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Religion, Society, and the State in Pakistan: Pirs and Politics

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Source: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, No. 5 (May, 1987), pp. 552-565

Published by: University of California Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2644855>

Accessed: 11-04-2019 06:20 UTC

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# RELIGION, SOCIETY, AND THE STATE IN PAKISTAN

## *Pirs and Politics*

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Riaz Hassan

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The main objective of this article is to begin a sociohistorical exploration of the evolution of Muslim society in Pakistan and historically in the subcontinent. This effort has been prompted by recent works on Muslim society by Gellner<sup>1</sup> and on Pakistan by Ahmad, Ewing, Talbott, Gilmartin, Eaton, Metcalf, and others.<sup>2</sup>

The essay will focus on two interrelated areas, namely: (1) the spread of Islam and the evolution and development of "popular" Islam in the sociocultural milieu of the subcontinent, and (2) the nature and form of the political struggle among the followers of "popular Islam" and "purist

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1. Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1981).

2. Akbar Ahmad, *Religion and Politics in Muslim Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1983); Katherine Ewing, "The Politics of Sufism: Redefining the Saints of Pakistan," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 42:2, February 1983; I. A. Talbot, "The 1946 Punjab Elections," *Modern Asian Studies*, 14:1, 1980; I. A. Talbot, "Deserted Collaborators: The Political Background to the Rise and Fall of the Punjab Unionist Party, 1923–1947," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth Studies*, 11:1, 1982(a); I. A. Talbot, "The Growth of the Muslims League in the Punjab, 1937–1946," *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 20:1, 1982(b); David Gilmartin, "Religious Leadership and the Pakistan Movement in the Punjab," *Modern Asian Studies*, 13:3, 1979; Richard Maxwell Eaton, "Court of Man, Court of God: Local Perceptions of the Shrine of Baba Farid, Pakpattan, Punjab," *Contributions to Asian Studies* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982); Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in India: Deoband 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982[a]); Barbara Metcalf, "Islam and Custom in Nineteenth-Century India: The Reformist Standard of Maulana Thauawi's *Bihisti Zewar*," *Contributions to Asian Studies*, 17, 1982(b); S. A. A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, Vol. 2 (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983).

Islam”<sup>3</sup> for religious and political hegemony in contemporary Pakistani society.

## The Spread of Islam in India and Pakistan: A Historical Overview

Any attempt to theorize about the social structure of Muslim society in Pakistan and historically in the subcontinent must begin with the question: How did Islam spread in India? And unlike some other places (e.g., Spain), why did it succeed in finding a permanent home in the sociocultural milieu of the subcontinent?

Much of the earlier historical writings about the spread of Islam (in the subcontinent and elsewhere) have concentrated on those aspects which highlight the exploits of Muslim invaders of non-Muslim societies and the role of coercion in converting the conquered populations to Islam. Only in the last eighty years or so has historical evidence been systematically chronicled which shows that missionary work by Muslim Sufi saints in India and Pakistan played a critical and possibly the most significant role in Islamization.<sup>4</sup> This historical evidence has provided valuable insights into the role of missionary Islam in the evolution of Muslim society in the subcontinent.<sup>5</sup> Only very recently have historians and other scholars of twentieth-century India and Pakistan produced evidence that shows how profoundly the social structure of contemporary Pakistani society has been influenced by the religious and social institutions of missionary Islam.<sup>6</sup>

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3. This typology is borrowed from E. Gellner, *Muslim Society*, except that he calls the two types “central” and “peripheral” instead of “purist” and “popular” traditions, as I have done here in order to avoid giving the impression that “peripheral” Islamic tradition was/is unimportant. On the contrary, my argument is that what Gellner has called “peripheral” and what I have called “popular” Islam is the dominant religious tradition in Pakistan.

4. For example see T. W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1961 [originally published in 1896]); Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India During the Thirteenth Century* (New Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, 1961); S. A. A. Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975); S. A. A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, Vol. 1 (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1978); Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent* (Koln: E. J. Brill, 1980); R. M. Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur, 1300–1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

5. R. M. Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*; Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, “Early Indo-Muslim Mystics and Their Attitudes Toward the State,” *Islamic Culture*, 23 (1949), and 24 (1950); Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid ud Din Ganj-i-Shukar* (Aligarh, 1955).

