

Srinagar: Tracing the Footprints of Muslim Culture on the Urban Landscape of a City in the Himalayas

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Abstract: Writing in XIth century CE, the Persian scholar and polymath Abu Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni (973-1048CE) provides us with a critical appreciation of India, as well as a detailed and fairly accurate description of the isolated mountainous land of Kashmir. For Biruni, Kashmir represented an abode of Indic learning as well a land marked inaccessible by its location, placing it outside of the reach of Ghaznavid Empire. Well informed about the land, which at this time was closed to outsiders, he writes: "Kashmir lies on a plateau surrounded by high inaccessible mountains... They are particularly anxious about the natural strength of their country, and therefore take always much care to keep a strong hold upon the entrances and roads leading into it. In consequence it is very difficult to have any commerce with them. In former times they used to allow one or two foreigners to enter their country, particularly Jews, but at present they do not allow any Hindu whom they do not know personally to enter, much less other people."

Less a century after Biruni's death we find the mention of first Muslim community in Kashmir/And almost a century after the founding of Delhi Sultanate, Kashmir emerged as the center of Himalayan Sultanate which would open its borders to Sufis, artisans, poets and traders arriving from Persian speaking world, marking the land as the northernmost outpost of Persianate culture. And the materiality of this new 'Muslim culture' would be represented by khanqahs, mosques and shrines of Srinagar, the capital city of Kashmir.

This paper explores the presence of these Muslim sacred spaces in the city and how they contributed to the urban and visual landscape of Srinagar. The paper will examine how sacred spaces linked with Muslim faith emerged as the cultural determinants and visual markers of Srinagar city.

Keywords: Kashmir, Srinagar, India, Muslim Culture, Mosques, Shrines, Sacred Spaces.

Introduction

Somewhere in the later part of the fifteenth century CE, a Persian Sufi, Shaykh Shamsu ad-Dīn 'Iraki (1424-1525 CE) arrived in the court of the Sultan of Kashmir as the emissary of Sultan Husayn Bayaqara (1470-1507CE). In addition to representing the Timurid court of Herat, 'Iraki was also a leading member of the *Nurbakshiyā* Sufi order, and the first individual from this newly established order to visit Kashmir. On his arrival in Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, 'Iraki was received by the nobles of Kashmir on behalf of the Sultan and escorted to

the *khānqāh* (hospice) of Mālik Aḥmad.¹ The *khānqāh* which was located on the banks of river Jhelum in the *mohalā* (ward) of Didmar served not only as a hospice for Sufis but also as a rest house where the Sultans of Kashmir would lodge their guests.² Additionally, it emerges from textual references relating to the period that the facility of free lodging and food at the *khānqāh* was not limited to royal guests only but could be availed by ordinary travelers. At the time of ‘Iraki’s visit, the city of Srinagar had four such *khānqāhs*, in addition to the one in which the Sufi-emissary was lodged. These included the Khānqāh-i Maula (‘Alā-’u ad-Dīn pora), the *khānqāh* of Shaykh Sultan Kubra (Drugjan), *khānqāh* of Shaykh Bahā’u ad-Dīn and the *khānqāh* of Mawlānā ‘Uthmān Makhdūm. The oldest *khānqāh* in city located in the *mohalā* of Būlbūl Lanker though still standing had at that time, fallen in a state of disrepair. During the course of his stay in Kashmir, spread over two different visits, ‘Iraki was responsible for setting up another *khānqāh* in city, Khānqāh-i Nurbakshiya at Zadibal. By the beginning of sixteenth century CE, almost all major Sufi orders with a visible presence in the Persianate world including the *Kubrawyā*, *Suharwardiyā*, *Qadriyā* and *Chistiyā*, had also established *khānqāhs* in Srinagar, with the *Nurbakshis* adding another *khānqāh* on the eastern edge of the city.³



Fig. 1: Shawl map of Srinagar city, SPS Museum Srinagar,
(Source: Sandeep Sangaroo, 2010).

1. Mulla Muḥammad ‘Alī, *Toḥfatū'l-Āḥbāb*, english translation and annotations by Kashinath Pandit (New Delhi: Asian-Eurasian Human Rights Forum, 2009), 77-8.

2. Muḥammad ‘Alī, *Toḥfatū'l-Āḥbāb*, 133.

3. See, Hakim Ghulam Safdar Hamdani, *Tarikh-i Shiyan-I Kashmir* (Srinagar: Ali Mohammed & Sons, 1974).

Four centuries after 'Iraki's visit, the Dogra ruler of Kashmir, Maharaja Ranbir Singh (r. 1857-1885 CE) commissioned a shawl map of Srinagar city (fig. 1) to be presented to Queen Victoria (1819-1901 CE) on her jubilee celebrations.⁴ The *khānqāhs* of Srinagar figured prominently on the map as major urban landmarks around which the cultural⁵ and physical contours of the city evolved. These *khānqāhs* along with the various mosques, *rawzas*⁶ and *imambaras*⁷ mark the presence of Islam in the region, while also giving to the city of Srinagar its sense of place.

A Saint and a Sultan: Making of a Muslim community in Kashmir

Writing in eleventh century CE, the Persian scholar and polymath Abū Rahyān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī (973-1048 CE) provides us with a critical appreciation of India, as well as a detailed and fairly accurate description of the isolated, mountainous land of Kashmir. For Bīrūnī, Kashmir represented an abode of Indic learning as well a land marked inaccessible by its location, placing it outside of the reach of Ghaznavid Empire. Well informed about the land, which at this time was closed to outsiders, he writes:

“Kashmir lies on a plateau surrounded by high inaccessible mountains [...]. They are particularly anxious about the natural strength of their country, and therefore take always much care to keep a strong hold upon the entrances and roads leading into it. In consequence it is very difficult to have any commerce with them. In former times they used to allow one or two foreigners to enter their country, particularly Jews, but at present they do not allow any Hindu whom they do not know personally to enter, much less other people.”⁸

Yet the land located as it was on one of the branches of the Silk route⁹ leading into the Indian sub-continent was never totally devoid of external influences. Kashmir was not only a recipient of traditions from the east, of China and Tibet but at various points of its history also formed a part of wider empires originating from mainland India, like that of the Mauryas under Ashoka, the Kushans under Kanīshkā, the White Huns¹⁰ or the Mughal in the medieval period. This resulted

4. See Janet Rizvi and Monisha Ahmed, *Pashmina, The Kashmir Shawl and Beyond* (Mumbai: Marg, 2009), 107-9.

5. For role of shrines and *khānqāhs* in medieval Indian society see, Nile Green, *Making Space: Sufis and Settlers in Early Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), xiv.

6. Also known as *āstans*, they represent shrines associated with Muslim saints of Kashmir.

7. Literally, “house of the imams,” *imambadas* serve as ritual mourning places for Shii Muslims.

8. Ab-ul Rahim Al Beruni, *Alberuni's India*, vol. II, transl. W.C Sachan (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., ltd. edition, 1910), 206.

9. An early reference to the route links it with the salt trade by referring it to as the salt route; see Kalhānā, transl. M.A. Stein, *Rajatarangini*, 2 vols. (Srinagar: Gulshan Books, 2007), 395.

10. Hermann Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Indian Himalayas* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1969), 1.

not only in the introduction of foreign elements in the overall cultural and social life of the inhabitants of the region, but a certain cross fertilization of ideas, a cultural melting pot. The origin of Kashmiri art-architecture lies in this process of assimilation and selection from plurality of artistic traditions, (fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Martand temple (7th century CE,) showing Greek influences in the persistyle,
© author).

Less than a century after Bīrūnī's death we find the mention of first Muslim community in Kashmir.¹¹ And almost a century after the founding of Delhi Sultanate, Kashmir emerged as the center of Himalayan Sultanate which would open its borders to Sufis, artisans, poets and traders arriving from Persian speaking world, marking the land as the northernmost outpost of Persianate culture.

While the presence of a nascent Muslim community in Kashmir can be traced back to the eleventh century, it was only in the fourteenth century CE that Muslim rule was established in this Himalayan region when a Buddhist chieftain from Ladakh, Rinchāna (r.1320-23 CE)¹² ascended the throne of Kashmir. Immediately afterwards, Rinchāna converted to Islam at the hands of an obscure Sufi saint, Būlbūl Shāh (d. 1327CE). The accession of Rinchāna to the throne, his conversion and the establishment of Muslim rule in the region took place in

11. Kalhānā, *Rajtarangni*, 353, 357.

12. Haider Malik, *Tarikh-i Kashmir*; transl. Razia Bano (Delhi: Bhavna Prakashan, 1991), 40.

the background of political instability and chaos that marked the closing period of Hindu rule in Kashmir – a period, “of progressive political disorganization and consequent economic decay.”¹³

The conversion of Rinchāna does not mark a paradigm shift in the society; in fact it marks a continuation of an older, established order. As a result of Rinchāna’s conversion we see no sudden social transformation or large scale import of foreign ideas – albeit of Islamic values, to replace local traditions. Rinchāna, though now a Muslim was presiding over a court which was no different from that of his predecessors. A desire for stability and continuing court intrigues were the hallmarks of court life not a desire for religious supremacy.

