

Research Report 2: A Sufi Saint's Day in South Africa: The Legend of Badsha Peer

This paper examines the role of pirs (saints), mazars (shrines) and Urs ("wedding") in forging Islamic culture and identity in South Africa, whose minority Muslim population of approximately one million originates mainly in the Indian sub-continent and Malay Archipelago. The focus of this study is the Urs in May 2002 of Badsha Peer, a revered Saint who lies buried in Durban, KwaZulu Natal, where Indian Muslims predominate. While providing succour to many ordinary Muslims, Badsha Peer's shrine is a site of tension. This paper traces the establishment of the shrine, the role it played and plays in the lives of Muslims, its significance to those who administer it, and how conflict over the shrine and practices associated with it refract social relations among Muslims. More broadly, this study explores 'internal' debate among Muslims about the relationship between God and believers, and transitions in activities associated with popular Islam, in the context of historical and structural economic and political change in twentieth century South Africa.

Migration and Settlement

Most Indian Muslims arrived in Natal between 1860 and 1911 as indentured workers for Natal's sugar industry or as traders. 152,641 indentured Indians came to Natal between 1860 and 1911, approximately ten per cent being Muslim.¹ Migrants, drawn from a large area of India, were divided in terms of religious tradition, caste, language, ethnicity and regional cultures. The diversity of indentured Muslims is illustrated by language. Muslims who came via Madras spoke Tamil and Telegu, while northern Muslims spoke dialects of Hindi such as Braj, Bundeli, Awadhi and Bhojpuri.² After indenture, free Indians flourished throughout Natal, mainly as market gardeners and hawkers of fruits and vegetables, and in the process established racially segregated settlements in places like Clairwood and Merebank in the south, Sydenham, Overport, Clare Estate and Cato Manor in the west, and Riverside in the north. In 1951 there was 91 per cent racial segregation between Indians and whites in Durban.³

Muslim traders from Gujarat on the west coast of India, who began arriving in Natal from the mid-1870s, were incorrectly called 'Arabs' because most adopted the Middle Eastern mode of dress.⁴ Swan estimates their number to have averaged 2,000 in the period 1890-1910.⁵ The special circumstances of traders enabled them to keep their corporate character and social distance from other Indians. They saw migration as temporary and maintained family links by through regular visits to India, marrying their sons and daughters in India, and remitting money to build mosques and schools in their villages of origin.⁶ In a confidential report to the Durban Town Council (DTC) in 1885, police inspector Richard Alexander pointed out that the 'Arabs will only associate with Indians so far as trade compels them to'.⁷

Social and economic conditions made it difficult for indentured Muslims to fulfil the many requirements of Islam. Traders, on the other hand, possessed resources and built the Jumuah (1881) and West Street (1885) mosques within a few years of their arrival. It was around these mosques that they consolidated Islamic practices. Indentured Muslims' primary link to Islam was the festival of Muharram, which commemorated the martyrdom of Imam

Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. Muharram was a major event in the local calendar and was given official sanction from the mid-1870s when employers granted their workers leave to observe Muharram. Although there was strong disapproval from the authorities and middle-class Hindus and Muslims, Muharram remained a central part of the Islam of indentured workers and their descendents.⁸ The arrival of Soofie Saheb in Natal in 1895 had important consequences for working class Muslims. According to oral tradition, as soon as he arrived in Durban, Soofie Saheb established the shrine of Badsha Peer in central Durban. Together with mosques that he established throughout Natal, this played a crucial role in establishing a distinct Islamic identity within the disparate working class Muslim population.⁹

Establishing the Mazar (Shrine) of Badsha Peer, 1895

The mazar (shrine) of Badsha Peer is located in the Brook Street cemetery in Durban. The cemetery, 16 acres in size, was opened in 1864 and apportioned as follows: four acres for Episcopalians, two acres for Wesleyans, two acres for Roman Catholics, six acres for 'other' Christians and two acres were set aside for Indians and Africans. A small section of the Indian section was reserved for Muslims. The Muslim section came to be known as the "Brook Street Cemetery" because its entrance is in Brook Street. During the early years of the twentieth century records of the City Council were lost and there is no evidence to verify who was buried in each site.¹⁰

Though there are no contemporary sources to positively verify Badsha Peer's historical identity, a number of sources agree on the broad narrative of his life. Much of the information is legendary; in the process, as Beary remarks in another context, 'historical truths' about him have become 'a casualty'.¹¹ Most of the hagiographical accounts have identified Sheik Allie Vulle Ahmed (colonial number 282) as Badsha Peer.¹² According to records of the Indian Immigration Department, Sheik Ahmed was thirty when he came to Natal aboard the Truro in November 1860, the first ship to transport indentured workers from India. Although it is claimed that he came alone and lived most on his life as a recluse on the streets of Durban, the name following his on the ship list is that of a female Ameenah Bee (283), also from Arni in North Arcot, and belonging to the same caste, 'julaha'. Both were assigned to R.G. Mack, and both transferred to F. Salmon in December 1861. This suggests a relationship; she was most likely his wife since she listed her last name as Sheik Ahmed and he listed his as Vulle Ahmed. Sheik Ahmad left Natal in 1873. He went to the Diamond Fields in Kimberley, which had just opened, and returned in 1876.¹³

According to Lawrence, genealogical purity, anecdotally studied popularity, and disposition to poetry and music mark a pir as a leader of a mystical order.¹⁴ There is no evidence that Sheik Ahmed possessed these qualities. Despite Badsha Peer's underdeveloped biographical profile and unclear genealogy, large numbers of Muslims and Hindus visit his tomb site to pay homage to him. Who lies buried in the grave that bears Badsha Peer's name does not matter as much as the fact that large numbers of Muslims accept his existence without question and that his shrine is part of a deep Islamic tradition with thousands of adherents.

According to legend, when his employers recognised 'him to be of spiritual mind', Badsha Peer was 'honourably discharged'. He subsequently spent time in the vicinity of the Grey Street mosque, preaching to locals. According to reports, he 'did not have a home, neither did he have a family or relatives'; he did not care for food, 'a sign of a typical saint who relies upon Allah (God) for their rizq (food)'. He often visited the cane fields, where he 'proved a source of inspiration' for those who found plantation life difficult.¹⁵ Shortly before his death in 1894, Badsha Peer is said to have foretold the arrival of another saint from India, Soofie Saheb:

Too many people are on the wrong path. The time is near when a friend of Allah will come here and by the Barakat (blessings) of his footsteps infidelity and darkness will disappear.... If you want peace in this world and in the hereafter you must follow him.¹⁶

Badsha Peer is said to have died on Jumuah (Friday), a blessed day for Muslims, on 6 Rabi-ul-Awwal, the month in which the Prophet was born.¹⁷

It was Soofie Saheb, full name Shah Goolam Mohamed, who gave birth to the legend of Badsha Peer. Soofie Saheb, whose descendents trace his genealogy to Abu Bakr Siddique, the first Caliph of Islam and father-in-law of the Prophet, was born in 1850 in Ratnagir, about 200 kilometres from Bombay.¹⁸ He was the eldest son of local imam Ibrahim Siddiqui. Soofie Saheb studied under his father and succeeded him in 1872 at the age of 22. In 1892, he became the murid of Habib Ali Shah of Hyderabad, a Sufi in the Chisti order, considered the most authentic Indian Sufi order.¹⁹ In 1895, Ali Shah instructed Soofie Saheb to go to South Africa to propagate the Chisti silsila.²⁰

