Robert Rozehnal. *Islamic Sufism Unbound. Politics and Piety in Twenty-First Century Pakistan*

Mauro Valdinoci

Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/40639>

DOI: 10.4000/abstractairanica.40639

ISSN: 1961-960X

Publisher:

CNRS (UMR 7528 Mondes iraniens et indiens), Éditions de l'IFRI

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 December 2013

ISSN: 0240-8910

Electronic reference

Mauro Valdinoci, « Robert Rozehnal. *Islamic Sufism Unbound. Politics and Piety in Twenty-First Century Pakistan* », *Abstracta Iranica* [Online], Volume 32-33 | 2013, document 281, Online since 01 July 2016, connection on 29 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/abstractairanica/40639> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/abstractairanica.40639>

This text was automatically generated on 29 September 2020.

Tous droits réservés

Robert Rozehnal. *Islamic Sufism Unbound. Politics and Piety in Twenty-First Century Pakistan*

Mauro Valdinoci

REFERENCES

Robert Rozehnal. *Islamic Sufism Unbound. Politics and Piety in Twenty-First Century Pakistan*. New York and Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, 275 p., biblio., index.

- 1 The literature on South Asian Sufism has paid marginal attention to how Sufism is taught, practiced and imagined in the postcolonial era. This book dwells on this topic. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach based on the methods of anthropology and Islamic studies, the author examines a living Sufi tradition. He traces the identity politics and ritual practices of a particular branch of the Čištīyya Šābirīyya *silsila*, which is active in contemporary Pakistan and Malaysia. Drawing on textual and ethnographic research, he shows how members of this order communicate and experience their Muslim identity and which practical strategies they adopt in order to adapt Sufism to modernity.
- 2 The introduction discusses key theoretical and methodological questions referring, among others, to the works of Dipesh Chakrabarty, Arjun Appadurai, Talal Asad, James Clifford and George Marcus. The first chapter, "Sufism and the politics of Islamic identity", deals with an accident in 2001 at the shrine of Bābā Farīd Ganj-yi šakar in Pakpattan, when more than a hundred people were killed in a mob stampede. The responses of state authorities, shrine caretakers and disciples to the accident are reported. The second chapter, "Muslim, mystic and modern: Three twentieth-century Sufi masters", contains the biographies of the order's last three leaders. Manuscripts and oral histories are used to show how sainthood is viewed by contemporary Čištī Šābirī Sufis, and it is concluded that the hagiographic accounts conform to the

traditional model of Indo-Muslim sainthood. The third chapter, “Imagining Sufism: The publication of Chishti Sabiri identity”, analyzes how a distinct Sufi identity is presented in writings by the masters of the order. This identity is based on a *šari’a*-minded and socially engaged Sufism, firmly rooted in southern Asian traditions but open to change. The order’s Sufi masters consider Sufism to be both the essence of Islamic orthodoxy and the ideal source for a Pakistani national identity. The author discusses this involvement in society and politics, and the use of the mass media by the Čištī Šābirī Sufis studied. The fourth chapter, “Teaching Sufism: Networks of community and discipleship”, explores how religious and esoteric knowledge is transmitted in this Sufi order. Interviews and personal oral histories shed light on disciples’ backgrounds, experiences of initiation and interactions with their spiritual guides. The ultimate aim of this spiritual training is to totally transform the self. The author also argues that the disciples complement and integrate their master’s teachings with texts and the collective wisdom of their peers. The fifth chapter, “Experiencing Sufism: The discipline of ritual practice”, details the order’s main rituals, such as dream interpretation, prayer, recollection of God (*dikr*), contemplation (*murāqaba*), annual commemorations of saints (*urs*) and musical assemblies (*samā’*). These ritual practices play a key role in transforming the self. According to the author, ceremonies cement the Sufi identity and connect the current generation to its predecessors. Spiritual practices are not static and immutable however; they have been reformulated to accommodate social and historical changes.

- 3 This detailed, nuanced description of a living Sufi order is successful, a firsthand account of rituals and spiritual practices with abundant quotations from primary sources. The authors discussion of the development of a Sufi order in a modern and globalized context brilliantly takes into account the historical, social and political implications of a Sufi identity without neglecting its doctrinal and spiritual aspects.

AUTHORS

MAURO VALDINOCI

University of Modena and Reggio Emilia