

Pakistan's Barelwiyat between Sufislamism and Love for the Prophet

Thomas K. Gugler

*In the defence of Mustafa, you took this stand!
silenced those insulters, throughout the land!
ya Mumtaz Qadiri, the coolness of my eyes;
the prince of Ghawth ul Azam, every Sunni's pride!¹*

The religious teachings of Barelwis traditionally revolve around saints and shrines. Barelwis preach rituals close to folk Islam and pen poetry praising the positive characteristics of pious saints and the Prophet Muhammad. As the Barelwis are the main activists of the South Asian Sufi lobby, American analysts contrast Barelwi-specific peace-loving prophet piety with the neoorthodox agenda of the purist Islamic reform movements like the Ahl-e Hadith or the Deobandi movements. As lovers of the prophet, Barelwis are considered to be emotionally pious, and at the same time staunch and authentic antagonists against the agents of Islamic revival movements for a Salafi-inspired Islamization of Pakistan. However, when the beloved prophet is in debate, Barelwis manage to mobilize with the Sufi symbols and semantics traditionally associated with the pious veneration of Muhammad for quasi-Islamist projects – hence the term *Sufislamism*, which shall be used here to critically discuss several ambiguities inherent in the classical categories used to classify Islamic religiosities.

Pakistan is the first country to be created as a home for Muslims. The Islamic Republic has the fastest growing nuclear arsenal in the world and is currently home to the world's second largest Muslim population, which in another two decades may well become the largest. Pakistan is commonly considered the most dangerous country in the world today (Riedel 2011) and since 2008 the nuclear power ranks amongst the *top ten* of the worldwide *Failed State Index*,² at times seemingly poised to become a jihadist enclave. A recent *GlobeScan* survey carried out for the *BBC World Services* drastically demonstrates the dramatic dimension of the international concern over the negative impact of Pakistan in the world today: South Korea, Italy, Brazil, Spain, France and Germany are among the countries, where people responded estimating that Pakistan was even worse than the already quite negative responses gathered from India. Germany was in the first position. The negative image people in Germany have of Pakistan is due to the seemingly close relation between Pakistan and radical militant Islam. In the current debate on violent political Islam, in particular in the Anglo-Saxon discourse, Islamist hardliners are often contrasted to Sufis, who are portrayed as

¹ Na't by Da'wat-e Islami activists praising the murderer of the Punjab governor Salman Taseer.

²http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/21/2010_failed_states_index_interactive_map_and_rankings (accessed 1 March 2011).

positive examples for Muslim piety. Some commentators sometimes describe these peace-loving Muslims as a minority within the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. This article attempts to challenge the limits of this theory and discusses among other things the political phenomenon of Sufi piety, deconstructing the assumed dichotomy between the Islam classificatory general terms Sufism and Islamism. The term *Sufislamism* shall be used to introduce the problems of classification and describe the ambiguities implicated in a binary understanding of Sufism and Islamism.

Conflicts of religious denominations in Pakistan

The subcontinent hosts a comparably high diversity of religious groups, movements and communities with tradition-specific and to some extent highly professional networks of scholars (Malik 2009). Although Pakistan is home to an extraordinary high number of Islamic groups and movements, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan traditionally portrays itself as a religiously homogeneous country. Hence there are no official records about the sectarian affiliations of the 170 Muslims in Pakistan. The last census conducted in 1998 pronounce that more than 96 percent of the population were Muslims.³ Following a constitutional amendment in 21 September 1974, the believers in the Islamic reform movement Ahmadiyya founded in Qadian in 1889 are not considered Muslims as they do not recognise the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad.⁴ The Ahmadiyya are one of the most persecuted religious minorities in Pakistan as indicated by the attacks on two Ahmadiyya mosques in Lahore on 28 May 2010 which killed 93 people.

It is estimated that about 75-80 percent of the Muslim population are Sunnis and around 15-20 percent are Shiites. The Sunnis comprise the Barelwis (70 percent), the Deobandis (20 percent), the Ahl-e Hadiths (app. 5 percent), and the modernists, for example the followers of the Islamist party *Jama'at-e Islami* founded by the Islamist mastermind Abu-I A'la Mawdudi (1903-1979).

At the same time, a majority of Muslims consider themselves only as Muslim and the theological differences of interpretation between specific schools of thought are often peripheral in everyday life. As government agencies in Pakistan started to increasingly cooperate with specific sects in order to mobilize for support for government actions against radical elements in the last two years, the number of intra-Sunni sectarian conflicts has increased dramatically.

³ See http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/statistics/other_tables/pop_by_religion.pdf (accessed 1 March 2011).

⁴ See <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/amendments/2amendment.html> (accessed 1 March 2011).

Neofundamentalism & Neobarelwiyat

The two largest Sunni schools of thought (Urdu: *maktab-e fikr*) in South Asia are the Barelwis and the Deobandis. These two rival Islamic reformist movements compete with each other for members, resources, authority and influence in society. The Deobandi reformist movement originated in 1866 from the seminary (*dar ul-ulum*) founded in the North Indian town of Deoband. The Deobandis consider the attribution of superhuman characteristics to the prophet a kind of polytheism (*shirk*). They deny the prophet any ability of intercession as only Allah is worthy of worship. The *Taliban* and lay preachers of the *Tablighi Jama'at* are considered close to Deobandi beliefs.

Around 1880, a counter-reformist movement began that centered around Ahmad Riza Khan (1856-1921) from Bareilly (Sanyal 2011). In the late nineteenth century, theological debates revolved around questions of the qualities of the prophet Muhammad. Many South Asian Muslims believed that Muhammad had his own natural light (*nur-e muhammadi*) created before creation, that he was omnipresent and witness to everything (*hazir-o nazir*), infallible and omniscient (*ilm-e ghaib*) and that there is no way to Allah except through his intercession (*wasila*) (Sanyal 1996). These beliefs stressed the celebration of the prophet's birthday (*milad al-nabi*) as well as other rituals of Muhammad and saint veneration. Till today Barelwi religious practices revolve around *pirs* (saints) and their *dargahs* (shrines). Since 1880 a specific tradition of mistrust and hatred developed between agents of the Deobandi and Barelwi school of thought.

