Sovereignty, Modernity and Urban Space: Everyday Socio-Spatial Practices in Karachi's Inner City Quarters

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Abstract

Sovereignty, Modernity and Urban Space: Everyday Socio-Spatial Practices in Karachi's Inner City Quarters.

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This thesis is an interdisciplinary study of the norms and forms of everyday life in the historic quarter of Karachi, Pakistan, as they relate to the sovereign imaginaries that animate the way urban subjects inhabit the space of the city. It examines the evolution of the urban form of the city and shows how historical constructions of space, empire and nation structured present formulations of political subjectivity at the micro and macro levels. Using three disciplinary lenses—history, anthropology and political science—the study captures the diverse forces and sovereignties that have shaped ideas of life and the organization of space in a complex urban environment. Based on previously unexamined archival material and ethnographic field research in the historic inner city area of Karachi, it traces the effects of historic formations of the space of the city on the lived space of the streets and neighbourhoods. It locates the politics of space that unfolds in the streets and neighbourhoods of the city in significant shifts in its colonial and postcolonial history. In doing so it brings attention to the limits of biopolitical subject formation, where the processes of making social and political worlds in common exceed the state's attempt at discipline and subjugation. The social and political formations that were the object of this study, consist of different kinds of sovereign arrangements that attempt to rule and govern space in parallel to, and often overlapping with, state governance. These sovereign arrangements range from custom and kinship-based organizations to political and religious groups and movements that seek to establish norms around the social and spatial management of the neighbourhood. The finding of this study is that multiple sovereign

assemblages act to both challenge and reproduce state sovereignty. These sovereignties operate in different domains – political, religious and clan-based social networks that constantly overlap and engage with the state to claim legitimacy and a share of urban resources. The most significant finding of this study is that sovereign imaginaries drawn upon by these arrangements go beyond the nation to draw upon histories and trajectories that are transregional and transcendental, bringing into question the nation-state's sole claim to territorial sovereignty.

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Note on Transliteration and Translation

I have used the Library of Congress standard for all transliterations from Urdu to English – except for diacritical marks, which I have not used at all. All translations of original Urdu texts and interviews into English are my own.

List of Abbreviations

KMC	Karachi Municipal Corporation
KPK	Khyber Pukhtunkhwa
MNA	Member of National Assembly
MQM	Muttahida Qaumi Movement
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
PAC	People's Aman Committee
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
UC	Union Council

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Glossary

biradiri	literally “brotherhood”, patrilineal kinship group
burqa	garment worn by women covering them from the head down to the ankles
danda	a thick wooden stick
dīn	religion
durood	recitations from Quran and Hadith in praise of prophet Mohammed
ganj	literally a town or habitation; a name that was typically given to towns whose economy and spatial forms were reflective of the trade and cultural practices of Hindu merchants in the nineteenth century in India
hukoomat	government
imam	title used for Muslim religious leader
izzat	respect
jamaat	literally, an association or organization. There is a popular connotation of Jamaats with older and more traditional associational forms based on religion or kinship, for e.g. the Jamaat-e-Islami or the Memon Jamaat organizations like the Kutyana Jamaat.
karobari	pertaining to business
kasoti	a game of twenty questions
mawali	homeless
mehfil	a social gathering
mohallah	a ward or quarter
Mohajir	refugee
naat	songs sung in praise of prophet Mohammed
panchayat	council of elders

pir	a spiritual guide
pukka	solid
kutcha	raw
qabza	forced occupation
qasba	a town
qanoon	law
siyasat	politics
shamiana	a cloth tent
tanzeem	organization or movement
waqf	Muslim religious trust

Punjabi	Punjab is Pakistan's most populous province with a population of 100 million. Traditionally, the military and civil bureaucracy has had an over-representation of Punjabis and they are often viewed as Pakistan's ethnic elite.
Sindhi	Indigenous to the southern province of Sindh. Sindh is the second most populous province in Pakistan with a population of 55.5 million, almost half of which resides in Karachi with a population of approx. 20 million. Sindhi nationalism centres around obtaining more autonomy and representation for the province, and tensions prevail with Urdu-speaking Mohajirs who mostly inhabit the urban centres of Sindh.
Balochi	The Baloch have inhabited the coastal region of Sindh and the Balochistan province. Balochistan, which shares a border with both Iran and Afghanistan, is Pakistan's largest but most sparsely populated province with a population of 13.9 million. It is a resource rich province with major reserves of gas and gold, but the most impoverished of Pakistan's provinces. Baloch ethnic identity has become politicized in the context of a militant separatist movement in Balochistan, which has entailed a heavy military presence in the province.
Pushtun	Also known as Pathans, the Pushtun province of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, previously known as the North West Frontier Province shares Pakistan's western border with Afghanistan. KPK is Pakistan's third largest province with a population of 26 million. Karachi has a sizeable population of Pushtun speakers who are mostly involved in running the city's informal transportation network as well as informal land provision and speculation. Tensions between Urdu-speaking Mohajirs and Pushtuns in Karachi have been major flashpoints of violence in the city during the past three decades.
Mohajir	'Mohajir' meaning migrant is the identity claimed by the Muslims who migrated from different parts of India, mostly Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh at partition in 1947. The largest population of Mohajirs in Pakistan resides in Karachi, which is majority Mohajir with other pockets in the urban areas of Sindh province.
Memon	Gujarati Muslims who migrated from various parts of Gujarat state and Bombay to Karachi in and after 1947. They are one of the traditional South Asian merchant groups who rose to prominence in the nineteenth century and carried out trade along India's west coast, East Africa and the Persian Gulf.

Table 1: Ethnic Groups in Pakistan

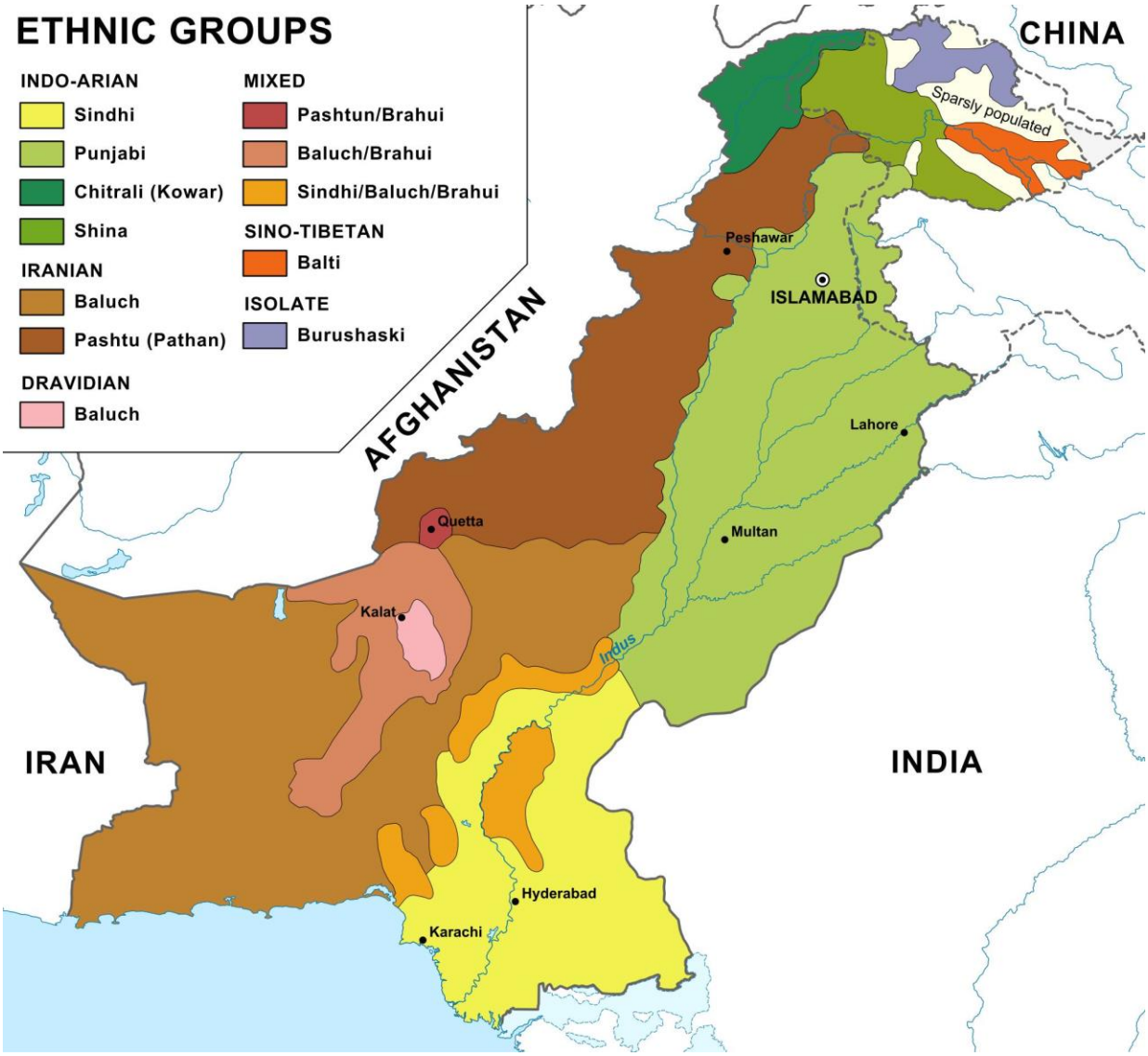

Figure 1. "Map of Ethnic Makeup of Pakistan." Spearhead Research - Pakistan. Accessed March 26, 2016. http://spearheadresearch.org/index.php/maps_graphs/pakistan-ethnic-distribution.

Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis is an examination of how the internal social and political life of a community works to reproduce ideas about what it means to be an urban subject in modern Pakistan. It is an ethnographic study of the neighbourhoods, streets, public spaces and institutions in the historic quarters of Pakistan's largest city – Karachi. In light of the contested nature of sovereignty and state in Pakistan, my key concern is to investigate the ways modern citizen-subjects make sense of their relationship to the space of the city and the nation. In doing so I ask what kind of sovereignties, alterities and imaginaries come into play in the making of space in the city, and what does this tell us about Pakistan's still emerging postcoloniality? I answer this question by locating the present politics of space in the city in significant shifts in its colonial and postcolonial history. The study focuses on the historic centre of the city of Karachi, which was profoundly shaped by the colonial experience and subject to the governing imperatives of empire. The development of public spaces in this area therefore reflects the contestations that arose out of the colonial encounter in which certain functions and typologies disappeared and others remained.

The research questions posed in this thesis were formulated against the backdrop of increasing challenges to the legitimacy of the state in Pakistan, and what is seen as its inadequate and increasingly dysfunctional role in the provision of infrastructure, services and the rule of law in general. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the US, the question of secular modernity in Pakistan has become intensified in a context where all ills are attributed to its failure in confrontation with Islamic extremism. The consequent re-alignment of US political and military

interests resulted in Pakistan's enlistment as a key ally in the war on terror. Pakistan's dilemma is often represented in and by the West as that of a crisis and 'failure' of governance, and its descent into a regressive and obscurantist state of chaos. In contrast with neighbouring and rival India, this difference is intensified even more where the example of India performs the task of proving the success of secular nationhood.[1] While the secular/religious binary is brought into sharp focus in Pakistan due to its geopolitical significance globally, all of the rest of the tropes used to diagnose its condition of success or failure as a nation – underdevelopment, failed governance and corruption – are shared with much of the postcolonial third world. Putting aside these tropes, and reading against them, I ask what is Pakistan's postcoloniality and to what extent have the subjects of this postcolony been absorbed into the liberal modernizing project? I approach this question by investigating the biopolitics of socio-spatial practices in the urban postocolonial context. Paying attention to the micro-processes of everyday living and the organization, delineation and management of space allowed me to trace the political and economic effects of colonial and postcolonial conjunctures on Pakistan's urban subjects. In doing so I bring attention to the limits of biopolitical subject formation where the processes of making social and political worlds in common exceed the state's attempt at discipline and subjugation. Further, this life-making produces subjectivities that need to be viewed with greater nuance than being seen in terms of liberal subjectivity, class resistance or a Foucaultian docility. Thus this thesis is a contribution to the understanding of the dilemma of urban modernity in the postcolony.

[1] However, the assumption of Indian secularism has been brought into question in light of the emergence of extreme right wing ruling parties like the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) and the dominance of the Sangh Parivar. Further the present dominance of Islamist parties in a country like Turkey where secularism was seen to be constitutive of the national identity also unsettles the idea that a secular state produces liberal subjects.

Pakistan's urban spaces were dramatically transformed in 1947 when millions of refugees from different parts of India streamed across the new border, settling most notably in Karachi, its largest city and capital of the new nation state. As the capital of the new Muslim state as well as the political and economic centre of the new nation, Karachi was the object of the hopes and aspirations of a range of different actors and ideologies vying to reinscribe its space with the symbols and signs of the new nationhood.

City modernizers, urban planners and, recently, development specialists have often posed the problem of Karachi's old quarter as a problem of a loss of 'tradition' both in terms of the architectural character of its buildings as well as the social and economic life of its inhabitants. This is problematic because they invoke the idea of 'authenticity' and 'tradition' to argue for a revival of what has been lost. In fact invoking the loss of tradition in this case is an index for the modern desire to create proper spatial distinction between the old and the new. In doing so what is overlooked is the present moment, the real time of everyday experience and what it reproduces in terms of space, place and lifeworlds. In addition, the view of the old city as a space of 'difference' separates it from the urban politics and governmentality of the rest of the city. My research engaged with and interrogated some of these assumptions in light of the current uses and meanings of spaces in this area. I located the process of the reproduction of space within the metropolitan experience of Karachi and within Pakistan's postcolonial conjuncture. In this way I have attempted to locate meaning in the 'periphery' which can allow a reading of urban politics in its local terrain, on its own terms without being held accountable to the universalist norms and assumptions of planning and governance, while at the same time understanding that the two are not necessarily separate and distinct from each other. Thus this thesis is essentially an investigation into the modern urban biopolitics of the postcolonial city.

Pakistan: Sovereignty and Territoriality in the Postcolonial State

Pakistan's creation as a Muslim state for Indian Muslims in 1947 elicited the necessity to erase or occlude the many regional ethnic and linguistic identities that constituted the newly demarcated territory. Nation-building in the early post-independence years required the construction of a homogeneous Muslim national identity, but while also maintaining a reshaped idea of the place of ethnic and linguistic minorities in the new nation. The country was administratively divided into five provinces based solely on ethnic and linguistic differences: Sindh, Punjab, North West Frontier Province (with a Pushtun majority), Balochistan and East Pakistan (majority Bengali speaking) At the same time Urdu, spoken by less than 10% of the population at the time, was designated as the national language (see fig. 1). The divisions were a continuation of the colonial demarcations of populations and territories that had firmly consolidated ethnic identity as a marker of social and political difference. The millions of migrants were mostly from North and Central India, and they streamed into Pakistan along its western Punjab border and into Sindh's urban areas. They adopted an unofficial identity of Mohajir – or migrant – that was later to become a major factor driving identity formation and power-sharing arrangements, especially in densely populated urban areas where most Mohajir migrants settled.

The vast migrations, and the resultant upheavals in the form of communal violence on a mass scale, that were precipitated at decolonization and independence are often seen as overdetermining factors that shaped Pakistan's post-independence and postcolonial reality. The massive influx of refugees from India was mostly accommodated in Pakistan's largest urban areas – Karachi and Lahore – and to a lesser extent in the smaller cities of Hyderabad and Shikarpur in Sindh province. Tensions between migrants and the indigenous Sindhi population

over resources and representation began surfacing in the immediate post-partition period. The early state response to these tensions, as well as others amongst the various nationalities, was to attempt greater centralization in order to control the provinces.

Provincial autonomy was seen as a threat to the power of the highly centralized civil bureaucracy and the interests of the military. In particular, East Pakistan with its Bengali population constituting a national majority, was subjected to economic and political domination by the West Pakistani controlled and Punjabi and Mohajir-dominated centre. The controversial "One Unit" plan was introduced in 1954 by Prime Minister Mohammad Ali Bogra, in which the four provinces of Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan and NWFP were to be merged into one administrative unit. While the plan was sold as a unifying measure, as well as to achieve more efficient territorial administration, it was actually an attempt to counter the demographic power of East Pakistan. These early manoeuvrings to consolidate elite interests in the name of nationalism would go a long way towards sowing the seeds of ethnic-based discord, the most violent culmination of which would be the catastrophic breakaway of East Pakistan and the formation of independent Bangladesh in 1971.

All throughout the 1950s, the failure to achieve power-sharing arrangements between the centre and the provinces, the battle over allocation of resources which included institutional financing and budgeting, and the uneven representation of the different national groups in national institutions paved the way for the first military coup in 1958 by General Ayub Khan. However, as Ayesha Jalal argues, the domination of civil bureaucracy and military had already been achieved as early as 1951 – four years after independence.[2]

[2] Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Ayub Khan's era, 1958-1967, is often hailed as Pakistan's 'development era.' A modernist who styled himself as Pakistan's Ataturk, Ayub Khan foresaw Pakistan as a modern republic with Islam as the dominant religion – but a modernized Islam. It was under a military government that Pakistan entered the Green revolution, with mechanized agriculture, modern irrigation systems, and large-scale infrastructure constructions like bridges, dams and barrages. This massive overhaul of the rural countryside however was accompanied by limited land reform that consolidated power in the hands of mid-level landowners while leaving the peasantry landless. Ayub Khan's reforms have also been criticized for spending excessive resources on water and energy development and not enough on education and health. While rural restructuring did result in higher agricultural output in an attempt to create food self-sufficiency, there was little social spending on basic services. The starkest disparity that highlighted uneven development was the difference between the economic output and living standards between West and East Pakistan. By 1970, West Pakistan's per capita GDP was at least 60% higher than that of East Pakistan. Pakistan also developed a close and aid-dependent relationship with the United States at this time. As Jalal argues, the derailing of political processes in Pakistan was a result of the complex interactions of the bureaucratic-military nexus of the state with the international centres of power in Washington and London. And most scholars on Pakistan have been in agreement on how, more than any other state, the form of the Pakistani state has been contingent upon historical circumstance which includes a highly contested regional and international setting.[3]

[3] Jalal, *State of Martial Rule*; Christophe Jaffrelot, *A History of Pakistan and its Origins* (London: Anthem Press, 2002); Faisal Devji, *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013).

The Role of Islam

As a nation created in the name of Islam – as a homeland for Muslim Indians – Islam has been one of the major legitimizing forces used by the state to consolidate its power. While it is clear that the process of achieving Pakistan had been primarily driven by the need to protect the interests of the Muslim elites of North and Central India, led by the Muslim League under the secular leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, nevertheless the role of Islam in Pakistani state and society has been hotly debated and contested throughout its 69-year history. In the years leading up to partition groups like the Jamaat-e-Islami, who had initially opposed the project on the grounds that it would not materialize a truly Islamic state, later became one of the foremost proponents of the new nation and actively intervened in redefining its Islamic identity.

The bureaucratic-military elites and the emerging class of ulemas, mainly represented by two prominent parties – the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Pakistan and the Jamaat-e-Islami, disputed the correct interpretations of doctrinal Islam.[4] Despite these contestations over what an Islamic state was supposed to be, the lived reality of Muslim life in Pakistan was much more diverse. Religious expression was far from homogeneous and, apart from being subject to differences of class, caste, rank and privilege, was also spread across a range of syncretic practices representing different strands of Sufism imbued with Hindu rituals and practices and tribal interpretations. Even as the doctrinal trend represented by the ulema-led parties took hold in the urban areas, the

[4] The contentions between the secular leaning military-bureaucracy and the ulema over the role of Islam and state are revealed most obviously in the contents of the 'Objectives Resolution,' which was adopted by Ayub Khan's government in 1956. The resolution conceded the sovereignty of Allah over the entire universe and guaranteed that the state would ensure that Muslims at all levels of society lived in accordance with the teachings of Islam, both collectively and individually. While this part was what largely appeased the religious lobby, the liberal leanings of the ruling elite were revealed in the sections of the resolution that firmly located power in the hands of chosen representatives of the people rather than religious authority as well according religious minorities equal rights and protections. In leaving the door open to both religious and liberal interpretations that appeared to contradict each other, the resolution paved the way for ongoing contestations over the relationship between nation and religion.

rural countryside continued to adhere to a more popular Islam. However while this may have been true in the earlier post-partition decades, subsequent transformations in both rural and urban economies has meant that this difference is not as clear-cut as before. Rural-urban migrations as well as the greater reach of newly emerging religious movements, largely led by Deobandi and Wahabi-inspired outfits, into Pakistan's hinterlands has meant that popular and doctrinal interpretations of Islam have met and meshed in both conflicting and accommodating ways, which will also be discussed in this thesis.[5]

As far as the role of the state is concerned, the state's attempt to fashion itself as a 'guaranter of an Islamic social order,' but through 'crude attempts' at 'Islamic social engineering,' ultimately fostered bigotry and an extremely restricted field of tolerated social behavior.[6] Due to the absence of a national consensus on the constitutional role of Islam, different regimes – both civil and military – tried to both counter and accommodate the demands made by the religious lobby leading to policies that created further social fragmentation rather than cohesion. These policies have included at various times: the prohibition on alcohol; the banning of obscene literature; and, more contentiously, the targeting of religious minorities like the Ahmadis as apostates. The traditionally secular leanings of the military and civil bureaucratic elite were finally dealt a deathblow under Pakistan's third military dictatorship, which lasted from 1978-1988. Unlike Ayub and his successor General Yayha Khan, General Zia-ul-Haq presented his military regime as the protector of an Islamic state, which was to be ruled under Sharia law. Widespread constitutional changes were introduced – the most controversial being

[5] See Chapter 6: Negotiating Difference: Religion, Gender and Space in Kharadar
[6] Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule*.

the Hudood and Blasphemy laws.[7] The Zia era consolidated the religious lobby which continued to assert its dominance over doctrinal interpretations of Islam long after the regime ended. This is attested by the fact that some of the most restrictive laws that conflate rape with *zina* (adultery), as well as the law governing *tauheen-e-risalat* (insult to the prophet) punishable by a sentence of death, still remain on the books.

Urban Planning and Development

During the 1960s, under Ayub Khan's modernizing policies, Pakistan was the recipient of major aid-funding from the United States. Development projects receiving US aid however, were contingent on US interests that tended to discourage agricultural and industrial autonomy.[8] On the other hand, urban restructuring projects provided the opportunity to showcase America's cold-war era commitment to third world development as a way to ward off the specter of communism.[9] Thus new plans for urban development, the most notable of which were the Greater Karachi Resettlement Plan and then the creation of the new capital city of Islamabad, became the development hallmarks of Ayub's era. But more than anything, urban structuring projects like those implemented in Karachi revealed the contested and fragmented nature of the state's sovereignty and ultimately failed to deliver on their promises.[10] This is because in Pakistan urban restructuring and reterritorialization have been key elements in the exercise of state sovereignty, and thus in constructing specific places in the city. Urban development

[7] The Hudood Ordinances were laws enacted in 1979 as part of the 'Islamization' process under General Zia-ul-Haq's military regime. It replaced parts of the secular British era Pakistan Penal Code and added crimes of adultery (zina) and fornication with punishments of whipping, amputation and stoning to death. The zina provisions of the laws became very controversial as victims of rape were accused of adultery and punished under the ordinance. The Blasphemy law has always been part of the Pakistan Penal Code, as it is a carryover from the British penal code, but its use and implementation became more frequent and severe during General Zia's military rule.
[8] Markus Daechsel, "Sovereignty, Governmentality and Development in Ayub's Pakistan: the Case of Korangi Township," *Modern Asian Studies* 45.1 (2011): 131-157.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.

agendas have followed the state imperative to remake urban space to fit nationalist visions of an undifferentiated Pakistani identity. These homogenizing agendas, however, have always been destabilized by the persistence of spatial configurations that have asserted diverse identities – usually along the lines of ethnicity, in keeping with the trend established by the early state to exploit linguistic and ethnic identity in the service of building a new nationhood.

While the 'modernization' era under Ayub is credited with bringing Pakistan into the fold of industrial capitalism, it was marked by highly uneven development. While agricultural output increased substantially, the surplus was mostly invested in the urban economy with the lion's share going to Karachi, the largest urban conglomeration. This investment was also a reflection of the regime's patronage of the rising class of merchants and traders, mostly based in Karachi, who would form Pakistan's new industrial classes. What resulted was increased disparity between rural and urban development, which created tensions particularly in the province of Sindh where the disparity was greatest.

State projects of territorialization also drew upon those modernist planning principles that could consolidate state sovereignty. In these state imaginings, urban space becomes a tabula rasa on which new narratives of statehood and nationalism could be inscribed. Such visions divided the urban landscape into spaces of productivity and unproductivity, formality and informality, safety and subversion. Karachi was the object of active governmental planning in terms of plans for new settlements, rehabilitation schemes and new industrial zones that were mainly implemented in the 1950s and 1960s – the heyday of modernist planning projects around the world. Most planning was focused around the reconfiguration of city spaces in order to accommodate the increased population due to partition transfers.

The vast majority of these new settlements were designed around the city's periphery along with the industries for which they were to provide a cheap pool of labour. Older working class settlements in the city centre, though, remained a major source of labour as well. Where the new working class migrants could be positioned away from the centres of urban power, the older, densely populated settlements could not be repositioned in this way – this would have required uprooting large numbers of people.

Recent work on sovereignty and governance in Pakistan, with particular reference to urban development and urban politics, has highlighted two aspects of the Pakistani state. Verkaaik[11] points to the fragmentary nature of the Pakistani state, which does not fit into the familiar tropes of either an authoritarian state exercising its sovereign power with impunity, or a weak or dysfunctional state. This fragmentary nature of the state becomes apparent in the inconsistency and instability of state structures and institutions. However Verkaaik takes care to distinguish the *idea* of the state from the everyday workings of state institutions, and suggests that the state in abstraction remains a strong ideological force in Pakistan. Daeschel, in his historical examination of the creation of the settlement of Korangi in the 1960s, suggests that state power in Pakistan still relies on an older form of sovereignty.[12] It exercises 'raw' power through practices of urban removal and eviction, for example; yet the state is unable to exercise the more disciplined power of governmentality, which is a project that remains incomplete in the post-colonial context. Thus the domain of governance remains contested and fragmentary in the context of Pakistan.

[11] Verkaaik, *Migrant and Militants*.
[12] Daechsel, "Sovereignty, Governmentality and Development."

While Ayub Khan's era tried to introduce widespread changes aimed at reterritorializing both urban and rural spaces, the piecemeal nature and uneven implementation of these projects reflected the contradictory forces at the heart of the developing state. By the 1970s, in the post-1971 war era, there was a vast difference between the urban centres of power in Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore. The three major urban regions represented very different interests and power arrangements. As the new capital city built on a blueprint almost entirely designed by the international planning firm of Doxiades Inc., Islamabad was supposed to project the centralized power of the military-bureaucratic elite as well as to showcase the orderliness and coherence that the centre uniquely claimed that it could bring to governance. Attempts to recreate parts of this blueprint, also designed by the same firm, in the form of the Greater Karachi Resettlement Plan ended up partitioning the city along class lines more than anything else. While class differences and elite interests also created segregation in Lahore, the second largest city, Karachi's political economy as well as population make-up was vastly different making it an outlier with reference to its urban evolution. Thus Karachi presents an interesting lens through which to view the social and political arrangements that have come to define subjecthood and citizenship in the postcolonial state (see fig. 2).

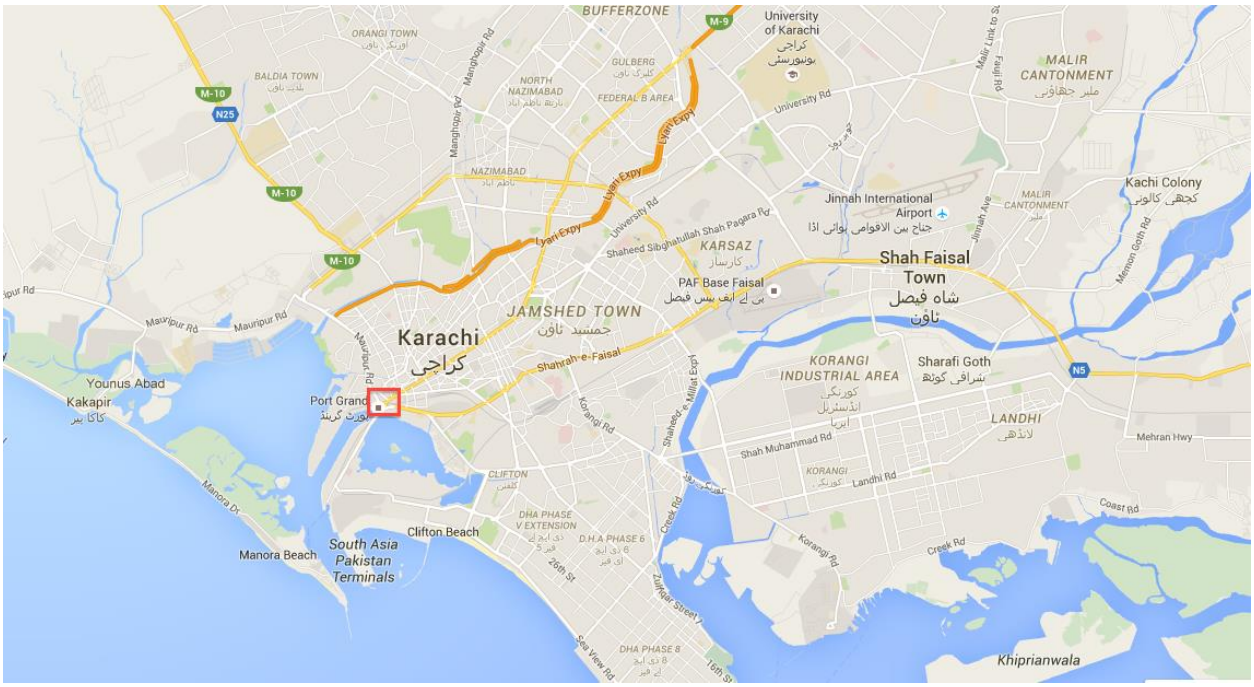

Figure 2. "Map of Karachi with case study area in red." Google Maps. map.google.com Map data ©2016 Google

Theoretical Context

The Colonial Legacy in the Postcolony

How have colonial constructions of urban spaces and ideas of urban living shaped present realities? As part of British India for roughly 150 years, the region that now constitutes Pakistan was subject to new orders of rule and governance during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Karachi itself was a 'creation' of British rulers as a military and administrative outpost of the empire on its western borders with Afghanistan and the Russian empire. What is the relevance of this history for the questions asked in this thesis? Scholars working on colonial urban contexts in South Asia and the Middle East have established the constitutive role of colonial administrative rule in fundamentally reconfiguring urban environments.[13] In the

[13] Gwendoline Wright, "Tradition in the Service of Modernity: Architecture and Urbanism in French Colonial Policy 1900-1930," *Journal of Modern History* 59.2 (1987): 291-316; Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and*

transformation and creation of new urban landscapes under colonialism there arose new mobilities facilitating transregional migrations of people and ideas that also gave rise to new urban imaginaries and new geographies of control as well as co-existence. Further, there are deeper implications for the changes that transpired, as Wilson Chacko Jacob suggests: "the historical conjuncture of colonialism and state temporarily produced new conditions of possibility for the ancient government of men."[14] These new conditions of possibility appear as the hybridized forms of the social; and one way this manifested was in the transformed nature of urban life and visions of urban living. It is with these assumptions in mind that I examine the historical constructions of place or 'place-making' practices that informed the way the urban was imagined and envisioned in Karachi.

Colonial city planning was also fundamentally linked to the development of processes that produced the modern city: processes which go back to the emergence of state-led governing techniques that developed in the context of the formation of the modern nation-state in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The objective of these techniques was to produce an order in which "the planned city becomes a regulator of modern society."[15] This critical view of spatial planning is based upon Foucault's ideas on the emergence of governmentality and its attendant processes. For Foucault, in the eighteenth century, the city becomes an object of governmentality concurrently with the appearance of man both as an object of knowledge and the subject who

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Forms of the Social Environment (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1989); Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism and the Colonial Uncanny* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Janet Abu-Lughod, *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious*; Stephen Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi's Urban Governmentalities* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

[14] Wilson Chacko Jacob, "Of Angels and Men: Sayyid Fadl B. 'Alawi and Two Moments of Sovereignty" *Arab Studies Journal* XX.1 (2012): 41.

[15] Rabinow, *French Modern*, 12.

knows.[16] At this time power began to operate on the social body in new ways that were different from the 'triumphant power' of the monarchy or the 'spectacle of the scaffold.'[17] The objective of this power was to increase productivity and create a better economy of power. It was the exercise of this power that gave rise to modern institutions, which were represented in the built environment in the forms of hospitals, barracks, schools and prisons. Some of the major themes that emerged in the spatial planning of these institutions were surveillance, exposure and legibility, which culminated in the idea of the Panopticon, the principle that, Foucault suggests, is embedded in the way modern society was conceived of by the enlightenment reformers. Following the panoptic principle, space had to be inscribed with a clear objective and function to produce a legible social and spatial order that could be anticipated and predicted with some degree of certainty. The social engineering aspect of city planning became extremely significant in the colonial context, as what was required was the management and governance of a vast new social and political world. This process also involved the production of new narratives and discourses about the relationship between the colonial and metropolitan worlds.

For example, in the South Asian context, the imperial narrative historicized regional cities in the empire as having originated in colonial rule and having achieved their heyday under colonial administration. The existence of prior settlement and trade in the area were not just disregarded but were also placed within the framework of the pre-modern which was cast as chaotic, undeveloped and uncivilized. Trade was not free and despotic powers limited free economic development, until the advent of colonial rule.[18] True autonomy and public life were missing. In other words, these were not cities in the true sense of the word. This trope of the

[16] Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge and Power," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 239-256.
[17] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).
[18] Stephen P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: the Sovereign City in Mughal India, 1639-1739* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

dysfunctional pre-modern entered into native, nationalist imaginings of the past as well by establishing a binary between what was and what came after as being forever opposed to each other. In order to assert one, the other had to be negated. The imperialist narrative achieved this through asserting the inherently moral nature and legitimacy of the colonial order while the nationalist narrative strove to recover the 'tradition' that had been displaced by the colonial order.

As Prashant Kidambi notes, one of the obstacles to the theorizing and study of the Indian city has been the idea that the real India resided in the villages, and cities were a foreign intrusion. [19] This idea was itself a result of colonial discourses of essentialization of Indian culture and the rationalization of the colonial order through setting up a contrast between the colonial urban and the native rural. The way these narratives affected views of the colonial city was through framing the city as forever divided between the colonizer and the native - the dual city.[20] The native city then became a repository of all that was rural, archaic, a carryover of the despotism of the old order. Reading the history of the colonial city against the grain of this binary, scholars have revealed the imbrications of the colonial and native orders as well as the co-constitutive nature of categorizations of modern and traditional in the development and evolution of the social, political and economic forms that emerged from the colonial encounter.[21]

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[19] Prashanth Kidambi, *The Making of an Indian Metropolis: Colonial Governance and Public Culture in Bombay 1890-1920* (UK: Ashgate, 2007).

[20] In the critique of the 'dual city' phenomenon that most colonial cities represented, there is no question that most colonial cities – from Cairo to Dehli were spatially segregated along racial lines and their 'modern' halves were built expressly to house the European population – as Janet Abu-Lughod argues in her classic examination of the evolution of Cairo (Janet Abu-Lughod, "Tale of Two Cities: Origins of Modern Cairo," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 7.4 (1965): 429-457). However, to what extent this duality determined social and political life has been questioned in later engagements with the historic evolution of cites under colonial rule, highlighting the ways in which this duality was unsettled in both reality and representation.

[21] Ritu Birla, *Stages of Capital: Law and Governance in Colonial India* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2009); Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Swati Chattopdhyay, *Representing Calcutta*; Rajnarayan Chandavarkar,

However, these binaries are still very operative in the way city spaces are managed, governed and imagined much like other aspects of the social and political sphere in most postcolonial contexts. The imprint of colonial imaginings of space and territory is very present in urban South Asia and Karachi, a military and then a commercial port town developed by the British, offers an extremely relevant field to study the impacts of colonial planning and trace its links to the present moment.

The Urban Political Economy

In locating the study of the neighbourhoods of old Karachi in the city's larger political economy I have asked what are the major factors that have driven urbanization in Pakistan's largest and fastest growing urban conglomeration. Even from a global perspective, with an estimated population of 22 million and an annual growth rate of 4.5%, Karachi is among the top five largest and fastest growing urban regions in the world. The growth rate is as much a factor of natural population growth as it is of rural-urban migration and incoming refugees into the city. Karachi has had three significant waves of refugees during its 69-year post-independence history: first, during partition when an estimated 600,000 refugees from different parts of India came to the city; second, after the 1971 war that partitioned East and West Pakistan during the formation of Bangladesh when Bengali and Bihari refugees from East Pakistan settled in Karachi; and third, after the 1979 war in Afghanistan, in the aftermath of which an estimated one million Afghan refugees settled in the city. While Karachi's urbanization has been driven by unique regional and geopolitical factors, its complex political economy is also a reflection of

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History, Culture and the Indian City (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Dipesh Chakrabarthy, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for "Indian" Pasts?," *Representations* 37 (1992): 1-26; William Glover, *Making Lahore Modern: Constructing and Imagining a Colonial City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

structural and global economic forces, much like most urban regions of the world. Urban regions have been theorized in various ways by geographers, urban sociologists and anthropologists with the three disciplines complementing and diverging in significant ways.

For urban critics like Harvey and Marcuse, the city has been formed as a result of the processes of capital production and accumulation; therefore the spatial distribution of cities follows a capitalist logic.[22] The city thus emerges primarily as a space of inequality and segregation, of either space where capital invests and accumulates or space from which capital withdraws and abandons. It is either a city of abundance or a city of scarcity. Within this city, the processes of capitalism are embedded within everyday life and are not abstractions outside of it. In these framings the city is a place constitutive of global economic processes where the urban milieu in interaction with globalization is producing new forms of politics that lie between the experiences of those disadvantaged by capitalist accumulation and those who practice a politics of exclusion.[23] The urban form is thus seen to be an extension of the capitalist logic of accumulation and agglomeration.[24] In the neo-liberal restructuring of capital and labour cities become the terrain of creative destruction, a process by which capitalism reorganizes itself and reterritorializes its productive domains.[25] It is in this 'market-driven socio-spatial transformation'[26] that contestations arise over precious land and resources in the city. Within this framework, studies on the sociology of urban public space focus on the control exercised on

[22] David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (New York: Verso, 2006); Peter Marcuse, *Cities for People not Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City* (New York: Routledge, 2012).
[23] Saskia Sassen, *Globalization and its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money* (New York: The New Press, 1999).
[24] Allen J. Scott, "The Cultural Economy of Cities," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 21 (1997): 323-339.
[25] Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, "Cities and Geographies of 'Actually Existing Neoliberalism'," *Antipode* 34.3 (2002): 349-379.
[26] Ibid, 353.

public space for purposes of social regulation, for example, to get rid of undesirable elements like the homeless and the vagrant who occupy the dark spaces of the city. These are seen as obstacles to gentrification, which require security, transparency and legibility in public space. This control is seen to be contested from below through subversion and appropriation of public space by marginalized groups who periodically clash with formal authority in a battle to establish the 'right to the city.' The Marxist perspective of these theories emphasizes the ideological underpinnings of the production of space.

However, the 'geography of uneven development'[27] is not just a phenomenon that expresses the inequalities within cities but amongst them as well. Third World urbanization, usually cast as being on the extreme end of the worst inequalities and excesses of runaway growth remains an undertheorized field of urban studies, peripheral to the main discourse which focuses on western cities.[28] However there is an emerging discourse on the cities of the third world that can broadly be termed as a kind of subaltern urbanism. The proponents of this discourse aim to attend to that which has been relegated to the margins of urban scholarship. The emerging theoretical approaches draw upon post-modern debates on the city which see urban space as more fragmented, imbued with multiple meanings, subjective and to a certain extent, unknowable.[29] From this perspective the modern city is also seen as having produced new subjects, new meanings and new solidarities.

While acknowledging the deeply significant historical role of capital in the continuous reconfiguration of urban environments, critics have pointed out that it tends towards an

[27] Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism*.
[28] Ananya Roy, "Urban Informality: Towards an Epistemology of Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71.2 (2005): 147-158.
[29] Ananya Roy, "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Sublatern Urbanism," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35.2 (2011): 223-238.

overdetermination that primarily sees the city as a product of economic processes that produce social stratification. Thus cities are either/or planned/unplanned, formal/informal, modern/traditional. A more nuanced reading of the complex processes that increasingly define the social worlds of cities of the global south comes from scholars who are also invested in decentering Eurocentric ways of codifying and analyzing the urban form. Abdoumaliq Simone et al. see the workings of politics and capital in the city also as a contest, but one that is between:

> [t]he tendency to rationalize, codify, and make transparent the functions of clearly delineated institutions and governance processes and, on the other, the tendency to intensify highly idiosyncratic, often nonformalized, creolized, hodgepodged social orders and territories that obscure any clear reading of what is going on.[30]

The point is that, as against the reading of the urban environment as divided between either spaces of power or its lack, Simone's reading allows the possibility of power in both governmentalized spaces as well as those that challenge or unsettle governmentalizing practices. What opens up is a different way to understand and perceive the complexities that undergird the seemingly incomprehensible and chaotic third world city.

From post-apartheid South Africa to Yemen and further to Brazil, the liberal democratic project has generated intensely contradictory forms of politics. Postcolonial scholars have argued that rather than reading these contradictions, which are shot through with violence, as a failure of statehood embedded in the parochial and 'backward' forms of community seen to be associated with these lifeworlds in Eurocentric political framings, they should be seen as constitutive of the

[30] AbdouMaliq Simone et al., "'My Soul I Can See': the Limits of Governing African Cities in a Context of Globalization and Complexity," in *Governance on the Ground: Innovations and Discontinuities in Cities of the Developing World*, eds. Patricia L. McCarney and Richard E. Stern (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 221.

very nature of democracy in the postcolonial context: a vernacularized democracy that may also not necessarily be tied to the former colonial world but is manifest in the metropole as well.[31] And as Comaroff and Comaroff argue, this constitutive violence is not only internal but has an external element in the form of the "entanglements that tie postcolonial graft to the metropolitan scramble for tropical spoils."[32] It is also apparent that many of these contestations are intensified in urban contexts where the competition for power and scarce resources are played out on an everyday basis in the struggle for land, housing and infrastructure. These struggles reveal not only how citizens and subjects relate to each other but also their conflicted relationship with the state.

The Urban Modern and the Postcolony: Sovereignty, Biopolitics and Governmentality

In examining the everyday politics of space in the old city area of Karachi, I have focused on the ways in which residents make sense of how they inhabit spaces and govern their neighbourhoods. In this process, residents also encounter and interact with the state on an everyday basis. In order to critically understand what these interactions mean for state-society relations as well as the meaning of being an urban subject, Foucault's formulations of biopolitics and governmentality are extremely relevant. Biopolitics, "the growing inclusion of man's natural life in the mechanisms and calculations of power,"[33] was the form of power that arose and evolved from the application of modern forms of governmental discipline as argued by Foucault. Drawing upon Foucault, Agamben notes that the modern biopolitical project seeks to "redefine the threshold in life that distinguishes and separates what is inside from what is outside."[34] Thus

[31] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
[32] Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 10.
[33] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 119.
[34] Ibid., 131.

understanding biopolitics as a technique of governance that circulates through the social sphere and that seeks to position and manage subjects in space in certain ways allows us to understand the productive power of spaces and places to both mould and be moulded by subjects. Biopolitical projects engaged by the State range from new forms of enumeration (biometric identity cards) to increasingly differentiated forms of belonging (internally displaced persons, refugees,) and are a major point of contention shaping state-society relations. These processes are constitutive of the very forms of state and society.[35] But biopolitical projects that manage subjects and spaces are not always the purview of the state, or at least the state in its formal incarnation. Other forms of sovereignty that reproduce state practices and discourses also deploy a biopolitics that diverges from and contests state forms. These practices of non-state sovereignties that seek to manage and govern urban space are a primary focus of this study.

The question of sovereignty and the city poses the problem of increasing challenges to state sovereignty that originates in contested urban environments.[36] Thus the reach of state sovereignty in managing and governing urban life is a subject of much debate. Scholars of the postcolonial context have developed a more critical view of sovereignty than the classical understanding of sovereignty as the sole purview of a nation-state over a bounded territory that measures the success and failure of a state in terms of the proper exercise of this sovereignty. Sovereignty in the postcolonial context appears more 'graduated' and fragmented with political

[35] Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and their Critics," *The American Political Science Review* 85.1 (1991): 77-96; Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Populations: Lectures at the College de France 1977-1978*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2007).; Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without Ends: Notes on Politics (Theory Out of Bounds)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
[36] Diane E. Davis and Nora Libertun de Duren, eds., *Cities and Sovereignty: Identity Politics in Urban Spaces* (Indiana University Press, 2011).

constellations and social spaces that often compete with the state while at the same time reproduce state-like practices and discourses.[37]

It is with these concerns in mind that I take a critical look at different sovereign arrangements and their claims to power and space in Karachi's neighbourhoods. In doing so I am also attentive to the factors that delimit and circumscribe these different domains, as well as the opportunities and possibilities they create. As Benton has argued, state sovereignty has always generated spaces of exception.[38] Thus allegiance to other sovereign imaginaries co-exists with the national sovereign imaginary, which is increasingly contested in postcolonial urban environments. Some of these sovereignties directly challenge the state's monopoly over violence, but some assert their power in other domains: in directing social order and managing spiritual and moral norms.

State-society structuring in South Asia has also been theorized in terms of the way the postcolonial state is challenged and contested by popular collectivities. Most of this work has focused on the relations between NGOs and the state, where civil society organizations claiming to represent the popular will negotiate with the state for citizenship rights for the poor.[39] There has also been recent work on how the private sector plays a part in fragmenting state power.[40] However, how do groups that do not fit into accepted categorizations of state, private sector, civil

[37] Aihwa Ong, "Graduated Sovereignty in Southeast Asia," *Theory, Culture and Society* 17.4 (2000): 55-75; Akhil Gupta, "Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State," in *Anthropology of the State*, eds. Akhil Gupta and Aradhana Sharma (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), 211-242.
[38] Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.
[39] Arjun Appadurai, "Deep Democracy: Urban Governmentality and the Horizon of Politics," *Environment and Urbanization* 13.2 (2001): 23-43; Jonathan Anjaria, "Ordinary States: Everyday Corruption and the Politics of Space in Mumbai," *American Ethnologist* 38.1 (2011): 58-72; Soloman Benjamin, "Occupancy Urbanism: Radicalizing Politics Beyond Policy and Programs," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32.3 (2008): 719-729.
[40] Liza Weinstein, "One Man-Handled: Fragmented Power and Political Entrepreneurship in Globalizing Mumbai," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38.1 (2014): 14-35.

society or even political society, figure in urban governance? In order to answer this question, we need to broaden the idea of what constitutes collectivities and sovereign imaginaries.

Further work on governmentality and its role in shaping state and society has yielded some interesting questions about the norms and forms of 'informal' politics. If as Foucault suggested, there is an internal logic to the functioning of government and this logic is largely self-serving then exposing the contingent nature of this logic requires the historicization of modern forms of government and a questioning of the universal nature of notions of sovereignty, state, civil society, people, subjects, etc. Building on Foucault's critique of universals, Chatterjee poses the problem of the unquestioned assumption of universalist ideals and suggests that this space of the universal is the utopian space of capitalist modernity where anything outside of it is either inconceivable or belongs to a backward pre-modern past. After establishing the existence of such a upotian space he further argues that the reality of politics exists in spite of this utopian or "homogenous" space in "the real space constituted by the heterogenous time of governmentality and the effect produced by this tension."[41] This is a particularly useful point for investigating the contemporary urban politics of space in the global south, because it allows a reading of emerging forms of social and political life on their own terms without holding them accountable to the extent to which they conform to the 'homogeneous' time of capital. Chatterjee calls this the "politics of heterogeneity," whose claims are always strategic and contextual and variable rather than universal and consistent. Chatterjee's concern is to find resistance to governmental techniques and disciplines in the popular politics of heterogeneous time or heterotopias. This also brings up the question of how we understand the way the disciplinary power of the state works. As Akhil Gupta has argued, it is not simply a matter of the

[41] Chatterjee, *Politics of the Governed*.

rationalizing bureaucratic processes of the state versus popular practices that seek to undermine it. [42] The assumption of the homogenized rationality of bureaucratic processes fails to take into account the everyday functioning of the state that reveals the arbitrary and contingent nature of state practices. Gupta further posits that in these practices a special kind of biopolitics is at work, one in which the social and political exclusion of the poor is achieved through the very processes that actively seek to implement an ethics and politics of care.[43]

While the focus of much of this work has been on subjects who inhabit the margins and thus constitute an exceptional state, whether as 'political society' or as bare life that is expendable, how do we explain the way states of exception, contingency and arbitrariness also permeate the domains inhabited by propertied subjects and planned spaces? In addition, is it even possible to capture modern forms of political life through this categorization, in states like Pakistan where the incompleteness of the biopolitical project is constitutive of the postcolonial state? According to Markus Daechsel, the Pakistani postcolonial state has actually been at odds with the project of development and this should not conceptually be seen as a 'failure' of the state, but rather it begs an interrogation of the assumption that a postcolonial state had to be a developmental state. In Pakistan, the postcolonial nation came into being on the promise of Muslim land for Muslims and the developing state was later grafted onto this as "nationalist politics did not necessarily have to be 'developmentalist' or founded on an economic agenda, and neither did the states they demanded and produced." [44] He further suggests that the state was 'willed into being' through an act of 'self-assertion and power' and that was all that was needed to establish its sovereignty. This is an interesting diagnosis of the increasingly intense

[42] Akhil Gupta, *Red Tape, Bureaucracy, Structural Violence and Poverty in India* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2012).
[43] Ibid.
[44] Markus Daechsel, *Islamabad and the Politics of International Development in Pakistan* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015), 18.

contradictions that are emerging in Pakistan with reference to governance and planning, especially in the urban context.

It is in these fragmented domains of governance and incomplete projects of governmentality and biopolitics that I locate the everyday practices of urban subjects. I ask how governmental disciplines that attempt to govern urban space and direct urban futures are imbricated in the everyday uses of space through both accommodation as well as circumvention. In this process I focus on the role of localized forms of sovereignty that deploy a governmentality of their own through an internalized regime of conduct – both social and spatial.

