

**“Musings of the Unlettered:”  
Wartime Surveillance and the Muslim Subaltern in  
India, 1913-1918.**

**by  
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## Declaration of Committee

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## **Abstract**

Histories of Pan-Islamism in the late 19th and early 20th century have long been populated by accounts of Indian Muslim notables and their concerns for the growing European aggression against the Ottoman Empire. However, seldom have these histories attempted to investigate the phenomenon of pan-Islamism from below, in an attempt to understand how subaltern Muslims navigated their politics in an age of global Muslimness. Through a highly critical reading of early 20th century surveillance documents from the Bombay Presidency, this thesis examines the nature of subaltern Muslim political expression during the Ottoman-Balkan War and the First World War. Honing in on communal and anonymous phenomena at the fringes of colonial surveillance, such as rumors, bazaar-gup, and communal gatherings, this thesis challenges the idea that extraterritorial sympathies for the Ottoman Empire were the main cause of Muslim politicization. Rather, it argues that the Pan-Islamic political expressions of subaltern Muslims were influenced primarily by local events which triggered existential anxieties causing pro-Ottoman sentiment to be expressed in uniquely local metaphors.

**Keywords:** Pan-Islamism; Subaltern; First World War; Colonialism; Surveillance

## **Note: Turk vs Ottoman**

In this thesis, words with the root Turk appear side by side with the word Ottoman. Knowing full well the limitations of using the former when writing about pre-1924 historical events, I use the term Ottoman to describe anything that is attached to the Ottoman Empire, be it people, places, or ideas. However, in excerpts from British colonial correspondence quoted in the thesis, terms with the root Turk (Turco-, and Turkey) are used to describe Ottoman officials, politics, ideas, and spaces. To maintain the originality of the text, I have retained these terms as they are.

## **Academia, Surveillance, and the Racialized Muslim: A Note**

“You have been randomly selected for additional security checks.”

These were the words with which the journey of this thesis began. I landed at Vancouver Airport in September 2021 following a 40 hour long flight from Karachi. In these 40 hours, I was randomly selected seven times across three different airports in Europe and North America. With that probability by my side, I almost wished I was flying to Las Vegas instead.

On my second trip to Vancouver, I was not-so-randomly stopped at the door of the plane and pulled back for “one more check” because “we might have missed something.” A long-distance marriage means I fly into New York often to see my wife, where I have lovely conversations with immigration agents at JFK who want to know why I’m bringing her Breka cookies when there are perfectly good bakeries in New York. The gaze sits on you at first. Then it starts to creep in. Then it becomes a part of you. In a post-9/11 world, the intersections between surveillance and the global racialization of Muslims have become more pronounced than ever. For a Muslim international student from Pakistan, the process of writing this thesis has been heavily punctuated by reminders of how tied contemporary surveillance is to my racialized identity.

The idea of this thesis was very different last year. Ironically, surveillance played a huge part in what it became, as several of the archives that were essential to the original idea were housed in the United Kingdom, the site of my proposed research trip for last summer. There was, however, the minor obstacle of a passport that invited extra bureaucratic hoops and a much higher probability of rejection. I returned to school the following fall with a very different idea of what my thesis was going to be.

This note is not a grand declaration of this thesis being a product of my experiences with surveillance. I knew I wanted to write about surveillance long before these travels. But having completed this project, I cannot help but wonder at what point, the weight of the surveillance overpowers an aspiring academic’s thirst for knowledge. We know of the scholars from the Global South who “make it.” We do not know of the thousands who have succumbed to that weight.

## Acknowledgments

A human being contains multitudes. A sum of all the parts taken from everyone who joins us on our journey, however temporarily. This thesis is the same. It is adorned with the paramount support and input of people who have shaped my work in paramount ways, for which I hold deep gratitude.

Thomas Kuehn fought for me since day one and pushed me outside my comfort zone in ways that I've never been pushed before. I am forever indebted to him for widening my horizons and teaching me to never let my curiosity die.

Bidisha Ray exuded warmth and compassion, and always reminded me to bring the same values to my work, not just for myself but also for the people whose stories I tell. Thank you for being the reason I did not miss home a lot.

Aaron Windel taught me to be comfortable with uncertainty and confusion, and not let the weight of the unknown keep me from moving forward.

To Yusra, Nuzhat, Mahnoor, and Naz, for being my entire support system throughout the ups and downs of the last two years. Thank you for your unconditional love and support.

And finally, to the person who pushes me to be my best self in every capacity; my forever first-reader, my editor, my cheerleader, my partner in life and beyond: Manal. Without whom, this project would have never left the notebook. Thank you for holding space for my thoughts and driving me to follow them. I could not have done it without you. And I would not want to.

# Table of Contents

Declaration of Committee .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Note: Turk vs Ottoman .....	iv
Academia, Surveillance and the Racialized Muslim: A Note .....	v
Acknowledgments .....	vi
Table of Contents .....	vii
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter One .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Chapter Two .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>63</b>

# Introduction

On the 13th instant, 1100 Turkish prisoners were landed and entrained at Keamari, Karachi. While the train was waiting, a small crowd of Muhammadans - boatmen and labourers - gathered and greeted the prisoners with marks of sympathy. Some furtively handed fruits, sweets, and cigarettes to the Turks, and a Cutchi boatman even plucked the courage to offer the senior Turkish officer some fruit which was accepted with a *salaam*. The donor was questioned by his friends and remarked that fear of the *Sirkar* (government) alone kept him from giving a great deal more. It is said that some of the prisoners spoke Urdu and that some are really Indians who have been fighting for the Turks. Just as rumour was explaining that the prisoners were not soldiers but *ryots* (peasants) whom the British had captured, the news of the occupation of Baghdad arrived. The Sunni Muhammadans are in varying degrees of sullenness. Opinion among the Shias is divided.

On 11th March 1917, the British Indian army marched into Ottoman Baghdad, bringing an end to the Mesopotamian campaign of the First World War which had started in late 1914. Two days later, the first group of Ottoman prisoners of war landed in the port city of Karachi in Southern Sindh, then part of the Bombay Presidency. The above statement is part of the Sindh Crime Investigation Department's weekly intelligence abstracts, shedding light on the response of subaltern Indian Muslims to the arrival of these prisoners, as well as to the news of the fall of Baghdad itself. The responses reported in this abstract demonstrate the feelings from disbelief at the defeat of the Ottomans. It is, however, not by any means an exceptional passage. Rather, surveillance of such opinions and behaviours of Indian Muslims were characteristic of British intelligence gathering in India in the second decade of the 20th century. This decade, particularly the years of 1912-13 and then 1914-18, were the crescendo point for the pro-Ottoman pan-Islamism that various actors had been trying to propagate within Indian society. Following the Ottoman defeat, the long fermenting impact of this propagation would ripen in the shape of the Khilafat Movement.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Khilafat Movement was a political movement initiated by Indian Muslims in the early 20th century in response to the disintegration of the Ottoman Caliphate following World War I. The movement sought to defend the political and religious authority of the



At first, the report did not raise my eyebrows; the idea that colonized South Asian Muslims held sympathies for the Ottoman Empire and its Caliphate during the First World War was a widely acknowledged fact. Be it in popular histories or school textbooks in Pakistan, pro-Ottoman Pan-Islamism, and the Khilafat Movement that it inspired, was seen as an important chapter in the story of Muslim politicization in South Asia. Indeed, the popular appeal of this narrative has stood the test of time, aided primarily by a post-colonial nation-building project in Pakistan with Islam at its existential core.<sup>2</sup> However, what was different about this report was the people populating it; boatmen, labourers, common folk: subaltern<sup>3</sup>. While scholarship on pan-Islamism in South Asia gives us detailed insights into the ways in which the idea was mobilized by Muslim elites in the Ottoman Empire and British India for political means, very little is known about the ways in which actors outside the corridors of power interacted with the idea of a globalized Muslimness. It is this question which forms the crux of this thesis.

What we can glean from the abstract above, Indian Muslims and their speculations, opinions, and actions in the wake of Ottoman-British clashes in the early 20th century represented anything but unanimous and absolute support for their co-religionists. However, within the imperial intelligence collection in India and,

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Ottoman Caliphate and to oppose British colonial rule in India. It emerged as a significant part of the broader Indian independence movement and was led by prominent Muslim leaders, including Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali, and supported by Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. For a study on how Khilafat Movement influenced broader Muslim individual and communal identity in colonial India, see Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850* (Routledge: New York, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> In 2020, for example, I wrote a detailed report about the history Pan-Islamic narratives in post-colonial historical fiction television in the country. Shehroze A. Shaikh, “From Bin Qasim to Ertugrul: How the Pakistani state has revived the use of historical drama as a political tool” in *Himal Southasian* (November 26th, 2021).

<https://www.himalmag.com/from-bin-qasim-to-ertugrul-2020/>

<sup>3</sup> For this thesis, the definition of subaltern as “the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office or in any other way” is borrowed from Ranajit Guha, “Preface (I. Methodology).” In Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies*, 35–6. Delhi: Oxford University Press.”

subsequently, the larger colonial archive, such events are lodged under the broad but unanimous heading of “pan-Islamism.” While pan-Islamism does capture some of the nuances of a globalized sense of Muslimness, it does not fully encapsulate the entirety of the Indian Muslim positions on the First World War. This perceived unanimity, thus, is reductive and limits our understanding of the nuances of Muslim politics in colonial India. Indeed, Johan Mathew has written about the use of pan-Islamism as a bogey by the British colonial administrators across South Asia and the Middle East in the early twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> He argues that at the time when the British were struggling to contain anticolonial resistance over a diverse range of economic, political, and social lines amongst its Muslim populations, “pan-Islamism” provided a neat category to surveil, and police these upheavals. The label of pan-Islamism, thus, allowed the British to externalize Muslim politics rooted in diverse and localized issues and anxieties, and attach it to “foreign influence,” most notably from the Ottoman Empire.

In reality, however, these forms of resistance were not unanimously subscribed to by Muslims, nor were they restricted to a religious agenda. In fact, this thesis argues that among the Indian Muslim subaltern, the pan-Islamic sentiment was dictated by strictly localized events. Intelligence surveillance of public meetings, festivals, newspapers, and the activities in mosques and shrines during this time reveal that there was a range of opinions across different classes of Indian Muslims, from overt support for the Ottomans over the British to ones that tried to make space for both; the political authority of the British Crown and the spiritual authority of the Ottoman Caliph. Thus, the opinion of different groups were informed by different anxieties and expressed in a variety of ways, such as public proclamations of support for the British on one end, and on the other, publication of “seditious literature,” outright calls for *jihad*, and, as the excerpt quoted earlier shows, valorization of Ottoman prisoners of war being detained in India. Thus, British attempts to surveil the varying stakes, attitudes, opinions, and behaviors of Indian people, and the effect of these attempts on the everyday lives of the people warrant a

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<sup>4</sup> Johan Mathew, “Spectres of Pan-Islam: Methodological Nationalism and British Imperial Policy after the First World War,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 45, No.6 (2017), 942-968.

deeper study that subverts the totalizing lens of “pan-Islamic fervor” that populates the colonial archive.

### **Islam, India, and the First World War**

In recent years, there has been a renowned interest in how the colonies of European empires experienced the globalized conflicts of the 20th century. In 2018, for example, to mark the century of the end of the First World War, an edited volume titled “India and World War I: A Centennial Assessment” brought to the fore new insights into the colony’s experience of the war. Several chapters of the volume serve as inspiration for this thesis, including, but not limited to the works of Sarah Ansari, Suchetana Chattopadhyay, and Salman Bangash. Where previous writings focused on India’s role as the primary provider of troops and infrastructural expertise, this volume turns the focus inwards, highlighting the life and the afterlife of the Great War in South Asia. This thesis builds on that scholarship, by exploring the ways in which the globalized ideas of Muslimness in the early 20th century created unique circumstances for the vast Muslim population of India to express their political opinion.

More traditional scholarship on the issue of Muslim politicization in South Asia during the First World War which uses the lens of pan-Islamism has been more focused on the politics of the elites and the middle-class intelligentsia. Azmi Ozcan’s *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, The Ottomans, and Britain* gives a detailed account of how the relationships between Ottoman and Indian Muslim elites during the second half of the 19th century fostered ideas of a globalized Muslim identity and politics within India.<sup>5</sup> Ozcan draws on Ottoman sources to argue that in the late 1800s, the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II (r.: 1876-1909) emphasized the long-standing claim of Ottoman rulers to the caliphate as never before, in an attempt to leverage its status as the spiritual and political representative of a global Muslim community. In the face of growing European aggression on its borders, Ottoman pan-Islamism was thus a conscious policy aimed at securing extraterritorial influence over Muslims in South and Central Asia. The empire

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<sup>5</sup> Azmi Ozcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, The Ottomans, and Britain (1877-1924)* (Brill: New York, 1997).

resorted to these claims during its wars with Russia and in the Balkans, and eventually during the First World War as well, by calling on Indian Muslims for support.

More recently, Cemil Aydin's thorough and expansive intellectual history of Pan-Islamism traces the socio-politics roots of the idea of a globalized Muslim identity and politics, arguing that it was a direct result of European imperial racialization of colonized Muslims.<sup>6</sup> Where Ozcan claims that Pan-Islamism was an idea in existence among political and intellectual currents of the Indian Ocean since the 16th century, Aydin traces its history to more recent events. Aydin critiques the idea that pan-Islamism was synonymous with the concept of the *Ummah*, a global Muslim community, as it appears in Islamic scripture.<sup>7</sup> Rather, he argues that it is a modern concept rooted in the growing political subjugation of Muslim powers at the hands of European empires in the nineteenth century. Aydin sheds light on how the racialization of Muslims as a distinct and politically inferior community under European rule led to oppositional intellectual currents wherein Muslim intellectuals fashioned Islam as the basis of political identity. These currents, wherein the work of Muslim modernist reformers like Jamal al-Din Afghani and Muhammad Abduh were notable, challenged European ideas of Muslim inferiority, but did not do so for claims of "essentialized difference." Thus, both colonial and anti-colonial race-making processes interacted to develop the idea of Muslims across the world as one transregional whole with shared political interests. Indeed, Afghani and Abduh were both aware of the political sway that a unified Muslim front could hold in the nineteenth century imperial order in the Middle East and South. Aydin's work contains a rich account of the intellectual roots of pan-Islamism as a political ideology and the ways in which it shaped a diverse set of political movements across the globe.

In recent years, however, there has been a scholarly shift in the study of globalized Muslim politics which has led to more interest in the ways in which common Muslims interacted with the idea of Pan-Islamism in their everyday lives. Arthur Asseraf's *Electric News in Colonial Algeria* is notable here, in the ways in which he ties the formation of a globalized Muslim identity in the North African colony to

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<sup>6</sup> Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Harvard University Press, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*.

developments in communications technology and the ability of the Muslim Algerians to access news and opinions about Islam on a global scale.<sup>8</sup> In the context of South Asia, Suchetana Chattopadhyay's article on Pan-Islamic politics in the First World War Bengal also examined the spread of militant anticolonial sentiment among the urban working-class Muslims in Calcutta.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Michael Christopher Low and Lâle Can's works provide valuable insights into how the Ottoman Hajj in the late 19th and early 20th centuries featured in the making of British Indian and Central Asian Muslims as extra-territorial Ottoman subjects.<sup>10</sup> My thesis draws from these histories of Pan-Islamism from below and aims to build on these works by focusing the attention on the Western maritime frontier of the British Raj: The Bombay Presidency.

