

Mapping Partition: The Cartographic Construction of Pakistan

by
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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts,
Department of Geography & Planning, University of Toronto

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2020

Abstract

In the summer of 1947, a British barrister who had never before set foot in India used paper maps to sketch out the lines that would lead to its partition. Today, the border he designed is one of the most militarized and surveilled spaces on earth. Thousands of floodlights installed along its perimeter render it visible from space in a bright orange hue, underscoring the power of pencil lines drawn decades ago. In this thesis, I investigate how British and Muslim political interests used cartography to construct, reinforce, and contest ideas of nationhood and statehood during India's partition; and show how maps can at once be used as tools of colonial intervention and decolonial struggle.

Acknowledgements

Though this thesis was written between me, a computer, and the texts I have cited, so much of it was also shaped by uncitable forces in unknowable capacities. Among them, numerous converging local and global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the global movement against racist policing; my mood and tenor as I wrote amidst widespread discontent and unrest; and my discussions with friends and family which may have felt like they had nothing to do with the topic. In ways I cannot directly point to, the ideas underpinning this work were shaped and sharpened by numerous conversations with my dear friends Ali, Atif, Jandell, Khalood, Mariba and Tucker.

I also cannot imagine the process of conducting this research without the constant encouragement, unflappable support and thoughtful feedback offered by my supervisor, Dr. Emily Gilbert. Her edits, insights and questions were tremendously helpful in raising fascinating dimensions of this work I had not considered before, sharpening my analysis, honing the arguments I offer here. I would also like thank my thesis examiners, Matthew Farish and Rajyashree N. Reddy, whose generous reading and thoughtful questioning helped strengthen and clarify this work.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family for their always unwavering support (and being willing to translate documents at any hour of the day). I could not have coped with the doubly isolating process of writing a thesis in the midst of a pandemic without the encouragements, comforts and sustenance offered by my greatest supporter, Sean.

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1. Introduction

On an August night in 2011, as the International Space Station flew over the Indian subcontinent, its crew captured an image of the terrain below (see Figure 1). The earth's curvature is visible at the top of the image, accentuated by a ring of charged atoms dispersed throughout the atmosphere. Below, South Asia's sprawling megacities appear as clusters of lights branching out like spiderwebs. To the left, massive cloud systems are pushing up against the Himalayas. But amidst all this, the most prominent feature on the image is a bright orange line cutting through the cities, running towards the mountains. This is the India-Pakistan border, illuminated at night by thousands of floodlights. Sixty years before the ISS crew took this photo, this border was first sketched out on paper by a British barrister, Cyril Radcliffe, who had never before set foot in the subcontinent. It's staggering to think that this line, once hastily drawn over a carelessly arranged set of maps, is now visible from space.



Figure 1. India-Pakistan borderlands at night. Image taken from the International Space Station on August 21, 2011. Image ISS028-E-029679, retrieved from NASA's Visible Earth catalog, originally published September 5, 2011.

At the end of the Second World War, the British Empire—resource-stretched and facing increasing local resistance—decided to retreat from the Indian subcontinent. The plan to partition India was announced on June 3, 1947, but the new border was not made public until August 17—two days after Partition took place. At the start of this period, India and Pakistan were not commonly understood as separate nation-states, but were vastly more ambiguous and complicated ideological conceptions (Khan, 2017, p. 45). Yet, seventy-six days later, two countries with clearly defined borders stood beside each other in South Asia. These two and a half months brimmed with cartographic activity, as newspapers speculated where the borders might fall and local political parties published maps pushing their own vision of the subcontinent. Indians rallied behind local political leaders, mailing them maps—often sketched on paper and sometimes even carved in wood—expressing their hopes for the future of their country (Khan, 2017, p. 43). At the same time, the ‘real’ lines that would divide the colony were being drawn by Radcliffe. Given only six weeks to develop his plan—not enough time to survey the provinces being partitioned—he used population tables and statistics to guide his pencil over ordnance maps drafted by the Royal Engineers of the British Army (Lapierre & Collins, 1999, p. 266). This meant that the way army cartographers had chosen to draw map features would ultimately have greater influence over the partition line than the political, social or ecological relationships on the ground that the line would cut through. Indeed, the final border would separate people from their lands, families and communities, provoking a mass migration of fifteen million people (Kosinski & Elahi, 1985, p. 6), and triggering horrific communal violence in which a million people are estimated to have been killed (Khan, 2017, p. 6).

The Indian subcontinent in 1947—simultaneously being decolonized and partitioned while facing immense nationalist and religious upheaval—serves as a rich frame to study how the processes of nation-building and state-making are linked to territorial imaginaries. Many scholars have interrogated how states engage in the consolidation of a group of people into a nation to solidify their territorial holdings (Sparke, 1998, p. 467; Dunkerley, Hodgson,

Konopacki, Spybey, & Thompson, 2002, p. 27) or how emergent nations make territorial claims to aid in their struggle towards realizing themselves as states (Storey, 2012). With the pulling together of India's Muslims into a nation, and then the development of this nation into an independent state, this latter process can be observed at incredible speed. The idea that India's Muslims should be considered a nation apart from followers of other religions was first recorded in 1888; this nation was first attached to territory in 1930; and the first call to create an independent state for this nation was put forward in 1933. Twelve years later, in 1947, the nation-state of Pakistan was carved out of the British Indian Empire. What is remarkable here is that India's Muslim leaders didn't just imbue an existing nationalism with aspirations towards statehood—they actually defined and oversaw the production of this nationalism, mapped its claim to territory and then roused its development into a state. This entire process took just fifty-nine years, and maps didn't just document this transformation, they functioned as a key technology used to enable it.

In this thesis, using the partition of India as a case study, I interrogate how cartography is used to develop and articulate imperial, political and religious ideas into geographic imaginaries, which then produce effects on the ground. At the broadest level, I trace how the transformation of Pakistan from a nebulous political idea to a fixed geographical space was largely negotiated on and through maps. More specifically, I investigate how British and Muslim political interests used cartography to develop the spatial dimensions of imperial, nationalist and religious ideas during India's partition; and how these spatial imaginaries ultimately influenced the contours of the India-Pakistan border. In the contemporary moment, when the legitimacy of national borders is broadly contested while at the same time those contours are increasingly securitized and militarized, the task of tracing the origins of both nations and their borders is an important project. Contentions over the India-Pakistan border have led to three wars since Partition, frequent stand-offs between the two nuclear armed countries, and an ongoing occupation of Kashmir—which today is the most militarized region on Earth (Bhat, 2019, p. 78). Since so

much of modern South Asia's instability is rooted in the border Radcliffe devised, it is crucial to interrogate the processes that determined its design, so as to better address the geopolitical tensions it unleashed.