Violent Politics and Publics in the Postcolony

A major issue that regularly surfaces in considering emerging forms of life in the postcolony is the question of violence. Recent studies have pointed to the constitutive role of violence in the political economy of postcolonial urbanization.[45] Violence can also be seen as the outcome of a 'counterfeit modernity' with splintered and fragmented sovereignties in which the state acts more like a 'licensing and franchising authority.'[46]

The investiture of public spaces with the symbols and signs of different kinds of sovereignties and the use of violence to police these spaces is a ubiquitous feature of Karachi's urban landscape. The existence of violence in public space is not unique to Karachi. Most third world urban metropolises - Mumbai, Rio and Djakarta,[47] with Johannesburg[48] on the extreme

[45] James Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctures of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001); Laurent Gayer, *Karachi: Ordered Disorder and the Struggle for the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[46] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*.
[47] Hansen, *Wages of Violence*; Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*; AbdouMaliq Simone and Vyjayanthi Rao, "Securing the Majority: Living Through Uncertainty in Jakarta," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36.2 (2012): 315-335.

end - have seen rising levels of violence in public spaces. In some cases, notably India and Brazil, it has been noted that this violence has increased as these countries have become more democratic.[49] Holston suggests that in the case of Brazil democracy and its 'counters' produce seemingly contradictory publics: powerful discourses around rights and obligations that co-exist with rising incivility and violence in public space.[50] Most urban metropolises in the global south present contexts in which there are continuous contestations over jurisdiction and governance: increasing segregation between elite groups fortifying themselves in gated enclaves, and a vast majority of marginalized populations who rely on complex networks of brokerage and intermediaries to gain access to urban goods and services.[51] These contexts thus highlight a fundamental condition of the postcolony, but one which also increasingly defines the metropole: the co-constitutive nature of violence and law, where the spirit of the law and a 'culture of legality' infuses illicit domains and orders, while the law itself violently reproduces more and more 'walls' to separate and protect power from its margins.[52] The rich and complex empirical field offered by the postcolonial urban context allows a deep engagement with the imbrications of violence and order in the materiality of urban living which manifests in one significant way in the politics around its public spaces, streets and infrastructure.

Karachi's neighbourhoods have increasingly become major sites of violent confrontation between political groups vying for economic and political control. One of the questions I ask in

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[48] Loren B. Landau, "Urbanization, Nativism and the Rule of Law in South Africa's 'Forbidden' Cities," *Third World Quarterly* 26.7 (2005): 1115-1134; Jacqueline M. Klopp and Elke Zuern, "The Politics of Violence in Democratization: Lessons from Kenya and South Africa," *Comparative Politics* 39.2 (2007): 127-146.
[49] Hansen, *Wages of Violence*; Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*.
[50] Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*.
[51] Simone and Rao, "Securing the Majority"; Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*; Teresa P. R. Caldeira and James Holston, "Democracy and Violence in Brazil," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41.4 (1999): 691-729; Sarwat Viqar, "Constructing Lyari: Place, Governance and Identity in a Karachi Neighbourhood" *South Asian History and Culture* 5.3 (2014): 365-383; Nausheen H. Anwar, "Urban Transformations: Brokers, Collaborative Governance and Community Building in Karachi's Periphery," *South Asian History and Culture* 5.1 (2014): 75-92.
[52] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*.

this thesis is, how is this violence dealt with and negotiated on an everyday basis by residents? This is an important question because it aids in revealing the limits of social order. One of the obstacles to understanding violence in postcolonial contexts has been an assumption that violence is always linked to social disorder. Laurent Gayer's recent work on Karachi's violent geographies has complicated this assumption and revealed the logics at work in the reproduction of violent landscapes in the city. These logics of 'disorder' permeate both formal and informal domains of governance.[53]

Understanding the rationality and instrumentality of violence is important because the pervasiveness of violence in postcolonial metropolises has often rendered public spaces in these contexts dysfunctional and not even properly 'public.' And while the crisis of public space in the current economic and political conjuncture of urban privatization, deregulation and globalization has been a subject of much debate, the empirical context of this debate often revolves around western metropolises. Therefore notions of what constitute public space and its counter, i.e. private space, are based on the Habermasian notion of the public sphere.[54] And even though it has been pointed out that the link between public space and the public sphere across disciplines remains weak, the notion of the ideal public space is rooted in a genealogy of public squares and plazas in Europe, seen as having emerged from an ideal conception of the Greek polis and the agora.[55] But, as the location of the largest urban conglomerations in the world shifts to the South, there is an emerging focus on the idea and use of public space and its implications for politics in cities that are quite different from western metropolises.

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[53] Gayer, *Karachi: Ordered Disorder*.
[54] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (1962)* (Massachusetts: First MIT Press, 1991).
[55] Setha Low and Neil Smith, *The Politics of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

The privileged public space of urban modernity is based upon the idea of the public sphere as that constituted by the voluntary association of individuals acting rationally and in their own best interests. It also assumes the state as the ultimate guarantor of a free public sphere. At the heart of this idea of the public sphere is the very conception of freedom and democracy and the Aristotelian distinction between *agora* and *oikos*. Following from this, Arendt distinguishes the realm of the public from that of the household and suggests that the 'true public' is absent even in the realm of community if the concerns are that of charity as in early Christian community ethics.[56] This approach assigns a lesser value to actions based on communal concerns of charity, patronage of the poor and religious activities, and takes away the privilege of being public from these activities. Effectively, most urban forms of life in the public spaces of the third world are ejected from the very definition of 'public' and, by extension, democratic or free. The association of the public with 'worldliness,' as opposed to the worldlessness inferred in the private, implies that a public realm can only exist in an engagement with earthly things and the community built around the concerns of the material world created by man. This is a realm that requires a sense of the permanence of the world as opposed to the religious sense of the mortality of man and the world: "Without [this] transcendence into a potential earthly immortality, no politics, strictly speaking, no common world and no public realm is possible."[57] Thus it is fair to say that the Arendtian public sphere becomes a privileged, arguably the only possible site of politics.

But what is the nature of politics in contexts where the public and the private sphere, and by extension public and private space, are not so clearly defined? What happens when religious attachments formed in the 'private' world of family and kinship underpin political demands?

[56] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1958).
[57] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 55.

Furthermore, what happens when what are considered the 'parochial' concerns of parish, family and kinship are also deeply imbricated with the voluntary attachments forged in the world of work and political association. As Lisa Wedeen argues, in the context of emerging forms of politics in Yemen, historically embedded attachments and identities and those forged strategically for short periods of time are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, "Rather than treat democracy as a singular outcome of a given (bourgeois European) history, as Habermas would argue, we learn from the Yemeni example that democracy is always there, a possibility available to human beings as actors who make political worlds common."[58]

Other works that have investigated informal networks and politics in the Global South urban context, notably Diane Singerman and Asef Bayat, point towards the way everyday practices challenge formal notions of order and divisions between public and private.[59] For Bayat, the "quiet encroachment of the ordinary" reflects the way the juridical norms of the state are contested by average citizens. For Singerman, these are extra-systemic informal networks that claim public space and negotiate through the political institutions of the state, while at the same time generating their own informal institutions. These networks are seen as legitimate in the eyes of their constituents even though they are not legitimate in the eyes of the state. The members of these networks are consumers of the benefits of state goods and services, yet they have little power to legally affect state policy. They have therefore reacted by "altering the nature of collective life" and in doing so they are redefining the boundaries of the political. Informal networks can also be conceptualized as "submerged networks" - the kind of relations that are embedded in everyday forms of life and that constitute a necessary element of the daily struggle

[58] Lisa Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions: Publics, Performance and Power in Yemen* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 216.
[59] Diane Singerman, *Avenues of Participation: Family, Networks and Participation in Urban Quarters of Cairo* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995); Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (California: Stanford University Press, 2009).

to resist forms of domination and control, whether directly political or economic.[60] Other studies, notably Homa Hoodfar, have also linked the role of familial networks and dynamics within the household to the ways in which urban residents cope with macro-level political and economic change.[61]

While respecting the importance of the constitutive role of family and household in determining social life, and remaining attentive to the insights offered by these engagements, my focus is the public domain in which everyday politics gets played out and the intersections of these everyday interactions with the localized sovereignties that have their own normalized spatial orders. In this endeavor I draw upon work that focuses on what the performance of democratic process does rather than the values that inhere in it.[62] This focus on the performative and the everyday as a way to conceptualize politics echoes arguments made by scholars like Saba Mahmood[63] and Bayat[64] who make a similar argument for theorizing a politics based on practice rather than preconceived values, on function rather than form. In addition I propose a reading of this politics beyond strategies for resistance or rooted in survival in the contemporary political economy, towards a rootedness in allegiances and sovereign imaginaries that have emerged out of historic formulations of the norms and forms of urban living and urban planning.

[60] James H. Mittleman, and Christine B. N. Chin, "Conceptualizing Resistance to Globalization," in *The Global Resistance Reader,* ed. Louise Amoore (New York: Routledge, 2005).
[61] Homa Hoodfar, *Between Marriage and Market: Intimate Politics and Survival in Cairo* (California: University of California Press, 1997); Diane Singerman, *Avenues of Participation*.
[62] Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions*.
[63] Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011).
[64] Bayat, *Life as Politics*

Much attention has been given to recent conjunctures in urban politics in Pakistan, particularly focused on Karachi. Most of these examinations[65] have focused on the politics of Karachi's most prominent political party and its most violent urban movement, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). While these studies illuminate important aspects of the city's postcolonial condition in terms of the rising role of non-state forms of power in directing and governing urban life, as well as the subjective elements of this power in the form of the constitution of distinct masculine identities, they are evidenced on extraordinary moments of crisis and violence that have defined the lives of key individuals in leadership roles in these movements. Informed by the valuable insights that emerge from these studies about the complex workings of violent urban movements, I wanted to focus on the ways in which this politics of violence is worked out in the micro-processes of urban living in the everyday spaces of the city. Filling a gap in the literature, I wanted to develop an understanding of what other kinds of registers and imaginaries of urban living and experience beyond violence informed everyday life and how differences were worked out in these processes. Laura Ring's study of an apartment building in Karachi is a noteworthy departure in this sense.[66] She provides interesting insights into the 'peace-making' practices of middle-class women in the interiorized world of apartment living in the city. While appreciating these insights into the individual lives of these women, I wanted to attend to the collectivities and sovereignties that operate in the public domain and how they interact with private lives. For this I had to cast a wider net: to study the making of a community and a neighbourhood over time, I aimed to pull together the varied threads of

[65] Oskar Verkaaik, *Migrants and Militants: Fun and Urban Violence in Pakistan* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004); Gayer, *Karachi: Ordered Disorder*; Nichola Khan, *Mohajir Militancy in Pakistan: Violence and Transformation in the Karachi Conflict* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010).
[66] Laura A. Ring, *Zenana: Everyday Peace in a Karachi Apartment Building* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006).

multiple histories and identities that have generated complex and contradictory forms of social and political life in the city.

The Gendered Dimension of Urban Politics

The city has been theorized as a gendered space that "manifests a distinctive relationship among the political, economic and familial systems."[67] The context in which these subjectivities emerge is shot through with power, in terms of the boundaries that mark the division between those who are included and those who are excluded, between what spaces are accessible for everyone and those that strictly circumscribe their uses as well as the bodies that are allowed to inhabit a particular space.

The performative aspects of gender in emerging ethnographic studies, especially in South Asia, offer a rich theoretical field of engagement with how gendered subjectivities are constructed in public life.[68] Women's experience of public space is often contingent on the way they appear in public space – how they move, how they dress and whether they are alone or accompanied; and even though women's labour in public space is an essential part of the urban economy, their presence is often made invisible through practices of surveillance and exclusion.[69] Recent investigations of thresholds, especially those around law and the household have also revealed the imbrications of the private and public spheres.[70] Thus while recognizing that the conception of insides and outside – a domestic sphere and a public sphere, which are also

[67] Maureen A. Flanagan and Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, "Gender and the City: the Awful Being of Invisibility," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 32.1 (2011): xiii-xx.
[68] Tarini Bedi and Liza Weinstein, "Building Politics: Gender and Political Power in Globalizing Mumbai," in *Women's Encounter with Globalization,* eds. Samir Dasgupta et al. (Kolkata: Frontpage Publications Ltd, 2012); Ayona Datta, *The Illegal City: Space, Law and Gender in a Delhi Squatter Settlement* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Verkaaik, *Migrants and Militants*.
[69] Shilpa Phadke, Sameera Khan, and Shilpa Ranade, *Why Loiter? Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets* (India: Penguin, 2011).
[70] Datta, *The Illegal City*.

gendered – has older and also non-European genealogies, the assignment of normative values to one or the other, not to mention their strict segregation through modern biopolitics, is what becomes too limiting a frame when investigating the site of politics, in any context.

Women's participation and presence in public life in Pakistan varies according to different class, religious and ethnic backgrounds as well as amongst rural and urban areas and has to be considered against a backdrop of intense debates over women's rights and their access to the public sphere. These contestations show an imbrication of gender with religious norms and often the question of women's greater freedom becomes a conflict between statehood, religion and secularism. The fact that one of the avenues through which women have actively participated in public life is through their increasing involvement in religious movements, like the Jamaat-e-Islami, also complicates the distinction that is traditionally made between these three categories. While in this thesis I have not engaged specifically with women in organized movements, I have observed the entanglements of gender, piety and public space in the way women contribute towards enacting a politics of place.

In considering why public space becomes such a site of violent contestation, it is also important to take into account the social construction of masculinity. Public space has been well-researched as a significant site of performance of a violent hegemonic masculinity where disenfranchised young men lay claim to power and assert racial/ethnicized identities.[71]Masculinity and public space are often seen as co-constitutive: public space is projected as dangerous and unpredictable and therefore conflated with masculinity. But there are other dimensions to male behavior in public space that complicates the easy conflation between

[71] Kristen Day, "Being Feared: Masculinity and Race in Public Space," *Environment and Planning A* 38.3 (2006): 569-586.

masculine power and public space, and speaks to the underlying fears and anxieties that permeate public spaces as a result of social exclusions based on race and class. In considering the way men and women both appear in public space, I was attentive to the various dimensions of gendered behavior that contributes to the architecture of public spaces.

Research Methodology: An Inter-Disciplinary Engagement

This thesis relies on an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the urban modern in contemporary Pakistan that is a constant interplay of economic, political and religious forces; the approach cannot necessarily be reduced to one category or discipline, although the disciplines that have been chosen are very closely related – History, Anthropology and Political Science. The importance of historical meaning and memory, for example, to the constitution of the urban subject – the urban imaginary- necessitates an engagement with both the genealogy of the urban form as well as the evolution of its significance to the social world and its formations - particularly the state and the nation. Thus, writing a history of the city of Karachi as a repository of both memoir and archive became a way to identify the tensions and the lines of force that run through the social body and carry forward into the present. This is also meant to be an approach that allows a dialectic between the historical imagination and the present moment, but in a way that is not necessarily tied to a linear time. Crucial to this dialectic are the multiple and intersecting narratives that move across time and space to build a story of the making of a community, and a city in space and time.

As Comaroff and Comaroff[72] argue, for there to be coherence in the dialectic between ethnography and history there needs to be a common ground in terms of similar fields of inquiry and methods of analysis. The question is what kind of ethnography and what kind of history would create the kind of complementarity that would capture the questions asked in this thesis? As far as ethnography is concerned, more than a decade ago the Comaroffs argued for a "neo-modern" anthropology in which ethnography should be informed by the spirit of trying to understand the "making of collective worlds – the dialectics, in space and time, of societies and selves, persons and places, orders and events."[73] This kind of ethnography resonates deeply with the goals of the fields of social and cultural history that aim to, amongst other intents, read against the grain: of power and hegemony, both local and global; of totalizing narratives and dualist conceptualizations of historical time; and of linearity and evolutionist tendencies. It is an approach that looks for texture and fragments and understands that historians can only ever "see" the "dispersed fragments of an epoch," just as ethnographers only "see" the "fragments of a cultural field." [74] However the aim of both, in order to 'make sense' of the collective world, is to link these fragments to a "historically determinate society and environment."[75]

This ethnography is thus animated by questions important to historians, namely the tracing of effects across time. It is also grounded in a geographical imagination that acknowledges the importance of different scales of space and place to the making of the social world. Thus the other methodological thread that this thesis relies upon is a geographical approach towards the reading of "space," as conceptualized in the work of Lefebvre[76] and

[72] Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff*, Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1992).
[73] Ibid., 12.
[74] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Ethnography*, 16.
[75] Ibid., 16.
[76] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New Jersey: Blackwell, 1999).

Foucault[77]: the understanding that the spatial environment is the product of a socio-spatial dialectic in which people give meaning to places and places in turn imbue the social space with meaning. In this thesis, physical space that is urban space is treated not only as an ethnographic text but also as a component of the larger global geography of power relations and spatial hierarchies in which the urban occupies a privileged position.

I am also attentive to the issue that ethnography in a post-colonial context requires a critique of the role that anthropology as a discipline and anthropologists as professionals have played in the history of colonialism. The most significant part of the deconstruction of colonialist anthropology, for the purposes of my research, are the questions raised about the self-evident nature of binary categorizations such as tradition/modernity and public/private. These questions also eventually lead to a collapsing of the disciplinary boundaries between history and anthropology where historiography and ethnography are constantly in a dialectic, which continuously informs colonial and post-colonial realities.

Anthropological studies of urban space most commonly employ an ethnographic approach, which is useful when a deep engagement with the everyday reality of urban living is required. Within ethnographic approaches, there are specific areas of spatial/social analysis, which include "historical emergence, sociopolitical and economic structuring, patterns of social use and experiential meanings."[78] I engaged in these four areas of analysis in order to achieve my research objectives. My approach was also informed by an awareness of the power/knowledge of architecture and planning, and the function of urban discourses in shaping the urban. Urban space, particularly public space, is a site of major contestations between state and society as well

[77] Foucault, "Space, Knowledge and Power."
[78] Setha M. Low, "The Anthropology of Cities: Imagining and Theorizing the City," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25 (1996): 400.

as different forms of non-state authority. Fieldwork in such a context required an awareness of this tension and developing an ability to negotiate through this contested terrain.

The other disciplinary thread that informs this thesis are emerging critiques of state formation and state-society relations in which scholars, both from within political science as well as outside (anthropologists in particular), have questioned the assumed centrality of the state to social and political transformations.[79] This critique has significantly informed this study as it allowed me to look beyond the idea of a homogeneous state sovereignty towards other articulations of sovereignty through the avenue of socio-spatial practices. This interdisciplinary lens facilitated a reading of the spatial world from different conceptual angles, and posing questions such as: what does the internal organization of a neighbourhood and everyday socio-spatial practices tell us about the nature of state and modernity, sovereignty and citizenship?

As far as archival research was concerned, my engagement with the colonial planning archives on the city is informed by an approach that sees these texts as reflective of powerful discourses that played a key role in not just the physical development of the city but also the creation of new urban subjects and values. I have placed these texts in the larger colonial context by drawing attention to key historical conjunctures in the development of colonial rule in South Asia. In this contextualization the colonial world emerges as both a site of struggle and negotiation.

[79] Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions*; Janet Roitman, *Anti-Crisis* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2013); Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (New York: Verso, 2011); Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*.

Summary of Chapters

In summary, the specific research objectives of this thesis are to identify the main issues related to the emerging politics of space in the old city area of Karachi, which include the contestations, accommodations and negotiations around the uses of public spaces in this area. In addition, I seek to understand how different kinds of sovereignties function to shape norms and manage life and space in the quarter; and to locate these issues in the spatial politics of Karachi as well as that of emerging postcolonial urban conjunctures. I also aim to historicize the present moment by tracing the effects of the colonial construction of what it meant to be urban in Karachi for both Europeans and non-Europeans during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Following the introductory chapter, the second chapter lays out the field research methodology and context of the study. It contextualizes the neighbourhoods chosen for the study and provides the rationale for their selection. It provides a detailed field research methodology through a reflexive examination of field interactions and encounters, and concludes with identifying the challenges and constraints of conducting fieldwork in a contested political environment.

In the third chapter I write a history of the city of Karachi while highlighting how the city came to define the very idea of being urban for its inhabitants. Using previously unexamined archival material consisting of colonial administrative documents, correspondence, travelogues, and the memoirs of local inhabitants, I have tried to show how diverse subjects, both colonial and native, worked out their ideas of what it meant to be modern and urban through the processes by which they governed as well as lived and moved through the urban environment. The chapter

concludes by highlighting the moment of independence in 1947 as an event that both crystallized certain effects of the colonial urban, and at the same time generated immense contradictions that set the city off on the path towards its postcolonial avatar.

As the historic centre of the city is the repository of much of its urban and architectural heritage, I begin my ethnographic section in chapter four with the story of the dominant communities and the role of their associational life in managing and shaping social life in the quarter. A key concern that animates this chapter is to define the possibilities and limits of these internalized modes of governance and sovereignties – the Memon Jamaats that establish the norms and forms of social life in the quarter, specifically in the ways in which the neighbourhoods, streets and public spaces are used, conflicts are resolved, and differences are negotiated. What is the significance of public space and place-identity to the collective life of the neighbourhood, and what is its significance to the ruling arrangements? What kinds of sovereign imaginaries animate the way the space of the neighbourhood is imagined and reproduced? What are the historic and transnational geographic registers in these imaginaries? How do these registers come up against the developmentalist urban visions of the state?

In chapter five, as opposed to the customary associations like the Jamaats, I focus on political parties and their adjunct groups and their use and control of public spaces in the area. What I have tried to tease out in this chapter are the ideological differences between different kinds of sovereignties and how this plays out in the public spaces of the quarter. Gendered anxieties, as well as gendered subjectivities, emerge as a constitutive force in the spatial geographies being shaped in the quarter. Here I bring attention to the ways in which both men and women work out their desire for recognition and empowerment in public space. I ask how are public spaces contested, and what does this contestation reveal about the significance of

public space for the enaction of rule and governance by non-state actors? Also, how do we make sense of the threat of violence that permeates public spaces, and what do they tell us of the links between violence and democracy? The chapter concludes by delineating the shape of these 'modern' political sovereignties and how they come up against the more customary sovereignties like those of the Memon Jamaats.

Since religious life emerged as constitutive of social life in the quarter, in chapter six I trace the effects of religious beliefs, rituals and practices on the lived space of the quarter. Religious shrines and saint worship are significant elements of these practices and I examine the religious shrines as important socio-spatial loci. I am also attentive to the emerging religious movements and their new prescriptions that come against older forms, and how differences are worked out in the everyday lived experience of people. Do heterodox spiritual practices represent a transcendental sovereignty that goes beyond the state in a way that orthodox practices do not? Does the liminal space of the Sufi shrine act as a threshold between life and death that challenges biopolitical conceptions of subjects in spaces?

Chapter seven concludes the thesis by tying together the various threads generated by the historical and ethnographic examination, and placing the insights gained through this examination within a broader, national, regional and global context.

Chapter Two

Fieldwork and Context

The field research for this thesis was conducted in Karachi over a course of eleven months in 2011, and over the months of June and July in 2013 when I revisited the field site. When I initially went in 2011, I was coming back to Pakistan after an absence of eight years since moving to Canada from Pakistan in 1995. I had been making short intermittent visits in the meantime to see family and friends. After obtaining a bachelor's degree in architecture, and then working two years professionally as an architect in Karachi, I left Pakistan for Canada at a time when there was a great deal of political unrest in the city. My years in university had been spent with a paramilitary force occupying campuses across the city to keep the peace. These years, 1988-1993, had seen the rise of a militant ethnonationalist movement, the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) or the National Migrant Movement, which initially began as a student movement in Karachi's major universities. "Mohajir" an Urdu word, meaning migrant, is the identity claimed by the Muslims who migrated to different parts of Pakistan from India during and after partition in 1947. Being half 'Mohajir'[80] myself, I was made aware of ethnic identity as a marker of difference in new ways. MQM's early student cadre was highly militant and bent on dominating Karachi's campuses through converting most Urdu-speaking students to their cause. Never a supporter of the cause, I had engaged, much like most university students at the time, in debates about the viability of Mohajir nationhood and the legitimacy of their cause. These experiences had made us acutely aware of questions of belonging: who had a legitimate right to be here, to claim resources and to demand representation? We were being told that all of that was

[80] For an explanation of the term see Glossary and Chapter One.

contingent on our ethnicity. I often felt like an outsider in these debates, since my other 'half' – on my mother's side – is Punjabi. For the Mohajir nationalists, Punjabi elites dominated Pakistan's politics and exerted hegemony over all the other nationalities. Later as the movement became armed by the illegal flow of weapons that accompanied Pakistan's increasing involvement in the war in Afghanistan, city neighbourhoods were turned into battlegrounds as armed militias of the MQM fought with their major rivals – the Jamaat-e-Islami. I had personally witnessed some of this violence on campus as students were humiliated and abused for being one ethnicity or another – Mohajirs targeting Sindhis, Punjabis and Pathans, and vice versa. Coming from a fairly privileged upper middle class family and not having experienced the marginalization and disenfranchisement of mainly lower middle class Mohajirs, I developed a strong bias against the MQM, holding it responsible for creating a violent politics of ethnicity.

But my own personal sense of urban life as unpredictable, somewhat chaotic, even dangerous goes back to my childhood. Having grown up during the turbulent years of General Zia-ul-Haq's Islamist oriented military dictatorship that lasted from 1978-1988, I am part of a generation that witnessed significant social transformations: the greater role of religion in public life; Pakistan's increasing involvement in the conflict in Afghanistan; and the increasingly visible presence of the military in civilian life. Coming from a middle-class and fairly liberal background, with family members who had supported Pakistan's first experiment in democracy under Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto from 1971-1978 before it came to a sudden and violent end, I – like many other middle-class, secular Pakistanis – experienced the increasing role of religion in public life, as well as the militarization of society, as an unwelcome intrusion. Under Zia's regime, Pakistan entered into a phase of increasing intolerance for the presence of women in

public space, disregard for the rights and freedoms of religious minorities, and repression of political dissent.

The regime's abrupt end in 1988 and the subsequent election of Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan's first and only female Prime Minister, signaled what many felt was the beginning of a hopeful new era of renewed democracy. But much like in the broader postcolonial context, Pakistan's second experiment with democracy revealed more the limitations of liberal promises of freedom than its possibilities. The post-Zia years in Karachi saw the rise of militant non-state actors like the MQM who challenged state sovereignty in new ways.

Studying architecture and urbanism in a city like Karachi had allowed me to become sensitive to the spatial dynamics that resulted from the play of power and politics in the city. Posed mainly as a problem of a lack of 'development' Karachi's degrading infrastructure, more than rising inequality and violence, was of particular concern to planning and building experts. This infrastructure included buildings, water supply and sewage systems, electricity provision, roads and transportation. There was a preoccupation with retrofitting existing infrastructure as well as grand new plans for future infrastructure and building projects. But with the vast majority of the city living in 'informal' settlements without many essential services, any state planning, and no land tenure, there was a disjunction between the technocratic visions of a modernized city that we were being taught to create and the actual forces that were driving development in the majority of the city. Thus, I became interested early in my architectural education in the social impacts of architecture and planning. This interest was carried through into my Master's studies in architecture at McGill University for which I researched the social economy of rural housing in the remote mountainous regions of Northern Pakistan. This was also the beginning of my interest in a deep study of the sociology and anthropology of the built environment, and I

subsequently embarked on my doctoral research project to study the politics of the urban environment in my hometown.

The Neighbourhoods

My fieldwork was conducted in two neighbourhoods of Karachi's inner city quarters, which are located adjacent to the port area in the south east of the city (fig 1.1). Occupying the southern tip of the city that overlooks the Arabian Sea, the area contains prominent landmarks that speak to Karachi's maritime as well as colonial history. The massive curved façade of the Karachi Port Trust, established in 1916 flanks the southern end of the old city and also defines a borderline between the extensive harbor infrastructure consisting of piers, docks and wharves, and the city proper.

Located in the South District of Karachi, the colloquial name of the area is Kharadar, or 'Salt Water Gate," which refers to the seaward entrance of the old walled city (see fig. 3). The area consists of several densely populated 'quarters' with narrow winding streets, often not wide enough for vehicular traffic to pass through. The quarters are delineated through a few major traffic thoroughfares that also mark the most traffic heavy zone in the city. I carried out my study in two adjacent quarters in the old city: Macchi Miani, also known as Kharadar (Salt Water Gate); and the Old Town Quarters, also known as Mithadar (Sweet Water Gate), which broadly corresponds to the oldest part of the old city and the quarters that contained the original walled fortification (see fig. 4).

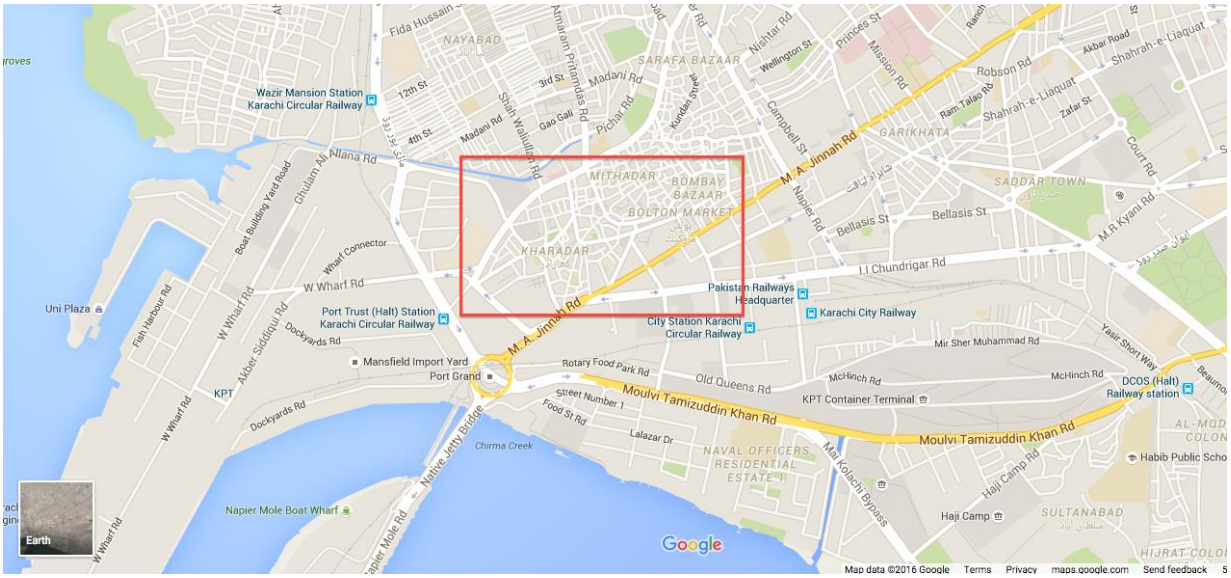

Figure 3. “Map of Karachi with the old city quarters highlighted: Kharadar (Salt Water Gate) and Mithadar (Sweet Water Gate*).*” (Source: Maps.google.com, copyright: Imagery © 2016 DigitalGlobe, Data SIO, NOAA, US Navy, NGO, GEBCO, TerraMetrics,)

Figure 4. Close-up of the neighbourhoods of Kharadar and Mithadar in the old city. Source: Maps.google.com, copyright: Imagery © 2016 DigitalGlobe Map Data © Google

I chose the old city neighbourhoods because here there is a certain density of population that has fostered multiple and multi-functional uses of space in a very small area, which remain unique to this area. I wanted to find out how residents relate to their urban environment in such a place. Apart from certain unique uses of space in the area, it is also inhabited by communities that have a long history of association with the city, both in terms of the material as well as the imaginary. I wanted to find out how these residents relate to the city and what kinds of changes had taken place in the ways in which the idea of community and the urban had developed for them.

The neighbourhoods of the old city date back to the mid-nineteenth century and, though they present a dilapidated look with degrading infrastructure, they are legally tenured areas – sometimes with a continuous history of occupation dating back to colonial times. However, informality does enter into land transactions – especially in transfer of ownership of land and buildings, as well access to infrastructure, much like in most of Karachi. The area is also adjacent to Karachi's prime business district area, which contains the headquarters of most national and international banks as well as multinational corporations. The crumbling old colonial buildings, four to six stories tall that populate the old quarter, present a stark contrast to the steel and glass highrises of the business district.

The neighbourhoods are connected to all public utilities, however the state of infrastructure is quite dysfunctional. Due to the failing residential electrical grid supplying the area, illegal electrical connections – visible in the form of wires connected to street poles – abound in the area. Like in much of Karachi garbage collection services remain erratic and often absent, and backed-up sewage systems result in streets overflowing with effluent. Deteriorating infrastructure is the biggest source of discomfort and frustration for the residents, and managing

it takes up a lot of time and energy. Municipal provision of infrastructure in Karachi is highly uneven: planned and affluent localities receive efficient services while the majority of the city – almost 60% of which is concentrated in 'unplanned' areas – depends on informal service providers, particularly for water supply, even though state representations show a largely planned space (see fig. 5). I give a detailed examination of the politics of infrastructure in the city in Chapter Four.

The area also contains some of the biggest wholesale markets in the city from where goods shipped in from the port are distributed to the rest of the country. However, despite the existence of the markets as well as being home to the Karachi Chamber of Commerce, it is an economically depressed area with increasing migration from low-income groups looking for work in the markets. The area has a strategic importance for the urban economy that has created a competition for the control of real estate in this area. The area has been undergoing a steady degentrification as the more affluent inhabitants have left for the elite suburbs of the city, leaving behind mostly lower middle class and working class residents. The presence of the elite business owners however can be felt in their shops and businesses that still operate in the area and which employ the migrant workers coming from different parts of Pakistan.

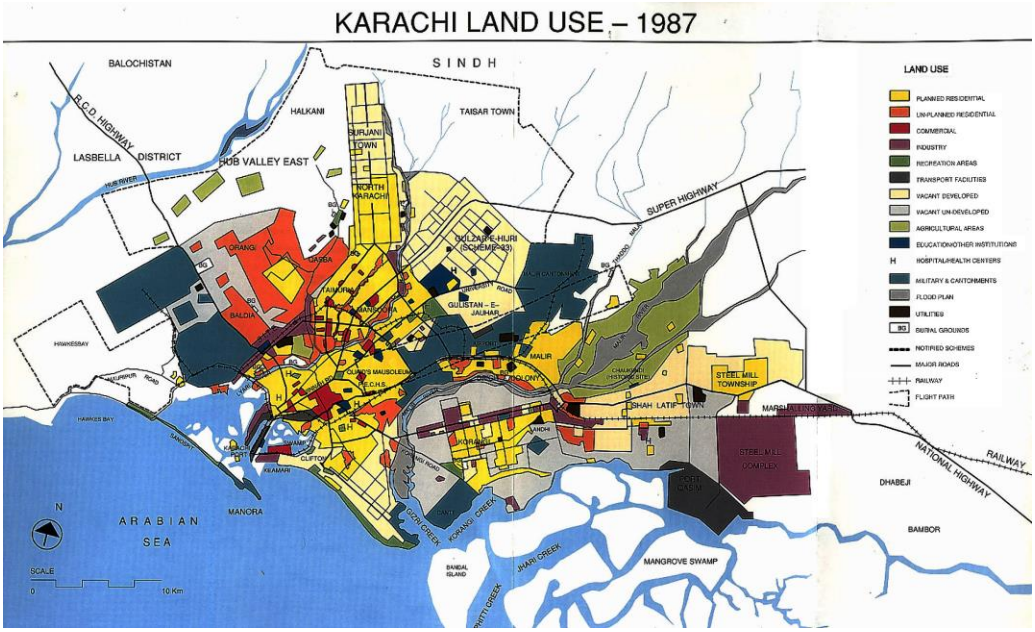

Figure 5. Karachi map of land use indicating 'planned' and 'unplanned' development according to the Karachi Master Plan 1987. Arif Hasan. Accessed June 12, 2016. http://arifhasan.org/karachi-landuse-1987.

The uniqueness of the area also lies in the multi-functionality of space-use, often in contravention of municipal regulations. Apartment blocks, bazaars, markets, shrines, mosques, community halls, hospitals and schools are packed together; sometimes the functions of each of these places bleed into each other. People belonging to distinct communal identities and religious denominations inhabit the old city, with their community and religious spaces clearly defined. Most of the inhabitants identify as *Ahl-e-Sunnat*, commonly associated with the Sunni denomination in Islam. However there is a sizeable minority of *Bohras*, *Ismaili* and *Ahl-e-Tasheeh* or Shias whose religious centres in the form of *Imambargahs* and *Jamaat Khanas* proliferate in the quarter. While the area is a mix of different ethnicities, there is a predominance of Memons – Gujarati speaking Muslims originally hailing from the west coast of India, from the regions of Gujarat and Kathiawad. The stamp of Memon social and cultural life is strong in the

old city area and I have engaged extensively with their history, associational life and social organization in Chapter Four. There is a strong sense of place: residents express the fact of living in the old city area as living in the 'real' Karachi.

In the Field

Over the course of eleven months I conducted 52 interviews with residents of my chosen case study area. The interviewees included male and female elders and youth who were involved in a range of occupations: shopkeepers; small business owners; contractors; a broker; journalists; municipal workers; councilors; housewives; students; religious leaders; and political party workers. The common thread was their involvement or rootedness in the area, either as residents or as workers. The interviews were a combination of long, involved discussions touching on people's life stories, to more focused interviews in terms of their particular occupational, religious or community leadership roles in the area. Certain interlocutors became more than subjects for my study, assisting and guiding me through the area as well as giving me a glimpse into their private lives and family activities.

Participant observation was an important part of my research strategy. As my main field of engagement was the microenvironment of urban living, this strategy was particularly relevant in order to examine and explain the social processes by which people adapt to their physical environment as well as the way they shape its meanings and uses. Using this strategy I engaged with people in their everyday use of public spaces, and in their participation in public events, community organizations, and political and municipal networks.

I employed a fairly open ended approach in conducting the interviews. I would often begin by posing questions about the general conditions of the neighbourhood, even the city. In

Karachi initiating a friendly conversation through a reference to the prevailing social/political conditions is quite common, this meaning being conveyed in a single word: *halaat*. Asking about the halaat of the day almost always elicited involved responses, usually consisting of opinions about the current politics of the city and its effects on the lives of the inhabitants. I would then intersperse specific questions, taking my lead from the issues that would surface in these initial responses. I had specific questions to ask as well about the function of the particular organizations in terms of their social and political role in the area.

In order to 'enter' the field I began by identifying my entry points, which were the social locales where I would be able to introduce myself as a researcher. This act of introduction, in addition to the obvious objective of establishing contact with and gaining further contacts in the neighbourhood, also acted as a way for local residents to assess and approve my intrusion into their lives. The locales that became the most important entry points, as well as subjects of further research, were the offices of Jamaats - local welfare-type societies; market or bazaar associations; the local municipal office; religious places (mosques and shrines); and local political party unit offices. These locales were also the site of the dominant social and political arrangements that directed most physical and social development in the area, their domains always overlapping in complementary as well as conflicting ways. The contacts identified through these social arrangements also became important interlocutors who often acted as guides and assistants during my year of fieldwork. I met them in their official places of work, often joined by other workers/employees and volunteers. When joined by others, these sessions became more like focus groups where I would pose questions to all present in order to get a sense of their social locations and experiences in the neighbourhood. All these sessions were

recorded with the permission of the participants. Occasionally I was invited to the homes of some of the community or municipal workers, as well as to religious festivals in the area.

The awareness of one's own social and cultural position has been highlighted in anthropological fieldwork as an important mediatory factor when interpreting social phenomena. I was very aware of my own social location with regards to my interlocutors. Being a Pakistani, on one level I had an immediate and close connection that allowed me easy social access to the area. However, at the same time my class background, of which my educational level is an important element, also put me at a distance. The area that I was working in however, while economically depressed, is not on the margins of the local political and economic set up. It is inhabited by blue and white collar workers, as well as small traders, with a large transient population of migrant workers from all over the country. Most of the better off residents of the area send their children to school and aspire for a university education for them. I was often welcomed by these residents as someone who had 'achieved' the kind of social mobility that they aspired to. On the other hand interaction with workers, especially those involved in 'informal' work and occupations, often posed a challenge as class tensions were often expressed in terms of a lack of trust. This was understandable in a social situation where the already precarious standing of informal workers was continuously threatened by the state as well as dominant class interests. It was these interactions that provided a real learning opportunity in class dynamics and marginality in the area.

The two parts of the old city area that I focused on, Kharadar and Mithadar, are home to an influential community of Memon businessmen, traders and shop-owners who have played a key role in the physical and social development of the area. The stamp of Memon social and cultural practices is very strong in the old city area, and an engagement with their particular

family and community set-ups became key towards understanding the social forces that had shaped this part of the city. This involved attending social and religious events in the area and visiting the sites of major community events. Since most social events centre around some kind of religious activity, I attended major religious festivals as well as smaller ones in the many Sufi shrines in the area. I also attended and participated in 'langars,' which is the donation of food at shrines, as well as ritual prayers conducted in the shrines. In order to observe the everyday use of public spaces I frequented open squares, parks, chowks and bazaars where I carried out on-the-spot interviews with public users. At times, these venues would also be sites of conflict where armed confrontations between political groups would transpire. This experience formed a significant part of the participant observation I engaged in.

Since I wanted to establish the link between everyday uses of space and the formal prescriptions of urban space use, the formal domain of urban municipal planning was a significant focus of this study. My approach towards gaining an understanding of this domain extended beyond the study of official documentation to an engagement with everyday municipal functions. This was done not just through interviews with municipal officials, but also participant observation of the everyday business conducted in the local municipal office. This was achieved through repeated visits to the municipal council office of the neighbourhood, which was staffed by the local elected councilors, as well as the permanent municipal staff. This engagement provided me with valuable insights into the way the state, on a very local level, interacts with citizens, and the kind of contestations and accommodations that arise in the state's dealings with the various social and political arrangements in the area. These observations inform, to a significant degree, my understanding of the interaction between state and society through the lens of this ethnographic engagement, which is explored in depth in chapter three.

While access to the local municipal offices was fairly easy, this was not the case for the higher levels of the municipal structure. The Karachi Municipal Corporation is the controlling municipal authority of Karachi. It is a highly politicized municipal body where access to information is carefully controlled in the interest of the local political party – the MQM – that has majority representation in local government. In a situation of constant political flux where municipal governance structures are constantly being re-arranged, officials are highly suspicious of any attempts to document the municipality's practices and see this as potentially threatening. City plans and maps, which render visible not only the land-use but ownership patterns of different localities are highly prized instruments of enumeration and thus not readily available in the public domain.

A significant part of my archival research was conducted in the British Library in London. After receiving a travel research grant for archival research I spent two months, June and July in 2012, researching the India Office Records and Private Papers collection of the library. The collection is a repository of the archives of the East India Company (1600-1858), the Board of Control or Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India (1754-1858), and the India Office (1858-1947). My focus in the archives was the administrative documents of the Karachi Municipality, official reports, letters and correspondence pertaining to town planning and city administration, travelogues and memoirs of visitors to Karachi in the colonial era, and imperial gazetteers of the Bombay Presidency.

Challenges/Opportunities: Reflections on Field Work

In undertaking this study of mainly public spaces as a woman, I knew that I would face some challenges. While women actively occupy public spaces in all sorts of ways in Pakistan,

there are conflicts in the way this presence is negotiated, challenged and contested, much like in most public spaces around the world. I was aware that I would be putting myself in the middle of these contestations. I was also aware, that in some ways, women, while being present in public spaces and thus in constituting the architecture of public spaces, were often made invisible through different techniques of surveillance and monitoring.

But most of all, I was acutely aware and critical of the assumption of Muslim women in public spaces being perceived primarily as a threat to patriarchy in spaces controlled by Muslim men. While I listened to male anxieties about family, sexuality and masculinity that surfaced in contestations around public space, I was attentive to all the ways in which both men and women were present in these spaces and how both periodically participated in the destabilization of norms and accepted practices.

I am also aware that violence against women in a large metropolis like Karachi unfolds in a complex urban scenario which is defined by economic vulnerability, state and political violence, social and spatial marginalization and massive infrastructure provision issues. For example, even though studies have shown that domestic violence against women cuts across all socio-economic classes, in public space and public life, class plays a significant role in intensifying or mitigating the violence experienced by women. Rising inequality and income disparity has meant that working class and low-income women have had to take on the role of providers and to step out of the home. The first challenge women face, however, regardless of whether they work or not, is in accessing basic infrastructure. Lack of access to drinking water means women often have to walk long distances from home to find water. Thus low-income women in public space are particularly vulnerable to harassment and threats of violence, and

often taking public transportation is also considered as an undertaking fraught with dangers of harassment.

However, despite the increasing insecurities that define public life in Pakistan, women of course form very much a part of public presence in the city. Being the largest urban conglomeration in Pakistan, Karachi has the largest number of working women in the country and an increasing number of professional women who move and commute through the city on a daily basis. Growing up in the city I have a personal experience of the constraints and challenges to mobility, which made me acutely aware of women's presences and absences in public spaces, not only through the eyes of my female interlocuters but men as well.

Many of my interlocutors were men who were unused to encountering academics, let alone female academics conducting field research in public spaces. There was often an undercurrent of skepticism about what I planned to do with my research. While I had a male research assistant with me and also developed a cordial relationship with Shahid, a young Memon man who was one of my key interlocutors as well as with Farooq Bhai, a much older Memon gentleman of some standing in the community, random encounters with men in public spaces were more difficult, often shot through with an undercurrent of hostility. I tried to turn these instances into opportunities to engage with the sources of my interlocutors' anxieties around gender and family especially with regard to public space, and thus gained important insights into some of the emerging tensions in the control of public space in the area.

One of my key interlocutors in the field was Razia Bano, a woman who was an active member of MQM and had served as a municipal councilor in the local union council. It had been easy to develop a relationship with Razia as she saw me as a fellow Mohajir, as well as a

working woman like her. One of the significant ways in which we bonded were our shared experiences of the city and its politics as well as the challenges women face when stepping out of the home to work. I also relied on a female friend from my university days, Farida, who had grown up in the old city, to gain access to the area as well as learning from her experiences of the neighbourhood and the community she had grown up in. Farida introduced me to Shahid and his family who became one of my key interlocutors and she also participated in informal sessions and visits with the family where we would discuss, over chai and samosas, the local politics, the difficulties and challenges that the family, which included Shahid's wife, three children, his mother, sister and grandfather, faced in everyday life. Like me, Farida had studied architecture and was also very aware of the politics of land and infrastructure in the city. Her perspectives thus provided an interesting foil to my own investigation, in the form of many conversations about proper and 'improper' practices pertaining to municipal planning, social conduct and religion in public space.

Even though there were advantages to embedding myself amongst the social and political actors who were my interlocutors, I realized the pitfalls as well. In developing a relationship with the party workers of the MQM[81], for example, there were implications in terms of my own positionality and the people and politics I was seen to be aligned with.

For example, following a somewhat threatening encounter with members of the MQM in a public park, I decided that I needed to understand their role and the extent of their power and involvement in the community. This is when I became acquainted with Razia Bano. After having developed what I thought was a comfortable relationship with her and the work she had done as a councilor for the area, I found myself, when accompanying her on a routine drive around the

[81] See footnote 1, also see Chapters One and Four

neighbourhood, in the middle of a forced shut-down of the shops and markets in the area carried out by armed men from the party, whom she was directing at several points in the process. My dilemma was two-fold: my personal discomfort at technically being a part of this process as I was accompanying her; and concerns about being seen by other residents as being associated with this action and thus aligning myself with the party, whose support in the neighbourhood was uneven and often coerced at best. No doubt, journalists encounter these situations often, but as a researcher it raised some questions for me in terms of what my role was and how that affected the integrity of my research.

These two encounters precipitated some key questions revolving around the relationship between 'formal' and 'informal' practices, the role of local forms of authority in reproducing the meanings and uses of space, and the question of accessibility of public space. These encounters, amongst others allowed me to gain insights into the terrain of negotiation that exists between the formal and informal aspects of control/authority and socio-spatial practices, as well as the ambiguity that surrounds them.

Through an engagement with actors who move within the 'formal' and 'informal' I was able to live the dilemma of being implicated in those practices myself. This role provided me with a valuable vantage point from where to pose the questions I have around formal and informal governance and the fluid thresholds between licit/illicit domains and activities.

Conclusion

Engaging in ethnographic field research requires the anthropologist to become aware of their own positionality in relation to the communities they conduct research in, which points to the subjective nature of ethnographic research. But the interaction between the multiple

subjectivities involved in the research process – the researcher, their assistants and the interlocutors – also provides opportunities for a much deeper and richer engagement with the social world than one that presumes an objective, 'outside' standpoint, as many have pointed out.[82] The neighbourhoods of the old city provided a rich terrain of social and political life that I attempted to understand through an awareness of my own social location, the way I was seen by members of the community, the power dynamics generated by my own insertion into the lives of my respondents, and the gender dynamics of the uses of public spaces in the area. The neighbourhoods I chose offered a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and mixed income field of study, which was very well-suited to the research questions I was asking about the norms and forms of urban spatial politics in the city. The challenges offered by the need to negotiate through the highly contested domain of Karachi's public spaces, and my own role as observer and inadvertent participant in the control of public spaces provided some of the richest learning opportunities for this research. This kind of ethnographic engagement, in which I was caught up in the entanglements of formal/informal spatial practices, also allowed me an on the ground vantage point to consider and reflect on state/society relations.

[82] Farhana Sultana, "Reflexivity, Positionality and Participatory Ethics: Negotiating Fieldwork Dilemmas in International Research," *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 6.3 (2007): 374-385; Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.), eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Sage, 2000), 733-768.

Chapter Three

Karachi: Historical Constructions of Place - Between Memoir and Archive

The oldest memoir written by a native on the settlement that preceded the city of Karachi was penned by Naomal Hotchand[83], a Hindu merchant who became an ally and a political agent for the British aiding their capture of the city of Karachi in 1839. He wrote his memoirs in 1886 in which he, in addition to recounting the events that led up to the British capture of the city, gave a description of the city as it existed before colonial rule:

> Kharabunder was at the conflux of the Habb with the Arabian Sea. After the lapse of some time the entrance to the port from the seaside was choked with a collection of sand, and no vessel could find admission into the harbor. All vessels were then made of bamboo wood, kept together by coir rope instead of iron nails.
>
> The merchants felt much inconvenienced by the entrance to the harbor being barred. Seth Bhojoomal then, in consultation with other leading men of the place set out in search of another spot in the viscinity better suited for mercantile purposes, whither they might remove. The Karachi creek was preferred. There stood originally at the head of the bar about 20-25 huts of fishermen. The spot was then called Dirbo. There was also a pool of water close by which was known by the name of "Kalachi's Kun"- "Kun" meaning a deep ditch, and Kalachi being the name of a fisherman. Round about it grew tamarind and mangrove trees. This spot was selected and houses were built thereon, and everything moveable in Kharakbandar was transferred and everybody removed to Kalachi-jo-ghote, or Karachi as it was then called…"
>
> About the sumbat year 1785 (A.D. 1729) the people of Kharakbandar settled in Karachi. At the suggestion of Bhojoomal, one Asoodamal consulted Beebee Muradan on the desirability of fortifying Karachi. The suggestion being generally liked, timar (mangrove) trees were cut down, and people set about erecting a fortification of wood and mud. Foreign labour was engaged to assist the people. All labourers received their wage in dry and wet dates brought down from Bahrain and Muscat. In a short time a goodly fort was raised and mounted with canons brought from Muscat. The fort wall included an area of 60 or 70 jirebs. The fort had two entrances – the one facing the west was called the Khara Darwaza, or the gate leading to the salt water; the other facing the north-east was called the Mitha Darwaza, i.e. the gate leading to sweet water. All people

[83] Naomal Hotchand, *A Forgotten Chapter of Indian History as Described in the Memoirs of Seth Naomal Hotchand C.S.I. of Karachi. 1804-1878*, trans. Rao Bahadur Alumal Trikamdas Bhojwani (Exeter: William Pollard and Co. Ltd, 1915). Reprints from the collection of the University of Michigan Library.

