THE SUFI SHEIKHS AND THEIR SOCIO-CULTURAL ROLES IN THE ISLAMIZATION OF BENGAL DURING THE MUGHAL PERIOD (1526-1858)

Wahyuddin Halim
Faculty of Islamic Theology and Philosophy
Alauddin State Islamic University of Makassar
E-mail: wahyuddin.halim@uin-alauddin.ac.id

Abstract: One of the most observable influences of Islam on the Indian-subcontinent, especially in today's Bangladesh, is the spiritual and humane teaching of Sufism during the medieval period. Based primarily on a critical elaboration of Eaton's *The Rise of Islam in Bengal Frontier 1204-1760* (1993), this article attempts to describe the socio-cultural and religious role of the Sufi sheikhs in the conversion to Islam of the Bengali people during the period of Mughal Empire (1526-1858). The earliest Sufis attempted at Islamic conversion began in the very hostile environment maintained by the local Hindu or Buddhist rulers. However, these Sufis sheikhs or *pirs* were able to convert most of the local population to Islam by preaching about the great teachings of the new religion about love, brotherhood, and equality. Among other success factors in the Sufi mission in Islamic conversion of the Bengali during the period under discussion were their unconquerable dedication and exceptional piety as well as the common belief among the Bengali people that these *pirs* could perform incontestable miracles.

Keywords: Sufi, Bengal, Islam, Conversion, Socio-cultural Roles

Introduction

The questions of how Islam spread in many different places outside the Arabia and who did the task have always been the subject of much interest among scholars of Islamic history.[1] In Eaton's perspective, the spread of Islam in Bengal is particularly exceptional. This is related to the fact that among the pre-partition India's interior provinces, only in Bengal where Islam as the religion of the ruling class was adopted by a majority of the "indigenous population". In fact, Eaton states that by the end of the nineteenth century, Bengalis "comprise the second largest Muslim ethnic population in the world, after the Arabs".[2]

Moreover, as far as the number of people converted to Islam is concerned, T. Arnold notes that it is in Bengal "that the Muhammadan missionaries in India have achieved

---

[1] For this, see e.g. the articles collected in N. Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam* (New York: Holmes & Meyer, 1979). A comprehensive, yet somewhat apologetic account on the subject is given by A. Ezzati, *The Spread of Islam: the Contributing Factors* (London: Islamic College for Advanced Study Press, 2002).

[2] Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam in Bengal Frontier 1204-1760* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. xxii (hereafter cited in this paper as *the Rise of Islam*). Emphasis added. Eaton's account on the exceptional character of Islamic spread in Bengal agricultural frontier may not, however, be totally unique when it is seen within a broader context of the spread of Islam in other places such as that in the Malay-Indonesian world, particularly in western Java, where the substantial majority of indigenous population, prior to conversion, were mainly Hindus, Buddhists or animists adopted Islam in a peaceful way. For this see e.g. Sartono Kartodirjo, *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888: Its Conditions, Course and Sequel* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966) and M.C. Ricklefs, "Six Centuries of Islamization in Java" in N. Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam* (New York: Holmes & Meyer, 1979), pp. 100-28.

their greatest success."[3] It is also interesting to note that, in Clinton Bennett and Charles M. Ramsey's observation, "the handprint of Sufism" is more observable in South Asia than in other parts of the Muslim world. South Asia has been commonly recorded as the region where the second largest Muslim population of the world is living even in today's standard.[4] The humble aim of this paper is to examine this exceptional phenomenon of Islamic conversion in Bengal, especially during the Mughal Period (1526-1858). The questions that this paper will answer are what factors that contribute to this phenomenal conversion and what roles that the Sufis (or *pirs* or holy men) played in that sociocultural and religious process.

Some Theories on the Spread of Islam in Indian Subcontinent

Several theories have been developed by historians with regard to the spread of Islam.[5] However, according to Eaton, within the context of the growth of Islam in India, there are four basic modes of reasoning that are frequently

[3] T.W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith* (London: Constable & Company Ltd., 1913), p. 277.