During his short rule of two years, Rinchāna was responsible for constructing a small mosque for the Muslim community of the city, and a *khānqāh* for his spiritual preceptor, Būlbūl Shāh.¹⁴ In the immediate vicinity of the mosque, lies the *mohalā* of Maleech Mar which many contemporary, local historians posit as the residential quarter linked with the earliest of Muslim community that settled in Kashmir. The etymology behind the naming of *mohalā*, as well as situating the first mosque of Kashmir in its neighborhood, strongly suggests the presence of a small, non-native Muslim community in the land. At the time of Muslim inroads into the Indian sub-continent, we find the use of the Sanskrit word “*malecchas*” to denote Muslims.

Based on our understanding of available textual and archaeological evidences, the two mark the beginning of the physical presence of Islamic culture in the city of Srinagar as well as in the newly established Sultanate of Kashmir. And, in their construction the materiality of Muslim culture in Kashmir, its image and the enduring memory that would get associated in succeeding centuries with these sacred spaces both as urban as well as cultural landmarks, was born.

Making of the Muslim Spaces: The Mosque and Khānqāh at Rinchānapura

Located on the right bank of Jhelum river, the mosque of Rinchāna forms a part of a series of religious and secular buildings¹⁵ that were constructed by Rinchāna within the *mohalā* of Rinchānapura, a *mohalā* he established on his accession to the throne. As with many medieval kings, the establishment of *mohalā* by a king or members of the court was seen not only as act of piety but also as a tool of enshrining the memory of the patron in history. The choice of the area for laying the new *mohalā* was governed by established urban patterns, with the life of the city revolving around the Jhelum and the various water channels linked with the river.¹⁶ During the early medieval period of Kashmir, preceding Muslim

13. Kalhānā, *Rajatarangini*, 130.

14. Malik, *Tarikh-I Kashmir*, 40.

15. This includes the palace of Rinchāna.

16. For details see, Hakim Sameer Ḥamdanī, “Srinagar: The Shehar-I Kashmir,” in *Shehar-I Kashmir: Cultural Resource Mapping of Srinagar City* (New Delhi: Skyline publishers, 2010), 22-8.

rule in the region, we find a sustained tradition of establishing major temples and *viharas* (monastery) on the banks of water bodies, particularly Jhelum. This holds especially true of religious institutions whose functioning was interwoven with the daily life of the citizens, especially in urban areas, like Srinagar. The river served not only as the principal source of transportation of good as well as people, but also as a source of drinkable water, used both for consumption as well as for the purpose of morning rituals of ablutions. The *Tuhfa* gives a detailed account of how even in the sixteenth century; elites of the Muslim community such as the *Qādi* and the *Shaykh al- Islām* would solemnize the wedding of their children on the banks of the river, in what can be seen as water rituals originating in the pre-Muslim, native traditions. This included a ceremony of slicing with sword by the bride and the groom, of water poured from a tumbler, near the river bank. In our understanding of medieval period, and the role that religion and religious rituals had on the functioning of city life, it is safe to posit that accessibility to running water was a major ritualistic concern for both Hindus as well as Muslims.¹⁷ The extensive presence of temples, mosques and major *khānqāhs* near the river is indicative of this phenomenon. The specific location of *khānqāhs* and shrines, on prominent turns of the river front accentuates the visual impact of these buildings, rendering them into major urban landmarks figuring prominently in the panoramic view of the river, (fig. 3). This also reflects on their role in the community as markers of community spaces and memory linked to sacredness, piety and religious authority.

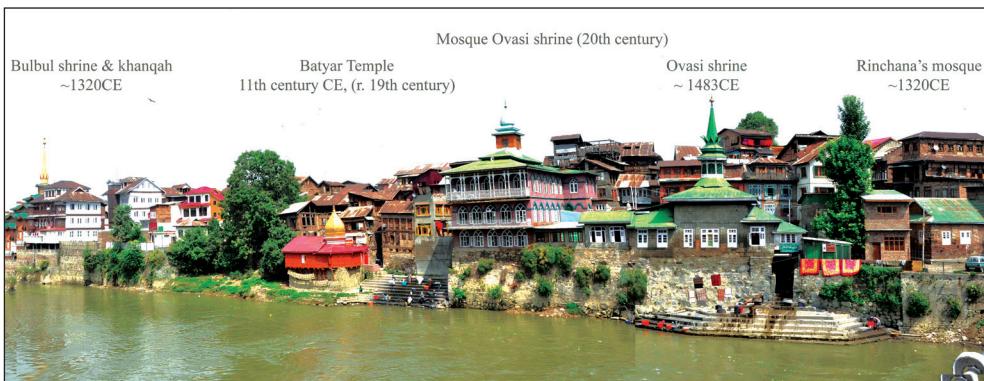


Fig. 3: Jhelum riverfront, with prominent religious places, (© Author, 2019).

The *mohalā* of Rinchānapura occupies around 200m of the riverfront, near one of the most historic stretches of Jhelum within the older parts of downtown Srinagar. Traditionally, the mosque, and the *khānqāh* which is located downstream represent the two extremities of the *mohalā*. The palace of Rinchāna, of which no trace remains is said to have been located somewhere in between the two. The establishment of the mosque and the *khānqāh* in vicinity of the palace is

17. For a nineteenth century CE account of the same see, Baron Charles Hugel, *Kashmir and the Punjab*, transl. T.B. Jervis (Jammu: Light & Life Publishers, 1972), 118.

indicative of the inward-looking nature of early Muslim community in Kashmir, with the palace forming both as the originator as well as the nucleus of the new faith and its adherents. Over succeeding generations this role would be reversed, with saint-shrine-*khānqāh* presenting the community with the matrix of a religio-temporal place independent of the palace. At times the religious establishment would also act as source of resistance against the political authority as represented by the court. The most prominent example of this is the struggle between the Shīi Chak Sultans and Sunni Shaykh Hamaza Makhdūm in the sixteenth century CE in a conflict which took on an increasingly sectarian colour.

The *khānqāh* that Rinchāna built formed a part of established Muslim traditions, where such institutions were invariably associated with the various Sufi orders spread across the Muslim world. Usually translated into “a hospices for religious mendicants,” these *khānqāhs* (*ribāts* in Arabic) evolved into huge establishments comprising rest rooms (*sarāy*), *hammāms*, the main meeting space (*takyye*), kitchen (*langars*) etc.¹⁸ Providing services to the needy and destitute, thus attracting a wide audience, the institution of the *khānqāh* gradually transformed into the nucleus of Muslim proselytizing activities in Kashmir.

Regarding the *khānqāh* of Būlbūl Shāh, a native historian who compiled his account of the region in 1614 CE, remarks upon the prosperous conditions of the *khānqāh* in these words:

“As a result of the abundance of goodwill and purity of disposition of this dervish, the *khānqāh* continues to be in a prosperous state even to this day.”¹⁹

This would indicate re-emergence of the *khānqāh* on the cultural landscape of the city, nevertheless the role of the shrine-complex of Būlbūl Shāh was eclipsed by other major *khānqāhs* and shrines of Srinagar. The *khānqāh* of Būlbūl Shāh, was endowed with the revenue of various villages, enabling it to organize a free *langar* (kitchen) for the poor and the travelers. Though Rinchānapura never assumed a Muslim alone character, nevertheless it retained substantial Muslim majority presence. In the fifteenth century CE the Muslim makeup of the *moḥalā* was accentuated with the burial of the Sufi, Sayyid Muḥammad Ovasi in vicinity of Rinchāna’s mosque. The burial place of Ovasi, who belonged to the powerful dynasty of *Sadat-i Bahiqi*, was transformed into a major shrine complex along the riverfront, adding to the sacredness of the site.

18. For a discussion on the Muslim religious places related to various Sufi orders in the wider Indian context, see Edward W. Troll, *Muslim Shrines in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004). Richard Maxwell Eaton, *Essays on Islam and Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010) provides an understanding of the Muslim culture and construct of the Sufi sacred space in medieval India.