6. See note 2. Adrian C. Mayer, “Pir and Murshid: An Aspect of Religious Leadership in West Pakistan,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 3:2, 1967; Fredrik Barth, “The System of Social Stratification in Swat, North Pakistan” in E. R. Leach, ed., *Aspects of Caste in South India*,

The main thesis of this essay is also that Sufism was a principal historical force in the spread of Islam in the subcontinent, and that it also played the dominant role in the evolution and development of popular Islam. Given this intellectual orientation, it seems appropriate to begin our discussion with a brief note on the historical context of the evolution of Islamic sufism.<sup>7</sup>

In the history of Sufism, mystic thought had been consolidated into a coherent discipline and a consistent philosophy through the efforts of mystic philosophers like Imam Qushairi, Imam Ghazzali, Shaikh Shihab al-Din Surhrawardi, Shaikh Muhyil-Din Ibn Arabi, and Shaikh Jalal al-Din Rumi in the 11th through 13th centuries. Its development was aided by its application to the concrete historical and social conditions of medieval middle-eastern Muslim society, which had receded into social, political, and spiritual inertia after Hulaqa's forces had ransacked Baghdad—the political and spiritual center of Islamic civilization. The Sufi response to these conditions was to mobilize spiritual power and apply it to the regeneration of Muslim society. The world was divided into spiritual territories (Wilayats), and different Sufi orders, with clearly demarcated spheres of jurisdiction, set out to revitalize Muslim spiritual life. The spiritual orders (Silsilahs) were effectively organized to meet the challenge and *khanqahs*,<sup>8</sup> which became an integral part of the mystic discipline, were established on an extensive scale.

Muslim mysticism reached India almost simultaneously with the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate through the mystic orders of Chistiyya and Suhrawardiyya. In the 14th century these orders were all established in their respective zones with extensive networks of *khanqahs*. According to one account, there were around 2,000 *khanqahs* in Delhi and its surrounding areas.<sup>9</sup> The *khanqahs*, numerous and extensive as they were, soon wove themselves into the complex cultural pattern of India and helped to remove that spirit of mistrust and isolation which honeycombed relations among the various culture groups there.

The success of a *khanqah* depended very largely on the resident Sufi mystic's ability to understand and empathize with the social and cultural climate of the surrounding areas. According to Nizami,

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*Ceylon, and North-West Pakistan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Khabid B. Sayeed, *Politics in Pakistan* (New York: Praeger, 1980).

7. The discussion on Sufism has been based primarily on the work of K. A. Nizami, (Note 4 and "Some Aspects of Khanqah Life in Medieval India," *Studia Islamica*, 8 [1957]).

8. Historically the word *khanqah* has been used to refer to a house where mystics live and pray, according to the rules of their order. I have accepted this meaning but have also expanded it to include their shrines as well.

9. Masalik al-Absar, quoted in K. A. Nizami, "Some Aspects of Khanqah Life," p. 53.

What mystics call *nafs-i-gira*—an intuitive intelligence that could understand, comprehend, control and direct the mind of the disciples—was needed in an abundant degree to fulfill the purpose of *Khanqah* organization. Unless they identified themselves with the problems of the people, their worries, their hopes and aspirations, these *Khanqahs* could not gain the confidence of the people.<sup>10</sup>

In fact relatively clear and explicit principles for Sufi mystics responsible for organizing *khanqahs* were laid down.<sup>11</sup> These included:

- (1) The people of the *khanqah* should establish cordial relations with *all* men (*khalq*).
- (2) They should concern themselves with God, through prayers, meditation, etc.
- (3) They should abandon all efforts at earning a livelihood and should resign themselves to the will of God.
- (4) They should strive for the purification of their inner life.
- (5) They should abstain from things that produce evil effects.
- (6) They should learn the value of time.
- (7) They should completely shake off indolence and lethargy.

