

**A BETRAYED PROMISE? THE POLITICS OF THE
EVERYDAY STATE AND THE RESETTLING OF REFUGEES IN
PAKISTANI PUNJAB, 1947 -1962**

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Declaration of work

I, Elisabetta Iob, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Egham,

Signed

Abstract

Lahore, Anarkali, mid-1950s. A distinguished-looking refugee is standing in front of a petition writer in the hope of getting the better of the Pakistani bureaucracy and having a property allotted. A few miles ahead, another refugee, camped in a school, is drafting a letter to the editor of the *Pakistan Times*. He will hide his identity through the pseudonym ‘desperate’. Both of them belonged to the throng of those *muhajirs* who, back in 1947, had embarked on a dreadful journey towards what they perceived to be their homeland.

Historiographical trends have tended to overlook the everyday experience of the state among those middle-class Partition refugees who resettled in Pakistani Punjab. Focusing mainly on their ‘less fortunate’ fellow citizens, these explanations have reproduced that historically-unproven popular narrative that ascribes pain and sufferings only to the economically-backward sectors of the local society. Even more frequently, well-rooted argumentative patterns have superimposed historical and present-day socio-geographical mappings of refugee families onto both urban and rural Punjab. These somehow echo that government rhetoric that, up to the early 1960s, paid lip service to the notion of a ‘*biraderi*-friendly’ rehabilitation.

This thesis challenges standard interpretations of the resettlement of Partition refugees in Pakistani Punjab between 1947 and 1962. It argues the universality of the so-called ‘exercise in human misery’, and the heterogeneity of the rehabilitation policies. As it sheds light on these latter original contributions to the current knowledge, it questions the ability of the local bureaucracy to establish its own ‘polity’, the unsuitability of patronage political systems as an

autonomous politological category, and the failure of Pakistan as a state. Individual chapters pursue questions of emotional belonging to spatial and political places, social change, everyday experiences of the state through its institutions, electoral politics, and the deployment of integration/accommodation practices as nation- and state-building processes.

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Opinions, views, errors and omissions are, needless to say, my own.

Glossary

<i>adab</i>	proper moral conduct
<i>alim (pl. ulama)</i>	Muslim scholar learned in the Quran
<i>anjuman</i>	association
<i>anna</i>	one sixteenth of a Rupee
<i>atta</i>	flour
<i>bahir</i>	external world; domain of the material
<i>biraderi</i>	kinship group
<i>chak</i>	village
<i>crore</i>	ten millions
<i>dharamsala</i>	rest house for Hindu pilgrims
<i>fitna</i>	sedition; chaos or fragmentation
<i>ghar</i>	home; inner self
<i>gharana</i>	lit., those of the house, close relation
<i>gurdwara</i>	Sikh temple
<i>holi</i>	Hindu religious spring festival
<i>imam</i>	supreme leader of the Muslim community; among Shiites, referred to Ali and his descendants
<i>izzat</i>	honour; prestige; reputation
<i>jamabandi</i>	revenue records (land)
<i>katcha</i>	makeshift; temporary
<i>kafila</i>	caravan; group of persons travelling together
<i>kafir</i>	miscreant
<i>kamin</i>	craftsmen and labourers who earn their living by supplying landlords with goods and services
<i>kirpan</i>	sword owned by all Sikhs as a part of their faith 'symbols'/rituals
<i>lakh</i>	one hundred thousand
<i>lathi</i>	wooden stick
<i>maghreb</i>	time of the daily fourth ritual prayer
<i>maulvi</i>	Muslim scholar learned in the Quran; title used by an <i>alim</i>
<i>mohalla</i>	neighbourhood
<i>muezzin</i>	person who calls Muslims to prayer from the minaret of a

	mosque
<i>muhajir</i>	hist., someone who, in 622, joined the Prophet as he migrated from Mecca to Medina; in Pakistan, usually used to refer to all Partition refugees
<i>muharram</i>	first month of the year in the Islamic calendar
<i>murid</i>	follower of a <i>pir</i>
<i>naqshbandi</i>	affiliate <i>pir</i> whose spiritual lineage traces back to the homonym <i>sufi</i> order
<i>patwari</i>	Revenue Department officer at <i>tehsil</i> level
<i>pir</i>	Sufi saint
<i>pardah</i>	practice among women of living in separate rooms; fig., seclusion
<i>qabza derina</i>	long-time possession
<i>raj</i>	rule; empire
<i>sajjada nashin</i>	lit., one who sits on the carpet, head of a <i>pir</i> family
<i>salat</i>	ritual prayer performed five times daily, one of the five pillars of Islam
<i>seh parta</i>	assessment list
<i>shakra malikana</i>	particular type of rent contract
<i>sharia</i>	Islamic law
<i>sufi</i>	Muslim mystic
<i>tabbar</i>	unit of kinship groups, ranging from a mononuclear family up to three-generation lineally-related kinsmen
<i>taziya</i>	processional miniature tombs
<i>tehsil</i>	administrative subdivision of a district
<i>zamindar</i>	landowner; landholder

List of abbreviations

BRCMA	British Red Cross Museum and Archives, London
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office
IOR	India Office Library and Records, British Library, London
IT/OT	Inward Telegram/Outward Telegram
MDRR	Multan District Records Room, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan
NAKG	National Archives, Kew Gardens (London)
NAP	National Archives of Pakistan, Islamabad
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration, College Park (MD)
NDC	National Documentation Centre, Islamabad
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province (present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)
PCSL	Punjab Civil Secretariat Library, Lahore
PML(N)	Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz
PPL	Punjab Public Library, Lahore
PPMS	Private Papers, Prof Mahmood Shaukat, Lahore
PPP	Pakistan People Party
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SSCR	Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations
UKHC	British High Commission
UPL	University of the Punjab Library, Lahore
V&A	Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, Textiles and Dresses Department, London

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Note on transliterations and translations

Urdu, Hindi and Arabic words have all been italicised and transliterated. This dissertation makes use of a simplified mode of transliteration without the use of diacritical marks. For place names, transliteration contemporary with the sources has been maintained. The English form of the plural is used in preference to the foreign one.

All translations from Hindi, Arabic, Persian and Urdu are my own. Manto's short stories are taken from S. H. Manto, *Mottled Dawn: Fifty Sketches and Stories of Partition*, New Delhi, 1997. The translation of Faiz A. Faiz's poem is by Agha Shahid Ali in *Annual of Urdu Studies*, 11, 1996, p. 87.

Introduction

On 5th April 2012, on an otherwise business-as-usual and humdrum political evening, the President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari hit the headlines with a declaration that caused an almost immediate uproar. Addressing the Pakistan People Party (PPP) Executive Council at the Governor House in Lahore, he argued that the Sharif brothers “were living [in Lahore] as migrants”.¹ According to local press reports, President Zardari further rubbed the salt into the wound by polemically dragging in the funeral of their father at Data Darbar.² The reactions of both the family and party members were immediate. Maryam Sharif – Nawaz’ daughter – tweeted: “Guys, do you sees Zardari’s statements on TV channels. Wish he had kept this side of him hidden”.³ For his part, the Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah voiced the opinions and the mood of affiliates of the Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz (PML(N)). “I cannot even believe” – he declared to *Express News* – “that such shameful remarks were given by the president. It seems like he has gone mad”.⁴

The unsigned editorial that the PML(N)-leaning newspaper *The Nation* (Lahore) published a couple of days later came as a bit of a surprise. “President Asif Ali Zardari” – its opening words were – “has mocked his main political rivals, the PML(N), calling the party leaders [...] emigrants. Whether he meant this just politically, as they were, he said, camping on Lahore, which was actually PPP territory, or personally, when he said that they had to take their father’s corpse to Data Darbar to raise a funeral congregation, the Sharif brothers

¹ *The Express Tribune* (Karachi), 6th April 2012.

² *Nawa-i-Waqt* (Lahore), 7th April 2012, and *The Nation* (Lahore), 6th April 2012.

³ <http://twitter.com/maryamnsharif> (accessed 29th June 2012).

⁴ *The Express Tribune* (Karachi), 6th April 2012.

should realise that they have brought it [upon] themselves”. Indeed, Zardari’s statement followed on from the harsh campaign that the PML(N) had concocted against the PPP central government in the early months of 2012. Nevertheless, the columnist failed to tune properly into the mood of a certain section of the Punjabi society, whose feelings and emotions were made clear to me by one of its members. Sons of an upper-middle class businessman who migrated from Amritsar to Lahore as a result of the 1947 communal disturbances, Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif belong to the large ‘family’ of those *muhajirs* who resettled in the Pakistani Punjab. The words of the PPP leader wove private and public narratives into a single political plot. Never before – my interlocutor confided in me – had this specific element of the refugee community’s identity been brought in the public domain in such a rude manner and made so overtly political.⁵

Both the personal and community histories of those Partition refugees who resettled in West Punjab differ substantially from the experience of the *muhajirs* who eventually ended up in Sindh. There, the Urdu-speaking migrant community has been involved in a longstanding and at times violent ethnic clash with the Sindhi majority and eventually founded its own political party.⁶ By contrast, in West Punjab, refugees trod a relatively smoother path towards their assimilation within the local social fabric. A common language and cultural background certainly has helped to prevent them from fomenting harsh contrapositions and retreating into potentially stubborn ethnic differences. All the same, they have still developed their own political identity, which, in recent years, has found in the PML(N) its standard-bearer. The founding fathers and almost all the upper

⁵ Conversation with the author, 8th April 2012. Due to his/her prominence and the possible implications of his/her declaration, the interviewee will remain unnamed.

⁶ On this point see O. Verkaik, *Migrants and Militants: Fun and Urban Violence in Pakistan*, Princeton, 2004.

echelons of this party are first- or second-generation Partition refugees whose personal stories leave deep footprints on the land on which they daily walk.

To place this experience in proper perspective, it is necessary to provide an overview of the official Pakistani state discourse on refugee rehabilitation, and also to identify the main migratory flows as well as the places, both urban and rural, where Partition refugees were resettled. Figures and statistics on the number of refugees who fled into West Punjab are widely acknowledged for their unreliability, and still represent a bone of contention between India and Pakistan. The collapse of the administrative machinery threw into confusion any attempt to keep accurate demographic accounts of the comings and goings of persons across the region. In early September 1947, the local correspondent from *The Times* (London) registered that “more than 1,000,000, and possibly as many as 2,000,000 people” were trekking either eastwards or westwards in search for a safer place in which to live.⁷ “No reliable estimate” – pinpointed the Governor of West Punjab Francis Mudie a month later – “can be formed of the numbers who have yet to come from East Punjab. It may be 3,000,000. It may be 4,000,000”.⁸ Apparently, only 20% of the displaced persons who were temporarily hosted in West Punjab reception camps could be properly identified and recorded.⁹ Nevertheless, some kind of a consensus has been reached on the idea that the number of refugees who resettled in West Punjab amounted roughly to 5,500,000.¹⁰

In spite of this general agreement, however, these figures still demand to be handled with extreme caution. They do not take into account, for instance, the

⁷ *The Times* (London), 5th September 1947.

⁸ *The Times* (London), 17th October 1947.

⁹ *Uncoordinated Punjab Refugee Tour Notes*, n.d., DO 133/60, NAKG.

¹⁰ *Appendix A*, File No. B50, NAP.

thousands of Indian Muslims who crossed clandestinely the Punjabi border from India. According to then Minister of the Interior Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani, in the lapse of time between 1948 and 1953 an overall total of 441,721 persons illegally entered Pakistan.¹¹ Officials within the Rehabilitation Department, West Punjab, admitted that 1,000 to 1,500 illegal aliens escaped monthly across the border with India.¹² Things then become even more complicated when the so-called refugees from non-agreed areas are brought into play. On 19th-20th September 1947, an inter-ministerial conference decided that the resettlement of those persons who were fleeing from the disturbed areas of East Punjab and the local Princely States would take priority over the evacuation of *muhajirs* from any other Indian regions. With India infringing the agreement, it is highly likely that the arrival of non-agreed areas refugees further weakens the accuracy of calculations. Apart from anything else, it muddles up possible discussion on the geographical origins of this refugee community.

Understanding where refugees were resettled or where they resettled themselves can be even more controversial. As this dissertation contends, the current mapping of their presence in Punjabi towns and villages, whose socio-geographical coordinates are frequently taken as proof of the homogeneity of the rehabilitation practices and therefore exploited as both ‘documentary evidence’ and research tools in many historiographical analyses, does not reflect their original ‘final destination’. According to the West Punjabi Board of Economic Inquiry’s statistical review of the distribution of the migrant community and the 1951 Pakistan Census, the ‘strongholds’ of the refugee resettlement were the

¹¹ *First Session of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly – Despatch No. 849*, 14th March 1953, NND 938750, NARA.

¹² *Recent Developments in Refugee Rehabilitation and Resettlement in the Punjab*, 12th July 1951, NND 938750, NARA.

districts of Lahore, Lyallpur (present-day Faisalabad), Montgomery (present-day Sahiwal) and Multan.¹³ Therein, refugees exceeded by far the 5-lakh units (see Table 1 below) and accounted – especially in the headquarter towns - for an overall average of 56,5% of the local population.¹⁴

Lahore Division		Rawalpindi Division		Multan Division		Bahawalpur State	
Gujranwala	299.145	Campbellpur	38.121	Dera G. Khan	35.740	Bahawalpur	298.140
Lahore	745.078	Gujrat	135.676	Jhang	138.649	Rahim Yar Khan	74.726
Sheikhupura	309.890	Jhelum	52.376	Lyallpur	986.236		
Sialkot	369.467	Mianwali	46.672	Montgomery	713.050		
		Rawalpindi	106.262	Multan	646.151		
		Shahpur	207.256	Muzaffargarh	78.559		
Total	1.723.580		586.363		2.598.385		372.866

Table 1: Refugee population in the Divisions and Districts of West Punjab – Source: *Census of Pakistan - 1951*, 1951.

In line with national statistics, around 90% of the refugee community lived in the Punjabi countryside.¹⁵ The litmus test of this trend lies in the number of *muhajir* workers whose jobs related to the primary sector: indeed, 64% of the self-supporting refugee workforce was on duty on the local fertile agricultural lands (see Table 2).

¹³ Board of Economic Inquiry (West Punjab Government), *A Statistical Review of the Distribution of Refugees in West Punjab*, Lahore, n.d., Mudie Papers, Mss EUR F164/147, IOR and *Census of Pakistan – Table of Economic Characteristics (West Pakistan)*, Vol. VII, 1951, UPL.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*. The number of refugees in Lahore (Corporation) was of 363,954 (out of a total population of 849,333), in Montgomery of 31,633 (out of 50,185), in Lyallpur of 124,343 (out of 179,127) and in Multan of 93,586 (out of 190,122).

¹⁵ A. G. Raza, *Resettlement of Refugees on Land – A Review*, 6th June 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG. See also Phillips Jr. W. M., “Urbanisation and Social Change in Pakistan”, *Phylon*, 25, 1, 1964, p. 37.

	Technical/ Professional	Administrative/ Managerial	Clerical/Office Workers	Sales Workers	Agric./Fish Workers	Skilled Operatives	Unskilled Labourers	Service Workers	Other
Cultivation					1,077,334				
Animal husbandry					39,586				
Other agriculture					5,962				
Forestry/fishery					106				
Mining/quarrying	7	6	27	3		143	89	23	
Manufacturing	976	2,007	2,544	574		179,531	9,196	800	
Building construction/ Utilities	266	460	326	9		5,829	479	117	
Trade/Commerce	181	12,128	2,274	119,456		1,698	4,745	1,011	
Transport/Shipping/ Port Services	87	186	1,484			9,780	2,862	2,157	
Post/Telecom.	21	20	1,059			131	52	21	
Education	4,002	70	307	6		5	26	112	
Medical Services	3,504	60	143	17		16	54	30	
Municipal Services	895	540	36,557	5		1,081	198	6778	
Domestic/Personal Services	41	99	442	11		899	9,121	73,008	
Religion/Art/ Public Information	4,097	8	182	1		24	257	62	
Other/Not Classified	284	118	1,449	455		1,325	129,684	5,612	20

Table 2: Economic groups and occupation of self-supporting *muhajirs* aged over 12 years old (excludes a) Defence Service and b) economically inactive persons) – Source: *Census of Pakistan – 1951*, 1951

But available statistics – lies, damn lies – register neither the places of origin nor the number of extended families that eventually found a new home in these districts. They merely draw a numerical and, therefore, largely static picture of events, and arguably serve little useful purpose to researchers interested in the subtleties of ongoing social change processes. A rare exception to this paucity of data is a 1954 albeit partial list of Muslim abducted women and children, in which each and every refugee's place of origin is provided (see Table 3).¹⁶

East Punjab		Patiala and East Punjab States		Other	
Ambala	133	Faridkot State	38	Delhi Province	30
Amritsar	232	Jind State	85	Other States in India	43
Ferozapore	455	Kapurthala State	57	Other Places in India	18
Gurdaspur	141	Nabha State	162	Jammu and Kashmir State	401
Gurgaon	10	Patiala State	1056		
Hissar	74				
Hoshiarpur	92				
Jullundhur	95				
Kangra	20				
Karnal	40				
Ludhiana	165				
Rohtak	30				
Simla	3				

Table 3: Number of abducted women and children per district – Source: Government of West Punjab, *Supplement to the List of Muslim Abducted Women and Children in India and Jammu & Kashmir State – Part III*, Lahore, 1954

¹⁶ Government of West Punjab, *Supplement to the List of Muslim Abducted Women and Children in India and Jammu & Kashmir State – Part III*, Lahore, 1954, MDRR.

Nevertheless, the 1948 West Punjab Refugee Census reveals that, out of the total refugee population who poured into the Pakistani Punjab, 4,197,000 persons came from the East Punjab Districts; 682,000 from the East Punjab States; 202,600 from the Jammu and Kashmir; 191,600 from Alwar; 91,200 from the Delhi Province; 28,400 the United Provinces; and some other 93,600 from other regions of India.¹⁷ The combination of these latter figures with those of the earlier 1941 Census of India reveals a clearer – albeit still rather cloudy – picture of the districts of origin of those 4,197,000 *muhajirs* who fled the eastern wing of the Punjab. Torn apart by the 1947 communal violence, the districts of Karpurtala, Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Jullundur and Ferozepore - whose Muslims, by the time of the 1941 Census of India, accounted for respectively 56,4%, 50,2%, 46,5%, 45,6% and 45,1% of the local inhabitants – certainly registered a steady decrease of their Muslim population.¹⁸ Arguably, a fair number of refugees came also from the districts of Ludhiana, Gurgaon, Hoshiarpur, Ambala, Karnal and Faridkot, where Muslims comprised an overall average of 32,6%.¹⁹

Once again, any data extrapolated from the 1948 West Punjab Refugee Census must be treated with extreme caution. In practice, their calculation resulted from an ‘educated guess’ being made of the number of urban refugees settled in the province plus the product obtained by multiplying an estimated 5-member family by the number of claims for an eventual allotment of agricultural land that had been submitted to the local provincial Revenue Department.²⁰ The

¹⁷ *Recent Developments in Refugee Rehabilitation and Resettlement in the Punjab*, 12th July 1951, NND 938750, NARA.

¹⁸ *Census of India – 1941*, Vol. VI, New Delhi, 1941, IOR.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ *Recent Developments in Refugee Rehabilitation and Resettlement in the Punjab*, 12th July 1951, NND 938750, NARA.

thoroughness of the screening of bogus applications and their subsequent systematic ‘writing off’ is unclear.

Indeed, from the very early stages of the post-1947 resettlement process, refugees in West Punjab demonstrated a strong penchant for exaggerating their claims and submitting multiple forms for multiple allotments.²¹ The actual magnitude of the problem cannot be calculated, though estimates in one case suggest that some 80% of the 3,000 submitted applications for refugee allowances were either bogus or highly inflated.²² On 16th December 1952 the then Minister for Rehabilitation and Colonies Fazal Ilahi Piracha left a list of multiple allotments of West Punjabi evacuee urban properties on the table of the local provincial Assembly Hall.²³ Unfortunately, it has not survived the merciless march of time and the troubled history of local archives in Pakistan. The curious case of those “wealthy Muslims from India, [who were] uncertain to return their Indian citizenship or become Pakistanis” yet nonetheless applied for – and eventually were allotted – either an urban or a rural evacuee property lacks in factual accuracy.²⁴ The very same problem applies to all those lands, houses, businesses and factories that were illegally occupied by both locals and refugees during the chaotic early months of Pakistan’s independence.²⁵

After all, the scramble for bagging as many profitable evacuee properties as possible was not restricted to the refugee community alone. Legally entitled to apply for the allotment of all kind of evacuee property whenever the restoration and maintenance of the economic life of Pakistan made it necessary, local

²¹ UKHC (New Delhi) to UKHC (Karachi) – Ref. P/69, 9th August 1949, DO 35/2994, NAKG.

²² Rehabilitation Department of West Punjab, *Manual of Instruction – Part I and II*, Lahore, 1949, Chapter VIII, p. 1, PCSL.

²³ *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 16th December 1952, PCSL.

²⁴ UKHC (New Delhi) to UKHC (Karachi) – Ref P/69, 9th August 1949, DO 35/2994, NAKG.

²⁵ A-1, 4th January 1949, NND 765024, NARA.

inhabitants started themselves to compete for the allocation of local business and industrial premises and houses.²⁶ In their own particular battle, they were, according to available sources, spurred on by a deep feeling of resentment at “the newcomers [who were] obtaining land and lodgings they themselves would like”.²⁷ By early March 1954, according to a not-particularly reliable statistical survey published in *The Dawn* (Karachi), the number of allotted evacuee urban houses that were in locals’ hands amounted to 22,670 (out of 160,010) and the number of evacuee shops to 23,375 (out of 160,010).²⁸ As regards factories, government data released in 1948 suggested that non-refugees ran 244 out of the 2911 evacuee registered and non-registered factories of the West Punjab. Numbers in reality could however have been even higher, for, as the West Punjabi authorities reported, locals ‘exploited’ and nominated refugees in order to secure an evacuee property for themselves.²⁹

A couple of official documents published in the mid-1950s – namely *The Manual of Instruction – Part I and II* and the *Resettlement of Refugees on Land in the Punjab – Part XII and XVI* – go a long way towards unlocking the secrets of the official Pakistan state discourse on the resettlement of refugees in West Punjab.³⁰ In the eyes of the local politico-institutional apparatus, the linchpin of the humanitarian emergency was primarily the management and the eventual allotment of all those urban and rural properties that had been left behind by Hindus and Sikhs during the late summer and the autumn of 1947. The federal

²⁶ On locals’ entitlement to claim an evacuee property, see Rehabilitation Department of West Punjab, *Manual of Instruction – Part I and II*, Lahore, 1949, pp. 6-7, PCSL and *West Punjab Government Letter No. 2300 – Reh. 49/1678*, 10th March 1949, PCSL.

²⁷ *A-1*, 4th January 1949, NND 765024, NARA. See also I. Talbot, *Divided Cities. Partition and its Aftermath in Lahore and Amritsar, 1947-1957*, Karachi, 2006, pp. 157, 163-4.

²⁸ *The Dawn* (Karachi), 3rd May 1948 and *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 8th March 1954, PCSL.

²⁹ *West Punjab Government Letter No. 2300 – Reh. 49/1678*, 10th March 1949, PCSL.

³⁰ Rehabilitation Department of West Punjab, *Manual of Instruction – Part I and II*, Lahore, 1949, PCSL and Government of West Pakistan, *Resettlement of Refugees on Land in the Punjab – Part XII and XVI*, Lahore, 1956 PCSL.

Minister for Refugees and Rehabilitation Khwaja Shahabuddin accordingly showed his hand during a question and answer session of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly in late September 1950. The schemes, he pointed out, that the Government had been enforcing up to then were “(1) the temporary allotment of land to agricultural refugees; (2) allotment of evacuee houses; (3) allotment of evacuee shops; (4) grant of maintenance allowance to deserving refugees; (5) establishment of cottage industries by the Pakistan Refugee Rehabilitation Finance Corporation; (6) schemes for establishing satellite towns or colonies for absorbing the overflow of the bigger towns”.³¹

Appointed immediately after Independence, the Custodian of Evacuee Properties was tasked with the preservation of all the aforementioned possessions and the safeguard of the original owners’ rights and interests. During the 5th Inter-Dominion Conference held in Karachi in January 1949, Indian and Pakistani authorities succeeded in reaching an agreement on the transfer, sale and exchange of movable evacuee properties, thereby leaving the Custodian with the sole responsibility of managing the immovable ones. He was supposed to compile and maintain a complete record of abandoned shops, businesses and houses, and to liaise with evacuees, his counterpart in Jullundhur and the Indian government.³²

The Custodian of Evacuee Properties, however, was only a tiny cog of the resettlement machine. Federal and provincial ministers for refugee resettlement quickly took over the ‘political reins’ of both rehabilitation policies and practices. Friction between the centre and provinces being an everyday routine affair, Joint Refugee Councils were established first in Punjab (1947) and then in

³¹ *Pakistan Constituent Assembly Debates*, 30th September 1950, PCSL. Point 5 of Shahabuddin’s ‘refugee manifesto’ will be discussed in detail on pp. 212-3.

³² *Sind Observer* (Karachi), 15th January 1949.

Sindh, East Bengal and the NWFP (1948).³³ Usually attended by the Prime Minister, the Minister for Finance and for Refugee Resettlement, Pakistan, and the concerned provincial Governors, Chief Ministers and Ministers for Refugee Rehabilitation, their meetings aimed at harmonising acts and ordinances and coordinating policies.

But if Ministers and Joint Councils were supposed to be the brain behind the reintegration of the *muhajir* community, all the employees of the Rehabilitation Department represented the brawn (see Table 4). At the top of the organisational structure of the Department, the Head acted even as Resettlement Secretary to the West Punjab Government, and was assisted by a Deputy Secretary and an Under-Secretary. In the West Punjab districts of Lahore, Sialkot, Multan, Rawalpindi, Lyallpur, Montgomery and Gujranwala, a Deputy Rehabilitation Commissioner was appointed to polish off resettlement policies *in loco*. In the remaining districts – where the number of refugees was relatively low - Deputy Commissioners fulfilled the *ex-officio* function of Deputy Rehabilitation Commissioners as well.³⁴ Entrusted with the task of allotting houses, shops and unregistered factories, they also sat on the West Punjab Rehabilitation Board and West Punjab Allotment Tribunal. So, for instance, while the West Punjab Rehabilitation Board was tasked with the allotment of all registered and important unregistered factories, ice factories, the West Punjab Allotment Tribunal supervised the allocation of the shops on the Mall, Lahore and the houses with a rent of Rs 300/month in Lahore and of Rs 100/month in all other districts.³⁵

³³ *Pakistan Constituent Assembly*, 20th March 1953, PCSL.

³⁴ Rehabilitation Department of West Punjab, *Manual of Instruction – Part I and II*, Lahore, 1949, Chapter I, p. 1, PCSL.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, Chapter III, p. 3.

	Deputy Resettlement Commissioner	Assistant R. Commissioner	District R. Officers	R. Officers	Deputy R. Officers	Assistant R. Officers	R. Inspectors	Assistant R. Inspectors	S.D.Os	District Engineers	Overseers	Provincial Town Planners	Inspectors Tube well	Others*	Total
Lahore	2	1	1	11	16	17	17	69	2		5	1	1	292	435
Sheikhupura			1	1	1	2	2	10		1	2			26	46
Sialkot	1		1	3	1	4	4	24		1	2			43	84
Gujranwala	1		1	2	2	1	5	22		1	2			62	99
Rawalpindi	1	1	1	3	3	3	6	35		1	2			77	133
Jhelum			1	2	1	2	2	15		1	2			35	61
Gujrat			1	2	1	1	4	17		1	2			34	63
Shahpur			1	1	1	4	2	19		1	2			29	60
Mianwali			1	1	1	2	2	13		1	2			27	50
Attock			1	2	1	1	3	17		1	2			32	60
Multan	1	1	1	4	4	8	5	46		1	2			82	155
Lyalpur	1		1	2	4	2	5	21		1	2			67	106
Montgomery	1		1	3	4	2	6	20		1	2			75	115
Dera G. Khan			1	1	1	3	2	18		1	2			28	57
Muzaffargarh			1	1	2	2	4	14		1	2			31	58
Jhang			1	1	1	3	3	16		1	2			24	52
Total	8	3	16	40	44	57	72	376	2	15	35	1	1	964	1634

Table 4: Gazetted and Non-Gazetted Field Staff Sanctioned for Rehabilitation – Source: Rehabilitation Department of West Punjab, *Manual of Instruction – Part I and II*, Lahore, 1949, Appendix II, Statement A and B. (*Others: Assistant Accounts Officers, Superintendents, Head Clerks, Steno-cum-Readers, Assistants, Senior and Junior Clerks, Typists, Accountants, Accounts Cashiers, Assistant Cashiers, Cashiers, Daftries [sic] and Peons)

Overall, the distinction between urban and rural resettlement was the only selected criterion for pigeonholing premises and redistributing them among claimants. Soon after Independence, federal authorities became more and more paranoid about what they perceived to be the high correlation between the survival of Pakistan as a state and the economic recovery of the Punjabi countryside.³⁶ According to contemporary estimates, the land on which refugees were to be resettled amounted to 3,064,625 acres. By the *kharif* of 1948, all the holdings of those non-Muslim landlords who employed Muslim tenants were reduced so as not to exceed to 8 acres/family. This government act extended the amount of land that was available for resettlement purposes up to 4,030,274 acres. A further 113,893 acres of Crown land was added to the final

³⁶ Extract from the *Pakistan News for the period February 18th to February 24th 1948*, n.d., DO 142/440, NAKG.

calculation.³⁷ Finally, in 1949, the development of the so-called Thal Project – a revamped pioneering plan that aimed at enhancing the irrigation system of the homonym deserted area in South Punjab – increased the available rural land by 660,000 acres.³⁸

Re-allotting the fertile lands of the West Punjab was not however only a matter of available acreage. It first and foremost involved the physical transfer of all self-declared refugee agriculturalists to their plots. As in early 1948 no record had yet been exchanged with India, early temporary allotments were made by consulting the list of voters of the 1945-6 elections.³⁹ In 1948, The West Punjab Refugee (Registration of Land Claims) Ordinance was hailed as the milestone in the resettlement of refugee in the Punjabi countryside. Owners of land and those tenants who had a right of occupancy under the Punjab Tenancy Act, 1887 and section 3 of the Colonisation of Government Land, 1912, were thereby solicited to submit their claims for compensation. The Act provided for the appointment of Settlement and Assistant Settlement as Registration, and represented the “first step towards a large-range policy for the allotment of [land] rights [...] as opposed to the temporary cultivating possession.”⁴⁰ Following the promulgation of the Registration of Claims (Displaced Persons) Act in 1956, refugees from non-agreed-areas were allowed to submit their claims for all those lands that they had behind in regions other than the East Punjab. Local authorities would take until late 1961 to process their applications.⁴¹

³⁷ A. G. Raza, *Resettlement of Refugees on Land – A Survey*, 6th June 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG.

³⁸ Government of West Punjab, *The Thal Development Act, 1949*, Lahore, 1949 and Government of West Punjab, *The Thal Development Act, 1950*, Lahore, 1950, MDRR.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ *Lahore Despatch No. PHC/43/48 – Pol. 10980/48*, 27th September 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG.

⁴¹ *Rehabilitation and Works Division 1958-1963 – Five Years of Revolutionary Government*, n.d., p. 9, PCSL.

For their part, urban resettlement practices showed a higher degree of formal sophistication. Houses and shops were divided into four classes: class A, for all those premises having rents above Rs. 100/month; class B, for all those with rents above Rs. 50/month up to Rs. 100/month; class C, for all houses and businesses with rents above Rs. 25/month up to Rs. 50/month; and class D for properties with rents up to Rs. 25/month.⁴² Houses and shops were allotted to so-called *bona fide* claimants for an initial six-month period that could eventually be extended up to 1st January 1952.⁴³ The re-allocation of unregistered factories was on 4-year basis, while that of registered factories was “until otherwise ordered by the Rehabilitation Commissioner (General), West Punjab”.⁴⁴

In their attempt to curb the overcrowding of urban areas, the West Punjab authorities initially planned to repair damaged buildings. The lead in the whole restoration process was taken by the Lahore Improvement Trust. As soon as early February 1949, it sketched out a project for the revalorisation of the damaged areas between Shahalmi Gate and the Bawli Sahib within the walled city of Lahore under the ‘legal umbrella’ of the just-approved West Punjab Damaged Areas Ordinance, 1948. From then onwards, Improvement Trusts cropped up in almost every town of the West Punjab, and similar projects implemented.⁴⁵ The urban housing shortage being so acute, the idea of satellite towns was immediately developed and taken in hand by these Improvement Trusts themselves from the mid-1950s up to the fall of Ayub Khan’s regime in the late 1960s. Self-contained units on the edge of the main refugee-saturated Punjabi

⁴² Rehabilitation Department of West Punjab, *Manual of Instruction – Part I and II*, Lahore, 1949, Chapter II, p. 2, PCSL.

⁴³ *West Punjab Government Letter No. 2300 – Reh. 49/1976*, 10th March 1949, PCSL.

⁴⁴ Rehabilitation Department of West Punjab, *Manual of Instruction – Part I and II*, Lahore, 1949, Chapter III, pp. 4-5, PSCL.

⁴⁵ I. Talbot, *Divided Cities*, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-23.

towns, satellite towns were graded from scale A to D according to their price and size. In 1963, local builders were working on 42 building sites of as many satellite towns – many of which located in the former province of West Punjab – all throughout West Pakistan.⁴⁶ In one of them, namely the Lahore Township Scheme, development works had just started. The total investment in its 28,700 residential plots and 10,000 one-room quarters was of about Rs. 79,2 millions.⁴⁷ In the purple rhetoric of Ayub Khan’s pamphlets, satellite towns were supposed to provide “not only accommodation but also employment and other facilities to the millions of uprooted men and women, giving them a sense of belonging and assimilation in their new homeland”.⁴⁸

In April 1954, the Pakistani Government put forward a joint-scheme for cash compensation for all those properties that refugees had left behind in India during the stormy summer of 1947. As “the [...] period from 1955 to 1958 was more or less a period of inaction”, the Displaced Persons (Compensation and Rehabilitation) Bill was later amended in 1958 in order to “make [...] [compensation] workable in a smooth and rational manner”.⁴⁹ Reportedly, by 1963, compensation was being paid to all those refugees, orphans, widows and aged persons whose claim did not exceed Rs. 5,000.⁵⁰

All the aforementioned ordinances, laws and resettlement policies embodied the official State discourse *in* and *around* the urban and rural rehabilitation of refugees in West Punjab. This dissertation accordingly aims at unveiling what *actually* happened behind the scenes of what with hindsight might appear to have

⁴⁶ *Rehabilitation and Works Division 1958-1963 – Five Years of Revolutionary Government*, n.d., p. 9, PCSL.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁸ *1958-1964: Years of Progress*, 1965, p. 16, PCSL.

⁴⁹ *Rehabilitation and Works Division 1958-1963 – Five Years of Revolutionary Government*, n.d., p. 7, PCSL.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

been a well-planned and thought-through process. It takes as its primary focus the city of Lahore, the provincial headquarters of Pakistani Punjab in both political and bureaucratic terms. While the socio-economic and political legacies of Partition-related migration where possible do need to be considered at district and local levels, there is also room for a study such as this one, which concentrates on one, albeit, of Pakistan's major cities during this important transition period, from whose experience we can learn much, of not all, of what was happening more widely in the province's urban centres.

As I write, rumours are circulating that the Pakistani citizens will be asked to go to the polls in late autumn this year. Parties are getting ready to fight. In the region of the Punjab, the PML(N) will have to reckon with the PPP in the south and for the first time, at the all-Punjab level, with an apparently rising Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). The actual political weight of Imran Khan's party is a controversial issue among political analysts and commentators. Nonetheless, it has the potential to attract a share of votes to the detriment of the PML(N) and, in some constituencies, to hold the balance of power. In spite of a few programmatic differences, Imran Khan and the Sharif brothers roughly target the same electorate. Some go as far as to fear an unlikely pact between the two. Imran Khan and Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif all share a refugee background. Understanding how their political minds work and how their own personal stories may shape the future of Pakistan is now a political imperative.

Bibliographical review

*Under no circumstances am I prepared to be converted to a Sikh.
I want my razor back.*

(S. H. Manto, *Determination*)

The idea that the Partition of the Indian subcontinent was a watershed in South Asia history is a widely accepted truism. Just like all such momentous and liminal events, it has lain at heart of intense debates among historians, social scientists and anthropologists. Despite the heatedness of the discussion, the relevant secondary literature has paradoxically polarised into three main competing interpretative narratives. The appearance of provincial studies first and then a ‘from-beneath’ analysis of the path towards Independence have counterbalanced the study of the so-called ‘high politics’ of Partition. As for this latter approach, the manoeuvring of both colonial and local leaders as well as that of political parties represents the prism through which the withdrawal of the British *raj* has been analysed. Indeed, Indian nationalist accounts are moulded out of an apparent contradiction: while condemning those Muslim League tactics that urged the Congress to opt for the partition, they usually highlight the success implied in the achievement of independence.⁵¹ In contrast, as suggested by the case of Khalid bin Sayyed, Pakistani historians have generally succumbed to the temptation to emphasise greatly the role of Islam in shaping the demand for Pakistan and the fulfilment of the two-nation theory.⁵² In 1985, Ayesha Jalal burst onto this narrative and argumentative scene by proposing an alternative

⁵¹ S. Mahajan, *Independence and Partition: the Erosion of Colonial Power in India*, New Delhi, 2000.

⁵² K. B. Sayyed, *Pakistan: the Formative Phase, 1857-1948*, Karachi, 1968.

pattern of interpretation of the events.⁵³ A tool in Jinnah's hands, Pakistan was conceived as a peculiar 'negotiating bargain' on which the British authorities and Indian political parties came to agree. When, back in the 1970s, official documents on Partition and Partition-related events were released, the emergence of local studies shed light on the twist and turns of the Muslim League success in focal regions of colonial India. This is, for instance, the case of Francis Robinson, David Gilmartin and, more recently, of Ian Talbot and Sarah Ansari.⁵⁴ As suggested above, alongside these historiographical trends, the so-called subaltern studies finally highlighted both the human and subjective dimension of the independence of India and Pakistan.⁵⁵

The rioters brought the train to a stop. Those who belonged to the other religion were methodically picked out and slaughtered. After it was all over, those who remained were treated to feast of milk, custard pies and fresh fruit. Before the train moved off, the leader of the assassins made a small farewell speech: "Dear brothers and sisters, since we were not sure about the time of your train's arrival, regretfully we were not able to offer you anything better than this modest hospitality. We would like to have done more.

(S. H. Manto, *Modesty*)

With Independence drawing closer, the appeals that came from the political headquarters started to acquire a more violent twist. Even Gandhi - advocate and bulwark of non-violence – was reportedly ready to accept the hypothesis of a bloodbath, should the Indian subcontinent be divided into two autonomous states. Indeed, the daily agenda of local religious and civil associations and the

⁵³ A. Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman. Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand of Pakistan*, Cambridge, 1985.

⁵⁴ S. Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power: the Pirs of Sindh, 1843-1947*, Cambridge, 1992; D. Gilmartin, *Empire and the Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan*, Berkeley, 1988; F. Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: the Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923*, Cambridge, 1974; I. Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947*, New Delhi, 1988.

⁵⁵ This point will be further discussed on pp. 24-5.

whirl of declaration and press-releases brought about a harsh opposition between all the different communities, and stimulated the progressive militarisation of the local society.

Partition violence has been widely portrayed as a turning point in South Asian history. Paul Brass, later followed by Ravinder Kaur, Yasmin Khan and Ian Talbot, has explained it in terms of an exceptional political mobilisation around the demand for an independent India and Pakistan.⁵⁶ According to this view, communal upheavals were predominantly political-led conflicts that lost all the religious impetus that had previously featured in former conflicts. Hence the heated debate on Khizr Tiwana's government in the Punjab and the achievement of India and Pakistan – rather than Hinduism, Islam or Sikhism *per se* – then pushed people to take up arms and opt for violence. The intensity and the brutality of communal riots, the role of women and the invasion of the private sphere typified 1947 violence as an *unicum* in South Asian history. But while these interpretations certainly highlight the exceptional dimension of the events, they have nevertheless failed to recognise the degree of continuity that survived across time and space. Furthermore, they have overlooked what general studies on other partition-affected areas had previously revealed. In 2003, Ghislaine Glasson Deschaumes and Rada Ivekovic edited a wide number of contributions on post-1989 Eastern Europe nation- and state-building historical processes.⁵⁷ Driven by the desire to assess whether or not India and Pakistan represented a

⁵⁶ P. Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India and Pakistan*, Seattle-London, 2003, p. 13; R. Kaur, *Since 1947. Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi*, 2007, pp. 27-8; Y. Khan, "Out of Control? Partition Violence and the State in Uttar Pradesh", in I. Talbot (ed.), *The Deadly Embrace. Religion and Violence in India and Pakistan, 1947-2002*, Karachi, 2007, p. 40; Y. Khan, *The Great Partition. The Making of India and Pakistan*, New Haven-London, 2007; I. Talbot, "The 1947 Violence in Punjab", in I. Talbot (ed.), *The Deadly Embrace, op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁵⁷ G. G. Deschaumes and R. Ivekovic (eds.), *Divided Countries, Separated Cities. The Modern Legacy of Partition*, New Delhi, 2003.

paradigm in the field of nationalism and partition studies, the editors collected articles whose focus ranged from Berlin, Jerusalem, Cyprus to the former Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. As they introduced their collection, Deschaumes and Ivekovic recognised that “partition incites ancient hatreds rather than settling them. [...] [It restructures] the sources of conflicts around borders, refugees and diasporas”.⁵⁸ All the social conflicts that result from a political and geographical division of a land draw on well-rooted socio-historical dynamics. Therefore, the outbreak of harsh upheavals during the early formative phase of some states trigger off a process of re-elaborating previous conflicts alongside newly-created reasons of contraposition.

Literature – especially that produced by Ian Talbot – has not depicted 1946-8 violence as a monolithic historical *unicum* that shares the same causal connections and features all throughout months and events.⁵⁹ In his work, looting and rioting have been classified and divided into a three-phase process. The communal conflagrations that broke out in May 1947 followed the calls for direct action that led to the withdrawal the Unionist government and anticipated the enormous social disruption of the summer of 1947. Above and beyond the theoretical ring-fencing of such classification, riots are recognised for their ability to impact on both the land and the social mapping of villages, towns and districts, and to carve out the geographical spaces of Indian and Pakistan. Drawing consistently on Suranjan Das’ research on Bengal, these studies have

⁵⁸ R. Kumar, “Settling Partition Hostilities. Lesson Learnt, the Option Ahead”, in *Ibidem*, p. 5, 15.

⁵⁹ I. Talbot, “Violence, Migration and Resettlement: the Case of Amritsar”, in I. Talbot and S. Thandi (eds.), *People on the Move: Punjabi Colonial and Post-Colonial Migration*, Karachi, 2004, pp. 78-95; I. Talbot and D. S. Tatla (eds.), *Amritsar. Voices from between India and Pakistan*, Oxford, 2006, pp. 6 ff.; I. Talbot, *Divided Cities, op. cit.*, pp. 33-66. It is worth recalling that Talbot’s classification re-reads Anders Bjorn Hansen’s analysis of Partition-related communal clashes. See A. B. Hansen, *Partition and Genocide. Manifestation of Violence in Punjab, 1937-1947*, New Delhi, 2002.

highlighted the relevance of the privatisation of the traditional state-held monopoly on violence.⁶⁰ The progressive militarisation of the *Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh* (RSS), the Muslim League National Guards (MLNG) and private citizens facilitated, it is argued, the subsequent spread of conflicts throughout the whole of the region. Substantial changes in the structural approaches of Hindu nationalism, Sikh militancy and Muslim associations, together with the appearance of illegal training courses on the use of arms and ammunitions, finally paved the way for the subsequent Partition-related clashes and the reactions of the different communities involved.

Attempts to explain the August to November 1947 violence have been even more controversial. Its unbearable atrocity, the spread of the upheavals and the number of deaths, wounded individuals and refugees veiled the interpretation of events for the immediately-subsequent decades. What someone lived through and experienced in those months became a non-narratable and non-explainable 'taboo'. Arguably, the curtain of pain, mutual distrust and allegations appeared to be too difficult to be lifted with the necessary detachment and rationality. Alongside the accounts of British and local administrators, memoirs backed and compiled by single religious communities or regional governments took their place within the available literature.⁶¹ The rival community is portrayed here as the instigator of violence, and its decisions or acts as direct, pre-meditated and well-planned provocations. Local circumstances and an instinctive feeling of self-defence or retaliation thereby shocked the offended party into action.

⁶⁰ S. Das, *Community Riots in Bengal, 1905-1947*, Delhi, 1991.

⁶¹ M. Darling, *At Freedom's Door*, Oxford, 1949; A. Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, London, 1951; P. Moon, *Divide and Quit*, New Delhi, 1998; R. Symons, *The Making of Pakistan*, London, 1951; S. G. S. Talib, *Muslim League Attacks on Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab 1947*, Allahabad, 1950; West Punjab Government, *RSS in the Punjab*, Lahore, 1948.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the emergence of gender and subaltern studies inaugurated a new history-from-beneath approach. As these re-assessed previous interpretations of Independence-related violence, they emphasised the relevance of common people's experiences by reframing them into the wider picture of the so-called 'high politics'.⁶² New shapes, faces, voices and whispers were added to the histories and stories of Partition. The body of the abducted becomes, Urvashi Butalia argues, the body of the nation.⁶³ Events are depicted in all their physical fallouts and aspects, turning themselves into human beings impacting on other human beings.

Was then the Spring to Autumn violence of 1947 a case of genocide? Or ethnic cleansing? Or, even, a new form of violence? Historians and political and social scientists have divided over the issue and the ensuing search for a convincing answer. One of the first systematic attempts to tackle the issue was that carried out by Hansen back in 2002,⁶⁴ in which he provides a vivid account of the decade and the months that led up to Independence, upgrading Punjab-based massacres and clashes to the general debate on genocide studies in the process. In fact, the lack of state involvement and the mutuality in the perpetration of the atrocities had previously prevented researchers who specifically focused on genocide studies from considering the case of 1947 Punjab as a testing ground for their arguments.⁶⁵ Thus, at the very same time as he pursues his aim, Hansen makes a double point. On one hand, he overcomes the traditional boundaries that implied the mainstream image of the genocidal

⁶² S. Mayaram, "Speech, Silence and the Making of Partition in Mewar", in S. Amin (ed.), *Subaltern Studies IX. Writing on South Asian History and Society*, New Delhi, 1997; R. Menon, and K. Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries. Women's in India's Partition*, Delhi, 1998.

⁶³ U. Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence. Voices from the Partition of India*, Delhi, 1998.

⁶⁴ A. B. Hansen, *Partition and Genocide, op. cit.*

⁶⁵ This is, for example, the case of Leo Kuper. See L. Kuper, *Genocide. Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, New Haven, 1982.

violence: on the other, he questions the idea of the summer 1947 clashes as a simple moment of temporary madness.⁶⁶ In relation to the same historical events, Ishtiaq Ahmed and Ian Copland talk of ‘ethnic cleansing’ by juxtaposing the relevance of intentions in both the outbreak and the perpetration of violence.⁶⁷ They somehow anticipate Norman Naimark’s remarks on the substantial difference between genocide and ethnic cleansing: in the latter’s words, “genocide is the intentional killing of part or all of a ethnic, religious group: the murder of a people or peoples [...] is the objective. The intention of ethnic cleansing is to remove a people and often all traces of them from a concrete territory”.⁶⁸

Whether or not Partition-related communal clashes were a case of genocide, ethnic cleansing, deadly ethnic riot, retributive genocide or nationalist fratricide, almost all historians and social scientists have overlooked the interplay of the local press and public declarations from political leaders.⁶⁹ Indeed, the reading of newspapers filters the understanding and elaboration of an opinion over events. A reader of printed dailies, Eugene Shaw suggests, usually goes through a

⁶⁶ S. Ayar, “August Anarchy: The Partition Massacres in Punjab, 1947”, in D. H. Low and H. Brasted (eds.), *Freedom, Trauma, Continuities: Northern India and Independence*, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 15-39.

⁶⁷ I. Ahmed, “Forced Migration and Ethnic Cleansing in Lahore in 1947: Some First Person Accounts”, in I. Talbot and S. Thandi (eds.), *People on the move, op. cit.*, pp. 96-142; I. Copland, “The Further Shores of Partition: Ethnic Cleansing in Rajasthan”, *Past and Present*, 160, 1998, pp. 203-39.

⁶⁸ N. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred. Ethnic Cleansing in the Twentieth Century Europe*, Cambridge (MA), 2001, p. 3.

⁶⁹ On the ideas of retributive genocide, nationalist fratricide and deadly ethnic riot, see P. Brass, “The Partition of India and Retributive Genocide in the Punjab, 1946-47”, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 5, 1, 2003, pp. 71-101; J. Francisco, “In The Heat of a Fratricide: the Literature of India’s Partition Burning Freshly”, in M. Hasan (eds.), *Inventing Boundaries, Gender, Politics and the Partition of India*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 382; D. L. Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 2002.

cognitive process of either exclusion or inclusion that relies consistently on what the press includes or excludes from its pages.⁷⁰

Thousands of Muslims families left their homes and hearts in India that August, taking only the barest necessities with them. Train after train transported them in the unknown. Many did not make it – they were tortured, raped, and killed along the way by vengeful Sikhs and Hindus. Many Hindus and Sikhs heading in the opposite direction, leaving Pakistan for India, were butchered in turn by Muslims. [...] All those who made this journey and lived had a tale to tell.

(P. Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire. A Memoir*, London, 2006, pp. 11-2)

From the very outset, the resettlement and rehabilitation of refugees challenged the performance of the administrative and political machineries of West Punjab and Pakistan. This was not merely related to their integration into the local social fabric but even encompassed what seemed to be lesser experiences, needs and claims. Crammed camps, angry refugees, the spread of medical diseases, the need to provide millions of people with food and assistance, were side troubles that demanded immediate action. British officers, such as Richard Symonds, and government institutions have got into print a number of first-accounts of the management of the humanitarian emergency at both institutional and political levels.⁷¹

The emergence of gender and subaltern studies inspired a new perception and treatment of the topic at issue. Their bottom-up approach wove together the high politics and the everyday life of millions of refugees. Consequently, historians

⁷⁰ E. Shaw, "Agenda Setting and Mass Communication", *International Journal of Mass Communication Studies*, XXV, 1, 1979, p. 96.

⁷¹ Government of India – Ministry of Information and Broadcast, *Millions on the Move: The Aftermath of Partition*, Delhi, 1948; M. S. Randhawa, *Out of Ashes: an Account of the Rehabilitation of Refugees from West Pakistan in Rural Areas of East Punjab*, Chandigar, 1954; R. Symonds, *In the Margins of Independence. A Relief Worker in India and Pakistan, 1942-1949*, Karachi, 2001.

have more recently shifted their analysis progressively from government and party headquarters to private houses, resettlement camps or shops. In her analysis of the early condition of *muhajirs* in post-independence Sindh, Sarah Ansari meticulously explores the twists and turns of this new approach.⁷² The task of accommodating millions of refugees and integrating them into the local socio-economical fabric was not, she argues, a mere administrative headache. Instead, it undermined the foundations on which Pakistan was being built and, to a certain extent, affected the elaboration of the early idea of national solidarity. The superimposition of an artificially bureaucratic notion of citizenship on regions and local inhabitants encouraged what Ansari calls an ethnicisation of the public sphere. Within this socio-political framework, individuals were then actively involved in a process of either re-construction or protection of well-consolidated identities. Therefore, whilst the migrant community regarded themselves as the embodiment of the new state, Sindhi Muslims retained much of their own identity and authority.

With reference to the Punjab, Talbot has recently advanced a similar argumentative and interpretative narrative.⁷³ Despite the common cultural background and kinship ties facilitating integration, a fierce competition for resources, he maintains, embittered the relationship between local people and refugees. While the former believed that government decisions were mainly refugee-oriented, migrants charged local residents with illegally seizing local evacuee properties. Distrust, allegations and suspicions further tarnished the early success of some refugees' enterprises.

⁷² S. Ansari, *Life after Partition. Migration, Community, and Strife, 1947-1962*, Karachi, 2005.

⁷³ I. Talbot, *Divided Cities, op. cit.*, pp. 154-81.

Dealing with the resettlement and rehabilitation of refugees entailed the need to reckon with the related costs at a moment when both the federal and regional exchequers were being asked to fund the economic reconstruction of Pakistan and the Punjab. On one hand, there was the spending on the management of the humanitarian crisis and the local re-constitution of the politico-bureaucratic steel frame. On the other, the duty of avoiding the financial collapse of the state stood as a tricky and momentous challenge for the administrative establishment. Much has been written on the elaboration and development of the early Pakistani political economy.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, far fewer words have been devoted to exploring and analysing the actions undertaken by the West Punjab Assembly and local civil society to re-establish agrarian, commercial and industrial businesses in the aftermath of August 1947. Nor has there been careful historical analysis to explain the anthropological fallouts of such decisions on the refugee community and local society.

