

claimed descent from Mu'in al-dīn through Qayām al-dīn Bābā Yaal, the son of Husām al-dīn Sokhta who settled in Gujarat. According to the *Siyar al-Aqtāb*, Tāj al-dīn

disappeared in his youth but after a long interval he reappeared during the reign of Sultān Mahmūd Khilji. The Sultān gave him the state of Ajmer [sic]. After a time the people became intensely ill-disposed towards his sons. It reached the point when they went to the Sultān of that time. The Sultān collected 'ulamā', *fuzalā* and *mashā'ikh* from the town and countryside and asked for their opinions on this matter. In the end, Shaykh Husain Nāgaurī and Maulānā Rustam, who were high-ranking among the 'ulamā', as well as many other well-known people, testified that Shaykh Bāyazid was descended from Shaykh Qayām al-dīn, the son of Khwāja Husām al-dīn Sokhta, son of Khwāja Fakhr al-dīn, son of Sultān al-'Arifīn, Hazrat Khwāja Mu'in al-dīn Hasan al-Husainī.¹³

The author does not say explicitly that Tāj al-dīn was appointed Sajjāda-Nishīn of the dargāh, but if his claims to descent were acceptable they would have qualified him to become the titular head of the community attached to the shrine. That the *khuddām* did not find him acceptable is predictable. With considerable vested interests at stake, it is to be expected that they would do all they could to keep the prestige and income deriving from the shrine exclusively to themselves and not share it by admitting a lineal descendant of the saint into their midst.

Shaykh Husain Nāgaurī was clearly convinced of the validity of Tāj al-dīn's descent for, having ensured that Tāj al-dīn would be allowed to remain at Ajmer, he married his own daughter to one of Tāj al-dīn's sons.¹⁴

It is fair to assume that, on Tāj al-dīn's death, the office was handed down by lineal descent; but nothing is known of the next three Sajjāda-Nishīns. It was not long, however, before the question of descent again arose, and this time it aroused the interest of the Emperor Akbar himself. When Akbar began to take an interest in the affairs of the shrine, he ordered another enquiry to be made into the ancestry of those who claimed descent from the saint.

The *Akbarnāma* records the following incident, occurring when Akbar visited the dargāh in gratitude for the birth of his first son:

¹³ *Siyar al-Aqtāb*, p. 137.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

As on the occasion of the division of the gifts, which came to a large amount, those who claimed to be descendants of the Khwāja, and who had the superintendence of the shrine—their chief was Shaykh Husain—took possession of the whole of the money, and there were disputes and quarrels between him [Shaykh Husain] and the attendants on the shrine [*khuddām*], and there was the allegation that the shaykhs who had charge of the shrine had told falsehoods with regard to their descent, and as this dispute had gone on for a long time, His Majesty appointed trustworthy persons to inquire into the matter and report thereon. After much investigation it was found that the claim of sonship [descent] was *not* genuine.¹⁵

Badāyūnī is more sympathetic to the cause of Shaykh Husain than Abu'l Fazl and, because of its different approach, his version is worth quoting in extenso:

It is commonly reported that he was a descendant of that pole-star of holy men, and king of true lovers of God, Khwāja Mu'in al-dīn Sijzī-i Chishtī (may God hallow his soul!). Since the Emperor, in the days when he first began especially to venerate his holiness the Khwāja of Ajmer, happened to slight the claims of the Shaykh (to descent from him) some perverse fellows, prompted thereto by certain shaykhs of Fathpur, men who have endeavoured to the utmost to depose and discredit those of their own class (may God reward them therefor!), gave evidence against his claim to descent from the Khwāja, saying that his holiness left no descendants, and the *sadrs* and *qāzīs* also issued decrees to that effect, being guided by their time-serving dispositions...

Thus the hereditary trusteeship of the shrine which had come down to him through so many years was transferred to others. The Shaykh, who was a man of great estate, lived in that province like a king, and the emperor's regal jealousy ... could not endure the Shaykh's position, so he ordered him to leave India and to journey to Mecca, and the Shaykh accordingly took formal leave of His Majesty during the march to Banswala [1577], and, after successfully performing the pilgrimage to Mecca, returned. Having accomplished his journey to the *Hijaz*, he paid his respects at Court, on his return ...; but he would not conform to the ceremonies which have in these days been established by those who have accepted a new faith and have been recently converted to Islam, new followers of a new order of things.

