

# Marginalisation and appropriation: Jogis, Brahmins and Sidh shrines

**Mahesh Sharma**

Department of History  
Punjab University

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Post-independence reconstruction of the social history of India has encountered a much debated social phenomenon—the process of upward caste mobility, arbitrarily known as sanskritisation.<sup>1</sup> This process of mimesis, modelled on the ritually highest caste,<sup>2</sup> provided a basis for discussion on the effect of values on social change in India while dismantling the myth of Indian villages being a self-sufficient ‘isolated whole’.<sup>3</sup> However, over the years, the criticism of the process has also mounted,<sup>4</sup> especially made polemical by the question of dominant caste and ranking. This is evident from the cropping up of new models as ‘Rajputisation’,<sup>5</sup> ‘Kshatriyaisation’,<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M.N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*, 2nd edition, London, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> M.N. Srinivas and A.M. Shah, ‘The myth of the self-sufficiency of the Indian Village’, *Economic Weekly*, Vol. 12, 1960, pp. 1375–78.

<sup>4</sup> J.F. Staal, ‘Sanskrit and Sanskritization’ in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 22, 1962–63, pp. 261–75; Barnabas, A.P., ‘Sanskritization’ in *Economic Weekly*, Vol. 13, 1961, p. 613; Marriot, Mckim, ‘Little communities in an indigenous civilization’ in Marriot, *Village India*, Chicago, 1955, pp. 174–76; Harper, E.B., ‘A Hindu Village Pantheon’, in *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 15, 1959, pp. 71–72; M. Singer, ‘Social Organization of Indian Civilization’, *Diogenes*, Vol. 45, 1964, pp. 84–119.

<sup>5</sup> Surajit Sinha, ‘State Formation and Rajput Myth in Tribal Central India’ in *Man In India*, Vol. 42, 1962, p. 35.

<sup>6</sup> Hermann Kulke, ‘Kshatriyaization and Social Change: A Study in Orissa Setting’ in S. Devadas Pillai ed., *Aspect on Changing India*, Bombay, 1976. Also reprint of Publication of Staff members, S.A.I. Heidelberg University.

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or the reverse sanskritisation whereby the Brahmins tried to imitate the Kshatriyas to acquire the status of the landlords.<sup>7</sup>

However, all these studies, situated mostly in the contemporary social milieu and based on intensive/extensive field surveys, have aimed at social mobility and socio-cultural change implicit in it. But quite often, than not, the contemporary parameters, used to determine the change, have an ambiguous character and if the process is analysed against the backdrop of a length of time period, the picture alters radically. For instance, often our field data forces us to presume that a shrine that has been sanskritised has also resulted in socio-cultural change in its catchment area resulting in upward mobility. But then these contemporary sources do not contain information that would enable us to consider the complex nature of transition, the forces involved, and the motives behind such transition. Quite often, it is a simple case of appropriation and marginalisation, whereby the process of upward mobility is, in fact, thwarted—as is evident from the present paper.

In this paper, I have tried to bring forth a case of Brahminical appropriation of popular shrines by asserting their caste-ritual authority<sup>8</sup> through reformulation of myths and appropriation of resources. The term Brahminical appropriation has been used to emphatically illustrate the process of marginalisation and alienation of the dominant low castes by the Brahmin priests in connivance with the high caste state officials, for certain economic and political gains. The political and economic process of such appropriation has been systematically analysed within the north-western Himalayan social milieu that I came across during the course of my field survey on the Sidh<sup>9</sup> network in 1991–93. Data was collected from 12 Sidh shrines—of which three have been brahmanised, one is in the process of transition and needs to be tracked closely. Three others are managed by the *kanphata-jogis*,<sup>10</sup> and the remaining five by members of the low castes.

For the present paper, however, the focus will be on the shrine of Balakrupi situated in the village (*tika*), Har, in the revenue-circle of (*mauza*) Alampur, in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh.

<sup>7</sup> Srivastava, S. K., 'The process of Desanskritization in Village India', in Bale Katnam ed., *Anthropology on the March*, Madras, 1963, p. 266.

<sup>8</sup> See, Kulke, 'Kshatriyaization and Social Change', p.4, for a similar definition of Kshatriyaization.

<sup>9</sup> The local version of *Siddhas*, the medieval renouncers who professed to have attained *Siddhis* (magical powers), owing to their Hathayogic and tantric practices. It was a powerful anti-Brahminical protest movement, rejuvenated by Buddhist Siddhacharya and Nath-panthi Yogis: the followers of Gorakhnath. See G.W. Briggs, *Gorakhnath and the Kanphata Jogis*, New Delhi, 1930, 1982 (Rep); D. Yadav, *Vajrayani Siddha Sarhyada*, Shantiniketan, 1972; Yashpal Yogiraja, *Sidh Sabar Mantra*, Hardwar, 1985.

<sup>10</sup> The Sidh-adepts or practitioners were known as *Kanphata* (split-ears) *jogis* because of the characteristic ear ring (*mudra*, *kundal* and *darsana*), symbolising that the *jogi* 'has had a vision of a Brahmana'. It also means that the adept are initiated (Nath) into the sect. See, Briggs, *Gorakhnath and the Kanphata Jogis*.

I

The entry of Sidhs into Himachal goes back to the end of the first millennium A.D. when Charpat Nath, who is also mentioned in the *vajrayani sidh* tradition as Charpati,<sup>11</sup> immigrated to Brahmanpura, in the reign of Sahila Varman.<sup>12</sup> Being a *raseswara sidh*<sup>13</sup> he had migrated in search of herbs and had hoped to attain immortality by their usage. However, he was seemingly politically active and at the helm of affairs in the Chamba Court. After his death a shrine was erected over his *samadhi* in Chamba, and is presided over by householder Jogis, who belong to one of the lowest castes of the region. The shrine received royal patronage<sup>14</sup> and the cult spread to the surrounding villages as a part of the *kaula-pancha-dharma*.<sup>15</sup> This was entirely a local phenomenon, with the effective social space being no more than a couple of villages.<sup>16</sup> With the passage of time, owing to the loss of royal patronage, the cult started declining and could not compete with the sanskritic tradition, namely the Lakshmi Narayana complex in Chamba.