Migrants and local residents indeed possessed deeply different experiences of interpersonal labour relations. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, David Gilmartin, Ian Talbot and Shinder Thandi listed the main features of pre-independence agricultural Punjab.⁷⁵ The geography of its west wing and the distribution of the natural resources had empowered economic ties that transcended kingship and caste connections. With the advent of the canal colonies, agriculturalists – mainly Sikh – who settled in southern Punjab turned

⁷⁴ See, for instance, M. Ali, *The Emergence of Pakistan*, New York, 1967; A. Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule. The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence*, Cambridge, 1990; O. Noman, *The Political Economy of Pakistan, 1947-1985*, New York, 1988.

⁷⁵ D. Gilmartin, "Migration and Modernity: the State, the Punjabi Village, and the Settling of the Canal Colonies", in I. Talbot and S. Thandi (eds.), *People on the Move, op. cit.*, pp. 3-20; I. Talbot, "The Growth of the Muslim League in the Punjab, 1936-1947", *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 10, 1982, pp. 5-24; S. Thandi, "The Unidentical Twins: Some Explanations of Comparative Agricultural Performance Since Partition", *International Punjab Studies*, 4, 1, 1997, pp. 63-84.

out to be rational *homines oeconomici* able to increase productivity and gross income. However, land was not merely an economic resource. It was a unit of measurement of personal prestige and way to boost its owner's political power.

*The tarnished rays, the night-smudged light.
This is not that Dawn which, ravished with freedom,
we had set out in sheer longing,
so sure that somewhere in its desert in sky harboured
a final heaven for the stars and we find it.
We had no doubt that night's vagrant wave would tray towards the shore,
that the heart rocked with sorrow would at least reach its port.*

(F. A. Faiz, *The Dawn of Freedom – August 1947*)

The achievement of independence went hand-in-hand with the emergence of the Muslim League as a party of social integration and the sole representative of Indian Muslims.⁷⁶ Mushirul Hasan describes the Punjabi political arena of the late 1920s as political space that was structured along 'have got and 'have not' lines rather than along communal ones.⁷⁷ Elaborating a political platform in support of the interests of the rural *zamindars* helped political parties to make significant gains in any type of electoral competition. The late 1930s Unionist Party thus won the support of the local electorate thanks to its ability to rely upon traditional and religious leaders and create an ideological umbrella wherein Hindu, Sikh and Muslim *zamindars* felt their interests to safely and properly represented. Elsewhere, Hasan provides a long-term and detailed account of the decline and fall of the Unionist Party.⁷⁸ Beset by the fallouts of the Morley-Minto and Montagu-Chelmsford reforms and the end of the Khilafat Movement's

⁷⁶ On the idea of party of social integration, see S. Neumann (ed.), *Modern Political Parties. Approaches to Comparative Politics*, Chicago, 1956, p. 404.

⁷⁷ M. Hasan, "Communalism in the Provinces: A Case Study of Bengal and Punjab, 1922-1926", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5, 33, 1980, p. 1403.

⁷⁸ M. Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1916-1928*, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 203, 207-8.

Hindu-Muslim unity, the party started progressively to lose ground and electoral appeal.

Both Mushirul Hasan and David Gilmartin acknowledge that electoral competitions proved to be of great importance in the conceptualisation of the political self. For his part, Gilmartin carries out an in-depth religious-focused analysis of the impact of democratisation processes on Punjabi Muslims.⁷⁹ From the 1920s onwards, elections called for a reconciliation of at least two ‘identities’. Indeed, the Muslim community had to reframe its identity as a group both within the South Asian context and within the colonial structure of power. The introduction of an electoral representative challenged the traditional equipoise, and triggered off fierce debates over the quintessence of local Muslim-ness. If compared with previous campaigns, 1945-6 elections underlined the relevance of autonomous voters. The political mobilisation of Punjabi Muslims was carried out in the name of the re-establishment of Islamic unity and a moral order wherein each and every individual was required to fulfil his own duty.

Across the whole of the Punjab, Muslim League mural posters and political leaders appealed to voters to “exercise [...] [their] free choice”.⁸⁰ *Pirs* and *sajjada nashins* called on their followers to stand for Jinnah’s party as a way to prevent *fitna*. Self-realisation, order and unity therefore became the standout themes exploited to rally support from among local Muslims. In an article that was published back in 1979, Gilmartin points out that traditional religious authorities “found in the Muslim League under Jinnah’s leadership a political platform which allowed them to maintain their political and religious

⁷⁹ D. Gilmartin, “A Magnificent Gift: Muslim Nationalism and the Election Process in Colonial Punjab”, *Comparative Histories and Societies*, 40, 3, 1998, pp. 415-36.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 430.

connections and at the same time to express their religious concern in politics at the provincial and national level”.⁸¹ Recent trends in historiography attenuate the relevance of religion on the 1945-6 elections. Ian Talbot casts light on the political implications that resulted in the fall of the Unionist Party and the subsequent rise to power of the Muslim League.⁸² According to his analysis, the outbreak of World War II and the British decision to devolve independence to the Indian subcontinent rocked the Punjabi political arena. Members and leaders of the Unionist Party – whose manifesto had rested on the loyalty to the colonial *raj* – were now running on empty. When it comes to delving into the secrets of ‘domestic politics’, Talbot highlights the impact of the 1937 Jinnah-Sikander Pact. This political agreement is conceived as the turning point in a three-step strategy that was concocted by the Muslim League and aimed at winning over the rival party. The ‘helping hand’ of the Punjab Muslim Student Federation and the alleged mismanagement of the wartime crisis paved the way for the electoral success of Jinnah’s party in the province.⁸³ Finally, the decision of *zamindars*, *pirs* and *sajjada nashins* to join League’s ranks was, in Talbot’s view, the straws that cumulatively broke the camel’s back.

When Independence came to India and Pakistan, the Muslim League, its staff and its political platform themselves turned into peculiar refugees. Existing literature tends to focus on the party’s failure to address the challenge of nation-

⁸¹ D. Gilmartin, “Religious Leadership and the Pakistan Movement in the Punjab”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 13, 3, 1979, pp. 485-517. On the involvement of religious authorities in the run-up to Independence, see also D. Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam. Punjab and the Making of Pakistan*, Berkeley, 1988.

⁸² I. Talbot, “The 1946 Punjab Elections”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 14, 1, 1980, pp. 65-91; I Talbot, *Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement. The Growth of the Muslim League in North-West and North-East India*, Karachi, 1988; I. Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1948*, New Delhi, 1988.

⁸³ To date only a single monograph has been published on the role and activities of the Punjab Muslim Student Federation during the Independence movement. See S. H. Mizra, *The Punjab Muslim Student Federation: an Annotated Documentary Survey, 1937-1947*, Lahore, 1978.

state- and institution-building processes. Safar Mahmood, for instance, identifies in the League's factionalism, corruption and internal weaknesses the main causes of Pakistan's failure.⁸⁴ In contrast, Ayesha Jalal stresses the role played by Pakistan's geography and financial constraints in the centralisation of power and the emergence of the army and the bureaucracy as dominant political forces. Jinnah's choice to opt for the separation of party careers from ministerial appointments proved in the long run to be a great mistake that doubly harmed institutions and party life.⁸⁵

Recent regional research on the immediate post-Partition years reveals more complex and multi-faceted image of the League's attitude towards nation- and state-building strategies. An *impasse* in the machinery of the representative patterns, Talbot maintains, embroiled the early political life of both Pakistan and the Punjab.⁸⁶ The 'transfer' of party seats from the pre-Independence regional legislature to the newly-established West Punjab Assembly pushed Muslim League politicians to grant their loyalty to the centre rather to their electoral basis. Personal rivalries imbued the local sphere and progressively widened the gap between politics and those who were supposed to be represented by it.

Hence, refugee integration into the fabric of West Punjabi society and their everyday interaction with state authorities provide an excellent thematic and analytical framework that allows the mutual interactions of 'high politics' and the everyday experience of political institutions to be investigated. Post-Partition literature on the history of the Pakistan Punjab has consistently portrayed the resettlement and the rehabilitation of refugees as a smooth, successful and

⁸⁴ S. Mahmood, "Decline of the Pakistan Muslim League and its Implications (1947-1954)", *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, 15, 2, 1994, pp. 63-84.

⁸⁵ A. Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule. The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence*, Cambridge, 1990.

⁸⁶ I. Talbot, *Divided Cities, op. cit.*, pp. 176-9.

biraderi-homogenous process.⁸⁷ But this assertion is generally based on a common assumption that has not, as yet, been supported by historical evidence. It duplicates government narratives of the time and current socio-geographical mapping of Partition refugees and their families on land by taking for granted their truthfulness and historical accuracy. What if – as this dissertation's first research question poses – these widely-accepted yet unproven arguments are challenged? What if, as a cursory glance through available primary sources suggests, the resettlement of Partition refugees in West Punjab is acknowledged for its still unknown socially and politically-disruptive outcomes?

The early policies of both the government of Punjab and the provincial branch of the Muslim League and their consequences for the everyday life of the average local man or woman have equally not found adequate space in studies on post-Partition Pakistan. There is, in fact, a paucity of research that focuses specifically on those dynamics that led government and party authorities to act as viable state actors within a re-drawn political arena and to be accepted as such by members of local society. The dawn of 15th August 1947 entailed, for both the administrative and political cadres, the need to – albeit partially – ‘start at zero’. Ordinary citizens, local parties and authorities had to learn how act as respectively citizens and state institutions. As many Pakistanis put it, Pakistan itself was a *muhajir*.⁸⁸ Consequently, it shared the very same joys and sorrows of those millions of refugees who, back in 1947, had found their new home within its borders. But to what extent – the second research question of this dissertation explores – does the challenging of well-rooted arguments on the resettlement of

⁸⁷ Government of Pakistan, *The Journey to Pakistan: a Documentation on Refugees*, Islamabad, 1993, p. 78-9, NDC. See also M. Waseem, “Muslim Migration from East Punjab: Patterns of Settlement and Assimilation”, in I. Talbot and S. Thandi (eds.), *People on the Move, op. cit.*, pp. 63-77.

⁸⁸ Conversation with Dr. Tahir Kamran, Southampton, 11th April 2011.

the migrant community in West Punjab affect our understanding of the early years of Pakistan's political history?

Methodology and sources

One January afternoon in the year 1941, a German soldier was out walking, enjoying an afternoon's liberty when he found himself wandering alone, through the San Lorenzo district of Rome. He knew precisely four words of Italian and of the world he knew little or nothing. His first name was Gunther. His surname is unknown.

(E. Morante, *History: A Novel*, London, 2000, p. 11)

As drunk as a lord, Gunther was roaming around the Eternal City in search for a brothel. He bumped into Ida Mancuso, a primary school teacher, and raped her. Ida would become pregnant and, nine month later, give birth to Useppe. Her life, alongside that of Useppe and the son of her first marriage, present a window on the poignant events of World War II. Elsa Morante – the author of *The History: A Novel* – crafts a subtle plot wherein the everyday life of the protagonists permeates the major events of history. In turn, the latter constantly shapes Isa, Useppe and Antonio's lives. As William Rivière comments in his introduction to the English translation of the book, "*History* is history and story in many senses, from its original title *La Storia*. [...] [It] abounds in human weakness, misfortune, superficiality and corruption".⁸⁹

Methodologically-speaking, this dissertation focuses on the hundreds of thousands of Punjabi Idas, Useppes and Antonios who, in 1947, took refuge in a state that they perceived to be their new homeland. In particular, it casts light on the manifold recesses of the everyday experience of the state among Partition refugees in Pakistani Punjab. Ida, Useppe and Antonio rubbed their eyes as

⁸⁹ E. Morante, *History: A Novel*, London, 2000, pp. xi and ix.

events and persons swam before them. Likewise, Pakistani Punjab's migrant community has often appeared not to be in control of either its own fate or, needless to say, the fate of other individuals. Nevertheless, their lives have left their mark in history. Feelings and emotions shape, argues Leora Auslander by extending Ernest Renan's arguments on nationalism to citizenship, both the sense of belonging to a nation and the attachment to a specific form of governance.⁹⁰ Indeed, political history stems from an intricate tapestry of such histories and stories. The apparently chaotic cluster of ideas, interactions, reactions, personal opinions and objects that usually fill the life of each and every individual makes an imprint on the so-called 'major' history and politics. In her research on the Vichy Government, Shannon L. Fogg fully unveils the impact of the everyday on politics and institutions at a momentous juncture of French history.⁹¹ Therein, big ideas meet with the day-to-day realities of ordinary people in a creative and somehow revolutionary state-building (and questioning) process. Lucia Michelutti adds a new twist to the wider debate in her recent *The Vernacularisation of Democracy: Politics, Caste and Religion in India*.⁹² By lifting the curtain on the grassroots mechanics of Indian democracy, Michelutti spotlights those subtle processes of embedment of the activities that are associated with the governance of India in the local socio-cultural practices of

⁹⁰ L. Auslander, *Cultural Revolutions: The Politics of Everyday Life in Britain, North America and France*, Oxford-New York, 2009, p. 1. See also E. Renan, "What is Nation?", in V. P. Pecora, *National Identities*, London, 2001, pp. 162-77. More recently, Judith Farquhar, Qicheng Zhang and Michael Skey have explored similar themes. See J. Farquhar and Q. Zhang, *Ten Thousands Things. Nurturing Life in Contemporary Beijing*, Cambridge (MA), 2012; M. Skey, *National Belonging and Everyday Life. The Significance of Nationhood in an Uncertain World*, Basingstoke, 2011.

⁹¹ S. L. Fogg, *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France: Foreigners, Undesirables, and Strangers*, Cambridge, 2011.

⁹² L. Michelutti, *The Vernacularisation of Democracy: Politics, Caste and Religion in India*, New Delhi, 2008. See also, L. Michelutti, "'We (Yadavs) are a cast of politicians': Caste and Modern Politics in a North Indian Town", in D. Gupta (ed.), *Caste in Question. Identity or Hierarchy?*, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 43-72.

ordinary people. Her ethnographic exploration of the low- and middle-ranked *Yadav* caste and its engagement with the political ideas of democracy lays bare the mutual dualities of the politics of the everyday state. This latter is not merely about the impact of the men of street on abstract political ideologies. It also deals with what happens when those abstract ideologies reach the realms of each and every individual.

Michelutti succeeds in leaving her imprint on the still-in-the-making and rather cloudy interpretative picture of the everyday state. Indeed, in spite of them claiming it as their own research field, researchers - especially area studies ones - have failed to be as forceful and consistent as Michelutti while outlining their own definition of an everyday state and revealing its twofold nature.⁹³ One, however, should not blame them. As they interact with it on a daily basis, citizens themselves come up against the elusive and fuzzy nature of the state.⁹⁴ After all, rulers and ruled are, as Achille Mbembe argues, intimately involved in a mutual indeterminate, equivocal, impromptu and mediated relationship,⁹⁵ The state, Akhil Gupta follows hot on Mbembe's heels, stands as a by-product of

⁹³ This is, for instance, the case of the contributors to a recent special issue of *Contemporary South Asia*. See *Contemporary South Asia – Special Issue: Experiencing the State from the Margins: Ordinary Politics and Spaces of Possibility*, 19, 3, 2011. The list of the individual articles published therein is: R. Jasani, “A game of hide and seek: gendered ethnographies of the everyday state after communal violence in Ahmedabad, Western India” (pp. 243-62); P. Williams, “An absent presence: experiences of the ‘welfare state’ in an Indian Muslim *mohalla*” (pp. 263-80); M. Mohsini, “Engagement and disengagement from the margins: perception of the state by urban Muslim artisans in India” (pp. 281-96); F. McConnell, “A state within the state? Exploring relations between the Indian state and the Tibetan community and government-in-exile” (pp. 297-314); C. Still, “The State and the *palli*; Dalit perspectives on the state in Andhra Pradesh” (pp. 315-29).

⁹⁴ S. Ismail, *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters; Encountering the Everyday State*, Minneapolis (MN), 2006, pp. XXXIII-IV. The contentiousness of the State is a philosophical and political classic. See, for instance, M. Foucault, *Surveiller et Punir*, Paris, 1998; T. Mitchell, “The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and their Critics”, *American Political Science Review*, 85, 1, 1991, pp. 77-99; T. Osborne, “Security and Vitality: Drains, Liberalism and Power in the Nineteenth Century, in A. Barry, T. Osborne and N. Rose (eds.), *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Rule*, Chicago, 1996, pp. 99-121; M. Taussig, *The Nervous system*, New York, 1992, pp. 111-40.

⁹⁵ A. Mbembe, “Prosaics of Servitude and Authoritarian Civilities”, *Public Culture*, 5, 1, 1992, pp. 132.

specific historical moment and moulds out the interplay between politics and governed and governors' representations of it.⁹⁶ In a Louis XIV-style bout of enthusiasm, it can be then argued that, for all the vagueness of their definitions, the state is the everyday and the everyday is the state.

The argumentative narrative of this dissertation stems from the idea that Pakistan has not been a failed (or failing) state. Anatol Lieven convincingly argues Pakistan's stability and resilience in the face of an only apparently contradictory weakness of the civil government itself.⁹⁷ It is, he maintains, a "negotiated State": political power, authority and sovereignty are indeed the result of an endless process of mediation. Elsewhere, literature – admittedly rather scattered – has labelled such political systems as patronage democracies/regimes, but it has never taken account of their potential for standing as a distinct political category.⁹⁸ An intellectual legacy of a number of pieces of research on the so-called Northern American 'Gilded Age', patronage political systems have traditionally been conceived as a dysfunction of either democratic or autocratic regimes.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, arguing the epistemological autonomy of patronage democracies/regimes (or negotiated states) allows researchers to grasp more fully the complexities, subtleties and dynamics of Pakistan's political life. Politics is consequently judged by the standards of local stake- and shareholders, actors as well as those taking occasional 'walk-on'

⁹⁶ A. Gupta, "Blurred Boundaries: the Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics and the Imaged State", *American Ethnologist*, 22, 2, 1995, p. 353.

⁹⁷ A. Lieven, *Pakistan. A Hard Country*, London, 2011, pp. 12-16 and 23-9.

⁹⁸ K. Chandra, "Why Voters in Patronage Democracies Split their Tickets: Strategic Voting for Ethnic Parties", *Electoral Studies*, 28, 2009, pp. 21-32. It should be also noted that, in September and October 2011, King's College, University of Cambridge held the International Multidisciplinary Colloquium "Patronage in South Asia".

⁹⁹ See, for instance, L. D. Ackermank, *Boss Tweed: The Rise and Fall of the Corrupt Pol who Conceived the Soul of Modern New York*, New York, 2005; S. J. Mandelbaum, *Boss Tweed's New York*, New York, 1965. Still, the most vivid account of those years is M. Twain, *The Gilded Age*, Boston, 2007.

parts. To a certain extent, ideas of power, authority and institutions become tinged with new nuances that challenge the traditionally-applied definitions of institutions, bureaucracy, electoral policies and corruption.¹⁰⁰

Source limitations, however, have played an important part in shaping the approach undertaken by this dissertation. Kanwaljit Kaur's Ph.D. on the resettlement of Partition refugees in Indian Punjab makes anyone focusing on the mirror phenomenon in the Pakistani wing of the region frankly envious.¹⁰¹ Her bibliography details a long list of primary sources that represent a forbidden dream for historians who are used to working in Pakistani party, federal and provincial archives. In 1958, the banning of all political parties, the requisitioning of their records and the freezing of their assets immediately followed the imposition of martial law over the whole of Pakistan. Thereafter, with the only exception of the so-called Freedom Movement Archives (mainly pre-1947 all-India and provincial Muslim League Records), remaining party papers and their location appear to lie in the realm of the unknown. Hence, the government records that are available in Islamabad and Lahore and which specifically deal with the topic under scrutiny can be almost counted on the fingers of one hand.

This apparent paucity of official documents can be attributed in large measure to the early difficulties of both the bureaucratic and institutional *apparata* in swiftly handling the humanitarian crisis. To a certain administrative degree, the birth of an independent Pakistan meant starting at zero. *Doing things* took priority over *rationalising* decisions. Authorities frequently scribbled reports on

¹⁰⁰ On this point, see W. Gould, *Bureaucracy, Community, and Influence in India. Society and the State, 1930s-1960s*, Abingdon (Oxon), 2011.

¹⁰¹ K. Kaur, *Riots, Refugees and Rehabilitation: A Case Study of Punjab 1946-56*, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2012.

the edges of newspapers that, it goes without saying, were not kept for records purposes.¹⁰² Up to the mid-1950s, district and provincial officials did not file documents, decisions and receipts.¹⁰³ Reportedly, *patwaris* who were supposed to serve first the Pakistan Administration Service and then the 1950-onwards revamped Civil Service of Pakistan in the rural districts of Punjab, did not turn up and deserted their offices.¹⁰⁴ All this has resulted in a scarcity or, at times, lack of proper detailed documentary evidence of resettlement plans undertaken whether at district-, town- and village-level. So while a list of locally-kept and focused documents on *and* around the rehabilitation of refugees in Multan District can be found either in a recently-published catalogue or in the bibliography of the present dissertation,¹⁰⁵ just a cursory glance of them reveals that nothing – or nearly nothing – has survived both the early deficiencies of the Pakistani institutions and the wearing effect of time. The case of Multan is not, however, an isolated one. The Lahore Improvement Trust (the present-day Lahore Development Authority) holds no documentary evidence of the period under scrutiny. For his part, Ilyas Chattha, working on developments elsewhere in the Punjab during the same timeframe, recently came up against similar problems, namely that “archival sources in Sialkot and Gujranwala are scattered and have been moved continuously”, making, in his words, access to district- and *tehsil*-level sources an “intricate problem”.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² A. Albinia, *Empire of the Indus: The Story of a River*, London, 2009, pp. 14-15.

¹⁰³ A-2, 8th October 1947, NND 765024, NARA and *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 2nd March 1954, PCSL.

¹⁰⁴ *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 8th March 1954, PCSL.

¹⁰⁵ A. A. Ali, J. A. Salyana, S. M. Awan (compiled by), *The Collection of Multan Record. Pre- and Post-Independence Official Documents of Punjab, 1852-2004*, Multan, 2010.

¹⁰⁶ I. Chattha, *Partition and Locality. Violence, Migration, and Development in Gujranwala and Sialkot, 1947-1962*, Karachi, 2011, pp. 15-6. Similarly, Matthew Hull argues that, in Islamabad, “it [...] [is] much easier to [...] read what are called ‘current files’, that is, not archives, but active files and other documents that [...] [are] currently in use”. See, M. Hull, *Government of Paper. The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 2012, p. 28.

Therefore, bearing in mind the problems associated with retrieving district-level sources, this dissertation brings together official Pakistani documents with US and British records and a careful survey of both the judicial records and the Urdu or English-language dailies of the time. With respect to local newspapers, it draws consistently on the *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), whose readership – members of the well-educated Punjabi urban bourgeoisie – is frequently omitted from the existing narrative on refugee resettlement whose rhetoric instead tends to focus on less privileged individuals and groups. But relying on the Pakistani English and vernacular press of that time entails a certain amount of calculated risk: conspiracy theories, conflicting interpretation of events and unchecked information dominated local newspapers and magazines alike. Furthermore, their own struggle for survival trapped journalists, editors and government authorities in a dangerous vicious circle. As the joint-editor of the *Weekly Guardian* (Lahore) pointed out in a private conversation with a US representative in Lahore in early July 1951, “the Government control[led] the entire supply of newsprint of Pakistan and [...] [could] withdraw all government-sponsored advertisements whenever it wishe[d]”.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, sticking to institutional views, reports and narratives was, in many cases, a life-saving daily routine. Censorship, charges of corruption and partisanship notwithstanding, the press and local courts constitute an invaluable source of details, stories and (why not?) gossip.

The number of sources used in this dissertation that can be traced back to so-called oral history, however, is relatively small. This was a deliberate choice. The aim was to break down that wall of silence, denials and dissonances up

¹⁰⁷ *Memorandum of Conversation*, 9th July 1951, NND 897209, NARA.

against which researchers usually come.¹⁰⁸ Sometimes less is more. For those who went through it as refugees, Partition was unquestionably a distressing experience. Re-ordering the jigsaws of sleepless nights hidden under stacks of corpses, relatives brutally butchered and women raped on public highways, with an unknown foreign researcher can be a source of understandable discomfort.¹⁰⁹ For their part, questionnaires – no matter whether structured or semi-structured – trigger off a curious mechanism that pushes interviewees to please their interviewer. The idea of meeting the same person several times and finally ‘being accepted as one of the family’ may certainly be challenged on the grounds of the very necessary detachment that a historian is asked to have. Nevertheless, in a trust-based society such as Pakistan, it puts interviewees at ease by engaging them in an open and frank debate on the issues at stake.

Chapter outline

The present research accordingly weaves a chronological and thematic plot into a single narrative. Its investigation focuses on the Punjabi refugee middle and upper-middle class, thereby challenging the argument that their members were by no means overcome by the dreadful events of Partition.¹¹⁰ *Los ricos también lloran*, one may gloss.¹¹¹ Unless otherwise clearly stated, and as pointed out earlier, this dissertation will mainly draw its conclusions from an analysis of the Lahori *milieu* from Independence up to the promulgation of the second Constitution of Pakistan in 1962. As they trace the development of the politics of the everyday state among the *muhajirs* of the Pakistani Punjab, individual

¹⁰⁸ I. Talbot, “Punjabi Refugees’ Rehabilitation and the Indian State: Discourse, Denials and Dissonances”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 45, 1, 2001, pp. 109-30.

¹⁰⁹ Conversation with Dr. Saeed Elahi, Lahore, 14th February 2010.

¹¹⁰ I. Chattha, *Partition and Locality*, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-5, 187.

¹¹¹ Even wealthy people cry.

chapters of this dissertation question the assumed homogeneity of resettlement and self-resettlement practices, the ability of the local bureaucracy to act as an independent political power, and the so-called ‘leftist syndrome of the marginal men’.¹¹²

Chapter 1 introduces the dissertation by framing the migration of Partition refugees within its natural historical context. It chronicles the communal violence of early spring to late summer 1947, and the initial flows of refugees that this produced. Particular attention is paid to the everyday symbolic dimension of these events and to popular, grassroots-level understanding and re-elaboration of the ‘big political ideas’ at stake in those months.

Chapter 2 then explores the ways in which this refugee community elaborated its sense of belonging to a state and a wider nation, while engaging with the ideas of modernity, urbanisation and scandal. From reception camps to temporarily-allotted houses or self-constructed huts, migrants became involved in an intricate hotchpotch of emotions that deeply influenced their process of integration into the local social fabric and the development of their own political identity. As migration and resettlement practices literally tore apart entire *biraderis*, these latter ones, this chapter contends, went through a process of notional and social re-elaboration.

The disruption of traditional hierarchies and balances of power undoubtedly made an impact on the bureaucratic management of the humanitarian crisis.

Chapter 3 accordingly delves into the weaknesses of the new Pakistani bureaucracy as it grappled with the need to re-assert its own authority over local society and to resettle millions of people on the land. As a result, it challenges

¹¹² Each and every chapter has its own ‘literature review’ where all these points are properly addressed.

traditionally-accepted definitions of corruption by re-framing patronage practices within the kind of institution-building processes that exist in trust-based and highly-personalised societies such as that of Pakistan.

Chapter 4 continues the arguments of the previous chapter and re-frames the substantial weakness of the Pakistan bureaucracy within the context of the 1951 provincial elections and of the early laying of the foundations of local political stability. As civil servants and politicians interfered with and exploited each other, the local arena lived up to both old and new expectations. The relevance of kinship ties, ordinary people's struggle for securing the (usually) scarce means of livelihood, and party dynamics merge here together in an analysis of the early shaping of Pakistan's electoral policies.

Chapter 5 addresses finally the nature of the Pakistani institutional '(dis)order'. At a moment when debate over the future constitutional shape of the Pakistan state stagnated, day-to-day reality supplanted any form of learned discussion. A morbid attachment to charismatic figures, censorship and the partisanship of the press, and Pakistan's troubled relationship with India and regional rivalries are here depicted as proactive - albeit dysfunctional – constituents and constitutional parts of the new state.

Chapter 1

Memories of swords, blood and freedom:

1947 communal disturbances and the early flows of refugees

When my critics object and tell me that I am obsessed by the experience of partition, trapped in it, my response is that what happened in 1947 was so complex, so devastating that I have yet to understand it fully. How can I get away from it?

(I. Hussain in A. Bhalla, *Partition Dialogues. Memories of a Lost Home*, New Delhi, 2007)

As Jinnah defined it, the Punjab represented the cornerstone of Pakistan. Here the Muslim League fought one of its most interesting political battles in order to win over the Unionist Party in the key 1945-6 elections. Taken as a proof of the Muslim League's power and its declared aspiration to be the sole representative of Indian Muslims, both the electoral campaign and competition shook the local political arena by challenging all those traditional affiliations that had consolidated over the previous decades. Ideas of religious identity, individuality and a lethal overlapping of politics and religion equally provided the raw ingredients for the 1945-6 Muslim League victory and for the different bouts of violence that rocked the Punjab after the withdrawal of Khizr Tiwana's ministry in February 1947.

This chapter challenges existing definitions and images of Partition-related communal clashes by re-assessing the value of the symbols that social actors 'handled' during the spring and the summer of 1947. It offers a brief yet detailed account of the circumstances involved in the early fluxes of migrants and these latter ones' journey towards what they perceived to be safer places or their new

home. As a general remark, the chapter argues the need to emphasise the relevance of the meanings that local society attached to the political ideas at stake and violence. The aim here is to apply the methodology of Marshall McLuhan, Quentin Fiore and Jerome Agel, thereby treating attitudes, opinions and clashes as both a medium and a message.¹ Therefore, the first section of this chapter reveals the subtle plot of interactions between past and contemporary symbolic cosmogonies in the deployment of the March to June communal clashes, and accounts for the early flows of refugees. The second and third sections focus on the individual and somehow personal experience of communalism, the indeterminateness of the political ideas at stake during the early summer of 1947, and the subsequent re-negotiation of both the religious and civic identities of the local communities.

“People will surge from one side of the Square to the other”: the 1947 March to May communal violence and the early flows of refugees²

The Governor of Punjab Evan Jenkins entrusted the Khan of Mamdot with the task of forming a new Cabinet at 11:40 am on 3rd March 1947. A single-party Ministry that counted on the miscellaneous support of single individuals within the Assembly, would not, Jenkins warned him, last long. Daultana’s only answer was to ask the Governor’s blessing in this new Muslim League enterprise.³ “[You can] count on help from me if [...] [you get] into difficulty, but I could do very little unless the Muslim League [...] [takes] a reasonable line and [...] [are]

¹ M. McLuhan, Q. Fiore and J. Agel, *The Medium is the Message. An Inventory of Effects*, Harmondsworth, 2008.

² See K. Golsorki, *Poem of the Unknown*, n. d.

³ *Jenkins to Wavell No. 652*, 3rd March 1947, MSS.EUR.D 977/16, IOR.

prepared to help themselves”, countered the British official.⁴ As news spread across Lahore, Hindus and Sikhs started tearing down Muslim League flags. Some of them marched towards local police stations and set them on fire.⁵ The long spring and summer of 1947 had just begun. The wave of violence that swept all before it was not, literature has argued thus far, about ‘traditionally’-understood religious differences.⁶ But the everyday dimension of those months suggests that a certain degree of continuity survived across time and surfaced in the popular perception of events. Delving into the vast array of official primary sources, this section highlights the interplay of historical correspondences and assesses their impact on the course of the history of the Punjab. Highlighting continuities between 1947 events and previous communal conflicts, however, should not be perceived as a way of downplaying the exceptionability of the months leading up to the withdrawal of the British *raj*. By contrast, it represents an attempt to conduct both a diachronic and synchronic analysis that sheds light on the complexity of the local scenario and pins down the fluidity in the social perception of the value of symbols in twentieth-century Punjab.

Demonstrations, fires, killings, disrupted communications, assaults on trains and deserted streets crammed with corpses were about to become a common scenario throughout 1947 Punjab. As colonial administration over the Indian subcontinent drew to close, the main local towns and rural areas shared a similar experience of violence, pain and terror. Soon after the resignation of Khizr Tiwana in early March, rioting broke out in the Amritsar suburbs of Chown

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secraphone Message*, 4th March 1947, MSS.EUR.D 977/16, IOR.

⁶ P. Gosh, “Partition’s Biharis”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 17, 2, 1997, pp. 21-34; I. Talbot and G. Singh, *The Partition of India*, Cambridge, 2009, p. 66; I. Talbot, *Divided Cities. Partition and its Aftermath in Lahore and Amritsar, 1947-1957*, Karachi, 2007, pp. 33-59.

Nohli, Holi Bazar and Kitra Jamal. Businesses and commercial were systematically looted and burnt, and 40,000 persons were made homeless. The total damage was assessed at Rs. 5-8 crores.⁷ Although only slightly touched by the demolition of properties, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi experienced similar bouts of communal violence. Overtly political, riots combined Hindu and Sikh opposition to the establishment of a Muslim League *raj* over the Punjab with some of the elements that had previously featured in conflicts of the 1920s and 1930s. Local mainstream disturbances and their symbolic religious cosmogony were encapsulated in a new form of contraposition. This latter broadened and renewed the traditional meaning that social actors attached to communal violence.

The various means through which this violence was deployed seem to have been all part of a common repertoire “learned, shared and acted all through a relatively deliberate process of choice” that had been taking place since the early part of the century.⁸ Take, for instance, a sudden outbreak of a communal clash that had shaken the southern town of Multan in September 1920. A mishap occurred during the Shi’a *muharram* process through a Hindu-majority suburb. When the *taziya* inadvertently damaged a telephone cable, stones were thrown at the faithful involved. Muslim retaliation was immediate, and resulted in the destruction of Hindu houses and shops, several wounded and the rape of Hindu women.⁹ “On 11th April [1947]” – reported the British Deputy Commissioner – “large numbers of Muslims collected at this mosque [the one in the suburb of

⁷ *The Times* (London), 10th March 1947.

⁸ C. Tilly, “Contentious Repertoires in Great Britain, 1758-1834”, *Social Science History*, 17, 2, 1993, p. 264. See also C. Tilly, “Les origines du répertoire de l’action collective contemporaine en France et Grande Bretagne”, *Vingtième siècle. Revue d’histoire*, 4, 1984, pp. 89-108.

⁹ D. Abenante, *La colonizzazione di Multan. Islam, potere, istituzioni nel Punjab sudoccidentale (1948-1922)*, Trieste, 2004, p. 211.

Chowk Prag Das] for Friday prayer. [...] After the prayer, the Muslims passed through a predominantly non-Muslim area, shouting slogans, and stones and bricks were thrown at them from the housetops by Hindus and Sikhs. The Muslims retaliated to some purpose”.¹⁰ The similarities between the two occasions separated by nearly two decades are striking. The ‘technology’ that the social actors exploited and to which they appealed relied upon well-established set of acts of violent public performances.

As in the past, religious festivals, processions and symbolisms were again part and parcel of the whole picture of events that was being sketched out on the all-India scenario. In early 1947, a number of Sikh associations were planning to take part in almost all *Holi* procession in Lahore and across the whole Punjab.¹¹ In April Amritsar, a riot broke out after the ritual Friday prayers.¹² Sikh holy books were burnt in Muzzaffargarh, and cases of Sikhs having their beards and hair forcibly cut were reported in Rawalpindi, Attock and Jhelum Districts.¹³ Spaces and symbols need here to be conceived in terms of their fluid and dynamic dimensions. As Turner puts it, they are not static cognitive signs.¹⁴ Rather symbolisms should be understood with reference to the general context and the significance or interpretations that human beings and groups attach to them.

In the spring of 1947, the overall religious cosmology still retained the meaning that previous communal clashes had established, albeit reshaped around

¹⁰ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secret No. 666*, 30th April 1947, MSS.EUR.F. 200/121, IOR.

¹¹ *Jenkins to Wavell – Telegram No. 27/G*, 5th March 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR, and *Jenkins to Wavell No. 33/G*, 7th March 1947, MSS.EUR.D. 977/16, IOR.

¹² *Jenkins to Mountbatten No. 79/G*, 11th April 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.

¹³ *The Times* (London), 19th March 1947 and *Note by Jenkins to Mountbatten*, 16th April 1947, R/3/1/90, IOR.

¹⁴ V. Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Ithaca-London, 1974, p. 96.

a new political demand and the subsequent reactions of political leaders. From 1945 onwards, politics and religion had intertwined in an intricate plot. The call for an independent India and Pakistan embodied the porosity of the borders demarcating the two. Likewise, the ambiguities of Indian and Pakistani nationalisms echoed and seeped into local society and the way it stood in the public arena. Mosques, Hindu temples and Sikh *gurdwaras* were both the target and the starting point for communal violence. In Multan, for instance, the Devpura, Jog Maya and Ram temples as well as the *dharamsala* of Bawa Sant Das and the shrine of Baba Safra revealed the relevance of religion to all the persons who were either taking part in or experiencing the events.¹⁵ No matter if reasserted within a new political context and message, the participation of ‘enemy’ communities in processions or the desecration of holy books unquestionably aimed at provoking religious identities.

What was even more important was that all the various religious groups and leaders read events within this framework and consequently concocted their counterattacks along these lines. “It [rioting] was communal in its essential and had as its purpose the domination of the Punjab by Muslims”, the Sikh leader Master Tara Singh set down in black and white in February 1947.¹⁶ As in the earlier 1920s and 1930s disturbances, most of the March-May 1947 incidents were often perceived as a direct religious provocation according to which the religious ‘other’ was always portrayed as the aggressor. While the political matrix of events was not denied, retaliations were incited and even premised upon this assumption. Muslims along with Muslim League leaders blamed Hindu

¹⁵ *Jenkins to Wavell – Telegram No. 61/G*, 19th March 1947, R/3/1/89, IOR.

¹⁶ Master Tara Singh quoted by Mr. Akhtar Hussain in G. D. Kholsa, *Stern Reckoning. A Survey of the Events Leading up to and following the Partition of India*, New Delhi, 1989, p. 98.

and Sikhs as the sole instigators of communal clashes.¹⁷ For their part, Sikh leaders similarly claimed that communal outbursts and Muslim League agitation were orchestrated as a targeted attack against their community.¹⁸ Unsurprisingly, the defence of their *gurdwaras* and the attachment to *guru* Gobind Singh were standout issues in all Sikh public campaigns and publications. “In order to establish Pakistan, the atrocities committed on Sikhs in the Punjab since 5th March 1947 have not come to light because on censorship on news. [...] Oh Sikhs! Read this and think yourself. What have you to do under the circumstances? In your veins, there is yet the blood of your beloved Guru Gobind Singh Singhji. Do your duty”, incited a five-sheet pamphlet that, in early April, was passing from Sikh hand to Sikh hand.¹⁹ Elsewhere, these feelings were further linked to the claims for a territorial sovereignty in the future post-colonial institutional arrangement.²⁰ The indeterminateness of Indian and Pakistani nationalisms crept into the lives of common people by finding its embodiment in the deployment of violence. It became itself one of those ordinary things that, being the most powerful idea in history, made an impact on persons’ choices and acts.²¹

Nevertheless, the 1947 March to May communal clashes possessed their own peculiar traits that anticipated and, to some extent, even constituted a preparation for the summer rioting. A progressive and massive militarisation of the everyday was underway across the whole of the Punjab, notably in Lahore and Amritsar

¹² *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 70/G, 24th March 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR and Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secret No. 662, 31st March 1947, MSS.EUR.F 200/124, IOR.*

¹⁸ *Jenkins to Wavell No. 654, 9th March 1947, MSS.EUR.D 977/16, IOR and Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secret No. 663, 9th April 1947, R/3/1/176, IOR.*

¹⁹ *Enclosure to Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secret No. 663, 9th April 1947, R/3/1/176, IOR.*

²⁰ *Jenkins to Wavell – Telegram No. 35/G, 8th March 1947, MSS.EUR.D. 977/16, IOR, and Note to Jenkins to Mountbatten, n.d., MSS.EUR.D 200/124, IOR.*

²¹ C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: the Making of Modern Identity*, Cambridge, 1989, p. 14.

Districts.²² The smuggling of arms and ammunitions – mainly imported from the NWFP and the Tribal Areas – grew steadily.²³ Paramilitary associations such as the RSS and the Muslim League National Guards doubled their efforts alongside their membership.²⁴ Together with a militarisation of local society, the region also experienced the further privatisation of the traditional state monopoly over the legitimate use of violence. Groups of persons as well as single individuals – in some cases not attached to any political or religious group – embarked upon an extensive production and accumulation of ammunitions, firearms and bombs.²⁵ Sometimes the results were comically tragic. Hundreds of persons died while squeezing homemade incendiary devices into soda water bottles.²⁶ The scramble for arms, however, was part of a targeted activity of paramilitary associations and newly-created ‘private armies’ as well as a reaction to the growing sense of insecurity and mistrust towards the local police. Indeed, retired and employed officers were quite frequently charged with being actively involved in the disturbances and eventually arrested.²⁷ Allegedly, both the Muslim League and the Congress had inaugurated a widespread under-the-table campaign of delegitimisation of the local police forces.²⁸ A do-it-yourself arranged self-defence was perceived to be the only viable solution to the partiality of those institutions that were deputed to the maintenance of law and order, and to the resulting growing climate of uncertainty.

²² *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secret No. 675*, 15th May 1947, R/3/1/178, IOR.

²³ *Document enclosed to Abbott to Abel – D.O. No. G.S. 206*, 7th April 1947, R/3/1/176, IOR.

²⁴ *Punjab FR Second Half of May 1947*, L/P&J/5/250, IOR and *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secret No. 675*, 15th May 1947, R/3/1/178, IOR.

²⁵ *Jenkins to Wavell No. 653*, 7th March 1947, MSS.EUR.D. 977/16, IOR, *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secret No. 675*, 15th May 1947, IOR and *Jenkins to Colville No. 100/G*, 21st May 1947, IOR.

²⁶ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secret No. 666*, 30th April 1947, R/3/1/178, IOR.

²⁷ *Abbott to Abel – D.O. No. G.S. 213*, 12th April 1948, R/3/1/176, IOR.

²⁸ *Memorandum – Enclosure to Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secret No. 699*, 4th August 1947, ff. 212-37, R/3/1/89, IOR.

Frequent calls for action by political leaders further embittered the months that preceded and followed the withdrawal of the Tiwana government. In August 1946, Gandhi had reportedly accepted the eventual ineluctability of bloodbath.²⁹ For his part, Jinnah had requested Muslims to “make every effort to prepare and organise the community” as a reaction to the dangerous fallouts of the all-India level negotiations on the future constitutional arrangement of the subcontinent.³⁰ At grassroots level, however, the situation had slipped through the fingers of party notables and influential individuals. Indeed, those who were blowing on the fire of communalism found themselves face to face with the fright of the nasty fallouts of their strategies.³¹ In Campbellpur – Jenkins reported – local “Muslim sections [...] were extremely sulky and some of [...] [their members] are beginning to be frightened”.³²

Violence, its organisation and its tools, entered now more than ever into the everyday life of the men and women of Punjab. It somehow also acquired new and more ‘familiar’ faces. Passers-by, neighbours, fellow citizens and even friends all became potential aggressors and started to be treated with suspicion. In mid-April Hodal, the intercession of a Muslim mutual acquaintance in a quarrel between two Hindu *kamins* resulted in a communal clash with a roll call of 10 death and 32 persons injured. To top it all, a Rs. 1 *lakh* fine was levied and the suspension of certain trading licences imposed on the whole area.³³ In many other towns, the hoisting of white flags on the roofs of the houses signposted the presence of a Muslim family and sent out a clear message for all Muslims

²⁹ *Inward Telegram No. 1796/s*, 27th August 1946, PREM 8/541/5, NAKG.

³⁰ *The Times* (London), 31st August 1946.

³¹ *Jenkins to Wavell – Telegram No. 30/G*, 6th March 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.

³² *Jenkins to Wavell – Secret No. 657*, 17th March 1947, IOR.

³³ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 657*, 17th March 1947, R/3/1/89, IOR.

belonging to the neighbouring villages.³⁴ They identified those buildings that should not be attacked, marking new social boundaries within suburbs, villages and towns the while. A state of ‘flag war’ existed among all the different local communities. Hindu and Sikhs cut Muslim League flags into a thousand pieces and ripped up the badges of the members of Jinnah’s party.³⁵ “A class fellow of mine” – remembers an interviewee in a recent BBC documentary on the partition of the subcontinent – “raised the Congress flag on the school building. Muslims were very furious. Why? They also raised the Muslim League flying on the school building”.³⁶

People engaged in unusual and curious competitions. Lahore appeared to be “infested by a pack of jackals howling at the moon”.³⁷ Slogans of defiance and war cries echoed from within houses and from rooftop to rooftop from dark to dawn. It was, Gyanendra Pandey would argue, violence in its more disguised forms.³⁸ Perpetrators of brutalities were then the same persons who could act selflessly and show solidarity with their neighbours, fellow citizens and friends. There was however no contradiction in this overlapping of mutual support and violence. The duality of the human behaviour is part and parcel of any group activity or performance. Indeed, in spite of their involvement in awful crimes, persons still show a considerable degree of disinterestedness and sacrifice.³⁹

The 1947 spring clashes erupted simultaneously and, for the first time, went on to encompass the countryside as well. Communal violence first scourged the rural areas in the outskirts of Rawalpindi in mid-March 1947. Armed with *lathi*,

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ *Jenkins to Wavell – Secraphone Message*, 4th March 1947, MSS.EUR.D 977/16, IOR.

³⁶ *Partition. The Day India Burned*, BBC documentary, 2007.

³⁷ *The Times* (London), 18th March 1947.

³⁸ G. Pandey, *Routine Violence. Nations, Fragments, Histories*, Stanford, 2006, p. 8.

³⁹ G. Le Bon, *The Crowd*, New Brunswick-London, 1995, p. 77.

agricultural implements and homemade arms, the villagers of the Taxila-Gujar Khan-Kahuta triangle put their suburbs to fire and sword.⁴⁰ Gunshots would thereafter ricochet across the Attock, Jhelum and Multan districts.⁴¹ Life there was, needless to say, brought to a standstill. Local officers and the police found it difficult to reckon with this widespread situation of terror and violence. As the wave of upheavals hammered rural villages and small towns and lasted for weeks, all those forces that should have kept the Punjab stable and peaceful were found unprepared. Authorities, Jenkins recorded in his correspondence to the Viceroy, had “little experience of dealing with such disturbances”.⁴² The almost complete disruption of the communication networks further hampering the appeasement of the region, supplementary efforts were needed.⁴³ A subsequent inquiry into the conduct of local Post and Telegraphs offices during the rioting later revealed that their staff made no effort to maintain the service.⁴⁴ Those persons who could afford a telephone appeared to be quite reluctant to use it. Rumour – later confirmed – had it that calls were being intercepted and then passed on to political leaders.⁴⁵

Unsurprisingly, the early refugees poured into the streets and the hastily-prepared temporary reception structures. Violence, fear and houses reduced to smouldering wrecks persuaded individuals that it was too dangerous to live as a minority in rival religious majority areas.⁴⁶ About 40,000 displaced persons were hosted in a large army-run camp in the Rawalpindi Cantonment area.⁴⁷ In the

⁴⁰ *Jenkins to Wavell No. 654*, 9th March 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR and *Jenkins to Wavell – Telegram No. 36/G*, 9th March 1947, MSS.EUR.D 977/16, IOR.

⁴¹ *Jenkins to Wavell – Telegram No. 38/G*, 10th March 1948, R/3/1/189, IOR.

⁴² *Jenkins to Wavell – Telegram No. 39/G*, 8th March 1947, R/3/1/89, IOR.

⁴³ *Jenkins to Wavell – Secret No. 657*, 17th March 1947, R/3/1/89, IOR.

⁴⁴ *Jenkins to Wavell – Secret No. 655*, 14th March 1947, R/3/1/178, IOR.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁶ *The Times* (London), 29th March 1947; and I. Talbot, *Divided Cities*, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁴⁷ *Jenkins to Wavell – Telegram No. 66/G*, 21st March 1947, R/3/1/89, IOR.

comparatively smaller Jhelum District, local authorities had to accommodate around 6,000 refugees who had been made homeless by communal disturbances.⁴⁸ Numbers, it seems, were even higher. All those who had been given a temporary bed in charitable institutions or relatives' homes were missing from the official roll call.⁴⁹ Furthermore, March to May migrations were primarily an urban phenomenon. Indeed, towns were not badly hit by communal bouts, but, in a curious twist of fate, were also seen as the first port of call for the many displaced persons involved.⁵⁰ Partition was both at the threshold and already there.

“And these passersby, decent and suffering,/these passersby do not know your name”: translating the ‘big political ideas’ at stake into practice

I am glad to inform the House that the plan contained in the announcement which I am about to make, including the offer of Dominion status to one or two successor authorities, has been favourably received by all three parties represented at the conference held by the Viceroy with the Indian leaders during the past two days.⁵¹

On 3rd June 1947 Prime Minister Atlee entered a House of Commons where a sense of sharp expectancy mingled with frenzy excitement. The rooms of Westminster were hosting a debate that would sanction the end of the colonial era and affect the course of world history. The austere and attenuated calm of the Lords Chamber clashed with the hasty political manoeuvring and the images

⁴⁸ Jenkins to Wavell – Telegram No. 62/G, 19th March 1947, R/3/1/89, IOR.

⁴⁹ Jenkins to Wavell – Secret no. 662, 31st March 1947, R/3/1/178, IOR.

⁵⁰ *The Times* (London), 12th March 1947.

⁵¹ *The Times* (London), 4th June 1947.

of a subcontinent literally being torn apart by the flame of communalism.⁵² The announcement of the partitioning of the Indian subcontinent marked the point of no return in the local political and communal history. The involvement of political parties and both religious and civil associations in the deployment of violence that followed has pushed many historians to portray conflicts as concocted and perpetrated by large and organised groups of persons.⁵³ The need to assert power and authority over local spaces has been acknowledged for its ability to force Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs equally to coordinate their attacks in order to win over their 'rivals' more quickly.⁵⁴ These very same features have led to communal upheavals being considered as a massive mobilisation around an independent India and Pakistan.⁵⁵ This section, however, challenges such interpretations by arguing the perceived indeterminateness over the political ideas at stake and introducing the idea that it was individuals and small groups rather than large mobs who comprised the building blocks of the 1947 summer violence.

An odd feeling of 'making the best of a bad job' crept over both the local arena and civil society. Caution soon left room for mutual claims, reclaims and allegations. One could not please everybody. In the Punjab, the so-called 3rd June

⁵² The Commons Chamber has been destroyed on the very last day of the Blitz. The foundation stone of the new hall would be laid down in 1948. In the meanwhile, the MPs met in the Lords Chamber.

⁵³ See, for instance, I. Copland, "The Master and the Maharajahs: The Sikh Princes and the East Punjab Massacres of 1947", *Modern Asian Studies*, 36, 3, 2002, pp. 657-704; D. Gilmartin, "Partition, Pakistan, and South Asia History: in Search of a Narrative", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 57, 4, 1998, p. 1086.

⁵⁴ A. Jalal, "Nation, Region and Religion: Punjab's Role in the Partition of India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1998 (8th August), pp. 2184-90.

⁵⁵ P. Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*, Seattle-London, 2003, p. 13; I. Chattha, *Partition and Locality: Violence, Migration, and Development in Gujranwala and Sialkot, 1947-62*, Karachi, 2012; R. Kaur, *Since 1947. Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi*, 2007, p. 27-8; Y. Khan, "Out of control? Partition Violence and the State in Uttar Pradesh, in I. Talbot, *The Deadly Embrace. Religion and Violence in India and Pakistan, 1947-2002*, Karachi, 2007, p. 40; Y. Khan, *The Great Partition. The Making of India and Pakistan*, New Haven-London, 2007, chap. 4; I. Talbot, "The 1947 Violence", in I. Talbot (ed.), *The Deadly Embrace, op. cit.*, p. 3.

Plan was then greeted by the anger of the Sikh community, the approval of Muslims and Hindus who were resident in their respective religion-majority districts, and the serious concerns of those who lived as minorities within all the different administrative units. This announcement notwithstanding, the social climate remained mainly unchanged. However, as the Governor of Punjab put it, “the plan had no discernible effect on communal relations”.⁵⁶ The atmosphere – especially in Lahore – continued to remain very tense: communal clashes persisted without showing any sign of either worsening or improving.

