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Making a Muslim: reading publics and contesting identities in Nineteenth-century North India

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Making a Muslim

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Contesting Identities
in Nineteenth-Century
North India

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Making a Muslim

Using primarily Urdu sources from the nineteenth century and by de-emphasising the colonial archive and its particular narrative, this book allows us to rethink notions of 'the Muslim', in its numerous, complex and often contradictory forms, in colonial north India after 1857. The book contrasts how the colonial British 'made Muslims' very differently compared to how Muslims envisaged themselves, re-examining the 'dominant narrative of consolidation of communal solidarity among Muslims in colonial India'.

A key argument contests the general sense of the narrative of lamentation, decay, decline, and a sense of self-pity and ruination, by proposing a different notion, that of an agentive *zillat*, a condition which gave rise to much self-reflection, resulting in action which motivated different groups of Muslims to reimagine themselves, in turn resulting in new ways of being Muslim, providing some understanding of why modern South Asia produced such a diversity of Islamic movements. Subsequently, as the titular Mughal empire eroded, the role and position of the *'ulamā* changed to one which substituted for and claimed a form of political sovereignty and representation, producing leaders who began to emerge as *political actors competing with each other* to serve as leaders and symbols of the many communities in Islam.

Furthermore, decentralised and localised systems of knowledge created 'intellectual geographies' where writers and readers engaged in intense debates and argumentation about diverse topics, ranging from the theological to ritual practices, to parochial concerns. Given so many different versions of who a Muslim was, any notion of a composite Muslim *qaum* as a political category is challenged, as are notions of 'territorial nationalism' and 'Islamic universalism', both emerging much later, perhaps in the early years of the twentieth century. By questioning how and when a Muslim community emerged in colonial India, the book unsettles the teleological and anachronistic explanation of the Partition of India and the making of Pakistan.

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for Rabab,
for far too many debts unpaid

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Preface
The Making of This Book

Unlike most academic books, I begin this Preface with something of my own background. Even if I were to eliminate many of the frills and do away with some interesting details, the story of how this book came into being cannot be told without delving into my own biography.

Having taught political economy and institutional economics at Karachi University for over a decade and having published numerous academic articles and books based on my research, I became bored with such themes and wanted to study something different, preferably in the social sciences. One day in Karachi during the second tenure of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, probably sometime in 1999, I read an article in one of the Karachi newspapers on how the prime minister of Pakistan had walked into a government-owned bank, the National Bank of Pakistan and, not finding the manager in the bank, fired him. I found this behaviour quite odd, without any sort of accountability or investigation. I imagined this to be a *darbari* form of culture and attitude which was, I thought, inherited from Mughal styles of authoritarian governance where power rested in the body of the emperor. I believed Nawaz Sharif's behaviour was a continuation of such styles of arbitrary governance. Perceiving this as a worthy topic for a dissertation in History, I wrote what I thought was a proposal that would get me admission into a history PhD programme.

I sent this 'proposal' to a number of scholars who worked on South Asian history in the United Kingdom (UK) and asked if I might meet with them to discuss it. I was already in my mid-forties at this stage and was not sure how I would be received, especially as I was looking forward to working in a new discipline and moving away from economics and political economy, where I had worked for almost two decades. I went to meet Professor Francis Robinson at the Royal Holloway College in London with my 'proposal', and he suggested that I do an MA in history first and then see if I wanted to do a PhD. He set my own research ideas to the side, and instead suggested that I work on the Tablighi Jama'at. I did not want to do another MA, having already

done one in development economics and an MPhil in mainstream economics. Nor did I want to work on the Tablighi Jama'at. I then travelled to the University of Oxford and met Professor Sanjay Subrahmanyam, who was at Oxford that year, and with Professor David Washbrook. Both had seen my 'proposal', and both laughed it off, saying that this was not so much a PhD proposal as a possible book idea. They suggested that I should write a book on the idea, which was looking at a presumed lineage or association between a putative Mughal *darbari*-style of governance that I assumed to be manifest in twenty-first century Pakistan. They asked whether I knew any Persian in order to study the Mughal period, which I did not. I had already written six or seven books by that time and told them that I was not interested in writing yet another. Rather, I wanted to pursue a doctorate in History. In the nearly two decades prior to this moment, during all my time teaching and publishing in political economy, I had not wanted to pursue a PhD. I taught at the Applied Economics Research Centre (AERC) at Karachi University alongside 10 exceptionally talented economists, some of whom were brilliant, all with PhDs from amongst the best universities in the world. Despite them being exceptional teachers and colleagues, highly knowledgeable and well-trained, very few published any academic papers. I once calculated that I, despite not having a PhD, had more publications than all the senior faculty at the AERC put together. I suffered from an arrogant attitude that I did not need or want a PhD. I carried a chip on my shoulder, wanting to prove a point that we do not need to hold a doctorate in order to be acknowledged and recognised as scholars and academics. This time around, however, I wanted to do a PhD in history.

My visit to the UK in search of a PhD advisor was in vain, but it helped me see the point Professors Subrahmanyam and Washbrook had raised. I put aside the idea of pursuing a doctorate in history and continued doing research and publishing while being voluntarily unemployed, working from home, since I had left the AERC by then. In August 2002, I received a 12-month fellowship from the Asian Studies Foundation (ASF), which was based in Bangkok, to be able to spend a year in Delhi at the University of Pennsylvania Institute for the Advanced Study of India (UPIASI). I spent the 12 months reading history, of a varied and diverse kind, in the wonderful Nehru Memorial and Museum Library, Teen Murti, as everyone calls it, in Delhi. My ASF fellowship project began with a vague notion of the sovereignty of nations—this was, of course, soon after 9/11, and especially after the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan—but once I had a fairly good idea about what my end of project would look like, I read widely and extensively. I put off the idea of doing my PhD.