The second entry of Sidhs, in point of time, into the Hill States was around A.D. 1500. The earliest Jakhbar records point to the established centres of Gorakhdibbi in Jwalaji and in the villages of Bir, Ichhi, Daroh Tiara, etc.<sup>17</sup> These centres paid annual tribute to the parent shrine at Jakhbar,<sup>18</sup> which must have been responsible for their establishment.<sup>18</sup> If we take into account the *Janam Sakhis* of Guru Nanak, all of them refer to a dialogue with Sidhs on the top of a mythical mount Sumeru,<sup>19</sup> perhaps meaning the north-western Himalayan ranges. Also, the tradition of Balaknath in the state reflects a strong borrowing from the events of these *Janam*

<sup>11</sup> H.P. Dvivedi, *Nath Sampradaya*, Varanasi, 1966, pp. 172–74; Virnath, *Srinath Charit*, Hardwar, 1988, p. 331; Bhamboolnath ed., *Sri Charpat Satkam*, Hardwar, 1969, pp. 44–70.

<sup>12</sup> J. Hutchison and J. Ph. Vogel, *History of the Panjab Hill States*, Lahore, 1933, pp. 283–86.

<sup>13</sup> The Indian alchemists who believed that immortality can be attained by perfecting certain herbal concoctions. See Mohan Singh, *Gorakhnath and Medieval Hindu Mysticism*, Lahore, 1937; Virnath, *Sri Nath Charit*, Hardwar, 1988.

<sup>14</sup> Documents with Baijnath, the priest of Charpat Nath, Charpati Mohalla, Chamba. These are the transcriptions of *pattas*, renewal of land-grants naming each Mahant after Chamba Raja Raj Singh onwards (c. 1774 onwards).

<sup>15</sup> The progenitor of Nath-Sampradaya; an ancient Kashmir Saivite sect. P.C. Bagchi, ed., *Kaula Jnana-nirayana*, Calcutta 1934; S.C. Vidya-Bhushan, *Kaulamarga Rahsya* (Bangla), Calcutta, 1938.

<sup>16</sup> Document No. c-25, Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba, referring to Jund, Bhallai, Diur, Bandal and Kihar about 'Kaula Pancha Dharma'. Protection to be granted to this sect by the lineage of Raja Brij Raj of Jammu. Also, Rose, H.A., *Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North Western Frontier Province*, Vol. I, pp. 278–79.

<sup>17</sup> B.N. Goswamy, and J.S. Grewal, *The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakhbar*, Simla, 1967, p. 141, 161, 170, 171, 175 and document x and xva.

<sup>18</sup> *The Mughals and the Jogis of Jakhbar*, Document no. XVA.

<sup>19</sup> W.H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, Oxford, 1968, Delhi, 1988, p. 75. All six accounts and Macauliffe's account refer to this.

*Sakhis*.<sup>20</sup> This enables us to conclude that the Balaknath cult, one of the most popular cults in the State, is a post-Nanak phenomenon.

The Sidh centres mentioned in the Jakhbar records were managed by the *kanphata jogis*. The popularity of these shrines reflects the role of 'renouncers' in society,<sup>21</sup> especially among the lower castes, since they acquired a mass following because of, among others, three basic reasons. First, the metamorphosis of a charismatic historically singular personality. For instance, Gorakhnath, in Gorakhdibbi, around whom a corpus of oral tradition developed describing his miraculous deeds. Second, the charisma of the *mahants* (lit. pontiffs) or the *kanphata jogis*, who headed the centres. They managed to extract veneration by promising the possession of equally miraculous powers as their preceptor.<sup>22</sup> And third, the anti-householder ideals of the renouncers. Although they defied all social relations and norms, they nevertheless managed to live off the society by supposedly guarding the interests of people, thereby asserting their authority and converting it into a profitable pilgrim base.<sup>23</sup>

However, the shrines managed by the householder priests, as distinguished from those managed by the *kanphata jogis*, were more popular and revered throughout the state without any religious distinction.<sup>24</sup> The Sidh deity of these shrines, through the medium of its priests (*called chelas*) manifested miraculous powers and people undertook pilgrimage to beget children, to seek protection from malevolent spirits, cure illness, for the recovery of sick cattle, for psychosis or 'possession syndrome' and faith healing, mental illness and to recover or overcome the vicissitudes, as well as for a successful completion of life cycle rituals, (except in the case of death).<sup>25</sup>

The *chelas* (oracles and shamans) serving as priests at these centres belonged to the lowest castes (Ghiraths, Halis, Sipis, Jogis, etc.) and were distinct from the *pujari* or Brahminical priests, normally officiating at the sanskritic shrines.<sup>26</sup> As most of the Sidh shrines had no royal patronage and

<sup>20</sup> Like 'Cobra's shadow' as in *Bala Janam Sakhi*, the 'true Harvest' as in all the six accounts, etc., Mcleod, pp. 73-74. Compared with oral tradition maintained at Centre of Balak Nath, Deot Sidh, Sakri, Garkhal, etc.

<sup>21</sup> Romila Thapar, 'Renunciation: The making of a counter-culture?', in Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History*, Hyderabad, 1978 (reprinted in 1989), pp. 63-104. Also L. Dumont, 'World Renunciation in Indian Religions', in *Homo Hierarchicus*, 1980, Delhi (reprinted in 1988), 'Appendix B'; Parry, J.P., 'The Aghori Ascetics of Baneras', in R. Burghart and A. Cantile, ed., *Indian Religion*, Delhi, 1986, pp. 51-78.

<sup>22</sup> V. Bouillier, 'Growth and decay of a Kanphata Yogi monastery in south-west Nepal', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 28(2), 1991, p. 153.

<sup>23</sup> Romila Thapar, 'Renunciation'

<sup>24</sup> Rose, *Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Panjab and North Western Provinces* (hereafter *Glossary*), 3 Vols, Lahore, 1883 (reprint 1970), I, pp. 261-64; 279-80; Oberoi, H.S., 'The worship of Pir Sakhi Sarver: Illness, healing and popular culture in the Punjab', *Studies in History* (n.s), Vol. 3(1), 1987, pp. 29-56.

<sup>25</sup> Oberoi, 'The Worship of Pir Sakhi Sarvar', reports similarly about another popular cult, p. 32.