The Presidency, dubbed the "Indian home-front" by Sarah Ansari, was crucial to British security concerns during the First World War.<sup>11</sup> The protection of Raj's Indian Ocean presence relied heavily on their ability to mobilize resources in the Presidency, which included regions like modern-day Maharashtra, Gujarat, Sindh, parts of Balochistan, and the Southern Yemen Protectorate of Aden, while small Persian Gulf kingdoms under the protection of the Raj also fell within its jurisdiction. The region was thus at the crossroads of heavily populated networks of movement which, coupled with its proximity to the fronts of war in Ottoman Arabia, meant that its inhabitants had a far more unique experience of the war than other parts of India. An experience that is so far missing from the scrolls of South Asian, British, or Indian Ocean histories of the early 20th century.

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<sup>8</sup> Arthur Asseraf, *Electric News in Colonial Algeria* (Oxford University Press: New York, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Suchetana Chattopadhyay, "Jihad at wartime?," *South Asian History and Culture* 7 (2) (2016), 155-74.

<sup>10</sup> For Ottoman-British imperial interactions in the Western Indian Ocean in the context of Hajj and politics, see Michael Christopher Low, *Imperial Mecca: Ottoman Arabia and the Indian Ocean Hajj* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020). For Ottoman subject-making and the Central Asian Hajjis, see Lâle Can, *Spiritual Subjects: Central Asian Hajj at the End of Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Ansari, "The Bombay Presidency's 'home front', 1914–1918," in *India And World War I*, ed. Roger D. Long (Routledge, 2018), 60-78.

In this endeavour, I will be drawing on the untapped resources from the archival collection of the Sindh Police Museum in Karachi, Pakistan.<sup>12</sup> I will examine in detail the police intelligence files from the Bombay Presidency, namely the Criminal Investigation Department's weekly intelligence abstracts from the years 1913 to 1918. The abstracts are categorized thematically under overarching sections, each relating to trends that were deemed worth surveilling. Some trends, such as "Resident Suspects," "Political, Politico-Religious, and Racial Movements," and "Social and Religious Excitement and Propagandism" feature every week, while sections on "Native Press" and "Trans-frontier Issues" appear relatively less often. A majority of the contents of the reports, particularly in the Movements and Propagandism sections pertain to information on the activities of common folk in markets, fairs, *chaikhanay*, as well as rumours and speculations. It is these reports which form the main crux of the primary material for this thesis. Thus, these reports represent the very ground-level mechanism of British intelligence and surveillance in India. Compiled using reports from informants and officers by the office of the Commissioner of Police, supplemented by notes from the officers of the Criminal Investigation Department, and the District Magistrates of the relevant regions. As such, it represents the base level of what Christopher Bayly, in *Empire and Information*, calls the 'colonial information order.'<sup>13</sup> It is thus the information site in the archive where the distance between the colonizer and the colonized is at its closest.

There is, however, the crucial methodological issue that arises at the doorstep of a historian when using colonial archives: to what extent can the voices of the subaltern be accurately recovered from a colonial archive where they are intrinsically marginalized?

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<sup>12</sup> The initial research plan for this thesis involved accessing the India Office Archives at the British Library, as well as records from the National Archives at Kew and the Middle East Centre at Oxford University. However, due to visa issues, my research trip to the UK did not materialize.

<sup>13</sup> In Christopher Bayly, *Empire and Information.: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), "information order" refers to the system of communication, knowledge production, and dissemination that emerged within the colonial context. However, it is not a system in the tangible sense, but rather a "heuristic device" to represent the way information is conceived, collected, processed, and used to make knowledge in a given society. Thus, this thesis uses "colonial information order" to represent the same for colonial India.

Indeed, we know nothing about the boatmen and the laborers mentioned in the report at the beginning of this section, except the fact that they happened to be present where the colonial state's gaze, through the informant, was locked on at that moment. A majority of the reports which form the basis of this thesis are similar in nature. The archive and its epistemological violence make it a difficult task to put the subaltern first. And even then, the subaltern speaks through the voice of the historian, never its own.

However, over the years, scholars have attempted this task nonetheless, owing to the immense methodological and theoretical foundations of the Subaltern Studies Collective. It provides us with the tools to critically read the lexicon of power employed in the colonial archive, in an attempt to work past its epistemic foundations to arrive at points where the colonial gaze is at its weakest. In "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," for example, Ranajit Guha writes about the 1855 Santhal Hool Rebellion in Jharkhand:

Religiosity was, by all accounts, central to the *hool*...The statements we have from the leading protagonists and their followers are all emphatic and indeed insistent on this aspect of their struggle...In sum, it is not possible to speak of insurgency in this case except as a religious consciousness—except, that is, as a massive demonstration of self-estrangement (to borrow Marx's term for the very essence of religiosity) which made the rebels look upon their project as predicated on a will other than their own...How authentically has this been represented in historical discourse? It was identified in official correspondence at the time as a case of 'fanaticism'...The idiom used to describe the phenomenon was typical of the shocked and culturally arrogant response of nineteenth-century colonialism to any radical movement inspired by a non-Christian doctrine among a subject population...The insurgents are regarded here as a mindless 'rabble' devoid of a will of their own and easily manipulated by their chiefs.<sup>14</sup>

Putting the language of colonial epistemic violence under the microscope, Guha provides key analytical insights into how the voices of subalterns can be drawn out. The metaphor of fanaticism, for example, is ubiquitous in British intelligence assessments of subaltern Muslims exhibiting anti-colonial sentiment, particularly in a language of religiosity. For the Muslim subaltern in particular, religiosity is not only tied to a perception of ignorance - often the term "fanatical" is accompanied by qualifiers like "ignorant,"

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<sup>14</sup> Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," *Subaltern Studies II: Writings of South Asian History and Society*. (Oxford University Press, 1993), p.34.

“unlettered,” and “uneducated” when describing Muslims - but also to a foreignness. This is particularly important in our analysis, as it sets any political expression by the Muslim subaltern on the War against the Ottomans as not just a fanatical attachment to a foreign power, but also trivializes their politics as not really anti-colonial, as it is deemed less relevant to ideas of freedom from subjugation in India. As we will see, however, this was far from the truth and represents a reductiveness of colonial knowledge about subaltern Muslim politics that is critiqued throughout this piece.

The archive of surveillance is a site ripe for a subversion of the colonial gaze and a potential recovery of marginalized voices. Christopher Bayly, in assessing the formation of the colonial information order, and identifying sites of “information panic,” demonstrated how the colonial archive has the potential to help us understand subaltern agency.<sup>15</sup> More recently, Suchetana Chattopadhyay, in *Voices of Komagata Maru* critically examines the lexicon of racialization in surveillance archives to draw insights about the experiences of Punjabi migrants in Bengal in the context of the Komagata Maru Incident.<sup>16</sup> In fact, surveillance archives have played a crucial role in the past decade as subjects of study in scholarly attempts to draw out the voices of subaltern subjects from colonial archives.<sup>17</sup> This is precisely because the everyday surveillance archives primarily consist of information about the unnamed inhabitants of the colony who express their politics in the quotidien, without a stage.

What Guha also gives us is a potential site to focus our readings on. If the colonial understanding of subaltern political consciousness is reductive, it represents a spot where the colonial gaze is weak, and the agency of the colonial subject can be drawn out. If an insurgent act, for example, leads to the colonial state misrepresenting the insurgent as a fanatical body, then that indeed is a text where the agency of the insurgent is most visible. This is what I call ‘sites of translucency;’ a spot in the archive where the agency of

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<sup>15</sup> Bayly, *Empire and Information*, as “the feeling of the fledgling colonial administration that it knew nothing of local society and that the locals were combining to deny it information.” p.174

<sup>16</sup> Suchetana Chattopadhyay, *Voices of Komagata Maru: Imperial Surveillance and Workers From Punjab in Bengal* (Tulika Books, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> See Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives. Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790–1920* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).



colonized escapes the grasp of the colonial information order because the latter's perception of the subversive potential of the colonial subject is incorrect. What is important is not that the colonial officer is incorrect, but more importantly that he believes otherwise under the assumptions of a "colonial common sense," to borrow from Anne Laura Stoler.<sup>18</sup> But where Stoler focuses on sites where the colonial common sense is in action to identify epistemic anxieties of the surveillance apparatus, I focus on sites of translucency to analyze how colonial blindness to the subversive potential of subaltern political expression gives us, as historians, a chance to undermine the colonial gaze<sup>19</sup>. These are the sites where I situate the agency of the Muslim subaltern in this thesis.

One of the main sites of translucency, for example, is rumours, which have long been seen by subaltern studies scholars as alternative, democratic, and subversive means of communication that undermine the colonial information order, and induce panic within the ranks of colonial agents. Scholars like Anjan Ghosh and Anand Yang have theorized rumours as "mapping the distance between the worlds of colonizer and the colonized."<sup>20</sup> Julia Clancy-Smith's monograph on popular protests in Algeria and Tunisia during the

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<sup>18</sup> Anne Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton University Press, 2010). Stoler defines "colonial common sense" as a habit, where certain ways of thinking and acting in the context of colonial administration were considered a given and not deliberated upon. However, Stoler argues that the development of this common sense was a historical process, wherein colonial technologies of knowledge making, governance, and surveillance of the Other. "But what constitutes common sense is at once historical and political; colonial contexts teach us clearly that dispositions are trained and disciplined and not without deliberation... To my mind, this shaping of common sense, and the reigning in of uncommon sense, how it is taken up, is the substance of colonial governance and its working epistemologies.", p.38.

<sup>19</sup> The "Colonial Gaze" here refers, briefly, to the ways in which the colonial state's apparatus of control reshaped the ways in which colonized subjects were seen and understood. It is the way in which the racialized and gendered subjects of the colonies are represented in ways that seek to set them apart from the colonizer, who assumes a position of supremacy in the structures of knowledge, administration, agency, and every other aspect that dictates the relationship between the two. For a detailed discussion of the colonial gaze and how it racializes communities and spaces, see Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. (New York: Grove Press, 1952) and Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978).

<sup>20</sup> Anjan Ghosh, "The Role of Rumour in History Writing," *History Compass* 6 (5) (2008), 1235-1245

long nineteenth century, for example, also examined in detail the role of rumours in providing avenues of expression of subversive politics.<sup>21</sup>

However, drawing from Stoler, this thesis in its method not only attempts to read the colonial sources against the grain - that is to read the text with a critical lens that puts the author's, i.e. the colonial state's prejudices under the microscope - but also recognizes the value of reading along it. By reading along the grain and pondering over the colonial common sense present within the surveillance archive, I comment on cracks within the colonial information order in grasping the realities of subaltern Muslim politicization in the Bombay Presidency. The benefit of drawing out these shortcomings is that a) it gives us insights into the structure of the colonial state's sources of knowledge about the subaltern, i.e. Muslim elites (feudal lords, businessmen, notables, etc.); b) an analysis of the relationship between elites and the state sheds light on a more loyalist expression of pan-Islamic rhetoric which can be contrasted with subaltern expressions to add much-needed nuance of class into our discussion and avoid the clumping of all relevant actors into one single category of "Muslim."

To expand further on the use of the term "Muslim" in this thesis, it implies merely a sociological identifier within the discussion. Where relevant, the term Muslim will be accompanied by qualifiers of class, occupation, sect, etc. to demonstrate the vast diversity of actors which populate the story at hand. However, what ties them together is their religious identity, and the experience of performing that identity in a time of perceived globalized crisis in their ingroup (detailed further in the two chapters that follow). Another reason why the term "Muslim" is used as a blanket identifier in most cases is simply that it is the best working option available. Since the bulk of the primary analysis of the thesis includes reports focusing on subaltern actors, the archives condemn them to a state of anonymity where their only identification is the term "Muhammadan" or "Moslem." No amount of reading against the grain can undo that anonymity. There are exceptions where the actors are named, most notably a butcher named Badru Kasai (who appears in chapter one) whose snippet was what got me interested in this project in the

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<sup>21</sup> Julia Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters* (Algeria and Tunisia 1800-1904) (University of California Press, 1997).

first place, and Ismail Chota Khan, a Sindhi Haji-turned-POW in the Battle of the Suez Canal.

This thesis contains two chapters. Chapter 1 begins in 1913, and analyzes subaltern Muslim politicization during the First Balkan War between the Ottoman Empire and the coalition of Balkan States. It briefly traces the social, cultural, and intellectual developments in the Bombay Presidency region at the turn of the century to draw a picture of the world that our actors inhabit and experience the conflict in, as well as the sources by which they interact with it. Following that, the chapter introduces the sites of translucency that will be examined in order to draw out insights into the political expression of the Muslim subaltern in the region. It also briefly discusses elite politics and their struggle to maintain favor with the state. Most importantly, it sheds light on how existential anxieties on the part of Indian Muslims, stemming from acts of colonial violence, led to larger pan-Islamic sentiments taking on local meanings. Chapter 2 begins with the start of the Great War, and sheds light on how the state's increasingly repressive stance on Pan-Islamic rhetoric impacted the political expression of the Muslim subaltern. It demonstrates the role of rumors in communicating an anti-colonial consciousness, and how aspirations of freedom from colonial subjugation result are what leads to the expression of Pan-Islamic sentiment, and not the other way around.

# Chapter One

## Loyal Subjects vs Fanatic Dissidents: Globalized Muslimness and the Limits of Imperial Surveillance, 1912-14.

The years leading up to the First World War saw an exponential rise in the political expression of the Presidency's Muslims, from the cosmopolitan port cities of Bombay and Karachi, to the Upper Sindh Frontiers of Larkana and Jacobabad. These expressions occurred across classes, were characterized by concerns that were both local and global, and spanned the spheres of politics, culture, and law. These expressions were by no means isolated; at any given point, actors and events outside the immediate Presidency, or even India as a whole, inspired, venerated, and collaborated with local actors. In every sense of the word, I argue that the political expression of the Presidency's Muslims was global, owing to the region's place as the hub of Britain's empire in the Western Indian Ocean. This chapter will shed light on three major issues that politicized the Muslim communities in the region, and demonstrate 1) how the Presidency's unique set of connections allowed for that politicization, and 2) how the Muslim public of the region expressed this politics, and 3) how British attempted to surveil this increasingly globalized politics.

The Bombay Presidency is uniquely placed in the story of surveillance, political Islam, and the First World War. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, it became the administrative hub for Britain's empire in the Western Indian Ocean, and by the early twentieth century, the shift of the capital to Delhi resulted in a further increase in the administrative importance of the region. The port city of Karachi, as well as the region of Sindh, benefited heavily in the decade prior to the War. Karachi's proximity to Delhi, as compared to Bombay, accelerated its growth as a trade hub, and in 1912, the city was also opened to Haj traffic, connecting it even more intimately to not just Britain's policy

in the Indian Ocean and the Middle East, but also opened its doors to a large influx of Indian Muslims.<sup>22</sup>

Even within India's borders, during the First World War, it was the maritime frontier of British India's home front.<sup>23</sup> Karachi and Bombay, as trade-centric port cities, invite a diverse mix of migrant workers from all over India, particularly the Punjab, United Provinces (present-day Uttar Pradesh), and the North-West Frontier Province (present-day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).<sup>24</sup> These connections were facilitated further by the early twentieth century when developments in the Sindh Railways further connected the region's market towns, like Hyderabad, Larkana, Sukkur, and Shikarpur to the rest of India. Beyond regional connections, the Presidency's ties to the wider Indian Ocean increased as well. Karachi's status as a port city became more important in 1911 when the capital of British India shifted from Calcutta to Delhi. Karachi, being closer to the new capital than Bombay, meant a rise in its administrative importance.<sup>25</sup>

In the social and religious sphere, the early twentieth century was a time of change as well. Developments in print technology, and the proliferation of vernacular knowledge led to the establishment of a vibrant public reading sphere, where newspapers in languages such as Sindhi, Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi were read across the region. These newspapers reported on a range of issues, including those of global politics, leading to a growing public opinion on events across India, as well as beyond.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to print, collaborations between Muslim religious scholars and Sufi *tariqas* across different regions of India also played a crucial role in establishing wider connections, particularly between the United Provinces and Sindh. In the early twentieth century, an interconnected network of scholarly exchange developed between the Naqshbandi and Qadiri shrines in Sindh, and the Dar ul Uloom at Deoband in Saharanpur, which had predominantly pan-Islamic leanings. The network was owed largely to the efforts of pan-Islamic revolutionaries like Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi, a

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<sup>22</sup> Sarah Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power: The Pirs of Sindh, 1843-1947* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>23</sup> Ansari, "The Bombay Presidency's 'homefront.'"

