RECONSTRUCTING THE SUFI SHRINE
AS A LIVING CULTURAL HERITAGE:

CASE OF SHRINE OF SHAH ABDUL LATIF BHITAI, SINDH (PAKISTAN)

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MASOOMA MOHIB SHAKIR   CURRICULUM VITAE

Masooma Shakir is an architect and an urban researcher. She is particularly interested in interdisciplinary research focusing on urban and spatial issues in relation to historic environments. She has keen interest in cultural heritage and its contextual associations. Her doctoral research looks at the local religious and cultural heritage of Sufi shrines in the region of Sindh. Her work is analytical, aiming to decipher the vocabulary / components of the regional tangible and intangible culture of a particular place as a system / language.

Apart from this, she has been involved in urban research projects within the Architecture department of NED University, as well as outside it on the documentation / analysis of multiple urban issues of the mega city of Karachi. Her masters thesis was an urban design proposal for the futuristic development of CBD in a direction that protects the heritage areas of the city. Urban research and documentation activities have not been limited to the city of Karachi and Masooma has ventured into the research activities exploring the smaller towns and secondary cities in Sindh in particular.

She has been part of the faculty at the Architecture and Planning Department at the NED University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi as Assistant Professor since 2007. She has been involved in design teaching, theory courses including Urban Planning and Design, Research Methodology and Environment Studies. She has been a dynamic participant in various research projects and academic activities within the department. She has been a part of the Editorial team of the Journal of Research in Architecture and Planning at the Department previously and has also acted as Advisor / Senior Coordinator of Design Studio Group (DSG). The Design Studio Group is a design faculty group that was formed as a forum to discuss and develop design studio teaching, bringing and sharing new ideas and practices.

She also carried out several small and big scale, residential and commercial, interior design and architecture projects as well as heritage adaptive reuse projects.

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2013 - 2017	**Doctorate study (ongoing)-**
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Research papers presented in International Conferences

Presented a paper at the Centre d'études de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud - CEIAS (Center for South Asian Studies) Paris on '**Rituals, Social Hierarchies and their relationship to Place: Case of Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, Bhitshah'**, as part of the ongoing Phd study, for the Conference on 'How to Study Shared Sacred Spaces in South Asia and Beyond', December 2016

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Presented a paper on: '**From Sufi Learning Center to Popular Place – Living History and Cultural Place at the Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai in the Town of Bhitshah, Sindh (Pakistan)',** at ARCASIA Conference, Ayutthaya, Thailand, November 2015.

Publications:

Books:

Karachi From the Prism of Urban Design, Co-authored with Dr. Noman Ahmed, Asiya Sadiq Polack and Suneela Ahmed, Published by Department of Architecture and Planning, NED UET, Karachi, 2016.

Research Projects and Reports:

Documentation and Analysis of the Secondary City of Larkana (Sindh) as part of the **Sustainable Urbanization Project**– Research Study of 8 secondary cities of Pakistan; A UNHabitat-NED Collaboration Project including Sialkot, Mansehra, Mingora, Turbat, Landikotal, Gilgit and Muzaffarabad as other secondary cities in Pakistan. This involved physical and socio economic survey of selected areas of city, analysis, formulation of key proposals based on identification of key issues. This was carried out between 2010-2012

Mapping of density of four low income housing areas in Karachi, **Density Study – 04 Cases of Housing**, 2008/09, Prepared for the International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED), co-researchers and authors including Asiya Sadiq Polack and Suneela Ahmed in collaboration with Architect and Planner Arif Hasan, published and available at http://www.iied.org/pubs/pdfs/G02709.pdf

Asia Link Programme (2006/07), NED University: as research assistant; A collaborative program between Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium; Technische Universiteit Eindhoven, the Netherlands; CEPT University (CEPT), Ahmedabad, India; University of Moratuwa, Colombo, Sri Lanka; and the NED University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi, Pakistan for curriculum development in urban and city design.

Research Papers:

'**Economic functioning of Secondary cities of Pakistan and its integration with the physical landuse – Case of Larkana and Mansehra',** presented at the 7th Seminar on Urban and Regional Planning, NED UET, 31 March 2012, published in the Conference proceedings.

'**Towards achieving a balance between real estate development potentials and issues of heritage conservation in the city center, with the backdrop of Karachi'**, presented at the 5th Seminar on Urban and Regional Planning, NED UET, May 2010. This was also published in the Seminar Proceedings Publication 2010.

Gated Living in the context of Karachi, published in: "Journal of Research in Architecture and Planning", Volume Nine, 2010, Department of Architecture and Planning, NED University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi

Trends in Urban Housing and Development Practices in Karachi: An interface with the Informal Sector, presented at the AsiaLink-AsiaUrbs Conference, 07-09 June 2007, Center for Housing Planning and Building, Battaramulla, Colombo, Srilanka. published in**:** "Emerging South Asian Urban Design Practices and Paradigms". This paper was a result of my work as a research assistant for Asia Link Programme (2006/07). This was a collaborative program between Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium; Technische Universiteit Eindhoven, the Netherlands; CEPT University (CEPT), Ahmedabad, India; University of Moratuwa, Colombo, Sri Lanka; and the NED University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi, Pakistan for curriculum development in urban and city design.

International Urban Design Competition Entry

Participated in International Competition on Urban Regeneration of Aurificia Block in Porto, Portugal as the main coordinator.

The entry was the only one from Asia. Taking on a multidisciplinary approach sought to revitalize a degenerated area through an economic activity addition of urban agriculture, supported by community and cultural activities along with creation of an authentic tourism.

Participation in Cultural Events and Exhibitions

Participated in art event 'Pursukoon Karachi', with the art project 'Rang De', that aimed to create and spread messages of peace through graffiti and mobile messages on rikshaws (local transport mode). Along with a handful of dedicated fourth year design students from NED, ticket booths for rikshaws were designed using bamboos and scaffolding as basic local materials and technology put together at very low cost, detailed with rikshaw art.

Participated in IAP Design Competition '21 cubic feet', a storage box design of the stated volume, exhibited at the Indus Valley Art Gallery for two weeks. The design storage box was a multipurpose, semi outdoor studio space for any kind of creative work. It was called 'Pandora Box'. A couple of old wooden window structures were revamped to become openable table and storage space for creative minds.

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The continued cultural importance of the Sufi shrine in the South Asian context makes it a living heritage. While neoliberal developments and fast paced urbanization in many Asian cities in particular have rendered them free of important cultural heritage, historical, social and cultural continuity along with a preservation of the physical heritage has become unique and special.

Living heritage sites are strongly connected to their historical, geographical, socio-political and cultural context. A descriptive narrative of the evolutionary process of the living heritage site of a Sufi shrine is undertaken in this research. It focuses on the changing relationship between the spatial and socio-cultural aspects over time. The larger or macro regional context is interrelated to the micro architectural context. The tangible heritage is defined by and intimately tied to the intangible aspects of the heritage. It is these constituting macro and micro elements and their interrelationships particularly through space and architecture that the research thesis explores in its documentation and analysis.

The Sufi shrine in the South Asian Pakistani context is representative of a larger culture in the precolonial era. It is an expression of an indigenous modernity, belonging to a certain time period, place and community. The Sufi shrine as a building type has evolved from the precolonial time period, particularly starting at the golden ages of the Muslim Empire in the world (9th – 12th century), through the colonial age when western modernity arrived until the current neoliberal paradigm within the post independence period. Continued and evolved use of space, ritualistic performances, multiple social groups using the site are various elements whose documentation and analysis can establish the essential co-relations that contribute to continuity of its historical living. Physical and social relation of the historic site to its immediate settlement context is also a significant element that preserves the socio-cultural context.

The chosen case of the Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, situated in the small town of Bhitshah in the province of Sindh, Pakistan forms a unique example where the particular physical and socio-cultural environment forms the context within which the Sufi heritage lives and survives. It is well integrated within its context at multiple levels. What are these levels and how do the constituting elements integrate is a major subject of research? These form the background to defining some of the basic issues and questions addressed in this doctoral thesis.

Given that living heritage sites are unique due to their particular association to the context, the case study method was used to gain deeper insight and understanding on the topic and to achieve the objectives stated below.

Aims of the dissertation

The research is broadly divided into two main parts; the tangible, that is the physical built form and the intangible. These are further divided into the macro and the micro levels of analysis.

At the macro level, the relationship between the context and the living heritage takes focus. The study aims to outline the major phases of contextual evolution that broadly brought change to the historic site in form and function. This is looked at in general terms regionally and culturally at the macro level. What is the relationship of this living heritage to the public realm (including city function, city infrastructure, public place)? The formal and functional relationship between the town and the heritage is also articulated to highlight the multiple levels of interrelation, including also how the heritage and its current development and form affect the town?

At the micro level, the living heritage site takes focus in terms of its physical use of space and the social structures attached to it, outlining its process of evolution due to the impact of the macro elements. It is aimed to identify and separate the various elements that add to the living, breathing rhythmic character of the heritage. These include besides the physical elements, the social and cultural practices and rituals that through continuous repetition reinforce traditional interpretations and meaning to space.

Place attachment, collective and individual memory and history linkages, and a study of people's cultural affiliations to place, as place of remembrance are a major subject of research. How are the social and cultural setups of the place tied to the physicality of the structure and contribute to the meanings and values assigned to place? The connection of commemoration to place / physical space is elaborated upon. Factors and processes, challenges and opportunities laying within for a consistent and evolving persistence are highlighted to generate a comprehension of the process.

Relevant current research

With the aim to interconnect and relate macro and micro levels of spatial, historical, socio-cultural analysis, the study takes on an interdisciplinary approach in research data collection and methodology. The study makes overlaps between several disciplines including history, urban, architecture and heritage studies.

The historical, social, political, economic and geographical context of a built environment plays a prerogative role in defining it (Kostof 1991; Tuan 1979; Agnew 2011; Albert 2013; Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge 2007). The intangible aspects of heritage including its context and the indigenous community attached play an essential role that require attention in observation, analysis, preservation and protection (Smith 2006; Smith and Akagawa 2009; Sørensen and Carman 2009; Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge 2000). This approach takes on a broader scope of heritage looking beyond mere physical preservation as the practice

oriented discipline defines it, to a more academic viewpoint. Heritage properties that are popularly used by the local people and are not representative of an elite class or royalty are a separate category that require a different approach to preservation and protection. The Sufi shrine is such a building type as the thesis elaborates and outlines its selection criteria. Its current role / function [that has evolved over centuries] maintains it actively. Their functional evolution, distribution of spaces and relation to context is a recent subject of exploration (Shahzad 2007; Shahzad 2014; Wolper 2003; Edwards 2015; Khan 2015; Quraeshi 2010; Mokhtar 2012; Rehman 2009; Desplat and Schulz 2014).

These scientific research studies largely make up the background of the study of the interrelation of 'the shrine' to 'the place', as a 'living heritage', and a place of commemoration. The numbers of scientific researches on the physical analysis of Sufi shrines are fairly limited and it is still a subject requiring academic focus. This study is therefore a contribution to this knowledge base.

Methodology

The in-depth study of the case of a living heritage within its context required the use of two prominent documentation methods; that of physical and ethnographic documentation methods. The two dominant methodology types were used to primarily document the physical and the social aspects of the chosen heritage site. The multi-faceted nature of the case was recorded through employing multiple strategies and tactics such as an intensive photographic documentation, mapping or recording contextual and spatial / functional / ritualistic features on map to show their spatial outreach and symbolic significance; interviews of a varied set of stakeholders, directly and indirectly related to site. The significance of the shrine for the town was also explored in interviews and through its physical and cultural mapping as a living place and heritage. The selection of interviews was based on the idea to gain a variety of perspectives on the significance and use of the place to thereby analyze the multiple facets of the heritage. Participant observation was carried out at the daily, weekly, monthly and annual rituals taking place at the shrine. The underlying meanings attached to these rituals were discussed in the interviews that followed of the prominent participants in the rituals. Archival records and official documents were also a reference source particularly for data from the colonial era. These methods have been used in triangulation to complement and/or compete with each other for an effective analysis.

Outcomes

The indigenous urban fabric is constituted by the macro and micro components of the living heritage, defined by the physical morphology and architecture as well as ritual performance and congregation by the community. Rituals constitute another component of the heritage, the relation to place and meaning embedded within its gestures and verbal practice. They define the social organization / hierarchy of the group closely involved.

The indigenous community tied to the place is one of its most important aspects of the living heritage, playing an active role in its upkeep and continuity. Interrelations between the multiple stakeholders are complex and consist of a distinct social heirarchy. There is a need to safeguard the indigenous community members. The positive and harmonious interaction between the indigenous traditional community and the modern institutions of management and justice is key to sustenance of the living heritage.

Shrines constitute a substantial number of listed heritage in the province of Sindh. Although they are popularly visited by the masses, the functional distribution and connection of spaces is not particularly analyzed and understood by architects and planners. This research in its analysis has articulated essential spatial interrelationships of functions and meanings attached to building type in general, and the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (Bhitshah, Sindh) as a prominent, fairly well conserved shrine in this regard in terms of the social group in particular.

Sufi shrines in the region were *khanqahs* or Sufi lodges in the past, actively engaged in moulding societal norms around monotheistic worship and peaceful coexistence between various social factions, preaching humanitarian values. They were traditionally established as waqf properties [similar to a trust], attached with charitable and public welfare activities along with a strong link of the saints family. As a confluence of public and private activities, it is representative of Islamic historic architecture, that was commonly known for its multifunctional capacities and characteristics.

The evolution of the system of establishing private waqf properties for public and family welfare into the government (national and provincial) institution of *Auqaf* that specifically caters to Sufi shrines (in contrast to stated all religious property types) is a significant one that requires a general understanding by the local people. The work of Jamal Malik and Kozlowski is insightfully revealing about this evolution process. The original intentions of the urban waqf institution can be appreciated for the flexibility and fluidity that it offered for use of a particular private property allowing it to be used for public purposes. The government department of *Auqaf* is oriented to 'defining religion' in specific way and establishing 'norm' under the premise of an Islamic nation. The comparison points out the discrepancies in existing management and possible opportunities for the development of heritage if looked at from its original source of establishment.

The morphological form of the settlement and networks of traditional cultural land uses are two physical forms of evidence that support the interrelation of the traditional social structure and customs in physical form, contributing to continuity of living traditions related to heritage.

Further potential research

This research makes a major contribution to the study of Sufi places as an integrated part of its social and spatial context. The spatial and urban studies of Sufi shrines and related spaces

require research particularly in the South Asian context. This is because they continue to be well connected with the current settlement / urban life styles, society and the general context. The study of the interrelation of Sufi shrines, the physical past and the social present can add to much understanding of existing environments and contribute to questions of policies and regulations in relation to heritage and developing urban environments.

The study of living heritage sites within their contexts including shrines in South Asia as example, can allow for a general understanding of 'heritage' and its developing / evolving associations with people as physical markers of history and memory. As determined through this research, Sufi shrines continue to be self contained living spaces, even after modernity. They are not just brick and stone, and should be preserved in a more integrated manner. The role currently played by the government institutions of *Auqaf*, Culture and Archaeology needs to be combined into one institution in order to achieve contextual sensitivity and integration in preservation.

The practice field of heritage conservation is a young one in the context of Pakistan. The concept and institutions enforcing heritage are fraught with limitations and issues in formulation also within the western context. The heritage of the east is different set within a different socio-cultural context, how people relate to heritage in this part of the world is different from that in the west. Two major typologies of heritage that are easily observable and that people relate to are that, to which people completely stop relating in terms of their daily lives, meanings are lost; and that with which people's lives continue to be closely intertwined. The study of the latter can allow a better understanding of safeguarding it for posterity, for developing / upgrading existing mechanisms of protection of historic built environments. These are different for the two contexts.

Acknowledgements

INTRODUCTION

The Sufi shrine within the South Asian context today is a living heritage. This premise forms the main research hypothesis of this study. The context of the sufi shrine is set within the post colonial Pakistan nation state as defined by historians: Jalal (2001); Anderson (2006); Hasan (1979); Gilmartin (2014). It is representative of a larger culture in the precolonial era (Ahmed, 2015). The evolution of the sufi shrine marks the political and cultural transition of the region from the precolonial kingdoms through the period of colonization (1799-1947) to the formation of the nation state in 1947. Despite the transition periods where there have been major changes in structures of administration and political authority, there continue to be examples of sufi shrines in the Indian subcontinent that are witness to a historical continuity.

The continued cultural importance of a historical place constitutes the concept of a 'living heritage' (Graham, 2002; Sørensen and Carman, 2009). The conception of 'heritage' started off from the western countries, particularly so after the second world war. The institutionalization of heritage as a top down application framework within the professional discipline is also a western development, which has been in the process of application and development in various other parts of the world including Pakistan. The social and cultural processes attached to a heritage like the sufi shrine have however continued since before the time of conception of the idea of 'heritage'. Traditional community frameworks have preserved not just the physical heritage but also harboured the various related social and cultural activities. Later, national and provincial institutions have reinterpreted the significance parameters and supported what was outlined as prerequisite. While evolution of living heritage sites is inevitable over their several centuries of existence, what drives this research are the reasons for the historical continuity of such a site.

Neoliberal developments, mega city syndrome and fast paced urbanization in many cities of the world have rendered them free of important cultural heritage (Ren, 2008; Secretariat, 2008). Social and cultural historical continuity along with a preservation of the physical heritage has become unique and special. What are the forces and support mechanisms that have allowed the maintenance of such a historical continuity?

The shrines and related culture developed by the saints at these places represented an indigenous modernity in specific time and within their context (Gilmartin, 2014; Malik, 1996). The colonial invasion in the late 1700s, along with the simultaneous arrival of western modernity, 'scientific' manners of organization and classification created disruption as the modern system of government and administration took over, reinterpreted and modified or eliminated various traditional practices[1]. The British hegemony was established through what was considered a 'superior scientifically established system' of local knowledge (Cohn, 1996; Gilmartin, 2014).

Before colonization, the Sufi saints played a significant role in creating a culturally rich environment which was socially cohesive. According to Gilmartin (2014: 177), sufi shrines 'traditionally occupied a place at the hinge between Islam's civilizational imaginings and the local political worlds'. He uses 'civilization' as a frame for analysis, carrying

> 'structured tensions between the core and periphery, … defined by the relationship between a moral and intellectual center shaping core understandings of humanity's place in the cosmos and the particularities of mundane power, organization and culture'.

The Sufi saints with their spiritual training and traveling exercises modified and adapted existing cultural practices to preach simplicity, monotheistic divinity, and love for mankind and all creation. Among other centers, the saints and the shrines within their contexts represented 'moral and intellectual centers' in defined time periods and similar to other religious cores, played a role in defining 'humanity's place in the cosmos'. While their role in politics was fairly limited and varied considerably, their relationship with the ruling authorities and royal families has been an intriguing subject of anthropological and historical study (Desplat and Schulz, 2014; Gilmartin, 2014; Malik, 1996; Wolper, 2003).

The shrine is a social, cultural and a religious place. They are places of commemoration, remembrance of the saint buried at the tomb, considered to be 'blessed' by its visitors. The religiosity attached to it gives it particular prominence as 'living heritage', similar to many religious places in different parts of the world (Stovel et al., 2005). How is the historical value of the place perceived and preserved? My research assumes and argues that the shrine is not only a religious heritage but also a cultural one, and it is a significant marker of the history of the subcontinent region.

The term 'heritage' has evolved in meaning and scope and official use from one designating monumental structures to including intangible qualities, local cultural activities and features and thereby being referred to as a 'social and cultural process' (Ashworth et al., 2007; Ashworth and Larkham, 1994; Graham, 2002; Graham and Howard, 2010; Smith, 2006; Smith and Akagawa, 2009). This evolution has taken a shift from appreciating only

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[1] Examples of traditional practices removed include absence of private landed property, the system of waqf property as individual source of private and public welfare among the prominent ones.

monumental structures of grandeur, expressions of power and wealth to an appreciation of traditional indigenous cultural objects, crafts and places. The institution of heritage continues to remain a top down structure, with questions of who decides what is worth preserving and why as important academic debates.

The broader definition of heritage includes within 'a complex, diverse and even divergent social practice' (E. C. Avrami et al., 2000). This aligns it with its multidisciplinary nature, to which professionals working in the broader heritage field contribute from the sciences, arts, social sciences, humanities among some and receives contributions for academic research, historical research, policy making, planning and technical interventions[2]. The narrower definition includes greater focus on the preservation of the physical object, artifact or place.

> "At the heart of contemporary, interdisciplinary, critical research on heritage is the notion that cultural heritage is a social construction, resulting from social processes specific to time and place. …. and culture is a set of processes, not a collection of things." (E. C. Avrami et al., 2000)

Heritage in this reference is described as a cultural process, whereby the past engages with the present (Albert 2006; Carman 2009; Smith 2006; Silberman 2012; Shalaginova 2012; Uzzell 1994; Smith 2009). The spatial relations between the new / recent and the old and various cultural meaningful relations with the past that continue or evolve in the present are explored within a case study.

It is considered open to a variety of interpretations and tied inevitably to the 'social construct of identity'. Different cultures may interpret a particular heritage site in different ways and variations in interpretations also occur over time (Graham, 2002).

> "Heritage is not a 'thing', is not a 'site', building or other material object. … these things … are not themselves heritage. Rather, heritage is what goes on at these sites, … Heritage… is a cultural process that engages with the present, and the sites themselves are cultural tools that can facilitate … this process" (Smith 2006:44).

The Sufi shrine is looked at in this research as such a heritage site, attached to a rich past that is perceived and relates to the present through use of place, rituals, social structures in particular. It is within this reference that heritage is defined within this study. It is considered to be inclusive of 'a diverse range of social practices, processes and experiences', and are places through which 'people align value and sentiment to things and sites, and claim them in collective ownership affirming continuity and identity' (Filippucci in Carman et al. 2009). The physical site and its social dynamics of site are interrelated, continuing the traditional cycles of rituals and associating, maintaining collective ownership though with evolved meanings.

The tombs of saints have a current status, defined in the present, and hence are more than just the past. The emotional attachment to tombs, of the people visiting maintain them as a

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[2] Interdisciplinary collaboration however is not mostly achieved in practice. The interconnectedness of the related spheres often loses sight in coordination and intervention.

current reality rather than just the past. A living heritage with a function, the history and the evolution of the shrine as a whole is known little to the people visiting it, rituals embedded with meaning in the present make them a current happening place. Sufi shrines have undergone a transition, having been part of a written learned cultural past, they are today a popular heritage.

This thesis wishes to reanalyze the position of sufi shrines looking at it as heritage in the broader, academic sense of the word. Besides the spatial and physical characteristics of heritage, the social and cultural aspects give it continued significance. The multidimensional elements of the shrine are analyzed in their relation to the place defined by systems of social and morphological configurations (Chapters 3, 4 and 5).

Set within the semi-urban / rural context of the town of Bhitshah in Sindh in Pakistan today, the Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai is taken up as a case study for this research. There are many shrines that have witnessed decreased numbers of visitations over time. There are others, whose physical and socio-cultural prominence has grown over time. The chosen case study is such a shrine.

Rituals and the indigenous groups as active participants attached, continue to harbour some of the old practices making them unique experiences of a collective memory. The differences are particularly so between urban and semi-urban/ rural contexts. Positioned within the post colonial Pakistani context, the shrine consists of multiple stakeholders. Indigenous groups of fakirs and the saint's genealogical descendants work alongside the government departments of Culture and *Auqaf*, managing, maintaining the different aspects of its living cultural heritage. Parallel collaborations and distribution of responsibilities between the local people and the provincial government departments offer interesting analysis of changing time frames, reinterpretations and related evolution and functions performed by the place. This thesis aims to define and expand upon the significance of the living character of the sufi shrine (Chapters 3 and 5).

What is it that has allowed the heritage of the Sufi shrine to continue to be living for centuries? Sufi shrines are sacred spaces of historic value. Over time their architecture has evolved as the study elaborates due to requirements to accommodate more people, and their basic needs. Expansion works, addition of new infrastructure including dispensaries, public toilets, accommodation etc. are part of this evolution. How do the past and the present of the Sufi shrine reconcile? For centuries they have been visited by the people of the region, managed and maintained by different and / or similar groups of people. The supporting social institutions and the time period of their origination explain the shrine's present experiences better.

An analytical study of the context (physical and non-physical) and case site is carried out in this research to primarily dissect the significant elements constituting the heritage site. The

physical realm offers insight into the non-physical. As an architect and an urban researcher, spatial parameters and consequently their interrelation with other parameters become the fundamental stepping stones for my research analysis. The spatial and physical aspects are thereby analyzed to highlight essentially the relationship between the intangible and the tangible.

Shrines of Sufi saints are pluralistic in nature and receive people of different religions, classes, ethnicities and castes. Pluralism is a concept that has survived through centuries at shrines, taught first by the saints preaching inclusiveness and generosity. Social barriers of religion, caste, class, ethnicities or nationalities are minimal. At the same time, the current practices of individuals and/or groups can be observed to align with a particular interpretation. Religious, social, recreational and even advocacy may be reasons for their visit to the shrine. What is the shrine within its context and what is the role it plays connecting the past and the present, as a living heritage? The research looks at the interrelation.

Context: theoretical and empirical

The landscape of South Asia is dotted with shrines. Shrines and tombs make up for 32.8 percent of the total listed national heritage sites under the Antiquities Act 1975 in Pakistan, ranking second after the numbers of national monuments (GoP, Antiquities Act 1975; See Table 1). Sufi shrines are popularly visited by low to middle income groups including daily wage earners, rural peasants, informal salespeople and representative of a large population bracket in the area around the case study and the region in general. This fact supports the idea of exploring a ‚peoples heritage'. About their cultural significance, Carl Ernst, Prof. of Religious Studies remarks, that "…the institute of kingship cannot be seen as the real locus of the culture of South Asian Muslims, despite the romantic fascination of its tales of courtly intrigue and power," (Quraeshi, 2010) implying the significant role in cultural development of sufi shrines as an institution and place. Sufi shrines acted as educational institutions and learning centers for Sufi knowledge, open to accommodating diverse social groups. Shrines hence are a typology of heritage that is largely people centered, non- elitist and not entirely owned by a particular class of people. The history of the shrine as an institution, a *khanqah*[3] and a travelers' abode has much to do with this characteristic. They served multiple functions.

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[3] *khanqah* is a Persian term referring to sufi lodges.

Percentage (%)	Province	Archaeological Sites	Monuments	Temples	Buddhist Sites	Sikh Sites	Mosques	Tomb/Shrines	Haveli/Residence of National Personality	Military/Forts	Garden	Baradari	Water Works Baoli Well	Gates	Column/Tower	Serai	Haveli	Landmark Public building
7.6%	(27) Balochistan	18	9	-	-	-	-	4	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
17%	(61) KPK	48	13	1	4	-	10	4	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
40.5%	(144) Punjab	18	126	6	5	3	11+2	44	5	8	3+2	5	8	10	5	2	1	-
34.6%	(123) Sindh	28	95	5	2	-	10+3	54	-	8	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
	(355)	112	243	12	11	3	21+6	116	6	22	3+2	6	8	10	5	2	1	-
		31.5%	68.5%	10.7%			11.1%	47.7%		9%								
	Punjab Special Premises Ord.			3		3	46	128	6	3	2	3	3	1	-	2	1	36
							18.7%	52.2%										14.6%

Table 1: Different typologies of heritage of the four provinces, included in protected sites lists notified under the Antiquities Act 1975 and the Punjab Special Premises Ordinance 1985. [This table is used to basically highlight the numbers and significance of shrines as a national heritage in Pakistan]

Source: Naeem, A. in: Silva and Chapagain (2013) Asian Heritage Management, Contexts, Concerns and Prospects, Routledge.

The research context of Pakistan falls within the larger region of South Asia. South Asia is known to be ethnically diverse with a history of kingdoms and old trade routes. It has been a melting pot of several cultures and influences can be identified to belong to different parts of surrounding geographical regions, due to regional migrations. Many of the shrines in Pakistan and countries that have had links to a Muslim history, are frequented by visitors from across the world. Those in Pakistan are particularly visited by people from hostile India and Bangladesh.

The South Asian context is also referred to as developing with sharp contrasts in living patterns between rural and urban areas. This sharp contrast is also visible in the visit to sufi shrines in big cities like Karachi and Lahore and those set in small semi-urban/ semi-rural towns of the country. The presence of the Sufi heritage in regions has influenced urbanization and economy albeit on a small scale. Their significant numbers through the subcontinental landscape and their relation to the settlement / regional context is a subject of study that has been little explored.

Shrines are layered in history and meaning. Surrounded by myths, legends and rituals, modern urbanites like myself often question the ingenuity of the history of some. Many among these are shrines that are historical landmarks and tell of imaginative tales associated with the regional landscape. Of Sufis, sacred figures, heroes of their time, important personalities within local history, many of whom were migrants and brought with them knowledge, intellect and wisdom from lands they travelled across and made invaluable contributions to the regional cultures (Fredunbeg, 1985; Nizami, 2007, 1997; Thattvi, 2006). This is referring to an

age without automobiles, when travelling spanned over months on animal backs. Particular reference is made of the 11th - 12th century with regard to the tales of Sufi saints and other saints who were inspired by them. These were offshoots of the period of the golden age of the Muslim rule over large regions.

Review of theoretical and historical literature

Heritage studies and memory studies form the theoretical context for this research apart from the research literature on the architecture and the cultural heritage of sufi shrines. The field of Heritage studies includes a broad range of research studies on heritage. Carman and Sorenson in their publication on Heritage Studies provide an overview of this discipline and contribute research articles. This is a relatively recent discipline and it explores the larger heritage context, associations of different groups of people including formal institutions and the local people and their organizations working with built historic environments, makes interdisciplinary overlaps of physical heritage with social, cultural, material, symbolic issues[4] apart from the political and economic issues (Sørensen and Carman 2009; Smith 2006; Smith and Akagawa 2009; Lowenthal 1985; Garden 2006; Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge 2007; Graham and Howard, 2010; Albert 2013).

The listed works focus primarily on the western context. While studies on heritage have been dominated by the physical documentation and preservation outlines, the recently developed field of heritage studies is more inclusive in its debates in relation to other disciplines. This research aligns itself with this and is based on ideas of achieving a greater insight into cultural preservation through aligning the multifaceted natures of a heritage.

Recent research literature on heritage emphasizes it to be the process by which people use the past, where a particular community or society has a personal / communal relation and ownership with it (Smith, 2006). This research takes a bent toward indigenous heritage, one that is supported by traditional practices and systems. Collective memory studies, particularly looking at Halbwachs (1980) and Connerton (1992) theoretically articulate the significance and mechanisms through which local communities continue tradition and repetitive customs and rituals are aligned to particular places attaching meaning to them.

The non-western context has much to contribute to the studies of the cultural heritage of shrines and their related geographical histories. In a few particularly important shrines the heritage continues to be alive in certain ways, tradition and collective memories playing an important role in community sustenance.

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[4] The intangible heritage convention in 2006 and various supporting research contributions before and after this, point toward an evolution of the heritage discourse particularly in non-western contexts. As Rudolff (2009) in her doctoral thesis discusses the various UNESCO broad meetings and conferences on the subject, the significance of traditional indigenous cultural systems/ mechanisms is now understood and acknowledged.

Within the South Asian context, the subject of sufi shrines and related social structures and institutions has been covered by a few particularly indepth historical research works that are used in this study as references. These include the works of David Gilmartin (2014). The publication, 'Civilization and Modernity – Narrating the Creation of Pakistan' is a compilation of Gilmartin's work and research articles over a couple of decades. The book presents a historical perspective of looking at sufi shrines and related Muslim culture from a *civilizational* perspective, where he subscribes the view of each civilization as reaching a modernity defined similar to western modernity. He presents an evolution of the sufi culture and the role of saints and their descendants from during colonization to after independence.

The work of Kozlowski is a valuable research, presenting an insightful analysis of the institution of *waqf* or Muslim endowments of which the shrines were also a part of, during and before colonization. The history of shrines is therefore best understood when divided according to its major phases of evolution, that is before colonization, during colonial rule and post independence. The study of the institution of *waqf* offers brilliant insight into the Muslim culture and the public (community, social, cultural and philanthropic) and the private (personal, individual and familial) interrelations of functions in daily life. The waqf was an urban institution through which properties could be declared by rich individuals or families for public, family and community use and benefit. The interrelation between the public and private life and use of spaces is culturally unique – the shrine of Shah Latif is an example of this interrelating use of the space as one common in the cultural history of Muslims. *Waqf* was a precapitalist institution and offered a buffer to families and community from the insecurities of the capitalist framework. The publication by Kozlowski reveals the social and political implications of the controversies over endowments that resulted in arguments and debates in the imperial courts and councils during colonial rule.

Malik (1996; 1997) presents a sociological history of the evolution of the various traditional institutions of Muslims from colonial to post independence period, particularly focusing on the period after independence. These institutions include the endowments, linked educational institutions, public finance and charity.

Ayesha Jalal, Mushirul Hasan and David Gilmartin are historians who, apart from the historical overview, also present the argument of the definition of nationhood for the Muslim community and its articulations during the struggle for identity and rights in colonial rule. While these definitions played an important role during the struggle for the Muslim 'nation' (as a non-territorial community), the reality of what emerged from the struggle at independence was the western notion of a territorial nation state as Pakistan. Cohn (1996) gives a neutral unbiased background to the colonial ideas of systematizing rule and the various institutions. These references are used to give a historical context that is not ethnocentric, or focused on the

superiority of any culture. The evolution and significance of the sufi shrine within the regional context is hence charted.

The cultural heritage of Sufi shrines and the institution of *waqf* with its distortions are found in various Muslim countries or countries that were under Muslim rule in between the 10th and 16th century. Sara Ethel Wolper, (2003) 'Cities and Saints' is a study of three cities of 13th - 14th century Anatolia as a network of *khanqahs* (resting / visiting places for saints, fakirs and followers). The spatial organization of the architectural heritage as well as the towns gives a background to the political role they played in the cultural history of the region. It makes evident the role of Sufism in the region in the shaping of the community. The first waqfs were established for community use in the 12th century, informs Kozlowski (1985). Patrons of saints and the ruling elite also functioned in the establishment of an urban order through the development of the *khanqahs*. These khanqahs evolved as sufi institutions functioning as educational and socio-cultural centers.

Sufi shrines today, particularly those in big cities are metropolitan microcosms as Rachana Rao Umashankar (2015) describes them. Rao and Strothmann both use the case of the Shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore, highlighting the nature of its centrality, similar to 'a city within a city' (Strothmann). The two research articles (Umashankar and Strothmann) focus on the big city dynamics within which influence of a major shrine expands to cover a large area, the shrine playing multiple roles within the settlement context, including several private welfare and charity based activities. A hub of welfare activities now situated within the urban center of Lahore, the immediate context of the shrine shelters the misfits, runaway children, poor families and a sociology that is particular to it and to no other place in the big city. While Wolper work focuses on the historical context of the khanqahs, these works look at the present appropriation of the historical spaces.

Within the context of 'heritage', research works of Britta Rudolff (Phd thesis), and Rachana Rao Umashankar are contributions on shrines / tombs of historical and religious importance. Rudolff (2006) phd research titled, *Intangible and Tangible heritage – a topology in the context of faith* looks at a famous Muslim tomb in Damascus using social methods to study the relation between tangible and intangible heritage. The study takes a stronger bent toward the western theoretical arguments around the official use and relation created between the tangible and intangible aspects of heritage. It highlights, through the fieldwork analysis, the multiple forms of associations, from personal to community relations toward the shrine.

Sufi shrines have historically carried relevance as central places in the Muslim dominated parts of the world. They have acted as religious, intellectual and educational centers in small towns or their peripheries. In order to particularly study the relevance of Sufi shrines to place and its functional distribution, evolution, the following scientific researchers are a useful

reference. The numbers of scientific researches on this relation are fairly limited and it is still a subject requiring academic focus. Nevertheless, Khan (2015); Mokhtar (2012); Quraeshi, (2010); Shahzad (2014); Wolper (2003), Desplat and Schulz (2014); Edwards (2015); Mazloom et al., n.d.; Rehman (2009) are recent research studies that make contribution to knowledge, exploring shrines and attached places.

The two works of Shahzad (2014, 2007) are comprehensive, factual studies of shrines in the Punjab province of Pakistan, focusing in particular on the Shrine of Data Ganj Bukhsh in Lahore. He gives a historical account of the evolution of regulations, policies and related institutions to shrines since the colonial era. In basic terminology, his works give numerous details about the place, the physical architecture, spatial distribution and activities that take place, processes of maintenance by the *Auqaf*, rituals and people involved. They are easy reads for anyone interested in the topic and essential as there are few works on the subject particularly from Pakistan. Shahzad also gives basic introduction to Sufism, philosophy, theoretical background and history in relation to place. The shrine of the saint has received much importance at the national level particularly as a tool to define 'Islam' for the nation of Pakistan. While the work of Shahzad focuses more on the shrine of Data Ganj Bukhsh in Lahore in particular, the research paper of Linus Strothmann in Desplat and Schulz (2014) and Umashankar look at its physical context within the Lahore city. She calls it 'a city within the city'.

Quraeshi (2010) provides a visual study of several prominent shrines in India and Pakistan, forming the Indian subcontinent. It is a photographic documentation, supported with a basic description of each shrine, its history and observations gathered from the shrine visits. The book presents the shrine culture as a vernacular culture, and is a coffee table book with lots of images.

The work of Holly Edwards (2015) is particularly relevant and interesting as it focuses on multiple religious buildings belonging to the region of the Indus Valley. Her research focus lies on brick buildings from the northern region of the Indus Valley, highlighting the symbolic gestures in built form, replications holding similar significance across religions, attributing the articulations to be geographic and specific to the skilled crafts people of the region. It is an interesting study, that tries to break the perception of attributing certain physical monumental features of buildings to specific religions and insists that the craft of building of the region was infact developed in such a way over time. Moreover, she highlights the shared syncretic practices prevalent that were the cause of the shared symbolic references.

Hussain Khan (2015) also asserts that there was a relationship between artisans and the geographical location through material of craft and its aesthetic articulation. His doctorate thesis on *Artisans, Sufis, Shrines: Colonial Architecture in the 19th century Punjab* presents

the case that the culture of shrines supported the local artisans and allowed them space for development of craft. It puts forth an intriguing point of viewing the historical context of shrines.

The shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar has been a subject of much research particularly anthropological studies. The masters thesis work of Mokhtar (2012) is a sociological research focusing on the *urs* festival. The background description includes a good overview of the physical context, the town and the place before he gets into the analytical details of the socio-spatial study.

Uzma Rehman (2009) compares the rituals performed at the *urs* festivals at two shrines in Pakistan, one belonging to the region of Sindh and one of Punjab. Using an anthropological approach, she provides a description of the rituals performed by the individuals and their interpretations and intent / meanings attached to them by the devotees. The two shrines are that of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, Bhitshah (Sindh) and Pir Waris Shah, Jandiala Shah (Punjab). She describes the two festivals to be of historical significance for the local religious cultures.

The history book on Islamic Architecture by Robert Hillenbrand is worth mentioning, as it undertakes a different perspective from the chronological view or a regional framework. It highlights the function of the major Islamic building types within the medieval society which produced them. The chapters are divided according to single building types. Of these, the mausoleum variety includes the sufi shrine as a popularly visited type. The generally multi-functional nature of 'Islamic architecture' and the regional evolution of the building types are insightful aspects of study.

The publication of Desplat and Schulz (2014) is a compilation of research articles including an introduction and conclusion as well as couple of articles by themselves. The editors / authors derive relevant analysis from the articles about religious and cultural values of shrines among other religious places. The article by Linus Strothmann in the book, mentioned earlier, is an urban documentation and analysis of the context of the shrine of Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore, the second largest city in Pakistan. The context and analysis is good reference.

These scientific research studies largely make up the background of the study of the interrelation of 'the shrine' to 'the place' and as a 'living heritage', or a place of commemoration.

Sufi culture has been explored largely anthropologically apart from the theological writings on it (Quraeshi 2010; Boivin 2007; 2012; Boivin and Delage 2013; Mokhtar 2012; Frembgen 2012). The major subjects in this domain are covered by different scholars. Ansari, (2003); Eaton, (1982); Ewing, (1997); Ramey, (2007); Sanders, (1994) are research studies that look at the relationship between the different interest groups, particularly the state and the sufi saints or pirs of shrines. This subject has been one that has undergone an evolution and has

been one of interest in anthropological studies in particular. The work of Frembgen, (2012) documents and analyses the various local nuances, interpretations and understandings of the subject through the medium of religious posters, iconography highlighting the symbolism attached.

The multidisciplinary approach enveloped within the anthropological research works of Michel Boivin (Boivin, 2012, 2007; Boivin and Delage, 2013) present a comprehensiveness to the study of the physical and socio-cultural aspects of the religious heritage of shrines. Boivin uses this as a background to the documentation of their material culture.

Among the historical research on Sufi culture, literature in particular includes Gulrajani, (1924); Islam, (2002); Rizvi, (1978); Suvorova, (2011). 'Sufism in South Asia' by Riaz-ul-Islam confronts some of the major issues that he highlights in his chapters relating to following Sufi *pirs*. He argues that the syncretic cultural practices were adopted by sufi saints in the region in order to win a large following. The adjustments, modifications and 'compromises' made to religious practices given this has been criticized by Islamic theologians. At the same time, Sufism was immensely and popularly appreciated for creating deeper connections for individuals to the spirit of the faith, something that the regulated religious (or even orthodox) practices had been unable to achieve. Islam (2002: 445) admits that Sufi practices are able to internalize the ideals and ethical values of the religion unlike any other system of practices. He nevertheless concludes that there were certain Sufi practices that made saints infamous and brought down their ethical standards in general, including the performance of miracles, creating a blind following, not earning a living, receiving charity encouraged corruption and discouraging followers to do original research.

Sayings of Sufi saints (*malfuzat*), their letters and writings (*maktubat*), biographical accounts (*tadhkiras*) are important sources of information and reference for the writing of historical works as well as anthropological analyses.

The historical account of Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi (1978) called 'A History of Sufism in India' is divided into two volumes, one looks at the sufi developments in the region from the 13th to the beginning of the 16th centuries, when Sufism was not established in India. The second volume focuses on the post 16th century period when Sufism was well established in the region. It elaborates on the mystic philosophy and the major sufi orders established.

Apart from this, the local popularity of Sufism in history has been in the recent past brought to forefront through popular literature in the form of stories, narrations and novels. These have increased in numbers over the past few decades in particular and create a sketch of the history and culture of Sufis and places attached to them and allow local people (particularly disconnected migrants and urbanites) to reconnect to history[5]. Some examples that come to

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[5] Simplistic religious values have removed the local people from traditional Sufi practices, with the new generations knowing very little about this history.

mind are *Forty Rules of Love*[6] by Elif Shafak, *Aag ka Darya*[7] (River of Fire) by Qurutulain Hyder and *Nine Lives- In Search of the Sacred in Modern India*[8] by William Dalrymple. Quotes and phrases in everyday life, poetry are different mediums of maintaining the Sufi references and keeping the collective memory alive for different generations at multiple levels. Literature by Sufi saints themselves include theological writings and poetry in particular. The work of Hazrat Ali Hujwiri known as *Kashf al Mahjub* and *Shah jo Risalo* of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai are well known examples of regional literatures.

The Sufi shrines are integrated within their social and spatial context. The spatial and urban studies of Sufi shrines and related spaces require research particularly in the South Asian context. This is because they continue to be well connected with the current life styles, society and the general context. The study of the interrelation of Sufi shrines, the physical past and the social present can add to much understanding of existing environments and contribute to questions of policies and regulations in relation to heritage and developing urban environments. Sufism is currently undergoing a revival in Pakistan and for this reason too, this study is important in making the essential connections between the past and the present, in built form and community performances.

Premise

This research study looks at the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai as a living cultural heritage. It aims to correlate the historical trajectory of performances, rituals and congregation of such a living cultural and religious heritage to the physical architecture and urban space.

The real source of meaning of heritage comes from the contexts in which they are embedded, particularly the social context. The values that people attach with them, the functions they serve in society and the uses that are derived from them are the reasons for their presence and significance (Avrami et al. 2000:4; Smith 2006). It is important to thereby situate material heritage within the larger social contexts – 'as part of the larger cultural sphere'. The research aims to identify the various elements that make the sufi shrine a living cultural heritage in the region, particularly so within the semi-urban / rural context. The study can be broken down to the following two major components:

- Sites of living history or sites of a collective memory marking socio-cultural systems of prolonged attachments
- Physical (formal and functional) and socio-cultural context of the towns / surrounding settlement
- Interrelationship

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[6] *Forty rules of Love* by Elif Shafak is a story of the relationship between Rumi and his friend Shams. Both are famous sufis, known for their inseparable relationship as they explored the mystic world.
[7] *Aag ka Darya* is a classical novel in Urdu language, set within the Indian subcontinent. It is a series of stories set in different eras and geographical locations.
[8] *Nine lives* is a series of nine biography stories of people belonging to different religions or sects set within the Indian context. These nine stories are set around the rich religious heritage of the region.

In essence, the research looks at the important phases in evolution of the place and its relationship to the larger, physical regional context.

Aim and research questions

The research presents the multiple facets of the sufi shrine as a living cultural heritage of the region, tied deeply to a cultural past. The research highlights the current status of shrines as one representative of a civilizational / indigenous modernity (Gilmartin, 2014). What constitutes the sufi shrine as a living heritage? The historical, political, morphological and social contexts of the shrine play an important role in keeping it alive. The research is therefore identified to be two fold, macro and micro. The macro level analysis looks at the changing contextual parameters. The micro level analyzes the shrine heritage itself. Spatial and social aspects in relation take focus.

1. Macro level: The context and the shrine heritage

Broadly, the historical evolution of the sufi shrine in general is characterized by the political and administrative developments within the pre colonial, the colonial and the post independence periods. The political, socio-cultural, economic evolution has had a spatial impact on the place and its physical context. The different levels and scales of physical (form and function) associations of the shrine heritage to the settlement / regional context are identified as part of the analytical framework. The interrelationship of the heritage of the shrine to its context is the main subject of the research, highlighting the multiple roles it plays and has played within its settings.

2. Micro level: The shrine as a living heritage, the development and current major functioning of its physical and social structures

Collective memory and history linkages attached to the physical shrine become the major subject of study at the micro level. How are the social and cultural setups of the shrine tied to the physicality of the structure and contribute to the meanings and values assigned to place?

What practices have contributed to the continuity of the living heritage and why? How has the functional use of spaces evolved over time? The performance of collective rituals signify the continuation of values. By debating and aiming to answer these questions, the research aims to make a contribution to the study of heritage in general and specifically to sufi heritage.

Research strategy

In order to study the above stated aims and research questions, multiple approaches could be taken, depending particularly on the primary field of study. To study the social and spatial interrelations within a built environment, architectural research provides approaches to cater to this.

Architectural Research

Architecture is today a multidisciplinary profession. This particular research draws upon this inter-/multi- disciplinary aspect. Combining interpretive historical research and qualitative research strategies, the following research adds to the general body of knowledge of architectural research where use of such combined strategies are yet a developing frontier.

Within the domain of architecture research, this study looks at historical interpretations. History need not be understood as a discrete past event but with the intention to connect the past to the present and the future (Snyder, 1984). Raymond Williams regards the need for studies on cultural history to be seen as past events that are 'not specific histories but a continuous and connected process.' (Snyder: Williams) Such a cultural process bounds a living heritage within a broader definition. Groat and Wang define interpretive research as 'investigations into social-physical phenomena within complex contexts, with a view toward explaining those phenomena in narrative form and in a holistic fashion'.

Following the emancipatory paradigm, the research is based on the premise that there are multiple realities shaped by social, political, cultural and economic values. With interaction between the researcher and the field agents, the knowledge is socially as well as historically situated. Most importantly, the resultant physical form within the context is highlighted as the manifestation of the multiple forces.

Mixed methods are used to carry out an indepth enquiry into a single case study. Groat and Wang (2002) define case study research as an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon or a setting, applicable to potential historic as well as contemporary settings. The use of two or more methods drawing on cross-paradigmatic assumptions is defined as mixed methods (Moran-Ellis et al., 2006).

Qualitative research strategies are undertaken to explore the casestudy from multiple dimensions. These require interaction between the subject of study in the field and the researcher. It thereby assumes a subjective reality, one that is interpreted. As an inductive process of inquiry, the multiple factors affecting the area of the research are outlined, identified and defined.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) describe qualitative research to be multimethod in focus and interpretive characteristically toward the subject matter. The subject is studied within its natural settings, 'attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Groat, Wang 2002:176). Combined strategies are aimed to offer a richness and diversity of empirical data and its interpretation in the field of study.

The Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai is used as a case study for the research is situated in a small town called Bhitshah. The town and the region of Sindh present the geographical context within which the case site is originated and developed.

Data collection methods

Positioning heritage as an inter-disciplinary research topic, the research employs tools of physical and social documentation to record the essentials of the physical and socio-cultural context, documenting the various elements giving value to the heritage site. A multi-method approach is hence undertaken for such a documentation. Multiple research topics are covered within an intense literature review. The history of place for the case is an important aspect covered through a review of local literature of historians, writers, and newspaper sources. The study of the cultural heritage related to shrines requires data collecting to be done at the field site. Talking directly to people, interviewing, observing behavior and actions within the context is an essential prerequisite for gaining a good understanding of the field site. Multiple forms of data including interviews, observations, photographs, historical references are collected.

Mapping

A qualitative mapping exercise was undertaken to map the important structuring features of the town of Bhitshah, of relevance to the case shrine and the activities that take place through the year. The culture of mapping or physical maps within the municipal administrative structures does not exist and it was hard to find any plans of previous years in the government departments except those of current infrastructure projects. That is to say that measured physical maps are mostly only made for engineering works and available only of the particular site, scale and refer solely to the project. A set of regulations usually define the standard procedures for the state machinery. Hence, the mapping exercise of the case and its context that is undertaken is considered to be a valuable addition to the archival data available for the towns and the shrines themselves.

Qualitative mapping strategies included creating base maps, zoning diagrams of field sites to map place attachment and identifying significant features of the site in function and meaning. An evolution of the place is also mapped to understand the changing dynamics of site in terms of function and interpretations. An intensive photographic documentation of the shrines was also undertaken to record the present physical state.

In providing a contextual overview of the region within which a memory site is located, connected to the geographical and historical context, maps present an important medium of communicating information, facilitating "a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes, or events in the human world" (Harley & Woodward, 1987: xvi).[9]

Photography

In this research, photographs are a main tactic used for giving visual detail and presenting a physical and social environment. They are used to record the built structures on site as well

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[9] http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/viewArticle/1480/2983

as recording the activities taking place and the people at the shrine. The images are aimed to add visual evidence and context to the descriptive narrative. They will add to the depth of explanation making the narrative comprehensive and holistic.

Interviews

The use of qualitative research methods ranges from narratives, interviews of the community, to focus groups and interviews, to community involvement and analyses of experts to elicit cultural values more effectively. Interviewing is used for gathering data, apart from participant and non-participant observation. With a view that in such a study, research methods do not dictate the results of the study, an open ended, semi structured approach to interviewing is undertaken.

Interviews conducted were of people at the shrine and those who live and work in the city presenting a broad scope to understand the context of the survival of this heritage. The ongoing social processes at work that manage and maintain the living heritage are analyzed. These add different perspectives to the usage and significance of the shrine for the city. The qualitative social survey was carried out to understand the reasons for people visiting the shrine, for people to live in the city, major values that are assigned to the shrine by the different groups. The educated youth in the town along with various social organizations working present another opinion of the development aspirations in the town.

Social research methods in particular expert interviews of the various individuals and groups who are strongly linked with the various activities at the site, the users and the management were undertaken. Interviews are best conducted in the local language. It allows interviewees to articulate things better. At the chosen case site, Sindhi is most commonly spoken. People also speak in the Urdu language. A local person from the town was used as aid and informer. He helped in identifying key persons in town and accompanied alongside in case of requiring translation in some cases[10]. Expert interviews of key representatives of social groups were recorded and transcribed, while shorter interviews of visitors (more in number) were jotted down as rough notes and later converted to transcriptions.

A network of informants from within the town of the case site was set up to give a locally enriched record of their history, their culture, and the significance and meaning of the important physical landmarks. To get a multi-sided perspective from the different active groups in town, it was aimed to conduct interviews with residents belonging to a broader range of professions and activities in town. This included representatives of various non-government organizations doing social work, active individuals and the educated youth of the city. It was intended to gather different perspectives relating to the role of the shrine in the

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[10] Sindhi is not my main language. I understand some basic Sindhi, local body language in communication, traditions and customs linked to semi-urban rural populace. An aid was helpful in some of the interviews. However, during the course of the fieldwork, it was found that most people spoke Urdu language easily and fluently. Hence, except for about two to three cases where interviews were conducted in Sindhi, most were done in Urdu.

city, activities, aspirations and the challenges that the people and the town face, with the aim to gauge the role of the *mazar*[11] in this.

The above methodology was used to study the particular case. Interviews with bureaucrats, government officials within the fields of planning for the town of Bhitshah over the past decades and those promoting culture and tourism helped to get a sense of the general perspective of the 'heritage' within Bhitshah, shrines in general and linked urban development.

Newspapers, research articles, archival resources, official documents and reports have been other sources of data collection.

Triangulation

When using multiple methods of research, triangulation is a useful tool. Different tactics used are compared, to verify or create the argument, for instance tallying the literature sources with the field observations. One source of data may be used to explain another, to point at paradoxes and to produce a more accurate analysis than one would get by just using one or two. It is an analytical tool. Each research method comes with its particular strengths and weaknesses. Integrating multiple methods from diverse traditions in one study can combine strengths and neutralize weaknesses. 'In general, researchers advocate triangulation to address issues of research validity and /or objectivity' (Groat and Wang, 2002). More importantly, it provides a way to engage with the complex, contingent nature of the built environment (Fielding and Fielding 1986: Moran-Ellis et al., 2006). Apart from an intensive literature review, the spatial analysis of the shrine and its context is used as a primary tool or lens through which to understand its relationship with the social and cultural uses, rituals, and activities. Interviews and participant observation of rituals and activities along with photographs together assist in the descriptive analysis of the case.

Sites of living history are more than just physical 'persistences' (Rossi) in settlements, but continue age old rituals and practices that give that living character to the sites for traditional and current linked usages. How do these sites fit within the current milieu? How have they evolved in meaning and concept within their physical and socio-cultural context is a major question for the study, highlighting what can be learnt about the challenges and potentials offered by the sites and their context.

Historical sites that continue to remain active and functional provide a layered experience of its significant time periods. Different social groups, ownership, functions of space and concepts coexist together or parts of it. Elimination of some aspects of the historical experience or parts of it is inevitable. The experience of such a place hence requires a close examination through multiple spaces, literature and people, along with repeated visits to truly understand or logically separate the aspects belonging to different time periods.

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[11] mazar – local word used for a Muslim tomb or shrine

The study at the macro level, looks at the interrelationship between the shrine as a memorial site to the regional and settlement context. Focusing on the patterns and characteristics of various zones in the town, it also looks at the formal and functional relation of site to town. At the micro level, the study looks at the interrelationship of the existing and evolved social structures to the current framework of practicing traditions, continuing historical practices / acts of commemoration in relation to the physical space of the shrine.

This work analyzes the case selected within the socio-political and the cultural context focusing on its relevance to history and commemoration apart from its sacredness which is undeniably an important aspect of the place for most visiting.

The case study of the Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai

Case study research allows the advantage of an indepth study of the embeddedness of the case in its context. 'A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a (contemporary) phenomenon within its real-life context, and specially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 2013). Case study research puts primary focus on a single (or multiple cases) (Groat and Wang, 2002),

- studied in real life contexts
- identifying and explaining causal links
- uses multiple sources of evidence, with one source verifying another in triangulation
- generalizing to theory.

The case study chosen is historic, well known, well covered by literate sources and authentic. It is supported by practice and value through a strong presence of rituals and commemorative events and activities reinforcing the original message of saint for people who seek to understand it. Although there is sanctity attached to the place, however, it is not a place of worship. Multiple activities within along with its multiple interpretations make it intriguing subject of research.

In seeking to understand how heritage is much more than deteriorating historic city centers (in particular reference to big and global cities), isolated monuments and markers of a by-gone era, the case was chosen to understand the layers of meaning associated with a particular site. The research field site of the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai has been selected due to its congruence with the following factors:

- the identification of heritage that is living,
- that reveals historical continuity
- identifiable elements that have allowed the heritage to survive as a living, breathing culture,

- heritage that is popular and deeply respected,
- old and new meanings and interpretations are attached to the cultural heritage

Based on the idea of exploration of 'heritage' as a concept as laid out in the initial sections, the criteria laid out for the selection of case site are listed as follows:

- The most important criterion for case selection was that of a cultural heritage site within the South Asian context (Pakistan) that consisted of active intangible features strongly rooted in tradition. The investigation of the interrelationship between tangible and intangible aspects of heritage made this a prerequisite. A major hypothesis in this was that strong intangible features would entail multi-level associations of the related community and other local people in belief and culture to the place, thereby creating varied levels of ownership. Ownership, personal and community associations are a key to a 'living heritage'.

- The second most important criterion for the selection of case was based on its recognition as a community heritage as well as one that is a part of the history of the larger region. It is therefore more than just a national heritage.

> '…Such studies tend to miss out on the wider context of the buildings and to degenerate into little more than masses of undigested data. Furthermore, modern political boundaries distort medieval realities, erecting artificial barriers between territories that were culturally and often linguistically united, ...' (Hillenbrand 2003: 8)

The reason for this is to prominently identify the reasons for the continuation of traditional practices and the challenges faced in the major political transition periods within the region. This was aimed at allowing an analysis of the transitory interface that constitutes the transition between community and nation as the owners of the heritage. This includes its maintenance and management structures. The overlapping of identities and histories supported by institutions is identified to be a crucial transition in the transformation of 'heritage'.

Sufi shrines and tombs carry religious significance. The practice of the religion of Islam in various parts of the world incorporates within the cultural practices of the people. So closely intertwined is culture and religion that it can be difficult to separate the two. The purpose of this dissertation is to look closely at shrines as an important part of the cultural heritage of the people of Sindh. While seeking proximity with the love of the Divine, this heritage is religious in intent in such a manner that through centuries, it continues to welcome (theoretically for sure and in practice to a major extent) people belonging to other religions like Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs etc.

The cultural living heritage of Sufi shrines in the south of Pakistan is a popular one that continues to live in the daily practices of the local peoples lives. Linked to the shrine, this was at one time part of the golden age of Sufism. The golden age of Sufism (1200 – 1500) in the

Indian subcontinent can be described to be the time before colonization, when the Muslims of India put primary emphasis in their lives and gave considerable attention to the lives of Sufi saints for whom they held enormous affection. Almost every individual who considered himself to be culturally abreast, aligned himself with a particular saint(s). Hence, even today Sufism is closely intertwined with many aspects of the South Asian Muslim community.

The Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai sits in a small town about 300 km away from my resident city major, Karachi. It is selected as a case study on the basis of the criteria listed above. Besides being a religious living heritage, it is also listed as a national heritage. It is acknowledged to be a cultural heritage site and much more than a place for prayer. It is a regional hub of cultural activity. Its popularity is an important factor in determining its selection and thereby links the selection of case to the idea of study of heritage as a 'social and cultural process'.

The Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai falls under this criteria alongside several other shrines in the country. What makes the shrine a living heritage are its various actors and activities at the shrine. The shrine of Shah Latif is unique in its experience because of the association of the age-old music, adapted and developed by the saint himself along with poetry in Sindhi language conveying a message to people near and far. This music is religiously learned with lifelong commitments by fakirs, sung at the shrine about 20 hours in the day, seven days a week. The music along with various rituals, a calendar of events choreographed at the place make it continuously active, changing and an attraction for the local people. For instance the annual anniversary of the saint is celebrated with fervor through the town as well as the region.

Living heritage sites offer a window into living history of the cultural heritage. Often bits of these experiences may seem unconnected and incomprehensible as subsequent layers of history, represent. These include changes that have happened over time and conceptions behind these changes differ as they may come from different sources or social groups and differing intentions. An analysis of these layers can lead to a deeper understanding of the significances attached to a site and how these emotional, socio-cultural and political attachments have changed over time. Together they are experienced within the present.

The research identifies the various ingredients of this living heritage in the case of the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, related cultural processes and sociology (people who are directly involved in different ways). The case of the town of Bhitshah is a good case in point because the settlement was formed by the saint and developed due to the presence of the shrine. The strong interrelationship between the shrine and its political, socio-cultural, physical development processes is an important aspect of the study.

The context of the cases of living heritage governs the survival and evolution of the practices at the site. Hence, the physical and socio-cultural context of a heritage site forms a relation

whose understanding can allow effective planning and management of the heritage <u>and</u> the context.

The case is used to explain the different aspects of the site within its context. This is not to say that all such cases are congruent but there may be several similarities between such cases and their interrelationships with their towns. The town of Bhitshah is a semi-rural context, of an estimated population of no more than 45,000, its scale gives it some advantages in relations between the different aspects of the heritage.

Challenges and opportunities of the research study

Case study research is criticized conventionally for the fact that 'there is no basis for generalizing from one case to other cases'. Yin (2013) however argues that in fact the strength of the case study lies in its capacity to generalize to theory. A single case study research undertaken in depth can become 'the vehicle for examining other cases' in comparison. The theory therefore can be a significant contribution to the discipline.

Single case studies can allow study of issues from the scale of very broad cultural trends to the much smaller scale of side walk interactions for instance. A single case allows one to 'uncover complex dynamics of one setting of interest' than to look less deeply at multiple settings. The challenges of case study research are that the case may open to complexities that were not thought of or incorporated. Causes explained may be multifaceted and complex. Integrating several data sources in a coherent way is yet another challenge. Also according to Groat and Wang (2002), there are fewer established rules and procedures for case study research than for other research designs.

The analysis can be looked at as a model that can be used or tested for other living heritage sites and / or sufi shrines.

The research study undertaken involves multiple topics and is seemingly complex. The case study research allows the researcher to look at the various aspects of the heritage site in substantial amount of detail. Given this and the task undertaken, the horizon of theoretical works mentioned is broad and may seem superficially applied in places. As an architect and an urban researcher keenly interested in historic environments, the study looks toward multiple ways of analyzing the shrine as a place, at different scales and the spatial relation of the place to the various socio-political, anthropological aspects of study. Simultaneously, in this measure, the study can also be looked at as formulating a creative research framework and connecting various western theoretical arguments in relation to an eastern (South Asian) context. This framework can be used as a model as well. The context is one where there is a dearth of research inputs and the study is therefore an opportunity to make a valuable research contribution.

Research outcomes

This research work will contribute to heritage studies. It is expected that the study of living heritage sites within the South Asian context can lead to a better understanding of 'heritage' from a broader academic viewpoint, and one that the local people relate to. The social and cultural parameters of a site of living heritage are in evolution, affected by the world and affecting the context in turn. A better elaboration of this concept is expected, in physical and social terms.

Although this is challenging but the study is expected to articulate an interweaving of the multiple aspects that constitute and sustain a living heritage site. Identification of these aspects and their interrelation are expected to be the major deductions from analyses. The research will also create a context for generating considerations for the planning of historic contexts within cases of living heritage.

The physical and social components of heritage are multi-scaled and interlinked. Planning of historic contexts and heritage studies are interdisciplinary and the identification of interrelations between the heritage components within the limitations of one case site are expected to be analytical contributions to the disciplines particularly of the context.

The analysis of the sufi shrine as a building type, including particularly articulation of the interrelations of its functions and charting its evolution within the political context is expected to be another main outcome of the research study. Maps of the shrine and its context are also a major result of this study and significant contribution to knowledge.

1   ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Having introduced and outlined the subject of research, the research framework, objectives and methodology, the next step is to lay out the analytical framework. What are the salient analytical aspects? Defining important terms, this chapter is organized and structured to propose a framework under which the analysis of the case can be done, in order to achieve the stated objectives of research. It starts off with the general, moving on to the particular case site.

1.1   Introduction

Heritage is historically produced, structured 'pattern of meanings embodied in symbols' (Geertz, 1989: 89). Heritage sites have been referred to as 'the object of a social construction', as meaning-bearer for a society. The context within which the heritage lies becomes an interactive background against which it becomes 'alive' and its representations attach meanings. The relationship between this context and the heritage is an important one that requires close examination and analysis to understand the interlacing of symbols and meaning to place and context.

As a component of culture, heritage is a form of cultural expression. A semiotic approach to culture can '. . . aid us in gaining access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them' (Geertz, 1973).

The process of understanding cultural heritage as a meaning-bearer is embedded in semiology, the study of signs as the object of social construction. Dissecting the language that constitutes heritage offers a semiological analysis. The context within which the heritage lies, lives and continues on forms an interactive background for it. Over time, successive articulations create layers of meaning superimposed on one another. Disentangling these layers can only give the full understanding of the meaning manifested or as Corboz (2009)

and Dormaels (2013) put it, it allows one to get at the 'full "thickness" of heritage meaning' (Albert, 2013). These layers are formed and articulated over time. Their disentangling is an analytical strategy that can give a full understanding of the meaning manifested.

Heritage can be broken down into components and articulation / analysis of their relation to place and context presents its complete picture of meanings and associations. As 'self-contained, self-regulating and self-transformative', it is a structuralist approach (Piaget: Groat and Wang, 2002). Each heritage site presents a case particular only to itself. A structuralist research approach is based on the understanding of the system, where things operate 'through a coherent set of rules that make reference to nothing outside the system'. The relation between the various entities is significant and what the meaning rests on, rather than the entities themselves.

The construction and transmission of meaning (Danesi and Perron, 1999:17) within a heritage site can give a holistic understanding of it. Its process and the product are interrelated and together make the meaning. "Place and story, object and performance combine to create an overall texture which frames the meaning of heritage" (Rudolff, 2006).

The research analysis starts with a larger overview of the wider interrelations between the various contextual elements, the specific historical, ideological, political and economic processes providing a backdrop to the physical (Lefebvre, 1991). Within a larger cultural sphere and social context, material heritage needs to be situated.

The study of the larger context includes laying out the overview of the socio-cultural processes, attaching meanings, values and uses to the physical heritage. The production of the place takes place through a combination of the historical, ideological, political and economic processes (Lefebvre, 1991). The tangible heritage is an expression of the larger sphere of the socio-cultural processes. This interrelationship is important given the living nature of the heritage, its historical continuity showing that the meanings and values attached are not as yet dead, but continue to survive within the context. A historical geographical background of the region focusing only on the essential aspects of the processes gives the setting for the production and construction of meaning attached to place. Built heritage may stand as signifier to cultural movements, political actions, heroic endeavours in relation to the geographical history of a place. Multiple aspects of the context including spatial, geographical, historical and socio-cultural are engaged with the tangible and intangibility of the heritage at different scales.

Similarly, the settlement space within which the 'place' is located, constructs its relationship with it physically, morphologically and through its use by inhabitants and visitors. The analysis of meaning in settlement space cannot be divorced from the larger society within which the place is located (Lefebvre, 1991; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1974). The settlement itself can be read as a language created through the built environment and read by its inhabitants through use

and cognitive imaging. It is an expression of a host culture, and hence heritage 'cannot be understood without understanding its people' (Inaba: Stovel et al., 2005).

The historical background and later the addition of meaningful rituals and associations that develop with it constitute the layers of meanings superimposed over time of the living heritage. The main threat to all heritage expressions is their semiological degradation. Mohammad Arkoun (1990) points toward the need to understand the meaning within the heritage as an expression that gets degraded even as it is physically restored at times. In his article on 'The meaning of cultural conservation in Muslim societies' (1990) he urges for the need to make semiological assessments of heritage before intervention.

Case studies on traditional local cultures have been described by anthropologists as striking examples of the semiotic aspects of heritage found in their contexts. Indigenous people who preserve their heritage are called custodians. 'Custodians can either be persons who look after objects and places, or individuals who tell the stories and perform the ceremonies linked to them' (Rudolff, 2006). Living heritage sites tend to be supported by traditional custodians who have received the legacy of preservation of the culture through a structured manner.

This chapter lays out / identifies the fundamental components of such a heritage and their interrelationships for analysis, with the context itself being such a component as well. The following section breaks down these components showing their association with the tangible and intangible properties of heritage.

1.2 The Interrelation between the tangible and the intangible components of a living heritage

The table below shows the analytical framework developed for this research. Cultural heritage, an accumulation of various tangible and intangible aspects embodies the expression and values of a society that give meaning to life. Tangible heritage is taken to be the spatial representation of culture, while intangible heritage, its behavioural representation (Bouchenaki, 2003a). The 'symbiotic' relationship between the tangible and the intangible within the given case is described and explored. Taking intangible heritage as the larger framework within which the tangible heritage takes shape, this work starts with a focus on the contextual parameters as listed, consisting of the processes and the practices that the tangible is an expression of. The meanings, uses and values attached to place are part of the larger sphere of socio-cultural processes.

		TANGIBLE	INTANGIBLE
LIVING HERITAGE	**MACRO (CONTEXT)**	Region Settlement	History Representation and Identity of a people
	MICRO (CONTENT)	Shrine Architecture Space Use	Symbolism Collective Memory – Rituals Society / Community Structure and Responsibility Poetry & Performance

A living heritage is strongly connected to its context. Given the importance of this connection, my research is divided into macro and micro scales, the macro providing the larger context and the micro the details of the place of historic importance along with its relation to town as the immediate context.

Within the two scales, the tangible and intangible aspects are interwoven to bring together the living heritage. The table above is put together for the purpose of this research by myself and summarises the analytical framework. The historical context plays a major role in shaping the place. The first level of analysis begins at the regional scale where the attached symbolism to the place is formed and make their references to.

Paradigmatic changes in political systems, governance and administrative machinery often mark crucial points in the history of rooted socio-cultural sites (Kostof, 1991). They are conflicting points or rather negotiations in history, where larger societal changes 'negotiate' with traditional values. The 'give and take' that happens within the society that is taking on new values and giving up of what may be considered old and outdated, is the 'negotiation'.

Societies that are least affected by political changes taking place within a larger region become 'isolated bubbles' or 'islands' within. These islands are physical areas where life continues as it was. The history of the region of Sindh provides an example for such a case with many heritage sites continuing traditional living patterns surrounded by strong socio-cultural relations to historic built environments. A geographical network of similar sites over a larger region validate their significance.

Networks such as these that are historically rooted, and validate cultural norms, with tradition prescribed rules, affirm history, and the movements that they are representative of. The people associated with such a network take on special importance in history and in the lives

of people today. In this case, it is a network of tombs of Sufi saints and their followers, lying within the wider South Asia or the Indian subcontinent. The time period to which they belong varies from the 9th / 10th century upto the 18th century (Gulrajani, 1924; Rizvi, 1978). Yet together they provide a narrative of inspirations, religious and cultural practices and following.

The relation of a physical site within the wider historical geographical setting can reveal much about its contextual relationship. The regional geographical analysis will give a sense of the outreach areas of the heritage in concept and physicality. This is also important as it cuts across the nation boundaries of today to include the larger region once under influence with respect to the history of place. The next chapter on the regional context of Sindh highlights the presence of similar sites through the larger geographical region and the historical relevance. Sufi shrines are mostly formed / initially constructed on the periphery of cities or in isolated areas, away from settlement. Over time settlements have grown around them. The historical context of the region within which the selected heritage site was created and achieved its prime provides a background ideology and relevance of the case.

The reason for the selection of the case site of Sufi shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai has been a) the role that shrines have consistently played in the social and cultural milieu through centuries in the region; b) the association of local cultural features like syncretism, pluralism, performances and poetry, and various cultural elements linked to shrines.

A historical narrative of the philosophical context of the heritage using references situates the significance of the site in history within the geographical context of the region. Political changes, and other interventions that led to changes are identified, highlighting their impact on the heritage and its meaning-making processes.

The research situates the material heritage within the larger socio-political contexts. The interrelation between the context and the content of the heritage are an integral subject of study. A chronological political evolution is marked showing the phases in history that led to major changes in systems (administrative and political) causing a transformation of the heritage use and perception.

The content of the heritage comprises of the physical site, the settlement and community within which it exists and continues to thrive as well as the rituals performed that create the structure within which this continuation is allowed (Connerton, 1989). The settlement surrounding the heritage site has a direct and historical relationship with it. This is physical as well as socio-cultural.

The analysis of the living heritage is divided into three parts.

1) The multiple roles / functions that the site has played over the past three centuries of its existence, including its original use;

2) The relation of the place to its immediate settlement context. The evolution of the town in relation to the place is charted, highlighting the political and ideological reasons to the morphological and demographic changes. Shrine, community and the town are the three major elements whose interrelation is the major focus here.

3) The major rituals performed by the community supporting the 'living heritage' and their interrelation.

The shrine as a place and a spatial element remains a main subject accentuated in its significances attached through the analysis. Rituals, community and the shrine are the main elements of analysis in this. The morphological, functional and community relations between the settlement and the shrine are analytical aspects for studying the interrelationship between the heritage and its physical and socio-cultural context. The case of Bhitshah offers one perspective in this viewpoint. Other cases of settlements and shrine and their historical and morphological relations would offer other perspectives, that may be similar and whose comparison can lead to intriguing inferences.

The different interrelationships to place identified are aimed to highlight the significance and relevance of the case, the construction, production, transmission and manifestation of meaning and the value of the heritage itself.

1.3   The Context: Cultural Geography

'The history of the city is always inseparable from its geography; without both we cannot understand the architecture that is the physical sign of this 'human thing'. (Rossi 1982: 97)

History with its major political phases of evolution is intimately tied with geographical and socio-cultural changes to places and societies. The context within which heritage is formed; values attributed and sustained over time can be understood best by drawing upon the historical references associated.

Sites of memory preserve particular historical moment(s), a turning point where a sense of historical continuity persists. In differentiating between history and memory, the context is provided usually by history, a reference to a larger geographical and periodic evolution within which sites of memory exist. These sites of memory present a greater richness to the past and the present of a particular community or social group.

The shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, the chosen case study, situated in Sindh province of Pakistan, is held highly for its regional cultural values and associations, similar to several other shrines in the region.

1.3.1 Nodes in a wider network

Religious buildings including shrines and public places related to important figures and events are part of a sacred topography, forming a web of sacred / similar places that are framed by

'the creation of continuity' through acts of remembrance (Bennett 1994; Desplat and Schulz, 2014; Schimmel, 1976). Sacred topographies are structured around communities. A look at the theoretical inklings of place draws focus on their significance in part due to their relevance to remembrance, to commemoration, their association with 'an identity'.

Agnew (2011) identifies two ways to analyze 'place'. One is a 'phenomenological, concrete environmental analysis looking at the mediating role of the environment on the physical, social and economic processes and thus affect how processes operate'. The other is 'an abstract spatial analysis, which is geometric in nature, referring to nodes in space and networks'. While the descriptions of heritage as a place put greater focus on the phenomenological analysis in the thesis, the extrapolation of place as 'nodes' is a direction for further study. A wider network of similar nodes plays a significant role in the reinforcement of the values attached and can be a subject of another study. The case study research becomes more relevant given such a nodal structure in the region.

> "Muslim sacred places constitute spatial nodes in a wider network of religious, socio-political, cultural or economic flows in which different ideas, claims and interests intersect and sometimes converge" (Desplat and Schulz, 2014: 10).

Sacred topographies are however not restricted to Muslim communities only but extend similarly for other religious communities as well. The sacred topography of Sindh is unique as it highlights the syncretic cultural history of the region, one in which multiple religions/sects and their practices overlap.

'A place is a mode in a social network,' write (Desplat and Schulz, 2014). They describe sacred places to be sites where social groups come together. At the same time, identity is an important feature attached to place.

> 'Place is not only defined by its inscribed identity, but this identity itself is a process reliant on interactions and movement of people through a wider space.' (Desplat and Schulz, 2014).

Doreen Massey, (1994) articulates places as 'sites on which multiple identities and histories are inscribed'. Sacred places like sufi shrines are also interpreted in different ways by the various social groups visiting them. The opinions of use of sacred places may differ among social groups, as the meaning of 'sacredness' varies with people / groups (Desplat and Schulz, 2014).

Shrines have been associated in different ways by the rulers and the visitors during colonization and then post independence. Governments have related to some sites as representing religion, and / or culture. These associations have brought about an evolution in the role of the shrine within its context. The physical development of the shrines and shrine towns or their physical settlement context have been a consequence of this association.

Apart from the role of the ruling government, the shrine receives multiple audiences whose interrelationships and opinions differ. They converge to shrines for a variety of reasons

through the year, subject to multiple interpretations and significances (Abbasi, 1989; Baloch, 2010; Burton, 1851; Malik, 1998; Rehman, 2009; Rizvi, 1978; Sorley, 1940; Syed, 1996). The subject is also one of investigation at the case site.

1.4   The Content: Place, Settlement and Rituals

1.4.1 The Settlement and its spatial relation to place (morphology / primary element): Framing locality

The physical structure of the city has been a result of the major political phases of development of the town that had an impact on its form. The theoretical framework for the analysis of the town is derived from the works of Spiro Kostof and Aldo Rossi, both looked at the architecture of the city as a derivative of its political, social and economic systems. Kostof (1991) takes on the view of an inclusive method that 'resituates the history of its architecture within the social and cultural discourse' (Çelik et al., 1994). A better knowledge of the cultural context allows us to better able to read and understand the society's built environment. The structure of society in various periods of history adds depth to this understanding (Kostof, 1991). The work of Rossi puts greater emphasis on monumental architecture that creates center points within a city and therefore plays an important role in defining its urban structure / form. He regards them to be persistences or permanences. In his theoretical work on the 'Architecture of the City', Rossi presents an analytical framework to understand the role of historical built forms in the city symbolically and physically. He highlights the characteristics of such an architecture that becomes an essential part of the city, characterizing and structuring it. Primary elements 'participate in the evolution of the city over time in a permanent way' (Rossi). The morphological pattern, whether organic or grid shape is not his focus as in Kostof's work. The landmarks / urban artifacts and their relation to the city's transportation network, and their structural importance within the city is what he articulates theoretically. Patterns of transformation are also derived from the significance of the primary urban artifacts that make the identity of town. The work of Kostof by contrast focuses on the morphological patterns and meanings associated with them. While Kostof's view puts greater focus on the cultural meanings attached to place by its users within a particular spatial context and related history, Rossi focuses on the urban form and the structure of the city in relation to history.

Places of historic and cultural importance form centers or focal points in settlements. Daily activities of the settlement in many ways center around the place. The interrelationship between the settlement and the place is a historical one. Besides the social and communal acts and rituals tied to place, the physical morphology, the form and structure of the town also manifest this relationship to place.

This particular segment of analysis looks at the physical urban form of the settlement, its evolution and characteristics with respect to the living heritage site / place. Places of collective memory form the distinctive character of the city (Boyer, 1994; Halbwachs, 1980; Rossi, 1982). They are what give it its identity, meaning and value. They can be described as urban monuments or primary elements of the city that represent a 'fixed activity of the collective and for the collective', and are identified 'with an event or an architecture that is capable of 'summarizing the city' (p.99). Their permanence / persistence makes them characterizing elements in the city and the community that maintains its association with them is a major participant in allowing this.

The history of the town and the place of heritage are inevitably linked together prompting and engaging the other. Which prompted the building and development of the other, the settlement or the place - is a question that explains much about their interrelation. As a place of social importance in history, it can be understood to be connected to other places within and outside the city to other places that validate and amplify its significance and meaning attached to it. The major historical phases marking the growth of the settlement also mark the developing relationship between the settlement and the historical place. The meaning associated with the place may change and acquire additional or altered definitions.

As societies grow in size, settlements and towns transform. In different time periods, the morphological growth pattern may change as town expands, following a different ideology. The contrast between the different morphological developments within town highlights the prevailing system of place as well as the history of the development of the urban artifact (Rossi).

Other structures built of related symbolic and functional association within or close to the settlement together form a network. Different zones of importance are formed. The settlement can be read as layered based on its historic development. Throughout its different phases of development, what characterizes its evolving urban form with respect to the historic sites? A morphological analysis of the settlement can show the formal relationship of the heritage site to its physical context. How does the heritage site and its architectural layout affect the development of the settlement? What is the role that memory plays in the morphological development of the town?

The contrast between the old towns / city center of cities in South Asia and post colonial development is a common one. While the old towns of South Asian cities have mostly organic layouts, with narrow winding pedestrian lanes, post colonial developments of cities are mostly carried out on modern planning principles. The traditional and the modern developments are two characteristically different approaches to city form and function. Each comes with its own set of opportunities and short comings that the analysis highlights. Differences in modes of

circulation, i.e. vehicular and pedestrian and landuse planning are the major justifications for morphological differences. The city is clearly divided into these two zones. While the old town is experientially dense and crowded, the post colonial development provides plenty of relief spaces. Envisioned as a modern extension to the town, facilitating old centers and place, incorporating expansion of settlement and space and adding new facilities and amenities, the post colonial development of town uses a rationale for its development centering around the place and its significance as interpreted. The following section elaborates this.

Collective Memory

The collective memory participates in the transformation of settlements, towns and cities, memory becoming the guiding thread of the entire complex urban structure" (Rossi). The settlement forms the context of the place, its urban form and function are interrelated, one impacting the other. The community and later the state relate to the place and the town, reinterpreting the collective memory within the global development frameworks.

The theory of primary elements is valid for this analysis because it is about the relationship of the urban monument to the town itself. The urban monument possesses a value of its own, as well as a value that is dependent on its place in the town. They are generators of the form of the city / settlement, with a direct interrelation between its architecture and the town. The primary element takes on additional functions over time, differing from what it was designed for (Rossi 1982).

Rossi distinguishes between monuments and primary elements, with monuments being fixed points in the urban dynamic with strong footing, while primary elements are not as strong and have a fluid blending characteristic. They are well intertwined with social patterns of living of a place despite their historic reference compared to monuments that are isolated markers of a past society. Their intrinsic value and their particular historic situation relates to the history and the life of the city (Rossi 1982: 95).

Primary elements play an effective role in the dynamic of the town / city with respect to their placement. The way they are ordered gives them their individuality, creating its architecture, defined by its uniqueness, its precise function and its placement within town (Rossi, 1982). The function it plays in the city due to its location and connectivity to other urban elements creates this order and articulates its 'architecture' within the complex structure of the town. There is always a close connection between primary elements and the area; "often this connection becomes an urban artifact so absolutely predominant that it constitutes a characteristic of the city, for the city is invariably the sum of its artifacts" (Rossi, 1982: 95). Rossi stresses on the uniqueness of the interrelationship between the primary elements and the major land uses around it.

The relationship between the place and the town creates the immediate context within which the heritage site situates itself and the two are interrelated culturally and physically. What are

the various elements of this interrelation within the case? The analysis is done of multiple levels including the form or morphological relations as well as the function, its use by the people. Identifying the interrelation between the settlement and the place is the main objective of this analytical segment.

Living heritage sites are most often than not associated with rituals, commemorative in nature. These rituals are rich in their content and are attached to a narrative of immense significance to the place and the people associated with it. They too are a component of living heritage (table 1). The following section presents a framework to evaluate the relation of rituals to place and the people.

1.4.2 The function of the place / the roles it has played through its history

A living heritage site is a place. Tuan (1989) speaks of 'place' as a location (from locality) to which is attached a strong sense of cultural rootedness. A locality refers to the linkage of a geographical location to a community / a group of people. It is when 'people come to identify themselves with a particular locality'. Humanist geographers relate to the concept of 'place' as being best understood as the locus of meaning. Place is a *space that holds meaning* (Zeisel, 2006). Meaningful spaces or places that are culturally important are called elaborative semantic places. A place with semantic meaning, describes Zeisel may be a well known vacation spot. An elaborative semantic place is one that is firmly embedded in a personally meaningful context. "The homes we live in and those we grew up in evoke elaborative semantic memories, as do spiritual buildings such as synagogues, mosques and churches. Semantic and elaborative semantic spaces are types of places that hold the most meaning for users, places with deeper meaning for particular cultures, and what particular elements of those places inspire deep meaning in users" (Kagan 1997: Zeisel 2006). Sufi shrines as living heritage are thence also identified as elaborative semantic places.

Agnew (2011) offers a comparison between space and place that makes the definition of place clear. She refers to space as 'a location somewhere' and place to be 'the occupation of that location…Space is about having an address and place is about living at that address' (p. 82). Places are embodiments of meaning and locations of cultural memory (Tuan, 1974).

Tuan (1974) for example, uses the term *topophilia*, love of place, and explains the perception and emotional ties people have with their environmental surroundings. Places of positive memories are fixed entities of value and belonging as opposed to space which is an arena of action, mobility and movement (Desplat and Schulz). 'Placelessness is a nostalgic assertion that more and more places in the modern world are assumed to lose their meaning through developing the standardized landscapes like motorways, airports.

The concept of 'place' situated within a locality, experiential and individualistic, can allow a detailed analysis of the site of memory in terms of a physical space of socio-cultural value. A 'place' has an identity and is known for particular characteristics, situated within a particular locality. The concept is well developed particularly in the discipline of urban geography. The geographical location of a place makes it characteristically what it is, as well as a site of cultural memory within a social network.

> 'Places are socially constituted through practices, … and material manifestations, and they simultaneously structure action and social life. … A place is at once a performative act and a structuring order. They are a medium through which social life is affected.' (Thomas Gieryn 2000:468)

Community, cultural and interpersonal relationships occur at 'places'. These add meaning and value to the place and are what people attach themselves to (Altman and Low, 2012; Casey, 1996; Relph, 1976).

What was the original use of the place and what have been its later uses over the past centuries? The time when the site came to be recognized as a place of commemoration for the community is distinctly clear. How does the architecture of the place respond to this? What is the basic element of commemoration and what are later added to give significance to this? A living heritage site is more than a monument. It is a place, in active use with functions, and rituals linked to its various spaces, each with their own narratives and symbolism attached to it. The social and cultural elements and the physical spatial elements are intertwined to create a commemorative built environment.

