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Sikhs in Pakistan

In one of the many books he published on the Sikhs, W. H. McLeod titled the fifth chapter : who is Sikh ? It is of course significant already that he asks this question, which implies that the definition of who is Sikh is not self-evident, but moreover, he asks it only in the fifth chapter, after having devoted four chapters to Sikhs, the origins of the Sikh tradition, four centuries of Sikh history, and finally Sikh doctrine (McLeod 1989). And as expected, McLeod started the book as follows : « Everyone, it seems, knows how to recognize a Sikh (or at least a Sikh man) and most people seem to have some notion of the general outlook and behaviour to be expected of them ». He goes on on talking of the beard, turban, and possibly a sword (McLeod 1989 : 1). Who is a Sikh ? Especially who is a Sikh in Pakistan ?

For most of the people, the Sikhs are a group easily identifiable by the clothing worn by men, particularly a specific large turban and beard. However, defining who is a Sikh is not always easy. The difficulty can be expressed as follows: is the designation of Sikh limited to those who wear a turban and beard? How to classify in this case the thousands of disciples of Guru Nanak, or of his son Shri Chand, who do not follow this dress code, and who sometimes call themselves Hindus? This question has recently been debated by the interested parties themselves in Pakistan. As a matter of fact, in 2004, when members of the Sikh Gurdhwara Prabandhak Committee in Lahore were appointed, the Pakistan Sikh Council (PSC) in Karachi expressed reservations in this regard, observing there were not enough members from Sindh, because Sikhs from Punjab would consider Sikhs from Sindh as not being « true Sikhs » since they recently converted from Hinduism.

A number of scholars mirror this ambiguity about being Sikh. Sometimes, they call Sikhs only the Khalsa Sikhs, taking it for granted and not deeming it useful to specify it (Kothari and Jasbiskaur 2016) excluding the other followers of Guru Nanak, and sometimes, they call Sikhs all the followers of Guru Nanak. In fact the cleavage between the two groups has been remarkably studied by Harjot Oberoi in his book on the *Constructions of Religious Boundaries* he published in 1994. Following him, different names are given to both groups but the main cleavage is between on one side the Khalsa Sikhs, while the others are called Sahajdharis or Sanatan Sikhs (Oberoi 1994 : 298). The Sahajdharis are divided into sub-groups such as Nanakshahis, Udasis, Nirankaris etc. Beyond the fact that the Sahajdharis did not comply with the dress code of the Khalsa Sikhs, they would also worship other deities and saints than the ten Sikhs gurus.

About the demographic representation of the Sikhs, it is noticeable that the last completed census in 1998 did not provide a distinct category for the Sikhs. They were put in a category named 'others'. Consequently, when the next census was to be organized, the Sikhs launched demonstrations in different cities of Pakistan, but in vain. It is thus difficult to know how many Sikhs are in Pakistan. About the Khalsa Sikhs, they would be about 20, 000 settling in Pakistan. If the Sikh domination is extended to non-Khalsa Sikhs, the number would reach about several millions.

This article deals with the Sikhs as being the community made by Guru Nanak's followers at large, as well as followers of other saintly characters of his religious tradition, such as his son Shri Chand and others. It doesn't focus on the rituals performed by the Khalsa Sikhs, since they are similar with those of their co-religionists settled in India. The issue of the Sikhs in present day Pakistan only attracted the interest of a few scholars. Nevertheless, there are a

number of publications mostly focussing on the architectural legacy of Sikhism. They intended to provide a kind of summary of the different buildings and monuments built by he Sikhs, mostly in Pakistani Punjab, knowing Lahore was the capital of the only ever Sikh empire founded by Ranjit Singh, which lasted between 1799 and 1849, when it will be annexed by the British. The article is divided into four parts : an outline of Sikhism before the independence of Pakistan, the specificity of Sikhism in Sindh, the Sikh legacy in art and architecture, and finally the Sikhs and the State of Pakistan.

1.

Map of Sikh religious places in Pakistan (underlined)



Historical outline of Sikhism in the pre-independant Pakistan

Nanak's travel in the Indus Valley, Shri Chand and Sadhna

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born in 1469 in Nankana Sahib, formerly named Talvandi Rai Bhoi, in Sheikhpura District of present day Pakistan, and subsequently, many of the founding events of Sikhism took place on the territory of present-day Pakistan. Guru Nanak's parents were Hindu Khatri and his father was a merchant by profession. By his birth, he thus belonged to the middle class. The *janam sakhis* related the different travels

Nanak has made during his lifetime. Among them was the travel to Mekka. For this, he travelled along the Indus River and thus visited a number of sacred sites along his way.

He would have spend some time at Hinglaj, in present day Baluchistan, where is located a main Hindu pilgrimage devoted to the figure of the Devi known as Hinglaj. His footprints still testify his coming. Similarly, most of the Sikh sites of Punjab and Sindh claimed to have been visited by Guru Nanak. It constitutes a powerful mean of legitimization, and materially, the final evidence is often provide through the shape of relics, objects who would have been owned by Guru Nanak. Notwithstanding, two sites that played a particularly important role in Guru Nanak's life are located in Pakistan: his birthplace, Nankana Sahib, and Kartarpur, the place where he spent the last eighteen years of his life.

The fourth guru Guru Ramdas was himself born in Chuna Mandli, in Lahore. He was the founder of Amritsar and composed many hymns (about 10%) to be included in the Guru Granth Sahib. On the institutional level, he organized the *masand* system were Sikh community leaders who lived far from the Guru, acted to lead the distant congregations, their mutual interactions and collect revenue for Sikh activities and temple building. Although he had spent only seven years in his native place in Lahore, the *gurdwara* was rebuilt and expanded by Ranjit Singh's wife, Maharani Nakain, as a thank for having a son, named Kanwar Kharak Singh (Shah & Kazi 2012 : 70). The new building was constructed on the pattern of the Harmandir Sahib, in Amritsar, and named Prakash Asthan Ramdas Ji.

Among the other key-events that occurred in the history of Sikhism, there is the martyrdom of Guru Arjan (1563-1606), on the banks of the River Ravi. Guru Arjan was Guru Ramdas's son, and he succeeded him as the fifth Sikh guru, and the first to be martyred. The conditions in which it happened are contested. Guru Arjan is credited with two founding events in the Sikh tradition. He was the compiler of the official edition of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and he furthermore led the foundation stone of the Harmandir Sahib (The Golden Temple) in Amritsar. Guru Arjan was arrested on the order of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, and asked to convert to Islam. Since he refused, he was tortured and finally executed in Lahore Fort. In Lahore, one can find another *gurdwara* devoted to the memory of Guru Arjan, Gurdwara Lal Khooh. It is the very place where, according to Sikh tradition, his jailer Chandu Shah would have kept and tortured him in custody (Shah and Kazi 2012 : 72). There is still the well nearby, where Guru Arjan used to bathe.