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

Deoband graduate, and Maulana Mahmud Hasan, the Shaikh ul Islam at Deoband. The former even opened a feeder madrassah in Goth Pir Jhando, north of the city of Hyderabad, where young students from all over Sindh, Bombay, and Gujarat came for their early education, in both religious and physical sciences, before transferring to the Dar ul Uloom for higher learning. In fact, Ubaidullah also set up the only branch outside Deoband of the Jamiat ul Ansar, an organization of Deoband alumni who worked to propagate the Dar ul Uloom's pan-Islamic teachings.<sup>27</sup> As we will explore in Chapter Two, in the years that followed, these networks between Sindh and UP would be at the heart of the revolutionary pan-Islamic Silk Letters Movement, of which Ubaidullah and Hasan were prime movers.

In its immediacy, however, the development of this network of scholarly exchange had a profound impact on the Presidency's status as a center for religious debate. The region, which has largely been studied from an economic lens as the beacon of colonial modernity in India, or as an intellectual center for upper-caste Hindu nationalism, was actually the site of a controversial, and volatile Islamic theological debate in the years prior to the War, which sparked the interest of religious scholars across the empire. In 1912, a Deoband-trained Maulana Muhammad Sadiq of the Khadda mosque in Karachi, attracted the attention of religious scholars and the Muslim public alike across the Muslim world, when he began preaching in sermons that the Prophet Muhammad did not possess *Ilm al Ghaib*, i.e. the divine knowledge of the unknown. This attracted the ire of predominantly Hanafi scholars across India, whose understanding of the Prophet was more semi-divine.<sup>28</sup>

Over the next two years, mosques across Karachi were the sites of debates between Deobandi and Hanafi scholars.<sup>29</sup> Hanafi Scholars from UP and Punjab travelled to Karachi with hoards of followers to debate. On the other hand, Naqshabandi and Qadiri *pirs* and their *murids* from across Sindh, as well as the Pashtun and Memon communities of Karachi and Bombay were supportive of the Deoband view. The latter

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>29</sup> Paragraph 706, "Bombay Presidency Secret Abstracts of Intelligence - 1913", *Intelligence Abstracts Collection*, Sindh Police Museum and Archives, Karachi, Pakistan.

were even joined by scholars from Afghanistan, under direct orders of the Amir. Moreover, the debates were written about extensively in the vernacular press in India, leading to a much wider audience. Thus, in the years leading up to the War, major cities across the Presidency had an environment ripe for politicizing the Muslim public. This environment was closely tied to developments in infrastructure, public opinion, and the growing interconnectedness of the Presidency in the early twentieth century.

However, these developments did not continue unimpeded or unnoticed by the authorities. Rather, they were coupled by simultaneous developments in surveillance. In fact, all of the factors discussed above are directly connected to the growing web of intelligence collection and surveillance in the Presidency, as well as the wider Western Indian Ocean. The proliferation of native vernacular press leads to the development of weekly Native Press Reports within the colonial surveillance networks, which summarize the range of topics covered in the newspapers across the Presidency, flagging any content considered seditious or disruptive of “law and order.” Native informants were also key in the collection of intelligence information for these abstracts, which Christopher Bayly also demonstrates, was a long standing surveillance practice of the colonial state.<sup>30</sup> This fact was not lost on the revolutionary elements in India as well, who actively attempted to undermine the native element in the colonial information order. One of them was Maulvi Barkatullah, a pan-Islamic revolutionary from Bhopal, who would also later join the Silk Letters Conspiracy alongside Ubaidullah Sindhi and Mahmud Hasan.<sup>31</sup> In 1913, Barkatullah circulated a “seditious pamphlet” titled *The Dawn of Liberty* (translated from Urdu), in which he outlined the three main pillars on which the British empire in India rested:

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<sup>30</sup> Bayly, *Empire and Information*.

<sup>31</sup> The Silk Letters Conspiracy was a scheme devised by Indian revolutionaries Ubaidullah Sindhi and Mahmud Hassan. It was named so because the letters which the revolutionaries sent to each other were stitched into the hems of yellow silk handkerchiefs. The plot involved revolutionaries immigrating to Afghanistan and the Hejaz, and from there, working together with German and Ottoman officials to influence the Afghan Amir into invading British India. See Yuvaraj Deva Prasad, “The Silk Letter Plot - An Anti-British Conspiracy in World War I.” *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 34 (3) (1986), 153-163.

So long as the true friends of India do not have in hand the Criminal Intelligence Department, communal movements and attempts at independence will never thrive. The English have greatly extended in these days the sphere of their spies. The Mullahs of the mosques, the worshippers of temples, bawds of houses of prostitution, street-hawkers, shopkeepers in the market, schoolmasters, and Khan Bahadurs and Rai Bahadurs in popular assemblages, etc. one and all have in these days, connections with the CID. CID is A two-edged sword. If the friends of India, carrying their lives in their hands, try without caring two stores for death, the CID will soon be the cause of death and destruction to the English. In short, the duty of a spy should be so much endangered that the real spies may be made to think of their lives, and the people may put their hands against their ears in token of their refusal to give out information.<sup>32</sup>

Over the next couple of months, Barkatullah's pamphlet was found in press offices and schools, across Bombay, Baroda, Karachi, Hyderabad, and others. In many of these spaces, the pamphlet was handed over to the CID by the editors and principals themselves. This validates two key factors: 1) the proliferation of vernacular press, which provided avenues for the Muslim public in the Presidency to connect to the issues of the wider Muslim communities, also provided inroads for the colonial intelligence apparatus to surveil these developments, and 2) as Barkatullah highlighted, these inroads came from native informants who had access to the sites where Muslim public opinion was being formed and politicized upon, like newspaper editors.

Similar to the proliferation of the native press, other developments that contributed to an environment of politicization among the Muslim public of the Presidency went hand in hand with developments in surveillance and intelligence. For example, the *Haj* had been a point of concern for the colonial state in areas of public health, and more importantly, curtailing the development of pan-Islamic ideas.<sup>33</sup> With the opening up of *Haj* traffic in Karachi, the Bombay Presidency now housed two hubs for Muslim traffic across not just pilgrimage routes, but also trade, travel, and espionage. In fact, when the Government of Bombay, in 1913, attempted to give the monopoly of the *Haj* travel to the British steamship company, Turner Morrison and Co., Bombay and

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<sup>32</sup> Maulvi Barkatullah in *Dawn of Liberty*, in Paragraphs 1180, 1181, and 1182, "Bombay Presidency Secret Abstracts of Intelligence - 1913."

<sup>33</sup> Michael C. Low, "Empire and the Hajj: Pilgrims, Plagues, and Pan-Islam under British Surveillance, 1865-1908," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 40 (2008), 269-290.



Karachi became the site of widespread protest by Muslims, which engulfed avenues from the streets to the sheets of newspapers, court petitions, and *fatwas*.

The widening of British control over the *Haj* traffic was closely tied to surveillance. Turner Morrison had proposed that all pilgrims would be required to buy return tickets before being able to travel for *Haj*. This went against the common practice, where Indian Muslims would travel to Mecca on a one-way ticket, and then spend time in the Hejaz collecting money through temporary employment, begging, or sponsorship by wealthy patrons. This also allowed the pilgrims to spend time in the holy cities beyond the actual *Haj* itself, something which to the British Indian state, was one of the root causes for pan-Islamic radicalization among Indian Muslims.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, the practice also contributed to Bombay and Karachi being transit spaces for Muslims of Central Asia and the Far East. Several of these returning pilgrims, for example, would only be able to collect enough money to travel to Bombay or Karachi, where they would embark on subsequent begging trips to collect money for the second leg of their return trip back home. This provided headaches for the CID in the Presidency, as the increased return traffic, and free travel of pilgrims in transit across India, was seen as a potential threat. Granted, foreigners and travelers from Europe also often followed similar travel practices, but in an environment of increased surveillance of Muslim travels in the Indian Ocean, the CID worked in full gear to intercept any “Muslim fanatics” who might provoke anit-British sentiments amongst local Indians. In October 1913, the CID in Karachi detained and questioned an Afghan resident of Mecca named Muhammad Mir Khan, who was traveling from Bombay. During the questioning, he got into an altercation with two CID officials and proceeded to verbally abuse them for their harassment of Muslim travellers. Further tracing of his movements in Karachi revealed that he had meetings with the Afghan Amir’s agents in Karachi, and had also been attracting an audience with anti-British stories:

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

He then went on to tell a Kutchi boy that the King of England had asked the Sultan of Turkey how many soldiers he had, and had got the reply that all the Muslims in the world were his soldiers. The man is being carefully watched and if he appears likely to give trouble, he will be kicked out.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, the Bombay Presidency was a space of growing Muslim politicization, as well as increased surveillance of all the sites where this politicization happened. It is in this context that the Muslim public in the region expressed their politics, and tried to navigate the surveillance that these expressions invited. The Presidency, thus represented a space of contradictions, where forces of resistance and repression inhabited the exact same channels of agency, and different events up to the War provided opportunities for compromise, competition, and everything in between. The following sections will examine, as a case study, the events of the Balkan War. It will demonstrate how news of the conflict provided sites of Muslim politicization and colonial surveillance in the Presidency, and how they became the foundation of a wider and more intensified political space once the War began.

### **Surveillance and Subaltern Political Expression in the Streets**

Badru Kasai, a very bigoted and fanatical Muhammadan, residing near Cunningham Square near the Cantonments (in Karachi), collects for the (Red Crescent) Fund. Years ago, when the British suffered reverses in the Soudan [sic], he illuminated his house in honour of the Muhammadan victories. Now he is at loggerheads with the low class Christians of his neighbourhood. They complain that a cow of his pursues their children, and he replies that the cow is avenging Muhammadans slain in the War. The matter is a very petty one.<sup>36</sup>

Badru Kasai, a butcher from an inner-city neighborhood in Karachi, is a concise but encompassing case study that is central to the main questions of this thesis. In fact, it is one of the first instances that attracted my attention when this project was in its infancy. As a singular actor within the vast Muslim subaltern of the Bombay Presidency, his place in the archive is a mere coincidence; this anecdote is a peripheral part of a larger entry on

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<sup>35</sup> Paragraphs 1928, "Bombay Presidency Secret Abstracts of Intelligence - 1913."

<sup>36</sup> Paragraphs 602, "Bombay Presidency Secret Abstracts of Intelligence - 1913."

“Muhammadan Feelings regarding the Ottoman-Balkan War,” which focus primarily on the efforts of Muslim elites to collect funds for the Red Crescent Society. Badru Kasai does not feature ever again in the archive, but his brief encounter with the CID’s intelligence apparatus is one of many such brief moments which encapsulate the term “political expression” as discussed in this chapter. It demonstrates one of the many ways in which the everyday acts of the Presidency’s Muslim subaltern represent a political consciousness that is both local and global.

Badru’s sense of his own Muslimness, in opposition with his fellow Christians, is reflective of a globalized identity polarization that is discussed in great detail by Cemil Aydin in *The Idea of the Muslim World*.<sup>37</sup> Charting the development of pan-Islamic ideas across global Muslim communities, Aydin highlights the inherently racialized foundations of this identity formation process. The development of European Christian nationalism in the 19th century had a profound impact on Muslims around the world. These developments, articulated by Christian intellectuals across Europe, were deeply tied to ideas of racial superiority and difference.

Central to these ideas was the Ottoman Empire and its European Christian subjects, which provoked outrage among these intellectuals such that political differences between Istanbul and its European subjects began to be articulated as communal, civilizational conflicts. And while Aydin meticulously charts how the anti-Muslim rhetoric of European nationalism impacted Muslims in European colonies such as India, it is pertinent to note that the growth of pan-Islamic ideas is closely tied to this rhetoric in a very paradoxical manner.

The idea that Muslims across the world in the late 19th and early 20th centuries represented a single, global, political unit is a colonial invention. It is rooted in the racialization of Muslims as a fanatic and barbaric race that is inherently anti-Western and anti-modernity. However, it is also anti-colonial, in that Muslim elites respond to these accusations by denying their racial inferiority but upholding the idea of difference, essentially internalizing their own racialization. It is colonial in the sense that these ideas of sameness travel across Muslim territories through newspapers, telegraphs, and

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<sup>37</sup> Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World*.

sermons relayed along nodes of colonial modernity, but anti-colonial in how they critiqued colonial violence upon colonized Muslim subjects and produced grounds for politicization. It is colonial in that it allowed European colonial surveillance to erase all localized nuance from a diverse set of anti-colonial movements led by Muslim revolutionaries across India, Afghanistan, North Africa, and the Persian Gulf, and lump them under the reductive bracket of “pan-Islamism.” It is also anti-colonial in how the fate of Muslims in one part of the world invigorated everyday “acts of resistance” by colonized Muslims in another.

It is in this context of globalized Muslimness that the Bombay Presidency’s Muslims find themselves impacted by what they saw as Christian aggression against a Muslim caliphate. As a community, thus, their political expressions need to be read beyond reductive and dismissive descriptors like “fanatical” and “petty” that populate the CID’s intelligence abstracts. On the contrary, Badru Kasai’s act of celebrating Muslim victories against the British in Sudan by decorating his house with lights represents the very globalized political space that the Bombay Presidency was in the early 20th century, in which the Muslim subaltern was not only well-read on news of global events but also responded to them by expression their agency in a localized context. Badru Kasai, as a collector for the transnational Red Crescent Society, attempts to exert his agency on global events, while also recreating the Ottoman-Balkan conflict in his immediate vicinity, attracting the attention of the colonial surveillance state itself.

In fact, responses to the Ottoman-Balkan War prompted several changes in the colonial information order, and how it reflected itself in the surveillance of Muslims in the Bombay Presidency. At the beginning of 1913, two months into the conflict, the Bombay Presidency CID’s weekly intelligence abstracts placed “Muhammadan Feelings regarding the Ottoman-Balkan War” under a category titled “Miscellaneous.” It takes another three months for it to be moved to a more consistently published category of “Social and Religious Excitement and Propagandism.” Despite this change, most reports maintained a tone that reflected a mix of denial and dismissiveness; the idea that the political expressions of the Presidency’s Muslims are mere “feelings” and will not amount to any substantial anti-colonial movement. Nevertheless, in the vibrant and interconnected political space of the Presidency, the Ottoman-Balkan war took on unique,

localized meaning which led to an increasingly politicized expression of Muslimness, resulting in a more repressive surveillance regime.