<sup>26</sup> Observation at these centres and interviews with functionaries.

were of local importance only, they were economically dependent upon the income from offerings during annual festivals, offerings of a part of the first seasonal crops, or the first seasonal fruits, the first milch, and thanks-giving donations by those whose vows had been granted.<sup>27</sup> Since the Sidhs were anti-Brahminical and most of them hailed from lower castes,<sup>28</sup> and the Sidh centres were economically ineffective at the on-set of this movement, these shrines had no Brahmin *pujaris* (high-caste priest) but only low-caste *chelas*. As a result they were popular amongst the lower castes only, while the *dvija* (twice-born, in this region comprised the landed, but not agrarian, class and traders only) offered pilgrimage to the sanskritic shrines. However, the *dvijas* made vows at Sidh shrines when under duress, especially in connection with psychic illness, evil eye and spirit possession: a category of healing which the low-caste *chelas* specialised in.<sup>29</sup>

These shrines had a simple ritual structure. Only the morning and evening prayers were officiated by the *chelas*. For daily purposes people invoked the deity directly, without the mediation of the *chelas*—whose services were only required for the purposes of faith-healing, or as an oracle (*puchh*), and for amulets. Usually these services were offered on a Sunday, considered to be the auspicious day in all Sidh centres. Once a year the priest and the people of the village housing the shrine carried the icon around its effective social space and received tribute from the inhabitants in lieu of protection offered by the deity. Thus, the ritual role of the low-caste *chelas* was limited.<sup>30</sup>

In the latter half of the nineteenth century the ritual position of the low-caste *chelas* was systematically replaced by the Brahmins when some of the Sidh shrines started gaining prominence for socio-political reasons. The process of Brahminical appropriation, however, has its origins in the political developments of the mid-eighteenth century detailed as follows.

## II

In 1752, when Punjab along with the Hill States was ceded to Ahmed Shah Durani, the Katoch Rajas tried to benefit from the prevailing anarchy and recovered all their territories from the Mughal control with the exception of the Kangra fort.<sup>31</sup> In order to declare their complete independence they

<sup>27</sup> Compare to Oberioi, 'The Worship of Pir Sakhi Sarvar', pp. 35–36.

<sup>28</sup> K. Kailasapathy, 'The writings of the Tamil Siddhas', in K. Schomer and W.H. Meleod, ed, *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, Delhi, 1987, pp. 385–441; G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, Roma, 1949, II, Tanka 39; Shankra Nath *Sri Mast Nath Charit*, Hardwar, 1990, p. 181.

<sup>29</sup> Interviewed the chela and musician at Balakrupi, *tika Har, mauza Alampur*, District Kangra.

<sup>30</sup> Participant and non-participant observation at a Brahminised Sidh shrine network. Also, interview with the *chelas* at these networks.

<sup>31</sup> Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, I, p. 175.

gave donations and new landgrants, amongst others, to religious institutions.<sup>32</sup> Though these grants were made over to the temples, they attracted Brahmin claimants, who started dominating these shrines. When Raja Sansar Chand (A.D. 1775–1823) ceded the fort of Kangra to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, he shifted his capital to Sujanpur, which is in the vicinity of Balakrupi and Deot Sidh.<sup>33</sup> A nexus between the king and these local shrines started developing<sup>34</sup> with Sansar Chand proclaiming himself as '*sidh sahaya*',<sup>35</sup> or the benefactor (?) of the Sidh centres.

In the shrine of Balakrupi, as one of the variants of myth goes, there was earlier a temple of Gugga, a popular peasant deity. A Brahmin named Jogu, who was the son of one Ganesh Brahmin, a *purohit* (priest) of the Jaswal Rajas, got possessed by Sidh Balakrupi while grazing his cows in the jungle. His parents were informed by Baba Lal Puri (a *dashnami* ascetic), that the boy had betrayed the Sidh by proclaiming his forbidden esoteric instruction. As the Sidh had vanished thereafter, the search for his iconic representation began. With the intervention of Kanthar Nath (a *kanphata jogi*), 'a flat stone' (*pindi*) was discovered near the present temple which when struck with a spade started oozing blood and milk. The *pindi*, through onieromancy, ordered the destruction of the Gugga shrine and reconstruction of its temple in the same place.<sup>36</sup>

This myth is structurally similar to the myths associated with other Sidh shrines as Deot Sidh<sup>37</sup> and Vairaga Loka.<sup>38</sup> For instance, according to the myth of Vairaga Loka, a shepherd once met a *gosain* (an ascetic) and became his friend under a vow of secrecy. But the boy told his parents about the *gosain* and was consequently turned into a *pindi*-stone. Few days later a Gaddi (semi-nomadic tribal) shepherd became possessed and narrated the incident to people who erected a shrine to the Sidh. The shrine became a popular centre for the cure and protection of cattle and was presided over by the low-caste Giri *gosain* (of *dashnami* order) and the progeny of the Gaddi-shepherd.<sup>39</sup>

The finding of a *pindi*-stone after 'possession', as in the myths mentioned, is a common pastoralist's/agriculturist's myth throughout the state and

<sup>32</sup> See Patta, for instance, issued by Sansar Chand in Takri to the priests of Swaroop Gir Shrine.

<sup>33</sup> Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, pp. 186–190.

<sup>34</sup> Compare with C.J. Fuller, *The Servants of the Goddess*, Delhi, 1991, pp. 104–11.

<sup>35</sup> Document no. C 23, Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba. Seal no. I, 'Sansar Chanda Sidh Sahaye', 1991 = A.D. 1771. Also, Uttam Kavi, *Dalip Ranjani*, Mss, Acc. no 80.280, State Museum, Simla, Sidh influence in Guler, pp. 12, 22, 27, 102, 103.

<sup>36</sup> H.A. Rose, 'Hinduism in the Himalayas', in *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 32, 1903, pp. 376–78. Also, *Glossary*, I, pp. 261–63.

<sup>37</sup> *Glossary*, pp. 279–80.

<sup>38</sup> Rose, *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 32, pp. 376–78.

<sup>39</sup> *Glossary*, pp. 264–65; Briggs, C.W., *Gorakh Nath and the Kanphata Yogis*, Delhi, 1938, 1982, p. 91.

hence, in this limited sense, there is a structural homogeneity in all these myths—which acted as a popular mode of manifesting the rise of a protective deity in a predominantly agrarian society. But in the case of Balakrupi, another myth was added to the earlier myth by the Brahmins. In this case Balakrupi was associated in vertical relation to Shiva (as his child-incarnation), thereby beginning the process of universalisation of this shrine.<sup>40</sup>

The discovery of the *pindi* of Balakrupi soon managed a royal patronage through the process of trance-possession. The nexus is also explained in a popular legend. According to it a girl of the Rajput clan of Patyal once made a vow that if she married a Raja she would offer a bullock to this shrine. This wish was fulfilled but she forgot her promise. Consequently, she got 'possessed' by Balakrupi and started losing her health. The anxious Raja, Abhaya Chand (A.D. 1747–50), told by the *chelas* of her vow, undertook the pilgrimage and donated a bronze bullock to the Sidh.<sup>41</sup> Later, Raja Sansar Chand issued a land grant to the shrine when he was bestowed with a son, wished for at this centre.<sup>42</sup>

The association of royalty with the shrine and its miraculous powers enhanced its reputation and increased the pilgrim-base which in turn resulted in the economic prosperity of the shrine. A separate *muafi* (rent-free) grant in the name of the temple was made to the low-caste *chelas*. This was renewed by the Punjab Government in 1865 to the *chelas* as 'trustees' of the temple.<sup>43</sup> Thirty years hence, in 1895, a similar grant was issued to the Brahmin *pujaris*.<sup>44</sup> Thus, between 1865–95 the process of Brahminisation had begun.