Architecture of Place: Elements and Symbolism

The most important element that constitutes place and shapes the architecture is its functional distribution. A place of historic importance is layered. Circles of significance can be determined based on their relative importance. Addition of uses takes place over time. These add to the layers / circles. Thus these circles of significance can be identified on the basis of type of significance attached such as religious, cultural, historic etc., as well as the audiences that they attract. The symbolism attached to different spaces narrates the highlights of the history apart from the beliefs attached.

Layers: Historical Evolution

The historical evolution of the place is a key to understanding the layers that create it. Living heritage sites can appear random and disconnected in experience especially to those who are not familiar with the history of the place. This is because through its process of evolution, there are various elements that have been adapted, modified, distorted, completely altered and some totally eliminated. Together, they form the place in its present form (Smith, 2006). Paradigmatic changes in state and society form time periods in history when these sites undergo a revalidation. The independence / nationalization acted as such a crucial point in history. The analysis can, on this basis, be broadly divided into two categories: Pre-independence, and Post independence. Changes in the social structures and institutions that

are linked to the place for management, from pre-independence to post independence mark crucial points / phases in history. Ruling bodies and / or society reinterpret and reassert their relationship to the sites. This reinterpretation is manifested in the physical evolution of place. The physical evolution of the place when studied in detail, can clearly identify the influential historical periods and political changes of the region. Factors outside of itself <u>and</u> beyond the place also thereby create an impact on it.

1.4.3 The Rituals: Acts of Group Commemoration and Place

Rituals at sites of living heritage are age old performances imbibed with symbolism and meaning of relevance to the place. They are usually traditional and a means of group commemoration. Their relevance to the place is historic, social and cultural. Also they are political in that their order of performances points toward social hierarchies embedded in the community.

Following a formal sequence of physical bodily movement and stillness, rhythmic recitation, statement and action, they generate a sense of order and continuity reinforced by periodic repetition. They are described as 'formalized, rule bound, structured and repetitive activity of a symbolic character restricted to specific times and places, focusing the attention of participants and observers on 'objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance' (Lukes 1977:54; Kong and Yeoh 1997: Moore and Whelan 2008: 70-1). The repetitive action of rituals implies continuity with the past. Rituals combine movement and meaning. "Participants must follow a formalized sequence of physical movement and stillness at coordinated times and places. These moments of movement and stillness are full of meaning within the context of the organizing group."

Rituals are another important component of a living heritage. They can be divided into two categories, based on their time of origination. One as that which is as old as the place itself or from before. Second, as that which are relatively recent in their invention.

Their period of origination and invention clearly points to the relation of the historic context to the place. While rituals are acts of symbolic representation, they offer also historic positions where the understanding of the roots of the ritual frames its context (Connerton, 1989). The relevance of the political and socio-cultural context takes significance again highlighting the key relationship.

Secondly, the analysis is framed to answer these questions: Who are the people performing the rituals? What roles do they play in the society in town/ region? Their performance by order signifies their position of authority determining the social hierarchy at the place, and the role that they play in society. According to Boivin (Boivin, 2012; Boivin and Delage, 2013), rituals are a metaphor of society and how it is structured within a settlement or a region, in terms of political and / or religious importance. The social context of rituals gives them meaning. They

cannot be read independently of their context. Maintaining continuity through the performance of the rituals becomes a part of the identity of the group and the space that it occupies.

> "The routinized nature of the participants, their dress, demeanour, movement, the almost liturgical nature of the language employed and the specific times of place and performance combine to set it apart. Yet such constant repetition of these widely recognized patterns makes them an integral part of society's life patterns. (…) A final ambiguity of ritual, …is its combination of rigidity and flexibility. Part of the appeal undoubtedly lies in the constant repetition of formalized acts, generating a sense of order, continuity and legitimacy." (Graham et al., 2000): 71)

A third level of analysis includes the different points within the place where the rituals are performed or that become an active part of the ritual performance. What do they signify and for whom? It is interesting to note the audience for the rituals. For different rituals based on their signification, there is a specific audience. The different rituals mean different things to different people. Graham et al., (2000) write that the collective appreciation of the rituals does not mean that there is a common interpretation of the messages that they transmit. It may mean different things to different groups at the same time. Moreover, "interpretations may alter with time, depending on the socio-economic and political context. It is this combination of constancy of form with flexibility and adaptability of meaning which lies behind its enduring strength and appeal." (p. 71)

A study of the different rituals at an active place of historic importance, the different time periods to which they ascribe to, their relationship to place, time of performance etc. all show the social and cultural process of a living heritage and its relationship to place. Heritage is a process that 'creates and recreates a range of social relations, values and meanings about both the past and the present' (Smith 2006: 42).

It is within this framework that I will analyze the Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, located in Bhitshah in the Sindh province of Pakistan.

Structure of the Case study Research Analysis

After presenting the research framework and the analytical framework, the next four chapters following this chapter, present the analysis of the case site itself.

Chapter 2 looks at the macro level historical and socio-political context. It starts off with an introduction to the role of the shrine in history, with the later sections elaborating on the evolution of sufism and shrines from the preindependence to post independence. The chapter mostly looks at the general historical context within the South Asian region and in Sindh and highlights the impacts of Sufism on culture and community. Changing social orders and administrative paradigms from kingship to colonial rule and nationalism, brought about a change in perception of Sufi saints and shrines due to certain administrative measures.

Chapter 3 zooms into the casestudy of the Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai. It presents what constitutes the larger framework of this heritage, the socio-cultural aspects and the intangible component. It starts off with an introduction to the life of the saint and his person. The alient features of the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, considered to be significant regional literature is presented to highlight its cultural contribution. The latter part of the chapter presents selected major rituals performed at the shrine, and analyses these performances with respect to their location within the shrine along with the positioning of its main participants. The participants and organizers of the rituals are an important part of the traditional social heirarchy. The analysis also describes the nature of the relationship between the traditional social structure and the modern institutions.

Chapter 4 then gets into the immediate physical context of the shrine, that is the town of Bhitshah, describing its evolution with respect to the shrine and the historical interaction between the two, inspirations and influences. The morphology of the town and the process of community building is also tied to this evolution process. The living heritage of the sufi shrine plays an integral role as part of the traditional nodes and networks within town. Lastly, the chapter presents comparative shrine studies where the urban / physical development of the settlement context has brought about significant changes in the relationship between the shrine and settlement, taking away an important connection to / element of this living heritage.

Chapter 5 finally delves into an architectural functional analysis of the shrine, looking at the sacred and non-sacred spatial elements. The chapter presents an evolution of the shrine from the saint's institution to the town centric role it plays today. Interviews conducted at the shrine supported with the observations on the functional use of spaces in and around the shrine structure this analysis.

Maps are used as an important medium of analysis in chapters 4 and 5, and to show within a concise diagram, the different segments of spatial use.

The concluding chapter sums up the analysis and the lessons learnt thereafter.

2 MACRO LEVEL: THE LARGER CONTEXT

Having laid out the analytical framework of the research study, this chapter begins the contextual overview for the case study of sufi shrines in the Indian subcontinent. This chapter gives a socio-political evolution of the regional context, identifying the various factors playing an essential role in this evolution and defining important terms used in the study. The geographical positioning of the region of Sindh has been unique as a link between Central Asia and Arabia and the Indian subcontinent, harbouring a life line connection of old and new cities with the river Indus. The built heritage of the region is emblematic of the important events in history marking cultural movements and political conditions that allowed it (Hosagrahar, 2005; Kostof, 1991, 1985, Kusno, 2010, 2000). The Sufi heritage also signifies its relation to the past.

This chapter provides a contextual overview including the historical, geographical and cultural features that have made it unique to sustain the living heritage of Sufi shrines. It gives a background to the formation and evolution of this cultural heritage. The major phases of history when significant changes took place in the political governance systems can be broken down into the pre-colonial, colonial and post independence periods. A literature review forms the basis of the analysis in this chapter. Maps provide a graphic articulation of the geographical position of the region through these significant periods of history.

2.1 Introduction: The role of the shrine in history

The cultural heritage of the sufi shrine lies at the injunction of a local/ community religious and cultural center and a national symbolic feature for defining religion and culture for Pakistan. On the one hand, this cultural heritage has acted historically as a local religious center and traditionally as a commemorative community center (Jalal, 2001; Kozlowski, 1985). On the other hand, it has acted as an important tool for the nation state of Pakistan to define religion

for its citizens (Gilmartin, 2014; Malik, 1996; Shahzad, 2014). This has considerably altered the hierarchical significance of sufi shrines within their own network.

In the pre-colonial traditional milieu, Sufi shrines acted as local religious centers. Saints travelled and settled at particular geographical locations, integrated with the society and adapted the cultural traits to convey messages of peace, harmony and a monotheistic Divinity. They were religious figures, associated with narratives of contemplative reflections to society, ideas of social justice, meditative practices, to acquire closeness to God, for the love of God. The various shrines belonging to the different sufi orders[12] are spread through the Indian subcontinent in such a way that they acted as a network of religious, cultural and educational institutions. The reference to the spread of Islamic institutions within the region of Central and South Asia as a network has also allowed Islam to be commonly referred to as 'a networked civilization' (Gilmartin, 2014).

A later section gives more detail about Sufism and its relation to local culture. Sufi shrines displayed syncretic cultural behavior[13] particularly in Sindh as explained later. This was culturally specific. Popular adaptation of tradition and rituals between various religious practices was also a way of establishing harmony amongst the social groups. Besides Sindh, Anatolian case studies also show shared influences (Wolper, 2003).

The network of Sufi shrines through the region was spiritually active particularly before colonization. Historians elaborate on the significance of traditional structures of religion as intellectual and moral centers at this time (Gilmartin, 2014; Jalal, 2001; Nizami, 1997; Trimingham, 1998). Education, culture and religion were linked together with the organizational structure of the shrine in many cases. Some acted as centers of general education as well apart from spiritual. Kozlowski (1985) gives the example of a shrine in India that funded a school of 200 students from the charity proceeds and donations it collected. This school was an important one for the rural populace and followed a curriculum that taught important academic contributions of the Muslim world.

In 1799, the British took over large parts of the Indian subcontinent. The region of Sindh was annexed in 1846. After colonization, the shrine's significance was altered. The Muslim Empire was declining in the different parts of the world. The change in Empire was also one of transition in cultural understanding. The European colonialists looked at religion as outdated tradition. Colonization therefore came together with 'the western ideas of modernity'. The following were some of the significant changes enforced by the British that had major effects on the shrine culture.

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[12] While there are many sufi orders, the main sufi orders in South Asia can be listed to be four. Suharwardi order, Chishti order, Naqshbandi order and Qadiri order. Belonging to a sufi order is not the same as an ideological commitment to a political party. It is dependant on the sufi saint or fakir who one follows and the practices undertaken to become a sufi (Ernst, 2004; Trimingham, 1998).

[13] Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism all practiced mystic culture and specifically in Sindh they related to and influence one another. Later Islam, through Sufi mystic culture combined or adapted local practices. A later section elaborates on syncretism.

1. The genealogical descendants of saints were enrolled into education institutions following British developed curriculums.

2. Statistical social surveys and population classification categorized them as landlords. This gave them political position in the government administration and Muslim political party communication. This was a divergence from the spiritual roles. During the development of the Pakistan Independence Movements, this network played an important role in gathering support for a Muslim nationhood based on the saint's descendants followers in the rural areas.

3. The network of local religious centers was broken due to the new administrative measures taken. The saints' descendants today are families with western education mostly from universities abroad and play a customary role in carrying out traditional rituals at shrines.

These measures steered the saint's families away from their spiritual legacies, connecting them to the worldly capitalist mannerisms acquired through the improvised / westernized education curriculums (Bose and Jalal, 2004).

In 1947, the nation state of Pakistan was formed in the name of Islam, with the intention to be a state defined under Islamic principles. The struggle for independence from the British government had been much about the need for restoration of traditional organizations and freedom to practice Muslim culture. However, the presence of the British for more than 100 years in Sindh[14] had moulded the new generations within the westernized institutional mindsets and ways of managing a 'national' government[15]. Gilmartin defines such contradictions as patterns of cultural tension in the history of the Indian subcontinent where the aspiration / intent and the reality of things do not match.

The cultural heritage of the sufi shrines are recognized to be important in the state's definition of religion. The different Pakistani governments have subsequently defined a significance hierarchy, giving more importance to prominent shrines and none to the others (Iqbal, 2007; Malik, 1996). The syncretic[16] culture of shrines that traditionally brought local communities together irrespective of religion, sect, race and caste is regarded as one not 'always' following the strict precepts of religion. The significance awarded to shrines bears on the definition of 'Islam' that the state conforms to. This has affected the criteria of selection of important shrines and the strategies of conformation that these shrines have undergone to spell out this definition for the urban and rural populations.

Identity is a social construct (Ashworth et al., 2007; Ashworth and Larkham, 1994; Graham and Howard, 2010). Meanings attached to a place of importance by local communities and / or nation are what make the identity association. The Sufi shrines of Sindh / Pakistan are

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[14] In the rest of India, the British stayed for almost 200 years.
[15] Goswami: The political economy of nationhood was the establishment of an international capitalist economy.
[16] Their traditions are a 'conscious blend of elements from distinct religions, making them syncretic' (Ramey, 2007). A process of blending has taken place and the religious boundaries as set by each 'religion' are blurred, creating a syncretic culture.

important historical landmarks, many dating as far back as 1000 CE. Examples include the shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore, dating to 1072 CE, shrine of Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in 1356 CE as prominent ones. There are several sufi shrines that continue to act as community centers, however their numbers have decreased with time. The Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai in Sindh is such a *dargah*[17] where the fakirs of Shah are genealogical descendants of the saint's fakirs. The shrine of Bhitai along with its rituals is representative of their identity and their collective memory. Their collective performance of rituals, as described in chapter 3 as well as the common use of the shrine as a place of gathering for the fakirs keeps them together as a community.

The cultural heritage of sufi shrines has been interpreted differently at different times. "Heritage is capable of being interpreted differently within any one culture at any one time, as well as between cultures and through time" (Graham, 2002). The precolonial traditional and the national interpretations of the shrine cultural heritage are varied. Changes in the political context, from the colonial and the post independence time periods particularly among other aspects has evolved the interpretations. The following sections unfold the contextual political, social, economic and cultural parameters that led to these changes. The table below summarizes the contextual differences at a macro level, which the following sections elaborate.

Political Regime	Economy	Social	Cultural
Kingdoms	Largely agricultural	Heirarchical, religious structure and organization of society	Syncretic culture in Sindh including sufi culture; influenced by a hierarchical social structure
Colonial 1799-1947	Capitalist economy; Trade and agricultural	Modern Administration, scientifically classified, foundation of 'nation' laid	Patterns of cultural tensions between colonial 'modern' culture and indigenous culture
Post independence 1947 onwards	Agricultural; Manufacturing; Trade and Services	Combination of the two systems, largely dominated by the modern system established during colonial rule officially	Urban and rural cultural distinctions increase as western modern influences accentuate in the urban areas

Table 2.1: Summarizing the macro contextual aspects: political, economy, social and cultural

The context is an interactive background within which the heritage lives and evolves (Albert, 2013; Dormaels, 2013). Despite the syncretic character and local influences in the cultural heritage of sufi shrines, they are essentially representations of a regional Muslim history.

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[17] *dargah*: The popular sufi shrine is usually referred to be a *dargah* after the death of the saint.

Hence, the description of the historical context bends in its narrative toward the Muslim history and civilization within the Indian subcontinent.

After an introduction into the subject at hand, the following section presents details and perspectives on the historical context.

2.2 Civilizational Imaginings and contradictory patterns constructing identity of the Muslim nation and community – Precolonial, Colonial and Nation formation

The historical context of sufi shrines as described in this section shifts between the larger geographical Indian and the regional context of Sindh. Sufism traversed through the Central and South Asia with sufi saints as the main medium of knowledge that travelled from one part to another. The various geographical regions acquired their own character through this interaction. After the 11th century, Sufism was a major trend in Islam (Ahmed, 2015). The following section outlines the Sufic cultural characteristics of the Sindh region, traditionally referred to as the region of the Indus River Valley, acquired through this sufic interaction.

2.2.1 Pre Colonial (Before 1790)

Mysticism and related cultural values – Syncretism

The Indian subcontinent has a history of being a maelstrom of various religions and cultures. The region of Sindh in particular has been geographically positioned at the cross roads of culture. Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism and Islam have all been in Sindh in the stated order. The region is known for its mystic values and for what is described as 'cultural syncretism' (Boivin and Cook, 2011; Burton, 1851; Syed, 1996; Verkaaik, 2004). Particularly values of peace and love for humanity have been reinforced through the time periods and has formed a single culture that is unique to Sindh itself. Orthodoxy in religion has historically been non-existent in Sindh (Gulrajani, 1924). An open attitude toward intermingling of communities and their religious practices has therefore particularly defined the region's culture.

This section elaborates on the syncretic culture prevalent in Sindh as an important characteristic associated with the region's cultural history. Prominent and varied references are used for this, which belong to different time periods, including British historian Richard Burton (1851), Hindu writer Gulrajani (1924), Muslim politician from 1950s Ghulam Murtaza Syed, German orientalist and scholar Annemarie Schimmel (1975;1976) and Michel Boivin, a French anthropologist focusing research on Sufi shrines. This section outlines the relation of Sufism to culture. The concept of 'Sufism' is defined briefly according to its relevance.

Sindhis assert that ancient religious scriptures including Rig Veda (Sanskrit), Mahabharta (Hindi, Hindu legends), Upanshud have preached values of peace and love of humanity. My

interview with Dr. Tehmina Mufti[18] was particularly revealing of how these values are tied to the personal lives of the Sindhi people.

> "We have been taught by our grandparents to not hurt even an ant.... Buddhism, Jainism preach this too. The Sufi[19] concept of *Wahdat-ul Wajud* about the existence of One and all creation being a reflection or an image of that existence of One God. This matched the values of other religions too. As an example, when the Jain religion came, their people used to move around the streets with broom sticks clearing the street of all insects and life so they would not die as people moved through them in their vehicles.

> Our grandparents insisted for instance that we were not allowed to kill the ants that came out of holes in the walls. We were told to put some salt there so they would go back to their homes and stayed there. This was a way of control, no killing was allowed. Our elders believed in these things that all life is a creation of God and must be treated with care."[20]

Mysticism and later with the addition of Sufism, the various religions of Sindh 'melted into a single unity' (Dr. Daud Pota, Sind Today, 1951:16: Ikram and Spears, 1955). Ramey, (2007) describes syncretism:

> 'Many members of a community effectively participate in a varied group of religious practices and ideas, accepting some aspects of the dominant practices and ideas of their group, combining them with ideas and practices from other groups or traditions'.

Syncretism has been a cultural trait, specific to the Sindh region where people belonging to different religions or sects were influenced by the practices of others and incorporated them. The religious differences of the different groups, therefore were never a cause of strain and only until after independence[21] of Pakistan, was Sindh affected by Indian politics of religion (Hasan, 1979; Jalal, 2001).

Quoting Ghulam Murtaza Syed, a Sindhi nationalist and politician from 1955, *The Case of Sindh:*

> *"*An amalgam of different religions and philosophies took place here... Buddhism was born in India, but it flourished here. When Islam appeared in Sindh, Buddhism was still extant. Islam added a positive element to the teachings of Buddha. Philosophies of Vedanta[22] and the Unity of God (*Wahdat ul Wajud*) first interacted *on* each other in this land. [This] influenced the thinking of the Hindus, reducing their interest in idolatry ... religious or sectarian prejudices,

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[18] Dr. Tehmina Mufti is Professor of Sindhi literature at Sindh University. The interview was conducted in January 2016.

[19] The work of Ibn Arabi and Rumi created the initial framework of Sufism. Their ideas are the pillars of the numerous schools of Sufism. The poetry of Rumi in the Persian language, the Masnavi is famous for laying the foundations of Sufism. Within the Indian subcontinent, the oldest treatise of Sufism written in Persian was the Kashf al-Mahjub, written by Ali al-Hujwiri in 1911. Popularly known and revered as Data Ganj Bakhsh, his tomb is located in Lahore. Sufism forms a religious and philosophical background for this study. Sufism was a form of Islamic expression and its spread in Sindh pervaded the local culture (Boivin 2011).

[20] Interview: Dr. Tehmina Mufti, at her residence in Jamshoro, January 2016

[21] partition, when it received frustrated Muslim migrants from India.

[22] a prominent philosophical school of thought of Hinduism, that is about one God.

caste differences and the impulse for violence are absent in this land as perhaps nowhere else.'

The quote highlights the syncretic culture of Sindh, where Buddhist, Islamic and Hindu philosophies of non-violence and love of humanity came together. The philosophies acted *on* one another, writes the author and came together to form a composite, what is referred to as 'syncretism' in Sindh. The fact that the Sufi saints welcomed people irrespective of their religious and caste associations without prejudice, made them popular culturally and their spaces accessible to all. A deep devotion to the divine that went beyond any particular religious tradition was disseminated in Sufism, thereby incorporating anyone who was attracted to the notion (Ramey, 2007).

> "Sind is free from many pernicious social evils, from which the other parts of India are suffering. Caste is virtually absent in Sind; the Brahmins among the Hindus form but a microscopic portion of its population; and where the priest is not powerful, caste cannot exist." (Gulrajani, 1924)

Sufi assertions such as 'universal charity and love' flowing 'from the source of all goodness' correspond not only with those of Vedantic[23] thought but prove

> "so consistent with man's reason, so useful to his interests…The Sufis responsible for the syncretic practices observed in Sindh are not to be dismissed as heretics, but rather commended for blending (traits of) polytheism with monotheism, religion's 'poetry' with its 'prose'" (Burton 1851: Boivin and Cook, 2011:155).

Burton's remark on the blending of religious values with cultural practices as 'poetry' with 'prose' is evident of his admiration / appreciation of this observation, with religious values referred to as poetry and cultural practices offering the prose (Horta in: Boivin and Cook, 2011:154). It shows the unbiased attitudes that he observed in religious / cultural practice for his time.

After the conquest of Sindh in 1846, British officers soon noticed how Sufism was a major part of the local society and culture. Richard Burton was a British explorer, linguist, ethnologist, and in his observation records (1851) on Sindh, he devotes an entire chapter to 'Sufism in Sindh'. Referring to where the trends of Sufi practices and culture are originating from in Sindh, he writes,

> '… Central Asia held such tenets at a very early period; and the philosophical works of the Hindoos prove that the ancient Indians had made great progress in them'. (p. 199)

And later,

> 'There is certainly a wonderful resemblance between *Tasawwuf* and the Vedantic system; and the modern Indian's opinions concerning the efficacy of *Jog* (penance and abstinence), exactly contain the Sufi ideas of *Riyazat*[24]'.

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[23] Hindu ancient scriptures
[24] spiritual practices including abstinence and meditation

Sindhi scholars explain the Sufi culture of Sindh to be a result of the 'confluence of Sufi *wahdat al-wujud* and the Hindu scripture of Vedanta'. *Wahdatul wajud* is defined as the unity of existence by the scholar Ibn Arabi in the 11th century. It is the Sufi culture of Sindh that forms the foundation on which the regional identity is built (Gulrajani, 1924; Mufti 2011).

Gulrajani (1924) describes the presence of numerous Hindus in Sindh, some being important people in trade and intellect as being 'Sufi by religion'. Ramey (2007) explains,

> 'Some Sufis … rejected the limitation of Sufism to one religion, seeing it as a universal spiritual practice.'

Later, he also writes,

> 'While some contest the inclusion of Sufism within Islam, Sufis in India are typically associated with Islam, as the symbols associated with Sufi sites, including adjoining mosques, green flags, and Arabic calligraphy, demonstrate.'

A number of Hindus were devoted disciples of Muslim saints and did not hesitate to compose religious poetry in honour of Muslim saints and even of the prophet of Islam. Sufi saints such as Odero Lal[25], Lal Shahbaz Qalandar[26] and Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai were followed devotionally by both Hindus and Muslims. While this is a particular feature of the cultural landscape of South Asia, in Sindh it is particularly prominent (Burton 1851; Gulrajani 1924).

Apart from the sharing of mystic influences, Sufism has contributed to the region's culture through poetry and literature in particular as the following section explains.

Horta (Boivin and Cook, 2011) analyzes the works of Richard Burton on Sindh highlighting essential conclusions he reached in his writings. Of these, the first is the fact that he acknowledges that the region of Sindh possesses 'a distinct linguistic and literary tradition with its own original rhythms, meters, and peculiar poetic devices … second to no other vernacular tradition on the Indian subcontinent' (p. 157). Shah Abdul Latif is held particularly significant in the culturally syncretic poetic forms he introduced as he engaged with Sufism (Burton 1851: Boivin 2011: 158; Syed 1955).

Secondly, he regards the work of Shah Abdul Latif highly, with its potential as 'a culturally syncretic work to transcend the limitations of regional or national literature… within the canon of Sufi literature alongside 'Ibn Fariz among the Arabs, Hafiz in Persia… and Abdul Rahman among the Afghans' (Burton 1851:202: Horta, Boivin and Cook 2011). These poets are widely respected and known for their poetry and its Sufic content belonging to the regions mentioned as highly cultured form of poetry. Shah Latif's work is also identified with these alongside.

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[25] Odero Lal is a very popular religious figure of the Indian subcontinent, known as Jhuley Lal, Sheikh Tahir, and Nanak Pinto among the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs respectively. The town where he is buried is named after him and lies 100 km to the east of Bhitshah. Within the same compound, is his grave venerated by Muslims and a temple dedicated to him as God, Oderolal.

[26] Lal Shahbaz Qalandar is also a very popular Sufi saint of the region, revered internationally. His shrine is located in Sehwan. He is followed by both Hindus and Muslims.

"The Sufis of Sind are in their practices neither specially Islamic nor Persian, but it contains in its warp and woof the threads of both the Indo-Aryan Sanatana Dharma and Arabian-Persian mystic culture." (Gulrajani, 1924)

This quote comprehensively summarizes this section, in terms of the regional influence and syncretism in Sufi practices in the region.

Sufism and Sindhi culture

Sufism is commonly associated with terms like mysticism, spirituality and Divine love. Schimmel, (1975) defines mysticism as 'Love of the Absolute'. The local term (Persian / Urdu) used for this is '*tasawwuf'*. While Sufism is a term implying a broader multi-dimensional context of theory and practice, the term *tasawwuf* holds a strong religious connotation, of being 'connected with Divinity through abstinence of worldly selfish pleasures, a simplistic life and living for the love of God' (Ansari 1986; Hujwiri, 1911; Abu al-Hassan Nuri).

Alongside its strict theological nature, it is tied strongly also to a cultural way of life, creatively developed for local dissemination and teaching, culturally adapting for the common person to align himself to. Sufi saints employed various mediums of expression to reach the common people, those who wished to understand. Among numerous examples, Farid al-Din Attar (1119-1229 CE) was one of the earliest Sufi poets of Persia. Using poetry, he was able to create an imagery to allow people to relate to the 'divine objective of life' (Shahzad, 2014).

Rumi's major work *Mathnawi-e-Manawi* (Spiritual Couplets) is considered by many to be one of the greatest works of mystical poetry. It comprises fables, scenes from everyday life, Quranic revelations, exegesis and metaphysics. Rumi's poetry is divided into various categories; the quatrains (*rubaiyat*) and odes (*ghazals*) of the *diwan*, the six volumes of the *mathnawi*, the discourses, the letters (Shahzad 2014:22).

Ali Hujwiri from Lahore, known popularly as Data Ganj Bakhsh, wrote a religious treatise (Hujwiri, 1911) elaborating on Sufism and its practice. Lal Shahbaz Qalandar of Sehwan is known for his *dhamaal,* a bodily performance as an act of devotion to God.

Literary works are particularly associated with Sufi forms of expression. If the saints were not poets / writers, poets and writers from 16th – 19th centuries were characteristically connected in some way to a mystical order. "… the whole mystical vocabulary, as developed during centuries, was practically common stock for all members of the society, down to the lowest strata" (Schimmel, 1976). Annemarie Schimmel writes of the first half of the 18th century also being 'amazingly fertile in poetical expressions in all the languages of Muslim India'. Sufi poets were folk poets.

The poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (1689-1752) from Bhitshah, falls no short of recognition. Written in old Sindhi dialect, the average Sindhi citizen attaches immense reverence and calls it an expression of his identity. The verses comprise of the old folk tales of the region, and are expressions of relationship to the divine. The Sufi saints made a prominent mark on the

literary and cultural landscape of Sindh. *Shah jo Risalo*, poetry compilation of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai acquires prominence in this regard in particular. It is regarded as the *Masnavi* of Sindh[27]. Using Sindhi folk tales, it 'expresses the very soul of the Sindhi land and its people' (Schimmel, 1976). The poetry is symbolic in its character at multiple levels.

'*Tasawwuf* may be defined to be the religion of beauty, whose leading principle is that of earthly, the imperfect type of heavenly love.' Burton (1851) gives examples of Sufi saints from different parts of Central Asia, highlighting their characteristics as students of 'different branches of language and metaphysics; gifted with a musical ear, and fearless indulgence in luxuriant imagery and description'. Like Shah Latif, Ibn e Fariz also borrowed ideas for his poetry from the wild hill and desert sands of his native country. He observed that all the Sindhi natives, either Muslims or Hindus, were able to sing abstracts of Shah *jo Risalo*.

Among the best known Sufi poets in Sindh are Shah Latif, Sachal Sarmast, Rohal, Sami, Bedil Bekus, Dalpat and Sadik. Bulleh Shah was a Punjabi poet of the 18th century who uses the rural imagery of his homeland allowing the common people from rural areas to relate to it combining the mystical vocabulary to form its essence. The most obvious impact of Sufism lies in the realm of popular culture. Sufi poets rank among the pioneers in the use of local languages, popular folk idioms, music and the inclusion of metaphorical imagery into devotional compositions, thereby influencing the lives of millions of ordinary men and women (Asani in: Quraeshi, 2010: 13).

Sufism developed in regions of Anatolia (present day Turkey), Khurasan, Persia (present day Iran and Iraq) and later came to Hindustan (Indian subcontinent) (Ernst, 2004; Islam, 2002; Quraeshi, 2010; Shahzad, 2007; Suvorova, 2011; Wolper, 2003). It began to take shape as an institution in the 12th and 13th centuries. Charismatic spiritual leaders called *shaikhs* or *pirs* traveled to different parts of the world, seeking mystic knowledge. Lodging houses or *khanqahs* sprang up along their routes of travel. In their humility and charity orientations, these were open to all travelers, and offered services of lodging, and food popularly known as *langar.* Eventually these *khanqahs* came to be associated with the various Sufi orders[28] (Shahzad 2014: 34).

The Sufi saints were known for travel, i.e. they travelled a lot at a certain phase of their life. Keenly observant, they adapted the cultural traits of the locals to preach, adding to it the knowledge and traits they brought with them (as migrants, through life and travel experiences). The history of Sufism is therefore significant for its contribution to cultural life of common people, and for the universal values it upheld. Generally, the Sufi saint

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[27] Shah jo Risalo, poetry compilation of Shah Latif's poetry is often spoken of as one parallel to Rumi's Masnavi.

[28] The Sufi order is a practical method to guide followers to spiritual development (Shahzad 2014:7; Trimingham 1971). *Chishti, Suharwardi, Qadiri, Firdausi, Qubrawi, Shattari* and the *Naqshbandi are the names of most of the Sufi fraternities.* (Quraeshi 2009:70)

characteristically neither supported cruel autocratic rulers nor the religious clergy. They have been known for radical thinking, fearlessness and challenging conventional thought (Gulrajani, 1924), examples include Shah Inayat of Jhok Sharif[29], Lal Shahbaz Qalandar of Sehwan Sharif among others. The popularity of Sufism was such that without exaggeration, everyone was a *murid* of some *pir.* Even the members of the royal kingdoms were disciples of saints (Islam, 2002). The personal bond to a shaikh promoted values of sectional harmony and interfaith tolerance. *Isar* (sacrifice for others) and *infaq* (giving away in charity) were important Sufi virtues.[30]

Sufi orders were developed out of differing schools of Sufi thought. The golden age of Muslim rule was also the high point for their intellectual development. During this time, as mentioned earlier, religion and education were closely interwoven. Physical sciences went hand in hand with religious education. In the early 19th century, 'the chief centers of learning (that also taught poetry, astronomy, medicine, philology, dialectics and similar subjects) were Thatta, Matiari and Rohri in Sindh, places famous for the residence of *Sayids*[31] and holy men attached to tombs, mosques and shrines' (Akhund, 1991; Sorley, 1940).

> "…the institute of kingship cannot be seen as the real locus of the culture of South Asian Muslims, despite the romantic fascination of its tales of courtly intrigue and power." Carl Ernst

Ernst (Quraeshi, 2010) highlights the relevance of Sufi shrines as a heritage significant for its localness, popularity and cultural significance, where remnants of kingship rule could not be entirely representational of the local culture.

The practice of Sufism was able to provide a basis for social change and for hierarchies to reconfigure and reintegrate in society. For example, 'the son of a poor villager, by associating himself with some Sufi order, could feel at par with the educated and prosperous members of the society and could enjoy the privilege of being friends and companion with them and indeed with the whole Islamic world' (Shahzad, 2014).

The Sufis of Sindh were very versatile and the popularity of the Sufi shrines is apparent in the Sindhi landscape where it is common to find shrines within every few miles. Their versatility of character and manner of engaging with the local people varied as they have been associated with writing of religious treatises, poetry and bodily performances. In the recent past, new research approaches have been devised to study the role played by Sufism in society socially and politically (Boivin, 2012; Khan, 2015; Mokhtar, 2012; Ramey, 2007; Rehman, 2009).

An association of saints with individuals and families passing on the tradition carries on until today. There is a 'sacredness' associated with the tombs of saints apart from their role as

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[29] Sufi saint Shah Inayat of Jhok Sharif (1655-1718) is known to have rebelled against the Mughal kingdom to stand up for the rights of the rural peasant. He is known for his slogan "Jo Kherray so Khaey" in Sindhi that means that the one who ploughs the land has the first right on its yield. He was able to gather up an army and was killed in the fight.

[30] Riaz-ul Islam (2002) in his book, Sufism in South Asia writes in detail about the downside of 'blind faith' in pirs.

[31] Those who claim descendancy from the family of the Prophet Muhammad's.

simply places of commemoration. The tombs of saints by way of physical association are believed to be mediatory spaces between the Divine and the Earthly (Eaton, 1982).

The structure of authority of Sufism before colonization was only that connected through sacred ancestry prominently to 'Islam's exemplary center'. Gilmartin (2014) describes this to be a norm in the construction of community in India in general. Processes and connection networks 'simultaneously constructed both particularistic identities and participation in larger moral communities' (Gilmartin, 2014). It was situated within a particular local geography and connected to local power and life. He articulates the significance of sufi authority due to its 'placement at the intersection of the particular and the universal' (2014: 287; xxxvi).

The various described characteristics of Sufism and its humanizing interrelation with the local culture together made it into what can be termed a local form of modernity or an indigenous modernity, that created a vision of progress and development for the local society. Gilmartin's work, 'Civilization and Modernity' (2014) creates a frame for analysis of 'civilizations'. His research domain focuses particularly on Indic and Islamic civilization in South Asia, that he writes 'shared much with the structure of modernity'. The intellectual foundations of this possibly indigenous form of modernity have been articulated to be based on 'universalistic principles' that give direction for individual behavior as well as community norms. The syncretic culture carried several layers of interpretation and tolerance that allowed various social groups to coexist.

Political history

The precolonial political terrain of South Asia was dominated by kingdom regimes. India was largely ruled by the Mughal Empire after 1526, seated prominently at Delhi. Peripheral regions that did not fall within the central region of governance including Sindh, were either governed by appointed or local governors.

Table 2 is a brief summary of the political history of the region of Sindh over 11 centuries during kingdom regimes. The region was particularly under political turmoil of conquests and defeats after 1540s, that is during the Mughal rule. Constant turmoil and lack of political and administrative stability led to a decrease in its population (Burton, 1851; Lari, 1994). Its peripheral position within the Indian region allowed for little development of its infrastructure and public facilities as compared to other central regions. While changes in rulers became a constant, on ground with the local people, their mannerisms, daily life and customs continued to operate largely independent of this. The Abbasids and Ghaznavids were followed by the Sumras, the Sammas, the Afghans, and the Tarkhans. The Governors of the Mughal Empires[32] were Kalhoras and Talpurs, until Sindh was taken over by the British in 1846. Of these, the Sumras, Sammas and the Kalhoras were local empires that originated from within and were supported by the larger empires in India.

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[32] the Mughal Empires had their centers located mostly in Delhi.

711	Sindh was ruled by Hindus until this time, when it was conquered by the Moslems
750	Governed by the deputies of the Umayyad caliphs, Later governed by the deputies of the Abbasids
969	Ismailis – Fatimids and Qamaratis
997	Annexed by Mahmud of Ghazni to his dominions
1054	Governed by a Sindhi tribe called the Sumrah
1315	The Sammah Rajputs overthrew the Sumrahs
1519	Conquered by Shah Beg Arghun, the prince of Kandahar
1543	Invaded by Humayun Padshah, the dethroned monarch of Delhi
1545	The Tarkhans, a family of military adventurers, obtained power
1591	Annexed by Mughal Emperor Akbar to Delhi
1740	Nur Mohammad, a Sindhi of the Kalhora clan, became governor under Nadir Shah, the Persian conqueror
1786	The Kalhora Dynasty overthrown by the Talpur Balochis.
1846	Sindh conquered by Charles Napier, and annexed to British India

Table 2.2: A summary of the chronological political history of Sindh (Burton, 1851; Lari, 1994)

The Southern parts of Asia have been often called by writers as one where there has been little change in traditional systems of living (Cohn, 1996; Rahman, 2012). The social structures of organization were hierarchical. Economic systems and the social organization of traditional living patterns particularly however carried on the same as before for decades. An agricultural economy dominated the region before colonization. In Sindh, internal dissension and changes of local regime led to depopulation.

The economic system itself is not particularly relevant to this research study, however its non-capitalist nature points towards the strength of the community formations in South Asia. Communities formed under religious organization were a prominent way of social organization.

Absence of landed private property

Among the key observations recorded by the westerners who came to the Indian subcontinent was that the entire region had no system of private land property. The writings of Karl Marx in 1853 on the Indian subcontinent also validate this.

Karl Marx (1853) wrote articles recording his observations about India and the prevailing systems. He questioned why the history of the East appeared to be the history of religion. After reading Francois Bernier, he wrote to Engels that he agreed that the East including Turkey, Persia and Hindustan all commonly shared the 'absence of private landed property' and this was an important part of their definition of the history of the region. 'This is the real key… to the east...' To this Engels replied: 'The absence of landed property is indeed the key

to the whole of the East. Therein lies its political and religious history….' (Marx 1853: Rahman, 2012).

> '…the real proprietor, proper, is the commune – hence the property only existed as communal property in land' (Marx 1858: Rahman, 2012).

Communal hierarchy governed the production from land. Traditional social hierarchy therefore worked also with the agricultural production activity (Rahman, 2012).

Instead of attaching monetary value to land itself, it was its population and production that was enumerated for organization and distribution. Since land ownership was not an issue, it was the control of the village grain heap that mattered. 'A ruler marked his status by the share of the land's yield he claimed and by the number of subjects he commanded, not by the amount of land he 'owned'' (Neale: Kozlowski 1985: 26). The central government was also responsible for the public works systems such as the irrigation system. Besides that, the agglomeration of villages acted as independent communities, 'each with its own distinct organization and each forming its own small world' (Rahman, 2012). It was for this reason that the traditional systems continued without much change. They were 'self enclosed and self-sufficient' and made the basis of the Asiatic systems as Rahman explains. They paid their land rent to the state in terms of their grain produce. '…the sovereign was absolute landlord of the whole surface of the land where rent to any considerable amount was attainable' (Rahman 2012:10).The land officially belonged to the ruler of the kingdom, to whom everyone paid rent according to mutual agreement.

Precolonial India, including the three centuries of Mughal rule before the British arrived, was 'characterized by the absence of private property in land' (Elphinestone 1841; Habib, 1975; Marx, 1945; Rahman, 2012). This economic system supported the traditional communities, their formations and the hierarchies. Community networks were strong and hierarchical.

Community formations (role of saints)

The saints played an important part in organizing communities, as spiritual leaders and advocates of peace and social justice in society.

The history of the vast geographical spread of the Muslim Empire constituted a golden age for the Muslims. Among other factors, this was also responsible for the Muslims located across large parts of Central and South Asia to refer to themselves as a large community, locally called the Muslim *ummah*[33]. Although they were viewed as a large community, they spread out geographically, nevertheless were locally or geographically specific and separated. Travelers including saints who were often migrating from other parts of the world, brought cultural traits and influences from different regions and merged them with the local culture of a particular place.

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[33] *ummah*: Persian / Arabic word for community

'The *khanqahs* established by the sufi mystics served as local outposts of Islam linking the diffuse, tribally organized population of the region to the larger Islamic community. Subsequently, it was these local centers, first the sufi *khanqahs* and later the tombs of sufi saints, which provided the focus for Islamic organization (in most of rural western Punjab). It was to these centers that the population looked for religious leadership.' (Gilmartin, 2014)

'The hospices with their associated tombs,' Trimingham has written, 'became the foci of the religious aspirations of the ordinary man who sought the *barakat* of the saints' (Trimingham 1971:173; Gilmartin 2014: 57). The religious authority of the *sajjada nashin*[34] was largely based on the 'transmission of *barakat*, or religious charisma', from the original saint to his descendants and to this tomb. The *sajjada nashin* was recognized as a religious intermediary who provided access to the devotee for the favour of God (Eaton, 1982; Shahzad, 2014; Trimingham, 1998). The hereditary leadership gave sufi shrines stability as local religious centers.

It was common through the Mughal rule and the colonial rule for people to visit shrines and saints regularly. 'Almost everyone was a *murid* (follower) of some *pir* (saint)'. The tradition continues even today particularly in rural areas and small towns. It has however become increasingly sporadic in urban areas[35].

Historically, the Shrine acted as a 'crucial link between the local traditions and the greater tradition of Islam' (Gilmartin, 2014). Its geographically specific characteristics were linked through the saint, his travels and association with a sufi order, to the larger community and tradition of Islam and the Muslim *ummah*. The sufi saints played a significant role in the construction of local identities of communities within the geographical region. The poetry and content of Shah *jo Risalo* by Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai is an insightful example for this. Chapter 3 gives detail on how the *Risalo* is an expression of the cultural identity of Sindhi people.

Networks

Islamic civilization has also been defined in history as a 'networked civilization' (Gilmartin). Sacred and communal spaces formed under varying pretexts became spatial nodes within regional networks. Sufi shrines, *dargahs* and *khanqahs* formed by sufi saints were significant as culturally inclusive and open spaces apart from places of worship (*masjids*) and education (*madrassas*).

'Spatial nodes are formed in a wider network of religious, socio-political, cultural or economic flows in which different ideas, claims and interests intersect and sometimes converge'. (Desplat and Schulz 2014: 10).

Communication and travel allowed circulation of moral principles creating an Islamic moral order and therefore a networked civilization. Migration and print communication prominently

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[34] genealogical descendant of saint, from direct lineage. The term *gaddi nashin* is used for appointed descendant of saint, from indirect lineage.
[35] There is greater impact in urban areas of orthodox groups who preach renouncement of syncretic practices.

facilitated these networks in history. It is also common to find a physical sufi shrine within certain geographical distance in the Indus Valley (Edwards, 2015; Shahzad, 2007).

A society that is 'networked' is made up of global networks that form a spatial architecture through the presence of multiple centers focusing on a function or set of functions within a territory(ies) (Castells, 1996). Repetition of similar set of functions and activities within a region is a way of its reinforcement. The multitude of shrines within the region is an example of this. Furthermore, followers of the saint are often buried within the near vicinity of tomb. Sehwan Sharif is a good example of this where several prominent people, being followers of the saint, Lal Shahbaz Qalandar are also buried within the tomb and/or town. Shrine towns are special in the close association they have with the community living in its immediate context.

> 'Networks of shrines grew which were loosely linked together within the sufi orders; in many cases a large and well-known shrine became the center of a network of much smaller shrines which were monuments to the disciples and descendants of the more well known saint.' (Gilmartin 2014: 57)

The geographical distances between the saint shrines allowed influences to be shared, as well as allowed independence of domain of influence (rural populace). Within the specific region, the network was not a socio-political one. The geographical spread of shrines also allowed for the consolidation of Sufi orders. For instance in Sindh and Punjab, the Suharwardi sufi order is found to be predominant. However, shrines of saints from other orders like Chishtiya, Naqshbandiya also exist parallel to them within the region. The map (Figure 2.1) shows the cultural, religious, commercial and administrative centers of Sindh between the 8th and 13th centuries. It highlights the regions multi-religious character, marking tombs and shrines of Muslims and Hindus as well as Buddhist stupas and Jain temples. Saints[36] who came to Sindh during this time period belonging particularly to the Suharwardi order include Bahauddin Zakariya, Shaikh Sadruddin and Abul Fateh Rukunuddin in Multan, Jalaluddin Bukhari and Jalaluddin Makhdoom in Uch, and Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan. Several saints are commonly revered by Hindus and Muslims and some are even known by different names to both. As mentioned previously, Shaikh Tahir / Odero Lal is a well known example. Similarly, Khwaja Khizr (for Muslims) is popularly also referred to as Jinda Pir by the Hindus.

The network of Sufi shrines in particular have acted as centers of moral and intellectual activity as described by Gilmartin (2014) in specific time periods. They shaped and articulated 'core understandings' within the Islamic civilization, 'of humanity's place in the cosmos' and therefore played a central role as religious and socio-cultural centers. Just the sheer numbers of sufi orders found to have existed is an indication of the tolerance and flexibility in the practices incorporated for Sufi training. Sharing, adapting and welcoming travelers were ways in which these centers can be imagined to be thriving social and cultural centers.

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[36] Saints who came to the region belonged particularly to the Suharwardi sufi order, by way of classification of the sufi orders set by the various sufi schools of thought during the 12th century.

The Sufi network played an important role in the construction of 'Islam's civilizational imaginings'. They represented a core – center of moral and intellectual activity, mostly non-political in nature but connected the common man with values that defined 'humanity'. In this, they represented an indigenous modernity up until it was alive and intellectually thriving.

Figure 2.1, map of Sindh highlights the presence of sacred places that can be described as a web or a network through the region. The tombs and shrines of saints and their followers each have a different narrative, a history belonging to varying time periods. Yet their numbers, multiplicity and reinforcement of values in different ways is of geographical, historical and cultural importance.

As the Muslim Empire declined and colonial rule was established in various parts of the world in the 18th century, the socio-political dynamics of shrines changes. At present, sufi shrines play a minimal or no role politically and are mostly used as religious and cultural sites of visitation. National administrative systems, during colonial rule and then later after independence (establishment of Provincial / National Department of *Auqaf*) worked toward reducing the political power of the geneaological descendants of saints. Simultaneously, changes in the larger region broke off the socio-political networks that previously assisted in informing and improvising the religious and educational systems.

Geographically today, shrines range from being located in cities where they grew separately and urbanization connected them to cities that originated in a shrine, grew around it and have become inseparable from it (Strothmann in: Desplat and Schulz, 2014: 265). The tradition of saints going 'into the wilderness' and spending long periods of their lives outside of settlements is largely responsible for most shrines being located in rural or semi-urban settings, in small village or between settlements (Desplat and Schulz, 2014; Shahzad, 2014).

In the case of small settlements that developed around shrines, the physical place takes on a central role in the religious and cultural life of the community, and the town economy thrives in the presence of the shrine. Such settlements can be grouped together as Shrine Towns. Shrines located initially on the periphery of existing settlements that eventually become part of them as they grow, do not center around its physical structure. The community that settles in particular within shrine towns does so on the basis of an association, religious and / or cultural or even economic, one that centers around the life of the shrine itself. This distinction makes the 'shrine town' unique. Religious rituals and mundane activities are linked and combined together commonly at such a shrine. Shrine towns are significant as towns housing a physical heritage along with their evolved traditional socio-cultural systems that play a major role in keeping the heritage alive.

Historical development of towns in South Asia including shrine towns follows a similar pattern characteristic of old town, in this case affected by the 'sufi structures'. The shrine is geographically positioned on the basis of its history of origination with respect to the town. A

post colonial planned expansion (usually on a grid) typically includes public amenities, educational and health institutions and infrastructure work, recreational parks and playgrounds along major roads.

The characteristic South Asian city form, consisting of walled cities particularly the ones that acquired royal prominence, narrow winding lanes and public community spaces within a well understood social hierarchy were formed with a negotiation and understanding between the community. The community was well organized and followed norms and principles governed by its hierarchy (Hosagrahar, 2005). It is possible that the absence of private landed property was closely related to the development of the South Asian city form described. The two aspects are characteristically regional and correlation between the economic aspect and the typical physical form of settlement may be more than mere coincidence. Community formation, and relation may have played an essential role in the negotiations for appropriation and construction. The physical settlements that pre-date colonization may have been conditioned due to this economic system.

The Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai is located in the shrine town of Bhitshah. Over the course of my field research, I have visited other shrine towns and observed similar characteristics and issues of the towns. The analysis of Bhitshah town in relation to the shrine offers an insight into 'Shrine towns' in general within the region. Moreover, a presence of many similar towns validate the cultural and religious norms for the people. As 'places', shrines are representational and offer cultural distinction for the region and each town.
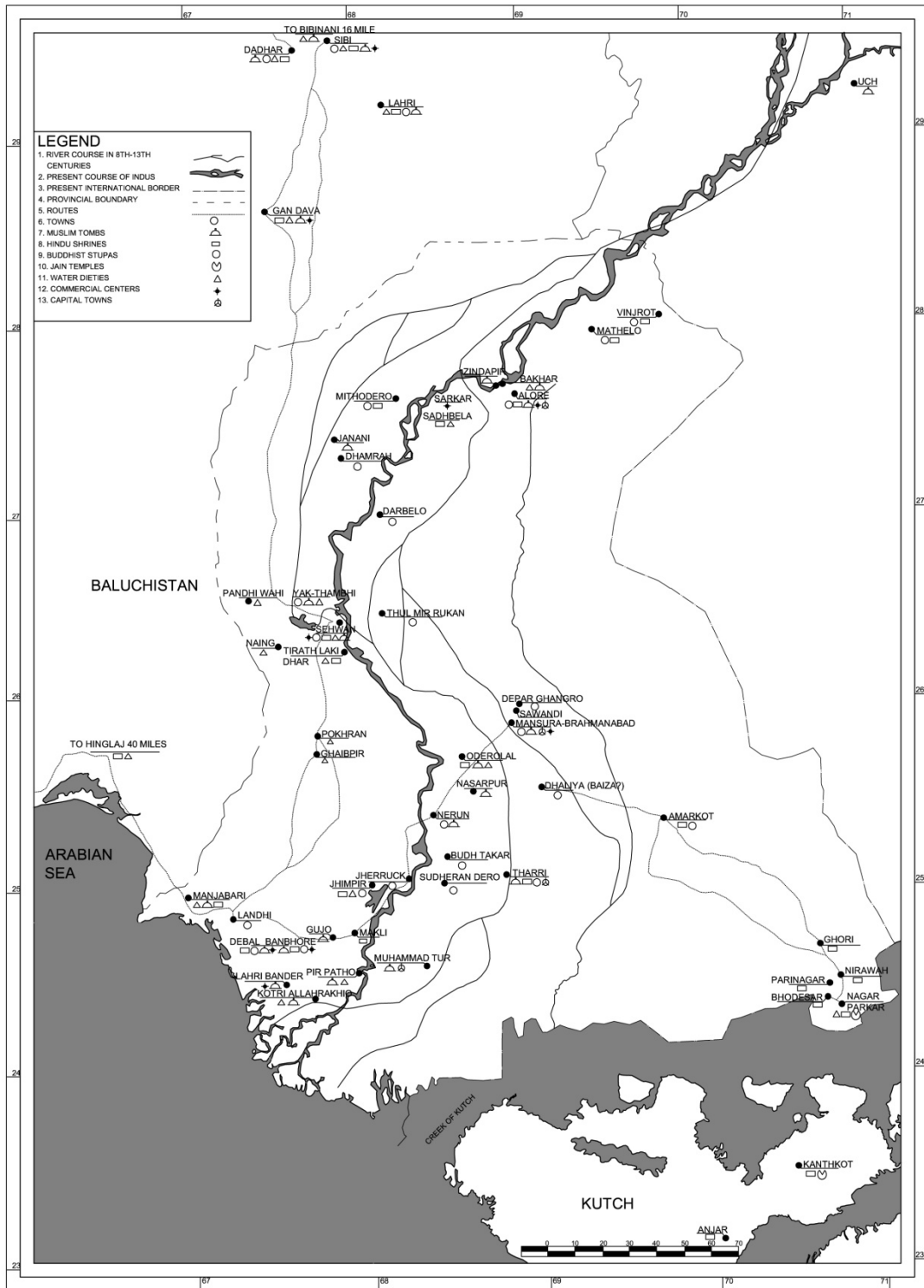
Figure 2.1: Cultural, Religious, Commercial and Administrative Centers in Sindh between the 8th and 13th centuries

Source: Panhwar, (2003) *An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Soomra Kingdom of Sindh*, Hyderabad: Soomra National Council

The precolonial contextual overview has tried to shed light on the particular nature and character of the region of Sindh. The colonial contextual sketch in contrast will focus more on the general political dynamics of identity issues of Muslims that led to the formation of Pakistan. The sources and references used also specifically focus on the cultural paradoxes faced by the Indian Muslim community in general and that was the result of the process of colonization. Descendants of sufi saints also played a significant role in the process.

2.2.2 Colonial (1799 – 1947)

As the Mughal dynasty started its decline, it made way for the British who had entered India on the premise of trade through the East India Company to start assuming power and to redefine their influence over regional administrative systems. Colonization was an organized and systematic process of acquiring control of governance and creation of 'modern' administrative mechanisms of the large Indian territories. The process of colonization coincided with the arrival of modernity in the west.

Figure 2.2: British Indian Empire 1909. The red marks the British occupied territories while the yellow marks the native states within.

Source: Imperial Gazeteer of India (Empire, 1881)

The pre-British and the British eras in India differed in their 'conceptual baggage about the nature of property and religion'. During colonial rule, new organizational measures were introduced to systematize society according to a 'modern' legitimacy as perceived by the British. Observations made by the British travelers and historians were used to construct these systems and mechanisms. Occurrences in Britain and India simultaneously affected the decisions taken in both parts of the world (Cohn, 1996). Science and scientific classifications were used to organize the 'modern' society and its governance that was to no longer base on traditional / religious patterns in the west. Modernism was a statement of freedom from tradition and clear separation of religion from western systems of organization. Within the Indian subcontinent, however, religious systems were deeply involved in the cultural living patterns. This contradiction led to the formation of 'patterns of cultural tensions' (Gilmartin, 2014). These were particularly observed and articulated by Indian Muslims[37] belonging to different fields of cultural expression during colonial rule as a way of articulating their identity. The shrine and its associated social order became an expression of such a cultural tension as well.

Western modernity: Classifications and systems

A systematic survey of India was started by the British in 1765. This was an official and organized investigation of the 'natural and social features' of the Indian subcontinent under colonial rule. It was a process of classification of the 'geology, botany, zoology, ethnography, history, economic products and sociology' (Cohn, 1996).

The strategies of social classification in particular had a major impact on the governing of India. Existing knowledge was objectified under the 'census, map and museum' as Anderson, (2006) identifies and formed 'modernity's intellectual foundations' (Gilmartin 2014). While the census was meant to reflect the sociological facts of the region, in actuality, it 'objectified social, cultural and linguistic differences among the people of India' (Cohn, 1996). The census has been responsible for 'fixing communities' including Sufism.

Apart from the social classifications, the survey of archaeology was a significant genre undertaken during the colonial rule. In 1859, Alexander Cunningham, an army engineer established the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Important archaeological sites were recorded and preservation of historical sites undertaken. Site museums were developed as well as a national collection of archaeological specimens was put together (Cohn, 1996). The British recognized the Indian territory as witness to historical civilization.

The British faced several issues in getting their data together as they worked to organize the Indian territory scientifically.

'The conquest of knowledge was also a way of establishing British supremacy over India' (Cohn 1996:104).

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[37] including Muhammad Ali Jinnah (lawyer, later founder of Pakistan), Muhammad Iqbal (philosopher and later national poet of Pakistan), Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (politician during colonial rule) among many others.

These issues along with colonial supremacy / the need for the 'conquest of knowledge' led the British to make decisions which were not favourable or suited for the cultural environment. Among the issues that the British faced in gathering data, the first was that historical data was available in multiple languages. These were not well known to them. They, therefore assumed and felt the need to 'provide India with a history' (Cohn, 1996; Fergusson, 1899), that is to provide record of the historical evidences found.

Secondly, they looked for similar data as what had allowed them to put together the British history[38]. Fergusson (1899) for instance, provided the first architecture history of the Indian region in English language. The physical built environment was rendered to be hard evidence, as remnants of the historical civilizations.

The third major issue for the lack of understanding of the local culture by the British was the distance that the British wished to maintain between themselves and the Indian locals / the popular culture (Cohn, 1996). Cohn's publication on the classification systems used by the British, outlines the factors that conditioned their analysis and the texts produced by them as a result. The following couple of subsections give a few examples of some of the decisions made by the colonial rulers that created unrest and prejudices in the local social milieu.

Objectifying and fixing identity of Muslim community

The colonial rulers of India perceived the colonized society as one that was 'starkly segmented' (Gilmartin, 2014; Jalal, 2001). Census surveys categorized the social structure into 'caste, tribe, brotherhood, sect, occupation and neighbourhood'. Among these, religious differences became a primary category and eventually formed distinctive social entities.

The British claimed to have 'superior scientific knowledge and therefore the right to order, categorize and classify communities into a rationalized political whole' (Cohn, 1996). However, they lacked the cultural comprehension that held communities together. This categorization, although it started off as a simple survey classification, however had an enormous impact on the dynamics of social identity. Traditions and composite culture formed the identity of the people of the region, particularly Sindh and the British policies tried to break this.

Living religions, attached to 'universalistic principles for individual behavior or for the definition of a larger political system' were reduced to 'a particularistic fixed identity within the colonial political system' (Shaikh, 1989). The fact that religion is interpreted and followed by individuals in different and multiple ways, changed. Its flexible, intelligible character changed (Kozlowski, 1985). Religions (particularly in this case, Hinduism and Islam) were 'transformed

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[38] British history was constructed from dateable records, coins, artefacts, archaeological and material evidences. Indian history on the other hand was more available in ancient scripts in different languages, records of courts and meetings of sufi saints (for instance) kept by their fakirs among other things.

into bounded entities, separated from and juxtaposed against one another, and they became 'knowable through objectifying ('modern') social and historical analysis' (Gilmartin, 2014: xxi).

Majority, minority principles that were enforced on communities led to questions of granting privilege to one religious community over another.

Inevitably, the British administrative policies were linked to the development of a territorial nationalism (Goswami: Gilmartin, 2014). This meant linking the religious classifications to particular geographical territories. Later, the movements of rebellion formed shape into independence movements and the separation of Pakistan as a Muslim nation from India was consequential.

In the process of scientific organization and 'modern' administration, the colonial rulers

> 'broke down the …framework of Indian society, without any symptoms of reconstitution …. This loss of his old world, with no gain of a new one, imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the present misery of the Hindu and separates Hindustan, ruled by Britain, from all its ancient traditions and from the whole of its past history' (Marx, 1945).

Marx articulates well the dilemma that the Indian society found themselves in highlighting the cultural tension created. In their selective adoption from 'pre-existing networks and patterns of social organization', the colonial administrators made the Indian society 'more administratively integrated' but also 'more culturally fragmented' (Jalal, 2001). The following section is an example of this.

Categorizing fakirs as criminals; descendants of saints as landlords

As survey classifications were made, the British compared their observations of the social group of fakirs, yogis, *sadhus*, *sannyasis* as those being similar to medieval philosophers of European traditions 'degenerate in Greek and Roman religion'. They were perceived to be 'living devils', and were described as a social group that was beyond the civil boundaries that the administration was defining of being proper and civilized.

> 'There were… groups and categories of people whose practices threatened the prescribed sociological order. There were people who appeared by their nature to wander beyond the boundaries of settled civil society: *sannyasis*, *sadhus*, fakirs, dacoits, *goondas*, thugs, pastoralists, herders and entertainers.'

They were categorized in the same breath as dacoits or robberers and thugs. Their behavioural norms, clothing and living patterns were all different from the conventional society. While the particular social group did not align with the characteristics of 'modern' society, it mostly remained aloof and detached and was harmless. The mere fact that this was the case, made the British feel uneasy and threatened. They were eventually stigmatized as

criminal[39] (Cohn, 1996). Such categorization was a huge statement for the Indian societal context.

Yet another categorization made during the formation of the administrative system during British rule that is of relevance to this research is that of the descendants of saints, the *sajjada / gaddi nashins*. It was the declining age of Muslim rule in the region. The various precolonial Islamic systems, institutions were on the downhill track and therefore vulnerable. They lacked structuring and were also open to influences and modifications.

Traditionally, descendants of saints, *sajjada nashins* were considered to be the spiritual heirs of saints. They are considered in popular Islam to share the *barakat* or blessings of the saint himself (Eaton, 1982). The local popularity of *sajjada nashins* always carried a political dimension.

> 'The structure of religious leadership mirrored the structure of political authority' (Gilmartin, 2014).

The *sajjada nashins* were usually closely associated with the local political leadership, in terms of communication and association. There are also examples of 'saints' who took local political control. The rule of the Kalhoras in Sindh is a good example of this. The Kalhoras claimed to be spiritual saints *and* political rulers (refer to table 2.2). Apart from such instances, *sajjada nashins* as spiritual heirs commonly received gifts, honours, titles and lands during Mughal rule as well. There are instances of exchange of letters between political leaders and saints, offering words of advice for the various affairs and challenges faced by the former. These connections were political as the saints' heirs were locally popular and had large following.

During colonial rule, the British also wished to maintain the 'established traditions of political control' (Gilmartin). The Alienation of Land Act 1900 gave expression to this by not allowing people belonging to non-agricultural backgrounds to acquire land in rural areas. This was done to prevent urban citizens from venturing into the rural areas and to consolidate the rural social structure. The British defined the descendants of saints as a 'class of landed gentry' as well. They were classified as landlords and eventually came to represent their areas/ regions and acquire positions of power within the local structures of administration that were mediated by the British (Gilmartin, 2014). The *sajjada nashins* were educated under the British curriculum enforced in schools in India, as the traditional system of schooling no longer received support. Along with many political leaders of the independence movement, the spiritual heirs of the saint followed the newly enforced curriculums.

Later the *sajjada nashins* acquired positions of representation within the Unionist party. They played an important role in the independence movement of Pakistan, sharing their religious

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[39] Cohn also simultaneously points out that the discipline of anthropology was just taking shape and was only just 'beginning to be defined as a distinctive form of knowledge' (p. 11). This explains the assumptions and biases that the British rendered in the system.

concerns, many times indirectly influencing political leaders and not taking active part in the Muslim League, the party that aimed to voice the concerns of the Muslim community in India.

> 'In establishing a state based on *shariat* or Islamic law as defined by the British, *murids* of saints took part. [This]… was perfectly natural, for in this, they could see the projection of their religious work into a larger political arena' (Gilmartin, 2014: 202).

'Patterns of cultural tension' were created. Of these, the conflict on the idea of nationalism was one. The following section briefly articulates the paradox, where religion and nationalism stood juxtaposed and interconnected at the same time, in the process of the definition and formation of the state of Pakistan.

Cultural tensions: Muslim nationalism versus modern nation

Once the religious classifications acquired administrative and political weight, they created ripples or disturbances within the social and political milieu in multiple ways. The concept of a Muslim nation was not a new one. The terms 'ummah' and 'millat' were used in Persian and Urdu language to denote the larger Muslim community, even before colonization. Their use acquired specific meaning in the debate on nationalism in social events. Muhammad Iqbal[40], philosopher, poet and politician, well articulated the difference between 'millat' and 'qaum' in the local language. While both refer to a national community, 'millat' was interpreted to mean a religiously guided community that was not territorial by nature and 'qaum' included all people not distinguished on the basis of religion.

In one of his early poems entitled 'Mazhab' (lit. meaning religion), Iqbal declared that 'the idea of territorial nationalism …was a weapon of European imperialism,… destroying the unity of Islam' (Jalal, 2001).

The material and spiritual dimensions of life for the Muslims were not separate realms in everyday life. Customs, laws, religious and social institutions defined Muslim identity / nationalism. The institution of waqf, relevant to the history of the case study of sufi shrines is a good example of this. The following section introduces this in relation to private property ownership and socio-cultural values and customs. Religion represented a higher universal ideal, around which the socio-cultural setups were created.

Muslims were not a territorial community, aptly described as a 'nation without a country' as well articulated by Mohamed Ali (1878-1931). According to Iqbal, the Muslim community 'had nothing to do with the unity of language or country or of economic interest' (Jalal, 2001:174). As example, the terms *millat* and *ummah* pointed toward a moral solidarity among the Muslims. This 'transcended structures of state power and regional and linguistic boundaries' (Gilmartin, 2014).

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[40] Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), also known as Allama Iqbal, played an important role in the formulation of the Pakistan Movement.

By contrast, modern nationalism by concept, itself was defined as 'a principle of human society', politically based on the separation of religion and state (Sherwani: Speeches and Statements of Iqbal: 256; Jalal, 2001: 576). It was 'inclusionary and homogenizing' (Anderson, 2006). During Mughal rule, the royal court relates of incidences whereby religious communities traditionally received favours, due to the consideration that religion was a higher ideal. Inclusionary nationalism on the other hand was about the existence of 'difference with discomfort' (Jalal, 2001). According to Iqbal, it was this nationalism that gave rise to the 'relativity of religions', the notion that religions were territorially specific and unsuited to the temperament of other nations. It was indeed with 'discomfort' (Jalal, 2001) and 'cultural tensions' (Gilmartin, 2014) that Pakistan was pronounced as a unique nation-state that was although territorially defined as Muslim, aimed nevertheless to allow freedom of practice of all religions in 1947[41] (Jalal, 1994; Karim, 2010).

> Don't compare your nation with the nations of the west
> Distinctive is the nation of the Prophet of Islam
> Their solidarity depends on territorial nationality
> Your solidarity rests on the strength of your religion
> When faith slips away, where is the solidarity of the community?
> And when the community is no more, neither is the nation.
> (Iqbal: Mazhab, Bang-i-Dara in Kulliyat-i-Iqbal: 202)

The territorial framework of 'nation' was defined by the imperial powers. Jalal in her book, 'Self and Sovereignty – Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850', interprets the historical processes that led to change in perception of the Muslim community, from a hierarchical to a horizontal. Benedict Anderson (2006) describes the fundamental conceptual difference between the traditional community and the national community articulating the former as centripetal and hierarchical and the latter as boundary oriented and horizontal. While the traditional community has defined leadership and a social hierarchy that clearly indicates the roles of its various members, the nation is an imagined political community, one that is 'conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail' (Anderson, 2006). The concept of the nation was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm'. It was therefore imagined to be sovereign. The dominance of either communities affected their institutional structures and architecture. Settlements were structured differently.

Paradoxically, '[T]he concept of a territorially and culturally grounded Muslim community was in deep tension with the concept of Islamic universality' (Gilmartin, 2014). The universal notion accepted the presence of multiple territorially grounded communities, culturally

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[41] Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), the founder of the nation of Pakistan, in his speeches around the time of independence, declared the country to allow freedom on practice to all religions.

specific. Communities were constructed through a relationship process of both 'particularistic identities and participation in larger moral communities' (p. 297).

The Muslim League was formed to give an effective voice for the Muslims and in their speeches, offered idealized visions of Muslim community. In this process, sufis also engaged in the arguments and shared their views through the print media to shape the meaning of Indian Islam that was grounded in the cultural life of India.

This dilemma and related 'patterns of cultural tension' are important to highlight as background to the development of the current form of the sufi shrine. The next section elaborates on the concept and basic outline and development of the institution of *waqf*, that is a good example of one of these patterns of cultural tension within a spatial unit, the public and private usage of which defined the cultural norm, in relation to above debate and is also linked to the later development of shrines.

The Institution of *Waqf* and its role in Sindh

Colonial rule in India was a capitalist venture. The British made investments seeking returns, improving efficiencies to maximize profits. Private property laws were made for the first time and taxes levied according to designated use of land such as agricultural, urban, commercial etc. Written property deeds were made for many landed properties that had earlier existed through oral agreement (Kozlowski, 1985). Setting the parameters of land ownership according to new policy created initial confusion. Before this, the concept of private landed property had never existed before in the Indian subcontinent as mentioned earlier. As the initial confusion of declaring properties and their boundaries started to clear, the local people started realizing how this was affecting them in material terms. Many found themselves in constant debt. Inability to pay the heavy taxes levied could result in loss of property to the British government. After the establishment of British rule in the subcontinent, the subsequent enforcement of private property laws and taxes, led to many family settlements to start to create endowments or what is called *waqf* property, according to an old Muslim tradition.

The concept of the *waqf* property goes as far back as the time of prophet Muhammad about 620 AD (Gil, 1998; Kuran, 2001). The term *waqf* comes from the Arabic language and literally means confinement or prohibition. It is known to be the first Islamic urban institution whereby an individual could prescribe his property's use and distribution of income between his family and public use.

> "A *waqf* is established by a living man or woman (the *waqif* = founder) who holds a certain revenue-producing property, and makes the property inalienable until perpetuity, prohibited from sale, gift and inheritance. The property is placed under the stewardship of a caretaker (*wali* or *mutawalli*) who assures that the revenues pass to the intended beneficiaries (*mustahiqeen*)" (Zarqa 1994; Sait & Lim 2006).

Waqf is confined to fixed property whose revenues are dedicated to philanthropic goals, for rich and for poor and may simultaneously include the family members of the founder of the *waqf* as beneficiaries. The *waqf* property in today's language is one similar to a trust, with the basic difference that once declared a *waqf*, it was to be used as stated in its deed for perpetuity, that is forever (Gil, 1998; Kozlowski, 1985; Suleiman and Home, 2009). The property can no longer be sold or bought. *Auqaf*, plural of *waqf*, are endowments therefore in a general sense as they are 'gifts made to individuals as well as institutions' (Kozlowski, 1985). Traditionally, *waqf* properties were declared particularly where private properties offered public services and / or were public infrastructure. Examples included properties with water resources like wells, ponds etc.; health and educational institutions as well as places designated for prayer; public kitchens, animal shelters and orphanages. Moshe Gil in her article on 'The Earliest *Waqf* Foundations' refers to the tradition in the 8th century, when it was commonplace for the rich Muslims to dedicate their properties for public use. By 714 AD,

> "wealthy Muslims were expected to designate a portion of their property for the establishment of a waqf….People were advised, however, not to allot more than one-third of their wealth for a waqf…." (Gil, 1998)

This act was an honourable one and gave social prominence to families at that time and promised to continue this later after their life as well. It provided some continuity in a group or family's material base and was also an attempt to secure higher social status. They were philanthropic, benevolent acts of charity as well as allowed long term security for one's family. Their provisions or clauses were shaped by the social, political and economic conditions of the time. Endowments also paid for salaries for the care taker and/or other regular workers required to maintain it (Kozlowski, 1985; Malik, 1997, 1996).

Waqf provided a range of public goods and services. It has been described to be an important economic institution of society that redistributed wealth in society. It also shaped civic spaces and large parcels of agricultural land were also dedicated to be *waqf* (Kozlowski, 1985; Malik, 1997; Wolper, 2003). Such properties are still found in Turkey, Morocco, Egypt, Syria, India, Iran, Israel, and Arabia.

The arrival of the British in India and their enforcement of capitalist administrative policies created a reaction. In the early years of the 19th century, a number of India's Muslims began to convert their property into *Auqaf*[42], 'probably noting how the families connected to sufi shrines in particular were able to support themselves for generations, even in troubled times, on the proceeds of the *Auqaf*' (Kozlowski, 1985: 37). It was common for sufi shrines and saints to receive 'nazranas' or gifts as kind offerings of gratitude by their followers, in this case functioning as the proceeds of the shrine *waqf*. These gifts were a major source of their income.

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[42] The term Auqaf is used here as a plural of waqf.

Waqf properties in Sindh include those in big cities and in rural settlements. In Karachi, there are several properties of a commercial nature that were established as waqf during the colonial role, whose income goes for its prescribed purposes. The waqf of Hakim Mohammad Said is popularly known under Hamdard Laboratories, produces herbal and natural products including medicines. It is a corporate waqf, the proceeds of which go into multiple charitable acts. The Hamdard University is also a part of this waqf. This followed the traditional trend of establishing educational institutes as waqf properties. These waqf properties have been set up by philanthropists mostly before independence. Shrines, temples and mosques are also commonly understood as waqf properties. Sufi shrines in particular belong to particular saints and their families and are therefore their waqf.

The institution of *waqf* did not operate with clear distinctions between 'private' and 'pious' interests. Within the same *waqf* property, the revenue income would be distributed to cater to the family as well as the general public. It was this combined use of property and income that put the British into doubt about the genuineness of its philanthropic purpose in many cases, as Kozlowski writes (1985: 60). The research by Kozlowski is a brilliant one, as it creates a good sketch of the dilemmas faced regarding land property by Indian Muslims during the British rule. His study is derived from analysis of 40 *waqf* deeds as well as lawsuits relating to them that he selected from different cities of India, although he estimates the numbers of *waqf* documents at the time of his research in 1980s to be as many as 100,000, all belonging to the colonial era.

Apart from offering security to family, *waqfs* were declared by the rich Muslim families to 'leave behind some record of their existence and achievements'. Kozlowski (1985:53) gives the example of Hajji Bikani Mian who wrote in his *waqf* deed, 'Whereby my name [i.e. reputation] and memory may be perpetuated forever…' (Bikani Mian's case, Cal, xx,119: Kozlowski 1985: 53). It was a way of leaving their memory behind in material terms, and that they may be remembered through the presence of a physical property that is revenue producing and consistently maintained as well as through the good that they did for the community. Dedicating one's property for charitable uses was also done with the hope 'to attain spiritual merit'.

The traditional Muslim legal system was not an institutionalized one. It was flexible in use and accommodated variances of communities belonging to different geographical and societal distinction. The fragmented, uninstitutionalized legal systems used were such that individuals belonging to varied professions would also be conducting sessions for giving their opinions about an aspect of the 'shariah' (translated as Islamic law). 'They were not structured and remained unspecialized in learning and occupation. Some were clerks, some teachers, government employees and even soldiers' (Kozlowski, 1985: 104). This however, made it vulnerable to the foreign structured institution of justice. The traditional legal systems were incorporated in local laws including the *shariah*, however it was fixed and interpreted by the British. The flexibility that the traditional system offered in decision making was an important

part of it but this was not entirely understood[43]. A good example of the open and unstructured legal institution is also the very interesting observation Kozlowski makes that he is infact unable to find any written *waqf* deeds within the Indian subcontinent of before colonial rule[44]. *Waqf* deeds were written down particularly when the British arrived and landownership became a subject of debate. Before this, private property ownership was not regulated as mentioned earlier. Many decisions were through community forums and oral negotiations. Many of these were based on to be in line with the Great Traditions followed in other parts of the Islamic world. Other examples of 'waqf declarations' were also events, celebrations and festivals.

> 'Just as mosques and *imambarahs*[45] were often part of the donor's dwelling place, many religious ceremonies mentioned in deeds of endowment were connected with life in the founder's family' (Kozlowski, 1985: 73)

They often provided sums for the celebrations of several kinds of religious festivals, like the prophet's birthday, providing breakfasts for those who kept the Ramzan fasts, performing mourning rituals during Muharram, all these connected the patrons with the 'Great Traditions' of Islam. Support for events such as the commemoration of the local saint's death anniversary came within the sphere of 'Little Traditions' of Islam in India.

The *waqf* property was identified as non-tax paying and revenue generating and perpetual by clause. The increasing numbers of declarations made the British suspicious. The British officials complained about several issues they found difficult to work with in the *waqf*. Firstly, they perceived the personal benefit of *waqf* property as a public trust property to be illegitimate. For instance, shrine revenues generated were partly allotted for the personal use / salary of the caretaker. In their understanding, the revenue produced by the shrine ought to be used for religious purposes only.

Secondly, they also had a problem with increasing fragmentation of agricultural holdings that were part of the inheritance deeds. This was because of the system of big sized extended families, sometimes almost a community living together and sharing livelihoods and income.

While traditional Muslim legal systems had been flexible in comparison and allowed space for the complexities, the British tried to categorize public and private institutions of *waqf*. The British government tried to put forth policies and regulations through which to control and

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[43] The British thought of the shariah as a system of law similar to theirs. The courts mixed British legal notions with the indigenous traditions and did not apply the existing legal codes. When British authorities took over the enforcement of *dharamsastra* (regulations dictated by belief and religion), they smoothed out the irregularities, supported some opinions over others, subjected it to the rule of precedent and made it metropolitan (central) rather than geographically local. Under the British aegis, it became less fluid, more like a legal system on the British pattern. (Derrett: Kozlowski 1985:123)

[44] Perhaps the reason for this was just that no need was felt of doing this, maybe old documents were destroyed or they were in another language. But the coincidence of finding no document throughout India is strongly suggestive of the level of security that the absence of private land property offered and the reliance on the oral word.

[45] *Imambarahs* or *imambargahs* are Shia gathering spaces, particularly used in the month of Muharram (of Hijri calendar) for *majlis* in the memory of the martyrs of Karbala (tragic legendary war in Iraq in 680 AD)

monitor it as a comprehensive system and to better manage its donations for public use, while separating the private benefits. The first regulation for public religious endowments called the Religious Endowments Act was passed by the British in 1863. Subsequent amendments to the *waqf* laws 1913 and later 1923, as proposed and suggested by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, a lawyer, reveal some of this process of the time. Jinnah studied law from Britain and returned to practice in India during colonial rule. He later took up various institutional and identity issues and played a central role in the independence movement.

The aim of giving this background is not to give a history of *waqf* (as that is not relevant to subject at hand) but to simply give conceptual definition and an introductory background outlining the characteristics of the institution. This is also to highlight that khanqahs of sufi saints were usually also established as waqf properties through the region.

The shrines and the adjoining properties (many times included gifts from earlier rulers as a way to show their gratitude or submission to saint) were part of the private *waqf* before the colonial amendments. The *khanqahs⁴⁶* were considered charitable and service providing places / institutions. The shrines always received considerable donations and charity intended, for financing public welfare services and as gifts to saints which were mostly given or distributed by them among their fakirs or the needy. The *waqf* deed specified the use of the revenue collected.

The later generations of the saints and increase in the number of claimants to the revenues generated by shrines led to disputes about its distribution⁴⁷. Under the Religious Endowment Act 1863, three or more persons based committees were formed to supervise a transparent management of the endowments and its revenues, particularly for shrines. The committee was responsible to keep a balance sheet to show the civil court annually. For the next 50 years, the same administrative system prevailed at religious worship places, shrines and *mazars* for the management of the occasion celebrations, incomes and expenditures. Despite government intervention, *gaddi nashins* and *mutawallis* maintained an upper hand at shrines. They were found to be taking undue illegitimate advantage of their position. While many court cases and other government institutions took over individual cases of the *waqf* disputes, regarding shrines, it was only after independence in 1960 that the provincial Department of *Auqaf* was established to address this issue (Malik, 1997, 1996).

The British were nevertheless successful in separating the pious and private domains of the *waqf* by regulation. The later Muslim leaders, educated and trained under the colonial setups adopted the suspicion and criticisms of their colonial leaders. Most *auqaf* was hence understood to be in need of supervision (Kozlowski, 1985).

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⁴⁶ *dargah* – explained in greater detail in chapter 4. *Khanqahs* were multifunctional spaces, primarily set up by saint and his followers away from settlement to conduct sufi practices. They also provided free food and resting spaces for travelers and were open to receiving different social groups.

⁴⁷ Interviews with history writers of the shrine cities and *Gaddi Nashins*

The last few sections have described some of the general issues connected to the history, social, political and cultural aspects of Indian Muslims in formulation of their identity. The next section zooms on to the geographical region of Sindh and the role of its political community in striving for its independent territorial identity.

Sindhi nationalism and its role in the definition of Pakistan territory

A year after the region of Sindh came under colonial rule, it was made a part of the Bombay province, with Bombay city acting as the main center (Refer to Figure 2.3). Due to internal dissensions during Mughal rule, the population of Sindh had gone down considerably. Even though there was a big distance between the two regions, they were put together as one administrative region. Inevitably, with Bombay as main Presidential center for India, Sindh was isolated. The Sindh separation movement, a nationalist venture was started as a reaction in 1913. A text on 'Separation of Sindh from Bombay Presidency' was presented to the British administration in 1931. This lays out the argument regarding the matter (Khuhro, 1982). It was the first time that the region of Sindh was identified as a separate cultural and political entity by Muhammad Ayub Khuhro, a Sindhi politician. Khuhro presented the argument that Sind had always been referred historically in reference to India or Hind as a separate geographical entity, quoting various regional historians including Al-Idrisi (*Nuzharul Mushtak*), Al Masudi (*Murujul Zahab* – The Meadows of Gold), Sir H. Elliot, Rashiduddin (*Jamiat Tawarikh*) and Mirza Kalichbeg (*Chachnama*). He identified Sindh to have distinctive cultural traits, dress, customs, habits, language and a way of living that makes it a separate entity in itself, clearly different from the presidential province of Bombay. In his argument about the Sindhi language as the identity of the region, he particularly takes the name of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai and his poetry.

> 'The Sindhi poetry, and particularly the poetical works of Shah Abdul Latif are very well known..' (Khuhro, 1982): 206)

The name and poetry of Shah Latif is a distinct cultural identity for Sindh and its people. Apart from the cultural differences, the long distance between the provinces created what he calls 'a lack of understanding' of the issues at hand within the region as well as bad correspondence and coordination. Basic amenities and infrastructure were being neglected on this account including education, irrigation works, engineering works, roads and communication infrastructure in the region of Sindh. He regarded Sindh to be a nation in itself and a community, and on this basis the proposal demanded the region to be recognized and designated as a separate political entity / province.

The Sindhi nationalist movement was started by a group of Sindhi intellectuals. Their education under the British system at the University, Sindh Madrassah tul Islam[48], the only one in Sindh at the time located in Karachi (Verkaaik, 2004), had a considerable impact on their thinking. The literary works of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai were considered a significant contribution supporting the Sindhi nationalism.

Figure 2.3: Sindh became a part of the Bombay Province in 1847 under the colonial government

Source: (Lari, 2002) *An Illustrated History of Sindh,* Karachi: Heritage Foundation.

His poetry consisted of folk stories of being faithful to one's land and community. His collection of verses hence started to be regarded as the national book of poems by the Sindhis.

The demand for designation of Sindh as a separate geographical entity, that was a Muslim majority region was one of the factors that coincided with the debate of 'the Muslim nation'. The demand for a Muslim homeland coincided with the demand for territorial independence of Sindh that was a Muslim majority region. The region of the Indus Valley rivers was together considered as one part of Pakistan, the 'Muslim' territory. History records the partition to have been a hasty decision of the British when they were forced to leave India. The region of Pakistan emerged after long debates and various Hindu Muslim tussles all over the Indian subcontinent where the divisions between the religious communities got aggravated.

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[48] The Sindh Islamic madrassah was established in 1885 on the model of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh. While the name suggested a traditional Muslim curriculum, it was infact meant to promote modern secondary education in English. (Verkaaik 2004)

Sindh with its mystical unique cultural features remained calm through the entire time until after partition. Its values of peace and love for humanity reinforced through the time periods[49] that had formed a united culture maintained harmonious ties among the Hindus and the Muslims through this troubled period. Sindh was known generally for its syncretic and non-orthodox leanings through history (Gulrajani, 1924).

It was only after partition had happened and the migrations of Muslims took place in large groups from different parts of India to Sind that things started to change. The Hindu population of Sindh also started to feel threatened as the Muslim migrants were frustrated and had suffered material, emotional and psychological loss in their journey to Pakistan. The episode of Hindu Muslim riots in Karachi in January 1948, the first that occurred there, was witness to the pent up frustrations[50]. This then resulted in mass Hindu migrations from Sindh to India. The region witnessed for the first time in history social divisions based on religion, that they had never experienced before. The syncretic cultural traits of the region and the people who belonged to Sindh had managed to maintain harmony among the different groups of religious sects until partition, many of whom were visitors to local shrines and sufi saints. Migration resulted in a disconnect between the resident population, now comprising in large numbers of immigrants, and their relation to shrines and shrine culture, particular to Sindh.

2.2.3 Post independence (1947 -)

Pakistan separated from India on 14th August 1947 and was pronounced as an Islamic Republic. 6.5 million Muslims migrated from India to Pakistan as a result of the partition while 4.7 million Hindus moved to India. The increase in population mostly took place in urban areas of Sindh and Punjab provinces (Hasan, 2006). According to the 1951 Census survey, 48 percent of the urban population of Pakistan comprised of migrants. The refugee population changed and dominated the new socio-cultural compositions of the urban areas. The geographical region of Pakistan changed from a 'multi-cultural and multi-religious society' to a 'uni-religious society' (Hasan, 2006). The syncretic culture of Sindh and Sufism had managed to maintain harmony in relations between the various societal groups before independence. The enforcement of the new 'uni-religious' society enhanced the social *differences*[51]. The role that Sufism and sufi shrines played in the regional milieu, became less important, and state-organized values received greater importance. The divide between the urban and rural areas also highlighted this, with the migrants concentrating in urban areas.