Oral tradition has it that when he arrived in Durban in October 1895, Soofie Saheb asked for the grave of a recently deceased 'holy man'. As nobody knew the position of the grave, Soofie Saheb meditated until he located it. Given Badsha Peer's fame and attributes, this begs the question why nobody knew where his grave was. H.R. Smith has suggested spiritual contact between Soofie Saheb and Badsha Peer prior to the latter's arrival in Natal:

The very fact that Badsha Peer foretold the arrival of Soofie Saheb, and the latter inquiring about the whereabouts of the grave of Badsha Peer immediately after his arrival is ample testimony that these two Saints had spiritual contact.²¹

Soofie Saheb placed his shawl on the grave until a permanent structure was erected. The background of Konkani Muslims like Soofie Sahib was one where pirs, shrines and festivals were central. At least twenty fairs were organized annually in Bombay, attracting crowds of up to twenty thousand.²² It is against this background of outward migration and entrenched popular practices that activities of Soofie Saheb must be viewed. Soofie Saheb organised celebration of the birthday of the Prophet, and death of saints at the shrine of Badsha Peer. This linked Badsha Peer to the chain of great Chisti saints who are remembered at his tomb. They include Suleman Tawsawi (month of Safar), Abdul Qadir Jilani (Rabi-ul-Akhir), Moinuddin Chisti (Rajab) and Hafiz Ali Shah (Zil Qada).²³

Until his death in 1911 Soofie Saheb was the *sajda khadim*, 'keeper' of Badsha Peer's tomb, a position subsequently filled by his descendents Abdul Aziz Soofie (1911-1947), Goolam Mohammed Soofie (1947-1978) and Mohammed Saeed Soofie (since 1978), as devotees believe a Saint's power is contained in his bloodline and that his immediate remaining family should take over his religious function and administration of shrine. The general principles of succession are birth (*jadi-silsila*) and spiritual initiation (*nehmati-silsila*). It is usually the eldest son who, when he has shown himself spiritually capable of understanding the 'secret knowledge', replaces his father as *sajjada-nashin*, 'he who sits on the prayer mat of his father'.²⁴ Soofie Saheb purchased land in Riverside on the banks of the Umgeni River, where he built a dargah. By 1903 it comprised a mosque, residential home, *khanqah* (teaching hospice), *madrassah*, cemetery and orphanage.

Soofie Saheb and Sheik Ahmed had little in common. Soofie Saheb was from the 'elite' class, urban and well-travelled, a speaker of Urdu/Marathi mixed with Arabic and Persian, Konkani, a Sufi of the Qadiri and Chisti orders, and from western India; Sheik Ahmed was a Telegu-speaking, rural Muslim from south-eastern India, while it is unclear which, if any, Sufi order he belonged to. Notwithstanding this, a recent study claims that Sheik Ahmed's genealogical lineage can be traced to the Prophet, that he was a sheik in the Chisti order, and that he ranks among the top ten *Mazjoobs* in the world, that is, a saint in constant communication with God, indifferent to worldly affairs.²⁵ This claim is important because it suggests authenticity and accuracy of practice and belief. The history Badsha Peer's tomb resonates with de Jong and Doorn-Harder's assertion that:

Beliefs surrounding a tomb are constructed by its myths, its history and by the efforts of those who were and are in charge in the place.... This constellation of features can be called the 'landscape' of any pilgrimage. The term 'landscape' here forms a powerful organising metaphor that consists not only of a physical terrain and architecture, but also of all the myths, traditions and narratives associated with natural and man-made features.²⁶

Badsha Peer's Karamats (Miracles):

Badsha Peer's *karamats* (miracles) are legendary. Karamat stories, according to Reeves, 'display beliefs about saints, their character, and their doings. Sainly miracles attest to the superabundant super natural powers of the wali and they explain why people are devoted to the saints'. Most karamats, Reeves adds, 'have a discernible ideological content':

The saint is often described as bringing judgements against the wealthy and those who occupy positions of authority, especially when they are arrogant, fail to show respect for the saint, have hidden moral failings, or are unjust in their dealings with subordinates and dependents.²⁷

Karamats are important for establishing sainthood. Hagiographies emphasise the positive qualities of Badsha Peer. The following, standard in most works, relate to Badsha Peer's ability to know things that are concealed and which he could not have known through 'normal' means. They relate to the well-being of others, healing the sick, assisting the weak, foreseeing accidents and protecting others. Followers of a shaykh have a vested interest

in spreading stories about him. The more they spread stories of his miracles the more their own reputation increases through vicarious holiness. As a result, sometimes 'belief in miracles caught the imagination of the populace and led to extravagant and fantastic stories of the deeds of the Sufis'.²⁸ Badsha Peer's miracles include:

- He is said to have meditated all day on the plantation, despite the pleading of his fellow workers that he would be flogged by the Sirdar for not completing his work. When the day's work was completed, however, labourers were shocked to find that work allocated to him was completed. He also assisted others to complete their tasks.
- A Corporation worker, specifically identified as a 'Mia Bhai gentleman' (descendent of indentured workers) and staunch devotee of Badsha Peer by the Mazaar Society, was lighting the street lamp with paraffin one evening. He had late reporting to work and was in trouble as it was already dark. When locals complained, he is alleged to have said that if Badsha Peer wanted the lamps lit, they would light. Just as he completed this remark, the lights lit without paraffin.²⁹
- Badsha Peer was on his way to Ladysmith to attend a wedding. The train conductor refused him a ticket because of his shabby dress. To the amazement of his friends he was on the railway platform in Ladysmith awaiting their arrival by the time they got there.
- In another incident, Badsha Peer advised a bridegroom, parents and close relatives to delay their departure to India, where he was to marry. The ship sunk in a storm shortly after it disembarked from Durban.
- When a conductor refused Badsha Peer entry to a horse-drawn tram, he ordered the horse to sit down and rest in the middle of the street. The animal refused to move until the conductor apologised to Badsha Peer and allowed him to use the tram.

Myths, which Levi-Strauss refers to as the local arrangement of 'mythemes',³⁰ were important in the making of Badsha Peer as a Saint. Symbolic tales about him resonate with the difficult voyages from India to Natal for Indians who regarded crossing the sea, the 'Kala Pani' or 'Black Water' as a terrible ordeal; the brutal social and work conditions indentured workers experienced in nineteenth-century Natal; as well as racist policies of the Colonial government. Enduring difficult lives, many sought solace in Saints to promote their prosperity and wellbeing.

Tales of the conductor on the tram and trains reflect the dependence of ordinary people on the saint. While they are 'weak' Badsha Peer was strong and proactive. Such stories 'derive their piquancy from being a reported personal experience and from the pleasure taken in the discomfiture of an overbearing and morally corrupt official. The saint champions the interests of the 'the weak while those in authority are vulnerable to the saint's judgements'.³¹ Those who fail to recognise the saint's superordinate authority, like the tram conductor, are humiliated and punished. These stories foreground a concern with justice in interpersonal relations within a

moral framework. By punishing the strong for their injustice the saint constrains the abuse of power.

