FOSTERING AN ATTITUDE OF PEACE: HOW MALERKOTLA'S HISTORICAL NARRATIVES HAVE HELPED SHAPE INTER-RELIGIOUS COHESIVENESS

by

COLIN JAMES LAW

(Under the Direction of Kenneth Honerkamp)

ABSTRACT

Narratives and stories play an important role in the town of Malerkotla. Stories shape our identity and how we view ourselves. The leaders of the town, and the narratives about them, have shaped the town of Malerkotla and the way the residents identify them self as a community. It is not just the history that has shaped the town, but what the residents have chosen to remember and to ignore. The collective memory of the town focuses on positive aspects of their leaders. Out of the history of Malerkotla, the important people and events that the town has remembered are Shaikh Sadruddin, the founder of the town, Sher Mohammad Khan and his call for Justice, Bayzid Khan Bahadur, and the Kuka Massacre, which in particular, have fostered an attitude of peace for the residents in the town, which has led to inter-religious cohesiveness.

INDEX WORDS: Malerkotla, Indian Partition, Inter-Religious Violence, Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism, Memory, History, Saints.

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DEDICATION

To my sons, Cowboy Warren James Law and Ranger Masen Levi Law.

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I am very thankful for the position I am in today. I would not and could not be where I am without a whole lot of people. First, I would like to thank my parents for all of their support. I am sure that I have put them through much turmoil over the years. I would like to thank my wife who has pushed me to better myself and encouraged me to pursue the things that interest me. Without her, none of this would be possible.

After working for a few years and getting married, I realized that I needed to change my course. I knew that I needed to go back to school and get a degree. What interested me most was the study of religion and I was fortunate that Valdosta State University had such a program. I am convinced that the professors in the Philosophy and Religious Studies program at VSU are some of the best in the world. During my time there, I not only learned about religion but I learned how to write and think better. I would like to thank Dr. Lily Vuong, who was an important person during my time at VSU. She was not just a professor but also a mentor. Her devotion to her students is unparalleled. She helped me to fall in love with the subjects that I was learning and inspired me to pursue graduate work. I will be forever indebted to Dr. Vuong. I would also like to thank Dr. Serrán-Pagán for all of his support. He is a brilliant man and great professor.

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INTRODUCTION

The media, both news networks and entertainment programs, focuses a great deal on violence. We are inundated with stories of violence and aggression between both individuals and groups of people. Day after day, there are numerous reports of the atrocities that people are doing to one another. While it may seem as though there is no good in the world, peace does exist.

The twentieth century is notorious for being a terribly violent period in human history. The violence during the twentieth century was insurmountable, between two World Wars, the use of nuclear weapons, and genocide the world, as a whole, saw little peace throughout the century. However, for society to function and operate properly, peace must exist. During the twentieth century, colonialism went out with a bang. Throughout the 18th, 19th, and into the 20th centuries, Western European countries imposed their control both politically and economically on countries throughout Africa and Asia. Through resistance, people in these countries began to fight for control of their own governments.

India was one of many countries that won its fight against the colonists but due to religious divisions, the country was divided. When the British government decided to vacate the country, in 1947, their parting gift to the sub-continent was to partition it based on religious population culminating in the establishment of the countries India and Pakistan. This partition lead to a mass exodus and displaced tens of millions of people. The partition of India was a time when religious tensions and communal violence were at

an all-time high. Nevertheless, throughout the partition one unlikely town was able to remain peaceful. The town of Malerkotla is a small Muslim majority town located in the east Punjab. This town, despite having a quite diverse population split between three different religious traditions, was able to survive the partition with no communal violence. This face attracted quite a bit of scholarly attention.

Anna Bigelow is the most notable scholar who has written about Malerkotla. Her research on Malerkotla has primarily focused on the shared religious site of the tomb of Shaikh Sadruddin. Bigelow suggests that the narratives of peace during the partition are reflected back to the life of the founder.[1] She also states, "the prime cause of communal harmony [was] the resilience and character of the population."[2] I agree with Bigelow's assessment. The tomb of Shaikh Sadruddin is an important site for not only devotees located within the town but also those further away. This shared religious site has had a deep impact on inter-religious relations in the town.

A few other scholars have mentioned Malerkotla in their research. Pippa Virdee points to policing and social disapproval of violence as reasons for the absence of violence in the town during partition.[3] While it is true that the last Nawab of Malerkotla, Iftikhar Ali Khan, had a strict zero tolerance policy on inter-religious crime and looting, many other leaders in other princely states had similar policies that did not save them from the widespread violence. While I agree with Virdee's premise, I believe the complexity of the situation goes beyond any one answer.

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[1] Bigelow, Anna. "Saved by the Saint." The *Journal of Asian Studies*, 68, no. 2 (2009).
[2] Bigelow, Anna. "Memory and Minority: Making Muslim Indians." *Numen*, 58 (2011), 391.
[3] Virdee, Pippa. "Partition and the Absence of Communal Violence." In *The Deadly Embrace: Religion, Politics, and Violence in India and Pakistan, 1947-2002*, edited by Ian Talbot (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

The reason there is no clear answer as to why the town of Malerkotla was able to remain peaceful while the rest of the Punjab was in flames; it is due, in part, to a number of variables that contributed to this position. The leadership exhibited by Nawab Iftikhar Ali Khan was important during the time of partition, but the history of leadership in the town was also a factor. Another important variable that has contributed to Malerkotla's peaceful outlook is the stories and narratives regarding the town's history. These stories about the leaders of the town have been influential in the town's ability to develop inter-religious harmony and to remain peaceful through difficult times.

Through Chapter 1, I will explore the history of the town of Malerkotla. A look at the population of the town and the diversity will provide a context for the town's impressive ability to remain peaceful in spite of surrounding areas who had much inter-religious violence. This chapter will also examine the importance of the leadership of the town and how the leaders influenced the town towards an attitude of peace.

The emphasis in Chapter 2 is on the legacy of the historical figure of Shaikh Sadruddin, founder and saint of Malerkotla. This chapter will look at the Shaikh's life and the historical events during his lifetime. The importance of the tomb of Shaikh Sadruddin to the residents of the town will also be examined.

Chapter 3 will address the one of the most important Nawabs in Malerkotla's history. Sher Mohammed Khan and his actions will be examined through historical accounts. This chapter will also focus on the history of Sikhism in the Punjab and the interactions and relationship between the rising Sikh communities with the Mughal Empire.

History and memory will be discussed in Chapter 4. How the people in Malerkotla remember key events in their past will be examined in how they internalize these events and incorporated them into their own identity. This chapter puts a focus on the first Nawab of Malerkotla, Bayzid Khan Bahadur, and his influence on Malerkotla's identity of pluralism. The Kuka Massacre will also be discussed and how this event has been adapted to unite the town rather than divide it.

The leaders of the town have played in influential role in shaping the attitude and atmosphere of peace within the town. The historical narratives about these rulers have been internalized by the residents of the town and have shaped the collective identity of Malerkotla. This collective memory bonds the different religious communities in the town and has developed a state of inter-religious cohesiveness.

A. History of Colonization in India

The beginning of British interest in the Indian sub-continent began in the sixteenth century with the exploration of sea routes. With new trade routes open to the European empires, many new trading companies began to be established. Tara Chand states that a "number of companies obtained royal charters for trade – the African Company in 1567, the Spanish Company in 1577, the Eastland Company in 1578, and the Turkey Company in 1581."[4] Queen Elizabeth eventually established a royal charter for the East India Company. The company was granted financial stability as well as military protection with armed vessels. The company would eventually establish a colony in

[4] Tara Chand. *History of the Freedom Movement in India, Volume One.* (Calcutta: Sree Sarawaty Press, 1961), 232.

Bombay and built a military base, which according to Chand "enabled the Company to wield armed authority from the Bay of Bengal to the mid-Atlantic."[5]

The Company faced many armed conflicts with the Mughal Empire throughout the seventeenth century. Following the death of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707, the Company was able to begin to spread its power and resources further inland. The military presence also grew, and recruitment of Indian citizens began. By the early nineteenth century, the Company was in control of India except for the Punjab region.

People in the Punjab, especially Sikhs, resisted British rule longer than any other group. The British desired to obtain the Punjab for its strategic position. During the mid-nineteenth century, the British launched a number of campaigns to take over the region. Following two major battles, in 1845 and 1849, the British had finally seized power. With the institution of the British rule in the Punjab, the religious communities were on the same level. Suri states they were "subjects of an alien government but rivals amongst themselves for the privileges and opportunities."[6] This division caused inter-communal conflicts, which prevented the communities from joining together to oppose the British government and allowed the British to continue to rule the area.

B. Indian Nationalism

During the 1850's, Indian citizens began pushing for more of a voice in the government process. According to Muriel E. Chamberlain, "Indians were beginning to realize that using their conqueror's own political and philosophical weapons could be

[5] Ibid., 233.

[6] Surindar Suri. "Communal Conflict in Punjab: A Socio-Dynamic Analysis." *Social Action* 33 no. 4 (1983), 392.

more effective than resorting to force of arms."[7] A meeting was held in the August of 1852; the group wrote a petition to the British government requesting a number of reforms and included provisions to allow Indian citizens to hold administrative and judicial seats.[8]

The Indian National Congress established itself in 1885. The purpose of this group was to be a voice of the Indian people. Through the Indian National Congress, the citizens of India would have a voice to communicate their views to the wider British government. The Indian National Congress had a few problems from its inception. There was a sense of exclusivity with the group. The recruitment was limited to graduates from the University of Calcutta, which according to Chamberlain, led to membership being "a very narrow class of professional men."[9] During its first session, the Indian National Congress had only two Muslims present for the meeting. The under-represented Muslim community eventually set up the Muslim League in 1906.[10]

The British government, in August of 1917, made a commitment that there would be a move toward allowing some self-governing institutions for the Indian people.[11] The Indian people had hoped that, after the First World War, the British would turn over more control of the government to them, but were disappointed with the speed at which this process was moving. Many Indians were insulted by the passing of the Rowlatt Act in

[7] Muriel E. Chamberlain. *Decolonization: The Fall of the European Empires*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 17.

[8] Ibid., 16.

[9] Ibid., 18.

[10] Ibid., 19.

[11] Geoffrey Barraclough. "The Revolt Against the West." In *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then*, edited by Prasenjit Duara (New York: Routledge, 2003), 120.

1919, which extended emergency wartime legislation, limited the rights of citizens, and allowed the government to detain citizens without trial.[12]

These events helped usher in a new group of nationalist leaders, including Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Jawarharlal Nehru. Gandhi launched a campaign of civil disobedience as a protest against the Rowlett Act. Due to this campaign, the British held Gandhi responsible for the riots that swept through the Punjab and for the death of several Europeans.[13]

C. Partition and Violence in Punjab

The first mention of an independent Muslim state happened in 1933. The Muslim population wanted representation in the government, but most did not take the suggestion of an independent state seriously at this point. Four years later, however, in 1937 following the elections and Congress' lack of compromise, Jinnah suggested a separate Muslim state.[14] Throughout the Second World War, India made little progress toward gaining independence. Both sides held on to their attitudes: the Indian people wanted immediate independence from Britain, and the British continued to say that nothing could be done until the war ended.