On 1 January 2003, I visited the annual Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust (SAHMAT) festival in New Delhi with two friends whom I had first met while studying for my MPhil in economics at the University of Cambridge, the journalist Anjali Modi and her husband, the economist Rathin Roy. At the SAHMAT festival, Anjali and Rathin bumped into Professor Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, a historian from

the University of Cambridge. Raj had been Anjali's MPhil advisor at Cambridge, and she introduced me to him. I had no idea who Raj was, yet the first thing he said to me was, 'Oh, I know your work, I have read things you have published and your SSRC Report for us.' Raj told me he was the chair of a committee on South Asia set up by the efforts of Itty Abraham who was then working for the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in Washington, DC. Itty had asked a group of scholars across South Asia to undertake research on the state of the social sciences in South Asia, and I was asked to do research on the state of social sciences in Pakistan. The results of my work were eventually published in *Economic and Political Weekly* when Partha Chatterjee had headed the SSRC research efforts on social science in South Asia. I told Raj that I wanted to do a PhD in history and had a proposal that no one seemed interested in. He asked me to send it to him and suggested that we meet next time I was in England.

When I met Raj in Cambridge, he informed me that this 'proposal' was not a PhD proposal; I needed to focus on a particular issue within a much more limited time frame. I wrote something on the lines suggested by Raj and was admitted back to Cambridge and enrolled for a PhD in history in 2004. I had no idea how one 'does' history. I was in my late forties at that time and had never been taught history in a manner that inspired much curiosity or interest. Nevertheless, I was eager and willing to become a student again and learn history, perhaps for the first time.

Those who are familiar with the PhD process in the UK will know that there are no classes or coursework to be undertaken and students are expected to undertake their research on their own. Not having studied any history, unlike my graduate student colleagues pursuing doctorates alongside me, I was at a great disadvantage. I struggled with the fundamentals of the process. My advisor was also not known for a hands-on approach with his students. I spent my first year of my PhD trying to write an extended proposal that should have been part of the beginnings of the thesis. At the end of that first year, during the review meeting with my advisor and an external examiner, who happened to be Christopher Bayly, I presented a long paper written on the basis of my preliminary research. My assessment did not go well (although the paper I had submitted would eventually be published as a stand-alone journal article and be well received). When Raj had read my essay, all I remember him saying was 'Oh dear!'. Later he told me that he assumed that because I had already published so much, I must know what I was doing. Raj had left me completely on my own for the first year based on that assumption. Thereafter, Raj told me that he was going to take greater control over my work and be a more active supervisor. He kept telling me to 'go to the archive' and that is where he said I would learn to 'do' history. However, Rajnarayan Chandavarkar passed away in April 2006, and I then inherited Christopher Bayly as my thesis advisor.

My PhD proposal underwent many iterations. Its eventual focus was far removed from either the Mughal *darbar* or Nawaz Sharif's style of governance of the 1990s. Instead, my work focused on Urdu writing by Muslims in the Hindustan of colonial India in the second half of the nineteenth century. I examined the nature of identity formation amongst the *ashrāf* (well-born) of north India and how notions of self-articulation and self-definition were emerging, often in contradiction with British classifications. Chris Bayly was not particularly familiar with the material I was looking at, knew no Urdu, and had not worked on the topic of Muslims in colonial India, but was an engaging reader and guide. Again, in the British system of undertaking a PhD, the discussions and direction from an advisor begin to frame a student's thesis, and often this is the extent of interaction students at the PhD level have, apart from attending seminars and discussing their work with other students. Unlike the United States (US), there is no 'formal' training in how one 'does' history. Chris was a very enthusiastic advisor, always encouraging me, always reading what I gave him and returned with copious comments and queries. Not being familiar with Urdu or Muslim constitutions of identity formation, he always said my material was 'really fantastic' and once said that had he had access to what I had written, he would have changed parts of his monumental *Empire and Information*. He even said that unlike his other students, my past record of academics, research and publication was of a great advantage. I was flattered and highly motivated to finish.

I submitted my dissertation in 2008 and on 24th October had my oral exam. (I remember the date well since the next day I left for Barcelona, and what started after is best reserved for a more personal biography). I had been told that once your advisor approves your thesis, the oral exam is a shoo-in, just a formality as any other result would have been a reflection on the advisor's judgement and reputation. I was told that when you walk in, your examiners usually say, 'Congratulations on your PhD, it stands approved. Now let's talk about some of the ideas you have written up'. My viva went quite differently. I was asked to wait when I arrived for the exam while both my examiners were locked in a discussion about their reports and opinions about the thesis. One of the examiners, both well-known historians, was considered the main authority on Muslims in South Asia. He failed me in the oral exam, not formally but suggested major revisions. His main objection was that I had mis-written his name in my references—I had written his initial only, not his full name—and he had brought all of his books to show me how to spell his name correctly. This was what most disturbed him, and while it did not become part of the written examiner's report, it consumed a great deal of the discussion during the oral exam. The other objection he had was that he said that I had misrepresented his position on Muslims in colonial India and that he had not taken the position I had critiqued. In my thesis, I had argued that the separatism approach to South Asian history was anachronistic and was a simple 'separatism to partition' narrative

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much propagated by this historian. He had also shown me many passages from his books which presented a more nuanced approach to the one I had taken. The other examiner had much praise for my work and felt that it deserved to pass with minor revisions, but her voice was drowned out. I did not get an official fail but was told that I had to make the revisions suggested.

Chris Bayly was quite shocked when he heard about what had happened. After all, he had approved my work and had felt that it was ready to be examined and for me to pass. He initially considered taking up the matter officially, but then decided it would only delay the whole process. He suggested that I do what I had been asked, resubmit and pass the exam, and take my degree. He said that when I would publish my book I can write whatever I want, but at the moment I would just have to satisfy this one examiner. I revised, corrected the examiner's name, made some other corrections, then resubmitted and received my PhD in history from the University of Cambridge in 2009.

As this is the first part of the background to how this book came into being, I need to thank two people who played a fundamental role in completing my thesis and in receiving my degree. Historian Charu Gupta of the University of Delhi, who became a dear friend when I was at Teen Murti in Delhi, was a constant source of encouragement throughout the four years I spent 'doing' history. I used to ask her for advice, and send her material I was writing at every single juncture. She always encouraged me to keep going. She was in some ways my main guide in learning to 'do' history. Without her constant support and persistence, I would not have completed my PhD. The other person who was also a great source of encouragement and was always giving me advice, reading my chapters, telling me how to proceed, was historian Usha Sanyal. Usha—on whom more below—was pivotal to the process.

