

## Looking for Love and Miracles : Multivocal Composition and Conflicts among Believers in a Sufi Mausoleum Festival of Rajasthan, India

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## Looking for Love and Miracles: Multivocal Composition and Conflicts among Believers in a Sufi Mausoleum Festival of Rajasthan, India<sup>1)</sup>.

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愛と奇蹟を求めて  
—インド・ラージャスターン州における  
スーフィー聖者廟祭礼の多声的構成と信者間の葛藤—

三 尾 稔

A large number of Muslims as well as Hindus pay homage to the Sufi mausoleum of Baba Diwana Shah (who was active in the Mewar region of Rajasthan, India in the first half of the 20th century), just as followers do in other Sufi saint mausoleums in South Asia, in their search for aid from the supernatural power of the saint's tomb. Moreover, the core followers of this saint mausoleum cult consider personal love for the saint the basis of their faith, and express their deep love to the saint through ritual activities. The administration of the mausoleum is also carried out by these core followers. As the saint took many disciples without making distinctions between Muslims and Hindus, there are still Hindus among those who play a central role in the present saint mausoleum cult. However, since the saint ascended without appointing a formal successor, there has been an ongoing dispute over leadership of the core followers between the Hindu disciples and their descendants, the Muslim disciples, and the saint's descendants. The process and the interpretation of the most important annual festival (*'urs*) also reflects this dispute among the core followers.

This paper addresses the multivocal composition of the annual festival, and considers especially how rivalry among the core followers is reflected in the performance of the rituals. It also describes the competition and coex-

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istence of the core groups that seek leadership of the cult. The authority of the cult is expressed in the festival by holding the executive right to the most important secret ritual as well as by being the ultimate gift giver in a sacred exchange in the mausoleum. Competing groups try to monopolize these rights and criticize each other, for trying to usurp authority in illegitimate ways. The axis of confrontation seems to be rooted, rather than in the communal identity difference between Hindus and Muslims, in the peculiar character of the Sufi saint faith in which the disciple's personal devotion to the saint is regarded as being of ultimate importance. The relationship between a saint and a disciple can be understood in terms of personal and internal love, and the relationship is considered as unique and beyond conventional norms. The reason this unique internal love between a saint and his follower is expressed in a set, conventional ritual performance will also be considered in the conclusion.

インド・ラージャスターン州メーワール地方で20世紀前半に活動したスーフィー聖者ババ・ディワナ・シャーの聖者廟には、南アジアの他のスーフィー聖者廟同様、ムスリムのみならず多数のヒンドゥーが聖者の墓の神秘的な霊力による救いを求めて参拝に訪れる。また聖者廟信仰の中核となる信者たちは、聖者に対する人格的な尊崇の念を信仰の基盤とし、聖者への深い愛を儀礼を通じて表現している。廟の管理運営も廟信仰の中核的な集団に担われてきた。聖者はムスリム、ヒンドゥーの区別をすることなく多くの弟子を取っており、現在の聖者廟信仰の中核的役割を果す者の中にもヒンドゥーが含まれている。しかし、この廟の聖者は正式な継承者を定めることなく昇天したため、信仰の核となる集団のリーダーシップをめぐるヒンドゥーの高弟やその子孫、ムスリムの弟子たち、及び聖者の子孫たちの間で紛争が続けられてきた。廟で最も重要な聖者の年忌祭の執行や解釈にも彼らの対立は色濃く反映されている。

この論文では、聖者の祭礼の多声的な構成に焦点をあて、特に信仰の中心的なメンバーの間の拮抗的な関係が儀礼の執行にどのように反映されているのかを考察し、信仰の中心的権威を求める諸グループが競合しつつ共存している状況を記述する。信仰の中心的権威は、祭礼に伴う贈与交換で究極的な贈与の与え手になること及び最重要の秘儀の執行権を持つことで表現される。競合する諸グループはそれらの権限を独占することをめざし、対立するグループが邪なやりかたで権威を侵そうとしていることを相互に非難する。ここにみられる対立の軸は、ヒンドゥーとムスリムのコミュニカルなアイデンティティーの対立というよりは、聖者に対する人格的信仰をどのように証拠立てるかというスーフィー聖者信仰特有の性質に由来するものと思われる。聖者と弟子の関係は人格的、内面的な愛の関係と捉えられ、伝統的な規範をも超える関係とされる。結論部では聖者祭礼が多声的に構成されるにいたる背景が、聖者-弟子関係のユニークさの表現がある一定の伝統的な儀礼的行為に収斂する理由とあわせて考察される。

1 Introduction	5 Levels of the 'urs: the Multivocal Composition of the Saint's Festival
2 Overview of the <i>Dargāh</i> of Baba Diwana Shah of Kapasan	6 Conclusion: Coexistence and the Contesting of Ritual Practices
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## 1 Introduction

This article aims to give an ethnographic description of the annual festival of a Sufi saint's mausoleum in the Mewar region of southeast Rajasthan, India<sup>2</sup>). I will consider how the Hindu and Muslim members of the mausoleum cult compete with each other in ritual practices and interpretations while coexisting in its most important annual festival, the 'urs.

In Mewar, as in other regions of India, many Hindus as well as Muslims pay homage at Sufi mausoleums (*dargāh* in Urdu) as part of a common religious practice. It is generally believed that the spirit of an ascended Sufi saint dwells within the mausoleum, making it the seat of a supernatural power. For this reason, people come to the mausoleums seeking miraculous healing, pregnancy, children's healthy growth, and success in various enterprises.

The Sufi saint mausoleum has occupied a very unique position among south Asian religious centers as a space where the relationship between Hindus and Muslims actually takes place through their religious practice, so there have been ongoing debates on the significance of belief in it among orientalist, historians, anthropologists and other social scientists (Werbner & Basu 1998: 17–21). Against the background of the emergence of Hindu nationalist discourses in national politics, the communal violence which culminated in the demolition of Baburi Masjid in Ayodhya, and the violent communal clashes after the Ayodhya affair, we can see the reason why the belief in Sufi saint mausoleums in India as it relates to communalism has been attracting a great deal of scholarly attention in recent years<sup>3</sup>).

For example, Nandy maintains that whereas the religion-as-ideology of the political and intellectual elites promotes communalism, the religion-as-faith of the premodern rural public underlies communal harmony at the grassroots level. So he presupposes that the key to overcoming communal conflicts lies in syncretic and harmonic folk religious practice (Nandy 1990).