There were also strict rules for the spiritual and personal guidance of the *khanqah* inmates and disciples. They were expected to make effective contributions to the maintenance of the *khanqah*. The principal support for the upkeep of *khanqahs* in the early stages, however, came from three sources: *futuh* (unsolicited charity), *jagirs* (land grants), and *waqfs* (religious trusts).

The *khanqahs* became an important institution of Muslim and non-Muslim community life in medieval India. Their importance arose from the spiritual, social welfare, educational, and cultural functions they performed for the local population. The congenial, unstructured social environment and the unassuming ways of the mystics were in sharp contrast to the highly stratified and rigid social structure of Hindu society. In the Muslim community the *khanqah* social organization was characterized by Islamic ideals of equality and fraternity notwithstanding the discriminatory practices of the Muslim ruling classes.

The following account of the social and spiritual life and practices of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya is highly instructive.

Shaikh Nizam al-Din had opened wide the doors of his discipleship, admitting people to his discipline, confessing sinners, and pervading with religious habits all classes of men—nobles and commoners, rich and poor, learned and

10. K. A. Nizami, "Some Aspects of *Khanqah* Life," p. 54.

11. These principles were laid down by Shaikh Shihab ad-Din Suhrawardi; see *Awarif Al-Ma'arif* (Urdu Translation, Lucknow, 1926).

ignorant, citizens and villagers, soldiers and warriors, free men and slaves; and these persons refrained from many improper acts because they considered themselves disciples of the Shaikh; if any one of them committed a sin, he confessed and vowed allegiance anew. The general public showed an inclination to religion and prayer; men and women, young and old, shopkeepers and servants, children and slaves, all came to say their prayers. Most of these who frequented the Shaikh's company regularly said their *chashi* and *ishraq* prayers. Many platforms with thatched roofs were constructed on the way from the city to Ghiyathpur (where the Shaikh had established his *khanqah*), wells were dug, water-vessels were kept, carpets were spread, and a servant and a *hafiz* were stationed at every platform so that people going to the Shaikh should have no difficulty in saying their prayers on the way. And on every platform a crowd of men could be seen saying their supererogatory (*nafi*) prayers. Owing to regard for the Shaikh's discipleship all talk of sinful acts had disappeared from the people. There were no topics of conversation among most people except inquiries about the prayers of *chashi* and *lahajjud*. How many genuflections (*rak'ats*) did they contain? What *Sura* of the Quran was to be recited with each genuflection? What *du'as* (religious formulae) were to follow each prayer? How many *rak'ats* did the Shaikh say every night; and what part of the Quran in every *rak'at* and what *daruds* (blessings on the Prophet were recited)? What was the custom of Shaikh Farid and of Shaikh Bakhtiyar? Such were the questions asked by the new disciples of the old. They inquired about fasting and prayers and about reducing their food. Many persons took to committing the Quran to memory. The new disciples of the Shaikh were committed to the charge of the old. The older disciples had no other occupation but prayer and worship, aloofness from the world, and the study of books and of the lives of the saints. God forbid that they should ever talk or hear about worldly affairs or turn towards the house of a worldly man, for such things they considered to be entirely sinful and wrong. Perseverance in *nafi* prayers alone had gone to such an extent that at the Sultan's court many amirs, clerks, guards and royal slaves had become the Shaikh's disciples, said their *chashi* and *ishraq* prayers and fasted on the 13th and 16th of every month, as well as during the first ten days of *Zul-hijja*. There was no quarter of the city in which a gathering of the pious was not held every month or every twenty days with mystic songs that moved them to tears. Many disciples of the Shaikh finished the *tarawih* prayers in their houses or in the mosques. Such of them as were more persevering passed the whole night standing in prayer throughout Ramadan, on Fridays and during the days of the Hajj. The elder disciples stood in prayers for a third or three fourths of the night throughout the year, while others said their morning prayers with the ablution of their *'Isha* prayer. Some of his disciples finally reached eminence in spiritual power through this education.