Early in 1947, the British government accepted the proposal by Viceroy Lord Mountbatten and conceded to partition the country in an attempt to avoid civil war. The division of land was based on population distribution in the areas constructed on religious association rather than established provinces.[15] The British government placed Lord

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[12] Muriel E. Chamberlain. *Decolonization: The Fall of the European Empires*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 20.

[13] Ibid., 22.

[14] Ibid., 25.

[15] Ian Copland. "The Master and the Maharajas: The Sikh Princes and the East Punjab Massacres of 1947." *Modern Asian Studies* 36 no. 3 (2002), 657.

Mountbatten in charge of overseeing the partition strategy, setting the departure of the British for June 1948. The date for the governing handover changed, and Chamberlain states, "[I]n June [1947] Mountbatten announced on behalf of the British government that independence would in fact be brought forward from June 1948 to August 1947."[16]

As talks of partition continued and plans were being made, there were many outspoken individuals. The rhetoric during the time was particularly hostile. On March 4, Sikh leader Tara Singh, made a speech to rally the Sikh community and coined the slogan "Pakistan Murdabad," meaning death to Pakistan.[17] Robin Jeffrey quotes one of Tara Singh's speeches:

> "O Hinuds and Sikhs! Be ready for self-destruction like the Japanese and the Nazis. Our motherland is calling for blood and we shall satiate the thirst of our motherland with blood. By crushing Moghulistan we shall trample Pakistan!... the Sikhs ruled over the Muslims with their might and the Sikhs shall even now rule over them. We shall rule over them and get the government fighting. I have sounded the bugle. Finish the Muslim League."[18]

Tara Singh's speech in March came months before the June 3 decision of the new boundaries and was used to generate hostility. Words quickly turned into something much worse. The Rawalpindi Massacre was the first burst of partition-related violence. This incident occurred in March of 1947 in the North West Punjab. The aggressors were the Muslim majority attacking the Sikh and Hindu minorities. Many reports about the

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[16] Muriel E. Chamberlain. *Decolonization: The Fall of the European Empires.* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 28.

[17] Robin Jeffrey. "The Punjab Boundary Force and the Problem of Order, August 1947." *Modern Asian Studies* 8 no. 4 (1974), 494.

[18] Ibid., 494.

partition refer to the spontaneous bursts of violence that occurred without warning because they are linked with the collapse of governmental control. Ian Talbot asserts that some of the violence was "reciprocal violence" but much resembled "organized genocide."[19]

The police often did nothing to stop violent acts and sometimes participated. According to Talbot "involvement in violence resulted not from widespread insubordination, but from local police following the lead given by their officers and civilian superior."[20] Other policing organizations also failed to protect people. The Boundary Force was designed to protect people as they migrated to their new homes but largely failed. The Boundary Force had many problems. This organization was set up only one month before the August date of partition. While the Boundary Force was created to be neutral, set up as half Muslim, one-quarter Sikh, and one quarter Hindu, the recruits came from the Punjab. Due to this Jeffrey states that the recruits were "deeply involved emotionally."[21]

The effects of the violence in the Punjab region were devastating. According to Talbot, close to "40 per cent of Amritsar's houses were destroyed or damaged and its Muslim population fell from 49 per cent of the population on the eve of partition to just .52 per cent in 1951."[22] Additionally, upwards of ten million people were displaced in the Punjab region alone. While this was a chaotic time in India's history and especially

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[19] Ian Talbot. "The 1947 Violence in the Punjab." In *The Deadly Embrace: Religion, Politics, and Violence in India and Pakistan, 1947-2002*, edited by Ian Talbot (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.

[20] Ibid., 11.

[21] Robin Jeffrey. "The Punjab Boundary Force and the Problem of Order, August 1947." *Modern Asian Studies* 8 no. 4 (1974),518.

[22] Ian Talbot. "A tale of two cities: the aftermath of partition for Lahore and Amritsar 1947–1957." *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no. 01 (2007): 151.

the Punjab, the town of Malerkotla was able to survive this turmoil with no communal violence.

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING MALERKOTLA

There are a few things that make Malerkotla unique. First, Malerkotla is the only Muslim majority town in the East Punjab region.[23] Malerkotla also has a reputation for being a peaceful area. This reputation became widespread after the events of 1947 and the partition of the subcontinent of India. Whenever the media mentions Malerkotla, there is always a qualifier labeling the town as an "oasis of tolerance" or a "cradle of love and friendship."[24] In Anna Bigelow and Pippa Virdee's research on Malerkotla, they interviewed people from the town to show the reasons for the sustained peace, which are quite varied.[25]

The peace in Malerkotla has been attributed to a lack of economic value, meaning it is a small agricultural area, to the absence of extremist groups in the area, and even to the town's focus on the value of the community.[26] Virdee has conducted interviews with many people in Malerkotla to hear their perspective on why there was peace there during this time. Virdee states that many people cite the story of Guru Gobind Singh and his blessing on the town and the ruling family. Another historical example of inter-religious

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[23] Anna Bigelow, "Saved by the Saint: Refusing and Reversing Partition in Muslim North India." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68 no. 2 (May 2009): 435.

[24] Ibid., 435.

[25] Anna Bigelow, "Saved by the Saint: Refusing and Reversing Partition in Muslim North India." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68 no. 2 (May 2009); Virdee, Pippa. "Partition and the Absence of Communal Violence." In *The Deadly Embrace: Religion, Politics, and Violence in India and Pakistan, 1947-2002*, edited by Ian Talbot (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[26] Virdee, Pippa. "Partition and the Absence of Communal Violence." In *The Deadly Embrace: Religion, Politics, and Violence in India and Pakistan, 1947-2002*, edited by Ian Talbot (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

harmony goes back to the founding and fortification of the town. Virdee states, "a Chishti Sufi saint [… and] a Bairagi Hindu saint […] together blessed the site in a public enactment of pluralism."[27]

Another theory of the resulting peace has to do with the burial shrine of the Sufi saint, and founder of the town, located in Malerkotla. Because of this shrine, residents of the town and devotees of the saint often credit the saint with sustaining peace within the town through such violent and stressful periods in the area's history.[28] This shrine helps to bring together different people by providing what Bigelow describes as a "shared histor[y] of the region within a single space, shaping and stabilizing the collective memory and identity of Malerkotla."[29]

The partition, an extremely turbulent time in India's history, divided its lands based on religious grounds, resulting in a mass migration of people. The violence was widespread throughout India, especially in the Punjab region. With the creation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Punjab divided into two, the West Punjab on the Pakistani side and the East Punjab remaining within India's borders. The partition led many Muslims in India and the Punjab to flee to the newly instituted Pakistan. Malerkotla, however, did not see an exodus of its Muslim population; instead, Malerkotla became a safe haven for those who were making the journey.

[27] Ibid., 21.

[28] Anna Bigelow, "Saved by the Saint: Refusing and Reversing Partition in Muslim North India." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68 no. 2 (May 2009): 436.

[29] Ibid., 437.

A. Location/Population

The town of Malerkotla is located within the Sangrur district in Punjab. Malerkotla is a rural town surrounded by much larger and more populated districts. About 45 kilometers to the North is Ludhiana and Patiala is about 60 kilometers to the East. Both saw a great deal of violence during the partition and both had significant populations of Sikhs.

The 1941 census of India shows that the Punjab region had a slight majority Muslim population of 53 percent, 31 percent Hindu, and 15 percent Sikh.[30] What sets Malerkotla apart in the region is that after the partition the town has continued to possess is a high concentration of Muslims.[31] Malerkotla is a relatively small place in terms of square miles and population. According to the 1941 census, Malerkotla town's population was 29,321 with 76 percent of the population listed as Muslim.[32] The Hindu community was the second largest group, comprising 21 percent with Sikhs making up only 1.5 percent.[33] The *Tehsil*[34] of Malerkotla had a larger and more evenly dispersed population. This sub-district's population in 1941 was 88,109, with 38 percent Muslim, 34 percent Sikh, and 27 percent Hindu.[35]

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[30] Ibid., 440.

[31] Virdee, Pippa. "Partition and the Absence of Communal Violence." In *The Deadly Embrace: Religion, Politics, and Violence in India and Pakistan, 1947-2002*, edited by Ian Talbot (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 18

[32] Ibid., 18.

[33] Ibid., 18.

[34] A tehsil is a collection of provinces, used for taxation purposes, which make up a larger district. See, C. E. Bosworth. "Tahsil." *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E van Donzel, W. P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2015.

[35] Virdee, Pippa. "Partition and the Absence of Communal Violence." In *The Deadly Embrace: Religion, Politics, and Violence in India and Pakistan, 1947-2002*, edited by Ian Talbot (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 19.

Due to the decline of the Muslim-ruled Mughal Empire and the rise of Hindu and Sikh powers in the region, princely ruled Sikh states and high volume Sikh districts surrounded Malerkotla. During the Sikh conquest of this region, Virdee states, "the Sikh Army was mindful of causing any damage in Malerkotla due to the Guru's blessing."[36] This sparing of Malerkotla helped the ruling family in Malerkotla maintain power until the partition.

B. Town History

Founded in 1454, Malerkotla was established as Maler. The ruling family of Malerkotla can trace its ancestry to the Sherwani Afghans who migrated from Kabul.[37] The founder of the town, Hazrat Shaikh Sadruddin, is revered from both within and outside of the town. Following his death in 1505, a small shrine was constructed. Bigelow states that the saint's shrine "serves as a physical and imaginary repositories of Malerkotla's civic identity."[38] The shrine is a gathering place for people of many faiths. Devotees of the Shaikh are not limited to the Islamic tradition and pilgrims from both Hindu and Sikh traditions attend festivals in honor of the Shaikh.

Even those who object to saint worship or to visiting the sacred sites of other religions do not openly oppose the traditions.[39] This is significant, as shrine visitation is controversial within Islam, officially disapproved of in Sikhism, and discouraged or even targeted by militant Hindus. Yet Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus all persist in the practice with great enthusiasm.[40]

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[36] Ibid., 25.
[37] Ibid., 18.
[38] Anna Bigelow, "Saved by the Saint: Refusing and Reversing Partition in Muslim North India." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68 no. 2 (May 2009), 437.
[39] Ibid., 437.
[40] Ibid., 438.

In 1657, under the leadership of Bayazid Khan Bahadur the town of Kotla was fortified. According to tradition, Bahadur summoned both Shah Fazl Chishti, a Sufi saint, and Damodar Das, a Hindu Saint to lay the foundation stone, thus, setting up an atmosphere of communal harmony and religious tolerance.[41] Bahadur's grandson Sher Mohammad Khan also shaped the history of the region. Khan is most remembered for his call for justice for the two young sons of Guru Gobind Singh. This protest is remembered by not only residents in the town but by many Sikhs throughout the region. Within the town, there is both a university and a Gurdwara named to honor the actions he took.

