



# MIFS NEWSLETTER 7-8

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## Editorial

The MIFS was created in 2008 on the occasion of the launch of the international and collective research project on Sehwan Sharif (see the previous issues of the MIFS Newsletters at <http://ceias.ehess.fr/index.php?1741>). In 2010, ten years ago, it became an association under the 1901 law, which gives the legal status of a non-profit organisation under French law. After a rather long interruption, the new issue of the MIFS Newsletter starts with a summary of French contribution in the field of Sindhi Studies. It is followed by an interview of Professor Sarah Ansari, an academic paper on phonetical changes in spoken Sindh, fieldwork reports, abstracts of new PHD-s and a book review.

French researchers have been working in the Sindh region for a long time. The first were archaeologists who worked on the Indus civilization as early as the 1950s. Nevertheless, the first PhD devoted to Sindhi studies in a French university could be Gopal Advani's research on rural life in Sindh, he defended at the University of Montpellier in 1926, almost a century back. Several teams of archaeologists worked, and are still working, in different parts of the province. Later, this work was opened up to paleontology and to the social sciences. To date, a number of master thesis and PhD have been completed in French universities (see page 3).

In 2008, the Centre for South Asian Studies (CEIAS), affiliated to the School of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS), and the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) began its first major project dedicated to Sindhi studies. This project focused on the holy city of Sehwan Sharif, where the tomb of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar (d. 1274) is located. It started in the wake of the work carried out by the French archaeologist Monik Kervran between 1996 and 2002, in the same site, who was heading the French Archaeological Group on Sindh (MAFS). The Sehwan project was organized as the French Interdisciplinary Group on Sindh (MIFS) and it brought together various specialists, such as historians, anthropologists, geographers, topographers, sociologists, epigraphists, and architects.

Subsequently, many scientific events related to Sindhi studies were organized by the CEIAS, such as international conferences, research workshops, seminars, and of course publications (see page 3). During the period, the field of Sindhi Studies has developed strongly on a global scale, and new projects have emerged within CEIAS, sometimes in collaboration with other universities. The MIFS Newsletter, with the blog of the Sindhi Studies Group (SSG) (<https://sindh.hypotheses.org/>) and a vlog of the same name (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJCwXe48pypuy9jUivU5Mag/channels>), wishes to provide information on work relating to Sindhi studies, as well as to strengthen interaction between those concerned with this field.

The field of Sindhi studies focus on the Sindh area, which is presently a province of Pakistan. It also includes Sindhi-speaking population settled in other Pakistani provinces, such as Balochistan, and the Sindhi diaspora in India, following the Hindu migration after partition. Nevertheless, other Sindhi-speaking population also inhabit other South Asian areas, such as Kutch in Gujarat, or Marwar in Rajasthan. Furthermore, the Sindhi diaspora can be found all over the world, with main clusters in Far East, UK and the United States. Notwithstanding, speaking Sindhi is not the only criterium to identify the 'being-Sindhi'.

Finally, the MIFS Newsletter starts from the hypothesis that this field is a privileged place for observing the major problems of the modern era, such as nation building, central and peripheral powers, devotion and institutionalization of religion, social integration and exclusion, vernacular and normative tradition, borders and boundaries, and many others.

**Michel Boivin, CNRS-CEIAS**



## CEIAS achievements in Sindhi Studies

### **Thematic ateliers**

2006-2013 | **History and Sufism in the Indus valley** (*Michel Boivin*)

2014-2018 | **Gujarati and Sindhi studies: societies, languages and cultures** (*Michel Boivin & Pierre Lachaier*)

2019-2023 | **Aesthetics and the Vernacular: Cultural Products and New Elites in the Indus Valley and Beyond** (*Michel Boivin and Julien Leveque*)

### **PhD in Sindhi studies submitted in French Universities (including non CEIAS PhDs)**

2004 | Laurent Gayer, *Les politiques internationales de l'identité : significations internationales des mobilisations identitaires des Sikhs (Inde) et des Mohajirs (Pakistan)*, 3 vols, Sciences Po Paris.

2005 | Jyoti Garin, *Le bhagat, une tradition orale sindhie*, INALCO.

2007 | Frédérique Pagani, « Servir les hommes, c'est servir le Seigneur ». *Le salut par la philanthropie. Etude d'une association de bienfaisance sindhie (Bhopal – Inde centrale)*, 2 vols, Paris-Ouest Nanterre.

2010 | Annabelle Collinet, *Au prisme de la céramique : le Sind et l'islam. Culture matérielle du sud du Pakistan, II<sup>e</sup>-XII<sup>e</sup>/VIII<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, 2 vols, Paris 1.

2016 | Julien Levesque, *Être sindhi au Pakistan : nationalisme, discours identitaire et mobilisation politique (1930-2016)*, EHESS.

2017 | Asma Faiz, *Ethnic nationalism, State and party politics : the Sindhi and Siraiki movements in Pakistan*, Sciences Po Paris.

2020 | Kamran, *Practising Hinduism in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Devotion and the politics of untouchability in Ramdev Pir's tradition of Sindh*, EHESS.

Three EHESS students are currently completing a PhD in Sindhi Studies.

### **Funded projects**

2008-2013 | Sehwan Project, with the MIFS (CEIAS).

2016 | Udero Lal Research Project-1, funded by CNRS.

2019-2021 | Udero Lal Research Project-2, funded by French Embassy of Pakistan and HEC, with a partnership of CEIAS and N.E.D. University (Karachi)

2020-2023 | Vernacular cosmopolitanisms : cultures in the Indus Valley, funded by SPARC (Government of India), in collaboration with CEIAS and Institute of Technology (Khoragpur, India)

### **A selection of national and international conferences**

2006, December | Investigating interpretations of a regional patrimony in Sindh, CEIAS with AFK.

2009, January | Plurality of sources and interdisciplinary approach: a case study of Sehwan Sharif in Sindh, CEIAS-EHESS.

2016, May-June | Comparing the Vernacular in Muslim and Hindu Traditions: The case of Sindhiyyat, CEIAS-EHESS





2016, December | What's up in the Sindhi Devotional ?, CEIAS-EHESS.

2017, November | Social and Spatial systems of Religious and Cultural Heritage in Sindh, co-organized by Department of Architecture, N. E. D. University, and CEIAS, Karachi.

2018, November | Exploring Shared Religious Legacy from Archaeology to Anthropology : The Multiple identities of Jhulelal and other case studies, Alliance Française de Karachi (AFK), CEIAS with Habib University, Karachi.

2019, November | Community and Architecture in Sindh, N. E. D. University with CEIAS, Karachi.

### **Exhibition and others**

2010, September | The Red between black and white, curated by Omar Kasmani (Free University of Berlin), EHESS.

2016, November | Sharing space : the *darbar* of Udero Lal, curated by Michel Boivin (CEIAS), EHESS.

2016, December | Sindhi Film Festival : curated by Bhavna Rajpal (University of Westminster), Maison de L'Asie, Paris.

2018, November | Shared sacred place in South Asia and beyond : the case study of Udero Lal in Pakistan : curated by Michel Boivin, Alliance Française de Karachi.

### **MOU in relation with Sindhi Studies**

2008 | Department of Antiquities, Government of Sindh, Karachi.

2014 | Deccan College, Pune.

2015 | Florida International University, Miami.

2019 | N. E. D. University, Department of Planning and Architecture, Karachi.

### **Recent publications (An updated selection prepared by Rémy Delage, CEIAS)**

#### **Books**

Boivin, Michel, *The Sufi Paradigm and the Makings of a Vernacular Knowledge in Colonial India : the Case of Sindh (1851-1929)*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2020.

Boivin, Michel (2019), *The Hindu Sufis of South Asia. Partition, Shrine Culture and the Sindhis of India*, London, I. B. Taurus.

Claveyrolas, Mathieu et Rémy Delage (2016) (dir.) *Territoires du religieux dans les mondes indiens. Parcourir, mettre en scène, franchir*, Editions EHESS, coll. Purusartha, n°34, Paris.

Boivin, Michel et Rémy Delage (2016) (eds) *Devotional Islam in Contemporary South Asia. Shrines, Journeys and Wanderers*, Routledge, Londres, 195 p.

Boivin, Michel (2012) *Le soufisme antinomien dans le sous-continent indien*. Paris, Éditions du Cerf.

Boivin, Michel (2011) *Artefacts of Devotion. A Sufi Repertoire of the Qalandariyya in Sehwan Sharif*, Sindh, Pakistan. Karachi, OUP.

#### **Articles and book chapters**

Ortis, Delphine, « La tombe, miroir de la destinée des morts ? Analyse de différents espaces funéraires dans une ville de pèlerinage pakistanaise (Sehwan Sharif, Sindh) », *REMMM*, 146 (2-2019)-avril 2020, <http://journals.openedition.org/remmm/13466> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/remmm.13466>

Boivin, Michel (2020), « Ritual Displacements as process of constructing and de-constructing boundaries in a Sufi Pilgrimage of Pakistan », *Ritual Journeys in South Asia. Constellations and Contestations of Mobility and Space*, ed. by Christoph Bergmann and Jürgen Schaflechner, Oxon and New York, Routledge, pp. 119-138.



