

CULTURES OF HISTORY

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The death of history, reported at the end of the twentieth century, was clearly premature. It has become a hotly contested battleground in struggles over identity, citizenship, and claims of recognition and rights. Each new national history proclaims itself as ancient and universal, while the contingent character of its focus raises questions about the universality and objectivity of any historical tradition. Globalization and the American hegemony have created cultural, social, local, and national backlashes. Cultures of History is a new series of books that investigates the forms, understandings, genres, and histories of history, taking history as the primary text of modern life and the foundational basis for state, society, and nation.

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The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia

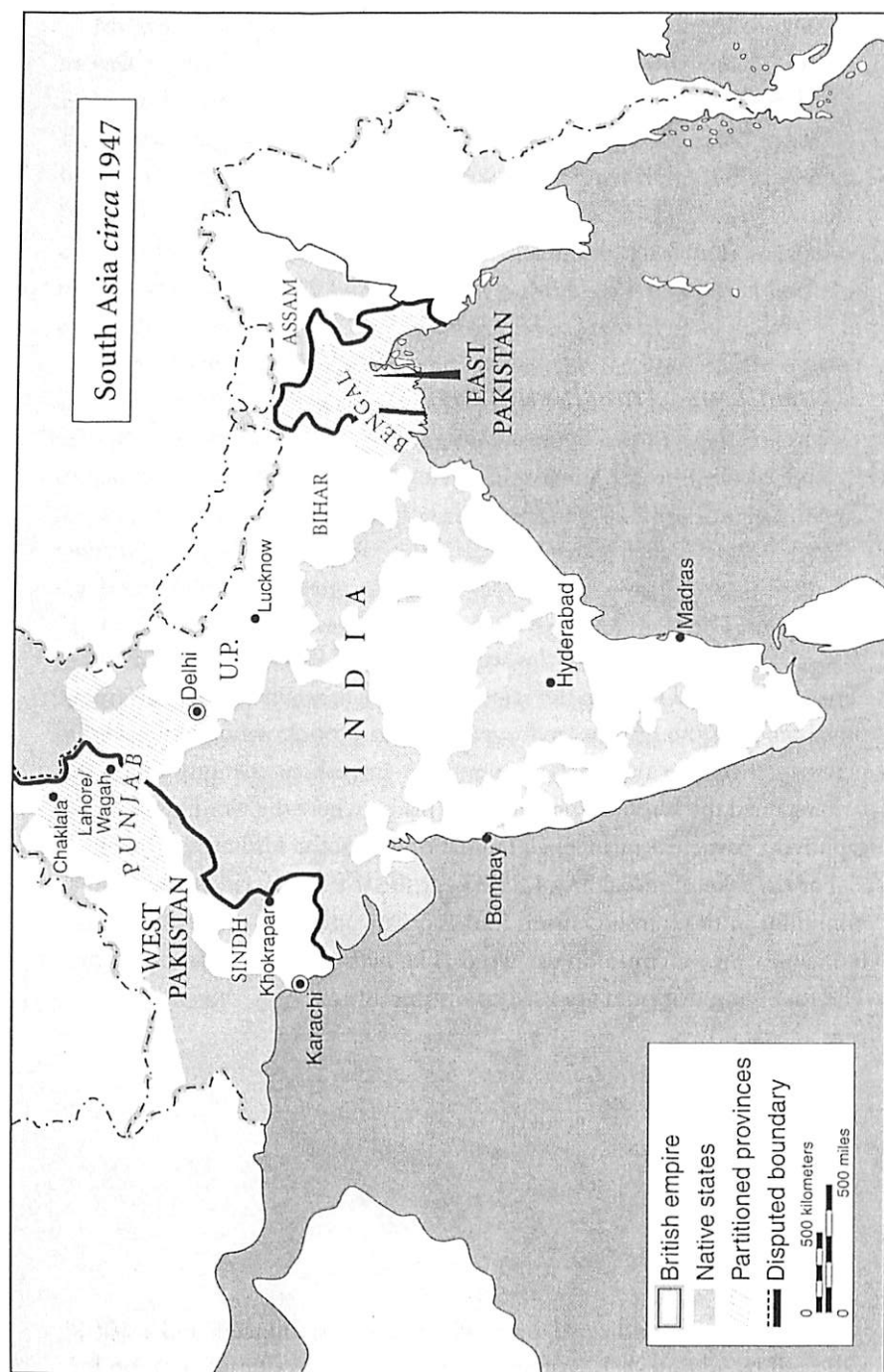
REFUGEES, BOUNDARIES, HISTORIES

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Introduction: The Place of Partition

There behind barbed wire, on one side, lay India and behind more barbed wire, on the other side, lay Pakistan. In between, on a bit of earth which had no name, lay Toba Tek Singh.¹

In our maps of the world the bit of earth with no name simply disappears. It folds into a black, impenetrable line. Let me begin with Ghulam Ali's story as a way of unfolding this history, drawing out lives from lines, untended margins from marked places.

Ghulam Ali was a subaltern officer in the British Indian Army, an *havlidar*, who had been sent to receive technical training in artificial-limb making in Britain during the closing years of the Second World War. When he returned, he was posted at the military workshops in Chaklala, near Rawalpindi. On June 3, 1947, a partition of the Indian subcontinent was announced, concomitant with the coming end of almost two centuries of colonial rule, and a Partition Council began the exacting task of counting and dividing the vast machinery of colonial statecraft into two—everything from tables and chairs, weather instruments and military hardware, to railway engineers and office clerks. All those in government and military service were asked to choose which post-independence nation-state they wanted to serve—India or Pakistan.

Ghulam Ali “opted” for the Indian Army since his familial home was in Lucknow. But before post-independence maps could be drawn up that would show Lucknow in a new India and Chaklala in a new Pakistan, genocidal violence engulfed Rawalpindi and war broke out between the two nascent states over Kashmir. Prevented from returning to India, Ghulam Ali was forced to work for the fledgling Pakistan Army. Eventually in 1950 the Pakistan Army discharged him on the grounds that he had opted for the Indian Army. The limb maker was taken to the Pakistani border post at Khokrapar and, deemed to be an Indian, was “forcibly removed” into Indian territory. However, at the Indian checkpost he was not recognized as an Indian. He was arrested by the border police for entry without a travel permit, forced to serve a prison sentence, and was deported back to Pakistan in 1951 on the grounds that he was a Pakistani.

If lives can unfold, they can also unravel. Faced with dispossession, Ghulam Ali applied to the courts to be recognized as a Pakistani citizen, but was declared an Indian national in 1956. He then bought himself a Pakistani passport in order to cross the border and return to his familial home in Lucknow. There he applied for Indian citizenship, but despite appeals by his brother, the provincial government of Uttar Pradesh ordered him to leave the country in 1957. When he was deported by an Indian police escort to the Wagah border crossing, the Pakistani officials there in turn arrested him again and, considering him an Indian national, placed him in the “Hindu camp” at Lahore.

Ghulam Ali, barbed wire on either side of him, is that quintessentially Manto-esque figure: like Toba Tek Singh in Saadat Hasan Manto’s best-known Urdu short story of Partition’s “madness,” he invokes all the aporias of belonging in a cartography of nation-states. Where, indeed, is India? Where is Pakistan? Who is an Indian? Who is a Pakistani?

Perhaps the sheer magnitude of the catastrophic experiences of Partition in 1947 is enough to justify this study. Marked by genocidal violence, forced conversions, abductions and rapes in large parts of north India, as well as an unprecedented displacement of people, Partition has been called “a holocaust” of a tragedy.² And yet, by placing the events of 1947 at only the beginning of what I argue was a *long Partition*, this book asks us to stretch our very understanding of “Partition violence” to include the bureaucratic violence of drawing political boundaries and nationalizing identities that became, in some lives, interminable.

I came across Ghulam Ali’s story in a government file which I requested

because I had been “tracking,” in ethnographic fashion,³ Urdu-speaking north Indian Muslim families as they became divided between Delhi, India, and Karachi, Pakistan, in the years following 1947. Divided families are at the heart of this book, for it is through them, their oral histories in two cities, that I was forced into the archive; it was what E. Valentine Daniel calls “the drone of silence” in interviews, caught between “not-being-able-to-speak” and “ought-not-to-speak,”⁴ that drove me to read Urdu newspapers of the time, and tucked away, seemingly indifferent government records of both states.

Moving between memory and record, I recover here a remarkable history of how, in the midst of incomprehensible violence, two postcolonial states comprehended, intervened, and *shaped* the colossal displacements of Partition. It was through the making of refugees as a governmental category, through refugee rehabilitation as a tool of planning, that new nations and the borders between them were made, and people, including families, were divided. The highly surveillanced western Indo-Pak border, one of the most difficult for citizens of the region to cross to this day, was not a consequence of the Kashmir conflict, as security studies gurus may suggest, but rather was formed through a series of attempts to resolve the fundamental uncertainty of the political Partition itself—where did, where could, “Muslims” like Ghulam Ali belong.

The *Muslims* I speak of here does not refer to a people constituted by shared beliefs or religious practices, for certainly Muslims in South Asia are linguistically and culturally very diverse. Instead it refers to a constructed category of community and political mobilization that emerged under colonial conditions,⁵ and which was to become substantially transformed through the years of the long Partition. There are many contested histories of how the idea of Muslims as a separate political community came to be mobilized as part of the Pakistan movement; how the neologism *Pakistan*, evocatively coined by a Punjabi Muslim student at Cambridge University in 1933 amid numerous “fabulous place-making” exercises, led to the actual “moth-eaten Pakistan” in 1947.⁶ It is not my purpose here to add to these studies to understand why Partition happened,⁷ but rather to clarify, with a focus on north Indian Muslim families, the post-colonial burden of this political partition.

When the All India Muslim League invoked “Pakistan,” it did so on behalf of a nation of “Muslims,” even though many Muslims did not support the Pakistan movement, and yet others would be simply left out of a state drawn from regions where Muslims formed an enumerated

majority. Furthermore, those who did support the Pakistan movement included Muslims of regions like Delhi and Uttar Pradesh who could not be part of its territorial claims. As David Gilmartin points out, the "two-nation theory," the basis for the Muslim League's Pakistan demand, was "a fundamentally non-territorial vision of nationality," and "for most Muslims the meaning of Pakistan did not hinge primarily on its association with a specific territory."⁸

However, as the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress agreed to the denouement of partition and transfer of power to two territorially distinct postcolonial states, nation as community had to be transformed into nation as citizens of two states. This task came with questions and attendant ambiguities for both emerging states. Where did Hindus and Sikhs belong who resided in the territory now Pakistan? Did they belong to an Indian nation or could they become citizens of Pakistan? And where did Muslims belong who resided in the territory now India? Could they be citizens of India and yet part of an imagined Pakistani nation?