The Emperor, after studying the page of the Shaykh's life and the lines of his forehead read there the signs of disaffection to himself, and commanded that the Shaykh should be imprisoned in the fortress of Bakkar. There he spent some years, and at last, in the year 1002 AH [1593-4] owing to the efforts made on his behalf by certain courtiers

¹⁵ *Akbarnāma*, vol. 2, p. 511.

who had His Majesty's confidence, he was summoned from Bakkar to the Imperial presence He arrived at Court, and there they all paid their respects to his Majesty, and all, with the exception of the Shaykh, prostrated themselves. He, an old man of seventy years of age, utterly unaccustomed to the ceremonial of kingly courts and the correct fashion of waiting upon royal personages, made a slight inclination and a mere bow, after the old custom. The Emperor's displeasure with him was renewed, and the Mirza was ordered to have a grant of three hundred *bigha* of land in Bakkar made out to him, as *madad-i ma'ash*, and to dispatch the Shaykh thither once more.¹⁶

Badayuni was clearly contemptuous of the reasons for Shaykh Husain's dismissal and had a high regard for him:

I was not personally acquainted with him till recently, but now that he has returned from his pilgrimage to the Hijaz, and has suffered bonds, he appears to me to be a quantity of [heavenly] light, and an angel in bodily form. Never have I known him to speak of worldly matters, either in public or in private. He is ever employed in austerities, in worship, and in striving in the way of holiness, fasting continually and always watching at night.¹⁷

After the dismissal of Shaykh Husain, and his banishment to a remote corner of Sind, Muhammad Bukhari, 'distinguished among the Saiyids of Hindustan for knowledge and fidelity', was given charge of the dargah.¹⁸ There is no mention of his being descended from the saint; this was a secular government appointment to oversee the organization and administration of the shrine.

Prince Salim, disturbed by his father's treatment of Shaykh Husain, interceded on the Shaykh's behalf and eventually procured his release. Shaykh Husain returned to Ajmer where he is buried within the dargah. The faction that believes in a continuous line of descendants acting as Sajjada-Nishin at Ajmer argues that Shaykh Husain's family, having regained favour, once more succeeded to office in the person of Wali Muhammad, son of 'Abd al-Khair, the brother of Shaykh Husain.¹⁹

It will be clear by now that there is no evidence to suggest that there was a Sajjada-Nishin, in the usual sense of the word,

¹⁶ *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh*, vol. 3, p. 136.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹⁸ *Akbarnama*, vol. 2, p. 511.

¹⁹ Begg, *Hazrat Khwaja Mu'in al-din Chisti*, p. 77.

at Ajmer during this period. None of the early sources refer to a Sajjada-Nishin at the shrine. Neither Akbar nor Jahangir mention meeting a Sajjada-Nishin when they visited the shrine. Furthermore, none of the *farmans* or *sanads* dating from these reigns refer to the Sajjada-Nishin.

The word used to describe the position of Shaykh Husain at the dargah in both the *Akbarnama* and the *Muntakhab al-Tawarikh* is *Tuliyat* (trusteeship). In a *farman* issued by Jahangir in 1621 to sanction Shaykh Husain's return to Ajmer, he is described as 'descendant and *Sahib Maqam* of the saint Mu'in al-din', and 'the *khuddam*, *muezzin* and all other officials and servants of the shrine' are ordered to carry out 'their duties in accordance with the advice and discretion of Shaykh Husain'.²⁰

After the controversy over the antecedents of Shaykh Husain the government appointed a *mutawalli* (secular trustee) to take charge of administration of the shrine. With no more secular duties to perform, the titular head of the shrine assumed the title Sajjada-Nishin, which emphasized that his significance was solely derived from descent from Mu'in al-din and his consequent spiritual eminence.

Under later Mughal rule Ajmer enjoyed greater political stability than at any time since the death of Mu'in al-din. There were no more migrations of putative descendants who lived in Ajmer and those with the closest ties of descent successively assumed office.

In 1770 the Emperor Shah 'Alam endowed the office of Sajjada-Nishin with the revenue from three villages—Hokran, Kishenpura and Dilwara. The Sajjada-Nishin automatically became *jagirdar* of these villages. The control of succession to office passed from the dargah itself to the government. There is, however, no record of any disputes in this period subsequent to that of Shaykh Husain's claim to descent.

