

# MIFS NEWSLETTER 11

## February 2022

### Editorial

Although the pandemic is not yet eradicated, the skies are clearing as missions to South Asia, and in particular Sindh, have resumed. This new issue follows its usual red thread, beginning with an interview with the renowned researcher Kaleemullah Lashari. I would like to add a personal note about him. Dr Lashari has held very important positions of responsibility in the province of Sindh. I would like to acknowledge here the support he has given to researchers from France and other countries. His help has been invaluable, for which he is warmly thanked. The issue continues with two field reports, one in Sindh, Pakistan, and the other in India. This is followed by the other sections of the newsletter, which, as always, bear witness to the vitality of the Sindhi Studies field.

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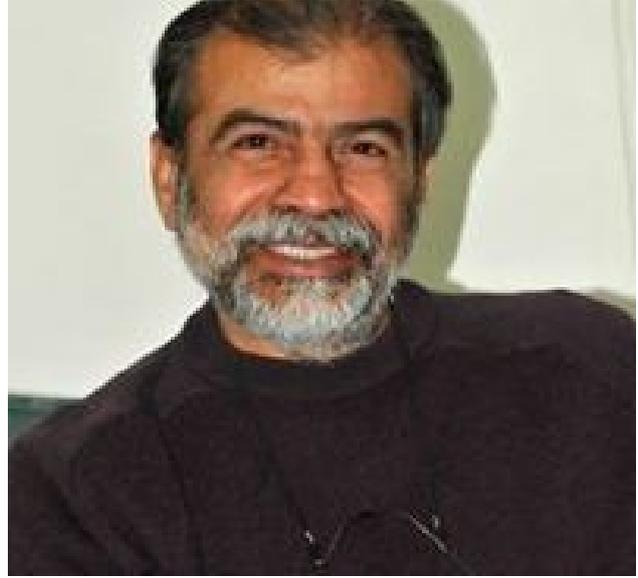
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## In Conversation with Dr. Kaleemullah Lashari

By Sindhri Saba, CEIAS-EHESS

**DR. Kaleemullah Lashari** (Sindhi: ڊاڪٽر ڪليم الله لاشاري) (Urdu: ڊاڪٽر ڪليم الله لاشاري; b. 3 June 1953) is an archaeologist, historian and author. In March 2019, the government of Pakistan awarded him the Sitara-i-Imtiaz, the third highest honour and civilian award in Pakistan. He works and preserves physical heritage.



**SS:** Can you describe for us the steps that led you to the training in Archeology, History and Persian language?

**KL:** The interest in the field of physical and cultural heritage was a harvest, which was a result of exposition to many factors. My late father was a poet, and also a political activist, with leanings to the far left. His collection of books, and his profession as journalist, as well as publisher of newspaper opened up a very broad perspective. My elder brother had very sensitive intellectual and cultural leanings, those proved a sort of catalyst, contributing to the lifelong interest in books and reading. At school, the learning process was as per the social dictates, and I progressed and found myself in an engineering college, which was much to the liking of my social circle / relatives. Though I couldn't come to terms with the conventional following, but found myself in the Training Academy of Civil Services of Pakistan, in Lahore. The rich library of Lahore Museum was frequented by me after the training hours, on a daily basis; it helped augment my knowledge in numismatics, biblical archaeology, and the physical heritage of the country.

During the service years I was in a unique position of access to the archaeological sites, far and wide. I began my field study of funeral remains in Baluchistan and southern Sindh, these presented a challenge vis-a-vis their origin and belonging, as there was not much learned knowledge in publications about these interesting graves, which were built with beautifully carved stone slabs. The research began early and was concluded with the publications of various papers, these culminated in the publication of the *Study of Stone Carved Graves*, in 1996.

Meanwhile my work brought me a grant for three-year Diploma in French, in Paris, but due to Service exigencies I could not avail the grant, that was meant to help me defend my dissertation in Sorbonne.

The association with the Foreign Archaeological Missions working in Balochistan in the days of unrest brought about closer association with the scholars working on South Asia. Thus the Civil Service, despite its taxing duties proved a conducive ground for field work. Academic progress was also gradual, PhD followed in quick succession to two post Doctoral Studies, one at Islamic Arts Museum, Berlin in 2002, and another in 2005-06 at Department of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin, at Madison.



It was followed by the creation of the Directorate General of Heritage Sector Special Projects, which was transformed into Department of Antiquities in 2008. The new Institutes were established under the Department, funds were created, schemes for the establishment of museums throughout the province were initiated. Thus a new era dawned in the province of Sindh, where archaeological investigations received preferred treatment, technical publications became the departmental initiative, and human resource development became the core function.

My personal research activities included regional histories, as I realized that a meaningful national historical narrative was not possible without more focused accounts of the regional historical accounts, of various events and persons. The publication of the work on the funeral practices of the major tribes in southern Sindh-Balochistan became a pertinent example of how the land-tribe relationship could be studied and the major historical sites understood. This provided reason enough and I started encouraging the District Historical societies, and established new working plate forms in Sukkur, Dadu and Thatta. This single fact went hand in hand to promote the regional languages as the medium of the learned discussion. Sukkur Historical Society, under my guidance was able to carry out extensive research work, and within a year was able to publish the proceedings of the learned pursuit in sixteen volumes in the year 2000-01.

**SS: In the graves of Makli, we commonly hear about Hindu architecture, Muslim architecture and then the amalgamation of both. Could you tell us if there is Buddhist architecture as well? If yes, where?**

**KL:** The appreciation of Makli and its architecture still remains to be done. What we so often hear is the generalization of vital elements, it has therefore generated many misgivings. Makli and its architectural legacy has three basic elements, which are to be kept in mind; one is stone, as Thatta and its environ has good quality stone available, thus the stone workers from the adjoining regions were drawn to contribute towards buildings and decorations. Second is the availability of quality clay, which was exploited to its maximum, and the third one was glazed bricks and tiles. You would appreciate that the stone masons and carvers mostly came from the eastern adjoining regions, however they still happily followed the instructions of the sponsors, and carved secular motifs. Not a single decorative theme was brought from Buddhist historic narratives. Nor was there a single Hindu religious motif carved. It is true of the Jains as well, the presence of goose is not in context of any religious narration, but as a neutral representation of the innocent nature, on the tomb building of Jam Nizamuddin. The reliquary of this tomb does not emulate any Hindu elements, you would appreciate that the mosques and tomb buildings in Gujarat, especially Ahmedabad, Champanir etc. could be cited as the inspiration.

**SS: Further, besides the presence of different kinds of architecture in Sindh, could you tell us if Sindh, as an autonomous region, had its own unique style of architecture, present in Makli and elsewhere in Sindh?**

**KL:** It is to be noticed that the architectural practices of a region are dependent upon the role played by the people in power. The region also impacts the architecture with the type of building material available therein. As far as local craftsmanship is concerned, that too is one of the variable factors. It is a fact that geographic hurdles in Sindh are scanty, thus the region has remained accessible to the influences of adjoining areas, the ruling dynasties belonging to these regions have especially brought preferences in design and material. However there are a few independent styles which are totally unique to Sindh-Baluchistan. These include the building types in the ancient past, flourishing in the urban centers of the Indus Valley Civilization. Another type is that of stone carved graves, which abounds in Sindh-Baluchistan. Another instance is that of the tomb architecture from 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, in the piedmonts of the Khirthar; these small-scale buildings are very economical, and are profusely painted.

**SS: You break many myths around the graves of Makli. One of them is about the inscription of Ayatul kursi that not every grave is inscribed with it. Can you explain it in more detail and tell us what most of the graves are inscribed with? And what does it tell us about the religion of that time of Sindh?**

**KL:** The inscriptions on the cenotaphs and on the buildings are the real strength of the necropolis, it is greatly appreciated for its calligraphic beauty. However, the important fact is that the carvers, the calligraphers and the medium itself has made it quite difficult for the visitors to read these epigraphs with accuracy. That is the reason that certain misgivings have taken root, which are not necessarily correct. Sir Richard Burton, the British scholar who visited the site during mid-nineteenth century said that the main characteristic of the inscriptions is that these are not readable. Thus the concept took root that all the cenotaphs are inscribed with the Ayatul kursi. The fact is quite contrary to it, out of 114 Surah from Quran there are quotations from about 42 Surah represented in Makli, and it is not only the Ayatul kursi. Likewise many more facts come to light with systematic survey and documentation.