On a different level, an almost lethal combination of enthusiasm, indifference, nervousness and excitement poisoned the late Punjabi spring of 1947. These contrasting feelings created the soil in which the first reactions were being developed.⁵⁷ The future possible manoeuvrings of local political leaders catalyzed the attention of the local public sphere. A sense of anxious waiting spread through party seats, militants and ordinary people. On the 23rd of that month, the partition of the Punjab would be held in the provincial assembly, and the reactions of social and political exponents were much awaited. After all, the Partition Plan had raised many more questions than it really answered. Its vagueness on the geographical and ‘factual’ identity of an independent India and Pakistan increased the climate of uncertainty, and left local leaders with an important gap to plug.

Not even the history of the Pakistan movement weighed in favour of local politicians and government representatives. Indeed, a curious dysphasia marked the Punjabi narratives on Partition. In high circles meetings, the ‘P-word’ and

⁵⁶ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secret No. 683*, 15th July 1947, R/3/1/178, IOR.

⁵⁷ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 120/G*, 6th June 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR; and K. A. Abbas, “Who Killed India”, in M. Hasan (ed.), *India Partitioned: The Other Face of Freedom*, Delhi, 1995, Vol. II, p. 235.

idea had always been a hot potato that passed from hand to hand without anyone being either able or willing to handle it. Back in late August 1942, Chhotu Ram and Sardar Singh had urged the Governor of the Punjab not to release any declaration as regards Pakistan.⁵⁸ Sikander had hoped for long that first the war and then discussions on the future constitutional shape of the subcontinent would discourage Jinnah from pursuing his political aim.⁵⁹ Grassroots politics and militancy, however, had modulated on a quite different pitch. “Amongst the Muslims of the province, your name [Jinnah’s one] is magic. The League must take advantage of this wave of feeling in favour of Pakistan”, Malik Barkat Ali - patron of the Muslim Student Federation – had proudly announced in his late 1941 July letter.⁶⁰ As the wheels of the newly-reorganised student association got going, the idea of Pakistan had started spreading among ordinary men and women.

What was then the image of Pakistan that the Federation had been popularising across the whole Punjab? Speeches that had appealed to the rank and file presented the Partition of India as a *fait accompli*. The methods and channels through which Muslim League students’ plans had been thwarted measure their success among social groups, revealing their contents the while. In 1942, the Jullundhur District Magistrate issued a caution to all those Muslims who had been planning to organise or attend the Muslim League conference in Phillaur. Special orders would allow the meeting, provided that the question of Pakistan and the Lahore resolution were not discussed. “It should not be mentioned” – it was stated – “that the Mussalmans and the Hindus [are] two separate nations and that therefore the Mussulmans of those provinces where

⁵⁸ *Glancy to Linlithgow*, 27th August 1942, R/3/1/64, IOR.

⁵⁹ *Glancy to Linlithgow – D.O. No. 401*, 10th July 1942, R/3/1/64, IOR.

⁶⁰ *Malik Barkat Ali to Muhammad Ali Jinnah*, 21st July 1941, PPMS.

they are in a majority [have] right to secede from the Centre”.⁶¹ In spite of its vagueness, the idea and image that the average Muslim had attached to the P-word deeply resonated with Atlee’s own comments. Pakistan meant Partition on the basis of religion. The gist of the problem was to understand what this would geographically and institutionally entail for the region of the Punjab and its inhabitants.

It was no surprise then that the Partition plan was welcomed by a curious yet quite unsurprising popular disregard. Muslims who ran into each other in Lahore’s markets and parks had just a short chitchat over the issue.⁶² They were by contrast quite critical of the behaviour of local Muslim League leaders.⁶³ Indeed, these latter appeared to be groping in the dark. Apparently, the symptoms of that curious dysphasia that had been affecting the political life of the Punjab since the early 1940s were quite difficult to treat. While anti-Pakistan rallies were organised across the whole of the region, a taboo remained on discussing the interrelations between Partition and Pakistan at both the lower-rank political and institutional level.⁶⁴ Even when, in early May, the unmentionable word first appeared in an official meeting, indeterminateness reigned supreme.⁶⁵ The Khan of Mamdot kept postponing the release of any formal declaration indefinitely. Doubts and questions over the immediate institutional future of the Punjab or the formation of a special Partition Committee remained unanswered for days. “The summons should not issue until the Muslim League Council has ratified. [Mamdot] thinks ratification [of the Partition Plan] almost certain. [...] will

⁶¹ *Malik Barkat Ali to Muhammad Ali Jinnah*, 30th May 1942, PPMS.

⁶² *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 119/G*, 5th June 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR and *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 120/G*, 6th June 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.

⁶³ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 118/G*, 4th June 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.

⁶⁴ *Jenkins to Wavell – Telegram No. 39/G*, 10th March 1947, R/3/1/89, IOR.

⁶⁵ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Top Secret No. 667*, 1st May 1947, MSS.EUR.F 200/130A, IOR.

consult his colleagues and let me know his final opinion when he has done so”, recorded a frustrated Governor of Punjab.⁶⁶ Off the record and during informal meetings with their supporters, Punjabi leaders agreed on the idea they did not agree on anything. Muslim League associates started the rumour that the 3rd June Plan was the result of Jinnah’s stroke of genius. Local Congress representatives flattered themselves to have pushed Muslims into a corner. Sikhs could not help but play on an atavist fatalism and trust to the Boundary Commission.⁶⁷

Publicly, Master Tara Singh maintained his previous standing, inciting Sikh to carry on their fight in defence of their own community and its existence “until [their] object was obtained”.⁶⁸ Jinnah voiced the dissatisfaction of the Muslims by highlighting the differences between the Muslim League platform and the British plan. In *Dawn* (Karachi)’s words, “the Muslim nation can never reconcile itself to the act of vandalism which truncated Pakistan”.⁶⁹ Nehru tried to bring back the debate to the rioting and looting. As he blamed British officers for their failure to handle communal violence, he praised the efficiency of local Ministries in containing disturbances in Congress-ruled regions. Nehru’s line of reasoning implied a subtle narrative that would become both a leitmotiv and a widely-accepted explanation of the Government of Punjab’s inability to restore law and order in its towns and villages.⁷⁰

The unsuitability of the Muslim League and its leaders to manage the government apparatus properly was then counterpoised with the supposed efficiency of the United Provinces’ authorities in tackling the 1947 communal

⁶⁶ *Note from Jenkins to Mountbatten*, 6th June 1947, MSS.EUR.F 200/122, IOR. See also *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secret No. 680*, 6th June 1947, MSS.EUR.F 200/122, IOR.

⁶⁷ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secret No. 683*, 15th June 1947, R/3/1/178, IOR.

⁶⁸ *The Times of India* (New Delhi), 5th June 1947.

⁶⁹ *The Dawn* (Karachi), 4th June 1947.

⁷⁰ See, for instance, Y. Khan, “Out of control?”, *op. cit.*, pp. 38, 47-52.

breakdown. In late 1947 spring political jargon, this argument turned into an opportunity for the Congress and its followers to challenge Jinnah, the Muslim League, its supposed suitability to rule Pakistan and, for all its vagueness, the idea of Pakistan itself. To some extent, it subtly reversed the grassroots campaign policy that Jinnah's party had put forward during its early 1940s political rooting process among the Punjabi electorate. In the words of Malik Barkat Ali, Muslims had "changed [...] [their mind] because [...] [their] experience of the Congress-governed provinces from July 1937 to October 1939, when they were in power, shattered all our confidence in the good faith of our Hindu countrymen".⁷¹ The shift from the Muslim League support of a united India to the cause of Pakistan – whatever the P-word had meant in those years – had then resulted from the misgovernment of Congress-ruled province in the late 1930s.

Political parties and leaders – no matter whether from the UP or the Punjab – tended to go back on their words. Appeals for a normalisation of social relationships went hand in hand with an undercover abetment of conflicts. Peace committees started to crop up in towns and villages across the whole of the Punjab.⁷² Unluckily, they were doomed to failure even before being founded. At the negotiating tables and in everyday 'social transactions', their founding fathers equally instigated communal attacks and "made no efforts to maintain peace".⁷³

As the timeframe of the path towards independence was revealed, the everyday and familiar face of communal violence showed its true colours. Attacks impacted on the solidarity among the different religious communities by fuelling a climate of mistrust, hate and fear. Places, buildings and people acted as a prism whereby high politics came face to face with popular understandings of

⁷¹ *The Indian Annual Register*, Calcutta, 1942, Vol. II, p. 230.

⁷² *Jenkins to Wavell – Telegram No. 33/G*, 7th March 1947, MSS.EUR.D 977/16, IOR.

⁷³ *Note from Jenkins to Mountbatten*, 16th April 1947, ff. 12-6, R/3/1/90, IOR.

the political ideas that were at stake in those months. Cases of the poisoning of water sources made the simple act of drinking a glass of water into a spring from which mutual communal allegations poured.⁷⁴ This peculiar act of violence dredged up age-old inhibitions that would leave their mark on future everyday interactions between the various different communities. “When we went to drink water,” – recalls the well-known wrestler Zahoor ud-Din – “they wouldn’t let us use their glasses. They wouldn’t even pour it for us. They had a long pipe and would pour it through the nozzle. [...] The Hindus considered us more untouchable than the untouchable”.⁷⁵ Bombs thrown at people resting on roofs turned sleep into a nightmare. Private houses stored arms, bombs and other incendiary material, losing thereby their traditional image of being safe and protective places.⁷⁶

Any moment that triggered off a process of normalisation of people’s lives was thus under attack. The ability to carry on a normal life suddenly slipped away. In early May, the Senate Hall of the University of Lahore was crammed with striking students. According to their elected representatives, the communal fury had been a nerve-wracking ordeal and they demanded the postponement of their examination session.⁷⁷ Many of them were certainly looking for excuses for their laxness. Nevertheless, the British Governor in Lahore admitted, “students belonging to the Pindi, Lahore and Amritsar divisions have anxious time and can reasonably ask for a postponement”.⁷⁸ Workers on their way to their factories or craft workshops were further notable targets for 1947 violence.

⁷⁴ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 150/G, 27th June 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR and Jenkins to Mountbatten, 30th June 1947, R/3/1/178, IOR.*

⁷⁵ *Partition. The Day India Burned*, BBC documentary, 2007.

⁷⁶ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 133/G, 16th June 1947, L/P&J/663, IOR and Jenkins to Abell – Telegram No. 146/G, 26th June 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.*

⁷⁷ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secret No. 666, 30th April 1947, R/3/1/178, IOR.*

⁷⁸ *Ibidem.*

In less than twenty-four hours, two assaults targeted Hindu and Muslim workers in Lahore in late June.⁷⁹ There, some weeks earlier, an attendant had been stabbed at the petrol pump where he worked during the rush hour.⁸⁰ Only few shops and offices ran a partial service with reduced personnel and scanty resources. The supply and the demand for food, fruit and vegetable did not reconcile, as the delivery from suppliers were frequently delayed. To top it all, the provision of clean drinking water and adequate sewage disposals fell to an all-time low.⁸¹ The stoppage of almost all financial activities short-circuited the very basis of the whole credit system and encouraged smuggling and the black market to flourish. Attacks and assaults not only aimed at destroying the economic wealth of opposing communities but also paralysed towns, cities and villages through acts that hindered the resumption of normal living conditions.

In their roles as both victims and perpetrators, single individuals and small groups appeared as the basic building blocks of the 1947 upheavals. Chronicles are packed with information on incidents, assaults and murders inflicted by a single person or bands of no more than six or seven members. “People seem to have discovered during the actual riots how easy is to burn the average building in an Indian city. [...] Our first problem was [...] to deal with stabbing and burning – not by crowds or even groups of people but by individuals”, declared Jenkins in June 1947.⁸² Indeed, arms could be easily collected among those that were lying near dead bodies or found in many abandoned properties and houses.⁸³ Incendiary material became an important tool within easy reach for a

⁷⁹ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 138/G*, 20th June 1947, IOR and *The Times* (London), 21st June 1947.

⁸⁰ *The Times* (London), 7th June 1947.

⁸¹ *Jenkins to Wavell – Telegram No. 29/G*, 6th March 1947, R/3/1/89, IOR.

⁸² *Jenkins to Mountbatten*, 25th June 1947, R/3/1/176, IOR.

⁸³ *Jenkins to Abell – Telegram No. 141/G*, 23rd June 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.

large number of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, frequently causing deaths and injuries even among its inexperienced makers. But single persons or small groups were not part of an irrational and unstructured mass in a moment of temporary madness. Targets were carefully picked out from among all the possible ones, as no one stabbed “his victim without choosing his moment carefully”.⁸⁴

Everyday life in the Punjab was thus gripped by a paralysis that resonated in the socially as well as politically-perceived indeterminateness of the idea of Pakistan. This odd feeling would keep its tight rein on and in suspense the local society for a few more weeks.

“In you nestles songs of blood and sword”: moulding both personal and political identities out of the Partition mayhem

On 23rd June the Punjab Assembly met in Lahore under curfew. Police precautions and barbed-wire barricades isolated the building from the clashes that were occurring just a handful of meters away from there. The agenda under scrutiny focused on the momentous vote for the partition of the region. Although members of the western wing opted for a united Punjab, the rejection of the Khan of Mamdot’s motion on the same issue by the eastern group sealed the geographical division of the Punjab into two halves. The spaces within which the identity of Punjabis now had to be reasserted added a new and relatively clearer dimension. The withdrawal of the British *raj* would entail the partition of the subcontinent as well as the geo-political division of the province. Historians,

⁸⁴ *Jenkins to Mountbatten*, 25th June 1947, R/3/1/176, IOR.

socials and political scientists appear to have been affected by a peculiar labelling syndrome. This approach has resulted in a substantial *corpus* of literature that tries to tag the fury of the summer of 1947 by delving into almost all the entries of the dictionary of human atrocities.⁸⁵ At the other end of the spectrum, gender- and subaltern-studies have focused on both the socially excluded and weaker individuals of local society. Thus, following on from the previous one, the present section aims at providing a clearer picture of the everyday dimension of the June to August events that tends to be overlooked. It will seek to cast light on those ‘grey areas’ where the so-called big ideas that were at stake in these months encountered the perception of the average men and women of the Punjab.

Political identities, Charles Tilly argues, are structured around boundaries that split social groups along the distinction ‘us’ versus ‘them’.⁸⁶ With the summer of 1947 approaching, all the communities of the Punjab relied heavily upon their religious experience. “A fortnight earlier he would replied emphatically ‘No’, or ‘I have no religion’ or ‘religion is irrelevant’. The situation is different now”, avows the narrator of Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*.⁸⁷ This was indeed a difference that bore heavily on the everyday dimension of the relational self. “I had Muslim friends and we used to play together and there was no one from our

⁸⁵ I. Ahmed, “Forced Migration and Ethnic Cleansing in Lahore in 1947: Some First Person Accounts”, in I. Talbot and S. Thandi (eds.), *People on the Move. Punjabi Colonial and Post-Colonial Migration*, Karachi, 2004, pp. 96-142; S. Ayer, “‘August Anarchy’: The Partition Massacres in Punjab, 1947”, in D. A. Low and H. Brastred (eds.), *Freedom, Trauma, Continuities: Northern India and Independence*, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 15-38; P. Brass, “The Partition of India and Retributive Genocide in the Punjab, 1946-1947”, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 5, 1, 2003, pp 71-101; I. Copland, “The Further Shores of Partition: Ethnic Cleansing in Rajasthan”, *Past and Present*, 16, 1998, pp. 203-39; J. Francisco, “In the Heat of Fratricide. The Literature of India’s Partition Burning Freshly”, in M. Hasan (ed.), *Inventing Boundaries, Gender, Politics and the Partition of India*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 372; A. B. Hansen, *Partition and Genocide, Manifestation of Violence in the Punjab, 1937-1947*, New Delhi, 2002; D. L. Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 2002.

⁸⁶ C. Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence*, Cambridge, 2003, p. 32.

⁸⁷ K. Singh, “Train to Pakistan”, in *Memories of Madness. Stories in 1947*, New Delhi, 2002, p. 158.

families who put any obstacle between us. But when this is strife began, then I was [?] out my Muslims friends”, looks back Aridan Singh Dillon at his childhood through a mist of fears.⁸⁸

Shrines, mosques, Hindu temples, *gurdwaras* along with religious fairs or rites remained the main targets of the July-August 1947 fury. Identity, its expression and assertion, deals unavoidably with spatiality. Places come to be identified with the definition of the self and are the support on which the elaboration of both individual identities performances relies.⁸⁹ In Verka in mid-July, a bomb hit a group of Muslims gathered in a mosque for their *salat*, causing one dead and five injured.⁹⁰ A few weeks before, a roll of five killed and a hundred wounded had been the result of a blast during a Muslim fair in Mandhan. The slaughter of pigs, cows and individuals and the eventual exposure of their corpses in temples acted as warning for all those who were still alive. In early July, the attack of a Muslim shrine in Jullundhur that had been visited by Muslims, Hindus and Sikh alike, mirrored the radicalisation of local religious sentiment of belonging and fervour. *Sufi* lodges had long represented a shared social place. In many cases, they had also established themselves as the fulcrum around which the social harmony of the local communities had rotated.⁹¹

The 1945-6 electoral campaign, however, had further exacerbated the polarisation of religious identities. In a private conversation with the then Punjab

⁸⁸ *Partition. The Day India Burned*, BBC documentary, 2007.

⁸⁹ K. Hetherington, *Expression of Identity. Space, Performance, Politics*, London-Thousands Oak-New Delhi, 1998, p. 105; R. Shields, “Individuals, Consumption Cultures and the Fate of Community”, in R. Shields (ed.), *Lifestyle Shopping: the Subject of Consumption*, London, 1992, pp. 99-113.

⁹⁰ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Confidential No. 191/G*, 24th July 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.

⁹¹ It is worth recalling that, in several regions, *sufi* shrines still maintain this role even nowadays, See, for instance, H. Basu, “The Embodiment of Charisma”, in P. Werbner and H. Basu (eds.), *Embodying Charisma. Modernity, Locality and the Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cults*, London, 1998, pp. 3-27; S. A. A. Sahed, “A ‘Festival of Flags’: Hindu-Muslim Devotion and the Sacralising of Localism at the Shrine of Nagore-e-Sharif in Tamil Nadu”, in *Ibidem*, pp. 55-76.

Governor, a Muslim League notable from Campbellpur admitted that the Punjab was reaping the harvest of the early 1940s rooting of the Pakistan idea and what he termed “the extreme communalism of the election campaign of 1945-6”.⁹² Indeed, in those years, *pirs* and *sajjada nashins* had left the Unionist Party in increasing numbers to support Jinnah’s platform. Public appeals, leaflets, mural posters and publications testifying to this switch had been issued in great numbers and reached a wider and growing audience. Increasingly animated by religious leaders, the political debate had been imbued with a rhetoric that, especially in rural areas, made the Muslim League campaign equal to a peculiar religious movement.⁹³ In 1945-6 Punjab, votes for Jinnah’s party had not been granted on the basis of people’s own perceived identity and opinions. Yet, the adherence to its political platform was perceived as a proof of the Muslim-ness of each and every individual and as an “act of incorporation in the body of Islam”.⁹⁴ *Pirs* and *sajjada nashins* had then further helped the early-imagined community of Pakistan become a real and perceived entity. Local social actors and influential individuals had staged a so-called choreography of religious pilgrimages. As the Muslims of the Punjab had provided the “dense, physically reality of the ceremonial passage”, local religious leaders had conducted “the unifying rites, interpreting to their respective followings the meaning of their collective motion”.⁹⁵

This weaving together of the religious and the political dimension enriched the local arena with new integrating rituals. The vernacularisation of the

⁹² Jenkins to Wavell – Secret No. 657, 17th March 1947, R/3/1/89, IOR.

⁹³ D. Gilmartin, “Religious Leaders and the Pakistan Movement in the Punjab”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 13, 3, 1979, p. 514.

⁹⁴ B. D. Metcalf and T. R. Metcalf, *A Concise History of India*, Cambridge, 2002, p. 211.

⁹⁵ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London-New York, 2006, p. 54.

messages of religious and political leaders, along with the idea of an independent India and Pakistan, implied a re-elaboration of traditional and new symbols, identities and contrapositions. Unquestionably, the high politics of political developments affected how all the different Punjabi communities looked at each other and interacted in the everyday. Normative patterns of behaviour expectations and the day-to-day projection of the lives of millions of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims onto the local public area were then refashioned along new lines. Indeed, the new political context within which the British *raj*, the Muslim League, the Congress and some revivalist associations framed events broke the mould of local people's image of their own social existence and relationship with others.⁹⁶

Although substantially 'laic' and political, the idea behind Pakistan encapsulated a few religious hints that the deployment of communal violence embodied. Originally born as an alternative to nationalism, communalism came to be part of it and shared its fallouts and actions with state-building processes. These socio-political dynamics translated into the co-presence of both religious and civil symbols as the main targets of the attacks. In early July, a group of Muslims assaulted a Public Works Department van that was announcing the imposition of the curfew on the city of Gujranwala.⁹⁷ On 13th of the same month, late at night, the beating of two constables on duty rocked a small village in Jullundhur District.⁹⁸ A couple of days later, the local Police Recruitment Centre was set on fire, and the Muslim League flag replaced the Union Jack that was flying on its mast.⁹⁹ For their part, Muslim League National Guards scoured the

⁹⁶ C. Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Durham, 2004, p. 23.

⁹⁷ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 162/G*, 5th July 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.

⁹⁸ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 176/G*, 15th July 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.

⁹⁹ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 181/G*, 17th July 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.

streets of Lahore while local police officers could not help but stand by unable to react.¹⁰⁰ Bombs frequently highlighted the extent of popular mistrust in the local judiciary. In late July, an incendiary device exploded outside the Session Court in Amritsar where two murder cases that had occurred during the spring disturbances were being heard.¹⁰¹

New symbolic cosmogonies came then abreast of old ones in a continuous process of definition and re-definition of both public and private identities and spaces. With Independence fast approaching, attacks on trains registered a steady increase in number and ferocity. In late July, Jullundhur and Hoshiarpur districts reported four attacks in less than three days.¹⁰² The need to build up an early administrative apparatus that could handle the immediate institutional needs, pushed Muslim League leaders into organising large-scale transfers of bureaucratic cadres by train via the Punjab. During the second week of August, one such train with many prospective employees on board was attacked a handful of kilometres outside Bhatinda. The assault resulted in four persons killed and twenty injured.¹⁰³ The carefully-planned choice to conduct a swift campaign of onslaughts on the so-called ‘specials’ was, it seems, an attempt to undermine those foundations that would have allowed Pakistan to stand on its own feet. Former President of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf adds a further nuance to the general picture. His is a “story of a middle-class family, a husband and wife [Musharraf’s parents] who left Delhi with their three sons. [...] The little boy [Musharraf himself] [...] remembered his father’s anxiety about a box that he was guarding closely. It was with him all time. He protected it with his life,

¹⁰⁰ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 228/G*, 12th August 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.

¹⁰¹ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Confidential No. 96/G*, 28th July 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.

¹⁰² *Abott to Abell*, 1st August 1947, ff: 244, R/3/1/157, IOR.

¹⁰³ *The Times* (London), 11th August 1947. See also *IT from UKHC to SSCR*, 12th September 1947, DO 142/416, NAKG.

even sleeping with it under his head, like a pillow. There were” – Musharraf reveals – “700,000 rupees on it, a princely sum in those days. The money was destined for the foreign office of their new country”.¹⁰⁴

Attacks were carried out along military-style lines. A first wave of saboteur shot at train roofs with the aim of driving out their passengers. As soon as grenades hit the coaches, the real massacre began: attackers drew their *kirpans* and swords to proceed to the killing itself.¹⁰⁵ The numbers that were involved in single attacks, arson and robberies could now grow to as large as a few thousands of persons. Up to five thousands Sikhs – armed with spears, bombs and guns and led by a retired army officer – raided a Muslim village.¹⁰⁶ The 1947 summer violence acted as a wave that occasionally hit and withdrew by spreading from urban settings to rural areas. In a curious twist of fate, it was in the countryside that it reached its peak and assumed its most organised guise. In late June, a couple of miles far from Phillaur, Jullundhur District, an attack that was perpetrated by a well-organised group of Sikhs caused the death of fourteen Muslims and injured as many.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, the rural areas of Amritsar were swept up in the same communal fury: over there the death roll on one occasion comprised thirty-three persons in less than twelve hours.¹⁰⁸

Nevertheless, the bulk of the devastating effects of the June-early August communal violence remained an apauage of the banality of evil and, to some extent, of small figures.¹⁰⁹ The daily proportion of deaths to the overall population of the region was surprisingly low. “Casualties are running between

¹⁰⁴ P. Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire. A Memoir*, London, 2006, p. 12.

¹⁰⁵ *The Times* (London), 25th August 1947.

¹⁰⁶ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 194/G*, 26th July 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.

¹⁰⁷ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 206/G*, 1st August 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁹ On the banality of evil, see H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: a Report on the Banality of Evil*, London, 2006.

50-100”, recorded the Governor of the Punjab in a private letter to the Viceroy.¹¹⁰ However not particularly frequent, bombs that targeted crowded places took the lion’s share of the toll of dead and injured. That was, for instance, the case of the already-cited explosion that, in late July, rocked the area in front of the Session Court in Amritsar and resulted in forty-eight injured among passers-by, demonstrators and employees.¹¹¹ In most cases, the 1947 summer communal bouts turned into a surreal manhunt. “Raids” – Jenkins pointed out – “caused most casualties but there were many individual attacks”.¹¹² In Bharawal, on the hot and dry night between 3rd and 4th July, a group of Sikhs shot down a Muslim who was irrigating his fields.¹¹³ Not even local well-known personalities were spared. On 31st July, Ashiq Hussain – former Unionist Minister – was killed at a road post soon after having squabbled with the sentry.¹¹⁴

24-hour reports of the everyday life of the citizens of the districts of the Punjab clearly exemplify the magnitude of communal clashes. On 2nd August, the list of dead and wounded in Amritsar City had a total number of twelve on its roll. In the local rural areas, gunfire and stabbings brought about the death of two Sikhs in Vairawal and Ghavinda. A further person – a Muslim – was injured as a result of a bomb explosion near Tarn Taran.¹¹⁵ Three days later – on 5th August – Jenkins recorded no more than twenty-four casualties in the districts other than Amritsar.¹¹⁶

Putrefying corpses lying on the streets among the garbage and being eaten by animals, the brisk smell of blood and wrecked houses represented the other side

¹¹⁰ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secret No. 219/G, 8th August 1947, MSS.EUR.F 200/123, IOR.*

¹¹¹ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 96/G, 28th July 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.*

¹¹² *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 218/G, 7th August 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.*

¹¹³ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 162/G, 5th July 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.*

¹¹⁴ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 206/G, 1st August 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.*

¹¹⁵ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 209/G, 2nd August 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.*

¹¹⁶ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 213/G, 4th August 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.*

of the summer violence. Starvation, fear, despair, hopelessness and anger carved out socio-geographical spaces wherein the dialogue among social actors was almost impossible.¹¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, the result was the deconstruction of the familiar ‘word’.¹¹⁸ All the traditional points of references and the usual everyday experience of the self vanished. In early July, some Sikhs attacked their neighbours, injuring eleven people.¹¹⁹ A bomb hit the Hindu-run Crown Cinema at Bhati Gate, Lahore and caused the death of fifteen persons among its usual clientele of lower-class Muslims.¹²⁰ Unquestionably, the so-called communal of war of succession placed a strain on all those relationships, which had underpinned local society. It “dissolved old loyalties and created new ones, and [...] produced many symptoms of a revolution”.¹²¹

Partition fast approaching, loyalties – both old and new – and symptoms would be fully unveiled.

“In you the migrating birds”: when Independence came to India and Pakistan

As he addressed his audience at the Council Chamber of the Sindh Legislative Assembly in Karachi, Jinnah did not let his feelings show at all. He did not even seek the eyes of his beloved sister Fatima who was sat in front of him. He talked “quietly and unemotionally like a lawyer arguing a case”, the correspondent from

¹¹⁷ N. Thrift, “Immaculate Warfare? The Spatial Politics of Extreme Violence”, in D. Gregory and A. Pred (eds.), *Violent Geographies. Fear, Terror, and Political Violence*, New York-London, 2007, p. 275.

¹¹⁸ On this point, see C. Nordstrom, *Shadows of War. Violence, Power and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century*, Berkeley, 2004.

¹¹⁹ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 166/G*, 7th July 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.

¹²⁰ *Jenkins to Mountbatten – Telegram No. 185/G*, 21st July 1947, L/P&J/8/663, IOR.

¹²¹ *Memorandum – Enclosure to Jenkins to Mountbatten – Secret No. 699*, 4th August 1947, ff. 212-37, R/3/1/89, IOR.

The Times (London) recorded, towering over the fifty newly-elected members of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly.¹²² Pakistan, he argued, would be a state where individuals who belonged to religious minorities were “citizens with equal rights and obligations”. Complete religion freedom would be granted, modelling the new state on the British separation of the religious and political spheres.

Ironically, at that very minute, Hindus Sikhs and Muslims were quite literally conquering towns and villages by fire and sword. After all, Pakistan and India were two independent states whose borders had been neither known nor internationally acknowledged as yet. It was then violence that in several areas – those thought to be quite close to the yet-to-be-announced border – carved out spaces and sketched out the future geography of the region. During the week that preceded independence, Lahore and Amritsar were set on fire. Mainly inhabited by Hindus and Sikhs, the walled city of the ‘Paris of East’ was almost completely burnt out up to the Muslim *mohallas*. Similarly, fires and attacks razed the Muslim suburbs of Amritsar to the ground.¹²³ The result was, needless to say, an almost complete exodus of all those who perceived that their religious identity put at high risk their lives. On 21st August, about 30,000 of Hindus and Sikhs, who had previously lived in the shadow of the Badshahi Mosque, were believed to have already reached the Indian Punjab.¹²⁴ Apparently, their departure, like that of the 70,000 Muslims who trekked westwards, had the discernible effect of appeasing local communitarian rivalries.¹²⁵ “Improvement in Amritsar and Lahore maintained”, telegraphed – with a certain amount of relief – the British

¹²² *The Times* (London), 12th August 1947.

¹²³ *OT from UKHC to CRO No. 642*, 21st August 1947, DO 133/59, NAKG.

¹²⁴ *OT from UKHC to CRO No. 683*, 21st August 1947, DO 133/59, NAKG.

¹²⁵ *The Times* (London), 20th August 1947.

High Commissioner in Lahore to the London headquarters in late August 1947.¹²⁶

Nevertheless, in those villages and small towns whose future geographical status was a matter under discussion at the negotiating table of the Boundary Commission, disturbances snowballed into full-scale riots. In the rural areas of Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Jullundhur, Hoshiarpur and Ludhiana Districts, attacks, arson and reprisals showed no sign of improvement even after some pockets of refugees had left their suburbs.¹²⁷ One may think that tempers cooled as soon as the proceeding of the Radcliffe Award were released on 17th August. “Whatever the fault of the award by the Boundary Commission, both the Governments of India and Pakistan had to abide by it and there was no question of making a protest”, declared Ghazanfar Ali Khan.¹²⁸ In the Congress headquarters, the outcome of the negotiations was said to be accepted as a “settled fact”.¹²⁹ Official declarations however only scratched the surface of the general popular mood. A long editorial published in *Dawn* (Karachi) précised the real-life discussions within the lower ranks of the Muslim League. “Even a cursory glance to them [Commission’s papers]” – it stated – “shows that these reports have been drafted in the most cowardly fashion and do not possess the essential characteristics of a legal judgement. [...] Let us make it perfectly clear that even if the Government accepts this territorial murder of Pakistan which is miscalled a judicial award, the people will not”.¹³⁰ For its part, *The Hindu* (Madras) opted for a far more ironic twist. “There is” – its columnist argued – “something [...] [true] in his [Radcliffe’s] plea that when the Bengal Commission was taking

¹²⁶ *OT from UKHC to CRO No. 667*, 27th August 1947, DO 133/59, NAKG.

¹²⁷ *OT from UKHC to CRO No. 642*, 21st August 1947, DO 133/59, NAKG.

¹²⁸ *Reactions to the Boundary Commission Award (III)*, 22nd August 1947, DO 133/59, NAKG.

¹²⁹ *Reactions to the Boundary Commission Award (II)*, 19th August 1937, DO 133/59, NAKG.

¹³⁰ *Dawn* (Karachi), 18th August 1947.

evidence he had to study the Punjab records, and when the Punjab Commission was taking evidence he had to study the Bengali records”.¹³¹

The publishing of the Award not only further exacerbated communal tensions but also gave them a more marked political twist. “The crisis in the Punjab is changing in character. [...] The chief problems now are large-scale looting on both sides of the frontier and sporadic attacks on the minority communities as they evacuated on foot, trucks, and by railway”, reported a correspondent from *The Times* (London).¹³² Despite them issuing soothing statements on an almost daily basis, Indian and Pakistani leaders appeared unwilling to cast off the chains of the vicious circle of retaliation. “Our State is not” – Nehru declared in late August after having toured the Punjab – “a communal State [...] I have been assured by Liaquat Ali Khan [the then Prime Minister of Pakistan] that this is also the policy of the Pakistan Government”.¹³³ Reassurances notwithstanding, the political and party narrative on and around violence played on a multi-faceted argumentative fabric. In everyday conversations, the development of a spirit of reconciliation was always subject to an equally powerful act of appeasement from the counterpart.¹³⁴ Apparently, Pakistani authorities turned a blind eye on the hundreds of angry appeals – in Nehru’s words, “threats of war and of extermination of Sikhs” – that appeared in *Dawn* (Karachi) and *Zamindar* (Lahore).¹³⁵ An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. During his visit to Amritsar in late September, the words of the Deputy Prime Minister of India Patel acted as a wake-up call for the local inhabitants and refugees. “If you do

¹³¹ *The Hindu* (Madras), 19th August 1947.

¹³² *The Times* (London), 5th September 1947.

¹³³ *The Times* (London), 20th August 1947.

¹³⁴ *OT from UKHC to CRO No. 813*, 23rd September 1947, DO 133/60, NAKG.

¹³⁵ *Aide Memoire Signed by Pandit Nehru of Point to Be Discussed with Liaquat Ali Khan*, 19th September 1947, DO 133/60, NAKG.

not have faith in Pakistan Government [on the exchange of population] or its people” – he polemically argued – “you can hold your hands for week and see what happens. If they do not observe the truce in the right spirit the world will know who the breakers of laws of humanity are”.¹³⁶

“If only [...] politicians would not interfere with the practical work, the army and civilians would get on far better with the job”, confided Kondem Subbaya Thimmayya, commander in chief of the Punjab Boundary Force, to a British attaché.¹³⁷ East and West Punjab presented a scene of an endless flow of millions of persons who, according to contemporary sources, literally clogged streets, town and village. Party propaganda that aimed at pushing individuals away from their homes and into reception camps met with rumours of a Sikh rearmament policy and plans for the founding of their own state.¹³⁸ Contradictory messages and appeals further inflamed public feelings. Leaders of majorities encouraged minorities to express their loyalty to the state, making clear to them that there would be no room for their political representatives in future institutions.¹³⁹

Attacks on mile-long refugee *kafilas*, ‘special trains’ and temporary camps plunged the whole of the Punjab into further chaos and violence. A group of armed Sikhs attacked a Muslim column in the outskirts of Amritsar in early September, killing and injuring ninety persons. On the very same day, a train packed with refugees was halted between Jullundhur and Karpurtala. The assault resulted in death toll of seventy casualties.¹⁴⁰ A couple of weeks later, an

¹³⁶ *OT from UKHC to CRO No. 897*, 1st October 1934, DO 133/60, NAKG.

¹³⁷ *Uncoordinated Punjab Refugees Tour*, n.d., DO 133/60, NAKG.

¹³⁸ *OT from UKHC to CRO No. 697*, 4th September 1947, DO 133/59, NAKG and *OT from UKHC to CRO No. 818*, 23rd September 1947, DO 133/60, NAKG.

¹³⁹ *OT from UKHC to CRO No. 1035*, 20th October 1947, DO 133/60, NAKG.

¹⁴⁰ *OT from UKHC to CRO No. 762*, 15th September 1947, DO 133/59, NAKG.

uninterrupted two-hour siege of another ‘special’ to Pakistan resulted in a similar bloodbath, with a mob of RSS members and Sikhs killing more than 1,000 Muslim travellers.¹⁴¹ Meanwhile, in the Pakistani Punjab countryside, groups of Muslim peasants were planning their own raids on those Hindus and Sikhs who were on their way to India.¹⁴² Held to ransom by the early bouts of nationalism, women were raped on public roads frequently in front of their own relatives. Their future of pain and shame was all mapped out for them.

The tents and the makeshift huts of temporary refugees camps would soon replace refugees’ cosy and comfortable houses. The long journey of the Punjabi migrant community towards its resettlement and rehabilitation had just begun.

Chapter 1 has delved into the records of the communal upheavals and the early flow of migrations that rocked the region of the Punjab between the early spring and the late autumn of 1947. Aiming at introducing the whole dissertation by framing it within its historical context, it has chronicled the progressive embitterment of communal relations and the continuous process of negotiation and re-negotiation of the political ideas at stake. Individual subsections have dealt with the interplay of historical correspondence between local ‘mainstream’ communal conflicts and Partition violence, the commonly-held and politically-perceived indeterminateness of the idea of Pakistan, the individual everyday dimension of the conflict and the somehow lethal encounter between the ‘big ideas’ at stake and the common perception of the average Punjabi of that time.

¹⁴¹ *Indian New Chronicle* (New Delhi), 26th September 1947 and *OT to UKHC to CRO No. 881*, 29th September 1947, DO 133/60, NAKG.

¹⁴² *The Times* (London), 2nd September 1947.

Chapter 2

There is no place like home: the politics of intimacy, domesticity and resettlement among West Punjabi refugees.

“A happy home is the single spot of rest which a man has upon this earth for the cultivation of his noblest sensibilities”
(F. W. Robertson, *Sermons Preached at Trinity College, Brighton, Boston, 1870*, p. 318)

Amidst walls of flames, tears and the smell of death blended with latrine and life, millions of refugees flocked along the roads that brought them to what they perceived would be their new personal, institutional and safer home. Novelists, poets and commentators alike have articulated this sense of loss and made of it one of the earliest and finest pages of Pakistani literature.¹ For their part, however, anthropology, political science and history have remained trapped in a long series of unproven assumptions regarding the processes at work during the post-Partition years. Muhammad Waseem summed up these hypotheses in two articles that were published in 2000 and 2004, and thenceforth set the pace for all subsequent studies.² Despite acknowledging the long-term repercussions involved in the rehabilitation of Partition refugees in West Punjab, his analysis concluded that the processes of resettlement was “relatively well-planned and

¹ See, for instance, A. Hossein, *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, London, 1988; K. Iftikhar, *Jab Amritsar jal raha tha, 1947* (While Amritsar was Burning, 1947), 1980; S. H. Manto, *Kingdom's End. Selected Stories*, New Delhi, 2007.

² M. Waseem, “Partition, Migration and Assimilation: A Comparative Study of Pakistani Punjab”, in I. Talbot and G. Singh (eds.), *Region and Partition. Bengal, Punjab and the Partition of the Subcontinent*, Karachi, 2000, pp. 203-27; M. Waseem, “Muslim Migration from East Punjab: Patterns of Settlement and Assimilation”, in I. Talbot and S. Thandi (eds.), *People on the Move. Punjabi Colonial, and Post-Colonial Migration*, Karachi, 2004, pp. 63-77. See also, I. Talbot, *Divided Cities. Partition and its Aftermath in Lahore and Amritsar, 1947-1957*, Karachi, 2006; I. Chattha, *Partition and Locality: Violence, Migration, and Development in Gujranwala and Sialkot, 1947-61*, Karachi, 2011.

therefore quick and orderly”.³ The advent of oral history has subsequently added refugees’ perceived absence of a state and the celebration of their self-reliance onto the debate.⁴ Nevertheless, these interpretative trends have prevented a careful investigation of how the migrant community elaborated its relationship with the new state and how its sense of belonging to a wider institutional *corpus* subsequently developed. It is precisely this long-overdue re-examination that provides the main focus of this chapter.

As soon as they crossed a border that was not properly demarcated, refugees were accommodated in temporary camps and structures. Some sought refuge in the houses of friends or relatives; others illegally occupied Sikh and Hindu abandoned properties. This chapter thus first traces the history of the early attempts of West Punjabi migrants to become better integrated into their new - local - social, political and institutional *milieu*. It reveals how and in what ways refugees thought of themselves as citizens of a new independent state, while dealing with the dislocating and traumatic fallout from Partition. Homes – the search for, the life in or the lack of them – proved very important in moulding the formation of an everyday political and institutional identity. They epitomised the deep-seated malaise of all those refugees who were hovering between contradictory feelings of alienation from and intimacy with their surrounding environment.

This chapter therefore also chronicles the growth of the migrant community’s sense of citizenship amidst tremendous setbacks, a drive for modernity and the return to traditional social structures. The troubled history of both the urban and the rural resettlement of Partition refugees betrays a re-elaboration of local

³ M. Waseem, “Muslim Migration from East Punjab”, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

⁴ I. Talbot, *Amritsar. Voices from between India and Pakistan*, Chicago, 2006.

traditions as well as the need to reckon with new and unexpected scandals. Hence, the tension between modernity and deep-rooted rituals experienced by many refugees also forms an important dimension of the following exploration.

Liminalities of Citizenship: the big-bang model of refugee camps and temporary structures

Lahore, December 1947. The sun dipped below the horizon. The amber colours of the sunset and a slight fog enveloped the city. A crackling loudspeaker allowed the *muezzin's* voice to reach even the remotest area of Walton Road temporary refugee camp. It was *Maghreb* time. Thousands of refugees left their tents and lined up for their evening prayer amidst mud and washing just hung up to dry. Supported by tumbledown structures and furnished with boxes and trunks, these tents were the temporary houses provided to hundreds of thousands of citizens belonging to the newly-created state of Pakistan. An area of approximately 8ft x 7ft stored the meagre belongings, the feelings and the hopes of a six-member family who had just left Jullundhur, India.

Existing secondary literature, however, has overlooked the relevance of the experience of and in West Punjabi refugee camps, and relegated its significance to an arena where collective grievances were voiced and expressed.⁵ Yet, as new primary sources are brought to light, the temporary structures that were intended

⁵ I. Talbot, *Divided Cities, op. cit.*, p. 179. Despite providing us with vivid and first-hand accounts of the events, most published research and primary sources on the immediate aftermath of Pakistani Independence have not engaged in a detailed and critical analysis of refugees' life in West Punjab camps. See, for instance, P. Mountbatten, *India Remembered. A personal Account of the Mountbattens During the Transfer of Power*, London, 2007; R. Symons, *In the Margins of Independence; A Relief Worker in India and Pakistan, 1942-1949*, Karachi, 2001; I. Talbot and G. Singh, *The Partition of India*, Cambridge, 2009. Quite different is the case for Indian refugee camps that find their best and most fascinating description in R. Kaur, *Since 1947. Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi*, New Delhi, 2007.

to accommodate the millions of persons pouring into Pakistan instead reveal their potential to disrupt personal lives and inner emotions, while, in the meanwhile, acting as a perfect breeding ground for new individual feelings of belonging to a wider political community to blossom. As this section will argue, the tension between inner and outer selves and the contamination of private and public spaces wove these different sentiments together and carved out space for a new identity and the subsequent claim of its distinctiveness within local Punjabi society.

In many ways, the bundle of tents, the management of the time and space, and the structuring of social life in Walton Road as well as in many other refugee camps, established the boundaries of both public and private life within this new framework. In the parts of South Asia that constitute pre- and post-independent Pakistan, domesticity has always been a clear-cut notional and physical domain from whence individuals have not offered up to the so-called ‘outside world’ their secrets, intimacy and feelings easily.⁶ Sections of about 40ft x 15ft housing 80 or more persons in tents and barracks reshaped the boundaries and the contents of both the ideas and emotions of private and public life.⁷ In those tiny spaces, tension between *bahir* and *ghar* exploded.⁸ The intimacy of a married couple going about their daily routine – previously safely hidden from prying eyes – was brought, whether they liked it or not, into the open. Filth, squalor and inadequate hygienic arrangements challenged once again the reorganisation of

⁶ H. Papanek, “Purdah in Pakistan: Seclusion and Modern Occupations for Women”, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 33, 3, 1971, p. 518.

⁷ 1594/9, R-N-4, BRCMA and 1940s/Pakistan/Services: *Pakistan relief* (photos), BRCMA.

⁸ On the idea of “inner” domestic space and “outer” world, see P. Chatterjee, “The Nationalist Resolution of the Women’s Question”, in K. K. Sangari and V. Sudesh (eds.), *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial Indian History*, New Brunswick, 1990, p. 239.

spaces that had followed the imposition of colonial rule over the subcontinent.⁹ As Bulent Dilken and Carsten Lausten have argued, inclusion within a person's private affairs and exclusion from their public life typify the human experience in any camp environment.¹⁰ For all their efforts, authorities and staff members in these Punjabi refugee camps were only partially able to minimise the effects of such intrusion and marginalisation. It recalled a "Dante's Inferno or some of the mediaeval pictures one sees of the nether regions", reported Angela Limerick, a British Red Cross officer, in her diary.¹¹

Rites and rituals of death and burial underwent the same blurring and forced a further process of redefinition of the social and personal sphere. The dislocating effect of Partition had ripped apart the familiar and community ties that had traditionally comforted the deceased's relatives, and the subsequent lack of the extended family's support turned into a feeling of isolation. Nevertheless, this loneliness of sorrow walked alongside the phenomenon of mass grief: one person's bereavement was that of any other refugee's loss. Death and life, public and private, became intimately entwined. The murmurs of prayers that had previously been recited behind closed doors for the three-days period of mourning now became an ordinary buzz in the background of refugees' lives in camps. The mechanical arms of bulldozers excavated communal graves and unfamiliar hands filled in them with earth.¹² Stacks of corpses showed up among huts and tents, and marked off the areas intended to accommodate refugees from the other suburbs of cities and towns.

⁹ 1594/9, R-N-4, BRCMA and *1940s/Pakistan/Services: Pakistan relief* (photos), BRCMA.

¹⁰ B. Dilken and C. B. Lausten, *The Culture of Exception. Sociology facing the Camp*, London-New York, 2005, p. 58.

¹¹ 1594/9, R-N-4, BRCMA.

¹² *Letter from UKHC to CRO*, 13th October 1947, DO 142/440, NAKG.

As Limerick continues, “on the waste land on either side of the road [Ferozepore Road, Lahore] was a continuous stretch of graves for practically the whole distance”.¹³ Mass and individual graves were thus strung out along the axes of refugee camp premises, and frequently identified these temporary facilities as specific geographical locations. In practise, circumscribing and signposting them proved to be a way of establishing distinctions between insiders and outsiders, and a consequent principle of order.¹⁴ This imposition of an order implied in turn the establishment of a shared set of laws, rules and regulations. According to this process, normality and everyday life are to be considered as a pre-condition of any kind of law and its related implementation.¹⁵ Yet in the immediate aftermath of Partition both normality and everyday life were brought to a standstill. Beyond the fences of refugee camps, the closure of industrial concerns and banks were matched by disruptions to transport, communications and health services. The number of scheduled and non-scheduled banks dropped by approximately 80%, and, in March 1948, Pakistan’s railway services reported a loss of Rs. 1.97 crores.¹⁶ Up to December 1948 the toll of murders and robberies in Pakistani Punjab registered a steady increase that was not related to 1947 communal upheavals.¹⁷ Poor and ineffective administrative arrangements thus imported a sense of alienation from everyday normal life to many West Punjab temporary camps. Overcrowding as well as multiple or triple registrations of the same family in different camps epitomised the kind of rifts that emerged

¹³ 1594/9, R-N-4, BRCMA.

¹⁴ B. Dilken and C. B. Lausten, *The Culture of Exception*, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

¹⁵ C. Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, Cambridge, 1985, p. 13.

¹⁶ Commercial Relations and Exports Departments – Board of Trade, *Overseas Economic Surveys. Pakistan. Economic and Commercial Conditions in Pakistan (May 1950)*, 1951, pp. 58, 110.

¹⁷ A-29, 6th December 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

from the bureaucratic processes of form-filling and reception. Indeed, in some temporary facilities these calculations did not add up. The overall capacity of Multan Qila Camp, for instance, was estimated to be nearly 80,000 refugees, but in August 1948 the demand for food rations stood at more than double this figure.¹⁸

Meteorological quirks over the region harbingered further difficulties. “The summer of 1947 was not like other Indian summers. Even the weather had a different feel [...]. [...] No one could remember when the monsoon had been so late. For weeks, the sparse clouds cast only shadows. [...] People began to say that God was punishing them for their sins”, reveals Khushwant Singh in his *Train to Pakistan*.¹⁹ When the heavens opened, floods and cold snaps hit the region hard. While warm clothing and proper bedding were in short supply, the price of coal, coke and fuel rocketed. In camps, food - widely acknowledged to be a symbolic and primeval source of security²⁰ - proved insufficient. Misery, havoc and monotony reflected the feelings of starvation, apathy and work-shyness that crept over many refugees.

To what extent did this mood mirror an apathetic attitude among refugees towards nation- and state-building processes as well? How did they think of and project themselves as their status switched from subjects of the British *raj* to citizens of an independent state? It would seem that unpredictability and the occasional eruption of violence are often the hallmark of the social and political lives of displaced persons. Partition refugees in post-independent Pakistani Punjab were no exception to this rule. News reports of incidents and protests

¹⁸ A-17, 28th August 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

¹⁹ K. Singh, “Train to Pakistan”, in *Memories of Madness. Stories of 1947*, New Delhi, 2002, p. 3.

²⁰ Welfare Division, *Report on Psychological Problems of Displaced Persons*, 1945, HA5-4/3, The Wiener Library, London.

taking place on camp premises and in towns echoed across the whole of the Punjab on a daily basis.²¹ As early as March 1948, a group of refugees demonstrated in front of the Punjab Assembly and joined hands with other protesting social actors.²² In late August that year, persons lodged in Dher Pindi camps went on hunger strike and attempted to march into the city centre of Lahore. In other places such as Multan and Bowli temporary structures, refugees attacked census officers in violent fashion and angrily opposed the collection of their data.²³ The mere mention of the name of refugee leader Rao Khurshid Ali Khan – well known for his ability to keep camps in a state of semi-rebellion – threw officials into a panic and rendered their nights sleepless. His arrest in August 1948 generated a rumpus in Montgomery, where 50,000 protesting refugees clashed with the local police.²⁴ Ian Talbot has acknowledged the ability of such demonstrations to cement social solidarity among their participants and keep hardships and claims under the spotlight.²⁵ Nevertheless, the political dimension of refugees' acts did not, it is suggested here, stop at the threshold of mere recrimination for better living conditions. Their protests can instead be viewed, as this chapter contends, as avant-garde acts of citizenship. No matter the precise reason for their complaints, refugees showed themselves to be responsive to an idea of injustice in ways that made them embryonic activist citizens.²⁶ Hence, the progressive shift from the status of subject to that of a citizen started quickly to become apparent.

²¹ *Report from UKHC – POL 7730/48*, 27th March 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ *A-17*, 28th August 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

²⁴ *Ibidem* and *Reuters – Indian and Pakistan services*, 30th August 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG.

²⁵ Talbot, *Divided Cities*, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

²⁶ E. Isin, "Theorizing Acts of Citizenship", in E. I. Isin and G. M. Nielson (eds.), *Acts of Citizenships*, London-New York, 2008, pp. 38-9.

New sites and scales of struggle were introduced during the period following Partition, and new and extended lines between outsiders and insiders started to be delineated. Carving out their space as distinct from any existing local identity, refugees found their own ways of being political and channelling their claims, and, in the last resort, their own ideas of belonging to a state. The anger that results from the violation or the perceived violation of a right, Ernest Gellner reminds us, bespeaks of a sentiment of belonging to a wider national community.²⁷ “Disgruntled refugees in the villages and in the camp just near us, have used the rumours as their opportunity to threaten and frighten our Christians. This was interpreted as an effort to get them to leave their homes and the meagre lands they are working so they, the refugees, may take possession. [...] The threats of the refugees here in Montgomery camps are directed not so much at the Christians as against the town officials and the world in general”²⁸, reported a member of a religious association in his correspondence with his mother house in the United States. Previously, the transfer of Hindu deposits from banks in Lahore had resulted in angry migrants targeting the local District Commissioner’s car.²⁹ What the press sympathetic to the government hastily labelled as hysteria or psychological disorder was actually a political demand that – it should be noted here – was not at this stage attached to any kind of religious or theological claim or rift. Indeed, giving voice to refugees’ unrest and complaints meant swelling the ranks of “certain dangerous lines of anti-State propaganda”,³⁰ and facing the possibility of a temporary prohibition on the publication and circulation of pamphlets and newspapers.

²⁷ E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalisms*, Oxford, 1983, p. 1.