As the maritime frontier to the West, the Bombay Presidency was often the first to receive news of global events through telegraph and travelers. The events of the Ottoman-Balkan War became public knowledge through similar channels and were disseminated further *en masse* in multiple sites. These ranged from mosques, religious processions, and philanthropic gatherings to tea shops and docks. These channels, or the opinions expressed through them, were not uniform. Rather, there were subtle nuances that speak volumes about the variance in Muslim public opinion, especially as it related to their own relationship with the colonial state.

Philanthropic efforts to support the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan War were one of the major channels through which Muslims in the Presidency sought to express their politics. With organizations like the Anjuman Zia-ul-Islam (Society for the Rise of Islam) and the Sindh Red Crescent organizing philanthropic tours across the Presidency, their meetings became sites where the Muslim public gathered *en masse* to listen to the leading intellectuals of the community. In December 1912 alone, the pan-Islamic activist and journalist Muhammad Zafar Ali spoke at two different gatherings in Bombay and Pune respectively, which were attended by 2000 people each. These meetings were not only a point of dissemination for news of the war, but also spaces where Muslim intellectuals like Zafar Ali attempted to shape public opinion and gather donations to aid the Ottoman cause. Indeed, through the Balkan War and later the First World War, aid from Indian Muslims made up a substantial source of income from the Ottoman Empire. In addition to major cities, large-scale fundraising meetings took place in Belgaum, Larkana, Nasik, and Sukkur.<sup>38</sup>

The Muslim public was not mere listeners or donors in these tours. In fact, these meetings became recruiting grounds where several men volunteered for these organizations. The volunteering structure was strengthened further when in early 1913,

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<sup>38</sup> For more on Indian Muslim fundraising and economic support to the Ottoman Empire, see Michael O'Sullivan, "Pan-Islamic Bonds and Interest: Ottoman bonds, Red Crescent Remittances and the Limits of Indian Muslim Capital, 1877–1924," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 55 (2) (2018): 183–220.

the Anjuman-e-Khuddam-e-Kaaba (Society of the Servants of the Kaaba) was set up with branches across India. The AKK was formed in response to a growing fear of British incursion on the Holy Cities in Arabia. The organization, over the next year, recruited hundreds of volunteers across the Presidency's major cities and towns. These volunteers, called *shedais*, would take oaths that required them to do "everything in their power to protect the Holy Places from any attack by a non-Moslem [sic.] power."<sup>39</sup> Throughout 1913, the AKK amassed a large volunteer base and was able to consolidate itself so deeply that volunteer sign-ups did not stop even with the end of the Balkan War. In November 1913, six months after the end of the war, the society had 275 volunteer sign-ups across four major districts in Sindh; Karachi, Hyderabad, Matiari, and Sukkur.<sup>40</sup>

Pan-Islamic organizations like the AZI, SRC, and the AKK, were one of the major channels through which the Muslims of the Presidency expressed their politics. Despite the rather upper-class and intellectual makeup of their central leadership, the organization provided opportunities for the local Muslim public to not just contribute to the larger issues plaguing their communities but also to make inroads into the political sphere. It is important to note, for example, that actual political parties like the All-India Muslim League are conspicuous by their absence in the Presidency's political surveillance net, and the section on "Muhammad Feelings" is often dominated by the work of these philanthropic and volunteer organizations. It is these organizations that, in the years prior to the First World War, provide the most viable vehicles to politicize the Muslim public of the Presidency.

However, while analyzing the work of these organizations in the context of Muslim politicization, it is important to note that the leaders of these organizations did not think of their own work as political. In fact, anti-colonial sentiment was largely absent in their rhetoric. Instead, their tone straddled the border between allegiance to the Crown on one hand, and the Sultan on the other. In fact, a tone of loyalty and appeal was most conspicuous. For example, on 31st January 1913, at an Anjuman Zia ul Islam meeting in Bombay led by journalist and pan-Islamic activist Shaukat Ali, rubbished claims that that Muslim sentiment for the Ottomans was anti-British. It was also stressed

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<sup>39</sup> Paragraphs 2354, "Bombay Presidency Secret Abstracts of Intelligence - 1913."

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

that Islam, as a universal religion, allowed for territorial patriotism and extra-territorial sympathies to exist at the same time.<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, the Sindh Red Crescent meetings would often begin with acknowledgements of the dual allegiance. Even after the war ended with the Ottomans losing almost the entirety of their European territories, not only did the tone of appeal stay consistent, but rather was accompanied by a complete disavowal of any political aims. On 16th February 1914, Shaukat Ali, now a leading member of the Anjuman-e-Khuddam-Kaaba, wrote a letter to the Police Commissioner in Bombay, stating that their organization was a religious one, and not a political one. Towards the end, he wrote: “I need not tell you that it is our sincere desire and prayer that we should do all we could do for our faith without in any way causing anxiety to the Government.”<sup>42</sup>

The reluctance to seem “political” on the part of intellectuals like Zafar Ali and Shaukat Ali, was characteristic of a larger loyalist trend in Indian Muslim politics which stemmed from their alma mater, the Aligarh Muslim University. Following a school of thought pioneered by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, they articulated a style of Muslim politics that prioritized a collaborative approach to colonial rule. As such, for these intellectuals, the appropriate channel for pan-Islamic concerns was to appeal to the British, as colonial subjects, to intervene on their behalf. However, how common was this loyalist trend in the Bombay Presidency, especially outside the circles of these Muslim intellectuals? To what extent was their so-called “apolitical” stance reflected in the political expressions of not just the workers of their own organizations, but by the Muslim public in general? Importantly, how does one extract the answer to that question from a surveillance regime that either spends very little time concerning itself with the subaltern, or minimizes their agency altogether?

One example which demonstrates the relevance of this question, again, is that of Badru Kasai, who as a volunteer funds collector for the Sindh Red Crescent, is part of an organization that begins its meetings by announcing their allegiance to the Crown. Despite that, Badru harbors a clear sense of aggression towards the British Raj and

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<sup>41</sup> Paragraph 168, “Bombay Presidency Secret Abstracts of Intelligence - 1913.”

<sup>42</sup> Paragraph 411, “Bombay Presidency Secret Abstracts of Intelligence - 1914”, *Intelligence Abstracts Collection*, Sindh Police Museum and Archives, Karachi, Pakistan.

celebrates their losses in a rather public manner. To tackle this question, it is important to delve into the anonymity with which the subaltern occupies in the British surveillance regime. Whereas the colonial police surveillance was relatively comfortable with the large-scale meetings and speeches under the banner of the Muslim intellectual elite, it was the anonymous *bazaar-gup* that created bigger ripples in the information order. From crowds, processions, and religious festivals to the tea shops and dockyards, the everyday life of the Presidency, and the surveillance it was under, provide important cues by which we can delineate Muslim political expression on the streets.

The Balkan War captured the imagination of the Presidency's Muslim public. Outside the meeting halls of pan-Islamic organizations, the streets of the Presidency's major cities were spaces of grief and anger for the Muslim public. These sentiments seeped into everyday life, and took center stage, especially in times of collective experience. Communal activities, thus, were an integral site of political expression. However, the qualitative difference between this expression and that of the Muslim intellectuals was, to varying degrees of overtness, an anti-colonial tone. The term anti-colonial here refers not just to the disavowal of Britain's colonial authority in India and the wider Muslim world, but also a critique of what was seen as Britain's complicity in a collective European and Christian offensive against a Muslim empire.

One of the sites where this parallel presents itself clearly is the annual *Ashura* processions. As an event of remembrance for the martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Hussain, and his followers in Karbala, *Ashura* processions have historically been a site of Muslim grief, particularly for the Shi'ites. As such, the event serves as a commemoration of what is believed to be a spiritual battle against an oppressive ruling state. The rituals performed on *Ashura* are laced with symbolisms that reinforce this narrative.

*Ashura* itself has an interesting and contradictory place in the British imagination. From the fascinating and fearful depictions in Rudyard Kipling's writings to the plethora of representations in postcards made for the British public back home, the event had long been a site of anxiety for the colonial state in India. Thus, attempts to "order" and "sanitize" the *Ashura* processions had long been a point of concern for the state. Rebecca Brown, in her analysis of colonial art depicting *Ashura*, argues that these depictions



carried out a specific kind of erasure of Muslim religious expression, wherein they conveyed orderly and static portrayals of otherwise dynamic and high-energy rituals. In doing so, the state attempted to paste onto canvas the “civilizing authority” with which it policed actual processions in the streets.<sup>43</sup> To the British Indian state, *Ashura* presented a policing problem in itself. An annual event where crowds spring up all across India, running high with emotion and religious fervor, it was a potent cocktail of surveillance nightmares.

It is, in that sense, very relevant to note the alarm bells that rung off when in December 1912, the annual *Ashura* processions in Pune’s Bhorli Ali and Ravivar Peth neighborhoods became sites for anticolonial sentiment. The CID reported that at several points in the procession, *juloos*, pictures depicting scenes from the Ottoman-Italian War of 1911 were circulated<sup>44</sup>. The circulation mostly took place through *paan* shops (street-side kiosks selling betel leaf) in the neighborhood, but in no way was this circulation peripheral to the procession. In fact, many of the pictures were pasted on to the *taboots* in the processions. The *taboots* (caskets) are an integral part of *ashura* processions, which serve partly as re-enactments and partly as compensations of the events of Karbala. Each *taboot* represents a martyr of Karbala, and the act of carrying the caskets is symbolic compensation for the respectful funeral that martyrs did not receive.

For the procession to paste pictures of Ottoman martyrs on these *taboots* is a powerful act by which the participants are not only commemorating their sacrifice but also fulfilling a communal duty: to participate in a neighbor’s funeral. So despite the deaths of Ottoman soldiers happening thousands of miles away, they are localized by their symbolic inclusion in an intimate neighborhood ritual and simultaneously immortalized by being tied consciously to one of the most vividly and fervently commemorated grief in the history of Islam. Thus, to the anonymous subaltern crowd in the streets of Bhorli Ali and Ravivar Peth that day, the Ottomans represented a struggling, oppressed power on the verge of martyrdom at the hands of conniving European oppressors.

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<sup>43</sup> Rebecca M. Brown, “Abject to Object: Colonialism Preserved through the Imagery of Muharram,” *Res* 43 (2003), 203-217.

<sup>44</sup> Paragraphs 82, “Bombay Presidency Secret Abstracts of Intelligence - 1913.”

Following this instance, sympathy for the Ottomans became a consistent feature of Muslim religious and political expression throughout 1913, accompanied in tandem by increased surveillance. For example, in March, the CID reported that another Muslim procession in the town of Yeola in Nasik displayed pictures that depicted acts of heroism carried out by Ottoman soldiers in the Balkans.<sup>45</sup> The pictures were subsequently removed by the sub-Inspector of the Police.

Extra-territorial sympathies were not just limited to expressions of grief, but also in joy. For example, when the Ottomans recaptured Adrianople (modern-day Edirne) from Bulgarian forces in July 1913, celebrations took place in several cities. In the city of Baruch, in Gujarat, sweets were distributed among children, and songs were sung in collective expressions of gratitude. Similarly, in the town of Thasra, streets were decorated with lights and celebrations took place in which, to the concern of the CID and the District Magistrate, local state officials and police officers also participated. Thus, sympathy for the Ottomans took on a life of its own among the Muslims of the Presidency, wherein the spatial distance between the battlefields of the Balkans and the streets of India was nullified.

Prior to the re-conquest of Adrianople, however, the news of the Balkan War was marked primarily by anger. The anti-colonial tone of this was only magnified once it seemed inevitable that the Ottomans were going to lose the War. In the city of Sangamner, the Police Commissioner reported a strong environment of frustration among the local Muslim community. Speculations were abound that European aggression against the Ottomans was a product of Christian religious zeal, channeled through a modern-day Crusade against a Muslim power. Rumours also went around that the primary reason for the War was the Christian obsession to “recover the Holy Sepulchre.” What is interesting, however, is that the grumblings of the Muslim public do not hesitate to criticize the “*khatpat* of the *sirkar*” (trans: interference of the British government) in the defeat of the Ottoman Empire. In fact, there is a general opinion that the British are enemies of Islam, and duplicitous in their dealing with not just the Ottomans, but Indian Muslims as well.

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<sup>45</sup> Paragraphs 650, “Bombay Presidency Secret Abstracts of Intelligence - 1913.”

However, what do these “grumblings” tell us about Muslim sentiments in Sangamner? Are they of any value in the larger analysis of Muslim political expression, or are they mere gossips on the streets? I argue that these grumblings provide valuable insights once we read against the grain. The environment in Sangamner, for instance, is marked by widespread conversation, speculation, and the spread of rumours; something which the *Times Of India*, earlier in the year, had termed *bazaar-gup*. In a more theoretical sense, *bazaar-gup* represents anonymous social communication that is subversive to the colonial information order.

The reporting of rumors in Sangamner is not accompanied by names of people who can be subsequently questioned for their “seditious” actions. Secondly, its delivery to the authorities is preceded by several layers of transmission and changes, with every individual relay not just politicizing the listener but also qualitatively changing the content of the rumor more and more. Thus, a rumour that reaches the state has two potentially subversive characteristics: 1) the fact that it reached up the corridors of power means that it must be a strong, widely-discussed rumour, otherwise it may have died down along the way, and 2) it has spent enough time in circulation that by the time it reaches the state, it may have already stirred the public enough that the Police is bound to be playing catch-up.

Thus, for the subaltern, rumor and speculation offers a mode of communication outside the lexicon of colonial power<sup>46</sup>. It is not important whether the speculations of the Muslims of Sangamner are accurate. It does not matter whether the Balkan states are inspired by religious zeal, or whether the point of their aggression towards the Ottomans is to recover the space where Jesus was crucified. It is important, methodologically, because it allows us to hear the whispers of subaltern agency in an archive that is designed to suppress it, and provides valuable insights into Muslim political expression.

The result of this scenario is typical for what Bayly called “information panic,” and it can be seen from the way state actors respond to the rumors in Sangamner. At the first reading, the Police Commissioner is rather dismissive of the *bazaar-gup*, and chalks

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<sup>46</sup> Anand A. Yang, “A Conversation of Rumors: The Language of Popular Mentalités in Late Nineteenth Century Colonial India,” *Journal of Social History* 20 (3) (1987), 485-505.

it up to the chatter of the unlettered: “*Ignorant Muhammadans hold the Sirkar responsible for all the deeds and omissions of the whole of Europe.*”<sup>47</sup> He goes on to write that critiques of British foreign policy did not necessarily indicate a disdain for British rule in India. Indeed, as discussed earlier, this was the position portrayed by the Muslim intellectuals in the Presidency. However, as we have seen, that position was not necessarily shared by the Muslim public on the ground. It is here that we see the lexicon of colonial power, which prioritizes a certain kind of Muslim political expression as legitimate, and the rest as mere gossip, erasing subaltern agency in the process. The erasure is further consolidated by the remarks of the District Magistrate of Sangamner, who responds by declaring, “*On the whole, the Muhammadans of Sangamner are a good lot.*”<sup>48</sup> Where Bayly defines information panic as “the feeling of the fledgling colonial administration that it knew nothing of local society and that the locals were combining to deny it information,” in the context of a nascent colonial state, I argue that in late colonial rule, “information panics” arise in situations where the “colonial common sense,” as per Stoler, fails to provide an accurate grasp of the situation.