1.1. Summary of Sections

In this thesis, I first establish the theoretical and historical frame my research is constructed on, and to that end, Section 2 outlines the literatures I draw upon to examine the role of cartography in molding space and geographical imagination. In Section 3, I set out the methods of cartographic and the archival analysis I deployed to examine the maps I found. In Section 4, I summarize the imperial, nationalist and religious discourses underway in India leading up to Partition. I begin my cartographic analysis in Section 5, where I trace the idea of Pakistan from its earliest imaginaries, through its cartographic development on maps produced by Indian Muslims, to the final proposed map of Pakistan submitted to the Punjab Boundary Commission. In Section 6, I outline the cartographic process undertaken by Cyril Radcliffe to determine the contours of the India-Pakistan border, and illustrate how the line he produced was deeply marked by two hundred years of British colonial rule. Finally, in Section 7, I explore how the geographic imaginaries of the India-Pakistan border remain subject to continuous negotiation to this day.

2. Imagined Geographies, Cartography and the Geo-Body

2.1. Performing as a Nation

The national mythologies of both the Indian and Pakistani states trace their provenance to antiquity, yet even in 1947 the meanings of Partition, Pakistan and swaraj (self-rule) remained numerous and contested (Khan, 2017, p. 5). In *The Great Partition*, Yasmin Khan writes that “a history writing project was commenced immediately after independence in both states, which slotted these nationalist upsurges into a straightforward teleology that can still be viewed in the black and white photographic exhibitions in the national museums of South Asian cities or in

schoolchildren's history textbooks" (Khan, 2017, p. 5). Ayesha Jalal, analyzing Pakistan's state-controlled textbook industry, finds a particularly egregious example of this post-dated history writing project in M. D. Zafar's *A Text Book of Pakistan Studies*. "For Zafar," she writes, "Pakistan 'came to be established for the first time when the Arabs under Mohammad bin Qasim occupied Sind and Multan'; by the thirteenth century 'Pakistan had spread to include the whole of Northern India and Bengal' and then under the Khiljis 'Pakistan moved further south-ward to include a greater part of Central India and the Deccan'" (Jalal, 1995, p. 78). In fact, the idea of a separate state for the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent emerged twelve hundred years after Mohammad bin Qasim conquered the Indus valley in the 9th century—the term 'Pakistan' was only coined in 1933. This dissonance between the actual and perceived origins of nationalist entities is highlighted by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* as one of the paradoxes of nationalism: "The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists" (Anderson, 2006, p. 5). Anderson's definition of a nation as "an imagined political community ... both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson, 2006, p. 6) is not only helpful in analyzing the revisionist projects which unfolded in the wake of Partition, but also how India and Pakistan began to be imagined as separate entities and untangled from each other in the first place. The Pakistan Movement, given its success in pulling a nation out of the highly syncretized populace of South Asia, provides a powerful example of the emergence of an imagined political community.

The development of Muslim nationalism in South Asia was an uneven process, and by no means a shared development between all of India's Muslims across economic, geographic or cultural lines. As will be expanded upon later in this thesis, it was conjured and experienced quite differently by Muslims across the subcontinent based on their varied socio-economic positions, interests and aspirations. One aspect of nationalism missed by Anderson, but very evident through observing the Pakistan Movement, is the role of elites in the crafting of national identity. Zygmunt Bauman writes that "Nationalism was, first and foremost, a conjunction of the

spiritual elite's bid for political leadership and the political rulers' bid for spiritual hegemony” and that “it was aimed at recapturing the bodies and minds of the previously distanced and estranged ‘masses’” (Bauman, 1992, p. 683). This is certainly observable in the moves made by Muslim elites to capitalize on widespread anti-colonial sentiment by characterizing the creation of Pakistan as the religious destiny of India’s Muslims; as they worked to rally the broadest possible coalition of Muslims behind the Pakistan Movement, whilst privately acknowledging that many of them would be excluded from the resulting state of Pakistan.

Much has been written about the motivations of Indian elites in the lead-up to Partition, which varied from preserving or increasing their wealth and power, to genuine idealism roused by rising anti-colonial sentiment around the world (Guha, 1988, p. 37). At the same time, South Asian historiography largely ignores what Ranjit Guha calls the *politics of the people*, a domain of discourse and actions “in which the principal actors were not the dominant groups of the indigenous society or the colonial authorities but the subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of the labouring population” (Guha, 1988, p. 40). A main point of difference between the domains of elite and subaltern politics is their method of mobilization. While the elites mobilized vertically against colonial rule, often using the mechanisms of British parliamentary institutions, the subaltern mobilized horizontally based on the “organization of kinship and territoriality” or along “class associations” against their exploitation at the hands of the British colonialists as well as the Indian elites (Guha, 1988, p. 40). Still, as Guha writes, these two domains were not “hermetically sealed off from each other” and influenced one another through integration and conflict (Guha, 1988, p. 42).

Another tendency of South Asian historiography, deeply interrogated by Priyamvada Gopal in *Insurgent Empire*, is “the tenacious assumption that the most significant conceptions of ‘freedom’ are fundamentally ‘Western’ in provenance” which frequently appears as a trope in which “colonial subjects took up British ideas and turned them against empire” (Gopal, 2020, p. 25 & 22). This telling of history obscures the fact that even so-called Western notions of freedom

were shaped by the conceits of anti-colonial resistance being absorbed into metropolitan thought (Gopal, 2020, p. 23). Putting Gopal in conversation with Guha, we see that the politics of the Indian elite and the subaltern were not sealed off from the sphere of British imperial politics either; and that each of these domains were engaged in a reciprocal, albeit uneven, dialogue over the shape of India in the days leading up to Partition.

2.2. The Role of Documents in the Performance of Space

When it was announced that India would be partitioned, the imagining of communities in India became linked with the imagining of space. It was now clear that a fixed material and legal divide would be created somewhere along the subcontinent—a prospect which presented local nationalist groups with both possibility and peril. Nationalist discourses in India would now need to define space, who would be let in, and who would be left out. The spatial dimensions of imagined communities can be explored using the notion of imagined geographies, a concept first put forward by Edward Said in *Orientalism* and expanded upon by Derek Gregory in *The Colonial Present*. Gregory defines imagined geographies as “constructions that fold distance into difference through a series of spatializations” (Gregory, 2004, p. 17; Said, 2003, p. 211). Put another way, imagined geographies are produced when distances, not just spatial, but also economic, racial and cultural, are used to create an interior and an exterior—a space which contains us and excludes the other. Though these geographies emerge as simplifications, misunderstandings or in some cases mere fictions, various forms of power can be deployed towards their realization.

Thinking through Orientalism as an imagined geography, Gregory writes that “Orientalism produces the effects that it names. Its categories, codes, and conventions shape the practices of those who draw upon it, actively constituting its object (most obviously, “the Orient”) in such a way that this structure is as much a repertoire as it is an archive” (Gregory, 2004, p. 18). Such geographies generate structures and vocabularies which can be deployed to affect reality. When the imagined methods of organizing space and people begin to be acted out,

these methods lose their status as imaginaries. In this way, imagined geographies are realized through their performance. This idea of performativity figures heavily in both Said and Gregory's work on the topic (Said, 2003, p. 238). Gregory observes that Said's "critique of Orientalism was shot through with theatrical motifs" and he himself argues that "imaginative geographies are not only accumulations of time, sedimentations of successive histories; they are also performances of space" (Gregory, 2004, p. 18).

