

**ANTICOLONIALISM, NATIONALISM, AND STATE FORMATION:
THE RISE OF PAKISTAN**

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Abstract

There is ongoing popular and scholarly debate about the rise of Pakistan as a nation-state. Much of this literature frames the emergence either in cultural terms as a territorial expression of transhistorical Muslim nationhood, or in a liberal framing as the outcome of the political mobilization of the Muslim community against Hindu domination. This dissertation makes a corrective by examining the constitutive role of radical anticolonialism in the rise of Pakistan, with a focus on the province of Punjab in British India from 1880 to 1947. I argue that the formation of the Pakistani nation-state entailed the condensation of multiple political struggles over rescaling empire. Muslim nationalism reified struggles over land, food, women's bodies, and access to the colonial state as ethnic struggles between Muslims and Hindus, thus codifying class, caste and religion in essentialist terms. Despite popular energies of agrarian classes against Hindu *Bania* (moneylender caste) were redirected into radical anticolonialism by the Ghadar Party in the 1910s, the demand for Pakistan subsequently shifted the scale of anti-*Bania* antagonisms among agrarian classes onto claims for a Muslim national space. The materialization of a Muslim national space (Pakistan) and Hindu national space (India) cannot be understood in the absence of the repression of radical anticolonial movements such as the Ghadar Party, the Kirti Kisan Party, and communist organizing. When Muslim landlords foresaw that independence was inevitable and joined the Pakistan movement, those formerly associated with the Unionist Party projected their pro-landlord and pro-imperialist politics within a framework of Muslim nationalism defined by the Muslim League. The false character of decolonization in British India amounted to a passive revolution which restored and modernized imperial rule by reorganizing social hierarchies, structures of domination, and scales. This dissertation

denaturalizes the scale of the nation by arguing how it is not some pre-given or transhistorical entity, but its emergence in the case of Pakistan was the outcome of the balance of forces between radical anticolonial initiatives and their repression and absorption into a restored imperial order. Passive revolution entails rescaling processes that reconfigure the vertical relationship among household, village, nation, and empire.

Dedication

To the *kisan* and *mazdur* of Pakistan and India. To those who struggle for liberation.

Preface

That there is one author and date printed on the first page of this dissertation points to a single author and end point. But, the reality is that the development and people involved in making this text possible are multiple.

One narrative I can tell is that very early on I was fascinated by the stories my father would often repeat about our family's journey from our ancestral home in eastern Punjab, in contemporary India, to various parts of western Punjab, in contemporary Pakistan, during the summer and fall of 1947. My father's stories were quite critical of the formation of Pakistan. I would only learn later that this was not a unanimous position among my family members. I remember hearing a great-aunt, who was a teenager at the moment of partition and independence, recount the gruesome violence that women experienced, those being vital details that my father never told me. But, I was equally shocked to hear her defense about those events: Pakistan was necessary, even if blood needed to be spilled.

Another starting point could be through my involvement in community radio in Montreal. While I was part of the South Asian community news collective there was a debate on naming the show. One member, Jaggi Singh, suggested the name of Ghadar Radio. This was a reference to the Ghadar Party, which was a radical anticolonial movement founded in 1913 by Punjabi diaspora living along the west coast of the United States and Canada. The Party connected the national liberation struggle in the Indian subcontinent with struggles against racist immigration systems in North America. The Ghadar Party showed how the struggle against imperialism could take on multiple nodal points that reached beyond the contours of British India. I wasn't fully able then to appreciate the name of Ghadar Radio, nor was it able to capture the consensus of our

collective. Till today, the Ghadar Party continues to be a source of inspiration to a section of the South Asian diaspora in North America. Ghadar is a testament to a long history of anticolonial and antiracist organizing by the South Asian diaspora in North America. Its history should be remembered and reclaimed. This dissertation is a small attempt at recuperating some of those histories of anticolonial resistance.

An important impetus of this dissertation has been my time with the committed and generous peasants, workers, and organizers with the Pakistan Kisan Mazdoor Tareek and Roots for Equity that do the slow work of political education. My time traveling around villages across Sindh, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with these organizations was important to learn about the realities and struggles of working people. It was there that I felt that reclaiming the histories of past struggles could contribute to contemporary struggles. This was impossible without the friendship of Wali Haider, Azra Sayeed, and the rest of the staff at Roots for Equity. It is through long conversations over biryani and chai with Wali that I was first convinced by a historical materialist analysis for understanding social realities in Pakistan and beyond.

I thank other people in Pakistan for making a temporary home for me there: Ali Raza, Bilal Tanweer, Asad Farooq, Waqas Butt, and Syed Azeem. I also thank the staff at the Punjab Archives, Pakistan Documentation Center in Islamabad, and the South Asian Resource and Research Centre, who always provided a hospitable cup of chai. Rizwan Mughal and his family opened their doors to me while in Islamabad. Others who I have met in transnational encounters who have been important to the development of this dissertation include, Ammar Ali Jan, Sara Kazmi, and Hashim Bin Rashid. I also want to thank the organizers and participants at the *Commemorating Ghadar* conference at the Lahore University of Management Sciences in December 2014. Another transnational friend and fellow *ghadari* has been Radha D'Souza.

I need to give the highest gratitude to my dissertation supervisor, Stefan Kipfer, whose insights about theory and political practice have been generative for this work. My appreciation for Frantz Fanon and Antonio Gramsci was born through reading their texts in light of Stefan's own writings, which alerted me to their historicism and geographical sensitivity. If there is anything worthy in this dissertation, it is thanks to Stefan's meticulous reading, commenting, and rereading of these pages. I thank him immensely for his hospitality and generosity in accompanying me on this journey.

I also want to thank the other members of my dissertation committee. Janam Mukherjee for being a dedicated reader and good consul. I always found it difficult to find my bearings in this interdisciplinary work, Janam has helped me to find the tools to be a part-time historian and for navigating the field of South Asian Studies. I also appreciate Anna Zalik's good spirit, committed energy, and insights. Anna was an important point of departure in my readings on anticolonialism and critical social theory through her course on Development Studies. I want to thank Raju Das for creating a space to think about Marxist theory. His dedicated organizing of the Critical Geography Reading Group has been an important space to reflect on Marx and Marxism.

Aziz Choudry has been a friend who first suggested that I study at York University's Faculty of Environmental Studies. I am forever grateful for his friendship, continuous guidance, and humour.

Majed Akhtar, Waqas Butt, and Kyle Gibson gave feedback and helped in copy-editing some earlier chapter drafts.

Multiple friends and colleagues at York University have seen me through this project: Aaron Saad, Tania Hernandez, Sonja Killoran-McKibben, Ayyaz Mallick, Julie Chamberlain, Kyle Gibson, Michael Classens, Qamar Zaidi, Caren Weisbart, Mburucuya Marcela Rrtiz Imlach, Murat Ucoglu, Bikrum Gill, Zahir Kolia, and Salmaan Abdul Hamid Khan. I am also grateful to Nadia Hasan for alerting me to the writings of key Pakistani feminists. I also want to dedicate this work to Zabia Afzal, a friend and colleague, who I got to know as a doctoral student and had accompanied some of the conversations that revolved around this dissertation. Her fiery, committed, and caring spirit inspired me. She was a committed community organizer and scholar-activist and showed immense promise. She left us too early.

This research was only possible through institutional support. The staff at the Faculty of Environmental Studies made behind the scenes aspects of the doctoral program possible, and Alicia Filipowich at the York Centre for Asian Research created a welcoming space from where to work on campus. I also acknowledge the support I received in the form of a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Canada Graduate Scholarship (2011-2014), SSHRC Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement (2014), and an Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) grant (2015-2016).

I don't know how to express my appreciation to my parents – Abu and Ami – as this dissertation would never have been possible without them. Their patience and love has kept me going during this project. I trace my appreciation for critical thought to my father, who first shared his love for Muslim activists or anticolonial militants like Abu Dhar al-Ghifari, Malcolm X, and Ali Shariati when I was still twelve years old.

And most of all to Gladys and Maylin who have in patient and impatient been at my side during the ordeal of writing this text. They most likely still don't understand what exactly this

manuscript is about. I first gained an appreciation of social movements through activists like Gladys that I met during my time in the Andes. I am forever grateful to her for accompanying me all these years near and far, and for making me reflect on how the family and household are sites of politics and decolonization. And Maylin, for keeping me going with her questions about how many pages I had remaining in the thesis. And teaching me that there is more to life than a dissertation.

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Glossary

AIML	All-India Muslim League
CPI	Communist Party of India
AMP	Anjuman-e-Mazareen Punjab
INA	Indian National Army
INC	Indian National Congress
KKP	Kirti Kisan Party
JI	Jamaat-e-Islami
ML	Muslim League
PCP	Pakistan Communist Party
PML	Punjab Muslim League
PMSF	Punjab Muslim Student Federation
PNUP	Punjab National Unionist Party
PPSO	Punjab Public Safety Ordinance
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh

ada-ada | a system of sharecropping where tenants and landlords each received half of the harvest

arhatiya | commission agent

Arya Samaj | a Hindu reformist organization that began in nineteenth century Punjab

ashrafi | Muslim nobility in northern India

atta | wheat

bajra | millet

Bania | Hindu moneylender and merchant caste

battai | sharecropping, that is where a tenant pays rent as a percentage of agricultural production

Brahmo Samaj | Hindu reformist organization

chaukidar | night watchman

chavi | a large blade with an attachment that could easily be taken on/off from a bamboo stave

dacoit | bandit

doab | A tract of land between two rivers

dobhi | the caste of a labourer who washes clothes

Dusehra | a Hindu festival

gurdwara | a Sikh temple

ghadar | mutiny, rebellion, revolt, see also Ghadar Party

ghadari | member of the Ghadar Party

Ghadar Party | a radical anti-colonial organization that was founded in 1913 by Punjabi peasant, students, and ex-soldier emigres in United States and Canada

hartal | strike

jagidar | An individual who has been assigned land rights to collect the state's share of revenue. Jagirs were assigned by the Mughal state but continued with the British colonial state.

jagir | see *jagidar*

Jalhulni | a Hindu festival

Jat | a peasant caste that includes Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs

jathas | bands, gangs

jhatka | Hindu ritual form slaughtering meat

jirga | a council

jowar | barley

kachcha arhatiya | a small commission agent whose clients are often agrarian cultivators selling surplus products

kamin | a landless labouring caste

karewa | widow re-marriage that entails marrying the younger brother of the deceased spouse

kharif | autumn; in agriculture it is used in reference to the autumn harvest and crops

kisan | peasant or farmer

kisan sabhas | peasant associations

lathi | large knife used for cutting wheat

mazdur | a labourer

misl | autonomous Sikh states that belonged to a Sikh Confederacy, in operation between 1716 to 1799

mohallah | neighbourhood

Muharram | a Muslim festival celebrated especially among Shia that spans twelve days

pacca arhatiya | large commission agent or wholesale merchants and mills that make purchases for large firms

pardah | the practice of seclusion of women in Muslim communities, this can be manifested as the physical segregation of the genders in a place (e.g. household) and as the obligation for women to cover their body

panchayat | a council or assembly

pir | in Sufism or mystical Islam, a spiritual guide. In rural Punjab, it was common that a pir came from a family that claimed ancestry with Prophet Muhammad

pardah | seclusion of women to the home

qaum | community, collectivity, social grouping, nation

rabi | spring; in agriculture it is used in reference to the spring harvest and crops

sahukar | moneylender, shopkeeper, or merchant

sal sawaya | system of loan where a moneylender will charge interest of 12.5% after each spring and fall harvest

sarpanch | the leaders of a panchayat

sepoy | native Indian soldier

Subh-e-Azad | literally translates as “dawn of freedom”

swadeshi | self-help institutions

swaraj | mass mobilization through passive revolution

Unionist Party | founded in 1923, formed out of an alliance between landlords in western Punjab and peasant-proprietors in eastern and central Punjab

watan | homeland

tehsil | an administrative unit that consists usually of a town or city and surrounding villages

zail | a group of villages that are treated as an administrative unit

zaildar | the principal landlord who is given responsibility over a *zail* by the colonial state

zamindar | large agrarian landowner

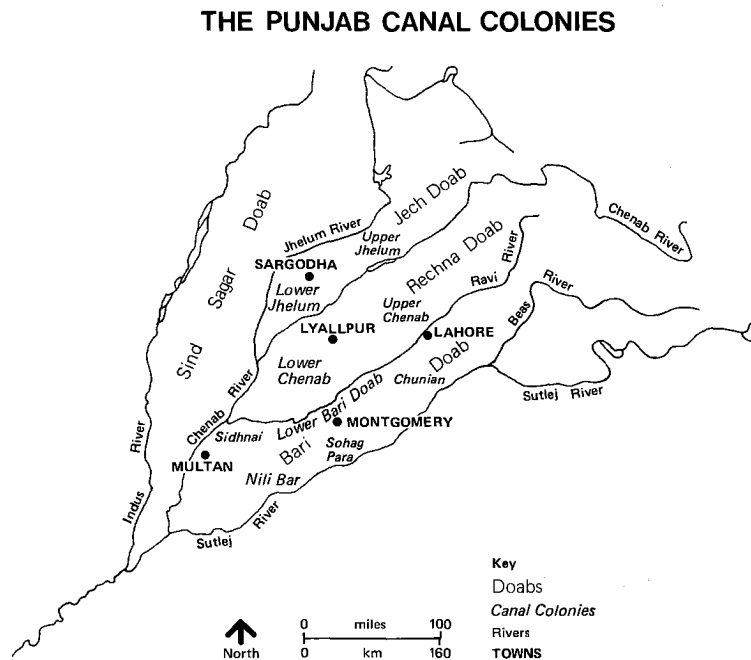
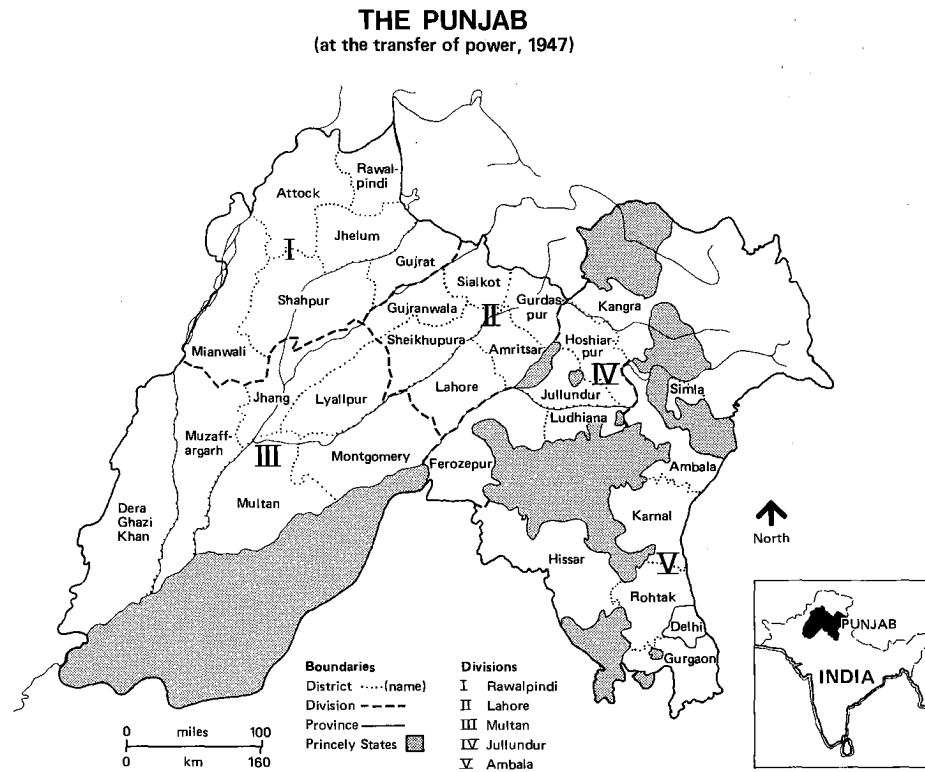


Figure 1: Map of Punjab (1947)

Ali, Imran. The Punjab. 1988. In: *The Punjab Under Imperialism, 1885-1947*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.



Figure 2: Kirti newsletter (circa 1928)

1. Introduction

These tarnished rays, this night-smudged light –
This is not that Dawn for which, ravished with freedom,
we had set out in sheer longing, so sure that somewhere in its desert the sky harbored
a final haven for the stars, and we would find it.
- Faiz Ahmed Faiz. *Subh-e-Azadi* (Dawn of Freedom - August 1947)¹

If the ruling class has lost its consensus, i.e. is no longer “leading” but only “dominant”, exercising coercive force alone, this means precisely that the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously, etc. The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.
- Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci 1971, 275–276).

While communal violence was at its height in British India in mid-July of 1947, a month prior to independence and partition, Teja Singh Swatantar, Fazal Ilahi Qurban, and other fellow communists in western Punjab founded the Pakistan Communist Party (PCP).² The party called for a Pakistan that worked to remove hierarchies and exploitation based on class and inequitable property distribution. It also made a call neither to be a dependency of British or US imperialism, nor serving as their foot soldiers in the repression of national liberation struggles elsewhere. It also called for the state to develop relations of mutuality among Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs in the country (Punjab Government 1947). The manifesto laid bare that the apparent breaking of the British empire into two nation-states actually entailed the reorganization of both these spatial

¹Faiz (1996: 87)

²The Pakistan Communist Party was a faction that split from the Communist Party of India (CPI) and only existed during the summer of 1947. The PCP needs to be distinguished from the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) founded in 1948. This emergence of the CPP is brilliantly documented in Kamran Asdar Ali’s recent book (Ali 2015).

scales: the nation would be subordinated to a new imperial order. The PCP's statement recognized how scales were not natural nor given entities, but were sites of struggle and potential for creating an emancipatory future world.

Teja Singh Swatantar and Fazal Ilahi Qurban's political careers traced important aspects of anticolonial militancy in Punjab. Their lives followed two typical pathways towards communism for the generation that was politicized in the 1920s, that of the Sikh-led Akali movement and Pan-Islamism. Swatantar was involved in the Akali movement in early 1920s Punjab. He later joined the radical anticolonial Ghadar Party – originally founded in San Francisco in 1913 – while he was in Kabul in 1923. It was there that he developed connections with anticolonial Pan-Islamists. He traveled to the Americas and organized from the Ghadar Party branches in San Francisco, Panama, Brazil, and Argentina from 1929 and 1932. Upon his return to Punjab he was involved with the communist Kirti Kisan Party (Worker and Peasant Party – KKP) from the mid-1930s (Williamson 1934; Ramnath 2011). Fazal Ilahi Qurban participated in the Pan-Islamic *hijrat* movement that took him to Afghanistan in 1920. During a sojourn in Tashkent along his journey to Istanbul to support the falling Ottoman Empire, he turned into a Bolshevik *muhajarin* after being convinced by Indian communists such as M.N. Roy who were operating from the city. He returned to India in 1926 and was quickly arrested for possessing communist literature. In 1929, he was involved in the militant anticolonial youth organization, Naujawan Bharat Sabha (Young India Society – NBS).

The Pakistan Communist Party was a bold attempt to steer the territory of what would become Pakistan towards development as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, and in the process separate Muslim nationalism from Pakistani nationalism. The Party itself was an example of how the differentiated experiences of Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus could be used to find shared

meaning. The founders of the party assumed the inevitability of the partition of the subcontinent. In this context, they saw value in working through Pakistani nationalism, but also recognized the limits of such a politics and the need to go past nationalisms. That is to say, they were attempting to resist the communalism brand of nationalism that was framed by rape, murder, and arson in the streets and fields of Punjab, Bengal, and elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent. In the end, however, communal violence shattered the hopes of many for such a multi-religious and emancipatory imaginary. The Pakistan Communist Party had an equally short life being dissolved when many of its members were dislocated by the violence of partition. Teja Singh Swatantar and many other Sikh communists were compelled to leave their homes in western Punjab for India, while many Muslims, like Fazal Ilahi Qurban, stayed behind in Pakistan. By mid-August official declarations of independence were made by the newly formed governments of Pakistan and India.

Despite the Pakistan Communist Party's short-lived and abortive attempt at redirecting the character of decolonization, it nonetheless was able to make at least two perceptive critiques that can be understood as important insights into the nationalist project on the verge of partition.

First, the PCP was able to reveal that, although Pakistani nationalism implied a claim to a particular national space, it did not, at any given time in its development as a national imaginary, imply a given politics, nor was it a necessarily an exclusive concept, either in terms of communities, political organization, and ideology. Rather, Pakistani nationalism – from early on – was a site of struggle, contestation, and ideological negotiation. So, while the PCP did not see the nation as an exclusive site of politics, it was able to engage in contemporary nationalist debates as a platform for advancing the project of a universal, humanist emancipation. This idea resonates with anti-imperialist militant-intellectual Frantz Fanon's warning about the necessity of

protecting against shallow, exclusivist forms of nationalism. In his seminal work, *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon writes: “If [anticolonial] nationalism is not explained, enriched, and deepened, if it does not quickly turn into a social and political consciousness, into humanism, then it leads to a dead end” (Fanon 2004, 144).³

Second, the PCP’s critique of imperialism at large, anticipated continuities between colonial and postcolonial society that would emerge. The PCP advanced its critique that the independence advanced by the dominant tendency of Pakistani nationalism was only giving expression to new hierarchical class, gender, caste, and ethnic/religious relations, as well as imperialist inter-state relations – rather than overcoming them. Furthermore, the Pakistan Communist Party highlighted how despite independence and the shift from colony to nation-state and from colonial subjects to citizens, there were indications of continuities with extant imperial, class, gender, and caste relations. So, while the old was dying, the new could not be born yet. In brief, the Pakistan Communist Party’s short intervention was an attempt to prevent the forces of restoration from turning Pakistan into a neo-colonial state. In this dissertation, I will examine the genealogy of such critiques that did not just begin with the inception of the communist party in the summer of 1947 but developed out of a long course of struggle in the Punjab.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz’s poem *Subh-e-Azadi* (Dawn of Freedom), written at the moment of partition and independence, similarly foregrounded the contradictions of Pakistan’s independence. Faiz too bemoans the fact that while the moment of independence was marked by the hope for a great transformation after a long period of colonial rule, the failings of social and political

³Gillian Hart has recently described this idea in Fanon’s thought in terms of his recognition for “working through and beyond articulations of nationalism” (Hart 2014, 20:24).

consciousness that remained at the time of state-formation signaled the restoration of colonial social relations of inequality, exploitation, and state violence. Faiz, as a communist militant and revolutionary poet, uses the metaphor of a false dawn to point to unrealized dreams of freedom imagined and fought for during the long night of imperialism, but jettisoned in the process of passive revolution, preferred by the nationalist elite. Faiz ends his poem with the appeal: “Friends, come away from this false light. Come, we must search for that promised Dawn” (Faiz 1996, 87). Though Faiz penned those words seventy years ago, the quest for that *subh-e-azadi* is ongoing. Meanwhile, it has been a recurrent strategy of the Pakistani state to structurally delimit such dreams and keep them from becoming reality.

While independence is memorialized through museums, national holidays, and school syllabi, these are moments to inquire whether decolonization is a finished project. A memory of my own as a teenager is a poignant example of the extent to which “independence” in Pakistan has remained elusive. In 1995 my parents mentioned to my high-school principal that we had seen him driving on Mall Road in Lahore on Independence Day, amidst nationalist jubilations and celebrations. His reply was succinct: “What independence?”

In truth, since independence, the Pakistani state has exercised only a fragile hegemony that itself demonstrates the contradictions hidden within Pakistani nationalism. The nation-state remains a contested field at local, regional, national, and worldwide scale. Domestically, military juntas have ruled Pakistan for half of its seventy-year existence and, internationally Pakistan remains a garrison state for empire. The US has used the region for staging its war in Afghanistan. And at least since 2008, the US has also mounted numerous drone attacks against civilians and suspected Islamist terrorists inside of Pakistan itself, while blanketing its Northwest Frontier airspace by unmanned Predator aircrafts. Meanwhile, hostilities with India persist over the

Kashmir question, multinational companies such as Monsanto challenge the seed sovereignty of poor farmers and society is divided along hierarchies of class, caste, gender, nation, and religion. In many ways the contemporary context of Pakistan foregrounds the continued pertinence of the problems and possibilities that Swatantar and Qurban laid out in their manifesto in July 1947.

In analyzing the course of the development of anticolonialism in the Punjab since the beginning of the 20th century through to its entanglement in a nationalist project in the mid-century, the concept of “passive revolution”, as developed by the Italian communist militant-intellectual Antonio Gramsci, is helpful. Gramsci used the concept passive revolution to describe how Italian national unification in the mid-nineteenth century combined processes of modernization with projects to restore the dominant class alliance by repressing, absorbing, or transforming radical struggles and claims. What we see in the course of the development of the nationalist project in Pakistan is a similar incorporation and repression of radical claims that undermine full liberation. Although many strands of anticolonial sentiment and energies persist throughout, the political moment is nonetheless seized by elite forces that ensure restoration of socio-political structures.

Pakistan nationalism needs to be conceptualized in its relationship with Muslim nationalism. The postcolonial state has made repeated claims upon a Muslim nation as part of its hegemonic project for political unity across social difference based on ethnicity, region, and class. In this effort, reified understandings of caste, ethnicity, and religious difference established by the colonial state were used as organizing principles, thus only reproducing the sort of “violence of abstractions” (Sayer 1989) pioneered by the colonial state. In order to understand Muslim nationalism, we need to go beyond Gramsci’s passive revolution. Fanon’s writings on nationalism in (post)colonial contexts are extremely useful for this purpose. While such

nationalisms could have strategic value, he also warned that they could reproduce (neo)colonial and racialized aspects of a social formation and thus perpetuate alienation.

Similar to the idea of passive revolution but in (post)colonial contexts, Fanon's term "false decolonization" allows us to observe the old in new clothing within social formations. Whereas independence transformed colonial subjects into citizens with supposed formal equality, citizenship has neither been universal nor its implementation implied equity. Privileges are still a function of caste, ethnicity, religion, class, and gender. In Pakistan, the recent initiative to change the status of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) from a territory to consolidating it with the province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa is a good contemporary example of false decolonization. The move signals a transformation that will undo the implementation of colonial-era laws (e.g. Frontier Crimes Regulation) governing the people in the region and will give them full citizenship rights (Asif 2017). While the initiative is laudatory, all indications show that FATA residents will continue to experience a racialized social formation, citizenship rights notwithstanding.

The emancipation of women was a central aspect neither of the Pakistan movement nor of radical anticolonial nationalism. Nonetheless, peasant and middle-class women were politically mobilized by the Pakistan independence movement. They were alerted to the possibilities national liberation could hold for women, including the introduction of universal suffrage and land reforms, and the dismantling of patriarchal customary laws supported by the colonial state. Muslim nationalists have often made calls for replacing customary laws with Islamic law, with some claims that this will give more rights to women. Whereas in certain aspects Islamic law might be more progressive towards women (e.g. granting inheritance rights), actual contemporary practice consists of "overlapping legal codes", which allow laws to be

implemented according to “patriarchal opportunism” (Toor 2014, 134), through a flexible combination of colonial, customary, and Islamic law. In postcolonial Pakistan, the Ayub Khan military régime desired to appear as a “modernizer” to his western allies and liberal middle-class Pakistanis by introducing seemingly emancipatory policies (regulation of polygamy, support for women in cases of divorce, increase in the marriageable age). These were modest attempts because there were loopholes for their implementation and they were primarily meant to address concerns of middle-class women (Jalal 1991). But more often than not, the Pakistani state as part of its hegemonic project used discourses of “national culture” and religious authenticity for the moral regulation of women (Toor 2014).

This is all to say that claims on a national people and space continue to be mobilized for giving expression to inequities based on class, gender, caste, ethnicity, religion. This dissertation examines the contradictory aspects of Pakistani nationalism in state-formation by deploying critical analysis informed by the Gramsci’s concept of passive revolution and Fanon’s concept of false decolonization. My mobilization of these concepts foregrounds their inherent geographical sensibilities. For both Gramsci and Fanon, national unification and decolonization highlighted the contingency of the national scale as a product of political struggle. I argue that passive revolution and false decolonization are multiscalar processes. In order to argue that the moment of independence was a passive revolution and a false decolonization of colonial authority, I examine these processes from a scalar perspective; I demonstrate how the body, household, rural, urban, nation, and world all became sites for nationalist claims in the *longue durée* of decolonization. In the next section, I develop my rationale for using these concepts by examining limitations in the existing literature on the Pakistan independence movement.

1.1 Pakistani Nationalism

State-sponsored historiography of independence find its core principles in the Pakistan movement itself. Various intellectuals, including historians, were involved in the All India Muslim League (AIML) campaign for Pakistan. A case in point is Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, who wrote various tracts in the mid-1940s that provided a historical argument for Pakistan. Qureshi would later publish a history textbook in 1969, *The Struggle for Pakistan*, that repeated the dominant thesis in Pakistani nationalist historiography, namely the “two-nation theory”. The argument was that Muslims were a nation separate from Hindus and thus could legitimately claim a separate state.

Qureshi’s *The Struggle for Pakistan* provides a historical narrative to the “two-nation theory”. At one point, Qureshi claims that India is a Muslim invention: India as a political unit was established through the Muslim Delhi sultanate in the fourteenth century and later with the Mughal state. This unification provided the basis for the British colonial consolidation of India as a singular entity. Yet, the scholarship of Manu Goswami (Goswami 2004) has forcefully demonstrated that popular notions of India as a bounded national space only emerged through the Indian nationalist movement in the colonial period. These ideas are developed from colonial imaginaries and practices of India as a territorially bounded space and economy. Qureshi read history backwards to assume Mughal India as a territorial space.

Despite the fact that Qureshi mentions a Muslim-Hindu syncretic culture in pre-independence India, which is often called *Hindustani*, he notes that divisions between Muslim and Hindu society were significant for making Muslim national claims. He notes how Muslims and Hindus represent coherent communities with substantially different religious beliefs, social norms and

practices, and racial backgrounds between them. He considered Hindus as an indigenous population, whereas Muslims were mostly foreigners with only a small group of native converts. Such a view can be found much earlier among British colonialists and Hindu nationalists – and as such it is interesting to consider the extent to which Qureshi’s thesis may be derivative. To some extent, Qureshi’s own work gives us a clue. Qureshi describes how Muslims before the rise of Muslim nationalism were “a nation without a name” (Qureshi 1969, 10), that is to say, Muslims in India were always a nation despite their lack of Muslim national consciousness. It is only through Muslim nationalism that such a consciousness develops and culminates materially through the Pakistani nation-state. Qureshi’s argument is implicitly teleological. He sees Muslim national space as a progressive development of Muslim national consciousness that develops in a (non-dialectical) process of struggle with Hindus and Hindu nationalism. As such, central to Qureshi’s argument is that Muslim nationalism arises in the face of Hindu nationalism, including the Indian National Congress (INC) and its attempts to undermine Muslim self-determination. For him, a Muslim homeland is not based on physical geographical features in the Indian subcontinent nor some transhistorical territorial claim. It represented a territorial solution for Muslims to be free from Hindu domination and express their national self-determination.

There has been no lack of critiques of nationalist historiography. One such critique was developed by two prominent Pakistani liberal historians, Khursheed Kamal Aziz and Ayesha Jalal. Aziz’s *The Making of Pakistan: A Study of Nationalism* (1967) argued that the “two-nation theory” as advanced by Muslim nationalists was a strategic maneuver to unify the Muslim community politically against Hindu domination. He argued that the demand for a separate Muslim state was arrived at by the leader of the Muslim League, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, when Indian National Congress rejected demands for a postcolonial India as a federation with

autonomous Muslim states. Ayesha Jalal's *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League, and the demand for Pakistan* (1985) followed similar lines of argumentation: the Pakistan claim did not arise from an ideology of Muslim separatism but was the outcome of contingencies in the face of Hindu nationalism. According to Jalal, Jinnah used the Pakistan demand as a bargaining chip for parity with the Hindu community in a united India, but this demand was rejected by the Indian National Congress. The outcome was, as Jinnah called it, a "maimed, mutilated and moth-eaten" Pakistan (Jalal 1985, xvi).

Pandey (1994) and Gilmartin (1996) criticized Jalal for over-emphasizing high politics at the expense of examining how some people constructed a Muslim community in their everyday lives. Gilmartin provided such an analysis in his *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan* (1988), which studied Islamic ideology in the making of Pakistani nationalism. Gilmartin combined a rich material history of the colonial state's relationship to Muslims and Muslim politics. His study was unique in Pakistan Studies by exhibiting rich spatial sensitivity. He examined the tensions between the colonial state's patronage of a rural landowning class with connections to Sufi mystic leaders and the emergence of an increasingly politicized urban Muslim middle-class. Despite this materialist analysis, Gilmartin's conclusion was that the Pakistan movement gained a following because of the discursive power of its Islamic ideology, an emphasis of *din* (faith) over *dunya* (world). Gilmartin claimed that the Pakistan movement attempted to transcend the old politics of patronage based in local kinship networks by advancing a modern and territorially bounded notion of the Muslim nation-state. This tension between rural and urban forms of Islam and their associated political formations continues into postcolonial society. General Zia's military dictatorship for example promoted its *Islamization* project by developing a social base among a pious urban petite bourgeoisie. While Gilmartin's attention to

geographical and historical specificity was a welcomed break from previous analysis, his work treated the rural and the urban in quite dichotomous ways. Further, Gilmartin's attempt to examine how a Muslim community was produced in everyday life ignored how working classes, peasants, and landless labours participated in such a process. He focuses only on landlords and the urban middle-class.

Jalal's subsequent text on Muslim nationalism in colonial India, *Self and sovereignty: individual and community in South Asian Islam since 1850* (2000), attempted to address how people (mostly urban Muslim intellectuals) discursively produced a Muslim community. Whereas Gilmartin recognized that Muslim nationalism was an outcome of the colonial state's practice of reifying subjects in terms of religious communities, Jalal also argues that there were multiple Muslim concepts of self, community, and sovereignty. She argues that Muslim claims for national self-determination were posed against Hindu and Congress attempts of domination. She situates these voices in terms of class and region. Yet, she does not relate these voices to the balance of social and political forces, which shapes ideas through struggle and political action. Jalal also fails to investigate how nationalisms are mobilized to advance competing claims over property. In contrast, Marxist analysis has emphasized the formative role of class struggle in the development of Muslim nationalism.

Marxist scholarship has often advanced an objectivist analysis of the class composition of the national movement. Hamza Alavi dismissed the role of religious ideology as the moving force of Pakistan. He described the movement as being a class project led first by an urban Muslim middle-class (an "auxiliary class") and then, by the 1940s, Muslim landlords in Punjab and Sindh (Alavi 1972; Alavi 2002a; Alavi 2002b). Alavi describes how Muslim nationalism was driven by leading social forces rather than being a coherent ideology. Alavi argued it was not ideology that

drove Muslim peasants to support the Muslim League, but rather coercion by their landlords (Alavi 2002a). Alavi would have done well to consider ideology not only as a set of ideas, but as a material force. In such a consideration, an analysis of ideology takes into account the dialectic between coercion and consent, persuasion and force, in establishing rule among the peasantry. What must be analyzed is ideologies can speak to the lived experiences, desires, needs, and concerns of subaltern social forces (Eagleton 1991). Whereas Alavi was the first to theorize the Pakistani state in relation to the colonial state (Alavi 1972), that study left untheorized the role of both political struggle and ideology in the construction of Muslim nationalism.

Gilmartin (1988) and Jalal (2000) both documented the role of the Punjab branch of the Communist Party of India (referred henceforth as the Punjab Communist Party) in infiltrating the Punjab Muslim League in the years leading up to independence. Jalal is quite dismissive of the Punjab Muslim League's 1944 manifesto that was written by communists: "Tall claims matched by a puny organizational structure marred by personal as well as ideological rivalries were not the best insurance for the translation of the League's ideals into practice in the Punjab" (Jalal 2000). Despite the failures of the Punjab Communist Party, such dismissals overlook the political formations that were organized by peasants, landless labourers, workers, lower caste women, and their allies. It also discounts the formative role of the colonial state in both repressing movements with radical anticolonial politics while supporting other groups. A case in point is that the All India Muslim League had a very small following until the Second World War, when the Congress politicians resigned from their elected posts as provincial ministers, and the colonial state chose the All India Muslim League as their principal interlocutor (Ahmad 2002). Ali Raza (2011) argued that by examining the Punjabi Left one can go beyond the frequent tropes used in historiography: empire, nation, and community. Examining such movements shows how political

forces were not defined by fixed notions of community, religion, and nation. Kamran Asdar Ali (2011; 2015) has recently related communist organizing in Punjab to the Muslim nationalist hegemonic project. Ali uses Gramsci's concept of "hegemony" by drawing from Ranajit Guha's work on nationalism, subaltern popular initiatives, and spontaneous actions. Ali argues that upper middle-class intellectuals in the Communist Party in the 1950s actively intervened in debates on questions about Muslim nationalism in the construction of a postcolonial society. Yet Ali does not follow Gramsci sufficiently in making his argument. For Gramsci, ideologies need to be situated within the balance of political forces, including the relationship between stated claims and actions involving subaltern classes. At the same time, documenting the voice of subaltern classes is an elusive project when considering subordination and exploitation leaves but fleeting traces of their voice.

Much popular discourse and scholarship situates gender in Muslim societies in terms of a struggle between tradition and modernity, where a reified conception of "Islam" is given explanatory power (Toor 2014). Feminist scholarship has attempted to go beyond such dichotomies with varied success. Jalal argued with regard to Muslim nationalists such as Syed Ahmed Khan: "Political accommodations with the colonial masters was acceptable, indeed desirable, but only so long as it did not entail adjustments in the established status quo of the private domain" (Jalal 1991, 81). For upper class-caste Muslim men, the protection of the public domain meant maintaining the practice of *purdah*, or seclusion of their kin women to the realm of the domestic sphere. While Jalal avoided essentializing Muslim society, she does find that gender relations are mediated by varying interpretations of Islam and the actions of Muslim political forces. Jalal attributed Muslim upper class-caste women's participation in Muslim nationalism and the Pakistan movement to the Muslim League needing to court women voters in

the 1946 elections. While casting a ballot meant that veiled women came out of seclusion from their homes, the Muslim Women's League treated voting as a religious duty and described women as symbols of the nation. Whereas Jalal argues that an "Islamic ideology" was used to mobilize and empower Muslim women, she also claims that this mobilization was a slippery slope: fundamentalist interpretations of an "Islamic state" would create conditions for controlling women's bodies (Jalal 1991, 84).⁴

Much of the literature on Pakistani and Muslim nationalism is only loosely tied to work that examine the rise of the Pakistani state and the formation of a post-independence historical bloc. As Pakistani nationalism prefigured the rise of the Pakistani nation-state, much of the literature on the state of Pakistan examines its emergence through the Pakistani nationalist movement and that fraught relationship between that movement and the colonial state.

1.3 State Formation

Amidst the debate on state theory between Nicos Poulantzas (Poulantzas 1969; Poulantzas 1976) and Ralph Miliband (Miliband 1970; Miliband 1973) during the 1970s, Hamza Alavi (Alavi 1972) made a much needed, but largely ignored, intervention. Alavi argued that classical Marxist theories of the state were Eurocentric, being implicitly concerned with only Western societies and reconsideration needed to be made for theorizing the postcolonial state, where the historical experiences of colonialism and decolonization were integral to its contemporary formation. As Alavi's analysis was based mostly on the experience of state formation in Pakistan (but also partly Bangladesh), his analysis continues to inform future discussions of a Marxist theory of the

⁴This stance sits in contradiction with her earlier book *The Sole Spokesperson* (1985) that argues that the Pakistan movement had little to do with an "Islamic ideology".

Pakistani state (Gardezi 1985). However, much of this literature insufficiently theorizes the connection between nationalism and state formation.

Alavi argued that the post-colonial state contrasted in its development from the capitalist state in Western societies: colonialism was constitutive of the state, ideology, and class relations in the former (Alavi 1972).⁵ Alavi asserted that colonized societies in many cases had an overdeveloped state apparatus in relation to indigenous productive forces, due to the nature of the colonial economy as serving imperialist interests. The state, through the bureaucratic-military oligarchy, serves the role of maintaining the interests of the three propertied exploiting classes in post-colonial societies: the indigenous bourgeoisie, landed property, and the neo-colonialist metropolitan bourgeoisies. Alavi argued that none of the three classes has exclusive domain over the state apparatus nor do any of the groups dominate over the other two. In addition to the state apparatus being overdeveloped, also appropriates a large proportion of the economic surplus. It is only in Alavi's later scholarship that he dealt more significantly with the role of Muslim nationalism in consolidating a postcolonial historical bloc among large rural landowners and a comprador bourgeoisie (Alavi 2002b).

Aasim Sajjad Akhtar (Akhtar 2008) has critically engaged with Alavi's text to extend analysis of the Pakistani state into the twentieth first century. While Akhtar finds Alavi's analysis to have valuable insights and is an important starting point for theorizing the state of Pakistan, he is critical of the Althusserian structuralism that plagues Alavi's analysis as it presents the state a static structure. Akhtar builds on Gramsci to instead provide a conjunctural analysis of the

⁵Though, the argument should be equally extended: colonialism was formative for metropolitan states in the post-colonial era.

dynamic constitution of the historical bloc in Pakistan. Being sensitive to historical specificity allows Akhtar to argue that the immediate post-independence historical bloc consisted of “state functionaries, propertied classes [landed property and proto-capitalists] of the western wing [West Pakistan], and of course, the forces of capitalist imperialism” (Akhtar 2008, 30). Akhtar’s analysis differs from Alavi’s on several counts. First, Akhtar treats the bureaucratic-military oligarchy not as the state itself but as an element in the historical bloc. He finds the military’s capacity for mediating the interests of the other social forces as an emergent relationship that really becomes dominant subsequent to the ouster of Zulifkar Bhutto regime in 1977. There did not exist a consolidated Muslim bourgeois class following partition. Industrial and merchant capitalism was dominated by Hindus and Sikhs in Punjab and Sindh in the colonial era. With the removal of the majority of these communities, possibilities opened up for Muslim capitalist interests to develop. Some Muslim trading groups from India moved to West Pakistan, especially to Karachi. Industrialization was not significant in the colonial era in the region, but would build from the 1950s with import substitution industrialization.

Akhtar also critiques Alavi for not including the struggles of “subordinate classes” into his analysis of the Pakistani state. Akhtar attributes the period of 1967 to 1977 as central to the contemporary period, as it transformed popular resistance into patronage politics. The protests against the Ayub military dictatorship combined class and ethno-nationalist struggles framed both through radical and reformist tendencies. The movement combined the rural and urban poor, students, and the emerging intermediary classes.⁶ Zulfikar Ali Bhutto newly formed populist party, the Pakistan Peoples Party, was successful in re-directing the radical energy of the

⁶Akhtar describes these intermediary classes in this period as small and medium entrepreneurs involved in the tertiary agrarian economy that developed out of the Green Revolution.

time towards the ouster of the military dictatorship. Despite his socialist and populist rhetoric, Bhutto's regime introduced supposedly progressive initiatives (nationalization of industries, agrarian land reforms) but did not make substantive redistribution of the means of production. Instead, his policies expanded the extent of patronage politics to include the intermediary classes. He also repressed radical movements and dismissed socialist ministers in his party (Akhtar 2008). I would argue that Bhutto's régime and the molecular transformation of popular politics – namely, radical class and ethno-nationalist political elements – into the realm of patronage-based politics was a form of passive revolution.

Ayyaz Mallick was more successful in integrating concerns about state formation with nationalism in post-1971 Pakistan (Mallick 2017). This was elaborated by showing how the relationship between civil society and the state are produced, especially through multiple transformations of Islamic-centered nationalism in relationship to newly emerging intermediate classes.

While the focus of this dissertation is not on the post-independence era, this work situates the emergence of a post-independence historical bloc among large landlords, a proto-capitalist class, and in a patriarchal social order. I develop Antonio Gramsci's critical historicism for understanding the contemporary moment in a long historical perspective that includes important sediments from a previous moment, that of 1947. But even that moment requires examining the long history of passive revolution and false decolonization as strategies used by the colonial state and the Pakistan movement. I take these concepts as modes of inquiry. Gramsci's non-determinist historical-geographical materialism can be translated to studying racialized social formations (Hall 1986a). Yet, I stretch Gramsci's concepts with the help of Fanon in order to

think about colonial worlds and decolonization. The next section reviews Gramsci's concept of passive revolution, as well as elaborating my mobilization of the term.

1.5 Passive Revolution

Gramsci's concept of passive revolution has been extensively mobilized for thinking about how social and political forces work towards developing hegemony. I chart here some of the limitations of the existing literature on passive revolution as either prone to a class-centric approach, or alternatively disavowing questions of class and property in favour of a discursive analysis of modernity. In this section I also outline how I frame passive revolution, one that is informed by Gramsci, developed further through the writings of Fanon to consider colonial contexts and Himani Bannerji for taking into account its gendered relations.

Gramsci advanced the concept of “passive revolution” or “revolution-restoration” for thinking about how to develop a proletarian hegemony in the contemporary moment: the emergence of a fascist régime in Italy (Thomas 2009, 136). Fascism in Italy was a reaction to a crisis of authority in light of the rise in worker militancy after the Russian Revolution of 1917. Gramsci inquired into the historical reasons that created the conditions for the rise of fascism, he identified the weakness of the Italian state after the *Risorgimento* (Italian national unification) in the mid-nineteenth century as a primary cause. He described both fascism and national unification as passive revolutions. In the case of the *Risorgimento*, Gramsci described passive revolution as a modernization of state rule dependent on restoring the dominant class alliances and repressing, liquidating, absorbing, or transforming radical struggles and claims. Passive revolution is a set of processes, the confluence of struggles, and the crystallization of various strategies and movements. Gramsci described the struggle between Cavour and Mazzini – two nineteenth-

century Italian political figures – as representing the dialectical character of passive revolution. He associated Mazzini with popular initiative and the war of maneuver, and Cavour with passive revolution and war of position.⁷ In the end it was Cavour's party that held the balance of forces in their favour during and after unification. In the same context, Gramsci describes passive revolution as entailing “molecular changes which in fact progressively modify the pre-existing composition of forces, and hence become the matrix of new changes” (Gramsci 1971, 109). During the struggle for unification, liberal-democratic elements were incorporated into Cavour's party through his strategy of war of position. Italian national unification was a moment of restoration as the post-unification bloc consisted of royalties of the various kingdoms in the Italian peninsula while the Mazzini element had been isolated. Italian national unification showed that passive revolution combined the strengthening of the state, specifically the coercive aspects of the state apparatus in relation to civil society, with the repression and absorption of popular initiatives (Coutinho 2012, 103–4).

Gramsci also used the concept of passive revolution to describe Italy's transition to monopoly capitalism under fascist rule (Coutinho 2012, 176). He referred to Americanism or Fordism in Italy as a form of molecular transformation (Gramsci 1971). State-led initiatives introduced American productive methods to Italy. Fordism was not limited to transformations in Italian industries, but also furthered an ideology of economic, social, and political rationalization. This had the potential of removing the last residues of feudalism in Italy and stabilizing the power of capitalist classes. Rural landowners and reactionary intelligentsia obviously resisted these developments.

⁷“War of position” and “war of maneuver” are one of among various dialectical pairs in Gramsci's conceptual universe. They refer to two ends in a spectrum of political actions, from that of ideological struggle to direct action.

Gramsci himself opened the door for translating the concept of passive revolution beyond the terrain of Italy. He treated the concept as a geographically relational one. Italian developments like national unification in mid-nineteenth century, fascism in the 1920s, and Fordism were respectively studied in relation to the revolutions of 1848 across Europe, the Russian Revolution, and American productive forces. He described the concept as a “criterion of interpretation” (Gramsci 1971, 114; quoted in Coutinho 2012, 104) for studying the social realities beyond the limits of Italy but also in terms of whole historical periods (Coutinho 2012).

Various authors have described a range of situations and movements in terms of passive revolution. Neil Davidson examined the transition to capitalist agriculture in late seventeenth and mid-eighteenth-century Scotland in relation to conflict between England and France (Davidson 2010). Ian McKay studied the “long Confederation” in Canada between 1841 to 1949 as a process that included the incorporation and transformation of subaltern movements coupled by the further incorporation of northern North America with British imperialism (McKay 2010). Various authors described anticolonial nationalism in British India as a form of passive revolution (Chatterjee 1986; Riley and Desai 2007). Majed Akhter situated hydro-power modernization in 1960s Pakistan in a context shaped by developmental nationalism during the Cold War era (Akhter 2015a). Sudipta Kaviraj examined how state-led initiatives for capitalist development in postcolonial India necessitated molecular transformations of state and society given the limits placed on the bourgeois state’s class coalitions (Kaviraj 1988). Carlos Coutinho outlined Brazil’s path to capitalist modernization in the twentieth century as a “conservative modernization” rather than a democratic-bourgeois revolution (Coutinho 2012). Andrew Brooks and Alex Loftus examined how the Malawi government recently re-established relations with transnational capital while repressing protests (Brooks and Loftus 2016). Cihan Tuğal outlined

the rise of the ‘liberal’ Islamist party Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party – AKP) in contemporary Turkey as an absorption and transformation of radical Islam into the capitalist state (Tuğal 2009).⁸ Gillian Hart focused on nationalisms in post-apartheid South Africa in relation to global capital and articulations of race and class (Hart 2014). Ayyaz Mallick investigated the role of religious nationalism since the 1970s in the re-alignments of the historic bloc in Pakistan (Mallick 2017).

As this short review corroborates, arguments have been made to use and develop the concept of passive revolution to understand colonial and postcolonial contexts. Stuart Hall emphasized how Gramsci’s native Sardinia was in a (semi)‘colonial’ relationship with mainland Italy (Hall 1986a, 9). While Hall argued that Gramsci said little about race, there was potential in extending his concepts to think about racial social formations (Hall 1986a). However, Gramsci does discuss how the hegemonic bloc in Italy was partly constituted through pseudo-scientific ideologies that posited the racial inferiority of southern Italian peasants (Green 2013). Before developing my own approach, I will survey some scholarship that use the concept of passive revolution to examine anticolonial and religious nationalisms.

In a class-centric reading of Gramsci, Dylan O’Riley and Manali Desai described Indian nationalism between 1919 and 1947 as a passive revolution or “conservative modernization” where “a mass political party rather than the state promotes economic development and national integration while leaving the pre-existing social and political order largely undisturbed” (Riley and Desai 2007, 815). Mass mobilization and the perceived threat it poses is seen as an important

⁸Recent events in Turkey demonstrate that Tuğal overestimated the liberal aspects of the AKP régime, and underestimated its authoritarian nationalist character.

impetus for economic development. O'Riley and Desai described passive revolution as a combined process whereby the Indian National Congress co-opted and the colonial state repressed left anticolonial movements. The INC was able to co-opt the left by presenting unification as the necessary condition for social transformation. O'Riley and Desai situate Indian nationalism as a class project and secular force, while they ignored its relationship to Hindu and Muslim nationalism. This class-centric approach to passive revolution makes it difficult to explain the rise of Muslim nationalism and the demand for Pakistan.

Partha Chatterjee's approach to passive revolution in his various writings on Indian nationalism has opened reflections on the role of religion and gender in anticolonialism. Partha Chatterjee's *National Thought and the Colonial World* is a well-known text in postcolonial studies that makes the argument that Indian nationalism and decolonization amounted to a passive revolution (Chatterjee 1986). Chatterjee extended the concept of passive revolution to a colonial context by advancing a Foucauldian reading of Gramsci. Chatterjee argued that as anticolonial nationalism was embedded within the colonial epistemology of post-enlightenment rationality, it was unable to make a complete break from colonialism. This impasse is described as a "blocked dialectic" between nationalism and colonialism (Chatterjee 1986, 169). The social conditions were not in place for elite nationalists to assert control and consolidate their leadership over colonized society. Given the context of "backward" agrarian relations and a corresponding non-modern epistemology, elite nationalists were unable to create a hegemony based on an ideology of post-enlightenment rationality.

Chatterjee argued that "'passive revolution' is the general form of the transition from colonial to postcolonial national states in the 20th century" but that the precise path taken depends on specific contexts (Chatterjee 1986, 50). In the particular case of India, it followed a "logical

evolution” of three historical moments through the intellectual-moral leadership of Bankimchandra, Gandhi, and Nehru. While Bankimchandra represents the moment of nationalist thought accommodating post-enlightenment rationality in local vernacular, it was unable to produce a mass movement. It was Gandhi who brought a mass following to the nationalist movement through an anti-modern ideology. Nehru, then, represents the moment of passive revolution as he was successful in making selective, calibrated, and controlled appropriations of mass mobilizations to advance the modern nationalist project of the 1940s. Chatterjee’s provocative argument went beyond an analysis of the continuities between the colonial and postcolonial state that focused solely on class alliances and social relations of production. It pointed to the persistence of colonial epistemology in the postcolonial state, in, for example, planning and development.