Against Nandy's view, van der Veer points to the multivocality of faith in Sufi saint mausoleums, and criticizes the naïve conceptualization of the faith in the saint's shrine as syncretism, which would imply a certain systematic doctrine. According to van der Veer, Hindus and Muslims who gather to the most important festival of a Sufi saint mausoleum in Surat attach different meanings to their visit.

Hindus participate in the festival only peripherally and for them the mausoleum is important only for healing demonic illnesses. On the other hand, for Muslims a spiritual relationship with the saint is of central importance (van der Veer 1992). Moreover, according to van der Veer, in the Hindu worldview, Muslims are so close to the world of spirits that they can exercise power over the spirits; in that sense Muslims are close to untouchables, who are specialists in exorcism. So according to Hindu perception, Muslim saint worship is an impure and inferior practice (van der Veer 1994: 207). Van der Veer also insists that Hindus regard their relationship with Muslims as a hierarchical one, even in the realm of folk religion, and that their relationship is never equal or harmonic.

Basu, on the other hand, presents an opposite image of van der Veer's, although like him, she acknowledges the different worldviews of Muslims and Hindus in the Sufi shrines. She also points to the large number of Hindus haunted by evil spirits who visit the Sufi shrines in Gujarat in search of healing. But her work shows how Hindus are considered to embody the world of evil spirits because they are vulnerable to possession, and Muslim saints who overcome those evil spirits are believed to represent the justice of Islam. Moreover, it is believed that the Sufi saint defeated the Hindu gods who were represented as demons in the legend of the origin of her mausoleum (Basu 1998). Muslims have a hierarchical relationship in her view as well, but Muslims are superior to Hindus in her case.

Although Van der Veer and Basu present opposite views on the hierarchical relationship between Hindus and Muslims, they are in agreement that one community encompasses the other in the Sufi saint cult.

The view of this article is that the saint's festival is of multivocal composition and various groups compete with each other for leadership in the festival, so harmonic relationships are not necessarily maintained among these groups. However, no competing group has been able to gain enough dominance to encompass the other groups. Each competing group asserts its own legitimacy in this mausoleum cult through ritual activities in the festival. Simultaneously, these groups participate in the same festival and in the same religious space without being divided from the cult completely. Furthermore, although there are two levels of followers in this cult, one consisting of followers who attach much importance to a personal relationship with the saint and the other comprised of followers who mainly seek healing through the spiritual power originating from the saint, the hierarchical difference is not consistent with hierarchy based solely on religious identity as is claimed in the work of van der Veer and Basu. While there are large numbers of Muslims who seek only the aid of a miraculous spiritual power, there are also several Hindus who are the core members of the cult and who treasure their personal and internal relationship with the saint. Actually, it is a Hindu who was regarded as the saint's most devoted disciple, and he was the greatest contributor to construction of the mausoleum. Moreover, Hindus were in charge of management of the mausoleum and

executed the most important ritual of the festival until fifteen years ago.

This paper addresses the multivocal composition of the saint's festival, considering especially how rivalry among the core members of the cult is reflected in the performance of rituals. It also describes the competition and coexistence of core groups which seek leadership of the cult.

The authority of the cult is expressed in the festival by holding the executive right to the most important secret ritual as well as by being the ultimate gift giver in sacred exchange (Werbner 1998) in the mausoleum. Competing groups try to monopolize these rights while criticizing each other, for trying to usurp authority in illegitimate ways. The axis of confrontation seems to be rooted, not so much in communal identity difference between Hindus and Muslims, as in the peculiar character of the Sufi saint faith in which the disciple's personal devotion to the saint is regarded as being of ultimate importance.

The relationship between a saint and a disciple can be understood in terms of personal and internal love, and the relationship is considered one that is unique and which goes beyond conventional norms. The reason this unique internal love between a saint and his or her follower is expressed in a certain conventional ritual performance will also be considered in the conclusion.

## 2 Overview of the *Dargāh* of Baba Diwana Shah of Kapasan

The *dargāh* that is the subject of this paper<sup>4)</sup> is the mausoleum of Baba Diwana Shah who was active in Mewar as a saint of Sufi *Rifa'i silsila* (a school) during the first half of the 20th century. It is especially famous for its supernatural healing power. Many pilgrims including those from neighboring South Asian countries visit throughout the year. The *dargāh* is in a suburb of Kapasan, in the middle of the trunk road connecting Mewar's principal city Udaipur and its ancient capital Chittorgarh. The population of Kapasan, as of 1991, was about 16,000, about twenty percent of which are Muslims (Census of India 1991). This percentage is substantially higher than that of Mewar, where it is about four percent.

The *dargāh* is located about two kilometers south of the city center. It covers an area of about thirty bigars (a bigar equals to 0.74 ha), making it one of the largest *dargāh* in Rajasthan. The construction started in the late 1940s. Currently, as shown in Figure 1, beside Baba's grave, there is a *masjid*, a traditional Islamic school for children (*madrasa*), accommodations for pilgrims, an assembly hall (*māphil khāna*), a rest hall for visitors, a caldron for *langar* (a free meal served to visitors during the annual festival), an enormous gate (*buland darwāza*), and an orchard. A number of other buildings are currently under construction.

The *dargāh* is, at present, administrated by a semi-official Muslim committee called a *waqf*. A male Muslim descendant of one of the saint's disciples (*murīd*) is the chair of that committee. The duty of the *waqf* is to manage the income and