### III

In order to understand the appropriation of the priestly rights by the Brahmins, we will have to contextualise the myth narrated earlier. The replacement of the Gugga temple, which was purely a peasant deity, should have been resented by the dominant (86%) lower-caste population. But the construction of the Balakrupi temple proves otherwise because it would not have been possible without the cooperation of the local population. Their connivance can be understood if we consider that the *kanphata jogis*, who were known for their *siddhis* (miraculous powers) and exerted

<sup>40</sup> Durga Dutt, *Sri Balakrupi Ji Ki Sankshipta Katha*, Kangra, 1963, pp. 1–22. (Hereafter BRSK)

<sup>41</sup> BRSK, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> H.A. Rose, 'Hinduism in the Himalayas', *The Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 33, 1903, pp. 396–98.

<sup>43</sup> The original document is with the Jogi Parabhu. Also attested by letter no. 650, dated 29 September 1885 recorded as Ex. D. 4. in the court of Senior Sub-Judge S. Nasir Ali Shah at Dharamsala, 1941.

<sup>44</sup> The original document is missing but is recorded in the court as Ex. p. 4, 1941.

tremendous influence in the rural areas, appear to have had the shrine constructed at the first instance. Evidence for this is seen in the *samadhi* (cenotaphs) of the Jogis located near the shrine, where a guru and his disciple buried themselves simultaneously in order to be venerated along with the deity. The authority of renouncers and a general belief in their capabilities must have led people to accept this new Sidh deity. That the myth was later appropriated by the Brahmins is evident from the internal criticism—by considering the coincidence of the name of the arbitrator—Jogu. The name, though common in the hills among lower castes, logically seems to be an *apabhramsha* or the localised form of Jogi or an ascetic (from sanskrit *yogi*); the former style, Jogu, being a more personalised form of address. (Compare this with the name of Jogu's father, Ganesh— which is Sanskritic, used in the same myth.) This appropriation is interesting as in the later Brahminical myth this mythical 'Jogu' gets transformed into a more realistic name—'Jogu Ram'. However, the spiritual succession of the *Nath Jogis* soon gave way to lineage succession<sup>45</sup> and the *Jogis*, as a caste, became the *chelas* of the deity whose shrine was, in fact, built by one Bali.<sup>46</sup>

In the myth about this shrine's origin, the dichotomy of blood-milk also seems to be a later Brahminical invention. The blood, symbolic of sacrifice, was a popular mode of thanksgiving by the peasantry; while milk, symbolic of vegetarianism and ritual purity, was the mode of expression of the higher castes. Through this myth, the Brahmin-*pujaris* placated the *dvija* pilgrims without alienating the low-caste pilgrims. It also means a systematic shift in a pattern while aiming at an eventual change in the entire structure itself in the course of time.

Apart from the ritual context of the myth an important question arises: Why did a *purohit* of Jaswan state relinquish his official position? The answer to this question bears on the claim of Brahmins over this shrine.

The *purohit* must have left the employ of the Jaswan state when in A.D. 1815 Raja Ummed Singh accepted an annuity of Rs. 12,000 from the Lahore Durbar and relinquished his rights. He later joined the Sikhs against the British in the 1848 War and was deported to Almora after the annexation of Punjab. No longer employed, the *purohit* migrated to *tika* Har sometime between 1815–48.<sup>47</sup> Yet, the Brahminical assertion of priestly rights before 1823 was practically not possible until Raja Sansar Chand, who died in 1823, issued a land grant to the temple during his last years. The interest of the Jaswal Brahmins in economic gains is clear from their

<sup>45</sup> See D. Gold, 'Clans and lineage among the Sants: Seed Substance, Service' in *The Sants* pp. 305–27.

<sup>46</sup> Regular first appeal number 35 of 1943 in the Judicature of Lahore, Justice M.C. Mahajan and Justice Achhar Ram, p. 4. (The judgement is with the Treasurer, trust of Balakrupi.)

<sup>47</sup> Hutchison and Vogel, *History of the Punjab Hill States*, p. 209.

deft appropriation of the temple's landed property as revealed in the *bandobast*-settlement records. Luder, son of Thakhrū, the Brahmin *pujari* in 1868, appropriated 29 *kanals* and 13 *marlas* of land in his name (1 *kanal* = 500 sq.ft and 1 *marla* = 25sq.ft) though the settlement report observes this area to be in possession of the 'mandir'-temple.<sup>48</sup> By 1891–92 this possession was turned into a *muafi* (rent-free) grant under the management of the *pujari* who was a Brahmin.<sup>49</sup> The 1915–16 settlement report, however, only mentions 25 *kanals* and 11 *marlas* as the property of the temple managed by the *pujaris*.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, 15 *kanals* of *abadi tika* (area under habitation) though listed in the name of the temple in the 1891–92 settlement report as *kharaj bachh* and *gair mumlik abadi* (rent-free and undemarcated habitation area) was appropriated by the Brahmin *pujaris*.<sup>51</sup>

The process of Brahminic land appropriation around 1868 and the entire question of the alienation of the lower caste finds an interesting corroboration in a passage from a Sanskrit manual of pilgrimage written for Kangra region in 1864. In it, though the deity is connected to the child-incarnation of *Sada-Siva*, the centre is still known as '*sadha-kendra*'<sup>52</sup> or the nodal point of ascetics (Jogis?) or a place of austerity (*Sadhana*?). Thus it represents a stage where the appropriation of myths continues, though formally the low-caste Jogis and the high-caste *pujaris* continue to officiate the temple as co-sharers. Therefore the appropriation of land by Brahmins acquires an important dimension in the subsequent marginalisation and alienation of the Jogis.