However, Chatterjee’s focus on anticolonial nationalism in terms of its discursive content separates, abstractly, colonial and indigenous modalities of being (Goswami 2004, 25–26). This allows Chatterjee to make the claim that Gandhism was an anti-modern ideology whose mass mobilizations were absorbed and transformed by the modernist Indian National Congress. Yet, anticolonial nationalism (including the supposedly anti-modern Gandhism) emerged from within the material and ideological contradictions of colonialism and imperialism (Goswami 2004, 26). Gandhi unwittingly initiated the process of absorption and control of popular discontent by the Indian National Congress, rather than being the object of appropriation and transformation himself. Gandhi made concerted efforts to prevent subaltern spontaneous rebellion from being translated into a Jacobin uprising. Restoration as advanced by nationalist forces was thus not an appropriation of Gandhism, but a process and project of transforming and absorbing radical anticolonialism (Riley and Desai 2007).

Chatterjee's subsequent writings had a positive appreciation for the anticolonial and passive revolutionary character of Indian nationalism.⁹ Chatterjee argued that anticolonial nationalism understood as a form of resistance produced the dichotomies of inner/spiritual/home and outer/material/world (Chatterjee 1993; Chatterjee 1990). Chatterjee claimed that while colonial rule had control over the outer domain, the inner domain was the "sovereign territory" of the native population. Nationalism re-inscribed "colonial difference" as a means to distinguish themselves from the colonizer and claimed sovereignty over the inner domain of social life (Chatterjee 1993, 26). This abstract separation of the private and public domains is the basis for Chatterjee's argument that anticolonial nationalism developed according to an autonomous logic. Whereas Chatterjee earlier critiqued Indian nationalism for reinscribing colonial rationality, he subsequently theorized an autonomous inner domain of social life that was a sovereignty territory. Chatterjee praised the anticolonial character of Bengali social reformers of the nineteenth century by addressing colonial interventions in the domestic life of native women (Chatterjee 1990).¹⁰ The arguments followed that Bengali social reformers in colonial India maintained an inner/private domain that was untouched by and autonomous from modernity/colonialism, which kept a grip on the outer/material aspects of life.

Before proceeding with a critique of Chatterjee's conception of passive revolution, I review how two scholars – Cihan Tuğal and Shahnaz Rouse – build from his framework for examining

⁹Partha Chatterjee drops the term passive revolution in these writings, but it indirectly informs his analysis, see Chatterjee (1993) and Chatterjee (1990).

¹⁰Chatterjee specifically uses the case of Bengali social reform movements during the British Raj. Scholars have pointed out the flaws in this using such movements for analyzing anticolonial nationalism, namely because Hindu social reformers were not necessarily anticolonial (See Bannerji 2001).

religion and nationalism in hegemonic projects. Cihan Tuğal examined the AKP in Turkey in terms of a passive revolution of capitalism that had neutralized the threat of radical Islam by absorbing the latter into (neo)liberal Islam. While Tuğal intended to go beyond Weberian ideal types of tradition and modernity, religion and secularism, he reinforced them. This was a consequence of building from Partha Chatterjee's conception of passive revolution (See Tuğal 2009, 272). According to Tuğal, Turkish Islamism was revolutionary because in its original form it was non-secular and non-Western. Passive revolution then is the moment when "Turkish Islamism developed a hegemonic strategy and was absorbed into Turkish secular hegemony" (Tuğal 2009, 235). This falsely disassociates "Turkish Islamism" in its various original forms from secularism and capitalism.

Shahnaz Rouse sought to go beyond the modern-tradition dualism to discuss religion, gender, and nationalism by drawing on Chatterjee's discussion on the women's question (Rouse 1996; Chatterjee 1990). Rouse employs Chatterjee's dichotomies of inner/spiritual/home and outer/material/world for critiquing Muslim nationalism in British India. Muslim nationalism combined the embrace of tradition in the home, and modernization in the world. Seemingly distinct forms of Muslim nationalism ("modernists" or "traditionalists") are shown to agree when it comes to controlling women's bodies as part of their hegemonic and class project, and preventing the colonial state from encroaching on private space characterized by religion and tradition.¹¹

¹¹While Chatterjee employed the dichotomy of inner/tradition and outer/modernity to describe Bengali Hindu social reformers as anticolonial along positive terms, Rouse mobilizes this conceptualization for critiquing Muslim nationalists through a feminist perspective.

While Chatterjee's analysis of anticolonialism opens up several avenues for reflecting about the constitution of nationalism in relation to aspects like religion and domesticity, it leads to several theoretical and political impasses that can be resolved by advancing a critical historicist framework through the writings of Frantz Fanon, Antonio Gramsci, Himani Bannerji, and Manu Goswami. Ato Sekyi-Otu used the term 'critical historicism' to describe Fanon's theoretical orientation (Sekyi-Otu 2011). For Fanon, the present moment is a product of historical processes and is connected to open horizons of collective disalienation and freedom. This approach eschews those historical analysis that are linear-teleological, determined by a singular temporality (e.g. imperialism as the only determinant), or uphold anti-historicist arguments as found in certain strands of Subaltern Studies. Fanon and Gramsci encounter common ground in their approach to historicism: they situate subjected and exploited peoples' lived experience, common sense, and spontaneous initiative as being mediated by colonial and capitalist social relations. Their historicist approach avoided positing a reified notion of a religious or peasant subjectivity as situated in an autonomous zone, ontology, or temporality in relation to capitalist modernity, (such as advanced by certain Subaltern Studies scholars like Guha (1997), Chakrabarty (1997); and Chatterjee (1993)). Rather, Fanon and Gramsci posit that a range of temporalities are understood to be mutually constituting in a messy and hierarchical relationship. Such an approach opens avenues for theorizing the role of race/ethnicity, religion, gender, and claims on space in anticolonialism and nationalism.

Gramsci definitely provides the building blocks for analyzing racialization, colonialism, and anticolonial nationalism, yet there are certain limits to his approach. For example, his focus was not on the study of specifically colonial worlds, and the Italian context proves an insufficient case for thinking about the role of colonial state violence in producing hegemony, and how

anticolonial nationalism emerges in relation to the colonial reification of native subjectivity. For this reason, we need to go beyond Gramsci's analysis to grasp the larger dynamics of colonial rule in India and the emergence of nationalism. Fanon's critical historicism provides rich tools for stretching Gramsci to the colonial situation.¹²

Fanon described colonization as a process of reifying society and space. Black men and women are not beings-in-themselves, rather they are historical beings. Colonialism structures the lived experience of being black and produces the gendered black person. Colonialism is a process of re-making the colonized body into an essentialized, static, and inferior figure: the Black, the Arab, the Muslim, etc. That colonial subject is furthermore violently emptied out of agency through ideological and material colonial practices. She is made into an object: compartmentalized, confined, and segregated into a "zone of nonbeing" (Fanon 2008, xii).

In contrast to Chatterjee's claim that anticolonialism's starting point is a sovereign/non-colonized inner domain, Fanon described a politics of liberation as a reaction to colonial reification and repression. And in this sense, Fanon argues, decolonization is a struggle between two adversaries whose differentiated subjectivities share a common origin in colonialism:

Decolonization is the encounter between two congenitally antagonistic forces that in fact owe their singularity to the kind of reification [*substantification*] secreted and nurtured by the colonial situation. [...] It is the colonist who fabricated and continues to fabricate the colonized subject. The colonist derives his validity, i.e., his wealth, from the colonial system (Fanon 2004).

Fanon analyzed how colonized populations formulated their politics within a framework of colonial reification. He cites Negritude, Arab nationalism, and Islamic reformism, as anticolonial

¹²A few authors have pointed to the resonances between Gramsci and Fanon (Sekyi-Otu 1996; Kipfer and Hart 2013). Gillian Hart has similarly suggested extending Gramsci via Fanon for thinking about passive revolution and racialized dispossession (Hart 2014).

political formations that were “the affective if not logical antithesis” of the colonial “insult” (Fanon 2004, 150). Fanon was critical of Jean-Paul Sartre’s assessment in *Black Orpheus* (Sartre 1964) of Negritude as a “weak stage of the dialectical progression” (Sartre quoted in Fanon 2008, 112) in the development of class consciousness. Fanon was not dismissive of Negritude and Islamic reformism, but he did point out that their tendency to invert objectified realities risked reproducing colonial reification.

While the term “false decolonization” is a passing phrase in Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth* rather than a fully developed concept, the idea permeates that text as well as his *Black Skin, White Mask*.¹³ There was growing awareness among anticolonial militants of emergent regressive social and political forces that were pushing the postcolonial transition towards a society that was nominally independent but maintained colonial-type social relations. Kwame Nkrumah, the emergent leader of Ghana and Pan-Africanism, used the term “neo-colonialism” (Nkrumah 1966). In *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon was conscious of how the native bourgeoisie in the colonies was a regressive force, which often remained a lumpenbourgeoisie serving imperialism as a comprador class. While opposing revolutionary claims to national space, the native bourgeoisie began singing a nationalist tune in response to radical anticolonial revolts gaining mass support. The seemingly progressive claim of colonial space as national space could

¹³The precise passage where false decolonization is mentioned is as follows: “Because decolonization comes in many shapes, reason wavers and abstains from declaring what is a true decolonization and what is not [une vraie décolonisation et ce qui est une fausse décolonisation]. We shall see that for the politically committed, urgent decisions are needed on means and tactics, i.e., direction and organization. Anything else is but blind voluntarism with the terribly reactionary risks this implies” (Fanon 2004, 21).

just as easily become appropriated by restorative forces that came to lead the post-independence bloc.

In *Black Skin, White Mask*, Fanon examined colonialism and racialization at the level of the body. Yet, the text provides a layer of nuance for reflecting on false decolonization at the level of the nation as well because here, too, he differentiates between authentic and inauthentic social transformation. He argued that to go beyond colonial objectification and reification, disalienation required the development of a genuine being-for-self that blossoms in a context of mutual recognition. Fanon asserted that if the colonized seeks to be recognized in the eyes of the white master, then this will only lead to “a white liberty and a white justice” (Fanon 2008, 195). Because colonial reification is a structural relationship, substantive transformation will not come when the colonizer recognizes the rights of colonized peoples or grants independence, or when natives struggle for white recognition. What then is an authentic struggle? Fanon hints that substantive transformation requires creating the structural conditions for mutual recognition: “I am fighting for the birth of a human world, in other words, a world of reciprocal recognitions” (Fanon 2008, 193). Fanon’s critique of recognition-based politics in *Black Skin, White Mask* suggests false decolonization is about asking for white recognition. In a context of national independence, false decolonization refers to post-independence historical blocs that reproduce a racialized social formation even as they modernize rule through national citizenship, territorial control, and reconstituted relations with the metropole. False decolonization only entails the rearticulation of race, class, nation, and empire, not their removal.

Gramsci and Fanon’s critical historicism provide a rich framework for examining the relationship between religion and politics, and especially for unearthing contexts of passive revolution and false decolonization. Gramsci treats religion as a material, social, and historical

force in relationship to the mode of production, the state, and modes of rule.¹⁴ He situated the emergence and consolidation of religions, like Catholicism and Islam, in tributary social formations.¹⁵ Gramsci examined in different contexts the role of the clergy in maintaining an unequal social formation, such as the intellectual work of the Christian ecclesiastics in supporting feudal property relations in pre-capitalist Europe (Gramsci 1971, 7). The Italian Marxist did not ignore the role of religion in political struggle. This is demonstrated in his analysis of David Lazzaretti's millenarian movement subsequent to Italian national unification as the expression of peasant discontent through the idiom of religion. Gramsci briefly discussed an Islamic mystical movement in North Africa that led anti-colonial insurrections. Further, he found interesting an assessment by a European author who saw possibilities for this Islamic Sufi order to be incorporated as intermediaries for imperial interests (Gramsci 2011, 5§90).¹⁶ The Italian Marxist considered religious institutions as sites of struggle, as is shown in the case of left-wing elements like the Popular Party advocating trade union unity in the Catholic Church and among

¹⁴Broadly speaking such an approach is not unique to Gramsci and Fanon. The idea that Muslim societies should be studied not through Islam as a transhistorical and monolithical entity, but as a human or social practice is an approach that can found in studies by the French Marxist Maxime Rodinson (Rodinson and Achcar 2015), the Egyptian-French Marxist Samir Amin (Amin 2009), and even the thirteenth-century Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldun (See Rodinson and Achcar 2015).

¹⁵The tributary mode of production is not Gramsci's term, but comes from Samir Amin (Amin 2009). Gramsci described the consolidation of Catholicism in relation to the feudal mode of production, which Amin conceives as a particular variant of the tributary formation.

¹⁶Gramsci has scattered reflections on Islam and Muslim societies, see Boothman (2012)

Catholics. However, Gramsci, as with Fanon, did not advocate religious solutions to questions of political struggle.¹⁷

While Fanon was often critical of traditionalism because of its reliance on ossified cultural practices, he saw possibilities in religion for political liberation and social transformation, his own atheism notwithstanding. Fanon acknowledged the potential role of Islam in national liberation in a correspondence with Iranian militant-intellectual Ali Shariati. Fanon wrote about Islam's "anticolonial capacity and anti-western character" that included a history of resistance to colonialism and the Occident (Fanon 2015, 543). Islam provided "cultural and social resources hidden in the depths of society in the Muslim spirit, in the perspective of emancipation and for the founding of a new humanity and a new civilization" (Fanon 2015, 543). While Fanon saw the potential of Islam providing elements for a critique of imperialism, he noted that this was not his own path. However, reflecting on his experiences in North Africa, Fanon signaled a tendency of religious nationalism to turn into sectarianism and traditionalism, thus treating the nation not as an open-ended, unfinished project but an image and form fixated on the past. Nonetheless, Fanon is hopeful that both his and Shariati's path will meet again in a future where "humanity lives well" (Fanon 2015, 544). In sum, Fanon saw both potential and danger in religious politics.

¹⁷In a text written by Gramsci in 1926, he outlines how the Communist Party of Italy would support left-wing elements emerging among catholic peasants. But, "[the position of the party] must in no way lead us to encourage any ideological movements of a strictly religious nature that may emerge. The party's task consists in explaining the conflicts that arise on the terrain of religion as deriving from class conflicts; and in aiming to bring out with increasing clarity the class features of these conflicts. It does not, by contrast, consist in encouraging religious solutions to class conflicts, even if such solutions appear left-wing insofar as they call into question the authority of the official religious organization." (Gramsci 1978a, 396).

By building from Fanon and Gramsci, it is difficult to sustain Chatterjee's notion of religious nationalism in a dichotomous relationship with colonialism. Nationalism, religious or otherwise, did not remain untouched by wider social and political forces. Rather, it operated from within the material and ideological contradictions of colonialism and imperialism (Goswami 2004). Fanon pointed to ways in which racial, ethnic, and religious nationalism could emerge as a response to colonial reification of subjectivity. The Marxist feminist Himani Bannerji highlighted further theoretical and political problems with Chatterjee's analysis of religious nationalism.

Bannerji critiqued Rouse and other feminists for drawing upon Chatterjee's false dichotomy (Bannerji 2001). She raised several issues with Chatterjee's framework. Chatterjee ignored the possibility of multiple patriarchies, colonial and native. His work also neglected the experiences and forms of agency shared and developed by women. Bannerji argued that the relationship between home and world is more dialectical than dichotomous. In this view, the colonial state, (male) Muslim nationalists, and women have actively struggled to make and re-make the domestic sphere. Bannerji also critiqued Chatterjee for examining "moral propriety as divorced from relations of property" (Bannerji 2001, 37). I am encouraged by this materialist approach to push the distinction of the home and world beyond that of spatial metaphors. The household scale is not natural or trans-historical, but material, produced, and struggled over. Moral propriety derived from religion as a social practice is an important ideological force in the production of the household.

Bannerji actually argued that various Bengali social reform movements in colonial India mark a moment of passive revolution (Bannerji 1991). However, Bannerji understands passive revolution here in terms of a class or class faction that advances an ideological position as part of a hegemonic project. This included a project among middle-class Bengali men of producing "the

new Bengali woman” (Bannerji 1991, 50). Bannerji notes that this was an initiative of producing a new consensus and was a moral agenda. The construction of the new woman was coterminous with the construction of a new family, with its gendered relations of social reproduction, and a new nation. Although Bannerji alerted us to hegemonic projects that were anticolonial but worked to produce a new patriarchal order, Fanon hinted at the possibility of the reconstitution of the family as part of a process of true decolonization.

Fanon outlined decolonization as a double transformation, an end to European colonialism and social change of native society, where aspects of the latter are indeed shaped by colonial practices. His essay *The Algerian Family* (Fanon 1965) forcefully critiques notions of the family as a transhistorical entity. On the one hand, colonialism transformed aspects of the Algerian family. On the other hand, he detailed how anticolonial nationalism created opportunities, moments of reflection, and pathways for the transformation of various aspects about the family (the relationship between father and daughter, conjugal life, and the process of marriage and divorce). For Fanon, decolonization does not entail the return to the pre-colonial family, but includes the transformation of unequal and exploitative social relations rooted in colonialism and native society.

Manu Goswami’s critique of Chatterjee’s blocked dialectic theory provides a means of thinking about passive revolution along a historical-geographical materialism, even though she does not herself develop an analysis of passive revolution. Goswami writes:

By identifying the problem of nationalism only in terms of the formal constraints of its discursive content, Chatterjee overlooks the wider sociohistorical and historical-geographical context of its production. His reading of the “logical sequence in the evolution” of nationalism’s “ideological structure” as moments within a “blocked dialectic” does not differentiate between a logical, deductive sense of necessity (e.g., certain premises have strict logical entailments) and a nondeterministic, historically specific conception of necessity” (Goswami 2004, 23)

Goswami's critique encourages reading nationalism – including those embedded in moments of passive revolution – as entailing historical and social processes. The production of the nation is a multiscale process, it entails the (re)constitution of the body, household, nation, and world. These are all sites of struggle for the hegemonic project of nationalism. The production of scale is a material process that cannot be separated from spatial claims in a balance of forces. For instance, this dissertation examines how Muslim claims to a national space existed in a field of political forces, and was informed by colonial production of space. Goswami stated that: “Central to the project of nationalism is making the nation appear natural” (Goswami 2004, 1). A critically historicist and geographical nuanced framework points to ways of denaturalizing the nation as scale. The next section develops the connections between space, scale, and passive revolution.

1.6 Space, Scale, and Passive Revolution

The nation-state is commonly conceived in Pakistani historiography in terms of absolute space, that is an empty pre-given container that can be filled historically with events. While it's a given that Pakistan emerged historically as a nation-state in 1947, most narratives nonetheless naturalize the nation as a socio-spatial form that emerged through a linear set of events rather than as the condensation of political struggles that involved multiscale reorganization.

I critique the pre-given character of the nation by building on scale debates in critical geography, which developed as part of the “spatial-turn” since the 1970s that is described as the “reassertion of space in critical social theory” (Soja 2011, 12). Radical geographers were responding to the entrenchment of historicist theoretical frameworks that had been dominant in the social sciences and in historical materialism since the nineteenth century. These geographers were informed by

worldwide anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-patriarchal struggles in the late 1960s (Kipfer 2017). While there is a legitimate critique in that Marxists have often subordinated questions of space over time, the question of space has been central to anti-capitalist praxis starting with Marx and Engels (Kipfer 2017).

Critical geographers have emphasized the social construction of scale (N. Smith 1990; Smith 1992; Marston 2000). Neil Smith advanced a political economy of scale approach that argued capitalism produced space unevenly through process of equalization and differentiation. While spatial differentiation existed in pre-capitalist society, these differences are spatially integrated and intensified. Capitalist social relations further produces and hierarchizes spatial scales. While there is a sense in Smith's various writings that scale is produced through historical processes, he also reverts to a schematic presentation of scales as a nested hierarchy from the body, household, regional space, urban space, nation-state, and global space (N. Smith 1990). Smith, along with Sallie Marston, emphasized the social reproduction of scale as a gendered process. This provided both writers a rationale for giving importance to the body and household as scales (N. Smith 1990; Marston 2000; Marston and Smith 2001; Marston 2004).

This conception of scale as the scaffolding of life obscures the multiple and complex combination of sociospatial and sociotemporal processes that are involved in producing scales (Brenner 2001). Some critical geographers have debated whether we can describe the household as a singular spatial scale (Marston 2000). Closer examination shows how the household is produced through multiscale processes (Kipfer 2009). Similarly, social substances like the body, region, urban, and nation cannot be described as an individual spatial scale, but are multiscale.

In his later writings, Smith emphasized the political construction of scale (Smith 1992; Jones et al. 2016). Smith argued that "the construction of scale is a social process, i.e., scale is produced

in and through societal activity which in turn produces and is produced by geographical structures of social interaction” (Smith 1992, 62). He further explains that “it is geographical scale that defines the boundaries and bounds the identities around which control is exerted and contested” (Smith 1992, 66). He further advanced that scale was not only the outcome of state actions and the circuits of capital, but that the production of spatial scales are sites of resistance by labour (Smith 1992, 62). Others have argued that the multiscale character of capitalist social relations opens opportunities for resistance at various scales (Keil and Mahon 2009).

The concept of scale has been underdeveloped in Postcolonial and Subaltern Studies. Whereas Subaltern Studies has consistently critiqued nationalism’s epistemological foundations (Chatterjee 1986; Guha 1997), it is in Manu Goswami’s critical engagement with their project in *Production of India* (2004) that brings a historical-geographical materialist approach, via Henri Lefebvre, so as to denaturalize the scale of the nation and situate its production in terms of historical sociospatial and scalar processes and responses to the contradictions of imperialism and colonialism.

More recently, Stephen Legg has used assemblage geographies to examine inter-war colonial India contestations over scale between the League of Nations’ internationalism and British India’s imperialism (Legg 2009). Legg provides key insights into scale as socially constructed and contested by different political forces. Developing on Deleuze-Guattari and Foucault, he argues that scales are effects of networked practices rather than frames or structures. Assemblage analysis has been characterized as providing innovative descriptive capabilities while lacking in an explicit explanatory framework (Robbins and Marks 2010; Brenner, Madden, and Wachsmuth 2011). Legg’s emphasis on scales as the “effect” of networked practices does not provide a capacity for differentiating the influence among different social and political forces in the

production of scale. Because Legg's empirical case study is on interimperial conflict, his intent is not to make a statement about anticolonialism and scale.

I argue that colonialism and anticolonialism entail multiscalar processes. This requires going beyond the "limits of political economies of scale" (Kipfer 2009, 67). To accomplish this, I build upon the historical-geographical work of Antonio Gramsci and Frantz Fanon (Kipfer 2007; Ekers et al. 2013). While Gramsci and Fanon historically precede debates by critical geographers on scale, they also anticipate some of the various strands of arguments.

If scalar differentiation is intrinsic to capitalism, its production and reproduction is an integral aspect of the *modus operandi* of colonialism as well. In one sense, Fanon describes empire in terms of a spatial differentiation of capitalism at a worldwide scale, characterized by a social and spatial division of labour (Fanon 2004). Elsewhere, Fanon alerts to how the imperial-colonial state produced scales through processes of "compartmentalization" (Fanon 2004, 2) and spatially demarcating the boundaries of social activity that were enforced through a violent state apparatus (Fanon 2004, 3). The colonizing state extends its control to the scale of the body of colonial subjects through the inter-connected processes of racialization and spatial confinement (Fanon 2008; Fanon 2004). Fanon outlines how the colonial state's production of rural and urban spaces is a means of confining and differentiating subjects. This includes the institutionalization of spatialized categories of race, class, caste, and religion: "This is not the traditional opposition between town and country. It is the opposition between the colonized excluded from the benefits of colonialism and their counterparts who manage to turn the colonial system to their advantage" (Fanon 2004, 67). The colonial household cannot be only understood in terms of a historical separation of spaces of social reproduction and spaces of production (Marston 2000; D. E. Smith 1990), but Fanon alerts the need for considering the historical transformation of the patriarchal

household under colonial conditions. Fanon outlined the “double confinement” – “a product of both colonial spatial organization and traditionalist reaction on the part of the colonized” – that women experienced in the gendered colonial city in Algeria (Kipfer 2007, 712).

Gramsci is useful to further develop Smith’s idea about the politics of scale. The Italian Marxist, who was a spatial theorist in effect (Jessop 2007; Ekers et al. 2013), gave historical and geographical specificity to the analysis of social relations as located in place, space, and scale (Jessop 2007, 103–4). Scales are not only discursive constructs, but they emerge materially as the condensation of struggle and the balance of social and political forces. He examined class compositions, alliances or blocs, and their hierarchies as having geographical specificity in making spatial and scalar claims (Gramsci 1978b). Gramsci highlighted the contradictions in political alliances as they could point towards both homogeneous and heterogeneous scalar claims. For example, he assessed the Sardinian Action Party to be a bloc between southern peasants and petty bourgeois elements united by regional sentiments and the claim to Sardinian interests. Turin communists at the time signaled the contradictions within such a union, namely how Sardinian nationalism was being used to mystify the hierarchical relationship between the southern petty bourgeoisie and peasants.

Gramsci framed passive revolution as a multiscale process, one that gives new expression between the local, national, and worldwide (Hart 2014). Fanon and Gramsci provide building blocks for thinking about passive revolution along spatial terms. They gave historical and geographical specificity to the analysis of social relations as located in place, space, and scale.¹⁸. Claims to urbanity and rurality can also play a role in hegemonic projects: “Gramsci’s fleeting

¹⁸On Gramsci as a “spatial theorist”, see also Jessop (2007, 103-4).

insight (that claims to urbanity and rurality can mediate hegemony) holds even in an urbanizing context, particularly if meanings of city and countryside become re-inscribed in material processes (urbanization, state formation) that appear to make these terms redundant in the first place” (Kipfer 2013, 96).

While Gramsci and Fanon dealt significantly with the national question, they never adopted a reified notion of the nation. They lived at a time when the national form was in ascendancy, yet always in relationship to other spatial and scalar claims. For them, the struggle for a national space was a hegemonic project that built upon, claimed, and unified multiple social spaces and scales. In their view, the nation was an open-ended scale of intervention with universalizing potential, within an internationalist horizon. This is in contrast to falsely decolonial claims to the nation, which treat the latter as a static, transhistorical, pre-existing entity, and which mystify global hierarchies. For example, Goswami (2004) has shown how Hindu nationalists conceptualized India as a Hindu national space through an ideological strategy of naturalization that materialized through a field of political forces.

Passive revolution is more than the reorganization of national and world scales, but as “a practice of hegemony [it] is thus ‘boundary-traversing’ in the spatial and scalar sense because it articulates the various spheres and spaces of civil and political society with the multiscalar territoriality of capitalism” (Mallick 2017, 243). In Gramsci’s notes on Fordism, he discussed how new production relations in the United States included an attempt to instill a “new sexual ethic” among workers (Gramsci 1971, 296). Gramsci saw how Ford was regulating worker sexuality to encourage stable monogamous relations and foster discipline in the workplace (Gramsci 1971, 299). His analysis invites us to critique dichotomies between the domain of work and the private domain of sexuality (Ekers 2013). Gramsci described the formation of Fordist

production relations in multiscalar terms, involving transformations in sexual relations, the rationalization and simplification of labour relations, and urban planning focused on big cities (Gramsci 1971, 287). In the previous section, I mentioned how questions around domesticity in nineteenth century Bengal made the household an important site for a hegemonic project led by middle-class male Bengalis (Bannerji 1991).

Fanon's focus on lived experience pushed him to acknowledge colonialism and decolonization as a gendered process. The fact that colonialism was experienced differentially provided a challenge for national liberation struggles. In an essay titled *Unveiling Algeria*, Fanon examined how the Algerian woman's body was a site of struggle through the institution of the veil (Fanon 1965). On the one hand, Fanon recognized the veil as a cultural institution that is spatially confining and restrictive of women's agency. And on the other hand, he is critical of colonial attempts at unveiling women, rejecting any claims that this is a progressive initiative rather than a mechanism to control women's bodies. Fanon described the emergence of women as an authentic national agent in terms of a "new dialectic of the body and world" (quoted in Sekyi-Otu 1996, 227). Native women achieved a national subjectivity in a process of unveiling. Motivated by the imperative of taking the armed struggle to the European quarters of the colonial city, the act of unveiling allowed women to bypass colonial surveillance and escape patriarchal confinement. Fanon saw in this practice a subversion of the Algerian women's double confinement, through colonial and native patriarchy (Sekyi-Otu 1996, 225). This double unveiling of the Algerian woman is a good example of how anticolonialism is a multiscalar struggle that transforms the interrelations among body, home, street, nation, and world. The moment of unveiling was indicative of how true decolonization includes the transformation of

gender relations, and that this “new dialectic of the body and world” experienced in the public sphere had to initiate new relations even in the home.

I take several insights from the scale debates in critical geography and the spatial insights in the writings of Gramsci and Fanon. One, scales are not pre-given, but are produced through historical processes. Two, the production of scale entails spatially-bounded and spatially-bounding social activity that includes geographical differentiation. Three, while scalar differentiation existed prior to the capitalist mode of production, it is endemic to capitalism and (neo)colonialism. Four, scales are not objects but are a set of social relations and processes. Five, the production of scale is materialized in a political field of force among contesting spatial claims. Six, social substances from the body, home, village, rural, urban, district, nation, empire, and world can be conceived as individual scales (entailing spatially-bounded and spatially-bounding social activity), but more importantly they are produced through multiscalar processes. Meaning, social entities like the body, nation, and world are produced through multiple contradictory determinants (e.g. (de)colonization, urbanization, capitalist exploitation) that may entail a variety of spatialities and temporalities. Seven, these processes do not only entail scalar differentiation, but also its dialectical flip-side: homogenization and boundary-traversing activity. Eight, passive revolution as a hegemonic project entails processes that (re)articulate various sociospatial entities, including places, scales, and territories.

1.7 The argument of the dissertation

This dissertation provides a critical historicist analysis of the rise of the Pakistani nation-state through a study of anticolonial struggles centered in Punjab. Literature on the Pakistan movement and the post-independence state often focuses on Muslim nationalism and the All

India Muslim League. However, I want to emphasize the importance of histories of radical anticolonialism in the region. While there has been recent scholarship in Pakistan Studies that examines communist politics in colonial and postcolonial society in a dialogue with debates about the idea of Pakistan, I want to push those connections further. My project is not just highlighting forgotten histories, but pointing to the role of this history in the formation of Pakistan. The negation of a radical anticolonial horizon was immanent to the formation of Pakistan. Just as radical anticolonial imaginaries continue to be ignored as contributors to national culture, these movements were repressed by the colonial state in order to ensure the restoration of empire. I find it necessary to turn to concepts from critical human geography to grapple with the end of colonial rule. Namely, I make two conclusions. First, I argue that the Pakistani nation-state emerged in a moment of passive revolution, that is it entailed the condensation of multiscalar processes of revolution and restoration. Second, Muslim nationalists reified struggles over land, food, and access to the colonial state as ethnic struggles between Muslims and Hindus, thus recodifying class, caste and religion in essentialist terms. This contributed to independence as false decolonization.

I focus my study on the province of Punjab, which was an important site of anticolonial struggles, as well as inter-communal violence, and a bloody location for the partition between Pakistan and India. In other words, the case of Punjab demonstrates the role of political struggle had in the formation of Pakistan. In 1941, a few years before independence and partition, Muslims represented 53.5% of the total population in the province whereas Hindus totaled 29.1% and Sikhs 14.9%.¹⁹ Hindus were mostly concentrated in urban areas, where they

¹⁹While I mention colonial statistics, part of the claim of the dissertation is the contingency of being classified and claiming to be Muslim, Hindu, or Sikh. Some writers have discussed syncretic traditions in pre-colonial and colonial

represented 37.9% of the population. Muslim and Sikhs accounted for 51.4% and 8.4% of the urban population (Krishan 2004). Many urban Hindus were employed as professionals and civil servants. While Muslims were the majority in urban areas, their population was predominately rural. Muslims were mostly concentrated in western districts of the province, whereas Hindus were in greater numbers in eastern districts. Sikhs were strongly represented in central districts of Hindu-dominated Jullundur and Muslim-dominated Lahore (Gilmartin 1988).

The second chapter provides the contours of historical development in the Punjab from 1849 to 1947. It outlines transformations in social and spatial relations that were entailed with the deepening integration of Punjab with British imperialism subsequent to its occupation in 1849. I detail how British colonization of Punjab entailed multiscalar integration, transformation, and production. The colonial state transformed Punjab to be a primary military labour market for the British Empire and for supplying English workers with cheap wage-foods. The process of imperialist penetration did not bring forth social change through a simple linear set of stages, but the colonial state retained and reconstituted aspects of the old social formation, namely caste hierarchies through processes of codification of customs. This entailed the re-articulation of

Punjab that problematize easy classification of religious identity. For example, there was the practice among Sikhs, Hindus, and Christians of venerating Muslim saints (See Mir 2010). Then, there is the categorization by the colonial state as someone as Muslim. Often this was accomplished through the colonial state's classification of communities by their caste, which was inflected by designation of religious grouping. For example, a set of people were identified as being Muslim *Jats*, rather than being just *Jats*. Colonial classificatory systems influenced self-identification, as well. I later develop a distinction between an individual claim to being Muslim and being Muslim as a political subject and political community.

class, gender, caste, and religion. These changes reconstituted contradictions in native society that informed the terrain of political struggles.

The fraught relationships between Pakistani nationalism and radical anticolonialism are multiple. There is the question of how Muslim nationalism appropriated and transformed popular energies amongst Muslim peasants, landlords, and artisans against Hindu *Bania* (moneylender and merchant castes). Hindu-Muslim riots are a common point of reference for the Muslim nationalist “two-nation theory” – the trans-historical notion that Hindus and Muslims in South Asia were separate nations that each needed their own states. Riots were referenced in colonial, liberal nationalist, and cultural nationalist discourses as signifying the spontaneous and natural feeling of Hindus and Muslims. Colonialists, liberal nationalists, and communists have many times emphasized the social and economic character of such riots, which often pitted (Muslim) indebted peasants against (Hindu) moneylenders. Riots are neither trans-historical occurrences nor purely economically or sociologically determined events. I expand on this point in chapter three by examining Hindu-Muslim riots from 1880 to 1915. I situate these riots as the product of imperialism and colonialism. Commercialization of agriculture, land revenue paid in cash, export-oriented agrarian exploitation, and colonial reification of caste and religion in law and social relations of production, contributed to Muslim peasant and Hindu *Bania* antagonisms. Riots were a form of politics that responded to a “racially structured social formation” (Hall 1996) and re-organized – with no intention of transcending – caste, class, and religious hierarchies.

Anti-*Bania* energies among peasants were similarly mobilized by the Ghadar Party in the 1910s in an anticolonial direction. The fourth chapter examines how the colonial state in India brought forth instances of restorative modernization subsequent to waves of anticolonial organizing in the

early 1910s. The colonial state responded to the Ghadar Party's attempted insurrection in 1915 by producing "civil society". It did so by combining the repression of illegitimate modes of politics (mutiny, political banditry, armed struggle) with attempts to create the conditions for loyalist interests to form political parties and hold provincial-level ministries through elections. This dual approach tried to channel antagonisms against *Bania* away from radical anticolonialism and towards colonial liberalism.

The Pakistani nation-state that emerged in 1947 was one possibility among other competing postcolonial scalar imaginations. The fifth chapter examines the multiscale character of Punjabi communist united front organizing in the late 1920s and colonial state repression. The united front coalition advanced by the communist Kirti Kisan Party and Naujawan Bharat Sabha in partnership with left-wing elements of the Indian National Congress showed much promise. Their postcolonial imaginary gravitated around nationalist internationalism, socialist federalism, and secular nationalism. Yet, there were contradictions in how united front politics were mobilized. The colonial state engaged in a scalar project of splitting the coalition. It separated communist internationalism from the nationalist movement by excluding it from the zone of civil society through criminalization.

In chapter six, I argue that the Pakistani nation-state was formed in a moment of passive revolution and false decolonization. The materialization of a Muslim national space and people was the condensation of multiple struggles and initiatives, revolutionary activities and restorative state modernization. Punjabi communists attempted to advance a revolutionary platform within the Punjab Muslim League and the Pakistan movement, most notably through an anti-imperialist and anti-landlord strategy and a call for a multi-national postcolonial India. However, it was the element of restoration that prevailed: Muslim landlords formerly associated with the Unionist

Party projected their pro-landlord and pro-imperialist politics within a framework of Muslim nationalism through the Punjab Muslim League when they foresaw the inevitability of independence. Restoration prevailed as the landlords affiliated with the Punjab Muslim League put down tenant struggles in western and central Punjab in 1946-47. Further, the realization of separated Muslim (Pakistan) and Hindu (India) national spaces became a project advanced by the Hindu Right. Muslim landlords saw state modernization (nationality and national space) as a strategic means of ensuring restoration through the now inevitable process of decolonization. Muslim landlords – emanating from property-owning agricultural castes – would become an important element in the historical bloc in the post-partition/post-independence period.

Given the fragmented character of the national liberation struggle, the colonial state dictated the terms of the postcolonial transition. The British Raj supported an initiative for partition that maintained the colonial reification of religious communities while recasting them now in separate national frameworks. This maintained social hierarchies based on class, caste, and religion. The transition to legal notions of a national citizenship left unchallenged extant property relations that had been organized based on caste and religion. Whereas progressive members of the Punjab Muslim League pushed for land reforms subsequent to independence, these were prevented by the landlord elements in the party. Decolonization also combined existing imperialist relations with Britain with the newly developed imperial linkages to the United States.

Muslim anticolonial nationalism in South Asia can be placed within a “continuum of passive revolution” (Morton 2010, 315) since 1917 and the repeated efforts of imperialist forces to repress communism and radical anticolonialism. The British colonial state’s attempt to repress radical strains of anticolonialism – from the Ghadar Party just prior to the Russian Revolution

and Indian communism subsequently (e.g. the Kirti Kisan Party) – was coupled by colonial support of the forces of restoration even if this meant transforming colonial space to national space within a framework of false decolonization.

1.7 Methodology and Data Collection

This research is based heavily on archival data, in addition to secondary sources. I relied on colonial documents, such as secret intelligence reports that monitored subversive activities, and land revenue documentation and district gazetteers that provided details about social relations of production. These documents I obtained from the Indian Office Library in London, the Punjab Archives in Lahore, and the Pakistan Documentation Center in Islamabad. I also found texts written by anticolonial movements, such as Urdu language periodicals by the Ghadar Party and the Kirti Kisan Party. While I did review some of these Urdu texts, I also found and used various sources with English translations of Ghadar, Kirti, and Communist Party documents. I found these texts at the British Library in London, the University of Toronto Library, and the South Asian Resource and Research Centre in Islamabad. I attempted to access archives in India, such as Ghadar Party archives in Jullundur. However, the various obstacles put in place by the Government of India for obtaining research visas, especially for those researchers with family from Pakistan, prevented me from visiting these archives.

This dissertation studies several underexamined moments of revolt and struggle in the history of colonial Punjab. In fact, the Hindu-Muslim riots of Multan of 1881, the grain riots of 1915, the Ghadar Party's strategy of banditry, the Kirti Kisan Party's united front politics, and the Communist Party of Punjab's tenant struggles in the mid-1940s are not only under-documented. They have been given scant theoretical consideration in relationship to debates about

anticolonialism and nationalism. And they were never considered substantial forces in the rise of Pakistan. One of the main purposes of this dissertation is to start closing these empirical, conceptual and historical gaps.

I use colonial archives as a means to assess colonial knowledge. They represent an entry point to the ideology of colonial officials, their perceptions, fears, and desires. They are also indicators of the colonial state's ability to act and dominate, as well as the difficulties of enforcing rule on the ground. Publications by native organizations are studied for how they attempt to mobilize themselves as political forces, that is how they constitute themselves as a class, caste, religious grouping, or otherwise. I examine colonial and native ideologies in both their negative (producing distortions and singular projections of reality) and positive (materially produced) aspects (see Rehmann 2013). I analyze how ideologies are not only mediated by class, caste, and religious positions, but are materially produced in a field of social and political forces.

While big landlords, urban educated professionals, and even middle peasants formed organizations and left published records through these organizations, there were large sections of the population – most women, poor peasants and landless labourers, and dalits – that remained silent. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak famous rhetorical question “can the subaltern speak?”, was a gesture at how “[s]ubalternity is a position without identity” (Spivak 2005, 476; Spivak 1988). This brings to light the difficulty of excavating the politics of subaltern classes. Gramsci, too, acknowledged how the study of subaltern classes is difficult in the way in which relations of subordination disperse and fragment subject populations. As a result, subaltern consciousness can only be studied in fragments, through the mediations of civil and political society (Gramsci 1971, 52). The implication here is to read colonial, nationalist, and radical anticolonial texts by gauging the relationships of mediation, intimacy, and leadership that may exist between the

authors of these texts and the subaltern. The other consequence is to be attentive to the subtle forms that subaltern voice may appear in such texts.

2. Colonial and Imperial Articulations

In the opening scene of Mulk Raj Anand's novel *The Village*, Nihal Singh is arriving back from the district town via a third-class train ticket. As the seventy-something year old peasant walks away from the train station, he is startled by the shriek of the train whistle. He stops dead on his feet, feels embarrassed, but then is relieved when he realizes it is the train. Whereas Nihal's response was visceral, Anand may be pointing to a sentiment of unsettlement that peasants experienced with the rhythms that trains introduced into colonial space.

The everyday life of peasants like Nihal was synchronized with the spatio-temporality of the railway, from what they produce, and where, when, and how they travel to sell their goods, and what prices they receive. Nihal calls the train a "Devil" that has brought an "age of darkness". While his young son Lalu sees the convenience of transporting agricultural surplus by train, Nihal experiences it as enforcing a regime of regulation. A cart could take "devious" detours to avoid custom taxes. Though Nihal critiques the present and looks to an idealized past, the "silent compulsion of economic relations" (Marx 1976, 899) and a colonial "spatial framework of power" (Goswami 2004, 32) tie him to the temporality and trajectory of the train. His critique of the structural violence of imperial time-space reminds him that these transformations were initiated by the colonial annexation of Punjab subsequent to the Anglo-Sikh wars of the 1840s, where a young Nihal fought against the British.

As Nihal moves away from the train station and closer to his home, village life appears as a set of timeless practices that are not under the influence of the colonial state. Yet, there are instances in the novel, like the scene at the train station that remind the reader (and Nihal) of the presence of colonialism in everyday life. Nonetheless, the historical record demonstrates that colonialism

brought forth transformations even in seemingly transhistorical elements of everyday life like caste, gender, and domesticity.

This chapter examines the social and spatial transformations in Punjab subsequent to annexation by the British in 1849. I particularly find useful the “articulation of the mode of production” debates for understanding how transitions to capitalism are not usually linear but entail a complex process of social change such that the new mode of production reconstitutes elements of the old mode of production. I demonstrate that British colonial state’s use of codification of caste categories was an important element in creating a labour-intensive export-oriented agriculture in the region. This also included transformations in the landscape, from the building of railways, the expansion of market towns, developing the port in Karachi, and expanding irrigation networks. In addition, subsequent to the mutiny of 1857, the Punjab was seen by the British as a strategic requirement area for the British Indian Army. These dynamics entailed the rearticulation of class, gender, caste, and religion. It had the effect of reifying native subjectivities and reconstituted contradictions in society. In future chapters, I outline how natives recast these reified subjectivities in various political formations. For example, in chapter six, I explain how Muslim nationalism was able to mobilize a highly differentiated and fragmented people into a national people. This helps us understand the moment of false decolonization during independence.

2.1 On Articulation

In the late 1960s and into the 1970s, a debate erupted concerning whether Indian agriculture had recently – under the auspices of the Green Revolution – undertaken a transition from feudalism

to capitalism.²⁰ The debate opened up questions of how to classify the mode of production during the colonial period, and the role of imperialism and colonialism in social formations. Parallel debates how to characterize emergent modes of production in other regions as well, for example in Latin America and Africa. These were not mere academic debates, but were interventions concerning political organizing.²¹

My starting point in the mode of production debates is an insight made by the Brazilian Marxist geographer, Milton Santos. Santos found two tendencies in how transitions were examined in the mode of production literature. First, there were those that examine the historical transformation from one mode of production to another (e.g. feudalism to capitalism). Second, the transition in modes of production are examined spatially to take into account how aspects of previous modes of production persist and co-exist in the new mode of production. Santos argued that while the first emphasized time and the second space, they were not distinctions but aspects of a single phenomenon in a dialectical relationship (Santos 1976).

²⁰Alice Thorner has written a more extensive survey of the Indian mode of production debate (Thorner 1982).

²¹There is ongoing debate in Pakistan and India among leftist organizations on the question of the contemporary mode of production. In Pakistan, Maoists argue that feudalism persists, and the social formation can be described as semi-feudal and semi-colonial. Such a formulation leads them to place primary importance on the peasantry as leading the vanguard party. In contrast, there are those in Pakistan who see the mode of production as capitalist, and the working class is seen as the revolutionary class. Laclau (1971) framed the differences of political strategy in Latin America along the following terms. On the one side, there were those claimed that feudalism persisted and called for a united front with the national bourgeoisie against imperialism and feudalism. On the other hand, there were those who claimed that colonized societies were capitalist because they were integrated into a capitalist world market in a subordinate or dependent position. This latter analysis called for uniting the masses against imperialism.

One of the concerns in the debate on capitalist transitions as a temporal phenomenon was how to conceptualize forms of exploitation other than wage-labour in the context of a capitalist mode of production. Jairus Banaji emphasized that wage-labour does not define the capitalist mode of production, but that the latter could combine a range of forms of exploitation that resembled wage-labour (Banaji 2010). Banaji argued that petty commodity producers in 19th century Deccan were an example of the formal, not real subsumption of labour to capital. Even though capitalism had not fully revolutionized the relations of production it incorporated these petty commodity producers into the circuits of capital.²²

While Banaji provided a refreshing theorization of labour regimes through historical analysis that rejected essentialism and evolutionism, he inadvertently reproduced such a framing of capitalism. Neeladri Bhattacharya found his analysis to problematically fit multiple forms of exploitation as variations of wage-labour (Bhattacharya 2013). For example, Banaji argued that petty commodity producers in the Deccan provinces should be regarded as being effectively like wage-labourers. Neeladri Bhattacharya found Banaji's argument problematic as it attempted to force an equivalency between wage-labour and a range of forms of exploitation (Bhattacharya 2013). Banaji's discussion of Deccan petty commodity producers' subsumption to capital points to a given set of stages in a transition to capitalism.

One means of addressing the problem of forms of exploitation has been to take into account questions of scale: do we examine the mode of production in the village, the national territory, or

²²Raju Das (2012) pointed out that Banaji was incorrect in describing this as a case of the formal subsumption of labour to capital, since for Marx this category was applied to wage-labour. Rather, Das argued this is a case of the hybrid subsumption of labour to capital. Marx referred to hybrid subsumption where "capital has not yet acquired a direct control of the labor process" (Marx quoted in Das (2012), 181).

the world? In Latin America, a productive debate ensued between Andre Gunder Frank and Ernest Laclau. Gunder Frank and the dependency school argued that Latin America was capitalist since the sixteenth century because the region became integrated into a capitalist world market. Frank considered a social formation as capitalist if production was for a wider market, while feudalism is characterized by a closed subsistence economy (Laclau 1971). Ernesto Laclau critiqued such conceptualizations for not treating capitalism and feudalism as modes of production (Laclau 1971). Laclau contrasts his own position with that of the Latin American communist parties' "feudalist" thesis that there existed a dual economy of feudalism and capitalism. Laclau emphasized the possibility of multiple modes of production, where the different modes are in a dialectical relationship with the possibly of one mode dominating over the others. Such a perspective was differently expressed by Pierre-Philippe Rey as the "articulation of the mode of production" (Rey 1982). Rey described how in a period of transition multiple modes of production can co-exist in a social formation. Though, pre-capitalist modes of production undergo a process of transformation such that they are articulated by the capitalist mode of production. Althusser described such a process of one mode of production dominating over others as an "articulated hierarchy" (quoted in Hall 1996, 40).

The articulation of modes of production literature have implicitly and explicitly demonstrated that the transition of capitalism produces uneven spatial development. Claude Meillassoux has shown through his fieldwork across Africa that social relations of reproduction that have their origin in previous modes of production, such as the household, kinship networks, and villages, are organically integrated into the capitalist mode of production (Meillassoux 1972; Meillassoux 1981). In other words, whereas the household and village – and their gendered social relations of reproduction – are socio-spatial substances that have origins in pre-capitalist modes of

production, they are absorbed, maintained, and transformed in the transition to capitalism. Meillassoux demonstrated that the domestic realm was an important basis for subsidizing the social reproduction of the African wage-labourer.

Harold Wolpe extended Meillassoux's argument for analyzing black migrant labour in apartheid South Africa (Wolpe 1972). Wolpe understands apartheid as a system that modernizes and rationalizes the system of producing cheap migrant labour through coercion. Apartheid did not just create demand for cheap labour, but created the capacity to produce and reproduce cheap labour. The South African state absorbed and reinscribed pre-capitalist social relations of reproduction in order to subsidize the reproduction of black migrant labour. The South African state has consistently enforced laws that reproduced customary laws, granted power to chiefs in order to preserve "tribal" communities, and communal lands were preserved in reservations. Wolpe's analysis shows that the capitalist social formation consists of uneven spatial development. The outcome is a landscape with differentiated socio-spatial substances: the family, the kin group, household, the reserve, agricultural fields, common grazing land, the factory, mines, township, the state, the world. These entail multiple relations of production and reproduction in a totality.

Much of this debate generally ignored the centrality of imperialism for understanding the differentiated character of relations of production at the world scale.²³ I find particularly useful

²³One exception is Hamza Alavi's interventions in these debates (Alavi 1975). Alavi critiqued the articulation of the mode of production thesis by arguing that this literature did not question whether there was "any conflict between rural 'capitalists' and 'feudal' landlords" to motivate a distinction between the two (Alavi 1975, 1243). For Alavi, the colonial period was marked by a single mode of production that he called the "colonial mode of production". Alavi describes the colonial mode of production as consisting of extended reproduction and simple reproduction in a

Farshad Araghi's concept of "global value relations" in order to frame the uneven geographical development in the transition to capitalism (Araghi 2003). Araghi didn't explicitly draw upon the articulation debates, but he did explain the transition to capitalism not solely along temporal terms, but spatial and relational ones as well: generalized commodity production in the colonies and semi-colonies provided cheap wage-foods that subsidized the reproduction of the industrial labourer in England (Cf. Patnaik 2011). That is to say, the transition to capitalism implies the universalization of the wage-form only if we consider it as a relational world-historical concept.²⁴ This further implies that industrialization in England is immanently connected to the ruralization of Punjab.

Bhattacharya pointed out how Banaji and others in the Indian mode of production debate had ignored the role of ideologies in organizing hierarchies for reproducing labour regimes (Bhattacharya 2013). Banaji, for example, in his treatment of the colonial mode of production, ignored how the colonial state used categories of gender, caste, and religion, which were important in mediating class relations. Important in this regard were interventions in the South African mode of production debate concerning race and class (Wolpe 1972; Hall 1996; Wolpe 1990; Hart 2007).

hierarchized unity in a world imperialist system. An important characteristic of this mode of production was the role of the colonial state in exercising extra-economic coercion for creating conditions for the exploitation of labour, and protecting bourgeois property relations.

²⁴Araghi uses the concept "global worker" for framing the universalization of the wage-form along world-historical lines (Araghi 2003, 51).

Stuart Hall intervened in the race-class debates concerning South Africa by developing upon the concept of “articulation” for examining “racially structured social formations” (Hall 1996, 50). Hall developed his argument from the pioneering work of Harold Wolpe that we discussed earlier (Wolpe 1972). Hall defined “articulation” as a complex structure of combination or linkage. The concept allowed Hall to study historically specific forms of racism, and tease out the particular ways in which race and class are linked together. Hall attempted to employ the concept of “articulation” that went beyond Wolpe use of Althusserian structural Marxism through the help of Gramsci by discussing how hegemonic projects among social and political forces work to transform race and class relations and their linkages. Yet, Gillian Hart advanced that there are structuralist remnants in Hall’s conceptualization and that it does not take Gramsci far enough (Hart 2007). Hart pointed to another sense of the meaning of articulation, “to give expression to”, which is closer to a Gramscian framing given his interest in the politics of language. Hart mobilized such a Gramscian meaning of articulation for showing how race, class, and nationalism are mutually expressed in the process of political practice and ideology.

In the next section I will show how codification of customs by the British colonial state was one such practice of rearticulating class, caste, gender, and religion. The practice of codification was inherently important in transforming the Punjabi landscape to produce cheap wage-foods, like wheat, and soldiers for the imperial army.

2.2 Codification

Punjab was incorporated late as a British colony when we consider that the East India Company’s rule in the Indian subcontinent, referred to as the Company Raj, was first established after the Battle of Plassey in 1757, at which the army of the Mughal Nawab of Bengal was

defeated. Following this, the Company conquered territories through battles with the Mughal state and various confederacies and kingdoms that had emerged with the fragmentation of Mughal authority.²⁵ Later the Company annexed Myorse in 1799, the Maratha Confederacy in 1818, Sind in 1843, and Punjab in 1849. Prior to British annexation of Punjab, the region was ruled by a Sikh state that was established in 1799 under the leadership of Ranjit Singh. It was only with the death of Ranjit Singh in 1839 and the inability of his potential family heirs to consolidate a coherent bloc that the British found an opportunity for dismantling the Sikh state and occupying the province.

Given the multiple contradictions of colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent, the character of colonial rule varied across time and space. This was based on a host of reasons, not the least of which were uneven geographical development, tensions among administrators over ideologies of governance, and the colonial state's varied responses to native anti-colonial resistance. There was a long-standing debate at various levels of the state about whether significant social change in native life should be introduced, as Benthamite radical reformers argued, or whether existing customs and practices should be maintained, an argument led by romantic conservatives and "orientalists" (Stokes 1963). The debate reflected differences in the strategies of accumulation and hegemony.