19. Anonymous author, *Baharistan-i Shahi*, transl. K.N. Pandit (Srinagar: Gulshan Books, 2013), 19.

The *khānqāh* of Būlbūl Shāh was repeatedly rebuilt and no traces of the original structure or its spatial layout exist either in textual or visual references or even in terms of site archaeology. Catering to the needs of an alien faith, the local builders in their construction of the mosque of Rinchāna and *khānqāh* of Būlbūl Shāh, responded in a manner wherein the essential functional requirements of the religion were met and fulfilled in an idiom rooted in native traditions. The materiality of Kashmir's Muslim culture as represented by its architectural outpourings may be seen as the physical representation of a syncretic culture which was based on assimilation and adaption while also forging continuity with established native building features and elements. It is interesting to note that in following two centuries of the rule of Sultans of Kashmir, these traditions were developed and sustained under patronage of Muslim rulers, who along with most of their courtiers hailed from areas that were part of the medieval Islamic heartland, comprising Iran and the surrounding areas of Central Asia. The strength of these local traditions was strong enough to outlive the powerful image of the of Imperial Mughal rule which in the XVIth century brought a building style that was developed outside the confines of the valley.

The religious architecture of Islam evolved in Kashmir in an age and milieu when the immigrant missionaries who introduced the religion in the region were deeply conscious about the Islamic-ness of their native social and cultural mores. Individual mystics some of them leading a solitary life of a religious recluse where as much a part of this journey as were communities of wandering missionaries well equipped with zealous preachers and attendants. These group of people undertook what would in those times best be described as a hazardous journey along narrow mountain passes into *mulk-i-kashmir*, the land of Kashmir. Most of these missionaries, who were part of this endeavor to proselyte in Kashmir belonged to Iran or rather the wider Iranian world, of Iran proper as well as parts of Central Asia, especially Khurasan-areas rich with Iranian influences. They acted as conveyors of Islamic values both ideological as well as cultural-acting as agents of cultural ethno-centrism. Self-identifying with the image of acting as Islam's standard bearer in a new territory, they represented not only the religion but the entire cultural outpourings of their native lands, whether it be language, dress or architecture. Yet the architectural style that emerged and came to be associated with Islam in Kashmir remained rooted in local building traditions and rejecting any outside "image manipulation," (fig. 4).

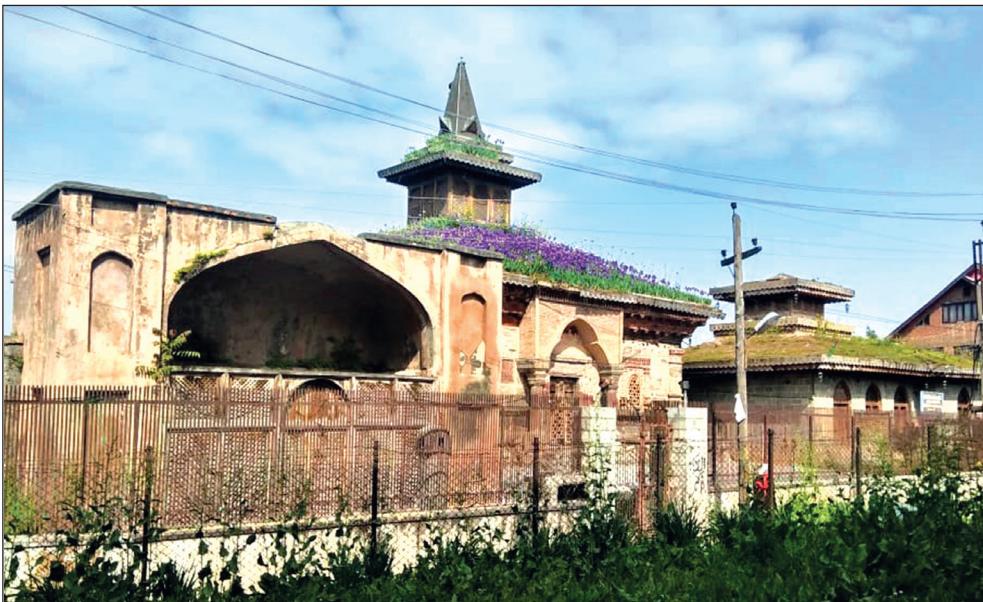


Fig. 4: Mosque of Madni with the quintessential Kashmiri roofline,
© Zubair Ahmed, 2019).

The Architecture and the Urban Setting

If the peculiarity of Islamic architecture was its early concern for monumentalisation²⁰ of even secular settings, in Kashmir during the initial years of Muslim rule the same is not true even for the more religious architecture – an architecture that provides the greatest symbolic context – and thus would benefit from an architecture where scale related and reinforced the meaning of the symbols. A survey of existing surviving Islamic religious architecture from this period in Kashmir, would indicate builder's preoccupation with underplaying the cultural significance of these structures in a manner that could be perceived them to be alien to the land. The appropriateness of early Islamic religious architecture of Kashmir lies in the how it merges with existing cultural landscape to a degree wherein it borrows it not only its language from the local traditions but also de-scales itself so as not to confront the monumental edifices it tries to replace. Seen in the light of what was built before, the religious Islamic architecture of Kashmir emerges as a deliberate attempt of vernacularization of existing architectural language, an attempt to re-humanize the architecture. The mosque of Rinchāna is the oldest surviving representation of this architectural genre and a testament to the syncretism that underpins the experience of Muslim culture in Kashmir.

20. Oleg Grabar, "What Makes Islamic Art Islamic?," in *Islamic Art and Beyond*, vol. 3, *Constructing the Study of Islamic Art* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 248.

The mosque, devoid of any architectural decorative element that would highlight its status as the first mosque in Kashmir, is a small and simple building (7.7m x 7.6m) of uneven stone masonry that lacks of any pretensions of a monumental scale, (fig. 2). The extreme simplicity of the mosques, in a geography that was used to monumental religious edifices,²¹ the use of local materials and local techniques in its construction, is a testament to how Muslim religious edifices during the early period of Muslim rule were built upon a paradigm of assimilation rather than that of conquest and dominion. The absence of a monumental scale in the designing of Rinchāna's mosque assumes greater significance given the locale of the building on the riverfront. During medieval period, as today, the Jhelum riverfront comprises a cohesive urban fabric of residential buildings intermixed with religious architecture. During the fourteenth century the riverfront would have numerous four to five storey buildings standing on top of the stone retaining wall that formed the edge of the settlement. In such an urban situation, constructing a small single storey building is indicative of a conscious attempt to de-emphasize the visual impact of such a construction. This phenomenon associated as it is with the formative period of Muslim religious architecture in Kashmir can also be witnessed at sites outside of Srinagar city, such as the mosque of Mīr at Pampore (c. late fourteenth century CE) or the shrine-mausoleum of Sultan Shamsu ad-Dīn (r. 1339-42 CE) at Anderkote.

Additionally, on examining the earliest extant instances of Islamic iconography used in decoration of religious buildings in Srinagar, we find the messages displayed are more in the nature of encouraging a sense of religious piety in the community rather than propagating the dominating message of a victorious religion. These include the mosque of Sikandar (c.1380 CE approx.) at Madin Saheb and Malik (c. 1473-74 CE) at Safa Kadal, in Srinagar. In both the mosques, the Prophetic saying (Hadīth) “He who builds a mosque for Allah, Allah will build for him likewise in Paradise” is displayed prominently on the main entrance door in bold readable *thuluth* script, (fig. 5). This is in sharp contrast to what occurred in the Indian mainland’s two centuries before, where “one of the principal functions of Islamic epigraphs in late twelfth century CE India was to warn the non-Muslim majority to accept Islam.”²²

21. Of which the medieval stone temple of Kashmir, especially those of Avantipura, Martand and Parhiaspora are the best surviving examples.

22. Anthony Welch, “The Emperors Grief, Two Mughal Tombs,” *Muqarnas* XXV (2008): 271.



Fig. 5: Mosque of Malik Ahmād, entrance door, (© Author, 2018).