For the Deobandis, the Barelwis seemed to be supporters of innovations (*bidatis*), while for Barelwis, the Deobandis seemed like *Wahhabis* whose denial of the superhuman powers of the prophet amounted to blasphemy:

“Our hatred and our disgust for the Deobandi-ulama is due to their shocking words and acts of blasphemy, it is an obligation of our faith and will remain alive as long as we are alive.”⁵

Both Sunni reform movements gave birth to specific missionary organizations and movements for faith revival, which function as the *New Religious Right*. The central neofundamentalist movement within Barelwiyat is *Da'wat-e Islami*, a missionary movement founded in 1981 in Karachi (Gugler 2011[a]). The Deobandi missionary movement *Tablighi Jama'at* and its Barelwi counter-organization *Da'wat-e Islami* radically individualize Islamic piety and constantly send their lay preachers systematically for example to state-run jails and hospitals to recruit.⁶ Characteristic of these neodenominational special-identities is the rather emotional feeling of being part of the threatened minority of *real Muslims* as well as the fundamentally paranoid perception that true Islamic beliefs

⁵ Al-Qadiri 1993: 22 (own translation).

⁶ <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/pakistan-news/Regional/Karachi/01-Apr-2011/Convert-or-go-to-hell-tablighis-tell-nonMuslim-patients-at-govt-hospitals> (accessed 1 March 2011).

and symbols need to be protected from being besmirched and used by pseudo- or semisecular *Friday-* or *Ramadan-Muslims*. This modernity-specific radical individualization of *piety of action* is increasingly staged in public spaces and results in phenomena resembling militant agents (cf. Metcalf 2009: 243).

Pakistan playing the Sufi card: *State-sponsored Sufism in practice*

As Sufi-representatives of folk-religious pleasures of plurality, Barelwis are considered in practice relatively moderate and significantly more peaceful. Hence Pakistan focused on the Sufi alliance to mobilize for support for the war on terror following the advice given by American analysts. An oft-cited security analysis of the *RAND Corporation* on civil democratic Islam advised unambiguously: „Encourage the popularity and acceptance of Sufism“.⁷ As intra-Islamic antagonists of the Deobandis, the Sufis were portrayed as the potential enemies of Islamists.⁸ Several similar analyses followed and repeated this interpretation, advising the Pakistani government in the war on Taliban-like extremist elements to actively support the revival of the traditional diversity and plurality of Pakistan’s Islamic landscape and dramatically increase the leverage and attention provided to Sufi agents.⁹

WORDE’s security analysis (Mirahmadi et.al. 2010) drastically pushed for alliances with Barelwi institutions, and advocated generous financial support. During May 2009, several Barelwi organizations came together under the *Sunni Ittehad Council* to fight Talibanization by launching the *Save Pakistan Movement*. In June 2009, the parliament founded the *Sufi Advisory Council* to limit the mobilization potential of radical elements (Eteraz 2009).¹⁰

Due to these and other reasons, the *Tahrik-e Taliban Pakistan* intensified attacks against popular Sufi shrines. On 1 July 2010 two suicide bombers attacked the *dargah* Data Darbar of the 11th century saint Ali Hujwiri in Lahore killing 45 people. The security cameras show that the attackers were dressed in the *madani libas* of the Barelwi *Tablighi Jama’at Da’wat-e Islami*, which is co-administrating the shrine.¹¹ On 03 April 2011 a similar attack by two suicide bombers took place against the shrine at the grave of the 13th century Sufi saint Ahmad Sultan alias Shakhi Sarwar in the district of Dera Ghazi Khan, where at least 49 people were killed. Several smaller terrorist attacks – for example the suicide attack at the shrine of Abdullah Shah Ghazi in Karachi on 07 October 2010, killing nine, and the explosion at the shrine Ganjshakar of Baba Farid, killing four, in the same month

⁷ Benard 2003: xii.

⁸ Vgl. http://www.economist.com/node/12792544?story_id=12792544 (accessed 10 April 2011).

⁹ <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2009/05/Reviving-Pakistans-Pluralist-Traditions-to-Fight-Extremism> (accessed 10 April 2011).

¹⁰ <http://archives.dawn.com/archives/76869> (accessed 10 April 2011).

¹¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10483453> (accessed 10 April 2011).

– went practically unreported in the Western media.¹²

Fundamentals of Sufislamism: The politics of exclusive love for the prophet

The rather emotional Barelwi lovers of the prophet are – compared to the more neoorthodox purists from Deoband – relatively apolitical, moderate and peaceful. Occasionally, however, a Barelwi-specific dynamic of mobilization flares up that reaches a remarkable dramatic magnitude. The flaring up of Barelwi protests usually takes place after an alleged sacrilege against the prophet Muhammad. The Deobandis react in a significantly more relaxed or unemotional manner as they consider the prophet equal to any human being, who once his message is conveyed has no super-human relevance anymore. The Barelwis, however, consider the prophet Muhammad crucial to individual salvation as he is the only intermediary to Allah. Hence, the recognition of Muhammad's special position, is for Barelwis a key element of the denominational-specific Islamic identity, as: „*Loyalty to Allah is useless without Love for the Prophet.*”¹³ „*It has become crystal clear that any person who holds somebody dearer than the Prophet (saw) is not a Muslim at all.*”¹⁴

When the respect towards the prophet becomes a matter of debate, Barelwis mobilize with Islamic rhetoric and symbols in mass political protests, which much resemble those of classical Islamists, but the numbers involved in these are more impressive.