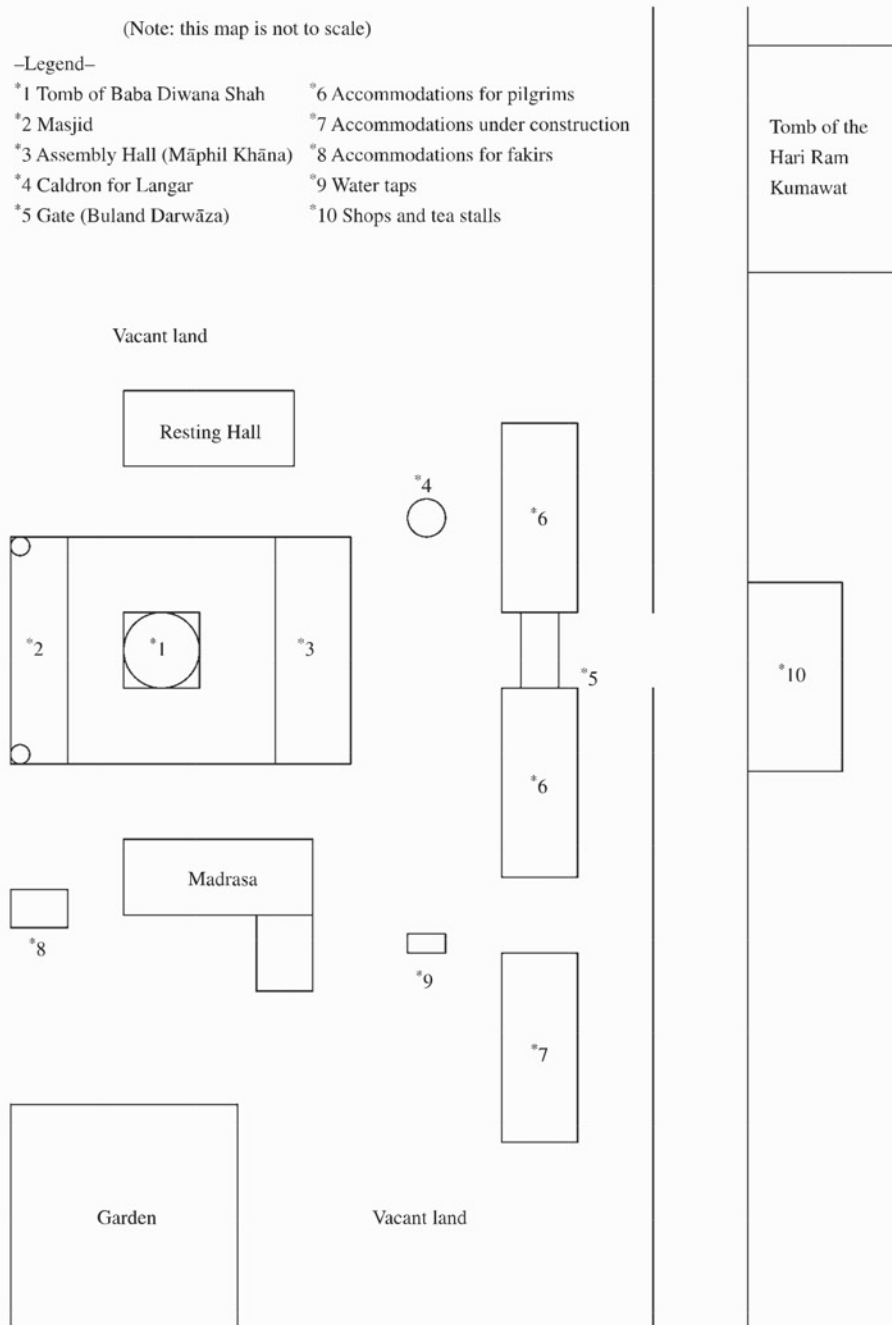


Figure 1 Ground plan of the Dargah of Baba Diwana Shah of Kapasan

expenditures of the mausoleum, and to carry out necessary repairs and additions to buildings. In this case, however, because the saint passed away without designating a formal successor (*sajjāda-nashīn* or *pīrzāda*), the *waqf* plays a central role in various events concerning the *dargāh* cult such as the organization and management of daily rituals and annual ceremonies<sup>5)</sup>. The *waqf* considers the mausoleum a pure Islamic religious facility, so the committee sees to it that *namāz* prayers are performed in the *masjid* at the prescribed time every day. The committee also organizes and carries out various ceremonies in this mausoleum on other Islamic festivals like *Id*.

For the general public, both Hindus and Muslims, the charm of the *dargāh* is not its pure Islamic activities, but the supernatural power of Baba's tomb.

Those who visit the *dargāh* to make a vow go inside the tomb building (*mazār sharif*), and prostrate themselves at the foot of Baba's tomb. Many visitors tie a thread on the surrounding fence as a sign of their wish. Once their wish is fulfilled, they visit again to express their gratitude and donate a suitable amount of money or various goods. It is said that the total amount of monthly contributions has reached a hundred thousand rupees. Sometimes *qawwālī* (Sufi religious songs) are dedicated as an expression of gratitude. In such case, the person who made the vow employs a *qawwālī* musician and dedicates songs in front of the *mazār sharif*.

The healings are performed outside the gate of the *mazār sharif*. Those who are possessed by evil spirits gather around its gates, murmuring the name of Baba and rolling around on the stone pavement. At this moment, Baba is believed to enter their body to battle the evil spirit. These kinds of healings are usually performed by a Hindu medium at a shrine for local Hindu gods or goddesses near the believer's residence. But these people come to the *dargāh* as a last resort after visiting a number of local shrines that were not able to cure them.

So far, there are no special features in this *dargāh*, unlike the mausoleums of other Sufi saints in India. As mentioned earlier, it is not uncommon for Hindus to visit the mausoleum to obtain the spiritual benefits of the Sufi saints' tombs. It also seems natural for Muslims to administer the Islamic mausoleum.

However, as mentioned in the Introduction, it was only fifteen years ago that the *waqf* acquired its administrative right. Before that, Hindus, including Brahmans, were regarded as the highest disciples of Baba and were in charge of all those works of the *dargāh* such as construction, administration, and important ceremonies. Conflicts are still ongoing between the descendants of the Hindu disciples and the *waqf* over the right of administration and the way of the mausoleum faith. These conflicts are reflected in the *dargāh* rituals, and the rituals themselves are arenas for competition among the disciples.

In order to grasp the issues fueling the conflicts among the disciples, we will examine the developmental process of this cult of a Sufi saint by looking at Baba's life and the events that followed.



### 3 A Belief History of the *Dargāh*

#### *Baba's lifetime*

Baba Diwana Shah was born in the small town of Gujarat to a Muslim *Kasai* family (traditionally butchers) around 1875. After he married and had a son, he left his family to start the ascetic life. He became a disciple of a Sufi saint and experienced union with Allah. He came to live in Kapasan around 1930 and started to gather disciples.