Marajah Ranjit Singh built later on a *gurdwara* known as Gurdwara Dera Sahib, on the very place where Guru Arjan was supposed to have passed away. Ranjit Singh's own *samadhi* will be built very close to it, both building being themselves between the fort and the Badshahi Masjid (see below). Guru Arjan's execution is still much discussed among historians, since sources provide contradictory versions. For Mughal sources, it was only a political decision, after Guru Arjan has taken the party of Jahangir's son Khusraw, who had rebelled against his father. But according to Sikh tradition, it was a decisive action aiming to stop the growth of Sikhism, whom more and more Punjabis even Muslims started to follow. Notwithstanding, it is well attested that Guru Arjan met Khusraw, and made a finger-mark of saffron on Khusraw's brow as an auspicious sign. This would have infuriated Jahangir (Richard 1993 : 96-97).

After Guru Arjan's death, his son aged eleven became the sixth guru, with the name of Guru Hargobind. He did constructed the Akali Takht in Amritsar, and once he was returning from Kashmir, he spent some time in Wazirabad. A *gurdwara* was built under the name of

Gurdwara Guru Kotha. On the other hand, two among the most important *gurdawaras* of Peshawar, the capital of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, are devoted to Guru Gobin Singh's followers. Gurdwara Bhai Joga Singh is dedicated to the memory of Bhai Joga Singh, who was one of the five preachers sent by Guru Gobindsingh, the tenth and last Sikh *guru*, to propagate Guru Nanak's message. Gurdwara Bhai Biba Singh was built in the memory of Bhai Biba Singh, who was himself Bhai Joga Singh's follower (Shah and Kazi 2012 : 48-49).

Ranjit Singh and Lahore as the capital of the first Sikh empire

The climax of the Sikhs in present day Pakistan was reached with the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He was born in 1780 in Gujranwala, in present day Pakistan. The Sikhs were then organized in a confederation made of twelve *misls*, the groups of Sikh horsemen whose chieftains (*sadar*) had acquired regional authority over areas of various size. Ranjit Singh inherited one from his father, but when Zaman Shah, Ahdmed Shah Durrani's grandson and heir, invaded the Indus valley, he was able to resist his invasion, and defeated Zaman Shah's general. It allowed him to acquire a great popularity. Later on, he took Lahore in 1799 which was under the control of other Sikh groups, and in 1801, he was proclaimed *maharaja* of the Punjab. In 1802 he took Amritsar, and after paying homage at the Harmandir, he ordered the Temple to be rebuilt in marble and its domes to be covered with gold leaf. The capture of Amritsar added spiritual sanction to Ranjit Singh's temporal powers.

2.

Ranjit Singh

<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/illustration-of-maharaja-ranjit-singh>



According to *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, « The administration of Maharaja Ranjit Singh may be described as a personalized military despotism based on popular will. Designated as the Sarkar Khalsa, it was an absolute centralized monarchy, but liberal and benevolent. » (Singh 1998 III : 484). The kingdom was roughly divided into four principal *subahs* - Lahore, Peshawar, Multan and Kashmir, each headed by a *nazim* or *subahdar*. The hill principalities and territories conquered from the *sardars* paid tribute direct to the State. Ranjit Singh reorganized his army with the help of European officers. Two of them were French, Allard

and Court, and had previously served in Napoleon Bonaparte's army. Ranjit Singh was also an amateur of arts and he welcomed many artists previously employed by the Mughal court in Delhi.

Born in Lahore, Kahrak Singh (1801-1840), Ranjit Singh's eldest son, became *maharaja* of Punjab after the death of his father in 1839. Since then the Sikh empire was torn by the struggles between different factions belonging to Ranjit Singh's family. Finally, the last *maharaja* of Punjab was to be Dileep Singh (1838-1893), Ranjit Singh's youngest son, also born in Lahore. He was five years old when he was proclaimed *maharaja*, and after the second Anglo-Sikh war, the British decided to suppress the empire. Dileep Singh migrated to England and he died in Paris in 1893. While Lahore remained the capital for the entire duration of the Sikh empire, most of the monuments were erected during the long reign of Ranjit Singh. The *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism* counted nine Sikh monuments built in Lahore during the empire, mostly *gurdwaras*, but also *samadhis*, *baolis* (wells), and other commemorative buildings (Singh 1998 II: 546).

Lahore as the centre of nineteenth century Sikh reformism

In the years following the annexation of Punjab, and thus the destruction of the Sikh empire, Lahore continued to play a prominent intellectual role among the Sikhs, although Amritsar was the religious capital. Lahore was then the hub of new religious and ideological movements that culminated with the foundation of the Arya Samaj at Lahore in 1877 by Dayanand Saraswati (Oberoi 1994 : 279). Many Sikhs were much impressed by the reformatory zeal of the Arya Samaj and as soon as in 1879, a Singh Sabha was founded in the same city, whose purpose was the recovery of distinctive Sikh values. Some years before, Sikh literati had succeeded into introducing Punjabi and gurmukhi at Oriental College, providing evidence there was a literature of hundreds of books and manuscripts. Consequently in 1877, a Gurmukhi Department was created (Oberoi 1994 : 283).

Other landmarks in the creation of a distinct Sikh identity were made in Lahore. For example in 1880, Gurmukh Singh started a weekly paper named *Gurmukhi Akhbar* in Punjabi. In 1883, with the support of maharajas and landed aristocracy, he started the Khalsa Press, still in Lahore. The intellectuals of the Singh Sabhas which were booming at the turn of the twentieth century, wanted to formulate a new ideology aiming at « sikhizing the Sikhs », to quote Harjot Oberoi (Oberoi 1994 : 306). For this, they formulated the discourse of the Tat Khalsa. The Khalsa was the name given by the tenth guru Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) to the community he had created through imposing a code of belief and discipline (*rahit*), and the meaning of 'tat' was pure. In fact, they wanted to build a distinct religion only based on Sikh texts, and on the beliefs and rituals that were attached to them.

The main consequence was to give up practices and beliefs concerning non-Sikhs, be they Hindu or Muslim. They were thus prevented to worship Hindu deities, and to visit the *dargahs* of the Muslim saints. One of the targets of the Tat Khalsa was the cult of Sakhi Sarwar, whose sanctuary was located west of Multan, in present day Pakistani Punjab. Ditt Singh, an intellectual from Lahore, published in 1896 a book where he successfully attempted to demonstrate that Sakhi Sarwar had nothing to do with Sikhism (Oberoi 1994 : 308). Other intellectuals belonging to the Tat Khalsa published other books when they condemned other popular practices, such as those related to pilgrimages or festivals on the banks of holy rivers undertaken at the time of certain solar eclipses considered auspicious.