An important aspect of colonial governance in Punjab after annexation was the codifying of customs and subject identities through categories such as caste, community, and gender. The codification of customary law was applied in 18th century colonial Bengal, where it entailed deriving laws from sacred texts with the help of native religious clerics (Bhattacharya 1996). In

²⁵The Mughal state ruled over the Indian subcontinent since 1526.

Punjab, laws were drawn not from ancient sacred texts but from existing social practice. This entailed turning the results of ethnographic research (interviews and observations) about inheritance, marriage, divorce, and access to property into legal codes. In practice, this remade custom: it helped transform native social relations based on colonial prerogatives.

British administrators imagined Punjab as a land of rural villages, that were characterized by small and middle peasants. When the British initiated canal projects that expanded agricultural cultivation, they created model villages by providing the majority of land grants to castes that historically possessed small to middle size holdings. They also held patrilineal forms of property devolution as normative, treating them as the basis for customary law even where they were absent (Bhattacharya 1996).

In the Punjab, authorities combined both colonial strategies; they codified inherited custom and promoted social reform. This contradiction is exemplified in a statement by the Dalhousie, the Governor General of India from 1848 to 1856: “It is the duty of the Government to improve Native institutions as well as to uphold them. It is possible... to domestic[ate] primitive law: you can redeem it from barbarism without killing it down” (quoted in Bhattacharya 1996).

The 1857 mutiny accentuated a push towards a logic of defining, recasting, and codifying customs in order to substantiate colonial control. On the 11th of May, 1857, *sepoy* from the Meerut military cantonment occupied Delhi and called for a mutiny of the entire Bengal Army. The mutiny consisted of over 100,000 *sepoy* of the Bengal Army and also included agrarian uprisings mostly in the regions where the soldiers originated (Habib 1998). While the revolt was ultimately repressed, it brought forth a re-evaluation and reconfiguration in the mode of colonial rule. In the aftermath of the mutiny of 1857 in India, the Maori Wars from 1845 to 1872, the Morant Bay rebellion of 1865 in Jamaica, and the Fenian Risings in Ireland of 1867 there was

considerable debate and critique of imperial liberalism and its capacity to maintain political stability (Mantena 2010). The multiple anticolonial rebellions across the British empire in mid-nineteenth century changed the balance of social and political forces in London. Strategies of collaboration and repression were refigured to maintain the stability of empire. While strategies of liberal reforms and reproducing customs organized the British colonial project, the mutiny further convinced many in the colonial state that defining and remaking native customs and practices was an integral aspect of colonial governance.

The theoretical underpinnings for codifying customs in the post-1857 climate was provided by Henry Maine, a scholar of historical and comparative jurisprudence. His ideas exerted influence through his position as a Legal Member of the Viceroy's Council in British India. He also had a strong following among civil servants as many heard him lecture when he taught at Oxford and Cambridge and studied his books in preparation for the Indian Civil Service examinations (Dewey 1991a).

Maine understood the 1857 mutiny not as a political movement, but rather as an irrational response of traditional society to modernization. A predominant narrative in England and among colonial administrators was that the mutiny was sparked when rumours spread that the newly issued Enfield rifle's cartridge, which was opened by biting so as to load it into the barrel of the gun, was greased with beef tallow and pork lard. Maine claimed that Hindu and Muslim soldiers believed that chewing the Enfield rifle cartridge would lead to the loss of social and personal dignity through a breaking of religious taboos. According to Maine, colonial administrators failed to understand the superstitious consciousness of the native: it was "the defect of knowledge or imagination which hides these truths from the English mind prevails so widely that

every sort of explanation of the Mutiny has commended itself to politicians and historians except the true one that it [the mutiny] was an outburst of terrified fanaticism” (Maine 1887, 474).

1857 provided Maine with evidence for a critique of utilitarian ideas of universal progress and enlightenment. While Maine believed in modernizing India, he feared that a reform-based approach towards democracy would result in further rebellion. According to him, democracy was only suitable for societies organized on equality, but India was not ready for such a development given that Hinduism justified inequality (Maine 1887). Yet, India was not ready for immediate removal of the caste-system, as this would jeopardize political and social stability. The path to progress would not be found in annihilating traditional society, but rather protecting indigenous institutions and making small incremental transformations. This perspective developed from Maine’s comparative and historical method.

Nineteenth century European social and political theory emerged through and was implicated in the imperialist project. Social theorists distinguished societies along the binary terms of modern and traditional, which Maine articulated as being respectively organized through contract or status respectively (Mantena 2010). Maine set these societal forms not in counter-distinction, but within one historical trajectory of social evolution. The West was modern in that it was organized through contract, jurisprudence, and individual rights. In turn, the East was at a primitive stage of being organized through custom and kinship. Maine’s comparative analysis conceptualized the contemporary East as being a social formation at the stage of the pre-modern West. There was a linear progression from status to contract, communal to individual property rights. These ideas emerged from Eurocentric attitudes about the alleged superiority of western Europe over its backward colonies (Maine 1880).

Maine's theoretical framework gave credence to the position that modernizing traditional societies too quickly would lead to political instability, as the case of 1857 demonstrated in his view. Rather than a strategy of reform to annihilate custom, kinship, caste, religion, Maine's followers suggested that indigenous institutions needed to be incorporated and protected within imperialism. But this protection was strategically selective in terms of what aspects were to be protected and on whose terms. The strategy of codification was utilized to define exactly what were indigenous institutions, but in this process these institutions were not only reinforced, but also transformed.

The codification of customs was a process of structuring the native into a temporality of "tradition", whose reference points and the idioms of caste, religion, custom, and kinship, all defined through colonial anthropology. The colonial state before the 1857 mutiny was already defining native customs through the production of ethnographies of Indian society. Civil servants in Punjab produced detailed district-specific studies of their history, customary practices, caste divisions, agricultural practices, property relations, and genealogies of chieftain families. Folk tales and ballads were also compiled. The study of religious customary practices was used to codify and institutionalize these sources into Hindu and Muslim Law.

The formation of colonial space was informed by codification, such as with the reorganization of property, class, and caste relations. In the years following the annexation of Punjab (1849) and prior to Crown rule (1859-1947), there was a debate within the Board of Administration on whether to protect or abolish the system of *jagir*, which was a system of assigning land grants in exchange for services rendered to the colonial state like land tax collection. Those who took an affirmative position for *jagirs* saw this as a means of rewarding loyalists among the rural aristocracy and gaining the consent of rebel chieftains who fought against the British prior to

annexation. Those who took a negative position regarding *jagirs* saw the rural aristocracy as a parasitic class that held back peasant-proprietors and smallholders. Governor General Dalhousie sided with the position of phasing out *jagirs*. The phasing out of chieftainship was accomplished through the reduction of incomes and land holdings, removal from employment in the army, and a reduction in administrative positions (Major 1991).

This position was reversed during and subsequent to the mutiny of 1857 and Crown rule. At the onset of the mutiny of 1857, chieftains in Punjab pursued a strategy of neutrality, neither loyalty nor rebellion. The British encouraged the chieftains to raise armies against the rebellion in exchange for *jagirs*, *taluqdars*, land grants, and pensions. And they joined the British Indian Army in turn. After 1857, the rural elites were no longer considered parasites but as the “natural leaders of the people” (Major 1991). As a result, there was a gradual increase in employment quotas for the rural aristocracy of Punjab in the Bengal Army. By the mid-1860s loyal chieftains were allowed to purchase proprietary rights to waste land. During canal colonization, they and other designated loyalist castes were also allowed to acquire virgin agricultural land.

The institutionalization of customs rearticulated relations of class, caste, gender, and sexuality. The codification of customary law – including practices of inheritance, land alienation, marriage, tenure arrangements, and adoption – further enforced extant patriarchal social relations through the colonial state and in so doing also created greater obstacles for resistance. In Haryana district, *karewa* or widow-remarriage was popular practice among many Hindu landowning castes. It consisted of marrying the widow to one of the younger brothers of a deceased husband. Remarriage could not happen without the consent of the husband’s family. Previously, there was space for women to refuse such practices. But with the institutionalization of customary practices, widows who did not consent were forced into remarriage by the deceased husband’s

family, who appealed to the colonial legal system (Chowdhry 1989, 318) This custom was frequent among landowning families because it kept property with the husband's family. The practice was formalized through customary law and enforced by the colonial state, which perceived it to be of social and political use. It provided a means for maintaining the existing structure of the village community and preventing the fragmentation of landholdings. *Karewa* stabilized the village community during the Great War, a time when many married women were made into widows (Chowdhry 1989).

The common perception among colonial administrators was that the preference for rural women in agricultural labour allowed for increased land revenue. Civil servants had negative perception of those agrarian castes that did not allow female agricultural labour. For them, *purdah* (the seclusion of women in the home) made women unavailable as agricultural labourers. Of course, they ignored the contribution of domestic labour to social reproduction (Chowdhry 1989, 309).

The codification of custom became an integral part of colonial strategy. It recast caste, class, and religious relations by turning customs into law. Native customs were not completely subsumed under the colonial state. Some elements of everyday life remained non-codified. Aspects of marriage, inheritance, and property relations remained beyond the limits of the law (Bhattacharya 1996). However, codification both reproduced and reorganized social relations according to changing state strategies. Some of these shifts in strategy had to do with the militarization of Punjab.

2.3. Militarization

A central contradiction of the British Empire in India was that the majority of its military workforce consisted of native soldiers. The native soldier was a pivotal force for producing

empire but was also a potentially revolutionary figure. The British Indian army was not a voluntary force, it was composed of soldiers for hire, who were mostly recruited from the peasantry. Whereas Punjab was demilitarized subsequent to annexation in 1849, after the mutiny of 1857, Punjab developed into the major “military labour market” for the empire.²⁶ 1857 was a constant reminder to colonial authorities that a native army could either be a collaborator of empire as in the case of many Punjabi soldiers, or rebels of empire, as with the mutineers in the Bengal Army. In this section, I outline how the colonial state’s formation of military castes and military districts articulated class, caste, and gender relations.

Soldiers as a hired workforce existed at least since Mughal rule. During that epoch, a soldier had enough mobility to combine military work and agricultural labour. Kolff has argued that the Mughal state’s use of a hired military workforce arose out of a need to control the general condition of an armed and fortified peasantry that had tendencies to resist revenue collection (Kolff 2002). The Mughal state’s formation is integrally connected to the capacity to control and incorporate this armed peasantry into the state as soldiers while still collecting land revenue. The East Indian Company’s military conquests and defeat of the armies of the Mughal state and other principalities left a population of two million mercenary soldiers unemployed (Kolff 2002). There was significant worry whether this surplus military labour force would pose a threat to the empire.

The Company’s military was divided into three distinct armies based in the respective “presidencies”: Madras Army, Bombay Army, and Bengal Army. *Sepoy* were recruited from the native Indian population and were led by European officers. In May of 1857, rising discontent

²⁶The concept “military labour market” is taken from Kolff (2002).

within the ranks of the army led to a mutiny in the Bengal Army that escalated to a widespread rebellion within the army and population in north and central India.²⁷ The mutiny highlighted the problems in using a native military labour force to maintain the empire. The Bengal Army's mutiny provoked questions about many aspects of the organization of empire, including the need to organize the army differently. Replacing Indian troops with Europeans was not considered a practical solution given the much higher cost involved in paying European soldiers. One solution to the army's problem was enlisting more Punjabis into the Bengal Army.

As already mentioned, the Punjab was annexed into the rule of the East India Company following defeat of the Sikh state. After annexation, the Punjab was demilitarized through the dis-banding of soldiers of the Sikh state's army. Colonial administrators initially feared enlisting these ex-soldiers, especially Sikhs, into the Bengal Army subsequent to annexation. Yet, the loyalty shown by Punjabi soldiers during the mutiny – including formerly disbanded Punjabi soldiers who were organized temporarily into regiments against the rebel soldiers – prompted colonial authorities to increase enlistment from Punjab (Tan 2005). 1857 marked a shift toward recruiting Punjabis into the army and thus transforming the character of its military labour market.

In 1895, an amalgamated united Indian army was established, dissolving the presidential armies of Bengal, Madras, and Bombay into a single entity, it was now divided into four regional commands: Bengal, Madras, Bombay, and Punjab. And by 1900, more than half of *sepoys* were

²⁷Soldiers had several grievances, there was the rising land revenue tax placed on peasant families and alienation of land due to non-payment of revenue or debts with moneylenders. This affected soldiers because many came from peasant families (Habib 1998). Other grievances included pay for wars fought outside of the Indian subcontinent, and advancement only by time-served.

enlisted from Punjab: Punjabis represented 75,000 in a total armed force of 141,000. Punjab was now the empire's major military labour market (Tan 2005). To become the principal military labour market needed the restructuring colonial space in Punjab.

In this period, there was an increased tendency toward enlisting those castes and religious communities thought to be the superior soldiers (Tan 2005, 69). Among colonial authorities there was an emerging theory about "martial races"; Sikhs, Punjabi Muslims, Pathans, and Gurkhas were deemed warrior "races". Recruitment strategies focused on these communities for enlistment. Obviously, the impression among army leadership that Punjabis made superior soldiers had less to do with inherent ethno-anthropological traits and more to do with them having had more experiences in battle given wars with Russia and defending the western frontier compared with their colleagues to the south and east (Tan 2005). Categorization of "martial races" according to castes and sub-castes was based on colonial assessments about a community's masculinity and sexuality. This was not just a case of the colonial state producing discourses about colonial subjects, but the very organizing of the army based on reified notions, re-articulated caste and gender relations.

The militarization of Punjab was a spatially and socially uneven process. Enlistment did not occur across the entire Punjab, but was limited to "military districts" and among those so-called "martial races". Recruitment was spatially organized by caste and religion according to concentrations of so-called "martial races". From 1891, recruitment was coordinated through regional depots in Rawalpindi, Amritsar, and Delhi. Each depot recruited from districts within their catchment area and from specific castes and religious backgrounds: the Rawalpindi depot recruited Punjabi Muslims from the districts Attock, Jhelum, Rawalpindi; Amritsar recruited Jats Sikhs from the central districts; and Delhi recruited Hindu Jats from Rohtak and Hissar districts

and western districts of the United Provinces (Tan 2005). While considered “martial races”, Sikh Jats were not all classified equally, rather there was a hierarchy based on district. Strong preference was given to Punjabi Muslims among tribes of the landowning aristocracy, such as the Gakkhars, Janjuas, Anwans, and a few Rajput tribes. The Punjab division of the army consisted of Jat Sikhs from Amritsar, Lahore, Hoshiarpur, and Ludhiana; aristocratic Muslim tribes from the Salt Range in Jhelum and Rawalpindi districts; some Hindu and Muslim Jats from the south-eastern districts of Rohtak and Hissar; and Dogras from the Kangra district (Tan 2005). Recruiting was localized so as to organize regiments and companies along “clan purity”.

The colonial state didn’t just reproduce pre-colonial categories of organization – such as caste, clan, tribe, and religion – but rather dynamically recast them strategically according to their prerogatives. Take the case of low-caste Mazabhi Sikhs. While this caste served in the Sikh state’s army, after annexation they were denied entry into the army and were classified by the colonial state as rural menials. After demonstrating their loyalty in 1857, they gained access to military service and therefore land grants; this elevated them within the caste hierarchy (Tan 2005, 73).

The colonial state reproduced its dominance not only through the figure of the *sepoy*, but as well through the production of physical and social space. Militarization included the building of military cantonments, which was a regular feature of urban life in military districts. Here, urbanization was constituted through militarization. Jhelum was a small town of five hundred that was developed to serve as a garrison town with an important military cantonment (Punjab Government 1907, XXVII a:276). After annexation, a large military cantonment was built in Rawalpindi in northern Punjab. By the 1890’s Rawalpindi had the largest and most important military cantonment in North India. Manufacturing was developed in the area to supply the

military infrastructure; the Commissariat Steam Flour Mills in Rawalpindi supplied the Rawalpindi cantonment along with the majority of the cantonments in Punjab (Punjab Government 1895, 256). The Government of India invested significant amounts of money in the 1880s for railway lines, roads, and cantonment towns to service the military. Significant portions of land in canal colonies were dedicated for producing agricultural surplus and husbandry for the army (Tan 2005).

During World War I, the Punjab provided the majority of Indian soldiers to fight on the fronts of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. The Punjab supplied the majority of new recruits because the war effort was mobilized through existing recruitment mechanisms and institutions, such as military districts, recruiting officers, and villages that were routinely used for recruitment (Tan 2005). For two and a half years, recruitment was organized using pre-existing methods, which were unable to meet the high demand placed on Punjab for supplying military labour for the war (Leigh 1922, 33). This led to a re-evaluation of recruitment strategies; specifically, calls were made for greater civil-military integration. This included increased coordination between recruitment offices and local district offices. Whereas the Indian Army's circuits for recruitment had been limited to "martial races" in the military districts, the civil administration had access to an extensive province-wide village network through its land revenue officers. The coordination between military and civil administrative units expanded recruitment geographically beyond the military districts. By 1918, 200,000 men had been recruited in Punjab, this was 50% more than the size of the entire pre-war Indian Army.

Militarization was formative for elite rural castes who were landlords, tribal chiefs, religious and clan leaders. They were mobilized by the government as military contractors (Tan 2005). In return they were given land grants, *jagirs*, and titles. In 1917, a Provincial Recruitment Board

was established in Punjab that was chaired by the Governor of Punjab, Michael O'Dwyer, and included other civil administrators as well as tribal chiefs and landed elites. In the same year it was decided that the revenue administration of a district should be integrated with recruitment, whereby village revenue officers had to put recruitment high on their priority list. Existing collaborators had to meet recruitment quotas if they wanted to keep their posts. Leading rural families who had provided political and military assistance during the war received patronage in the form of land grants, titles, military and civil positions. The war integrated rural elites into the military infrastructures as collaborators-intermediaries, a relationship that persisted after the war.

The Tiwana clan of the Shahpur district is exemplary of how the class and caste formation of an elite rural landowning clan was tied to collaboration with the colonial state in the realm of military and civil service. After annexation, the clan was given *jagirs* for their loyalty to the British in the Anglo-Sikh wars. In return for Malik Sahib Khan's military support in the Second Anglo-Sikh wars and in the 1857 mutiny, he received land grants and *jagirs*. Malik Fateh Sher Khan Tiwana responded to British calls for support during the 1857 Mutiny by raising a cavalry of three hundred. His son, Malik Muhammad Sher Khan, served as a *lambardar* at several villages, and a *zaildar* at Mitha Tiwana. He also enlisted 300 recruits during the Great War and was given the title of Honorary Lieutenant in 1918. Malik Umar Hayat Khan was granted land for supplying horses to the army in the newly established Jhelum Canal Colony. He served in the Indian Army on foreign expeditions, such as a military campaign in Somalia as Assistant Commandant of the 54th Camel Corps and an expedition in Tibet. He became a Lieutenant in 1904 for the 18th Tiwana Lancers. In 1909 he was elected as a member of the Imperial Legislative Council and elected to the Council of State in 1920, on which he served till 1934. For his loyalty he was given the title of Nawab, which later became a hereditary distinction. At the

start of World War I, he was first of the Imperial Legislative Council to volunteer his services and was sent immediately to France among the first group of *sepoys*. His war efforts in France and Mesopotamia earned him the Knighthood of the Order of the Indian Empire and a promotion to Major. He was given tax waivers on land revenue due to his war activities. His son Khizar Hayat Khan, who was born in 1900, enlisted for war service in 1918. He provided support in suppressing the 1919 Punjab disturbances, the Akali rebellion in the 1920s, and Gandhi's non-cooperation movement in 1921. He visited cantonments in Punjab to prevent the spread of the propaganda by the non-cooperation and Red-Shirt movements among soldiers. In the 1920s and 1930s, he held several civil administrative positions. In 1937, he became the Minister of Punjab Government as the leader of the National Punjab Unionist Party, which was a loyalist party representing rural elite interests (Griffin et al. 1940, II:191–210).

This contrasts with the class and caste formation of a *sepoy*. A *sepoy* was a military labourer, who most often came from a poor peasant background and regions with greater instability in meeting subsistence levels. Regions with relatively greater prosperity due to canal irrigation development and lenient revenue assessments showed lower recruitment numbers. In contrast, districts with greater poverty had more war recruits. Enlistment in the army prior to the war was out of material motivations (Leigh 1922, 47). Colonial administrators considered it a general tendency that scarcity or famine convinced individuals to enlist in the army (Punjab Government 1907, XXVII a:253). In the districts of Jhelum and Rohtak it was found that those areas that had rain-fed agriculture, which were relatively poorer and higher in debt than their colleagues in canal-irrigated tracts, enlisted into the army more frequently (Tan 2005, 80–86). In Rohtak, soldiers considered joining the army as a “famine insurance policy”, as a mechanism for maintaining subsistence in a context of the uncertainties of agrarian production (Tan 2005, 85).

In the months after World War I broke out, the high price of food items led many to enlist in the army as military labour (Leigh 1922).

But, while the *sepoy* was integral for maintaining British colonialism, he continued, even after 1857, to be a potentially rebellious figure. When discharged soldiers returned from the First World War, many were upset given the unfulfilled promises of land grants and the post-war economic recession. The Punjab's Soldiers Board, a provincial branch of Indian Soldiers' Board, re-settled discharged soldiers to civil life as a means to appease rising discontent. Despite these efforts, ex-soldiers were important actors in the uprisings of April 1919 that spread across rural and urban areas of Punjab (Tan 2005). District Soldiers Boards would shift from assisting re-settlement to surveying the activities of soldiers and ex-soldiers. The colonial state feared soldiers joining the anti-colonial movement.

When the Ghadar Party attempted a mutiny among soldiers in Punjab in 1915, they drew their inspiration from the 1857 mutineers. Many Ghadar Party members were ex-soldiers themselves and strategically focused their propaganda on soldiers in the cantonments of Lahore and eastern Punjab. They saw a *sepoy* mutiny as integral to ending the British Empire. Military districts and cantonments in Punjab had historically been seen as strategic sites for anticolonial propaganda. In 1920, Akali and Khilafat activists appealed to Sikh and Muslim soldiers to quit military services (Tan 2005, 149). The global economic depression of 1929 rocked the military districts with agrarian crisis, which prompted ex-soldiers to mobilize by making claims on the government (Tan 2005, 168–169). In the military districts of eastern Punjab, Congress was able in the following years to rally support among discharged soldiers who had not received land grants, pensions, or employment after service in the Great War (Tan 2005, 179). Mutiny within the ranks of the Royal Indian Navy in 1946 was pivotal for the British to consider withdrawing

the Indian subcontinent (D'Souza 2014). Chapter 4 examines how attempts were made by the Ghadar Party to transform soldiers into anti-colonial mutineers.

2.4 Agrarian Transition

There were two decisive phases in the development of colonial space as it related to agrarian relations, both were strategies of imperialist accumulation: the imposition of a land tax and the appropriation of surplus products. The first entailed the recording of land titles, shifting from land rent paid in-kind to cash payments, and agricultural production mediated by debt relations. The latter strategy became more intensified in the latter part of the nineteenth century and consisted of producing the veins for export-oriented agriculture, from the construction of market towns, canal irrigation, railways, ports, and an international grain market. These developments must be situated within the world-historical context of nineteenth century capitalist development in Western Europe. The integration of Punjab into the capital flows of imperialism operated through the transformation of social space, and the articulation of class, caste, gender, and religious relations. The first part of this section outlines the transformations connected to the land tax, and the second part looks at those related to export-oriented agriculture.²⁸

2.4.1 Land Revenue Tax

The attempt by the colonial state to institute a bourgeois conception of land in Punjab required significant transformations in social space, that engendered various forms of tensions and contradictions in everyday social life. Principal in that regard was the emerging struggle between Muslim peasants and Hindu moneylenders, which will be examined in more detail in Chapter 3.

²⁸ As of 1931, 6.6 million people were involved in agricultural cultivation in British Punjab. Of this population, 4.8% were non-cultivating landlords who received rent as cash or in-kind payments, 42% were cultivating owners, 37% were tenants, and 11% were landless labourers (Government of India 1933, 239).

During the Sikh régime, peasant proprietors mostly paid land revenue tax in-kind, though some villages involved in commodity exchange due to their proximity to towns and cities made cash payments. Given that the land revenue tax was in-kind, payment was a portion of the harvest. There didn't exist a fixed assessment of tax, but its amount involved a compromise between the revenue collector's capacity to coerce proprietors and preventing resistance over high taxation. The usual level of taxation left peasants with just enough to subsist. Revenue collectors were assigned by the state at district-level and positions were usually given to local chiefs who contracted out the work to petty farmers (Thorburn 1886).

Subsequent to British occupation of Punjab, the colonial state put into motion measures for transforming social space. First, the British transformed land-as-rule into land-as-ownership (Neale 1984). In pre-colonial India, land was considered as a space for rule; the state granted a chieftain the ability to rule over a portion of land. In contrast, the British colonial state considered land as a unit of ownership that was fungible. One of the first processes that the British set in place was making a record of land ownership. To accomplish this, the colonial state transformed collective rights to an individual assignment of property rights.

Second, the British implemented a fixed land revenue assessment in cash. Deputy commissioners of a district assigned fixed land revenue taxes based on a forecast of future revenues based on past harvests and projected improvements in land for the subsequent decade or so (Dewey 1991b). To facilitate this changing land tax régime, debt relations also needed to be transformed. During the pre-colonial era, the value of land was associated with the bi-annual harvests. The village moneylender – who was generally from the Hindu trading castes of *Aroras*, *Khatris*, *Bhatias*, and *Bania* – gave seed loans prior to sowing, and then received payment in-kind from the cultivator, with interest, after harvest. The amount one could borrow – in kind or in cash –

was always limited to the potential size of the harvest. A British settlement officer described the valuation of land during Sikh rule as follows: “Bankers and money-lenders looked to the assets of the land, and not to the land itself” (quoted in Nazir 2000, 58). Given that land was held collectively, if one was not able to pay their revenue demand then their kinsmen could claim their holding and pay the revenue instead. Following the colonial fixing of individual land titles and land revenue assessments, land was alienable and had a market value. Loans were now leveraged according to one’s ownership in land and were also based on occupancy rights in tenancy. As such, now the temporality of land revenue payments was not synchronous with harvest periods, which allowed landowners and tenants with occupancy rights to take cash loans for paying the land revenue tax prior to the harvest, while moneylenders were paid back following the harvest. Borrowing also served the purpose of providing a guarantee that a high fixed land revenue assessment could be met during an under-performing harvest. Given that landowners and tenants had greater access to credit, this also opened new consumption patterns, marked by an increase in purchases for home improvements, clothing, engagements, marriages, and funerals (Thorburn 1886).

By the 1870s, there was a growing problem of peasant indebtedness and the alienation of property rights. In some regions debt was taken through *lekha-mukhi* contracts. This usually entailed the moneylender giving out loans without any security for a couple of years. When the loan reached a high amount, moneylenders required a mortgage of the cultivator’s land as repayment. Then, the creditor took the entire crop to pay for all the expenses for agricultural production, deducted interest, and (if anything remained from the harvest) contributed to the paying off the debt. The effect was that the debtor-proprietor was a tenant: the indebted tenant was in a never-ending cycle of making loan payments that resembled a sharecropper’s tenancy

payments (Thorburn 1886, 83). The colonial judicial system made a break with earlier customary practice by allowing land to be alienable property. The Law of Limitation of 1877 allowed for moneylenders to take possession of a peasant-mortgagor's land, if for a period of six years, the latter was unable to pay their principal, whereas previously it was set at 12 years (Thorburn 1886). Such practice made dispossession a common occurrence in *lekha-mukhi* contracts, given that peasants were usually only able to pay off the interest with each harvest (Nazir 2000).

When the British occupied Punjab, they encountered a society that was heterogeneous and hierarchical. That is, one where society was differentiated by caste, class, religious identity, and region. The colonial state used already existing forms of social differentiation in organizing society, sometimes codifying, legalizing, and reifying differences. They also transformed existing hierarchies by choosing to privilege and limit certain castes and sub-castes as part of a strategy for accumulation or hegemony. Whereas Hindu trading castes, such as the *Bania*, did not hold a prominent position in society prior to colonization, new opportunities of accumulation opened up for them given the new property and judicial régimes along with the commercialization of wheat. The majority of cultivators were Muslims, from agricultural castes like *Jat* and *Rajput*, and as such the transformations in the agrarian political economy rearticulated caste, class, and communal relations. With the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900, colonial reification of identity intensified further.

With significant proportions of Muslim landowners and tenants in debt, the alienation of land was becoming a growing problem for the colonial state. For one, private property did not lead to capitalist agriculture in the sense of cultivators re-investing surplus for land improvement. Second, there was growing fear of political instability given that their trusted collaborator – the large rural landowner – was increasingly coming under the economic control of Hindu trading

castes. Septimius Smet Thorburn, who undertook one of the first manuscript length studies of the question of indebtedness in Punjab in the mid-1880s, expressed worry that Muslim peasant resentment against Hindu *Bania* might translate into an anticolonial millenarian uprising:

The fuel will then be ready for ignition, and a spark – a sympathetic breeze down to [the] frontier from that hot-bed of Mahomedan fanaticism – Afghanistan – a famine, the exhortations of an agitator, whether aspiring Mahdi or land-law reformer – will kindle such a flame that [the] Government will, in order to quench it hurriedly and fearfully, pass some Act of Bunniah spoliation more drastic than the famous Deccan Ryots Act of 1879 (Thorburn 1886, 40–41).

The colonial state responded with the Punjab Land Alienation Act, which produced reified notions of caste-class relations that were spatially inflected. Specifically, the Land Alienation Act legally differentiated between “agricultural castes” and “non-agricultural castes”. This provided the means to prohibit land transfer from agricultural to non-agricultural castes. It was a strategy for maintaining colonial hegemony by giving protection to large landowners; arguments in favour of the legislation emphasized the need for protecting indigenous institutions as alienation might threaten political stability.

While extant social structures made it difficult, and even impossible for many castes to own land, the Punjab Land Alienation Act made it still more difficult. The Hindu *varna-vyavastha* system barred so-called untouchables from owning land. With the Land Alienation Act these structures of social domination became defined and enforced through the colonial state through their designation as “non-agricultural castes”, despite the involvement of many of these same communities in agricultural labour (Ram 2004, 326).

2.4.2 Export-oriented agriculture

Punjab underwent extensive socio-ecological transformations that underwrote the feeding of the British proletariat. Western Punjab underwent extensive irrigation development that transformed

the landscape of pastoral nomadism to settled agriculture, extensive railway networks and market towns were constructed that provided the means to quickly transport of cash crops, and the development of ports also facilitated export.

When the Prussian officer and writer Leopold von Orlich traveled through the Indian subcontinent, he described western Punjab in 1845 as a desolate place filled with shrubs, only a few large towns, and fertile land limited to areas along the rivers:

The Punjab, or country of “five waters” (*punj*, five; *ab*, waters), covering an area of 6000 geographical square miles, lies between the Indus, the Sutlej, and the Himalaya mountains. The four streams which rise in these mountains, intersect the country, and divide it with the Indus into four distinct doabs. The first district, lying between the Indus and the Jailum [*sic.*] ... is the most sterile, the least cultivated, and the least populous part of the country; it is covered with undulating, bare eminences, which rise considerably towards the centre, and is intersected by rugged declivities (Orlich 1845, 159).

Prior to annexation in the late 1840s, production west of the Beas-Sutlej and east of the Jhelum rivers was predominately centered on nomadic pastoralism and some settled agriculture along the riverbanks. Nomadic pastoralists either traveled within the pastoral highlands or between the highlands and the riverine tracts (Bhattacharya 2012a, 1). The colonial state imagined the pastoral highlands as a vast “wasteland” that could be made productive through a process of creative destruction: destroying existing socio-ecological relations of pastoralism and developing a new agrarian society. The colonial state theorized that the development of perennial irrigation canals would open the possibility of making the landscape productive. Bhattacharya describes this imperial optimism: “A new society could be founded with the immigrants, the industrious peasants of Central Punjab settled in new colonies, a new regime of customs introduced, villages and markets planned, valuable commercial crops produced” (Bhattacharya 2012b, 2). This was vastly different from the trajectory taken east of the Sutlej river which consisted of transforming existing socio-ecological relations.

The landscape of western Punjab in the period from 1880s onward would undergo massive transformations that converted vast stretches of land that were mostly uninhabited and used by nomadic pastoralists and their livestock into what Imran Ali called a “new agrarian frontier” (Ali 1988). The development of canal colonies in western Punjab included processes of evicting and criminalizing nomadic pastoralists, developing canal irrigation, and settling the region with large landowners, peasants, and tenant farmers. An interdependent and separate process was the integration of Punjab into the emerging “first international food regime” (Friedmann and McMichael 1989). The latter process needs to be conceived of not in terms of the global determining the local. Rather, the production of the new agrarian frontier in Punjab was part of the process of constructing an international food regime. This included the settling of western Punjab for agrarian production, and the development of railways, roads, ports, and market towns across the province. Spatial transformations were closely inter-related to social change, and to state and class formation.

The first canal colony was constructed in Multan in 1886. A further eight canal colonies were established till the end of colonial rule in Punjab. Land in the newly established canal colonies was distributed through grants based on specific criteria of caste, and often came with conditions on land use. For example, in Chenab Colony, three types of land grants were given: peasant, yeoman, and capitalist. Peasants were given between 14 and 55 acres of land and occupancy tenancy without ownership, which was held by the state as a means to prevent land alienation. Yeoman land grants were between 55 and 111 acres, and capitalist land grants were larger than 111 acres. Yeoman and capitalist land grants could obtain proprietary rights after 5 years. Peasant and yeomanry grants required residence on the land. 80% of the grants given were peasant land grants which re-produced the image of Punjab as a land of peasant farmers. Peasant,

yeoman, and capitalist grants were only given to landholding agricultural castes. Capitalist grants could be given to agricultural and non-agricultural castes, and were a form of reward for some holders prior political, military, administrative services. They were also awarded to those with enough capital to undertake agricultural improvement. Landless labourers were not given land grants, but became either subtenants or labourers in the canal colony (Ali 1988). In various colonies, the landed aristocracy was given large land grants for their political, administrative, or military services and loyalty. In addition, certain parts of canal colony lands were sold through auctions.

Together these canal colonies made it possible to convert 4 million acres of pastoral land into agrarian settlements (Bhattacharya 2012b, 2). However, this transformation required the forcible removal of nomadic pastoralists from the land. With the development of perennial irrigation, the colonial state partitioned the pastoral land for agrarian settlement. Peasants from Central Punjab were enticed to migrate to the canal colonies through land grants for military service or loyalty, or alternatively through purchase. The new proprietors and their labourers had the land cleared, ploughed, enclosed, fenced, and planted. The colonial state had strict designations of ownership, with clear distinctions between proprietors and tenants (Bhattacharya 2012a). Nomadic pastoralists rebelled against the new property regime by having their cattle trespass onto the agricultural land and destroy crops, a phenomenon witnessed across the canal colonies as well as across newly settled and enclosed lands throughout the British Raj. The Cattle Trespass Act of 1871 restricted the mobility of pastoralists and enforced the new property regime. Other acts regulated the movements of the animals held by nomads by requiring camels, ponies, horses, and mules to be registered and branded. The Punjab Military Transport Act of 1903 gave the state the power to appropriate transport animals for the purpose of military service. Nomadic pastoralists

in the canal colonies were criminalized through the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, which classified “wandering” as a crime. Tribes that were considered as “habitual wanderers” were confined to stay in their villages and required licenses to leave (Bhattacharya 2012b).

In some canal colonies, land grants were given to so-called “depressed classes” and “criminal and wandering communities” – landless labourers and nomadic pastoralists – but only under particular limited conditions. Land grants were given to nomadic pastoralists in certain colonies as a means of domesticating nomads into settled modes of life. Lands with the poorest quality for agriculture were given to nomads in Jhelum Colony and Lower Bari Doab Colony. “Depressed classes” in Lower Bari Doab Colony were given a total of 20,000 acres, but these were specifically allocated to Christian converts and administered through missionaries (Ali 1988). Land grants to landless and subaltern classes were very limited, rather land distribution in the canal colonies was based on reproducing hierarchical caste and class relations. Caste became recast in the new property regime, whereby caste distinctions solidified which groups were landowners, tenants, and labourers. The lone peasant farmer-proprietor was a fiction that the British Raj invented, as the real work of cultivation was done by landless labourers. The colonial state recognized the need for producing and reproducing social difference by granting and denying of proprietary rights and maintaining a population of landless labourers.

Imran Ali describes agricultural production in the canal colonies as predominately non-capitalist or semi-feudal because of the predominance of tenancy, that wage labour is not generalized, the absence of re-investment of surplus value, and the use of extra-economic coercion through systems like caste (Ali 1988). While there were non-wage forms of exploitation in operation in the canal colonies, Ali’s analysis ignores how a social formation may incorporate in an articulated hierarchy multiple forms of exploitation. The labour of tenants and the landless under

conditions of super-exploitation and coercion contributed to producing value (in a capitalist sense of value), when we consider the worldwide scale of how surplus via land tax and grain were fed into the circuits of imperialism (Araghi 2003). While caste and sharecropping operated in colonial Punjab, these extant forms of social relations of production became articulated differently when incorporated into empire as they were increasingly determined by global value relations, specifically for the purpose of providing “cheap food” for the social reproduction of proletariats of western Europe (Patel and Moore 2017).

From the 1860s Britain sought a means to expand production of wheat and cotton, so as to be less dependent on American supplies. However, there were limits to intensifying production on existing agricultural lands in the Indian subcontinent, which had been mostly concentrated in the United Provinces in the north. Western Punjab provided a frontier for expanding wheat and cotton production using American varieties (Bhattacharya 2012b, 32). Emphasis was on cash crops like wheat and cotton and high yielding varieties, rather than traditional coarse food grains such as *bajra* (millet) and *jowar* (barley). The opening of the Suez Canal from 1870 made it possible to open the wheat fields of northern India for imperial consumption. Wheat only took thirty days to arrive in England. The construction and expansion of a railway network in India and Punjab was seen as providing another necessary condition for opening up the countryside for agricultural exports and to compete with the United States in the international grain market (Connell 1885; Fowler 1877–1900).

The incorporation of Punjab into world capitalism was organized through the colonial state’s production of space and time to facilitate the quick flow of agrarian produce from field to port. This export commodity circuit was based on an extensive railway network, construction of roads, building of market towns, and developing the port of Karachi to take goods out of the

subcontinent. The construction of the railway network was integrally connected to facilitating the export of a range of agricultural products, but especially wheat. The railway not only contracted the time it took to transport commodities, but also reduced costs when compared to the bullock cart or river boats that one colonial official described as a “clumsy native craft” (Andrews 1857). With the removal of export duties in 1873, wheat exports expanded (Fowler 1877–1900). Building the railway in Punjab connected the rural hinterlands with the port of Karachi to allow for the efficient movement of agricultural goods onto steam ships bound for the ports of England (Andrews 1857). A circuit between Amritsar and Lahore would be connected to Karachi via Multan and followed the Indus river. Construction began in 1859. With a railway connection between the commercial city of Amritsar and the port of Karachi it was now faster to transport commodities than to send goods via the eastern port of Calcutta, thus reducing the maritime journey to Europe (Andrews 1857). However, the increased flow of commodities into Karachi required expanding the port. The construction and expansion of the port of Karachi developed from the anticipated and concrete role the port would play in the wheat export economy. From the late nineteenth century, the majority of trading in the port of Karachi was that of wheat (Brow 1945).

Wheat in colonial India was sown from the end of November to the latter half of December. Harvesting started in March, reached its peak in April, and ended in May. Following the harvest, wheat was threshed and winnowed in preparation for the market. Casual labour was most often hired during the harvest period. In the canal colonies, given that the acreage of wheat was considerable and the surplus labour population insufficient, hired labour was brought in from south-eastern Punjab, where the harvest occurred earlier (Government of Punjab 1939, 85). Casual labour during the harvest were paid in-kind. Proprietors and share-cropper tenants were

also obliged to give a portion of the harvest to their money-lender to cover a portion of their debt, which they might have taken to pay for an advance on the purchase of land, seeds, or cattle, for paying the land revenue demand, or for the maintenance of the family or a marriage ceremony. A portion was given as labour-in-kind for services rendered by *kamin* and artisan castes (e.g. blacksmiths, potters, barber), who used wheat for bartering. Given requirements to pay in cash a part of their debt, land revenue demands, and water rates, proprietors quickly sold their wheat following the harvest. They opted either to sell the remaining wheat at the village level through the money-lender or take their produce to the closest market town via hired conveyance of bullock cart, camel, or donkey. In the market, wheat was sold through a *kachcha arhatiya* (small commission agent) or as of 1912, co-operative commission shop. The *kachcha arhatiya* would often advance loans to producers or *sahukar* as a means of binding clients. Village rates for wheat would be higher as they included a markup for transportation costs to take the goods to the market. Large firms would purchase wheat in the market through *pacca arhatiya* (wholesale merchants) for a certain quantity and within rate-limits. *Pacca arhatiya* usually purchased wheat through the *kachcha arhatiya*. Market towns in most cases were connected to railway networks to facilitate the flow of commodities. Exports were organized through large firms who might have several agencies that dealt in the purchase of wheat, or alternatively operated through a *pacca arhatiya*.

Markets were classified into three types by colonial officials: primary or country markets, secondary or central markets, and mill or terminal markets (Government of Punjab 1939, 106). Depending on the various roles a market held, it could be at once a primary, secondary, and/or terminal market. At primary markets, producers sold their produce to local dealers or commission agents of large merchants. The trade of wheat in the primary market may also have

included weekly bazaars and cattle fairs. Primary markets were often located on the railway lines and, with the advance of motor vehicles in the 1930s, nearby roads. Traders would take this produce to the secondary market, where merchandise would be sold, weighed, bagged, stored, and sold in the shops of the *arhatiya*. In keeping with the centralized planning involved in designing the canal colonies, secondary markets had *arhatiya* shops not scattered around town as in the older markets, but rather had “centralized markets” where shops form a consolidated market area (Government of Punjab 1939, 110). The terminal markets were where wheat was exchanged by the wholesale firms to distribution networks for ultimate consumption within the country or for export. For the Punjab, terminal markets were the ports of Karachi, Calcutta, and Bombay, gateways to the Indian subcontinent and foreign markets (Government of Punjab 1939, 112). Amritsar is a good example of a market that was at once a primary, secondary, and terminal market; it combined an outlet for local producers to sell their surplus wheat to traders, trade with wholesale traders and foreign markets, and a market for local consumers.

Concluding Remarks

A particular type of colonial space was forged in the post-1857 period as the East India Company (“Company Raj”) gave way to direct British colonial rule (“British Raj”). Goswami has argued that the shift to direct administration entailed a territorialization and spatialization of colonial rule. The colonial state produced space as heterogeneous, uneven, and hierarchized. It bound itself to existing socio-spatial entities, modified them, and produced new ones – racialized bodies, households, agricultural lands, railways, irrigation networks, market towns, martial districts, and ports – that were spatially integrated into the circuits of empire. The British Raj actively transformed and regulated its territory as a single bounded entity with greater internal connectivity (Goswami 2004, 32). As a mediation of the imperial economy and territorial mode

of rule, colonial space rearticulated class, caste, religious, and gender relations. In the process, the colonial state produced reified and highly differentiated subjectivities.

In the next chapter I build on this idea by showing how the colonial state did not merely produce representations of the Hindu *Bania* or Muslim *Jat* through discourse, but also materially produced these figures through codification and modification of customary laws, regulations about property relations and taxation, policies about military recruitment, and allocation of property in canal colonies. While the current chapter has focused on articulation as a process by the colonial state, the next chapter examines how colonial subjects also gave expression to class, caste, religious, and gender relations. Native political forces were often based on such colonial reifications even though they struggled for its modification or alternatively worked to liberate from structures of objectification. Hindu nationalists rearticulated colonial reified subjectivities through ideology and political practice. Castes designated as “martial races” sometimes repeated such a discourse for making anti-colonial claims, as is shown in Chapter 4. In the next chapter I examine how riots between Hindu *Bania* and Muslim peasants were struggles over the rearticulation of class, caste, and religious relations.

3. Re-organizing class, caste, and religion: Hindu-Muslim riots, 1880-1915

Muslim peasants spontaneously rose up against Hindu merchant castes towards the end of February of 1915. That is, at least, how Michael O'Dwyer, the governor of Punjab at the time, described those events. O'Dwyer claimed that attacks by Muslim landlords, tenant farmers, and landless labourers on Hindu *Bania* had much to do with rising food prices and the former's indebtedness to the latter (O'Dwyer 1925). In contrast, the Punjab Hindu Sabha attributed the violence to anti-Hindu communalism among Muslims (Sohan, Fakir, and Bahadur Chand 1915). Gyanendra Pandey has argued that there exist two general tendencies in analysis on communal violence, that of liberal-rationalist and racist-essentialist. Pandey also recognized that nationalist and colonialist political machinations combined elements of both. O'Dwyer used racist-essentialism and liberal-rationalism to drive his point: in spite of Muslims peasants of "the South-West Punjab [being] a simple, credulous, and homestaying people, lacking the virile instincts of their martial brethren of the North-West Punjab", a crisis of subsistence drove them to violence (O'Dwyer 1925, 210). Pandey's assessment was that there is a need to go beyond both the liberal-rationalist and the racist-essentialist approaches. Rather, he calls for examining the historical processes that produce communities through categories such as caste, religion, and class. Pandey demonstrated how the colonial state produced objectifying representations of native communities through categories of caste. Yet, he also argues that collectivities worked through colonial objectification of caste as a means of making claims for social ascendancy (Pandey 1990; Pandey 1983). This chapter emphasizes how native re-articulations of colonial

reification are more than just discursive, but processes for materially re-organizing social hierarchies based in caste, religion, and class.

During the late colonial period, the character of communal violence was a highly charged political question. The Muslim League referenced instances of Hindu-Muslim riots for claims that India consisted of two separate nations. In contrast, communists in the 1920s asserted that communal violence was a mask for class struggle; rather than inter-religious conflict, communalism was a reflection of struggles between sectional interests of class forces: Muslim *merchants* attacked Hindu *merchants*, Hindu *landlords* fought Muslim *peasants*, and Hindu *moneylenders* exploited Muslim *peasants*. Yet – to invoke E.P. Thompson’s question about eighteenth century England – can we have “class struggle without class?” (Thompson 1978, 133). That is to say, if class was not a political organizing principle – a class-for-itself – then how can we speak about class struggle. I contend that communal violence was indicative of how class relations were experienced and organized through caste and inter-religious relations. I avoid considerations that inter-religious riots were an expression of trans-historical rivalries. Colonial, imperial, and native socio-political forces worked upon caste and inter-religious relations. The specific form of violence between Hindu *Bania* and Muslim peasants and artisans must be situated in terms of a response to the massive upheavals during the colonial-imperialist transition and hierarchies produced in social space.

I first re-visit the concept of spontaneity for coming to grasp with the character of Hindu-Muslim riots. For this purpose, I draw upon the writings of Antonio Gramsci. Second, I show how the use of rioting as a tactic by Hindu *Bania* against Muslim peasants and artisans was a means for constituting a Hindu political force under Hindu merchant caste leadership, and asserting relative

Hindu dominance in public spaces.²⁹ Third, I examine the use of rioting by Muslim peasants as a means of controlling their subsistence in relation to Hindu *Bania* at a time when imperialist articulation of caste, class, and inter-religious relations was increasing tensions between communities.

3.1 On Spontaneity

Gramsci's notion of spontaneity was quite distinct from its common sense meaning of "out of the blue". Rather, he treats spontaneity as historically produced "common sense" that emerges through a combination of everyday experience, religious institutions, traditional intellectuals, and hegemonic forces. Gramsci distinguishes spontaneity from those actions arising with "conscious leadership":

"Spontaneous" in the sense that they are not the result of any systematic educational activity on the part of an already conscious leading group, but have been formed through everyday experience illuminated by "common sense", i.e. by the traditional popular conception of the world - what is unimaginatively called "instinct", although it too is in fact a primitive and elementary historical acquisition (Gramsci 1971, 198–199).

Spontaneous action emerges from the experiences of subaltern classes and their understanding of exploitation and domination. In this regard, Gramsci often references subsistence insecurity as being linked to spontaneous actions. In a note on a revolt by small farmers in Italy, Gramsci remarked that a flour tax severely affected smallholders' capacity for subsistence and led them to kill and beat tax collectors. He described these actions as spontaneous, that is without organized and conscious leadership. But Gramsci at the same time examined the underlying reasons for the action as rooted in historical experiences of exploitation: the flour tax forced subsistence

²⁹I use the term "relative" because Hindu supremacist politics generally did not question colonial rule.

smallholders and sharecroppers who never had money to take loans from moneylenders at extortionate rates [Gramsci (1992), 289; Q2§43]. Elsewhere, he comments on the Turin workers strike of 1917 that began as a spontaneous action against food shortages (Gramsci 1992, 205: Q1§116).

Gramsci is clear that spontaneity and leadership are not dichotomous. Neither can pure spontaneity exist (Gramsci 1971, 196). Rather he points to the dialectical relationship between spontaneity and conscious leadership. In so-called spontaneous movements “there exist multiple elements of ‘conscious leadership’ but no one of them is predominant or transcends the levels of a given social stratum’s ‘popular science’ - its common sense” (Gramsci 1971, 196).

Spontaneity can be a mode of politics that develops from within hegemonic projects in relation to the struggles of everyday life. When conscious leadership works upon spontaneity, and vice versa, a political formation develops through organic relationship between social forces: “This unity between ‘spontaneity’ and ‘conscious leadership’ or ‘discipline’ is precisely the real political action of the subaltern classes, in so far as this is mass politics and not merely an adventure by groups claiming to represent the masses” (Gramsci 1971, 198). The Turin workers movement provides an instance of this unity between leadership and spontaneity: “elements of ‘spontaneity’ were not neglected and even less despised [...] it [the workers struggle] applied itself to real men, formed in specific historical relations, with specific feelings, outlooks, fragmentary conceptions of the world” (Gramsci 1971, 198). Gramsci gives the example of how the Moderates developed upon “spontaneous” aspects of their class for mobilizing during the *Risorgimento*, but once in power they used “constraint” (Gramsci 1992, 138; Q1§44).

Gramsci’s analysis points to how the strategies of spontaneity and leadership, and their precise admixture, emerge in relation to hierarchized and uneven social space. There is a tendency

among subaltern political formations to rely on common sense, spontaneity, and a lack of conscious leadership. Social relations of domination and exploitation create barriers for producing organic intellectuals who can provide leadership and political education to subaltern forces. When political formations do arise, dominant social forces frame these movements as irrational and spontaneous outbursts. Take for instance the peasants of Southern Italy who developed as a radicalized faction of the *Risorgimento* movement by going beyond liberal republicanism and were repressed by the state. Intellectuals used the movement as evidence of the racially and biologically inferiority of southerners (Green 2013). Gramsci noted how even left liberals characterized David Lazzaretti's anti-state Christian millenarian movement among peasants in southern Italy as rooted in the madness of its leader:

Such was the cultural habit of the time: instead of studying the origins of a collective event and the reasons why it spread, the reasons why it was collective, the protagonist was singled out and one limited oneself to writing a pathological biography, all too often starting off from motives that had not been confirmed or that could be interpreted differently. For a social élite, the members of subaltern groups always have something of a barbaric or a pathological nature about them (Gramsci 2001, 165: Q25§1).

Southern resistance against northern colonization was framed instead as the biological and racial inferiority and irrationality of southern peasants (Green 2013). Yet, those characterizations of subaltern groups and their political movements are not mere statements, but contributed to the hegemony of northern social forces and the ideology of southern racial inferiority. Gramsci suspected that Lazzaretti was seen as a threat to the state because his movement combined leadership and spontaneity, radical republicanism with popular religious sensibilities:

the tendentially republican nature of the movement, which was such as to be able to spread among the peasantry must have contributed especially to making the government decide to exterminate its main leader [...] perhaps because the tendentially republican strain within the movement contained a bizarre mixture of prophetic and religious elements. But it is just this mix that represents the affair's main characteristic since it shows its popularity and spontaneity (Gramsci 2001, 166: Q25§1).

By working through Gramsci's concept of "spontaneity" for analyzing Hindu-Muslim riots, our starting point is a different set of questions from those posed by colonial, liberal nationalist historians, as well as contemporaneous left militant commentators.

3.2 Hindu supremacy

On the morning of September 20th, 1881, while a Muslim butcher was transporting beef inside the walled city of Multan, in south-western Punjab, the covered contents of his cart were accidentally uncovered. Hindu shopkeepers responded by assaulting the butcher. A riot between Muslims and Hindus ensued with shops set on fire and places of worship belonging to both communities vandalized. Such riots were occasional occurrences in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Punjab. In the above narrative, it appears that the mere sight of beef would wake up latent violent religious intolerance among Hindus towards Muslims. Another version claims that the Muslim butcher intentionally advertised the raw cow meat he was selling so as to provoke the ire of Hindu shopkeepers and passersby. However, there is more to riots than the "immediate".³⁰ Gramsci's questions about spontaneous actions are helpful for disentangling the politics of riots: What are the historical origins to this collective action? And, why did an action become collective?