Unlike most academics who are in a hurry to publish their theses, write their first book and get tenure, I was in no such hurry. I did not have a job, was not looking for one and was still 'working from home' even after completing my PhD. I already had an extensive list of publications. Most were still in the field of political economy and institutional economics, which remained my main means of earning a living. I sent out my PhD to scholars who worked in my field and received extensive comments, particularly from Barbara Metcalf. At around the same time, in 2009, I saw an announcement for a conference celebrating Barbara's work at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. My work had used Barbara's early monograph on Deoband, and I had developed some of the themes she had introduced to our field. In fact, an entire chapter in my thesis was based on Barbara's discussion of the 'celebrated' *munāzara* of Chandapur, examining the relationship with orality and print. The proposal I sent in was accepted. I had not presented this work before and was delighted to be part of a gathering of scholars whose work had shaped mine so fundamentally. There, I had the opportunity to meet with Barbara Metcalf, Usha Sanyal, David Lelyveld, David

Gilmartin, Mushirul Hasan and many others, all of whom had worked on themes that related to Barbara's foundational and extensive oeuvre.

On my way to Ann Arbor in September 2009, I stopped in New York at the invitation of Janaki Bakhle of Columbia University to present a paper at the South Asia Institute. I had written to Partha Chatterjee that I would be passing through New York and would like to present something at Columbia. Partha put me in touch with Janaki who was then the director of the institute. I presented a talk at Columbia, unrelated to my historical research, on the ideological and geographical location of Pakistan, whether it was 'located' in South Asia or whether it had drifted into the Middle East, a paper which had just been published in *Economic and Political Weekly*. This talk turned out to be an important, though unexpected, turning point for my career, and my life. A few months later, I received an email from Janaki asking whether I would like to come teach at Columbia. She wanted me to teach some history and some political economy. In September 2010, I joined Columbia University to teach Pakistani and South Asian history and political economy. It is this last decade at Columbia which transformed my thesis into this book.

Even though I taught courses based on my thesis and read most of the new literature which had emerged on the subject, I postponed redrafting my thesis because I was still not ready to convert it into a book. Finally, by around 2018, having spent some years amongst leading historians with whom I discussed my work and ideas, I prepared a first draft and submitted it to Cambridge University Press for consideration. It is at this point that I need to thank a host of academics, friends and others who have helped in different ways in making me revise ideas and themes I had originally encountered.

A number of people have read and commented upon parts of or the whole manuscript at various times. The Ann Arbor *munāzara* paper, which was eventually published in a collection based on the conference in honour of Barbara Metcalf and is considerably revised here as Chapter 4, received extensive comments from David Gilmartin and Sandria Freitag, who were the publication's joint editors along with Usha Sanyal. Barbara Metcalf read the original dissertation and offered many important comments, as she did also during discussions at Ann Arbor. A separate unpublished paper, drawn from my thesis, on knowledge production amongst Muslims in north India finds itself here in different forms and places. It was originally presented at a conference organised in London. While not accepted for later publication, it received very detailed comments from Daud Ali and Indra Sengupta who had organised the conference. Javed Majeed made numerous comments on the *zillat* (utter humiliation) chapter (Chapter 2) in one of its earlier forms and has also offered comments at other points.

On my manuscript, I received helpful comments from Margrit Pernau who helped me to winnow notions that were unnecessary to my argument, particularly in her comments about identity formation, which she rightly said were 'a bit 1990s by now'.

She also offered numerous other words of caution and advice, all much heeded. C. M. Naim made very detailed and critical comments on the *zillat* chapter, challenging many of my assumptions forcing me to tighten my arguments. Naim Sahib, in his classical *andāz* as an *ustād*, was dismissive of many assertions I had made and asked me to rethink concepts, which I did. Janaki Bakhle read the entire draft manuscript and while making encouraging comments said she had just 'three observations', each which required considerable thought and reflection on my part. Other readers include two students from my Pakistan history classes at the IBA in Karachi, both hopefully on their way to becoming historians, Hasan Hameed, now doing his PhD at Princeton University, and Ilsa Razzak, on her way to study in the US. Hannah Archambault has been an extraordinary and meticulous editor, not just providing edits, but as a scholar herself. Hannah has given numerous pointers and comments that have helped improve this manuscript immensely. I am indeed very grateful for the time and energy she put into this. I am also very grateful to SherAli Tareen and Ali Altaf Mian for last-minute help with some translations which both supplied within a few minutes of my request.

In the 10 years I spent at Columbia University and in New York, I have learnt from colleagues and from friends, all of whom I am happy to acknowledge and thank. Janaki Bakhle got me to Columbia, and along with Nick Dirks before they moved to California, invited me to spend many evenings in conversation with dozens of scholars and academics in their palatial Riverside apartment. Thank you to Akeel Bilgrami, a dear friend and also later the director of the South Asia Institute where I was located, for conversation about numerous themes and ideas, and especially cricket. Thanks to my colleagues at Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies, Sudipta Kaviraj, Debashree Mukherjee, Brinkley M. Messick, Anupama Rao, Mana Kia, Mamadou Diouf, Wael Hallaq whose seminar on the Shari'a I took, Joseph Massad whose seminar I also took on Freud, Michelle Quay who allowed me to participate in her Persian classes, the late Alison Busch and Shelly Pollock. Shahid Amin came to teach at Columbia for a semester and I was fortunate to argue and learn with Shahid as a participant in his seminar, 'Walking In and Out of the Archives'. Without Bill Carrick and Annapurna Potluri there could have been no home or office in Knox Hall, no South Asia Institute. Both have been at the institute since before I came to Columbia and have been key permanent features at the institute, always there for advice, consolation and help. They have been reliable and dependable colleagues, addressing all my needs and requests. Thanks to Bill and Annapurna.

In New York, there was always David Lelyveld, Phil Oldenburg and Veena Talwar Oldenburg to talk about South Asia with, and the filmmaker Mira Nair for far too infrequent conversations about film, Karachi, Lahore, Delhi and Lucknow while she was finishing the television series *A Suitable Boy*. Azra Raza holds extraordinary gatherings of equally extraordinary and brilliant scholars, artists, poets, writers, movie

makers and Nobel laureates. Azra Apa also saved my life, literally, when I was extremely ill in 2013 and I sent her an SOS email at 4.15 am. She replied instantly and put me in the hands of Dr J. Gregory Mears at the New York Presbyterian Hospital, who, alongside his Senior Nurse Susan Vogel, gave me excellent care towards recovery. Finally, there are my three friends, Partha Chatterjee, Mahmood Mamdani and Manan Ahmed, with whom I spent many dozens of evenings at The Hamilton or in Manan's cinema–theatre apartment watching a (almost always) black-and-white Indian movie from before there was a Bollywood, ordering in food, and talking politics, South Asia, academia and academics, and sharing all sorts of gossip. New York has been a fabulous place to live and learn, and these evenings, the seminars and conversation have all made this a spectacular and memorable decade.