[4] Clinton Bennett, "Introduction: South Asian Sufis – Continuity, Complexity and Change", in Clinton Bennett and Charles M. Ramsey, (eds.), *South Asian Sufis: Devotion, Deviation, and Destiny* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

[5] See Ezzati, *The Spread of Islam,* part 2, where he mentions the following thirteen principal factors that contribute to the spread of Islam: religious, religious leadership, intellectual, moral and ethical, cultural, humanitarian, political, social and socio-political, economic, emigration and immigration, educational, civilizational, and Islamic dynamism and resilience.

adopted to explain the process.[6] The first theory is, as Eaton calls it, the "immigration theory", which views Islamization as a process of diffusion of people rather than of belief due to an extensive immigration or emigration. The next and the most widely held theory especially by the nineteenth- and twentieth-century held by some Orientalists to explain the emergence of Islam in seventh-century Arabia. According to this theory, Islam was spread by sword. This theory emphasizes the role of military force in the expansion of Islam in India and elsewhere. The third theory suggests that socio-economic factors, i.e. the desire for social improvement or prestige, are the causes for the Indians' conversion to Islam in the pre-modern period. The last theory which, according to Eaton, was created by British ethnographers and historians is the "religion of social liberation" thesis, as Eaton calls it. In this theory, the Hindu Indian population from the lower-castes who were oppressed by the Brahmanic caste people were converted to Islam because the latter carried a liberating message of social equity.[7] T.W. Arnold, for instance, whose book *The Preaching of Islam* has been classical on the early study of Islamic preaching, holds this theory with reference to India: "It is the absence of class prejudices which constitute the real

[6] Ezzati, *The Spread of Islam,* p. 113.

[7] Ezzati, *The Spread of Islam*, pp. 113-6. See also Murray T. Titus in his *Islam in India and Pakistan: A Religious History of Islam in India and Pakistan* (Calcutta: Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, 1959) where all of these theories are also used to explain the nature of Islamic penetration in India and Bengal. See particularly chapters II and III.

strength of Islam in India, and enables it to win so many converts from Hinduism".[8]

Eaton presents several convincing arguments to refute these theories. He contends that none of these theories can alone accurately explain the real character of the massive conversion of Indian and Bengal population to Islam in its earliest historical presence in the subcontinent. Eaton argues that "… So few advocates of any of the theories discussed above… grounded their theories on original evidence. Nor did they attempt to establish exactly when and where Islam first became a mass religion".[9] In the context of Bengal, Islam becomes the religion of the peasant community who comprise the great mass of its population. Eaton further suggests that a clear explanation about the mass conversion to Islam can be given only when we have answered the question of "when and where the Bengali Muslim peasant community emerged" as precise terms as possible.[10] Apparently, what draws Eaton's important attention in this regard is the significance role of the Bengali peasant community as his subject of analysis in the rise of Islam in Bengal, particularly in its eastern part.

Eaton notes that the feature of East Bengal during the Mughal Period was remarkable because its agricultural productivity and population growth were far greater relative to contemporary Western Bengal. One important factor for

[8] Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, p. 291.
[9] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 131.
[10] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 131.

this is the long-term eastward movement of Bengal's major river systems, which deposited the rich silt which made possible the cultivation of wet rice in the region.[11] It is not surprising, therefore, that already by the late sixteenth century eastern and southern Bengal were able to produce so much surplus grain to such an extent that for the first time rice emerged as an important export crop, joining cotton textiles which was Bengal's main export commodity since at least the late fifteenth century.[12] This boom of Bengal's agricultural product and later on also its manufacturing coincided not only with the consolidation of Mughal power in the province but also with the growing activities in overland and maritime trade which connected Bengal ever more firmly to the world economy.

In short, as Eaton explains, there are several natural, political, and economic factors to this seventeenth century's booming of rice production in the eastern Bengal: (1) the eastward movement of Bengal's rivers and therefore the active delta, (2) the region's political and commercial integration with Mughal India, and (3) the growth in the money supply with the influx of outside silver in payment for locally manufactured textiles. What is more important to note in the context of this paper is that Bengal's rice boom also coincided both in time (between the late sixteenth and early eighteenth centuries) and place (the eastern delta) with

[11] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 194.
[12] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 201.

the rise of a Muslim peasantry.[13] Therefore, we see here the interplay between economic change and religious transformation.