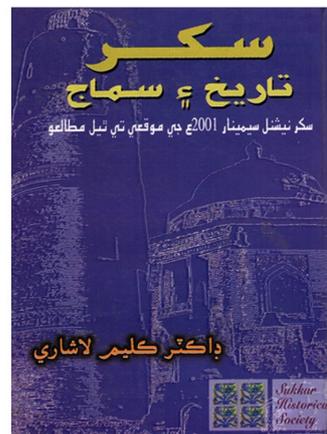
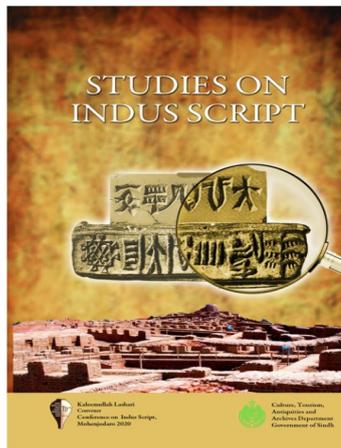
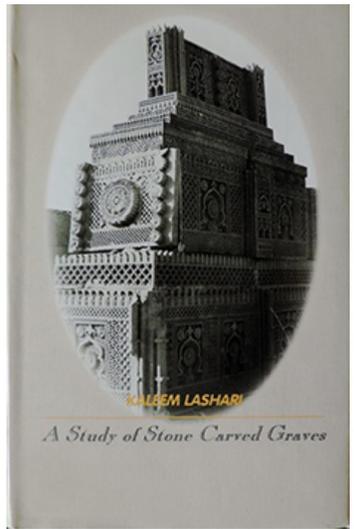
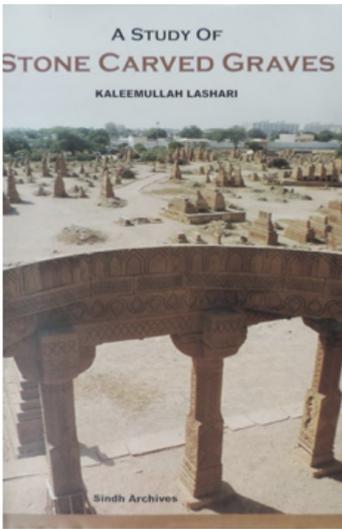
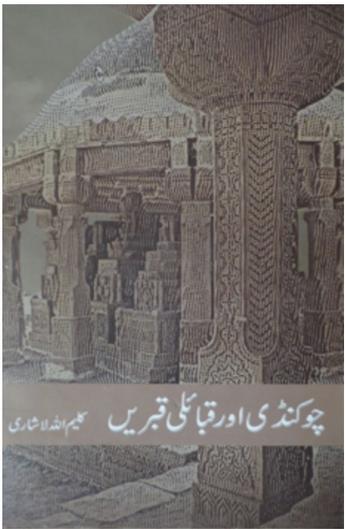
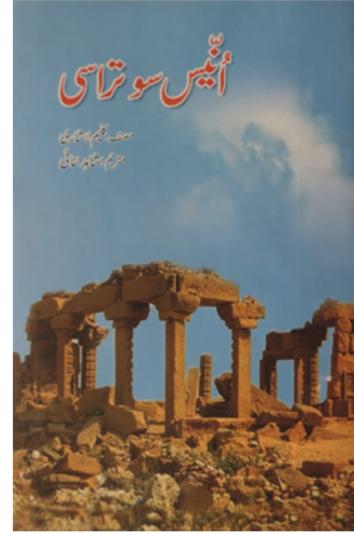
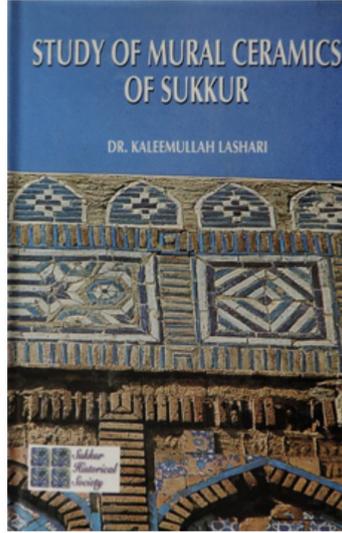
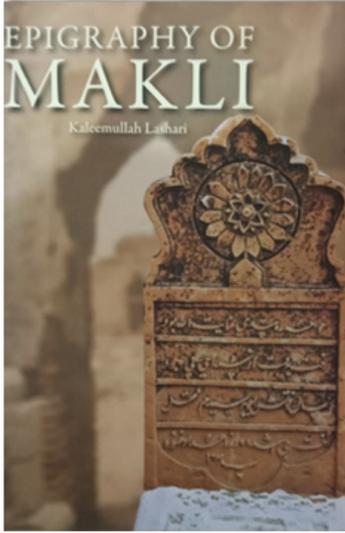
**SS: There are different hypothesis regarding the decline of the Indus Valley. What do you think were main reasons of its decline? Or what theory do you suggest?**

**KL:** The reasons of decline of the Indus Civilization have been very broadly commented upon; but there has not yet been any scientific investigation upon the subject. The archaeologists have not found any evidence of the forced end of the demise of the civilization, thus the ground is open for speculations. The most recent area of speculation is the environmental impact; however it has to be probed scientifically before anything can be said about it.

**SS: Do you have any ongoing or upcoming projects?**

**KL:** I have many roles to play, on the one hand I am serving high level committees, dealing with World Heritage, on the other hand I have to undertake consultancies, besides which I devote time to my own research / studies, and also practice conservation of physical heritage; it thus makes me a very busy person. I am presently engaged in the activities aimed at the Centenary Celebrations of Excavations at Mohenjodaro. At the same time I am finalizing rehabilitation work on the Old Nusserwanjee Building, and have very recently initiated conservation work on the Frere Hall, Karachi. I am also completing my work on the Chronograms from Makli, a comprehensive study of this genre of literature, comparing the trends in other contemporaneous societies.

Some Publications by Dr. Kaleemullah Lashari



## Finding Jhulelal overseeing the Packing of Diwali Gifts, October 2021, Mumbai

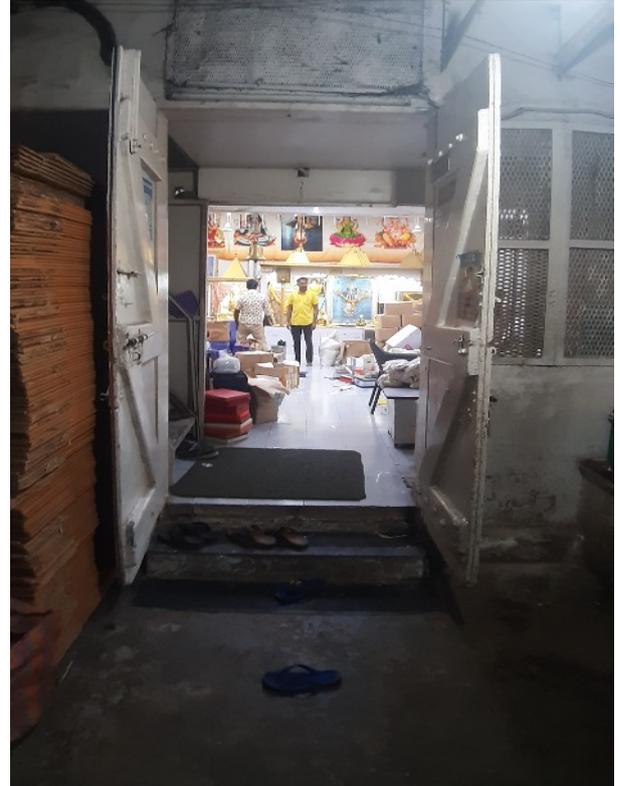
By Trisha Lalchandani, CEIAS-EHESS

Crawford Market, Mumbai, is quite difficult to navigate for the sheer number of shoppers that throng the place. As I waded through the sea of people and found my way around the maze of long line of cars halted at the traffic signal, I searched for the narrow alley that Mr. Dwarka Sainani had told me to enter when I had spoken to him over the phone about an hour before my first encounter with the cacophony that Crawford Market is. A fruit vendor stood at the mouth of a street, that to me looked like could be the one that Mr. Sainani had wanted me to take. A fruit vendor seemed like a reasonable entity to make an enquiry about a temple to, for fruits often tend to become prasad, or offering, to a deity. Besides, I was on the lookout for a Jhulelal temple, and from my earlier field visits in Delhi, I had learnt that most Jhulelal temples were set up by committees formed by traders of fruits (and vegetables). So, here I found one. Arbitrary connections, but I believed the pattern would thicken later.