After the intervention by the British Empire the political landscape began to change. Malerkotla developed a relationship with assisted the British; Malerkotla was able to maintain its status as a princely state, not subject to British rule. In all, there were thirty-four princely states in the Punjab region; Malerkotla was one of only five Muslim-ruled states located in the Punjab.[42] Ian Copland mentions that the princely states had less violence than their British ruled counterparts had, but during the partition there was still a considerable amount of violence in the princely states.[43] Pippa Virdee asks an important question "why did princely order prevail here, but not elsewhere in the states of the Punjab region?"[44]

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[41] "History of Malerkotla." *History of Malerkotla*. Accessed October 25, 2015. http://www.malerkotla.co.in/hist.aspx.

[42] Virdee, Pippa. "Partition and the Absence of Communal Violence." In *The Deadly Embrace: Religion, Politics, and Violence in India and Pakistan, 1947-2002*, edited by Ian Talbot (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 18.

[43] Ian Copland. "The Master and the Maharajas: The Sikh Princes and the East Punjab Massacres of 1947." *Modern Asian Studies* 36 no. 3 (2002).

[44] Virdee, Pippa. "Partition and the Absence of Communal Violence." In *The Deadly Embrace: Religion, Politics, and Violence in India and Pakistan, 1947-2002*, edited by Ian Talbot (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 17.

C. Conflict and Harmony

During Bigelow's research, she encountered people who would state that they "[look] back at the pre-partition period as a utopian time when there was a common Punjabi culture […] before it was broken by the British, by the Muslims, and by the Hindus."[45] When looking back through the history of the town, there are many instances of conflict and even violence that are prevalent. Bigelow also states that, "the general peace during the partition was no mere extension of the pre-partition status quo."[46] Malerkotla has much to be proud of in terms of remaining peaceful throughout such a tense time; its history, however, is not free from blemishes.

We know from history that Sher Mohammad Khan fought with the Mughal Empire against the rising Sikh power in the early sixteenth century. Later, in 1761, Malerkotla also fought against the Sikhs alongside Ahmad Shah Abdali's Afghan forces during the battle of *Wada Ghalughara* (Great Massacre).[47]

Malerkotla, was not free from communal conflict, Virdee states "some of the worst communal agitation [… was] over prayer times" between the Hindu and Muslim populations which occurred in 1935.[48] The Hindu temple and the Muslim mosque were located close to one another and both parties complained about the noise of the other. The Nawab and other authorities in the town, who intervened and imposed different prayer times for each of communities, settled this dispute.[49]

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[45] Anna Bigelow, "Saved by the Saint: Refusing and Reversing Partition in Muslim North India." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68 no. 2 (May 2009), 441.

[46] Ibid., 438.

[47] Ibid., 439.

[48] Virdee, Pippa. "Partition and the Absence of Communal Violence." In *The Deadly Embrace: Religion, Politics, and Violence in India and Pakistan, 1947-2002*, edited by Ian Talbot (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 20.

[49] Ibid., 21.

D. Importance of the Nawabs

The ruling families in these princely states had a better understanding of their community than the British administration. It was common for princes to demonstrate to their communities that they were responsible for not just followers of people whose faith they shared but also the people who differed in religious tradition. Princes often attended cross-communal festivals and paid respect to others' places of worship showing their commitment to bi-partisanship.[50]

The princely states functioned differently than did the British ruled districts; Copland states the "princes refused to let communal considerations affect the way they ran their states."[51] It was not uncommon for the Sikh, Muslim, or Hindu princes to distribute their sponsorship, and aid indiscriminately, giving to charities of other religious tradition almost as generously as they gave to their own.[52] In addition to this, people of various traditions occupied government positions. Even high-ranking positions in Sikh and Muslim princely states were often taken by people of different traditions refusing to give preferential treatment to those of similar religious preferences.[53] Leaders of princely states tended to be much more connected with the people in their community and often attended religious services of faiths other than their own. Copland mentions, for instance, that "Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala (ruled 1890-1949), was as likely to be seen inside a mosque as a gurudwara."[54]

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[50] Ibid., 20.

[51] Ian Copland. "The Master and the Maharajas: The Sikh Princes and the East Punjab Massacres of 1947." *Modern Asian Studies* 36 no. 3 (2002), 667.

[52] Ibid., 667.

[53] Ibid., 667.

[54] Ibid., 667.

Due to the fact that Malerkotla is the only location in East Punjab with a majority Muslim population, Sikh and Hindu visitors to Shaikh Sadruddin's shrine experience interreligious encounters that they could avoid by attending shrines elsewhere in the state that are now managed by Hindus and Sikhs.[55] Because so many people from different religious backgrounds attend this site, they acknowledge one another's presence, and Bigelow states they "also adopt each others' ritual practices, attend the same spiritual gatherings, visit at the same time of day, make the same offerings, consult the same ritual specialists, and in some cases become possessed by the saint's spirit."[56]

Other theories for the peace in Malerkotla point to the ruling family and their ability to maintain control over communal conflict. Within princely states there was often cross-communal support, which developed over the centuries, adopting policies of accommodations for local minority communities.[57] Cow slaughter was an issue in many parts, and in most Hindu and Sikh states this practice was prohibited and the Muslims customarily ended up using alternatives to cows as sacrifices.[58] It should be noted the under the British administration cow slaughter was not prohibited, and there were no restrictions which became a major factor in stressing communal relations in some districts.[59]

During the partition, the Punjab was in a state of unrest, and this includes Malerkotla. Although, Malerkotla was free from violence, it was not free from tension.

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[55] Anna Bigelow, "Saved by the Saint: Refusing and Reversing Partition in Muslim North India." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68 no. 2 (May 2009), 440.

[56] Ibid., 440.

[57] Virdee, Pippa. "Partition and the Absence of Communal Violence." In *The Deadly Embrace: Religion, Politics, and Violence in India and Pakistan, 1947-2002*, edited by Ian Talbot (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 20.

[58] Ibid., 20.

[59] Ibid., 20.

Virdee, in fact, states, "the state is always a potential source of trouble [and] neighbouring agitators from Ludhiana find it a happy hunting ground."[60] Additionally, Malerkotla was not free from rumors and fear from their surrounding neighbors. Copland recalls an incident in August of 1947 when Khan Ahsar Ali Khan, a relative of the Nawab, went around the city with many other officials telling the Muslim community that there was great fear from attack by the Sikhs of Patiala. Khan told them to arm themselves and gather groups to guard the city through the night.[61]

Malerkotla navigated its way through a distressing period in the region's history with the help and guidance of the Nawab. Malerkotla's Nawab not only made himself visible among the various communities in the town, he also had instituted a zero-tolerance policy for crime and specifically for looting of property.[62] Bigelow's field-work included interviews with people in Malerkotla, and she cites a Muslim army officer who stated, "not only did [the army] have to guard the state from outside aggression, but [they] had been ordered to protect non-Muslim property from local attempts of arson or looting."[63]

The participation of the Nawabs within the community and their influence was paramount for the sustained peace of Malerkotla. The Nawab of Malerkotla was effective in making sure violence did not break out. Since Malerkotla was a Muslim-ruled sub-district surrounded by much larger princely Sikh districts, it was imperative to suppress the violence to prevent retaliation from their neighbors. In many cases, the

[60] Ibid., 21.

[61] Ian Copland. "The Master and the Maharajas: The Sikh Princes and the East Punjab Massacres of 1947." *Modern Asian Studies* 36 no. 3 (2002), 684.

[62] Anna Bigelow, "Saved by the Saint: Refusing and Reversing Partition in Muslim North India." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68 no. 2 (May 2009), 446.

[63] Ibid., 445.

police and the army often helped in perpetuating violence rather than preventing the onset of attacks.

Patiala is the Sikh ruled state to the East of Malerkotla. At the time of the partition it had a population of nearly two million people, compared to Malerkotla's population of only eighty-eight thousand. Since Malerkotla had much more to lose than to gain, the very existence of the state itself was dependent upon remaining peaceful and avoiding any violence that would set off a chain reaction. Malerkotla's ability to avoid violence during the partition arose from a combination of sources. Malerkotla's past, while having instances of conflict between traditions, also had a pattern of conflict being solved without much bloodshed. Malerkotla also had many times in which the community rose above the boundaries of these divisions in traditions. Malerkotla's Muslim population had no political advantages in allowing violence breaking out.[64] Due to this, Virdee contends that the "administration [was] committed to law and order as a crucial factor in inhibiting partition related violence" and the army's position "in maintaining the peace was reinforced by the social disapproval of violence arising from the 'myth' of the Guru's blessing."[65]

Between the years 1941 and 1951, the Muslim population in the East Punjab declined from 53 percent to a mere 2 percent.[66] While the majority of the East Punjab saw a dramatic change in its Muslim population, Malerkotla remained an important Muslim focal point in the region and even became a refuge for many Muslims from

[64] Virdee, Pippa. "Partition and the Absence of Communal Violence." In *The Deadly Embrace: Religion, Politics, and Violence in India and Pakistan, 1947-2002*, edited by Ian Talbot (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 30.

[65] Ibid., 31.

[66] Ibid., 16.

surrounding areas.[67] Due to this, the town of Malerkotla saw a slight increase in the Muslim population as a result of the partition instabilities.[68]

While Malerkotla can boast there was no communal violence during the partition and that no one died during this period in India's history the reasons for such peace are still up to speculation, though, it appears that many factors played a part in this sustained peace. Bigelow states "Malerkotlans today imagine and understand interreligious relations through the prism of symbolic events."[69] Events from Malerkotla's past have conditioned the residents of the town towards an attitude of peace. This attitude is also evidence of moral character and secular values that have been represented by leaders of the town.

[67] Ibid., 16.
[68] Ibid., 16.
[69] Anna Bigelow, "Saved by the Saint: Refusing and Reversing Partition in Muslim North India." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 68 no. 2 (May 2009), 100.

CHAPTER 2

LEGACY OF SHAIKH SADRUDDIN

The legacy of Shaikh Sadruddin is of great importance to the community of Malerkotla but stretches outward to other regions. The Shaikh and founder of the town has become a legendary figure; stories, poems, and songs are used by his devotees to venerate the saint. Following his death in 1508, the Shaikh had a modest shrine until more recent times, when a permanent structure was constructed. The shrine is used as a place for devotees of the Shaikh to pray and ask for blessings from the Shaikh. There are both weekly events at the shrine as well as an annual festival to venerate the Shaikh. This chapter will delve into the history of the region, address the historical figure of Shaikh Sadruddin, and also examine the shrine and practices of the Shaikh's devotees.