From the *Sufa* at ‘Alā-’u ad-Dīn pora to the Khānqāh-i Maula and Beyond

A significant aspect of Muslim rule in medieval Kashmir is the centrality of Srinagar in the political discourse of the region. While many of the Sultans established towns and quarters outside of Srinagar, yet the city continued serving as the capital city, throughout this period. An analysis of the various foreign Sufis who visited Kashmir from the reign of Sultan Quṭbu ad-Dīn (r. 1373-89 CE) down till that of Sultan Zayn al-Ābidīn (r. 1420-70 CE) reveals that of a total of approximately ninety two individuals, sixty are buried in various *mohalās* of Srinagar city.²³ While such a breakdown does not rule out that as missionaries many of those who are buried in Srinagar, would also be engaged in proselytizing outside the capital, it does nevertheless indicate the

23. The overall makeup of this group of non-native Sufis and ‘ulemas included, six individuals from Asia Minor, nine from Indian mainland, two from Iraq and the rest from the Persianate world.

urban character of the various Sufi orders. Additionally the principal *khānqāhs* associated with Sufi orders like the *Kubrawiyya*, *Qadriyya*, *Naqshabandiyya*, *Suharwardiyya*, *Nurbakshiyya* etc, were all located in Srinagar. Orders which operated within the confines of sharia mindedness of orthodoxy linked with the urban culture of the city.²⁴

By the time 'Iraki, the *Nurbakshiyā* Shaykh arrived in Kashmir, the *khānqāh* of Mir Sayyid 'Alī Ḥamdānī at 'Alā-'u ad-Dīn pora had emerged as the principal religious institution of Kashmiri Muslims. The *khānqāh* owed its patronage to the architectural proclivity of Sultan Sikandar (r.1389-1413CE), who constructed it, in remembrance of Mir Sayyid 'Alī Ḥamdānī (1314-1384CE). Sayyid 'Alī Ḥamdānī was the first trans-national Sufi figure to visit Kashmir, and during his brief stay in Srinagar resided in a *sarai*(inn) which was located in vicinity of a Hindu temple at 'Alā-'u ad-Dīn pora. According to Muslim historians and hagiographic accounts, the Sayyid (or the Sultan) undertook the construction of a *sufa* (open air-raised masonry platform) in vicinity of the *sarai*, where he would pray and engage in debate. At the time of Sayyid 'Ali visit to Kashmir there were three to four mosques in the city, but apparently no one would give the call to prayer in these mosques.²⁵

It was only in 798AH/1396CE that Sayyid 'Alī's son Mir Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥamdānī got a *khānqāh* constructed at the site of the *sufa* with the help of Sikandar. While no description of the *khānqāh* from the period survives, we know that the building was a single storey structure that also included ancillary structures like the quintessential *langar*. The *khānqāh* was located in a dense residential locality in close vicinity of private houses. Regarding the extent of the *khānqāh* and its surroundings we know that:

"The foundation and the structure of the *khānqāh* as laid by Amir Sayyid Ḥamdānī made it small and limited. Private houses of the inhabitants (of the locality) and the caretakers were so close to the walls of the *khānqāh* that if a fire would break out in the locality, its flames would engulf the entire *khānqāh* (complex)." ²⁶

The *khānqāh* was rebuilt (898AH/1493CE) and vastly expanded during the reign of Sultan Muḥammad Shāh by his Prime Minister Kaji Chak on the advice of 'Iraki. Private houses and land in the vicinity of the *khānqāh* was acquired and added to the *khānqāh* precinct, which was reconstructed as a double storey building. The expanded site in addition to the *khānqāh* included a public kitchen

24. Mohibbul Hasan, *Kashmir under the Sultans* (Srinagar: Ali Mohammad. & Sons, 1974), 241.

25. See, Sayyid 'Ali, *Tarikh-I Kashmir*, transl. Ghulam Rasul Bhat (Srinagar: Center of Central Asian Studies, 1994).

26. Anonymous author, *Baharistan-i Shahi*, 46.

(*langar khāna*), a pottage house (*āsh khāna*) and store house for paddy.²⁷ The present outer boundary of site confirms to the expansion that were undertaken by Kaji Chak.

The *khānqāh* built by Sayyid Muḥammad was endowed by the Sultan with revenue of three villages. The endowment deed (*waqf nāma*) which is preserved in the *khānqāh* provides an overview of the custodianship of the *khānqāh*, its working and organization. An assured regular (and substantial) income devoted to the *khānqāh*, helped in maintaining the social activities of the institution, of which the free kitchen service (*langar*) was the most significant. In addition to being the setting for close knit fraternity of Sufis belonging to a particular Sufi order, the *khānqāh* also served as institutions of imparting learning (*maktab*), socializing center (*langar*) as well as taking upon the task of congregation prayers (*nimaz-i jamat*) that was traditionally associated with a mosque.

The various *khānqāhs* that emerged in Kashmir would rival mosque both as an institution as well as an architectural edifice throughout medieval times. With a dedicated and learned team of Sufi masters, trained both in the polemics of theology and Sufism the *khānqāh* provided an intellectual leadership that was still unavailable to the community at large, which controlled the local *mohalā* mosques.

The *khānqāhs* of medieval Kashmir helped in shaping the community and the community outlook towards society at large, community relations and the interpretation of Islam. As most of these *khānqāhs* were linked to established trans-regional Sufi orders and operated from urban settings in Kashmir, we see a dominant shift towards a more orthodox, communal and down the lines a pronounced sectarian interpretation of Islam within the urban elites.

The *khānqāh* that Sayyid Muḥammad built would over the centuries help in enshrining the memory of Mir Sayyid ‘Alī Ḥamdānī as the *baniy-e Islam* (founder of Islam) in Kashmir. In this created image of the saint, Sayyid ‘Alī would not only be associated with the propagation of a faith but also projected as the man behind every major art and craft form that emerged in the Kashmir. Popular hagiographic accounts mention that the Sayyid’s entourage comprised seven sayyids, preachers, artisans and craftsmen who settled in Kashmir. Throughout the Kashmir valley and in Ladakh, in Skardu and Baltistan, we find mosques and shrines that are associated with the Sayyid, a proof of his enduring veneration in the memory that Muslims of the region created for themselves.

27. Ibid., 44.



Fig. 6: Khānqāh-i Maula at Srinagar, (© Niraj Kumar, 2019).

While in history we see no evidence of large scale proselytism being undertaken by Sayyid ‘Alī in Kashmir, yet given the cultural developments that followed in the wake of his sons missionary activities, he did attain success. Consequently, Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥamdānī was able to introduce a policy of court sponsored iconoclasm during the reign of Sikandar – an activity which would periodically be reinforced in the valley, especially with the arrival of another Persian missionary, – Mir Shamsu ad-Dīn. Mir Shamsu ad-Dīn was connected to Mir Sayyid ‘Alī Ḥamdānī through an intermediary chain of discipleship comprising Sayyid Qāsim Faizbaksh-Sayyid Muḥammad Nurbaksh and through him to Khawja Ishāq Khatlānī, the principal *khalifa* and son-in law of Sayyid ‘Alī Ḥamdānī. Mir’s activities in Kashmir resulted not only in vandalism of numerous Hindu and Buddhist sites, but also their reappropriation and remaking as places of Muslim identity.

From an unassuming *sufa* to a *khānqāh* and then as *Khānqāh-i Maula* (The Great Khānqāh) the hospices of Sayyid ‘Alī would in the words of the seventeenth century CE Kashmiri historian Dedhmari emerge as the unrivalled

structure of the city, (fig. 6).²⁸ By the end of Muslim rule in Kashmir in the nineteenth century CE, ‘Alā-’u ad-Dīn pora, the name of the ward in which the *khānqāh* was located was increasingly being replaced by that of the *khānqāh*. The Khānqāh-i Maula became the Khānqāh-i mohalā. It was intertwined not only with the religious landscape of the country but also become an integral part of the political tapestry of the land, both in its celebrations as well as dissensions.²⁹ In the sacred geography of Kashmir the *khānqāh* was described as having, “attained the position of the second Kaaba in this country.”³⁰

Additionally, the visit of Sayyid ‘Alī helped in breaking the physical isolation that had surrounded Kashmir. Gradually more and more caravans of *ahl al-‘irfān* (Sufis), *ahl al-‘ilm* (preachers) and *ahl al-sukhan* (artisans) started to arrive in Kashmir – representing the phenomenon of “mobility”³¹ that characterized the medieval Muslim societies of India. A majority of these immigrants linked by bonds of loyalty and membership to various Sufi masters and *silsilas*, not only helped in strengthening their respective *khānqāhs* in Kashmir but also acted as agents of transmission of contemporary learning prevalent in their native homelands, whether linked to traditional sciences, mysticism or artistic trends. The arrival of artisans and craftsmen from Persianate world received a fresh impetus during the reign of Sultan Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (r.1420-1470 CE) who is credited with widespread patronage of arts and crafts, (fig. 7). Most historical references maintain that Zayn al-‘Ābidīn invited craftsmen from all parts of the Islamic world especially from Iran and Central Asia. Indeed, and according to popular legend, Zayn al-‘Ābidīn is said to have spent some time at Samarkand³² before his accession to the throne. Amongst the various crafts that were introduced in this period are the art of making lacquered pen cases known as *kar-i-kalamdan* (papier-mâche), *khatamband* (marquetry art), *pinjrakari* (lattice work), *tilla qari* (gold thread work), carpet weaving and paper making.