The Hindus who organized and participated in the Multan riots of 1881, and other similar riots like the Rohtak riots of 1890, were majority from the Hindu commercial, trading, and

³⁰I am drawing here upon Ato Sekyi-Otu's reading of Frantz Fanon. The Sekyi-Otu finds Fanon makes a "critical historicist" critique of "immediate knowledge" in the colonial condition (Fanon 2004; Sekyi-Otu 1996).

moneylending castes: *Khatris*, *Aroras*, and *Banias*.³¹ According to the 1901 census, 18.8% of the population in Multan district were Hindu, 0.7% Sikh, and 80.2% Muslim. Hindus in Multan district were mostly from non-agricultural castes and were found mostly in urban areas where they counted for 45% of the population (MacLagan 1902). In Multan district, the *Arora* caste was the largest Hindu community and consisted of trading, shopkeeping, and moneylending elements.

On the other side, Muslims from a range of artisan and peasant castes were implicated in rioting. The antagonism between Hindu moneylending castes and Muslim peasants must be situated in the post-conquest agrarian transformation. Colonialism and imperialism were integrally implicated in caste and class formation. The changing context entailed a shift towards land revenue paid in cash, the institutionalization of individual alienable property rights, commercialization of agriculture, and colonial reification of caste in property and productive relations. With rising prices in cash crops like wheat, those implicated in the agrarian economy benefited immensely: peasant proprietors and tenant farmers enjoyed new patterns of consumption. However, a relationship of exploitation was established between Hindu moneylending castes and Muslim peasants that was not witnessed in the pre-conquest period: Muslim peasants were severely indebted to Hindu moneylending castes, which often resulted in

³¹As a way of shorthand, I sometimes reference these caste groupings as Hindu *Bania* as they represent the majoritarian caste among Hindu commercial, trading, and moneylending castes in Punjab.

land transfers from the former to the latter.³² In conjunction with these developments, Hindu political formations came into being.

Hindu social reformist organizations such as the Brahmo Samaj (founded in 1863) and Arya Samaj (founded in 1877) came to prominence in Punjab from the late nineteenth century. The majority of Brahmo Samaj's and Arya Samaj's members were from the English educated commercial and trading castes. They worked as industrialists, merchants, clerks, moneylenders, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and civil servants. The majority of native civil servants were also from these Hindu castes, along with Hindu *Brahmins*. Hindu reformist movements developed followings in Lahore and other urban areas. Brahmo Samaj opened branches in urban areas of Rawalpindi, Multan, Amritsar, Rupar, Simla, and Dera Ghazi Khan in the two decades after its founding. They also extended proselytizing to rural areas. However, Hindu reformism in Punjab resonated mostly to the interests of Hindu commercial and trading castes and never gained an organic relationship among Hindu agrarian communities due to class antagonisms with merchant interests.³³

The increasing opportunities in the colonial economy made available to Hindu commercial and trading castes gave them the means and desire for English education. The ideology of the Arya Samaj, which challenged Hindu orthodoxy, gave expression to the concerns of Punjabi Hindus studying in English colleges in Lahore in the late nineteenth century. It addressed their alienation and desires in finding in Hinduism accommodation with modernization (Jones 1976). Brahmo

³²These dynamics are explained in more detail in Chapter 2.

³³Pandey's account of Hindu reformism in eastern United Province and western Bihar shows how Hindu merchants castes were at the forefront of Hindu reformism but it also included agrarian landowning castes (Pandey 1983).

Samaj was a similar organization that sought a compromise between liberal rationalism and Hinduism by making a call for a return to “Upanishadic rationalism”. Hindu reformist organizations promoted English education at a time when sectors of the Muslim community made calls against western education as it was conflated with Christianity (Jones 1976).

Arya Samaj’s critique of caste allowed for merchant castes to access social mobility that western education allowed in the colonial context. Yet, Arya Samaj’s critique did not work to annihilate caste, as lower castes (e.g. *shudras*) were not privy to this form of social mobility. Colonial domination was explained as a result of the degeneration of Hinduism, which led to the fragmentation of the Hindu community. This process could be reversed by reviving an imagined Hindu past. Arya Samaj both reacted against Christian missionaries and were influenced by them: of particular influence was the Christian’s use of the printing press for publishing religious pamphlets and street preaching. The Brahmo Samaj called for social reform in the Hindu community, some of which included accepting widow re-marriage, communal meals, and inter-caste marriage. While Arya Samaj did not officially become part of the campaign against cow slaughtering, its founder Swami Dayanand Saraswati helped found and organize the Society for the Protection of the Cow and individual members joined the movement (Jones 1976). The movement against cow slaughtering was a campaign that was part of their anti-Muslim politics and a means for asserting Hindu supremacy.

There were two main factions within the Arya Samaj. The so-called “College” faction was less devotional, more secular, and saw Hindus first as a political community rather than a religious one. This section used Arya Samaj for politically mobilizing the Hindu community. They joined the Indian National Congress when their interests coincided with them, as it did with the mutual opposition to the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900, which favoured rural landowners over

Hindu moneylending castes. This group emphasized *swadeshi* (self-help), which was expressed in terms of independent educational institutions, businesses, and industries. A second faction put more emphasis on religious and devotional aspects. They called for a new man and a new society through religious practice and social reform (e.g. widow remarriage, women access to higher education) (Jones 1976). After anti-government protests organized by the more political faction of Arya Samaj in 1907 led to the deportation of two of its leaders – Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh – many members distanced themselves from these anti-colonial actions, emphasized the non-political character of the movement, and worked to re-establish a cooperative relationship with the colonial state (Jones 1976).

As Hindu commercial, moneylending, and trading castes increasingly felt marginalized from the Indian National Congress after the 1907 protests, they formed a Hindu nationalist and political organization, the Punjab Hindu Sabha, to defend the rights of the Hindu nation in Punjab especially as Muslim nationalists formed the All-India Muslim League and competed for privileges with the colonial state. Members of the Punjab Hindu Sabha felt that Congress's form of nationalism was too secular as it tried to appeal to the interests of the Muslim community at the expense of Hindus. However, besides organizing a couple of annual conferences, the Punjab Hindu Sabha was unable to unite the Hindu community for political action nor bring social change in its favour (Jones 1976).

A set of riots in our period of study can be attributed to Hindu contestation over the Muslim practice of cow slaughtering. This was more than a movement for the protection of cows, which is considered a sacred animal in Hinduism. Rather, the cow became a proxy for politically mobilizing a fragmented Hindu community and asserting their dominance among other native religious communities in public spaces.

Colonial laws regulated the location of slaughtering and sale of beef to be outside of religiously mixed populations and was not to be exposed for sale. While slaughterhouses were located outside the city center of Multan, cooked beef was sold by Muslims in restaurants near the city's bazaar. Butchers were allowed by authorities to transport beef to restaurants as long as it was covered when going through the central bazaar. The sale of beef was never a significant issue for Hindus in the city prior to these riots.

It is unknown whether the attack on the Muslim butcher was premeditated, however, Hindu lawyers and shopkeepers were mobilizing their constituency through anti-Muslim actions months before. After a Muslim butcher was claimed to have displayed raw beef in the walled city, Hindus elected a *sarpanch* (leader) and a *panchayat* (assembly) of twelve individuals to organize agitations against the sale of cooked beef in the city center in April 1881. The *sarpanch* attempted to shame Hindus to participate in their campaign by claiming that those who did not support their petition were not authentic Hindus (Punjab Government 1881, 787). Months before the riot, petitions concerned about the sale of uncooked beef in the city were sent to the District Commissioner. However, slaughterhouses were located outside the city walls and restaurants inside sold cooked beef. Muslim restaurants as a rule did not expose meat so as to satisfy regulations and to not cause offense to Hindus, but they did buy raw meat from butchers who transported meat into the bazaar. The Hindu *panchayat* attempted to break the Muslim monopoly over the butchery business by petitioning to sell mutton in the city through *jhatka*, i.e. the Hindu ritual of slaughtering sheep that was distinct from Islamic methods.³⁴ Despite not having received permission, they went ahead and opened *jhatka* shops. Muslim leaders responded by

³⁴The colonial state regulated (at least in Multan) that only Muslims were allowed to be butchers and sell raw meat.

organizing Muslim sweepers not to collect “night soil” from Hindu residences, thus creating fear in the Hindu community over a potential epidemic (Roseberry 1987).³⁵ The administration found this latter petition as problematic given it was a means to incite hostility with Muslims. When legal means had been exhausted in asserting Hindu supremacy in public spaces, extra-legal tactics were employed. On September 19th, the night before the riot, the Hindu *panchayat* made calls among Hindu shopkeepers to close their shops in the bazaar the next day (Punjab Government 1881, 794). On the morning of the 20th, when Hindus assaulted the Muslim butcher they claimed that he was intentionally displaying raw meat in the walled city (Roseberry 1987).

The organizational capacity of the Hindu community reflected recent caste and class transformations after conquest. The class relations of Hindu *Bania* provided them with greater access to new modes of communication and organization. In Multan, native lawyers were majority Hindu and thus they knew the process for litigating and making petitions to the state. *The Tribune* was a native newspaper that had tended to be supportive of the Hindu reformist organization *Brahmo Samaj*. Two *Brahmo Samaj* members were charged with inciting the riot as they had translated anti-beef letters and telegraphs into English for submitting to authorities. *The Tribune* defended these two individuals. There was no further evidence showing the direct involvement of Hindu revivalist organizations (Roseberry 1987), but the issue of cow protection did not emerge from a vacuum. Hindu reformism was advancing the campaign of cow protection as a means for achieving their goal of Hindu supremacy and Muslim subjugation through the re-organization of social space along a notion of an imagined Hindu past.

³⁵Night soil was the term used to describe human feces collected at night from cesspools. In colonial India, this work was limited to shudras and those of lower caste.

The District Commissioner of Multan gave a contradictory description of Muslim rioters, as both organized (“prepared”) and spontaneous (“turbulent fanatics”):

Although the Hindus may have been the aggressors, both sides were almost equally prepared for a disturbance. The closing of the shops of the Hindus was no doubt the note of preparation for this disturbance, and when the outbreak came it found the Muhammadans collected, or ready to collect, in crowds of turbulent fanatics (Punjab Government 1881, 802).

However, the District Commissioner overestimated the extent of Muslim conscious organization leading the riots. Where Hindus were making new claims on inter-religious spatial practices (e.g. cow slaughtering and religious processions), Muslims responded as a collectivity in defense of norms they previously enjoyed through much limited forms of organizing. There was no premeditated planning nor any equivalent Muslim *panchayat*. A few months prior to the riots, Muslims, including religious leaders, met in a mosque to make a petition against the opening of *jhatka* shops, which they found threatening to their monopoly over the sale of meat. Police on duty said that a mob formed among Muslims in bye-lanes in response to the attack on the butcher. On the day of the riots, it was only after the burning and destruction of two mosques by Hindus that Muslims organized the raiding of a Hindu temple. Upper caste Muslims led one hundred Muslim sweepers to damage Hindu shrines (Roseberry 1987; Punjab Government 1881).

The campaign against cow slaughter was a means towards forming a Hindu collectivity, but such a grouping was internally uneven. Even in the Rohtak riots of 1889, the leading element was represented by the Hindu commercial and moneylending castes. But, indebted Hindu peasants were coerced by Hindu moneylenders to participate in the campaigns against Muslims (Government of Punjab 1890).

The Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak District argued that mobilization against cow slaughtering was a result of a branch of Arya Samaj opening in the town of Rohtak. The campaign against cow slaughtering became an important basis for developing their organizational base. Arya Samaj had a strong following among the *Bania* caste in Rohtak town. These *Bania* organized a *hartal* by closing their shops in Rohtak town, but this brought hardship not only to Muslim agrarian classes but also non-*Bania* Hindus as well. The *Bania* were able to coerce those indebted Hindus, such as *Jat* peasants, in their debt to participate in anti-Muslim campaigns. Yet, those Hindu peasants who were not indebted to politicized *Bania* did not join the movement (Government of Punjab 1890, 192).

Hindu reformism was a political formation led by Hindu merchant and moneylending castes. They coerced non-*Bania* Hindu into participating, either through religious shaming or threatening their debtors to mobilize. Their campaign against cow slaughtering was used to mobilize Hindus as a political force and as part of an anti-Muslim project. The campaign was a means for the relative control over public spaces. The attempt to diminish Muslim public presence had the objective of materially producing an imagined Hindu India into the present. Hindu reformism operated within a colonial framework of reified notions of caste and religion. Yet, they attempted to re-organize the existing colonial social hierarchy through struggles on everyday aspects like use of public spaces.

3.3 Communal Violence or Grain Riot?

In February and March of 1915, a “jacquerie”³⁶ spread across southwestern Punjab (O’Dwyer 1925, 211). Muslim *zamindars*, tenant farmers, and landless labouring castes responded to the extreme high price of food by rioting against Hindu *Bania*, who had taken advantage of the relative scarcity by increasing the price of grain. This was the product of a war economy that prioritized the export of grain for feeding troops on the western front. The war led to more forceful imperialist articulations of caste, class, and inter-religious relations. On the one hand, Muslim *zamindars* from so-called *martial castes* benefited from military postings and land grants. But on the other hand, the war economy showed how *Bania* controlled the subsistence of agrarian classes by controlling prices and the supply of food. Rioting by agrarian Muslims against Hindu *Bania* was a tactic to take relative control over subsistence and land.

Tensions between agrarian and trading classes were further compounded because social difference was organized through religious and caste categories: landlords, tenant farmers and landless labourers were majority Muslim and merchants were Hindu. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, in Multan district, the *Arora* caste was the largest Hindu caste and were involved in trading, shopkeeping, and moneylending (MacLagan 1902). The community was also referred to as *kirar* or *karar*, which means “coward”, which gives a sense of how other caste groupings viewed them. Contemporary proverbs indicate the common sense among agrarian castes regarding Hindu trading castes:

³⁶While jacquerie has come to refer to peasant uprisings in general, named after the 1358 French peasant rebellion, it was also the term used by the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab to describe the 1915 grain riots.

Bhuke Karar wahian pharole. (If a *karar* is hard up, he turns over his account books (to fish up forgotten debts).)

Kan, Karar, kutte da, visah na kija sutte da. (A crow, a *karar* and a dog should not be trusted even if asleep.) (Maclagan 1902, 127).

When the *Jat* is prosperous he shuts up the path (by ploughing it up): when the *Kirar* (moneylender) is prosperous he shuts up the *Jat* (Ibbetson 1916, 109).

The *Banya* with his sacred thread, his strict Hinduism, and his twice-born standing, looks down on the *Jat* as a *Sudra*. But the *Jat* looks down upon the *Banya* as a cowardly spiritless money-grubber, and society in general agrees with the *Jat* (Ibbetson 1916, 103).

He who has a *Banya* for a friend is not in want of an enemy.

First beat a *Banya*, then a thief (Ibbetson 1916, 242).

A colonial ethnographic study of Punjabi castes in the 1880s described the *Aroras* as “active and enterprising, industrious and thrifty [...] a cowardly, secretive, acquisitive race, very necessary and useful it may be in their places, but possessed of few manly qualities, and both despised and envied by the great Musalman tribes of Bannu [western Punjab]” (Ibbetson 1916, 251). I mention this quote not as a statement of truth, but to give an example of colonial perception of Hindu moneylending castes, which is most likely mediated by British alliances with large rural landowners. Colonial knowledge regarded the *Bania* as lacking in masculinity: their weak physical built is contrasted with that of cultivating classes like the *Jat* who are considered handsome, virile, and strong (Ibbetson 1916). The same study describes the *Bania* as serving a necessary social function in agrarian life as well as being honest in their trade (Ibbetson 1916). In one incident, a colonial official speaking to a tenant-at-will in Jhung district described the cultivator’s tribesmen in Gujrat district as thieves – a reference to cattle-theft – but the tenant rebuked that here the one who was the real thief was the *Kirar* (Punjab Government 1884, 68). The association of the Hindu trading caste with a hidden practice of thievery was a commentary about the exploitative character of their moneylending and merchant activities.

In Multan district, by the turn of the nineteenth century, 74% of land was held by Muslims, while 26% by Hindus that were mostly from the *Karar* caste. Hindus as landowners was a new

phenomenon in Multan district as they acquired land through alienation from indebted peasants. Such land transfers were more frequent from the 1880s as land under mortgage was on the rise. The amount of mortgaged land doubled from the 1873-80 to 1896-7 settlement assessments (MacLagan 1902), and this trend continued into the early twentieth century. Interest rate on loans in 1901 was estimated at 25%. In contrast, government loans were set at 6.25%, but these required regular and punctual payments that generally deterred peasants. Tensions were augmented by Hindu merchant caste control over grain.

Since World War I had begun in July of 1914, the price of wheat in Punjab was on the rise. In Amritsar, the price of wheat over the previous 10 years ranged from 8 *seers* per rupee to 20 *seers* per rupee.³⁷ The last time the price was at 8 *seers* in December 1907 some parts of Punjab were declared as having famine conditions (Acland 1918). On December 23, 1914, the official price of wheat in Lahore was at 7.5 *seers* per rupee, by January 15th it was 7 *seers*, and by mid-February it was at 6.25 *seers*. The situation was quite dire for peasant and labour communities. Two thousand workers from the North-Western Railway workshop marched to the Government House in Lahore on February 13, 1915, to present a petition to the Lieutenant Governor to address the high price of wheat. The demonstration ended when the railway workers were able to meet with the Private Secretary (Civil and Military Gazette 1915, 6).

Towards the end of January 1915, the police were becoming increasingly worried about social unrest as a result of high grain prices. In Muzaffargarh, difficulty in obtaining food by the poorer classes was leading them to crimes against property, particularly the theft of grain (Punjab

³⁷1 seer is about 1 kg, and wheat was priced in terms of how much weight in seers could be bought per rupee. Less seers per rupee implies a higher price.

Government 1915, 82). In the beginning of February, in Jhelum the price of wheat had gone up to 6.5 *seers* per rupees, this was despite having had good rains and harvest in that locality. The Jhelum district police was concerned that unless action was done to address the price that it could lead to unrest (Punjab Government 1915, 133). Rumors were circulating across the province to explain the high prices. Some of the explanations included: demand of wheat down country, purchases by the government to feed troops on field service, and speculative hoarding by Hindu moneylender castes (Punjab Government 1915, 133). In various districts, the colonial administration opened “cheap shops” for the sale of more affordable grain. By mid-February, merchants and the wealthy of Amritsar began putting in measures to protect their homes from potential thieves, including the purchase of arms (Punjab Government 1915, 151).

The colonial administration enacted special ordinances that gave them powers to appropriate wheat for the purpose of supplying the war. The growing common sentiment was that the government should prohibit the export of wheat (Punjab Government 1915, 170–177). Native newspapers called upon the government to prohibit the export of wheat and set a minimum price for local retail (Civil and Military Gazette 1915, 9). Exports had already been restricted to 78,000 tons on December 28, 1914, for a period of three months as means to limit the increase in prices (Acland 1918, 2). By February 26, 1915, the Government of India intervened further and temporarily prohibited the export of wheat and wheat flour by private enterprises, allowing the colonial government to have total regulation of exports and protecting local prices from international market fluctuations (Civil and Military Gazette 1915, 4). The regulation of exports didn’t entirely control food prices as *Bania* refused to sell wheat at cheaper rates when they had benefited earlier from high prices (Punjab Government 1915, 184). The *Bania* hoarded grain as a means of speculation and incurring a higher profit. This had severe consequences for *zamindar*,

tenant farmers, and labour to maintain subsistence as they were dependent on *Bania* for their supply of food. In Jhang, such purchases would be made through credit which was being given at high rates or not at all. The Jhang district police sensed that the situation was becoming quite critical.

Petty looting of grain shops began in Garh Maharaj in Jhang district by January. Hindu shopkeepers and *Bania* closed their shops and went to nearby towns in the advance of a plague epidemic. Given the strain of high food prices, on January 18, three grain shops were broken into and looted. Subsequently other shops were broken into on February 6 and 11. This was followed by grain riots on February 20 in nearby Ahmadpur on a larger scale. Shopkeepers and merchants had similarly closed shops in Ahmadpur due to the plague epidemic. Such grain riots expanded across southwestern Punjab (Civil and Military Gazette 1915, 3). From February 22 to March 20, *zamindars*, tenant farmers, and *kamin*³⁸ organized as bands for raiding merchant shops in Jhang, Multan, and Muzaffargarh districts. Beating drums and displaying banners, they looted or burnt the shops of *Banias*. In some cases, loot was carried off on horses and donkeys. They stole grain and burned the debt account books. *Banias* tried to resist and in some instances killed bandits, but for the most part they were overwhelmed by superior numbers of the raiding bandits. The Punjab Hindu Sabha inquired into the riot and reported injury against Hindus and especially cited Muslim men raping Hindu women (Sohan, Fakir, and Bahadur Chand 1915, 49).

Rumors were circulating in British India about the status of the war. According to police intelligence, false rumors were spreading among the masses that the German and Turkish armies

³⁸*Kamins* or so-called “menial castes” were engaged in a range of labouring activities, as leather workers, sweepers, butchers, potters, weavers, ironsmiths, boatmen, bards, barbers, carpenters, oil men, and as agricultural workers.

were approaching India. The Lieutenant Governor of Punjab at the time, Michael O'Dwyer, claimed that these rumours were initiated by "seditious newspapers", which were possibly references to the publications of the Ghadar Party (O'Dwyer 1925, 210). These so-called "submissive" peasants started an uprising because they thought that the colonial state had retreated in the face of the approaching German and Turkish army. The Assistant Superintendent of Police in Muzaffargarh reported that bandits said they were subjects of the German Emperor and that British Raj no longer existed. In Jhuggiwala, two hundred bandits announced they were subjects of the German Emperor and had been given permission to loot (Sohan, Fakir, and Bahadur Chand 1915, 47). Two of the peasant leaders dressed as the Kaiser and the Crown Prince (O'Dwyer 1925, 211).

The military was brought into these rural areas and repression quelled the movement. Four thousand were arrested and faced special tribunals. About four hundred of those were convicted and placed in a concentration camp in the Multan district (O'Dwyer 1925; Sohan, Fakir, and Bahadur Chand 1915). Further, a punitive police force was stationed in this region for one year to prevent another uprising from occurring.

The repression of this movement was facilitated by the recent enactment in March of the Defense of India Act of 1915, whose premise was that special war-time legislation was needed to suppress internal dissent and for cracking down on emerging radical anticolonial movements that were rising from Bengal to Punjab. It was inspired by the Defense of the Realm Act of 1914 enacted in England days after that country officially entered the war.

The war context provided an opportunity for Muslim agrarian classes to take relative control over subsistence and thus attempt to reorganize caste relations. The war created a context whereby Muslim agrarian classes could avoid colonial state repression as many regiments were

fighting in Europe. The British colonial government argued that the peasant rising was able to become widespread without a corresponding response of state violence because of the region being in the hinterlands from the provincial headquarters. Given the war context it was difficult to organize a regiment of troops to patrol and march through the extensive areas and draft sufficient extra police to intimidate the *jacquerie* into passivity (Civil and Military Gazette 1915, 3). These conditions put increased strain on the colonial regime's capacity to quickly put down a disturbance of this magnitude. As mentioned above, rumors were circulating of an impending victory of German and Turkish military forces against the British. This led many Muslim peasants to see this as a moment for avoiding British repression in response to their violent recuperation of grain and destruction of debt logs held by Hindu *Bania*, and thus potentially turning around caste, class, and inter-religious relations.

If the riots did not include a central organizing structure, what explains that there were widespread grain riots across southwestern Punjab? And, why didn't high prices translate into riots in central Punjab. I suggest two principal reasons. First, the grain riot as a political tactic in one locality became a model for collective action in an imperial space with increasing homogeneity of social experiences. Grain riots began in Garh Maharaj in Jhang district and were followed by riots in nearby localities. They expanded much beyond into *tehsils* in Jhang, Muzaffargarh, and Multan districts. All these areas had shared experiences of high food prices given integration into the international grain market. In what started as an isolated incident of collective action in Garh Maraj, the riot as a model for protest influenced other agrarian communities in nearby *tehsils* for resistance against *Bania* control over subsistence. This suggests that when communities rioted it was a tactical decision under a dynamic context that was evaluated and involved intellectual work, rather than being purely spontaneous. The grain

riot was also a known form of protest among peasants against *Bania* control over wheat grain and land property. For example, the Isakhel riots of 1893 had similar dynamics of indebted Muslim landowning and landless labour castes raiding the homes and shops of Hindu *Bania* as well as burning debt books. Colonial officials at the time claimed that the burning of debt books was a tactic toward relieving an oppressive debt (Petty-Fitzmaurice 1893; Government of Punjab 1894).

Second, riots were more likely in zones with concentrations of indebted peasant Muslims. Whereas the strain of high food prices was felt in central Punjab districts, they didn't translate into riots. While agrarian zones of central Punjab had a majority Muslim population, there was a significant population of agrarian Sikhs and Hindus. In southwestern Punjab, agrarian classes were overwhelmingly majority Muslim. The effect in southwestern Punjab was that Muslim agrarian classes experienced exploitation with moneylenders as religious difference and were responding to the Hindu *Bania*'s exploitation and resentment against their anti-Muslim project.

The conclusion of an extensive study by the Punjab Hindu Sabha of the grain riots on the Hindu community in southwestern Punjab was that they were anti-Hindu in character and unrelated to grain scarcity. However, a more accurate assessment is that Muslim agrarian classes organized an anti-*Bania* riot that had much to do with grain scarcity, even more it had to do with an opportunity to take relative control over subsistence and land. The report published by the Punjab Hindu Sabha gave evidence of the Muslim (rather than agrarian) and anti-Hindu (rather than anti-*Bania*) character of the riots. For example, they claimed that Muslims placed red flags over their houses, so the bandits would know which houses not to target (Sohan, Fakir, and Bahadur Chand 1915, 2). Further they cite that in addition to the burning of shops and homes, Hindu temples and holy scriptures were vandalized or burnt (Sohan, Fakir, and Bahadur Chand

1915). Yet, the Muslim as a political collectivity was formed in reaction to the shared experience of exploitation by Hindu *Bania* and a history of anti-Muslim racism through campaigns such as cow protection. Landowners and tenant farmers as majority Muslim experienced exploitation through religious and caste difference. Muslims as a political force were mobilized through the collective action of the grain riot against Hindu *Bania*. It is also important to consider that an alliance among *zamindar*, tenant farmers, and *kamin* was an unequal one, given caste and class relations. Landowners had a different relationship to credit as compared to landless labour. Though, all experienced subsistence vulnerability at times of high food prices. Besides the majority sharing a common religion, an alliance had probably more to do with common enmity towards the *Bania* and debt relations. Whereas the Punjab Hindu Sabha described the riots as anti-Hindu by representing the particular experiences of violence experienced by Hindu *Bania* as the generalized experience of the “Hindu”, they ignored the experience of other Hindu castes, including those few that were peasants.

Conclusions

Hindu-Muslim riots in late nineteenth and early twentieth century had a complex character that must not be simply characterized as expressions of trans-historical rivalries and spontaneous violence among Hindus and Muslims. Nor, can we describe collectivities of “Muslims” or “Hindus” in naturalized terms, rather historical processes and strategic decisions went into organizing collective actions that divided people into Muslims and Hindus. On the one hand, Hindu moneylending castes used the riot as a tactic for reorganizing rights over public space. This was part of a strategy for relative Hindu supremacy and thus reorganizing social hierarchies. On the other hand, Muslim agrarian classes used the riot as a means of taking relative control over their subsistence and land against the Hindu *Bania*, while also responding to the aggressive

character of the Hindu *Bania* in their anti-Muslim campaigns. Both were tactics for rearticulating caste, class, and religion.

Frantz Fanon gives further insights on the question of spontaneity in colonial context (Fanon 2004). Fanon found potential in the spontaneous anticolonial uprisings among the rural masses. However, he argued that such movements would fail unless they went beyond localized and semi-organized forms of resistance. Fanon felt they needed to be expressed at the national scale in order to challenge colonial rule. Fanon's discussion is insightful about the potential tensions between rural spontaneity and urban nationalist movements. In dialectical fashion, he sees spontaneity and nationalism as mutually enriching moments, with the nationalist movement learning from the masses and turning abstract claims into grounded and revolutionary ones. While the general tendency was for urban nationalists to treat the masses in patriarchal terms by dismissing their knowledge and their struggles, Fanon saw the transformation of rural spontaneity into national liberation struggles not only as a quantitative scaling up but as a qualitative transformation where previous political claims were translated to the national scale. He was writing about anticolonial rebellions, not inter-communal struggles, but his point about the interface between localized "spontaneity" and nationalist organized movements remains relevant to our context.

Communal riots had the potential to become translated into radical anticolonial politics by organically integrating popular discontents or to be appropriated for reactionary nationalist politics. The first possibility provides the subject of the next chapter on the Ghadar Party. The second possibility is the focus of chapter six on the Pakistan movement. There, I examine how the Muslim League was able to mobilize a fragmented and differentiated Muslim population to

its cause of Pakistan in the 1940s in part by building upon popular antagonisms with Hindu *Bania* and Hindu nationalist political formations.

4. Repressing anticolonialism and forming civil society: The case of the Ghadar Party, 1913-1915

When Britain entered the war in the summer of 1914, Kartar Singh, an eighteen-year-old militant with the Ghadar Party branch in San Francisco, along with other Party members immediately made preparations to return to Punjab to raise a rebellion. One estimate was that about 8,000 *ghadaris* from across North America, East Asia, and other locations returned to Punjab over the next two years to wage an anticolonial insurrection (Ramnath 2011).

When they arrived in Punjab they were divided into *jathas* or small bands, with many organizing series of *dacoities* (gang-based robberies) as a means of financing their anticolonial rebellion. Kartar Singh, who led one *jatha*, reprimanded Dilip Singh for suggesting robbing a relative just because he had disagreements with him. Kartar emphasized that their mission was not to engage in personal revenge, but rather was to overthrow British colonialism. Kehar Singh, another returned emigrant, suggested robbing a rich man's house in his village, Sahnewal, in Ludhiana district. Once there, the band had someone watching the police station while others went inside the house of their target. They didn't find much loot in the house. When one *dacoit* was about to sexually abuse a female inhabitant, Kartar's second-in-command threatened to shoot the *dacoit* if he continued.

The next target for a *dacoit* was a few days later at Mansurian village in the same district. There they targeted a Hindu moneylender. Kartar and Dilip remained on guard outside, while the other *dacoits* looted inside. While some villagers started gathering out of curiosity outside the house, Kartar explained to the villagers that they shouldn't worry as they were collecting money to attack the British. When the *dacoits* opened one of the safes, land deeds and debt logs were

burned, a common practice among peasants to protest against exploitative debt relations. Boxes of gold and silver ornaments and coins were taken. When a retired high-ranking officer of the British India Army from the neighbouring village arrived, he led an attack by firing on the *dacoits*. The *ghadari* militants responded by throwing ink-bombs, leaving a cloud of smoke and a path for their getaway (Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 98–100). Kartar would also have an important role in convincing troops in the Ferozepur cantonment to join the Ghadar Party in a mutiny. However, the British foiled the Ghadar Party plans through significant repression enabled by the Defence of India Act of 1915. This included the arrest of Kartar Singh. Kartar was sentenced to death and hanged at the age of nineteen years old in Central Jail of Lahore in November 1915. He is fondly remembered today among Ghadar Party sympathizers for going to the gallows with his head up high.

The government used the draconian Defense of India Act of 1915 to arrest, prosecute, imprison, and execute many members of the Ghadar Party. The Act was legislated as a direct response to the threat of growing radical anticolonialism that was posed by the Ghadar Party. The repressive measures of the Act were justified by the British as a means for maintaining imperial security during a time of war. However, the laws were extended subsequent to the end of the war through the Rowlatt Act, which was also known as The Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919. While the government was producing the judicial mechanisms for repressing radical anticolonial movements, it also produced spaces for limited political participation – i.e. civil society – through the Government of India Act of 1919. This chapter examines the connection between these two initiatives: the incremental democratization and modernization of imperial rule and the repression of radical anticolonialism. I conceptualize this contradiction of colonial state practices as a form of “false decolonization” and “passive revolution”. To better understand

the hegemonic struggle between radical anticolonialism and the colonial state, I employ Gramsci's semi-metaphorical concept of "translation", which implies both literal translation and a political practice of transforming existing struggles.

Gramsci is relevant to this study especially in how his inquiry into the unification of Italy provides insights for analyzing how various social and political forces were mobilized to produce a national-popular collective will. This chapter would not be the first attempt at translating Gramsci for the study of the Ghadar Party; Harish Puri brought Gramscian concepts to work in his own analysis of the party (Puri 1993). Puri makes use of Gramsci to examine the role of spontaneity and organization, and traditional and organic intellectuals. Concepts such as spontaneity and organization in the framework of Puri are treated as dichotomies, whereas Gramsci saw them in a dynamic relationship to one another.

This chapter is organized into five parts. The first part outlines Gramsci's concept of "translation". Second, I provide a background on the Ghadar Party. I use the conflict between peasant debtors and moneylender creditors as an entry point into how attempts were made at appropriation or transformation of existing conflicts by radical anticolonialism and the colonial state, which are the subject of the third and fifth sections respectively of this chapter. The fourth part examines repression by the colonial state.

4.1 On Translation

Gramsci's concept of "translation" provides a framework for uncovering the transformation of socio-political struggles in a hegemonic moment. Gramsci used the Italian word *tradurre*, which means linguistic "translation", but also "to express", "to interpret", "to transfer", "to summon". *Tradurre's* etymological root is the Latin *tradere*, which means to "hand over", and is shared

with “traitor” and “tradition” (Ives 2004a). This etymology unveils how translation entails a dialectical relationship between change and continuity, revolution and restoration, that is to say how meaning is transformed while maintaining elements from an earlier moment (Ives 2004b, 101).

Gramsci believed in the possibility of translation across time and space, but this was never a simple process of transposition from the source to target language. Gramsci used the word “translation” for teasing out what could be learned from the experience of the Russian Revolution in Italy. He recognized that a process of selective betrayal and faithfulness was required in transferring the experience of the Russian Revolution into the geography of Italy, especially given differences in state-society relations and the organization of rule. Gramsci wrote about how in Tsarist Russia “the state was everything”, such that a strategy of a “war of maneuver” made sense (Gramsci 1971, 238). Whereas in Western Europe and in Italy, Gramsci saw a greater role for the “war of position” given how there was a more developed relationship between state and civil society.

Translating revolution across time-space was open to producing something of a passive character, that is to say being a transformation from above rather than below. This was Gramsci’s conclusion in examining how the French Revolution was taken up by the movement for Italian unification (*Risorgimento*) in the mid-nineteenth century. Gramsci discussed how one Giuseppe Ferrari was “was incapable of ‘translating’ what was French into something Italian, and hence his very ‘acuteness’ became an element of confusion, stimulated new sects and little schools, but did not impinge on the real movement” (Gramsci 1971, 65). The passive quality of the Italian *Risorgimento* was the consequence of mis-translating ideas developed in an international order characterized by uneven development (Morton 2007, 68–69). Ideas of social

revolution born in an advanced capitalist country became disfigured when mechanically translated to the peripheries of capital. For Gramsci, the idea of passive revolution also denoted a condition where transformations occurred without an organic basis, that is they came from an external influence or were imposed from above at a moment when the necessary objective and subjective conditions were not fertile.

In a literal sense, translation for Gramsci entailed a process of transformation or revolution of the target language. As a political practice, he considered the work of organic intellectuals as involving the process of “active translation”, transforming language and social practices, producing new social practices based on existing ones, and producing a new political subject from the material of social life (Ives 2004b). Said differently, translation as a political project is not just a process about introducing from outside ideas and forms of social relations, but is a process of organizing and bringing coherency to the spontaneous activities of subaltern classes.

The appeal to spontaneity made by Gramsci is expressed well by Fanon who saw there existing “a time-lag, or a difference of rhythm” (Fanon 2001, 85) between leaders of liberal nationalist movements and subaltern classes. In addition, we can find within spontaneity a form of political action that responds to the experience of alienation and the desires of subaltern groups. Fanon gives the example of how the question of subsistence can take central importance to subaltern classes but is ignored by liberal nationalists:

The people, on the other hand [compared to the native liberal nationalist intellectual], take their stand from the start on the broad and inclusive positions of bread and the land: how can we obtain the land, and bread to eat? And this obstinate point of view of the masses, which may seem shrunken and limited, is in the end the most worthwhile and the most efficient mode of procedure (Fanon 2001, 50).

Fanon outlines how the “geography of hunger” (Fanon 2001, 96) is another marker of the “Manichean world” (Fanon 2001, 41) of colonialism and imperialism. Spaces are defined

between the colonizer and colonized, between the stuffed and starved. However, as James Scott points out, hunger and exploitation do not necessarily translate into outright rebellion. And when working communities do resist, it may consist of “everyday forms of resistance”, such as theft, banditry, or murder (Scott 1976). In moments of subsistence insecurity, the target of resistance is a strategic calculation and in relation to subaltern consciousness of the geography of hunger – whether the perception of the source of hunger is due to the merchant, the colonial state, or empire. Yet, there is always the possibility of re-configuring the target and content of political struggles. Scott’s work provides evidence of everyday forms of peasant resistance in colonial Burma and Vietnam being translated into anticolonialism under different types of organizing – peasant, communist, and millenarian (Scott 1976).

A central inquiry for Gramsci, as well as Fanon, was how to develop a national-popular collective will among a fragmented and dominated population. The development of this unity required “translating” the common sense and the spontaneous movements of the subaltern classes to develop a collective will (Lo Piparo 2010). Gramsci envisioned a national-popular being developed as a hegemonic project through a process of unification. Yet, this was not meant to dissolve heterogeneity entailed in creativity and the fragmented and spontaneous feelings, thoughts, actions, and desires of the subaltern groups. Rather, he was concerned about differences that were based on exclusion and exploitation (Sotiris 2017). Gramsci saw the role of the communist party as working to uncover difference and bring coherence to the social formation through mutual transformation.

The Ghadar Party attempted to develop a popular collective will by translating the fragmented feelings of alienation, desires, and daily struggles among the peasantry into an anticolonial

movement. I examine here how the Ghadar Party translated peasant struggles against moneylenders into an anticolonial popular collective will.

4.2 The Ghadar Party

The Ghadar Party is situated within the second phase of anticolonialism in the Indian subcontinent, after colonial consolidation across the sub-continent in the early 19th century. The first wave of anticolonial organizing began with the mutiny of 1857. The second included mobilizations against the partition of Bengal and in Punjab protests in 1907 over water rates and paternalistic colonial state regulations. While the latter protests had some articulations of anticolonialism, it was with the arrival of the Ghadar Party in the early 1910s that Punjab was introduced to a radical anticolonial praxis. The literature on the Ghadar Party situates the birth of the movement among Punjabi peasants and Indian intellectuals along the Pacific coast of North America in 1913 (Puri 1993; Bains 1962; Ramnath 2011; Josh 1977). What follows in that narrative is how after politicization in North America by understanding imperialism as the root cause of their racialized exploitation, Punjabi peasants returned to their homeland intent on waging an anticolonial mutiny among the peasantry, landless labourers, and native soldiers.

It is quite difficult to define the Ghadar Party in terms of its ideological tendency. There is ongoing debate in popular, scholarly, and colonial-era literature on the Party's political framework. There are those who claim the Ghadar Party was secular nationalist (Puri 1993; Deol 1969), others who claim that it was a specifically Sikh political formation (Tatla 2013), and still others who claimed members were "crude socialists" (Ker 1917, 100), or anarchist (Oberoi 2009). The reality is that the Ghadar Party had multiple political influences. This didn't signal a confusion on their part, but rather was demonstrative of their ideological openness that was

firmly committed to anticolonialism (Ramnath 2011). Ramnath argues that the precise ideological tendency at any given moment was based on historical-geographical contexts and the concrete interface with other movements and struggles that it entailed. So, at certain times and spaces, individuals and groups associated with the Ghadar Party also held nationalist, socialist, and Pan-Islamist ideological tendencies.

Harish Puri locates the failure of the Ghadar Party in the impossibility of interpreting their migrant political consciousness among their co-patriots in Punjab (Puri 1993). Further, he argues that their lack of organization skills led to their demise. I argue that the Ghadar Party did not encounter limits in bridging their anticolonial politics from North America to Punjab. Rather, they were quite successful in “translating” extant forms of socio-political struggles into radical anticolonialism. What is often ignored in the literature on the Ghadar Party is how they utilized and “translated” extant forms of peasant resistance, as well as the sentiments of alienation and desires of the subaltern classes. I examine here how the Ghadar Party learned from peasant banditry for building an anticolonial popular collective will. I make this point because in subsequent sections I will show how these energies were appropriated by the colonial state.

Immigration from India to USA and Canada was on the increase at the turn of the twentieth century. Following an agrarian crisis in India, waves of Punjabi peasants emigrated to the Pacific coast of North America, between California and British Columbia (Ramnath 2011). Most migrants were peasants from the eastern districts of Jullundur and Hoshiarpur, and some were from the canal colonies in western Punjab. The majority of the migrants were Sikh, followed by Muslims and Hindus. Half were ex-soldiers who had served in the British Indian Army (Puri 1993). Those who arrived in British Colombia found work as wage labourers in the burgeoning lumber industry, particularly in the sawmills around Victoria, the Lower Mainland, and in the

Fraser Valley logging towns (Rajala 2003). Some settled as far as Calgary and Edmonton working in coal mines. In the USA, migrants worked as labourers or tenant farmers in the Sacramento Valley, California, others in lumber mills in Oregon and Washington state (Puri 1993). There were also Indian students in universities in California.

The Punjabi labourers and Indian students that would form the Ghadar Party in 1913 developed their political consciousness through their shared experiences of white supremacy and class exploitation in North America. Punjabi migrants thought they held access to imperial citizenship that would enable them, as British subjects, to immigrate within the British empire, such as with Canada (Gorman 2006). Instead, they experienced racism from various fronts when there: the Asian Exclusion League organized anti-Asian riots, the British Columbia legislature enacted a law to disenfranchise people of South Asian origin in 1907, a range of laws and obstacles put in place from 1910 prevented South Asian immigration, and sawmill owners exploited South Asian workers (Puri 1993; Sohi 2014). In the United States, they were fascinated by the US struggle for independence, but were quickly disappointed by the failure of the country's claims for liberty as being far from applicable to everyone. This context provided an opportunity for South Asians to organize politically by building their own institutions to deal with questions around immigration, voting, housing, and labour. When they realized in the 1910s that their claims of imperial citizenship in Canada would not be recognized under existing structures of imperialism and racism, they mobilized behind a critique of the British Empire and Canada's implications within it. The Ghadar Party that was founded by Punjabi peasants working along Pacific coast of North America (Ramnath 2011; Puri 1993; Deol 1969), primarily mobilized the South Asian community to contribute to national liberation struggles in India, but were also connected to struggles in the US and Canada. This context was an opportunity to understand class exploitation

and racialization as being structured by imperialism. They also saw their oppression in North America as being connected to British colonialism in India.

On November 1st of 1913, months from the opening of the First World War, this motley crew of expatriate Punjabi peasants and ex-soldiers, and Indian students in California and across the Pacific Coast made a bold call for *ghadar* in launching their party organ, *The Ghadar*:

What is our name? *The Ghadar*.

In what does our work consist? In bringing about a rising....

When will this rising break out? In a few years.

Why should it break out? Because the people can no longer bear the oppression and tyranny practiced under English rule and are ready to fight and die for freedom. It is the duty of every Indian to make preparations for this rising (quoted in Ker 1917, 125).

With those words the Ghadar Party amplified their autonomous initiative, with circulations posted to India from San Francisco and Vancouver and copies sent as far afield as East Asia, and South and East Africa. They also published a regular collection of anticolonial poetry titled *Ghadar-di-Ghanj* (Echoes of Mutiny). Their network expanded to include branches in Vancouver, Portland, Panama, Berlin, Mexico City, Moscow, London, Paris, Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Lahore, Singapore, and Tokyo. With the beginning of World War I, they called upon their members to return to Punjab and start a mutiny among the soldiers of the British Indian Army. This call for an anticolonial insurrection among Indian *sepoys* “echoed” another anticolonial moment – that of the 1857 mutiny. The Ghadar Party had a major set-back when the planned uprisings in the winter of 1914-1915 were repressed and many *ghadaris* were sent to jail or killed by the colonial state in Punjab.

The Ghadar Party’s call for emancipation from the British Empire was unique for its time. It preceded Indian nationalist calls for independence: the Indian National Congress would only make a demand for complete independence in the early 1930s. And while Indian communists

made poignant critiques of imperialism, this movement only emerged subsequent to the Russian Revolution in 1917. The Ghadar Party described the British Empire as a tyranny and likened the condition of its subjects to that of slavery. They emphasized how poverty in India was as a consequence of “plundering”, the appropriation of grain and other agricultural goods by the British (quoted in Sareen 1994, 174). In addition to describing the empire in terms of economic exploitation, they also connected it to a system of racialization.

The politics of the Ghadar Party in the early 1910s was multiscalar in that their critique of imperialism was simultaneously nationalist and internationalist. The Ghadar Party’s particular form of national culture framed the Indian sub-continent as consisting of multiple nations or *qaums*. This enabled mutual solidarity among Muslim, Sikh, and Hindus. Radha D’Souza finds that this perspective was not influenced primarily by republican or secular nationalism but rather shared a genealogy with indigenous knowledge traditions, specifically the “Indic Enlightenment” (2018). The Indic Enlightenment was a South Asian intellectual and social tradition that had its own history of resistance and rebellion among Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims against exploitation and oppression that had a religious understanding of alienation and freedom.

The Ghadar Party’s international political framework was a product of imperialism’s global connectivity: they were able to communicate and coordinate their program of *ghadar* via an international postal service and marine transportation networks, and they mobilized a global Punjabi diaspora of emigrants and Indian Army soldiers who were stationed at various nodes of the British Empire from East Asia to Africa to North America. They also developed alliances with labour movements like the International Workers of the World in California and national liberation struggles in places like Ireland and Egypt (Ramnath 2011).

Several scholars have attributed the failure of the Ghadar Party to develop a successful mass struggle against the British Empire to questions of ideology and organization. Harish Puri has argued that the *ghadaris* who returned to Punjab in 1914 and 1915 failed to develop a mass movement among peasants, soldiers, and labourers because there was a separation between the consciousness of the returned migrants and the native population, which the former was unable to bridge through the dissemination of political ideology (Puri 1993).³⁹ Similar assessments are made in colonial intelligence reports that argue that the Punjabis in North America had become disconnected with the realities in Punjab (Isemonger and Slattery 1919). There were real differences in the experiences between the recently returned Punjabis and their co-patriots in Punjab, however, this was a separation that could be overcome. The assumption in Puri's analysis is that ideas cannot be translated across space and experience. The Ghadar Party's analysis of empire was precisely an acknowledgement of the ways in which political unity could be produced through anti-imperialism because of the translatability of particular experiences of exploitation and oppression across empire.

Another reason for the failure of the Ghadar Party that is commonly cited is the question of organization: the leadership lacked political organizing skills (Puri 1993, 148) and had "poor coordination" (Sarkar 1990, 147). The organizational and political tendencies of the party were the outcome of its heterogeneous social character and the social division of labour. The branches along the west coast of United States consisted of two dominant social groups: a small group of Indian university students (mostly Hindu Bengalis) and a large number of Punjabi labourers. The

³⁹Whereas my engagement with the literature on the Ghadar Party focuses on a critique of Harish Puri's text, this is only because his laudable scholarship is an often-cited work on the Party as well as its focus overlaps with the central concerns of my essay, that is questions of organization, spontaneity, and ideology.

students assisted the core leadership at the headquarters in San Francisco in developing propaganda and the party organ, *Ghadar*. The Punjabi labourers were spread across the Pacific coast and did the grunt work of developing branches, spreading propaganda, and collecting funds. The collaboration between the Bengali students and Punjabi labourers created an uneasy alliance, with internal disputes and divisions arising from class and ethnic prejudices as well as political differences. The Bengali students' idea of anticolonial revolution consisted of secret organization, military training, terrorism, and collaborating with Bengali revolutionary movements (Puri 1993). In contrast, the Punjabi labourers were more concerned with developing a mass movement through political education (Puri 1993, 154). With the arrival of World War I in the summer of 1914, most of the Bengali students were interested in organizing through the Berlin-based Indian Independence Committee, leaving most of the Ghadar organizing to the Punjabi labourers. The various branches across USA, Canada, East Asia, Latin America, and Africa had an autonomous relationship with respect to the headquarters in San Francisco. A branch could consist of a small group or band, sometimes Punjabi labourers at a common workplace like a specific mill or farm. In some cases, branches were initiated through the political education of party workers who traveled across the North American Pacific coast. In other cases, those Punjabi labourers in the diaspora who had come across the newspaper *Ghadar* and were persuaded by its cause, responded to the paper's call for developing a branch and organized autonomously from the headquarters while being inspired by the directives that came through the party organ (Puri 1993).

Puri criticized the Ghadar Party leadership for not developing a coherent and centralized organizational structure. Puri described the Ghadar Party as a "spontaneous and pre-organized movement," a quality that he associates due to the majority of the membership being peasants

and this being typical of peasant rebellions (Puri 1993, 168). There was indeed a non-hierarchical party organization, a lack of coordination, and an emphasis on spontaneity. Yet, this wasn't because of a lack of organizational skills nor a tendency among the peasantry towards spontaneity. Rather, the Ghadar Party believed in organized spontaneity and held an under-mediated notion of rebellion.

4.3 The Echo of Banditry

Ghadar was both party name and action. A British dictionary of Urdu from late nineteenth century defined it as: “perfidy, faithlessness, ingratitude; fraud, villainy; mutiny, rebellion, sedition, riot, disturbance, confusion, tumult, noise, bustle” (Platts 1884, 769). These connotations of *ghadar* as a negative and irrational form of political action were a reflection of imperial views of anticolonial resistance. The Ghadar Party's use of the term *ghadar* reflected a range of political actions including *sepoy* mutiny, riot, rebellion, and banditry, and acknowledged its translatability across time and space.

The Ghadar Party referenced the way in which their call for *ghadar* “echoed” the anticolonial mutiny of 1857 in the title of a poetry collection: *Ghadar-di-Gunj* or “Echo of Mutiny”. *Gunj* can be translated from Urdu as “echo”, “resonance”, or “roar”. Its origin is in the Sanskrit root word *gunjan*, meaning vibration or an intense and continuous resonance. Echoing the 1857 mutiny was a means of establishing their organizing within a lineage of popular anticolonial rebellions. The Ghadar Party placed the tactic of *ghadar* at the center of their political organizing. That is, they saw the necessity of armed struggle and unity among the native *sepoy* and peasantry. Just as with an audible echo, the Ghadar Party's invocation of *ghadar* consisted in a shift in time and space from the roar of 1857. The term *gunj* finds resonance with Gramsci's

“translation”, in the sense that both terms evoke the importance of learning from past struggles yet transforming modes of resistance to adapt to new contexts. *Ghadar-di-gunj* references the ways in which the Ghadar Party seized upon the practice of peasant banditry and transformed it into an anticolonial practice.

When Great Britain declared war on Germany on August 4th, 1914, the Ghadar Party took this as an opportunity to transform their general call for anticolonial mutiny and take concrete political action. Prior to this moment, Germans were regarded as sympathizers of national liberation of India, as they had a common enemy – England. Now, on the date that Great Britain entered into war, the Ghadar Party issued their own declaration of war through their party organ in an article titled *The Bugle of War*, Indians were called to support Germany in the war effort (Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 17). The Ghadar Party mobilized their branches along the Pacific Coast through their party organ and in meetings to get masses of Punjabi labourers to return to their native Punjab to ignite an insurrection. The first goal upon their return was to raise funds through *dacoity* (banditry) and to bring peasants, labourers, and *sepoys* into their fold.

The Ghadar Party’s use of *dacoity* was more than just a convenient means for raising funds. *Dacoity* was one of the ways for peasants, landlords, and agrarian labourers to struggle against the influence of rural moneylenders, dominated by the Hindu *Bania* caste. The Ghadar Party developed on this mode of resistance and gave it an anticolonial and anti-imperialist character. The potential relationship between banditry and anticolonialism can be teased out from the moment of February and March 1915, which witnessed both an attempted anticolonial mutiny by the Ghadar Party in central Punjab, and grain riots and banditry in southwestern Punjab.⁴⁰

⁴⁰For more details on the 1915 grain riots in southwestern Punjab see chapter 3.

In February of 1915, food prices and tensions were rising across the whole of the Punjab. These antagonisms developed into grain riots and dacoity in the southwest of the province from February to March of that year. Muslim *zamindars*, tenant farmers, and landless labouring castes responded to the extreme high price of food by rioting against Hindu *Bania*, who had taken advantage of the relative scarcity. Inflation was the product of a war economy that prioritized the export of grain for feeding troops on the western front. On the one hand, Muslim *zamindars* from so-called martial castes benefited from military postings and land grants. But on the other hand, the war economy showed how *Bania* practices led to vulnerability among agrarian classes. Rioting by agrarian Muslims was a tactic to take relative control over subsistence and land against Hindu *Bania*.