However, the erasure of agency and dismissal of rumors does not necessarily translate to a lack of policing action. In fact, the Commissioner announces his intention to not just increase surveillance of sites of interaction for the Muslim public, but to also exploit police favors in the process:

I am taking steps to find out if whether any seditious pamphlets have been received (in Sangamner)...Muhammadan tea-shopkeepers ought to know something of their co-religionists’ feelings just now, and in Bombay, where their livelihood depends on Police favour, their information ought to be available.<sup>49</sup>

Rumours in Sangamner, thus, cause a rumble in the surveillance regime beyond the immediate confines of the city itself. More importantly, they demonstrate a key aspect of colonial surveillance of Muslim political expression in the Presidency: contradiction. The Commissioner of Sangamner is not alone in his dismissal of Muslim rumour on one hand,

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<sup>47</sup> Paragraphs 1426, “Bombay Presidency Secret Abstracts of Intelligence - 1913.”

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

and increasing surveillance measures on the other. Rather, the colonial information order as a whole was in a sense of, at best, security and, at worst, denial about the politicization of Muslims in the Presidency. In police surveillance reports, this was reflected in a consistent demarcation of “religious” and “political” activity when reporting about Muslims of interest.

This demarcation does apply somewhat to the political expression of Muslim intellectuals in the speeches that they give on tours, where they openly declare their allegiance to the Crown and sympathies with the Sultan. However, it falls flat when it has to travel down to the streets which the Muslim subaltern occupies. It is this information gap that sheds light on colonial understandings of agency, whereby “real” political consciousness is understood primarily as a top-down process inspired by the political and intellectual elite. Any sort of political expression that does not fit these parameters is stamped with the dismissive lexicon of power: “bigoted,” “fanatical,” and “ignorant.”

A closer analysis of conversations between institutional actors also reveals contradictions at deeper levels, and how these contradictions cause subaltern erasure. For instance, the Commissioner of Baruch in August 1913, reported in fair detail that Muslims in the village of Palej had been increasingly organizing and having meetings where they discussed both local and global political issues. This news has traveled from informants to agents to scribes, all the way to the Commissioner, who takes the next logical step and reports to the District Magistrate, who then remarked: “These persons appear to be villagers, and are of no importance.”<sup>50</sup> Subsequently, the entire trail vanishes, condemning the villagers of Palej to the depths of anonymity, and the contemporary historian, whose method centers on a paper trail, loses access to their stories.

The epistemological violence of the colonial archive can be seen in real-time here in how a strand of information about subaltern politics is consciously disregarded in the larger scheme of things by state actors. And as historians committed to recovering knowledge about that politics from the archive, the murmurs of Sangamner, the secret meetings of Sehwan, and the twinkling lights on Badru Kasai’s house are knobs around

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<sup>50</sup> Paragraphs 1667, “Bombay Presidency Secret Abstracts of Intelligence - 1913.”

which the threads of this story can be tied. This is the primary reason why this project, moving forward, will shift its focus to sites where the intelligence archive exhibits hints of an information gap, or more importantly, information panic: rumors, anonymous texts, *bazaar-gup*, and *en masse* festivities.

Throughout the second half of 1913, rumors continue to surface from Muslim communities across the Presidency, with their content demonstrating an intimate intertwining of global and local Muslim anxieties, often with parallels between the two. One of the issues that provides a crucial analysis in this regard is that of the Kanpur Mosque Massacre. In 1913, the government in United Provinces sanctioned a large-scale Public Works project which included several infrastructural developments. One of these was the widening of A.B. Road in Kanpur, which would require partial demolitions of either a mosque or a temple, which straddled a side each. In the end, the Public Works Department decided to demolish a part of the mosque on May 7th. The act which was met with country-wide protest, which rose exponentially weeks later when a protest at the demolition site was fired upon by the Kanpur police.

Thus, in the summer of 1913, there was palpable anger among the Muslim public, both local and global, which came to a head specifically in religious gatherings. In July 1913, the *urs* of the Sufi saint, Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, in Sehwan Sharif, became the site of a large-scale gathering of Muslim attendees who conversed at length about the British state's complacency in the Balkan War, as well as its direct role in the sacrilege in Kanpur. What is interesting to note, however, is that the CID agents present at the *urs* were initially unaware of any of these conversations, and reported that there was "no public excitement."<sup>51</sup> It was only a week later that the CID headquarters in Larkana reported that secret meetings were held during the *urs* by local Muslims and visiting followers, where these conversations took place.

However, a proliferation of widespread rumors was one of the major outcomes of this anger. For example, in Bombay, the Port Trust attempted to acquire the land on which there was a *musafirkhana*. The matter, which was pretty standard otherwise, became politicized when rumors began to fly around that the *musafirkhana* contained a

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<sup>51</sup> Paragraphs 1485 and 1534, "Bombay Presidency Secret Abstracts of Intelligence - 1913."

mosque inside which was also going to be demolished. In the context of bubbling anger over the Kanpur incident, the rumor took on a life of its own, because it embodied the politicized anxieties of the Muslim public.

In addition to communicating anxieties, rumours also were a vehicle to communicate ideas of heroism and resistance. In Ahmednagar, for instance, it was reported that a tea-shop where the “ignorant” and “touchy” Muslims of the neighborhood often congregated, was the site of rumours about the Kanpur incident. The most potent of these rumours was about a man who, during the shooting on the protest crowd in Kanpur, was “pierced by ten police spears, and on being taken to the hospital cried out that he had suffered for the faith.<sup>52</sup>”

The Police Commissioner dismissed the rumours as fanciful accounts, citing the poverty and lack of education among the Muslims of Ahmednagar as reasons why their speculations are nothing to worry about. Nonetheless, as we have established by reading beyond the lexicons of power, the existence of these rumors is closely tied to the environment of anger that the Muslim public of the Bombay Presidency occupied. To them, the colonial repression faced by them and the aggression against the Ottomans were two sides of the same coin. Thus, their opinions about the latter often became a channel through which they expressed their anxieties, hopes, and frustration over their circumstances in India. The *bazaar-gup*, in its various iterations, embodied these political expressions. It is these sites of resistance that become wider and even more pronounced once the First World War begins, and the existential threat to the Ottomans grows in tandem with Muslim repression in the Presidency.

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<sup>52</sup> Paragraphs 1667, “Bombay Presidency Secret Abstracts of Intelligence - 1913.”

## Chapter Two

### Great War, Greater Resistance: Apocalyptic Anxieties and the Muslim Subaltern

*“The Turks were trying their best to invade India from the mouth of the Indus because the surrounding country is populated chiefly by Muhammadans.”<sup>53</sup>”*

- **Maulvi Muhammad Sadik, a Wahhabi preacher from Karachi, speaking about the Mesopotamian front.**

By the onset of the First World War in June 1914, the political sentiment among the Muslims of India became increasingly suspicious of the British colonial state. Influenced by both global and local events where Muslims were targets of European colonial violence, there was a growing sense of existential anxiety among Muslim populations across the empire. As discussed in the previous chapter, these anxieties and the anti-colonial sentiment resulting from it, manifested itself in a wide range of political expressions in spaces of communal gathering, as well as through subversive mediums such as rumors.

In this context, the problems faced by the colonial state in its attempts to police the growing politicization of Muslims became increasingly difficult. The surveillance system, which was already stretched thin in order to contend with revolutionary activities in the Bengal and Punjab, had to be widened considerably to stay up to date with the subversive potential of pro-Ottoman “pan-Islamism” that was being used increasingly as the medium of expressing communal dissatisfaction by the Muslim public of Bombay Presidency. However, the socio-political and economic fabric of the region was ruptured significantly with the start of the First World War. The opening of the front in Mesopotamia coupled with the uncertainty of Afghanistan’s position meant that the region’s unique connections within and beyond the frontiers of India made it a crossroads of war supply lines, flow of information and propaganda, and networks of resistance.

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<sup>53</sup> Paragraphs 919, “Bombay Presidency Secret Abstracts of Intelligence - 1916.”



On this volatile ground, the anxieties of the Muslim public were accentuated even further. Whereas in the previous chapter, we saw that Muslim subaltern expressed anti-British sentiment in their everyday life and communal activities during the Ottoman-Balkan War, the First World War introduced much higher stakes for similar expressions. In the former, the British were not directly part of the conflict, rather it was their lack of support for the Ottomans that was seen as being anti-Muslim. In the First World War, however, with the Ottoman Empire allying itself with Germany, the political and spiritual sovereigns of the Indian Muslims became direct opponents, thus severing the tightrope between the Crown and Caliph that they had been contending with for the past many decades. Thus, placed within the web of economic, social, and cultural connections which were central to the flow of resources and information throughout the War, the Muslims of the Bombay Presidency found their psychological distance from the events in Mesopotamia and the wider Muslim Indian Ocean world drastically reduced.

The First World War had tangible impacts on everyday life in the Bombay Presidency. Sarah Ansari has written in detail about the ways in which spatial changes in the region, influenced by the War, were central to the ways in which the local population perceived the conflict, leading to the Presidency being the *de facto* home-front in the Indian Ocean. The rising food prices and rents led to major anxieties among the local populations, while for agriculturalists, the immediate breakdown to trade meant that there was widespread concern regarding the potential wastage of crop harvests.

Furthermore, the deployment of troops to warfronts meant that the internal security was compromised. In October 1914, several cities in Sindh saw an uptick in crime, particularly robberies. The Hindu money-lending class in Hyderabad and Jacobabad expressed concerns regarding the removal of cavalry regiments barracked in the cities for deployment to the War, fearing that it would encourage raiders from Balochistan and Afghanistan to commit theft and dacoities.<sup>54</sup> The subsequent need for more troops to offset the imbalance, as well as reinforce European fronts, led to widespread panic about forced conscription. In the city of Satara, for example, it was reported that retired Indian Army officers were disrupting recruitment activities, telling

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<sup>54</sup> Paragraphs 1742, "1914"

potential enlisters that they should wait for the war to end before signing up so that they are not sent abroad for active war duty.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, in the context of the war, the colonial state found itself struggling administratively on several fronts, leading to an air of panic not just amongst the state's officers, but also among the general population. Across India, there was an attempt to control the panic by suppressing news and information about the events of the War, particularly that of Allied losses. However, in a region as interconnected, porous, and diverse as the Bombay Presidency, this was particularly complicated, as the free passage of travellers, pilgrims, and traders between Karachi, Bombay, and the Gulf made it difficult to maintain that control. This meant that the state's surveillance system had to work overtime to ensure that it anticipated any threats from beyond and within. However, the scale of their problems increased massively when in late 1914, the Ottoman Empire formally announced its entry into the War, and heightened British anxieties around the security of their empire in India. Extending across the Western Indian Ocean into Aden, the Bombay Presidency was closer to the War than it had ever been. This is encapsulated in October 1914, when the District Magistrate of Karachi wrote to the Sindh CID:

The possibility of Turkey taking part in the War is again beginning to be a good deal discussed. Owing to Karachi's proximity to the Persian Gulf, Turkish affairs gain a certain amount of special attention here, and a local set of Mahomedans (sic) have always claimed to show special interest therein.<sup>56</sup>

The quote at the beginning of the chapter, which comes from a prominent Wahhabi, pan-Islamic preacher of Sindh, Maulvi Muhammad Sadik in 1916, suggests that there was a perception that the Western frontiers of Bombay Presidency and India as a whole, due to their predominantly Muslim population, were of special interest to the Ottomans in terms of an invasion. This, of course, was primarily the reason why the British Raj launched an invasion of Ottoman Iraq in the first place, in order to secure the Western frontiers of India.

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<sup>55</sup> Paragraphs 1752, "1914"

<sup>56</sup> Paragraph 1631, "1914"

However, even before the conflict in Ottoman Iraq began, there was a recognition among the local population in the Presidency that they were close to the conflict. For example, throughout the early months of the war, panic was reported across the coastal regions of the Presidency over the news of the German ship SS Amden, and its exploits on the eastern littoral of the Indian Ocean.<sup>57</sup> The Muslims of the Presidency, however, were connected to the fronts of war through the Persian Gulf routes, whereby news and letters were p key sources of war information and speculations.

One such letter was intercepted by the Karachi Port Censor in October 1914. The original letter, handwritten in Sindhi and translated by the Sindh Police for reproduction in the intelligence abstracts, was posted from Mecca to Larkana. While the abstract do not have the direct text from the letter or any information about its author, the District Magistrate’s summary of its contents reads: “Egypt and Aden taken. Karachi next to be attacked.”<sup>58</sup>

The erasures of the archive do not tell us much about the letter, but they do shed light on the way this anonymous Sindhi traveller in the Hejaz imagined the conflict. Historical record does show that Karachi was never the site of an attack by the Ottomans or Germans. However, the conflict’s oceanic framing gives us an indication of the ways in which the high degree of connectedness of the Presidency with the Hejaz and the wider Gulf region reduced the psychological distance of the region’s Muslims from the War, to the extent of fearing direct invasions.

Over the next couple of years though, the extent of how mobilised the Indian Ocean space was for pro-Ottoman and pan-Islamic propaganda began to be fully realized by the Raj through intelligence gathering, all while the internal surveillance systems failed to comprehend the element of subaltern Muslim politicization within this environment. This does not mean that the British did not attempt to counter any of these attempts. Rather, their response failed to go beyond the contours of the established information order around Muslims, and thus, failed to come to grips with the nuances that we can draw from subaltern Muslim political expression when we read against the grain.

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<sup>57</sup> Paragraph 1602, “1914”

<sup>58</sup> Paragraph 1708, “1914”

Before jumping into the latter, thus, it is important to discuss the imperial race to mobilize Muslim opinion during the war, and place the Bombay Presidency within it.

In Ottoman attempts to mobilize Indian Muslims, the Hejaz and the Persian Gulf were key points of access. As discussed above, the Hejaz, and particularly the pilgrimage sites of Mecca and Medina were important sites to deliver subversive information into India. Another key site was Baghdad, as throughout the Mesopotamian campaign, pamphlets containing anti-British content kept trickling into India despite considerably stringent Postal Censorship at the ports in Bombay and Karachi. One such pamphlet, titled *Al Jihad* and written in both Arabic and Persian, was posted to a Shi'ite cleric in Lahore, who submitted it to the local police station. The part of the pamphlet translated and quoted in the intelligence abstracts reads:

“For centuries the Christian have been endeavouring to encompass the ruin of Islam. The atrocities committed in the Balkans are fresh in our minds. Are old men and children were butchered. The chastity of our women was violated. The Christians are bent upon the destruction of the Holy Kaaba and the mausoleum of our Holy Prophet. They are greedily misappropriating our territories. O Muslims, value around the Sultan, and let us present a bold and united front against our fiendish enemies.”<sup>59</sup>

The text was characteristic of most pan-Islamic propaganda material being employed to mobilize Muslims globally, as discussed by Cemil Aydin in *The Idea of the Muslim World*. It employed an anti-Christian and anti-European tone and very importantly in the context of the First World War, it served as reminder to European hostilities against Ottomans during the Balkan War. As discussed in the previous chapter, anti-European rhetoric was a key aspect of Muslim political expression in the immediate years before the First World War, and it seeped into their sense of colonial subjugation, socio-economic precarity, and existential anxieties in the wake of violence on communal spaces, such as mosques.

As the war progressed, Baghdad and the Hejaz became increasingly important sites for mobilizing Indian Muslims to support the Ottomans. In early 1915, the Postal Censors in Karachi consistently intercepted “highly objectionable” letters relaying

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<sup>59</sup> Paragraph 1780, “1914”

between Muslim clerics and Sufis in Sindh and Baghdad. Several of these letters, it was found, bore the stamp of the *naquib al ashraf* of Baghdad.<sup>60</sup> As a political and spiritual title, the office of the *naquib al ashraf* in Baghdad was held by the direct descendants of Shaykh Abdul Qadir Gillani, the founder of the Qadiriyya Sufi Order which has historically had a strong influence in South Asia. The *naquib*'s khalifas had established themselves across cities and towns in Balochistan and Sindh.