A. Setting the Stage

During the thirteenth century there was growing influence and presence of Afghans in north-west India. Afghan soldiers even began serving the Delhi sultanate during this period. Over time these soldiers, according to Salim Mohammed, slowly "began to acquire higher positions, so that by the reign of Muhammad bin Tughluq (r. 1325-1351) they formed an important element among the centurion nobles (*sadāh amirs*)."[70] In the latter half of the fourteenth century the *sadāh amirs*[71] eventually

[70] Salim Mohammed, "Shrine of Shaikh Sadruddin at Malerkotla: History, Politics and Culture," in *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, eds. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur. (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009), 361.

[71] Sadah comes from sadi "or a unit of one hundred; the sadah amirs were mostly of foreign extraction; held civil and military assignments and each one of them is said to have commanded a hundred soldiers." Jaswant Lal Mehta. *Advanced Study in the History of Medieval India, Volume 1.* 218.

became zamīndārs[72] and politically influential throughout the area. As the Afghan power in the region grew, Mohammed says, more Afghans "migrated from their ancestral lands" to be employed by "governors posted in the frontier provinces."[73] In 1451, Bahlul Lodi rose to power in Delhi and "undertook several steps to consolidate his position" by trying to improve the economic circumstances of India and by building "alliances with influential local elements," which included giving one of his daughters in marriage to Shaikh Sadruddin.[74]

Over time, the Malwa region was divided into princely states. Within this area, there were eight princely states, Patilal, Nabha, Jind (Sangrur), Faridkot, Karpurthala, and Kalsia were all ruled by Sikh Chiefs, Nalagarh, which was ruled by a Hindu Rajput Chieftan, and lastly Malerkotla, which was ruled by an Afghan Muslim.[75] The town that is now known as Malerkotla began as "Maler in 1466 AD," when it was founded by Shaikh Sadruddin.[76] It was not until about two centuries "later in 1656 AD, the Kotla segment of Malerkotla town was founded by Bayazid Khan[77] (1606-1659 AD), who was a […] descendent of Shaikh Sadruddin."[78]

The name Malerkotla is derived from two names of "revenue settlements, named Maler and Kotla."[79] There are two popular accounts for how the name Maler came

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[72] Zamīndār is "a term used in Muslim India for landowners, possessors of estates." Encyclopedia of Islam, s.v. "Zamīndār."

[73] Salim Mohammed, "Shrine of Shaikh Sadruddin at Malerkotla: History, Politics and Culture," in *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, eds. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur. (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009), 361.

[74] Ibid., 362.

[75] Ibid., 356.

[76] Ibid., 359.

[77] Nawab Bayazid Khan was the great-great-great grandson of Shaikh Sadruddin, and the son of Khan Sahib Fath Muhammad Khan. (Malerkotla website)

[78] Salim Mohammed, "Shrine of Shaikh Sadruddin at Malerkotla: History, Politics and Culture," in *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, eds. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur. (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009), 359.

[79] Ibid., 359.

about. The more popular of the two versions points to "the genesis of Maler [being] linked with Raja Maler Singh, who constructed a fort near the village Bhumsi and named it Malergarh. The new settlement, which emerged in the vicinity assumed the name of the fort and came to be called Maler."[80] The other account is "recorded in Rose's *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province*, an aged Muslim woman, named Mali, became the first follower of Shaikh Sadruddin (Haidar Shaikh) and from her Maler takes its name."[81]

As for the name Kotla, "Kotla derives its origin from Kot, which means a walled area. Kotla was a walled town with seven gates" was built just South of Maler.[82] Delhi Gate can be seen in Figure 1. It was not until two and a half centuries after the construction of Kotla that Maler and Kotla were combined by "Nawab Ahmed Ali, who became the ruler in 1911 AD, [and] constructed the Moti Bazar and linked Maler and Kotla."[83]

B. History of Shaikh Sadruddin

Hazrat Shaikh Sadruddin Sadar-i-Jahan "was born in Darban (Afghanistan) in 1434 AD" and received his "education from Maulana Jamaluddin Khurasani."[84] Shaikh Sadruddin, is also known as "Haidar Shaikh," and he is a saint to the community.[85] The reasons for the Shaikh's migration to India is not known, but Salim Mohammed suggests that "the rise of Afghans as political power in the Punjab might have encouraged Shaikh

[80] Ibid., 359.
[81] Ibid., 359.
[82] Ibid., 359.
[83] Ibid., 359.
[84] Ibid., 360.
[85] Ibid., 360.

Sadruddin to migrate to Punjab and to join his Afghan ethnic fraternity."[86] It has also been suggested that both

> his father and uncle held high offices with the sultan at Delhi. There is ample evidence which testifies that the towns of Chhat and Banur (now near Zirakpur and Chandigarh) were granted to his father. In these towns are located the graves of Shaikh Ahmad Zinda Pir and Shaikh Ghulam Dana, the father and uncle respectively to Shaikh Sadruddin.[87]

Shaikh Sadruddin is described by Salim Mohammed as a "sufi ascetic" and states that the Shaikh might be the only one to combine being both "a recluse and a ruler."[88] Shaikh Sadruddin's origins are from Afghanistan and he was a follower of the Suhrawardi Order.[89] Bahlul Lodi is also believed to have been a part of the Suhrawardi Order because "his grandfather and father had lived for a long time at Multān,[90] the chief centre of the Suhrawardi Order in north-western India."[91]

Shaikh Sadruddin was first married to one of the daughters of Bahlul Lodi, Taj Murassa Begum, in 1454 as well as given authority over 69 villages, "twelve of these were big villages (*mauzas*[92])."[93] In the year 1458, "the ruler of Kapurthala, Rai Behram

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[86] Ibid., 360.
[87] Ibid., 360.
[88] Ibid., 356.
[89] Ibid., 362.
[90] Multān is a city now located in central Pakistan. Multān is "the name given by the Arabs to the ancient Pandjābī city of Mulasthana [… and] became one of the centres of Muslim rule in Western India." Encyclopedia of Islam, s.v. Multān.
[91] Salim Mohammed, "Shrine of Shaikh Sadruddin at Malerkotla: History, Politics and Culture," in *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, eds. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur. (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009), 362.
[92] Mauzas are located in rural areas and are revenue settlements. These communities tend to have very strong social ties. National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh, s.v. "mauzas."
[93] Salim Mohammed, "Shrine of Shaikh Sadruddin at Malerkotla: History, Politics and Culture," in *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, eds. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur. (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009), 362.

Bhatti, gave his daughter [Bhatianiji Begum[94]] in marriage to the Shaikh."[95] Shaikh Sadruddin had four children in all, "a daughter named Bibi Mangi and a son named Hasan" from Taj Murassa Begum, and two sons, "Isa and Musa," from "the Kapurthala Rajput princess."[96] The Shaikh's son Hasan became a *mujawir* of the shrine of the Shaikh. The Shaikh's son Isa "became the subsequent *jagirdar*."[97] The family of the Shaikh remained in power under the subject of the ruler of Delhi, "until 1657, under the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb," when the area "[became] a quasi-independent principality (*riasat-i-Malerkotla*) when Bayazid Khan was granted the title of Nawab."[98] Salim Mohammed points out that the "spiritual domain of Shaikh Sadruddin remained and remains in the hands of Afghan blood," through his son Hasan from the Shaikh's Afghan wife, while "the nawaship was partly Afghan and partly Rajput," through his son Isa from the Shaikh's second wife.

C. The Shrine

The Shrine of the Shaikh is one of the most important structures in Malerkotla. There is a popular belief among the town and devotees of the Shaikh, "the tomb was built by genni (jins) in one night."[99] From the time of the Shaikh's death in 1508 CE until "partition of the Indian subcontinent, the grave of the saint was placed under a tent."[100]

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[94] "History of Malerkotla." *History of Malerkotla*. Accessed October 25, 2015. http://www.malerkotla.co.in/hist.aspx.

[95] Salim Mohammed, "Shrine of Shaikh Sadruddin at Malerkotla: History, Politics and Culture," in *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, eds. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur. (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009), 362.

[96] Ibid., 362.

[97] Ibid., 363.

[98] Ibid., 363.

[99] Ibid., 363.

[100] Ibid., 363.

Following partition "a simple pillared structure was erected which gave the appearance of a canopy."[101]

One of the few pieces of the original shrine, "built five centuries ago," and "constructed with boulders without using any mortar or cement," is the wall that sets the boundary for the shrine.[102] The current structure of the Shrine is quite modern; the pillars that were constructed following the partition were demolished, and in their place, a new building was constructed in 2007.[103] To get to the tomb itself, one must pass through a series of gates; the main gate is situated on the northern side of the compound. Figure 2 illustrates this. After passing through the main gate, one enters into the courtyard where they will walk around the wall, surrounding the tomb on all the four sides, as is demonstrated in Figure 4. While walking towards the tomb, as we see in Figure 5, many devotees can be seen siting along the path wearing green headgear.

On the western side of the courtyard, as we see in Figure 6, "there is a single room (*ibadatgah*) where Shaikh Sadruddin used to sit for meditation," and the "graves of the saint's sons – Shaikh Musa, Shaikh Isa and Shaikh Hasan."[104] On the eastern side of the courtyard, as Figure 7 illustrates, are "the graves of the saint's wife Taj Murssa Begm, grandson Shaikh Sulaiman and three other relatives."[105] On the south side of the

[101] Ibid., 363.
[102] Ibid., 363.
[103] Ibid., 363.
[104] Ibid., 365.
[105] Ibid., 365.

compound stands a more modern second gate, which leads devotees into the main tomb area. We see this in Figure 8.

The tomb of the Shaikh, pictured in Figured 9, is a six-pillared structure, "which is covered by an onion-shaped dome. The inner side of the dome, in Figures 10 and 11, is ornamented with mulit-coloured glass work."[106] The shrine also contains "relics of the Shaikh: his silken robe and shoes."[107] Just outside the shrine compound there are two more buildings that have been built more recently, "a mosque for offering prayers (*namāz*) and a pillared hall which accommodates pilgrims coming from different places during the festivities."[108]

D. Festivals

The shrine of the Shaikh holds both weekly events as well as an annual festival. The weekly event is held on Thursdays lasting from 6 AM until Friday morning until around 3 AM and is called "*jumeraat;"* on this day devotees, as we see in Figure 12, "deposit an offering and pray for a favour" from the Shaikh.[109]

During the month "May-June (Jeth[110]) on the eve of *Nirjila Ikadeshi* of *Jeth Sudi*," thousands of pilgrims travel to Malerkotla "from all parts of Malwa, in addition to Haryana, Himachal Pardesh, Calcutta and Bombay," for the "*Mela*[111] *of Haidar*

[106] Ibid., 365.
[107] Ibid., 369.
[108] Ibid., 365.
[109] Ibid., 366.
[110] A month in the Hindu calendar from May 15 to June 15 and is known as an extreme summer month. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "Jeth."
[111] Mela is a Sanskrit word that means gathering or assembly but is often used when referring to "a religious fair, especially one held in connection with a festival." Collins Engilsh Dictionary, s.v. "Mela."

