A 'Proving Ground' for Spiritual Mastery: The Chishti Sabiri Musical Assembly

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Qawwālī is a distinctly South Asian variety of *samāʿ*, the ritualized performance of ecstatic Sufi poetry accompanied by music. Cultivated in particular by the Chishti order since the twelfth century, this unique genre of religious expression has inspired poets, spiritual seekers, and popular audiences alike. Along the way, it has also invoked frequent criticism from detractors who question its Islamic credentials. Recently, the growing popularity of "world music" has brought *Qawwālī* to new international audiences. Accelerated via emerging technologies — from CDs to cyberspace — this growing reach has transformed performers like the late Nusrat Fateh ʿAlī Khan and ensembles like the Sabri Brothers into mass-marketed, deracinated, global pop stars. Yet even as *Qawwālī* expands its boundaries and explores new frontiers, it remains deeply rooted in South Asian Sufi history, piety and practice.

Qawwālī is often described as Indo-Muslim "gospel music." Both lyrically and musically, it is emotive, celebratory, inspiring and potentially transformative. In the context of the Sufi path, however, *samāʿ* is first and foremost a pedagogical tool — a ritual technology for the molding and shaping of a moral, virtuous self. In response to the often caustic harangues of critics over the centuries, Chishti masters have for centuries marshaled a spirited defense of *samāʿ*. No less an authority than the famous thirteenth century luminary Shaykh Nizām ad-Dīn Awliyāʾ (d. 1325) recognized and defended the use of music as a spiritual catalyst for Sufi adepts willing to engage it with discipline, purpose and sobriety. In the face of controversy and criticism, the

shaykh remained unapologetic in his assessment of Sufi musical poetry. "*Samāʿ*," Nizām ad-Dīn declared, "is a proving ground for men of spiritual prowess."[1]

This article traces the polemics, poetics and performance of Sufi music within a particular branch of the contemporary Chishti Sabiri order in Pakistan. Drawing on Urdu manuscripts as well as ethnographic fieldwork, I explore how today's Chishti Sabiris defend, experience, and explain one of the most essential ritual practices of their spiritual lives: the musical assembly (*maḥfil-i samāʿ*).[2]

Contextualizing the Chishti Sufi Order

An appreciation of *samāʿ* presupposes some knowledge of the Sufi milieu from which it emerged. And any survey of Sufi music leads inevitably to the spiritual universe of one of the most prominent and prolific brotherhoods in South Asia: the Chishtiyya.[3] Who are the Chishti Sufis? With its doctrine of social equality, tolerance, and spiritual discipline, the Chishti order (*silsila*) spread rapidly eastward from its roots in Afghanistan in the twelfth century. Under the guidance of charismatic spiritual leaders (*shaykhs* or *pirs*) who embodied Islamic doctrine through their piety and practice, Sufism helped translate Islam for the indigenous population. Versed in local customs and proficient in vernacular languages, Chishti *shaykhs* established centers of learning and hospices (*khanaqahs*) that offered food and shelter for the wayfarers and mendicants who survived on their charity, solace for the pilgrims who visited them for spiritual blessings (*baraka*), and intensive spiritual training for their select corps of disciples (*murīds*).[4]

The posthumous reputation of many Chishti *shaykhs* often led to the development of elaborate shrine complexes (*dargahs*) where devotees flock in search of spiritual power to alleviate their worldly troubles. As loci of sacred geography and fronts for public social welfare, these regional shrines continue to thrive as pilgrimage sites and symbols of local Muslim culture and identity.[5] In the twenty-first century, Sufism is still experienced in the popular practices at shrines, and expressed through the ecstatic poetry of its literary luminaries. But beyond this legacy of a rich Indo-Muslim past, it also remains a dynamic, living teaching network — rooted in the intimate exchange between master and disciple and mediated through ritual performance.

In South Asia, the Chishti Sufi order developed two primary genealogical branches: the Nizamiyya and Sabiriyya. Breaking from the lineage of the predominant Nizami branch in the thirteenth century, the eponymous founder of the Chishti Sabiri sub-branch, ʿAla ad-Dīn ʿAlī Ahmad Sabir (d. 1291), initiated an alternative model of spiritual asceticism. From the beginning, the Chishti Sabiris were much less visible than their famous Chishti Nizami

counterparts, withdrawing from urban life and the allure of the royal courts. Chishti Sabiri *shaykhs* were often renowned for their intense, awe-inspiring (*jalālī*) personalities. In search of a life of solitary contemplation and spiritual discipline, they favored more rural locales, avoided public appearances, trained fewer devotees, wrote fewer books and avoided building large shrine complexes. In the face of the increased communal politics, polemics and competition of the colonial era, however, select Chishti Sabiri leaders increasingly came to view silence and withdrawal as untenable. In the late nineteenth century, prominent Sabiri *shaykhs* linked themselves to social reform movements, founding educational institutions and publishing a broad range of texts. For example, both Hajji Imdad Allah al-Muhajir Makki (1817–1899) and Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (1829–1905) — spiritual founders of the famous Deoband *madrasa* — were prominent Chishti Sabiri masters.[6] The social activism and reformist agenda of these nineteenth century Chishti Sabiri *shaykhs* mirrored the efforts of numerous Sufi leaders from diverse institutional orders across the Muslim world who resisted European hegemony and vigorously defended Sufi piety during the colonial era.[7] In the context of the Chishti Sabiri order, however, it marked a radical break with historical precedent.

Yet even as South Asia's changing social, cultural and ideological landscape forced a radical rethinking of the Chishti Sabiri's public posturing, the discipline of ritual practice remained the enduring bedrock of Sufi identity. In today's Pakistan, spiritual masters of the order continue to guide their followers along the Sufi path, armed with a spiritual genealogy (*silsila*) that links them directly to the authority of the Prophet Muḥammad. Given this continuous — but contested — history, the re-emergence and reconstitution of the Chishti Sabiri order on the public stage of post-colonial Pakistan offers an instructive example of Islam's diverse and dynamic encounter with the modern world.

Chishti Sabiri Sufis in Pakistan

For Chishti Sabiri disciples in Pakistan, three spiritual masters set the standard for Sufi piety and practice: Muḥammad Zauqi Shah (1877–1951) and his two principal successors, Shahidullah Faridi (1915–1978) and Wahid Bakhsh Rabbani (1910–1995).[8] These modern Sufi exemplars embodied the complexity of their times, and their lives paralleled the birth and development of Pakistan itself. Zauqi Shah was educated at Aligarh Muslim University and pursued a career in journalism and politics before emigrating to Pakistan and devoting himself to his spiritual duties as a Chishti Sabiri *shaykh*. His designated successor, Shahidullah Faridi, was the son of a wealthy London industrialist. Born John Gilbert Lennard, he converted to Islam along with his

elder brother in 1937 and traveled widely throughout the Muslim world in search of spiritual knowledge. After becoming a disciple of Zauqi Shah in Hyderabad, India, he married his *shaykh's* daughter and then moved to Pakistan with them both following Partition. Shahidullah spent the last thirty years of his life in Karachi immersed in the Sufi path, guiding his own devoted corps of disciples.