> lived within this fort, which was on the outside surrounded by a jungle of timar and thorny thuar bushes.[84]

Hotchand's account is a rare insight into the pre-colonial origins of Karachi that allows a reading of the city from the point of view of a local, yet at the same time it is trans-regional in scope. What is most interesting for our purposes is the reference to what seems like a communal process of decision-making by consensus, here in the momentous context of entirely relocating a trading settlement. Put another way, in Naomal Hotchand's account of pre-colonial Karachi's foundation, from the vantage point of the high colonial period, we are not given a sense of conflict having arisen in the course of the relocation and the establishment of the new settlement. In this imagined old order, the forms and processes of placement of settlements are not fixed but change according to the changes in the environment, like the silting of the river and the threat of attacks from the sea. Elders are consulted about decisions to relocate, and merchant networks are deployed to provide labour for the reconstruction. This prior constellation of space, capital, labor, and politics served as an accidental counterpoint to Hotchand's colonial present. Hotchand's account is set within the backdrop of ongoing conflicts between the autonomous Hindu Amils who controlled most of the coastal trade along the Arabian Sea and the Muslim Talpur rulers' attempts to take over these coastal settlements, including Karachi. His account thus begins with the attempts of these merchant networks to retain their autonomy, which also formed the basis of their negotiations and eventual collaboration with the British to wrest control of a lucrative trading post from the Talpur rulers.

In this chapter I trace the historical construction of place, or 'place-making' practices that both Europeans and Non-Europeans engaged in to 'make' Karachi a definite location within the larger geography of empire, colony and postcolony. This examination is informed by an

[84] Ibid., 36-37.

understanding of place-making practices as always embedded in a web of power relations that span time and space, in this case, the time and space of modernity. Relying on different kinds of textual materials – from administrative documents, guidebooks, travelogues and memoirs, I foreground the ideas and attitudes, amongst both Europeans and natives, that contributed towards the construction of an urban identity. I am also attentive to the fragmented nature of the history that emerges; since the material that I trace remains embedded in a fairly privileged gaze, whether that of colonial administrators or middle-class Indians who inhabited the city. One of the key aims of this examination is to tease out the ways in which different conceptions of being urban were produced through the colonial encounter, through processes that involved imposition, contradiction, accommodation and hybridity. While the 'materialist pedagogy'[85] of colonial planning processes was introduced as a new way to create a 'modern' urban order, I am also attentive to the ways in which this pedagogy came into contact with other urban imaginaries.

Going back to Hotchand's early narrative of the city's creation, the picture that emerges is of a port settlement which relies on a thriving trade network in what is now the province of Sindh (see fig. 6), which reaches up north to the ports along the river Indus and west across the sea to the ports of Muscat and Bahrain and south to Surat and as far away as the Malabar coast. Hotchand mentions his ancestor, Bhojomal, who originally settled in Kharak Bandar from where he sent his workers to Gawador, Bela and Muscat, all ports along the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. His people in Muscat eventually opened various *kothis*[86] in Bushahar, Shiraz and Bahrain. His business further expanded in other port cities in Sindh, and he was able to trade with Surat, Purbandar and Malabar, along the West Indian coast. The maintenance of these

[85] Glover, *Making Lahore Modern*.
[86] The term "Kothi" refers to the merchant firms or 'factories' that were established in different towns and cities throughout the trade network. The literal meaning of the term, however is the house or home of a wealthy person.

merchant networks was to later become of crucial importance to the British who wished to establish a coastal hub in the port that would allow the management of trade and commerce in this outer frontier of India.

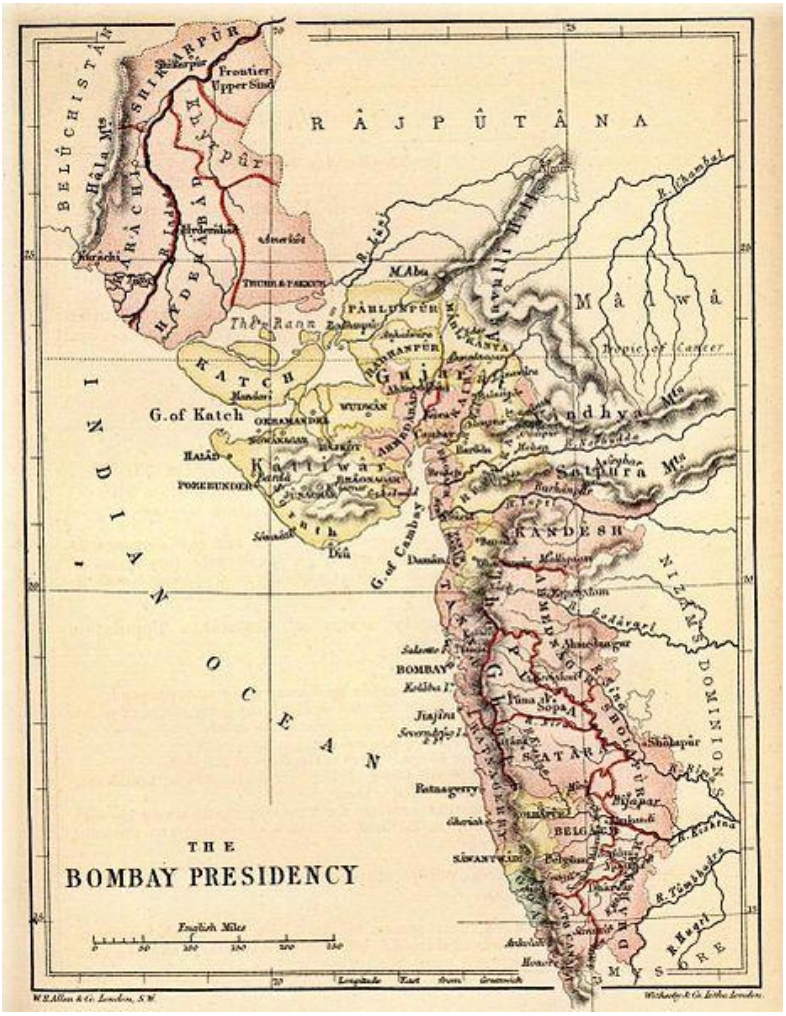

Figure 6. Map of the Bombay Presidency with the region of Sindh in upper left corner. Source: Pope, G. U. Text-book of Indian History: Geographical Notes, Genealogical Tables, Examination Questions. London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1880.

The movement and fluidity of settlement in this part of South Asia has been observed elsewhere, although more in the rural context.[87] Commenting on the relationship between Sindhi identity and its relationship to place, Ansari suggests that partly because of the dependence on the river Indus and being subject to its unpredictability, the forms of housing were not very permanent in order to facilitate movement when necessary. As a result of this, attachment to place was not necessarily an important factor informing people's identity. That said, established towns and cities with more permanent forms of architecture, monuments and defined urban forms as well as an economy with inter-regional linkages have been well-documented in Sindh.[88] However, in comparison with the older cities of Sindh like Thatta, Shikarpur and Hyderabad, Karachi was a newer settlement, which originally began as a fishing port and arguably took on characteristics of rural settlement or what can be called a coastal fishing settlement. Karachi was the largest, but not the only fishing port on this part of the Arabian Sea coast. There still exist fishing villages and settlements that, according to local accounts, have a long history of presence on the coast. The non-permanent character of these settlements is also known as they contain very few permanent structures. Local fishermen trace the presence of their ancestors in these locations from 300-400 years ago. What is clear though, is that these port settlements were part of a coastal economy that extended west towards the Persian Gulf and towards the southeast as far as the Malabar Coast.

Naturally, central to Hotchand's memoir are the events of his life and how they played out in this city. Karachi's fortunes are also referred to in terms of the powers vying to control it, hence there are accounts of the various local sovereignties and the disputes between the Talpurs

[87] Sarah Ansari, *Life after Partition: Migration, Community and Strife in Sindh, 1947-1962* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[88] Claude Markovits. *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750-1947: Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

and the other powers laying claim to the city. Hotchand's account can be seen as falling into an ancient tradition of representation, prior to what Timothy Mitchell has termed "enframing." Mitchell references the work of Ibn Khaldun to conclude, "the life of the city was understood in terms of the occurrence and reoccurrence of practices, rather than in terms of an 'architecture' – material or institutional – that stands apart from life itself, containing and representing the meaning of what was done."[89] Representing this tradition, Hotchand refers to the city in terms of the rise and fall in his own fortunes, changes and disputes in its rule, and its trade and business practices. The city, at this point does not seem to be a static container, standing apart from the life that unfolds in it. It is dynamic and rises and falls with the life practices that unfold in this place.

By contrast, in European accounts of the city – the most detailed and notable of which was penned by Alexandre Baillie in 1893[90] – the city becomes fixed in a historical position. This 'fixing' is achieved through the precise location of the city within the topography, and eventually in the transformation of this topography. Accordingly, Baillee often refers to Kurrachee as a city that "came to the fore", "was called forth into being," and "was fixed upon as the residence of the commissioner of Sindh."[91]

In Hotchand's account the old town appeared as a warren of narrow streets where houses, shops, mosques and temples abounded. He also made numerous references to *Kothis*, or factories that were part of his family business. Sometimes these *Kothis* are also referred to as 'ghar,' which means home in Urdu, implying that the functions of home and business may not have been entirely separate. Others have pointed to the multi-functionality of urban spaces in

[89] Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 59.
[90] Alexander Baillie, *Kurrachee: Past, Present and Future (1890)* (Oxford in Asia Historical Reprints: Oxford University Press, 1975).
[91] Baillie, *Kurrachee*, 6.

settlements from this region and this time. There were similar spatial patterns as well in the older and more established cities of Thatta, Shikarpur and Hyderabad, in the region of Sindh. This pattern of multi-functionality and the fluidity between what was considered private and what was considered public space was the most marked difference from the way urban space was later reconceived by the British planners. There was a definitive demarcation between public and private functions, as well as the construction of buildings built to fulfill specific functions.

Another way in which local settlement patterns have been shown to have a distinct character in South Asia is by the existence of distinct spatialities based on caste and religious affiliations. In Naomal Hotchand's account it is clear that there existed *mohallas* (neighbourhoods) of Muslims and Hindus in the old city, although how distinct or strict their boundaries were is difficult to ascertain. Hotchand does recount conflicts between the Hindu and Muslim inhabitants of the city, although this is against the backdrop of the beginning of British attempts to gain control of the city.

The early port settlement eventually became part of the domains of the Talpur Mirs, who ruled southern Sindh from 1783-1843. Mir Fatehali Talpur, the first Talpur ruler, fortified the island of Manora, which lay off the Arabian Sea coast of the main settlement, in 1797. Since the seventeenth century when the British East India Company had established its first factory in Thatta in 1615, which was closed down in 1662, the British had had a hard time gaining a commercial foothold in Sindh. Partly because of the vicissitudes of the Indus river and its ports, and partly due to the less than amiable relations with the local rulers who changed two dynasties during this period – the Kalhoras and then the Talpurs[92] – it was only in the mid-nineteenth

[92] The Kalhora clan ruled Sindh from 1701-1783. Mian Yaar Mohammad Kalhoro, originally appointed as governor by the Mughals, eventually extended his domains beyond Mughal jurisdiction and the Kalhoras continued as an autonomous dynasty. They were succeeded by the Talpur Mirs, of Baloch origin who defeated the Kalhoras in the

century that, through a 'humane piece of rascality,'[93] Sindh was brought under colonial rule. In their attempts to wrest autonomy from the local rulers the British wanted toll-free passage along the Indus, which the Mirs were unwilling to provide. Disputes arose over British objections to tolls paid by European and native merchants under their patronage in Karachi (Naomal and his family would have been among them).

During the nineteenth century, Sindh had acquired another strategic value that involved British attempts to secure the western frontiers of their empire from the Russian empire. Competition with the French over control of South Asian seaports also lent urgency to these attempts. As Sir Nathan Crowe, a political and commercial agent for the East India Company declared:

> It would make Sindhian help likely if attack on Afghanistan became necessary; it would make it possible for the British to foment a revolution against Kabul, if this proved necessary or desirable; it would preclude the entry of the French, Afghans, or Marathas. It would be an excellent centre from which to spy on Afghanistan.[94]

The port settlement at Kurrachee had already been identified as the potential site for the development of a major seaport that could allow the transshipment of troops bound for the Afghan front, as well as open up a channel of trade up and down the Indus. Thus most accounts of the settlement appear between 1830 and 1839 in which travel writers like Sir Richard Burton and military men like Outram, Carless and Hart lay down details of the town's commercial and maritime potential and its defences. As Khuhro points out, at this time Lord Auckland, the Governer-General of India, was dreaming of immense wealth: "If I can open channels of

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Battle of Halani in 1783 and stayed in power till 1843 when they were defeated in the Battle of Miani outside the city of Hyderabad, by the British under the command of Charles Napier.

[93] A popular quote attributed to Sir Charles Napier, the 'conqueror' of Karachi.

[94] Quoted in R. A. Huttenback, *British Relations with Sind, 1799-1843* (University of California Press, 1962), 3.

commerce to Central Asia and if I can make the Indus the thoroughfare for navigation, that gold and silver road…which it ought to be, I shall not care much else."[95]

Defended only by a weak fortification and a handful of Talpur Baloch riflemen manning its walls, Karachi did not offer much of an obstacle. The military takeover of Karachi in 1839 was a prelude to the eventual conquest of Sindh, which was decided in the fateful battle of Miani, fought outside of the fortified city of Hyderabad in 1843. In contrast to the battle of Miani the takeover of Karachi was a bloodless affair as chronicled by Hotchand, who had provided crucial information to the British, which allowed them to encircle and then encamp the settlement in a matter of a few days.

Hotchand is a controversial figure in Karachi's history. He played a pivotal role in the capture of the city by the British, acting as an informant, and was later rewarded with the title of CIE (Companion of the Most Exalted Order of Staff of the Indian Empire). In his memoirs his relationship with the British officer, Captain Carliss, is represented as one of reciprocal trust, and his main anxiety is around the threat posed by the Muslim Talpur rulers to the Hindu merchants and their businesses in Karachi and Hyderabad. Numerous incidents of the capture or abuse of Hindus by Muslims are recounted in his memoir. The alliance with the British was meant to protect the economic interests of Hindus, represented by independent family firms that "partook the appearance of a petty government" and whose agents or "Goomashtas" operated branches as far north as Kabul and Kashmir and as far west as the Persian Gulf, Oman and Muscat.[96]

Hotchand's fortunes changed radically with the advent of the British. The British decision to 'take' Karachi was made in light of the failed negotiations with the Talpur rulers of

[95] Lord Auckland to Sir Richard Jenkins, 21 May 1839, quoted in R. A. Huttenback *British Relations with Sind, 1799-1843* (University of California Press, 1962), 58-59.
[96] Hotchand, *A Forgotten Chapte*r.

Sindh on establishing a stake in the lucrative trade routes along the Indus. The hostility of the local Baloch Talpur rulers and their subjects towards the British was a major obstacle that they overcame through alliances with the Hindu Amils, a merchant caste and the one to which Hotchand belonged. In 1843, subsequent to the battle of Miani at Hyderabad, where Charles Napier defeated the Talpur armies and caused their retreat into the citadel of Hyderabad, Karachi was formally annexed to the British Empire with Hotchand playing a key role in providing intelligence about the Talpur's plans to mount a sudden attack on the town. It is clear from Hotchand's accounts that he saw his relationship with the British as vital in order to guard his economic interests and to retain his transregional merchant networks—as was the case with other Hindu merchant families—in a time of dramatic geopolitical shifts. The early to mid-nineteenth century signaled a time of sovereign instability in this part of the world. The Talpurs' sovereignty was rendered precarious by, amongst other factors, being subject to the payment of annual tributes to the Kingdom of Kabul. Armed conflicts would break out over tribute payments, and local subjects were aware of the always contested nature of their rule. The Talpurs' precarious hold over the coastal region also spoke to the power of the trade networks that operated along the coast and that were more oriented towards the suzereignty of the Persian Gulf kingdoms, particularly the Sultanate of Muscat.[97] In addition, local merchants contested their sovereignty in terms of the taxes they imposed on the coastal trade. These were the factors that gave the British an opening to make strategic alliances with the local merchants, mainly the Hindu Amils that would allow the takeover of the port settlement.

[97] Rajat Kanta Ray, "Asian Capital in the Age of European Domination: the Rise of the Bazaar, 1800 to 1914." *Modern Asian Studies* 29.3 (1995): 449-554.

Planning a New City

For the British, like Calcutta and Bombay before, Karachi would acquire a strategic importance for the maintenance of the colonial presence and a key communication link, being the first port of call for eastbound British traffic. In keeping with colonial administrative policy elsewhere in India, the transformation of the settlement was informed by a concern for the most efficient application of newly emerging technologies of planning and building, as well as the establishment of an extensive bureaucracy. One of the major achievements of this early intervention was the construction of a new harbor that radically transformed the coastline and occupied the efforts of a whole slew of engineers, contractors and administrators for a few decades.

Karachi's development also came at the cusp of a major transformation, in the forms of colonial governance in India, precipitated by the fall from grace of the British East India Company and the inception of a more 'enlightened' rule directly administered by the Crown.

Beginning in 1860, the Government of India sanctioned a series of projects involving major financial outlays that involved the expansion of anchorages, the fortification of breakwaters, the construction of a new lighthouse, warehouses, detention camps and quarantine sheds to the laying of jetties, moles, and railway lines. By 1896 Karachi could accommodate "the largest class of steamers…in and out of the Harbor…These facts alone show what the capabilities of the Harbor are and it is submitted the Port of Karachi may now be considered to be abreast of the times…"[98] (See fig. 7).

[98] Karachi Port Trust. *Port of Karachi (Kurrachee) Sind, West Coast of India, 1892. Chairman's Report* (Karachi Port Trust: Karachi, 1892).

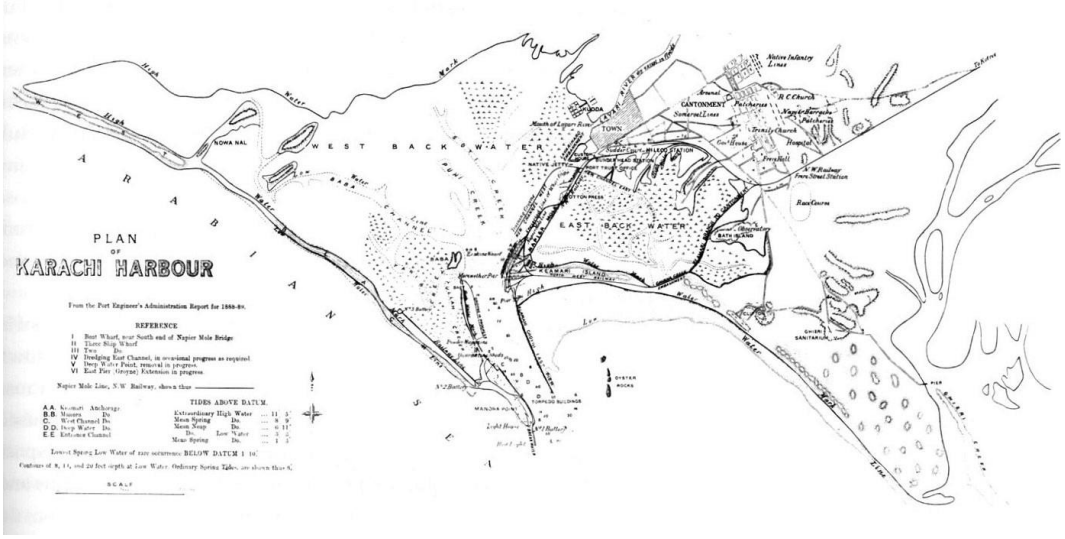

Figure 7. "Karachi Harbour 1888-89." Alexander Baillie, *Kurrachee: Past, Present and Future (1890)* (Oxford in Asia Historical Reprints: Oxford University Press, 1975), 53.

Early assessments made by the British to evaluate the advantages of the town they conquered reveal how local practices were classified in various ways as either being advantageous or detrimental to their interests. The casting of different communities in terms of their commercial practices as well as their labour value was a way to speculate and anticipate their emplacement in the new order. What lay before the new rulers was a town of approximately 14,000 inhabitants belonging to different castes and classes. From the beginning it is evident that the British identified the Hindu traders of Karachi as allies. Their trading practices were approved of and the leverage they had in terms of generating trade at the port was recognized, not to mention the key role many of them, chief amongst them Naomal Hotchand, had performed in helping acquire control of the city. They were often contrasted with the conduct of the 'Mohamedans', who as members of the previous ruling elite represented the major obstacle to British objectives of gaining control of the city and its trade. A key concern for the British was to provide incentives for the Hindu merchants to maintain their establishments and 'kothis' at

Karachi, having realized that due to their extensive trading networks with the Persian Gulf and the Malabar Coast, they had the option to move to other locales if they so desired or deemed it necessary.

One of the themes that emerges from nineteenth-century accounts of the British presence in South Asia is an argument for colonial rule as having a systematic, consistent and more moral character, as opposed to the unstable and continuously changing and disputed character of the local rulers. As Baillie recounts: "it was a fortunate day for the poor wretches when they were transferred forever from the rule of the Princes of Sind and the Khans of Kelat, to the less enacting British sovereignty, even though the salt duty may have been imposed, and a tax levied upon those who have an income."[99] Thus in Baillie's assessment the local rulers stood accused of not just treating their subjects badly but of unproductivity as well, as he further goes on to say that "by sheer mismanagement the Amirs spoiled the Indus trade."[100] This way of condemning local practices and contrasting them with the more 'enlightened' order of the British acted as a powerful instrument of legitimizing colonial rule.

The heterogeneous nature of the city's population, a reflection of the fact that it was a port settlement with extensive trading and commercial links within the Indian Ocean region, was seen as something that needed to be sustained if the city was to realize its full potential under the colonial regime. The trading and banking practices of the local merchants and traders were therefore encouraged and their demands accommodated so that their commercial activities could be maintained. In addition, the upcoming undertaking of the extensive harbor works required a vast labour force, which could only be recruited from around the province of Sindh, which

[99] Baillie, *Kurrachee*, 33.
[100] Ibid., 37.

already consisted of diverse populations of Sindhis, Balochis, Lohanas and Kutchis. However, this diversity was also seen as a potential source of disorder and so the orderly disposition of the local population, based on race, class and religion began to emerge as a major concern in the early administrative regime of the city. This disposition resulted in the entrenchment of ethnic, religious and caste identities, which became the basis for communal representation, as Sir Bartle Frere asserted in a meeting of the municipality in 1858:

> The European Officers of Government, the Military and Civil Servants of the State, the indigenous Lohana merchants, Bhatias, Cutchees, Parsees, Mehmons, Khojas and Borahs, each large class in the Kurachee community had its representative and he (the President) earnestly begged them not to lose sight of this fundamental principle in their Municipal arrangements.[101]

The establishment of the Karachi Municipal Commission in 1852 was modeled on the Municipal Corporations of Bombay and Calcutta. Originally a Board of Conservancy that had been set up in 1846 after an outbreak of cholera in the city, the Municipal Commission stood "for the purpose of making better provision for making, repairing, cleaning, and watching its public streets, roads, drains, and tanks, and for improving the said Town, and preventing any nuisances arising therein." [102]

One of the tensions emerging from the accounts of the Karachi municipality is between the regulatory needs of the modern administrative regime, which included a whole new system of taxation on property, and the need to encourage the free flow of capital. The two were not necessarily compatible and it was in the instances that contradictions arose between the two that the arbitrary nature of the various administrative disciplines became apparent. For example, the

[101] A.F. Bellasis, comp., *The Kurrachee Municipality, From its Commencement to 1st January* 1860 (Bombay: Education Society's Press, 1860), 89.
[102] Ibid.

feasibility of imposing a house tax in the initial years of the development of the municipal tax regime was debated, as there were concerns that it would discourage the local traders from sustaining their businesses. Their commercial networks and contacts were seen as key towards facilitating outbound trade in general.

Far from the imperial centre at Delhi, and not considered as significant as the Presidency capitals of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, Karachi was valued primarily for its mercantile potential, similar to other secondary cities in the sub-continent, like Amritsar. However, what gave Karachi its advantage was that the port and the development of its port economy proceeded at a much faster rate than had been envisioned, rivaling the port economies of Bombay and Calcutta by the early 1900s.

The other advantage was its proximity and direct line of communication with the hinterland of Punjab, a major producer of cotton. Therefore the need to manage the flow of commerce and capital, and to provide the facilities and services that would respond to the needs of the merchants and bankers – both indigenous and European – would determine the priorities of the municipal administration. Thus, the 'orderly disposition of things' mainly extended to fixing prices and taxes on land and property, ensuring an abundant supply of drinking water and controlling the spread of disease through sanitation and sewage disposal systems. It is clear that this infrastructure was essential to the coming transformation of the city into a strategic military and commercial port.

In the post 1857 period, when there was a rising emphasis on a more consent-based rule under the Crown, Karachi offered a tabula rasa on which new administrative disciplines could be inscribed more readily than in the much older Presidency capitals. The need to manage a class-

based division of the city to maintain a constant and docile labour force was important and led to a spatial segregation of the city, which was relatively easier to achieve because of the congregation of the laboring classes around the port area, their main source of livelihood. And while in the original settlement merchants, traders and labourers had inhabited the same space in the old, walled city, under the new arrangements the indigenous merchant classes were encouraged to move out of the old city and establish themselves in the new town, which was also segregated, but along racial lines. The existing habitation was seen as messy and chaotic without 'order or classification' as pointed out by A. F. Bellasis, collector and magistrate of Karachi from 1853-1859.[103] The registration of property was introduced to determine the precise location of land and the identity of owners in order to avoid the conditions in which "good houses get mixed up with hovels and huts – the Native population with the European – the poor with the rich."[104] It was also clear that this process was meant to protect the private value of property that was meant to be a key generator of revenue, a novel idea in a situation where land for habitation had either been communally owned or granted by the rulers. The commodification of land was a key objective in turning the settlement into a lucrative source of revenue along with the control of its trade and the development of the port.

Amongst the concerns of the early administrators of the city, a major preoccupation was with fixing a process for the disposition of land. The lived space of the city that the British arrived in consisted mainly of the walled city, which contained residences as well as commercial establishments. The workers comprised of seasonal and migrant labourers and fishermen were spread out on the west side of the settlement. Early British administrators saw the walled city area as an unsatisfactory urban arrangement on several levels. It was considered too congested

[103] Bellasis, *The Karachi Municipality*, 17.
[104] Ibid., 70.

and therefore conducive to disease and obstructing the 'free circulation of air', despite the fact that there were wind towers that channeled the south blowing wind into the three to four story mostly adobe houses. The fishermen who inhabited the old quarters became a major object of concern because of the "collection of wretched huts"[105] they occupied and several attempts were made to induce them to change their living environment along with their habits of living. Bellasis repeatedly lamented the failure of these fishermen to adopt cleaner and more orderly habits of living. Despite attempts by the municipality to provide them with 'model' huts on 'raised ground' made with 'pukka'[106] materials, the fishermen refused to leave their mat and reed huts, which they found cooler and more comfortable to live in.

Comfort came to acquire a different meaning for the colonial administrators, because it was associated increasingly with the appearance of the built environment as opposed to its tactile experience. This concern with appearance, with a more 'orderly and regular' arrangement of urban space, is not purely aesthetic, as has been demonstrated in various studies on the colonial planning disciplines.[107] The appearance of order is meant to introduce a way of making the urban environment more visible and legible, for the purpose of productive transformation. Local populations whose ways of life were threatened resisted this double-edged attempt at "improvement" and control, leading to a perplexing dilemma for administrators who were also trying to create more consent-based governance at this point in colonial rule. Traces of these dilemmas can be found periodically in the administrative documents, which expressed the frustration of early administrators at the difficulties of achieving proper documentation and

[105] Bellasis, *The Karachi Municipality*, 70.
[106] Pukka literally means solid, referring to stone or brick as more desirable building materials than the reed and mat huts of the local fishermen.
[107] Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

statistics of population numbers and land ownership, or encountering resistance in changing 'unsanitary' living habits.

Sanitation and urban space

> "[T]here is no wider field for the display of attainments in sanitary science than an Indian city and its surroundings."[108]

The establishment of sanitation was an important priority for the colonial regime. The existence of an efficient sanitary system came to symbolize the effectiveness of colonial rule on several levels. Arnold has suggested that the issue of disease and medicine as it affected Indians became important for the British when their power had grown to such an extent as to require more scrutiny and control of Indians.[109] At this time, in the second half of the nineteenth century the nature and durability of British rule in India had become a practical concern. The portrayal of the Indian environment as intrinsically pathogenic, and its indigenous inhabitants as reservoirs of dirt and disease, has been pointed out in the historiography of public health in colonial India.[110] This was also the era of the development of tropical medicine as a separate field of study in medical science, and the colonies provided a field of knowledge that helped to develop the causes as well as remedies for public health dangers.

Harrison argues that the needs of military, as well as the need to control the industrial working classes, led to the elaborate sanitary administrative regimes in the metropole. This sanitary regime in the colonies, however, became the starting point of intervention in urban

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[108] Baillie, *Kurrachee*, 101.
[109] David Arnold, *The Tropics and the Travelling Gaze: India, Landscape and Science, 1800-1856* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006).
[110] Mark Harrison, "Tropical Medicine in Nineteenth Century India," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 25.3 (1992): 299-318.

development. But even here, the militarized nature of sanitary administrative arrangements came to dominate which diseases and situations were considered to be the most serious health threats.[111]

As Baillie details in his comprehensive account of the city's administration, under the Compulsory Vaccination Act of 1879, which was supposed to have conferred "great benefit to the public," the city was divided into six registration districts each of which was administered by "a Superintendent, a Clerk, two Public Vaccinators, a Police Constable and six Sub-Registrars of Births and Deaths."[112] The primary duties of the Sub-Registrars were to collect information and make house-to-house visitation. What this allowed of course was precise record-keeping on not only the births and deaths but the movements of persons on and out of the city as well. These measures were introduced as part of a general and vast sanitary administrative regime in India, which had been launched in the wake of the reports submitted by the Royal Commission on the Health of the Army in 1863. In the post-Mutiny period, the size of the British element in the Indian army had shown a considerable increase, which became a cause for concern in terms of the sanitary and health conditions of British soldiers, their diets, the condition of their cantonments and barracks, and the condition of the army hospitals.[113]

In the following years Sanitary Commissioners to the Government of India were appointed to oversee the sanitary reforms in most of the major towns and cities. While concerns about the sanitary conditions of the British troops informed the initial focus of these measures, the needs of trade and commerce, in cities like Karachi, Calcutta and Madras, would also govern sanitation arrangements. The new municipal sanitary arrangements facilitated the control and

[111] John Harrison, "Allahabad: a Sanitary History," in *The City in South Asia: Pre-modern and Modern, eds. Kenneth Ballhatchet and John Harrison (London: Curzon Press, 1980).*
[112] Baillie, *Kurrachee*, 157
[113] Harrison, "Allahabad."

prevention of the spread of disease, a primary concern for the colonizing rulers no doubt and that did end up creating benefits for the local population. But what it also created was the subdivision of the city into easily governable and legible units that allowed for complete scrutiny of the population. It created a model that came to be seen as the ideal of order that was hard to argue with as it was justified on the grounds of creating public benefit and preventing disease. Sanitation regimes also facilitated the classification and categorization of population groups according to class, ethnic and religious backgrounds, thus entrenching a class and caste-based spatialization of the city with important ramifications for years to come.

In Karachi, successive epidemics of plague were a major concern for the Municipality, and between the years of 1896 and 1918 Karachi was visited by annual plague epidemics. The various accounts of the Karachi Port Trust and the Municipality make clear that the plague was instigated by the increased traffic at the port, reaching its peak during World War I when "there [wa]s a rapid and frequent intercourse between Karachi and Mesopotamia, consequently a large number of Plague cases occurred amongst coolies at Keamari."[114] While the spread of plague was being facilitated by the intense military and commercial activity between Karachi and the other key ports of the Empire, the main focus of the sanitary regime was how to manage and contain the plague at its point of termination. Thus the overcrowding and congestion of the working class areas clustered around the port area become a major object of intervention and concern, where the living conditions themselves are presented as being the cause of the spread of the disease. So, when plague first broke out in Karachi in 1896 "it was mainly confined in three quarters viz., Napier, Market and Old Town Quarters and that too only in a particular part of

[114] *Administrative Report of the Karachi Municipality 1916-1917*, 187.

these quarters which have narrow streets and insanitary and overcrowded buildings."[115] The living quarters of coolies and dockworkers around the port area were a major object of intervention as quarantine sheds were built, often after removal of existing living quarters.

Extraordinary measures were taken against the plague, as well as malaria and cholera. Grouped under epidemic and tropical diseases, these health dangers were seen as a threat particular to the colonies. The measures taken included aggressive attempts to declare certain kinds of housing—especially in the low-income areas of Machchi Meani largely inhabited by fishermen, and the labourer and coolie quarters along the harbour area of Kaemari—as unfit for habitation. Consequently, the inhabitants were given notices of removal. It is not clear what they were offered in return. Gangs of coolies were organized to clear out wells, dhobi ghats – large public laundry areas – and to place mosquito traps on wells. It is also clear that these measures could have been possible without a virtual army of cheap labour.

As was reported in the Municipality's administrative report for 1916-17:

> The construction of schemes of drainage, the filling in of insanitary tanks and wells, the covering of Nullahs, the conversion of insanitary privies into properly constructed water closets, the prohibition of the use of insanitary buildings for dwelling purposes – all these labours have materially tended to the improvement of the health of the City, as evidenced by a diminution in the death-rate.[116]

The classification table for plague deaths makes distinction between local cases and those from 'immigrants' who 'imported' the disease from outside the city, thus creating clear demarcations between the inside and outside of the city (see table 2). Other co-relations between health practices and class and ethnicity also surface as a way to create regimes of administrative

[115] *Administrative Report of the Karachi Municipality 1915-1916*
[116] Ibid., 77.

intervention. For example, infant mortality in the city was classified according to different quarters and localities in the city, which were already segregated along class and ethnic lines (see table 3). So the Lyari, Napier, Old Town and Kaemari quarters contained the working classes including the dockworkers, fishermen and coolies as well as the lower class of Hindu and Muslim shopkeepers and merchants. The wealthier classes of merchants were being encouraged to move to the Preedy, Saddar and Ranchore Line quarters. The British military cantonments were in the Artillery Maidan, Civil Lines and Serai Quarters. The Gizri and Clifton quarters, stretching east right alongside the coastline of the Arabian Sea, were home to the top hierarchy of colonial officials. Thus, after tracking infant mortality in these various spatial divisions it was concluded that:

> The comparatively low rates among Christians and Parsis, which are to a large extent free from superstitions and prejudices peculiar to the East; indicates too clearly how much of the infant mortality in Karachi is preventable. Here again a large question is involved. Until the women of India from the highest to the lowest caste are educated and a knowledge in elementary hygiene is given very little progress can be expected.[117]

[117] *Administrative Report of the Karachi Municipality 1915*-1916, 204.

Quarter	Cases	Deaths
Jail	76	57
Machi Miani	72	51
Old Town	69	55
Ramswamy	54	50
Bunder	32	21
Kiamari	28	22
Serai	26	21
Rambaugh	23	20
Begarikhata	10	10
Frere Town	10	9
Bhistiwara	9	7
Soldier Bazaar	8	7
Unknown	6	5
Baba, Bhit, Shamspir	4	3
Imported	3	3
Railway	3	1
Trans Lyari	1	
Queens Road	1	

Table 2. Plague Deaths: 1916-17. Source: Karachi Municipality. Administrative Report 1916-17

Quarters	No. of Births	No. of infants under 1	Infantile Mortality
Napier	404	124	307
Bunder	40	12	300
Kiamari	221	64	290
Machi Miani	278	80	288
Runchore, Ramswami	1043	287	275
Lyari	1615	422	261
Sadar and Preedy	347	89	257
Market	205	49	239
Garden, Soldier	579	138	238
Old Town	324	87	237
Jail	410	97	237
Rambaugh and Serai	420	98	233
Mauripur	31	6	193
Baba, Bhit and	30	5	166
Civil Lines and Frere	207	23	111
Railway	10	1	100
Quarry	13	1	77
Clifton	2		

Table 3: Infant Mortality: 1916-17. Source: Karachi Municipality. Administrative Report 1916-17

The story of sanitation regimes is meant to foreground how sanitation became linked with not just health and well-being but also the cultural norms and ethics of the communities that inhabited the city, as in much of the colonial world. These imbrications of sanitation, with ethical and political forms of life, would set standards that the postcolonial city would be held up to and judged against.

Constructing a New Urban Subject

By the inter-war period Karachi was firmly established as the third largest port in India with the Port Trust reporting an annual revenue of Rs. 72, 67, 713 for 1928-29 and a value of total imports and exports of Rs. 77,77,89,106 (see fig. 8). At the end of the nineteenth century Karachi had already outstripped Bombay as a major exporter of wheat, exporting 340,000 tons by 1889, and just before the beginning of the First World War it "broke all records in the British Empire by exporting 1,380,000 tons in the financial year 1912-13."[118] It is during this period that the city was also showcased as an 'Emporium of Trade' with Central Asia. Trade shows were arranged that highlighted the transshipment potential of Karachi as the most convenient bridging point in the traffic between India and England.

In 1914, Karachi became the eastern headquarter for the allied operations in the Middle East and the city saw heavy war traffic as Indian recruits from Punjab were shipped off in their thousands to fight in the fronts in Iraq and France, against Turkish and German armies respectively. Both the commercial and military traffic gave the city an air of cosmopolitan mobility, even while it signaled the emergence of the nationalist movement. British relations with Turkey and the imminent fall of the Ottoman caliphate had precipitated the Khilafat movement[119] which, headquartered in Karachi, provided yet another link with the broader theatre

[118] Herbert Feldman, *Karachi Through a Hundred Years: the Centenary History of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce 1860-1960* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1960).
[119] In response to what they feared to be the imminent fall of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1918, Indian Muslims headed by Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar and his brother Maulana Shaukat Ai Jauhar started a movement for the restoration of the caliphate called the Khilafat movement.

of war in the Middle East.

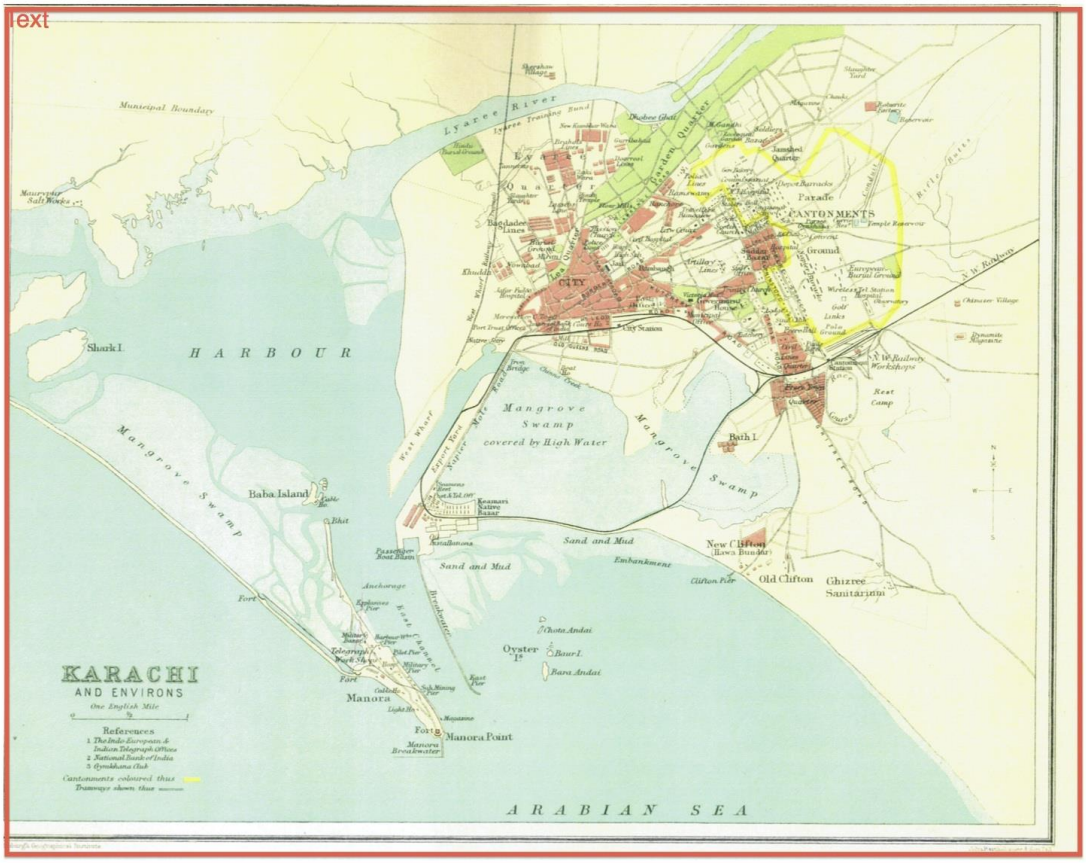

Figure 8. “Karachi circa 1919.” Imperial Gazetteer of Sindh. India Office Collections, British Library.

The city’s population according to the 1921 census was 216, 883. The sanitary regime that had come out of the turbulent years of the turn of the century with the annual plague visitations, and the troop movements of the First World War, had become normalized within the administrative disciplines. There was better representation of natives in prominent administrative positions as they had now been schooled as proper modern subjects, fulfilling Baillie’s recommendations:

> You must first insert the link that is now missing between the English chief and his native sub-ordinate; you must educate the latter to a higher standard, not only in the point of inducing him to adopt as his own, our language; but also in leading him to accept and follow our ideas of government; and to regard them as those that must inevitably have sway throughout the Empire.[120]

Jamshed Mehta was the first Parsee Municipal Commissioner of Karachi. His 1925 account of the Karachi Municipality begins with the following paragraph:

> A harbor port city, commanding an excellent geographical position, a healthy climate, with the largest scheme of irrigation on one side, with prospects of oil production on another, with industrial development of cement, and the probability of coal mines somewhere in the near vicinity, Karachi must become great, greater than any human vision can conceive."[121]

The psychological and social impacts of improvements in the built environment are a central concern of Mehta's book. Prescriptions about what it means to be a proper civic subject and have a 'civic sense' are linked to the physical environment of the city. As the New Town continued to expand towards the North-East, congested conditions in the old quarters, a result of the increased labour population in the city, became a major cause for concern. The Municipality, under Jamshed Mehta, thus announced a campaign to "Fill up the Hollows" in order to avoid the problems of "germs, insanitation, epidemics and lack of building development," because wherever there were hollows, pits and low-lying areas "nuisance was caused."[122]

The expenditure of capital and labor for these ventures to level, align and sanitize what was seen as an unruly and dangerous urban landscape, was extensive and based on the optimism generated by the unprecedented wealth of the city, generated almost exclusively by trade.

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[120] Baillie, *Kurrachee*, 168.
[121] Jamshed N. R. Mehta, *Karachi Municipality: Its Administration, Activities and its Future* (Karachi: Daily Gazette Press Ltd. 1925), 102.
[122] Ibid.

Karachi's rising labour force consisted of Sindhis and Balochis coming from the provincial hinterlands, who were also seen as an unpredictable element entering the city, even though their labour was needed. However, it also generated anxieties about the 'wild and undisciplined bordermen who flocked to the Indus'[123] looking for employment. Many of them ended up as peons and coolies in the urban areas, taking up habitation around the ports and docks or in the inner city bazaars. Their plebian ways, while often portrayed as 'picturesque' in terms of their clothing (turbans) and visage (beards) were also seen as a nuisance when they interfered with the orderly arrangement of space in the city.

This was also the period when guidebooks on the city started to make an appearance. These guidebooks provide insights into the changing practices of place-making as they were a departure from the older travel narratives on the region. The guidebook was a new kind of narrative that contributed to the construction of a particular type of colonial place/space. Guidebooks also marked the transition from colonialism to postcolonialism, especially in the inter-war period, in which the strategic importance of colonized locations, as well as their potential and assets in terms of modern infrastructure, particularly transportation links and routes, and also the availability of economic potential, became key features of the guide.[124] One of the first guidebooks on Karachi was published in 1891,[125] and although one of the sources of information of early guidebooks were early travelogues and imperial gazeteers, the guidebook was different from these early texts.

A compendium of many different kinds of information from varied sources, the over-all emphasis was not so much on Karachi as an Indian city, but on the activities and interests of

[123] Baillie, *Kurrachee*, 250
[124] Han Mui Ling, "From Travelogues to Guidebooks: Imaging Colonial Singapore, 1819-1940," *Sojourn* 18.2 (2003): 257-78.
[125] William Watson, *Guide to Karachi* (Karachi: William Watson and Co: Bankers and Agents, 1891).

Europeans in the setting that was Karachi. An early guidebook published in 1891, "A Guide to Karachi," begins with a sketch and description of the city of Karachi – most of which is devoted to a technical description of the process of building the city's harbor. A classification of institutions according to their functions (military, ecclesiastical, educational, medical), public works and infrastructure, and a breakdown of commercial establishments, takes up the rest of the guide. A directory listing of residents classified by religious/ethnic affiliation – Europeans, Parsees, Hindoos and Mohamedans – ends the guide. The objective of the guide also becomes obvious by the identity of its author. It was written and compiled by William Watson on behalf of his company William Watson and Co: Bankers and Agents and is meant for a European audience to be able to make the most of the commercial potential of the port city. As Ling argues, "in fact, the dispersion of narrative voices and the authority of objectivist science constitutes the main ideological scaffolding of guidebooks."[126]

The guide also reproduces a firmly progressivist notion of place-making wherein the city is represented as a tabula rasa of opportunity, which sometimes is not being realized to its fullest potential due to either disinterest or incompetence. The guide thus acts as an instrument of the objectification of place. A curious feature of colonial guidebooks is also their presentation of urban history as a history of public works and administrative disciplines highlighting the achievements of colonial rule, while at the same time noting where it falls short, leading to a situation that is marked with "administrative indecision, with obstacles artificially created to hamper the progress of the city and to diminish its utility."[127]

[126] Ling,"From Travelogues to Guidebooks," 272.
[127] Watson, *Guide to Karachi*, 5.

In later guidebooks the importance of changing the habitus of living in the Indian city-dweller is emphasized while an account of philanthropic and missionary activities undertaken by voluntary associations, often run by European women is highlighted as a way to effect these changes. In the Karachi Handbook, published in 1914, a colorful account of the plebian ways in which the streets of the city are used serves to illuminate exactly what this new habitus required:

> Few of the roads are provided with footpaths, though of late years, these – from the English point of view – very necessary adjuncts have been added to some of the more important roads. The Indian, at any rate the Karachi Indian, has not yet learned the use of footpaths, and does not appreciate them, at least for walking on. He uses them chiefly to tether cows and horses on, to deposit goods and furniture on, to sit on during the day, and sleep during the night, but not to walk on. Perhaps time, and the advent of the motor car, will teach the true use of footpaths, and will convince the pedestrian that it is not only cleaner, but safer, to walk on them than in the centre of the carriageway.[128]

The investment in the desire to create this new urban order was equally strong on the part of the rising native middle-classes – the Parsi administrators, the Hindu and Muslim bureaucrats, and the intelligentsia, as has also been noted elsewhere in India, notably in Calcutta.[129]

In 1915 the Bombay Town Planning Act was introduced to consolidate and manage town development in the cities of the Bombay Presidency. By this point the idea of social reform through town planning had been more than fifty years in the making, and represented the blending of the interests of capital and property with utopian ideals of social progress. While these ideas were presented in the Indian context as a universal set of principles that were required to ensure the best outcomes in terms of social and economic productivity, they had arisen from the specific context of late Victorian Britain. The emphasis on shaping the moral character of the working classes through an improvement in the built environment had its genesis in the Victorian

[128] B. Temple, *The Karachi Handbook* (Karachi: Sindh Gazette Press, 1914), 61.
[129] Partha Chatterjee, "A Postscript from Kolkata: An Equal Right to the City," in *Comparing Cities: the Middle East and South Asia*, eds. Kamran Asdar Ali and Martina Rieker (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2009).

reform movements that had employed a combination of private philanthropy and social volunteerism to address the environmental fallout of the industrial revolution.[130] These practices of social engineering, which utilized a discourse of improvement related to joining class and race in the industrial city, also grew out of a longer global and colonial history of re-forming subjects and spaces to new sovereign dispensations, which oversaw a vast field of labour management, from slavery to coolie labour, to the assignment of specially designated groups like 'criminal tribes' to work camps.

In 1923 A. E. Mirams was appointed as consulting surveyer to the Government of Bombay and produced a report on the development of Karachi. While foregrounding Karachi's military and commercial significance and success, the report is concerned with the application of sound town planning principles to the city as, "there can only be one standard by which national or municipal action in regard to town planning can be judged, viz., its effect on the well-being of the community as a whole."[131]

While this renewed emphasis on town planning represented the ongoing application of disciplinary regimes that would allow further legitimization of colonial rule, it was also a response to the increasingly unmanageable consequences of an urbanization driven by the unfettered growth of commercial interests that were buttressed by the growing needs and interests of the military. As Karachi's port economy flourished and its population grew, it was the inner city area adjacent to the port that absorbed most of this growth. This was where the merchants and traders, both indigenous and European maintained their establishments consisting of offices, retails outlets and warehouses.

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[130] Gordon Cherry, "The Town Planning Movement and the Late Victorian City." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 4. 2 (1979): 306-319.
[131] A. E. Mirams, *A Report on the Development of Karachi* (Government Central Press, 1923), 2.

More importantly there was a major influx of labourers from the rural hinterlands in Sindh who occupied the areas closest to their sources of employment. A consequence of this was that land values rose dramatically in the city centre and the space for further expansion of living quarters became limited. The densification and subsequent overcrowding of the inner city was identified as a major problem that needed to be addressed through the application of town planning expertise. Rather than examine causes, the consequences of colonial capitalist development preoccupied officials, planners, and reformers as major issues that needed to be managed.