When the Mughal conqueror, historian, Mirza Haidar Dughalt (d.1551CE), who briefly ruled over Kashmir as a semi-independent ruler, arrived in Kashmir he recorded his appreciation of the vibrant craftsmanship available in the city of Srinagar. Mirza Haidar hailed from Central Asia and was well versed in the artistic and cultural traditions of the Timurid court, best exemplified by the royal cities of Samarkand and Bukhara. About Kashmiri artisans he records:

“[...] In Kashmir one meets with all those arts and crafts which are, in most cities, uncommon [...]. In the whole of Mavara-un-Nahr, except

28. Khawja ‘Azam Dedhmari, *Waqat-i-Kashmir*, transl. Z. S Azhar (Srinagar: Gulshan Publishers & Exporters, 2003), 90.

29. See Muhammad ‘Alī, *Toḥfatū l-Aḥbāb*, 105, 121 and Malik, *Tarikh-i Kashmir*, 70.

30. ‘Alī, *Tuhfatūl*, 264.

31. See, Green, *Making Space*, xi-xv.

32. Samarkand at that time was seen as the centre of Muslim civilization in the east under the Timurids.

in Samarqand and Bukhara, these are nowhere to be met with, while in Kashmir they are even abundant.”³³

A well-travelled connoisseur of art and literature, the praises of Mirza Haidar reflect the level of artistic excellence that Kashmir had achieved during the medieval period.

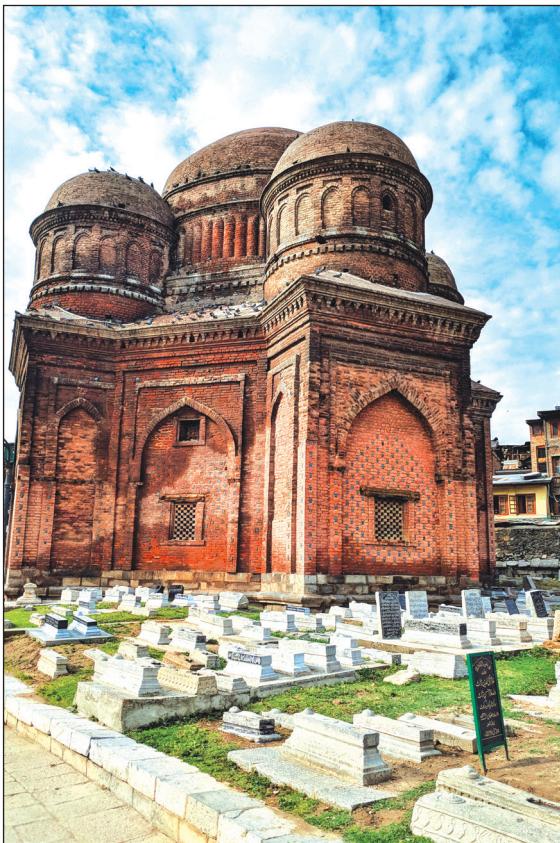


Fig. 7: Mausoleum of Zayn al-'Abidin's mother, Srinagar reflecting Timurid architectural influences, (© Author, 2018).

For the artisan³⁴ community of Srinagar, their crafts and indeed life revolved around the various *khāngāhs* and *rawzas* of the city. These sacred spaces with their spires, overlooking entire neighborhoods, were not only linked with the understanding and practice of the faith, but invariably also operated as the most significant determinant of the urban morphology of the *mohalā* in which the artisans resided and practiced their craft. Festivities, pilgrimage and ‘urs centered on these religious institutions marked the most significant events of community celebrations in the *mohalā* and the city at large. Invariably, in spite of the religious nature of these celebrations, these events also served as important

33. Mirza Haidar Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi: A History of the Moghuls of Central Asia*, transl. E.D Ross (Srinagar: Gulshan Books, 2012), 691.

34. Historically the crafts of Kashmir have been associated with the Muslim community, a trend that continues in contemporary Kashmir.

spaces for commercial interaction between the citizens and the artisan-merchant drawing both Muslim as well as a non-Muslim audience.

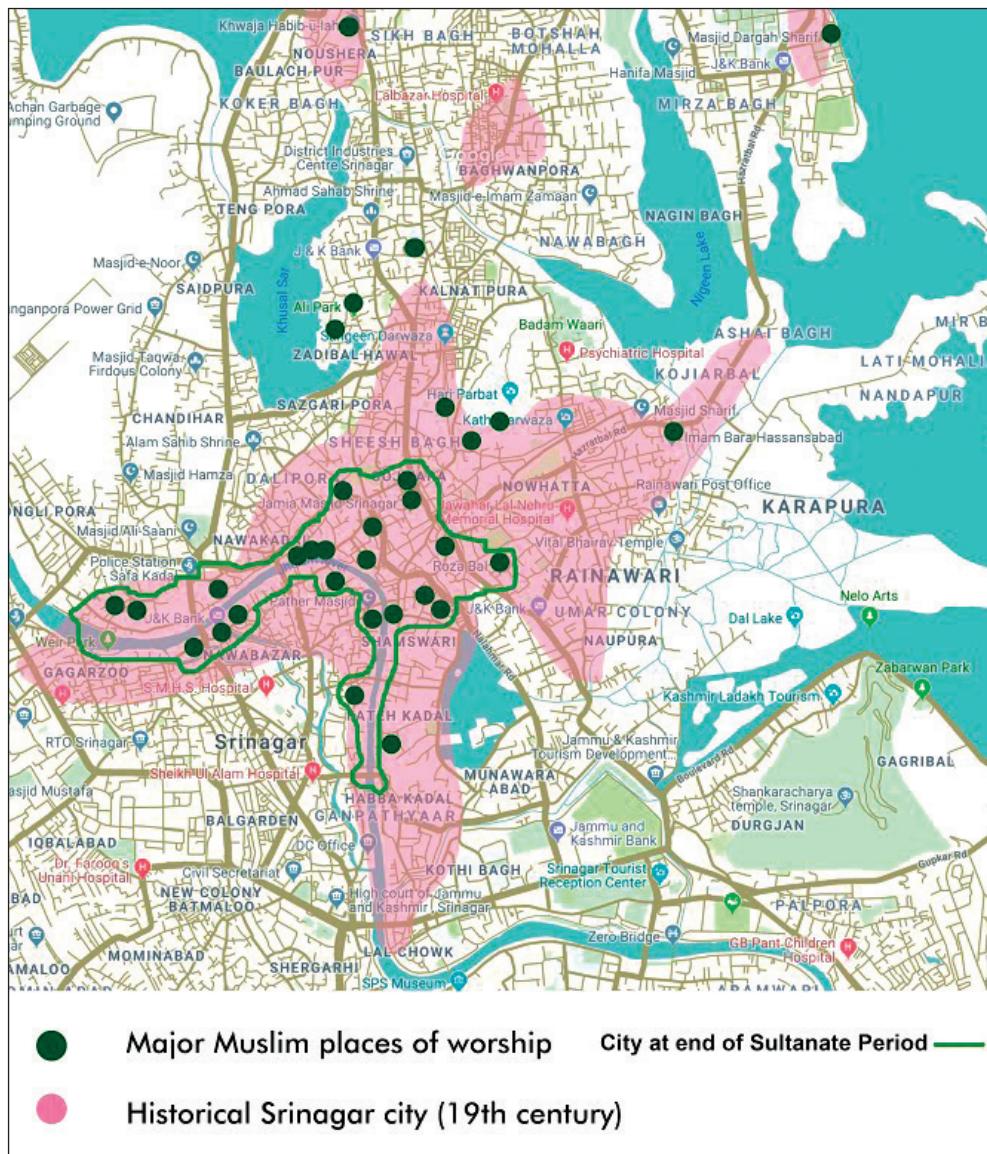


Fig. 8: Map of Srinagar city, (© Author).

Jāmi‘a Masjid, Srinagar: Monumentalizing the Religious Space

The level of influence of immigrant Sufis on the cultural landscape of Srinagar can be observed in the designing of the *Jāmi‘a* at Srinagar. The mosque was the first successful attempt of building at a monumental scale, undertaken by the Sultans of Kashmir. The mosque, in terms of its scale alone is a worthy addition to the overall world survey of fourteenth century CE Islamic religious architecture.

The Jāmi‘a was constructed at the edge of the city near the western flanks of the Hari Parbat hillock. The construction, involved cutting of the slope of the hillock so as to create a large, flat level land required for the construction of the mosque. The traditional approach to the mosque was from narrow streets leading into the city located to the west of the Jāmi‘a, with dense residential areas surrounding the mosque on its south, north and western side. Historically, to the east of the mosque, on the elevated slopes of the hillock were located two major Muslim cemeteries of the city, *Mazar-i Kalan* and *Malkhā*. Thus the mosque served not only as a prominent urban landmark of the city, but till nineteenth century CE also formed the eastern edge of the city, (fig. 9).