Delage, Rémy (2018) « Sufism and Pilgrimage Market: A Political Economy of a Shrine in Southern Pakistan », in Coleman, S. & Eade, J. (eds) *Translating the Sacred: Pilgrimage and Political Economy in Transnational Contexts*, Berghahn Books, Oxford.

Boivin, Michel and Bhavna Rajpal (2018), "From Udero Lal in Sindh to Ulhasnagar in Maharashtra: Partition and Memories across Borders in the Tradition of Jhulelal", in Churnjeet Main and Anne Murphy (eds), *Partition and the Practice of Memory*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 43-62.

Delage, Rémy (2018) « Sufism and Pilgrimage Market: A Political Economy of a Shrine in Southern Pakistan », in Coleman, S. & Eade, J. (eds) *Translating the Sacred: Pilgrimage and Political Economy in Transnational Contexts*, Berghahn Books, Oxford.

Delage, Rémy (2017) « L'espace du pèlerinage comme territoire circulatoire : Sehwan Sharif sur les rives de l'Indus », *Cahiers d'Outre-Mer*, Numéro thématique Prier aux Suds : les lieux de culte entre territorialisations, cohabitations et mobilités du religieux, 275.

Ortis, Delphine (2017) « From Potent Dead to Potent Places ? Reflections on Muslim Saint Shrines in South Asia », *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 18, n° 5, pp. 483-498.

Kasmani, Omar (2017) « Grounds of becoming : faqirs among the dead in Sehwan Sharif, Pakistan ». *Culture and Religion. An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 18, n° 2, pp. 72-89.

Kasmani, Omar (2016) « Women [un-]like Women : The Question of Spiritual Authority among Female Fakirs of Sehwan Sharif ». In M. Boivin and R. Delage, eds, *Devotional Islam in Contemporary South Asia: Shrines, Journeys and Wanderers*, Londres, Routledge, pp. 47-62.

Delage, Rémy (2016) « Soufisme et espace urbain. Circulations rituelles dans la localité de Sehwan Sharif », in Claveyrolas, M. & Delage, R. (eds) *Territoires du religieux dans les mondes indiens. Parcourir, mettre en scène, franchir*, Editions EHESS, collection Purusartha, n°34, Paris, pp. 149-175.

Delage, Rémy et Delphine Ortis (2014) « Les relations entre Sehwan Sharif et l'Indus dans le Sindh : histoire d'une mise à distance (Pakistan) », in Harit Joshi et Anne Viguier (eds) *Ville et fleuve en Asie du Sud. Regard croisés*, Editions INALCO, pp. 33-47.

Boivin, Michel (2012) « Compétition religieuse et culture partagée dans les lieux saints complexes d'Asie du sud » in Isabelle Depret et Guillaume Dye (dir.), *Partage du sacré : transferts, cultes mixtes, rivalités interconfessionnelles*, Bruxelles, Editions EME, pp. 149-165.

Boivin, Michel (2011) « Le qalandar et le shāh. Les savoirs fakirs et leur impact sur la société du Sud Pakistan », *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 154, pp. 101-120.

Boivin, Michel et Rémy Delage (2010) « Benazir en odeur de sainteté. Naissance d'un lieu de culte au Pakistan », *Archives des Sciences Sociales des Religions*, n° 151, Paris, Editions EHESS, pp. 189-211.

Collinet, Annabelle, « Chronology of Sehwan Sharif through Ceramics (the Islamic period) », in Boivin, Michel, dir., *Sindh through History and Representations. French Contributions to Sindhi Studies*, Karachi, OUP, 2008, p. 3-21.

Kervran, Monik (2005), «Pakistan. Mission Archéologique Française au Sud-Sindh», *Archéologies. 20 ans de recherches françaises dans le monde*, MAE, Maisonneuve et Larose/ADPF-ERC, pp. 595-598.



#### 2009 MIFS

(left to right)

Rémy Delage,  
Michel Boivin,  
Sophie Reynard,  
Omar Kasmani,  
Delphine Ortis,  
Yves Ubelmann  
Waheed Mahar,  
Hasan Ali Khan.





## Interview with Professor Sarah Ansari, Royal Holloway, University of London (by Saba Sindhri, CEIAS-EHESS)

Professor Sarah Ansari is Professor of History on South Asia's recent past at Royal Holloway University of London. Her research interests tend to focus on the history of (1) the province of Sindh and its mega-port city of Karachi, and (2) the lives of women in South Asia. Her main publications are *Sufi saints and state power. The pirs of Sindh, 1843-1947*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992; *Women, Religion, and Culture in Iran*, Editor with Vanessa Martin, Routledge, 2002; *Life after Partition: Migration, Community and Strife in Sindh, 1947-1962*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005; *From subjects to Citizens: Society and the Everyday State in India and Pakistan, 1947-1970*, Joint Editor with Taylor C. Sherman & William Gould, Delhi, Cambridge University Press, 2014; *Boundaries of Belonging: localities, citizenship and rights in India and Pakistan*, co-authored with William Gould, CUP, 2019.



*You have been working on Sindh since many years, can you please shed light on this long journey? Specifically, what triggered you to start working on Sindh? How this journey had been so far? What challenges you had to go through?*

Being absolutely honest, I initially became interested in the history of Sindh for personal reasons. I met and married my husband, whose family had lived on and off in Sindh since 1944 (first in Sukkur, then Hyderabad, and finally Karachi). Hence, I wanted to know more about the province's past. The journey since then has been a very enlightening one. I hope that my research has helped to generate more interest in Sindh. Certainly, when I began my studies in the mid-80s, there were very few academics focused on Sindh's history and culture. Anne Marie Schimmel, whom I was fortunate to meet on my first visit, was the biggest name. Christopher Shackle, who taught me during my MA at SOAS, was another early influence. In terms of challenges, an early one was probably persuading other historians that Sindh offered a credible context for the questions that I was asking as part of my PhD.

When I explained my interest in Sindh's *sajjada nashin* families during the period of British rule, I was often asked why ... after all, there were already studies on *pirs* in the Punjab, and their Sindhi counterparts were no different. Of course, I replied that 'context' is all important, and Sindh's context was definitely not the same as that of the Punjab! On the other hand, when a field of study is relatively ignored, this offers all sorts of opportunities to make a contribution, and so I was lucky in this respect. More generally, the biggest obstacle for me has always been archives-related – while the period up to 1936 is relatively better served (even if nowadays there is material still in Bombay Presidency records that is inaccessible to researchers based in Pakistan), it remains a challenge to track down archival material relating to later years. I got into trouble once by pointing this out. But my comments were not a criticism of today's archivists so much as a reflection on the low priority given in the past to preserving a record of unfolding developments.



## Interview with Professor Sarah Ansari (contd/-)

*How the Sindhi society has evolved, in terms of religion, since the time you start your research? Under the Zia-ul Haq regime, Pakistan became more Islamized: how did it influence the religion of Sindh, specifically?*

I first arrived in Sindh during the Zia years. The aftershocks of the MRD movement were still evident. People whom I met often had links with the PPP, and they had played a role in these protests. This meant that I was able to witness first-hand how intimately certain *sajjada nashin* families were engaged in politics. Perhaps, however, the regime's Islamisation programme had the effect of making some of them more defensive when it came to how they accounted for their own 'Islamic credentials'. I do remember both *murids* and *sajjada nashins* seeking to align themselves publicly with a more 'austere' religious practice. But, on the other hand, many of the long-established rituals seemed to still be taking place at shrines. Being historical about things, we need to remember that successive and subsequent Pakistani regimes (Ayub, Bhutto, Zia, Musharraf) all tried, in their different ways, to harness the popularity of Sufism and its shrines to their own agendas. And – as in past times – many *sajjada nashin* families accommodated themselves to these external forces in order to meet the challenges that they posed.

*You have done extensive research on the Pirs of Sindh and there is common discourse that Sindh is the land of Sufis. Could you please tell how the Sajjada Nashins/Pirs played their role in developing this discourse? If they did?*

Certainly, much has been made of Sindh being the land of Sufis. The syncretic traditions often involved in Sufi belief and practice meant that much early writing in this vein was produced by non-Muslim Sindhis, whether based in Sindh or outside (after 1947). Moreover, many Sindhis since 1947 have adhered to and perpetuated this discourse, in part because it reinforces a distinctive Sindhi identity that has been put under repeated pressure by the wider 'Pakistani' one. But it is hard for me to point to individual *pirs* specifically developing this discourse. As I understand it, relatively few members of *sajjada nashin* families have engaged in Sindhi nationalist politics as compared with their involvement in parties with all-Pakistan aspirations, but where they have, then no doubt this discourse features strongly.

*According to you how does the Sufi Sindh discourse influence Hinduism and Islam in Sindh and create space for itself?*

As a historian, I am more equipped to discuss the past, rather than present-day Sindh, but my view is that this discourse definitely encouraged the blurring, at least in popular belief and practice, between different religious communities in Sindh (just as it did in other parts of South Asia and beyond). It is well known that certain saints 'combined' both Hindu and Muslim identities, and their shrines/festivals offered shared spaces or opportunities for people from different religious communities to pray and worship alongside one another.

*How the increasing Islamization which has consequences like Sehwan blasts have affected the Pirs and their religious authority in Sindh?*

Again, as a historian, this is tricky for me to answer. It is also difficult because I have unfortunately not been able to visit Sehwan or likewise any other shrines in recent years. But with religious belief remaining highly polarised in Pakistan, and militancy operating in the province also, *sajjada nashin* families must be under continuing pressure to justify their authority, both spiritual and temporal. Equally, however, challenges to them will be coming from other directions also, with education, for instance, chipping away at the foundations of their support base.