Shaikh."[112] The yearly pilgrimage to the Shaikh's *dargah* "coincides with *jeth Sudi Ikadeshi/ Nirjal Ikadeshi*."[113] In the town of Malerkotla the festivals "*Nirjal Ikadeshi* and the fair held in the revered memory of Shaikh Sadruddin – fuse together."[114] The merging of the festivals shows how Malerkotla has connected despite the diversity of the town.

These festivals have a way of bridging gaps between communities, notes Richard Lannoy when he states, "excessive inter-caste rivalry or sense of exclusivism is countered by festivals in which the entire community co-operates."[115] Devotees often stay for many days during this festival and because "the *dargah* and its adjacent area are considered a spiritually elevated abode of the Shaikh, the devotees sleep on the bare ground, a symbol of submission […] whosoever sleeps on a cot, offends the Shaikh and hence is subject to his wrath."[116] Many of the devotees upon approaching the *dargah* crawl on their "elbows and knees, called *dandaut*."[117] During the festival "devotees get together in groups, beat drums and dance. Many of them go into trance, saying that the sacred soul (*ruh*) of Babaji (Shaikh Sadruddin) has possessed them."[118] During their time at the *dargah* the devotees make their requests from the Shaikh. Many of the devotees enquire about the future or request to "be blessed with a son and to ward off the evil spirits."[119]

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[112] Salim Mohammed, "Shrine of Shaikh Sadruddin at Malerkotla: History, Politics and Culture," in *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, eds. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur. (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009), 366.

[113] Ibid., 367.

[114] Ibid., 367.

[115] Richard Lannoy, *The Speaking Tree: A Study of Indian Culture and Society*, (Oxford University Press, London, 1971), 193.

[116] Salim Mohammed, "Shrine of Shaikh Sadruddin at Malerkotla: History, Politics and Culture," in *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, eds. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur. (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009), 368.

[117] Ibid., 369.

[118] Ibid., 368.

[119] Ibid., 368.

Additionally, "no marriage is considered blessed unless the newly wedded couple visits the *dargah*."[120] A marriage party can be seen entering the tomb in Figure 13.

Businesses have sprung up in the community to distribute memorabilia to the devotees. Items such as green headgear "toys, bangles and poster," as well as "audio-cassettes and CDs […] contain devotional songs relating to the spectacular deeds of Shaikh Sadruddin."[121] Some local writers, "Muhammad Ismail and Muhammad Khalid Zubairi," have also made a living by producing "brochures and booklets narrating the history of the saint and the town."[122]

E. Shared Space

Shaikh Sadruddin's shrine closely fits Hassner's definition of a "civil-religious sacred space" in that,

> Civil-religious sacred spaces are secular spaces, such as memorials, cemeteries, or museums, that serve emotive and ritualistic functions for a nation that parallel the functions sacred space serves for a religious movement. Instead of offering access to the divine, civil-religious sacred space provides the community with the means for visualizing, celebrating, and memorializing the nation, both past and present. [123]

For the town of Malerkotla and the devotees of the Shaikh, the shrine compound is very much a sacred space as well as a reminder of their past. Often, institutions such as this

[120] Ibid., 369.
[121] Ibid., 369.
[122] Ibid., 369.
[123] Ron E. Hassner. *War on Sacred Grounds*. (New York: Cornell University Press, 2009), 166.

shrine, according to Randhawa Karenjot Bhangoo, "serve as powerful markers of spirituality and religion are key components of civil society."[124]

There are a number of different ways that the Shaikh's memory is kept alive by the town and devotees, Salim Mohammed notes that these include, "the *dargāh*[125] and festivities,"[…] "*khalīfas,*[126] pamphlets and audio-video cassettes."[127] Over time as the legacy of the Shaikh has grown the importance of the shrine has increased. According to Richard M. Eaton, "if a living Sufi had only minimal influence in the religious life of non-Muslim Indians, a deceased Sufi, especially one blessed with sainthood by the local population, could literally work miracles."[128] The influence of the shrine has the ability to continually influence people's lives over a long period of time, as long as the structure is maintained and not lost to the effects of time.

Devotees of the Shaikh are not just Muslim but Hindu and Sikh as well. Civil society in India "is seen as protecting the cultural diversity of communities against the state and is thereby associated with tradition."[129] This is particularly true in Malerkotla, where the population of the three religious traditions is almost evenly distributed. Additionally, in Malerkotla "many of the places used for worship are shared spaces,

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[124] Randhawa Karenjot Bhangoo. *Civil Society in Malerkotla, Punjab*. (New York: Lexington Books, 2012), 23.

[125] "Usually "royal court, palace" in Persia, but in India with the additional specialized sense "tomb or shrine of a pīr ." Encyclopaedia of Islam, s.v. "Dargāh."

[126] A khalīfa "may be the successor of the (alleged) founder of a ṭarīḳa or to the deceased leader of a group of mystics." Encyclopedia of Islam, s.v. "khalīfa."

[127] Salim Mohammed, "Shrine of Shaikh Sadruddin at Malerkotla: History, Politics and Culture," in *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, eds. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur. (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009), 366.

[128] Richard M. Eaton, "Approaches to the Study of Conversion to Islam in India" in David N. Lorenzen, ed., *Religious Movements in South Asia 600-1800*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Second Impression, 2006), 117.

[129] Randhawa Karenjot Bhangoo. "Civil Society in Malerkotla, Punjab." (New York: Lexington Books, 2012), 22.

visited by many people from the different faith communities."[130] These communal gathering places, according to Mohammed, "serve as cross-cutting linkages in which religious exchanges flourish, thereby creating an embedded conflict-prevention structure."[131] Mohammed also mentions, the local narratives of the town also "promote the community's right to peace, resisting the appropriation of larger and more destructive narratives."[132]

The devotees have mixed the lore of the Shaikh "with their respective religious milieus, histories and legends," which helps to facilitate "inter-religious dialogue, strengthens communal harmony, [and] enriches the shared cultural space."[133] Narratives about the Shaikh often transcend the boundaries of historical space, time, and even order. R. C. Temple notes that there is a tendency to "connect all their heroes in some way or the other."[134]

The emphasis is not of the factual authenticity of the stories but rather the meaning and the truth of the stories for the devotees. Stories regarding the Shaikh often contain prominent figures from the devotees' religious tradition. For the Hindu devotees, many believe that "Shaikh Sadruddin and Baba Atma Ram [were] contemporary saints who were intimate friends," despite the fact that Baba Atma Ram a figure from the eighteenth century.[135]

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[130] Ibid., 39.
[131] Ibid., 21.
[132] Ibid., 46.
[133] Salim Mohammed, "Shrine of Shaikh Sadruddin at Malerkotla: History, Politics and Culture," in *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, eds. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur. (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009), 370.
[134] R. C. Temple, *The Legends of the Panjab*, Vol. II, (Patiala, Punjab University, Department of Languages, Reprint, 1963), ix-xi.
[135] Salim Mohammed, "Shrine of Shaikh Sadruddin at Malerkotla: History, Politics and Culture," in *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, eds. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur. (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009), 370.

F. Qawwals and Stories

There are a number of different *qawwals* that hold concerts at the shrine and sing their poetry. This practice is a "method of worship and a means of spiritual advancement."[136] This musical genre is important to not just the town of Malerkotla but also to the region and Sufi communities throughout India.

One *qawwali*, "*darshan Pauan Sangatan*, narrates in the Punjabi vernacular the story of Shaikh Sadruddin, his miracles and his meetings, at different points of times, with Bahlul Lodi."[137] This *qawwal* contains a story of the Shaikh when he was a boy of five,

> At this age, he went to a jungle and returned with a lion while holding the wild savage by an ear. Seeing such a strange sight, the mother of the Shaikh became transfixed with surprise. She approached her husband and revealed the incident. The later asked her not to be petrified. Recognizing the ascetic (*fakkar*) in the person of his son, the father told his wife that the Almighty (*rab*) had bestowed a tremendous power on him (*fakkar di zat nu rab ne bari taaqat bakhshi hai*).[138]

History of the town and the memory of the Shaikh rely on *khalifas*, the spiritual decedents of the Shaikh. Until more recently this history was transmitted orally from the *khalifas* to other devotees. Anna Bigelow, who has conducted much research in the area including interviews with the town people, narrates a story of the Shaikh from a *khalifa*. Bigelow writes,

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[136] Ibid, 372.
[137] Ibid, 372.
[138] Ibid, 373.

> Baba Hazrat Shaikh Sadruddin was a general in the army, but he was a fakir also. Once the king asked him to go somewhere because at that place a revolt was going on. But when the command came to him he took it and threw it on one side because he was doing *zikr* at that time in the Lord's name. So his followers, who were *jinn*, picked it up. The understood that they were given this command and they went to that place and they conquered it. And they got the booty from the people there and the king asked, 'my army didn't go there how were they conquered?' And he inquired [of Haidar Shaikh], 'If my general was here and my army was also here, who went to conquer that place?' He answered, 'Your command came but I was praying and threw it to one side and my followers thought the command was for them so they went there and conquered.' So the king ordered that he [Shaikh Sadruddin] should not be given any work, he should only rest. But he left [the king's service]. Because his secret was laid open in front of every one, which is not good. So his *pir* ordered him to go to Malerkotla and spread Islam there and pray to God."[139]

Malerkotla's history has had a profound influence on the lives of the residents over the last few centuries. The legends and stories of the Shaikh have helped the community, as a whole, to connect with one another, despite their various religious beliefs. The presence of the Shaikh's shrine has allowed for a communal gathering place for residents in the town, as well as non-resident devotees. Through the shrine, stories, poems, and festivals the legacy of the Shaikh continues to bring hope to people in Malerkotla.

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[139] Anna Bigelow, *Sharing the sacred: practicing pluralism in Muslim North India*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Figure 1 Delhi Gate, one of the seven gates that surrounded Kotla.

Figure 2 Main gate to the tomb.

Figure 3 Inscription above the main gate.

Figure 4 Wall surrounding the tomb as viewed from inside the main north entrance.

Figure 5 Devotees wearing green

Figure 6 Graves of the Shaikh's sons.

Figure 7 Tomb of the wife and grandson of Shaikh Sadruddin.

Figure 8 Second gates to the tomb.

Figure 9 Shrine structure.