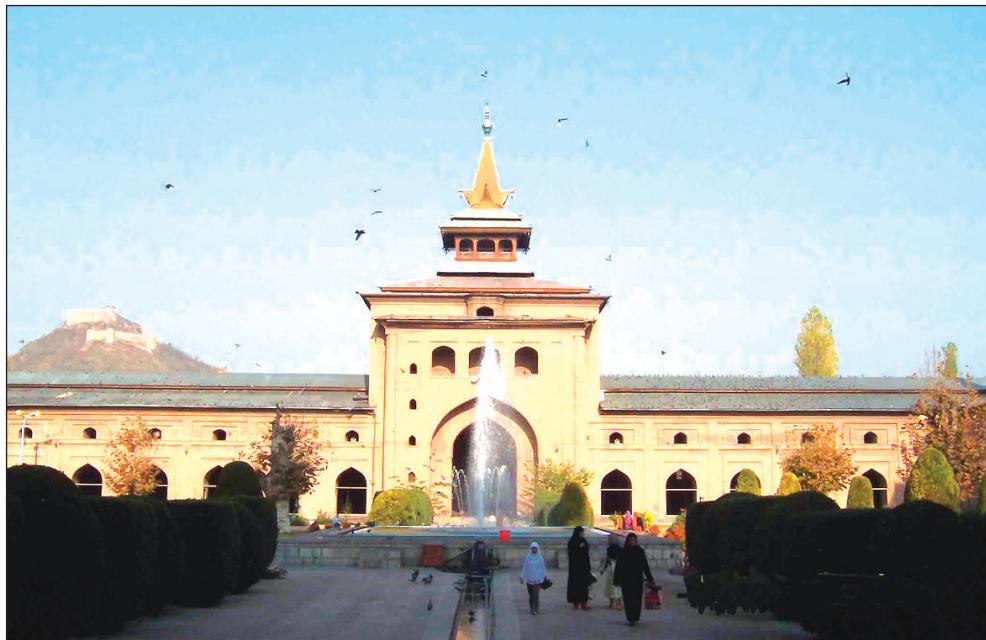


Fig. 9: Jāmi‘a masjid Srinagar, view across central courtyard,
(© INTACH Kashmir, 2007).

The mosque is built on the courtyard plan with four *iwans*³⁵ surrounding a central open courtyard, and the work was completed in 840 AH/1402 CE. The four ‘īwān plan which was introduced in the Islamic world in the eleventh century CE and is associated with the Seljuks, had by now become the most prominent and wide spread form of the Jāmi‘a mosque in Iran. Thereafter it remained essential feature of what has been defined as the Iranian mosque, a form that did not remain confined to the land of its origin alone, but became an accepted model for areas as widespread and diverse as Transoxina and India. The first four ‘īwān mosque in India, the Begampur Friday mosque had been constructed by the Tughlaqs at their capital Jahanpanah (Delhi) in 1343CE virtually around the same time when

³⁵ On the use of four ‘īwāns opening on to a central courtyard, see, Andrew Petersen, *Dictionary of Islamic Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 130.

the Shāhmīrī Sultanate was being set up in Kashmir. The adoption of this plan in Kashmir, nearly a century after establishment of Muslim rule in the region, was complimented by a steady arrival of Persian missionaries and artisans.

Interestingly, while the finest example of the *'īwān*-courtyard mosque in Iran dating back to the Seljuk period, the Masjid-i Jum'a at Isfahan has a central courtyard measuring 59.74m x 70.1m, in comparison, the architects at Srinagar designed the mosque around an impressive courtyard of 71.6m x 76.2m. While there is no implicit record of the desire to outsize the Isfahan mosque, yet the architects must have been well aware of the fact that the Isfahan mosque comprised the largest courtyard mosque of Iran. The desire to out build it could certainly have been there. In fact the author of *Baharistan-i Shāhi*, while recording the construction of the mosque takes obvious pride in the size of his native mosque recording:

“Throughout the lands of Hind and Sindh and the climes of Iran and Turan, one cannot come across a mosque of such grandeur and magnificence, though of course such grand mosques do exist in the lands of Egypt and Syria.”³⁶

The construction of Jāmi'a was followed by setting up of a new capital to the north of mosque, under Sultan Zayn al-'Ābidīn at Nau Shāhr (New City). The rule of Zayn al-'Ābidīn would result in setting up of a court that would be representative of the most transcendent, ecumenical, interactive and pluralistic as well as inspiring period of Kashmiri society under the Muslim rule. Besides constructing the first permanent wooden bridge at Srinagar near Khānqāh-i Maula, Zayn al-'Ābidīn was responsible for expanding the network of water channels within the city. Lachma Khatun the wife of his minister dug a canal, Lachma kul which fed the Jāmi'a masjid with fresh water, the water channel survived until early part of the twentieth century CE. Of Nau Shāhr, the only surviving archaeological trace exists in the form of the mosque and tomb that the sultan constructed for an immigrant saint, Sayyid Muḥammad Madni. The mosque-shrine complex became the nucleus of an urban settlement, even after Nau Shāhr fell in disuse, a settlement which even today goes by the name of mohalā-i Madin Sāheb, (fig. 4).

Major Muslim religious institutions that came up along the riverfront during the Sultanate period, include the shrine complex of Sayyid Muḥammad 'Amīn (Ovasi), the Khānqāh-i Nau, shrine of Shāh Ni'matu 'Allāh, shrine mosque complex of Malik Aḥmad, as well as the royal cemetery of *Mazar-i Saltin*. Shrines, mosques and *khānqāhs* were also constructed along the Nalah Mar water channel which had been dug by Sultan Zayn al-'Ābidīn on the right bank parallel to the Jhelum. Most of the shrines and *khānqāhs* located in the city are demarcated by

36. Anonymous author, *Baharistan-i Shahi*, 9.

open surroundings, comprising green spaces that are otherwise missing in the highly congested *mohalās* of historic parts of Srinagar city, (fig.10).

The *khānqāh* at Zadibal constructed by the *Nurbakshiyā* soon expanded to include the first *imambada* in Kashmir. The *imambada* known as Marak, can be seen as one of the first such building that was constructed in the Indian sub-continent. Located on the banks of Khushal Sar, between Zayn al-‘Ābidīn’s erstwhile capital of Nau Shāhr and the more historic older parts of Srinagar city, Zadibal, with Marak at its heart, has since then served as the focus of Shii cultural and religious activities in the region. In addition to the narrow water body of Khushal Sar, a large open stretch of mostly uninhabited land serving as the ‘Idgāh, separated the city from the *mohalā* of Zadibal. The relative physical distance of Zadibal from the Sunni dominated parts of the older city, also helped in advancing the proselytizing activities of the *Nurbakshis*. Over the years Zadibal and another Shii dominated *mohalā* located on the eastern outskirts of Srinagar, Hasanabad, would continue to remain culturally linked to the city in-spite of the physically distance between the two.



Fig. 10: Shrine of Shāh Ni‘matu
‘Allāh Qadri surrounded by a
dense residential area,
(© INTACH, 2010).

Mughals In Kashmir: Adding to Contours of the City

When the Mughals conquered Kashmir in the sixteenth century CE after facing stiff local resistance, they made use of their architectural outpourings in Kashmir to project an image of permanence of Mughal power as well as their munificence in creating new spaces of worship. Consequently, one of the first major public buildings constructed by the Mughals was a mosque, Masjid-i Nau (New Mosque). As an architectural enterprise, it is the first and most significant Mughal intervention in the Srinagar city. Constructed in the heart of the old Srinagar along the left bank of the river Jhelum, the building stands in stark and dramatic contrast to the local wooden architecture, represented in this case by the Khānqāh-i Maula on the opposite bank, (fig. 11). The positioning of the first Mughal congregational mosque in Srinagar, the architectural idiom employed and the choice of the materials used in the construction are strong indicators of the political message that the construction was deemed to convey.

Given what we understand of the period, the Khānqāh-i Maula was the dominant religious monument in the city. The construction of a new mosque on the opposite bank of deeply revered established religious site is indicative of an architectural experiment based on projection of Mughal authority rather than a benevolent concern of the empire for meeting the needs of local population. Historically the need to cater to larger congregation, the need for more covered space could, and had been met by expansion or even reconstruction of existing structures. The expansion and reconstruction of Khānqāh-i Maula and the mosque at Char-i Sharief in the preceding century are indicative of these historical precedents, where existing buildings were enlarged to accommodate larger congregations. The construction of Masjid-i Nau not only ignores the local architectural traditions, it also raises an interesting question, why? What was the need of building the mosque, especially given where it was built? If “creators or patrons of a work or an edifice always aspire to fix its meaning and direct its reading, use, and interpretation,”³⁷ what was the political and social locus behind the construction of the Masjid-i Nau, that its patron sought to propagate? Unlike the royal *baghs* (gardens) and *baradaris* (pavilions) constructed by them in Kashmir, which were out of bounds for ordinary Kashmiris, the construction of a mosque was an example of public iconography, set right opposite the most visited religious site of Kashmiri Muslims. In building the mosque, the Mughals redefined the image of what a mosque would look like. In building it in stone, they marked the permanence of their construction as well as their empire. It is significant that the building was built at a time when the last remnants of local resistance to Mughal rule were finally stamped out and the stability of Mughal rule in Kashmir assured.