On the medium term, the works undertaken by the Tat Khalsa intellectuals from Lahore were to enlarge the cleavage between them, the Tat Khalsa, and the other Sikhs, which were known under different denominations such as Sanatan Sikhs or Sahajdharis. The vision of the Tat Khalsa was symbolized by the three Gs : guru, granth, and gurdwara. There was no Sikhism outside of them. While the majority of the Sikhs went to rapidly follow the Tat Khalsa's injunctions, others continued to worship, along with the three G-s, Hindu deities and Muslim saints. This was particularly the case in the province located south of Punjab, in Sindh. In 1920, Tat Khalsa reformists founded the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) to manage *gurdwaras* and organize volunteers groups (*jathas*) to wrest control from Udasi *mahants*, who were viewed as corrupting Sikhism with Hindu practices. In a tremendous victory for Singh Sabha reformists, the Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925 legalized the SGPC's custodial role of *gurdwaras*. The SGPC convened committees throughout 1931 and 1932, publishing the *Rehat Maryada* (Code of Conduct) in 1936 to normalize decorum within the *gurdwara* and a distinct Sikh identity composed of belief in the ten gurus, the Guru Granth Sahib, and no other religious allegiance (McLeod 1989).

Nanakshahis and Udasis : the specificity of Sindh

The last quarter of the 19th century was therefore a period of fluctuation in the identification of Sikhs, which is well reflected in the censuses. For example the Lohanas, an important caste of traders in Sindh, were registered as Sikhs in the 1881 census, and as Hindus in the 1891 census (Schaflechner 2018 : 242). In fact, the explanation comes from the fact that the Sikhs of Sindh refused to follow the injunctions of the Tat Khalsa, and therefore preferred to register as Hindus from 1891 onwards. How were they led to make such a decision ? Two main factors can be put forward: on the one hand, Sindh had long been the home of specific Sikh traditions, and on the other hand, it had escaped a form of standardization which had already been undertaken at the time of Ranjit Singh's empire, since Sindh had remained an independent emirate, and Sikhs were therefore not subject to the *maharaja's* authority.

The distribution of the darbars in Sindh

In Sindh, the congregational sites of the Sikhs are more named *darbar* than *gurdwara*. The old Sindhi word of *tikano* is now abandoned. It could be said that the Persian originated word *darbar* is nonetheless used for imposing religious buildings, be they Muslims or Sikh. Furthermore, the *darbars* of Sindh are not related to *maharaja* Ranjit Singh, as it is often the case in Punjab. Nevertheless, they are mostly dated from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and are consequently contemporary of his reign. One of the oldest *darbar* is the Halani Darbar, which was created in 1787. Sadhu Bela, in Sukkur on an island in the Indus River, was created in 1823. According to the traditions of the *darbars*, in both cases a Muslim ruler belonging to the Talpur dynasty played a decisive role in their making, giving the land for free.

A glance at the geographical distribution of the Sikh *darbars* in Sindh would show the majority are located in the northern part of the province. Traditionnally known as Siro, this part borders with Punjab. Most of the *darbars* are affiliated to the Udasi tradition of Sikhism, while most of the followers are Nanakshahis (or Nanakpanthis). In fact, the Nanakshahis are the followers of the Sikh gurus, as well as of the Udasi ascetics. The Udasis are supposed to have devoted their whole life to religion. In other words, it can be said that the cleavage between Nanashkahis and Udasis crossed that between renunciants and householders. The

Udasis are staying in a *darbar* and are not supposed to marry, while the Nanakshahis are married with a family, and they have a job.

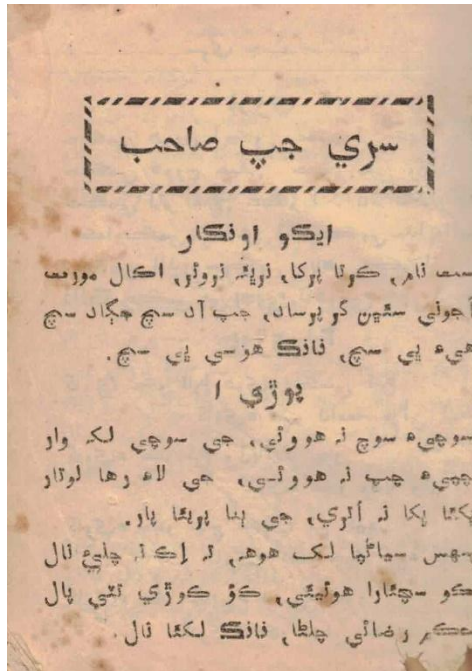
The word Nanakshahis, or Nanakpanthis, were used by the British officers in the nineteenth century, to name followers of Guru Nanak and the Guru Granth Sahib who did not restrict their religious life to them. They were also followers of Hindu deities, as well as of Sufi *pirs*. In a Nanakshahi *darbar*, there were rooms devoted to the Guru Granth Sahib, and others for the Hindu deities. The *darbar* where the Nanakshahis use to attend rituals were mostly run by Udasis. Furthermore, in the Hindu temples, there were and still are always representations of Guru Nanak and often of the Guru Granth Sahib. In the biggest Hindu temple of Karachi for instance, where is the seat of the Pakistan Hindu panchayat, there is a room devoted to Guru Nanak and the Guru Granth Sahib, while the temple is, as its name attests, run by devotees of the Hindu reformist from Gujarat, Swami Narayan (1781-1830). It holds idols of Hanuman, and other Hindu deities. Most of the Hindu families of Sindh have at home a picture of Guru Nanak.

The Lohanas as Nanakshahis

In the 1901 census, the Lohanas formed the bulk of the Hindu population of Sindh. The chief occupation of the Lohanas was trade, money-lending and Government service, which they largely combine land holding. They had no objection to eat meat and drink alcohol, but they burnt their dead. According to the compiler of the 1907 *Gazetteer of Sindh*, the Lohanas called themselves Nanakshahis. Many Lohanas didn't worship everyday, but the religious devotees went in the morning to the *tikanos*, the name given to the Nanakshahi temples in Sindh. They read some verses of the Guru Granth Sahib, and when at home, they recited portions of the *Japji* and *Sukhmani*, two very popular parts of the Guru Granth Sahib, the first being attributed to Guru Nanak, and the second to Guru Arjan. These texts had been transcribed from Gurmukhi script to Arabic-Sindhi script. In the evening, they attended once more at the *tikano* and listen to a reading and exposition by the *bawa*, or priest, of Hindu texts, such as Bhagava Gita, Ramayana or others (Aitken 1907 : 164-165).

3.

Shri Japji Sahib in Arabic-Sindhi script (no place no date, private collection of the author)



Aitken is not very clear, but according to his depiction, it seems that a fraction of the Sindhi Sikhs are Khalsa Sikhs. Indeed, he specifies that they have a beard in contradiction with the laws of all Hindu castes, and that they have separate places of worship called Akal Bhunga, within which no Hindu scriptures are read. They added Singh after their name, let their hair grow. However, they seemed to form a minority since only two Akal Bhungas are mentioned, one in Hyderabad, and the other in Karachi. Originally, the Akal Bhunga was the name of the building erected in Amritsar, opposite to the Harmandir Sahib, on which later on, Guru Gobind Sindh will make the Akal Takht. In their temples, they make the Kanaha Sahib on which, after blessings, Guru Nanak is said to leave the impress of his five fingers (*panja*). Today the Akal Bhunga of Hyderabad has been shifted to Mumbai, where it stands near Mahalakhshmi.

