Sacred Spaces: A Journey with the Sufis of the Indus, by Samina Quraeshi, Peabody Museum Press, 2009. 298 pp., 300 color illustrations. Hb., \$65.00/£48.95/€58.50, ISBN-13: 9780873658591

Anna Bigelow, North Carolina State University, anna_bigelow@ncsu.edu

Samina Quraeshi's *Sacred Spaces* is a photo-essay pilgrimage through the culture of Sufi shrines in the Indus Valley region, encompassing both India and Pakistan. A visual artist, whose residency at Harvard brought her into the orbit of the doyenne of Sufi studies, Annemarie Schimmel (d. 2003), Quraeshi animates her personal jeremiad with a rich assembly of photographs and her own "imaginative history" of Sufism in South Asia. This does not seek to be an academic history, but rather is an exercise in how memory and story intertwine to develop a richly patinaed picture of the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feel of Sufi shrine culture in the subcontinent.

Several brief essays—by Ali Asani, Carl Ernst, and Kamil Khan Mumtaz—open the volume, grounding Quraeshi's explorations in the field of Sufi literature, history, and architecture. All three essays will be of especial help and interest to the person who may be encountering this complex and fascinating world for the first time. Asani highlights the role of narrative tropes and Sufi poetry in disseminating and popularizing Sufi Islam in South Asia. Ernst focuses on the startling contrast between pre-colonial imperial patronage of Sufism and the current "rise of monolithic interpretations of Islam" (p. 31) that often seek to delegitimize the popular, devotional forms of Islam that have historically dominated in the region. The essay by Mumtaz marks the move away from an academic approach to Sufism. As an architect, Mumtaz recounts his personal journey in designing and building sacred structures—a journey not without its moments of spiritual serendipity and discovery. The remainder of the book is comprised of Quraeshi's own reflections on the traditional, devotional Islam of her childhood in Pakistan, how it has been challenged from within by Islamic fundamentalism, and how unknown it is to the outside world trained to be fearful of Islam. She does this by bringing the reader along with her on a pilgrimage to eight of South Asia's most renowned Sufis and their resting places, six in Pakistan and two in India: Shah Abdul Latif, Data Ganj Bakhsh Hujwiri, Bulleh Shah, Mian Mir, Shaikh Rukn-i-Alam, Madho Lal Husain, Khwaja Muinuddin Hasan Chishti, and Nizamuddin Auliya. Each stop on her journey is recounted as both a step in Quraeshi's own spiritual path and a look deeper into the

cultural, historical, and built environment of the shrine and its patron saint. Enlivened by Quraeshi's photographs and artistic vision, the book pulls the reader/viewer along on a journey into Sufi South Asia.

Sacred Spaces has clear intentions—to make a “humble argument for an artistic method of spiritual investigation” (p. xii) and to “understand how religious practice ramifies in unique ways in each social context” (p. 266). Indeed, Quraeshi feels she was given a charge by her mentor, Annemarie Schimmel, to spread the knowledge of the Sufism of the subcontinent – a mission that she feels unprepared in some ways to take on. Never having formally studied Sufi history, thought, or practice, Quraeshi nonetheless is deep repository of the kind of understanding of South Asian Sufism that comes from living a lifetime in its orbit and then moving outside to observe it, both as an artist and an expatriate. Quraeshi is clearly motivated by a desire to preserve and defend the rich Sufi traditions of her homeland and to depict the ways in which they persist in spite of myriad threats. The book reads somewhat defensively, which is understandable given the spate of terrorist attacks on Sufi shrines, but also to a degree would allow a reader unfamiliar with South Asia—the primary audience for this book—to imagine shrine culture in the region to be in a more critical decline than it in fact is. Nonetheless, the challenges are real and this volume is a good resource for those seeking to acquaint themselves with the traditions of several of the most popular and influential shrines in the region. Quraeshi follows her heart in selecting these sites, so does not include important places like the tomb of Shaykh Fariduddin Ganj-e Shakar in Pakpattan or Shaykh Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sehwan. Nor is she deeply concerned with the political economy of these shrines, even as she notes the frequent confluence of power and wealth in the hands of the descendants of the saints and the caretakers of the shrines. More troubling for those seeking to place her photo essay into context is the total absence of any identifying titles to the images. For those familiar with these places and traditions, it is frustrating not to have more specific references and for the neophyte, it might be simply baffling. Indeed this points to one of the questions about the book—who is the audience? For those steeped in the histories and traditions depicted in the book it is a pleasurable read and full of wonderful (if unidentified) images, but adds little to the rich body of literature on these saints and their communities. It seems to be written for the non-expert, the curious traveler, and the aficionado of South Asian culture and history, though experts will also enjoy the nostalgic and colorful journey.