Badsha Peer's tomb became a site of veneration for large numbers of Muslims who believe that praying to God in his presence was 'much more likely to be efficacious'. For example, R. Rehman, teacher at Orient Islamic School in Durban, explained in 1986 that

... the Sufi is a 'Wali Allah', that is, an individual who is closer to God. The followers of Badsha Peer are not grave worshippers. They do not worship Badsha Peer. The followers of Badsha Peer really look up to Badsha Peer as a spiritually enlightened person, close to God and therefore ask him to intercede for them to God. I too am looking for God. So I go to Badsha Peer and ask God to look favourably upon me.³²

Local Muslims continued to believe that Badsha Peer, having special attributes of divinity, exuded Baraka, a supernatural power of divine origin. Contemporary followers could not readily explain what this meant, except that the saint was 'a blessed man', 'a descendent of the Prophet', 'did not care about the world', 'walks in the Prophet's footsteps'. Dawood found that although most Muslims in her sample visited the site regularly, they knew little about him except that he worked miracles. They nevertheless looked upon him as intercessor between them and God. Adherents compared him to a lawyer. Just as a lawyer could resolve legal problems because of his / her greater knowledge of the law, so it was necessary for them to pray before the shrine of Badsha Peer who was closer to God than mere mortals, in order to increase the chances of their wishes being granted. Adherents felt that life's difficulties were better explained and resolved by a benefactor. Achieving their dreams depended heavily on pleasing their benefactor.³³ For adherents 'the fact of coming, being blessed, drinking the holy water and making an offering, was the most important facet of worship'. People came to solve marital problems, seek jobs or children, cure from disease, assistance to pass examinations or because they wanted a house from the City Council. When prayers were not answered, adherents explained that it was because their own faith was weak.³⁴

Contextualising the Saint Cult in Indian Islam

Pir, a Persian word and etymologically 'elder', denotes a spiritual guide among sufis. The functionary described by the title is also known under the names 'shaikh', murshid' and 'ustadh'.³⁵ Pirs and shrines have traditionally played an important role in the lives of Indian Muslims. Islamisation had been 'a lengthy process of attrition, of continuing interaction between the carriers of Islam and the local environment',³⁶ in which remnants of former religious practices were eradicated very slowly, if at all. Large parts of rural India were converted to Islam through the efforts of eclectic Sufis who tolerated syncretism. Respect for mystic teachers was elevated to total veneration. Pirs enhanced the cause of mysticism by stressing the advantages of esoteric knowledge to scriptural and scholastic knowledge.³⁷

Richard Eaton has shown that in Indian, conversion to Islam took place through gradual absorption into shrine cults as the local Hindu population were drawn to the fame of pilgrimage centres and hagiographical accounts of saints' miracles. This lured them more than the teachings of Islam. The

result was eclecticism in Indian shrines, which was encouraged by Chisti shaykhs who allowed free access to Hindus and Sikhs, Yogis and Sidhus, despite criticism from orthodox ulama that they were diluting Islam with Hindu practices.³⁸ In many instances rural Islam and Hinduism merged and formed new cults, or local people were not even concerned about the religion of the saint.³⁹

According to Alavi, Indian rural Islam, 'infused with superstition, and syncretism', emphasised 'belief in miracles and powers of saints and pirs, worship at shrines and the dispensing of amulets and charms'.⁴⁰ Pirs, considered closer to God, were regarded as important intermediaries who softened the stark boundary that separated Heaven from Earth, and interceded on behalf of locals with God.⁴¹ There is consensus in the literature that 'sufi' preachers and pirs played a critical role in 'winning over the hearts of the masses, ground down by the social rigours and indignities of the caste system'.⁴²

Pirs were 'valued because of their capacity to cut through worldly constraints so as to make direct and immediate contact with the divine'.⁴³ In pre-reformist India, Muslims believed that when pirs died they were receptive to intercessory pleas on their burial site.⁴⁴ From around the 11th century large numbers of Muslims visited local tombs because they believed that praying to God in the presence of a saint was 'much more likely to be efficacious'.⁴⁵ While the 'Court of God as a cosmological construct seemed to lie beyond the devotee's immediate grasp, he did have a "friend in court", as it were, who represented his interests there'.⁴⁶

Two institutional innovations, the pir's hospice (khanqah) and tomb (mazar), were extremely important. Most converts, being low-caste or untouchables, had been denied direct access to temples or Brahmin priests because of 'ritual pollution'. For them, these institutions, providing 'open and total access', were extremely attractive. According to Roy,

They were attracted not only towards the personal and religious charisma and thaumaturgic powers of a living saint but also to such memories of a dead 'saint', perpetuated in his shrine by his followers. In the case of a tomb, in particular, it is interesting to speculate on the possible psychological impact of the Muslim practice of burying the dead and erecting tombs, contrasted with the Hindu-Buddhist practice of consigning the corpse to flames. If the atmosphere of these institutions was emotionally congenial for rural folk, no less attractive were those institutions capacity and willingness to offer material comforts to the people.⁴⁷

The urgency with which Soofie Saheb established Badsha Peer's shrine is consonant with the Sufi world-view. Migrating devotees did not lose their bond to local shrines but built 'new shrines, inspired by the belief that each was an equally potent repository of barakat' ('blessing'). Migration resulted in a 'widening and intensification of the original cult tradition, and certainly not a turn towards a more universal or transcendent faith devoid of shrines, magical intercessory power and all other features of the pir cult'.⁴⁸

The Chistiya tariqa demonstrates a common pattern. Saints of the tariqa developed new centres in places where they were sent by their shaykh to

promote Islam. Family descendents of the original saint became custodians of the tomb and dargah. These new centres became shrine centres upon the death of their founders. There thus developed a vast network of silsilas that traced their lineage to Khwaja Mu'ihu'd-Din Chishti, the original Grand Shaykh of the tariqa.⁴⁹ Important tomb sites in Natal include those of Badsha Peer (1895), Soofie Saheb (1911), and two of Badsha Peer's companions Saiya Bawa ('father') and Qaasim Bawa. Classical Sufism, in the sense of being a mystical religious attitude and system of a Muslims's direct communication with God, has had limited application in South Africa.

Contesting Hegemony: The Tomb of Badsha Peer

The hegemony of the Soofie family over Badsha Peer's tomb was contested from the 1940s by the Badsha Peer Mazaar Society whose president Goolam Mustapha Essop-Sarrang (1921-1985) claimed a link to Badsha Peer through his maternal grandfather Ajam Hoosen, who arrived in Natal in the early 1860s. Hoosen displayed strong leadership qualities on the ship, and was named "Sarrang", meaning leader, by fellow passengers. The name has stuck with the family.

After completing indenture Hoosen lived in Queen Street, opposite the Grey Street Jumuah Musjid, where he spent a great deal of time. It was here that he met Badsha Peer. According to family folk lore, Hoosen and his wife were having difficulty conceiving children so he went to Badsha Peer seeking a karamat (miracle). While Hoosen and Badsha Peer were talking, two flowers fell from a nearby tree. Badsha Peer set Hoosen's mind at ease by predicting that he would have two daughters, one of whom would 'do my work'.⁵⁰

Mariam and Sakina were born in the 1890s. Mariam married Yusuf Amod Essop. They had seven children, five sons and two daughters. Goolam Mustapha, their second son, was born in 1921. He married Sakina Somerey in the early 1940s. They had with nine children, four sons and five daughters. Second son Iqbal continued his father's labour. Even as a child Iqbal took a keen interest in activities associated with Badsha Peer, and it came as no surprise when Goolam Sarrang announced that Badsha Peer had informed him in a "vision" that Iqbal should succeed him as Khalifa.⁵¹

Essop-Sarrang was devoted to saints and spent a great deal of time renovating tombs throughout Natal at his own cost. He and his friends took particular interest in Badsha Peer's shrine, and especially his Urs. In a handwritten recollection shortly before his death in 1984, Essop-Sarrang wrote:

When the older people got tired and could not manage to organise the Urs Shareef they made an approach to the young Boys who had lots of faith in Badsha Peer. The young peoples accepted this offer to carry on with the affairs of Badsha Peer and the Mazaar. Then was formed a body known as Badsha Peer Committee. First thing this committee body did was to alter and enlarge the Mazaar Shareef and bring it to the position it stands today. Then after the first year, the Urs was organised in small way. The Urs Shareef was organised thereafter year after year in a more and more bigger way. Peoples of all Races from all over the world visit this shrine everyday. Hundreds of people visit the shrine for faith healing, peoples who are in distress, and peoples with

many problems come to this shrine and pray for help and they get their prayers answered. During the Urs Shareef 16000 to 20000 peoples take part and join the Celebration.

