

SAINTS, SUFIS AND SHRINES - THE MYSTICAL LANDSCAPE OF SINDH
Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro

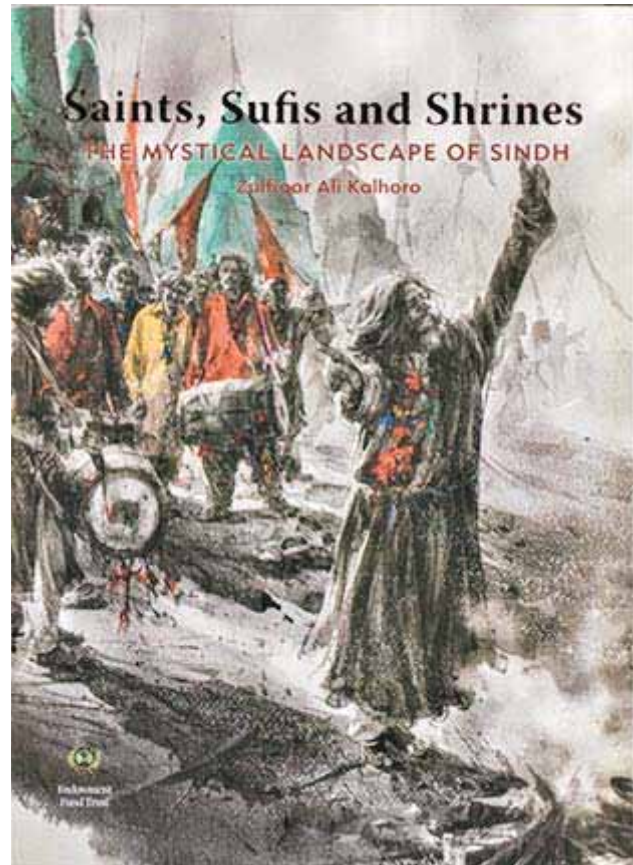
Reviewed by Sarah Sarmad*

BOOK REVIEW

Saints, Sufis and Shrines - The Mystical Landscape of Sindh authored by Zulfiqar Ali Kalhoro examines the intricate social, religious, and cultural contexts in which Sufism flourished in Sindh. The purpose of the book is to develop the interest of international academics in Sindh's rich Sufi heritage. The author plans to write three volumes in this series, with this one being the first. It comprises saints and shrines from every region of Sindh from the thirteenth to the twentieth centuries, both known and less known. This book has around fifty-five articles on various saints and shrines. These articles discuss the saints and talk about their significance in Sindhi society and culture in bringing socio-political and religio-cultural changes in the mystical landscape of Sindh.

This engaging and thoroughly researched book offers insight into Sindhi Sufism in its multiple facets. It goes into detail on how Sufism is Islam's preserved spiritual path. Drawing on a thorough study of Muslim writings and traditions, the author posits that Sufism is not an innovation but rather the continuation of a thinking process that connects Muslims to their religious predecessors.

It presents a perceptive analysis of how Sufism interacts with both Muslim and non-Muslim society. This book discusses both Muslim and Hindu saints as well as their shrines. All of these shrines serve as examples of religious harmony and tolerance where people of many faiths can mingle and communicate while letting go of prejudice through the enjoyment of Sufi music and poetry. Families of Hindus from marginalised castes are frequently spotted at the shrines, which reflects both their widespread appeal and inclusivity. The centuries-old shared heritage of Sindh



has been carried on by devotees of both religions. One of the many Sufi shrines in Sindh where people of various religions gather to seek comfort and transcend all religious boundaries is the shrine of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai.

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Pictures of all the shrines discussed makes the book even more interesting. It also discusses the architecture of the shrines from inscriptions to the tileworks which gives insight into the preservation of the shrines. It covers the people who are guardians of the shrines who welcome both Muslims and Hindus and proudly tell that they themselves belong to both religions.

Readers are free to escape the illusion of putting Sufism in a box with restrictions and rigid boundaries. The meaning of Sufism is liberated by Kalhor's work. He describes how Sufism is not like a structured phenomenon with a clear

beginning and end. Instead, it is a complicated world, all on its own.

The subject of *Saints, Sufis, and Shrines - The Mystical Landscape of Sindh* is a one that has not received much scholarly attention, and this book is a commendable contribution to it. Based on 244 pages, the book is simple to read and can readily capture the interest of both layman readers and scholars. Academics may use this publication as important reference on the subject in the years to come.