Wahid Bakhsh Rabbani was born and raised in the southern Punjab and educated at the Officers Indian Military Academy in Dehra Dun. He was commissioned in the Bahawalpur State Forces in 1933 as an infantry officer in the British Indian Army before moving with his regiment to Malaysia at the outbreak of World War II. Retiring from military service after being charged with insubordination for refusing to cut his beard and wear shorts, he returned to South Asia, where he joined the Civil Secretariat. During his tenure in the British military and civil service, Wahid Bakhsh immersed himself in Sufi practice under the guidance of his mentor, Zauqi Shah. For the last three decades of his life, he too committed himself to a life of scholarship and spiritual discipline as a Chishti Sabiri teaching *shaykh*.

Collectively, the experiences of these contemporary Chishti Sabiri leaders provided them with a unique perspective on Sufism and its relation to colonial and post-colonial structures of authority, knowledge and power. The *shaykhs* were all educated in Western-style universities rather than traditional *madrasas*. Multi-lingual, urban and cosmopolitan, they moved fluidly in multiple cultural complexes and epistemological universes. Acquainted by direct engagement with the instruments and ideology of modernity, these *shaykhs* appropriated and critiqued the language of science, nationalism and secularization. In all this, they were not unique. Other Sufi masters from multiple orders also struggled to adapt Sufi tradition to the shifting landscape of postcolonial South Asia. With his constant travel, voluminous writings, and direct political engagement, Shaykh Jamāʿat ʿAlī Shah (d. 1951), for instance, initiated a similar model of leadership for the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order in India. The *shaykh* actively engaged in polemical debates and founded an organization, the Anjuman-i Khuddam as-Sūfīyya, to defend Sufism against the polemical attacks of conservative Muslim and Hindu critics alike.[9] Shaykh Khwaja Hasan Nizami (1878–1955) did much the same for the Chishti Nizami *silsila* in India, communicating Islamic Sufism in a new idiom through his public writings, institution building, and pan-Islamic activism.[10] Yet Muḥammad Zauqi Shah, Shahidullah Faridi and Wahid Bakhsh Rabbani are distinguished by their concerted efforts to root Chishti Sabiri history, doctrine, and practice in the contested landscape of postcolonial Pakistan. As teachers, writers and political activists, they each defended the orthodoxy of Sufi thought and praxis, and championed

a reconstructed Pakistani cultural identity that was simultaneously Muslim, mystic and modern.

Today this legacy is perpetuated by a new generation of Chishti Sabiri disciples in Pakistan and, more recently, Malaysia. From Karachi to Kuala Lumpur, these contemporary Sufis preserve a distinct Muslim identity. This identity is rooted in spiritual genealogy, inscribed in texts, and communicated in the intimate exchange between master and disciple. Above all, Chishti Sabiri identity is experienced and expressed through embodied ritual performance.

The Chishti Defense of *Samāʿ*

For Sufis, ultimate knowledge about the nature of the self and its relationship to God is not found in abstract philosophizing or the academic parsing of legal and theological debate. Instead, Sufis argue, understanding is possible only through active "spiritual striving" (*mujāhada*). The Sufi path (*sulūk*) couples a distinct model of human psychology with a series of practical, bodily techniques that together create religious experience and communicate religious truth.[11] Chishti Sabiri practice begins with a strict adherence to the orthodox ritual requirements incumbent on all Muslims — *shahāda* (the testimony of faith), *ṣalāt* (ritual prayer), *zakāt* (the alms tax), *ṣawm* (fasting during the month of Ramadan), and *Ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). These "pillars" of Muslim piety are then supplemented with a regimen of extra-canonical Sufi practices designed to radically transform the self by molding the body, sharpening the mind, and purifying the soul. For Chishti Sabiris these include superogatory prayers and periods of isolation and fasting, as well as prescribed meditative techniques like contemplation (*murāqaba*) and the repetition of the names of God (*zikr*). Chishti Sabiris insist that these Sufi rituals do not replace normative practice — they expand and deepen it. They are taught to individual disciples by the *shaykh*, and subsequently reinforced and rationalized through a social teaching network. Overall, this program of rigorous and routinized spiritual training provides Chishti Sabiri adepts with a tangible, tactile, sensual, and immediate source of knowledge.

The quintessential Chishti Sabiri ritual practice is *samāʿ*: the ritualized "listening" to ecstatic Sufi poetry accompanied by music. *Samāʿ* assumed a central role in Chishti devotional practice by the twelfth century. From the beginning, Chishti *shaykhs* vigorously defended the practice against critics who dismissed musical performance as inappropriate, even blasphemous. In response, Chishti masters championed *samāʿ* as an integral part of Sufi devotion, arguing that it was fully in keeping with the dictates of normative Islamic law when performed under the proper conditions. Over time, Sufi musical traditions gained broad popularity and royal patronage. The use of

music for spiritual inspiration, however, remained a hallmark of the Chishti order. As Bruce Lawrence notes:

> In the Indian environment from the period of the Delhi Sultanate through the Mughal era, *samāʿ* assumed a unique significance as the integrating modus operandi of the Chishti *silsila*. Chishti apologists adopted a distinctive attitude to *samāʿ*: far from being an embarrassment to them, as the literature sometimes suggests, *samāʿ* was aggressively defended as an essential component of the spiritual discipline or ascesis incumbent on all Sufis . . . *Samāʿ* became, if not the monopoly of the Chishtiyya, the preeminent symbol crystallizing their position *vis-à-vis* other Indo-Muslim leadership groups.[12]

Contemporary Chishti Sabiri masters are as resolute in their defense of *samāʿ* as their pre-modern predecessors. They too feel the need to marshal evidence and arguments to demonstrate the usefulness and legality of music — a defensive posturing that suggests they are aware of (and threatened by) critics of the tradition. In a wide range of Urdu texts, twentieth century *shaykhs* assert the orthodoxy of *samāʿ*. The writings and discourses of Shaykh Muḥammad Zauqi Shah, for instance, abound with lengthy discussions of the merits of music and the requisite decorum for its apt performance.[13] Shaykh Wahid Bakhsh Rabbani followed in his mentor's footsteps as an unwavering advocate of *samāʿ*. His diverse and eclectic writings marshal a broad range of evidence drawn from the Qurʾān, the *sunna*, and the lives of myriad Sufi masters to argue for its legality and spiritual efficacy. In *Maqam-i Ganj-i Shakkkar*, Wahid Bakhsh offers a detailed counter-polemic in a section entitled, "Criticism Against the Music of the Sufis" (*Samāʿ-i sūfīyya par iʾtiraz*).[14] An equally expansive account is found in the *shaykh's* lengthy introduction to the discourses (*malfuzat*) of the nineteenth century Chishti master, Ghulam Farid (d. 1911), *Maqabis al-majalis*.[15] Summarizing his own view of *samāʿ*, Wahid Bakhsh writes:

> While music is a controversial issue in Islam, its benefits in spiritual development are of an overwhelming nature. The kind of music and singing which is prohibited in Islam is of the frivolous and corrupt type whose vulgarity is unwholesome in any society. The Islamic society, in particular, stands for all-around purity, chastity and perfection. I have, however, upheld the sanctity of spiritual music with copious references from the Qurʾān, Hadith and sayings of the Companions of the Prophet, the leaders of the four schools of *fiqah* [sic], *muhaddithin* (the Traditionalists) and the heads of various spiritual orders — Chishtis, Qadiris, Naqshbandis, Suhrawardis and so forth — in the introductions to my books.[16]

Throughout his voluminous writings, Wahid Bakhsh invokes a range of pre-modern Sufi luminaries to bolster his own defense of *samāʿ*. The famous

nineteenth century Chishti Sabiri master Hajji Imdad Allah al-Muhajir Makki (d. 1899) is especially prominent in Wahid Bakhsh's imagination. His reputation for intellectual rigor — coupled with deep piety and social activism — mark Hajji Imdad Allah as a prominent moral exemplar and spiritual guide.[17] Yet even as he invokes his Chishti Sabiri predecessor, Wahid Bakhsh adds his own distinct voice to the exposition and defense of *samāʿ*. As Ernst and Lawrence illustrate:

> The approach of Capt. Wahid Bakhsh is at once bolder and more 'rational.' He explicates *samāʿ* as the culmination of spiritual discipline, which alone can produce the result of annihilation (*fanāʾ*) in God. It is no longer ancillary; it is central. It is, moreover, projected as modern because it recognizes the interior/exterior correspondence of spiritual/physical health that both Europeans and Americans have too narrowly construed as uni-dimensional or physical.[18]

Despite the differences of style and emphasis, there is clearly an unbroken trajectory in Chishti discourse. As the living heirs to this legacy, today's Chishti Sabiri disciples continue to view *samāʿs* credentials as unassailable.

The *Maḥfil-i Samāʿ* as Ritual Performance

In her theoretical work, Catherine Bell outlines the constituent parts of religious ritual. Despite the many differences across traditions, she argues that rituals share certain universal traits. In Bell's assessment:

> these activities may use a delineated and structured space to which access is restricted; a special periodicity for the occurrence and internal orchestration of the activities; restricted codes of communication to heighten the formality of movement and speech; distinct and specialized personnel; objects, texts, and dress designated for use in these activities alone; verbal and gestural combinations that evoke or purport to be the way things have always been done; and the involvement of a particular constituency not necessarily assembled for any other activities.[19]

Each of these elements is integral to the Chishti Sabiri musical assembly. In both theory and practice, therefore, the *maḥfil-i samāʿ* is best understood as a formalized, elaborately structured ritual performance. Chishti Sabiri masters and disciples view the ritual arena of the musical assembly as a sacralized, liminal space in which the normal structures and logic of everyday social practice are temporarily suspended.[20] Amid the intensity and intimacy of the *maḥfil-i samāʿ*, music and poetry are transformed into vehicles for heightened spiritual insight — opening up the possibility of a deeper union with the divine.

In his Urdu discourses, *Tarbiyat al-ʿushshāq* (*The Training of the Lovers*), Shaykh Muḥammad Zauqi Shah details the essential prerequisites of the

musical assembly. Echoing a well-known phrase often attributed to the early Sufi theorist, Junayd of Baghdad (d. 910), he asserts that *samāʿs* efficacy is conditioned by three key factors:

> There are three requirements (*sharaʾit*) for *samāʿ*: place (*makān*), time (*zamān*), and companions (*ikhwān*). *Makān* means the place where *Qawwālī* is performed. It should not be a location where everyone passes by. Rather it should be a secluded site. *Zamān* means that there should be a prescribed time for *Qawwālī* when no other duties are at hand. For example, it should not be time for prayer or any other obligations that might intervene. *Ikhwān* means that only people of taste (*ahl-i zauq*) should be seated in the *Qawwālī* assembly (*maḥfil*), and only those in search of God (*talab-i haqq*) ought to listen to the *samāʿ*. The *Qawwālīs* (singers) are also included under the requirement of *ikhwān*.[21]

According to Chishti Sabiris, it is the combination of *makān, zamān*, and *ikhwān* that transforms the musical assembly into a sacred space. The careful attention to atmosphere and audience, they insist, distinguishes the closed, private performance of the Chishti Sabiri *maḥfil-i samāʿ* from the daily, public gatherings for *Qawwālī* at Sufi shrines throughout Pakistan. Disciples highlight these elements when comparing *samāʿ* with the pop-star *Qawwālī* of the global recording industry as well. Their criticism of popular *Qawwālī* is that it reduces mass-produced music to a form of commercialized entertainment that is often insensitive to the Sufi tradition. *Samāʿ*, by contrast, constitutes a carefully choreographed technology for the enrichment of a Sufi's inner, spiritual development. Accessible exclusively to an elite cadre of disciples (*murīds*) under the supervision of a teaching *shaykh*, the performance of *samāʿ* is always governed by strict rules of comportment.

Four times a year, Chishti Sabiri disciples travel together on pilgrimage (*ziyārat*) to the tombs of prominent Chishti masters to commemorate the saint's death anniversary (*ʿurs*).[22] During these short but intense periods of spiritual immersion, they live and worship together as a community — mirroring, for a brief span of time, the setting and social dynamics of the pre-modern Sufi hospice (*khanaqah*). The Chishti Sabiri musical assemblies are usually held on the night of the *ʿurs*, most often within an enclosed space adjacent to the Sufi saint's tomb. At the annual *ʿurs* of Shaykh Shahidullah Faridi in Karachi, for example, the ceremony takes place in an enclosed, open air courtyard immediately in front of the tomb. In other locations such as Allahabad and Pakpattan, the *silsila* maintains a separate indoor room for the occasion in private compounds near the shrines.