Most of the authors underline the cleavage between Khalsa Sikhs and non-Khalsa Sikhs in Sindh. Nevertheless for U. T. Thakur, who collected data just before partition, the Khalsa Sikhs of Sindh were mostly divided into Namdhari Sikhs, a nineteenth century Sikh sect claiming that the personal line of *gurus* still continue, and Labana Sikhs. The biggest temple of the Namdharis, who were Lohanas by caste, was located at Kandhra, between Khairpur and Rohri in northern Sindh (Thakur 1959 : 142). The Labanas formed a caste distinct from the Lohanas, and they were not anymore involved into trade. They « settled near the banks of the Indus where they led a sort of semi-savage life, and engaged themselves in hunting and making ropes and mats » (Thakur 1959 : 67). The Nanakshahis, for their part, has two sects : the Udasis and the Jagiasis (or Bhais). We already know that the most important temples of the Nanakshahis of Sindh were in the charge of Udasis, and the temple of Sadh Belo, to which I shall return below, was the most important.

Regarding the religious specialists, the Nanakpanthis resorted to different categories of priests. Their « Nanakpanthi » priest were the Bhais or Jagiasis, who married and lived in a family life. But since they were also performing Hindu rites, such as the sacred thread (*janeo*), they were also employing Brahmins. Another sacerdotal group played an important role : the Masands or Gurpotas. They formed an hereditary sacerdotal caste whose members were the descendants of the collectors of religious offerings designated by the gurus. In Sindh,

the Masands were also the religious preceptors of the Bhais, and although they officiated at rites and ceremonies of the Nanakpanthis, they recognised the superiority of the Brahmins (Thakur 1959 : 65).

Other branches of non-Khalsa Sikhism are represented still in today's Sindh. There was for example the group known as Bandai Sikhs. They are the followers of Banda Singh Bahadur (1670-1710), a general of Guru Gobind Singh. He played a leading role in resisting the Mughal army, and but was captured, transferred to Delhi, and finally executed with hundreds of his fighters in 1715, thus becoming a martyr (*shahid*). For a portion of the Bandai Sikhs, Banda Singh Bahadur was the eleventh and last guru of Sikhism. Before they migrated to India, the Bandai Sikhs did not marry with other Sikhs, and they still are pure vegetarians (Singh 2020 : 42). Another portion of the Sikhs of Sindh were Nirankaris. The existence of the Nirankari Sindh is not really informed yet, except in some India websites managed by Indian Sindh is (<https://thesindhuworld.com/who-are-sindh/>). Founded in 1851 by Baba Dyal, a Sahajdhari living in Rawalpindi, the Nirankari Sikhs believe in a living guru, and the Sant Nirankari subsect was excommunicated from Sikhism by the Akal Takht in 1978.

The Gursikhs are, except for *Kesh* (or 5 Ks) Khalsa Sikh in every aspect (Singh 2020 : 44). They don't worship idols, but a fracture could be appearing in their midst : some have become Keshdhari Sikhs, those who wear uncut hair, and Amritdhari Sikhs, those how have been initiated in the Khalsa, who now number about 10,000 in Sindh. Since 2005, these Sikhs have opened number of *gurdwaras* (not to be confused with Udasi *darbars* or *tikanas*) in every town and city of Upper Sindh. Inderjeet Singh rightly pointed out the consequence of the internet spread on the followers of Guru Nanak. As a matter of fact, the rituals as performed at the Harmandir in Amritsar are broadcast by live TV channels every day. This is for example the case of Guru Granth Sahib's 'awakening' ritual in early morning. Every Sikh household in Sindh can attend live. It is not impossible that in the medium term, it could start a partial « Khalsa-ization » of the different categories of Nanakpanthis in Sindh. It doesn't mean the Nanakpanthis would follow the five K overnight, but rather that they would gradually start by refocusing their beliefs and practices on the core of the Sikh religion, namely the cult of the Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib, to the exclusion of the rest.

Sadh Bela, an exemplary Udasi centre

The particular situation of Sikhs in Sindh is reflected in the categories used by the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (PSGPC), the institution in charge of Sikh buildings in Pakistan (see last part of the article below). In the page devoted to the shrines, there are two types of buildings : *gurdwaras* and *mandirs* (<https://www.etpb.gov.pk/shrines-branch/>). In fact there is no authentic count of the number of Nanakpanthi and Udasi buildings, or at least no figures have ever been published. Furthermore, no academic study was devoted to the issue, except two papers by Zahida Jatt (Jatt 2016 and Jat 2017). However, the author of this article can testify that there are a relatively large number of *darbars*, some of them large, that are still active in Sindh.

4.

The Udasi complex of Sadh Bela, Sukkur (Sindh) on an island in the middle of the Indus River
(© Michel Boivin)



The Udasis hold that Guru Nanak bequeathed two lines of succession, one to the householder Angad, the second guru, and the other to Nanak's renunciate son Sri Chand. By the seventeenth century, the Udasis supervised Sikh shrines throughout north India and founded establishments at pilgrimage places, dressing as ascetics to renounce society (Oberoi 1994, 77–80). Headed by a *mahant*, Udasi establishments transmitted education in yoga, meditation, medicine, and commentaries on the Adi Granth, the Vedas, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, and the Shastras though they remained heterogeneous in beliefs and practices (Oberoi 1994, 124–9). As we saw above, the Tat Khalsa succeed into removing the *mahants*'s control on *gurdwaras* in Punjab, but it didn't occurred in Sindh.

Sadh Bela is an island in the Indus River, belonging to the city of Sukkur in northern Sindh. It hosted a number of shrines. According to tradition, Swami Bankhanji, who was a wandering Udasi ascetic, would have come from Nepal to Sindh. The tradition doesn't say where and when he was born. Once he was accompanying two of his disciples on the island for performing the *mundan* ceremony (shaving of the new born's hair), he was « extremely enamoured of its quiet and tranquil solitariness and expiscated it to be the most seemly place for lightning a *dhuni* » (Chaturvedi 2000 : 66). He wished to transform the wild island into a place of pilgrimage, and for this he asked the support of Shri Chand. Shri Chand soon manifested himself before him and instructed him to ask Annapurna Devi for help. The goddess then manifested herself before him (id. 68).

A book published for the centenary of the shrine gave the daily habits of Swami Bankhanji. He woke up at 3 :00 am and after having bath, he offered prayers and devotion to the sun. Then he studied verses from the Guru Granth Sahib. From 10 :00 am, he seated on his *gaddi* (throne) with religious discussion, and instructions to his followers. The morning ended up with religious reading and comment of the Bhagavad Gita. After he had meal and siesta, he instructed again his followers and at night, he was performing yoga exercises. All his successors followed Swami Bankhanji's time-table (Ajwani 1923 : 46). He passed away in 1863 and explicitly asked his followers not to build a *samadhi*. As put by the book, « the Swami fell into a *samadhi* by pranayaman (breath-controlling) method ». It furthermore added that he was « a staunch Sanatinist Hindu, and belonged to the order of Udasin sadhus » (Ajwani 1923 : 49). He was burnt and his ashes were dispersed in the Indus River.