It is at this point that historiography of the subcontinent blurs into a mapped silence as "1947" becomes a threshold. Most histories of the region as a whole end at this "moment of arrival," as nationalism achieves its celebrated goal of statehood, or thereafter sever into studies of distinct nation-states, as if in this "moment of rupture"¹⁰ "India," "Pakistan," and their borders simply emerge fully formed. This book sits at this threshold, and sutures severed histories to bring together disparate "facts" of genocidal violence and mass displacement, refugee rehabilitation and resettlement, controlling movement of people and the making of citizenship, to show how they were mutually constituted parts of a single history. These "facts," if recovered in archives on any one side of the divide, would have capitulated to a marginal history on the borders of nation. Instead, my cross-border research elucidates the centrality of the dialogic between two states as they marked national difference in the midst of historic chaos.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot's comment that "[h]istory is messy for the people who must live it"¹¹ is important to foreground, not only for ordinary people caught in the chaos of their times. The mass of ideas of what Partition meant do not fold neatly into our paradigm of sovereign nation-states. From the "hostage theory," which proposed that the Indian state could "safeguard" Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan by the hostage treatment of Muslims in India,¹² or the Congress leader Sardar Patel's

insistence that citizenship in India be conceived so that Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan were not aliens to it,¹³ or the Bengali Muslim League leader H. S. Suhrawardy's address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, where he argued that continuing to live in India did not conflict with his being a member of Pakistan's legislature¹⁴—the record is littered with ideas in which relationships between citizen and state, nation and territory are nebulous, even for leaders of the time. Thus the years following 1947 are extraordinarily important, for in a whirlwind of people on the move they reveal how these relationships had to be crafted, and at what human cost.

Delhi and Karachi became the two capitals of the post-independence states, and although the two cities were dramatically different before independence, it is Partition itself that binds them together. According to the colonial census of 1941, Delhi had a Muslim minority population of 33.22 percent, while Karachi had a Hindu population of 47.6 percent,¹⁵ and although the enumerative power of the colonial census is unmistakable, it does not capture the enormous cultural significance these religious communities had for the two cities.

Delhi has been described as an "Indo-Islamic city" since it was the seat of power for Delhi sultanates and various Mughal rulers, including Shah Jehan, the builder who left his monumental mark on the geography of the city.¹⁶ When Sayyid Ahmad Khan, the nineteenth-century reformer, sought to uplift *ashraf* Muslims around the time of the Revolt of 1857, he wrote an architectural-cum-genealogical history of Delhi as a Muslim city par excellence.¹⁷ As the city became the colonial capital at the beginning of the twentieth century, many important modern institutions for Islamic learning, for Urdu language, and for pro-Congress and pro-Muslim League nationalism among Muslims all came to be centered here.¹⁸

In September 1947 genocidal violence from the Punjab spread to the capital city, and most of the city's Muslims were forced to leave their homes and take refuge in camps and wherever they could. By the time the 1951 census was taken 3.3 lakh Muslims of the city had left on the trains to Pakistan, and almost twice the number of Hindu and Sikh refugees had arrived from the Punjab.¹⁹

Most of the Muslim refugees of Delhi and north India arrived in the city of Karachi. In comparison to Delhi, Karachi had been a small, sleepy port city that served the Sind hinterland, and was largely tied to Bombay and the Malabar coast for its mercantile links. However, as Sind's provincial

capital, its highly educated Sindhi Amils and other Hindu communities were essential parts of Sindhi culture and literature, and the region's proud Sufi traditions.²⁰ As the city's status underwent a dramatic change, from the periphery of British India to being declared the federal capital of the Pakistani state, almost its entire Hindu population had left the city by the census of 1951, despite comparatively little violence in the city, and the city's population as a whole had tripled with the arrival of Muslim refugees from north India.²¹

The complete demographic transformations of entire cities and their urban cultures as a result of Partition's massive displacements are now being accounted for in the growing scholarly attention to Partition's memories.²² Yet these resettled geographies conceal the completely unsettled character of the first days and years of flight, and the ways in which the combined interventions of the two states shaped them.

Transfer of power took place from colonial rule to national rule in what was a crisis, a state of emergency. Both postcolonial states were formed from a divided albeit unchanged colonial structure of governance and had to restage the modern state on behalf of the nation. Thus their response to this crisis was crucial to establish legitimacy.²³ Both states responded almost immediately by setting up parallel Emergency Committees of the Cabinet to bring "law and order" in murder-cleaved Punjab and Delhi, as well as the Ministries of Relief and Rehabilitation to "manage" the well-being of the millions displaced. It is here that the figure of the "refugee" emerges to carry the scripted and rescripted labor of postcolonial governmentality.

Some 12 million people were displaced in the divided Punjab alone, and some 20 million in the subcontinent as a whole, making it one of the largest displacements of people in the twentieth century, comparable only to the nearly contemporaneous displacements produced by the Second World War in Europe.²⁴ The comparison with Europe is significant, since the rather well-documented social history of "refugee rehabilitation" there has been considered formative in the later drafting of international refugee laws and the establishment of international organizations for the management of refugees. From the European experience, it has been argued, the refugee emerged as an identifiable social and legal category that could then be studied in the subsequent burgeoning fields of "refugee studies" and "migration studies."²⁵ The subcontinent's experience of displacements, of the making of refugees, has largely gone unexamined not

only because of its peripheral location to the postwar international order, but also because in the region's nation-bound historiographies these refugees have been presumed to have seamlessly folded into two new nations; although two sets of refugees were produced, Hindu and Sikh refugees were displaced to become Indians, while Muslim refugees became Pakistanis.²⁶ But this was by no means a straightforward process; it was a debated, contested, and fraught historical process of negotiation between two states, in which ultimately there was no consensus on the national status of the "Muslim refugee."

This history of a long Partition unsettles this national closure given to Partition's displacements, by recovering the contingency in which people left their homes in Delhi and Karachi, as well as their numerous attempts to return to them in the ensuing years. Therefore it is with purpose that I use the word *displacement* and not *migration*, to describe the momentous movements of people at this time. The word *migration* came to imply both a movement with the intention of permanent relocation as well as a voluntary exodus, and acquired bureaucratic and juridical meaning in attempts to control, legislate, and ultimately fix these displacements—to produce, with some force, bounded citizens of two nation-states.

In Delhi, for instance, Muslim refugees emerged in the capital in crisis and boarded trains to Pakistan, not necessarily to "migrate" but primarily in search of refuge. In the city's unraveling geography, the Indian state's interventions in the violence were exceedingly important. As Muslim homes became occupied by Hindu and Sikh refugees from the Punjab, the perception that the rehabilitation of "non-Muslim refugees" in need of housing and shelter was pitted against that of "Muslim refugees" profoundly shaped the Muslim exodus.

Path-breaking writings on programs to recover women abducted in the Punjab violence have shown how the two states "fixed" nationality onto religious community with the Indian state attempting to recover and rehabilitate Hindu and Sikh women and the Pakistani state attempting to recover and rehabilitate Muslim women. These writings show how women themselves resisted this national inscription, and many wanted to remain a part of their abductors' families.²⁷ *But the Punjab was an exception with far-reaching effects.* In the case of Punjab, both the Indian and Pakistani states agreed to a complete "transfer of populations" on the basis of religious community, but there was no such agreement on the rest of the Indian subcontinent. This resulted in the Pakistani state's vehement

opposition to the Muslim exodus from Delhi, even as it was unable to deter it, for it argued that Delhi's Muslim refugees were Indians and should be rehabilitated by the Indian state.

In parallel fashion, in Karachi, Hindu houses became a similar source of contention as the Pakistani state tried to house its government there and manage the rehabilitation of Muslim refugees pouring in from Delhi and other parts of north India. Here, despite attempts by M. A. Jinnah, a Karachiite by birth, and Sindhi Muslim politicians to retain this important religious community, the Sind Congress strenuously tried to persuade the Indian state to include Sind's Hindus in its planned evacuation and rehabilitation schemes originally designed for the Punjab. With riots in the city in January 1948, the Indian state eventually formally agreed to include "our people," Sind's Hindu refugees, in its planning for rehabilitation. In turn, the Pakistani state not only was ambiguous about Muslim refugees arriving from outside Punjab, but also formulated "muhajirs" as a governmental category to classify Muslim refugees such that it left open an imagined *muhajir* return to India.

This fact that, in the Indian subcontinent, the figure of the refugee was marked by religious community, and that these people were considered as forming two distinct and opposed sets of refugees, had enormous implications for the entire rubric of refugee rehabilitation and its relationship to the making of the Indo-Pak divide. On the one hand, there were "Muslim refugees" and "Hindu and Sikh refugees," who were also referred to as "non-Muslim refugees." This differentiation is also evident in Urdu newspapers where the word *panaghirs* or *muhajirs* was used for Muslim refugees, and *sharanatis* for Hindu and Sikh refugees.

On the other hand, both postcolonial states conceived refugee rehabilitation not as a religious duty, but rather as a universal and rational program for the development of the nation as a whole.²⁸ Bhaskar Rao's *The Story of Rehabilitation* (1967) is a testimony of the new Indian state's epic efforts to rehabilitate refugees as part of a larger vision of national development. In an Indian Constituent Assembly debate on rehabilitation efforts of the government on November 29, 1947, for instance, the need for "planning" and a "scientific" approach to rehabilitation found wide

* Throughout this book "Muslim refugees" and "Hindu and Sikh refugees" or "non-Muslim refugees" should be read in quotation marks as constructed categories that shaped and were shaped by this history.

consensus.²⁹ Nehru argued before the Assembly that "the refugees . . . have to be looked after and they must be made proper citizens of India." A parallel paradigm for rehabilitation is evident in the *West Pakistan Gazetteer* of 1959, which announced that "the Government of Pakistan from the very outset realized the importance of development . . . The schemes for the rehabilitation of refugees are difficult to separate from the general development plan for Pakistan."³⁰ In keeping with this view, refugee rehabilitation figured prominently in the first Five-Year Plans of both states.³¹ This universal framing of refugee rehabilitation projected a universal figure of the refugee as its central subject, who, through the discursive and institutional regimes of rehabilitation, was to be made into a citizen of the nation.

How was the marked refugee on the ground reconciled with the universal refugee of planning? In the initial conditions of emergency and relief work, the differentiated categories of "Muslim refugees" and "non-Muslim refugees" is evident. However, as institutions of rehabilitation became established on firmer footing in government, these categories of the marked refugee were self-consciously replaced in the universal language of legislations and policy as "displaced persons" and "evacuees." While the shift in categories was by no means consistent, in all Indian refugee rehabilitation programs and legislations the "displaced person" included specifically those displaced from their homes in Pakistan³² and therefore encompassed only "non-Muslim refugees." In turn, the term "evacuees" in Indian legislation referred to those displaced from their homes in India and therefore differentially encompassed "Muslim refugees." The exact reverse was true of the Pakistani definitions of those categories. Thus when the universal figure of the refugee was invoked as "our people," it only referred to those encompassed in policy and legislation as "displaced persons."