Wherever and whenever the Chishti Sabiri *maḥfil-i samāʿ* takes place, every dimension of the ritual space and the listening audience is overseen by

the presiding *shaykh*. With rare exception, only a select, inner circle of disciples are allowed to participate. During the musical assembly, disciples gather together in the presence of the spiritual master near the patron saint's tomb. There they sit in quiet contemplation as the singers — professional musicians known as *Qawwālīs* ('reciters') — perform poetic verses (*kalām*), accompanied by the rhythm of hand-clapping, drums (*tabla*) and the harmonium. Under the proper conditions, *murīds* insist, *samāʿ* is transformed into a powerful form of meditative recollection, or *zikr*. Under the watchful and discerning eye of the *shaykh*, participants are spurred towards mystical insight (*ḥāl*). Some experience states of ecstasy (*wajd*). Overall, the logic and mechanics of the Chishti Sabiri *maḥfil-i samāʿ* closely mirror those described by ethnomusicologist Regula Burckhardt Qureshi in her classic study of Sufi music at the shrine of Shaykh Nizām ad-Dīn Awliyāʾ in Delhi.[23]

The physical space of the Chishti Sabiri *maḥfil-i samāʿ* clearly manifests relationships of power and authority, both spiritual and temporal. This is reflected in the seating arrangements of the assembly, which mirror the hierarchical social relations between the leader (*shaykh*), the performers (*Qawwālīs*), and the listening audience (*murīds*). At the annual *ʿurs* in Karachi, for example, the *Qawwālīs* sit at the far end of the compound, directly facing Shaykh Shahidullah Faridi's tomb. As the saint's living heir, the presiding *shaykh* is positioned in the center row to the right of the musicians, facing the direction of the Kaʿba. In both Pakpattan and Allahabad, where the musical assembly is held in a room adjacent to the shrine, by contrast, the *shaykh* sits directly opposite the performers. Disciples, in turn, form a series of rows behind and opposite him. The most senior disciples position themselves nearest the *shaykh*, while others take seats in the front or back of the rows according to their relative status. While the logistics vary according to the physical landscape of different shrines, the logic remains constant. The spatial layout of the musical assembly places the Sufi master at the very center of the ritual action, even as it confines the singers to the periphery.

Significantly, the *maḥfil-i samāʿs* ritual space is gendered as well.[24] Female disciples typically sit together in rows directly behind the *shaykh*, divided off from the central arena by a thin, white sheet. Though recognized as full and active participants in the ceremony, women remain distanced from the *samāʿs* ritual action — physically present, but sequestered, silent and invisible. This is in sharp contrast to the norms of everyday experience. Though the exact dynamics differ among *silsila* families, many women play integral roles in the Chishti Sabiri order's social and ritual life. Muḥammad Zauqi Shah, Shahiduallah Faridi and Wahid Bakhsh Rabbani each had a large number of female disciples. In interviews, disciples emphasized that the *shaykhs* were fully accessible to women and treated their female *murīds* as the spiritual

equals of their male counterparts. In a last will and testament composed a year before his death in 1978, Shahidullah Faridi singles out several senior female disciples by name, praising them for their high spiritual status. If the Chishti Sabiri tradition allowed, Shahidullah asserts, he would have named them his successors.[25] To this day, many of the most respected disciples in the *silsila* are women. Their wisdom and advice is eagerly sought after by all *murīds*, female and male, young and old alike. Several women, in fact, are renowned as spiritually advanced mentors with expertise in Sufi ritual practice, including *samāʿ*. Despite the high standing of women in Chishti Sabiri daily affairs, however, they remain noticeably marginalized within the ritualized confines of the *maḥfil-i samāʿ*.

Chishti Sabiri disciples insist that every dimension of the *samāʿ* performance is fully in keeping with the dictates of *sharīʿah*. In their view, the maintenance of ritual etiquette decorum (*adab*) protects and preserves the *maḥfil-i samāʿs* sanctity. The words of a senior Pakistani disciple are typical:

> In our *maḥfil-i samāʿ* there is nothing that anyone could object to, even Wahhabis. We always keep *sharīʿah* intact. The women, for example, remain in *pardah*. We are in *wudu* [having performed the ritual ablutions for prayer], neatly dressed, listening to the recitation of *ḥamd* and *naat* [songs of praise and blessing] to the Prophet, God bless him and grant him salvation. There is nothing at all objectionable in this. Often you feel so moved that you want to shake your body. There is so much pressure that you just want to move. But you are not allowed to do this. Here there is not a single utterance.
>
> We are always careful to protect the *adab* of *samāʿ*. The proof is the spiritual element in all this. The more you watch and hear it, the more you are attracted to it. It is not like other kinds of music. You can listen to this for years and years and it always moves you, just as it did the first time you heard it. A prayer offered in Mecca is ten thousand times greater than *namāz* done at home. The same is true for *samāʿ*. The presence of the *shaykh* and the saint make all the difference.[26]

For Chishti Sabiris, the requirements of *adab* are as essential to Sufi practice as the ritual prescriptions of formal worship (*ʿibādāt*). A meticulous attention to the nuances of decorum, in fact, is at the very heart of Chishti Sabiri discipleship. To a large extent, an individual's standing in the community is measured by her/his knowledge of and adherence to these rules of ritual etiquette. According to the well-known adage, "All of Sufism is *adab*" (*al-tasawwuf kulluhu al-adab*).

Throughout the *samāʿ* performance, every effort is made to ensure an atmosphere of piety and decorum. In *Tarbiyat al-ʿushshāq*, Zauqi Shah outlines the ritual's parameters in detail. His exposition illustrates how *adab*

impacts every dimension of the ceremony, from the listeners' dress, to their bodily comportment and physical postures. Most importantly, it highlights the imperative for propriety and decorum. In Zauqi Shah's words:

> Both the singers and the listeners (*samāʿin*) should arrive clean and well dressed. Everyone who participates in the musical assembly should perform ritual ablutions. As long as they sit in the assembly, they should maintain etiquette (*adab*) and remain seated with crossed legs. During the *Qawwālī*, everyone should sit and make every effort to focus their attention on God. If they are spurred to inner states of ecstasy (*kaifiyat-i batin*), they should focus their attention on the Prophet of God (God bless him and grant him salvation), or on their own *shaykh*, or on any saint of the *silsila* whose virtues are being mentioned [in the *Qawwālī*]. They should not look around because this only disperses one's thoughts and disrupts the other people of the assembly. Whatever gifts (*nazr*) they give [for the *Qawwālīs*] should be presented in front of the master of the assembly [i.e., the *shaykh*]. It is against etiquette to give it directly to the *Qawwālīs* . . . If it necessary to renew ablutions, one should immediately exit the assembly, perform the ablutions and return. Talking, using prayer beads (*tasbīḥ*) or performing other forms of worship is against the etiquette of the musical assembly. Of course, those who have reached perfection are exempt from these rules.
>
> When overcome with ecstasy (*ḥāl*) a person should remain in control and stay seated. He should continue to refrain from movement that would disturb the people of the assembly. If someone is forced to stand up in ecstasy then everyone should follow his example and stand up as well. As long as the person in ecstasy does not sit down, neither should they. People should never try to seat themselves up front. However, the leader of the assembly [i.e., the presiding *shaykh*] should arrange to have those who have a taste for *samāʿ* (*arbab-i zauq*) to sit in front.
>
> If a novice seeker manages to maintain control when overcome with ecstasy, his status (*maratib*) will improve and the spiritual blessings (*faizan*) will increase as well. If, however, he does not try to stay in control and instead begins to leap and jump about when overcome with ecstasy then all progress stops. When a man becomes intoxicated (*mast*) after drinking only one cup, why would should receive more wine? Of course, it is a different matter with those who have achieved perfection. The character of their ecstasy and rapture (*wajd o ḥāl*) is entirely separate.[27]

Samāʿs efficacy, Zauqi Shah suggests, presupposes an exacting attention to the details of its performance. As with daily prayer, listening to music demands careful preparation. Ritual purity is maintained through ritual ablutions, the wearing of clean clothes and the disciplining of the body. With proper intention and the focused concentration of the mind, the *shaykh* notes,

disciples open themselves up to spiritual blessings and rarefied states of consciousness that are inaccessible in everyday experience. Yet the mark of spiritual attainment is to maintain sobriety and control, even in the face of spiritual ecstasy. This is only possible, Zauqi Shah insists, if the *murīd* maintains an unwavering discipline and adheres to the dictates of decorum. Enshrined in texts and orally communicated among disciples, the rules of *adab* are passed down from generation to generation of Chishti Sabiri disciples. While mediating ritual performance, *adab* also forms a fundamental part of the *silsila's* historical memory, collective wisdom and corporate identity.