Since the highly ambiguous phenomenon of the politicization of exclusive love for the prophet cannot be seriously analyzed within the dichotomy of Sufism and Islamism if both are considered a pair of opposites, I recommend the term *Sufislamism* here. This specific form of quasi-political mobilization for Sufi projects can be described analytically as a complement to classical Islamism or as Cryptoislamism or Sufislamism (cf. Phillipon 2004 and 2006). Groups like the *Da'wat-e Islami* evoke Sufi identity to mobilize for quasi-Islamist projects. On such occasions, the claim to build the ideal Utopian Islamic ethos society of Madina within one's own neobrotherhood is carried into the public sphere. More often than the *Da'wat-e Islami*, its militant splinter group *Sunni Tahrik*, the Sunni organization, organizes public urban mass rallies. Barelwis massively protested for example against Salman Rushdie after the debate on the *Satanic Verses* (Modood 1990, Werbner 2008: 10-11). They organized mass demonstrations after the *Regensburg lecture* of Pope Benedict XVI in September 2006, as well as after the *cartoon affair* (Blom 2008). During the Gulf crisis Barelwis supported Saddam Hussein as it was felt that he had limited the influence of Saudi Wahhabism (Werbner 1996:

¹² <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2030741,00.html> (accessed 10 April 2011).

¹³ Raza Khan 1996: 13.

¹⁴ Raza Khan 1996: 15.

110). Another example for Sufislamism would be the allegedly *al-Qa'ida* aide Barelwi Shaykh Mubarak Ali Gilani (Werbner in print).

The most recent significant example of Sufislamism in practice is the debate on the blasphemy laws.

Paragraph 295-C on “prophet sacrilege” in Pakistan

According to paragraph 2 of the constitution, Islam is the state religion of Pakistan. The blasphemy law aims to safeguard Islamic authority. As one of the harshest blasphemy laws in the world it mandates death penalty for any detractor of the prophet. For the imposition of the death penalty in a court of justice, one Muslim accuser and witnesses of the same faith are sufficient. This rather uncomplex procedure makes the blasphemy paragraph 295-C a simple and favored method in particular against “unbelievers”.

Specified under § 295 of the Pakistan Penal Code it reads:¹⁵

“295-A. Deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs:

Whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the 'religious feelings of any class of the citizens of Pakistan, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations insults the religion or the religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, or with fine, or with both.

295-B. Defiling, etc., of Holy Qur'an:

Whoever willfully defiles, damages or desecrates a copy of the Holy Qur'an or of an extract therefrom or uses it in any derogatory manner or for any unlawful purpose shall be punishable with imprisonment for life.

295-C. Use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet:

Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine."

In the narrow sense the term *blasphemy law* refers only to paragraph 295-C, which refers to disrespect against the prophet. It is the only paragraph that is independent from the intention (!) – mandating of among other things the death penalty. The death penalty was introduced as an alternative to imprisonment for life only in 1984 during the rule of the military dictator Zia ul-Haq. This was a period in the history of Pakistan that was characterized by the despairing search for legitimacy following the liberation war of East-Pakistan in 1971, which (West-)Pakistan lost resulting in secession and a sudden significant reduction of Pakistan's population to less than the half. The country's geopolitical weight was minimized dramatically and furthermore the events were understood as an enormous psychological defeat against the significantly more successful democratic nation of India. Zia ul-Haq's reaction to the *Islamic Revolution* in Iran was to transform Sunni Islam in Pakistan into practically a religion of law. In 1991, the *Federal Shariat Court* limited the

¹⁵ <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/legislation/1860/actXLVof1860.html> (accessed 15 April 2011)

range of tolerance for the punishment (imprisonment for life or death penalty) drastically and ruled that the death penalty was the punishment for blasphemous words. That means that whoever is held guilty for blasphemy according to paragraph 295-C by any Muslim judge was - whether or not the conviction included an additional fine – automatically on death row.¹⁶

The only thing that remained of the traditional tolerance of ambiguity was the timing of execution of the death penalty, i.e. in practice most people sentenced to death remained arrested until they either died in prison or were killed by hidden hands in jail.

Pakistan is very serious about this law: In May 2010, Pakistan blocked access to *Facebook* after a call for an *Everybody Draw Muhammad Day* was posted. In June 2010, the Pakistani state began to monitor search results of among others *Google*, *Yahoo*, *MSN*, *Hotmail*, *YouTube* and *Bing* – and block them in case the contents were considered offensive to Muslims.¹⁷

Since 1999, Pakistan annually submits a resolution against defamation of religion at the *United Nations Human Rights Council* in Geneva, calling for worldwide political action against Islamophobia. In 2010, France strongly criticized the Islamophobia resolution. In March 2011, the UNHRC decided to declare religious believers worthy of protection instead of religious beliefs.

But in Pakistan there are more severe problems than Islamophobia:

Since 1986, more than 1,000 people have been convicted on the basis of paragraph 295-C – about half of them were non-Muslims, and they make up less than 3 % of the general population of Pakistan. The sheer figures alone suggest that the blasphemy law is indeed deployed abusively as a blunt instrument during sundry conflicts against religious minorities. The largest group of people sentenced to death for alleged blasphemy have been Christians and their advocates argued that in all cases, the conflicts were motivated by economic interests or neighborly tiffs. It is of particular interest that until now not a single death penalty was executed – however 30 people convicted for this crime were murdered during their detention by unknown agents (cf. Imhasly 2011).

The last death sentence that was taken up by the media was the suit against the Christian farm worker Asiya Nurin, who became famous in the media under the name Asia Bibi. She is a 45 year old mother of five children from the district Shaikhupura. The cause of the dispute was the sharing of water from a village well, which the other female farm workers of the neighborhood didn't want to furthermore share with the Christian farm worker, who was considered *Islamic impure*. A week after this dispute, in June 2009, some women went to the local police station and reported that Asiya had uttered insulting words against the prophet Muhammad during the dispute at the well. Asiya was arrested when police forces had to protect her life from an angered mob, which was beating up her as well as her family members. After having spent a year in jail all authorities up to the Supreme

¹⁶ <http://www.pakistannews.net/story/492878> (accessed 15 April 2011).

¹⁷ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10418643> (accessed 10 April 2011).