From the beginning, there were many Hindus among Baba's disciples. Some of them, such as Hari Ram Kumawat, Mangi Lal Vyas and Devi Lal Ojha (the latter two being Brahmins), became prominent disciples of Baba in later years. It is said that the then *maharana* of Mewar frequently sent messengers to the Baba's abode, and the *maharaja* of the Sirohi princely state neighboring Mewar was an enthusiastic disciple of Baba as well<sup>6</sup>. However, many of Baba's Muslim disciples were members of the Chipa, and occupied a middle or lower status group in Muslim society. Isak Chipa and his family, and Mahumud Chipa were among the Muslim disciples in the early years. They became formal *murīds* of Baba after going through the traditional Sufi initiation. In contrast, few Hindu disciples converted to Islam to become *murīds*. Baba's disciples, with no condemnation from Mewar society, formed a cult based on the personal love between the saint and his disciples.

For his disciples, Baba was, above all, a savior in times of emergency, and the bestower of peace of mind. The internal, personal, and absolute love of the disciples for Baba, and Baba's equal affection for them were the basis of the relationship between master and disciple in the Sufi saint's cult of Kapasan. The miraculous powers of Baba, however, were not regarded as so important among the disciples, even though they did not deny his supernatural power.

In the 1940s, as his health began to fail, Baba ordered Mangi Lal to purchase an estate in his (Mangi Lal's) name, in order to construct a *dargāh* after Baba's ascension. According to Baba's will, Mangi Lal was to donate this estate to Baba's granddaughter after Baba's ascension, and the *murīds* were to cooperate in constructing Baba's *dargāh* on the estate. Baba ascended on February 6th (*Safar* 8th, according to the Islamic calendar), 1944.

#### *The construction of the dargāh*

The course of events after Baba's ascension was, however, much different from what he had intended. Immediately after Baba ascended, Mangi Lal refused to transfer his land rights to the Muslims. The construction of the *dargāh* was carried out mainly by the Hindu disciples living in Kapasan. Baba's granddaughter was living far away in Gujarat, and no influential Muslim *murīds* lived in Kapasan as many of them had dispersed due to social instability at the time of Indian Independence.

However, most of the Hindu disciples were concentrated in Kapasan. Not even the Muslims could deny that the Hindu disciples greatly admired Baba, nor could they oppose the construction of the *dargāh* itself as a symbol of faith in Baba.

Hari Ram took the charge of the construction and took up residence near Baba's tomb. At first, the Hindu disciples cooperated with each other in constructing the *mazār sharif*. There are two tombs in the *mazār sharif*. Baba's actual tomb is concealed in a basement room to protect it from pilgrims' comings and goings. On the ground floor there is a copy of Baba's tomb surrounded by silver railings. This double tomb structure is common in the tombs of Muslim nobles and saints.

The 'urs was also started during this period. Although Muslim *murīds* actively participated in the 'urs, it was Hari Ram who executed the most important rituals from the beginning. In the late 1950s, Baba appeared in Hari Ram's dream and instructed him to construct various facilities along with his tomb. Instructions on construction were given by Baba to Hari Ram in his dreams whenever it was necessary. By this time, no one had any doubt that Hari Ram was Baba's closest disciple. The basic construction work finally ended with the completion of the main gate in the mid 1970s.

### *Hindu leadership*

Around the time when the main gate was completed, Muslims living in Kapasan tried to acquire the execution right of the 'urs from Hari Ram, but Hari Ram refused by putting a curse on them. From this time on, Baba's leading Hindu disciples began to acknowledge Hari Ram as their guru. Hari Ram was neither a Sufi saint, nor a Hindu saint of any kind. However, because of his zeal in the construction and administration of the *dargāh*, not to mention his own charismatic personality, he won people's respect as a holy religious leader in this Sufi *dargāh*, even though he was a Hindu.

After the mid 1970s, the *dargāh* cult entered a temporarily stable period under its unique religious leader, Hari Ram. But in the late 80s, the two leading Hindu disciples who had strongly supported the cult passed away one after another. Mangi Lal died in December 1986, not long before the death of Hari Ram in August 1987.

### *Waqf administration*

After the death of Hari Ram, Isak's great-grandson Nisar claimed that the rights of the *dargāh* administration and the execution of the 'urs belonged solely to the family of Chipa based on documents from the 1940s. Since Hari Ram did not name a successor, his two sons and his disciple Devi Lal Ojah stood and fought for the Hindu disciples, claiming their rights in the *dargāh*.

This dispute provisionally ended when Nisar asked the high officials of the Rajasthan government to mediate. The officials consequently approved his appeal, letting the family members of Chipa organize a trust for administering the *dargāh*.

The *waqf* promptly promoted the “Islamization” of the *dargāh*, reconstructing Hari Ram’s residence in the *dargāh* into the *madrassa*, and cutting down the holy Hindu *peepal* and *banyan* trees which Hari Ram had carefully raised.

Although the Hindu disciples lost the administration rights of the *dargāh* and Devi Lal Ojha died in 1989, Devi Lal’s sons have struggled to maintain the Hindus’ faith in this cult. As described in a later chapter, they participate in the secret ritual of the *dargāh*’s annual festival. Moreover, they constructed two mausoleums for Hindu disciples, one for Hari Ram just in front of the *dargāh* of Baba Diwana Shah and the other for Devi Lal in his hometown, in a mixture of Islamic and Hindu styles<sup>7)</sup>. These mausoleums, which are also believed to have supernatural powers to cure illness and grant various wishes, attract large numbers of followers, most of whom are Hindus. Hindu followers of Devi Lal’s hometown in particular have united under the leadership of Devi Lal’s sons to form a cult and support Devi Lal’s sons’ struggle in the *dargāh* of Baba Diwana Shah.

Around 1990 Baba’s granddaughter and her son’s family came from Gujarat to live in the *dargāh*, claiming they had the right to live there freely because of kinship ties with Baba. Her son calls himself a *pīrzāda* (a saint’s holy descendant) of Baba and has occupied several rooms in the lodging area of the *dargāh*. He uses them as his residence and made a *gaddi* (a royal chair that symbolizes succession to the leadership of a cult when one sits on it) in one of the rooms. He presides over rituals as a *pīrzāda* in his own right and has his own *murīds*.