Essop-Sarrang and the Soofie family were at loggerheads over Badsha Peer's tomb from the early 1940s. The shrine was well patronised and important source of revenue as visitors contributed nazars (offerings) in the hope their prayers would be answered. Offerings, which included money, were controlled by the custodian of the shrine, called *sajjadanashan*, and his family members, *muttawallis*. Situated close to the Indian Market, bus rank and Indian-dominated CBD, Badsha Peer's shrine provided convenient access for large numbers of devotees, and control of it was keenly contested. Essop-Sarrang and the Mazaare Society challenged Soofie custodianship of the shrine.

Differences culminated in a court case in 1959 between applicant Essop-Sarrang, Khalifa ('organiser, sponsor or leader') of the Badsha Peer Mazaare Society, and respondent Goolam Soofie, son of Abdul Aziz Soofie who died in 1947, and grandson of Soofie Saheb. In his affidavit dated 20 February 1959 Essop outlined the history of Badsha Peer's shrine:⁵²

According to legend, the late Badsha Peer was gifted with supernatural powers. He was a very holy man and saint. When he died about sixty years ago, he was laid to rest in the Brook Street cemetery and his grave became a shrine, where people who professed the Muslim faith would come and pray.

The shrine consisted of a simple dome erected over the grave. A corrugated iron structure was erected by Hindu, Bhaga, around the dome in 1917. F.W. Thorns, director, Parks, Recreation and Beaches Department, confirmed to the Town Clerk on 11 December 1958 that the 'shrine in its present form was built in 1917 or 1918'. A collection box was installed at the Shrine for worshippers to make a 'voluntary' offering of cash.

A 'Mujawar' took care of the shrine. The first Mujawar was Mohamed Ally (c. 1890s - 1910s), followed by Mohamed Khan (c. 1910s) and Lalla Mia in the 1920s and 1930s. The Mujawar was directly responsible to the 'sponsor' of the Shrine, the Soofie family. The sponsor, according to Essop, was a person who

... voluntarily, as a representative of the people, saw to it that the shrine was properly maintained, and also collected the moneys put into the collection box. The money had to be spent on the poor and the sponsor had to 'account for the expenditure to the leaders of the community.

Essop took an active interest in the shrine from 1938 because Badsha Peer had been a contemporary of his grandfather Ajam Hoosen. Essop claimed that he was disturbed that Abdul Aziz had allowed the tomb to fall into a derelict state and was determined to build a memorial 'fit enough' for a "great personality". Essop approached Abdul Aziz who refused to use contributions for the shrine's upkeep. Together with others concerned that the shrine was falling into disrepair, Essop formed the Badsha Peer

Committee on 20 August 1945 with fifty members. Essop was elected president and chairman.

The Committee formally adopted a constitution on 22 September 1945. They met Abdul Aziz on 23 November 1945 and requested funds to renovate the shrine, to no avail. The Committee collected 1000 from members and obtained permission from cemetery inspector Y.W.C. Imerson on 21 September 1946 to replace the wood and iron building. After completing renovations in early 1947 the Committee organised what became an annual function, an 'Ur's Shariff' to commemorate the death of Badsha Peer. It included a qawwali concert as well as offerings of food and refreshments to the public, especially to the poor and needy. The Urs became a major event in the Muslim calendar and imposed a huge financial burden on organisers. In 1957, for example, the Committee spent 330 to hire a tent, qawwali singers and food. Abdul Aziz refused requests for assistance (Affidavit).

According to Essop when Abdul Aziz died in 1947 his son Goolam Mahomed, who became mujawwar, agreed to utilise funds for the shrine's upkeep and build a khanqah in Badsha Peer's honour:

The Society has a great ambition to build a Monastery (Khanqah Shareef) in the name of Badsha Peer because the Society feels there is no Institution existing on the name after this great Walli-Allah. We feel that we are duty bound to fulfil our most wanted ambition. This is about time Badsha Peer had his name on the walls.

Though Goolam Mohammed failed to honour his pledge, the Committee did not take legal action because his 'late grandfather was held in high esteem by all Muslims, and partly because we did not want to create a community scandal'. By 1958 the Committee was restless against Goolam Mahomed, who

... many thought was living like a wealthy man but had no business or occupation, and were no longer prepared to put be off. Members wanted to start a school, home for the aged and more actively assist poor and destitute.

Essop, the secretary of the Badsha Peer Committee Cassim Amod Somerey, and members Ismail Mahomed Suleman and Ally Mahomed met Goolam Mahomed in November 1958, but he remained 'intransigent'. The Badsha Peer Committee revised its constitution and changed its name to Badsha Peer Mazaare Society at its Annual meeting on 28 September 1958. Goolam Mahomed was invited but did not attend the meeting, at which it was resolved to take 'full control' of the shrine from 1 January 1959. On the designated day, Essop and Solly Desai, assistant secretary of the Society, put an extra lock on the Collection Box. Essop felt that they were entitled to part of the monies because 'the public frequented the shrine in greater numbers and more money was donated' after they had renovated the shrine.

On 2 January 1959 Ismail Mahomed Suleman, Solly Desai, Sultan Ally and Abdul Kader waited at the shrine. When Goolam Mahomed arrived at 4:30 pm they requested that he remove his lock as they intended collecting the money in future. Goolam Mahomed refused and left the shrine, with both locks intact. On 8 January 1959 Essop received a letter from Goolam

Mahomed's attorneys Darby and Higgs instructing him to remove the lock. Replying through his attorneys Wartski, Sanan and de Jager on 16 January 1959 Essop said that he had not affixed the lock in his personal capacity but on behalf of the Mazaare Society's 500 members who were 'concerned' that Goolam Mahomed did not have any interest in the Shrine, which they regarded as public property:

Who vested control in your client as he alleges and by what authority? Furthermore, by what authority has he placed a lock on the shrine collection box and by what authority does he collect the money? Would he be so kind to give a full statement of account of all monies collected from the donation box? Can Soofie explain how and in what ways he has spent the money collected for the benefit of the poor?

Goolam Mahomed arrived at the shrine on 22 January 1959 with an entourage in two vehicles, broke the lock with a saw and hammer and removed the money. Ally Mahomed of the Mazzar Society, who was keeping watch, locked the cemetery gate and called the police, who took possession of the money and shepherded the men to the police station. Between 2 and 22 January 2002 worshippers had donated 138.5.8. as well as 382 'chadars', a cloth to cover the grave of Badsha Peer. Satin, linen, and cotton chadars were approximately 7 by 5 feet, and averaged between 12/6d and 25/-d each. Essop stated in his affidavit that he had donated a velvet chadar costing 16 when his prayers were answered in 1951. Essop alleged that while chadars were meant to clothe the shrine or the poor, the Soofies took them for personal use. Control of the shrine was partly linked to material interests, but also meant influence over public manifestations of the saint's identity, and the prestige, power and authenticity that this implied.