He told me I needed to walk up to a fleet of cargo containers that line the street. Sure enough, a few metres on, I saw them. Cargo containers, being laden with cartons wrapped heavily in plastic sheets. Men were carrying boxes up and down the street, it was busy. Diwali was coming up, and the crowd or even the liveliness that the market exuded did not surprise me. Walking down a street that seemed to be the epicentre of Diwali gift packs to look for a temple, though, was a tad bit bewildering. I had been told to look for a narrow passage created by the cargo containers. I spotted it without much difficulty.

The street behind the containers was rather filthy, covered in plastic waste. Not an uncommon sight, but certainly one that seemed incongruous knowing I was looking for a temple. I was led into a makeshift corridor, covered with plastic sheets. As I turned into the corridor, to my left were a series of storage rooms, while to the right there were people playing cards. There was more than one group like that. These were all shops or stores or warehouses. While I had seen Sindhi temples built in obscure looking buildings, I was not prepared for this. Someone pointed me to the 'temple.'

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Entrance of the temple, with cartons moved to the side after my arrival.

I walked up to the door, which was small and identical to the others that I had just passed. I caught a glimpse of two men on their haunches, diligently packing and unpacking boxes and cartons, and right behind them, a framed image of Jhulelal. This was not the usual Jhulelal I had seen on other field visits, but it was unmistakably him. Mr. Sainani greeted me, and led me straight to what was a new avatar of Jhulelal's depiction. While the usual image is of the ishta-devata of the Sindhis seated on a lotus and the pallo fish, here I saw him standing on the lotus, holding a staff and a scripture, with not only the darya behind him, but also a structure, maybe the Sadh Belo. He didn't seem to have same smile as is visible in other iconography though. The 'temple' was essentially just one hall. The back of the room was lined with images of Jhulelal along with a few other Hindu deities, and a pile of cartons blocked the view. Though shielded from the bustle outside, the scutter of plastic wraps and packets dropping to the floor in the fervent preparation of the right combination of nuts lent a similar energy to the hall.

Mr. Sainani, visibly occupied, clarified that the space of the temple and the warehouse faded into each other only at a time like Diwali. As a wholesaler of dried fruits, this was the busiest time of the year for him. The hall had initially been just that, a warehouse, and Mr. Sainani's father had commissioned a painting of Jhulelal, which he eventually installed in the warehouse. Soon enough, (Sindhi) traders in the vicinity began to mark their presence at the 'temple' on a regular basis, even contributing monetarily to maintain the upkeep of the temple. The purchase of oil is an interminably repeated activity in a Hindu place of worship, particularly one where Jhulelal is worshipped. Mr. Sainani pointed out that the jyot (the lamp) was alight all throughout the day everyday, and quite perceptively drew my attention to the pecuniary aspect of worship. Though he clarified that his father felt most contented when he made the purchases for the temple from his own pocket and was discomfited by the participation of others, Mr. Sainani's mention of the budgetary side of temple maintenance was a fairly novel addition of a secular, profane entity to the sacred narrative of faith, veneration, and community-building.

In the grander scheme, I was alerted to the gradual and incidental building of a community around an image placed there without a defined intention by Mr. Hundomal Sainani, Dwarka Sainani's father in the early 1950s. This had been the evolution of one man's desire to have an image of Jhulelal in his warehouse into a full-scale collective exercise in fortifying a place of worship for the community. It had, in effect, been the production of religion through practice, and the making of the Hindu Sindhis as a people who chose to ensconce their heuristics within the familiar trope of praying to the deity mytho-historically attributed with guardianship of their well-being. Far from being vapid, the entire exercise in locating the temple, navigating the bustle of festive shoppers, and then being at the warehouse-temple was rather eye-opening. It enabled me to witness the resilience of a people and the remarkable ways in which they had found ways to survive through altered hermeneutic practices.

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"Jhulelal is devta, Gurunanak lived amongst men," said Mr. Sainani, when I asked him why despite the access to a structured faith practices of Sikhism, the Sindhis still made it a point to have Jhulelal temples and why it was that the Jhulelal image and idol was present in a tikano in defiance of the non-idolatry of the Sikhs. Mr. Sainani, in this statement, established a hierarchy, and harkened back to the legend of Jhulelal. In doing so, he was alluding to the miracles of Jhulelal that in the first place set him up as the protector of the Sindhis. The re-emergence of the deity as the ishta-deva in the mid-twentieth century among the Hindu Sindhis who migrated to India is well recorded by scholars in the area.<sup>1</sup> What is of note however is Mr. Sainani's claim that the Crawford Market Jhulelal temple was indeed the very first temple in Bombay to have Jhulelal as the main deity. He is proud to admit that this is where the

<sup>1</sup>See Anita Ray 'Varuna, Jhulelal, and the Hindu Sindhis', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, Issue 2, 2012, and Michel Boivin, *The Hindu Sufis of South Asia: Partition, Shrine Culture, and the Sindhis of India*, London, I.B.Taurus, 2019.

Jhulelal festivities germinated. While this claim remains unverified, it brings into question the centrality of Professor Ram Panjwani<sup>2</sup> to the promotion of a unitary Sindhi identity of which Jhulelal was the centre.



The painting of Jhulelal commissioned by Mr. Sainani's father

Jhulelal temples were only one aspect of my field visit to Mumbai. What I first encountered there were *darbars*, where Jhulelal was not always a presence. My enquiry in the field around temples which had the Sindhi deity as the central figure, more often than not, yielded the response that I should visit Ulhasnagar,<sup>3</sup> for that is where the Jhulelal phenomenon could be experienced in all its frenzy. First, I was told that Mumbai did not have any Jhulelal temples. It was only Mr. Sainani who seemed to be aware of the other locations of Jhulelal temples, most of which I realised were situated in neighbourhoods that came into existence only in the mid to late twentieth century. Most *darbars* (Khatwari, Halani, Manjhand, Kambar and others) are located in the well-to-do neighbourhoods of Mumbai. None of the *darbars* led me through narrow alleys, they were not hidden behind a facade of local trade, nor were they so amorphous in shape and character. Their patrons, I learnt, were businessmen and they had a dedicated discipleship which visited these places regularly. The Crawford Market temple thus stood in stark contrast.

2 Ram Panjwani, writer of Sindhi origin and an advocate of Sindhiyat, was instrumental in bringing limelight to Sindhi culture and writing, particularly through the establishment of Sita Sindhu Bhavan, a Sindhi cultural centre in Mumbai, India.

3 Ulhasnagar a small town near Mumbai was settled by Sindhis who migrated (to India) across the newly formed border after the division of the Indian subcontinent. The town, with its large Sindhi demography, offers a vibrant Sindhi cultural tableau, particularly with focus on Jhulelal. There are several temples Jhulelal temples there. The repeated advice to visit the town by Mumbai Sindhis was not a surprise.

Legend suggests that the wives of maritime traders who traveled away from home prayed to Jhulelal for their safety and brought them with wealth. At Crawford, it seemed the latter had veritably transported himself to not only oversee the well-being of the trader but also personally oversee the business and its success. The women had been expelled from this arrangement, and it was the homosocial space of the market where traders and the cohort of aides had established a religious set-up. A composite of faith and profit was brought alive in that space.