Neither the *waqf* nor the Hindu disciples acknowledge his legitimacy. The committee even, on several occasions, tried to evict them from the *dargāh* by appealing to the police. But Baba’s descendants would not leave the *dargāh* and with support from the *pīrzāda*’s *murīds* they undertook legal proceedings to claim their inheritance rights over the *dargāh*.

At the moment, there are three interest groups claiming to have legitimate administration rights over the *dargāh*. Among the Muslims, one group is comprised of Baba’s descendants and the other of the Chipas. Among the Hindus, Devi Lal’s sons are trying to succeed Hari Ram in authority and leadership of the cult. Their conflict with each other is reflected in the performance of the most important festival of the *dargāh*, called ‘*urs*’.

#### 4 The ‘*urs* at the Baba Diwana Shah’s *Dargāh*

The annual festival is the occasion for commemorating the date of a saint’s ascension into heaven. Sufi followers believe that their saints do not die, so the ascension and the loss of the body mean that the soul of the saint and Allah have become eternally unified. Thus, the anniversary of ascension is a happy event, and this is the reason why this festival is called ‘*urs*’ (which originally meant marriage) in Urdu (Currie 1992: 117).

The 'urs of this particular *dargāh* is held from the third to the tenth of the *Safar* month in accordance with the ascension of Baba Diwana Shah. It is believed that the power of Baba is especially strong during the 'urs, so pilgrims come from all over India, and more than a hundred thousand people visited the festival in the 1990s.

In other *dargāhs* where the authority of the *sajjāda-nashīn* or a *pīrzāda* is established, in principle, all the events at the *dargāh* are presided over by him. In this *dargāh*, however, there is no *sajjāda-nashīn*, and only a few followers acknowledge the legitimacy of the *pīrzāda*, as mentioned above. The son of Baba's granddaughter, calling himself a *pīrzāda*, performs his own rituals only with his followers during the 'urs. For example, he presides over his followers' *chādar charānā* ritual<sup>8</sup>). He also performs his own ritual on the last day of the 'urs in his own room. Since other followers deny his legitimacy as *pīrzāda*, he refuses to participate in any other ritual during the 'urs.

The 'urs opens with the chanting of a passage from the Quran and closes with a ritual called *kul ki fātiha*. Thousands of Muslims, not only from Kapasan but also from all over the Mewar region, participate in the final ritual, emphasizing their brotherhood in the Muslim community. During the 'urs many Islamic religious practices, such as the performance of *namāz*, are held at set times. The *qawwālī* concerts performed by bands from all over India are also held everyday in the *dargāh*. In short, during the festival period, Islamic rituals frame the schedule of the *dargāh*'s events.

At the *dargāh* of Mu'īn al-dīn Chishtī of Ajmer, the most important Sufi shrine in South Asia, the gathering of *qawwālī* is the main function of 'urs, and the seating order at *qawwālī* is a very important issue related to the authority of the mausoleum<sup>9</sup>). In the case of Kapasan's *dargāh*, although the gathering of *qawwālī* is held on a large scale, it is not regarded as the main event of the ceremony, and the seating order has not been an important issue so far. The main event in the Baba Diwana Shah's *dargāh* is a secret ritual, *ghusl ki rasm*, which is executed exactly at the time of Baba's ascension.

The reason for this difference may lie in the fact that there are different matters of concern for the various participants. In the case of the *dargāh* of Mu'īn al-dīn Chishtī, Muslims are dominant in the numbers of pilgrims. Their main concern is to praise the glory of the saints buried in the *dargāh* and to get blessings from those saints. On the other hand, at Kapasan, Hindu and Jain pilgrims outnumber Muslims. They pay little attention to Islamic rituals; their main concern is the supernatural power of Baba's tomb. For Muslims also, the magical power is one of the main reasons to come to the 'urs here.

*Ghusl ki rasm* is the ritual of cleansing the tombstone. Before the cleansing, all the velvet clothes and rose petals that cover the tomb are removed. This is believed to imply symbolically that the body of Baba is naked. So during the ritual of *ghusl ki rasm* the gate of the *mazār sharif* is closed (an exceptional during an 'urs) and

taking part in this ritual is restricted to only a few people.

It is well recognized by the visitors that this is the main event of the '*urs*'. The power of the tomb is believed to be extremely strong just after the cleansing ritual, so although this is carried out in secret from midnight to dawn, many pilgrims gather around the *mazār sharif*, trying to enter it just after the ritual.

All of the rose water used to wash the tombstone is collected and kept by the *waqf*. This is sold or given out upon the requests of followers. The power of Baba is believed to be contained in this water also, so the rose water kept in a bottle would never spoil under any condition, and one sip is believed to heal any disease.

Because the tomb is the new body of the saint who has become unified with a diety, it is believed to have great supernatural power. That power, as examples of healings at the *mazār sharif* demonstrate, is sometimes emitted directly from the tomb. And, as can be seen from the example of the rose water from the *ghusl ki rasm*, it is also believed that the power is contained in objects that have touched the tomb.

Because *ghusl ki rasm* is a ceremony through which people reconfirm that the tomb is the new form of Baba's body and the supernatural power is reproduced by the cleansing of the grave, it is regarded as the central ritual with supreme value in Kapasan's saint's *dargāh* cult. Therefore the person who executes this ritual can simultaneously be the authority who can control the power of the tomb as the source of the *dargāh* cult. Hence, the most important issue of the *dargāh* cult centers on who the main performer of the ritual is.

As mentioned earlier, Hari Ram performed *ghusl ki rasm* when he was alive. Though Mangi Lal and some Chipas also took part in the ritual, they played only assisting roles. As Hari Ram was not a Muslim, he did not recite prayers in accordance with Islamic tradition as at other *dargāhs*, and he only followed the traditional acts of *ghusl ki rasm*. Moreover, after the construction of the *mazār sharif* building was completed, Hari Ram performed that ritual only on the ground floor.

Some Muslims opposed the way Hari Ram carried out the *ghusl ki rasm* because he did not completely follow the Islamic tradition. Some even tried to deprive of him the right to perform the ritual. But no one could contradict Hari Ram's authority, so he continued to perform the ritual until his death.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Devi Lal's sons still participate in *ghusl ki rasm* even under the *waqf*'s administration. At the moment the only persons who can enter into the *mazār sharif* during the *ghusl ki rasm* are Nisar Chipa (the chair of the *waqf*), his uncle Noor Mohammad Chipa, and Jamnesh Ojha and Jai Prakash Ojha who are the sons of the late Devi Lal Ojha. Devi Lal's sons claim that Baba never discriminated against Hindus and that they should be able to observe Hari Ram's traditional acts in this cult.