I argue that documents—such as posters, pamphlets, treaties and maps—are necessary to the performance of geographies in that they serve as one of the primary sites of developing, circulating and implementing spatial visions. Or, furthering Said's theatrical motif, the performances of space need scripts, plans and props so they can be successfully enacted, believed and perceived as authentic. This research is premised on the idea that geopolitical forces reveal themselves through the documentary forms produced by them or used to enable them. Documents can hold both the rhetorical and aesthetic lexicons of nationalist groups who aspired to shape the geographies around them, or imperial powers who wished to apply geographies from a distance. Text and images on documents betray a moment of fixity or tangibility for what can otherwise be complex and unwieldy processes to understand. Typographic and symbolic forms serve as threads which can be pulled to reveal more of the systems or ideologies which produced them, to see their shape or shadow, in sharper relief against a wildly complicated and inter-relational world. In this thesis, I hone in on maps as a kind of document which opens up physical topographies to the application of imagined geographies.

2.3. The Work Maps Do

Tracing the histories of borders and barriers around the world will often lead us to rooms with powerful individuals gathered around maps. In his book *A Line in the Sand*, James Barr describes such a scene which played out inside 10 Downing Street in London in 1915 (Barr, 2012, p. 16). Four men were huddled around a map; one of them sketched lines across the surface with his fingers, to nods or objections from the others. The man sliding his finger was

Mark Sykes, a 36-year-old baronet who positioned himself as an authority on the Middle-East. The other three were the British Prime Minister, Henry H. Asquith, and his ministers of war and munitions. They were planning the partition of the Ottoman Empire, now on the verge of collapse, in a manner that would please the French while preserving British interests. Referencing the physical position of text on the map, Sykes proclaimed that he would “like to draw a line from the ‘e’ in Acre to the last ‘k’ in Kirkuk”—a line derived not from geographic partitions or ethnic configurations, but the arbitrary position of letterforms on the map (Barr, 2012, p. 16). In 1916, Britain and France ratified that line in a secret agreement. Territory to its north would be controlled by the French, and to the south by the British. With the Ottoman Empire’s collapse in 1918, that line lifted from paper and moved onto land, forming the present-day border between Iraq and Syria. The map in the agreement compressed Western Asia to points of imperial concern, allowing for a callous application of power from a distance, splitting many cities, villages and communities in two.

A hundred years later, a similar scene played out in the Israeli High Court of Justice in Jerusalem. In 2014, a group of Palestinian villagers from Beit Sourik in the West Bank appealed to the court against the authority of the state to build a wall that would separate them from their agricultural land. The proceedings, summarized by Eyal Weizman in his book *The Least of All Possible Evils*, dealt with the specifics of planning and constructing the wall as well as the topography of the land it was being built on (Weizman, 2011, p. 113). To better understand these details, the judges ordered a three-dimensional topographic model of the relevant area be constructed. On the day the case was heard, the judges stepped down from their bench to stand around the model along with the lawyers from both parties. The gathered individuals made arguments by tracing their fingers and pens along the model’s miniature topography, pushing and pulling at the contours of the route, giving the wall shape and granting it legitimacy. Eventually, the court decided that the wall should be built along a route suggested by retired Israeli military officials, which they believed adequately balanced the security of the Israeli state against the

livelihood of the Palestinian villagers. The topographic model of Beit Sourik opened up the land it depicted to the legal power of the Israeli state—of which poured concrete is only the most visible dimension (Weizman, 2007).

I refer to these examples because the exercise of colonial power they illustrate resembles the political moves and strategies employed by the British as they partitioned India. These geographies were fiercely contested spaces; there were multiple parties at the table attempting to negotiate a compromise between their geopolitical concerns; and ultimately, the prevailing spatial vision did not consider the conceptions of that space held by the people who lived there. The British-French plan for the Middle-East did not account for the ideologies and politics of the people it drew borders around; and the premise of a compromise wall between the Israeli state and lawyers representing villagers in the West Bank reads as farcical because it would still be built on territory that is entirely occupied. Most crucially for my own research, these examples illuminate the spatial dimensions of imperial power and colonial law, and how these forms of subjugation are fashioned and implemented with the aid of cartography. In Syria, Iraq, Palestine and India, maps were used to dissolve the complexities of space in favour of the positions held by colonial powers; and to apply a specific spatial vision onto a place of countless contesting and overlapping geographic imaginaries. Cartography was used as a means of fixing space; and the narrow visions depicted on these maps were then forcibly, often violently, applied on land and in the imagination. Deborah Cowen has asked: “What is colonial power if not the forced imposition of a particular map of the world onto peoples and places that live by another?” (Cowen, 2017). As evidenced by these incidents, her provocation rings true even in its most literal sense. Maps, as flattened visual representations of space, can and have been applied to remake space in line with their depictions. As noted by Mathew Sparke, “Cartography is part of a reciprocal or, better, a recursive social process in which maps shape a world that in turn shapes its maps” (Sparke, 2005, p. 12). Today, the path Mark Sykes traced with his finger is lined with trenches, barbed wire, concrete barriers and landmines, and the walls in the West Bank cut

through Palestinian communities, separating people from their families, land and belongings.

This is the work maps do.

2.4. Critical Cartography

Driven by the rise of cheap printing methods and increasing cartographic literacy, maps emerged as the “the dominant vehicle for conveying geographical conceptions” in the eighteenth century (Edney, 1997, p. 2). As the scientific ideals of the Enlightenment—which held that total archives of knowledge could be produced using ‘rational’ methods—began to inspire major cartographic projects, the tradition of criticism which emerged around map-making was animated by a desire to produce the most ‘complete’ and ‘scientific’ maps. Surveyors argued over the most accurate methods of measuring and recording points on the earth’s surface while cartographers discussed how to best distort spatial geometries to serve the intended purposes of maps. As a result, though maps still remain the primary conveyers of spatial information to this day, the debates within the field of cartography have largely been limited to weighing the virtues and faults of various projections (Wood & Krygier, 2009, p. 340). However, as J.B. Harley posits, and as will be evidenced by the documents analyzed in this thesis, “maps are too important to be left to cartographers alone” (Harley, 1992, p. 231). A substantive critique of cartography has developed outside the field, amongst geographers and map historians who deploy a method of analyzing maps which has been termed ‘critical cartography’. Using this method, scholars such as J.B. Harley, John Fels, John Pickles and Denis Wood have explored an understanding of maps as expressions of power and knowledge, vested with political and social agency (Wood & Fels, 2008; Pickles, 1992; Wood, 2010).