There are four scholars in particular who have read my manuscript in thorough detail and have given exhaustive comments that helped shape the book's final form. Zahra Sabri, finishing up her PhD at McGill University, has gone through the manuscript with a fine-toothed comb, correcting the transliteration, translating from Urdu to English, and making very profound methodological, historical and theological interventions, all while forthrightly offering her opinion. I owe a great deal to Zahra in giving parts of this book shape. Zahra also deserves thanks for severely admonishing me where I made throwaway statements about Islam, which on greater reflection revealed my naiveté. In her written comments and at a coffee shop in Montreal in February 2020, she berated me for many of my formulations. For this degree and severity of critique one can only be grateful. With hindsight, I can add that Zahra's comments and warning were particularly pertinent and prescient, for as my manuscript was going to press, I read SherAli Tareen's excellent *Defending Muhammad in Modernity*; many of the criticisms Zahra had made were echoed in SherAli's book, sparing me some of the severe critique he makes of scholars who transgress disciplines and make passing comments and judgements on things they know little about.

Usha Sanyal, a decade after our first interactions, has been a particularly close reader, having seen the document in its original dissertation form and the changes that have transformed it. Usha has given me copious line-by-line comments, corrected mistakes, made suggestions about content, form and style. I owe her a great debt of gratitude for the second time. David Lelyveld, probably the scholar who knows more than anyone about what this book is about, was brutally honest with his comments, enough so (unintentionally on his part) for me to think about abandoning this project altogether. I am most grateful to David and know that he will always continue to help me raise my game even as my ego lies bruised. I hope that he is happier with what this book has become.

Just as I was finalising my manuscript, incorporating many of the comments I had received from friends and the anonymous readers at Cambridge University Press, my

friend and colleague Manan Ahmed at Columbia University asked me for the draft. I had already sent him a draft eight months earlier and every time I had asked him for comments, he had avoided the topic. I felt that there was no harm in sending it to him once more, since after all he had just finished revisions to his own manuscript and said that he 'was free' now. Four days after my sending him the draft, he asked to meet to give me comments. At an evening at The Hamilton, in a short spurt of about an hour and a half, during the three rounds that went down, Manan gave me the most profound stylistic and structural comments I could have hoped for. Three rounds do blur one's judgement and perspective, but perhaps also clear the mind to receive understanding and insight. Manan's comments were just so, mind-blowing, and have helped me redesign, re-emphasise, refocus and re-present many of the themes that were buried or lost in the original manuscript. To Zahra, Usha, David and Manan, I am particularly grateful and indebted.

Although this particular book has taken almost two decades in the making, having gotten here, I know how I want to proceed, drawing upon many of the ideas and themes I discovered and hope to continue building on in the hundreds of Urdu pamphlets and newspapers that I have read. Not everything could be represented and reproduced here, and that allows for subsequent publications. For example, the historical writings of Maulvi Zakaullah are worth a detailed discussion, as is the notion of *taraqqī* (progress), a notion which was constantly on the minds of the Urdu-writing Muslim *ashrāf*, many of whom were entangled in such debates. Was *taraqqī* or the lack of it a concern that emerged from amongst the Muslim *ashrāf* themselves, or was the idea placed into their collective imaginations by notions of British superiority conveyed to the *ashrāf*? Linked to this is also the notion of what was '*ilm* (as in learning and knowledge) and what constituted more formal education—the difference between 'useful' knowledge and 'useless' knowledge—again themes that appear repeatedly in Urdu writings of the late nineteenth century. With a large number of new PhDs and books set to appear over the next few years, the field of Muslim and Urdu writing in the late nineteenth century is seeing a vibrant revival and rejuvenation reminiscent of the very different, highly scholarly, 'older school' wave of writings three and four decades ago. These are great times to read, study and write about Muslims, Urdu and Islam in colonial India.

These last 17 years since I started 'doing' history have seen numerous pathbreaking and critical, personal and professional moments, junctures, breaks, break-ups and transitions. Without doubt, the most overwhelming and devastating for me has been the passing away of my wife, Rabab. Without her consistent and unconditional support and encouragement, her taking care of our three children while I was doing my PhD at Cambridge, working in research libraries in India, or later, leaving her to come to Columbia just as her illness began, my life would have been much the poorer, less accomplished and very different. I owe Rabab more than I can imagine or was ever

able to express to her while she was with me, a regret that I will always carry. I was hoping to present this book to her, but sadly it was many months too late. It is to her that this work is dedicated.

For the ten years that Rabab was unwell, we were supported by her sisters Rana and Narjis, both doctors, who took care of her every single need throughout her illness, at all times of the day and night, and gave us extraordinary support as doctors and as family. Without either of them, I know I would not have been able to take care of our three children or to work, read, write and publish. Their support was my lifeline to try and live through Rabab's illness. Muzaffar Zaidi, my father, still reads everything I write and even now encourages me to keep working and writing, and I thank him for being such a generous father and encouraging all his children to do whatever they wanted. I hope I have acquired at least some of his qualities and attributes to be a better father to my own children.

Three other people also need to be mentioned alongside Rabab, all of whom have been part of my many lives all these years. Faiz, Amar and Laila, as they went along making their own lives, saw me make mine and participated in the many moments that have formed who I am and what this book has become. They continue to be my centre, my home, wherever they and I happen to be.