Urdu language was announced to become the national language. While the refugee population was predominantly Urdu speaking, the locals spoke regional languages, for instance Sindhi in Sindh and Punjabi in Punjab. The large proportion of refugee population in

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[49] Ancient religious scriptures including Rig Veda (Sanskrit), Mahabharta (Hindi, Hindu legends), Upanshud have preached values of peace and love of humanity.
[50] Sydney Morning Herald, *Riot Deaths in Karachi - Mobs kills 122*, 9 Jan 1948, Newspaper Article. http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/18056597
[51] While differences were always present between the social factions, however, this act highlighted what was different (speaking in particular between Hindus and Muslims), when earlier, the similarities of culture brought harmony and the religious differences were less recognized.

urban areas having arrived in their homeland after many sacrifices, welcomed this change that allowed them to identify with the new country. However, an urban-rural divide started to become visible, with pronounced differences in culture and language. Arif Hasan[52] (2006) gives useful insight into the situation in Sindh:

> 'The migrants to Sindh… settled almost entirely in the towns, thus creating a rural-urban divide. For example, in the 1998 census almost 42 percent of the urban population of Sindh stated that Urdu (as opposed to Sindhi) was its mother tongue as compared to 1.62 percent in rural areas. This division manifested itself politically with the refugee population … supporting a strong center and the Sindhi population fighting for greater political autonomy and decentralization.' (p. 8)

Before getting into details about the situation in Sindh, the following sections outline the articulation of the various patterns of tension in the course of history that are relevant to issues of identity, the conflict between tradition and modernity in the newly formed nation state.

Continuing patterns of tension:

Embracing western modernity vs. defining Islamic state

Set up on the 'modern' guidelines of state administration left by the British, the nation-state of Pakistan was formed with inherent conflicts and paradoxes within its formal and informal definitions – of what was considered civil and uncivil, sifting the modern from the traditional. The nation-state of Pakistan was 'an incarnation of colonial values, consolidating its power through traditional and non-traditional institutions' (Malik, 1996).

Nationalism is defined by Anderson (2006) as 'a quintessentially modern phenomenon'. It is based on the success of 'scientific conceptions of time and place over older forms of sacred time and place' (Gilmartin, 2014). While the call for the creation of Pakistan was one as 'a self-consciously Muslim state, created to give expression to the political aspirations of British India's large Muslim population', in Gilmartin's words it 'represented an important moment in the history of the Muslim world, …that brought into clear focus the modern intersection between Islamic history and the history of a nation-state' (Gilmartin, 2014: 245).

> "The moral appeal for the creation of Pakistan … rested on a vision of the state not only as a rationalized focus for order and power but also as a more ineffable symbol of personal attachment to a transcendent civilizational ideal, an ideal associated both with Islamic civilization and with the image of free individual volition linked to the core of modernity. This

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[52] The work of Arif Hasan (2006) charts the scale and reasons of urban changes in the country and its different provinces. The publication consists of a series of tables that enumerate the factors of change through census reports while the narrative provides a concise and clear explanation for the changes in growth rates in urban and rural areas, socio-cultural compositions, economic indicators, distribution of gender and quality of housing among its prominent categories of analysis.

perspective also suggests the deep seated contradictions in Pakistan's creation.." (Gilmartin, 2014)

The unique perspective that the making of Pakistan was initiated with never arrived at any grounded policies or regulations. Its visionaries by design of fate, including Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1948)[53], Muhammad Iqbal (1946), Liaquat Ali Khan (1950) among other died within a few years of its creation. Its intersection between being part of the Islamic history and becoming a nation state maintained modern inclinations mostly, following the set ups that the pre-independence government (colonial) had formulated and practiced.

> '…the perception of backwardness of the orient from colonial times was reproduced and thus perpetuated and strengthened. It is plausible that Muslim intellectuals picked up this concept of backwardness, accepted it as a fact, and finally attempted to stop the supposed decay of Islam by adopting western values and forms.' (Malik 1996:1)

The ideology of the nation state was formed 'under the law of the adversary, that first conserved what had been achieved, i.e. the colonial status quo'. It was then later extended through a process of Islamization to create a relation with 'areas hitherto untouched by the colonial society' (Malik, 1996).

Since 1947, the country has undergone a politicization of Islam which is 'a justification of the integration of Western values and norms and thus of the colonial structures' within society (Malik, 1996). Integration policies for traditional indigenous cultures have been introduced, which have been 'positively influenced by exogenous interests, sometimes of a geo-strategic nature' (Malik, 1996). National and global interests have influenced the formation of these integration policies. These policies have directly influenced the objectives behind the institutional structures established for management of shrines, namely the government departments of Auqaf.

The process of Islamization has led to an adjustment and maneuvering of the religion to suit the running of the state. It has been 'a means of legitimation for the regime'. It has been a way of over-simplifying and fixating the religion to prescribed norms, policies and regulations. It is 'Islam from the cantonment,' (Malik 1996:8) cantonment referring to the urban physical settlement area of the British, where religion and culture were looked at from a safe distance as described in the narrative of the colonial period in earlier sections.

> 'The principles underlying modernization theories not only testify to a eurocentric view but also obscure the increasingly complex social circumstances in Pakistan. They project merely the strategies of action of a small, mostly alienated minority, making its particular suggestions for change according to maxims of generalized social action.' (p. 8)

In the process, the social realities are overlooked and presented in a simplified form. Strategies and policies are similarly reactions to a limited viewpoint of realities. The work of

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[53] year of death

Malik (1996) 'Colonization of Islam- Dissolution of Traditional Institutions in Pakistan' looks at the evolution of the various traditional Islamic institutions including endowments, mystical orders, traditional institutions of education and traditional social systems focusing particularly on the time period after the creation of Pakistan. Using his analysis, he states that these traditional institutions continue to exist but they have been isolated as new modern institutions have ventured in. The later description of the traditional and modern institutions involved at the shrine of Bhitai in the next chapter elaborate as an example.

The Province of Sindh and its struggle after partition

After independence of Pakistan in 1947, Sindh was given a provincial status and its boundaries were demarcated as shown[54] (Refer to figure 2.3). As mentioned earlier, the urban rural divide manifested itself within the region's geography and socio-cultural composition. Karachi and Hyderabad, the major urban centers as recipients of immigrants from India constitute a very different culture from the rest of the region of Sindh. The rest of Sindh includes towns and rural areas. Overall, it has a 90 percent Muslim population. The loss of the Hindu elites of Sindh was a big one, as they had immense ownership of its culture and played a major role in its development. The Sindhi Hindus were better educated and progressive in nature. The diaspora community of Sindhis all over the world continues to align with the distinct cultural features of the region. A large majority of the Sindhi Hindus who migrated to India settled in a town named Ulhasnagar. Sindhi is the main language spoken in this town, apart from its various other urban physical features that have developed over time to give it semblance with Sindh in Pakistan. Their ownership of the Sindhi culture is evident from these developments. The Sufi culture of Sindh was also deeply affected as it was just as much a part of the cultural rooting of the Hindus who moved out. The numbers of the multi-religious followers of shrines reduced.

The Muslim Sindhi elites and politicians in the 1950s including Ghulam Murtaza Syed, Ibrahim Joyo[55] stirred Sindhi nationalist movements on similar lines as during colonial rule, to educate and create awareness among the youth in particular about the strong identity of the Sindhi community. Political parties like Jeay Sindh[56] also materialized from this framework with the struggle for autonomy and development of the region (Verkaaik, 2004).

The modern political leaders of Sindh envisioned its progress on the framework of modernism, albeit as a way of allowing traditional frameworks to progress and develop through the provision of a modern infrastructure. The story of the development of the town of Bhitshah formed around the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai is an example of this. The recognition of Sindh as a separate political entity took physical form in planning of towns and

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[54] The boundaries of the Sindh province today were first marked by the British during colonial rule as the figure shows.

[55] Ibrahim Joyo, a student of G.M.Syed following in the footsteps of his teacher identified and separated the nationalism of Sindh from the Muslim nationalism of Pakistan.

[56] The Jeay Sindh Movement was formed by GM Syed in 1973, after the separation of Bangladesh and was oriented to demanding an independent and / or autonomous Sindh region.

architecture design. This was particularly during the mid 1950s and 1970s under the vision of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's vision.

In general, the evolution of the traditional institution of waqf offers insight into the process of nationalization and its relation created with traditional institutions. The research study of Malik (1996) is insightful and relevant. He presents an analytical framework in which he broadly categorizes two sectors; the traditional and the colonial operating parallel to each other. Within these two, he suggests, are the agrarian and the urban sector. The traditional agrarian sector (TAS) constitutes the 'egalitarian peasant culture including mystical associations and movements' such as those apparent in Sindh. The traditional urban sector (TUS) is driven by 'small scale trade and traffic of goods, local subsistence, and is embedded into traditional security systems'.

Bureaucratization of traditional institutions: The formation of the government department of *Auqaf*

The Government Department of *Auqaf* is a distorted bureaucratized version of what was once a private institution of *waqf*. The department was set up to look after only religious endowments, particularly sufi shrines. It is an outcome of one of the integration policies of the modern state with traditional institutions. This challenges the traditional social order and has replaced it with agents of bureaucracy. Nationalization of *waqf* properties commonly took place not only in Pakistan but also in various other Muslim countries. In Pakistan, this process of nationalization of *waqf* properties had three objectives (Malik 1996: 55):

> 'first, the State wanted to extend and protect its interest, since these endowments are often in the form of religious schools, estates and shrines. The shrines are meeting points for large contingents of people, because of the popular cults associated with them. Religious schools are the centers which produce both religious and political leaders. Secondly, the State was interested in the financial resources accruing from the shrines and schools. Thirdly, nationalization meant the bureaucratization of the shrine-culture and of endowments which, in association with Folk-Islam, was striving for autonomy.'

The traditional institutions were referred to being 'neglected and misused' and its caretakers like the *mutawalli*, *sajjadanashins* were looked at as those misusing the institutions. The Department of *Auqaf*[57] was set up in 1960 for the purpose of managing and maintenance of religious buildings and shrines in the country. Under the Provincial Chief Administrator, the *Auqaf* Department is divided into geographical circles where each circle is supervised by a Manager *Auqaf*. The Manager and the Chief Administrator change every few years and could belong to any region following government regulations. The other staff employed at each *Auqaf* office at shrines is usually local, that is from within the town or nearby region.

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[57] While the history of 'waqf' is a long one and refers to many public and private properties in the region set aside for public welfare in different ways, the provincial Department of Auqaf is relatively recent one.

The absolute authority of the saint was replaced by the bureaucratic institution. The powers and status of the Administrators of *Auqaf* are based on a one-man authority who does not require any special theological or religious knowledge, although the department has been set up to deal with Islamic affairs. He is required to be a Muslim and qualified as 'prescribed by the Government'. This includes a basic qualification degree. The single individual authority system of the government while initially intended to maintain administrative control and justice also makes it vulnerable to corruption (Shahzad 2007; 2014). According to the *Auqaf* Federal Control (Repeal Ordinance 1979), the Chief Administrator can give more attention in physical management renovation and space expansion to one shrine over others, without giving a logical explanation or as Malik writes, 'without being in any way legally answerable' and therefore 'encouraging arbitrariness' (Malik, 1996).

The process of nationalization of endowments was aimed to 'reduce the traditional religious authority of the shrine holders', 'to represent it as a worldly institution' and 'to take away its religious character' (Malik, 1996: 61). The system does not build upon an understanding of the original conceptual alignments of the waqf institution. The complete lack of religious knowledge and background of institutions by the Chief Administrator and the general arbitrariness of his actions support the government's mandate of Islamization as a selective process.

'As a rule, however, only profitable endowments were (first) nationalized' (Malik 1996: 60). The *Auqaf* Department now functions as an autonomous department self-financed by the *nazranas*[58] it receives. The Department took over the management of shrines who did not have *Sajjada Nashins*, i.e. direct descendants, but had *Gaddi Nashins*, indirect descendants. Taking over the financial management from the *Gaddi Nashins* have rendered them powerless as such. Their role is now restricted to presence in rituals as a representative of the saint. The government decides which shrine to give more importance in physical form and upgradation. Some of the shrines have been expanded, reconstructed and developed while other, have been totally neglected.

The shrines that are chosen for upgradation are also altered / modified for their religious alignments, to generate greater popularity. In general, the main functions of the *Auqaf* Department at the shrines include: a) physical upkeep and maintenance of the shrine including cleanliness, infrastructure, water, lighting etc.; b) facilitation of visitors; c) collect *nazranas* in boxes placed by the administration at different key points of circulation at the shrine. The nazranas that were previously received by the saint are now given to the *Auqaf* Department. The donations facilitate the functioning of the department, paying salaries to

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[58] '*Nazranas*' have since the olden times, always been most important source of income for shrines. In the old times, the believers and followers of *sufi* saints used to offer these '*nazranas*' or gifts to the saint by hand or would leave money under the carpet before leaving. After the saint's death, *mutawalli* and *gaddi nashins* received the *nazranas* (Shahzad 2014).

employees as well as the regular upkeeping works. The department rents out the various services at the shrine on annual or 2 year contracts including the *langar*, shoe rentals, the bedding rentals, as some examples.

The Department does not officially undertake heritage conservation. Its management practices are often criticized by the conservation experts on issues of ignorance and neglect. Disputes and quarrels over the financial distribution of the *nazranas* received by the heirs of the saint(s) at several shrines throughout the country are also given to be one of the reasons for establishing a neutral institution for the shrines management.

A conceptual articulation of the institution of *waqf* as one preserving of collective memory and supporting 'living heritage' sites within the context

The private institution of waqf as a traditional institution was oriented toward preserving of the collective memory of a group of people in concept and practice. Using Kozlowski (1985) and Malik (1996), this section aims to conceptually articulate this and highlights the traditional institution as one that supported 'living heritage' with its context. Another question that it directs at is if this can conceptually be compared to the modern institution of conservation.

The institution of *waqf* was historically looked upon as the declaration of a property for such use that it preserved a family's memory in name, in built form and through a public service function associated with it for perpetuity. These clauses are very interesting also when looked in comparison with the modern institution of heritage conservation.

The older institution of *waqf* apart from the various reasons of its declaration, was also a way of preserving memory. *Waqf* was individually articulated by the local people according to their own terms of use and sharing of property. This may have been personal or collective memory, in the form of physical built spaces, used for particular function and / or ritual performances and celebration of events. It therefore acted as an institution of preservation of socio-cultural elements, supported by physical and functional elements. Maintenance revenue generated through its income was expected to keep it in good form. Physical upgradation of place was also possible. In my reading of research works on *waqf*, the element of physical preservation was not one that dominated or defined the *waqf*. The function and use(s) of space by a specific / multiple social group(s) carried greater prominence. The specified use(s) also included revenue generating uses. A private caretaking system passed down through generations or nomination was a way of ascertaining continued use of place as specified.

Compared to the top down heritage institutes and practices within the international and national milieu, the waqf was a grassroots institution[59] that allowed the wealthier families to share their wealth, make a contribution to society, continue to participate (during their life and after) in rituals with their name attached.

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[59] I refer to it as an institution because although it could be looked at in small units for families, it was referred to as a collective pool of donated property, or property used for public services.

While in the modern practice of conservation, it is heritage specialists and professionals who are considered responsible for analyzing the status of historic buildings, their values, preservation and conservation management clauses (E. Avrami et al., 2000; Mason, 2002), the traditional institution of *waqf* was based on the financiers / owners conditions and maintained the social core of values, attached to the owner, the intentions of establishing the *waqf* forming the fundamental of its very outline. While physical conservation is an important element for the preservation of a cultural past, as prescribed by international institutions yet the processes and institutions attached have received criticism and generated debate on top down approach for identification, valuation and conservation; limited participation of local community / natives; lack of understanding of needs of this community; greater focus on physical preservation and bounding regulations for physical changes in structures after their declaration as heritage, and exclusivity of experts (Albert, 2013; Ashworth et al., 2007; Graham, 2002; Graham and Howard, 2010; Moore and Whelan, 2008; Moore, 2007).

The institution of *waqf* was a grass roots declaration, governed by individual and collective needs and cultural desires that were identified for long term survival. The individual and collective units identify the property, its use and its long term maintenance (*mutawalli*). This aspect is imperative in maintaining it in function, meaning and the general status quo for which it was originally dedicated. Its continued maintenance and preservation does not require or result in a 'gentrification' or drastic alteration of its socio-cultural milieu over time. In its grassroots form of private property use and preservation, with a basic comparative analysis, it gives direction and flexibility to heritage preservation and its related issues. It is the uncalculated and unappreciated wisdom of such a property use and flexibility for long term of this indigenous clause.

The institution of *waqf* no longer exists in its original form in the current age. The comparison of two institutions belonging to different time periods and cultures is therefore hypothetical. It is nevertheless an intriguing viewpoint, of which most sufi shrines are an example. The combined public and private use of the spaces of the shrines and distribution and sharing of its revenues before the enforcement of administrative measures in the colonial rule provide a significant example of the traditional 'waqf' property.

2.3   Concluding Remarks

To summarize, this chapter has presented the socio-political evolution of the context giving a background to sufi shrines and the multiple contextual aspects that have played a role in constructing its current shape.

With the aim to analyze the sufi shrine as a living cultural heritage, its historical context is a significant element that defines its present form socially, politically and culturally. The three political phases within which the history of the region is broadly divided are the kingdom regimes, colonial and post independence periods. An evolution of socio-cultural processes

has been highlighted. These processes point toward the change in meanings and values attached to sufi shrines.

Table 2.1 summarizing the contextual parameters is reinserted in this section for discussion. Capitalism had not come to the forefront during the precolonial age in South Asia. The Indian subcontinent along with many parts of Central Asia were characterized by absence of private landed property, a dominant agricultural economy and traditional patterns and organization of living.

Political Regime	Economy	Social	Cultural
Kingdoms	Largely agricultural	Heirarchical, religious structure and organization of society	Syncretic culture in Sindh including sufi culture; influenced by a hierarchical social structure
Colonial 1799-1947	Capitalist economy; Trade and agricultural	Modern Administration, scientifically classified, foundation of 'nation' laid	Patterns of cultural tensions between colonial 'modern' culture and indigenous culture
Post independence 1947 onwards	Agricultural; Manufacturing; Trade and Services	Combination of the two systems, largely dominated by the modern system established during colonial rule officially	Urban and rural cultural distinctions increase as western modern influences accentuate in the urban areas

Table 2.1: Summarizing the macro contextual aspects: political, economy, social and cultural

The culture of Sindh was observed to be syncretic and peace loving. The constant political instability within the region between the 14th and 18th centuries acted as a cause for the local people's leaning towards 'a search for harmony and peace'. Poetry, literature became cultural forms of expression. Following particular Sufi saints in the 16th – 19th centuries was a common part of the living patterns of society. Community organizations were strong, hierarchical and a norm. The sufi saints took on a role as passive religious leaders and shrines and *khanqahs* became local religious centers as the saints adopted a pattern of movement and migration.

Resettlements of sufi saints developed in isolated places and their community formations were passive regional interventions in Sindh mostly. The development of these spatial nodes among other center holds created regional networks of the Islamic civilization. The shrines of

saints played the role of local cultural and religious community spaces as well as made connections to the larger universal values and realities of the Islamic civilization.

Macro urban form

An important hypothetical connection made in this chapter is also that of a possible link between the physical urban form of the typical South Asian old city, and the absence of private landed property. The negotiations between the community members that resulted in a distribution of public, semi public and private spaces shows their strength in relationship, before colonization. Typically, the South Asian city form was of mixed landuse and was primarily pedestrian oriented or wide enough for animal drawn carraiges. The characteristic organic morphology of many old cities in the region, dictated by the narrow winding lanes and courtyard based mixed use plot configurations have been a result of these economic and socio-cultural parameters.

The grid iron, bungalow-plot residential unity, modern segregation of landuses were brought in by the colonial rulers (Lari, 2002). It resulted in the modern urban form becoming common and the regulation.

Colonialism became the background for the arrival of 'modernity' in South Asia. Sufism, sufi shrines and their living traditional regional culture comprehensively accommodating educational, social and cultural activities within a particular environment can be regarded as an indigenous form of modernity. This came in competition with western modernity, which was experimented and imposed upon a colonized population. While the fluidity and flexibility of the traditional mechanisms can be looked at as a positive element and a form of opportunity, it was also vulnerable and its unstructured form make it easier to dominate.

The region became experimental grounds for the scientific frameworks. The social division created as a result of this classification system created unimagined disturbances within the socio-cultural milieu. Classification of descendants of saints as landlords along with a 'modern' education disengaged their cultural and spiritual connection with their traditional legacy. Classification of fakirs and similar social groups as criminals excluded them from the new conventional hierarchies formed and recognized as 'formal'. The public social events formed venues of debates on religious identity and nationalism.

The Muslim nation referred to locally as *ummah* and *millat* was a non-territorial concept of the community at large. Local representation based on geography, language and culture formed the multiple particularistic identities that altogether comprised of the Muslim *ummah*.

Muslim nationalism and the modern concept of territorial nationalism were paradoxical and juxtapositions. The latter was capitalistic, inclusionary and homogenizing. The contradiction led to formation of 'patterns of cultural tension'. During colonial rule, the institution of waqf, a

traditional institution became an example of such a pattern of cultural tension. The shrines of sufi saints came to be recognized as *waqf* property.

Modern planning regulations aimed to segregate public and private landuses. However, the history of waqf properties found particularly during colonial rule showed that this segregation did not traditionally exist and was an important socio-cultural component of the Islamic living patterns. The intermixing of private property usages with public charitable and philanthropic works was characteristic of traditional life. It was a way of distribution of wealth in society and acted as a buffer from the stark public and private insecurities that could result from capitalist interventions and changing family structures. Religious endowments were separated during colonial times and regulations for private *waqf*, family *waqf* were made separate.

After independence of Pakistan, the Department of *Auqaf* was formed in 1960 to supervise and manage religious endowments, including sufi shrines in particular.

The territorial nationalist movement of Sindh that coincided with the debate on Muslim nationalism were put together to define the Western region of Pakistan. Muslim majority areas of the Indian subcontinent were identified to form the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The features of Sindh that make it culturally unique include its geographical positioning and the syncretic mystic culture prevalent and reinforced through centuries, also in the form of Sufism. The syncretic culture of Sindh is representative of the people of the region. Today, diaspora community of Sindhi Hindus who migrated and are now settled in different parts of the world get together on multiple forums aligning themselves with a culture that is unique. These forums are organizations and community institutions established in India among other places as well as websites where people share their traditions, research, and family history among other things.

The Sufi shrines of Sindh are places of commemoration, representative of the syncretic culture of the region in multiple ways. The next three chapters zoom into the case study of the Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai in Bhitshah itself. The historical and socio-political context in this chapter has laid forth the background for the establishment of shrines in the region in general at a macro level.

The following chapter is about the intangible heritage relating to the shrine of Bhitai. Its significance and multiple levels of experience make it the most important component of the living heritage of the shrine. Infact, it is this intangible heritage that forms the larger framework within which the shrine situates itself.

MARUI XXVII, Original in ancient Sindhi by Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, Shah jo Risalo
Translation in verse by Elsa Kazi, Risalo of Shah Abdul Latif (selections), 1ˢᵗ ed. 1965, 3ʳᵈ ed. 1996, Sindh
Adabi Board, Jamshoro.

When 'Be' was not yet said, nor was
there flesh-bone scheme on plan:
When Adam had not yet received
his form, was not yet man:
Then my relationship began,
my recognition too.

'Am I not thy Lord?' came a voice;
a voice so sweet and clear;
And I said: 'yes' with all my heart
when I this voice did hear;
And with a bond I did adhere
that moment to my love.
...
A prisoner I by destiny..
Or who would want, these forts
''We nearer than thy life's vein are"
to that home I will flee --
When will I be from mansions free
and reach my Maru⁶⁰ sweet?

O God, do send the messenger
who will my message bear-
I do belong to them, although
to own me they don't care..
I hold the pen within my hand.
may some one paper spare;
Tears check my writing, in despair
'O' er pen they fall and fall.

Scores of patches my bodice shows,
my head with rags is decked-
I to my people hoped to go
and all robes did reject;
My shawl from Dhat, may God protect
its virtue to hide my shame.
...
Almighty God, let it not be
that I in bondage die
Enchained my body night and day,
doth weep in misery-
O let me first my homeland see
and then my days let end.
...

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⁶⁰ Maru is Sindhi for man. This one indicates a special person and relation for Maruii.

Fair Marui does not wash her hair'
She does not smile or eat'
On Omar's justice relies she
who robbed her freedom sweet;
"The havoc you have wrought, you'll meet
at your arrival 'there'."
...
Fair Marui does not wash her hair,
for Malir longeth she...
Only when prince doth set her free
balance restored will be...
Whole desert will drink milk, for glee
when 'trust' is safe returned.

There is no force to make them pine,--
no taxes in their land,
They gather lovely flowers red
for mangers of their kine --
Malir with lustrous smiles doth shine
there priceless marus are.

Omar, for me your mansions grand
a double torture are;
Here you torment me ... there, so far
loved-ones accuse me too.

To Maru needle joined my breath ,
a needle, oh so fine,
My heart is there, my earthy flesh
must here to force resign;
My breath is in the thatch divine
my body's to mansions bound
...
"Palatial doors and windows I
will build for thee, Marui-
But here now ... lovely canopies
I shall rise over thee..
Those who did ne'er enquiries make
why so continuously
You weep for them? something must be
wrong with the desert-folk."
...
Threads Maru round my wrists tied.. gold
fine gold they are for me;
Omer, don't offer silks to rustic
maid, they leave me cold--
Because much dearer I do hold
my worn ancestral shawl.
Were I to breathe my last, looking
To my home longingly --
My body don't imprison here
In bondage and unfree-
A stranger from her love away

Not bury separately
The cool earth of the desert let
The dead one's cover be;
When last breath comes, O carry me
To Malir, I implore.
...
The wounds that happy rustics left
today fester again --
Sumro, sorrow dwells in me
of every joy bereft;
From Maru's separation, cleft
is every bone of mine.

My girl-friends in reproachful mood,
today sent word to me:
"Silly one, you perhaps have eaten
much of princely food,
and friends, and your relations good
you have forgotten all."

In corners of the fort, to quell
her grief Marui doth mourn
Remembering Malir, she doth weep,
makes others weep as well --
O may the maid reach home and dwell
amongst her Marus soon

"Would that I never had been born,
or died at birth" she says;
" O what a torture, shame and scorn
to Marus I became."

Destiny brought me here.. reside
I do unhappy here;
My body's here- my heart is there
where Maru doth abide;
May God now turn this sorrow's tide
and let me meet my love. ---

The lightenings are now newly dressed,
the season doth return;
Mine eyes do not stop drizzling... for
ancestral land they yearn --
I would not with such sadness burn
if they would think of me.

If looking to my native land
with longing I expire;
My body carry home, that I
may rest in desert-sand;
My bones if Malir reach, at end,
though dead, I'll live again.

A messenger arrived 'this day
authentic news conveys;
"Do not forget your distant love
and do not die", he says,
You shall reach home; only few days
in this fort you may stay?

The one who from my homeland came,
oh at his feet I fall
And to this traveler, my heart
did open, telling all
An instant more behind this wall
to be, how I abhor.

"Don't cry, don't weep and fret
shed no tears of dismay;
Whatever days appear,
O let them pass away, ---
For after sorrow, joy
O Marui , comes to stay --
Desert maid know, your chains
by destiny's own sway
Are moved, and now you may
throw them into the fire."

Omar, a traveler I did meet
today, with news for me
And as he stood and message gave
from the Beloved sweet
I felt all sufferings did retreat
and my chains all did fall.

My iron shackels all are gone
Love's chains unyielding are.
Unhappy days without Marus
in mansions, life did mar..
My countrymen, they are too far
reproach them I cannot --
Good were the days that I in pain
In tortuous prison passed;
Storms roared above me threateningly,
My cries for help were vain;
But lo: my love by prison chain,
Was chastened, purified.

The days I passed in deep despair,
away from homeland mine, --
My tribesmen will reproach me, if
my face looks washed and fair
So to their thatches I'll repair
to wash off mansion dirt!

"Don't weep, nor cry in agony
But when the world's asleep;
At night raise both your little hands
To God, and hopeful be --
Where you wedded were, brave Marui
'that homeland' thau shalt see."

In this story of Omar and Marui put together in this Sur by Shah Latif, 'Marui symbolizes the 'finite self' and learns to realize that as she in reality belongs to the King of Kings she cannot afford to submit to the will of Omar, the mere earthly king who had kept her in subjection far away from one to whom she was betrothed before the very beginning of things. She must therefore, firmly reject all corrupt inducements that were being offered by Omar in order to seduce her into becoming his bride. She deliberately must turn away from these false blandishments and to this end she must constantly remember her kinship with people from whom she has been separated. This is the only way whereby she is to become in the process more conscious of her link with God' (Kazi 1996).

The story of Omar and Marui became particularly significant in the context of Sindh and its history for its symbolic attachment to land and the people of a place. It has played an important role in creating a nationalistic narrative for the region. The following chapter gives further context and details to the intangible heritage attached to the Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai.

3 INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE SHRINE OF SHAH ABDUL LATIF BHITAI

This research study particularly explores the idea of a cultural heritage as an integrated system within the indigenous social and cultural processes. It is defined often as the result of a dynamic social process, a product or 'social construct'. This chapter holds a central position in this thesis, by order and by importance.

The intangible cultural heritage of the chosen case study of the shrine of Bhitai is a central feature in maintaining its historical continuity. This chapter describes this intangible heritage. It is divided into two parts. The first part describes briefly the poetry of Shah Latif, its content, and major features that the local people of Sindh make associations with, and that characterize it as 'Sindhi' and 'indigenous'. The Sufi shrine is a place of enactment, where poetry and ritual performance govern its architecture. This chapter establishes the indigenous/ traditional importance of ritual to architectural form, in contrast to the modern conventional architecture where 'form follows function'.

The second part of the chapter identifies the significant rituals that take place at the shrine. Rituals are embedded with social and cultural meanings. Their repetitive form and structure of performance are choreographed to define the levels of importance to the different elements of space and people: the social hierarchy and organization. It is the interrelation of the rituals to place and the participants that this latter section focuses on.

Starting with an introduction to the saint, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai and his literary works, the chapter gives a background of the socio-cultural processes attached to the case site of 'living heritage' for the study. Ideological and political processes in history produce place / heritage. The background and setting for the production and construction of meaning attached to place are the context within which the place situates itself. The poetry of Bhitai, and his person as an inspirational being and saint form the socio-cultural background. They are the intangible heritage that forms the larger framework within which the tangible takes shape (Bouchenaki, 2003b).

It has been common for Sufi groups in the past to contribute immensely to the literary, intellectual and spiritual spheres as there exists 'preponderating content of Sufi thought' in regional literatures (Ikram and Spears, 1955:14). Shah Abdul Latif's poetry is a prominent example in this regard. The poetry of Shah Latif is an intangible heritage.

It is important to describe although briefly the nature of the contents of the *Risalo* of Shah Latif. This offers an understanding of why the Sindhis refer to it as their cultural identity. The mystical poetry is essentially religious; its various compositional elements make it a cultural representation of the average Sindhi, belonging to any religious group. Moreover, his poetry has been reinterpreted in the later years, creating new connections to a changing society. These modern interpretations situate Shah Latif's poetic works effectively within the framework of a social and cultural development.

3.1   Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai (1689-1752): Introduction

Shah Abdul Latif was born into a family of mystics who lived near Hala; his father, Shah Habib, was a descendant of one of the first noted poets in his mother tongue, Shah Abdul Karim of Bulri (Baloch, 2010; Lari, 1994; Sorley, 1940).

Born in the late 17th century, Bhitai is described to be a great scholar, 'incomparably the greatest man whom Sindh (region) has yet produced in the realm of imaginative art' (Sorley, 1940: 169). He was an Islamic mystic, a fakir[61] and a poet. Gulrajani, (1924) in his book on the Sufis of Sindh describes him to be 'the *greatest* poet and mystic of Sindh' (emphasis added).

Shah Latif lived a simple life. Figure 3.1 shows a depiction of him sitting in a simple pose under a tree, his

Figure 3.1: Oil on Canvas, 'An imaginative portrait of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai' by Mohammad Ali Bhatti
Source: Sindhology Museum, Jamshoro

hand counting the beads of his rosary. His clothes and environment depict the simplicity of his

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[61] Fakir: a person who lives his life simply, subsisting with few worldly possessions and remains busy in contemplation regarding religious, spiritual phenomena; an ascetic.

life. He spent his initial years at Hala, about 10 km from Bhitshah today. Their old residence is referred to as *Hala Haveli*. His father, Shah Habib as well as his great grandfather, Shah Karim were practicing Sufis as well (Baloch, 2010). Islamic mysticism was practiced as a living tradition in the house where Shah Latif spent his childhood. Sufi practices were therefore a part of his daily life. He was inspired by Rumi's literary works, his great grandfather's poetry and the Holy Quran enough to incorporate some of its content in concept and quotation in his own works. He could read but no written scriptures have been found from his time. It is said that while he produced poetry, the order of the poetry and the structure of compilation of the *Risalo*[62] even today in different versions[63] varies (Lari, 1994). It is therefore concluded in texts that the poetry was not written during the life of Bhitai but memorized (Lari, 1994; Schimmel, 1976).

He traveled through the various regions of Sindh and was a witness to the geographical locations of the folk tales that he weaves in some detail in his poetry. In 1742, he finally settled down at Bhitshah with some fakirs. His father passed away and he buried his father at the site. The site of Bhitshah was a small plateau overlooking the Karar Lake, mentioned also in his poetry. The site offered solace and contemplation, with the presence of the water body then connected to a tributary of the Indus River. It is said that it was one of the spots that he came to for meditation in isolation before he eventually decided to settle here (Baloch, 2010). He and his fakirs constructed their simplistic dwellings. The old house of Bhitai is still there from this time, preserved by the later generations of fakirs. He attracted people with his mystic talks, his poetry and is spoken of[64] as a good motivator and inspiration as many joined him at Bhitshah. The fakirs were faithful to him and obeyed his instructions. He was a good social motivator in that that the various tasks that he assigned to different people for daily functioning as a community were obediently and faithfully carried out.

Some grew food, some made dwellings, some were responsible for cleaning and various other tasks, and alongside all this, they prayed together, meditated together and joined him in his poetic sermons (Baloch 2010). The fakirs had immense amount of respect for Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai as reveal the accounts gathered from the fakirs of the shrine today (See Appendices). There are several fakirs that still follow the tasks that they have received through generations or by nomination of rituals prescribed by Bhitai. The second part of this chapter gives details of the prominent rituals that are carried out at the shrine today, their history and relevance to the people involved and the place. Chapter 5 describes with map the use of the place during the life of Bhitai along with its evolution. He passed away in 1752 and his tomb was constructed by then ruler, Ghulam Shah Kalhoro, who it is said[65] was born and

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[62] The Risalo was the technical term for collections of poetry arranged according to the musical modes.
[63] The next section briefly outlines the difference between the versions of the Risalo.
[64] Interviews of generational fakirs at the shrine and Zulqarnain, local research expert on the history of shrine and town of Bhitshah.
[65] Sources including (Kanasero, 2007) and (Baloch, 2010) refer to this. Also my interviews with the generational fakirs revealed this.

lived a life of kingship due to fulfillment of Bhitai's prayers. His mother was a particularly ardent follower of the saint.

Bhitai lived a simple life and many anecdotes related from his time are regarded as heresy as there are no written records from the time and information was passed on orally (Baloch, 2010; Lari, 1994; Sorley, 1940). His poetry was also written down much later after his death. Prominent references on the life of Bhitai and his poetry include Abbasi, (1989); Akhund, (1991); Kanasero, (2007); Schimmel, (1976); Sorley, (1940). The next section gives an introduction to his poetry, its relevance within the historical context and significances.

3.2 The Poetry: Intangible Heritage and a Cultural Representation

The poetry of Bhitai has been regarded very highly in the region of Sindh and by historians. The following are some quotes from different texts that show this.

> '[Shah's poetry] has retained its universal appeal, with the spontaneity of his message engrained in the hearts of all classes of Sindh's population, Muslims and Hindus, lettered and unlettered.' (Sorley, 1940)

The statement holds true even today, as the people of Sindh popularly quote Shah's poetry in their daily conversation and to explain worldly phenomena[66].

> "Shah Abdul Latif is a poet who uses for the first time with supreme skill the language of the country folk and employs it to interpret ideas of beauty and of religious philosophy, which, while drawing much inspiration from Persian models, succeeded in maintaining a high level of native originality and local eloquence. He was a man steeped in an understanding of the mystical teaching of Islam and familiar with the form of thought found to perfection in the great Persian masters." (Akhund, 1991: 23)

The architectural craft and form reflects the cultural predisposition of the shrine. Chapter 5 explains in detail its structure and organization of spaces, while a later section in this chapter shows the ritualistic use and prominence of spaces.

The 18th century was the dawn of modern times and the time when Shah Abdul Latif produced his poetry. The political turmoil and instability due to turfs and takeovers by the dynasties, rivalries within royal families created social anxiety. The works of Sufi poets in such time was a respite and get-away.

During the time of Shah Latif, the official language being used in the Indian subcontinent particularly in the urban areas as well as in the courts of the Mughal kings was Persian. The Mughal kings promoted the Persian language. It was considered a refined language and was

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[66] Casual conversations with Sindhis; Observations at Sindhi workshops on town development and heritage [Shikarpur 2015; Karachi 2016]

spoken in educational institutions as well as in daily life. A popular phrase used at the time was *Parhe Farsi ghore charsi*, meaning 'if you want to progress, learn Persian'. The following quote from British observer, Richard Burton in 1851 reveals the language comparisons and their public image.

> 'Shah Bhitai… had the disadvantage of contending against a barbarous dialect, and composing for an unimaginative people. His ornaments of verse are chiefly alliterations, puns, and jingling of words. He displays his learning by allusions to the literature of Arabs and Persia, and not unfrequently indulges in quotation. His compositions are all upon subjects familiar to the people, strained to convey a strange idea. As might be expected, he is more homely and common place than Ibn Fariz or Hafiz; at the same time, he is more practical, and some portions of his writings display an appreciation of domestic happiness scarcely to be expected from one of his order.
>
> Hence his poetry is the delight of all that can understand it. The learned praise it for its beauty and are fond of hearing it recited to the sound of the guitar. Even the unlearned generally know select portions by heart, and take the trouble to become acquainted with their meaning.' (Burton, 1851: 203)

Burton makes reference to Ibn Fariz and Hafiz who were popular in Bhitai's time in Arabic and Persian poetry respectively. His reference to Sindhi as a 'barbarous dialect' points to his and the public image of the language as one unrefined. He writes from a foreigner's perspective and at the same time admits people enjoying the poetry and its singing and memorizing it and describes the poetry itself as homely and commonplace.

The British also observed the disconnect of Persian language with some of the local regions. The people of Sindh were not able to express themselves in the Persian language and could not relate to Persian as a language for their culture.[67] Later the British established Sindhi as an official language for some time as a reaction, supporting the view that people of their own regions needed to speak and use their own language (Sorley, 1940).

It is Shah Latif's contribution to poetry and to the region that he reverted the trend of doing poetry in the local language in Sindh, his poetry being the first of its kind in the language. Subsequent poetry was produced as a reaction to Shah Latif's as later sections will mention. When people of a region express themselves in a language through poetry, the language becomes representative of the people, their feelings and traditions. His poetry cannot be regarded as one representative of the elite. It was the masses, the common people who aligned with it. He presented the problems and feelings of the local people. His characters include the miner, the metalsmith, potter, carpenter, fishermen, peasants, tradesmen. By contrast, where there is the mention of the kings, it does not take on a main role, it is a mere mention without dwelling into the grandness of their aura and environment. They are just presented as characters within the local milieu. His poetry is about the life of the common

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[67] Discussions: Dr. Tehmina Mufti, Professor of Sindhi literature, January 2016 @ her residence in Jamshoro.

man. The descriptions and folk tales, culture and customs come from the people of Sindh. The Sindhi community therefore identifies with it.

Within the same text, Burton also writes, referring to Shah Latif's works:

> "As regards the literature of the Sindhi tongue, it may safely be asserted that no vernacular dialect in India, at the time of our taking the country, possessed more, and few so much, original composition." (Burton, 1851: 75)

While he uses some Arabic and Persian words in his poetry, he changes their pronunciation and spelling to modify them according to the local style of speaking and word formation. For instance the Persian word *riwaj* meaning tradition, is used as *riwaz* in the poetry adopting the local Sindhi manner of talking. He refers to the British locally called *farangi*, as *fulangi*, referring to the feather in their caps that they wore, highlighting the airs that came with the British administrators[68]. Such nuances give his poetry a popular appeal.

The structure of his poetry does not follow the Persian forms of poetry, like *ghazals*[69] but used *bait* and *wai. Bait* was a local form of poetry structure but *wai* is said to be something Latif invented. Similarly, while the major themes of Persian poetry were *gul* (flowers), *bulbul* (birds), *mehboob* (lover) and *qamar* (moon), symbolic references of a dreamy romantic poetry, Shah's poetry is known for its 'locally public' (*awami*) nature, and folk tales, being sufic and religious in its essence (Abbasi, 1989).

Shah Latif's poetry is representative of the local Sindhi landscape including the sand dunes, the river, jungles, mountains, lakes and the way of living, the culture of Sindh.

> 'When we read the poetry of Shah Latif, we understand how the people of Sindh think and feel. Different nations think and feel differently. Shah Latif was able to express the Sindhi common man. He uses the words of the common spoken language yet is able to achieve the depth in his poetry of that of a Sufi poetry.'[70]

Shah Latif's imagery and his whole way of speaking is deeply rooted in the popular Indian tradition of women's songs (Schimmel, 1976: 267). Poetry that stirs emotions for a particular people and is specific to them, their geography, traditions, history, customs, becomes part of their communal identity and representation.

Shah Abdul Latif's poetry brings together Islamic mysticism, mystical poetry with the rural, simple and unassuming living. The use of the whole range of inherited forms with great ease makes the imagery comprehensible without too many theoretical interpretations. The masses enjoyed this type of Sufism, for it offered them some consolation in their miserable lives. They could sing Shah Abdul Latif's poetry when ploughing or going out for fishing, picking cotton or

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[68] Discussions: Dr. Tehmina Mufti, Professor of Sindhi literature, January 2016 @ her residence in Jamshoro.
[69] Persian form of romantic poetry
[70] Discussions: Dr. Tehmina Mufti, Professor of Sindhi literature, January 2016 @ her residence in Jamshoro (Appendix 3xvii).

spinning it, and hence the central concepts of Islamic mysticism became part and parcel of their daily lives (Schimmel, 1976: 269).

> "….he transforms the simple heroines of Sindhi oral tradition into radiant symbols of suffering and love." (p. 267) "[Shah Abdul Latif] sings of the plight of the poor villager, describes the grazing camels and the soft-eyed buffalo calves, gracious rain and scalding desert wind; the large, simple assembly halls in the male quarters and the lowly thatched huts at the riverside, are his world; and his music, though indebted to the classical Indian tradition, utilizes the folk songs of his home province until even the cries of the desperate lovers turn into love's own melody". (Schimmel, 1976: 263)

A blending of cultures took place. The mystical poetry of Shah Abdul Latif is set within a musical foundation, the *raags* and *raaginis*[71] that constitute simple form of Indian classical music (Sorley, 1940).

There are 31 versions of Shah *jo Risalo*, writes (Lari, 2002: 187), 'with considerable variations between them. For example, the number of *surs* vary from 17 to 40. Moreover, the number of sections in each *sur* are also not uniform, nor is the order of the *surs* the same in all manuscripts'. The oldest manuscript of his work was by Akhund Faiz Ali dating from 1852, while the earliest edition of *Shah jo Risalo* was published by the German missionary Ernst Trump in 1866. The Bombay edition of the *Risalo* has 30 *Surs*. A *Sur* is a musical mode, named after itself and points also to the nature of its contents[72]. Each *sur* closes with a *wai*. Invented by Shah, the *wai* is recognized as a Sindhi form of poetry. 'A *wai* is a longer poem with one main line which is repeated in singing after every line of the poem' (Schimmel, 1976). Many *surs* consist of folk tales, true historical legends dating back to 14th and 15th centuries.

The main *Surs* of the *Risalo* are listed sequentially as follows (Akhund, 1991; Schimmel, 1976; Sorley, 1940):

1 *Kalyan* is a purely mystical song, begins with a deep felt hymnical praise of God, the One, who manifests Himself under different forms.

2 *Sur Yaman Kalyan* is a derivation of the first *Sur*, it also explains the traditional Sufi ideals.

3 *Sur Khambhat* is a night melody, dealing with the journey of the camel toward the radiant beloved, the camel being the symbol of the lower soul which has to be tamed and driven towards the beloved (the Prophet or God Himself). It contains lively remarks about the restive camel's habits, typical for a poet who lived in a camel breeding society.

4,5 The two *Surs, Sarirag* (an afternoon rag) and *Samundi* are connected with the dangers of seafaring. Making analogies like, the fragile boat, 'man' requires sails made of sincerity and right action, and the cargo should be prayers… The melody of Samundi is an indigenous Sindhi folk song.

6 The next *Sur*, *Sohni*, 'the Beautiful', is about whirlpools and sandbank forms. It refers to a tragic love

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[71] The raags, surs or musical modes in Indian classical music has male and female modes. The female modes are called Raaginis.

[72] While Kalyan, Yaman Kalyan, Khambat, Sarirag, Kamod, Ghatu, Kedaro, Pirbhati are surs named after the musical modes, Surs like Lila Chanesar, Mumal Rano are named after the couples on which the stories are based. Sur Sohni, Marui center on the women, that are the main characters of the folk tales and representative of their struggles. Sur Samundi, Asa, Purab and Karail tell us of the subject or mood of the poetry.

story of *Sohni* (girl) unhappily married to a man, she swims every night to the island where her beloved *Mehar* grazes the buffalos. She drowns in water when her clay vessel is replaced with an unbaked one in conspiracy. The unity with God as her faithful, makes for an important message in the poem.

7   Lila Chanesar, the next Sur, is a traditional story of one of the Samma rulers in 14th century Sind. Chanesar's wife bargains a night for her husband with another woman (owner of necklace) against a necklace worth Rs. 900,000 (about 9000 Euros today). The story is about the evolving relationship between the husband and wife given this incident, the process of purification that she considers important to be pure again for her husband and her God after her bargain.

8   Mumal Rano is another folk tale originating in Lower Sind in 15th century about beautiful Mumal and her lover Rano. Rano mistakes her for cheating on him and leaves her quietly disappearing. After a long period of waiting, the loving woman is united with her beloved. The analogy with the beloved is always made with that of Allah as beloved and the waiting for love.

9   *Sur* Marui is based on a historical event in the 14th century, when the mighty Omar of Omarkot kidnaps a village girl of Thar desert. Despite the torture that she is put through, she refuses to marry the ruler and remains faithful to her family and people and pleads to go back to them, only to be scorned at later by her own people, when she finally returns.

10   *Sur Kamod* is the only *sur* that talks of a deeply peaceful and fulfilled love and happiness, versus the hopeless search and waiting for love. It is a famous tale of Prince Jam Tamachi falling in love with a charming fishermaid Nuri, a story of perfect obedience in love.

11   *Sur Ghatu* narrates within the background of the dangerous, merciless sea of monsters who swallow fishermen.

12   *Sur Sorathi* is built upon a Hindu tale of a King from Girnar, Gujrat who offered his head to the fakir who enchanted him with music since he had promised to give anything in return.

13   *Sur Kedaro* is an old mourning melody, devoted to the martyrs of Kerbala[73] who were slain, lead by Prophet Muhammad's grandson Husain.

14   *Sur Asa* is not about folk tradition but talks of mystical wisdom and poetical imagery.

15   *Sur Khahori* is written in praise of the Yogis who walk from the village of Ganji Takar near present day Hyderabad to the sacred mountain of Hinglaj (an ancient Shiva sanctuary in Baluchistan)

16   *Sur Purab*, 'East', describes the feelings of the loving woman who sends out the crow (as the messenger bird) to find out how her beloved is.

17   *Sur Karail*, the song of the swan who is admonished not to fly and dive with the other unclean birds, but continue to feed on pearls.

18   In *Sur Pirbhati* 'Early Morning', man's soul is seen as a wandering minstrel who is kindly treated by the ruler of Las Bela, the representative of Allah.

19   *Sur Bilawal* talks of the importance of good company for development and grooming of one's character.

The above table tries to summarize the main subjects and chapters of the *Risalo*. In representing the common Sindhi man, the following are examples from Shah Latif's poetry that show the spiritual relationship he makes with Allah. He talks of the way the metalsmith works, 'My heart is joined to my lovers heart like a chain, like the smaller connecting parts of the chain connect' (Schimmel, 1976). Bhitai refers to the potter who bakes his products in the

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[73] Kerbala is a small town in Iraq. It is held important due to a war that took place there in 670 AD, between the family of prophet Muhammad and the Umayyad army. It is held to be the most tragic event in world history as a small number of 72 people in this army fought against an army of about 10,000.

furnace, 'My dear lover, look at the fire and learn from how it burns all day quietly, keeping the emotions within and says not a sigh to any outside'.

His stories, characters are more than just common people. The following in the words of the Gaddi Nashin explains some of the cultural associations with the folk tales that Shah Latif uses in his poetry.

> 'In the stories of Shah Latif, the woman is the hero. His stories display the strength of character of the woman as heroines.
>
> The story of Marui, heroine of Shah Latif for example, is that of a village girl who is taken by a prince, Omar to jail. Marui is 15 to 16 year old little girl, her mental strength is such, she refuses to relent to the pressures of the prince and refuses to marry him, to live with him at any cost, she refuses to be disloyal to her family and her people. Omar says to her that your clothes are torn, your slipper is broken, yet you refuse all riches to be loyal to your people. However, when Marui goes back to her people, they say bad things about her, in response to which she turns to God and says to Him that He is the only one who knows her and the only one for her.
>
> In Latif Saeen's stories, the woman is the hero.
>
> Similarly the story of Noori, who is a village girl of a fishermen family, the king of the time comes to her family to ask for her in marriage. For the western fairytale that would be the ideal thing in life, but Noori does not immediately agree to the marriage and puts conditions like asking the king to not tax the village anymore, that she will not break her connection with her family, to allow her to regularly meet her family and not put forth issues like smells etc. Once the king agrees to her various conditions, only then does she agree to the marriage. So she takes her initiative.
>
> The story of Sasui and Punhu's love story. After Sassui and Punhu get married, Punhu's brothers come to take him with them. When Punhu goes away for something and does not return, she does not stay there and wait but goes after him to look for him, so the woman takes initiative. She has a tough time, is pricked by thorns on her way, is thirsty, clothes are torn, but she remains steadfast in looking for her beloved.' (Gaddi Nashin Interview: Appendix 3 x)

Although they are historically real characters, Shah Latif is not just a story teller, as he makes symbolic references to larger aspects including spiritual, representational, and of the struggle. He points toward the inevitable and ultimate relation of his characters to the divine.

Modern Interpretations

The poetry of Shah Latif has contributed to the regional literature and cultural development. The *Risalo* of Shah has received modernist interpretations and reactions from other poets. Shaikh Ayaz is one of the most well known poets among these, whose poetry was a modernist reaction to Shah Latif's. For instance, Shaikh Ayaz writes addressing Shah Latif, *Dekho mein ne tumhara keenoro taura nahi.* The *tambura* is referred to as the *Keeno*, meaning he has continued with the tradition and provided interpretations that matched the thought of that time.

Similarly, Shah Latif writes for Sassi, *chalti raho, mehnat karti raho,* literally meaning, keep moving, keep struggling and don't give up so you find what you are looking for. Shaikh Ayaz

adds a modernist approach for Sohni's struggle, *naye naye garhe banao, take tum apni manzil tak puhanch sako*, literally translated as, 'make new types of (clay) pots, so that you can reach your destination'.

The two tales of Sassi and Sohni are different in that Sassi loses her lover and struggles through a desert in search for him, eventually dying there. The story of Sohni is one in which she tries to cross a river to meet her lover at the other end, however, in envy, the clay pot that she is using to keep afloat has been replaced by one unbaked. Latif takes the two stories of struggle and uses symbolism to make statements about yearning for life and love of God. Ayaz in comparison, offers an improvisation, new technique and approach. He offers modernization of ways to reach goals. 'Don't make unburnt utensils, make better ones.' Shah Latif in comparison promotes constant hardwork. Supportive of women's struggle for their rights in the local context, Ayaz proposes modern manners of achieving them.

Other modern poets who refer to and interpret Shah's work include Niaz Humayun, Imdad Husaini, Sarwe Sajjad Ali, Tanveer Abbasi and Adal Soomro. Symbolism is a tool used to address the current social issues (Dr. Tehmina Mufti). It is relevant to understand the associations made with Shah's poetry and highlight its socio-cultural significance for the people of the region.

The story of Marui and Umar (Sur Marui) receives much importance and is symbolically one yearning for homeland, aligned with patriotism and of strong feeling of belonging to a particular community and place. King Umar forcefully takes Marui, a poor village girl and offers her riches, entitlement and place. But as the story relates, Marui yearns for nothing else but being among her own people and village. The *Loi*, the piece of fabric that she wraps around herself has been attached with symbolic references of patriotism. The *loi* much torn and worn out is a source of comfort and of native association to her. Oskar Verkaaik expresses this well.

> "There is a profound sense of patriotism expressed in the fate of Marui, who prefers her modest village to the luxury of the court. There is passion for freedom, a refusal to surrender to tyranny and a spirit of self-sacrifice" (Verkaaik: Boivin 2011: 209).

Later she laments that when she dies, she wants the flowers of her country to be put and burned at her grave. She relates to their smell as one of where she belongs and therefore she can be there in memory. This narrative has created impact for the nationalism movements in Sindh and has been referred to in literature, speech and official cultural alignments[74]. Having given a brief overview of the poetry of Bhitai, this section has described its most salient features and aspects that take particular attention in discussions with fakirs, followers of Bhitai and the people of the Sindhi community in general.

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[74] With particular reference to, (Khuhro, 1982) *Documents on the separation of Sindh from the Bombay presidency* and political speeches and notes of G M Syed (1955).

Without going into too much detail, this section has laid out the philosophical and structural content of the poetry for which it is generally appreciated. It presents the various elements of the poetry that make it culturally valuable and an intangible heritage. Within the context of Sindh's historical and cultural terrain, the poetry of Shah Latif forms the intangible heritage that is the larger framework within which the tangible is formed and situated. Most importantly, the poetry is mystic in nature, capturing simultaneously the different faces of the Sindhi man and his eventual return to God. Composed in the Sindhi language, Shah Latif uses local folk tales to bring back the depth of the Sufi relation to Allah. His verses carry the texture of the Sindhi landscape and the local culture, language and manner of speaking of the people to such an extent that it is 'Sindhi' in its character. It is patriotic and nationalistic as interpreted by its modern poets and interpreters. Poets like Shaikh Ayaz, Imdad Hussaini, Niaz Humayun and others have responded to Shah's poetry, given direct references and reactions in dialogue to his poetry. Many of these poets are not mystic but their poetry evolves around social issues. Thus, it contributes to the social and cultural development of Sindh.

The poetry of Bhitai, his *Risalo*, is literature that defines the Sindhi people and contains mystic symbolism to which most Sindhis, belonging to multiple religions, castes, income brackets, align themselves with. The following clips from a couple of interviews articulate some of the association.

> *Do you understand his poetry? What is his message?*
> [At this, Amir Ali recited from Sur Sarang of Shah's poetry and then said] Shah Latif preaches patience, living with peace, working hard to make a living the right way and discourages bad practices and short cuts like stealing. (Shrine visitor – Amir Ali: Appendix 3xi)

> *What is so special about this that you have given up everything?*
> The performance of music for the love of Imam Husain and other martyrs who were killed in the historic event of Karbala (Iraq) is so moving that if you also stayed to listen to it, you would also become an ardent follower of Shah Latif. (Shrine worker – Ayaz fakir or Alamwala fakir: Appendix 3xii)

The shrine itself is also such a place that is open and accessible to all. His poetry has been described as 'one retaining its universal appeal' (Sorley, 1940) and one 'maintaining a high level of native originality' (Akhund, 1991). The subject, characters, folk tales, symbolism, form and language of the poetry all together make it effectively representational for the common people of Sindh. Modern interpretations, feminism and patriotism are topics that show the role of the poetry in the socio-cultural evolution of the Sindhi community.

3.3   Rituals, Social Organization and Relationship to Place

The following sections form the second part of the chapter, focusing on the performance of rituals at the Shrine of Bhitai. This section analytically describes firstly the significant rituals

performed at the shrine and secondly the social grouping / the people involved at shrine. It interrelates the social groups at shrine, major rituals that they participate in and the significance of the place. The analysis reveals the multilayered and complex nature of the living heritage, induced with multiple meanings at different levels. The fine line between its cultural appreciation and religious reverence is articulated where appropriate. This adds to its multi-layered, interpretive character.

The methodology used mainly for this analysis is participant observation and photography, interviews of the ritual participants and mapping the movements of the key participants to highlight the significance of key spots at shrine and the interrelations. The use of multiple methods, referred to as triangulation assists in reinforcing conclusions drawn.

This section begins with some outline and definition of rituals and their main characteristics of significance. Rituals are described to be,

> 'formalized, rule bound, structured and repetitive activity of a symbolic character restricted to specific times and places, focusing the attention of participants and observers on 'objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance' (Lukes 1977:54; Kong and Yeoh 1997: Moore and Whelan, 2008: 70-1).

They are cultural components structured by institutions or groups founding a cultural heritage and reinforce primary association with sites of collective memory. They can be looked at as secondary elements that give additional significance.

A means of group commemoration, rituals at sites of living history create a commemorative structural framework. Their constant repetition generates a sense of order and continuity. They occur at special places at fixed times (Connerton, 1989). The repetitive action of rituals implies continuity with the past. Rituals combine action and statement. "Participants must follow a formalized sequence of physical movement and stillness at coordinated times and places. These moments of movement and stillness are full of meaning within the context of the organizing group." The dressing, symbolic artefacts and gestures accompanied with music, singing, slogans chanting involve the audience to become a part of the ritual, symbolism signifying cultural statements (Graham et al., 2000; Moore and Whelan, 2008: 70).

Rituals were structured traditionally in time periods where the society was more orally based.

> "Within such an orally based society, time was structured in a simple way and history was understood within the time span covered by the memories of its living members" (Moore and Whelan 2008: 85).

Face to face relations, imitation and exchange of words are tools of a cultural transmission and allow individuals to experience a sense of continuity and connection between the past and the future (Jackson, 1994). A pattern of performance is created through prescribed language of ritual including specific time, place, dress, manner, movement, imbibed with symbolism recollected within a short span of time. Their constant repetition makes them

widely recognized and a familiar pattern that becomes an integral part of society's life patterns.

Connerton, (1989) identifies two major ways of reading rituals. Firstly, ritual behaviours can be seen as symbolic representation, one that is bound with symbolic acts. As a mnemonic system, formal ceremonies and informal symbolic gestures and postures make the language of commemoration. The symbolic representation is made up of a vocabulary and a set of body and speech expressions as well as images, texts that altogether constitute this language. Secondly, rituals are situated in historical positions. The understanding of its roots frames the ritual's context and invention. Rituals refer to a particular time, place, event and / or person and the gestures relate to this time of their invention. In the case of the shrine, the historical position from the lifetime and particularly the last ten years of Shah Abdul Latif's life make the context of the rituals.
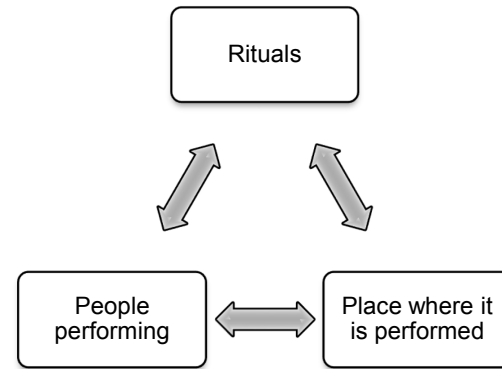
The people who perform the rituals are particularly involved in the process. The rituals give value and meaning to their lives as they become a part of them, their identity and association. They mark the historical narrative of the community itself. '…the performance of a ritual specifies the relationship between the performers of the ritual and what it is that they are performing' (Connerton, 1989: 54). It also gives the stratification of social relations, through the ritual organization. The involvement of particular social groups in rituals is an indication of the role that they play in society. According to Boivin (2012), rituals are a metaphor of society and how it is structured within a settlement or a region, in terms of political and / or religious importance. The traditional community thereby plays a significant role in the historical continuity of place. The definition, identity of the community through the rituals is key to their continued association to the place.

Ritual symbolism is a language behind which lies the hidden point that the ritual signifies. Its gestures and speech is 'stylized and stereotyped, composed of more or less invariant sequences of speech acts' (Connerton 1989). At the same time, rituals are also thoughtfully tied to the space, the locations where they are performed. 'Every memory unfolds in a spatial framework, … in the arrangement of … places …' (Boyer, 1994). Boyer relates the works on memory of Connerton and Halbwachs to organization of space and its functional use.

This chapter looks at two aspects in relation to rituals: 1) the people involved, and their relation to what they are performing; 2) the place where the ritual is being performed and the meaning associated with it. This triad relationship is summarized in the diagram above.

The social context of objects, artefacts and rituals give them meaning. Boivin (2012) writes with reference to devotional objects ascribing their importance to their social positions. The

social hierarchy within the collective memory framework is prescribed by the roles of individuals and groups within rituals.

Using this as a framework for analysis, the following section take up major rituals performed at the Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai and identify their salient components. Giving a short background on the groups involved, it also identifies individuals playing a major role in rituals. The structuring elements of the collective memory framework are identified, dwelling on in particular on the relationship of the rituals to place, highlighting the particular places of the shrine that are considered to be important.

3.4   Social grouping at the Shrine and the Rituals

Multiple social structures / institutions are present at the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai to take responsibility of the maintenance and management of different aspects of the living heritage. These institutions having evolved in form and structure over time, coexist harmoniously and are emblematic of the different phases of its history and changing political scenario. All shrines do not exhibit multiplicity of social structures where present, they may not be coexisting 'harmoniously', but may face challenges in their current status.

According to Boyer (1994), social relations and collective consensus form the essence of the language of representation belonging to different periods in history. She writes, when there exist together worlds belonging to different periods (inserted into one other), "they can be better understood by outlining the rules and codes that constitute or construct the worlds and to understand what happens when a subject passes from one world to another." (p. 492)

Social relations, groups and institutions formed in different time periods are organized and managed differently with very different goals. At the living religious heritage site of the Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, there can be found three particularly distinct types of groups / social structures in place, playing a role in the management, upkeep of the living heritage in different ways. Listed hierarchically based on their personal ownership, involvement in management of shrine activities and rituals, these are:

1. The *Gaddi Nashin*
2. Fakirs
3. The *Auqaf* Department

The three are distinctly different in set up, objectives and mannerisms. The fakirs and the *Gaddi Nashin* (the hereditary title bearer of Shah Abdul Latif[75]) are traditional social groups, the two group types have been passed down through generations or alternative nomination process following the code of the groups carrying the responsibility of continuing the collective commemoration rituals. They have been carried forth since almost 300 years. The fakirs are further divided into sub-categories with respect to the roles they play at the shrine.

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[75] supported by his family and followers

The role of the *Gaddi Nashin*[76] has evolved over time. Change in management systems (from the traditional familial to the national / provincial) has allowed for a reconfiguration of their roles.

The department of *Auqaf*[77] is a provincial institution appointed since 1960 to manage financial and physical upkeep of the shrine. While the term *Auqaf* takes its reference from the first Islamic urban institution of *waqf* set up in Arabia around 621 AD as a private welfare institution for public services, the department of *Auqaf* for shrines and religious buildings in the independent Pakistan was created in 1960 (Malik, 1996). The two (*waqf* and *Auqaf*) originate in different time periods and vary (have varied) in their processes of upkeep at the shrine.

These 'institutions', as I call them, based on a clear projection of themselves are working toward the preservation of collective memory in different ways. The collective memory is understood to be constituted of the dedicated ritual practice(s) as structured by Bhitai himself. The social group responsible for the preservation of the collective memory at the shrine is popularly referred to as 'fakirs'. The presence of the *Gaddi Nashin* at the rituals is of significance. The *Auqaf* Department and the provincial Culture Department are government institutions that also play selective roles for maintenance and management of different aspects of the cultural heritage.

In terms of wealth and administrative power, the *Auqaf* Department ranks first. Contrastingly, the fakirs are simple, ordinary men involved in a range of occupations from farming, crafts, engineering to salespeople. The *Gaddi Nashin* is the spiritual heir of the saint. He is a landlord owning large agricultural property around town. In Sindh, landlords and heirs of saints are regarded as important people by the rural populace, particularly those working under them (Ansari, 2003).

It is aimed to correlate the rituals to the social group that plays an important role in them in the text that follows. The table below lists the main rituals performed at the shrine, the time period within which they are performed and the social group(s) that play an important role in them. They are listed in accordance with the frequency of the performances.

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[76] *Gaddi Nashin* is a word of the Urdu language. Literally, the word means the one who takes the seat. While the Gaddi Nashin is the title bearer inheriting the saint's legacy through generations, the title also implies that he is not the direct descendant of the saint. This is the case with many Sufi Saints since only few were married and even fewer had children of their own. The term ascribed to the direct descendant of the saint is *Sajjada Nashin,* literally meaning the seat of prostration.

[77] *Auqaf* is an Arabic word, plural of *waqf*, literally meaning confinement or prohibition. The institution generally aims to 'offer protection to a property and to keep from becoming a third persons property' (Shahzad 2007). Auqaf institutions still exist in many countries of the historical Muslim Empires. Spelt in different ways including Awkaf, Aukaf, Awqaf, the institutions have evolved depending on their national contexts. In some parts, it has ceased to exist.

	Rituals	Social groups involved	Time period within which it is repeated
1	Performance of Shah jo Raag	Tamar fakirs/ other fakirs	Daily (about 21 hours a day)
2	*Naqqara* (Drumming)	Mungenhar fakirs	Daily (twice a day)
3	*Sao Sumar*	Zakri fakirs / Tamar fakirs / Gaddi Nashin	Monthly (first Monday night of lunar month)
4	*Urs*	Culture Department / *Auqaf* Department Zakri fakirs / Tamar fakirs / Gaddi Nashin	Annually

3.5   Traditional Social Group: Preservation of the Collective Memory

Fakirs[78]

Fakir comes from the Arabic word 'fakr', the 'f-k-r' hold a basic meaning of simple basic living. A fakir is therefore one who lives simply. In *popular* Urdu language, the 'fakir' is usually referred to the beggar, particular in big cities where there are many beggars. In Bhitshah and other shrine towns like it including Sehwan, fakirs are referred to be the social group that work to preserve the collective memory, and carry forward the legacy of the shrine / saint. 'Calling someone a fakir was originally meant to be honourable and prestigious.'[79] 'Technically, fakir is one who takes the method forward,' says Fakir Muhammad Ismail[80]. According to Zulqarnain, my resource person at Bhitshah, real fakirs are God's men. They are God's beloved men, people who work for the love of God, they are also called Sufi.[81] According to Shah Hussain Lahori (1538-1601), Sufi poet from Punjab, a fakir is he who is selfless and a learned person. 'Knowledge is his ornament. A real fakir is not a beggar but a knowledgeable person who gives knowledge as charity' (Shahzad, 2014: 92). Fakirs are different from the average people in several ways. Their characteristics can be listed as follows:

a. "A fakir has to fulfill the role / responsibility that he has self proclaimed or he has been given through generational transfer".[82]

b. Fakirs are of humble disposition. They wear simple plain clothing, many times black in colour. In their selflessness, they characteristically never ask for anything.

c. A fakir is one whose aim in life is not work to make large sums of money.

d. A fakir is not necessarily poor. He is one who chooses to live simply. If a fakir is rich, has wealth, "then it is his responsibility to help people in whatever way he wishes." (Ismail, Zulqarnain)

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[78] The text on who a fakir is and what defines him has been put together using multiple sources, commonly refined to as triangulation, including interviews of fakirs and non-fakirs or observers at shrine as well as from literature review.
[79] Interview and discussions with Zulqarnain, Resource guide and Manager Research Cell at Bhitshah Cultural Center, Feb 2015.
[80] Interview, Feb 2015
[81] Zulqarnain Shah – Discussion 28 Jan 2015
[82] Interview with Mohammad Ismail, 07 Feb 2015

Fakiri[83] is something that comes from generational transfer and can also be self-proclaimed. There are people who are from the family of fakirs and decide not to be fakirs. There are also people who do not belong to fakir families but are self proclaimed like Muhammad Ismail.

Talking about what fakirs do and how they live, Fakir Muhammad Ismail elaborated, "It is amazing when you think about it that this music has been happening since 300 years. The tradition has *never* stopped. If people are not normally paid for a month or something, their lives would be disturbed. But the fakirs take their responsibility seriously. With or without pay, they would carry on their responsibility. There are fakirs here who are farmers, those who are landlords, those who do service, daily wage workers, labourers, those who have white-collar jobs. At the *dargah*, you have fakirs, who undertake daily, monthly or annual rituals, example *Zakri* fakirs, *Autari* fakirs, *Dhamaali* Fakirs, named after their designated role at shrine."

My field work and interviews at the shrine revealed that there were many at the shrine calling themselves fakirs, of different roles and responsibilities, self proclaimed and generational. The following is an attempt to categorize the different typologies of fakirs that I came across specifically only for the case site of Bhitai shrine. Broadly divided into two main categories, there are fakirs who perform at the shrine and those that don't.

1. Fakirs actively participating in rituals
    a. Familial fakirs, whose families have been doing this for generations. At Bhitshah, they are mostly farmers (Eg. Munwar and Kami Fakir[84]). They are not formally educated mostly, and ready to perform on other platforms.
        i. *Tamar*[85] Fakirs (Fakirs who perform music at the shrine and are responsible to carry it forth in their families).
        ii. *Munghenhar* fakirs also called *Dhamaali* Fakirs (Fakirs who play the drums for *dhamaal* at Bhitshah[86])
        iii. *Zakri fakirs* - those who do *zikr* (recite the name of Allah, or divine verses)
    b. Fakirs by choice, (Eg. Mohammad Ismail), may be formally educated (i.e. in a school), ready to perform on other platforms and considers it his duty to spread the message of Shah Latif not just from the shrine but from other platforms as well.
2. Fakirs passive participants of rituals, mostly as audience.

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[83] *Fakiri*: The condition of becoming a fakir.

[84] Munwar and Kami fakir were two young fakirs interviewed at the shrine, as the later part of the section narrates. They call themselves Munwar Fakir and Kami Fakir and attach the 'fakir' as a suffix to their names. It is common practice for dedicated fakirs to do this.

[85] Named after Tamar fakir, friend and confidant of Shah Latif. He also gave his daughter in marriage to Shah Latif and was the main fakir who played the tamboora and sang Shah Latif's poetry in his life time. His nominants and subsequent descendants are referred to as Tamar fakirs today.

[86] There are dhamaali fakirs at Sehwan Sharif too, at the Shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. This shrine is well known for its energetic and vibrant dhamaals, at Bhitshah, this is comparatively low key and is not the main ritual performance.

a. *Autari fakirs* - those who manage *autaqs*. (rest houses in city dedicated to facilitating outsiders visiting shrine to stay)

b. *Majzoob* type (those who shun regular responsibilities of their households and decide to dedicate their lives in Bhitai's service by living at the shrine.)

Fakirs in general take their responsibilities seriously. As listed their characteristics become part of their persona, from clothing to life style and mannerisms. Their contribution to rituals is about the preservation of the collective memory. While spirituality offers a deep sense of commitment not just for the group but for the self, the rituals are also a political act defining their individual and collective identity. It ascertains 'who they are'. With little financial reward, their commitment goes beyond the economic day-to-day survival, as many fakirs try to make their ends meet in various ways. Among the fakirs who perform at the shrine are those that have been doing this through generations and those that choose to do it without any familial obligations. Among those that are descendants or nominees of fakirs are prominently the *Tamrani* fakirs from the Tamar fakir (responsible for performance of *Shah jo Raag*), the *Zakri*[87] fakirs (responsible for reciting praise of Allah or doing *zikr*) and the Mungenhar fakirs.

Among the fakirs that don't take active part in rituals as a responsibility are those who have been living at the shrine for different periods of time varying from 40 years at a maximum to a minimum of about 4 years or less. These are not many in numbers. Disconnected from the outside world including their own families, they are a complete contrast to fakirs like Muhammad Ismail who believe the duty to the shrine can be done along with other worldly obligations and opt for different professions and occupations for doing so. The *Majzoob* fakir[88] by contrast, are little aware of their family troubles and their daily lives, and find contentment in whatever spiritual and material benefits the shrine offers them.

Rituals as a form of collective memory in space

Maurice Halbwachs, (1980) describes collective memory as a current of continuous thought still moving in the present, through being part of a group's active life. These memories are multiple and dispersed, spectacular and ephemeral, not recollected and written down in one unified story. Instead, collective memories are supported by a group framed in space and time. They are relative to that specific community, and not a universal history shared by many disparate groups.

> 'The continuum of traditional experience and remembrance / memory embedded in spatial forms is still the ordering structure and the generating device for memory (of some South Asian cities / towns, like Bhitshah). For large urbanizing centers particularly in the Third World, they are impoverished beyond recognition.' (Boyer, 1994: 28)

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[87] *Zakri* comes from *zikr*, the one who does *zikr* or repeats the name of Allah

[88] Interviews with the fakirs living at the shrine revealed that they met their families atleast twice a year or even every month. However, their visits were short as compared to the time they spent at the shrine, not more than two to three weeks in about six to eight months.

The town of Bhitshah through its name is associated with the shrine of Bhitai making the predominant *image* of the town through its architecture, the rituals and cultural events that revive cultural memory. The shrine as architecture of the town is a representation of the collective memory of a social group, the followers of the saint (refer to chapters 4 and 5 for details).

> "Through the preservation, commemoration, and celebration of sites associated with a given Sufi teacher, his disciples argue over, legitimate, perform, and display the religious authority of their beloved and heroic master" (Quraeshi, 2010: 267).

The rituals are socio-cultural form(s) of collective memory existing at the shrine, with their own periodic structure reinforcing representation of the shrine not just as physical structure but a living heritage. The fakirs as a social group through their presence and acts of commemoration play an important role in attaching memory to the place. They are deeply associated with the history and tradition / culture of the place. The fakirs are socially aligned through a common culture, religion, kinship, and place with historical relations, as well as patterns of communication and commemoration, representing them.

Physical heritage in many parts of the world loses its meaning and purpose when social groups associated with it disperse or evolve. Similarly, many shrines are no longer supported by the original social groups that represent it. The shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai is one which has managed to maintain its historical continuity strongly. This can be accredited to several factors, but particularly the *fakirs* who sing at the shrine through the day and the night and have been taking active part in the traditional rituals through generations. It is unique given this characteristic as this section elaborates.

The language used for commemoration when studied closely, gives insight into the life patterns and beliefs of a group. Repeated commemoration is a sign of respect and a representation of the collective identity of the group. The choice of medium / form used for collective memory by Sufi saints has differed individually, with poetry and literature as common forms. In South Asia, after the poetic works of the famous Amir Khusrau, the invention of the 'qawwali' as a religious / Sufi form of music, many Sufi shrines caretakers took on this ritual as a regular weekly (Thursday night) performance at different shrines in the Indian subcontinent. A good and famous example is Shrine of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia in Delhi. Sufi singing performances at shrines are known as *sama'a* in the local language. Literally meaning 'to hear', it is employed to mean 'listening to music' and by extension, 'music' (Chittick, 2000:78), it is a practice performed by some of the Sufis.

At the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, the most prominent custom and daily ritual that is observed religiously following the time of the day is that of the poetry and music recital of

Shah Abdul Latif's famous 'Shah *jo Raag*[89]. Positioned in front of the entrance door of the tomb (figure 3.3), the performances symbolize the offering of a tribute to the saint. It is a powerful tool of commemoration[90]. The fakirs until before the 1960 used to perform the *raag* at the edge of the court. Their current position was decided later after independence as their presence and performance was given more importance with respect to the shrine. The recitals can be heard through most of the city. During the day, while people go about their daily business, traffic and people noises make it inaudible in the city, however, at night, when all is quiet and still, the music echoes through much of the town[91]. The performance is not very loud at the shrine, yet the small scale town remains enveloped in the halo created by the echoes of the music. It is calming, soothing and in a strange way, allows one to connect to larger realities, like nature, the quiet of the night and sense of peace rarely found and experienced in the more urban cities of Pakistan.

The structure and rhythm of collective memory *(symbolic representation and understanding of rituals as carriers of memory)*

Rituals offer a window into the memory of a past. They are the medium harbouring memory and are referred to as 'carriers of memory' by Connerton (1989). The Sufis (often immigrants / travelers) observed local culture and customs and used these as a structure on which they developed rituals, stories (literature) and poems to express forms of Divine proximity. This managed to capture the attention of the local people and allowed them to open up to it later. The content of their rituals belongs to a historical context connecting to another time period. Symbolic representation is central to rituals, defining significance of memory, pronouncing social hierarchies and mannerisms and validating participants. It is a language in itself with a basic structure of depiction. The following characteristics of Shah Latif's poetry[92] mark its contextual relations:

- Shah's poetry is in ancient Sindhi language. It is the first example of Sufi poetry in Sindhi at the time.[93] Understood by the people of its time, it continues to be well remembered and considered to be part of the cultural development in language and literature for the region. Much of or parts of the poetry are recalled and interpreted by the average Sindhi even today (Fieldwork 2014-15).
- The poetry of Shah Latif is based on the ancient true legends of the region. The seven folk tales make the major content of *Shah-jo-Risalo*. Shah Latif traveled through the different parts of the region to witness the places associated with each

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[89] Compilation / publication of Shah Latif's poetry, in Sindhi language is called Shah jo Risalo.

[90] It is primarily about the spiritual connection with God. Richard Eaton in his paper, 'Court of Man, Court of God' write about the tombs of Sufi saints acting as a transition space between Heaven and Earth. He dwells on the spiritual importance of the tombs using the shrine of Baba Farid Shakarganj in Punjab as his case and presents analytical hierarchy of space and social relations in this respect. For anthropological studies mostly, it is the spiritual relations of people, objects and place that take prime focus in research of shrines. This aspect is not the main focus of this study.

[91] Fieldwork Bhitshah, Dec-Feb 2014-15.

[92] Summaries of the poetry content are attached in the Appendix (extract from Anne Marie Schimmel)

[93] See GM Syed, *Shah Latif and his message;* Oskar Verkaaik 2004.

tale[94]. His poetry is rich with geographic and graphic details of the folk tales that he uses to express human relationship with Divinity. Quoting Samina Quraeshi (2010) who articulates this well:

> "Through the use of local folk tales, Shah Abdul Latif's poetry elaborates the soul's movements: hope, longing, fear, annihilation, and finally union: these are the stages of the 'interior journey' toward the Divine. The use of folk legends was a well-established tradition in religious teaching in the region, and Sufi teachers tapped it since their audience was familiar with these tragic tales and could identify with the universal sentiments and the local customs and geography that they referred to." (p. 109)

- He structured this poetry into modes of the Indian classical music, relating to times of the day, seasons, and moods for major religious occasions. The compositions were done with the help of other fakirs singing classical music from the subcontinent. The well structured form of classical music has strengthened the rhythm of this ritual / form of collective memory.

The performance is representative of Sufism in general, of a specific Sufi order, of Sindhi culture and heritage, of the saint Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai and his fakirs.

3.5.1 Daily performance of *Shah jo Risalo*: *Raagi* Fakirs at the Inner Court of Shrine

The daily music recitals are major components of the collective memory of Bhitai and his fakirs. Thursday nights are generally considered important by believers as 'Friday' is a religiously important day of the week and in traditional time zones, the day starts at the setting of the Thursday sun. The daily Friday performance is also regarded to be a special one. The oldest fakirs sing and perform on this day. The shrine is washed and cleaned early Friday morning in preparation. This makes for the weekly event at the shrine.

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[94] Traveling was considered to be an important aspect of the training of a Sufi saint and Shah Latif also travelled for years within the region of Sindh.

Figure 3.2: The *Raagi* Fakirs positioned on axis in the portico in front of the entrance of the tomb with visual connection to grave

Figure 3.3 The *Raagi* Fakirs sit in a semi circle facing the tomb doorway

Each day, the music sessions happen in three shifts. The morning shift starts at 9 am until 1pm, ending before the afternoon prayers, the second session between 3 – 6 pm depending on the timings of prayers that vary with summers and winters, the movement of the sun determining this. The breaks in the middle are for prayers and food. The last session of the day starts at 9pm and lasts until 6 am ending before the morning prayers.

About 17 people play in one day, in different shifts altogether. There are about 80 fakirs in Bhitshah who are musicians[95]. The seven days of the week are distributed among the fakirs. So most fakirs do not sing on two days together. Hence different fakirs sing for each session.

> "We have an elder fakir, from the family of Tamar Fakir[96]. We follow his instructions when it comes to music performances at the shrine or anything else. He is also like a *gaddi nashin*."[97] (Interview with Kami and Munwar Fakir, shrine courtyard, Feb 2015)

For any who wants to learn the classical music of Bhitai, has to acquaint himself with the language and meaning of the ancient Sindhi to attain the correct tones, moods and manner of

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[95] Interviews and fieldwork
[96] The tomb of Tamar Fakir stands more prominently as a cubic structure between the graves within the graveyard of followers of Bhitai, by way of his special association with the saint as mentioned earlier. He was entitled with responsibility for the poetry and music heritage of Bhitai.
[97] Interview with Muhammad Khan Fakir, Senior Performer at Shrine of Shah A Latif, 07 Feb 2015

singing. The poetry in its words consists the essence, the detail and the wholesome picture of the Sufi teaching, set within the geographical context.

10 qualitative interviews were conducted with different typologies of fakirs (as listed in the earlier section). The fakirs that I spoke to were young and old and involved in different activities and rituals at the shrine. Most knew how to play the *tambura* and memorized the *raag* of Shah. The fakirs who sing the *raag* are called *Raagi* fakirs, (local term for classical music). Many of them have been doing this through generations and saw their forefathers playing at the shrine as well. Munwar and Kami fakirs are young fakirs in their twenties who learnt to play the *tambura* while they were still children from their father and uncles (appendix 3i). They

Figure 3.4: Kami Fakir playing at the Shrine

belong to Goth Ker Fakir Lanjwani. The name is ancestral, referring to village and the ancestors, meaning the Village of Fakir Lanjwani. They are known as Lanjwanis, named after their ancestor, Fakir Lanjwani. They have always been farmers and it remains their main source of livelihood. Children from their family, their cousins and nephews who show interest and inclination to learn, exhibit the talent to understand music are pulled automatically, they say, and learn by watching and practicing as they play in their free time.

Mohammad Fakir on the other hand, does not come from Bhitshah town, but from a town called Badin, 150 km south east of Bhitshah. His father used to play at the shrine of Shah Karim in Bulri, the great grandfather of Shah Latif. "Bhitshah was the best place to learn this." So when he was 20 years old, he decided to come to Bhitshah specially for this. Later, he married and settled in town. He has 3 sons and 5 daughters and is now almost 50 years of age. It was surprising to learn that none of his children have learnt to play the *tambura*. He has struggled but managed to give formal school education to his children. '*Fakiri* is not what it used to be,' he says. They do not have a particular family livelihood. He himself has tried doing business, taught the *tambura* at Sindh University for a few years but faced financial strain. His eldest son, works part time after his undergraduate classes, driving a *chingchi*[98]. His wife makes the *relli*, the traditional Sindhi textile craft, for blankets and bedspreads mostly

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[98] local taxi

at home, selling them to make some extra money[99]. Mohammad Fakir continues to be a dedicated senior fakir representing the fakirs and even performing internationally, he has pursued his interests out of choice. The music is not his family legacy.

Muhammad Ismail is another example of a fakir who opted to learn the *tambura* out of choice. In his early twenties, he lives in Bhitshah with his family. The music had always attracted him as a young boy and he would come by the shrine on his way running errands of the house, stand and watch the music playing. One of the elder fakirs upon noticing him engrossed for long periods of time, offered to teach him. He took the opportunity eagerly and learned the *raag*. It took him about four years to perfect it. Now he is a teacher himself at the music school of the Bhitshah Culture Center and promotes the *kalaam* on his weekly radio show as well apart from his weekly performance at the shrine on Saturdays. Young Muhammad Ismail is ambitious and takes his responsibility as a fakir seriously. His radio show is his own initiative to promote the *kalaam*[100] of Bhitai and its philosophy through the medium. Responsibilities of fakirs thereby are open to individual interpretation.

The main family responsible for the continuity of the performance of Shah *jo Raag* at the shrine is that of Ali Duni fakir. The grandfather of Ali Duni fakir was nominated by Tamar fakir or his nominee, since Tamar fakir himself had no family. The practice of continuing the performance of *raag* at shrine means two things; that the *raag* performance has to be organized by someone deciding who plays when and what and ensuring it works just as well and secondly, that the children of male descendants of the fakir take the responsibility to learn the raag to make sure it is not lost.[101]

Zulqarnain elaborated in one of my numerous discussions with him, that during the saint's lifetime, 'Tamar fakir' was a senior fakir who was awarded the responsibility to continue the *raag* at the shrine by Shah Latif himself. It was the daughter of Tamar fakir that Shah Latif married. Hence he is an important fakir in the system, by way of his relationship to Bhitai and in matters of trust and responsibility. Successive fakirs were appointed with the task initially when a couple of fakirs down the line had no children. Currently this legacy is entrusted to Ali Dinu fakir. Ali Dinu fakir is a landlord /farmer and owns a large area of agricultural land on the periphery of Bhitshah. His sons have taken over this work as he is retiring, but he continues the singing at the shrine. His sons are to follow him with the farming *and* the singing, it is their personal heritage. "It is our responsibility to make sure it carries through our family lineage and is safeguarded" (Interview with Ali Dinu fakir, at his residence in February 2015). His translation of this 'personal heritage' was this and did not include the task of tutoring others outside his family.

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[99] The textile craft of *relli* is labour intensive handicraft, requiring neatness in stitching and takes a long time for the finished product. If it is not sold commercially, it is usually not well paid for.
[100] sayings or poetic words
[101] Having male children is considered of major significance in such traditional patriarchal families.