With regard to the countryside, Eaton argues that the reliable evidence of a Muslim peasant population anywhere in Bengal can only be observed from the late sixteenth century, and particularly after the Mughal conquest (1574). In other words, Islamization among the rural population did not become visible until after this conquest.[14] For Eaton, the fact that the most significant conversion to Islam among the rural people of Bengal took place under the Mughal regime is a paradox. This is because, despite the insistence of conservative *'ulama'* (religious scholars) on the emperors' "duty" to convert, the Mughals are well-known for their lack of interest or concern in converting the Bengalis to Islam, stressing their policy, instead, on increasing agricultural productivity by "extracting as much of the surplus wealth of the land as they could".[15] Convinced with this fact, Eaton then focuses his investigation on the Mughal period in Bengal to find the answer for this paradox.

All historical accounts regarding Islam in Bengal have noted that in the thirteenth century, Islam had been associated with the ruling ethos of the delta's Turkish conquerors; and in the cities, at least, such an association persisted for several centuries, especially because it is

[13] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 207.
[14] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 132-3.
[15] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 134.

preserved by Sufi sheikhs of the Chishti order, the most dominant Sufi order in India since the early fourteenth century onward.[16] In a subsequent period, the Mughal conquest paved the way for the advent of a new elite class of *ashraf* Muslims (i.e. Turkic-Persian immigrants from points west of the delta), or their descendants, characterized particularly as administrators, soldiers, mystics, which most of them subordinated to the secular ethos of Mughal imperialism. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, thanks largely to exceptional levels of agrarian and demographic expansion in East Bengal, the role to develop Islamic civilization in the delta which was predominantly carried out by urban *ashraf* now shifted to peasant cultivators of the eastern frontier. What is interesting to observe is the fact that the latter were remarkably successful in assimilating Islam to their agrarian world-view.[17]

Eaton further notes that this process is possible because in the Mughal period, Bengal's agrarian and political frontiers had collapsed into one.[18] From Sylhet through

---

[16] M. Eaton, "Who are Bengal Muslims? Conversion and Islamization in Bengal" in Rafiuddin Ahmed (ed.), *Understanding the Bengal Muslims: Interpretative Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 43 (hereafter cited in this "Who are Bengal Muslims"). See also Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India,* vol. 1 (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher, 1978), p. 256f. For Chishti order in South Asia, see e.g. Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.

[17]M. Eaton, "Who are Bengal Muslims?" p. 43.

[18] In Eaton's schema, to understand the geographical, political and theological landscapes of Bengal in this period, he suggests three kinds of frontiers: the economic frontier separating field and forest, the

Chittagong, the government fused the political goal of strengthening its authority among dependent clients rooted on the land with economic goal of expanding the state's arable land area. This expansion was made possible by stimulating the agricultural development of the forested hinterland through subsidies which were mostly given to pretty *mullahs*, pilgrims returned from Mecca, preachers, charismatic *pirs,* and local chieftains seeking tax-free land.[19] These "charismatic pioneers" who were frequently referred to as Muslim holy men were frequently charged with clearing the forests and the construction of mosques or shrines, which in turn became the centers for "the diffusion of Islamic ideals along the agrarian frontier."[20] Among the most popular of such holy men (*pir*) are: Sheikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi (d. 1244), Mehr 'Ali, Shah Saiyid Nasir al-Din, Khondkar Shah 'Ala (in early Mughal period), Shah Jalal Mujarrad (d. 1346), Khan Jahan (d. 1459), and Pir 'Umar Shah (eighteenth century).

In Eaton analysis, while the settlements that accompanied agricultural growth may not have been large cities, they were still settlements that formed new communities around the authority of Muslims. Over time the local community began to venerate these men and

---

political frontier separating Mughal from non-Mughal administration, and the religious frontier separating Islam and non-Islam. See Eaton, *The Rise of Islam*, p. 265.

[19] Eaton, "Who are Bengal Muslim", p. 43.