This dynamic was not so different from the way the problem of urbanization was being addressed in the metropole.[132] The tendency to focus on the excesses of capitalist industrial development and manage its social and moral effects also arose from the bourgeois fear of the restlessness of the 'labouring classes', who, if not kept at a minimum level of comfort would take to the streets and challenge the power of capital. The other fear was that of endemic disease and contagion that was seen to arise solely in the living conditions of the working classes. These fears were intensified in the colonies by the added factor of race engendered by the 'rule of colonial difference' – the difference that allowed the spaces occupied by the native to be treated as spaces of exception, where the rule of law could be suspended or modified arbitrarily.[133] Hence, for Mirams the overcrowding in the inner city revealed by "the startling fact that 48% percent of the population are living in single rooms occupied by six or more persons" was "dreadful to contemplate" because of " the effect of disease under such circumstances." He

[132] Cherry "The Town Planning Movement."
[133] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

concludes, "…no words can describe the vital importance of ameliorative action being taken, to at once increase the housing accommodation of the poorer classes…."[134]

And while the problems of overcrowding and densification in London and Manchester were cast in terms of class differences, in the colonies these differences/pathologies became racialized, and cast in the idiom of culture and sometimes religion. Whereas in Britain the consequences of capitalist urbanization became a way to construct and maintain class differences, in the colony it allowed a racial and colonial distinction that led to a homogenized idea of European ways of living as opposed to native ways of living.[135] This erasure of the root causes of industrial urbanization then leads Mirams to claim, "the Indian population continues to reside in the Old Town, which extended in an haphazard manner, with narrow crooked streets, without plan, as the Indian towns do. The European, however, prefers to live in the vicinity of the Cantonement, which is well-laid out with broad roads."[136]

The opaqueness of the 'native' city, specifically the poorer part, was a major cause for concern for the Municipality, and interventions ranged from removal to realignment, with the insertion of infrastructure, dispensaries and schools.

The principle that followed seems to be that of the minimum intervention required to maintain order in these settlements and avoid the perceived threat of infectious diseases, as well as an aesthetic concern with the removal of 'ugliness.' Whereas infrastructure improvements in terms of provision of water supply and sewage as well as the building of health clinics and schools were realized, the more radical interventions like the model sanitary villages were never implemented. The process of the disposition of land was also not entirely under the control of the

[134] Mirams, *A Report on the Development of Karachi*, 4
[135] Chatterjee, "A Postscript from Calcutta"; Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*.
[136] Ibid., 7.

government. The transfer of land leases and titles for purposes of speculation was going on even amongst the poor, where several plots were acquired by a single landholder and then leased out to renters. The housing facilities provided on these plots were built with semi-permanent or 'kutcha' (non-permenant) materials, a local practice that was associated with insanitary living conditions. Interestingly, these processes were known to the municipality and were allowed to continue as they were responding to the overwhelming housing demand generated by the increase in Karachi's population from "150,000 in 1911 to 225,000 in 1921" which was "a record in the whole of India."[137]

Other ways in which municipal plans and schemes were unsettled involved the process of negotiation and contention in response to the land acquisition and alignment schemes of the municipality. The acquisition of private land for the purpose of alignment, which would facilitate the application of the proposed town planning and infrastructure standards, involved the straightening and widening of roads, the acquiring of leftover and 'dead' spaces, and the appropriation of spaces for public use like parks and municipal grounds. The required acquisition of private residential land was a far from smooth process as home-owners, especially in the dense old city area were unwilling to give up a portion of their property without compensation. To this end, *Panchayats* of residents were formed to negotiate with the Municipality, which involved "arguing, pleading, persuading and bringing in all sorts of arguments to get out as much as they can from the Municipality."[138] This process, however, was eventually considered unsatisfactory. In the interests of a 'sense of justice' and 'accuracy,' the acquisition of land for alignment schemes was brought under the purview of the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 under

[137] Ibid., 123.
[138] Mehta. *Karachi Municipality*, 13

which the compensation for the land acquired would not be determined by negotiations with the home-owners but would be determined by a Government Acquisition Officer.

The purpose of elucidating the above processes is to bring attention to the way the colonial administrative regime worked out its own principles and standards in relation to its encounters with colonial subjects. The 'sense of justice and accuracy' in acquiring private land for public use, grounded in the rational needs of the municipal/military administration, became a concern when the acquisitions were deemed arbitrary by and faced the challenges and diverging interests of those who were adversely affected.

One of the conflicts that continuously animated the concerns of city administrations in the first decades of the twentieth century grew out of the dynamic between Karachi and its hinterland, the province of Sindh. Karachi was seen as a bastion of colonial administrative excellence and stability that was threatened by Sindhi nationalism, which was on the rise in the wider province. Other unrest in the province ranged from peasant revolts, workers strikes to railway stoppages. As the labour force in Karachi grew, the city also became the site of an increasing number of strikes by dockworkers and factory workers. Karachi was thus seen as existing within a hostile environment that continuously threatened to envelop it. Calls to strike unfair working conditions as well as calls for 'Swaraj' or self-rule were made regularly, largely through the vernacular press, which thrived in the city consisting mainly of Urdu and Sindhi language newspapers. During the 1930s the Hurs – a tribe of Baloch origin and followers of a local Sufi cult – rose in rebellion and launched attacks on the railroads and bridges and surrounding villages that linked Karachi to interior Sindh. Under the Criminal Tribes Act the

rebellion was put down ruthlessly – to the extent of the establishment of containment camps where Hur men and their families were confined.[139]

As the birthplace and home of Pakistan's founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Karachi was also the site of the All-India Muslim League's major activities. The All-India Congress presence was also strong and during the 1930s in particular, strikes, demonstration, and boycotts called by both of the nationalist organizations were the cause for frequent arrests and imprisonment of nationalist workers and leaders.

It is this conjuncture – a time of great political flux in which colonial administrative disciplines had acquired strong legitimacy but colonial sovereignty was being challenged by the emerging nationalism – that is highlighted in accounts of the city written by the local literati. Two of these accounts, written in the form of memoirs, are examined in the following section and they offer a way to read the experience of the urban through the eyes of native inhabitants.

Karachi in the Memory of Local Inhabitants

For local residents, of both Karachi and the surrounding province of Sindh, the city was quickly beginning to represent the pinnacle of urban modernity and a longed-for destination for the visitors who were in awe of its pristine boulevards, public gardens and tramways. Many middle-class Sindhis from the nearby older cities of Thatta and Hyderabad – and further away from Sukkar, Shikarpoor and Khairpur – were attracted to the promise of prosperity that the city

[139] The Criminal Tribes Act was originally enacted in 1871. There were several incarnations of the act that were applied to different regions – in the Bengal Presidency in 1976 and in the Madras Presidency in 1911. Eventually in 1924 all the versions were incorporated into one version that was applied universally across British India. Under the act, ethnic communities that had been deemed as habitually criminal, like the Hurs in Sindh, were routinely subject to search and arrest and confined to prescribed areas. Adult males had to report weekly to the police.

embodied. The enchantment was tempered however by a realization of the boundaries that marked exclusions and difference in the city.

Lok Ram Dodeja and Pir Ali Mohammad Rashidi were two visitors and occasional residents of Karachi, who wrote their memoirs of the city much later in the post-partition period. Their accounts illustrate the experience of colonial modernity, how the 'natives' who were also its products through education and schooling as well as through their participation in colonial governance, made sense of it. Their accounts give their points of view on the achievements of British planning and design, while at the same time revealing an awareness of and attention to the alterities that existed in the city.

In "Karachi and its Surroundings", Lokram Dodeja, a resident of the historic centre of Shikarpoor, recounts his visits to Karachi in the 1920s and 1930s, beginning with an account of the origins of the old city. Dodeja lived in the old city area of Kharadar and his description of the old city echoes that of Naomal Hotchand in which the density of the settlement and its multi-ethnicity was highlighted. Castes of businessmen – Seths – share the dense space of the quarter with the lower caste – Chappars, as well as Sehtas. It is also a cosmopolitan space containing people from all over 'Hindustan.' The most interesting part of this account, however, is the way Dodeja describes Ram Bagh, an open public space lying to the west of the quarter:

> There was an ancient ground by the name of Ram Bagh, about which it is said that in the Treta Yug, while traveling to Hinglaj, Ram, Lakshman and Sita rested in this spot. During the freedom struggle, from 1920 to 1947, this is where leaders would hold rallies, the martyrs of the salt and satyagraha movements were martyred here and there were incidents of firing. I had bought a building towards the south of this spot, from the balcony of which I witnessed these historic events. This was also the place from where, during the Mutiny of 1857, Sindhi fishermen revolted against the British and were bound to the mouths of the canons and blown up. It is a pity that now, the name of this historic place has been changed

> from Ram Bagh to "Aaram Bagh" and so a symbol of Sindh's history and pride has been erased.[140]

Ram Bagh was an open public space associated with significant effects, both mystical and political. The name literally means the Garden of Ram, one of the mythical Hindu gods. The story[1] of Ram and Sita and their taking respite in Ram Bagh on their way to Hinglaj, a sacred Hindu place, is known in the folklore of the city from long before the arrival of the British. Hinglaj is the endpoint of a sacred Hindu geography that is the pilgrimage route tracing the mythical path of Ram and Sita's journey. The pilgrimage began at Karachi and is still enacted by visiting Hindu Pilgrims and the diminishing Hindu residents of the city, beginning in the Ramswami Temple in the old city area.

For Dodeja, though, Ram Bagh has acquired a different significance during the colonial years, when it became associated with the repression of local revolts during the Mutiny and further repression during the salt and *satyagraha* movements initiated by Gandhi during the years of the independence struggle. The story of Ram Bagh does not end there, it continues with the changing of its name to Araam Bagh, the Garden of Comfort, which Dodeja sees as an attempt to erase its proud history.

The post-partition name change of the space is significant because it was a gesture towards the changing religious sentiment in the city. When the Hindu population that constituted half of the city's population left after partition, the vacuum was filled by the arrival of Muslim refugees into the city from different parts of India. Overnight, the population of the city had been

[140] Lokram Dodeja, "Karachi kay Teerath aur Doosray Maqamat," in *Karachi ki Kahani*, ed. Ajmal Kamal. (Karachi: Aaj, 2007), 174.

changed from almost 50% Hindu to majority Muslim. With communal tensions as well as nationalist pride on the rise, the city was slowly purged of reminders of its Hindu past. The different social meanings associated with this public space at different times show the dynamism of the socio-spatial world of Karachi and the way that the local and the colonial interacted to create new meanings and new contestations around space.

Dodeja's account also foregrounds a religious and enchanted landscape of the city in which healers performed miraculous cures of bone-setting, and Ayurvedic practitioners claimed to be able to treat incurable diseases for "Nawabs, Sardars and Rajas." Entertainment and religiosity combine in his accounts of the various Hindu temple sites, one of which had a well that produces fresh water despite being located on the coast. The mythological origins of these temples highlight the path of an alternative mapping of the city in which Hindu religious sites and festivals provide leisure, entertainment and spiritual solace. While colonial buildings and monuments are also a part of this narrative, they do not merit the same level of detail and description, partly because though they can be enjoyed as a display and spectacle, they are not necessarily accessible to the native. So, although the Frere Hall library is "a magnificent building built in the gothic style" only the "English are allowed to be its members."[141] Dodeja is eventually able to get access to the library through his friendship with an English priest. What does inspire his appreciation is the modern infrastructure of the city, specifically the tramway because of its swiftness as well as its accessibility.

A similar embrace of the infrastructure and technologies of modern development is expressed by Pir Ali Mohammad Rashidi, a well-known Sindhi politician and nationalist, who wrote about his experiences in the early twentieth century in Karachi, in *Wo din wo log*:

[141] Dodeja, "Karachi kay Teerath aur Doosray Maqamat," 176.

> As we approached the Saddar Railway station, we would begin to see the wireless telegram poles. In those days people could not fathom how one could send a message without wires. When the train stopped on the platform the coolies would enter the second-class cars and for one *anna* they would transport our luggage to the waiting victoria carriages. There were fewer passengers then and enough carriages for everyone. There would be no rush, no scuffle, we would ride the victoria in comfort along the Saddar road. On the way we would pass the Carlton Hotel, which is now in ruins but then was for the exclusive use of the English. After many years, fashionable 'natives' were also allowed to stay there, or at least the ones who dared. As we rode along we would pass the Frere Hall which was surrounded by vast gardens with sculptures of English kings and queens. Seeing all this and the strange/bizarre aspect of the building, people would be awed and stunned. (After independence these statues were either destroyed or hidden!).[142]

The spectacle of modernity "staged" by the colonial buildings and monuments induced a sense of awe but also strangeness.[143] For Pir Ali Rashidi, the Frere Hall seemed a bizarre spectacle that was both strange and awe-inspiring. The accounts are both sensitive to the inscriptions of class and power on space by noticing and naming segregating practices. Hence even though the city was experienced as a repository of hybrid meanings, as the base of colonial power, the 'rule of colonial difference' did not go unnoticed.

Rashidi also delineated the space of the city in terms of gender. This is remarkable because most colonial accounts did not pay much attention to how native women appeared in public space. He noted, approvingly, that women in Karachi, whether Muslim or Hindu observed strict Purdah. Purdah, which consists of women's dress as well as the covered palanquins they used in public spaces, was respected by the men they encountered in public spaces. The norms of gender segregation dictated that men should turn away or even change their path if they saw a

[142] Pir Ali Mohammad Rashidi, "Vo Din Vo Log," in *Karachi ki Kahani*, ed. Ajmal Kamal (Karachi: Aaj, 2007), 120.

[143] Thomas Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britian's Raj* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). As Metcalf has argued, the staged character of the colonial architecture can be attested by the effort that went into inventing a whole new architectural style – the Indo-Saracenic style – that was supposed to combine the most refined aspects of Hindu and Muslim 'civilizations' within a colonial neo-Gothic architectural idiom.

lady's palanquin approaching. But Rashidi also marked when these norms were transgressed: he noted the case of a Parsi woman who stood out because of her refusal to observe Purdah. The wife of a well-respected local doctor, she was in the habit of stepping out every evening and taking a walk on the Clifton Promenade that ran along the shore. He narrates with particular detail how she would become the object of male attention and catcalls but would always present a self-possessed and confident demeanor.

While the Purdah marked the boundaries between public and private for native women, for European or Europeanized women like those belonging to the Parsi community, this was also a time of greater participation in spaces of leisure and consumption. Rashidi noted the presence of European women shopping on the streets of the city – Elphinstone Street in particular. Amongst the mostly European owned establishments of haberdashers, watchmakers, and leather goods retailers, there were also a few Memon and Hindu-owned businesses. Rashidi recounts that he and his friends would always approach this place with caution as the presence of European women required extra deference, especially on the part of native men. One did not want to be accused of 'lecherous activity' and arrested while accidently crossing the paths of European women or looking at them – it was best to steer clear. His deference towards the Europeans was also marked by an awareness of the rule of colonial difference.

The observation and noting of spaces of difference, segregation, and resistance are common to both accounts. They reveal that underneath the perceived order, discipline, and aesthetics of the modern colonial city was a contested space of difference. As both these accounts were written in the post-independence period, they display a nostalgia for a simpler world, but at the same time it was a world that gave rise to the turmoil that was necessary for liberation. Dodeja's attention to the sacred geography of the city and Rashidi's observation of the

communal conflicts as well as racial and gender differences illuminate the different registers of urban life that co-existed with and also unsettled the over-arching logic, if ever there was one, of the modern colonial city.

1947 – Imagining the City Anew

Perhaps nothing captures the contested nature of the pan-Islamist sentiment that permeated the city after Partition as it changed from a colonial city to the capital of the new state, as this little tongue-in-cheek style essay, published in the Urdu-language *Daily Jang* in March, 1948, entitled 'Dates and Camels':

> It is an indisputable fact that Karachi is Hindustan's most beautiful city….One reason for Karachi's beauty are its date trees, which give an Arab flavor to this new capital (*paya-e-takht*) of Pakistan and in this way we can truly call Karachi - the capital of the largest Muslim country in the world- an 'Islamic City.' Granted that before August 15, 1947, both camels and date palms were without *waqar* (respect/grandeur) in this city, because most of the population of the city was constituted of non-Muslims. After Aug 15, 1947, however, Karachi became the capital of Pakistan and overnight the fates of both dates and camels were changed. The same camel, that for the British was an awkward, long-necked animal, now became emblematic of Pakistan's Islamic spirit. And those same date trees, which during British times, were nothing more than desert trees, under Pakistani care and patronage have become the representatives of the holy air of the Arabian desert.

As the capital of the new Muslim state as well as the political and economic centre of the new nation, Karachi was the object of the hopes and aspirations of a range of different actors and ideologies vying to reinscribe its space with the symbols and signs of the new nationhood. Some of these aspirations are clearly captured in graphic imagery from the period as in the following cartoon that appeared in the *Daily Jang*, dated April 10, 1948 (see fig. 9). On the right is a depiction of Delhi with the caption reading "'andar parast' Delhi, 20 years in the future" and on the left a depiction of Karachi with the caption reading "Pakistani New York, 20 years in the future." The title reads "Mahw-e-hairat hoon kay duniya kya say kya ho jai gi" (I am a picture of

astonishment at what will become of the world in the future). The Karachi that is like New York boasts skyscrapers topped with minarets and the streetscape interspersed with mosques. On the other hand, Dehli is depicted as a backward and plebian space of dhoti-clad men in a village setting.

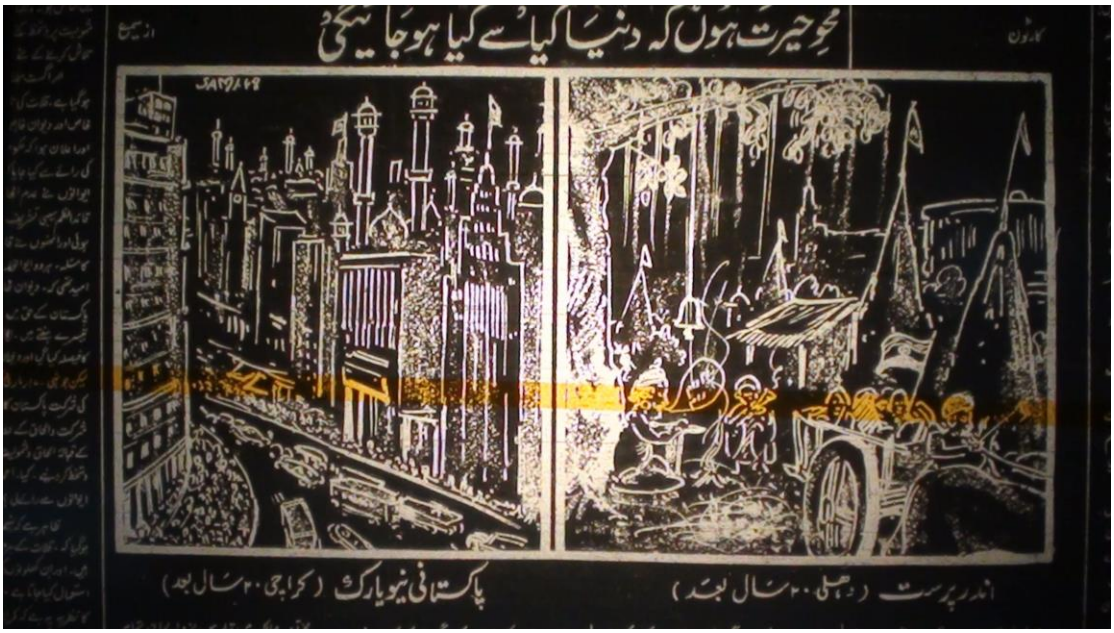


Figure 9. The above cartoon appeared in the *Daily Jang*, April 10, 1948.

But against the ambitious longings for a Pakistan able to flex its industrial muscle in the world, as well as to declare its Muslim identity to the Islamic world, were the longings for what was left behind. The village-like and chaotic Delhi in the cartoon is imagined in a different way in the poetry of Raees Amrohi, one of Pakistan's most well-known 'Mohajir' poets. In the *Jang* issue of March 11, 1948, Amrohi writes:

Kal aik dost nay Delhi say ā kay batlāyā
Tumhain vahan ki hawāain salām kehti hain
Vo lāl qila, vo jamna, vo Jamī masjid

Vo mehfilain, vo fazāain salām kehti hain

Shikasta-dil hai tumharay bughair Chāndni chowk

Shikasta-dil ki sadāain salām kehti hain

Bichar kay jin say Karachi tum chalay āai ho

Vo maqbaray, wo sarain salaam kehti hain

Yesterday a friend arrived from Delhi and informed me

The winds of Delhi send their salaams to you

The Red Fort, the Jumna, the Jami Masjid

Those Mehfils, that ambience, send their salaams

Chandni Chowk is miserable without you

It sends its miserable cries to you!

All those you left behind to come to Karachi

Those tombs, those sarays (travellers' inns) send their salaams

Raees Amrohi: Daily Jang, March 11, 1948.

Thus the imagining of a new sovereign space in Karachi involved a generic Arab Islamic domain coming up against an imagined Indian Muslim space of courtly culture grafted on to a modern, developmentalist urban utopia. These imagined pasts and futures came together intensely amongst the displaced communities that flocked to the city in the post-independence period and informed their investment into the future of the new nation.

Conclusion

Colonial planning constituted the city as a space of experimentation in which new techniques of governance could be tested out in the service of capital accumulation and the consolidation of the economic power of empire. These developments were accompanied by a vast new regime of planning and engineering in which knowledge was produced that

encompassed new modes of calculation, classification and categorization. The colonial planning governmentality that emerged was focused on the creation of an urban subject who would not only be productive but would also consent to the reproduction of a new order of capital and property. These processes were then deployed as key instruments of control in the exercise of colonial power on several levels. First, the new modes of planning and construction were contrasted favourably with what had existed before in order to demonstrate the undeniable superiority of colonial planning. Second, these processes made legible and visible what was seen as an illegible and inscrutable landscape. They laid bare an arena which had been reworked to contain not only specific kinds of functions, but people as well. In this order, the colonial city acquired an identity based on its productive capacity and its symbolic significance to the projection of the values of empire. This early colonial governmentality was informed by the order of modern liberalism that aimed to create clear categories of populations and territories which would become productive in a way that they hadn't been before. However this order constantly encountered the "messiness" of the vernacular, as well as the disorder generated by its own excesses.

While there has been a firm establishment of the narrative of modern progress instituted in official histories of Pakistan, even those that are written from a Sindhi nationalist perspective, fragments of accounts written in a different vein and by individual travellers and writers, as elucidated in this chapter, reveal the lines of slippage between that narrative and the awareness of different ways and forms of inhabiting the city, as well as the uneasiness with the forms of exclusion and segregation generated in the process of the implementation of modern forms of development.

The role of non-Europeans in the creation and reproduction of this order oscillated between innovation and accommodation, and rebellion and dissonance. Where the successive municipal administrators, who were increasingly represented by the local Parsi, Hindu, and Muslim merchant classes, adopted a distinctly British discourse on town planning and governance, their plans and projects were thrown into discord by the material conditions of everyday living in the city that was increasingly shaped by the structural consequences of the prevailing economic order. Further, the writings and reminisces of native residents of the city indicate the persistence of the old spatial order at the same time as the colonial spatial order: initially an external order meant to produce effects of power becomes linked in certain ways with the older forms. This was not necessarily an effect that the colonial order meant to achieve, though. Even though colonial governmentality attempted a certain kind of integration with the local in order to create legitimacy, an example like the significance of Ram Bagh for Dodeja shows the way reproductions of space happened outside of its conceived meanings. For Dodeja, Ram Bagh evokes the old spatial order in the story of Ram and Sita and pre-colonial meanings associated with the space. It then takes on a meaning arising out of the effects of colonial rule and the contestation that results from it, and yet another meaning resulting from its post-partition transformation.

While recognizing that the experience of the colonial city was shaped by the complexities of the encounter between colonial rulers and their subjects – which involved contestation, accommodation, and the emergence of hybrid forms – ideologically colonial governmentality created principles that were seen as standing apart from these socio-political processes. The principles of alignment, containment, and framing and its accompanying aesthetic, as well as the

practice of communal municipal representation and the encouragement of enclaved development became seen as the way to govern and shape urban space.

And while many colonial administrative orders collapsed and became untenable in the post-independence and post-colonial era of political and economic change, discursively they retained powerful legitimacy as the indicators of an ideally functioning state. And while conceptions and experiences of urban space that unsettled these rules dominated lived experience in the city – whether it be the contravention of boundaries, the collapsing of land-use functions into each other, or the hybridity and multi-functionality of spaces – these rules persisted and in many cases have even taken over the urban experience. They remain firmly cast as undesirable and dysfunctional ways to live in the city. As we see in the sentiments expressed by new migrants to the city, at the time of partition, the dominant narrative begins to fragment into other narratives, as mentioned, that expressed aspirations for a pan-Islamic unity, but were also shot through with the loss of the urban worlds that were left behind in Dehli, Bombay and Gujarat. In the following chapters, I engage with the histories and experiences of these communities and their socio-spatial worlds in order to understand what kind of urban subjects emerged from this turbulent history.

Chapter Four

Cultural Identity, Social Norms and Jamaat Sovereignty: The Reproduction of Space in Kharadar

"Wherever Memons go there will be Masjid, Madrassah and School"

(Iskandar, President of shopowner's union, Kaghazi Bazaar, Karachi, April 2011)

Gujarati Memons,[144] who hailed from the Kathiawad and Joonagarh regions of the state of Gujarat in India, migrated to Karachi by the tens of thousands during 1947 and settled in the old city area where they already had business links with the departing Hindu trader communities. The old city area of Karachi was a key site of development of Memon associational life in Pakistan where they reproduced and transformed their clan and family associations into welfare type organizations, or Jamaats in the post-partition era. Constructions of community and belonging are always worked out in relation to both 'insiders' and 'outsiders.' The many narratives of community that I encountered in Kharadar are rooted in different forms of authority, with certain forms being predominant, and the Memon Jamaats being the most pervasive. In addition, both Memon and non-Memon residents invest in other kinds of social networks that constantly shift across kinship and clan-based identities. These networks emerge as key social relations that facilitate everyday life and the production of space on various levels, which are explored in this chapter. My argument is that Jamaats constitute one of those

[144] The Memons are a Muslim merchant/trader group who rose to prominence during the nineteenth century. Originating in the Gujarat region they travelled and established their commercial ventures along with tightly-knit neighbourhoods in different parts of South Asia. In Sindh and around Karachi, Cutchi Memons had established themselves as commercial agents and merchants by the early twentieth century. Most of the Memons who migrated to Karachi in 1947 are Halai Memons who were suppliers of timber, dry fish and building materials and were also oil merchants and rice millers. Asghar Ali Engineer, *The Muslim Communities of Gujarat: An Exploratory Study of Bohras, Khojas and Memons* (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1989).

'horizontal sovereignties'[145] that occupy the hybridized space of modernity in the postcolonial city. Most of this chapter is thus devoted to laying out the precise delineations of this sovereignty: its historical genaeology, its socio-spatial practices, its possibilities as well as its limits, its fragmentations as well as the norms that give it coherence. Although this is a story about the making of a community in space, it is not meant to privilege the Memons or essentialize their ethnic identity as being constitutive to this 'making.'

I begin the chapter by laying out the spatial histories of the communities that inhabit the old city and how those histories have shaped the present form of the neighbourhood. I then examine in detail the role of community associations – the Jamaats – in the internal governance and management of the quarter. I highlight the aspects of neighbourhood governance in which the Jamaats are particularly invested – the street and the market and how residents, through everyday practices of loitering, 'hanging out,' as well as transgressive commercial practices like vending and encroaching, unsettle the thresholds between public and private. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the significance of Jamaats as localized modes of sovereignty that seek to mold a certain kind of normative urban subject.

In the Field: The 'Salt Water Gate' (Kharadar) and 'Sweet Water Gate' (Mithadar)

I conducted research in two main areas of the old city: Kharadar and Mithadar. The names evoke the form of the old settlement that had existed on this site since the early nineteenth century. *Kharadar* means the "salt water gate" and *mithadar* the "sweet water gate," indicating the entrances on the opposite sides of the old walled city – one facing the sea to the south-west and other the Lyari river to the north-west. Mithadar is a dense warren of narrow lanes and

[145] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*.

streets – which are not wide enough for cars to go through, only motorcycles – not more than five to eight metres in width. The streets are flanked on both sides by four to six story apartment buildings, most of which date back to the pre-partition era (see fig. 10). There is a hierarchy of streets in terms of width and the amount of traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian. Snaking through the length of the quarter is the widest street that meanders and branches off into several lanes. This is the 'kaghazi bazaar', or the cloth market where the ground floors of the apartment buildings contain shops selling fabrics, ready-made burqas and hijabs, jewelry and assorted household goods.

Figure 10. "Apartment buildings in Mithadar." Sarwat Viqar. March 10, 2011. Mithadar, Karachi. The flags strung across the streets are in celebration of Eid Milad-un-Nabi – the birthday of the prophet on the 12th day of the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal in the Islamic lunar calendar.

The space in front of the shops is taken over by vendors, or 'patharas' in an informal occupation of the street that further narrows the movable space for people and goods. Residents often cite the informal occupiers as a nuisance because of this. Kaghazi bazaar is just one of twenty-two markets in the entire old city area that cater to a largely lower-middle class clientele and are valued for the cheapness and affordability of their goods. There are usually banners hung over most streets proclaiming a range of messages, from political party flags to advertisements for private education, educational tuition centres, appeals for donations for the poor, and most of all religious events or pedagogical religious messages from one religious party or another. However, it is the symbols of the various political parties that dominate, the predominant being that of MQM (Muttahida Qaumi Movement), then the PPP (Pakistan Peoples Party), and recently the Sunni-Tehrik.[146] This display is more than advertisement, it is a political staking out of territory which lets the residents know which party is in control of which street or section of the quarter.

From the Kaghazi bazaar, narrower lanes lead into primarily residential streets, sometimes as narrow as six meters across, often ending in cul-de-sacs surrounded by a group of apartment buildings. Several mosques dot the Mithadar quarter belonging to several different denominations: *Barelvi, Deobandi* and *Ahl-e-tasheeh.* The oldest Shia Imambargah in Karachi, built in 1884, also lies in this quarter. The average resident can walk out of their apartment and access either the bazaar or a mosque in five to ten minutes. In addition, small *dargahs* and shrines also dot the quarter, often tucked in the interior lanes and spaces of the quarter. For an outsider, it is easy to get lost in the quarter and go around in circles (see fig. 11).

[146] The Sunni Tehrik is a religious and political group that follows a Barelvi approach and actively counters Deobandi outfits and groups like the Jamaat-e-Islami. They are known for taking over control of mosques and neighbourhood streets using the threat of violence.

Figure 11. "The neighbourhood of Mithadar." Source: Maps.google.com, copyright: Imagery © 2016 DigitalGlobe Map Data © Google

The bazaar, shrines, and mosques are generally pointed out by the inhabitants as navigational markers. They are important socio-spatial forms that have a genaeology in pre-colonial spatial patterns. Two kinds of forms are seen as having acquired dominance in the development of urban conglomerations throughout South Asia by the eighteenth century – the Muslim *qasba* and the Hindu *ganj.*[147] The *qasbas* contained the Muslim service gentry who acted as custodians of Indo-Persian culture, their lineage being from the pre-colonial courtier culture. They also invested in land and were landholders. The *Ganj* was the form acquired by towns of traders and merchants, which were traditionally dominated by various Hindu castes. Christopher

[147] Christopher Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen, and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British expansion, 1770-1870, 1770-1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); James Heitzman, *The City in South Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

Bayly argues that that these merchant towns were the site of a thriving corporate life in which caste played a complex role, not necessarily as a force of division but helping to create social ties amongst various business actors. The styles of both *qasba* and *ganj* were replicated in larger neighbourhoods and towns in which Bayly suggests that a significant development was the emergence of intermediary corporations of urban residents. The roots of Jamaat organizations of the various Memon clans in Kharadar can be traced to this lineage, as these Jamaats both perform an intermediary function as well as being corporate associations that protect the business interests of their constituents.

Elements of both qasba and ganj are present in the socio-spatial patterns of the old city. The strong interlinkages between religious, educational and kinship-based cultural practices evoke the Islamic gentry town, which was: "the ideal Muslim *qasbah* society….formed by literacy, agrarian dependence and Islam. Families from Muslim service people from *ashraf* (gentry) families were bound together by tight marriage alliances, which often became cross-cousin arrangements."[148]

While the bazaar oriented economy of the old city is far from the agrarian base of nineteenth century qasbatis, evocations of these agrarian roots are reproduced in the collective imaginary in the reminisces of individuals, as well as in the representation of Memon culture and history in print. The following is an excerpt from the annual newsletter of the Wadla Volunteer Corps, which is managed by the Wadla Jamaat:

> In the beautiful Indian state of Junagadh[149], in the qasba of Mangrol, is a small village called "Wadla." The significance of this village is that it was the birthplace of our ancestors going back at least ten generations. Wadla was a beautiful little village

[148]Heitzman, *The City in South Asia*, 192.
[149] Junagadh state was located in Gujarat, India.

> surrounded by green fields and beautiful gardens. Although the Sayyads of the village were not that rich they were content with what they had.
>
> In the village there were large and small houses which were clean, some made with pukka some with kutcha materials. The houses had spacious rooms, an open courtyard, verandahs and beautiful backyards. In each house, there would be mirrored partitions, the walls would be beautifully and colourfully painted and embellished. Trees would surround the house.
>
> There were five neighbourhoods in the village. The Sayyads inhabited the northern and southern neighbourhoods and the rest were inhabited by the Sarwanis and the Rabadis. In the middle of the village was a street on which there was a mosque, a madrassah and the chilla of the famous saint Hazrat Bukhari Shah Ali-ur-Rahma, which is still there. Our ancestors and elders occupied the northern and southern part of the village, whereas Sarwani Musalmans lived in the Sarwani mohallah, the Hindus lived in the Rabadi mohallah and the periphery of the village was occupied by the bhangis.
>
> Near the Sarwani Mohalla there was a large compound which was called the "Faqir ki peedh". The compound contained several small houses and a traveller's inn (musafir khana). This compound was inhabited by a family of faqirs. Travellers coming into the village would stay at the inn and they would be fed by the villagers. These faqirs were Musulmans and they worked to clean and maintain the masjid and madrassahs and performed other small jobs in the village households. They also ran errands for the villagers outside the village. Amongst them were some musicians who were known as "Meer". These people did not own any land and villagers would given them a certain portion of the produce from their harvests, in order to sustain and support them.

These descriptions and imaginings show an attachment to certain spatial forms and arrangements that are considered the ideal of living. Significant here is the setting of the village, which implies an isolation and autonomy from the larger world of state and empire. And while there is a clear demarcation of boundaries and specific neighbourhoods, in addition to some clear functions like that of the mosque and madrassah, spaces are otherwise demarcated and identified by the fact of who inhabits and manages them. Thus the space acquires meaning from those who live in it, rather than a given space with a certain function of living that needs to be conformed to. While the prescribed functionality of spaces is important for certain types of buildings and proceedings – mosques and madrassahs being the most prominent – the rest of the space of the village and the neighbourhood acquires meaning through the everyday acts of living, and through

the identity of those who inhabit it. In a way the reproduction of a Memon built form along with its habitus in these accounts serves to make sense of the uprooting that resulted during partition migrations through an invocation of an imagined *gemeinschaft* of autonomous units of communal life based on patronage-based social relations. Considering how meanings of public/private were transformed during colonial times it is interesting to see how this sphere of communal living emerges in the imaginings of these residents. It provides an alternative register for the norms and forms of urban living that is evoked often, especially in light of current anxieties and insecurities about an unsafe urban environment.

Historically, Bayly suggests that relations between Hindus and Muslims in these towns were mediated through the patronage of the ruling Muslim classes, the gentry and the reverence shown to Muslim shrines by Hindus and Muslims alike, which acted as a bond to cement social solidarity.[150] The other spatial lineages that can be linked to the socio-spatial practices of old city residents are the traditional Memon neighbourhoods of colonial Bombay. Most of the business families who migrated to old Karachi during partition were coming from Bombay, where well-established neighbourhoods of Memons like the Memonwada had developed during colonial times. As Chopra argues, for the Memons in colonial Bombay, what gave an area coherence were "the intertwined community institutions of their daily life."[151] The old city area of Karachi shares many features with inner cities elsewhere in South Asia, particularly Bombay. In addition, in the colonial period these areas were linked through the business practices of firms and family, thus similar practices of organizing space and creating neighbourhoods on the part of local inhabitants developed here. These practices hinge on reproducing a neighbourhood space where

[150] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*.
[151] Preeti Chopra, "Refiguring the Colonial City: Recovering the Role of Local Inhabitants in the Construction of Colonial Bombay 1854-1918," *Buildings and Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 14 (2007): 115.

places of residence, work and leisure are in close proximity to each other, with public space ideally acting as a cement for forging alliances and reinforcing and regulating dominant social norms. With respect to the city at large, these neighbourhoods also represented an interiorized world that was administered by the communities that inhabited it rather than through active state intervention. This pattern and form of inner city life has been noted in Middle Eastern cities where rules governing the use of public spaces like the street and the market relied partly on Islamic norms of property regulation, and partly on a negotiable process amongst residents, neighbours, and local authorities like the *mohtasib*.[152]

There is a certain kind of 'enclavization' that is produced here, which is often seen as an exclusionary and divisive segregation of urban space harking back to an older and 'backward' urban order.[153] However as Al Sayyad and Roy suggest, "medieval forms of organization and community can lurk at the heart of the modern."[154] Additionally such urban forms, rather than representing city spaces that persist in clinging to a traditional mode of urban organization and governance, are actually indicative of the emerging norm of enclaved development. This includes the highly-policed and elite gated communities, the informal squatter settlements, as well as inner city quarters. Moreover, the designation of such spaces as enclaves should not be taken to imply an homogeneity of culture and ethnicity, or of social and economic interests.

Thus, in the old quarters of Karachi, the differentiation of various clans of Memons does not necessarily mean that there is no movement or linkages across the Jamaats. This was

[152] Janet Abu-lughod, "The Islamic City – Historic Myth, Islamic Essence and Contemporary Relevance," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19 (1987): 155-176; Nezar Al-Sayyad, "Streets of Islamic Cairo" (MS thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1981); Akbar Jamel, *Crisis in the Built Environment: The Case of the Muslim City* (Singapore: Concept Media, 1988).
[153] Benton*, A Search for Sovereignty*. Benton's historic examination of the spaces of imperial sovereignty between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries reveals the fragmented nature of state sovereignty that always resulted in enclaves and 'outside' spaces where the application of the rule of law was always contingent and negotiated.
[154] Nezar AlSayyad and Ananya Roy, "Medieval Modernity: On Citizenship and Urbanism in a Global Era," *Space and Polity* 10.1 (2006): 5.

complicated by the fact that – despite the partition migrations that resulted in a takeover of the predominantly Hindu quarter of the old city, and an attempt to create a homogenized Muslim space – the discourse of a heterogeneous urbanity carried over from India still remains. In the post-colonial period of Pakistani nationhood construction, now the heterogeneity was supposed to be a show of diversity, and not just amongst the Memons, but amongst the various ethnicities of Muslims who had migrated from different parts of India – Sindhi, Bihari, UPians (from Uttar Pradesh), as well as the various denominations and sects within Islam – Barelvi, Deobandi, Ahl-e-Tasheeh, Ismaili and Bohra. In a way the discourse of heterogeneity in this context goes towards reinscribing and reinforcing the unity of Pakistani nationhood that gave these diverse lifeworlds and collectivities a single unified space to occupy. Often marked as apart and outside of modern urbanity, the social, political and economic practices of these interiorized worlds are often overlooked despite their constitutive nature in determining the urban present. More than that, in much of the urban development discourse in Pakistan, they represent the chaos and squalor of an unfinished modernity[155] that must be overcome through urban interventions, which seek to reorganize and delineate localities and neighbourhoods according to the logics of modern urban development. Central to the perceived chaos in these areas are the persistence of practices, ways of being, and of inhabiting space that unsettle juridical divisions of public and private, and inside and outside.

Historic inner city areas are also objects of heritage preservation interventions that attempt to remake inner city neighbourhoods into a charming space of vernacular for tourist consumption. This process is underway, for example, in the historic inner city of Lahore – much older than Karachi and considered a repository of the nation's 'glorious' Muslim, mainly Mughal

[155] Daeschel, *Islamabad and the Politics of Development*.

past. In Karachi, while there is an emerging discourse of heritage preservation amongst urban experts, mainly architects and urban planners, it has not been so easy to realize these visions in light of the highly contested nature of municipal politics in the city.

Jamaats: A Localized Sovereignty

The Jamaat form emerged out of the reconstitution of local *panchayats* and caste councils into civic associations in the first two decades of the twentieth century amongst many of the merchant classes and families throughout India, notably the Marwaris.[156] Memons come from a lineage of Muslim trader-bankers who attained power and political influence in India during the late eighteenth century. Against assumptions about the lack of a true civic life and the development of a public sphere within these communities, Bayly[157] argues that there existed a thriving urban associational life in the small towns of the subcontinent that amounted to a 'virtual civic self-government.' This is not to deny the transformational role played by European capitalism in introducing trading corporations and opening up export routes, but as Birla has pointed out, the pre-colonial urban corporate groups already constituted indigenous capitalist practices which became part of the story of colonial capitalist development. This involved the legal reconstitution of the public and private spheres in terms of the economy, where the market emerged as the ultimate public sphere.[158] This also included the colonial reworking, through law, of local arrangements of wealth accumulation and distribution amongst these groups: inheritance and property laws; and institutions of social welfare, like charitable trusts and endowments. Memon associational life has to be placed within this historical frame. Through this lens, the importance of family alliance, the household, and marriage to the constitution of collective

[156] Birla, *Stages of Capital*.
[157] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*.
[158] Birla, *Stages of Capital*.

business activities can be seen as existing side by side with a community ethic driven by charitable trusts and societies, the firm entrenchment of caste identities and the engagement with national capitalist development. Much like other mobile merchant groups, notably the Hadhrami traders in South East Asia,[159] these groups actively engaged with the process of the colonial reconstitution of the public and private sphere.

Modern associational life amongst the Memons thus emerged out of the coming together of the agrarian and mercantile worlds in the transformation of the Indian political economy in the nineteenth century. In the pre-colonial era, the process of urbanization had already led to the proliferation of small towns with hybrid agrarian and trading-based economies – the coming together of the Muslim *qasba* and the Hindu *ganj* as spatial forms.[160] As intermediary corporate associations, the role of these groups oscillated between representing the interests of their kinship and trade-based constituencies and negotiating for political and economic power with the ruling regime. In the economic transformations of the colonial period in which the local trading practices shifted from artisan-based production to industrial and urban-based production, these groups negotiated with the colonial regime to establish their relevance and in the process transformed their own economic practices.

The early post-colonial era in Pakistan allowed mercantile groups like the Memons to flourish in a situation where they were patronized by the state, receiving major benefits and allowances. The idea of "community" that was forged in this process incorporated their attempts at capitalist accumulation and integration into the global economy with localized social forms and norms, in which kinship and ethnic identity acquired new meanings. Where kinship had

[159] Michael Gilsenan, "Possessed of Documents: Hybrid Laws and Translated Texts in the Hadhrami Diaspora," in *Ethnographies of Islam: Ritual Performances and Everyday Practices*, eds. Baudouin Dupret et al. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 181-193.
[160] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*.

traditionally acted as a facilitator of economic alliances amongst competing merchant families,[161] in the post-colonial period it became a way to facilitate claim-making and power-brokering in the national context. Thus prominent Memon families like the Dawoods, the Haroons and the Adamjees became synonymous with Pakistan's industrial development creating monopolies in the production of a wide range of goods and services – from textiles and cement, to insurance companies and brokerage houses. These families, through their affiliation with major Jamaats, also contributed to the newly forged discourse on Pakistani nationhood, in which they highlighted the sacrifices they had made as well as the contributions, through political engagement to the cause of Pakistan as the Memon community. They brought over with them their mobile mercantile networks, their know-how, their savoir-faire of the bazaar economy, and their zeal to contribute to a thoroughly modern project of national development.

The new migrants formed their associations or Jamaats based on the traditional models that had existed in Mumbai and in Gujarat. The Jamaats were registered as social welfare societies under the Societies Registration Act 1860, which still remains the act governing charitable institutions in Pakistan. Membership in these associations was kinship-based, which was established by the clan names rooted in the ancestral villages that each family hailed from in Gujarat. The most prominent of these towns and villages are: Kutiyana, Bantva, Veraval, Dhoraji, Wadla, Vanthali and Aajak. Certain groups distinguish themselves as 'Sayyids,' and assert that they are not really 'Memon' but direct descendants of the Prophet Mohammad – notably the Wadla and Aajak Jamaats. Sayyids have special dispensations as well as responsibilities, which creates tensions in their interactions with non-Sayyids. For example, Sayyids cannot be recipients of Zakat, no matter how needy. On the other hand they are seen to

[161] Birla, *Stages of Capital*.

have a special responsibility and stature as custodians and *gaddi-nashins* of the Sufi shrines that proliferate in the quarter. The diverse lineages and identities of all these groups are also reproduced in the spatial organization of the old city where each Jamaat, representing a particular endogamous clan, has its own schools, community halls, marriage halls and housing co-ops.

Under Jamaat organization, the forms of spatial organization and public life in the quarter are also strongly reminiscent of and in some ways consciously emulate medieval Islamic and Indian urban traditions. A significant element of these traditions was the importance of the neighbourhood unit in the provision of urban services, the resolution of property disputes, and the management of public spaces and streets, as has been noted generally about medieval Islamic cities.[162]

While these traditions continued or were disrupted in varying degrees according to different contexts in the Islamicate world, what they did provide was a common social vocabulary and as Abu-Lughod[163] suggests 'common social responses' that Muslims could draw upon as references in diverse contexts. As illustrated in the opening quote to this chapter, the importance of a certain kind of spatiality to Memon associational life that is the existence of a 'Masjid, Madrassah and School' speaks to this common point of reference. This sentiment also expresses very clearly the understanding that the provision of important public institutions, as well as their upkeep and maintenance, is the responsibility – indeed an obligation to be met collectively – of those who represent the associational life of a neighbourhood. Of course it also has be pointed out that these references and understandings of 'traditional' ways to organize

[162] Similar processes were reported for older Islamic cities, see Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic City."
[163] Ibid.

urban life do not exist to the exclusion of modern registers in their various manifestations, notably a developmentalist urban order and aesthetics.

As the coordinator of the local union council office in Kharadar claimed: "In an election, only a Memon can win from this area."[164] In the post-colonial context where state regulation of urban space is constantly contested, intermediary actors like the Jamaats create their own orders of rationality. Relying on the economic and social capital accumulated throughout the post-independence decades of participation in state capitalist development and the social networks that were both an outcome of and constitutive of this development, the powerful Jamaats aim to steer the social life of their constituents in accordance with their social and religious norms. The Jamaats are also connected to a transnational network of disaporic organizations similar to many other mobile merchant groups. Overseen by the World Memon Federation, many Jamaats rely on these networks for their commercial and business ventures. It can be argued that this transnational element also enables these Jamaats to participate in a global economic and cultural space of circulation that acts as a counterweight to their rootedness in national contexts.

The invocation of membership in a Jamaat is meant to serve as an expression of lineage as well as a distinguishing feature that emphasizes the particular identity of the jamaat while at the same time identifying the individual as being part of the Memon community in general. Each Jamaat issues its members with identity cards that act as a means to gain access to unemployment benefits, free medical services and subsidized housing. The identity card also serves as a way to regulate marriage alliances, and one's membership in a particular Jamaat can be revoked if marriage is contracted outside of the Jamaat. Amongst the key functions of the Jamaats are welfare activities and acquiring property for community activities, notably religious

[164] Interview, Farooq Bhai, Sept. 13, 2011

gatherings and marriages. Jamaats also establish schools and madrassahs. However, it has to be understood that the dominant Memon Jamaats, as being the pioneers of capitalism in Pakistan also carry with them the privilege of retaining most of the private property and controlling the forms of property transactions in the old city area. They retain ownership rights to the properties acquired virtually for free during the partition upheavels. Members of various Memon and Sayyid clans also took over most of the wholesale business activities and further established new markets in the area.

The Kutyana Memon Association and the Bantva Memon Association are the two wealthiest Memon Jamaat associations that maintain hospitals, schools, and community and marriage halls in the area. Within a general environment of increasing privatization of public goods, Jamaat provision of these services is one of their central functions, and it is also a powerful source of legitimacy for them. Often these institutions are offered up as models for the state to emulate if it gets its act together. Prominent Jamaat leaders are also successful businessmen who are members of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce, whose offices are also located in the area. Many of the leaders no longer maintain their residences in the area and have moved to the more well-off suburbs of the city. Most of the residents who are members of the Jamaat are workers in the various institutions, or volunteers who are involved in the maintenance of its various properties, including the community halls, mosques and dargahs. It is these members who were the focus of this study, since they are involved in the day-to-day process of managing and regulating space and community.

Farooq Bhai belongs to the Kutyana Jamaat and has been the co-ordinator at the local union council for the last twenty years. He has seen councilors and nazims come and go. As he told me during one of our interview sessions in his union council office in the neighbourhood: “If

you want to be elected Nazim in this area, you have to be Memon, after all only if you are from the *biradari* (brotherhood) will you be able to understand the issues of the biradari." He points out that it is on the basis of Jamaat membership that most work gets done in the area. They resolve any issues that result from within the 'biradari'.

The most common disputes that arise are related to property or domestic conflict. The acquisition and conversion of property for community use is a major function of the Jamaats although that is limited by the individual wealth of the member of each Jamaat. Due to the fluid and legally ambiguous nature of property transactions, the repurposing of building space for community or Jamaat use happens prolifically.

An interview with a key functionary at the Land Department of the CDGK[165] revealed this ambiguity in land transactions: "Since partition there has been no planning in this area, there are no official schemes for this area. The last map of the area is from the 1920s which was a survey done by the British. The lines that they drew still remain the same, whatever else is there, are encroachments." Further, he indicated how "there was no writ of the state" anymore, although also referring to the general state of affairs in urban land transactions.

This state of ambiguity is partly the reason why the Kutyana Memon Jamaat was able to negotiate with the state to construct a major hospital in a converted historical building owned by the Karachi Municipal Corporation (KMC) and the construction of their community centre, the Kutyana Memon Hall, on a part of one of the largest public grounds in the old city, the Kakri Ground. As Habib Fuda, one of the prominent members of the Kutyana Memon Jamaat admits, there were problems with the KMC in negotiating for the building to build the hospital, but it

[165] City District Government Karachi.

was mainly through the influence of prominent members of the Kutyana committee that the property was finally acquired.

Property Management Under the Jamaats

Jamaats are also actively involved in the turnover and exchange of property for commercial and residential use. Two different kinds of tenancy systems exist in the area: the standard system of owners renting out their property on market rates, and the "pughree" system. The "pughree" system allows an informal transfer of tenancy rights from the original tenant to the new tenant through the payment of a lump sum to the original tenant and the landlord, with the larger percentage of that sum going to the landlord. In this way the new tenant gets superficial tenancy rights and pays a nominal monthly or yearly rent on the property. The owner gets to make a profit each time there is a transfer of tenancy rights. Almost 50% of tenancy in the old city area operates under this system. Often different kinds of rent arrangements exist on the same property with the owner retaining some of the portion for his own use, renting some out in a conventional rent arrangement and the rest on Pughree. This system is said to have originated in Bombay, also primarily amongst merchant families and communities as a way to gain protection under the Bombay Rents Act. Dada Bhai, a local real estate broker explains that there are both advantages and disadvantages to this system. The landlords are motivated by the desire to keep transferring tenancy rights depending on who offers the highest sum and often try to evict previous tenants. On the part of tenants, the system is regarded as something between ownership and rent which is much more affordable in the long term than attempting to buy property according to market rates.