The new *mahant* was Swami Harparshad (d. 1883). He built most of the sacred construction that are numerous on Sadh Bela island, including the well, the Guru Mandir, a port for

accessing to the island with a seven step stair, and cottages for hosting the visitors. Most importantly, it was during his *mahant*-ship that the Guru Granth Sahib was installed in 1873. Later on other temples and sacred spots were built, such as Shri Chand Dev Temple with a big marble statue of Shri Chand, a *patshala* (school), a *pushtakalya* (library), a garden named Guru Shri Bankhandi Bagh, and many others. When the book was published about a century ago, many festivals were organized throughout the year. Main festivals were commemorating birth and death anniversaries of Guru Nanak and Shri Chand. Another festival was devoted to the worship of the Guru Grath Sahib, and to the anniversary Swami Bankhanji. Nonetheless, other festivals were arranged for Krishna, Ram and Lakhshmi.

When partition occurred, the *mahant* Harinamdas decided to migrate to India, and he settled in Kashi, where he expired in 1949. In 1952, the new *mahant* Swami Ganeshdas made a short visit to Sadh Bela in Sindh, and in 1954 he shifted from Kashi to Bombay, where he built a modern Sadh Bela temple near Mahalakhshmi. Although the *mahant* is now living in India, Sadh Bela in Sindh is still a very active Udasi centre of Pakistan. Sadh Bela is under the custody of Evacuee Property Trust Board.

Sikh Legacy in Art and Architecture of Pakistan

According to journalist Rana Tanweer, 90% of Sikh heritage sites would be located in Pakistan (Tanveer 2014). A first report conducted soon after partition counted 130 important historic *gurudwaras* located in Pakistan : 28 *gurudwaras* were built in the memory of Guru Nanak, one in honour of the fourth guru Shri Ramdas, and eight in the memory of the fifth Guru, Shri Arjan Devji. Most of the *gurudwaras* were made of a building, and agricultural land, which went under the control of Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB, see below). The *gurudwaras* are all located in Punjab, while the Nanakpanthi buildings of Sindh are all put as *mandirs*.

As we have seen above, most of the Sikh religious buildings in Punjab were built in the time of Ranjit Singh, and later. The Sikh building par excellence is the *gurdwara*, or guru's place. In 1962, Mohammed Waliullah Khan, who was Superintendent of the Western Circle in Lahore, belonging to the Archaeological Department, published a first book on the Sikh shrines of Pakistan. He found out 130 Sikh shrines : 124 were in Punjab, 6 in Sindh, and 4 in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. According to him, Lahore hosted 12 shrines, and most of the shrines are *gurudwaras*, and to a lesser extend *samadhis*.

The gurdwara as an architectural pattern

In Pakistan, one of the most important Sikh complex is in Nankana Sahib, the birth place of Guru Nanak. It is made of seven *gurudwaras*, starting with Gurdwara Janamasthan, which is supposed to be built on the very place Guru Nanak was born in 1469. He would have spent 35 years of his life at this place then called Rai Bhoi Di Talwandi. The building was commissioned by Ranjit Singh in 1819, to which he added 20, 000 acres of land as endowment to the shrine. The present building is made of a domed square sanctum with a pavilion in front standing on a spacious, raised platform.

Since that 1947 the Pakistan government had permitted 15 Sikhs to stay at Nankana Sahib to carry out routine services at the shrine, but their number was reduced to a bare five in 1968 and, still later, to a solitary Khalsa Sikh who maintains a token attendance with the help of some Sahajdhari Sindh Sikhs. Thrice a year, on Baisakhi (April), death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (June) and birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev (November), the

Pakistan government allows Sikh *jathas* (groups of pilgrims), a few hundred strong each, to visit this and other shrines at Nankana Sahib, Panja Sahib and Lahore. There are two very sacred places in the Gurdwara Janamasthan : the *chawkandi* (a built structure with four pillars and a dome) which marks the birth place of Guru Nanak, and the Palki Sahib, where the Guru Granth Sahib is hosted.

5.

Janamsasthan Gurdwara, Nankana Sahib, Punjab

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/12/sikhs-mark-guru-nanaks-550th-birth-anniversary-in-pakistan>



In terms of architectural style, the Gurdwara Janamasthan follows the same rules as other *gurdwaras* built during Ranjit Singh's rule. The architectural element working as the most explicit identifying Sikh marker is the tower. It is made of several floors, each of them is adorned with a balcony, and *chhatris* (small domed kiosks). The tower is surmounted by a fluted dome, which is characteristic of Sikh constructions of this period. Nevertheless, all the *gurdwara* towers are not adorned with a fluted dome. For example, the domes of Gurdwara Rori Sahib, where Guru Nanak sat in meditation before he was taken as prisoner, are not fluted. Another important feature is the *sarovar*, the pond. At Gurdwara Choa Sahib, it would have been a spring resulting from Guru Nanak's miracle (Shah and Kazi 2012 : 47).

Art historians of South Asia would argue there is an obvious Mughal inspiration in the *gurdwaras*. Although not being such a specialist, it is striking to observe that the space organization of the Gurdwara Janamasthan is reminiscent of the Badshahi mosque in Lahore, especially with the huge court from which all the other elements are distributed. According to the authors of *The Sikh Heritage of Pakistan*, it would express « a harmonious mix of Sikh and Muslim architecture » (Shah and Kazi 2012 : 28). On the other side, the huge size of the building was to reflect the power of the Sikh emperor, as the huge size of the Badshahi mosque, built in 1673-1674, was intended to reflect Aurangzeb's power.

Beside the Gurdwara Janamasthan, Nankana Sahib hosted other *gurdwaras* that are as many markers of the different episodes in the life of Guru Nanak. For example, the Gurdwara Baal Lila was built in the area where Guru Nanak spent his childhood. Rai Bular, the local Muslim ruler would have bequeathed half of his landholdings for establishment and upkeep of the *gurdwaras* of Nankana Sahib. Ranjit Singh bestowed the title of Rai Bahadur on the family's

head and for the 550th anniversary of Guru Nanak in 2019, the new Rai Bahadur was asked to lead the Sikh procession. Other *gurdwaras* are related to miracles performed by Guru Nanak, such as Gurdwara Maal ji Sahib. While he was grazing cattle, he was resting in full sun, when a cobra appeared, and spread its hood, shielding the face of the guru (Shah and Kazi 2012 :32).