It is worth diverging here to discuss that the office of the *naquib* in Baghdad had been a contentious one in recent times. Aline Schlaepfer's work on the officer holder of the time, Talib al-Naqib, reveals that the *naquib*'s position and popularity was the subject of anxiety for both the British and the Ottomans during the war. In late 1914, he had attempted to negotiate a deal with the British resident in Basra, which was refused.<sup>61</sup> In early 1915 though, he found himself in exile in India, travelling between Bombay and Madras where he was the subject of strict police surveillance.<sup>62</sup>

In the context of the letters, over the course of a three-month investigation, it was found that a network of pan-Islamic Muslim clerics in Sindh and the Kalat region had put in place missionary networks whereby Sindhi Muslims would be convinced to join the Ottoman Army as "*ghazis*" following the completion of Hajj. Several actors implicated in the matter were followers and khalifas of the *naquib* of Baghdad. In the following week, a colonial informant in Medina reported that several Sindhi Hajjis had indeed joined the Ottoman army and that the network had members stationed in Medina to facilitate the process. This was confirmed further when reports came in from Egypt where, among the Ottoman prisoners of war following the failed raid on the Suez was a Sindhi man named Ismail Chota Khan.<sup>63</sup>

Khan's capture seemingly validates the largely held view among scholars of pan-Islamism that Indian Muslims were supportive of the Ottomans during the First World

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<sup>60</sup> Paragraph 175, "Bombay Presidency Secret Abstracts of Intelligence - 1915"

<sup>61</sup> Aline Schlaepfer, "Between Ruler and Rogue. Sayyid Talib al-Naqib and the British in Early 20th Century Basra," in *Age of Rogues Rebels, Revolutionaries, and Racketeers in Turn of the Century Eurasia Minor*, ed. Öztan, Ramazan Hakkı; Yenen, Alp (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021).

<sup>62</sup> Schlaepfer, "Between Ruler and Rogue," 247.

<sup>63</sup> Paragraph 343, "1915"

War. What it adds to the conversation is that it clearly demonstrates the mechanics by which this support was mobilized. For the Ottomans, it was important to leverage influential offices within their *vilayets*, like the *naquib al ashraf*, to be able to flex their extraterritorial ambitions across the Indian Ocean space into the frontiers of British India.

However, the British authorities also attempted to mobilize Muslim opinion in India during this time by leveraging Muslim religious authority. In the early months of the war, this was particularly important in order to maintain control over Muslim soldiers who were expected to fight their co-religionist Ottomans across multiple fronts. For example, as early as September 1915, when the Ottoman entry into the war seemed imminent, military authorities across cantonments in the Presidency turned to a preacher by the name of Muhammad Shah Safri. Invited from a mosque in the Mhow Cantonment of the Central Provinces, Safri was asked to deliver lectures to Muslim soldiers in the cantonments of Baroda, Ghodra, Poona, and Bombay, titled “Behaviours in War and Discipline and Obedience Towards Superiors.”<sup>64</sup>

Similarly, religious and philanthropic organizations with pan-Islamic missions also became very important to both sides in the war. One of these was the Anjuman-i-Khuddam-i-Kaaba had presented itself as “religious, not political” organization in order to maintain favour with the colonial government at home. It had amassed large-scale public support among Muslims in the Presidency by popularizing a host of pan-Islamic issues, from the protection of Muslim pilgrimage sites to the caesfire of European aggression against the Ottoman Empire. Prior to the First World War, they maintained a tone of appeasement and appeal to the British authorities as their mode of protest. However, as the war progressed and Ottoman involvement became more and more likely, the Anjuman became the subject of suspicion from colonial officials.

In September 1914, the Sindh CID intercepted a letter from Maulvi Taj Muhammad, a senior member of the Anjuman’s Karachi branch and a vocal pan-Islamist cleric, to a branch in Phul in Sindh’s Nawabshah district. In the letter, Taj Muhammad is reported to have claimed that several Turkish military officers had joined the Karachi branch of the organization, and were aiming to open similar branches all over Arabia and

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<sup>64</sup> Paragraph 1586, “1915”

Anatolia. In the context of wartime legislation discouraging the movement and association with “enemy aliens,” this was a particular cause for concern about the intentions of the Anjuman. Indeed, in the same week, one District Magistrate in Sindh wrote about the Anjuman:

“It seems to be only religious, professedly; but might be used in time otherwise, my friend (i.e. informant) thought.”<sup>65</sup>

This concern came to head the very next month when Indian Muslims traveling between the Gulf and India were approached by Ottoman officials as possible assets to their propaganda efforts. In October 1914, it was reported that Indian journalists and Red Crescent volunteers in Cairo were consistently being approached by Ottoman officials, who were attempting to instigate “anti-British sentiment” among them. All of the actors named in the report were connected to the Anjuman, and had considerable influence among the Muslim public of the Bombay Presidency. As such, they were seen by Ottoman officials as important sounding boards to gauge the general feeling among Indian Muslims.<sup>66</sup>

However, Raj officials were not unanimous in their suspicions of the Anjuman. As part of the Muslim social elite, the leaders of the Anjuman had close ties with British officials in various positions of power. Furthermore, Anjuman’s lack of overt anti-British position, but the perceived potential for subversion, led to British officials leveraging these connections in order to nudge Anjuman leaders to toe the British line and disseminate the colonial state’s message to the Muslim masses. In November 1914, the District Magistrate of Karachi wrote:

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<sup>65</sup> Paragraph 1558, “1914”

<sup>66</sup> Paragraph 1631, “1915”

“I recently had an interview with Maulvi Hakim Fateh Muhammad, the local secretary of the Sindh branch of Anjuman-i-Khuddam-i-Kaaba. He and I are on easy terms and I feel I can rely on his good sense. He explained that he would give up the secretaryship if desired, but he feared that someone less useful to the government might take it up. At any rate, if the Society or its emissaries should give trouble, Maulvi Fateh Muhammad knows full well that I should hold him personally accountable. The Honorable Mr Bhurgri, on the other hand, is practically the head of the Society in Sindh. I see from the papers that he is carrying out the Commissioner’s advice and is delivering a series of useful addresses to Muhammadans in different parts of Sindh.”<sup>67</sup>

For the Raj, the Muslim elites and influentials were a reliable source of connection with the Muslim masses. Within the colonial information order, as represented by the intelligence abstracts, much of Raj’s efforts to understand Muslim opinion during the war came from their collaborators within the Muslim elite, who in return maintained their patronage. This was also the case in the Bombay Presidency as a whole, and Sindh in particular. In November 1914, as Eid ul Adha approached and the news of the Ottoman declaration of *jihad* began to come through, British officials’ interest in securing the support of Muslim elites became paramount, as it was understood that through their influence, the support of the subaltern could also be acquired. The District Magistrate of Karachi, for example, wrote:

I’m glad to be able to report that in the most influential Mohammedan circles in Karachi, the outbreak of the war has failed to produce the least indication of sympathy with Turkey. Her action is viewed with universal regret and I hope for good leadership from the local Mohammedans. I have anticipated events by sending for the Mohammadans’ social and religious leaders before the *Bakri Id* (i.e. Eid ul Adha) explaining the probability of such action by Turkey, and the necessity for a quiet Eid and steady loyalty with whatever might occur.<sup>68</sup>

Similarly, in Ahmedabad, the prominent clerics of the city were convened together to ensure the dissemination of pro-British leaflets and pamphlets in Urdu and Gujarati in their mosques. They were also asked to omit the name of the Ottoman Sultan from the Friday prayer sermons. In Larkana, the District Magistrate wrote:

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<sup>67</sup> Paragraph 1782, “1914.”

<sup>68</sup> Paragraph 1743, “1914”



I have discussed the situation with many zamindars, and they all say the same thing, that they are sorry - but that the Turks are very foolish and will get no sympathy from Indian Muhammadans.<sup>69</sup>

However, as we will see in the second half of this chapter, British assessments of Muslim opinion, and thus their politicization, were largely reductive. As discussed earlier, it was reductive because it viewed highly varied and localized anti-colonial expressions as fanatical attachments to a foreign political entity, i.e. the Ottoman Empire. This was due to two reasons which have been reflected in the discussion above. Firstly, Raj's understanding of Muslim opinion on the ground was coming directly from various Muslim elites and leaders and also relied on them to intervene on behalf of the colonial state to disseminate its views amongst the Muslim masses. As the second half of this chapter will show, however, they did not entirely represent the opinion on the ground. While they did possess enormous amounts of influence in social, cultural, and economic terms, they were not the only source of information for the Muslim subaltern during this time, who were learning about the war through alternative means, such as traveler accounts, testimonies of returning soldiers, as well as letters. In fact, due to colonial wartime surveillance measures and censorship of news, it can be argued that non-official means of information constituted one of, if not the major sources of information for the large reading public of the Bombay Presidency.

Similarly, as discussed above, in many situations, Muslim elites had varying levels of interests aligned with the colonial state in itself. The landed and spiritual elites in Sindh, for example, who throughout the early years of the war were adamant that the Muslim masses were docile and represented no threat to the state, relied on British patronage for the protection of their economic and political interests. However, as the war progressed and opposition to colonial rule increased, in the form of pan-Islamic sentiment and anticolonial movements at home, several of the elites did take up anti-British positions for the protection of their popular support.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid

Similarly, the element of coercion cannot be discounted from the equation as well. For example, a thorough reading of the intelligence abstracts from the Bombay Presidency in the second half of 1914 and early 1915 would reveal a sense of widespread Muslim support for the British. For example, in August 1914, it was reported by the Bombay and Sindh CIDs received informant reports from across the region that Eid sermons across the region had been marked by prayers for British success. It was also reported that Sunni Muslim sections of the region were encouraged by the neutrality of the Ottomans, while the Shi'ites were generally indifferent. Indeed, well into the early months of Ottoman entry into the War, prayers for British success were offered in tandem with prayers for the protection of the Ottoman Empire and the Holy Cities in the Hejaz during congregational prayers and other communal activities. This was by no means a blanket phenomenon though. For example, Eid prayers in Sukkur were disrupted when a Pashtun Muslim named Abdur Rehman in attendance took offense to the prayers for British success by declaring: "Mussalmans should pray for the arms of Kabul and not the British."<sup>70</sup>

However, by and large, reports from across Presidency, and in fact, India as a whole seemed to indicate that Muslims were staunchly loyal to the Crown. However, once we read these reports against the grain and in conversation with future reports, the aspect of coercion comes through to subvert any ideas of widespread Muslim support for the British. For instance, as the war progressed and news of Allied captures of Ottoman territories began to come through, the position of Indian Muslim leaders came under

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<sup>70</sup> Paragraph 1550 of 1914. Afghanistan and the position of the Amir was as much part of the speculation throughout the early years of the War as the Ottomans were. This was particularly important in the context of policing in Sindh, which since its annexation, was an important node of surveillance into Afghanistan and Central Asia. Thus, the region saw an increase in the surveillance of people who looked Pashtun or Afghan, with the understanding that they might be spies sent by the Amir to get a feel of Muslim opinion in India. In September 1914, a zamindar in the village of Matli in Southern Sindh reported to the Police that man from Kabul named Muhammad Akbar visited him asking questions about what the local Muslims thought of British rule, and remarked that British policies against Muslim peasants in Sindh were tyrannical. While no proof was found to tie him to the Amir, he was nonetheless sent to prison for a year on account of not being able to prove that he was of "good behavior."

more and more scrutiny. One instance where we see this is a secret surveillance report of a conversation held in January 1915 in the offices of *Hamdard*, a pan-Islamic newspaper based out of Delhi. In this conversation, it was reported that following the face of Allied annexation of Egypt, as well as local events such as the Kanpur Mosque Massacre, Muslim religious leaders in India “were convinced of the applicability of *jihad* to Indian Muslims, but would not admit it for the fear of losing their lives at the hands of the Government.”<sup>71</sup>

Over the next many months, some Muslim religious leaders spoke with varying degrees of openness about this sense of coercion they were facing in the face of divided loyalties between the Crown and the Sultan. In September 1915, as annual Haj pilgrims began to arrive in Bombay for departure to the Hejaz, a report by the Bombay CID read:

Among the persons who have come to Bombay for the Hajj is one Maulana Khalil-ur-Rahman, accompanied by a number of students and followers. He is said to be one of the pivots of Muhammadan religious life. A friend of mine got into communication with the party with a view of discovering whether their pilgrimage has any political flavour, and was informed that they Maulvis intend to establish themselves in Mecca for good as they consider their position in India unsafe. They state that at the suggestion of certain Government officials, Maulvi Abdul Haq of Delhi prepared a decree laying down that Maulvis and Mussalmans generally should have nothing to do with Turkey. Several Maulvis were forced to sign it and those who did so have immediately lost all respect in the eyes of the Mussalman Community, while those who have managed by excuse or subterfuge to avoid signing believe that they have been marked down by the government for repressive action.<sup>72</sup>

What this report demonstrates is not only the need to read the intelligence abstracts critically, expansively, and against the grain, and subsequently the challenges in trying to draw insights from a quotidian source of this nature. One cannot, for example, take the reports of the widespread prayers for British success at face value and conclude the political position of a community from it. Nor would it be entirely accurate to claim that Muslims supported the British at the beginning of the War and then changed their mind drastically over a couple of events. Rather, each report reads as a complete text in itself,

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<sup>71</sup> Paragraph 45, “1915”

<sup>72</sup> Paragraph 929, “1915”

and thus, reading multiple reports against each other is an attempt at intertextual reading which allows us to be critical of the colonial information order. As a result, one can argue that a confusion among Muslim elites about the legitimacy of *jihad* and government attempts to police any recognition of Ottoman spiritual authority in mosque sermons and larger religious belief as a whole help subvert the narrative of Muslim support for the British that seems ubiquitous in the intelligence archive.

The report on Mualana Khalili ur Rahman also alludes to the second reason why British assessments of Muslim political opinion on the ground in reductive and lacking. The colonial informant in the report is tasked to find out whether the Maulana's pilgrimage has any "political flavour." Even in the earlier discussions on the Anjuman-i-Khuddam-i-Kaaba, there is a constant concern about whether the organization is religious or political. This obsession with the binary categorization of Muslim activity in the public sphere is found throughout the archive, and is applied readily to Muslims across class (although with the masses, it is coupled with adjectives like *ignorant*, *fanatic*, *unlettered*). As discussed in the previous chapter, while this dichotomy somewhat applied to certain Muslim elites who were careful to publicly separate their religious activities from the political sphere. It did not, however, map neatly onto the subaltern, for whom religious identity was an important macro-political identifier for a variety of micro-political anxieties rooted in a sense of colonial subjugation of their communities.

Thus, in order to fully grasp how the Muslim subaltern expressed its politics in the wake of the First World War, one must focus on the fringes of the intelligence archive where the colonial gaze is most translucent. Translucency here implies that in certain reports, particularly ones that describe the activities of subaltern groups, there is an opportunity to disentangle the subversive layers of meaning that *escape* the full grasp of the colonial gaze. This colonial gaze sees Muslim subaltern agency as "ignorant" and "fanatical," and also perceives the influence of Muslim elites upon their political consciousness as absolute and hierarchical. This means that between the reporting of the activity by the colonial informant and its compilation in the intelligence abstracts, it goes through layers of interpretation that add more and more disbelief to their subversive potential. This is why several reports on speculations among Muslims about the war are coupled with notes by colonial officers which dismiss the anti-British sentiment and

reinforce the narrative of Muslim loyalty, which as we discussed earlier in this chapter, is not entirely accurate. The next section will reshift our focus on these sites of translucency, namely rumours, *bazaar-gup*, and communal activities among the Muslim subaltern.