The process of land appropriation was, however, not limited to the Brahmin *pujaris* only. Grants in areas faraway from the shrine were appropriated by the Jogis also. For instance, 8 *kanal muafi* grant of the temple in *tika* Harnoh, village Lalla, in Palampur *tehsil* was appropriated by the Jogis in 1868.<sup>53</sup> The Jogis, however, possessed the original grant document handed over by the Panjab Government to Jita Jogi *chela*, on 29 September 1865. According to this grant the *chela's* lineage was to enjoy the revenue of that land 'during the pleasure of the British Government'. It is of significance that the low-caste Jogis were manipulating the smaller portion of the land while the Brahmin *pujaris* were effectively managing the larger portion of the land located in close proximity to the shrine. The Brahmins were thereby geographically distancing the low-caste Jogis from the shrine.

<sup>48</sup> *Bandobast (Settlement) Report, Tika Har, Mauza Alampur, Tehsil Palampur, 1868–69*, Sadar Kanungo Office, Dharamsala, *Khasra No.* 367, 68, 70, 72, and 375. Banjar Qadim; Note: 'in possession of Mandir for several hundred years'.

<sup>49</sup> *Bandobast Report, 1891–92*, *Khasra No.* 183; Note: *muafi* grant under Achhar, son of Luddar Brahmin.

<sup>50</sup> *Bandobast Report, 1915–16* *Khasra No.* 472, 74, 76, 78.

<sup>51</sup> *Bandobast Report, 1891–92* *Khasra No.* 184, *abadi tika*.

<sup>52</sup> P.R. Shastri trans. and ed., *Jalandhar-Pitha Dipika*, Kangra, 1983 Ch. 5, 7 and 8, p. 48.

<sup>53</sup> *Bandobast Report, 1868*, *Khasra No.* 651, 509 in 1891–92; Note: it is a *muafi* grant in the name of Kirpa Ram son of Sali Jogi.

However, we have no definite information as to how the land was appropriated. Nevertheless we can infer by reading between the lines the text of the *bandobast*/law-suit documents, as well as by extrapolating on the basis of the contemporary situation. This extrapolation is with the presumption that there is little or no deviation in the systematic ways by which the land is appropriated (*qabza*). There is a legitimate reason for this presumption that these appropriations coincided with the initiation of the earliest land settlement in the region, therefore making the task of forced possessions easy.

To begin with, it seems, both the *pujaris* and the Jogis managed the land, though it belonged to the shrine, which they later appropriated. When the first settlement was initiated the colonial government upheld the *de facto* possessions reported to it in all the Hill States. This way most of the inhabitants came to acquire private hereditary property. In this particular case where the rights were contested, the land remained in the *de jure* possession of the shrine, though in the *de facto* possession of its managers. But with the systematic expulsion of the *Jogi-chelas* from the sanctum of the shrine and the strengthening of their claims as the *pujaris* of the shrine the Brahmins also initiated the process of piecemeal appropriation of its landed property, perhaps, with the connivance of the local state machinery by showing that they have been themselves tilling it for a number of generations (*khud kasht*). It must not have been very simple as they had to first eliminate the tenants who in actuality tilled the land for the *pujaris*. The weaning away of the tenants was, perhaps, achieved by advancing them loans which they could not return and therefore had to forfeit their tenancy rights; or by seeking help from the local Zamindar whose dictates could not be disobeyed; or by using both means in succession. Being the tillers themselves, even if in name, the *pujaris*, in a politically correct fashion, strengthened their claims of ownership. Similarly, the Jogis dispensed with their tenants at Harnoh and the *pujaris* allowed them to claim that land so as to strengthen their own case. However, an important distinction should be kept in mind so as to contextualise both the appropriations. The Jogis, to begin with, were the managers of the land for the shrine as is evident from the grant document of 1865. In their case the transition was from the managers to the claimants (owners). But the *pujaris*, in contrast, first catapulted themselves in the position of managers and then became the claimants. The first transition was aided by their caste-ritual authority and the second by their connivance with the state machinery. This goes on to prove the systematic ways in which caste hierarchy corresponds with the government machinery. It is clear from this that marginalisation is in-built in the mechanism, even if as a defensive tool. Thus, the Brahmins were successful in distancing the Jogis geographically (perhaps even by aiding their case passively), by their deft manipulations, while appropriating the land in close proximity to the shrine.

The ritual-economic significance of geographical distancing becomes clear if we take into account the proceeds from the pilgrims. For instance, the following figures, though recent, from the shrine of Deot Sidh indicates its popularity.<sup>54</sup>

Table 1  
The Money Flow: Balance Sheet of a Sidh Shrine

Year	Income	Expenditure	Balance Sheet
1987	4,772,895.81	3,927,904.50	844,911.30
1988	5,467,893.38	4,679,876.64	788,016.70
1989	7,556,783.06	6,592,624.88	964,158.20
1990	8,550,028.32	7,248,028.97	1,301,939.40
1991	15,405,471.44	10,957,786.00	4,447,685.44

The figures are available after this shrine was taken over by the state government; the earlier estimates are missing. Even though the figures are not comparable they can be projected into the past while considering the significance of geographical distancing leading to alienation of the lower-caste *chelas* and strengthening of the economic base of the Brahmin *pujaris*.

#### IV

Though the motive of the *pujaris* is clear, the mode of appropriation is also interesting. After claiming the priesthood of the Balakrupi shrine the Brahmins built a shrine of their lineage Goddess (*kulaja*) Kamakshi.<sup>55</sup> This was a socially significant move because with it started the operative process of purity-pollution as this *kulaja* was clearly a sanskritic deity. Due to the ritual impurity, the low-caste people were now not allowed inside the new shrine, which had become the private property of the *pujaris*. The purity of this lineage Goddess eventually extended to the entire temple area and after 1890 the untouchables were not allowed even to enter the Balakrupi shrine. The process of making the shrine exclusive to the *dvija* was thus complete.

This transformation is evident from a comparison of the reference in the 1864 manuscript, the notes of H.A. Rose (1883) and the judgement of the civil suit filed in the court of the sub-judge in 1941.

In 1864, the manuscript *Jalandhar Pitha Dipika* clearly demarcates between the *sadha-kendra*<sup>56</sup> (the centre of ascetics), which the Balakrupi

<sup>54</sup> Department of Archaeology, Himachal State Archives, Simla. *Register-Vibhag Ke Adhinaast Liye Gaye Mandiron Ki Suchi*, No. 2 in Index, pp. 8, 9, 10.