The protagonists and their lawyers agreed that monies would be held in Trust pending settlement. 'To avoid any risk of violence' both sides affixed locks on the box. Representatives from each side met at 3 pm each Wednesday to count the money, record the amount and hand the money to attorneys Darby and Higgs. 129.14.3 was collected between 22 January 1959 and 11 February 1959, and 49.7.0 between 11 February 1959 and 18 February 1959. Goolam Mahomed wrote to the Town Clerk on 26 January 1959 to 'get his occupation of the shrine properly recognised' through a lease. His application was supported by affidavits by 80 year old Shaik Hoosen, 70 year old Hajee Omardeen, Mohammed Bashir Siddiqui, a 75 year old marriage officer, and 85 year old Sayed Fakroodeen. Their affidavits affirmed that the shrine was established by Soofie Saheb and that after his death his son Abdul Aziz and then grandson Goolam Mahomed administered the shrine. They felt that it 'would be in the interests of the Muslim community for Goolam Mahomed to be recognised by the Durban Municipality as the caretaker in sole charge of the shrine'.

The Mazaar Society applied to the Supreme Court in February 1959 for the estimated 2000 collected annually to be given to their society, the only body 'directly connected' to Badsha Peer. After hearing both sides of the argument Justice E.L. Jansen ruled that control of the shrine remain with the Soofie family, but the Mazzar Society would be allowed to maintain its name and hold Urs and Muharram festivals in the name of Badsha Peer.

Tension simmered and there was another altercation in July 1965 when four members of the Mazaar Society who were praying at the shrine, were turned out, and the doors of the shrine locked. Essop-Sarrang arrived shortly thereafter and ordered the door to be broken down, explaining that...

... this is the latest of many incidents between us. It all started with a court case over funds. I'm just waiting to see if the opposition take any further action. I shall be calling a public meeting over this business.⁵³

Soofies, on the other hand, felt they had the right to lock the door because 'the court gave us full control of the shrine'.⁵⁴ This marked the end of public feuds as the Mazaar Society came to terms with Soofie legal control of the shrine, and instead focused on organising the Ura and Muharram festivities.

A fire in 1978 added to the legend of Badsha Peer. When the caretaker of the tomb Abdul Bawa arrived for work one morning in August 1978 he found the tomb filled with smoke. He managed to put the fire out, but damage was estimated at several thousand rands. Devotees of Badsha Peer pointed to things not damaged - the expensive Persian carpets surrounding the marble railings of the grave, the Quran and religious books in the tomb, and yellow and green shroud that covered his grave - as a further sign of Badsha Peer's powers. Devotees told reporter I.A. Khan that the carpet folded on its own to escape the inferno.⁵⁵

Essop appointed his son Iqbal 'spiritual' leader (khalifa) of the Mazaar Society shortly before his death in 1984. The appointment of successor is important because it is through the leader that followers of several generations are united in allegiance to a common saint even though descent is not common. Through Iqbal, a 'notion of timelessness, transcendental reality (haqiqat) is affirmed' and 'firm social bond' created within the group.⁵⁶

Popular Islam and Rising Opposition:

Most Muslims accommodated a wide range of practices, including those associated with folk Islam, which was the Islam of the majority of Durban's Muslims. Those who did not partake directly in activities such as Muharram and Urs engaged as observers. The Urs was an important component of local Islam. 'Urs' meaning 'wedding' or a "happy occasion" in Arabic, signified the meeting of two beings, and was akin to what medieval saints fairs must have been in Europe. The anniversary of the 'death' of a saint is seen as the time when his soul departs his body and he meets his Maker. The saint's passing away is regarded as a wedding ceremony in which the saint, who is a bridegroom, will join God, the Beloved Bride, in an eternal marriage. Further, as van der Veer points out,

... the death anniversary of a saint is an occasion of great power, since the saint who lives in his tomb derives his ability to help the supplicants from his unhindered access to God. The saint's day is said to be a powerful occasion in which one can be cured of all kinds of affliction.⁵⁷

Centred on the shrine of Badsha Peer, the Urs generated an influx of people and combined religious and non-religious activities, such as visits to the shrine, street processions, trade, qawwali entertainment, eating and drinking.

The Mazaar Society formally observed the Urs of Badsha Peer from 1947. The Society obtained permission from the City Council each year to erect a temporary bamboo structure on vacant land opposite the shrine, install loud speakers, decorate a portion of Queen Street from Albert Street to Brook Street with buntings and flags; and carry out a sundal procession from Victoria Street through Grey Street into Queen Street to the Brook Street ceremony.

The local Council imposed stringent conditions to assert control over the activities and ensure that it did not deviate from what was acceptable to local whites. For example, in granting permission in 1952, the Council warned the Committee that the singing of songs and hymns had to be 'toned down to the satisfaction of the police'; the erection of the structure to commence the day before the ceremony; the ceremony to terminate on receipt of complaints from the neighbourhood; the area to be left 'clean and tidy'; the 'promoters of the ceremony comply with the requirements of the Local Police'; and the Committee had to indemnify the Council against damages or accidents that might arise as a result of the fixation of flags and decorative streamers.⁵⁸ This was the standard response from the City Council each year.

Folk Islam came to be known as 'Barelwi Islam' after Ahmed Riza Khan (1856-1921 of Bareilly who founded schools in Bareilly, Lahore and Philibit. He was a mujaddid (reformer) to his followers, who defended orthodoxy in alliance with hereditary pirs of the countryside. Rituals and authority were crucial components of Barelwi Islam.⁵⁹ At the centre of Ahmad Riza's teaching was the Prophet, whose birth he celebrated. He gave public deference to Sayyids, descendents of the Prophet, and Saints. In Riza's notion of Islam, Saints retained a bodily existence after death. As Jones explains,

... Saints could thus both hear prayers and grant requests from the grave. The position led him to accept the celebration of urs, revere saints, tombs, and the rituals associated with these powerful figures. The Prophet, saints, pirs, and sheikhs could all act on behalf of Muslims who sought their assistance. Ahmed Riza accepted as valid customs and parochial cults, as long as they were not in contradiction to established sections of hadith.... He wanted to preserve Islam unchanged; not as it was idealised in the texts or the historical past, but Islam as it had evolved to the present.⁶⁰

Riza strongly opposed those seeking to reform Islamic practices, broadly labelled Wahhabis, after Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, an eighteenth century reformer in present-day Saudi Arabia who advocated removal of what he regarded as 'innovations'.⁶¹

Reformist activities from the early 1960s had a discursive impact on Muslim practices in Natal. A reformist tradition established in the 1860s in Deoband, India, subjected the 'Indian' heritage of Indian Muslims to scrutiny. It advocated a 'pure' Islam, shorn of aspects of Indianness, including the historical experience of being Indian and Indian cultural survivals.⁶² The gap between the 'ideal' and 'actual' was attributed to 'incomplete conversion' or 'religious degeneration'.⁶³ Deobandis associated taken-for-granted practices such as Muharram, Urs, and visitation of gravesites with Hindu cultural and religious influences, and rejected them on theological grounds. Closely allied

was the role of the Tabligh Jamaat, the transnational religious movement founded in India by Muhammad Ilyas (1885-1944).⁶⁴

The movement first made inroads in South Africa in the early 1960s among Gujarati traders. Later, however, it attracted support from Memons as well as some Urdu-speaking descendants of indentured Muslims.⁶⁵ This reformation drive condemned rituals like Urs and Muharram as non-Islamic. However, while the putative right of reformists to change practices was strong, the Barelwi tradition was resilient and the Urs remains a feature of Islamic practice, though support is on a reduced scale and aspects of it have changed. This paper examines the urs, as observed in Durban in 2002.