The Power of Poetry and the Etiquette of Performance

The most important — if controversial — element of *samāʿ* is the recited lyrics (*kalām*). Sufis long ago discovered poetic images of love and intoxication to be powerful catalysts for enhancing states of spiritual ecstasy. *Fawā'id al-Fuʿād*, for instance, records Shaykh Nizām ad-Dīn's awe at the transformative power of poetry:

> From his [Nizām ad-Dīn's] blessed mouth came this pronouncement: 'Every eloquent turn of phrase that one hears causes delight, but the same thought expressed in prose when cast into verse causes still great delight.' At this point, I [Hasan Sijzi] interjected: 'Is there nothing which touches the heart so deeply as listening to devotional music (*samāʿ*)?' 'For those who tread this Path desiring the Divine,' replied the master, 'the taste which is evoked in them through *samāʿ* resembles a fire set ablaze. If this were not the case, where would one find eternity (*baqa'*), and how would one evoke the taste for eternity?'[28]

For Sufis past and present, *kalām* is much more than eloquent verse. As the expression of accomplished spiritual masters, it provides a blueprint for spiritual development — a "model of" and a "model for" mystical experience.

Contemporary Chishti Sabiris are equally attuned to the aesthetics and power of *kalām*. In *Tarbiyat al-ʿushshāq*, Zauqi Shah links the sequence of *kalām* with the stages of the Sufi path (*sulūk*). His commentary offers a succinct yet nuanced summation of both:

> *Samāʿ* is a part of *sulūk*. Indeed, it the essence (*khulāsā*) of *sulūk*. The *Qawwālīs* should arrange the *kalām* to match the stages of *sulūk* itself. These days the *Qawwālīs* are often ignorant of these matters. For this reason, it is the duty of the Sufis to inform them of these nuances.
>
> The essence of *sulūk* is this: in the beginning, man is in a state of duality (*maqam-i dui*). The mind of the seeker of truth struggles to overcome this. With the blessings of *mujāhada*, the signs and secrets of divine

> unity (*tawḥīd*) begin to be revealed and the seeker traverses the stages of true love. The result is ultimately union with God (*wasil bi Allah*). After this, he returns to the state of servitude (*maqam-i 'abdiyat*) which is the reward for permanence in God (*baqa' bi Allah*).
>
> This very same path should be followed in *Qawwālī* as well. According to etiquette, *Qawwālī* should commence with poems in honor of the Prophet (*na't sharīf*). This should be followed by songs in praise (*manqabat*) of the saints of the *silsila*. After that, words of love [should be sung] so that the fire of separation and division (*hajr o firaq*) warms the hearts of the seekers, and the pleasure of the taste and desire for God (*zauq o shauq*) is increased . . . Having heard this type of poetry, the seekers immerse themselves in the contemplation of annihilation (*murāqaba-i fanā'*). This kind of *kalām* will help them to achieve effacement in the Divine essence (*mahwiyat-i dhat*) and become overwhelmed with the state of Divine union.
>
> After annihilation, servitude is restored, and this is the final state. For this reason, after the recitation of *kalām* dealing with annihilation and union, the *kalām* associated with servitude — the descent after ascension, separation after union — should be performed . . . The singers (*Qawwālīs*) should remain attentive to this arrangement. If, having reached one stage they return to a previous stage, the seekers hearts will shatter. For this reason, once they have reached the stage of annihilation they must not begin singing about love. Similarly, if the stage of permanence (*baqa'iyat*) is achieved, they should not return to annihilation (*fana'iyat*) or *na't* or *manqabat*. If after hearing a particular couplet a *salik* goes into ecstasy (*wajd*), they must continue repeating that same couplet until his state has passed. If this is not kept in mind, he could die under certain circumstances.[29]

As this lengthy quote illustrates, there is nothing arbitrary about the poetic repertoire of the *maḥfil-i samā'*. It encapsulates *sulūk* itself, serving in effect as a lyrical microcosm of the Sufi's arduous spiritual journey to God. For Chishti Sabiri adepts, poetry and music are merely a medium for a higher goal: the inner concentration on the mystical quest. In the proper context and with the proper intention, they assert, *samā'* has the power to spur states of heightened consciousness. This power is also potentially dangerous, even destructive. Zauqi Shah's final cautionary note invokes the memory of the famous thirteenth century Chishti master, Shaykh Qutb ad-Dīn Bakhtiyar Kaki (d. 1235), who died in a state of prolonged spiritual rapture while listening to *samā'*. The musical assembly, Zauqi Shah suggests, is neither a playground nor a venue for worldly entertainment. Instead, it is a ritual training ground open exclusively to devotees who are fully committed to the discipline and rigors of the Sufi path. In the proper context, Chishti Sabiris assert, devotional music

becomes a didactic tool that reveals a depth of spiritual insight and knowledge that no text, library or scholar could ever hope to communicate.

In practice, the Chishti Sabiri *maḥfil-i samāʿ* is led by one or two singers who are supported melodically by a background chorus and several musicians. Though constrained by the ritual's formal structure, *Qawwālīs* are allowed some limited space for creative expression and spontaneity. "The ensemble structure and performing style make possible extended singing, a strongly articulated musical meter," notes Qureshi, "and a flexible structuring process adapted to the changing spiritual needs of the *samāʿ* listeners."[30] Under the watchful eye of the presiding *shaykh*, the *Qawwālīs* repeat and re-combine poetic couplets and individual phrases or words in response to the reactions of the audience. At times the performers choose the lyrics and musical cadence; at other moments, the *shaykh* will call for a specific poem, or encourage the *Qawwālīs* to speed up (or slow down) the pace. In this respect, the *maḥfil-i samāʿ* resembles a form of spiritual jazz — fluid, open and responsive to audience feedback and participation.