S. Akbar Zaidi
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25 April 2020

A Note on Transliteration

I mainly use a simplified version of John T. Platts' *A Dictionary of Urdu Classical Hindi and English*,[1] also following Barbara Metcalf's modified schema in her *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900*.[2] I mark long vowels as well as 'ayn, and in some cases hamza'. I differ from Platts' use of the Urdu letters غ and چ, which he transliterates as 'g̤' and 'c̤' respectively, using instead the simpler gh and ch. For the Urdu forms of 'in' and 'I', which are written in the same fashion but pronounced somewhat differently, Platts uses the same form: *men*. I use *men* for 'in' and *main* for 'I'. In some cases, my use of Urdu terms differs from other scholars. One is in my representation of the Urdu letter *vao* or *wao*. Some scholars use the 'softer' *wao*, such as Barelwi, Nadwa. I, however, use the 'stronger' version, *vao*, as in Barlevi, Nadva. I do this for all uses of *vao*, except in the cases of *fatwā* and Nawab, both of which are now standardised. Following Barbara Metcalf, I, too, simply add an 's' to many transliterated words to make a plural, particularly, *qaum*s, *fatwā*s, *ra'īs*es and so forth, but use the Arabic plural on other occasions, for example *mazāhib* and so forth. For proper names, I use what has now become convention, for example, Khan, rather than Khān. Where appropriate, I use the original names as transliterated by Urdu newspapers themselves, in particular the *Oudh Punch* and the *Oudh Ukhbar*, both of which were given on the masthead of these papers from Lucknow. Importantly, I prefer what one might call South Asian spellings, such as Ramazan or *hadīs*, rather than Arabic ones, such as Ramadan or *hadith*. I should add that my main aim is to be consistent and simplify this process rather than to focus on a highly specialised and sophisticated system and structure.

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[1] John T. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English* (1884; repr., London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

[2] Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (1982; repr., Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002).

An earlier version of Chapter 1 was published as 'Who Is a Muslim? Identities of Exclusion – North Indian Muslims, c. 1860–1900', in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 47, no. 2 (2010). A version of Chapter 4 appeared as 'Writing Partial Truths: Orality, Print, Myth, and Identities', in Sandra B. Freitag, David Gilmartin and Usha Sanyal's edited volume, *Muslim Voices: Community and the Self in South Asia* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2013). Both have been thoroughly rewritten and revised and are reproduced with thanks to the copyright holders.

Introduction

I

Maulvi Sayyid Imdadul 'Ali Sahib, Deputy Collector Bahadur, Kanpur and later of Aligarh, was one of the earliest and most vociferous critics of Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–98), one of the most prominent Muslim reformists in colonial India. The noted essayist, writer and poet Altaf Husain Hali (1837–1914) had called Imdadul 'Ali one of the two most important people who campaigned against Sayyid Ahmad. In AH 1289/AD 1872, Imdadul 'Ali published his *Imdād ul-Āfāq ba-Javāb-i Parcha-yi Tahzīb ul-Akhlāq* as a forceful reply to the publication *Tahzīb ul-Akhlāq*, not long after Sayyid Ahmad Khan founded his journal in 1871. On the very last page of Imdadul 'Ali's 88-page diatribe against Sayyid Ahmad Khan, we learn why he wrote the tract. His spirit and core beliefs about Islam were provoked, he said, and he became angry and immediately wrote this tract in reply to *Tahzīb ul-Akhlāq*. This trend of 'becoming angry' after reading something and being compelled to write, often 'immediately', became quite commonplace, certainly amongst the *ashrāf* (well-born) of Hindustan, even at a time when 'print capitalism' was still in its early phases. Imdadul 'Ali continued by saying that *Tahzīb ul-Akhlāq* was not only far removed from Islam but was blasphemous. In order to protect the beliefs of his Muslim brethren, he had his own text published and distributed for free.[1] Sayyid Ahmad Khan had written to many individuals, including Imdadul 'Ali, seeking their help when he began to plan the establishment of his college at Aligarh.

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[1] Sayyid Imdadul 'Ali, *Imdād ul-Āfāq ba-Javāb Parcha-yi Tahzīb ul-Akhlāq* (Kanpur: Nizami Press, AH 1290/AD 1872), 85. This publication is particularly useful because it contains numerous interventions and *fatwā*s made by the *'ulamā*, which gives a wide range of the types of opposition to Sayyid Ahmad Khan's planned college for Muslim men.

After spending many pages on what constituted a proper 'Muslim dress', Imdadul 'Ali moved on to Sayyid Ahmad Khan's planned dress code for the *Madrasat ul'ulum Musalmanān* (Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College).[2] He quoted Sayyid Ahmad, who wrote that each student would have to come to the madrasa wearing socks and shoes.[3] Imdadul 'Ali felt that Muslims would object to this, saying that while this madrasa was supposed to be meant for Muslims, by imposing a condition of wearing *āngrezī jūtā* (British shoes) it would force people away from their Islamic dress and they would begin to find the British style more pleasing. He argued on the basis of a *hadīs* (prophetic tradition) that Muslims should dress in a manner that was distinct from non-believers, and that they were prohibited from copying them.[4] Imdadul 'Ali continued with a discussion on wearing a red hat and black alpaca overcoat as part of the dress code and explained why this was unacceptable (*nā-jā'iz*) and difficult for students, particularly poor students, to acquire.[5] He was noticeably perturbed by the transformation undergoing Muslims in colonial India and saw these changes as a clear sign of the loss of cultural and social mores, their *akhlāq o ādāb*, which had been so representative of the characteristics of the *ashrāf*. Imdadul 'Ali wrote, he said, because there was a feeling 'that our *qaum* is being ruined [*kharāb hotī jātī hai*] and that we should do something about it'.[6]

Citing some other *hadīs*, Imdadul 'Ali also argued that according to the Hanafi tradition, 'which is in the majority in Hindustan', the wearing of red clothes was not permitted. He pointed out that at Sayyid Ahmad Khan's madrasa, Muslims were to eat on a raised platform; Muslims would object to this 'because that too is like a little table, [and] this would make them like the Christians who eat at tables. In our country only they eat at tables and in the Islamic religion, Muslims have been prohibited to copy/resemble Christians and they have been commanded to oppose them'.[7] He argued that Sayyid Ahmad said that he would have photographs taken and put in the madrasa; but this too, according

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[2] See Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (London: Hurst & Company, 1996), although her book on sartorial politics looks mainly at Hindu India and Hindu dress codes.

[3] The relevant reference can be found in Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Tahzib ul-Akhlaq* 3 (AH 10 Safar 1290/AD 1873).

[4] Imdadul 'Ali, *Imdād ul-Āfāq*, 49.