What mitigates the risk of arbitrary eviction by the landlord is the relations with the landlord, not just as individuals but as members of Jamaat, biradiri and clan. Since most owners and landlords are also associated with the prominent Jamaats, this gives the practice a stamp of legitimacy. If disputes and conflicts arise between the landlord and tenant in a pughree arrangement the matter cannot be taken to court due to the illegality of the practice. The matter is usually taken to a local conflict resolution committee set up by most Jamaats for the resolution of conflicts ranging from property to domestic disputes. While such rental arrangements exist elsewhere in the city as well, they are much more pervasive in the old city area since there are much older properties with continuous ownership.

The active role played by the Jamaats in conflict resolution of property disputes is one way that Jamaats attempt to govern and manage space in the area. There is also a general sense that such disputes should be resolved within the community and that the "matter should not go to court."[166] This avoidance of recourse to legal protections and its associated contestations is crucial in order to be able to maintain an autonomous sphere of action for the Jamaats. The encouragement of extra-legal practices like the pughree system, as well as other kinds of informalities that will be examined later in this chapter, is a part of this effort to maintain autonomy. However, this is not to suggest that these practices and the social structures that sustain them exist apart from or outside of state practices and governance. It is only to say that the state, on an everyday basis, is not interested in the micro-management of space and property in the area. I explore the relation between state and local actors, and state and 'civil society' attempts to reconfigure the area, with respect to new urban development in the following chapter.

[166] A general sentiment often expressed by multiple interlocutors

Charity and Philanthropy

The channeling and redistribution of wealth through endowments, charity and philanthropy are proudly claimed as major achievements by the Jamaats. The streets of Kharadar are filled with banners announcing the distribution of Zakat funds for widows and orphans, free food distribution for the destitute and hungry, free medical aid for the needy, free schooling for children from low-income families, support for dowries and wedding ceremonies and even free burial services for the dead. While these practices are part of the management and accumulation of wealth by these privileged groups, through the avoidance of taxes for example, they also speak to a more pervasive ethics of welfare and "gifting" – where the gifting of wealth and services is a way to create reciprocal relations of trust, gratitude and conviviality. Birla argues that customary social welfare practices amongst mobile merchant groups in India were key to the enaction of a localized market sovereignty.[167] These practices were also underpinned by a religious ethics where gifting ensured an investment in "dharma," in the case of Hindu groups like the Marwaris; or the performance of a prescribed religious duty like Zakat, in the case of Muslim groups like the Memons. However as Birla has further shown, customary social welfare underwent a recoding during the colonial period as the gifting and endowment practices of these merchant/religious groups were classified and categorized as either private or public trust/charity. Customary practices of social gifting were brought under purview of contractual relations with the state and converted into philanthropic practices for an abstract public benefit.

One important aspect of gifting is the designation of property as an endowment for religious purposes, or waqf. Considering the proliferation of mosques and shrines in the old city area, most of which are managed under different waqf regimes, Jamaats are significantly

[167] Birla, *Stages of Capital*.

involved in the management of waqf properties. One socio-spatial arrangement where Jamaat interests, waqf[168] arrangements, and social life converge in significant ways are the dargahs or shrines of more than twenty saints that dot the old quarter, which is examined at length in Chapter Six.

One of the most visible ways in which charitable gifting is enacted is through public 'langars' where free food is distributed, a practice that is also considered a part of the tradition of the old city. The Bantva Aikta Foundation, an offshoot of the Bantva Jamaat, operates a free food service located at the edge of the largest public grounds in the area. Every Friday, working class and unemployed men line up to get free plates of Biryani doled out from huge 'deghs.' The men are mostly daily wage labourers – fishermen and construction workers – who work at the port. The organizers of the service indicate that the numbers of men lining up have increased over the past few years, an indication of rising unemployment. Many restaurants in the area also have free food services on Sundays and the streets of Kharadar are often lined with men, women and children seeking a meal, many coming from the more economically depressed area of Lyari, which lies adjacent to Kharadar.

While this kind of gifting allows the prominent Jamaats to establish their reputations of benevolence and caring for the poor, an image that significantly adds to their legitimacy in the eyes of their members, residents and peers, most residents also consider the practice of charitable food gifting a religious imperative. It is a form of 'Zakat' and is engaged in even by less privileged residents whenever possible, and while it is considered appropriate for the individual donor to remain anonymous, as much as possible such gifting must be enacted in a public, collective setting in order to be recognized by all as a charitable activity. These spaces also turn

[168] Waqf

into social settings, as this is one of the activities that legitimates the presence of marginalized groups in public space: unemployed men, drug addicts and low-income women. Arguably, in the old quarter of Kharadar and other adjacent old city quarters, one is more likely to see the public and somewhat leisurely presence of various social outcasts than in other areas of the city. The increasing visibility of destitute groups in public spaces is noted by many residents and speaks to the rising numbers of unemployed and homeless in the city. They also become major objects of gifting practices and as access to urban goods and services becomes more difficult, such practices are beginning to proliferate in the rest of the city as well, often organized by prominent Memon businessmen on the same model as in the old city.

While scholars have argued that charitable practices, especially ones that are religiously-motivated are increasingly becoming common in the global south urban context and that there is an emerging 'religously-coded biopolitics'[169] – the Jamaat charities operate on an older register. Although it is a biopolitics that works well within the present conjuncture of rising scarcity and the state's withdrawal from the provision of basic needs, it also comes from an older genealogy of an ethics of care for neighbourhood and community. It is an important aspect of Jamaat governmentality as it allows them to delineate urban space as a space of charity in which they are seen to emulate an older Islamic tradition of Muslim rulers extending their largesse to the poor and needy.

Governing the Street

Memon residents often invoke the importance of the street to the everyday life and social activities of the community. Ilyas, 58 years old and a longtime resident of Kharadar, recounts his

[169] Yasmeen Arif, "Religion and Rehabilitation: Humanitarian Biopolitics, City Spaces and Acts of Religion," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32.3 (2008): 671-89.

experience of growing up in the neighbourhood. We meet in an inner street in Mithadar, which is no more than 8 meters across. There are concrete benches lining the street on both sides where men sit and 'timepass', especially on Sundays. The street is lined with four to six storied buildings with shops on the ground floor and apartments above. The entrance to this street is narrow and commences with a series of steps that lead in from an outer ring street that is vehicular. The entrance is also partially blocked by a shop that has been constructed in the middle of the road. This shop and the steps both act as a way to demarcate the more private space of this street from the more public 'outside.' Further in, there is a man operating a small ferris wheel for children. Vendors are selling snacks and sweet meats. There are several groups of older Memon men sitting on the ground on white sheets, playing cards and 'satta' – a form of speculative gambling. In contrast to the street 'outside' with its chaotic traffic jams, noise and pollution, entering this street is like entering the outer 'bhaithak'[170] of a private residence. This interiorization of the street also acts to delineate a domain of autonomy that residents refer to as the 'life of the streets,' and it is evoked often by them as the most attractive feature of life in Kharadar. As Ilyas recalls:

> This area is mainly inhabited by the Kutchi biradari. Our ancestors have been here for hundreds of years. Here they set up their businesses. I have lived here since I was five or six years old. My own family, my parents migrated here from India, from Dhoraji. They came in 1947, at partition. This area used to be a peaceful area. After graduation I started working in a local bank as a bank manager. We used to sit (out on the street) till 4-5 in the morning; we used to play kasoti, asking questions about famous personalities. We were educated people, and us men, with our pals, we would hang out and talk about all sorts of things. It was very peaceful here. People would be roaming around outside on the streets till 3-4 in the morning. Women would be able to be out when returning home from their Maikas (their parents house) with their children. There was no fear. Here, where you are sitting right now, people would be able to bring out their mattresses and sleep out in

[170] In the North Indian spatial tradition the concept of 'bhaithuk' – literally meaning a place to sit – is associated with the outer, more public area of a private residence. The bhaithuk is the space adjacent to the outer courtyard of a house, or even within a non-courtyard house, where guests who are not so intimate with the family – always male – are received. For public figures like politicians or socially prominent individuals, bhaithuks can also act as a venue for impromptu political gatherings and meetings.

> the street during the heat of the summer. There were less people; these same streets which seem so congested now, seemed wider and more spacious. There are too many people now; the whole area is getting congested.

Ilyas's invocation of a shared history and emphasis on biradari and clan is also echoed by other inhabitants and points to a memorialization of the space of the neighbourhood when the street was imagined as a shared domestic space where they forged relations of friendship and conviviality. This is also a space of 'timepass' – where one can 'hang out' and pass the time without being held accountable to schedules and timetables or even an ethics of productivity. It is mostly older retired men and unemployed ones who indulge in 'timepass' – however, most residents evoke this practice of just hanging out in the streets as something they value and have tried to sustain at all periods of their lives.

In ethnographic accounts of the practices of young unemployed men in urban public spaces all over South Asia, "timepass" has been theorized as a kind of politics of waiting.[171] These studies locate these practices in the current socio-economic conjuncture of rising unemployment, deregulation and scarcity. However, 'timepass' in Kharadar, amongst the Memons at least, seems to evoke an older ethos, a cultural practice that is part of the habitus of everyday life, something to be indulged in with friends and family in the public space of the street and as will be seen in the later chapter, in public parks and grounds. This is not to say that this practice of passing the time or killing time is not linked to urban processes of disenfranchisement and dispossession. As I also explore in the next chapter, working-class and unemployed men also refer to 'timepass' or just hanging out as a way to explain their presence in public space. I suggest that these two articulations of 'timepass' co-exist and are evoked in

[171] See Craig Jeffrey, *Timepass: Youth, Class and the Politics of Waiting in India* (California: Stanford University Press, 2010); Phadke, Khan, and Ranade, "Why loiter?"

different ways in different settings, while at the same time providing a shared language that relates to and explains a particular kind of presence in public space. And, as others have alluded, this is a trangressive presence that challenges the space-time of modern capitalism, which demands that movement through space-time be directed towards an end goal of social and economic productivity.

Many of my interlocutors were of a generation that was born immediately after partition. Their formative years also coincided with the formative years of the nation, and a lot of their nostalgia for the peaceful days of the past evokes the promise and aspirations of post-independence Pakistan. Not immediately connected to the violent displacement and losses of the partition move as their parents, they evoke this early space of the nation as secure and hopeful. This contrasts with, or in some ways represents the other side of the sense of insecurity and precariousness that has also been pervasive in the national ethos.[172]

The treatment of the street as a private space is also temporal. During working days, when the shops on the ground floors are open for business, the same street is transformed into a commercial thoroughfare, albeit with some constraints still intact. The controlled entrance ensures that no vehicles except motorcycles can enter and even commercial traffic is vetted for appropriateness. The most obvious mark of an 'outsider' is belonging to a social status that is deemed as not belonging to the area – usually upper middle class men and women who are seen as modern and westernized, especially through their form of dress and their accents. While they are never asked to leave, they are often politely approached by local residents and asked if they have 'lost their way' and need help in navigating their way out of the quarter. Thus there is an

[172] Daechsel, *Islamabad*; Devji, *Muslim Zion*.

attempt to preserve a certain interiority, despite the commercial nature of the street. The presence of beggars and other destitute groups is often tolerated as long as it is not disruptive.

When asked about the kind of conversations that happen while men hang out on the street, Ilyas indicated that most often this would be the space where business and marriage alliances, often inter-linked, would be forged. A key function of this presence on the street is also to enact control over who goes in and out of the neighbourhood and to be able to identify insiders and outsiders. Outsiders can be non-residents of the area who are passing through, but they can also be residents from neighbouring quarters who do not habitually occupy the street and belong to a non-Memon group like the Bohras, Aga khanis or Ahl-e-tasheeh.

The experiences of other residents further reveal how competing sovereignties are transforming the street and destabilizing accepted norms around boundaries and behavior. Haji Akbar and his wife Meher-un-Nissa occupy a six-story apartment building that opens out onto this street. In contrast to the hustle and bustle on the street side of the threshold, the entrance to the building is extremely dark and narrow with narrow stairs leading up to the apartments. The landing to each floor is barred with grilled doors that are kept locked. These entrances then lead to the individual apartments that are also barred with grilled steel doors. The interior of the apartment buildings seems like a series of cages. The grilled steel doors have been added in recent years as a way to create multiple levels of transitional spaces guarding the privacy of the household inside from the street outside. The street space is constantly evoked by Haji Akbar, as well as his wife and by other residents I interviewed, as a space that was once almost an extension of their households. It is where residents, mostly men, would be able to walk out in the evenings and 'hangout' for 'time-pass,' playing cards till late into night. Women would be able to walk around freely wearing jewellery without fear of being robbed and molested. The street,

or ‘gully’ was perceived as a safe space for aspiring middle-class lifestyles and sensibilities: “We used to be out on the street till 2:00 am, chatting with our neighbours, playing cards and drinking tea. Now, to even think of doing that is impossible.” What has changed? The street is no longer the familiar place it used to be – “others” have intruded and violently staked their claim on the street. Young men on motorcycles toting “TT’s” – small pistols – now patrol the streets. They snatch cellphones and handbags. To spend time on the street is now to court danger.

These residents experience the loss of this domesticated street almost as a trauma. Often this trauma is expressed as a generalized emotion conveying the destruction of a way of life: “They have destroyed Kharadar, what it used to be.” The “they” are the various political groups vying to establish their control over the area through the threat of violence in the form of theft, extortion and even murder. While residents’ anxieties and feelings of insecurity arise mainly from this threat of violence, these new configurations of power have also brought with them the possibility of practices and behaviours in the street that destabilize certain cultural norms, especially around class and gender. Haji Akbar, Meher-unnisa and Ilyas represent lower-middle class sensibilities of both anxiety and privilege on the issues of public space. Their ‘ownership’ of the street represented a kind of social capital that allowed them to exercise their class privilege of making alliances, whether business or familial, within their own class and clan. These were the fields of power and social relations that they negotiated, as Bourdieu has suggested middle-classes do,[173] and I suggest the street space represented one such space that was crucial to this negotiation.

Thus while many of these anxieties about the street are typical of bourgeois fears about crime and security, as well as maintaining class privilege in public spaces, there is a deeper

[173]Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology* (Oxford: Polity, 1990).

investment here in inhabiting the street in a certain way that the Memon imaginary is attached to and that is linked to the overall governmentality of space that the Jamaats seek to maintain and sustain.

In addition, their presence on the street also allowed the monitoring of the bodies that circulated in these spaces, especially women. One of the gauges that is often used to judge whether a public space is safe or not is how safe it is for women in terms of a space free of harassment and sexual molestation. However, in addition to the explicit evocation of the ideal street as being a space free of sexual violence toward woman, what is implicit in these evocations is the attempt to shield women from the gaze of 'outsiders.' Memon women were able to freely move through the space because it used to be inhabited by Memon men who acted as moral gatekeepers of the community – their's was the 'safe' gaze that guaranteed that women passing through these spaces did so in conformity with accepted norms. When Ilyas talks about the street space having been safe for women, he feels compelled to explain the reason for women's presence in the space, which is to visit their *maikas* – their parent's home. Whereas men's presence in public space is circumscribed by limits of membership in class and clan, for women there is the added circumscription of only being allowed on the street when necessary for a certain kind of mobility, limited to visits to school or college for unmarried women and their parents' families for married women. Elderly women used to be considered exempt from these restrictions, but at present no women are ever seen just 'passing the time' on the street or even on the threshold of houses in the most private interior lanes of the quarter.

Thus unregulated public space is seen as a particular threat against maintaining the proper sexual conduct, which is not limited just to segregation. It is important for those who are seen in public space to be recognized and known, tacitly understanding that it is young men who

generally "hang out" in public space. As Iskandar, a member of the Kutyana Memon Association recounts:

> We have to know who's out there, who our daughters are going to marry. When people move out of our area, then they mix with other kinds of people, we no longer know who these young men are. Here, everyone is known, so it's very easy to investigate and find out the background of potential marriage partners.

Certain kinds of religious activities are also considered as legitimate reasons for women's presence on the streets and in public spaces. Every Thursday evening the Al-Noor mosque in Mithadar organizes an event called Khatm-e-Qadri, which is a combination of religious sermon and "naats" and "duroods" – songs and poems sung in praise of the prophet. Cloth tents (*shamianas*) are strung across the streets surrounding the mosques, which are blocked off for the evening. There is a separate women's section that is usually packed; this is where Shabana, a local resident and schoolteacher, can be found most Thursday evenings because as she says: "I go there because prayers get answered there, I truly believe it." While the event happens inside the mosque space for the men, the women's section is actually out on the street, in an inversion of the typical gendered norm of women inside and men outside. This is because women's presence inside mosques is prohibited amongst the Ahl-e-Sunnat in Pakistan, even while Sunni women's presence in mosques is accepted in other parts of the Muslim world. Also, while some women in Pakistan have challenged this exclusivity, in general practice, women are discouraged from going to mosques.

In response to new threats and the loss of what they see as the kind of safe public realm that existed for them, most Memons invoke the necessity of the rule of law in bringing back the kind of discipline and regulation that had allowed their social arrangements to function in the expected fashion. This invocation sits in contrast with another kind of discourse in which

disillusionment and distrust of the state is also constantly invoked. As Haji Akbar asserted: *"Qanoon, Qanoon hota hai.."* – "the rule of law is the rule of law"; and "*humain qanoon ki zaroorat hai*" – "what we need is the rule of law." This claim sits in ambivalent contrast with: "*Hukoomat kay pass kabhi funds hi nahin hotay, Hukoomat to kuch bhi nahin karti*" – "The government never has the money, it never does anything." Practically, the lack of state protection has led to the emergence of committees of neighbourhood watches in which young men have armed themselves and taken on the task of protecting the street. For this residents have put up barriers between the streets that are guarded by young men armed with 'dandas' or thick wooden sticks. However, rather than preventing or confronting the gun-toting motorcyclists who come roaring through the streets, these watches function more as a warning system for the residents to retreat to their homes when there is danger and signal when it is safe to come out. The proximity and density of the overall neighbourhood plan is also hard to navigate and control for the political groups and acts as a deterrent to violence.

The other way in which residents deal with the threat of violence is negotiating with the multiple political groups operating in the area. This negotiation happens between influential members of the local Jamaats and the local leaders of Tanzeems – an Urdu term usually referring to political groups. This line of communication is crucial to the maintainence of everyday peace. In this negotiation what is evoked is the historic rootedness of the area and its importance to the very idea of the urban as well as the peaceful and essentially 'non-political' nature of its residents and its associational life.

Thus, the space of Kharadar is offered up as a neutral political space with appeals to respect that neutrality. An argument that is offered often to support the claim to neutrality is that this is a karobari – or business – area, implying that the needs and practices of doing business are

not political; but also it is a reminder of what is at stake economically if there is continuous disruption of daily life through political activity. The end result of this negotiation, in terms of the street space, is that there is a system of warnings and barriers which allows residents to negotiate their movement through the space of the neighbourhood with some degree of security (see fig. 12). This system is precarious though, as larger political developments in the city periodically lead to sudden and dramatic bursts of violence that disrupt these arrangements and render the locality 'paralyzed' – as is often termed in the media – in terms of daily activities related to work and education.

Figure 12. "Barriers on a street in Mithadar." Sarwat Viqar. March 27, 2011. Mithadar, Karachi.

If the street is a space of familiarity based on shared social ties, then the question arises, how does one encounter otherness? What happens at the borders of spaces that are self-defined

social units? I encountered one such border in an in-between space in front of the oldest Shia Imambargah in Mithadar, built in 1878. A group of five young men were standing around on the street outside the Imambargah. There is an Ahl-e-sunnat mosque right in front of the Imambargah. The young men are all Ahl-e-tasheeh, or Shia and they claim harmony with their Sunni neighbours while subtly admitting to underlying communal tensions. One reason for there being relative peace in their particular neighbourhood, they admitted, was precisely the close proximity of places of worship of very different denominations, which forces them to talk to each other.

> We sit here for 'time pass.' Often we come here when there is no power at home; it is too hot so we come to cool off here. The ahl-e-sunnat guys from the mosque across also come for the same reason. So we sit and talk and that way solve problems, talk things over. It is one of the reasons why we are not bothered by others when there is trouble.

One of the causes of trouble is when at the time of Eid-ul-Azha, the time of animal sacrifice, there is competition to acquire the sacrificed animal pelts since they fetch a high price. Goat pelts sells for Rs. 20,000 ($200) whereas cow pelts can fetch upto Rs. 100,000 ($1200), which is why the stakes for the trade in "qurbani ki khalain", the "skins/pelts of sacrifice" is very high. This situation is not unique to Kharadar but is similar all over the city. However, arguably the number of animal sacrifices being carried out in Kharadar is considerably higher both because of the high number of devout and practicing Muslims as well as a certain amount of wealth being spent. One of the reasons why young men are out on the streets is also to police and guard against the violence that can erupt as a result of the 'animal-pelt' war. It is also, however, where they negotiate and work out terms of peace between rival groups. Usually the animal-pelt racket is controlled by the dominant political party in the area, which is MQM, in what is part of an emerging religiously-inflected biopolitics in which political groups have become increasingly invested in an economy of trade in the by-products of devotional practices.

While Shia and Sunni young men collaborate to manage and control the threat of violence during times when there are struggles over capital goods, there are other times when Sunnis assert their religious hegemony. In recent years, a local resident tells me, young Sunni men have started marking out the space in front of shia imambargahs, often at the crossroads of intersecting lanes, with the construction of 'sabeels' – a water station that is a symbolic response to the lack of water and thirst of Imam Hussain and his army in the confrontation with Yazeed, the usurper. While sabeels are part of the Shia history of honouring Karbala and the martyrdom of Hussain, in Pakistan there is a tradition of Sunnis honouring the event and the sacrifice of Hussain as well. Thus, while the major Muharram enactments center around Shia rituals of mourning and self-flagellation in processions, it is Sunni Muslims who set up the 'Sabeels' in public spaces and streets around the city. Sabeels have thus become symbols associated with Sunnis. My guide informs me that these Sabeels are recent constructions and are meant to be provocative. Shias who manage the imambargahs have complained and in one case, the offending Sabeel was removed as a result.

Thus the street space in the quarter emerges as an important element in the internal governance of the quarter by its residents. Presence in the public space of this street seems to be contingent upon membership in a group, on recognition of inside and outside boundaries, and a recognition of local sovereignties and how they operate. The street also acts as a space of relief from the oppression of private domestic environments that are increasingly becoming unlivable due to failing infrastructure – especially lack of electricity due to power breakdowns. At the same time it is the site of struggle over the disposal of public and private goods and sometimes even waste. The street also acts as a repository of memories and histories of social relations and attachments that Memon residents actively invoke to claim a unique identity for their quarter.

The inscription of the space of the streets with religious and political symbols reproduces it as a site of the enaction of a rich public culture in which the social, economic, religious and political intersect in both accommodative and confrontational ways.

The street thus acts as a polymorphous space where objects and bodies acquire resignification – whether through their insertion in economies of exchange or through the assignment of new meanings to gender, ethnicity and religious identity. It is this heterodox use of space that comes up against homogenizing agendas to 'cleanse' the street of a certain kind of politics – a politics that continues to decenter and transgress juridical norms around public and private. This politics is connected to an alternative biopolitics, a biopolitics that treats the figure of the human as contingent upon circumstance and not a fixed point of reference from which all meaning emanates.

However, it has to be stressed that this politics of the streets also unfolds in a larger environment of disenfranchisement, where participation in the kind of consumerist futures predicted by local and national elites remains an unattainable dream. What also keeps the street space 'clean' for the bourgeoisie is their participation in conspicuous consumption that includes the exclusive use of private enclaves for different consumptive practices – shopping malls, gyms, guarded and gated 'public' parks, walking tracks. Private security is a thriving industry and is increasingly employed by Karachi's elite to keep them out of the 'bhatta' – extortion racket that, as outlined above, largely plays out in the streets of the city.

Governing the marketplace

The generic Islamic city has often been portrayed as having its two key public community spaces as the Mosque and the Bazaar. Bazaar economies, however, have a much

more embedded and complex relationship with the life and residents of cities than being focal points or expressions of material culture. The development of Bazaars in the old quarter of Karachi was a major object of investment for both the British administrators as well as the indigenous merchant communities. Today, the Bazaars of the old city are at the centre of contestations around real estate and finance between state and non-state actors. For the city administration it is the most lucrative tax base and a major source of revenue for the city. For non-state actors, a collection of the hardline wings of major political parties, they provide opportunities for extortion, or 'bhatta' collection as it is called locally. In between the two are the predominantly Memon shopowners and businessmen with their Jamaat affiliations. The state, in the form of the local municipal government in association with private developers and contractors, wants to streamline economic production into what it sees as the presently inefficient use of land and resources, in other words to disembed the markets from their social context. For this purpose, new plans to move the markets to the outskirts of the city have been initiated along with attempts to influence local leaders to get on board with this change. Local residents, however, remain ambivalent to this project and their reasoning provides interesting insights into the way economic activities are integrated into the very way people conceive of their place in the city.

Residents often refer to and emphasize the 'karobari'[174] nature of the old city area. It is the customary business practices of the Memon community that dominate the commercial space of the area. Most of the twenty-two retail markets in the area were set up by Memon businessmen and entrepreneurs in the early post-partition era. Bringing over much of their know-how and capital from their previous establishments in Bombay, and taking advantage of the

[174] Business-oriented

vacuum left by the departing Hindu merchant community, which had largely been concentrated in the old city, these traders and entrepreneurs were faced with a tabula rasa of potential economic opportunity. They were aided in this by the newly independent post-colonial state, which was giving major incentives for setting up industries and retail establishments. It has been noted that practices of tax evasion were tolerated and even encouraged by the state.[175] Memon businessmen were major stakeholders in the development of industry and capital in the new state. As was noted earlier, these business communities not only reproduced their commercial arrangements in this new setting but their socio-spatial practices as well. This included an embedded idea of social and economic life in which social identity was defined through one's trade and occupation, and social status was highly dependent on the trade alliances and economic arrangements that were struck amongst families. The strong incentive to keep ownership and profits within the family and the respective clan encouraged socio-spatial practices in which the place of residence, commercial activity, leisure and public activities were in close proximity to each other. Today, most residents cite this proximity and multi-functionality as a major incentive for maintaining residence in the area. Many residents refer to the markets as adding 'raunaq' or 'life' to the area. The embeddedness of the Bazaar economy in local kinship ties, ethnic identities and shared histories is a feature that is shared across many other contexts in the region and beyond.[176] As well, the spatial localization of the trades and their reliance on neighbourhood and local religious networks is seen as a way to manage risk and integrate production and commerce – as has been noted, for example, in the case of the traditional carpet Bazaars of Tehran.[177] Further as Rajat Kanta Ray has shown, these localizations and kinship networks allowed the

[175] Gustav F. Papanek, *Pakistan's Development: Social Goals and Private Incentives* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967).
[176] Abu-lughod, "The Islamic City."
[177] Arang Keshavarzian, *Bazaar and State in Iran: The Politics of the Tehran Marketplace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

shared investment of capital in ventures whose profits were then divided up between the various allied groups in a form of cooperative trading.[178]

Many of the retail markets originated as encroachments on public space, which were later 'legalized' by the municipality. Shopkeepers refer to the early development of the markets as an ad hoc process in which the municipality dealt on a case-by-case basis with these encroachments, and through a process of negotiation finally provided the land to the shopowners on a lease system. Today, these are the biggest wholesale markets in Pakistan from where traders, wholesalers and retailers supply imported and locally manufactured goods to the rest of the country. The presence of the markets generates an intense and continuous daily traffic of buyers, suppliers, consumers and labour through the old city area, which keeps intensifying. The transactions associated with these wholesale businesses are not entirely localized, though. Many businesses have moved out of the area but retain storage and warehousing facilities here because of the cheaper cost of transporting goods from the adjacent port area, as well as the abundant availability of cheap labour. It is the retail markets though, that are still the "raunaq" or life of the area, according to local residents. Three of the retail markets are located in the neighbourhoods studied in this research and these markets retain their original functions and identities from the pre-partition period: the Kaghazi Bazaar, or the Cloth market, the Bombay Bazar and the Macchi Miani Market (see fig. 13). Each market has its own association of shopowners that claims to represent the interests of the retailers in the resolution of disputes, the setting of prices, the maintenance and upkeep of the markets, as well as issues of security.

[178] Ray, "Asian Capital in the Age of European Domination…"

Figure 13. “The Kaghazi Bazaar or “Cloth Market” in Mithadar.” Sarwat Viqar. March 27, 2011. Mithadar, Karachi.

Most residents cite the market as a major incentive for maintaining residence in the area. Their reasons are based on features of the traditional marketplace that are common all across the global south, particularly where inner city quarters retain much of their traditional character, notably Cairo.[179] The retail markets offer cheap affordable goods of everyday use. There is possibility of bargaining and negotiating the price of goods, as opposed to the fixed prices offered in the increasingly proliferating shopping malls in the city. But proximity between place of residence and commerce is the strongest incentive for residents to stay in the quarter. Often

[179] Nezar AlSayyad, *Cairo: Histories of a City* (Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2013).

this preference is expressed as, “There is everything here that we could possibly need, why would be go somewhere else?” Thus, the internalized world of the quarter is seen to fulfill all practical needs. These needs are fulfilled by the close proximity of Bazaar, Masjid, Madrassah and School. Very rarely do any residents mention the absence of modern spaces of entertainment like cinemas, shopping malls and arcades as a lack in the quarter.

In referring to the nature of bazaar life and marketplace culture in the quarter, shopowners often use the idioms of biradiri, clan and ‘community.’ The two terms most often used to invoke positive social capital are ‘biradiri’ and ‘community.’ Biradiris refer to homogenous social groups based on clan and kinship ties and are often invoked in terms of their benefit to the group: “Our biradiri always takes care of its own.” Community is often referred to in the plural to claim the heterogeneous and egalitarian nature of the market place, a general comment often being: “All kinds of communities inhabit the bazaar, Sindhi, Pashtun, Baloch, Memon, Mohajir. We all get along.” This discourse also permeates other social, cultural and religious spaces. Local merchants also emphasize that the area had a history of largely productive alliances amongst the different ‘communities’ inhabiting the bazaar, until the recent decade. In the past, the bazaar economy was mostly dominated by the various Memon clans. This began to gradually change in the post-70s economic boom when Pakistani migrant workers began sending back remittances from the Persian Gulf region (United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman), precipitating a boom in the construction industry as well as greater investment in wholesale import and export businesses. Most migrant workers hailed from Punjab and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa provinces, and their increased prosperity led to an investment in what is the most lucrative trading area of Pakistan, which is the old city of Karachi.

While emphasizing the inclusiveness of the marketplace, though, old-time Memon shopowners also reveal their anxieties about the different market practices of their Pushtun counterparts, who represent the fastest growing merchant sector in Karachi. As Iskander, a 65 year-old merchant and president of the local merchant's association complains:

> When a customer comes to us, we offer them a seat, we offer them something to drink, usually chai. Then we chitchat and negotiate about the price of the product till we agree on a mutually agreed price. But these Pushtun dukanwalas, they are so rude, they tell the customer, "*lena hai to lo, varna jao*" – "take it or leave it!" They refuse to bargain. They are not civil!

This intrusion of what is seen as the "uncivil" culture of the upstart Pushtuns is a recurring undercurrent amongst residents and merchants who claim a certain ownership of the quarter and its markets. While crediting the Pushtuns with bringing more customers and business to the markets, there is uneasiness against what is seen as their plebian manner of conducting business and dealing with customers. While informed to a certain degree by preconceptions and stereotypes of the rude frontiersman, these attitudes are a reaction to a destabilization in the norms and order of doing business in the quarter and the fear of losing long-time customers. When referring to the past, that is the immediate post-partition environment when Hindu merchants still retained some businesses in the area, it is implied that Hindus and Muslims shared a compatibility in their market practices and culture that is absent amongst the present configuration of communities, mainly between Memons and Pushtuns – the two major groups dominating the market economy of the quarter.

Since Bazaar practices relied on networks of recognition and familiarity amongst merchants and as has been noted in other contexts, newcomers used to be vetted against their

reputations amongst merchants[180], this can no longer happen in a marketplace that is no longer autonomous in its reconstitution in a 'rationalized' economy. These ways of organizing the Bazaar were the heterodox[181] ways of organizing urban life and economy that are now cast as nepotistic, corrupt and caste-ridden. These transformations in the Bazaar economy have also affected norms of gender segregation and privacy in the quarter, and transgressions of traditional codes of privacy are a rising source of concern. For example, as the demand for storage space for wholesale goods grows, new, expanding businesses, many of them operated by non-Memons, are buying up the inner buildings of the quarter and converting them into storage spaces as well as housing for workers. Most of the workers are migrants from the northern part of the country and are single. The upper floors where they live and work have been stripped of the fenestrations, extensions and balconies that provided a private screening partition from the outside. They are now exposed to and can also look into the residential buildings across the narrow street. As a result of this, a resident complains: "our women are losing their privacy. You can look and see everything. There are strange men and they can see into our home. This is "*be-pardagi.*"[182] When I asked the president of the merchant's association of Kaghazi Bazaar how such a problem is dealt with, he indicated that the owners of such buildings would be approached by leaders like him and asked to cover up their windows.

The above concerns and negotiations inform to a significant degree the struggles over creating a livable space within the quarter. They also show that as much as possible, merchants, residents and Jamaat leaders try to keep the formal role of the state at a minimum in the internal governance of their quarter. This also includes attempts to retain a certain flexibility in spatial

[180] AlSayyad, *Cairo*
[181] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*.
[182] An Urdu/Persian term meaning an intrusion into the private/feminine world. There is a strong implication of shame here - the term literally means a lifting of the veil.

arrangements. One such setting, where Jamaat and market sovereignties coalesce with the indirect involvement of the state, is the illegal occupation of space by the numerous vendors who ply their trade on virtually all available space on the streets, on public grounds and around mosques and shrines. The dynamics between legal owners of shops, the encroachers and municipal officials is revealed when considering the setting of one marketplace in the quarter of Kharadar, which is detailed below.

Undoing Thresholds: Vendors and Encroachments

Farooq bhai is the co-ordinator at the local union council office in Kharadar (see fig. 14). The offices of the local union council are located on the upper floor of the Machi Miani market, which almost a hundred years ago was the site where the fishermen whose refusal to move from their reed and mat huts had caused such a headache for the colonial administrators. Today, the Machi Miani market is a covered space of more than 200 shops selling mostly fabric and household goods. While the indoor space of the market is owned by the municipality and is regulated through formal rent and lease agreements with the shop owners, the outside space is a different matter. Patharas – the local term for vendors' informal occupation of the streets – abound selling fruits and vegetables. Their encroachment blocks the street outside and makes the passage of vehicles very difficult.

Figure 14. "Map of Kharadar with Machi Miani market in top left." Source: Maps.google.com, copyright: Imagery © 2016 DigitalGlobe Map Data © Google

Local merchants, while publically proclaiming them as a nuisance, in more involved interviews admitted that they add 'raunaq' – or life – to the area. Beyond that, they act as 'catchers': attracting customers because they mostly sell either prepared foodstuffs (something for which Kharadar is known for, i.e. the best street food in Karachi) or fruits and vegetables. Municipal officials in the area seem to support this practice as well. Farooq Bhai is generally supportive of the vendors' presence:

> These thellas are an indication to the customer that all is well, we are open for business, because that is what they have been used to for years. If you remove them, you will lose

> customers, they will think something has happened to the markets, the 'raunaq' has disappeared.

I asked him later if the government had ever thought of legalizing the thellas and he replied:

> They have tried and failed. The government's solution was to standardize the space occupied by each thella and they built them these 5'X5' cabins. It was a dismal failure. You can't do that to [them]. You have to let them be free. Maybe it is a kind of 'qabza' or racket, but it works. It keeps the prices down and keeps our markets going.

His response is revealing in the sense that as a state representative he is advocating the informal use of space by these vendors; and while acknowledging the unambiguity of municipal prohibition of the informal occupation of public space, he asserts the absurdity of rendering 'illegal' spatial occupations that have decades long histories. It is tacitly understood that the various illegalities involved in maintaining and protecting these spaces are necessary for the benefit of the various actors involved in this illegal occupation, not least of whom are the occupiers themselves.

Labeled as encroachments, vendors all over the city, much as in many southern metropolises,[183] have been the subject of periodic anti-encroachment drives, seen to disrupt the free flow of goods and services. Vendors literally occupy and unsettle the threshold (much like other thresholds – refugees, squatter settlements, abandoned industrial sites, railroads) that defines a clear juridical norm – between the that of public thoroughfare with its own regime of rights and rules, and that of privately owned property. They are also seen to contribute to a chaotic and unruly public space, and their existence is anathema to the developmentalist urban aesthetics that demands a clear definition of thresholds in continuation of the overall neoliberal project to demarcate and capitalize urban land. The cleansing of the urban environment from encroachments is thus usually at the forefront of urban development plans and city beautification

[183] Bayat, *Life as Politics*.

schemes. However, counter-intuitive to the automatic labeling of vendors' street occupations as an eyesore, many local residents, though not all, but especially the shop owners who interact and negotiate with them on a daily basis, make an argument for their necessity not just in practical but aesthetic terms. They represent variety, diversity and flexibility in bargaining, which is seen as a desirable way to conduct business in the quarter. Arguably, the overall urban context is one where the violation of thresholds is the norm rather than the exception. In that Kharadar is not unique, but what does become interesting is the way these transgressions are absorbed and integrated into the forms of life that govern the quarter.

Respondents – shopkeepers as well as vendors – repeatedly emphasized how they resolve disputes by talking to each other and coming to informal arrangements. In this process, they become like 'family.' A local grocery shop owner described his relationship with the vendor who sells vegetable and takes up the space in front of his shop: "They are like family, our children have grown up together, so how can I turn him over to the police? Even if he does take up space illegally, he also has a right to try and fill his children's bellies any way he can."

The sympathy for vendors' informal occupation of space on the part of market owners partly arises from a recognition of Kharadar's history of squatting and encroachments, where most long-time residents and merchants had been squatters at one time or another. Informality allows parties to negotiate amongst themselves, getting to know each other in the process and resolving disputes in face to face interactions. State mediation brings an element of disconnection as the parties appeal to an outside authority, far removed from the reality on the ground, and disputes are managed on the abstract rule of right to property in which the various parties' interests are pitted against each other. This points to a situation in which the occupation of space is governed by practical realities that consist not just of the economic interests of the

parties involved but also the loyalties and attachments that are generated in the process. Vendors' claim to informal space occupation is also strengthened by the fact that these spaces have decades old histories of continuous possession by their families. This embeddedness is seen to be an important part of the unique marketplace culture of the quarter.

The greatest precarity for the vendors' occupation of space comes from state authorities – the police as well as the municipality. With the threat of removal ever present, their survival depends on finding ways to negotiate with police and municipal authorities. When I asked Zuhoor, the president of the local hawker's association, if he thought moving in order to obtain legal title to commercial space would be a better option for the vendors, he replied:

> It depends on where they send us, whether it is inside or outside the (inner) city. Kharadar is a major junction in the city. We have spent our entire lives here. If we had to move to a new place, the biggest challenge would be creating new networks and relationships. Here we are solid. God has deemed that we should earn our living here, in this space and who are we to argue with that? Everyone comes here, from all over Pakistan, from the frontier, from Punjab, to earn a living, what other reason is there?

The state's approach towards disciplining vendors and thellawalas shows multiple levels of coercive and conciliatory as well as corrupt practices. On the one hand there is an attempt to 'clean-up' the urban space through threats of removal, which is often a violent process in which vendor's property is destroyed. Vendors avoid this threat by paying off municipal officials and police on a regular basis. On the other hand, municipal officials on the level of the union council, the most local tier of the state, negotiate to let the vendors stay and work with Jamaat and market owners to incorporate them into the local economy of exchange through forging relations based on patronage, in order to facilitate consumption. They also encourage vendors to unionize in order to enter into collective bargaining with the merchants as well as the state. The Union Council, in this sense, performs a supportive and arguably negotiatory role in sustaining current

spatial and commercial practices. As the union council is staffed by Memon residents who are also Jamaat representatives, and has a close association with merchants and market representatives, it is ensured that the interests of all will come into play in regulating commercial activities and the associated spatial arrangements in the area.

The politics of encroachment in the quarter reveals not only the kinds of mobilities that are possible within the fluid domain of Jamaat/bazaar sovereignty, but also the extent to which the state relies on this space of fluidity and mobility. While the opaqueness and ambiguous nature of thresholds that define inside and outside, and private and public, allow individuals a measure of freedom in negotiating and creating avenues for economic survival, it has been argued that the state also takes advantage of this space of opacity to create domains of exception, which furthers the larger biopolitical project to manage populations and territories.[184] However, in light of the Pakistani state's ambivalent relationship with 'development,'[185] the question arises, to what extent is the state able or even willing to participate in the biopolitical project? Because, while there has existed a continuous trajectory of developmentalist projects – agrarian and urban in Pakistan – very few of these have been realized. And in an urban context where ad hoc planning is the norm, the politics of encroachments – a clear violation of the urban spatial logos – points more towards a well-established norm that has allowed much of the current socio-spatial arrangements to survive and thrive. This is a hybrid and heterodox space that relies on both contract and custom, kinship ties and modern relations of exchange to reproduce more and more dense and complex forms of urbanity. It is also a space in which localized sovereignties like the Jamaats take on the responsibility of the 'care' and survival of those who have been

[184] Partha Chatterjee, *Lineages of Political Society: Studies in Postcolonial Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).
[185] Daechsel, *Islamabad*.

excluded from the regime of rights and citizenship, to the extent of generating new kinds of norms around their occupation of urban space. Thus Jamaat sovereignty is one in which 'bare' life continuously circulates, crossing thresholds and evoking an alternate register of imagining urban space.

Conclusion

The concern of this chapter has been to show how the associational life of Kharadar contributes to the governance and administration of the quarter by its inhabitants, resulting in an urban form that is a mix of older norms and hierarchies and present destabilizations. The transformation of Karachi's urban economy in the post-liberalization era, which started in the late 1990s, has been marked by a shift towards increasing privatization of what had previously been public assets: land and infrastructure. In this economic restructuring, urban land has become a highly sought after resource. This state of affairs has affected the old city area dramatically in terms of rising real estate prices and increasing attempts to completely commercialize the area, forcing out many old-time residents. However, there is still a genuine attachment to the area on the part of those who stay. The area remains 60% residential, according to local union council estimates. An important incentive for those who stay are the decades worth of investment of social and economic capital in the area – social networks, property ownership and political involvement. While the economic capital is mobile and transferrable to other cities and regions, and indeed that is what has already happened as businesses have moved out, the social capital which includes the networks and attachments that are linked to particular kinds of institutions and their spatial manifestations, is considered as a unique feature of this area and keeps many residents tethered to the locality.

In the interiorized world of the quarter, the street emerges as a major site of the negotiation of the public and private, where ideas of public and private are contingent upon notions of familiarity, belonging and domestication. The idea of the urban street as an ordered and rational space of certain kinds of productive activities is constantly destabilized, because how space is used and who uses it depend upon different layers of intermediaries and brokers who are embedded in the violent geographies that are a pervasive feature of Karachi's postcoloniality. These are also networks which crisscross social, economic, cultural and religious institutions and norms where economic life, for example, is never separate from but implicated in and intertwined with social and cultural interests. Thus those who rule the marketplace also feel entitled to regulate social norms around privacy and the public circulation of women. In addition, even while promoting and encouraging consumptive practices and the free flow of capital and goods in the market, the attention to fostering mutual relations of conviviality, co-existence and reciprocity amongst the various classes and ethnicities inhabiting the bazaar shows an attachment to older norms of commitment and investment in the long-term future of the quarter.

Against the rationalization process of the state's urban development agendas, the question arises: what kind of urban life are these practices/associations pushing towards? State rationalization processes have often resulted in insecurity and precarity, where the assertion of private property rights and the implementation of functional zoning and categorization creates social fragmentation – tearing into dense and overlapping layers of social networks and relations. The hybrid and heterodox forms of life that abound in the quarter transgress and unsettle these juridical boundaries/borders giving rise to opportunities to continuously bond, knit and re-knit social connections and associations – as in the case of the politics of encroachment.

What also emerges in this examination are the ways in which Jamaat governmentality acts to absorb the urban homo sacer – the excluded from the reach of political rights – the needy, the homeless, the encroachers. In considering the plight of the homo sacer, Agamben's prophecy is pessimistic: in the present political order, the homo sacer is doomed to be forever the figure of bare life – to be killed with impunity but never a figure of sacrifice.[186] However, the hybrid contexts of modernity in the global south – a context that does not figure significantly in Agamben's work, suggest that the homo sacer is also connected to another kind of biopolitics – one inflected with an ethics of collective care. These are forms of life that are distinct from the welfare-driven biopolitics of the state and the humanitarian biopolitics of institutions emulating state processes of enumeration and categorization.

The Jamaat arose as a hybrid form of associational life out of the reworking of the categories of custom and contract in the colonial age. The groups that it represented actively participated in the post-colonial project of nation-building and capital accumulation, but through reworking contractual relations in their own ways. While actively promoting consumer practices and relations of market exchange, residents of the old city, imbue these practices with their social norms in such a way that unsettles the 'rationality' of market relations. The articulation of the relation between vendors and shopkeepers as one of 'family' as well as that of mutual benefit is one example of such an unsettling.

These associations and their constituents actively participate in facilitating the turnover of property, and the generation of profits and rents; yet they do so while sustaining extra-legal practices of economic exchange. In rental arrangement, they prefer to resolve conflicts through informal mediatory bodies rather than appealing to the state. In doing this they also take on a

[186] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

representative role in which they adopt a paternal approach towards the marginalized. Patronage of the poor is incorporated into gifting practices that are also rooted in religious ethics, allowing the gifters to be seen as fulfilling a duty while also establishing their legitimacy as leaders. The space of the quarter regularly acts as a setting for the enacting of this gifting, which is often ritualized in the context of the shrines and mosques.

One of the questions that arises when considering the social and political role of Jamaats is that, if civil society is conventionally understood as a voluntary association of individuals who act in the name of public interest, then what space do Jamaats – associations rooted in precolonial forms, transformed by colonialism and playing a significant role as intermediaries between state and society in the post-colonial period – occupy in the state-society spectrum? This is an important question to consider because it has implications for the socio-spatial practices and the production of urban space and politics in the postcolonial context. The urban space of the Memon imaginary, which also permeates non-Memon residents' socio-spatial practices in the old city, is a result of the collaborations and contestations of their associative life with the modern state. In this relationship, categories and meanings of custom are creatively deployed to manage space, claim power and exercise sovereignty. The very existence of this space of multiplicity, flexibility and regulatory opacity reveals the contrived nature of the state-society divide. In order to delve deeper into the political implications of Jamaats as an associational form, a key question is what are the limits of Jamaat sovereignty? The short answer is that the social and economic capital of the Jamaats, and investment in it on the part of residents, is unable to secure access to infrastructure. Electricity, water and sewerage remain the most problematic concerns of everyday life in the quarter. In addition, Jamaats' reach in ensuring security and diminishing violence is also very limited. Where possible, Jamaats try to exercise some of their political leverage with

ruling groups and the state to create security – as in the cases of negotiating for the release of kidnapped merchants and business men in the area. It is in these two domains – security and infrastructure – that Jamaats and their affiliates encounter both the state as well as competing political sovereignties in the form of political parties in the area. The control and management of public space is a key feature of these contestations. This is the subject of the next chapter in which I examine the encounter between old and new forms of associations through an ethnographic engagement with public actors in public spaces in Kharadar.

Chapter Five

Tanzeems: New Sovereignties and the Material and Discursive Terrain of Public Spaces

In the summer of 2013, Shahid, who lives on the sixth floor of a six-story apartment building in Kharadar with his wife and two young children, takes me on a walkabout of the quarter. I am coming back after a year's absence, to revisit the neighbourhood and to see what changes have transpired. As he takes me around the quarter, Shahid is visibly nervous. He wants to spend as little time walking around outside as possible. He cautions me not to point or gesture at anything, especially when he is indicating places where some kind of violence has occurred. Shops with bullet holes in the shutters, slogans denouncing a certain political party, a crossroads where a young boy, he recounts, had sprayed passersby with a Kalashnikov. "There are parts of Mithadar where we dare not venture outside after Maghrib [evening] prayers. Anything can happen and has already happened. They can come at any moment, even now as you and I are walking. They have hand grenades! This was the first time in my life that I ever saw a hand grenade. The nickname for it is 'barfi' (a popular local sweetmeat)."[187]

Shahid further indicated that he knew many of these young men – and sometimes teenage boys – who come toting pistols, semi-automatics and hand grenades. They are from his neighbourhood and he has seen them playing in the streets. "These are people from the 'gangwar' and they are recruiting kids from our streets. The incentive they give to these kids is money, owning a gun and sometimes even just a meal of kebab and parathas." We follow the narrow residential street to where it meets the wider space of the Kaghazi Bazaar, and after

[187] 2013 was considered one of the 'deadliest' years in terms of targeted killings in Karachi. See "Death Toll Rises: Over 3200 killings in Karachi Make 2013 Deadliest Year So Far" *Express Tribune*, Jan 14, 2014. http://tribune.com.pk/story/660098/death-toll-rises-over-3200-killings-in-karachi-make-2013-deadliest-year-so-far/ (accessed September 10, 2016).

weaving through shops selling burqas, jewellery, colourful plastic toys and children's clothes, we emerge from the quarter onto the road that forms its western border.

The Nawab Mahabat Khan road forms a contested border between Kharadar and the adjoining town of Lyari, which has become a site of gun battles between the de facto armed wings of the PPP (Pakistan People's Party) and the MQM (Muttahida Qaumi Movement). Buildings on both sides of the street are pockmarked with bullets with graffiti proclaiming party affiliations on each side. Concrete barriers to control movement, often placed by the residents themselves, have cordoned off the streets leading inward from the main street. For Memon residents of Kharadar, Lyari has become synonymous with the "gangwar" – and fear of the "gangwar people" permeates the social space. There are undercurrents of ethnic bias as the threat is often defined in terms of the ethnicity of those coming from the "other side" – namely the Baloch.[188]

This road is also a major city thoroughfare linking the port area with the rest of the city. Incredibly congested, with trucks, tankers, public buses, rickshaws and cars packed together and inching forward on a street surface – which is often flooded with overflowing sewage and riddled with potholes – it is a nightmarish experience for most commuters. The crisscrossing tangle of illegal electrical connections, or 'koondas', that surround the electrical poles along the street, attest to failing and degraded infrastructure where people are desperate to get a few hours

[188] The working class neighbourhood of Lyari, which is also part of the old city area, is inhabited by, amongst others, Baloch communities whose lineage goes back to the early pre-colonial settlement in Karachi. The Baloch, originally hailing from the western province of Balochistan, had also settled in parts of the Sindh province and their Talpur Mirs were the last rulers of southern Sindh, before they were defeated by the British, culminating in the conquest of Karachi in 1839. The Baloch who settled in Sindh and Karachi, though distinct from their cousins in Balochistan in terms of their integration into Sindhi culture, still maintain strong links with the larger Baloch nation, both socially and politically. During British times, the 'Balooch' were seen as a particular cause of disruption, variously cast as criminals, outlaws and terrorists. That characterization continues into the postcolonial era. Baloch nationalists are presently engaged in a virtual civil war with the Pakistani state, which is a continuation of past struggles going back to Pakistan's inception.

of power by any means necessary. Eleven to twelve hour power outages are common in the area, as in many parts of Karachi, and in the sweltering summers that last from May to September, lack of electricity to power fans in the homes drives residents, mostly male, to seek respite outdoors.