The singers' repertoire draws on a diverse range of lyrical poetry communicated in multiple languages. *Qawwālīs* move fluidly between linguistic registers: from the Persian verses of Jami, Hafiz and Rumi, to the Punjabi poetry of Mehr ʿAlī Shah and Ghulam Farid, and the classical Hindi of Amir Khusrau, among others.[31] Chishti Sabiris have a particular affinity for Persian poetry. In the words of a young *murīd*, a disciple of Wahid Bakhsh: "My *shaykh* told me that unless you know Persian you cannot be a Sufi! The poetry in Persian is the essence of *kalām*."[32] A senior Pakistani disciple explains the rationale behind this preference:

> Most *kalām* for *Qawwālī* is in Farsi. These poems have been written by the saints (*awliyāʾ Allah*), and because of their spirituality it effects us too when their *kalām* is recited. If I write something, it will not matter. If a *wali Allah* writes something, it will have a different effect. Apart from Farsi, you have *kalām* in Saraiki, Hindi, Sindhi, and Punjabi. Urdu has not been selected by our saints for this purpose . . . But in our *maḥfil-i samāʿ*, the *Qawwālīs* are directed to focus on Farsi.[33]

The *Qawwālīs* represent just a single node in a vast web of economic networks and mini-markets that surround the *ʿurs* pilgrimage and its public rituals. Within the private, sacralized space of the *maḥfil-i samāʿ*, they play a central (if at times ambiguous) role. As the preservers of poetic and musical tradition, the singers are respected as ritual mediators. As paid service professionals, however, they are simultaneously (and paradoxically) held in low esteem. During the *maḥfil-i samāʿ* the position of the musicians is actually fraught with tension. An accomplished *Qawwālī* is expressly valued — and financially rewarded — for his musical and poetic talents. Yet a singer's artistic

creativity and social authority are constantly kept in check by the Sufi *shaykh* who ultimately controls every dimension of the *samāʿ* assembly. Qureshi provides a lucid summary of this complex dynamic. In her words:

> Issues of spiritual and socio-economic priority, of dominance and submission, of hierarchical order and individual assertion, of conformity and creativity, are being negotiated audibly, in the language of music, through a *Qawwālī* performance. Since the *Qawwālī* is the only one who 'speaks' this language, he is in effect charged with being the sole mouthpiece for all this is to be conveyed in the *Qawwālī*. This is why he 'speaks' musically not only for himself, but for all his listeners, articulating, in structure and dynamic, the multiplicity of relationships between all participants including himself . . . [Ultimately] the only way to control the *Qawwālī's* musical power over his audience is to give his audience religiously legitimized social and economic power over *him*. Made dependent on his audience in a real way, he can then be controlled in performance through the presence of a strong authority structure and through strict rules of censure for defying it — both of which are realities facing any *Qawwālī* performer.[34]

Within the Chishti Sabiri *maḥfil-i samāʿ* the presiding *shaykh* is solely responsible for the spiritual welfare of his followers. During the performance, he carefully moderates the actions and reactions of his *murīds*, directing the *Qawwālīs* to amplify or pacify their responses. The *Qawwālīs*, in turn, are tightly controlled. Loud drumming and theatrical gestures are discouraged. Similarly, pandering to popular tastes by playing "film *Qawwālī*" is strictly prohibited. Singers who violate these rules are immediately ushered out of the assembly and not invited to return. Not surprisingly, well known local singers are frequently turned away from the gathering altogether. I was told, for instance, that throughout the 1970s Shaykh Shahidullah Faridi pointedly refused to allow either the Sabri Brothers or Nusrat Fateh ʿAlī Khan to perform at the annual *ʿurs* in Pakpattan.[35] A senior Chishti Sabiri disciple offers a critique of popular *Qawwālī* that I often heard repeated among *murīds*:

> *Qawwālī* is not *samāʿ*. With these Nusrat Fateh ʿAlī Khan types . . . there is always lots of talk about wine, and the [drum] beats go up [in intensity]. It is a different taste and they [the *Qawwālīs*] play to the gallery. We do not allow them to use loud *tabla*. They must come to us for the blessings of our *shaykhs* and not for the money. They never get much money from us![36]

This is a common lament. While Chishti Sabiri disciples respect popular singers for their musical artistry, they are highly critical of those who commercialize and commodify Sufi music. *Samāʿ*, Chishti Sabiris insist, is not a form of entertainment. It is a powerful spiritual catalyst that should be used

only in the presence of a spiritual master who understands its power. Removing *samāʿ* from its proper ritual setting, disciples argue, undermines the music's spiritual efficacy and dilutes its transformative power.

In interviews, *murīds* often commented on the pervasive decline in standards among today's *Qawwālīs*. Most singers, they claim, are no longer properly trained in the subtleties of ritual etiquette and the intricacies of *kalām*. In order to insure that *adab* is maintained, therefore, several senior Chishti Sabiri *murīds* assist the *shaykh* in controlling the *maḥfil-i samāʿ*, selecting and guiding the *Qawwālīs*' performance. One of these select disciples explains his role:

> We know the *Qawwālīs* and they know us. And having been in the gracious company of our *mashāʾikh*, we also have a little more knowledge than the novices about what sort of *kalām* should be recited and the proper order. This is worship (*ʿibādāt*), it is not a social function . . . Sometimes the *Qawwālīs* have to be told [what to recite]. There are not many singers left who know that order, and maintain that order. There are various reasons for this. There is a lack of knowledge and there is greed. The *Qawwālīs* only perform for money. They only want to play the songs that people will pay money to hear. That is why the selection of *Qawwālī* must be done by the Sufi masters (*mashāʾikh*) themselves. They alone decide whose name should be called [i.e., what poet should be recited].[37]

By screening the selection of singers and carefully monitoring their performance, Chishti Sabiris effectively maintain a monopoly as the gatekeepers of tradition.

According to disciples, under the proper conditions *samāʿ* is transformed into a powerful vehicle for states of spiritual insight that no other ritual practice can equal. This is true, they note, even if the recited lyrics are not understood, as is often the case. According to a senior Malaysian disciple, "The *kalām* is central, it brings you to Allah. I do not understand much of the *Qawwālī*, but there is still such a blessing of the *mashāʾikh* who are present there. Even when you do not understand, you keep concentrating on the oneness of Allah. Of course, if you know the meaning of the *Qawwālī* your heart cries out even more."[38] At times, Pakistani disciples struggle with the lyrics as well. The rapidly shifting linguistic registers, coupled with the often poor pronunciation of novice *Qawwālīs*, frequently creates translation problems. Nonetheless, disciples assert that the transformative impact of *samāʿ* ultimately transcends the limits of language. In the words of a senior Pakistani disciple:

> You may hear the same *kalām* elsewhere, but you will not have the same feeling. *Kalām* makes it easier for you to understand the spiritual feelings you receive. You decipher it better. *Kalām* is a vehicle, even

> when you may not understand it. The *awliyā' Allah* frequently explain this by the example of a blind man and a man with vision, sitting together in the sun. The blind man does not see the sun, but he can sense the warmth of the sun, just as a man with eyes. Both will get the same warmth of the sun, without any difference.[39]