Owing to the influence of the Shaikh, most of the Muslims of this country took an inclination towards mysticism, prayers and aloofness from the world, and came to have faith in the Shaikh. This faith was shared by 'Ali al-Din and his family. The hearts of men having become virtuous by good deeds, the very

name of wine, gambling and other forbidden things never came to anybody's lips. Sins and abominable vices appeared to people as bad as infidelity. Muslims out of regard for one another refrained from open usury and monopolistic practices (*ihṭikar*), while the shop-keepers, from fear, gave up speaking lies, using false weights and deceiving the ignorant. Most of the scholars and learned men, who frequented the Shaikh's company, applied themselves to books on devotion and mysticism.<sup>12</sup>

With the passage of time the *khanqahs*, as a socioreligious organization, evolved and changed. The spirituality of the mystic and knowledge of mysticism shifted from a *learned* process to an *hereditary* one. The spiritual power of the founder of the *khanqah* came to be transmitted through his descendents who became the center of the devotion of followers of the Sufi saints who, after their death, were usually buried in the *khanqah*. This was an important change and eventually led to the development of the master-disciple, or what is known as the *pir-murid* paradigm in which *pir* (or master) is the director and *murid* (disciple) a faithful follower obliged to surrender himself/herself completely to the *pir*.<sup>13</sup> The *pir-murid* paradigm was instrumental in the evolution of the devotional saint cults and these eventually became the cult associations called *ta'ifa*. The charisma of the *pir* was routinized as headship of the cult association based on heredity rather than on merit became an accepted practice. This gave rise to a whole new class of people who by virtue of blood descent from a Sufi saint could claim spiritual status.<sup>14</sup> They are now commonly known as *sajjada-nishins*, *gaddinashins*, or *walis*.

The establishment and evolution of the *khanqahs* not only generally corresponds to the establishment of Islamic political rule in medieval India, but also to the spread of Islam in India the subcontinent.

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12. Tarikh-i-Furuz Shadi, pp. 343–345, quoted in K. A. Nizami, "Some Aspects of Khanqah Life."

13. In the *pir-murid* paradigm, all *murids* are expected to participate in a formal initiation ceremony during which the *murid* makes a solemn oath, known as *bait* (meaning swearing spiritual obedience and allegiance) to the *pir*.

14. The analysis of the evolution of *khanqah* to cult association is related to J. S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971) and his conceptual framework for analyzing Sufism. He suggests that in its organizational aspect Sufism has passed through three stages: The *khanqah* stage, the *tariqa* stage, and the *ta'ifa* stage. The *khanqah* stage, characterized by a relatively unstructured and undifferentiated religious and social life centered around the *khanqah*; the *tariqa* stage, referring to development of mystical schools and gradual systemization of mystical techniques and Sufi learning, leading to development of the *pir-murid* paradigm and its development of devotional saint cults; and finally the *ta'afi* stage, describing cult associations.

### *Khanqah* (Popular) Islam and the Social Structure of Muslim Society

Besides the critical and elemental roles they played in the spread of Islam and the growth of Islamic culture, the *khanqah* organizations also influenced the evolution of the social structure of Muslim society in India and Pakistan. The profound cultural and social influence that the *khanqahs* and their *sajjada-nishins* exerted on their disciples attracted the attention of the ruling class which, for spiritual as well as for political reasons, sought cooperation from the *khanqah* organizations in maintaining political stability in the country. The dominant, but by no means the sole, mechanism through which the *khanqahs* were co-opted by the state was through the granting of substantial land grants (*jagirs*) to maintain the *khanqah* shrines and their permanent residents. By the time the Sufi cult associations, led by descendents of the Sufi saints, had evolved from the early *khanqahs*, their spiritual leaders (i.e., *sajjada-nishins*) were granted substantial *jagirs* by the state not only to obtain their co-operation in maintaining political and social stability, but also to use their influence and power over their disciples to provide military recruits for the state at short notice. These land grants, known as Ma'adad-e-Ma'ash (given as *waqf* to the Sufi shrines or *jagirs* to the *pirs*, *walis*, and *sajjada-nishins*), were given first by the sultans of Delhi and then by the Moghul emperors of India and British colonial rulers. In fact, under Moghul rule the Sufis and their descendents were known as Laskar-e-Du'au (army of prayers) and were considered as important as the regular army in periods of political upheavals and warfare in the country.