Some *gurdwaras* are not related to Guru Nanak or to another Sikh guru. Gurdwara Bhai Joga Singh in Peshawar, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, is dedicated to the memory of a devout disciple of Guru Gobind Sindh named Bhai Joga Singh. Guru Gobind Singh had allowed him to leave Anandpur for his wedding. In the midst of his marriage ceremonies, the call came from the *guru* : he left it at once without completing the wedding. Furthermore, sometimes there are *gurdwaras* in very congested areas of the cities. In Peshawar once again, Gurdwara Bhai Biba Singh was built in the memory of one of the five trusted followers of Guru Gobind Singh he had sent to preach Sikhism (Shah and Kazi 2012 : 48-49). Built in the heart of the city, it doesn't display any marker of Sikh identity.

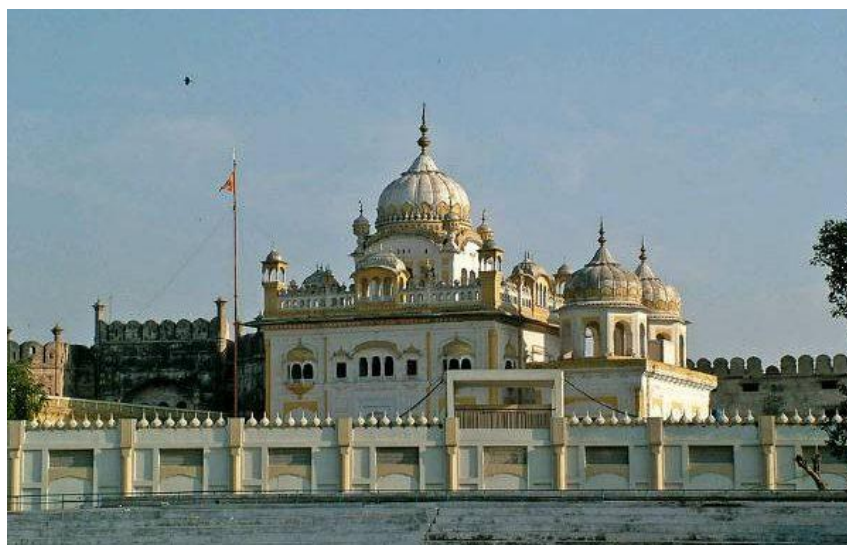
The samadhis and the darbars

The word *samadhi* is here used with the meaning of a commemorative building related to a saintly or divine figure. His ashes, can or can not be put inside the structure. For example, there is Guru Nanak's *samadhi* in the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, in Kartarpur, where Guru Nanak breathed his last. Nonetheless, the most monumental *samadhi* is that of Ranjit Singh, in Lahore. Here, the architectural style and organisation of the space are very close to those of the Sufi *dargahs*. The building is a rectangular structure with balcony on the roof, as well as many towers of different sized. The building is surmounted by a fluted dome, in white marble, as is the whole building. Interestingly, the size of the dome is smaller than the size of the dome of the very close Badshahi Mosque.

6.

Ranjit Singh's samadhi, Lahore (Shah and Kazi 2012)

<https://nationalviews.com/photo-blog-samadhi-maharaja-ranjit-singh-lahore-pakistan>



All the *samadhis* were not built during Ranjit Singh's rule. Especially in Sindh, where he was not the ruler, one can observe their architectural style is different. For example, the complex

of Shri Chand in Thatta hosted a *darbar*, to which I shall return, and a *samadhi*. The *samadhi* architecture follows the regional patterns that appear in the 18th century during Kalhora rule on Sindh. The main difference with the *samadhis* in Punjab is that the dome is not fluted. It is put on a square building, and remind tombs of the Kalhora and Talpur rulers (18th-19th centuries), as well as temples devoted to Jhulelal. A same difference in architectural style can be observed in the *darbars* of Sindh, mostly run by Udasis. Here the dome is not a permanent feature, neither an identity marker.

The *darbar* of Shri Chand in Thatta is without a dome. In fact, contrary to the *gurdwaras* of Punjab, or the Muslim *dargahs* of Sindh, the *darbar* does not share any particular homogenous style. There is a lack of sources to know when and how it was built, but one can hardly find out similarities in terms of space organization, distribution of different built structures, and ornamentation between Shri Chand (Jatt 2016) and Sadh Bela. One can surmise it was due to the autonomy of the Udasi centres, as well as their locality and pragmatism. The *darbars* were built to answer pragmatic and local needs of the population. This fragmented tradition was furthermore more and more submitted to the renewal spread by Hindu organizations from the nineteenth century onwards, such as the Arya Samaj. For Shri Chand, it is amazing to see that most of the rooms are dedicated to Hindu deities, while only one includes Sikh elements, Shri Chand and the Guru Granth Sahib. But it is not possible to state if this distribution started earlier, or if it was the result of the neo-Hindu associations.

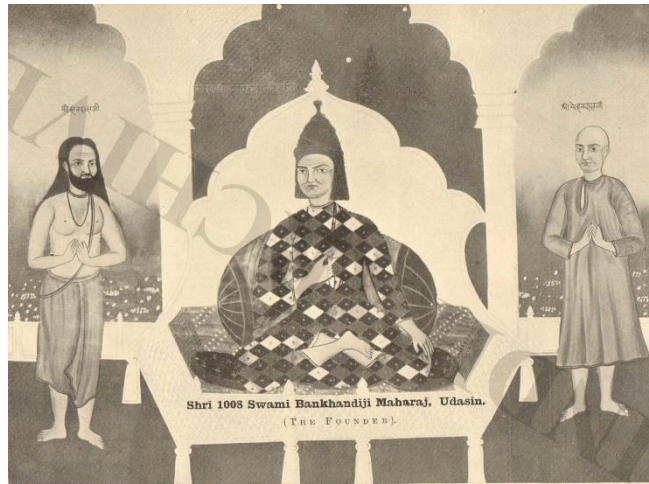
Ornamentation and iconography

Once again, there is a huge flexibility in the ornamentation and iconography, in Punjab and in Sindh. Nevertheless, it has to be reminded that the Khalsa Sikhs banned idol worships, and they removed them from the precincts of Harmandir in 1905. Consequently, the ornamentation is mostly floral or geometrical. Here again, it is often difficult to distinguish if an ornamentation belongs to a Sikh or a Muslim building. Of course, the ban of iconography was not strictly respected everywhere. For example, the Gurdwara Beri Sahib in Sialkot, Punjab, provided beautiful frescos remembering the visit made by Guru Nanak. In one of them, he is welcomed by a procession of women, whom each of them presents a gift to him (Shah and Kazi 2012 : 62).

In this respect, it is thus relevant to highlight once again the cleavage between Khalsa and non-Khalsa traditions. A very varied iconography is to be found in Udasi *darbars*. It can be paintings of statues, or marble sculptures in the round. There are representations of Hindu deities which are not specific. They follow the mainstream modern iconographical patterns of the Devis, Shiva Krishna and others. In Udasi context, most interesting representations are those related to Shri Chand, which always underlined he was an ascetic. The most common image or statue shows him as a renunciant. He only wears a *lungi*, being sat in the lotus position, and with a *tilak* on the forehead. His skin is made with a slight blue colour. The portraits of the *mahants* provided in the 1924 book on Sadh Bela would show an evolution in the presentation of Udasis. For example, the founder Swami Bankhanji is not portrayed on his *gaddi* with short hair, no beard, a cap, and above all a patched cloth, which is reminiscent of the one weared by the Qalandar Sufis (Ajwani 1924 : facing page 56). About the *mahants* who are pictured in the books, only one is in the Udasi attire.