Badsha Peer's Urs, 2002

An four-day urs is held annually at the shrine of Badsha Peer in his memory. In 2002 the urs of 'South Africa's most illustrious Majzooob Wali Allah', as Badsha Peer was described in a pamphlet put out by the Mazaar Society, was held 'at his only address, his Darbar in Badsha Peer Square in Durban' from the evening of Thursday 16 May 2002 to the afternoon of Sunday 19 May 2002, 3-6 Rabi-ul-Awwal in the Islamic lunar month. According to the pamphlet, this was the 116th Urs of Badsha Peer, indicating that he died in 1886. While, Essop insisted that Ajam Hoosen told him that Badsha Peer had died in 1886, the Soofies contest this date and insist that Badsha Peer died in 1894.⁶⁶

The Urs was attended by an eclectic crowd. It included those seeking 'baraka', blessing inherent in saints and his intercession with God or the Prophet; professionals who made money out of the occasion selling food, Islamic frames and other wares; and those who simply came for entertainment. The function began on Thursday evening, Jumuah being a blessed day. There was a prayer and supper after the maghrib namaaz (prayer) at sunset. This was followed by Thilawatul (recitation) Quran, Qiraat, Ladies Naath (poetry) and Nazms Mehfil Salaam (salutation). On Friday evening, after maghrib there was fateha, dua (convocation), supper and Mehfil-e-Naath after Esha Salaat by South Africa's most prominent Naat Kwaans.

The main events were reserved for Saturday and Sunday. On Saturday, the Sundal Shareef procession began officially at the offices of Iqbal Sarrang on the 8th floor at Tasneem Centre in Victoria street. The procession is called 'sandal' because sandalwood paste is carried during the procession and applied to Badsha Peer's tomb. The shamiana, a piece of green chadar (cloth) placed on the shrine of Badsha Peer, was 'washed' with athar (perfume) imported from India. The two fragrances used were Majmua and Hina which, according to Iqbal, have been used by living saints for generations.

After a short fateha (prayer), Iqbal and about a hundred followers who were able to squeeze into his office walked eight floors down to street level, to the retail store Kool Kids in Victoria Street. Around 300 people gathered at 2.00 pm in the shop with several hundred more outside. While the atmosphere was buoyant, the impact of reformism is evident in the fact that during its heyday in the 1960s this procession drew up to 10,000 people. at Kool Kids there was a long prayer that focused on blessing those who were present, followed by Naath, Sandal and Salaami. The Naath, sung by a Qawwal Essop

Kaloo Party of Durban, comprised of praises to the Prophet. This was followed by a Maqabat, songs of praise to Badsha Peer, written by Iqbal Sarrang [See Appendix].

This was followed by the Sundal procession, the focal point of activities. This tradition began in 1947 when the Sundal Shariff procession originated from Sayed Fakroodeen's shop at 128 Victoria Street to Ashana Sheriff at Brook Street. The procession could not present a more stark contrast, consisting as it did of two distinct sections. Iqbal, as 'servant' of Badsha Peer, led a procession of around fifty followers who carried sandalwood paste and new covers for the grave. They walked slowly and introspectively. Iqbal was a picture of total calm and benevolent aloofness. His position and power, it should be remembered, is entirely genealogical and derived from his ancestors. Iqbal waizifas and stopped every few steps in respect to the memory of Badsah Peer.

The second group, more buoyant, comprised of men and boys engaged in Ratib and singing devotional, accompanied by musical instruments such as drums and tambourines, swords and special maces (gurz]. Some participants were in a state of possession or trance. This activity consisted of dancing and jumping while beating upon one's chest; the miraculous piercing of body parts, including cheeks and tongue by swords, iron pins and other instruments. Although the instruments were extremely sharp there was no blood when they were removed. Participants and onlookers considered the absence of blood an indication of the spiritual power of Badsha Peer. During the slow and largely self-managed procession, the heads of participants were thrown back passionately, arms flung in the air, and knees lurched forward. Meer's description of the procession in the 190s remains fairly accurate and is worth quoting:

Slim men and little boys pull up their shirts and knot them almost neck high, bare their stomachs and then plunge the raathies (long lengths of steel with sharply pronged ends) into their bared stomachs. The assault develops into a graceful dance. Heads are thrown back, arms flung forward, for a moment the raathies remain tense and poised in mid-air, as if drawing strength, then torsos curve in, knees spring together, and the points dig into flesh. The movement continues up and over and in, matador-like rhythm to the beat of cymbals and large tambourines tautly stretched with skins and edged with bells. And all the while others in the procession intone in rich voices, verses from the Quran. Within a short time, the exposed parts of the body are covered with red pinpoint scars. The procession moves slowly, the raathie players pausing in between for breath.⁶⁷

Beyond these immediate participants were several hundred followers. Interviewing them it was clear they saw the saint's day as combining sacred time and space. By observing what was happening they felt they were participating in the occasion, with special religious feeling and fervour flowing through the crowds. Many looked in awe at the body piercing and became possessed when the sandalwood paste was applied.

When the procession reached the cemetery, Iqbal and his followers crowded inside the shrine while their followers stood outside. Salaami, salutation to the Prophet, was read by a blind Qari, Shama, a muezzin at the Jumuah

Musjid. Thereafter the Manqabat was read again, followed by the placing of the shamiana (chadar) on the shrine. This is the most poignant and powerful moment of the ceremony, the point when the grave is uncovered and everybody tries to lay a hand on it. Many were overcome by the moment and became possessed. All the time zikr, praises to the Prophet and Saints, was read loudly. Around 1000 mainly yellow and green chadars were laid, taking approximately ninety minutes. The chadar that was placed on top of Badsha Peer's tomb was imported from India. It was expensive and ornate, looking very attractive with the gold glitter that adorned it. This chadar was also donated by a member of the public, as happened each year. Iqbal, the Khadim, took the Sandal (sandalwood paste) from a bowl with his shahadah finger and two other fingers, and made three lines, each six inches long, on the head side of Badsha Peer's tomb. Thereafter, a flower bed, made from the interweaving of 1500 red and pink carnations, was placed on the chadar. Around 100 bottles of athar was sprinkled on the flower bed. Then the Manqabat was read, followed by a fateha of approximately ten minutes by Shabir Mohammed, nephew of Iqbal, and salami by Shams. The salami was very inspiring and read with great feeling. Many were moved and threw around R600 as a matter of appreciation in a matter of minutes. This was followed by a final fateha by Iqbal. Practices such as reading of the zikr are more recent introductions and suggest an attempt to eradicate elements of syncretism while moving towards normative Islam.

Devotees then proceeded to the jhandi, flag hoisting ceremony. The flag, with its a green and yellow border, green background and yellow moon and star, denoted the colour of the particular Sufi tradition, the Chisti Silisila, to which devotees belonged. This particular flag was sewn in the 1960s by the wife of the late Solly Desai, a pioneer member of the Mazaar Society. Once the jhandi ceremony was completed, members greeted each other with glad tidings, and congratulated and thanked others for a 'job well done'. Greetings were also passed on from the public to members of the Mazaar Society. The ceremony ended just before sunset. Both the maghrib and Esha prayers were read at the on-site tent, led by local Mawlana Murtaza. After Esha the Katama-Kwajgaan was read. It comprised praises to God, the Prophet and Saints, in that order, and was compiled in India from the Saint Khwaja Garib-un-Nawaaz.