Remarkably, Chishti Sabiri *murīds* claim that even physical distance does not diminish the impact of *samā'*. When they are unable to travel to Pakistan for the annual cycle of *'urs* celebrations, for example, Malaysian disciples frequently commemorate the occasion on the opposite side of the Indian Ocean. During the days of the *'urs*, they gather together in private homes in Kuala Lumpur. There they perform communal prayers and, most intriguingly, listen to taped recordings of *samā'*. Despite the medium, disciples insist that the spiritual blessings, or *faizan*, at these gatherings is extremely intense. In the words of a senior female *murīd*:

> Somebody asked our *shaykh*, 'What is the difference between attending *'urs* at the *mazār* proper and [celebrating] *'urs* here in Kuala Lumpur?' He replied, 'In both places you receive *faizan*, blessings come down. But the blessings you get at the *mazār* itself you do not receive at your house. It is much stronger at the *mazār* because the Shaykh intensifies it.' It is true. We receive a lot of *faizan* when we have our *'urs* here. We play *Qawwālī* on the tape cassette. It is fantastic![40]

Taped recordings allow disciples to participate in the ritual performance *in absentia* — one of many examples of the fluid incorporation of technology into Chishti Sabiri practice. Even so, disciples insist that nothing compares to the direct, unmediated, communal experience of the *maḥfil-i samā'*. It is the intimacy and intensity of this experience that cements the annual cycle of *'urs* celebrations as a central fixture of the Chishti Sabiri ritual calendar.

Conclusion

In a letter written to a female disciple, Shaykh Wahid Bakhsh Rabbani recalls his own experience at the Muharram *'urs* of Baba Farid in Pakpattan in 1990:

> I was terribly tired, especially after the exhaustion of a full week of spiritual exercises (*mujāhada*) at the shrine (*mazār*) comprising three strenuous hours in the morning from 8 am until 11 am, and three hours in the evening, from 5 to 8 pm . . . On the night of the *'urs* the *Qawwālīs* sang special Persian and Hindi *ghazals* for our *silsila* people because they know what our taste is. On the arrival of the Diwan Sahib, the *Qawwālī* reverted to mob entertainment. During mob *Qawwālī* we fixed our attention on the saint himself who made up for all the deficiency. The three hour evening *samā'* session was filled with ancient Hindi songs of Amir Khusrau and the Persian songs of Hazrat Baba Farid himself. This was very intoxicating and full of ecstasies.[41]

This account captures something of the intense atmosphere that draws Chishti Sabiri *murīds* to the annual *ʿurs* celebrations year after year. It also points to the unrivaled intensity and transformative power of *samāʿ*. For Sufi adepts committed to the rigors of the path, the musical assembly offers a tactile, sensual, and immediate source of knowledge — a passageway to higher states of insight and awareness. At the same time, its structured performance cements a deep sense of social solidarity, shared memory, and communal identity among the select group of listeners. As the paradigmatic ritual practice of the Chishti Sufi order, the *maḥfil-i samāʿ* perpetuates a discursive tradition and an embodied, experiential practice that links today's disciples to each other and to their spiritual ancestors. Rooted in a long and storied Indo-Muslim past, it continues to sacralize the living present for a new generation of Chishti Sabiri seekers in South Asia, and beyond.

Endnotes

1. Amir Hasan Sijzi, *Morals for the Heart (Fawāʾid al-Fuʿād): Conversations of Shaykh Nizām ad-dīn Awliyāʾ Recorded by Amir Hasan Sijzi*, translated and annotated by Bruce B. Lawrence (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999), 132.

2. This paper draws on materials published in a recent monograph: /Islamic Sufism Unbound: Politics and Piety in Twenty-First Century Pakistan/ (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). The research is based on fourteen months of fieldwork in Pakistan (September 2000–October 2001) and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (October–November 2001) conducted under the auspices of fellowships from the Social Science Research Council and the American Institute of Pakistan Studies. At the request of senior figures in the Chishti Sabiri order, I have withheld the names of individual respondents when quoting from personal interviews in the interest of anonymity and privacy.

3. For an overview of the history, piety and ritual practices of the Chishti order, see Carl W. Ernst and Bruce B. Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Sufi Order in South Asia and Beyond* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). The definitive work on the Chishtiyya remains Khaliq Ahmad Nizami's Urdu magnum opus: *Tarikh-i mashayikh-i Chisht* [*The History of the Chishti Sufi Masters*] (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyyat-i Delli, 1980/1985). See also id., "Chistiyya," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. 11 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965): 50–56.

4. On the history of Sufism in South Asia, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975). See especially pages 370–402 where Schimmel provides a masterful survey of the Sufi contributions to Indo-Muslim culture and the development of regional literary and, in particular, poetic traditions. See also the two volume work by Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1975, 1983).

5. For an example of the cultural role of local Sufi shrines, see historian Richard M. Eaton's work on the shrine of the Chishti saint Baba Farid ad-Dīn Masʾud Ganj-i Shakkar (d. 1265) in the town of Pakpattan in Pakistan's Punjab: "Court of Man, Court of God," *Contributions to Asian Studies*, Vol. XVII (1982): 44–61; id., "The Political and Religious Authority of the Shrine of Baba Farid," in *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, ed. Barbara Daly Metcalf (Berkeley: University of California

Press, 1984): 333–356. For anthropological studies of contemporary practices at South Asian Sufi shrines, see the essays in Pnina Werbner and Helene Basu, eds., *Embodying Charisma: Modernity, Locality and the Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cults* (London: Routledge, 1998).

6. The most comprehensive overview of the history and legacy of the Deoband *madrasa* remains Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

7. On the politics and polemics of contemporary Sufism, see especially Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defense, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World* (Richmond: Cuzon Press, 1999). See also Carl W. Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala Press, 1997), 199–228.

8. While Ernst and Lawrence's monograph, /Sufi Martyrs of Love/, focuses primarily on the predominant Chishti Nizami lineage, the authors do give some attention to the Sabiri sub-branch. See especially pages 118–127; 130–140. In /Islamic Sufism Unbound, /I examine the lives, the teachings, and the enduring legacies of Muhammad Zauqi Shah, Shahidullah Faridi and Wahid Bakhsh in detail. A comprehensive history of the Chishti Sabiri Sufi order, however, has yet to be written.

9. Arthur F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 192.

10. On Khwaja Hasan Nizami, see Marcia K. Hermansen, "Common Themes, Uncommon Contexts: Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882–1927) and Khwaja Hasan Nizami (1878–1955)," in *A Pearl in the Wine: Essays on the Life, Music and Sufism of Hazrat Inayat Khan*, ed., Pirzade Zia Inayat Khan (New Lebanon, NY: Omega Publications, 2001): 323–353.

11. For a theoretically nuanced approach to Sufi psychology and ritual practice see Scott A. Kugle, "The Heart of Ritual is the Body: Anatomy of an Islamic Devotional Manual of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Ritual Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2003): 42–60. For a broad overview, see also Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 81–146. Schimmel, *The Mystical Dimension of Islam*, 98–227.