There is strong opposition among Muslims, especially among those who are eager to make the *dargāh* a pure, orthodox Islamic religious space, to Hindu partici-

pation in *ghusl ki rasm*. Baba's great-grandson is also against Hindu participation. He asserts that while although Hindus should be welcome to visit the *dargāh* as it shows Baba's greatness, the ritual performance should be purely Islamic. He also blames the present *waqf* for their negligence in reciting prayer even at the time of *ghusl ki rasm*. According to him, this shows the *waqf*'s lack of competence and legitimacy.

Nisar agrees to Devi Lal's sons' participation at the moment. He says that he does not want bring the communal disputes into the *dargāh* because Baba Diwana Shah disliked such discrimination based on communal identity and because Hindus' contribution to the *dargāh* should be acknowledged to a certain extent. But he tries to distinguish his way of the ritual process from the way that Devi Lal's sons perform it. That is to say, after the participants cleanse the ground floor together, only the Chipas then go downstairs to the basement to perform additional cleansing. Devi Lal's sons wait for them on the ground floor during the basement cleansing. They maintain that disciples should not cleanse the underground tomb, in accordance with the actions of Hari Ram. But they dare not oppose the Chipas' cleansing of the basement for fear of disturbing the tranquility in the sacred space that their disputes would cause. The Chipas, however, take their acts for granted because the basement tomb is the original and actual tomb.

According to Muslim elders in this region<sup>10</sup>, in this kind of mausoleum it is the custom to cleanse only the replicated tomb on the ground floor. But, in this *dargāh*, strangely enough, it is the Hindus who try to keep the Sufi custom and the Muslims who venture to break it. Let us consider the significance of this later.

There is also a subtle difference in the interpretation of the significance of *ghusl ki rasm* between Nisar and Devi Lal's sons. They agree that the ritual is meant to wash the new body of Baba and to dress it in a new *chādar*. Nisar emphasizes that it is performed to reenact and remember the disciples' action just after the Baba's ascension. Devi Lal's sons, on the other hand, interpret it as a ritual to dress Baba as a bride who is preparing for marriage with Allah. They say that it is like decorating the Hindu statues in their festivals with the tomb being a kind of statue of a god for them. It is Hari Ram who was the guru for them, and Baba is the god that Hari Ram guided them to. For Devi Lal's sons, the nature of faith of the *dargāh* cult is very similar to the *guru bhakti* (saint worship) of Hinduism. So *ghusl ki rasm* is interpreted as a kind of *murti puja* (idol worship) by the Hindu disciples.

A contentious relationship exists between Nisar and Devi Lal's sons not only in regard to *ghusl ki rasm*, but also on at least two other occasions during the '*urs*'. One such occasion is the distribution of food to the visitors. Generally speaking, free meals (called *langar* in Urdu) are served to those who visit the *dargāh* during '*urs*' at the mausoleums of Sufi saints. In the case of this *dargāh*, the custom of *langar* has been kept from the beginning, and the Chipas have taken full responsibility for supplying the food supplies and for cooking. According to Nisar, the Chipas are the



hosts of the *dargāh* in place of Baba, and serving meals to guests is the obligation and right of the hosts.

However, Devi Lal's sons also distribute free meals, for which they have assumed responsibility, to all the visitors just after the opening ritual of the '*urs*'. It is, they insist, the obligation of the real hosts to serve a free meal to the visitors at the beginning of the '*urs*'. They also regard all the pilgrims to the *dargāh* as their personal guests.

The other occasion of contention is the closing ritual, *kul ki fātiha*. One of the main purposes of this ritual is to pray to Allah for Baba's happiness in heaven. The *waqf* expresses their gratitude for the cooperation of the participants and prays for the lasting brotherhood of Muslims on this occasion. Gifts are also given to the *qawwālī* musicians, and many different items are offered to Baba's tomb as wedding gifts; these are distributed to those in attendance afterwards.

Nisar Chipa apparently takes charge over this ritual. He takes a seat in the center of the *māphil khāna* wearing special clothing to preside over the ritual, giving the musicians gifts and distributing items to the followers who gather at the *māphil khāna*.

Devi Lal's sons and other Hindu disciples of Hari Ram do not participate in the distribution of these items. They gather in the room where Hari Ram lived and perform their own ritual. The same items as those in the ritual at the *māphil khāna* are prepared in this room as well. Devi Lal's sons send gifts to the *qawwālī* musicians in Hari Ram's name. They sit in this room while the Muslims perform their ritual. Just after the items are offered from the *māphil khāna* to the Baba's tomb, they offer their own items to Baba and Devi Lal's sons distribute these items to the Hindu disciples.

Moreover, the Baba's great-grandson performs his own ritual in the room with his *gaddi*, where his disciples have gathered. He prays to Allah for Baba's soul and for mercy to his followers and all those in attendance at the *dargāh*. He also distributes items to his disciples after offering them to Baba's photograph hanging on the wall of his room.

It is clear that there are three centers of ritual for *kul ki fātiha*, which reflects the struggle for the legitimate leadership of the cult. None of the contenders have been able to garner a clear hegemony. Indeed, the '*urs*' itself may be seen an arena for struggle for leadership of the cult among the various disciples and followers. Let us turn our attention to the levels of '*urs*' and analyze the dynamics of this struggle.

## 5 Levels of the '*urs*': Multivocal Composition of the Saint's Festival

The '*urs*' of the *dargāh* of Baba Diwana Shah is, on the whole, framed by Islamic religious practice. Various rituals and events, like *qawwālī* or *langar*, are performed according to the Sufi tradition. More basic Islamic practices according

to *shari'at*, such as *namāz*, are also performed. According to van der Veer, at the *dargāh* of Rifa'i school (van der Veer 1992), one of the focal issues among local Muslims is whether or not Sufi practice and belief in supernatural power is truly Islamic. In the case of this *dargāh*, however, the Sufi tradition is considered to be an orthodox Islamic practice. Another focus of the '*urs*, Baba's supernatural power, is also taken for granted.