²⁸ *Letter to Mr. Cootes*, 9th June 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

²⁹ *Enclosure in Karachi Despatch No. 77*, 22nd November 1947, DO 142/440, NAKG.

³⁰ *The Times* (London), 26th August 1948.

As their integration into the local socio-economic fabric of West Punjab became a necessity, the political essence of refugee protest surfaced more fully and the complexity of the tangle in which they were blew up. Camps proved to be just the tip of the iceberg. Many thousands of refugees were accommodated in either civil or religious hospitals, school buildings and homes for women and orphans. In Lahore, patients in Lady Mayo Hospital outnumbered the usual bedspace by approximately one thousand units.³¹ Surgical cases resulting from the 1947 atrocities and migration engulfed its operating theatres as well as those of many other hospitals made worse by an acute shortage of trained medical personnel. Large numbers of high and middle schools put aside desks and blackboards and served instead as temporary reception centres. Meanwhile, leaks in the institutional reception network and policies were plugged through refugees' self-managed construction of mud huts and occupation of empty houses. In early October 1947 official estimates warned of the presence of about 200,000 migrants who had settled within West Punjab without governmental sanction and then proceeded to travel back and forth between camps and the middle of towns and cities of the region.³² In the old city of Lahore, the collapse of a crumbling house claimed 18 lives among the refugees living in the area.³³ Soon afterwards, nearly 2,000 persons targeted the offices of the Lahore Municipality, badly damaging its contents and a couple of cars. Local authorities tried to take immediate counter-measures by emptying 3,000 tumbledown houses and relocating the families concerned in schools, go-downs and parks. Yet, for all their efforts, tension and discontent remained palpable and widespread among refugees and, in late 1948, this dissatisfaction went as far as to threaten seriously

³¹ 1594/9, R-N-4, BRCMA.

³² A-2, 8th October 1947, NND 765024, NARA.

³³ A-17, 28th August 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

the stability of Mamdot's Punjab ministry.³⁴ The losses, hardships and sufferings undergone in their dreadful journey to Pakistan allowed all refugees, whatever their immediate circumstances, to claim the kind of morality that turns groups into communities able to embody and put forward a politics of the governed.³⁵

Refugees who rushed the Municipality of Lahore aimed at opposing the delays that were making the early allocation of houses almost impossible and, in the last resort, at shaping government policies. In late 1948, after an informal meeting with the Minister for Resettlement and Rehabilitation of Refugees Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Limerick recorded that, despite governmental enthusiasm, rehabilitation plans “didn't consist of much more than getting some of the refugees out of the camps and into the village, but without taking any adequate steps to get them on their feet or established in any trade or occupation”.³⁶ The ongoing continuous rationing of a wide range of basic resources together with acute shortages of trained personnel in key sectors dealing with the reintegration of displaced persons further exacerbated the problems associated with local living conditions and hampered the deployment of resettlement projects and plans. By flicking through the lists of shortages of materials and jobs published in local gazettes of those years, one actually experiences almost first-hand a Pakistani society that seemed to be starting at zero. Food grains, building material, chemical and surgical instruments, paper, electric goods, coal, coke and medicines were all added to the list of the items to be requisitioned and rationed.³⁷ Wanted – Dead or Alive: civil, electrical, mechanical, wireless,

³⁴ *Political Alignments in the West Punjab – Confidential No. 25*, 28th November 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

³⁵ On this point see P. Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed. Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, New York, 2004, pp. 53-78.

³⁶ 1594/9, R-N-4, BRCMA.

³⁷ *West Punjab Gazette – Extraordinary Issue*, 4th September 1947, UPL.

sound and marine engineers, chemists, surgeons, radiologists, pathologists, nurses and bacteriologists, published the *West Punjab Gazette* in early March 1948.³⁸

A whole social imaginary had thus to be reshaped and reframed. The interplay between local social interactions and the weaving of mutual normative expectations is inextricably interwoven with both a spatial and a narrative dimension.³⁹ Formerly inhabited by a single family of Muslims and well-stocked in terms of Hindu temples and *Shivala* buildings, the old market of Ghumti Bazar within the walled city of Lahore represented one of those hundreds of local microcosms where personal and collective histories intermingled to produce the rich tapestry of West Punjabi society. Houses and huts would soon replace camps and temporary structures, and the anguish of the creation and re-creation of respectively a state and a social imaginary thus became immediately tangible and visible.

Elective affinities: refugees, homes, domesticity and belonging

Home and domesticity embrace both the social and personal experiences of their inhabitants by serving as the building blocks of a relational self. Their constant presence in the everyday lives of individuals has, as Amanda Vickery in a different context argues, overshadowed the need to dig into the feelings that bring their rooms to life.⁴⁰ South Asian houses – and Pakistani ones, in particular – proved to be no exception to the rule. The exposure of architecture and

³⁸ *West Punjab Gazette*, 5th March 1948, UPL.

³⁹ C. Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Durham, 2004, p. 23.

⁴⁰ A. Vickery, *Behind Closed Door. At Home in Georgian England*, New Haven-London, 2009, p. 3.

colonialists to an idea of domesticity and feelings of being at home has provided the parameters for most of the critical analysis that has attempted to tackle this issue.⁴¹ Houses, homes and domesticity will be used here as both the physical and emotional space within which refugees perceived the state as a ‘trauma’. Its inability to fulfil what they perceived as its duties and hence to live up to their expectations brought about a disenchantment among refugees that materialised itself in a perceived lack of intimacy with and casual attitude towards the surrounding environment and a troubled process of construction of an everyday Pakistani state.

In the aftermath of independence, West Punjabi homes were piled high with all the emotions and the dynamics that the search for, and the life in, them triggered in terms of reconstructing a social imaginary. “Oi, b***ch*d, you’re living in my f***ing house!”, would thunder a threatening Martland in a room in McLenburgh Square, London, more than sixty years later.⁴² Martland and Ahmad had met by chance and became good friends thousands of miles away from their home countries. Each of them was respectively an Indian and a Pakistani child of that midnight hour that changed the course of South Asian events. 90 Upper Mall, Lahore is the address of a so-called evacuee property that, having been vacated by Martland’s family in 1947, was allotted to Ahmad’s grandparents in 1959 thanks to the help and intercession of the then Punjab Inspector General of Police Qurban Ali Khan. Temporary residents or

⁴¹ See, for instance, E. Butcher, *Empire and Families: Britons and Late Imperial India*, Oxford, 2004; R. Crane, G. Gardiner, A. Johnson and F.A. Steel (eds.), *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook*, New Delhi, 2010; M. Former, “Postcolonial Domesticity Amid Diaspora: Home and Family in the Lives of two English Sisters from India”, *Journal of Social History*, 39, 2, 2005, pp. 467-82; W. Glover, “Objects, Models, and Exemplary Works: Educating Sentiment in Colonial Punjab”, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 64, 3, 2005, pp. 539-66; W. Glover, *Making Lahore Modern. Constructing and Imagining a Colonial City*, Minneapolis, 2008. The only exception to this trend is L. A. Ring, *Zenana. Everyday Peace in a Karachi Apartment Building*, Bloomington-Indianapolis, 2006.

⁴² *The Express Tribune* (Lahore), 29th August 2010.

commuters of friends' houses, flats that were rented at exorbitant prices and, in the last resort, of life itself, Ahmad's grandparents finally found a place of their own, more than a decade after crossing the border into Pakistan. Resettlement and compensation in this way were two sides of the same problem. As Ahmad went on, "families that had opted to migrate to Pakistan were compensated, if that is the correct term for this situation, for what that they had left behind".⁴³ Special registers that were progressively filed with the Custodian of the Evacuee Properties recorded meticulously all the entries of the forms that refugees were required to complete in order to claim the value of their immovable properties left behind in India and consequently to get a house allotted in West Punjab.⁴⁴ Information such as the extent of share or interest of the evacuee, estimated value of the property, amount of the mortgage and dates of auction and serial number of sale list headed the list of information that refugees were asked to supply.⁴⁵ This level of detail provided by the form, however, did not reflect the attention given to allocating housing, which was done on a much more *ad hoc* basis.

Numbers did not work to the refugee's advantage. According to Pakistani sources, the Muslims who had poured into West Punjab outnumbered by far the Hindus and Sikhs who had fled to India. The wave of looting and fires that accompanied the Partition of the subcontinent had severely damaged entire *mohallas*, leaving hundreds of streets unviable and thousands of houses unfit for use: 105,367 out of the 106,010 evacuee houses in the towns and cities of Pakistani Punjab were classified as 'not easily reparable': crumbling walls, uneven floors and broken window frames made most of these buildings little

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ First appointed by the West and East Punjab authorities in late August 1947, the Custodian of the Evacuee Properties took over the 'property of all abandoned properties and was tasked with their care and protection'. See, *Sind Observer* (Karachi), 15th January 1949.

⁴⁵ *West Punjab Gazette – Extraordinary Issue*, 16th December 1947, UPL.

more than heaps of rubble.⁴⁶ Despite government optimism with regard to its resettlement schemes, endemic delays in the clearance of temporary structures left their mark on refugees' feelings of anxiety, precariousness and disillusionment.⁴⁷ In late 1948 the afore-mentioned bundles of sticks and well-worn tents were still sheltering about 400,000 refugees distributed in camps across the whole of the Punjab.⁴⁸ Among them were around 2,500 refugees from non-agreed areas who were lodged in Bowli camp and who, on a foggy winter's day of early 1951, took the streets of Lahore. Their march towards the Wahga border and their attempt to reach India voiced their concern about the need to feel truly at home.⁴⁹ The claim to a roof over their heads was closely linked to the idea of taking part, and being involved, in a wider project of both a nation- and a state-in-the-making. Indeed, the conceptualisation of a sense of belonging to Pakistan meshed with the elaboration of a physical and emotional domesticity. If their obstinate refusal to take part in census data gathering exercises had previously marked the desire of refugees from non-agreed areas to be considered as equal citizens of the newly-created state, the political significance of their protest over the lack of proper accommodation now flagged up disillusionment with the early projects of national integration. As loneliness pervaded their souls and a house was perceived to be a chimera, refugees felt that that the "final heaven for the stars" that they had found in the immediate aftermath of the Partition was slowly becoming "tarnished rays [and a] night smudged light".⁵⁰ 'Squatter' and '*jhuggi*' would soon replace their usual label of 'refugee', and the

⁴⁶ *Dawn* (Karachi), 3rd May 1948.

⁴⁷ *IT to CRO – Opdom No. 27*, 1st-7th April 1948, DO 142/438, NAKG and *Political Alignments in West Punjab – Confidential No. 25*, 28th November 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

⁴⁸ *Political Situation, West Punjab – July 1948*, 2nd August 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

⁴⁹ *Civil and Military Gazette* (Lahore), 11th January 1951.

⁵⁰ A. F. Faiz, *The Dawn of Freedom – August 1947*.

model of *katcha* mud houses – imported by rural migrants into urban centres – would draw the border around their domestic lives. Refugee self-resettlement on land arranged itself into a structured and proper business. Squatter and refugee entrepreneurs and community leaders asserted their power and ‘sovereignty’ over the illegally-occupied plots: no property could be sold or transferred without their approval on prices and future allottees.⁵¹ Frequently demolished by calamities or town development authorities without any proper notice and offers of alternative accommodation, huts perfectly matched their precariousness with the possibility of being rebuilt in the same place almost overnight.⁵²

Counting on a safer and solid building was by no means a byword for stability and intimacy with the surrounding environment. An aura of weirdness enveloped the sense of relief that usually followed the allotment of a house. “There was a dinner service on the dining table and, in a study in an annexe in the back, a glass of water lay on a desk as if someone had just risen to answer the phone. ‘I told them I didn’t want a house like this’, my grandfather told me”, explains Ahmad while drawing his readers into his family’s inner feelings.⁵³ The idea of a mutual contamination of personal spaces came here into play. Muslim hands opened front doors whose inlays finely entwined Sanskrit characters with images of Hindu deities. Mere kilometres away, in East Punjab, Hindu or Sikh eyes decrypted Quran verses that had been carved over the doorstep. Furniture in rooms, dishes and glasses in cupboards and clothes in wardrobes traced the taste of unknown persons. The familiar and reassuring smiles of those who had been portrayed in pictures and paintings adorning domestic walls turned into

⁵¹ *Squatters and Squatting – Extract from the Draft Report of the UN Housing Mission to Pakistan, 1957, NND 948832, NARA.*

⁵² On governmental action towards the elimination of refugee shantytowns see *Punjab Assembly Debates, 5th May 1952, PCSL.*

⁵³ *The Express Tribune (Lahore), 29th August 2010.*

emotionless exhibitions of artists' talent. The intimate space of the city – an everyday and domestic leeway on which cultural differences had previously harmoniously met – was accordingly torn apart.⁵⁴ A persistent feeling of domestic space being violated framed the tapestry of the refugee's life and, when the Government of Punjab ordered the requisition of stocks and commodities from private premises for public use, it was even sanctioned by law. Private stocks and commodities were frequently transferred to temporary structures that were put to use as lodgings. In February 1954 the District of Lahore still had no fewer than eight schools that were used both as 'private' houses by several refugee families and Homes for Refugee Women and Orphans.⁵⁵ The word 'home' was also attached to the Centre for Abducted Women that was hosted in a local civil jail where iron bars functioned as front doors and the usual roll call of residents as the doorbell.

Yet, despite the bureaucratic jargon, refugees rarely perceived houses, and educational and reception institutions as a proper home. "Home. The very thought of home threatened to shatter their sanity just as a storm threatens to uproot trees", reveals a fictional character in Intizar Husain's *Kishti* (Ark).⁵⁶ Home – crossroads of emotions, tenderness and affection – finds its main personification in the metaphor of the heart.⁵⁷ Arguably an incurable arrhythmia affected refugees' hearts. An initial first-come-first-served method of allotting evacuees' houses and a subsequent assignment of urban premises on a

⁵⁴ On the idea of houses as those intimate spaces of the city that are able to harmonise differences, see J. D. Dodds, M. R. Menocal and A. K. Balbale, *The Arts of Intimacy. Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Making of Castilian Culture*, New Haven-London, 2008, p. 4.

⁵⁵ They were the Arya Putri Pathshala, Sarswati College, D.A.V. High School, S.D. High School, S.D. Middle School, Hindu Primary School and the S.D. High School (Qasur). See *Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates*, 22nd February 1954, PCSL.

⁵⁶ I. Husain, "Kishti", in I. Husain, *A Chronicle of a Peacock*, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 88-9.

⁵⁷ A. Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

provisional basis deepened the sense of insecurity and alienation that had already crept into the mindset of many refugees. The immediate and tangible effect of this mood was the progressive decay into which large numbers of buildings irremediably fell. The poor conditions of the evacuees' properties caused recurring front-pages headlines that screamed out their warnings. "Evacuee homes in state of despair. Many refugees may become shelterless in Punjab", announced the *Pakistan Times* (Lahore) in the midst of the torrential 1950 monsoon season.⁵⁸ "Refugees living in sub-human conditions", would bawl five years later an emaciated kid strolling along Mall Road in Lahore while trying to sell the same newspaper to passers-by.⁵⁹ The reorganisation of spaces that had followed the social reformism of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, as well as the formal and informal set of rules that buttressed it, were thus placed in jeopardy. Houses were no longer those images of perfect engines of neatness that had permeated gender and domestic reformist literature.⁶⁰ As allottees refused to take charge of the repairs and the upkeep of their allotments, houses teetered on the brink of collapse. Famous addresses were by no means immune. Immediately after independence, Iqbal's former residence at 94/A McLeod Road, Lahore was first declared evacuee property and then occupied by a family of refugees. The progressive deterioration of its structure over the following years threatened the safety of the occupants to such an extent that the Lahore Corporation eventually demanded its demolition.⁶¹ Maintenance work, rents and permanence of the allotment were the indissoluble and lethal

⁵⁸ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 12th August 1950.

⁵⁹ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 10th January 1955.

⁶⁰ N. Ahmad, *Milat ul-Urus*, London, 1903, p. 106. See also B. Metcalf, *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar. A Partial Translation with Commentary*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1990, pp. 334-5.

⁶¹ M. Baqir, *Lahore. Past and Present*, Delhi, 1984, pp. 261-2.

combination of elements that spoilt remaining furnishings, frames and walls, and swayed refugees' sense of attachment to a physical space. For many, a straightforward and simple equation lodged in their minds. Realising no return from the rent of the houses that they had abandoned in India, refugees contended that neither payments nor repairs were due for premises allotted to them in West Punjab.⁶² Consequently, the ambiguity that was implied in any claim to compensation fully surfaced. Equally, their feelings and ideas of belonging engaged in a tongue-twisting fight fraught with danger and contradictions. Pakistan consequently embodied the reality that 'home' had turned out to be powerless in arranging a home away from home. As a local saying puts it, *jehri mauj chhaju de chobare, na oh Balakh na Bukhare*.⁶³ There could be no surprise then that, when the occasion arose, refugees literally overflowed back into East Punjab. In early April 1955, a hockey match between the teams of the East and West Punjab police forces gave them the right chance to enter the neighbouring state. More than 65,000 refugees rushed to the Indian diplomatic representation in Lahore in order to secure one of the reduced-rate visas that had been made available to them. They reportedly wanted to meet old acquaintances and overcome the nostalgia of past and familiar places.⁶⁴ The 1955 spring peace between India and Pakistan was the formal guise of a much-perceived need to feel 'at home'.⁶⁵

On the top of such challenges, how could lodgings that had been allotted on a temporary basis ever be worthy of both physical and emotional affection? "The

⁶² *Recent Developments in Refugee Rehabilitation and Resettlement in the Punjab*, 12th July 1951, NND 938750, NARA and *Pakistan Times (Lahore)*, 6th August 1954.

⁶³ East or west, home is the best.

⁶⁴ *Pakistanis Pour into India by the Thousands*, 6th April 1955, NND 938750, NARA.

⁶⁵ The organisation of a number of minor sport events to be held in India and Pakistan relaxed the restrictions on the free movement of persons across the border. See Talbot, *Divided Cities*, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

news appearing in a recent issue of your newspaper that an ordinance regarding the quasi-permanent allotment of urban immovable properties will be promulgated shortly is most welcomed”, commented with relief ‘A refugee’ in his letter to the editor of the *Pakistan Times* (Lahore).⁶⁶ Administrative requirements by the early 1950s had dragged many refugees into an exasperating battle of nerves. Requests for the allocation of any evacuee property had to be first substantiated and then verified through proper documents and revenue records. Within this bureaucratic framework, claimants grappled with the need to trace back the papers that they had left or lost in East Punjab, and government desks were packed with crabbed Devanagari-written files.⁶⁷ Their own houses and belongings left behind in India had been or were being apparently sold at insignificant prices while, as a *Dawn* (Karachi) editorial eloquently entitled ‘Shall We Only Talk?’ argued, “in Pakistan the Hindu evacuees were reaping a rich harvest”.⁶⁸ Fuelled by repeated difficulties and setbacks, refugees’ souls and minds were permeated with deep feelings of resentment and bitterness towards India.⁶⁹ Yet, paperwork duties were just a symptom of a wider malaise. Opponents of the government scheme of a permanent resettlement revealed the silent illness that affected many persons who had embarked on that dreadful journey in 1947. “To cancel the existing allotments and orders, the new ones would amount to robbing lakhs of people of their habitation and livelihood”, warned one of them who concealed himself behind the frequent pseudonym ‘A refugee’.⁷⁰ A deep-seated anxiety paralysed his thoughts. The habitation that ‘a

⁶⁶ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 14th November 1954.

⁶⁷ *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 1st March 1953, PCSL.

⁶⁸ *Dawn* (Karachi), 3rd July 1949.

⁶⁹ *Immovable Property Legislation in Pakistan – Despatch No. 524*, 16th February 1955, NND 938750, NARA.

⁷⁰ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 20th August 1954.

refugee' feared to lose was something more than just the building to which he returned after work. Rather it incorporated all the immaterial yet vital galaxies of relationships, balances and hierarchies that filled his life and allowed him to rend the silence of anonymity and be part of a pattern of mutual expectations and trust. The feelings of both of these 'A refugee' resembled a hall of mirrors: what one longed for, the other one feared to lose.

Partition, the disruption that followed and the massive migration of millions of persons unwittingly encapsulated potential elements of social modernity. After touring the region in the aftermath of Partition, a correspondent from *The Times* of London discovered that refugees' economic and material losses were accompanied by the even more distressing tearing of their social and living patterns.⁷¹ Indeed, entire *biraderi*, *tabbar* and *gharana* – essential social units of local Punjabi society – had been ripped apart. Disorientation then further sharpened as the allocation process began and households underwent dramatic, and often involuntary, changes. The houses that had previously sheltered extended or joint families were now fragmented and allocated to claimants who, in most cases, were not related to, and did not know, each other. Thus, for instance, it happened that a 12-flat building was redistributed according to the unfamiliar method of one flat for each one of the twelve applicants.⁷² Elements of individuality, anonymity and social autonomy slowly crept into the so far highly personalised Punjabi society and became an everyday challenge to anyone's sense of belonging.

⁷¹ *The Times* (London), 20th January 1948.

⁷² *Refugees Claims Settlement Operations, A Review – Despatch No. 574*, 7th January 1960, NND 948832, NARA and *Extract from Report from Deputy UKHC – POL 10208/48*, DO 142/440, NAKG.

How did refugees react to this sudden change? If some adapted to the new circumstances, most of them deliberately violated regulations and resettlement plans. An official of the US Embassy at the time recorded that “the main difficulty is that of keeping refugees settled. There is a natural tendency to seek to settle in village groups as they came over”.⁷³ Their identity was substantiated through these old or newly-created relationships that provided them with a ‘survival kit’ in what was still a highly-personalised and trust-based society: credentials of reliability, solidarity and stability.⁷⁴ Renouncing or rejecting them would have been suicidal. However, these were not the only and main concern of our “A refugee”.

Congested towns and cities exacerbated a housing crunch that made rent prices soar. A person who looked to rent a three-bedroom house in Charing Cross, Lahore, for instance, was asked to face a rise of an astonishing 84.8%.⁷⁵ Funny jokes on the subject spread from month to month. ‘Look here, young man, you must either pay your accounts or leave the home’ – ‘Thank you very much, my last landlady made me do both’, stated one of them. When, in the early 1950s, this joke managed to draw a smile from a refugee who was sharing a cup of tea with some friends along a dusty and chaotic road in Montgomery, satellite towns – a government-funded undertaking that aimed at tackling the emergency – and housing schemes were still mostly projects in government officers’ minds and on papers inside architects’ drawing tubes.⁷⁶ However, as soon as new or repaired properties started to become available, it was immediately clear and

⁷³ *A-1*, 4th January 1949, NND 765024, NARA.

⁷⁴ M. Mines, *Public Faces, Private Voices. Community and Individuality in South India*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1994, pp. 31-35.

⁷⁵ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 29th October 1954.

⁷⁶ *Analysis of Communist Propaganda in Pakistan 1951*, 25th February 1951, NND 842430, NARA.

evident that most refugees could not afford them. Despite the fact that the sale of urban sites and houses operated on the basis of a quota reserved for refugees, their prices often went far beyond the Rs. 5,000 limit of affordability and hence prevented low- or no-income persons from any kind of purchase.⁷⁷

Above and beyond such economic concerns, a stubborn resistance to any kind of relocation was registered among many refugees. As soon as a new accommodation was allotted to them, subtenants rather than proper allottees took possession of the dwellings.⁷⁸ As the years rolled on, jobs – no matter whether ‘under the table’ or legal ones – provided a draft for the still uncertain geography of refugees’ everyday lives. If new allotments spelt the loss of their traditional livelihoods, then people relinquished their proprietary or tenant rights and looked for new sources of income.⁷⁹ In 1976 Farhat Oulzan, an urban geography research student at the University of the Punjab, exposed the secrets of the urban development of Lahore in a Ph.D. dissertation that remains one of the few available comprehensive studies on the subject.⁸⁰ This superimposition of the mappings of both commercial and industrial activities and the refugee concentration in different areas across the years traces and provides reasons for the apparent oddities of local urban planning. Accordingly, in the 1950s the Lahore Improvement Trust embarked in a series of housing developing schemes that initially pushed the city’s boundaries more and more north- and westwards. It was there and along the other main thoroughfares that businesses, workshops and factories started to spring up, setting Lahore’s new economic life in motion.

⁷⁷ *Punjab Gazette*, 22nd August 1952, UPL and *Squatter and Squatting – Extract from the Draft Report of the UN Housing Mission to Pakistan*, 1957, NND 948832, NARA.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁹ *Air Rail*, 11th September 1953, NND 907969, NARA and *Civil and Military Gazette* (Lahore), 26th January 1951.

⁸⁰ F. Oulzan, *The Urban Fringe of Lahore City. A Functional Study*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of the Punjab, Lahore, 1976.

Housing construction sites, their supervisors and contractors grappled with skyrocketing raw material prices that inevitably made an impact on the bill for potential buyers and automatically meant that only better-off tenants were shortlisted. At the other end of the spectrum, although they offered the prospect of a better future and higher income, the unskilled and manual jobs available on the outskirts of towns and cities proved desirable in practice only to those who could afford the cost of transport or, otherwise, had nothing to lose. When the full details of this picture became apparent, the local Improvement Trust diverted projects and funding from the urban fringe to the city centre.⁸¹ The coming of public transport in time would subsequently enhance social mobility by narrowing the gap between workplaces and homes.

The situation was serious but by no means hopeless, or, at least, this was what some refugees thought. In early 1950s, in the city of Lyallpur, in order to solve the local paucity of accommodation facilities and endemic delays in the implementation of both private and public-funded housing development schemes, an enterprising group of them combined forces and embarked upon the building of new houses at their own cost. After years of delay, cooperative societies finally gained a new impetus. Lyallpur entrepreneurs' advertisements were soon placed in local newspapers together with those of hundreds of other similar business organisations across the whole of the Punjab.⁸² Cooperative properties, Ian Talbot has established, attracted attention mainly from among middle-class Punjabi and governmental officers. High costs prevented most

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 145-325.

⁸² It is interesting to note here that, up to 1956, the names of the cooperative members who had fled from East Punjab were always followed by the caption 'refugee'. See issues of the *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 1952-56.

refugees from any investment.⁸³ If truth to be told, a quick inspection of the different houses that were advertised by both housing and commercial cooperatives reveals that size and price diversification made flats and houses relatively affordable even to low income persons. The revival of the cooperative movement came in the shape of a multi-faceted phenomenon that cannot be easily explained along binary lines. Groups of urban homeless persons frequently organised themselves into cooperatives, whose buildings reproduced, on a larger scale and on unexploited evacuee land, the local mainstream architectural mixture of housing facilities and business premises. Indeed, in 1957 a UN officer noticed, for instance, that “in Lahore squatters’ settlement [...], some 350 weavers ‘resettled themselves’ in a cohesive working, community of comparatively well-built brick building in which they live, weave, and sell their products through a cooperative organisation”.⁸⁴

Thus, this combination of business activities and everyday life helped to mitigate the side effects of swallowing the bitter pill of an image of a state in trauma; yet at the same time it opened a window on those ‘grey areas’ where tradition and modernity manoeuvred side by side with each other.

Something old, something new and something borrowed: the rural resettlement of refugees in Pakistani Punjab

The process of re-elaborating a tradition succeeded in replicating itself even in the post-Partition Punjabi countryside. It was there on its fertile yet still historically unexplored lands that many refugees caught sight of a state and its

⁸³ I. Talbot, *Divided Cities*, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁸⁴ *Squatters and Squatting – Extract from Draft Report of the UN Housing Mission to Pakistan*, 1957, NND 948832, NARA.

authorities in the guise of malleable agents of change.⁸⁵ Tradition, change and modernity are widely-discussed concepts in the current theoretical, colonial and post-colonial literature.⁸⁶ The recent introduction of the idea of ‘multiple modernities’ has brought under the spotlight those intersections wherein different communities embrace “modernity without giving up their own traditions”.⁸⁷ The allotment of rural evacuee properties to refugees can therefore be framed within this process of elaboration and re-elaboration of the ideas of tradition, change and modernity. Instead of constituting an infringement on the modern, the traditional – it will be argued here – moulded the structure of refugees’ labour and economic relations into a new collective identity and, in the process, established new social boundaries.⁸⁸

In the space of the sixty-year period that spanned the decades from 1880 to 1940, the southern rural areas of West Punjab had experienced one of most imposing projects of social and agricultural engineering of the British *raj*. In the so-called canal colonies in particular, the introduction of modern cultivation and irrigation facilities had proceeded in tandem with a progressive shaping of those human characteristics that would eventually culminate in rational *homines*

⁸⁵ Indeed, literature has mainly focused on the Indian wing of the Punjab. See, for instance, G. Kudaisya, “The Demographic Upheaval of Partition: Refugees and Agricultural Resettlement in India, 1947-67”, *South Asia*, 18, 1995, pp. 73-94; S. S. Thandi, “The Unidentical Punjab Twins: Some Explanations of Comparative Agricultural Performance Since Partition”, in I. Talbot and T. Shinder (eds.), *People on the Move, Punjabi Colonial and Post-Colonial Migration*, Karachi, 2004, pp. 298-324.

⁸⁶ See W. Glover, *Making Lahore Modern*, *op. cit.*; D. Washbrook, “Intimation of Modernity”, *South Asia History and Culture*, 1, 1, 2010, pp. 125-49; M. Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, Boston, 1993; M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism and Other Writings*, London, 2002.

⁸⁷ S. N. Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities”, *Daedalus*, 129,1, 2000, p. 15. On multiple modernities see also S. N. Eisenstadt, *Comparative Civilisations & Multiple Modernities*. Leiden, 2003; M. Kamali, *Multiple Modernities, Civil Society and Islam: the Case of Iran and Turkey*, Liverpool, 2005.

⁸⁸ D. Chakarabarty, *Habitations of Modernity. Essays in the Wakeup of Subaltern Studies*, Chicago-London, 2002, pp. xix-xx; S. N. Eisenstadt, *Comparative Civilisations*, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

oeconomici able to maximise crops and profits.⁸⁹ M. L. Darling's earlier words - "men all connected by common descent, all physically fit to take up a life in a new country under considerable difficulties, all hard up for land" - now epitomised the quintessence of the new Punjabi agricultural workers or tenants.⁹⁰ Almost ten years later, although the quantities of available materials and the quality of migration fluxes had changed, social and farming operators produced an almost identical result. Willing to sell their own soul to the devil, refugees tussled with each other in order to secure even a single plot of the renowned fertile and fruitful lands of West Punjab. Hundreds of artisans, shopkeepers and merchants turned overnight into supposedly professional agriculturalists. A persistent lack of thorough administrative controls over declarations on forms allowed refugees to turn their hands fraudulently to agriculture and subsequently to secure an allotted property.⁹¹ This peculiar scramble for evacuee lands designates the experience of their applicants or allottees as quite distinctive. In 1989 the collapse of the Soviet Union would force or push almost three million Russians who were living as a minority in the newly-independent states to seek refuge in Russia. Unskilled jobs and a consequent professional downgrading would distinguish their lives in their perceived homeland and intensify their feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction.⁹² By contrast, the experience and the conditions of many refugees who put down new roots in rural Pakistani Punjab modulated on a quite different pitch. Evacuee rural properties demanded

⁸⁹ D. Gilmartin, "Migration and Modernity: the State, the Punjabi Village and the Settling of the Canal Colonies", in I. Talbot and S. Thandi (eds.), *People on the Move, op. cit.*; I. Talbot, "The Growth of the Muslim League in the Punjab, 1936-47", *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 10, 1982, pp. 5-24.

⁹⁰ M. L. Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, Lahore, 1920, p. 116. See also D. Abenante, *La colonizzazione di Multan: Islam, potere, istituzioni nel Punjab sudoccidentale*, Trieste, 2004, pp. 162-7.

⁹¹ A. G. Raza, *Resettlement of Refugees on Land - A Review*, DO 142/440, NAKG.

⁹² H. Pilkington, *Migration, Displacement and Identity in Post-Soviet Russia*, London-New York, 1998, pp. 141-5.

substantial technical investments and high levels of professionalism and expertise in return for almost guaranteed high profits. Opportunities for personal and financial advancement were indeed the other side of the coin minted by a post-Partition Pakistani economy on the brink of collapse.

But did refugees have any real prospect of success as they embarked on a project that gave the impression of being beyond their actual means and possibilities? In 1955 many departmental officers of the West Pakistan Government received a copy of *The Cooperative Inquiry Committee Report* on their desks.⁹³ While sipping their umpteenth tea of the day, they would have leafed through its chapters and finally seized upon the condition of the agricultural market and the magnitude and limitations of the cooperative movement. In the early 1950s Punjab farming cooperative societies sprung up at impressive rates and registered an overall membership of 1,100,000, out of whom nearly 770,000 were refugees.⁹⁴ Their motto was simple and trenchant: “popularise Pakistan’s products”.⁹⁵ Societies developed frequently as a stimulus to the enhancement of local infrastructures or, in some cases, even as a village within the village itself. In the lapse of time between January 1951 and April 1955, more than 6,000 houses, 70 adult education centres, ten mosques and about 270 hand pumps were built in connection with the cooperatives’ activity in rural Punjab.⁹⁶ Apparently both Lyallpur and Sialkot Districts confronted the rearrangement of those hierarchies and delicate balances that had traditionally

⁹³ Government of West Pakistan, *The Cooperative Inquiry Committee Report*, Lahore, 1955, MDRR.

⁹⁴ *Cooperative Movement Spreading in Punjab – Despatch No. 215*, 24th May 1952, NND 907969, NARA.

⁹⁵ Board of Trade – Commercial Relations and Exports Department, *Pakistan. Economic and Commercial Conditions in Pakistan (May 1950)*, London, 1951, p. 88.

⁹⁶ *The Cooperative Inquiry Committee Report*, Lahore, 1955, p. 24, MDRR and *Economic Summary for week of June 24th-30th, 1955*, 1st July 1955, NND 938750, NARA.

imbued ideas of local prestige and power. The unwillingness of past and present *zamindars* to portion out and share their properties mirrored the close identification between their own lands and their prestige, honour and influence over local society.⁹⁷ It is no surprise then that those groups of landowners who disclaimed their rights over their lands in Lyallpur and Sialkot in order to set up a joint-cooperative society with their tenants immediately hit the headlines. This news sounded so shocking that the local US representative asked his officers to double-check the information: “The assertion that ‘a number of landowners in Sialkot and Lyallpur have surrendered their proprietary rights [...] in favour of cooperatives set up by them’ has been checked and found to be true”, noted down the still sceptical functionary.⁹⁸

In fact his scepticism was by no means groundless. Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa’s voice echoed throughout rural Pakistani Punjab and whispered in the ears of both *zamindars* and tenants: “If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change”, it repeated incessantly.⁹⁹ Admittedly power relationships withstood any kind of substantial transformation during this period. Landowners – although frequently only temporary allottees of evacuee land – kept their properties firmly in their hands and structured their partnership with their tenants and *kammis* along traditional lines.¹⁰⁰ When in 1954 the Government of Punjab vested in them the right to eject tenants, refugee allottees exposed through their behaviour the social pattern that in reality underpinned their enterprises. “A crisis is impending in this Province because of the

⁹⁷ Z. Eglar, *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan. Perspectives on Community, Land and Economy*, Karachi, 2010, pp. 59-65.

⁹⁸ *Cooperative Movement Spreading in Punjab – Despatch No. 215*, 24th May 1952, NND 907969, NARA.

⁹⁹ G. Tomasi di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*, London, 1963, p. 26.

¹⁰⁰ *Recent Developments in Refugee Rehabilitation and Resettlement in the Punjab*, 12th July 1951, NND 938750, NARA.

threatened mass ejection of refugee tenants. Reliable statistics will show that refugee tenants constitute more than half the entire number of refugees. If such a huge body of refugees are ejected, it would mean an unprecedented crisis in the Punjab”, condemned the umpteenth refugee writing to the *Pakistan Times* (Lahore) while hiding his identity under a pseudonym.¹⁰¹ Government authorities thus merely ratified a social attitude and a *modus operandi* that had manifested itself years before and had reached its zenith during the late August 1951 Matta incidents. Over there, 72 Muslims were charged with murder, attempted murder, arson and dacoity in connection with a communal flare-up with a death roll of 11 Christians.¹⁰² Apparently, the circumstances behind the riot were shrouded in mystery. On the spur of the moment, word got out that it “was due to the relation between a Christian boy with a Muslim girl”.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, the details soon began to emerge. “The real cause of the trouble – declared Joshua Fazal Din, a prominent Christian member of the Muslim League – was primarily economic [...]. The refugees find the locals stand between them and their dream of prosperity”.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, the relationship between Christian tenants and allottee landlords had been passing through troubled waters throughout this time. Their tenancy agreements had been progressively flouted, and ejection notices had dispossessed these tenants from both their lands and sources of income. Refugee

¹⁰¹ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 6th December 1954. Apparently, journalists at the *Pakistan Times* were by no means scaremongers. According to a survey drawn up by the Deputy Secretary, Rehabilitation (Land) A. G. Raza, the land that, before Partition had been owned and cultivated by Non-Muslims or owned by Non-Muslims and cultivated by Muslims, amounted to 30,64,652 and 22,69,818 acres respectively. See A. G. Raza, *Resettlement of Refugees on Land – A Review*, DO 142/440, NAKG.

¹⁰² *Lahore Despatch No. 42*, 21st December 1951, NND 842430, NARA and *Civil and Military Gazette* (Lahore), 14th December 1951.

¹⁰³ *Telegram No. 30*, 24th August 1951, NND 842430, NARA.

¹⁰⁴ *Government's Action Lessens Muslim-Christian Tensions over Matta Incident*, 4th September 1951, NND 842430, NARA.

zamindars instead had to hire their relatives, friends and members of their extended families.¹⁰⁵

Biraderi, byword for power and authority, incarnated both resistance to, and the elaboration of a new idea of, social change. The resentment and hostility that were reported to be widespread among native West Punjabis were only partially linked to competition for the allocation of resources and evacuee properties.¹⁰⁶ On a far deeper level it was the traditional image of villages as economic and social self-sufficient units that was at stake. Rural labour markets had been structured around the narrow and closed circuit of the village where the interplay of demand and supply together with the subsistence economy had flourished.¹⁰⁷ Excessive fragmentation of lands, and inexperienced manpower as well as the crippling effects of recurrent summer floods during the immediate post-Partition period, were certainly to blame for the extremely low agricultural production and quality rates recorded in late 1940s and 1950s Punjab.¹⁰⁸ Yet, as a US officer discovered, “there is [...] another cause of the growing poverty of the resources and the production in the country, when the right type of people are not encouraged at all, with the result that so many useful brains and bodies are simply wasted”.¹⁰⁹ Potential for any increase of local *zamindars*’ power, prestige and loyalty instead topped the list of the most needed skills that farm labourers and tenants were asked to supply and develop throughout their working lives.

¹⁰⁵ *Memorandum of Conversation – Confidential*, 18th August 1951, NND 842430, NARA and *Government’s Action Lessens Muslim-Christian Tension over Matta Incident*, 4th September 1951, NND 842430, NARA.

¹⁰⁶ *A-1*, 4th January 1949, NND 765024, NARA. See also S. Ansari, *Life after Partition. Migration, Community and Strife in Sindh, 1947-1962*, Karachi, 2005, p. 186; I. Talbot, *Divided Cities*, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-5.

¹⁰⁷ Z. Eglar, *A Punjabi Village in Pakistan*, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹⁰⁸ *Letter from C. W. Lewis, Jr. to H. A. Doolittle, Esq.*, 28th September 1948, NND 959418, NARA, *Annexure – Economic Effects of the Disturbances in the Punjab*, n.d., DO 142/440, NAKG and *The Cooperative Inquiry Committee Report*, Lahore, 1955, p. 55-6, MDRR.

¹⁰⁹ *Agricultural Crisis in Pakistan*, n.d. (mid-50s), NND 897806, NARA.

Within the tiny space where the border between the shock of change and the affirmation or re-affirmation of old ways became blurred and porous, the failure to improve agricultural methods of production and villagers' lives and opportunities found its most fertile breeding ground, and merged with refugees' own needs to re-weave their fabric of *biraderi* alliances, hierarchies and balances of power.¹¹⁰

These thin interstices of interaction between tradition and modernity disturbed not only the relationship between locals and refugees in the rural areas of West Punjab. When packing up their belongings and leaving for local towns and cities, both refugees and locals alike could hardly imagine that ideas of change and conventional customs would once again embroil their lives in a curious yet crucial scandal.

How scandalous! Government plans of urban resettlement and refugees' perception of the State

When the countryside proved unable to keep its promises of prosperity and economic assistance, expanding cities lured unemployed persons by their glimmering lights and prospects. Over there the image of a State as a 'scandal' was spreading across their roads and suburbs. Generally associated with debates regarding the gender perception of authorities and institutions or the intimate, sexual and private sphere,¹¹¹ the public dimension of 'scandal' here will be

¹¹⁰ On the lack of adequate methods of production and the failure of creating a viable programme of community and individual empowerment see *Guidance on Indo-Pakistan Talks*, 28th May 1953, NND 897209, NARA and *TOUSFO A-1159*, n.d., NND 907969, NARA.

¹¹¹ See R. S. Rajan, *The Scandal of the State. Women, Law and Citizenship in Postcolonial India*, Durham-London, 2003; K. W. Weierman, *One Nation, One Blood. Interracial Marriage in*

broadened out to encompass how both refugees and locals experienced the early Pakistani state (and its related weaknesses) as an instrument of egalitarianism and emancipation from previous social constraints. This will then provide a useful lens for capturing and understanding the mechanisms used by refugees to live *in, with* and *within* a state in-the-making and to articulate their own sense of belonging to it.

Lahore, like Lyallpur, Gujranwala and many other towns throughout the province, turned out to be the first port of call for all those jobless refugees and local people who had previously been employed on the lands of rural Punjab. Indeed, accounts and reports of exceptional opportunities were giving them new hopes. Women with their intricate yet noteworthy world represented an interesting prism through which urban dynamics were projected onto local society. For many of them, particularly those belonging to more privileged classes who got together in the Lahori suburbs of Model Town and, at a later stage, Gulberg, Partition had presented an invaluable opportunity to leave *purdah* and become active members in the social construction of the new state of Pakistan.¹¹² Keeping up with its well-established tradition as a pioneering hub for gender-empowerment and female activism, Lahore buzzed with trepidation and even enthusiasm.¹¹³ Health, education and social care were perhaps not surprisingly the main fields where women played a prominent and a pivotal role. Immediately after its foundation in 1948, the local Fatima Jinnah Medical

American Fiction, Scandal, and Law, 1820-1870, Amherst, 2005; M. D. West, *Secret Sex and Spectacle. The Rules of Scandal in Japan and the Unites States*, Chicago-London, 2006.

¹¹² 1594/9, R-N-A, BRCMA and P. Virdee, "Negotiating the Past. Journey through Muslim Women's Experience of Partition and Resettlement in Pakistan", *Cultural and Social History*, 6, 4, 2009, pp. 476-7.

¹¹³ On the role of women in pre-independence Lahore, see S. Ansari, "'Winds of Change'? The role of women activists in Lahore before and after Partition", *Pakistan Vision*, 9, 2, 2008, pp. 1-15 and D. Wilmer, "Women as Participants in the Pakistan Movement: Modernisation and the Promise of a Moral Stare", *Modern Asian Studies*, 31, 3, 1996, pp. 573-90.

College for Women could boast a waiting list comprising 550 candidates.¹¹⁴ On the opposite side of the street, the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital's Training School for Nurses reckoned with a similar roll of potential trainees. Between 1948 and 1960, the number of Muslim students who enrolled at Kinnaird College – the first women's higher education institution in the whole of the Punjab and local breeding ground of future teachers – hit 1177 units, thereby registering a tenfold increase from the previous decade.¹¹⁵ It was, as Shahnaz Rose has pointed out, a reproduction of their private roles in the newly-created public Pakistani domain that drew on, and even strengthened, the segregation between men and women.¹¹⁶

But was this really a mere transposition of roles within which not that much changed? Lahori women appeared to seize difficultly but also slowly many of the opportunities that both a rising nation and an emerging civil society were now offering them in the aftermath of independence. Processes of gender empowerment and self-awareness took place at different levels of local society, albeit amidst tremendous setbacks. Nearly 500 cooperative spinning societies provided thousands of women with new opportunities to earn their living by setting up their activities both in Lahore and all across the whole of the West Punjab.¹¹⁷ Clinics and hospital hosted and established free birth control and sex education courses that were specifically intended for poverty-stricken and illiterate women.¹¹⁸ These women's initial sense of belonging to a new and

¹¹⁴ 1594/9, R-N-A, BRCMA.

¹¹⁵ M. Maskiell, "Social Change and Social Control: College-Educated Punjabi Women, 1913 to 1960", *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, 1, 1985, p. 63.

¹¹⁶ S. Rouse, "The Outsider(s) Within. Sovereignty and Citizenship in Pakistan", in P. Jeffrey and A. Basu, *Appropriating Gender. Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia*, New York, 1998, pp. 55-6.

¹¹⁷ *The Cooperative Inquiry Committee Report*, Lahore, 1955, p. 84, MDRR.

¹¹⁸ 1594/9, R-N-A, BRCMA.

wider community thus stemmed from an acquisition or, in certain circumstances, a re-acquisition of their sexual and body consciousness and their own economic self-sufficiency after the pain and shame that had followed their mass abduction during the summer of 1947 and the loss of their loved ones.¹¹⁹ Hence, despite its perceived absence and paternalist approach, the state in Lahore materialised by the way of a scandal rather than through a reassuring prolongation of colonial social and civilising reformism or as the by-product of the restoration of a nationalist identity. And its objective institutional weakness distanced Pakistan from its Indian counterpart in terms of the elaboration of an early gender agenda.¹²⁰ As it pushed women out of their comfort zone by heightening their awareness of their own body and their human potential, Pakistan beat its bitter rival to the straw.

Women – politicians and upper middle-class members of the so-called Lahori civil society – helped to set the agenda for the rehabilitation and integration of their less fortunate ‘sisters’. “Today your country needs you as never before [...] You are the real soldiers of Pakistan [...] Your helpless sisters await for your aid”, urged Begum Shah Nawaz in late September 1947.¹²¹ Female ‘militancy’ was unquestionably intended here in terms of those traditional activities that had employed women within their domestic ‘four walls’. Yet, the boundaries of their recognition were pushed towards the new, and so far unknown, field of all the different private, public and voluntary institutions that now emerged. What had previously been ‘private’ now became purposely and ostentatiously ‘public’. “I mention women, because after all they are the managers of the household. [...]

¹¹⁹ On women’s sufferings during Partition and their political value and impact see U. Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, New Delhi, 1998; R. Menon and K. Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition*, New Jersey, 1998.

¹²⁰ R. S. Rajan, *The Scandal of the State*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹²¹ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 25th September 1947.

Let the women of Pakistan prove that they are good managers”, Begum Shah Nawaz insisted once again a few months later.¹²² Hence, female *adab* – as it had crystallised over the previous centuries – became a tool in state-building processes and a new way of conceptualising and expressing a sense of belonging to a wider national community. Women’s clothes accordingly borrowed their colours from the national flag’s palette and were refashioned along the lines of those worn by Italian actresses in the popular neo-realist films that were being screened throughout Pakistani cinemas at this time.¹²³ Anna Magnani, Sophia Loren and Gina Lollobrigida became both the forbidden dream of many Lahori men and a ‘fashion model’ for their middle and upper class wives. Urban Pakistan resonated then with the echoes of the Romanovs’ Russia *milieus*. The appropriation of European clothes and patterns, however piecemeal and partial, epitomised the fashioning of a new identity and thus helped to delineate the passage from subject to citizen.¹²⁴ Whether they gossiped in the halls of the local Gymkhana Club where the advertisement for film premieres adorned the walls or took up a job in private and public organisations, such women progressively eroded men’s spaces and undermined the latter’s power: the embrace that fathers, fiancés or husbands had extended in order to protect women was now left grasping at the unknown.

The ways in which these women thought of themselves and envisaged their role within society thus seemed to be changing and they were now faced with a cultural environment that was not necessarily ready to reckon with them. A rude and awkward anger voiced the much-awaited male reaction. Land, women and

¹²² *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 10th December 1947.

¹²³ 5935(15) Series, 71021/2 (1.5), 0693a, 189/3146, 0795 I.S., 7109, 8095,V&A.

¹²⁴ C. Ruane, “Subjects into Citizens: The Politics of Clothing in Imperial Russia”, in W. Parkins (ed.), *Fashioning the Body Politic. Dress, Gender, Citizenship*, Oxford-New York, 2002, pp. 49-53.

gold are the three things for which Punjabi men are ready to kill, warns a local proverb. Shahnaz Rouse's mother was one of Pakistan's first female bank clerks. Yet, as her daughter reveals, "she encountered incredible sexual harassment. Drawing on her own negative encounters in the workplace, she succeeded in establishing separate women's department in the bank. This permitted women who would be reluctant to bank to do so".¹²⁵ Modernity and change, conservatism and tradition, messed around with each other, and the traditional segregation of roles became both a defeat and a tool of social change. It was once again Begum Shah Nawaz who, through her words, highlighted and set the pace of this contradictory and multi-faceted process. In early December 1954, while addressing her audience during a visit to a Home for Abducted Women in Lahore, she recalled that refugee abducted women had been "educated up to 6th standard and [...] particularly trained in cooking, sowing and laundry" and were now ready to get married to "unmarried or widowers with no issues [who] should be no more than 30 years of age".¹²⁶ The idea and the feeling of an 'unfinished revolution' here come into play. Regardless of a new *adab* that was still-in-the-making, women – especially urban middle and upper class ones – turned down the opportunity to publicly defend their position by, metaphorically speaking, retiring to their own rooms.

An ascendant and almost identical dimension of scandal embroiled the economy of small urban businesses and the life of non-agricultural refugees. Their post-independent material and social crisis heralded a wide range of opportunities. The bundled relationship between occupation and position within the social ladder was almost completely torn apart. Eyewitnesses reported,

¹²⁵ S. Rouse, *The Outsider(s) Within*, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

¹²⁶ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 10th December 1954.

although frequently with excessive emphasis, the withdrawal of social barriers among refugees and acutely forewarned of the far-reaching repercussions of the situation.¹²⁷ Refugees' favourable social condition was reflected in the colourless image of local people's angry nostalgia and resentment. Throughout their process of integrating the newcomers, towns and cities progressively undermined that urban state of mind that allowed people to be culturally and socially identifiable through their jobs.¹²⁸ Most refugees were artisans, shopkeepers, unskilled labourers and civil servants who contributed to engulfing further a labour market that was already saturated by local manpower.¹²⁹ The mismatch between previous businesses and those allotted in West Punjab after 1947 was a frequently highlighted problem that eventually led to the failure or the financial collapse of many firms and enterprises.¹³⁰

High inflation rates and shortages of consumer goods certainly did not benefit the wide urban network of shops and commercial activities. Servants and housewives who intended to purchase their goods in the markets of mid-1950s Lahore were defenceless in the face of the weekly halving of their spending power: one pound of sugar required half an average daily wage, the cost of cloth for domestic manufacture rose by as much as 35% after 1953, and vegetable oils almost doubled their prices.¹³¹ Factories themselves operated below their usual capacity. Controlled prices and ration cards attempted to make up for endemic shortages and economic weaknesses, but, as the Heinz mission to Pakistan

¹²⁷ A-2, 8th October 1947, NND 765024, NARA.

¹²⁸ A. Nandy, *An Ambiguous Journey to the City. The Village and other Odd Ruins of the Self in the Indian Imagination*, Delhi, 2007, pp. 134-5.

¹²⁹ Out of the 1,583,600 self-declared non-cultivator migrants, 427,000 were businessmen, 407,500 labourers, 329,800 artisans and 260,300 public servants. See *Recent Developments in Refugee Rehabilitation and Resettlement in the Punjab*, 12th July 1951, NND 938750, NARA and *Department Air gram No. A-202*, 27th March 1951, NND 938750, NARA.

¹³⁰ Conversation with Dr. Ali Usman Qasmi, Lahore, 18th March 2010.

¹³¹ *The Economic Situation and Pakistan Request for Aid*, n.d., NND 897209, NARA.

discovered, “some commodities are [...] simply not available at any price, others are available at what must be termed ‘black market’ prices”.¹³² This depressing economic conjuncture doubly harmed the bulk of the refugee population. On one hand, as allottees of evacuee properties with no capital and very little financial security, they frequently found themselves having to cope with the fall in the demand for all goods and commodities and to meet the bureaucratic requirements that governmental and corporation authorities fixed in return for their aid.¹³³ On the other hand, the despairing path towards the recovery of their possessions in East Punjab and the lack of regular earnings and profit margins further jeopardised their prosperity and welfare.