[5] Ibid., 49.

[6] Ibid., 9.

[7] Ibid., 50.

to Imdadul 'Ali, was against Islam and would result in angels staying away from those houses where there were pictures. He quoted numerous *hadīs* stating that those who make pictures will burn in hell. The extent of ridicule and contempt for those who were imbibing 'British ways' was best illustrated by Imdadul 'Ali's statement: 'They urinate while standing so that they can become civilised.'[8] For many like Imdadul 'Ali, who observed and wrote about changing cultural and social norms, such forms of deportment and such practices were an embodiment of utter and extreme humiliation, *zillat*.

This cultural notion of *zillat* was emphasised further and repeatedly by Imdadul 'Ali in the bimonthly newspaper from Kanpur, *Nūr ul-Āfāq*. In the 6 June 1874 issue, when Imdadul 'Ali was Deputy Collector in Aligarh, he wrote a reply to articles by Mazhar ul-Haq and Maulvi Mahdi 'Ali Sahib, Deputy Collector, Mirzapur. Addressing these heretics/infidels (*mulhid*), he said that they had destroyed their faith for jobs worth a mere 10 or 20 rupees. They had abandoned their Islamic dress, code and conduct, and wore jackets, pants, socks, shoes and red caps. They stood and urinated, ate un-koshered chicken cooked in impure water and ate off impure plates with a knife and fork while sitting at tables. They tried to emulate the Europeans to become more like them, he argued.[9] In this article as well as in earlier ones, Imdadul 'Ali supported his assertion that Muslims were not supposed to urinate while standing with references, noting that urinating while sitting was the correct *Islāmī tarīqa* (Islamic manner).[10] Clearly, Imdadul 'Ali, himself in the employ of the British, represented this idea of debasement in cultural terms. Muslims in Hindustan had given up their more traditional cultural mores—their *akhlāq*—by acquiring British (or European) ways, which according to some was the manifestation, if not the cause, of *zillat*.

The Urdu journal *Oudh Punch*, published from Lucknow in the middle of the nineteenth century and edited by Muhammad Sajjad Hussain (1856–1915), was one of the iconoclastic periodicals of its era, widely read and never ignored. It was a witty paper (*zarīf*), often very sarcastic, though serious in intent and subject

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8 Ibid., 11. The exact phrase is *khare ho kar peshāb kar ke muhazzib ban sake*; some of the more religious-minded Muslims believed that they should be seated on their haunches while urinating, arguing that this was based on tradition. This question of a preferred posture of urination as a tradition, was also discussed by Imdadul 'Ali in the 30 August 1873 and 6 June 1874 issues of *Nūr ul-Āfāq* as part of a debate with other writers.

9 Imdadul 'Ali, *Nūr ul-Āfāq*, Kanpur, 6 June 1874.

10 Ibid.

matter. It was read by Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and the British alike, and had *nawab*s, *munshi*s, *divan*s, *pandit*s, *maulvi*s and various categories of government officials subscribing to it across north India.[11] While it was a 'Muslim' newspaper, it was syncretic, in that one did not see either pro-Muslim, pro-Islamic or anti-Hindu sentiments expressed. It included stories about 'Id and Divali, both equally celebrated, and in this manner stood out amongst the many newspapers of north India.[12] The *Punch* even wrote articles against its competitor, the *Oudh Ukhbar*, for writing anti-Muslim articles.[13] Akhtar Shahanshahi in his biography of newspapers written in 1888 listed 1,512 newspapers between 1840 and 1880 and said that there was no better humorous newspaper than the *Oudh Punch* in the whole of Hindustan.[14] It had amongst its readers Maulana Shibli Nu'mani (b. 1857) who was said to have read the paper with great enjoyment.[15]

The *Punch* spoke of a very different culture in a very different language, humorous and caustic. In 1878, in the midst of a debate around how the term *tahzīb* (culture/civilisation) should be defined and used by Muslim writers, with major implications for how groups of Muslims reacted to colonial rule and how they imagined themselves, the newspaper carried an article which defined *tahzīb* in a way very similar to Imdadul 'Ali's, which is as follows:

> To call one's countrymen semi-barbaric; to call one's elders 'old goose'; to wear a jacket and pants; to whistle while walking; to swirl one's umbrella and hit one's shoe [on the ground]; to urinate taking aim on the walls of one's neighbours; to wear a cap with a tail; to enjoy eating potatoes; to drink wine; to eat a non-koshered chicken; to give up using oil and use the fat of a bear in one's hair; to get a foreign wife; reading a newspaper [in English] whether they know English or not ….[16]

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[11] See *Oudh Punch* on 5 February, 26 March, 23 April, 11 June, 30 July of 1878 for numerous lists.

[12] See Chapter 3 for further discussion.

[13] *Oudh Punch*, 10 August 1880.

[14] Akhtar Shahanshahi, *Sawānih-i 'Umrī-yi Akhbārāt*, part 1 (Lucknow: Akhtar Press, 1888), 53.

[15] Muhammad Mahdi, *Tazkira-i Shams ul-'Ulamā Maulānā Shiblī Marhūm* (Agra: Shama Mission Press, 1925), 5. For an extensive discussion on both papers, see Jennifer Dubrow, *Cosmopolitan Dreams: The Making of Modern Urdu Literary Culture in Colonial South Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2018).

[16] *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 22 January 1878. Jennifer Dubrow in *Cosmopolitan Dreams* points to similar examples where she writes that Rathan Nath Sarshar, who was the editor of the *Oudh Akhbar* and author of the Urdu novel *Fasāna-yi Āzād*, paints the

The *Oudh Punch* was also a major vehicle for attack on the so-called Naturies (*nechrī*s) and on Sayyid Ahmad Khan. There were numerous articles and letters to the editor printed in it which criticised the *nechrī* school of thought. For instance, a reader going by the initials FH sent a letter to the *Oudh Punch* with the published title 'New Religion', mocking the *nechrī*. The letter, which took the form of a dialogue, asked what this *nechrī* fiend was. The reply came that it was a new religion which had been invented by a 'Sayyid Sahib'. The letter then stated that these days there was a lot of hue and cry about it. When the letter writer asked what its principles were, the answer given was that it really had no principles, and because of this façade, religious benefits accrued to those who subscribed to this 'new religion'. The writer then wrote that 'for fame and progress, this is a good scheme [that is, not to reveal its principles]'.[17] Dozens of articles and poems (for example, one entitled 'Natural Poetry') and even cartoons against the *nechrī* appeared in the *Oudh Punch* in 1880. It was identified specifically as an 'Aligarh-based ailment', where the disease could be found in its most articulate form. The newspaper gave a description of its adherents as follows: '[They wear] a red cap with a tail; a cigarette holder in the mouth; … with a dog alongside; wearing a jacket … hating the natives, friendship with the British … saying "good morning" rather than "*salām*"….'[18]