Court endorsed the punishment for her alleged crime: Death by hanging. In November 2010 she was the first woman in Pakistan finally convicted of blasphemy, sentenced to death and ordered to pay a fine of 300.000 PKR (about 2400,- EUR).¹⁸



Asiya Bibi in uniform in a picture circulated by her family.

The verdict was criticized internationally, among others by Pope Benedict XVI and *Human Rights Watch*. The governor of Punjab was seriously concerned about the international outcry and started thinking publicly about a change in the law to prevent the misuse of falsely accusing someone. This by itself became his death sentence. But first a short note on his background:

Salman Taseer was born on 31 May 1944, the son of the intellectual and close friend of Iqbal Dr. Muhammad Din Taseer and Bilqis Taseer, who is the sister of the widow of the famous Urdu poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz. He was a classmate of Nawaz Sharif and graduated as an accountant in London. Until his brutal murder on 04 January 2011 he was an amazingly successful and well loved leader (<http://www.salmaantaseer.com/> [10.05.2011]): He was CEO of *First Capital Securities Corporation* and *Worldcall Group* and one of the most important politicians in Pakistan. Since May 2008 he was governor of Punjab, the largest, most populated and economically most important of the four provinces of Pakistan. As member of the *Pakistan People's Party* he was not only a close confidant of Benazir Bhutto, but also served as a minister under Pervez Musharraf and Muhammad Mian Soomro. He owned the newspaper *Daily Times* and the English news channel *Business Plus* as well as Pakistan's first kid's channel *Wikkid Plus*. He is father to seven children, borne by three women. Furthermore he authored the political biography of Bhutto (Taseer 1979).

¹⁸ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/family-leads-outcry-at-blasphemy-death-penalty-2135011.html> (accessed 15 April 2011).

Readers of novels may know Salman Taseer from the international *bestseller* written by his son Aatish Taseer, who was born in London in 1980. Aatish is living in New Delhi and in 2009 he authored a travel novel critical of Islam. It described his search for an Islamic identity as he travelled from Istanbul via Mecca and Damascus to Lahore, where he finally met his father Salman. The book *Stranger to History: A Son's Journey through Islamic Lands* was heavily criticized by Muslims in South Asia, especially in Pakistan. It draws a pretty negative image of his father Salman Taseer and Islam in general – as Islam remains something for Aatish deeply connected with the feeling of the absence of his father. His mother, Tavleen Singh, an Indian journalist in New Delhi, who met Salman Taseer during a promotion tour for his Bhutto biography, started to publish anti-Islamic commentaries after the affair failed (titles of her publications include: *The myth of moderate Islam*, or: *Why its Islam vs. the rest of the world*, etc.). She is considered by many Indians as a local version of the Islamophobic Italian writer Oriana Fallaci.

*“My resolve is so strong that I do not fear the flames
from without, I fear only the radiance of the flowers,
that it might burn my garden down.”*

(Urdu poetry by Shakil Badayuni as ultima vox: Last Tweet of Salman Taseer)

The death sentence for the successful liberal politician Salman Taseer was due to his criticism of the conviction of the Christian farm worker Asiya. He proposed an additional law that would rule out misuse and false allegations of blasphemy. According to media reports he allegedly referred to the blasphemy law as the *black law* (Urdu: *kala kanun*). On 04 January 2011, in broad daylight his bodyguard shot him from behind. The elite police officer Malik Mumtaz Qadiri riddled him with 26 bullets from his Sub-Machine Gun (SMG) at the elitist Kohsar market, which is highly popular among diplomats, in the military dominated sector F6 of Pakistan's capital Islamabad.

Sufi Mullahs, sacrilege terrorism and martyr competition: Heroic deaths are not enough

For observers even more alarming than the hideous dastardly shooting of the unarmed from behind however was the way his murderer made a sudden career as prophet-pious national hero after his public avowal of being a lover of the prophet Muhammad. This was one of the few historical moments which left even senior and sophisticated experts speechless: At one blow Pakistan's civil society seemed muzzled. News commentators and politicians seemed scared to mourn (cf. Tandler 2011) and even President Asif Ali Zardari entrenched himself during the following days in a private residence in Karachi, full of fear of his own elite police forces and bodyguards. Pakistan prostrated frozen in fear before the formerly highly praised lovers of plurality and apparently peace-loving moderate Sufis, who gloatingly celebrated their victory over the political elite in public. The Barelwis

interpreted the governor's critique of the misuse of the blasphemy law as an attempt to legalize blasphemy – and even lawyers showered rose petals on the murderer.

The staging of the arrest of Mumtaz Qadiri in particular deserves increased attention: His fans blocked the police convoys that were to bring him to the anti-terrorism court in Rawalpindi, decorating his car with rose petals, honoring him with flower garlands, kissing him and applauding frenetically while he gave a speech in front of the court on the state of religion in the nation.

Unlike after the killing of Benazir Bhutto, not Salman Taseer, but his living murderer became a martyr.¹⁹ The president of the *Jama'at-e Islami* in Sindh, Asadullah Bhutto, immediately declared after being informed about the attack: „*Whoever has killed him is a pious man and will go directly to the seventh heaven.*“

Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani explicitly reaffirmed on 12 January 2011 that there would be no change of, or additional paragraph to 295-C limiting potential misuse. Other party members of the PPP issued equally uncooperative statements. Aitzaz Ahsan, former president of the *Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan* and a senior leader of the PPP, declared that the blasphemy law would remain intact the way it is and “*if Punjab Governor Salmaan Taseer committed any mistake or blasphemy, instead of killing him he should have been punished under the law of the country.*”²⁰

The Minister of Justice – also a PPP politician – had already issued a statement that there wouldn't be any amendment or rectification of the blasphemy law during his term in office.

