

*Bai'at* as initiation and succession:

Locating power and its manifestation in two Sufi texts

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In this paper, I will explain the structure of my archive for a study of the mechanism by which Sufi saints claimed power and authority in order to attain the status of *pīr* (master) over the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Using the example of two Chishti saints, Burhan al-Din Gharib (d. 1337, Khuldabad) and Sayyid Muhammad Husaini Gisudaraz (d. 1422, Gulbarga), this paper looks at *bai'at* (the oath of allegiance) as a discursive concept that functioned across a textual neighbourhood (following Rajeev Kinra), and particularly focuses on how the construction of the archive (both by retrospective Sufi literature as well as modern cataloguers) has resulted in current historiographical trends. By studying how separate loci of power accessed the same canonical body in their specific contexts to claim a place in their social world, patterns and links emerge that fracture the picture of a homogenous Chishti brotherhood which had emerged in certain textual traditions by the sixteenth century and is embedded in contemporary scholarship as well.

This paper will demonstrate how this chosen textual neighbourhood aids in studying the explication of power, by looking at Sufi inheritance and succession in its manifold forms. I read repeated norms and forms of conduct that we must interpret both in their physical manifestation as *tabarrukāt* and *khilāfat-nāmas*, and their intangible forms as the performance of the ritual of shaving, as well as rites and rituals associated with conducting an oath. Gisudaraz was the first of his line of *pīr-murīdī* to combine the offices of *sajjāda-nishīn* and *khalīfā* in his son, and to directly justify the manoeuvre in his text. Burhan al-Din, on the other hand, followed the practice of his spiritual preceptors and did not make his choice obvious. While we have parallel histories of *khil'at* (robes of honour, in Stewart Gordon's work) and *tabarrukāt* (relics, in the work of Simon Digby), the matter of initiation and succession was teeming with ritual significance and meaning, and the task remains to historicise this within a Sufi context.