<sup>55</sup> The Judge in 1941 judgement declared this as a personal shrine and private property of the 'Barval (Jaswal?) Brahmins, on whose offerings no other party have any claim, p. 13, Senior Sub-Judge's Court, Dharamsala, Suit No. 1/5/1940-41.

<sup>56</sup> *Jalandhar Pitha Dipika*, 5: 7-8, p. 48.

shrine was and the river nereby, Neogal, where the pilgrims offered various donations to the Brahmins.<sup>57</sup> It is significant that there is no mention of donations to the Brahmins in the shrine (a singular event, as in all other shrines enumerated in the manuscript the donations to the Brahmins/priests in the temple is clearly noted), a clear statement that the Brahmin *pujaris* as yet did not enjoy a monopoly. Thus the process of Brahminisation reflects an interesting ritual dimension, that is, the movement of the Brahmins from the outer sacred space to the inner space, or of combining the sacred authority with complete temporal authority, thereafter.

By 1883 the rights of the low-caste Jogis operating within the sacred complex were made clear. Hence the operation of exclusion had already started, by way of demarcating the rights of *pujaris* and *chelas*. Thus, the Jogi on duty got as a matter of right some rice; the head, fore legs, skin and a 'pice' per each sacrificed animal; and the 'live animal' if not to be sacrificed but to be presented to the deity. He also got the offerings made to the bull (Nandigan) in the courtyard of the deity and the offering made during *jamwalu* (tonsure).<sup>58</sup> Any offerings in accordance with a vow, such as a buffalo, cow, horse, etc., went to these low-caste Jogis. Some devotees vowed to offer the child granted in boon, to the deity, which meant the making of a payment to the Jogi on duty and thus the purchasing of the child by the parent. By 1941, however, the situation had changed. The low castes, including the Jogis, were not allowed in the temple complex at all. They worshipped at a fixed place outside the boundary wall (*danga*). The Jogis received only the proceeds from the low-caste pilgrims. This arrangement was contested by the Jogis in the lower court (1941) and the High Court (1943). The judgement, while maintaining that the shrine, for all practical purposes, subsisted on the offerings made by the pilgrims, observed that:<sup>59</sup>

The Jogis have tried to exaggerate and augment their claim in respect of the offerings to which according to their notion they are entitled—Jogis themselves being members of a low-caste tribe are not allowed an access inside the temple and so they are given the offerings of untouchables only which are offered outside the Danga (Boundary wall) or at Nandigan [emphasis mine]. They have not been able to establish by any satisfactory evidence that they are entitled to alive [*sic*] goats offered inside the *danga* on the occasion of marriage, tonsure, *cheoli* [first milch] or other happy occasions . . . .

The appropriation of a Sidh temple complex by building a shrine of the sanskritic deity inside it and then prohibiting the entry of low-castes on the

<sup>57</sup> *Jalandhar Pitha Dipika*, 5: 9–11, p. 48.

<sup>58</sup> H.A. Rose, *Glossary*, I, pp. 263–64.

<sup>59</sup> Senior Sub-Judge Court, Kangra District, Dharamsala. Justice S. Nasir Ali Shah, Suit No. 1/5 of 1940–41. Alleged, p.1 Judgement, p. 3.

basis of purity–pollution is also observed at Machhwal, in Joginder Nagar *tehsil* of Mandi district in Himachal Pradesh. Here was an iconic representation of Matsyendra Nath, the Guru of Gorakhnath, but no shrine. It was a popular centre visited by the lower castes and also by the Muslim Gujjars (the nomad buffalo-herders). But in the late fifties of this century, the Matsyendra myth was associated with the myth of Matsya-avatara of Vishnu, whose shrine was built in its vicinity.<sup>60</sup> Low-caste pilgrims were not allowed inside this temple and at present there is a conflict with the low-caste Julaha *chelas*, who have similarly deified Kabir and built his shrine. This has on the one hand resulted in caste-polarisation with a clear high-low-caste divide; on the other hand it has resulted in cultural tension and contentions. The manipulation of the land granted to the establishment of Matsyendra Nath seems imminent. Of the 22 *kanals* and nine *marlas* of land endowed to Matsyendra Nath, there are nine claimants of whom seven are of the *pujari* family.<sup>61</sup> Of this, 4 *kanal* and 4 *marlas* of land has already been transferred in the name of the *pujari* of Matsya-avatara temple.<sup>62</sup> The relation between *pujari*–sanskritic deity–Sidh deity–‘untouchables’ vis-à-vis *pujari*–Sidh–‘untouchables’ becomes clear if we take into account a third shrine, the Balakrupi shrine of Hatli (Joginder Nagar). This shrine came into existence around 1850 through the efforts of a low-caste woman to cater to the local needs of the peasantry. It is an extension of the Balakrupi *tika* Har shrine. It received a *muafi* grant from the British government and was looked after by the *chelan* (the low-caste women priestesses). It is to be noted that there is a *chela-chelan* gender inclusion among the low castes as against gender exclusion by the Brahmins. The *chelan*, however, died issueless and the zamindar of the area appointed a hereditary Brahmin *pujari* to this shrine. Since there was no priestly contention and conflict, the entry of dominant low castes to this localised shrine, (and even the Muslim Gujjars of the area), was not banned. This is also evident from a recent inscription, dated 1946, which clearly specifies:<sup>63</sup>

The upper floor of *sarai* is for the saints and renouncers. The lower floor is for the untouchables.

The inscription clearly distinguishes between castes on the basis of touch, food and pollution (by implication) but states explicitly that these ‘untouchables’ were allowed inside this Sidh temple.

<sup>60</sup> Priest, Matsya-avata temple, Machhwal, tehsil Joginder Nagar, interviewed.

<sup>61</sup> *Bandobast-1964, Jamabandi 1986–87* Khata 114/289, Khasra No. 148, 1032, 33, 59, 60, 61, 69. Mamla Rs. 4.64; Rs. 21/4.55; Khasra No. 2. 33; *muafi*; Rs. 2.31. Total Rs. 7.19.

<sup>62</sup> *Jamabandi 1986–87, Kabja Sakh Dev Ghair murusi*, Khasra No. 1073, 1078, 1128, 113, khaite-4.

<sup>63</sup> Inscribed in Devnagari on marble, on the pedestal of *Sarai* issued by Th. Gyan Singh and Capt. Sahib Prem Singh, dated 01 Vaisakha, Samvat 2003 (1946).