Such hardships notwithstanding, refugees managed not to forfeit that strong penchant for economic vitality and dynamism that would draw a distinction between them and local Punjabis for years to come.¹³⁴ Most of them were attending the hundreds of public and private training centres and professional colleges that literally mushroomed across the whole province in the years after 1947. Benefiting from a complex combination of fee concessions and stipends, members of the refugee community undoubtedly seized all the opportunities that the lack of trained personnel and the urgent needs of a State in-the-making were offering them.¹³⁵ In 1949 one B. Khan Kakaji, refugee from Amritsar, put pen to paper and wrote to the US Consulate. Employee of the Irrigation Department in Lahore, he was eager to set up a business in the textile sector. Yet, as the interview with the American attaché revealed, he lacked both experience and

¹³² *Report of the Heinz Mission to Pakistan*, n.d., NND 897209, NARA.

¹³³ *Letter from UKHC (Karachi) to SSCR*, 16th April 1948, DO 142/438, NAKG.

¹³⁴ A. Lieven, *Pakistan. A Hard Country*, London, 2011, p. 274.

¹³⁵ *Punjab Gazette*, 25th January 1952, UPL and *Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates*, 13th March 1952, PCSL.

bank references.¹³⁶ Was this the impromptu attempt of a reckless aspiring entrepreneur? Farhat Oulzan suggests otherwise. His guided tour of the newly industrialised urban fringe of Lahore allows us to catch a retrospective glimpse of refugees' ventures in the area. His meticulous survey of lands and their functional use discloses the real extent of the history of successes and failures of refugee entrepreneurship. The *laissez-faire* policy that inspired government acts and ordinances up to 1958, the frequent shortages of raw materials and commodities, and the interplay of the foreign exchange mechanisms brought about the apparently self-contradictory development of the retailing industry. Shops, stores and markets sprang up in all those areas where the concentration of refugees on land was particularly high.¹³⁷ Groceries, workshops, canteens, milk and fodder shops topped the list of their commercial specialisation.¹³⁸ Both the economic cycle and the production line were in refugees' hands. Established and run by them, such businesses employed mainly refugee labour.¹³⁹ Arguably they sealed themselves along the new yet old ties of family and blood. While the blood was the same that had been shed during the events of 1947, the family was the one that had met and learnt to care for its members after Partition, whether in camps, the offices of the Resettlement and Rehabilitation Department, *jhuggi* clusters or evacuee properties.

This chapter has revealed the gradual path taken by West Punjabi refugees towards the elaboration of their own civic responsibility: just as it questions

¹³⁶ *Telegram No. 18*, 28th April 1949, NND 765024, NARA.

¹³⁷ F. Oulzan, *The Urban Fringe of Lahore City*, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-197.

¹³⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 337-358.

¹³⁹ *Dawn* (Karachi), 22nd January 1957.

current understandings of their rehabilitation, it also argues in favour of the heterogeneity of their resettlement on the land. Thus, present-day terrestrial coordinates of the demographic concentration of the migrant community within the towns and villages of Pakistani Punjab are the by-products of an historical stratification that has progressively crystallised across the years. Ranging from temporary structures to homes, factories and agricultural co-operatives, this chapter has investigated the different facets of refugees' acts of citizenship, their expectations of the new state, and their contested feelings of belonging to a wider community. By drawing the curtain on the apparent and perceived silence of the state, it has engaged with the ideas of modernity, tradition and citizenship as they were perceived and re-elaborated by Partition refugees in the process of establishing new lives for themselves and their families in Pakistan. Building on this understanding, the following chapter explores the potential of refugee family and blood ties in terms of the social capital that allowed them, often if not always, to get the better of the local bureaucracy in the years following Partition.

Chapter 3

Whispers of held-back tears:

producing a bureaucratic order out of the refugee resettlement chaos¹

In April 1950, the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan signed a treaty that would go down in history as the Nehru-Liaquat Ali Khan Pact. Among other things, they restated their firm commitment to give all refugees who returned home by 31st December 1950 their ancestral houses and former properties. Liaquat Ali Khan's diplomatic 'deal' put Pakistani authorities in a difficult and awkward position. Indeed, the local bureaucracy – quintessentially weak and bungling – was unable to properly serve its citizens, let alone eventual 'newcomers'. Thus far, its attempts to re-assert its authority and power over a slippery reality had proved an uphill struggle rather than a glorious series of crushing victories.

The present chapter questions the traditional understanding of so-called corruption practices. It instead reframes the patronage dynamics of these years within local institution-building processes as they were understood in a highly-personalised society such as Pakistan. In particular, its first subsection explores the intrinsic and somehow 'intimate weaknesses of the Pakistani bureaucracy. As old and newly-appointed civil servants grappled messily with the ongoing refugee emergency, cases of *ultra vires* decisions, excesses of power and cloudy legal frameworks all spiced up the life of both Government employees and

¹ An abridged version of this chapter was presented at the BASAS Annual conference in early April 2011.

ordinary citizens. The essence of the problem resulted from the subtle alchemy of a hall-of-mirrors game: the difficulties of the local bureaucracy in establishing a clear *corpus* of rules reflected the parallel difficulties of the ordinary men and women of mid-1950s Punjab. And as the years rolled on, the progressive institutionalisation of patronage practices reproduced at administrative level the same dynamics of marginalisation that were poisoning the realm of social relationships. Only those who could count on or brag about influential acquaintances successfully took the upper hand over their ‘opponent’ fellow citizens during the everyday negotiating of basic – albeit limited – resources.

Consequently, those who felt to be – and actually were – on the fringe of society had to dash for cover. The third section of this chapter accordingly pinpoints the ‘Pakistani’ definition of corruption by placing it within its ‘natural’ context. It reveals how and to what extent the bureaucratic steel frame was imitated at grassroots level so that even ‘marginal men’ could enjoy the ‘administrative support’ of those ersatz ‘persons who really matter’. Finally, the chapter explores how the first and most immediate image of the state triggered off among some members of the refugee community a political demand for adequate representation within local political institutions.

A hide-and-seek game: challenging the strength of the Pakistani bureaucracy.

Lahore, Civil Secretariat courtyard, mid-1950s. Sat on a warm doormat, a petition-writer was filing an appeal for the umpteenth time. A refugee was standing in front of him with the hope of getting the better of Pakistan’s

bureaucracy and having a property allotted. A few miles ahead, another refugee, camped in a school, was drafting a letter. He would hide his identity under the pseudonym 'desperate'. Both refugees shared the same emotional condition: they felt that the state as embodied by its own administrative institutions was marginalising their experiences and needs.

Scholarly literature has so far sought to explain this feeling of marginalisation by the reference to an evident, overwhelming and somehow oppressive superiority of the Pakistani bureaucracy over any other politico-institutional organisation.² According to this interpretative trend, the local civil service consequently established itself as a peculiar independent power and competed on a level playing field with the army, the intelligence services and the executive, legislative and judiciary powers from the very early years of Pakistan's independence. Indeed, its autonomy regarding officials' appointments, its discretionary powers and the initial pervasiveness of its nature have made the so-called bureaucratic polity into a widely-researched classic of Pakistan's historiography and political science studies. Careful analysis of the everyday day lives of millions of West Punjabi Partition refugees and the day-to-day administrative management of their emergency suggests however that the Pakistani bureaucracy was not a monolithic, somehow tyrannical and

² H. Alavi. "Class and State in Pakistan", in H. N. Gardezi and J. Rashid (eds.), *Roots of Dictatorship. The Political Economy of a Praetorian State*, London, 1983, pp. 40-93; R. J. D. Braibanti, *Research on the Bureaucracy of Pakistan: a Critique of Sources, Conditions and Issues with Appended Documents*, Durham, 1966; H. Goodnow, *The Civil Service in Pakistan: Bureaucracy in a New Nation*, New Haven, 1964; M. S. Hull, "The File: Agency, Authority and Autography in an Islamabad Bureaucracy", *Language and Communication*, 23, 2003, pp. 287-314; M. S. Hull, "Rule by Records: the Expropriation of Land and the Misappropriation of Lists in Islamabad", *American Ethnologist*, 35, 4, 2008, pp. 501-18; M. S. Hull, "Uncivil Politics and the Appropriation of Planning in Islamabad", in N. Khan (ed.), *Crisis and Beyond: Re-evaluating Pakistan*, London, 2009, pp. 442-71; M. S. Hull, *Government of Paper. The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 2012; A. Hussain, *Politics and People's Representation in Pakistan*, Karachi, 1972; C. H. Kennedy, *Bureaucracy in Pakistan*, Karachi, 1987; I. H. Malik, *State and Society in Pakistan. Politics of Authority, Ideology and Ethnicity*, New York, 1997, pp. 57-71; K. B. Sayyed, *The Political System of Pakistan*, Boston, 1967; M. Waseem, *Politics and the State in Pakistan*, Lahore 1989.

independent institution. The present section will therefore investigate the difficulties of West Punjabi civil servants as they grappled with the humanitarian emergency and the resettlement schemes in the years that followed Partition. Consequently, the challenges that were implied in a process of re-adaptation to a new socio-political framework will be exploited here to provide a counterbalance to the archetypal image of the Pakistani bureaucracy as a separate power.

Soon after independence, patterns of patronage and networks of authority within administrative departments and among the various branches of all the different bureaucratic institutions had to be reconstructed and weighed up. As an attaché on the staff of the British High Commissioner observed, the ‘pioneers’ of the West Punjabi bureaucracy “started off by passing a number of silly orders [...] [and] the administration in rural areas [...] [had] largely collapsed”.³ Previous well-oiled hierarchies and linkages had been almost completely torn part: classmates, former superiors and juniors were no longer those figures on whom others were able to count at times of need.⁴ All the attempts to redress the balance of these institutional and power relationships unquestionably made an impact on both nation- and institution-building processes. The indeterminateness over roles and competencies – coupled with corruption and apathy – inhibited that cultural intimacy that encourages a sense of familiarity between institutions and citizens to bloom. The absence of the state as embodied by its bureaucratic *apparata* was in some cases a matter of fact. *Patwaris* in the rural areas of the Pakistani Punjab were frequently caught red-handed as they deserted their offices and disregarded their responsibilities towards their fellow citizens.⁵ Reported to

³ *Copy of Report from H. S. Stephenson*, 25th August 1947, DO 142/416, NAKG.

⁴ P. Oldenburg, *India, Pakistan, and Democracy: Solving the Puzzle of Divergent Paths*, London-New York, 2010, p. 38.

⁵ *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 8th March 1954, PCSL.

be anxious and shocked by the widespread occurrence of bribery especially among lower-ranking officials, refugees established and maintained distrustful relationships with wide sections of the administrative cadres.⁶ Indolence and inefficiency affected the everyday management of resources within provincial and federal administrative departments. As a consequence, these chipped away at refugees' faith in institutions from the very moment that migrants entered temporary camps and structures.

Producing order out of administrative chaos and the pressing requirements of a state-in-the-making called for the enactment of new sets of laws and regulations. According to a powerful metaphor conjured up by a *The Times* (London) journalist, it was all about "creat[ing] the [bureaucratic] machinery while [...] learning to handle it".⁷ The socio-political and economic entries in the dictionary of the administrative everyday had consequently to be re-modulated into new meanings. In 1958 the *Civil and Military Gazette* (Lahore) was at the centre of a legal battle that revolved around the re-definition of the financial term 'share'.⁸ As an evacuee shareholder opted to sell his own dividends, the Custodian of the Evacuee Properties was asked to pinpoint and reframe the idea of capital within the new legal context of movable evacuee properties. Earlier on, in 1957, the lexicon of everyday business had had to include new headwords that pertained to the more intimate spheres of family relations and the experience of Partition events. Following the 1947 communal upheavals, Messrs Sardari Lal and his family, for instance, had temporarily left West Punjab and handed over the running of their commercial activity to a few

⁶ *Political Alignments in the West Punjab – Confidential No. 25*, 28th November 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

⁷ *The Times* (London), 26th February 1948.

⁸ *PLD 1958 (Cust.) Lah 7*, (A. M. Jan, Cust.) – In the matter of Civil and Military Gazette, Ltd. Lahore, MDRR.

reliable acquaintances.⁹ Was this sufficient to qualify them as refugees and their belongings as evacuee properties? Gathered in his council chamber, the administrative judging authority, together with his advisers, had had to string together intentions, feelings and notions of philological officialese. In the face of the failure of the local bureaucracy to act as a force for stabilising the relationship between the state and its citizens, legal experts had to cyclically put forward new interpretative views that harmonised laws, balances of powers and social dynamics.¹⁰

“The true answer to the point depended on the meaning to be ascribed to the word ‘left’ and also the place of ‘residence’ occurring in the provision”, noticed the honourable Mr. Justice Ahmad as he opened the hearing in which Imdad Ali Malik and The Settlement Commissioner (Policy), Lahore, were at loggerheads.¹¹ Judges and citizens were constantly asked to proofread and further pinpoint each and every bureaucratic act, law or ordinance that focused on the resettlement and the rehabilitation of the migrant community. Now, the ordinance at issue was the Displaced Persons (Compensation and Rehabilitation) Act, 1958. A displaced person was therein defined as “any person who, on account of the setting up of the Dominions of Pakistan and India, or on account of civil disturbance in any area now forming part of or occupied by India, has, on or after the first day of March, 1947, left [...] his place of residence [...] and has subsequently become a citizen of Pakistan or is residing therein”.¹² An employee

⁹ *PLD 1957 (Cust.) Lah 27*, (A. M. Jan, Cust.) – Rehabilitation Authorities vs. Messrs Sardari Lal and Roshan Lal of Mool Chand & Co., MDRR.

¹⁰ H Heller, “Osservazione sulla problematica attuale della teoria dello Stato e del diritto”, in H. Heller, *La sovranità e altri scritti sulla dottrina del diritto e dello Stato*, Milano, 1987, pp. 384 and 395.

¹¹ *Writ Petition No. 107/R of 1961*, (Bashir Ahmad, J.) – Imdad Ali Malik vs. The Settlement Commissioner (Policy), Lahore, and Another, MDRR.

¹² *Ibidem*.

of the Government of India, Imdad had been transferred to Calcutta from his home village Arup, Gujranwala way back in 1945. His opting for Pakistan in early August 1947 entailed a further relocation and the allotment of an evacuee house in Model Town, Lahore. When, in 1959, he exercised the right of pre-emption of all displaced persons on their allotted premises, the local authorities sifted through his documents and picked up a couple of irregularities. For a start, Imdad's Punjabi roots challenged his status as a 'displaced person'. The court ruling in favour of the conviction of the petitioner, the order of allotment was countermanded. Imdad was apparently suffering from a legal personality disorder. Under the existing laws, he was a refugee as "being previously domiciled in India, [...] [he had] taken refuge in Pakistan from any part of India by reason of the disturbances arising out of the setting up of the Dominions of India and Pakistan".¹³ Yet, as the Honourable Justice Ahmad pointed out, Imdad could not be considered a displaced person.

The limitations of the resettlement and rehabilitation law as it stood by the late 1950s were inexorably rising to the surface. In 1959 the Punjab Co-operative Bank Ltd. took legal steps to assert its proprietary right over its joint-stock company.¹⁴ Its head office in Amritsar and its West Punjabi branches mostly closed, the bank had been declared an evacuee property and taken into possession by the Custodian in late December 1947. The sudden 1949 right-about turn on the status of joint-stock companies as evacuee properties, however, unravelled the Co-operative Bank's legal status. Once again, the nature of the problem pertained to the lexicon of the resettlement and rehabilitation practices

¹³ Government of Pakistan – Ministry of Refugees and Rehabilitation, *Ordinance No. XVIII/1948*, 18th October 1948, PSCL. See also *West Punjab Government letter No. 2300-Reh-49/1676*, 10th March 1949, PSCL and *Form No. Reh. VI – Appendix B*, n.d., PSCL.

¹⁴ *Writ Petition No. 513 of 1959*, (Muhammad Yaqub Ali and Changez, JJ.) – Punjab Co-operative Bank Ltd. vs. Republic of Pakistan and Others, MDDR.

and its several entries. “On one view, properties, which had already become evacuee [...], continued to be evacuee under the doctrine of transaction past and close. On the other view” – the judge summed up in his abstract – “the definitions being declaratory in nature, properties [...] could not continue to be evacuee, for this would render the new definitions nugatory to some extent”.¹⁵ This was the umpteenth curious case of a definition that did not describe the nature and meaning of a reality that it was supposed to portray faithfully. Laws, ordinances, memoranda and internal circular letters simply did not keep pace with the manifold fallouts and implications of the Partition events. After Independence, the banking sector had been grappling with the lack of trained and well-prepared clerks for several months.¹⁶ The Punjab Co-operative Bank did not opt for the closing of its Pakistani branches. Like many other employers within the banking services, it was in no position to take on fresh manpower and give its affiliates a new start in business.

Ultra vires decisions and excesses of powers seemed to be the order of the day in almost all the departments or institutions that dealt with refugee resettlement. Eventual plans to shake up all bureaucratic cadres after their initial hypnosis and disorganisation were a no mean task.¹⁷ In 1956, the honourable Mr. Justice Kayani and Ali tripped up the Lahore Rehabilitation Commissioner on the separation of powers.¹⁸ Indeed, the Rehabilitation authorities encroached on the judiciary’s territory by breaching the law that gave them only limited powers of review of deeds and ordinances. Writ petitions and review applications, the

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ *Extract from a Report from H. S. Stephenson, Esq., Lahore to Sir Laurence Grafftey-Smith – Ref. No. PHC 29/47, 7th December 1947, DO 142/440, NAKG.*

¹⁷ *The Times* (London), 26th February 1948.

¹⁸ *PLD 1956 Lah 642, (Kayani and Muhammad Yaqub Ali, JJ.) – Muhammad Ramzan vs. Rehabilitation Commissioner (General), Lahore, MDRR.*

Court pointed out, differed substantially from each other, and the administration of justice was up to the judges. A couple of years later, in the light of the recent promulgation of a new act, the Custodian of the Evacuee Properties felt the need to clarify further the responsibilities that fell within the scope of his institutional mission. As he adjusted the case between Ghulam & Co. and the Urban Secretary Rehabilitation Commissioner, the Custodian asserted his sole right to partition evacuee and non-evacuee jointly-owned properties and businesses.¹⁹ In 1959, it was the Rehabilitation authorities' turn to take their own peculiar revenge when the strained institutional relationship between them and the Custodian of Evacuee Properties surfaced once again during a hearing of appeal chaired by Shabir Ahmad and Masud Ahmad.²⁰ The power to pass an order of allotment belonged to the officers of the Rehabilitation Department as of right, ruled the two judges by dismissing quite quickly a case that found the Custodian guilty of acting *ultra vires*.

Migrants likewise often ran into difficulties while attempting to comply with rules or meet bureaucratic criteria. Terms, conditions and guidelines were frequently amended almost overnight. Related new forms – usually released several months apart – invalidated automatically and retrospectively previous ones. For instance, following the promulgation of Registration of Claims (Displaced Persons) Ordinance, 1954, claimants for urban agricultural properties were asked to fill in fresh documents, as formerly submitted application sheets were now no longer valid.²¹ Yet, as a refugee from Sialkot complained in his letter to the *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), “the details of this slow and lengthy

¹⁹ *PLD 1958 (Cust.) Lah 3*, (A. M. Jan, Cust.) – Ghulam & Co. vs. Secretary Rehabilitation Commissioner (Urban), MDRR.

²⁰ *PLD 1959 Lah 284*, (Shabir Ahmad and Masud Ahmad, JJ.) – Koolaire Ltd. vs. Custodian of Evacuee Properties, Lahore, MDRR.

²¹ *Memorandum No. 11900-55/483 – R(P)*, 1st February 1956, PSCL.

process and the policy and principles on which they are to be based are so far a sealed box, so far as the refugees are concerned”.²² One can bet that the migrant community were in the dark about the newly-introduced administrative process. The Director of the Public Relations, West Pakistan, would be asked to divulgate the new bureaucratic requirements only two years later in early February 1956.²³ Nevertheless, it all had to be done all over again in 1958. In that year, the promulgation of a Martial Law order enjoined refugees to re-submit all their claim forms.²⁴ The need to pick up irregularities and vitiate applications entailed the umpteenth shifting of refugees’ bureaucratic ground.

In Lahore, on 1st July 1954, ‘One Concerned’ correspondent to the *Pakistan Times* (Lahore) raised his voice against a notification issued by the Punjab Industries Rehabilitation. Set procedures granted the allotment of industrial properties only to those applicants who could show documentary proof of their evacuee premises left behind in India. Yet, what if “the properties of a migrant from East Punjab was burnt and demolished altogether? What is the Board going to do with such applicants”, countered ‘One Concerned’.²⁵ The reaction times of government departments always seemed to lag far behind the expected schedule. Oddly enough, the procedures for the temporary allotment of houses, industrial premises and shops themselves had been formally finalised only in early March 1949, that is once most of the properties had already been occupied or allocated.²⁶ In fact, throughout the post-Partition years the Pakistani administration appeared unable either to grasp or to regulate the manifold

²² *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 18th September 1954.

²³ *Memorandum No. 694-54/532 – R(P)*, 7th February 1956, PSCL.

²⁴ *Refugee Rehabilitation Program Takes Another Step Forward – Despatch No. 652*, 5th May 1961, NND 948832, NARA.

²⁵ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 20th July 1954.

²⁶ *West Punjab Government Letter No. 2300 – Reh. 49/1676*, 10th May 1949, PSCL.

implication of refugees' peculiar *status*. The day-to-day organisation of resettlement and rehabilitation policies slipped quite frequently through civil servants' fingers, placing bureaucracy's intrinsic weaknesses on public view. Consequently, officials, commissioners and government employees came across as panicking and somehow frightened pawns in the hands of a weak and bungling administrative demiurge.

The burden of superimposing instructions and ordinances on a slippery reality was referred to district and municipal clerks. Over there, these latter had to cope with the predictable resistance of particular well-rooted local administrative institutions. Clashes among all the different authorities seemed frequently to be the order of the day. In early October 1954, the Lahore Improvement Trust vociferously opposed the Government-proposed plans of allocating plots for new houses to be built under aegis of the Trust itself.²⁷ Both of them were unquestionably looking after their own interests. The provincial authorities attempted to meet the housing needs of those thousands of persons – mainly refugees – who were leaving the Punjabi countryside to seek their fortune. The Improvement Trust, by contrast, was eager to protect long-time and Lahore-born residents.

Endless lists of civil suits and cases further engulfed the administrative machinery of the offices of the Deputy Commissioners of the Evacuee Properties. In spite of the border with India being sealed, evacuees to East Punjab were summoned to appear in front of local administrative courts to claim their rights over movable and immovable properties. Should this not happen, “ex-parte

²⁷ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 9th October 1954.

proceedings [...] [would] be taken against them”.²⁸ The number of cases was so high as to push officials first to timetable and then to serve hearings with a writ upon a week’s notice.²⁹ Mian Mumtaz Muhammad Khan Daultana – the then Chief Minister of Pakistani Punjab – revealed the extent of the bureaucratic headache while introducing the annual 1953-4 Budget to the Punjab Assembly. Figures were staggering. 11 *lakhs* of claims had to be evaluated and 160,939 objections checked.³⁰

It should be noted however that, in post-independent Pakistan, mathematics was not an exact science. In 1951, officials of the Revenue Department – now partially in charge of resettlement practices – had proudly announced that the early screening of the 1,100,000 applications for West Punjabi Hindu and Sikh evacuee properties had been successfully completed.³¹ No less a person than the Chief Minister would dampen their enthusiasm a couple of years later. In the already cited speech, he denied those figures by admitting that the settled claims were instead 722,803.³² The final report of the Claims Organisation would square the accounts. Established by the Registration of Claims (Displaced Persons) Act, 1955, the Claims Organisation was tasked with verifying both the measurement and the street value of refugees’ immovable urban properties in India. By May 1961, it would deal with about 386,000 files.³³ This was more or less the same number of claims that were absent at the bureaucratic roll call, and squared the accounts of both the Revenue Department and the Chief Minister. According to

²⁸ *Punjab Gazette*, 20th January 1950, UPL.

²⁹ *Punjab Gazette*, 29th September 1950, UPL.

³⁰ *Punjab Gazette*, 20th March 1953, UPL.

³¹ *Recent Development in Refugee Rehabilitation and Resettlement in the Punjab*, 12th July 1951, NND 938750, NARA.

³² *Punjab Gazette*, 20th March 1953, UPL.

³³ *Refugee Rehabilitation Program Takes Another Step Forward – Despatch No. 652*, 5th May 1961, NND 948832, NARA.

Daultana, Pakistani civil servants were tasked with closing them by December 1952. In reality, they would only polish off the job nine years later. The screening of refugees' claims was however only the first bureaucratic step in the whole process of allotment of the evacuee properties. In the early 1950s, the meticulous work of comparison between original *jamanbandis* and refugee declarations was still at its planning stage.³⁴ The lack of a proper legal and bureaucratic framework was giving officials and clerks a watertight alibi. Procrastinators however held fixed-term contracts. In 1957, the Pakistan (Administration of Evacuee Properties) Act finally broke the deadlock by first acknowledging the urgency of the matter and then providing the necessary tools to speed up the whole process.³⁵

On a different note, the micro-management of refugees' needs and multi-faceted lives delayed the preparation of the *seh partas* of the rent of all evacuee agricultural lands in several districts of West Punjab. Indeed, by early 1956, in spite of the repeated instructions given by the administrative headquarters in Lahore, no substantial improvement was recorded with respect to the estimates of the value and the planning of the collection of rents of the evacuee lands in Attock, Mianwali, Jhang, Muzaffargarh and Gujrat Districts.³⁶ "It has not been possible to ascertain as for how many harvests the demands have so far been created", complained the Secretary Administration to the Rehabilitation Commissioner, West Pakistan, Ahmad Khan Tareen.³⁷ No matter how detailed the guidelines were, refugees did not simply tick the boxes.

³⁴ *Punjab Gazette*, 20th March 1953, UPL.

³⁵ *Data on Refugee Rehabilitation in Pakistan – Despatch No. 753*, 6th May 1957, NND 948832, NARA.

³⁶ *D.O. No. 314-56/1430 – R (G)*, 25th January 1956, PCSL and *Memorandum No. 3511-56/2924 – R (G)*, 1st May 1956, PCSL.

³⁷ *D.O. No. 314/56/1446 – R (G)*, 25th February 1956, PCSL.

As a consequence, their problems – no matter whether hornets’ nests or not – dragged on for years. The allocation of evacuee lands to all those claimants who held *qabza derina* and paid a *sharka malikana* rent remained a bureaucratically outstanding controversy up to the early months of 1956.³⁸ It was only in February that year that the Rehabilitation Commissioner, West Pakistan, lent his helping hand to local officers by regulating that tricky matter and providing a proper administrative framework. Likewise, the wait took forever even for refugee tuberculosis patients, invalids, orphans and old people. Their social position was first given state recognition back in 1953 and then finalised a couple of years later.³⁹ For their part, the West Punjabi families of 50 government officials who had either been killed or permanently injured during the 1947-8 communal upheavals received their compensation only in 1960.⁴⁰

Under these circumstances, it was then hardly surprising refugees turned to and adopted alternative ways when it came to claiming their rights over evacuee properties and how to get the better of the local bureaucracy. The malleability and the adaptability of the rules and the forces that stimulated and underpinned the everyday life of Punjabi society were, needless to say, ready to take up the challenge and compete with institution-building processes.

³⁸ *Memorandum No. 11900/55 – R(P)*, 1st February 1956, PCSL.

³⁹ *Punjab Government Letter No. 963-54/995-R (L)*, 27th January 1954, PCSL and *Memorandum No. 1500-56/1740-R (L)*, 6th March 1956, PCSL.

⁴⁰ *Meeting of Indo-Pakistan Punjab Partition Implementation Committee – Despatch No. 511*, 27th June 1960, NND 948832, NARA.

Powerful friends, influential acquaintances: conceptualising and building the Pakistani bureaucracy

As her husband closed their door behind them, she was overwhelmed by an odd sense of relief tinged with nostalgia. After all, that school in Lahore had been their home for almost seven years. Then, quite by chance, a couple of months earlier, her husband had run into that old acquaintance of theirs who enjoyed a high profile in the Resettlement and Revenue Department. They had lost sight of him after the 1947 summer madness. Now he proved to be in the right place at the right time. He helped them to get a new and proper house allotted by bringing his influence to bear on a couple of other officials. There was nothing of which to be ashamed: local society had always played, and relied, on trust and the chains of mutual favours.

Historians and political scientists have frequently described clientelism and practises of bureaucratic favouritism in terms of corruption. Channelling public resources through informal, private and personalised networks is understood in this literature as a primarily dishonest and fraudulent conduct.⁴¹ Resulting from a transposition of the early studies on public power and patronage political systems, ideas of durability, asymmetry and face-to-face hierarchies underpin this analysis of the mutual and vitiated relationship between patrons, clients and administrative cadres.⁴² The social and material ‘transactions’ of the Indian

⁴¹ I. Chattha, “Competition for Resources: Partition’s Evacuee Properties and the Sustenance of Corruption in Pakistan”, *Modern Asian Studies – First View*, 2012, pp. 1-30; G. Myrdal, “Corruption as Hindrance to Modernisation in South Asia”, in A. J. Heidenheimer and M. Johnston (eds.), *Political Corruption: Concepts and Contexts*, New Jersey, 2002, pp. 265-80.

⁴² C. Clapham (ed.), *Private Patronage and Public Power: Political Clientelism and the Modern State*, London, 1982; D. Cruise O’ Brien, *Saints and Politicians. Essays in the Organisation of a Senegal Peasant Society*, Cambridge, 1975 and R. Fox, *From Zamindar to Ballot-Box. Community Change in a North Indian Market Town*, Ithaca, NY, 1969.

subcontinent's everyday life, however, are durable, hierarchical and asymmetrical in nature.⁴³ Negotiating deals – even bureaucratic ones – was (and still is) sociably and morally acceptable in the eyes of both citizens and institutions throughout Pakistan. “Eventually, it was Qurban Ali Khan, the SP Delhi before Partition and now IG Police of new Pakistani Punjab, who was instrumental in getting my parents a place their could call their own and where they could raise my family”, candidly admitted the Ahmad encountered in Chapter 2 referring to his grandparents’ intermediary by name.⁴⁴ The present section thus investigates the ‘instrumentality’ of patronage dynamics at a moment when the state and its administrative cadres were failing to establish clear rules and regulations. Relying on Martin Shefter’s study of the relationship between patronage, bureaucratic absolutism, and the professionalisation of officials, it will argue the need to institutionalise administratively everyday social dynamics in order to plug the gaps of a bungling bureaucracy⁴⁵

Unsurprisingly, refugees frequently felt misunderstood in terms of their needs and aspirations, as well as personal experiences. Migrants often resorted to hunger strikes, sit-ins and requests for judicial inquiries in order to channel their disgruntlement and keep their hardships in the spotlight. Back in 1950, in Mianwali District, some of them grouped together and threatened to take to the street in protest against recurrent delays in the implementation of the resettlement scheme.⁴⁶ Stemming from a similar complaint, the All-Pakistan Muhajir Board in

⁴³ L. Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: les système des castes et ses implications*, Paris, 1979; L. Dumont, *Homo Aequalis: genèse et épanouissement de l'idéologie économique*, Paris, 2008; E. Fasana, “Riforma sociale e conversione nella comunità musulmana del Subcontinente Indiano”, *Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli*, 36, XXVI, 1976, pp. 359-94.

⁴⁴ *The Express Tribune* (Lahore), 29th August 2010.

⁴⁵ M. Shefter, *Patronage and its Opponents: a Theory and Some European Cases*, Ithaca, NY, 1977.

⁴⁶ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 14th August 1950.

1954 solicited the judiciary to probe into the multitude of malpractices that were recorded within the Rehabilitation Department.⁴⁷ Government authorities were accused of backtracking on their early promises. The road to the refugees' bureaucratic hell had indeed been paved with a huge number of institutional good intentions. A Mamdot-supported draft ordinance that aimed at establishing special tribunals and entrusting them with the task of delving into civil servants' corruption had been put on the back burner as early as 1948.⁴⁸ Likewise, no trace remained of those appeals and orders that called on the Pakistani administration to 'handle with care' the refugee emergency'. Phantom parliamentary commissions of enquiry met to discuss the bureaucratic mismanagement of resettlement and rehabilitation plans and to take disciplinary actions against those official who were guilty of professional misconduct.⁴⁹ Neither the minutes of their meetings nor the sanctions they proposed would ever see the light of the day.

A sense of frustration, that combined powerlessness with loneliness, ensued, and literally poured even into the pages of local newspapers. In 1954 an anxious Syed Ikhitar [sic] Abbas Naqvi put pen to paper to denounce his hardships and concerns to the readers of the *Pakistan Times* (Lahore). "I and my family are living on the streets and do not know how we shall linger in this miserable state. Our luggage and clothes are lying sealed in a room of the house from which we have been ejected", he glossed at the end of his letter to the editor.⁵⁰ Syed had just been made homeless. His cousin – head of the household and initial allottee of the premises – had been granted some agricultural land in distant Multan. The

⁴⁷ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 14th September 1954.

⁴⁸ *Political Alignments in the West Punjab – Confidential No. 25*, 28th November 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

⁴⁹ *Memorandum*, 8th January 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

⁵⁰ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 30th July 1954.

family had then split up: Syed with some other members of his family opted to remain in Lahore, while his cousin moved to southern Punjab. When the notice of ejection was issued, the former immediately found themselves trapped in the maze of Pakistani bureaucracy. Their attempts to address Rehabilitation Officers fell on deaf ears. The newly-appointed allottees had already take possession of the house, and the dusty streets of Lahore – it seems – remained the only shelter available to Syed’s family. Apparently the premises had been allotted to an employee of the Rehabilitation Department well before the hearing of the appeal in front of the District Commissioner.

Syed hinted cryptically what other refugees denounced overtly. “I am one of those thousands of refugees who on arrival in Pakistan did not occupy any house illegally and have from time to time applied to the Rehabilitation authorities, but due to the lack of influence, still remain without any permanent shelter”, ‘Another Affected’ made it clear a few months later.⁵¹ His documentary evidence notwithstanding, the Rehabilitation authorities had repeatedly rejected his application for the allotment of an evacuee property in the city. Syed and ‘Another Affected’ were refugees who could not brag about relevant acquaintances within the administrative and bureaucratic circles. Indeed, together with many other migrants, they found themselves having to re-map the chart of their relationships and, thus, their social accountability and role within society.

As institutions panicked and proved unable to establish clear rules and procedures, the allocation of resources and services started to live up to very peculiar expectations. The Rehabilitation Commissioner and Secretary to Government, West Punjab, A. M. Leghari candidly put it down on paper no later

⁵¹ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 2nd October 1954.

than March 1949. “[The West Punjab] Government consider[s] that the absence of adequate staff of the proper calibre and the lack of clear cut instructions in regard to [the] policy [of allotment of properties and lands] are largely responsible for this state of affairs”, he recorded while introducing his remarks on resettlement and rehabilitation practices and policies.⁵² Personal identity and links with influential individuals topped the list of the selective criteria that administrators and resource holders usually applied in order to redistribute available assets.⁵³ In its formative process of reformulation within an independent state, Pakistani bureaucracy stemmed from and was shaped around personal and ‘informal’ systems of allocation of resources. Trust, reliability and reputation – ideas, qualities and attitudes to be found at very heart of any public and private transaction – had all to be reframed and regained after the dislocating fallouts of Partition. The institutional and the social tangle mirrored and nourished each other. While they ordered the jigsaw puzzles of their lives in early independent Pakistan, refugees rarely pointed at institutions in a formal and clear-cut way.⁵⁴ They usually remembered their contacts with bureaucratic authorities and officers in terms of personal acquaintances and relationships. Where the tissue of friends, relatives and the so-called influential persons was quickly and successfully rewoven, gaining access to resources and services turned out to be more straightforward and easier.

It was no secret, for instance, that values of friendship and guidance had to inform as constituent guidelines all the activities and the course of action of the

⁵² *Memorandum No. 2300-Reh-49/1676*, 10th March 1949, PSCL.

⁵³ M. Mines, *Public Faces, Private Voices. Community and Individuality in South Asia*, California-London, 1994, p. 35.

⁵⁴ Conversation with Dr. Ahmad Ejaz, Lahore, 29th January 2010, and Dr. Usman Khan and mother, Lahore, 22nd November 2010.

Rehabilitation Department.⁵⁵ So-called social capital entered the realm of institution-building processes as a supporting actor by officially coming to be a way of transacting ‘deals’ over public or private resources. Mutual faith-based solidarity and social bonds – Antony Giddens argues – set individuals free from any constraints.⁵⁶ At a moment when institutions were adjusting their hierarchies and power balances to suit the needs of a new state framework, personal acquaintances turned into *the* constraint par excellence.

Accordingly the expression ‘as I lack influence’ flagged both the social marginalisation and the strong feeling of being in a condition of neglect shared by many Partition refugees. Unofficial estimates suggested that the number of migrants who could neither count on nor brag about influential acquaintances amounted to about 30 *lakhs*.⁵⁷ The chance to make use of the multi-faceted galaxies of the spheres of influence and power within which public resources were at a relatively short reach, were arguably the realm of an elite. Their elitarian dimension mirrored the identity of their circles’ members and the nature of the transactions. “There was a [refugee] friend of mine who had not had a house the last five years. [...] I had his case examined by the Department and I found that he deserved accommodation”, nonchalantly admitted the Punjab Minister of Revenue, Muzaffar Ali Khan Qizilbash during a session of the Provincial Assembly.⁵⁸ Shaikh Sadiq Hassan – a Punjabi member of the Constituent Assembly – likewise owned up to having similarly submitted a

⁵⁵ Rehabilitation Department of West Punjab, *Manual of Instruction – Part I and II*, Lahore, 1949, p. 1, PCSL.

⁵⁶ A. Giddens, *The Construction of Society*, Cambridge, 1984, p. 169.

⁵⁷ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 24th August 1954.

⁵⁸ *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 10th March 1954, PCSL.

couple of property claims to the Rehabilitation Department on behalf of his friends.⁵⁹

The silence over the system of bureaucratic obligations had just, although only partially, been broken. Seemingly, all the traces of Muzaffar and Sadiq's 'charitable' intercessions had been removed from the local administrative records. There was no general outcry from the tabloids as well. No one had bought their silence, however. Handed in to lower-ranking officials without any "greasing [of] their palm", the applications of Sadiq's friends were rebuffed.⁶⁰ Sadiq, it seems, had failed to reproduce the free-of-charge market of obligations of those elite circles that, by contrast, were familiar to Muzaffar. After all, everyday relations and chains of politico-administrative favours and mutual indebtedness do not necessarily rely on economic transactions: the status of the persons involved and the privileges connected with them may act as a reliable guarantee of future rewards or help in case of need.⁶¹ Engines driving the everyday dimension of human relations across the whole region, these dynamics were now exploited to plug gaps in the local bureaucracy. Highly-placed individuals and members of the both the provincial and federal governments slipped their 'wish lists' to equally high-ranking officials who, in turn, referred requests and needs to a subordinate employee.⁶² Clear understandings breed long friendships. Protection, political accommodation and a friendly hand in case of need were the implied trading currency.⁶³ The apparently unblemished reputation of the higher administrative echelons that found vast echo in the local and

⁵⁹ *Pakistan Constituent Assembly Debates*, 4th April 1953, PCSL.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁶¹ W. F. White, *Street Corner Society*, Chicago, 1981, pp. 240-6.

⁶² *A-1*, 4th January 1949, NND 765024, NARA.

⁶³ F. Allum, *Camorristi, Politicians, and Businessmen. The Transformation of Organized Crime in Post-War Naples*, Leeds, 2006, pp. 184-201 and D. Bell, *The End of an Ideology. On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the 1950s*, Cambridge (Mass), 1967, p. 193.

foreign accounts of the time resulted then from an administrative institutionalisation of the everyday.⁶⁴

Common people vulgarised their intense sentiment of marginality by talking about ‘have gotts’ and ‘have nots’.⁶⁵ “A real genuine and respectable family of refugees has been leading a miserable life for the last seven years”, complained one Muhammad Rafique from Lahore with regard to this distinction.⁶⁶ He and his family had left for West Punjab from Amritsar, where they had run a jewellery shop. Their arrival and settlement in Pakistan meant the beginning of daily pilgrimages to the offices of the Resettlement and Rehabilitation Department in order to get the better of the local bureaucracy and secure the allotment of a business or a commercial activity. As he did not move in the ‘fashionable’ circles of the local administration, Muhammad’s efforts were doomed to be wasted. Surprisingly, sometimes even civil servants faced an unexpected shortfall in proper and effective networks of relationships and hence the necessary clout. Despite a number of provisions introducing some kind of an administrative fast-track system, the process of allocation of an evacuee house appeared to be an uphill struggle for the bulk of the employees of the former Indian Civil Service.⁶⁷ One particular correspondent ‘Muhajir’ exposed in a letter to the editor of the *Pakistan Times* (Lahore) the vicissitudes involved in his being a government employee in a desperate need for a house. As his posting into the city came through, ‘Muhajir’ had to find and pay for accommodation amidst the housing shortages and the skyrocketing rents of the mid-1950s. He went straight

⁶⁴ *A-1*, 4th January 1949, NND 765024, NARA and *Pakistan Constituent Assembly Debates*, 4th April 1953, PCSL.

⁶⁵ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 24th August 1954.

⁶⁶ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 17th October 1954.

⁶⁷ Rehabilitation Department of West Punjab, *Manual of Instructions – Part I and II*, Lahore, 1949, Chapt. 3, PCSL, *Form No. Reh. VI – Appendix A and B*, n.d., PCSL and conversation with Dr. Usman Khan, Lahore, 22nd November 2010.

to the heart of the matter. “How does the Government propose to repay his [refugee’s] loyalty and sufferings”, he asked.⁶⁸ The hardships he had had to undergo surely demanded some kind of compensation. Yet the replies of the Pakistani State kept falling far behind his as well as other refugees’ schedule.

Living on the fringe of the society, Muhammad and ‘Muhajir’ could not help but bank on those persons who pledged to open the door to the offices of the Rehabilitation Department.

“I need to look for a tout”: ersatz bureaucracy for people on the brink of marginality

Muhammad and Muhajir probably passed one another in the streets surrounding the Punjab Civil Secretariat in Lahore. They might even have exchanged a few words while queuing in front of the sole person who could mediate between them and the state bureaucracy. It was precisely along these roads that the marginality resulting from the lethal combination of the bureaucratic intrinsic weaknesses and the elitist dimension of the institutionalisation of the everyday surfaced and became a byword for bribery and corruption. The present section will delve into the narrative and the sociology of the bureaucratic misconduct in 1940s and 1950s Pakistani Punjab. It will explore and document the administrative mechanisms and the workings of the human mind that allowed the system first to take root and then to flourish.

Up to sixty petition writers were there, about forty yards far from Lahore’s Anarkali’s tomb, stationed on their doormats and filing in at an incredible speed

⁶⁸ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 15th September 1954.

hundreds of documents and appeals per day. Refugees' attempts at making the leap from their condition of marginality to the upper circles of 'administrative society' appeared to be a total failure on the bureaucratic market. "I would, therefore, request the postal authorities to expedite the verification of my saving bank account so that [the] early payment of the amount can be made to me. It is needless to add that being old and poor I am desperately in need of money", implored Imam-ud-Din writing from the Lahore suburb of Qila Gujjar Singh.⁶⁹ A retired teacher from Amritsar, he had been tilting at the windmills of the post offices to have his own money transferred from India. "I"– the aforesaid Muhammad from Lahore continued in his letter – "respectfully request the Minister of for Rehabilitation to consider my case, and after satisfying himself of my genuine claim, provide my unfortunate family with some means of supporting. I am confident that the Minister for Rehabilitation will give his most sympathetic consideration to my case".⁷⁰ Muhammad's trust was about to be betrayed. His heartfelt plea together with thousands of other appeals to local ministers and highly-place officials went often unheard. Refugees had no choice but to pin their hopes on the petition-writers and the army of middlemen of the local Civil Secretariat.

In July 1954 a well-placed observer leaked to the *Pakistan Times* (Lahore) interesting though not particularly exclusive data and information.⁷¹ In some cases former *patwaris* charged with corruption, petition writers served as a bridge between a few clerks within the Rehabilitation Department and those whom the collective imagination labelled as 'touts'. These latter sealed the absolute need and relevance of a reliable network of acquaintances and in

⁶⁹ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 4th December 1954.

⁷² *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 17th October 1954.

⁷¹ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 17th July 1954.

influential persons in the multi-layered formal and informal processes of allocation of resources. Indeed, they approached refugees and introduced themselves as someone “who really matters”. In other words, they put themselves forwards as those ersatz ‘big men’ who make things happen for their followers.⁷² These intermediaries interceded first with accommodating petition writers and then with lower-rank clerks of either the local Rehabilitation Office or the Record Room. Refugees were eventually issued with valueless documents where scribbles such as ‘forwarded to the A.D.C.’ or ‘please consider it favourably’ sounded as empty and meaningless words. Nevertheless, ‘have not’ migrants possessed the sense of enjoying the sweet smell of the bureaucratic success. Oddly enough, the backstage behaviour of a minority turned into the public representation of the everyday life of hundreds of thousands of persons, whose entry tickets came in the shape of bribes to officials and agents.⁷³

The whole system was then so oiled as to generate its own peculiar economies of scale. In mid-1950s, at the provincial level, it ‘employed’ 1,383 gazetted and non-gazetted officers within the bureaucratic cadres of West Pakistan’s government and thousands of persons within the ‘informal sector’.⁷⁴ Common citizens appeared to consider this peculiar administrative economy as part and parcel of their everyday life and relationship with the local bureaucracy. Employees, middlemen and users all lived in symbiosis within this closed circuit where public resources were redistributed.⁷⁵ Slackening the reins of the network of mutual relationships, balances of power and hierarchies proved to be an uphill

⁷² M. Mines, *Public Faces, Private Voices*, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

⁷³ On this point see E. Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, London, 1990, pp. 28-82; and E. Goffman, *Interaction Ritual. Essays in Face-to-Face Behaviour*, New Jersey, 2005.

⁷⁴ *West Pakistan Chief Secretary Review Year’s Achievements in Provincial Civil Service – Despatch No. 129*, 2nd November 1959, NND 948832, NARA.

⁷⁵ G. Falcone and M. Padovani, *Cose di Cosa Nostra*, Milano, 2004, p. 93.

struggle for both provincial and federal authorities. Appeals that wholeheartedly called for citizens' as well as civil servants' support and cooperation were the corollary of any attempted far-reaching reform of the sector.⁷⁶ Urdu and other vernacular newspapers captured their contempt in black and white via scathing editorials: "Corrupt officials in government departments [who] are sucking the people's blood" were harshly stigmatised in editorials published by *Musulman* and *Anjuman*.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, these kinds of despatched SOS calls frequently fell on deaf ears. Not even the increase in penal sentences in the early 1950s and the later provisional transfer of the capital city from Karachi to Rawalpindi in the early 1960s made civil servants, brokers and citizens worry.⁷⁸ Promulgated in 1953, the Civil Services Prevention Rule proved to be nothing less than a footnote in the margins of the history of this period.⁷⁹ Indeed, the vagueness of both legal and political countermeasures did not cripple the relational and economic engines of the informal administrative machine.⁸⁰ The resilience and adaptability of the latter won over any attempt to quash the vicious circle of an apparently wayward corruption. 'Touts' and, to a certain extent, petition writers took the edge off any sense of guilt that might have tormented bureaucrats or the man in the street. By transacting businesses, those brokers triggered a subconscious

⁷⁶ *Spotlight on Corruption among Public Servants: Chief Justice Cornelius Suggests Introduction of Administrative Tribunals – Despatch No. 87*, 16th August 1960, NND 948832, NARA.

⁷⁷ *Karachi Weekly Press Analysis, September 27th – October 3rd (inclusive) – Despatch No. 229*, 5th October 1953, NND 938750, NARA.

⁷⁸ *Lobbyists Appeared in Rawalpindi – Despatch No. 54*, 5th January 1961, NND 948832, NARA and *Karachi Weekly Press Analysis, September 27th – October 3rd (inclusive) – Despatch No. 229*, 5th October 1953, NND 938750, NARA.

⁷⁹ *Pakistan Constituent Assembly Debates*, 24th September 1953.

⁸⁰ J. Scott, "The Analysis of Corruption in Developing Countries", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 11, 1960, pp. 315-41.

mechanism of shame-displacement that allowed officers and citizens alike to lay the blame on someone else for the act.⁸¹

Likewise, those bureaucratic cadres who were involved in this twin ‘market’ made some kind of capital out of their name officially appearing on public records, legal deeds and newspapers. Knowing to whom one could turn for advice and help made the job easier for everyone and safeguarded the whole of the subsidiary administrative process of social control.⁸² That the ordinary man in the street could easily identify and, through the intercession of the ‘touts’, make contact with accommodating clerks was almost an open secret. Officers and politicians provide us with the much-needed insight into the whole process. Ejected from a house that he had apparently illegally occupied, a clerk from the Revenue Department immediately turned to the person concerned. “What happened was that he talked to the other fellows of the Department, entered the house and came with a *fait accompli* and said, ‘I belong to the essential service and need a house, just say ‘Allotted’”, revealed, without flinching, the Minister of Revenue, West Punjab, to the Punjab Assembly.⁸³

It was only when officers were threatened with a substantial reduction in their wages and privileges that they made themselves heard. With the post-independence austerity measures of the early 1950s harming their material interests, clerks and administrative government employees orchestrated a two-week ‘pen down’ strike that, in mid-March 1951, knocked out the whole of the

⁸¹ J. P. Olivier de Sardan, “A Moral Economy of Corruption in Africa?”, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37, 1, 1999, pp. 34-8.

⁸² A. Blok, “Peasants, Patrons, and Brokers in Western Sicily”, *Anthropology Quarterly – Special Issue: Socio and Political Processes in the Western Mediterranean*, 42, 1, 1969, p. 155; G. Falcone and M. Padovani, *Cose, op. cit.*, p. 166.

⁸³ *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 10th March 1954, PCSL

Punjab.⁸⁴ Under the umbrella of the Punjab Subordinate Services Federation, the wish lists of local *patwaris* and middle-ranking officials encompassed a wide range of claims. Among them, the monthly horse allowance of Rs. 45 and a guaranteed education for their children stood out in sharp relief against the more classical demands for higher wages or a pension plan.⁸⁵

This vociferous protest on the part of civil servants of the Government of Punjab appeared to meet with the approval of some local observers. It was, in their view, a way to break the bonds that nourished the vicious circle in which low salaries were in inverse ratio to corruption.⁸⁶ They should have however been more circumspect with their predictions. The monthly wages of lower-ranks officials were unquestionably set at starvation levels, falling within the pay range of Rs. 50-Rs. 120.⁸⁷ Their families barely made ends meet. Yet, the Jekyll and Hyde existence of the administrative *apparata* rooted primarily in its living was in symbiosis with the surrounding social environment. Mohammad Ali Bogra – Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Commerce, Government of Pakistan – demonstrated in 1953 just how far he had his finger on the pulse of the problem during a session of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly. In reply to a question from Sardar Asadullah Khan, he rightly pointed out that “prophylactic measures [...] [had] to be taken. Corruption [...] [had] to be fought on at all fronts. Corruption [...] [had] to be fought in schools and colleges, in university and even in public life of this country”.⁸⁸ One can bet that sniggers and sentences with double meanings most probably welcomed the speech. Nevertheless, the

⁸⁴ *Punjab Government Workers' Strike*, 19th March 1951, NND 948832, NARA.

⁸⁵ *Strike of Punjab Patwaris Ends*, 19th March 1952, NND 938750, NARA.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁷ Rehabilitation Department of West Punjab, *Manual of Instructions – Part I and II*, Lahore, 1949, Appendix I, PSCL.

⁸⁸ *Pakistan Constituent Assembly Debates*, 23rd September 1953, PCSL.

Prime Minister was unquestionably right on target. These patronage structures that supported the Pakistani administration as well as its popular ersatz duplication in the streets surrounding Anarkali were first and foremost a socio-cultural problem.

“I am not putting the blame on any individual [...]. I agree that it was the mentality which has got to be changed”, echoed a year later Muzaffar Ali Khan Qizilbash from the benches of the Punjab Assembly.⁸⁹ In spite of their guise of a friendly society, preferential treatments and cronyism were poisoning the early life of what was a still-in-the-making civil society.⁹⁰ Their tentacles extended dangerously into the sensitive realm of the state and provincial economies. The full extent of the financial damage was unknown. Yet, according to US sources, so-called malpractices in the early 1950s resulted in substantial cash deficits for both the provincial and federal exchequers.⁹¹ The cancer that was consuming the administrative life of the Punjab surfaced even in the language of the everyday. Ordinary citizens usually referred to the Resettlement and Rehabilitation offices as the ‘Carbuncle Department’.⁹² The idea and the risk that an unusual disease could slowly yet inexorably infect the whole socio-political fabric was by then subconsciously clear.

Nevertheless, it was the everyday with its challenges and needs that attracted much of the refugees’ attention. Politics and the realm of the so-called political ideas were not clear of the same perceptions over priorities.