A Qawwali concert (Mehfil-e-Sama), was held on Saturday night from 9:30 pm until 3:15 am at the Badsha Peer Shelter. Prominent local qawwals performed Sufi music and songs originally associated with the Chisti brotherhood. The root of the word Qawwal is the Arabic 'Ou'al', which refers to the sayings of religious personalities that inspire individuals and help purify their thoughts. Sama or Qawwali refers to the singing of religious hymns in Persian and Urdu in praise of God Allah, and popularise the dictums of his Prophets, Saints and other Holy personages, in addition to extolling their greatness. Usually accompanied only with a harmonium, qawwali has played an important part in the development of Sufism in India. Songs mostly comprise compositions of popular and internationally famous Urdu and Persian poets such as Rumi, Jami, Fariuddin Attar, Shibli, Shiraazi, Junaid Baghdad, Shams Tabrez and Amir Khusro. According to Greaves:

... the qawwal is the unique form of dhikr practiced by the Chistiyya tariqa. The haunting and sometimes up-tempo songs of divine love and

longing are adored by Indian people from all religious backgrounds. It is believed that the qawwal was introduced by the Chisti Sufis because they knew that the Indian love of devotional music would attract converts to Islam.... The music and songs serve not only to promote spirituality but also function to preserve a sense of community through shared memories and nostalgia for the place of origin.⁶⁸

The privilege to sing is strictly by invitation. Six qawwal groups were invited; Goolam and Party of Maritzburg, Sportsy and Party, a Hindu singer who has been performing for almost half a century; Kaloo Brothers of Durban; Hajee Sayyid and Party of Johannesburg, a young group performing for the first time; Hajee Faisal Niazi of Durban and Khali Nawaaz of Durban. Each group performed for between 45 minutes and an hour, to the great excitement of the crowd which numbered between 12,000 and 15,000. The tent was packed to the brim with large crowds standing outside. Many in the audience went into a trance, moved by the music and poetry. They lost awareness and performed 'strange' movements, even going into ecstasy. It sometimes leads to hypnotic spell and inspires an intense feeling (jazba) that culminates in trance.⁶⁹ Many showed their appreciation and love by throwing gifts of money on to the platform.

The loudest applause was reserved for Kaloo Brothers, whose lead singer was a seventeen year old matric pupil and grandson of old favourite Yusuf Kaloo who sang in the 1950s. His style and presentation was likened to the great Ustad Nooruth Fateh Ali Khan. The crowd went into raptures when he sung the line after building a crescendo:

Yehdil aur yeh jaan tere liyeh
My heart and my soul is for you [Badsh Peer]

The sacred combined with the less than sacred for there was a festive atmosphere outside where many were gathered in what resembled a village fair (mela). The enclosed qawwali area was separated from the trading area by a gateway of four minarets, 25 metres long and 15 metres high. It was light orange and cream with green lights, creating, most felt, an 'Islamic' ambience. There was brisk trade in tea and Indian delicacies. The most popular item was sikh kebabs, mince balls barbecued over open fires (braziers) and served with lemon. This has become synonymous with the Urs. Vendors took in between R200,000 and R300,000 for the evening. Speaking to the crowd, there was no single reason for attending. Some referred to the need for cures or other needs, others to the demands of religion and others for the sheer pleasure of festival.

The crowd began dispersing around 3: 15 am. For Mazaar Society members there was no rest. They divided into two groups, one went to the headquarters in Stratford Road while the other remained at the tent. Together with hired labour they arranged tables to feed 3000 people at the site. The second group went to Stratford Road where a hundred strong cooking team began preparing 220 degs (large pots) of food for Sunday lunch. The programme began at 11:00 am on Sunday, and consisted of Thilawatul Quraan, Naaths, Nazms, Manqabats, lectures in English and Urdu, followed by Chistia Langar Niaz (lunch). A waiz (lecture) was delivered in the musjid yard and later at the Brook Street cemetery by Mawlana Murtaza and Mawlana Alkhekir, Khatib of the Ladysmith Soofie Musjid.

Lunch was served to approximately 6000 people over two sittings. The Mazaar Society invited many homeless African street children, seeing it as a way of giving dawah (invitation to Islam) to Africans. Food was also distributed until 5:00 pm. The menu included khir, a pudding made of rice and milk and usually served at funerals, sweet yellow rice, and dholl (lentil soup) and rice, a very traditional Indian dish.

In the evening, when the crowd had left, a final fateha (prayer) was made at the shrine for forgiveness for any shortcomings on the part of members. Members thanked God for giving them strength and fortitude to carry out His work. Mazaar Society members moved to the cooking area where they worked until late into the night washing the hired pots and cooking utensils and cleaning up. It took three months to prepare for the occasion and about a week to clean up. The cost was around R200,000 which was obtained mainly from donations from the public.⁷⁰ Why is there such massive expenditure in honouring Badsha Peer, and why do the poor not oppose it? According to Reeves, businessmen are motivated by the fact that capital contributions are 'sanitised'. Capital is transmuted into 'the symbolic capital of piety and as a consequence evade moral censure'. The saint's judgement does not fall on those who pay him the respect that is his due. The powerful win legitimacy at financial cost. The masses participate because they are not an organised group who can indulge in unified action. Poorer members of society

... gain from being able to define an ideal of piety and justice in interpersonal relations in accordance with their experiences and interests. Symbolic power appears to be qualitatively different from more overt forms of institutionalised power because it inspires positive-sum appraisals in powerholders and subjects alike. Because of its positive-sum nature, symbolic power is also immune to the accrual of resistance, at least at some levels of discourse. Consequently, a diagnostic of symbolic power would entail the absence – rather than presence – of resistance.⁷¹

Conclusion:

The shrine of Badsha Peer has been important in the development of Indian Islam in Natal. As a result of practices such as Urs, a popular form of Islam became hegemonic among descendants of indentured Muslims. Many new communities of Muslim have developed in this way; the new location of sacred space appearing upon the death of a saint providing traditional authority based on an age-old custom. The shrine also connected local Muslims to the history and geography of places of origin. The focus of attention being the shrine itself, it included followers from all areas of India and not just area of origin. The tomb site has also served as a means to transcend narrow ethnic, locality and class boundaries as many Muslims gathered around the lifestyle and leadership of the shrine and cult.

Activities connected to Badsha Peer's shrine are very much a product of historical and structural contexts. As a result of economic, political and social changes, as well as the impact of reformist Islam from the 1960s, participation in the public aspects of Urs, such as the procession. Attendance at the night activities and Sunday lunch however continues to be massive and buoyant. The decrease in crowds is probably partly due to

changes in lifestyle, with the shopping mall, television, sport and extra work taking up people's time. As a result of reformist Islam, which rejected veneration for saints, emphasis on genealogy and saintly hierarchy, the format and meaning of popular practices have also changed. The strong discursive influence of reformists has not succeeded in terminating popular practices, but has resulted in changes. For example there is noticeably more emphasis on the reading of Quran and zikr.

A multiplicity of meanings was attached to Saint's Day by participants. In a context of disenfranchisement, for some these practices were historically an important source of self-respect and resistance to race, class and ethnic hegemony. Others took the tomb and adapted it to their own background, education, hopes and beliefs. The multiple and contradictory meanings of participants with diverse interests seem to be reaffirmed during the Urs. Some came simply to recite the Quran, others for the inspiration of being close to the burial site of a saint, some to offer requests and prayers, others to ask for the blessings of the saint, or seek proper spiritual guidance or even worldly gains.

Appendix One:

Huzoor-E-Akram Nabie Muhammad Durood Tum Par Salaam Taum Par Quraan Meh Bhi Farmaan Heh Rab Ka Durood Thum Par Salaam Thum Par

Jismaani Mehraj huwa tha aala Allah ka didaar huwa tha beshaq ahadh Ahmadh meh parda heh meem ka ya keenan hum neh yeh maan liya heh

Mehraj ka Lamha kohee kya jaaneh rab yeh jaaneh ya habeeb jaaneh shammehe risalat ki ek yeh shaan heh yakeen hum nea yeh maan liya heh

Kohee yeh maaneh ya na maaneh huzoor akram yahaan moujood heh har unki mehfil meh who heh shaamil yakeenan hum neh yeh maan liya heh.