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Anita Ray discusses the process of adoption of Jhulelal as the *ishta-devata* of the “rural Sindhis” and the “rural Lohanos” (Ray 2012: 234, 237) in her essay, indicating the tenuous connection between the worship of Jhulelal with a certain social group. While there has been a scholarly acceptance of the intervention of Panjwani in situating Jhulelal in the centre of the matrix of Sindhi cultural *imaginaire* and projecting him as the pan-Sindhi deity, the associative links with the worship of the river god by some social groups rather than all Sindhis remain blurry. There has been extensive study on the more discernible social group identified as the *bhaibands* through their transnational *sindhworki* networks, but it is the minor, local trade networks that may be able to demonstrate the transition of the worship of Jhulelal from being limited to a small social group or a practice that existed alongside others to becoming the metonymic icon of the Sindhi Hindus more effectively. Its emergence as the locus of Sindhi Hindu religious practices is demonstrative of the emergence of a different social order, not controlled by the more cosmopolitan *amils* or *bhaibands*, but by the figure of the *vaneyo*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Amils*, in pre-partition Sindh, were the educated social group, often found to be in administrative service of the *Mirs* in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century and eventually taking up positions created by the colonial administration. *Bhaibands* constituted businessmen who were especially known for their tenacious global trade links. The *vaneyos* (from *bania*, a caste group strewn across northern India) denote small-time local traders, typically involved in moneylending, or trading in vegetables and groceries.

## Muhanas of the Manchar Lake: A Preliminary Survey of their reverence to Water

By Sindhri Saba, CEIAS-EHESS

### Introduction

This report is developed from an ongoing project titled 'Interdisciplinary Survey of the Legacy related to Uderolal/Zindapir in Sindh: Uderolal Research Project (URLP)' funded by the French Embassy and Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. The objects of the project were twofold, one was to locate the sites dedicated to Uderolal and second was to observe the reverence that communities have for him. Regarding this, fieldwork was conducted earlier to locate the various sites of Uderolal in different districts of Sindh including the main site in Uderolal village near Hala. Moving to the second object, the URLP team planned to work with the communities who live on the water or by the banks of water such as Muhanas, known as fishermen or boatmen in English. The Muhanas are found all along the river and lakes in Sindh. The previous fieldwork was conducted with the Muhanas of Karachi (Sindhri, 2020).<sup>1</sup> This time, the project team decided to work with the Muhanas of Manchar lake to cover the rural context.<sup>2</sup>

The main sacred figure related to water is Uderolal who is worshipped by both Hindus and Muslims. Hindus worship him as a water deity and Muslims revere him as a saint who guided Prophet Musa (Surah Kahf, chapter 18). For Hindus, the legend states that in the late 10th century, a Muslim ruler Shah Mirkh was forcing Hindus to convert to Islam. Hindus, under duress, went to the river banks and prayed to the water god Varuna, who emerged from the water and saved them from persecution. God Varuna appeared in the water and told them that a child will be born who will later save them from conversion and persecution. Following the prediction, a child was born who later miraculously convinced the king to spare the Hindus. The king, impressed by his wisdom and influence, spared the Hindus. Since then, Hindus worship him as a manifestation of the water-god Varuna, under the name of Uderolal, Zindapir, Amarlal. For Muslims he is Shaikh Tahir, Khwaja Khizr. However, due to lack of sources, it is difficult to locate the source of such diverging tales about the figure, but the hypothesis is that people having different religious faiths in Sindh gave birth to his dual identity.

In this report, I start with locating lake Manchar in Sindh where the fieldwork with Muhanas was conducted. The report is divided into two parts, in the first part I introduce the Muhanas and their caste variation within the group with some insight into their social organization. In the second part, I shall provide the religious setting of Muhanas of Manchar lake, and discuss their reverence to water under the name of Khwaja Khizr. Further, I focus on Muhanas' inclination towards shrines such as Shaikh Dhaman and conclude by proposing the hypothesis that Shaikh Dhaman is related to the tradition of Uderolal.

### Locating Lake Manchar

Lake Manchar is situated to the west of the Indus River in Jamshoro and Dadu district, at a distance of 18 kilometers from the city of Sehwan. It is a big formation created from the River Indus, ancient channels and several hill torrents like Nai Gaj, Nai Naing and others. Lake Manchar provides different kinds of fishes which makes it a favorable lake for fishing. Besides fishing, it provides water for cultivation in the region. Further, it has been used for transportation of people and pilgrims in the past. Before modernization of the railways and transport system, people used to take boats from Bubak city east of the lake to Shah Hassan village in the west. From there, they would go to the Gaji Shah shrine which attracts many pilgrims in the region, second only to the pilgrimage site of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar.

1 <https://sindh.hypotheses.org/1742>

2 Manchar is written as Manchhar as well.



Source: Google maps

These activities of transportation and fishing have been performed by the Muhanas who live in big boats called *galiyo* in Manchar. Demographically, Muhanas are an important group in Sindh, scattered in different districts along the river and lakes. It is said that where there is water, there are Muhanas.



Fig 1: Childen gathered at *galiyo* during the fieldwork

Muhanas claim themselves to be the descendants of the inhabitants of the Moenjo-Daro civilization (Hasan, 2002, 110). Besides their claims, colonial (British) and post-colonial sources also suggest that they are the true descendants of their ancient and prehistoric inhabitants of the lake (Sehrai, 1997, 74). Some even believe that the original name of Mohenjo-Daro was Mohanan-jo Daro named after its inhabitants Muhana. Historically, Muhanas being fishermen, have been associated with transportation and were involved in the logistics of trade (Ortis, Delage, 2016, 72). However, today, with the modern transport system, Muhanas are limited to fishing only, with the majority abandoning it and moving to agriculture and education sectors. This professional change has created a gap in understanding the Muhanas today. For instance, the literature produced on the Muhanas focuses on

two perspectives only: one, that the Muhanas are the original descendants of Mohenjo-Daro and second, that they are fishermen/boatmen of Sindh. But contrary to that, many Muhanas are agriculturists now and some even work in the education sector. Therefore, the literature lacks in studies that evidence the evolution of the fishing community. For instance, what would those communities of members be called who have abandoned fishing. Besides, many non-Muhanas living near the river and lakes have started fishing professionally, thus, the question is if they could be called Muhanas as well.

Furthermore, Muhanas and Mallahs are depicted as the same caste, like Sahrai writes, the lake and pile-dwellers of Sindh are called 'Mohanna' in the Sindhi language and 'Mirbahar and Mallah' in Persian (Sahrai, 1997, 73).<sup>3</sup> Conversely, the terms being similar, Muhanas prefer to call themselves Mallahs. During the previous fieldwork with the Muhanas of Lyari, Karachi, informants claimed that both Mallah and Muhana were the same caste, however, when we asked them what their caste was, they said it was Mallah not Muhana. Like an informant said, "every other person claims to be Mallah but they are Muhans whereas 'we're original' (*asli*) Mallahs." Similarly, Muhanas of Manchar also consider themselves Mallahs. Therefore, to fill the gap in the studies dedicated to Muhanas, we stepped into the field exploring the question that if Muhana and Mallah are names of the same caste then why did Muhanas prefer calling themselves Mallah over Muhana. Some informants responded to it by saying that the difference between both lay in social upliftment. Those who could get some education, abandoned their caste that is Muhana. Another informant sarcastically said when someone became literate, he became Mallah. And when someone became literate and abandoned his profession of fishing, he became Sama, Mirani, Pirzada and others. It shows that Mallah and Muhanas are fishermen by profession but compared to Muhanas, Mallahs are literate fishermen. However, I contend that such change in caste is not related to social upliftment only but due to the prevalent caste system of Sindh as well. For instance, fishing is considered a low-class profession and thus who have abandoned it try to differentiate and separate themselves from their community. It is quite common to observe that people of low profession castes such as Pinjara, Manghanhar, Kumbher opt for higher castes like Sama, Soomra, Pirzada.<sup>4</sup> However, the caste questions in the Muhana community as to how the change in profession causes change in social organization and how the Muhanas who ascend to higher castes maintain their associations with the people of previous castes are yet to be explored.