## Interview with Professor Sarah Ansari (contd/-)

*In South Asia, in general, there is caste hierarchy system but Sindh, in particular, it is considered a casteless “Sufi” society. According to you, to which extent, this claim could be justifiable? Also, can a person from scheduled castes communities become a Pir? Did you encounter any of such Pir during your research?*

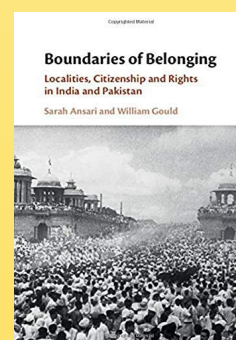
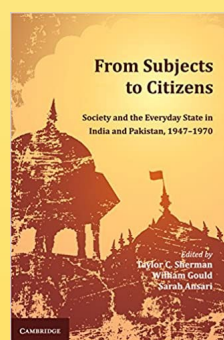
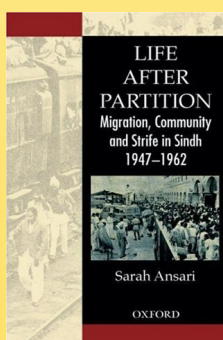
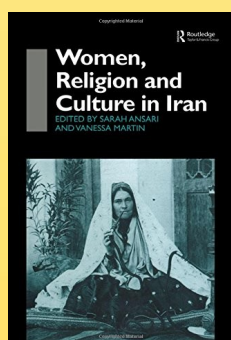
I am afraid that my research did not touch on this interesting aspect of Sufism or Sindhi society. It would be great to learn more from others! My only comment would be that many *sajjada nashin* families claim a Sayyid identity, one that is very high up the religio-social hierarchy from a Muslim perspective. How well this equips them to deal in practice with the idea - let alone the reality - of a non-hierarchical, egalitarian socio-economic order remains highly debateable!

*Do you have current ongoing project relating to Sindhi Studies?*

I have recently co-written a monograph with William Gould that looks at developments in Sindh and UP in the aftermath of Independence and Partition (*Boundaries of Belonging: localities, citizenship and rights in India and Pakistan*, 2019). I also have a short piece on *sajjada nashin* families in a Columbia University Press edited volume that will hopefully appear at some point later this year. But in terms of current work, I am writing a research article on the Government Hari Committee Enquiry of 1947-8 from the perspective of contemporary thinking and debates about development, while also trying to digitise more of the research data that I have collected!

*How could we reinforce Sindh Studies, especially among European academics?*

A tough question but one approach – from a historian’s perspective - might be to get the message out there that there are still so many unanswered questions regarding Sindh. But this means being prepared to approach the history of the province from new directions, moving away from tropes closely associated with it (e.g. Sufism and *sajjada nashin* families!), and finding ways of integrating developments in Sindh into wider debates and stories. In other words, we need to ‘stretch’ the horizons of Sindh studies so that European academics recognise the ‘added value’ that can be gained from looking at Sindh from different perspectives and through different lenses.







## Scripting change : The orthographic impact of intergenerational phonological change in Indian Sindhi

**Arvind Iyengar, University of New England, Australia**

Studies have shown that spoken Sindhi, both in Pakistan and India, has been undergoing phonological changes from generation to generation, from at least the mid-20th century (Bugchio 2001; Iyengar 2017). These changes involve both vocalic as well as consonantal transformations, resulting in the emergence of two different chronolects (Frellesvig 1996), or varieties spoken by the older and younger generations. Bugchio (2001) terms these chronolects ‘Old’ and ‘New’, respectively. The Old chronolect is most evident in the speech of Sindhi speakers aged 60 years or older, while the New chronolect is characteristic of the speech of those aged 40 years or younger.

Table 1 summarises the main differences between the Old and New Sindhi chronolects.

	Old Sindhi chronolect	New Sindhi chronolect
<i>Implosives</i>	Present: [ɟ ɟ̥ ɖ ɖ̥]	Largely absent; typically realised as the corresponding plosives [g dʒ ɖ b], or occasionally as the geminate versions of these plosives
<i>Fricatives</i>	[x] and [ɣ] phonemic; e.g., [xəbər̥] ‘news’, information’	[x] and [ɣ] no longer phonemic; largely merged into [kʰ] and [g], respectively; e.g., [kʰəbər] ‘news, information’
<i>Clusters</i>	No oral consonant clusters; If a loanword contains a cluster of oral consonants, a reduced form of the vowels [ə ɪ ʊ] is inserted to break up the cluster, e.g., Sanskrit /aːt̪maː/ → [aɪ̯ma] ‘soul’ Arabic /mədˈbuːt̪/ → [məzˈbuɪ̯] ‘strong’	Oral clusters permitted; If a loanword contains a cluster of oral consonants, the cluster is not necessarily broken up by inserting a reduced form of the vowels [ə ɪ ʊ], e.g., Sanskrit /aːt̪maː/ → [aɪ̯ma] ‘soul’ Arabic /mədˈbuːt̪/ → [məzbuɪ̯] ‘strong’
<i>Vowel-finality</i>	Generally, all words vowel-final; if a loanword is consonant-final, a vowel (usu. reduced [ə ɪ ʊ]) is suffixed, e.g., English /ˈɔfɪs/ → [afɪs̩] ‘office’ Persian /dʒɒn/ → [dʒan̩] ‘life’ Arabic /mədˈbuːt̪/ → [məzˈbuɪ̯] ‘strong’	Consonant-finality permitted; - Native or assimilated Sindhi words may lose word-final [ə ɪ ʊ]; - If word-final short vowels are retained, they may no longer be phonemic, but only epenthetic, e.g., [xəbər̥] → [kʰəbər̩(ə)] ‘news’, information’  If a loanword is consonant-final, a vowel is not necessarily suffixed, e.g., English /ˈɔfɪs/ → [afɪs] ‘office’ Persian /dʒɒn/ → [dʒan] ‘life’ Arabic /mədˈbuːt̪/ → [məzbuɪ̯] ‘strong’



These phonological changes in spoken Sindhi can have grapholinguistic implications, namely, implications for Sindhi orthography. In India, where a debate has raged on whether to write Sindhi in the Perso-Arabic or Devanagari script (Asani 2003; Daswani 1979; Iyengar 2017), the aforementioned changes in phonology may impact orthography in both scripts, leading to potential pedagogical issues.

Let's take a closer look at these potential grapholinguistic implications in both scripts, starting with the Perso-Arabic script. This is an abjad or consonantary (Daniels 1996: 4), in that its basic graphematic units represent consonants. Certain vowel phonemes are represented by diacritics positioned above or below a base grapheme. For example, [məz'buṭʊ] would be written مَضْبُوْتُ, where the three vowels [ə ɪ ʊ] are written using the diacritics َ, ِ, and ُ, respectively. However, in everyday writing, these vowel diacritics are often omitted. The expectation is that fluent readers of Sindhi will mentally add these diacritics where needed. Thus, [məz'buṭʊ] would typically be written مضبوت, sans diacritics, but a fluent reader of Sindhi would, in theory, read and comprehend it as if it were مَضْبُوْتُ. Omitting optional diacritics results in less visual clutter and a neater appearance, but makes it harder for nonfluent speaker-readers of Sindhi to 'fill in the gaps'.

In contrast, Devanagari is an abugida or alphasyllabary (Daniels & Bright 1996: xxxix). While its representation of vowels is similar to that of a consonantary, its representation of vowels is rather different. Devanagari it requires vowel diacritics to always be written. That is, unlike in Perso-Arabic, vowel diacritics can never be omitted in Devanagari. Thus, if [məz'buṭʊ] were to transparently transcribed into Devanagari-script Sindhi, it would be written मज़िबूतु – and always so, with none of the vowel diacritics considered optional or omissible. Compulsorily including all vowel diacritics in this manner results in less orthographic flexibility, but makes it easier for nonfluent speaker-readers of Sindhi to phonologically decode any unknown words.

While Sindhi orthography in the Perso-Arabic script is relatively more standardised than that in the Devanagari script, given that the former has been in official use since 1853 (Boivin 2008), both continue to exhibit areas of variation (Iyengar 2018). Nevertheless, both orthographies are largely based on, and reflect, the Old variety chronolect of Sindhi. Consequently, with the emergence of a New chronolect, there is potential for a 'mismatch' between the Old-chronolect-based orthographies, and the New variety phonology. Even then, the mismatch may be more stark in one writing system than the other.

Let's look at the implications of the intergenerational phonological change on Perso-Arabic Sindhi orthography. As seen in Table 1, the word pronounced [məz'buṭʊ] in the Old chronolect is pronounced [məzbuṭ] in the New chronolect. Orthographically, the diacritical Perso-Arabic spelling مَضْبُوْتُ is reflective of the Old pronunciation. Phonetically speaking, this spelling represents vowels that are no longer pronounced in the New chronolect. In fact, one might argue that a spelling that is more transparent and reflective of the New pronunciation [məzbuṭ] is مضبوت, with only the diacritic for [ə] written. Nevertheless, even if the vowel diacritics for [ɪ] and [ʊ] were to be omitted, it is evident that the graphematic modifications involved are minimal. Furthermore, were vowel diacritics to be altogether omitted—as is conventional in Perso-Arabic Sindhi orthography—we would end up with the same spelling mentioned earlier: مضبوت. From this, it emerges that, when faced with the nondiacritical form مضبوت, an Old chronolect speaker-reader would mentally interpret the word as مَضْبُوْتُ [məz'buṭʊ], while a New chronolect speaker-reader would interpret the word as مضبوت [məzbuṭ]. On this basis, it could potentially be argued that the Perso-Arabic script makes a good candidate for an economical and compact pan-chronolectal Sindhi orthography.