The methodological conceit of critical cartography is summarized by J.B. Harley in his influential polemic, *Deconstructing the Map*, as seeking “metaphor and rhetoric in maps where previously scholars had found only measurement and topography” (Harley, 1992, p. 233). Harley calls for a textual reading of maps in order to deconstruct the assumed relationship between the reality of a space and its cartographic representations (Harley, 1992, p. 232). In order to read

maps in this way, he argues that three hidden or unintentional rules of cartographic discourse must be understood. The first of these is the “rule of ethnocentricity,” under which societies tend to place the territory they occupy at the centre of the maps they produce. This self-assertion of societies on maps extends to the locations of routes, sites of resources and other geographical features which are important to them, while features which are not considered meaningful remain mostly absent from their maps. Secondly, there are the “rules of the social order”, in which the features chosen to be drawn on maps by cartographers, and the symbologies assigned to them, are influenced by or derived from the values of the society they belong to, as they relate to race, politics, religion or class. This ordering is often a simplification, a misreading, an *imaginaire* (as was the case in the mapping of the ‘Orient’ by Europeans) or an aspirational representation of the social relations on the ground. Finally, he argues that maps shouldn’t be understood as static representations of space, but as rhetorical instruments which actively contribute to societal discourse, and thereby possess a similar power to provoke change in the world as the spoken word, books, or any other avenue of dialog or representation. Maps possess the epistemological power to affect how the societies which produce them understand and act upon the world.

More recently, geographers and historians such as Raymond B. Craib, Charmaine A. Nelson, Sumathi Ramaswamy and Thongchai Winichakul have explored the application of cartographic power in specific colonial and post-colonial contexts (Craib, 2017; Nelson, 2017; Ramaswamy, 2010; Winichakul, 1994). In *Siam Mapped*, Winichakul traces the emergence, consolidation and territorialisation of an imagined notion of ‘Siam’ into the contemporary nation-state of Thailand, and his argument that maps were the “prime technology” which enabled this transformation is of particular relevance here (Winichakul, 1994, p. 17). His argument hinges around the idea of a *geo-body*, which he construes as the “man-made territorial definition” of a nation, that creates the effects it names “by classifying, communicating, and enforcement—on people, things, and relationships” (Winichakul, 1994, p. 17). To the adherents of various nationalisms, the geo-body of their nation takes up a specific, bounded position on the

earth's surface. Within nationalist discourse, the origins of the geo-body are often rooted in antiquity or its consolidation is positioned as the inherent destiny of a group of people. The geo-body derives its power to affect change by being teased out of the past and drawn into the future. At the same time, it "appears to be concrete to the eyes as if its existence does not depend on any act of imagining" (Winichakul, 1994, p. 17). The geo-body is produced by imagining a place as bounded and then forgetting that its boundary has been imagined.

The term geo-body doesn't only refer to a specific space or territory, but also the processes by which that space is construed as being limited and how this imagined space then influences the discourses which produced it. Just as a myriad "concepts, practices, and institutions" influence the construction of a geo-body, the geo-body then informs the "life of a nation", in that it is a source of "pride, loyalty, love, passion, bias, hatred, reason, unreason" for its adherents and detractors (Winichakul, 1994, p. 17). Maps, as the primary method of "conveying geographical conceptions", play a central role in the spatial discourse by which the geo-body develops and is reproduced (Edney, 1997, p. 2). Through a cyclical process in which the spatial dimensions of nationalist discourses were negotiated on maps, and these maps then influenced ideologies which produced them, maps "created the geo-body of a modern nation" (Winichakul, 1994, p. 18).

Since the development of India's Muslim nation into the state of Pakistan revolved around the question of territory, maps emerge as a key type of document to examine. Maps serve as sites where spatial ideas can be developed and presented as being bounded. This is not to say that maps always depict space as fixed and clearly delineated, though maps that follow the Enlightenment cartographic tradition certainly do, but that the ideas motivating the production of the map are frozen in their current state on the document due to the simple fact that a mark must be made on paper. By examining these maps in context, we have an opening towards understanding the methods, logics and intentions of the authors and the polities they belonged to. At the same time, much in the same way that maps are a product of the political, historical and

geographical condition they were produced in, interpreting maps is also subject to the biases and dispositions of their reader, and the wider geopolitical context they stem from. As Winichakul writes: “A code or a symbol, like the word ‘border’ or the map of a nation, does not necessarily signify the original signified. It can be generative, producing many more related meanings” (Winichakul, 1994, p. 171). Though a map may depict a space as limited, it still remains subject to limitless interpretations.

3. Methods and the Archive

3.1. Method of Cartographic Analysis

The rules of cartographic discourse put forward by Harley are legible in the maps of the subcontinent produced by both the British colonialists and the Muslim nationalists. To conduct my research, I tracked down cartographic documents produced by British officials as well as Muslim politicians, activists and civilians in the lead-up to Partition, and examined their design and content. In analyzing these maps, I follow three main lines of inquiry. First, I ask how these maps were used to construct, contest, and reinforce ideas of nationhood and statehood; second, I interrogate how these maps functioned as tools of both colonial intervention and decolonial struggle; and third, I identify the cartographic iconographies that were developed and deployed to support these goals.

The first line of inquiry involves reading cartographic documents as an extension of the political, nationalist and religious discourses in India during Partition. I follow the political processes through which the Radcliffe Line was formed, and locate maps which illustrate the line’s changing shape as this dialogue progressed. I also interrogate how India’s many politically and geographically disparate Muslim communities, faced with the cold, physical reality of partition, assigned territorial shape to their ideologies and put forward their arguments in the form of maps. I then consider how these maps recursively influenced the political processes and

the ideological contexts which produced them: and how they shaped Indian geographical imagination at large.

In the second line of inquiry, I interrogate ways that the numerous local visions for the future of India may have spilled into or challenged the British imperial vision. I will explore the role that territorial proposals, propaganda and pleas—produced by Muslim politicians, activists and civilians—played in shaping the border. Though most historians of South Asia hold that drawing the partition line was a lonely exercise by Radcliffe, performed behind closed doors, I ask if local cartography tugged at its contours in small, overlooked ways. I argue that the measure of success for the cartographies of resistance should not just be if they ‘won’, but the extent to which they influenced the cartographies of power. This line of inquiry is a specific application of a broader historical project by Priyamvada Gopal, which examines how resistance in British colonies shaped metropolitan thought in varying, often unnoticed ways (Gopal, 2020).

Finally, I analyze the cartographic iconographies and styles developed by the various political and religious ideologies vying for influence during Partition. I examine the cartographer’s decisions about projection, scale, color and typography; their inclusions and omissions; and their inevitable distortion of geometries and hierarchies. I argue that the way maps present information—their design—is as important as what they present. The symbols, features and letterforms on maps constitute a geographical vocabulary that can be deployed to shape physical reality and spatial imagination. Any aesthetic or compositional considerations made while drawing maps ultimately influence the decisions made using those maps. Clashing nationalist and religious identities in India produced maps with striking stylistic and territorial disparities. Maps made by Hindi nationalists, which often depicted the whole of the subcontinent anthropomorphized into the figure of the goddess Bharat Mata (Mother India), have been meticulously analyzed by Sumathi Ramaswamy in her book *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India* (Ramaswamy, 2010). The geographic imaginaries of India’s Muslims,

some of whom imagined Pakistan as islands of small Muslim-majority territories within a larger nation of India, will be examined in greater detail in this thesis.