In the midst of those events, on the 19th of February, police raided a home in Gawal Mandi, Lahore, suspected by the government of being occupied by “Sikh revolutionaries”. One pamphlet that was found at the house read:

Dear Indians:

Just think a little, you and your country's state, what is happening to them. This country, which of all countries was considered the greatest, today is being destroyed under the feet of foreigners. Which country is the most fruitful in the world? This country's children today are dying of starvation. What is the reason for this? Why are you in this state? Does your grain in your country become less? Certainly not. Much more grain is being produced now than used to be produced, but this is all going to foreign lands. The grain produced in your country you are not allowed to eat (quoted in Punjab Government 1915, 193).

The pamphlet was the work of the Ghadar Party. It is unknown if this pamphlet, which was originally written months prior to the food price hike, was strategically reprinted given the contemporary circumstances. Yet, we know the Ghadar Party was unconnected to the grain riots in the southwest of the province because this region was not a zone of Ghadar organizing and the grain riots did not espouse explicit anticolonial politics.

Nonetheless, there are at least two ways in which the grain riots of 1915 and the Ghadar Party are similar. First, they were both distinct responses to colonialism and imperialism. The grain riots were a critique of the restriction of food entitlement, which was the outcome of imperialism and colonialism. As seen in the pamphlet above, the Ghadar Party made those connections between the imperial question and the right to subsistence. To this effect, the Ghadar Party worked to conspire against the colonial state and allied forces. In contrast, the grain riots of southwestern Punjab targeted Hindu *Bania*. The targeting of *Bania* rather than the colonial state might have been because it was a strategic choice for immediately and partially resolving the question of subsistence. The politics of the grain riots was limited to the village level. In contrast, the Ghadar Party understood the multiscalar character of the village, and therefore worked towards reorganizing the nation and empire.

Second, *ghadaris* drew upon the repertoire of peasant forms of resistance, such as *dacoity*, that were used in the grain riots of 1915. Social banditry was an extant form of class action by agrarian classes in Punjab. *Dacoity* was a frequent strategy used by agrarian landlords, landless labourers, and peasants in their struggle against *Bania* for control over agricultural surplus production. *Bania* were not just moneylenders for agrarian classes, but often dealt in commercial activity, particularly as merchants of agricultural production. Neeladri Bhattacharya explained that “the object of the merchant-moneylender was not to earn interest as such, but to control prices of purchase and sale, and ensure regular channels for the supply and disposal of commodities. Since rural traders could not always determine the price at which they sold their stocks to wholesalers in *mandis* [markets], they attempted to exercise their control at the points of supply in the village” (Bhattacharya 1985, 307). After harvest, the *Bania* came around to take the produce against the *zamindar*’s debt. The control that *Banias* held over agricultural

production was such that increases in food prices benefited them, not producers. At times of high food prices *dacoity* and petty theft increased, and frequently was directed against the *Bania*.

During years of famine there was a considerable increase in crime – *dacoity*, robbery, criminal trespass, house-breaking, and theft – as a strategy for material survival. Famines brought greater distrust upon the *Bania*. In the famines of 1868-70, grain-merchants hoarded grain, mixed wheat with lower-grade grains, and raised food prices through speculation (Punjab Central famine relief committee 1870, 9). The export of grain continued despite a food shortage. In the Hissar district, it was reported that exports in grain exceeded imports, with three-fourths of the population requiring food relief (Punjab Central famine relief committee 1870, 27). During the famines of 1877, grain riots occurred in eastern Punjab, mainly in Delhi, Amballah, Gurgaon, Karnal, and Rohtak districts (Commission 1878, I-2/35). Traders in Delhi speculated on grain prices, which drove prices up and resulted in grain riots. Instances of *dacoity* increased during the famine. In many cases *zamindars* sold grain to the *Bania* out of obligation. *Zamindars*, being hard pressed for food, organized *dacoits* to prevent the export of grain from villages to Delhi (Commission 1878, 5). Grain riots occurred in Rohtak district where *dacoits* broke into and looted 37 grain shops (Commission 1878, ix). The colonial administration frequently organized food-for-work programs during famines as a means of getting labour for public works. Authorities claimed that engaging the starving masses in such labour programs could prevent them from resorting to crime for survival (Commission 1878, I-2/19). Mike Davis termed famines as “redistributive class struggles” (Davis 2001, 20). Famines don’t just create victims, they make it easier to transfer property between classes. Whereas greater privileges were accumulated by the *Bania* in times of hunger, peasants and landlords made efforts to sabotage *Bania* holdings through theft, looting, banditry, and rioting.

The Ghadar Party translated *dacoity* into a broader political practice by giving it articulations of anti-imperialism. This was accomplished by linking questions of food insecurity to the British Empire's imperial food regime in India. The vagaries of the emerging international grain market would be a determining factor in the local price of wheat. The higher demands for a secure food supply to feed troops and citizens in England during World War I placed a greater burden on working communities in the colonies and spurred an increase in prices. The Ghadar Party articulated these dynamics in their literature in terms of the British Raj being a "drain" on India that lead to deprivation and hunger among the population. In various speeches, Ghadar Party militant Lala Har Dayal expounded how the British Empire's drain on India's surplus production was leading to famine and destitution. He called the British Empire instead the "British Vampire" (quoted in Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 14). The analysis of the Ghadar Party on the question of food developed from the theories of Indian liberal nationalist Dadabhai Naoroji, specifically his "drain theory" (Naoroji 1901). Whereas Naoroji advanced the "drain theory" to support liberal nationalist politics of reforming colonial rule, the Ghadar Party extended the argument by calling for the end of empire. *Dacoity* as reconstituted would be used for addressing both the immediate and root aspects of food insecurity.

The Ghadar Party made frequent calls for *dacoity* in their publications: "Commit *dacoities* in some places" (Waraich and Singh 2008, 292), "We should commit *dacoity* on the Government and awake the whole of the Punjab" (Waraich and Singh 2008, 292), "Plunder the treasuries" (Waraich and Singh 2008, 298), "Loot the plunders" (quoted in Tatla 2013, 8). The *ghadaris* distinguished their activities from survival-oriented forms of *dacoity*. The Ghadar Party saw *dacoity* as a way to raise funds for their revolutionary organizing, which included acquiring resources for manufacturing bombs and arms. The Ghadar Party translated "social dacoity" into

what they described as “political dacoity” for the purpose of revolutionary praxis. Elsewhere, the *ghadaris* criticized the colonizers for calling them *dacoits*, instead of revolutionaries (Ghadar Party 1919). For them the real *dacoits* were the British (Ghadar Party 1919).

Ghadari militancy appeared to the colonial state as unorganized and spontaneous in character, rather than being a decentralized, but organized spontaneous initiative. With the homecoming of *ghadaris* in the fall of 1914, party members were divided into bands of sixteen with a leader in charge, but decisions were made collectively. Nawab Khan, a *ghadari* militant, explained: “Each of us was to be in charge of a detachment of the emigrants whom we were to keep concealed in different places, ready, when the occasion arose, to unite together and carry out our campaigns. The reason for our thus distributing our force was to ensure safety for the remainder in case [the] Government succeeded in capturing one leader and his party” (quoted in Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 67). Government intelligence reports commented that there existed little organization: “The various gangs wandered about from village to village to meet other returned emigrants, organise gatherings and look for likely places in which to commit *dacoities*” (Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 68). Further, they write that “they had broken up into small parties and wandered at random among the villages near their homes, preaching sedition when they found any one to listen and looking for favourable places for dacoities” (Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 70).

The principal target for *dacoity* mentioned in Ghadar texts is the colonial state. Specifically, targets listed included cantonments, police armouries, and district treasuries where agrarian revenue tax was deposited. Attempts were also made at looting magazines at cantonments and a district treasury, but when these met with failure the focus shifted on raiding homes and shops of *Bania* (Waraich and Singh 2008, 298–299; Isemonger and Slattery 1919). The Ghadar Party nonetheless described their targeting of moneylenders as “political *dacoity*”. This shift away

from looting the colonial state reflected the practical difficulties of confronting its violent apparatuses. However, the shift of focus was also a means for the Party to include attacks on those native social forces that profited from imperialism at the peasant's expense – namely, the rural moneylender. Balwant Singh's gang made an attack on January 21, 1915, at Sheikhpur village in Kapurthala State, looting six Hindu shops. On January 24, the same gang robbed Hindu shopkeepers at the village of Alawalpur in Jullundur District (Isemonger and Slattery 1919). The gang led by Icchar Singh, a religious leader at a *gurdwara* who held anti-British sentiment after the Rikabganj Gurdwara agitations, organized meetings at his gurdwara.⁴¹ They organized a *dacoity* in Jhaner in the Maler Kotla State, where they attacked the homes of moneylenders. The *dacoits* told the villagers not to be alarmed since they needed the money to fight the colonial state. A *dacoity* was organized on a moneylender in Chabba, a village near Amritsar, on January 4th of 1915. The *ghadari* militant who suggested the target actually owed money to this moneylender, and had suggested killing the old man, but the leader of the gang said they were not in the business of killing but only wanted money. The safe of the moneylender was opened by a locksmith working with the *ghadaris*. Gold and silver were taken and the debt bonds were burned.

The Ghadar Party's translation of *dacoity* into anticolonialism was not simply a process of transforming banditry into an anticolonial practice. Rather, in the process of political organizing, the meaning of anticolonialism took new form and content. *Ghadari* militants' engagement with peasants expanded the targets of anticolonial praxis to include native social forces that supported

⁴¹The Rikabganj Gurdwara agitations began in 1913 among the Sikh community against the British Raj's demolition of a wall in a Sikh shrine in Delhi.

and benefited from imperialism and colonialism. This contrasts with the claim made by colonial officials that the Ghadar Party was out of touch with the peasantry. The colonial administration claimed that villagers, rather than being swayed by the revolutionaries, made attempts to stop the *dacoits*. They recount cases where unarmed villagers either captured or scared away the *dacoits*, this is despite the latter having guns, bombs, and swords (Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 108). British intelligence made claims that the acts of banditry actually alienated the peasantry as several cases show how they attacked the bandits. One British intelligence officer wrote:

These *dacoities*, on the Bengal model, had been recommended by the Ghadar for the collection of funds; but the authors of the scheme failed to consider the mentality of the Punjab peasant. The outrages committed, far from terrorising, only made him [the peasant] more keen to stamp out the perpetrators of them (Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 103).

Colonial accounts document that villagers made significant efforts to resist the efforts of the *ghadar dacoits*. However, it is important to note that these narratives consistently mention the role of colonial intermediaries – large landowners, senior military officers, and village officials (e.g. *zaildar*) – who were leading these efforts.

Ghadar Party militants and peasants developed in dialogue the necessity of zeroing in on the common enemy of the peasant: the village moneylender. Peasant attacks on *Bania*, however, took on the grammar of anticolonialism. The Ghadar Party's political organizing resulted in a transformation in the language of peasant resistance. In addition, peasant struggles transformed the language of the Ghadar Party.

4.4 Repressing *ghadar*

The spread of revolutionary propaganda must be checked forthwith; violent and seditious crimes must be promptly punished; the men behind them must be removed and interned; the mischievous activities of newspapers must be curtailed; and every precaution must be taken to ensure that the *poisonous* teaching of open rebellion was kept both from the army and from the people from which the army was recruited.

- Sedition Committee Report (Sedition Committee 1918, 108–109)

The colonialist analysis often described *ghadar* militancy in terms of viral metaphors: not only was their message described as “poisonous” but as “contagious” (Sedition Committee 1918). Such metaphors give the sense that believing in radical anticolonialism verges on madness and irrationality. In the colonial mind, this was the only possible explanation for why peasants, labourers, and *sepoys* joined the Ghadar Party rebellion. These metaphors allow us to understand how the colonial state thought of the Ghadar Party and how it organized its repression. For the metaphor of *ghadar* as “contagion” hints at how the colonial state feared the intimacy between radical anticolonial organizing and spontaneous action of the peasantry. The strategy used for repressing the Ghadar Party reflected such an understanding: both the Ghadar Party and spontaneous uprisings required equally harsh repression. State violence was meant to block the work of translating spontaneous revolts into radical anticolonialism. The threat of *ghadari* anticolonialism was that it expanded the scales of struggle to include the national and international.

Colonial intelligence officers explained that *ghadar* militants expected to find the Indian subcontinent in a “state of uneasiness” (Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 86) and a “state of acute unrest” (Sedition Committee 1918, 105). The argument went that the Ghadar Party thought that the conditions were ripe for revolution and prevailing discontent could be translated into a revolution (Sedition Committee 1918). It was claimed that the Punjabi peasantry was largely

illiterate and easily unsettled by rumour. Hearsay about the injustices faced by Indian soldiers in the First World War and the strength of the German army were high in circulation. Despite that, colonial administrators affirmed the “unwavering loyalty” and contentedness of the peasantry, which, they reasoned, explained why the Ghadar Party failed to take hold among the native population (Isemonger and Slaterry 1919, 86).

The Ghadar Party was said to consist of uneducated peasants who during their time outside the Indian subcontinent “had lost touch with home affairs” and had little understanding of how to actually carry out an armed revolution (Isemonger and Slaterry 1919, 93). Administrators acknowledged that despite the generalized loyalty among peasants and soldiers, “scores [were] contaminated” by the *ghadaris*, especially among the poorer classes” (Isemonger and Slaterry 1919, 93). A central reason many joined was alleged to be to religious “fanaticism” that was awakened by actions of the colonial state against their religious community. Some Muslims were said to be enraged by British involvement in the Tripoli and Balkan wars of 1911 and 1912, and by the Cawnpore mosque incident, which was interpreted as a civilizational struggle between “Cross and Crescent” (Isemonger and Slaterry 1919, 86). Sikhs were moved by British regulations on the size of the *kirpan*, anti-immigration policies in Canada, agitations about colonial interventions in the Delhi Rikabganj Gurdwara in 1914,⁴² and the *Komagata Maru* incident (Isemonger and Slaterry 1919, 86).

The *ghadar* contagion was said to have a potentially dangerous effect upon the so-called “criminal” segment of society. It was said that,

⁴²The colonial state claimed that they were only straightening a wall in the Delhi Rikabganj Gurdwara.

The lawless element in the province, always ripe for *dacoity* on Hindu, Sikh, or Muhammadan, might be counted on to some extent to join in a movement of revolution in which their part would be the plundering of wealthy persons, in the proceeds of which they were to share (Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 86).

In the winter of 1914-1915 this was not just a question of “lawless elements”, but the colonial state had real fears that those segments of the population that resorted to criminality in the contemporary context of war and famine-like food prices might become further encouraged and get into the fold of radical anticolonial movements like the Ghadar Party. Following two months of Ghadar Party activities in the province, the colonial fear of organized rebellion induced the Punjab Government to enact repressive measures like the Punjab Ordinance of 1914 in December. The Ordinance provided the mechanisms to criminalize seditious activities and included speedy trials without committal and appeal processes, and punishment for aiding and harbouring revolutionaries and for carrying arms in suspicious circumstances. While these measures punished seditious activities, they also targeted offenses against property that were unconnected to sedition and revolution. Colonial officers perceived the “danger of organized attacks on property on a large scale” (Sedition Committee 1918, 106) that resulted from a combination of high food prices, war, and anticolonial propaganda.

In March 1915, substantive aspects of the Punjab Ordinance were extended to the whole of British India through the Defence of India Act. When the colonial fear of non-seditious large-scale destruction against property became reality in February and March of 1915 with the grain riots in southwestern Punjab, the provisions in the Defence of India Act were employed to suppress the movement. The military was brought in and the show of force itself quelled the grain riots. Four thousand peasants were arrested and faced special tribunals. About four hundred of those were convicted and placed in a concentration camp in the Multan district (O’Dwyer 1925; Sohan, Fakir, and Bahadur Chand 1915). A punitive police force was stationed in this

region for one year to prevent another revolt. While the grain riots were not seditious and were considered a “general contagion of lawlessness” (Sedition Committee 1918, 109), the colonial state nonetheless viewed them as a threat that had the potential of turning into anticolonialism.

The Ghadar Party’s failure had less to do with losing touch with the reality in the colonies, then with the repression the party faced, as well as the violence and restrictions that the colonial state imposed on the general population. This was accomplished through a variety of mechanisms. First, restrictions on mobility. The Ingress into India Ordinance was passed on September 5, 1914, regulated movement in order to protect “public safety”; restrictions could be placed on entry or mobility within the subcontinent if passage was granted (Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 53). The Ingress into India Ordinance was first used on the return of the *Komagata Maru*, which carried Indian migrants who were refused entry into Canada but had been radicalized by *ghadaris* en route to India. A colonial official wrote that “it was evident from their penniless condition and raw temper this crowd of three hundred emigrants would constitute a serious menace to public tranquility if permitted to land in Calcutta and left to find their way to the Punjab unassisted” (Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 53). A special train was provided to escort the returned emigrants to Punjab. They were to be detained at Ludhiana for processing. Upon entry to the port, there was a violent confrontation when the police and army exchanged fire with the returned emigrants. The Government of India had been alerted by Canadian and Hong Kong authorities about several passenger ships bound for India that were suspected of carrying revolutionaries, such as passengers possessing seditious literature or engaging in seditious conversations during the voyage (Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 64). The Central Intelligence Office (CID) in Delhi issued a report at the end of 1914 that advised that “every Indian from America or Canada, whether labourer, artisan or student, must be regarded with the greatest

suspicion as a probable active revolutionary” (Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 47). Many Indians returning from North America who were suspected of being tied to the Ghadar Party were either interned or their mobility was restricted to their home villages. With the large numbers of returned migrants and the number of actions committed by them, the British colonial authorities had difficulty processing all returned migrants. The government decided to send all Punjabi migrants who were not taken into custody on arrival to Ludhiana for examination by Punjab CID officers. Unless they appeared to be absolutely harmless, those not arrested and interned were confined to their home villages. A general rule was that those from Canada, US, Hong Kong, Shanghai, or Manila were all given restrictions. Limitations on mobility were further entrenched in the Defence of India Act of 1915, which empowered “civil or military authority to prohibit the entry or residence in any area of a person suspected to be acting in a manner prejudicial to the public safety, or to direct the residence of such person in a specified area” (Governor General of India 1916, 14).

Second, seditious discourse was criminalized. *The Ghadar* was said to have first arrived by mail in India on December 7, 1913. It was quickly proscribed and intercepted in January 1914 by the postmaster general under the Sea Customs Act. The periodical was mailed to civilians and soldiers. Its content included discussions about social injustices in British India, described anticolonial struggles past and present, and made calls for mutiny and rebellion. The Defence of India Act criminalized telling of “rumours” or what officials described as the “spread of false reports or reports likely to cause disaffection or alarm” (Governor General of India 1916, 14). However, the codification of discourse as “rumour” or as “false reports” was never an impartial process, but was a means of suppressing speech that was deemed critical of colonial rule. Those returning emigrants who were heard engaging in “seditious talk” while on a ship to India were

reported and most likely faced internment or mobility restrictions upon landing in British India (Isemonger and Slattery 1919).

Several methods were used to overcome censorship, including placing small newspaper clippings in envelopes, or dispatching the mail via Manila. In some cases, people re-wrote the newspaper by hand as a way to convey the ideas of the Ghadar Party (Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 18). Given that the postal system monitored and censored the mail, some *ghadaris* used cypher codes in their correspondence to each other (Waraich and Singh 2008, 238).

Third, the repression of the Ghadar Party was assisted by loyalist factions among the native population. The cooperation of Sikh gentry in those districts with heavy emigrant populations was secured during a meeting at Government House, Lahore, on February 27, 1915. The Sikh Advisory Council advised interning all returned emigrants and subjecting them to speedy trials. This practice was later codified in the Defence of India Act of 1915. The council also promised to report on suspicious activities and anyone known to be involved in the Ghadar Party (Isemonger and Slattery 1919, 65–66).

Fourth, these repressive laws targeted not only those directly involved in radical anticolonialism. They could also be used to punish entire communities for activities that might be deemed as related or leading to anticolonialism. The Punjab Ordinance of 1914 penalized villagers who were thought to be assisting or harbouring anticolonial activists (Sedition Committee 1918). As we have seen above, anti-sedition laws were used to severely repress communities involved in non-political *dacoity*, that is, a tactic to survive the “geography of hunger” (Fanon 2001, 96).

The colonial state did not only resort to violence for building hegemony. It was engaged in deepening the relationship between a civil society and the state in order to produce consent. This

was accomplished by introducing aspects of liberal democracy, while giving support to their intermediates – large landowners.

4.5 Restorative Modernization

Neglecting, or worse still despising, so-called “spontaneous” movements, i.e. failing to give them a conscious leadership or to raise them to a higher plane by inserting them into politics, may often have extremely serious consequences. It is almost always the case that a “spontaneous” movement of the subaltern classes is accompanied by a reactionary movement of the right-wing of the dominant class, for concomitant reasons. An economic crisis, for instance, engenders on the one hand discontent among the subaltern classes and spontaneous mass movements, and on the other conspiracies among the reactionary groups, who take advantage of the objective weakening of the government in order to attempt coups d’état. Among the effective causes of the coups must be included the failure of the responsible groups to give any conscious leadership to the spontaneous revolts or to make them into a positive political factor (Gramsci 1971, 199).

Gramsci was explaining how Italian fascism, as a form of passive revolution, emerged in a moment of failed translations of spontaneous worker actions. His insights can be brought to bear on explaining how the Ghadar Party’s inability to direct peasant discontent around debt and food entitlement towards anticolonialism provided the objective conditions for the colonial state and native landlords to consolidate their power. Alongside repressing radical anticolonial tendencies through the Defence of India Act of 1915 and the The Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919 (or Rowlatt Act), the colonial state created spaces for limited political participation through the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1918 and the Government of India Act of 1919. Those reforms were part of the colonial initiative for the “devolution” of political power to native social forces. This was an attempt at giving the semblance of modernizing rule through the extension of civil society, but the rules of the game were set to allow only loyal social forces like large landowners to win. Such is the story of the rise of the Punjab National Unionist Party (PNUP) in Punjab.

From the early 1920s until the beginning of 1947, the Unionist Party, was not only the leading political party of big landlords in Punjab, but also the dominant political party in the province. The party was loyal to their colonial masters while calling for reforms in the interests of big landlords. The Unionist Party emerged following the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1918, which provided the framework for giving natives increased participation in select aspects of provincial governance, as in the ministry of agriculture, health, and education. Yet elections were biased towards colonial intermediaries: landlords. The Punjab Council was formed in 1921 as a governing body with 71 elected members with religiously separate electorates, with allocations of 50 seats for Muslims, 15 for Sikhs, and the remaining for Hindus and other communities. The franchise was biased towards those with property and income. Fazli Husain – a Muslim lawyer who represented big landlords in western Punjab – was elected to the Punjab Council and formed the Rural Bloc, which commanded the allegiance of all the elected Muslim members and was later re-named the Rural Party. Husain reconstituted the Rural Party in 1923 as the Punjab National Unionist Party along with Chhotu Ram. Ram was a lawyer of the Hindu *Jat* caste from Haryana who organized Hindu landlords in eastern Punjab. With a friend, he established the *Jat Gazette* in 1916 as a means to politically represent Hindu *Jat* landlords. Ram formed the Zamindara League in the 1920s which served as a front organization of the PNUP for mobilizing landlords in central and eastern Punjab (Verma 1981).

The PNUP's manifesto described the defense of the Land Alienation Act of 1900 as part of their basis of unity. The Land Alienation Act provided large and small landowners protections from land transfers to moneylenders arising from indebtedness to the latter. PNUP consolidated its support among landlords, peasants, and landless agricultural workers through their shared antagonisms with moneylending castes. However, the PNUP represented the interests of large

landowners and did little to address questions of caste inequality, imperial exploitation, and landlessness. By enabling native political parties, the colonial state did not introduce substantive democracy, especially since franchise was limited to those with large property holdings.

The colonial state produced a more sophisticated relationship with civil society through the introduction of the Government of India Act of 1919. Here, I do not understand civil society as conceptualized in liberal theories that treat it as a sphere outside of the state and as a trans-historical entity. Rather, I develop from Gramsci's critique of civil society that frames it as a historical socio-political formation that emerges with the modernization of the state and formation of liberal and parliamentary forms of government. Gramsci described the state (or political society) in a dialectical relationship with civil society. He famously distinguished between the state in the "West" and "East", where the former was characterized by a more sophisticated elaboration between the state and civil society, while in the latter the state was considered everything (Gramsci 1971). The East-West distinction was not a literal one, but rather Gramsci used geographical metaphors for differentiating between tendencies in actually existing state forms. The colonial state in India was closer to the "Eastern"-type, where civil society was not significantly developed and where coercive aspect of the state was more dominant than producing consent. The colonial state's struggle against radical anticolonial movements like the Ghadar Party was not only a war of maneuver but also a war of position. The second aspect included repression as a means for preventing the educative aspects of anticolonial projects, but also included initiatives of state modernization. This specifically entailed the development of state-sponsored spaces for political participation that were nominal in character. Rather than providing liberation to native society from above, modernization via devolution was a hegemonic project or passive revolution. These transformations encouraged political

interventions at the provincial scale over those favoured by the Ghadar Party: the national and the international.

State modernization was not only a moment of passive revolution, but also falsely decolonizing. The colonial state claimed that the devolution of powers was part of a gradual process for decolonization. Yet, given the nominal aspects of how these electoral reforms returned sovereignty to the oppressed and exploited in colonial society, it was false in character. The initiative to modernize the colonial state by introducing electoral reforms and limited participation in governance was a means of maintaining British hegemony in the Indian subcontinent. In the context of Punjab, this included consolidating rural society under the leadership of large landowners through shared antagonisms with moneylenders. The conditions for such an appropriation was made possible by the Ghadar Party's failure at translating peasant struggles against moneylenders into anticolonialism.

Conclusion

On the one hand, the Ghadar Party's anticolonial politics were multiscale. For instance, while the Ghadar Party's praxis demonstrates for reorganizing the relationship between the household, nation, and world. First, rather than treating food insecurity as a problem that originates at the household or village scale, the Party traced the contours of hunger to global dynamics (the imperialist appropriation of agricultural products), local ones (moneylender control over grain), as well as being mediated by the colonial state. Second, the peasant household was a relational entity, immanently connected to the moneylender's household. This was clearly demonstrated in *dacoit* actions where peasant bandits forced themselves into the homes of moneylenders as acts of transformative redistribution. This included the burning of debt logs, the retrieving of grain,

and the appropriation of money for their anticolonial struggle. Third, while the Ghadar Party didn't explicitly espouse a feminist agenda, there were internal tensions between some *ghadari dacoits* who saw political mobilization as an opportunity to violate native women and others who considered male violence as counter to their emancipatory politics. Fourth, while the Ghadar Party framed their anticolonialism as a critique of the imperial theft of domestic grain, its struggles were implicitly about recuperating control over subject people's social reproduction. Fifth, the formation of a nation and an anti-imperial international order were means towards ensuring sovereignty over their bodies, homes, and villages.

The Party's praxis also showed how they went beyond colonial conceptions of native bodies. Their militant actions and popular education strategies attempted to construct a multi-*quam* national culture. Such a political subject challenged the colonial confinement of native bodies and went beyond a narrow framework of caste and religious affiliation.

On the other hand, the repression of the Ghadar Party provoked structural transformations in the colonial state that attempted to rescale native politics. The British undertook initiatives for state modernization, which entailed producing a more sophisticated relationship between the state and an emerging civil society. These initiatives combined coercion and consent: repressing radical anticolonialism on the one hand and opening legitimate spaces of political participation on the other. Repression included tactics to block the Ghadar Party's work of translation, that is the transformation of peasant struggles with moneylenders into radical anticolonialism. On the reformist side, the colonial state allowed elections and made it possible for native political parties to participate in provincial state bureaucracies. The objective was to develop a leadership of large landowners among rural classes. In doing so, the colonial state appropriated peasant struggles with moneylenders. The Government of India Act of 1919 did not found civil society

as such in India, but it contributed to its increasingly sophisticated relationship with the state. Despite these developments, state coercion remained the dominant modality of rule. These reforms were meant to direct native politics from treating problems such as food insecurity as a function of imperialist food regimes, or to a lack of national sovereignty to approaching agricultural questions as a problem of policy and provincial-level political participation. These structural transformations in the colonial state were aspects of a moment of passive revolution and false decolonization.

The Ghadar Party similarly went through a period of transformation in the post-war period as party members regrouped after the repression of 1915 and members were released from prison. While the Ghadar Party combined elements of spontaneity and organization, the emphasis was on under-mediated forms of rebellion, where organizational form was not as important. By reflecting on the reasons for their failures and translating the experience of the Russian Revolution, *ghadaris* began placing more emphasis on political education for building a mass movement. The Ghadar Party was to be re-born on various political fronts, such as the Kirti Kisan Party in the late 1920s. Now the historical point of reference was 1917, not 1857; Moscow, not Delhi; the united front, not mutiny.

5. The multiscalar politics of revolution and restoration: The communist united front, 1927-33

On Tuesday, October 30, 1928, a procession of over ten thousand demonstrators arrived at the Lahore Railway Station, where the seven members of the Simon Commission met local administrators and native elites. The Simon Commission – also known as the Indian Statutory Committee – consisted of seven British members of Parliament who were sent to India in 1928 to evaluate constitutional changes made at the end of the 1910s and assess necessary constitutional reforms. The crowd shouted “Simon, Go Back!” and carried black flags with a range of slogans: “Simon, Go Back!”, “We want complete independence!”, “An alien government is a curse; so long as it exists famines will continue in India” (Punjab Government 1928, n186). In making their demands, the demonstrators highlighted how empire was not a fixed and stable entity, that there were other ways of organizing society that could be won in the process of struggle. The colonial state responded by sending in a police force to violently shut down the protest. Both the forces of revolution and restoration worked towards the reorganizing of scales, from the corporal to the planetary.

The campaign against the Simon Commission was a self-described “united front”. The united front was an emerging political practice based in debates in the Communist International (Comintern) for building a broad alliance for short-term goals, but also with the underlying objective of strengthening a proletarian communist movement. The formula outlined by the Comintern in the struggle against colonialism was for the native working class and peasantry to build alliances with the national bourgeoisie in a struggle for national liberation. However, the actual translation of the united front into practice could take a range of possibilities.

The demonstration outside the Lahore Railway Station was the condensation of differentiated politics and held multiple scalar claims. While the protesters were united in their boycott of the Simon Commission, they did not make homogeneous claims over the local, the national, and international. As this united front brought together multiple spatial relations, there were tensions and contradictions among the various social and political forces. There were two dominant positions on national sovereignty, those making claims for dominion status and others calling for complete independence. The latter included a marginal tendency led by communists to shift the movement toward an anti-imperialist politics. Groups such as the Kirti Kisan Party (KKP - Worker and Peasant Party) and the Naujawan Bharat Sabha (NBS - Young India Society) called for a united front that brought together all anti-imperialist political forces, mobilizing workers and peasants, but also collaborating with bourgeois nationalist organizations like the Indian National Congress (INC). The Naujawan Bharat Sabha was formed in March 1926 to mobilize students and teachers in the colleges of Lahore for the national liberation struggle (Punjab Government 1928, 203; Josh 1976, 13).⁴³ The Kirti Kisan Party developed as an offshoot of the Ghadar Party in the wake of the failure of the attempted insurrection of 1914-1915 and under the influence of the Russian Revolution.

By 1929, signs of dissolution could be seen in the united front. Its possibilities and contradictions could be witnessed in the events of October 30. First, there was a contradiction between the anti-imperialist call for mobilizing peasants and workers, Hindus and Sikhs and Muslims, while the demonstrations outside the Lahore railway station mostly consisted of students and Hindu clerks. Second, colonial repression helped further fragment the united front. Colonial administrators

⁴³Ram Chandra, a founding member of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, traces its founding to 1924 among students and teachers at National College, Lahore (see Chandra 2007).

made protests illegal and used force to put down the demonstration in Lahore. Police seriously injured anticolonial Hindu nationalist Lajpat Rai, who died on November 17 as a result of *lathi* charges by the police during the protest.

Whereas many historians have described this period as a moment of nationalist renewal led by the Indian National Congress, Pakistani nationalists see here a brief moment of Hindu-Muslim unity as well as the parting of ways between the Muslim League and Congress (Qureshi 1969). Left historians have emphasized the anti-imperialist tendencies. In his memoir, Sohan Singh Josh, a communist leader in the Kirti Kisan Party and the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, described the year of 1928 as “full of political activities against British imperialism in India” (Josh 1991, 129). With the combination of the Simon Commission, the Public Safety Bill prohibiting British communists’ entry into India, and the Trade Disputes Bill that criminalized work stoppages, a “united struggle gave rise to a great mass upsurge which swept the country from one end to the other” (Josh 1976, 129). Sumit Sarkar draws similar conclusions: “With the announcement of the all-white Simon Commission in November 1927, the forces of renewal began to coalesce leading towards a new great wave of anti-imperialist struggle” (Sarkar 1990, 253). These divergent analyses – the movement as either a moment of Hindu-Muslim unity or as an anti-imperialist workers struggle – reflect the range of tendencies that existed within the united front in this period, including bourgeois liberal nationalism, Muslim nationalism, and communist internationalism. What is left out of these assessments are the tensions in the united front, and the moments of negotiation and division through which these contradictions manifested themselves.

This chapter builds upon the argument that anticolonialism attempts the reorganization of multiple scales, from the corporal to the planetary. The united front coalition advanced by the communist Kirti Kisan Party and Naujawan Bharat Sabha in partnership with left-wing elements

of the Indian National Congress showed possibilities of nationalist internationalism, socialist federalism, and secular nationalism. Yet, there were contradictions in how such politics were mobilized. Further this chapter examines the multiscalar character of colonial efforts at restoration. The colonial state worked to maintain the scale of empire by violently demarcating the limits of legitimate forms of nationalist politics in civil society. The British administration would tolerate those political forces that made claims to the nation that could be contained and absorbed into empire. However, forming communist associations was prohibited because its internationalist claims called for the annihilation of empire. So, while the British colonial state in the late 1920s and early 1930s did not entertain the transition to a postcolonial state despite a restored imperial order, there existed signs that they would only tolerate forms of nationalist politics that could be contained within empire.

The first section of this chapter develops insights from Gramsci and Fanon for inquiring into the varying scalar claims made by social and political forces in this united front. Second, I examine the ways in which the strategy of a united front was translated from the Communist International into Punjab. Third, I examine the contradictory claims on the nation made by anticolonial militants in Punjab. Fourth, I explore the tensions in anticolonial secularism as a basis for a united front. In the fifth section, I look at the multiscalar character of the colonial state's use of repression and restructuring in fragmenting the united front and as a means for maintaining the empire-state.

5.1 Further notes on scale

Gramsci and Fanon provide insights for inquiring into the scalar claims in a united front. Gramsci makes sense for such a project as his writings from the 1920s were directly influenced

by debates in the Communist International, especially the concept of the united front. His text “Some Aspects of the Southern Question” (Gramsci 1978b) used a spatialized analysis to highlight the contradictions that needed overcoming in developing a united front in Italy. However, Gramsci’s discussion on the united front in Italy dealt with building alliances between workers and peasants in the struggle against fascism. This was a different scenario than developing a front between subaltern forces and a national bourgeoisie for national liberation. Frantz Fanon was informed by debates on the united front, and gave critical reflections on its application in a colonial context through spatial and scalar sensitivity.

In examining the “Southern Question,” Gramsci saw the national question in terms of building a national-popular will in a context of socio-spatial heterogeneity and hierarchy. There existed differentiated social relations of production between northern and southern Italy, whereby the south was subordinated to the north. Subordination was cultural. Linguistic and ethnic differences were taken up by northern bourgeoisie to demonstrate the racial inferiority of the south. Gramsci envisioned building a united front among workers in the industrialized north and peasants in the agrarian south that would serve to counter the class alliance between northern industrialists and southern large landowners. Gramsci recognized that building alliances among social and political forces was never an easy process. For northern industrial workers to lead a national-popular hegemonic bloc, they were required to win the consensus of the southern peasantry. This included working against the racist conceptions of the southern peasantry’s backwardness and supposed laziness. The northern worker also retained the memory of southern peasantry acting as a counter-revolutionary force. This required removing any vestiges of corporatism and syndicalist prejudice, so as to think beyond their own craft, class, and regional particularisms. Northern workers and southern peasants had to come to think of themselves as

one class to make a legitimate claim to the nation. Gramsci's analysis pushes us to examine the spatial specificity of the united front in Punjab and the internal contradictions that played out between social and political forces located across place and scale.

Fanon understood the formation of a united front across social and spatial difference could potentially undergo permanent gestation as a "narrative of liberation" (Sekyi-Otu 1996). In Ato Sekyi-Otu's re-reading of Fanon as a Hegelian-Marxist, phenomenologist, Black radical, and anticolonial revolutionary, the latter does not make "irrevocable propositions and doctrinal statements" (Sekyi-Otu 1996, 4; Kipfer 2007). If we "read Fanon's texts as though they formed one dramatic dialectical narrative" (Sekyi-Otu 1996, 4), we discover that the militant-intellectual gives a narrative of anticolonial consciousness as unfolding and self-revising according to experience. *The Wretched of the Earth* is an abstraction of national liberation struggles in Africa, Latin America, North America, and Asia, while leaving openness upon "political judgment" on how the dialectic is to be resolved (Sekyi-Otu 1996).

Fanon asks what a "legitimate claim to a nation" is (Fanon 2004, 146). He understood national liberation as historically bringing together multiple social and political forces as well as being multiscalar. The Gramscian term of "organic" and its negative "inorganic" give a good conceptualization of how Fanon differentiated between types of unity. An example Fanon gives of an illegitimate or inorganic unity was one led by the nationalist bourgeoisie, who made formal claims for national unity and self-determination that were empty of content. Nationalism was used for mystifying inequality, social difference, and imperialism, while dominant factions make particularistic demands for their class, ethnic group, or tribe. In contrast, a politically legitimate claim to the nation is signaled by organic relationships among different social and political forces. The meeting of a variety of social and political forces that represent multiple social

relations of space does not consist in a simple conglomeration that produces the nation. Rather, their encounter results in an *aufgehoben*, an “overcoming” or “sublimation” (Hegel 1977; Kojève 1980). That is, in the transformative process of struggle, there is mutual dialogue and constitution that broadens the social and political consciousness of genuine national liberation. An organic form of national self-determination transforms the constitutive elements by both preserving and overcoming them.

Fanon stressed the political importance of distinguishing between “true decolonization” and “false decolonization” (Fanon 2002, 59). Along objective terms, false decolonization indicates scalar reorganization from an empire-state to a nation-state, where the latter would come to mediate the scales from the body to the imperium. Neil Brenner described this vertical reorganization of scales that are the outcome of political struggles as a “rescaling process” (Brenner 2001, 592). Though, Fanon helps push beyond a political economy approach to scale (Kipfer 2009). Fanon indicated that false decolonization could find its origin in an “objective dialectic,” whereby a political program is pre-determined or blindly imitated. This would produce inorganic social relations and miss the particular ways that social relations of domination and exploitation are manifested and experienced. Fanon emphasized that a necessary condition for “true decolonization” is a “dialectics of experience”, where the national liberation struggle works upon and is worked by subaltern experience, consciousness, and (to use a Gramscian term) “common sense” (Sekyi-Otu 1996, 31). This includes taking into account how subaltern consciousness experiences and conceives of scales, as well as the content of their scalar claims.

Sekyi-Otu notes that Fanon argued that at the level of “immediacy” (Fanon 2004, 5) colonial society and scales appear in terms of Aristotelean dichotomies of radical exclusion between the

colonizer and colonized, White and Black, Muslim and Christian, the European quarter and the native shanty town. The colonized desires to replace the colonizer. Rural spontaneity as an anticolonial force emerges from this immediate knowledge. Fanon outlined how anticolonial struggles of a spontaneous character can be witnessed throughout the colony. Local initiatives and actions are witnessed across multiple scales, for example in: rural space, the forest, and the urban periphery. Fanon gave a range of sites where anticolonial rescaling was happening: the family and urban neighbourhood (Fanon 1965); tribe and village (Fanon 2001); and in radio stations and hospitals (Fanon 1965). At the level of *immediacy*, the struggle may be national in scale and some degree of coordination exists among different groups, but at this stage it is a mishmash of groups rather than an integrated whole.

The urban bourgeois nationalist party had a dichotomous status with respect to subaltern movements. Fanon characterized the national bourgeoisie as being a deformed and stunted class – as they are externally determined – that acts as intermediaries for imperialism’s extractive economy and haven’t developed into a class-for-itself. They are unwilling to play “partisan-universal” role, that is to build a national-popular will that transforms and preserves its particular constituent parts (Sekyi-Otu 1996, 118). Fanon described how urban bourgeois nationalists attempted to appeal to rural masses through a “pre-determined schema” while ignoring local histories and struggles (Fanon 2004, 68). “There is no contamination of the rural movement by the urban movement. Each side evolves according to its own dialectic” (Fanon 2004, 71). Elsewhere, Fanon described how urban bourgeois nationalists reach out to the peasantry from a “formal need” for building a “united front against colonialism” (Fanon 2004, 74).

The narrative of liberation developed for Fanon when there was a dialectical meeting in the encounter among multiple spatialities and temporalities. One instance of the shift towards a

dialectical understanding emerges for Fanon when a radical faction of the urban national bourgeoisie party is repressed and makes its escape into the countryside. Here, a qualitatively different relationship developed between the rural and urban movements. There existed the mutual constitution of the peasantry and the radical intellectual bourgeois faction. The meeting of these two political forces was not a simple agglomeration or scale jumping into a nationalist struggle. Rather, rural spontaneity provided an antithesis to urban nationalism that leads to the sublimation of these movements to a “higher level”. This brought the movements away from the earlier position of anti-dialectics towards a more complex understanding of the colonial situation (Fanon 2004).

Fanon understood that the objective conditions internal to the colony had to be contextualized in relation to the metropolis as well as to international conditions (Fanon 1988, 144). Internationalist political solidarity between the colonized oppressed and the colonizer worker would not be achieved through abstract claims, but “organic links” would be achieved with respect to “internal relations” (Fanon 1988, 144). Fanon believed that national consciousness was a vehicle for an international consciousness. He was critical of certain forms of internationalist scalar claims – such as Pan-Negritude and Pan-Arabism – when they operated outside of a national framework. Fanon argued that native racialization of their claims could lead to an abstraction of culture as well as being disconnected from social reality. However, there was revolutionary potential when this cultural movement became a national culture through sublimation in dialogue with the everyday realities of subaltern classes. He pointed to forms of political solidarity and internationalism – whether among colonized subjects or between the colonized oppressed and the metropolitan exploited worker – that developed from organic relationships rather than abstract claims of sameness and solidarity (Fanon 1988).

Anticolonialism is a challenge to existing scalar configurations and their fixed appearance. Scales and inter-scalar relations are never fixed and stable, yet, political forces may attempt to maintain its “fixity” through their production and reproduction (Smith 1992). For example, nation-states put significant effort to maintain control and integrity over a bounded territorial space. Smith advanced the notion of the “fluidity” of scales by emphasizing struggles over its reorganization (Smith 1992). Lefebvre discussed studying scales in their “genesis,” “stabilization,” and “rupture” (quoted in Smith 2004). Rescaling can take on a range and combination of forms, from expansion to contraction, from fragmentation to consolidation, from transgression to re-appropriation, and through the process of forging solidarities across multiple spatial and temporal relations. Anticolonial scalar claims have taken multiple forms, such as internationalist humanism, secularism nationalism, internationalist communism, Pan-Islamism, Pan-Negritude, and regional cultural nationalism. The call for a “united front” made by the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1922 was another call for challenging capitalist and imperialist production of scale. It is a question of inquiry whether its embodiment in place lived up to its ideal of being a “partisan-universal”.

5.2 The Anticolonial United Front

The “united front” is commonly conceived as a strategy outlined in the Fourth Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) in July 1921.⁴⁴ However, there is a long history of debate

⁴⁴The Communist International is alternatively called the Third International because it was the third attempt by communists to coordinate a communist world revolution. The First International was the the International Working Men’s Association, a federation of worker organizations and unions. It was founded in London in 1864 and dissolved in 1876. While Karl Marx was not a founder, he played a leading role. The Second International was made up of socialist and labour parties from different countries. It operated from 1889 till 1916. Lenin criticized the

on the idea of a united front in communist praxis. The problem of the united front is fundamentally about who will be the leading and allied forces in social revolution. During the revolutions of 1848 to 1850, Marx and Engels propagated among the German working class the need to connect their movement with the struggle of German serfs to free themselves (James 2017). Vladimir Lenin similarly was concerned about working class alliances with the peasantry to advance the Bolshevik Revolution given that Russia was majority agrarian. For Lenin, the united front was not to be conceived as a simplistic formula to be applied across differentiated spaces, but rather as a means for thinking about the uneven character of struggles in the path towards “world revolution” (James 2017; Renault 2017). Lenin’s various writings from the 1910s on the national question indicates the importance he gave to national liberation struggles in the fight against imperialism. In addition, Lenin’s formulations of an anticolonial united front developed from his conversations with non-European anticolonial militants and his efforts to address persistent internal colonialism of Muslim communities in Russia (Renault 2017).

Before proceeding, I want to explain the importance of delving into the applicability of some of the debates unfolding in Soviet Russia. It is not the case that the united front formula outlined in the Fourth Congress was simply applied in the colonies. Rather, these debates inform conversations and negotiations that happen on the ground in Punjab. Such an application always involves a translation to the historically and geographically specific conditions underlying

Second International for its tendency towards nationalist socialism rather than taking an internationalist perspective. The Third International began in 1919 subsequent to the Russian Revolution to similarly coordinate and strategize about world revolution among communist parties and militants in different countries. It was dissolved by Stalin in 1943.

struggles. Reading into Gramsci's "Some notes on the Southern question"⁴⁵ (Gramsci 1978b) provides methodological guidelines for thinking about studying the united front in actual practice. Gramsci's text was an intervention in debates on the southern question and left organizing. The text was intended as an action to help create and shift alliances. Gramsci outlines the configurations for a new hegemony through an alliance between workers and peasants that was informed by the Comintern's united front strategy. In making this call for a worker and peasant centered alliance, Gramsci interestingly also appeals to Southern intellectuals to join the front because they consistently valued the role of the working class for social transformation. Gramsci's text shows how he thought through the Comintern's discussion of the united front and pointed to ways of broadening its contours (Del Roio 2016). Yet, even in the Comintern there were disagreements about how to conceive of the united front in relation to the national and the colonial question.

The Third Congress of the Comintern in July 1921 concluded with the call to "win the masses", which was meant to bring the majority of the working class to communism. This was elaborated months later by the Executive Committee of the Comintern into the policy of the "united front", an appeal for working with the largest range of working-class organizations, including non-communist ones, for united action against capitalism (Riddell 2011, 2). The tactic was further discussed and debated in the Fourth Congress. It was meant to be an organizing principle for building working class internationalism and a broad-based movement with working class leadership against capitalism, fascism, and colonialism. The united front policy provided a degree of autonomy for national parties as it was open to application depending on national

⁴⁵The full title of Gramsci's text is "Some notes on the Southern question and on the attitude of communists, socialists and democrats" is quite indicative of how it is a dialogue among various political forces.

conditions (Riddell 2011, 44). In European contexts where communist parties did not enjoy a large popular base, the united front was a means of gaining access to the working class operating in reformist organizations, in addition to fighting against the latter's reformist tendencies.

While the call for a "united front" was elaborated in the fourth congress of the Communist International, its application in colonial societies was informed by an earlier debate on "The National and Colonial Question" between Vladimir Lenin and M.N. Roy during the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920. Lenin was critical of Wilsonian internationalism of national self-determination as he saw it was a means for the United States to gain access to the colonies of Western European states. He also acknowledged that nationalist movements in the colonies were primarily led by the native bourgeoisie. Despite this, Lenin saw national self-determination as having potential in undermining imperialism as well as providing the conditions for communism's eventual supremacy. He recommended temporary alliances with bourgeois-nationalists while keeping the communist party and peasant and worker organizations autonomous. Lenin's appeal for supporting nationalism did not negate communist internationalism. Lenin envisioned a transitional phase of Soviet republics in a federation prior to the goal of unity of all workers across the world (Adhikari 1971; Haithcox 1963).

In contrast, Roy was skeptical of a politics of national self-determination in his debates with Lenin in the Second Congress. Roy argued that national liberation was a bourgeois class project. Roy claimed that the bourgeois nationalists had a historical tendency towards compromise with the colonial state and thus could not be trusted. Roy concluded that given that the mode of production in India was already capitalist, there would be no bourgeois revolution in the colonies that played a progressive role. Roy called for the world proletarian struggle to operate on multiple fronts and scales working towards social revolution (Adhikari 1971).

Even prior to his debates with Lenin during the Second Congress, M.N. Roy was decentering the role of the European proletariat as the harbinger of world revolution, as per Marxist orthodoxy, by giving greater weight to the role of anticolonial struggles. Part of Roy's argument rested on how the English worker made gains based on British imperial exploitation of Indian subjects (Adhikari 1971).

Lenin modified his draft *Theses on the National and Colonial Question* subsequent to his debate with Roy. The latter's intervention highlighted the need for distinguishing between various tendencies in the nationalist movements in the colonies. Lenin did not differentiate in his draft text between reformist and revolutionary currents in the nationalist movement. Lenin replaced "bourgeois-democratic" with "revolutionary-nationalist". That is to say, the communist party in the colonies should support the bourgeois national liberation struggle to the extent that they were revolutionary. Roy influenced Lenin to clarify the need for fighting against the conformist tendency among bourgeois-nationalists by highlighting their contradictions (Adhikari 1971).

Whereas Roy re-iterated his critique of a politics of national self-determination in the Third Congress of the Comintern (Riddell 2015, 1181–1187), in the Fourth Congress he came to have a more open line on national liberation. Roy and other delegates worked on formulating the *Theses on the Eastern Question* developed from Lenin's *Theses on the National and Colonial Question* but now used the language of an "anti-imperialist united front". The resolution on the "Eastern Question" re-iterated supporting organizing at the scale of the nation along revolutionary lines: "the Communist International supports every national-revolutionary movement against imperialism" (Riddell 2011, 1182). Given that communist parties in the colonies and semi-colonies, it stated, are in an "embryonic" stage they "must take part in every movement that provides them with access to the masses" (Riddell 2011, 1186). This included working in

temporary alliance with revolutionary elements within bourgeois-nationalist organizations, but only on the precondition of political autonomy of peasant and working class organizations. During discussions on the Eastern Question, Roy had stated that the goal of an anti-imperialist united front “is to organise all available revolutionary forces into a great united front against imperialism” (Roy quoted in Riddell 2011, 694); however, he rejected bourgeois parties as having a leadership role within it. Nevertheless, prior to the Fourth Congress, Roy stated in discussion with other Indian communists a proposal for developing a left-wing element within the Indian National Congress that would be under the leadership of the Communist Party of India while maintaining the latter’s autonomy (Adhikari 1971). The goal of allying with bourgeois-nationalist organizations was to become the vanguard of the nationalist movement.⁴⁶

While Roy described national liberation and revolutionary class struggle as two distinct and separate movements in his formulations in the Second Congress in 1920, by 1922 he accepted the possibilities of national liberation as being part of a revolutionary class struggle. His 1922 text, *Transition in India*, claims that national liberation and class struggle operate “side by side”

⁴⁶I want to clarify some points here, as the anti-imperialist united front mentioned here might be conflated with another strategy, that of the “popular front”. The popular front was proposed by Georgi Dimitrov, the General Secretary of the Comintern, in the Seventh Congress in 1935. It was specifically formulated for developing a mass movement against the rise of fascism in Europe where previous attempts had failed. Whereas the united front in advanced industrial contexts was formulated for mobilizing working class unions and parties (communist and non-communist) for a specific goal, such as fighting fascism. In contrast, a popular front was formulated to develop a broad enough coalition – that was principally working-class, but also included anti-fascist national-bourgeois organizations – against fascism. However, the idea of an anti-imperialist united front as fleshed out in the second to fourth congresses of the Comintern made calls for creating alliances with national-revolutionary organizations for quite different reasons than outlined in the anti-fascist popular front.

(Roy 1971, 200). His text hinted at a complex relationship between these two struggles. He argued that the national liberation struggle is a class project of the native bourgeois that will result in increased contradictions between workers and the native bourgeois, thus intensifying class struggle. Further, the national bourgeoisie needed mass support for national liberation, but is only prepared to integrate the working class and peasantry on subordinate terms. He also claimed that revolutionary class struggle may take the form of a national struggle, though that would give it a different content from that advanced by bourgeois nationalists: “It [class struggle] may still have the appearance of a national struggle involving masses of the population, but fundamentally it is a social strife, the revolt of the exploited against the exploiting class, irrespective of nationality” (Roy 1971, 203).

Roy’s and Lenin’s texts on the colonial and national question point to a shared understanding of how empire and nation were not fixed, stable, pre-established territorial entities, but the outcome of historical struggle. Roy dismissed the naturalization of India as a geographical-territorial nation:

The extensive peninsula called India, is a mere [physical] geographical expression; it is very distinctly marked out from the mainland of Asia by physical barriers. But to hold that this geographical accident has been in itself sufficient to create a sense of national unity among the diverse communities inhabiting India, would be to misread the history of human evolution. To weld the numerous races and tribes, divided by language and grades of culture, into one national unity was conditional upon the development of a material force which could make such fusion possible. As long as the productive forces remain so backward that the different groups of the people can live in self-contained isolated communities, the simple accident of their happening to be situated within the limits of a certain geographical area does not suffice to make a nation out of them. It is only economic development that induces these isolated communities to come into relation with each other to satisfy their mutual needs (Roy 1971, 145–6).