In contrast, if one were to transparently represent the New chronolect pronunciations of words in Devanagari, the nature and structure of the script would require any graphematic modifications to necessarily be more conspicuous. So, while the Old chronolect pronunciation [məz'buʈʰ] would be accurately reflected by the spelling मज़िबूतु, the New chronolect pronunciation [məzbuʈ] would require the spelling मज़बूत् in order to be transparent. Even to a nonreader of Devanagari, it is evident that the graphematic differences between the two spellings is substantial.

Table 2 provides a summary of the correspondences between Old and New chronolect pronunciations, and their respective phonetically transparent spellings in the Perso-Arabic and Devanagari scripts. Besides [məz'buʈʰ ~ məzbuʈ], also included in Table 2 for comparison purposes is the English loanword 'card'.

Table 2: Pronunciations and putative transparent spellings in Old and New Sindhi chronolects

	Old chronolect	New chronolect
<b>Pronunciation</b>	[məz'buʈʰ]	[məzbuʈ]
<b>Perso-Arabic (nondiacritical)</b>	مَضْبُوْتُ	مَضْبُوْتُ
<b>Perso-Arabic (diacritical)</b>	مَضْبُوْتُ	مَضْبُوْتُ
<b>Devanagari</b>	मज़िबूतु	मज़बूत्
<b>Pronunciation</b>	[kar'dʰ]	[kard]
<b>Perso-Arabic (nondiacritical)</b>	كَارِڊُ	كَارِڊُ
<b>Perso-Arabic (diacritical)</b>	كَارِڊُ	كَارِڊُ
<b>Devanagari</b>	कारिडु	काई

As evinced by Table 2, transparently reflecting Old and New pronunciations in Perso-Arabic requires minimal graphematic changes. And when all diacritics are omitted per convention, the graphematic change in the orthography is nil. In contrast, the Devanagari spellings that reflect the Old and New pronunciations are graphematically and visually quite different. In short, Perso-Arabic allows for vowel diacritics to be omitted, which makes it difficult for nonfluent readers, but also makes it a potentially better candidate for a pan-chronolectal Sindhi orthography. In contrast, Devanagari does not allow for vowel diacritics to be omitted, which makes it easier for nonfluent readers, but also hinders the creation of a pan-chronolectal Sindhi orthography.





This phenomenon throws a spanner into the Sindhi script debate in the Indian context (see Daswani 1979). One of the major arguments made by pro-Devanagari Indian Sindhis has been that the inherent structural requirement of Devanagari that all vowels be explicitly represented is pedagogically sound and advantageous for learners (Iyengar 2017; 2018). However, taking into account the intergenerational change in Sindhi phonology and the emergence of the New chronolect, how pedagogically sound is using a spelling system that reflects the pronunciations of words in the Old chronolect and not the New one? How advantageous is using a spelling like मज़िबूतु when a young Sindhi reader's own pronunciation is more like [məzbuʈʰ]? Using an Old-chronolect-based Devanagari orthography would mean that readers and learners of Devanagari-script Sindhi who are speakers of the New chronolect would need to mentally delete vowels where needed – that is, learn to mentally interpret मज़िबूतु [məz'buʈʰ] as if it were मज़बूत [məzbuʈʰ]. It thus emerges that the arguments of Devanagari having pedagogical advantages for Sindhi learners requires further qualification and nuance, and that one needs to give greater consideration to ongoing phonological changes in the spoken language when deciding on matters of orthography.

Be that as it may, phonological change is part and parcel of every spoken language around the world. If the language happens to have a reasonably standardised written form, such phonological change would likely result in some mismatch between the orthography and the actual pronunciations. But no orthography is perfect. In fact, one of the implicit aims of an orthography is to be reasonably stable over time and not change. An orthography is a written standard for the sake of having one. So why, then, is an intergenerational phonological change in Sindhi noteworthy or critical?

The answer lies in the tenuous state of Sindhi literacy in India. Spoken Sindhi continues to be maintained in India in pockets — especially in semi-urban and rural areas. However, because of socioeconomic pressures, Sindhi parents seek to educate their children in widely used languages like English and Hindi, which parents believe will benefit children the most (Cook 2014). This has resulted in there being almost no students today in India who receive an education in Sindhi as the language of instruction (Asani 2003: 642). To the extent Sindhi is learnt in schools, it is as an additional language subject, and that too, usually in secondary school. Therefore, in India, literacy in Sindhi, be it in Perso-Arabic or in Devanagari, is on a steep decline (Iyengar 2017: 12 ff.).

Now, when it comes to literacy, a language that is widely read, written, taught and used, and in which the population at large is highly literate, can afford to have a deep or opaque orthography. As SIL linguist Bill Smalley wrote, “[t]he reason we can get along with five vowel symbols in English for [its] horribly complex vowel system is that we can force children to stay in school long enough to teach them” (1964: 60). But clearly, such a luxury is not available to many minority language communities, such as the Sindhis in India. For such communities and languages, where the window of opportunity to acquire literacy in the heritage language is rather small, a transparent orthography actually might be the most practical or pragmatic option, so that those who do have the opportunity to become literate in the language are able to do so relatively easily and quickly. This is why questions of:

- creating a shallow or a transparent orthography for Sindhi, in both Perso-Arabic and Devanagari,
- which chronolectal phonology to use as basis for this orthography, in both scripts, and what the relative advantages and disadvantages of both scripts are, from orthographic and pedagogical perspectives, become important if we want to ensure that the Sindhi language in India continues to be maintained in not just oral but also in written form.



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## In search of the Mohanas

***Saba Sindhri, CEIAS-EHESS***

This fieldwork was carried out as the part of the PERIDOT project named Udero Lal Research Project (ULRP) in the collaboration of CEIAS (CNRS-EHESS), Paris and NED university of Karachi. It was led by the Professor Masooma Shakir, head of the project from NED Pakistan side and other members: Professor Suneela Ahmed, two research students Rahat Arsalan and Sindhri Saba. The main purpose of the fieldwork was to visit the communities who revere Udero Lal and any sacred figure associated to the Indus river or the ocean, and observe how do they revere them through rituals and traditions.

Udero Lal is associated with different names such as Khwaja Khizr and Zinda Pir. Khwaja Khizr is the patron saint who often appears to travelers (Burton 1851). It was the first fieldwork for which we selected Mohana community for whom Richard F Burton (1851, p.252) writes, they adore Indus River under the name of Khwaja Khizr. Since, it was short-lived preliminary field, we selected Karachi Fish Harbor (KFH), where many fishermen are working. We started from the hypothesis that given their profession, it was plausible that they perform rituals related to the ocean.

In Sindh, Mohana as a caste is known with different other names such as Mallha, Mirbahar and Mahagir but it can't be said with surety that whether they are same or different. However, everyone at the fisheries referred they are same. Through snowball method, we reached KFH by 10 in the morning on the fieldwork day. At the fishery, there was an unorganized organized chaos, an incomprehensible disorder. We experienced that at the outside of the gate, fishmongers, in the line, were selling fish and different people in personal vehicles have come to buy it. From there we entered into the fishery. Inside the gate, there were boats ordered at the shore with people inside them.

Specifically, looking for the boats of Mohana and asking people about them, we found a lady who told us she belongs to the Bagri caste. She took us to their boat where we met Mohammed Saleh who confusingly agreed for two minutes conversation. Mohammed Saleh is originally from Shah Aqeeq, Thatta and is associated with fisheries since long. He with other members of his community go to the sea each time for twenty to twenty-five days for fishing. Asking him about who is Mallah or Mohana, he told, the person who catches fish at the fishery is Mallah, only their *qaum* is different like someone is Pathan, Kutchi, Balochi but we are the true Mallah. *Qaum* is an Arabic word and is commonly referred as a caste or community or qabeelo (tribe) in Sindh. However, Mohammed Saleh's understanding of *qaum* was confusing, he referred it as caste but compared it to the ethnicities of other people like Balochi, kutchi which raises questions that whether he meant *qaum* as caste or ethnicity. It will be further researched in the coming fieldwork.

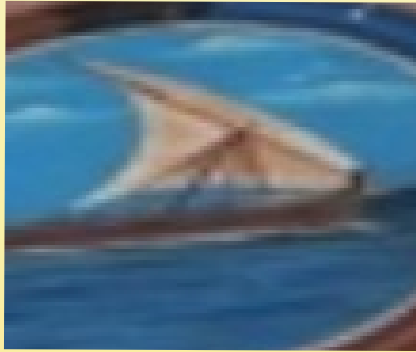
Though, it is yet to find who is Mallah and how Mallah, Mohana, Mirbahr are different from each other or same because for Mohammed Saleh, they are same but when it came to his own caste, he reluctantly said, it's Mallah not Mohana or Mirbahr. Here, we had to finish our interview with him as security coast guard intervened and prohibited us to further continue it and asked us to take the permission from the department of Karachi fisheries harbor authority. For this reason, we could not ask questions regarding their relevance and connection with Udero Lal.