Ownership and proprietorship of large estates and their political alliance with the state made the spiritual leaders of popular Islam an important economic and political force in the society, and given the extended kinship and *biradari* (brotherhood) system that characterizes Muslim social organization their kin became beneficiaries of this economic and political status. Through intermarriage and social alliances with other Muslim *zamindars* (landholders) they came to constitute the core of Muslim society, occupying a dominant position in its social structure. This structural position made them an often formidable force wielding enormous political, economic, and spiritual influence over large numbers of their disciples who resided primarily in villages. The central state could not ignore their political constituency and in due course these spiritual leaders became an integral part of the state's power structure, with primary responsibility for maintaining political stability and ensuring the presence of the state in the vast countryside. Their political authority varied with the power of the central state. When the center was militarily and politically strong, they



concentrated mainly on their spiritual role, but at times when the political center was weak they generally played a powerful and important political role in maintaining stability.

The *khanqah*/shrine of Hazrat Farid al-Din Ganj-i-Shaker, popularly known as Baba Farid, can serve as a good example of the role of popular Islam and the *pirs* in Muslim society. Baba Farid, a Sufi saint of Chisti Silsilah, died in A.D. 1265 at the age of ninety and was buried in his *khanqah* situated in the town of Pakpattan in the Pakistani Punjab. Over the centuries he has remained an immensely popular saint among the millions of villagers who inhabit the southwestern Punjab. The villagers belong to many of the major endogenous clans and include powerful ones such as the Wattu, the Sial, the Kathia, the Bhatti, and the Tiwana, which even to this day exert a powerful political influence on the Pakistani state and in Punjabi society. The *sajjada-nishin* of Baba Farid's shrine wields immense power, both through his family's spiritual influence over its millions of *murids* and through its economic power. Indeed, about 10% of total land in the *tehsil* of Pakpattan is owned by the shrine, some 43,000 acres in all. Part of this land was given to the shrine as gifts during the period of Sikh rule in the Punjab.<sup>15</sup> During the British rule, the *sajjada-nishin* of Baba Farid's shrine was recognized as one of the leading *darbaris* (shrine leader) in the district.

Under British rule in India, the *khanqah*/shrines and the hereditary *pirs* (*sajjada-nishins*) continued to receive state patronage through land allocations and state honors in return for their support. Their economic and political position was strongly reinforced when the government of the Punjab recognized them as "landed gentry" in the administration of the Punjab Alienation of Land Bill of 1900.<sup>16</sup> The reasons for designating *pirs* as "landed gentry," as stated by the lieutenant-governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, were because they were regarded with veneration by many of the leading chiefs and such influence had to be taken into account because this influence might be put to political purposes. "If a man has political influence and uses it well the fact that he is connected with a religious institution and even to a certain extent derives his influence from that connection should not in my opinion," O'Dwyer argued, "stand in the

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15. R. M. Eaton, "Court of Man"; I. A. Talbot, "Deserted Collaborators" and "The Growth of the Muslims League." For clans in the Punjab see Denzil Ibbetson, *Punjab Castes* (Lahore: Punjab Census Reports, 1891).

16. Norman Gerald Barrier, *The Punjab Alienation of Land Bill of 1900*, Duke University Program in Comparative Studies on Southern Asia, Monograph and Occasional Papers, Series No. 2, 1966; D. Gilmartin, "Religious Leadership."

way of obtaining a grant.”<sup>17</sup> Subsequently, many *sajjada-nishins* were recognized as “landed gentry,” and it was this recognition that provided the basis of support by many *pirs* and *sajjada-nishins* for the Unionist Party, which represented the common interests of the landed class in Punjab and became the dominant ruling political party there between 1923 and 1946.<sup>18</sup> Only after the Muslim League succeeded in obtaining the support of the *pirs* in 1946 did it succeed for the first time in obtaining the majority of Muslim seats in Punjab—the area which was to become the heart of Pakistani society and state after 1947.