Evidence about the office of Sajjada-Nishin from Mu'in al-din's death until the beginning of the nineteenth century is very sparse, but certain tentative assumptions can be made about this early period. The immediate male descendants of Mu'in al-din appear to have had nothing to do with Ajmer at all.

²⁰ 'Abd al-Qadir Beg, *Collection of Persian, Urdu and English Documents*, Persian Document No. 4.

Until the appearance of Tāj al-dīn Bāyazīd, there is no evidence to suggest that there had always been a titular head of the shrine with pretensions to direct descent from the saint. During this period, the shrine would have been attended by the *khuddām* with no Sajjāda-Nishīn to preside over them. From Tāj al-dīn to Shaykh Husain, there was a series of titular heads with both sacred and secular authority. These individuals, claiming direct descent from Mu'in al-dīn, were believed to have inherited the saint's charisma, a legacy which substantiated their authority and earned them respect as the living representatives of the deceased saint. This situation would appear to have continued uninterrupted until the advent of British rule in Ajmer in 1820. But after the British annexation of Ajmer, there are extensive records of further disputes.

From the Advent of British Rule to the Present Day

The first such dispute in which the British Government had to take a hand, occurred on the death of Diwan Mehdi 'Alī in 1838. Imām 'Alī, the brother of Mehdi 'Alī, claimed prior right to succession over the former Diwan's (Sajjāda-Nishīn's) son, Hadi 'Alī, on the grounds that the son's mother was of dubious reputation and lowly birth, and that he was not, therefore, qualified to occupy the honoured position of Sajjāda-Nishīn.

The Superintendent of Ajmer decided the case against Imām 'Alī, who then appealed to the Commissioner, Colonel J. Sutherland. The Commissioner reversed the decision of his subordinate and decided that Sirāj al-dīn, the son of Imām 'Alī (Imām 'Alī had died while the case was being heard) should be recognized as Diwan. Sutherland decreed that the Diwan should be of respectable birth on both sides of his family; only shaykh-zāda, saiyyid-zāda, or pīr-zāda families could qualify. The incumbent should also be of suitable moral stature.²¹

This emphasis on the social qualifications of the Diwan constitutes a significant shift away from traditional Muslim precepts whereby the social position of the mother is irrelevant

²¹ The case is conveniently summarized in a letter from the Chief Commissioner, Col. Watson, presented to the Court of the Civil Judge, Ajmer in 1945.

in determining the status of the child. However, Sutherland's criteria have been generally accepted ever since.²²

Diwan Sirāj al-dīn died in November 1865, having nominated his son Ghiyās al-dīn as his successor in a letter written on his death-bed. This nomination was confirmed and approved by the then Deputy Commissioner of Ajmer, Major Davidson. Ghiyās al-dīn died in 1909. Imām al-dīn, the son of Ghiyās al-dīn's father's brother, Munīr al-dīn, succeeded to office. This was disputed by a certain Rashīd al-dīn, but the objection was dismissed by the executive authorities. Imām al-dīn died in 1912. After an enquiry the Chief Commissioner appointed Sharf al-dīn 'Alī Khān. Although Sharf al-dīn was closely connected with Imām al-dīn by marriage through the female line, his relationship in the male line was remote and could only be traced by returning through seven generations to the common ancestor, 'Abd al-Fath, through his second son, Shams al-dīn.

The death of Sharf al-dīn left nineteen rival candidates for office. It was the duty of Colonel Watson, Commissioner of Ajmer, to consider the merits of each candidate and arrive at a decision as to whose claim was the strongest. In his summing up of the case in court, Watson said:

It is common ground between the parties that the nearest male heir to the deceased Diwan through the male line has the prior right to succeed provided he has the other qualifications required in a diwan by family custom. Each claim is based on this propinquity to Diwan Sharf al-dīn 'Alī Khān and on the assertion that the other claimants who may be nearer by blood are debarred by some disability or disqualification.²³

Only one claimant, Saiyyid Munawar 'Alī, was descended in the same male line as the former Diwan, but he was disqualified because he was an illegitimate son and had been sentenced in 1912 for smuggling cocaine. Six candidates claimed descent from various sons of Saiyyid 'Abd al-Fath; five from his eldest son, the former Diwan Sirāj al-dīn, and one from his fourth son, Saiyyid 'Atāullāh. Of the five, Mehreban 'Alī's case was dismissed because his grandfather's mother had been a concubine; Rashīd al-dīn's case was dismissed because his father was discovered to be the illegitimate son of Diwan Saiyyid Sirāj al-dīn

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

'Alī Khān II; the case of the brothers Imdād and Akbar Husain was dismissed because they eventually admitted that their mother had been a prostitute before she was married.