After the fishery, we went to the Mohana Parra, Khadda, Lyari about whom, the people at KFH told us that their lives a big community of Mohanas. It is two and half kilometer from the KFH. Here, we interviewed a group of people of Fisherman Lara Jamat (Association of the fishermen of Lara). They told us that a big community of Mohanas was living in the para (area). According to their community calculations, they are consisted of thirty to thirty-five thousand in this para. They introduce themselves as fishermen and refer it as the translation of Mohana. Fishermen is replaced in writing. For example, they write in Perso-Arabic script as Fishermen Lara Jamait but not as Mohana in Perso-Arabic script as written in the picture number 6 below.





They have several other associations like Karachi Jamat, Norani Jamat, Wangora Jamat, Bandri Jamat and Lorai Jamat. All are settled in this area at some distance. Few of the members of Lara Jamat told us about their work structure that they work under the Government of Sindh, Karachi Fisheries Harbor Society. Inside the office of their Jamat, workers were casting the net and there was big hall upstairs which they have made for the community events.



*Fisherman Lara Jamat Khadda, Lyari*

Regarding association to Udero Lal, they told they don't know about him. We experienced through their facial expressions that as if they haven't heard about this figure before. Also, For Khwaja Khizr and Zinda Pir, they had the same expressions of unknowing. But for rituals, it was different, we could trace some connection. According to what is reported by Richard Burton almost two centuries ago (Burton 1851) that people who revere Udero Lal under different names, put rice in the water. Similarly, while going for fishing, Mohanas turn their boat towards the shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi, put the *mithai* in the sea and read *dua*. However, for now, they told these are superstitious things now, we used to do it before some thirty, forty years ago but now, we only read *dua* and start the journey. It could be speculated that probably this ritual practice effected by the sunni movement of Deoband which Mohanas of Lyari para started following. Around forty years ago, General Mohammed Zia ul Haq, then president, introduced Sharia system in Pakistan and funded different religious organizations. Therefore, Mohanas who already shifted from Udero Lal to Abdullah Shah Ghazi as discussed earlier, probably now shifted to Islam under the wave of Sharia system of General Zia period. However, they still read *dua* which means *dua* ritual is constant with variations.

We finished our fieldwork here and it was the first short preliminary fieldwork which is why many questions remain unanswered. The coming fieldwork will be started with these questions and more exploration.



*Fishmongers along outside of the KFH*



*Workers casting net at Lara Jamat association, Khadda Lyari*



## Note on Udero Lal *mandir* in Ghorabari (Sindh)

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This paper is an abstract of a report titled “Architecture as a Reflection: A Case of Sacred Figure Uderolal” which was compiled after a fieldwork completed in October 2018. It was a part of the research program “Udero Lal Research Project” and conceived in the framework of a MOU between the CEIAS (CNRS-EHESS, Paris), and NED University in Karachi, under the supervision of Michel Boivin and Masooma Shakir. During the fieldwork, five sacred sites devoted to Udero Lal were visited: two temples in Karachi, one in Udero Lal, north of Hyderabad, one in Naserpur, and one in Ghorabari. This abstract deals with the Ghorabari mandir of Udero Lal. This personality, Uderolal has devotees in Sindh, and in India, and is known under different names. Jhulelal, Udero Lal, Sheikh Tahir, Darya Lal, Khwaja Khizr, Zinda Pir, and Lal Saen are some of the names associated with the sacred figure. These names have more to do with the beliefs and the history associated to Sindhi Hindus and Sindhi Muslims. The research examines how faith is embedded with customs in a prevailing society of overlapping traditions and studies how the different sanctuaries are bonded through architecture.

### GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF THE FIELDWORK

Five sacred places where Udero Lal is worshipped have been selected for the research process. Two of them were in Karachi, one near the Custom House and the other in Jodia Bazaar. The third one was in Ghorabari, Thatta district south of Karachi, and it was significant as it was said that Udero Lal meditated in this place. The fourth case study relates to the birthplace of Udero Lal, located in Naserpur. The last site selected is the main shrine of Udero Lal, where it is said that he disappeared. The methodology adopted for the research and documentation was based on literature reviews of various academic papers to gain familiarity with the context. Questions were developed to be answered during the site visits. The visits were organized to document the rituals, architecture and context of the sites.

The sites' exteriors and interiors were measured and photographed. Interviews with the keepers and visitors of sites were then noted and recorded. The interviews were formally conducted with semi-structured questions based on a qualitative approach with open-ended question. Later the recorded interviews were transcribed for analysis. Some of the basic questions were: who is Jhulelal for the interviewee; what is this building; how old is the structure. Conversations encouraged interaction offering the opportunity for interviewees to share details about their various beliefs, significant practices and on-site activities. The use of different spaces and orientations were also documented. The last step was to develop a theoretical framework for the data collected. The report has been written from an analytical point of view, giving the insights of historic and religious significances of the temples visited pertaining to Uderolal.

### LOCATION OF UDEROLAL HAMLET, GHORABARI

The old temple stands silhouette in the rural context beautifully setting the skyline. From the by-pass the dome is easily visible as an important and historic landmark in the city of Ghora Bari. Informal settlements mixed together with kacha and pakka houses are the characteristics of this old town. Recently a government school has laid its foundations just adjacent to the temple. Demolition of the old temple's boundary wall and the new construction of the school show the change in trends and priorities of the town. Recent rehabilitation of this abandoned temple may postpone its destruction to some extent. Interviews suggested that the care-takers hope to restore it. It does not appear that will be that easy given its deteriorated state. Restoration and maintenance would be challenging requiring the support of hard to approach agencies.



## HISTORY

The iconic mandir of the town of Ghorabari has been solitary in its position for a very long time. The post partition era of Sindh had little to offer to this temple until recently when the temple found a new patron in a man who calls himself Red River. The temple is said to have been constructed by Seth Mangal in order to dedicate it to Udero Lal who came here by the Indus and to meditate. There are definitely many versions of the story as people narrate according to their knowledge. Initially the mandir had a garden in front of it with other built structures as well. The boundary or the fortification was recently taken over by the Muslim's Eid Gah.

## THE TEMPLE

The square building measures to be 18'x 18'. The façade gives the impression of the era in which it was built. It is considered to be 300 years old. The temple's broken plaster, crumbling masonry and fading paint requires care before it the disintegration advances too far to repair. The pure forms of the square base with octagonal tower and circular dome reflects a certain charm. It is a masterpiece of Kalhodo architecture especially evident in the detailing. There is only one arched door providing access to the temple and the arch is framed by a central panel. Recently a door was put in, but then removed. Shallow recesses in the plaster on the front portal are the only ornamentation. The clear line of the dome has been broken by the four turrets on each of its ends. In their deteriorated condition the merlons could not withstand the effects of the environment leaving an lack luster appearance. The material used was handmade burnt bricks with limestone plaster. The bricks were said to be made from the sand taken from the bank of the River Indus. The 3 ft 6 in-thick masonry can bear the structural load and could continue to do so for another century.

## THE INTERIOR

The chamber with its square profile measures to be 17'x 17'. The interior used to be highly decorated with paintings but now look as if they have been damaged by fire. The walls turned a smoky black due to the weather and as the time passed by the paintings have also faded. There are 2 vents which were apparently opened recently. The chamber was paved with marble stone which has been mostly chipped off of the floor. In the west corner, a small statue of Jhoolay Lal sits on the floor. A diya has been lit meaning that the temple is in use.

## THE DOME AND ITS EXTERIOR

The roof line is marked by a merloned parapet along all its facades with the detailing common to Kalhodo architecture. The roof is a dome with octagonal tower. Each face of the neck is decorated with cornice and moldings giving it the look of battlemented merlon. A lantern probably originally sat on top of the dome since some of its traces could be recognized in the elevations. The dome is not a perfect hemisphere and rather octagonal in shape. The octagonal turrets in their shabby condition still looked balanced in the elevation at each of the corner giving the exterior its aesthetics.

## SOCIAL CONTEXT OF UDERO LAL MANDIR, GHORABARI

With the passage of time this small village has transformed and in the process has lost immense heritage. As the only remaining structure, the wrecked temple was recently adopted by patrons. The two care-takers, doctor Anil Kumar and Darya Lal live in Ghara, a small city 15 kilometer away from this village. Darya Lal who is a Hindu convert, had a dream telling him to save this temple, and since then the two of them visit this site often. The temple was supposed to be left vacant after Partition. The community living in this area is 100% Muslim.

The locals have their own faith regarding the sacred figure and they believe that Jhoolay Lal has nothing to do with the Hindus. So, their reason for the ignoring the state of the temple is justified as their faith does not consider Jhoolay Lal as a God. The temple was used to keep donkeys until recently a door was been put for the temple's safety. According to the care-takers, they had to make fake documents in order to reclaim the temple and its actual property lines. History tells us that there used to be three temples out of which only this one remains. The care-takers claim that the other two were demolished by the Muslims and they predicted that this last one would have suffered the same treatment, but it was said that a snake used to guard this temple. Snakes are highly regarded as one of the theriotype of Udero Lal.





### RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF JHULELAL TEMPLE, GHORA BARI

In a completely Muslim context, the temple has not yet lost its significance in the hearts of the two Hindu devotees, Dr Anil Kumar and his friend Darya Lal. A door has been hung at the entrance of the temple and inside sits a small statue of Jhoolay Lal. Diya was lit when we visited the place. In the interview with them, they told us that they visit this temple every Friday, hold a pooja and offer prayers in the form of matha tekna, art and prasad. According to them Jhoolay Lal was the last messenger of God and the first one sent in Sindh. Therefore, restoring their messenger's temple is considered to be an indispensable gesture of their faith. It was also narrated that Jhoolay Lal visited this place by the river Indus on a palla (herring) fish. The Hindus performed all their rituals with full zeal and zest until the Partition when they had to leave the town and the temple.

### CONCLUSION

The 300-year-old temple tells a special story. Significant deteriorations and changes have taken place over time. Lately the temple has been revived again functionally. Its care-takers are keen to restore the temple for worshippers and consider it a sacred sanctuary for Hindu devotees. Its protection as a heritage and merely for the sake of Udero Lal became their duty to which they are responding. Different perspectives were taken in the research and the results analysed comparatively; religion and architecture coming together in the social context of the stakeholders.

1. temple in Karachi, near Custom House



2. Temple in Naserpur



3. Temple in Ghorabari



4. Temple in Udero Lal



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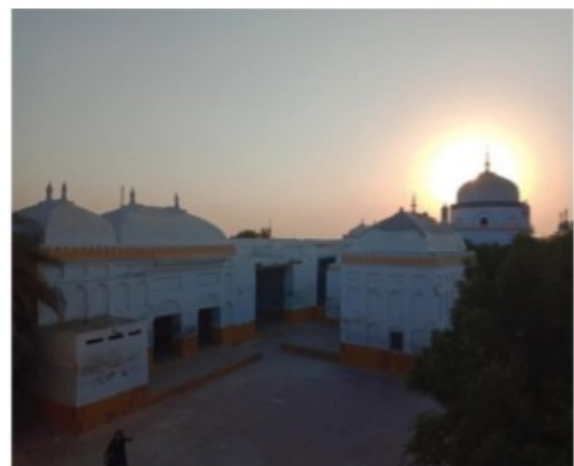
1. temple in Karachi, near Custom House



2. Temple in Naserpur



3. Temple in Ghorabari



4. Temple in Udero Lal





## Travel Diary : Udero Lal in Northern Sindh, October 2019

**Aneela Ahmed, Masooma Shakir and Fahmida Shaykh**  
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The Udero Lal Research Project (URLP) results from a MOU between the Centre for South Asian Studies (CEIAS), National Centre of Scientific Research (CNRS) and School of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (EHESS), and the Department of Architecture and Planning, NED University of Engineering and Technology. Three research scholars visited research sites in Sindh in October 2019: Suneela Ahmed (NED), Michel Boivin (CEIAS) as co-PI, and Fahmida Shaykh (NED). The aim of this preliminary fieldwork was to survey the main sites dedicated to a sacred character related to the Indus River in northern Sindh, especially the Sukkur, Shikarpur and Rohri areas. The sacred characters associated with the River are given several different names, such as Uderolal, Khwaja Khizr, Zinda Pir or Jinda Pir.

### DAY 1 SUKKUR – JHULELAL TEMPLE (Sookha/Dry Temple, Zinda Peer)

We started off from Karachi early morning and reached Sukkur around late afternoon. After having rested for a while we went to attend the ritual named *bahrano* celebrated every first Friday after the new moon in Jhulelal Temple. This Friday is also known as Green Friday. The Jhulelal Temple is located on the Bank of the River Indus in Sukkur, and is currently under renovation.



Figures 1 and 2: The ritual of *bahrano* taking place inside and outside of the Temple.

In the first month of the Sindhi Hindu calendar, called *Cheti Chand*, and believed to be the month of the birthday of Zinda Pir, devotees organize a ritual called *bahrano* in which they perform worship inside the temple and then carry oil lamps to the river and offer fruits and sweets to fish and other aquatic life (Figures 1 and 2). It is believed that when the Indus is flooded, high tide reaches the temple in a show respect for the saint.

This temple is currently under expansion, with a bigger premises proposed to be covered by a larger dome, which would be visible from a greater distance and from River Indus (Figures 3 and 4). This expansion and the desire for a more majestic and colossal structure was reflective of the search for identity by the Sindhi Hindu community, and although it was not directly expressed as such by the members of the community, it was implied in their conversations.





The temple has a well and a number of other spaces allocated to other Hindu gods and Sikh gurus. The *puja* (worship ritual) was taking place in a large hall on the first floor, into which we were welcomed. Punjabi devotional songs revering Jhulelal were being sung by the devotees accompanied by hand-held instruments. The central space was occupied by the statue of Zinda, or Jinda Pir, depicted riding his *palla* fish. It is believed that the brass lamps which burn here day and night are blessed by the immortal saint, and if oil is taken from one of them and a wish made silently, it will be granted.



Figures 3 and 4: The old and new domes of the Julay Lal Temple



Figure 5: View of River Indus from the Temple of Jhulelal



## DAY 2 KHAWJA KHIZR (Geela/ Wet, ZINDA PEER) AND SADHU BELLA ISLAND

The next day we set out by boat towards the island of Khwaja Khizr. Khwaja Khizr is known as the saint who “saved” Rohri, Sukkur and Lansdowne Bridge during the 1965 War.<sup>1</sup> Zahida Rehman Jatt, “Julay Lal’s Cradle of Tolerance.” *Dawn* Updated June 3, 2015. Retrieved on June 25, 2020 <https://www.dawn.com/news/1185942/jhulay-lals-cradle-of-tolerance>. During the Indo-Pak War of 1965, when Indian planes came to bombard this strategically important bridge, people noticed that bombs wouldn’t explode and harm their targets. Some claim to have seen a green-robed man standing over the bridge, disarming the bombs, and that is how the bridge, Rohri and Sukkur were saved from destruction. We were taken to the site on a Mohana boat. These boats are maintained by the Evacue Trust under the supervision of Aukaf Department Sukkur. The island of Khwaja Khizr is under the Aukaf Department’s jurisdiction and the boatmen are its employees. The island and *khanqah* (resting place) of Khwaja Khizr are located near the Bakhar Island in the middle of River Indus in Rohri (Figures 6-9) .

The raised platform in the middle of the island is believed to have been Khwaja Khizr’s seat and is considered sacred. A number of flags can be seen on the island, representing the influence of the *Shia* sect within the locality. After a rift between the Hindus and the Muslims, a temple for Uderolal was constructed on the main land of Sukkur, facing the River Indus.

Next, we went to the island of Sadhu Bella, passing the Bakhar Fort on the way. We were received by the Head Priest and Incharge of Sadhu Bella Island (Figure 10-12) and he briefed us about the structures on this island and the various followers who visit regularly. This island has many temples for different deities and the architecture is a mix of Mughul, Rajasthani and Hindu Architecture.



Figures 6 and 7: Images of the Island of Khwaja Khizr



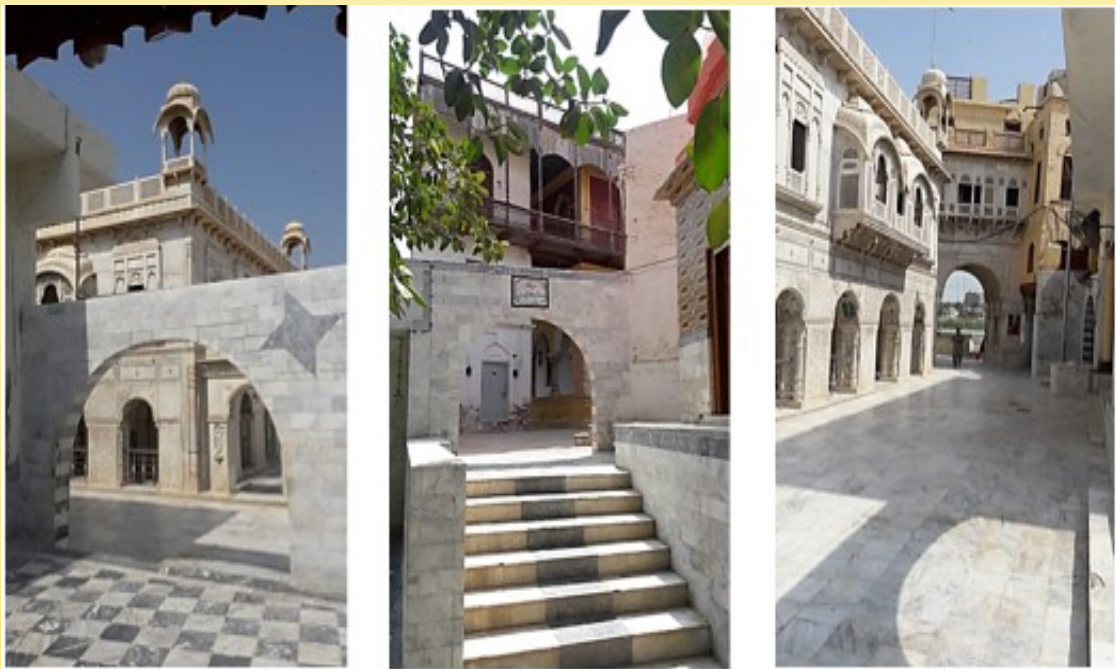
Figures 8 and 9: The grave of Khwaja Khizr





Sadhu Bella is a Nanakpanthi Temple founded in 1823, by Bhand Chand Sharma, a Nepali Udasi Sadhu. Interestingly, the iconography of Uderolal/ Khwaja Khizr is held to be of significance for the Nanakpantis too, as an important figure in their sainthood.