This attack on the *nechrī*s and on their cultural values, blaming them for the decline and humiliation of Muslims, continued in the *Punch* well into the 1880s. Blaming the *nechrī*s for bringing about a condition of slavery to the British, the *Oudh Punch* argued that the Muslims were the most useless (*nikamme*) community because they had recently lost their kingdom (*saltanāt*), and that they were still living in an older world.[19] In another attack on the Aligarh college, in an article entitled 'Tahzīb kī Taraqqī' ('The Progress of Culture'), the *Punch* made an astonishing link between the Muslim community's *zillat* and the students' obsession with playing cricket! In a sarcastic piece, it asked, 'Is it going to be this cricket that is going to correct the present and future condition of Islam?'[20] Writers in the *Oudh Punch* also acknowledged a larger concern with respect to the condition of decline and humiliation of Muslims—namely,

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main character Azad 'as an example of the Anglicized *babu*', carrying numerous 'Western objects' (p. 47).

[17] *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 17 February 1880.
[18] *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 10 August 1880.
[19] *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 29 January 1885, 2.
[20] *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 7 May 1885.

disunity—stating that this was the most common reason for all the ills that had befallen Muslims.[21]

Zillat was perceived by different categories and groups of Muslims in different terms and emanating from different sources or elements in their lives. For some, it was religious decline, for others, it was social and cultural decline, and for yet others, it was a loss of social position related to their job and economic status. For certain sections of the *ashrāf*, questions of comportment, dress, 'everyday living', as well as morals and mores, were tied in to their notions of *zillat*, and to their *akhlāq* (ethics).[22] This was a class perception of *zillat*, which resulted in a loss of face. On the other hand, for some Muslims, imagined or real restrictions on religious practices and rituals, as well as pollution of Islamic practices from Hinduism (*bid'at*), or the absorption of 'Western' social values and practices, implied that they had fallen to a *zillat kā maqām* (a state/place of humiliation). For still others, it was some combination of religious, social, economic, cultural and moral decline, leading towards *zillat*.

Notions of *zillat* were not exclusive to the Muslim *ashrāf* or *'ulamā* in nineteenth-century Hindustan. Other religious communities experienced similar sentiments. However, because many Muslims believed that their community had experienced political loss with the end of Mughal sovereignty in 1857, they were more greatly affected than were other communities who suffered other forms of loss. Such *zavāl* (decline) was not limited to Hindustan; as Mana Kia writes, 'In the mid-nineteenth century, under the pressures of looming European imperialism, Persians saw Iran's declining economic, social, and political position as the results of collective moral degradation.'[23] Yet the loss of political power after 1857 marks a radical departure compared with similar experiences elsewhere. Importantly, most Urdu writers in the nineteenth century agreed that they had brought *zillat* by themselves upon themselves: *apne hāthon se* (by their own hands).

Despite numerous monographs on South Asian Islam and Muslims over the last 50 years, the question Barbara Metcalf asks at the beginning of her foundational

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[21] *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 5 November 1885.

[22] See Seema Alavi, *Islam and Healing: Loss and Recovery of an Indo-Muslim Tradition, 1600–1900* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007) for how the *akhlāq* of the *ashrāf* were affected as they negotiated colonialism and the changes underway in the nineteenth century.

[23] Mana Kia, 'Moral Refinement and Manhood in Persia', in *Civilizing Emotions: Concepts in Nineteenth Century Asia and Europe*, ed. Margrit Pernau et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 146.

study on Deoband, 'Why has modern South Asia produced such a diversity of Islamic movements?', has not satisfactorily been answered. She answers her own question as follows: 'One reason may well be the extreme form in which political loss here took place.'[24] Such an answer is at best partial. What was it then, that agentive force amongst Sunni Muslims in the late nineteenth-century colonial India, which led them to a revival, renewal and reform of their practices and belief systems resulting in an efflorescence of identities and denominations emerging within Islam?[25]

I propose that what acted as an agentive force was the realisation of *zillat*, the utter humiliation that Muslims faced after the 'extreme form in which political loss here took place'. From Urdu texts including those by less-known publicists, one gets the sense that the Muslim *ashrāf* were confronted by a condition of *zillat* that began to define their collective sentiment. As I explain in Chapter 2, *zillat* was not merely a cry of lamentation; it was instrumental in encouraging Muslims to redefine who they were. I see *zillat* as the *motor* which caused a revival, renewal and reform amongst Muslims, giving rise to them emerging and coming into being in diverse manifestations and multiple forms.

This was also the period when the British started defining and categorising Muslims based on their own understanding, needs and criteria, through instruments such as the census. Muslims, on the other hand, were imagining themselves quite differently. While the motif of change, decline, destruction and loss was central to their lives, I argue that one of the consequences of the experience of *zillat* was a momentum that led Muslims to *remake themselves*, resulting in different ways of being. The medium for this transformation was most often print, which, rather than unifying, resulted in fragmentation and fracture. It produced not one, but many types of Muslim communities. This technique, instrument and technology of capitalist and colonial modernity—mass printing— becomes the vehicle through which numerous conflicting Muslim identities

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[24] Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (1982; repr., New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 7.

[25] In chronological order, these would be as follows: the Deobandis, the Ahl-i Hadis (although they had some strong continuities with the past), the Ahmadis, the Barelvis or Ahl-i Sunnat wa'l Jama'at, and the Tablighi Jama'at, part of and an offshoot of the Deobandi tradition. Interestingly, all except the Ahmadis emerge from within a geographical radius of a few kilometres of each other, and the Ahmadis are also not that much further afield.

took institutionalised, organised and corporatised forms as *maslak*s.[26] It is the realisation and agentive force of *zillat*, interacting with modern techniques and technology, which results in new categories of Muslims 'being made', providing some understanding of why modern South Asia produced such a diversity of Islamic movements.