For lower middle-class residents like Shahid, who depend on multiple sources of employment, negotiating the public space of the quarter and then the city to get to their place of work, while depending on precarious means of transportation, is unavoidable. Shahid has two jobs: during the day he works as an office assistant in a Jamaat office, and during the evening he works in a printing press. An old motorcycle is his only means of transportation and also one that exposes him to two of the most pervasive hazards in the area: failing infrastructure and the threat of violence.

In this chapter I examine how political groups as well as residents manage, negotiate and contest thresholds that define inclusion and exclusion, and presence and absence in public spaces. I show how control of public space is key towards the construction of sovereign imaginaries that seek to locate political actors as global subjects in a competitive urban economy. I also bring attention to the way gendered subjectivities play an agentive role in the production of public spaces. The chapter begins by laying out the history of political contestations around urban space in Karachi going back to independence. This is followed by an extensive ethnographic section that examines two key public spaces – the Allah Rakha Park, and the Kakri Grounds, both located in Kharadar – as everyday sites of politics. I conclude the chapter by delineating what these ethnographies reveal about the nature of emerging political sovereignties and their relationship to public space.

One of the key insights that has both emerged from and informs this chapter's analysis is that public spaces are linked to and given form and meaning by the infrastructure networks that traverse the city. James Ferguson argues that this infrastructure is implicated and embedded in structures of inequality and the violence that results from this inequality.[189] My research revealed that the presence of people in public spaces in the city is increasingly informed by the concerns of material infrastructure – that is, its lack, its failure, and the violence associated with its delivery and provision. In addition, presence in public space is contingent upon membership in and relationship with the multiple sovereignties and power groups that attempt to rule and govern space. In more indirect ways the violence of poverty, unemployment and patriarchy significantly shapes how different social groups inhabit public space.

Thomas Blom Hansen[190], in the context of Mumbai, stresses the need to focus our attention on performances and spectacles in public spaces like squares and street corners as the sites "where historical imaginaries, the state, and notions of community and "society" become visible and effective."[191] While extraordinary instances of public presence in space in the form of festive spectacle or political demand-making are significant in enacting different identities – national, ethnic and religious – I bring attention to the everyday and routine presence of people in public spaces as constitutive of the development of distinct subjectivities and desires. I approach public space as a major field for the negotiation of power relations, where different groups attempt to partition and demarcate space, establish norms, and contest with other groups on questions of identity, belonging and responsibility in the urban context. Such an approach is informed by an understanding of politics as performative, and the importance of everyday

[189] James Ferguson, "Structures of Responsibility," *Ethnography* 13.4 (2012): 558-562.
[190] Hansen. *Wages of Violence*.
[191] Ibid., 232.

discourses and spatial practices as the vehicles through which people negotiate and contest social relations.[192] Class and gender identities are significant sites of such contestations and negotiations and an attention to these identities reveals the way dominant norms seek to differentiate and demarcate space. These agendas are also contested in both direct and indirect ways by women, working class men, and youth – groups whose presence in public space is a particular object of control and anxiety.

In terms of the increasing incidence and visibility of violence in the city, both spectacular violence as well as everyday violence, Laurent Gayer's recent examination of Karachi's landscape of violence[193] provides some interesting insights into the link between violence and social order. To begin with, Gayer conceptually delinks social order from control and management of violence, especially by the state, and goes on to posit that violence in Karachi symbolizes an 'ordered disorder' that results from the multi-level linkages and interdependencies between the multiple sovereignties operating in the city. However Gayer's idea of sovereignty still relies on identifying the notion of sovereignty with monopoly on the use of violence, lacking attentiveness to the role of subjective desires and cultural norms that co-exist with aspirations of propertied citizenship as well as consumptive futures, in the micro-processes of everyday living. This also brings into question the assumption of the state as the site of absolute sovereignty based on its monopoly on applying the rule of law and force, whereas performances as well as scholarly representations are also central to its reproduction.

I consider these 'forms of life' as also constitutive of sovereign imaginaries that seek to establish norms and govern the lives, and deaths, of the people belonging to the distinct

[192] Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Wedeen, *Peripheral Visions*.
[193] Gayer, *Karachi:Ordered Disorder*.

collectivities that these imaginaries claim to represent, as indicated in more nuanced readings of sovereignty.[194] But Gayer is correct in pointing to the constitutive nature of violence and order in the city based on the political histories and discourses of the major political parties, mainly the MQM, vying for conventional sovereign power. But what happens in the other ways that people form collectivities, inhabit neighbourhoods and seek to manage and govern social and political life? And how do these formations interact in both conciliatory and contested ways with the more dominant, violence-driven sovereignties? Also, how can one capture the differences between different kinds of sovereign arrangements?

One significant way in which this difference surfaces in Kharadar, for example, is the way residents relate to different kinds of sovereignties. In the previous chapter, Memon Jamaats emerged as one kind of sovereign arrangement that attempts to guide and regulate the lives of their members as well as the area in general. As distinct from 'Jamaats', 'Tanzeem' is the term which is used to refer to the political parties that dominate the quarter. The term 'Jamaat' has generally been used for traditional and often religious assemblies, denominations and groups – and in the case of the Memons, an ethnic community. 'Tanzeem' (an urdu term that comes from the root 'Intizam') – to arrange – and 'Munazzim' – disciplined – imply the coming together of a disciplined movement. There is also a sense that Tanzeems are a modern associational order as opposed to the perceived parochialness of Jamaats, which also have connotations of tribe and caste as well as fraternal brotherhoods. Thus this distinction delimits distinct domains of authority and arrangements of power, which emerges in the way residents relate to Jamaat and Tanzeems. For example, Shahid makes it very clear that "when we really have issues around security – if your life is in danger or if someone is blackmailing you, then we go to the Tanzeems

[194] Agamben, *Home Sacer*; Comaroff and Comaroff, *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*.

– the Jamaats cannot do anything about that." These 'horizontal sovereignties' have also emerged from and are embedded in Karachi's 67-year post-independence history, which is elaborated on in the following section.

Karachi's Postcolonial Geography – from 1947 to the present

The present politics of land and infrastructure in Karachi has been shaped by the colonial and post-colonial transformations of the urban economy, with the partition of British India and the birth of two new countries as major markers of change. Karachi's demographic landscape was radically transformed in 1947 when almost one million refugees from various parts of newly established India migrated to the city in newly established Pakistan. In this moment of inception of the newly independent state, these were not refugees who were marginal or unwelcome. On the contrary, the very act of migration attested to the success of the call for a homeland for Muslims from all over the now separated "Hindu" half of British India. Major efforts to house and settle the newly arriving migrants were undertaken, with free or subsidized land grants and squatting rights. There were auctions on the vacant properties of the departing Hindu residents, and sometimes the occupation of vacant properties was merely overlooked. Though for the most part, the poorer segments of the refugees did not have such easy access to land and property.

Initially camping out in open public spaces in the city that had been turned into temporary receiving camps, they were later housed in 'colonies' which starting springing up in the peripheral areas of the city.[195] The mass movement of migrants during Partition also gave the city administrators a mandate to establish vast new settlements and colonies, which were segregated along class lines. In addition, refugees arriving from different parts of India, even in

[195] Ansari, *Life after Partition*.

middle-class localities, were encouraged to reproduce their ethnic identities and affiliations in organizing neighbourhoods – identities which were seen to be compatible with the idea of Pakistan as the homeland for the Muslims coming from diverse regions of India.

In the case of Karachi and Sindh, Ansari[196] suggests that the persistence of the spatialization of ethnicity in the urban areas is the result of the Pakistani state's emphasis on substituting the diversity of existing identities, based on cultural and linguistic distinctions, with a new identity, which entailed the imposition of the dominant narrative of Pakistani nationhood and the imposition of a single language, Urdu. Also the state's own ambivalent relationship with the project of 'development' has contributed to the 'failure' of large-scale urbanization projects to remake and develop Pakistan's cities as showcases of modernity. This is argued by Daechsel,[197] who sees this failure more as a fundamental contradiction between Pakistan's inception as a postcolonial state and its aspirations as a developmental state, rather than the consequence of a 'failed' statehood. This is a very significant point since it sets up the ground for an interrogation of not just Pakistani statehood, but what state, and nation-making has come to mean in the postcolony. Through a close examination of the way large-scale urban development projects were implemented in the 1950s and 1960s, the heydays of modernist planning in much of the newly liberated third world, in Karachi and Islamabad, Daechsel shows the way the Pakistani state itself has been at odds with 'development,' and by extension with governmentality as the instrument with which to implement a developmentalist future. This understanding echoes the relation between law and disorder in the postcolony as being co-constitutive, as discussed earlier.

[196] Ansari, *Life after Partition*.
[197] Daechsel, *Islamabad*.

In the current urban conjuncture in Karachi, these contradictions are manifesting in the form of political 'turf wars' that involve the use of city neighborhoods and localities to assert political hegemony through the control of vote banks. In the past two decades, political liberalization and economic restructuring have resulted in the increasing privatization of land and property in the city in which land brokerage is a thriving industry and urban land has become a highly sought after resource with various interests vying to maximize its potential for generating capital. For the average resident of the inner city, much like most of the rest of the city, this has led to insecurity and precariousness of tenure and residence. As their locality becomes the most sought after in terms of the potential for profit in land values and the turnover from the wholesale markets, there is more pressure to commercialize and gain control of resources in the area.

Considered one of the world's fastest growing cities in the world, Karachi's annual growth rate has hovered around 5 percent since 1972, with a present estimated population of 20 million. Approximately 54 percent of central government tax revenues are collected in Karachi and its monopoly over sea bound trade ensures it remains a key site for the collection of customs duties. Nearly 61 percent of the city's residents belong to low and middle-income groups who reside in 'unplanned' settlements where civic resources are poorly distributed.

Informality underpins Karachi's post-colonial urbanity. With the state's inability to provide housing and social amenities to the lower-class population, 'illegally' acquired land and privately contracted infrastructure arrangements – aided by political party strongmen, land brokers and the lower echelons of the state – have engendered new forms of patronage and political alliances. These dynamics have been exacerbated by IMF structural adjustment policies

that have, since the 1990s, reduced state-backed social sector spending. Increased inflation and reduced access to affordable education and health have severely affected poor families.[198]

The supply of basic infrastrcture in the city is deeply embedded in networks of exchange that circulate between the legal and illegal. For example, water supply in the city is managed through a collaboration between a 'water mafia' and its illegal siphoning of water from hydrants, which is tacitly supported by the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board. The sale of water through illicit channels allegedly generates US $43 million per annum. According to KW&SB officials, Karachi requires 1100 mgd of water but receives only 450 mgd largely due to water siphoning. This situation highlights a fundamental contradiction: informal infrastructure networks enable most of the infrastructure provision in unplanned settlements, while at the same time being implicated in violent geographies,[199] since violence has become a routine instrument of contract enforcement where infrastructure is concerned.[200] What also complicates this picture is that 'informality' as a conceputalization of non-state contractual relations does not quite capture the processes by which these networks function, since state officials also occupy key positions in the brokerage for illicit access to services.[201] Thus the planned/unplanned dichotomy that is often used to frame the 'problem' of the postcolonial urban is problematic because of the way that licit and illicit economies are embedded in each other.

[198] Nausheen Anwar, Daanish Mustapha, Sarwat Viqar, Ameira Sawas and Humeira Iqtidar, "Urbanization, Gender and Violence in Millennial Karachi: a Scoping Study" (report prepared for Safe and Inclusive Cities Program – International Development Research Council of Canada, 2014).
[199] Ibid.
[200] Haris Gazdar and Hussain Bux Mallah, "Informality and Political Violence in Karachi," *Urban Studies* 50.15 (2013): 3099-3115.
[201] Anwar et al, *Urbanization, Gender and Violence in Millenial Karachi*.

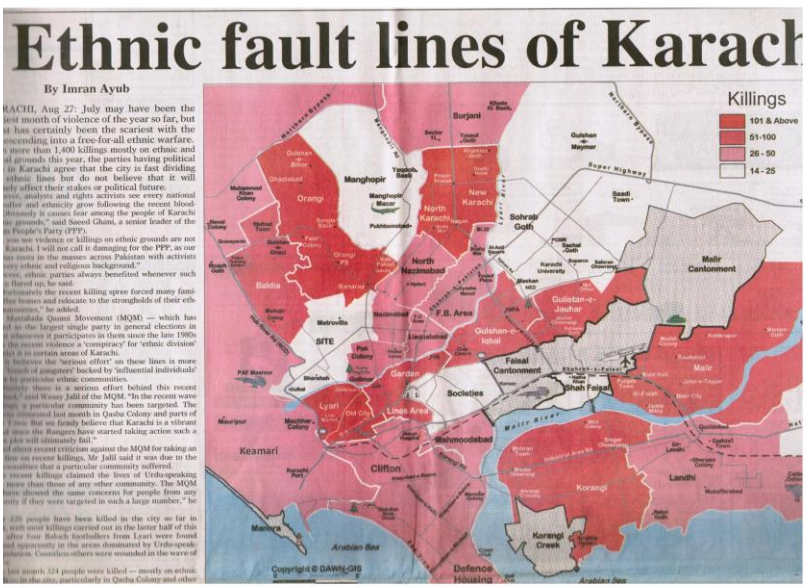
While there has been more emphasis on the informal politics of infrastructure arrangements in peripheral urban areas, which are seen to be more outside the purview of law and regulation – I draw attention to the ways that informality also permeates the 'planned' areas, or areas like the old city, which are firmly 'on the map' as far as city planning is concerned. Thus the dynamism that results from the constant negotiation of insides and outsides and juridical thresholds also marks the social world of core urban areas as against the assumption of inner cities as static repositories of entrenched social and political structures. For example, Simone et al.[202] characterize inner city neighbourhoods in terms of an entrenchment of customary and traditional layers of social capital, and the peripheral urban area as the site of the emergence of new forms of association and social capital. But while core areas like the old city do operate under older status quos, like the Jamaats as well as state patronage, they also absorb new power arrangements, which introduce new social and political hegemonies.

The old city area is a major space for the generation of urban rents, which in the past had been protected by relatively stable city administrations, thus the area always had strategic significance for the urban economy. But as Karachi's municipal administrative structure has become more and more unstable in terms of political representation, urban land as well as urban goods and services have become instrumental to the exercise of emerging political sovereignties in the form of political parties as well as criminal gangs.

Recognizing the value of the lucrative port area in terms of the capital generated by the wholesale and retail markets, the area has become a major object of extortion operations carried out by multiple groups who function in both political and criminal domains. However, by and

[202] AbdouMaliq Simone, "Assembling Douala: Imagining Forms of Urban Sociality," in *Locating the City: Urban Imaginaries and the Practices of Modernity*, eds. Alev Cinar and Thomas Bender (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

large, these operations are dominated by the MQM, the most powerful regional political party of Karachi. MQM's politics of space revolves around the question of governance, resource distribution and the use of public spaces as sites of collective demand-making. The significance of public space as a site of power is not unique to MQM as the control of public spaces has acquired strong political currency in Karachi. Open public spaces are often appropriated by various political groups (the PAC – People's Aman Committee, the ANP – Awami National Party, the JI – Jamaat-e-Islami) as a way to exercise panoptic control over localities, and have become a key arena of conflict in political turf wars which frequently turn into violent confrontations (see fig. 15).



Figre 15. The above article and map were published in Dawn, Aug 27, 2011.

Rising to power initially on a wave of popularity generated through appeals to an exclusive ethnic identity, MQM has reinvented itself as it developed an urban power base in Karachi, Pakistan's largest and richest metropolis. The party won the municipal elections in 2005 and the city elected a charismatic young mayor, Mustapha Kamal, who promised to transform

Karachi into a 'World Class City." Under their municipal tenure, major urban reforms were instituted with the largely upward redistribution of the municipal budget that involved investment in large-scale urban restructuring projects like flyovers, signal-free corridors and highways, as well as projects of city beautification.

Underlying this formal regime of urban revitalization, undertaken by the higher echelons of party representatives and the mayor's office, is MQM's real power base in the city: a network of party units and sectors in each town and neighbourhood who, amongst other forms of control and governance, actively police public space through their armed presence in the city's parks and streets. MQM's hegemony over the city space is not uncontested, whether by ordinary residents or by other political groups, which is why the threat of violence is ever-present in public spaces like the Allah Rakha Park in Kharadar. But this policing is accompanied by a discourse of urban rights and citizenship in which MQM claim to act in the name of public good.

MQM's Geographies of Control

As the most powerful tanzeem operating in the old city area, MQM is an extremely significant actor in local affairs as it is able to exert its power – both legitimate in the form of its electoral representatives, and illegitimate in the form of its militias and extortion operations. The MQM's base of power consolidated significantly in light of their victory in the municipal elections of 2005, which had also been the inception of a new, more devolved system of local governance. Although this system is now defunct and there will soon be a reversion back to the older commissionerate system, the effects of devolution still linger in significant ways that remain largely undocumented.

As one of the key non-state actors in the area that is engaged in enforcing informal contractual arrangements, the party has established a system of protection in exchange for extortion. The MQM workers claim this as compensation for providing security where the state is unable to do so, however this is an arrangement that takes place with the tacit support of local state authorities, including both the police and the municipality. Many of these arrangements are centered around the use of space, both public and private. The most pervasive informal spatial arrangement in the area are vendors who have set up their encroachments upon the streets. They form the most vulnerable, if not the most lucrative, object of contract enforcement. For the vendors this is not a novel situation. They have encroached upon the public space of the streets for decades and have previously been paying up to the municipality and the police to keep their livelihoods going. The MQM is simply the newest actor to claim 'bhatta', however here there is the added element of being promised protection and a kind of guarantee against removal or eviction. MQM has the support of the majority of residents in Kharadar though the terms of this support are complex and often tinged with ambivalence.

A cadre of young, men usually between the ages of 18-30 and members of the party, regularly patrol the streets and public spaces of Kharadar. The increasing presence of armed young men representing political affiliations in public space is also a reflection of the current economic and political conjuncture of rising unemployment, the proliferation of illegal weapons and arms, and the active recruitment of young men by prominent political groups to facilitate extortion operations across the city. However these groups are also heavily invested in building loyal constituencies, and in doing so they also attempt to engage socially and politically with the residents. Contrarily, while creating insecurity in public space through the threat of violence, these groups present their takeover of space as a way to ensure the right kind of use of space.

They do involve themselves in the maintenance and upkeep of the parks and grounds they takeover. Often their control of public spaces is presented as a service for public benefit and a contribution towards securitizing public space, something they indicate the state has failed to achieve.

Gendered Performances in Public Space: Asserting Ownership, Gaining 'Izzat' (Respect)

Abdul Rehman is in charge of the MQM unit in Kharadar. He has grown up in Kharadar. He sits on the ground floor of a two-storied structure that has been illegally constructed on the park's premises and is claimed by the MQM as its unit office. The unit is guarded by armed young men who mill around in the inner office while we have a conversation about Kharadar. Rehma has made it clear that he will not speak about the party, but only about the area and how it has changed over the years. When I asked him about the significance of the old city:

> It is the foundation of Karachi, and because of that it is essential for the functioning of Pakistan, of Sindh, because Karachi is the heart, and Karachi's heart is the old city. 90% is being given by the people of Karachi. We are giving to Sindh, to Punjab, to KPK, to Balochistan. The port is here, the main markets are here. There is cloth – any item in the world you can find here. This is the main city. We are giving to everyone but not receiving anything in return.
>
> When you think of Balochistan or (East) Bengal, what was the issue there? You would bring rice from there for Rupee ten and then sell it here for Rs. Ten. But when you buy things from Karachi at the rate of Rs.5 and then sell it for 15 in Punjab….why? In the same way, there is injustice in the way Balochistan is treated We get so much minerals, gas from there, but what are they getting in return?
>
> Because of Karachi, the whole of Pakistan is functioning. When Farooq bhai (Farooq Sattar, MQM leader and Mayor of Karachi from 1988-1992) was in charge, we got water and sewerage lines. Now it has been three years, and we are still existing on that.

Abdul Rehman's views are a fair representation of how MQM articulates the connection between the local and the national: as a war of resources, as a crisis of representation and

democracy, and a claim for territorial power. The claim is explicitly spatial as Karachi's geopolitical position, its proximity to the port, and the resultant revenues it generates, are the basis of the key arguments deployed to make a case for its central importance to the country. As a long-term resident of the area, however, Abdul Rehman is also attached to the quarter and its thriving social life. This is the 'real' Karachi for him and the repository of the city's history and memory in terms of authenticity. He is attached to the social norms that regulated life in the quarter and laments their loss. Mostly these norms related to the availability and enjoyment of the same kind of street life that Haji Akbar and Ilyas[203] had also evoked.

The park where we have our meeting is on the site of an old municipal recreation ground that has existed on the map since 1905. It is one of the only public parks in the tightly-knit settlement of the old city, and boasts a huge MQM flag strung across the park tied to electric poles (see fig. 16). According to the local residents, the takeover of the park by MQM took place around four to five years ago. The park is surrounded by vendors selling various goods from foodstuffs to household goods. The vendors are all 'encroachers' – who are periodically moved around by either the police or the political party workers. They do have representation though, through the Hawker's Association of Kharadar. MQM extracts 'bhatta' from the vendors on a regular basis. These arrangements are made with the individual vendors as well as with the president of the Hawker's association. The boundary of the park thus acts as an important site of income generation and contestation over the redistribution of urban rents and profits, with violence as an instrument of rent collection and territorial control.

The threat of violence is also presented as a necessary measure to ensure public safety. The park is patrolled by gun-toting young men who usually surface in times of 'tension' when

[203] See Chapter Three

there is danger of either a strike or a confrontation with rival political gangs, mainly the People's Aman Committee, the MQM's main rival in Karachi. "We are here to make the park safe for our mothers and sisters, for our families," recounts one armed young man I encountered in the park one day. "We are doing what the police should be doing. We are the ones rounding up the criminals and handing them over to the police." He later boasts that they had confronted and 'busted open the heads" of 12-13 men who had come from Lyari. It was clearly implied that these men were Baloch who had come over from the neighbouring town of Lyari and that they were members of the infamous People's Aman Committee.

Figure 16. "MQM flag over Allah Rakha Park." Sarwat Viqar. April 23, 2011. Mithadar, Karachi.

MQM's main ire was directed towards the now defunct People's Aman Committee; however there are strong ethnic overtones to this rivalry. The mainly Baloch population of Lyari are often cast as a threat – as crime-ridden, violent drug-users who are also taking away resources and jobs. Since the MQM officially became part of the city administration in 2005, the discourse of public safety and citizenship rights has increasingly become part of even the militant cadre's explication of their role in policing urban space.

The increasingly violent politics of ethno-nationalist groups like the MQM also has to be understood in the overall context of the rise of violent masculinities and transformations in patriarchal relationships in Pakistan. As Khan[204] and Gayer[205] have suggested, a violent urban and international political landscape has contributed to the role of violence as a constitutive force in Karachi's politics. For young men facing the structural violence of poverty, unemployment and changing social and familial norms, enacting violent politics in the streets meant a reinvention of selfhood. Young men defied social and patriarchal norms that required them to sustain cohesion within communities and conform to accepted behavior that was risk-averse and conservative. But they also reproduced other aspects of patriarchy in public spaces in which masculinity took on ludic[206] and impulsive forms that were valued as political virtue.

But in the present context, while these young men are driven by a "desire for status, respect and collectivity" that is needed in a situation of a "fracturing" of the personal and political landscapes that they inhabit as perpetrators of violence, they are increasingly also aspirants to formal institutional power as well as the consumptive futures that their leaders are

[204] Khan, *Mohajir Militancy in Pakistan*.
[205] Gayer, *Karachi: Ordered Disorder*.
[206] Verkaaik, *Migrants and Militants*.

invested in constructing.[207] In the current conjuncture of MQM's heightened stake in gaining formal political power, their overtly masculinist stance is tempered by the realization that they must construct a legitimacy using the language of liberal modernity. But one thing is certain – young men in public space and their capacity to assert control over, manage and survey public space are a significant element of the current political sovereignties. These assertive masculinities, however, are countered by other ways in which men inhabit public space, which is an issue I return to later in this section.

The other significant element of the exercise of power in and over public space is the creation and promotion of an appropriate urban aesthetic. During MQM's tenure, the 'greening' of Karachi was sold as a major element of making it into a 'World Class' city, on the way to taking its place in the global hierarchy of cities as 'engines of growth.'[208] In keeping with these aspirations, the park was 'beautified' by the past MQM councilor with a pavilion sporting dancing dolphins as well as a sculpture of a giraffe (see fig. 17). These artistic innovations sit uneasily with some of the more conservative residents of Kharadar, as they cite the existence of these sculptures as one of the main reasons why there are no more religious gatherings in the park, a frequent occurrence in the past, as sculptures of living things are seen as un-Islamic. The caretaker of the park suggested differently, as he indicated that it was the constant threat of armed violence that had driven away most of the social and community activities from the park.

[207] Nichola Khan, "Between Spectacle and Banality: Trajectories of Islamic Radicalism in a Karachi Neighbourhood," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36.3 (2012): 575.
[208] Karachi Master Plan 2020.

Figure 17. “Newly-erected pavilion at Allah Rakha park.” Sarwat Viqar. April 23, 2011. Mithadar, Karachi.

Memon residents who frequent the park, mostly older men, express mixed feelings about MQM’s presence in the park. As I come over and introduce myself and my reason for being there, one of them loudly proclaims, “This is the worst area of Karachi. It has been deliberately neglected. When it rains, there is nowhere for the water to go; we are up to our knees in dirty water. There is no government here; it is only a government of money.”

This is a reference to not only municipal neglect but also to the ineptness of political parties. It is a deflected anger, since openly expressing antagonism towards the MQM cadre is fraught with consequences. While MQM enjoys majority electoral support in the quarter, the violent politics that it enacts in public space has majorly disrupted the norms of sociality in the quarter. The shock of this disruption is expressed by residents as an encounter with an unfamiliar incivility. The Memon norms of civility are founded upon an idea of the honourable Memon man

who diverges from the heteronormative in certain ways. The most important aspect of this is to avoid the display of aggressive masculinity in public dealings – an attitude that is not so difficult to reconcile with the fact of being a mobile merchant community whose survival was dependent on developing networks of mutual interest and on diffusing conflicts.

Because of these conciliatory rather than confrontational attitudes, Memons have historically been stereotyped as effeminate and cowardly. While these stereotypes are continuously belied in the present atmosphere, since many of the local MQM cadre are also Mohajir Memons, the casting of Memons as a cowardly community, unable to defend themselves, still persists and continues to fuel tensions in confrontations with other ethnicized groups. Thus the language of masculinity – in terms of physical courage, defence of family and the protection of women's honour – also permeates these spaces of confrontation.

However, I argue that there is another norm here of a more conciliatory and non-heteronormative way to inhabit space in which men from other kinds of social locations participate. The park is also frequented by working class men, some unemployed, who can often be seen lying on the grass in one corner of the park (see fig. 18). When I approach them, they are eager to talk, saying how much difficulty there was in finding work. Most of them work as loaders at the docks or the custom-house, and are daily wage earners.

Figure 18. “Just ‘hanging out’ in Allah Rakha park.” Sarwat Viqar. September, 26, 2011. Mithadar, Karachi.

One thing they stress is that there is no sectarian feeling amongst them. They claim to hail from all ethnicities, and assert that they all get along. Sometimes there are union meetings to discuss working conditions, but if the police ever finds out then they are driven away from the park. There has been no other attempt to drive them out of the park. Often they cohabit the space with women and children and other middle class and ‘white collar’ families that frequent the park. This is a relatively unusual circumstance for Karachi where public spaces are fairly strictly segregated along class lines. There seems to be a tacit acceptance of this plebian presence in the park, as long as it is not disruptive.

For the working class and unemployed men though, these spaces are crucial for the everyday business of living and working, as they literally have nowhere else to go – commuting as they do from distant areas of the city to work on the docks. In the parks they quietly create a

space where they assert a shared solidarity, evoking both their class oppression as well as the need for greater national unity, always countering ethnic differentiations. This attitude is a departure from the typical perception of men in public spaces in South Asia as assertive of an aggressive masculinity. On the contrary, these working class men try to create a conciliatory space absent of the bluster and boastful attitudes of the MQM's young male cadre, for example. While a great deal of attention has been given to the enaction of the violence of male youth in public spaces, these other ways of inhabiting public space beg the question of what are the ways in which men, young and old, work out differences and effect conciliations? These registers of 'peace-making' surfaced periodically in other spaces in the quarter, as I have chronicled in previous chapters and later in this chapter to come.

Often, residents express disapproval of MQM's activities, which also becomes conflated with state corruption and dysfunction and a general disapproval of the state. The state that had allowed the functioning of their older order is seen to have now failed, and a sense of chronic insecurity pervades any discussion of politics – ultimately declared to have resulted from a failure of the state. They see the decentralized dimension of state power, that enabled the rise of these new sovereignties and their ruling arrangements, as a weakness, even though specific aspects of this decentralization, i.e. municipal devolution, is seen as a generally democratic development.

A few months after these initial visits to the park, in September 2011, after a major confrontation between MQM and PAC, in which a prominent former PPP MNA was murdered, I observed that the park seemed deserted. The MQM flag was gone and the 'unit office' was empty. However, a few days later, when the MQM workers had still not returned, the park

gained hustle and bustle as women, children and the old (the most frequent users of the park) came back, as did the working class and unemployed men.

Nobody really wanted to speak of what had happened to the MQM, except through subtle implication. A woman sitting on a park bench when asked what it was like these days to use the park said, “Kharadar has been destroyed, the life that used to be is no longer.” She further went on to recount how being out in public space was not same as it used to be. Referring to the six to eight storied apartment buildings that closely circle the park she recounted: “We used to come and sit here with ease, not really minding that people could look at us from the surrounding apartments, because they were people from our community. Indeed, it was a good thing because in this way, you could keep an eye on your children and young people. But now, who is in these apartment buildings? We don’t know, there are too many strangers.”

Women continue to use the park, though, and not necessarily at the hours designated for them on the sign outside the park. The frequent power outages as well as failing electrical connections in their homes are also cited as reasons for their presence in the park: “Sometimes, it gets so unbearable in our homes that you want to kill yourself.” The women also spoke of religious gatherings that would take place at the park when the Dawat-e-Islami would hold public addresses led by women. That situation had changed because of security concerns when the MQM presence became more dominant in the area.

These frank expressions of frustration at reduced mobility by women who were unveiled and were previously used to free movement in public space speaks to the changing terms of occupation of public space. As household economies are subject to greater scarcity due to rising unemployment and inflation, women in particular find themselves confined to homes where the

traditional ‘comforts’ – water supply and electricity – are falling apart. This foreclosing of the domestic sphere to the provision of what had been the minimum of comfortable living has created new stresses that cannot even be alleviated through stepping out into the street as the street becomes more and more subject to random male violence. While men are also subject to insecurity in the private and public domain, their experiences are not quite the same. Men’s presence in and occupation of public spaces is not circumscribed by the same rules as for women. Even while class and ethnicity define the right to occupy public space, men have greater leeway in negotiating these circumscriptions.

Thus, while the MQM asserts its sovereignty over the space through not just armed surveillance and extortion, but as well through the creation of a discourse of protection and the public good, local residents express both ambivalence and accommodation in dealing with their dominant presence. They see the identity of the area – understood as peaceful co-existence, a lively street life, and the security of familiarity – as now lost under the new hegemonies. This includes anxieties about the loss of a ‘safe’ public realm, where one is not exposed to the threat of violence nor the gaze of strangers. While MQM invokes its role as providing protection against precisely these kinds of threats, the residents see them as an intrusion even though they may hail from the same area and ethnic background.

The ideological tensions in the everyday use of the park revolve around the concerns of middle class men to exert a certain kind of public where neighbours can meet and greet each other, while maintaining certain forms in which, for example, women’s presence, though encouraged, should be managed and restricted.

Generally speaking, what is significant by its absence is an overarching singular logos of public space in this context in which there is a constant unsettling of juridical boundaries, creating a space of contingency and one which can be put to a multiplicity of uses. Although any group can take over and assert its sovereignty within that space, it is tacitly understood by everyone that this sovereignty is precarious and transient. In order to deal with this uncertainty residents create discourses and practices in which they are ready to deal with the constantly changing terms and uses of public space. In other words, it is practice that defines the form and nature of the struggles over space, and not pre-determined norms. On the contrary, norms are constantly in a state of flux and emerge from everyday struggles.

Much of the work on the subjectivities of urban political actors focuses on the experiences of young men, where their desire for recognition is easily imbricated with the performance of a public masculinity. But what about women? Where do they lie on this spectrum of public/political presence? What explains the rising and active presence of women in MQM's public politics, and what does it add to the understanding of what drives the political subjectivities of these rising urban actors?

The rising presence of MQM's female cadre in public space has been an effect of MQM's increasing participation in municipal politics. While here I recount the story of just one female MQM party worker and former councilor who is a prominent public figure in the locality, the increasing presence of MQM's women in political representation and in public space has been noted in recent studies on urban politics in Karachi under MQM.[209] One of the important dynamics that has defined women's increasing participation in the political wing of the party is

[209] Nausheen Anwar and Sarwat Viqar, "Gender, Politics and Power in Urban Pakistan" (paper presented at *AAS: Asia in Motion: Heritage and Transformation*, Singapore, July 2014); National Commission on the Status of Women, "Gender Review of Political Framework for Women Political Participation" (2010).

the deployment of a liberal discourse of citizenship and meritocracy that they claim is unique to MQM. They distinguish their political participation as being based on merit as opposed to nepotism and patronage, gesturing towards a common pattern amongst the most prominent political parties in Pakistan where women's representation is often dominated by female relatives of the feudal/bureaucratic/business dominated national parties – notably PPP and PML-N (Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz). This claim to an authentic mandate based on valuing meritocracy is often deployed as a way to build legitimacy and credibility, which is seen as lacking in the other political parties.

The experiences of Razia Bano, an ex MQM councilor, illustrate very well what is at stake for women in the political sphere. Razia was elected on the MQM ticket to serve as councilor on the local union council and served for three years along with three other women who were also elected on the party's ticket. She is a resident of Mithadar, and belongs to the Wadla Jamaat. Razia grew up in the smaller city of Hyderabad to the north of Karachi. She recalls that she was approached by MQM party workers and asked to take an active role in politics when she was working in a clothing factory at the age of sixteen. She stayed active in the party throughout the years of getting married and then having three children, till her election as councilor in the local union council on the party's ticket. She carries most of the financial burden of sustaining her family, as her husband has mental health issues that do not allow him to be regularly employed. Presently she works in a telecom company as a sales representative selling cellphones – she carries two of them with her all the time. Her employment in the company has also been 'arranged' by the party, as it is tacitly understood that the company is mostly controlled by MQM's cadre – a reflection of the way the party also acts as an employment and welfare agency for its members. Hailing from the Sayyid lineage, Razia often refers to the fact

that as belonging to the community of descendants of the holy prophet, she is not eligible for zakat as other depressed families who are often helped out by the prominent Memon Jamaats. In this sense, most of her financial support in the form of employment and her children's school fees comes from MQM. There are other ways she also benefits from her association with MQM, which I found out as I spent more time observing her in her role as a party worker.

In our initial conversations in 2011, she had spoken with gratitude and admiration of her association with MQM. She believed that they had brought a new order to the area – more organized, efficient and progressive. During her tenure as union councilor, she claims the area underwent a huge transformation: sewage lines were laid, water and electricity issues were resolved and garbage was regularly disposed of. In her opinion, this was where MQM had truly achieved something concrete for the people of Karachi, echoing the views of her male counterparts who we encountered in the public parks and streets. While proud of her Memon heritage, her view of the Jamaat organizations is that although they provide a sense of clan identity and are important in organizing family and marriage alliances, they remain ineffective in addressing the day to day public issues being faced by people in the area. This is where MQM, in her opinion, has been effective. She attributes them with a long-term vision of social improvement. While she is appreciative of the close-knit character of Kharadar and Mithadar as neighbourhoods that provide proximity to public facilities, she is slightly contemptuous of what she sees as the insular and introverted character of the residents and communities of the area, especially the women. As she moves about freely on the streets without the all-enveloping burqa that most women of the locality wear, she is a rare sight.

According to her, being affiliated with the party, and especially her time as councilor, has given her the respect and the 'clout' that allows her to walk around in the neighbourhood and be

recognized and received by prominent residents: “When I go around my neighbourhood, I get ‘izzat’ (respect); people know who I am, they call out to me, they invite me into their shops, my opinion matters. Everyone knows me.” In the close-knit environs of the quarter, where news travels fast and public exposure is maximized as soon as one steps out of one’s residence, the kind of stature that Razia enjoys in public is even more intensified. On one occasion while driving around in the neighbourhood with her in my car, there was sudden commotion and the shops started dropping their shutters, and people started running. Razia’s cellphone rang and we soon found out there was a call for a ‘shutter-down’ strike by the MQM, which is essentially a forced shut-down of commercial establishments, something which MQM is known for deploying frequently as a strategy for protest.

Razia was given some instructions on the phone and started talking to the young men who were going around giving ultimatums to the shopkeepers to close shop. They seemed to know her as she encouraged them to keep doing their job. This is the part of her role that allows her to be part of the vast coercive mechanism of the party, creating a public persona that also inspires fear of the party. For Razia, this process was a legitimate part of demand-making – if one has power, one must use it to strengthen the system that sustains her survival. In the same vein, while visiting different commercial establishments, she demands her ‘cut’ of the portion of their goods that most shopkeepers in the area provide to the various power-brokers, as I observed during our sojourns around the quarter. For her, this can be in the form of extra food rations for her household from a grocery store, or fabric for outfits from a clothing store. She enjoys these perks and claims them as her due for working for the party and extending its largesse and protection to the public.

At the time of these initial interviews, she had a daily routine of stepping out everyday, spending some time in the Union Council office chatting with her old colleagues, as she is no longer the councilor. She would then make a round of the markets, greeting acquaintance shopkeepers, and collecting her 'dues.' On occasion she would go the Doolay Shah shrine, right next to the main market and the municipal offices, and chat with the dargah manager as well as the women who gather in large numbers at the shrine. Her sphere of acquaintances as well as movement went far beyond that of the average woman in the neighbourhood. This was not a factor of her class background, which is lower-middle class, but her political subjectivity as a member of the MQM – in other words what she had made of herself through the party.

Razia's life and her experiences of urban life, especially her public life are closely allied with her identity as a political worker of MQM. That role enabled her to experience the city and its urbanity in a particular way and to break through accepted norms, especially those regulating gender, as well as class. And cultivating a certain kind of 'urbanity' is also very much part of the 'training' that she has received in the party:

> We take these classes in which we are taught how to speak properly, how to dress when we go outside, how to move. We don't want to be like these other women, who cannot speak properly, always hidden behind the burqa, with their coarse mannerisms. We must appear different, sophisticated, so we can attract and draw people to us.

Tarini Bedi's ethnographic work on women's experiences of public political life within the highly patriarchal Shiv Sena movement in Mumbai reveals the contradictions that define women's participation in the public sphere.[210] While taking on much of the 'Hindu masculinist' aggressive behaviour in public space, termed as 'dadagiri' – also applicable in the Pakistani

[210] Tarini Bedi, "Feminist Theory and the Right-Wing: Shiv Sena Women Mobilize Mumbai," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 7.4 (2006): 51-68.

context – women also uphold the outward appearance of middle-class respectability – particularly in dress and make-up – even when hailing from lower class backgrounds. While in the context of Shiv Sena in Mumbai, Bedi suggests that this adherence to typical gendered tropes of motherhood and wifehood serve to make the other more aggressive masculinist performance more acceptable, MQM women's cultivation of a particular kind of public persona speaks to the performance of a specific kind of gendered modernity that sets them apart from those deemed as 'others.' Thus the social space that these women carve out for themselves, while circumscribed by masculine norms and prescriptions of public and private and the terms of political participation, is also being fashioned by these women as a space of a distinct female subjectivity that is cosmopolitan and urbane but at the same time patriotic and 'moderately' Muslim. These women aim to present themselves as distinct from and in opposition to both the extremely pious ways of the veiled women of the Jamaat-e-Islami, as well as the plebian/rural ways of Sindhi[211] women who they deem as uncouth, ignorant and backward.

There may be another, older and more sexually nuanced register to this casting of the modern, Muslim, unveiled urban woman as against her backward and ignorant veiled counterpart: a way to screen modernity's other project to heteronormalize the social sphere in order to counter the perceived threat of 'unnatural sexualities' seen to proliferate in gender-segregated domains.[212] While this dimension of women's public performance of modernity has not been adequately investigated in this study, what is evident is that these terms of women's

[211] MQM's nationalism is predicated not only on a narrative of sacrifice, which includes the identification of the 'Mohajir' or migrant with the original migration of the prophet to flee persecution from the Meccans to Medina, it has also been about asserting the urban, and urbane identity of the North Indian Muslim 'ashrafs' as against the rural, indigenous Sindhi populations they had to share their new homeland with after partition.
[212] Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley, CA; University of California Press, 2005).

participation in the public sphere attempt to "reconfigure women's bodily presence in public"[213] and "transform them into companionate wives, educated mothers and useful citizens."[214]

As has also been noted,[215] women in what are seen as 'communal-based' movements often become symbols of progress and modernity within a male-dominated hierarchical structure, while still adhering to typical gendered tropes. So while women's iconic status in MQM swings from the extreme of motherhood to widowhood, with each trope being mobilized to position women symbolically as the carriers of Mohajir nationalism, in the arena of municipal politics women have challenged these tropes to take on practical matters related to the household economy, access to infrastructure and the provision of public amenities.

Violence, Incivility and the "Gangwar"

In the summer of 2013, which also happened to correspond to the Islamic month of Ramadan, the streets of Kharadar were unusually quiet, a rare occurrence, especially during Ramadan which is a particularly lively time of year. There had been numerous incidents of violence – the exact number of killings hard to determine because of erratic media coverage, but residents spoke of men with guns on motorcycles spraying the streets with bullets and people caught in the crossfire.[216] The 'gangwar' had come to Kharadar with a vengeance. The 'gangwar' refers to the activities of the 'People's Aman Committee' (PAC), seen as the de facto armed wing of the Pakistan People's Party, which exercises territorial control over another part of the

[213] Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, 151.
[214] Ibid., 152.
[215] Amrita Basu, "Hindu Women's Activism in India and the Questions it Raises," in *Appropriating Gender: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia*, eds. Patricia Jeffrey and Amrita Basu (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 167-184.
[216] See footnote 186

old city area in Karachi – Lyari. The PAC was seen to be engaged in a 'turf war' with the MQM, to gain control of the lucrative markets in areas that were the object of extortion by both parties.

Lyari Town lies on the other side of Nawab Mahabat Khan Road that forms a contested border between Lyari Town and Saddar Town (see fig. 19). On the Saddar Town side – in addition to commercial establishments, residences and welfare societies – are the landmark shrine of Hazrat Doolay Shah Bukhari, another shrine of Chuttan Shah (the space informally claimed by the Sunni Tehrik), the Jaffar Fadoo Dispensary, and the Aga Khan Jamaat Khana. On the Lyari Town side is the Kakri Ground, an open public space with its various contestations: the encroached commercial development, the KMA school and KMA Hall built on what used to be a portion of the grounds; and the Kharadar hospital. The road marks an administrative division, which has become highly politicized. It has also become a borderline of violence.

Figure 19. "Nawab Mahabat Khan road that divides the neighbourhoods of Lyari and Kharadar." Sarwat Viqar. July 24, 2013. Kharadar, Karachi.

There are claims to space on both sides, and demarcations of territory, based on political affiliations. This includes posters of party leaders, as well as gateways to streets, that proclaim party affiliation. The most prominent of these is the newly built gateway to Lyari town (see fig. 20). Residents claim that before the redrawing of the administrative map, apart from the road there was no politically based demarcation dividing the settlement from one side to the other. It was all considered the old city area with its various neighbourhoods. Now that Lyari town has been asserted as an identity marker for the majority of the Baloch community, clear borders have been created around the Memon communities inhabiting the old town quarters, the Machi Miani quarters, and Lea Market. For Lyarites, it is the town on the other side that has asserted its political dominance by creating a different administrative division that takes away lucrative and employment generating markets away from Lyari.

Figure 20. "The gateway to Lyari Town guarded by Rangers – Pakistan's paramilitary forces." Photo by Ajmeri Rashid. Express Tribune, Karachi. 19 March, 2012. Accessed February 15,

2014. http://tribune.com.pk/story/352060/kutchi-rabta-committee-leader-among-four-killed-in-lyari/ .

For the leaders of the People's Aman Committee, the old city area is experienced as a heavily demarcated space, where resources have been unfairly distributed favouring certain ethnic groups. They see the present politics of space in the area as a continuous reproduction of older hierarchies between middle-class Mohajir migrants who set up lucrative businesses in the area with the backing of the state and the marginalization of the older inhabitants who hail from working-class backgrounds. Most of the populace of what is now the municipal subdivision of Lyari Town works in the industrial sector, which includes portage work on the docks. Many of them are also fishermen. Lyari's working class history goes back to the inception of the modern city of Karachi under colonial rule.

The redrawing of municipal boundaries during the past fourteen years, in which a very different regime of municipal governance was established, has created new geographies of socio-economic control in the city. The municipal governance structure in Karachi has been in flux since the municipal reforms instituted in 2001, when the administrative map of the city was redrawn under a devolution plan. Devolution was supposed to affect a transfer of power down to the elected local bodies. The new municipal subdivisions reflected the emerging geographies of power in the city, where vote banks and land values were determining the way the city was being administratively reconfigured.

The elected town administrators, or *nazims*, represented the interest of the dominant political party, the MQM, as well as the party representatives elected further down in the administrative hierarchy, which included the union councils. Previous municipal subdivisions were either collapsed into single municipalities or towns, or in other cases districts were broken

up and reconfigured into different towns. The area of Lyari, which previously formed part of the strategic South district of the city – the most lucrative district in terms of a municipal tax base, which included the central business district, the port area and the major wholesale markets the city – has now been made into its own municipality, divested of all the economically lucrative spaces. “In the new sub-division, we have lost the markets which were a major source of revenue – the Timber market, the Cloth market, and many others…,” recounts one of the active patrons and co-ordinators of the Lyari town office.

The reordering of the administrative landscape was a significant factor that fueled the activities of the political groups in Lyari, and has led to major contestations around questions of governance and competition for municipal resources. For the leaders of the PAC, devolution was seen to have led to a ‘politicization’ that was seen as highly partisan, since the political representation that resulted from the process was overwhelmingly dominated by the MQM – the PPP’s key rival in Karachi. While this system has now been dissolved in a further restructuring of local government in Pakistan, there is yet to be a resolution in terms of which system of political representation will be instituted. In the meantime, the towns continue to function bureaucratically, as under the previous system.

In these contestations, public space plays a significant role. The dominance of the People’s Aman Committee in Lyari is based on alliances with a range of local actors, which include town officials, community organizers, NGO workers and even school administrators. While it was active, the PAC was ruled by local Baloch gang leaders who employed a mix of jirgah and clan-style justice with militia-style policing. Where public space was concerned, a significant output of the PAC’s control of space was the improvement and active management of parks, playgrounds and schools, all carried out under the aegis of the Lyari Resource Centre – a

registered NGO.

The founding member of the centre is Sardar Uzair Jan, a Baloch gang leader who is allegedly running arm and drug rackets in Lyari. The centre has been actively involved in creating a landscape of public spaces in the locality of Lyari. An invocation of what are considered 'traditional' Baloch public practices also informs the design of these public spaces. For example, leftover spaces at the crossroads of certain streets have been appropriated to create covered seating areas, often elaborately designed in neo-colonial designs (see fig. 21). When questioned about the reason for creating these spaces, the organizers indicated that these spaces were meant to reproduce the traditional Baloch practice of gathering in the evenings to discuss community issues, and were meant to encourage people to come together to solve their common problems.

Figure 21. "A seating area for facilitating community 'bhaitaks' or sit-ins constructed on a street corner in Lyari." Sarwat Viqar. November 10, 2011. Lyari, Karachi.

It is clear, however, that these inclusive practices transpire under the watchful eyes of the party patrons, as attested by the presence of posters of the Pakistan People's Party heroes, Benazir Bhutto and her father Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. In another case, a small open green space, strategically located in a particularly tense neighbourhood crossroads where violent confrontations between political groups and gang members have taken place, is named a 'peace park.' Every night, there is a jirgah that sits in the park to resolve disputes.

The organizers claim that the park was constructed specifically to create a 'peace station,' a zone of negotiation to mediate political conflicts. However, now, the organizers insist that the park is used to mainly resolve land, property and 'domestic' disputes. The small space also overlooks a large football ground where young men and boys play and train for football. The organizers imply that they have opened up the public space in terms of safety and accessibility.

It is clear though that the patronage of the park comes from the gang leaders, who are often referred to as 'bhai log' or 'brothers.' Members of the LRC have connections with the bhai log, whom they represent as armed protectors of the community who have stepped in where the state has failed. The peace park, in addition to portraits of Pakistan People's Party 'martyrs' like Zulfiqar Bhutto and his daughter Benazir, also sports the portrait of Rehman Balcoh, monickered in the media as 'Rehman Ducait' or 'Rehman the bandit', who was killed in an alleged police encounter in 2008. Rehman was succeeded by Sardar Uzair Jan, the present patron, a Baloch from a prominent family who is allegedly running drug and arm rings in Lyari.

At the time this research was undertaken, Sardar Uzair Jan was presiding over nightly

jirgahs in which residents would be encouraged to come and present their complaints and disputes for resolution. The coordinator of the LRC indicates that the Sardar employs lawyers and advocates who are on hand to give legal advice as well. It is preferred, the coordinator indicates, that disputes be resolved 'in-house', without going to the police or the courts.

Thus, here, municipal ownership of public space coexists with political patronage, encroachments, non-state policing and surveillance, as well as multiple usages that transgress the bounds of what is legally allowed in public or amenity spaces. Here there is a tension between practices that seek a modern cosmopolitan urban identity and unresolved questions around belonging and rights as members of a minority ethnic community. Hence there is an overriding concern with making Lyari a clean ordered space of urban modernity, while at the same time inscribing public space with narratives and visuals of Baloch tribal identity and practices. The older political hierarchies represented by the jirgahs and clan councils sit in uneasy contrast with modern discourses of democracy and an inclusive citizenship, which is the overall frame for the functioning of the LRC as a modern NGO.