⁸⁹ *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 10th March 1954, PCSL.

⁹⁰ G. Falcone and M. Padovani, *Cose, op. cit.*, p. 93.

⁹¹ *Strike of Punjab Patwaris Ends*, 19th March 1952, NND 938750, NARA.

⁹² *Pakistan Constituent Assembly Debates*, 4th April 1953, PSCL.

Turning political? Administrative failures and political demands

‘A miss is as good as a mile’. As West Punjabi civil servants bungled their attempts to carry out a swift redistribution of evacuee properties, this saying turned into the war cry of many claimants. *Izzat*, power, authority and sphere of influence were on the line almost on a daily basis. The present section aims at providing a link between this and the following chapter. While focusing on the disrupting effects on the anthropological fabric of the migrant community, it discusses the refugees’ self-perceived need to assert their identity as a separate group within local society.

Rehabilitation practices frequently threw all the migrants’ attempts to rebuild their networks of relationships and influence into confusion. In 1952, the Garden Allotment Committee in Lahore was, for instance, directed to re-distribute vegetable and flower path “to villages and *chaks* other than those where they have applied for allotment of land under the Rehabilitation Settlement Scheme”.⁹³ Temporary allottees of those evacuee premises that were otherwise reserved for public purposes were evicted through official orders released by central Rehabilitation authorities.⁹⁴ Withdrawn properties would then be assigned to some other refugees, widow and elders.⁹⁵

The vicissitudes of Muhammad Siddiqui’s family was worthy of one of the finest serial stories or Lollywood films.⁹⁶ A refugee from India, Muhammad and his relatives were temporarily allotted a property in the village of Qadirpur

⁹³ *Memorandum No. 5371-R (L)*, 23rd April 1952, PCSL.

⁹⁴ *Memorandum No. 7070-R (L)*, 7th September 1953, PCSL and *Memorandum No. 13723-55/457-R (P)*, 31st January 1946, PCSL.

⁹⁵ *Memorandum No. 13723-55/456-R (P)*, 31st January 1956, PCSL.

⁹⁶ *Supreme Court – Civil Appeal No. 69/1958*, (Muhammad Munir, C.J., Shahabuddin, Cornelius and Amiruddin Ahmad, JJ.) – Mst. Bashiri vs. The Additional Rehabilitation Commissioner and Others, MDDR.

Rawan, Multan District. As the years rolled on, members of his family either passed away or moved elsewhere. Apparently, only Mst. Bashiri, widow of Muhammad's paternal uncle, stayed behind and fought tooth and nail not to hand over the allotted premises. Another refugee together with a legal gap in the Resettlement scheme got in the way of the realisation of Mst. Bashiri's dreams. Indeed, the Government of the Punjab only regulated the *status* of refugee widows, unmarried daughters and minors in relation to the evacuee properties in early 1953.⁹⁷ Unfortunately, as it could not be applied retrospectively, the amendment did not benefit Mst. Bashiri. Her notice of ejectment had been served a year before, and her portion of land already allotted to someone else. Likewise, the laws of inheritance as embodied either in the *Shari'a* or in the customary justice system could not be fully implemented. Allotments resulted from a legal and bureaucratic conveyance, and no refugee had a vested right to obtain them. "The argument" – pointed out the honourable Mr. Justices Ahmad, Ali and Changez during a different hearing – "that on the demise of the right-holder his heirs, whether under custom or Personal Law [Personal Law (Sharia Act), 1948] became vested with the estate and therefore, were entitled to allotment of property in Pakistan in their own right and not as help has no force".⁹⁸

A particular kind of 'honour' killing – in this case, attacks against rights of land possession or exploitation – were bureaucratically committed all across the Punjabi countryside. The agricultural lands bordering on *chak* No. 13/1-L, *tehsil* Okara, Montgomery District were the scene of the crime that the Honourable Mr Justice Changez investigated in 1957. It was indeed there that the *izzat* of Rao

⁹⁷ *Memorandum No. 831-R(L) – Government of Punjab*, 5th February 1953, PCSL.

⁹⁸ *PLD 1960 Lah 834*, (Shabir Ahmad, Muhammad Yaqub Ali and Changez, JJ.) – Umar Draz Ali vs. Khurshid Ali, MDDR.

Zia-ud-Din and Muhammad Umar risked meeting its end.⁹⁹ Rehabilitation practices and functionaries were immediately put on trial. They were suspected of re-drawing the borders of both Rao and Muhammad's allotted lands by re-distributing 10 acres of them to one Muhammad Khan through a procedure of revision and adjustment of early-assigned allotments. Tittle-tattle assaults on Muhammad Khan's honesty assumed the quality of a malicious character assassination and spread across Montgomery District.¹⁰⁰ For their part, Rao Zia-ud-Din and Muhammad Umar filed an appeal to the local Additional Rehabilitation Commissioner and asked for records to be verified accurately. Lawyers, respondents and petitioners trudging round courts and offices of the Rehabilitation Department, the legal battle snowballed and occasionally turned into a cadastral survey competition. Officials revoked allotments, the local police launched an inquiry, and petitions or complaints piled up. "Elementary, my dear Watson", exclaimed Changez while going through the documents. The umpteenth case of administrative authorities – those of the Resettlement and Rehabilitation Department – acting in excess of power was nosed out. Basically, he washed his hands of the gist of the legal action and the real rationale behind it. Rao and Muhammad went to court in order to preserve their own *izzat* and not to discover a bureaucratic blunder.

As they levelled off and wound down resettlement schemes, local authorities had consequently to reckon with the resistance of particular groups of refugees and their determined attempts to preserve what they had regained with difficulty. Feelings, concerns and worries translated into the stronger sense of being part of a social group in need of special attention and protection. It was in courtrooms in

⁹⁹ *Miscellaneous Civil – Writ Petition No. 486/1957*, (Changez, J.) – Allah Dia and Another vs. I. U. Khan and Others, MDDR.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

particular that refugees sought a clear-cut demarcation of new social boundaries and claimed their exceptional *status*. In the face of the failure of the Pakistani administration to grapple with the humanitarian crisis and live up to refugees' expectations, judges and lawyers were frequently called upon to smooth out disputes and in effect attempt to constitute an impersonal and equitable socio-administrative order.

Habibullah Butt – refugee resident in House No. 124 in Market Road, Rawalpindi Cantt. – shielded his own peculiar ‘self’ by a number of defence mechanisms, including the transfer of his desires and emotions to a judging authority.¹⁰¹ His own four walls were the ground on which the Pakistani bureaucracy gauged the success of its ability to respond to the challenge of meshing together refugees' expectancies towards the state and institution-building processes. The Governor General of Pakistan himself had leased these premises from their original evacuee owner back in October 1947. Habibullah had had them allotted when he was appointed to the local M. S. Branch as Officer Supervisor. In 1954, his retirement being imminent, both the Military Estate Officer and the local District Rehabilitation Commissioner asked him to surrender the property. The subsequent lodging of a writ petition to the High Court opened a proverbial Pandora's box by revealing the extent of the confusion that existed among bureaucratic cadres and within institutions in relation to their specific roles and responsibilities. Which institution could claim the right to issue a notice of ejectment? Was it the Defence Military or the Rehabilitation Department?

¹⁰¹ *Civil Appeal No. 93/1958*, (Shahabuddin, Cornelius, Amiruddin Ahmad and Rahman, JJ.) – Chief Administrative Officer Minister of Defence vs. Habibullah Butt and others, MDRR.

In accepting the petition, the High Court argued the unsuitability of the military authorities sending out the ejection notice. In spite of claiming a lease from the Rehabilitation Department, the Minister of Defence itself could not wield the actual power to eject. Yet, the Judgment of Appeal upset the situation. According to its ruling, the military authorities were fully entitled to eject Habibullah, the Rehabilitation officers exercising no control over the property but the collection of the rent. Habibullah himself became dizzy in his attempt to unravel his legal and personal problems. Indeed, his early petition was filed against the Ministry of Defence in the belief that it was the local Deputy Resettlement Commissioner who allotted him his house. It was then to this latter authority that, after having been unable to document this process of allocation in the court of first instance, he turned in order to seek the allotment of the premises in question. Nevertheless, as the Supreme Court found out, Habibullah “had himself been requesting the military authorities from time to time to effect repairs on the premises”.¹⁰²

In 1951, Muhammad Sharif summoned Muhammad Iqbal and Amid-ud-Din to appear before him. Muhammad had filed a lawsuit against Amid over a controversy that resulted from a perceived breaking of the Punjab Rent Restriction Act, 1949. During the hearing, objections to refugee exceptionality were raised by one of the litigants and eventually rejected by the judging authority. In the abstract of the judgement, this latter clearly stated that regularly-appointed refugee allottees “were no better no worse than the non-Muslim

¹⁰² *Ibidem*.

tenants [...] accepted as tenants by the owners themselves on payment of certain fixed rent”.¹⁰³

Both Muhammad and Habibullah had just upgraded their social status to some kind of a political demand. The hot potato was now in the hands of the local politicians and members of both Punjab and Pakistan Constituent Assembly.

This chapter has questioned and reframed traditional ideas of institution-building processes, patronage and corruption within highly-personalised and trust-based societies such as the Punjabi and the Pakistani ones. As it has traced back the administrative path towards the attempted full resettlement of the refugee community in places like Lahore, it has argued the intrinsic weakness of the local bureaucracy. As the next chapter will also demonstrated, this latter surfaces as an institution that was unable to cope with the everyday needs of its users, let alone to put forward a proper and swift bureaucratic policy.

¹⁰³ *PLD 1951 Lah 27*, (Muhammad Sharif, J.) – Muhammad Iqbal vs. Amid-ud-Din, MDRR.

Chapter 4

Pawns in a political game: refugees, electoral rules and competitions and the politics of West Punjab's stability

“It is impossible [...] to settle even one refugee because every refugee is a pawn in their political game; every refugee means a vote for the Muslim League”
(C. E. Gibbon, *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 10th March 1954)

“I have been knocking on the door that holds the throne [...] We take care of our own”
(B. Springsteen, “We take care of our own”, *The Wrecking Ball*, 2012)

Once the assumption of an easy, homogenous and swift resettlement of Partition refugees is challenged, new avenues of interpretation of the early years of Pakistan's history open up. The idea of Pakistan as a failed or failing state is not restricted to the myriad of geo-political analysis that frequently hit the headlines. Indeed, the list of historians and political scientists who have given in to the temptation to plumb the depths of the ‘Pakistani failure’ is almost endless.¹ By contrast, Anatol Lieven has recently argued that, if judged by its own standards, Pakistan is a state that *works*.² Stemming from his detailed and functional investigation of present-day dynamics, it will be argued here that Pakistan and the region of the Punjab in particular paved the way for the establishment of its own peculiar stable and workable political system back in the early years of its

¹ T. Ali, *Can Pakistan Survive? The Death of a State*, Harmondsworth, 1983; M. Ayoob, “Dateline Pakistan: A Passage to Anarchy?”, *Foreign Policy*, 59, 1985, pp. 154-73; C. Baxter, *Pakistan on the Brink: Politics, Economics and Society*, Lanham, 2004; R. Jahan, *Pakistan: Failure in National Integration*, New York, 1972; A. Kapur, *Pakistan in Crisis*, London, 1991; A. H. Nadeem, *Pakistan. The Political Economy of Lawlessness*, Karachi, 2002; P. Oldenburg, *India, Pakistan, and Democracy: Solving the puzzle of divergent paths*, New York, 2010; J. B. Owen, *Pakistan. Eye of the Storm*, New Haven, 2002; F. Shaikh, *Making Sense of Pakistan*, London, 2009.

² A. Lieven, *Pakistan. A Hard Country*, London, 2011.

independence. The lens through which the phenomenon is observed is that of the electoral and party manoeuvrings that accompanied and resulted from the 1951 provincial elections and the related debate on the adequate representation of refugees within the local Assembly, with a particular focus on Lahore.

In the run-up to the 1951 provincial elections, the relationship between the bureaucratic cadres and the political actors of the West Punjab flowed from their mutual attempts to define and re-define their role within the frame of a newly-established independent State. This chapter thus seeks to demonstrate that, as they engineered the new rules of the electoral game, both civil authorities and refugee politicians played on those values that typically underpinned local society. It will be argued that the hurly-burly of mutual exploitations, interferences and interactions resulted in a *corpus* of regulations and political practices that, by being socially sustainable, would contribute to a stabilisation of the West Punjab political arena.

As the rules were first discussed and then established, local parties and factions started on their jockeying for a sought-after electoral and post-electoral success. A careful examination of the political manoeuvrings reveals, however, that the independence of Pakistan did not mark an entirely new phase in the life of West Punjab's party politics. The need to milk the state *apparata* in the search for limited resources and the atavistic ideas of loyalty and political opportunism merged there with the attempts to rise to the challenges that the re-integration of millions of persons and a nation-in-the-making were progressively putting out. This chapter accordingly investigates the ways the Punjabi parties shaped up and drifted perilously towards a one-party system, hovering between the pressing demands of a newly-established public arena and past legacies.

Indeed, it unveils the political and anthropological episteme that in time stabilised the local party scenario by levelling down the ‘side-effects’ of breakups, personal rivalries, powers behind the throne and presumed conspiracies.

Electoral campaigns aim at checkmating hurdles and opponents. In order to pursue their respective objectives, candidates and voters need to make contact with each other. In 1951, amidst heated debates on the role of religion in the state and calls for an Islamisation of the public sphere, traditional religious figures bestowed behind-the-scenes help on most candidates. Hence this chapter also aims at exploring the ways *pirs* and *sajjada nashins* progressively resumed their path towards emerging from the obscurity to which they had been relegated after the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reformism, and put politicians – especially refugee ones – on course to renew contact with their voters.

Pieces at the beginning of the game: engineering a new electoral system

Chalie, chae pien. Gathered around a cup of tea Qutab Din and Rao Khurshid Ali Khan were engaged in an animated discussion. A long, silent pause anticipated a frank and friendly handshake. The agreement was finally made and the informal contract signed. Qutab Din, potential candidate for the constituency of Montgomery VII, and Rao Khurshid Ali Khan, powerful refugee leader and former member of the Punjab Assembly, set the seal on their electoral alliance. This decision however was by no means easy and painless. Indeed Qutab Din “after giving anxious thought to the pros and the cons of the case [...] was of the opinion that Rao Khurshid Ali Khan’s votes would come to [...] [him] and [...]

[his] to Rao Khurshid Khan in pursuance of the pact”.³ Both of them were fully aware of the value and the eventual impact of refugees’ votes on the course and the outcome of the impending elections scheduled to take place in the province in late March 1951. Frenzied political manoeuvring had pushed the whole West Punjab to fire and sword shortly after 14th August 1947.

That Rao Khurshid Ali Khan and Qutab Din were beset with difficulties and hurdles has been acknowledged in existing secondary literature exploring this early period in Pakistan’s political development. Indeed, it was Muhammad Waseem who, in his 1989 *Politics and State in Pakistan*, first drew attention to the implications of the massive migration of millions of persons for the electoral basis of nearly all the refugee politicians.⁴ In his view, it was by stepping into the political breach that resulted from their loss of public support that the Pakistani bureaucracy found a way to secure the upper hand over local society. Therefore, as H. F. Goodnow has argued, the newly-established Pakistan Civil Service stood in continuity with the attitude of the British administrators. A public façade of tolerance camouflaged the bureaucracy’s self-perceived superiority, and formally preserved government institutions.⁵ Markus Daechsel has asserted a similar line of reasoning in 1997, arguing that the dominance of bureaucracy is understood there as the absolute power to allocate resources through the intricacies of the administrative processes.⁶ However, the idea of what Philip Oldenburg and Muhammad Waseem have labelled as ‘bureaucratic polity’ will be challenged

³ *Punjab Gazette*, 29th February 1952, UPL.

⁴ M. Waseem, *Politics and State in Pakistan*, Lahore, 1989, pp. 112-13.

⁵ H. F. Goodnow, *The Civil Service in Pakistan*, New Haven, 1964, p. 241.

⁶ M. Daechsel, “Military Islamisation in Pakistan and the Spectre of Colonial Perception”, *Contemporary South Asia*, 6, 2, 1997, 141-60.

and re-addressed in this chapter.⁷ By tracking down both the anthropological and historic episteme that led to the re-integration of refugee politicians and voters in the years following Partition and to the institutional choice of an electoral system, it will seek to explain the relationship between politics and bureaucracy through their intricate and subtle plots of mutual exploitation, weaknesses and interdependency.

In autumn 1947, refugee leaders, new and old politicians alike, scoured almost all camps and temporary structures to be found in West Punjab. Thorough manhunts went hand in hand with their attempt to mould government policies and achieve the much desired and congenial resettlement of refugees on land. A refugee-saturated Punjab was facing the urgent need to re-accommodate the bulk of the migrant community by sharing this burden among all its districts and the neighbouring regions. Governmental projects – mainly based on a first-come-first-served method of allocating evacuee properties – was biased against the eventual re-election and preservation of any political ascendancy, let alone refugees' chances of benefiting from the peculiar perks of a political system that had already long featured patronage relationships. It was, Kenneth Post has argued in relation to another former part of the British empire, both a semantic and linguistic problem. Patronage political dynamics demand the representative to speak the same social 'language' of his constituents and to share the same 'ethnic' background.⁸ Unsurprisingly, then, former eastern members of the newly-restructured Punjab Assembly pressured Pakistani authorities into a

⁷ P. Oldenburg, *India, Pakistan, and Democracy*, *op. cit.*, p. 40; M. Waseem, *Politics and State*, *op. cit.*.

⁸ K. Post, *The Nigerian Federal Elections of 1959*, Oxford, 1963, p. 391.

district-wise resettlement of refugees and hence hampered the latter's dispersal within the region or their transfer to Sindh, Baluchistan and the NWFP.⁹

Indeed, they did not intend to turn swords into ploughshares. As a worried British Deputy High Commissioner (Lahore) warned in late 1948, their crusade against a non-district based rehabilitation was resulting in far more aggressive and resentful refugees.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the formal and institutional acceptance of the criterion of the much anticipated assignment of evacuee dwellings along district lines did not soothe politicians' nerves and paralleled a much more fluid and slippery reality. The resettlement or self-resettlement of refugees had already started, and a prospective and further dis- and re-location was not an economically and socially sustainable and viable option.¹¹ The laborious task of re-consolidating entire *biraderis* and spheres of patronage influence had to face the lack of a reliable system of identification, scarce means of communication, and the hurried scramble for a shelter that compulsively involved almost all refugees. The case of Meo refugees, for instance, stood out as paradigmatic. In July 1949 they were reportedly scattered across West Punjab despite their request for a homogenous rehabilitation.¹² The 'linguistic units' of fidelity and solid relationships between any local leader and his followers – essential units of local political discourses – demanded thus to be partially reworded in order to retain their significance and power. Any attempt to solve the problem in theory was simply hopeless.

⁹ *Extract from UKHC (Lahore) Report – POL 9324/48*, 4th July 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG.

¹⁰ *Extract from Report from Deputy UKHC (Lahore) – POL 10384/48*, 30th December 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG.

¹¹ *Political Situation in West Punjab – July 1948*, 2nd August 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

¹² *Civil and Military Gazette (Lahore)*, 3rd July 1949.

Ghostly shapes loomed out of the fog of the provincial elections scheduled for 1951. Relatively inexperienced and new to electoral competitions, the region of Punjab held one the first elections of independent Pakistan.¹³ In a curious twist of fate, the so-called Punjabi school of public administration turned into the first laboratory within which Pakistani democratic aspirations were to be tested. It was, as Andrew Wilder has pointed out, one of those attempts at legitimising the *status quo* through an adaptation of all possible democratic needs to the supremacy of bureaucracy that would eventually spell out both federal and provincial political histories in the years to come.¹⁴ By April 1951, as the counterpoint voice of Iftikhar Ahmad insinuates, almost half of the newly-elected members of the Punjab Assembly would owe a favour to a public servant.¹⁵ Grassroots politics and manoeuvrings bespoke however of a far more elaborated and multi-faceted reality. Politics and bureaucracy, my main argument is here, exploited each other's weaknesses in an endless process of negotiation and re-negotiation of their identities within the new institutional framework of an independent state. Thus the opening chapters of the apparently same old story talk instead about an odd process of vernacularisation and enthronement of patronage democracy wherein Partition refugees and their eventual representation in local institutions played a leading role.

In early 1949 former members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly, current members of the Central Constituent Assembly, secretaries of local boards and public associations were all caught up in answering a long questionnaire that a

¹³ The very first elections had been held in the princely states of Khaipur and Bahawalpur in 1949.

¹⁴ A. R. Wilder, *The Pakistani Voter: Electoral Politics and Voting Behaviour in the Punjab*, Karachi, 1990, p. 17. See also A. Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 193.

¹⁵ I. Ahmad, *Pakistan General Elections: 1970*, Lahore, 1976, p. 7.

newly established committee had just submitted to them all. Questions 4 and 5 stood out as being of crucial importance. “Do you think it would be possible to secure adequate representation of refugees in the Legislative Assembly in West Punjab if the basis referred to question 3 [franchise qualifications based on taxation, education, service in the Armed Forces and, in the case of women, status of their husband]? In case you are of the opinion that it would not be possible to secure for refugees representation commiserated with their numbers on this basis, what other basis do you suggest for achieving the object?”, stated Question 4.¹⁶ Question 5 raised the political and electoral stakes and asked whether or not “it would be proper to prescribe different and concessional franchise qualifications for the refugees for the next general elections”.¹⁷ The problem was far from being trivial. Electoral systems lie at the very heart of institutions - and, in the last resort, even decision-making processes. District Boards and small towns initially co-opted refugees through the replacement of those of their members who had fled to India.¹⁸ Immediately after independence, the transfer of parliamentary seats from East to West Punjab had hewed to a similar principle and methodology. The upcoming scheduled elections presented Punjabi politics with the *fait accompli* of the absolute need for careful considerations and mulled-over evaluations.

Interviewees and committee members finally tabled a three-option draft that attempted to solve the electoral and political quandary. Separate electorates and multi-member constituencies with or without a reservation of seats for refugees

¹⁶ *West Punjab Gazette*, 5th August 1949, UPL.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ *West Punjab Gazette – Extraordinary Issue*, 23rd April 1949, UPL and *West Punjab Gazette – Extraordinary Issue*, 26th April 1949, UPL.

were the formulas that, according to the proposals, had to be weighted up in order to secure an adequate representation of all the different sections now part of Punjab society.¹⁹ The committee rejected almost immediately the idea of multi-member constituencies without reserved refugee seats. Refugees were sure to cast their votes only in favour of refugee candidates and *de facto* prejudice the result of the polls. This would – as stated in the proceedings – clash with the institutional efforts to bridge the gulf between locals and newcomers by *socially* and *politically* acknowledging, and thus deepening, the rift.²⁰ Bets were now taken on the two remaining solutions. A curious bungle beckoned on the horizon. Both refugees' separate electorates and multi-member constituencies would *institutionally* ratify precisely the social split that Pakistani institutions were trying to mend amidst tremendous difficulties and setbacks. Regardless of the outcome of the negotiations, these two options would herald a realignment of urban and rural power and hierarchies along new lines. New powerbrokers who owed their position to means other than land would then emerge and play a leading role in the local political scenario.²¹

The related debate on a possible revision of the franchise further brought to the fore the relevance of the question. Unable to prove their property, wealth or educational credentials, the bulk of the refugee community risked being kept out of the electorate and off the candidate rolls. Feelings thus were running high, and Punjabi public opinion split over the issue. The subtle implications of the introduction of adult franchise lurked in the recesses of the whirl of declarations,

¹⁹ *West Punjab Gazette – Extraordinary Issue*, 28th October 1949, UPL.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ W. Singer, "Women's Politics and Land Control in an Indian Election: Lasting Influence of the Freedom Movement in North Bihar", in H. A. Gould and S. Ganguly (eds.), *India Votes. Alliance Politics and Minority Governments in the Ninth and Tenth General Elections*, Boulder-San Francisco-Oxford, 1993, p. 183.

disclaimers and rectifications that resulted from the deliberations of the committee. Never a day passed but *Imroze* (Lahore) and *Pakistan Times* (Lahore) hammered away at their campaign that trumpeted unrestricted adult suffrage as the quintessence of Pakistan's future democracy.²² For its part, the West Punjab Union of Journalists tagged its support on the abolition of all landlord constituencies and the debarment of landlords from labour seats.²³ Opponents to an extension of the electorate feared that the Committee was biting off more than it could actually chew, and urged it to bring the matter to the Constituent Assembly. Someone went as far as to drag in the Quran in order to support his arguments.²⁴ The thrill and the trepidation were the sort that usually haunt a person who is about to take a leap in the dark. All these ingredients looked set to 'ginger' up Punjabi politics as soon as the Committee published its findings and final recommendations.

The fictional Major Kayani of Mohammed Hanif's debut novel questions our understanding of the weight of the decision. "Have you ever been inside the Palace of Mirrors? [...] You look up and you see your face staring at you from thousands of mirrors. But these are reflecting the reflection of your face. [...] Do you get my point?".²⁵ Indeed, the mirrors of Sheesh Mahal at Shahi Qila, Lahore, were the images that come to mind when commenting on the eventual results of the first experiment of electoral engineering in independent Pakistan. Assessing whether the choice of two-seat constituencies with a reserved seat for refugee candidates and the adult franchise mirrored or, by contrast, reflected indefinitely

²² See issues of *Imroze* (Lahore) and *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), January-November 1949.

²³ *Prospects for Refugee Representation and Democratic Elections in the West Punjab – Confidential No. 23*, 4th March 1949, NND 765024, NARA.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ M. Hanif, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*, London, 2009, p. 200.

the reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of local customs was a herculean task. Member constituencies perfectly matched the features and the needs of what was a highly personalised Punjabi society. The candidate-ballot mechanism – one available ballot to be cast for a single candidate – established a direct relationship between candidates and voters that was informed by particularistic benefits and incentives.²⁶ Playing by the rules – both formal and informal – was apparently a child's game for all social actors.

Tracking down the basic elements of the local political system was instead the real challenge that lay ahead. Benefits and incentives needed, of course, to be targeted to specific individuals or groups. The chemistry and the chances of electoral success can be summed up in the following formula: P₂K.²⁷ On the eve of 1951 elections, two atoms of patronage and one of kinship were the elements that potential candidates were trying to blend. Ostensibly the needs and the wishes of influential local leaders shaped the borders of the newly-designed constituencies by cutting across their natural administrative and physical boundaries.²⁸ The electoral bureaucracy had finally to bow to the necessities of local politics and the geopolitics of the newcomers' rehabilitation. No matter whether they intended to run for refugee or 'normal' seats, all future members of the Punjab Assembly would unquestionably have to worm their way into refugees' affections. The feverishness that followed the announcement of the Committee converted itself into an almost desperate hunt for electoral alliances. Refugees' resettlement, or self-resettlement on land, had shifted anyone's

²⁶ P. Norris, *Electoral Engineering. Voting Rules and Political Behaviour*, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 230-31.

²⁷ A. Lieven, *Pakistan, op. cit.*, p. 204.

²⁸ Government of Pakistan, *Electoral Reforms Commission Report*, Karachi, 1956, p. 1, PCSL.

ground, and no candidate felt safe. Elections would be fought and eventually won inch by inch in every constituency. Potential candidates had to put their shoulder to the wheel and further step up the intensity of South Asian historically typical door-to-door campaigns.²⁹

Qutab Din and Rao Khurshid Ali Khan made a contract with each other with this picture in mind. The pact, as proceedings pointed out, could be regarded as a “blindfold transfer of one’s influence in favour of the other”.³⁰ Interestingly enough, by forming an alliance with the powerful contestant of a non-reserved seat, Rao Khurshid Ali Khan – whose arrest in 1948 had mobilised no less than 50,000 supporters³¹ – incidentally revealed a substantial reduction in his electoral basis. The fluid dynamics of the resettlement of refugees spared no one. Many other potential candidates and refugee leaders across the whole of West Punjab were engrossed in similar negotiations and political transactions.³² For all three contracting parties – candidates, refugee representatives and, although frequently unwittingly, voters themselves – it was a win-win situation. The transfer of spheres of influence ensnared votes in a trap of checks and double-checks. Indeed, would-be members of the local provincial Assembly and the refugee leadership alike banked on the sheer weight of number: blocs of voters would seal former’s fate and provide the latter with the necessary power to thwart any broken promise. Both the electoral system and the agreements that political actors were signing led thus to a peculiarly Punjabi self-enforcing equilibrium of

²⁹ On the relevance of personal meetings and door-to-door campaigns in South Asian electoral contests, see K. Subha, *Karnataka Panchayat Elections 1955: Process, Issues and Membership Profile*, New Delhi, 1997, p. 27.

³⁰ *Punjab Gazette*, 23rd February 1953, UPL.

³¹ *Infra*, p. 85.

³² *Punjab Gazette*, 23rd February 1953, UPL.

group voting.³³ The plank of the system was the incentives that pushed voters and candidates to take part in their mutual political and personal shares. Reportedly money and material benefits defined the parameters within which elections or re-elections were negotiated.³⁴ On the understanding that mutual trust was the indissoluble clause, electoral ‘contracts’ were subsequently signed on this basis at all different levels. The everyday face of paternalism surfaced here and became tinged with the nuances of the *ma-bap* relationship. Politicians interacted with their voters by empathising with their needs and hardships within an intricate frame of emotional situations that mirrored the father/son bond.

The economy of the Punjabi electoral system was accordingly far from being impersonal and modelled only on market dynamics. As Sir William Sleeman claimed when explaining the relationship between “the martial classes of the people of India” and “their immediate chief”, “he [the immediate chief] may change sides as often as he pleased, but the relations between him and his followers remain unchanged”.³⁵ Punjabi politics were moulded out of the bundle of personal *biraderi* and charismatic community leaders. Alongside the brokering on the respective sphere of influences a peculiar and party-led diaspora of candidates took place and attempted to keep pace with the mirroring dispersal of refugees in their resettlement of self-resettlement efforts. In the constituencies of some of the most refugee-saturated towns in West Punjab candidates who it was rumoured would win the day easily in the reserved seats had previously taken up their residence elsewhere. Hence, “I Abdul Hamid Khan [...] living at

³³ K. Chandra, “Counting heads: a theory voter and elite behaviour in patronage democracies”, in H. Kitschelt and S. I. Wilkinson (eds.), *Patrons, Clients, and Policies. Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition*, Cambridge, 2007, p. 93.

³⁴ *Punjab Gazette*, 20th February 1952, UPL.

³⁵ See W. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official*, Karachi, 1980, p. 238.

Women Home, Female Jail – Lahore [...] do declare I am a refugee within the meaning given in clause (a) of Sect. 2 of the Punjab Legislative Assembly Election Act, 1950”, filled the form in one of them while putting himself forward as a candidate for the refugee seat in Sheikhpura VII.³⁶ Sajjad Ali Khan, Zafar Hussain, Abdul Aziz and Altaf Mohy ud-Din – all resident in Lahore – were others who followed hot on his heels, in the constituencies of Gujranwala II and II and Sialkot IX and V respectively.³⁷

By early 1951 it was clear that politics and bureaucracy had begun a fight that was – and would be – informed by feelings of mutual exploitation, interdependency and self-perceived superiority. As regards the upcoming electoral competition, bureaucrats and party workers armed with their tactics and tricks yielded now the floor to local politicians. Political platforms had to be drafted and time was getting short.

The king’s jewels: defining parties’ dynamics

Biraderi and influential representatives of old or new power brokers indeed took the lion’s share in the run-up to 1951 elections. Still, the local political corollary involved a wide use by candidates to demonstrate publicly their strength and to test their own political platforms.³⁸ Roads, squares and parks were the places where anyone could measure the pulse of local citizens on the topics that were inflaming public opinion. The number of knots of people who gathered around

³⁶ *Punjab Gazette*, 20th February 1951, UPL and *West Punjab Gazette – Extraordinary Issue*, 23rd June 1950, UPL.

³⁷ *Punjab Gazette*, 20th February 1951, UPL.

³⁸ S. I. Wilkinson, “Explaining changing patterns of party-voter linkages in India”, in H. Kitschelt and S. I. Wilkinson (eds.), *Patrons, Clients, and Policies*, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

politicians bowing and scraping gauged the success of new and old personalities in party conventions and reunions. At first glance, an apparent steadiness reigned supreme within almost all parties' ranks. Accordingly, the direct proportion of the early weaknesses and failures of both the Pakistani political and parliamentary systems to the decline of the Muslim League has been raised to an almost widely accepted truism within existing secondary literature. A corrupt and landlord-dominated party, Safar Mahmood argues, was to blame for the flaws that marred local parliamentary politics.³⁹ Yunas Samad and Ayesha Jalal echo very similar arguments as they identify in the decision to separate party careers from and government one and in the assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951 scapegoats for the party's decay.⁴⁰ The crumbling empire of the Muslim League has been named in their writings as a suspect responsible for the political immaturity of Pakistan as a state. Its weaknesses notwithstanding, the Muslim League showed itself to be responsive to dynamics that were well known to the members of local society and paved the way for a stabilisation of the Punjabi party system. The debate on the resettlement of refugees that took place within both the government and the opposition reveal clearly how far Punjabi political factions played by the rules of all patronage and trust-based societies and, in practice, achieved their own political equilibrium.

At its annual Council meeting held in Karachi in late January 1949, the Muslim League showed its utter inconclusiveness and indecision. All ten resolutions that were passed during the assembly proceedings turned out to be

³⁹ S. Mahmood, "Decline of the Pakistan Muslim League and its Implications (1947-54)", *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, 15, 2, 1994, pp. 68-89.

⁴⁰ A. Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule, op. cit.*; and Y. Samad, *A Nation in Turmoil. Nationalism and Ethnicity in Pakistan, 1937-1958*, New Delhi, 1995.

empty hackneyed slogans that dealt mostly with trifling matters.⁴¹ According to rumourmongers, the Muslim League – the party that had guided Pakistan towards its independence – was in its death throes. The double-entry bookkeeping of its members revealed an irrepressible haemorrhage of persons that frustrated any attempt to further root the party throughout the whole of Pakistan. Initially working in a small room of a private house with scant resources and personnel, the Pakistan Muslim League was now establishing the provincial and federal secretariats and several organisational units.⁴² Nevertheless, the West Punjab chapter had no more than 1,183,593 affiliates.⁴³

While the discussions at the Council meeting went on, a couple of persons were standing aloof and speaking in a whisper. One of them could be clearly heard complaining about the party's "failure to put forward any concrete substitute for the pre-Partition attitude of militant agitation".⁴⁴ "[I am wondering] whether the League has any further useful function to perform in Pakistan", reasoned the other one, voicing a concern that apparently was quite widespread among other fellow associates.⁴⁵ Its organisational efforts notwithstanding, the Muslim League could hardly be considered as a proper party. It was rather a summation of splinter groups, factions and personal rivalries. Just tracing the complicated dynamics and in-fighting that characterised the Muslim League of the late 1940s and early 1950s was enough to threaten anyone's sanity. The sanity at risk was, of course, that of foreign observers and commentators. Those

⁴¹ *Pakistan Muslim League. Meeting of the Council – POL 12044/49*, 24th March 1949, DO 35/3178, NAKG.

⁴² *IT to CRO – OPDOM No. 17*, 3rd May 1949, DO 35/3178, NAKG.

⁴³ *Pakistan Muslim League. Meeting of the Council – POL 12044/49*, 24th March 1949, DO 35/3178, NAKG.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*

who had a vested interest were not taken in by appearances. Delegates from Punjab joined in the Muslim League convention in Karachi with the declared aim of having their currents or personal ambitions backed by central party notables.⁴⁶ Hence, programmatic weaknesses together with the government's failure to address the needs of both a state and a nation-in-the-making gave party leaders enough room for tapping into people's mood and in the process increasing their own personal influence.⁴⁷

Outside the country's new nerve centres and across the whole of the Punjab in particular, the average man in the street showed a total disregard for the collapse of the party. Any news coming from the Muslim League's provincial headquarters was immediately pigeonholed as the umpteenth settling of scores between its different factions or an attempt by local politicians to pursue their own private interests instead of levelling down social and economic grievances.⁴⁸ Unquestionably refugees were amongst the more disillusioned. The hazy political platform cut them and their needs out of any party debate. The USA's almost paranoiac hunt for potential communist threats stopped at nothing to x-ray the activities of any social or political movement whose identity appeared to be informed by communism. When they came to trace the contours of that Pakistani 'Red Menace', whose backing of the Rawalpindi Conspiracy in 1951 caused uproar in the press, US officials unwittingly vouchsafed the details of refugees' political claims. The withdrawal of the existing land tenure system, the containment of rampant corruption and widespread nepotism, and the right to a

⁴⁶ *A-1*, 4th January 1949, NND 765024, NARA.

⁴⁷ *Extract from OPDOM No. 42 (Part II) from UKHC (Pakistan) – POL 127/C/2/3*, 12th November 1949, DO 35/3178, NAKG.

⁴⁸ *The Muslim League, West Punjab – Despatch No. 385/451*, 12th June 1949, DO 35/3178, NAKG, *Letter from C. W. Lewis, Jr. to H. A. Doolittle, Esq.*, 28th September 1948, NND 958418, NARA and *Internal Politics – Despatch No. 118*, n.d., NND 842450, NARA.

fair trial were the main points in a catch-all agenda that refugees failed to hear from Muslim League politicians and which they read instead mainly in the Communist Party's leaflets.⁴⁹ It was indeed the secretary of the Punjab Communist Party who, in early August 1950, hit the headlines by denouncing the fiasco of both the federal and provincial governments over the resettlement and the rehabilitation of West Punjab refugees.⁵⁰

He got his fifteen minutes of fame, one may argue. Appearing in the pages of the leftist *Pakistan Times* (Lahore) certainly did not earn him an award for bravery. However, pro-Muslim League refugee associations or parties were equally in no less deep water. Six months later in early 1951, Sirdar Abdus Sattari Faruqi, President of the All-Pakistan Muhajir League, convened a press conference in Lahore. Soon after pledging his support for the Muslim League "at any cost", Faruqi candidly acknowledged that "the Central and Provincial Governments had not efficiently worked for the rehabilitation of refugees".⁵¹ In his view, the actual identification of the government ranks with the upper echelons of the Muslim League was apparently in no flat contradiction of his stance. The contradiction, and the problem, was instead crystal clear to the Khan of Mamdot who had already broken away from the Muslim League to found his own Jinnah Muslim League in 1950. To all those who call account for his withdrawal, Mamdot could not help but attack Daultana's party for its failure to handle properly the resettlement of refugees, the institutional misunderstanding of the rigid borders between state and government responsibilities and, finally,

⁴⁹ *Analysis of Communist Propaganda in Pakistan in 1951*, 25th February 1952, NND 842430, NARA.

⁵⁰ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 10th August 1950.

⁵¹ *Civil and Military Gazette* (Lahore), 18th January 1951.

for allowing Cabinet Ministers to become office-holders within its lines.⁵² The Muslim League, he thundered when turning a blind eye to his personal rivalry and skirmishes with the ambitious Daultana, “not only forgot to implement the promises made by the Quaid-i-Azam to the people, they have also failed to stand by the future program he laid before us. [...] To end unemployment and poverty and to guarantee education and health is the guiding principle and duty of a good government. The League Government has failed to perform this duty”.⁵³

Indeed, no one but Mamdot, Chief Minister of the Pakistani Punjab between 1947 and 1949, knew the state of affairs of refugee rehabilitation policies through and through. Furthermore, no one but him, whose Ministry had tottered from one refugee protest to another and, according to an infuriated Jinnah, had showed no interest in their fate, was fully aware of the potential and the strength of refugees as a political and electoral basis.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, concern and curiosity about Mamdot’s new party haunted mostly foreign observers. Cunning worldly-wise politician with a troubled relationship with Mamdot behind him, Liaquat Ali Khan immediately numbered the Jinnah Muslim League among the “mushroom parties” that sprung up almost overnight across the whole Punjab.⁵⁵ Its chances of future success and its power to steal supporters from its contestants depended heavily upon its ability to act as a *sui generis* ‘charitable institution’. In other words, through the intercession of its own charismatic leader, the party should have been able to redistribute benefits and resources – especially limited

⁵² The decision of the Muslim League Council to forbid government members to hold party offices had just been overthrown by the appointment of the Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan as President of the party. *Resignation of the Khan of Mamdot from the Muslim League and the Formation of Jinnah Muslim League*, 1st November 1950, NND 948832, NARA.

⁵³ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁴ *Mudie Papers*, MSS. EUR F.164/19, IOL.

⁵⁵ *Resignation of the Khan of Mamdot from the Muslim League and the Formation of Jinnah Muslim League*, 1st November 1950, NND 948832, NARA.

ones – among its constituents.⁵⁶ By opting out of the Muslim League and, consequently, *de facto* alienating all government support, Mamdot reduced his room of manoeuvre to the lowest terms. Hopes of milking the state and bureaucratic *apparata* any further clung to a mere possibility. It was no surprise then that, despite Mamdot being their long-standing representative, almost all influential Punjabi *zamindars* did not follow him out of the League to support his new political venture.⁵⁷ As it allowed them access to government ears and to shape official land policies, the Muslim League umbrella was perceived to be a far safer shelter for their assets.

Local landlords decided then to carry on and fight their own good fight within party ranks. They were not alone in their attempt to get the best out of the existing political situation by simply playing by the kind of rules that typically underpin highly personalised and patronage-based societies. Abdussar Khan Niazi, leader of a religious spin-off group called the *Khilafat-e-Pakistan*, turned his back on the Khan of Mamdot as soon as he saw which way the wind was blowing. As he slammed the door in the latter's face, he made clear that "the League organisation should not [have been] allowed to play second fiddle to a lethargic Ministry which requires close vigilance by the parent organisations".⁵⁸ Niazi's attempts at 'Islamising' the local political and social arena were perceived to be more secure in the hands of those who could actually implement eventual reforms. The politics of the belly – a rhizome of personal networks and alliances that governs the allocation of resources through a combined mechanism

⁵⁶ M. Mines, *Public Faces, Private Voices. Community and Individuality in South India*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 2004, p. 57.

⁵⁷ *Internal Politics – Despatch No. 118*, n.d., NND 842450, NARA.

⁵⁸ *A-29*, 6th December 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

of self-ethnicisation of social groups and mutual benefits – rose to a well-established way of administering party politics and dynamics.⁵⁹ Mian Iftikharuddin had given the triangle of membership-party dynamics-state resources this new twist back in the early months of independence. Despite stepping down as West Punjab Minister of Refugees and Rehabilitation following a row with Mamdot over tenancy reforms, Iftikharuddin decided to remain within the League ranks where he could act as an annoying goad.⁶⁰ With close communist connections, he brought his followers around to joining his internal leftist pressure group.⁶¹ This current, together with the *Khilafat-e-Pakistan*, would remain a real thorn in the Muslim League's side in the highly refugee-concentrated towns of Lahore and Lyallpur in the years to come.⁶² No matter how political and social actors translated and understood them, socialism and religious conservatism were by no means polar opponents in late 1940s and early 1950s Punjab.

Husain Shaheed Suharwardy entered a packed YMCA room in Lahore on 29th June 1949. Members and guests of the West Punjab Union of Journalists were waiting for his speech. Shortly after taking the floor, Suharwardy asked those present to switch their recorders off.⁶³ No word of his speech had to get out. Nevertheless, a British officer from the local High Commission who had slipped into the venue managed to note down a summary of what he had to say. “He [Suharwardy] shocked his mixed audience by stating that whilst refugees

⁵⁹ J. F. Bayart, *L'État en Afrique. La politique du ventre*, Paris, 2006, p. 439 and ff.

⁶⁰ *Political Alignments in the West Punjab – Confidential No. 25*, 28th November 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

⁶¹ *Communist Party Activities in Pakistan – Despatch No. 136*, 3rd March 1948, NND 765024, NARA and *Despatch No. 386 (451)*, 12th July 1949, DO 35/3178, NAKG.

⁶² *Despatch No. 386 (451)*, 12th July 1949, DO 35/3178, NAKG.

⁶³ *Speech of Mr. Suharwardy given at Y.M.C.A. (Lahore) under the auspices of the West Punjab Union of Journalists*, 29th June 1949, DO 35/3178, NAKG.

families were being compelled to sell their bodies of their womenfolk for bread, yet two such exalted statesmen as Zafrullah and Shahabuddin should announce that [...] Pakistan had completely solved its refugee problem”, reported the functionary to his ambassador.⁶⁴ The Bengali politician with all-Pakistan ambitions, who was just back from Sialkot where “the great industries of that city were now in decay and dissolution, the workers standing idly in the streets”, advocated “a vigorous solution of the refugee problem”.⁶⁵ In his view “the present mixture of contempt, cynicism and indifference” could be tolerated no longer.⁶⁶ Far from being a flash in the pan, Suharwardy challenged the prevailing position of the Muslim League within the Punjabi party system by exploiting the malcontent that was taking root in the refugee community. His dissension and bitter criticism of the policies of the party in power caused widespread embarrassment among the League associates, and earned him the title of champion of refugee grievances.⁶⁷

Rumour had it that, soon after the foundation of the Awami League in March 1950, frenzy negotiations were underway between its leader and the almost all the splinter groups operating within the Muslim League.⁶⁸ Iftikharuddin and Shaukat Hayat were fingered for potential natural allies. Yet Punjabi politics is rich in coups de théâtre. In January 1951, amidst general astonishment, Suharwardy announced that his Awami League had just merged with Mamdot’s Jinnah Muslim League to form the Jinnah Awami League.⁶⁹ A strong penchant for socialism and populism married thus with the staunch conservative attitude of

⁶⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁶⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁶⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁶⁷ *Despatch No. 389/1504 – POL 15204/1949*, 15th July 1949, DO 35/3178, NAKG.

⁶⁸ *Extract OPDOM No. 22*, 31st October 1950, DO 35/3178, NAKG.

⁶⁹ *Political Handbook of the Lahore Consular District*, n.d., NND 938750, NARA.

the former Chief Minister of West Punjab. What bound together this odd couple? How could the standard-bearer of refugees' claims ever act in concert with someone who was in the dock for the failure of his rehabilitation and resettlement policies? It was neither love at first sight nor an interesting case of opposites attracting. A small handbook on the post-1951 elections' political dynamics of the Pakistani Punjab provides a much-needed solution to this enigma. Here we find the Jinnah Awami League described as the result of the merger of "Mamdot's group [...] of landed gentry and moderate religious leaders" [with] Suhrawardy's [...] combination of refugees, orthodox Muslims and disappointed Muslim Leaguers".⁷⁰ A quick spot-the-difference exercise reveals the foundations on which the alliance was based. The wind of another electoral campaign imbued with religious symbolisms was sweeping throughout the whole of Pakistani Punjab. No later than 17th July 1950 some 10,000 persons had rallied at the Delhi Gate in Lahore under the banner of the Jamaat-i-Islami, visibly flagging up the relevance of an Islamic agenda to the local community.⁷¹ It was common knowledge that exploiting the refugee-local split as a way of gathering support would lead to an almost certain personal debacle. The reservation of seats made it somehow politically and electorally irrelevant. Refugees themselves appeared to have had their religious sensitivity further sharpened. Prominent welfare associations that were rooted in the local Islamic faith had been plugging many of the gaps present in the government schemes of resettlement. One of them – the *Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam* – had stepped up its efforts, and its orphanages and education institutions were working at full

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁷¹ *Peace Week in Lahore*, 28th July 1950, NND 948832, NARA.

stretch.⁷² Mamdot himself had handed over part of the activities of the refugee rehabilitation to the Jamaat-i-Islami and was now wooing again Maududi and his followers.⁷³ The contribution of moderate religious leaders and orthodox Muslims, who were the benchmark of the new political party, was worth thus its weight in gold.

As party hierarchies and balances of power revolved around the centre of gravity of personal or group interests and the redistribution of resources, all politicians were gearing themselves ready to fight the length and breadth of the whole Punjab.

With friends like these: checkmating political rivals

His emissaries had done a really good job. As they announced to him that the *Pir* of Alipur had agreed to endorse his campaign, Muhammad Munir – candidate for the refugee seat in Sialkot X – could not hide his relief. The *Pir* of Alipur had played a vital role in the crucial 1946 elections. Head of one the most important and renowned revivalist shrines in the whole of the Punjab, he had devoted his energy to supporting and spreading the demands of the Muslim League.⁷⁴ For Muhammad Munir having the *Pir* of Alipur on his side was thus a great privilege. He felt that he had victory in his grasp. A personalisation of both the political and campaign mechanisms that had been brought up to scratch during the Pakistan movement was taking place up and down the province. Existing

⁷² *Child Welfare Organisation in Pakistan – Despatch No. 303, 1957, NND 948832, NARA.*

⁷³ S. V. R. Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution. The Jama'at i-Islami of Pakistan*, London, 1994, pp. 116-28.

⁷⁴ D. Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam. Punjab and the Making of Pakistan*, Berkeley, 1988, p. 214.

literature, however, has largely overlooked the dynamics and the fallouts of 1951 elections.⁷⁵ Vigorous criticism of its irregularities has overshadowed analysis of the various ways in which these elections and their related campaign made an impact on the frail structure of both a nation and a state in the making. And while an attempt to plug the gap has been carried out by Sayyed Vali Reza Nasr in his 1988 book on the history of the Jamaat-i-Islam in independent Pakistan⁷⁶ his analysis is restricted to the aim of his research. As it unfolds the events that led would-be members of the Punjab Assembly and voters to be on a mutually profitable footing with each other, this section will argue the relevance of 1951 elections as a *momentum* that, even through the political ‘rehabilitation’ of refugees, shaped the local institutional arena as a stable and functional political system. As the electoral campaign stuck to the ongoing process of Islamisation of the local society, West Punjabi refugees, this section also contends, did not show that leftist political penchant that Prafullak Chakrabarti has attributed to their West Bengali counterparts.⁷⁷

If, in the earlier 1946 elections, *pirs* had channelled their support into the rooting of the Muslim League and of the idea of Pakistan among the rural masses, now they turned their hand to personally backing single candidates. The slogan that the *Pir* of Alipur, together with other local religious leaders, coined for Muhammad Munir was simple, straightforward and, in subtle ways, morally persuasive. Casting a vote for his *protégé* in 1951 would have saved anyone from

⁷⁵ That is, for instance, the case of T. Kamran, “Early Phase of Electoral Politics in Pakistan: 1950s”, *South Asian Studies*, 24, 1, 2009, pp. 257-82; M. Waseem, S. Shah Saud, Z. Habib and N. Khan, *Democratisation in Pakistan: A Study of 2002 Elections*, Karachi, 2006, p. 10.

⁷⁶ S. V. R. Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*, *op. cit.*

⁷⁷ P. K. Chakrabarti, *The Marginal Men: The Refugees and Left Political Syndrome in West Bengal*, Calcutta, 1990.

eternal damnation and the displeasure of God.⁷⁸ In the constituency of Gujrat XII things did not change. Over there another key figure of the 1945-6 campaign decided to take the field once more. A *naqshbandi* with close connections with the Ahl-e-Sunnat-o-Jamaat Ulama and a devoted supporter of the Quaid-i-Azam, *Pir* Jamaat Ali Shah defected to the ‘enemy’ and joined the ranks of the Jinnah Awami League. Had not his followers supported its candidate Saeed Muhammad, they would have incurred in both the divine and his own curse. In order to make his position further clearer, *Pir* Jamaat Ali Shah published a small leaflet to be distributed among all his *murids*. Its title – *Ilahi Wajib ul-Azadi* (On the Divine Duty of Freedom) – spelt its contents. A vote for Mamdot and Suharwardy’s candidate was described here as a “true service to the cause of Islam”.⁷⁹ With a couple of different ingredients, the same receipt was tested even among Jhang III constituents. A tiny Shi’a majority village not far from Athara Hazari hosted a three-day meeting that was organised under the auspices of the *Majlis-i-Izzar*.⁸⁰ As widely expected, voters were asked to have God and *imams*’ feelings at heart. Voting for Abid Hussain Shah would have certainly tipped the balance of the Divine Justice in favour of the salvation of their souls.

In a context where politics was not a matter for weaklings, the exploitation of religious symbols along personal lines all too easily became a two-edged sword that could open new wounds on the sensitive body of a nation in the making. Muhammad Arif Khan from the constituency of Jhang-I knew a thing or two about the dangerous dynamics that were inflaming the whole of the Punjab. *Pir* Khawja Allah Bakhsh of Shujabad, *Pir* Qasim Ali Shah of Farid Mahmood

⁷⁸ *Punjab Gazette*, 15th February 1952, UPL.

⁷⁹ *Punjab Gazette*, 7th March 1952, UPL.

⁸⁰ *Punjab Gazette*, 15th February 1952, UPL.