7.

Swami Bankhanji with two other mahants of Sadh Bela (Ajwani 1924)



The complex of Sadh Bela in Sindh provides other samples of Udasi iconography. As a matter of fact, the outside walls of the Shri Guru Mandir are ornamented with many marble sculptures in round. Different scenes can be identified, but the two most important are the representation of hell, and the representation of heaven. Many characters have been carved, to illustrate the delights of the last, and the horrors of the first. Many Hindu deities are also represented, but in a smaller size than Shri Chand. On the columns, there are other characters such as musicians, dancers, or sacred characters. It is amazing to see how numerous the musicians are, with a detailed carving of the different instruments they play. But this beautiful ornamentation is unique in Pakistan.

Generally speaking, the Udasis did not strictly follow the ban on iconography. In the Khatwari Darbar in Shikarpur, there are many sculptures and paintings representing the Sikh gurus, and other sacred figures of Sikhism. In Halani Darbar, rebuilt in 1894 between Khairpur and Rohri, still the huge dome is ornamented with beautiful frescoes mostly representing the dance of Krishna and the gopis, with the *dandias* (sticks) (Kalhor 2014 : 242-243). This famous scene of Hindu mythology known as Krishnalila or Ras lila is very popular in the *darbars* of northern Sindh. There is another famous representation of Krishna on a door of the Khatwari Darbar, carved in wood and covered with silver leafes. Here, Krishna is playing the flute, surrounded with cows and *gopis*. Similarly, he still plays the flute on the marble carved wall of Sadh Bela, but with only two *gopis*.

8.

Frescoes of Krishna and the gopis, Halani Darbar, Sindh (Kalhor 2014 : 244)



The Sikhs and the State of Pakistan

The above depiction could imply that the Sikhs traditions of Pakistan are less standardized and centralized than those of India. For example, the Udasis still dominate the Sikh landscape in Sindh, reminding to some extent a pre-partition situation. On another side, while India is, according to its constitution, a secular state, Pakistan is an Islamic Republic : what does it mean for the Sikhs ? And what are the relations between the Pakistani state and the Sikhs of the country ?

Pakistan and the Sikhs of India

In India, Sikh factions considered that they were the losers of partition, since they had not been granted a state. The executive committee of the Akali Dal, the Sikh political party, passed a resolution in March 1946, claiming the creation of a Sikh state. Nonetheless, the majority of the Sikhs migrated from Pakistan to India in 1947 onwards. For thanking the role played by the Sikhs in the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965, Indira Gandhi accepted to create a state of Punjab in which the Sikhs would form the majority of the population (57, 7% today). Nevertheless, in her desire to centralise and weaken the Akali Dal, Indira Gandhi favoured the rise of extremist Sikh parties that did not hesitate to resort to violence to impose their ideology. They attacked the Hindus in order to use terror to force them to leave the Punjab. these terrorist organisations were often supported by the Sikhs in the diaspora.

One of the groups headed by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale (1947-1984) decided to take refuge with its armed militants in the Harmandir in Amritsar. Since it was a sacred place, the Indian armed forces were supposed not to intervene. Nonetheless, the very day of the martyrdom of Guru Ramdas, in June 1984, Indira Gandhi ordered the Indian army to penetrate in the Harmandir and to kill Bindhrawale's partisans. In November, Indira Gandhi was herself assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards, which was going to cause an anti-Sikh pogrom throughout the country. The Indian secret service was quick to accuse Pakistan of having favoured the development of Sikh terrorism in India. For them, it was obvious Pakistan's main purpose was to weaken India, if not to provoke its desintegration. In the White Paper on Punjab Agitation published by the government of India in 1984, Pakistan was explicitly named.

But it would rather be from 1986 onwards that Ziya ul-Haqq's Pakistan would have offered Indian extremist Sikhs refuge, training camps and weapons. In Sindh, Sikhs had even officially thanked the Pakistani government for its support of the terrorists. In May 1988, a

document based on the confession of arrested terrorists explicitly mentioned that Pakistan had given them refuge and financial assistance. However, Pakistan was not the only country named. After Ziya ul-Haqq's death in a plane crash in August 1988, the government of Pakistan headed by Benazir Bhutto was in a better position towards India, as indicated by the Kashmir talks Benazir had started with Rajiv Gandhi. Nevertheless, Indian authors claimed Pakistan was still involved in creating disorder in Indian Punjab. In 1991, there would have monitored 25 training camps for terrorists, and on 31 August 1996, the assassination of Beant Singh, the Chief Minister of (Indian) Punjab would have been masterminded by Pakistan (Talbot 2010 : 66).

It is always a great pleasure for the Pakistani government and the media to let it be known that Indian Sikhs who wish to make a pilgrimage to the Sikh holy places of the country are welcome to do so. As put by Ian Talbot, « Throughout the post-independence era, Sikh access to shrines in Pakistan had always been a barometer of Indo-Pakistan relations. Its restoration by Islamabad after periods of tension was always a signal of normalization of relations » (Talbot 2010 : 67). In 2005, Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, was administratively upgraded to become the 35th district of Punjab. The government also removed the visa requirements for Sikhs to Kartarpur Sahib, in Narowal District. In 2006, a regular bus service was launched between Amritsar and Nankana Sahib (Talbot 2010 : 72). Notwithstanding, the Mumbai terrorist attack on 26 November 2008 put a stop to this « normalization » of relations between Pakistan and Indian Sikhs, since the Indian government advised its nationals not to travel to Pakistan.

The official protection of the State and the threat of the Islamist groups

As stated in the constitution, Sikhs are one of Pakistan's religious minorities. According to articles devoted to this issue, Sikhs are free to practise, teach and propagate their religion. No one can compell them to practice a religion other than their own. In practice, however, Sikhs suffer various forms of discrimination, mainly due to threats from Islamist groups, especially terrorist groups. As regards freedom and security, the situation of Sikhs therefore varies according to the hold that these groups have in the areas where they reside.

For example, in some areas of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, and moreover in the Tribal Areas, the Taliban impose the *jizya*. The *jizya* is a Shariatic fee imposed on non-Muslims if they don't want to convert to Islam, in exchange for being able to practice one's faith, enjoy communal autonomy, and to be entitled to Muslim protection from outside aggression. Only Sikhs, not other minorities, need to pay this fee to non-state actors, namely militants. Several reports have been received of Sikhs being killed in public places for not paying this protection fee. According to representatives from the Sikh community, there are several groups that demand to be paid this tax. If Sikhs need to travel to Peshawar, they have to pay a tax to Mangal Bagh Afridi (1973-2021), the leader and founder of Lashkar-e-Islam; if travelling to Malakand district, then a tax must be paid to the Fazlullah group; and so on. The amount of the tax is usually about Rs 25,000 (18.88 Euros) per person. Community representatives said that when they raised the issue with government ministers, they are told helplessly that ministers too are paying some sort of fee to buy protection from the Taliban.