The belief in the supernatural power of the *pīr's* tomb is based on the desire of laypersons to overcome suffering and problems in their daily lives. Belief in the tomb's supernatural power is also deeply connected with the popular Hindu belief in the Mewar region in spirit possession. Therefore, faith in the tomb's spiritual power transcends the boundaries of religious ideology, and enables various kinds of people from different classes and places to participate equally in its religious practices.

There is no doubt that faith in the spiritual power of a saint's tomb is a common feature among the Indian Sufi *dargāhs*. The belief in the magical power, however, is not entirely related to pure Islamic doctrine. Furthermore, as described above, there are many non-Muslims deeply involved in the tomb cult. Most of them have little interest in Islamic doctrine. They have not even read the Quran. Still, they have played a central role in the tomb's rituals for a long time. So it is accurate to say that belief in the supernatural power of the Baba's tomb is a religious practice that extends well beyond the boundary of Islamic tradition.

In the '*urs* at Kapasan's *dargāh*, we find two levels of religious faith and practices. The belief in the supernatural power and the Islamic faith are not mutually contradictory nor do they form a structure placing one of the faiths at the center and the other at the periphery. They coexist in the *dargāh* space and form multiple centers.

When we look at the participants of the '*urs*, we can also see two levels among them. The difference of levels does not neatly overlap along the lines of religious identity, nor with the two levels of religious faiths and practices mentioned above. Rather it is based on differences in the extent of their involvement with this cult.

On one level there are those who have no personal relationship with Baba and seek only the supernatural power of Baba's tomb. They come to the *dargāh* in order to have their own specific wishes realized. They participate in the ceremony only passively, paying little attention to the performers of the rituals. Therefore, their involvement can be said to be temporary and peripheral. On the other level, there are those who had personal relationship with Baba and are still trying to maintain that relationship. They are small in numbers, but they are the core of this cult in terms of administrating the *dargāh* and organizing the '*urs*. They devote their lives to Baba, believing that Baba's spiritual existence does not merely grant their specific wishes but also guides their lives totally. In this way, their involvement can be considered permanent and central.

Those who are at the core of the cult recognize the relationship between the



center and the periphery as a one-way relationship of giving and receiving. Werbner points out that hierarchical relationships between the center and the periphery of a Sufi cult are continuously recreated by asymmetrical exchanges of gifts in the south Asian Sufi *dargāhs*. The saints (or his successors) are closely identified with Allah, and they play the role of infinite gift giver at the center of the cult (Werbner 1998: 104–105).

In this case as well, the ordinary pilgrims are regarded merely as passive receivers of Baba's boons. On the other hand, those who are jockeying for position at the core of the cult see themselves as the hosts of the mausoleum and givers of hospitality. Baba's supernatural power is also distributed to the pilgrims through them.

The *langar* and distribution of items and gifts at the *kul ki fātiha* can be interpreted as concrete expressions of that self-image. *Ghusl ki rasm* is also an occasion to distribute the supernatural power activated by the ritual cleansing to the pilgrims through the hosts who are the main performers of the ritual.

There are three groups that desire to be the sole core group of the *dargāh* cult as stated earlier, and they are in competition with each other for the leadership of the cult and '*urs*'. As a result, at this time, there is no one person who can execute every ritual of '*urs*' thoroughly and dominate the ritual. Nisar, as the chairman of the *waqf*, is the formal executive of the '*urs*', but cannot expel challengers from the other core groups. The important rituals themselves become the occasions for contests among those competing for leadership of the cult.

Each competing group refuses to accept gifts from the other groups and each claims that they themselves do not demand anything from the *dargāh* and are devoted earnestly to Baba whereas the others are trying to get some profit from the mausoleum through their status. They share the interpretative scheme of the hierarchical relationship at the *dargāh*, but they disagree as to which group should occupy the position of ultimate giver. As no group can seize decisive authority from the other groups, the conflict over sole authority in this *dargāh* cult is in a stalemate for the time being.

## 6 Conclusion: Coexistence and the Contesting of Ritual Practices

Although there are Muslims and Hindus in the core groups of the cult of the *dargāh* of Baba Diwana Shah, the conflict among the core groups cannot be grasped as a communal conflict between different religious identities. The Muslims are not a monolithic group, as Baba's *murīds* and descendants are adamantly opposed to each other. Moreover, even though the Hindu disciples are in competition with the Muslims for the authority of the cult, they are in agreement with Baba's *murīds* in the criticism of Baba's great-grand son based on the belief that he came to this *dargāh* not because of his faith, but because of his greed for honor and treasure in

the *dargāh*.

Certainly, there are criticisms based on the difference of religious identity against Hindus' participation in the most important ritual. Islamization of the *dargāh* space is also proceeding rapidly under the administration of the *waqf*. But criticism and discrimination based on religious identity were invoked under the strong influence of communal politics in the 1990s in order to garner an advantage in the power struggle with the Hindu disciples. Communal division has long been irrelevant to Baba Diwana Shah's cult. Moreover, there are leaders, Nisar Chipa being the most exemplary, who have resisted introducing communal politics into the *dargāh* space.

The conflict among the core groups is perceived as the contest over centrality in the sacred exchange at the time of the *dargāh* festival. This conflict, however, cannot be settled on the basis of how much or how often they can give to others. Because the authority of this cult is based only on the quality of the relationship between Baba and his followers, whoever can show the most devotion in his personal relationship with Baba will be able to win the supreme authority.

As Pinto shows clearly (Pinto 1989), the central theme of Sufi faith consists of divine love conceptualized as a secret, internal and absolute personal relationship between individual disciples and a saint. Emotional experiences, especially love, are ultimately important to Sufi religious practices (Nanda and Talib 1989).

In this case also, the importance of personal love between Baba Diwana Shah and his disciples has been strongly emphasized. A feeling of deep reverence to the saint is an internal matter. But as Baba has passed away, and even though his actual existence is believed to be eternal, there is no one in this world that can appreciate that internal love. Therefore, the depth of the internal affection can only be ascertained by others and only through external actions and behavior. When everyone agrees that a certain person has demonstrated that he has the deepest love for Baba, that person can gain authority in this cult second only to that of Baba.