The category of "evacuees" was particularly important because it suggested that this was a group that was departing, or had departed, and their homes, lands, and businesses came to be classified as "evacuee property" which was to be used to rehabilitate "displaced persons." In this economic equation, it became important that those considered "evacuees" did indeed leave, although the term "migration" used to describe their contingent departure was laden with ambiguities. In important respects the classification of evacuee included much more than refugees, for a certain amount of uncertainty accompanied who was leaving their homes and

why. Indeed, in some economic calculations, all religious minorities were assumed to be "evacuees," and with the creation of the supplementary classification of "intending evacuee" in evacuee property legislations on both sides, the wide-ranging effects of these legislations could include entire religious communities. The institution of the Custodian of Evacuee Property can be squarely placed in a comparative history of the mid-twentieth century, particularly given its chilling parallels with the Israeli equivalent, which makes evident its silenced effects in "emptying" the land and creating significant internal dispossession.

The logic and rationale of planned refugee rehabilitation as critical to economic development provided both states with almost complete political justification for treating these two sets of refugees, initially within their own territories, differentially. Economic rationalization provided the logic for the agreed "transfer of populations" in the Punjab and became central to the notion that Muslim refugees from elsewhere in India could not be accommodated, that they were an economic liability, for both the Pakistani and the Indian states.

Economic and scientific rationality of planning for the nation not only provided the bureaucratic, legal, and technological functions of the state with legitimacy, but also, as Partha Chatterjee has argued, "provided the political process a rhetoric for conducting its political debates."³³ Thus, while the Indian National Congress claimed a secular platform to represent an all-inclusive "Indian nation," and a significant number of Muslims were part of the Congress, the postcolonial Indian state was able to push out and dispossess Muslims with substantial political legitimacy as it bounded a new nation for the well-being of "our people." In the case of Pakistan, which was claimed ideologically to "safeguard" the interests of all Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, including those who would remain outside its territory, excluding Muslim refugees from India was also a significant ideological compromise of its very premise. Although the Pakistani state classified Muslim refugees as *muhajirs* to invoke the Prophet Muhammad's historic flight from Mecca to Medina, refugee rehabilitation was not undertaken as a religious duty. Despite ideological differences with the Indian state, the Pakistani state shared with it the paradigm and logic of the developmental state. As a result of this logic, from its inception the Pakistani state argued that it could simply not accommodate all the Muslim refugees that might want to come to Pakistan from India, and eco-

nomic rationalization provided it with a legitimate need to draft limits to its nation. The technologies of permits and passports were therefore not mere documents that led to Ghulam Ali's arrests and incarcerations by both states, but were ostensibly neutral and bureaucratic modes for producing limits to the ideological nation.

Histories of technologies to control the movement of people in Europe and North America have shown how they were fundamentally tied to the making of citizenship through the marking of "insiders" and "outsiders."³⁴ However, these technologies to regulate movement emerged in divided South Asia to control ongoing displacements of a long Partition, and to fundamentally resolve disputes over where Muslim refugees belonged. Thus drafting limits to new nations was not as simple as fixing citizenship onto religious difference, since not all Muslims could become Pakistanis, and some Muslims wanted to remain in or return to their homes in India. Thus marking "insiders" and "outsiders," always an ambiguous process, became nearly impossible without any representable limit with which to construct this national difference. Thus one could argue that the highly surveillanced and particularly unique forms that the Indo-Pak border took were an outcome of its function as both an international border and an "internal border,"³⁵ marking citizens from aliens but also producing questions of loyalty and legitimacy as it marked suspect/disloyal citizens from putatively natural ones.

In an essay evocatively titled "Can a Muslim Be an Indian?" Gyanendra Pandey recovered the angry debates that emerged in India in the aftermath of 1947 on Muslim loyalty and belonging. This book historically situates these debates on loyalty and citizenship through not just the discursive, but also their institutional sites on two sides of the emerging border, to make visible the power of modern states to limit and produce bounded nations and the margins within them.³⁶

The first part of this book, chapters 1 and 2, unfolds histories of violence and displacements in Delhi and Karachi around 1947, recovering the conditions of contingency in which people left their homes, and the role of the two states in the making of the dual figure of the refugee. The second part, chapters 3 and 4, examines the emergence of permit regulations in 1948 and transformations in evacuee property legislations respectively, as they shaped displacements both across and within new borders. The permit system was instituted by the Indian government to stem the return of Muslim refugees back to their homes, and led to the formulation

of citizenship provisions centered on a definition of “migration,” while evacuee property legislations on both sides changed the definition of the “evacuee” to create massive displacements and internal dispossession. Both institutions and their effects are part of the region’s histories, histories which have been silenced into margins by being deemed insignificant and through conscious erasures. These chapters thus unfold the emerging shapes of two nation-states from these very margins.

The third part of the book, chapters 5 and 6, examines the shift from permits to passports in 1952, a technology to mark distinct national identities and give closure to Partition’s ongoing displacements. The shift to passports was introduced by the Pakistani government to stem the continued “illegal” flow of Muslim refugees into Pakistan and thus produced considerable debate on the legitimacy of making Muslims in India into “foreigners” in Pakistan. On the other hand, the contingencies in which the passport emerged meant that classifications of nationhood produced numerous “undefined” and stateless people such as Ghulam Ali who became caught in the limin of new national borders. I trek through an array of political debates, bureaucratic paper trails, and court cases on permits, evacuee property, and passports that went on through the 1950s, some into the 1960s (while some national identity and evacuee property cases continue to this day), to account for this long Partition.

In “India” and “Pakistan” we live in the shadows of this long Partition, and it is by placing its history alongside other histories of a twentieth century, marked by all the violence of making modern, “ethnically cleansed” national identities, that we can interrogate the postcolonial world that we are forced to inhabit, and from which meanings of culture and identity continue to be contested.

WRITING ON THE BORDER

Many histories of the making of national borders have been centered on geographic borderlands, tracking the ways in which a mesh of relationships and ethnic diversity came to be displaced and disciplined by institutions of the state.³⁷ This history is not about a geographic borderland, and a considerable distance separates the cities of Delhi and Karachi. Instead the border it traces is one which cut through ordinary middle-class households like Mirza Salim’s, captured in an exceptional 1973 film,

Garam Hawa. This process of border-making—the hot wind or *garam hawa* of a long Partition—swept through the inner world of familial ties, transforming both those who left and those who remained in their ancestral homes, and displacing old ways of belonging for everyone.

Narrated from the perspective of Mirza Salim in a joint family household in Agra, the film rests upon Salim’s ultimate refusal to leave for Pakistan, even as the departure of his loved ones wrecks devastation on the emotional ties within the family, and results in the loss of his familial home and shoe-making business. It is the story of a divided family in the making, and records, in the undertow of its narration, the emergence of permit restrictions, so that when the fiancé of Salim’s daughter returns from Pakistan to marry his beloved cousin, he is arrested and deported. The evacuee property laws result in dispossession without their ever leaving home, and the film shows the emergence of the “Muslim” as a figure of suspicion in independent India. Even though *Garam Hawa* tells us only a partial story of the Indian Muslim experience of Partition and almost nothing about the Pakistani experience of Salim’s brothers and sisters, it comes as close as is possible within a national frame to represent the Muslim predicament, and the emotional, material, and political dispossession of Muslims who remained in India in the 1950s—a dispossession that I contend was produced by both the Indian and the Pakistani states.

In an interview, the director, M. S. Sathyu, said the aim of the film was to expose “the games these politicians play” and the “suffering it had caused.”³⁸ But while the film does show the unraveling world of a Muslim household, and their suffering is eloquently portrayed, it does not really help us understand the political “games” that shaped this long Partition. How did politicians, many with high ideals and vision, who had fought for freedom and nation, make decisions that caused such dispossession and suffering? Was it inevitable in the logic of Partition itself? Or does history bear the task of putting the very process of making modern nation-states to trial and scrutiny?

Between 1998 and 2000 I traveled back and forth between Delhi and Karachi to do “historical fieldwork”³⁹ in familial households like Mirza Salim’s. Since I belong to a divided family, I grew up with Partition in ways that have unavoidably shaped this historical fieldwork; it shaped my entry into the worlds of other divided families, and placed me in an emotional and political landscape which may have constrained me to “listen” to and struggle with that “drone of silence” that kept surfacing in my interviews.

My tape recorder often brought together family members, as an elder would align stories, many heard before, into an affectionate, sometimes proud, history of the family itself. But, as Dipesh Chakrabarty has pointed out, "memory is a complex phenomenon that reaches out far beyond what normally constitutes an historian's archive."⁴⁰ The first narrations, tracking genealogies, childhoods, and other lost worlds were usually enormously powerful in drawing together kin networks, friendships, and a sense of embedded place, so that by the time we got to Partition and the falling apart of remembered worlds, there was always unbearable grief, exhaustion, and speechlessness. Yet these first narrations were also less consciously framed, as memories poured forth with many surprises to form a telling of family histories without the ordering of nation.

However, when I returned months later, with stories from the other side, to ask specific questions to understand unsettled fragments of their earlier narrations, the answers usually became more self-conscious and cautious, shaped not so much by the telling of the past as by the exigencies of the present. This present continues to be shadowed by Indo-Pak hostilities as well as internal margins where Indian Muslims on one side, and *muhajirs* (particularly since the rise of the Muhajir Qaumi Movement) on the other side, have been subjected to violence and suspicion for their cross-border ties.⁴¹ Thus any public narration that conceded relations on the other side, let alone deeply felt affections for them, has been seen as a compromise of loyalty to the nation. The cumulative sense of danger associated with posting letters, making phone calls, and traveling to visit family on the other side, including police reporting and border-crossing harassment, meant that of the numerous members of divided families whom I met, most refused formal interviews, and those who did agree requested that their identities be protected.⁴²

These silences have been etched by loss and nation in ways that are not simple to undo. With the two states having been to war, and to the brink of war, more times than I can account for here, historians like Mushirul Hasan have turned to literature (and here one can include *Garam Hawa*, based on the writer Ismet Chughtai's short story with the script written by the poet and writer Kaifi Azmi), to provide alternative narratives of Partition to "defeat the urge to lay blame which keeps animosity alive."⁴³

This is partly why historians have eschewed the traditional historian's archive for examining what happened at Partition. Although the reflexive turn in history and postcolonial theory have made silences a productive

analytical site for investigations against the grain of nation, my investigations required me to look for the very record that I had to read against. What were the "institutional inscriptions"⁴⁴ of government, law, and leaders that had shaped these silences?

This necessarily involved looking for records on both sides of the Indo-Pak divide, for no matter how differently Partition may be invoked on the two sides, it is a shared history of the region for which one simply cannot understand "the whole range of significance of the occurrences to which [sources] testify" on one side alone.⁴⁵ Making two nations out of a landscape meant the reordering of people and places on a catastrophic scale, and required the play of both states. The extraordinary parallel of state institutions, carved out of a shared colonial legacy, in and of itself called for a converging of histories.