Roy contended that a sense of “national unity” was impossible during the Mughal period because social relations were such that communities existed as separate productive units. The conditions for feelings of national unity were only possible when productive units were developed into an

integrated whole. On the one hand, he critiqued both imperial historiography that argued Indians were unable to produce national unity because of their racial inferiority. Roy countered that nationalist ideology was difficult to produce without control of state propaganda. On the other hand, he was critical of nationalist historiography for claiming that a “homogenous national unit” existed given supposed religious and cultural unity (Roy 1971, 147). Roy pointed out how such culturalist claims were possible because much of Indian nationalism was Hindu supremacist. He recognized that there were multiple anticolonial scalar politics beyond just that of liberal and cultural nationalism, including Pan-Islamism and communist internationalism.

The principal narrative on the development of Indian communism generally traces how anticolonialism was transformed by the Bolshevik revolution. However, M.N. Roy repeatedly argued that anticolonial struggles were already at the forefront in the conflict against imperialism and capitalism. Take for example the positive appraisal of the Akali struggle in Punjab in the Fourth Congress of the Comintern (Riddell 2011, 1183). The Akali struggle was a movement in the early 1920s to liberate Sikh *gurdwaras* (temples) from colonial control, notably the British habit of assigning loyal clerics. Roy and his colleagues working on the “Eastern Question”, conceived the Akali struggle in class terms as a fight against feudal social relations that were maintained by the colonial state. By identifying the Akali struggle as anticolonial and anti-imperialist, they were hinting at the multiscalar character of the struggle to liberate *gurdwaras*. The Akali movement demonstrated that national liberation was a struggle over the reorganization of scales, from the *gurdwara*, the nation, and empire. As a movement, Akali challenged the colonial state’s scale of control over *gurdwaras* and extended the scale of community control back to those spaces. Yet, it was not evident to all Akali militants that the liberation of *gurdwaras* was potentially a struggle against empire. Sohan Singh Josh was a leading Akali

activist who would turn to communist politics by realizing the need to “fight for the complete independence of the biggest *Gurdwara* – India” (Josh 1991, 76).

As conceptualized by delegates in the Communist International, the united front was an open concept for struggling against capitalism, colonialism, and fascism depending on the historical-geographical context and political strategic judgment. In the colonial situation, Lenin called for channeling working classes towards a struggle for national liberation in alliance with the native bourgeoisie to the extent that they were revolutionary. In contrast, Roy’s position shifted from rejecting the role of national liberation as an intermediary stage for communist politics to accepting that in a colonial context the class struggle would take the form of a national struggle while rejecting any revolutionary potential in an alliance with the native bourgeois. The tensions between various interpretations of the united front becomes clear in the Punjabi context. While Roy and others signaled the multiscalar character of radical anticolonial activism in Punjab, practical politics highlighted the difficulty in reconciling the claims on the local, national, and world.

5.3 Claims to the Nation

The campaign against the Simon Commission mobilized a range of classes (peasant, worker, petty bourgeois, and bourgeois), religious communities (Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim), communal organizations (Muslim League, Khilafat Committee, Akali movement), and a diverse range of political forces with varying ideologies (communist, socialist, liberal). The campaign represented a high moment of unity in the history of the national liberation struggles on the Indian subcontinent. This unity was based on a rejection of the Simon Commission and was manifested

in terms of coordinated actions. The campaign was a moment for multiple, sometimes conflicting, social and political forces to make claims on the nation.

The scalar claims made by forces in the united front were both homogeneous and heterogeneous. They were homogeneous to the extent that they called for the reorganization of scale by fragmenting the empire-state into nation-states. Yet, different political forces imagined the national in different ways. The national struggle could be universalizing to the extent that it transformed particularistic forces, otherwise there was the ever-present risk of splintering.

I examine here the contradictions among various universalizing claims made within the context of a national united front. Specifically, I analyze the tensions and collaborations between the national bourgeois party (Indian National Congress) and attempts by communists to shift the united front towards an anti-imperialist politics. I use the case of the campaign against the Simon Commission to tease out these tensions. First, I examine the three political tendencies in the anti-Simon Commission campaign. Then I look at the social forces mobilized in the INC-led February 3 actions. Subsequently I consider the Kirti Kisan Party's attempt to shift the united front to an anti-imperialist politics. I end with an inquiry into the October 30 actions led by the INC which included the participation of anti-imperialist groups such as the Kirti Kisan Party and Naujawan Bharat Sabha.

5.3.1 Three Tendencies in the Campaign against the Simon Commission

In November of 1927 the British government assigned the Indian Statutory Commission – more popularly known as the Simon Commission – the task of examining constitutional reforms in British India. A result of the Montague Chelmsford Reforms of 1918 was that the British government decided to review these reforms ten years later on and make necessary constitutional

changes. The committee consisted of seven British members of Parliament, including Sir John Simon as chairman. The nature of the commission brought forth a broad range of oppositional political forces across British India.

While the campaign against the Simon Commission produced a united national force with degrees of coordination among a range of social and political forces, differences existed in their specific critique of the commission, strategies for action, and their ideas of nationhood. Ghulam Ambia Khan Luhani, a communist from Bengal who worked closely with M.N. Roy, described three tendencies within the anti-Simon Commission campaigns. The first was a right-wing nationalist element that didn't contest the principle of the commission, but rather its all-white composition that included no native leaders. This perspective was represented by bourgeois and landlord sections of the Indian National Congress. Second, the nationalist center criticized the appointment of a commission by the British parliament, regardless of its composition. They called for producing and submitting their own report through a round-table conference. Proponents of this demand called for constitutional reforms, including dominion status for India. Luhani described the third tendency as that of the "unorganized left". Mass mobilization questioned the authority of the British parliament to dictate the constitution of India. The commission was seen as a violation of the right of national self-determination (Adhikari 1982, 168–174). The Worker and Peasant Party (WPP) of Bombay similarly rejected claims that the commission had the capacity to bring emancipation, rather they argued that "only by bringing into action the basic force of the nation, the dynamic action of organised workers and peasants, can alone be productive of any really valuable and vital political results" with actions including strikes and demonstrations (Adhikari 1979, 281). The WPP of Bombay called upon Congress to organize the peasantry in actions such as the non-payment of revenue taxes and building trade

unions in the transportation sector (railway, ports, steamship, motor services) so as to develop the capacity for a general strike that would block the arteries of imperialist accumulation (Adhikari 1979, 172).

In the context of Punjab, the campaign to boycott the commission brought together a broad coalition of groups, including Congress, the Khilafat Committee, Naujawan Bharat Sabha, the Lahore Student Union, Kirti Kisan Party, and the Akali movement. While the Kirti Kisan Party and Naujawan Bharat Sabha advanced an anti-imperialist critique of the commission, they were never able to develop into the dominant tendency of the movement, nor were workers and peasants mobilized into direct action. Province-wide calls for a *hartal* (strike) on February 3, 1928, principally co-organized by Congress and the Khilafat Committee ended up mobilizing mainly urban Hindu shopkeepers. In the lead-up to further actions on October 30th, a range of political forces converged without, however, turning into an anti-imperialist force.

5.3.2 February 3rd Action

A range of political organizations under the leadership of the Indian National Congress set February 3rd as a national day of action, the date of arrival of the Simon Commission. While attempts in Punjab were made to organize a range of social and political forces across different spaces, the principal actors who were mobilized were urban Hindu shopkeepers observing a *hartal*.

Urban educated Muslims were divided on whether to cooperate or fight against the Simon Commission. During the annual session of the Indian National Congress in December 1927 in Madras, a Hindu-Muslim pact was established in campaigning against the Simon Commission and giving support to Muslim claims for separate electorates. This pact was concretized through

Congress' continued alliance with the Khilafat Committee, with whom they worked together in the early 1920s during the non-cooperation movement. In the early 1920s there existed support among some Muslims for campaigning against the British dismantlement of the Khilafat in Turkey. But when Mustafa Kemal abolished the Khilafat in the republic, the demands of the Khilafat Committee lost its political relevance among its supporters. Nonetheless, the movement was still an active anticolonial political force that began making domestic rather than extra-territorial claims. When the Punjab Khilafat Committee met in Lahore on December 25, 1927, a resolution was passed to boycott the Simon Commission. Similarly, the All-India Muslim League (AIML) session in Calcutta made a resolution to boycott the Simon Commission. However, not all Muslims in Punjab agreed with such a position.

Muhammad Shafi⁴⁷ disaffiliated the Punjab Muslim League and organized his own annual session of the All-India Muslim League (AIML) in Lahore on December 31st, 1927. Shafi led the position that the British were the only guarantors for Muslim rights within the empire and as such these rights had to be achieved constitutionally.

Khilafat Committee members attending the Lahore AIML session argued for boycotting the commission. However, these Khilafat members were not registered attendees to the meeting and the police were used by the conference organizers to remove them. Subsequently, the session unanimously supported a campaign for Muslim rights by supporting the Simon Commission (Punjab Government 1928, n2a). The Khilafat Committee by January 6th of 1928 formed a

⁴⁷Muhammad Shafi (1869–1932) was a Muslim lawyer born in Lahore. He was a founding member of the All-India Muslim League in 1906 and organized the Punjab Muslim League branch in 1907.

separate Punjab Muslim League to boycott the Simon Commission (Punjab Government 1928, n6).

Various public meetings were co-organized by Congress and the Khilafat Committee across different districts of Punjab, including Lahore, Lyallpur, Gujranwala, Rohtak, Amritsar, Ambala, Hissar, Jullundur, Hissar, and Rawalpindi. Both organizations critiqued the Simon Commission and argued that a just alternative would be to have an all-parties round table for charting a new constitution. Abul Kalam Azad⁴⁸ addressed those Muslims who thought they would receive special accommodations in negotiating with the government by highlighting how from 1857 to 1912 Muslim cooperation got them nothing nor could they expect anything more. A common argument made by Congress and Khilafat speakers was that the commission was strategically organized to be deliberated when Hindu-Muslim communalism was on the rise as this was a means of the colonial state to justify that colonial rule was necessary for maintaining law and order. Therefore, Hindu-Muslim unity was a strategic counter to achieve recognition for self-government by the colonial state (Punjab Government 1928, n21). Speakers also called for a *hartal* on February 3rd. Other organizations such as the Akali Dal, the All Parties Sikh Conference, the Lahore Student Union, and Ahl-i-Hadis similarly resolved to boycott the Simon Commission and supported a *hartal* on February 3rd.

While the present-day usage of the Urdu *hartal* or *haṭ-tāl* means a workers' work stoppage or a mass political protest, this reflects contemporary political tactics. The word's etymology combines the words *hāṭ* (shop) and *tālā* (lock). A dictionary published in 1884 states the definition of *haṭ-tāl* as: "Shutting up all the shops in a market (on account of oppression, or as a

⁴⁸Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958) was a leader in the Khilafat Committee and the Indian National Congress.

passive resistance to exaction)” (Platts 1884). A poem on the mutiny of 1857 (compiled in 1879) gives a sense of its common usage: “Now anarchy doth reign, where can I fly, where can I go? The grocer [*Bania*] has staged a *haṭ-tāl*, no grain to purchase now” (Fallon 1879). Whereas Fallon translated *Bania* as a grocer, this removed the caste element of the agent of this political action. Typically, *Bania* are entitled to such actions insofar as they belong to a merchant-shopkeeper caste. The specific ways the concept was mobilized by Congress and the Khilafat Committee in the caste-inflected fashion was along this usage of *hartal*. This was a far cry, though, from the evocation made by the WPP of Bombay for a *hartal* as general strike of workers as a means of paralyzing the nodes and veins of imperialism.

On the day of action, few participated in the *hartal*. In various parts of Punjab, there was partial observance of the strike as a minority of shops remained closed for the day. In many cases, local Khilafat and Congress activists tried to convince shopkeepers on the day of action to close their shops. In urban and rural areas, those who did participate were majority Hindu shopkeepers, while most Muslims shop owners refused to shut down. The most successful mobilization was in Amritsar where 70% of shops remained closed (Punjab Government 1928). Speeches by Congress and the Khilafat Committee began at Jallianwala Bagh and were followed by a demonstration with members carrying black flags. The Kirti Kisan Party also shared the platform with Congress and Khilafat Committee. However, the Kirti group until this point had a very limited engagement in organizing against the Simon Commission, nor did they make an effort to shift the debate towards anti-imperialism. Rather, the Kirti group was busy patiently pursuing political education among peasant communities.

5.3.2 Kirti Kisan Party

By 1920, the Ghadar Party members in San Francisco realized that there was a need for renewing the party ideology and organizational form (Josh 1978; Ramnath 2011). The Russian Revolution was pivotal in this process. The shift towards Marxism more than just followed a global trend. A Marxist theoretical framework helped explain the reasons for past failures and suggested another course of action. The Ghadar Party sent Santokh Singh and Rattan Singh as representatives of the organization to the Fourth Congress of the Communist International that was held from November 5th to December 5th of 1922 as a means to assist in translating the experience of the Russian Revolution for the purposes of anticolonial organizing. While not much is known about the participation of the two delegates, the discussions in the congress would change the political direction of Santokh Singh. Especially influential was the strategy of an anti-imperialist united front. Santokh returned to India via Afghanistan but was arrested upon crossing the border and was interned in his natal village for two years given his past history of being involved in anticolonial activity with the Ghadar Party. Upon his release in 1926, he began *Kirti*, a Punjabi language, monthly that was an organ for mobilizing peasants and workers along communist lines. The Kirti group formalized into a political party, the Kirti Kisan Party, in April 1928. They were modeled after similar worker and peasant parties in other provinces. The shift towards taking the organizational form of a political party intensified the Kirti group's existing mobilization and education of peasants and workers.

Facing criminalization since the Cawnpore Conspiracy Case in 1924, communists formed organizations that could serve as open and legally legitimate fronts to avoid colonial repression.⁴⁹ In this regard, worker and peasant parties were started in Madras (1924), Bengal (1926), Bombay (1927), and Punjab (1928). Given that there wasn't a fully formed "official" or centralized communist party of India at that time, communist militants decided the precise orientations and strategies in their respective regions. Whereas the Peasant and Worker's Party in Bengal aligned with the position held by M.N. Roy by calling for working entirely outside of the Indian National Congress, which they saw as having compromised with British imperialism (Adhikari 1979, 180), the Worker and Peasant Party (WPP) of Bombay followed Lenin's line on developing a party that was politically autonomous while also working within the Indian National Congress. In contrast, the Kirti group would not work inside the INC as such but developed alliances and coordinated actions with left-wing elements in the latter.

In January of 1926, a statement was issued by the Kirti group in various native newspapers announcing their forthcoming monthly:

The journal will be the voice of Indian workers in America and Canada and will be dedicated to the sacred memory of those heroes and martyrs who awakened sleeping India... and whose ideal was regarded by our own people as well as outsiders as the dream of Alnaschar. The journal will sympathise with all the workers throughout the world... the subjugated, weak and oppressed nations and subjugated India. Bhai Hardit Singh will be the editor... and Bhai Bhag Singh Canadian and Santokh Singh American will be its joint editors (Josh 1978, II: Towards Scientific Socialism:224).

The reference to the "martyrs who awakened sleeping India" was a nod to Ghadar Party martyrs from the attempted mutiny of 1914-15. The quote highlights how the Kirti group traced their inspiration to the Ghadar Party and placed their activism as a node in a network of anticolonial

⁴⁹The colonial state arrested communist organizers in the Cawnpore Conspiracy Case for seeking violently to overthrow colonial rule.

Indians that reached as far as North America.⁵⁰ It simultaneously situated their politics in proletarian internationalism.

The first issue of the monthly (February 1926) made repeated claims upon an international scale.

The first issue associated struggles for national liberation in India as part of a worldwide movement:

The voice of the Kirti is this, that India will have to pay the same price for its freedom as other people have paid to win their freedom. This is the lesson of history. The view propagated loudly but mistakenly says that India has nothing to do with what is happening in the world. This view is quite wrong. The view of the Kirti is that we should highly evaluate the sacrifices made by the freedom fighters wherever they may be living in the world. We should not see the oppressed peoples of the world with spectacles through which the oppressors see them (Josh 1978, II: Towards Scientific Socialism:225).

The Kirti group highlighted the way in which liberal nationalist and colonial epistemology tended toward methodologically fragmenting and separating movements across states and empires. The first step toward building political solidarity across “national” difference was to recognize how their struggles faced a common enemy – i.e., imperialism – and were working together for proletarian internationalism.

Santokh’s writings in *Kirti* demonstrated how multiscalar transformation was integral for building a movement for national liberation:

The communist objective is to use all means to establish complete independence based on from [*sic.*] the democratically-elected village panchayat up to the top. Even before we establish complete freedom, we have to work for the betterment of the conditions of the peasants and workers in every possible way, and in this task it is necessary to take the assistance of all parties concerned, to arrange for the propagation of communist principles and to bring the masses round to these principles so that with the establishment of *swaraj* [self-governance or self-rule] on these principles are put into practice (Josh 1978, II: Towards Scientific Socialism:226–7).

⁵⁰While the Kirti Kisan Party and the Ghadar Party were two distinct entities, they had a complex relationship. For instance, the Ghadar Party branch in San Francisco provided financial support and recruits to the Kirti Kisan Party.

The Kirti group mobilized middle peasants through appeals to agrarian grievances. Whereas its starting point was an internationalist anti-imperialism, it translated the latter to the village scale by taking up agrarian grievances that found their roots in colonial rule. In various meetings with peasants, resolutions were passed demanding assessments of land revenue on the principles of the Income Tax Act, remission of land revenue on land irrigated by wells sunk by peasants, and the abolition of the *chaukidar* tax (Punjab Government 1928, 25). During a Kirti Kisan conference in Hoshiarpur from October 6 to 7, 1927, the sole agrarian demand was that “small-size holdings should be exempt from revenue by the government” (Josh 1991, 116). In May of 1928, the Kirti Kisan Party attempted to mobilize peasants in Lahore, Sheikpura, and Lyallpur districts around the failure of the wheat harvest in certain districts of Punjab. Peasants in these meetings called for the total remission of land revenue and agricultural water taxes (Punjab Government 1928, 94). While the Kirti group appealed to all labouring and exploited communities, these agrarian demands pointed to the limits of who was represented by these demands. The remission of land revenue appealed to middle peasants – that is a peasant who had sufficient land to meet subsistence, did not earn their living off the labour of others, but had few privileges in relation to the colonial state. This was an outcome of how the Kirti Kisan Party developed out of the network of the Akali movement, whose base was principally Sikh Jats in the *doab*⁵¹ region and central Punjab, most of whom were middle peasants. This made it difficult to expand the party to include Muslim agrarian landless labourers and tenant farmers who were the dominant labouring group in southern and western Punjab.

⁵¹*Doab* literary refers to the land between two rivers. Its usage here references the land in the Indus basin valley, where canal colonies had been built in the past decades and had subsequently significant Sikh migration.

5.3.3 The October 30 Action

Whereas the Simon Commission was an opportunity to mobilize a broad set of social and political forces, Punjabi communists in the Kirti Kisan Party and Naujawan Bharat Sabha were unable to persuade nationalists to follow their anti-imperialist position nor mobilize workers and peasants toward action. This was reflected in who was and wasn't mobilized on October 30, 1928 – the date of the last major action in the campaign against the Simon Commission. To understand why this failed to occur, we need to begin by accounting for the dominant line within the campaign, that is, the “center nationalist” position advanced by the Indian National Congress.

The “center nationalist” position argued for an all-parties conference to develop constitutional recommendations that they hoped would be recognized by the colonial state once pressured by petitions, mobilizations, and demonstrations. The outcome of the Congress-led initiative was the Nehru Report, which was released at the end of August 1928.⁵² The Nehru Report framed a constitution that included the following demands: dominion status; no state religion; universal adult suffrage; federated government with residual powers in the center; no separate electorates for minorities, but reservation of seats in provinces where Muslims are minorities and for non-Muslims in the North West Frontier province as well as reconsideration of the question of separate electorates in ten years.

Some of the most vocal criticism of the Nehru Report came from communal organizations. The Punjab Hindu Sabha slammed the report for giving too many concessions to Muslims, whom they saw as the root of communalism in India (Punjab Government 1928, n171). One such issue

⁵²The Nehru Report was named after committee chair, Motilal Nehru. Motilal was a long-time Congress leader and father of Jawaharlal Nehru.

raised by the Punjab Hindu Sabha was regarding the separation of Sindh from Bombay, which they saw as benefiting the Muslim majority at the expense of the Hindu minority. Also, the Hindu Sabha saw a contradiction between the allocation of seats for Muslims where they were minorities and the absence of such an allocation for Hindus in the Punjab. Shortly after the release of the report, the Lahore Akali Jatha⁵³ and the Lahore Sikh League co-organized a public meeting criticizing the Nehru Report as it ignored the rights of Sikhs in Punjab. They were in favour of abolishing separate electorates across India. However, as long as seats were reserved in some provinces to Muslims, they wanted Sikhs to have at least a 1/3 share in the Punjab legislature and in administrative positions. They saw Congress as a Hindu organization that made concessions to Muslims so that the latter did not side with the British. These Sikh organizations further called out the Nehru committee for demanding dominion status rather than complete independence (Punjab Government 1928, n156). In other discussions, some Sikhs feared that recommendations in the Nehru Report would lead to a Muslim Raj in Punjab. In contrast, some Muslim organizations and newspapers commented that the report didn't give sufficient protections to Muslims. For example, the newspaper *Muslim Outlook* critiqued the report for not granting separate electorates, which in consequence would make dominion status equivalent to replacing the British Raj with Hindu Raj (Punjab Government 1928, n146).

The Kirti Kisan Party and the Naujawan Bharat Sabha denounced the Nehru Report from an anti-imperialist position. Both these parties claimed that the Nehru constitution ignored the interests of peasants and workers. Kirti activists expounded how dominion status would only lead to a change in the hegemonic class while keeping the existing hierarchy, that is, a shift from a British

⁵³Akali *jathas* were bands that formed during the struggle against colonial control of *gurdwaras*.

to Indian ruling class (Punjab Government 1928, n170). NBS attacked the Nehru Report for making a call for dominion status rather than complete independence. However, their critique did not prevent these organizations and their activists from participating in Congress-led actions. This was in keeping with the anticolonial united front tactic of working with bourgeois nationalist organizations. Likewise, there were Congress figures who opposed aspects of the Nehru Report but gave support to it as a means of building unity.⁵⁴

The Nehru Report (Nehru 1975) gave recommendations that favored the interests of native and foreign capital, as well as propertied classes. The report claimed that there was very little substantial difference between dominion and independence. This was a point repeated by Congress workers who argued that – given that a self-governing dominion state had control over its army, education, and industries, while keeping an allegiance to the Crown – it would effectively be the same as independence and a stepping stone in that direction. However, the report even acknowledged that the ideal of a dominion state, implying an autonomous society with no relationship of subordination with Britain, would probably be unlikely. While the report made efforts to re-assure European capitalists that their investments and businesses would remain unaffected by a transition to dominion status, it implied that decolonization would not mean the founding of a new relationship with Europe that severed imperialist exploitation and dominance despite the semblance of self-governance. The report also went to great lengths to re-

⁵⁴Jawaharlal Nehru was a leading figure of the Congress Left who critiqued the report for not making a call for complete independence. Along with Subash Chandra Bose and Zahir Husain, Jawaharlal Nehru formed the “Independence for India League” to fight for complete independence. Sumit Sarkar described their effort as verbalism without action, see Sarkar (1990).

affirm the protection of personal and private property, thus maintaining unequal property holdings in rural and urban areas.

Subsequent to the release of the Nehru Report, Congress and Khilafat Committee workers rallied support for the Nehru Report across districts in the Punjab and for actions on the arrival date of the commission to Lahore – October 30th. Several Congress members, including Jawaharlal Nehru, were in favor of complete independence, but felt that, for the sake of building a national campaign, they would support the Nehru Report. Despite the fact that Naujawan Bharat Sabha and Kirti Kisan Party activists like Feroze-ud-Din Mansur and Kidar Nath Sehgal were critical of the Nehru Report for not including a call for complete independence, they appreciated the attempt made to bring all parties together on a common platform and cooperate with Congress in mobilizing a united front through the report and boycott actions.

Khilafat Committee branches worked within Muslim and non-Muslim communities toward building a consensus on the demands of the Nehru Report. They addressed Muslim concerns about joint electorates, which they claimed would do away with communal sentiment (Punjab Government 1928, n163h). Zafar Ali Khan, a leading organizer with the Khilafat Committee, responded to claims that the Nehru constitution would bring a Muslim Raj to Punjab. He said if that was the case then he would oppose the report as well. Yet, he argued that an Islamic Raj would prevail in that the report's intent was to have a society where people are taught equality, justice, and the oneness of God. Here, he established a contrast between an Islamic Raj and a Muslim Raj. While the former was a political system that could borrow from Islamic conceptions of social justice to govern a multi-religious community, the latter represented a form of rule with Muslim territorial hegemony (Punjab Government 1928, n175b).

Public meetings, street corner gatherings, and in at least one case, a public meeting in a mosque, were organized to gain support for the boycott. Congress members and allies called for a shopkeepers' *hartal* and a mass demonstration on the arrival of the Simon Commission in Lahore on October 30th. While this action got much support from Congress and its allies, Ram Chandra of the Kirti Kisan Party and Naujawan Bharat Sabha was critical of past Congress actions during the anti-commission campaign, such as the February 3rd *hartal*, which he saw as ineffective. Chandra spoke of the need to mobilize peasants and workers. He repeated a similar call made by the WPP of Bombay, who argued for a general strike of workers and peasants. During the Workers and Peasants Conference in Lyallpur in September 1928, Chandra advanced that if workers on the railways refused to work and peasants refused land revenue payments, the British colonial state would fall apart (Punjab Government 1928, n175f). However, these calls fell on deaf ears. Neither Congress, Kirti, or Naujawan Bharat Sabha made concrete efforts for mobilizing peasants and workers towards a general strike for the following month. In addition, those in attendance – mostly Sikh and Hindu rural landowners, and shopkeepers in the town and canal colonies – did not organize such actions themselves.

Students played an important role in mobilizing for the planned demonstrations. In a public meeting in Lahore on October 24th, Forman Christian College student Abnash Chander Bali urged his colleagues not to attend school on October 30th in order to come to the demonstration at the railway station. The Lahore Student Union held a public meeting on October 28th in Bradlaugh Hall, Lahore, to gather support for the October 30th actions (Punjab Government 1928, 187g).

On October 30th, the significant actions by the commission boycott campaign was a march to the Lahore Railway Station and rallies that morning and night. There was no significant *hartal* by

shopkeepers in Lahore. Demonstrators consisted of Hindu clerks and a religiously diverse student population. There was no mobilization of workers towards a general strike, as Ram Chandra had urged.

While the campaign against the Simon Commission showed potential as a national united front, there were contradictions in the movement. The Bengali communist, Luhani, argued that the center nationalists rejected the Simon Commission yet called for the reform of empire. This was a far cry from the left nationalists who called for the dismantling of empire. These divisions could be seen in how Punjabi communists organizing in the Kirti Kisan Party and the Naujawan Bharat Sabha critiqued the INC-led Nehru Report for calling for dominion status within the British Empire. Despite their critiques, several organizers with the Kirti Kisan Party and Naujawan Bharat Sabha supported the Nehru Report as it provided a basis for national unity. Communist collaboration with the INC did not translate into shifting the national united front leftward.

Congress's call for national unity only mystified absences and presences in the movement. The February 3rd and October 30th actions showed that the majority of those who were mobilized were Hindu shopkeepers and clerks. Meanwhile Muslim shopkeepers remained suspicious of Congress' claims to secular initiative. Whereas Sikh and Muslim communal organizations were sometimes locked in their own particularity, they still had a legitimate critique of Congress's secular nationalism as serving the purpose of Hindu supremacy.

The Kirti Kisan Party was neither able to shift Congress towards the left nor were they able to make significant gains in mobilizing peasants and workers. The Kirti group attempted to build upon the politicization that the Akali movement had developed since the early 1920s. Kirti

leaders such as Sohan Singh Josh⁵⁵ were part of a generation of Sikhs that had first developed an anticolonial consciousness through the *gurdwara* liberation movement. By translating the Akali struggle to communism, the Kirti Kisan Party's agrarian outreach became limited to satisfying the interests of middle peasant Sikh Jats in central Punjab and the *doab* region, while ignoring Muslim landless agrarian labour and tenant farmers in western and southern Punjab. The limits of this national united front had much to do with the contradictions of the politics of secular nationalism, whether liberal or communist.

5.4 Communal and Secular Nationalism

Comrades, as the festival of *moharrum* is being celebrated at present, the Workers' and Peasants' Party of Bombay deems that it is the party's duty to call on the Indian masses to maintain absolutely peaceful and fraternal relations with the other during the festival and not to react to the mischievous propaganda of communal fanatics and start cutting one another's throats. [...] Neither differences of religion nor of race, caste or creed, can divide us, we who form the one homogeneous mass of oppressed and exploited.

- *Moharrum Manifesto of the Workers' and Peasants' Party of Bombay*, June 1927 (Adhikari 1979, 174–176)

The police of Lahore found the above cited pamphlet during a raid of the home of Abdul Majid. This was part of India-wide arrests in March of 1929 of communist, trade union, and peasant leaders in what would be called the Meerut Conspiracy Case. While the extent of the pamphlet's circulation in Punjab is unknown, it reflects the secular and communist views of organizations in which Majid was involved, such as the Kirti Kisan Party and Naujawan Bharat Sabha. Majid's entry into anticolonial politics was as a "Bolshevik Muhajarin". Majid was among tens of

⁵⁵Sohan Singh Josh (1898-1982) was a former Akali militant who became the editor-in-chief of the Kirti in January 1927 while Santokh Singh was severely ill with tuberculosis. Santokh Singh passed away in May of that year at the age of 35 (Josh 1991). Josh was also an important leader at the Amritsar branch of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha from its founding in April of 1928.

thousands of Muslim youth living in British India who traveled to Afghanistan in 1920 in what was called the *hijrat* movement.⁵⁶ He later traveled to Baku with other *muhajarin* on their way to Turkey to enlist the latter's military forces in their fight against the British. The *muhajarin* in Baku were instead recruited into communism by Soviets. Majid eventually received training under M.N. Roy who deputed him to promote communist politics in India (Williamson 1934, 2–3).

In addition to becoming a labour organizer in Punjab, Majid was a leading militant in the Kirti group as well as a founding member of the Lahore-based Naujawan Bharat Sabha. As with many Bolshevik Muhajarin that became involved in the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, his Pan-Islamism gave way to secular politics. The trajectory from a Muslim anticolonialism - or similarly Sikh in the case of the Akali activists - to communism was not a dialectical movement. Punjabi Communism was not the outcome of a synthesis between religion and communism, but rather replaced the former by the latter. The secular character of Punjabi communism alienated many Muslims and Sikhs and prevented them from joining the movement. Many Sikhs and Muslims were skeptical of secular nationalism given that in the case of the Indian National Congress it appeared to conceal its particularistic aspects, namely that it was working towards Hindu supremacy.

The Naujawan Bharat Sabha took a lead in propagating anti-communalism and secularism in their anticolonial organizing. The name chosen for the group incorporated internationalist, nationalist, and vernacular sensibilities. The English translation of Naujawan Bharat Sabha is “Young India Society”, which was a reference to how the group was inspired by other youth

⁵⁶The hijrat was a Pan-Islamic movement to engage in a jihad against British India in the 1920s.

movements involved in struggles for national liberation, such as in Turkey and Ireland. Once the anticolonial character of the group came to be known among college administrators, the latter prevented the group's use of college spaces and hostel halls for meetings and conferences. From April 1927, the group was mostly inactive, but was revived and expanded beyond Lahore in April 1928 through collaboration with the Kirti group.

The NBS was an important nodal point in the anti-imperialist united front in Punjab. It principally worked to produce a cadre of student and youth who would serve to mobilize peasants and workers. Through propaganda and actions, the Naujawan militants aimed to subordinate communal, religious, and regional particularisms to a national secular engagement. According to Sohan Singh Josh, the Naujawan Bharat Sabha arose out of dissatisfaction among youth with communal politics, as well as a desire to organize along a more radical economic and political agenda. Josh described their struggle against communalism as an attack on regionalism and religion. Indeed, group rules and regulations aimed to,

a) to establish a complete independent republic of workers and peasants throughout India; b) to have nothing to do with communal bodies or other parties which persist in having separate communal representations and which disseminate communal ideas; c) to create the spirit of general toleration among the public considering religion as a matter of personal belief of men and to act upon the same fully; d) to organise workers and peasants (Josh quoted in Adhikari 1979, 292).

The anti-communalism of Naujawan Bharat Sabha faced struggle inside and outside the organization. There was constant tension, contestation, and negotiation over claims to scale.

During the founding of NBS in April 1928 in Amritsar, Bhagat Singh and Sohan Singh Josh tabled a proposal to prohibit anyone belonging to a communal or religious organization to be a member of the new organization. This proposal did not reject community and religion, but it did suggest that religion should be a private affair and the interests of communities needed to be subordinated to the interests of the nation. Here, communalist particularism was counterpoised to

nationalism and secular universalism. This call was contested by youth who belonged to communal organizations. Archival materials give contradictory accounts on what happened during the conference. Writing in the 1970s, Sohan Singh Josh described how Ahmad Din of the Khilafat Committee and Gopal Singh Qaumi of the Babbar Akalis lead the view against prohibiting youth from joining the organization. Josh claims that the anti-communal motion was passed unanimously (Josh 1991). However, police intelligence reports claim that the motion was rejected by a majority (Punjab Government 1928).

Despite these discrepancies, it is clear that anti-communalism remained an organizing principle of the NBS. Notwithstanding the fact that their secular politics alienated Muslims, many Muslims also decided to organize through the NBS. The lead organizers of the Punjab Khilafat Committee were divided on whether to support the NBS. In a Lahore meeting of the Khilafat Committee on May 6, members described the NBS' call to separate religion and politics as sacrilegious and against the spirit of Islam. Meanwhile, during a Khilafat Committee meeting in Amritsar on May 11th that took place in a mosque, Sheikh Hissam-ud-Din criticized the resolution to subordinate religion to politics, but nonetheless urged the Muslim youth to join the NBS as a means to end colonial rule. In an NBS meeting, Hissam-ud-Din clarified that the group was not irreligious and that he himself was prepared to sacrifice his life for national liberation, but would never give up on his Islamic faith in doing so (Punjab Government 1928). Various leaders of NBS kept ties to so-called communal organizations: Ahmad Din with the Ludhiana branch of Khilafat Committee and Sohan Singh Josh with the Akali movement. While the Khilafat Committee and the Akali movement were working to mobilize the Muslim and Sikh communities respectively, they also worked in solidarity across religious divisions and held anticolonial politics. This praxis points to how Naujawan Bharat Sabha's rejection of

communalism was negotiated and excluded those forms of organizations that were religiously supremacist or loyal to colonial rule.

In the same month when the Naujawan Bharat Sabha was refounded, in April 1928, the debate about religion and national liberation continued. In a public meeting in Lahore, Abdul Majid spoke on behalf of Naujawan Bharat Sabha. Many Muslims in the audience shouted protests when Majid spoke in support of the separation of religion and politics and praised Mustafa Kemal's efforts to institutionalize secularism in Turkey. Muslims in the audience questioned the degree to which Majid held onto the Islamic faith. Majid's position was a far cry from his earlier Pan-Islamic politics of the early 1920s that defended the Khilafat in light of the collapse of the Ottoman empire. However, there remained residual Pan-Islamic elements in his argument; he claimed that religious freedom was impossible in a context of colonialism and that economic and political liberation were its necessary preconditions (Punjab Government 1928, n76h). Elsewhere, Majid argued that colonial subjects were slaves who could not in effect have any possessions, including the possession of an autonomous religious subjectivity (Punjab Government 1928, n101g). However, Majid did not entertain a religiously-inflected anticolonialism, rather he believed that the dis-alienation of religion would be only possible once there was national liberation.

Communism attempted to move communal organizing and religious anticolonialism to class politics. NBS's call to subordinate religion to the household, mosque, and temple, and to find unity on class terms was an attempt to respond to the real experience of communalism. Regardless, it belied how class in the colonial context was determined not only by one's position in the social relations of production, but by the capacity of the state and colonized society to spatially confine bodies based on caste, ethnicity, and religion. It also ignored what was learned

from the Akali movement: religious temples were contested spaces, for colonial control or liberation. Colonization had not left untouched the native body, household, and temple. Although communalism was limited as it was an anti-racist racism and did not always question the colonial state, it did confront this corporal ordering and constriction. The secular nationalism propagated by communists was not a dialectical movement; it did not attempt to give new meaning to communal struggles over bodily confinement, but rather attempted to rally communities to communist class politics. Yet, as debates in the Communist International showed, the question of class and religion were not disconnected.

Participants at the Communist International had heated debates over the nature of Pan-Islamism. Lenin's critique of Pan-Islamic movements was specifically concerning its leading class forces. In *Theses on the National and Colonial Question*, Lenin wrote: "It is necessary to struggle against the Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian movements and similar currents that try to link the liberation struggle against European and American imperialism with strengthening the power of Turkish and Japanese imperialism and of the nobles, large landowners, clergy, and so forth" (Riddell 2011, 288). In contrast, in the Fourth Congress of the Comintern, Tan Malaka of the Communist Party in the Dutch Indies claimed that they had built a successful united front with Pan-Islamists through an association with Sarekat Islam, a mass political party consisting of traders and poor peasants.⁵⁷ Malaka argued that Pan-Islamism was not only a "nationalist freedom struggle" but also a struggle in solidarity with all Muslims and subjugated colonial peoples against imperialism (Riddell 2011, 263).

⁵⁷Tan Malaka claimed that the Communist Party and Sarekat Islam later split partly due to the colonial state taking advantage of Lenin's statement from the Second Congress of the Comintern as evidence how the communists wanted to destroy the Pan-Islamic movement.

The position held by M.N. Roy on religious anticolonialism is pertinent to our discussions here as it resonates with views held by Naujawan Bharat Sabha. Roy, who was Abdul Majid's mentor, implicitly treated religiously motivated anticolonialism as a form of false consciousness. He described the Pan-Islamist *hijrat* movement as a "fiasco", representing the "superficiality of religious sentiment". He argued "a close investigation [of the *hijrat* movement] showed that in spite of the religious ardour which undoubtedly existed on the surface, it was some material motive or other which actuated almost every one of these emigrants" (Roy 1971, 237–8). He claimed that it was the dream of free land promised by the Afghan Amir that motivated most to leave India. Roy viewed religious practice as a mere reflection of class relations. Yet, the *hijrat* movement showed signs that Muslim historical memory of resistance and Islamic concepts about justice and struggle could be mobilized for building anticolonialism. The communism of Roy and Naujawan Bharat Sabha was not a dialectical movement; Marxism as the antithesis of religious anticolonialism would not bring its synthesis but its replacement.

Sikhism similarly had an anticolonial capacity given the history of resistance among its community to the Mughal Empire and participation in national liberation struggles. The Kirti group produced an anti-imperialist united front by developing the already existing rural mass organizing of the Akali movement. The Kirti group encountered the Akali movement through translations, contradictions, negotiations, as well as disagreements. The group made extensive collaborations with Sikh organizations and attended religious festivals to discuss the agrarian question through an anti-imperialist perspective. The Nankana fair, a religious and political event, attracted over fifty thousand Sikh pilgrims across the Punjab, had a platform to discuss agrarian issues. Calls were made for the redistribution of taxes and improve services to the level enjoyed in urban areas. But the fair organizers did not permit the Kirti group to use the fair's

space to speak. Instead, they organized a political *diwan* nearby the fair (Punjab Government (1928), n202; n203k). Gatherings co-organized by the Kirti group and the Akali movement included discussions on the boycotting of and organizing a *hartal* of the Simon Commission, demands for land revenue on the principles of the Income Tax Act, remission of land revenue on land irrigated by wells sunk by peasants, the abolition of the *chaukidar* tax, and the purchase and distribution of land for families of Akali martyrs (Punjab Government 1928, n. 25, 85d).

Part of the project of persuading Sikh organizations about anti-imperialism included calls for nationalism replacing communalism. This was never entirely successful. During the All-Parties Sikh Conference in 1928, there were discussions about how a Hindu-Muslim pact was forged in the Madras session of annual Indian National Congress in 1927 where Muslims received support for communal rights while ignoring the communal interests of Sikhs. In response, Sohan Singh Josh argued for members of the conference to avoid communalism and instead take a nationalist approach (Punjab Government 1928, n22a). In February 1928, a political Hindu-Muslim-Sikh *diwan* was organized using the Akali press; however, the gathering attendees were predominately Sikh (Punjab Government 1928, n25). Surprisingly, some of Sohan Singh Josh's interventions were communal in nature. On April of 1928 in Amritsar, during a debate on the dalit question in a political *diwan* organized by an important organization in the Akali struggle, Sohan Singh Josh argued in favor of working towards the conversion of untouchables to Sikhism, a religion he argued that removes caste distinctions. Still, the Kirti group had difficulties persuading the Sikh community to forgo communalism and religion for the benefit of nationalism and communism. The *Kirti* group offered to finance the *Akali* and *Akali-te-Pardesi* newspapers, the principal organs of the Akali movement, as they were running at a loss. However, the Akali newspapers refused their assistance given that the Kirti group made their

financial aid conditional on the former replacing religious propaganda with communist ones (Punjab Government 1928, n115).

By building upon already existing networks of Sikh militancy in Punjab, the Kirti group was able to develop a rural mass base, but this was limited to Sikh Jats, mainly middle peasants, and in central Punjab districts and in the *doab* region. Even there it was difficult in convincing some sections of the Sikh community to forgo communalism for nationalism. The appeal to the class interests of Akali supporters made it more difficult to extend these networks to Muslim peasants and landless labourers across the province and especially in southwestern Punjab.

Punjabi communists' scalar imagination of the nation as secular form was a means to build a united front across religious difference and to counter the particularistic politics of communalism. It specifically understood secularism as relegating questions of religion to the private space. Yet, many Muslims and Sikhs were alienated by such political framings. Whereas some in the Khilafat Committee and Akali movement maintained those ties while being leaders of the Kirti Kisan Party and Naujawan Bharat Sabha, such an engagement did not lead to mutual transformation, there was no sublimation of Marxist anticolonialism with Sikh or Muslim anticolonialism. This pointed to a missed opportunity that could have avoided false forms of decolonization.

5.5 Rupture

This dream of an anti-imperialist united front eventually fell apart. On the one hand, the contradictions among different scalar claims in the united front were unable to be resolved. On the other hand, the repressive apparatus of the colonial state was strategically employed to augment differences and fragment the movement. The colonial state's strategy was to exclude

communist nationalist internationalism from the domain of civil society. For this purpose, I examine the role of the Meerut Conspiracy Case in creating divisions between different scalar claims on the nation.

The Meerut Conspiracy Case began on March 20th, 1929, when police raided the homes of communist, peasant, and trade union leaders, in Bombay, Bengal, the United Provinces, and Punjab. In total 33 people were arrested. Those from Punjab included Abdul Majid, Sohan Singh Josh, and Kedar Nath Sehgal. They were charged under section 121-A of the Indian Penal Code, which made it a crime attempts to deny the sovereignty of the King Emperor over British India. That most of those arrested were leading figures in trade unions and peasant organizations with communist politics gives the strong sense that the conspiracy case was meant to attack communist militancy across British India. The prosecution substantiated their charges by establishing links between Indian communists and the Soviet Union by way of the Communist International. Indian communists were accused of assisting a Soviet conspiracy against the King Emperor. The colonial state's Intelligence Bureau generally believed that communism in India was a Soviet conspiracy rather than an expression of native self-determination (Petrie 1958).

Sohan Singh Josh commented several decades later that the colonial state used the Meerut Conspiracy Case as a means to isolate communism from nationalism (S. S. Josh 1979; Raza 2013). The colonial state's strategy was an amalgamation of coercion and consent. Administrators in the British Raj understood the prosecution of the communists as a means to repress their organizing and convince colonized society that communism was an illegitimate form of politics. In a letter written to the prosecuting council Langford James prior to the beginning of the case, the home political department wrote:

A judicial pronouncement is required as early as possible which will enable us to deal with further manifestation of communism and to prevent [the] communist movement [from] recovering from the blow which the arrest of the leaders has dealt. We hope to be able on the result of the case to make further communist activities difficult and dangerous for those who wish to indulge in them... wanted clear pronouncement from the court these activities are illegal (quoted in S. S. Josh 1979, 80).

Further, the home political department wanted to separate communism from nationalism:

From the political point of view, it would be in advantage to be able to convince the public in general as early as possible that communism is not the kind of movement that should receive the sympathy of nationalists (quoted in S. S. Josh 1979, 80).

The Meerut Conspiracy Case was a direct attack on the united front, as its intent and effect to intensify the divisions between Indian National Congress and communists, separating scalar claims to the nation and the international. While the premise of nationalism was a challenge to the sovereignty of empire, the colonial state perceived reformist tendencies of nationalism as containable. In contrast, the revolutionary rescaling inherent in communist anti-imperialist praxis threatened the British Raj. As a response, the colonial state spread propaganda that communism was anti-nationalist – a misrepresentation of communist nationalist internationalism – as part of its strategy for isolating communism from nationalism (S. S. Josh 1979, 90).

The most persuasive way of de-legitimizing communist politics was prohibition. In the end, the colonial court made illegal associating with communist organizations, not expressing individual communist beliefs (Raza 2013). The colonial state was selectively strategic in their choice of who was – and who wasn't – arrested and tried under the Meerut Conspiracy Case in order to distinguish between legal and illegal forms of nationalism. Decades after the case, Sohan Singh Josh commented that the fact that Jawaharlal Nehru was not arrested showed how communism was being isolated from nationalism (S. S. Josh 1979, 90). There was sufficient cause to include Nehru in the group of arrestees: he was an Indian representative to the 1927 Brussels conference of the League Against Imperialism, he visited the Soviet Union soon afterwards, he subsequently

associated with the left faction of Congress, and made repeated calls for a socialist post-colonial India. Regardless of Nehru and his leftist Congress colleague's collaborations with communists, the colonial state wanted to demarcate which forms of nationalist organizations would be permitted in civil society.

The rupturing of the united front was part of the moment of decolonization as passive revolution. An important event in that moment was independence in 1947, where the colonial state supported those claims to national space that were congruent with a post-colonial imperialist inter-state system. These events are part of a connected history: the Meerut Conspiracy Case being one instance where the colonial state maneuvered to isolate anti-imperialist internationalism from nationalism.

Repression by the colonial state was not the only cause of the break-up of the united front. It was also the result of dynamics internal to the Communist International and Indian communist movements (Raza 2013). Following the rise of Stalin in Soviet Russia subsequent to the death of Lenin in 1924, the Comintern went through significant changes. The united front policy was abandoned during the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, which took place from July 17 to September 1, 1928 in Moscow. On the colonial question, the executive committee argued that the national bourgeoisie in the colonies had now crossed over to the side of counter-revolution. In the context of India, the left-wing of Congress was considered an unworthy ally as it used the language of socialism while representing the interests of propertied and professional classes. This prevented the working class from developing an autonomous politics. The Comintern recognized the advances that worker and peasant parties had accomplished in India, yet they saw these parties as becoming vehicles for petty-bourgeois interests. They emphasized the need to develop a strong centralized national communist party, given that worker and peasant

parties were not substitutes for the former. The executive committee criticized that greater efforts were made to build relationships with left-wing Congress members than developing an autonomous political organization (Adhikari 1982).

After the Meerut arrests, signs of fragmentation started to multiply. Since its founding, the Kirti group had criticized the reformist tendencies of Indian National Congress, while supporting the left-wing of the party. As early as 1931, the party began to follow the Sixth Congress of the Comintern's Colonial Thesis and broke off its alliance with the Indian National Congress (Chandra 2007, 153).

The trend toward sectarianism increased among those arrested in the Meerut Conspiracy Case. The trial set in motion transformations in communist politics in India. Communist militants came out of the trial with a rigid interpretation of Marxism-Leninism and began organizing a more centralized and hierarchical party organization (Raza 2013). The Meerut trial provided the conditions for the development of a so-called "official" communism in India. The trial allowed for communist militants from different parts of India to be together for an extended period of time and coordinate the future directions of the communist party in India (see Raza 2013). While it gave many of these communist militants the opportunity to actually read Marxist literature, this steered many towards Moscow's reading of Marxism rather than generating an autonomous analysis. This led to the hardening of ideological lines and a disavowal of developing alliances with bourgeois-nationalists or communal organizations.⁵⁸

⁵⁸The Comintern would shift its position temporarily back to one of a united front policy in the mid-1930s that encouraged Indian communist militants to infiltrate Congress.

The Meerut trial lasted until 1933. While many of the accused were set free, some had their prison terms extended. Sohan Singh Josh was released from prison in September 1933, at which time the Kirti group was divided by internal factions and disagreements. Josh no longer worked in alliance with the Akali movement nor the Kirti Kisan Party, which he considered too communal or, in the latter case, insufficiently communist. Sohan Singh Josh and Abdul Majid developed their own organization in Punjab: the Anti-Imperialist League, which was an affiliate to the Communist Party of India (CPI). In contrast, the Kirti Kisan Party refused to affiliate with the centralizing authority of the CPI.

Maia Ramnath argued that there existed two tendencies in Punjabi communism in this period: the emerging “official” communism led by figures such as Sohan Singh Josh and the Kirti group that developed after the arrest of Josh (Ramnath 2011). The first followed dictates from Moscow and the Communist International to build a hierarchical, centralized organizational structure, and implement an inflexible Marxist-Leninist party. The Kirti communists continued to be inspired by the ideologically more opened-minded pre-war Ghadar Party. In spirit of promoting a “synthesis of [ideological] elements,” they called for political and economic decentralization (akin to “Makhnovian libertarian socialism”), emphasized anti-imperialism over anti-capitalism, and integrated aspects of a religious and non-sectarian anticolonialism (Ramnath 2011, 163).

The anti-imperialist united front ruptured from internal and external causes. First, there was the colonial strategy of isolating nationalism from (anti-imperialist) internationalism by prohibiting communist politics in civil society. Second, communist secular politics produced several missed opportunities that could have avoided false forms of decolonization. While in the late 1920s communist militants collaborated with religiously oriented anticolonial organizations like Akali and the Khilifat Committee, such coordination was avoided by the 1930s. Communist secular

politics privileged the national scale while criticizing communalism as a form of regionalism. Communists' engagement in body politics was framed in terms of labour exploitation, and avoided questions of confinement through colonial social organization via categories of caste and religion. As shown by the Akali movement, religious institutions like *gurdwaras* were important nodal points in colonial hegemony, and vital sites of struggle for extending the scale of community control. A richer engagement with religion could have been avoided by preserving and sublimating aspects of religious anticolonialism or even communal struggles. Third, the increasing tendency towards a rigid communist praxis made building alliances less tenable. This did not begin with Stalinization of the Comintern, that only solidified such a position, but it could be noticed in how groups like the Kirti Kisan Party had an ambiguous engagement with respect to communal. I make this point not to say that Punjabi communists should have been more committed to building ties with nationalist organizations like the Congress, but that they were closing engagements with movements that organized peasants and workers.

Conclusions

Native political forces were in constant tension over their respective claims to the nation. The INC's call for dominion status remained hegemonic among nationalists, even if it was a fragile hegemony with dissent within and outside the party. Despite attempts to raise a mass force against the Simon Commission, those who were actually mobilized were urban Hindu shopkeepers and clerks, and students. Whereas the Kirti Kisan Party's rallying of peasants was limited to Sikh Jat middle peasants in Central Punjab and the *doab* region, it had little engagement with Muslim landless agrarian workers and tenant farmers in south-west Punjab. While secular nationalism had a universalizing potential, it did not produce an organic anticolonial movement. I attribute the limitations of a united front politics to its abstract

application in Punjab. The united front was applied as an “objective dialectic” (Sekyi-Otu 1996, 31) in the absence of a dialectics of experience. Whereas the Akali movement understood and experienced colonial society and space beyond a Manichean society divided between colonizer-colonized, they understood the social to be a more complex matrix that was characterized by class that was determined by the colonial state’s (dis)-privileging and confining subjects based on caste, religion, and spatiality. However, Punjabi communists caricatured Marx’s conception of class as being determined only by one’s place in the social relations of production. They attempted to replace, rather than sublimate, religious anticolonialism and communal struggles with class politics. The failure to produce a national united front was due to an unwillingness to develop a dialectics of liberation that gave a central role to subaltern subjectivity and experiences of alienation, especially in terms of how scale was experienced and resisted. There was little attempt for a dialectical transformation of the anticolonial movement, little energy devoted to integrating subaltern groups across differences in class, caste, gender, and religion. These tendencies would persist into the moment of independence in 1947. Opportunities were missed to avoid false forms of decolonization.