Watson decided:

Whatever may have been the case in ancient times, the recent custom has been to demand a worthy lineage on both sides from candidates for diwanship. The sons of a prostitute cannot have, in the eyes of the Muslim world, the pure noble descent which is required, and on this ground their claim should be rejected.²⁴

Shihāb al-dīn was the fifth candidate descended from Diwan Sirāj al-dīn I. Watson observed that Shihāb al-dīn was

undoubtedly the popular favourite in Ajmer; he has managed to enlist the support of the *khuddām* who are the hereditary opponents of the Diwan in all matters of perquisites and privileges. The late Diwan, who was over eighty when he died and not a man of strong character, was greatly under his influence, and during his term of office said and did all that he could to strengthen Shihāb al-dīn's claim to succeed on his death. He has the strong support of the ladies of the family—the widow of the Diwan Imām al-dīn and the sister of Diwan Sharf al-dīn—who fear that their position and maintenance will be imperilled if an outsider [Saiyid 'Alī Rasul] whose family has been away from Ajmer for two hundred years be appointed to succeed.²⁵

In spite of such popular approval of Shihāb al-dīn, Watson disqualified him because his mother was a Hindu. Furthermore, so far as I can judge, the candidate has no special qualifications of intellectual or moral character which would make up for his defects of birth.²⁶

So the five claimants descended from the eldest son of Saiyid 'Abd al-Fath were all rejected. The next closest claimant genealogically was Saiyid 'Alī Rasul, a descendant of Saiyid 'Abd al-Fath's youngest son 'Atāullāh.

The descendants of 'Atāullāh are admitted down to Masihullāh, and thereafter through his eldest son, Shāh 'Alī, to Saiyid Rājā Husain who died without issue. The claimant states that Masihullāh had three sons of whom the two younger, Fazl 'Alī and Kalbi 'Alī, went and settled at Dhulkot Gurgaon in the Panjab and that he is the great grandson of Fazl 'Alī by unblemished descent.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

This claim was backed up by an impressive array of documentary evidence and supported by witnesses of considerable standing (Khān Bahādur Pīrẓāda Mahmūd Husain, a retired District and Sessions Judge and the Mīrẓā Zafar 'Alī, High Court Judge of Lahore). Watson concluded:

The testimony of these gentlemen and the absence of any assertion to the contrary seems to me enough to establish that the candidate is morally fitted for the succession to which he aspires and that the marriages contracted by his male ancestors have not been unworthy of the position of Diwan.²⁸

'Alī Rasul was duly appointed. The remaining twelve candidates' claims rested on lineal ties with the agnates and ancestors of Saiyid 'Abd al-Fath, so they could only succeed if none of his more direct descendants were able to prove they had the necessary qualifications for diwanship.

At Partition Diwan 'Alī Rasul and his family migrated to Pakistan. On 5 May 1947, the Chief Commissioner selected 'Ināyat Husain as the new Diwan.²⁹ This appointment has given rise to a controversy which still exercises the community attached to the dargāh. The opposition to 'Ināyat Husain believes that he was qualified neither on grounds of genealogy, nor on grounds of personal qualities.

In 1948 Saiyid 'Allām al-dīn brought a suit against 'Ināyat Husain alleging that the office of Diwan is a hereditary office and, according to the law of primogeniture, he himself was the nearest qualified male relation in the male line of the former Diwan, and was, therefore, entitled to succeed to the office.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ The Chief Commissioner was entitled to make this appointment under his power vested in his office by Paragraphs 37 and 38 of the *Ajmer Regulations*: 'Para. 37. No person shall be deemed entitled to any exemption, total or partial, from the land-revenue assessment or to any assignment or land-revenue except under a *sanad* granting or recognising such exemption or assignment issued by or under the authority of the Chief Commissioner as hereinafter provided.

'Para. 38. It shall be in the discretion of the Chief Commissioner ... to grant or recognise ... any such exemption or assignment.' With this authority the Chief Commissioner was appointing 'Ināyat Husain to the *jāgīr* of Hokran, Kishenpure and Dilwara and therefore automatically making him Diwan as these villages were bequeathed to that office.