However, the difficulty of a transnational study extended beyond simply that of crossing tense political boundaries. The very differences in the location of history within the two nation-states made looking for records on both sides an uneven process. The writing of history has been an important critical activity to the making of nation in modern India, in striking contrast to Pakistan. On the one hand, Delhi has maintained a continuity of status as it shifted from being the capital of colonial to independent India, and its institutions of archives are well-maintained and vibrant centers for historical research. I read Delhi's Urdu newspaper, *Al-Jamiat*, published by the pro-Congress Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Hind, in a national library, and declassified central and local government records in established national archives. Although photocopying documents in Urdu, a marginalized language in contemporary India, posed problems with staff unable to read page numbers and dates in Urdu, and fragments and erasures of documents left uncertain traces, institutional structures of historical production conditioned those margins.

On the other hand, Karachi's status kept shifting, from periphery to capital, to periphery again, with Islamabad becoming the new capital of Pakistan in the early 1960s. Some records kept moving with each change of status, so that parallel institutions like the National Archives and the Sind Archives are relatively new institutions and ambiguous and largely uncatalogued repositories of records. I read the *Jang* newspaper in the newspaper offices itself, for although the daily moved from Delhi to Karachi in 1947 and began largely as a *muhajir* newspaper, it has become, with Urdu as the declared national language of the state, the largest press

conglomerate. On the other hand, other newspapers like *Anjam*, which also made this journey from Delhi to Karachi but is no longer extant, were practically impossible to recover. The official records that I did read were mostly from the small rooms of a documentation center inside a high-security government building in Islamabad where the brigadier giving security clearances considered history of little consequence.

In Karachi, looking for a record of the city's past was a scavenger hunt of sorts through a myriad of local government institutions, the absences as telling as the wholesale replacement of curriculum history with compulsory, geopolitical Pakistan Studies. Even in Karachi University's library, as the Freedom Archives were being recast into Pakistan Studies, a librarian suggested that going to India was my best chance of reading any records of Karachi's past! Thus improvisation substantially conditions and in some sense marginalizes all history writing in Pakistan.⁴⁶

And yet it was through crossing the national boundaries of archives that the nation's categorical order in a patchwork of bureaucratic files became denaturalized. If Partition marked being "Muslim," or "Hindu" and "Sikh," in particular and violent ways, then moving between memory and record on both sides of the Indo-Pak divide required a repeated interrogation of how these markings were transformed and folded into this national order. This history then is self-consciously marked by a sense of discovery and surprise, for it brings to analysis that "underside" of nationalized memories that eschews and glosses over the remarkable contestations of ordinary people who moved against the flow of Partition's narrated migrations and maintained ties against the boundaries of hostile nation-states. Before the political trajectory of Partition settles into a common sense about the region's landscape, and maps our memories entirely into nation-states, let us recover the margins that have shaped them and the roads that were not taken.

1. *Muslim Exodus from Delhi*

*Survivors carry history on themselves . . .*¹

Some of the most indelible images of Partition are those of the historic train and foot convoys, the old and the young huddled together, carrying few if any belongings, hoping to reach their destinations in safety. But this sheer fact of terror and mass displacement alone did not create the figure of the refugee. When people left their homes, when their "familiar *way-of-being* in the world"² was disrupted by violence, fear, or uncertainty, it was not necessarily with the prospect of permanent displacement. The making of refugees was not "a onetime set of events bounded in time and space,"³ but was instead profoundly shaped over time by the two postcolonial states as they struggled to classify, enumerate, and manage these displacements.

I want to open up the contingent conditions in which people left their homes as old social geographies unraveled, the uncertainty in which they were displaced, for it was in the hubbub of on-the-ground realities that the bureaucratic record began to give shape to the notion that there were two distinct sets of refugees, Hindu and Sikh refugees on the one hand and Muslim refugees on the other, and that the rehabilitation of

one required the exodus of the other. In both Delhi and Karachi, at the center of this official record was a concern with houses and the housing of refugees. This official concern and its effects shaped the first flights for safety and contested urban geographies.

Delhi's transition from capital of British India to the capital of independent India at midnight of August 14–15, 1947, is well remembered from the ramparts of Shah Jehan's Red Fort, where Jawaharlal Nehru famously inaugurated "the old to the new," the achievement of statehood as the expression of "the soul of the nation."⁴ Rafi bhai remembered going with his grandfather, a "freedom fighter" in the Indian National Congress, to the inaugural celebrations, and his narration captures another transformation of the city:

RAFI BHAI: *Aur jab Hindustan azad hua to un ko invitation bhi āya ke Lal Qille par Hindustan ka jo jhūnda lehraya jaye ga Pandit Nehru ke hathon, to us ko witness karne ke liye āp bhi āye. Yē mujhe yād hai ke main aur mere bāre bhai ko le kar mere dada jo the. . . . Lal Qille hum log pohnc̥he. . . . Wahan to ādmion ka samandar tha. Us men hum dada se alag ho gaye. Tō unhon ne mehsoos kiya ke hum log reh gaye hai. Tō mujhe zabardastī ghasec̥a gaya sau logon ke upar se, aur us ke ba'd hum ne socha ke ye program hum nahin attend kar sakege. Aur danvaza bhi band ho gaya tha Lal Qilae ka. Tō nūche se hum ne us ko witness kiya.*

AUTHOR: *Kiya ye āp ke bachpan ka bāra wāq̃e'a tha?*

RAFI BHAI: *Hanh. Samjhe, 1947 mein . . . ujār gaya . . . sāre chale gaye.*

RAFI BHAI: And when Hindustan became free, then he too got an invitation to the Red Fort where the flag of Hindustan was going to be flown at the hands of Pandit Nehru; to witness this you please come too. I remember that my grandfather took me and my older brother with him to the Red Fort. . . . There was an ocean of people. In this we became separated from my grandfather. He realized that we had gotten left behind. And then I was forcefully dragged over a hundred people, and after this we thought that we would not be able to attend this program. And the doors too of the Red Fort had closed. So then we witnessed it from below.

AUTHOR: Was this a big occasion for your childhood?

RAFI BHAI: Yes. Understand, in 1947 [this place] became desolate . . . everyone left.

When I asked Rafi bhai if this was an important event in his childhood, I had meant the independence celebrations, but the midnight of freedom, witnessed from below, was entirely eclipsed in his memory by the departure of his loved ones, the desolation of mass exodus, as more than 3.3 lakh Muslims, more than a quarter of the city's population, left the city in the ensuing months.

On the heels of independence, by early September 1947 Delhi experienced the kind of horrific violence that had already engulfed large parts of Punjab. It was believed that Hindu and Sikh refugees pouring in from West Punjab were responsible for the violence in the city in which Muslims became the primary target. Some 20,000 Muslims were killed, and one observer noted that "the dead lay rotting in the streets, because there was no one to collect and bury them. The hospitals are choked with dying and wounded, and in imminent danger of attack because of the presence of Moslem staff and Moslem patients."⁵ The "new" Indian state responded to this strife in the heart of the nation by setting up, on September 6, an Emergency Committee of the Cabinet along the lines of a war council, and a Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation for the care of refugees.⁶ What role did these institutions play in the shaping of the Muslim exodus? Why did Muslim refugees of Delhi leave for Pakistan despite Gandhi's pleas that these too were "our people," despite the religious neutrality of the new Indian state?

REMEMBERED TERROR

The difficulty of representing violence in academic writing has received a great deal of attention in recent years, from anthropologists in particular but also from those grappling with the events that took place at Partition.⁷ One of the difficulties has involved the ways in which certain kinds of violence enter the official record and thus inform history, making invisible the role of the state as well as the use of violence by the state. This is particularly true of what has come to be called "Partition violence," or the "communal violence at Partition," where the focus has largely been

on the violence between Hindus and Sikhs versus the Muslims. Although it has been remarked that individuals working for the state (such as the police or government servants) became “communal” in the violence, the modern state as a totality has appeared “transcendental”⁸ and therefore a rational arbitrator in the irrational and disruptive violence of the “communalized” body politic.⁹

For instance, in his fortnightly report to the Home Ministry, the chief commissioner of Delhi, Sahibzada Khurshid, described “the communal upheaval” in the city as “an orgy of murder, loot, and arson,” and held Hindu and Sikh refugees who had been streaming in since the end of August as responsible for it. “The main cause of the riots,” he noted, “was the influx of 1.5 lakhs of refugees from West Punjab who brought harrowing tales of loot, rape, and arson.” He argued that “[t]hey naturally gained the sympathy of their co-religionists in Delhi,” and that this ignited retaliatory violence against the Muslims of the city.¹⁰ This analysis of the violence in September 1947 in Delhi can be found in the minutes of the Emergency Committee of the Cabinet. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who was a member of the Emergency Committee, noted in his autobiography that the “murderous upheaval” in Delhi began with “news of murders in the Punjab . . . followed by the trickle of refugees,” and was a “gruesome application” of the hostage theory, whereby Muslims of Delhi were murdered in retaliation for the violence in the Punjab.¹¹ Furthermore, this kind of account of Delhi’s Partition violence can also be read in as general a text as Percival Spear’s *A History of India*, where Spear noted that the “tide of refugees [from the Punjab] caused an explosion of communal strife in Delhi in early September.”¹²

This narrative of horrific violence—recorded in reports while officials were still “busy dealing with the communal upheaval” (therefore of substantive impact in policy-making), and then sedimented into history writing (and therefore of significance in the making of public memory)—provides a causal explanation for the departure of Delhi’s Muslims which, by laying the blame on Hindu and Sikh refugees from the Punjab, makes the violence comprehensible, if not in some sense legitimate. So, for instance, V. N. Datta, in his study of Punjabi refugees’ contribution to the growth of Delhi, could go on to explain it as the “blind rage” of the “dispossessed.”¹³

Instead I would like to take two excerpts from my interviews with Muslim survivors of this violence in Delhi and interrogate the context of

the Muslim exodus, and in particular the role of both states in it. The first is from an interview with Aziz saheb, who continues to live in a *mohalla* in the walled city:

AZIZ SAHEB: *Taqseem ke to bahut baṛe jhagaṛe the. Isne to musalmanon ko nonasi kar diyā. Karol Bagh sārā tabah kar diyā. Paharganj sārā tabah kar diyā. Main special police officer tha. Sabzi Mandi sārā bairā gaṛap kar diyā.*

AUTHOR: *Āp duty par the is waqt?*

AZIZ SAHEB: *Hanh. Sāra Dilli dekha. Chhoṛde, main is ka zikr nahin karnā chāhta. Main apna dīmāg kharab nahin karnā chāhta.*

DAUGHTER-IN-LAW: *Log yād nahin karna chāhte. Itne taklīf-deh hālāt the. Zehn men blī nahin lānā chāhte.*

AZIZ SAHEB: *Main ne itna muqabala kiya hai, kuch puchhe nahin . . .*

[Silence.]