Kahtia and a few *maulvis* lent a helping hand to Mian Faiz Muhammad, and started touring the villages of the constituency to support his candidacy. Reportedly, slogans that branded Shias as *kafirs* and enemies of Islam and Sunnis informed the bulk of their campaign in favour of their chosen nominee.⁸¹ Islamic cosmogonies had previously edged 1945-6 electoral campaign as a result of the activity of local *pirs* and *sajjada nashins*, who, as David Gilmartin points out, had anticipated the future identity of Pakistan by first understanding and then spreading the idea of a religious and *Sharia*-based state.⁸² In point of fact, religious leaders such as *Pir* Bakhsh or Ali Shah not only hinted at the dilemmas that would troubled Pakistan history in future years, but they also instilled a specific everyday idea of belonging to both the local and national community. The perilous syllogism that this twist entailed cannot be ignored. In 1945-6 political and rurally religious rhetoric, a vote for the Muslim League and the Pakistan demand had embodied the quintessence of Punjabi Muslim-ness. The *kafirs* had been all those who had not followed this set ‘theological’ pattern.⁸³ Similar trends and ideas had re-surfaced in the local countryside soon after independence. “The community [Indian Christians]” – recorded a journalist from *The Times* (London) in late January 1948 – “[...] is being persecuted and maltreated by those who believe that Pakistan should be completely Islamic and by rabid nationalists who associate the Christians with the British [...] and contend that Christians should not be allowed to remain in Pakistan”.⁸⁴ Certain pockets of late 1940s and early 1950s Punjab accordingly experienced a further

⁸¹ *Ibidem*.

⁸² D. Gilmartin, “Religious Leadership and the Pakistan Movement in the Punjab”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 13, 3, 79, p. 516-17.

⁸³ B. D. Metcalf and T. R. Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 211-13.

⁸⁴ *The Times* (London), 26th January 1948.

radicalisation of that peculiar deviation that re-framed political and religious identities and dynamics along sectarian lines.

Apparently, even the colours that the Electoral Commission now picked to identify every single party and the boxes in which their ballots would eventually be cast were bent to serve a very similar purpose. “The yellow colour [...] seems to have been deliberately assigned to us, as it enabled the Muslim Leaguers to vilify our candidates and to indentify them with Sikhs and anti-Pakistanis. This propaganda has some effect on ignorant villagers”, complained Suhrawardy in a memorandum to US authorities.⁸⁵ Through the demarcation of a border that separated insiders from outsiders in relation to cultural differentia based on religion, this process of re-elaboration of the self proceeded inevitably to an early ethnicisation of social relations within the newly-created national community.⁸⁶

On a completely different level, the tendency to personalise an electoral campaign set the scene for a further strengthening of voter-representative bonds and for a stabilisation of the whole provincial political system. Trust, reputation and knowledge of the counterpart were the values that underpinned the intricate network of all personal relationships within local society.⁸⁷ On the eve of an election that would be conducted on the new and wider basis of the adult suffrage, *pirs* and *sajjada nashins* crowned those principles as a way of administering electoral ‘transactions’. The jockeying for political power on the one hand and limited material resources on the other enthroned them as mediators and reliable guarantors of any interaction between a candidate and its

⁸⁵ *Punjab Elections of 1951. A criticism of Suhrawardy – Enclosure No. 1*, 5th June 1951, NND 842430, NARA.

⁸⁶ F. Barth, “Introduction”, in F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the Social Organisation of Cultural Difference*, Boston, 1969, pp. 15-16.

⁸⁷ M. Mines, *Public Faces, Private Voices*, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-58.

constituents within the new institutional frame of a state-in-the-making. The machineries that had safeguarded the British colonial system of political control could be seen to be in motion once again. As in times past, religious leaders channelled political change by providing the means that were necessary to the local society to learn to live with it.⁸⁸ The body politics was thus playing by the same, well-known and reassuring rules that had informed the everyday life of persons and groups of individuals under the wing of colonial rule. Terms, conditions and eventual rewards were clear and familiar to anyone. One Saeed, refugee from Jullundhur, might have been a devotee of the *Pir* of Alipur but was probably a perfect stranger to Muhammad Munir. In turn, Munir might have just represented an anonymous picture on the glossy billboards that our Ahmed noticed across his suburb in the constituency of Sialkot X. The wheel was destined to turn full circle thanks to the intercession of the Alipur *pir*, who, by repairing the fabric of *biraderi* that Partition events had torn apart, would have been the point of intersection between Saeed and Muhammad's personal and public lives.

The whole system was not, of course, free from flaws and imperfections. As a consequence, candidates in these provincial elections deployed a wide range of remedies to counteract all the possible threats that loomed over their appointment. On the day of the poll, private transport companies or simple vans' owners did a roaring trade. With their prices revised upwards, both professional and makeshift drivers roamed around local constituencies to give a lift to the nearer polling station to those persons who were present on the lists with which

⁸⁸ D. B. C. O'Brien, *The Mourides of Senegal*, Oxford, 1971, pp. 179-89.

politicians had previously supplied them.⁸⁹ Surprisingly, however, the form of the ballot paper and voting procedures proved to be the real aces up the candidates' sleeves. The counterfoil of every ballot paper quoted the constituency, the number of the polling station and the number of the elector or the elector roll with the particulars indicating the electoral roll or the part of the electoral roll in which the number was entered.⁹⁰ If the vote was supposed to be confidential, then these details turned it into an open secret. Secrecy was further violated when, by sticking to the regulations printed on the outer foil, voters casted their "ballot paper in the ballot box of the colour allotted to the candidate for whom [...] [they wished] to vote".⁹¹ As troops of party agents and workers literally garrisoned the entire network of West Punjab polling stations, no one could afford to waltz on a promise.⁹² Electoral laws put an official seal on the rise of those socially well-rooted and favoured-based dynamics of mutual interdependency to the ways of administering politics and the relationship between representatives and voters. This expedient allowed potential members of the Punjab Assembly to keep a very tight rein on the patronage mechanisms of punishments/rewards at precisely the time when the introduction of the adult suffrage and the arrival of millions of refugees were asking for a re-negotiation of hierarchies and balances of power.⁹³ The high costs of those activities that would have aimed at curbing all kinds of opportunistic behaviour were kept to a

⁸⁹ *Punjab Gazette*, 15th February 1952, UPL and *Punjab Gazette*, 22nd February 1952, UPL.

⁹⁰ *West Punjab Gazette – Extraordinary Issue*, 23rd December 1950, UPL.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*.

⁹² *Punjab Gazette*, 22nd February 1952, UPL.

⁹³ R. A. Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*, New Haven, 1961, p. 16; J. H. Whyte, "Landlord influence at elections in Ireland, 1760-1885", *English Historical Review*, 80, 1965, pp. 740-9.

minimum, and candidates could afford the luxury of scrutinising the behaviour of each and every individual.

Extrajudicial solutions were sought and implemented on several occasions across the whole region both during the campaign and on the Election Day. Candidates easily bypassed legal requirements, frequently asserting the supremacy of a play-it-dirty politics over a bungling bureaucracy. “How do you get an elephant into a voting booth? Register him!”, urged a poster that was commissioned by the US Democratic Party.⁹⁴ But in early 1950s Punjab registering a voter was easier said than done. The labyrinthine swarm of rules and regulation that governed the inclusion of individuals in the local electoral rolls produced very hastily prepared records. In Ward No. 9, Gujranwala, for instance, all the 22,000 persons who were entitled to vote were listed in alphabetical order but no clear information was provided with regards to their residence.⁹⁵ Proper identification of voters was thus almost impossible. Unfamiliar to local people and to each other and unable to prove their identity through proper evidence, refugees not surprisingly represented the weakest link on the chain and a much-exploited loophole for cunning politicians.⁹⁶ As they arrived at their local polling stations, many voters found that their names had been left out of the rolls or witnessed psychic phenomena such as those of dead men walking and, even more important, voting.⁹⁷ Someone else was allowed to vote well after the time limit or by, contrast, they discovered that unknowns had

⁹⁴ Poster commissioned by the Republican Party, National Museum of American History, Kenneth E. Behring Centre – Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC.

⁹⁵ *Punjab Elections of 1951. A criticism of Suharwardy – Enclosure No. 1*, 5th June 1951, NND 842430, NARA.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁹⁷ *Punjab Gazette*, 15th February 1952, UPL.

cast their vote on their behalf.⁹⁸ In this fight to the death, some members and supporters of the opposition parties were illegally detained and women brutally intimidated.⁹⁹

The day of the declaration in early April 1951 of the poll promised anger, relief, smiles and a few surprises. When the whistle for full time was blown, the Muslim League was leading by 143 seats to 54.¹⁰⁰ By late July 1951 the curious political phenomenon of shifting alliances in order to suit personal needs had taken a heavy toll among the ranks of the Opposition parties, and resulted in a swelling of the Muslim League membership within the Assembly by 23 seats.¹⁰¹ No one however escaped his own fate or the future that he had carefully made for himself. *Pirs* and *sajjada nashins* hit the bull's eye once more. Muhammad Munir, Abid Hussain Shah and Saeed Muhammad won easy victories over their contestants.¹⁰² For their part, even *biraderi* did not fail to live up to the expectations of all those voters whose family networks and alliances had survived the fury of the Partition and the resettlement policies. Indeed, Abdul Hamid Khan, Sajjad Ali Khan, Zafar Hussain, Abdul Aziz and Altaf Mohy ud-Din would proudly cross the threshold of the building designed by Bazel M. Salune and take oath as members of the Punjab Assembly.¹⁰³ Ejected in early 1951 from the Muslim League and thus deprived of the protection that the party granted its members and the followers of its members, Iftikharuddin and his new Azad Pakistan Party grabbed a single seat and an unsatisfying 2.4% of the total

⁹⁸ *Punjab Elections of 1951. A criticism of Suharwardy – Enclosure No. 1*, 5th June 1951, NND 842430, NARA.

⁹⁹ *Punjab Gazette*, 15th February 1952, UPL and *Punjab Gazette*, 22nd February 1952, UPL.

¹⁰⁰ *Elections in Pakistan*, 24th April 1956, NND 937328, NARA.

¹⁰¹ M. R. Afzal, *Political Parties in Pakistan, 1947-58*, Islamabad, 2001, Vol. I, p. 99.

¹⁰² *Punjab Gazette*, 2nd April 1951, UPL.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*.

votes cast.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless refugees had unquestionably reshuffled the pack and altered the composition of the Assembly. At least 11 out of the 21 members who had benefited from the transfer of seats back in 1947 had either renounced the opportunity to run a campaign or lost their seats.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the refugee-saturated cities of Lahore, Lyallpur, Jhang, Rawalpindi and Sialkot demanded a substantial re-graduation of the lenses through which hierarchies and balances were observed in both ‘normal’ and reserved-seats.¹⁰⁶

A revamped provincial Assembly was thus undoubtedly a gamble with both the future and the past in terms of the fulfilment of electoral promises and members’ need to come to terms with their new role and responsibilities as state actors. Settlements of scores and blood feuds would steep Punjabi party politics and the region in blood. It was all about letting things take their course.

The after-match party of the 1951 elections

In late 1952 the malaise of two *zamindars* and prominent members of the Punjab Assembly, Syed Naubahar Shah and Nasrullah Khan, reminded parliamentarians and fellow Muslim League associates of previous agreements and undertakings.¹⁰⁷ The Punjab Tenancy (Amendment) Act, 1952 and the ongoing party debate on a possible reform of the tenant-landlord relationship were bitter pills to swallow. A vociferous campaign marked by vicious declarations and by the retaliatory decision to withdraw wheat from local markets and smuggle it to

¹⁰⁴ *The Dawn* (Karachi), 30th March 1951.

¹⁰⁵ *Punjab Gazette*, 2nd April 1951, UPL.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁷ *Extract from Lahore Report 25/52*, 19th December 1952, DO 35/5153, NAKG.

India was gaining momentum and meeting general approval among Punjabi landlords and Muslim Leaguers. Reportedly at least 30 party members were ready to join the ranks of these two dissident *zamindars* and erect barricades in order to protect their interests from any further attempt to reform the primary sector.¹⁰⁸ When Syed Naubahar Shah threatened to resign, Daultana caught him on the wrong foot and ordered his and Nasrullah Khan's expulsion from the Muslim League. It was one of those cases when someone is used as a mouthpiece. Syed Naubahar Shah and Nasrullah Khan's isolation from the party was tantamount to a marginalisation from the political nerve centre and to a debarment from their 'right' to milk the state *apparata* and effectively mould government policies. Apparently all the other landlords and members of the Punjab Assembly received Daultana loud and clear. Indeed the revolt was put down and, as an officer to the British High Commission (Lahore) reported, "held in check at least for the time being".¹⁰⁹

But both Syed Naubahar Shah and Nasrullah Khan signed their own political death warrants. Their flirtatious attempts to climb onto the bandwagon of the Jinnah Awami League ran into the buffers of Suharwardy's resolute disapproval.¹¹⁰ The skyrocketing prices of *atta* and other food grains were lending weight and quality to the political platforms of all the Opposition parties. In February 1952 the Jamaat-i-Islami, the Azad Pakistan Party and the Communist Party combined their efforts with the Islam League in the organisation of a march in protest at government inability to tackle the

¹⁰⁸ *Internal Politics – Despatch No. 118*, n.d., NND 842450, NARA.

¹⁰⁹ *Extract from Lahore Report 25/52*, 19th December 1952, DO 35/5153, NAKG.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

emergency.¹¹¹ An 8,000-strong attendance spotlighted the potential of the issue in terms of both electoral and party successes.¹¹² The sabotage of the Punjabi markets that had been concocted by the two ejected *zamindars* partially contributed to the price rise and epitomised the extent of outright resistance to any eventual agrarian reform. Consequently, the Opposition's leaders were not willing to lose popular support by taking Syed Naubahar Shah and Nasrullah Khan on board.¹¹³ Despite the intrinsic weaknesses of his party, Suharwardy's sun appeared not to be about to set. Sir Khizr Hayat Tiwana, whose surname spelt decades of Punjabi political history, recorded that the year 1952 ended with authority of the leader of the Jinnah Awami League rapidly growing.¹¹⁴

Sometimes even the most experienced politicians can make a mistake. From the very beginning, the Pakistani press showed a certain knack of gossiping and plotting conspiracies. Rumours now circulated that the strains within the coalition between Khan of Mamdot and the Bengali politician were shaking the Punjab branch of the Jinnah Awami League to its roots.¹¹⁵ It was no secret that the appointment of Suharwardy to the Cabinet would have calmed his polemic against the Government down.¹¹⁶ The cracks that were damaging the architrave of the alliance started to appear in the public domain in April 1953 and set the tone for those speculations that would pack newspapers in the following days. The Khan of Mamdot rebuffed his nomination as a member of the party Working

¹¹¹ *Riot in Lahore – Despatch No. 146*, 27th February 1952, NND 842430, NARA.

¹¹² *Civil and Military Gazette* (Lahore), 25th February 1952.

¹¹³ *Extract from Lahore Report 25/52*, 19th December 1952, DO 35/5153, NAKG.

¹¹⁴ *Extract from Lahore Report 24/52*, 5th December 1952, DO 35/5152, NAKG.

¹¹⁵ *Extract from Fortnight Report from UKHC (Lahore) for the Fortnight ending on 5th May 1953*, 5th May 1953, DO 35/5152, NAKG.

¹¹⁶ *Extract from Lahore Report 3/53*, 5th January 1953, DO 35/5152, NAKG.

Committee, sending his political companion in arms into a rage.¹¹⁷ A couple of interesting pieces of news and a fresh proposal coming from the Punjab Muslim League headquarters were the straws that eventually broke the camel's back. Under the pressure of the devastating events and fallout of the 1953 anti-Ahmadiyya riots¹¹⁸, Daultana stepped down as both Chief Minister and President of the Punjab Muslim League. Firoz Khan Noon was called to the high offices of both the party and institutional seats and immediately sketched out his course of action. The standout point of his political platform encapsulated the introduction of a method of allotment of evacuee agricultural lands that stuck to the equal shares of the properties that refugee landlords had left behind in India.¹¹⁹ Suharwardy vehemently rejected the proposal as, in his own words, it “was done at the expenses of the poorer refugees”.¹²⁰ He then went too far and urged a nationalisation of all landed property. Unsurprisingly, the statement brought the situation within the Jinnah Awami League's ranks to breaking point. Mamdot, who felt very exposed, stormed out slamming the party's door behind him. Yet, in the early years of Pakistan's history, political love affairs rarely lasted for a long time and old flames were rekindled quite frequently. In November 1953 Mamdot made his triumphal return to the Muslim League. A convention of the Punjab Jinnah League, which was back in the land of militant politics after two

¹¹⁷ *Extract from Lahore Report*, 24th April 1953, DO 35/5152, NAKG.

¹¹⁸ On this point see, D. Abenante, “The Roots of Political Instability in Pakistan: the anti-Qadiani controversy, 1949-1953”, *Sociologia*, 3, 2000, pp. 3-21; S. R. Valentine, *Islam and the Ahmadiyya Jama'at. History, Belief, Practice*, London, 2008.

¹¹⁹ *Extract from Lahore Report II*, 4th June 1953, DO 35/5152, NAKG.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*.

years of inactivity, voted for the amalgamation of the party with the Muslim League and allowed its 17 members of the Punjab Assembly to cross the floor.¹²¹

Politically speaking, Suharwardy had become a marked man. In September 1953 a few notable Punjabi political leaders declared that the distinction between ‘locals’ and ‘refugees’ had become meaningless by then.¹²² All those black flags that welcomed the leader of the Jinnah Awami League to Lahore on 1st May 1954 brought his political experience within the local area to an end and forecast the continuing marginalisation of refugees’ claims and needs from mainstream party debates.¹²³

The present chapter has argued that the early years of Pakistan’s political and parliamentary history were not an ‘abject failure’.¹²⁴ If considered and analysed as a closed-unit system, the region of Punjab was mired in dynamics that progressively stabilised the political and institutional arena. The mutual interplay of party dynamics, electoral rules and local socio-anthropological features produced the ‘antibodies’ that protected the body politics from the germs of instability and unruliness. Indeed, the resettlement and rehabilitation of refugees on the lands of West Punjab proves to be the most suitable prism through which this phenomenon can be carefully observed.

As both institutional actors and civil society reflected upon the representation

¹²¹ *Extract from Fortnight Report from Acting Deputy HC (Lahore) for the Fortnight ending on 1st December 1953*, 1st December 1953, DO 35/5153, NAKG.

¹²² *The Dawn* (Karachi), 3rd September 1953.

¹²³ *Lahore Report Nr. 39*, 7th May 1954, DO 35/5153, NAKG.

¹²⁴ I. Talbot, *Pakistan. A Modern History*, New York-Basingstone, 2005, p. 126.

of Partition refugees within the Punjab Assembly, politicians and bureaucratic cadres played up their mutual interdependency. The dislocation that had resulted from the migration of millions of persons and the scramble for limited public resources prompted politics and bureaucracy to increase their reliance on patronage values and personal ties. Playing by the rules of politics thus meant playing by the rules of the local society. Traditional religious figures such as *pirs* and *sajjada nashins* added the icing on the cake by channelling political change and helping to provide a viable political platform. Still, was this enough to create a nation and instil a sense of belonging to it?

Chapter 5

Self-portraits in spherical mirrors: Partition

refugees and the elaboration of the ‘basic (dis)order’ of Pakistan

“The new constitution [...] the new constitution.” But no one understood what he was referring to. “What are you shouting about? [...] What new laws and rights are you shouting about? [...] The new laws are the same old ones.”
(S. H. Manto, *The New Constitution*)

Challenging the widely-accepted assumption of a smooth and homogenous resettlement of West Punjabi refugees offers new insights into both the federal and regional elaboration of a foreign and domestic policy agenda during Pakistan’s early years. As talks on the new Constitution plodded on into the 1950s, the everyday interaction between institutions and State authorities within Pakistan and across the border with India took the centre-stage by in practice replacing the Constituent Assembly. The early, cloudy, engagement of local authorities with wider debates over the role of institutions, foreign policy and the consolidation of a national community frequently softened the resilience of the particular socio-anthropological structures that underpinned local politics and its electoral dynamics. Pakistan’s obsessions, self-perceived weaknesses and bungled attempts to dovetail its multiple and composite identities thus reverberated through the day-to-day management of the persisting humanitarian crisis that was Partition and its aftermath.

Indeed, rehabilitation and resettlement practices almost immediately became sucked into the competing narratives on Pakistan’s polity and ‘ship’ of state. Hence this chapter’s first section explores the ways in which the need to accommodate millions of destitute persons mingled with a quest to re-define the

system of government, the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, and freedom of the press. It sheds light on what shaped the underlying basic norms and order – perhaps even the only ones that have survived *coups d'état* and revisions – that informed the drafting of the Constitution of Pakistan.¹

Contrary to popular belief, their dispute over Kashmir did not provide the tinder for the early, and enduring, rivalry that emerged between India and Pakistan. It was refugees, their places of origin and/or status, that first set the pace for the troubled future of South Asian stability. This chapter's second section accordingly focuses on the diplomacy of the unspoken subtleties that anthropologically and intimately balked any hope for a peaceful settlement of the controversies that divided the two newly-created independent States. The 'Manichean' distinction between migrants from agreed and non-agreed areas and the mapping of evacuee properties operate here as the prism through which Pakistan's paranoia and troubled relationship with India during this period can be revealed.

In addition, the idea of Pakistan, itself a peculiar refugee, had from the outset to compete with the resistance of pre-existing local identities and provincial feuds. As the burgeoning numbers of refugees spilled over and were relocated to neighbouring regions, the federal authorities had to rule with an iron rod in order to try to instil a stronger feeling of belonging to a wider national community among both ordinary citizens and the country's various provincial authorities. This chapter's final section thus investigates how far the will to harmonise all the different sections of local society informed the coercive transfer of hundreds of

¹ On this idea and the definition of basic norm (*Grundnorm*) see H. Kelsen, *Verteidigung der Demokratie: Abhandlungen zur Demokratietheorie*, Tübingen, 2006; H. Kelsen, *Reine Rechtslehre. Einleitung in die rechtswissenschaftliche Problematik*, Tübingen, 2008.

thousands of refugees to Sindh and the introduction of the One-Unit arrangements in 1955.

All that glitters is not gold: refugees, resettlement policies and the challenge of creating an everyday state

The office was tiny and slightly claustrophobic. Heaped up everywhere, stacks of paper sent out a clearly perceivable smell of must. A civil servant took his eyes off the newspaper. “Speak of the devil, and he is bound to appear”, he mumbled. It was a day of informal meetings at the Punjab Assembly. A Minister had just entered the room to collect a copy of those documents he needed. As he sneaked a look at the newspaper, the member of the provincial Cabinet understood immediately what the functionary who was in front of him thought. He too had read that day’s edition of *Dawn* (Karachi) while having breakfast. The first couple of lines had been enough to spoil his appetite and his day. Both the Pakistan and the Punjab provincial governments were there severely reprimanded for their inability to cope with the crisis that had arisen from the massive migration of millions of persons.²

In those early post-Partition days, the refugee emergency was a stark but accurate reflection of the state of affairs that existed within the institutional nerve centres of West Punjab and the whole of Pakistan. The *Dawn* (Karachi) columnist who set down his thoughts and his firm rebuke in a vitriolic editorial touched a raw nerve. Government authorities were bungling any attempt at sharing the burden of rehabilitating the refugees. The difficulties of the state and

² Letter of UKHC (Karachi) Archibald Carter, KUB, KCIE, Joint Permanent under Secretary of State, 29th December 1947, DO 142/440, NAKG.

the provincial authorities in facing up to the nation- and state-building processes have always been acknowledged for their ‘centripetal side effects’. “There is a deep-seated jealousy and an aberrant inferiority complex among many Pakistanis over Indian abilities and achievements”, pointed out a US attaché in a 1956 memorandum.³ These feelings, coupled with the paranoid fear of an imminent fatal attack from India, informed what Ayesha Jalal has called the “Pakistan’s political economy of defence”, and paved the way for a number of studies on the military-imbued outward appearance of Pakistan’s institutional identity.⁴ Nevertheless, acts and deeds on the part of both federal and provincial institutions showcased intrinsic inadequacies that were independent from Pakistan’s relations with India or the plots of the ‘high politics’, and which affected the ways authorities instilled an everyday sense of belonging or feeling of citizenship among all Pakistanis.

This new slant on the institution-building processes of an everyday state lies at the heart of the present chapter. The fallout from the refugee humanitarian emergency in terms of shaping the ‘Establishment’ still remains unexplored by historians and other social scientists, despite its clear potential for shedding light on the nature of political and institutional developments in Pakistan during the post-Partition years. The perceived absence of a state, the almost morbid attachment to charismatic figures and the disorienting experience of the bureaucratic maze that marked the refugee experience will be revealed here

³ *Office Memorandum*, 10th October 1956, NND 897209, NARA.

⁴ A. Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule, The Origins of Pakistan’s Political Economy of Defence*, Cambridge, 1990. Further examples of this historiographical trend include H. Haqqani, *Pakistan. Between Mosque and Military*, Washington DC, 2005; S. Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army and the Wars Within*, Karachi, 2008; A. Siddiq, *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan’s Military Economy*, London, 2007.

through an exploration of their potential for acting as proactive constituent parts of the everyday state of Pakistan.

The tension between the Pakistan and the West Punjab Cabinets was palpable. No later than November 1947, three provincial Ministers crossed swords with the Government of Pakistan and threatened to resign. Indeed, the repeated interference by the Centre in the management and early resettlement of the refugees sent the latter into a rage.⁵ All things considered, it was the West Punjab government that was paying the bill – admittedly a huge one – for their rehabilitation. Projections left no room for doubt or speculation. By the end of March 1950, the West Punjab Exchequer would have to pay out more than Rs. 80,000,000 for the maintenance and the early accommodation of Partition refugees.⁶ Unofficial reports claimed however that the figures might have been higher. Local districts did not keep any record of the financial sacrifices they were making to fund the rehabilitation of the migrant community.⁷ Ministers candidly admitted that they had lost count of the expenses they had incurred in the early months of independence.⁸ “The Government did everything they could regardless of cost [...] using up [even] their food reserves”, revealed one of them.⁹

Grants-in-aid and loans that were being released by central authorities were tiny drops in the bucket. Indeed, in March 1950, the Government of Pakistan set the bar for its funding at Rs. 30,750,000.¹⁰ The drastic fall in local revenues

⁵ *The Times* (London), 11th November 1947.

⁶ *Partial Text of Statement by Dr. Mahmud Husain, Deputy Finance Minister, on the Status of Refugee Rehabilitation*, n.d., NND 948832, NARA.

⁷ *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 2nd March 1954, PCSL.

⁸ A-2, 8th October 1947, NND 765024, NARA.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ *Facts and Figures on Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation*, 19th October 1950, NND 948832, NARA.

placed a further strain on those provincial public finances that would soon run up an astonishing Rs. 68,500,000 debt.¹¹ The bad habit of embroiling problems and difficulties in an endless demarcation dispute was – and would be – difficult to eradicate. “You try to transfer your responsibility to the Centre and the Centre transfers the responsibility to you and you go on hoodwinking the people [refugees] from the start to finish”, C. E. Gibbon, member of the Punjab Assembly for the Pakistani Christian and Anglo-Pakistani III seat, threw in the teeth of the then Chief Minister Malik Firoz Khan Noon.¹² Unsurprisingly, the whirl of mutual allegations and institutional skirmishes dragged down even the galaxy of those agencies that were being set up to smooth over difficulties and controversies.

This was the case, for instance, of the Pakistan-Punjab Joint Refugee Council. Established in October 1947 with the declared aim of coordinating the rehabilitation policies, it soon turned into the umpteenth battlefield where the two contenders challenged each other to a duel.¹³ The institutional ‘memorandum of association’ of this joint authority did not bode well by having a considerable embryonic vice of form. Admittedly, it justified any eventual misuse of power on the part of the central authorities. Invested with the power of asking provincial officials to submit reports without previous authorisation from the provincial minister, the Joint Refugee Council attracted, rather unsurprisingly, the wrath of West Punjabi authorities.¹⁴ Ministers banged their fists on the table, and perceived institutional sin found their transgressors out. In late March 1948 Chief

¹¹ *The Times* (London), 22nd October 1947 and *Partial Text of the Statement by Dr. Mahmud Husain, Deputy Finance Minister, on the Status of Refugee Rehabilitation*, n.d., NND 948832, NARA.

¹² *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 19th March 1954, PCSL.

¹³ *Pakistan Constituent Assembly*, 20th March 1953, PCSL.

¹⁴ *Political Alignments in the West Punjab – Confidential No. 25*, 28th November 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

Minister of the Punjab the Khan of Mamdot pointed the finger at the Federal Minister for the Resettlement and Rehabilitation of Refugees Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, who was apparently guilty of taking action without previous consulting his provincial counterpart.¹⁵ As expected, broadsides over personal political rivalries and rumours of ‘palace conspiracies’ would foul the institutional debate and allow the matter as well as the problems to fester. In spite of the eventual release of soothing statements, the aggrieved would tie a knot in his handkerchief and come out with the new old story of jurisdictional limits at the earliest opportunity.¹⁶ This latter – actually the most solemn one – arose in 1956. Indeed, the Constitution that was promulgated that year finally ‘dotted the i’s’. The central authorities, namely the President of Pakistan, authoritatively reserved the right to give directions to and legislate on behalf of a province, should “the security or economic life of Pakistan or any part thereof, [...] [be] threatened [...] by internal disturbances beyond the power of a Provincial Government to control”.¹⁷

Ministers, authorities and members of both the Constituent and provincial assemblies staged a comedy of errors and manners that reverberated around the early attempts by the Pakistani state to instil a sense of institutional belonging among the refugees. “The [refugees] are now an essential and valued element in our life, and it must be our constant and sacred endeavour to heal from the soul the sting of the memory of unspeakable suffering, both of body and mind, which they have undergone”, made clear Daultana in February 1952 by recalling to the other members the Punjab Assembly the speech that he had delivered as Minister

¹⁵ *IT to CRO – Opdom No. 25*, 25th-31st March 1948, DO 142/438, NAKG.

¹⁶ *IT to CRO – Opdom No. 29*, 8th-14th April 1948, DO 142/438, NAKG.

¹⁷ Art. 129 Const., *Constitution of Pakistan*, 1956, PPL.

of Finance in the same room back in 1948.¹⁸ Now, in his capacity of Chief Minister, Daultana reaffirmed his commitment to the rehabilitation of refugees. As he pointed out in his somehow purple prose, “every year that has passed since, every year with its own history of sufferings heroically borne and of endeavours magnificently justified has confirmed [...] [him] in the views and the hopes [...] [he] then expressed”.¹⁹ The Government of Punjab’s pledges to put an end to refugees’ hardships certainly did not appear to be far-fetched and were reflected in the hundreds of channels through which funding flew into their pockets. Fee-waiver concessions and stipends for students or substantial rebates on rents and taxes aimed, for instance, at not leaving any refugee lagging behind.²⁰ Under the shadow of Anarkali’s tomb, a committee of local officers arranged marriages for abducted women who were hosted in temporary structures.²¹ As provincial government employees and prominent politicians turned the rooms of the Punjab Civil Secretariat into an introduction agency, the well-known and legendary slave lady was getting her own peculiar revenge.

The provincial scheme of protecting refugees’ rights to their welfare was, however, not all of a piece with the federal one. “The Government [of Pakistan] believes that the refugees should be able to stand on their own feet and not be dependent upon any system of dole whatever its shape may be”, hit back in 1953 the then Federal Minister of Refugees and Rehabilitation Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi.²² Since the very early years of its independence, the Government of Pakistan had not been willing to back the dependency culture that the measures

¹⁸ *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 29th February 1952, PCSL.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 12th March 1952, PCSL and *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 18th December 1952, PCSL.

²¹ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 10th December 1954.

²² *Pakistan Constituent Assembly*, 17th March 1953, PCSL.

of its provincial counterpart – although frequently unwittingly – stirred up. The Pakistan Refugee Rehabilitation Finance Corporation Ordinance Act was only one among the hundreds of laws that embodied the rationale behind the federal attempts at moulding refugees’ sense of belonging to a wider institutional community. Promulgated in 1948, it set up a fund to further the rehabilitation of all artisan refugees.²³ Yet, as the British High Commissioner found out after a careful examination of the twists and turns of the act, the Corporation could not benefit those persons who had no capital to invest and were unable to offer proper financial credentials.²⁴ Federal authorities thus goaded people to breaking free of the chains of paternalistic approaches. They were probably related to Moni Mohsin’s fictional Aunty Pussy: “And As Aunty Pussy’s always said, ‘God helps those who help themselves’ ...”.²⁵ Nevertheless, federal officials did not set great store by those intrinsic weaknesses that dogged Pakistan and made their institutional projects overt the local society mere wishful thinking. Schools, medical and recreational facilities and houses – the building blocs of the socio-institutional architecture that the Government of Pakistan was trying to erect – proved in practice unable to handle day-to-day office routines, let alone sharing the burden of ambitious federal state- and nation-building processes.²⁶ Litmus test of the federal government institutional efforts, the Refugee Rehabilitation Finance Corporation proved to be an utter failure. In January 1954, local refugees and societies had claimed less than one fourth of the whole Rs. 3-crore allocated fund.²⁷

²³ *The Gazette of Pakistan*, 9th April 1948, PCSL.

²⁴ *UKHC to SSCR*, 16th April 1948, DO 142/438, NAKG.

²⁵ M. Mohsin, *Tender Hooks*, London, 2011, p. 13.

²⁶ *Children Welfare Organisation in Pak – Despatch No. 303*, 1957, NND 948832, NARA.

²⁷ Board of Trade – Commercial Relations and Exports Department, *Pakistan. Economic and Commercial Conditions in Pakistan (May 1954)*, London, 1955, pp. 122-3.

Scanty administrative personnel and the lack of a reliable and widespread network of both senior and junior officers added further fuel to the fire of the demarcation disputes that were inflaming the relationship between the Centre and the province of West Punjab. The resettlement of millions of refugees was, as a journalist from *The Times* (London) observed, a problem of “gigantic proportions [...] which [was] completely beyond the capacity of the civil authorities to handle”.²⁸ ‘Hastily improvised’ and ‘lacking in essential components’ were indeed the labels that foreign observers recurrently affixed to the federal and provincial governments.²⁹ Both the executive and the legislative *apparata* were themselves well aware of the problem, and worked to remedy the situation by devolving pockets of power and authority to their sister State bodies as well as to civil society. Calling for the creation of a peculiar institutional solidarity fund in effect disguised an admission of state powerlessness. Unsurprisingly, the result was a total mess over responsibilities, competences and roles.

In August 1947 local magistrates – deemed to be ‘special’ – handed over the control of the towns of West Punjab and the restoration of the law and order therein to the military.³⁰ However, this latter, it seems, failed to honour its commitments. In fact, tribesmen and policemen compensated for the omissions of the army and ensured the security of common citizens.³¹ The hustle and bustle of the army, the local police and influential men overlapped with the activities of the brand new Home Guards, whose duties involved the protection of persons,

²⁸ *The Times* (London), 25th August 1947.

²⁹ *The Times* (London), 26th February 1948.

³⁰ *Telegram*, 20th August 1947, NND 765024, NARA.

³¹ *The Times* (London), 26th February 1948.

the security of properties and the public safety.³² Officers in uniforms looked after abducted women across the whole of the region. Army-run refugee temporary structures mushroomed and surpassed in efficiency those that were administered by the civilian authorities.³³ This clutter of activities consequently diverted the attention of the Pakistan Army from those tasks that were naturally in keeping with its institutional vocation. In late 1948 an undeclared war was indeed being fought along the border of the West Punjab. On the Indian side of the frontier, slit trenches, gun emplacements and troop movements added spice to life in neighbouring villages and towns.³⁴ For all that, Pakistan experienced a “complete lack of any similar warlike measures” as even the stronghold of Lahore was believed to be “untenable in case of large scale attack from across the border”.³⁵ Movements of troops ricocheted from one side of the frontier to the other and frequently exposed the weakness of Pakistan’s countervailing moves. In July 1951, for instance, Pakistan authorities detailed only a single infantry division and a couple of armoured brigades to counteract the Indian deployment of two infantry divisions, an armoured brigade and an armoured division along the roads leading to the Indian capital.³⁶ Previously, on 17th September 1948, a handful of policemen had been left to patrol the village of Viamian in Lahore District and put up a six-hour fight with the Indian platoons that were stationed in Lulakot and Pulkanjiri.³⁷

The Pakistan state was apparently waiving its claim to the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence by deputing it to its private citizens. Chaudhri Mehtab

³² *West Punjab Gazette – Extraordinary Issue*, 4th September 1947, UPL.

³³ *The Times* (London), 20th January 1948.

³⁴ A-23, 30th September 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ *Outline of Indian and Pakistani Troops Movements*, 1st August 1951, NND 897209, NARA.

³⁷ A-23, 30th September 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

Khan, member of the West Pakistan Assembly for Lahore District, brought the issue to the fore during a Question and Answer session in late September 1957. It had recently come to his knowledge that those refugees who had been re-settled along the border areas of the former West Punjab had received “a sufficient quantity of arms for their defence”.³⁸ The Chief Minister’s sheltering behind state secrecy was almost equal to an admission of guilt. “When a lady says no, she means perhaps. When she says perhaps, she means yes. But when she says yes, she is no lady”, warns a well-known quotation that is attributed to Otto von Bismarck. Pakistani political communication was not in reality that different from the cryptic messages of a flirtatious genteel woman, and local politicians did not certainly want to compromise their reputation.

The everyday life of those citizens – mainly refugees – who lived along the West Punjab-side of the border and the incidents that occurred there on what seemed like a daily basis were banned talking points in almost all public debates. The experience of the border itself was at times surreal, alienating and disorienting for both federal and provincial authorities and the average Pakistani. Until January 1960 the partitioning line between Pakistan and India along the districts of Lahore and Montgomery was neither fully drawn nor mapped out yet.³⁹ India and Pakistan would take a further year to implement the 1960 agreement and finally exchange areas and, once again, new refugees. Monsoon floods frequently diverted the course of the rivers and re-charted the uncertain geography of Radcliffe Award. In 1950, for instance, some people who had been resettled on the Pakistani borderland found themselves to be – almost overnight –

³⁸ *Provincial Assembly of West Pakistan*, 20th September 1957, PCSL.

³⁹ *West Pakistan-India Border Talks – Despatch No. 41*, 25th August 1961, NND 948832, NARA.

on the Indian-side of the river Sutlej.⁴⁰ After all, as the moony protagonist of *Tender Hooks* would comment sixty years later in her funny broken English, even “in Defence Phase V, on the very hedge of Lahore, where all upstarters live [...] the army only started making into plots and selling [the land] to people five years ago. Before it was boarder [sic] with India”.⁴¹

When asked to supply figures and information on the Indian incursions into their territory, Pakistan’s authorities usually hid behind professional confidentiality.⁴² The Chief Minister of West Pakistan Sardar Abdur Rasheed Khan was no exception to the rule. Nevertheless, the case and the dust that Chaudhri Mehtab Khan had raised did not risk failing through lack of proof. Smuggling and activities “prejudicial to the economy and security of Pakistan” appeared to have become the favourite pastime and, in many cases, a proper job for many refugees that had been resettled near the border defence zone.⁴³ Back in 1951 the Government of West Punjab had backed the creation of the so-called *Qaum Razakars*.⁴⁴ In fact, these voluntary groups were given the task of tackling rising crime and instilling a sense of discipline by means of the institutionalisation of a number of spontaneous associations that had previously cropped up across the region in defence of the country. For all the government’s efforts to make the border into an impermeable membrane, fluidity and porosity ate away at the film that was meant to protect Pakistan from any incursion and illegal activity.⁴⁵ In March 1959, federal authorities blackmailed local residents to curb all the activities and transactions of the black market. Persisting in

⁴⁰ *Memorandum No. 1661-56/1403-R (P)*, 17th April 1956, PCSL.

⁴¹ M. Mohsin, *Tender*, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

⁴² *A-29*, 6th December 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

⁴³ *West Pakistan Martial Law No.9, dealing with the Properties in and Residents of the Indo-Pakistan Border Areas – Despatch No. 123*, 24th March 1959, NND 948832, NARA.

⁴⁴ *Punjab Gazette*, 18th May 1951, UPL.

⁴⁵ *West Punjab Gazette*, 22nd October 1947, UPL.

staying behind their peculiar deals would have cost runners their immovable properties and earn them the not particularly enviable status of ‘undesirable persons’.⁴⁶

However, the perceived feeling of inadequacy on the part of the authorities did not stop at the threshold of a consequent militarisation of the everyday or the delegation of part of its monopoly on the legitimate use of violence to private citizens and paramilitary associations. In August 1948 the Government of West Punjab fell back on the Punjab Public Safety Act to rein in the local press and curb criticism and dissenting voices.⁴⁷ This would then become an essential feature of the early years of Pakistan’s history. Indeed, just twelve months later, its renewal met with total indifference and surprisingly tame acquiescence.⁴⁸ The list of censored publications seemed endless. Apparently, it encompassed even the private correspondence of all the ordinary citizens of West Punjab.⁴⁹ In 1956 a US attaché took the trouble to make a list of the directly and indirectly government-controlled publications. These latter were meticulously recorded, he claimed, “in descending order of control”.⁵⁰ Radio, textbooks, imported films and literature, Pakistani films, the local English and vernacular press and religious publications were all carefully scrutinised and eventually blacklisted. For instance, *Pakistan Men Mazdoor Tahreek* (History of Workers in Pakistan), *Yeh Azadi* (This Freedom), *Inquilab-i-Chin Zindabad* (Long Live the Revolution of Chiang [Kai-Shek]) did not find favour with censors, as according to the formula, they tended “to incite disaffection towards the Government established

⁴⁶ *West Pakistan Martial Law No.9, dealing with the Properties in and Residents of the Indo-Pakistan Border Areas – Despatch No. 123, 24th March 1959, NND 948832, NARA.*

⁴⁷ *The Times* (London), 26th August 1948.

⁴⁸ *Confidential*, 31st August 1949, NND 765024, NARA.

⁴⁹ Conversation with Dr. Massarat Abid, Lahore, 20th January 2010; and *Secret PHC/20/49 – Police Administration in the West Punjab*, May 1949, DO 35/3178, NAKG.

⁵⁰ *Office Memorandum*, 4th December 1956, NND 897209, NARA.

by law in Pakistan”.⁵¹ Similar actions had previously been taken against the Urdu literary periodicals *Savera* (Dawn), *Nagoosh* (Evening) and *Adab-e-Latif* (Man and his Works).⁵² These pamphlets and magazines were probably not chef-d’oeuvres of political literature or critical journalism. Yet they were functional to the development of a well-informed public opinion, a proper political opposition and a balanced party system.

While newspapers and journalists were not powerful enough to tell people what to think, yet they still drew up lists of topics to be discussed and help common citizens to gain their own insight into the surrounding socio-political environment.⁵³ As a consequence, vetoes and political complicities did jeopardise the process of forming an opinion on events. In early 1949, rumours spread that the popular and influential *Nawa-i-Waqt* owed the Khan of Mamdot a debt of gratitude. Apparently, through the intercession of the former Chief Minister, the Urdu daily had had been allotted a new and modern evacuee Press and its editor could enjoy some plots of agricultural land.⁵⁴ The result was, needless to say, a plunge in credibility among its readership. Censorship and the somehow ‘intimate’ ties between the press and political authorities reduced many debates on politics and government policies to silence. Newspapers and local radios thus failed in their duty to inform and even suggest competitive interpretation of events.⁵⁵ Citizens – no matter whether well-off and educated or not – were unable to fully face the complexities of the socio-political reality and

⁵¹ *West Punjab Gazette*, 1st January 1949, UPL, *West Punjab Gazette – Extraordinary Issue*, 23rd August 1950, UPL and *West Punjab Gazette –Extraordinary Issue*, 29th August 1950, UPL.

⁵² A-18, 3rd September 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

⁵³ E. F. Shaw, “Agenda-Setting and Mass Communication”, *Gazette – International Journal for Mass Communication Studies*, 25, 2, p. 96; D. Roberts, “Nature of Communication Effects”, in D. Roberts and W. Schramm (eds.), *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*, Urbana, 1972, p. 371.

⁵⁴ A-9, 8th February 1949 NND 765024, NARA.

⁵⁵ H. D. Lasswell, “The Structure and Function of Communication in Society”, in L. Bryson (ed.), *The Communication of Ideas*, New York, 1948, pp. 37-51.

therefore strengthen their relationship with their community to which they belonged.⁵⁶

A powerful weapon in the hands of the Muslim League, the Public Safety Act was frequently exploited to outstrip eventual rivals.⁵⁷ In turn, the fallouts on the electorate were devastating. In the words of Hussain Suhrawardy, it “suppress[ed] the organisation of [the local] public opinion”.⁵⁸ In early November 1954, during a press conference with serving foreign correspondents in Pakistan, General Iskander Mizra himself candidly admitted that “the masses [...] [were] overwhelmingly illiterate [and] not interested in politics”.⁵⁹ Trained at the ‘political academy’ of the British *raj*, Pakistanis had not lost their strong penchant for accepting prohibitions for all kind of demonstrations.⁶⁰ Indeed, in 1949, a very strict implementation of Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code banned processions and all kind of public meetings across the whole of West Punjab.⁶¹ The promises that the transition from subjects to citizens implied proved quite difficult to fulfil. In the long run, it is always better to own up to our own mistakes. No sooner said than done. The ‘betrayal’ was put down on paper in 1956 Constitution and later absorbed by the 1962 one as well. The right to freedom of speech, expression and association was therein subject to “any

⁵⁶ C. I. Hovland, A. A. Lumsdale, F. D. Sheffield, *Experiments on Mass Communication: Studies on Social Psychology in World War II – Volume III*, Princeton, 1949; E. Katz, M. Gurenvitch and H. Hass, “On the Use of Mass Media for important things”, *American Sociology Review*, 38, 1973, pp. 164-81.

⁵⁷ *Prospects for Refugee Representation and Democratic Elections in the West Punjab – Confidential No. 23*, 4th March 1949, NND 765024, NARA.

⁵⁸ *Civil and Military Gazette* (Lahore), 3rd July 1949.

⁵⁹ *General Mizra’s views to the Foreign Press on Democracy’s Experience in Pakistan and the Separate Roles of Religion and Politics – Despatch No. 266*, 6th November 1954, NND 938650, NARA.

⁶⁰ *Factors Conditioning Pakistani Action in the Kashmir Dispute*, 28th June 1957, NND 937328, NARA.

⁶¹ *Secret PHC/20/49 – Police Administration in the West Punjab*, May 1949, DO 35/3178, NAKG.

restriction imposed by law in the interest of the security of Pakistan, [...] public order, decency or morality”.⁶²

The late 1940s and early 1950s witnessed a curious proliferation of committees, sub-committees and advisory boards that specifically dealt with the resettlement and rehabilitation of Partition refugees. Keeping an exact count of all of them was almost impossible. One of the last-ditch attempts to break the back of the continuing emergency was made in early 1953. On 20th February the provincial Punjab Cabinet constituted the Rehabilitation Consultative Committee for the purpose – it was stated – of “advising the Government in matters relating to the resettlement of refugees on land under the Rehabilitation Settlement Scheme”.⁶³ The members of the Rehabilitation Advisory Board gave a nervous and surprised start and thought about pleading the crime of lese-majesty. Their board had been set up in 1951 when it had been similarly tasked with advising government authorities on “the existing policy and procedure for the allotment of agricultural lands to refugees and [...] [eventual] modifications as may bring about an expeditious and satisfactory settlement of refugees”.⁶⁴ The Central Rehabilitation Advisory Committee equally turned up its nose at the news. So too did its provincial branch that had been operating since 12th January 1951 and was supposed to advise the Government of Punjab “on matter relating to [the] refugees rehabilitation”.⁶⁵ This newly-established Rehabilitation Consultative Committee was the umpteenth body with whom refugees and bureaucrats had to interact. The Head of the Central Committee could not help but think that his daughter’s wedding was less crowded than any other meeting with the

⁶² Artt, 8-10 Const., *Constitution of Pakistan*, 1956, PPL.

⁶³ *Punjab Gazette*, 20th February 1953, UPL.

⁶⁴ *Punjab Gazette*, 18th May 1951, UPL.

⁶⁵ *Punjab Gazette*, 12th January 1951, UPL.

administrative paraphernalia that had been deputed to the resettlement of the migrant community.

Rather to everyone's sympathy, local people frequently complained about both the central and provincial governments' mediocrity.⁶⁶ Levels of tax compliance mirrored and measured the success of the Pakistani administration in instilling a sense of belonging to a wider community among its citizens. In the early spring of 1953, the annual renewal of the Muhajir Fund Cess Bill loomed large on the agenda of the Punjab Assembly. Established in 1948, a 2 *anna*/Rs. tax was levied on all the lands of West Punjab to support the rehabilitation and the resettlement of Partition refugees.⁶⁷ Five years later, C. E. Gibbon flew into a fury at the Minister for Education Sardar Abdul Hamid Khan Dasti who was in charge of introducing extensions to the terms of the West Punjab Fund Cess Act, 1948 to the provincial Assembly. "The Muslim League at the Centre and in the provinces [...] have made the life of every respectable, God-fearing and law abiding citizen, intolerable", burst out the elected representative from the constituency Pakistani Christian and Anglo Pakistani III.⁶⁸ The solution that he put forward was quite radical. In his view, the existing food crisis on one hand, and the recurrent heavy taxation on certain section of the society on the other, provided enough ground for what he called the "imperative necessity" of a revolution.⁶⁹ Gibbon's tax moral epitomised the widespread notion of a

⁶⁶ *The Times* (London), 26th February 1948.

⁶⁷ *West Punjab Gazette – Extraordinary Issue*, 26th January 1948, UPL and *Punjab Gazette*, 22nd February 1952, UPL.

⁶⁸ *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 31st March 1953, PCSL.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*.

mistrusted authority that was blundering in its attempt to integrate people's preferences into its own political system.⁷⁰

Allegations of inefficiency coupled with, in particular, the clear perception of a total absence of proper federal executive and legislative bodies.⁷¹ A lethal combination of unelected officials lacking in a proper electoral basis, initial scanty economic resources, and confusion over roles and responsibilities made almost all federal institutions impermeable to those patronage and paternalistic dynamics that were instead gaining ground at the provincial level. The glaring inconsistencies of the central government ushered in then an almost morbid popular attachment to charismatic political figures.⁷² It was a textbook case, Max Weber would argue. The 1935 Government of India Act - in effect the first provisional constitution of Pakistan - was written and then promulgated to suit the needs of the colonial political architecture.⁷³ When Pakistan emerged as an independent state, the whole fabric of previously-established hierarchies, spheres of authority and systems of formal rules frayed and started to live up to very different institutional and personal expectations. Clear echoes of the absolute need for a re-alignment of the equipose of powers were to be found in the resettlement and rehabilitation of the migrant community. Ahmad E. H. Jaffer, eminent refugee from Poona and member of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, pointed this out in mid-March 1953. "The refugees from India who are here and who have left properties at the other end are not asking for any charity or dole

⁷⁰ R. W. McGee, "When is Tax Evasion Unethical?", *Policy Analysis No. 11 (Working Paper)*, International and Technical Consultant Inc., 1996; A. Mummert and F. Schneider, "The German Shadow Economy: Parted in United Germany?", *FinanzActiv*, 58, pp. 287-317.

⁷¹ Conversations with Dr. Ahmad Ejaz, Lahore, 29th January 2010 and Dr. Usman Khan and mother, Lahore, 22nd November 2010.

⁷² *The Times* (London), 26th February 1948.

⁷³ P. Newberg, *Judging the State. Courts and Constitutional Politics in Pakistan*, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 14-21.

from Government”, he proudly opined during an animated discussion with the Federal Minister for Refugees and Rehabilitation.⁷⁴ By claiming his as well as other refugees’ right to be treated not only as displaced persons but also as citizens, Jaffer called the Pakistani authorities to order and urged them to face up their responsibilities as representatives of an independent state.

The process of transition from a colony of the British Empire to a sovereign country thus created an administrative, political and relational vacuum wherein the seeds of charismatic dynamics could easily germinate.⁷⁵ Pakistani charismatic leaderships conformed, of course, to the local idea of eminence. In turn, this latter flowed from a person’s ability to be the first among his equals and make ‘things’ happen for his followers.⁷⁶ Muhammad Ali Jinnah was the first proceed with the formalisation of charisma as a constitutional and constituting component of Pakistan’s new institutions. All the voluntary organisations and relief funds that were taking over the rehabilitation of the refugees were headed, or at least ostensibly headed, by him.⁷⁷ The vernacularisation of their activities left no room for doubts and turned the wheel full circle. Names and their meticulous knowledge represent the essence of all highly personalised societies and form the basis for leader-centred institutions.⁷⁸ Attaching names and, thus, persons to institutions and associations provided these latter with both a clearly identifiable identity and a position within the complex local social ladder. In the eyes of the ordinary man in the street, it was

⁷⁴ *Pakistan Constituent Assembly Debates*, 17th March 1953, PCSL.