The temples on this island are highly revered by the Hindus and Sikhs and the temples are associated with the syncretic [Udasi](#) movement. The island houses the Teerath Asthan, which is the biggest Hindu temple in Pakistan. The island has eight other temples, a library, dining areas and a huge garden, along with rooms and residences for monks and people who want to stay on the island on a spiritual retreat. This island and its fine architecture represent an example of the increasing need felt by the Hindus of Sindh to clearly demarcate themselves as Hindus rather than some sort of marginal caste that the colonial taxonomists found bewildering. This example of Sindhi religious life offers them the opportunity to make this shift towards recognition.



Figures 10-12: Temples on the Island of Sadhu Bella

#### MOHANAS/ MALLAHS:

On the other side of the river, nearby Khwaja Khizr's island, we saw a few huts and people engaged in cultivating rice and we went to meet this community. These were the Mallahs who, having been evicted from the banks of River Indus post the 2010 floods, had been displaced to various locations. The livelihood of the Mallahs is tied to the River Indus, as they depend on it for fishing, transportation and cultivation. These communities stay in various areas around the River Indus, and at this particular location they stay for six months or when the tide of the river is low while the island above water and accessible for cultivation and hut building.. During high water periods they scatter to other parts of city. When the Mallahs are away from the river they survive by collecting wood, fishing or transporting goods by boat (Figure 13-14).



Figures 13: Presence of Mallahs on the banks of River Indus



Figures 14: Mallahs Sukkur



Communities on the outskirts of

### DAY 3 SHIKARPOOR (JHULELAL TEMPLES – MANDIR)

On the third day of our trip we headed towards Shikarpoor. We visited a temple of Jhulelal which was under construction, an expansion after the amalgamation of adjacent plots. As the Temple was located in a dense locality, this was only means of expansion. Strangely, the well associated with this temple now lies inside a neighboring house, and has been covered leaving no trace of its original location. Wells are an important element of Jhulelal temples, as the Saint is associated with the Indus River. Lanterns kept in the well are believed to denote the quality of water, if the flame is stable the water quality is good and if it flickers the water has impurities (Figure 15).

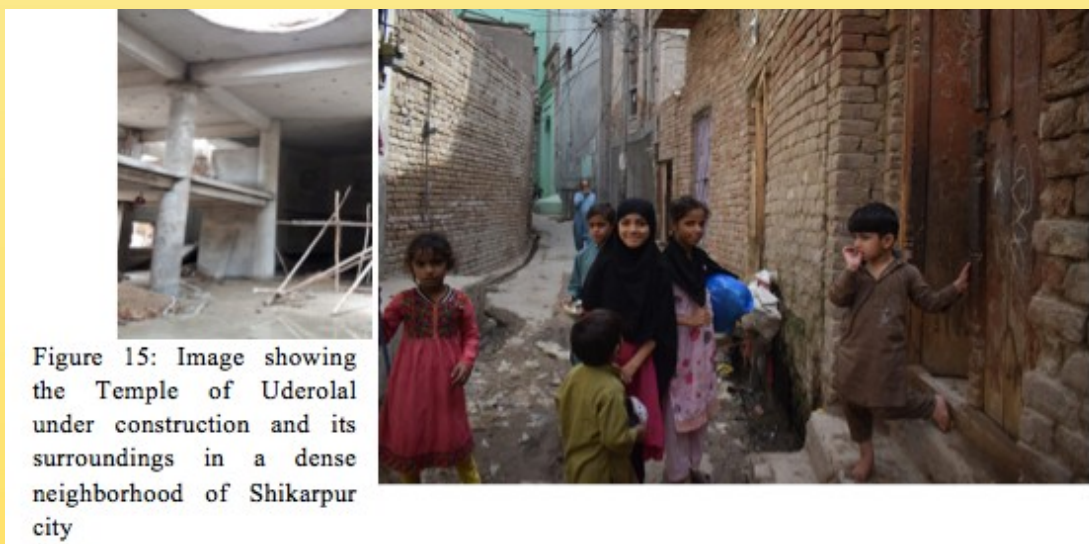


Figure 15: Image showing the Temple of Uderolal under construction and its surroundings in a dense neighborhood of Shikarpur city

We also visited another Temple in Shikarpur which had statues of other deities as well as Uderolal. The main worshipping hall of this temple had a very narrow and tight staircase leading to the basement, where, it was explained, water penetrates on specific days of the lunar calendar, and is believed to indicate the visit of Uderolal to the Temple given that no identified water source can be found nearby this location within the dense urban fabric of the city of Shikarpoor (Figures 16).



#### DAY 4 UDEROLAL

On our way back to Karachi, we stopped at the *dargah* of Uderolal, or Shaikh Tahir, a Muslim saint. Uderolal, also known by the name Jhulelal, is regarded as an incarnation of the Hindu deity Varuna. The shrine caretakers call themselves “fakirs” and belong to both Muslim and Hindu communities. In the evening, Muslims offer *namaz* prayers at the shrine while Hindus perform their *aarti* and *puja* prayers. At the temple, a lamp is kept burning perpetually, and according to the local care takers this lamp has been continuously burning for four hundred years. On new moon days when *Bahrano* is performed, lamps are lit and the shrine’s deity is worshipped.

Associations with Jhulelal and his reverence have become part of the intrinsic identity of Hindus of Sindh who migrated to India. This association is used by them to highlight their difference as Sindhi Hindus, and to prevent them from being merged into the more general classification of “Hindus”.







The site of Uderolal is both managed by a Hindu spiritual master, and a Muslim spiritual master. The Hindu one is a lady the followers use to call Mata. We requested to have a meeting with her, and after initially being refused we were called into her residential quarters. She explained that the state of Jhulelal is not well known here in Sindh and there is some sort of rift between Hindu communities, they have started ignoring Uderolal as a main site for worship and developing new sites of worship, not far from Uderolal itself. She was concerned that if this practice were to continue, people would start deviating and the Hindu community lose its identity related to Jhulelal or Zinda Pir in Sindh.

Overall, this trip highlighted the relationships between communities, myths and spatial markers that develop over time. It also pointed towards the fact that these spatial markers become intrinsic parts of people's lives and that the points when myths become reality are difficult to pinpoint. Furthermore, it was also realized that contrary to the popular belief of puritanical and narrow confines of religion, there still exist certain elements in our society that are a manifestation of centuries' old traditions of religious coexistence. The shrine of Jhulelal at Uderolal is a living example of this being equally revered and simultaneously visited by Muslims and Hindus.





## New PhDs in Sindhi Studies: 2019-2020

*The last few years have been very productive in terms of Sindhi studies. Below, four summaries reflect not only the dynamics of this field, but also the diversity of approaches.*

**Mustafa Ahmad Khan**

### ***Making Them Look the Other Way! The (Ir)rationality of Road Building in the Sindh Borderlands of Pakistan***

**PhD in Anthropology, SOAS, University of London, 2019.**

The thesis explores the politics and poetics of road making in Pakistan. The material addresses two questions: why do states build roads? What happens to the people and places that roads pass through when road construction occurs.

I conducted eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork on and along 360 kilometres of road built through southern Sindh, from the port of Karachi to a newly discovered coalfield in the borderland district of Tharparkar. The material challenges and complicates a body of scholarship connecting road building to state-making and territoriality. I explore how the 'cartographic anxieties' of India and Pakistan have created 'zones of exception' in their borderlands. Research on borderlands has focused on illicit flows and weak states, but in Sindh the border is a fiercely contested space and highly securitised while also being home to marginal populations, including Hindus and Dalits. This thesis de-constructs the tendency to explain road building as a form of economic improvement because the material from Sindh suggests that road building is a political process influenced more by discourses of national security than by the promotion of economic well-being. Foucauldian perspectives on the study of the state have produced important and necessary insights, but, at times, have also reified the power of the state as a particular universal instantiation of power, and more recently, neo-liberalism. By moving the focus on to the relationship between the citizen and state, this thesis will make an argument that post-colonial states such as Pakistan now face a 'crisis of legitimacy' when they undertake large infrastructural projects, with resistance from communities undergoing displacement, as earlier notions of social, political and legal orders are rearranged.

Overall, this material allows me to develop an argument about borders in the region. The Partition of 1947 did not simply create new territories and countries. Instead, this has been a long and contested process of adjustment, rupture and accommodation - the 'afterlives of Partition'. In many ways, the border is still being made, and roads are just one part of this process. In Pakistan, Tharparkar, like other 'remote places' in Asia, is increasingly reimagined as a resource-rich, unexploited 'wasteland' targeted for large-scale development schemes aimed at national integration and territorial control. New roads have been constructed for the exploitation of a new 'resource frontier'. With roads come new connections with urban Sindh, in particular Karachi, and new spatial realities for older populations.