With the beginning of the Mesopotamian Campaign, the Western Indian Ocean region became not just an arena for conflict. As the war progressed, it became a site mobilized for propaganda and surveillance by both the British and the Ottomans. In this highly surveillance and mobilized space, the Muslims of Bombay Presidency expressed apocalyptic anxieties about everyday life. The Bombay Presidency was not unique in this regard. Suchetana Chattopadhyay's work on imperial Calcutta during the First World War reveals similar fears and anxieties about impending doom and destruction.<sup>73</sup> Much of Calcutta's fears regarding the activities of the German ship *Emden*, for example, travelled across coasts and added to the sense of maritime insecurity in the region. In September 1914, rumours began circulating in Bombay that the *Emden* had been sighted off the coast of Goa, some 600 kilometers away caused widespread fears among the general population.<sup>74</sup>

A common theme in war speculation was religion. For example, Hindu astrologers in the Thana district were speculating that the positions of the planets at the beginning of the First World War, as well as the overarching theme of events that led to it, strongly resembled those at the beginning of the wars in *Mahabharata*, an ancient Hindu epic.<sup>75</sup> Among Muslims as well, the sense of impending destruction took on specifically religious meaning. The *Sind Gazette* reported that sermons in mosques across Hyderabad were speculating about the impending arrival of the *Mahdi*<sup>76</sup>, a messianic figure in Islamic belief who is currently in hiding but will reveal himself to humanity at an ordained time. The appearance of the *Mahdi* is considered one of the final signs of the *yum-al-akhira* (The Day of Judgement).

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<sup>73</sup> Suchetana Chattopadhyay, "Watime In An Imperial City: The Apocalyptic Mood in Calcutta (1914-1918)" in *India and World War I*, ed. Roger D. Long (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2018)

<sup>74</sup> Paragraph 1602, "1914"

<sup>75</sup> Paragraph 1446, "1914"

<sup>76</sup> Paragraph 1602, "1914"

The apocalyptic content only increased in distribution as time went on. In April 1915, the police in Ahmedabad found that an Urdu leaflet had been circulating from tea-shops in the city and had been disseminated wide enough to find readers in the Punjab as well. Written by a man named Shaikh Ahmed, the text claimed that the author had seen the Prophet Muhammad in a dream, who ordained him to communicate to the Muslims to mend their ways and give up sins, as “*In Sha Allah, the time when the sun will rise in the West has approached.*”<sup>77</sup> Thus, religious mythologies became a key motif through which the general public expressed its existential anxieties about the fate of the world as a whole. Focusing on the Muslim subaltern, we will see that this theme seeps into political expressions as well.

Another way in which religion became a mediating factor for Indian Muslims was the Hajj. As discussed in the previous chapter, the development of a second port in the Bombay Presidency, namely Karachi, had exponentially increased the flow of Hajj traffic in the region. The pilgrimage, which was a site of anxious surveillance for the British for decades, particularly in the context of growing pan-Islamic sentiment within India. As the war progressed, Ottoman entry into the war could not have been better timed to exploit the inroads provided by the Hajj. Within a month of the Sultan’s declaration of *jihad* against the Allies, ships carrying returning pilgrims began trickling into the docks of Bombay and Karachi. However, with them came a barrage of “seditious leaflets” tucked into their pieces of luggage, with texts aimed at encouraging the idea that the Ottoman fights against the British was a religious war, and thus it was obligatory for the Muslims to raise up in arms. Within a week, five pilgrim ships docked at Bombay port, wherein 76 Urdu leaflets of anti-British content were found on Muslim passengers. While most pilgrims feigned ignorance of the contents of the leaflets, one of the detainees admitted their dissemination in the Hejaz was accompanied by public announcements calling upon the Hajis to spread the message of *jihad* when they returned home.<sup>78</sup>

In response, the police across the Presidency were put on high alert for seditious leaflets, while Customs at Aden were instructed to search for them as well, in order to add an extra layer of surveillance. By large, however, the colonial policing apparatus was

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<sup>77</sup> Paragraph 330, “1915”

<sup>78</sup> Paragraph 1810, “1914”

dismissive about the impact of these leaflets entering India. This was not due to the contents of the leaflets per se. Rather, it stemmed from the same shortfalls of the colonial gaze that we discussed earlier: colonial officials' perceived lack of the subversive potential of the Muslim subaltern carrying them into the country and their understanding of its contents:

In practically every instance these leaflets were recovered from illiterate and simple Hajjis of the cultivator class. Some were treasuring the leaflets as “*tavis*” [sic: *taaviz*], imagining them to contain verses from the Koran.<sup>79</sup>

Even the report of the one detainee who claimed that there were widespread announcements regarding *jihad* during Hajj was off-handedly dismissed as “sensation-mongering.”

How accurate were the British claims that Hajjis were not aware of what they were carrying? While it is not possible to answer this question directly, we can get close by reading against the grain of other reports where the political consciousness of the “illiterate and simple Hajjis of the cultivator class” seeps through in the archive. In the same month, for example, the District Magistrate of Tharparkar region in Sindh reported that Punjabi Sikh colonist settlers complained about Sindhi Muslim peasants - again, “illiterate and simple Muslims of the cultivator class” - working on their farms speculating about the war. The District Magistrate wrote of the complaint:

They assert that Sindhi Mussalmans, always of the baser sort, threaten that they will soon be avenging themselves on the colonists for coming and occupying good land in Sindh, because Turkey was now at war with the British government and the troops were being sent out of the country. Some such talk certainly seems to have been. It is true that the Punjabi Colonists are hated by their Sindhi neighbors.<sup>80</sup>

Sindh's political economy under colonialism, particularly in areas of construction and agriculture, was built on the marginalization of Sindhi laborers. Within the ethnographic accounts of early colonial officers, Sindhis were often described as “naturally indolent

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>80</sup> Paragraph 1679, “1914”

and devoid of muscular power”<sup>81</sup> Manu Goswami, for example, in her study on the making of India’s political economy, has written about how the construction of railways in Sindh prompted the British to import “hardy race of laborers” from Afghanistan and Balochistan due the perceived unsuitable nature of Sindhi workers.<sup>82</sup>

Similarly, the development of canal agriculture in Sindh involved the settling of Punjabi farmers on land in Sindh, further alienating the local population. In her study on the historical development of Sindhi nationalism, Asma Faiz writes about how economic marginalization and hostility towards “outsiders” was one of the key factors in the formation of a Sindhi national identity and its expression within the colonial political space at the turn of century.<sup>83</sup>

Thus, in the context of the war, news of British vulnerability was particularly enticing to Sindhi Muslim peasants, who saw Punjabi settlers as beneficiaries of their colonial subjugation. It is important to note, however, that while this ethnic hostility is expressed in purely economic terms, religion and class cannot be completely ignored from the equation either. It is particularly the Muslim subaltern that feels empowered by the possibility of deliverance from colonial subjugation. Thus, the British dismissal of the subversive potential of the subaltern pilgrims represents an inability to see them as active political agents. A cross-reading of this dismissal with other reports of similar actors reveals not just an awareness of the stakes of the war, its belligerents, and events, but also the knowledge of how the war might impact their very localized circumstances and aspirations to overthrow colonial subjugation.

It is important to note that the Muslim subaltern does not express their joy at the prospect of an Ottoman victory as a victory for Islam. However, religion remains important to political expression and anti-British sentiment in general. One way to draw insights about this is to focus on some of the rumors that come through in the intelligence abstracts in the early months of the war. These rumors, thus, represent a site of translucency on the fringes of the colonial information order where one can focus to draw

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<sup>81</sup> Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 110.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Asma Faiz, *In Search of Lost Glory: Sindh Nationalism in Pakistan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).



insights about the politics of groups that do not take centre stage in the everyday reports generated by the colonial intelligence apparatus.

One rumour which warrants discussion in this regard comes from the upper-Sindh district of Nawabshah in the same month, where the District Magistrate wrote that “uneducated Muhammadans” were saying that: “*Germans are bound to win the war because they have become Muhammadans.*”<sup>84</sup> The Magistrate goes on to dismiss the report as mere musings of the unlettered. However, this rumour provides us with an opportunity to glimpse into the world of the Muslim subaltern. In hindsight, with the benefit of years of scholarship, one can conclude that a mass-conversion of the Germans did not happen, and neither did a German victory. But rumours and speculations about such an event demonstrate that this was part of everyday discussion and relay within local Muslim communities in Sindh.

Over the next few weeks, similar rumors sprang up in Southern Sindh in Tharparkar, and all the way up North in the Yaghestani frontiers between British India and Afghanistan. Martin Sokefeld, writing about wartime rumors in the region, discusses the ways in which such rumors subverted the colonial informational regime to the effect that it created large-scale panic among colonial officers.<sup>85</sup> The important thing to note here is that this rumor began circulation *before* the Ottoman entry into the War and the subsequent declaration of “jihad.” Even before the Ottoman propaganda machinery began to frame the war in a religious lens, the Muslim subaltern of Sindh was painting the conflict in that light. However, even in this framing, the end goal was not a victory for Islam, but that of emancipation from colonial violence. British vulnerability in the war was seen as an opportunity for political and economic freedom, and religious identity was the hook by which the global conflict was tied to their local circumstances.

This phenomenon was not limited to the Bombay Presidency but stretched across the Western frontiers of the British Empire, and seeped into local communal cultural activities as well. For example, it was reported in January 1916 from the North West Frontier villages of Kohat that local Muslims were singing anti-colonial songs in Pashto

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<sup>84</sup> Paragraph 1650, “1915”

<sup>85</sup> Martin Sokefeld, “Rumours and Politics on the Northern Frontier: The British, Pakhtun Wali, and Yaghestan,” *Modern Asian Studies* 36 vol 2 (2002).

which were pro-German. These songs were also laced with rumors that Germans had converted to Islam:

The youth will fall in action  
The maidens will remain unmarried  
The firhangi (British) has gone from thee  
The German is going to embrace Islam<sup>86</sup>

What we can draw from this and the case of similar rumors of German conversion to Islam in Nawabshah from late 1914 is that religious identity was an important identifier for the Indian Muslim subaltern which made the events relatable to them. Clearly, this identifier was effective as well, since it seeped into local song and poetry. However, the impact of this identifier is at the end of the day in freedom from colonial subjugation rather than pan-Islamic ambition.

Furthermore, the expression of communal trauma provides us with another site to explore the idea above. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Kanpur Mosque Massacre of late 1913 had jolted Muslim communities across India into a sense of existential insecurity. Coupled with the apocalyptic feeling that the War had induced, the memory of the massacre manifested itself in the shape of rumors about supernatural events.

In June 1915, rumors began to circulate across India, including major cities in the Bombay Presidency, that eyewitnesses had seen blood rain down upon the neighborhood of Machhli Bazaar where the mosque was located, and that every inch of the vicinity was red except the mosque itself. The report by intelligence officials read:

It is considered by all to be a solemn from Heaven that the world is about to be punished, while some say that the Almighty is angry at the slaughter of the Turks.<sup>87</sup>

Another subsequent rumor in a similar ilk was that municipal workers cleaning the streets at night had seen 200 Muslims dressed in all shining white arrive at the mosque and read

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<sup>86</sup>Paragraph 219, "1916"

<sup>87</sup> Paragraph 625, "1915"

the Holy Quran facing the mosque. The general understanding the public was that the people they had seen were in fact the souls of the Muslims martyred during the massacre at the mosque about two years back.<sup>88</sup>

These rumours give us crucial insights in understanding the roots of Muslim political expression during the war. An analysis of these rumours shows how the memory of Muslim martyrs at Kanpur mixed with the apocalyptic mood of the war, and the association of Ottoman suffering with these memories of communal trauma. How are the activities of the Muslims impacted by such rumours and speculations? Less than ten days later, a communal fair at Sonapur in Bombay became the site of widespread expression of sympathies with the Ottomans. In the vicinity of the fair, there was a grave of an Ottoman officer who had died in Bombay in recent years. Muslims attending the fair paid their respects at the grave in large numbers. The intelligence report read:

A green cloth was laid over the tomb and a Kitson light was setup, honours which are as a rule paid only to Syeds, Pirs, or Shaheeds (martyrs); the inference is that the deceased Turkish officer is regarded in some quarters as having lost his life in the defence of Islam.<sup>89</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapter, during the Balkan Wars, Shi'ite Muslims used the occasion of *Ashura* to tie the memories of the martyrs of *Karbala* to the that of the Ottoman martyrs in the Balkans, thereby framing them as the latest in a long line of victims of perpetual evil. With the rumours from Kanpur, we see the framing of Ottoman martyrs as the latest in a long line of Muslim victims of British aggression. Thereby it ties the localized colonial subjugation of the Indian Muslims to the perceived global aggression against the Ottomans. It demonstrates how the local socio-political circumstances of Indian Muslims contributed to sympathies for the Ottomans rather than some larger global political ambitions of Muslim supremacy or racialized unity as expressed by the thinkers and propagators of pan-Islamic thought.

Following these events, overt expressions of sympathies for the Ottomans that were seen during the Balkan Wars started to reappear. Clerics started to make open

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid

<sup>89</sup> Paragraph 624, "1916"

prayers for Ottoman successes, and pro-Ottoman leaflets which had been in circulation during the Balkan Wars also began to be distributed widely.<sup>90</sup> Notably, Ottoman imagery began to appear on items of everyday use as well. Notable among these, for example, consignments of cigarettes where boxes were printed with pictures of Ottoman general Enver Pasha. In October 1915, a cigarette-making factory was discovered where sixty thousand such boxes were destroyed by the state. Similarly, poultry consignments marked with the crescent and star, seen as an Ottoman symbol, were also discovered around the same time.

In terms of war events, there was a definite uplift in mood across Muslim communities in India where news began to spread in mid-1916 that the British Indian army had been defeated at Kut al Ammara. In December 1915, the British garrison at Kut had been besieged by Ottoman forces, and after holding out for five torturous months, General Townshend surrendered on 29th April 1916. As one of the events of the Mesopotamian campaign, the failure at Kut was a serious blow to the British reputation. As a campaign organized directly by the Raj, the government in London brought the Indian administration under immense scrutiny.<sup>91</sup>

For the Muslims of the Bombay Presidency, who had seen the logistics of the war up close and speculated about it for months, the news of the surrender came as a matter of encouragement and relief. For elites, the news was particularly encouraging; Ottoman victory was seen as absolute and the potential of a ceasefire meant that their loyalties would no longer be divided. Among the masses, however, the idea of freedom from colonial rule was still prevalent. The removal of British forces from Iraq and the Indian Ocean was seen as the logical antecedent to the end of British rule in India.<sup>92</sup>

What this demonstrates, thus, is that subaltern Muslims in India held pan-Islamic sentiment in service to their anti-colonial ideas, and not the other way around. This distinction is important because it helps us draw three major insights to add to a range of scholarly discussions. Firstly, it supplements our understanding of late 19th and early

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<sup>90</sup> Paragraph 1022 and 1090, "1915"

<sup>91</sup> Priya Satia, "Developing Iraq: Britain, India and the Redemption of Empire and Technology in the First World War," *Past and Present* 197, (2007), 211-255.