The appointment of 'Inayat Husain was, he maintained, illegal. The defendant in the case, 'Inayat Husain, contested the suit pleading that the office of Diwan was not hereditary but that succession thereto was determined by the Chief Commissioner or local representative of the government of the day. He also pleaded that the plaintiff was not in fact the nearest qualified relation through the male line of the former Diwan.

The case proceeded slowly as certain legal objections raised by the defendant as to the validity of the suit had to be cleared first. This led to a series of appeals from the court of the Additional Sub-Judge, to the District Judge, to the Judicial Commissioner and finally to the Supreme Court. When these preliminary objections were out of the way, the issues before the court were 1) Is the succession to the office of Diwan governed by the rule of primogeniture and, if so, is the plaintiff the nearest male relation through the male line of the former Diwan? 2) If the plaintiff is the nearest male relation, is he qualified to succeed to the office? 3) In 1955 the *Dargah Khwaja Sahib Act* came into force. Section 13 of this Act gave the Dargah Committee (the administrative body constituted under the Act to manage the affairs of the dargah) the right to appoint the Diwan. Section 21 of the Act provided that:

The person holding the office of Sajjada-Nishin immediately before the commencement of this Act shall on and from such commencement continue to hold that office subject to the other provisions of this Act and the final decision in the suit relating to that office which is pending on such commencement and to which the said person is a party.³⁰

'Inayat Husain died while the case was still pending and before this act came into force. The court had to decide whether the assumption of office by his son, Saulat Husain, was not invalidated by the *Dargah Khwaja Sahib Act*.

The High Court of Rajasthan decided that the Dargah Act did not invalidate Saulat Husain's assumption of office. Section 21 of the Act provided that 'Inayat Husain should continue to hold office subject to the final decision of the pending law suit.

³⁰ *Dargah Khwaja Sahib Act*, No. 36 of 1955, Section 21.

It is argued on behalf of the defendants that the provisions of Section 13 were attracted on the death of Hakim 'Inayat Husain for the office of the Sajjada-Nishin which fell vacant after the commencement of the act and, consequently, appointment to the office of the Sajjada-Nishin can take place only in the manner provided in Section 13 of the Act. This argument has not impressed me at all. A careful reading of Section 13 would reveal that the intention of the legislature in enacting Section 13 was to determine the disputes as to the succession to the office of Sajjada-Nishin if the office of the Sajjada-Nishin fell vacant after the coming into force of the Act. As regards the dispute relating to the office of the Sajjada-Nishin which had already occurred before the coming into force of the Act and for which a suit was pending at the commencement of the Act, it was specifically enacted in Section 21 of the Act that the vacancy, though filled up by the appointment of Hakim 'Inayat Husain, shall be subject to the decision of the present suit. Even if Hakim 'Inayat Husain had survived till today his appointment as Sajjada-Nishin would have been subject to the result of this suit. If that is so it cannot be said that on the death of Hakim 'Inayat Husain the office of Sajjada-Nishin fell vacant so as to attract the provisions of Section 13 of the Act. The present suit relates to the vacancy caused by the migration of Saiyid 'Ali Rasul Khan and since that vacancy fell vacant admittedly before the commencement of the Act, Section 13 cannot be applied and the jurisdiction of the civil court to decide the suit was, in my opinion, saved by Section 21 of the Act.³¹

By this stage both parties in the suit were prepared to accept that succession to the office of Diwan should be governed by primogeniture. The problem was, therefore, first to decide who was the nearest male relation in the male line of 'Ali Rasul Khan when he migrated to Pakistan in 1947.

'Ali Rasul is descended in the male line from Saiyid 'Abd al-Fath. The plaintiff, 'Allam al-din, is descended in the male line from Saiyid Husam al-din, one of 'Abd al-Fath's brothers. The defendants, 'Inayat and Saulat Husain, are in the male line from Saiyid 'Abd al-Fath's father's brother, Diwan Mu'in al-din IV. While Imam al-din is therefore closer genealogically to 'Ali Rasul, Saulat Husain argued that he was not the closest relation at the time of the former Diwan's migration to Pakistan. If Haidar 'Ali was older than his brother Imam 'Ali, Bashir al-din was the closer relation. The High Court Judge decided

³¹ Judgement of the High Court of Judicature for Rajasthan at Jodhpur, 9 August 1974.