Figure 10 Tomb of Shaikh Sadruddin

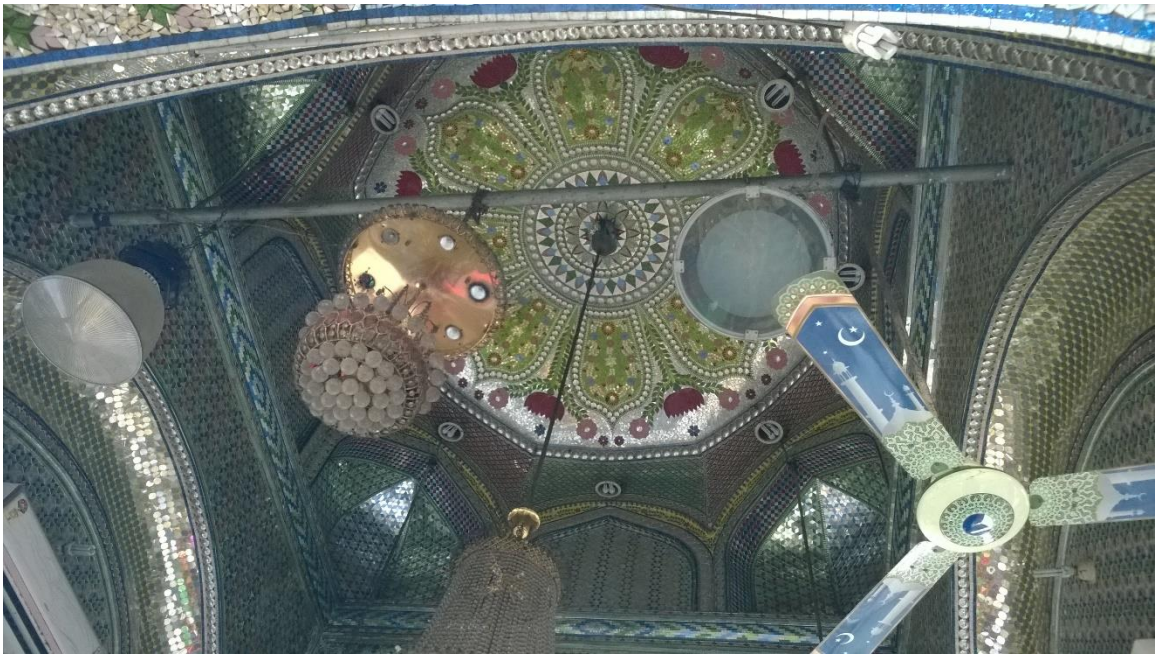

Figure 11 Above the Shaikh's tomb.

Figure 12 Devotees covering the tomb.

Figure 13 Wedding party entering the tomb.

CHAPTER 3

NAWAB SHER MUHAMMAD KHAN

Stories and narratives regarding the history of the town of Malerkotla are of immense importance to the people of the town and even throughout the Malwa region itself. While the last chapter's aim was to delve into the history surrounding the foundation of the town and the lasting legacy of Shaikh Sadruddin; this chapter will look further at the family of the Shaikh following his death in 1508 CE. Additionally, I will explore the history of the region after Shaikh Sadruddin's death and the rise of Sikhism in the region, with an emphasis on the conflict between Sikhs and Muslims. Lastly, this chapter will address the town's narrative dealing with Sher Muhammad Khan and the importance of the blessing of Guru Gobind Singh.

Although the Shaikh's family has been in leadership roles since the Shaikh himself was appointed Balul Lodi, the first five generations of the family were essentially *jagirdars*, and were still under the subsequent rule of the Delhi sultanate and then the Mughal Empire after the fall of the Lodi Dynasty. The title of Nawab was not granted to the family until Muhammad Bayazid Khan Bahadur.

Nawab Bahadur was born in 1593 CE and was only seven years old when his father died leaving the responsibility of the town to him "under the regency of his mother."[140] For the majority of his life Nawab Bahadur was a *jagir* like his ancestors before him. The actions of Nawab Bahadur led to his family obtaining even more power

[140] "History of Malerkotla." *History of Malerkotla*. Accessed October 25, 2015. http://www.malerkotla.co.in/hist.aspx.

over the land they had been entrusted with. Nawab Bahadur joined the military of the Mughal Emperor; he eventually became a high-ranking *manṣabdār.*[141] During his time serving in the Mughal military it is said that he "saved Aurangzeb's life by slaying a charging tiger with a single blow."[142] It was due to this action that he was given a *sanad* enabling him to construct the fortified city of Kotla and allowing him to become an independent ruler. He was granted the titles "Nawab Bahadur, Asadu'llah Jang, and Saif ul-Mulk, from Emperor Aurangzeb in 1658."[143]

The grandson of Nawab Bahadur was Nawab Sher Muhammad Khan Bahadur. Sher Muhammad Khan is a very important figure in the history of Malerkotla and the region. Born in 1640 CE at Fort Kotla, he succeeded his father in 1672 CE. What makes Sher Muhammad Khan stands out from other rulers of Malerkotla he was an "exemplar of moral rectitude and ethical leadership under duress and he is celebrated and remembered for it;" additionally, he is venerated by Sikhs in the Malwa.[144] Salim Muhammad notes, "people of Malwa remembered and still remember the noble gesture of Nawab Sher Muhammad Khan of Malerkotla, who lodged a strong protest against the execution of the two younger sons (*sahibzadas*) of Guru Gobind Singh."[145] His blessing from the Guru is important to the town's history and is seen the basis for the Nawabship remaining in the family for so long; at least until 1971 CE when the Indian Constitution

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[141] A "member of the imperial bureaucracy of the Mughal Empire in India. The *manṣabdār*s governed the empire and commanded its armies in the emperor's name. Though they were usually aristocrats." Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "*manṣabdār."*

[142] "History of Malerkotla." *History of Malerkotla*. Accessed October 25, 2015. http://www.malerkotla.co.in/hist.aspx.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Anna Bigelow, *Sharing the sacred: practicing pluralism in Muslim North India,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 66.

[145] Salim Mohammed, "Shrine of Shaikh Sadruddin at Malerkotla: History, Politics and Culture," in *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, eds. Surinder Singh and Ishwar Dayal Gaur. (Delhi: Aakar Books, 2009), 359.

removed Nawab Iftikhar Ali Khan's position as leader and he essentially became an elected official.

A. Political History of Punjab

During the time of Shaikh Sadruddin, northern India was controlled politically and militarily by the Afghan Lodi Dynasty. The Lodis had come from Afghanistan by way of Multan where Bahlul Lodi's father ruled for some time. Bahlul expanded the boundaries of the dynasty into the Malwa region and conquered Delhi in 1451 CE. By the reign of Ibrahim Lodi, the grandson of Bahlul Lodi, the Mughal Empire was advancing into the region. During the first battle of Panipat in 1526, Ibrahim was killed and Lodi Dynasty fell to the Mughals.[146]

The Mughal Dynasty of India was founded by "a Chagatai Turkic prince named Babur[147] (reigned 1526-30), who was descended from the Turkic conqueror Timur."[148] Babur, whose headquarters were in Kabul, was invited to India by "Dawlat Khan Lodi of Lahore and 'Alam Khan, uncle of Ibrahim Lodi."[149] It was at this point in April 1526 CE that Babur's forces overtook Lodi's army in Radjab. Under the leadership of Shah Jahan, the Mughal Empire continued its progression throughout the northern Indian region and produced great architecture in both Delhi and Lahore. However, it was his son, Aurangzeb, who pushed the boundaries of the Empire and spread the Empire throughout the rest of the Indian subcontinent.[150]

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[146] Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "Mughal Dynasty."

[147] Babur is the Arabic word for tiger; Babur's given name was Zahir al-Din Muhammad. Encyclopedia of Islam, s.v. "Babur."

[148] Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "Mughal Dynasty."

[149] Encyclopedia of Islam, s.v. "Babur."

[150] Encyclopedia of Islam s.v. "Awrangzib."

Aurangzeb was the third son of Shah Jahan and with his illness in 1657, "a war of succession among his four sons" broke out.[151] Defeating all three of his brothers, Aurangzeb then exiled his father and "confined him to Agra Fort, in view of the Taj Mahal."[152] Aurangzeb took power in 1658 and as his empire spread to cover the vast majority of the Indian subcontinent; but in so doing, he weakened the empire. As mentioned before, Aurangzeb appointed Bahadur the Nawab of Malerkotla in 1658, the same year he came to power.

The Mughal Empire lasted a little over three centuries. After the reign of Aurangzeb, who is seen as the last great Mughal emperor, the Mughal Empire steadily declined as a power in India. In the mid-nineteenth century, Bahadur Shah II was exiled by the British Empire to Myanmar.[153]

B. Rise of the Sikh Tradition

The Malwa region and the east Punjab have been center stage in the rise of the Sikh powers. Sikhism's spiritual founder Guru Nanak, "was born of Khatri parentage in 1469 at Talwandi.[154]"[155] Guru Nanak's birth is roughly sixty years after the foundation of the town of Maler by Shaikh Sadruddin. Guru Nanak traveled to Sultanpur under the guidance of his father and entered "the private service of Nawab Dawlat Khan Lodi, the Governor of the province."[156] Leaving the service of the Nawab around the age of thirty, Guru Nanak began traveling throughout India as a preacher. It is also said that he "travelled through Persia and […] visited Mecca and Baghdad."[157] In Guru Nanak's

[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Talwandī is located now in present day Pakistan nearly twenty miles west of Lahore.
[155] Ibid. s.v. "Sikhs."
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.

travels and while he was settled in Kartarpur, he successfully accumulated a fairly large number of followers. Before his death in 1539, he appointed one of his followers, Angad, to the position of guru stating that "his [Nanak's] spirit would dwell in him [Angad]."[158] This has led to the belief among the Sikhs that Guru Nanak's spirit was passed on through all of succeeding gurus in turn.

Sikhism in the region continued to grow as a religious influence in the area but also had political implications as well. The Sikhs rejected the caste system of their Hindu brothers and aligned themselves closely to Muslim communities. The third guru, Amar Das, "cultivated friendly relations with the Mughal Emperor Akbar," who granted Guru Amar Das a large estate.[159] During the time of the fourth guru, Ram Das in the year 1577, Emperor Akbar gave a substantial plot of land for construction of "the sacred tank (meant for the devotional ablutions of the Sikhs) which was afterwards named *amrit sar* 'the pool of nectar." A town flourished around the area and would later become known as the city of Amritsar.

Guru Ardjan took over the position of guru after his father in 1581, beginning the tradition of the position as a hereditary lineage. During the time of Guru Ardjan the *Har Mandar*, which is now widely known as the Golden Temple, was built. Guru Ardjan was both religiously and politically minded and "styled himself *sačā pādshāh* 'the true King.'"[160] Guru Ardjan was responsible for financially helping Prince Khusraw, who rebelled against his father Emperor Jahangir, son of Akbar. After Jahangir defeated his

[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid.

son, Guru Ardjan was imprisoned and held "at Lahore, where he shortly afterwards died."[161]

While the first five Sikh Gurus had been peaceful teachers of their tradition, the sixth guru, Hargovind, began military campaign of the Sikhs. Guru Hargovind raised an army;it is said that he was always accompanied by three hundred horsemen. Guru Hargovind resented Emperor Jahangir and blamed him for the death of his father. As Guru Hargovind's forces grew, the Mughal Empire imprisoned him for a short time. After the death of Emperor Jahangir and the succession of Shah Jahan, a number of battles between the Mughal Empire and Guru Hargovind ensued.[162]

Har Ray and Har Kishan were the seventh and eighth Guru respectively. Har Ray was the grandson of Guru Hargovind. Har Ray had become friends of Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Shah Jahan, which caused conflict when Dara Shikoh's brother Aurangzeb took over the Mughal Empire. With the death of Har Ray in the year 1661, his son Har Kishan took over the guruship at the age of six. Har Kishan was only a guru for three years until his own death in 1664, by way of smallpox.[163] Following the death of Har Kishan the guruship reverted back to the son of Guru Hargovind, Tegh Bahadur. Under the leadership of Guru Tegh Bahadur tensions between the Sikhs and Mughal Empire continued to rise. A popular story about Guru Tegh Bahadur is that he "prophesied the coming of the English and destruction of Mughal power at their hands."[164] Guru Tegh Bahadur was eventually sentenced to death by Awrangzeb in 1675.