3.2. Archival Research

Most of the maps analyzed here were accessed at the British Library in London, where they are held as part of the India Office Records. The bulk of this archive consists of documents produced by the vast bureaucracy of British India, which were brought over to Britain after Partition in 1947. These records were later supplemented with documents produced by the Pakistan Movement, which were sent over by the National Archive of Pakistan.

It's important to recognize that these maps are housed in state archives which can suffer from a kind of amnesia inflicted by their own national mythologies. Artifacts which pertain to ideas and movements which have prevailed over history are collected, catalogued and made the most available (Steyerl, 2008, p. 3). If we consider that national mythology is constructed by removing from history the ideas, events and individuals unimportant to the emergence of the nation, then the national archive is constructed using the diametrically opposite process of collecting only the artifacts considered most important to the emergence of the nation. At the same time, in determining what artifacts to collect and retain, the national archive contributes to and reshapes the national imaginaire. As Emily Gilbert, drawing upon the work of Ann Laura Stoler, writes: "collected materials—whether in an archive or counter-archive—should not be approached as having a fixed ontological essence," and that we should be "attentive to the ways that archives seek to fix dominant narratives in ways that might not correspond to acts or events" (Gilbert, 2016, p. 35; Stoler, 2010, p. 4). In this way, the national archive not only serves as the bedrock of national mythology, but also actively produces it.

When conducting archival work, many scholars have written about the need to pay attention to the voices misrepresented or altogether missing from the archive (Azoulay, 2019, p. 643; Hartman, 2008, p. 12; Said, 1994, p. 51). Ariella Aïsha Azoulay writes that the contents of the archive were "were produced, classified, and preserved according to an imperial temporality,

spatiality, and body politic,” but we are led to believe “that these documents represent the missing pieces of incomplete puzzles, telling the true story of imperial regimes,” while excluding the people they marginalized (Azoulay, 2019, p. 643). Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, Gayatri Spivak and the Subaltern Studies Group at large have argued that the historiography of South Asia focuses on its elites and ignores its poorest, the suppressed and the dispossessed. In the context of Partition, almost all the major Indian leaders belonged to the aristocratic class and had been educated at elite European universities. It is also mostly their documents that are held in national archives, and there are few artifacts that speak to the political outlooks and aspirations of the majority of India’s Muslims. Due to this, most of the maps discussed here were produced or held by Indian leaders, and the following analysis is an incomplete survey of the mapping done by India’s Muslims. Though I cannot fill the gaps in the archives, I will attempt to highlight the silences, and offer a “contrapuntal reading”, wherever possible (Said, 1994, p. 51).

3.3. The Afterlives of Empire

One aspect of archival research at the British Library which puzzled me was how easily and quickly I could find some records damning to the Raj, while other important documents, like Radcliffe’s original Partition map, were conspicuously missing. I wondered: why does the national library of what used to be the British Empire—the largest library in the world in no small part because of its extensive catalogue of records from its former colonies—make it easy to access some aspects of its imperial past? It occurred to me that what I like about the library is what I critique about the nature of the British Empire and its boundary-making process in this thesis. The imposition of order (having to get a research card to get access and being restricted to specific spaces in the library), the strict categorization of artifacts along chosen criteria (which make certain documents easy to search for and find) and the speed with which they are delivered make the library a pleasure to use. In thinking through these features, the structure of the archive starts to reflect the logics underpinning the British Indian Empire: The imposition of order (how the British understood and organized India), the strict categorization of people along chosen

criteria (the British conviction that religion formed the most important marker of identity in India and thus the country could be divided along religious lines), and the startling speed with which the new borders were drawn and the British departure took place. Much in the same way that the British governance of India was limited by the way they understood and organized India, the archives at the British Library too are limited by the decisions made around which records should be collected and how they should be organized.

As I unwound the string holding together the stained archival folders at the British Library, I remembered that the last time I had encountered similar string-tie folders was over a decade ago as I was growing up in Pakistan. Every weekend, my father, who worked as a District Judge in Punjab, would bring home a stack of files pertaining to the cases he would hear over the coming week. My father would hand me these files and ask me to unwind the string holding them shut as he worked through them, perhaps hoping my interactions with legal documents would instill in me a desire to follow in his footsteps and pursue a career in law. Given the similarity of these folders with the ones I was now opening at the British Library, I wondered if my father's files were remnants of the legal documentary tradition of the Raj. As I attempted to tease out the parallels between the stationary used in British archives and Pakistani courts, I began to realize that for much of my life, because of my proximity to the Pakistani legal system through my father, I had been in interface with the ghost of the Raj in direct and tangible ways.

The use of similar stationary constitutes but a small part of the continued links between the colonial legal system with which the British had imposed their rule over South Asia and contemporary Pakistani jurisprudence. When the dominions of India and Pakistan were created, they inherited the entire legal framework of the British Indian Empire. The new dominions continued to practise colonial-era laws over predetermined jurisdictions using the same institutions—the courts, police and prisons—they used to be enacted from. The laws my father administered, the courts he applied them from, as well as the housing and recreational facilities offered to us due to his position, were made in the image of, if not directly built by, the colonial

legal system. Today, these colonial-era laws have been sharpened to be used against minorities in Pakistan. Blasphemy laws are frequently deployed against Hindus and Christians, as well as Shia and Ahmadi Muslims, often resulting in lynchings and assassinations (Badry, 2019, p. 95), and public decency and anti-sodomy laws are used to harass the Khwajasara and other queer communities (Hussain, 2019).

4. Historical Overview

4.1. The Morley-Minto Reforms

At the turn of the 20th century, the end of the British Raj in South Asia seemed only a remote possibility. Yet, in the first half of the century, the eruption of global conflict and the bubbling over of long-simmering local tensions would quickly render that outcome inevitable. Conflict between India's Hindus and Muslims rose sharply between 1890 and 1910, as Hindus raised cries against centuries of non-Hindu rule in India, directing their ire not just towards the British, but also the Mughals before them. Cow protectionism, animated by the rising stature of the cow-herd god Krishna, emerged as a particularly salient driver of communal strife (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006, p. 153). Disputes over the mistreatment of cows in courts would spill over into the streets, leading to the lynching of Muslims, inspiring revenge killings and launching cycles of violence. Muslim leaders became convinced that only greater political representation would best serve and protect the interests of India's increasingly antagonized Muslim minority. The Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 codified these demands into the law by creating separate electorates in which only Muslims could vote or be elected to provincial and central parliamentary bodies (Jalal, 2000, p. 160). These reforms were the legislative enactment of the notion that India consisted of fundamentally different and irreconcilable groups, an idea implanted onto Indian society by the rigid caste and religion-based categorization used to conduct the Survey of India and administer colonial policies (Cohn, 1987, p. 229). Playing on themes of communal difference, the Indian National Congress, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohandas

Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel, and the Muslim League, led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan, emerged as the most dominant political forces in India over the 1930s and 40s.