The Sajjāda-Nishīn

The spiritual authority (*wilāyat*) of a shaykh was inherited by a chosen disciple (khalifa). The transmission of this authority was symbolized in the transference from the shaykh to his successor of various personal insignia of office. These insignia (*amānat*) consisted in the Chishtī *silsila* of the prayer rug (*sajjāda* or *musallā*), the staff (*asā*), the cloak (*khirqā*) and less importantly, sandals and a begging-bowl.¹

In the case of Muʿīn al-dīn these *tabarrukāt* were inherited by Qutb al-dīn Bakhtiyār Ūshī. Qutb al-dīn did not live in Ajmer but established himself in Delhi.²

While the spiritual traditions, symbolized by the *tabarrukāt*, were continued by the chosen khalifa and through further generations by a succession of murshid and khulafā, the original charisma of a shaykh was also transmitted to the physical site of his burial and through the ties of lineal descent.³ Descendants of the saint usually tended his grave and fostered a lasting cult of the saint. The community which lived at the shrine would be led by the man who was most closely and most directly descended from the saint. This man was the Sajjāda-Nishīn and he was believed to represent the saint on earth and to symbolize the saint's continued activity and interest in the lives of his devotees.⁴

¹ *Siyar al-ʿArifīn*, p. 30; *Anīs al-Arwāh*, p. 35; *Dalīl al-ʿArifīn*, p. 56; *Akhhār al-Akhyār*, p. 57; cf. Digby, *Crosscurrents*, II, 1.

² *Siyar al-ʿArifīn*, p. 23.

³ Cf. R. M. Eaton, 'The Court and the Dargāh in Seventeenth Century Deccan', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 10, 51; and Digby, *Crosscurrents*, II, 15.

⁴ So the Sajjāda-Nishīn at a shrine is not necessarily the inheritor of the original saint's prayer-carpet despite the suggestion of the title (*sajjāda* = prayer-rug). The division of the saint's charisma between two groups—the disciples and the descendants—can lead to controversy with one group

In keeping with this practice, the shrine of Muʿīn al-dīn has a Sajjāda-Nishīn as its spiritual leader. The holder of this office claims descent from the saint. His function is to be a figurehead: he has no administrative duties, and his ritual duties are far from exacting. He presides over the *samāʿ* held every night during the 'urs, and every week on Thursdays. But as the living representative of the most widely-revered Muslim saint in India, he is rewarded not only with reverence and deference, but by a substantial income and a rent-free official residence.⁵

The issue of the rightful claimant to be Sajjāda-Nishīn at the Ajmer dargāh is accompanied by intense rivalry and continual litigation.

The tradition that Qutb al-dīn inherited the *amānat* of the Chishtī *silsila* from Muʿīn al-dīn is not questioned by Muʿīn al-dīn's followers or descendants. The name Sajjāda-Nishīn for the titular leader of the community attached to the Ajmer shrine is therefore an anachronism. The suggestion that the Sajjāda-Nishīn of Ajmer inherited the Chishtī *amānat* is irrelevant, and recognized as such by all sides in the controversies. Thus the titular leader of the shrine is often called the Diwan, a title which carries no overtones of a legacy of *amānat* and *wilāyat*.

The Diwan and the devotees of Muʿīn al-dīn claim that this post has been occupied by an unbroken line of incumbents who have had ultimate responsibility for the shrine of Muʿīn al-dīn since his death, and who have all descended from him. These claims appear, however, often to rest on very tenuous evidence, which needs to be examined.

claiming both legacies. In the Chishtī *silsila* there was conflict between family and disciples on the occasion of the death of Qutb al-dīn Bakhtiyār, and in the following three generations on the deaths of Farid al-dīn, Nizām al-dīn and Nasīr al-dīn. The family of the dying shaykh in each case attempted to prevent leading disciples from gaining access to the death-bed, but they were never successful. The successors to the *wilāyat* never gained control of the tomb, neither did the family manage to inherit the *wilāyat*. Cf. Digby, 'Crosscurrents', II, 14.

⁵ See below, pp. 180–2.

From Mu'in al-din's Death to the Arrival of the British

Although a list of individuals holding the office of Sajjada-Nishin has been handed down through the centuries, there is very little evidence to substantiate the historical accuracy of these claims. Indeed, such evidence as there is suggests that the direct descendants of Mu'in al-din had little connection with Ajmer.