The united front politics in late 1920s Punjab exemplified the “political construction of scale” (Smith 1992, 80). Anticolonialism was part of a struggle for the reorganization of scale, from the body to the world. The multiple social and political forces operating in the united front pointed to both shared and conflicting scalar claims. This contradiction both enabled alliances as well as signaling potential points of rupture to the extent that particularistic struggles could be transformed. The colonial state fought against the united front by strategically intensifying divisions among political forces. The most effective aspect of this was to make certain claims to the nation illegal. Communist organizations were prohibited because their internationalist claims

to the nation could not be contained in empire. In contrast, the Indian National Congress demonstrated political tendencies and claims to the nation that could be appropriated by the imperium. By the mid-1940s, in a moment of passive revolution, the colonial state worked to support such claims to national space in a post-colonial transition that would be congruent with a restored imperialist world order.

6. Pakistan as Passive Revolution: (False) Decolonization and claims to Muslim National Space

March 22nd of 1940 marked a dramatic shift in the political framework of Muslim nationalism in colonial India. It was quite a distinct conception from how the Kirti group, now organizing under the banner of the Pakistan Communist Party with the likes of Teja Singh Swatantar and Fazal Ilahi Qurban, would conceive of Pakistan in the summer of 1947. The Muslim League announced the Lahore Resolution of 1940, where they made claims on a Muslim national space using the language of self-determination. They called for “geographically contiguous units” of areas with Muslim majorities in “North Western and Eastern Zones of India” to be grouped as “Independent States”, that would be “autonomous and sovereign” (quoted in B R Ambedkar 1940, 16). The resolution was vague on the precise territorial boundaries and its constitutional relationship to a united India. Whereas previous claims made by the Muslim League dealt with questions of separate electorates, employment in the colonial state bureaucracy, and language, the demand for Pakistan was an explicit claim on a national space and society that was delineated by belonging to a religious community. Seven years later, after much blood and fire, Pakistan was a territorially bounded nation-state. This chapter inquires why the demand for Pakistan as a territorial claim to national space became the dominant ideology among Muslims in Punjab by 1947. I argue that the socio-historical processes that went into transforming colonial space to a Muslim national space consisted in the modernization of rule, but was led by forces for restoration not revolution. The formation of a Muslim nation-state was, in other words, a moment of passive revolution.

The case of South Asian Muslim nationalism and the Pakistan movement in particular makes an important contribution to our understanding of nationalist ideology. The Pakistan movement provides a rich empirical field for reflecting on the character of passive revolution in post-colonial transition. It provides a good example for taking up Stuart Hall's suggestion that there are rich possibilities in developing Gramsci's concepts in societies "racially structured or dominated situations" (Hall 1986a, 26). I argue that nationality/national space was a contested terrain among multiple social and political forces that combined elements of restoration and revolution. This struggle was mediated by colonial reification of religion and caste identities. For my argument, I build from Manu Goswami's important contribution in emphasizing the dialectical character of the nation as objective and subjective, universal and particular (Goswami 2002; Goswami 2004). She achieves this by examining the nation not as pre-given, fixed, trans-historical entity, but rather as produced through identifiable socio-historical processes. Since national space is a multiscalar entity – that is, it is implicated in a hierarchical relationship with other social substances like the body, household, and world – claims upon it are multiscalar and entail political struggles over rescaling. While, the focus of the chapter is on claims upon national space, I will examine the changing relationship among the body, home, nation, and world.

This chapter argues that the Pakistan movement was led by a historical bloc, rather than a single ruling class, and welded together a fragmented people. It did so by posing a challenge to Indian/Hindu nationalist claims to a singular national space. I first examine early attempts at mobilizing a Muslim people that conceived of *Hindustan* as a shared homeland with other religious communities. In doing so, a colonial reified notion of Muslim was employed. Muslim claims of being a community were invoked through colonial notions of a Muslim social subject.

Second, I explore how the call for a Muslim territorial nation in the 1940s reconfigured Muslim politics in terms of a single people with a single territory as a means of asserting Muslim national self-determination in the face of Hindu supremacist conceptions of national space. Third, I look at how communists in Punjab attempted to transform claims for a Muslim territorial nation into its Leninist modular form. This re-thought the Pakistan movement as an anti-landlord and anti-imperialist mass movement in a multi-national India. Fourth, I examine the internal contradictions of the Pakistan movement as both anti-landlord and pro-landlord. The tenant struggles of 1946-47 reveal how the Pakistan movement combined a rhetoric of anti-landlord ruralism with the interests of Muslim landlords. It did so by rallying Muslim landlord interests that were previously framed by working within the colonial state-space to calls for a Muslim national space. In the fifth and last section, I show how the communal violence of 1947 was a means of materializing a unity among nation, economy, and territory, among contested claims for Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu national spaces. I conclude with an argument that the formation of the Pakistani nation-state was part of a moment of passive revolution.

6.1 ‘Muslim’ as *Qaum*

One of the first instances of invoking Muslims as a *qaum* for political claims in colonial India was in the mid-nineteenth century. The Urdu term *qaum* was defined in late nineteenth century as “A people, nation; a tribe, race, family; sect, caste” (Platts 1884, 796). However, there is debate whether “nation” is the most appropriate translation of *qaum*. Ayesha Jalal shies away from translating *qaum* as “nation”, but rather as a “social collectivity” and says the term has been interchangeably used in describing a tribe, caste, or religious community (Jalal 2000, 11). The difficulty in translating *qaum* as “nation” has much to do with the historically varying meanings

the term has in English. According to Raymond Williams, the common usage of “nation” in English referred principally to “a racial group rather than a politically organized grouping” (Williams 2014, 178). While it would later be used to designate a politically organized group, there would be an overlap with its earlier meaning as a racial grouping in its modern usage. Raymond Williams explains the role that nationalism had in this shift:

The persistent overlap between racial grouping and political formation has been important, since claims to be a nation, and to have national rights, often envisaged the formation of a nation in the political sense, even against the will of an existing political nation which included and claimed the loyalty of this grouping (Williams 2014, 179).

The term *qaum* would similarly undergo a shift from being a descriptor of social collectivity to being mobilized for claims to hegemony. Jalal has shown that the meaning of terms like *qaum* and *watan* (homeland) were sites of debate, but her treatment of struggle remains mostly at the level of discourse (Jalal 2000). I push this analysis further by arguing that invocations of *qaum* from the mid-nineteenth century were claims to hegemony; calls upon a *qaum* were used for mobilizing social forces, organizing social and political practices, and for making social and spatial claims. Further, I understand native claim of Muslims as a *qaum* are informed by colonial ideology. For this purpose, I draw upon the work of Frantz Fanon, who framed anticolonialism as a struggle against colonial processes of reification (Said 1993).

Fanon “stretched” the Marxist use of the concept of reification to incorporate the role of colonialism and racism in shaping social relations and co-constituting capitalism (Fanon 2004, 4).⁵⁹ Fanon consistently treats the question of reification in material and even spatial terms,

⁵⁹Edward Said speculated that Frantz Fanon developed his ideas on colonial processes of reification from George Lukacs’s *History and Class Consciousness* (Said 1993). Lukacs argued that in a capitalist society, the commodity form “permeat[es] every expression of life” (Lukács 1971, 84). Capitalist society is dominated by mechanization, quantification, dehumanization, fragmentation, and reification. For example, there is nothing natural about land

where colonialism produces the experience of being “locked in [a] suffocating reification [*objectivité écrasante*]” and being made into an “object”, and existing as “an object among other objects” (Fanon 2008, 89). The colonial world is reified: Blacks are objects, and Whites are subjects. Fanon describes the multiscalar character of colonial reification as “A slow construction of my self as a body in a spatial and temporal world – such seems to be the schema. It is not imposed on me; it is rather a definitive structuring of my self and the world – definitive because it creates a genuine dialectic between my body and the world” (Fanon 2008, 91). Once writing in colonial Algeria, he described the colonial condition through greater spatial acuity: bodily confinement is achieved through the colonial production of space through compartmentalization (Fanon 2004). Fanon described how colonial space is reified through the differentiation between the colonized’s shanty towns and the colonizer’s city (Fanon 2004).

being considered as ground rent, but space is treated as such through commodity relations. Reification does not arise for Lukacs through the dissemination of ideas that are meant to produce illusions. Rather, it is through the materiality of ideology that the social appears and is experienced as relations with objects. The proletariat too becomes a commodity. In the direct producer being separated from the means of production, they enter into commodity relations such that even their labour-power becomes a commodity. The immediate knowledge of the proletariat is partial, fragmentary, and witness to a world of autonomous objects. Proletarian consciousness reaches a higher level when it is able to grasp knowledge of the totality, that is knowledge of the social order beyond reified appearances. Lukacs contended its undoing will require more than reversing reified consciousness, but by transforming the material conditions that produces reification. It is in the process of class struggle that the proletariat acquires this knowledge of totality, whereby the proletariat becomes both object and subject of history. Edward Said pointed that given that Lukacs’ book was translated into French in 1960 and was readily available, Fanon must have been inspired by him. Yet, Fanon develops the idea of reification in his first book, *Black Skin, White Masks* published in 1952.

Fanon noted how spatial compartmentalization shapes the co-constitution of race and class: “You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich” (Fanon 2004, 5).

While at the level of immediacy it appears that Fanon treated racialized social formations in dichotomous terms (black and white), it is important to read his text as a dialectical narrative that complicates the initial analysis of a dichotomy between the colonizer and colonized (Sekyi-Otu 1996). Yet, he pushed to include multiple shades of grey. He demonstrated the internal contradictions of anticolonial nationalism by showing the various class forces and ideological tendencies. For example, he focused upon the relations between an emerging national/comprador bourgeoisie, the urban working class, and the peasantry.

Fanon critiqued certain forms of native politics as being false forms of decolonization to the extent that they were recasting colonial reified identities. In some ways, there is no escaping reified responses to colonialism if we consider that the colonized and colonizer represent a unity in opposition. Fanon described the *negritude* movement as the anticolonial anti-thesis to anti-black racism. While Fanon was sympathetic and built from the contributions of *negritude*, he also critiqued instances where such movements made abstract claims in the absence of the consideration of concrete relations. In the Arab world, Fanon found an Islamic “re-awakening” that was responding to colonialism, where poets and intellectuals attempted to “launch a new Arab culture, a new Arab civilization” (Fanon 2004, 152). He described their attempts as “racializ[ing] their claims” (Fanon 2004, 152) which he contrasts with the development of a “national culture”. Fanon referred to national culture as developing through the struggle for national liberation that was consciously reflexive of historical-geographical realities rather than looking to recuperate some notion of a pre-colonial identity. Fanon’s discussion of colonial reification of subjectivities and movements of counter-reification need to be stretched for

understanding British India, where there existed multiple claims to a national space and people, including Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh nationalism.

Claims of a Muslim *qaum* were informed by colonial reification of Muslim (inter-)subjectivity. The figure of the “Muslim” was neither just the product of being a member of a community of faith nor the outcome of colonial discourse but was more significantly produced materially through the state as a structured set of social relations. Being “Muslim” informed aspects of everyday life in colonial India: access to government and military employment, ability to acquire or purchase land, electoral enfranchisement, language requirements for government employment, and access to education. In addition to religion, colonial categories of caste, class, and gender structured social relations. The experience of being “Muslim” was thus never homogeneous, it varied according to class, gender, caste, and geography. Nonetheless, a shared experience of Muslim-ness structured by colonial reification would frame native politics.

Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) made one of the earlier calls of the Muslim *qaum* as a political formation. This wasn’t representative of the social life of the majority of Muslims but rather those of the *ashrafi* (nobility), who traced a lineage to the Mughal court. Khan’s 1858 text *Asbab baghavat-i-Hind* (“Causes of the Indian Revolt”) addressed the colonial perception of the mutiny the year before as an anticolonial insurrection led by Muslims (Khan 1986). The manuscript was addressed to colonial administrators, but was also an initial foray into defining the Muslim as a political subject who is loyal to the colonial project. Khan sometimes described the native population as the *Hindustani qaum*, which is inclusive of both Hindus and Muslims, who live in a shared *mulk* (country) called *Hindustan*. In other places, he uses the term *qaum* to refer to religious communities (Muslim *qaum*, Hindu *qaum*), caste groupings, and calls the colonizers

ghair-qaum (foreign community). Despite these multiple and overlapping significations of collectivity, Khan principally uses *qaum* to describe the Muslim community.

Khan goes to great lengths to dismiss the colonial argument that the mutiny was an organized affair by Muslims to overthrow the East India Company and to restore Mughal rule. Instead, he sees it as an expression of multiple grievances that erupted spontaneously into a revolt against the Company, its interference with Islamic practices and the colonial laws and practices that produced poverty and high unemployment, especially among Muslims. Khan called for state reform, such as: allocation of space on the legislative council for natives, and increased quotas for Muslims in government employment. He also called for separated platoons for Hindus and Muslims as he attributed the revolt to the policy of having mixed Hindu and Muslim sepoy regiments. This inter-religious intimacy produced a relationship of *biraderi*, a form of brotherhood often associated with kinship or caste grouping. Khan's intervention was a defense of Muslims as loyal and was meant to re-align Muslim *ashrafi* politics with the framework of empire. His was a call for Muslim *ashrafi* to have greater representation in governance, government employment, and economic resources.

Khan saw that the existing education system in the *ashrafi* community – and its focus on the Persian language, Islamic education, and manners – was suited for the Mughal court but not as an intermediary for the British Raj. Khan opened the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College – or alternatively called “Aligarh College” – in 1875 as a way of producing leadership among the Muslim *qaum* within the colonial framework. The college provided British-style education combined with Islamic knowledge and came out of Muslim middle-class dissatisfaction with British-Indian schools and *madrassah* (traditional Muslim schooling) education. Whereas early plans included educating lower caste Muslims as well, the College became a center for training

ashrafi young men only, especially those whose families were government servants, legal practitioners, or teachers. The school's objective did not aim to address Muslim underrepresentation in government jobs, as the number of Muslims in government jobs corresponded to their percentage of the population. Khan didn't consider aggregate numbers to be relevant indicators of the Muslim and Hindu community. Rather, Khan argued the lower castes should be ignored when counting the Hindu population. In turn, he thought that the (roughly equal) size of the Muslim and Hindu nobility justified his idea that the number of Muslims working in the government should be on par with Hindus (Lelyveld 1978). Yet, while Khan was trying to recast the role of the Muslim *ashrafi* community across northern India in the colonial framework through his educational project, he made reference to a homogeneous Muslim *qaum*.

A further elaboration of Muslims as *qaum* came about in response to the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885. In a gathering among Muslim nobility three years after the founding of the INC, Khan made a critique of the new organization and its brand of Indian nationalism. He argued that its claim to a nation of two equal parts was disingenuous in a country where there existed multiple, socially distinct and unequal *qaums*. According to Khan, the INC's calls for merit-based entry into the civil service favored Bengali Hindus who were better prepared for competitive exams given their access to English education. In contrast, Khan argued, conditions were not in place for the Muslim *qaum* to compete against Hindus for government jobs. Khan wanted to maintain a system that gave preference to hereditary social rank and deplored the idea that lower-caste individuals could access upper-ranking government jobs based on merit. Khan underlined the high social rank of the Muslim *qaum*, given the former rulers of the country (Khan 1982). As a result, Khan called upon Muslims not to join the INC, but rather to build their own institutions. He envisioned Aligarh College as the central Muslim institution of learning

with a network across India. The Muhammadan Educational Conference, which began in 1893, was meant to be a forum to build a pan-India Muslim polity centered in Aligarh.

The Muhammadan Educational Conference created the impetus for a Muslim political party in 1906, the All-India Muslim League (AIML). On October 1, 1906, a few months prior to the foundation, leaders from Syed Ahmed Khan's group – Muslim elites from United Provinces and Aligarh – organized the so-called 'Simla Deputation' to Viceroy Lord Minto. The group requested reserved seats for Muslims that called for representation beyond numerical proportion based on Muslim loyalty and their defense of the empire. The Indian Councils Act of 1909 responded to some of those demands by allowing for elected native members on the legislative council to question and sponsor resolutions. There were also separate electorates for Muslims and Hindus (Sarkar 1990).⁶⁰

By the mid-1910s, there were signs of a younger Aligarh generation breaking with such politics of 'mendicancy'. This new generation of Aligarh graduates did not have the blood of nobility nor that of big landlords. Instead, they came from families who needed to complement their modest income from land rent with income from services and professional employment (Sarkar 1990). They held anticolonial views, called for Hindu-Muslim alliances, and believed in pan-Islamic internationalism. In 1919, Gandhi's Non-Cooperation movement struck an alliance with the emerging Khilafat movement. The Khilafat movement called for the Turkish Sultan Khalifa to maintain control of Muslim sacred places and territory sufficiently large to defend the Islamic faith. It also insisted that *Jazirat-ul-Arab* (Arabia, Iraq, Syria and Palestine) be a Muslim sovereign space. The Khilafat movement had a moderate and a more radical faction. The

⁶⁰Enfranchisement required a minimum income level.

moderate faction was led by Bombay merchants, whose tactics included holding meetings, writing memorials, and organizing deputations. The radical wing was led by lower middle-class journalists and the *ulama*. This latter group participated in Gandhi's Non-Cooperation movement and called for *hartals* (Sarkar 1990, 195–226). The Khilafat movement combined both pan-Islamic internationalism and Indian nationalism. While the Khilafat movement was indeed misguided in its awareness of geo-politics and undermined Turkish and Arab nationalism (Alavi 1997), it did indicate a shift toward a more radical tendency in Muslim politics that joined anticolonial nationalism with internationalism.

The Khilafat movement combined elements that resonated with the ideas of an earlier Muslim figure, Jamal al-Din Afghani (1838-1897), who wrote and spoke in India during the 1880s. Afghani was a roaming radical Muslim intellectual whose travels took him to the Ottoman Empire, Afghanistan, Egypt, and France. His general message in the Middle East was that of anticolonialism and pan-Islamic internationalism. He criticized nationalism for limiting political solidarities. However, during his travels to India from 1879 to 1882, he adjusted his message according to local circumstances. Rather than calling upon the mobilization of an international Muslim *qaum*, he called for unity based on territorial nationalism, which would bring unity between Indian Hindus and Muslims. He also critiqued Syed Ahmed Khan and his followers, calling them intermediaries for British colonial rule. He denied that Khan was mobilizing and educating Muslims as a *qaum*, since his project was to educate Muslims for the benefit of foreign rule. To foster a common sense of history, he called upon Indian Muslims to identify with the history of Hindu India and the important historical contributions by Hindus to global knowledge. This would serve for building anti-imperialist Hindu-Muslim unity (Keddie 1972).

While women's experiences have been mostly ignored in the literature on Muslim nationalism, several feminists have pointed to their gendered calls for a Muslim *qaum* (Jalal 1991; Rouse 1996; Rouse 2004). These authors usually reference how Deobandis, an anticolonial Islamic reformist movement that began in 1867 in Uttar Pradesh, was similar to colonial sympathizer Syed Ahmed Khan in instituting patriarchal gender norms. One Deobandi organization was Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, which began in 1919 in order to mobilize Muslims against colonial rule. It was historically aligned with Indian National Congress and was committed to a united India. The Muahhammadan Educational Centre, Deobandi Ashraf Ali Thanawi, and others were involved in a movement for the reform of women's conditions, but specifically addressed Muslim women of middle-class household. There was consensus about the benefits of female education for a patriarchal order: capacity to educate their children, managing the household, greater knowledge about religion, and fulfilling middle-class Muslim male's new desire for an educated housewife. Yet, there were questions about the content and organization of a modern education for women without it leading to "disobedience, immorality, and a rejection of domesticity" (Devji 1991, 141).

These initiatives proposed the rescaling of the household. The overall concern of reform was reaping the benefits of modern education while maintaining the seclusion of middle-class Muslim women within the bounds of their household. Colonial modernization had the perceived threat of the metaphorical or material unveiling of Muslim woman, as it could bring them to the public sphere. This included the (Muslim male) public anxiety of exposing Muslim middle-class woman to the threat of rape by Hindu men (Das 2007). These initiatives were simultaneously a process of class formation, as it meant to produce greater differentiation between house menials

and the housewife (Devji 1991). Further, lower class-caste Muslim women were not the site of regulation as they were obliged to work outside of the home.

The notion of a Muslim *qaum* as a political formation was mobilized differently by social and political forces. There existed two broadly defined tendencies in Muslim politics until the mid-1920s. First, a loyalist and reformist element with champions like Syed Ahmed Khan and institutions like the Aligarh College, the Muhammadan Educational Conference, and the early All-India Muslim League. A second tendency of Muslim politics combined Indian nationalism with pan-Islamic internationalism. This tendency was advanced by figures like Jamal al-Din Afghani, the Ali brothers, and the Khilafat movement. The loyalist and reformist element had a strong tendency to work through and modify the reification of colonial subjectivity. These reformist Muslim-*ashrafi* politics attempted to re-organize social hierarchies viz a vis other religious and caste communities. In contrast, the radical faction worked against aspects of colonial reification by making appeals to Hindu-Muslim alliances, and challenging imperial rule in the Indian subcontinent. Muslim claims to be a *qaum* were tied up with relegating Muslim middle-class women to the household and the task of its social reproduction. Up until 1940, the dominant tendency in Muslim politics accepted the colonial vision of *Hindustan* as a shared *watan*, a singular and bounded colonial state space. A significant shift occurred in Muslim politics with the Muslim League's 1940 call for a Muslim national space.

6.2. Muslim National Space

The demand for Pakistan was the most significant attempt by Muslims to frame their politics territorially. While this was a different way to frame Muslim politics compared to demands that assumed a shared *watan*, it still built upon colonial reification of religious identities. That is to

say, Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh claims to nationality and national space extended from how the colonial state organized social relations based on the objectification of religious subjectivity. Further, the call for a Muslim national space in India must be understood as part of contesting claims to colonial India as a national space. Pakistan was a strategic demand made by a section of Muslim society in consideration of the contemporary balance of social and political forces. Territorial claims by Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh nationalists was a means for reorganizing social hierarchies based on colonial reification of caste and religion. The first sub-section outlines the claim of national space made by Hindu nationalists, whose dominant geographical imaginary was that of India as a singular, bounded national space. This discussion will allow me to situate the emergence of Muslim counter claims to national space in the second sub-section.

6.2.1 *Bharat* as national space

From the late nineteenth century Hindu nationalists advanced the idea of *Bharat* – the Hindi-Hindu name and popular emotive term for India – as a bounded national space and economy (Goswami 2004). Goswami forcefully argued that this was achieved by reconceptualizing the relationship among history, territory, and inter-subjectivity. She argued how continuity was established in the idea of *Bharat* as national space between the ancient past and the present. The nationalist conception of *Bharat* recast earlier, Puranic versions as a singular entity whose boundaries were equivalent to that of colonial India. Authors like Raja Prasad invoked the Vedic era as the point of origin for nationhood and a model for a utopian non-colonial future. The Mughal period was seen as one of Muslim conquest and decay of the moral order. In this historicization of territory and inter-subjectivity, the Hindu figures as the core national while the Muslim becomes a foreign body (Goswami 2004).

This ideology of *Bharat* was adapted among a section of Punjabi Hindu nationalists in the 1920s. These Punjabi Hindu nationalists wanted to turn Muslim majority zones of India into separate states as a means to counter Muslim challenges to Hindu supremacy. Punjabi anticolonial militant and Hindu nationalist Lala Lajpat Rai wrote a series of articles under the title of *The Hindu-Muslim Problem* in 1924. The articles followed the breakdown in Hindu-Muslim solidarity present in the Gandhi-led alliance between the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat movements. While Rai made repeated efforts in these articles to distance himself from Hindu nationalist groups that he was formerly involved with, such as the Arya Samaj, his position shows how Indian nationalism could remain veiled forms of Hindu supremacy.

Rai described the figure of the Muslim as deviant and prone to riot under the provocation of Muslim leaders and religious clerics. In the case of Hindu-Muslim riots, Rai portrays Muslim men as aggressors and Hindu women as victims:

The fact that wherever there have been riots between Hindus and Mussalmans, the latter have looted the former, desecrated their temples and assaulted their women, betrays the widespread diffusion of the idea that the Hindus are “Kafirs,” that the Muslims are in a state of war with them, and that in fighting them, their property and women are “halal” for the Muslims (Rai 1996, 2:192).

Rai discounted the argument that riots were the product of social inequality and religious difference: the idea that poverty among Muslims drive them to rob the typically rich Hindu. For him, this hypothesis could not explain why Muslim peasants do not rob Muslim landlords and professionals. Riots could only be a function of anti-Hindu propaganda.

Rai gives a natural condition to Hindus as being Indians:

Hindus cannot be anything but Indians. They have no other country and no other nation to look to. They cannot, therefore, be accused of any kind of Pan-Hinduism, in the sense in which the term is used in relation to Islam. Hinduism and Indianism are, in their case, synonymous terms (Rai 1996, 2:203).

In contrast, Muslims are always suspect of not being true nationalists because of their extra-Indian territorial allegiances. For Rai, Pan-Islamic internationalism and Indian nationalism were ultimately irreconcilable:

Most Muslim leaders openly say that they are Muslims first and Indians afterwards, [...] No one can be a true Nationalist who is not an Indian from first to last. He may be an Indian Hindu or an Indian Mussalman, but he must be an Indian all the time. A man who says he is prepared to sacrifice the freedom of India for the freedom of "Jazirat-ul-Arab" [the Arabian Peninsula] cannot be an Indian nationalist (Rai 1996, 2:205–206).

Rai was also responding to persistent campaigns made by Muslims calling for communal representation with separate electorates in the legislature and local governing bodies. He asserted that demands for separate electorates was anti-nationalist. Rai's solution was to partition the Punjab and produce Muslim and Hindu/non-Muslim sovereign states:

Under the circumstances, I would suggest that a remedy should be sought by which the Muslims might get a decisive majority without trampling on the sensitiveness of the Hindus and the Sikhs. My suggestion is that the Punjab should be partitioned into two provinces, the Western Punjab with a large Muslim majority, to be a Muslim-governed Province; and the Eastern Punjab, with a large Hindu-Sikhs majority, to be a non-Muslim-governed Province. Under my scheme the Muslims will have four Muslim States: (1) The Pathan Province or the North-West Frontier, (2) Western Punjab, (3) Sindh, and (4) Eastern Bengal. If there are compact Muslim communities in any other part of India, sufficiently large to form a Province, they should be similarly constituted. But it should be distinctly understood that this is not a united India. It means a clear partition of India into a Muslim India and a non-Muslim India (Rai 1996, 2:212–213)

Rai's appeal for dividing India into two national spaces – Muslim India and non-Muslim India – was a strategy to expunge the Muslim figure, who was considered a rioter, rapist, non-nationalist, foreigner, and subversive towards Indian national unity, through a territorial solution. In the Hindu nationalist imaginary, *Bharat* had to be produced through territory. At the time, Rai's demand was not influential among Punjabi Hindus, who were not ready yet to sacrifice their provincial interests for Hindu supremacy at a national scale. However, it was significant that some Punjabi Hindu nationalists were already articulating a territorial solution to the Muslim

question. They thus anticipated the Lahore Resolution of 1940 and the support by Punjabi Hindu nationalists in 1947 for partition.

6.2.2 Countering *Bharat*

The claim to a Muslim national space and people was made in dialogue with claim to *Bharat*. While *Bharat* was the product of ideological naturalization, the Muslim League intellectuals tried to de-naturalize the concept of India/*Bharat* as a singular national space and people. But in doing so they counterpoised one set of singular truths with their own. While the AIML's Committee of Writers represented a technocratic optimism among a British-educated middle-class and its publications were probably not disseminated much beyond this constituency, its views did reflect opinions that were in circulation in the party.

The Lahore Resolution of 1940 affirmed the Muslims of India as a nation. The leader of the All-India Muslim League, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, declared in his presidential speech at that time: "The Musalmans are not a minority. The Musalmans are a nation by any definition" (Jinnah 1942, 149). Gandhi's response to Jinnah was that Indian Muslims were of the same "racial stock" as the rest of the people of India. Gandhi argued that Indian Muslims, being former Hindus who had converted to Islam, were indigenous to the land. Gandhi held that if these natives were a *qaum* before the advent of Islam, they remained as such (All-India Muslim League and Committee of Writers 1947). Gandhi's historicization of the Indian nation was distinct from Hindu nationalists who said Muslims were foreigners and colonizers. Muslim League intellectuals followed a similar line of argument by claiming that many Muslims had arrived in various stages of conquest (All-India Muslim League and Committee of Writers 1947). These Muslim nationalist intellectuals further contested a definition of the nation based on racial

and linguistic categories. Rather, they took a subjectivist approach. To make their argument they drew upon the work of Oxford professor Alfred Cobban who held that a nation was a territorial community that is self-conscious of its national character. The Muslim League could claim that Indian Muslims were a nation because they viewed themselves as such.

One Muslim nationalist geographer was enlisted to argue against the idea of India being a singular national space. Kazi Saiduddin Ahmad received his doctorate in Geography in 1939 from the University of London and taught at the Punjab University in Lahore from 1944. Ahmad de-naturalized India's spatial singularity by showing that there was no necessary equivalence between physical geography and political geography. In the case of India, he found that there existed four distinct physical geographical regions: "(1) Western, consisting of the Indus Basin, (2) Northern, consisting of the upper Gangetic Basin, (3) Eastern, consisting of [the] lower Gangetic Basin or the Delta and (4) the Deccan consisting of the Plateau and the flanking low lands" (Ahmad 1955, 4). He argued that these zones were homogeneous in physical terms and coincidentally according to social criteria (religion, ethnography, culture, and economy). In their coherence and distinction, these regions could be the basis for four sovereign states. There were thus enough objective grounds to justify a separate homeland and nation-state for Muslims in western India. If Muslims and Hindus could not come to a political agreement about a shared nation-state, then the right to separate homelands should be granted (Ahmad 1945). The Muslim League made a legitimate critique of Hindu nationalist claim of the singularity between Indian people and territory. However, they advanced their own ideological distortions by advancing the idea that western India was characterized by social and physical geographic coherence and distinction that warranted claims for a Muslim national space.

Muslim claims to a separate nation were made on a shared and distinct relationship to the past and the future. Another of AIML's Committee of Writers included historian Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, who had obtained a PhD from Cambridge University. Qureshi outlined how two nations – Hindu and Muslim – were the product of a differentiated relationship to the past:

If the Hindu looks upon the pre-Muslim past as his golden age, the Muslim replies by idealising the achievements of his ancestors in India. The tale of Muslim conquest, looked upon by the Hindus as a story of national humiliation, is the record of the glory of his forefathers to the Muslim. As such this has brought an estrangement in the relations of the Muslims with the Hindus which has made the Muslims conscious of being a separate entity (Qureshi 1946, 15)

Qureshi argued that Hindu revivalism glorified the Vedic past as a model for the future. However, this past and future was a call for Hindu supremacy and assimilation. He considered that in such an imagined future there was no political or cultural viability for Indian Muslims (Qureshi 1946).

Qureshi saw a Muslim nation as consisting of a shared sense of future, one that was guided by an Islamic utopia of state capitalism. While Qureshi made vague references that Islam was critical of capitalism and tyranny, there was nothing concretely Islamic about his proposal. It resembled Nehruvian developmentalism in that it shared an emphasis on central economic planning, large development projects, and industrialization. Qureshi's Islamic utopia would abolish constraints on human freedom and self-development through industrialization. This future was also a break from past Muslim rule in India. Qureshi believed that Islam was against hereditary monarchy and for democracy on the basis of universal suffrage. He was also convinced that the state had a role in limiting human freedoms to prevent religiously deviant behavior (Qureshi, All-India Muslim League, and Committee of Writers 1949).

The claim to a Muslim national space countered claims of a singular Indian national space. Middle-class Muslim nationalist intellectuals challenged the notion of *Bharat* by arguing that

Muslims were a separate nation, they had a distinct relationship to history, there was no natural relationship between territory and nation, and *Bharat* was a Hindu supremacist project. While the Muslim League highlighted the empirically false claims in Hindu supremacist ideology with regard to claims on territory, the Muslim League also advanced its own false totalizations by claiming that western India was a coherent and distinct entity based on physical geography and social criteria, and that its people had a singular relationship to the past. The Muslim League was not unique in challenging the hegemony of the imaginary of *Bharat*. The Communist Party of India, for one, also critiqued the singularity of an Indian national space and supported the demand for Pakistan, albeit for different political ends.

6.3 Red Pakistan

The ideology of Pakistan could not be encapsulated as a singular political formation. The demand for a separate Muslim homeland did not necessarily imply a certain politics, rather it could be creatively appropriated by a range of social and political forces committed to some notion of a Muslim homeland. Jalal argued that the Lahore Resolution was strategically ambiguous so that it could be open to multiple interpretations for building a broad enough coalition among different social forces (Jalal 2000). In contrast, I contend that the idea of Pakistan was non-homogenous and immanently contradictory because it was an ideological formation that was a site of contestation. In this section I examine how the Communist Party of India from 1942 to 1946 attempted to transform the Pakistan struggle into an anti-imperialist mass movement. They re-conceived claims for a Muslim national space as part of a multi-national and multiscalar struggle for an international communist future. I first examine how the

Communist Party of India (CPI) re-imagined the Pakistan movement and then I look at how they intended to undertake this project in the context of Punjab.

6.3.1 Pakistan and Anti-Imperialism

The Lahore Resolution of 1940 provoked a shift in the CPI's stance on the national question. The majority of communists in India since the mid-1920s followed Lenin's line on supporting struggles for national self-determination. This meant building their own worker and peasants institutions and supporting the Indian National Congress, which was considered a bourgeois-nationalist organization. In contrast, the CPI had historically considered the Muslim League as a communalist organization with feudal and comprador elements. Following the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan and complete independence, the CPI in 1942 considered the Pakistan movement as a legitimate struggle for Muslim national self-determination as well. However, instead of following the Muslim League's two-nation theory, they pushed the argument further by conceiving of India as a multi-national entity. This departure was influenced by Joseph Stalin's views on the national question and his sensitivity to how nationalist struggles operated in spaces of uneven development.⁶¹

In an essay published in 1913 entitled *Marxism and the National Question*, Stalin distinguished a "nation" from a racial or tribal grouping. Rather he conceptualized it as "a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture" (Stalin 1942, 12). While a nation was considered as a relatively stable entity, it was subject to transformation. Stalin was clear to emphasize his notion of nation as a territorial community. For instance, he claimed that Jews were not a nation because they did not

⁶¹Cf. Ali (2015).

have a shared territory. He conceived of Russia as a multi-national state with uneven development, where difference was manifested as and the outcome of oppressor and oppressed nations. This resulted in struggles between certain class elements in those nations. Nationalism could arise among the oppressed nation through its experience of being dominated and as a means for mobilizing against the oppressor nation (Stalin 1942).

Especially through the initiative of Gangadhar Adhikari, the CPI would advance that India was a multi-national social formation. They imagined a free India as a federation or union of autonomous states: Pathanland, Baluchistan, Sind, Western Punjab, Central Punjab, Hindustan, Bihar, Rajasthan, Assam, Orissa, Andhra, Tamilnad, Kerala, Karnatak, Maharashtra, Gujrat, and Bengal. Whether these would be autonomous units in a free India or sovereign states would be decided in separate Constituent Assemblies for each nation. This idea was a middle ground between the Indian National Congress's claim for one centralized state with autonomous units and the Muslim League's call for two sovereign states. In contrast, the CPI called for universal suffrage and constituent assemblies that would become the basis for national self-determination in a multi-national India. The CPI preferred that India did not separate into various states, but felt that giving "nations" the right to a constituent assembly and the right to separation would remove mutual suspicion and develop unity (Jacob 1988).

The CPI suggested that Punjab be split into three constituent assemblies. First, the Hindustani-speaking zone of Himalayan States and Ambala Division, where Hindus were in the majority. Second, a Sikh homeland in Punjabi-speaking Central Punjab State, where Hindus and Sikhs made up 65% of the population, with Amritsar as the capital. In this multi-religious zone, Sikhs would have to work alongside Muslims and Hindus while maintaining autonomy over their *gurdwaras*, language, and culture. Third, the Western Punjab with Muslim-majority districts and

Lahore as the capital. Muslims consisted of 76% of the population in this region; the dominant language was Punjabi in the Persian script (Jacob 1988).

This campaign for national self-determination in a multi-national India became the basis upon which the CPI called upon the Indian National Congress, Muslim League, and the Akali movement to join the CPI in a “united national front” against British imperialism. They could make such a call because they believed in the anti-imperialist tendencies, past or present, in these movements. Adhikari believed the Muslim League was no longer a reactionary movement, but,

...the expression of the growing anti-imperialist upsurge among the Muslim masses, of the growth of the individual national consciousness of the Sindhis, of the Punjabi Muslims, of the Pathans and so on within the framework of the broader all-India nationalism (Jacob 1988, 22).

However, Adhikari argued that the Akali movement was becoming a communalist movement. It had disavowed unity with Congress, Kirtis, and Communists, and was no longer struggling for national liberation. The Akali movement had allied with the Unionist Party and the Hindu Mahasabha to oppose the Pakistan demand. However, Adhikari called upon Akalis to recover their past anti-imperialist politics. He cited their participation in the national liberation struggle in the early 1920s and their previous efforts for Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity. He also mentioned the rich tradition of Sikh anticolonialism among the Ghadar Party and the Babbar Akalis.

The CPI made a valuable advance in recognizing the multi-national character of India. However, they transposed rather than translated Stalin’s analysis of the national question from Russia into Punjab. In doing so, they attributed a unity among nation, class, and territory. Stalin’s Russia was comprised of nations as territorial communities, with dominant spaces/nations and dominated spaces/nations. In analyzing the Punjabi context, the CPI conceived of western Punjab as a Muslim nation that was a dominated space/nation with so-called “backward” peasant agriculture. Central and eastern Punjab represented the Sikh and Hindu nations and were dominant

spaces/nations engaged to a greater extent in mercantile and industrial activity. The CPI described the tension among these spaces/nations: “The backward Muslim majority fear the economic domination of the industrially and commercially more powerful Sikh and Hindu minority, while the latter fear the political domination of the numerically greater Muslim majority” (Jacob 1988, 139). Such an analysis fits nicely into a narrative advanced by the Muslim League that Muslims were an oppressed, territorially coherent community with a right to national self-determination. One could demarcate zones where Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were the majority. Yet Hindu-Muslim conflict did not manifest territorially, between the Western Punjab Muslim peasantry with the Eastern Punjab Hindu *Bania*. Rather the struggle between Muslim peasants and Hindu *Bania* was a struggle internal to a social space. There was no neat correspondence among nation, class, and territory despite uneven development and core-periphery dynamics. The reality was that India consisted of multiple *qaums* in a shared *watan*.⁶²

6.3.2 Mass Politics

Until about 1944 the Muslim League had made little consistent effort at developing into a mass party, especially not among peasants and rural workers. However, there were some short-lived attempts. For example, when the Indian National Congress developed a Muslim Mass Contact Program in the United Provinces in 1938 with the help of Muslim communists such as K.M. Ashraf and Z.A. Ahmed, the Muslim League responded with their own campaign to reach out to Muslim masses in the countryside by making vague calls for Islamic socialism (Dhulipala 2015). Leading up to the Punjab elections of 1946, the Muslim League started making more serious

⁶²The Ghadar Party of the late 1910s framed the subcontinent in terms of multiple *qaums* in a shared *watan* in their calls for a United States of India, see D’Souza (2014).

attempts at propaganda in the countryside. It is at this time that some communists entered the Muslim League leadership and assisted them in their efforts.

The CPI in Punjab had various tactics for mobilizing working communities in the countryside in the early 1940s. In various districts of Punjab they organized *mohallah* (neighbourhood) food committees to address the ongoing war-time food shortage, village-level *kisan* (peasant or farmer) committees to examine local level issues and as a mobilizing unit, *kisan* conferences that were often several day events for communist propaganda in the form of teach-ins and theatrical performances, women's' conferences that passed resolutions calling for supporting rights to social reproduction by building adequate hospitals and health centres, the formation of Women's Self Defence Leagues, and district-level and village-level study circles for party workers (Punjab Government 1944). However, the CPI didn't limit rural outreach only to their organizational framework, they attempted to mobilize rural Muslims and Sikhs through the Muslim League and the Akali movement as well. The central leadership of the CPI instructed their district workers to assist the Muslim League in the enrollment of members, even if their help was not requested.

The CPI made tangible gains with another tactic: infiltrating the Muslim League. Police intelligence reports mention that in June of 1944, two members – Danial Latifi and Abdulla Malik – resigned from the CPI and were “allowed to join” the Punjab Muslim League (PML) (Punjab Government 1944, 362).⁶³ There is enough evidence to infer that Latifi and Malik did not shed their sympathies for communism nor their allegiance to the CPI, but this was rather a

⁶³Communists resigned from the CPI prior to joining the Muslim League because the latter did not allow membership in any other political party. It was also a means of preventing potential objections that they were communists.

strategic maneuver by the CPI to infiltrate the PML. Daniyal Latifi was assigned as the office secretary of the PML office in Lahore, and Abdullah Malik assisted the League workers in rural propaganda tours. Other communists also resigned and join the Punjab League (e.g. Ata Ullah Jahanian) and the Punjab Muslim Student Federation (PMSF). Latifi and Malik sat in private PML organizing meetings for planning rural propaganda. Some leaders of the PMSF objected that communists were allowed to join the PML and said they would bring the issue up with top ML leaders (Punjab Government 1944, 427). However, nothing was done by Jinnah and others to expel communists from the party. Prominent ML leaders like Liaquat Ali Khan criticized using communists to achieve Pakistan. Khan stated in a public meeting in 1945 that in such a case Muslims would “secure Pakistan of the conception of communism, but they would not be able to secure the Pakistan of Islamic conception” (Khan quoted in Dhulipala 2015, 448).

In this period, the CPI and ML shared a common priority: the overthrow of the Unionist Ministry in Punjab. Communists and ML workers emphasized how the Unionist Party and their affiliates (e.g. the Zamindara League) were working exclusively for the interests of the *Jat* caste and big landlords.

At the end of October of 1944, the PML approved a manifesto that was signed by Mamdot and Daultana, who were two important leaders in the PML. However, the document showed all the signs of being written by someone under the influence of communism, namely, Daniyal Latifi. The manifesto was a bold statement for significant transformations in state-society relations towards decolonization. It had a multi-scalar imaginary for decolonization. The first priority was national liberation for India, with no community dominating another. It demanded a Muslim national space that included rights for minorities. Thus, it reiterated the notion of one *watan* for one *qaum*, with some provisions for minorities. Privileges determined by caste, kinship, class,

and rural-urban relations, would be done away with. Rather than being confined by categories of caste, class, and space, subjects would have a common Muslim citizenship (Gilmartin 1988). Caste and class distinctions were said to be “in direct contradiction of the time-vindicated message of Islam” (manifesto quoted in Gilmartin 1988, 198).

The manifesto put forward state planning and a new property regime as means to resolve the question of uneven development. The state would address the urban question through the nationalization of key industries and financial institutions, and would institute state planned industrialization, full employment, a minimum wage, the right to collective bargaining, the right for workers to strike, democratic local self-government in urban areas including town planning, and access to efficient sanitation and civil amenities. The state would respond to the agrarian question by formulating an agricultural development plan for the welfare of small landholders, peasants, and landless rural workers; a resolution would be passed to address rural indebtedness; state land would be re-distributed to landless rural labourers; and graduated taxation would be implemented based on the size of land holdings; provisions would be made to make cheap credit accessible; the state would facilitate the development of co-operatives and the marketing of commodities at guaranteed prices; it calls for the end of imperialism including the exploitation of natural resources. And an all-India food policy would address the contemporary food crisis (Gilmartin 1988, 196–198; Leghari 1979, 28; Punjab Government 1944, 641).

The manifesto provided a left-wing platform for engaging rural and urban working communities. Communists organized tours for PML leaders into the Punjabi countryside, thus giving Leaguers their first presence in some Muslim peasant communities. They used the PML manifesto to challenge the Unionist Party’s hegemony. According to a CPI reporter, on one tour that lasted a month and a half, the PML workers were able to speak to two hundred thousand people. Salt

mine workers in Jhelum district also responded positively to the manifesto's rights for workers (Leghari 1979, 29).

From 1942, the CPI understood the Pakistan demand as an anticolonial and anti-imperial assertion of a right to national self-determination. However, they argued against the INC's claim about the singularity of Indian national space, arguing that India was a multi-national entity not a space composed of two nations. The CPI attempted to transform the Muslim League into an anti-imperialist mass movement by infiltrating the organization. Ultimately, however, the struggle over Pakistan came to be dominated by Muslim landlords with an anti-tenant and pro-imperialist orientation.

6.4 Landlords and Tenants in a National Space

Up until 1937, the Muslim League had no significant following in the Punjab except among a section of professional Muslims, whose employment was closely tied to the colonial administration or the operation of markets (e.g. clerks, accountants, teachers, lawyers).⁶⁴ The dominant native social force was an inter-communal alliance of big agrarian landlords who were organized under the Punjab National Unionist Party (PNUP) since the early 1920s. By 1946, the PML was the principal political platform used by Muslim landlords. This change of base from ("urban") professionals to ("rural") landlords would contribute to the contradictions of the Muslim League, which was interpreted as being caught between pro- and anti-landlord elements of its social base. The PML was able to build a broad alliance because it could simultaneously make various appeals to different sections of society, and thus able to weld together multiple

⁶⁴I hesitate to describe this group of professional Muslims as an urban group given how rural-urban continuums make distinctions difficult to sustain.

experiences and desires among a fragmented people. This section will examine the tension of the PML as both anti-landlord and pro-landlord. To accomplish this I first examine the history of the PNUP and its relationship with the PML. Second, I examine tenant struggles against landlords in the months prior to independence as this movement brings to light the character of the PML. I demonstrate that the dominant element of the Pakistan movement at the dawn of independence were Muslim landlords, who re-aligned their pro-imperial and pro-landlord claims to rurality with a project for national independence.

6.4.1 From the Unionist Party to the Punjab Muslim League

The Punjab Muslim League party was reconfigured from 1937 to 1947 to become a leading political force in the province as Muslim agrarian elites foresaw the difficulty Unionist Party ideology would have adapting to changing winds. Given that the demise of colonial rule was on the horizon, the colonial state would not in the foreseeable future be the guarantor for patronage politics. However, landlords understood that continuities with the past would have to be mediated by a national state. Between Nehru's anti-rural urbanism and the Muslim League's ideologically ambiguous Muslim nationalism, the latter held more possibilities for Muslim rural elites to advance a pro-landlord agenda and attendant claims to rurality. To explain why Muslim agrarian elites came to organize under the PML, we need to trace this class' ideological moorings to their earlier organizing efforts in the PNUP.⁶⁵

The PNUP advanced an anti-urban ruralism in its claims to hegemony that contributed to the production of the rural and urban. During consultations among native elites concerning the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms in the 1910s, Ram advocated for separate rural and urban

⁶⁵On the origins of the Punjab National Unionist Party, see chapter 4.

representation in provincial councils, with seats being allocated relative to population size and tax contribution. Favouring rural over urban areas with a ratio of 9 to 1 (Verma 1981), this electoral organization was a pre-emptive measure to check rising Indian nationalism that appeared to be located primarily in zones of urbanization. The PNUP's manifesto described the defense of the Land Alienation Act of 1900 as part of their basis of unity. The Land Alienation Act re-inscribed notions of anti-urban ruralism. It prohibited the alienation of land to those not within the state-defined "agriculturalist castes" as a means to protect "rural" landlords against "urban" moneylenders (i.e. "non-agriculturalist"). The PNUP made the claim that they were the true embodiment of progressive secular nationalism in contrast to similar self-representations by the INC. The Unionists claimed Congress did not live up to their posture as secular nationalists because they in fact advanced the sectional interests of merchant and professional urban Hindus with a politics of anti-rural urbanism. The PNUP claimed they represented the exploited masses (in the underdeveloped rural spaces) against the interests of the exploiters (in the so-called developed urban areas). Fazli Husain claimed that his party was not anti-urban but for rural upliftment to eliminate distinctions between the rural and urban. Contrary to such claims, the PNUP represented the sectional interests of big landlords while excluding smallholders, tenants, and agricultural labourers.

The British Raj further devolved governance to the native population in the Government of India Act of 1935. This act, too, was meant to counter growing urban nationalism by promoting provincial autonomy and introducing provincial elections across India. Electorates were again biased towards agrarian property owners. Only one quarter of electorates were allocated towards 'non-agriculturalist castes'. The franchise in the countryside was limited to landowners who remitted above a designated land revenue tax, or tenants who occupied more than 6 acres of

irrigated land or 12 acres of un-irrigated land. The PNUP dominated the elections with 99 out of 175 seats, and was thus able to form a ministry in the province (Talbot 1982). In the following years they were able to pass a number of pro-rural policies: distributing land grants and titles to loyal patrons, a six-year rural uplift program (the building of health care centers, educational institutions, model farms, and an improved sanitation system), legislation to further reduce the influence of non-agriculturalist moneylenders by introducing licensing and removing loopholes, as well as the passing of the Restitution of Mortgaged Lands Act that allowed recovery of lands alienated prior to 1901 (Talbot 1982; Ali 1976).

Whereas the Muslim League made little ground in the 1937 Punjab elections, over the next ten years they were slowly able to build electoral dominance. The first step was the Jinnah-Sikander pact that was signed in October 1937 between the AIML and the PNUP. This gave the PNUP complete control over the PML in exchange for making Jinnah the former's representative in all-India politics. The agreement allowed for the PNUP to reorganize the PML, which they promptly did. While the PML did not pose any threat in the immediate future in Punjab politics, the agreement was a pre-emptive measure by the Unionist leadership (Talbot 1982). For the Muslim League the pact was a means of penetrating the Punjab, where they had a weak following (Jalal 2000). It also gave them political leverage at the all-India level as they now had a stronger claim to represent Indian Muslims (Talbot 1982).

The Punjab National Unionist Party reorganized the Punjab Muslim League in their own image. They brought Muslim agrarian landlords into the leadership, thereby displacing the PML's old guard of professional Muslims. However, as Imran Ali argues, during the early 1940s "the Unionist Party ceased – and the League began – to be the caucus of the Muslim elite, for a large section broke its Unionist links and assumed leadership of the PML" (Ali 1976, 58). So when the

Unionist Party and the Muslim League split in 1944, it meant very little for the latter. With rising calls for national independence, it appeared to agrarian Muslim elites that the Unionist Party were no longer be able to distribute patronage in a post-colonial future, that it would be mediated through a national state. The Muslim League seemed a more favorable option given that there were more ideological openings within its Muslim territorial nationalism for restoring a project of pro-landlord ruralism. Alavi has argued that Muslim agrarian landlords of Punjab joined the Muslim League as a matter of class survival as they feared the INC would introduce land reforms (Alavi 2002a, 6). In other words, there was little space for Muslim agrarian elites in the historic bloc being built through Nehruvian claims to anti-landlord rurality and industrial urbanity. Rather, Muslim landlords could envision having their pro-landlord claims to rurality integrated into calls for a Muslim national space.

The Unionist Party emerged in an era of increasing profits for dominant agrarian classes, which resulted from agricultural intensification and extensification in Punjab.⁶⁶ Rising profits were the result of opening up of frontiers for “ecological surpluses” (Moore 2010, 393). Railways and canal irrigation made it possible to produce wheat, sugar, and cotton as commodities for the international market. These developments were uneven: rising food prices disproportionately favoured large landowners (Gandre 1984). Yet, rising prices and the expansion of frontiers had their limits. The Great Depression in the late 1920s put a halt to profits from rising agricultural commodity prices. Big agrarian landlords made up for decreasing profits by extracting more surplus value from smallholders and tenants. The Land Alienation Act of 1900 created conditions for landlords to enter into the money-lending business and slowly displace “non-

⁶⁶See chapter 2 for more details.

agriculturalist caste” money-lending professionals (e.g. Hindu *Bania*). In western Punjab, the new player in money-lending was the Muslim agrarian landlord who often lent money with the mortgage as collateral, which allowed them to take a cut of the harvest from smallholders and occupancy tenants. With decreasing incomes during the 1930s, many smallholders defaulted on their loan payments and alienated their land to these landlord-cum-moneylenders. From 1925 to 1939, the number of subsistence peasants and the concentration of land among big landowners both increased (Gandre 1984). More and more smallholding peasants were becoming tenants-at-will. The increasing tensions between tenants and landlords gave rise to a tenants’ movement, especially in the late 1930s and then again in 1946-47.

6.4.2 Tenant Movement of 1946-1947

The CPI’s assertion that the Pakistan movement was a mass anti-imperialist political formation working towards Muslim national self-determination was not an absolute claim. Rather, it was the former’s interpretation of emergent tendencies that could find expression in the Pakistan movement with the help of the CPI’s own intervention. Communists like Adhikhari and Sajjad Zaheer saw in the split between the Unionist Party and the Punjab Muslim League in 1944 a potential opening towards anti-landlord and anti-imperialist politics (Zaheer 1944). However, the tenant struggles of 1946-1947 was a lesson for the party as it highlighted the social force (Muslim landlords) and ideology (pro-landlord ruralism) that was coming to dominate the PML, and as a consequence, the Pakistan movement (B. Josh 1979).

Beginning from October 1946, tenants across Punjab were organizing against landlords. While the most intense and sustained tenant activism in this period was in Multan and Montgomery districts in western Punjab, tenant organizing also touched various districts in western, eastern

and central Punjab: Gurdaspur, Hissar, Hoshiarpur, Ferozepur, Patalia State, Garshankar, Lyallpur, and Lahore. In many cases, tenants first formed their own village-level associations, which district-level communist workers would later attempt to influence. In other cases, district-level communist workers were the starting point for organizing tenants. In the Nili Bar region, i.e. in Multan and Montgomery districts, communists organized tenants into village *kisan sabhas* (peasant associations) that were associated with the Nili Bar Kisan Committee. For the most part, the tenant movement was more of an agglomeration of individual struggles than an expression of dialectical unity.