4.2. World War II

On 3 September 1939, with the onset of World War II, the British Government of India declared war on Germany without consulting with Indian political leaders (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006, p. 203). Outraged, Congress leaders resigned from all provincial and local ministries and threatened mass civil disobedience. Months later, taking advantage of the standoff between the British and Congress, the Muslim League passed the Lahore Resolution which contained a vague demand for “independent states” in Muslim majority regions (Mughal, 2014, p. 10). This series of events set the stage for India’s decolonization, as Britain, with its army stretched across multiple fronts and its debts mounting, raced to curtail the possibility of civil unrest in India and placate the Indian political class. In 1942, the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill sent the diplomat Stafford Cripps to Delhi to negotiate with Congress and seek its support for the war (Khan, 2017, p. 55). Congress under Nehru’s influence was sympathetic to the battle against fascism, but argued India could only meaningfully participate if it were free. Cripps offered independence in return for fighting in the war; an arrangement which Gandhi famously referred to as a “postdated cheque on a failing bank” (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006, p. 205). Though Congress soundly rejected this plan, neither Indian leaders nor the public would forget that independence was now on the table.

4.3. The Quit India Movement

With the failure of the Cripps mission, Congress launched the ‘Quit India’ movement, a massive civil disobedience campaign aimed at driving the British out of India (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006, p. 205). Gandhi, Nehru and the rest of the Congress leadership were immediately thrown in jail, and the movement, now leaderless and uncoordinated, grew outwards from the city of Bombay to the countryside. Bands of students and farmers targeted the Raj’s transportation and communication infrastructure, destroying railway tracks, telegraph lines, post

offices and police stations in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006, p. 206). The uprising was violently crushed using fifty battalions of troops already mobilized due to the war. As the British looked elsewhere for local support, they found so with the Muslim League. Jinnah had celebrated the resignation of Congress members as a “day of deliverance and thanksgiving” and agreed to support British war efforts if they recognized the League as the sole representative of India’s Muslims (Mukerjee, 2010, p. 34). As a result, the League’s stature on the Indian political stage grew as the war progressed, and their demand for a separate Muslim dominion in South Asia began to gain credence in London.

At the end of the war, Britain’s departure from India was widely expected, and a final round of elections in both the metropole and its colony shuffled the major political players one last time before India become consumed with determining what independence meant and looked like. In Britain, Churchill’s Conservatives were replaced by a Labour government lead by Clement Atlee. In the 1945 Indian general election, Congress won 59 out of the 102 seats in the central legislature, and formed government in eight provinces. The League won all 30 seats reserved for Muslims, forming government in Punjab, Sindh and Bengal, and solidifying its status as the sole party representing India’s Muslims (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006, p. 213). Commanding almost 90 per cent of the legislature between them, the Congress and the League now wielded the political power and mandate to determine the shape of an independent India.

4.4. Direct Action Day

The Raj inched towards instability as it faced mounting opposition from local parties, mutiny within its ranks, and a civil service that was now half comprised of Indians. As Britain embarked on a costly reconstruction after the war, there was little appetite within its new government and among the public to expend money or manpower towards reasserting control over its imperial holdings (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006). In 1946, Atlee sent a Cabinet mission to India to devise a plan to hand over power. The resulting ‘ABC’ plan proposed a federation of three groups of provinces. Group A comprised of the Hindu majority regions in the centre and

the south, and groups B and C consisted of the Muslim majority regions in the east and west—all answering to a weaker central government (Khan, 2017, p. 59). The Muslim League, satisfied that this arrangement would provide India's Muslims with adequate representation, signalled support for the proposal. However, to Congress, with its lofty goals of quickly eradicating poverty and rapid industrial growth, a weak centre was unacceptable. This rejection of the plan angered Jinnah, who grew suspicious that Congress was attempting to steamroll the League's demand for separate Muslim regions. He called for a general strike, 'Direct Action Day', which amidst high communal tensions turned into the 'Great Calcutta Killing', in which some 4000 people, Hindus and Muslims, were killed (Khan, 2017, p. 63). This sparked a period of rioting between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs across India with for which the number of casualties still remain a subject of dispute. On 20 February 1947, as India spiralled into a cycle of escalating communal conflict, Atlee appointed Louis Mountbatten the last viceroy of India and gave him a June 1948 deadline to draw up the plans of India's decolonization. Within months of his assignment, Mountbatten determined partition to be the quickest path to British withdrawal. The plan to partition India was announced on June 3, 1947 and Mountbatten quickly moved up his deadline for withdrawal to 15 August, 1947. The stage was now set for the British, Congress and the League to develop and put forward their visions for the shape of an independent India.

5. The Cartographic Development of Pakistan

5.1. Pakistani State Mythology

The state-sanctioned history of Pakistan—a mythology embedded into and reproduced by the country's national education system—positions the creation of Pakistan as the logical, inevitable and necessary culmination of Muslim nationalism in South Asia (Aziz, 2010; Jalal, 1995; Qasmi, 2019). It reaches into the past to rearrange historical events in way that a straight teleological line can be drawn between the arrival of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent in the 9th century and the emergence of Pakistan in 1947. Facts that are irrelevant to or contest this

telling of history are brushed away, leaving behind a farcical account in which the call for a separate state was unanimous and consistent amongst all of India's Muslims. In fact, leading up to Partition, Muslim leaders and intellectuals participated in a richly imagined debate over the meaning of 'nationhood', 'statehood' and how these constructs relate to territory, and Muslims around South Asia defined their own communities in vastly different and divergent ways.

The fact that the mythology of the Pakistani state papers over these cultural and ideological differences is not surprising, after all this flattening is key to preserving the foundational conceit of Pakistan—that India's Muslims form a singular political community. However, the consolidation and simplification of Muslim proposals and aspirations is replicated throughout South Asian historiography, where they are often lumped into two categories: The separatists who called for an independent nation-state and the nationalists who wished to maintain a unified India (Sevea, 2012, p. 38). Iqbal Singh Sevea observes that this is likely because of an uncritical translation of concepts such as *qaum*, *millat* and *jamuriyyat* into western political concepts such as nation and democracy. These terms were deployed heavily and with varying meanings by Muslim leaders in their writings and speeches. The word *qaum* for example can be “interpreted variously as community, ethnic group, race or nationality”, but is often just erroneously equated with the western notion of a nation (Sevea, 2012, p. 40). As a result, Muslim leaders are presented as either calling for a separate nation or opposing it, losing much of the nuance that underscored these debates, and ignoring the creative work involved in the imagining of new forms of governance, and in the construction of a political community. Many Muslim leaders had specifically stipulated that western forms of governance could not work in South Asia, and that their work was to imagine something new that could not easily be mapped on to Western notions of nation and state.