While the PAC struggled to gain ground in the neighbouring area of Kharadar where their major rival was the MQM, there was support for the PAC within Kharadar as well – although many of the residents claim that this was a coerced support, ensured through the threat of violence. Thus, Kharadar's streets were demarcated according to the control exerted by the PAC, MQM, or Sunni Tehrik, another armed political group. However for Rehana, a school teacher of Aga Khani background living in Kharadar, the PAC has had a positive influence on her street which they consider 'their' area:

> These *tehriks* and *tanzeems*, they have taken over areas by force, however there have been advantages as well. So, our street is claimed by the PAC and because of this, when

> people used to throw garbage on the streets from their apartments - that has stopped. The street is now neat and clean. Women have protection now when they walk on the streets, we feel safe when we walk out onto the street. The barriers that they have put at the end of each street on which they put their names, like the People's Aman Committee barrier at the end of our street – this has created further protection. This system of barriers is new. This is how the *tehriks* publicize themselves and their claims in the area. If you have the support of the *tehrik*, life becomes easier, despite the fact that you have to give them *bhatta*.

Rehana's support for the PAC also derives from her Ismaili background. Most Ismailis support the Pakistan People's Party, which is seen as a secular party unlike the religious or ethnic base of parties like the Sunni Tehrik and MQM.

This support also indicates that residents are active participants in the accordance of legitimacy to the actions of the *tehriks* rather than passive victims of their coercion. If residents see their interests being represented or coalescing with those of the *tehriks* then they will, in tacit ways, support their coercive arrangements. More often than not, it is the immediate needs of access to resources and ensuring everyday safety and security that propels residents to actively give their support to and enable particular arrangements of power and sovereignty. These alliances can shift frequently and suddenly as well.

Thus the terms on which social networks are set up are constantly shifting, creating a situation of contingency. Because the support is based on pragmatic concerns, loyalties can shift without a crisis of conscience. Thus, if one day MQM plants a flag over a public park then residents deploy their networks to communicate with the unit office in order to keep the peace. These negotiations and compromises are essential to the maintenance of everyday peace although they do not ensure any long-term security.

The state's differential allocation of resources has created a municipal landscape where territorial demarcations signify borders between spaces of accumulation and those of scarcity.

New political sovereignties thus follow these demarcations to build their constituencies either in the name of protecting resources that are already there or fighting for more resources. For example, PAC's power base in Lyari is explicitly built around invocations of the marginalization of the majority Baloch population and their systematic exclusion from urban structures of governance as well as access to jobs and infrastructure. In Kharadar, MQM with its loose affiliation with the Jamaats invokes the threat posed by groups who are cast as inherently criminal and violent. Despite these tensions, or perhaps because of them, there are ways in which the everyday use of public space also acts as a site of sociality that builds cohesion and communication – as became apparent in an engagement with public users of another significant public space in the area which is examined below.

Unemployment and 'Timepass' at Kakri Ground: negotiating class and ethnicity

The Kakri ground is a large open ground located on the strategic boundary between Saddar Town, specifically Kharadar, and Lyari Town (see fig. 22). The ground is surrounded by six to eight-storied apartment buildings whose facades are pock-marked with bullet holes, testimony to the various gunbattles between rival political groups. The street that borders the Kakri ground is lined with posters proclaiming political party affiliations, religious messages, and gang affiliations (see fig. 23).

Figure 22. “The Kakri Grounds – located between Lyari and Kharadar.” Sarwat Viqar. November 10, 2011. Lyari, Karachi.

Figure 23. “The entrance to the grounds.” Sarwat Viqar. November 10, 2011. Lyari, Karachi.

The space straddles a political division that has increasingly acquired an intense ethnic flavor. The boundary of the park is often manned by armed men who 'guard' the border between Kharadar and Lyari. Despite this outward show of territorial control, the grounds itself are used by populations from both sides, for sports like cricket and football, card-playing or satta as well as just 'time pass.' The ground is also used regularly for religious gatherings arranged by prominent religious organizations in the area such as the Dawat-i-Islami and Jamaat-i-Islami. The grounds also house a boxing club as well as a Karate club, which are run semi-privately and subsidized through municipal funding. A philanthropic Memon organization, The Bantva Aikta Foundation, provides daily free food on one end of the grounds. Thus, while armed clashes break out on either side of this informal 'border,' it acts as a setting for the enaction of diverse levels of sociality: charitable activities, sports and recreation, religious gatherings, or just 'hanging out.'

Residents also refer to the history of the ground as a site of major political gatherings. It has been a venue of pre and post-independence political rallies and local residents often refer to the political leaders who have held addresses here: Ayub Khan, Altaf Hussein, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and later his daughter Benazir Bhutto. Another claim to fame is that the grounds hosted the wedding of Benazir Bhutto to Asif Ali Zardari, the former president.

Groups of working class men who work in the port area as loaders, fishermen, and construction workers, can be seen playing satta every evening on the grounds. "We come here for time pass. Where else is there to go?," relates one man. "When there is no work, then I spend more time here. When I get work, then I do not come so often," recounts another. Yet another user relates his reason for frequenting the grounds: "When there is no power, it becomes unbearably hot in our small homes, so we come out here to get some air and cool down." Thus for most working class unemployed men this public space is an escape from the world of both

work and home. Another motivation is proximity to the free food offered at the edge of the grounds by one of the Memon Jamaat's philanthropic organizations: "Even though I feel a bit shamed at lining up to get the food, hunger can drive you to do things you wouldn't otherwise do."

When asked about the political tensions prevalent in the area and how it affects them, the men become a bit nervous and are unwilling to really respond. They assert right away that there is no 'problem' that they all get along: "There are Sindhis here, Mohajirs and Baloch, there are Memons and Pathans, we all sit together and pass the time, there is no issue here." This assertion is repeated often. When considered performatively, at the very least it implies the way the politics of ethnicity permeates socio-spatial practices. Presence in public space is contingent upon one's right to the space and the need to justify why one is in a space and who has the right to occupy that space.

The 'nomos' dictates that public space should be accessible to everybody, implying by its very assertion that free and equal access to public space is what is at stake in the present political environment. The assertion that all these ethnicities can sit in one place and get along is an indication of a concern with the way ethnic affiliation is being used to create differential access to goods and services. At another point, another user of the ground asserts that, "it is like a mini-Pakistan here." Such appeals to national unity, similar to other calls to remember that, "we are all Pakistanis," serve to, in this instance, reproduce a national space within the local in order to keep conflict at bay.

These assertions in the current political environment present a way to counter the divisiveness being generated both by municipal planning practices as well as the competing

hegemonies of political groups. In the face of pervasive insecurity and unemployment there is disillusionment with organized political engagement, as well as an awareness of the way ethnic difference is being constructed to further political and economic interests. The socio-spatial practices of these men thus enact a space-time that refuses to submit to the pervasiveness of oppressive capital that deprives them of the everyday reliefs of living.

In this space-time, one can sit and 'time pass' with fellow dwellers/denizens, engage in gambling and, along the way, refuse ethnic differentiation. It is ironic that these men are often the target of local policing – both state and non-state – as 'undesirables' who engage in illegal activities – mainly cast as activities that 'waste' time and are corrupt. In conversations with "upright" citizens of the area it is obvious that the presence of unemployed men in public space is a cause for anxiety, and prominent residents like the Jamaat members and the dargah managers often collaborate with the police to try and remove these "undesirables" from public space.

When asked about what they think of the illegal commercial structures lining the street end of the park they replied: " What's it to us? It doesn't really bother us. We have our space." And while they condemn the 'encroachments' publically, municipal officials have collaborated in building them. Their major concern for the ground is to keep it clean, which also means free of certain kinds of people – namely the homeless and drug-users. Thus there have been periodic drives to evict the 'mawali'[217] from almost all public spaces. Working class men of a slightly higher social standing, as in the group interviewed above, are tolerated as long as they continue to pay some sort of 'tribute' to the police when it comes to carry out sweeps of the area.

[217] homeless

While the activities of satta-playing and just hanging out are tolerated, the self-styled managers of the ground who are the town municipal officials backed and funded by the PAC, do have other visions for the development of the ground. Recent additions to the ground, which are partly constructed, include a jogging track, paved areas with planters, and a small fountain – which, one of the party strongmen tells, me evokes the look of 'Trafalgar Square,' since it attracts the many pigeons that inhabit the rooftops of the old city. These attempts to aestheticize the ground are an important element of projecting a certain image of the town, as well as a way to sanitize and demarcate public space so that it becomes easier to control. Control of the investment in this public infrastructure is also a major site of contestation for the political groups, as it allows them to create legitimacy as urban caretakers and to be able to access votes.

Conclusion

Control of public space is key to the exercise of power of the emerging sovereignties like the Tanzeems. In this post-liberalization and post-devolution phase of urban economy and governance, struggles over the meaning of democracy and the ways in which democratic politics can be enacted are increasingly occupying the forefront of national discourse. Thus the liberal democratic project of the reorganization and reform of urban governance and space seeks to establish the rule of law and bring an order of rationality to the perceived dysfunction of urban space and infrastructure. For powerful political groups like the MQM, and the PAC, the spatial element of this refashioning has taken on importance, as it is a means to enact their power in the urban setting. This involvement in the re-territorialization of urban space is not unique to MQM – it is an emerging feature of other ruling political groups as well. However, public space here should not be seen as existing apart from the essential material urban infrastructure of the city.

As Don Mitchell has argued, public space in capitalism is, "a form of property that itself exists within a regime of property relations, especially if they are defined by rights."[218]

Urban public space also emerges as an embattled site of performance of a gendered urbanity enacted in different ways by men and women. As observed in the ways men from different social and political locations inhabit public spaces, there is another kind of masculinity at work to mediate the effects of the dominant heteronormative masculinity. At the same time, women fashion their own empowered feminine selves in contrast to what they see as an old-fashioned and 'backward' femaleness. The fact that public spaces are sites of an agentive enaction of gendered subjectivity is significant in the general environment of fear and insecurity, in which any kind of presence in public space is seen to be fraught with the threat of violence. Beyond the threat of physical violence however, a major source of social anxiety that permeates public spaces are the changing gender roles of both men and women.

Thus multiple social actors work to maintain a status quo that allows both legal and illegal uses of space. The 'right to the space' is a result of a process of negotiation more than outright resistance. In this negotiation, many of the public users create opportunities to, as seen in the other examples, create a space of interaction where they work out notions of belonging and community that may run counter to the dominant trend of creating ethnic and class differentiation.

Embedded in this control of public space is also a particular discourse, and related understandings, of what constitutes the public. This new public is not so much a space of voluntary sociality. It is essential infrastructure, a bargaining chip for political control, and a

[218] Don Mitchell, "The End of Public Space? People's Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85.1 (1995): 108-133.

showcase for an emerging modern urbane subjectivity. It is governed in a different way than the governance enacted on the traditional street space. While for the Memon Jamaats it is about protecting and maintaining norms around the preservation of certain kinds of sociality, for the Tanzeems it is a space for the staging of spectacle and a show of power, a setting for claims to citizenship, and for showcasing modern development through new discourses of productivity and beautification. This new sovereignty is cast as progressive, based on individual rights and leading to autonomy, as opposed to the dependent and intermeshed character of the older norms. However these new sovereignties promote a politics of individual citizenship and rights while relying on older networks of clan and kinship. They are also firmly enmeshed in illicit brokerage of urban goods and services, which is enforced violently.

In light of the threat of violence that pervades this space, the question then arises: What happens when everyday living conditions, which involve access to movement, services, leisure etc., can no longer be taken for granted? They acquire the nature of exceptions that are longed for, and eventually acquire the status of privileges that have to be negotiated with those who have played a part in creating states of uncertainty and contingency. Those who can insert themselves in these networks that enable access to infrastructure and services thus become important power brokers and develop a stake in the control of public space.

Chapter Six

Negotiating Difference: Religion, Gender and Space in Kharadar

> "This is a neutral area. People here do not get involved in politics (*siyasat*). We are religious people (*mazhabi log*). We like religious parties (*deeni jamaatain*). Our Jamaat (affiliation) is Ahl-e-Sunnat. Here people are more inclined towards religion, not politics." (Farooq bhai - Sept 14, 2011 – venue – UC-3 Kharadar)

Farooq bhai, who is a prominent member of the Kutyana Jamaat, and the coordinator of the local union council office, was expressing a sentiment that can be taken as an assertion of the unique identity of the area as well as a prescription for an ideal social world. The distinction he makes between religion and 'politics' is also echoed in the narratives of other residents I encountered. 'Siyasat,' or politics, is seen as something compromised and corrupt as opposed to the purity of religion. This distrust of the dirty world of politics also speaks to a pervasive sense of postcolonial disappointment with the state and what is seen as a betrayal of the promises of a prosperous new nationhood upon independence. Religion then presents an ideal world that is aspired to, as opposed to the contaminated reality of '*siyasat*' and the fact that for these residents the locus of moral authority firmly remains in the domain of religion. However, in light of the fact that religious organizations are deeply implicated in political processes, his distinction raises more the question of how people understand the relationship between the political, ethical and religious. Thus, the question that animates this chapter is, what is the significance of religion in shaping the urban imaginary? And further, is religion a 'pure' space or is it embedded in and constitutive of urban modernity in the quarter? These questions are answered in this chapter

through an engagement with everyday religious life and ritual in the space of the quarter. In this examination the shrines of Sufi saints emerge as significant sites of place-making practices.

The role of religion in the shaping of urban imaginaries, as well as urban spatialities, has been noted as one significant way in which the modern is vernacularized in the urban context, particularly in the global south.[219] In contemporary religious discourses and imaginaries in Pakistan, there is a major preoccupation with questions of exclusion and inclusion which revolve around both bodies and practices: Which bodies are acceptable and which are contaminated? Which practices are authentic and which are inauthentic or a corrupt innovation (*bidat*)? This question of purity and impurity, of insides and outsides, has a strong spatial element. It is through the designation of certain kinds of spaces, and the practices embodied in these spaces as authentic and acceptable, that a certain kind of religiosity is performed and legitimized. In this chapter I consider the performative aspects of religion in discursive, visual, embodied and affective forms in everyday life. This performance I argue is a significant contribution to the overall urban imaginary of the quarter, and also overlaps and interweaves with the social, economic and political life in the quarter.

In Karachi, religious life unfolds in an overall urban context of violent insecurity, economic disruption and competing political sovereignties.[220] It is a context in which ideas of tolerance and inclusion are being viewed through an ethnic lens, and yet religious identity plays a significant role in the constitution of these discourses. For example, political parties like the MQM and the PPP operating in the municipal context, are constructing their role as urban

[219] Mary Hancock and Smriti Srinivas, "Spaces of Modernity: Religion and the Urban in Asia and Africa," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32.3 (2008): 617-30.
[220] Arif Hasan, *Understanding Karachi: Planning and Reform for the Future* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Gayer, *Karachi: Ordered Disorder*; Anwar, "Urban Transformations.."; Viqar, "Constructing Lyari.."

leaders and managers based on a distinction between extremist religious ideologies and more moderate and 'secular' forms of religiosity. This process also involves the discursive partitioning of the urban landscape into spaces of 'extremism' and those of moderation. For example, certain localities in the city have been rendered as hotbeds of extremism to the extent that local media has created a spatial mapping of no-go areas based on the casting of these localities as controlled by the Taliban and other similar outfits.[221]

In this context, residents like those in the inner city area of Karachi, are compelled to assert that their area is not one of 'those' areas where the Taliban threat abounds. 'There are no Taliban here' is often asserted in the old city by residents as a way to locate themselves as more acceptable urban subjects. Calls to denounce extremist ideologies, conflated with reformist and Deobandi-oriented practices and outfits, are regularly made by Karachi's most influential political party, the MQM, which has been a major actor in city governance and administration as well. These calls have been intensified in the wake of the targeting of prominent symbols of liberal religious practices, mainly the shrines of Sufi saints that abound in different parts of the city. These calls are also echoed by civil society groups, mostly non-governmental organizations, who are part of the effort to rebrand the city as a space of liberal tolerance through the invocation of its history of housing a diversity of places of worship – Hindu, Parsi and Christian – which is also inflected with a kind of colonial nostalgia that imagines the Karachi of colonial times as a cosmopolitan space of sophisticated diversity.

In Pakistan, shrines of Sufi saints have been the target of violence from organizations like the Jamaat-ud-Dawa, the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and the TTP (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan). The largest and most revered shrine in Karachi – that of Abdullah Shah Ghazi was bombed in 2010 in

[221] Gayer. *Karachi: Ordered Disorder*

twin suicide attacks for which the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility. The Data Darbar shrine, a shrine of similar prominence in Lahore was bombed in the same year with 35 dead. While shrines in the old city area have not been direct targets of attack, they have received threats of violence as a result of which there is increased security around the more prominent and well-frequented dargahs.

I have examined much of the discourse around shrines and religiosity through the eyes of female interlocutors, since, as a woman, I had easier access to other women in religious spaces. In many cases, speaking to men was an impossibility, particularly men in the more 'purist' strands of religious movements like the Jamaat-e-Islami or the Dawat-e-Islami. Whilst shrine spaces were much more accessible, I still could not 'hang out' with men in the spaces of the dargah as I did with the women. However, with the managers and caretakers of the dargahs I engaged in candid conversations. This access gave me a unique perspective on the way these spaces were both experienced by women as well as the embeddedness of sexual anxieties in the control and management of these spaces and public space in general.

Dargahs or the shrines of saints have a long tradition as sites of reverence and worship in South Asia. Under British rule, colonial administrators had identified shrines and dargahs in general as sites of production of local arrangements of power that could be subverted to serve colonial interests. But first the independent force of the saints, whose sovereignty represented an alternative 'form of life', had to be destroyed. Many of them were criminalized as outlaws and exiled, as Jacob has documented in the case of Sayyid Fadl b. Alawi in the nineteenth century.[222]

[222] Jacob. "Of Angels and Men.."

The institution of the shrine and the Pirs were then enlisted as potential sources of collaboration that could aid in the colonial administration of a vast and complex social world.[223]

As with other intermediary groups the British retained the social and economic function of the shrines, and even further consolidated the social and economic power of those Pirs who were more conciliatory towards the prospect of British sovereignty. Ewing suggests that traditionally the Pirs in Pakistan have always enjoyed economic and political power, and various ruling structures including the pre-colonial have had some kind of a power-sharing relationship with them. The British inherited this structure of patronage towards the Pirs and also sustained it for their own purpose.[224]

However, the subversive potential of saints as religious sovereigns, and the shrines as sites of challenge to colonial authority, continued through the late colonial period, notably in the case of the Hurs in Sindh.[225] In the post-independence period the institutions governing the administration of shrines and other religious properties, both Muslim and non-Muslim, were brought under state control, as the relatively autonomous sphere of influence of the intermediary religious leaders was seen as a potential source of destabilization and challenge to the state. It

[223] Sarah Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power: The Pirs of Sindh 1843-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[224] Katherine Ewing, "The Politics of Sufism: Redefining the Saints of Pakistan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 42:2 (1983): 251-268.
[225] The Hurs (Arabic word meaning "free") were the followers of a Sufi cult in Sindh headed by the Pir of Pagaro. The first Pir of Pagaro was Syed Sibghatullah Shah I, who is said to have declared his followers free from British sovereignty. He died in 1831. He was succeeded by successive Pirs, and the lineage continues to the present day. The current Pir of Pagaro is Syed Sibghatullah Shah Rashdi, who was declared the spiritual and temporal successor of the seventh Pir of Pagaro who died in 2012, by a council of 15 elders of the Hur Jamaat who call themselves Khalifas. The Hurs were involved in various insurgent acts against the colonial government from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. The British declared them a criminal tribe under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, which was imposed on Sindh in 1900.

was an attempt to secularize and therefore control the religious authority exercised by the custodians of the shrines and the *dini-madaris* (religious schools).[226]

While the political economy of shrines in Pakistan, particularly in the Sindh province, has been tracked in studies that have examined the relationship between saints and the state, from the colonial to postcolonial times,[227] my focus is on the ways in which shrine-goers, devotees and those who manage these spaces make sense of spiritual practice and material realities. Much attention has been given to the institution of the shrine and its related practices, as well as the issue of 'liberal' versus 'illiberal' Islam in Pakistan's rural hinterlands.[228] Marsden's study of the everyday lives of Chitrali Muslims in Pakistan's North-Western Frontier region points to the intertwined character of Sufi and Salafi practices as well as the contestations that arise with the more outlying practices like those of Ismaili Muslims.

Marsden contends that Chitrali Muslims engage in critical intellectual discourse as well as emotive and embodied practice to work out their differences. While this brings attention to the complexity of religious life in a little-known context, Marsden manages to present the fact that village Muslims in rural Pakistan, especially in the much-maligned Pashtun regions, show emotional and intellectual complexity in working out religious differences – as a unique and refreshing discovery. This tone, in a way reinforces the assumption of a lack of critical discourse in the lifeworlds of popular Islam, especially those marginal to the urban centres where religious

[226] Jamal Malik, *Islam in South Asia: A Short History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2008).
[227] Ansari, *Sufi Saints and State Power*.
[228] Magnus Marsden, *Living Islam: Muslim Religious Experience in Pakistan's North-West Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Lukas Werth, "The Saint Who Disappeared: the Saints of the Wilderness in Pakistani Village Shrines," in *Embodying Charisma: Modernity, Locality and Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cults*, eds. Helen Basu and Pnina Werbner (Routledge, 1998), 77-91.

power traditionally resided. Other studies, notably Werbner[229] and Werth,[230] provide valuable insights on the emotional and symbolic significance of shrines, but remain focused on village shrines in North-western Pakistan. While I draw upon Werbner's insights on the significance of charity in the shrine and Werth's attention to the shrine as a liminal space lying between wilderness and habitation, my concern in this chapter is, in part, to address the function and symbolism of shrines in dense urban areas like the old quarter of Karachi where religiosity unfolds in a very different kind of political economy as compared to the village context. Apart from these differences, however, what emerged from this study was also the persistence of a certain village imaginary in a large urban context.

The role of religious identity in the shaping of urban space in the post-colonial and post-independence period is particularly salient in the case of Pakistan. As the new nation was supposed to represent an Islamic domain, the inscription of its territory with the symbols and signs of the dominant religion was a significant feature of reshaping its urban environments. This happened as a result of state-directed projects of urban development and monumentalization, but also in a more spontaneous way by the subjects of the new nation, as an attempt to express and solidify their status as subjects of a state expressly created in the name of Islam. Thus, there was an attempt to create a more homogenized religious space where diversity involved more of an expression of intra-religious difference and co-existence than inter-religious difference.

This transformation became more transparent in the dense and historical space of the old quarter where the process of homogenization also involved the erasure of Hindu spaces of worship and other symbols of Hindu occupation like dharamsalas. It is also significant that most

[229] Pnina Werbner, "LANGAR: Pilgrimage, Sacred Exchange and Perpetual Sacrifice in Sufi Saint's Lodge," in *Embodying Charisma: Modernity, Locality and Performance of Emotion in Sufi Cults*, eds. Helen Basu and Pnina Werbner (Routledge, 1998), 95-116.
[230] Werth, "The Saint Who Disappeared.."

of the shrines proliferating in the quarter at present underwent major expansions and renovations in the post-partition period. Thus arguably, the investment in the improvement and expansion of religious buildings and symbols also represented participation in nation-building. This investment was more intense amongst Mohajirs, the Memon community being one of the earliest Mohajirs to the city, as what was at stake was their status and claim as new residents in a new urban environment.

Religious Practice and Discourses in the Quarter

At present, the role of religious organizations in the ordering of the social world of the quarter is unmistakable. Various religious organizations belonging to different denominations proliferate in the quarter. Religious diversity in the quarter ranges from residents adhering to the predominant Barelvi approach to Deobandi, Ahl-e-tasheeh, Aga khani, Bohra and Hindu (a small minority of residents). What also distinguishes the quarter is the presence of iconic religious landmarks that are the locus of major religious festivities and congregations, all packed together in a very dense urban environment. Two of the largest and oldest Imambargahs in Pakistan lie in this quarter; which is also where the major Shia processions originate in the month of Muharram. The shrines or dargahs of more than twenty saints belonging to different silsilas – from Qadri to Qalandari – dot the quarter. This is the site of *urs* festivals – the death anniversary of the saint – which is celebrated as the 'marriage' of the saint with God, symbolizing union with the divine in death. Two dates of significance for Barelvi Muslims, Eid Milad-un-Nabi[231] and Shab-e-Qadr,[232] garner week-long festivals, almost carnival-like in their pageantry.

[231] Celebrations commemorating the birthday of the Prophet

[232] A night in the last five days of the month of Ramadan when the Quran was revealed to the prophet. It is celebrated on any of those five days. In the Sunni tradition amongst Barelvis it is usually celebrated on the 27th of Ramadan.

In Kharadar, time is often marked according to the dates of the *urs,* the death anniversary of the saints, and the special "moon" nights or *chand raat* that are associated with the dargahs. Life follows this sacred time along with secular time. These special nights, associated with the birth and death anniversaries of the saints as well as significant events in the life of the prophet, determine social and cultural life on a regular basis. Almost all the residents interviewed observe one or the other of the special nights associated with various dargahs. The abundance of dargahs in Kharadar and Mithadar means that they are also major navigational markers of the area. Meeting points are often set with reference to the numerous shrines in the quarter. For example, "Achchi Qabar" – literally meaning 'nice grave,' a tiny shrine that marks the entry to the cloth market – is universally given as a reference point to those who are lost in the winding lanes of the quarter.

Most Muslims in Pakistan (50%) identify with the Barelvi tradition, and in Karachi even more so. Karachi has traditionally been considered the centre of the Barelvi tradition in Pakistan. This is symbolized in the fanfare and pageantry with which, as mentioned earlier, the two most important festivals in Barelvi Islam are celebrated: Eid Milad-un-Nabi, the birthday of the Prophet Mohammad; and Shab-e-Baraat, the Night of Ascension, which is the night in Ramadhan when the prophet arose to the heavens. It is in the old quarter of Kharadar that these events are commemorated with the greatest ceremony. Eid Milad-un-Nabi merits the most celebration and the festivities are carried out for the entire month of Rabi-ul-Awwal, the third month of the lunar Islamic calendar.

The carnevalesque character of the festivities is particularly prominent on Shab-e-Qadr, celebrated on the 27th of Ramadhan, when the streets of Kharadar are teeming with vendors, ferris wheels, camel rides, donkey cart rides, and the biryani doled out freely from the langars

opened up by virtually all the shrines in the quarter. Reference to these festivities as bringing life or 'raunaq' to the quarter surface frequently amongst the residents and are cited as what attaches them to the social world of the quarter. In this way, the quarter has symbolically become associated with a certain celebratory and pageant-like aspect of Islam. Often seen to represent a more 'folk' oriented and Sufi Islam, these practices, as I will show in this chapter, are also at the centre of debates around the true nature of Islam and its role in directing moral life in the community.

New Islamic movements, like that of the Dawat-e-Islami are also beginning to gain a popular following, and signal the emergence of a more streamlined and disciplined version of Barelvi Islamic practices. The Dawat-e-Islami enjoys a lot of popularity in the quarter and its religious events now compete with the older shrine festivals like the *urs*. The streets of the quarter are often cordoned off to hold *milad*, dars and zikr gatherings arranged by the 'Madani brothers' and 'Madani sisters' of the movement. Those who adhere to these practices broadly identify as 'ahl-e-sunnat,' and also root themselves in the Barelvi tradition. Often perceived as a counter to the growing influence of the oppositional Deobandi denomination, Dawat-e-Islami positions itself as non-political and purely interested in religious reform through education. Their role in the social life of the quarter is addressed later in this chapter.

Barelvi practices that actively follow or tolerate shrine and saint worship are seen as un-Islamic and corrupt by the Deobandis[233] and these contestations surface in Kharadar in the form

[233] "Deoband and Bareilly are the names of two towns in the United Provinces of India where two different schools of Islamic learning flourished. Deobandi refers to the orthodox revivalist movement which dates back to the fundamentalist reformer Shah Waliullah of Delhi (1704-64). His followers opened an Islamic seminary at Deoband in 1864 and founded a movement aimed at purifying Muslims from what they saw as un-Islamic practices. Their main targets have been shrines and saint worship. Ahmad Raza Khan of Bareilly (1856-1921) began a crusade against the revivalist attack on the institutions of the pirs and shrines, and 'gave coherence to a distinct group both intellectual and social'" (Saifur Rahman Sherani, "Ulema and Pir in Pakistani Politics," in *Economy and Culture in*

of competing discourses around the legitimacy of shrine visitation, as well as practices that, in the eyes of Deobandis, excessively venerate the prophet. These practices are deemed as 'shirk' – a form of polytheism – and as 'bidat' – a corrupt innovation. While Deobandi influence remains weak in the quarter and in Karachi in general, the threat of violence associated with most Deobandi outfits, which include organizations ranging from the more moderate – the Jamaat-e-Islami – to the most extreme – the Lashkar-e-Jahngvi, Jamaat-ud- Dawa and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan – has created a sense of being under siege. As Dada bhai, who is a Sayyid of the Wadla Jamaat, indicates: "We give *niaz*, we go to the shrines. Deobandis do not do this and stop others (from following these practices). Because of this, the social environment (in this area) has changed. It is not as (socially) vibrant as it used to be. It has lost its 'raunaq.'

Mainly represented by the Jamaat-e-Islami, those who identify as Deobandis have a few mosques in the quarter and actively proselytize against the practices of giving free food in the name of the prophet or the saint, *langar* and *niaz*; and the holding of *urs*, the death anniversary of the saint celebrating his reunion with the divine, which are accompanied by *qawwali* (devotional songs) and *dhammal* (drums and dancing).

While shrine sovereignty revolves around the charismatic authority of the saint, shrines also represent the coming together of the prosperous local economy which generates a great deal of taxable wealth, with the spiritual economy. Prominent shrines are recipients of major donations by the local businessmen and Jamaats as well as being associated with commercial enterprises as a way to generate income. Shrines also acquire prominence through the patronage of wealthy or influential local leaders.

Pakistan: Migrants and Cities in a Muslim Society, eds. Hastings Donnan and Pnina Werbner (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1991), 228).

Concurrent with the general reverence for shrine culture there is an ongoing debate amongst the Barelvis on the appropriateness of dargah associated practices and the debate revolves around whether these practices constitute "bidat" – a corruption of proper practice. These debates are also imbricated with concerns about gender and the presence of women in shrines. Women are being increasingly enjoined to keep away from the dargahs, the popular reason being given that the dead (pir) can see women naked when they visit the graves. Dargahs are seen to encourage integration of the sexes since there is no formal segregation although the more prominent shrines have started introducing sex-segregation, something that is also encouraged in the dargahs that are formally managed by the State's Auqaf department. The smaller shrines that are under private waqfs are more flexible, also because practices of segregation require more resources, which the poorer shrines do not have.

In South Asia, Sufi shrines have generally been open to women and have been studied as spaces with an agentive feminine aspect where women forge, on the one hand, a very personal and emotional relationship with the saint, and on the other hand, where they form bonds of conviviality and shared spirituality with other women.[234] While the prolific traffic of women in the shrines of Kharadar confirms this trend, I observed other aspects of women's shrine visitation practices in the ways in which men react to these practices and how they become imbricated with concerns about religious authenticity, purity and sexuality. In addition, shrines themselves, as spaces that lie on the threshold of life and death, bridging past and present time, emanate an occult-like, other-worldly effect that circulates through the quarter, giving meaning and reason to events, places and times. They serve as repositories of collective memories of migration, displacement and emplacement, and provide a constant reminder of a spatial world that extends

[234] Kelly Pemberton, *Women Mystics and Sufi Shrines in India* (University of South Carolina Press, 2013).

beyond the nation. Indeed, the sacred space that resulted from the enshrinement of the saint's body was meant to "make sense of the life *between* worlds, between places of origin and places of settlements, between places of written memory and places of lived experience."[235]

Managing the Saintly Presence: Shrine Sovereignty in the Dargah of Shah Doula Sabzwari Bokhari

The shrine complex of Shah Doula Sabzwari Bokhari occupies a prominent crossroads on the western end of the quarter, with its main entrance on the Nawab Mahabat Khan Road. It is a popular space of congregation in Kharadar. Originally the site of a small grave dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, the shrine has grown into a complex which contains, in addition to an elaborate tomb for the saint, a large marbled and tiled inner courtyard, an outer courtyard where free food is distributed every alternate day, a dispensary for women, as well as a girls' Madrassah (ses fig. 24 and fig. 25). The Dargah is informally called 'Benazir's dargah' as it was a major object of patronage by former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, in continuance of a tradition of patronage of Sufi shrines by prominent Sindhi politicians of feudal backgrounds. During the 1980s, Benazir's government had endowed the dargah with substantial donations that were used to build the elaborate new extensions. The shrine now boasts marble flooring and elaborately tiled pillars and *mihrabs*. According to the dargah manager, Benazir was a regular visitor to the shrine. She would come anonymously, without fanfare, and pray at the tomb of the saint. Thus the shrine became a significant site of political performance even as Benazir kept her visits discreet. The dargah managers and those involved in the upkeep of the shrine tell stories about her visits, her patronage and her generosity. The shrine attracts a significant portion of the population from the adjacent quarter of Lyari, which has traditionally been a hub of support for

[235] Nile Green, *Making Space: Sufis and Settlers in Early Modern India* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 5.

the Pakistan People's Party. Arguably Benazir's patronage, especially after her death, has ended up eclipsing that of the saint.

A complex of shops surrounds the shrine. The shops are rented out and a part of their profits are given over to the shrine. The commercial activity is thriving with shops selling flower garlands, religious literature and prayer mats. Similar to many urban sacred spaces, especially in the global south, the commercial precincts of the shrines support a thriving economy of exchange in devotional objects and offerings that adorn the dense and intimate space of the quarter with the iconography of the saints and shrines.

Figure 24. "The Shah Doula Sabzwari Bokhari shrine in Kharadar." Sarwat Viqar. 15 October, 2011. Kharadar, Karachi.

Figure 25. “Women in the outer courtyard of the Shah Doula shrine” Sarwat Viqar. October 15. 2011. Kharadar, Karachi.

Officially a property of the Auqaf Department, unofficially the dargah is managed by a board constituted of prominent local residents, most of whom are representatives of the more dominant Memon Jamaats, mainly the Bantva and Kutiyana Jamaats. Auqaf collects the monthly donations of the dargah goers, however, there is a tacit practice of inducing most shrine visitors to donate directly to the dargah managers rather than to the Auqaf department. State ownership is generally looked at with suspicion and skepticism as Auqaf functionaries are seen to be interested in the dargah only insofar as it can provide commercial benefit. Auqaf’s ownership of commercial precincts around the shrines is generally seen as an unfair appropriation of land. These parochial concerns are expressed often by the dargah manager as standing in the way of realizing the true potential of the shrine and, it is implied, the power of the saint. This sentiment is shared by other dargah caretakers as well, as dargahs in general are seen to have fallen into a state of neglect.

There is a *langar* every Thursday evening when biryani is doled out freely to all visitors. The majority of the visitors are working class men and women, often destitute, although the

shrine also has a loyal middle class following. Major miracles, or 'karamat' are attributed to the saint who presides, in death, over the troubles and anxieties of the devotees. Pragmatic concerns, however, also motivate dargah users and visitors: as one woman gives her reason for visiting the shrine, "I come here when things at home get difficult, to get away from my husband," another woman says, "here, no one can tell me what to do, I don't have to cook or clean for the family, there is peace." This theme of getting away from home arises often amongst women. Another incentive to come to the dargah is to access free food.

For these women, the dargah space can be evoked as a legitimate spiritual refuge without being seen as a way to escape their duties. The figure of the saint, absent, revered, almost worshipped becomes the legitimate refuge from everyday oppressions. It provides the opportunity for physical relocation from the secular space of one's home or work into the sacred space of the dargah where there is a suspension of rules and restrictions, restrictions that may also apply to the more orthodox and formal spaces of the mosque. Many of the women come from homes where infrastructure is failing and the household economy is becoming unmanageable. Often, the husbands are unemployed and consequently spending more time at home. 'Hanging out' in the precincts of the dargah provides these women with a respite from what is increasingly being experienced as an oppressive home environment. Their trips to the shrine space thus seek to allay both pragmatic and spiritual concerns, the two often intertwined. The saint's help is sought to intercede miraculously in the task of securing employment, increasing incomes and resolving domestic conflicts. As well, the access to drinking water, free food and a space to rest and socialize with other women creates a space that is seen as productive and hopeful.

Large numbers of women continue to visit the shrines despite periodic fatwas by local mullahs and imams, usually belonging to the Deobandi denomination, who deem the practice of saint worship as 'bidat' – as practices that are un-Islamic and corrupt. The debate over legitimacy of presence in shrines is also enacted within the precincts of the dargah where women have diverging views on the implications of saint worship. Whilst older women are generally more attached to the practice often younger women express their misgivings about putting so much value on the blessings of the saint. They claimed these misgivings on the basis of being more educated about the true practice of Islam. According to one young woman: "I don't really feel comfortable coming here. These practices are 'bidat' and they are frowned upon by Islam. I come because my sisters-in-law come here." However, later she admits that, "you never know, these prayers (to the saint) might be answered."

The manager of the dargah expresses very different concerns. The association of shrine culture with sexual laxity has led to concerns about the presence of women in shrines as leading to transgressive social behavior in the form of pre-marital relations. When asked why women visit the dargah he replies: "Because we solve domestic disputes. If women have domestic issues at home, they come to us to solve them. We try to help." He then goes on to assert that a major issue has been to restrict the times when women can visit the shrine. When asked why, he recounts: "If women stay out too late, '*mahaul kharab ho jata hai*' [the social environment is corrupted]. Nowadays, everything is changing. Because men do not stay at home as much, women are being corrupted. When young women, especially, go out telling their families that they are going to the dargah, their mothers do not really know where they are, where they go." As a response to these concerns the management has decided to close the dargah for women by 8 pm and the manager further goes on to assert that he wishes all dargahs would follow these rules.

Arising from the general discouragement of women from frequenting graveyards and tombs, the popular belief is that the dead can see one naked, and so women's modesty is compromised when they enter the tomb of the saint. In light of this, most of the well-regulated shrines, while allowing women, restrict their presence to the outer precincts of the shrine. However, it is not so easy to delegitimize the shrine of Shah Doula for women as one of its leading patrons was the deceased and former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Popularly known as Benazir's dargah, the shrine has also become a symbol of her patronage and reverence for dargahs.

The dargah manager expresses a similar concern about the other marginalized group that inhabits the space of the shrine: unemployed and homeless men who also come seeking free food and sometimes a place to sleep. While they are always offered food, the new regulations will not allow anyone to sleep in the precincts, a practice which is very common in other smaller and unregulated shrines in the area. Letting '*mawalis,*' as they are commonly known, inhabit the sacred space blessed by the saint has traditionally been a part of shrine culture. However new ways to order space – that involve sanitization, demarcation of space, a prescription of what kind of activities are allowed, and restrictions on time of visitation – are now questioning and limiting the older practices that were not so spatially and temporally confined.

Other ways in which the space of the shrine has been 'secularized' and thus regulated has been through the addition of a women's dispensary and a girls' Madrassah. It is not a coincidence that both these facilities are targeted towards women. The regulation of female bodies and anxieties around female behavior that cannot be monitored, especially in public space, arise often amongst those who manage these spaces. In this way, there is an attempt to turn the shrine into an exemplary space that will set examples: namely through restricting and

regulating the presence of women and homeless or drug-addicted men, seen to be a cause of disruption. What cannot be controlled is the other-worldly lure of the saint and the promise of 'nijaat,' or deliverance from worldly troubles and salvation in the afterlife. Despite the restrictions, in the dargah women do create a space that enables debate on religious matters. They discuss their dissatisfactions around domestic life and arrangements. Their presence in the dargahs draws attention to rising economic insecurity and failing infrastructure. This presence also unsettles attempts to 'rationalize' and curtail what are deemed to be irrational practices, as well as unsettling dominant social norms that seek to limit women's mobility and presence in public space. What is also interesting is the fact that while there is a general agreement amongst most religious and Jamaat leaders, both men and women, that dargah-going is not an appropriate activity for women, there is tacit acceptance of its prolific practice in the quarter and amongst Barelvi Memons in general. Farida, a close friend and colleague who grew up in Kharadar and is now a practicing architect responded to my queries about the acceptability of women's presence in shrines:

> Well, Sarwat, going to dargah is discouraged for women in Islam. Dawat-e-Islami also discourages it but women still go there, including myself. Reason being, we do not stand right in front of *qabr mubarik* (the blessed grave). We usually sit in *sehan* (courtyard) outside and offer *fateha* (prayers). We do not indulge in other rituals which do not seem appropriate like bowing head to stepping stone, kissing *chadar mubarik* (the blessed shroud that covers the grave). etc.. It is acceptable to many who otherwise believe in paying tribute to *mazars* (tombs/shrines). If you remember, we both also went to Bukhari Shah dargah in Kharadar during our visit.

In the same vein, when I asked Farooq Bhai, who is prominent in Jamaat and municipal life in the quarter, about whether he thinks that women should frequent dargahs, he asserted that despite frequent fatwas against the practice women still visit the shrines. "Nobody can stop women from going to dargahs and nobody will stop them. There are frequent fatwas against it

from different denominations, but the women refuse to be deterred. It is a matter for them and their families – if they are allowed to go from home, then they go." Shrine practices thus define a faultline that determines the contestation between inside and outside, between the home and the public, and central to this concern is where and how women appear in public.

Because within the precincts of the dargah no particular religious denomination is favoured, it has been hard to police it along the lines of the sectarian divides currently pervasive in the rest of the city. The space of the dargah is not oriented toward a particular idea but towards the otherworldly presence of the saint, and it is a belief in the active presence of the saint and the call exerted by them that brings devotees to lay their very worldly concerns before the saint. Thus, the dargah, though deriving its authority from the spiritual, is very much a part of the everyday materiality of the residents of Kharadar in times of economic scarcity and physical insecurity. It is a 'public' space in the sense that it allows a flexibility of interaction between genders, classes and different religious denominations that are not found in other more strictly inscribed spaces like mosques. Dargahs are considered free of 'sectarianism,' and also seen as spaces of charity, education and philanthropy, which have been partially a result of the state's attempt to "secularize" the culture of Sufis and Pirs in general in Pakistan.[236]

The Dargah of Qadir Shah Baba: Desire, Desolation and Refuge

The dargah of Qadir Shah Baba is a private waqf property, as opposed to the 'public' waqf of the Shah Doula shrine. This means that it is not under Auqaf management. The shrine is located in the Kharadar Chowk, which is the culmination point of five inner city streets and is a vibrant hub of commercial and transport activity. The chowk is populated with vendor stands

[236] Katherine Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis and Islam* (London: Duke University Press, 1997).

selling fried food snacks, paan shops and dairy shops, which have encroached the space in front of the formal commercial establishments. The space has been further encroached by rickshaw stands. The chowk is dominated by the Kharadar police station at one end, the space in front of which is noticeably absent of any encroachment. The facades of the surrounding buildings are almost completely obscured by political party posters mostly belonging to the Pakistan People's Party, which informally claims this part of Kharadar. A large poster of Benazir Bhutto is particularly prominent and is juxtaposed with exhortations to youth to join the People's Party Youth League. The dargah itself, though small, occupies a prominent position in the chowk. A two-room structure with an elaborate arched entrance and a decorated dome in green and white, it represents contemporary shrine architecture in the Sindh region.

The caretaker of the dargah introduces himself as the 'Khalifa' of the shrine and asks me to call him just Khalifa. According to him the grave of the saint is 300 years old. He is careful to state that he knows this because this is a fact that has been handed down from generation to generation by his elders. He is the fourth Khalifa to be appointed as caretaker of the shrine. For him, there is no ambiguity about the powers of the dead saint – he appears in his dreams as 'basharat,'[237] subsequent to which prayers are answered.

> Anyone can come here, men, women – women come very often – also those seeking refuge, even *mawalis* (homeless), *charsis* (opium addicts) – we don't turn anyone away. This is God's house, his Wali's house, we cannot refuse anyone, it would be unseemly if we did. But we don't let anyone spend the night. The policemen across the street have given strict instructions not to let strangers stay the night and to check the id cards of those we do not recognize. Otherwise, there are no restrictions. When the *charsis* (drug-users) are here, the policemen come and they also start taking hits with them.

[237] A revelatory dream

Unlike the Shah Doula dargah and the other popular shrine of Kausar Baba, the few shops around the shrine are not selling shrine iconography or devotional objects. There is a milk shop and a shop selling bicycle parts. These shops provide a nominal rent to the dargah. Khalifa feels that Auqaf will not be interested in a dargah like this because there is no financial incentive in terms of commercial possibilities, and they do not get much in the way of donation. He compares this with the other dargahs, notably Shah Doula's dargah where there are tons of people and more money coming in. He suggests this is because it is under the active patronage of Auqaf. The dargah of Qadir Shah Baba does not have the potential to generate profit so Auqaf has no interest in it. There have never been too many people at this dargah, just the Baba's regular devotees.

Lamenting the absence of rich patrons who could endow the shrine with sumptuous langars and festive *urs* celebrations, Khalifa is still loyal to the miraculous potential of Qadir Shah Baba, and asserts that it is only through the Baba's blessings that he has fended off misfortune and disease in his life. He claims that the Baba appears to him in dreams and subsequent to that his wishes are granted. He even offers to intercede with the Baba on my behalf: "Is there anything you want? Are you still single?" He then suggests I should pray to the baba to intercede and the result would be miraculous: "*Baba har kisi ki murad poori karta hai*" – The baba can grant anyone's desire. If there is an affect associated with this space then it is one filled with the promise of fulfilling desires and realizing hopes – *murad*. Thus while the shrine does not offer material relief in the form of langars, it represents a realm of possibility that goes beyond the space-time of everyday materiality. It is also a place that ensures its own survival, as the Baba from his otherworldly sovereignty directs the fortunes of the shrine itself. When asked if they get many devotees in the shrine, Khalifa answers: "*baba ki karamat hai, jo aagaya, wo*

aagaya" - It is the will/miracle of the baba, who will come, comes. Sometimes the dargah also acts as a safehouse. Khalifa indicates that whenever there is a '*hungama*' – a violent incident or disturbance – in the area then people come to seek refuge in the dargah. It is clear that in general, despite the violent threats to prominent shrines, in the internal world of the quarter and even the city in general, the sanctity of shrines is respected.

Khalifa also expresses with dejection the loss of an older economy of gift and exchange when "people were more devout, they were *aqeedat mand* (showing respect and devotion and seeking help from the saint). There used to be food sent from households (*ghar ghar say khana aata tha*) someone is sending rice, other foodstuffs. That does not happen anymore."

He then speaks to the reasons why the world of saints and shrines is no longer a site of abundance – neither spiritual nor material. It is because economic woes have driven people to abandon their 'aqeedat' (their devotion and attachment), implying that unless there is a material benefit attached to a particular shrine, it will be uninteresting as an object of patronage and devotion. Thus the saint's charismatic power alone is not enough to draw people towards the sacred space of the shrine in an economy where the fulfillment of consumptive desires has become paramount.

Invoking a Geography of Loss and Change

Each story about the origin of the shrine points to a landscape of absence, of what is no more, and so invokes a geography of postcolonial change and loss. It is the story of the absence of certain kinds of practices and socialities, but significantly the absence of a certain kind of space. Often there is a reference to the pre-partition environment of the quarter, which had one significant feature that is absent today – Hindu temples as well as Hindu residents. In one of the

inner streets of the quarter of Mithadar, Dadabhai, a local Memon resident and real estate broker, takes me to a small shrine which is unusual since it is dedicated to two children, twins – a boy and a girl. The elaborately decorated marble plaque over the entrance indicates their names – 'Hazrat Masoom Roshan Shah' and 'Hazrat Bibi Mariam.' There is not much information about the origins of the children,[238] except that the grave had existed on this spot for sometime and the children were considered blessed. But what made the shrine a popular place of visit was the recent patronage of a wealthy businessman, who after a *basharat* decided to renovate and expand the gravesite into a shrine. The shrine is the most modern looking in the quarter – though tiny, basically a single room, it boasts a granite floor and wood-laminated and glass doors leading to the small graves inside (see fig. 26). Dada bhai points out that this site is regarded with particular attention and tenderness because of the children.

[238] Werth (1998) suggests that it is not necessary in Pakistan to know the name or even the life of the pir of a small shrine because the fact that he is supposed to belong to a holy category is sufficient to qualify him to be prayed to, as the personality of the saint has been almost effaced and is of very limited importance.

Figure 26. “The children’s shrine in Mithadar.” Sarwat Viqar. September 12, 2011. Mithadar, Karachi.

Right next to the shrine are the crumbling ruins of a Hindu temple. Dada bhai is eager to take me inside the temple. He seems to regard the state of the temple with some sadness, though all he says is, “this is what happened to all the temples – this is the state they are in.” The temple has not been entirely demolished yet because it is under the protection of the state’s trust for the protection of non-Muslim religious property. It is possible that the symbolism of the immaculate little shrine with its modern façade beside the crumbling old ruin of the temple is not lost on the residents of the quarter. It is a site they encounter often in other parts of the quarter as well in the form of gutted out remains of old Hindu temples or *dharamshalas* – Hindu travellers inns. Reference to a past that was more co-existent and tolerant often features references to either Hindu places of worship or the previous Hindu residents of the quarter. As when Syeda Maria, a

young 21-year old resident of Mithadar, laments the failure of the residents to take care of the old pre-partition buildings of the quarter, which contain fragments of its Hindu past in the form of tilework inscribed with Hindu icons, or effigies of Hindu deities carved on old wooden furniture that was disposed of and in many cases just destroyed.

Hindu residents also feature in assertions about the peaceful nature of life in the quarter. Sikandar, the president of the local shopowner's association, and also a member of the neighbourhood peace committee, talks about what happened in the quarter during the Babri Masjid[239] incident. When mobs came threatening the few Hindu residents in the area, they took care of their Hindu neighbours and made sure that they were not subjected to violence. "We protected them as if they were our brothers." To Sikandar, this action was also an important part of maintaining the integrity of the quarter and its social norms, which demand a certain degree of cordiality and co-existence with difference.

Shrine spaces are also associated with the history of a distinctly non-urban landscape. This invocation points to an alternate imaginary in which the space of Kharadar is imagined as consisting mainly of the saints and their *chillas* and their communion with the sea. As the Khalifa of the Qadir Baba's shrine says: "[They] would just lie here, in the water. There was nothing else here, just their *chillas*." The Khalifa of Ibrahim Shah's shrine just a street away recounts: "These graves/chillas[240] have been here for the past 350-400 years. There was nothing here, no population then. This was the coastline then, now it has receded. Here, caravans would come from Mecca, from Thatta." These imaginaries impart another layer of spatiality to the

[239] The demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, UP, India, in 1992 by Hindu extremists calling themselves *kar sevaks* ("volunteers") precipitated widespread communal conflict within India but also in Pakistan, though not to the same degree. Hindus residing in Karachi and other smaller cities in Sindh were targeted in retaliatory attacks by Muslims.