This research makes an original contribution to the study of state making, citizenship and development in Pakistan. This is the first ethnographic research to be carried out along the borderlands of Sindh and Gujarat-Rajasthan with a focus on the afterlives of the Partition.



**Nimrita Kaur Rana,**

***Being and Becoming: Sindhis in Accra, Ghana,***

**PhD in African Studies and Anthropology, University of Birmingham, 2019.**

This thesis explores cosmopolitanism as an ever-changing set of aspirations that Sindhis in Accra strive for in their everyday lives. The links of Indian diasporas to their homeland, either real or imaginary, has been the central focus of scholars seeking to understand the everyday lives and aspirations of Indians living outside of the sub-continent. Sindhis, however, lack access to an original homeland because it was lost during the Partition of India in 1947. Rather than lamenting its loss or trying to (re)create an alternative one, my research participants invest in *becoming* Sindhi, which for them means *becoming* cosmopolitan. However, their view of cosmopolitanism, their strategies for achieving it, and the investments that they make in it, are all shaped by the context in which they actually live. Their cosmopolitanism is thus local and distinctive, even as it aspires to transcend the perceived limitations of a particular place. By demonstrating this, the thesis also shows how cosmopolitan aspirations play a role in framing success in the professional and personal lives of people in diaspora.

**Kamran**

***Practising Hinduism in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Devotion and the Politics of Untouchability in Ramdev Pir's tradition of Sindh***

**PhD in History and Civilisations, EHESS, 2020.**

This study is an attempt to understand the process through which a minor religious sect settled in a new region with an intricate historical past and transform later into a political organization. In my thesis, I focus on the transformation of a Hindu panth in Sindh from its arrival in the 19th century during British colonization from the neighboring cross border regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat, to their transformation into a political movement. The members started to organize themselves as a religious community around a main religious site located in Tando Allahyar and later on, it faced splits which caused the emergence of multiple sites, justified by their linguistic, regional differences and Indo Pak war of 1971. It is important to state here this community was classified from the British times as Untouchables, to speak frankly, although different denominations were given to it, such as Scheduled castes, a classification which is still used by Pakistan administration.

This breakup episode has re-structured and re-organized the panth, since it has led to the emergence of different patterns of changes in the same panth because of their different sites and groups. Furthermore, they got less connected as compared to before but interestingly, the central site remained important and that is why the main part of this study is devoted to it. And after the war, the allegation and relationship of mistrust on Hindus in general led a group among the community to solidify politically with new political identity because of their dominant number and shared border with India.

It has been done through circulation of devotional literature first, recording the longingness for their old regions and the importance of savior and hero worship. Most of the devotional literature was produced in 1990 which later was followed by producing the political literature. It contributed to establish a Dalit movement in one city. It is really interesting that in the 1980, the Dalit movement and literature was produced in the Indian state of Gujarat and later it was followed by Sindh in Pakistan though the politics in Gujarat is not majorly discussed in present study. This Identity politics have responded differently because of the location of their new religious multiple sites, their number in the population and their own differences within the panth. The whole thesis is concluded that how a Hindu Panth changed and transformed their Hindu politics in an Islamic state.



## Remembering Dominique-Sila Khan's *Ramdev Pir and the Ismailis in Rajasthan*

**Mahek Khwaja**

**M.A in English Literature, Editorial Assistant at a publication house in Karachi**

*In 1997, Dominique-Sila Khan published a groundbreaking book related to the encounter of Islam and Hinduism in South Asia, highlighting a possible role the Ismailis could have played in this process. For a review of this book, see Boivin 1999. Mahek Khwaja discusses the important issues raised by this book.*

*Conversions and Shifting Identities: Ramdev Pir and the Ismailis in Rajasthan* (Khan 1997) is an ethnographic research conducted by Dominique-Sila Khan (1949-2016) and published with the sponsorship of Centre de Sciences Humaines in Delhi; it was partly based on a PhD thesis submitted to University of Paris VII in 1993. Khan herself reasons in the Introduction of her book why she preferred an anthropological point of view to investigate primarily the cult of Ramdev, but also those of the Mallinath, Jambha, Jasnath and Ai Mata that flourished between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Rajasthan and its neighboring regions of Sindh, Punjab, Gujrat and part of Maharashtra. Since there is a dearth of historical documentation on the topic, Khan's critical inquiry is based on direct observations of shrines and rituals and also a study of the oral culture of legends and songs, not to undermine her analytical reconstruction of oral and written texts. Aside from today's globally recognized "Aga Khani Khojas", Khan attempts to convince that there are other Nizari converts of South Asian origin that later chose to collaborate with the more powerful religious groups in their contexts. Of course historians like Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir (Shackle and Moir 1992) have identified Shamsis, Maulais, Satpanthis and Guptis as some off shooting Ismaili groups, yet there are other cults associated to low-caste followers whom Khan connects to Ismaili missionaries operating da'wah activities from the region of Multan. As the central authority in Persia declined due to socio-political issues, these cults lost connection with their parent body and came under the control of local pirs and gurus.

There are three points I particularly found distinct about this research. The foremost is Khan's critical take on the idea of "syncretism" that she calls "hackneyed" (p. 21). She criticizes the fact that almost all researchers on the topic have conveniently made syncretism "a magic key to all doors" to say that there has been a simultaneous coexistence of multiple perspectives (p. 21), whereas syncretic actually means that the elements combined are living an "uneasy coexistence" i.e. they are together yet they maintain their separate identities (p. 22). This perspective she calls a reductionist approach in that the focus is on the product rather than on the process. According to her it is more important to know if this syncretic attribute was a conscious effort on part of the religious teachers/leaders or if it occurred spontaneously on an unconscious level where the subjects were unaware of transcending any boundaries. To her, in the case of Hindus being called to the Ismaili faith, it was never intended by Ismaili missionaries to jumble together two distinct conceptual frameworks, rather that Ismailism was introduced as a reinterpretation of the existing conceptual framework. Khan employs the metaphor of a time machine quite effectively here. She posits how Hindu mythology and legend were never negated in Ginanic literature, the Ismaili discourse emerging as an amalgamation of those beliefs. The notions of masum (infallible) Imam and Naklanki, and mazhar (divine manifestation) and Dasa avatara being used in tandem are two good examples.

The second important point she makes is that many texts often show that syncretism is something particular to specific groups who have had a certain exposure to Islam and Hinduism. Some texts are a step ahead in reasoning that pan-Islam does not exist in a quintessential state; Islam in its various forms is itself heterogeneous. Hinduism on the other hand is generally deemed a homogeneous block. We tend to forget that Buddhism and Jainism are actually two of those indigenous movements that serve a testimonial to the range of observances and doctrines Hinduism accommodates and that Hinduism was as much an "emerging" notion in the subcontinent as Islam.





Khan's point is that many scholars are only partially right in tracing back these "hybrid" groups to the cultural accommodation the subjects experienced due to the sociopolitical contest, because they overlook the "polythetic" nature of both Islam and Hinduism (p. 164).

A third point I think of equal importance in her research is her conclusion that both Hinduism and Ismailism facilitate successful transitions; Hinduism, because concurrent with its heterogeneous constitution, it represents a flexible religious discourse. The various socio-religious trends under the label of Hinduism are "remarkable for their fluidity and capacity of absorbing various currents" (p. 117). Similarly, Ismailis unlike their other co-religionists hold and value a composite model where the esoteric interpretation transcends the contextual form. Therefore, the cultural survival of the latter has (mostly) not been much of a problem in diversified socio-political contexts.

This book pioneers socio-anthropological approaches and the vivid description of these communities and their cultures overpowered by "popular religions" is compelling. I personally did not find much overlooked by this book even as a critical reader, although in the investigation of the lost Ismaili groups, the term "acculturation" has been used a bit too conveniently. By this I mean that Khan's attempt to analyze how tradition was first adopted, preserved and finally modified by the lower castes of Sindh—because there was a need to fit this into the larger picture—was somewhat extrinsic. No more "intrinsic" approach could have been employed to determine whether any of the descendants consider themselves a "forgotten branch"? How do they interpret their identity and do the subjects endorse the idea that they have struggled for cultural accommodation? The fact that now vanished convert groups were actually a part of a centralized system is still a speculation—albeit an academic speculation—because many Fatimids believe that a centralized da'wah network was operative even in far-flung areas like India, where missionaries did not conduct centralized instruction otherwise. Also there is no documentation of dissident Nizarpanth groups being controlled by local religious leaders in South Asia. Therefore, maybe an extension of this research, concentrating on the dynamics of religious leadership then and now, if the cults still function, is necessary.

My final comment relates to how Khan meticulously handles the enlightening yet misleading terms of "orthodoxy" and "heterodoxy" in reference to how cult groups appropriated themselves after sifting through and sorting out those elements befitting the popular pattern. I am calling the two terms "misleading" because Khan herself discusses that a lens constituting a division between these two, leads to a pigeonholing attitude by which we undermine the actual process of cultural synthesis. She extensively explores these convert groups as separate communities which even after going through a rigorous "Rajputization", carry traces of Nizari *satpanth*. I believe this is only one side of the picture. Convert groups who had been Islamized to accommodate to the context, are not put in any juxtaposition which would have helped the reader better understand the dynamics of "appropriation" indigenous groups go through. Khan touches on the unsung notes in her works ahead, simultaneously providing research prospects to her contemporary and proceeding researchers.

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