"We are originally from Kutch Bujh[102]," he explained. Zulqarnain joined us in this discussion as Ali Dinu fakir could not speak well in Urdu and his Sindhi required translation. Shah Latif composed poetry, but did not sing or play the *tambura*. Other fakirs from Rajasthan and Kutch Bujh (referring to a town in the Rann of Kutch, desert and delta areas in the south east of Sindh towards India) played and sung his poetry. It is by this way of association that the music developed and the music was thence identified as their heritage. The geographical location and the art of classical singing were both important for their nomination, apart from the personal relationship between them and their appointees. Ali Dinu fakir further pointed out that Tamar fakirs traditionally also played the role of a *Munsaf*, or one who makes fair judgement for people like a judge but a local one. They were hence widely respected within the town and rural community. Ali Dinu fakir continues to play this role within the rural community, but he observes that the town has changed during his lifetime and this role is now largely limited only to the rural community who work on agricultural lands around. They have a *panchayat* referring to the group of elders with the authority to decide on disputes. This practice is still common in tribal and rural areas of Pakistan[103].

The *Bari Autaq*[104] (the big *autaq*) of town is also under the supervision of Ali Dinu fakir. It also houses the old residence of Shah Latif and his family and is located immediately behind the shrine to the west (refer to figure 5.4, concept plan of *khanqah* of Shah Latif). The residence is made of thick mud walls about 2.5 feet in width and consists of two small rooms and a large room, all interconnected and a kitchen adjacent to it in an L-shaped plan, all facing a courtyard where there is a large old tree. The tree retains its significance as the place under which Shah Latif used to sit and meditate. A relatively new portico type structure has been extended on the third side of the building also facing the courtyard that houses the guests of the *Autaq*. The purpose of an *Autaq* since the olden times continues to be of a place that accommodates guests that visit Bhitshah for the purpose of paying their respects at the shrine.

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[102] Bujh is a city and a municipality in Kutch district in the state of Gujarat, India. Their community is called Hingorja and they migrated to Sindh from Gujarat.

[103] The *panchayat* is a practice that still exists in the rural and tribal areas of Pakistan, however, fast paced urbanization has reduced its cult power as people have access to other ways of acquiring justice.

[104]*Autaq*: place associated with the men, used for sitting and meeting men not from their family. In Bhitshah, *autaq* is used to denote places for guests to stay, that is for the people who do not belong to the town.

Figure 3.5 Open Court space at *Bari Autaq*, the old tree in the middle is an important marker as it is one under which Shah Latif himself used to sit and meditate

Figure 3.6 Old residence of Shah Latif preserved as Museum by fakirs along with many small artefacts that he used.

Figure 3.7 The sitting place of Shah Latif and *Machh* (fireplace) where he and his follower fakirs would gather every day for daily conversations and reflections

Profiles of the different *Raagi* fakirs show how their responsibilities vary according to their position either as one taking familial responsibility or as one who chooses to take it. The younger fakirs compared to the elder senior fakirs are more aware of the external influences, and extrapolate their role to reach a larger audience through television, city, national and international Sufi concerts. The following are excerpts from some of the fakirs' interviews highlighting this.

> "We have also been invited to perform at whats the name, Coke Studio (very proudly) on TV. The media is making people aware." (Interview with Munwar and Kami Fakirs – Appendix 3-ii)

"…I work at the Radio Pakistan, Bhitshah as RJ (Radio Jockey) weekly in a programme in which I create awareness about the raags of Bhitai. The poetry and the message of Bhitai that is part of the music sung at the shrine." (Interview with Fakir Muhammad Ismail – Appendix 3-iv)

"I have performed in India, Lahore, Islamabad.

(Ismail's Friend added for his introduction) He performed in Coke Studio in Season 3, sang Shah's kalaam. On the web, you will find Lahooti Live Session, where there is a collection of Sufi music. There is also the kalaam of Shah Abdul Latif." (Interview with Fakir Muhammad Ismail – Appendix 3-iv)

These fakirs have chosen to be *raagis*, are dedicated and take their responsibility seriously.

3.5.2 Naqqara / Dhamaal: Mungenhar Fakirs at Noubat Khana

The *Naqqara / Dhamaal* is a daily ritual, performed twice a day. The *Naqqara* literally means a loud announcement that may be accompanied by a musical instrument such as a trumpet or the drums that makes the public attentive. It was a common act of announcement for a king's court, announcing the arrival of kings and important people as well as other major news. The drumming ritual performed at the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai is linked to this act as well as to the beating of the drums called *dhamaal* at the Shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar situated in the town of Sehwan Sharif. The ritual originally comes from the beating of drums to announce the arrival of the king or royal family in court during kingdoms. The *Mungenhar* fakirs were a gift to the saint from the king of Jaiselmir (India) in the 1700s to honour him. Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai during his travels, visited the royal town. The king upon being impressed with the person of Shah Latif, gifted him the *Mungenhar* fakirs in his honour that he was no less than a king to him. 'The saint was an authority in his own right', states Zulqarnain. The ritual continues from there. *Mungenhar* fakir has an extended family in Jaiselmir (India) who played *naqqara* for the king there, he related in his interview. 'Ofcourse we now have no contact with them as our families are settled here'. The fakir who plays today is a direct descendant of the *Mungenhar* fakir gifted to the saint about 250 years ago. The interview with the current descendant of the *Mungenhar* fakir lineage confirmed this legend. The tradition of beating the *naqqara* has hence carried through the centuries. The drums are beaten to a specific beat morning and evening, twice a day for ten minutes; once before sunset, once before sunrise.

The old man of thin stature and a small white beard, and of about 55 years of age told me he has been playing the drums since he was 10 years old. The eldest in the family gets to have the honour of performing the 'darbar duty' as he calls it.

'We were a small family when we first arrived in the town, now we are an entire community.' (Interview Mungenhar fakir; Appendix 3i)

The *Mungenhar* fakir is today an employee of the *Auqaf* Department. He carries out his official responsibilities along with the ritual that happens for a short duration every day.

A building is allocated for this ritual. Standing on axis to the *mazar* to its east is the *Noubat khana* (Figure 3.9). The building is particularly Persian influenced in its tile work and façade details, recently renovated[105]. It has tall columns holding up the roof with a small semi circular balcony that projects out on the first floor. It is on this balcony that the *Mungenhar* fakir sits facing the *mazar*, overlooking his audience that collects on the ground to listen and move to his *dhamaal* beat.

While the façade looks grand, the inside of the building is small and simple. The room inside is no more than about 12 feet in width and has no other openings except those in this elevation and functions mostly as a storage space. The building is given importance primarily due to the ritual that takes place here.

Figure 3.8 *Mungenhar* fakir beats the drums sitting in the balcony of the *Noubat khana* while the spectators watch fakirs and the saint's followers swirl to the beat

Figure 3.9 Noubat khana

The ritual is therefore recognized by the government (through the department of *Auqaf*) and given importance through the construction of a building structure as well as hiring the *Mungenhar* fakir as an employee offering him security of government employment. This is a good example or precedence set of the relationship between *Auqaf* and the fakirs.

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[105] The Noubat khana has been renovated and refinished several times. It has been in its present state since 2004.

3.5.3 Monthly Ritual of *Sao Sumar*: *Zakri* fakir and *Gaddi Nashin* at the Outer Court of Shrine

Sao Sumar is a monthly ritual performed on the first Monday evening of every lunar month at the shrine. The fakirs gather around the *machh* in which they light a fire, and prayers and *zikr* take place. *Machh* is a little dug up sandy space about a foot or less deeper than the ground level in which fire is lit using firewood. During the days of the saint, this was a daily activity with the saint leading it. In his old residence, there exists a small *machh* within the room beside his seating place, about 2 feet by 4 feet in size (refer to figure 5.2), around which his small group of followers sat on a daily basis for prayer, singing and group contemplations. The *Sao Sumar* is a major prayer ritual, that starts with an extended *dhamaal* (45 mins) as an announcement, the calling of the names of Allah (*zikr*), mixed with Bhitai's poetic phrases, followed by a prayer for the community. It offers insight into the organization of the community and its customs related to prayer before and after it. It is a 'public' performance in the outer court of the shrine, with a characteristic openness letting people join in for the chantings or simply as observers.

Figure 3.10 *Machh* (surrounded by a metal grill for safety) located in the outer court of shrine

Figure 3.11 *Sao Sumar: Zikr* around the machh by *Zakri* and *Tamar* fakirs

The lighting of the *machh* signals the start of the *zikr* ritual.

On the first Sunday / Monday night[106] after the first day of the lunar month has been announced on the sighting of the new moon (as is the traditional practice), the ritual begins a couple of hours after sunset. Symbolically, Monday marks the start of the week. Held once a month, the ritual was symbolically also important as it included prayers for a good economic yield for the village communities. *Sao Sumar*, refers to the day of *Somwar* (as called in Sindhi), Monday in English.

Figure 3.12 *Sao Sumar* Ritual: *Gaddi Nashin* sits in his prayer space

The ritual is a monthly prayer. Once the fire is lit, the *Zakri* fakirs descend from their communal space called *Autaq of Zakri fakirs*, situated immediate south of the shrine, pronounce a loud '*Allahu'* and chanting this, they head to the shrine in a procession. *Zakri* fakirs are also generational custodians responsible particularly for the ritual of *zikr* usually carried out around the *machh*. They continue reciting as they circle around the *machh*. The Tamar fakirs follow after some time from their *Bari Autaq* also located behind the shrine to the west and join in. After circling the *machh* a few times reciting *zikr*, they all stand in lines behind the *machh* facing the tomb of Bhitai, while the *Tamar* fakir leads a prayer.

In the meanwhile, the *Gaddi Nashin* joins the congregation, entering from the east doorway[107]. He sits on the raised prayer space designated for him in the middle of the court. After reciting the prayers, the *Gaddi Nashin* walks to the main entrance of the inner court of Bhitai called the *Lakhi Dar* and stands outside. The fakirs join him and stand at his side in a line. One of the fakirs prays out loud in the Sindhi language. The prayer is collective, for the saint, the community, the nation and the world and the general well being of all.

The fakirs continue to stand at the gate while the *Gaddi Nashin* enters the doorway into the inner court. He stands in front of the tomb of Shah Latif without entering it along with a small group of people and prays in silence. He then walks over to stand in front of the tomb of Shah Habib reciting a prayer there. He never enters either tomb chambers. He then comes out of

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[106] As per the lunar calendar, when the sunsets, the night is refered to as the night of the next day, so while it is Sunday night for the English calendar, the night between Sunday and Monday is Monday night for the followers of the lunar calendar.

[107] The Pir Mohalla where his residence is located lies to the east of the shrine, immediately behind the Noubat Khana.

the inner court. The fakirs receive the *Gaddi Nashin* as he steps out, touching his feet. Later, they join his procession heading toward his residence to leave him there as a gesture of immense respect. The fakirs move back to their *autaqs* in their processions, one going south and the other west thereafter. Figure 3.14 maps the movement of the fakirs and the *Gaddi Nashin* during ritual.

Figure 3.13 The Fakirs chant around the *machh*

The ritual is observed by a large number of devotees and pilgrims. It ends with the distribution of sweets or sweet water among those present at *dargah* and the *autaqs* of *Zakri* and *Tamar* fakirs. The sharing of food points to a collective sharing in the blessings associated with the performance of the ritual (Rehman, 2009).

The proximal location of the concerned groups to the shrine is of much significance as the processions enter and exit from the multiple gateways that connect the shrine to its oldest neighbourhoods. The ritual symbolically highlights the intimate relationship of the groups to the shrine itself.

> 'The turn by turn entrance of the different groups is a way of showing the face of the important people of the shrine, the fakirs and the Gaddi Nashin for any important program at the shrine. The audience understands who the important people are.' (Zakri Fakir Interview: Appendix 3vi)

It highlights the traditional social hierarchy. The *Gaddi Nashin* plays a main role in the ritual, representing the saint. The *Zakri* fakirs have traditionally been part of the group dedicated to the recitation and remembrance of Allah only. Their function within the ritual is one of continuing the practice of the *zikr* of Allah and they form the backdrop to the whole event.

"Fakir Sumar at the time of Shah Latif, was his close friend. He was my great grandfather's grandfather. He was a dervish. Only those who are *ahl*, who were considered to be reliable and capable of carrying forth the task would be appointed with spiritual tasks to perform at the *dargah*. He was a *qari*[108] of the Quran and had memorized the Quran Sharif and also the *risala* of Shah Latif. Shah Latif regarded him as a close friend and fakir."

"…it is also called *hamd-o-sanaa*[109] and also *mehfil-i-samaa*. It is all this. Shah Latif used to do this himself, it is the spiritual *zikr*." (Interview with the Zakri fakir, Fakir Abdul Ghaffar, Feb 2016 at the *Zakri* fakir *Autaq*)

Fakir Sumar acquired credibility for this impact of zikr. Zakri fakir spoke of his ancestral relation and the multiple factors for which the responsibility was given. The fire is classically symbolic, and associated with the eternal and timeless. In the words of *Zakri* fakir,

"At the time (of Shah Latif) there was no electricity, the machh was therefore lit to light up the *dargah* during the dark hours and *zikr* was conducted around it. *Allah hu. Allah hu* is what we recite. We take the name of Allah….With a fire in the center and people going around may create the impression that we are doing something that is the worship of the fire itself, but this is not true."

The event of the *Sao Sumar* attracts mainly an audience that is religiously inclined and are followers of Bhitai. They include the residents of Bhitshah as well as people from the rural areas around. The sighting of the new moon may not allow many to collect. On important religious months, there are a greater number of people who gather together, for instance the first of Muharram[110].

The *Sao Sumar* carries significance as a major communal religious ritual. It is traditional in its character, loud and inclusive. The fire creates an atmosphere that is similar to many traditional rituals belonging to different religions where fire is treated as a timeless and eternal symbolic element. The small machh in Bhitai's residence with his seating place next to it gives a different impression of the ritual. It could also be imagined as a relatively less public, contemplative gathering such as one around a simple bonfire, except with a religious intent.

The public performance was more 'symbolic' of another time. Post *zikr*, the *Zakri* and *Tamar* fakirs gather at their *autaqs* with their followers, in a relatively quiet gathering under the authority of the appointed *gaddi nashin* of each. People come to them singly or in pairs, with wives or children for blessings and *tabarruk* was shared.

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[108] One who recites the Arabic Quran out loud with proper tone of voice
[109] Praise of Allah
[110] The significance of Muharram is that of the starting month of the lunar year. It is also held significant with relevance to its association to the historical events of Karbala.

The proximal location of the concerned groups to the shrine is of much significance as the processions enter and exit from the multiple gateways that connect the shrine to its oldest neighbourhoods. The *Zakri fakirs* have traditionally been continuing the practice of the *zikr,* recitation and remembrance of Allah.
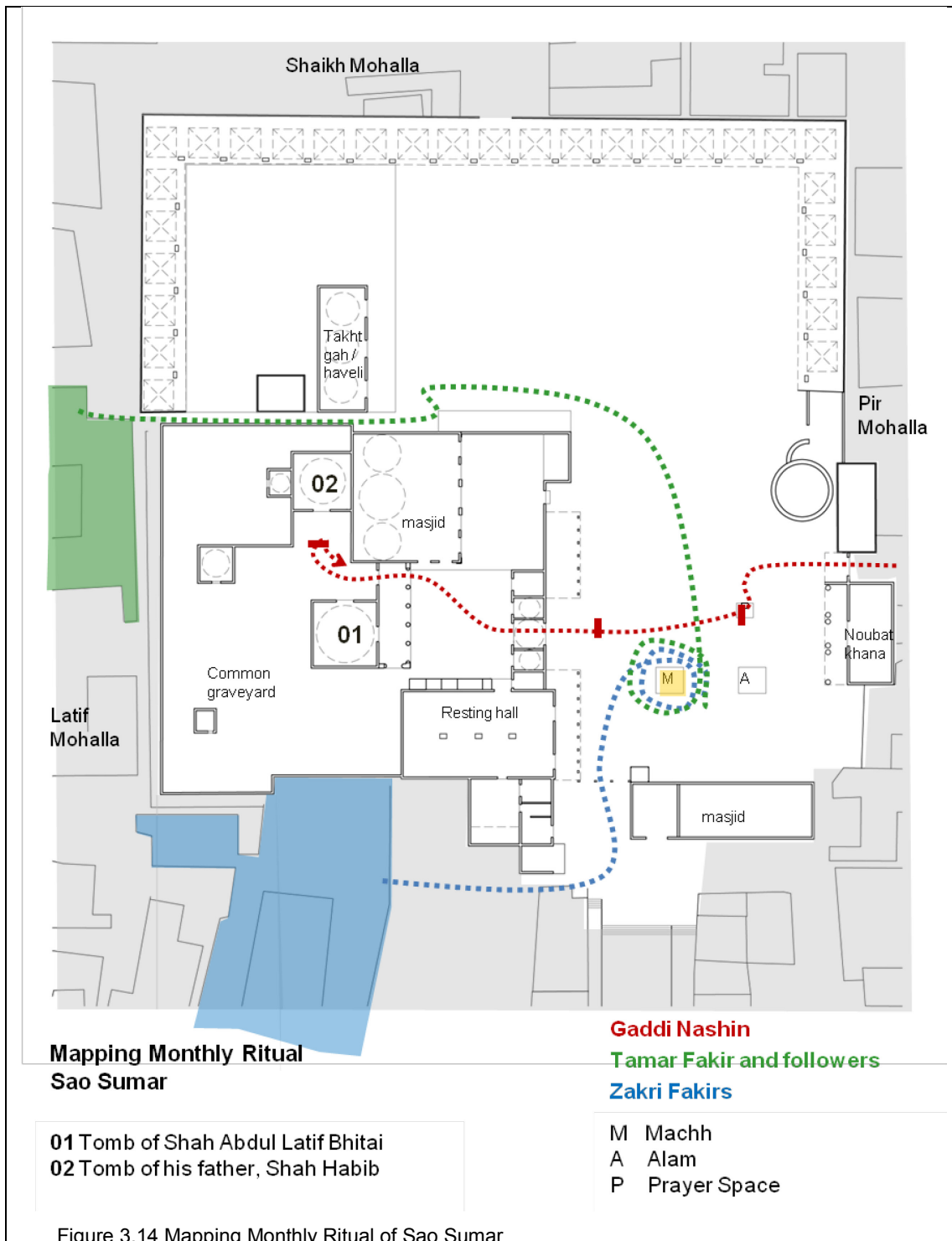
Figure 3.14 Mapping Monthly Ritual of Sao Sumar

3.6 Annual Ritual of the *Urs*: Provincial Management Institution, the *Auqaf* and the Culture Departments

The '*urs*', celebration of the death anniversary of the saint is the biggest and the major event of the year for the shrine and the town. It is much awaited and prepared for through the year. For the *fakirs* and those who religiously follow saints, the *Urs* is a celebration of his union with God[111]. It is not a day of mourning.

The event is a multi faceted one. Religious festivities take a fervent note at shrine. The fakirs and the *Gaddi Nashin* are part of a prayer ritual on the main day of the *Urs* – the third day. *Zikr* and *sama'a* are held for two days with fervor at the usual times. The visitors, followers and believers of the saint participate in charities and giving away of food, sweets and *nazranas* (mostly in the *Auqaf* boxes at the shrine). The religious act of *matam* also takes place in groups.

Simultaneously, a national cultural celebration also takes place in town. Extensively planned, cultural, intellectual and recreational programmes happen through the town. This regional cultural celebration has picked up rigour as the recognition of the significance of the Urs and the saint has taken prominence for the region's national identity. This has been promoted by several politically conscious personalities in the history of Sindh including prominently Ghulam Murtaza Syed, known popularly by his initials, Ibrahim Joyo, Miran Muhammad Shah and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. GM Syed, an educated Sindhi along with several other Sindhi intellectuals had a background of receiving a western education (following British curriculum) at the Sindh Madressah in Karachi during the 1920s and 1930s. The Sindhi nationalist movement was driven by a combination of neo-Gandhian and Marxist ideologies. The movement aimed at strategies for the development of Sindhi identity including Sindhi literature and language, and a Sufi society of Sindh.

GM Syed formulated[112] a reformed notion of Sufism[113], through the establishment of *Bazm-e-Sufiya* e Sindh (lit. the Sufi Society of Sindh) in 1966. This was a cultural organization aiming to politicize Sindh[114]. As a Sindhi nationalist, he introduced the idea of holding cultural and

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[111] It is based on the concept of *Wahdat-ul Wajood*, lit. the existence of One. This means in short, that all creation is a reflection or an image of that existence of One God. The Sufi saints dwelled over their purity through meditation so that they could achieve union with God when they reduce themselves to nothing. The concept is based on the annihilation of the self.

[112] Ibrahim Joyo was a student of GM Syed and supported him among other Sindhi intellectuals that were born out of the modern British formulated education at the Sindh Madrassa Karachi

[113] In the 1960s and 1970s, the reformed Sufism was a powerful ideological force behind left-wing and ethnic movements that protested the modernizing and centralizing policies and ideologies of the state of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. A modernized form of Islam was actively promoted by the state as the basis for a national identity (Verkaaik 2004).

[114] The Sindhi movement was driven by new main ideologues; neo-Gandhian and Marxist. The neo-Gandhian ideology was about being simplistic like wearing white clothes and a modernist supporting tradition such as writing treatises on the meaning of mysticism. The Marxist ideology aimed to struggle for the moral and social elevation of the local peasant population (Verkaaik, 2004).

social conferences on the occasion of the annual *Urs* festivals at various shrine towns promoting social harmony among the people (Verkaaik, 2004). The *Urs* festival was therefore extended from a single day event in the 1960s to a three day event, promoting popular and written Sindhi culture. Held in the multiple shrine towns in the region, the *urs* is a major festival for the towns themselves.

The number of people visiting the shrine goes up to hundreds of thousands at the popular shrines including that of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, in Bhitshah; and Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, Sehwan among them. The main and wider access roads to the shrine are lined with temporary shop structures, as part of the *mela* or festival. Bright colored fabric roofing along with hanging paper and lights decorations, music, promotion audios create a special atmosphere in town (See Figures 3.15-3.24). Cultural exhibitions, intellectual forums, local sports (Fig 3.19) and the streets create a packed experience of festivities apart from the folk singing and dancing that happens seemingly spontaneously in grounds / parks where the press covers it all. The Sindhi locals are found participating and enjoying activities and interests that most attract them.

Thousands of visitors flock to town. It is hard to estimate the exact numbers of people visiting the town and only estimation is possible. Special security and management arrangements are made. Car free zones are identified on the main streets and car parking areas are set away from shrine / town center. Multiple activities attract people for a variety of reasons. There is a constant movement of people arriving and leaving with no tickets as such, which makes it difficult to count. The maximum numbers of people visit shrines in general in the later afternoon and evening as it is thought to be the hour of prayer fulfillment - *kabooliyat ki garhi* as people explain (Fieldwork). The following is an attempt at making a calculated estimation.

The total area of the shrine is approximately 29000 sq.ft. Including other public areas and streets, the total area in public use in town is 1,611,543 sq. ft. Using pedestrian standards given by (Pushkarev and Zupan, 1975) in *Urban Space for Pedestrians*, it is estimated that an average person in the crowd as at Bhitshah during *urs* takes up about an average of 10 sq. ft. Such a crowd can be described as 'somewhat restricting' but allowing to move around comfortably. The total number of people during *urs* can therefore be estimated to be more than 160,000 approximately at a time. Considering there are many people who come and go constantly every few hours, the total numbers of people visiting the town and shrine during the three days can be estimated to be several times this figure.

According to the Gaddi Nashin's estimations[115], there are 300,000 to 350,000 people on the anniversary on one day, meaning on the three days it is about 1000,000 to 1200,000.

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[115] The Gaddi Nashin told me that their estimations were based on the presence of the camp of Shah Latif Foundation (SLF) in the shrine court, that is also used for such observations.

3.6.1 The Town during *Urs*

The cultural celebrations and activity programmes that take place through the Bhitshah town during *Urs* are a representation of the Sindhi people. It is celebrated as a cultural event of the town. The town of Bhitshah presents a culturally vibrant image of continuous entertainment and cultural recreation over the three day event of the *Urs*. Schools are off and commerce runs at its peak for the small town. The *Urs* celebrations attract the regional people in large numbers swelling four to five times its original size with many visiting and leaving the same day. The local markets of Bhitshah particularly those along the *Dargah* Road make good business. The residents and shopkeepers of Bhitshah make enough money during the *Urs* through commerce or rental accommodations that it lasts them through most of the coming year.[116] It is the best time of the year for the town economically.

Temporary shopping stalls are set up using bamboo / wooden legs and fabric along the main road of the town. These are colorfully decorated (figure 3.15 and 3.16). The shopkeepers of these stalls are mostly farmers or have other main stream means of economic livelihood. Setting up shop in the *melas* on *Urs* is a second means of livelihood which is quite profitable[117]. They travel mainly in groups to the various towns of Sindh where *Urs* festivals are scheduled to take place a day before the *Urs* and set up their stall. *Urs* festivals of popular saints like Shah Latif and Lal Shahbaz Qalandar are bigger *melas* compared to others that are small and not as popular, said a shopkeeper. The shops sell local sweets, nuts, fried eatables, artificial jewellery and plastic toys apart from flower garlands and *chaddars* and other such items that people take to the shrine[118]. They line the main street of town (which is the wider one) as it is designated to be a car free zone during the festival. The stalls selling eatables in particular claim they sell everything within a day and have to restock the shop for the next day.

The entire town works to support the thousands of visitors flocking to it on the event. Many residences offer rental accommodation or have their families from the region to stay over. The *Autaqs* are fully occupied. The concept of the *Autaq* is as age old as that of the *khanqah*. Women in Bhitshah mostly observe strict *purdah*. Strange men are therefore not allowed within the residences. The *baithak* or *autaq* are areas designated for entertaining male guests in particular. In Bhitshah, these are not attached to the houses but are separate plots including built and open spaces where mostly families but also groups of men (and women)[119] stay when they wish to visit the shrine. There are several *autaqs* in the old parts of the town dedicated for the purpose of giving accommodation to families who come to visit the shrine. In

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[116] Interview with local resident and principal of a private school in Bhitshah, Asif Rajput

[117] casual conversations with shopkeepers at mela, Bhitshah 2014

[118] Various beliefs are associated with physical items like *chaddars*, clothspreads with holy words in Arabic calligraphy to spread on the grave. Some are to pay tribute to the saint in small individual ways, some for charity like sweets and eatables are distributed among the people or the poor when a prayer has been fulfilled. Yet other items are taken to grave, touched to it or taken around it a few times and held sacred or considered to have spiritually healing powers for the sick, the old and distressed.

[119] groups of women usually stay at residences of people they know in Bhitshah

return, the guests cook food and keep the place clean for the care takers. They hence continue to work on the traditional pattern. There is no rent as such and it is a traditional service provision that is done privately.

During and after the saints lifetime, the numbers of people visiting shrines were not as much as since nationalization. Hence earlier, management was not such a major issue. Increase in numbers can be attributed to population growth and improved transportation networks and roadways. The cultural event in the town itself outside the shrine is organized by the provincial Department of Culture, while traffic and security related issues are managed by the Town/ District Municipality. The town administration organized the traffic. All vehicles are parked at the entrance of the town in a large parking lot managed by the town administration. The town remains essentially pedestrianized for the three days. Various open public spaces lining the GT Bhitshah Road that lie vacant and unused through the year become active. These are all managed and prepared for by the Bhitshah Cultural Center under the provincial Department of Culture. Invitations are sent out by the government.

All the public spaces and public buildings in the town become alive with activities like local craft exhibitions (fig. 3.17), dance performances (fig. 3.18), poetry recitals (fig. 3.20), regional sports (fig. 3.19), awareness and information sharing exhibitions for farming and animal health, education being some, besides the rituals conducted at the shrine. Large open grounds are used for horse racing, local wrestling matches *kabaddi* (local form of wrestling), bow and arrow competitions, and racing are held out in the open. *Shah jo bagh* (lit. the garden of Shah) is set up for a cultural exhibition selling local crafts of the region and town. Singing and dancing with playing of the local instruments happens at venues (see fig. 3.22, 3.23). The museum, amphitheater and auditorium facilities built especially for the annual *urs* become active with events during the day and evenings. Karar Lake offers boat rides to the visitors at nominal rates. All in all, the town is full of diverse cultural and recreational activities,

Figure 3.15 Main road of town lined with decorated colorful shopping stalls

Figure 3.16 Colourful shopping stalls lining Bhitshah street

Figure 3.17 Exhibition of local craft at Shah *jo Bagh*

Figure 3.18 Folk dancing at Shah *jo Bagh*

Figure 3.18 Local Sports like horse riding, racing, wrestling

Figure 3.19 Poetry Recitals in Sindhi

Figure 3.20 Marketing Promotions

Figure 3.21 Local musicians perform at Shah *jo Bagh, Urs* festival, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai

Figure 3.22 Playing local instruments specific to the region at Shah *jo Bagh, Urs* festival, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai

and is thoroughly enjoyed by the families and groups of friends visiting. It is also common to find open grounds in different parts of the city, particularly those owned by the government to be occupied by the visitors who bring their own travel kits for resting and taking their breaks under shady tree areas. The event takes the form of the most important and popular social and cultural occasion for the region.

The rest house of the Bhitshah Cultural Center serves the government functionaries on the 3 day *urs* celebrations in particular. A *funkar* house (artisan house), built as a dormitory type accommodation, houses the various artists visiting the town on this occasion, including musicians, performers in particular.

To summarize, the small town of Bhitshah becomes a regional hub of cultural activities during the three days. It receives artists from different parts of the region of Sindh, the performances set a standard of cultural activity in the region.

3.6.2 The Shrine on *Urs*

At the *Urs*, the Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai takes on special arrangements. It is decorated with lights. Thousands of people visit it, the marble grave is covered with heaps of *chaddars* and the carved wooden casing laden with strings of red roses. Hundreds stay *at* the shrine for the three days. They camp out in the big

Figure 3.23 The Shrine Court during *Urs*

court. Temporary shades/ tent of bamboo and fabric are set up in parts of the court meant for people to sit, stay and share for long time periods (Fig 3.24). The per person space within the shrine becomes tighter and impeded according to Pushkarev and Zupan, (1975), and can be estimated at 7 sq.ft per person. This distance is 'comfortable for standing without being affected by others, but walking between standees is possible only by disturbing them. The total area of the shrine is calculated to be about 103117.5 sq.ft (2.4 acres). Hence, the estimated number of people, at the shrine during *urs* on average is more than 16000 at a time.

Visitors

The shrine is under constant activity of celebration by the different groups including prayers, *matam*[120], folk dancing, or simply being an audience to the fakir performances of Latif's poetry in the inner court. Little stoves in places are set up to make tea or warm up food. People staying at the shrine during *urs* are zealous followers of the saint. They come from different parts of Sindh. People visiting are generally simply dressed and one is unable to decipher distinctions of class or income so easily discernible within urban contexts. The cultural and religious activities become the medium that brings the large numbers of people together to intermingle with ease and celebrate[121]. Among the prominent rituals that take place at the shrine during *urs* are those that the fakirs undertake with the *Gaddi Nashin* and the rituals of the government personnel (from Culture Department Sindh) visiting the shrine marking the opening and closing ceremony of the *urs* festival. Both rituals are religious, but the latter officially represents the government's participation. The ceremonies conducted by the government under the management of the *Auqaf* department mark the opening and closing of the cultural festival in town.

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[120] chest beating as a gesture of mourning; the act of matam is basically carried out for the martyrs of the tragic war of Karbala.
[121] In the recent Pakistani geopolitical context, large scale public gatherings are fascinating, particularly in Bhitshah where security concerns have never been a major sticking issue.

Figure 3.24 *Matam*: A ritual of beating chest with the hands as an expression of sadness carried out mostly for the tragic war event of Karbala and the martyrdom of Husain, grandson of prophet Muhammad and his family

Figure 3.25 Dancing on the *dhol* in the outer court of Shrine

Gaddi Nashin and Fakirs

During the first two days of the *Urs*, *zikr* and *sama'a* are held with much rigour and enthusiasm as the crowds gather from the town, other towns of Sindh and the rural vicinity for participation. The third day of the *Urs* is the actual day of the death anniversary. The Fakirs and the *Gaddi Nashin* get together for their annual ritual.

Around 10 o'clock in the morning, the *Gaddi Nashin* comes in a procession from his house in Pir *Mohalla* to the shrine. He sits down in front of the entrance door to the inner court of Bhitai's tomb called the *Lakhi Dar*. In about a few minutes, Tamar Fakir and his followers come to shrine and sit down in line with the *Gaddi Nashin*. People continue to gather and everyone sits down.

The old clothes[122] of Shah Latif, about 300 years old packed in a bundle are taken out carefully. It includes a grey colored robe, and head gear including a hard inner covering and a length of black cloth. The *Gaddi Nashin* wears the robe and the black cloth is wrapped around the inner core as it sits on his head to make what is locally called a *pagri*. Two long *tasbih*[123] of Shah Latif are also put around his neck. The *Gaddi Nashin* makes a collective prayer for all. His prayer is long and he prays for the wellbeing of the community, the country and the world.

Sugary syrup is prepared and is passed around as *tabarruk*[124] for all to take a few sips. As this continues, the *Gaddi Nashin* gets up, removes the old clothes which are then carefully folded and packed again in a bundle. The distribution of sweet water continues. The fakirs

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[122] The clothes are stored carefully with the *Gaddi Nashin*.

[123] rosary

[124] blessed items to eat usually shared

also get up. *Tamar* fakirs, *Zakri* fakirs and all their followers gather around the machh, while the Gaddi Nashin sits at his designated prayer space. Since this ritual takes place during the day, the machh is not lit up. The fakirs nevertheless gather around the machh reciting *Allahu* and do *zikr*. A communal prayer is held as in the ritual described in Sao Sumar.

Later, they return in procession back to their *autaqs*, Tamar fakirs to the *Bari Autaq* in the west, the *Zakri* fakirs to their *autaq* in the south. No *sama'a* is held during this day. 'Zikr' around the *machh* as explained earlier only happens on important days. It is an act of remembering Allah with different names, associated with His numerous characteristics. *Zikr* is a ritual that takes central importance in Sufi practice.

It is important to note that in the main monthly and annual ritual of the shrine, the fakirs and the *Gaddi Nashin* never enter the tomb of the saint. Most of the ritual infact takes place in the bigger court in front of the entrance door. The tomb chamber is usually closed and locked during the ritual. The saint is not an object of worship. Carrying out the ritual at his door implies the spiritual and commemorative relation being made to him, and his connection as 'an intermediary between Heaven and Earth' as Eaton (1976) articulates. It also reinforces the communal feeling and brings the various fakirs and the family of Bhitai together.

While the content of the ritual is prayer, the actions and gestures of the fakirs and the *Gaddi Nashin* suggest their relation to the saint and the defined hierarchy at the shrine.

The *Gaddi Nashin* is treated special as a representative of the saint in spirit. Physical elements like the saint's clothes, a secured prayer space and his role in conducting a collective prayer are deeply symbolic.

For the fakirs, the *machh* is an important symbolic place around which they pray and carry out '*zikr*'. '*Zikr* of the One God' is as eternal as the symbol of fire and stands for historic timelessness. The performance of *zikr* in the middle of the public court is of significance as the place is accessible to all. It is not within the confines of a place where access is restricted[125], but is located in the place that acts as a transition space between shrine and town, that is the outer court of shrine. It is a public activity inviting other people to join in. Distribution of *tabarruk*, is an act of sharing food symbolically brings the community together. People staying at the shrine continue with their tributary performances and prayers through the day. This includes religious performances as well as dancing on drums or *dhol* and other local instruments.

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[125] For instance, mosques. Mosques of different Muslim sects are different. Within the shrine precinct, there are two mosques, one of the edge of the shrine and one next to the tomb. Both belong to the prominent sects of Shia and Sunni.

The Role of the Auqaf Department

The three day celebration includes different activities that take place at the shrine and the main venues of the town. The cultural activities within the town are organized and managed by the Culture Department of Sindh, while the official activities at the shrine are managed and organized by the *Auqaf* Department. The establishment of this department has been a consequence of the need for better organization and management at shrines due to increasing numbers of visitors to them. The last chapter has given some history and background relating to the *Auqaf* and its link to the original institution of *waqf*.

Plural of *waqf*, the term *Auqaf*[126] is an Arabic word, that means 'to offer protection to a property and to keep it from becoming a third persons property' (Shahzad, 2007). The Department[127] was set up in 1960 for the purpose of managing and maintenance of religious buildings and shrines in the country. Under the Provincial Chief Administrator, the *Auqaf* Department is divided into geographical circles where each circle is supervised by a Manager *Auqaf*. The Manager and the Chief Administrator change every few years and could belong to any region following government regulations. The other staff employed at each *Auqaf* office at shrines is usually local from within the town or nearby region. The single individual authority system of the government while initially intended to maintain administrative control and justice makes it actually vulnerable to corruption in particular (Shahzad 2007; 2014).

The main functions of the *Auqaf* Department at the shrines are: a) facilitation of visitors; b) physical upkeep and maintenance of the shrine including cleanliness, infrastructure, water, lighting etc.; c) '*nazrana'* boxes are placed by the administration at different key points of circulation at the shrine. These collect donations that facilitate the functioning of the department, paying salaries to employees as well as the regular upkeeping works. The department rents out the various services at the shrine on annual or 2 year contracts including the *langar*, shoe rentals, the bedding rentals, as some examples. The Department does not officially undertake heritage conservation. Its management practices are often criticized by the conservation experts on issues of ignorance and neglect. The *Auqaf* department was established as a consequence of disputes and quarrels over the financial distribution of the *nazranas* received by the heirs of the saint(s) at several shrines throughout the country. The Department took over the management of shrines who did not have *Sajjada Nashins*, i.e. direct descendants, but had *Gaddi Nashins*, indirect descendants. Taking over

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[126] *Auqaf*, plural of *waqf*, is an Arabic word meaning confinement or prohibition. In the English language, it is parallel to mean 'Endowment'. According to Shamsul Aimma, the meaning of 'waqf' is to 'offer protection to a property and to keep from becoming a third persons property' (Shahzad 2007). The reference to waqf/ auqaf dates back to the 6th century when it was introduced as an urban institution within the Muslim context. The concept is similar to a private trust, where a property (established as 'Waqf') is made into a donation. A clear contract usually outlines specifics like beneficiaries of revenue from such property (land, of importance – agricultural, economic or infrastructure), and the trustee. A 'waqf' property cannot be sold / or given away as gift or inheritance and is to be used for specific purpose for as long as it serves the purpose that it was intended for.

[127] While the history of 'waqf' is a long one and refers to many public and private properties in the region set aside for public welfare in different ways, the provincial Department of Auqaf is relatively recent one.

the financial management from the *Gaddi Nashins* have rendered them powerless[128] as such. Their role is now restricted to presence in rituals as a representative of the saint. This is in some cases extrapolated and used for other purposes as deemed appropriate[129]. The Gaddi Nashin of Bhitai has set up a Shah Latif Foundation in a small room within the shrine premises. This he uses for several purposes including taking complaints for the zaireen, setting up a medical camp particularly during the days of peak traffic at shrine. This foundation is funded primarily by his family. In his interview, the gaddi nashin spoke of the Shah Latif Foundation as a way of negotiating better facilities for the visitors with the Auqaf Department. Example, making shoe keeping, bedding rentals free of cost, as most people asking for bedding are poor and distressed. Cleanliness was another major concern at shrine that many complain is not adequately addressed and the SLF intends to address this. He has also recently set up an ambulance service especially for the shrine. The Gaddi Nashin also wishes to use his role to promote interfaith / religious harmony within the region and makes gestures and public statements in this regard. The residents of Bhitshah do not always agree with his strategies. The *Auqaf* Department now functions as an autonomous department self-financed by the *nazranas*[130] it receives.

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[128] The *Gaddi Nashins* of shrines are/ have been mostly landlords and with the reverence given to them in belief and through *nazranas* as spiritual heirs of the saint, they have exploited their position in history, taken up personal vendettas, acted as tyrants and carried out unethical practices for their own personal desires.

[129] The *Gaddi Nashin* of Bhitai has set up a Shah Latif Foundation in a small room within the shrine premises. This he uses for several purposes including taking complaints for the *zaireen*, setting up a medical camp particularly during the days of peak traffic at shrine. This foundation is funded primarily by his family. He has also recently set up an ambulance service specially for the shrine. The *Gaddi Nashin* also wishes to use his role to promote interfaith / religious harmony within the region and makes gestures and public statements in this regard. The residents of Bhitshah do not entirely agree with his strategies.

[130] '*Nazranas*' have since the olden times, always been most important source of income for shrines. In the old times, the believers and followers of *sufi* saints used to offer these '*nazranas*' or gifts to the saint by hand or would leave money under the carpet before leaving. After the saint's death, *mutawalli* and *gaddi nashins* received the *nazranas* (Shahzad 2014).

Figure 3.25 Shrine decorated at the occasion of the *Urs*

The major rituals of the government and the fakirs are placed out well over the course of the three days each having their own audience and having no clashes of time and space. The following is a description of the ritualistic participation and involvement of the government personnel on the urs of Shah Latif.

The VIP protocol and the formal officials ceremony at the grave is managed by the *Auqaf* department at the shrine. The three day festive event is officially inaugurated by the government personnel, officials of the Department of Culture, who pay their respects at the shrine on the morning of the first day. This marks the opening ceremony of the *Urs* itself. The ceremony receives press coverage and government dignitaries cover the saint's grave with flowers and decorative *chaddars*. They then recite a few words of prayer quietly. For the *Auqaf* department, the event of the *Urs* is usually a cutoff point, a deadline within which they are to finish certain maintenance works at the shrine as the government officials pay a visit to the areas where major renovation or repair works have taken place. For instance, recently the later residence of the saint was renovated and decorated under the *Auqaf* supervision. This was inaugurated for opening in December 2014, during the *Urs*. The quality of work and finishes including *kashi kari*, lime plaster however is poor.

The fakirs singing *raag* during the *Urs* make special performance[131] for the ceremony. After the inaugural, they perform Shah *jo Raag* at their location under the portico, facing the tomb and the dignitaries listen to the performance for a short time.

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[131] Senior fakirs sing on the occasion and the selection of *raags* is apt for the occasion.

Special food is prepared for all (*langar*) by the *Auqaf* department. This is distributed among the people in the designated area at the shrine in the afternoon. The distribution of *langar* is the responsibility of the *Auqaf* and is a major activity during the *Urs* in particular.

The government officials also hold a closing ceremony on the third day in the evening at the shrine. They put a *chaddar* on the grave, pray and officially close the festival at the grave. The VIP protocol, lighting of the place, maintenance and repairs undertaken in preparation of the event apart from general management of the shrine precinct are also tasks undertaken by the *Auqaf* Department.

The rituals performed by the government departments and the traditional social group of the fakirs are performed separately, at different times allocated and space. Their nature is also very different. The govnerment rituals are individualistic and politically respectful while the traditional rituals are collective, a public performance and inclusive. The latter brings the indigenous community together and is filled with immense reverence.

3.7   Concluding Remarks

The monthly ritual of *Sao Sumar* and the annual *urs* ritual in which the *Gaddi Nashin* wears the ancient articles of clothing of the saint are two important community rituals that give much insight into the hierarchies prevalent and the nature of the interrelationships between the fakirs, the *Gaddi Nashin* and the *Auqaf* Department. The *Gaddi Nashin* is given immense respect as a representative of the saint. The bowing down of the fakirs to touch the feet of the *Gaddi Nashin* and their joining the procession to drop him to his residence are gestures that indicate their subservience.

The fakirs play a dedicated role toward the preservation of the traditional legacy of the daily performance on the *tambura*, the *naqqara* and the *zikr* around the *machh,* with or without the presence of the *Gaddi Nashin*, their spiritual reverence of the saint, and a commitment to continue their performance, relating to timeless values. The fakirs are the carriers of the 'spirit of the place' and their commitment and understanding of the heritage as a whole is remarkable.

The younger fakirs take their commitment further to link it to the age of the information technology and media. They play an active role in the promotion of the indigenous music as a Sindhi mystic music in tv programmes and in international concerts.

The *Auqaf* Department has no participating role in the traditional rituals. It remains aloof, yet it is supportive of them. A number of the performing fakirs are employees of the department. For instance, the *Mungenhar* fakir has been an employee of the *Auqaf* for more than 25

years. The dedicated, generational fakirs are given preference. The department is aware of their commitment, so besides their official duties, they become part of the rituals as an additional task. In their interviews, the fakirs spoke of the changes they have observed in the town of Bhitshah and at the shrine over their own lifetime. They admit to a change in the audience that the shrine attracts (See Appendices). Apart from the continuation of its religious nature, people from the region, in greater numbers, are getting attracted to the place specifically for recreation in the evenings and over weekends. The change is inevitable and therefore they must carry on their legacies, they admit.

The transformation of the *urs* from a religious ritual to a cultural celebration has been of significance within the socio-cultural process of evolution of the Sindhi society. Secular education and a rejection of the authority of the *sayids, pirs* and the *sajjada nashins* have been the main causes behind this transformation. Politically and culturally developed and propagated by people like Ghulam Murtaza Syed, Ibrahim Joyo and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto during the 1960s and 1970s, the transformation of the *urs* marks the turn. Verkaaik (2004) talks of this reformation as one in which 'the *urs* no longer was an occasion in which the authority of the landlord qua *pir* or syed was confirmed…. it rather became an event to commemorate the martyrs of Sindh and its peasants'. The status quo of the landlord represents a larger authoritative system that has formulated and gripped Sindh, defining its social classes and tyrannical practices of landlord to belittle the peasants.

> "In their own unique ways, the Sindhi intellectuals were …defining the distinct character of the Sindhi nation on the basis of this mystical essence of Islam. They were, … on the defensive, that is, responding to a dominant discourse of religious nationalism, appropriating it to argue for the uniqueness of the Sindhi people within Pakistan." (Verkaaik 2004)

This chapter has analyzed and created the relation between the rituals carried out at shrine, by the relevant people of the community. The social hierarchy in the community is highlighted. The collective memories and history of place attached to the rituals becomes clear and the historic significance is in this way articulated and described. While the community rituals including the monthly *Sao Sumar* and the annual *urs* ritual performed by the *Gaddi Nashin* and the fakirs, a small number of people attend the ritual. The rituals give an insight into the current role of the shrine, which is religious and subservient to the authority of the *Gaddi Nashin*. Descriptions of the various important spaces of the shrines with regard to rituals construct their deep rooted historical relevance. The spaces are used by the fakirs, particularly during rituals to make the relevance come alive, become current. The connection between the action / body gesture and place signify the relationship thence.

The major actors involved in the management of the living heritage of the shrine were identified to be particularly the different groups of fakirs who have remained associated to shrine for generations. Typology of fakirs was created based on the nature of their association

and tasks that they carry out as commitment. The gaddi nashin plays his own designated and no less significant role as the 'spiritual heir of the saint'. The Shah Latif Foundation is his modern intervention with the intent to fill the gaps that the Bhitai family observes and desires to facilitate for the visitors to shrine. The government departments of *Auqaf* and Culture with respect to their objectives, highlight the association the nation state makes to the shrine as a religious and cultural place of importance. The 'official' and unemotional attachment of the Auqaf department along with the random strategies of intervention are questionable. The translation of the waqf into Auqaf needs to be understood better and formulated and improvised to cater to the needs of the various shrines. The nazranas collected from popular shrines is enormous in quantity and lack of sufficient check and balances makes it susceptible to corruption in the current form, along with little of this collection being given out to the well deserved causes such as welfare of the poor, those seeking help, sick and distressed, health and awareness campaigns. Nevertheless, the office plays a role in the management and physical upkeep of the shrine. Although it is bureaucratic in its functioning, it maintains a steady and harmonious relation with the indigenous group at shrine and supports them through minimal interference, offering basic security appointing its workers at appropriate location etc., and most importantly offering employment opportunity and security preference to the fakir families associated with shrine. What is important to appreciate is that these social groups and institutions work together in parallel to structure and create a rhythm for the collective memory.

The descriptions of the rituals situate them in their context.

> "…to set a rite in its context is seen not as an auxiliary step but as an essential ingredient to the act of interpreting it; to investigate the context of a rite is not just to study additional information about it, but to put ourselves in a position to have a greater understanding of its meaning than would be accessible to someone who read it as a self contained symbolic text" (Connerton 1989: 51)

It is this as Connerton (1989) articulates well that this chapter has aimed to do that is to situate the various rituals within their context and offered an analysis and interpretation of this gathered through observation and interviews in the field. The next chapter talks about the town of Bhitshah within which the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai sits. The shrine is connected to the old neighbourhoods that surround it in such a way that it is intertwined with the daily living of the community. This proximal relationship between the shrine and town is significant to its 'living' attributes as a cultural heritage. The extension of the town as a hub of cultural activity for the region reinforces its cultural experience. At the same time, the fakirs of the shrine see this extension as one disconnected from its religious character, 'We do not really interact or have much contact with the later settlers in Bhitshah. They go about their own business and do not have much to do with shrine'. While the disconnection is a fact, the cultural activities together promote commerce in town, attracting a variety of visitors for

different purposes. The shrine remains the center of the town's attractions as the next chapter elaborates on its functions, attributes, and the roles it plays in town and region.

4 THE PLACE WITHIN THE TOWN CONTEXT: THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE SHRINE TO THE SETTLEMENT

The intangible heritage of the poetry of Bhitai along with the regular performance of rituals as a dedicated activitiy of the indigenous community of fakirs altogether form the larger framework within which the tangible has acquired meaning and form. This chapter moves into the physical context of the shrine that formed and developed over time, manifesting the intangible and making multitudinal connections through the physical form, proximal relations of functions and the social network.

In general, the heritage of Sufi shrines in the South Asian milieu is well connected and interlaced with their immediate physical and historical context (Boivin, 2007; Desplat and Schulz, 2014; Mokhtar, 2012; Quraeshi, 2010). This is because they play or have played a role in the social and cultural life of the people of the settlement.

The town within which historic sites of shrines are located have a deep seated relationship with them. The connections are historical, physical and socio-cultural. The town context when studied closely is a traditional cultural environment. It is within this that the shrine has survived as a living heritage. The formation, stratification and relation of town to the living heritage in multiple ways, (physical and socio-cultural) contribute to its living, breathing character.

The development and growth of the physical heritage and the settlement around it happens in relation to the other. This chapter describes the interrelationship between the site of historic and socio-cultural importance and the settlement context. The analysis focuses on the urban form and function and its relationship with the heritage site, along with a brief analysis of the socio-cultural networks that support this.

The historical evolution of the town can be broadly divided into the major periods of its transformation. Maps are used as a main medium of analysis apart from a descriptive narrative. In the case of the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, its special proximal association with the oldest neighbourhoods of town contributes particularly to its 'living' characteristic.

After an introductory overview of town, the next couple of sections give the historical evolution of the town, creating the setting for the immediate physical and social context of the shrine. Later interpretations of the cultural heritage also become the background for future developments of town.

4.1   Bhitshah (1742 -): Introduction to town

The place of the shrine of Shah Latif is also the place of birth of the town itself. This is because Shah Latif was the founder of this settlement. Bhitshah today is a small town with an estimated population of about 35,682[132] in 2014. Currently, it falls under the District Administration of Hala and the *Taluka*[133] Administration of Matiari. The town can be found on some of the oldest British maps of the time dating as far back as 1890. Its population was however always very small and the shrine, its main attraction.

Shah Abdul Latif came to this *Bhit* (lit. translation: mound of sand/ plateau) in the last 10 years of his life consolidating his ideas and his community of followers. The geography and physical features of the place were considered appropriate. The Bhit was surrounded by water at one end. The Karar Lake was then better connected to the Indus River tributary. This made it a haven and an attractive meditative spot. Before that, Shah Latif had visited the place occasionally for meditation and solace. The fakirs and followers of Bhitai joined him and together they created a small rural settlement.

The place of the shrine became a central community space in the settlement. Today, it is an important part of the defining structure of town. This makes the central idea of the chapter.

The architecture of the town is a derivative of the political, social and economic systems (Kostof, 1991; Rossi, 1982). The work of Spiro Kostof is apt in relating the historical and cultural contexts of settlements and cities to their urban forms. Quoting him (1991),

> 'Rather than presume… as practically everybody in the architectural world wants to presume, that buildings and city-forms are a transparent medium of cultural expression, I am convinced that the relationship only works the other way round. The more we know about cultures, about the structure of society in various periods of history in different parts of the world, the better we are able to read their built environment.' (p. 10)

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[132] As of 2014, estimates projected by the Town Municipal Authority
[133] subdivision

The morphology of the old town of Bhitshah carries a characteristic division of public and private spaces and connectivity with the shrine as a central open space. This central space is surrounded by neighbourhoods that are clearly designated and categorized according to division of the traditional society of Bhitshah.

The physical structure of the city also comprises of those defining elements within a town that form its identity. These include the main circulation routes, prominent public spaces, meaningful and identity-defining spaces all together. Aldo Rossi (1982) relates to the 'physical structure of city' as one that is defined by primary elements or primary urban artifacts that form a center due to importance regarding movement, symbolism and meaning. A historic place of cultural importance that continues to live remains associated in changing and adapting ways to the town through history. As a small town and one attached to a strong cultural identity [through Bhitai's contribution to the regional literature], the town of Bhitshah has particularly continued to retain and be associated in different time periods to Sufi symbol and physical forms highlighting its cultural value.

The shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai and its attached forms of commemoration and religious reverence manifest a personal history of Bhitai. They are also a representation of a cultural identity and a source of religious inspiration.

> '..architectural meaning is ultimately always lodged in history in cultural contexts'. (p. 9)

The analysis of the town is broken down into 1) a historical development of town, outlining its morphological development, 2) traditional cultural nodes in town/region. The theoretical works of Kostof and Rossi are used to articulate and offer the theoretical explanation for some of the analysis. Together these form a system within which the cultural heritage lives following its cultural pattern.

Towns inhabiting places of collective memory acquire a distinctive character. It is these places of memory that 'summarize' the city (Rossi). Their persistence is valuable and the community that plays a role in this, is a major participant in its characteristics appearance and continuation.

The history of the town and the place of heritage are inevitably linked together prompting and engangin the other. Which prompted the building ad development of the other, the settlement or the palce – is a question that explains much about their interrelation. As a place of social importance in history, it can be understood to be connected to other places within and outside the city to other places that validate and amplify its significance and meaning attached to it. The major historical phases marking the growth of the settlement also mark the developing relationship between the settlement and the historical place. The meaning associated with the place may change and acquire additional or altered definitions.

The settlement is layered based on two factors, first its historical development and second the structures of symbolic and functional association to the primary structure that form one or more network(s). For each of these segments, the relationship of the primary heritage site to it is revealing of its significance in the physical context. The chronological development of town with respect to the heritage is also witness to changing political and economic orders. The extrapolation of the role of the shrine heritage is an important node among a prevailing network of nodes is on the other hand a way of understanding the social and cultural aspect of space use. The landuse distribution of town is closely tied to the political and economic order of the region and is described within the historical town development.

The following section starts with an overview of the historical and political development that affected the town.

4.2   Chronological historical and political overview of the town

The physical development of the town of Bhitshah has been divided into four main phases based on the changes in urban form / planning, the political regime that influenced it, giving also the economic climate of the town. This table has been adapted from the works of Architect and Planner Arif Hasan and the Phd thesis works of Krishnamurthy, (2012). Giving a brief summary of these phases, the following sections elaborate on the morphological and functional development and expansion of town.

Time period	Political Regime	Economic Climate	Planning
1742 – 1754	Saint's Authority	Rural economy	Village settlement
1754- 1947	Kingdom Colonial rule	Rural economy / Rural center	Organic settlement
1947-2004	Post colonial democracy	Local craft production and trade	Modernist planning of Cultural City
2005 – 2014	Post colonial democracy	Hybrid; semi-urban center for rural areas, market for local crafts.	Networking Infrastructure improvements,

The **first phase** of the town development (1742- 1754) has been described as part of the introduction to the saint, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai's life in chapter 3. It started off as a rural settlement subsisting with farming in the peripheral areas. The tomb of Shah Latif was constructed close to his father's tomb. A graveyard developed on one side of the tomb over time, of the dedicated followers and family of Shah Latif. This time period was also a phase of political turmoil in Sindh within the macro context, creating social anxiety (chapter 2). The Mughal dynasty was declining. The region of Sindh was governed by a series of local governors under Mughal rule. Political power tussle for the past four centuries in Sindh had

created a decline in population and social unrest. It is also for this reason that the saint attracted followers within the bubble of peace and cultural harmony that he created, like numerous saints before him[134]. The time period is the founding period of Bhitshah, the time during the lifetime of the saint. It was then that he consolidated his spiritual ideas and developed his poetry with music as a medium of meditation, dissemination and engaging with the local people of Sindh. He and his fakirs organized the built structures, worked as a community to carry out the various tasks of growing food, langar kitchen, community services and music performances among them (Baloch, 2010).
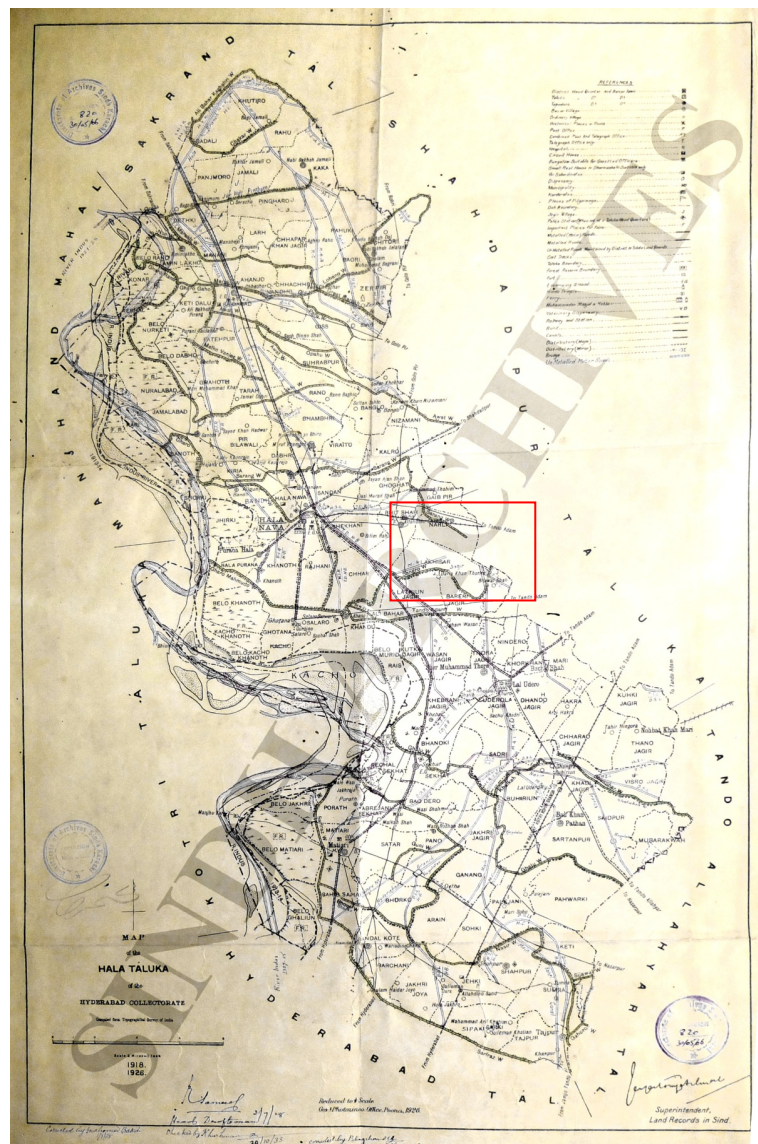
Figure 4.1: Map of Hala *Taluka*, Sindh 1884, 1904, 1907, by Superintendent Land Records and Registration

Source: Sindh Archives in January 2015

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[134] Examples include Shrine of Baba Farid Shakarganj in Pakpattan; Shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore; Shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan among them.

The oldest neighbourhoods of the town formed and consolidated around the tomb in the **second phase** (1754-1947) of the town's development. It marks a duration of almost two centuries in which the transition took place from the local kingdoms to colonial rule spanning its entire period until independence in 1947. The period was one of enormous political and administrative changes in the larger region. During this period, the region went from a local kingship rule to colonial administration and a governance system in place. The town of Bhitshah remained within its isolated bubble least affected through the entire colonial period. This is gauged from the population records obtained of 1902 (British records obtained from the Sindh Archives) and those of 1961 (Pakistan Census Survey 1961). The population of town changed by only 366 during this period of 60 years, from 2526 to 2892 respectively. The colonial rule in the region brought little changes to the settlement's form. New infrastructure within the region including connection to the railway network made the town more accessible for the people in the surrounding areas (See figures 4.2 and 4.3). The tomb remained a center of its daily life. Visited on Thursday evenings by people from the surrounding villages and towns, the shrine attracted larger numbers particularly during the annual occasion of the saint's death anniversary among other religious days of festivities and ceremonial celebrations. Visiting and paying respects at shrines has generally been part of the culture of South Asian Muslims through history (Ewing, 1997; Quraeshi, 2010; Rizvi, 1978; Suvorova, 2011).

Figure 4.2: Part Map of Hala Taluka **1884, 1904**, **1907** showing the town of Bhitshah as a village settlement centered around shrine

Figure 4.3: Map of Hala Taluka, Sindh **1918, 1926** showing addition of railway network in the region
Source: Sindh Archives

The setting up of a nation state[135] after independence, came with new aspirations of a modern development and upgradation of traditional setups and towns. Expansion of several

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[135] The political history of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has witnessed two contrasting visions among its leaderships. The state's policies and plans have undergone changes due to a difference in how the leadership chooses to define and align the religion to state policies. Of the two, one is more conservative in nature, fascist and

major cities and towns was planned following the modernist grid iron plan in the subsequent decades all over the country. Examples include Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad set up in the 1950s.

The **postcolonial** era brought about a unique development and expansion for the town of Bhitshah. The legendary politician Zulfikar Ali Bhutto[136][137], born a Sindhi, envisioned to connect the cultural heritage of the shrine to other 'intangible'[138] heritage of the region. He invited the families undertaking age-old crafts[139] production in the region to come and settle in the town. Under his instructions, a 'modernist' plan was produced to expand the town accommodating the traditional crafts production and marketing aiming to provide all necessary support and infrastructure (including housing and workshops for the artisans). The traditional local crafts included *Kashi*[140] tile work, lacquered wood work known as *Jandi*[141], dyed and blockprinted textile craft *Ajrak*[142], embroidered textile craft *Susi* and handwoven cotton fabric *Khaadi* (See figure 4.4). Committees / cooperatives were formed of each artisan group to liaison with the government for the requisite infrastructure[143]. The government operated under a Welfare State model in the initial two decades of its formation and took responsibility to provide welfare for the different sections of its population until the 1970s (Hasan 2002; Ahmed et al. 2016).

After Z.A. Bhutto was removed from the government (1970s), the plan execution stopped and was not revived after that. Only the *Ajrak* and *Jandi* artisans managed to settle down in Bhitshah. Hunarmand Colony or Artisans Colony is a residential neighbourhood in town featuring grid iron modernist planning. It consists of 75 plots of 80 sq yds each on a grid iron layout. Workshops, wholesale and retail shops of their products are lined along the Bhitshah Grand Trunk Road (GT Bhitshah). The built structures are basic and simple in construction, catering to the traditional way of functioning.

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chooses to nullify / deny regional practices, cultural influences. The second believes in an expression of regional cultures prevalent and evolved through history, relating deep geographical and linguistic linkages.

[136] ZA Bhutto was supporter of the second vision and was therefore popularly supported. He was removed by a military dictator, General Zia-ul-Haq in 1977 and executed on account of his vision development of a globally abreast and modern Pakistan, allowing freedom of expression and promoting a variety of cultural practices. The later years under Zia brought drastic changes as 'conservative' attitudes to all cultural practices were adopted.

[137] Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1928-1979): started his political career in mid 1950s, was a popular charismatic leader with a vision of facilitating the poor man and improving his life quality. He was arrested as a military coup took over in 1977 and executed later.

[138] Intangible heritage as defined in the heritage literature, includes heritage that is unbuilt such as poetry, crafts, skills, languages, music and similar aspects important to a culture.

[139] Traditional crafts production had been happening for centuries in specific geographic locations, passing on expertise over generations. The new nationalist spirit enveloped with tools of modernism offered Bhutto the chance of giving them support and protection.

[140] Local ancient tile craft using natural and chemical dyes. Indigo from indigo plant grown considerably has been a major colour used in patterns.

[141] *Jandi* workers have come from Kalot, Bhanot.

[142] The *Ajrak* crafts people used to live at Nasarpur in Matiari for example, next to the river. Their work requires use of water several times in the process of dyeing and fabric printing.

[143] Interview with the Jandi craftsmen at their workshop. Their workshop had been set up through such a cooperative – Bhitshah Handicraft Jandi Cooperative Society.
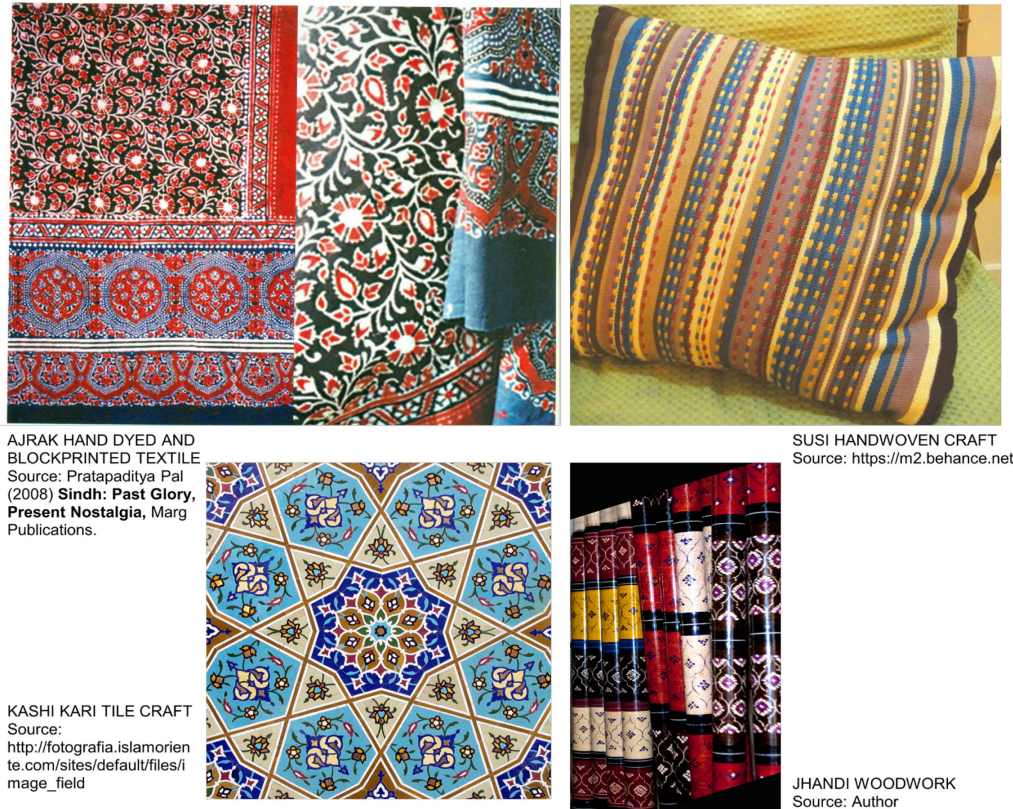
AJRAK HAND DYED AND
BLOCKPRINTED TEXTILE
Source: Pratapaditya Pal
(2008) **Sindh: Past Glory,
Present Nostalgia,** Marg
Publications.

SUSI HANDWOVEN CRAFT
Source: https://m2.behance.net/

KASHI KARI TILE CRAFT
Source:
http://fotografia.islamorien
te.com/sites/default/files/i
mage_field

JHANDI WOODWORK
Source: Author

Figure 4.4: Local traditional crafts production that were planned for set up at Bhitshah in 1954.

I interviewed some of the artisans at their workshops in Bhitshah during my fieldwork. According to Abdullah, the *Ajrak* artisan situated on the primary street of town, their families are equally involved in their processes of manufacturing and production. Hence, for most artisans like him, the production workshops were physically connected to their shops and their living spaces attached or closeby. Their major clients come from big cities like Karachi and Lahore and include private boutiques, government institutions promoting the indigenous craft as well as non-government organizations. The process of manufacturing for crafts like *Ajrak* is specialized and tenuous. It requires expertise, immense effort and dedication. According to Abdullah, around 15 people work through the different stages of production in order to finally arrive at the finished product. He seemed generally satisfied and content with his work and the sales that he is able to manage, although he wishes the infrastructure could be better updated.

About fifteen minutes from Bhitshah lies the town of Hala, which is a major center for handicraft production and market in Sindh today. Hala is an older city than Bhitshah and has maintained prominence as an administrative and commercial center. This has had an influence in the formation of the Bhitshah Cultural City.

A Bhitshah Cultural Center was established, in a similar vision to promote Sindhi culture from town in 1954 and public amenities including gardens, sports grounds, auditorium, exhibition space, a small music school, and a rest house for official guests were planned and built in town. The facilities set up are particularly used during the annual occasion of the death anniversary of the saint. The shrine's regular daily and weekly activities anchor the attraction through the year in the town. Even though, the Culture City was only partially executed, it has added to the richness of experience of the town as a multilayered city. The indigenous craft workers as well as those associated with shrine rituals as generational custodians are content in continuing their family legacies[144]. This tradition is a strong aspect of their identity and is a major factor of this contentment.

The last phase of Bhitshah's development timeline (2005-2015) has not seen much in terms of planned expansion. The catastrophic floods in the rural areas of Sindh in 2010 drove victims of destroyed homes and fields to the nearest towns and cities for aid. The floods, primarily induced by immense rain in the country caused much devastation in the region. The towns and cities became centers for the collection, treatment and support for the victims. According to Murid, local journalist at Bhitshah about 15000[145] flood victims stayed back after immediate support mechanisms were withdrawn and things went back to normal. The town of Bhitshah expanded at its northern edge with informal housing for families who found substitute means of livelihoods. While the locals of Bhitshah are sympathetic to their situation, they also criticize this influx for bringing crime particularly petty thefts to the town. In 2008, the Bhitshah Beautification Plan was undertaken that aimed at upgradation of some basic infrastructure of the town, including roads, water supply, upgradation of the government education institutions in town as well as restoration and beautification of the historic Karar Lake. Bad governance plagues maintenance issues in the town as it does in many cities of the country.

The town of Bhitshah is an example of a city of collective memory as Christine Boyer suggests. The collective memory of the shrine is the main characteristic of the town. Collective memory in comparison belongs to a particular social group, as opposed to a larger nation. The personal involvement of the ancestors of the members of the community makes this a personal / community relation and form of identity (Halbwachs, 1980).

The major political phases of history relate to the geographical and socio-cultural changes to places. The town of Bhitshah can be divided into two major historical phases based on its patterns of development / morphology. 'The form of the city is always the form of a particular time of the city…' (Rossi 1982: 61). The first is the organic town, the old town around the shrine. It is this old town that is also clearly attached to ritual performances in town as well as

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[144] Interviews of Jandi and Ajrak craft workers at Bhitshah @ their workshops in Bhitshah, December 2014
[145] Estimated figure from the interview of the local journalist during field work

at the shrine, for example through processions in town that culminate at shrine, and by the division of communities into the various neighbourhoods of the traditional town.

The second is the post colonial development of the town. The city's morphology is linked to primary elements with them as fixed points around which the residential and the anonymous parts of the city are formed (Boyer, 1994). Rossi refers to primary elements as the generating elements of the city's form, with them being public and collective and the residential private. Primary elements are places of historic importance, playing an essential role in the city, symbolically, physically and culturally. They are monuments of such a nature that they are 'capable of summarizing the city' through their architecture and 'activity of the collective'. As the following sections will show, the shrine is the primary element in the old town of Bhitshah, where other primary elements have emerged over time but also are associated with the shrine symbolically. The shrine therefore retains primary importance, with the old town forming the backdrop of the shrine. The concept of the primary element is helpful in articulating the relationship between a historical site to the urban physical context and form. The role that the shrine plays and has played in town is evidence of its significance as a living heritage.

4.3   The traditional organic town

The earliest evidence of the presence of Bhitshah as a small village town is found in a British map of Sindh from 1884 (refer to figure 4.1). It is then subsequently found in maps of 1918 and 1934 (Refer to figure 4.3). Its presence and growth are attributed to the presence of the shrine. The name of the town itself 'Bhitshah' marks its significance as the *Bhit* of *Shah*, the '*Bhit'* meaning mound of sand, of 'Shah', that is Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai.

The old town developed in mid 1700s, consolidated in the 19th century. It was initiated and organized by Bhitai earlier. The town remained small in population and area size until after independence, and acted as a regional center attracting rural population on weekly and annual occasions celebrated at the shrine.

The topography of Bhitshah is such that the highest point of the town is where the tomb is. Karar Lake[146] is a characteristic geographical feature of the town, known for its historical as well as recreational importance marking the lowest point in the gradient of the town, collecting its storm water drainage, specially that which flows down from the *mazar* and the surrounding higher ground.

The shrine lies right in the center of the town. Four old neighbourhoods surround the shrine namely Pir *Mohalla*, Sheikh *Mohalla*, Latif *Mohalla* and Bughio *Mohalla*. They are well connected to the shrine by four entry / exit points situated at the cardinal positions. This shows its close association to the oldest neighbourhoods of town. The shrine is the 'soul of

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[146] Tuhfat-ul-Kiram 1760; Shah jo Risalo; mention of the lake in two very old texts

the town'. Its physical connections and centrality reveal its cultural significance for the people of the town.

Mud brick housing laid out in organic plan with narrow winding pedestrian lanes and introverted residential courtyards, the old seemingly dense urban fabric hugs the immediate areas around the shrine. It was common for spontaneous towns to be built as such (Kostof, 1991).

> '…no city, however arbitrary its form may appear to us, can be said to be 'unplanned'. Beneath the strangest twist of lane or alley, behind the most fitfully bounded public place, lies an order beholder to prior occupation, to the feature of the land, to long established conventions of the social contract, to a string of compromises between individual rights and the common will' (Kostof, 1991).

Despite the seemingly unordered plan of the old settlement, the traditional South Asian city form is not unordered. Organic planned traditional towns were a result of community negotiations (Hosagrahar, 2005).

> '…the public space was continually negotiated and redefined, as the buildings pushed out and over, interlocked and diversified' (Kostof, 1991).

There was an absence of private property in the precolonial context in the region as explained in chapter 2. This meant that the land itself was not a private commodity. Space and its produce was negotiated and / or bargained to follow prescribed norms of the community including for example minimum width of streets, slopes to be maintained, visual privacy of residences, larger courtyards within the residences and narrower lanes connecting the settlements. The streets, semi-public courtyards and cul-de-sacs were hence produced as a result of constant negotiations.

The shrine makes a rectilinear shape, straight edged, juxtaposing the organic neighbourhood surrounding it. The large open space in front of the shrine experientially marks 'the arrival' to the center of the city. Built on higher grounds, the slopes work well for the sanitation infrastructure. A large water well today within the shrine premises used to be a main source of water for the old town, later additions were made of private boring pumps and wells in private dwellings. The dense urban fabric is of little architectural value, contrary to the morphology and street experience that add to the experience of the shrine. The residences within are simple in construction and of basic layout. They are built according to need and have little aesthetic value or regard for proportions. The residences are different from one another in size, since they are of mixed classes. Some are in very poor shape and with many people living together, others are large and spacious[147]. These neighbourhoods are of mixed income brackets, and they demarcate a distinct social grouping and hierarchy within the town, based on religious status and / or means of livelihood.

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[147] Visit of residences in Pir *Mohalla* and Shaikh *Mohalla* with Zulqarnain Shah. See Appendices – Women / residents of Bhitshah.

Pir *Mohalla* for instance, refers to the religious status of the social groups who reside in them. '*Pir*' referring to 'Sayids'[148], participating actively in the rituals at shrine. Bughio *Mohalla* was an old village closeby that was incorporated in the city, its residents were traditionally farmers, now they are of mixed occupations[149].

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[148] In Sindh, *Sayids* are held as socially privileged in particular in small towns. *Sayid* is a prefix attached to people's names and understood for them to be connecting lineage with Prophet Muhammad's family.
[149] Local journalist, Murid, Bhitshah, December 2014; Fakir Muhammad Ismail

Figure 4.5: Satellite image showing the Shrine and part of the old town of Bhitshah as well as part of postcolonial development. The image shows the morphological grain of the organic settlement around the shrine. The open areas around Karar Lake were developed as a set of public amenities in the late 1950s under a modernist plan. The contrast between the two textures of development is apparent in the image.
Courtesy Hassan Abbasi, Thesis work 2012, Architecture and Planning Department, NEDUET

The old neighbourhoods of Bhitshah are constructed in an irregular and organic fashion and are purely residential in character. The edges of the neighbourhoods are marked by small scale commercial and mixed landuse. These make up the secondary streets, connecting to primary streets. The neighbourhoods are low rise, mostly ground floor, of mud brick and brick construction.
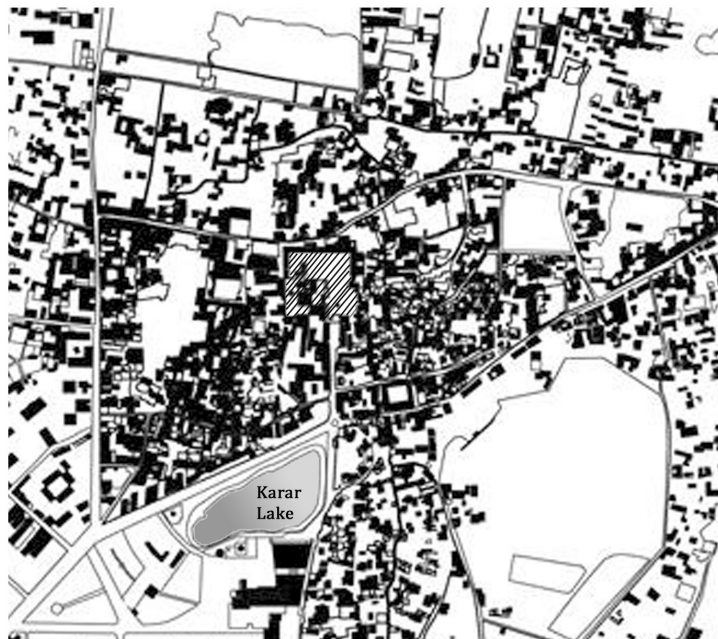
Figure 4.6: Old town of Bhitshah with the shrine at its center (marked by hatch)
Source: Author, Phd Fieldwork 2014/15

Figure 4.7: Narrow streets of Bhitshah old neighbourhoods, varying between 3' to 8' with minimum openings.

Characteristically traditional South Asian, their features can be listed as:

- Varying plot sizes, showing a mixed income grouping,
- Narrow winding lanes, not suitable for cars, mostly pedestrian and used by cycles, motorcycles, animals without carts.
- Introverted housing: private courtyards inside each house.

The streets are characteristically similar to those of old Islamic towns being semi-public in nature (Refer to Figure 4.7). Hardly any windows open on to the residential streets. Privacy concerns define these neighbourhoods. In the small town of Bhitshah, *chingchis*[150] offer commute to places where one is unable to walk. The town is largely walkable with old neighbourhoods planned primarily for the pedestrian.[151]

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[150] a local form of taxi

[151] There are many drawbacks to such type of planning and adhoc form of constructions. For instance there is little thought to futuristic planning, growing densities, emergency planning, eg: fires, ambulances access etc. There is a 'informality' about it, i.e. according to modern planning and regulation principles, the construction and planning do not follow them. The catch however is that much of the construction dates back to before the arrival of modernism and hence technically cannot be categorized as illegal or informal. Community negotiations and permissions from the

The organic city form is representative of a close knit society and shows the presence of community that negotiated the terms of the physical formation of the settlement. Other studies on cities formed under Sufi saints also offer evidence of the process of community building under the influence of their leadership and political patronage. The next section lays out the evidence available in relation to the nature of the community formed at Bhitshah in comparison to other historic settlements formed under saints.

4.3.1 The Process of Community Building

The organic urban form possibly also 'ensured social cohesion and encouraged a spirit of community' that is not experienced similarly in grid patterned neighbourhoods, traffic engineer's broad avenues and boulevards Kostof (1991: 64). The average inhabitant of the town belongs to lower middle / middle income bracket[152]. With this average mean, people live simply.

The settlement is the place or formed around the places, where the saint lived, acted, and finally died at the spot of veneration, 'as ancestor, neighbor, teacher, political leader, spiritual advisor, friend or foe' (Edwards, 2015). Community building is an important activity that has taken place apart from the religious rituals. Essential tasks of everyday life were appointed and the fakirs and followers of the saint were organized to create and manage a settlement and a community. The organization of the fakirs for various tasks at the shrine is evidence of the leadership role and authority of the saint. Interviews with *Zakri* fakir, Ali Dinu fakir and Zulqarnain at Bhitshah verified this. Quoting from the interview with Ali Dinu fakir (Appendix 3iii):

> 'Shah Latif treated his fakirs like his equals, we were not his servants, we were his companions. It was out of love, much respect and trust in him that we, fakirs obeyed him. It was spiritual affiliation'.

Wolper, (2003) in her insightful, indepth historic research titled 'Cities and Saints' describes the role played by Sufi lodges or *khanqahs* in community formations in the Sufi towns of 13th – 14th century Anatolia. The relationships of Sufi saints in community formations had several layers when reading studies belonging to different geographical regions. The study of Anatolian cities also shows that khanqahs formed by saints were part of a series of building typologies constructed together in Anatolia, in places forming a complex, in others spread out within settlements and dominating and dictating the socio-cultural milieu of the time. [These other built structures included caravansarais, mosques]

Khanqahs were primarily dervish lodges or living quarters for the saints and their spiritual followers. Adjoining them could be found caravansarais [visitor accommodations] and madrassas [educational institutes] apart from mosques and tombs.

'elders' of the social groups as required decide on the new developments and construction within neighbourhoods. The social status of a person or family is henceforth determining factor in such a situation.

[152] based on observations and interviews during fieldwork

The lodges became nodes / focal points for the communities of varied religious backgrounds and acted as spiritual and educational centers. Wolper describes the architecture of the building complexes to be having an open and welcoming character with a distinguished relationship between the interior and exterior spaces. Windows, arches, openings and fenestrations were designed to allow greater accessibility to the general public in courtyards within as well as the city streets. The dervishes were supported by the Muslim ruling elite.

Fluidity and openness was characteristic of these spaces with a clear demarcation of public, semi-private and private spaces simultaneously. An important observation that Wolper makes is the flexibility of space use within the complex. It was common for the educational activity to for instance take place not at the madrassas but for instance at the khanqah, the dervish lodge. There was a general ease of accessibility between spaces and for activities to take place in multiple spaces. This openness and tolerance of space use has been historically characteristic of shrines, as we also find the shrine of Shah Latif to be multifunctional and capable of accommodating a variety of public activities. Chapter 5 gives more details on this. The important point to be made here is that the overlapping uses of spaces created a centrality within settlements. The khanqahs of Anatolia acted as community nodes within the towns. Similarly, the active shrines in the region continue to act as community (gathering) spaces within settlements, harbouring a centrality.

The saints had a consistent political connection[153] and support during their lifetime. The architecture and patronage developed through this is monumental and the scale of construction is much bigger than that found in the small shrine towns of the Indus Valley.

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[153] The political connection of saints to the ruling elite varies in different contexts including within the South Asian context as well as in medieval Anatolia.

BAZAARS AT ENTRANCES
ECONOMY GENERATION
Source: Author

Figure 4.8: Landuse Distribution: Bhitshah
Source: Author

The publication by Wolper (2003) is a study of the changes and positive developments in three Anatolian cities brought about by dervish lodges or *khanqahs* between mid 13th and mid 14th centuries. These were set up by dervishes or saints and fostered local communities. Related physical and urban development was a result of this.

The case of the Senegal's Sufi centers is much more elaborate in comparison where a group of saints established multiple settlements of a similar nature and form.

The case of the Sufi cities of Senegal described by Eric Ross (2014) is another example where the dominant political order influenced distinct spatial organization and the architecture of the city. These Sufi cities were very organized settlements developed on a grid pattern around 1880s. They were characteristically organized around a large central open space with a mosque at the center. Their impeccable physical organization was representative of a larger political order.

> 'Since the dominant grid model of urban space is predominantly organized around the palatial compound of the Shaykh, these places are not just places of proper religion, but primary paragons of community building which generate and represent a larger political order. Since this specific design was applied to political and not religious places, their 'sacredness' becomes the expression of a larger field of authority, nobility and identity.' (Desplat and Schulz, 2014)

The process of community building in this case was much more organized and politicized. In comparison, at Bhitshah, Shah Latif did not aim to represent a larger political order. The settlement and its history do not carry any such evidences. The development of the settlement and the shrine space are however an expression of the field of authority, of the saint and his religious order and a representation of the people of the region who aligned with it.

At Bhitshah, Shah Latif undertook community building and configured the establishment of a settlement. He distributed the various tasks for this such as growing food, building houses, cleaning of the *khanqah*, putting together infrastructure etc. After the death of the saint, the socio-cultural and community practices were carried forward by the fakirs. The physical development of the shrine of Bhitai and later the town of Bhitshah was undertaken by patrons, rulers and political leaders. As explained in chapter 5, the shrine was built by Ghulam Shah Kalhoro out of deep respect for saint. The construction activity of tombs and shrines was a way of establishing markers of one's names, gaining popularity among the local people as well as seeking blessings.

Settlements that develop around *khanqahs* in numerous places around the world 'offer a point of view which cannot be grasped by a rather narrow definition of sacredness, which reflects a transcendental reality beyond Muslim practices and their everyday life' (Desplat and Schulz, 2014: 27-28). In essence, there are multiple forces at work. The experience of these settlements around shrines shows that they are part of the culture of the place.