For long after the creation of Pakistan, the marriage of the religious minorities was not recognized by the State nor by provincial administrations. When the Hindu Marriage Bill was passed in February 2016, the Sikhs were supposed to be included in the 'Hindus'. The Pakistan Sikh Council protested arguing the Hindu and Sikhs rituals were totally different, and thus asking for a distinct Sikh Marriage Bill. In March 2018, the provincial assembly of

Punjab unanimously passed The Punjab Sikh Anand Karaj Marriage Act 2018 (<http://punjablaws.gov.pk/laws/2698.html>). The bill was tabled by provincial minister Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora in 2017 and was signed by Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif.

The passing of the bill has effectively repealed the Anand Marriage Act, 1909 that was passed under British rule. Previously, the records of Sikh marriages were maintained in the *gurdwaras*, but above all, like other religious minorities such as the Hindus, the Sikh marriage didn't have any legal status. It means that two married Sikhs were not recognized as such by the institutions of Pakistan. And in case of a married Sikh woman was abducted and married by force, after being converted also by force to Islam, she thus would not be able to prove she was already married. With The Punjab Sikh Anand Karaj Marriage Act 2018, the Sikhs are able now to prove they are married.

The management of the religious buildings

As shown above, the Sikh *gurdwaras* are under the control of Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB). The ETPB was created in 1960 to look after the religious places left by the Hindus and the Sikhs. Based in Lahore, it would look after 517 *gurdwaras*. The ETPB is made of six 'official' members, who are all Muslims, and among the eighteen 'non-official' members, there are only eight Hindus and Sikhs. Since 1947, all religious properties of Sikhs came under Evacuee Trust Property Board. On 11 April 1999, Pakistan Sikh Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee was constituted under the ETPB chairmanship. As put on its website, « this organisation is entrusted with the maintenance of Sikh religious institutions, places of worships (Gurdwaras) and the well-being of Pakistani Sikh community. Its main office is situated in Gurdwara Dua Sahib Lahore. » <https://www.etpb.gov.pk/pakistan-sikh-gurdwara-parbandhak-committee-psgpc/>

In 2018, Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, Hindu member of the national assembly, presented the Evacuee Trust Properties (Management and Disposal) Bill 2018 which says that only a Hindu or Sikh should be appointed as the chairperson of the Evacuee Trust Property Board. However, the bill was rejected by the assembly's standing committee on religious affairs in 2019. The ETPB is accused of leasing the sacred places to land grabbers, and for example, a *gurdwara* was transformed in a five stars hotel. The ETPB members are also accused of corruption, since they rent these sacred places to people. Recently in October 2020, the Peshawar High Court has struck down the auction of a portion of the Bhai Beba Singh Gurdwara in Peshawar city by the Evacuee Trust Property Board, following a petition jointly filed by a member of the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Sahib Singh, and five members of the committee of the Gurdwara Bhai Beba Singh.

From 2010 onwards, the Pakistani government seems to want to develop a new policy towards the Sikhs, based on the enhancement of the spiritual heritage they have left in the country, particularly in Punjab. On 24 October 2019, Prime Minister Imran Khan laid the foundation stone for a University named Baba Guru Nanak, ahead of his 550 birth anniversary. It is located at Nankana Sahib, his birthplace, about 75 km from Lahore. The University would be devoted to 'Punjabi Language and Khalsa Studies'. In September 2020, The Government of Punjab, which has allotted 70 acres for the university, appointed the first Vice-Chancellor, Professor Asghar Zaidi, who was already Vice-Chancellor of College University in Lahore (<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/world/pakistan-appoints-first-vc-of-baba-guru-nanak-university-139843>). Later on, in the same context of Guru Nanak's birth anniversary, the University of Narowal in Northern Punjab announced the creation of a Baba Guru Nanak Chair. As we saw, Kartarpur, the place where the tradition claimed Guru Nanak

founded the first community of followers, and where he died in 1539, is located in the Narowal District, and a big *gurdwara* still commemorates the event.

Conclusion

In Pakistan, as in other countries including India, it is relevant to underline the cleavage between two categories of the Sikhs gurus' followers : the Khalsa Sikhs, and the non-Khalsa Sikhs. In Pakistan, the non-Khalsa Sikhs are far more numerous than the Khalsa Sikhs. Furthermore, the majority of the Khalsa Sikhs migrated to India after partition. Consequently, the Khalsa Sikhs are very few, probably some thousands. Still they manage the *gurdwaras* of Punjab, but through the mediation of the PSGBC. Despite the few number of devotees, the main Sikh festivals are performed in these *gurdwaras*. At some periods, the Pakistani Sikhs took benefit from the policy of the government, when it was convinced that their support to Sikh activism in India will destabilise India. Only recently, the government of Pakistan shifts from political activism towards the Sikhs to a more cultural representation of Sikh legacy, especially as expression of Punjabi language and literature.

The situation of Sikhism is different in Sindh. First, because of the domination of the Udasi tradition. The Khalsa Sikhs are never been influent over there, and the Sindhi Udasis have escaped Ranjit Singh's rule, as well as the Tat Khalsa's injunctions from late nineteenth century onwards. The Nanakpanthi and Udasi traditions in Sindh are fragmented, and they both share an integrative process towards the Hindu tradition. Recently, Hindu traditions have also integrated entire sections of Khalsa Sikh tradition. For example, in the religious complex of Jhulelal in Mol Sharif, in west Sindh near Baluchistan, the local tradition is a kind of amalgam of Sikh and Daryapanth, a local Hindu cult, traditions. While Jhulelal is worshipped as the main deity, several rooms are devoted to the ten gurus, as well as to the sacred site of Anandpur, Guru Gobind Singh's capital.

The cleavage between Khalsa and non Khalsa tradition is now a century and a half old. Thousands of Indian Sikhs crossed the borders every year for performing rituals at Nankana Sahib, as well as in other sacred Sikh pilgrimages. On the other side, several of the Udasi *darbars* of Sindh are now officially run by *mahants* who have migrated to India, such as Sadh Bela, Halani, or Khatwari. It is true that it didn't prevent the *darbars* of Sindh to be active, despite the absence of the spiritual head. In the last few years, the spread of internet and the social medias may have initiated a new process. As a matter of fact, they allow the Nanakpanthis and Udasis of Sindh to attend in live the main rituals performed in Harmandir, in the most sacred place of Sikhism, Amritsar. The issue is thus to know whether this new deal will allow, on a more or less long term, to put the two wings of Sikhism closer. Of course, it is not possible to know if the scenario will work but in India, the powerful Khalsa Sikhs have started a process aiming at controlling the Sindhi *darbars*, and to normalize them following the Tat Khalsa's injunctions, as the author was able to observe in Vadodara or in Pune.

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