Present Muhanas, like other communities, have many sub-castes such as Shaikh, Nakha, Nagwani, Omairani and many more. The different sub-castes are based on either different activities or by the name of older male member of the family. Following sub-castes, Muhanas represent the hierarchy within group as well. For example, in their social organization, Muhanas follow the hierarchical structure from *sardar* (chief), *wadero* (or *wado*) to *seth*.<sup>5</sup> Like other communities in Sindh such as Nohani or Sami, Muhanas also have a *sardar* named Muhammed Ayoub Mallah who heads the *panchayat* (council).<sup>6</sup> Further, every village has a *wadero*, who in the absence of *sardar*, takes his charge and performs his duties, like resolving conflict among community people or offering solutions to their problems. A Muhano (singular) said that everyone respects the *wadero* and submits to his decision in *panchayat*. Then, they have the designation of *seth*, which is more like a professional, and he performs the role of an intermediary between Muhanas and fish contractors. *Seth* takes the fish from Muhanas and gives it to the contractors in exchange of money.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Muhana is also written as Mohanna and Mohana. I prefer to write it as 'Muhana'.

<sup>4</sup> The similar pattern is observed in Hindu castes of Sindh as well. In fact, it is theorized that such caste variation in Muslim communities is the remnant of their Hindu past.

<sup>5</sup> According to *Sindhi-English Dictionary*, *seth* stands for a wholesale merchant. Previously, It was used for Hindu merchants who were associated with mercantile business. But now, regardless of Hindu, Muslim, *seth* is used for anyone related to the trade business.

<sup>6</sup> This *sardar* and his hierarchical status only belongs to the Muhanas of Manchar, not the whole community of Muhanas in Sindh.

<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, due to time restricts, we could not explore the community system in detail that how the hierarchy works within the caste and how one caste is superior than other but as the URLP project is in progress we hope to cover this aspect in future research.

### Living between Land and Water

As mentioned above, Muhanas played a leading role in the logistics of trade until the end of the nineteenth century but the decline in ports decreased their mobility. Further, agriculture drain-off in the Manchar lake infected the water, which has also compelled the Muhanas to adapt a sedentary life style and move to dry lands. Resultingly, living in galiyo has decreased. For instance, Badar Abro in his book *Manchar, Gorakh, Gaj Dunya* (1997) discusses the presence of two hundred galiyo houses in the west of Manchar at Shah Hassan village in 2002, but in our fieldwork we observed that all of them have disappeared. There were some fifty galiyo in the Moula Bux village (picture above).



Fig 2: The floating Moula Bux village of Muhana people

Upon our asking about the decrease of living on the water, a Muhano (singular) said:

'Living on the boat (*galiyo*) is expensive. One boat costs six to eight lakhs Pakistani rupees. How can a Muhano pay the price for it? And let's suppose if he did, how would his family survive? There is no fish in the lake. Many kinds of fishes and vegetables have disappeared due to infected water'.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, due to social change and poor economic conditions, Muhanas are leaving the ancient style of living on the water and are moving to dry lands. Nonetheless, there are some Muhanas who are reluctant to move to dry lands such as people in Moula Bux village, but they also said that it will be difficult to stay on the lake for long because the *galiyo* would need to be repaired. Therefore, they will be here until their houses survive. Continuing this conversation, we headed down in the boat (*beri*) called *huroe* to visit Muhana families. Muhana rows the *huroe* for fishing, tourists and transportation and *galiyo*, a big *beri*, discussed above, as a house for living.

<sup>8</sup> Personal Communication, 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2021, Manchar, Sindh.

Zahid, the boat rider took us to the *galiyo* of his father who is the *seth* of the Muhanas of his village.<sup>9</sup> Zahid drove us to the *galiyo* of his family who told us about their life in boat. For us, it was interesting to discover how one family lives in the boat and how women perform all the household chores in it. Muhana women told us about the ease of living in the *galiyo* and performing household chores. In the boat, two small cradles hanging in the ceiling captured our eyes. I asked the women about it and she told us that one in the center is for an infant and second, in the corner is for *sardar*. My next question was who was this *sardar*? And she said it is the Quran that we call *sardar*.



Fig 3: The Cradle, containing Quran inside, is hanging in the *galiyo*  
Source; Google

### **Cradle, Jhoolelal, Khwaja Khizr and Shaikh Dhaman: The Religious Setting of the Muhanas**

The cradle carries a significant place in the houses of Muhanas. We observed during our visit to the Muhana family in Bubak city that like the Muhanas in *galiyo*, they also had a similar cradle in the corner of their room. Every Muhana house whether on dry land or in the boat carries a cradle despite the differences of Shia, Sunni sects within the group. Muhanas hang a cradle in the ceiling like a ceiling fan and keep the Quran in it. Mostly, Muhanas are illiterate who cannot read the Quran. Therefore, they swing the cradle, every member of the family swings it once or twice a day and prays with open hands raised towards it. For them, the act of swinging the Quran is equal to reading it.

The cradle has a significance in the different shrines of Sindh as well. Devotees offer a small cradle to the shrines as an offering of fulfillment of their wishes of child. Also, when Hindus went to the river god at the time of their persecution by Shah Mirkh, the river-god appeared in a cradle and was rocking like a child (Thakur, 1959, 130). The cradle, translated as *jhoole*, is related to one of the different appellations of the river-god 'Jhoolelal' which is also strongly associated with Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan city and nearby districts. Hindus following river-god associate Jhoolelal with their deity Uderolal

<sup>9</sup> We met Zahid with the help of the communication between Fisheries department and Muhanas. Muhanas get their fishing license renewed from fisheries department located in Jamshoro district.

Uderolal but Muslims majorly associate this name with Lal Shahbaz Qalandar. For instance, Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's pictures are very commonly revered at the various shrines. In one of the postures at the Babar Sher shrine in Jhangaara, Dadu, there was a picture of Lal Shahbaz and his disciple Bodlo Bahar in the shrine. The picture depicts different things associated with him, among which, there is a small photo of a cradle over which the name of Jhoolal is inscribed.



Fig 4: The small picture of *jhoolo* captioned as Jhoolalal and small *jhoolo*, placed at the shrine of Mattan Shah in Manchar region.

There is no certain explanation as to when Jhoolal started being associated with Lal Shahbaz Qalandar but locals in Sehwan city and the nearby villages along with the Muhanas of Manchar, strongly believe in Lal Shahbaz Qalandar as Jhoolal. To confirm this, I asked a Muhana woman to sing a song dedicated to Jhoolal. She sang a song with lyrics such as "O My Qalandarlal, I am imprisoned (O muhnja Qalandarlal man qaidyani aahyan)", confirming that Muhanas strongly believe Qalandar to be Jhoolal. Besides, Muhanas revere a sacred figure associated with the Indus under the name of Khwaja Khizr. As discussed earlier, the Hindus revere Indus under the name of Uderolal. A Muhana woman told us they call the darya (river) Khwaja Khizr. Upon asking if darya could be called Uderolal as well, she responded: "No, it is Khwaja Khizr, we call it Khwaja Khizr".

A Muhana women told us that Khawaj Khizr is revered every day, every week and at every special occasion. For instance, whether it is 12th Rabi-ul Awal, 10th Muharram or Eids, we first offer sweets to Khwaja Khizr and then celebrate the relevant occasion. She said that they paid offerings of sweets and sweet rice (*mitho bhat*) to him.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, a Muhana woman said that every Friday night, she cooks *mitho bhat* and offers it to darya with the words saying: 'In the name of Khwaja Khizr' or "I offer this to you Khwaja Khizr".<sup>11</sup> Similar kind of ritual is performed by the Hindus, specifically, Lohana Hindus, who consider Friday the birthday of the river-god (Thakur, 1959, 124). Therefore, it shows that Muhanas

<sup>10</sup> In sindhi language, 'Beo mithayi ya kujh wirhayun ta pehrin Khwaja Khizr khy deenda aahyun.