4.3.2 Traditional cultural nodes in town

Multiple sites of cultural memory within a precinct together create a mnemonic scape. A series of structures within a region making a cityscape or a mnemonic landscape are expressions of cultural memory (Kansteiner, 2002). On similar lines, this section identifies / maps the multiple sites of religious significance within the town of Bhitshah. These sites show the spread of the sacred zone of Bhitai's influence and his personal history. They mark his living and meditating spaces. A couple of sites also exist outside the town close to its periphery.

The tomb acts as the spiritual center of the town. Figures 4.9 and 4.10 identify the sacred spaces that exist with reference to the shrine on map. The blue and green colored sites[154] mark the places with which the saint was associated during his life time within the immediate context. He meditated and / or lived here. The blue sites are currently used as *autaqs*, i.e. they are living and resting places for visitors to the shrine at Bhitshah and the sites marked have been serving this function since the lifetime of Bhitai. One of these adjoins the old

Legend:
- Tomb
- Autaqs
- The saint's sitting and living spaces
- Graveyard
- Karar Lake
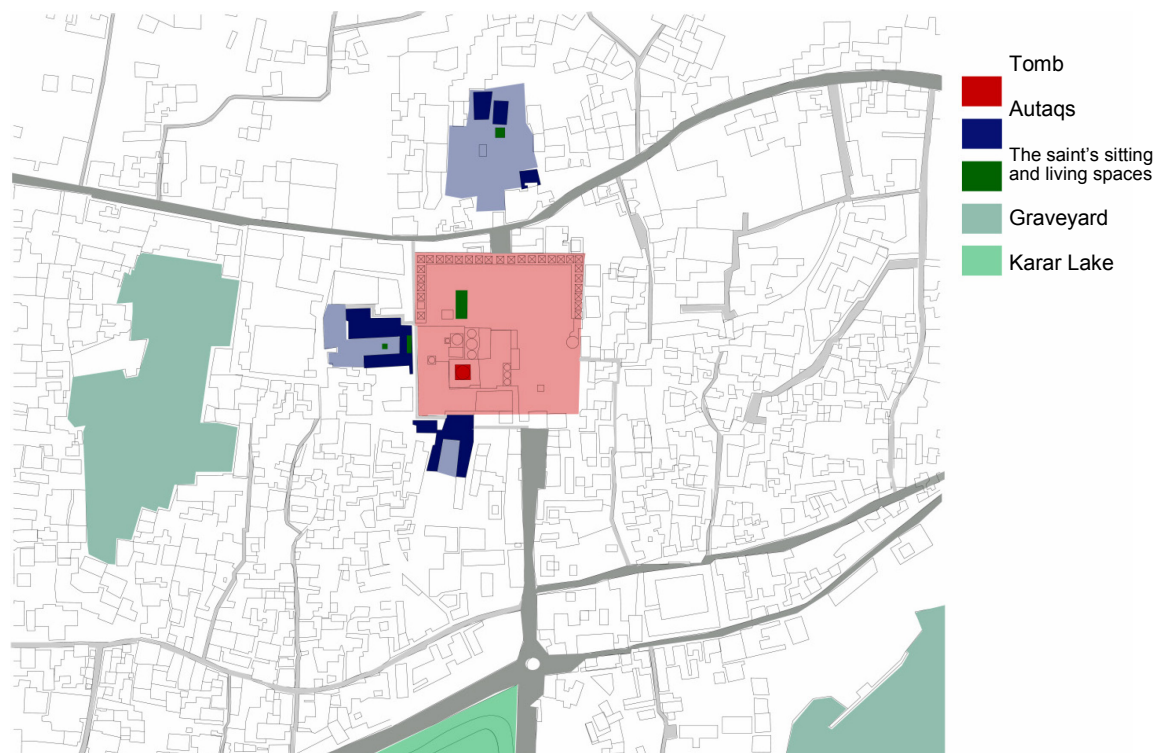
Figure 4.9: Mystical mapping of Bhitshah

Reference used: Sophie Reynard: (Boivin, 2012)

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[154] The dark colours representing the built spaces and their lighter shades, the open spaces within its bounded edges.

residence of Bhitai, also referred to as *Bari Autaq* (lit. the bigger guest place). It is located at the back of the shrine and is used by rural visitors to shrine, particularly families[155].

The *autaq* on the north of the shrine was also a prominent meditation space for the saint. Meditation spaces of saints are locally called his *takia* (lit. sitting space). These together form the sacred circle around the tomb itself (Refer to figure 4.10). While there are other *autaqs* in town, these three are considered of historical importance. They are related to the personal life of Bhitai and his community of fakirs. Yaqoob Shaheed[156] and Yaron Fakir[157] are two graveyards in town named after people considered important in the town's sacred history.

The Karar Lake is also a founding feature of town and holds a poetic significance for the followers of Shah Latif. It too falls within the first immediate zone of shrine. Its importance cannot be delineated as it is a reason for the specific geographical location of the habitation. Figure 4.11 is a painting that shows the relation of the lake with the shrine a century or so ago. The date of this painting is not mentioned and it is possible that it is perhaps created in the recent past and is an imaginary depiction of another time.

According to Zulqarnain Shah, local resident at Bhitshah, there are more than 20 *autaqs* in town. These *autaqs* are mostly open grounds with small semi-open structures and services (kitchen washrooms and storage) at the edges. The introverted residences and the *autaqs* define the morphological and cultural experience of town.

Apart from the *autaqs*, there are also *takias* and *imambargahs* in town. The two takias of Bhitai located on the outer precincts of town continue to be maintained as shady green areas. One of them has a large open space alongside where *eid* prayers take place for the adjoining village. The other site is also a graveyard for the adjoining villages. Each site has its own caretaker. These takias mark a boundary of Bhitai's influence with respect to settlement. They define his immediate sacred zone of influence with reference to Bhitshah, as regionally, this may be expected to be more widespread.

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[155] The *autaqs* usually charge no rent and are free of cost. However, during the busy times of the year, prior booking is required. The guests are expected to cook food also for the care takers during the stay and keep the place clean and in order.

[156] Yakoob Shaheed was the grandfather of Ali Dinu Fakir, the current generational custodian fakir of the music of Shah Latif. He was also a custodian fakir during his life.

[157] Yaron fakir literally means the fakir friends
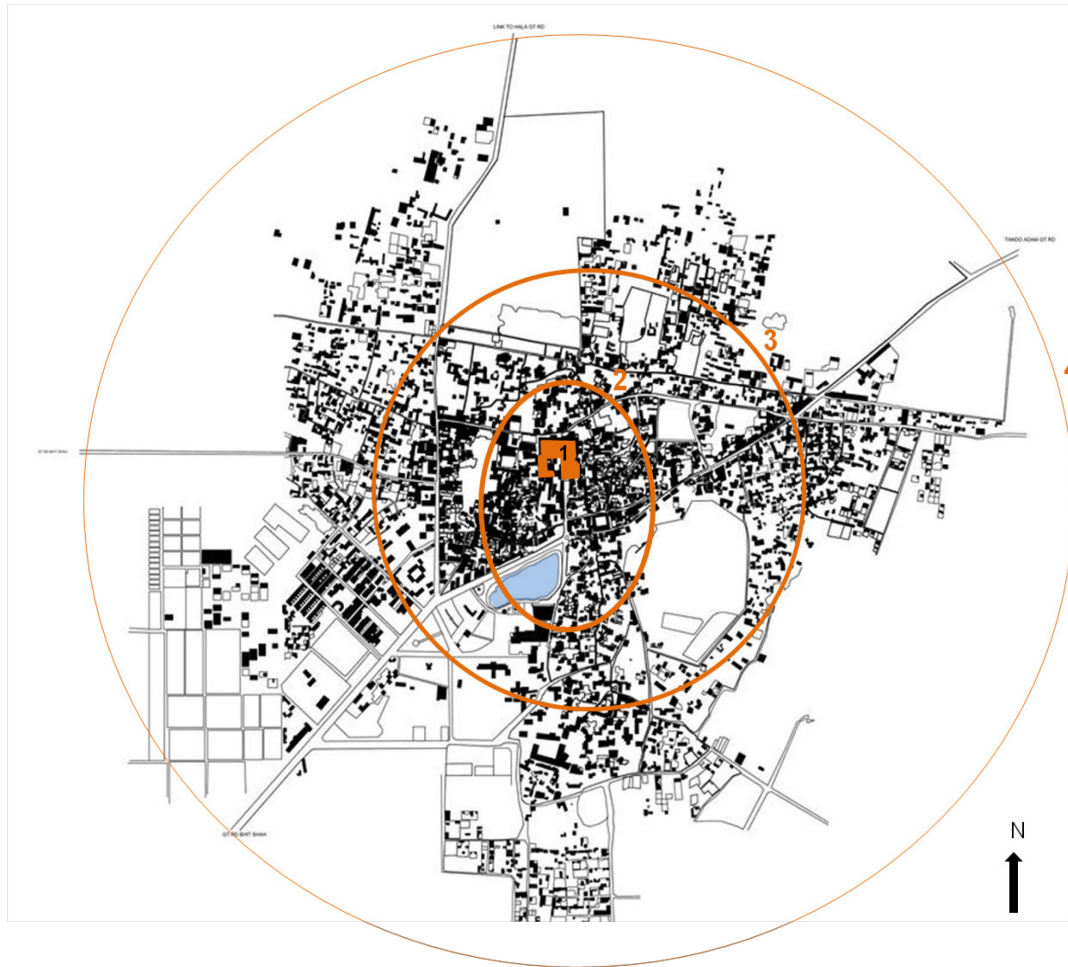
Figure 4.10: Bhitshah: Levels of sacred precincts

1. the Shrine; 2. Including main *autaqs*; 3. Including major old neighbourhoods & graveyards; 4. The town edges & takias located at its outer precinct, Bhitshah
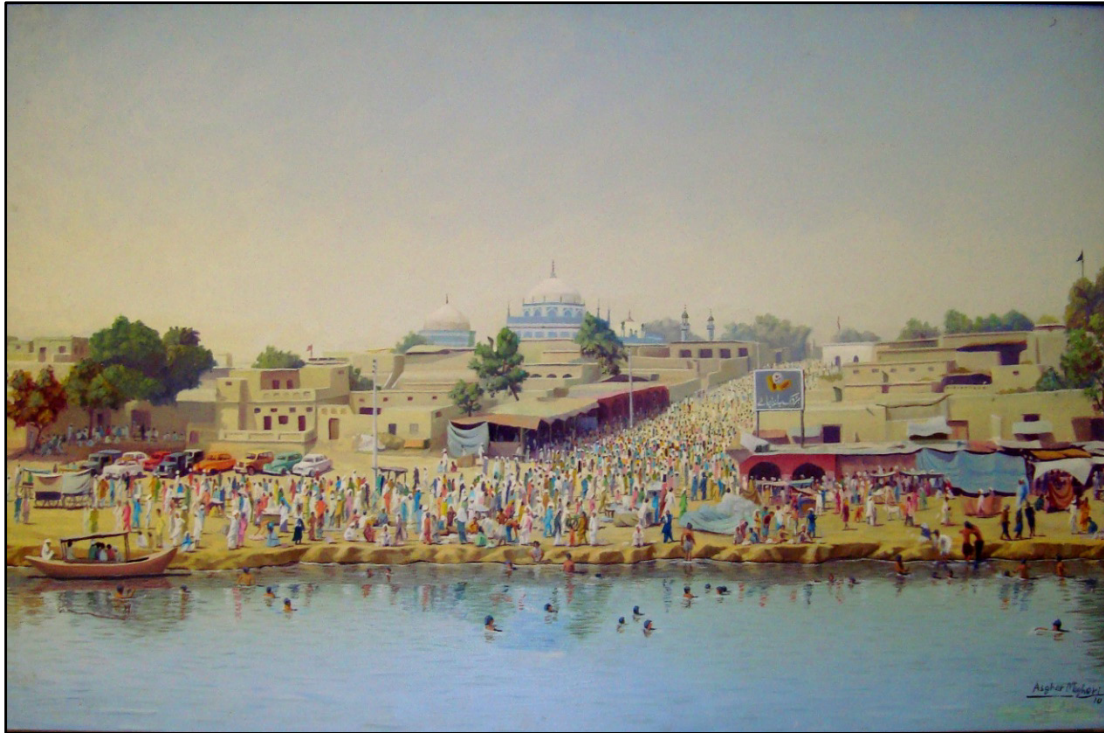
Figure 4.11: Painting Oils on Canvas showing Karar Lake as a public place with the shrine in the background; by Asghar Meghari

The *autaqs, takias* and *imambargahs* are simple, basic structures, built in popular taste, sometimes painted in bright colors to highlight their importance and therefore a popular architecture. They are physical markers of public use, and follow traditional norm.

Other cultural zones in the city such as the *ajrak* and the *jhandi* craft workshops, all together create a cultural landscape, a set of sites of cultural importance in proximity within town. Together, they make the experience of the town a unique one.

A series of functional spaces, landuses create a stratification of space in town. The town can be read to consist of

Figure 4.12: Meditating space of Shah Latif, in close proximity to the shrine. The ground is also used during urs for temporary accommodation and service of pilgrims.

periodic layers, concentrically organized around the core, the main primary element of town (Rossi) – the shrine. The town becomes particularly unique and happening during the annual

cultural and religious festival of the *urs* (See chapter 3). The series of religious spaces marking the history of Bhitai's movement through town become a site of pilgrimage for many local people.

Network of Imambargahs in town

There are 14 major Shia Imambargahs in town. Devoted followers of prophet Muhammad's cousin, Hazrat Ali Murtaza are called Shias. They hold a strong political disposition with respect to him and his family. Husain, son of Ali was martyred in the legendary war of Karbala that took place in 680 AD between two Muslim groups. Less than 100 people, friends and family of prophet Muhammad fought against an army of 10,000 soldiers and were killed in a historically tragic war that is commemorated annually passionately by Shia Muslims in the Hijri month of Muharram all over the world. Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai dedicated one of his poems to the tragic events, as he too engaged in the event's fervent commemoration. Every year in Muharram, the residents of Bhitshah follow tradition and commemorate this event. *Niaz* (food) and *sabeel* (water) is arranged in the name of the martyrs of Karbala every evening as a procession is taken out. This procession of mourners visits multiple *imambargahs* built for the purpose of the public gathering (*majlis*) of mourning. *Niaz* is served at each *imambargah* and sponsored by one or a group of residents. While this tradition is part of a larger regional practice by Shia Muslims and many Sufi saints, the fervor of this participation is intense in Bhitshah town. The enthusiasm can be observed in their dress codes. Most people wear black through the month and there are many who go without slippers for this period as a physical bodily expression of mourning. *Matam*, the act of beating chest is carried out in rhythm with *nohas* (tragic poems) recited in the memory of the war. The significance of food and water is due to the fact that the collective at Karbala was kept without food and water for three days before the war started. Generosity in charity, *niaz* and *sabeel* are also ways of participating in the mourning rituals and seeking God's blessings.

The spread and multitude of *Shia Imambargahs* in the small town of Bhitshah constitutes another traditional socio-cultural network which becomes active only at a particular time in the year. Their large number (14 main *imambargahs* apart from other small ones) is indicative of the intensity with which the event is mourned and participated in by the residents. When listing *imambargahs*, it is of no small significance that the *dargah* of Bhitai itself is considered to be the biggest and most central *imambargah*. It is the place of culmination of major Muharram processions, particularly on the 10th Muharram. It is also the place where the final Muharram sermon locally called *Sham-e-Gharibah* or the mourned evening, takes place, held on the 10th of Muharram. The evening signifies the historic time when the war was finished and the martyrs killed. The following map marks the location of the six biggest and most popularly used *imambargahs* in the immediate vicinity of the shrine.

The various *imambargahs* along with the shrine as the most central, are cultural nodes that through their regulated activity keep the shrine alive and well connected as a religious and cultural heritage.

Major Imambargahs Bhitshah

1   Wadu Pirr
2   Wichu Pirr
3   Ulhain jo Pirr – Karbala Markazi Imambargah
4   Dinnal Shah jo Pirr – Markazi Imambargah
5
6   Sheikhun jo Pirr
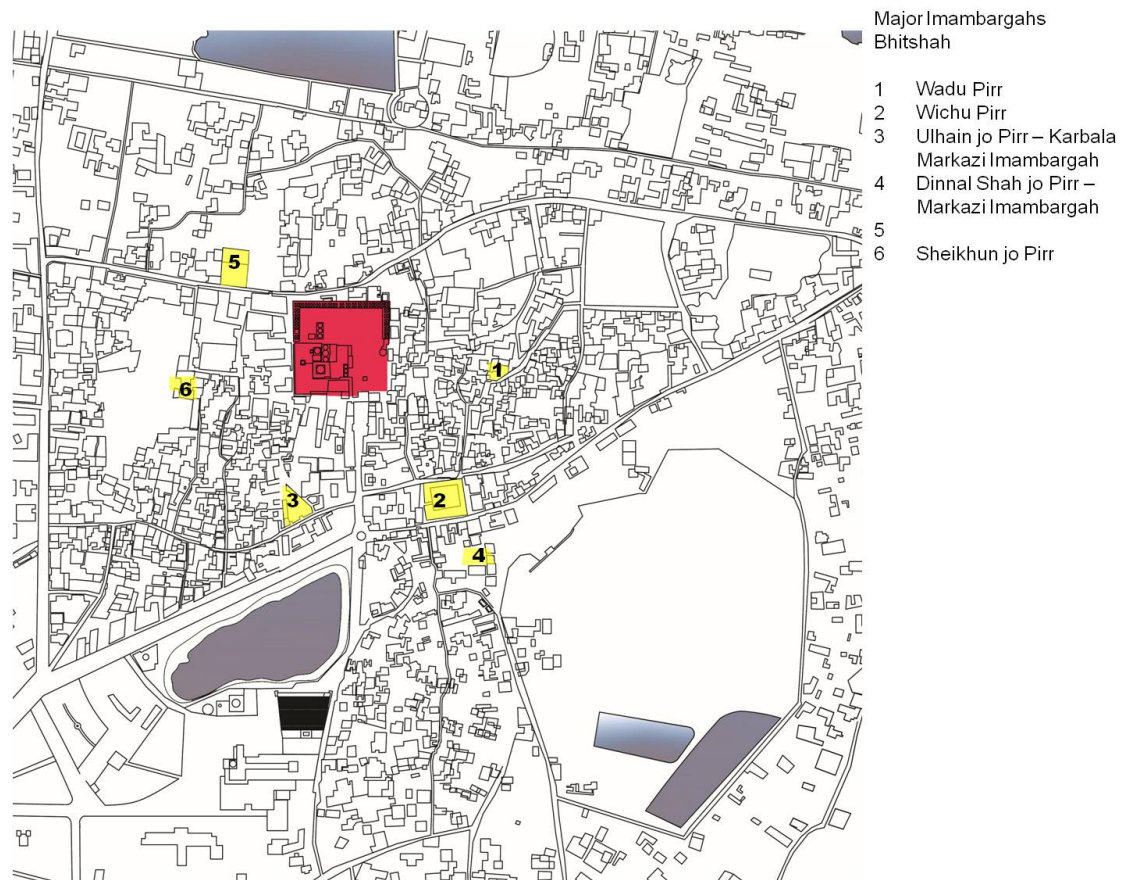
Figure 4.13: Major *Shia Imambargahs* of Bhitshah
Source: Fieldwork 2016

The various physical features including memorial markers and natural elements together create what is termed a mnemonic landscape. The traditional town of Bhitshah is formed within the traditional cultural context. It represents the culture, of which the shrine is an integral part. The architecture of the traditional town in general is simple and basic. The *takias* are marked as important spaces by adding a simple dome or painting the façade in popular taste and bright colors. Nevertheless, the significance of the existing traditional socio-cultural nodes and morphological pattern of neighbourhood has its benefits, giving social cohesion and maintaining the cultural milieu that keeps the heritage alive at multiple levels. The fact that land and its development or distribution within the traditional environment was not based on its presence as a commodity and private property is an important one. Community uses acted as a priority in providing for the use and distribution of space in town as it consolidated before independence. The next section elaborates on the post independence development and expansion of Bhitshah town, highlighting its inspiration, intent and connectivity to the shrine's traditional culture context.

4.4 Post colonial, post independence city form

After independence, the national and provincial governments envisioned modern developments and upgradation of the small towns of the country. The 1950s thence, brought several developments to the 'frozen in time' traditional town of Bhitshah. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a Sindhi populist politician, envisioned modernization as a means of provision of better infrastructure and planning to traditional small towns and cultural heritage. Inspired by socialist ideals, he aimed the new development to promote the local crafts of the region, facilitate indigenous skills and practices, as well as provide a market within the city. His political party with the slogan '*Roti, Kapra aur Makan'*[158] was a major supporter of the blue collar worker, the average hard working citizen in the region in general. After independence, he was the first politician to take particular interest in the shrine. Katherine Ewing, (1997) and Jamal (Malik, 1996) point out, "Bhutto's interest in shrines can be attributed to his attempt to show close relations between socialist government and Islam, in order to counter the association between socialism and atheism" (Desplat and Schulz, 2014: 268). The development of the shrine town was therefore a kind of a political statement. The post independence extension of Bhitshah town was a grid plan accommodating public amenities, housing, workshops and market for craftspeople.

The construction of the Grand Trunk Road Bhitshah in 1950 connected the town to the major cities around and the regional road network. The Bhitshah Cultural Center was set up in 1954 and a city expansion plan was prepared, with the aim to transform it into a cultural hub of the region. The idea was to plan a culture city that facilitated better livelihoods for people involved in traditional crafts as well as providing a regional market platform for them. These are very old crafts belonging to the region, some dating as far back as the Indus Valley Civilization (Pal, 2008). Thus the culture city plan aimed to create a concentration of different indigenous crafts in the shrine town and its linked cultural heritage of Sufi music.

Housing and workshop spaces were planned for the artisans of *khaddi, ajrak, susi, jandi* and *kashi* tile and pottery works, along with display areas and shops facing the main Grand Trunk Road (G.T.Bhitshah) coming into town. The neighbourhood was called *Hunarmand* Colony or Artisans colony in English. 80 sq.yd plots were developed on a grid iron plan with about 1500 houses. Public amenities included schools, playgrounds, hospital, college and cultural spaces like Museum, Library, and Auditorium were constructed during the same period as a part of the plan. The vision of the 'Culture City' of Bhitshah was a form of interpretation of its existing cultural heritage, complementing with the other regional crafts (heritage) later added. While the plans were partially implemented, its cultural undertones were set.

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[158] Literal translation of slogan: Bread, Cloth and House (for all)

Figure 4.14: Post independence expansion of town on a grid iron plan, accommodating Hunarmand Colony and public infrastructure and amenities

Source: Author

The modern extensions of Bhitshah, houses a cultural diversity in terms of the crafts people and includes the modern amenities. The shrine continues to inspire new developments in the small town. The most recent development in town was the inauguration of the Sufi University in 2013/14. This university is the first of its kind in the region. It is still at an initial stage of development but enrollments are increasing by the years.

The fakirs of the shrine see the town's post colonial extension as one disconnected from its religious character, "We do not really interact or have much contact with the later settlers in Bhitshah. They go about their own business and do not have much to do with the shrine"[159].

"Even though the craftsmen are disconnected from the shrine spatially, but the proximity and the daily rhythmic performance that echoes through the town, seems to reverberate in rhythm

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[159] Interview with Zakri fakir, February 2016.

subconsciously in their work", reflected Noorjehan Bilgrami, an artist and textile designer from Karachi who works with the *ajrak* craftsmen of Bhitshah, in a casual conversation on the subject. While the later settled traditional craftspeople in the town are not particularly inclined to religious activities at shrine, the traditional socio-cultural setups of the social groups at shrine and in town are similar in their dedication to craft, ritualistic in nature and passed on down generations. The post independence extensions and infrastructure provide support to both traditional groups i.e. the craftspeople and the saints fakirs. Interviews with both the social groups showed that while they both held a deep sense of commitment and dedication to their crafts, their need for support infrastructure and plugging into the 'modern social order' was similarly present and significant. This may be through social media platforms, non-government organizations promoting indigenous cultural heritage.

The shrine continues to remain the center of the town. The main commercial streets of the town emerge from the immediate context of the shrine (refer to landuse plan). The calendar of ritual days of the shrine generates the main yearly economic activity in town. The economy of the small town of Bhitshah within its rural context is largely driven by the shrine and the multiple religious and cultural alignments to it. The landuse distribution map of the town show its major streets supported by commercial and public landuse. Amenities, parks and playgrounds are part of the post colonial development of the town. Landuse segregation and protection of public spaces by government are some of its modernist features.

Figure 4.8 is a map that shows the zonal distribution of the town, mainly the older settlement belonging to the time period of a few decades of the lifetime of Bhitai, and the postcolonial development mostly on a grid iron pattern as the following section elaborates.

In towns like Bhitshah and Sehwan, the commercial area around the shrine forms the central commerce area of the town. Thus, day-to-day lives of the people of the town are closely intertwined with the shrine.

It is common for the residents living in proximity to visit the shrine everyday and sometimes several times in a day for mundane purposes, for meeting up, catching up with friends, as a transitory space, as relief and recreation apart from religious purposes. The next chapter elaborates on the use of the shrine space in Bhitshah as a public space and a community space.

Changing urban economy

The intersection where Dargah Road ends, is a major intercity transportation hub, where taxis and rickshaws bring the local people from neighbouring towns and villages. A parking lot accommodating about 30-40 cars is also a stop for the inter city buses. Connecting roads from here are linked to Tando Adam and to GT Bhitshah (Grand Trunk Road) that connects to the main National Highway, enroute to various cities of Sindh and connecting to the Punjab province in the north. The intersection is also a hub of informal commerce as is typical in the

context. Small scale hotels and resthouses are also situated at this crossing. The increasing popularity of the shrine has created a niche for this landuse function in the small town where autaqs have been a main landuse that traditionally filled in this gap. The majority fo the population that visits shrines and stays a few days in town has mostly belonged to lower income and lower middle income bracket. The Gaddi Nashin is also constructing a hotel / resthouse close to shrine where it is aimed to provide a greater number of facilities including internet and wifi and accommodating families in particular oriented for a middle income usergroup. This is a developing niche in the small town and can be understood as a developing urban economy.

The Shrine (1754)

Kirar Lake – historic, now linked with planned areas

Old organic settlement around (1800)

Planned settlement (1950 onwards)

S

L

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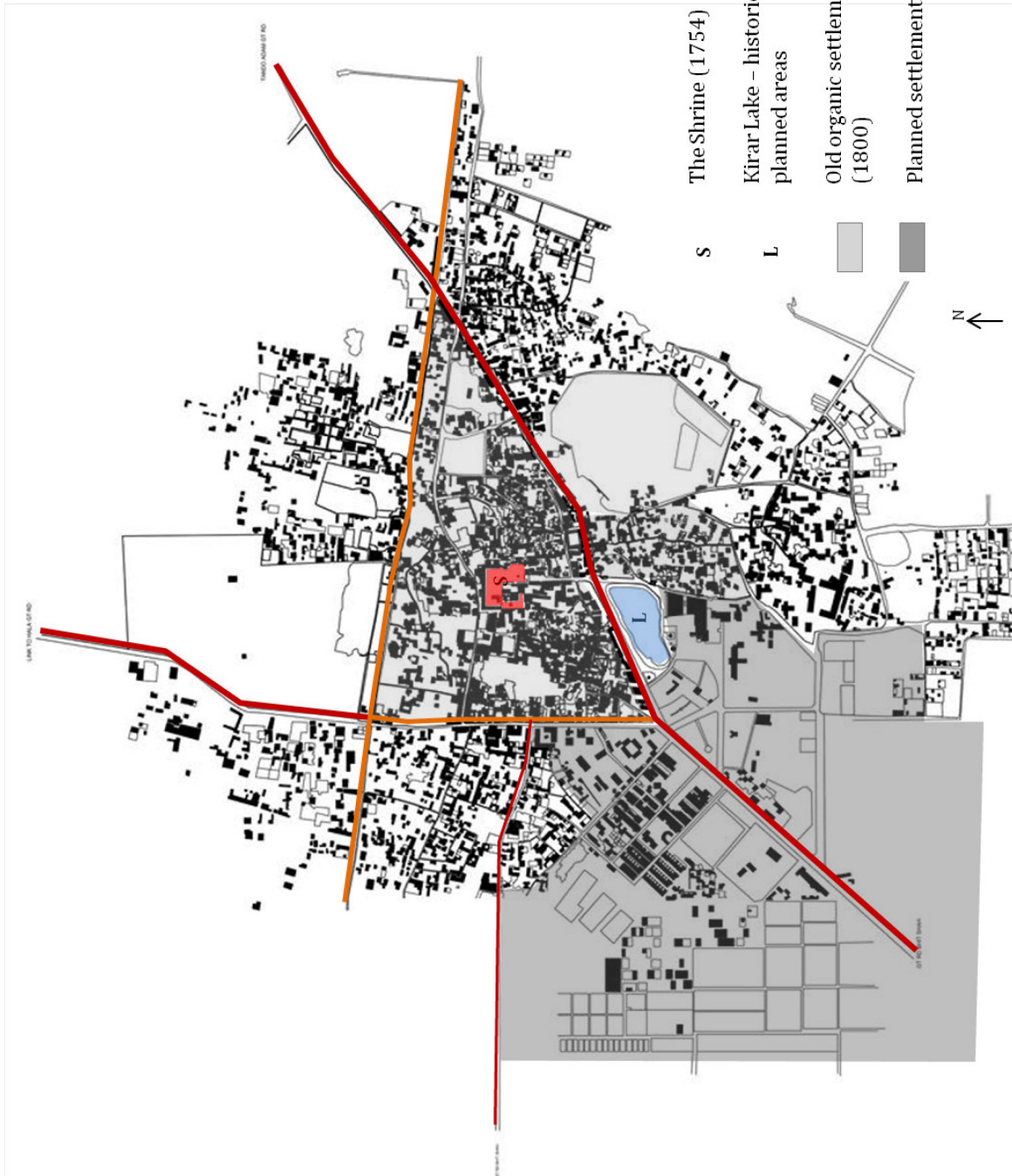
Figure 4.15: Spatial Development of Bhitshah
Source: Author

Urban planning exercises and changing relationships between indigenous neighbourhoods and shrine

The town of Bhitshah has managed to sustain the relation of its neighbourhoods to shrine. It is an important reason for its historical continuity and relation with the community of fakirs. The traditional town and its morphology is community centered, and support traditional relations and hierarchies. Important Sufi shrines however are not only representative of the local communities but also regarded as national assets and an international place of pilgrimage or even tourism.

The relationship between the indigenous communities in Bhitshah to the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai still continues to be strong through the continued physical connection of spaces, the organic morphology of the traditional neighbourhoods, the organization of the public and private functional spaces as well as the continued presence of the traditional semi-public and public spaces like the *autaqs, takias, imambargahs*. The small scale of town and its slow paced growth have been major factors in the continuation of traditional practices and its survival as a living heritage.

As more and more people are accommodated in shrines from different places with growing popularity over the years, the shrine of Hazrat Ali Reza in Mashhad is an example where the place has been expanded by several folds over time and old neighbourhood connections severed and broken completely. This proximal relation between the community and the shrine of Hazrat Ali Reza in Mashhad has been destroyed physically due to several urban renewal exercises undertaken over time (Collective, 2013). The Shrine of Ali Reza is one of the largest religious complexes in the world, situated in the second largest city of Iran. Mashhad has an estimated population of over 3 million inhabitants and its biggest attraction has been the shrine. It has been an important place of pilgrimage for Muslims. These facts make the shrine a regional and an international focal point of attraction, subject to pressures of development. The architectural history of development of the shrine (Collective, n.d.) shows the political ideological narrative that went alongside the physical development and expansion of the shrine. The following two figures show aerial views of the shrine, one from 1925 and another from 1977. The contrast clearly shows the radical nature of the urban renewal exercise undertaken between the time period.

Figure 4.16: An aerial view of the shrine from the early years of the Pahlavi period 1925. During this period, the complex was directly accessible to the neighborhoods surrounding it.
Source: Michel Ecochard. "La Rénovation du centre de Mashad." Banshoya Goto. 3 p.: Drawings 2, ill. 3. - (Extract from journal, s.n., 1975: 57-60) in: http://ajammc.com/2013/12/27/constructing-sacred-space-an-architectural-history-of-mashhads-imam-reza-shrine/

Figure 4.17: An aerial view of the Imam Reza Shrine photographed on 22 September 1977 by Georg Gerster. The neighborhoods surrounding the shrine were demolished in the 1960s.

Source: Website for Ajam Media Collective, "Constructing Sacred Space: An Architectural History of Mashhad's Imam Reza Shrine", December 27, 2013, Accessed on 23 July 2015.

Figure 4.18: Map of the Shrine of Hazrat Ali Reza as of 2015. The vehicular traffic flow has been taken under the shrine to allow ease of pedestrian access for the thousands of visitors it receives every week.

Urban contexts are particularly prone to new developments and influences, changing societies. Gradual and slow-paced development of rural and semi-urban contexts on the other hand make the least of changes and allow commemoration processes to continue and for institutions or rather social groups to survive their purpose. The level of urbanity of a town has congruent impact on the amount of changes that can be planned for the context, and thereby overtime affects the traditional living patterns and practices linked to the cultural heritage. The articulation of the religious living heriage in the political national framework as a statement defining the state's stance and significance awarded to religion / religious practice also plays an essential role. Development and population growth in Mashhad have centered around the religious complex that holds a central importance in the city. The shrine in Mashhad belongs to an 'Imam', or appointed spiritual descendant from the lineage of prophet Muhammad. Nevertheless, the urbanness of contexts definitely has a prominent impact on the 'living' practices linked to heritage. The comparison between development in Mashhad as the second largest city of Iran and Bhitshah, a small town says much in terms of the pressures of increasing demography, traffic circulation as well as issues of identity (national versus regional). Commerce generated by the shrines can make for the main economic activity of town. This adds pressures for urban planning to continue, facilitate and allow further economic growth of town through the development of shrine and its immediate context.

The popular shrines in Lahore and Karachi, that of Data Ganj Bakhsh and Abdullah Shah Ghazi are also examples of tombs of religious significance situated initially outside the towns in isolation (now mega cities). The growth explosions of these major urban centers has led to these tombs acquiring a central location within. The shrine of Data Ganj Bakhsh is described to be 'a city within a city' itself within the city of Lahore. Its physical circle of influence is spread out over a large area and carries a sociological complexity unique to itself (Desplat and Schulz, 2014; Umashankar, 2015). Both these tombs however date as far back as the 10th century and their attached communities are no longer present. Situated within busy urban centers, their physical structures and surrounding areas have undergone renewal and renovation exercises. The government acts as an important stakeholder in the management of these religious and cultural spaces.

In order to allow indigenous communities like the one in Bhitshah to continue their relation and interaction to shrine as discussed in this chapter and chapter 3 and 5, interventions in the context must be kept limited to improving physical infrastructure and to the minimum. Social changes are linked inevitably to physical condition of the built environment (Zukin, 2010). 'Centrality' of heritage sites in urban regions befalls increasing pressures of development (such as housing, circulation, commerce). Removing pressures of development can on the other hand allow the age old community relation to sustain itself (Shakir, 2010).

4.5   Concluding Remarks

The town and its various physical features in relation to the shrine are described in this chapter to support it as a living cultural heritage in the region. The chapter has articulated the interrelationship of the shrine to its physical context. This can be summarized as follows:

- The historical development / evolution of the settlement is tied to the history and physical development of the historic place. The political periods and ideological approaches in development are interconnected.

- The shrine and its physical context have a historical relationship in the urban form. This relationship is more than just a study of the urban form but is a deeper one. It is representative of a cultural pattern of living and connectivity to historic site of importance (Kostof, 1991). It structures the major transition routes and spaces of the town (Rossi, 1982). Rossi uses terms like primary element, persistences in the urban form to articulate this relationship between historic place and town.

- The community residing in the immediate context of the shrine also has a personal and communal relation with the place. The shrine plays a role in the mundane ordinary lives of the community. Rituals make it a special experience periodically.

- The historic and socio-cultural relation between the shrine and its context also becomes visible in the presence and use of other functional spaces in town that are connected to the shrine. Sophie Reynard's (Boivin, 2012) maps of Sehwan Sharif show the levels of sacred spaces in town, similar to the map of Bhitshah in figure 4.9 and 4.10. *Autaqs*, *takia*, places where the saint meditated and stayed for long periods, as well as graveyards are some of these places that are tied to the history and create a spiritual connection / reinforcement within town and region. These are usually not architectural monuments but simple markers, representative of a popular culture.

- The cultural activities together promote commerce in town, attracting a variety of visitors for different purposes, becomes a source of economy generation, albeit small scale of the small town.

The extension of the town as a hub of cultural activity for the region reinforces its cultural experience. The shrine remains the center of the town's attractions as elaborated by the previous chapter due to the multiple roles it plays in town and region, interpreted differently by different people.

5 CULTURAL PLACE & LIVING HERITAGE OF THE SHRINE OF 'SHAH ABDUL LATIF BHITAI', BHITSHAH - SINDH

'Heritage' or a living cultural heritage is more than just a physical architecture 'product', rather it consists of elements deeply integrated within systems of both social (-spatial, -material, -cultural and –symbolic) and morphological configurations (Kostof, 1991, 1985; Krishnamurthy, 2012; Kusno, 2010, 2000; Rossi, 1982). The previous chapters have elaborated on the regional, physical, historical, social and cultural significance of *the context* attached to the architectural heritage of the shrine.

This chapter describes the general evolution of the Sufi shrine in the larger region and that of the shrine of Bhitai in particular. Multiple layers of meaning and function are attached to the place and have evolved through time since its origination. Individuals and groups attach religious and cultural meanings to place. The performance rituals make specific places at shrine meaningful and attach the past in memory and sacred meaning to the present. These are specific to the geographical and socio-cultural context. It is the place, its functional distribution of space and space that the text analyzes to highlight the attached socio-cultural meanings in evolution.

In essence, this chapter describes the 'living heritage' itself in its functional form. The function of the place is the key to the realm of the physical (tangible) and the socio-cultural (intangible). The physical use of place in multiple and evolving ways are a manifestation of the socio-cultural attachments. The living heritage is constituted in layers of which the physical place and the use and meanings attached to it make up some. Parts of the place belong to different time periods and it has evolved and changed over time. It is this aspect that the chapter intends to articulate through text, maps and photographs.

The function and interpretation of the place is also clearly divided into the sacred and the non-sacred. Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 describe the sacred roles of the shrine, while sections 5.2.3

and 5.2.4. describe the non-sacred functions. Sites that are held by personal and common values are described by geographers as 'place'. Maintenance of these values over time as memory are key to the identity of the place itself. According to Karen Till (2008: 142), there is a 'threshold' where such 'commonly held places become communities'. The relation between indigenous communities and place, has been articulated in the previous chapter as well. Taking this further, the place itself is integral to the community. The following description and analysis of the place by example, emphasizes this. Also, the indigenous community plays an important role in keeping the heritage alive. The relation between place and community is therefore vice versa.

5.1   Introduction

> "Heritage is not a 'thing', is not a 'site', building or other material object. … these things … are not themselves heritage. Rather, heritage is what goes on at these sites, … Heritage… is a cultural process that engages with the present, and the sites themselves are cultural tools that can facilitate … this process" (Smith, 2006: 44).

The current reality of the shrine, its living nature is formed by the various roles it plays, the functions it performs and the meanings it holds for the different groups of people attached to it. The shrine is a place within its locality[160]. Apart from being a representation of local culture, the shrine is a sacred place. Sacredness is embedded within the spatial layers of the shrine to which most people award significance. Besides that, public service functions are aimed at facilitating visitors and have been characteristic of popular shrines in Central and South Asia.

This chapter uses maps as a main analytical medium to highlight the various functions played by the shrine. Weaving the narratives of the fakirs and old employees at the shrine, a map is constructed of the periodic evolution of the place in function. It is gathered from the field that the place of the shrine functioned as a *khanqah* during the lifetime of the saint in the 1740s. *Khanqahs* are Sufi institutions established during the lifetime of saints. The practice was common particularly in the 10th – 13th centuries in the Muslim World. After the death of the saint, the shrine has been referred to as a *dargah*, as has been the regular practice of other similar places within the Arab and Persian speaking Muslim world (Eaton, 1982; Wolper, 2003).

The sites of shrines have a history of the intermingling of diverse cultures of Central and South Asia and Arabia creating richness, manifested in architecture, rituals and performances. Quoting Quraeshi, (2010)[161]:

> [The sites of historic shrines] "trace the historical cross-pollination between Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Central Asian, and Indian traditions. So many travelers and pilgrims have come and

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[160] referring to the work of Tuan 1979 on place and locality
[161] The book by Quraeshi documents through photographs and a descriptive narrative several major shrines in India and Pakistan. These include, the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, Bhitshah; Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan; Hazrat Moinuddin Chishti, Ajmer.

preached and sung there that these sacred gathering places have become centers of diverse points of view. Even today, this diversity thrives, and some two-thirds of the population of South Asia has some allegiance to a shrine." (p. 90)

Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai was a Sindhi and belonged to the region. Noneless, his travels around the region had gained him many followers and visitors who came from different places including Gujrat, Jaiselmir, Kutch Bujh among them as some of the interviews in the field revealed. Most shrines or tombs of saints started off as *khanqahs* or 'dervish lodges' as Wolper (2003) describes in her historical analytical study of three shrine cities in Anatolia. These were mostly categorized as *waqf* properties. The notion of *Waqf* properties was adopted in Hindustan as it was a part of the Muslim world. In the 8th – 12th centuries in the Muslim Empire [including Iran (then Persia), Iraq, Syria, Turkey (then Anatolia) and Indian subcontinent (then Hindustan) (Quraeshi, 2010; Shahzad, 2014)], it was regular practice to declare private properties as *waqf*. These were used for financing and / or provision of public welfare services along with a select proportion kept as a family income for generations to come[162]. Examples included water wells and similar infrastructure, health and educational facilities, as well as shrines of saints and *khanqahs* that gave *langar* (free food) and resting spaces within. The '*waqf*' deed specified the use of the revenue collected. The management of the waqf property was usually assigned to a *mutawalli*. A *mutawalli* or trustee was appointed in the *waqf* deed by the owner of property who was responsible for the distribution and management/ maintenance of the place. The shrines and the adjoining properties (many times including gifts from rulers as a show of their gratitude or patronage to saint) were part of the private *waqf* before the colonial rule. The *khanqahs* were considered charitable and service providing places / institutions, apart from the spiritual affiliations[163] that they offered (Malik, 1996). The continuation and eventual modification of the '*waqf*' institution / framework in particular for religious properties of shrines, in name and function is aimed at validating its current framework, as a government institution (see chap 3).

The popularity of the saints among the masses apart from their own religiosity, has called for the development of intriguing relationships between the saints, the *khanqahs* and *dargahs* with the rulers through history in different geographical regions (Khan, 2015; Rizvi, 1978; Shahzad, 2014; Suvorova, 2011). Wolper (2003) gives examples of rulers in the 13th and 14th century Anatolia acting as patrons[164]. The architecture including various buildings types, the form and ornate structures are evidence of this patronage in Anatolia. *Surkhposh khanqah* in Uch, Southern Punjab is another example (Khan 2009). The Tomb of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai

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[162] The *waqf* deed once made was intended for as long as the place continued to serve the public service function that it did. One the function was no longer there, it was identified as any other private property. The deed would specify a time period for its validity or number of generations that could benefit from income (Malik, Shahzad 2007).
[163] *Khanqahs* were affiliated with the various Sufi orders.
[164] The sultans patronized Sufis sometimes in the form of an appointment to a ceremonial position. At other times, stipend, land grants and gifts. The Mughals patronized Sufis because they wanted them to act as intermediaries between them and the locals (Khan, 2015). This signifies their role and stature socially. However, all Sufis did not accept the gifts.

was built by such a patron ruler, Ghulam Shah Kalhoro, who along with his family believed that he was born a king due to the fulfillment of prayers and *baraka* (blessing) of the saint.

After the death of Shah Latif, his tomb was built within the *khanqah* and became a place of veneration, as is usually the case for tombs of saints. For many shrines, the Sufi practices carried out by the saints with their followers discontinued after their demise and the place became a simple tomb with monthly or occasional activities like *langar* taking place and qawwali or the urs celebrations. At Shah Latif's *dargah*, soon after his death, the fakirs discontinued the rituals. However, after a short break in which the fakirs felt disoriented[165], they resumed their practices and rituals as before.

Colonization and modernization brought setting up the modern justice system of civil courts. Increase in the number of claimants to the revenues generated by shrines among the later generations of the saints caused numerous disputes about its distribution[166]. Moreover, the colonizers and later the state were interested in *waqf* properties as these collected immense donations and charities in support of public services among other things. The first *waqf* ordinance / Endowment Act was passed in 1863, under which a committee comprising of three or more persons was set up to manage the finances of the shrines. The balance sheet was reported to the Civil Court on an annual basis. Despite government intervention, *gaddi nashins* and *mutawallis*[167] maintained an upper hand at shrines and were found to be taking unfair advantage of their position. The *waqf* ordinances 1913, 1923 passed during colonial rule did not amend the situation for shrines, but were focused toward providing protection to families receiving the *waqf* income in numerous cases among other things[168]. Finally, in 1960, after the independence of Pakistan, the *Auqaf* Department was set up as an autonomous government body dealing specifically with the *waqf* properties that were religious buildings and included shrines, temples, mosques and places of gathering for prayer and religious celebrations like *Eidgahs*. The system continues today. The department was set up to reduce the disputes among the saints' extended families and to safeguard what was regarded as a national asset. The finances that shrines attracted (through charity/ *nazranas* or gifts) and subsequent disputes are evidence of their immense popularity.

Urbanization and globalization including particularly improved communication and transportation networks created a new audience for the *mazar.* In the case of Bhitshah, the vision of its development as an International Culture City of Sindh invited a new typology of settlers in towns, including craftsmen and skilled people (See chapter 4 for more detail). The

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[165] Interview with Zakri Fakir, Abdul Ghaffar, February 2016
[166] Interviews with history writers of the shrine cities and *Gaddi* Nashins, Bhitshah and Sehwan
[167] trustees were appointed for *khanqahs* as for other *waqf* properties. These trustees managed the finances and the maintenance of the place. Later, as the families of the saint took active interest in shrines, their representatives acted as *mutawallis*.
[168] *Waqf* was used for multiple public services including health and education apart from *khanqahs* and shrines. The ordinances of 1913 and 1923 addressed them all together as private properties dedicated to public services. Chapter 2 gives more detail on the institution.

celebration of cultural events at Bhitshah, the music played through most of the day at the shrine and the calendrical activities of the shrine attract people from nearby towns and cities for veneration as well as for cultural recreation.

The major functions that the shrine has played over time can be listed as:

- *Khanqah*
- Place of veneration or *dargah*
- Place of commemoration and living heritage
- Recreation and relief – local tourism and a public space of the town
- Civic (public) space

The shrine is largely regarded as a sacred space. Yet its functions listed above also include what is 'not sacred'. In a newspaper article[169] by Omar Kasmani, (2011)[170], he talks of the *dargah* as a religious place that plays a role in society that a mosque does not.

> "…the *dargah* is pitted against the mosque as being emblematic of social, cultural and religious harmony and, more recently, as a representative of 'soft' Islam."

'The mosque in principle is open to all, but its alignment with a particular sect or religious denomination is seen as a restricting factor.' They are religious spaces created for particular sects, used only for prayer and sermons that prescribe to the teachings of this sect. Often their sermons highlight the differences between the different sects[171]. While the *khanqah/ dargah* is comparatively more inclusive and open to people, they are aligned 'producing a significantly selective relation across different ritual points in space' (Kasmani). Cultural activity of a mystical nature takes place within including singing, poetry, bodily performances, all expressions of the Divine reality. This cultural activity of a religious nature has also been connected to cultural development of the society, constituting the 'identity' of a people (Malik: Shahzad, 2007). Rituals at shrines pronounce the social hierarchy within the shrines spiritual order and suggest the various alignments of their order. Chapter 3 is a close examination of the rituals performed, at the shrine of Bhitai and their relation to the shrine spaces and the social set up.

The culturally embedded performances that take place at shrines allow them to be used as places of recreation, local tourism and relief. The shrine is a major public place in the town. It constitutes levels of sacredness, as the following sections identify. The evolution of the shrine, change of management and its expansion have added to its layers of interpretation, sacred and non sacred, that become obvious by contrast.

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[169] Newspaper article: Kasmani, Omar, *Dargah is what a mosque is not,* Express Tribune, November 15, 2011. http://tribune.com.pk/story/292260/dargah-is-what-a-mosque-is-not/
[170] Omar Kasmani in an anthropologist, architect and artist who recently finished his Phd in Anthropology on Muslim Cultures, focusing on gender studies and bodily expressions at the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, in Sehwan Sharif, Sindh
[171] Lecture videos of Nauman Ali Khan, Islamic theologist, accessed July 2015.

The following sections describe the functional evolution of the shrine of Bhitai, from his place of meditation to a shrine today. The khanqah and dargah are described also through the general aspects of the function as they are culturally specific. Later their specific use and meaning with respect to the shrine of Bhitai is also elaborated and analyzed.

5.2   Evolution of place

5.2.1 The Shrine as a *khanqah*

In the late 10th century CE, the *khanqah* acted as an institution of a particular group of people, many of which belonged to another region and had travelled specifically to join this group. These were mostly founded along trade routes and outside the cities. Hillenbrand (2004) describes it to be,

> 'a building which houses numbers of a Muslim mystical order. It implies an institution rather than a kind of building. ….In its simplest form the *khanqah* was a house where a group of pupils and initiates gathered around a master (*shaikh*) and it had facilities for assembly, prayer and communal living.' (p. 219)

The *khanqah* also offered travel accommodations and food. Their strategic geographical location served the purpose of allowing saints and fakirs to disseminate, share and contemplate on the Sufi ideas.

> "Before 1240, dervish lodges functioned much like way stations, housing pilgrims and travelers… Prominent dervishes attracted followers from different groups in society" (Wolper, 2003).

Situated in sparsely populated areas, the *khanqah* was a religious and a social institution. The *khanqah* can be described as a social institution where a Sufi saint gave training to his spiritual disciples, 'leading through a succession of stages to experience the Divine Reality' (Shahzad 2014: 7). Disciples travelled from different places in the region to stay at the *khanqah* and learn about the Sufi practice. It also tried to create an environment of service to people. It was open to receive different travelers, offering a place to rest and food at no cost. Openness of attitude allowed people / travelers to interact and learn about each other, in the absence of other social media. Interfaith tolerance, harmony among people of different sects, sacrifice, charity, love, equality and brotherhood (among all irrespective of religion and belief) were particular virtues promoted by the institution. In some *khanqahs*, the teaching function was dominant (Hillenbrand, 2004). Around the 12th century, several Sufi orders developed, promoting different practices of achieving the Sufi goal of promoting love of God. Hence, while the *khanqah* was representative of the Sufi, its practice was not associated with one particular way or *tariqa*. Sufi orders are numerous, some independent and some derived from one another (Trimingham, 1998). Their teachings focused on mystical / spiritual connections

with the one Divine Reality, be it called by any name. Hillenbrand also describes 'Islamic architecture' as generally having a multi-functional nature.

> '…Muslims did not worship only in mosques; they received their religious education not only in madrasas: they were buried not only in mausolea; when travelling they lodged not only in caravansarais. (Hillenbrand, 2004: 6)

The *khanqah* too was a multi-functional place, where sometimes some functions dominated more than the others. This multi-functionality created an openness and flexibility in space use. Despite this character, the public and private domains of space were unambiguously clear.

The *khanqah* was typically hosted by the people who serviced or managed the place, the *mutawalli* (trustee), *gaddi nashin*[172] and / or family of the saint. The hosts earned their livelihood through the *nazranas* (gifts) given by the visitors at the shrine, particularly those who revered the saint. The caretakers and after the death of the saint, the *mutawalli* or *waqf* management employees, paid special attention to the visitors and facilitated them in different ways to satisfy them as 'clients' or 'special guests' (Shahzad 2007). The possibility of the visitors becoming spiritual followers of the saint was always open. The Sufi saint welcomed people of all religions, caste and creed and their institution held the view that it was the same God that all monotheistic religions belonging to different time periods spoke of[173].

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[172] An indirect descendant of the saint appointed as his representative at shrine.

[173] The case of the saint Shaikh Tahir, known among the Hindus as Odero Lal and worshipped as a deity is perhaps the most explicit example of this. Called by several names through the region, including Varuna, Jhuley Lal, Khwaja Khizr, Jinda Pir, he is a figure that Muslims regard as a saint and the Hindus a God. So much so that within the same shrine complex at the town of Odero Lal in Sindh (close to Bhitshah), there is a tomb of the saint and a temple in the adjacent room. This is an example of the practices and openness of saints as religious figures in the region.

Seating place of Bhitai
Old Residence of Bhitai
Old Tree
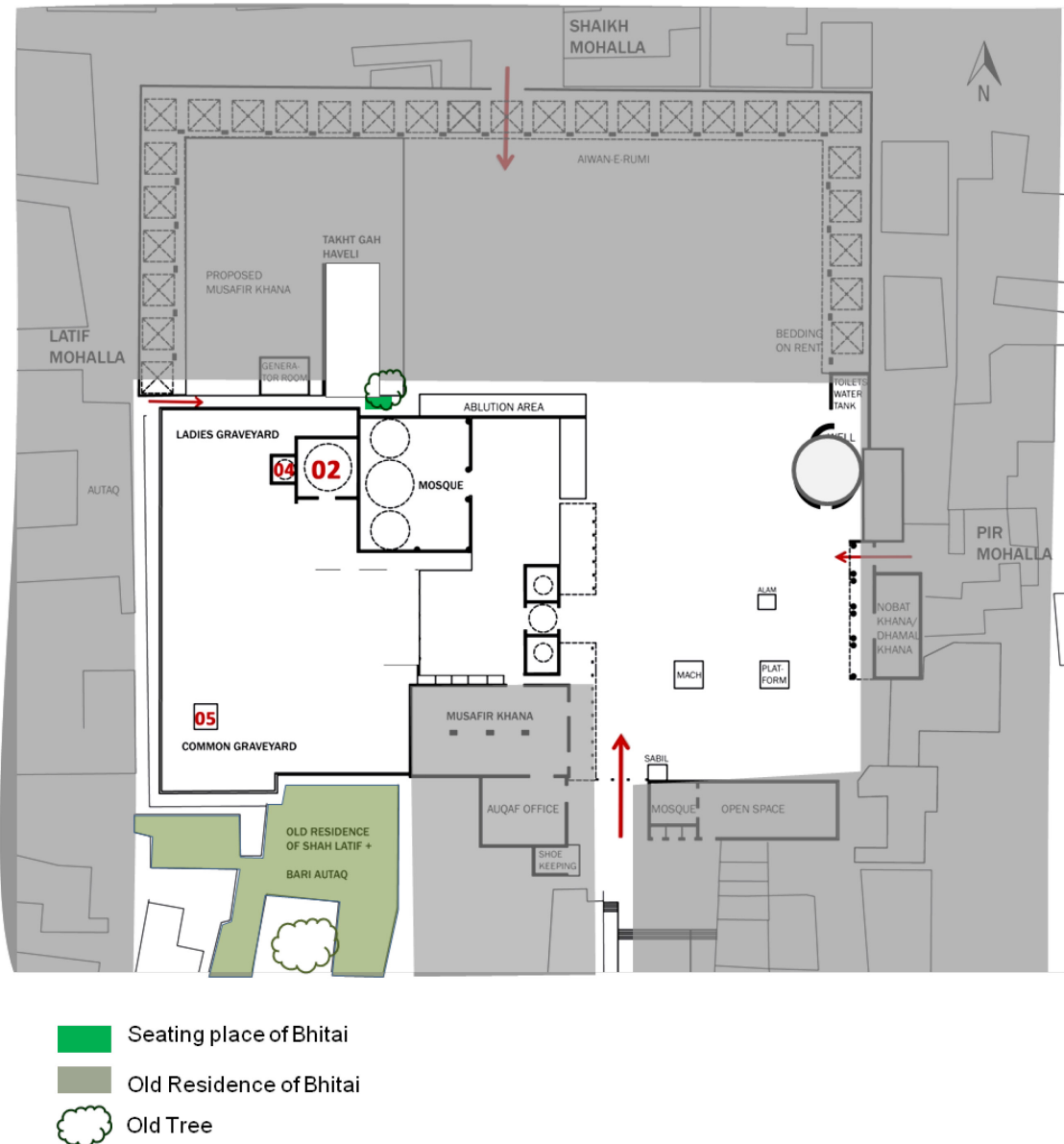
Figure 5.1: 1742 – Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai's *Khanqah*, Bhitshah

Source: Author

During the lifetime of Bhitai (1742-1752), the saint himself acted as authority. Daily sessions of *zikr* (remembrance of Allah) and *sama'a*[174] (mystic music) took place. The word *khanqah* has not been associated with this shrine in the historical records (Baloch, 2010; Sorley, 1940). The various functions associated with a *khanqah* were however prevalent here. These particularly include the gathering and meditating spaces of the fakirs, spaces to accommodate and facilitate visitors, *langar* kitchen, *sabeel* and association of the family of Bhitai to the place. However, as Hillenbrand suggests the khanqah to be an institutional building associated with one particular Sufi order, this was not the case for the Sufi place of Bhitai. Shah Latif was not following one particular Sufi order, but was mixing Sufi practices of more

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[174] *sama'a* lit. means to hear, employed to mean 'listening to music' and by extension, 'music' (Chittick, 2000):78). It is a practice performed by some of the sufis

than one order to formulate his own[175]. This was a common practice (Trimingham, 1998). The question whether the Sufi gathering place of Bhitai can still be referred to as a khanqah is a valid one.

During Shah Latif's lifetime, the tomb of the father of Shah Latif was constructed. The open courtyard around this is a burial place for the family including the women, fakirs and the followers of Bhitai. Trees in the courtyard were used as sitting, gathering, meditation spaces by the saint and his fakirs, similar to other shrines. In the hot, arid climate of Sindh, shady trees are common as gathering spaces. At the shrine is an indicator of his seating place, locally called *takia*, along with structures of his old and later residence and a simple mosque where prayers were conducted. The mosque, simple initially can be understood to be an important indoor space for the gatherings, sermons and prayers. Adjoining residences of the saint and the fakirs as well as the built network of *autaqs* in close proximity formed the shrine context. The *autaqs* are old structures that continue since centuries to play the role of accommodating visitors from outside of town. The fakirs, their structured performances, roles and responsibilities, rituals and spaces for *langar, sabeel, nazranas* (gifts to saint), *takias* – sitting and meditation spaces of Bhitai are all remnants of a similar function as that of a *khanqah* during the lifetime of saint. It is on this basis that I presume that the shrine acted as a *khanqah*. The word *khanqah* belongs to Persian language and may not have been used for the shrine of Shah Latif because it was culturally a Sindhi set up. The language spoken commonly was Sindhi and the local people visiting it belonged mostly to the region of Sindh as well.

Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai is said to belong to the Avesi Sufi order (Baloch, 2010; Kanasero, 2007). The large outer open space was a later expansion and mud brick housing extended into this space earlier. The *khanqah* of Shah Latif was simple and built as needed.

The location of the machh[176] at site is also indicative of the gathering space out in the open in the late evenings. The *machh* is associated with *zikr*, prayer and the gathering of fakirs, according to traditional ritual (refer to chapter 3). The old residence of the saint lies toward the back of the shrine, then *khanqah* (figure 5.2). His later residence, a basic room, was built closer to the shrine and his shady sitting place under the *neem*[177] tree for his convenience as he grew older and spent more time here. The presence of the structures belonging to the saints' lifetime and the stories of the fakirs closely involved through their families for centuries suggest the incremental nature of the *khanqah* during the saints lifetime as explained.

The place of the shrine today with marked edges as shown in map are presumed to constitute the *khanqah*. The map (figure 5.1) is conceptual in its articulation of the *khanqah* as there are no precise records of its original condition, apart from the physical markers on site. It has been produced using the current situation at shrine and incorporating texts and narratives of

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[175] Interview: Zulqarnain Shah, local resident and director of Research Cell, Bhitshah Cultural Center
[176] The *machh* is a shallow pit, dug in the ground where fire is lit.
[177] a local deciduous specie of tree known for its cool shade in hot tropical summers.

the fakirs from fieldwork. There are some local texts like Kanasero (2007), Baloch (2010), that give a bit more detail about the existing state. In the map, the grey shows the area that was initially all covered by the surrounding settlement.

1742 - 1754

-During the lifetime of the saint
- Composed mystical poetry
- A *Khanqah* – can also be called a Sufi learning center
    -Travel lodging facility
    - Free food service
    - Mosque

Seat of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, within the shrine outside his residence under a tree

Old residence of Bhitai: Tree.

Old residence of Bhitai: Machh.

Figure 5.2: Pictures of the existing landmarks surviving at and around the shrine, marked in the map in figure 5.1.

The *khanqah* acted as the center of social and cultural life. It was a center for community activities. The fakirs gathered here for the organizational purpose as well as for practicing zikr, sama'a and the rituals. The place was receptive and open to all 'from the king to the beggar' (Shahzad 2007; 2014; Baloch 2010). It was known for its generous, welcoming and humble dispositions.

> 'Shah Latif used to travel to places and many joined him during the travel. He had the quality to attract people who were spiritually attuned, who had special qualities and who loved listening to Shah Latif. Chanchal came, Atal came from Jodhpur, Rajasthan came of the Gwaliar family, and then people came from Jaiselmir, then also came people from Hinglaj.' (Zakri Fakir Interview: Appendix 3 vi)

Zakri Fakir in his interview spoke of how people from various places were attracted to Shah Latif's company and contributed to the making of the music and the various rituals in this process.

While the saint was able to develop the land (refer to chapter 4), where the shrine sits and the immediate areas around it for the formation of a residential settlement, the presence of a rather simple *khanqah* shows that he did not receive any extravagant gifts (besides the land) from his patrons. The later construction of the elaborate tomb / shrine is nevertheless witness to the presence of patronage[178]. The shrine like other similar shrines has been incrementally developed by its patrons and followers. The mosque and the shrine have been periodically added to, in ornamentation for instance, with *kashi* tiles by Mir Nasir Khan in 1835 (then ruler of Sindh), Syed Ali Bux in 1928 (then *Gaddi Nashin*), Jan Mohammad Wasan in 1940 (a disciple) and Gahno Khan Junejo in 1957 (Kanasero, 2007).

The next section gives details on the development of the *khanqah* into a *dargah*, or a place of veneration of the saint after he passed away.

5.2.2 The Shrine as a Dargah / Sacred Place of Veneration

After the death of the saint, shrines are usually referred to as 'dargah' in the local language. A Persian word, the literary meaning of *dargah* is 'a palace' or 'royal court', referring to the personal, authoritative association of the saint to the place.

The most prominent function taking place at the *dargah* is the veneration of the saint. 'Veneration' is defined as 'the act of showing respect for someone or something that is considered great, holy etc'[179]. Saint veneration at tombs is common through South Asia. *Dargahs* carry multiple meanings for different groups of people. They mark the site of the grave of the saint / dervish. They are sites of historic importance, associated with specific time period, persons and history. However, they are more than memorials. The built space not only consists of the various important spots associated with this history, but the place also carries functions of public service and charity for centuries with some of the major ones continuing to do so even today. The tombs of saints in particular with additive functions are referred to as 'dargahs'. Singular functional grave sites or tombs are not dargahs. The term is only attached to a place that has additional function attached to the tomb of a saint.

Prominently, *dargahs* are sacred spaces for most of its visitors. The physical space is endowed with multiple religious connotations. Therefore, the *dargah* space has multiple interpretations. Durkheim (1965) distinguishes between sacred and non-sacred spaces, regarding them as distinctly different. The most sacred space within the *dargah* is the tomb of the saint consisting of his grave. As a saintly person devoted to prayer and remembrance of Allah, during his lifetime, the saint was approached for blessings by people due to his nearness to God. He was regarded as 'a friend of God' or *wali*. 'It is in this capacity to serve both as a friend of God and of the *murid* (follower), to join as it were the opposing poles of

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[178] *Nazranas* and gifts received by saints generally were used for personal expenses, for the development of the place and / or distributed among the fakirs and followers. The simplicity of the old structures shows, however that the *nazranas* were not used for elaborate construction as in Anatolia (Wolper 2003) but perhaps mostly distributed among fakirs and followers and used for community organization and social works.

[179] Merriam Webster Dictionary

Heaven and Earth…' (Eaton, 1982). The grave site is thence approached after his death for the same purpose. Eaton describes the *dargah* as an intermediary place between Heavens and Earth. Flower petals or garlands and clothsheets (*chaddars*) inscribed with calligraphy, holy verses or names of Allah are common items of veneration usually put on the grave or beside it by visitors. The position of the performers in front of Bhitai's tomb facing the grave site in a semi-circle carries a tributary significance and a direct visual connection to the physical location of the dead saint. The mystical poetry is sung through most of the day and night at this location. The performers were positioned at this place around the 1950s by Miran Muhammad Shah, as an active representative of Sindh, the first Minister of the Government of Sindh after independence. Prior to this, the performers sat in the outer court at a side and performed in the same way[180].

The tomb of the saint acts as the core of the shrine (marked as 01). Before the independence of Pakistan, the tomb was almost the physical center of the *dargah*. This however, may not be the case for many shrines. The tomb is usually a monumental structure with a dome which shows its significance despite its non-symmetrical position in the layout.

A portico added later in front of the tomb of Shah Latif with monolithic marble columns are gifts from the king of Jodhpur in the late 1700s emphasizes its entrance. Intricately carved wooden beams hold up the roof of the portico. These features display exquisite craftsmanship and the meaningful association with which they were gifted. The portico has five arches. Odd numbered arches were used in Islamic monumental architecture to emphasize symmetry and a central entrance. The tomb and the mosque frame the inner courtyard of shrine.

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[180] Interviews and discussions with Zulqarnain, resource guide and director of Research Cell, Bhitshah Cultural Center at Bhitshah.
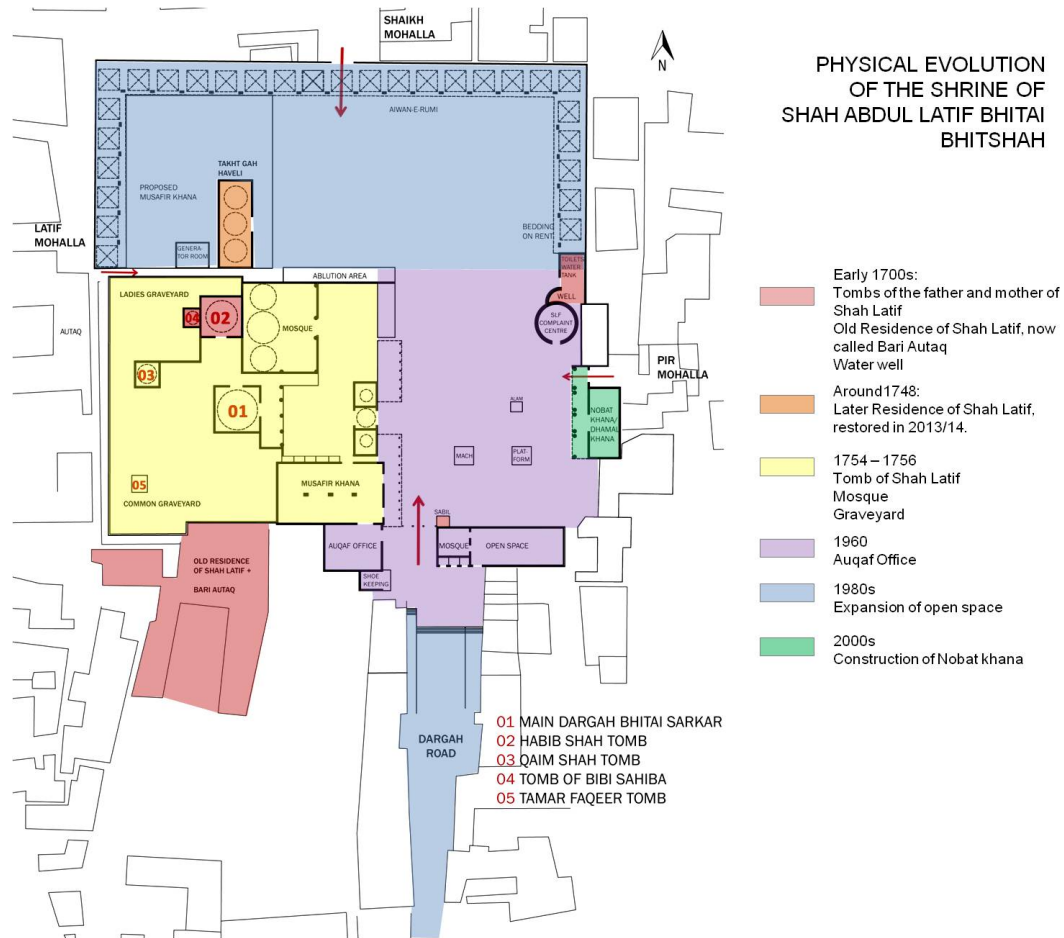
Figure 5.3: Map of Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai: physical evolution

Courtyards as well as porticos are spaces in shrine where people linger, and stay for longer periods after visiting the tomb itself and performing the customary individual prayer ritual. At Shah Latif's *dargah*, people usually sit down to listen to the performance of Shah's *raag*.

As a whole, the Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai is distributed into two concentric zones. The tomb acts as the centrifugal point around which the rest of the functions and activities configure. The inner court around the tomb is marked in yellow (figure 5.3), the outer court forming its periphery. The inner court marks the front to the tomb with the surrounding closed and semi open structures framing it. The three sides of the cubic structure of the Shah's tomb are surrounded by a graveyard of the family, fakirs and followers of the saint, with the graves of the women of his family contained in a secluded area following the social norm of privacy. The music performers sit facing the main tomb entrance under a porch, their performance being a tribute to their beloved saint. Daily *sama'a* performances are held in the inner court[181]. This portion was constructed under the orders of Ghulam Shah Kalhoro, then ruler of the Kalhoro dynasty. A mosque stands to the immediate north of the tomb with access to the resting hall and the *langar* kitchen courtyard to the south of the court.

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[181] see chapter 3 for more detail

The boundary of the inner court contains the set of sacred spaces including the tomb and mosque. Ablution spaces at its edge highlight this, as one is expected to be clean[182] when visiting the tomb, graveyard and the mosque. The tomb and the mosque are decorated with *kashi*[183] tiles and covered with a prominent dome, each articulating their significance.

Figure 5.4: The Shrine viewed from the larger public space

The outer court of the shrine is a large space that acts as a transition space connecting the neighbourhoods on the four sides of the shrine. This court was developed and shrine space expanded as a result, after the establishment of the *Auqaf* department. The court is lined by a peripheral wall of structures including a dispensary, public toilets, *sabeel*, bookshop, *noubat khana*, stall for bedding rental[184], shopkeeping, *musafir khana*, complaint center (set up by the *sajjada nashin* and his family) and the office administration.

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[182] The Muslim norm of ablution means to be absolved of impurities, to be clean and pure (locally *pak*).

[183] handcrafted, painted tiles, locally produced, characteristic particularly of Hala, a town 10 km away from Bhitshah. Nasarpur is also known for this craft, but their designs and paintwork is known for it intricate pattern. These traditional local crafts are also a cultural heritage and known to be declining. The numbers of craftsmen are reducing in number due to the lengthy processes and hardwork involved and not enough market sale and promotion.

[184] Bedding rentals are present only in few shrines as all do not support overnight stays. In most, the shrine closes at around 11pm – 12 midnight, and opens at 4-5 am depending on sunrise timings.

The covered portico lining the outer court of the shrine also serves to accommodate a greater number of people in shady areas along with the multitude of functions. This defines the edge of the shrine on all sides. It is a transition space between the town and the shrine connecting to some of the prominent connecting streets of town / neighbourhoods. The portico is climatically useful[185], particularly during the summer months when the temperatures rise up as high as 50 degrees Celsius in Sindh. They also offer shelters for night stays in summers. According to the estimations of the Gaddi Nashin, on an average day, almost 300 people visit the shrine while on Thursdays, about 4000 people are present. During the day time, however on an average day, there may be less than 100 people present at the shrine. The numbers grow in the evenings and particularly after sunset (observations based on fieldwork).

As a custom, people take off their shoes before they enter the outer court, respecting its sanctity. Entrances from four different cardinal directions connect the shrine with its old city neighbourhoods. The shrine is visited by many people, for a variety of reasons. Interviews of people were conducted at shrine to gauge the reasons behind their visits and their interpretations of the place (See appendix 2). A total number of 40 qualitative interviews were conducted, of which 15 were of the visitors to the shrine, while 12 were of the people part of

Figure 5.5: Outer Court of the Shrine of Shah Latif in 1960s
Source: Asar-i-Latif

Figure 5.6: A fakir sings Shah's poetry
Source: Asar-i-Latif

the management of the shrine[186] in different ways. It was aimed to select a variety of different user types at the shrine to understand their reasons for visiting it. The visitor types observed are described and categorized henceforth, focusing particularly in this section on the religious associations of people with the *dargah* – a title attached to saints mausoleums specifically. The section thereby introduces the sacred nature of the interpretations attached to place.

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[185] It is very hot and dry through nine months of the year in Sindh
[186] including custodian fakirs (generational – 7) and the officially appointed workers by Auqaf (5).

Visitor type A – Daily wage earner: 2 of the visitors that I came across at the shrine were daily wage earners living in Bhitshah who came every evening. One of these was a labourer in construction work, Riyaz and the other was an independent mobile salesperson selling flowers at the shrine entrance of the inner court. Riyaz's father is a fakir at the shrine and he believes his daily visit to shrine blesses him to maintain his daily income. Particularly keen, they sincerely and strongly believed their visits to the shrine helped them to earn a decent daily/ weekly income. Both also prayed for this at the shrine in particular.

Visitor type B: People with physical ailments, diseases, bad relationships and wishes for having children, especially (baby) boys, come to the shrine with prayers of health and well being. While I formally recorded only one interview of a middle aged lady accompanying her sick child (about 8-9 years old), it is well known common practice for the rural populace to visit shrine when suffering from ailments[187]. Her child has been sick for 6 months,

> 'Her body water is drying up, says the doctor…. We have been coming here twice a week since to ask for help from Bhitai.
> *Has it helped? Do you feel a difference?*
> Probably, Must have in some way or another.'
> (Visitors Survey: Appendix 3 xi-1)

They live half an hour away in a small town called Oderolal. Poverty, lack of welfare and health infrastructure in rural and semi-urban areas as well as illiteracy are mostly the causes for a big number of such shrine visitors (Eaton, 1982; Quraeshi, 2010; Rehman, 2009).

Another intriguing interview at the shrine was that of an older woman of about 50 years of age staying at the shrine since 20 days. Quoting from the interview, she described her problem for which she was at the shrine.

> 'My husband died 6 years ago. I have three daughters and 4 sons. My daughters are all married and sons don't live here.
>
> I was moving house as the tenant had asked me to vacate the place. I put all my furniture and households in a van and asked the van driver to take it to the new location. Since I was living by myself and had some last minute chores to wrap up, I asked the van driver to go ahead and that she would get there in a few minutes after handing over the keys. But to my utter dismay, the van disappeared. I have looked for it everywhere. It just disappeared with all my households. Now I am sitting at his (gesturing to Shah Latif) doorstep, hoping for him to help me in my prayers and finding some solutions to my life hanging in mid air.
>
> *How long do you plan to stay?*
> On whose doorstep I sit, he will find a solution for me. I stay until I find a solution, she said with firm resolve.' [Appendix 3xi]

The lady had a firm conviction. In her state of helplessness, she put her trust in Shah Latif. Until she arrived at a decisive solution to her problem, the dargah offered her some basic security and support.

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[187] Such practices are regarded as being signs of poverty.

Visitor type C: The 'Majzoob' type fakir[188] leaves all worldly life, home and family and dedicates his life to the saint. He lives at the shrine. These men[189] find peace, solace and serenity at the shrine that they are unable to find anywhere else. One such fakir I interviewed was educated, and wrote poetry by the name of Arbab Azam. He had previously worked in the government sector in Hyderabad. He was also a writer and returned home twice after staying at the shrine for months at a stretch. "There is no comparable place in the world where I can find such peace as I do at the shrine." Meeting Arbab presented an interesting paradox. Modern education and institutions through various means including written literature (Kozlowski, 1985; Malik, 1996), discredit shrines as sacred places, regarding them to be proper forms of worship, illiterate behaviour or even criminal. Chapter 2 presenting the historical context of the region, also mentions the subsequent discrediting process of shrines, sufis, fakirs and the sociology attached in literature, historical/ observation records during colonial rule. Later educated modern Muslim leaders of the region also denounced the worship-like practices at shrines and preached use of logic and modern methods of addressing health and economic issues of people. Here was Arbab, an educated man coming from a middle / upper income household. He had stayed some time at the shrine and gone back to his worldly statuses and returned before the year ended to the shrine to find peace that he was unable to find anywhere else and for which he again left everything including the comfort of his home, daily pleasures, to stay at the shrine. Arbab is not the only one with a deep reverence for the saint. The poetry of Shah Latif has had a major impact on many educated Sindhis. Arbab was an example of someone who had become *majzoob* by choice, after living the modern urban life. The other majzoob fakirs I interviewed came from small towns and rural settlements.

Ayaz Fakir was another *Majzoob* fakir who has been staying at the shrine since 35 years. A very intriguing looking character, he was dressed in a black *shalwar kameez*, wearing a brown coloured shawl. He wore thick steel bangles on both his wrists. All fingers had big rings on them, sometimes more than one on each. He also had some trinkets hanging around his neck. He sat next to the big *alam* and referred to himself as the 'alamwala' fakir. Ayaz Fakir is not a generational custodian of the legacies of Bhitai. He has self appointed himself with a 'duty'. He has arranged before him a variety of 'blessed' items to give to people, 'fi-sabeel-e-Allah' meaning as charity, in the way of Allah. These items include *khaq-e-shifa* (sand from Karbala), natural oils for pains and aches and various health benefits, dates and little white sugar balls. He also carries oil lamps that he lights up every evening at shrine. He is not married and an extended family of 18 people live together in his household, consisting of his brothers, sisters and their families. He knows little or vaguely about his family updates like how they are managing and is content with his life at shrine. When I asked him, what was so special about this place that he had given up everything, he said;

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[188] Profile of *fakirs* in Appendices
[189] I came across no women fakirs of such type at the shrine

'The performance of music for the love of Imam Husain and other martyrs who were killed in the historic event of Karbala (Iraq) is so moving that if you also stayed to listen to it, you would also become an ardent follower of Shah Latif.'

His response showed his seriousness and conviction.

The figure of the *Majzoob* fakir is generally criticized by many. Shunning all responsibilities including family, household, children are also denounced religiously by most schools of thought. Other fakirs who work for a livelihood and were interviewed at shrine also disagreed with this attitude. The fakirs who are generational custodians of the collective memory of Bhitai and his legacy (chapter 3) all have another means of livelihood that supports them and their families. The shrine is also not their place of residence.

'We are also responsible for taking care of our parents and household. That is and will for me remain my first responsibility.' [Quoting from interview of Fakir Muhammad Ismail – Appendix 3D]

'Hundreds of thousands of messengers have come to the earth from Allah. Of Allah's friends (Wali) and messengers, there are two types; *Majzoob* and *Salik*. *Majzoob* is one who is close to God, his prayers are fulfilled, he seems to have a connection to God. However, on the outer side, he does not seem to be like other people. He may sit in one place all day. *Salik* is one who follows the principles of the religion. Shah Latif was a *Salik*, he fasted, he prayed and did all the regular chores as people do.' [Fakir Muhammad Ismail]

The *Majzoob* fakir is generally discouraged at bigger shrines in more urban cities, after multiple terrorist attacks at / near shrines. The security systems at shrines in big cities in particular have been upscaled and the shrine premises are closed off after 12 midnight to open in the early hours of the morning. This is so also for the Shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore, Hazrat Abdullah Shah Ghazi in Karachi and Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan Sharif. At Shah Latif's *dargah*, it is only the tomb chamber that is closed between midnight and 4 am. This is a traditional practice[190].

These fakirs show immense respect for the saint[191]. Such types of fakirs are less in numbers, not more than 8 but a couple of them have been living at the shrine for as long as 30 – 40 years.

These three types of visitors at shrine reflect the sacred nature of the place and attached beliefs and convictions that make them return to the shrine repeatedly. My conversations and provocations at the regular shrine visitors and fakirs to talk about their life problems and issues were often met with a deep gratitude toward Allah and Bhitai's blessings.

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[190] The key of the tomb chamber is kept by a fakir of the *Gaddi Nashin* who opens and closes the doors according to tradition.
[191] However, like myself, many question their stance at leaving all worldly relationships and responsibilities to take on their unofficially self proclaimed position at the shrine. These fakirs are not beggars, but do receive charity from a few people visiting the shrine and survive on the *langar* distributed and other services available at the shrine.

Figure 5.7: Fakir cleaning shrine court floor

The image shows a fakir of Shah Latif engrossed in the act of cleaning the shrine court. He is not an Auqaf employee. His actions are a witness to his beliefs. His manner is serene, and he carries a calm posture.

'Sacred space does not exist naturally, but is assigned sanctity as man defines, limits and characterizes it through his culture, experience and goals" (Jackson and Henrie, 1983):94).

According to Jackson and Henrie (1983) as well as Desplat and Schulz (2014), the sanctity assigned to a place is a social construction. Its boundaries and edges are defined by the acts that take place at the shrine by various groups of people. The people believing in the sacredness of place 'construct' it through various rituals, customs and traditions. Miracles (stories of *karamat*) are also attached to places like shrines. Together this creates the popular culture orally as well as through the print medium.

Desplat and Schulz summarize the features of a sacred place well. Described as 'a distinct and experiential place', it contains at least three main features. It is socially constructed, it implies a moral quality and above all it is identified by its set-apart character, as having special value which has to be protected by material and symbolic boundaries (Desplat and Schulz, 2014: 25). The place, attached history to particular spots, various artifacts and the 'blessed' items together create the material culture awarding sanctity through symbolism. The bazaar, along the *Dargah* road, common at the entrance pathway for many major shrines in the Indian subcontinent sells the various little artifacts used in the process of veneration. The

next section describes the various physical and functional characteristics of the connecting or transition spaces to shrine including the open court, the *Dargah* Road. These connecting spaces enhance and contribute in different ways to the experience of the *dargah* as a place of veneration.

The multifaceted open court of the shrine

The outer court of the shrine is a multi-functional public space. It acts as a transition space between the more sacred inner court and tomb of the saint and the 'profane' town (Desplat and Schulz, 2014; Jackson and Henrie, 1983). It is also categorized as a sacred space nonetheless, as people take off their shoes outside this outer court.

The outer court of the shrine acts as a backdrop for the structures constructed within (Shahzad 2014). Each structure has an independent activity space and an interrelationship with respect to the courtyard. The courtyard is used as a place for people's accommodation when a large number of people stay over on prominent days such as the urs. Bedding rentals, shoekeeping and various services are located in the peripheral structures. *Langar* is sometimes distributed in the courtyard. It is also used for larger congregations for prayer when the mosque is full.

Figure 5.8: Local performers from the region of Sindh, face the tomb as they play Sufi music in honour of the saint

Source: http://www.asiadespatch.org/2015/11/27/272nd-urs-of-shah-abdul-latif-bhittai-starts-today/

The performances[192] carried out in the courtyard(s) of shrines are a deeply meaningful expression for people and are a tribute to the saint. Sufi music, like *qawwalis* and *raags*- local classical Sufi music are sung. It is a public activity held simultaneously with other activities in the public open court. Performing individuals including those singing and those playing instruments orient themselves in gesture toward the tomb, in respect. As mentioned, the fakirs sing Shah's *raag* in the outer court along with many others as well. Their later position places the performers in direct visual contact and orientation to grave. This change has made a direct association of the activity to place. Other performances also take place in groups in the outer court of the shrine particularly on Thursday and Friday evenings.

The outer court is an important public space where several activities take place including rituals, tributary performances, apart from groups of fakirs sitting together or individually, resting or chatting. The audience of 'spectators' are followers of saint, people who understand the culture or simply local tourists. Spontaneous public performances are characteristic of the place. Besides that, the various public services attached to this space include rest rooms, *sabeel*, *langar*, bedding rental, shoe keeping stall, the first aid camp / dispensary, book stall and Shah Latif complaint center. Together these make this space socially responsive.

Privacy concerns and the nature of the shrine court

It has a transient nature, one where activities happen, people come and go and city pedestrian circulation takes place alongside. Through the process of my fieldwork, the shrine was often a meeting point with my contacts. Apart from the interviews of the shrine visitors and fakirs that inevitably took place here, it was also the only place in town that was public, pedestrian and allowed small group discussions to take place. Its central location in Bhitshah town as well as the *purdah* / privacy concerns of its traditional social groups, make it acceptable and suitable for groups of women and mixed groups to meet[193]. During one of my initial fieldtrips for instance, I was accompanied by a male chaperone from Karachi, who was assisting me with the translation of interviews from Sindhi language. Zulqarnain Shah, my resource guide at Bhitshah was showing us some of the private residences in one of the old neighbourhoods. Mohsin, my field translator was not allowed to enter and simply stopped at the private entrances firmly announcing the tradition of 'privacy' in 'Pir Mohalla' or the neighbourhood of *Sayids*, those from the family of prophet Muhammad. The houses are 'private' domains for the women who did not go out without observing proper *purdah* / veil. The shrine court is therefore an important space where the town residents can meet friends and strangers whom according to their traditional privacy concerns they would not invite to their houses.

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[192] Not all sufi orders use *sama'a* or the playing of music as a way of expressing devotion. For instance, 'the Suharwardiyya order recommends the recitation of the Quran instead of *sama'a* or *qawwali*. The Naqshbandi order also do not allow singing while the Qadiri order allows vocal singing without the use of instruments. Shah Latif belongs to the Avesi order which is a branch of the Chishti order, where the two are allowed and are to be performed sitting.

