



# The Governance Programme

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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY  
(International) in the United Kingdom  
Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

## Power Dynamics in Colonial India: The British Colonisers, ‘Hereditary Şūfis’ And ‘Native State’ Of Bahāwalpūr (1833-1899)

*Paper for the Northeast Conference on British Studies, to be held at McGill University, Canada, October 4-5 2019*

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### **Abstract:**

The paper “Power Dynamics in Colonial India: The British Colonisers, ‘Hereditary Şūfis’ And ‘Native State’ Of Bahāwalpūr (1833-1899)” is an original attempt to understand the complex governing system introduced and practiced by the East India Company in collaboration with indigenous Muslim political leadership and influential Şūfis of the state. The ‘Native State’ of Bahāwalpūr was the third largest Muslim state in India (the other two were Jammū Kashmir and Haidarābād). The key theoretical framework of this study is informed by Robinson’s “theory of collaboration” and Ewing’s idea of “Hereditary Saints/Şūfis”. This study argues that the British authorities would have failed to conquer Sikh Empire and suppress the ‘Mutiny of 1857’ without the fidelity and military aid of the Muslim rulers of Native State of Bahāwalpūr. The British administrators signed treaties with ‘Native States’, which entails that the state will submit to the imperial suzerainty and limit its sovereignty merely to the internal affairs. However, the British authorities did intervene in succession disputes among the heirs of Bahāwalpūr State, particularly during the ‘minority period’ of Nawāb Şādīq Muḥammad Khān IV between 1866-1879. He was sent to London and upon his return the young Muslim had become anglicised and was subsequently the starch ally of the British (and a benefactor of art and architecture). This study has given substantial importance to political settings that are peculiar to a Muslim state, hence draws startling conclusions. It has also shown that the British failed to seek the alliance of the local hereditary Şūfī Khwāja Farīd, who then became the symbol of resistance against British colonisation. However, no concrete evidence of support from the Nawāb or the people of the Bahāwalpūr state could be found following Farid against the British power. The findings of this study have the potential to guide the future students of history to investigate the political collaboration of Muslim states using this advance approach.