AZIZ SAHEB: *47 men to ādmī ā'e. Wōh to qabza kar rahe the. Musalmanon ko nikal rahe the na. Makānon par qabza kar rahe the na.*

AUTHOR: *Kon ādmī?*

AZIZ SAHEB: *Jo Hindu migrated the. Ise ā-ke jagah chahiye thī. Un ki wajah se to jhagra hua hai. Bhai! Wōh wahan se apna makān chhoṛ kar ā'e the! Musalman ne Pakistan ke nām par alag hukumat le li thī! Tō un ko yahan rehne ka koi haq nahin! Tō un ke hisāb se jab un ko nikāl diyā'e ga'e, un ke ghar se . . .*

[Turns away towards the wall.]

Hamare dukān ke andar chāndnī thī. De diyā tamam logon ko sārā sāmān. ek bhi cheez nahin rahi. Koi cheez bhi. Bahut baṛī dukān thī hamari jis ki chāndnī, sab kuchh. . . . bahut . . . chhoṛ de'ye! . . . Mere samne, chaṛ baṛas ka aur chaṛ tukṛe. Yād āti hai. Nafrat hai mujhe in choron se . . .

AZIZ SAHEB: At the time of Partition there was big fighting. They destroyed the Muslims—Karol Bagh was completely destroyed. Paharganj was completely destroyed. I was a special police officer. Sabzi Mandi was completely destroyed.

AUTHOR: Were you on duty at this time?

AZIZ SAHEB: Yes. I saw all of Delhi. Just leave it! I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to disturb my mind.

DAUGHTER-IN-LAW: People don't want to remember. Those times were so painful. They don't even want to bring it to the mind.

AZIZ SAHEB: I had to face so many confrontations, don't ask!

[Silence.]

AZIZ SAHEB: In '47 people came. They were seizing [houses], pushing out the Muslims from their houses. They were then occupying.

AUTHOR: What people?

AZIZ SAHEB: The Hindus who had migrated. They came and wanted places. Because of them there was the fighting. Bhai! They had left their houses there and had come! Muslims had taken over a separate state there in the name of Pakistan! So they had no right to live here. So according to them since they had been pushed out of their homes . . .

[Turns away towards the wall.]

Our shop had silver. We gave it away to all the people, all the goods. Not one thing remained. It was a big silver shop, ours . . . everything . . . just leave it! . . . In front of me, a four-year-old cut into four pieces. I remember! I hate those thieves!

The second excerpt is from my interview with Salim saheb, also a resident of old Delhi. He recalled the September violence as follows:

SALIM SAHEB: *Dilli men bhī bahut khun kharaba huā. Ye to 'alāqa me-
hīfuz reh gaya. Lekin Paharganj, Karolbagh, New Delhi, Lodhi Gar-
dens, ye tamām . . . bahut se musalman the. Woh hum ne ānkh se dekha
hai. Sabzi Mandi ke, Paharganj ke, Jama Masjid men ākar there the.
Jama Masjid se phir Purana Qille gaye. Be-sar-o-sāmān! Aur chhe chhe
bachchain! Sab ne panah li thī. Bahut burā waqt tha. Bahut hi burā
waqt tha. Hum chhote the. Hamari umar taqseem ke waqt bāra sāl
ki thī. Hum apne walid ke sath, baron ke sath, Jama Masjid khana*

*taqseem karne jaya karte the. Ab khandani aurtain, khandani larhiyan,
bahut achhi achhi . . . hath milā kar khati thī.*

ATTIA: *Ye bāt to mere dada bhī batate hai.*

SALIM SAHEB: *Purane Qille men bhī esa hua. Purane Qille men dal diyā.
August barish ka mahina tha. Barishain ho rahi thī. Ganddgi thī. Wa-
han se train ban kar jaya karti thī . . . Pakistan chale gaye.*

SALIM SAHEB: In Delhi also there was a lot of bloodshed. This area was safe [Pahari Imli] but Pahar Ganj, Karol Bagh, New Delhi, Lodhi Gardens, all this . . . there were many Muslims. I have seen it with my own eyes. Those from Sabzi Mandi and Pahar Ganj came and stayed at Jama Masjid. Then from Jama Masjid they went to Purana Qila. Without any belongings whatsoever! And six six [i.e., many] children! All took refuge. They were bad times. They were really bad times. I was small. At the time of Partition my age was twelve years old. I used to go with my father, with the elders, to distribute food at the Jama Masjid. Now women from respected families, girls from respected families, very good [families], used to join their hands together and eat from it.

ATTIA: Yes, my grandfather also used to tell us this.

SALIM SAHEB: In Purana Qila also it was the same. They dumped them in Purana Qila. August was the month of rains. It was raining. It was filthy. From there trains would form and go . . . they left for Pakistan.

Aziz saheb was one of approximately 2,000 civilians who were appointed special police officers on a temporary basis by the Delhi administration, and along with the Madras troops were responsible for bringing the violence "under control." This was because the police force became partisan in the violence, and over 75 percent of the Muslims in the police force, roughly 1,600 men, deserted and took refuge in Purana Qila along with other Muslims of the city.¹⁴ In Salim saheb's case, his father was a well-known "freedom fighter" of old Delhi who helped organize care for the refugees who had collected at Jama Masjid, and it was alongside him, as the son of a respected elder, that he experienced the events that followed Partition.

Both men remembered the terrible violence as witnesses (I saw all of Delhi / I have seen it with my own eyes), but in some respects they

witnessed different aspects of the violence. Aziz saheb was an adult at the time, and as a special police officer participated in the actual fighting (he had to face many confrontations). This was a past that still disturbed his mind, and he could barely talk about it. The only way he could express the total moral collapse of his familiar world was through the image of a four-year-old cut into four pieces, violence in excess of murder on a body beyond culpability. In interviews with other survivors of the Delhi violence, this sense of unspeakable violence was repeated through the sign of the child. Anis apa, for example, told me of a boy who had been brought to them at Jamia who would not speak since he had seen the murder of his family, including that of an unweaned baby: "... *ek bachcha laya gaya tha. Woh bolta nahin tha ... kaise ek ek ādmi ko khatam kiyā gayā. Yahan tak ke sheerkhwan bachche ko bhi neze par liyā gayā ... bachcha itna khofzada ho gaya tha ke woh bolta nahin tha* [a child was brought, who wouldn't speak ... how each person was finished off, that even an unweaned baby was knifed ... the child was so terrorized that he wouldn't speak]."

In subsequent interviews, when I tried to ask Aziz saheb more about his role as a special police officer, he told me point-blank to talk to him about other things. Some memories could not be brought to speech for such was the terror of those times, the unspeakable nature of this violence.¹⁵ In Aziz saheb's account, the terror produced by this unspeakable violence was complicit with Muslims of Delhi being pushed out of their homes by "the people who came." *Makān*, houses were at the center of this violence, and here I will examine how the Indian state responded to this aspect of the violence, the occupation of houses in a cycle of forced dispossession.

Salim saheb was still a young boy at this time, and mostly saw Muslim families after they had fled their homes and taken refuge, after they had been dispossessed and were reduced to eating out of their bare hands. It was then from the Muslim camps, and Purana Qila in particular, he recalled, that Muslims left on the trains to Pakistan. The camps were an important intermediary site, under the purview of the state, from where most of the displaced left for Pakistan, and I interrogate this site to understand the decision of thousands to leave after the initial loss of their homes.

The role of the Pakistani state is equally important to understanding the contingent nature of this exodus. As Aziz saheb pointed out, Muslim dispossession was constituted in part by the feeling that because of Pakistan, they, the Muslims, had lost their right to live "here." The agreements between the Indian and Pakistani states on the Punjab displace-

ments threw into sharp relief the disagreements over the Delhi exodus. In a sense, it is here in the debates on the "transfer of populations" that the long Partition begins to unfold.

OCCUPATION OF HOUSES

According to Aziz saheb, the forcible occupation of Muslim homes was a significant part of the violence Delhi experienced in September 1947. Sahibzada Khurshid, the chief commissioner of Delhi, noted that "[a]rson was carried out on a fairly big scale for the first two or three days and only came to a stop when Muslim houses were occupied by Hindus."¹⁶ The Emergency Committee also noted that occupations of Muslim homes were taking place on a large scale.¹⁷ Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya quote a contemporary observer who estimated that almost 44,000 Muslim houses were occupied in old Delhi alone.¹⁸

These occupations created a predicament for the new Indian state that would have lasting significance. It was imperative for the Emergency Committee to act "effectively" in this "state of emergency" in the heart of the capital, for it was central to establishing the legitimacy of the new national government that it appear to stand outside the fractures within the body of the putative nation. Thus, the violence, as perceived to be caused by the displaced from the Punjab, had to be brought under control, since this violence, including occupations, was creating another set of displaced people. In the case of areas that were directly affected by "murder and arson," such as Karol Bagh, Paharganj, and Sabzi Mandi, survivors had already fled from their homes to emerging "Muslim camps." However, people from areas not directly affected by violence were also moving to the camps.

Although it was suggested in the Emergency Committee that many of those moving were Muslim Leaguers, or were incited to move by Muslim League propaganda, this did not account for the entire and ongoing exodus to the camps. Zakir Husain, the vice-chancellor of the pro-Congress Jamia Millia Islamia, reported with some distress to the Emergency Committee that he "couldn't understand why these people should have moved, when there had been no incidents in some of the predominantly Muslim areas of Delhi city to impel their movement." It was his feeling that government officials were advising Muslims to move to the camps for their own safety. Safety was of central concern in those terrifying times and

people looked to the state to provide it. In addition, groups of Muslims were making direct appeals to members of the Emergency Committee for police protection and guarantees of safety, so that they could stay on in their homes.¹⁹ As a result the Emergency Committee was confronted with difficult questions. What measures should be taken to stop Muslims from leaving their homes, or should "mass evacuation" be carried out? Could the government take responsibility for telling people to stay in their homes and guarantee protection if they did?²⁰

Although attempts were made to divert trains from Punjab away from Delhi in order to reduce the number of refugees coming to Delhi,²¹ still, according to the 1951 Census of India, 323,320 "non-Muslim refugees" arrived in just the months between August and October 1947.²² Thus taking care of these displaced people was also important to establishing the legitimacy of the state. It is no coincidence that the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation was set up at the same time as the Emergency Committee, with K.C. Neogy as its first minister. The Emergency Committee was already under pressure from refugees from the Punjab to officially give them "evacuated" Muslim houses for purposes of rehabilitation.²³ This made the question of how to respond to these massive occupations all the more difficult. Should the state attempt to enforce the rule of law and attempt to reverse these occupations? How should the state provide shelter for the refugees from the Punjab? What should be done with the city's Muslims who had taken refuge in the burgeoning camps?