[193] It is uncommon to find women standing, socializing in the streets of Bhitshah. Usually they are accompanied by male escorts and under veil, particularly the residents of the town.

Flexibility of public space use

It is generally common to observe people crossing over to go from one side of town to another, holding their slippers in hand. The walk through the open court of the shrine is a pleasant one, with a variety of activities happening there that enjoy an audience[194], particularly in the evening, or simply experiencing the wide expanse of space.

Amir Ali, one of the shrine visitors that I interviewed in the outer court was also such a visitor type that accessed the shrine simply as a place of transition. Amir Ali is a political party worker working for the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). He shifted from Larkana city in the north of Sindh to Bhitshah in 2011. Every evening he passes through the shrine court on his way home and sometimes meets up with a friend or co-worker here too. He was not religiously inclined and very focused on his work, and found the shrine court a convenient place to hang out before the end of the day.

The flexibility of public use, openness of the social environment at the shrine of Bhitai is endearing. It is a unique space with its own codes of behaviour. With reference to the open court of the Bhitai shrine, the intermingling of the different zones of public use makes the courts open to multiple uses, offering choice. It gives one the choice to be a passive spectator, an active and participant believer, an observer or one who simply enjoys the atmosphere for the sake of it. 'Cultural openness', 'tolerance' and freedom of expression in public are inherent aspects of the built environment that has been achieved through a continuation of traditional practice and use of spaces. The physical context and historical reference of the place are significant in this regard. These characteristics of shrines are threatened in postmodern social order.

Comparison of the courts of Bhitai Shrine with the Shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore

A complete contrast to this experience is that of the court of the shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore. The court adjoining the tomb chamber has been cleared of all activity. It is made of monumental scale to accentuate the tomb's grandness and made sterile. Lahore is a big city of estimated population 15 million, with the particular shrine situated in a central location. Inevitably, big city shrines are subjected to multiple pressures including dynamics of densely urbanized environments as well as issues of national representation. For instance, *sama'a* by various groups is performed only in the *sama'a* hall located in the basement at the opposite end of the court with all visual contact to tomb eliminated. The fact that Sufi shrines are recognized as a religious heritage, also open to interpretation and tolerance makes them a political subject of expression and representation for the nationhood of the 'Islamic Republic of Pakistan'. Segregation of its various functions has brought constraints to openness of its environment, and a disconnect between the essential zones of its configuration as a *dargah*.

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[194] This is based on personal observations at shrine. The interview with Fakir Muhammad Ismail also supports this.

A living heritage is basically a place of commemoration, that revolve around rituals of collective memory. Sufi shrines such as that of Data Ganj Bakhsh become less preserved and more engineered to promote another's values when they become restricted in use. Accompanied by strict and narrow interpretations, they no longer represent the community and its collective memories.

> "The huge amount of new spaces structured the shrine much more in its functions. While the space in front of the grave used to be used for concerts, distributing food, reading the Qur'an, or listening to the lectures of a *pir* etc., now each of these activities has their specific place. With this reallocation of space also came a much stronger control of the shrine by the administration. Thus, spontaneous concerts are now impossible. The regular sessions of *qawwali* that take place throughout the night Thursdays at most other shrines, are now strictly confined to the afternoon time between noon and evening prayers. The administration itself grew with the complex and with time, more and more institutions settled within the complex because of the availability of space."

> Strothmann, L. *A Shrine Gone Urban – The Shrine of Data Ganj Bukhsh, Lahore, as a City within the City,* Desplatz and Schulz (p. 272)

Here, the distinction between the shrine of Data Ganj Bakhsh as a 'national heritage', representing the religious ideals and the shrine of Bhitai as one representative of a collective memory becomes evident. The difference is also due to the fact that at Bhitshah, there is a strong presence of the generational fakirs and their regular participation and involvement in rituals and activities. At Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore, however, no indigenous community is linked to the shrine in similar manner, although there are many who have been visiting the shrine regularly through generations. Memory remains attached to a historic site due to the close attachment of a community.

The values of the shrine of Data Ganj Bakhsh as a listed national heritage site are controlled through directing the activities that take place there. Religious lectures are organized at a lecture hall on site by a committee that decides on their appropriateness (Shahzad, 2014). The popularity of the shrine, it is expected, will have an impact on the religious alignments of the general public. In this measure, the political role of the shrine as one promoting dominant religious practice as approved by the government becomes clear, promoting thereby a particular version of Islam (Desplat and Schulz, 2014; Shahzad, 2014). It is the only shrine in the country in which the involvement of the state has been to such an extent.

Centrally located in Lahore, the shrine of Data Ganj Bakhsh is described as 'a city within a city' (Strothmann in: Desplat and Schulz, 2014). Langar, shoekeeping are located around its peripheral zone to separate the public visiting these and the tomb for smoother and less chaotic functioning at the tomb front in particular.

The public space where multiple social activities take place in both the Karachi and Lahore shrines have been altered to create 'aesthetically pleasing' and sterile spaces with lawn or

marble floors where the average people are not allowed to sit comfortably, stretch, lie down, gather together or perform. At the recently reconstructed Karachi shrine, the space for *sama'a* is officially kept to the back of the shrine, and is also visually disconnected from the tomb chamber. The shrine is still under construction (since 2014), and it is yet to be seen how the spaces will evolve in use and appropriation.

In comparison, various performances take place at the shrine of Shah Latif. Apart from Shah's *raag* performed in the inner court of the shrine by the fakirs, other musicians also perform in the evenings, particularly on Thursday evenings in the outer court (refer to figure 5.8). They are usually located randomly, sometimes underneath the semi-covered porch, at other times out in the open, usually oriented toward the tomb in semi-circles, with that gestural reference to the tomb of the saint as they sing to offer tribute. The audience gathers around them as they please. *Dhamaal*, *zikr* and these random performances in the outer court keep it in active dialogue with the public and the tomb/ shrine – a gestural commemoration of the saint's message and values promoted.

The religious is the public life of the people of Bhitshah, the sacred space as a relief space makes for very close interweaving of the public and private lives of the people with the religious space, be it celebration of personal ceremonies like weddings, birth of babies for the more affluent in town. After a wedding ceremony, it is common practice for the bride and the groom to visit the saint's tomb to take his blessings. The birth of babies, particularly boys among the immediate and actively participating neigbourhood[195] are announced through *dhamaal* and sweets are distributed among the people at the shrine (Fieldwork; Rehman, 2009). These are acts of celebration and receiving good wishes of the people.

The sanctity of the *dargah* as a place of veneration is of prime importance as was reasserted and affirmed in several interviews, including those with the youth of Bhitshah. This, I found particularly interesting as the focus of my discussion with them was on the use of the shrine for civic purposes, described in a later section in this chapter. The later sections focus on the non-sacred interpretations and use of the shrine space. This includes the use of the shrine space as a public place and a place marking and displaying history. Various observations and interviews of people are highlighted who align with the use of the shrine for non-sacred purposes.

The relation between the shrine and the *bazaar*

The *bazaar* / shopping street is the linear axis to the shrine essentially making its pedestrian entrance corridor. At Bhitshah, this is called *Dargah* Road. Shahzad (2014) describes the passage or approach road to shrine as the 'first interaction of the *zaireen* (the visitors) with the surrounding of a shrine complex'. Shops along the *Dargah* Road may be private or owned by government for instance under the *Auqaf* and given out on rent.

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[195] Among the *Sayids* in particular, the fakirs and the family of the *Gaddi Nashin*.

The purpose of the attached commercial street(s) is to offer various items like *chaddars* (clothsheets), flowers, food items for charity distribution including dryfruits, amulets and other items of veneration as well as attractions for women and children like artificial jewellery and toys. It forms the background and accentuates the experience of entering into the shrine. It is an important spatial experiential feature and relation that requires recognition when planning for future changes and expansion projects.

Figure 5.9: Dargah Road, Bhitshah
Source: Author

At bigger shrines or major shrines situated in cities, the shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore being a good example, this is formed by several streets adjoining the *mazaar* on all sides. Langar is a common activity at many stalls in these streets. The geographical spread and the social activities attached of the *bazaar* to the shrine are such that Strothmann (Desplat and Schulz, 2014) refers to the area as 'a city within a city' and Umashankar as a 'metropolitan microcosm'.

Figure 5.10: Bazaar outside the Shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi in August 1999

Source: http://arifhasan.org/

Figure 5.11: Shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi under construction

Source: Author, picture taken on 14 Jan 2015

Figure 5.12: The rendered poster of the finished shrine, circulated at the shrine of Abdullah shah Ghazi

Source: Auqaf Department and Bahria Town

The recent reconstruction of Abdullah Shah Ghazi's *mazaar* in Karachi has altered the location of the shopping street to make it part of the exit pathway from the shrine instead[196]. Figure 5.10 shows the *mazaar* before reconstruction was undertaken in 1999.

Apart from reconstruction, one of the major reasons for the removal of bazaar at Abdullah Shah Ghazi's shrine has been security threats on shrines in the country, particularly so in the big cities[197] have led to changes. Recently, practical changes have disrupted the traditional relation between the *mazaar* and the *bazaar*. At the tomb of Hazrat Abdullah Shah Ghazi, the recent replanning, renovation and reconstruction exercise has been oriented to follow stringent security checks, the bazaar is planned to be located at the exit of the *mazaar*. The *langar* street was completely separated and given access from the rear side of the complex in 2000 after the terrorist attack at its entrance. Figures 5.11 and 5.12 show the mazar under construction in 2015 and its final finished structure modeled in the poster respectively.

Dargah streets are also a common, major spot for beggars to collect, as they hope to receive charity from the troubled people visiting the shrine in their time of distress. Charity or generous offerings to the poor has traditionally been considered a way to relieve distresses. *Langar* or other items of food are also distributed when prayers are fulfilled within and outside the shrine. Space of *langar* distribution is designated in shrine.

Dargah road at Bhitshah is also a tourist destination for local handicrafts, like textile crafts, *Ajrak*, blockprint, hand embroidered fabrics, hand painted pottery, utensils of wood finished within *Jandi* work as some examples. The bazaar is very old. It has been widened and shops reconstructed and renovated over time. Some of the shops along the Dargah road axis are owned by the *Auqaf* department to whom they pay rent. According to tradition, the shrines or tomb chambers are generally placed on a higher ground, the access ways to them such as Dargah Road in Bhitshah is a minor ascent upwards leading to steps. The *mazaar* of Hazrat Abdullah Shah Ghazi is known for its location on a hill and the steep slope with steps leading to the chamber. This is a common design feature also for ancient / historic Hindu and Buddhist temples and similar sacred places.

5.2.3 The Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai as a Living History and a Place of Commemoration

While the previous section had focused on the function of the shrine as a *dargah*, a place of veneration and therefore a sacred place for its followers, this section focuses on the function of the shrine as a living place of historic importance that is supported through various means to continue to be a living heritage. The most important role in this function is played by the indigenous community, generational / nominated custodians, the fakirs. Changing social

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[196] Interview with the architect of shrine, Najmi Hassan, who is the owner of the firm *Zavia*.
[197] A minor terrorist attack took place at the entrance gateway of this shrine in Karachi. This resulted in the completed removal of the *bazaar* and *langar* kitchens at the front façade.

orders have led to change in authoritative institutions and changing relationships between the state and the traditional institutions. Despite this, certain constants have managed to maintain the Sufi collective memories.

> *"…memory as a whole is bigger than the sum of its parts"* (Confino, 1997).

Memory, in its entirety, is more than the content put together, elaborates Confino. It is similar to a work of art that 'cannot speak for itself'. Its meaning can be deciphered by examining the intermediaries between the social world and that artistic representation.' He refers to Aby Warburg, a historian of artistic production as an inspiration, to draw parallels. The modes or vehicles by which memories become associated are a consequence of 'the various ways in which *people* can become associated' (emphasis added). The modes and vehicles of memory include collective and individual rituals as well as physical objects, artifacts and the architecture of place. Confino quotes Halbwachs,

> 'We can understand each memory as it occurs in individual thought only if we locate each within the thought of the corresponding group.'

The multiple social groups who commemorate, preserve and conserve in multiple ways interpret the memories attached in their own ways. In order to relate the structure and process of commemoration to heritage conservation, it is important to understand the finer, more textured multitudinal details, (modes and vehicles) through which people commemorate and make associations to place. At the same time, the history of memory is looked at as a 'shared symbolic universe' by the social groups. Thence this 'history of memory should place the articulation of a particular perception of the past within the context of society…' (Confino 1997) in order to understand its universal significance for the group.

The Shrine is a place of commemoration. It is a monument to commemorate the saint, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai and his teachings. The commemorative rituals such as the performance of the *raag*, *zikr* around the *machh* and the prayer rituals on important dates (see chapter 3) were a continuation from the life of the saint. The community set up of fakirs and their families around the saint was the beginning of something, a way of living with which commemoration of the saint was tied up after his death. The rituals associated with his teaching became a cultural memory associated with the place, the person and his teachings.

> "Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived…. Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; Memory is multiple, collective, pluralistic; it takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects…" (Halbwachs, 1980)

The theoretical works of Maurice Halbwachs on collective memory articulate the concept, with relevance to the community, 'the living societies' that 'are founded in its name'. The evolution of the discourse of collective memory is inevitable within a context with changing time frames, political and paradigmatic contexts as well as urbanization. The changing political contexts,

the precolonial, colonial and the post independence periods have brought about an evolution, a series of changes at the shrine as chapter 2 has related.

The history of memory of the shrine belongs to the premodern times[198].

> 'Premodern times are characterized by a natural, unselfconscious relation between people and their past. Their environments of memory sustain traditions and rituals that provide a stable sense of being in time for the members of local memory communities.' (Kansteiner, 2002)

The shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai is such a place of collective memory expressed through the preservation of traditional rituals, significant spots and physical place. Monumental burial of important / saintly figures brings about a change in use of place. It has 'anchored families' to create societies and 'converted lived spaces into commemorative community spaces' of shrines as the following quote by Edwards (2015) elaborates.

> 'When someone dies, the choice to bury the mortal remains has social and demographic implications. The burial sites of ancestors and other loved ones can anchor families in one place over time and may generate grave marking of more monumental honour. If the deceased enjoyed an elevated social standing or widespread respect, the choice to enshrine the dead for posterity might also serve quite worldly purposes among the living – acknowledging political loyalty, concretizing spiritual affiliation or demonstrating moral rectitude….these behaviours…and processes can exert profound influence on individuals and on the communities they inhabit… (These) monuments help to shape public spaces into which people .. fit their lives and thoughts.'

People playing an important role in the religious and cultural life of the local people become a part of the cultural memory, characterized and maintained through cultural formations like texts, rites and monuments (Confino, 1997). Collective memory exists only as long as it is part of the living experience of a group or individual (Halbwachs 1980). As a part of the active life of the fakirs and the saint's family and followers, 'it is a current of continuous thought still moving in the present' (Halbwachs). It is these various elements of the living heritage reinforcing its commemorative properties at the place that this section focuses on.

Briefly, the collective memory of the shrine is constituted by the following:

- the community
- the texts, the poetry of Shah Latif is the basic text associated with this.
- the rituals, particularly the performance of the mystical poetry of Shah Latif as commemoration.
- the shrine as a monument.

These are the 'vehicles of memory', the media of expression of cultural memory (Kansteiner 2002).

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[198] Pierre Nora (1989) divides the history of memory into three periods, a premodern, modern and post modern.

Community associations over generations to the place(s) and their rituals are a vehicle of memory (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004) and a socio-cultural mechanism for its preservation.

The indigenous community / settlement of fakirs

The traditional social group of fakirs and saint's family, who diligently perform their ritualistic duties, form the community who revive the collective memory consistently. The proximity of the community settled within the immediate context of the shrine creates a kind of a personal relation of the fakirs / local community to the shrine. As custodians of the collective memory of the saint's legacies through generations, the familial ties to the place bind them to form the community itself. The significance of this community relation is not just in the rituals performed but also the physical proximity and the ease of accessibility to the shrine that the fakirs enjoy. Chapter 3 has elaborated on the rituals and the community of fakirs, hierarchies, their roles and responsibilities and interrelationships.

The two shrines in big cities that is, Shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi in Karachi and the Shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore, do not have a particular community's association. They are very old[199], much older than the shrine of Shah Latif and also receive considerable attention from the *Auqaf* department of the government. The religious orientations of the saint(s) and the Sufi orders that they belong to converge with the lines that the nation state aligns itself with. The shrines of Bhitshah and Sehwan on the other hand, are culturally regional and distinct. They lie in physical proximity to the local communities that are active in the present day due to their regular participation in the collective memories and rituals. These are settled in its immediate neighbourhoods. The shrines heritage is living in nature due to the presence of the community. Social hierarchies at Sehwan Sharif are much more complex, with followers of saints making up the hierarchy, creating multiple levels of mystical relation to the saint[200].

Sustenance of living heritage could be achieved through recognizing the contextual elements that play a role in the processes of its historical continuity. The strong relation between the community and the shrine, is reinforced in the physical association, in the spaces of transition through proximity of their living spaces to the shrine. This is so also in their participation in the rituals on a regular basis, their economic livelihoods associated with tomb and their traditional role in society, meaning how they are recognized.

Texts: The poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, Shah *jo Risalo* was produced at his *khanqah* (see section 5.2.1). This is a historic relation to the shrine at Bhitshah today. It is an intangible heritage associated to the place (details in Chapter 3). Shah *jo Risalo* was first compiled and printed in 1866 by Ernest Trumpp.

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[199] Shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi in Karachi dates to 900 CE; Shrine of Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh in Lahore dates to 1021 CE.
[200] Data gathered through visits to Sehwan Sharif and the shrine of Lal Shahbaz

Rites/ Rituals: At shrines, there are individual and collective rituals. Rituals are universally mostly means of group commemoration. Individual rites performed at shrines include prayer, circumambulation of the grave, putting flowers, garlands and / or cloth sheets and distribution of *nazranas* as some examples. These are tribute offering to saint and in the desire for spiritual connection and relief[201]. They are followed by many individuals according to their own, their sects or their family's beliefs and convictions.

Group commemoration involves the collective ritual performances. The main participants in rituals and their role in the performances is indicative of their position in the traditional social hierarchy at shrine (see chapter 3 for details). Rituals are therefore properly structured. Apart from defining the social hierarchy, the location of performance is fixed as well as the time when it takes place. Its repetitive character reinforces its meanings among its observers. The collective memory is hence celebrated in different ways (through different or similar rituals) through the year. *Qawwali* (mystic music)*, naqqara* (drummed announcement), *dhamaal* (bodily performance), *zikr* and *sao sumar* are examples of the forms of collective rituals.

Monument:

The physical monument or structure marking the place of history is an important landmark. It is public in nature and carries historical significance. It is representative of a particular time period in built form and construction technique. Religious architecture in different regions in Asia is a display of regional construction materials and crafts. It is therefore in its totality, from marking a geographical location, form and distribution of function, building materials and techniques of construction and ornamentation through local crafts that, it becomes relevant to its time period.

Holly Edwards (2015) in her publication, 'Of Brick and Myth', writes about the different types of religious architecture as a 'spectrum of piety' built along the Indus River Valley at different time periods. She remarks on the similarity of the religious structures in general in the region.

> 'In general, the inner compartment of the temple houses the image in a womb-like chamber, a dark sanctum for the divine manifestation, while the exterior is adorned with sculpture for preparatory contemplation…. In this manner, all of the building types, stupa, temple and tomb, invite the worshipper towards that which lies inside, at the core. (p. 78)
>
> There exists a consistent craft tradition… façade compositions exhibit a dado zone of high relief mouldings, a plain or pilastered mid zone set in with deep niches, a more heavily decorated superstructure, a relatively constant repertoire of decorative motifs. … Another consistent feature of Indus Valley architecture over time is domed interior spaces.' (p. 79)

There is a continuity of craft and building traditions in the region, highlights Edwards. Traditionally, the architecture of shrines and tombs developed through patronage. Patrons and rulers took on the construction of parts of shrines or their expansions as generous gestures of honouring the saint.

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[201] Relief from the major problems faced in the worldly life.

This section describes the reasons behind the construction of the particular form of the monument, the influences and inspiration and the iconic symbolism attached to the various features of the Bhitai shrine construction. These highlight the regional trends and symbolism attached to monumental construction.

The tomb of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai was built under the orders of Ghulam Shah Kalhoro in 1754. Ghulam Shah Kalhoro was born after prayer of Shah Latif for his birth. His mother was a big follower of the saint (Baloch, 2010; Lari, 1994). He prayed for the birth of a son for her and told her that he would be destined to be a good ruler. Ghulam Shah Kalhoro built several shrines in Sindh apart from Shah Latif's. He was the local appointed governor during Mughal rule and was influenced by the building construction trends during the era.

Mausoleum or tomb construction was particularly popular in Iran and the Mughals took their inspiration from then Persia. The Mughals were particularly taken to construction of grand public buildings as well as tombs. The cube chamber with the dome is a typical structure of a tomb constructed for people of social elevation through this particular time period as well as earlier. Emperor Akbar's reign is considered to be particularly active for the construction of monumental architecture in the Mughal era. The first building to be constructed of major significance during the Mughal time period was the tomb of Emperor Humayun, father of Akbar, in 1570 (Koch, 1991).

Figure 5.13: Tomb of Humayun, Delhi (India)
Source: http://futuredelhi.com/thread-7.html accessed on 3 March 2016

Figure 5.14: The Tomb of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai. View from the inner court.

The prime purpose of all funerary architecture was to 'advertise the importance of the person commemorated'. The secular mausoleum was no more than a memorial. The shrines of Sufi saints on the other hand, examples of which can be found in Delhi, Ajmer, Fatehpur Sikri in India, Pakpattan, Multan, Sehwan in Pakistan and Ardabil, Baastan, Mahan, Natanz and Tirmidh in Iran are all deeply rooted in their local communities. They express a popular rather a strictly orthodox form of Islam (Hillenbrand, 2004).

This section looks at multiple physical signs and remnants at the shrine that make it a place that is attached to history and commemoration in multiple ways. This includes, the physical form of the tomb structure and where it is coming from; the ornamentation and the local materials and crafts traditions that take inspiration from the larger region and philosophy; traditional pattern of acknowledging crafts people and patronage on the multiple built artifacts and building crafts at the shrine; and the prominent symbolic elements at the shrine and the memories attached. Lastly, the section also articulates the social set up that undertakes the preservation of the intangible and the tangible heritage of shrine. All in all, this part of the text is organized to highlight the underlying characteristic of the shrine of Bhitai as a monument and a place of living history.

Form: The tomb of Shah Latif is a cubic structure within with a hemispherical dome. It was built a couple of centuries after the tomb of Humayun in Delhi, and bears several similarities. The two structures were built during Mughal rule in the Indian subcontinent. The tomb of Shah Latif is comparably much smaller in scale and monumentality than the tomb of Humayun. The latter was ofcourse built to commemorate him as the second Mughal Emperor, while the

former was developed through local patronage and due to the saint's reverence and popularity in the local community. Its monumental importance is due to the royal ownership. Nevertheless, the comparison between the two structures in form is aimed to highlight the common elements of such an architectural form. The tomb of Shah Latif is also not exactly symmetrical unlike the former. The later addition of the portico with five arches tries to give the impression of symmetry. Its central bay is marked by a raised front, even though that is not the entrance into the tomb. The turrets or small towers at the corners of the structure are similar in the two buildings although proportionately different. The inner structure of the tomb with a dome is clearly visible in both buildings.

> "The cube symbolizes the earthly, material body, and the dome represents the spiritual, heavenly sphere above." (Mumtaz in Quraeshi, 2010:46)

The tomb structure of this form metaphorically refers to the spiritual connection of the deceased between the Heaven, represented by the dome and circle, and the Earth, represented by the cube / square.

Geometry: The history of architecture of the Muslim context spread largely across Central and South Asia is known for the development of geometric patterns and proportioning systems at varying scales of construction and design.

> "…mathematical calculation is an integral part of the Muslim architectural aesthetic."
> (Hillenbrand, 2004: 14)

Design of tombs and mosques were embedded in geometry and mathematics in plans, sections and elevations as well as in the details of surface decorations like flooring, elevational openings in wood work, stone, marble and tile works. There are no architectural treatises of theory of construction of tombs or what is termed 'Islamic architecture'. However, Hillenbrand (2004) suggests that '[i]t is entirely possible that Islam as a religion played a significant – perhaps *the* significant – role in inspiring Muslim architects…'

The epitomic Taj Mahal and Tomb of Ali ibn Musa Reza in Mashhad-Iran are later developed monumental structures where the proportions reached an aesthetic apex. The tomb of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai follows similar principles[202], in terms of scale, axiality and proportions. It is simple in its layout and rationale. It is less grand in comparison. Its architecture is indigenous prominently due to the *kashi kari* tile work, but also consists of intricate wooden carved beams, marble columns and mirror work inside the tomb chamber itself. It has been constructed and later added to, to give immense regard to the saint and in his reverence.

Of the several tombs that Ghulam Shah Kalhoro constructed within the same period as the shrine of Bhitai are the tombs of Shah Baharo in Larkana (1774), Mian Noor Mohammad in

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[202] The Kalhoros were well aware of the strong architectural presence created by the Mughal Empire (15-18th century) at the time in prominent parts of the subcontinent. The forts in Delhi and Lahore, the tomb of Humayun were architecture of parallel times with the shrine.

Nawabshah (1758), Mian Adam Shah Kalhoro in Sukkur and Mian Shah Ali in Larkana (See figure 5.15). The similarities between them are obvious. Elements are repeated and part of a code and manner of traditional form of construction. The evolution of the tomb form in these constructions show the change in articulation of the structure where the transition from the cube to the hemispherical dome takes place. The octagonal structure between the cubic room and the circular dome reduced in size and visibility as proportions improved to give a grander look and the arched, framed portal called the *pishtaq*[203] acquired dominance in the aesthetic articulation. The development of the *pishtaq*, the frontal wall can be observed. The

Tomb of Mian Shah Ali, Larkana
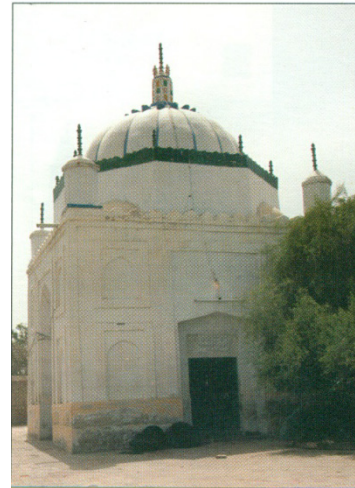
Tomb of Mian Adam Shah Kalhoro, Sukkur
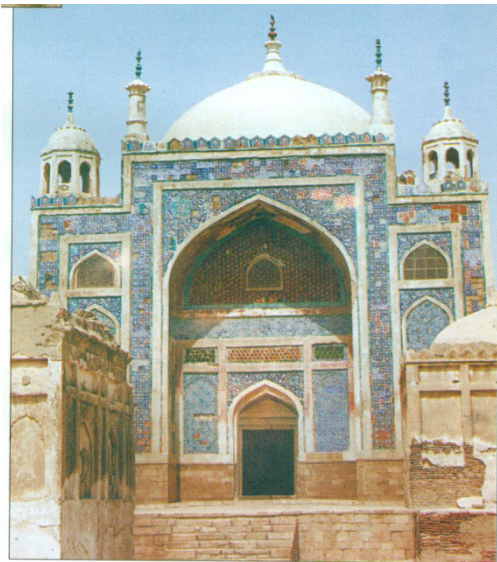
Tomb of Mian Noor Muhammad, Nawabshah 1758
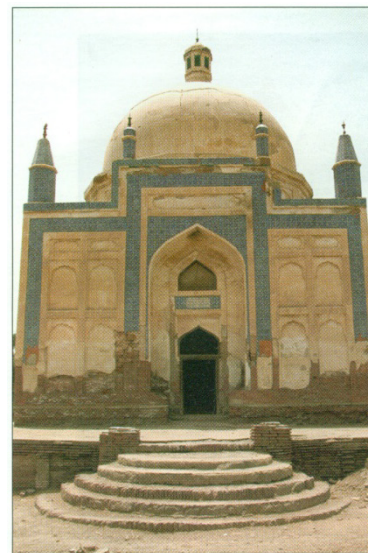
Tomb of Shah Baharo, Larkana 1774

Figure 5.15: Tombs constructed in Sindh by Ghulam Shah Kalhoro, show predominant Persian influence

Source: (Bokhari, 2006) *Kalhoro Period Architecture*

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[203] Pishtaq: In Islamic architecture, a rectangular frame around an arched opening, usually associated with an iwan. (www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100328853)

proportions of the structure also improve with time. The two structures at the bottom (refer to figure 5.15) were constructed after the tomb of Shah Latif, particularly showing design development in terms of detail and proportion.

Ornamentation – use of indigenous building crafts: While the adoption of faith and associated influences and inspirations brought about a continuity within the region, 'this continuity also permitted remarkable variety… (through) the many linguistic, ethnic and social divisions' as Islam and associated culture spread (Hillenbrand, 2004). In different parts of the Indian subcontinent, the materials of construction and surface decoration vary according to the geography and availability of materials (Edwards, 2015; Hillenbrand, 2004; Khan, 2015; Koch, 1991; Pal, 2008). Apart from the form and structure of the building of tomb, the building crafts including *kashi* tiles, carved woodwork and stone work is representative of the geographical location, local materials available and the skills. Indigenous crafts particularly used at the shrine are *kashi kari* tile work, carved woodwork, marble columns generously donated by one or more patrons (refer to figure 5.16).

The region of Sindh has been known for its production of the colour from indigenous indigo plants. The cities of Bhitshah, Hala, Nasarpur are known traditionally for the manufacture of *kashi* tiles painted with this colour in particular among others. The indigo is also used for making *ajrak*, the local traditional textile block print work. The blue extracted from the indigenous indigo plants has been used widely and characteristically in the Sindhi context in *ajrak*[204] and *kashi* tile work (See figure 5.16). Brick and stone structures and carvings are also indigenous crafts. These crafts are an indigenous heritage. Traditional craftsmen are generational. Examples include the crafts families of *Ajrak* textile work and *Jandi* woodwork in Bhitshah, handmade tile and pottery works using the indigo in Hala and Nasarpur (Heritage Foundation, 2015). These crafts as well as the indigenous architectural practices contribute to 'a recognizable Sindhi architectural idiom' (Pal, 2008).

However, there has generally been a decline in the demand, use and production of the building crafts like *kashi kari*. Their demand in the prospering urban regions where major construction works take place like Karachi are less[205]. Renovations and extensions in various parts of the shrine complex of Bhitshah also exhibit the bad quality of work being carried out, due to a decline in the craftworks and quality negligence over time.

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[204] local dyed and block printed textile (also refer to chapter 6)
[205] Modern materials and techniques of construction are popularly used in cities like Karachi, Hyderabad and Lahore.

Figure 5.16: Entrance porch of the tomb entrance showing *kashi* tile work, carved wooden beams and monolithic marble columns

Display of texts, acknowledging craftsmen, and time frames of construction: The traditional construction process regarded the crafts people as artists and technicians. Master masons and carpenters were people who visualized the built product. They worked at the site through the period of its construction, building themselves as well as managing the project and all its details with the co-workers on a day-to-day basis. Old buildings usually carry the signatures of the master mason, master carpenter and the head of the craftsworks, along with the names of other people such as the patron and the supervisor. These signatures are of immense importance to the built heritage, making them as 'works of art'. Religious and public buildings generally in the region acquire particular importance. Traditionally, they have been designed and constructed with immense reverence and love. The signatures are therefore an acknowledgement, a source of pride and recognition for this dedicated act, when the building is finally constructed.

Unfortunately, it is common practice in many shrines renovated and expanded under the *Auqaf* department[206] to remove the signatures completely[207]. The signatures give information about the physical history and evolution of the place, and give due credit to the craftspeople who diligently work to produce their best works, some as master pieces. These are just as much a part of the living heritage of the shrine adding to the process of its physical development, in a kind of personal way. Figure 5.17 shows the signature of the different craftspeople as the shrine was developed over time. Right on top of the entrance into the

[206] It is important to point out that while the department of *Auqaf* is responsible for the upkeep, maintenance and management of religious buildings in the country, many of which are also listed as heritage, their system has not been updated to include the treatment of old buildings of historic value as heritage.

[207] This was observed during my visits to other shrines during field work including the tomb of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan Sharif as well as the tomb of Abdullah Shah Ghazi in Karachi. Architecture firms now employed for the purpose of expansions and renovation, work very differently along with the government department of *Auqaf*. Bureaucracies and 'modern' mechanisms exhibit little ownership of the construction works at site to people directly involved in construction.

tomb chamber, the *kashi kari* tile work consists of the names of the patron, Ghulam Shah Kalhoro, the *Gaddi Nashin* who acted as the supervisor to construction, Syed Jamal Shah and the master mason, Eedan Razo from Sukkur. The *Hijri* year of construction is also mentioned alongside. The southern entrance of the tomb chamber is a silver door installed in 1972 as a donation with the name of stone carver Khaliq Dino[208]. It carries a verse of Bhitai. The donation was made in reverence and respect of the saint. Kanasero, (2007) lists the details of the significant inscriptions at the tomb.

A doorway of silver was installed at the southern entrance of the tomb. Along with a verse of Bhitai, it carries the date of installation. Month of Rajab, 1392 Hijiri; i.e. August 1972

The back of the tomb was recently renovated and kashi tile work done. It carries the name of the crafts person along with the date. While the other dates are according to the Hijri calendar, it is interesting to find this recent work dated according to the English calendar, 2.7.2001.

At the top of the entrance doorway into the tomb are inscriptions of names of the people who contributed to the construction of the tomb. These include the names of the patron, Ghulam Shah Kalhoro, the Gaddi Nashin, Syed Jamal Shah and the master mason, Eedan Razo, among others.

Figure 5.17: Display of texts inscribed in the building tile craft, acknowledging contributions of master masons, carpenters, *Gaddi Nashins* and patrons

Physical symbolic elements carrying religious significance: Apart from the signatures and the indigenous crafts, the shrines also carry physical elements that are symbolic, and are particularly religiously significant. The *alam*, the *sabeel* and the *machh* are prominent elements that are commemorative of another time frame and symbolize significant events in the religious history (See figure 5.15).

The *alam* and the *sabeel* carry symbolic reverence due to their association with the tragic event of Karbala in Iraq. The family of the grandsons of prophet Muhammad was martyred in this event by then Umayyad ruler's army, after being forced to keep away from the water

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[208] The door has a carved stone frame that is covered and hammered with silver sheet.

sources in the area for three days. The *alam* denotes the flag of the war held by the family. At the shrine, it is very tall (about 40') and is mainly a visual element. At the base of the *alam* is a glass showcase carrying models of the tombs of the family of prophet Muhammad, who were slain as well as *Masjid-e-Nabwi*[209] in Madina. The *sabeel* is set up as a drinking water facility in sacred places like shrines or on important religious occasions. The term used relates to the setting up of a drinking water stall which is open and accessible to all. It is not a commercial stall. The term denotes the reference to the family in Karbala. Often the *sabeel* is called, *sabeel-e-Hussain.* In concept, the water source is a remembrance of Husain, the grandson of prophet Muhammad as the symbol of generosity[210].

The *machh* on the other hand is particularly relevant to the tradition of the Sufi in the region. It is a place to light fire around which fakirs and other people gather for *zikr* as the description of the *Sao Sumar* ritual elaborates in chapter 3. The ritual of *zikr* around the *machh* dates to the time of Shah Latif himself. It therefore revives the time and the meanings attached to the ritual. Circling around the *machh* in a group reinforces the community feeling apart from its mystic chantings that connect the group to a larger religious reality. The *machh* tradition dates back to a time when there was no electricity and the fakirs gathered around the fire as a practical group gathering. Today it is a commemorative, mystic ritual bringing together the fakir community regularly, on a monthly basis.

The *machh, alam* and *sabeel* are freestanding emblems located in the outer court of the shrine of Bhitai. While the court itself is used for multiple purposes, these emblems gather particular attention on special occasions when larger crowds gather.

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[209] *Masjid-e-Nabwi*, the main mosque in Madina that includes the old house of prophet Muhammad within it, where he is buried as well and is known by his reference.
[210] The event narrates his family generously having shared all their water with a flock of the enemy, people and horses. Later, the war strategy refrained them from all water sources.

alam   Prayer space of   machh   sabeel
              Gaddi Nashin

Figure 5.18: Symbolic elements in outer court

Management

The management of the shrine and the traditional social groups attached to shrine and its rituals are integral for the maintenance of continuity of its living nature.

The insertion of the government department of *Auqaf* in 1960 for administrative functioning has added to the actors involved in the management of the shrine in Bhitshah and related heritage before for the three centuries prior. As a *khanqah*, the shrine was managed by the saint, his family and his fakirs. Different fakirs were attributed different responsibilities and different aspects of the collective memory for preservation and continuation[211]. *Tamrani* fakirs (responsible for music performance), *Mungenhar* fakirs (responsible for *dhamaal* drumming), *Autari* fakirs (responsible for management of resting spaces for visitors outside the shrine) are some examples. The *Gaddi Nashin* of the saint is also a part of the traditional system of management.

The property of Bhitai was probably established as a *waqf* (private property for public use) although I have found no written record of this[212]. My interviewees including Zulqarnain Shah,

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[211] Chapter 3 also presents a typology of the fakirs interviewed at the shrine.

[212] According to Kozlowski (1985), waqf may have existed orally before colonial rule. It contracts / written waqf deeds found all over India belong to the colonial period. It can therefore be assumed that these written deeds were only developed for properties in cities / urban settlements where the families felt threatened by the new order imposed. It is hence possible that in the less urbanized region of Sindh, the deeds were never made. This may be due to the history of geographical isolation of Sindh. The fact that the institution of waqf was an important matter for the social

the *Gaddi Nashin* of Bhitai, Syed Waqar Husain Shah were only aware of its first occurrence[213] (as Auqaf) when the government department of *Auqaf* was formed in 1960. Traditionally, the establishment of a waqf was meant to act as a mode of memory and shrines were popularly part of this practice among other public amenities and services through the regions of the Muslim Empire. It ensured the continuation of tradition and the processes that keep a cultural heritage alive. Absence of private property in South Asia and a community dominant use of land and its functional distribution are aspects that have been discussed in chapter 2 that allowed committees and individuals in the region security. As Kozlowski (1985) writes in his research that written waqf deeds from the Indian subcontinent could only be found from during the colonial rule and not before. The institution of waqf was an important matter for the social and cultural framework of the Muslim society during the early 1900s is well covered in research literature by Kozlowski, Jamal Malik and Ayesha Jalal.

The differences between the existing traditional fakir familial and the bureaucratic *Auqaf* system of management are distinct. The traditional system is familial, and defines authority and the social hierarchy within community. The modern mechanism in comparison is bureaucratic, with its center at the provincial level, it incorporates change in administrative appointments every few years. The managers appointed sometimes have little knowledge about the culture of shrines[214]. Physical infrastructure, building upgradation, as well as financial management are now undertaken by the *Auqaf*. Both systems perform their prescribed rituals, their timings clearly coordinated to avoid overlaps and conflicts. The *Gaddi Nashin* maintains his authority as the spiritual descendant of the saint. The different fakirs appointed as caretakers of the intangible heritage including *Mungenhar* fakirs, Tamar fakir and *Zakri* fakir have their own *Gaddi Nashins* too. They were nominees or descendants of the diligent followers of the saint since his lifetime who took active part in keeping the legacies of the saint alive (See chapter 3). The *Auqaf* on the other hand, ensures the government's presence at important occasions arranging prescribed protocol. The two systems, the traditional constituted by the fakirs and the *Gaddi Nashin* and the national / provincial management through *Auqaf*, co-exist parallel to each other, each respecting the other's domains[215]. In this sense, it is a rare example of a living heritage, delicately balancing authority.[216] A good example of this is the clear demarcation of rituals, timing and spaces

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and cultural framework of the Muslim society during the early 1900s is well covered in research literature by Kozlowski, Jamal Malik and Ayesha Jalal.

[213] During fieldwork at Bhitshah, there were several instances, discussions and interviews, when I questioned the presence or any local knowledge of the Bhitai property as a waqf. The institution of waqf, with its clause to use a property for a particular prescribed public function for perpetuity is I believe an important one, ensuring the continuation of tradition. It is for this reason that the question was salient.

[214] Interview with *Auqaf* Asst. Manager at Shrine of Shah Latif, 'I applied for a government job and I was more interested in working with the Karachi Port Trust. But I was assigned to work with the Auqaf. So I am just doing my duty. Government jobs are based on posting. I have been appointed previously at the Shrine of Shah Yakeek, also in Khyber Pukhtun Khua (KPK) Province."

[215] Interviews *Gaddi Nashin*, fakirs involved in major rituals and personnel at *Auqaf* office at shrine

[216] Parts of interviews with the various important stakeholders at shrine reveal also their disagreements and conflicting opinions on management and authority, revealing how this balance could be disturbed if disagreeable actions were taken by any authority.

during the *urs* of the saint. The festival, now extended to be a three day event, has two parallel schedules that deal with two different types of audiences. The traditional rituals are attended by the followers of the saint, from the region and town, while the government rituals are attended by the important people of the government authority and the town municipality and district.

> "In the context of nationalization of religious endowments, an attempt was made, both under Ayub and later under Bhutto, to reduce the traditional religious authority of the shrine holders, by formally propagating an emancipation of the pilgrims to the shrines. In order to do so it was necessary to play down the shrine or atleast to represent it as a worldly institution and thus to take away its religious character. Up to this stage, the ordinary *murid* had no direct access to God. The saint was a mediator. The holder of the shrine had taken over the position of the saint and now functioned as the mediator between the pilgrim and the pir. The saint, and therefore the … *sajjada nashin,* 'monopolized' access to God, and only through him was the path to salvation experienced. This mediating role was now supposed to be rendered superfluous through the activities of the *Auqaf* Department" (Malik, 1996:61).

In essence, the political authority of the saints family was reduced due to various disputes and injustices observed and recorded over the previous century through the introduction of the *Auqaf* department.

The property around the shrine that was originally part of the *waqf* property also falls under the *Auqaf* management. In some of the other cases of shrine properties[217], this includes agricultural lands, shops along the entire length of the *Dargah* Road, marking the main entrance axis into the shrine, and in some cases other private properties that may be used for a variety of purposes. The various properties under the *Auqaf* department are usually revenue generating, and are given out on rent. This revenue is used for the functioning of the autonomous department.

5.2.4 The Shrine as a non-sacred, civic, public place

The previous sections have elaborated on the significance of the shrine of Bhitai as a place – a space full of meanings associated, memory, elements that continue tradition. These associations are geographically specific and mostly religious. The multi-functionality and ease of accessibility make it a culturally inclusive public space (Alexander, 1979; Jacobs, 1961; Lynch, 1960).

The shrine plays multiple functions within its description as a public place. It is a public place, accessible to all, and an open platform used for several religious and social activities of the town. This multi faceted dimension is an intriguing aspect of the shrine, and highlights its civic and regional role.

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[217] Details of properties under the Auqaf management of the important shrines are available on their web page: http://www.sindh.gov.pk/dpt/usharzakaat/bhitshah.htm, accessed 28 April 2016.

The shrine is the geographical center of the town. Its central location and its major public and minor neighbourhood connections highlight its role as the socio-cultural center of the town (Refer to chapter 4). Its place characteristics make it a spiritual center in the region of Sindh, one that is also associated with the personal history of the saint Shah Latif and the region's mystical poet, representational and of regional identity.

The shrine is a meeting point, an orientation point, a point to acquire information; for residents of different neighbourhoods, for friends, for learners of the classical music, for travelers etc. Besides being a sacred space, therefore the shrine's open courts fulfill functions of a public collective space of the town. Not all shrines have this characteristic. The shrine of Bhitai is unique hence and comparable to other shrines in small towns, with its presence and form playing a significant role in the immediate settlement and town context (See chapter 4).

As a public place, it is open and accessible to all and provides important civic services, attracting people including local tourists, residents and travelers. Its ease of accessibility and multiple meanings allow for a mix of activities to take place at the shrine. The fact that it is a strictly pedestrian zone is of importance. People dress appropriately and feel at ease at the *mazar*[218]. The open courts of the shrine are the face / front of the town. On entering the open court of the shrine and standing in its center, the vastness of the space and the architecture of the shrine gives 'a sense of arrival' in the town itself. The chaotic experience of the town's streets is a complete juxtaposition to this. People take more ownership of the space comparatively, keeping it clean, giving respect to the environment and the people. Multiple levels of ownership, care of its visitors and a 'code of behaviour' create a symbolic language for this as a public space. It is representational of the town and its people – the geometry of the large court and its relationship to the immediate neighbourhood context highlights this role.

People also come to the shrine for recreation and relief from daily routine. Interviews with the locals revealed a general increase in the use of the shrine for recreation. One third of the interviews conducted of the visitors at the shrine were of people, locals and from region visiting for recreation. The shrine has increasingly become a local tourist spot particularly due to the music performances. Interviews with fakirs who actively participate in rituals like *Mungenhar* fakir, *Zakri* fakir, and have spent their entire lives associated with the shrine on a daily basis, also pointed out this change.

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[218] Contrastingly, the public behavior observed on the streets of Bhitshah is casual, less proper or informal in men's dressing and behavior while the women, found very few in number on the streets, are usually wearing black *burqas* (veils). The *purdah* protocol is comparatively at ease at the shrine and the women are observed to be in more colourful clothing. Also, casual chatting with groups of women at shrine showed that they belonged to other towns of Sindh. A chat with a young girl (in her 20s) from Bhitshah revealed that the small town norm was such that girls barely ventured out of their comfort zones of home and school without a male escort and that too required them to be covered in their black *burqa*. Women who needed to move within the neighbourhood preferred the narrow residential lanes within to the commercial streets of town.

"New people have come and settled in Bhitshah that people no longer recognize those who have been sitting here for centuries." (Ali Dinu Fakir – Appendix 3 iii)

"You have been in Bhitshah for so long, have you seen the city change before you? Has there also been change in the people coming to the shrine?
Yes, over the past 10 years in particular. The numbers of people coming to the shrine have increased substantially. Earlier, people came only to pray seriously. Now there are many more people who come for recreation to the shrine. That ofcourse does not mean that the numbers of people coming to the shrine for prayer has decreased. That has also increased, but the others are a new addition." (Mungenhar Fakir – Appendix 3v)

People from nearby villages and towns come to the shrine on motorbikes, personal vehicles or by public bus, *rickshaw*[219] to spend their weekend evenings, to relax after a working week, to hang out with friends and family at the shrine. The residents of Bhitshah, usually visit the shrine with family once a week. These are their evenings out, prayers mixed with recreation, for all ages. Their day of the week is usually fixed on the basis of their importance, gauging the crowd at shrine and availability of family members.

Sindhis from other cities / towns around Bhitshah are commonly observed taking pictures of themselves in front of the shrine. On weekend evenings, the shrine is filled with outsiders listening and enjoying the performance with friends and family. Within families, I observed that elder people were more into veneration, while the younger people were attracted to the shrine mostly for recreation. Groups of men and girls I interviewed, verified their purpose of attraction to be the same. 'It is a lovely way to spend an evening with friends', remarked a middle aged Sindhi man. They did not really understand the meaning and purpose behind the poetry and performance and knew little about the history of the saint and the place, but found it to be a source of entertainment. The people at the shrine were observed to be culturally diverse and open. That is, while there were many Sindhis from nearby rural and semi-urban towns, there were also people visiting from various major cities like Karachi, Hyderabad in particular. Occassional foreigners were also common to observe. The shrine has since its existence also functioned as a place of learning and performing music.

Learning the music / performances: Several fakirs of varying ages interviewed, admitted that they had learnt to play the *tambura* and sing Shah's *kalaam* at the shrine. Muhammad Khan Fakir, for instance, came to Bhitshah from Badin for the purpose of learning the musical performance, that appealed to him since he was younger. He stayed at the shrine through most of the day, where his master would give him lessons in small portions to learn and perfect. Watching the performance at shrine itself was also part of his training.

The outer court of the shrine is also used for performances by groups visiting from outside the town. Particularly so on Thursday and Friday evenings as well as other important religious

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[219] Rickshaws and chingchis are local form of taxi. The two are similar in form, with difference in size and the numbers of people that they can carry (Rickshaw for 3 persons, chingchi for 6).

days of the year, multiple groups sit and perform in local languages including Sindhi and its dialects as well as Urdu language. The groups (at times several) sit at different places in the outer court of the shrine, orienting themselves to tomb and in gesture as they perform and sing the lyrics. They may sing with or without instruments and attract an audience around them, to watch and / or participate. These performances by groups from outside of Bhitshah are a tribute to the saint and gestures to his chamber indicate this connection. They are mystic and cultural.

It is common to witness people taking pictures of themselves in front of the shrine. Their proud pictures are evidence of the fact that it is an important part of the cultural identity of the Sindhis. Urban settings offer several forms of public recreation, but for rural settings, *mazars* especially that of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai acts as a place of cultural recreation[220].

The 'recreational' element of the shrine is controlled when found to break the status quo[221]. Until about a couple of years ago, commercial photography had ventured into the shrine, for example. The *Gaddi Nashin* asserted his authority and took action against this venture. 'The activity was consumerist and was disturbing the peace at the shrine' (Interview with the *Gaddi Nashin*, Bhitshah shrine). It was in conflict with the religious nature of the place. Through his influence, he was able to remove it from the shrine completely. Now people are allowed to take personal photos but there is no commercial photography.

With the aim to understand the civic and public use of the shrine, particularly for the younger generations, a focused group discussion was done with young college going adults from the town. The group consisted of about 10 people. All were not religiously oriented. Although they admitted to the use of the shrine court for non-religious and mundane purposes in their everyday lives, they asserted it to be primarily a religious place. Its recreation and civic function was looked at as a by-product.

As the central public space of town, the shrine is also used as a space of public expression including for human rights demonstrations and social campaigns for media coverage of such activities, among others. As a town center, acting also as a public square, it was particularly intriguing to observe the occurrence of such activities.

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[220] Interviews conducted with the visitors to shrine.
[221] Interview with the *Gaddi* Nashin, Jan 2015

'…rallies in response to social tragedies are often taken out at the mazar. Examples are the rallies that

have been taken out for the victims of terrorism in Peshawar attack a couple of days back. Rally was also taken out for the Hazara victims in Quetta. The rally starts and ends at the shrine usually. A rally was also taken out against Taliban – Rasool Bakhsh Soomro.' (Murid – local journalist and resident: Appendix 3xiii)

I witnessed the demonstration against the terrorist attack in Peshawar[222] that took place in the provincial capital of the northern region, about a week before my visit in December 2014. Candles were lit and the young and old stood in solidarity holding placards and with prayers for the victims of the attack in the public space of the shrine (See figure 5.20). The local press covered the demonstration.

Moreover, there is a Bhitshah Youth Organization (BYO) in town, that is oriented to target the youth's concerns, particularly pertaining to health, education and career development. Interviews with the members of the organization highlighted their use of the shrine as a place to start off their awareness campaigns. The youth get together at the shrine to start off their campaigns. A town cleaning week was undertaken in March 2014, for instance, to promote cleanliness of

Figure 5.19: The Shrine as a Recreation Space

Figure 5.20: The Shrine as a Political Space – Media Campaign for Human Rights
Source: Bhitshah Youth Organization (BYO)

ڀٽ شاهہ: صفائي هفتي جي مهم دوران شهر ۾ ڀارو قرايو پيووجي

Figure 5.21: The Shrine as a Political Space - Cleanliness drive for the city led by the Bhitshah Youth Organization
Source: Bhitshah Youth Organization (BYO)

public spaces. This began with the cleaning of the shrine's public space and the adjoining streets. Social campaigns are relatively recent occurrence at Bhitshah, a reaction to the

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[222] Peshawar is the capital of the northern province, Khyber PukhtunKhwa of Pakistan.

failure of the government administrative and planning mechanisms (generally in most parts of the country). They are an indicator of the generation of small scale civil movements[223].

The shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai is representative of the town of Bhitshah and its surrounding rural areas, similar to shrines in other small towns in particular.

5.3   Concluding Remarks

The chapter establishes the significance of the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai as a continuum of memory embedded in spatial forms and religio-cultural practices. It was structured to highlight the physical architectural characteristics of the shrine of Shah Latif and its functional evolution since 1740s, when the beginnings of the shrine heritage was formed, set up, organized, developed and later expanded.

To summarize, the shrine of Shah Latif is suggested to have acted as a *khanqah* of the saint during his life time. Its multi-functional nature is common of what is called 'Islamic architecture' denoting its categorization as one belonging to this culture, that although made larger regional and philosophical connection of faith, also allowed local individuality and creativity. The architecture of the shrine is an example of this. Others examples of similar but regionally distinct architecture exist in Anatolia, Persia, Egypt, Sindh and Hindustan. The shrine as a place of veneration, *dargah* is traditionally a sacred place, celebrated through individual and collective rituals and multiple activities performed at the shrine.

The shrine has played several functions over time. As a place for learning the poetry and music recitals, it can be said to continue to act, though in a limited capacity as a Sufi learning center. A *khanqah* during the life of the saint, today it is referred to as a *dargah*. Successive articulations are formed over time as distinct functions in this case, creating layers of meaning superimposed on one another. This chapter has aimed to separate these layers and read them as functions performed in a particular time and as varied interpretations of the place. The articulation of the relation between the diverse use of a building's spaces and the building itself is intriguingly explained by Edwards (2015: 71).

> '…buildings are solid, earthbound, and even measureable, but they are not necessarily fixed in function or character. Anyone who walks into a building activates it and specifies its purpose, albeit in ephemeral and protean ways. Monuments can work diversely for individual believers and for whole communities- as spaces, as symbols, and as agents of continuity or change (to name but a few roles they play).'

At the same time, the use of a building and its spaces defines it. The shrine is a place of commemoration and veneration. Places of memory undergo changes over time and the memory attached itself changes in its perception, understanding and interpretation as

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[223] The Masterplan for the town prepared and executed around 2004 – 2005, targeted infrastructure, particularly water and education. The later phases of the plan were not executed and are a cause of major discontent among the residents of town (Interview and field work 2014).

generations proceed. The flexibility of use at the shrine is one of its intrinsic qualities, that also one that allows accommodation of other public uses within occasionally. It thereby functions as a public place of the town with the town centric social activities taking place within its boundary. It offers recreation and relief for the people of the region and town, particularly on weekend evenings. Special Friday performances attract particular crowds. Its various rituals, performances and prayers structure the town's calendar of events. The town opens up its 'hidden' public spaces to offer diversity of cultural attractions as crowds pour in during the annual *Urs*. These also constitute the contemporary interests and use of the shrine along with the traditional religious ones. This mix of activities sets it apart as a good example of a place where religious and cultural activities overlap in a unique way. It is a good surviving example of a place representative of the traditional South Asian culture.

Collective memory undergoes changes over time. According to Nora, this creates a need to create events and organize additional activities to revive the process of commemoration. The extension of the *urs* into a three day affair by the government is such an event apart from other aspects such as publications on the interpretations and reactionary poems on Bhitai, events of poetic exchanges and Sufi evenings held that are a part of the process of commemoration and cultural recreation.

> "…there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, notarize bills because such activities no longer occur naturally." (Nora, 1989)

Research and dedication in these directions is nevertheless much required. A complete translation of Bhitai's *Risalo* in English and Urdu are however still to be done. The translation publications of the *Risalo* have produced only partial or the most significant / selected parts of the *Risalo*.

Over the past centuries / decades, the numbers of social groups involved in the different aspects of shrine's functions has increased. Their evolving roles and responsibilities within the larger context have worked mostly to support the protection / development of the living heritage. The acknowledgement of the shrine as primarily a religious living heritage plays an important role in this.

CONCLUSION

The Sufi Shrine as a Cultural Living Heritage

The Sufi shrine is a religious building type as well as a form of cultural expression. The difference between the secular mausoleum and the religious Sufi tomb is that the former is simply a memorial. The religious mausoleum on the other hand, is mostly attached to multiple functions besides containing the grave site itself. The shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, taken up as a case study in this thesis, is linked to a historical past, revived periodically by the attached community through the intangible heritage of the poetry, performances and rituals. The traditional community attached to the shrine is the most important element of the 'living heritage', playing a key role in keeping it alive with meanings and collective memories. What makes the shrine of Bhitshah particularly indigenous and a community heritage is its association with the community of fakirs that are generational custodians of the legacies and rituals, ordered and prescribed by the saint himself. The poetry of Bhitai is an intangible cultural heritage by itself. So significant is the contribution of his poetry for the Sindhi culture that it is held highly by all Sindhis, whether they prescribe to the shrine culture or not. It is an example of the contributions of Sufi saints, generally to the local culture. Other examples of Sufi saints in the region that have made significant contributions to the local culture include Hazrat Ali Hujwiri (shrine in Lahore, through his Persian theological treatise called Kashf-al-Mahjub), and Baba Bulleh Shah (Punjabi poet and Sufi, shrine in Kasur). The form of poetry, language, vocabulary and content are contributions to regional literature and its development.

The multiple functions taking place at the shrine are attached to multiple networks of the traditional socio-cultural set up in town, examples of which include the old *autaqs* of the fakirs, the *imambargahs* as well as the old neighbourhoods [defined by the social groups inhabiting them] sitting in close proximity of shrine. The physical site of the Sufi shrine is tied through morphology and networks, additionally through regular commerce and a scheduled calendar of rituals and events to its settlement context. These physical features of the context play an integral role in sustaining the living nature of the heritage.

Sufi shrines in general are remnants of different time periods, of the time period of the saint as well as the time period that influenced and inspired him. The built structures are a manifestation of the Sufi philosophy in form and craft. The historical context plays a role in the

construction and production of place, making it a part of the 'sacred topographies' of the region. It inscribes multiple identities and histories. The written learned culture is owned by specific social groups. While it comes from / originated within a specific time period in the past, there have been later reinterpretations too. It is representative of real and imaginary communities (Anderson). The real community is constituted by the indigenous community supporting the heritage while the 'national' identities ascribed are imagined, whose boundaries of ownership and administration are rigid, fixed and limited in perception. The government department of Auqaf directly translates this association. The collective memory of communities in the form of traditional practices and rituals at place restore the original meaning attached. Reinterpreted and invented rituals and traditions connect the place to the present social order/ political paradigm. The extension of the urs celebrations of prominent saints to three day of festive cultural celebrations in Sindh is an example of this. The Department of Culture is yet another modern day institution that vows to promote appreciation of the cultural heritage within its defined scope. Today the indigenous community and the modern national institutions achieve preservation of the shrine heritage (specific to Bhitai) playing specific roles.

Shrines of Sufi saints 'occupied a crucial place' in 'folk' or 'popular' religion. Despite their alignments with the universal Islamic principles in concept and history at some level, they carry distinct local cultural traits, belonging to a particular geographical region and society. At present, it is approached mostly as a popular culture. Sufi shrines in Sindh particularly are popular given common infrastructure lapses or their complete lack of, law and order as well as human rights issues in towns, urban and rural settlements.

The Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai is a place, situated within its specific geographical location / locality, it is attached to a strong sense of cultural rootedness. As a place, it structures a sense of order in the physical and morphological context as well as within the traditional society and culture. For instance, the role of the dargah as the main imambargah in Bhitshah during the Hijri month of Muharram amplifies its central role in town as the biggest public sacred space. It is a point of beginning and culmination of many activities in town varying from religious processions to civic demonstrations and awareness campaigns. The 'new' role of the *mazar* as exemplified by the youth of the town is an excellent way of connecting the historical space to current issues.

Continuation of public functions and service related activities at the shrine is a major element in maintaining the connectivity of the place to the town. Its old role as a *khanqah* and today as a *dargah* have continued to carry through the provision of public services in multiple forms. Besides the morphological connection and links to socio-cultural networks, the role of the *dargah* in this measure carries an important civic dimension. These public service functions include *sabeel* (water provision), public washrooms, accommodation for the poor and distressed and *langar*. These make the place receptive to the local people visiting. While the urban heritage of the shrine needs to be preserved in its physicality, these functions and their

spaces of provision and management require upgradation to improve experience and recognize the added value.

This thesis has aimed to show the contextual interrelations of the case site of a particular Sufi shrine situated within a geographical location, as an integral part of its existence and history. The physical form, additions and expansion of the shrine, the multi-functional nature of its courts are remnants of its historical context.

The establishment of the Sufi shrine as a *waqf*, its attachment to a prescribed system (through the waqf deed) for its maintenance (through *mutawallis*) and the links with the family, the *sajjada nashin* acting as the spiritual heir of the saint and the continued relation of the family and linked community of fakirs and followers to the place itself, have been important factors for the persistence of the traditional culture of shrine. It is what has allowed the shrine to remain historically alive in some form.

The Sufi shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai is a living religious and cultural heritage. The thesis clearly establishes this statement through multiple aspects besides historical context, summed up in the following text. While the above facts may be applicable to the history of many shrines in the region and the reasons for their cultural continuity, the following pointers apply specifically to the case of the shrine of Bhitai and make up the multiple reasons for its continued validation.

The Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, set up within the small town of Bhitshah is able to sustain harmoniously, two different scales of commemoration.

1. As a community heritage, within the framework of collective memory (Halbwachs, 1980) and in close proximity of the community of age-old, generational fakirs and residents who revere Bhitai deeply and participate with dedication in its rituals and events.

2. As a regional heritage, the shrine commemorates a regional saint and poet whose contribution to the regional literature are acknowledged and appreciated. The development and expansion of the town of Bhitshah, envisioned as a 'Culture City' in the 1950s was due to this recognition. The shrine is therefore an important historical landmark for the region.

The community heritage is kept alive through the regular performance of rituals and participation of the fakirs. The traditional social set up is inevitably affected by the new social orders, is diligently followed nevertheless and the hierarchies respected. Faith in the religion and the Sufi philosophy tie the fakirs to the place and the 'tariqa' or Sufi way of practice (including manner of *zikr, sama'a* among them) adopted for remembrance of Allah and love for His creation.

At the provincial level, the government departments of *Auqaf* and Culture recognize and support the preservation (and maintenance) of the place and commemoration of the cultural

figure through publications and the enthusiastic celebration of his death anniversary in town as a major cultural event of the region.

The mutual respect and understanding between the multiple groups that carry out commemoration is a major factor that has contributed to the harmonious survival of the 'living heritage' of the shrine. While this is major potential for the case site, it is also the biggest challenge to maintain balance and peace in relationships between the social groups.

The attachment of the indigenous community of fakirs to the shrine is perhaps the major factor that carries forward the collective memory in form and spirit. This factor is however threatened by neo-liberal economic paradigm, possible land development, real estate ventures and landlords [including the *Gaddi Nashin*].

Edward Said (2000) suggests that increasing interest in memory studies reflects larger, societal changes.

Essentially, organized traditionally as a *waqf*, the preservation of the shrine is oriented to the continuation of rituals. This continuation in form and spirit can be reassured only through a preservation of the traditional social set up. The decreasing value of religious, familial and dynastic bonds as Hoelscher and Alderman (2004) suggest, is perhaps the most important concern in the current age of fast change. Research studies like this one that center around memory studies, are reflective of larger, societal changes and are a response to this, suggests Edward Said (2000).

> "…study and concern with memory of a specifically desirable and recoverable past is a specially freighted late 20th century phenomenon that has arisen at a time of bewildering change, of unimaginably large and diffuse mass societies, competing nationalisms, and most important perhaps, the decreasing efficacy of religious, familial and dynastic bonds." (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004)

The government department of *Auqaf* supports the indigenous community and keeps its interference to a minimum in the traditional rituals and other affairs. The *Auqaf* department is not oriented to physical 'conservation' as dictated by the heritage institutions. The primary approach to physical conservation is questionable in the first place. The orientation to popular development of shrines by its patrons, politicians, followers and indigenous craftspeople attaches the particular building type with mixed ownership. Its multi-faceted and public nature may or may not be controlled ideally through the modern heritage institution. Affected by market forces, trends of construction practices, indigenous building crafts are generally declining in quality and are also a cultural heritage.[224] Recognizing opportunities within the traditional indigenous set ups can be a way of dealing with the loopholes of what is not

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[224] The Aga Khan Awards for Architecture have the phenomenal aim to promote such indigenous craftsmanship (eg. *kashi kari*, stone craftsmanship) among other things within the Muslim context. Other organizations such as the Endowment Fund Trust and the Heritage Foundation in the Sindh region also work to support them as private foundations and consist of concerned professionals and citizens, however in the larger conservation scenario, these seem to also be isolated attempts driven mostly by the private sector.

conserved and lost in the process of multi-leveled management and maintenance. For instance, the tradition of recognizing indigenous craftspeople, master masons and patrons within the building details of ornamentation ought to be respected when expanding and renovating (Refer to fig 5.14). These signatures offer physical evidence of the development of the place in line with its popular practice of additions by multiple patrons and followers. This 'popular practice' is also one that maintains personal associations and reverence of the people to the physical place itself and can be incorporated within the conservation framework.

The purpose of this dissertation is however, not to show how this can be done, but simply to lay out the various elements that contribute to the formation and existing state of the living heritage of the Sufi shrine. The next step then lies in using these to highlight the opportunities and challenges within the existing traditional set ups that can be used or dealt with for better conservation that works rather than being a third institution that denounces or rejects what is present and acts as a top down institution, requiring external expertise. Such top down institutions (belonging to the government or private sector) have in the past been known to be distant from existing realities, and may threaten the very crux – the indigenous community. The connection of the fakir community to global networks, example international Sufi music associations, recognition of the authenticity and cultural value of their music: form, medium and compositions in the social media are way forward for the fakirs themselves to be recognized and valued at large and therefore be less vulnerable to forces for instance the market forces[225].

Within the South Asian context, 'heritage' has a broad scope. Existing continuation and strong ties to traditional practices tied to particular geographical location and culture are revealing of 'living heritage'. Global influences, western ideas of systematization and modernity and fast paced urbanization are realities in the context that may bring about a complete loss of indigenous cultural heritage. The research most importantly, highlights the traditional social structures and sustenance. The relevant challenges and opportunities thereby need to be recognized and dealt with for positive cultural interaction.

Contribution to Knowledge

This thesis makes a contribution to the following academic field of knowledge.

1) The study of Sufi shrines

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[225] The law suit filed the old nominee family of Tamar Fakir and the Gaddi Nashin is a prime example of their vulnerability. While the family of Ali Dinu fakir has been responsible for the music heritage as well as the maintenance and management of the old residence of Bhitai, currently used as Bari Autaq, the law suit has been filed due to the Gaddi Nashin's claim to ownership of this property. The conflict that denounces the traditional ownership of the place by Ali Dinu fakir and his family has eventually led to the removal of Ali Dinu fakir (and his family) from their designation at the shrine as custodians by the Gaddi Nashin himself. As the saint's representative, he has exercised his authority and nominated another fakir for the music heritage and this has resulted in pronouncing the vulnerability of other generational fakirs as custodians of the shrine heritage. [Newspaper articles and discussions with Zulqarnain Shah.]

Sufi shrines have been studied mostly under theological and anthropological studies, as mentioned in 'Introduction' to thesis. The physical architecture of tombs is also generally documented well in literature through the different parts of the world. The studies on Sufi shrines as places of historic and cultural importance reporting 'history' and 'culture' have however been few. This research is a contribution particularly in this. The analysis of its functional interrelations is a significant contribution to the field of 'architecture' and can contribute to better architectural expansion design and reconstruction processes of shrines in the local context. Maps are a particularly significant contribution to this field of knowledge.

2) Heritage studies

The field of heritage studies takes up heritage within a broader academic context. It is relatively recent. This research presents the multiple layers of relations that constitute a living heritage in its entirety. The study is a contribution to this discipline presenting a case from Sindh and South Asia. The mixed methodology used for research and analysis aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the multiple ingredients of the site and is a contribution to the multidisciplinary study.

Spatial and social data is mapped and analyzed in a manner that is a contribution of this thesis to the field of heritage studies. It proves the hypothetical statement of (Bouchenaki, 2003b) true about the intangible component forming the larger framework within which the heritage is situated.

3) Planning for historic contexts

The contextual analysis of the study in identifying the relation of heritage site to its context is an analytical contribution to this field. Physical built environments have a direct relation to the social groups that inhabit them. Alterations and renewals, minor changes and complete new planning have major impacts on the context of historic sites (Altman and Low, 2012; Naeem, 2011, 2004; Steinberg, 1996). This research study is another reference addition to many other reference case studies to the field.

In the study and comparison of urban and rural contexts to historical shrines, the number of pressure forces acting on a heritage site can only be certain beyond which the contextual forces overtake and overwhelm the site, robbing it off its various constituent components. This is a statement that can be taken up for further research. A quantitative study can particularly verify and quantify the forces.

GLOSSARY

alam	flag, mostly the term denotes the flag of Karbala, referring to the tragic war between the family of prophet Muhammad and Muslim army of the Umayyad Empire
Auqaf	plural of *waqf*
autaq	place associated with the men, used for sitting and meeting men not from their family. In Bhitshah, *autaq* is used to denote places for guests to stay, that is for the people who do not belong to the town.
bait	poetry verse
chaddar	cloth sheet
dargah	lodge or convent
dhamaal	Sufi dance form
fakir	lit. poor; in mystic terminology, a person lives for God alone; in popular terms, a beggar or a poor man
Gaddi Nashin	title bearer of the saint, of the lineage of his extended family
Infaq	giving away in charity
Isar	sacrifice for others
kalaam	sayings or poetic words
kashi tiles	hand craft of making tiles with paint finish and use geometric and floral patterns, with a characteristic blue color in particular. The craft is a cultural heritage of the region of the Indus Valley, found now in Sindh and lower Punjab, including Hala, Nasarpur and Multan.
khanqah	an institution established by the saint, offering living accommodation and Sufi training
langar	food distributed as charity or sharing
machh	shallow pit for fire
madrassa	school for higher learning, today referred to schools of Islamic studies
masjid	any Muslim place of worship where the prayer is performed in a group
masnawi	compilation of Sufi poetry
mela	local festival
munsaf	one who makes fair judgement in a trial
murid	Follower of a spiritual leader
mutawalli	the trustee appointed to a *waqf* property by the *waqif*
naqqara	beating of drums to announce the arrival of king for instance
nazrana	gift offered to saint or shrine
panchayat	group of elders in a tribal community with the authority to decide on disputes
Pir	Spiritual leader

qibla	direction of prayer for a Muslim
raag	classical music
sabeel	water stall, giving free drinking water
sama'a	distinctive performance at major shrines of saints, including music and / or dance
Sayids	honorific title for descendants of prophet Muhammad
sajjada nashin	honorific title for direct descendant of a saint
sur	musical mode
tabarruk	food offering considered as 'blessed'
tambura	old stringed musical instrument belonging to Sindh in particular. Shah Latif is said to have invented or improvised his version of *tambura*
tariqa	fully developed hierarchical orders
tasawwuf	being connected with Divinity through abstinence of worldly selfish pleasures, a simplistic life and living for the love of God
wahdat-ul wajud	lit. means unity of God. It is a belief in monotheistic God, with a strong emphasis on the unity of religions that believe in one God.
wai	a longer poem with one main line which is repeated in singing after every line of the poem
waqf	pious endowment for the upkeep of mosque, hospital or the like
zikr	literally, repetition, remembrance – a term commonly used for Sufi meditative exercises

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APPENDICES

Contents

1. LISTING VARIABLES OF TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

The table summarizes the different variables identified as the basic elements of tangible and intangible heritage, along with the values that can be recorded. The table is a methodological framework used to gather data. It was used for cross referencing and analysis was carried out later.

Main Parameters	Variables	Values	Information sources
Tangible heritage	Shrine, other supporting physical structures in the vicinity that can be categorized as historically important	Physical documentation of heritage Physical evolution Significances	Satellite imagery Mapping on site Maps from Auqaf Department Mapping using written sources Physical information on site Literature review
Intangible Heritage	Music, poetry	Significance of this Sufi literature in international Sufi literature Popularity dimensions: repetitions in other parts of Sindh; folk stories – their popularity and physical markers; political influences outside town;	Literature review Numbers of publications
	Customs	Significance highlighted Evolution in customs	Key informant interviews Literature available
	Mela on urs	Current scale and content of mela Role of mela in the economy Significance for the context Old ways – evolution	Observation and mapping Estimating numbers of people and outreach Literature
	Social groups: Family of Bhitai Musicians Fakirs and their typologies Visitors and their types Shopkeepers Auqaf Department	Current role play at shrine Level of association with shrine and in keeping heritage alive Interpretations of heritage Evolution in role play – Old New additions	Mapping activities in relation to spaces in shrine Customs performed by each, Personal interaction and interview of each typology – Profiling
Settlement Development	Planned interventions Political, power dynamics, regime paradigms affecting development Context settlement evolution in relation to shrine	Cultural development Infrastructure development Social structures – NGOs, welfare organizations, education development, government organizations	Literature Review Satellite image and mapping Old plans – Sindh Archives, Culture Dept

2. **DATA GATHERED**

A	PHOTOGRAPHY	METHOD SPECIFICATIONS	MAIN FINDINGS
	Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai	Physical structures, important elements Use of space People group types and activities, rituals	
	Bhitshah	Public spaces Spaces connecting to shrine	
B	**INTERVIEWS**	Semi structured, open ended	
I	**AT SHRINE**		
	Visitors		
1	**Fakir:** Male, 55 yrs	Lives at shrine since 40 yrs	Total 13 interviews of visitors: Typologies of visitors at shrine identified: Just passing through Recreation (5) Visiting for prayer Routine daily / weekly visit (3) Staying for short periods for prayer Fakir typologies: - Periodic stays - Since more than one year, upto 40-50 yrs
2	Female, 38 yrs, w/ child	Visiting, child is sick	
3	Male, 43 yrs, Bhitshah resident	Just Passing through	
4	Male, 25 yrs, resident	Routine daily visit	
5	Male, 35 yrs	Visiting from nearby village	
6	Male, 25 yrs	Visiting for recreation from neighbouring town	
7	**Fakir**: Male, 50 yrs	Living at shrine periodically for long periods	
8	Male, 37 yrs	Visiting for recreation, listening to music	
9	Female, 53 yrs	Staying since 20 days, praying for solution to her problem	
10	Female, 22 yrs	Visiting for recreation with friends from nearby town	
11	Male, 73 yrs, Bhitshah resident	Routine daily visit	
12	Male, 36 yrs, with family, Bhitshah residents	Routine weekly visit to attend the musical recital	
13	Female, 25 yrs	For recreation, from Hyderabad	
	Workers		
14	**Fakir**: Male, 42 yrs	Living at shrine, independently doing what he feels is his duty, making no income as such	Fakir typology
15	Male, 27 yrs	Independent mobile salesperson (sales item: flowers) (informal economy)	
16	Male, 38 yrs	Working for Auqaf Department – (Government department responsible for shrine management)	
17	Male, 32 yrs	Working at Shah Latif Foundation Complaint Center (organized by Gaddi Nashin of Bhitai)	
18	Male, 35 yrs, Asst. Manager, Auqaf Department		
19	Male, 30 yrs, shoekeeper	Private worker on contract with Auqaf Department	
20	Gaddi Nashin of Bhitai	Bearer of title of legend custodian of Bhitai (from the family)	
	Musicians		

21	2 young male performers about 24 yrs old	Father and grandfathers performed at shrine too	
22	60 yrs old senior male performer	Father also played at the shrine of grandfather of Bhitai	
23	26 yr old male performer	Learned out of self interest, family not into performing at shrine	
24	Fakir: Mungnhar Fakir – playing Naqqara/ Drummer	Legend custodian	Fakir typology
25	Tamar Fakir descendant – music and poetry custodian	Legend custodian	Fakir typology
II	**BHITSHAH**		
	Residents of Bhitshah		
1	Female, 45 yrs, lives on a 350 sq. yd plot with 2 other related families, sharing open space	Pir Mohalla – Visited house	
2	Female, 30 yrs, lives on a 60 sq.yd plot with one other family, total 17 people	Pir Mohalla – Visited house – poor and cramped for space	
3	Male, 46 yrs, living on 200 sq.yd plot, 3 families, arrived as African slaves centuries ago	Pir Mohalla- visited house	
	Citizens in different fields		
4	Journalist		
5	NGO Worker		
6	Government HighSchool Teacher		
7	Principal of private school		
8	Director, Research Cell, Bhithshah Cultural Center		
9	Young graduate, running Youth Program		
	Educated youth		
10 19	10 structured interviews aimed to understand the aspirations of the youth for themselves and for their town and the role of the mazar as they see it in the city		
	Skilled Craftspersons		
20	**Ajrak** – Local textile dyeing and printing workshops and shop	Understanding the process, the facilities at hand, market,	
21	**Jandi** – localized woodcrafts person @ workshop		
III	**KARACHI**		
1	Director General, Culture Department Sindh	Aimed at understanding the role of the Culture Department in promoting the cultural heritage of the shrine	
2	Engineer for Bhitshah Beautification Plan 2008	Explained the process of research and execution of the part of the plan that he was responsible for.	

3.   Interviews: Shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, Bhitshah

i. **Young Raagi Fakirs:** Munwar Fakir and Kami Fakir, 2 young musicians of about 20 – 22 years of age.

18 Dec 2014 at the Shrine

Since how long have you been playing this music?

It has been four years.

Who taught you?

Our fathers and grandfathers also used to play the tamboora and sing at the shrine.

Do you live here at the shrine?

We live in a village closeby called Goth Ker Fakir Lanjwan. It is named after my grandfather, said one of them.

Do you teach this others as well?

We are not yet so good, we have only been learning for four years and there are still things we need to perfect. There are over 30 raags in the music, each with their own poetry. First we are made to learn and understand the poetry and then how to sing each word, not to loose its mood and meaning.

But yes we teach to younger ones who are interested in the village.

How long are your music performance sessions at the shrine?

We usually get to sit in the evening session that starts at 9 pm and lasts until 6 am. We sing 18 raags through the night. The last one we sing in the morning is Marui. (that sounded like something special)

The next shift then starts at 9 am in the morning until 1 pm. The third shift is held between 4 pm to 6 pm. The breaks in the middle are for prayers and food. For each session, different fakirs sing.

A total of 17 people play in one day, in different shifts altogether. There are about 80 fakirs in Bhit Shah who are musicians. The seven days of the week are distributed among the fakirs. So most don't sing on two days together.

How do you make a living? Do you get paid for playing at the shrine?

We are farmers. We get Rs. 15000/ (120 Euros) annually per person for playing at the shrine.

Annually? ! (I was taken aback)

Yes, annually, it is very little. We used to get Rs. 30000/ (240 Euros) during the previous government (Pakistan Peoples Party- PPP government). This government has halved it.

We are supposed to be fakirs, and learn to live with little. (they said on a sad note)

What is it that Shah Latif wanted to convey to people, his message?

Its a message of peace and love. It's a message in a language that we can relate to.

What is the future of this work?

Last week we were in Karachi playing at an annual festival, a celebration of the death anniversary of Bhitai at a hotel. People who are literate and can read, they understand and appreciate the music and poetry including foreigners. … We have also been invited to perform at whats the name, Coke Studio (very proudly) on TV. The media is making people aware.

That's really great! Do you get paid well for these kinds of works?

Its not a lot and its one event in a year but there is greater appreciation.

Thankyou for your time. It was nice talking to you.

ii. **Senior Raagi Fakir: Muhammad Khan Fakir**

(Zulqarnain Shah also accompanied us)
28 Jan 2015, at the Shrine langar kitchen courtyard

[While we waited for the musician to arrive, I asked Zulqarnain about some of his work and general information for a better understanding of the social set up at Bhitshah.]

Who is a fakir? What is the definition of a fakir?

Real fakirs are God's men. They are God's special beloved men, people who work for the love of God, also called Sufi. Although 'fakir' terms is also used in cities for beggars and very poor people, but in Bhitshah, as possibly in other towns of saints, fakirs are 'Allahwale' (people who sing the praise of God)

Is it important for a fakir to be poor?

No, there are fakirs who have wealth but they work for the love of God – They get fakiri in inheritance. Fakirs characteristically never ask for anything. Calling someone a fakir was originally meant to be honourable and prestigious for being a special person. Fakirs are also those who sing in the praise of God at shrines.

How about Allan Fakir (a popular folk singer)? Is he a fakir too?

That s a different category, he makes money from his music, a fakir does not make money like this. That is part of his name, I think.

So a fakir is one who does not work to make money?

Yes that would be right.

Are fakirs supposed to wear a particular type of clothing?

Fakirs usually wear simple plain clothing, many times black in colour, sometimes torn. Fakiri is now a business. People wear torn clothing on purpose and beg on the streets. They are fake fakirs. ….. (thoughtfully, in a bit) there is a difference between fakir and miskeen. A *miskeen* is one who begs, is needy; a fakir is one who does not beg and believes in God for his provision.

Here in Bhitshah, there is a big fakir. He is the one who takes care of the *Bari Autaq*. He is from the family of the wife of Shah Abdul Latif. Because they gave their daughter to Shah Latif, hence they are referred to as big fakirs. They are land lords. When customary activities take place at the shrine, he comes here dressed in plain black clothes as a fakir. He is also generous by nature.

So if a fakir is wealthy, is he bound to spend of his wealth for helping the poor?

No he doesn't have to, some do, some don't. Some are generous.

[The musician fakir entered the room and said salaam.]

Zulqarnain (Z) introduced the fakir and went on: He has been around the world – to many countries. Please tell.

F (Fakir): Yes, France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Austria, Spain, NewYork, Washington, Turkey

Did Akhund Sahb arrange these visits for you?

F: Yes. Yes with Akhund Sahb.

Please allow me to introduce myself. (I told him about the intention of my interview) and went on to ask him.) Please tell me something about yourself, since when have you been in Bhitshah?

F: I came from Badin district in 1971 to learn music, the tamboora and the kalaam of Shah. There was a big fakir who was well known for the music. So I came here to learn from him.

Were you married then?

F: No, I married later. I was about 20 years old when I came here.

Did your father sing as well?

F: Yes my father used to sing at Shah Karim's mazar. Shah Karim was the great grandfather of Shah Abdul Latif.

Did you go to formal school?

F: It was not a school as such, my teacher was my institution. If you mean otherwise, I have only studied upto grade 2.

Do your children also learn music?

F: No, I ve decided to get them proper education and none of them have come this way. There is not much in this and times are different now. My eldest son is a graduate now.

So it is not an art which is a family tradition?

F: Well, my father used to sing as well, that's where I became interested.

Did your father also sing the same kalaam of Shah Latif?

F: Its similar, some of it is the same, but its Shah Karim s poetry. They also play the tamboora there. These two mazars are the only mazars where this kind of classical music is performed.

The music played at the shrines includes only the tamboora and no other instrument. In Shah Sahb's Risalo in the music, there are 38 surs (notes / chords). Of these 21 surs come from the Indian classical music. At Shah Sahb's time, two Indian classical musicians came here from Delhi and played a role in organizing the surs and raags. Their names were Emchan and Chanchal. The rest of the surs are Sindhi classical.

Do you have a music book / course book from which you learn?

F: No, there is no course book (he said with a smile). There is only one instrument (suggesting the probable the reason for this). We follow as the instructor suggests.

Z elaborated: Rano, Marui are examples of Sindhi classical raags. While Asa, Kedar, Kalyaan, Sohini, Kambhaat are all Indian classical raags.

[F and Z sing in turn samples of some of the Sohini (Sindhi raag) and Bhopali (Indian raag), later elaborating on the meaning of the poetry sung and the folk tale behind it.]

F: Sohini crosses the river usually to meet her lover Mehar on the other side. In the winter, the river bed is dry so this is easy, but in summer, this becomes difficult. She plans to cross with her *garha* (clay pot for water). The empty clay pot acts as a float in water and helps in the crossing of river. But people who do not want Sohni and Mehar to meet change the clay pot with an unburnt one. This breaks in the water and leads to the death of Sohni and she meets her Ultimate Creator. Her struggle to meet her loved one is actually the struggle to meet the ultimate Beloved. So Shah Abdul Latif's stories turn love stories into search for the ultimate love of the Creator.

I expressed my admiration and appreciation of the singing and the meaning and interpretations of the poetry and asked Muhammad Khan Fakir.

Do you sing at the mazar as well apart from singing at other places in the world?

F: Yes, I sing on Fridays after the afternoon prayer and on Sundays as well.

Z: The best of the musicians sing on Fridays. (implying that F is very good)

So what was the process of learning that your instructor adopted for you? Did you have to memorize all the kalaam of Shah Latif?

F: Yes, but we learnt one line at a time. My instructor would give us one line to learn and play with the chords. We would practice this and he would correct us every so often explaining the meaning and the mood of the poetry and music. Once we got this correct, he would then tell us the second phrase along with its surs (tones).

[Zulqarnain took his leave as he had some urgent domestic engagement. Thanking him for his help, the musician and I continued with our interview.]

How many musician fakirs are there in Bhitshah?

F: about 100-150 fakirs sing at the shrine.

[As Z left, F seemed more comfortable and seemed to want to share more. He went on]

In 1960, the government decided to pay us, musician fakirs of Bhitshah. It started off with Rs. 1000/ per person, per month, making it Rs. 12000/ annually. This payment has increased over the years to become Rs. 30000/ per year. In 1960, there were 60 fakirs. In 1996, during the time of Benazir Bhutto, she got houses built for us. We have a colony. (he identified the location for this colony in Bhitshah)

We are fakirs. We are not like commercial musicians, we don't perform at weddings, or media, television. Commercial singers make money by performing at public gatherings. We are fakirs of the shrine, we don't do this. Sometimes when people are interested to listen to us, they call us, sometimes Shikarpur, Shahdadpur etc. They pay us for the transportation and whatever else they wish. But this is usually not much. Between four or five people we distribute what we receive, but this is not enough to call it a livelihood.

The Governor of Sindh, Qaim Ali Shah was here in December on the occasion of the urs and publicly announced giving away Rs. 700,000/ for the various performers on the occasion. But there has been no distribution of money after.