For Muslims, notions of who a Muslim was emerged through a discursive space and process—in this case, the Urdu print medium—based on conditions of materiality, and resulted in the construction of identities that constituted who could be called a Muslim. By all accounts, such constructions resulted in fluid notions of who Muslims were, and in the case of the census, this fluidity became particularly apparent in the context of whom the British designated and counted as Muslim. What also emerges is that in matters of self-confession and self-description, the boundaries Muslims created were *far more rigid* than those demarcated by the British. Those who claimed Muslimhood or Muslimness often did so by arguing that they were the only authentic Muslims, establishing hard, bifurcating lines that ensured others were kept beyond the pale of their Islam.

II

One would have thought that it might have been easier to answer the question 'Who is a Muslim?', rather than 'What is Islam?', especially in the context of the early colonial modernity of nineteenth-century north India. Muslims, quite simply, ought to be those who professed that they were themselves 'Muslim', a self-confession being sufficient to designate belonging to the religion and varied practices of (an) Islam. This is what Shahab Ahmed argues in his magisterial *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic*, a study of the 'histories of the societies

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[26] See SherAli Tareen, *Defending Muhammad in Modernity* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 2020), who has a few pages entitled 'What Is a *Maslak*?', noting that a *maslak* in late nineteenth-century British India becomes 'the most visible referent to a distinct Muslim reformist program in colonial South Asia', which 'is intimately entwined with, and perhaps overshadowed by, its implicit signalling of competition over normativity. From the late nineteenth century onwards, *maslak* has become a resounding competitive concept' (p. 173). Brannon D. Ingram has argued that the term *maslak* in South Asia 'has come to denote the features that define a given school, sect, or movement' in Brannon Ingram, *Revival from Below*: *The Deoband Movement and Global Islam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2018), 141.

of Muslims',[27] where he sees Islam as a 'human and historical phenomenon'.[28] Taking the *shahāda*, bearing witness to Allah and his Prophet, as such a confession, this ought to be enough in making any claims to 'being' Muslim. At an individual and household level, this self-confession works adequately, but when notions of a larger collective being or entity, such as a 'community' or a 'religion' or *maslak*, emerge, things become more complicated. How does a family unit or an individual who has taken the *shahāda* decide (if they actually make such a clear and conscious choice) to *belong to* a particular representation of Islam, or of the numerous ways of being Muslim? What is that mechanism which results in such choices about belonging to different manifestations of Islam? Who decides where someone belongs *within* the larger notion of 'Muslim'? Which Muslim does one become, and how? One could even claim to 'be a Muslim' without subscribing to any doctrinal faith and by following rituals and practices selectively and creatively.[29]

Muslims have, in the words of Shahab Ahmed,

> been dealing with *difference, diversity and disagreement* for fourteen centuries … [and] have long been aware that they are *not* all the same; they have long been aware that their identity as components of universal Islam *includes* diverse experiences, agreement, disagreement, problems, dilemmas, and predicaments; that they mostly agree to disagree and to be different. One might say that the community of Islam is a *community of disagreement*.[30]

Approvingly quoting Ebrahim Moosa, Ahmed in a footnote continues, 'There are multiple and diverse forms and articulations of "Muslimness" or "Being Muslim". In other words what we really have are multiple representations of being Muslim embodied by concrete individuals and communities.'[31] For Shahab Ahmed, the

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27 Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016). I find Shahab Ahmed's book useful to make some general arguments in this Introduction rather than draw upon a wider scholarly field. His book brings in ideas from diverse fields and presents a good summary of many of them. Importantly, and most refreshingly, his is one of the few books on Islam that squarely addresses South Asia and other Muslim societies beyond the Middle East.

28 Ibid., 106–7.

29 The well-known case, one of many, is that of the poet Asadullah Khan Ghalib calling himself an *ādhā musalmān* (half Muslim).

30 Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 147, emphasis in original.

31 Ebrahim Moosa, 'The Debts and Burdens of Critical Islam', in *Progressive Muslims:*

great challenge has been to conceptualise Islam 'posed by the sheer diversity of—that is, range of differences between—those societies, persons, ideas and practices that identify themselves with "Islam"'.[32]

It might be convenient to make the argument, no doubt correct, that 'Islam is a community of disagreement', yet when we turn to examine the numerous and diverse groups which constitute that 'community of disagreement', complications arise as to who is entitled to, and/or has the power to, decide who belongs within a particular community which constitutes a part of the larger 'community of disagreement'. Those excluded might not even be permitted to make the claim that they also belong to the larger 'community of disagreement'. Self-confession allows one to make the claim of belonging, yet it seems that such a right could as easily be denied by and to others. Clearly, *a question of legitimacy* arises, but more importantly, the question of who decides this question of legitimacy needs to be addressed. First order and second order distinctions clearly matter—in order to make the claim that they belong to the community of disagreement, they have to be allowed to first make the claim that they actually belong (are allowed to belong) to the community of Islam before they are allowed to agree (or not). If they are not even allowed to make the claim that they are Muslims, they will certainly not be allowed to make the claim that they are Muslims 'differently'.

This book examines precisely this vein of concern regarding who is allowed to make such a claim of being Muslim, who is excluded and on what grounds. Multiple claimants to the supposedly 'legitimate' claim of being Muslim exclude all others making the same claim. Are those who are denied this right allowed to be part of this 'community of disagreement'?

Not only do one's own choices matter but in the context of colonial modernity and colonial governmentality, government holds the power to identify individuals, households and communities as 'Muslim'—leaving aside internal distinctions within the broader notion of 'Muslimhood' or 'Muslimness'—defining and constituting Muslim subjectivities. Subject populations whose own understanding and practices of faith may vary from the categories and characteristics recognised by the colonial state are nevertheless classified on the basis of having, or being perceived as having, certain types of characteristics with which the colonial power was somewhat familiar. Importantly, this subject population is even denied the notion of a conscious self-confession of who they are, who they think they

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  On Justice, Gender and Pluralism, ed. Omid Safi (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), 111, cited in Ahmed, *What Is Islam?* 147.

[32] Ahmed, *What Is Islam?* 6.

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