In vain one searches for any critics of the blasphemy law in Pakistan. From exile in Malaysia, TV preacher Javed Ahmad Ghamidi stated from a secure distance, that Pakistan's blasphemy laws were man-made and had no justification in Islam, neither in the Qur'an nor in the Hadith.²¹

Salman Taseer's murderer was his 26 year old bodyguard, Mumtaz Qadiri, who had been serving since 2006 as a police officer and since 2008 as an agent of the *Elite Forces* in Rawalpindi. He was a follower of the Barelwi missionary movement *Da'wat-e Islami* and he regularly visited its mosque center, the *Faizan-e Madina* in Pindi.²² Mumtaz Qadiri was no socially isolated religious fanatic. He had nine siblings, was married and four months prior to the attack he became father of a son. He lived with his family in a three-storied house in *Muslim Town*, Rawalpindi. Pakistani authorities did not classify him as a religious extremist – to the contrary they praised his level of cooperation and

¹⁹ <http://pakteahouse.net/2011/01/11/bilawal-bhuttos-speech-on-salmaan-taseers-murder/> (accessed 10 April 2011).

²⁰ <http://pakteahouse.net/2011/01/11/ghar-ko-aag-lag-gayee-ghar-kay-chiragh-say/> (accessed 10 April 2011).

²¹ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/20/islam-ghamidi-pakistan-blasphemy-laws> (accessed 18 April 2011).

²² <http://www.dawn.com/2011/01/05/assassin-linked-with-dawat-i-islami-2.html> (accessed 18 April 2011).

declared that he was not tortured *third grade* as he willingly explained the details of the events.²³ He never attended any *madrasa*, had relationships with girls, enjoyed visiting shrines of popular Sufi saints, and regularly participated in the weekly mosque programs of the local branch of the *Faizan-e Madina* chain run by *Da'wat-e Islami* – an organization that had not till then attracted attention due to militant activities.



The political Barelwi party Sunni Tahrik honors Mumtaz Qadiri in a public mass rally through Karachi.

More than 800 lawyers offered to defend Mumtaz Qadiri free of cost – as courts have become public stages of new dramatic cultural wars in which religious agents fight for legal positions and interpretations in line with their religious ideals and ideas.²⁴ Immediately several websites in Urdu and English appeared online – his fan page on *Facebook* attracted more than 2000 friends within the first 24 hours, but was deleted by the company (currently online is for example: <http://mumtazqadri.net> [31.03.2011]).

Over 500 Barelwi scholars quickly signed a statement paying rich tributes to Mumtaz Qadiri and urging Muslims to boycott the funeral ceremony for Salman Taseer.²⁵ The Barelwis, close to Sufism, now agitated much more radically than the neoorthodox Deobandis. The official umbrella

²³ <http://old.thenews.com.pk/10-01-2011/ethenews/t-3213.htm> (accessed 18 April 2011).

²⁴ Cf. Graf 2006: 12.

²⁵ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/99313/hardline-stance-religious-bloc-condones-murder/> (accessed 18 April 2011).

organization of the different Barelwi organizations and movements, the *Jama'at-e Ahl-e Sunnat Pakistan*, used all its religious authority to call for collective support for escalation of militancy: “No Muslim should attend the funeral or even try to pray for Salman Taseer or even express any kind of regret or sympathy over the incident. (...) We pay rich tributes and salute the bravery, valour and faith of Mumtaz Qadiri.” The name of the murderer was highly honored in this statement with the use of additional titles like *Ashiq-e Rasul* (lover of the prophet) and *Ghazi-ye Mulk* (conqueror of the country) – Mumtaz became ennobled as a national heroic warrior in the war against the world of unbelief.²⁶

Mawlana Shabbir, central executive committee member of the political Barelwi party JUP (*Jamiat Ulama-e Pakistan*), even went as far as considering Salman Taseer a *Wajib ul-Qatal* (must be killed according to the divine law) as „he had called the divine law of God a black law and tried to protect a condemned blasphemer“.

Senior Barelwi leader and co-author of the infamous Barelwi fatwa-like statement Hajji Mohammad Tayyab, secretary general of the *Sunni Ittehad Council*, openly threatened politicians publicly in the daily *The Express Tribune* as he “repeatedly urged the president, prime minister and Governor Taseer himself that if their knowledge about the blasphemy law are limited, they should consult them and avoid debating over the issue as it would inflame the people and then anything could happen.”

Self-chosen grandiosities & self-chosen traumata: The prophet as selfobject

The popular dynamics of this attack cannot be explained through the debate for sovereignty of interpretation of the religion of laws, but should instead be understood as a narcissistic mortification, and the Barelwis understand the sacrileges of the prophet in this manner. Pakistan’s contemporary modernity provides Muslims with relatively few resources for national or ethnic pride. Filial love for the prophet for the selfobject Muhammad compensates for a myriad fears that center around one apocalyptic war of existence for the highly dichotomized primacy for Islam. In psychoanalytical terms, the prophet is for Pakistan as a national *nurturing father* the central selfobject and figure of identification - for Barelwis furthermore he has become even a role model – and he is intrapsychically positively associated with feelings of self-worth. The basic dynamics of any debate of the prophet in Pakistan is characterized by a deeply paranoid pathological mistrust, which is rooted in the narcissistic dependency on the prophet Muhammad. The depressing *overall feeling* of inferiority or the perception of being victims individually or collectively in the dominant discourse is compensated with a self-referential grandiosity by identification with the prophet as the omnipotent object that completes the self. This explains the immense collective energy and the moral imperative

²⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgbwAfdKE78> (accessed 18 April 2011).

for narcissistic rage and the need for revenge against the dominant establishment (cf. Terman 2010). Kohut (1973 and 1977) distinguishes three basic selfobject functions or relational needs with a figure of identification: i) need for mirroring, ii) need for idealization, and iii) need for twinship. Not only are ideas of self-worth and corporate feelings provided for amongst the relational needs, but also the adequate techniques to deal with aggressive and libidinous drives. Destruction is for Kohut the result of a threatened dissolution of self-coherence due to a feared potential disruption of the relation between self and selfobject. Selfobject-relational needs are common and human, but according to Kohut usually refer to other humans. Selfobject-relations with a super-human component are a specifically religious phenomenon – and among Barelwis potentially more common than among Deobandis. Processes of super-humanization, however, are just one side of the coin of dehumanization: The endeavor by the side of Pakistani government agencies to manipulate its population by mobilizing feelings of inferiority against the USA (as done in the drone attacks debate), aimed to bring different segments of society in line or prevent the collapse of the society, could hence prove to be highly counterproductive for the political elite in Pakistan: The grandiose self heals narcissistic traumas via narcissistic rage.