<sup>11</sup> In Sindhi language, 'Khwaja khizr, hee tokhy tha dyun'.

also revere Indus but under a different name and with the concept of a saint, not god. Since Muhanas are Muslims by faith, they don't consider Khwaja Khizr as deity or god as the Hindus do.

Furthermore, I asked if they celebrated Khwaja Khizr's *melo* like the Uderolal *melo*, Muhana said that there was no *melo* for Khwaja Khizr but they celebrate Shaikh Dhaman's *melo* like the *melo* of different *pirs* are celebrated in Sindh. About Shaikh Dhaman, they told us that he was the *pir*, *murshid* of the Muhanas of Manchar. The caretaker who is also Shaikh by sub-caste, said that Shaikh Dhaman came from Delhi and settled here some centuries ago. Why he settled there the Muhanas do not know.

Badar Abro states that Dhaman is the name of a fish found in the river and Manchar Lake, and Shaikh is an Arabic word meaning elder, equivalent to the Persian *pir* (Boivin, 2015, 294). Thus, the term Shaikh Dhaman, means a *pir* related with fish named Dhaman. Badar Abro doubts that Dhaman fish could be the vehicle of Shaikh Dhaman as palla fish is the vehicle of river-god Uderolal (Abro, 1997, 252). However, Muhanas do not know about it.

Shaikh Dhaman's shrine is located in Shaikh Dhaman village. The village is in the west of Manchar situated between the villages of Tehni and Shah Hassan. All the Muhanas of Manchar revere Shaikh Dhaman and celebrate his *melo* or *urs* in Rabi-ul Awal, the third month of the Islamic calendar, which was celebrated fifteen days before our visit to them.<sup>12</sup> During the *melo* days, Muhanas drive their boats (*galiyo*) to the shrine of Shaikh Dhaman. A Muhana told us that it took twenty minutes from Moula Bux Mallah village to Shaikh Dhaman's shrine in a boat with motor/engine. The distance could thus be covered faster but they prefer rowing it with their hands, which takes five to six hours. Rowing a *galiyo* for five to six hours is an exhausting job because, one, it is heavy and, second, it is full with household materials and family members. But they believe that this long and difficult journey provides them more benefit (*sawab*) since they travel there as devotees.

Notwithstanding, the Muhanas don't know any legend associated with Shaikh Dhaman except that he is a *pir* who came from a foreign land and stayed here.<sup>13</sup> The caretaker who is a Shaikh by sub-caste arranges the *melo* for four days on the 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st of Rabi ul Awal. Muhanas of Manchar come in those days, cook food, sing songs, arrange musical nights and celebrate the festival. Regarding the rituals, the caretaker said that people whose wishes are fulfilled put the *chadar* on the grave, distribute cooked rice and light the lamps. Others come to ask for fulfilment of their wishes. Shaikh Dhaman's *melo* is like a community festival where all the Muhanas of Manchar visit and celebrate together. Though there are many shrines in the Manchar region like Lal Chato shrine, Babar Sher shrine, Sher Badshah shrine and others but Shaikh Dhaman's shrine is significant among the Muhanas.<sup>14</sup> However, the Muhana do not know why one saint is revered more than other. Like for other things, they told us that it has been continued to be followed since the time of their forefathers.

The caretaker plays the drums (*nagara*) every day, except on the *melo* days, after the Fajr prayer and lights lamps.<sup>15</sup> Further, Muhanas whose wishes are fulfilled visit the shrine on Fridays, put the *chadar* on the shrine, light the lamps and ask *dua*. Besides the reverence to the shrines around Manchar, a

<sup>12</sup> We visited them on the 6th of November 2021 and they said that Shaikh Dhaman's *melo* was celebrated fifteen days before which means it took place around 23rd of October 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Muhanas do not know any tradition regarding the origin and arrival of saint. Caretaker told the he came from Delhi and others said, he came from Afghanistan.

<sup>14</sup> It will be focused in future research.

<sup>15</sup> Nagara was present at almost all the shrines around the Manchar lake and in the locality of Sehwan.

participant told us that they are *murid* (devotees) of Jeelani *pir* in Khairpur Nathan Shah and visit them during the *melo* of Jurial Shah. Also, they visit different *pirs* in the region like Gaji Shah's *melo* in the west of Manchar and Lal Shahbaz Qalandar's *melo* in the east. The Nakha Muhana (sub-caste) plays an important role of raising the flag at the shrines of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar.



Fig 5: The exterior view of Shaikh Dhaman shrine at Shaikh Dhaman village

## Conclusion

The devotion to different shrines and their community *pir* suggests that shrines play a significant role in the religious setting of Muhanas of Manchar. For example, the Muhanas of Lyari don't follow so many *pirs* and, in fact, they were reluctant to talk about their reverence to water under any name of river saint or river god. Therefore, it also suggests that compared to the Muhanas of Lyari, the Muhanas of Manchar share porous boundaries with other religious sects and have continued worshipping Khwaja Khizr and other figures such as Shaikh Dhaman.

The few days of fieldwork with the Muhanas of Manchar opened up many avenues of research regarding community organization and their religious setting, and brought to light that a small portion of the Muhana community living in a different regions follow a different hierarchical structure and belief system compared to other Muhanas of Sindh. The field report shows that the Muhanas have continued following the old traditions of cradle and water worship. Though they seem to be affected by the religious change in region as they don't call the river Daryapir nor do they associate Jhoolal with the river-god figure, but it is certain that the Uderolal tradition has survived in Shaikh Dhaman. Further, though it is a bit too early to conclude that Shaikh Dhaman is directly drawn from or influenced by the Uderolal tradition, it helps to propose a hypothesis regarding the continuation of victuals and rituals related with Uderolal in the religious setting of Muhanas and at different shrines of Manchar for future research.

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## New Books (With Publishers' Abstracts)

**Levesque Julien, *Pour une Autre Idee du Pakistan: Nationalisme et Construction Identitaire dans le Sindh*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2022.**

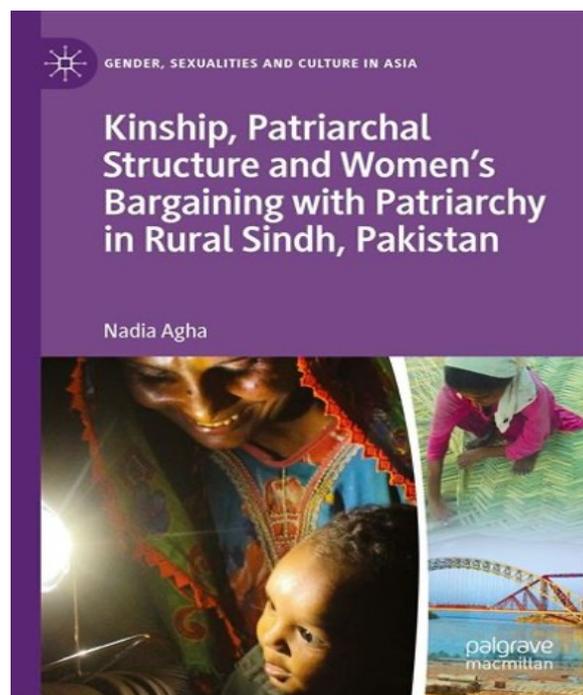
**En Francais:** Les dynamiques sociopolitiques du Pakistan sont souvent résumées à l'islamisme, au terrorisme et aux incursions du pouvoir militaire dans la vie civile. Ce livre propose une vision différente de l'histoire politique du Pakistan à travers le cas du nationalisme ethnique de la province du Sindh, située au sud-est du pays. Ce mouvement et son discours identitaire sont singuliers à au moins deux égards : d'une part, le discours nationaliste sindhi conçoit l'appartenance à l'islam soufi comme un marqueur ethnique qui distinguerait les Sindhis des autres musulmans du Pakistan; d'autre part, le nationalisme sindhi puise ses racines dans des mouvements et idéologies de gauche, qui dénoncent le conservatisme centralisateur du nationalisme officiel promu par l'État pakistanais. Depuis les années 1950, le mouvement nationaliste du Sindh conteste l'État central et réclame une plus grande autonomie pour la province. Certains groupes vont jusqu'à formuler des demandes séparatistes à partir des années 1970. Afin de comprendre le rapport des Sindhis à l'État du Pakistan, cet ouvrage retrace une sociohistoire de la mobilisation nationaliste et examine la construction des marqueurs identitaires qui est au coeur du discours nationaliste. Le cas du nationalisme sindhi au Pakistan illustre comment un mouvement identitaire peut contribuer significativement aux dynamiques sociopolitiques sans pour autant atteindre ses objectifs.