[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.

C. Guru Gobind Singh

The son of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh, became the tenth and last human guru of Sikhism. Guru Gobind Singh is the most influential guru in the Sikh tradition because of his foundation of the *Khalsa*, *rahat*, and institution of the *Guru Granth*. Guru Gobind Singh's goal was to unite the *Khalsa* by promoting feelings of equality and "conducted a vigorous was against the caste system."[165] During the late seventeenth century Sikhism began to become more of a threat to the Mughal Empire, which was under the direction of Aurangzeb until his death in 1707.

During Guru Gobind Singh's early life he avoided conflict with the Mughal Empire by retiring to the hills. During these twenty years he prepared himself for leadership by studying "the sacred languages of the Muslims and Hindus and their religions."[166] During this time, he also attempted to gain the support of the people of the area against the Mughal Empire. Being unsuccessful to gain the favor of the people, Guru Gobind Singh tried a more forceful approach by attacking small villages. Chiefs of the villages "united to attack the Guru with an army of 10,000."[167] Guru Gobind Singh opposed them with 2,000 followers, won, and increased his influence in the region.

Continued violence in the area lead to the appeal for help from Aurangzeb. Orders were dispatched to the governor of Sirhind instructing for an alliance to be formed to attack Guru Gobind Singh and his followers. The siege that ensued marked the beginning of the end for the Guru. He was forced to flee to the fort of Anandpur in 1701. The Mughal attackers continued their pursuit, and Guru Gobind Singh, his family, and his

[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid.

followers were forced to leave in 1704. Guru Gobind Singh wore a disguise until he reached Bhatinda. His family attempted to escape to Sirhind but were betrayed and given up to the Mughal leaders.[168]

D. Call for Justice

Arguably the single most important event in the town's history was the *haah da naara* or the call for justice made by Nawab Sher Muhammad Khan. Captured in 1705 CE, Guru Gobind Singh's two younger sons were imprisoned by Mughal forces. The boys were given up to the Mughal authorities by "their servant, a Hindu named Gangu Brahmin," who was supposed to be helping to them escape. Fateh and Zorawar, the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, "were only seven and nine years old at the time of their capture."[169] The two boys were brought to the court of Aurangzeb and pressured to accept the Islamic religion as their own.

Nawab Sher Muhammad Khan was with the Mughal Empire and even fought against Guru Gobind Singh in the battle at fort Anandpur. According to Bigelow those present at the court proceedings included "Wazir Khan, his Hindu advisor Sucha Nand, and a number of regional allies including the nawab of Malerkotla, Sher Muhammad Khan."[170]

Various accounts of the *haah da naara* are present in literature and in the form of oral tradition. Many of the accounts vary on some of the detail regarding the events of the court proceedings and what was said therein. All of the accounts include the boys being pressured to accept Islam, Sher Muhammad Khan's protest and the execution of the

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[168] Ibid.

[169] Anna Bigelow, *Sharing the sacred: practicing pluralism in Muslim North India*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 75.

[170] Ibid, 75.

boys.[171] Often what changes in the accounts of the court proceedings are the words that were spoken. In some of the accounts, Sher Muhammad Khan points to "general moral principles or a warrior ethic."[172] His argument lies in the idea that their battle is against Guru Gobind Singh and to kill him would bring "honor," but to kill the boys would damage the reputations of Wazir Khan.[173]

In other accounts, Sher Muhammad Khan's argument lies strictly on religious moral grounds. An account written by a descendent of the Nawab, Iftikhar Ali Khan, states that Sher Muhammad Khan pointed to *sharia* as the basis for not executing the boys. His interpretation was that it would be a sin and a violation of Islamic doctrine because of their status as non-combatants and innocent children.

In many of the accounts of this narrative, it is mentioned that Sher Muhammad Khan suffered great losses during the battle and that his own brother was slain in the battle. In some accounts of the court proceedings Wazir Khan offers to allow Sher Muhammad Khan the "honor" of executing the two boys.[174] Sher Muhammad Khan not only refuses this offer but also protests the execution altogether. Bigelow notes one Hindu pilgrim as saying that the Nawab's protest "rose above religious differences to the realm of humanity."[175] In Iftikhar Ali Khan's account, he also includes the blessing of Guru Gobind Singh. In this passage Guru Gobind Singh asks if anyone had spoken on behalf of his sons, when he hears of protest made by Sher Muhammad Khan "the hands

[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid, 86.
[173] Ibid 78
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid, 95.

of the Guru were raised in prayer for the Nawab's prosperity saying that 'His roots will ever remain green.' And that from now onwards the Mughal Empire would decline."[176]

Through this chapter, we have seen the rise of the Muslim Mughal Empire as well as the rise of the Sikh community and their shift into a warrior class. Through this history, we have seen both times of cooperation as well as conflict and strife between the two communities. The story does not end with the execution of the two sons of Guru Gobind Singh, but this event is a key point in the History of Malerkotla.

The implications of Sher Muhammad Khan's act of *haah da naara* had a lasting effect on the town and the Malwa region. It was due to this act that throughout the continued rise of the Sikhs into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries while many other Muslim and Hindu towns were attacked, there were specific order not to attack Malerkotla. Sher Muhammad Khan is revered for his actions by the Sikh community in the area who, as we see in Figures 14-16, have even built a Gurdwara in Malerkotla named Haa Da Naara. Following the partition, when asked how the town was able to remain peaceful throughout such a turbulent time, many of the residents pointed to the blessing that Sher Muhammad Khan and the town received from Guru Gobind Singh.

[176] Ibid, 88.

Figure 14 Gurdwara Haa Da Naara

Figure 15 Inside Gurdwara Haa Da Naara

Figure 16 Head Granthi Narinderpal Singh

CHAPTER 4

MEMORY VS. HISTORY

The difference between hagiography and historiography lies in the details. While hagiographies often focuses on the extraordinary life events of the individual, not all of the detail will be historically accurate. This, however, does not mean that there is no historical relevance to hagiographies. According to Novetzke, "scholars have argued that hagiographies are to be read as contextualized histories."[177]

Collective memory works in much the same way. Stelian defines collective memory as "the retro-projectional system consisting of the social representation of the past developed by a social collectivity in order to make sense of its own past."[178] Through the narration of stories, details can change and lose some of their factual demeanor. Memories can become distorted over time; oral stories can become embellished and details can be changed to suit a particular audience. Collective memory is important to the religious lives of devotees not because of its historical accuracy but the meaning it holds for the devotees.

While historians have kept records of the town of Malerkotla's history, what the community in the town chooses to remember tends to differ. Memory in this sense refers to the collective memory of Malerkotla and the stories that most often occur in narration. What the majority remember, or at least focus on, are the leaders and Nawabs that did

[177] Christian Lee Novetzke. *Religion and Public Memory: A Cultural History of Saint Namdev in India.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 35.

[178] Mihai Stelian. "History and Collective Memory: the Succeeding Incarnations of an Evolving Relationship." *Philobiblon* 18 no. 2 (2013), 261.

good deeds and those who are considered pious and just. Over the past five centuries, there have been many leaders of Malerkotla, but the community only reveres a handful of them today. According to Chaitin, "collective memories provide a picture of reality that resides in the public imagination at a given moment that reflects the spirit of the times, its ideologies, and social needs."[179] Why Malerkotla has chosen to focus on the good stories will be examined through the historical accounts and the collective memory that has been transmitted through stories that are perpetuated by residents of the town. The stories that promote peace and harmony among the various religious traditions are told and focused through the historical lens of the events around the 1947 partition and Malerkotla's ability to avoid communal conflict and violence.

Memories can also have an effect on identity and how one perceives oneself. How the past is remembered influences present events and future outcomes. Chaitin states "memories may be altered or distorted to support positive aspects of the self."[180] People in the town focus on positive events of the past and do not discuss events of disharmony among the different religious groups in the town. According to Chaitin, descendants unconsciously choose "the representation of the ancestor's traumatic event as a significant element in their group identity, which can become reactivated when the group senses a danger from 'others.'"[181] This could also be flipped around--wherein the descendants embrace the good events that affected their ancestors and subsequently ignore events which are perceived as negative or harmful to their self-image. This is

[179] Julia Chaitin and Shoshana Steinberg. "'I can Almost Remember it Now': Between Personal and Collective Memories of Massive Social Trauma." *Journal of Adult Development* 21 (2014), 33.
[180] Ibid., 32.
[181] Ibid., 34.

what is seen in Malerkotla today; residents embrace the good from their past and have made it a part of their identity.

A. Leaders over Time

So far two of the major leaders have been examined the founder Shaikh Sadruddin, and his descendant Nawab Sher Mohammed Khan. These two leaders are the most revered throughout the town's history. In fact, Bigelow notes, "few other rulers between Haider Shaykh, Sher Muhammad Khan, and the last two Nawabs who ruled in the twentieth century are remembered at all."[182] The stories surrounding these figures promote the character of peace and harmony that the town identifies with.

Sher Mohammad Khan's actions to save the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh are often pointed to as a reason for the harmonious relationship between Sikhs and Muslims in Malerkotla. In his book, Iftikhar Ali Khan points to Sher Mohammad Khan's actions and the blessing bestowed upon the ruling family and the town by Guru Gobind Singh as reasons why Sikh forces avoided attacking the town. Iftikhar Ali Kkan points to the example of Banda Bahadur, a successor of Guru Gobind Singh, who led a large Sikh army attacking Muslims throughout the Punjab as retribution for the death of Guru Gobind Singh's sons. Banda Bahadur, aware of Guru Gobind Singh's fondness for Sher Mohammad Khan and Malerkotla, avoided attacking the town.[183]

Throughout the five centuries of Malerkotla's history, there were twenty-two rules of the town. The time between She Mohammad Khan's rule and the rule of the last

[182] Anna Bigelow. *Sharing the Sacred: Practicing Pluralism in Muslim North India*. (New York: Oxford University Press. 2010), 66.

[183] Iftikhar Ali Khan. *History of the Ruliing Family of Sheikh Sadruddin Sadar-i-Jahan of Malerkotla (1449 A.D. to 1948 A.D.)* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2000), 39.

two Nawabs was a span of two hundred years, occupied by twelve different nawabs. The relative peace between the Sikhs and Malerkotla was not able to last due to the ever-changing leadership.