So far what I have argued is this: the *khanqah*/shrines of the Muslim Sufi saints were instrumental in the spread of Islam as well as in the development of popular Islam in India and Pakistan. These *khanqah*/shrines subsequently evolved into Sufi cult associations led by hereditary descendents of the Sufi saints. Because of their spiritual and social influence over millions of followers (*murids*), the *pirs* were co-opted by the state which granted large *jagirs* both to the *khanqah*/shrines and to the *pirs*. This extended their influence to economic and political spheres, coincided with the interests of the other Muslim-landed classes (*zamindars*), and evolved over a period of time into a *pir-zamindar* alliance. This alliance was further reinforced by intermarriage among these groups. Consequently, the *pir-zamindar* elite became the core of Muslim society as well as an integral part of the “historical state” in the subcontinent, and after 1947 the *pir-zamindar* alliance became one of the dominant political forces in Pakistani state and society.

Muslim society in Pakistan has two major spatial divisions—rural and urban. The city is the center of government (*sarkar*) and the home of professional and business elites, merchants, and the urban working class. These groups are responsible for the production of the economic goods and professional services that constitute an important component of the national GDP. Besides these groups, the city is also the home of the *ulema* scholars of Islamic jurisprudence (*shariat*) and scripture (*Quran*).<sup>19</sup> *Ulema* have been at the center of various Islamic reform movements historically as well as in contemporary Pakistan. Perhaps the best examples of *ulema*-led reform movements in recent history are the Deobandi move-

17. D. Gilmartin, “Religious Leadership,” p. 495.

18. D. Gilmartin, “Religious Leadership;” I. A. Talbot, “Deserted Collaborators” and “The Growth of the Muslims League.”

19. Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi, *Ulema in Politics: A Study Relating to the Political Activities of the Ulema in the South-Asian Subcontinent* (Karachi: Ma’aref, 1972).

ment<sup>20</sup> and the Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan.<sup>21</sup> The central concern of movements like Deoband to expunge Islamic culture of extravagant customs such as lavish weddings, dowries, and other ritual celebrations, which they regard as un-Islamic. These movements, which are also anti-*pir* and anti-saintly cults, downplayed these institutions in favor of individual responsibility to scriptural norms. They asked their followers to be guided by a high degree of internal discipline and to forego immediate material pleasures. They denied the importance of carefully graded social ranking, advocating instead a broad definition of respectability as a basis for marriage and other social relations, based in part on shared religious style. These *ulema* see themselves as teaching Muslims to be good Muslims by following the teachings of great past reformers, including the Prophet himself, for whom the ending of false customs and the creation of religiously responsible individuals was central. The *ulema* and their movements, in short, have been engaged in a renewal of the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet.

In their orientations, most of these movements have been highly modernistic. They seek the renaissance of Muslim society by emphasizing values of equality, asceticism, individual responsibility, education, and economic change. This ideological orientation paradoxically brought *ulema*-led movements into sharp conflict with the British colonial rulers, and subsequently with the rulers of independent Pakistan as well as traditional *pirs*, because they were perceived as socially and politically destabilizing forces. The Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistani is essentially a politically oriented *ulema*-led movement. The Jamaat, like its founder Maulana Abu Ala Maududi, is committed to the establishment of an Islamic state in Pakistan based on an Islamic constitution. It is a tightly organized cadre party, with a membership estimated at between 4,000 and 10,000, which sees itself as the vanguard of Islamic revolution.<sup>22</sup>

The *ulema* represent the central or "purist" tradition of Islam. They perceive "popular" Islam based on the *pir-murid* paradigm as misleading, superstitious, and vulgar, and they believe it needs to be replaced by "purer" or true Islam based on the Quran and *shariat* and for which they are the principal spokesmen. But popular Islam is the dominant religious tradition and as such it permeates the cultural life. The evolution of the state in Pakistan has been profoundly affected by the predominance of popular Islam.

20. Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival* and "Islam and Custom."

21. Kalim Bahadur, *The Jama'at-i-Islami of Pakistan* (Lahore: Progressive Books, 1978).

22. K. Bahadur, *The Jama'at-i-Islami*; Riaz Hassan, "Islamisation: An Analysis of Religious, Political, and Social Change in Pakistan," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 21:3, July 1985.