Where does this lead to? The alienation of the low-caste *chelas* from the Balakrupi, *tika* Har shrine, resulted in 'civil suits' and the senior sub-judge in his statement recorded:<sup>64</sup>

It is true that jogis have throughout been fighting civil and criminal cases with Durga Dutt (the *pujari*) and his ancestors are to a great extent responsible for the present situation. *Had they not gone to the extreme and had they not teased and harassed* [emphasis mine] Durga Dutt, he would not have *appealed to the Zamindars and villagers* to protect him against their mischievous activities.

Thus, it is clear that the process of Brahminisation was also activated by the local authorities (of *dvija varna*). The villagers may have cooperated because most of them were either the tenants of the *pujaris* and higher castes of the locality or were under financial debt to the *pujaris*. That *pujaris* lent money and mortgaged the property was not unusual in the State as is also testified by a *bahi* from Thor, near Solan. The *mahant* of that shrine lent money to the needy low-caste villagers on occasions, such as marriage or other festivities, or to buy cattle, but did not charge any interest. In return the debtors had to work on the land of the shrine as 'tenants' or help the *mahant* in his ritual activities until the time they returned the principal—which was seldom. The negotiations of the amount and modes of return in terms of labour were documented in the *bahi* against the thumb impression of the debtor.<sup>65</sup> This document, attested by the village, regional or State authorities, acquired legal shape which could be used to exploit the illiterate low-caste villagers if they 'testified' against the *mahant* in the court. Such connivance of the authorities in subjugating the villagers speak of a nexus between them and the religious authority of the area. That ploy, it appears, was used along with the authority of the local high-caste zamindars to subjugate the low-caste Jogis, the former *chelas* of these shrines.

By 1943 the process of alienation of the Jogis, as also the Brahminisation of the shrine of Balakrupi, was given a sanction by the State machinery, when the sub-judge ordered:<sup>66</sup>

Durga Dutt will officiate as *pujari* in the temple of Baba Balakrupi during his life time and after his death or retirement his elder son will officiate as *pujari* [emphasis mine] and so on . . . .

<sup>64</sup> Suit No. 1/5 of 1940–41, Dharamsala, Senior Sub-Judge Court.

<sup>65</sup> A *Bahi* from Thor, District Sirmaur (not catalogued) with Himachal State Archives, Simla.

<sup>66</sup> Suit No. 1/5 of 1940–41, Senior Sub-Judge Court, Dharamsala.

The Jogis were, henceforth, reduced to the status of 'servitors' of the shrine only.<sup>67</sup> The Jogis had thus lost the final round in their claim over the Sidh shrines.

## V

The process of Brahminisation is evident only in the shrines which were economically well off and had landed property. With the transformation of the State and emergence of colonial support structures, like modes of communication and means of transportation, these shrines broadened their pilgrim-base. The effective social space of these shrines which was earlier like any other Sidh shrine covering around 40–60 sq. km area, broadened to approximately 200 sq. km or more and the hinterland, which was totally regional, acquired supra-regional dimensions.

In terms of ritual process, the Brahminised shrines transformed to acquire an elaborate ritual structure. The shrine of Baba Balakrupi, for instance, named around nineteen<sup>68</sup> 'servitors' in 1941 working in various capacities as musicians, water-carriers, cooks, washermen, gardeners, etc., whose job was to make available the articles of 'rituals' at fixed times to the Brahmin *pujari*.<sup>69</sup> The number of prayers increased along with the mode, process and context. Specific fairs and festivals were added to the ritual calendar of the shrine along with the celebration of all major festivals of India, which increased pilgrimage during this 'special time'. The rituals of the deity as well as those of the pilgrims increased quantitatively, and ritual specificity, varying with occasion, was stressed.<sup>70</sup> For instance, the festival of Maha-Sivaratri was introduced in the *tika* Har shrine. In this festival the icon of Balakrupi as well as the image of Jogu Ram were besmeared with '*gula*' and '*rang*' (dry and wet colours as in the festival of Holi), and their *yatra* (a journey in its 'own' territory exacting tribute) was undertaken throughout the effective social space of this shrine. *Kirtan* (community singing), frequent sanskritic *arti* (prayer) and *pujan* (appeasement) were the prominent features of this festival. Festivals of this dimension were also organised at the time of Krishna-Janama-Ashtami, Deepawali, Vasant-Panchami, etc. However, during the months of January–February (*magh*) and June–July ( *jyesta* and *ashadha*), a day's fair was organised on every Saturday,<sup>71</sup> in tune with the local agricultural harvest cycle.

<sup>67</sup> Suit No. 1/5, p. 14.

<sup>68</sup> Suit No. 1/5, p. 10.

<sup>69</sup> Oral interviews with the mali, musicians and water carrier of the Balakrupi shrine, *tika* Har.

<sup>70</sup> Durga Dutt, BRSK, pp. 19–29. Nowhere in the pamphlet is there a mention of the jogis, and there are statements like, 'there is no jagir for the management of the temple', p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

The Brahminised Sidh shrines, with their elaborate ritual structure, became the nodal points of the caste-society. Further, the deity was associated with kinship terminology such as *kulaja* or a lineage deity, irrespective of caste stratification, and hence, these shrines became a unit of the social fabric within their effective social spaces. This social role of the deity, in a way, made the pilgrimage to the shrine compulsory and mandatory, especially after the completion of each of the life-cycle rituals. Hence, this process complemented and gave impetus to the phenomenon of Brahminisation of the shrines.

In terms of caste-pilgrimage relations, though initially the 'untouchables' were not allowed inside some of the Brahminised temple complexes, they were granted permission after 1947. But by this time the low caste had been completely marginalised from the socio-ritual structure of the shrine and the rich donors in *dvija-varnas* had been strongly aligned with these centres.<sup>72</sup> The earlier records emphasise the popularity of the Sidh-network without any 'religious distinction', meaning thereby that these shrines were need-oriented, associated with the problems of mundane life, visited by the 'Hindus' and Muslim-Gujjars alike.<sup>73</sup> It is significant that with the process of Brahminisation the Muslim population was also alienated from such centres, though they continued to visit the non-Brahminised centres. Also, a direct relation between the caste of the priest and that of the pilgrims came into vogue. For instance, in shrines like Chano Sidh, officiated by Chamars, the participation of Muslims and the low castes was more marked as compared to the shrine in transition—Matsyendra Nath's—where conflict between Brahmins and Julahas is going on. The percentage of low-caste pilgrims in this shrine is still better than in the shrines that have been completely Brahminised. Table 2, based on *bahis* and oral interviews conducted in 1991–92, illustrates the relation clearly.