At the village scale, the content of the struggle varied depending on local conditions. However, the immediate objective for most campaigns concerned the conditions for rent-in-kind. Those under the leadership of the Nili Bar Kisan Committee demanded that landlords respect the rent-in-kind system of *ada-ada* (“half-half”), where tenants and landlords each received half of the harvest (B. Josh 1979). In Kasur, tenants were demanding that landlords should only receive one fifth of the harvest (Punjab Government 1947, 3).

The Punjab Communists saw the campaign over the terms of sharecropping as part of a larger struggle demanding land-to-the-tiller. They called for the “abolition of landlordism, [the] nationalisation [*sic.*] of land”, and the “redistribution of land to make the uneconomic holdings of the poor peasants into consolidated economic holdings and to make large-scale co-operative farming possible” (Jacob 1988, 114). In the interim, they demanded that “landless labourers [...] get all the available fallow land whether of the landlord or the Government for producing grains” (Jacob 1988, 114).

The specific actions taken in the struggle depended on how events unfolded in the contradictions between tenants and landlords. Take for instance the tenant struggle in the Mamdot Estate in

Ferozepur district. The Nawab of Mamdot owned the largest private landed estate in Punjab that encompassed over 300 villages (Ali 1976). Between four to five hundred tenants of the Mamdot Estate formed a committee organized by communist workers (Punjab Government 1947, 240). When the tenants were evicted, they resisted by re-occupying those lands (Punjab Government 1947, 332). The Nawab of Mamdot then resorted to legal action against the tenants to ensure eviction (Punjab Government 1947, 358–9).

In many other sites, sharecroppers refused to pay the landlord's share. In one case, women tenants sat on the cotton harvest to protect it from appropriation by the landlord. When the police took the women away, four hundred of the tenant community responded by running towards the police shouting slogans. The police quickly released the women and ran away. In other cases, sharecroppers collected their share from the field or left the landlord's in the field while tenants stole the crops in the personal property of landlords (B. Josh 1979).

From January 1947, the police used the newly enacted Punjab Public Safety Ordinance (PPSO) to ban public meetings and gatherings. Though the rationale of the PPSO was to curtail the growth of armed wings of nationalist parties like the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) and the Muslim League National Guard (MLNG), they used it equally to repress tenant organizing. Tenants in Dilluwala, Montgomery district, decided that they would defy the ban on public meetings. The police arrested thirteen leaders of the tenants' movement in Dilluwala when three thousand tenants gathered on January 3rd, 1947. Tenants responded by protesting at the local police station and surrounding the assistant sub-inspector. The officer fired into the crowd, killing two and injuring three tenants (Punjab Government 1947, 17–19). Tenants in one village in Multan made resolutions to protest against the PPSO (Punjab Government 1947, 92).

In several cases of the tenant movement in western and central Punjab, Muslim landlords with the PML repressed their revolting tenants. The Nawab of Mamdot, who as discussed above had evicted protesting tenants, was Iftikhar Husain Khan, an important young leader of the PML. Sir Murid Hussain, a big landlord and an organizer with the PML, got the police to arrest forty-two tenants. A Muslim League worker was arrested who, surprisingly, was assisting the tenants (B. Josh 1979, 187). When the Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh tenants of Mian Mumtaz Daultana began agitating in Multan, he had them evicted (B. Josh 1979, 186). Paradoxically, Daultana was part of the progressive wing of the PML. He played an important role in giving space to communists such as Daniyal Latifi in his party.

One could argue that the dominant native political force in Punjab shifted from the PNUP to the PML by the mid-1940s. Yet, the dominant social force in both were roughly the same: Muslim agrarian landlords. Muslim agrarian elites thus maintained their dominance but shifted their ideology of pro-landlord ruralism from a colonial to national framework. If successful, their vision for a post-colonial future would be to reinscribe a basic fact of colonial rule: the subordination of poor peasants, tenant farmers, and agricultural workers to landlords.

Bhagwan Josh argued that it was the tenants who “enlightened” the Communist Party on the dominant role of landlords in the Muslim League, not vice-versa (B. Josh 1979, 186). Indeed, the tenant struggle highlighted pathways to national liberation different from those led by the Muslim League. The tenant struggle was built upon the organizing of working communities and their own institutions. The starting point was not with manifestos, but rather a critique of everyday life. Multi-religious tenant associations went beyond singular notions of a Muslim, Hindu, or Sikh *qaum*. The social reality of Punjab showed it was a territory with many *qaums* in a shared *watan*. The national question could never be resolved by assigning each religious *qaum*

with a separate *watan*. While the tenant movement did not use slogans of anti-casteism, its critique of landlordism challenged caste hierarchies given how caste was mediated by social relations of property. In turn, the repression of the tenant struggle was a means of maintaining the structure of caste hierarchy.

The tenant struggle continued into the summer of 1947, when Punjab was immersed in communal violence. Eventually, the tenant movement was interrupted by partition and independence. A last attempt at making Pakistan coloured by worker and peasant movements was the short-lived Pakistan Communist Party (PCP) advanced by Teja Singh Swatantar in July of 1947. Since the late 1920s, Teja Singh Swatantar and Sohan Singh Josh represented the two factions of Punjabi communism.⁶⁷ Teja Singh Swatantra led the Kirti Communist group. Swatantar's group traced its genealogy back to the Ghadar Party, Kirti Kisan Party, and the Punjab Kisan Committee. Whereas Josh's group was also part of the Kirti Kisan Party at an earlier period, they came to adopt a form of Marxist orthodoxy. Josh kept a close relationship to Moscow, while Swatantra's group had a greater tendency for breaching with Moscow's dictates and emphasized mass organizing. By the early 1940s both factions agreed to resolve differences and developed an alliance. Yet, disagreements persisted in organizing the CPI branch in Punjab. By mid-July of 1947, Swatantar finally broke with the CPI and developed the PCP along with BPL Bedi, Ram Singh Datt, and Fazal Ilahi Qurban. It contrasted significantly with the CPI's reconceptualization of the Pakistan demand. Swatantar's group accepted Pakistan as a forgone conclusion but wanted to work toward a true form of decolonization in Pakistan. The PCP's manifesto is significant in part because of its multiscalar character, that is in its call for

⁶⁷For more on Sohan Singh Josh see chapter 5.

transforming land relations, establishing a nation state, and undermining imperial systems. Its vision included the following calls:

- a) Formation of a free Democratic Pakistan State,
- b) prevent the Pakistan state as becoming a dependency of British and American Imperialism, and becoming a military base against eastern countries struggling for independence,
- c) end *jagidari*⁶⁸ system and to destroy the influence of British and Indian State troops,
- d) fight for universal suffrage,
- e) create mutual confidence among Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims living in Pakistan,
- f) protect rights of minorities,
- g) fight for the emancipation of the working classes (quoted in Punjab Government 1947).

Swatanter and many other non-Muslim communists made a decision to live in Pakistan. It was their hope that Hindus and Sikhs in western Punjab would remain there as part of their vision of a multi-*qaum* Pakistan. However, communal violence changed the minds of the majority of non-Muslim Punjabi communists. Swatanter himself traveled to eastern Punjab in post-partition India.

Pakistan could signify both anti-landlord and pro-landlord because the ideological struggle to define the nation led to internal contradictions. Ideologies are non-homogeneous and contradictory (Hall 1986b). This can be explained by how ideological formations can have residual and emergent elements (Williams 1977). And, internal contradictions in an ideological formation are the outcome of struggle among vying political forces (Eagleton 1991). The CPI attempted to turn the Pakistan movement into a force led by workers and peasants and direct its ideology towards anti-imperialism and anti-landlordism. However, the historical bloc of the

⁶⁸*Jagidari* refers not only to the existence of large landholdings, but also production organized through landlord-sharecropper relations, and landlord-state relations characterized by patronage (land, pensions, titles, political office).

Pakistan movement ended up being dominated by Muslim landlords, who re-configured their pro-colonial and pro-landlord claims to rurality under the Unionist Party toward a national project. The forces of restoration subordinated those of revolution in producing Pakistan. Yet Pakistan was also the outcome of competing claims for Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu national spaces. While the resolution of territory was also being made in boardrooms, the next section examines how such contesting claims were played out in the streets and in the fields.

6.5 Partition

The inhabitants of Lahore are being subjected [...] [to a city] submerged completely in the orgy of arson, stabbings, assaults and murders

- Secret Punjab Police Abstract of Intelligence, May 17, 1947 (Punjab Government 1947, 249)

While Muslims lost the most lives, Hindus and Sikhs lost the most property

- Penderel Moon, District Magistrate, Bhawalpur State, in 1947 (Moon 1962, 268)

The metaphor of “orgy” used by a colonial intelligence officer in Punjab to describe the horrific violence of the spring and summer of 1947 gives a sense of irrationality and spontaneity of the state of mind of those involved in these events. This is also the contemporary common sense about the violence of 1947: violence as spontaneous anti-Muslim, anti-Sikh, and anti-Hindu sentiment. Yet, beyond the level of appearances, the multiple acts of violence had multiple determinants. I want to tease out some of those logics and rationalities. I argue that communal violence articulated competing struggles over the nation. Ideas of national space were inflected with experiences of social life and alienation. They were organized by political forces, as well as being selectively strategic. I first situate the intensification of violence from March 1947 in the context of the militarization of colonized society and during the period leading up to the resignation of the Unionist Ministry that month. Second, I examine how the Hindu element saw Pakistan as a strategic opportunity to remove the presence of Muslims from India. Third, I

elaborate how many Sikhs were mobilized by claims to a Sikh national space that was threatened by the partition of Punjab. Fourth, I explain how ideas of a Pakistani national space became important for those seeking to acquire Hindu and Sikh property. This appropriation of Hindu and Sikh property was rooted in historical experiences of Muslim agrarian classes being exploited by Hindu *Bania*. But, it also had to do with the desire of Muslim proto-capitalists to undo the dominance of Hindus and Sikhs in native trading and manufacturing.

6.5.1 The Militarization of Colonial Society

When Punjabi soldiers returned to their homeland subsequent to the end of the Second World War, their presence would militarize the rising nationalist movements. While the colonial state had militarized a section of the Punjab – “martial castes” and “martial districts” – in the aftermath of the 1857 mutiny, the growing need for soldiers opened up enlistment beyond martial castes and martial districts. One million soldiers were recruited from the Punjab alone. After the war, many of the returned soldiers were demobilized since such a large standing army was both too expensive and no longer necessary. Some soldiers had become sensitized to anticolonialism; those interned in Japanese prisoner-of-war camps were enlisted in Subhas Chandra Bose’s Indian National Army (INA). 6,000 INA soldiers who were reported to have returned to the Punjab after the war (Punjab Government 1947).

In the Punjab, armed nationalist organizations rose in strength. They described themselves as community self-defence committees but were more often instigators of communal violence. The most significant of these was the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), which was at the forefront of acquiring arms, recruiting volunteers, and establishing and running local branches. Also important were the Muslim and Sikh equivalents, though they were less

organized: the Muslim League National Guard (MLNG) and the Akali Fauj. As communal tensions were on the rise, many ex-servicemen and ex-INA soldiers joined the RSS, the MLNG, or Akali Fauj, depending on their religious affiliation. This was despite the fact that the INA in many ways represented a counter to communal forms of organizing and politics.

Whereas the Punjab Muslim League won the majority of seats in the 1946 elections, they did not hold a sufficient number of seats to form a ministry. The Punjab Governor asked Khizr Tiwania, who was the leader of the Unionist Party, to form a coalition ministry. The Unionist Party made an unlikely alliance with the INC and Akali Sikhs. This was obviously a blow to the Punjab Muslim League who felt sidestepped after their election performance. At the end of January of 1947, things got tense when the coalition ministry issued the Punjab Public Safety Ordinance, which made the RSS and MLNG illegal. The Punjab Muslim League took a stand by starting a non-cooperation movement that included *hartals*, protests, and courting arrests during public meetings and processions. The pressure was too great for the coalition ministry and Khizr Tiwania resigned on March 2, 1947. In the ensuing days and months, communal violence intensified.

6.5.2 *Bharat*

A month after the All-India Congress Working Committee announced their recommendation for the partition of Punjab, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar issued a statement on the Hindu Mahasabha's position that echoed Lala Lajpat Rai's call for partitioning Punjab in the 1920s. Savarkar called for a truncated Pakistan in the north-west and north-east of India. He argued that the border could be pushed further out eventually, squeezing Pakistan out of existence. This would allow for a strong centralized India that could annex Pakistan at a later date (Punjab

Government 1947, 174). Similar sentiments were expressed by propertied Hindus in Punjab when responding to the Viceroy's decision to partition Punjab to create two separate nation-states. They likened partition to cutting off a weak limb, whereby removing Muslim majority areas provided a stronger center (Punjab Government 1947, 307). The *Bharat* of Hindu supremacism would be produced by removing Muslims. While Congress and Muslim League were busy negotiating the terms of independence in the colonial boardrooms, the RSS advanced to cut, chop, and squeeze Pakistan.

The RSS leadership believed that the territorial disputes between Pakistan and India could be resolved through a civil war. The RSS' strategy consisted not so much in organizing their volunteers into front-line ground troops, but rather creating the conditions for a social conflict over territory. They organized to pit Hindus and Sikhs against Muslims, thus laying the foundation for seemingly spontaneous outbursts of communal violence. Colonial intelligence described such activity among the Hindu community as making "preparations for a communal war of attrition" (Punjab Government 1947, 250). They also mentioned how the RSS was using the Akalis as ground troops and to a lesser extent their own volunteers. Further, fund-raising for relief aid after communal attacks was used as a front for funding RSS activities (Punjab Government 1947, 250).

The RSS made significant preparations for communal violence. They opened up branches across various districts, cities, and towns of Punjab to recruit volunteers. Volunteers received military training and physical education. In Ambala district, the local branch was engaged in riot training: they were practicing riot-tactics by going into Muslim neighbourhoods and scaring people (Punjab Government 1947, 197). RSS branches and gangs stockpiled arms, including: hand grenades, home-made bombs, revolvers, guns, sharp edged weapons, iron axe blades, wooden

axe handles, steel helmets, daggers, hatchets, bows and arrows, and acid (Punjab Government 1947, 51, 197, 275, 410). RSS workers would tour areas distributing fuel, rations, clothing, and weapons so as to secretly prepare the Hindu community for an offensive against Muslims (Punjab Government 1947, 275).

The RSS' principal tactic was to provoke Muslim retaliation. RSS had roaming gangs that would attack or murder individuals. Such assaults lead to Muslim reprisals and eventually a localized riot. In a raid of an RSS member's home in Jullundur City, police found several small scale and medium sized maps of various sections of the city that colour-coded Muslim and Hindu quarters, with names of owners and tenants of houses. For example, such maps were found in a house of an RSS militant who had lab equipment for making bombs (Punjab Government 1947, 275). One could assume that maps of the communal geography of Jullundur were to be used for targeted explosions. The use of bombs was a common *modus operandi* of the RSS. The residents of Lahore and Amritsar witnessed daily bomb explosions and arson in the summer of 1947 (Punjab Government 1947, 206–7).

I want to mention how the claim to national spaces was gendered. The violence of partition was unquestionably gendered: many women were raped, abducted, and forcibly married.⁶⁹ Veena Das argues that decades prior to partition, “public anxieties around sexuality and purity might have created the grounds on which the figure of the violated woman became an important mobilizing point for reinstating the nation as a “pure” and “masculine space” (Das 2007, 19). Discourse of partition violence shows that rape for example was a means of humiliating the other religious community by thus marking their women's bodies as “spoiled”. Lala Lajpat Rai's appeal in the

⁶⁹Men also experienced violence in particular ways, such as through castration (Das 2007).

1920s is a good example of how partition between Muslim India and non-Muslim India was premised on Hindu male anxieties about Muslim men raping Hindu women. Ideas about the “lustful Muslim males and innocent Hindu women” were commonly circulated among Hindu nationalist organizations, such as Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha, and Rashtriya Sevak Sangh (Das 2007, 32). Hindu nationalists mobilized over anxieties about lustful Muslim males being a threat to the nation and Hindu patriarchal domesticity. Paradoxically, the strategy to remove the Muslim male threat was to violate Muslim women.

Key to the plan for a truncated Pakistan included the removal of Muslims east of a future border. If Muslims could be pushed out while Hindus and Sikhs remained present in particular areas, these could be claimed to be part of India. Such a strategy found favour among sections of the Sikh community who felt horrified by the potential partition of Punjab as it would divide their community in half, separate them from their sacred sites, and destroy their claims to a Sikh *watan*. The Hindu and Sikh alliance was a negotiated settlement to accommodate Hindu and Sikh national claims. As a result, it was considered possible to create a Sikh homeland in eastern Punjab by displacing Muslims. To make this happen, RSS played instigator while the Akali Fauj provided the ground troops.

6.5.3 Sikh National Space

We took the decision to turn the Muslims out.

- Master Tara Singh, leader of the Akali Dal (quoted in Brass 2003, 77)

The prospect of Pakistan was looming larger in mid-February 1947 as Punjab Muslim League protests against the coalition ministry in Punjab were not abetting. The leadership of the Akali Dal saw this as a sign of Muslims wanting to create Pakistan by force. Until 1946 the Sikh community was divided between those who supported India and those who saw a Sikh future in

Pakistan. By the beginning of 1947 the Akali Dal considered that Pakistan would undermine their claims for an autonomous Sikh national space. Sikhs were increasingly wary of Muslim League overtures for an autonomous Sikh homeland within Pakistan. Master Tara Singh, leader of the Akali Dal, called for the resurrection of the Akali Fauj, the armed wing of the Akali Dal, to take back Punjab. Whereas the RSS and to a lesser extent the MLNG had already been organizing and planning, it was only at that point the Akali Dal made serious preparations for a territorial battle.

The Akali Dal made claims to the Punjab as a Sikh national space. This was not an assertion based on demographics; Sikhs could not make such an argument since they were far from being the majority. Rather, the claim to Sikh national space entailed a “historicity of territory and territorialization of history” (Poulantzas 2000, 114; Goswami 2004). The Akali Dal claimed the Punjab given that it was the birthplace of Sikhism, the location of the religion’s most important sacred sites, and the site of a Sikh state prior to colonial annexation. Sikh claims to national space developed upon colonial linguistic studies that asserted that Punjabi was a Sikh language despite the fact that its heritage and daily use was shared among the various religious communities in the region. Territorial claims by Akali Dal to central Punjab were also advanced with Lockean arguments which suggested that the *doab* region of canal colonies was made productive through Sikh labour. Ultimately, however, Pakistan became interpreted as a threat to the Sikh community not on the basis of abstract arguments but due to a sequence of events: Muslim League agitations against the coalition ministry, British Prime Minister Clement Attlee’s announcement of February 20th (calling for the transfer of power by June 1948), the resignation of the coalition ministry, and the Rawalpindi riots of March 1947 where Hindus and Sikhs were massacred by Muslims.

Master Tara Singh's plan for an Akali Fauj called for developing *jathas* (Sikh military regiments) in every village (Punjab Government 1947, 155). This plan echoed histories of anticolonial resistance: *Jathas* were formed during the Anglo-Sikh wars prior to the annexation of Punjab and during the 1920s in the struggle over the control of *gurdwaras*.

Whereas Akali leaders and lower-ranked members discussed ways of recapturing Punjab after the departure of the British, specific plans were underway to create a Sikh homeland in the eastern zone of a partitioned Punjab in India. Sikh industrialists and merchant capitalists, who were mostly aligned with the INC, desired a new province consisting of the eastern most districts of Ambala and Jullundur as well as Delhi. In contrast, Sikh aristocrats and landlords with large and medium sized estates wanted the territory to be in central and parts of western Punjab – that is, between the Sutlej and Chenab rivers, where most of the Sikh population was concentrated (Punjab Government 1947, 192–3). Giani Karta Singh, who led this second faction within the Akali Dal, believed that civil war alone would ensure a Sikh homeland (Punjab Government 1947, 202).

The strategy for a Sikh national space entailed maintaining a militant Sikh presence in contested areas and removing Muslims in eastern Punjab. When the Viceroy's June 3rd proposal was announced, Muslims residing in the "Hindustan Zone" of Punjab resigned themselves to living in *Hindustan/India*; for most, migration was not considered an option at this point. How could Muslims be forced to change their mind? One tactic pursued by the Akali Dal was to burn the wheat harvest in various Muslim villages, such as in Jullundur, Sialkot, Amritsar, and Multan (Punjab Government 1947, 20). A group of 20 to 25 Akali Sikh raided a Muslim settlement in Amritsar district and burnt the village using incendiary bombs (Punjab Government 1947, 288). Sikh and Hindu groups often burned entire Muslim villages in eastern Punjab (Punjab

Government 1947, 277). When the boundaries between India and Pakistan were set, there were multiple cases of Sikh and Hindu groups crossing over the border from eastern to western Punjab to attack Muslims and make nocturnal raids in the bordering villages especially in Lahore and Sialkot districts (Punjab Government 1947, 455, 478). These actions most likely tried to push the border further west.

Another tactic employed to force Muslims out was a social boycott. During an Akali Dal meeting in Amritsar in April, a call was made to replace Muslim menial labourers in villages, boycott Muslim lawyers, doctors and retailers, refuse housing or farming tenancy rights to Muslims, refuse purchases made by Muslim retailers (Punjab Government 1947, 202). Similar boycotts were also made by Hindus. Labouring Muslims across eastern Punjab found it difficult to survive: Muslim labourers were being laid off from Hindu owned factories (Punjab Government 1947, 179), and Muslims had difficulty purchasing grains. These actions had the material effect of unifying nation, territory, and economy by excluding Muslims.

After the Viceroy announced the partition of Punjab in June of 1947, Sikhs who resided in the future “Pakistan Zone” were instructed by the Akali Dali leadership not to migrate to eastern Punjab (Punjab Government 1947, 327). Hindu traders and merchants in western Punjab, who had more liquid forms of capital, were more willing to migrate to eastern Punjab. In contrast, Sikh landlords in the canal colonies had greater affinities to the land. They were upset by the British partition plan while also being unwilling to live under Muslim rule (Punjab Government 1947, 325). In collaboration with the RSS, Akali regiments were protecting Hindu and Sikh communities and *gurdwaras* in various parts of western Punjab. Giani Kartar Singh advised Hindu and Sikh villagers in Lyallpur not to migrate and called upon them to eject their Muslim neighbours (Punjab Government 1947, 366–7). The RSS advised Hindus in Jhelum not to

migrate, but instead resist any Muslim aggression (Punjab Government 1947, 379). There was optimism among the RSS and Akali Dal that Hindu and Sikh communities might be able to maintain their presence and push out Muslims. However, while RSS workers continued operating from within Pakistan subsequent to independence and partition, their numbers were dwindling. Many headed to Kashmir, a new site of contestation that offered the possibility to remove Muslims and extend *Bharat* as national space.

6.5.4 The Ideology of Pakistan

It is a difficult task to unpack the violence of 1947. It will be impossible to identify patterns based on all the desires and determinants that were behind each human that was killed, raped, or dispossessed. I do however want to remark on the multiple determinants of Muslim violence. Muslims often were involved in horrific acts of violence, some of it was organized through the Muslim League National Guard, who enlisted volunteers, gave training in sword and knife fighting, and first aid relief. The MLNG was complicit in communal riots against Hindus and Sikhs. However, they were considerably less organized compared to the RSS or the Akali Fauj. The Muslim League also had little history in grassroots organizing as compared to the RSS or Akali Dal. Some Muslim League leaders visited villages to motivate Muslims to fight against Sikhs in their area. In some districts, action and vigilance committees were formed. The Muslim League also assisted in opening up food-grain and cloth depots for specifically Muslim consumers as a means to respond to boycotts by Hindus and Sikhs (Punjab Government 1947, 252–3). Muslims who were forced to migrate from eastern to western Punjab in the summer of 1947 often engaged in retributive violence against non-Muslims in their new home. Those Hindus and Sikhs who initially decided to remain in western Punjab were convinced to leave following attacks on their person or property (Punjab Government 1947, 420). Reprisals for

atrocities in eastern Punjab followed suit. Hindu and Sikh evacuee trains and convoys were attacked by Muslims in Gujranawala, Jhelum, Rawalpindi, and Multan districts (Punjab Government 1947, 467). Women's bodies were a site of violence through rape, murder, and kidnapping by Muslims and non-Muslims alike (Punjab Government 1947). Claims to a Muslim national space were made through violence against Hindu and Sikh women, and similarly claims of Sikh and Hindu national spaces were exercised through violence against Muslim women. Muslims often targeted Hindu propertied classes. Claiming Muslim national space became a strategy to acquire Hindu and Sikh property.

After the resignation of the coalition ministry in the beginning of March 1947, riots ensued. Hindus and Sikhs were massacred by Muslims. The majority of the victims in Rawalpindi and Attock districts were Hindu moneylenders and shopkeepers, many of whom had recently converted to Sikhism (Moon 1962; Sarkar 1990). The specific targeting of Hindu moneylenders indicates how the violence of 1947 is contiguous with a long standing struggle between Muslims and Hindu *Bania*. In neighbouring Bhawalpur State, whose class structure was similar to that of south-western Punjab, Muslim peasants often attacked Hindu *Bania* during riots. Penderel Moon – a colonial official working as the District Magistrate in Bhawalpur State at the time – claims that Muslim agrarian classes and those in the Bhawalpur Army were “out for loot rather than blood” (Moon 1962, 194). Moon continues:

The removal of the Hindus from the city was, therefore, exactly what they wanted. It opened the field for loot and did away with resistance and obstruction. They had no special desire to wade through blood to get their plunder (Moon 1962, 194).

Many Hindus and Sikhs left Bhawalpur city in mid-September after Muslim mobs attacked Hindus and Sikhs. A Muslim railway officer commented on the emigrating Hindus in this period:

Look [at] how these rich *baniyas* are being allowed to leave laden with their belongings, whereas our people are being driven out of India empty-handed (quoted in Moon 1962, 219).

The evacuation by Hindu agrarian landlords was taken as an opportunity by Muslim tenants or neighbouring Muslim landlords to appropriate land (Moon 1962, 250). The common sentiment among Hindu industrialists and merchants in western Punjab in July of 1947 was in favour of migration. They were rushing to sell their assets and transfer their credit out of local banks (Punjab Government 1947, 357). Sikh landlords did not have such liquid capital and tended to burn their crops and homes when they migrated in order to frustrate Muslim would-be looters (Punjab Government 1947, 467). Muslim League leaders in Jhang advised Muslims to stop non-Muslim evacuees from taking their property with them (Punjab Government 1947, 292). In Sialkot, some wealthy and influential Muslims took possession of factories and buildings belonging to fleeing Hindus and Sikhs. However, appropriators sometimes faced resistance by a larger public; in Pakpattan, 300 to 400 people demonstrated against local Muslim League leaders and wealthy individuals who were accused of appropriating valuable evacuee property (Punjab Government 1947, 452–3).

The effectiveness of the ideology of Pakistan was in its ability to weld together a fragmented Muslim population into a national project. For the vast majority, Muslims did not join the Pakistan movement because they were convinced by the benefits of an Islamic state, though such arguments were being circulated by the Muslim League leadership. Rather, people participated in the struggle at the conjuncture of 1947 because the demand for a Muslim national space was perceived to be the most strategic means of achieving their desires and avoiding their fears. The Pakistan demand appeared as a territorial resolution over a number of contradictions that represented long-standing struggles. These struggles included aspects of rescaling processes among the body, household, land, nation, and the worldwide. First, there existed tensions around

land as a means of (re)production, and as a means for territorial sovereignty. This included a conflict between Muslim debtor peasants and Hindu moneylenders that involved questions about the role of debt, caste, and religion in mediating control over food and land. Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu nationalists made claims on agricultural and factory lands as a means of claiming a national space. In the face of the RSS and Akali Dal's attempt to remove Muslims from eastern Punjab and extend *Bharat* westward, Muslims were pushed into a Muslim national space. Some Muslims also perceived this as an opportunity to remove Hindu and Sikh propertied classes, acquire land, industry, and, in some cases freeing oneself from the tyranny of tenancy. Agrarian landlords with the PML were alerted to the possibility of avoiding land reforms through a Muslim national space. Second, women's bodies and their role in the household were two important sites of struggle. Muslim claims to be a *qaum* was tied to conceptions of women's seclusion to the household. Claims over national space was exercised through violence against women of other religious communities. A Muslim national space was perceived by Muslim men (and some women) as a means to protect Muslim women against Hindu and Sikh male violence. This, however, secured that the nation-in-becoming would be a patriarchal space. Third, the relationship between the nation and the worldwide was one fraught with tension. Various sections of colonized society were alerted to the emancipatory possibilities in a post-colonial future. However, the British colonial state ensured the materialization of those imaginaries of national spaces that were coherent with a restored imperial world order. The post-partition period would clarify the false character of decolonization during independence and partition.

Concluding Remarks: Pakistan as Passive Revolution

The Pakistani nation-state was formed in a moment of passive revolution. Muslim anticolonial nationalism in South Asia can be historicized within a "continuum of passive revolution"

(Morton 2010, 315) in the post-1917 era that worked to repress the forces of communism and radical anticolonialism. The British colonial state's attempt to repress radical strains of anticolonialism – from the Ghadar Party just prior to the Russian Revolution and Indian communism subsequently – was coupled by colonial support of the forces of restoration even if this meant transforming colonial space to national spaces within a framework of what Fanon called *fausse décolonisation* (false decolonization) (Fanon 2002, 59). Imperialism adapted to this changing international order through rescaling processes: independent nation-states came to mediate imperial relations.

The historiography of the Pakistan movement has largely ignored the role of radical politics in the creation of Pakistan. Communist activities are sometimes featured in such narratives, but are never central to the argument. This chapter is a corrective to such historiography. It places revolutionary movements and popular struggle in a dialectical relationship to movements for restoration. The call for colonial space as national space cannot be contextualized without the history of popular initiative and their repression. The demand for a Muslim national space combined both elements for restoration and revolution. From 1942 to 1946, Punjabi communists supported Muslim nationalism as they believed it had revolutionary potential. Pakistan presented opportunities for a radical anticolonialism: undoing structures of domination based on caste and religion while enabling national self-determination. It was radically anti-imperialist to the extent that it advanced agrarian revolution and proposed to eliminate landlordism and imperialist surplus appropriation. However, communists were unable to provide a leading position inside the PML, nor were they successful in creating a mass base that could change the balance of forces in their favour. The progressive elements of a Muslim national space were thus subordinated in the

PML's program when Muslim landlords came to lead the party. What did result from communist participation in the PML, then? A left discourse necessary for developing a mass base.

Rather than the transformation of structures of domination such as caste, religious, and gender hierarchies (which were pre-colonial in origin but used and modified by the colonial state), the thrust of the Pakistan movement struggled to reorganize, not overturn such hierarchies. Through a protracted struggle spanning decades and culminating in 1947, Muslim landlords, mostly of the *Jat* caste replaced Hindu *Bania* as moneylenders. However, this anti-*Bania* project was not for the "annihilation of caste", to borrow Ambedkar's phrase (Ambedkar 1987). Further, the realization of separate Muslim and Hindu national spaces (Pakistan and India) was promoted by the Hindu Right and the RSS. Women were frequent targets of communal violence, through rape, abductions, and forced marriages. Hindu nationalists mobilized their social base in part by playing on ideas about the threat of the lustful Muslim male towards Hindu women. Such a claim for protecting Hindu domesticity was linked to arguments for a national space. When Muslim landlords foresaw that independence was inevitable and joined the Pakistan movement, those formerly associated with the Unionist Party projected their pro-landlord and pro-imperialist politics within a framework of Muslim nationalism defined by the PML. Landlords affiliated with the Muslim League put down tenant struggles in western and central Punjab in 1946-47 in order to repress challenges to propertied caste supremacy. After, Muslim landlords continued their subservience to British, and, ultimately, U.S. imperialism. Partition became an opportunity for many to appropriate capital and land, as well as debt relief. Social hierarchies were reorganized, but landlords and the auxiliary class ensured that the redistribution of land and capital helped restore, not revolutionize the social order. Lower castes and classes benefited very little, with some spoils and debt relief. The real winners were Muslim agrarian landlords and the

auxiliary class. The Pakistan state provided Muslim migrants with evacuee land equivalent to the property holdings they possessed prior to partition. The gendered violence that characterized partition and independence in 1947 was part of an ongoing struggle by native men to relegate women with the social reproduction of the household, which produced women as a site of inter-communal struggle. Gender violence at partition also ensured that the nation-in-becoming was a masculinized space.

The case of South Asian Muslim nationalism contributes to the literature on passive revolution by developing the concept in a context of societies structured by domination, above all colonialism and racialization. The case makes it clear that class and state cannot be theorized as being outside of caste, religion, and gender. Anticolonial radicals recognized the importance of these structures of domination. The demand for national self-determination was a means of achieving autonomy for social collectivities defined by religion, ethnicity, and nation, while struggling against colonial reifications in racialized social formations. Yet, the claim for a Muslim national space shows that it was an internally contradictory demand with revolutionary and restorative elements. The leading element in the call for a Muslim national space were landlords, who saw in the Pakistan demand a means to maintain imperial relations and unequal property relations. At the same time, the struggle for a Muslim national space operated in a field of Sikh and Hindu contestation and competition. (False) decolonization amounted to a passive revolution which combined restoration and modernized imperial rule by reorganizing social hierarchies, structures of domination, and scales.

7. Closing Remarks: Naya Pakistan

Naya Pakistan, Naya Pakistan

Inshallah, Inshallah

Insaaf ki awaaz uthay

Zulm ki deewaar giray

Haq baatil pe ho chaa'ya

Haath utha kar maang dua

Naya Pakistan, Inshallah

New Pakistan, New Pakistan

God willing, God willing

Raise the voice of justice

Destroy the walls of oppression

Truth will defeat lies

Raise your hands and make a prayer

New Pakistan, God willing

- Salman Ahmad, *Naya Pakistan* (2013)

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something entirely new, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle slogans and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language.

- Karl Marx. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Marx 1978, 595)

As I write this conclusion, the Pakistani population have participated in the 2018 general elections. There are two events that are quite revealing about the present conjuncture. On the one hand, there is the ascendancy of Imran Khan as Prime Minister of the country. Khan, the leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (Movement for Justice -- PTI) is a cricket player turned politician, who makes anti-establishment slogans, has the support of a pious Muslim middle class, sections of native capitalists, and some commentators argue he has the backing of the military. On the

other hand, Mehar Abdul Sattar, the general secretary of the tenant farmer movement Anjuman-e-Mazareen Punjab (Punjab Tenants Association -- AMP), was recently given a ten year prison sentence for his involvement in a protest where two police officers were injured (Butt 2018). While these two events are seemingly unconnected, these are two aspects of the same moment of passive revolution in contemporary Pakistan.

The PTI's slogan *Naya Pakistan* captures ideas of change and continuity that are finding resonance with a range of social forces. For the past two decades, Imran Khan has consistently campaigned against corruption, which combines claims for economic redistribution and moral restoration. In a country where the state operates through patronage politics, the working class and the middle-class find explanatory power in a critique of corruption. Despite PTI's call for inaugurating a new form of politics, Imran Khan dons costumes from past battles: he calls for restoring the vision of the father of the nation (Muhammad Ali Jinnah) and the Prophet Muhammad for building an Islamic welfare state. PTI's claims on a Muslim national people and space is not just discursive, but its objectification and homogenization of Islam provides moral and social content for their hegemonic project. For instance, the PTI has been able to mobilize a conservative Muslim clergy and Islamist parties, like the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) to rally against the Protection of Women Against Violence Bill in Punjab in 2015. PTI and religious parties claimed that the bill was un-Islamic and would destroy the Muslim household by undermining the rights of men (Ali 2016). PTI's right-wing populist rhetoric shows all indications that he will follow the "infrastructural nationalism" of his predecessors through continued support of the Chinese-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Akhter 2015b), as well as capitalist development that is constrained by the hegemonic bloc (large agrarian landowners, merchant and industrial capital,

the middle-class, military-security complex, ethnically *mohajir* and Punjabi, and a patriarchal order).

The other aspect of this New Pakistan is an authoritarian character, which will be more evident when the PTI is unable to fulfill their populist claims for social welfare. Yet, authoritarianism and state violence is not a very new phenomenon, but an aspect of the linkages between political society and the military. Take for instance Mehar Abdul Sattar's recent sentencing that came after he was released from prison for one month after two years and two months of imprisonment in a high security prison in Sahiwal, Pakistan. Some of his charges then included murder, robbery, conspiring with India, anti-state actions, and multiple acts of terrorism (Sheikh 2016). This is interesting because the AMP is known for fighting for the tenancy rights of farmers in Khanewal and Okara districts. The movement began in 1999 when tenants on a military-owned farm in Okara were obligated to shift from a tenancy agreement to a contract system that would do away with protections from eviction, greater capacity to go into debt through a cash payment system rather than *battai* (sharecropping). The movement has deployed tactics like non-violent protests and lobbying with mainstream political parties. It includes in its leadership women tenants, who have often been at the front lines with *thappas* (laundry-washing clubs) in hand (Haider and Sayeed 2010). The movement is also noteworthy in being able to coordinate Muslim and Christian tenants on one platform. Police and paramilitary forces have responded with violent repression through intimidation, shooting, arrests, and torture.

These two entry-points on the contemporary moment are indications of the fragile hegemony of the Pakistani state. The contemporary crisis of authority is nothing new but is a founding character of this postcolonial state. The dominant forces of the Pakistan movement were unable and unwilling to form a national-popular collective will. While a Muslim national people and

space partially resolved certain contradictions of colonized society as well as creating new ones. Indeed, the ghosts of the Pakistan movement continue to haunt the living.

In the following, I examine the contemporary relevance of the historical argument about the rise of Pakistan. I develop the broader theoretical, historical-empirical, and political significance of this dissertation.

The Pakistani Nation-State, Passive Revolution, and Rescaling

First, I argue that passive revolution needs to be understood not only as operating *through* the multiscalar geography of imperialism and (neo)colonialism, but also entails rescaling processes. Such a framework provides an important corrective to how the emergence of the Pakistani nation-state is commonly conceived, either as the territorial expression of transhistorical Muslim nationhood, the outcome of political mobilizations for Muslim national self-determination against Hindu domination, or that it represented the class interests of a Muslim auxiliary class and agrarian landlords. In contrast, I argue that Pakistan was the condensation of multiple processes and struggles.

When examined in terms of a conjuncture, independence and partition cannot be examined solely in terms of the immediate surrounding events. Rather, it is congealed histories of different durations, temporalities, and spatialities. This dissertation has attempted to parse some of those histories and trajectories.

The Pakistan demand was originally advanced as a territorial resolution to long-standing claims by Muslim nobility and auxiliary classes for greater representation in governance, government employment, and economic resources. Claims for a Muslim national space was seen as one way

to counter claims for India as a Hindu national space. The Muslim League's demand for a Muslim national space never questioned British imperialism. This is understandable when we see that Muslim nationalism advanced by Muslim nobility and auxiliary classes envisioned a Muslim *qaum* inside a British India.

While Muslim nobility and auxiliary classes originally formulated the demand for Pakistan, in Punjab it never gained much support until Muslim agrarian landlords became its leading proponents. Muslim landlords had been an important social and political force that supported colonial rule. However, when Muslim landlords foresaw that independence was inevitable, they quickly joined the Pakistan movement. Landlords who had previously organized under the Punjab National Unionist Party projected their pro-landlord and pro-imperialist politics within a framework for a Muslim national space and people. Muslim landlords saw in Pakistan the possibility for avoiding agrarian land reforms under a post-independence Congress leadership. Muslim agrarian classes more broadly saw in the Pakistan demand a means of resolving tensions with Hindu *Bania* that were the outcome of class-caste relations subsequent to Punjab's integration in an imperialist food regime. Since at least the 1880s, riots between Hindu *Bania* and Muslim agrarian classes have been a means for rearticulating social hierarchies based on class, caste, and religion. Political struggles over Hindu (India) and Muslim (Pakistan) national spaces in 1947 was the latest phase in the fight between Hindu *Bania* and Muslim agrarian classes.

Violence against women was a significant aspect in the making of Muslim and Hindu national spaces. Control over women's bodies were key sites of political struggle by religious nationalists. Yet, this gendered violence needs to be contextualized in a longer history by Hindu and Muslim social reform movements attempt to control their kin women's bodies in the face of

colonial modernization. Hindu nationalists, since at least the 1920s, mobilized their social base in part by playing on ideas about the threat of the lustful Muslim male towards Hindu women. Muslim men similarly attempted to claim a Muslim national space during partition through the rape of Hindu and Sikh women. Gender violence at partition secured that the nation-in-becoming was a masculinized space. While I have integrated concerns about gender with respect to nationalism, anticolonialism, and state formation, my analysis indicates the need for greater attention on this problematic. A future project could examine gender relations highlighted in memoirs written by male and female anticolonial militants.

The Pakistani nation-state that was officially celebrated in August of 1947 was not the only postcolonial political-geographical imaginary that was on the table. The repression of radical anticolonialism has been immanent to the emergence of the Pakistan of August 1947.

The Ghadar Party's tactics of political education, political *dacoity*, and an anticolonial mutiny were ingredients for rescaling empire in the winter of 1914-1915. The party worked upon peasant forms of resistance to Hindu *Bania* control over food and land, but reframed them along anticolonial lines. The colonial response was unequivocal: the immediate suppression of the Ghadar Party. The colonial state reworked relations of coercion and consent, for enabling certain civil-political society connections while disabling others. The colonial state combined developing apparatuses for repression with limited democratization. The latter did not enable liberation to native society from above, but rather selective modernization via devolution was a hegemonic project or passive revolution. These changes set a course for redirecting popular energies to the provincial scale over those favoured by the Ghadar Party: the national and the international.

The late 1920s saw the emergence of united front politics that brought a range of social and political forces together with coordinated actions across British India. The united front was a site of internal contestation among different claims to the nation and worldwide. The Kirti Kisan Party and Naujawan Bharat Sabha attempted to shift the united front towards an anti-imperialist politic, while the dominant tendency was the “center nationalist” position advanced by the Indian National Congress that called for dominion status. The colonial state worked to break alliances in the united front by separating nationalism from (anti-imperialist) internationalism. This was accomplished by criminalizing those claims on the nation that could not be contained within empire, namely anti-imperialism.

The Communist Party of India in the mid-1940s attempted to bring a radical anti-colonial framework to claims on a Muslim national space, namely reframing the Muslim League’s demand into one about national self-determination in a multi-national India. Though, communists were in a weak position to provide a leading position inside the Punjab Muslim League. Punjabi communists were also unsuccessful in developing a mass base that could shift the balance of forces in the Punjab Muslim League in their favour. Progressive elements in the demand for a Muslim national space were subordinated in the PML’s hegemonic project when Muslim landlords came to lead the party. The PML’s pro-landlord stance could be seen in how several Muslim League leaders supported the suppression of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious tenant struggle in 1946-1947.

The Pakistani nation-state emerged in a moment of passive revolution – the condensation of political struggles and rescaling process that combined the modernization of rule with the restoration of dominant social and political forces by repressing, transforming, and redirecting radical struggles. Claims to national space were potentially revolutionary and anti-imperialist,

but they could equally be redirected and contained within empire in a post-colonial restored imperial world order.

In the present moment, the PTI is rearticulating claims on the nation with populist overtones that hint at progressive claims for constituting a popular collective will. Yet, PTI's claim to a Muslim national space is a hegemonic project for absorbing the interests of the new middle-class, but also restoring the dominant social and political forces (Mallick 2017). Hegemony is also restored through the repression of movements that are threatening such as the tenant rights movement in Okara. This tenants movement hints at decolonization being an incomplete project.

The contemporary agrarian relations in Okara find its origin in the British Raj. First, in Okara district, the colonial state organized settlement in the region with the construction of canal irrigation and the Lower Bari Doab Colony. Significant settlement occurred between 1905 and 1925, in what was then Multan and Montgomery districts (Akhtar 2006). The British Indian Army established a 20,000-acre farm for military agricultural needs that was first called Oat Hay Farm before changing names to the Military Farms Group Okara after independence (Akhtar 2006). The colonial state employed caste categories to distinguish between people with tenancy rights, artisans (*mussallis*) and landless labourers (*kamins*) (Ali 1988; Akhtar 2006). In Okara, the colonial state also allocated lands to low-caste dalits that had converted to Christianity. With independence, the newly formed Pakistan Army inherited ownership of the farmland along with the farmers who had tenancy rights from the colonial period. The AMP claims that the army has no paper record of ownership over the land (Haider and Sayeed 2010). Aided by canal irrigation, railways, ports, and shipping lanes, agrarian transformation in this region tied Punjabi fields to the international grain market. As I discussed in chapter four, the rise of the Ghadar Party in the 1910s responded to the agrarian crisis that resulted from the vagaries of the international grain

market. On the eve of independence and partition, peasants protested against tenancy relations in 1946 and 1947 in response to increasing economic exploitation by their landlords. In this longer view, the current tenant protests are generated by the most recent case of deepening capitalist and imperialist relations as initiated by the ruling social and political forces.

The military administration's call for a change from tenancy (in-kind payments) to a contract system (cash rent) was claimed to be a modernizing initiative as it would do away with archaic sharecropping practices. However, tenant farmers saw this as a recipe for greater precarity and eventual eviction. This shift to a contract system was part of a broader attempt to make agriculture more rationalized and corporatized. Other state strategies include the recent Seed (Amendment) Act 2015 and the Plant Breeders' Rights Act 2016 that are meant to facilitate the entry of genetically-modified patented seeds (Ali 2017). Meanwhile, the corporatization of agricultural inputs is happening through molecular transformations. For instance, USAID donated GM sunflower seeds when Pakistani farmers lost their seeds during the massive floods of 2010. Once a dependency was established between farmers and GM cash crops, farmers had little option to buy GM sunflower seeds the subsequent year. In longer perspective, the deregulation that came with neoliberalism since the 1970s forced many women in rural and urban working-class families to supplement household income by taking up home-based labour. This entails working in the informal economy through underpaid, unregulated, and temporary contractual work. In many cases, multinational corporations have resorted to contracting out work for producing soccer balls, garments, and cigarettes. Home-based women's labour in Pakistan is a rescaling of household, nation, and empire. It reconfigures the patriarchal practice of *purdah* (seclusion) (Roots for Equity 2011).

Many of these transformations are mediated by extant social relations, namely patriarchy, sharecropping, and caste hierarchies. Independence ended the colonial codification of caste relations without however challenging the material and ideological bases of caste. For example, no substantial land redistribution was undertaken. Capitalist development has not undone these structures, but rather is constrained by the hegemonic bloc that includes large landowners some of whom are also industrialists and merchant capitalists. Despite agriculture being partly industrialized and agricultural inputs being commodified, it remains labour-intensive. Agrarian change has not been taken lightly by landless labourers, tenant farmers, smallholders, and women labourers, who feel a squeeze in their capacity for dignified subsistence. In some cases, they have taken to organized resistance that is typically met by state repression.

I mentioned earlier that the charges on Sattar, especially those relating to terrorism, are interesting. I say this because they are reminiscent of the British colonial state's Punjab Ordinance of 1914, the Defence of India Act of 1915, and to a lesser degree anti-Communist type trials like that of the Meerut Conspiracy Case that were used to repress a burgeoning anticolonial movement by preventing any action that was deemed as disturbing "public safety". It is true that Mehar Abdul Sattar is no Kartar Singh, the 19-year old who was hanged in 1915 through the Defence of India Act for his involvement in the Ghadar Party. And AMP is not a revolutionary anti-imperialist organization. In fact, Sattar has been running for several years for a seat in parliament, first as an independent but then as a member of the landlord-led Pakistan People's Party (PPP) (Haider and Sayeed 2010). Yet, anti-terror laws by the Pakistani state to repress social movements is not without precedent. They originate in 1914 when the colonial state responded to the Ghadar Party and communal anti-*Bania* riots, in the latter case it was used to stop this movement from turning into something more radical.

While the AMP has taken the path of protest politics, they also see electoral campaigning with mainstream political parties as a viable strategy. The electoral option becomes more palatable given the criminalization of protest. In chapter four, I argued that the colonial state developed a more sophisticated relationship with civil society by repressing radical anticolonial movements and creating limited democratic institutions that were meant to incorporate popular initiatives. Today's protest and civil disobedience has stopped the military-landlords from collecting a share of the harvest from tenants, but it has come at the cost of arrests. At the same time, mainstream political parties have not kept their promises to implement tenant rights. In this context, gaining a parliamentary seat in order to defend their right to tenancy is seen as a viable tactic. The effect has been to prevent the AMP from turning into something radical. The movement has always remained quite parochial in its politics: its demand for tenancy rights has been limited to the scale of the estates that belong to the Military Farm Group in Okara and the Punjab Seed Company in Khanewal. Even so the Military Farm Group claimed that the AMP leaders were arrested not for defending land rights but for promoting anti-state and anti-national activities (Sheikh 2016).

The case of the AWP points to the strength and weakness of "militant particularism" (Harvey 1995). The military's harsh response to peasant "militant particularism" was due to a fear that it might take on a multiscalar character, questioning the hegemonic project for the corporatization of agriculture and its attendant articulations of caste, class, household, farm, nation, and empire. Despite the parochialism of the AMP, there was a moment when the tenant struggle expanded to surrounding districts among tenants in military-owned farms. There were also indications that the tenant struggle could take a radical multiscalar politics with the expression of solidarity by different left political forces. The strength of the AMP is that the movement demonstrates the

capacity of tenants to organize themselves based on a critique of everyday life. But this points to their weakness, they haven't been very willing to go beyond the scale of the local to embrace a multiscale strategy for constituting a popular collective will. In contrast, the PTI has been effective in consolidating a hegemonic bloc by rearticulating claims on a Muslim national people and space.

Making a Muslim National People and Space

The second contribution advanced in this thesis develops from a Fanonian insight, which encourages us to examine decolonization as a response to colonial-racialized social formations. Fanon pointed to the danger of reconstituting colonial reification in the process of decolonization, which thus re-articulates instead of transcending colonial categories of class, race, and nation. In the lead-up towards independence, native political forces often recast colonial reified subjectivity in their claims. For instance, Muslim nationalism reified struggles over land, food, and access to the colonial state as ethnic struggles between Muslims and Hindus, thus codifying class, caste and religion in essentialist terms.

The Pakistan movement made claims on a Muslim national space through the ideological work of essentialization, homogenization, and reduction. The Muslim League advanced false totalizations by claiming that western India (i.e. a future Pakistan) was a coherent and distinct entity based on physical geography and social criteria, and that its people had a singular relationship to the past. This territorialization of the "two-nation theory", conceived of western India as consisting of a single nation, territory, and economy. The fallacy of such a notion has been met with its attendant contradictions in the postindependence period, with, for example, the

Bangladeshi war of independence of 1971 and ongoing struggles by Balochis for national liberation.

Today, the PTI rearticulates claims on a Muslim national people and space for its hegemonic project. It conceives of the failures of postindependence Pakistan to create a prosperous society not to systemic multiscalar issues, but to the moral and economic corruption of an “establishment”. They produce a reified notion of a Muslim national people by reducing class, caste, ethnic, religious, gender, and regional differences. They also reproduce an imperialist notion of a “good Muslim” (in contrast to “bad Muslims”) in the age of the “War on Terror” by giving the appearance of an urban and liberal Islam (Mamdani 2005).

Reararticulating a United Front in the Contemporary Period

The third contribution of the dissertation is its contemporary political significance for rethinking the united front for left praxis in contemporary Pakistan. Despite my pessimism over the contemporary moment and the ascendancy of PTI, an analysis of this conjuncture is highly revealing about the possibilities of a project of optimism for a future of freedom. As they unfold, passive revolutions and false decolonization allows us to see missed historical possibilities. These concepts posit an unlikely intimacy between revolution and restoration. Gramsci and Fanon recognized the radical and regressive potential of claims on a nation. Despite the PTI’s mobilization of popular energies towards a restorative national project, there is potential for the constitution of a national-popular collective will through a united front.

In the fifth chapter, I noted the limitation of the anti-imperialist united front of late 1920s Punjab was its restricted understanding of class and national struggle. For instance, the secular nationalism of the Kirti Kisan Party and the Naujawan Bharat Sabha attempted to shift the Akali

movement and Pan-Islamism to class struggles. There was a missed opportunity in translating the movement over reclaiming Sikh *gurdwaras* from colonial control into a multiscalar anti-imperialist struggle.

In the present, there is a need to be attentive to the multiplicity of temporal, spatial, and scalar relations of neocolonialism and capitalism. Although anticolonial and anti-imperialist forces are generally weak and fragmented in present-day Pakistan, there are also a range of ethno-nationalist, worker, peasant, student, and women's struggles inside (and beyond) the country that represent a multiplicity of spatial and scalar relations and claims. The political work of translation creates possibilities for a practice of building a united front that is open-ended but committed towards emancipatory horizons (Kipfer and Hart 2013). These possibilities demonstrate the fragility of the hegemonic bloc and encourages the imperative to continue the collective work for creating that Dawn of Freedom, that *Subh-e-Azad*.

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