The Indian state intervened with two measures in response to the occupation of Muslim houses. First, the evacuee property legislation, which had been formulated for East and West Punjab with Indo-Pak agreement, was extended to Delhi, and accordingly a custodian was appointed for the city to look after "abandoned" properties in trust, until such time that the displaced could return to them. I discuss at length the changing role of the Custodian of Evacuee Property later in the book. However, in its initial phase, the evacuee property legislation protected the rights of the "evacuee" and declared occupations as "illegal." In principle it was meant to enable the return of the displaced, in this case "Muslim refugees," to their homes.

However, at the same time the custodian was permitted to temporarily allocate, or "allot," the "abandoned" Muslim houses it took into its custody to Hindu and Sikh refugees from the Punjab, as a way of providing immediate housing for this first set of displaced people. Given that forcible occupations had already taken place, of the 10,200 Muslim houses

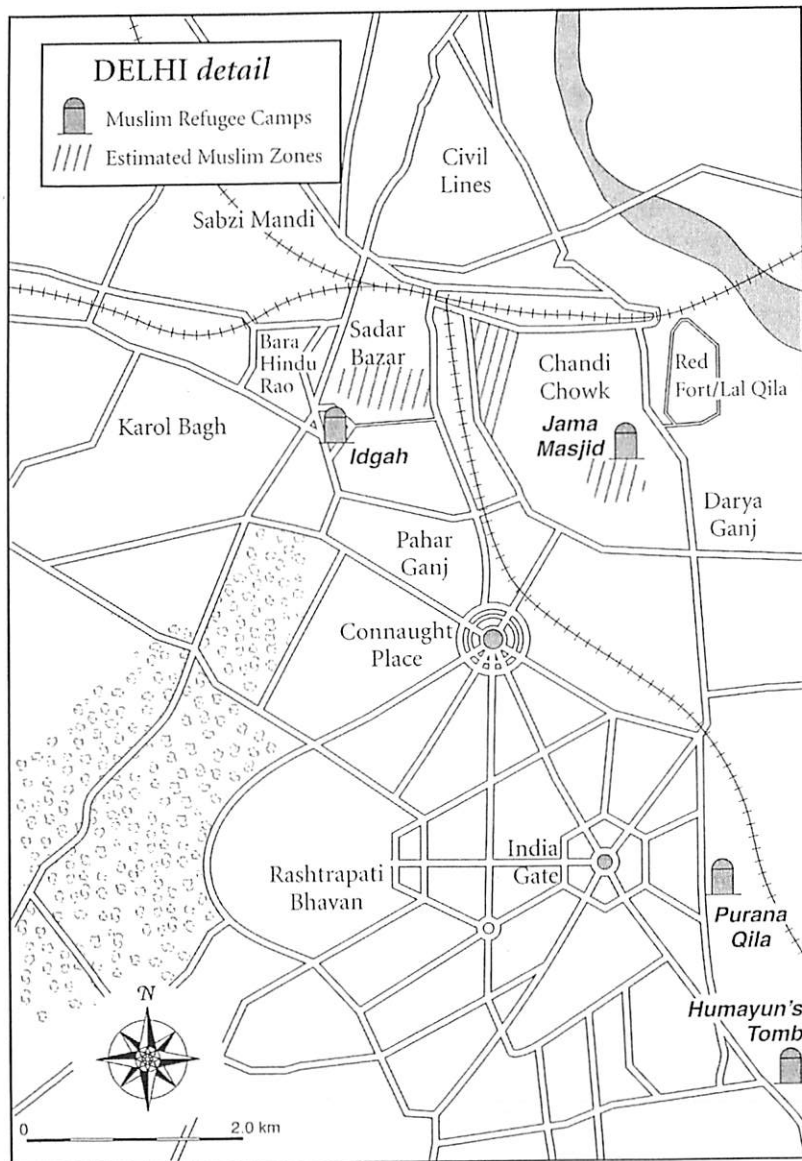
taken into this official custody almost all were already occupied, making official allotments redundant. In addition, such occupations had taken place on both sides of the divided Punjab and a large number of angry and destitute Hindu and Sikh refugees were still without shelter. Thus the Indian government adopted the policy that no (non-Muslim) refugee would be evicted for illegal occupation without being provided with alternative accommodation.²⁴ In effect, Muslims who had taken shelter in camps could not return to their homes if they had been occupied, even after the riots and murders had stopped.

The second intervention remapped the city for Muslims into "mixed areas" and "Muslim areas." Since it was felt that "Muslims no longer feel safe in mixed localities," it was decided that "they should be rehabilitated in predominantly Muslim areas."²⁵ This led to the creation of what came to be called "Muslim zones." Certain largely Muslim *mohallas* (such as Pahari Imli, Pul Bangash, Phatak Habash Khan, and Sadar Bazar) were cordoned off, and "abandoned" houses there were to be kept empty by police intervention, so that either Muslims could return to them or other Muslims could be moved there and provided safety.²⁶

Thus Muslims from "mixed areas" were offered safety by the state if they moved to these "Muslim zones," which were meant to be "safe areas." Sardar Diwan Singh, the editor of *Risalat*, wrote in his account of those days in Delhi about the move to Muslim zones:

Muslims from mixed areas were asked to move to the Muslim zones. The constable stood at the street corner and they had five minutes to gather their belongings and go. Many thought this was only a matter of a few days and that they would return when the public had calmed down. . . . [Th]e owner of the *Risalat's* building, Anwar saheb, left his house in [my] care and he did not even put a lock on any of the doors. Next to him his *khala* with her daughter and son-in-law lived and they too left their keys with me. And next to them was an old Muslim man. He said to me, "Sardar saheb, I am a poor man, please look after my house too, so no one loots it." So in this street I was the caretaker of these three houses.²⁷

The editor went on to recount how those houses in his care were broken into and occupied by refugees, and how his former neighbors did not or were unable to return. However, the account suggests how the move to



“safety areas” was presumed to be of a temporary nature, and that although they, Singh’s Muslim neighbors, left their homes, they left all their belongings in them. I emphasize this here because this fact of Muslim “belonging” came to be written out in official discourse on “rehabilitation.”

Aziz saheb had used the verb *qabza karnā* to state the fact of occupations, a verb which carries in its meaning the use of force; “to seize” is probably the closer English translation. Furthermore, the word *evacuate* means to move out of a place of danger to a place of safety. Thus one could say that most Muslims of Delhi were forced out or evacuated from their homes. But in discussions that ensued these homes came to be described first as “abandoned” and then as “vacant” and “empty houses,” which could then be used for rehabilitation. The violence that accompanied this process of “emptying” was thereby erased.

These “Muslim zones” came under a great deal of criticism in the Constituent Assembly, since some felt that providing shelter for homeless “non-Muslim refugees” should be the government’s first priority.²⁸ In a long debate that followed K.C. Neogy’s presentation on November 29, 1947, to the Constituent Assembly on “Relief and Rehabilitation” efforts of the government, it was argued that “refugees” (referring to Hindu and Sikh refugees from the Punjab) had a “right to live in these portions of the country” and that “they must be made proper citizens of India.” When it was argued that “empty houses” should be made available for the rehabilitation of shelterless “refugees,” it was clear that housing Hindu and Sikh refugees was seen as central to the task of rehabilitation, and that the process of rehabilitation was to make refugees into citizens of the state.²⁹ The status of Muslim refugees in the city, on the other hand, was less certain.

Jawaharlal Nehru defended the policy of Muslim zones by insisting that despite the acute housing problem for “refugees,” Muslims “should not be pushed out.”³⁰ In a later debate Nehru explained what he meant by “pushing out.” When Hindu and Sikh refugees occupied houses, he argued, “there was a tendency on the part of the Muslim residents of the other houses, next door, to leave their houses because they felt they were being pushed out. There was a tendency to push out the Muslim residents of the neighboring houses.” Nehru further argued that there were still Muslim residents of Delhi in camps—this as late as February 1948—and that he hoped they would return to their houses in the city.³¹

The pressure on “empty houses” in Muslim zones is particularly evident in the Delhi Deputy Commissioner M. S. Randhawa’s reports of late

1947. "Muslim zones" came to be seen as the primary focus for the establishment of "law and order" as well as the vast housing problem that faced the city's displaced people. Even after much of the rioting had stopped, these occupations remained a part of the violence in the city. There were repeated "rumors" of outbreaks of violence, which Randhawa interpreted as a "war of nerves" to push out Muslims from their homes. He noted that "[t]he main cause of the trouble which started on 23rd November 1947 was a scramble for empty houses." When stabbings and sporadic looting of Muslim shops took place, he noted that the "main source of the trouble [wa]s the housing and shopping problem" created by the large number of refugees present in Delhi.³²

Randhawa argued that the "forcible possession of some vacant houses" was an outcome of "refugees who are without shelter [and] wander about from street to street in search of accommodation." Their "miserable plight" and "great hardship" tempted them to "invade empty Muslim houses," and the fact that "they have no hesitation in going to jail" made his task of policing these Muslim zones all the more difficult.³³

Randhawa thus argued that "the general feeling among the public [wa]s that refugees should be permitted to occupy these houses and shops as is being done in Pakistan." The "empty houses" were the main source of Hindu and Sikh refugee discontent, and therefore key to the process of rehabilitation. As a result, he suggested allotting these "empty houses" to policemen, government servants, and other "suitable non-Muslim refugees" who would, he argued, not push out the localities' Muslim residents.³⁴

That Muslims, excluded from "public" opinion, saw the "empty houses" differently is evident in complaints to the chief commissioner of Delhi, and petitions to Congress leaders. For example, Maulana Habibur Rehman of the Central Muslim Relief Committee wrote:

In Sadar Bazar Muslims have been constantly made to make rooms for the refugees by all sorts of tactics, and of late, endeavors were being made to evict them from Qasabpura and . . . clear the locality of Muslims. In pursuance of this plan last night it is alleged that an offensive was organized and led by some special police officers. . . . Throughout the night he was out to hunt out Muslims from their dwellings, cause women and children to be out in the open, harass and terrorize them, and make them extremely panicky. The display of police force and

his high-handedness had certainly the effect of demoralizing Muslims and make them to leave the place at the earliest.³⁵

Policemen, as Maulana Rehman saw it, were not neutral agents of the state, but directly involved in Muslim displacement. Muslim zones, rather than serving as a refuge for Muslims, became part of a contested and fearful urban geography, in which institutions of the state were complicit in unsettling Muslims. Randhawa noted that an outcome of this contested geography was a "tendency among the Muslims, particularly of the lower-middle-class shopkeepers and laborers . . . to sell off their belongings and go to Pakistan. I have seen in the Muslim areas like Pul Bangash, Bara Hindu Rao, Sadar Bazar, and Jama Masjid that the Muslims spread their household belongings on pavements for sale."³⁶

Thus the experience of becoming a Muslim refugee was not just shaped by murderous violence in the city. The violent seizures of their homes by other refugees as they were forced into Muslim camps, as well as the continuing disputes over housing as they were forced into Muslim zones, produced a sense of a partisan state unable to protect them and unwilling to rehabilitate them.