[20] Eaton, "Who are Bengal Muslim", p. 43. See also Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 207a

"Islam was introduced as a civilization building ideology associated both with settling and populating the land and with constructing a transcendent reality consonant with that process."[21]

Briefly, Eaton describes the important elements in the diffusion of Islamic ideals with the systems of an agrarian society as in the following procedures: (1) The sheikh's charismatic authority and organizational ability, (2) the establishment of the mosque, (3) state support of the institution, (4) the sheikh's initiative in conserving forested lands into the institution, and (5) the transformation of formerly forested lands into wealth-producing agrarian communities that would continue to support the mosque.[22]

Therefore, it can be seen, since the sixteenth century onwards, the charismatic Sufi sheikhs or *pirs* have been firmly kept as a collective memory among the Bengalis. They are remembered because the authority of these *pirs* rested on three important bases: (1) their ability to tame the forest, a wild and dangerous domain; (2) their connection with the supernatural world, a marvelous, powerful realm, with which they were believed to wield continuing influence; and no less important (3) their association with mosques (or, later on, *khanaqah*, Sufi auspice) which they have built which, in turn, signify the institutionalization of the cult in Islam.[23] Islam in the active delta was, therefore, introduced as, to use Eaton

[21] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 226.

[22] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 218.

[23] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 218. See also Abdul Karim, *Social History of the Muslim in Bengal* (Dhaka: Jatiya Sahitta Prakash, 2007).

words, "a civilization-building ideology associated both with settling populating the land and with constructing a transcendent reality consonant with that process."[24]

More importantly, for the local communities that fell under the economic and religious influence of these institutions, Islam is not perceived as alien, or as a closed, exclusive system to be accepted or rejected as a whole. According to Eaton, the assumption that the world religions are self-contained and complete systems with well-defined borders is not true in the case of Bengal's pre-modern frontier. Rather, Bengal frontier has appeared to be a fluid context in which Islamic superhuman agencies, typically identified with local superhuman agencies, gradually infused into local cosmologies that were themselves dynamic. Because of this "seepage" which came about over such a long period of time, Eaton believes that no one can at any point identify a specific moment of "conversion", or any single moment when "people saw themselves as having made a dramatic break with the past."[25] The fact is, Islam in Bengal represents a mélange with so much local culture and become so profoundly identified with the delta's long-term process of agrarian expansion.[26]

Socio-cultural Factors in the Bengali Conversion to Islam

[24] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 226.
[25] Eaton, "Who are Bengal Muslims?" p. 44.
[26] Eaton, "Who are Bengal Muslims?" p. 44.

Now the question remains to be answered: what is the relationship between the facts discussed above regarding the *pirs* and the remarkable growth of Islam especially among the indigenous people in eastern Bengal during the period under consideration? Amplifying some relevant points that Eaton makes in his works cited earlier, I argue that there are at least three major factors that encourage the slow but significant and enduring process of "conversion" to Islam among the Bengal people since the thirteenth century, as described above. *First*, there seems to be no sign of coercion in this process, let alone compulsion. It has been revealed that the mass conversion to Islam in this region took place not during the conquest and military campaign in the earliest period of Bengalis' encountering with the Perso-Turkic Muslims from the west or the northwest of the delta. The significant result of this conversion was instead observed during the early Mughal rule in the province that, in contrast, did not show any interest to convert the Bengalis to Islam.

This lack of interest among the Mughal sultans in conversion may be explained by the fact that many of them were very much influenced by Sufi teachings whose orientation is not to conversion but to ethical education.[27]

[27] In addition, it is a well-known fact that Sufism tends to blur the distinction between Islam and other religious traditions, one of the reasons why Sufism encountered much opposition and accusation from the Sunni *'ulama'*. For this, see Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-800* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 233.

As noted by Riazul Islam with reference to the missionary role of Indian Sufis, it is a rare case that a Sufi has a track record of converting one person to Islam. Even more striking, Riazul shows that none of the Chishti sheikhs in India "ever converted a Hindu to Islam."[28] Surely, this fact is also applicable to Bengalis Sufis or the Sufis sheikhs under the Mughal patronage in Bengal. In addition, during the Mughal reign in the delta, its policy was directed towards getting benefit and abundant supply from the development of agricultural system in that province.