Was that only for the musicians at Bhitshah?

Oh no, that actually included everyone all performing artists of Bhitshah and other parts of Sindh.

When you were learning, where were your classes held?

Here at the shrine. My instructor was a dervish, he was always at the shrine. We knew where to find him. In the morning, he taught us something, that we practiced for one hour or two. The *kalaak* or hour being the time unit for which we practiced. Then we stayed at the shrine and watched other musicians play. In the evening, we would learn some more from our instructor.

Do you still go abroad? Is it a regular thing?

F: Last we went to perform on 12th May to Konya, Turkey on the occasion of Rumi's birth anniversary. Other Sufi performers were also there.

So when you perform internationally, do you get paid for that?

F: Yes ofcourse, when we perform, we are paid there at the place. For instance, in our Europe performances, we were paid 500 Euros each, then Rs. 71,000/ per person at that time. So it was good.

You said, that time and this time is different, so what has changed for a fakir?

F: People were more loving, respecting. Poverty for a fakir is always there but the attitude of other people towards them has changed. People have become more wealthy. The wealthy have become wealthier but the poor are as poor as before. People understood a fakir would not ask for anything, so they would ask how you were doing, if you have something to eat and took care of you in small ways. This attitude is no longer there, people don't give you that respect anymore. We just want people to respect us.

If you want to earn money out of this art skill, you can, right?

F: yes

But you don't want to, right?

F: We are fakirs, we are poor people but it is not our main objective.

If you are going around internationally and tell people you teach this cultural music at Bhitshah, people will come to you to learn from near and far.

F: Well, if somebody comes to learn, they will stay somewhere and ask us to come and teach them, we will go there where they're staying and teach them.

You have a music school here, why cant you teach there?

F: Oh that s nothing. That s fake, it does nt mean anything. I was giving formal classes at Sindh university three to four times a week in the evenings. I was only paid Rs. 5000/ per month. That s not much considering the transportation costs. I did that for two to three years, then left it. Then rejoined and did for a few years and left again.

You must have been working part time. Part time costs in government institutions are like that.

[For him, all explanations seem to end with, 'we are fakirs', as if that explained everything.]

Who tells you how and when to sing at the mazar? How is this system organized here?

F: We have an elder fakir, from the family of Tamar Fakir. We follow his instructions when it comes to music performances at the shrine or anything else. He is also like a Gaddi nashin.

How many children do you have?

F: I have three sons and five daughters. My eldest son is doing a Bachelors in Arts. After his studies, he drives a chingchi and makes some small amount of money that makes for our day to day living.

Is it usual for the children of musician fakirs to learn the art?

F: It depends on who inherently has the talent for music and who doesn't. There are those who start off and don't finish, there are those who just don't have the talent, and then there are those who are interested, motivated and talented. Yes, but generally the children of the fakirs do learn it.

What about your children?

My children are still young. I have never tried to persuade them to learn. If the boys wish to opt for it, they can do it. My eldest son is very busy as I told you. Times have changed, the love and respect that fakirs once had, is not there anymore. The world is too materialistic and it is hard for fakirs.

If you don't mind me asking, how much are you able to make by singing at the mazar say in a month?

F: Yes ofcourse, I don t mind it. Sometimes we are able to collect Rs. 3000/ to Rs. 4000/ in one sitting. Between 4 to 6 of us, it comes down to about Rs. 400/, sometimes Rs. 600/ and rarely about Rs. 800/. That s weekly.

That comes to not even Rs. 5000/ monthly. That's very little. It means other people in your house also need to work.

F: My wife makes ralli. (handwoven appliquéd cloth- can be made into suits to wear or bed sheets or quilt covers). She works on ralli in her spare time. It takes her about a month to make a double bed quilt cover. She then goes around showing it to people she thinks will be interested to buy this. She gets about Rs. 1000/ for each piece tailoring cost, material is charged for separately. She is very good at this, very neat and her work is good and appreciated, so sometimes people give her orders too.

Rs. 1000/ is quite less for a months work (I say, unable to really believe the man) It is work intensive.

F: Well that s how it is. We are poor. In the market it is sold for Rs. 7000 – 8000.

F: The raag of Shah Sahb has to be sung from the inside, it comes from the lungs and it affects the lungs and the kidneys. The fakirs who sing this their lives get shortened. They live max upto 65 years.

I find that a little hard to believe, but you must know better. [I sensed his complains were directed at perhaps pushing me into sympathy so I would give him some money. It was at this point I decided to finish the interview.]

Thankyou so much for your time, Khan Muhammad Fakir.

iii. **Senior Raagi Custodian Fakir: Ali Dinu Fakir, Gaddi Nashin of Tamar Fakir**
08/02/15

[We visited him at his farmland where he is getting a bungalow cum guest house (Autaq) constructed.

The raag is their heritage – transferred over generations, their generations are responsible to pass it on. Shah Abdul Latif passed on the various aspects of the tradition to different fakirs to make it their responsibility to nurture and pass on through their generations.

Ali Dinu Fakir recognized me from the shrine. He saw me while he was playing at the shrine on Thursday/ Friday night.]

Do you teach at the music school at Bhitshah Cultural Center?

A: No, Juman Shah and another fakir teach raag and table at the music school. The raag is the heritage / responsibility of my family.

What does it mean to say that this is your heritage (virsa) (personal asset)?

A: It only means it has to carry through our generations. It is our responsibility to make sure it carries through our family lineage and is safeguarded.

[It was interesting to note that while the music (raag) was referred to as the personal asset of the family of Tamar Fakir to carry forward into their subsequent generations, but it was not part of their agenda to transfer (teach) it to those outside their family.]

A: Our family only started three generations ago. Before that, it was passed on to fakirs who did not marry and subsequently had no family as such, but appointed their nearest and role fulfilling fakirs with the responsibility. They were generally all referred to as Tamar Fakirs.

Virsa [using the local word for inheritance, he explained] Latif Saeen distributed the various parts of this cultural heritage to different fakirs. There are Gaddi Nashins for the different aspects, the music, the family of Bhitai, the drummer / naqqara…

Yakoob Shaheed was my grandfather. We are originally from Kutch Bujh, Latif Saeen had a dargah in Boen.

Earlier all fakirs used to follow us, they would do as we said. We were appointed also as 'Munsaf' – ones ensuring justice. Those who are from the family of Bhitai were not appointed as 'Munsaf' but we were.

Zulqarnain (Z): When Shah Sahb got married, he had no children. He used to write poetry but did not sing, not play the tamboora. Other fakirs who came by from Sindh, Rajasthan, Kutch Bujh used to play and sing. They would also then sing the poetry of Shah Sahb. Shah Sahb grouped these fakirs, as you may say.

He told these fakirs that I handover my poetry to you to sing, to disseminate, to pass on to generations. The eldest, more responsible among them. Tamar Fakir was given the responsibility to pass on this heritage to younger generations, be it of his own family or of other, but to people that he could trust. So then Tamar Fakir took care of this heritage, sung it and passed it on.

Latif Saeen had no children too. His Gaddi was nevertheless taken forth down his brother's lineage. There are many people who believe Tamar Fakir were the appointed care takers of the message of Latif Saeen and became their followers. Many came to these fakirs for their prayers, hoping to find closer connections to Allah and prayers fulfilled.

There are many people who come to the shrine on Friday nights (night between Thursday and Friday) to listen to Tamar Fakir's performance, to achieve spiritual peace.

[At this point, a man came in with a young boy of about 7-8 years and told the fakir that his son was unable to sleep well last night due to some ailment and asked him to pray for him. The fakir asked the child to come closer and stand still. He held his hand to silently recite a prayer and lightly blew on him, taking 2-3 minutes to do this. Fakir told the man that God willing his son will be fine and asked him to take medicines on time as prescribed by the doctor. The man left with his son, thanking fakir.]

Who is a 'Munsaf'? Can you explain what that means?

[Since Tamar Fakir spoke Sindhi as his main language and was having trouble with Urdu, Zulqarnain would help in elaborating on some of the things he spoke about that I wanted to know more about.]

Z: Munsaf is a judge, one who resolves matters for other people having issues, conflicts, disputes. Sufis have always been peaceful people, people wanting peace. Hence, many were refered to as 'Munsaf' locally in villages. So they would make judgements so people would not fight among themselves, maintain peace. Hence, there were two responsibilities that they Tamar Fakirs undertook; One that of the raags and the other of establishing peace among people.

Tamar Fakir had no children, so then how did they decide who to appoint as the next person responsible for the passing on of the heritage?

Z: Their elders came from Kutch Bujh. The people of their community are called Hingorja. This is a community and they migrated to Sindh from Gujrat. They have followers on the coastal areas on the way from Karachi to Thatta, Badin.

How is your relationship with the Auqaf Department?

A: We have no relationship with them. The dargah is run, organized by the Latif Saeen's family.

Z: Oh no, that's no longer true. There were many mishaps in various shrines over inheritance rights and the incomes of shrine, so in 1960s, under Ayub Khan, the Auqaf Department was set up and many such shrines were put under their management. The family disputes were resolved by a court appointed person or the court itself.

(Addressing A): Do you go only on Thursday / Friday night?

A: Also when there are special guests, they call us and we go and perform there.

Does the Auqaf Dept. give you something for the duties you perform?

A: We get a Wazifa (a token of appreciation) from the Culture Department, but not from the Auqaf.

Z: They get Rs. 30,000/ (273 Euros) per year. It is a small gift of appreciation.

Are your children learning this skill?

A: My eldest son has learned it. He plays well and sings with me on Friday nights. My second son is also learning now. (gesturing to his son sitting closeby). I have two sons.

Are you able to make a livelihood?

A: Yes I am thankful to God.

You also ofcourse have the agricultural lands?

A: Yes, that ofcourse is a major earning. (Ali Dinu Fakir did not particularly by way of attitude explain his answers, but answered in brief. One of the reasons for that could also be that his Urdu was not good, Sindhi being his first language, Another could also be due to his old age.)

Z: The followers of the fakir give nazranas to them as they have a spiritual connection with him. These nazranas are much more than what is collected at the shrine. They are able to make a living from this. All the agricultural lands around are theirs, so its plenty for them.

How many children do you have?

A: I have two sons and four daughters. My eldest son has one son and three daughters. The second one just got married and does not have any children as yet.

Do their children go to school?

A: Yes they go to school and we also teach them a few things at home.

What is the work they do?

A: They take care of the jamaat, the panchayat (group of elders that decide on disputes of the people of the rural area or whoever chooses to have a neutral body decide on disputes for them), and the agricultural lands.

How much is your outreach for the panchayat?

A: The villages around our agricultural lands, the people of these villages around all come to us.

Z: The people who are their followers in Bhitshah also come to them. So its not because people are forced to come to us, they come to us out of respect and recognition of our responsibilities.

Do you face any problems in taking this work forward?

A: No problems in particular. I recently got some maintenance work done at Bari Otaq.

You have been here for so long. Have you noticed changes in particular in the city?

A: New people have come and settled in Bhitshah that people no longer recognize those who have been sitting here for centuries.

[He was not happy about the changing society due to migrations in particular and new people visiting the shrine. I suppose that he was also not very happy about the assertiveness of the new Gaddi Nashin who tried to be bossy as he narrated an incident in which the Gaddi Nashin insulted him and his family and referred to them as the servants of Shah Latif.]

That was never the case, Shah Latif treated his fakirs like his equals. We were not his servants. We were his companions. It was out of love, much respecr and trust in him that we fakirs obeyed him. It was a spiritual affiliation.

How has the mazar changed over time?

A: The open space of the mazar has been extended during Benazir's time. That was a good undertaking. Now people who come there have proper place for shelter to stay the night.

Thankyou so much for your time.

iv.   Young Raagi Fakir (by choice): Fakir Muhammad Ismail; 23 years old
08/02/15

[I received a call from one of my connections in the Bhitshah Youth Organisation after I had conducted a survey with them, that there was a friend of his that I should meet. He introduced him as someone who was well read and knew a lot about the history of the place and its culture.

At 2200, we started this talk at the lounge of the rest house where I was staying.

After basic introductions, Ismail started talking. I had not really asked him any questions. He seemed informed about what I was looking for and started talking about the history of Bhitshah.]

I (Ismail fakir): Before Bhitai and Bhitshah, close to Karar Lake, there was a village here called Vasant Bughio. People took out mud from the place where the lake is. According to sources about 100 fakirs performed this task to elevate the hill to make a safe place for the khanqah of the saint.

How do you know about this?

I: I have read the famous writers who have written about Bhitshah like Mir Abdul Husain Sangi and Mirza Kalich Beg, Daud Poto. Bhitshah has four old mohallas (neighbourhoods) that make the basic town. Of these, Vasant Bughio was the previously existing village.

What kind of work do you do yourself?

I: I am a raagi. I sing at the shrine with Ustad Guru Muhammad.

When did you learn?

I: I learnt about 13 – 14 years ago. I have performed in India, Lahore, Islamabad.

Ismail's Friend: He performed in Coke Studio in Season 3, sang Shah's kalaam. On the web, you will find Lahooti Live Session, where there is a collection of Sufi music. There is also the kalaam of Shah Abdul Latif.

Who taught you to play?

I: I learnt from Juman Shah Fakir.

Is he a Tamar Fakir?

I: Tamar Fakir is not a caste, if that's what you mean. The title does not belong to a family, as such. Anyone who sings and is a pro at it can be given the title of Tamar. If you learn to sing, you can be a Tamrani.

But I am not a Sindhi. I am from Karachi.

I: It is a seat (masnad) Bhitai is for everyone no matter where you come from.

Were there other people who learnt to play with you or were you the only one?

I: There were about 12 people. One of them was from Saudi Arabia.

How long does it take to learn?

I: It takes about 3-4 years to learn and become very good at it. You have to learn the poetry lines along with the tunes and then there are many different raags, 36 to be exact.

In Shah Latif's music, the pitch changes from low to high. This is a special characteristic.

What is the way of learning this music?

I: From the Culture Department, a music school has been opened here where there are two teachers. The schooling is free. They recently offered me and my friend to teach in the school too. I gave the names of people senior to me.

To learn this, you have to first of all know Sindhi. Dr. Ernst Trump who put together the first Risalo in Sindhi in print, learnt Sindhi. Dr. Sorley also learned Sindhi.

You seem to be educated and well read, did you also have a formal education alongside?

I: I have done my graduation from Sindh University.

And you learnt the music alongside?

I: I live in Bhitshah so close to mazar that if I need to get even groceries for the house, I have to cross the shrine on the way. So I was always very curious about the music being played there and even more so because I couldn't entirely understand it neither could the people around me. So I questioned why I couldn't understand it. I spent a lot of time at the shrine listening to the music.

The Syed Juman Shah asked me to join the music class and learn it. I was very interested as it is and jumped at the opportunity.

So when did you graduate? What was your subject?

I: In 2002 …and my subject was Economics.

When did you learn music?

I: After graduation.

Who is a 'Fakir' in the dargah terms? I have asked the same question to others at the shrine and would like to ask you the same. [Since he seemed well read and was a fakir, I decided to ask him some basic questions about local terminologies.]

I: I am a fakir. My name is Fakir Muhammad Ismail…. Fakir is somebody who follows 'faqr'. In the local terms, the beggar is usually referred to as the 'fakir'.

That ofcourse is not the 'fakir' at the dargah.

I: Yes. There are different categories of fakir. Technically, fakir is one who takes the method forward.

What is the fakir's main destination? What does he want to achieve?

I: A fakir has to fulfill the role / responsibility that he has self proclaimed or he has been given through generational transfer.

At the dargah, you have fakirs, who undertake daily, monthly or annual customs. There are:

Zakri fakir – those who do zikr (recite the name of Allah, or divine verses)

Autari fakir – those who manage autaqs.

Tamrani fakir – who take care of the music and take responsibility of its generational transfer of knowledge.

Dhamaali fakir – who play the drums

There are people who are from the family of fakirs and decide not to be fakirs. There are also people who do not belong to fakir family but take it upon themselves to be fakirs like yourself. You did a graduation in Economics probably because your parent wanted to make something of you, but you later decide to become a fakir… So if I understand correctly, fakiri is something that comes from generational transfer and also can be self-proclaimed.

I: We are also responsible for taking care of our parents households. That is and will for me remain my first responsibility. I work at an electric company. I have to run a house and provide for my family. After that I work at the Radio Pakistan, Bhitshah in which I create awareness about the raags of Bhitai. The poetry and the message of Bhitai that is part of the music sung at the shrine.

I have met people at the shrine who live there, have left their families, shunned responsibilities and call themselves 'fakir'. That seems like the other end.

I: Hundreds of thousands of messengers have come to the earth from Allah. Of Allah's friends (Wali) and messengers, there are two types; Majzoob and Salik. Majzoob is one who is close to God, his prayers are fulfilled, he seems to have a connection to God. However, on the outer side, he does not seem to be like other people. He may sit in one place all day. Salik is one who follows the principles of the religion. Shah Latif was a Salik, he fasted, he prayed and did all the regular chores as people do.

It is amazing when you think about it that this music has been happening since 300 years. The tradition has never stopped. If people are not normally paid for a month or something, things could potentially get disturbed. But the fakirs take their responsibility seriously. With or without pay, they would carry on their responsibility. There are fakirs here who are farmers, those who are landlords, those who do service, daily wage workers, labourers, have jobs. Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai himself married, took responsibility for his household, his parents etc. There is no source that says that once you are a fakir, you have to leave everything.

But as I understand a fakir is someone who lives simply.

I: Yes ofcourse

If a fakir is rich, has wealth. Do you think he has the responsibility to use this wealth for particular purpose.

I: If a fakir has wealth, then it is his responsibility to help people in whatever way he wishes.

v.   **Senior Custodian Fakir for Dhamaal: Mungenhar Fakir**

Mungenhar Fakir has been legendary descendant of historic drummers locally called *naqqara*. [Old man of thin stature and small white beard, approx. 55 years of age]

07/02/15 at the shrine court

Since how long have you been doing this work?
My entire life time, I have been doing this work since I was 10 years old. My father, his older
brother and grandfather before them used to do the same, passing on the legend and continuing with the family legacy.

I have heard your family came from Jaiselmir, is that right?
Yes that's right, its true.

Does everyone in your family work?
Initially, it was just one or two people who used to do this work, now we have an entire neighbourhood.

Does everyone in your family work and play the drums here?
The fakirs have their own duties, the darbar duty (meaning drumming) is always given to the eldest usually.

So you are the one who plays everyday?
Yes I play everyday.

Do you teach this as well?
Yes, I teach my sons and brothers sons.

How many people are there in your family?
My brother and his family and I have four sons.

Where do you live?
I live in Pir Mohalla.

Do your sons study?
One studied upto seventh grade and left. He was not interested. One has just finished eight grade and is planning to continue.

Do they work then?
Yes we have a store (a small shop selling grocery)

Do you technically work for the Auqaf?
Earlier, we were not *Auqaf* employees, we used to receive a token of appreciation (*wazifa*) from the *Gaddi Nashin*. For the last 40 -50 years now, we have been *Auqaf* employees.

Since 1960?
Yes

What you get from Auqaf, is that enough to sustain you and your family.
I am grateful to God.
It's a monthly salary you get?
Yes.
Later your children will continue this work after you, is that the idea?
Yes, it is our wish / desire for it to be so, but it will be as God wishes. He is the owner of all decisions.
When the Auqaf was formed and it was being decided who was going to perform this duty. I was 10 years old then. The elders of the community were suggesting to allow others to take on this duty. They were saying that I was too young to carry out this duty. But the Gaddi Nashin then, asserted that it will be me who will carry on the family legacy as my father and grandfather had done. Inshallah God will bless me.
That s brilliant, that even in today's day and age, when things are rapidly changing and developing to find such family legacies being passed on.
My fathers brother carried out this duty before me for 60 years. He was Usman fakir. When he passed away, my father played for 2-4 years. My father used to play occasionally during his brother's lifetime, but it was technically Usman Fakir's duty.
Do you play twice a day, everyday?
There are different timings. On Thursdays, I play three times a day. At 1430-1500 in the afternoon after prayers; around 1800 before sunset; and at 2100 at night.
Sao Sumar happens on the first Sunday night of lunar month. The prayer ritual starts with the drumming. When a son is born in the Bhitai family, the drums announce the good news to the neighbourhood.
On occasions of Eid, when Gaddi Nashin comes to the mazar, the drum is played to announce his arrival.
A lot of people including the media have asked to play the naqqara, but I cant do it without the permission of the Gaddi Nashin.
Any challenges you foresee in taking this legacy forward?
Not in particular. We are employees of Auqaf, that offers us security. If they remain in practice, we too will continue the way we are.
Any other desires, wishes that you would like to talk about?
I am happy with things the way they are. God has blessed me. I just pray my lifetime would pass by well.
Are you happy with your accommodation, daily family provision etc.?
All due to Bhitai's blessings.
You have been in Bhitshah for so long, have you seen the city change before you? Has there also been change in the people coming to the shrine?
Yes, over the past 10 years in particular. The numbers of people coming to the shrine have increased substantially. Earlier, people came only to pray seriously. Now there s many more people who come for recreation to the shrine. That ofcourse does not mean that the numbers of people coming to the shrine for prayer has decreased. That has also increased, but the others are a new addition.
Within the city itself, much development work took place in the city during the time of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Benazir Bhutto after him carried this work forward. Housing colonies were built for artisans and craftspeople in the city and infrastructure works have also been carried out. Benazir also carried out the space expansion works at the mazar. There were initially housing around this space, they were removed and families accommodated in other parts of the city. The shrine was expanded under her guidance. (gestures to show where)
How about the current government? Have they taken up any works in the city too?
Asif Zardari as President announced the making of Sufi University, but it has remained only paperwork and partially executed.
What is your surname / family name by which you are known?
We are called Mungenhar Fakirs. I am Dargahi Fakir, my father was Tor Fakir and his father was also Dargahi Fakir.
Is the Mungenhar family still there in Jaiselmir?
We have no contact with them, its been almost 200 years since we came here. It was my great grandfather who came here. So I really don't know.

Thankyou so much for your time. [I thanked him and ended the interview.]

A serious looking man with a black beard and a hefty build approximately in his mid thirties, wearing black shalwar kameez.

14 Feb 2016 at Zakri Fakir Autaq

For a research, I would like to interview you to understand the meaning of and the purpose behind the rituals that you just performed at the shrine. [Before the interview, the Sao Sumar ritual had been performed and Zakri fakir had been a main performing fakir.]

Z: Yes I will tell you everything.

Is it ok if I record this?

Z: Yes ok…. My name is Fakir Abdul Ghaffar. By caste, I am a Larik. We are zakir, saeen's zakir, dargah's zakir… What you just saw is called *zikr*[226], it is also called *hamd-o-sanaa*[227] and also *mehfil-i-samaa*. It is all this. Shah Latif used to do this himself, it is the spiritual zikr.

Shah Latif was married but had no children. For this reason, he appointed mature fakirs to carry on the ritual. We have been here for seven generations.

Fakir Sumar at the time of Shah Latif, was his close friend. He was my great grandfather's grandfather. He was a dervish. Only those who are *ahl*, who were considered to be reliable and capable of carrying forth the task would be appointed with spiritual tasks to perform at the dargah. He was a *qari*[228] of the Quran and had memorized the Quran Sharif and also the risala of Shah Latif. Shah Latif regarded him as a close friend and fakir.

At the time there was no electricity, the machh was therefore lit to light up the dargah during the dark hours and zikr was conducted around it. *Allah hu. Allah hu* is what we recite. We take the name of Allah. With a fire in the center and people going around may create the impression that we are doing something that is the worship of the fire itself. but this is not true.

Oh no.. we did not get that impression and is not the assetion we are here to make.

It happens though, people come here who don't understand and ask us these questions.

When you move from one place to another, stop in one place and recite something …what is the meaning of what you do?

The guy who was standing next to me was reciting the *kalaam* of Shah Latif. He changed the phrases and I changed the words of praise to Allah the Almighty. This is our *tariqa*.

What we do is from the Avesi tariqa. It is different from other orders of Sufism, like Baba Farid, Baba Bulleh Shah. Within other practices like these, people stand up and perform at shrine, but in this tariqa, we sit and perform (referring to the samaa at the shrine).

The kalaam of Shah Latif, if you listen to it and become engrossed in it, you will find something good in it. Love God's creations. Do good behavior with others. Don't hate people and use harsh words. This is what you will find in Shah Latif's poetry.

How do you know what time you should enter the dargah when the ritual starts, how do you know that it is your turn to perform.

The dhamaal was being conducted before. As soon as the dhamaal ended, we get the signal that now it is the time for us to enter in procession and start our performance.

When the Gaddi Nashin comes, what is the signal he gets that he knows that it is time to enter into the ritual for him?

When Tamar Fakirs come in, the Gaddi Nashin is informed to enter within a few minutes. That is the signal for him.

We do hamd-o-sanaa only. Nothing else. I am a God fearing man, one who prays regularly and quite a conventional muslim. I am at peace with myself.

We had no intentions of making such indications or suggestions.

When the Gaddi Nashin is inside [the inner court visiting the tomb chambers], you stand at the gate. What does this mean?

We stand in waiting for the Gaddi Nashin to receive him when he returns from the ziyarat to the tombs.

In the presence of Shah Latif, did the fakirs also wait for him?

At that time, Sumar fakir and Tamar fakir used to stand in line in waiting as Shah Latif went into do ziyarat of his father. Shah Latif used to do zikr himself. Later he gave this responsibility of doing zikr to our grandfather Sumar fakir.

Did you say the prayer at the end of the ritual?

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[226] Recitation of the name(s) of Allah for a long period of time

[227] Praise of Allah

[228] One who recites the Arabic Quran out loud with proper tone of voice

No it was not me, it was Tamar fakir. It was Tamar fakir who said the prayer out loud.

Can you tell me what the prayer said? I am not a Sindhi speaker. I did not understand all of it, but some.

He said, Ya Allah Please fulfill all prayers of all your people who have come here in your love. May they ful- fill the purpose for which they have come here. Those whose children are in trouble, resolve their problems. Those who are sick, give them health. If people have come with needs and prayers, fulfill their prayers. May the Gaddi Nashin have good in this life, may their children have good in this life. May the fakirs have good and their children be blessed with your blessings. He asked for safety and security for the people and for everything.

Besides this, what you do every month, what else are you responsible for as Zakri fakir?

We do this at the two Eids, at the urs mela for three days. the fourth day is a day of prayer which starts off with the zikr. Any program at the shrine begins with the zikr ritual. The turn by turn entrance of the different groups is a way of showing the face of the important people of the shrine, the fakirs and the Gaddi Nashin for any important program at the shrine. The audience understands who the important people are.

During the ritual, the doors of the mazar are closed, what is the reason for this?

The reason is that during the ritual, the fakirs are all busy with their own roles to perform during the ritual. There is then no one to take care of the tomb chamber in their absence. That is the only reason for the closing of the tomb chamber, none else. Many have their duties for the protection and security of the Gaddi Nashin. Others like myself have their own performances and roles to play.

If I understand correctly, the shrine is managed by the Auqaf Department.

The shrine is managed by the Auqaf Department. The key to the tomb chamber is held by a fakir of the Gaddi Nashin. He is the one who opens and closes the doors to the tomb.

The tomb is otherwise open all day and night, right except for this time?

No, the tomb has its own opening and closing times. It opens at 4:30 am in the morning and closes at 12 midnight. It is the same for the tomb chamber of Shah Habib.

The message of Shah Latif is this only. Half the time of our lives is spent in sleeping, half is spent in saying hello hi, socializing. For the rest of the life, it is important for us to do our duties. Shah Latif focuses much on the importance for us to do what is our duty. It is important to focus on our work and to be united to do this. To be jealous of someone, to tease people over how they do things, these are not good things. Shah Latif through his teachings and his poetry makes people focus on their duties and discourage others.

What is the social hierarchy in this shrine set up? Who are the elders in the set up under whom the others work and function.

It depends on the Gaddi Nashin. He has changed the older fakirs and now we have some new fakirs in the set up.

Tamar Fakir and you are very old in the set up. The Dhamaal fakir(s) are also very old. These fakirs he cannot change right?

Tamar fakir has been changed. They are not the same as the old one. The ones you just saw at the ritual.

I spoke to Tamar fakir, I was told they are the ones at the shrine…

No no, they are not the same, they have been changed by the Gaddi Nashin. The Gaddi Nashin decides who the Chief is. Whoever is the Chief, we give them respect.

[A guy standing at the back listening to our conversation, interrupted and said][229]

No body is big, the Gaddi Nashin is the elder here. The elder is the one who has more knowledge.

So what you are saying is that the Tamar fakir we saw in the ritual have been appointed by the Gaddi Nashin. [I confirmed what he had just said]

Yes that is right. They have been replaced. They had a dispute with the Gaddi Nashin. The matter has gone to the court and suits are in process.

What else do you do besides this?

I come from a well educated background. I have a job in the Auqaf Department (he said proudly). We have an educated family. My cousin has studied at the LEEDS in UK. One of my older cousins has spent a lot of time in USA. My oldest brother is a DIG Police officer in Special branch in Karachi. My brother is a professor of Mechanical Engineering. Three of my brothers have cleared Commission exams. In our family, the boys and the girls both study. The girls in our family have also all cleared CSS exams (Intermediate/ College level). Within Bhitshah and the fakirs, our family is considered to be one of the more educated ones. It is all because of the prayers of the Saeen.

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[229] The guy seemed to be like an informant or one who sided strongly with the Gaddi Nashin

The people who join you for zikr, where do they come from?
They come from outside Bhitshah as well and some are from here.
They are all volunteers?
Yes, yes
They are not paid for this?
No, they do this as a volunteer. We have a pretty big group of about 30 – 40 people. They believe in Shah Latif, take their blessings from here. I am the only one who is paid. I work for the Auqaf.
When the Gaddi Nashin comes out from ziyarat, do you hug each other?
No, we touch his feet.
Ok, and then you go to drop him home as well?
Yes, he is our elder, he is the Chief. We do this as a ritual. He is the Gaddi Nashin of Shah Latif Saeen, we have to respect him. We get respect when we give respect. For any elderly, you would also give them respect and then he is the Gaddi Nashin of Latif Saeen.
When we came in earlier, we were informed that you were praying some particular type of prayer. What was that?
I do the ziyarat-e-masumeen (the innocent), I pray for the blessing of the martyrs of Karbala after my regular prayers.
Your ancestor who was with Shah Latif, Sumar fakir, did he come from Sindh?
Yes, he was from Shikarpur. Shah Latif used to travel to places and many joined him during the travel. He had the quality to attract people who were spiritually attuned, who had special qualities and who loved listening to Shah Latif. Chanchal came, Atal came from Jodhpur, Rajasthan came of the Gwaliar family, and then people came from Jaiselmir, then also came people from Hinglaj.
Tamar fakir is from Hinglaj?
Yes, he was also from Hinglaj.
Do you have farmlands?
Yes, we also have farmlands
Are your farmlands around Bhitshah?
No they are in Shikarpur. …. basically we are an educated family, all the males and females in my family are mostly into jobs.
Since when have you been the Gaddi Nashin for the Zakri fakirs, you look young?
I was small relatively. I took over in the 1995 when my father passed away, I was born in 1977. So it has been 21 years. I was 17 years old then.
So did you know the rituals already or did someone have to guide you?
I was very young then. This work is in my blood. I required a little guidance. A little guidance was all I needed to pick it up. In our family, this is a good thing. We are fast at picking up things. There is the blessing of Shah Latif.
What are the changes that you have seen happening over time?
Yes there have been changes. Spirituality is becoming less. I observe the fakirs in groups act differently from earlier. I see jealousy and competition among the fakirs. Earlier the fakirs used to encourage and praise each other on performances. Now the fakirs try to make fun of others, there is a kind of negativity.
This is a tradition, how can there be a competition and jealousy among the fakirs who have been doing this for generations? People already have their duties assigned.
There is the Gaddi Nashin. Tamar fakir has been changed, the new one, how did they get appointed and on what basis. Gaddi Nashin was able to remove them. The fakirs now push over, they put things in the ears of the Gaddi Nashin and then we never know how he would react. We don't know when we have to go. Tamar fakir had been responsible for the tradition for 150 years. Saeen is young and new and he does not understand many things. He has been in authority only for a year. His father and grandfather had better knowledge of things. If Saeen wants something of us, then we have to do this. I am the Chief and now if somebody else is trying to be chief. Whoever does not listen to the Gaddi Nashin can be removed. (he said apprehensively) Even though I am from the family of Sumar fakir, who was of the company of Shah Latif himself.
There were 200 fakirs who sing.
The original Tamar fakir had a group of 50 to 60 fakirs. It was a large group.
Who was the new Tamar fakir before he got appointed?
He used to sing at the shrine.
How many other Zakri fakirs are there?
about 30 -40.

The group that accompanies you for the ritual, do you have to train them or do they learn by observation?

I have to train them. I have to tell them how to perform. I have to reprimand them, correct them. I take their class in groups. I correct them later after class as well. I taunt them sometimes, if they do not understand I have to punish them too. They do not mind my punishments. I am their elder and they listen to me. When we perform together every month in Sao Sumar, I know where they stand. Then I tell them accordingly.

Do the people of the shrine come together or come to you?

Yes any problems of the shrine are taken up and discussed. We have an APC meeting every so often in which we discuss and decide on matters of the shrine that need that. It is a general meeting. All the fakirs and the Gaddi Nashin come together. We discuss various matters and take decisions.

Do you have any interaction with the people of Bhitshah for anything?

No no, I hardly see them. …

How much do you think the people of Bhitshah are involved with the activities at shrine?

Bhitshah has grown over time. It used to be a little village. There are many new people that we don't know in the town. Earlier we used to know everyone. The older associations are still there ofcourse. People who have always believed and followed the culture, are still a part of it and come here. Now these new people have other things to do and are not really into the shrine.

So do you think that these new people are basically attracted to Bhitshah due to trade and shopkeeping and the attraction that the town offers to Sindhi and local tourists?

Yes, yes, trade and shopkeeping are main attractions. They know nothing of the shrine, they barely participate in the shrine's activities.

(Says something to a man in Sindhi, and they have a short exchange – Perhaps it is about his commitment somewhere)

Do you do anything else for the Gaddi Nashin besides the ritual?

The Gaddi Nashin has shops, he has farmlands, he has a Shah Latif Foundation.

I was wanting to know if you are involved in any duties with him besides the ritual.

No no, its only the ritual in which we are together.

I am sorry but I have to go fulfill some obligations. Please excuse me.

Thankyou so much for your time. This was a good interview.

Sorry I never offered you tea or anything.

It is perfectly fine. Thankyou!

vii.   Fakir staying at shrine since 40 years

Old man with a beard and a slightly stooped posture of about 55 years of age

18/12/14

Where do you come from?

Sukkur

How long have you been at the shrine?

Very long, I don't exactly remember, (On insisting he reflected and calculated) since 40 years. I came here when I was 15 years old and have been here since.

Do you go to other shrines as well?

Yes, Lal Shahbaz Qalander and Chaman Sarkar.

Do you go back to your place in Sukkur?

Yes, I go back every two months for 2 weeks and then I come back here again.

How do you move back and forth?

By bus.

What do you like about this place?

There s a serenity about this place. I am a murid (student or ardent believer) of Bhitai.

Has it changed a lot in 40 years since you ve been here?

Since 2010, after the floods, people from other parts of the province and country have come here. An earthquake shook this place. I was here. With strange people coming here, strange mannerisms can be seen; things get stolen, strange people with loose character started to come and live here because here you get free food and a shelter on their heads.

Does your family come here too?

They know about this place and come once or twice a year.

Do you know of any stories about the life of Bhitai?

No. Whoever comes here, uses Shah Latif as a connection to God, his prayers are answered. Hundreds, thousands of people come here. They all take something from here. The saints of God are the ones who are kings of the other world. They rule the way to God. (he said to reinforce the expression of his belief and conviction in the saint).

Do you understand the poetry of the saint? What is his message?

I don't understand it. It is in very old Sindhi language. He gives a message of love of God, of *khulus*[230], good ethics and moral values, good behavior with the creation of God, people and other.

viii.   **Educated fakir, staying at shrine since 8 years and off and on, trying to work in the formal sector but always coming back to the shrine**

Fakir is wearing dark plain clothing along with a grey scarf around his neck. He has an unkept short beard.

Is this your first time to the mazar of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai?

No. I have been here for some time.

How long have you been at the mazar?

I have been living here since 8-9 years. I took a break in the middle and decided to work. I worked for the government in the Education Board, Hyderabad for less than a year. I quit and came back to the shrine. I am a poet and have published two books with the name of Arbab Azam. I write in Sindhi. The name of my book is: Die before you are dead.

How educated are you?

I have a Bachelors in Arts.

Where does your family live?

In Bhit Shah.

How many children do you have?

I have 3 three children, 2 sons and 1 daughter. One of my sons is in the Army, the other has just finished his education and applying for the army. My daughter is married.

How educated is your daughter?

She studied until class 6.

Do you know of any stories from the life of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai?

He was a spiritual person, a fakir (of one living with simple means). He lived a simple life.

[Another fakir standing by listening to our conversation broke in and said,] Shah sahb lived under the ground and Qalander flew above the ground. (The statement had a poetic analogy that could perhaps be understood by people who knew what the two personalities were about)

What do you understand from the poetry of Shah Latif? What was his message?[I continued to finish my interview with Arbab Azam.]

He spoke of patience, love and peace among mankind.

ix.   **Fakir Staying at shrine since 35 years and facilitating the visitors**

[He works *fi- sabilillah* (for Allah and not for any person/organization as such), and assigned himself a 'duty', He has left his family at a young age and shunned all responsibility of them, knows little about how they live and make livelihoods too.]

Ayaz Fakir – refers to himself as the *Alam wala* fakir. He sits besides the very tall *alam* (flag of the prophets family in the Karbala war) with several accessories laid out in front of him and with a big box next to him that contained some too. He is wearing steel bangles on his wrists and big rings on all his fingers. He also has some trinkets hanging around his neck.

Are you selling something?

Not selling, just giving to whoever wants and asks for.

What are you giving away?

I have some *khaq-e-shifa* (sand from Karbala), oil for health benefits, white little balls of sweets and oil lamps that he lights up in different parts of the shrine in the evenings.

Who do you work for?

I don't work for anyone, this is *fi sabilillah* (for God's favour)

Do you do anything else besides this?

No.

Why do you prefer to work here?

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[230] *khulus,* Urdu word meaning, respectable attitude

I am his servant, his *murshid* (student), his fakir.
How long have you been here?
I have been at the shrine since 35 years. My grandfather also used to work here
What did your grandfather do at the shrine?
He worked as a cleaner for the Auqaf Department. That is how I got introduced to this place.
How many people are there in your family?
There are 18 people. Father, mother, sisters, brothers, brothers' wives, and their children.
Do the children at your place go to school?
Yes, they do.
How educated are you?
I finished my schooling and did my first year in college.
Where does your family?
They live in another town close to Bhitshah, at Tando Allahyar.
How does your family make a living?
My brothers run a barber shop. They do hair cutting for men.
Do you have access to good schools and hospitals?
Yes, the children go to a private school, the government hospital here is fairly ok. We manage.
Any problems that you face that you would like to share?
People in my family have always been curious about the reason for my 'single' status. But I tell them that I prefer my job at the shrine, if I had other lives, I would still prefer the same, it is an honour for me to be here.
What is so special about this that you have given up everything?
The performance of music for the love of Imam Husain and other martyrs who were killed in the historic event of Karbala (Iraq) is so moving that if you also stayed to listen to it, you would also become an ardent follower of Shah Latif.

x.   **Gaddi Nashin of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai: Syed Waqar Husain Shah**
29/11/14

[At his residence, *baithak*; the room was simply furnished with a charpoy (traditional single bed) at one end and a carpet and round cushions on the floor. We sat on the carpet.]

GN: What is it that you would like to know from me?

I am doing a research and I am interested to know more about Bhitai? What is the message of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, how is it practiced in terms of the customs and rituals at the shrine, how do people interpret this at the shrine, how much do people understand from this at the shrine.

Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai was a saint, who preached oneness of God, and spread the love of Allah among people using the local language. Various messengers had some special qualities gifted to them by Allah, so that we can differentiate between the normal people and the messengers of God. 124,000 messengers of God came to Earth. Prophet Musa had a stick that could turn into a snake and other forms, solving problems, Prophet Jesus could cure the ill, similarly, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai's music has had that special quality that attracted people to him and his message. This was not something that he adopted from somewhere, but he invented the form and composition from the local environment.
There are many good things in the world that are spiritual and cannot be seen, like truth, love of God, respect for parents….spiritualism gives a direction to our lives, to use values positively. The same tools can be used for good and for bad purposes, the positive use of the tool is something that can be determined spiritually. A knife for instance can be used for surgical purposes but can also be used for life threatening activities. The intention and values give the act a meaning. For instance, truth, loyalty, respect for parents, love for God, the light of the eye..these are true values. Spiritual factors have a world of their own. Latif Saeen has tried to disseminate these spiritual factors through the poetry. Spiritual elements have to be understood from within. No matter how educated and modernized we become, if we miss out on the spiritual values, we will lose the directions to our lives, the purpose of who we are if we forget these values.
Shah Abdul Latif owned the culture of Sindh, he developed the language of Sindhi, preserved it through his poetry. He developed it as if he were the bearer of the language. Before him, the Quran had not

been translated into Sindhi. He used many quotes from the Quran and translated them to use them and deliver these messages of God into Shah jo Risalo. The Risalo is divided into 30 surs.

We have to understand the spiritual meaning of the Quran, the message of God. The reason we have people disagreeing about the message of God, using God 's name to kill people, for national patriotism, or using it for the right reasons of social justice and spreading love of God is because of the lack of understanding of the spiritual meaning.

Shah jo Risalo is based on seven folk tales. Like the Quran explains its message through stories, the Risalo uses local tales to elaborate the meaning and message.

[He elaborated the stories then. The western stories usually revolve around a princess who waits in her life for her prince to arrive, if she is stuck, the prince will come to rescue her and when he arrives, her life becomes complete. In the stories of Shah Latif, the woman is the hero. His stories display the strength of character of the woman as heroines.

The story of Marui, heroine of Shah Latif for example, is that of a village girl who is taken by a prince, Omar to jail. Marui is 15 to 16 year old little girl, her mental strength is such, she refuses to relent to the pressures of the prince and refuses to marry him, to live with him at any cost, she refuses to be disloyal to her family and her people. Omar says to her that your clothes are torn, your slipper is broken, yet you refuse all riches to be loyal to your people. However, when Marui goes back to her people, they say bad things about her, in response to which she turns to God and says to Him that He is the only one who knows her and the only one for her.

In Latif Saeen's stories, the woman is the hero.

Similarly the story of Noori, who is a village girl of a fishermen family, the king of the time comes to her family to ask for her in marriage. For the western fairytale that would be the ideal thing in life, but Noori does not immediately agree to the marriage and puts conditions like asking the king to not tax the village anymore, that she will not break her connection with her family, to allow her to regularly meet her family and not put forth issues like smells etc. Once the king agrees to her various conditions, only then does she agree to the marriage. So she takes her initiative.

The story of Sasui and Punhu's love story. After Sassui and Punhu get married, Punhu's brothers come to take him with them. When Punhu goes away for something and does not return, she does not stay there and wait but goes after him to look for him, so the woman takes initiative. She has a tough time, is pricked by thorns on her way, is thirsty, clothes are torn, but she remains steadfast in looking for her beloved.

Bibi Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, is center of the Punjatan Pak[231]. If the prophet is mercy for humankind, and his daughter is a blessing, then what is the value of the blessing of the prophet who is the mercy for mankind. The position of the woman as a mother, daughter, wife, in Islam is given strength and value in religion. The value of each of the men in Punjatan becomes more because of their relation to Fatima.

Many of our interviews of the people at the shrine reveal that many come here to pray for sons in the family, or distribute food when sons are born in their family, or prefer to educate sons over daughters. What do you have to say about this?

Islam is the best religion but has the worst followers. We Muslims are divided into 72 sects. Our own understanding of things is so weak that it makes us bad followers. As pure as the original message is, we have allowed impurities to impregnate our original values.

The system of Sindh is full of corruption, lies, hypocrisy. We are not honest to ourselves. Latif Saeen s message is about being loyal to your own house, own family, own parents. That is the basic unit. The wadera system that we have is not good, it's a kingship, there are many injustices attached to it. Many followers who come here are not necessarily good people, they may be holding *tasbeehs* in their hands but the reality of them is different, if you ask people.

So we have set up the Shah Latif Foundation with which it is our intention to try to correct some of the issues that we can.

There are so many people who come to the shrine. Their prime purpose to come to the shrine seems to be only to bring a strong need or desire to be fulfilled. They know little about the history of the place and the saint. There is a communication gap between the visitors and the actual meaning and value of the place.

The believers who come here they are all very different, they have different types of connections with Allah, with Latif Saeen. Some people know the poetry of Latif Saeen and by heart. I met a child who

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[231] Punjatan Pak are the five blessed members of Prophet Muhammad's family whose lives form the core of Islamic values. These include the Prophet himself, his daughter and her husband, Fatima and Ali, and their two children, Hasan and Husain.

knew this. Recently, a man who is actually a school teacher came to the foundation to request funding for the publication of some of his poetry that he has written about Shah Latif and his message.

I met a man who said he does not read Sindhi poetry but likes Urdu poetry. He told me a verse of Shah Latif that goes: "The birds whose nests have been blown away in the storm last, do not complain with the rise of the sun, but pray and praise God with the rest of the flock." Such beautiful meaning, nothing I remembered from the Sindhi verses.

Coming to the second level, what is it that we are doing. 'We' includes two major stakeholders; there is the position of the sajjada nashin, who is responsible to pass on the message of Latif Saeen, and there is the government. The Auqaf Department was set up by the government in 1958 to manage the responsibility of the shrine and its finances. They started taking money on the commercial basis, did not provide sufficiently for the followers who come to the shrine, there is corruption also in the money, what they collected they did not spend on the shrine or its people. But on top of everything, the message of Shah Latif has been disowning the culture. They say, the message is not their responsibility but that of the Sajjada Nashin and the followers.

At the Auqaf Office at Bhitshah, the officers sit on chairs wearing boots like the English men, that is a sign of the disownment. The culture of the dargah is that people sit on the floor, they take their shoes off when entering into the designated precinct. But the Auqaf office does not take ownership of this culture.

So what do you think that the Auqaf Department should not be there, or there needs to be a designated role for the Auqaf?

Either they should respect the culture and the message and own it or they should not be there to take any level of ownership. When the Chief Minister comes, he comes wearing shoes. If they are ready to take financial ownership of the place, then they should also respect its norms and basic attitudes.

The other thing is that the Auqaf has little relation with the family of Bhitai/ sajjada nashin. They are answerable to their own seniors. They have kept no relation with the sajjada nashin, no discussion, no consensus creating.

I have read in books about the Auqaf process that say that the sajjada nashin is part of the committee that looks at the management of the funding that is received by the Auqaf, for instance when the boxes open, to maintain transparency.

Well, I am the next designated sajjada nashin as involved in the whole process and I can tell you that there is nothing of the sort.

We have therefore established the Shah Latif Foundation to fill up some of the gaps we observed that people visiting experience in the things at the shrine. We felt that the message was not being passed on well and felt it was our responsibility to undertake this. It may be through the print media, verbal transfer of message or through arranging programmes. Secondly, if the Auqaf is not performing well, for instance, if the cleanliness is not taken care of well, people require first aid, then we will take care of it. The Auqaf has a dispensary at the back of the shrine, it is always closed. Hence under the foundation, we have set up a medical camp at the shrine as well as a complaint center to provide for the grievances of the people coming to the shrine, in whatever measure we can. It is unfortunate. That is our intention to use the basis of the foundation to provide for the people, to make ourselves strong as an institution, for the benefit of the place and the heritage. Eventually, if things do continue to go back, we can also ask them to give the shrine to us on contract to take care of it. They are anyways giving it on contract to different people, we will just have more ownership of it. We can also take them to supreme court in the future that if you cant take care of it, then give it back to us. Until last year, there was a proper market within the shrine, for instance, people were selling things within the shrine premises, doing commercial photography. We have managed to remove these informal illegal arrangements. We controlled that within the domain that we have.

When was the foundation made?

It was made in 1982. My grandfather made this foundation as he felt the need to undertake this. In 2003, my father made it a little workable and active to take it to the grassroots. We have a network in all of Sindh. We have coordinators in all talukas and districts. They are all followers of Shah Latif. We have gatherings in which we talk and discuss about the message of Shah Latif and how we can implement it in our lives and how we can benefit from this. I was yesterday in Larkana for a similar discussion. There was recently a Mela for Marui in her village called Kandwa in Thar for two days. The injustices against the Hindus in our region is something we are working on to give a message of equality and social justice. A campaign was organized last year, we had an All Sindh Hindu Convention and plan to have this every year. We visited all the hindu temples in the region. When Latif Saeen was travelling, he would go into the temples too. When people learn of these activities they are very critical of this as in how can the next sajjada nashin undertake such activities. But Latif Saeen worked with them, looked at

them as our brothers. The message is that of interfaith harmony. We are planning a tourist resort close to the back entrance of the shrine. We have named it Madan Fakir Tourist Resort. Madan Fakir was a Hindu believer of Shah Latif. The sabeel is run and managed by a hindu family as well.

The Alam in the center of the shrine has been put up by a Sunni[232] woman, and she still continues to be Sunni. These kind of interfaith interlinkages are a kind of miracle in my opinion.

The media is also divided, a gap has been created. Our politicians for their own benefits have separated Metropolitan and Sindhi news channels. Sindhi news and events are only covered by some of the channels that are Sindhi speaking. The channels covering metropolitan cities are separate. This in my opinion is a major attitudinal issue. People who don't speak Sindhi don't learn about the activities in Sindh. The entire Urdu generation are completely aloof from the message of Shah Latif. This is rather unfortunate. It can be an asset in their development and a loss if not.

I do agree. I observed this in particular this time, when I was watching the coverage of the Urs on TV Channels, the urdu channels were covering activities of the celebration of the urs in Karachi, Lahore and Quetta, barely showing Bhitshah itself.

We have initiated the resort project because we feel that when outsiders come, they should have access to three to four star hotels, where they get internet, good food, a decent place to stay, access to research materials, standby generators and availability of electricity.

That is for people who can afford it as much. What for people who cant afford?

That is something different. Like here at the shrine, people who cannot afford pay for first taking off their shoes, renting bedding, going to the washroom. They charge Rs. 5 (5 cents) for each visit to the washroom, so if you come with the family, that can add upto a Rs. 100/ (1 Euro) for the day.

Under the foundation, we have been talking about these ideas that these facilities should be free for the people who come here. Shoekeeping should be free, bedding is only sublet by people who are poor and who do not have a place to stay or have big problems. So we are devising a mechanism, whereby if one can rent a bedding by giving an ID and take the ID back when returning.

We are also trying to keep a track on the numbers of people coming to the shrine. Almost 300 people come here on the average per day.

What is your method of estimation?

Now that we have a medical camp at the shrine, we use it for such observations too. On Thursday, about 4000 people are here.

How many people do you estimate to be there at the urs?

There are 300,000 to 350,000 people on the anniversary on one day, meaning on the three days it is about 1000,000 to 1200,000. 14 Safar is the day of his death anniversary and 16-17 is his Third or Soyem. The main custom in which the sajjada nashin also takes part happens on the Soyem. We also celebrate his birth anniversary. That is on the 1st of Rajab.

This circus, dancing and singing of the various culture groups is not an activity that we appreciate at the shrine. The shrine is a religious place, it is not a place where people perform for the sake of performance and entertainment. There is a deeper meaning attached to it. This circus, entertainment has nothing to do with the message of Shah Latif.

How about matam? That is a religious act.

There are groups that come from the north of Sindh, they seem to hijack the entire shrine and disturb everyone through the matam. It is a spiritual matter, but it should not disturb everyone. There should be some code of conducts that we are working at, which everyone follows at the shrine.

Thankyou so much for your time, you gave us so much time.

In future if you need any particular information or access to anything, please do contact us. I have an email address at which you can write to me: shahlatiffoundation@hotmail.com. And we have a website as well: www.shahlatiffoundation.org. I also come to Karachi often, if you need anything from here, you are most welcome to contact me.

I am an Urban Planner and Architect and I will be making maps of Bhitshah that I can share with you as well, once they are ready.

Please do share with me, I would be very happy if you do.

Are there any drugs or related practices at the shrine?

Used to be, but not anymore.

Yes, I last came in 1998, I did observe people taking drugs then but this time I don't see anything.

Yes, we have worked on it and managed to remove these practices at the shrine.

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[232] Sunni- a Muslim sect

We got up to leave, saying thankyou and he came to drop us until the shrine. We took pictures and he also gave us gifts for remembrance. He also gave me a book in Sindhi that he had put together, that was about the message of Shah Latif.

18/12/14

Interview 1:   A woman of about 40 years of age with a child in her lap
Why have you come to the mazar?
My child is sick. Her body water is drying up, says the doctor. So we have come here to pray for her health.
Where do you come from?
Odero lal, it's a small village closeby.
How did you get here?
I am here with my husband. We came on our motorbike. Our village is half an hour away.
How long has she been sick for?
She has been sick for 6 months now. We have been coming here twice a week since to ask for help from Bhitai.
Has it helped? Do you feel a difference?
Probably, Must have in some way or another.
(The woman seemed to have a deep conviction and even though her gesture told us that there was nt as such a change in the child's condition but her belief was infallible. That the saint will help in some way or another.)
Do you go to other shrines as well?
No, only this one, because it is close to where we live.
Since how long have you been coming here for?
We have been coming here since 10 years, atleast twice a year.
Do you understand the poetry of Shah Latif? What is his message?
There is truth in what he says.

Interview 2:   Amir Ali, a well built bearded man of about 45 yrs, sits about 20 feet away from the back entrance of the shrine with a younger man. The interview was conducted in the evening, after sunset.
Is this your first time to the shrine?
No I pass through here everyday.
Did somebody tell you about the shrine?
No, I pass through here everyday. I live and work here in the city since 2011.
Where do you live?
I shifted to BhitShah from Larkana in 2011.
What kind of work do you do?
I work for a political party worker, Junejo. It is part of the People's Party (PPP). I have shifted because of my work.
Do you go the mazar to pay respects?
No, I only pass through everyday through the open space of the shrine. It lies in the middle of the town and connects the different neighbourhoods of the town.

Interview 3:   Riyaz – of about 25 years
Is this your first time to the shrine?
No, I come daily to the shrine.
Do you live closeby?
Yes, I live in the town (Bhit Shah).
What kind of work do you do?
I am a daily wage worker, laborer.
What is your income?
I make about Rs. 300/ a day. (approx. 3 Euros/day)
Since when have you been coming to the mazar?
Since I was small, I used to come here with my parents. My father is a fakir at the shrine. He is the one who introduced me to it.
Why do you come to the mazar?
I pray for getting more work.
Do you go to other mazars as well?
No.

How many people are there in your house?
We are four people in the house, and I am the only working member.
Do you know of any stories related to the life of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai?
No, I don't.
Do you understand his poetry? What is his message?
I don't understand his poetry, but I know his message is about love and peace among mankind.

Interview 4:   Amir Ali, middle aged man
Is this your first time to the mazar?
I am a murshid (student) of Shah Latif.
Where do you come from?
I live in Khudabad which is in Hala (about 10 km away from BhitShah).
What do you do for a living?
I am a farmer, I grow cotton and wheat.
How did you manage to get here?
I came here by chingchi (local taxi).
Do you go other shrines as well?
Yes, I do but I am a *murshid* here, so I come here frequently.
How many times do you come here in a year?
I come here twice a week, sometimes once.
Have you told your children/ family about the mazar?
Yes ofcourse, we all consider him to be a man of God, who preached the word of God.
Do you know of any stories related to the life of Shah Latif?
None.
Do you understand his poetry? What is his message?
(On asking this question, he recited from the poetry). This is Sur Sarang (a particular form / mood in Shah Latif's poetry). Shah Latif preaches patience, living with peace, working hard to make a living the right way and discourages bad practices and short cuts like stealing.

Interview 5:   Young man of 25-28 years of age
Is this your first time here?
No. I come here everyday.
Do you live in Bhit Shah?
No. I live in Tando Adam.
How do you get here every day?
By motorcycle.
Did somebody tell you about this place?
Shehmir, a landlord in Tando Adam told me about this place.
Do you go to other mazars too?
Yes.
Since when have you been coming here?
Since 3 years.
Would you like to tell your family about this place too?
They know about it. I bring them here about three times a week.
Why do you come here?
For recreation.
Do you know of any stories related to the life of Bhitai?
No, none.
Do you understand his poetry? What is his message?
I don't know about it.

Interview 6:   Riyaz, middle aged man, sitting with a group of men at one edge of the shrine, so they could observe the music being played there.
Is this your first time here?
No.
Did somebody tell you about this place?
My friends and well wishers
Since when have you been coming to the mazar?

Since I was quite young.
Would you like to tell your family about this place?
They know about this place.
Do they come here with you?
Not often. I usually come here to hang out with my friends, for recreation.
Where do you live?
Hala (town about 10 km from Bhit Shah)
Do you know of any stories about the life of Shah Latif?
No.
Do you understand his poetry?
No. We only come here for recreation and to pay respects to the saint.
How do you think this area, town has changed over the past few years?
The Karar Lake has become beautiful.

Interview 7: Shehrbano, woman close to 50 years of age sat on her bedding in the women resting place (musafir khana).
How long have you been at the shrine?
I have been here since 20 days.
Where is your family?
My husband died 6 years ago. I have three daughters and 4 sons. My daughters are all married and sons don't live here.
I was moving house as the tenant had asked me to vacate the place. I put all my furniture and households in a van and asked the van driver to take it to the new location. Since I was living by myself and had some last minute chores to wrap up, I asked the van driver to go ahead and that she would get there in a few minutes after handing over the keys. But to my utter dismay, the van disappeared. I have looked for it everywhere. It just disappeared with all my households. Now I am sitting at his (gesturing to Shah Latif) doorstep, hoping for him to help me in my prayers and finding some solutions to my life hanging in mid air.
How long do you plan to stay?
On whose doorstep I sit, he will find a solution for me. I stay until I find a solution. [She said with firm resolve.]
What is the message of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai?
I don't know, I just know that when people come here and ask him for help, their prayers get answered.

Interview 8: Young woman, Fahmida Shaikh, with a group of women
How do you know about Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai?
I have heard a lot about him from my parents and grandparents.
How often do you come to the shrine?
Every weekend.
Does your family accompany you ever week?
Yes, I come here with my family and friends.
Do you understand the poetry of Shah Latif? What is his message?
He was a good poet. His poetry gives a lesson of faith and wisdom.
Do you see any change at the mazar, town within 10 year time period?
The town has become more urbanized, more shops have opened, the population has increased.

Interview 9: Old man of 70-75 years was sitting along with his daughter gazing at shrine.
Where have you come from?
I live closeby, walking distance from the mazar.
How often do you come here?
I come here every evening.
Why do you come here?
My parents and grandparents have guided us to come here.
Do you understand the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif?
No, I am an illiterate (cannot read or write).

Interview 11: A middle aged man, Ghulam Nabeel along with his wife, brother and children sit in the shrine court.

Where have you come from?
We live in Bhitshah.
What are you here for?
We visit the shrine every Thursday evening together to listen to the kalaam of Shah.
Do you understand what it means?
No. But I assume it is about good moral values. It is beautiful and it feels good to be here.
Do you know any stories about the life of Bhitai?
No.

Interview 12: A group of college girls.
Where have you come from?
From Hyderabad, also Nawabshah.
Why are you here?
We meet up with our friends here, for recreation.
Do you go to other shrines as well?
Yes we have visited many other shrines in Sindh. We heard a lot about Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai Shrine so had been planning this visit for some time. Now we are finally visiting it.
Do you know any stories about the life of Bhitai?
No.
Do you know about his poetry?
No, we don't know much, this is our first visit.

xii.   **Workers at the shrine**

Interview 1:   Mohammad Urs, stands selling flowers at the entrance of the tomb.

Do you work for somebody?

No. I work independently.

How much are you able to make in a day?

Rs. 200-300 (1.75 – 2.5 Euros per day)

Do you do anything else besides this?

No.

Why do you prefer to work here?

I believe in Shah Latif, he is my access to God. He provides for me on a day to day basis.

Do you have children?

Yes, I have two sons.

Do they go to school?

Yes, one is in class 8 and the other is not interested in studies and has left school.

Do other people in your house also work?

Maybe, I don't know, I am always at the shrine.

Do you have access to good schools, hospitals and other facilities?[233]

Yes.

How is the infrastructure in the area where you live, like electricity, water supply. Gas?

Everything is ok.

Are there any problems that you face that you would like to share?

I thank God for all his blessings and pray only for more work on a day to day basis.

Interview 2:   Middle aged man standing at the head of the nazrana (donation) box at the shrine of the father of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai.

Who do you work for?

I work for the Auqaf Department.

What is the nature of the work that you do?

I work as a cleaning person here.

Do you work here fulltime or do you do some other work as well?

I have been working fulltime at the shrine since 1999.

Where do you live?

I live in Hala town, about 10 km from here.

How do you get here everyday?

I come here by motorbike.

How much is your monthly income?

I make Rs. 12000/ per month. (95 Euros / month)

How many people are there in your house?

I have 6 children, besides my wife and myself.

Do they go to school?

They all go to school.

Do other people in your house work as well?

No.

Do you have access to good schools, hospitals and other essential facilities?

Yes

Do you have easy access to electricity, water supply and gas?

Yes

Are there any problems you face that you would like to share?

None, I am happy with my job and with my life.

Do you know anything about the saint's life and poetry?

Not particularly. I just do my job.

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[233] During the time of social survey, I thought that the nazranas received by the shrines ought to be used for the development of the settlements infrastructure and public amenities. I assumed that this connection had historically been there as part of the 'waqf' income and definition. It is for this reason that the questions on access to infrastructure and public amenities were included. However, I later decided that the evidence collected was not enough to made this assertion as well as the fact that the thesis took a different direction as it developed.

Interview 3: Ayaz Fakir – referring to himself as Alam wala fakir, sits besides the very tall alam (flag of Hazrat Abbas) with several accessories laid out in front of him and with a big box next to him that contained some too. He is wearing steel bangles on his wrists and big rings on all his fingers. He also has some trinkets hanging around his neck.

Are you selling something?
Not selling, just giving to whoever wants and asks for.

What are you giving away?
I have some khaq-e-shifa (sand from Karbala), oil for health benefits, white little balls of sweets and oil lamps that he lights up in different parts of the shrine in the evenings.

Who do you work for?
I don't work for anyone, this is "fi sabilillah" (for God's favour)

Do you do anything else besides this?
No.

Why do you prefer to work here?
I am his servant, his murshid (student), his fakir.

How long have you been here?
I have been at the shrine since 35 years. My grandfather also used to work here

What did your grandfather do at the shrine?
He worked as a cleaner for the Auqaf Department. That is how I got introduced to this place.

How many people are there in your family?
There are 18 people. Father, mother, sisters, brothers, brothers' wives, and their children.

Do the children at your place go to school?
Yes, they do.

How educated are you?
I finished my schooling and did my first year in college.

How does your family make a living?
My brothers run a barber shop. They do hair cutting for men.

Do you have access to good schools and hospitals?
Yes, the children go to a private school, the government hospital here is fairly ok. We manage.

Any problems that you face that you would like to share?
People in my family have always been curious in the reason for my bachelorhood. But I tell them that I prefer my job at the shrine, if I had other lives, I would still prefer the same, it is an honour for me to be here.

What is so special about this that you have given up everything?
The performance of music for the love of Imam Husain and other martyrs who were killed in the historic event of Karbala (Iraq) is so moving that if you also stayed to listen to it, you would also become an ardent follower of Shah Latif.

Interview 4: Mohammad Shakoor, Assistant Manager, Auqaf Department

Since how long have you been working here in Bhit Shah?
It has been 8-9 years since I have been here

Is there a special education requirement for working in the Auqaf Department?
No, not really.

What are your education qualifications?
I have a matriculation (high school). Then I studied for unit clerk.

Where else have you worked in Auqaf?
I was working in Tando Mohammad Khan before this. I have worked in Peshawar and Lahore as well. I worked at shrines and Auqaf properties like Shrine of Shah Yakeek.

How does the Auqaf operate?
The main administrative body of Auqaf is in Hyderabad. We only look at the management of the shrine of BhitShah.

What type of maintenance do you specifically look at here at the shrine?
Cleanliness, broken physical elements of the site, lighting etc.

Are you aware of any history of the Auqaf?
No, not particularly, but I understand that many things materialized during the time of Ayub Khan and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. But I just follow orders really, I don't know much.

Why do you prefer to work with the Auqaf?

I applied for a government job and I was more interested in working with the Karachi Port Trust. But I was assigned to work with the Auqaf. So I am just doing my duty. Government jobs are based on posting. I have been appointed previously at the Shrine of Shah Yakeek, also in Khyber Pukhtun Khua (KPK) Province.

Interview 5: Mohsin, at Shah Latif Foundation Complaint Center
What kind of work do you do at the Shah Latif Foundation?
There is a complaint center, a medical camp across the public square, mainly under the Shah Latif Foundation. Also some facilities are under construction in the town.
What is Shah Latif Foundation?
Shah Latif Foundation is founded by Syed Waqar Husain Shah, the Sajjada Nashin of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai. It aims to make better the experience of people coming to the shrine, to cater to their essential complains and needs. The medical camp and the complaint center do exactly that.
We have plans of putting dustbins in different parts of the shrine. By gesture, he showed me a sample of the dustbin lying in the corner of the room.
We are also constructing a four storey building on northern side of the city, which will include a tourist resort and a music school.
Apart from that, in our recent meetings, the family of the Sajjada Nashin wants to make free the use of washroom, bedding and shoe keeping. At the moment, the various facilities available at the shrine have to be paid for.
How much are the charges for the current use of these facilities?
The washroom costs Rs. 5 per person, per use and if you are here with family, it can go upto Rs. 100. Free use of washrooms will allow the city to be cleaner, he said reflecting. The shoekeeping costs Rs. 10 per pair of shoe.
What kind of complains do people usually come to you with?
Stealing was a problem until some time back, now we have managed to address that and its reduced to an extent. Cleanliness is a major issue that people come here to register mostly, just yesterday out of 6 complains that we registered, 5 were about cleanliness at the shrine. Apart from that, women issues are also commonplace (he meant harassment by his gesture).
The initiative of Shah Latif Foundation has made a difference in the environment at the shrine.
Since when have you been working here?
Since one month.
Why do you prefer to work here?
I used to work at a small grocery store before this, then I found work here. I get better paid here and I like the work.
Where do you live?
In Bhit Shah.
How many people are there in your house?
I have 2 sisters and one brother and my mother. We live together.
Are you the only working member in your house, or do other people work as well?
I am the one who supports the family.
Do you have access to good schools, hospitals and other essential facilities in the city?
Yes, the Rural Health Hospital (PPHI) is good here, they also do surgeries here, so its sufficient I suppose, but I have nt had the need to use it much.
How is the infrastructure availability in the city, like electricity, water, gas?
Everything works ok, except for the water. The water in the city is not good, its brackish and I have heard it causes Hepatitis B. The water at the mazar is comparatively better.

Interview 6: Shoe keeper – He was very busy so I just asked him a few essential questions regarding the number of people who come at the shrine. While the shrine has four entrances, one shoekeeper sits at the main entrance of the shrine only.
What is the usual number of people that come to the shrine everyday?
About 300.
What about Thursday evenings?
About 1000.
And on the Urs (death anniversary of Shah)?

About thousands, even hundred thousand. Its too many people and difficult to keep count. Many don't leave their shoes here but take them off and carry them with them, or have their own people or servants take care of them.

There is as such no record keeping for the number of people who come to the shrine. The estimates given by shoekeeper seems more reliable as he numbers the pairs of shoes he keeps. By way of circulation of these numbers, I thought his calculation of this number should be closer to accurate.

xiii.   **Residents of Bhitshah: Interviews**

Murid (Journalist – print media in Sindhi covering Bhit Shah, Resident of Bhitshah)

20/12/14

Tell me something about yourself for starters.
I got an undergraduate degree in Fine Arts from Sindh University and then cleared first year of Masters in Media Studies from Sindh University.
Since when have you and your family been in Bhit Shah?
My great grandfather came and settled in Bhit Shah.
What do other people in your family do?
People in my family do various types of work including government service, agricultural practices as well as running a shop. 3 of my cousins are working in the press. The new generation has a greater variety and changes in profession from the old generation.
Where do you live in Bhit Shah?
We live in Bughio Mohalla, it is bigger in size than other neighbourhoods of Bhitshah.
Can you tell me something more about your city and a history of how it has developed?
There are four old mohallas in Bhit Shah; Pir Mohalla, Shaikh Mohalla, Bughio Mohalla and Latif Mohalla. After the floods in 2010, Bhitshah grew toward the north with katchi abadis (temporary illegal settlements). The old mohallas in the city have an open drainage system.
Miran Mohammad Shah (represented Sindh in the National Assembly before and after partition) got the main roads for Bhit Shah made. It was during his time that the auditorium, museum and other facilities were built under the Bhutto government and Bhit Shah Cultural Center.
During the Bhutto government in 1980s, craftspeople like Kashi, Jandi, Ajrak, Susi and Khaadi were invited to settle in Hunarmand colony. The housing area was planned specifically for the families of the crafts people. There were a total of 75 quarters (housing units) in the colony. Only the Jandi and Ajrak crafts people came and settled here. The rest did not stay because they were not facilitated.
The Ajrak crafts people used to live at Nasarpur in Matiari for example, next to the river. Their work requires use of water several times in the process of dyeing and fabric printing. Jandi workers have come from Kalot, Bhanot.
The Bhutto government had a vision for developing the town of Bhit Shah into a cultural center.
Sindh Small Industries Corporation (government body dedicated to promoting handicrafts and cottage industries in Sindh) was set up and shops were built in a line on the main road for the display of handicrafts.
How is the mazar used politically and socially? (What is the mazar for the city of Bhit Shah)
Politicians use the mazar to gain popularity and popular vote and support. Marvi Memon and Amin Faheem visited the mazar last year and are good examples of this. Apart from that, rallies of social tragedies are often taken out at the mazar. Examples are the rallies that have been taken out for the victims of terrorism in Peshawar attack a couple of days back. Rally was also taken out for the Hazara victims in Quetta. The rally starts and ends at the shrine usually. A rally was also taken out against Taliban – Rasool Bakhsh Soomro.

What is the main source of income for the people of Bhit Shah? Is it an agriculture based economy in the town mainly?
There are agricultural lands all around the town of Bhitshah, but they are owned by landlords like Jamots, Saadats (meaning Syeds, including particularly family of Bhitai) and are not the main source of livelihood for people living in the town. Most people living in the town depend on tourism. The common person here makes a living out of this.
How good is the infrastructure of the town, like drainage, water supply?
The drainage system as was made in the 1970s is the same and continues as such. The water supply in the town is poisonous, it is undrinkable. We mostly bring water from certain points in the town where it is

clean and sweet. This water is usually from wells or boring water. In 2008, a major plan was approved and budget allocations made for infrastructure development in Bhit Shah. Under this, water supply lines were to be put underground; roads were broken in several places and then left as it is. The existing water supply in some places that was clean was also disrupted because of this work. The town suffered more than it received.

How about schools and hospitals?

I went to a government school and turned out fine. The public schools are still running fine as far as I know. The town has a good college, Bhitshah college. It is a growing trend these days to put children in private schools.

Asif Zardari announced the project of Sufi University in 2011. The land deal for the making of the university however, never got finalized. The university enrollments and admissions started and it functions now within the premises of the Bhitshah Public High School. It is a project of SZABIST[234], but much of it remains on paper unfortunately. Such developments are good news for Bhitshah. Institutions bring development to the town and it becomes known for some of its unique features like these.

What are the major issues that are faced by this town?

Bhitshah is a politically disputed territory like Kashmir. It is stuck between two factions, between Hala as the town committee and Matiari as the district representative. When we go with complains about the various issues in the town of Bhit shah to Hala as the town representative of the region, we are asked to get permission from Matiari being the district representative and vice versa.

The Jamots of Matiari and the Makhdooms of Hala do not get along politically and Bhit Shah makes up a large region and population for which none of the two make any decisions. Politically, this is a 50 year old disputed. (he sounded emotional and frustrated) …. The people of Bhitshah are *darbaris* (he carried on), meaning they are those people who sit in the king's palace, put their hands together in submission and accept everything as given.

In 2011, Bhitshah with the presence of the shrine became a center for the receiving of the IDPs (Internally Displaced People), the flood victims. Open grounds everywhere were occupied and temporary accommodations were supplied by various parts of the province. We conducted a survey related to this as well. Later the major public grounds were cleared and proper settlement area was allocated for the IDPs who wanted to settle here in Bhitshah.

Sada Husain - HANDS NGO worker, Resident of Old Hala town

20/12/14

Sada Husain works at HANDS, a non-government organization (NGO) oriented to rural education, health, social development and womens empowerment. The organization is spread across the country in about 35 districts and is well networked. Their website www.hands.org.pk/ gives details. I visited the NGO located on the main highway close to Bhitshah. I told them I was interested to know about their work in the small towns particularly Bhitshah and adjacent rural areas. They were very accommodating and offered to take me around in their van with a main worker to show me exactly what they do and where within Bhitshah. Sada Husain accompanied me. We visited Bhitshah High School and the small office of Bhitshah Youth Organization (BYO) that HANDS has supported the educated youth in town to form. We also visited a private school in town and met the principal. HANDS particularly held workshops and and programmes with the public and private educational institutions in town. On the way Sada shared his experiences and opinions about the social context. This was informative. The following three interviews were conducted with the HANDS assistance, in half a day altogether moving through multiple destinations in town.

On the way, Sada related an incident that he experienced while working within the town of Bhitshah, spreading the awareness and vaccination of Polio in the households in the town.

SH: We were motivating the families and households in Bhitshah to agree for polio vaccination for their children. He was moving around with a team that was simultaneously giving the vaccine drops to children whose parents agreed.

He related: A fakir was refusing to allow his family children to take the polio drops. His father was a hakim (desi doctor) and could cure diseases through traditional methods and medicines and what he could not, Latif Baba can cure. The fakir further insisted, 'For all ailments, Latif Baba is enough.' Sada

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[234] SZABIST: A well known educational institution called Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology, located in several prominent cities and towns in Sindh. It is named after the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader who is much respected in the region for his political initiatives and works.

tried various arguments and explanations of the advantages of the vaccination, religious contradictions to all what he said. But the fakir refused completely.

The cousin of the Sajjada Nashin of Shah Latif was also working for HANDS, so Sardar asked him to join them for help in making the fakir agree. The fakir sat in his cushioned seat on the floor with the historic music instrument (*tambura*) in his hand looking down.

The two men with their team sat around the fakir offering arguments to convince him. Finally Sardar introduced the Sajjada Nashin's cousin saying he is the grandson of Bhitai and asked, 'would you listen to him?' The fakir on hearing this, stood up and bowed his head, put his hands together and bent to touch his feet, told him to please come and sit at the cushioned head seat. His sudden change in behavior and acquiescence to allow his children to get as much vaccination as required was startling. The fakir offered the relative of Bhitai even the lives of himself and his family, if he asked. Syed Shujaat (Sajjada Nashin's cousin) asked him not to embarrass him.

The story was much revealing about the strong faith of fakirs in Shah Latif and his family.

Waqar Husain, Boys High School Teacher and Resident of Bhit Shah

20/12/14

Sada asked Waqar to explain to me of the recent Life Skills Basic Education Program (LSBE) that the school agreed to conduct with HANDS. He introduced himself and said,

Under this program, we make students aware of sexual harassment practices and attitudes that encourage and discourage them. The issue is an important one within the semi-urban/rural context of the region, Bad practices like cigarette smoking, hanging out with bad company and various other are discouraged that can lead to harassment.

Is the Sufi University located here? I saw a sign board before we entered the campus.

The Sufi University started admissions last year and is currently running its first second semester. While the plan of the opening of the university were approved in 2011-12, the land allocation never got approved. The management committee for the university at Bhitshah was motivated enough to start off the university within the Boys High School Premises.

Waqar teacher is also doing a masters himself from the university. It is his second semester.

Can you tell me something about your town.

Bhitshah has four old mohallas. In Pir Mohalla live mostly Syeds or Muslims who are believed to be descendants of Prophet Muhammads family, in Latif Mohalla lives the labour, in Shaikh mohalla live people who do jobs, and in Bughio Mohalla live people who are shopkeepers mostly. Most people in Bhitshah earn no more than Rs. 5000/ (40 Euros) a month.

What is the role of the mazar in the town of Bhitshah? What does it stand for?

I also go to the mazar with my family every 15 days. I have four children and I take them along.

In my opinion, while different people come together at the shrine, it also acts as a divider in Muslim society as there are certain Muslim sects like Deobandis, Wahabis and Ahl-e-Hadis that do not believe and go to shrines and consider it to be sinful. It is mainly the Ahl-e-Tashi and Barelvis among others who visit shrines.

Abdullah: Youth Program, 20 – 21 years of age; Resident of Bhitshah

20/12/14

Abdullah has a Bachelors degree in Electrical Engineering and graduated in 2012-13 from Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, Jamshoro. The university is located about 1 hour away by car. He works for the Radio Pakistan, Bhitshah FM 93.5 and has received a national award for good hosting.

He has also participated in the Life Basic Skills Education Program of HANDS in making young boys and girls aware of bad practices and attitudes of harassment. He is the vice chairman for the Bhitshah Youth Organization, this is supported by HANDS for various activities. Their organization is oriented to promoting a healthy, peaceful and educated environment. Their fundamentals revolve around cleanliness and healthy environment promotion, and projects supporting peace initiatives, as well as helping young people find career orientations.

A: One of our projects that we worked with HANDS on was about cleaning up some of the major streets in the town. HANDS promotes these initiatives by organizing group formations of about 20 people in one group. Our group consists of the educated young people of Bhitshah, who are graduates of or studying in LUMS (Lahore University of Management Sciences), Sindh University and Mehran University. We decided to organize a cleaning week and clean the streets of solid waste. We contacted the TMA (Town Municipal Authority), wrote letters asking them to pick up garbage from certain points in the city.

Eventually we asked for a tractor so we could do this ourselves when the authority remained indifferent to our pleas and suggestions. We suggested the placement of dustbins in certain spots to make this effective, however, we have received no support from the authority so far and whatever they have managed to do has been of their own will.

Our observations include that the sweepers appointed by the municipal authority are not checked enough and clean only some parts of the city or where the wealthy and the *saadat* live. Half of them do not come to work at all.

Another project that we undertook under the youth organization was offering all kinds of support for the putting up of a seminar on career planning. The seminar was actually organized by a NGO network including Youth Empowerment sector, Hunar Foundation (a private vocational training school run on donations), Habib University among others. I feel such seminars are badly needed for the youth so they can make effective decisions when planning their careers.

We also conducted a protest campaign at the shrine against the Peshawar terrorist attack last week. We held banners and lit candles in memory of the victims of the attack.

Is the mazar a good place for social activities?

Yes, it is. We had also started our clean city campaign at the shrine. The mazar itself was quite dirty mostly. People go there in ablution, yet when walking there, there comes a point when you feel you are no longer clean. The Auqaf employs a cleaning staff of 24 people for cleanliness but most of them don't work properly.

Yet another project, that I am very keen on, [Abdullah told me enthusiastically] is the shifting of the location of the bus and chingchi stop.

[Abdullah's friend, Naveed joined us. Abdullah introduced him as a graduate of Sindh University and told us that he also works with the Pakistan Peoples Party.]

Do your connections with the political party support you in your endeavours?

N: We do have connections and know people but the party is not interested to support us in our work for the town of Bhitshah. I am an active member of the Pakistan Peoples Party, however, the party refused to support me for any such activities and social work.

How is the quality of the amenities like hospitals in Bhitshah?

A: The main hospital in Bhitshah is the Rural Health Clinic (PPHY). This is a semi government facility where the land is owned by the government but the health facility is privately run. I was also interested in maintaining checks and balances and estimations for the facility in terms of the demand, its current range and quantity of facilities offered and the future growth in demand.

N: The Bhitshah youth organization works with other NGOs like PEACE, PREACH and HANDS. Ours is at the moment not a registered organization. Nevertheless, it consists of motivated youth of the city.

Sada then suggested we move to our next destination as we had someone waiting for us.

Asif Rajput, Principal of New English City School (private); Resident of Bhitshah

Do tell me about the school that you run.

It is a private school including primary and secondary high school. There is an average of 25 students in each class with 90 percent of the students paying Rs. 450/ - Rs. 550/ depending on whether they are primary or secondary level. 10 percent of the students are on scholarship, those who come from meager backgrounds. Unlike other schools in Bhitshah, ours is co-education (boys and girls together). The school is located in a three storey building on one of the main streets of the town coming from the shrine. It is a three storey building with the school on the ground and first floor and a tourist resort on the upper storeys.

What are the major issues that you face?

There are barely any resources in the town that can be accessed for teacher training. Apart from that, the importance of education is not reinforced by parents from the households that most children come from. There are issues like keeping books clean, finishing homework on time, general cleanliness and hygiene etc. But the school with the teachers try to deal with this in whatever ways that they can manage, grooming students mentoring and preaching the importance of basics.

07/02/15

[I visited Asif Rajput later again. We had a short conversation that we recorded at the school office.]

Asif Rajput: Sufism is mostly supported by Shias. All raagis are Ahl-e-Tashi. Besides that, there are many deobandis[235] here too.

Even in Bhitshah?

Yes, there are many deobandis in Bhitshah too, there is a jamaat / community center here. The center is not yet constructed but it will be soon. Deobandis get a lot of funding from Saudia and other places. Yes, Deobandis and Ahl-e-Hadis both receive funding.

Do people of Bhitshah move out of the city, migrate out, do you know of such people?

I don't know of any such people who are of Bhitshah and have decided to leave, unless they have a serious problem. There is no such trend here.

Is it easy to find work in Bhitshah?

You do find work here. Bhitshah is not like Karachi, Lahore, there is no system of factories or industries, but there are labourers and cottage industries. Shop keeping is able to support livelihoods easily, in my opinion. With Shah Latif's presence in the city, the year is active through out for tourists. Weekly and monthly activities and customs call for attractions and for local tourism. Sao Sumar every month attracts people from all villages around. People from different classes come here. Shopkeepers earn with this. Informal salespeople also make money.

How poor are people? With recession and rising expenses, it must be difficult for the people of Bhitshah.

People are not so poor. The cycle of life continues. Nobody sleeps without food here. Commerce runs through the year because of mazar. Many people living around the town grow their own food. In the floods of 2007, many people have come from Larkana and upper parts of Sindh and settled here. There are migrations that have happened into the city.

Mubashir, 2ⁿᵈ year college student

20/12/14

Mubashir is a leading participant in the Youth Action Social Committee (ASC) to give free tuitions with some other friends who are also college students. These tuitions are for school students especially those who are enrolled in government school and do not attend school. Since the education is free, the students enrolment remains even if they remain absent for long. Mubashir with his friends targets this particular group of boys and gives them pep talks, motivating them to attend school, giving them benefits of education for their future prospective careers. They also help the boys with whatever issues they have in studies. The tuitions are conducted every Sunday within the English City School premises. Mubashir is happy with the results so far. He says many boys have started going back to school and his class size has increased to 50 students. The students are offered incentives like free snacks and juice. They are allowed to bring their friends with them.

These interviews gave a very positive and optimistic side of the youth in Bhitshah who while living in a small town are progressive, networking with various NGOs working within their range in Sindh and even Karachi, with facebook and internet networking. The above interviews focused on the non-government organizations in town, striving at multiple levels toward social development. My next two visits in Bhitshah town were to be workshops of the traditional skilled craftspeople. The crafts included Ajrak, blockprinting and dyeing of textiles and Jandi, traditional lacquered colorful woodwork.

Abdullah at the Latif Ajrak Center – shop with the workshop attached.

Abdullah acquired the premises for the *ajrak* center in 1983. Government properties were given out to crafts people on the main road to the shrine, for display and workshop space at the back. Housing allocations in Hunarmand Colony, also referred to as Artisans Colony, across the road were also made for various different types of crafts persons and their families.

At the Latif Ajrak Center, there were about 10-12 people at work when I visited. Abdullah told us that they also train people and give tution as well. Students from textile universities in Karachi and Hyderabad also come here to learn and understand the process of making Ajrak. They work with various NGOs like Ahang and take orders from boutiques in Lahore, Hyderabad and Karachi.

Ajrak is made from natural dyes and chemical dyes. The various natural dyes are extracted from certain plants like indigo, eucalyptus, turmeric and pomegranate. These make blue, green, yellow and red

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[235] Deobandis are a Sunni (non-Shia) Muslim sect, with a strict approach that does not believe in Sufi values mostly. They have settled in Bhitshah largely for economic reasons.

respectively. These are cooked for a certain time and made strong with addition of some chemicals. The entire process is manual.

Abdullah's family also participates in the process of making ajrak, extracting dyes. He says his family cooks dyes alongside food for the lot. "There are 12 people in my house. All my family members assist in this work."

12 shops were allotted by the Bhutto government in 1970s along the length of the main road of Bhitshah. These do similar works on textiles ranging from dyeing, blockprinting, ajrak making and also tailoring. Most shops have display areas in the front and workshops at the back or on upper stories.

Abdullah says ajrak making is difficult and specialized work. His father and grandfather and ancestors also did the same work. The technique has been passed on over generations. It has a good market demand. "Everything we make sells." They basically operate in wholesale, and sell to various big shops and NGOs for retail sale and distribution at cultural events.

In the making of ajrak, each cloth goes through ten different people applying different techniques varying from basic precision marking, light backdrop block printing, dyeing, several stages of block printing with different colors, and drying until the final product comes through.

Of the basic problems in the city life, he said the water in the lines is not good. They bring water from the mazaar for drinking and cooking purpose. The water is sweet there and drinkable.