The assumption that the meanings of *qaum* and *millat* were fixed, and could be equated with 'nation', can be countered by an evaluation of the visual forms, specifically maps, produced by the leaders and members of the Pakistan movement, and Indian Muslims at large, in the lead

up to Partition. Though many Muslim leaders used the term *qaum* in describing their proposals, analyzing the accompanying maps reveals that their visions for the subcontinent were not at all the same. These maps were not just aspirational illustrations of the borders of an eventual nation-state, but attempts at devising new forms of politics and methods of governance. Further, maps provided a space on which the sweeping and often nebulous socio-political ideas emerging from Muslim nationalist discourse could quite literally be grounded. In this way, the maps produced by India's Muslims can be seen as an articulation of the spatial dimensions of the nationalist and religious debate underway in India in the lead-up to Partition.

5.2. The Two-Nation Theory

The idea that India's Hindus and Muslims constituted separate nations had circulated in the subcontinent since the late 1800s, but for many decades this notion would lay dormant in Indian politics. The first recorded mention of the two-nation theory is generally attributed to Syed Ahmad Khan, an aristocrat who served numerous roles within British bureaucracy in India, and later set out to reform Islam by promoting a Western style scientific education for Muslims. In a speech delivered in 1888, he wondered that if the British were to leave, "who then would be the rulers of India?" Could Hindus and Muslims share power? "Most certainly not", he thought, "It is necessary that one of them should conquer the other. To hope that both could remain equal is to desire the impossible and the inconceivable ... But until one nation has conquered the other and made it obedient, peace cannot reign in the land" (Hiro, 2015, p. 5).

Muhammad Iqbal, the famous poet and philosopher, was the first to territorialize the idea of India's Muslim nation by calling for autonomous Muslim states in the subcontinent's north-west. In 1930, in his inaugural address as the president of the Muslim League he declared that he "would like to see the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single State" (Ahmed Sherwani, 1977). It was clear that Iqbal was not calling for a completely independent state; he began his address with a critique of the European model of statehood and especially how it had taken a turn towards recognizing "territory as the only

principle of political solidarity” (Ahmed Sherwani, 1977). In his view, the principles of European democracy could not be applied to India without recognizing Indian communalism; the idea that the country consisted of hundreds of groups belonging to different races, speaking different languages and following unique variants of their religions, and that their behaviour was not animated by a common-race consciousness. However, it was far less clear exactly what he was calling for. Throughout the course of this speech he defined his proposed state as a “Muslim India within India”, as a “contractual organism” and most specifically as “autonomous States, based on the unity of language, race, history, religion and identity of economic interests” (Ahmed Sherwani, 1977). This implied that India could somehow be cleanly be divided along cultural and religious lines without recognizing that roots of Indian communalism, which he wished to preserve, emerged from people of various cultural and religious makeups cohabiting the same territory and influencing one another. Though he recognized that “even the Hindus do not form a homogeneous group” (Ahmed Sherwani, 1977), his proposal presented India’s Muslims as a monolithic entity with their religion as their primary identifier—a notion which would soon begin to be destabilized as the Pakistan movement got underway.

5.3. Early Visions of Muslim India

In the early 1930s, the British Government organized a series of a round-table conferences in London, inviting India’s major political parties to discuss constitutional reforms in the country. At the third and last session, in 1932, Iqbal presented a version of the speech he had delivered to the Muslim League. At some point that year, perhaps during the same trip to England, Iqbal met with Choudhry Rahmat Ali, a student at Cambridge University. Initially working from the margins, Ali would soon grow to wield immense influence over the “articulation of Pakistan” (Chester, 2018, p. 144). The following account of the development of Ali’s ideas is based on his biography by Kursheed K. Aziz and Bal Ram Nanda’s book, *Road to Pakistan* (Aziz, 1987; Nanda, 2010).

The ideas Iqbal presented so impressed upon Ali that in 1933 he pushed them even further in a pamphlet titled “Now or Never: Are we to live or perish forever?”. On the cover, Ali identifies himself as the founder of the Pakistan National Movement. This is the first recorded mention of the word “Pakistan” (which would later turn into ‘Pakistan’), explained in the pamphlet as an acronym for the “five Northern units of India viz: Punjab, North-West Frontier Province (Afghan Province), Kashmir, Sind, and Baluchistan” (Ali, 1933). Though many historians credit him for coining the nomenclature, Aziz troubles this origin by quoting an interview with Iqbal. When asked about the term “Pakistan” being attributed to Ali, Iqbal responded that Ali had come to him during the first session of the round table conferences in 1930 and asked him what his proposed government would be called. Iqbal replied that “if you take the first *lafz* (word) of each province in the northwest of India and the 'tan' of Baluchistan, you get a meaningful and nice word, Pakistan. That will be the name of the government” (Aziz, 1987, p. 352). Nevertheless, it would be Ali and his pamphlets that would help popularize the term ‘Pakistan’ among India’s Muslims.

Ali may have originally been inspired by Iqbal’s vision for the subcontinent, but he made a point to say that unlike the Muslim state within an All-India Federation proposed by Iqbal, he wished that “those five Provinces should have a separate Federation of their own outside India” (Ali, 1933). He had timed the release of his pamphlet to coincide with the first meeting of the 1933 Joint Parliamentary Committee in London, which would discuss a draft for the new constitution of India. At the meeting, the delegation of Muslim leaders endorsed an All-India Federation. When Reginald Craddock, a former member of the Viceroy’s Executive Council, raised Rahmat Ali’s pamphlet, the Muslim delegates referred to it as “only a student’s scheme and one which no responsible people have put forward” and dismissed it as “chimerical and impracticable” (Nanda, 2010, p. 256). Craddock, seemingly impressed by Ali’s proposal, responded that political movements “advance very quickly in India, and it may be when these students grow up it will be put forward; the scheme must be in the minds of people anyhow”

(Nanda, 2010, p. 256). Craddock's affinity towards Ali's proposal is not surprising for two reasons. Firstly, the British government of India had already demonstrated that it saw Muslim separatism as an effective counterweight to Indian nationalism (Nanda, 2010, p. 256). Secondly, British officials had a long and well documented history of gravitating towards policy rooted in Western traditions of organizing space and assigning jurisdiction. In this tradition, the definition of nation and state, though open to debate, must eventually serve as a fixed frame of reference. While Iqbal had explicitly stated that European models of governance would not work for India, of all the proposals for the future of India authored by Muslim leaders, Rahmat Ali's was the least ambiguous in how it defined 'nation', and aligned most closely to the western notion of the territorial nation-state. In a later pamphlet, as quoted by Sevea, Ali writes that "land is to nations what homes are to individuals and fields to farmers" (Sevea, 2012, p. 36), thus nations must claim land for themselves and develop into states. In imagining Pakistan as a completely independent state, his proposal would also prove to be the closest to the eventual outcome of India's decolonization.

5.4. The First Map of Pakistan

Rahmat Ali's pamphlets have long fascinated historians of South Asia, and a sentence or two about them appears in almost every history of Partition. Lucy P. Chester and Tahir Kamran have written at length about these pamphlets and the ideologies motivation their production (Chester, 2018, p. 114; Kamran, 2017, p. 94). Informed by their work, in the following analysis I apply the method of critical cartography to Ali's maps in order to tease out the rhetoric buried in their design. This analysis is based on the text of these pamphlets hosted online by Columbia University, his maps as reproduced in the aforementioned studies, and one pamphlet, *The Millat of Islam and the Menace of Indianism*, which I accessed at the British Library.