The *second* factor, and very much related to the first, is that the initial role that these holy man or *pirs* were playing when they first settled in Bengal was not Islamic or religious missionary, but rather socio-cultural. In fact, they were first recognized and respected because their contribution, or properly speaking their leadership and charisma, to the development of agricultural system in particular, and sociocultural in general, in the delta. However, it is obvious that precisely because of this role that they were later able to win the soul of the indigenous Bengal peoples of different religious tradition and maintain a close relationship to such an extent that conversion to the religion or adherence to the spiritual teaching of the *pirs* is just a matter of time. In other

[28] See Riazul Islam, *Sufism in South Asia: Impact on Fourteen-Century Muslim Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 448.

words, "peasantization and Islamization proceeded hand in hand"[29] among the Bengal agricultural society.

This process may be well described by Nehemia Levitzion when he says that Islamization "progressed and matured over decades and centuries largely as a result of the creation of an Islamic ambience and the development of Muslim institutions."[30] Similarly, Richard Bulliet argues that, "there is a direct and fundamental relationship between conversion to Islam and the development of what may be called an Islamic society."[31]

What Levitzion calls as "Muslim institution" or Bulliet as "Islamic society" above may well describe the *third* factor in Islamization process in Bengal, the institutionalization of the mosque. As can be seen, *pirs* played a dominant role in the establishment of mosque in Bengal its earlier Islamic history. As noted earlier, in many rural areas in Bengal, the mosque (*jum'a-ghar*) had become a very effective unit of social organization among Muslims. It is not difficult to understand the effectiveness of mosque as an institution where the dissemination of Islamic values can take place in a peaceful and voluntary fashion. It should be add, mosque in anywhere in the Muslim community does

---

[29] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 252. See also, Muhammad Enamul Haq. *A History of Sufism in Bengal*. (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1975).

[30] See Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam*, p. 9.

[31] Richard W. Buliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 1. See also *idem,* "Conversion to Islam and the Emergence of a Muslim Society in Iran" in Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam,* pp. 30-51.

not function only as a place of worship in the strict sense of the word but also as an institution where the Muslim can express their social, cultural, artistic, and even political concerns. To quote Eaton at length:

> The continuing social significance of the mosque in today's rural Bengali society is a legacy of a time when a religious gentry of '*ulama* and *pirs* –and in their institutionalized form, mosques and shrines—first emerged as nodes of authority around which new peasant communities originally coalesced, and in relation to which such communities were understood as "dependents".[32]

In concluding his observation, Eaton writes:

> In the context of pre-modern Bengal, then, it would seem inappropriate to speak of the 'conversion' of 'Hindu' to Islam. What one finds, rather, is an expanding agrarian civilization whose cultural counterpart was the growth of the cult of Allah. This larger movement was composed of several interwoven processes: (a) the eastward movement and settlement of colonizers from points west, (b) the incorporation of frontier tribal peoples into the expanding agrarian civilization, and (c) the natural population growth that accompanied the diffusion or the grains.[33]

Eaton further concludes that,

> Because this growth process combined natural, political, economic, and cultural forces, we find in eastern Bengal a remarkable congruence between a

[32] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 234.
[33] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 44.

> socio-economic system geared to the production of wet rice and a religious ideology that conferred *special meaning* on agrarian life. It is a testimony to the vitality of Islam, and one of the clues to its success as a world religion, that its adherents in Bengal were so creative in accommodating local sociocultural realities with norms of the religion.[34]

Eaton's account of the importance of Sufis' role in sociocultural or, properly speaking, agricultural life in the early Bengal sultanate in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries shows a considerably unique fact about the relationship between Sufi movement and the state in early Islamic history. It is widely understood that in many places, Sufis' influence is reinforced through the exercise of their spiritual piety or charisma or miracles over their people. When from political stand point this influence has become stronger, the emperors will, in turn, be convinced to seek patronage with the Sufis to reinforce their control over, and to legitimize his regime in the eyes of, their people. Such an important role of Sufis in the life of Muslim in Bengali continues to be exercised through the establishment of Sufi orders in later period.[35] Sufis' contemporary contribution in

[34] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 44.

[35] See, for instance, P. J. Bertocci, "A Sufi movement in Bangladesh: The Maijbhandari Tariqa and its Followers" in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 40 (1), (2006), pp. 1–28.