**In English:** The socio-political dynamics of Pakistan are often summarised as Islamism, terrorism and military incursions into civilian life. This book offers a different vision of Pakistan's political history through the case of ethnic nationalism in the south eastern province of Sindh. This movement and its identity discourse are unique in at least two respects: on the one hand, Sindhi nationalist discourse conceives of belonging to Sufi Islam as an ethnic marker that would distinguish Sindhis from other Muslims in Pakistan; on the other hand, Sindhi nationalism has its roots in left-wing movements and ideologies, which denounce the centralizing conservatism of official nationalism promoted by the Pakistani state. Since the 1950s, the nationalist movement in Sindh has challenged the central state and demanded greater autonomy for the province. Some groups went so far as to formulate separatist demands from the 1970s onwards. In order to understand the relationship of Sindhis to the state of Pakistan, this book traces a socio-history of nationalist mobilisation and examines the construction of identity markers that is at the heart of nationalist discourse. The case of Sindhi nationalism in Pakistan illustrates how an identity-based movement can contribute significantly to socio-political dynamics without achieving its objectives.

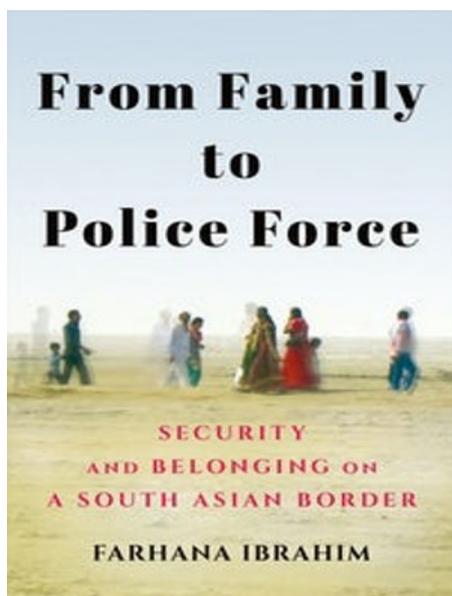


**Agha Nadia, Kinship, Patriarchal Structure and Women's Bargaining with Patriarchy in Rural Sindh, Pakistan, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.**

The book provides insights into the prevailing patriarchal system in rural Pakistan. It elaborates on the kinship system in rural Sindh and explores how young married women strategize and negotiate with patriarchy. Drawing on qualitative methodologies, the book reveals the strong relationship between poverty and the perpetuation of patriarchy. Women's strategies help elevate their position in their families, such as attention to household tasks, producing children, and doing handicraft work for their well-being. These conditions are usually seen as evidence of women's subordination, but these are also strategies for survival where accommodation to patriarchy wins them approval. The book concludes that women's life-long struggle is, in fact, a technique of negotiating with patriarchy. In so doing, they internalize the culture that rests on their subordination and reproduce it in older age in exercising power by oppressing other junior women.



**Ibrahim Farhana, Family to Police Force: Security and Belonging on A South Asian Border, NewYork, Cornell University Press, 2021.**



From Family to Police Force illuminates the production and contestation of social, familial, and national order on a South Asian borderland. In the borderland that divides Kutch, a district in the western Indian state of Gujarat, from Sindh, a southern province in Pakistan, there are many forces at work: civil and border police, the air wing of the armed forces, paramilitary forces, and various intelligence agencies that depute officers to the region. These groups are the major actors in the field of security and policing. Farhana Ibrahim offers a bird's-eye view of these groups, drawing on long-standing anthropological engagement with the region. She observes policing on multiple levels, showing in detail that the nation-state is only one of the scales at which policing is enacted at a borderland.

Ibrahim draws on multiple sources and forms of policing structure to illuminate everyday interaction on the personal scale, bringing families and individuals into the broader picture. *From Family to Police Force* looks beyond the obvious sites, sources, and modes of policing to show the distinctions between the act of policing and the institution of the police.

**Le Houerou Fabienne, *Ethnographie filmée des musiciens du désert du Thar en Inde: Princes et Vagabonds, poussière d'exils*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2021.**

**En Français:** L'auteur s'appuie sur une heuristique des images et, en particulier, un long métrage : *Princes et Vagabonds*, afin d'élaborer une ethnographie filmée des musiciens itinérants dans le désert du Thar (Rajasthan, Inde). Par le prisme du film et des images animées, elle montre l'existence d'une poussière d'exils induite par le système des castes, les exils intérieurs, les exils sociaux, les exils religieux, les seuils/exils de ces musiciens qui tentent de se réinventer en migrant dans des ailleurs aux multiples ouvertures. Fabienne le Houérou s'attèle ainsi à saisir le caractère « rhizomorphe » d'une théorie des exils pluriels en insistant sur les correspondances entre exils forcés et volontaires.



**In English:** The author uses a heuristic of images and, in particular, a feature film: *Princes and Vagabonds*, to elaborate a filmed ethnography of itinerant musicians in the Thar desert (Rajasthan, India). Through the prism of film and animated images, she shows the existence of a dust of exiles induced by the caste system, the inner exiles, the social exiles, the religious exiles, the thresholds/exiles of these musicians who try to reinvent themselves by migrating to other places with multiple openings. Fabienne le Houérou thus attempts to grasp the "rhizomorphic" character of a theory of plural exiles by insisting on the correspondences between forced and voluntary exiles.

## New PhDs in Sindhi Studies

Naresh Chhatwani, *Social Relations and Architecture: Study of Sindhi Neighbourhoods in India*, PhD., Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Institute of Infrastructure Technology Research and Management (Ahmedabad) 2021.

### Abstract:

The exodus of Sindhis over India's newly formed borders was a one of a kind moment in the social history of South Asia. Hindus lived as a minority population within the predominantly Muslim Sindh (presently located in Pakistan). When British India was divided in 1947 along the religious bases, Sindhi Hindus were forced into exile from their ancestral land. This thesis has presented an analysis of Sindhis' histories and contemporary circumstances of habitation patterns across India. This research aims to look at the concept of home and neighbourhoods that Sindhis have; they try to reconstruct a feeling of home away from "home" and, in the process, project their own presence and social status through architecture and interior. This thesis argues that the form and location of the houses are indicators of the relationship of owners and the host societies. Additionally, it also concludes that aesthetics of the house and interior through conspicuous display conveys the owner's cultural capital through which social relations between various groups in the society are constructed and contested. The framework implemented here is embedded in the broader theoretical underpinnings of the sociology of space, home and belonging, consumption, habitus, and capital. By analyzing both the Sindhi house and the Sindhi neighbourhood, multiple layers of social reality are explored to unearth what lies at the core of these relations. In the fieldwork, it was established that socio-economic conditions (of Sindhis) and its manifestation in housing result from their long standing social relations within the host societies. For a Sindhi businessman, wealth and power must be displayed for others through home building, interior, luxurious wedding receptions, and leisure. For a community like Sindhis, space becomes the means to signal their social status that is achieved rather than ascribed. Closely knit residential units and the religious and commercial places of everyday exchange create a sense of belonging and foster sociocultural exchange, both within the community and with other communities. These places also provide the markers of community identity within the city. In conclusion, the thesis has contributed to the scholarship on the Sindhi community, social relations, and negotiating an ever-evolving Sindhi identity through spatial manifestation.

Ghazal Asif, *Marvi's Sisters: Hindu Belonging and the Muslim State in Pakistan*, PhD., John Hopkins University, 2021.