Khamiso Khan - Lacquer woodwork; Jandi workshop

Khamiso Khan has been in Bhitshah since 32 years now. His family settled here during the time of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto when the Hunarmand Colony was built in 1975. Z.A. Bhutto had a vision to make the city of Bhitshah into a cultural center. A Bhitshah Handicraft Jandi Cooperative Society was made and registered in 1979. The workshop for jandi work was made under this. This is about ½ acre plot of land with a building and the open space being used for the various processes of the work including wood cutting, moulding, painting, refining, finishing happening in the outer semi-covered porch and the joinery work and storage of finished and unfinished goods in bulk inside the building. The original funds received for this work including the construction of the workplace etc. was Rs. 2300,000/ (18,400 Euros). The funding stopped in 1981. The plot for the workshop was donated by the government. The building was constructed with the fund received. Later the crafts people pooled in money to upgrade or buy new equipment.

[Khamiso showed us around the workshop and explained the process of the work] 'We use Bhan wood for this purpose. This is special wood for this work because it absorbs colors as well. The colors used are unique. Such work is also done in India and China but the colors and techniques used here are unique. The finished product shines and looks like glass. Nobody can tell it is wood.'

They make various furniture products including entire bedroom furnitures, indoor sofa swings, beds, charpoys (local bed consisting of a wooden frame and thick jute strings), chairs, office tables, home furniture and decoration pieces. About 3-4 people work on a swing for instance. One charpoy can be made by one person a day at the rate of Rs. 600/, sometimes more. The rate is for the product and not for the time spent. The best quality work is given for orders received. He says you cannot trust anyone selling anything at shops. That is because the wood is painted over. If the wood is broken or defective from anywhere, the customer can never know. He showed us how to tell the difference in the paint that made the top layer. One decorative indoor swing can sell from Rs. 15000/ (120 Euros) to Rs. 75000/ (600 Euros) depending on its quality. This furniture is popular and sold all over the province of Sindh.

The workshop was a place for wholesale production of jandi products.

Incomplete initiative: Of the 75 plots allotted to artisans, 20-25 plots are now owned by them, the rest sold off their property and left. This was due to incomplete execution of plan. People left because they did not have facilities they needed and had better prospects at other places.

The Hunarmand Colony is a planned neighbourhood, built by the government for artisans. Three different types of houses were constructed in terms of size and layouts. The houses on average cost about Rs. 52000/ (416 Euros) and were payable at installments as low as Rs. 200/ (1.50 Euro)

Jandi work is also done in Old Hala, Khankot and some other places in Sindh.

The problems that Khamiso Khan identified in doing this work can be listed as:

1) The wood comes from other places and we are running out of it. There are no policies or plans or private initiatives for looking at this.
2) There are barely any display centers within Bhitshah. People place orders and then sell them at high rates at other places. The plan of Bhutto as originally conceived was not completed.

3) Political issues hang unresolved. The people employed in the government, under cooperative society take ownership of several things like machinery and charge rent for it from workers. However, the workers had bought the machinery off their own limited resources and not their funding.

4) The artisans no longer receive any support from government. I have written letters for years to Chief Minister, Chief Secretary, Sind government, MNAs and have never received any replies.

5) The children of most artisans do not study, are not educated and unable to project bright future prospects for the craft.

Both his own children are educated with bachelors and masters degrees and he himself also works in Hyderabad in the Education Board.

xiv. Shopkeepers on Dargah Road

1.   At the shop, selling toys and jewellery on the main Dargah Road (the road that makes the main pedestrian entrance to the shrine.

Shopkeeper: Omar about 42 years old

What are the best months of the year for sales?

During Urs and Eid.

Where do you live?

Vasant Bughio Mohalla (walking distance from here)

Where do you bring the goods for the shop from?

I bring them from Hyderabad (2 hours by drive)

Do your children go to school? Public or private?

They go to the government school.

How many people are there in your house?

There s my wife and my younger brother and three children.

Do other people in your house work as well?

My younger brother has a tyre shop.

Are there good hospitals, schools and other facilities in your area?

The government hospital in Bhitshah is quite ok. It is good enough.

Do you get electricity, water, gas properly?

Yes, its good enough. Thanks to God.

Any other problems that you face and would like to share with me?

No, everything is fine, thanks to God.

Do you know of any organization that works for social welfare in the town?

No, none.

Since when have you been living in Bhitshah?

Since my childhood.

Has this area changed a lot over the past few years?

Yes, shops have become permanent, with proper roofing. About 30 years ago, they seemed informal.

2.   Shopkeeper: Riyaz of 22 years of age

Education: 12th grade / College

Shop location: Close to the entrance of the shrine

Selling items: Decoration pieces from Hyderabad, Chinese products

Since how long have you had your shop here?

Since 12 years.

What is the best time of the year for the shop?

During Urs of the saint, and the Eid

Where do you live?

I live closeby. I walk to my shop.

Do your children go to public school or private?

They go to private school.

How many people are there in your house?

2 sisters, 4 brothers of which I am the eldest. And my mother and father.

Do other people in your house work as well?

No, this shop is owned by my family and I run it.

What would be your average monthly income?

About Rs. 20000/

Do you have good schools and hospitals in your town?

Private schools are better than government schools. Hospitals are not too good, but we manage. For major health issues, we have to go to Hyderabad.

How about infrastructure such as electricity, water and gas? Is everything good and working well?

Loadshedding is regular for electricity, but that's normal for the country. The water is not good, its not sweet.

Do you know of any institutions or organizations that work for social welfare or solution to people's problems?

None.

How has this area changed over the past few years?

Before 2007, too many people used to come here, now things are expensive, the numbers of people coming to the town have gone down generally.

3.   Female vendor sitting close to the mazar entrance with a group of other women selling hand made colourful toy goats of stuffed cloth. There was no shop as such, the produce was displayed on the floor of the landing that led to the entrance of the shrine.
Where do you live?
I live in *katcha* (temporary) housing… we came to Bhitshah from surrounding village during the flood in 2010.
Do you come to the shrine everyday?
Yes, we come everyday at 7 pm and stay until 10 pm to sell all toys. We make toys in the morning, take care of the children and cook food. Then arrive here by evening to sell what we have managed to make.
Do your children go to school?
My children don't go to school, we cant afford it. The boys stay at home, the girls get some charity from people.
How are the hospitals in the area?
There has been no need to use them as such, so never tried.
Do you get the infrastructure gas, electricity and water?
No, we live in basic dwellings, there is no infrastructure there.

4.   Shop selling handicrafts
How old is your shop?
We have been here since 16 years now.
And since when have you been living in Bhitshah?
Since 25 years, I was born in Bhitshah.
Where do you bring your shop items from?
From Karachi and Hyderabad.
What are the best times of the year for sale?
The Urs ofcourse, that's once a year, but apart from that, Bhitshah is a good place for selling, Half the week is busy with local tourists coming from outside the town, that's Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.
Where do you live?
In Bughio Mohalla. That s one of the oldest mohallas of the town.
Do your children go to school?
Actually we have been living in Karachi since 10-12 years, they go to school there.
Why did you move to Karachi?
For personal reasons.
Are you happy with the infrastructure and public amenities like hospitals in the town?
The government hospital is good here. The infrastructure all works fine. I have no issues with the town.
What would be your monthly average income?
About Rs. 35000/

5.   Shop selling handicrafts
Since when have you had a shop here?
Since 1970. In 1984, the shops became proper and permanent physically, before that they were temporary structures.
What are the best times of the year for sale?
The eid and the mela (urs)
How much are you able to make in a month?
About 20,000- 25,000/. I have another shop in Sheikh mohalla, behind Malakhra ground.
Do your children go to public school or private school?
They go to private school.
How many people are there in your house?
Besides my wife, I have three daughters and two sons.
Are there good hospitals here?
The government hospital works from 9 am to 1 pm. Private clinics work better, but the doctor goes home at 6 pm. When one has an emergency, such time restrictions make problems.
How is the infrastructure in the town, electricity, water, gas?

There is a major problem of drinking water in the city, the water in the lines is not good. Its contaminated. We use boring in some places in the city, where water quality is better. A Beautification plan was undertaken that also included major works on water supply. 40 crore rupees were allotted for the project, the DCO and Taluka Adminstration of Hala were responsible. I have no clue where all the money went. No one knows, the water problems stand in their place. The government has some corrupt officials. The sewerage system is better in the town, with some of the works that were undertaken. The first phase of the project went well, and then there was some embezzlement. Apart from there, the solid waste disposal is a major issue in the town. The assigned sweepers of the town municipality only pick up garbage from in front of houses of the rich of the town example the families of the pirs, they get extra money on top there. They don't do their job properly for the rest of the town. Hence, there is a major problem of garbage collection in certain places in the town.

How is that you know so much detail about the projects undertaken by the government?

I was working in the local area union council and was assistant to the UC Councilor in 2007, and worked in the decentralized government system for sometime. Things were much better then, the governance system is still new and there is much politics of power between Matiari and the political landlords of the region, that is outside of Bhitshah.

Are you aware of any social organization or NGO that works for the welfare / problems of the people of the town?

There is Wahi Sangrasi, this is a foreign funded organization.

Since when have you been living in Bhitshah?

Since 1962.

How have you seen the area change over the past decades?

The town has grown three times from what it used to be. In 1960s, there was a population of about 15000 / 20000. Things change as towns grow in size. Bhitshah has developed. Projects and infrastructure have been developed in the town. The government has developed the Cultural Center and various facilities with it. Although they are used only on the urs, they nevertheless add to the town's facilities and prestige.

xv.   Women Residents at their residences located within the same neighbourhood of Pir Mohalla

19/12/14

1- Rashida

Rashida lives in Pir Mohalla with her family, a total of 16 people including her husband and his two brothers, 4 sons and 3 daughters. Of her two sons, one is a teacher and another is in civil service in Population Planning, Matiari. The rest of her children go to school. They prefer private school to public school.

Two families, hers and that of her husband's brother share the courtyard. Their children play together in the courtyard. Summers are considerably hot in Bhitshah – the courtyard works well in the long summer months from Feb to November when the family sometimes even sleeps in the courtyard at night. They have been living here for generations.

Their house is big in size. The family has grown over time from 8 people to 16 people and they have incrementally added rooms to accommodate the growing family. They have about 6 bedrooms in their house, two kitchens and shared bathrooms.

Electricity came to the area in 1962. Fifteen years ago gas came (doubtful year). Their residence is an example of one of the better off families in Bhitshah.

They visit the shrine particularly once a week, but usually use it everyday to cross over, access the shopping areas around the shrine. The women mostly stay within the house or visit their friends and family in the neighbourhood. They also visit Hyderabad city (about half hour away) once a month for shopping.

2- Yasmin

Yasmin was married into this household ten years ago. They are 17 people in the house living together in a small two bedroom house.

The central open space was small (not more than 100 sqft) in an L shape. It has a sharp slope that makes it difficult to use it as a surface particularly for sleeping that is a custom in the region. Yasmin feels the house is too tight for so many people, but they don't have a choice. [They have two bedrooms of about 120 sq.ft., a small kitchen of about 30 sq.ft. and one washroom that they share.] Her husband

and his two brothers sell cholas (spicy chickpeas snacks) on the road at different places in the city. These are mobile shops on wheels. While their usual places of putting up the shop is fixed, but if there are any traffic issues, they find another corner close to public access to continue their sale. Their mobile shop is a good example of informal economy of which a large percentage of Pakistan's population is part of.

Yasmin has four children, the eldest of them is 6 years old and is at the moment, the only one going to school. Yasmin is originally from Hyderabad, the second largest city of Sindh province. They go to Hyderabad and Karachi sometimes for recreation over the weekends.

I asked her about their access to infrastructure. There is regular electrical loadshedding every morning in Bhitshah and gas comes less. Their estimated income would be no more than 7000/ (56 Euros) per month.

They visit the shrine once a week, usually Thursdays. Her husband visits the shrine every other day. They as a family, sometimes miss out for a couple of weeks as well. The shrine is closeby and accessible anytime, that the thought makes them missed out, thinking they can go later. So it seemed that this was not such a priority for the poor household.

3- Habib Sheedi, Pir Mohalla

Habib Sheedi's grandfather came as an African slave to Sindh more than a century ago. He fought with Charles Napier – British Governor to Sindh in 1870s until the1920s. Habib Sheedi is a daily wage worker. He has five children who all go to a public school nearby. They are three families sharing the same plot. The house was divided into two parts with separate kitchen and washrooms and a common courtyard. The house was in a dilapidated state. Together there were three bedrooms in the house. The Sheedis work as labourers on daily wage. They usually have no time to go to the shrine. It is not a priority.

xvi.   Focused Group: Educated youth of the city

07/02/15

This survey was conducted in my third trip to Bhitshah involving intensive field work. I felt a need to understand the perspective of the educated youth of the city, since in my previous trips I came across a vibrant youth that seemed motivated to want to improve their town and its various systems in particular that relating to cleanliness, solid waste disposal, health, education.

I decided to structure a questionnaire so I could capture the perspective and aspirations of several young people working and studying in the town. For this, I designed a questionnaire and planned to hold a discussion alongside as they filled their questionnaires to allow them to open up and share ideas and personal incidences and points of views.

A total of 10 questionnaires were filled by the educated youth that I was able to bring together for a focused group discussion, through some networking. The questionnaires were structured and asked questions regarding their career, what they wished for in terms of development in Bhitshah, what were the challenges in achieving this. The targeted youth belonged to one of the few social organizations in the town. The second set of questions in the questionnaire asked about the role of the mazar in the town.

All questionnaires were filled by boys, even though I had asked for female representation in this as well. However, my key coordinator in the process replied that the culture in Bhitshah does not make this easy. Asif Rajput, Principal of New English City School assisted in coordination with the young people and although he intended to ask some of the female faculty from his school to participate, however, since we arrived after school hour was over, the faculty had all left.

Of the 10 questionnaires, 3 were filled by members of the Bhitshah Youth Organization. These were recent graduates about 23 years of age, mostly from Sindh University and had come together under this organization to work towards betterment, facilitation and offering support to NGOs in sectors of cleanliness, health and education, in particular career planning for other youth in town. 5 questionnaires were filled by members of Youth Social Action Committee. These are young, college going students, about 18 years old, mostly in their second year. Their organization, according to their chief organizer formed due to several reasons, including cleanliness and education. However, currently their most

effectively running program is that of motivating the younger age groups towards serious education. One questionnaire was filled by the Asif Rajput himself. He is 31 years old and has a Masters degree in Botanical science. The last one was filled by a friend of Asif, also a principal at a local school, with a Bachelors in Chemical Engineering and President of a religious organization called Islah-e-Muslimeen Pakistan in Matiari District.

Major findings from the interviews
- The mazar is primarily perceived as a place for prayer.
- Other uses of mazar are secondary and are not seen as an objective or is the idea explored as such.
- All interviews however agreed to the use of the mazar as a meeting point / orientation, as a place to meet friends, to take their guests to. The facebook page of Bhitshah Youth Organization also shows pictures of some of their social activities conducted at the shrine as a starting point, for public awareness, for media coverage.
- However, the youth were unable to see the place as one that can be an opportunity used for development.

Assumptions:
My expectations of the educated youth of the town was much more. Perhaps I expected them to be more urbanized.

Transcription of the discussion held with the members of Youth Social Action Committee (YSAC)

07/02/15

[I introduced my self and what I am working on, explaining why I have called them and what I expect from them. I told them that I was working on understanding the social groups who all came to the mazar and what were the various reasons behind it. Is the mazar used for religious purposes only or other purposes as well and I am curious to know their perspectives on this in particular.]
Aqib: The mazar attracts tourists from outside the country. We see tourists here from China, Europe.
Before we start off, I would like each of you to introduce yourselves, what you study and also tell what you plan to do after you finish studying.
Aqib: I want to be an Electrical Engineer. My aim is to get a job in WAPDA (Water and Power Development Authority), which is close to Bhitshah. I like Bhitshah and want to stay close to it. It is peaceful here compared to other parts of the country.
[The others introduce themselves as Lukman, Ismail, Mubashir and Javed. They were all second year students of the same class of Preengineering, except one who was in his first year, preengineering, in Bhitshah College, the main and only boys college in the town.
I mentioned the recent bombing incident in the north of Sindh and in Peshawar and asked them if they thought there is any probability of terrorist attacks in Bhitshah.]
Aqib: Bhitshah has no such inclinations. The people are mostly traditional and living here for long. Strangers become obvious and there is a police station close to mazar for any possible events.
Lukman: There was a small cracker thrown at a bank once, but that was a robbery. Petty thefts do happen in the town, but its safe overall.
Mubashir: Actually, when the floods came in 2010, many strangers from surrounding villages and small towns have come here to live. Since then, the incidences of petty thefts have increased. Before that, Bhitshah was perfectly safe.
How else is Bhitshah a good place to live?
Mubashir: Bhitshah is a good place for tourism. Businesses in the town do well because it is active through the year. The value of real estate in the town and particularly of plots close to the mazar and around the government developed facilities is higher.
There is a good animal market here too.
Do you interact with foreigners who come here? Any idea how people find out about Bhitshah and what really attracts them?
Mubashir: Mostly foreigners who come here are interested in the subject of Sufism. They read something about the history before they come. Recently, I saw some foreigners who came to the Sufi University, then later they were also there at the mazar.
When foreigners come to Bhitshah, how do they inform themselves about the history, traditions, the saint, his poetry etc. Is there any system here through which they can access this?

Mubashir: There is the museum here, but it is small. There is also a library for this. There is also a Press Club that guides people to press related information.

M: Where is the Press Club located? (unaware of this amenity as yet)

Mubashir: It is at the tambura chowk.

I passed around the questionnaires that I had and explained them, told them they could fill it alongside the discussions and my explanation. (I thought the students were young and may not be so articulate, so would need a detailed explanation from me about the expectations and I recorded the discussion alongside.)

M: About YSAC, do you do any other work besides motivational education sessions that you have?

Mubashir (Main Coordinator of YSAC): When we started out, we had quite a few things in mind, but the education motivation sessions have managed to come about successfully. We have also worked on career planning, participated in a seminar. We also wanted to work on health but we haven't done anything on that yet. We have done stage shows, dramas. Our last one was on 'Early Child Marriage'. We had a 3-day workshop on 'Peer Educators'.

Aqib: We got training from Sindh Education Foundation popularly called SEF.

Is that a government organization?

Mubashir: It is a semi-government organization.

Aqib: So they told us to identify problems, and pick up a task and to fulfill it within a stated period of time (3 months). So we were a group of 5-6 boys made an organization and decided to carry out these Sunday classes with young boys who try to skip school. We motivate them to go to school and also give tuitions to students struggling with any subjects. Sometimes we also ask teachers to come based on the input we think is needed.

Do you have any funding for your organization?

Mubashir: there is no funding as such. We pay for things from our pockets. We get returns for it. People, young boys benefit from it.

How many people are there in your organization?

Aqib: We were 6 boys in the core group. One has recently joined the Navy, so we are 5 now. Overall there are about 40 students in the organization. (I believe he was counting the students they manage to call in to their sessions.)

What are the issues that you face in carrying out the tasks that you wish to accomplish?

Mubashir: The old residents of Bhitshah have a bad habit of littering on the streets. The town administration is lazy and do not perform their tasks well. Cleanliness is therefore a major issue for the town.

[I explained the related questions and told them to jot down their thoughts and opinions on the questionnaires.]

Interviewee	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Name	Zohaib Hasan	Imtiaz Husain	Shareef Sethar		Muhammad Asif	Mubashir Hasan	M. Luqman	Aqib Rajput	Mohammad Ismail	Ammar Ahmed
Age	23 years	23	23	35	31	18	18	18	16	17
Education	BSc Sociology	B.A Economics; MPA (Public Administration)	BS (International Relations)	B.Engg	Msc Botany	2nd Year, PreEngineering (Bhitshah College)	2nd Year, PreEngineering	2nd Year, PreEngineering	1st year, PreEngineering	2nd year, PreEngineering
Residence	Shaikh Mohalla	Pir Mohalla	Pir Mohalla	Shaikh Mohalla	Shaikh Mohalla	Shaikh Mohalla	Bughio Mohalla	Shaikh Mohalla	Shaikh Mohalla	Bughio Mohalla
Social Organization	BYO (Bhitshah Youth Org.)	BYO	BYO	Islah-e-Muslimeen, Matiari Dist., President	Principal, English City School, Supporting YSAC through providing space	Youth Social Action Committee (YSAC)	YSAC	YSAC	YSAC	YSAC
Year of joining org.	2013	January 1, 2014	2014	-	2013	2013	2014	2013	2014	2014
PART I										
1 What is your reason for being part of organization?	To contribute to betterment of Bhitshah and its youth like myself	To contribute to Bhitshah's development	To facilitate Bhitshah's development	To work toward correction of Islamic attitudes individual and collective	Supporting social organizations through networking and space provision as he wants development of town and its youth	The aim of YSAC is to create motivation for education among youth	I learn through this organization	To improve awareness about education in the town	To create awareness about education	To create awareness about education
2 What would you like to achieve for yourself?	Looking for work in Hyderabad after graduation		Still studying	Currently Principal of local private school	Contribute to education		Complete studies	Be an electrical engineer	be an electrical engineer	To be a telekom engineer
3 What would you like to achieve for the town of Bhitshah?		Cleanliness and beautification of city, education awareness, career planning seminars	Cleaner city, healthier city, educated city	Interested in education and Islamic preaching of correct, open attitudes	Better drainage, tourism for the town	Motivating young people, career planning opportunities, cleanliness of town	Cleanliness	Clean city and educational city	educated city	clean and educated city
4 What are the major challenges in achieving this?	* explains about the organization in another interview	enrolment issues in university	Hospital needs more facilities; awareness for education		Education and awareness; health issues	Motivating		People of the city are not educated and are not aware of the importance of education	Lack of education in city	
PART II										
7 How often do you go to the Mazar?	when I get time	Weekly	Everyday	3-4 times a week	weekly	weekly	everyday	Thursdays - Weekly	Weekly	Once a month, once a year
8 What are your usual reasons for going to the mazar?	offer prayers	No response	No response	prayer	prayer	Praying, visiting with guests, sometimes with friends	Praying	Prayer	Prayer	With visitors
9 Activities conducted at the Mazar under your organization or any other that you witnessed	1. Cleanliness week in the town, the mazar was a starting point for this 2. Candle rally for Peshawar attack a month back, done by various organizations and students together	Cleanliness week	Cleanliness week	Had issues relating to propagation of message of peace at the shrine, also about women's privacy as their resting hall is open and semi covered. Their organization has never conducted any activities at the shrine.	Religious activities that many people attend	Raags sung = achieve peace	Sufi Music; Dhamaal	No response	Cleanliness week	
	Candle rally					Dhamaal	Sao Samar			

xvii.   Sindhi Scholar: Dr. Tehmeena Mufti

Msc in Sindhi literature

Phd in Sindhi short story [Dr. Tehmina Mufti introduced herself and her background as we sat down in their drawing room at their residence in Jamshoro, about one hour from Bhitshah on the highway on the route from Karachi to Bhitshah. We had spoken on the phone and she knew my reason of visiting her, so she immediately got into sharing what she knew about Shah Latif. Later she shared with me, that after my phone call a few days earlier, she had looked up books on Shah Latif and decided to read up and find the information that she thought would be relevant for my work. As the interview will tell, this talk was quite informative and revealing.]

TM: I have written a book on Shah Latif's work, another book of mine is that on Sachal and Sami[236].

About Shah Latif: He came from a family where Sufism was being practiced. Shah Karim was a practicing Sufi and his father Shah Habib was also a well respected and knowledgeable individual who received many in matters of advice and counseling.

Shah Inayat from Jhok, Nasarpuri were his contemporaries. Shah Inayat was killed during the lifetime of Shah Latif. Shah Latif was an adolescent at the time

Nadir Beg came from Afghanistan and attacked Sindh. Shah Latif witnessed this.

Tanveer Abbasi was a big scholar who analyses Shah Latif's poetry, Shah Latif jo Shairi is a book by him. He writes about these things. Shah Inayat was killed during the Mughal period, they appointed governors in Sindh.

Shah Latif made poetry and composed the music.

I am interested to understand the influence of Shah Latif and his poetic works on Sindhi culture. I have attended a few public gatherings of Sindhis and my observations are that the Sindhi people remember a lot of Shah's poetry and quote him often in public. Do people actually learn this, is it part of the education in Sindh?

Yes, people remember Shah's poetry, it is out of their own interest, not a part of the education.

Nur Muhammad Kalhoro married Gulnar, who used to sing at the khanqah of Shah Latif. She wished to live a life of respect and asked Shah Latif to pray for her. She eventually got married to the ruler and was the mother of Ghulam Shah Kalhoro who was also a result of Shah Latif's prayers. He ruled over Sindh for many years. The Sindhi people really believe in Shah Latif, to them these things mean a lot that Shah Latif prayed for her and she bore a son.

People love Shah a lot, and they love his work just as much. People hold his work very highly, I should nt say this, but after the Quran Sharif itself, the Sindhis hold Shah Latif's Risala high. It is that sacred for the people. If you read the Sindhi newspapers, in various local disputes, if people take the Risala to help solve the problem, they hold it sacred to swear them by it. This is how much they revere his work.

It is one thing to love and another to hold to something sacred. So is it just a deep love for Shah and his work or it is actually sanctity?

If people love something a lot, it is then that they hold something sacred in their hearts. If there is no love, sanctity does not come without it. It has spiritual importance.

GM Syed was a scholar. He gave a concept of Sufia-e-Bazm, in which all these Sufi saints including Shah Inayat, Shah Latif, that annual celebrations of Urs ought to be held every year, so that people revive their love for them, (mohabbat mai jakre rahein – a phrase indicative of the need to keep people captivated in the love and its recollection). Not only Sindhis, but also Punjabis, Urdu speaking, Parsis, people of different ethnicities, groups. Sufis welcome all people, they believe in humanity in general.

Do you also go to the Urs of Shah Latif?

I have nt been for a couple of years, but I used to go quite regularly, also presented research papers in the intellectual forums. I have listed some publications for your research, one is Musa Parvaganza by H.T. Sorley, have you been through this. The word Musa is from Music.

He was learned. He was literate. In the Risala, there are quotations from the Quran, and some words from the Persian language. At that time, Farsi (Persian) language was the main language in use, also officially. So he could not have done this, if he was not literate. He knew Arabic well, as he understood the Quran.

Shah jo Risalo's interpretation by Dr. Nabi Bakhsh Khan Baloch is a valuable and a well researched publication that you must take a look at. There is a history of Shah Latif's life and various aspects. It has taken him ten years to put it together.

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[236] Sindhi poets

Who were the people who were inspired by Shah Latif? For instance Shaikh Ayaz was a later poet that was inspired and responded in his poetry to Shah Latif's verses. What are the important pieces of work, poetry and artwork that are inspired by Shah Latif?

Shaikh Ayaz writes addressing Shah Latif*, Dekho mein ne tumhara keenoro taura nahi.* The tambura is referred to as the Keeno, meaning he has continued with the tradition and provided modern interpretations. Like, Shah Latif writes for Sassi, *chalti raho, struggle karti raho,* keep moving, keep struggling and don't give up so you find what you are looking for. Shaikh Ayaz writes for Sohni, *naye naye garhe banao, take tum apni manzil tak puhanch sako*. He is modern in his writing, there is a difference between the two. He offers modernization of ways to reach goals. Don't make unburnt utensils, make better ones. Shah Latif in comparison promotes constant hardwork. but Ayaz is modern in his approach. Ayaz says improvise your ways of getting to your destination.

This is what is happening today as the voice of women is being propagated in society in general. Let the women come out and speak for their rights.

Shaikh Ayaz recognized him as a *guru* (teacher). Then there is Niaz Humayun, Imdad Husaini, Sarwe Sajjad Ali, they have all reacted to Shah's poetry. The later poets have used the characters of Shah Latif as symbols in their poetry using them for the current social issues.

Does this come across in art work as well?

Yes yes, there is. Sarjeel for instance, others I don't remember the names. We can meet at Sindhology tomorrow if you have the intention of going there and I can show you a few things around. (She showed me a few publications that she had taken out for me that she thought would be significant to my research)

Can you tell me some more examples like you just told me of Shaikh Ayaz, how the symbols of Shah Latif have been used by other poets and artists?

Shaikh Ayaz has been the main modern poet who has particularly done that.

How has Shah Latif affected or changed Sindhi culture?

During the Arghun period, there was much tyranny. Also the Mughal period. They appointed governors in Sindh. They were cruel to the people. Libraries in Thatta were burned. Their rights were crushed. The governments have never been true to their people. Adam Shah Kalhoro came from Afghanistan.

The various religions that have come to Sindh, including Buddhism, Jain, have all been about treating life with care, so much so that they have preached to not hurt even an ant. The concept of *Wahdat-ulWajood* is about the existence of One and all creation being a reflection or an image of that existence of One God. Rig Ved, Mahabharata, Upanshud and the various scriptures of this region have established traditions here. When the Jain religion came, their people used to move around the streets with broom sticks clearing the street of all insects and life so they would not die as people moved through the streets in their vehicles.

Our grandparents for instance were also very particular about these things. We were not allowed to kill life. For instance, ants that came out of holes in the walls, we were not allowed to kill them but were told to put some salt there so they would go back to their homes and stay there. This was a way of control, no killing was allowed. Our elders believed in these things that all life is a creation of God and must be treated with care.

Kabirdas, Surandas were poets of the time and had an influence on the traditions and the social life of Sindh. Sindhi culture has therefore had a history of living with love for all creation in particular human beings. There is a continuation of this concept in religious and political history of the region. And all those who spoke about *Wahdat-ulWajood* and spoke up for the rights of all creation and of human beings were treated with cruelty by the administrators and government. *Wahdat-ul Wajood* is a concept that is derived from interpretations of the Quran. Sufism came later. Aurangzeb, the Mughal ruler was a staunch religious king and was a follower of *Wahdat-uShahood* which is another school of thought and did not agree with the former.

What does Wahdat-uShahood mean?

it looks at creation as separate from God unlike Wahdatul Wajood that says that all creation is a part of God, that after we die we become a part of Him. Like it is said, Allah is light. That man is created in Gods own image. The Quran also says that when you call God, He is closer to you than your main artery. It uses all these ideas and concepts as developed by Ibn-eArabi. This was done around 1200s.

Shakir: The Ismailis also follow a similar thought. The theory of emanation, kun-faya-kun is the philosophy that is also about the seven stages of creation, using the light of God. But there are contradictions to it, where people have questioned the presence of evil if all creation is an image of Allah.

That is a different subject. Allah has given choice to man.

Shaikh Ayaz is the biggest name after Shah Latif. Then you have Imdad Hussaini, his language is…. he is still alive and has been writing poetry since 1960. *Kirne jairo pal* (Moment like light). Tanveer Abbasi is another important name in the same list. Ustad Bokhari is also another one.

Dr. Sikander: Sindhi language should not be so difficult to learn and understand. If you read carefully and already can read Urdu and Arabic, it is similar in form, vocabulary and grammar.

Yes, it is true, I do understand it if I read carefully, but I have trouble understanding the grammar and some words.

How does the modern Sindhi interpret Shah's poetry?

Educated Sindhis are not fanatics, they believe in Shah s poetry in concept, they are non violent and peaceful. They do not like racial and caste discrimination. In their teachings and traditions, they are told that these discriminations are infact the source of conflicts and disputes. They believe in humanity and love for it.

The conditions have become quite different today. Now these jamaats that have come out, they preach a certain kind of Islam. It has created fear among the Sindhis, their beliefs have not changed as yet as far as I know. But the extremist faces, like Deobandi school of thought create different directions.

It is not that such differences were not there before. There are Sindhis who follow Abdul Qadir Jillani from Baghdad, a Sunni, he has preached the right to kill Shias. But the Sufi saints, as traditional religious thoughts have always dominated the larger perspective of Sindhi society. These oppositions have never gained momentum ever in which people were killed as a result. The tussle has been more with the administrators of the region.

The Sayyids in Sindh are particularly held high in the social hierarchy. In the more urban Karachi, we have never felt or considered them to be a special group, but in Sindh, in books and in practice, the Sayyids seem to be held above the rest of the groups.

The people of Sindh are not literate, they don't have education. When people say they are from the family of the Prophet, they are perfect, no matter they may be doing all kinds of bad things. Sayyids from the olden times, who actually are truly spiritual, are generous and kind hearted, they are not hypocrites. Then there is feudalism in Sindh, they discourage people from education. They want to control social progress for their own benefit.

When we read the poetry of Shah Latif, we understand how the people of Sindh think and feel. Different nations think and feel differently. Shah Latif was able to express the Sindhi common man. He uses the words of the common spoken language yet is able to achieve the depth in his poetry of that of a Sufi poetry. In Shah's poetry, there is the mention of a chadar, called Loi (clothsheet to drape). It comes in the story of Umar and Marui. The loi that is torn, with holes and much worn out. It is the chadar that Marui wears that is given to her by her parents. She says to Umar Badshah, that no matter how beautiful and expensive clothes you give me, I will continue to wear the loi that I have from home. The concept of homeland is linked to the attachment with the loi. Tanveer Abbasi has written about the Loi, that Shah Latif talks about.

Marui says in Shah Latif's risala, that when she dies, she wants the flowers of her country to be put and burned at her grave, so she can be with the essence of the place where she belongs. Such narratives have impacted the nationalism movements in Sindh and individuals of Sindh.

Shah Latif talks about the development and progress of the woman. But the general Sindhi culture does not really reflect that. Why do you think that is so?

There are many reasons for this. The biggest of these is the government, they do not want people to know more than they need to. They do not want them to be empowered. Secondly, our curriculums do not really include such things.

Sindhi women are more hardworking than the men. Since the beginning, but it hasn't really changed much. This hardwork has not really had much impact in the empowerment of women and of society in general.

The NGOs are now documenting the hardwork done by the women and counting them as labour. They are now being projected, the documentation is taking place. The government has to play a major role in education and changing systems, for that there is no political will, because major government officials from Sindh are feudal lords. The awareness is growing due to NGOs in particular in empowering people. But since the government is not doing much, it seems like not much is happening. But changes are taking place. The government is not listening and reacting but the changes in society are taking place.

If there is awareness in society, then why are the people in the government able to get votes and come to power in the first place and not once but again and again.

It is not so simple, it is a vicious circle. People who speak up are harassed by the police and through political influence at different levels.

Secondly, peoples party's (PPP) earlier ideas are still projected and used for campaigning. The PPP administrators are polite and do small things to please the people and are able to fool the people and get votes!

Another thing is that Sindhi people have a weakness. When they love somebody, they don't realize whether they are drowning in love or floating above. This is a weak point for them. They are inherently like this.

Moreover, we have no alternate leadership. The charisma of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto has had much influence over all these years, with his concepts. There has been no comparable leadership.

What about Pir Pagara and Pallijo?

Pir Pagara who sits and smokes all the time. He cannot even do one popular sermon in which people will show up. Pallijo sahb has not been able to organize the party. They are educated but are not organized to work together. Nationalism is also there in the Sindhi people. Inherently, the Sindhi people like to take everyone along.

[She then invited us to join them for lunch and to refresh ourselves. A day later I met her at the Sindhology library, where she suggested some readings for me, to help me with the analysis of the poetry of Shah Latif.]

xviii.   Syed Zulqarnain Shah, Bhitai Research Cell; Resident of Bhitshah.

18/12/14

Syed Zulqarnain Shah, a key steering contact person, in this fieldwork, employee of the Bhitshah Cultural Center is a resident of Bhitshah and Director of the Research Cell at the Cultural Center. Well connected with the provincial cultural department, Zulqarnain is a main person who also receives dignitaries, foreigners visiting the shrine and Bhitshah town, given his appropriate position as a local resident, he was able to connect me to the various fakirs and help in the laying out the network for my field research. This interview was conducted on our first meeting. He introduced himself and told me the history of Bhitshah and Shah Latif as he knew it.

My family has been here in Bhitshah since the time of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai. We have been here for ten generations.

Shah Sahbs family came from Afghanistan's province Firaq. His ancestors came with Ameer Taimur to Delhi. The Taghluqs were the rulers then with Feroze Shah as the king. Their family came to spread knowledge and cultural attitudes. Most sufi saints have come from Central Asia including Samarkand and Bokhara, Iran and Afghanistan (the provinces that are connected to Iran) to the Indian subcontinent. These Muslims who came from Central Asia, had Persian as their language. Hence Persian was introduced as the national language. It was spoken among the people but not popularly written.

Amir Ali and later his son Syed Amir Haider came and settled in Hal Kandi which was a province then. It was a bigger city of Sindh. Jodhpur, a big city of Rajasthan. They came from there.

Shah Mohammad Halo was the ruler at Hala then, his daughter was married to the son of Syed Ameer Haider.

In 1102 Hijri, Shah Abdul Latif was born about 14 km from here at their old residence called Hala Haveli. He was unique among his family members. He would leave his house to wander around in local areas. Two of his brothers passed away at young age. His father had two wives. Of one, the two sons passed away. The other wife had him and three or four sisters. When he was 20-25 years old, he started poetry.

His poetry was not a romantic poetry. He was a good observer and appreciater of the local stories and legends and used these to explain the depths of divine reality. He used the local epic stories to make them into symbols in his poetry, this made him very popular and famous. This eventually came to be known as Shah jo Risalo. It was first put together on paper and compiled in 1207 Hijri.

Maulana Rumi, a saint and a Persian poet, wrote similar poetry and inspired Shah Latif. He was well versed with Rumi's work and was influenced by it.

The first compilation from typewriter in Sindhi was done by a German Scholar, Dr. Armstrong who learnt Sindhi, published the risalo in 1866 AD in Germany.

Sir Charles Napier in 1843 took over Sindh. Then we were connected with Bombay henceforth. The book Shah jo Risalo started getting published and distributed in Bombay.

Shah Latif died in 1752 AD.

1144 Hijri, Shah Latif's father died, he buried him here.

1156 Hijri, Shah Latif died, his will asked of him being buried at the feet of his father. So hence he was buried a few feet away from his fathers grave. The city came about after the death of Shah Latif. Before that, it was just a little hill where he meditated and spent time with his fakirs and made poetry and music.

The height of the shrine from the ground is 18.5'. Ghulam Shah Kalhoro made this shrine. He was borm to his parent after Shah Sahb prayed for them. He was also named hence as 'the servant of Shah' – 'Ghulam Shah'. When he learnt all this, he felt immense respect for the saint and felt dutiful to build this shrine for him after he died and when he was in power.

In 1847, the Talpurs took over from Kalhoro, Mir Mohammad Khan made the walls around the shrine to construct a second public square outside the shrine. He also constructed the domes at the main entrance portal into the shrine. The silver door was made by him. Mir Nur Muhammad Talpur made the well there. For Sindh, it was a big well for the time.

The Musafir Khana dates back to the time of Shah Latif. The langar khana and kitchen also date back to Shah Latif's time. After Talpurs, the British came and in 1932, they connected Bhitshah by rail to other parts of Sindh. This rail line is no longer functioning. The station is about a kilometer away from here. But its vacant now, the system does not function anymore. With the railway, many people started coming here in numbers. Then in 1947, Pakistan was formed.

Syed Miran Muhammad Shah was the first one after partition to construct roads and develop the town. He was the member of Bombay Legislative Council, representing Sindh. Naveed Qamar, MNA at present is the grandson of Miran Muhammad Shah. He was a minister in the past government. Miran Muhammad Shah constructed highway link road to Bhitshah. Hundreds of thousands of people come here. On the urs, about 1000,000 people come here today.

15 October 1954: The foundation of the Bhitshah Cultural Center was put forth by Abdul Sattar Pirzada. This work did not include the renovation of the Mazar and was completed in 1964.

1958: Marshal Law was ordained by Ayub Khan, who henceforth ordered to stop all work relating to Bhitshah Cultural Center. Z. A. Bhutto, minister at the time brought Ayub Khan to Bhitshah and restarted the development work at faster speed. Rs. 3500,000/ was approved first. 1000,000/ was the allotted later.

1959-63: Z. A. Bhutto got the work of the construction of the complex of the cultural center completed. This included resthouse, gallery, funkar hostel, library, park and auditorium.

Kirar Lake goes back to the time of Shah Latif. In his poetry there is a reference to the lake in about 4-5 paraphrases. Zulqarnain Shah recited some phrases of this poetry and translated: 'When it rains, the water goes down the hill and collects into the lake of peace or Karar Lake'.

Until 1800, Pir Mohalla, Shaikh Mohalla, Latif Mohalla were there. The rest of the town developed later.

The dargah is the center of the city. Between the dargah and karar lake is the Pir Mohalla. This is where saadat and fakirs lived – the oldest residents and believers of Shah Latif live here.

1800: After the ground recently allotted to the cultural center as a park, some distance away is the railway station, the area around this was developed later.

Talking about Hunarmand Colony along the road that goes to National Highway developed in front of us. Yakoob Shaheed Kabristan in Shaikh Mohalla in the north is very old, historic. Yaaron Fakir Kabristan is also very old.

The mohalla next to Kirar Lake is called Bughio Mohalla named after Vasant Bughio.

25 Dec 1974: Z.A.Bhutto as Prime Minister approved Bhitshah Development Plan. This included Hunarmand Colony, 100 quarters for local skilled crafts people, also a small airport, watersupply network and construction of big gateways for entrance into the shrine.

1977: The regime of General Zia-ul Haq who enforced Marshal Law. The Bhitshah project could not continue because Bhutto was hanged.

1994: Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto laid the foundation for Bhitshah Mazar Beautification Plan under which Aiwan-e-Roomi with 29 small domes, 150' wide and 300' long was constructed. Marble flooring for the shrine was made. The shopping street at the main dargah entrance was paved. 60 quarters were constructed for musicians at shrine and allotted here.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a strong believer in Shah Latif. Benazir carried on this tradition from her father.

2008: Mega project of Bhitshah Beautification Plan was started by the then PPP government.

The tourism generated due to the shrine is the main source of livelihood for the people of Bhitshah.

There are several big pieces of land around the shrine that are used by people who come with families for temporary accommodation. They bring goats and livestock with them. The meat is cut and cooked and food distributed among the people at the shrine. This is usually an indication of a celebration of having their prayers and wishes fulfilled. The large pieces of land along with some essential built structures on them for accommodation are referred to as Autaq. There is no rent for these places. The food that the families cook and distribute is a kind of payment for their stay. As per tradition, says Zulqarnain, guests do not stay at our houses but at autaq.

Traditional culture in Bhitshah is such that unrelated (blood relations) men in particular are not allowed into the houses of the residents. The guests hence stay at the autaq. Autaqs are run, maintained and managed by fakirs. They are fed by the guests who come and stay here.

Property ownership: 90 percent people in Bhitshah are landowners. Traditionally, people come, make their house and claim ownership. Recent plans after Bhutto is when planned colonies were made, and official ownerships were allotted. [There seems to be no building control at the town.]

4 Nov 1884: First primary school was established in Bhitshah. Napier, Pringle and then Edward Frere did major work in Bhitshah. He came to the shrine, and planned to connect the town with the railway network.

1960: Middle school for boys was established close to Kirar Lake.

1972: Girls Primary school was established.

1973: High school was established under Z.A. Bhutto. I was young then and had insisted on it to Bhutto.

1980: Girls Middle school was established.

1994: Girls High School was made; Boys high secondary school was also built.

My son is part of the student sport club. We are custodians of the play ground, registered and owned by Cultural Center, close to Shaikh Mohalla.

2011: Boys Degree college was established.

2012: The order for the establishment of the International Sufi University was passed. I am a student there. It is my second semester. Tomorrow I have an exam. The Building for the University is not made yet, so it is being run in the High school Building.

The University has three departments. There is BBA, Political Science and Sufism. Except for Sufism, the rest is the same as in Sindh University. Some of the faculty from that university also comes here.

The Rural Health Center is the main hospital in Bhitshah. It has a trauma center.

Naubat Khana is also called Dhamaal Khana: The king of Jaiselmir, Rajasthan when Shah Sahb went there, gifted him with drummers who announce the entrance of the king. They came back with Shah Sahb. The tradition is 300 years old. The *naqqaras* that play even today, they come from the same family. They are played twice a day, before *maghrib* (sunset) everyday for 10 mins and before *fajr* (sunrise). On the two *eids*, special occasions, it is played more than usual.

Traditionally, it is meant to announce the arrival and departure of kings in the subcontinent. There have been many kingships in the region including Rajasthan. The tradition goes back to this time. The gift was meant to show that Shah Latif was not fakir but a king in his own right.

Aiwan-i-Latif, Aiwan-i-Rumi were constructed later. The *takhtgah haveli* of Shah Latif was the place where he breathed his last. This has been beautified and reconstructed. (perhaps under the Benazir regime in 1994)

What was the plan undertaken in the Bhitshah Beautification Plan 2008?

Bhitshah college building was built with 24 rooms in it. The Sufi University is currently being run there temporarily. 5 rooms were built in the Girls High School. 8 crore rupees were allocated for watersupply works for Bhitshah. The lines were laid, but the work was not finished.

In 2010, the work stopped, and remained incomplete. 50 crore rupees were further allocated but no work was done. Last week, the Chief Minister of Sindh came and asked about the work. Shafique ur Rehman, bureaucrat was supposed to be looking after the work. [Z complained]

[I then asked Zulqarnain to identify the major amenities on map for me. We also went around and visited the various important public buildings to eventually put together then town map.

xix.   Deputy Chief Administrator, Auqaf Department Sindh: Jamil Ansari (JA)

At Auqaf office at the Mazar of Abdullah Shah Ghazi, Karachi. (The Mazar is currently under construction)

in the afternoon in April 2015.

[Giving a basic background of the work that I am doing, I told him I was interested to know about the works done, management process that is followed by the Department of Auqaf.]

JA: The administrative department of the Secretary Auqaf Sindh is situated at the Secretariat in Karachi. Chief Adminstrator head office is located in Hyderabad. Sindh is divided into 3 zones for Auqaf Management. Each zone is headed by an Administrator. There are 7 circles in each zone. Each circle has its own Manager. Within each circle, there are usually multiple shrines may be 2 or 3 or more.

Karachi has 7 circles. There are total 80 shrines in Sindh that are under the management of Auqaf. Mostly there is a mosque attached to shrines.

Is that so for all the mazars under Auqaf?

JA: Mostly, yes.

What other properties come under the Auqaf besides this?
JA: We have agricultural lands under Auqaf. In Mirpurkhas, we have 7000 acres of land. We usually give this on lease for 3 years.
What are the boundaries of Auqaf property around the shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi?
JA: This entire block around which there is a road including the parking lot and the shops along the back road is all Auqaf property, same as in Qalander Lal Shahbaz, Sachal Sarmast Mazar, mazar of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai.
Do you have more agricultural lands with shrines in the small towns of Sindh like these.
JA: Most of the agricultural property under Auqaf is at Mirpurkhas, Dargah Lahori Sharif, 7000 acres These we lease out to people for 3 years. Then we have residential plots alongside. These we give on tenancy, the plots are not on any ownership status.
How do you figure who to give on lease / tenancy and who not to? Do the tenants need to have any religious affiliations?
JA: Whoever wishes to. There is no such criterion.
Does all the revenue of all 80 mazars collect together in one account?
JA: There is only one account of the Chief Administrator Sindh. The Managers of the different circles can only deposit and not withdraw from this account. Each Manager has his own collection account. The receipt of the rent and its collection of the amount in the account makes things transparent. Then we have an audit. The government gives an official account in which all the revenue is collected.
How is it decided how much of the revenue is to be spent on the reconstruction and expansion works of which shrine?
JA: We have architectural heritage and history within Auqaf dating back to 300 years. Example the Mazar of Shah Karim Bulri. The Shrine of Bhitai is about 275 years old. Recent construction at Sehwan has finished, done in 3 phases. New facilities include ladies and gents *musafir khanas* (resting halls), washrooms, ablution points, library, dispensaries. The dome has also been reconstructed.
Is this reconstruction paid for from the collected revenue?
JA: No. A PC 1 is prepared, i.e. Project Cost Document on the basis of which the government of Sindh funds such reconstruction and expansion separately as a project. P & D approves the project and the finances approved and reconstruction undertaken. All the revenue is collected in the government account. The money is allotted from it at different mazars for different purposes.
At the Data Darbar in Lahore, I have read that the revenue collected at the particular mazar funds the eye hospital and other medical facilities that are free for all. This obviously shows that the money collected is sufficient enough to do this.
JA: In Punjab, things are different. There are about 400 shrines in the province in all compared to 80 shrines in Sindh. The provincial government funds a lot of activities at shrines as its own. In sindh, such practice is less. Their system is much different from ours. There are 3200 employees in Auqaf Punjab compared to 780 employees in Auqaf Sindh.
I have read their budget report. Since the last 3 years, the government has been paying us in Sindh, granted net. The revenue collected that we receive, out of that we receive 21 crore rupees.
So if I understand correctly, the revenue collected is not used to pay salaries, administrative and development cost. You get a separate budget to pay these.
JA: It is collected and goes to the magistrate. Annually, we collected 15 crores from all of Sindh shrines. We get 21 crores from Sindh government. Our budget to spend is actually 36 crores. We have a lot of expenses. So there is a huge deficit, pending jobs to be taken care of.
Alam Shah, Abdullah Shah Ghazi and Dullah Shah in Karachi are three shines, the revenue of which is collected together and goes to the PMC account (Project Management Committee)
What is the reason of separating these shrines?
JA: They are more revenue generating than the others. During the time of Benazir first government, it was intended that the collected revenue of these shrines would be spent on them. Over time now, Malik Riaz has intervened and offered the reconstruction of the shrine.
Is the Auqaf department an autonomous body then?
JA: The Chief Administrator Auqaf is the sole authority in Auqaf.
(JA offered us water and some cold drinks.)
What is the difference between the management systems of the Auqaf departments in Sindh and Punjab, referring to what you said earlier?
JA: Their salaries are paid by government, hence they have more revenue. With 400 shrines in Punjab, the revenue collected is multiple times more than in Sindh. Here we have two days off officially, in Punjab, there is only a day off. They definitely have a supremacy. (I felt he was referring politically as

well) there is also the problem of law and order and security issues in Karachi. You live here so you know.

You have security arrangements here. So what s the problem?

JA: It is an added expense of Rs. 300,000 for us per month, an annual expense of Rs. 3600,000.

There are mazars like Abdullah Shah Ghazi that generate more revenue than other mazars of Sindh. How is it decided where expansion and maintenance works need to be carried out and when?

JA: We are running in financial crunches. We have shrines that are 200 to 300 years old. They require major works including dismantling and reconstructing. Simple regular everyday maintenance is not enough for them.

Why do you need new construction?

JA: Look at this new construction going on here. You can see the old building here. They will eventually pull it down once the new exterior structure is in place. Now technically they should preserve it. It is heritage as per the ordinance passed. But you live here and know how things work here. Who is going to talk to Malik Riaz[237] and tell him to follow the law. Who can tell him what the law is.

As an architect, cultural heritage should be preserved like in European countries. Example, the Pisa is so cared for, they don't want to dismantle it. In our country, no department does what it is supposed to do. Nobody takes responsibility for things. All blame various factors, people and departments. Our work is that we make a PC 1 and send it to higher authorities about the work we think needs to be carried out. Right now, we have 3-4 dargahs under construction being paid for by the government. Main problem is finance. When the money is there, the required works can be carried out.

What is the usually process of getting reconstruction and expansion works done?

JA: At Sehwan for instance, the Works and Services Department have been taken on to get the reconstruction works done. Usually we give ads in the newspaper and hire consultants to get this work done.

When reconstruction works happen, there are some things that are good that materialize like shrine expansion, better accommodation and circulation of visitors, then there are other things that one may think that it could had been better another way.

JA: If you look at some historic tombs and graveyards like Makli, they are beautiful in proportion, ornamentation. In the olden days, there was one technical person spearheading and managing construction works. The result was beautiful. Now there are many people working when something is to be built, that it is difficult to monitor, maintain a quality standard and achieve good work. There is a shrine whose reconstruction works I have personally supervised in 1998. You should look at this Syedi Moosani Mazar in Mehar, a small town after Dadu on the west side of the Indus River.

So it is not that we cant do good work, we can.

Do some governments support you more than other governments.

JA: Yes it is true (hinting at support of PPP)

Can you give me a breakup of the expenses incurred by the Auqaf last year?

JA: Annual revenue collection vary from Rs. 13 – 15 crores.

This include lease of agricultural lands and rent from shops.

JA: Yes everything; Rs. 3300,000 pension per month, Rs. 6000,000 for monthly salaries. During urs, there is VIP movement, protocol and security.

Isnt that paid for separately by the government?

JA: No, no. It is part of the annual expenses. Apart from that electricity bills of mazar and mosque, gas charges, conservancy charges, water supply and maintenance charges, among many other charges.

There are so many nazrana boxes in big shrines. You must be collecting a lot of revenue.

JA: The way of collecting this is that we have a dual lock system on that. Manager Auqaf of the area and the National Bank Manager at the Head office each have a key. The Chief Administrator Auqaf issues a schedule for the month so they know the designated days for opening the cash boxes. The boxes opened, cash counted and money put in the bank then and there.

Do the Sajjada Nashins also play a role in the shrine management process?

JA: If you have read the Auqaf laws Manual, it says they are not supposed to interfere in the matters of the dargah. We have a Religious Purposes Committee that help with the Management of the Shrine. Auqaf was made to remove the issues being created due to the mishaps created by the Sajjada Nashins. Each Mazar has its own Religious Purposes Committee. It constitutes of 5-7 persons. The

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[237] Malik Riaz is a big private real estate developer who has succeeded over time in providing good quality gated residential and commercial development of large scale. He has political support and the private commercial project (60 storey building) being developed on the plot adjacent to Shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi belongs to ex-President and PPP political party leader, Asif Zardari.

secretary is Manager Auqaf and other people are usually well known, representing various factions of society.

[JA receives a phone call and gets up] I am sorry I have to be somewhere.

We were almost finishing anyways. Thankyou so much for your time. Would it be possible to access the Sindh Auqaf departments budget report and any other publications of the department on shrines and their managements.

JA: There is the Manual that you have seen. The budget reports are confidential. Theres not much but I will look it up for you.

Thankyou! I will call you for that later then.

xx.   Engineer who prepared the master plan for Bhitshah in 2005: Niaz Soomro

04 Jan 2015

Current designation: DG- Parks and Horticulture Department, Sindh.

Previously: assigned the research and preparation and execution for the plan of Bhitshah town in 2005-6

- He researched on the town in 2005-6
- He prepared a PC[238]-1 based on his findings.
- He executed a major segment of the plan until the end of the PPP government.

What were your major findings in your research of the Bhitshah town?

The biggest issue we found was that of the quality of water in the city. The subsoil water cannot be consumed for drinking. It is not of that quality.

We visited the major public amenities in the city including schools in particular and found:

- In the boys high school, according to the headmaster, 1500 students were enrolled, but only 553 seats were found to be occupied.
- In the girls school, 700 students were enrolled, but only 450 seats were occupied. Also we found the students sitting on the window sills of the corridors and the classes being conducted there. Upon asking it was found, there was an issue of lack of furniture and three of their classrooms were locked.
- Bhitshah college had an enrollment of 200 students but only 29 chairs were present. There were no labs in the college and there were only two faculty members in the whole college. We were told that teachers come in the second half from Sindh University, three times a week.

Also Kirar Lake was a mess, there was solid waste disposal being done there, people were using it as a toilet. It was very dirty and quite dry.

The plan:

An addition building was planned and executed for the Boys High School and Bhitshah College. The building was planned with classrooms for 40 students each, with cavity walls to keep insulation from the very hot long summers of Bhitshah. Marble flooring was done. The material used was ensured for long term use and the budget was kept low.

5 new classrooms were added to the Girls High School. The three old classrooms were opened, repaired and whitewashed. There is a practice of putting broken furniture in schools on the roof top. All this was brought to the ground and a carpenter was asked to fix what could be done through little effort. Badly damaged furniture was removed. So out of about 500 pieces of furniture, they managed to restore about 250 – 300 chairs and tables. New furniture was ordered as required.

A detailed topography drawing of the town was made based on which the water supply network for the city was planned. The waterworks pond at the edge of the town goes back to the time of Ayub Khan (1960s). We discovered later that the pond was not lined well and the supply network since then had deteriorated. This pond was repaired and connected from a mains point called Lucky Miner, downstream from Hyderabad. The town of Bhitshah was divided into four sectors, in one of the sectors the work for the watersupply network was completed and executed. Good quality generators were also installed at the waterworks mains. The second sector's work was started but not finished.

This network was also connected to water the Kirar Lake. The beautification of this historic lake was also undertaken. A park was built around it with trees and flowering plants and it was fenced to restrict public access for casual spoilt use, but visual permeability was maintained to allow it to offer a pleasant view to the city. The mosque existing next to the lake was beautified and was often used as a venue for many of our meetings.

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[238] Proposed plan with costing based on analytical findings of major short comings.

I am very fond of plants and horticulture and I introduced various species of plants and trees there that have been original landscape features of Sindh including Cornucopia, also Bouginvillae. Shah jo Bagh along with the various cultural facilities around was also beautified through addition of landscape. The entrance into the town from GT Road Bhitshah was also lined with bouginvillae and various trees to beautify the entrance and make it attractive. A plant nursery was also developed next to the existing auditorium.

About 10-12 crore rupees were spent of the project on all these works, hence there was no corruption and much work was done in less money. I worked with Shafique ur Rehman Piracha, District Commissioner and it was a pleasant experience. The then Makhdooms found out about the money being spent on the city, then District Chief and the Sajjada Nashin. They were all interested in receiving payments from the money allocated. Makhdum Sahb made a bid for the project at a exceeding price of 24000,000/ when the original requirement for the project was only 8000,000 (80 lakh) rupees. This was three times what was required and was primarily for the second phase of the watersupply works of the town. The project was given to them, because of their connections. No work was hence forth done and the money was all given away (lost in corruption).

The mazar I believe was not a part of the plan of beautification of the town. I was also interested to learn of the various constructions that have happened over time at and around the shrine.

The mazar was not a part of this plan. The Naubat Khana and the Takhtgah Haveli were later constructions in 2008 that I know of as the town plan was ongoing then. We were not responsible for this work. But I believe the Works and Services Department Sindh undertook the exercise as they do the architecture planning for many other public projects in the province. Perhaps they could be useful for you.

Thankyou so much for your time.

I took my leave. The interview was useful in getting details of the beautification project that was undertaken from 2005-2008 at Bhitshah as I was unable to access the Project Report itself.

xxi. Manzur Kanasero, Director General Culture and Tourism Department, Sindh

21 Jan 2015

[Interview was conducted at the office of the Director General in Karachi.]

What does 'heritage' mean in your opinion?

'Heritage' is most importantly about history in my opinion. It is from the physical, which needs to be protected.

What about the non-material things like customs, traditions?

Traditions change over time and do not remain the same. The traditions at many of these shrines have changed over time, so they change and cannot be called heritage. The architecture however, is symbolic and representative of history.

What value is the most important in the heritage at the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai?

Historic value is first important; Recreation value, religious value, traditional value - these are secondary;

Where would you place the Architecture value?

The historic value is from the architecture in my opinion.

Do you think it has any education value?

At the shrine, not particularly. People normally go there for their own reasons, which I believe are not educational. But as far as the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif is concerned, that definitely has educational value.

I am looking for any development plans of the shrine. Someone told me that the Naubat khana and the Takhtgah Haveli were constructed later, I was interested to see them, do you know how I can do this?

Well, the Auqaf Department is responsible for the development or any work at the shrine, the Culture Department looks only at the promotion of cultural values like the *Kalaam* (poetry).

In one of my interviews, someone mentioned that there were once plans or ideas to reconstruct the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai in the same manner as Data Darbar in Lahore. Do you know anything of this and do you agree with such developments?

It was discussed in one of the meetings some time back, but it was never taken seriously. I don't believe there is any paperwork regarding this. There are no plans to reconstruct the shrine of Bhitshah. It should not happen also, it is representative of the history and is heritage. It does require expansion of space as more people come there and new structures have been added around it. Such additions need to be sensitively planned, for instance a dome was added over the tomb of the mother of Bhitai on the back

side. Only the women are allowed there. There have also been plans to construct Musafir khanas toward the backside, but that required buying off some property right adjacent to the mazar.

There were also plans to develop the main street intersection that leads directly to the shrine and place some public facilities for travelers and visitors, making the entrance axis grand. Due to political issues, that did not materialize. Such developments however do not affect the actual tombs architecture, but expands space around it, with additive facilities.

The shrines in Karachi however, like Abdullah Shah Ghazi in Clifton and Alam Shah Bukhari on M.A.Jinnah Road have undergone much reconstruction works. How do you see that?

The shrines do require expansion. Abdullah Shah Ghazi mazar is undergoing expansion works and the physical structure will remain there of the tomb.

The management at the shrine is selling out the photos of the new developed shrine, and it shows quite clearly that the inner built structure will no longer be there, the dome will be changed too.

Really? I was under the impression the inner structure will remain and they are developing an envelope around it. If that is the case, I don't agree that the historic structure should be removed.

(The construction of the shrine has been undertaken by the biggest real estate developer in Karachi city, who is very powerful and supported in this particular case by the ex-President. The project started during the time of his presidency and continues. The taboo on the project is something all are aware of including the press.)

What meaning does a place like the Shrine of Bhitai have in modern day Pakistan? Is it a promoter of Sindhi identity or do you see it as a national heritage?

In modern day Pakistan, the education value of the kalaam is important. Its message of interfaith harmony is an important one nationally. The Hindus participate with enthusiasm at the shrine, including food distribution now and then. This is of much value.

Thank you so much for your time Sir.

(Manzur Kanasero was reserved in his interview, spoke less and seemed very cautious in his answers. I understood that his personality was such. He was helpful and shared with me local references and contacts from the town of Bhitshah.)

4. At the Shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi, Karachi city

14 Jan 2015

i. Shabbir, Retired Auqaf Employee

Shabbir has been Auqaf employee for 30 years and now retired but spends a lot of time at the dargah and likes to be a part of the department.

Can you tell us something about the history of the place and its recent construction?

Abdullah Shah Ghazi came to Sind in 700 AD. He comes from the lineage of the Prophet, in particular his grandson, Hasan. At the time, all those who belonged to prophet Muhammad family (referred to as Saadat) were being hunted down and killed by the tyrannical kings then. The Ruler of Sind offered protection to Abdullah Shah Ghazi, who worked as a trader. There were many people who loved to listen to him talk about various subjects, worldly and non-worldly. He hence attracted many followers.

The old mazar structure was constructed in 1946-48. Tile work was done on the mazar through donation from a believer in Nov 1989- Jan 1990 that gave it its previous image of blue and white.

In 1995, Benazir Bhuttos government allocated about 10 crore rupees for the extension of the mazar. Foundation work was done toward the backside. Rs. 5500,000/ were spent on the foundation, through some advance and other private donations. With this money, the foundations were constructed, a fence was constructed around the mazar due to issues of encroachment and a parking space was allocated in the nearby plot. As the government was removed, the money did not come in for the work and it stopped. In 2005, various small constructions around the shrine were demolished to increase size of open space as there are many who come here specially during holidays, in the summer and on weekends.

Recently, when the neighbouring highrise project was announced, Bahria Town (through the big realestate developer Malik Riaz) offered to construct the mazar and the flyover across.

Has Bahria Town merely designed the mazar reconstruction or are they funding it too?

Everything at the moment is being taken care of by Malik Riaz, including design and construction.

What are different contracts that the Auqaf department gives out?
At the moment, there are only two, shoekeeping and parking.
How many people work under Auqaf?
There are 22 people working at the shrine.
Is there a sajjada nashin?
No, Ghazi had no heirs. There was one Nadir Ali Shah who claimed to be a heir, but it was a false claim.
Auqaf has taken over shrines where there are no gaddi nashins as per orders of Ayub Khan in 1960s.
What are the major issues that you face while working here? What kind of complains do people visiting normally come to you for?
The biggest problem that the mazar faces is mainly encroachment on the sidewalks. Many people come to us for complains of petty thefts.
I have heard people talk about saying there are drugs being sold in the hidden at the mazar… Is there any truth in this?
Perhaps this kind of thing happens around the mazar but not within the premises of the mazar. Anything bad that goes on around the mazar also is identified as being in the vicinity of the mazar, but it does not mean that it is happening within the mazar premises. We, at the Auqaf only take responsibility for the ongoings within the mazar boundary. Drinking is also something that happens around the premises. Last year when there were tents at the edge of the mazar and people were living here, (alcoholic) drinks were being exchanged but none of this happens within.
Does the police take care of the security of the mazar?
We have security arrangements at the mazar and it is well taken care of.
What are the new additions to the mazar in the new plan?
It is mainly an expansion of space, better circulation of people, the various facilities that were present before are all being reconstructed and will be better than before. This includes, public washrooms, masjid, other graves and tombs, auqaf office, shoe keeping place etc.

ii.   **Architect for Shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi, Karachi: Najmi Hasan**
Venue: At the board meeting room, Zavia, Karachi @ 11:00 am, 11th April 2015
Principal Architect and Owner of Zavia (Architectural firm)
Najmi Hasan (NH): When the project arrived at ASA (Arshad Shahid Abdullah – the architectural firm where Najmi Hasan was working previously), I was in the process of leaving and had told them that during my in-between period of switching workplaces, I would run my own practice in parallel. For three months, I worked like this. Shahid (Principal Architect of ASA) was not interested to take on this project, due to its religious connotations, I told him that I would like to take it as my own project.
I was called at Bilawal house for this project, there were political party workers of PPP, from Bahria Town, they told me this project was to be undertaken.
I had never been inside the shrine before. I undertook the project because I thought there are many people who come there and the environment has been built inconveniently. Mazars of saints like Rumi are much better in comparison. There were graves all over the place around the tomb. I had a major problem in deciding where to put the footing of the foundation of the structure, if I wanted to increase the footprint of the shrine.
That must be difficult.
NH took a phone call.
What were the major issues that you identified that needed to be tackled in design.
NH: There were not a few but many problems. The mazar becomes small at the top, as you go up especially during urs. The major task was the expansion of the tomb space. I had to do a major cleanup, in the sense that I had to organize the space and expand the public gathering space within the tomb. People cannot be stopped from going to the mazar. So everyone who comes they all need to visit.
How did you see the connection between the various elements of the mazar itself like the bazaar, the langar area, masjid – how was it before? And how did you think they needed to connect?
NH: Before construction started, at the entrance, there was a bazaar facing the street with extensions and informal shops at the footpath. They crowded the entrance pathway and created a chaos. There was a large parking lot. The place needed to be pedestrianized. So that after people park their cars, they could go through the bazaar before going to mazaar or afterwards. Would you like to go through the drawings? Perhaps it will be better to explain like this.
Sure, that would be nice, clearer definitely.

NH: Ok, I will get a soft copy on a USB and we can look at them here (the conference room had a multimedia)

That would be great.

NH: I will arrange for that. (he got up and offered me a cup of tea)

After he got back:

NH: So what is it that you are really doing?

I am looking at shrines as heritage and not just physical heritage but also intangible heritage that is associated with it.

NH: Our intention was that we wanted to take the shrine out of Auqaf and put it as heritage, because the performance of Auqaf is known to be of a corrupt department. (I was surprised to know with this comment that he was not aware of the fact that the shrine was already a listed heritage building since 1995, although one could question the architectural value of the old structure, as it was built in popular cultural aesthetics. Perhaps the comment only came as a reaction to justify what he was doing in the context of heritage.) They don't do anything anyways except eating up the money that comes out from the shrine. There is so much income they make here. There was a court case on Auqaf at that time too. There was a 3-4 storey square plan structure built next to the shrine. There is a tomb of Lal Shah next to the shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi. This structure was made in his name so that it was used for qawwali at the urs of Lal Shah, his followers would stay in this bare structure. It was an illegal structure. It becomes a source of income. People sell things. While there are genuine fakirs there too, there are people who exploit it too. They are different. That structure was demolished after the court hearing. The Sindh Governor also supported its demolition. Apart from that, within the shrine premises here (he pointed at the map) there is some informal housing here with entrances from the rear lane of the shrine.

The plot is quite big and there was much going on, including informal use of land, abuse of land and exploitation. Influential people managed to get space for personal and family burials.

Along the boundary wall at the back, there is informal housing.

The pedestrian lane along which langar is sold and distributed, it seems recently organized. Is that so?

NH: Initially, they were facing the main road, the Sindh Governor had them moved to this lane that was organized before the project was given to us. So that was something positive and already organized.

Then below the mound of the tomb, there is a cave in which there is a spring of water. It is shallow water, not a well.

It must be like a tap or several with water coming out.

NH: Some say its sweet water and people take it for tabarruk. There are no taps, its open.

Its in a natural spring form?

NH: Yes, it is, they take it out and fill bottles and containers and people take it for tabarruk.

M: So is the water sweet as they say?

NH: I haven't tasted it. Those who have, say its not sweet.

The people think it is a miracle, so may be there is something to it.

NH: I don't know if it is a miracle. Perhaps it used to be sweet and is not anymore. But the interesting thing is, I don't know where the water is coming from. Next to this is ICON Tower. We went seven basements down for ICON. Even though, the place is close to the sea, there was no water. The character of the sand is not permissible / permeable, like it is when water is close.

M: There was no water when you digged? (I confirmed)

NH: You can imagine the kind of digging that is.

M: Ah, yes, Icon Tower is also designed by ASA.

NH: Yes, I was working on the project myself, I designed it and was also looking at basic construction supervision.

M: So the water here, is it flowing water? Or is it stagnant?

NH: It is flowing in the sense that it has its roots at the base of the mound. The mazar is surrounded by graves on the various steps / levels of the mound as it slopes.

You had a tough time with the graves.

NH: Yes, it was hard fighting out where to put the footing.

Couldn't you relocate some of the graves, it happens worldwide.

NH: It is a sensitive issue. The graves received flowers from Pearl Continental Hotel all the time. There were flowers on the graves and expensive ones all the time, meaning people were looking after them all the time. So I could not touch the graves.

So then I decided that I would use pile foundations with footing 750 cm dia. Anyway I couldn't build on the mound with the water underneath so I put my pile foundations on the outer periphery (and he

showed me on the drawing). And ultimately this is how you will see them coming up (showing me the elevation).

In the picture, there is a bazaar around the mazar, have you relocated that?

NH: I removed the bazaar from here. A comprehensive environmental study was conducted of the area when Icon was being designed. The Engineering Associates conducted a traffic study and proposed the flyover eventually. Then Shehri NGO and other NGOs came forth with all their issues and apprehensions about the traffic proposal disturbing the historic environment. With this big Icon project, it was important to conduct this study and propose something for the traffic issues that would be created in the future. But in doing so, they disturbed the pedestrian movement that connected the historic sites. On Thursdays, the *dhol walas* collected at this place / intersection. I wanted to shift this chaos creating activities from the front to this side (pointing to map) so they would happen inside the site.

What is this open space in front of shrine?

NH: Nespak had started some work that stopped midway due to lack of funding.

And where have you shifted the bazaar now?

NH: I have shifted the bazaar on the edges of the parking lot so that it ties up with the entrance activities. There are two things that people come for, the bazaar and the *langar*, that happen outside the shrine. People shop at the bazaar before going to shrine and after they come out. The langar is also important. People make charity and distribute food. It is looked at as a separate activity.

All this space is occupied by Lal Shah and his followers. Then you also have Mian Noorani (he referred to him as a politician). So I have created a screen between the Abdullah Shah Ghazi and these two other tombs to separate them prominently.

So is that all good? (he seemed to have finished with what he wanted to share)

I did some interviews of people visiting at the shrine and generally people seemed really happy with the expansion works and some praised the superiority of the saint to have attracted attention and be made even more prominent through its architecture. In different ways, people have their own ways of putting it across.

NH: I don't mind that. I have put two towers in the premises (pointing to drawing). One is a low profile tower, where the staircase leads to the different levels of the graves. The language that I wanted to develop…. I went to North African belt, where you have Al-Jazair, Sufism started here. The Wahhabis followed them, chased them out of there. Sufis aimed at interpretation of Islam that was more tolerant, to make a broader interpretation of the religion, including Rumi.

Acha? So you have read about Sufism then.

NH: A little but not a lot. I was looking for a name for my office then, I read a book, I don't know if you are interested or read urdu literature.

Not particularly.

NH: There is a book by Ashfaq Ahmed called Zavia, Zavia used to be a consultation firm called House of Light about which the book is. I never read the book but named my firm after it.

I have put a lift in this tower to take the old upto the different levels of the shrine building, taking care of the old people who come here.

00 This is the level where the rock starts, here this is the first level, 4800 there are graves here that I have accommodated within this building. The other tower at the other end of the shrine is meant to be the exit for the mazar. There were circulation conflicts I observed taking place in the existing mazar. People came and went from the same route, the separation of men and women was an issue especially where old ladies had to be assisted by their sons to reach the tomb. So sorting this out, I separated the entrance and exit of the tomb.

In my opinion, the design of the shrine needed to cater to important social issues and needs of the society. As an architect, that is important and apart from the spiritual issues related to the shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi, or Sufism and the respect that needs to be given.

At 4800, the administrative part of the shrine, security and related IT offices, there is also a library here where people can research on Sufism.

At 12000, the tomb of the saint is present itself.

The shrine of Data Gunj Bakhsh, accommodates many social facilities, including an eye hospital among other facilities. Ofcourse its not within the premises, but it is run by the money from there.

NH: There is no such thing here.

Thankyou so much for your time and about being so open and frank in sharing your experience and design process for the shrine.

[With that I left.]

14/11/14
Profile:
Schooling from Hyderabad
Graduated in Science
Initially worked at Pakistan National Cultural Center
Founder, Culture and Tourism Department, Gov. of Sindh, Former Secretary several times over the past couple decades
Founder Sindh Archives
Worked at Ghee Corporation – Government industry
Board – Mohatta Palace Museum
Founder, Endowment Fund Trust established in 2008.

*What does the word **heritage** mean to you?*
Everything that I can relate to who I am. Identity. Including material and non-material things from the past including traditions, rituals and stories. I would like to make sure that this is not harmed or destroyed in anyway. But unfortunately there is not much that I can do about the law and order situation. The diverse regional identities within the country make up the country's identity. Mehdi Hasan, Noor Jehan and people like them that belong to the urban areas of the country are representative of the subcontinental identity and not really the national identity. On the other hand, in his opinion, the music rituals of the shrines of Sindh and the Sindhi musicians like those from other provinces of the country make up the national identity. Heritage is what represents us as a nation.
Before 1979, the people were more conscious of their identity and conscious of the physical representations of them as a nation. Now sadly, it is no longer the case.
Why is heritage important for you?
Identity, education, history and the various values associated with it. One's foundation about one's background needs to be clear. If people tell you, that Sindh belonged to the Hindus, or Buddhists, it is something that you have to know, and heritage is a great way of knowing that.
The challenges that heritage faces today
The **law and order situation** today is such that if the laws are there, they are not implemented; it barely works for the real reasons, not for me and you. The sad thing about this region is that there is now a strong **urban and rural divide**. The people who are there in the city do not have that association with the region and its history.
Before 1979, this gap was not there. The Sindhi nationalist movement of GM Syed also involved people like Nawab Muzaffar, spoke really good Sindhi, and was approachable to all Sindhis. The political situation and the law and order situation is such that this gap is increasing. The media is no help. It talks no longer of the right heritage.
The disruptive elements in the law and order situation have to be publicly executed. That is the only way of creating space for a fair working system.

He related the story of a politician and developer who acquired a heritage listed site and started getting it pull apart. The court issued a stay order but he went to court and said, the building is in shambles and it is impossible to save it. He came to Hamid Akhund as part of the Ministry of Culture and asked to get the building de-listed. This was refused, but the building was brought down anyways, when his party was in power.
The media does not talk about the heritage. The heritage that the media talks about is very selective. It mostly does not take up the actual country's heritage. For instance music. The popular singers that the media projects including Mehdi Hasan, Noor Jehan etc. are quite similar to singers in India, there is no difference in the type of music that is selected across board. They are subcontinental singers. So the media does not talk about the national heritage.
What is heritage for you, is it only that which is in solid form in front of you or is it something more, like stories, rituals etc.
It is something that needs to be owned. What exists as culture needs to be owned. He included within heritage all that makes culture, including music, rituals. He made a differentiation between subcontinental culture and that which is specifically coming solely from Pakistan. He gave examples of Sindhi musicians, Pathanay Khan, Dar Sanga, Naseebo Lal, Allan Fakir.
How have you learnt about the culture activities related to shrines. Was it something that was a part of your education in Hyderabad or a part of the family culture?

My father was a follower of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai and has written books on what poetry belongs to Shah and what does not. Hence, I was familiar with it since childhood. Did you know that the raag that is sung at the Bhitai shrine is actually a 250 year old raag and Shah himself used to sing with his disciples. There is a place at the corner of the courtyard which is called the *Autaq*, where they sit everyday and for one hour, tune their historical old instrument called *tamboora*.

When I joined the Pakistan National Center, I used to hang around with musicians, writers and poets, so Bhitshah used to be on our agenda.

The raags sung at Bhitshah are peaceful and calm in nature. But as you go further north in Sindh to Sachal Sarmast, the raags become more turbulent and more so as you go to Jacobabad.

So all these saints are Chishti sufi order?

I am not sure, In Sindh, people are not conscious of the sufi orders. They just sing because they have a strong belief in the saint and it does not have something to do with the sufi order.

I went to some mazars in Karachi. The experience of the mazars in the city and that in the Sindh is completely different, it much more controlled.

The kalams that you will find in Karachi mazars is probably inspired by Ameer Khusrau, and the qawali form of music. In comparison, in Sindh the music and the poetry is originally from the saint.

Can you tell me something about the EFT? When was it established? What were the reasons for establishing?

EFT was established in 2008. It is a public private partnership, the government gave some seed money, they wanted to have some of their people in the board, but we drew the line and said we wanted to run it as a private organization. The government has its own way of operation, permission and acquiring funding. The timings for these things can sometimes really not work with urgencies regarding maintaining work tempos at heritage sites. The government has given 1 billion rupees as seed money, 15% of which is usable.

Are there any heritage sites that you go to regularly?

I go to Ranikot, I have been going there since 1975, twice a year atleast, it is undergoing restoration by EFT.

- A literate person who lives in urban areas has a different idea of heritage than those who are living in the traditional rural set ups. The association that the two types of people have also with heritage is also very different. The people who live in the rural setups have a personal, social, cultural attachment to their heritage (and maybe they don't refer to it as heritage). This association is more detached for the urbanized people.
- He suggested that I should visit Heerabad where there are two heritage complexes that are undergoing restoration, one of these is being undertaken by Archaeology Department / Antiquities Department and the other by EFT. The comparison between the two restorations is revealing of the issues that lie in government restoration processes.

Prof. Marie Therese Albert, Cottbus, Germany

October 15, 2014

[I had emailed my expose to Professor Marie Therese Albert (MTA) and asked her for an appointment for an interview with her and also to discuss my work.

She immediately started off with her feedback on my expose, telling me about the issues she had with my expose. She told me that if I needed to look at the theory of Laura Jane Smith (LJS), then it was important for me to understand all the concepts of heritage and the epistemological background on LJS, Lowenthal is an important reference for LJS for example. He is a geographer and a historian. LJS is an archaeologist and interculturalist.

She pointed out that I needed to understand concepts like heritage as a memory, heritage as ….

She said she finds the work of LJS very interesting, but feels that it is not very clear as far as epistemology is concerned; she never really defines what heritage is.

I told her that this was the main objective of my paper to understand the perception and understanding of what heritage is for the various interest groups.]

MTA: The Heritage Studies Department orients itself with the idea of heritage as an inheritance that is passed on from generations to generations, so it aims to tie the physical heritage with people and development of a people at its center core.

So then its quite similar to what LJS is talking about.

MTA: In a way it is. We have a course on heritage conservation. And there is strong emphasis on theory, understanding the concepts of heritage.

How do you differentiate Heritage Studies from study of Tradition?

MTA: We do draw parallels between the two. Tradition is something that changes with time, just like living heritage. What used to be and was practiced as such is no longer practiced in a similar manner. Tradition changes with time.

Have you been to any parts of Asia?

MTA: I have worked with Nandini Thakur in India, quite a bit and also been to China. Infact, I will be going to China in November again.

While we believe in tradition and handing them down very strongly, however, linkages or personal and political relationshipis with 'heritage' in South Asia are generally weak. Atleast its not the same as the West. Perhaps, it has something to do with Heritage education. What are the different levels at which you think heritage education should be imparted with specific reference to Asia?

MTA: That s a pretty general question. I started the Masters and the Phd program in Heritage Studies at Cottbus, developed the curriculum and brought it up to here, have made several publications.

Yes, I have read your work and really feel quite inspired by it actually. That is also the reason that I am here.

…Last question, what do you think are the challenges that are faced under the UNESCO 2003 Convention for Intangible Heritage?

MTA: Frankly, I am not convinced about this convention. I am in the committee for the selection of Intangible Heritage and it is the same. It has more entries from the West. Somehow it seems to be about making money.

But there was a reason for the making of the convention??

MTA: Yes, … It was Japan, They stood up and said the World Heritage List is Eurocentric and that there needs to be a convention for Intangible Heritage. It still does not seem to be coming together. It just looks like a way of commercialization, promoting tourism to me.

[As I said 'Good bye and thankyou very much for your time and some valuable insights on 'Heritage'', she told me that she thought my work really had potential to be excellent if I continued in the direction that I had taken, if I can make it more clear, it would be really out there.

With all thanks for such confidence in me, I said bye.]

5.   Semi structured questionnaires

Shrine visitors

Name   Age:
Profession / Occupation   Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female
Education   Residence Location
Means of Transport used to get here
Is this your first time here?
Did anyone tell you about this shrine and recommended you to visit?
Do you go to other shrines as well?
Which ones?
Since how long have you been coming here?
What did you pray for?
How often do you come here by yourself, ___ with family, _____ and with friends_____
Do you want to tell your children / family about it? Yes / No   Why?
Do you come here for different things every time?
Do you know any stories related to the saint?
Have you read/ heard his poetry?
What is the message of the saint?
II. Ritual detail, what and why?

III. If coming here often, for long, live here,
Has the area changed a lot over the past few years?

Shrine workers

What do you do?
How?
What are the major duties that you perform?
Who do you work for?
Do you work fulltime here or at other places too?
Do you face any problems?
Why do you prefer to work here?
Where do you live?
How far is it?
How do you get here?
Do your children go to school?
How many people in your house? Numbers, Ages and Relation
Do other people work in your family too?
How much is your collective income per month?
Do you have access to good hospital, school and other facilities?
Are there any organizations that you know of or work with in the area?
What are they responsible for?

Shopkeepers questionnaire

Name, Age, Residence Location
Shop Type
Products
Permanent / Temporary
About the Products: What is it? How is it used?
What are the best times of the year?   1.   2.   3.

Where do you live?
How far is it?
How do you get here? Means of transport
Do your children go to school?
How many people in your house? Numbers, Ages and Relation
Do other people work in your family too?

How much is your collective income per month?
Do you have access to good hospital, school and other facilities?
Are there any organizations that you know of or work with in the area?
What are they responsible for?
Since how long have you been living in Bhitshah?
Has the area changed a lot over the past few years?

Building Crafts people

Name, Age, Craft, Medium, Residence location
How long since you have been doing this work?
Does your father and / or children do the same work?
What do you think of the work done at the shrine?
What are the issues faced in this?
Is it easy to do?
Is it in demand?
How much / well do you get paid?
Are you happy with this?
How can the situation be improved?
How important is this?
Do your children go to school?
How many people in your house? Numbers, Ages and Relation
Do other people work in your family too?
How much is your collective income per month?
Do you have access to good hospital, school and other facilities?
Are there any organizations that you know of or work with in the area?
What are they responsible for?

Musicians

Name, Age, Residence location, Type of Instrument
Since how long have you been playing this?
Did your father also do the same and your grandfather before?
Do you teach it to other people? Y/N;   Family or others commercially?
How often do you perform at the shrine?
For how long do these sessions last?
What is the history of what you play?
Is there a special meaning behind it?
Do you understand the meaning of what you play?
Can you tell me what it means?
How do you manage to make a living?
How much are you able to make through the music playing?
What are the problems you face in taking this historic music forward?
Do your children go to school?
How many people are there in your house? Numbers, Ages and Relation
Do other people work in your family too?
How much is your collective income per month?
Do you have access to good hospital, school and other facilities?
Are there any organizations that you know of or work with in the area?
What are they responsible for?

Residents

Name, Age, Location, Type of house (Permanent/Temporary structures and medium / finish of construction), Quality of construction
Since how long have you been living here?
Do you go to the shrine? If so, how often?

What is your reason for living in BhitShah?
How do you make a living?
Do your children go to school?
How many people in your house? Numbers, Ages and Relation
Do other people work in your family too?
How much is your collective income per month?
Do you have access to good hospital, school and other facilities?

Are there any organizations that you know of or work with in the area?
What are they responsible for?

6 Research Data on Pedestrian flows

Source: Zupan, J.M. and Pushkarev, B. (1975) *Urban Space for Pedestrians,* MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts, London.

Levels of Service for Standing Pedestrians

Quality	Spacing		Area per person		Description
	ft	(m)	Sq ft	(m2)	
UNIMPEDED	Over 4	(1.2)	Over 13	(1.2)	Circulation between pedestrians is possible without disturbing them.
IMPEDED	3.5-4.0	(1.0-1.2)	10-13	(0.9-1.2)	Circulation between standing pedestrians is somewhat restricted.
	3.0-3.5		7-10	(0.7-0.9)	Comfortable for standing affected by others, but walking between standees possible only by disturbing them ('excuse me').
CONSTRAINED	2-3	(0.6-0.9)	3-7	(0.3-0.7)	Standing pedestrians do not touch each other but are uncomfortably close together, circulation through the group is severely restricted, and forward movement is possible only as a group.
CONGESTED	Under 2	(0.6)	2-3	(0.2-0.3)	Contact with others is unavoidable, circulation through the group is impossible.
JAMMED	0		Under 2	(0.2)	Standees are pressed together, no movement is possible.

Source: Fruin, *Designing for Pedestrians*