During the first generation of Baba's disciples, Hari Ram's absolute authority was established. His authority was based on the fact that he was the most beloved disciple of Baba in addition to his absolute commitment to the construction of the *dargāh*. After the second generation, however, few disciples had had a long personal relationship with Baba, so they could only compete with each other through external actions and behavior. In this cult, the space and the means to demonstrate the depth of one's affection lay only the mausoleum and *'urs*. Therefore, the *'urs* becomes the main arena for competition among the core disciples.

Against this background, we can clearly see the reason why the most important ritual, *ghusl ki rasm*, is performed contrary to orthodox Sufi rules while the performers are still trying to follow the traditional order of the ritual.

Devi Lal's sons participate in *ghusl ki rasm* because they are eager to imitate the acts of Hari Ram. As long as they can continue performing Hari Ram's act, they can express their love and respect for Hari Ram as well as for Baba, and as a result,

they can claim authority within the cult. For them, participating in the ritual despite Muslim opposition is the expression of their ultimate affection to their guru that overcomes every kind of obstacle. On the other hand, Nisar must express a deeper love to Baba in another form, in opposition to the Hindus. In this case, the cleansing of Baba's original tomb, which is contrary to the traditional rules, can be interpreted as a way of expressing his unique love to Baba. Devi Lal's sons will never be able to perform that part of the ritual process, because they are trying faithfully to reenact Hari Ram's performance.

For the two groups that are descendants of the disciples, conventional Sufi customs are not something to abide by, but to intentionally violate in order to show their extraordinary love in their relationship with Baba. On the other hand, they can not express their unique love to Baba in a totally unprecedented manner. Because the true object of their love, namely Baba Diwana Shah himself, is no longer in this world, their sincere emotion has to be expressed in a manner that can be recognized by other followers. So these groups are always conscious of the traditional ritual procedures, and at the same time consciously depart from stereotyped ritual behavior. Hence we can grasp the dual structure at the core of the '*urs*', that is, the agents perform their own practices based on their own interpretation, whereas the whole process is framed by traditional ritual procedure.

Baba's great-grandson severely criticizes the violation of traditional prescriptions of *ghusl ki rasm*. He claims the authority of the cult based on a kinship relationship with Baba, following one of the traditional Sufi rules. And he insists that love and respect for Baba can only be expressed through the traditionally prescribed practices. His view corresponds to his conventional claim for authority, and at the same time touches on the inconsistency between the disciples' ritual practices and the tradition. But because he is not a patrilineal descendant of Baba in the strict sense, some Muslims question his legitimacy. He is also at a disadvantage insofar as he is a latecomer to the cult who appeared long after the completion of the *dargāh*. He cannot deny the disciples' distinguished contributions to the *dargāh* cult and their deep love for Baba.

Therefore, none of the three competing core groups, each with their advantages and weak points, can hold decisive dominance over the two other groups. They cannot help co-existing in identical '*urs*' while at the same time competing with each other for the sole leadership of the cult. The reason that various levels of interpretations and practices in the '*urs*' have arisen lies in this intricate three-way deadlock structure at the core of the cult.

The core members cannot separate themselves from the *dargāh* nor give up their competition for the central leadership in the cult. They have their own followers or supporters, and their authority in their own group is based on their position in the *dargāh* itself. While expressing their deep love for Baba in the *dargāh*, at the same time, they also have to keep one eye on securing their own followers' support

in and around the *dargāh*. So they are further impelled to participate in the struggle for central leadership in the *dargāh*.

At Baba Diwana Shah's *dargāh* of Kapasan, coexistence is a synonym for competition, and the various levels of rituals are carried out in a subtle balancing act that involves traditional religious practice, the bestowal of attention on the other followers, and a contest for authority between cult members who are themselves trying to demonstrate their devotion to the saint.

## Notes

- 1) This article is based on the paper which was read at the Annual Meeting of American Folklore Society 2000, Columbus, Ohio. I am deeply obliged to Dr. Susan Wadley who not only invited me to the meeting but also gave useful comments on the initial draft. I am also grateful to anonymous referee of the Bulletin of National Museum of Ethnology for constructive comments.
- 2) The data here are based on my field research carried out intermittently from 1994 to 2000 in the Mewar region. The field research was supported by the grant from the Monbusho International Scientific Research Program. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of the informants in and around the *dargāh* cult in Mewar for their generous support.
- 3) I have considered the relationship between communalism and this *dargāh* cult elsewhere. See Mio 1999 and 2000.
- 4) For more detailed description on history and religious practices of this *dargāh*, see Mio 1999 and 2000.
- 5) Generally speaking, after a Sufi mausoleum develops into a large religious institution, the mausoleum cult separates the functions of authority over religious faith and the administration of property. The former is taken upon by a *sajjāda-nashīn*, and latter is taken upon by the *waqf* if the institution becomes a public trust or by the *mutawallī* if the institution is a private trust. Even if they divide these functions, disputes over the sole authority of the mausoleum cult are quite common among the followers. See Mann, 1989: 164–169.
- 6) This maharaja, Sarup Singh, secretly converted to Islam in his later years and this secret conversion caused a scandal among the Sirohi royal family. See Vidal 1997: 197–199.
- 7) The buildings of these two mausoleums are in Islamic style and the construction of these disciples' tombs was carried out in an Islamic way. But clay figures of the disciples were put at the head of these tombs like statues of Hindu gods and the tombs are called, in Hindi, *samadhis*, which implies these tombs are for Hindu saints and not *mazārs*, a Muslim word for tombs in Urdu. The process and meanings of the construction of these mausoleums are considered in detail in another article by the author (Mio 2002, in Japanese).
- 8) Followers may make a ritual offering of a velvet cloth *chādar* to cover Baba's tomb as a sign of gratitude after their wishes are granted by Baba's miraculous power.
- 9) For the 'urs of the *dargāh* of Mu'in al-dīn Chishī in Ajmer and the importance of *qawwālī* at that *dargāh*, see Currie, 1992: 126–127. For more on the conflict for leadership in this *dargāh*, see Suzuki 1976 (in Japanese).
- 10) Based on an interview in August 2000 with Maulvi Hafiz Njairul Islam, one of leaders of the cult of the *dargāh* of Mastan Baba of Udaipur, and an interview in September 2000 with Liyakat Ali Shah Saheb, the *pīrzāda* of Mehbub Ali Shah Saheb who was said to be the *pīr* of Baba Diwana Shah.

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