



# FROM GURU TO SHEIKH TO QUTB

The Life and Times of a Sufi on the Move

This talk will trace the enigmatic origins of a non-literate Tamil-speaking Sufi sage from Sri Lanka named Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, who arrived in the United States in 1971 and died there in 1986. In between his arrival and death Bawa travelled to and from South Asia four times, brining Americans with him to Sri Lanka and Sri Lankans back with him to the United States. His back and forth movement resulted in the construction of several sacred sites in both places that have become part of a transnational landscape connecting the Serendib Sufi Study Circle in Colombo, Sri Lanka with the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship in Philadelphia, USA. By creating a transnational Sufi “family” based on a universal form of spirituality that acknowledges all religions as being integrated aspects of the one true religion (i.e., Islam), Bawa left behind a small but unique legacy that still continues today, virtually 35 years after his death. His “children,” however, are constantly negotiating their spiritual father’s legacy in the present as they seek to keep the charisma of his office in tact within a turbulent and changing world.

## SPEAKER



**Frank J. Korom** is Professor of religion and anthropology at Boston University, where he has been teaching for over two decades. He holds a PhD from University of Pennsylvania. His specialization is in the religions and cultures of the Indian Subcontinent and its diasporas. He is also the co-editor of the biannual journal *Asian Ethnology* as well as the author and/or editor of ten books, most recently *South Asian Folklore in Transition: Crafting New Horizons* (2018). His current project is a book-length study to be titled *Guru Bawa and the Making of a Transnational Family*, tentatively scheduled for release by DeGruyter in 2022.

**9 DECEMBER 2020 (WED)**  
**4.00 – 5.00 PM SGT | VIA ZOOM**

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