Rahegi roshan suneri gumbadh raheh salaamat woh pehla qibla, Islam deen koh fateh milegi yakeenan hum nehyamaanliya heh.

Makteh Heh

Iqbal Sarrang ki yeh hi Umeed yeh masjid al-Aksa ki ziyaarath kar leh, yeh hi seh masjid huzoor akram neh mehraj ka pehla kadam liya heh.

Translation

Praises to the Prophet: Naath Shareef

Salutations to you, O' Prophet Muhammad. The Almighty also states in the Quran, Salutations to you, O' Prophet.

The journey to the Heavens was in body form. You saw Allah, the Almighty, with you naked eyes. Definitely, we believe that.

The time frame of your journey, who can measure, but only the Almighty or His Beloved One. This is only one of your miracles that we believe in.

One can believe or not, our Prophet is always present on our occasions. We believe that.

May the green dome of Your shrine always glitter. May the religion of Islam get victory. We believe that.

Makta Heh (writer's vese)

Iqbal Sarrang has this wish that he visits Masjid-al_Aqsa in Jerusalem. From this mosque, the Prophet took his first step on his journey to Heaven.

Iqbal Sarrang

5 May 2002

Appendix Two:

Manqabat

Kitneh Pyaareh Heh Yeh Badsha Jis Peh Hum Mar Theh Heh Yeh Haqeeqat Heh Tasawwar Meh Unka Deedar Kartheh Heh

Unka roza heh beshaq makaam-e-madad hum ghareeb ki taqdeer koh
acheheh meh badal dehthe heh

Koe aaj tak no gaya heh
Is darbaar she khaali
Har mangtho keh daaman koh
Khoob seh hi bhar deh theh heh

Hum koh itna yeh khabar heh
Tho heh majzoob walee
Hum naseeb daar heh ya badsha
Theri
Kidjmat kar theh heh

Koe mushkil jab pareh tho
Darbar peh chaleh mwah
Yeh sakie ibneh sakie heh
Roteh huwe ku hasan deh theh heh

Maktsa
Thera mangtha thera Iqbal Sarrang
Ab aur kya maangeh
Unka naam thereh hi naam seh
Log hi liya kar theh heh

Translation:

Manqabath:

How loving it this Badsha Peer who we 'die' for, that we see him in our imaginary vision.

Truly his shrine is the destiny for help. He changes our luck to good.

Nobody has left his shrine disappointed. He fulfils everybody's wish.

We are aware that you are a Saint of highest calibre. We are fortunate to be doing your work.

If you have any problems come to the shrine of Badsha Peer. He makes a crying person smile.

What else can your Iqbal Sarrang ask for, when people mention his name with yours?

Iqbal Sarrang
17 April 2002.

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¹ Figures supplied by Tom Bennett and Joy Brain who are compiling an inventory of indentured Indians. Of 130,000 immigrants analysed thus far, 7874 were Muslim, comprising of 4958 males, 2418 females, 233 girls and 248 boys

² Mesthrie, *Language*, 29.

³ Davies, 'Growth of Durban', 26.

⁴ Bhana and Brain, *Setting down Roots*, 65-66.

⁵ Swan, *Gandhi*, 2.

⁶ Ginwala, 'Class, Consciousness and Control', 181.

⁷ Alexander, 'Progress of Arabs and Indians', 3.

⁸ See Vahed, 2002.

⁹ See Vahed 2001.

¹⁰ Murison, 'Cemeteries', 2.

¹¹ Beary, 1998.

¹² See Dangor, 1995; Mahida, 1993; Badsha Peer Mazaar Society [BPMS], 2000; and Soofie and Soofie, 2001.

¹³ Information supplied by Professor Joy Brain, who got the data from 'Unregistered File' of the Department of Indian Affairs during the 1980s. These files were subsequently destroyed by floods.

¹⁴ Lawrence, 'Islam in India', 33.

¹⁵ *Post Natal*, 30 August 1978.

¹⁶ Soofie and Soofie, *Soofie Saheb*, 42.

¹⁷ *Sunday Times Extra* 28 September 1986 and 14 February 1988; BPMS, 25.

¹⁸ Soofie and Soofie, *Soofie Saheb*, 45.

¹⁹ Rizvi, *History of Sufism*, 114.

²⁰ Soofie and Soofie, *Soofie Saheb*, 50.

²¹ Chetty, 'Badsha Peer', 7.

²² *Gazetteer 1909*, 265-7.

²³ Soofie and Soofie, *Soofie Saheb*, 70.

²⁴ van der Veer, 'Playing or Praying', 550.

²⁵ BPMS, *60 Golden Years*, 22.

²⁶ Doorn-Harder and de Jong, , 331.

²⁷ Reeves, 'Power, resistance, and cult of Muslim saints', 310.

²⁸ Greaves, *Sufis*, 18.

²⁹ BPMS, *60 Golden Years*, 25.

³⁰ in Hayden, 'Antagonistic tolerance', 210.

³¹ Reeves, 'Power, resistance, and cult of Muslim saints', 310.

³² Chetty, 'Badsha Peer', 12.

³³ Dawood, 'Influence of Badsha Peer', 57-8.

³⁴ Dawood, 'Influence of Badsha Peer', 62.

³⁵ Roy, *Islam in South Asia*, 101.

³⁶ Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*, 13.

³⁷ Roy, *Islam in South Asia*, 104.

³⁸ See Eaton, 'Political and Religious Authority', 1984.

³⁹ Mujeeb, *Indian Muslims*, 9-26.

⁴⁰ Alavi, 'Pakistan and Islam', 94.

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- 41 Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*, 41.
- 42 Roy, *Islam in South Asia*, 108.
- 43 Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 76-77.
- 44 Lawrence, 'Islam in India', 30.
- 45 Robinson, 'Islam and Muslim Society', 189.
- 46 Eaton, 'Political and Religious Authority', 61.
- 47 Roy, *Islam in South Asia*, 109.
- 48 Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 93-4.
- 49 Greaves, *Sufis*, 88.
- 50 Interview, Iqbal Sarrang.
- 51 Interview, Iqbal Sarrang.
- 52 Affidavit and correspondence located in the files of the Durban Town Clerk, NAR, 3/DBN, 4/1/4/898, 1959.
- 53 *Sunday Tribune*, 11 July 1965.
- 54 *Sunday Tribune*, 11 July 1965.
- 55 *Post Natal*, 30 August 1978.
- 56 van der Veer, 'Playing or Praying', 555.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 'Playing or Praying', 553.
- 58 Town Clerk to Badsha Peer Committee, NAR, 3/DBN, 22 October 1952.
- 59 Jones, *Socio-religious reform movements*, 72, 83.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 71.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 8.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 8.
- 63 Roy, *Islam in South Asia*, 116.
- 64 See Anwarul Haq, 1972.
- 65 Moosa, "World's 'Apart...'", 33.
- 66 Soofie and Soofie, *Soofie Saheb*, 42.
- 67 Meer, *Portrait*, 204-5.
- 68 Greaves, *Sufis*, 87.
- 69 Soofie and Soofie, *Soofie Saheb*, 26.
- 70 Interview, Iqbal Sarrang.
- 71 Reeves, 'Power, resistance, and cult of Muslim saints', 318.