Historically, a relatively weak central state has been able to extend its political jurisdiction over a vast countryside with the help of leaders of the popular Islamic tradition and the traditional *zamindars*. In fact it can be argued that historically, popular Islam has been an integral part of the state whereas the central or purist Islamic tradition has existed only at its periphery.

The Unionist state in Punjab until 1946 provides a good empirical example of this view.<sup>23</sup> In the post-independence period the alliance between the central rulers (military and bureaucracy) and the *pirs-zamindars*—the traditional rural elite—has remained essentially intact. The emergence of a military-bureaucratic state in Pakistan from 1959 onward has, in significant ways, sought to strengthen the state by bringing shrine management under state bureaucratic control. During the regime of General Mohammad Ayub Khan, the control and management of shrines was institutionalized in the West Pakistan Waqf Properties Ordinances of 1959 (superceded by 1961 and 1976 ordinances). Through the 1959 and subsequent ordinances an attempt was made to change the religious significance of the *pir*, but *not* his religious hold, by invoking a new ideology of the *pir* that emphasized their piety and spirituality in the eyes of common people. The *waqf* ordinances sought to create a sense of unanimity between government policy direction, religious values, and the reformist ideals of the *pirs*. Under the government of Z. A. Bhutto (1972–1977), some of the traditional functions of shrine management, such as celebration of *urs* (death anniversaries) of the major saints, were taken over by the new Auqf bureaucracy. In keeping with the ancient function of *khanqahs* and the *tariqa* phases of Sufism, Ayub and Bhutto revived the idea of shrines as welfare centers.<sup>24</sup> Under the present regime of General Zia ul Haq, the affinity between shrine and government values and purposes has dimin-

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23. Until 1946 it was the Unionist Party, founded in 1923, that formally expressed both Muslim political aspirations and drew most Muslim support from a limited franchise, under the British Raj. This was despite the formation and development of the Muslim League, which was seen as a predominantly urban-intellectual ideological group. In contrast, the Unionist Party drew its support from influential *pir* families, particularly in western Punjab. Close family ties, an emphasis on agro-economic matters, and a downplaying of religious concerns, all agreed with *pir* interests and outlook. The Unionist Party managed its rural Muslim support both by way of the rural elite and through local languages, both conforming to cultural norms. The Unionists were cooperationists with the British Raj and this too suited most *pirs*, though not all. The Muslim League, which shunned *pir* support until the 1940s, was forced to seek their patronage at the expense of its allies—the reformist *ulema* of Jamiat-i-Ulema-i Hind—in order to win the 1946 elections from the Unionist Party and consequently the political leadership in the Punjab Legislative Assembly. (See D. Gilmartin, "Religious Leadership.")

24. K. Ewing, "The Politics of Sufism."

ished in that shrine celebrations do not occur with government backing. But shrines are not disavowed and relatives of Sufi saints continue to enjoy government support.

To sum up, the social structure of Muslim society in Pakistan has been profoundly influenced and shaped by the "popular" Islam, which has played a pivotal role in the evolution of the rural elite—the *pirs* and *zamindars*, who together have been one of the pillars of the Pakistani state. The emergence of a military bureaucratic state tended to further reinforce its position by bringing some aspects of popular Islam under state bureaucratic control, ostensibly for the benefit of the larger community and not to end its spiritual links with popular Islam's traditional leaders. This state intervention, to some extent, is also indicative of the reformist tendencies within the popular Islamic tradition. The *pirs* as a group, however, have remained the symbols of this dominant religious and cultural tradition, and the Pakistan state has both relied on their political support and, in its functioning, reflected and served their class interest. On the other hand, the "purist" Islamic tradition and its *ulema* leaders have, for reasons discussed in this paper, remained at the periphery of the state. The *ulema* are committed to breaking the nexus between the state and popular Islam and replacing it with the purist Islam. They have made several attempts to do this but until recently they have been unsuccessful because the ruling elite has been able to exercise its power to contain their agitation and struggle for political power.<sup>25</sup>

But the social change which Pakistani society has undergone in the past three decades has created socioeconomic circumstances conducive to mass mobilization in support of a *ulema*-led purist Islamic tradition which I have elsewhere called Islamization.<sup>26</sup> Urbanization, increasing literacy, and industrialization have created an urban environment which is sufficiently socially differentiated to provide the *ulema* and the purist Islamic tradition with an important and strategically located constituency. As data in Table I show, education and urbanization appear to be related to an increase in a universalistic religiosity and a decline in folk or popular Islamic practices.