⁷⁵ S. N. Eisenstadt (ed.), *Max Weber: On Charisma and Institution Building. Selected Papers*, Chicago and London, 1968, pp. 48-54.

⁷⁶ M. Mines, “Individuality and Achievement in South Indian Social History”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 26, 1, 1992, pp. 129-56. See also M. Mines and G. Vijayalakshmi, “Leadership and Individuality in South Asia: The Case of South Indian Big-man”, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 49, 4, 1990, pp. 761-86.

⁷⁷ *The Times* (London), 17th October 1947, and *The Times* (London), 26th February 1948.

⁷⁸ M. Mines, *Public Faces, Private Voices. Community and Individuality in South India*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1994, p. 58.

accordingly Jinnah rather than specific the charities concerned who solved the riddle of their personal difficulties and made ‘things’ happen.

A decade later, Muhammad Ayub Khan would attempt to win back refugees’ hearts after his coup d’état in October 1958.⁷⁹ Lt. Gen. Azam Khan took over the ministerial portfolio for the Rehabilitation of Refugees and launched a vigorous campaign to expedite their resettlement. A so-called Evacuee Intelligence Bureau and a Martial Law Regulation initiated a ‘witch hunt’ of both bogus claimants and hidden evacuee properties.⁸⁰ Personal and household properties worth Rs 17,000,000 were recovered from friends and extended families in India.⁸¹ A plan for compensation – in both cash and properties – was set up to benefit all those refugees who had not a house or any land allotted.⁸² Repeated visits to towns and villages and a tight grip on the activities of his departmental staff further enhanced his reputation among the refugee masses of former West Punjab. Indeed, Azam Khan’s administrative endeavours resonated with the idea of *Pak Jamhuriat* (Pure Democracy) that reverberated in many government publications and speeches.⁸³ Government authorities toured the whole of West Pakistan with the stated, and ambitious, aim of making personal contact with all citizens and demonstrating what they touted as their genuine commitment to serve the wider national community. As a part of the anti-corruption drive, division and district offices were frequently visited by staff members of the Chief

⁷⁹ Conversation with Dr. Usman Khan, Lahore, 22nd November 2010.

⁸⁰ *Refugee Claims Settlement Operations. A Review – Despatch No. 574*, 7th January 1960, NND 948832, NARA.

⁸¹ Government of Pakistan, *The Rehabilitation and Works Division, 1958-1963. Five Years of Revolutionary Government*, 1963, p. 3, PCSL.

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 2.

⁸³ *Pak Jamhuriat* was the title of a weekly leaflet that was published in the early 1960s by the Ministry of Information and National Reconstruction. See *New Government of Pakistan Publications – Despatch No. 18*, 15th August 1960, NND 948832, NARA.

Secretariat, and nearly 1,500 officers were removed from service or reduced in rank.⁸⁴

Unquestionably, this was music to many refugees' ears. They had been weeping metaphorical bitter tears at precisely the evils that Ayub Khan's administration was now promising to stamp out. Indeed, the new course of political events appeared to rend the silence of that marginality to which some refugees had been relegated, by encouraging a self-reacquisition of their sense of responsibility. Apparently free from the dead-weight burden of administrative malpractices, displaced persons felt they could finally gain back control of their lives and the lives of their dearest ones.⁸⁵ Decisions over their belongings and their future now seemed to be – however partially – in their hands and liberated from the constraints of the bureaucratic 'oddities'. This newly-acquired refugee self-awareness set in motion that mechanism of 'action-causation' that is at the very heart of the local idea of responsibility and social order. As they were accountable for their own actions, refugees could now take on the responsibilities for their families and *biraderi* too.⁸⁶

Some of them disclosed these same feelings to Ayub Khan himself during his tour of the former region of the Pakistani Punjab in late 1959. Ceremonial arches, placards and thousands of persons chanting and waving their flags welcomed the new President to Multan on 17th December. According to the local accounts, "the tremendous mass upsurge and enthusiasm [...] was reminiscent of the heydays of

⁸⁴ *West Pakistan Chief Secretary Reviews Year's Achievements in Provincial Civil Service – Despatch No. 129, 2nd November 1959, NND 948832, NARA.*

⁸⁵ Conversation with Dr. Usman Khan, Lahore, 22nd November 2010, and Dr. Ali Usman Qasmi, Lahore, 18th March 2010.

⁸⁶ M. Mines, *Public Faces, Private Voices, op. cit.*, pp. 179-83.

the Pakistan movement”.⁸⁷ A group of refugees was there ready to address Ayub Khan and expressed their gratitude for finally being able to get the better of Pakistani bureaucracy and secure an allotted property.⁸⁸ The new anti-corruption campaign and legislative framework had however already highlighted numerous lacunae. The Chief Justice Cornelius would make these even more evident in a speech during a dinner hosted by the Lahore Rotary Club on 12th August 1960. Women whose earrings sparkled as they turned their heads and men with perfectly oiled hair entertained the distinguished guest. “The present pertinent laws [...]” – the Chief Justice pointed out over a mutton *karahi* – “debar citizens from ventilating their grievances before competent authority and thus could be made to ‘stifle’ prosecution of a corrupt public servant”.⁸⁹ The Anti-Corruption Department was certainly able to inquire quite quickly into citizens’ reports of corruption against public servants. Yet, the majority of the cases rarely had a judgement passed on them as the heads of departments had to authorise the prosecution of their accused employees.

Nevertheless, Ayub Khan’s reputation among common Pakistan citizens appeared during the early years following the 1958 coup to be unblemished. His power, leadership and civic individuality conformed to a very subtle plot that clearly echoed local religious processions. The Central Government freed up Rs. 569 *crores* for the development of new housing plans as, Ayub Khan’s manifesto suggested, “urbanisation [...] [was] a sign of progress”.⁹⁰ New schools, dispensaries, banks, seed suppliers and cooperatives sprung up in Union

⁸⁷ *Summary of the Press Reports on President Ayub’s Speaking Tour in the Lahore Consular District – Despatch No. 183, 24th December 1959, NND 948832, NARA.*

⁸⁸ *Ibidem.*

⁸⁹ *Spotlight on Corruption among Public Servants: Chief Justice Cornelius Suggests Introduction of Administrative Tribunals – Despatch No. 87, 16th August 1960, NND 948832, NARA.*

⁹⁰ Government of Pakistan, *Ayub’s Manifesto Undertaking*, n.d., PSCL.

Councils across the most refugee-saturated towns and villages of former West Punjab.⁹¹ In Jhelum new roads were constructed and old ones covered with asphalt.⁹² Boosting education, cooperative associations and agriculture meant broadening the horizons of refugees as well as locals through an extension of their idea of ‘community’ into new spatial and social areas. As Ayub Khan toured extensively the districts of the country, he established himself as its most eminent political figure, and both sanctioned and cemented the development of the new ‘national’ body.⁹³ Buntings, chants, ceremonial arches, huge crowds gathered along the roads to cheer the President and the idea itself of a journey within a specific domain were all part of a repertoire that owed its substance to religious processions. These latter’s transit along the streets or through the squares of newly-established suburbs marked both the acceptance and the accession of their inhabitants into the wider and historically-rooted social community. Likewise, Ayub Khan’s arrival in towns and villages shaped up to be a rite of passage together with an initiation rite for the bulk of Partition migrants. Hence, the inauguration of new residential units, hospitals or schools was used as a peg to spur refugees to “shake off the feeling that they were refugees”.⁹⁴

The never-ending disputes between the centre and the peripheries of the political power, the ‘committee complex’ and charismatic figures in this fashion established themselves as the *Grundnorm* of the everyday institutional life of Pakistan. A new state needs however to project itself into the international arena

⁹¹ *Basic Democracies: Fortnightly Review – Despatch No. 88*, 6th October 1961, NND 948832, NARA.

⁹² *Basic Democracies: Their Role is in the Making – Despatch No. 289*, 21st October 1960, NND 948832, NARA.

⁹³ M. Mines, *Public Faces, Private Voices*, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-3.

⁹⁴ *Summary of Press Reports on President Ayub’s Speaking Tour in the Lahore Consular District – Despatch No. 183*, 24th December 1959, NND 948832, NARA.

and become an active agent within the realm of the international relations. To many in Pakistan it seemed that India was lying in wait for it.

Until death tears us apart: India, Pakistan and the resettlement of refugees in West Punjab

The Gymkhana Club was hosting one of its renowned dinner dances that night. It was 11th September 1948. A couple of women with their hair backcombed were dishing the dirt on the new lover of that official who was having a word with a European High Commissioner. “Nest of vipers”, the cuckolded wife muttered between her teeth as she eavesdropped on their conversation. As the District Commissioner entered, the room fell silent. His face was as black as thunder. He cleared his throat and announced that Jinnah had just passed away.⁹⁵ On 12th September Lahore was like a death city. The sensitive body of the newly-established nation sank into a coma that would last for days. Offices, shops, banks and factories remained closed and everyday life was brought to a standstill.⁹⁶ The millions of Pakistanis who mourned the death of their leader staged an elaborate collective ceremonial that nourished their national consciousness and spoke of their identity to the outside world.⁹⁷

In a curious twist of fate, Jinnah’s demise coincided with the capitulation of the Nizam of Hyderabad in distant Deccan. In Lahore, mourners mingled with those demonstrators who were calling for immediate retaliatory action against

⁹⁵ *Lahore Mourns for Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah – Confidential No. 69*, 14th September 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

⁹⁶ *Telegram*, 14th September 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

⁹⁷ A. C. Mayer, “The Funeral of the Emperor of Japan”, *Anthropology Today*, 5, 3, 1989, p. 5.

India.⁹⁸ Unsurprisingly, one of the most well-attended memorial services was the military parade held in the local Cantonment area. The last post and the firing of a 31-gun salute topped off the march-past and sounded a clear warning to the neighbouring state.⁹⁹ Pakistan was indeed reaping the harvest of the process of militarising the everyday. An unknown number of persons, probably in the hundreds of thousands, crowded around the Chief Minister of Punjab the Khan of Mamdot after another commemorative ceremony shouting anti-Indian slogans. A couple of hours earlier some of them had reached the Governor's House and asked for his permission to personally attack Amritsar.¹⁰⁰

There was something of an atmosphere in the relationship between India and Pakistan. Classics of any theoretical handbook dealing with International Relations and World History, almost all the studies on the troubled relations between the two neighbouring states have focused on the twists and turns of their dispute over Kashmir and on the issue of nuclear proliferation.¹⁰¹ In spite of it being acknowledged as the very first serious test of South Asian regional stability, the impact of the refugee humanitarian crisis that had followed independence has been rarely looked into.¹⁰² This section accordingly seeks to fill this gap in the current literature by revealing the historical and 'institutional' roots of those deep-seated feelings of resentment at India that, even more than

⁹⁸ *Reaction in Lahore to the News of the Capitulation of the Nizam of Hyderabad - Confidential No. 72*, 20th September 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

⁹⁹ *Lahore Mourns for Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah - Confidential No. 69*, 14th September 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰¹ S. Bose, *Kashmir: Roots of Conflicts, Paths to Peace*, Cambridge MA, 2003; J. B. Duroselle, A. Kaspi, *Histoire des relations internationales. De 1945 à nos jours*, Vol. II, Paris, 2009; S. Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tension Since 1947*, New York, 2007; A. Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy, 1946-1990*, Karachi, 1993; R. J. Leng, *Bargaining and Learning in Recurring Crisis: The Soviet-American, Egyptian-Israeli, and Indo Pakistani Rivalries*, Ann Arbor, 2000; M. Rahman, *Divided Kashmir: Old Problems, New Opportunities for India, Pakistan, and the Kashmiri People*, Boulder CO, 1996; P. Renouvin and J. B. Duroselle, *Introduction à l'histoire des relations internationales*, Paris, 2004; and R. G. Wirsing, *India, Pakistan and the Kashmir Dispute: on Regional Conflict and its Resolution*, Basingstoke, 1994.

¹⁰² I. Talbot, *Pakistan. A Modern History*, New York-Basingstoke, 2005 p. 112.

sixty years later, still reverberate through the discussions and speeches of Partition refugees and their relatives. As it addresses the anthropological and ‘intimate’ implication of the negotiations on refugees from agreed and non-agreed areas and evacuee properties, it will explain how the so-called enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan bottled up a vicious circle of mutual treacheries.

Refugees, their resettlement and their rehabilitation on land had set the tone for the way in which the two states would think of themselves and their mutual relations in the years to come. Indian and Pakistani authorities alike started off on the wrong foot by inaugurating their mutual policies of institutional duplicities and remarkable volte-faces. Leaders on both sides publicly nodded their consent to pave the way for a well-managed transfer of liabilities, persons and properties.¹⁰³ Yet, their respective diplomatic corps frequently allowed negotiations to fall through and hindered provincial governments in their efforts to facilitate the transfer of refugees from East to West Punjab and vice versa. It was, in the words of US analysts, a “symptomatic [...] inability of the Dominions to cooperate” that transmuted into an almost complete lack of any joint approach to the resolution of refugee emergency.¹⁰⁴

“The Government of India and the Government of Pakistan have [...] decided that the movement of these people [...] is to have first priority. They have agreed to co-operate with each other on this matter to the fullest extent and to ensure that the movements in both directions are completed with the greatest possible speed”, stated the joint statement that Liaquat Ali Khan and Nehru released to the press after an inter-ministerial conference held on 19th-20th September 1947

¹⁰³ *The Times* (London), 5th September 1947.

¹⁰⁴ *India-Pakistan Relations since August 16, 1947*, n.d., NND 897209, NARA.

in Lahore.¹⁰⁵ The words, however, were doomed to fall on stony ground. Three weeks later, the ‘Paris of the East’ would host another summit meeting that aimed at attending to the humanitarian crisis. There, the idea of a military-managed evacuation of those pockets of refugees who were waiting to reach their perceived homeland from across the whole of the East and West Punjab was almost immediately ruled out.¹⁰⁶ For their part, the Pakistani representatives were strongly opposed to regular timetabled meetings at either central government or provincial level. The formula that settled the dispute between the two contestants turned out to be a masterpiece of diplomatic rhetoric. Ministers would have met at both levels “on ad hoc basis if there was sufficient demand”.¹⁰⁷ What was supposed to qualify as ‘sufficient demand’ was a secret that died with both Liaquat Ali Khan and Nehru.

Both leaders unquestionably reacted to the news – scars of them, actually – that they were receiving from the ‘front’. Rumour had it that the phenomenon of forcible conversion was driving India to restrict the passage of Muslim women to West Punjab through an introduction of a ‘special’ permit-system.¹⁰⁸ In retaliation, Pakistani troops were hindering the extraction of pockets of Hindu and Sikh refugees from the districts of Attock, Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Gujrat and Sialkot Districts. Nehru flew off the handle and went berserk. As he raged against the behaviour of the neighbouring state, he went as far as to hint at a military intervention.¹⁰⁹ Besides, it was the Indian Prime Minister himself who

¹⁰⁵ *OT from UKHC to CRO No. 805*, 21st September 1947, DO 133/59, NAKG.

¹⁰⁶ *The Times* (London), 9th October 1947.

¹⁰⁷ *Discussion between Prime Minister, Pakistan and Indian Government Representatives at Lahore on 5th October 1947*, 8th October 1947, DO 133/60, NAKG.

¹⁰⁸ *Extract from Report from Deputy UKHC (Lahore) – POL 8015/48*, 2nd May 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG.

¹⁰⁹ *Note for the Registry – POL 6304/48*, 24th January 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG.

had previously declared that the refugee emergency was “a situation which is analogous to war and [...] [they were] going to deal with it on a war basis”.¹¹⁰

Feeling ran even higher when diplomatic representatives and ministers moved on to the delicate subject of the distinction to be drawn between refugees from agreed or non-agreed areas. On 20th September 1947 both India and Pakistan concurred that the priority was to be given to the transfer of the evacuees between the two wings of the Punjab, the only exception being Pakistan’s government servants in other Indian regions.¹¹¹ From then on, the difference between agreed areas and non-agreed areas migrants would become the constantly debated topic among both local and foreign observers and journalists. The situation spiralled almost completely out of control and West Punjab in particular progressively turned into a powder keg that was capable of exploding. Accords notwithstanding, in early October 1947 trains that were loaded with refugees from non-agreed areas in India were still reaching the towns of the Pakistani Punjab.¹¹² Provocations were however far from over. Indian representatives likewise enraged their counterparts on other occasions. Later on, during an umpteenth conference, they tabled a report containing aggregate figures of refugees from both East Punjab and the western United Provinces. Pakistani authorities raised their voice in an attempt to jog the memory of these Indian envoys about their recent agreement. Yet, the latter’s only answer was to ask Pakistan to state publicly that it would not have made Muslims from western UP welcome.¹¹³ Pakistan unquestionably had its back to wall: refusing to accommodate these refugees would be the same as disavowing the ethics of the

¹¹⁰ *IT from UKHC to SSCR*, 11th September 1947, DO 142/416, NAKG.

¹¹¹ *OT No. 85*, 21st September 1947, DO 133/59, NAKG.

¹¹² *Extract from Acting UKHC Report*, 3rd October 1947, DO 142/440, NAKG.

¹¹³ *Extract from Enclosure to Despatch No. 64/47*, 20th October 1947, DO 142/440, NAKG.

country's struggle for independence and life. Even the traditionally prudent and buttoned-up British High Commissioner went as far as to comment that "Pakistan will be sabotaged by the deliberate sending of ex-Punjab Muslims to the Punjab instead of getting the miserable refugees from East Punjab".¹¹⁴

A psychological warfare had just broken out. It was a no holds barred contest that would touch on everyone's respective sore points. Pakistan's jealousy and inferiority camouflaged a deep-seated feeling of mistrust.¹¹⁵ Negotiations were tantamount to those everyday aspects of life and politics that banked heavily on personal relationships. It was indeed the lack of faith – virtually a criminal offence in all trust-based societies – that informed this Pakistani paranoia and paralysed any attempts of regional cooperation.¹¹⁶ In a context where persons exist only if their reliability and honesty are publicly displayed, talks like those on Evacuee Properties resembled, and proved to be, an uphill struggle. The so-called 'cold war' of the subcontinent in many ways revolved around the value, transfer by sale or exchange, and the utilisation of both movable and immovable properties that had been left behind by refugees in both wings of the Punjab.¹¹⁷ Unofficial estimates put the monetary worth of Hindu and Sikh lands, houses and other permanent commodities at around Rs. 250,000,000.¹¹⁸ The figure was staggering. An eventual request for reimbursement could have sent Pakistan and

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁵ *Secret No. 304*, 6th August 1949, NND 897209, NARA and *Office Memorandum*, 10th October 1956, NND 897209, NARA.

¹¹⁶ *Memorandum*, n.d., NND 897209, NARA.

¹¹⁷ *Extract from Opdom No. 133 (Part II) from UKHC (Pakistan)*, 25th August 1949, DO 35/2994, NAKG.

¹¹⁸ *Despatch No. 67(677) – Office of the UKHC (Karachi)*, 3rd February 1949, DO 35/2994, NAKG and *Political Situation in West Punjab, July 1948*, 2nd August 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

its economy flying. By comparison, the sum of Rs. 20,000,000 that India would have owed to the Government based in Karachi was regarded as chicken feed.¹¹⁹

Indo-Pakistan talks over the evacuee properties hit a snag not only over a possible future demand for compensation but also on the mapping of the properties. A leaked government document dropped hints that Pakistan authorities had set their sights on the inclusion of lands and houses lying outside East Punjab within the agreement.¹²⁰ Sparks flew as soon as the Press approached the controversy. Allegations that the Government of Pakistan was concocting a campaign to devalue the immovable evacuee properties appeared on the pages of the *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi).¹²¹ Between the lines, the law of retaliation was invoked. *Dawn* (Karachi) raised the stakes by encouraging “the timid doubter [to take into consideration] the Satanic provisions of some of the Ordinances promulgated by the Provincial Governments of India”.¹²² The administration at issue was that of the United Provinces. Apparently, it had just passed an ordinance that forced Muslims, whose relatives had fled to Pakistan, to relinquish their immovable possessions, despite them remaining resident in India. Sins were finally finding political institutions out, and even Pakistan’s authorities were no saints. The bank accounts of shops and businesses were progressively blocked as they were now considered ‘intending properties’.¹²³ The bureaucratic definitions of evacuees, refugees and ultimately of Indian or Pakistani citizens as

¹¹⁹ *Meeting of Indo-Pakistan Punjab Partition Implementation Committee – Despatch No. 511*, 27th June 1960, NND 948832, NARA.

¹²⁰ *Despatch No. 67 (677) – Office of the UKHC (Karachi)*, 3rd February 1949, DO 35/2994, NAKG.

¹²¹ *Extract from Opdom No. 25 (Part II) from UKHC (Pakistan)*, 25th June 1949, DO 35/2994, NAKG.

¹²² *The Dawn* (Karachi), 3rd July 1949.

¹²³ *Further Pakistan Violations of Inter-Dominion Agreement*, 25th August 1949, DO 35/2994, NAKG.

well were proving unable to make sense of this multi-faceted, slippery and complex reality.

Any news concerning evacuee properties usually cast a chill over both the governments of India and Pakistan. Authorities avoided each other in order not to deal with the topic. The Pakistani Minister for the Rehabilitation and the Resettlement of Refugees came under attack from foreign chancelleries for his prolonged and deafening silence.¹²⁴ At the negotiating table, India and Pakistan shared the same non-verbal language. Refusing to meet in order to negotiate resources and commodities meant repudiating their identity and eminence, and, in turn, denouncing their unreliability and dishonesty.¹²⁵ It was an institutional and, even more important, *personal* non-acceptance of the counterpart and its institutional representatives. In mid-June 1949 Nehru's patience wore thin. The Prime Minister of India threatened to cause all current negotiations to fail, should the question of Evacuee Properties not be given high priority on the Ministers' agenda.¹²⁶ A conference was finally held in Karachi on 25th-26th June 1949 and, in the orotund language of press releases and joint statements, ratified that India and Pakistan were a married couple legally separated but still living together in the same evacuee property. The fortunes of the affair would drag out for years, have their peaks and troughs but never be properly settled. Indeed, the march of time confused the issue. As a result of the overcrowding that had followed the early resettlement of refugees in the Punjab countryside, the whole of the region

¹²⁴ Extract from Opdom No. 27 (Part II) from UKHC (Pakistan), 15th July 1949, DO 35/2994, NAKG.

¹²⁵ M. Mines, *Public Faces, Private Voices*, *op. cit.*, p. 35-43; and K. Subha, *Karnataka Panchayat Elections 1955: Process, Issues and Membership Profile*, New Delhi, 1997, p. 27.

¹²⁶ Extract from Opdom No. 26 (Part I) from UKHC (India), 11th June 1949, DO 35/2994, NAKG.

experienced a rapid fragmentation of a great number of its agricultural lands.¹²⁷ To top it all, family disputes and alterations in the condition of buildings made decisions over value and ownership even more complicated and, it goes without saying, negotiations almost impossible.¹²⁸

Negotiations on evacuee properties and the transfer or status of the refugees touched raw and very sensitive nerves. Their fallouts would not disappear without trace from the elaboration of an everyday sense of belonging to a wider community, and instead intermingled fatally with internal regional hierarchies and identities.

All for one and one for all: creating a nation, levelling down differences

*Et j'entends siffler le train
que c'est triste un train qui siffle dans le soir
[...]
que c'est triste un train qui siffle dans le soir
J'entendrai siffler le train toute ma vie.*¹²⁹

A long train packed with refugees left the station of Walton Road, Lahore in the late afternoon of a chilly day in October 1948. It was the 78th – and the last one – and would reach Karachi in a few hours. There were no relatives waving their handkerchiefs or mothers giving advice. Only the then Governor of the Punjab Francis Mudie and several officials had attended this hastily-arranged farewell ceremony.¹³⁰ The atmosphere was pervaded by the kind of sadness that only the remaking of an old American folk song by a French *chansonnier* can convey.

¹²⁷ *Punjab Gazette – Extraordinary Issue*, 2nd December 1952, UPL.

¹²⁸ Conversation with Dr. Saeed Elahi, Lahore, 14th February 2010; and *Movable EP Agreement with India – Despatch No. 384*, 19th December 1953, NND 938750, NARA.

¹²⁹ R. Antony, *J'entends le train qui siffle*, 1962. It should be noted that Richard Antony merely revisited the popular folk song '500 miles' (also known as 'Railroaders' Lament').

¹³⁰ *A-24*, 29th October 1948, NND 765024, NARA.

Sarah Ansari has already analysed the negotiations and the iron fist that had anticipated the transfer of hundreds of thousands of refugees to Sindh in her *Life after Partition. Migration Community and Strife, 1947-62*.¹³¹ As comprehensiveness asks for a short discussion of the controversy within this section, it will only be briefly broached therein. Nevertheless, the dispute will be re-framed in the interpretative framework of the early attempts of the federal and provincial institutions at consolidating the Pakistani nation by coalescing all its different sections and groups. “Who is a Pakistani?”, wonders Farzana Shaikh in her latest book.¹³² When it comes to investigating the business of ‘national identity’, Shaikh relies on well-established arguments present in existing literature and concludes that the *muhajirs* from East Punjab did not show any kind of attachment to the label ‘refugee’ and its subtle moral implications.¹³³ This section will re-address this historiographical trend and argue the need to recognise the troubled and difficult path of the migrant community of the West Punjab throughout the early nation-building processes that followed August 1947.

Refugee resettlement and rehabilitation tested the stability as well as the institutional relationships that existed between the Punjab and the remaining regions of the western wing of Pakistan. The responsibility for the early reception of millions of displaced persons unquestionably fell mainly on West Punjab, almost bringing it to its knees and verging on the brink of social collapse. An initial estimated surplus of about 1,600,000 refugees tipped the balance of the fluxes in favour of a re-distribution of people to the neighbouring

¹³¹ S. Ansari, *Life after Partition. Migration, Community and Strife in Sindh, 1947-1962*, Karachi, 2005. See also S. Ansari, “Partition, migration and refugees. Responses to the arrival of Muhajirs in Sind during 1947-1948”, *South Asia*, 18, 1995, pp. 95-108.

¹³² F. Shaikh, *Making Sense of Pakistan*, London, 2009, pp. 46-80.

¹³³ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

provinces of Sindh, Baluchistan and the NWFP.¹³⁴ Indeed, this succession of ordeals had placed Pakistan against the wall and forced federal and provincial governments through the hoops of the first-ever call for a demonstration of national cohesion. On 4th December 1947 all the delegates from the country's different regions met in Lahore with the aim of getting the conundrum sorted out. Negotiations were not promising. Neither the official nor the off-the-record agenda of those who were sat at the negotiating table tallied. The representatives of West Punjab aimed at the transfer of no less than 1,000,000 persons to Sindh, Baluchistan and the NWFP.¹³⁵ Sindh's officials, by contrast, firmly kept their cards close to their chest. For their part, both Baluchistan and the NWFP opted for a cunning wait-and-see strategy.

This give-and-take manoeuvring left a nasty taste in everyone's mouth. 100,000 refugees would soon head towards the NWFP, while 25,000 of them would reach the region of Baluchistan. The princely states of Bahawalpur and Khaipur did their share of work by accepting nearly 75,000 displaced men and women. Apparently, Karachi agreed on accommodating up to 500,000 persons.¹³⁶ Doubts were however cast upon the real intentions of the Sindh authorities. "Whether or not Sindh is really willing to take 5 *laks* is doubtful", wrote British Deputy High Commissioner, Lahore, S. H. Stephenson in the margin of his letter to the Commonwealth Relation Office.¹³⁷ His remarks were far from short-sighted. In February 1948, the Chief Minister of Sindh Muhammad Ayub Khuhro ate his own words and brushed aside the possibility of

¹³⁴ *Brief Summary of the Refugee Problem*, 12th August 1950, NND 948832, NARA.

¹³⁵ *Extract from a Report from H. S. Stephenson, ESQ, Lahore to Sir Graffiey-Smith – Ref. No. PHC 29/47*, 7th December 1947, DO 142/440, NAKG.

¹³⁶ *Extract from Report from Deputy UKHC (Lahore) – POL 10384/48*, 30th December 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG.

¹³⁷ *Extract from a Report from H. S. Stephenson, ESQ, Lahore to Sir Graffiey-Smith – Ref. No. PHC 29/47*, 7th December 1947, DO 142/440, NAKG.

a relocation of more than 100,000 West Punjabi refugees to his region.¹³⁸ The reaction of Pakistan's central authorities was instantaneous. Ghazanfar Ali Khan stigmatised the about-turn as mere 'provincialism' and summoned Sindhi authorities to collaborate with both the federal and provincial governments.¹³⁹ The embryo of Pakistan's cohesion and unity was at stake. Pakistan had been made. Making *Pakistanis* was now the new imperative.

It had recently come to the ears of the Minister of Resettlement and Rehabilitation of Refugees that a violent campaign against Sindh – orchestrated mainly by local politicians and refugees leaders – was underway in the transit camps of the West Punjab.¹⁴⁰ Anti-Sindh sentiments were taking root at an increasing rate among the displaced persons who were still hosted in these temporary structures. Some of them refused to move to the neighbouring province while others made their way back to the 'Land of the Five Rivers' after having been resettled in Sindhi towns and villages.¹⁴¹ Seen through the eyes of Pakistani leaders, having recourse to authoritarian measures was, for all their deplorability, the only workable solution.

The need to establish a harmonious relationship among the different parts of the country's western wing was not the only trouble that loomed up in the long march towards a 'chemical synthesis' of reliable and reactive citizens and institutions out of the composite legacies of the British Empire. In September

¹³⁸ *Extract from Report from Deputy UKHC (Lahore) to UKHC – POL 6720/48, 1st February 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG.*

¹³⁹ *Extract from Telegram No. 99 from UKHC (Pakistan) – POL 6467/48, 28th January 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG and Extract from Telegram No. 197 from UKHC (Pakistan) – POL 6880/48, 25th February 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG.*

¹⁴⁰ *Extract from Pakistan News for the period February 18th-February 24th, 1948, 24th February 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG.*

¹⁴¹ *Extract from Telegram No. 56 from UKHC (Pakistan) – POL 6208/48, 14th January 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG, Extract from Telegram No. 99 – POL 6467/48, 28th January 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG and A.G. Raza, *Resettlement of Refugees on Land – A Review*, 6th June 1948, DO 142/440, NAKG.*

1953 both the federal government and the Pakistan Constituent Assembly revived the debate on the hoary and never-soothed problem of the distinction between refugees from agreed and non-agreed areas. “The Government is [...] aware that the distinction, in whatever form it exists, is a source of dissatisfaction to the refugees coming from the non-agreed areas of India”, admitted the Federal Minister for the Resettlement and Rehabilitation of Refugees during a ‘Question and Answer’ session.¹⁴² As the chance to criticise the neighbouring state was too good to miss, he went on by attacking India from under this cover. “India” – he declared– “never implemented the Agreement of 1949 under which the distinction arose as far as Pakistan was concerned. The Government of Pakistan have adhered on this formula [...] but the question of his [sic] abolition is under active consideration.”¹⁴³ Acting with traditional - local - split-second timing, Muzaffar Ali Khan Qizilbash – the Minister for Revenue in West Punjab’s Cabinet – made the views of its Government plain in early March 1954. “The House [West Punjab Assembly] has also passed a resolution and we had also written that this distinction should not be removed”, he replied to a question that Shameem Ahmad Khan from the refugee-reserved seat of Lyallpur VIII had posed him.¹⁴⁴ The cut and thrust of the debate was marked by sheer political and parliamentary rhetoric for the very simple reason that the difference between migrants from agreed and non-agreed areas had *de facto* already been withdrawn. At grassroots level, the border between the two had always been quite porous. Those refugees from non-agreed areas who belonged to the upper classes or had important acquaintances within the ‘administrative circles’ had already freed

¹⁴² *Pakistan Constituent Assembly Debates*, 23rd September 1953, PSCL.

¹⁴³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁴ *Punjab Assembly Debates*, 2nd March 1954, PSCL.

their lives from the hurdles of allotment ordinances and practices.¹⁴⁵ The 1951 elections further clinched the controversy by not first discussing and then providing for a reservation of seats for them.¹⁴⁶

The introduction of the One-Unit system in 1955 would finally bring the drama to an end. As *Nawa-i-Waqt* (Lahore) damned in a long editorial published on 19th July 1954, the “clouds of provincialism [...] had begun to obscure the Pakistani nation”.¹⁴⁷ Strong feelings of attachment to local identities were worming their way into the body of a nation and a state in-the-making, and set back any constitutional attempt to get to the bottom of a balanced representation of the rich and composite Pakistani social tapestry within the federal assembly.¹⁴⁸ The idea of amalgamating the four parts of the western wing into a single unit entailed, in turn, careful re-consideration of all their constituencies. In July 1954 the Government of Punjab appointed the Delimitation Committee to re-map the electoral geography of the region. As their power tottered, local politicians flew almost immediately into a panic. Party politics whipped itself into a state of frenzy. The Muslim League Refugees Consultative Committee strongly opposed the withdrawal of reserved seats, as the resettlement of refugees had not been completed as yet.¹⁴⁹ A twelve-member delegation of refugee members of the Muslim League was formed, and asked to meet the Ministers of the Central Government in an attempt to present the list of their grievances.¹⁵⁰

The editorial offices of local and national newspapers were swamped with letters from distinguished as well as less famous readers. Oddly enough, the

¹⁴⁵ Conversation with Rana Muhammad Iqbal Khan, Lahore, 1st December 2010.

¹⁴⁶ *West Punjab Gazette – Extraordinary Issue*, 5th August 1949, UPL and *West Punjab Gazette – Extraordinary Issue*, 23rd December 1950, UPL.

¹⁴⁷ *Nawa-i-Waqt* (Lahore), 19th July 1954.

¹⁴⁸ *The Political Situation in Pakistan*, n.d., NND 897209, NARA.

¹⁴⁹ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 4th August 1954.

¹⁵⁰ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 17th August 1954.

whole debate took place against a background of continuing institutional attempts to instil a sense of belonging to a wider community. As Radio Pakistan broadcast the national anthem for the first time and Pakistanis were welcomed to the screenings across the cinemas of the country, the bulk of the refugee community in West Punjab kept demanding official acknowledgment of their specific identity. Back in 1951, the creation of two-member constituencies had hewed to the plan of a quick rehabilitation of the migrant community. Yet, as Ahmad Mahsud Said – Muslim League Associate from Lyallpur – highlighted in his July 1954 letter to the *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), “if the position [is to] be examined today, it will be found that no more than 40% of the rural resettlement has not been completed so far and that the urban resettlement has not started”.¹⁵¹ For his part, Jalil Ahmad Khan – President of the Refugee Association of Gujranwala District – revealed just how far the co-option of the refugees in municipal institutions had taken on the shape of an uphill struggle. Run without any reservation of seats, the 1954 elections of the Gujranwala Board District had just represented a bitter pill for the members of the local migrant community to swallow. Indeed, refugees had secured only five out of the 38 available places by a very narrow majority.¹⁵² “Not until the refugees have been properly resettled and their peculiar problem satisfactorily solved should the reserved seats be allowed to be abolished”, warned the chairman of the association.¹⁵³

Mian Muhammad Shafi, however, struck a discordant note. A member of the Punjab Assembly representing the refugee-reserved seat of Montgomery VII, Shafi strongly opposed the initiative of his party fellows. “I wholeheartedly and emphatically oppose” – he argued – “the move for the simple reason that what

¹⁵¹ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 26th July 1954.

¹⁵² *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 31st August 1954.

¹⁵³ *Ibidem*.

they seek to achieve is not the protection of the rights of the refugees but the perpetration of a privileged class amongst the Punjabis who would not be eligible to sit in the House”.¹⁵⁴ The ‘mystery’ was finally unravelled. By polemically pointing his finger at the dualism between rights and privileges, Shafi revealed the mirroring tension between new and old *biraderi* links and patronage dynamics on one hand and a national community and big ideas on the other. As he went on saying, “the refugee problem under the present circumstances can not be solved to the doomsday [*sic*] and no amount of representation given to the so-called leaders of the refugees in the Provincial Assembly can alleviate their distress”.¹⁵⁵

Metaphorically-speaking, the still-in-the-making nation of Pakistan was also mirrored in its hundred of thousands of women, whose infidelity was argued to have devastating effects on the happiness of conjugal life and the whole fabric of local society. Protecting their chastity came to be perceived to be an institutional duty.¹⁵⁶ On 14th October 1955 Mian Mushtaq Ahmed Gurmani was sworn in as the Governor of the new province of West Pakistan. Muhammad Munir – Chief Justice of the Federal Court – chaired the ceremony and sealed the beginning of a new institutional era.¹⁵⁷ Following the report of the Demarcation Committee, the seat reservation for refugees who had been resettled in Punjab was abolished. Frequently compared to a women, Pakistan could be regarded as trying to preserve its ‘national chastity’ by levelling down identities and nationalisms, As the Prime Minister made clear while introducing the 1956 Constitution, “those of my friends who use phrases carelessly, who talk of "nationalities" [...] I would

¹⁵⁴ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore), 21st August 1954.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁶ *Gazette of Pakistan – Extraordinary Issue*, 20th December 1951.

¹⁵⁷ *Inauguration of the Province of West Pakistan – Despatch No. 73*, 18th October 1955, NND 938750, NARA.

earnestly request them to desist. We are yet in a formative stage and even though the idea of Pakistan Nationalism, the idea of our common culture of one country and one people, shines bright, yet there are spots here and there, dark spots, where germs of disruption can thrive”.¹⁵⁸

This chapter has explored and highlighted the basic and ‘immaterial’ norms and rules that underpinned and inspired Pakistani early legal system and institutional life. Provincial and federal authorities alike could not ignore the challenge of rehabilitating millions of displaced persons. Their provisions, ordinances, mutual trips and bungled attempts to tackle the emergency supplanted, it has been argued here, the rather lazy debates of the Constituent Assemblies.

A morbid attachment to charismatic political leaders, the strained relationship with India, the curious proliferation of committees and boards, restrictive attitudes towards the freedom of speech have been treated as constituent – albeit dysfunctional – elements of both the institutional fabric and the ‘fundamental principles’ of Pakistan’s political history.

¹⁵⁸ *Pakistan Constituent Assembly Debates*, 8th January 1956, PCSL.

Conclusion

Lahore, late November 2010. I am surrounded by a deafening silence. I cannot hear a sound, not even the loud noise of the traffic. I look around: there is a tiny mosque on my right and, down there, low in the sky, the railway. A mild breeze stirs the leaves of a couple of trees. Shrubs replace the hundreds of graves that, back in 1947, drew a line between this refugee camp and the city. “Many years have gone by, years of war and what men call History”, I repeat to myself, quoting Carlo Levi’s novel.¹ History has indeed stopped short of here, the former Walton Road reception camp. The yet-to-be-completed reinforced-concrete structure of part of the well-known Bab-e-Pakistan makes of this barren land a peculiar free-trade zone. Here, the past does not square its accounts with the present, and vice versa. The chats that refugees carried out in these premises and the nearby suburbs still echo in the everyday communication of current Pakistanis. Twitter and Facebook turn into a virtual Walton Road Camp, wherein the clock of history has stopped and the betrayed dimension of achievement of independence fully surfaces.² When, back in April this year, Asif Ali Zardari attacked the Sharif brothers by labelling them as ‘migrants’, he did not hit out blindly. As the reactions of my interlocutor suggest, he reopened an old wound that both *institutionally* and *personally* had never really healed. At various times in the last 30 years, Zia ul-Haq, Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif and Pervez Musharraf – all hailing from a refugee background – either supported or laid down their own foundation stone of this memorial to Partition refugees. The as yet unfinished monument mirrors the very same ‘broken narrative’ that has

¹ C. Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, London, 2000, p. 11.

² All the extracts quoted in this conclusion have been taken from either Twitter or Facebook public accounts that everyone can access freely at any time.

trapped the story on and around the post-1947 rehabilitation of the migrant community in West Punjab. This is precisely what this dissertation has attempted to address and re-evaluate.

Exploring Lahore – This [Facebook] Album [Chorn Aye Hum Wo Galyaan...!!] is dedicated to all those people who lived in Lahore, they left and they never came back. If your Parents/Fore-fathers migrated from Lahore to India, ask them the name of the area/street/bazaar mohalla they used to live. I shall try to capture pictures of those areas. I think it will be a great treat for them
[...]

*Asim Iqbal – Well Said this Will be amazing if we share Pictures of our forefathers Home town and also The Pictures of home and street. I Live in Lahore My forefather Migrate [sic] from jalandhar to lahore Love to see the Streets of Jalandhar bazar Muhalla anything from Jalandhar.*³

The history of the resettlement of refugees in Pakistani Punjab is clearly part of the rich tapestry of the places in which they lived and which they regularly haunted. Asim and his relatives are a shining example of this whirl of emotions. His forefathers' hearts certainly swelled with the pride of Pakistan nationalism but, as Asim inadvertently admits, their 'home' was in Jullundhur, India. The elaboration of a sense of belonging to the Pakistani state stemmed from their early experiences in camps, temporary-allotted houses and businesses. There the essential units of local society were challenged to such a degree that state institutions were perceived as a trauma and a scandal. Indeed, the dislocation of Partition brought about the ripping apart of entire *biraderi*, *tabbar* and *gharana* and of the local schemes of identification between occupation and position within the social ladder. Despite what government plans and widely-accepted narratives have argued thus far, refugees were hardly ever allotted properties on

³<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.204513086271032.50546.110914475630894&type=3> (accessed 18th July 2012).

the basis of their own place of origin, familiar ties and previous occupation. Instead, as oral accounts and official sources collected for this dissertation suggest, the current social stratification of Partition refugees and their families in Pakistani Punjab's towns and villages is a by-product of history rather than an institutionally-targeted strategy. Those *biraderi*- and place of origin-friendly resettlement schemes that were first publicised by government authorities and then assimilated into the historiographical mainstream have been proven here to be mere wishful thinking.⁴ Nevertheless, at a moment when ideas of individuality, anonymity and social mobility crept into what was a highly-personalised and hierarchical local society, modernity and tradition intertwined in an intricate plot. The eviction of tenants from allotted evacuee lands and the rekindling of the cooperative society movement mirrored the subtleties of the process of social change taking place during those years. As argued in Chapter 2, the notion of *biraderi* embodied one of those 'multiple modernities' wherein traditions were reframed within the phenomena of the early urbanisation of the Punjab and the paradoxical questioning of traditional hierarchies.

Salman Masood (@SalamanMasood):

*It's funny how there is talk of building institutions but practice of personal
worship*

Mohsin Hijazee (@MohsinHijazee):

*@SalamanMasood –Our inherent paradigm is: individuals build institutions,
I[mran]K[han] mostly takes this line. People always looking for a Messiah.*

⁴ As suggested in the introduction, see Government of Pakistan, *The Journey to Pakistan: a Documentation on Refugees of 1947*, Islamabad, NDC. See also M. Waseem, "Partition and Assimilation: A Comparative Study of Pakistani Punjab", in I. Talbot, G. Singh (eds.), *Region and Partition. Bengal, Punjab and the Partition of the Subcontinent*, Karachi, 2000, pp. 203-27; M. Waseem, "Muslim Migration from East Punjab: Patterns of Settlement and Assimilation", in I. Talbot, S. Thandi (eds.), *People on the move. Punjabi Colonial and Post-Colonial Migration*, Karachi, 2004, 63-77. and, more recently, I. Chattha, *Partition and Locality. Violence, Migration, and Development in Gujranwala and Sialkot, 1947-1961*, Karachi, 2011, pp. 183-208.

Salman Massood (@Salaman Masood):
*@MohsinHijazee – True. Its deep rooted and based on religioius [sic]
connotations too.*⁵

To what extent – the Introduction to this dissertation asked - does challenging the current interpretation of the resettlement of Partition refugees in West Punjab affect our understanding of the early years of Pakistan’s history? As the Lahore experience that largely informs this exploration of 1947’s longer-term consequences suggests, the socially-disrupting fallout of Partition-related events and resettlement practices did not merely shape the private lives of members of the refugee community. Balances of powers and patterns of patronage and authority within administrative departments, and between the latter and society as a whole, all had to be re-negotiated. Indeed, the sensitive fabric of administrative and political *biraderi*, *tabbar* and *gharana* had – almost completely – been torn apart. The need to re-assert local structures of authority reverberated through bungled attempts to grapple properly with the humanitarian crisis that had arisen from the migration of millions of persons.

This dissertation has thus brought out the intrinsic and somehow lethal weaknesses of the newly-established Pakistan Civil Service. Legacy of the colonially-glorious Indian Civil Services, the Pakistani one appeared not to have sufficient stamina to meet the basic needs of its users, let alone the capacity to put forward what scholarly literature has labelled as the “bureaucratic polity”. As both the Punjab and the Pakistan state failed (or, to be more precise, never attempted) to enjoin a viable, impersonal administrative and legal framework, it was patronage that assuaged citizen fears of being trapped in an endless maze of

⁵ <http://twitter.com/SalmanMasood/> (accessed 18th July 2012).

excesses of powers, *ultra vires* decisions and impossible-to-meet bureaucratic criteria. Persons – especially relevant and influential ones – *turned into* institutions. They became, as Mohsin would argue, Pakistan’s ‘inherent paradigm’. Their good offices were a *condicio sine qua non* for accessing the state and its resources.

In the wake of William Gould’s recent research on India in the 1930s-1960s, both the traditional idea of and on corruption practices are here challenged and re-addressed.⁶ What foreign commentators and diplomats hastily pigeonholed as ‘corruption’ were actually totally-acceptable (and accepted) norms of social and institutional behaviour. They stood out as being anthropologically ‘sustainable’ as well as suiting the needs of a state in-the-making. Nevertheless, the progressive institutionalisation of practices of favouritism brought about the transposition of the very same mechanisms of marginalisation that burdened ordinary local men and women in their everyday interactions. Indeed, only a tight-knit minority of the migrant community could count on relevant networks of influential acquaintances that enabled them to negotiate properly their access to much-needed state resources. Far from stirring up a scandal, patronage and cronyism triggered off a curious process of emulation instead. Along the streets around the Civil Secretariat in Anarkali, Lahore, so-called touts, petition writers and accommodating civil servants performed the very same negotiation rituals to the benefit of all those whom society and the government authorities themselves had put in the back row: bribes and empty promises fed refugees’ hopes that their needs would be eventually met, thereby amplifying the process of social polarisation and individuals’ feelings of being at the margins.

¹⁰ W. Gould, *Bureaucracy, Community and Influence in India: Society and the State, 1930s-1960s*, Abingdon (Oxon), 2011.

Raza Rumi (@RazaRumi):
*Amazes me that analysts insult the intelligence of Pakistanis. Families in
South Asia are well-knit composite units with shared interests!*
[...]
*Real tragedy of #familygate: it is not about individuals, heroes
(C[hief]J[ustice]) and villains (M[alik]R[iaz]) but about the democratic system
& const [sic] governance.⁷*

Elections provided socially-excluded members of the migrant community with a further chance to right perceived administrative wrongs and redeem themselves in society's eyes. In March 1951, the province of the Punjab held Pakistan's first elections based on universal franchise. The engineering of the electoral rules and the mapping of new constituencies culminated in a *corpus* of regulations that stemmed from well-rooted values and practices. For all its paradoxical nature, the disbanding of entire *biraderi* called for the partial enthronement of its political relevance. Instead of levelling down patronage practices, the *ad hoc* electoral committee and provincial authorities raised these dynamics to the highest dignities of the state-building process. Playing both politics and institutions by the reassuring rules of society, political stability was an almost predictable outcome.

The 'anthropological' sustainability of the chosen electoral system is not the only element that needs to be credited with the political stability of the early years of Pakistani Punjab's history. Raza Rumi will not take it amiss or personally. Yet, examining the campaign that anticipated the March 1951 elections suggests that, despite taking the lion's share and being academically acclaimed as the quintessence of Pakistani politics, *biraderi* were not the only ace up candidates' sleeves. A substantial share of the votes that the future

⁷ <http://twitter.com/Razarumi> (accessed 18th July 2012).

members of the Punjab Assembly scraped together resulted from promises of material benefits to single individuals who were unrelated to the candidates themselves. The latter being in the position to milk the government in charge for every single drop of the locally-limited (and thus much sought-after) resources, the vote was quite easily conceded. Unsurprisingly then, in 1950s Punjab, stability was tantamount to single-party rule. Judging from what we know about Lahore during this period, voters strategically picked only those candidates who, through their party connections, could mould government policies and eventually satisfy their demands. Within this framework of interpretation, the resettlement of refugees tells a different story of party history in post-independence Punjab and institution-building processes. Here, the Punjab Muslim League and, to some extent, Pakistan itself redeem themselves in the eyes of those scholarly interpretations that have plumbed the depths of their failure.⁸ Indeed, by the standards of its own electorate, the provincial branch of the Muslim League and the local party system were institutions that *worked*. Insofar as it held sway over the redistribution of state resources and the reins of the provincial exchequer, the sun over its political ‘empire’ was not doomed to set.

Classifying Punjabi political parties of the late 1940s and 1950s along the binary distinction of ‘conservative vs. progressive’ is a herculean task, the only exceptions being, needless to say, the Jamaat-i-Islami and the Communist Party. Nevertheless, local parties’ attitudes towards Islam and its role within the public sphere may well be a barometer of either their liberalism or conservatism. West

⁸ As suggested in the Introduction and in Chapter 4, see A. Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan’s Political Economy of Defence*, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 49-135, 295-328; S. Mahmood, “Decline of the Pakistan Muslim League and its Implications (1947-54)”, *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, 15, 2, 1994, pp. 68-89; Y. Samad, *A Nation in Turmoil. Nationalism and Ethnicity in Pakistan, 1937-1958*, New Delhi, 1995.

Punjabi refugees were apparently not infected with the same leftist syndrome that affected their West Bengali counterparts. “Pakistan is nation conscious of its nationhood. Visitors [...] are immediately conscious of this awareness of nationality, which is rooted in religious and economic but in many other common interests. Islam has been described as an individual experience creative of social order with implicit legal concepts”, pointed out a correspondent from *The Times* (London) in early 1948.⁹ The great majority of the refugee candidates for a provincial parliamentary reserved seat tapped into this popular mood as a way of winning over their opponents and, incidentally, ousting Islamist parties. Whether or not this was a winning move, it certainly drifted the political debate towards the troubled waters of religious clashes.

Saeed Elahi – Chief Minister, S[hahbaz] S[harif], has announced a special Ramazan Package of 4 billion to provide quality edible at subsidized rates to the people during Ramazan
[...]

Malik Mumtaz Ahmed – Ch Parvez Elahi has announced a similar Ramazan Package. C[hief]M[inister] should ensure not to waste additional amount 4 billion and ads in print and electronic media to gain political leverage.¹⁰

The legacy of the resettlement of West Punjabi Partition refugees for the broader political life of Pakistan, it could be argued, has inspired the elaboration of that (dis)order that has been underlying the Pakistani constitutional system since the country’s creation. The resilience and the stability of Pakistan as an autonomous patronage political system was by no means a byword for state strength. The problem that Dr. Saeed Elahi and Malik Mumtaz Ahmed are discussing is ‘old hat’. As parliamentary debates over the future constitution and

⁹ *The Times* (London), 26th February 1948.

¹⁰ <http://www.facebook.com/saeedelahimpa> (accessed 18th July 2012).

institutional architecture of Pakistan lazily dragged on in the decade after 1947, federal and provincial authorities found themselves without a legal framework that was able to regulate their mutual relationships successfully within a newly-established independent state. The result was a total mess in relation to responsibilities, roles and power jurisdictions. Both the Pakistan and the Punjab administrations found themselves trapped in an endless and somehow curious competition in institutional retaliation. Their policies were not in harmony with each other, and clashes between political personalities marked the grim everyday reality of local institutional life. For its part, the Pakistani press was of no help in the shaping of a public opinion that had the strength to sting authorities into action. In the face of political quarrelsomeness and inconsistency, Punjabi citizens, and the refugee community in particular, developed a morbid attachment to all those institutional individuals who made ‘things’ happen for them. For theirs was a personal and immediate relationship. It did not envisage the kind of party mediation that literature usually ascribes to ‘patronage states’. Top institutional figures were further expected to be actively involved in policy-making processes as, of course, these were interpreted by the local society. As power naturally coalesced around groups, different provincial authorities (for instance, the controversy between Punjab and Sindh over the transfer of overspill refugees) and categories, they were asked to mediate between them and on behalf of the marginal sectors of the local society.

Lahore, late November 2010. I am surrounded by a deafening silence. I cannot hear a sound, not even the noise of the traffic. “Many years have gone by, years of war and what men called History”, I repeat to myself.¹¹ “The greatest

¹¹ C. Levi, *Christ Stopped*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

travellers have not gone beyond the limits of their own words; they have trodden the path of their own souls, of good and evil, of morality and redemption".¹²

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 12.

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