<sup>92</sup> Paragraph 792, "1916"

20th-century pan-Islamic movements by highlighting the distinct ways in which the Indian Muslim subaltern engaged with the idea of a globalized Muslimness in a time of existential crisis. Unlike existing scholarly works, like those of Aydin, Ozcan, and O’Sullivan, which focus on intellectual, political, and economic currents of these movements, and hone in on the role of Muslim elites and scholars in propagating ideas of Muslim Unity. This work rather adds to a less populated cluster of scholarship, which aims to understand pan-Islamism from below through colonial intelligence sources, like the work of Suchetana Chattopadhyay on wartime pan-Islamic currents in Calcutta.<sup>93</sup>

Staying with Chattopadhyay and scholars of the global South, the second insight we can draw is methodological. This thesis represents an attempt on how colonial administrative sources, which are laced with the epistemological violence of the colonial gaze, can be read against the grain to draw insights about the experiences of colonized peoples in the Global South. Intelligence archives, which represent one of the lowest hierarchical means of documentation with the colonial information order, allow for certain sites of translucency where critical reading can be productive in this endeavour. In this thesis, these sites of translucency have been rumours, *bazaar gup*, and collective communal activities, which within the subaltern studies, have been widely discussed as potential entry points into the cognitive worlds of the colonized. They have also been understood as points of information panic within the colonial information order. This project has attempted to exploit them as sites where the subversive potential of subaltern gossip can be extracted and engaged with.

Lastly, it adds to the conversations around early 20th century anticolonialism in South Asia by demonstrating the unique circumstances within which the Muslim subaltern of the Bombay Presidency expressed their anticolonial politics. While scholarship on anticolonialism in this period focuses heavily on revolutionary activities in the Bengal and Punjab, or the interwar *satyagrah* and Khilafat movements, less attention is paid to the Bombay Presidency in the context of Muslim politicization. Focusing our attention here reveals that the Presidency’s position at the Western frontier of British India and its intricate ties with the rest of India and the wider world, made it a fertile

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<sup>93</sup> Chattopadhyay, “Wartime in an Imperial City.”

ground for various political currents. Within this space, ethnic discrimination in the region, anxieties around communal subjugation across India, and a hyper-awareness of European hostilities towards Muslim communities across the world, led to a uniquely localized engagement with pan-Islamic ideas. Religious identity was an identifier which served to help relate the globalized conflict to the people's immediate circumstances, but it did not dictate the terms of political expression, nor decide the end goal.

Here, it is pertinent to discuss a consolidating case study; the Arab Revolt. Shortly following the British defeat at Kut, the Sharif of Mecca, Hussein ibn Ali, rose up in revolt against the Ottoman Empire and allied himself with the British. For the British intelligence officials in India, the hope was that a Muslim revolt against the Ottomans, and the support of the Custodians of the Holy Cities, would divide the strong support for the former within India. Indeed, within the middle class, the worry was exactly that the Ottoman narrative of *jihad* would be undermined among the masses because of this news.<sup>94</sup> For the elites, the relief that followed the British loss at Kut evaporated quickly, replaced by a renewed fear that their interests would be undermined. The intelligence officials in Bombay even reported that the only reason the whole region was not fully overcome by anti-British sentiment among Muslims was that the Muslim economic elites who relied on Indian Ocean trade were trying to act as a “restraining force” upon public opinion because they recognized the benefits of a British-backed Arab monarchy in the Hejaz.<sup>95</sup>

While the position of elites remained in the balance, it was among the subaltern masses that the clearest anti-British positions began to emerge in response to news of the Arab Revolt. The immediate response among the “uneducated classes of Muslims,” according to intelligence reports was that of disbelief, and subsequently, anger - at the British. Immediately following news of the revolt, there was a clear acknowledgement from intelligence officials that the Muslim masses were furious at the actions of the Sherif, denouncing his claims to the position of Caliph.<sup>96</sup> The *bazaar-gup* was that to be a

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<sup>94</sup> Paragraph 854, “1916”

<sup>95</sup> Paragraph 890, “1916”

<sup>96</sup> Paragraph 854, “1916”

legitimate caliph, the Sherif would need the support of Muslims around the world, and that a great bulk of the *ummah*, including Indian Muslims, would not support his claims.

More importantly, however, there was a clear recognition of the fact that the Sherif's revolt was influenced by the support of the British, who were seen as the oppressors of Muslims. It is important to discuss here that the Sherif's identity as a Muslim, and his status as the custodian of the *Harmain* is not seen as a strong enough identifier to influence a change in the perceptions of subaltern Muslims. On the contrary, the idea of his alliance with their oppressors results in widespread condemnation. Anticolonial consciousness dictates pan-Islamic leanings, not the other way around.

Rumours, again, are a key source for understanding the nuances of Muslim subaltern opinion here. Following the revolt, there were two categories of rumours that were circulating within the streets about subsequent events, and the response to both categories was different. The first was the class of rumours which painted the Ottomans as aggressors against Muslims. In June 1916, rumours reached Karachi that the Ottomans had responded to the Arab Revolt by bombing sites across the city of Karbala. The source of these rumours was unknown, but the response was widespread disbelief, not in terms of shock but in terms of a denial of its validity. In fact, it was even discussed that this rumour was being spread by the government purposefully to instigate a conflict between the Sunni and Shi'te Muslims of India.

Moreover, the news of Arab dissatisfaction with the Ottomans being the cause of the revolt was also dismissed with equal readiness, with the view that British intrigues were the main reason. A surveillance report from Karachi of a conversation in the streets between an Indian Muslim and an Arab Muslim encapsulates this best:

Arab: "You do not know the zuloom (i.e. tyrannies) of the Turks as you have never lived under their rule.

Indian: You do not know the English. The Turks obtain the blood of their subjects by making great gashes on their bodies. The English, on the other hand, draw blood through fine punctures, which perchance, the victims do not notice, but the blood is extracted as effectively and as completely. That is the difference.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Paragraph 920, "1916"

The understanding thus, is that the Ottomans are not to be deemed perfect, but the experience of colonial violence at the hands of the British is where the condemnation of the Arab Revolt is rooted. Any attempt to relate to the war is mediated by an anticolonial political consciousness. This consciousness is what indicates the difference between belief and disbelief in rumours. Thus, where news of Ottoman aggression towards Arabs is dismissed, the reverse is believed to the extent of widespread rage.

In September, as the Hajj pilgrims began to return to the ports of Bombay and Karachi, a new round of rumours began to circulate about events in the Hejaz since the revolt. One of these was that the Sherif of Mecca and his loyalist forces had betrayed the Ottoman soldiers in the city and shot them in cold blood. Following this, their bodies had been paraded around the city before being hung in public. Another variation of this rumour was that the Allied bombing led to Ottoman soldiers surrendering in an attempt to save the city from destruction, following which British soldiers came and killed Ottoman soldiers. The outrage over these rumours was intense. In the same week, colonial officials faced the brunt of this outrage in the rural outskirts of Bombay. Here, they were publicly dismissed by Muslim peasants when they attempted to force the mosques to replace the name of the Ottoman Sultan in the Friday sermons with the name of the Sherif. The officials returned unsuccessful and the sermons subsequently remained unchanged.

As discussed earlier, what is important to analyze here is not whether these exact events happened. What is important is that the belief upon certain rumours and disbelief upon others is indicative of a political consciousness that is rooted in anticolonial rage towards the British Raj and anything associated with it, be it the officials at home, or the Sherif in the Hejaz. Thus, a detailed, critical examination of subaltern Muslim political expression, thus, refutes the colonial narratives of Muslim loyalty which were rooted in a reductive understanding of the causes of Muslim dissatisfaction.



# Conclusion

The First World War represented arguably the toughest internal security challenges to the British Raj's surveillance apparatus since the Crown took over in 1858. Empire's resources were stretched to their fullest, and this allowed opportunities for not just existing currents of subversion in Bengal and Punjab to become more active, but also for other long brewing currents of discontent to come to a head. This thesis, in its discussion of Muslim political expression in the Bombay Presidency, takes the latter as its main point of examination. In December 1917, the British government in India passed a resolution for the establishment of a Sedition Committee to investigate and report on "revolutionary conspiracies" in the colony, an attempt to inform the Raj's internal surveillance and security policies moving forward. The committee was headed by Justice Rowlatt, and included British administrators from Bengal, Bombay, Madras, and the United Provinces. Over the next many months, the committee acquired documented evidence on criminal conspiracies from all major provincial administrations in India.<sup>98</sup>

The ninety-four page report was published in October 1918 and would become the basis of the Rowlatt Act of 1919, the set of laws that were central to colonial subversion of anti-colonial movements in the interwar period. Under the act, the colonial government extended its wartime emergency powers into standard policing practice in India, allowing it to curb freedoms of press, assembly, and movement, as well as to arrest "dissidents" without due cause or notice. The act drew the opposition of Indian political leaders across the board. Muslim leaders like Muhammad Ali Jinnah resigned from the imperial legislative council in protest, while Mahatma Gandhi began his non-cooperation *satyagraha* movement which took the country by storm.

The large-scale opposition to the Rowlatt Act in the form of strikes, closures of businesses, and protest marches characterized the post-war anticolonial nationalist politics in India. Its foundation, the Sedition Committee Report, has thus gone on to become one of the key texts to understand the nature of anti-colonial resistance in the

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<sup>98</sup> Home Department, Government of India, Sedition Committee 1918 Report (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1918), pp. 4.

early twentieth century.<sup>99</sup> It is divided into different sections, each relating to a specific province, describing the causes of unrest in that region and the nature of the revolutionary activities. As mentioned earlier, due to being perceived as hotspots of revolutionary activity, Bengal and Punjab get multiple chapters, collectively occupying half of the report. While every other province gets a chapter each as well, the focus is not as extensive. Bihar, Orissa, and the Central Provinces, for example, occupy a combined total of five pages, while the North-West Frontier Province does not feature at all. Thus, there are notable blindspots in the assessments of the SCR. This thesis addresses one of the major regional blindspots, by shedding light on the trends of Muslim political expression and anticolonial activities in the Bombay Presidency. As the Indian home front of the First World War, the region had a unique experience of the war due to its proximity to the fronts of battle.

Beyond the question of region, however, the blindspots of the SCR cast their shadow not only on British policy in the years that followed, but on the histories of anti-colonialism in India as well. One of these is the way in which the report frames the revolutionary activities of Indian Muslims. In the “Introduction” section, the report traces the genealogy of Indian resistance to the discontent experienced by upper-caste Chitpavan Brahmins in the Poona district of the Bombay Presidency. From the outset, thus, local Indian resistance is framed as inherently upper-caste Hindu. On the other hand, relegated to a brief section towards the end titled “A Muhammadan Current,” Muslim resistance is almost an afterthought in the Report’s imagination of anticolonial sentiment in wartime India, and is seen - and dismissed - entirely as fanatical activities inspired by foreign agents.

It is not the Indian Muslims who are seen as a threat, but the foreign influences that are aiming to instigate revolutionary sentiment in them. The report’s inability to see Indian Muslims as the *source* of revolutionary activity, according to Faridah Zaman, limits contemporary scholarship and marginalizes their agency. It presents obstacles to writing a revolutionary history of Indian Muslims, seeing them as passive bodies

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<sup>99</sup> Faridah Zaman, “Revolutionary History and the Post-Colonial Muslim: Re-Writing the ‘Silk Letters Conspiracy’ of 1916,” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 39, No.3 (2016), pp. 627.

influenced and exploited by the more prominent *enemies of England*, such as the Ghadr, Germans, the Ottomans, and the Russian Socialists. In this thesis, this narrative has been challenged through a thorough examination of pan-Islamic expression from below, and a critique of the language of dismissal with which it is recorded in the colonial archives.

The Muslim subaltern on the Western frontiers of British India found themselves at the crossroads of intersecting lines of propaganda, information flow, surveillance, and subversion during the early 20th century. Leading up to the First World War, the idea of a globalized Muslimness articulated by pan-Islamic scholars and leaders around the world had been widely disseminated through print and fast-proliferating networks of *madrassas* in the Bombay Presidency. As such, they perceived themselves as part of a global community. However, their anticolonial sentiment was strictly localized, and rooted in existential anxieties related to their experience of colonial subjugation in India. The element of pan-Islamism merely provided a globalized hook by which they perceived their subjugation as part of a larger trend of anti-Muslim violence across the world.

For Raj's surveillance apparatus, the pan-Islamic leanings of Indian Muslims and the extraterritorial influence that it afforded to the Ottomans had been a point of anxiety since the late 19th century. In the context of the law enforcement reforms at the turn of the century, the widening of the surveillance net meant that this anxiety became fully incorporated into the larger streams of everyday policing and surveillance as well, bringing into focus the political expression of commonfolk Muslims. However, despite this, British attempts at surveilling Muslim political opinion and expression remained reductive. This was because their understanding of Muslim political expression and agency was derived from their interactions with Muslim elites who had interests tied to patronage from the colonial state, and thus were not overtly anti-colonial in their expression most of the time. However, reading against the grain on sites of translucency within the intelligence archive allows us to draw critical insights about the ways in which the political expression of the Muslim subaltern was subversive in its content. Through a thorough examination of rumours, communal activities, and speculation, this thesis engages with the historiography on 20th century pan-Islamism in India by contributing a much needed history from below to supplement the wealth of scholarship on the intellectual and elite discourse around it.

With the fall of Baghdad and the eventual defeat of the Ottomans in 1918, there was a widespread feeling of disbelief and grief among Indian Muslims. The immediate denial of the fall of Baghdad, for example, was reflected in rumours that there were actually two Baghdads in Ottoman Iraq, and the one captured by the British was a small village instead of the main city.<sup>100</sup> It was only when, as the opening report of this thesis demonstrates, the Ottoman prisoners of war began to arrive at the ports of Karachi did the reality of it settle in.<sup>101</sup> A similar sullenness was reported at the fall of Jerusalem in December 1917.<sup>102</sup>

For the Raj's police intelligence, the hope was that the Ottoman defeat would put an end to the subversive pan-Islamic sentiment among Indian Muslims. This was not a surprising assumption, particularly given the reductive understanding of Muslim political expression held by the colonial officials. However, it is a testament to that reductiveness and a validation of the argument of this thesis, that this did not happen. Instead, what followed was a nation-wide non-cooperation movement, where Muslim and Hindu leaders joined hands to combine the demands for self-rule in India and the demands for the protection of the Ottoman Empire. As early as the first half of 1918, for example, the Sindh Police's intelligence reports had introduced a section titled "Pan-Islamic-cum-Home Rule Agitation," which contained reports about increasing collaboration among political leaders of both movements.<sup>103</sup> This cooperation flew into the face of colonial ideas of *methodological nationalism*, to borrow from Johan Mathew, who goes on to critique British conflation of Muslim anticolonial resistance as purely pan-Islamic, and how the inter-communal cooperation following the First World War was "virtually incomprehensible" to the British state.<sup>104</sup> This thesis, in its examination of Muslim political expression, demonstrates that Muslim resistance was anti-colonial and very much rooted in the desire for freedom from colonialism, and that the British surveillance apparatus was wrong to reduce it to mere fanatical and sentimental attachments of the

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<sup>100</sup> Paragraphs 301 & 302 of 1917

<sup>101</sup> Paragraph 323 of 1917

<sup>102</sup> Paragraph 1300 of 1917

<sup>103</sup> Paragraphs 169, 254, & 328 of 1918

<sup>104</sup> Mathew, "Spectres of Pan-Islam."

uneducated. The Muslim subaltern in India, even in their extra-territorial sympathies with the Caliphate, were committed to the idea of freedom from colonial subjugation.

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