**Abstract:**

This dissertation asks how Sindhi Hindu communities living in Pakistan negotiate modalities of religious minority belonging in a modern Muslim polity, in the place their ancestors have lived for generations. Weaving ethnographic, archival, and textual analyses, it examines how mutual imbrications of the state and the domestic shape political aspirations, everyday lives, and intimate relations. The dissertation focuses on the lives of Hindu women in south-eastern Sindh. Based on fifteen months of long-term fieldwork from 2016 to 2018 as well as archival research, it engages with two broad aspects of the relationship between the state, the domestic, and the religious other. The governance of religious difference and identity remains a vexing question for the Pakistani state. Early promises of citizenship vacillated between discriminatory neglect and overt regulation of religious minorities through governance techniques such as categorization and adjudication. In turn, Hindus negotiate around such practices in various creative ways, to imagine different modes of political claim-making in their ancestral homes. Meanwhile, the anxieties and pitfalls about having been rendered strangers in such a place seep into the everyday: from neighborly or intimate relations, through the constitution of domestic life, to embodied histories and practices. This leads to a burden of sustaining communal and intimate life which falls primarily on Hindu women and their capacity for kin-work and relational labor. In such a landscape, I examine how the vicissitudes of everyday life can inform alternative forms of belonging and exclusion. Tenuous intimate and neighborly relationships are sustained or exhausted in unexpected or unintuitive ways for many Hindus, as they labor in the face of limited tolerance and patterns of violence, neglect, and discrimination. Through the interpellation of governance techniques with intimate social relations, I theorize how the everyday fabric of Sindhi Hindu life has become interwoven with Pakistan's aspirations to modern Islamic statehood.

## Academic Events

### Discussion on *Sindhi Tapestry*, hosted by KR Cama Oriental Institute, Mumbai (27 Oct 2021)

*Sindhi Tapestry: An Anthology of Reflections on the Sindhi Identity (2021)*, edited by Saaz Aggarwal, was aimed at anthologizing the many perspectives on what it means to be a Sindhi across various socio-economic locations. Encompassing personal experiences, reflections on language and personal histories, as well as fictional pieces, the book drew attention to the patchwork arrangement of narratives surrounding the diverse range of experiences of diasporic Hindu Sindhis. The very title of the book alludes to the multiplicity of voices and subjectivities that constitute a Sindhi identity, and this was taken up for discussion at the event hosted by the KR Cama Oriental Institute, Mumbai on October 27, 2021. The book discussion witnessed Professor Matthew Cook (Professor, Postcolonial and South Asian Studies, North Carolina Central University), Professor Maya Khemlani David (Honorary Professor, University of Malaya), Mr. Nandu Asrani (Entrepreneur), Dr. Shakuntala Bharvani (Professor, English Literature, Mumbai), coming together to share insights on the essays in the book. Saaz Agarwal moderated the discussion while Dr. Subash Bijlani (Collegiate Professor, University of Maryland University College) brought the discussion to an end.

The discussion began with Cook's presentation drawing upon the tapestry/patchwork image on the cover of the book which is also suggestive of the oft-repeated (and oft-contested) attribution of syncretism to Sindh and its people. Drawing attention to the assumption of an unintended, unprejudiced amalgamation of cultures, Cook demonstrated how the many parts of the Sindhi identity cannot be taken apart as easily as a patchwork, for there were historical precedents that had encouraged the construction of the composite Sindhi identity. To challenge the notion that Sindhi identity is syncretic, Cook shared archival material from mid 19th century which evidence the contest between the *Naskh* and *Khudabadi* writing systems. Richard Burton's disregard for the many other scripts that existed then and subsequent advocacy for the *Naskh*, coupled with Henry B. Frere's support for Burton's views, ensured that literary production of the time, a large quantum of it being Sufi poetry, employed the *Naskh* writing system instead of any other. This process efficiently dismissed the possibility of any other scripts (*Khudabadi*, *Gurmukhi*, *Devanagari*) being legitimized through the production of literature, and generated the linkages (between language, literature, and people) that have been taken for granted for several years now. Cook's presentation thus contended that the Sufistic principles assumed to have organically developed in Sindh were in fact a result of colonial intervention.

Continuing with the question of language, David's discussion employed the socio-linguist's perspective and examined why diasporic Sindhis have disassociated themselves from their tongue. Identifying a few samples from the book, David pointed out language shifts and deaths being shaped by positive and negative attitudes. Her presentation illustrated how the attitude of the Sindhi in diaspora moved closer to being negative than positive and deduced that alienation from their mother tongue was also a result of embracing a cosmopolitan identity.

Asrani revisited his essay and recounted the long history of Shikarpuri trade in his family. With an emphasis on his great grandfather and grandfather's journey through international trade, he also shared the essentials of a successful business: maintaining an impeccable reputation, developing an affable personality and not be shrewd, being flexible and adjusting, and, finally, practicing philanthropy as much as possible. Bharvani walked down the memory lane too in her talk, recounting the transition in the cultural practices of the Sindhi Hindus as they migrated to India. Bijlani too shared personal memories which addressed questions raised about the attrition of culture owing to loss of language and the close association that Sindhi Hindus have with Sikhism. The discussion, expansive in its scope, reflected the thematic concerns that the essays grapple with and underscored, once again, that the process of identity formation is a complex one. It also dealt delicately with issues of linguistic, cultural, and religious practice, finding a balance between jargon-filled academic discourse and an expository talk aimed at those curious to unravel the mysteries of their cultural origins.

### **'A Tapestry of Languages and Cultures in the Indus Valley' Organised by Professor Abdul Haque Chang**

Professor Abdul Haque Chang is an Associate Professor at the department of Social Sciences and Liberal Arts, Institute of Business Administration, Karachi. He has been hosting and moderating an online series organised by the School of Economics and Social Sciences (SESS) Institute of Business Administration, Karachi. The series of five talks was conducted under the title of 'A Tapestry of Languages and Cultures in the Indus Valley' with renowned South Asian and western scholars of Sindh Studies. This series covered different themes in the talks ranging from history, archeology, literature to local languages.

The series held its first session with Professor Rita Kothari (Ashoka University, India) who talked about the meaning of home with examples from her personal experiences and from the literature of Shah Abdul Latif focusing on the tale of Umar Marui in which the heroine longs for the home. Dr. Kothari, herself belonging to a Sindhi migrant family, shared her thoughts on the meaning of home for her. The session was conducted under the title 'Are Homelands Metaphoric?'.  
([https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch\\_permalink&v=1505044693174882](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=1505044693174882))

The second session was dedicated to the 15<sup>th</sup> century Baluchi epic titled 'Immortalized by Love: Discussing the 15<sup>th</sup> century Love Romance of Shah Murid and Hani'. The session was conducted with the Baluch literature expert Professor Sabir Badalkhan (University of Napoli, Italy). Professor Chang focused on the depiction of this epic in modern Baluchi literature and also highlighted the importance of different languages in Pakistan other than Urdu and English.  
([https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch\\_permalink&v=380426887141466](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=380426887141466))

The third session titled 'Persian and its currency in South Asia' was conducted with Archeology expert Dr. Kaleemullah Lashari, holder of the third highest civilian award 'Sitara-i-Imtiaz by the government of Pakistan. Highlighting the historical importance of Persian language in the region Sindh, Professor Chang engaged the speaker in the discussion of Necropolis in Makli, Thatta where archeological context of Persian language may still be observed.  
([https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch\\_permalink&v=228541399296511](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=228541399296511))

The fourth session was held with Dr. Haider Nizamani (University of British Columbia) under the title 'Politics of language and Education in Sindh during the first half of the British period'. This session was proposed to focus on the question of how the British Empire in Sindh destroyed the old education system to make way for a new system of education that was aimed to create new subjects and break the continuity of history and languages (Arabic and Persian) in Sindh.  
([https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch\\_permalink&v=1212233099264209](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=1212233099264209))

The fifth and last session was conducted with Moenjo-Daro expert Dr. Michael Jansen who has been working on Moenjo-Daro and Indus civilization since the late 1970s. The talk was focused on the socio-economic and behavioral study of Moenjo-Daro and the Indus Valley civilization that may provide us new avenues to think about the region's culture, religions, and social aspects of life.  
([https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch\\_permalink&v=1894078430764787](https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=1894078430764787))

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