During this period in Malerkotla's history, there were many skirmishes between the town and the surrounding Sikh states. The rulers went back and forth between alliances with different princely Sikh states, and finally, in the early 19th century, the British government. Malerkotla remained aligned with the British until their departure in 1947. Along with irritable relations with the surrounding Sikh territories, Malerkotla also suffered from strained relations between the brothers of the ruling family.[184] Following the death of Bhikar Khan, who had two infant sons, Bahadur Khan, Bhikar's brother, took over control of Malerkotla. Iftikhar Ali Khan describes the character of many of his ancestors. In regards to his ancestor, Bahadur Khan, he describes an "overbearing and presumptuous nature."[185]

The last Nawab of Malerkotla was educated in the history of the town and the past rulers and how they chose to rule. While writing the history of the ruling family, Iftikhar Ali Khan did not shy away from being critical of the past rules of Malerkotla. Ruling from 1784 to 1810, Ataullah Khan, Bhikar's youngest brother, is described by Iftikhar Ali Khan as "very fickle minded."[186] He often made preparations to battle against the Sikhs while at the same time paying them large sums of money. These actions put stress on the ruling family, the town, and their relationships with various Sikh communities.

[184] Ibid., 64.
[185] Ibid., 66.
[186] Ibid., 88.

B. Bayzid Khan Bahadur

Nawab Bayzid Khan Bahadur is a figure in the town who is remembered and revered for a few of his actions. While Nawab Bahadur is not as prominently remembered in history as Shaikh Sadruddin or Sher Mohammad Khan, his actions have had a lasting effect on the town and its identity. Stories of his actions appear in various ways in the town and even included in school pamphlets to demonstrate an attitude of cohesiveness between different groups of people in the town.

Bayzid Khan Bahadur was only seven years old when his father died leaving control of Maler to him and his mother who controlled the affairs of the state until Bahadur was old enough to rule on his own. Early in Nawab Bahadur's career, Iftikhar Ali Khan says he united the family and raised a large army to support the Mughal Empire. Nawab Bahadur's reign began while Jahangir was the emperor of India in 1600 CE. Due to Maler's cooperation with the Mughal Empire and the military assistance, Bahadur earned the respect of Jahangir and was given influence at the court in Delhi. Maler's cavalry was also entrusted with escorting the emperor at times. Following the death of Jahangir there was a struggle for the throne of the empire. Shah Jahan eventually ascended to the throne.

Bahadur was interested in expanding his territory and his status through his relationship with the Mughal Empire. While Bahadur was traveling to Delhi to ask for favor, Shah Jahan fell ill, was imprisoned, and his sons struggled for power. Bahadur made the decision to align himself with Aurangzeb. Bahadur and his forces traveled with Aurangzeb and while on a hunting expedition, Iftikhar Ali Khan states that Bahadur "killed a tiger with a single stroke of his sword and thereby earned the gratitude of the

Emperor for saving his life."[187] After Aurangzeb gained the throne, he awarded those who helped him with obtaining the throne. Bahadur earned the title of Nawab and received permission to construct a fort and build a new fortified city. Nawab Bahadur made no delay and quickly returned to begin construction on his fort and city.

During the month of May in 1657, Nawab Bahadur called for two spiritual leaders, one from the Islamic tradition, and the other from the Hindu tradition. According to Iftikhar Ali Khan, "the first was Shah Fazal of the Chishti Order of Sufis and the second Mahatma Sham Damodar, a follower of the Bairagi sect of Sadhus."[188] Together these two saints blessed the new town and prayed that whoever came to the town would settle there permanently and live in peace.

This blessing is remembered by the town of Malerkotla as a symbol of peace connecting different religious groups. This public performance of pluralism helped set the tone for the character of Malerkotla. The residents of the town view this story as a representation of their spirit of cohesion and inter-religious harmony. A resident of the town demonstrated this character when he stated that people in the town are full of love for everyone, regardless of their religious tradition.

C. Kuka Massacre

Another event in the town's history that has become a part of the collective memory of the town is known as the Kuka Massacre and a memorial has been built on the outskirts of the town to remember those who died. The details regarding this event are disputed and the reasons for the attack by the Namdhari in 1872 are contradicted by different accounts.

[187] Ibid., 22.
[188] Ibid., 23.

The Namdharis are a sect of Sikhism and are commonly known as Kukas due to their prayer style of producing loud sharp cries. What sets this sect apart from the majority of Sikhs, according to Bigelow, is their belief "in the continuation of the living personal guru after the death of Gobind Singh."[189] While the majority of Sikhs embrace the Guru Granth Sahib as the final guru. British writers have described the Kukas as fanatics. British sources point to reasons for the attack on Malerkotla as a protest against the slaughtering of cows by the British and Muslims of the town. It is known that the Kukas are against cow slaughter and other sources corroborate this reason. However, other accounts include other details of the attack, which could help determine more motives.

Bigelow states that Namdhari sources say, "the attack on Malerkotla was prompted by their opposition to the British presence there, the killing of cows by the British and the Muslims, and the worship of saints."[190] The Punjab was the last district that the British was able to infiltrate and they met much resistance by Sikhs early on. However, the attack on Malerkotla was more than just violence. Accounts of the attack also include looting of houses, the treasury, and the stables. Punjabi historians have made the claim that the Kukas attacked Malerkotla because they wanted weapons and the town was an easy target.

While the motives of the attack differ depending on the source, the attack on Malerkotla is not what sticks in the minds of the residents. After the attack, the Kukas fled and were pursued and captured by the British. The attackers were brought back to

[189] Anna Bigelow. *Sharing the Sacred: Practicing Pluralism in Muslim North India*. (New York: Oxford University Press. 2010), 73.

[190] Ibid., 73.

Malerkotla, without trial and without the approval of his superiors the British Deputy Commissioner ordered them to be executed. Sixty-six Namdharis, including women and children were put before cannons and executed. The Deputy Commissioner was declared to be insane and removed from service by the British. The killing of these sixty-six people remains as a prominent part of the history of the town.

Over time, the attacks and the massacre of the Kukas have taken on different meanings for the people in the area. Bigelow notes that "Namdhari literature today emphasizes British imperialism and intransigent discriminatory policies as the provocation for their attack.[191] The Namdharis also view themselves as freedom fighters who opposed British colonization. The Kuka Martyrs Memorial in Malerkotla, which was built in 1993, emphasizes these points. See figures 17 and 18. The memorial remembers those who were killed by the British and furthermore remembers them as not attackers of Malerkotla, but as people who fought against and opposed the British rule.

Malerkotla's collective memory and its self-identification as a place of peace and harmony are intertwined. While there is no doubt there has been conflict and times of disharmony between different groups, these details have not stunted how the residents view themselves and the town in which they live. Residents of the town embrace stories that contribute to the positive image of peace and choose to disregard stories that do not. Residents focus their attention on the few ideal examples of leaders that they have had over the course of the town's history.

Even more, the town's collective memory has incorporated the Kuka Massacre as a synthesis between different groups. The memorial brings people from different

[191] Ibid., 73.

religious traditions and unites them as one community. The reasons for the attack by the Kukas are overlooked and the memorial stands as a connection for the community of Malerkotla against a foreign oppressor.

Figure 17 The Kuka Martyrs Memorial

Figure 18 Sixty-six martyrs sixty-six holes

CONCLUSION

Focusing on Malerkotla's past has shown both the good and bad throughout the town's history. By providing a brief history of British rule as well as histories regarding the Mughal Empire and the rise of Sikhism in the Punjab, I hope to have provided a historical context for the anomaly of Malerkotla.

The Indian sub-continent has had many conflicts and shifts in power and political structure over the past few centuries. The culmination of which was the British departure and the Indian people regaining power over their own country. The British departure also divided the country; the resulting partition had disastrous effects.

The details of why Malerkotla is important were examined in Chapter 1. As the only place in the east Punjab with a Muslim majority, Malerkotla seemed an unlikely place for peace to prevail during the partition. Surrounded by much larger Sikh states, Malerkotla's survival depended on maintaining peace. Not only did Malerkotla survive the partition with no communal violence, it also became a safe haven for Muslims traveling across the country.

Chapter 2 focused on the founder of the town of Maler, Shaikh Sadruddin. The importance of this saint to the town encompasses the lives of the devotees and residents of Malerkotla. The tomb provides the devotees with a physical link to the saint as well as a shared sacred site for people of all religious traditions.

The figure of Nawab Sher Mohammad Khan, in Chapter 3, is of immense importance to the residents of the town. The stories that surround this leader have had a

deep impact on the town. Residents of the town and many Sikhs throughout the Punjab remember Nawab Sher Mohammad Khan's call for justice. Many residents of the town have also pointed to the blessing given by Guru Gobind Singh as the reason the town was able to avoid conflict during the partition.

Chapter 4 discussed the difference between history and memory. The collective memory of Malerkotla has shaped the self-identity of the town. Focusing on good leaders throughout its history, Malerkotla has developed an attitude of peace, which it was able to use to avoid violence during the partition. However, even rough times in the town's history are looked back on in positive ways. The Kuka Massacre was a terrible event, but the residents of the town view this as something that bring them together and connects them.

The historical narratives of Malerkotla have shaped the town and its identity. The reasons for the sustained peace during the partition are a result of these stories that make up the collective memory of the town. Both the positive as well as negative stories have had some effect on the town. The residents of the town do not dwell on many of the negative aspect of the town's history, but Nawab Iftikhar Ali Khan was able to learn from his ancestor's mistakes. The historical narratives of Malerkotla have developed an attitude of peace within the town that has allowed the town to reach a state of inter-religious cohesiveness and harmony.

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APPPENDIX A

RULERS OF MALERKOTLA

Years ruled	Name
1449-1508	Sheikh Sadruddin Sadar-i-Jahan
1508-1538	Sheikh Eisa
1538-1545	Khan Mohammad Shah
1545-1566	Khawaja Madood Khan
1566-1600	Nawab Fateh Mohammad Khan
1600-1659	Nawab Mohammad Bayzid Khan Bahadur
1659-1672	Nawab Feroz Khan
1672-1712	Nawab Sher Mohammad Khan
1712-1717	Nawab Ghulam Hussain Khan
1717-1755	Nawab Jamal Khan
1755-1763	Nawab Bhikan Khan
1763-1766	Nawab Bahadur Khan
1766-1780	Nawab Umar Khan
1780-1784	Nawab Asadullah Khan
1784-1810	Nawab Ataullah Khan
1810-1821	Nawab Wazir Ali Khan
1821-1846	Nawab Amir Ali Khan
1846-1857	Nawab Mehboob Ali Khan

1858-1871	Nawab Sikander Ali Khan
1871-1908	His Highness Nawab Ibrahim Ali Khan
1908-1947	Lt. Col. His Highness Nawab Mohd. Ahmad Ali Khan
1947-1948	His Highness Nawab Mohd. Iftikhar Ali Khan