[240] A *chilla* was a place where the saint or pir would sit and practice meditation and also preside over devotees. Chillas may or may not become the gravesites of the saint, but they could develop into shrines.

quarter, an alternate and invisible geography. It imputes a liminality to the grave site of the saint as lying at the cusp of two realms – land and sea. Werth[241] argues a similar kind of spatial liminality as a feature of village shrines in Pakistan where the shrine is often located at the edge of the village, marking the space between settlement and wilderness – between the legible and illegible, the known and unknown. The saint thus stands guard and provides protection in return for devotion, offerings and sacrifice. While the shrines in Kharadar no longer mark that space between land and sea, that liminal location still animates the imagination of the custodians and devotees.

The question is – while the current functions of the shrines are firmly embedded in the contemporary economy of exchange of urban goods and services, what function does this alternate geography perform? In some cases, shrine histories become intertwined with regional histories. The Khalifa of the Achchi Qabar, another popular shrine in Kharadar recounts: "This shrine has been here since the days of Mohammad Bin Qasim's conquest of Sindh," thus emplacing these local shrines within a pre-colonial, pre-urban and Islamic history of the region. Nile Green suggests that these kinds of originary claims serve to position the shrines as "urban founder figures from the era of pre-history of the city."[242] This is a significant element of constructing a certain kind of shrine sovereignty in which originary claims establish the residents as owners and caretakers of their quarter and by extension the city itself. The investments in these claims is more acute on the part of migrant communities, whose right to belong to the city is often contested by indigenous groups. However, in this case, the reference to Mohammad Bin Qasim, the Arab conqueror of Sindh, suggests that these origin stories also serve to make a

[241] Werth, "The Saint who Disappeared.."
[242] Nile Green, *Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the Western Indian Ocean 1840-1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 57.

connection with an older geography of a larger Islamicate world. This is also suggested by Engseng Ho, for example, in his examination of the gravesites of Alawi traders and Sufis across the Hadhrami diaspora.[243] And in the same vein Werbner indicates that, "typically regional cults cut across boundaries, whether of community, nation, or ethnic group, and generate their own sacred topographies, often in tension with the national and local."[244] In Kharadar these sacred geographies that stretch beyond the local are invoked often. For example, according to the Khalifa of the Ibrahim Shah Baba's dargah, visitors regularly come from India and from as far away as Africa. He traces Ibrahim Shah's lineage to the famous shrine in Datar in Gujarat. Shahid's grandfather, who migrated from Bombay during Partition, refers to the famous Haji Ali shrine, built on an island off the coast of Bombay, and how he always feels reverence for the shrine in his heart. Thus in the urban imaginary there exists a sacred topography that links the local shrines to others in the larger Indian Ocean world. In some cases, as in the case of Ibrahim Shah Dattari, the local shrine operates as a kind of 'satellite or franchise shrine'[245] of the original shrine of Hazrat Syed Ali Mira Datar in Gujarat.

This religious imaginary is also informed by the imagined geography of ancestral lands and villages that Memons were uprooted from at Partition. The dargahs of saints are frequently mentioned as significant sites of ritual and festival in the ancestral villages of Bantva, Wadla, Veraval and Kutyana in Joonagdh state. Just as the concept of masjid, madrassah and market defined the Memon spatial world, the dargah occupied that space of liminality and miracle that is evoked often as a part of Memon cultural identity. Thus the sacralization of the space of the

[243] Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*: *Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).
[244] Pnina Werbner, "Stamping the Earth with the Name of Allah: Zikr and the Sacralizing of Space Among British Muslims," *Cultural Anthropology* 11.3 (1996): 311.
[245] Green, *Bombay Islam*

quarter has thrived under the patronage of the Memon Jamaats and is an integral element of the spatial and cultural imaginary of the quarter.

The Role of the State: Secularization and the 'Urban Modern'

The ownership of shrine spaces is one way in which the contested nature of the state's role in the governance of urban space and life surfaces. Shrines are designated as 'waqf' – property that has been designated for public use in the name of God. It is property that cannot be transferred and is therefore inalienable. There are two kinds of waqf ownership in Pakistan – public waqfs and private waqfs. The evolution of the waqf into the public and private represents a significant development of the idea of Islamic property ownership and is rooted in debates around the meaning of waqf that surfaced during colonial times.[246]

The designation of a property as private waqf enables it to remain in private hands for perpetuity, although the concept of waqf in a sense was always private in that they were an individual's legal and material expression of piousness, charity, and or "civic engagement." Currently this status could also be a motivational factor behind *basharats* or revelations experienced by private patrons that end up designating a certain space as sacred. The present legislation ruling the administration of Waqf properties in Pakistan was enacted in 1970 with the establishment of the Auqaf Department. Ewing suggests that through the consolidation of the Auqaf regime of managing religious property, the policy of the government has been to direct and manage shrine practices through focusing on the upkeep and renovation of a few prominent

[246] The meaning of waqf was debated in terms of its public or private functions during colonial rule. Under colonial rule religious property was brought under the purview of public endowment. This was disputed by the Muslim intelligentsia that lobbied to get Muslim religious property redesignated as private ownership, which was eventually achieved through the MussalmanWakf Validating Act of 1913. (Malik, *Islam in South Asia*)

shrines while letting the others diminish in importance.[247] This patronage has allowed the state to benefit from a sense of increased legitimacy as they are seen as continuing a tradition valued by Muslim rulers. In addition, it has allowed the running of prominent shrines as commercial ventures, generating revenue through a partial commercialization of the space of the shrine. Further, it has allowed the state to reconfigure the moral space and function of the shrines through the introduction of 'secular' functions like dispensaries and schools into the precincts of the shrines. Auqaf controlled shrines thus remain distinct from the private waqfs, which are still under the hereditary control of particular families. The moral aspect of shrine management is made clear through the Auqaf Department's own articulation of its role: "to eradicate the menace of anti-social activities, to nip in the bud the sectarian issues arising in the mosques and shrines."[248]

The 'cleansing' of the dargah space of all 'anti-social' elements is a significant element of discourses that seek to create a proper urban space, and the concern for 'anti-social' activities around shrines that need to be curtailed translates into the removal of *mawalis* and *charsis* – homeless and drug-addicted men who tend to gather around shrine complexes in the hopes of getting free food from the *langars*, or even just a space to sleep and hang out. A local functionary who works for the Auqaf department in overseeing the shrines in the area asserts that:

> We have instructions from on high that if there is a *mawali* or a *charsi* hanging around the dargah – this should not happen. If they are not co-operating (with us when asked to leave) then we call the police and then the police take care of the matter. In Clifton[249] they have really taken care of this very well and cleaned up the area.
>
> Those who come and sit in the dargah for a long time – it means they have nothing else to do, they don't work. Then they start hanging out here and then start doing *peeri-muridi*

[247] Ewing, "The Politics of Sufism..,"
[248] "Auqaf Ministry Seeks Budget to Maintain Mausoleums." *The News*, Feb 25, 2011.
[249] A wealthy suburb of Karachi that also contains the site of Karachi's most prominent shrine, the dargah of Abdullah Shah Ghazi, considered almost a patron saint of the city.

> themselves. That is why we say, if you come, just say your *fatiha*, read the Quran for a bit and then leave.

For the state, dargahs are also instrumental to the constitution of the idea of development and modernity. As Shamsuddin says:

> Dargahs need to be developed. We need more income through the use of commercial properties around dargahs. Right now development only happens when some rich patron gets involved and invests in the dargah by building a mazaar and then forming a committee to maintain the dargah. You must have noticed in Kharadar – the dargah of Mohammad shah doola and the dargah of chuttan shah – both of them are under Auqaf, but they have not been developed by state money, but through private patronage and donations.

Dargahs are thus developed for both commercial advantage as well as to act as exemplary spaces representing state order and control. If we follow Saba Mahmood's insight[250] that secularism prescribes what religion should be in the modern world, then the management of urban sacred space is one specific way through which the state attempts to assign religion its proper place in society. These attempts at rationalization do not remain uncontested though, as is revealed in the ways people persist in engaging in practices that are considered divergent or 'innovative' (*bidat*) by local religious authorities. The subversive potential of these practices is seen to threaten a more rationalized practice of religion that is prescribed to be more in line with modernity. This attempt at the disenchantment of what is seen as a superstitious and irrational landscape also has a strong gendered element as the new spatialities seek to constrain and manage the presence and conduct of women in public space.

[250] Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*

Working out Differences

For many of the residents of the quarter, practices associated with shrines as well as with the veneration of the Prophet are seen as an integral part of Memon cultural traditions and some local leaders have responded to what they see as the 'mal-religiosity' (*bud-mazhabiyat*) of those who would deem these practices as un-Islamic or corrupt. In a local newsletter, the president of the Wadla Volunteer Corps, Sayyad Haji Abbas Ali Qadri writes:

> My friends and dear ones, our biradiri belongs to the Ahl-e-Sunnat wa-al-Jamaat. We have always practiced *nazr-o-niaz* and *milad sharif*.[251] In our Jamaat there had never been a *bud-mazhab*[252] amongst us. Ever since I came of age, I have seen our Jamaat and our families observing the *Majlis-e-Niaz* and *Ghiarween Shareef*.[253] Whether on joyous or sorrowful occasions, we have always held *milad* ceremonies, but for the past few years I have seen that some families in our Jamaat have become mal-religious (bud-mazhab) and they have started rejecting these practices as 'bidat' and 'shirk'. For now they are limited in number, but we should be vigilant. I am afraid that if we remain unaware and neglectful of what is going on then these people will prevail and try to impose their point of view throughout our biradiri. They try to insinuate their way into our biradiri through marriage and we should be very vigilant of their ruse.[254]

The above sentiments reveal an ongoing contestation over the meaning of proper religious practice that cannot however be reduced to a dichotomous relationship between two opposing sects. While Haji Ali Qadri is unequivocal in condemning divergent voices within the Jamaat as 'mal-religious,' and a recent phenomenon, the debate over the potentially transgressive nature of typical Barelvi practices – from the adoration of the prophet, to shrine and saint-worship – is an old one and has been present within various strands within the Barelvi tradition as well. In Kharadar, these debates are not just academic – they are rooted in and affect the materiality of life in the quarter. Residents express their attachment to these practices by

[251] Celebrations of the prophet's birthday
[252] Mal-religious
[253] Prayers of salvation (*eesal-e-sawab*) for the saint, Sayyadina Abdul Qadir Jilani, a revered Sufi and jurist (1077-1166 CE) whose shrine in Baghdad is a popular site of pilgrimage rumoured to have been threatened with demolishment by ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria).
[254] Annual newsletter of the Wadla Volunteer Corps. 2011.

referring to the absence of these practices in the public space of the quarter as something that has diminished the life or 'raunaq' in the quarter. This indicates that a certain kind of austerity now permeates the space of the quarter, which is experienced as abjected of a certain kind of sociality. The prolific presence of the saints amongst them marks the spatial world of Kharadar as one where the sacred is encountered often and demands reverence. It can also be argued that these occasions (niaz, urs, etc.) serve to forge social bonds in public space. In the Deobandi way, bonds are forged in designated spaces of piety, and always mediated through religious authority. The ideal Deobandi communal life is interiorized inside the mosques and madrassahs. On the other hand, in the Barelvi tradition, religious life is exteriorized through activities whose focal points are designated religious spaces, but that spill out onto the streets. This happens particularly in dargahs with the *lungars*, the *urs* and the dhammals, but also in more formalized mosque activities like the Khatm-e-Qadri where adjoining streets are cordoned off and taken over to extend the prayer activities, and anybody is free to walk in. It can be argued that this kind of religious subjectivity, at least in its spatial aspect, encourages forms of sociality that intermingle with spiritual activities. Arguably, this cannot be taken as a general trend amongst all Barelvis without further evidence, but based on this ethnography it is a strong trend at least amongst Memon Barelvis.

Even within the Barelvi tradition however, there are disputes over proper practice, and many of these contestations revolve around shrine visitation. Ahmed Reza Khan Barelvi, the founder of the movement who identified as a 'Hanafi,' gave clear prescriptions about what was allowed and what should be discouraged. His prescriptions also seem to warn against excessive elevation and veneration of the saints – one is not supposed to bow before the tomb of the saint or kiss the foot of the grave, or to circumambulate it. In addition, he expressly forbids women

from visiting mazars. Thus, even amongst Barelvi Memons, there are more 'rational' ways to engage in shrine visitation rites.

Haji Ali Qadri's views however, are directed expressly towards the Deobandis and their increasingly public injunctions against not only shrine practices but the exemplification of the Sunnah as well. But Haji Ali Qadri's ambivalence towards Deobandis is not shared by all Memon residents. Farooq bhai who belongs to another prominent local Memon Jamaat, the Kutyana Memon Jamaat, and is active in organizing events and resolving conflicts in the quarter, is uneasy making a distinction between Deobandi and Barelvi. When I asked him what he thought of concerns expressed by other residents about the rising Deobandi influence in the quarter he replied: "Why are you asking this question? First of all, we shouldn't make these sectarian distinctions, we are all Muslim. And anyway, what the Deobandis say, you have to admit they are in the right. We have mistakenly adopted too many practices that are not really Islamic."

These contestations over the proper way to practice Islam also manifest in the physical geography of the quarter. The following couplets, which were found on a Barelvi-sponsored 'sabeel' (see fig. 27) constructed in front of an imambargah in the Mithadar quarter, are a damning indictment of Deobandi-led attempts to discourage practices that elevate the status of the Prophet:

Mera sab kuch aap par qurban ya rasool-allah
Hai shirk jiss muzhub main tazeem-e-habib
Uss buray muzhub par laanat bhaijiye
Nisar teri chehal pehal par hazaron eidain ya Rabi-ul-awwal
Siwaye Iblees ke jahan main sab hi to khushian mana rahay hain

May all be sacrificed in the name of the Prophet of God

The religion which deems as *shirk* (polytheism) the veneration of the Prophet

Let that religion be damned

I would sacrifice a thousand Eids to the festivities of Rabi-ul-Awwal[255]

When, with the exception of Satan, the entire world celebrates

Figure 27. "Barelvi-inspired couplets on a sabeel in the Mithadar quarter." Sarwat Viqar. October 20, 2011. Mithadar, Karachi.

Although the sabeel is located and has been expressly constructed in front of an old Shia Imambargah as a show of Sunni territorial control, the verses are directed not at the quarter's Shia population, but towards Deobandi and Salafi inspired outfits or ideas.

[255] The birth month of the Prophet

People's relationship with the dargahs also reveal the tensions between a 'rational' version of Islam and a 'superstitious' irrational version. This tension reveals itself in the spatial environment of the dargahs as well, where the more prominent dargahs that are usually managed by the Auqaf department take on the characteristics of mosques. This can be observed in the way these kinds of dargahs are subject to control and regulation, which extends to injunctions about where the visitors should sit, when they should visit and the segregation of sexes in the space of the dargah. The disciplining aspect of this kind of regulation is expressed very clearly by the manager of the Shah Doola dargah when he asserts: "when I am sitting here, it is like a curfew." This becomes even more apparent when considering that a mosque has been built alongside the dargah, and on 'big nights' like shab-e-qadar, the regular prayers spill over into the space of the dargah. Thus the more 'rational' Islam tries to control the heterotopic space of the dargah. Locating a mosque right next to a dargah is thus a way to regulate the dargah space, which contains the potential for subversion.

This, however, does not seem to happen at Kausar Baba's dargah, where hours are not fixed, there is no segregation, and no expressed concern with forbidding certain kinds of visitors or acts. The fact that these kind of dargahs are seen as diverging from what is emerging as a dominant discourse on what dargah spaces should be, is revealed in Feroz bhai's concern with wanting all the 'other' dargahs to follow the rules set by the Shah Doula dargah.

The dargah of Kausar baba is a relatively small dargah, not owned by Auqaf, but extremely popular judging from the crowds who visit. It is located in an inner street of Mithadar, which is also a popular space of social activity. Kausar Baba, who died in 1981, was revered as a local hakim with many cures attributed to him, including miraculous ones. The dargah is now in the ownership of the *gaddi nashin* who is Kausar Baba's son. The interior space is a simple

square room with the grave of the saint to one side and a special place for the gaddi nashin to sit. The walls are decorated with marble slabs bearing the family tree, 'shajra-e-nasab' of Kausar baba and poetry celebrating his powers of healing. The special days of the saint are marked on the lunar calendar; usually Thursdays are special days, and one Thursday a month the *gaddi nashin* comes and presides over the *murids* (followers). Kausar baba's dargah is universally known in Kharadar and Mithadar, and most of the residents profess some kind of allegiance to the saint.

On any given evening of the week, the dargah is lighted up with fairy lights strung across the building. Surrounded by vendors selling foodstuffs as well as fresh rose garlands and garlands made of shiny paper to be laid on the grave of the saint, the dargah attracts a substantial crowd specially of women. For Haji Akbar's wife, Mehr-un-nissa, this space is very attractive. She has been a follower of Kausar Baba for many years and though she admits that they have been forbidden to go to the dargahs by the imams of the mosques and she accepts this from the point of view of religious doctrine, it is something she accepts reluctantly as she continues to long for the visit to her saint. In recent years, she has stopped going to the shrine and she contents herself by visualizing the shrine and praying from afar. She had been used to her primary interpellation as a dargah devotee all her life, and she struggles with this new interpellation that wants to remake her as another kind of pious Muslim subject. The spatial presence of the dargahs, its role in the community in terms of culture and activities, and the food distributed at the dargahs, all make this abstention more difficult. Her husband, sitting nearby while the interview is conducted, is in agreement with the injunctions of the imam, but has professed in separate interviews with me that he frequents the shrines as well. Here there is symbolic agreement with what is considered the legitimate source of authority, while there is

persistence of practices that form the primary interpellation as believers in the saint as miraculous interceder, healer and answerer of prayers.

The potential of shrines to serve as significant spaces of public activities and the locus of collective sociality in the quarter, as well as a source of wealth generation, is not lost on the political sovereignties operating in the area. For Tanzeems like MQM, which dominate in the quarter, shrines have generally been left alone as objects of extortion. While more overtly political religious parties like Jamaat-e-Islami and the Sunni Tehrik are viewed as rivals in their claims to space, in the form of mosque 'qabza,'[256] and their control of public space through armed presence is contested by MQM, the autonomy of cultural and religious institutions like the Jamaats and shrines is generally respected. Residents express this relationship with the more embedded socio-religious life of the quarter in terms of a distinction between the 'dunyavi' worldly business of politics – as opposed to the 'deeni' religious world, which is supposed to be private. For example, this is how Abdul Rehman, the local MQM unit in-charge (see Chapter Four) sees the role of politics as represented by his party and the place of religion: "My religious affiliation, my mother's religious affiliation is something that has its own place and is separate from my political affiliation."

Rehman's distinction between religious and political affiliations is interesting as it allows him to be rooted in the local arrangements of power in claiming an individualized religious self, while at the same time invoking political affiliation as the avenue through which he participates in the making of collective futures. MQM has always foregrounded this distinction in presenting itself as a secular political movement. What is interesting is how, on the local, neighbourhood

[256] 'Qabza' in urdu literally means a forced occupation. The term has come into common usage to usually signify the illegal occupation of space through coercion by local gangs and land 'mafias' often backed by political parties.

level these different affiliations are deployed to effect material changes as well as create different discourses of power around gender, class and ethnicity.

For Razia Bano as well, the Jamaats and shrines represent a cultural and social world that needs to be tolerated and respected, but is ineffective in precipitating broader political change. Thus religion belongs firmly in the private sphere and cannot be the site of social transformation. For political activists like Razia and Rehman, engagement in liberal politics increasingly demands dealing with the question of assigning religion its proper place in society. This involves the simultaneous recognition of the influence wielded by religious institution as well as attempts to curtail and limit their public role. So for MQM, the Shah Doula shrine is acknowledged as an important site of public activity that needs to be monitored. As attested by Rehman himself, as well as the managers of the shrine, local politicians, including prominent MQM leaders often visit the shrine to publically show their affiliation and support. Support of Barelvi practices is also a way for MQM to position itself as opposed to the Deobandi and Wahhabi inspired practices, which is in line with its very public stance against 'extremism.'

New Religiosities: The 'Madani' Brothers and 'Madani' Sisters of the Dawat-e-Islami

In 1981 Maulana Ilyas Qadri launched the Dawat-e-Islami, which translates to "Invitation to Islam." On its English-language website, it is described as a "Global Non-Political Movement for the Propagation of Quran and Sunnah." Qadri hails from Kharadar and is often referred to with pride by local residents as a prominent and famous personality, although they also take care to point out his humble origins. He was a broom-seller who would frequent a small shrine in the quarter. His fame, according to Farooq bhai, is testament to not just his talent and accomplishments, but the 'barkat' bestowed upon him by the fact of hailing from Kharadar: "*Is*

ilaqay main buhaut barkat hai" – This area is blessed, which is why it has produced such illustrious personalities."

The movement has expanded globally with congregations in North America, UK, Spain and Greece and there are an estimated 10,000 members in UK alone. The Dawat-e-Islami philosophy revolves around the exemplification of the life of the prophet in keeping with the Barelvi tradition. The movement is said to have arisen to counter the old and entrenched Deobandi inspired Jamaat-e-Islami. Karachi is considered the headquarters of the Dawat-e-Islami and with the largest number of adherents. It enjoys significant patronage and support from the Memon community. The disciplinary practices prescribed by the movement emphasize individual struggle, strict adherence to the 'five pillars,' and the cultivation of a personal discipline and aesthetics of dress and appearance that shuns modern and westernized trends. In his speeches, Ilyas Qadri often disparages the younger generation's obsession with fashion and popular music. He exhorts them to turn to the music of *naat*, *durood* and *hamd*, songs sung in the praise of God and Prophet, instead. His congregations attract tens of thousands, and are telecast by Dawat-e-Islami's own private television network.

Salma is a young female member of the Dawat-e-Islami and she works as a teacher in one of the Dawat-e-Islami madrassahs for girls, located in Kharadar. All of the madrassahs are named as 'Faizan-e-Madinah' – those blessed by Madina. The madrassah is housed in a four-story building with the windows covered with dark cloth and some of them painted over with black to create a screening from the outside. The female students at the madrassah range in age from 5 to 15 years. Salma emphasizes the importance of "creating an environment for the girls where they will be present constantly, where they will learn modesty, manners, etc." Salma's family migrated from the Punjab to Karachi in 2001. She was introduced to the Dawat then and

asserts that it was the best thing that happened to her. It has given her a sense of self-respect and discipline and a purpose in life. She is excited by my presence at the madrassah and earnestly insists that I come again to attend the weekly *dars* and congregations. She lists the achievements of the Dawat with pride: "We have made many converts, those who were non-Muslim have now become Muslim. Those who had been gambling and drinking have seen the correct path. The Madani *qaflas* (caravans) go everywhere. There is even a separate *majlis* for the deaf and mute. Those who are considered unimportant by others, they also have a right to this."

Salma also implied that shrine visitation practices are an indulgence that is not really productive or useful. It is better to steer women towards learning the Sunnah and the Quran and committing themselves to actively proselytizing the message of social improvement through adherence to the principles of Islam.

There are other women's congregations of the Dawat, though, which are not so strictly prescribed or controlled. These are usually Milad ceremonies with *naat-khawani* and *durood* as well as *dars* – a mix of hymns sung in the praise of the Prophet and exemplary narratives and anecdotes about the life of the prophet as well as his female relatives – notably Khadija, his wife and Fatima, his daughter. These congregations are held in rented halls in the quarter. Previously, the women indicated that these congregations would be held in the public parks and streets of the neighbourhood but were discontinued due to orders from on high that it was unseemly for women's voices to be heard in public.

For the women gathered at the congregation, this was an opportunity to meet and greet each other and to forge bonds, as they made very clear. There was a lot of food being served, made by the women themselves and brought from home. These women were not exclusively

following the Dawat prescribed practices though. They indicated that they frequented the Hall to attend Muharram events, the death anniversary of Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law, as well as the special 'moon' nights associated with the saints. The hall is a popular site of sociality where " we meet to solve our problems, though we don't discuss politics here or what is happening 'outside.' Because we are all neighbours and live in close proximity to each other we decided to start this *mehfil* (gathering) here."

The organizer of the event also indicated that it was important to have this space because "It is important for the younger women to come here so that they will follow the right path and instead of singing and dancing to bollywood, they should recite/sing naats." These concerns also speak to the increasing exposure to 'modern' and 'foreign' influences – often associated with Indian popular culture, in the form of films and music, in Pakistan's rapidly privatizing media landscape. The Dawat's attempt to reign in and discipline what they see as an out of control youth is a significant source of their popularity amongst the Memons, particularly those who see their youth slipping away from not only religious practice but from adherence to cultural norms like arranged marriages and endogamy. However, on the part of the youth themselves, there seems to be a great deal of enthusiasm in joining the movement. The Dawat congregations, both male and female, attract significant numbers of young people and, as attested by Salma's experience, there seems to be a rising commitment towards ideas of social reform and transformation.

Where dargahs and shrines evoke a mixture of different pre-partition histories of migration and specific cultural traditions like those of the Memons, new movements like the Dawat-e-Islami seek to reconstitute the urban as a different kind of moral space. While both conventions emerge from the Barelvi tradition they are distinctly different in the form and

content of the moral universe they invoke. Dargah worship rituals place themselves within a broad ideology of recourse to worldly intermediaries in accessing the divine in which the individual participates in a myriad of ways to ask the saints to intercede on their behalf. On the other hand, while expressing reverence for Sufis as *wasila* and intermediaries in general, Dawat-e-Islami emphasizes the cultivation of personal discipline, strict adherence to a prescribed code of conduct for its followers, and a commitment to a welfare-based model of social improvement. They also discourage women from developing too close a relationship with local saints, and urge women to refrain from appearing directly in front of the saint's tomb. Shabnam, a local schoolteacher, expresses her disapproval of shrine visitation, which she has given up since she started frequenting the khatm-e-qadri, a weekly congregation held in the streets of the quarter which is a mix of durood, zikr and dars about the Prophet's life and teachings. Dawat-e-Islami is thus an attempt to sell a more disciplined version of Barelvi Islam to a generation that is increasingly concerned with questions of authenticity and truth claims about religion. It is actively proselityzing and promotes a strict segregation between genders. It is an attempt to revive the 'counter-reformist' zeal that marked the original Barelvi movement. It lies at the cusp of the debates over what is proper/improper practice, because their practices are much more circumscribed and disciplined than the typical dargah-going rituals while adhering to the Barelvi tradition of exemplification and veneration of the prophet.

However, while movements like the Dawat are being positioned as a more 'moderate' version of Islam, its involvement in recent national controversies indicate the problematic nature of this kind of framing. The Dawat is a strong supporter of the controversial Blasphemy Law,[257] for example, and that support has translated into a public show of support for cases where

[257] See Chapter One, footnote 66.

individuals have been accused of 'tauheen-e-risalat' or 'insult to the Prophet.' In 2011 the former governor of Punjab Salman Taseer was killed by his bodyguard, who later confessed his membership in the Dawat and stated his motivation for killing him to be Taseer's opposition to the Blasphemy law. While the organization did not claim any responsibility and indicated that the assassin acted on his own, there were Dawat processions in support of his 'heroic actions' and processions by the Tahaffuz-e-Namous-e-Risalat – Protection of the Honour of Prophethood. Media reports have also pointed towards the growing influence of the Dawat-e-Islami within the Pakistani Army.[258] Thus, the presentation of these organized Barelvi and Sufi-oriented practices as a more peaceful version of Islam obscures the complex workings of these new movements, where religious desires also find violent expression in the current conjuncture of contested national identity and fragmented state sovereignty.

Conclusion

The sacred landscape of Kharadar represents another layer of sovereignty that seeks to govern social life in the quarter in which people's attachment to specific religious imaginaries and practices are constitutive of their everyday reality. I have revealed some of the ways in which the saint's power works in the world through tracing its tangible effects. In addition, there are intangible effects in the form of imaginaries and practices that permeate the socio-spatial world of the quarter with a different time and space, which is imbued with miraculous possibilities in the form of 'basharat' and 'karamat' (revelations and miracles) – where the saint appears in the dreams of blessed individuals to affect everyday materiality. The shrines are also at the centre of originary claims to the city, and because of the ambiguity that always exists about

[258] "Dawat-e-Islami Comes Under Military's Radar." *Express Tribune*, September 12, 2011. http://tribune.com.pk/story/250572/clamping-down-dawat-e-islami-comes-under-militarys-radar/. Accessed July 12 12, 2016.

their past and origins, they offer a creative avenue for the invention of narratives and histories that can serve different interests: from city-building and nationhood, to authenticity of religious practice, to the invocation of a wider global sacred geography. What I have found most significant about the contemporary importance of urban shrines is the way they bring into focus the paradoxes and contradictions that lie at the heart of Pakistani and, by extension, postcolonial modernity.

The liminality of the dargah space means that it acts as a place where one can negotiate otherwise rigid social locations and identities. Where engagement with national and regional politics is seen as contaminating and leading to anxieties about inclusion/exclusion and belonging, the sacred space and geography of the shrines invokes a different kind of social world – where there is a possibility of encountering difference without violence. The major contestation appears as the tension between a 'true' and 'rational' Islam in which the role of the intermediary between God and subject is either unnecessary or minimal, and religious practices in which the intermediary role of the saint is key towards achieving access to divine benevolence. Other tensions reveal themselves in attempts to regulate class and gender differences through the control of access to the dargah as well as control of the way spiritual rituals are conducted in the dargah. Dargahs also play a role in management/coping of everyday issues around violence, insecurity, inflation and scarcity.

The dargah space lies between enchantment and disenchantment. The charisma of the saint and the liminality of the space, which carries the possibility of the supernormal and the miraculous, have provoked attempts to disenchant the shrine of these unsettling space-times where anything is possible. Women are seen as intimately tied with this enchanted world, which

also represents a 'hidden sovereignty' that has always been at the heart of the Sufi institution.[259] But we also see that despite the attempts to curtail and contain shrine veneration practices, it is not so easy to draw a line between the sites and practices of religiosity and those who participate in and reproduce these practices. This struggle is apparent in the way residents negotiate and argue ways to sustain practices that are formally restricted or discouraged.

The overlapping of shrine practices with the other religious practices that exist in the quarter also reveal that rather than arising out of a commitment to an abstract principle or ideal, ideas of inclusivity and co-existence are worked out in everyday religious practices which are also embedded in everyday material concerns. These material concerns revolve around the sharing of urban resources, the proper use of public space and the question of how dense urban environments can be made into livable places. In addition and significantly, concerns and anxieties about the role and mobility of women in public space inform the degree to which a particular religious viewpoint is considered permissive. But while official discourses in the form of local fatwas draw clear lines between what is and is not permissible for women in public religious life, residents, both men and women, find discursive and practical ways to accommodate, circumvent or ignore these injunctions. Also, while most residents articulate a clear affiliation with a particular religious viewpoint, in actual practice they maintain loose and overlapping linkages with several different approaches. Dawat-e-Islami adherents overlap with shrine-going practices, as well as engage with notions of bidat and shirk which are typically associated with the reformist Deobandis. While there are clearly drawn lines along some denominations, as in Ahl-e-sunnat and Ahl-e-tasheeh, those become blurred in the liminal space of the shrines. The overlapping of the material economy with the spiritual economy also leads to

[259] Green, *Bombay Islam*

religious concerns being folded into material concerns of keeping the economy functioning – 'yeh karobari ilaqa hai' (this is a place of business) often surfaces as a way to assert priorities. Also, while there are contestations and difference is marked through drawing boundaries, diverging viewpoints are also accommodated and co-exist within families and similar kinship-groups in the quarter.

Because forms of localized and internal governance dominate in the inner city, there is a great deal of investment on the part of residents and local arrangements of power in the maintenance of public order and harmony. An important part of the calls for keeping the peace in public space is formed by the invocation and casting of customary Islamic practices as heterogenous and diverse. I would like to offer that some of these contradictions arise from a tendency to downplay difference in order to maintain order and harmony in a heterogeneous urban environment. Thus there are appeals to a wider Muslim unity. Calls to move away from 'sectarianism' are also a significant element of resident's discourses about peace and co-existence. The fear of sectarianism (*firqabandi*) and ethno-nationalism (*qaumiat-parasti*), leading to violence – based on Karachi's history of sectarian conflict, as well as arguably the longer history of communal conflict – may also inform the way residents manage and process difference. The shared reference and commitment could also be one of avoidance of the violence and trauma associated with memories of sectarianism going back to partition.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

This thesis has examined emerging modes of modern urban living through the multidisciplinary lens of history, anthropology and political science. What this interdisciplinary engagement has allowed is an interrogation of how sovereign imaginaries play out in urban space, informed by the memories and histories related to key shifts in Karachi and Pakistan's colonial and postcolonial history. I approached the research on urban spatial politics as a dialectical exploration, oscillating between ethnographic and archival methods, which I could then locate within the wider political economy of state, nation and empire.

The key question that was posed in the beginning of this thesis concerned the dilemma of urban modernity in the postcolony: the striving to create and sustain urban futures and social formations within a general state of lack, a pervasiveness of violence and a contested state. This dilemma was examined under a spatial lens, as shaped by history and politics, and with an anthropological imagination and methodology. Under this examination, it became apparent that the instability experienced in contested urban environments is shot through with the possibility of violence as ever-present, leading to uncertain futures. Sovereign imaginaries that go beyond the nation as a social imaginary occupy the faultiness of these destabilizations and help to at times mitigate and at other times to add to the uncertainty. These observations emerged from a deep engagement with the legacy of the historical construction of the urban environment in Karachi, and with present processes of place-making and identity-construction in the city. Significantly, the study points to the co-existence of diverse ideas and ways of organizing and occupying urban space that are embedded in customary, religious and political frameworks. This co-existence was always there – as the dialogue between memoir and archive in chapter three

shows – where alternative imaginaries that unsettle or transcend normative orders of rule reveal themselves in diverse narratives of the city.

The evolution of various place-making narratives show how places and spaces became imbued with concerns about the legitimacy or otherwise of ruling practices as well as class, race and gender. The attentiveness to history, spatiality and lived experience was key to capturing the interplay across these different and overlapping domains and to understanding how the historical construction of urban environments continues to shape present day realities. One of the effects of history has been a constant re-engagement with urban origin stories that have performed the task of either legitimizing or challenging ruling arrangements throughout the colonial and postcolonial period. Examining the early accounts of the city's inception thus allowed an understanding of what was at stake in claims of territoriality and how they affected place-making practices.

Mapping colonial processes of city-making was crucial to identifying modes of distinguishing the old and the new while making sense of everyday political life in the oldest neighbourhoods of Karachi. In an engagement with the colonial administrative archive for the planning of Karachi, I was able to trace the genealogy of ideas that inform present spatial norms and forms. The colonial urban was meant to be an exemplary space of nineteenth century modernity. This urbanity was constituted in contrast to imagined vernacular spaces of tradition and custom that acted as backgrounds against which modernity was contrasted and contoured. Pre-colonial urban spaces were seen as defined by the *gemeinschaft* of kin and custom. Colonial power, while drawing prolifically on the norms and forms of this *gemeinshaft*, created new categories of public and private, rural and urban, which were represented as based on contract, enacting a new order of rule. In these configurations urban space became a tabula rasa of new

experiments in municipal administration, building, and engineering and infrastructure management.

The urban imaginary that emerged from this enterprise was complex and contradictory. While powerful discourses of new urban utopias that contained and classified, sanitized and ordered populations and spaces were enshrined in law, the lived reality of urban space constantly belied these prescriptions – not just for the native population, but for Europeans as well. Amongst other factors, the destabilizing forces ushered in with the era of modernity – mass labour unrest, imperialist wars, transnational mobilities and disease, and eventually nationalist challenges to colonial rule – constantly unsettled attempts to smoothly transition urban spaces into an unproblematic utopic ideal. In memory and in quotidian experience, while modernizing infrastructure and the new urban landscape bedazzled and awed, an alternate urban imaginary, attached to other orders, persisted side by side.

As my study moved into the present, I focused on the everyday social and political processes that inform the making of a neighbourhood as an internally governed unit within the city. Public spaces and streets became a primary focal point of the study as sites of major political contestations. I investigated the ways in which different kinds of collective arrangements: clan and kinship-based, voluntary political association and various religious assemblages asserted control and sought to define normative ways of inhabiting the city.

In the 're-making' of space that began in the old city area at Partition, we see the continuation of older lines of force, and the emergence of new ones that were to bind different communities together into a tenuous new formation. In the evolution of the Memon Jamaats we see one way in which older forms of life – those centered around an ethics of care which governs

the social world – played a part in sustaining this new formation. In the 'state of exception' that succeeded Partition, in which the space of the city became a tabula rasa where juridical rules governing property and ownership were suspended, these older forms thrived and succeeded in maintaining their own order. Whereas the urban juridical order attempted to impose a governmentality of transparency, and a certainty based on statistics, it was never quite successful in implementing these disciplines.

Forms of internalized governance that were embedded in opaque, fluid and contingent socio-spatial practices that had always been present, asserted themselves in new ways in the new and contested space of the nation. Further, these forms that relied on modes of spatial organization that were fluid and contingent, and transgressed the prescribed rules of strict functional categorizations of specific codes of private and public, were transformed from the exception into the norm. The resultant opacity continues to vex the state as a form of dysfunction that eludes governmental discipline. Thus these forms have generated or retained their own *nomos* of public and private space that unsettles juridical norms around what constitutes the proper way to live in urban space. These ways of life are also imbued with unresolved questions about belonging and nationhood, and the trauma of the violence of reconfigured borders and the resultant displacement unleashed at partition.

Another major question that has animated this thesis has been what kinds of associational life have emerged in the contested terrain of Pakistani nation-building, and where do these forms of life lie on the state-society spectrum? An intersecting question has been, what are the imbrications of these forms with the ideas and contours of the urban? As an answer, this examination has revealed how different kinds of relationships with space can bring different possibilities of being urban to co-exist, despite the state's process of dividing, ordering and

categorizing to shape a certain urban subject. The Memon Jamaats, the political Tanzeems and the institution of the shrines emerge as key drivers of associational life in a dense and strategically important quarter of a rapidly expanding 'mega-city.' All these sovereignties revolve around the moral and strategic deployment of notions of place, locality, identity and history, to establish their legitimacy and relevance for the maintenance of the social world of the communities that inhabit the quarter.

The Kharadar residents' narratives of the past go back and forth between an idealized community that was realized for a time – the promises of independence fulfilled – which then slides into a sense of disappointment at the incompleteness of the project of nation-building. This historical memory powerfully imbues the social world of the quarter and manifests in its physical spaces. However, despite the increasing securitization of life in the neighbourhood, and the barriers and demarcations that have attempted to create new geographies of control and fear, the attachment to older registers of community and neighbourhood formation remain and are reproduced in the everyday interactions, which include cultural and religious practices that seek to transcend current exclusions and differences. These older registers, in this region, are rooted in histories of empire, trade and city-making that emerged out of the way the European and Islamicate worlds encountered each other in their expansions.

The close-knit urban fabric, which has been historically organized around trade and business, has fostered a tradition of engaging with radically different belief systems that have co-existed in the area. Heterogeneity and contestation are taken as normal features of living in an urban environment. This heterogeneity (whether it is the dozens of different clans within the Memon community, the various religious denominations within the Islamic tradition – *barelvi, deobandi, ahl-e-sunnat, ahl-e-tasheeh*—or the various regional ethnicities) engenders a social

space where negotiation with and adaptation to difference is a routine part of everyday life. Debating the meaning and role of religion in the moral management of the community is a central element of these negotiations. These negotiations – that range from debates over who should or should not visit shrines, whether shrines are a particularly corrupting influence on women, whether there are purer and more authentic ways to practice Islam, and what kind of spaces will perform that function – also show a preoccupation with how bodies appear and present themselves in public space.

The propensity to adapt to changing circumstances reveals itself especially in the way Memon residents and prominent Jamaat members give prime importance to negotiation, compromise and a practice of 'give and take' in order to ensure the internal survival of their socio-economic normative order. Increased economic precarity and political instability in Pakistan has intensified the contradictory forces of modernity even more, and brought up questions about the moral and ethical survival of the community. The persisting sovereignty of the Memon Jamaats is an effect of attachments to norms and customs that seek to define an internalized domain of social, moral and political life, where a certain opaqueness and contingency permeates the socio-spatial experience. The ambiguity around public and private also speaks to the unresolved attempt to regulate social life along juridical boundaries and borders.

This study has shown local attempts to rule, manage and govern territory and people to be incomplete, fragmented and contingent – much like, it has been argued, the fragmented sovereignty of the state. However, it is in that incompleteness that possibilities are continuously created for negotiation and accommodation with difference, albeit with contestation and conflict as well. For example, the limits to the Memon Jamaats' power, in being unable to effect changes

in access to infrastructure and security of life and property, also shape their relations with very different sovereign arrangements that have a very different idea of politics. Cohesion and certainty is required in certain domains (religious practice, marriage, family relations) and ambiguity and flexibility in others (market, land/housing economy, use of space). The fact that the material aspects of urban living – infrastructure, that includes public spaces as well – are the frontier on which these relationships are defined points to the emerging significance of urban ecological and environmental factors to the constitution of everyday politics. It is one of the most insistent effects of the state that people encounter on a daily basis. This condition is highlighted further in the palpable failure of modernist planning and infrastructure in Pakistan, and the extent to which its visual evidence – in the forms of degrading services and infrastructure – defines everyday life.

The pervasiveness of 'extra-systemic' networks in the marginalized urban spaces of the third world has been tracked in excellent engagements with the politics of the everyday.[260] The question is does the absence of centralized state modalities of control and regulation mean that there is a social sphere 'devoid of political control'?[261] The different forms and arrangements of rule tracked in this study provide a partial answer to this question as it reveals a diverse geography of urban living in which multiple forms of social regulations and norms compete with and contest state regulation. Furthermore, I trace the genealogy of these extra-systemic modes of organizing space and show their linkage and continuity with alternate geographies and imaginaries – such as in my discussion of the sacred topography of the shrines and the village imaginaries of the Memon Jamaats.

[260] Singerman, *Avenues of Participation.*.
[261] Janet Roitman, "The Efficacy of the Economy," *African Studies Review* 50.2 (2007): 155-161.

The extra-systemic space of incompleteness, liminality and contingency is brought into symbolic focus in perhaps the most tenuous and hard to capture social formation: that of the shrine. Here we find references to alternative historical and religious times that have a strong spatial element, and impart meaning in terms of a certain order and coherence. It also speaks to the messy, local and grounded forms of Islam that continue to unsettle established and dominant discourses and thresholds between religion, reason and ethics. This is the heterotopic space that unsettles modern biopolitical conceptions of space where the imperatives of secular modernity struggle with another kind of modernity – one in which distinctions between the public and private are delineated in other ways, notably in the imbrications of religious life with public life, and of social forms with political forms.

The mobility that is implied in these processes comes up against the carefully structured immobility of modern biopolitics, especially concerning legal and juridical thresholds – thresholds around private and public in particular. Further, new kinds of immobilities arise to challenge those movements, which are encouraged by a neoliberal biopolitics that seeks to direct subjects towards particular goals of productivity. I read the evidence for these immobilities, for example, in the encounters, arguments, presences and absences of people in their urban places and spaces, in which idleness and non-activity were as significant as their opposites – punctuality, productivity and purpose. I argue that this inaction and passive presence is indicative of a certain way of being that speaks to the modern dilemma of who constitutes a political being or subject. As Agamben[262] has argued, what is at stake in the survival of the polis,[263] is the very idea of who lives or dies, who can and cannot be sacrificed. From this perspective, those who are inactive and unproductive are those who can be killed, but not be sacrificed. However, in the

[262] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.
[263] The polis according to Aristotle is the site that creates the possibility of politics.

heterotopic postcolonial space of the third world city, Agamben's nearly apocalyptic pessimism in the face of state sovereignty is not quite warranted. Bare life still circulates and insists on its humanness, even finding recognition and validation in alternate registers of sovereignty. This is perhaps *the* subject that is being moulded in the postcolonial public space. This presence has to be accounted for when considering what it means to be a citizen-subject in the modern nation-state.

The state-civil society framing of forms of associational life has been shown to be too limiting a frame to explain not only the diversity of social forms of organization that operate, especially in dense urban environments, but also in light of the imbrications of these social forms with the state.[264] Chatterjee attempts to resolve this problem by introducing the idea of political society as that domain of social contestation that exposed the pretentions of so-called civil society to act as representative of all that constituted subjecthood in a nation-state. Most challenges to state processes of exclusion and division based on categorizations come, he contends, from a decidedly 'uncivil' society that constitutes the vast majority of subjects who are treated more as objects of collective political categories rather than as individual citizen-subjects.[265]

While the examination undertaken in this thesis can be said to reveal a "political society" at work, that categorization does not quite capture the messy imbrications of the various horizontal sovereignties with each other or with the state. As well, this model does not allow for their recourse to different kinds of historical and cultural registers – some embedded in local histories, others in transregional and transnational ones, including the discourses of liberal

[264] Mitchell, "The Limits of the State.."
[265] Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed*

democracy and citizenship – to fashion subjects and enact rule. It is within this conceptual ambiguity that I place further questions about urban associational forms that do not fit received social and political categorizations, as well as questions about the nature of state-society relations.

One of the significant findings of this study is that, contrary to conventional narratives of modernity, there seems to be more certainty in the domain that is considered part of the customary frameworks and relations that govern forms of life than the domain in which the subject interacts with the state – even with the understanding that the two are not mutually exclusive. While studies of everyday politics[266] point to the ways in which citizens destabilize and challenge state-society relations, the question remains, what kind of alternate registers of political life and sovereignty are used to contest modern liberal framings of state and society? It is these alternate registers that I have captured in this multi-disciplinary engagement, which would not have been possible without attentiveness to historical imaginaries as well as customary and religious norms that define the political in a different way. Furthermore, while extra-systemic arrangements do evolve and change to adjust to macroeconomic forces and state policies, they are also embedded in social and spatial histories that provide a stable reference and register to alternate forms of life.

Kharadar's residents' marshaling of historical memories and identities creates cohesion and envisions futures that rely on a persistent hybrid space of custom and contract. However, their imaginings and aspirations about their urban futures are also deeply embedded in the contradictions generated by the liberal democratic project of nation-building. This is the space

[266] Salwa Ismail, *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters: Encountering the Everyday State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

that comes up against the normative ideological space of the state and disturbs its prescriptions and unsettles its projected biopolitical utopias. Farooq Bhai's insistence on the workability and practicality of informal arrangements of space management – overseen by sovereign arrangements, dominated by the Jamaats, and blessed by the inchoate and immanent power of the saints that imbue the area with 'barkat' – captures the diverse and rich terrain that constitutes urban life in this context. For new political sovereignties like the MQM, the fluid and flexible thresholds that abound in the inner city, while providing a fertile ground for enacting new geographies of control, also act as reminders of these older registers – the invocation of which is tinged with a sense of loss, echoing the deprivations and disappointments of post-partition Pakistan. This broader experience of postcolonial modernity as constantly destabilizing – filled both with the possibility of extreme violence, but also the intense desire for the future space of possibility – is carried forth in the experience of the city, where the city itself is a symbol pregnant with economic and political possibilities.

In looking at the everyday occupation of public space as a modality for the expression of the political, I have strenghthened the link between the public sphere and public space. The examination of public spaces – as sites of conflict based on race, gender and class, and reflective of social and political divisions at large – has a well-established scholarship. However, the use of public places as a modality to interrogate what constitutes the political within the increasingly complex and multifaceted terrains of the metropolitan regions of the global south is a field of scholarship with a rich emerging field of literature, but also one which opens up more lines of questioning than it resolves. The most notable of these studies is James Holston's comprehensive historical and anthropological study tracing the way historical formulations have structured

present, often violent, possibilities of democratic life in Brazil.[267] On the other hand, Simone has focused on the contingent and fluid forms of an'anticipatory' urban politics that is in intimate conversation with governmentalizing processes.[268] But Solomon Benjamin's idea of 'occupancy urbanism' diverges from what he calls a preoccupation with identifying the urban on different scales of modernity. Benjamin invokes the idea of territoriality beyond the plan as something that has always already been there, structuring law and state.[269] This embeddedness of the state's repressed other in the processes that continue to reproduce and remake the state, is the most important optic through which I have examined how this remaking is worked out in public spaces on an everyday basis.

Ultimately, I argue that the presence, both real and spectral, of politicized groups in public spaces in Karachi acts as a significant vehicle through which these groups construct their legitimacy. The discourse of degraded and insecure public spaces, neglected by the state is used to then argue for the necessity for these emerging political actors to take matters into their own hands, even while they contribute towards further insecurity in public space through violent acts. Residents' responses to these logics reveal both engagement with as well as ambivalence towards the attempts to assert control over public movement. These responses involve at different times evasion or ignoring the prescribed use of space, or complicity with those ruling these spaces at any given time. While the logos of space is routinely ignored and circumvented, both by residents as well as by the various collectivities – Jamaats, Tanzeems and religious organizations – multiple *nomos* (laws) of space, either coded in customary frameworks like those

[267] Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*

[268] AbdouMaliq Simone, "Deals with Imaginaries and Perspectives: Reworking Urban Economies in Kinshasa," *Social Dynamics* 37.1 (2011): 111-124.

[269] Benjamin, "Occupancy Urbanism.."

of the Jamaats, or the new emerging *nomos* of the political parties like the MQM, are negotiated in creative ways. History plays a significant role in these negotiations as origin stories, historic cohesion and the centrality of the area to the city's identity are often invoked to argue for peace. The pervasiveness of sacred spaces with topographies and imaginaries that go beyond the nation also imbue the process of arguing for peaceful co-existence.

While acknowledging that registers of peacemaking can be claimed by groups and communities at the same time as their involvement in more hostile mappings and violent acts, I propose that there are consistencies in certain peace-making acts and discourses in this context that perform an ethical function and work to mitigate the violence. Here there are echoes of Laura Ring's exposition on the 'labours of peace' performed in the female and interiorized world of lower middle-class urban living in Karachi.[270] It is interesting that Memons, whose cultural practices have historically dominated the quarter, are often represented in a demasculinized way with their conciliatory attitudes cast as cowardly and 'effiminate.' Another significant element of such peace-making registers is the invocation of the idea of the state as a cohesive national identity to argue for an end to violence. The appeal to national unity, especially one which is implicity understood as having resulted from the sacrifices of partition, points to a subjecthood that concedes the monopoly of the state over the moral management of social life – especially as a mediator of social conflicts between diverging interests and groups. This is the other side, or in some ways a mirror, of the resentment and disappointment that also marks the way subjects forge their relationship with the state.

Karachi's public spaces are often represented as extremely divided and violent spaces, segregated along ethnic and gender lines. My examination has shown the grey areas in the

[270] Ring, *Zenana*.

occupation of space where possibilities are also generated for co-existence and inclusiveness, and gender occupies a more complicated role than just a clear segregation based on patriarchal control of public spaces.

Thus I have shown how multiple 'horizontal sovereignties'[271] occupy the hybridized space of modernity in the postcolony. In this space of fluid thresholds and competing orders of rule and informal governance the urban subject is able to draw upon different registers of belonging to make a claim for resources and power. The opacity and fluidity of thresholds facilitates an imagining that breaks free of juridical constraints in violent ways but also acts as a location from which to interrogate meanings of subjecthood, agency and freedom.

[271] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony.*

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