Blasphemy & bigotry

Ironically it was the Muslims from India, fifty in number, who collectively penned an open letter to the *amir* of *Da'wat-e Islami*, Mawlana Ilyas Qadiri, attacking him for not denouncing the killing of Salman Taseer.²⁷ Citing poetry praising the prophet (Urdu: *na't*), and lauding Muhammad's merciful character, the letter cleverly argues its case. The cited poetry includes a line frequently aired via the Television channel of *Da'wat-e Islami, Madani Channel*:²⁸

Salam us par ke jis ney zakhm kha kar phool barsaye!

Salute to the prophet who showered flowers even on those who inflicted wounds on him!

The letter cites several occasions when the prophet Muhammad pardoned his opponents or even prayed for them. In this statement, the *Da'wat-e Islami* assassin Mumtaz Qadiri is portrayed as the outright antithesis of the prophet Muhammad.

But neither the *Da'wat-e Islami* as an apolitical organization, nor the family of Mumtaz Qadiri dissociated from each other. In fact, the followers of *Da'wat-e Islami* pretty much favored their new position as the lions of Islam and protectors of the prophet in Pakistan's public sphere. In internet

²⁷http://www.twocircles.net/2011jan12/killing_salman_taseer_open_letter_mawlana_ilyas_qadri.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed:+Twocirclesnet-IndianMuslim (accessed 10 April 2011).

²⁸ <http://www.epakistannews.com/indian-muslims-question-pak-cleric%E2%80%99s-silence.html> (accessed 10 April 2011).

fora and the new social media like *Facebook* lay preachers enthusiastically published poetry praising Mumtaz Qadiri.

A brother of Mumtaz Qadiri, who is also a follower and disciple (*murid*) of *Da'wat-e Islami's* amir Mawlana Ilyas Qadiri, gave many interviews to journalists at the *Faizan-e Madina* in Rawalpindi during the weeks following the assassination.

In Pakistan ironically it was the Islamist party *Jama'at-e Islami*, which distanced itself from the Barelwi interpretation of the events – blaming only America for putting pressure on Salman Taseer to step up for a change of the blasphemy laws. The ultraconservative Deobandi scholar Mufti Naim, director of the highly influential *Jamia Binoria*, while confirming the correctness of the blasphemy laws declared that Mumtaz Qadiri was very wrong as no one had the right to take the law into his hands: „*The blasphemy law was made exactly to prevent such incidents. Else there will be chaos in the country and everyone would kill everyone.*”²⁹

The Mumtaz Qadiri “case”, however, is not only a turning point for the public opinion about the *Da'wat-e Islami*, which the Pakistani state – following advice from Washington – has supported and protected as it was considered apolitical and having a deradicalizing effect on Muslims, but also and in particular for the police and security agencies – which have to face new domestic problems with an increased level of alertness.

The Washington based *think tank* WORDE (*World Organization for Resource Development and Education*) invited a Barelwi delegation to America in April 2010. WORDE strongly advised American decision makers to broadly support Barelwiyat in Pakistan. Among other things, their security analysis states (throughout the report Barelwis are referred to as ASJ, i.e. *Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah*): „*ASJ leaders are naturally positioned to counter radical ideologues but they need international support and recognition.*” (Mirahmadi et.al. 2010: 22). After elaborating a whole series of reasons of why the Barelwis are the perfect partners for the communication and implementation of American interests in Pakistan, the recommendations for establishing alliances specify:

*„The ASJ needs programming support for events, campaigns and conferences which speak out against terrorism (...) ASJ educational institutions need to expand their capacity to provide quality education. They need financial assistance to upscale existing institutions to provide secular education, vocational training, as well as religious and ethics education for the general population. (...) The international donor community should provide technical assistance to ASJ institutions so they can learn how to maximize their effect in spreading the message of moderation and denouncing terrorism across Pakistan and internationally (e.g. communications training, media support, etc.).”*³⁰

“Across Pakistan more generally, it is also important to note that many of the ASJ institutions lack international standards of excellence because of financial limitations

²⁹ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/99313/hardline-stance-religious-bloc-condones-murder/> (accessed 10 April 2011).

³⁰ Mirahmadi et.al. 2010: 22.

and a lack of exposure to proper training and capacity building. International donors should be advised of these limitations and should work to strengthen their core abilities because of their massive grassroots appeal and credibility.”³¹



The Faizan-e Madina in Pindi was opened in 2002 by Mawlana Ilyas Qadiri (Gugler 2011[a]: 325).



In the associated Madrasat al-Madina 175 students were taught during my visit in 2008.

³¹ Mirahmadi et.al. 2010: 23.

Terrorist attacks against and target killings of politicians are not new phenomena in Pakistan. The assassination of the high-profile politician Salman Taseer, however, does display a new quality, raising several important questions on morals, work ethics and infiltration of extremist elements within security agencies.³² The case drastically discloses the urgent desideratum to have analytically more qualified observers of prophet-wars as *“the academic discourse as well as the political establishments display several serious shortcomings regarding the expertise in plurality and sensitivity for otherness.”*³³

Barelwi scholars were at no time less radical in their judgments of contemporary individuals and societies than the Deobandis – however the focus of professionals as well as public attention revolved considerably more around the colorful saints and their blessings. The British Barelwi expert Pnina Werbner had already criticized in 2003 the public perception of Barelwiyat as being one-sided with emphasis on popular saints while the voices of the religious scholars remained largely unheard by analysts:

*„While the maulvi preaches, the pir blesses. Perhaps for this reason the ulama may well prefer saints who are safely interred in their graves. There is also a difference in tone and ideology between saint and maulvi. Whereas Barelvi ulama are strident and militant, advocating Islamic radicalism and revolution, saints are soft spoken and peace promoting. (...) This stridency of the Barelvi ulama stems from the intercalary position they occupy in the Sufi cult system, placed in the middle between saints and followers. This is particularly true of the more educated ulama who hold important positions in major mosques or educational institutions and political organisations. The ulama compensate for the weakness of their authority through their strident tones. Their militancy is also for this reason, however, utopian and millenarian rather than practical. At the urd it is almost impossible even for a native Urdu speaker to understand parts of the ulama’s speeches, once they take off in flight.”*³⁴

Written statements, however, usually do not lack any explicitness.