12. Bruce B. Lawrence, "The Early Chishti Approach to *Samāʿ*" in *Islamic Society and Culture: Essays in Honor of Professor Aziz Ahmad*, ed. Milton Israel and N. K. Wagle (Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1983), 73–74. For an analysis of the defense of *samāʿ* by Chishti theorists, see Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, 34–46. For an overview of Sufi music see also Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 179–198; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 179–186.

13. See, for example, Sayyid Muḥammad Zauqi Shah, *Sirr-i dilbaran* (Karachi: Maḥfil-i Zauqiyya, 1951/1985), 203–226; id., *Tarbiyat al-ʿushshāq*, compiled by Wahid Bakhsh Siyal Rabbani (Karachi: Maḥfil-i Zauqiyya, 1958/1983), 248–250; 254–257; 390; 772–776; 806–816.

14. Wahid Bakhsh Siyal Rabbani, *Maqam-i Ganj-i Shakkkar* (Lahore: al-Faisal Publishers, 1994), 365–416.

15. Khwaja Ghulam Farid, *Maqabis al-majalis*, Urdu translation from Persian by Wahid Bakhsh Siyal Rabbani (Lahore: al-Faisal Publishers, 1979/1993), 131–212. The title of this lengthy chapter is "The Taste of *Samāʿ*" (*Zauq-i samāʿ*).

16. Wahid Bakhsh Siyal Rabbani, *Islamic Sufism: The Science of Flight to God, In God, With God, By God and Union and Communion With God, Also Showing the Tremendous Sufi Influence on Christian and Hindu Mystics and Mysticism* (Lahore: Sufi Foundation, 1984), 285.

17. On the life and legacy of Hajji Imdad Allah, see Scott A. Kugle, "The Heart of Ritual is the Body: Anatomy of an Islamic Devotional Manual of the Nineteenth Century,"

Journal of Ritual Studies, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2003): 42–60. See also Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, 118–121; 130–135.

18. Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, 134–135.

19. Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 204–205.

20. On liminality and the transformative power of ritual, see Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 95–96; id., "The Center Out There: The Pilgrim's Goal" in *History of Religions*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 195.

21. Wahid Bakhsh Siyal Rabbani, *Malfuzat*, in *Tarbiyat al-ʿushshāq*, 810. A similar typography is found in the appendix to *Naghmat-i sama (The Melodies of Listening to Music)*, a sourcebook for *Qawwālī* performers published in Pakistan in 1972. For a partial translation of this Urdu manual, see Carl W. Ernst, *Teachings of Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala Press, 1999), 105–117.

22. The writings of contemporary Chishti Sabiri *shaykhs* offer numerous explanations of the significance of *ʿurs* and pilgrimage to Sufi shrines. See, for example, Rabbani, *Islamic Sufism*, 282–284; id., *Malfuzat*, 146, 152, 238, 280, 545; id., *Maqabis al-majalis*, 239–242; id., *Maqam-i Ganj-i Shakkar*, 340–364. In a lecture entitled "Attendance at the *Mazārs*," Shahidullah Faridi invokes the Qurʾān, al-Ghazzali, Rumi, and Ibn ʿArabi to articulate a comprehensive defense of pilgrimage and its rituals. See Shahidullah Faridi, *Spirituality in Religion* (Lahore: Talifaat-e Shaheedi, 1999), 115–130. For a broad discussion of *ʿurs* celebrations and Sufi pilgrimage in South Asia, see Ernst, *Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 77–78; Syed Liyaqat Hussain Moini, "Rituals and Customary Practices at the Dargah of Ajmer," in *Muslim Shrines in India: Their Character, History and Significance*, ed. Christian W. Troll (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 60–75.

23. Regula Burckhardt Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwālī* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 114. See also id., "The *Maḥfil-e Samāʿ*: Sufi Practice in the Indian Context," *Islam and the Modern Age*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (August 1986): 133–165; "Sufi Music and the Historicity of Oral Tradition" in *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, eds. Stephen Blum, Philip V. Bohlman, and Daniel M. Neuman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991): 102–120; "Muslim Devotional: Popular Religious Music and Muslim Identity under British, Indian and Pakistani Hegemony," *Asian Music* 24 (1992–1993): 111–121.

24. On the role of women in Sufi orders, see especially Shemeem Abbas, *The Female Voice in Sufi Ritual: Devotional Practices of Pakistan and India* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); Annemarie Schimmel, *My Soul is a Woman-The Feminine in Islam* (New York: Continuum, 1997). For historical perspective, see also Abu ʿAbd ar-Rahman as-Sulami, *Early Sufi Women (Dhikr an-niswa al-muta ʿabbidat as-sūfiyyat)*, translation and commentary by Rkia E. Cornell (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 1999).

25. Shahidullah Faridi's will was published (in English) in the back of an early edition of his spiritual discourses: *Malfuzat-i shaykh*, compiled by Siraj ʿAlī Muḥammad (Lahore: Qausin Publishers, 1996).

26. Personal interview: October 7, 2000, Lahore.

27. Rabbani, *Malfuzat*, 811–812. On the spiritual effects of listening to music, see also 248–250; 749–750; 772–776.

28. Sijzi, *Morals for the Heart*, 154.

29. Rabbani, *Malfuzat*, 812–815.

30. Qureshi, "Sufi Music and the Historicity of Oral Tradition," 106–107.

31. In a detailed discussion of *kalām*, Muḥammad Zauqi Shah recites a range of his favorite poetic couplets. These include the Persian verses of Shams-i Tabriz, Amir Khusrau,

Hafiz, Khaqani, Maghribi, Rumi, Niyaz Ahmad Barelwi, Shah Bahlul, ʿAbd al-Quddus Gangohi and Qutb ad-Dīn Bakhtiar Kaki. Zauqi Shah also includes two couplets in Urdu: one from the popular singer, ʿAziz Miyan, and one that he composed himself. See Rabbani, *Malfuzat*, 812–814. On the *Qawwālī* lyrical repertoire, see also Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan*, 19–45.

32. Personal interview: September 2, 2001, Karachi.
33. Personal interview: September 1, 2001, Karachi.
34. Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan*, 231.
35. Personal interview: September 30, 2000, Pakpattan. Despite their name, Chishti Sabiri disciples do not recognize the Sabri Brothers as members of this sub-branch of the Chishti Sabiri order. On the spread of South Asian *Qawwālī* to an international audience in the twentieth century through the global recording industry see Ernst, *Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, 189–191; Qureshi, "'Muslim Devotional': Popular Religious Music and Muslim Identity under British, Indian and Pakistani Hegemony," 111–121.
36. Personal interview: December 15, 2000, Karachi.
37. Personal interview: September 1, 2001, Karachi.
38. Personal interview: October 3, 2001, Kuala Lumpur.
39. Personal interview: September 1, 2001, Karachi.
40. Personal interview: September 30, 2001, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
41. An extract from a personal letter, dated August 8, 1990.