This sense of exclusion from the Indian state's immediate rehabilitation efforts is most poignantly expressed in a letter by Abdul Ghafoor to Babu Rajendra Prasad, the first president of independent India. Ghafoor of Matia Mahal, Delhi, narrated his credentials as a "freedom fighter," as a man who had gone to jail nine times in the fight against the British, and who had opposed the Muslim League. His home and that of his family members had been looted, burned down, and occupied, and his wife had been sent to a Muslim camp and from there on to Pakistan. He complained that "*un kī ābadī par kachchī koṭī blū kharch karnā Indian Union men guna hai* [to spend even a raw cent on their rehabilitation is a sin in the Indian Union]." As a result, for "*bad-qismat* [ill-fated]" Congress Muslims, he concluded that "*in ke liye na Hind men jagah hai na Pakistan men [thikānā]* [there is no space for them in India, nor a resting place in Pakistan]."³⁷ Displaced from his home and separated from his wife, Ghafoor's anguish and plea to the state highlights what an extraordinarily difficult decision going, or not going, to Pakistan was for those who had opposed its creation. However, as we shall see in the Muslim camps, even for those without Ghafoor's political commitments the decision to board the trains in search of refuge was both a fearful and contingent one.

MUSLIM CAMPS/PURANA QILA

Muslims in the city sought shelter in all sorts of places, initially with relatives and friends in areas perceived to be “safer,” and then places like the Jama Masjid, houses of Muslim Cabinet ministers such as Azad and Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, the Idgah, Humayun’s Tomb, and the Purana Qila.³⁸ These places of refuge emerged spontaneously as large numbers of people congregated, but then some of them came to be organized as “camps.” While at Jama Masjid and Idgah relief work was carried out by Muslim volunteers³⁹ such as Salim saheb’s father, Purana Qila and Humayun’s Tomb were taken over and managed by the Indian government.

I want to focus here on Purana Qila, for it became the largest “Muslim camp” and an intermediary site where the Indian state intervened, and from there almost all those who took refuge left on the trains for Pakistan. However, as train derailments and organized attacks on trains were leading to massacres across the Punjab, regular trains from Purana Qila to Lahore did not start running until early October.⁴⁰ (There were, however, some special trains that departed earlier.) In addition, people continued to move from their homes to camps, such that the Purana Qila camp remained in use until early 1948.

The camp at Purana Qila emerged as some 12,000 government employees who had “opted” to work for Pakistan and their families (who had initially congregated at the Transfer Office of the Pakistan government) were moved there by the Pakistani High Commission, until travel arrangements could be made for their departure to Pakistan. As word spread, other Muslims seeking refuge, with or without intentions to go to Pakistan, also came to Purana Qila, and within days over 50,000 Muslims of Delhi had taken refuge there. With almost no resources in the Qila (there was only one tap for water outside its main entrance), the Pakistan High Commission then requested the Indian government to take over the running of the camp. On September 15, the Indian government took over the camp, though a Muslim guard was retained at the request of the High Commission.⁴¹

Although a considerable amount of writing exists on refugee camps, Liisa Malkki’s suggestion that the refugee camp needs to be understood as not just a place of refuge but rather as a “device of power” is quite significant. In the case of postwar Europe, for instance, the management

of refugees did not emerge out of humanitarian considerations alone but was considered a military problem, such that it was the Displaced Persons Branch of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force that undertook this task, and hundreds of work and concentration camps in Germany were transformed into refugee camps. Since then, Malkki argues, the refugee camp is meant to create supervisable spaces so that administrative and bureaucratic processes can intervene in categorizing, quarantining, and controlling its “inmates.”⁴²

Although camps like Purana Qila emerged spontaneously and in chaotic conditions, they were also subjected to modern disciplinary imperatives. After Zakir Husain visited Purana Qila at Nehru’s request, he reported to the Emergency Committee that “these places could not properly be called camps but rather areas in which humanity was dumped.”⁴³ Anis Kidwai, who worked as a volunteer with refugees, was also overwhelmed by the abject conditions inside Purana Qila, and described it in her memoir as a mass of “disorganized tents and heaps of tin roofs.”⁴⁴ Yet once the Indian government took over the running of the camp, it is interesting to note the paradigmatic fashion by which organizing the camp involved establishing the post of a “camp commandant” and installing loudspeakers to facilitate control, even prior to providing additional access to water.⁴⁵

The Emergency Committee minutes are quite informative on the concerns of the state in the management of such a camp, although it is uncertain how much of what is recorded here was actually implemented or was implementable in those circumstances. For example, in the search for a cadre of volunteers to help run the camps it was suggested that the Muslim policemen who had deserted to the camp be given back their uniforms. Although this plan was opposed, a consideration of policing skills as an asset was not incidental, for orders were passed to search all refugees entering the camp, and repeated attempts were made to control movement into and out of the camp, such that at one point permits were instated. This control was considered both justified and for the inmates’ own welfare, first because of the violent conditions in the city, and then because of an outbreak of cholera in the camp.⁴⁶

It is also evident from the minutes of the Emergency Committee that Muslim refugees in Purana Qila resented these attempts to discipline them, for officials repeatedly commented on their “uncooperative” nature. Gyanendra Pandey has argued that conditions in the Muslim camps were much worse than those in the Hindu camps because of inadequate

relief supplies.⁴⁷ Yet it was the “uncooperative” nature of the Muslim refugees that was considered a major obstacle in improving the conditions of the camp, as one official noted that “[t]he attitude of the refugees in the Purana Qila continues to be generally hostile to the non-Muslims and this makes it extremely difficult for the camp commandant to improve conditions in the camp.” However, it was not only hostility to non-Muslims that was deemed to be the source of the problem, but in addition “[o]ne of the main difficulties was that many of the refugees did not obey the camp commandant or their own leaders.”⁴⁸

As studies of contemporary refugees have shown, it is the breakdown of trust which is culturally constituted in a society that forces a person to become a refugee in the first place, and this distrust is only heightened in the hierarchical disciplinary spaces of a refugee camp.⁴⁹ From the perspective of Delhi’s Muslims, the state had failed to protect them in their homes, the Muslim policemen of Delhi were also in the camp, the sanitary conditions of the camp were so poor that a number of people had died of cholera, and the camp was rife with rumors of what was going on in the city. Thus it is not surprising that the Muslims of Purana Qila were hostile to the camp managers—representatives of the Indian state on whom they were now dependent for their survival. In addition, the camp had brought together Muslims from many different social backgrounds and political orientations, and, as Salim saheb had recalled, stripped many of them of their “respectability.” E. Valentine Daniel and John Knudsen describe this as “a state of hyperinformation” in which it becomes very difficult to give meaning to experiences,⁵⁰ and it was in this “state of hyperinformation” that Muslims of the camp were then being asked to decide whether they wanted to stay in Delhi or go to Pakistan.

To “arrange census” was perceived by the Emergency Committee as a task of high priority in the management of the Muslim camp. Given the camp’s origin, as a refuge of Pakistani government personnel, there were a large number of people in the camp who had decided to leave for Pakistan and were merely awaiting train facilities to do so. Their bags and beddings were decisively packed, so to speak. However, from the start it was suggested that “those in Purana Qila be separated into two lots,” those wanting to go to Pakistan and “those who wished to stay.” K. C. Neogy, to whom the task of the “census” fell, pointed out the difficulties of categorizing the Muslim refugees but conjectured that “about 90 percent” of the lakh of Muslim inhabitants of Delhi who had gone into

refugee camps “seem[ed] to want to leave for Pakistan.” The task of the census came up repeatedly for discussion in the Emergency Committee, which suggests that determining the intentions of the “inmates” was not a simple matter. Yet the “general feeling” in the Emergency Committee was that there was “reason to believe that 90 percent wish to go out” or “would want to go to Pakistan.” Given that in fact most of the Muslims in Purana Qila did leave for Pakistan, it would seem that the estimates of the Emergency Committee were accurate. However, one report to the Emergency Committee noted that “[e]xact figures for the latter two categories [go to Pakistan or back to city] are extremely difficult—as large numbers have not as yet finally made up their minds.”⁵¹

In this context of “hyperinformation,” there were some extremely important efforts to reassure and retain the Muslims of the city. Gandhi’s arrival in Delhi in October is widely regarded as the most important intervention in halting the murders and occupations. Sumit Sarkar describes it as the “Mahatma’s finest hour,”⁵² as a frail but determined Gandhi began to visit Muslim *mohallas* in an effort to restoring the morale of the Muslims.⁵³ Qamar apa, in my interview with her, recalled hearing about Gandhi’s visit to Maulana Ahmad Salim, of the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Hind, which she considered of the most importance in her family’s decision to remain in Delhi.

Salim saheb, on the other hand, recalled Maulana Azad’s *khutba* at the Jama Masjid on October 24, 1947:

Maulana Azad ne ākhir dam tak ek ek ādmi ko rokne ki koshish ki. Aur Maulana Azad ki ek tarikh ki taqreer hai Jama Masjid pe. Bahut tarikh ki taqreer . . . to un kī taqreer se bahut logon ke bandhe hua’e bistar, kehthe hai, bandhe hua’e bistar khul gaye . . . Us waqt mohalle men bahs ho rahi thi ke ja’e ya nah ja’e. Main ne batāya na ke Maulana Azad ki taqreer se hazāron bistar khul gaye.

Maulana Azad till the very end tried to stop each and every person. And there is a historic speech by Maulana Azad at Jama Masjid. A very historic speech . . . for as a result of his speech many people’s packed beddings opened, they say, packed beddings opened . . . at the time in our *mohalla* there was a debate about whether to go or not go. As I said, as a result of Maulana Azad’s speech thousands of beddings opened.

Azad, in his historic *khutba*, had argued to the city's Muslims that "this escape that you have given the sacred name of *hijrat*" was a hasty decision, made in fear. He asked them to let these difficult times pass, and said they could always leave later if they felt they wanted to.⁵⁴ The impact of the *khutba* went beyond those who were actually present to hear it, for word of mouth and newspapers spread Azad's "*dardnak cheekh* [cry of anguish]." According to Chief Commissioner Khurshid, Muslim refugees "in Purana Qila returned in thousands to the city with more confidence . . . and this was partly the result of the speech by Hon. Maulana Azad."⁵⁵

On January 12, 1948, Gandhi started his fast. Azad noted that the fast had an "electric effect" and that "not only the city but the whole of India was deeply stirred." One of Gandhi's conditions for breaking his fast, according to Azad, was that all Muslims of Delhi be resettled in their own homes. Azad wrote that he did not think that this was a practical solution since "many of the refugees from West Punjab had occupied the houses which were left vacant by Muslims. If it was a matter of [only] a few hundred, perhaps Gandhiji's wishes could have been carried out."⁵⁶

When G.D. Khosla, appointed to undertake an enquiry into the workings of the Custodian of Evacuee Property in Delhi, went to see Gandhi a few days before his assassination, he recalled the following conversation with Gandhi:

KHOSLA: The Muslims in the Old Fort [Purana Qila] camp have no wish to stay in this country. They told me when I visited them, that they would like to go to Pakistan as soon as possible. Our own people are without houses or shelter. It breaks my heart to see them suffering like this, exposed to the elements. Tell me Bapuji, what should I do?