37. Monica Juneja (ed.), *Architecture in Medieval India: Forms, Contexts, Histories* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 66.

The “New Mosque” establishes not only a new language of architecture in Kashmir, but also marks a stark break with the past artistic traditions of Kashmir. Yet, the mosque was and is a public building. While the construction of the mosque and the meaning behind its creation was governed by imperial authority, its acceptance as a place of communal worship was governed by public reception. Local folk traditions maintain that the mosque was never used by Kashmiri Muslims. On the other hand repairs undertaken to the mosque during the Mughal and Pathan period would indicate that the building was in use, even if intermittently way down till the advent of Sikh rule in the valley, when the building was officially closed down. Nevertheless, the mosque never found favor with the Kashmiri audience; neither did it help in promoting architectural ideas associated with the Mughal *tarah* (style). A similar fate befell another major mosque that the Mughals constructed at Srinagar, the mosque of Akhund Mulla Shāh Badakshi (c. 1651CE), which continues to remain in a state of disuse.

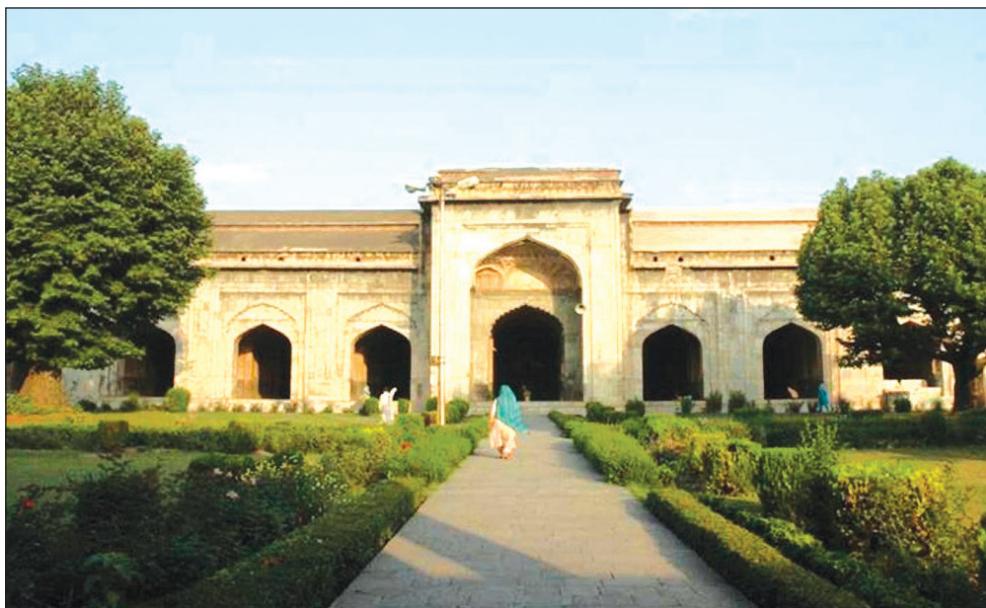


Fig. 11: Masjid-i Nau, Srinagar, (© Author, 2010).

Probably the greatest addition to the socio-religious landscape of Kashmir, especially of the Muslim community of Kashmir during 165 years of Mughal rule was the setting up of *Asar-i Sharīf*³⁸ at Hazratbal, Srinagar in the seventeenth century CE.

While the establishment of the *Asar-i Sharīf* does not represent a paradigm shift in the life of the community, as Kashmiri Muslims were well adapted to the custom of holding relics in great veneration, it nevertheless marks a novelty—a new addition both socially as well as architecturally. Again it is significant

38. The *Asar-i Sharīf* was set up to house the *asar* (relic) of the Prophet, the *moi-i pak* (holy hair).

that the setting up of the shrine at Hazratbal was entirely a Kashmiri venture, overseen by community elites who in the end also managed to co-opt the local Mughal court into the enterprise.

The arrival of the relic in Kashmir and its association with the Prophet Muhammad, seems to have caught the imagination of the common people, and soon it was found that the within the city enough space for its public display was lacking. Consequently, the local notables approached the Mughal *subedar* (governor) Fazil Khān and it was decided to remove the relic to a *baradari* (pavilion) at Bagh-I Sadiq Abad on the western banks of the Dal lake. The *bagh* was a part of the large genre of gardens that had been constructed in Kashmir by the Mughals in and around the Dal lake. Consequently the relic was deposited in the *bagh* which became famous as Hazratbal (The Revered Ground), *Asar-i Sharīf*³⁹ Hazratbal or simply as *Dargah* Hazratbal. Though the issues of running the shrine, its functioning and custodianship as well as the veracity of the relic was decided by native Kashmiri elites, the Mughal durbar also bestowed the shrine with revenue for its maintenance.

While Hazratbal would be the first *Asar-i Sharīf* in the city of Srinagar, it would be followed by establishment of three more such institutions in the city, the *Asar-i Sharīfs* of Kalashpora, Soura and Narwara. Another such shrine in the city was located in Lal Bazar but for some mysterious reasons the shrine did not achieve a deep spiritual connection with the city or the Muslim community of Kashmir at large.

The importance that religious institutions and their custodianship held on the city can be gauged from an interesting incident that took place in the early part of the nineteenth century CE. The setting up of the *Asar-i Sharīf* at Soura came about due to differences between the hereditary caretakers of the Hazratbal shrine (the Bandey family) and a leading trader of the city Khawja Munvar Shāh Dewani. The Bandey family rejected a proposal for matrimonial alliance from the Khawja and in retaliation, the insulted trader decided to set up a rival *Asar-i Sharīf* at Soura. The implication being that the prestige of the Bandays was derived from the shrine and as such setting up of a rival *Asar-i Sharīf* would undercut both the families' social standing, as well as the earnings derived from offerings at the shrine. Khawja Munvar also co-opted other city elite in the project and the first public display of the *moi-i pak* took place in 1225AH/1810CE during Afghan rule, amidst much fanfare. The entire enterprise including ferrying of the city population to Soura was organized and paid by the Khawja amidst much fanfare and celebrations. After the demise of Khawja Munvar Shāh, the shrine relapsed into relative obscurity before being revived in the later part of the twentieth century CE.

39. Literally, "The Holy Relic," in common usage it assumes the form of "The Place of the Holy Relic."

Another major shrine located within the city drawing devotees from all parts of Kashmir is the *rawza* of Shaykh Ḥamza Makhdūm (d. 1576CE), located on the Koh-i Maran hillock. Pilgrimage to the *rawza* on every Thursday became enshrined in the city life of Sunnis of Srinagar, a tradition which continues even today, though with lesser fervor. Significantly the geographical setting of the *rawza* is such, that it shares a part of the hillock with a major Hindu site, the temple of Chakrashevari. An important ritual linked with the shrine of Shaykh Hamza was the annual filling of the pool of the shrine with water. Devotees, both men as well as women would carry water filled earthen pots on their shoulders from the city to the shrine in procession, way down till mid part of the twentieth century CE. Nevertheless within the sacred geography of Srinagar, the shrine of Shaykh Hamza also represents a contentious sectarian space, highly venerated by the Sunnis and uniformly ignored by the Shī‘ī.

In the post-Sultanate period some of the principal Muslim religious sites that came up in Srinagar, and which continue to draw devotees even today include the Khānqāh-i Naqshbandi and the Khānqāh-i Gousiya. The Khānqāh-i Naqshbandi was established during Mughal rule in the vicinity of Jāmi‘a masjid, within the former palace of Sultan Hasan Shāh Chak. The Khānqāh-i Gousiya came up during the Afghan rule of Kashmir in close proximity of the Khānqāh-i Naqshbandi. Both the *khānqāhs* evolved into large *mohalās* primarily housed by members and devotees of the two Sufi orders with whom these *khānqāhs* were associated. In both instances the site of the *khānqāh* includes sprawling complexes housing mosques and burial chambers serving as shrines. In addition, numerous mosques, shrines and graveyards are located almost in all major *mohalās* of the old city, serving the immediate community. The soaring spires of the mosques, *khānqāhs* and shrines of Srinagar dominate the urban landscape of historic Srinagar, providing the city with its visual landmarks, (fig.12). They act as markers of the Muslim culture of the city and connecting to the pulse of the city life through a series of rituals and celebrations.