## VI

In Himachal Pradesh the Sidh shrines before the 1850's had no Brahmin *pujaris* but only low-caste *chelas* (priests). This explains their popularity among the low castes and the Gujjar-Muslim tribals. The upper castes visited these shrines only in connection with certain psychic maladies, a category of healing in which only the low-caste *chelas* specialised. Economically, these shrines neither had State patronage, as did the sanskritic shrines, nor a wide catchment area which would ensure a large inflow of liquidity. Nevertheless, they continued to be popular and asserted immense social influence in their limited and specific geographical area. They acted as a cohesive force in the region's caste and religiously heterodox society.

<sup>72</sup> BRSK, the entire *dvija* population as its pilgrims claimed, pp. 19–25, 27.

<sup>73</sup> Compare with Sakhi Sarvar of Lakh Datta, Oberoi, 'The Worship of Pir Sakhi Sarvar', p. 37.

Table 2  
The Priest-Caste Nexus and Sidh Shrines

Shrine	Tutelary Deity	Priest	Approx % of Caste Comp*				
			D	U	S	M	
Deot Sidh	Shiva	Brahmin	65(+5)	20(+5)	15(+7)	-	
Balakrupi-(Har)	Devi/Shiva	Brahmin	60(+8)	35(+5)	3(+2)	-	
Balakrupi-(Hatli)	-	Brahmin	55(+5)	40(+4)	1(+1)	2(+2)	
Machhyala (Joginder Nagar)	Vishnu/Kabir	Brahmin/Julaha	30(+8)	50(+4)	8(+5)	12(+4)	
Gugga (Kotla)	-	Ghiratha	20(+5)	75(+5)	3(+2)	2(+1)	
Vairaga Loka (Palampur)	-	Gosain (Low caste)	15(+4)	80(+5)	-	5(+2)	
Balankath (Gadakhhal)	-	Darji	10(+5)	60(+5)	30(+3)	-	
Charpat Nath (Chamb)	Shiva	Jogi	30(+10)	70(+5)	-	-	
Chano Sidh (Chaddiyar)	-	Chamar	4(+2)	76(+10)	-	20(+4)	
Pir Lakh Datta (Chamba; Una)	-	Ghiratha/Muslim	10(+4)	58(+3)	2(+2)	30(+3)	
Kanthar Nath (Sakri)	-	Jogi	15(+7)	80(+3)	-	5(+2)	
Ajiya Pala (Paprola; Chamba)	-	-	10(+3)	60(+5)	-	30(+2)	
Kaula-Pancha-Dharma (Chamba)	-	Various low castes/Muslims	2(+)	90(+10)	-	8(+3)	

\* Index. D = Dvija (Brahmin + Rajput + Vaisayas); U = untouchable; S = Sikh; M = Muslim.

However, due to the changing political scenario and consequently the political landscape, between the 1750's and 1820's, a nexus developed between the State and the Sidh shrines. As a result their catchment area started increasing and with the extension of royal patronage they became popular and economically affluent centres. These interlinked changes were in a sense firmed up through the Brahminical appropriation of these shrines—whereby the Brahmins, as *pujaris*, asserted their ritual status to legitimise their social and temporal authority for certain economic and political gains. There are at least two significant aspects of this process. One, that it was only witnessed in the economically well-off shrines and the other, that it was marked by the marginalisation and eventual exclusion of the low-caste *Jogi-chelas*.

The latter was effected systematically by reformulating the myth structures, manipulating the genealogical records, deploying the mediation of sanskritic deities (for instance, Kamakshi in the case of Balakrupi shrine), and using the state apparatus to distance the Jogis spatially and economically. The rituals were restructured to virtually replace popular ones and in cases where rituals were absent, sanskritic rituals were introduced.

The fallout of the process of Brahminical appropriation was that many Sidh shrines got universalised and this was reflected in the growth of the *dvija* (Brahmin, Kshatriya and the trading communities) pilgrimage to these shrines. The Brahminised deities also became associated vertically and horizontally with the sanskritic deities, though arbitrarily ranked and always in a subordinate capacity. The process also resulted in broadening the spatio-temporal jurisdiction of these shrines and their hinterland acquired supra-regional dimensions.

The significance of such appropriation emerges more sharply when it is located in the context of Sidh ideology which was anti-caste, anti-ritual and above all anti-Brahminic. More specifically, the Sidhs were opposed to the Brahminical model of social organisation and their movement was a protest against sanskritic culture. It was due to these ideological reasons that the Sidh deities and practitioners had become popular among the oppressed low castes and the Muslim tribals, both of whom shared a survival bond, pitted as they were against the upper-caste state machinery. While in isolation these centres thrived in their misery, once they acquired visible social, political, and economic power, they became as much a threat to the sanskritic centres as to the high-caste population. A generalisation may be attempted, while keeping in mind the socio-political transformations often aided by the State officials (for instance via high-caste local patwari, quanungo, tehsildar or zamindars at Balakrupi), to conclude that the authority of the *Jogi-chelas* had come to be perceived as a probable and potential threat to the social and political control of the upper-caste minority population. Alternatively, given that these shrines provided a hope of

redressal for social inequities by the usage of miraculous powers<sup>74</sup> (*siddhis*) endowed to the low-caste *chelas*, they had become important social centres undergirding as they did the caste solidarity and sharpened the identity of the low castes. The shrines also became potential centres of the *chela* supported low-caste social protest movements. Such threats became real and imminent once the shrines became economically and politically powerful. This is evident in the case of the Balakrupi shrine where the Brahmins were aided by the local upper-caste zamindars to contain the 'mischievous'<sup>75</sup> Jogi-*chelas*.

<sup>74</sup> For instance Parry observed that 'when Ratan Singh quarrelled with, and assaulted one of his tenants, the tenant is said to have invoked the leather-worker's deity, Chano Sidh. Chano Sidh did not punish Rattan directly, however, but first attacked his son's wife and then his father's brother's son's son . . .'; J.P. Parry, *Caste and Kinship in Kangra*, Delhi, 1979, pp. 143 and 325; Moorcroft also reported the existence of such beliefs in the 19th century Kangra as: '. . .and, amongst others, one of a Zamindar, who, having lost his son and a favourite cow, accused an old woman of the village of having destroyed them magically "eating their lives".' Moorcroft, W. and G. Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab & c.* Vol. I, London, 1841, p. 75. The social situation and power relations dependent on such beliefs, however, needs a more detailed exposition.

<sup>75</sup> Suit No. 1/5 of 1940-41, Dharamsala, Senior Sub-Judge's Court.