GANDHI: When I go there they do not say they want to go to Pakistan. . . . They are also our people. You should bring them back and protect them.⁵⁷

Although Khosla asserted that Gandhi convinced him of his moral task, yet the conversation reflects a widely held perception in different sections of the Indian state that "non-Muslim refugees" were "our own people" who had to be rehabilitated, while "Muslim refugees" had questionable entitlement. Thus despite significant attempts by Gandhi and

Azad to reassure the Muslims of Delhi, this overriding perception had important effects. Wedged between divergent views of whether or not Muslim refugees in camps wanted to go to Pakistan was the question of housing Hindu and Sikh refugees. If Muslim refugees in camps like Purana Qila were to remain as Gandhi wished, what would the Indian state do with their occupied houses, and where would they be rehabilitated? The economic equation that the rehabilitation of Hindu and Sikh refugees was contingent upon a Muslim exodus was perhaps most bluntly articulated by Sardar Patel when he noted in an Emergency Committee meeting "that there was bound to be trouble if as a result of these Muslims not moving out, it proved impossible to accommodate non-Muslim refugees coming in from the West."⁵⁸

This equation had far-reaching effects, as we shall see, when those who boarded trains to Pakistan to escape the abject and uncertain conditions of the camps later wanted to return to their homes. If the loss of their homes and contested geographies of Delhi propelled them to leave, their departure and arrival was equally contested in Pakistan, on the other side of this unsettled and shifting landscape.

ON THE TRANSFER OF POPULATIONS

As Aziz saheb noted, Muslim displacement was accompanied by a feeling of dispossession because of the creation of Pakistan. However, as thousands of Delhi's Muslims boarded special trains to Pakistan, the Pakistani government viewed this exodus with alarm.⁵⁹

To understand its alarm, it is necessary to situate it in the context of the agreed "transfer of populations" in the Punjab. By late August 1947 it became evident that the Boundary Force that had been established by the colonial state to deal with outbreaks of violence in the Punjab was terribly inadequate. The Cabinet of the Pakistani government complained bitterly to its Indian counterpart that the Boundary Force had become partisan, and was spectator to or abetting in the violence instead of controlling it.⁶⁰ One of the Pakistani Cabinet's concerns was that the Boundary Force consisted of only 20 percent Muslims, and even fewer officers, and that this disproportion had failed to deter a "slaughter of Muslims in large numbers."⁶¹ The loss of confidence in the Boundary Force had taken place on both sides, and thus it was agreed that the problem of controlling the violence and providing safe

passage to the "evacuating populations" had to be handled differently. As a result, by August 28 the Boundary Force was replaced by the joint Military Evacuation Organization (MEO).⁶² The MEO coordinated now-divided military units so that Pakistan army units escorted Muslim caravans and trains while Indian army units escorted Hindu and Sikh caravans and trains.

The establishment of the MEO brought with it a critical question. What should the official position be regarding the "evacuating populations"? Should they be regarded as refugees, who would return to their homes once the violence was brought to a halt, or was there to be an interstate agreement regarding "the wholesale transfer of population"? The Pakistani Cabinet was concerned, for a "refugee problem" premised on refugee return back to their original homes was "possible to handle," but a transfer of population on religious lines in the Punjab meant the momentous exchange of 12 million people.

In the Cabinet discussions on how to manage the Punjab displacements, an agreement to a "transfer of population" was seen as having two possibly grave implications, and which did indeed have enduring consequences in the ensuing years. An exchange of populations within the Punjab was considered possible because it was believed that since the Muslim population of East Punjab was roughly equal to the non-Muslim population of West Punjab and since the property of the latter was more than that of the former, there would be "no real difficulties in the way of absorbing the entire Muslim population of East Punjab in place of the non-Muslim population of West Punjab."⁶³ Calculations of property, the homes, businesses, and lands of those departing for safety were exceedingly important to this assessment of the Punjab situation.

However, first there were concerns that if questions of compensation on the basis of property arose, the Pakistani state might have to pay more than it would receive, and this could place a serious strain on its fragile economy. It was argued in the Cabinet that "the Sikhs had demanded the partition of Punjab on the basis of property holdings for the simple reason that they had extensive and valuable holdings in the West Punjab," and that this was bound to become an issue.⁶⁴

Second, it was feared that if an exchange of populations was agreed to in principle in the Punjab, "there was likelihood of trouble breaking out in other parts of the subcontinent with a view to forcing Muslims in the Indian Dominion to move to Pakistan. If that happened we would

find ourselves with inadequate land and other resources to support the influx."⁶⁵ The Punjab could set a dangerous precedent for the rest of the subcontinent. Given that Muslims in the rest of India, some 42 million, formed a population larger than the entire population of West Pakistan at the time, economic rationality eschewed such a forced migration.

However, in the divided Punjab millions of people were already on the move, and the two governments had to respond to this mass movement. Thus, despite these important reservations, the establishment of the MEO led to an acceptance of a "transfer of populations" in divided Punjab, "to give a sense of security" to ravaged communities on both sides.⁶⁶ A statement of the Indian government's position of such a transfer across divided Punjab was made in the legislature by Neogy on November 18, 1947. He stated that although the Indian government's policy was "to discourage mass migration from one province to another," Punjab was to be an exception. In the rest of the subcontinent migrations were not to be on a planned basis, but a matter of individual choice. This exceptional character of movements across divided Punjab needs to be emphasized, for the agreed and "planned evacuations" by the two governments formed the context of those displacements.⁶⁷ In contrast, movements of people from other parts of the subcontinent have different negotiated histories.

Delhi fell outside the rubric of Punjab's agreed transfers. Therefore, when violence engulfed Delhi in early September, it became a subject of intense discussion in the parallel Pakistani government's Emergency Committee of the Cabinet.⁶⁸ On September 15, 1947, Mohammad Ali Jinnah reported on his discussions with Delhi's Muslim leaders. He argued that Delhi's Muslims had now two courses open to them—one, to demand from the Indian government that they "give the minorities there a fair deal" or, two, "to start a civil war." The possibility of migrating to Pakistan, of seeking refuge or a home there, was not even considered as an option. When it was clear that Muslims were leaving their homes and going to refugee camps in large numbers, a suggestion was made in a meeting of the Pakistani Emergency Committee that in order to stop further abandonment of Delhi by Muslims, Liaquat Ali Khan as prime minister should go there to talk to the refugees and "advise them to stay on and make them understand that they were now nationals of India and should look to the Indian government for protection." This then became the Pakistani position on the matter,

that "the Muslims who are forced to leave their homes in India are Indian nationals and so long as they are in India it is the duty of the Indian government to feed and protect them as much as their other citizens."⁶⁹

Although the Pakistani government had accepted the total evacuation of Muslims of East Punjab, it considered it an imperative to deter migrations from elsewhere in India. Despite abject conditions of Muslims in Delhi, the fear of a forced Muslim exodus from the rest of India was so great that as large numbers of Muslims boarded trains in Delhi, the Pakistani government objected to the Indian government's position of allowing "those who wished to leave" to do so. It argued that the Indian government was not giving sufficient assurances to the Muslims there, as "the attitude . . . taken by high officials of the Indian government [was] that Muslims had no future in Delhi and their safety could not be guaranteed if they insisted on staying on in Delhi."⁷⁰ However, despite these objections, deterring this exodus was ideologically more complicated.

At the inter-dominion conference on October 5, 1947, at Lahore, the Muslim exodus from Delhi became an important point of contention. The Pakistani government insisted that only those in Purana Qila who had opted to work for the Pakistan government should be allowed to board the special trains to Pakistan, for it had not agreed to the movement of any refugees from Delhi or from Uttar Pradesh (UP). Liaquat Ali Khan took particular exception to what he described as the "dumping" of Muslims across the Pakistan border, and emphasized that the MEO agreement extended to only "members of the minority community" of East and West Punjab, the Punjab States, and the North West Frontier Province.⁷¹

The Indian government publicized Liaquat's position at the conference, that the government of Pakistan would not accept Muslim refugees from areas other than East Punjab—that "even Muslims who have worked for establishing Pakistan, even if they want to go, their doors are closed."⁷² In opposition to the Pakistani policy, the Indian government announced that it was willing to accept "non-Muslim refugees" from both Baluchistan and Sindh, which were also outside the MEO agreement.⁷³

This of course challenged the legitimacy of the Pakistani state as a proclaimed Muslim homeland and led to a "clarifying" rejoinder by Liaquat in a press conference on October 9. He claimed that he had only opposed

the suggestion of the Indian government that "the Muslim populations of Delhi and UP's western districts be exchanged." The point of contention was that slippery line between "wishing to leave" and feeling "pushed out." Liaquat stated:

I was told that all the Muslims of Delhi and UP want to come to Pakistan, and Pakistan should facilitate them. This is when I made it very clear that while Pakistan is willing to provide refuge to Muslims, it does not want that Muslims from regions other than East Punjab leave their *watan* and property and come to Pakistan. I placed emphasis that it is the duty of the Government of India to protect these Muslims and they should fulfill their promises. If the Government of India had fulfilled its duty properly then there would be no question of Muslims of Delhi and UP moving. The Partition of the country was done on the principle that minorities would remain in their regions and the governments would provide protection to all its citizens, and give them equal rights.⁷⁴

It was a difficult position to straddle for the Pakistani state, to argue that it was a refuge for all Muslims, and discourage Muslim displacement at the same time. The principle that "minorities would remain in their regions" and be equal citizens of those states was already unsettled by the intervention of the two states in the Punjab violence. Although people were displaced in terror, the agreed transfer of populations in divided Punjab precluded the possibility of their eventual return to their homes, precluded the possibility of rebuilding new lives in old communities. It meant that Hindu and Sikh refugees of West Punjab were not to be regarded as "minorities" and citizens of the Pakistani state, but instead were to be rehabilitated by the Indian state in order to become Indian citizens.

The transfer of populations in the Punjab indeed set in motion an unraveling precedent. How were Muslim refugees from the Punjab to be differentiated from Muslim refugees from elsewhere? Which Muslim refugees were to be regarded as subjects of the Pakistani state, and which Muslim refugees were to be rehabilitated by the Indian state?

Delhi's Muslims left their city in the midst of this ambiguity and interstate disagreement over their initial flight, and this would later lead to

questions about their national status and eventual belonging. As they arrived in Karachi, they faced a small, multireligious city in the throes of a different housing crisis, drawing out unresolved questions about the place of religious minorities in this shifting spatial order. If Punjab had unsettled a status quo, then what was the new status of the large Hindu communities in Sind?