The tradition claims that the first Sajjada-Nishin was Mu'in al-din's son, Fakhr al-din. However, nothing is known for certain about Mu'in al-din's sons. No details are given of their lives until the seventeenth century.⁶ But even then no mention is made of them being the Sajjada-Nishin. In fact, Husam al-din is said to have disappeared into the company of the *abdāl*, and Fakhr al-din is said to have been 'a great man' and to have 'lived for 20 years after the death of Mu'in al-din. He died in the town of Sarwar.'⁷ There is still no information on the life of the third son, Abū Sa'id. It is only in the later *tazkirāt* that the tradition of one of Mu'in al-din's sons becoming Sajjada-Nishin makes its appearance: 'After the death of Mu'in al-din, his son, Hazrat Saiyid Fakhr al-din, became his *Jā-nishin* and for twenty years men of God received spiritual benefit from him.'⁸ However, this author goes on to relate the tradition that Fakhr al-din died and was buried in Sarwar. It would be unlikely that the Sajjada-Nishin was buried anywhere other than within the precincts of the dargāh itself.

After Fakhr al-din's death, his brother, 'Abū Sa'id, is believed to have assumed the sajjāda.⁹ Again there is no evidence to support this. No details of the life of Abū Sa'id are given in the early hagiographies.

Husam al-din Sokhta is listed in the pedigrees as the third Sajjada-Nishin. The *Siyar al-Aqtāb* gives a brief outline of his life:

⁶ *Siyar al-Aqtāb*, p. 136.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Hasht Bahisht*, p. 22. See the appended genealogy which was accepted as authentic by the Diwan in 1976 and is supported by hagiographer, W. D. Begg, *Biography of Hazrat Khwaja Mu'in al-din Chisti*, pp. 76-7. See back endpapers.

⁹ *Hasht Bahisht*, p. 22.

Khwāja Husām al-din, son of Khwāja Fakhr al-din, and the grandson of Mu'in al-din, was named Sokhta. He was a pīr, a man of miracles and a great saint of his age. Spiritually he was a true descendant of his grandfather; he was extremely devoted to contemplation and asceticism. He was a companion of Sultān al-Mashā'ikh, Shaykh Nizām al-din Awliyā', and his grave is in the western part of Sanbhar.¹⁰

Again it will be noted that there is no reference here (nor in any of the other principal sources) of Husām al-din being Sajjada-Nishin, or even living in Ajmer.

Again there is no early reference to the fourth putative Sajjada-Nishin, Mu'in al-din the Younger, having any link with Ajmer. The notice on him in the *Akhhār al-Akhyār* runs as follows:

Khwāja Mu'in al-din the Younger is the older son of Shaykh Husām al-din Sokhta. He is called the Younger to distinguish him from the elder Khwāja. He was a perfect saint and, before he became a disciple, had, by his devotion and austerities, reached the stage where he could hold direct communion with Hazrat Khwāja [Mu'in al-din Ajmeri]. At last, ordered by the Khwāja, he became a disciple of Shaykh Nāsir al-din Mahmūd and obtained from him the robe of khilāfat.¹¹

Thus, there is no evidence to link either the sons or the grandsons of Mu'in al-din with the Ajmer shrine. In the following generation, the evidence suggests that his immediate descendants were living either in Mandu or in Gujarat,¹² probably because of the contemporary political situation. Ajmer was annexed by the Hindus after the fall of the Tughlaq Empire in the early fifteenth century, and it is with the re-conquest of Ajmer by Sultān Mahmūd Khilji in 1455 that the next phase of the history of the putative descendants of Mu'in al-din is connected, for no mention can be found of either of the Sajjada-Nishins allegedly following the younger Mu'in al-din.

After the conquest of Ajmer, Mahmūd Khilji appointed a certain Tāj al-din Bāyazīd to the Ajmer dargāh. Tāj al-din Bāyazīd

¹⁰ *Siyar al-Aqtāb*, pp. 136-7.

¹¹ *Akhhār al-Akhyār*, p. 251.

¹² Qutb al-din Chisht Khān, a descendant of Mu'in al-din, attained the rank of 12,000 horse. His residence still stands on the edge of the plain in Mandu. See G. Yazdani, *Mandu*, pp. 108-9; also Amin al-din Khān, *Kitāb al-Tahqiq*, p. 3.