Shortly after the attack against the liberal governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer, another politician concerned about potential misuse of the blasphemy laws feared becoming the next victim of the brutal lovers of the blasphemy laws. Pakistan’s federal minorities minister Shahbaz Bhatti (born 09 September 1968) – a Roman Catholic Christian– publicly admitted in the media his fear of being killed for his critical remarks on the misuse of the blasphemy laws. He requested increased security measures like more bodyguards from the central government.³⁵ The USA supported his call and demanded – all in vain – that Islamabad provide an armored car for the minister. Shahbaz Bhatti was shot down with 25 bullets on 02 March 2011 in Islamabad in front of the house of his mother.

³² <http://grendelreport.posterous.com/pakistans-police-and-army-how-many-enemies-wi> (accessed 10 April 2011).

³³ Graf 2011: 5.

³⁴ Werbner 2003: 257.

³⁵ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/103180/blasphemy-law-minorities-minister-fears-he-is-highest-target/> (accessed 10 April 2011).

The end of traditional tolerance of ambivalence?

Pakistan's deadly blasphemy ban is probably the hardest and mostly misused law of its kind worldwide. Pakistan's special way of *shariasizing* the penal law is based not only on the black and white paintings produced during the Cold War in times of Islamization during the rule of Zia ul-Haq and the longing for legitimacy after the highly traumatic war of secession against East Pakistan (Bangladesh) that Pakistan lost; it is also based on the impact of British colonial rule as the colonial power reformed the practice of Islamic jurisprudence, which was traditionally highly ambivalent, in favor of an unambiguous text-based law codex already before the foundation of Pakistan (Giunchi 2010). The dramatically increased pace of elimination of classical tolerance of ambivalence is in its central quality alarmingly modern (Bauer 2011). Barelwis were withdrawing during Islamization under Zia ul-Haq, but since the last two years they have entered into a period of relapse. Recent developments in the war on terror dramatically contribute to the increase of intra-Sunni sectarian violent conflicts. One drastic example for these worrying developments is the *Sunni Ittehad Council*, an alliance of Barelwi organizations founded in May 2009 to support the military course of action of the Pakistani government against the Deobandi-affiliated Taliban in the Swat valley. The Barelwi change of mode from withdrawal to relapse (cf. Roy 2010: 193) comes together with incisive consequences for the entire social culture: The reform of the blasphemy laws as proposed by Salman Taseer to minimize misuse of the paragraph 295-C would ten years ago not have been interesting enough to receive media coverage – today the same is a sufficient motive to kill and seemingly acceptable to majorities in Pakistan's society. The execution of Salman Taseer marks a turning point, not least for the friendly warm and supportive relations between Western agencies and NGOs and traditionally emotional-empathic lovers of the prophet. The latter's benign relation towards the prophet was associated with and interpreted as support for overall interpersonal tolerance and plurality. Even within Pakistan, the greatly increased dynamic of mobilization of Barelwis during recent months is understood as a potentially surprise moment for the political Barelwi parties in the next elections. The Taliban-critical Barelwi alliance *Sunni Ittehad Council* used strong words to warn about anarchistic state of things unless Asiya's death penalty was executed: „*Don't associate Mumtaz Qadiri with any terrorist group! He is a true lover of the Holy Prophet! A Mumtaz Qadiri will be at every corner of the country to stop any displays of solidarity!*” The battle for the soul of Pakistan is under way.

Further readings:

Abbas, Sohail, 2007: *Probing the Jihadi Mindset*. Islamabad: National Book Foundation.

Bauer, Thomas, 2011: *Die Kultur der Ambiguität: Eine andere Geschichte des Islams*. Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag der Weltreligionen.

Bauman, Zygmunt, 2005: *Moderne und Ambivalenz: Das Ende der Eindeutigkeit*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.

Benard, Cheryl, 2003: *Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources, and Strategies*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

Bleuler, Eugen, 1914: Die Ambivalenz. In: *Festgabe zur Einweihung der Neubauten*. Zürich: Schulthess & Co., pp. 93-106.

Blom, Amélie, 2008: The 2006 Anti-“Danish Cartoons” Riot in Lahore: Outrage and the Emotional Landscape of Pakistani Politics, In: *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, Special Issue 2: ‘Outraged Communities’: Comparative Perspectives on the Politicization of Emotions in South Asia. <http://samaj.revues.org/docannexe2633.html> [31.03.2011].

Eteraz, Ali, 2009: State-sponsored Sufism: Why are U.S. think tanks pushing for state-sponsored Islam in Pakistan? In: *Foreign Policy*: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/06/09/state_sponsored_sufism [31.03.2011].

Fallaci, Oriana, 2001: *The Rage and the Pride*. New York: Rizzoli.

Giunchi, Elisa, 2010: The Reinvention of *Sharī'a* under the British Raj: In Search of Authenticity and Certainty. In: *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69(4), pp. 1119-1142.

Graf, Friedrich Wilhelm, 2011: Der eine Gott in vielerlei Gestalt: Die konfliktreiche Pluralisierungsdynamik in den drei monotheistischen Weltreligionen. In: Lothar Gall/Dietmar Willoweit (eds.): *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the Course of History: Exchange and Conflicts*. München: R. Oldenbourg, pp. 1-17.