The urban environment for the first time has enabled the *ulema*-led reformist movements and particularly the Jamaat-i-Islami to mobilize the masses in support of their ideological position for the Islamization of the

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25. See Government of the Punjab, *Report of the Court of Inquiry Constituted Under Punjab Act II of 1954 to enquire into the Punjab Disturbance of 1953* (Lahore: Government Printer, 1954); Inamur, Rehman, *Public Opinion and Political Development in Pakistan*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1982), chapter 1.

26. R. Hassan, "Islamisation."

TABLE 1 *Urbanization, Education, and Folk Beliefs (Number of Cases in Parentheses)*

|  | Village | Squatter<br>Settlement | City   |
|--|---------|------------------------|--------|
| A. <i>Percent Does Not Believe in Pirs</i>                         |         |                        |        |
| No Education/Religious Education                                   | 9(57)   | 13(61)                 | 18(17) |
| Primary/Some Secondary   | —       | 10(31)                 | 31(39) |
| Completed Secondary  | —       | 9(11)                  | 43(53) |
| Tertiary Level Education   | —       | —                      | 47(43) |
| B. <i>Percent Does Not Believe Mannat</i><br>(divine intercession) |         |                        |        |
| No Education/Religious Education                                   | 16(63)  | 26(58)                 | 51(49) |
| Primary/Some Secondary   | —       | 30(30)                 | 51(84) |
| Completed Secondary  | —       | 27(11)                 | 51(77) |
| Tertiary Level Education   | —       | —                      | 51(71) |

SOURCE: Riaz Hassan, Religion and Social Change Survey, 1981, Unpublished Data Sheets. This sample survey was conducted in 1981 in Faisalabad, the third largest city of Pakistan. Also included in the survey was a sample from a village about 16 kilometers from the city.

Pakistani state and society. Besides mobilizing the strategically located urban middle and working classes, the Jamaat-i-Islami has also succeeded, through its tightly organized and carefully recruited cadre membership, to infiltrate the main institutions of the state and of public life. This has given it the power to launch political actions to reinforce and consolidate its political and religious position. By the late 1970s, it had established itself so strongly that after the military coup of 1977 that brought General Zia to power, it succeeded, for a short time, in influencing State policies. General Zia's Islamization program, in fact, is based on the blueprint provided by Jamaat-i-Islami's chief ideologue, Maulana Abul Ala Maududi.<sup>27</sup> In the first few years of General Zia's regime the advocates of the purist tradition came to have ideological hegemony in the State at the expense of the popular Islamic tradition and its leaders. But gradually the social realities of Pakistani society have forced the ruling military and bureaucratic elite to reconsider its ideological support for the Jamaat-i-Islami. And until such time as the advocates of the purist Islamic tradition can make political inroads among women and among the rural population—the

27. Sayyid Abul A'La Maududi, *The Islamic Law and Constitution* (Lahore: Islamic Publication, 1954); R. Hassan, "Islamisation."

mainstay of popular Islam—they will have to be content with the political power they have gained in the urban enclaves, in some organs of the state, and in selected spheres of public life. The next few decades, in my opinion, are going to see an intensification of the struggle between the popular and the purist Islamic traditions for control of the state.

The success of the purist Islamic tradition largely depends on its ability to mobilize the rural population. This will only be possible if it can enforce and bring about drastic and revolutionary economic and political reforms. However, this would be almost impossible without effective and complete control of the state, especially of its bureaucratic and coercive institutions. So far, there is no evidence that this is likely to happen. Given the immense cultural and social resources available to them, the *pirs* of popular Islam will be in a position to launch populist movements which may present a formidable challenge to purist Islam and an obstacle to efforts of the *ulema* to win the heart and minds of the masses.