Bangladesh includes strengthening religious harmony and inclusivism among the people of Bangladesh.[36]

Concluding Remarks

The wholesale conversion to Islam of the population of what was to become Bangladesh began in the thirteenth century and continued for hundreds of years. Conversion was generally collective rather than individual, although individual Hindus who became outcastes or who were ostracized for any reason often became Muslims. Islamic egalitarianism, especially the ideals of equality, brotherhood, and social justice, may be one factor which has attracted numerous Buddhists and lower caste Hindus to convert to Islam. But particularly it was the socio-cultural role of the holy men who wandered about in villages and towns helping people to transform the wild forest into agricultural field and who were subsequently regarded as saints or *pirs* or Sufi sheikhs, which responsible for many conversions in the Bengal.

It can be said that Sufi sheikhs (*pirs*) played the most important factor in South Asian conversions to Islam, including in Bengal. Most Bangali Muslims are influenced to some degree by Sufism, although this influence often involves only occasional consultation or celebration rather than formal affiliation. Both *faqirs* and *pirs* are familiar figures

[36] Abdullah Al Masud, Md. Faruk Abdullah and Md. Ruhul Amin, "The Contributions of Sufism in Promoting Religious Harmony in Bangladesh". *Journal of Usuluddin*, vol. 45(2), (2017): 105-121.

on the village scene, and in some areas the shrines of saints almost outnumber the mosques. In some regions the terms fakir and *pir* are used interchangeably, but in general the former connotes an itinerant holy man and the latter an established *murshid*, a holy man who has achieved a higher spiritual level than a fakir and who has a larger following.

Their inclusive approach to other people of different faith and religious traditions, their humble and low profile style of life, together with their willingness to be acculturated into the Bengal agricultural society enabled these Sufi sheikhs to attract the Bengali people to follow their teachings, although in many cases, not necessary become formally Muslim. In a large context, to quote Eaton for the last time, "What made Islam in Bengal not only historically successful but a continuing vital social reality has been its capacity to adapt to the land and the culture of its people, even while transforming both."[37] Other important factor is their role in the establishment of mosque maintaining the process of teaching and learning in this institution.

[37] Eaton, *The Rise of Islam,* p. 315.

Bibliography

Al-Ahsan, Abdullah. "Spread of Islam in pre-Mughal Bengal". *Intellectual Discourse*. 1994.

Al Masud, Abdullah, Md. Faruk Abdullah and Md. Ruhul Amin. "The Contributions of Sufism in Promoting Religious Harmony in Bangladesh". *Journal of Usuluddin*, vol. 45(2), 2017: 105-121.

Arnold, T.W. *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith*. London: Constable & Company Ltd., 1913.

Bennett, Clinton. "Introduction: South Asian Sufis – Continuity, Complexity and Change". In Clinton Bennett and Charles M. Ramsey, (eds.), *South Asian Sufis: Devotion, Deviation, and Destiny*. London: Bloomsbury, 2012.

Bertocci, Peter J. "A Sufi movement in Bangladesh: The Maijbhandari tariqa and its followers". *Contributions to Indian Sociology*. 40 (1), 2006: 1–28.

Buliet, Richard W. *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period: An Essay in Quantitative History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Eaton, Richard M. "Who are Bengal Muslims? Conversion and Islamization in Bengal" in Rafiuddin Ahmed (ed.), *Understanding the Bengal Muslims: Interpretative Essays*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001.

_____ . *The Rise of Islam in Bengal Frontier 1204-1760*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Ernst, Carl W. *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.

Ezzati, A. *The Spread of Islam: the Contributing Factors* (London: Islamic College for Advanced Study Press, 2002.

Haq, Muhammad Enamul. *A History of Sufism in Benga*l. Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1975.

Karim, Abdul. *Social History of the Muslim in Bengal*. Dhaka: Jatiya Sahitta Prakash, 2007.

Levtzion, N. (ed.), *Conversion to Islam*. New York: Holmes & Meyer, 1979.

Ricklefs, M.C. "Six Centuries of Islamization in Java" in N. Levtzion (ed.), *Conversion to Islam*. New York: Holmes & Meyer, 1979.

Rizvi, Saiyid Athar Abbas. *A History of Sufism in India,* vol. 1. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher, 1978.

Titus, Murray T. in his *Islam in India and Pakistan: A Religious History of Islam in India and Pakistan*. Calcutta: Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, 1959.