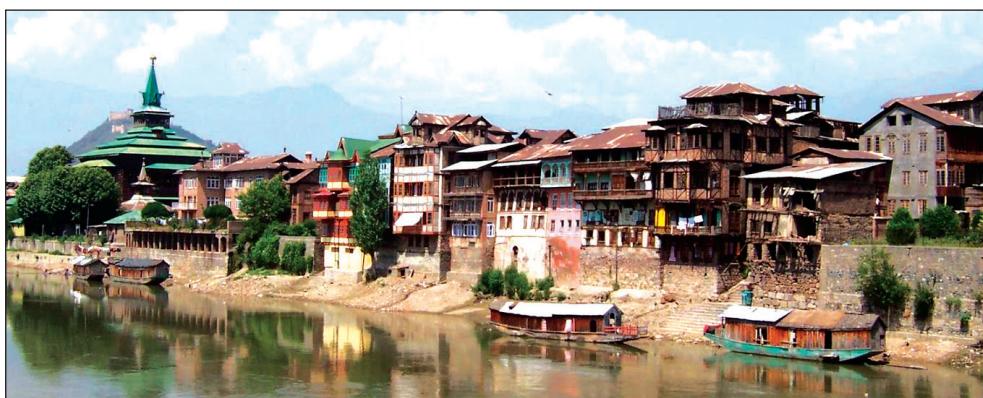


Fig. 12: Jhelum riverfront with the Khānqāh-i Maula in the background,
(© INTACH, 2010).

Contemporary Srinagar: Change, Continuity and Questions

In contemporary Kashmir, the fabric of Muslim community is being reorganized; historical realities associated with Islamic experience of Kashmir are being questioned, reinterpreted and reworked. Contemporary Muslim religious architecture is representative of a globalizing information process, wherein the image of traditional sacred architecture of the region is being reworked in a pan-Islamic image. Drawing on inspiration from the Arabian and Persian world, mosques and Muslim shrines of Kashmir are increasingly adopting a non-native architectural vocabulary. The process of globalization represents a novelty and “newness” that challenges the limitations of a constant forms of past as represented by traditional architecture. As an enabler of a non-native Pan Islamic architectural image, it competes and contradicts with the trends of regionalism as represented by historic architecture of the region.

The quintessential Kashmir spires of the mosques, shrines and *khānqāhs* that defines the historic Srinagar, is being increasingly replaced with domes and minarets, (fig.13). Rituals and customs associated with these shrines and *khānqāhs* are being questioned as being un-Islamic, as an unacceptable innovation – *bida'*. The phenomenon is being propagated by young graduates of various *Dār al-'Ulūm* (Islamic seminaries) who have eclipsed the role of the *khānqāh*. Officiating as imams in numerous mosques of the city, they have effectively through their sermonizing helped in re-moulding the fabric of community, especially amongst the Sunnis, as a more text-based congregation.



Fig. 13: Changing skyline of the city, a new mosque at Srinagar,
(© Author, 2017).

And, as Kashmir finds itself increasingly drawn into the sectarian and communal discourses originating from lands located geographically to its west in the traditional heartland of Islamic world undergoing through cataclysmic changes of its own, we may pause and wonder what of Kashmir's native identity, will it survive? The search for pure Islamic culture, an authentic experience of Islam, is slowly and steadily effacing out traces of Kashmir's own Islamic past which was built on a tradition of assimilation and syncretism best represented by the city of Srinagar. Today it seems that this represents the future, but then it is in no way certain that is "the only future" of the city and the region. In a global world of heightened interconnectivity, with waves of new ideas and challenges emanating from outside, a return to roots may still offer the land the path forwards towards carving new ideas, new symbols and a new language for its sacral architecture and the city.

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العنوان: سريناكار: اقتفاء آثار الثقافة الإسلامية من خلال المشهد الحضري لمدينة في جبال الهيمالايا.

خلاصة: في القرن الحادي عشر الميلادي، قدم لنا العلامة والموسوعي الفارسي أبو ريحان محمد بن أحمد البيروني (1048-973 م) وصفاً نقدياً للهند، بالإضافة إلى وصف مفصل ودقيق إلى حد ما لتحول الأرض الجبلية المعزولة في الهند المعروفة باسم كشمير. وفي نظر البيروني، مثلت كشمير موطنًا للتعليم الهندي بالإضافة إلى أرض مميزة يتعذر الوصول إليها بحزم وعورة موقعها، مما يجعلها بعيدة عن متناول الإمبراطورية الغزونية. ويتمتع البيروني بمعرفة واسعة عن هذه المنطقة وأراضيها المغلقة في ذلك الوقت أمام الغرباء، حيث كتب في هذا الشأن ما يلي: "تقع كشمير على هضبة محاطة بجبال عالية يتعذر الوصول إليها ... إنهم فلقون بشكل خاص بشأن القوة الطبيعية لبلدهم، وبالتالي يتمتعون دائمًا كثيراً بالحفظ على إحكام قبضته على المداخل والطرق المؤدية إليه. ونتيجة لذلك، من الصعب جداً التعامل معهم. في الأوقات السابقة، اعتادوا السماح لشخص أو اثنين من الأجانب بدخول بلادهم، وخاصة اليهود، لكن في الوقت الحالي لا يسمحون لأي هندي لغيرهونه شخصياً بالدخول، ناهيك عن الأشخاص الآخرين".

بعد أقل من قرن من وفاة البيروني نجد ذكر المجموعات الإسلامية الأولى في كشمير. وبعد قرن تقريباً من تأسيس سلطنة دلهي، برزت كشمير كمركز لسلطنة الهيمالايا التي سرعان ما فتحت حدودها لغدوة الصوفيين والحرفيين والشعراء والتجار الوافدين من الأراضي الناطقة باللغة الفارسية، مما يشير إلى أن الأرض هي البؤرة الاستيطانية الشمالية للثقافة الفارسية. وستتمثل الأهمية المادية لهذه "الثقافة الإسلامية" الجديدة في الخنادق والمساجد والأضرحة في سريناكار، عاصمة كشمير.

وتتناول هذه الورقة عرضاً دقيقاً لوجود هذه الأماكن المقدسة الإسلامية في المدينة وتوضيحاً لكيفية إسهامها في المشهد الحضري والمرئي لسريناكار. كما اهتمت بدراسة كيفية ظهور الأماكن المقدسة المرتبطة بالعقيدة الإسلامية بصفتها محددات ثقافية وعلامات بصرية لمدينة سريناكار.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كشمير، سريناكار، الهند، الثقافة الإسلامية، المساجد، الأضرحة، الأماكن المقدسة.

Titre: Srinagar: Tracer les empreintes de la culture musulmane sur le paysage urbain d'une ville de l'Himalaya

Résumé: Écrivant au XI^e siècle de notre ère, le savant et polymathe persan Abu Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni (973-1048 CE) nous fournit une appréciation critique de l'Inde, ainsi qu'une description détaillée et assez précise de la terre montagneuse isolée de Cachemire. Pour Biruni, le Cachemire représentait une demeure d'apprentissage indien ainsi qu'une terre marquée inaccessible par son emplacement, le plaçant hors de portée de l'empire Ghaznavid. Bien renseigné sur la terre, qui à cette époque était fermée aux étrangers, il écrit: "une forte emprise sur les entrées et les routes qui y mènent. En conséquence, il est très difficile de commercer avec eux. Autrefois, ils autorisaient un ou deux étrangers à entrer dans leur pays, en particulier des Juifs, mais à l'heure actuelle, ils n'autorisent aucun hindou qu'ils ne connaissent pas personnellement à entrer, encore moins d'autres personnes."

Moins d'un siècle après la mort de Biruni, nous trouvons la mention de la première communauté musulmane au Cachemire. Et près d'un siècle après la fondation du Sultanat de Delhi, le Cachemire est devenu le centre du Sultanat de l'Himalaya qui ouvrirait ses frontières aux soufis, artisans, poètes et commerçants arrivant du monde de langue persane, marquant la terre comme l'avant-poste le plus au nord de la culture persane. Et la matérialité

de cette nouvelle ‘culture musulmane’ serait représentée par les khanqahs, les mosquées et les sanctuaires de Srinagar, la capitale du Cachemire.

Cet article explore la présence de ces espaces sacrés musulmans dans la ville et comment ils ont contribué au paysage urbain et visuel de Srinagar. L’article examinera comment les espaces sacrés liés à la foi musulmane ont émergé en tant que déterminants culturels et marqueurs visuels de la ville de Sinagar.

Mots-clés: Cachemire, Sinagar, Inde, Culture musulmane, mosquées, sanctuaires, espaces sacrés.