Graf, Friedrich Wilhelm, 2006: *Moses Vermächtnis. Über göttliche und menschliche Gesetze*. München: C.H. Beck.

Gugler, Thomas K., 2011[a]: *Mission Medina: Da'wat-e Islami und Tabligi Gama'at*. Würzburg: Ergon.

Gugler, Thomas K., 2011[b]: When Democracy is Not the Only Game in Town: Sectarian Conflicts in Pakistan. In: Uwe Skoda/Stig Toft Masden/Kenneth Nielsen (eds.): *Trysts with Democracy: Political Practice in South Asia*. London: Anthem, pp. 281-295.

Gugler, Thomas K., 2010[a]: Pakistan nach den Islamisten: Transformationprozesse innerislamischer Rivalität und Populärislamismus. In: *Asien* 117, pp. 58-78.

Gugler, Thomas K., 2010[b]: Public Religiosity, Parrots of Paradise and Symbols of the Super-Muslim. In: Mushirul Hasan (ed.): *Islam in A Globalized World: Negotiating Faultlines*. Gurgaon: ImprintOne, pp. 99-122.

Hussain, Zahid, 2010: *The Scorpion's Tail: The Relentless Rise of Islamic Militants in Pakistan – and How it Threatens America*. New York: Free Press.

Imhasly, Bernhard, 2011: Chronik eines angekündigten Todes: Der Mord an Salman Taseer. In: *Südasien* 31(1), pp. 58-59.

Kippenberg, Hans G., 2011: *Violence as Worship: Religious Wars in the Age of Globalization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Kohut, Heinz, 1977: *Introspektion, Empathie und Psychoanalyse: Aufsätze zur psychoanalytischen Theorie, zu Pädagogik und Forschung und zur Psychologie der Kunst*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.

Kohut, Heinz, 1973: *Narzissmus: Eine Theorie der psychoanalytischen Behandlung narzisstischer Persönlichkeitsstörungen*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.

Lieven, Anatol, 2011: *Pakistan: A Hard Country*. London: Penguin.

Malik, Jamal, 2008[a]: *Islam in South Asia. A Short History*. Leiden: Brill.

Malik, Jamal, 2008[b] (ed.): *Madrasas in South Asia: Teaching Terror?* London: Routledge.

Malik, Jamal, 1990: The Luminous Nurani. Charisma and political mobilization among the Barelwis in Pakistan. In: *Social Analysis. Journal of Cultural and Social Practice*. Special Issue. Ed. by Pnina Werbner: *Person, Myth and Society in South Asian Islam*, pp. 38-50.

Metcalf, Barbara D., 2009: Jihad in the Way of God: A Tablighi Jama'at Account of a Mission in India. In: Barbara D. Metcalf (ed.): *Islam in South Asia in Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 240-249.

Mirahmadi, Hedieh, Mehreen Farooq und Waleed Ziad, 2010: *Traditional Muslim Networks: Pakistan's Untapped Resource in the Fight Against Terrorism*. Washington DC: WORDE.

Modood, Tariq, 1990: British Asian Muslims and the Rushdie Affair. In: *Political Quarterly* 61(2), pp. 143-160.

Philippon, Alix, 2006: Bridging Sufism and Islamism. In: *ISIM Review* (Spring), pp. 16-17.

Philippon, Alix, 2004: *Le Soufisme*. Aix-en-Provence: Institut d'Etudes Politiques.

al-Qadiri, Arshad, 1993: *Dawat-e Insaf* [Urdu: Call for Justice]. Delhi: Maktaba Jam-e Nur.

Rashid, Ahmed, 2008: *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*. New York: Viking.

Raza Khan, Imam Ahmad, 1996: *The Essentials of the Islamic Faith. The Importance of the Highest Respect for Allah Ta'ala and the Prophet (saw)*. Lahore: Vision Islamic Publications (1908).

Riedel, Bruce, 2011: *Deadly Embrace: Pakistan, America, and the Future of Global Jihad*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution.

Roy, Olivier, 2010: *Heilige Einfalt: Über die politischen Gefahren entwurzelter Religionen*. München: Siedler.

- Sanyal, Usha, 2011: Barelwīs. In: *Encyclopedia of Islam* 3. Vol. 2011-1. Leiden: Brill, pp. 94-99.
- Sanyal, Usha, 1996: *Devotional Islam & Politics in British India. Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi and His Movement, 1870-1920*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Stein, Ruth, 2010: *For Love of the Father: A Psychoanalytic Study of Religious Terrorism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Tandler, Agnes, 2011: Rosen für den Mörder des Gouverneurs. In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 09.01.2011.
- Taseer, Aatish, 2009: *Stranger to History: A Son's Journey through Islamic Lands*. Edinburgh: Canongate.
- Taseer, Salmaan, 1979: *Bhutto: A Political Biography*. London: Ithaca.
- Terman, David M., 2010: Fundamentalism and the Paranoid Gestalt. In: Charles B. Strozier/David M. Terman/James W. Jones (eds.): *The Fundamentalist Mindset*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 47-61.
- Weismann, Itzchak, 2007: Sufi Fundamentalism between India and the Middle East. In: Julia Day Howell/Martin van Bruinessen (eds.): *Sufism and the Modern in Islam*. London: I.B. Tauris, pp. 115-128.
- Werbner, Pnina, (in print): Comparing Peaceful Sufis and Warrior Saints in Pakistan: The Case of Shaykh Mubarak Ali Gilani. [Haifa University, *Islamic Fundamentalism and Sufism*].
- Werbner, Pnina, 2008 (ed.): *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism: Rooted, Feminist and Vernacular Perspectives*. New York: Berg.
- Werbner, Pnina, 2003: *Pilgrims of Love. The Anthropology of a Global Sufi Cult*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Werbner, Pnina, 1996: The Making of Muslim Dissent: Hybridized Discourses, Lay Preachers, and Radical Rhetoric among British Pakistanis. In: *American Ethnologist* 23(1), pp. 102-122.