5.4.1. "Now or Never"

Rahmat Ali published close to thirty pamphlets between 1932 and 1950, and across these pamphlets he carried out a project of delineating precisely how many nations exist in India and

attaching them to the territories they could claim—so they could each be granted a separate country. This began in 1932 with his first pamphlet “Now or Never”, in which he defined the nation of ‘Pakistan’ as the composite of the five north-eastern units of India: Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Kashmir, Sind and Baluchistan (Ali, 1933). This amalgam tracks quite closely to the Pakistan that would eventually emerge, albeit with a partitioned Punjab and with only partial and disputed control over Kashmir. This first pamphlet did not include a map of the nation-state he proposed.

5.4.2. “The Millat of Islam and the Menace of Indianism”

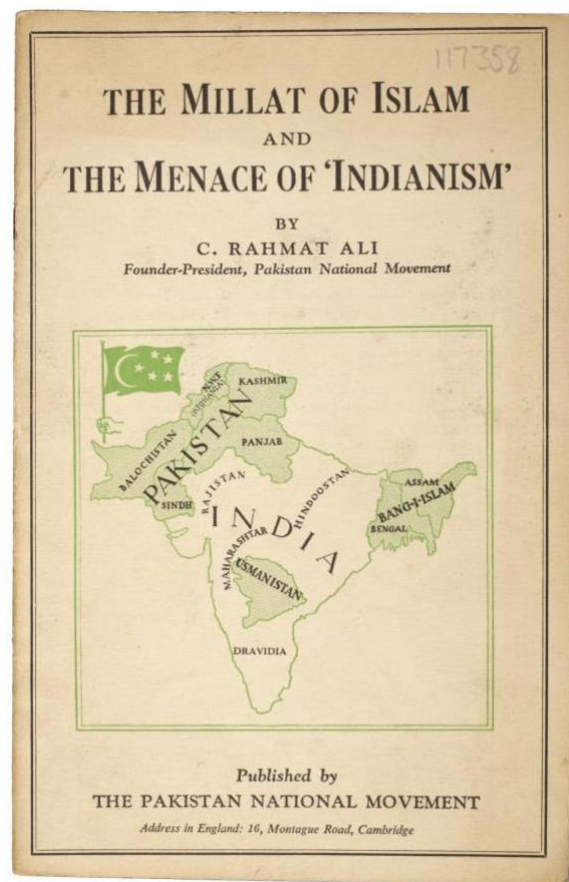


Figure 2. *The Millat of Islam and the Menace of 'Indianism'*, C. Rahmat Ali, 1942.

From *India Office Records and Private Papers (Mss Eur F158/615)*. British Library, London, UK.

The first map of Pakistan, or at the very least the first printed map which depicts Pakistan, appeared in Rahmat Ali’s fifth pamphlet “The Millat of Islam and the Menace of

Indianism”, published in 1942 (Ali, 1942). Right on the cover of the pamphlet, the map showcases Ali’s now expanded vision of Muslim states in the subcontinent (see Figure 2). The map is printed in bright green ink, with black labels. The colour green has long been hallowed in Islam because of its association with the Prophet Muhammad (Buendia, 2012). There are numerous *hadith* (first hand records) of him dressed in green garments, and he was covered with a green cloth when he died. As a result, being able to wear a green turban was a privilege afforded to the descendants of Muhammad during the Ottoman Empire. As the Ottoman-led Caliphate crumbled and was abolished in 1924, the colour green began to be taken up as a key part of the iconography of emergent Islamic nationalist movements—the Pakistan National Movement among them.

The map on the pamphlet shows three separate Muslim nation-states, filled in entirely with green. The rest of India is left uncoloured, with just a green outline. The first of the Muslim states, “Pakistan”, is composed of the same north-western provinces suggested by Ali in his previous pamphlets. The second state, “Bang-e-Islam”, is comprised of Bengal, Assam and the entirety of north-east India (Ali’s plans always depicted Bengal as a separate state, though upon Partition the eastern half of the province would form East Pakistan). The third state is the princely state of Hyderabad, which he renamed “Usmanistan”, surrounded on all sides by India. He also named non-Muslim regions of the subcontinent, such as “Dravidia” in the south and “Hindoostan” in the north, though it is unclear whether he imagined these as separate states as well. At the top of the map, there is an illustration of a fist holding up a flag. It is a bright green flag with a crescent and five stars, so it can be inferred that this is his proposed flag for the state of Pakistan, with the stars referring to each of its five provinces.

In a version of the same map published sometime later in 1942, and reproduced in Kamran’s article (Kamran, 2017, p. 98), it can be observed that Rahmat Ali was beginning to reckon with the simplicity of his vision, and to realize that there were even more nations within the nations he had proposed. In a part of northern Punjab, an area where some five million Sikhs

lived at the time (Krishan, 2004, p. 84), the stippled pattern he used to denote the areas belonging to Pakistan has been disturbed. It appears to have been erased or covered with some sort of white-out after the pattern was already filled in, indicating a modification after the map was already produced. This region is now labelled “Guruistan”, a nation for the Sikhs surrounded by Pakistan on all sides.

5.4.3. “The Millat and the Mission: Seven Commandments of Destiny for the 'Seventh' Continent of Dinia”

Rahmat Ali’s culminating vision for the subcontinent, and the most widely reproduced version of his map, first appeared in a pamphlet titled “The Millat and the Mission: Seven Commandments of Destiny for the 'Seventh' Continent of Dinia”, also printed in 1942 (Kamran, 2017, p. 97). In this pamphlet, he encourages the Muslim, Dravidian, Akhoot, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist and Parsi “nations” of India to rise up against “Caste Hindoos” (Ali, 1942). However, he recognizes that if a country contains such a multitude of nations, it may not be a country at all. Chalking up the categorization of India as a single country to being a British construction, Ali sets out to redefine it as the “Continent of Dinia” (Ali, 1942). The word Dinia is constructed by moving the ‘d’ in the centre of ‘India’ to the front. With its roots in Arabic, the Urdu word *din* means religion and he meant for Dinia to mean the land of religions and their followers (Kamran, 2017, p. 102). With this change, he meant to convey his perception that religion was the central organizing principle in India around which all aspects of political and personal life revolve. In writing about the people of India, he states that religion “defines their national entities, inspires their national ideologies, shapes their national histories, and sustains their national hopes” (Ali, 1946). In fact, nationalism in a discernible form and explicitly attached to ideas of religion had only emerged in India under and in response to the British Raj. As he wrote this, Rahmat Ali was among a new crop of Indian leaders, almost all of whom had undergone schooling in Britain, who were now leading a transformation of Indian society under which religion formed the bedrock of emergent national identities. Through the dissemination of their ideas, they were part

of a recursive process through which religion would indeed begin to define nationalist ideologies, histories and aspirations.

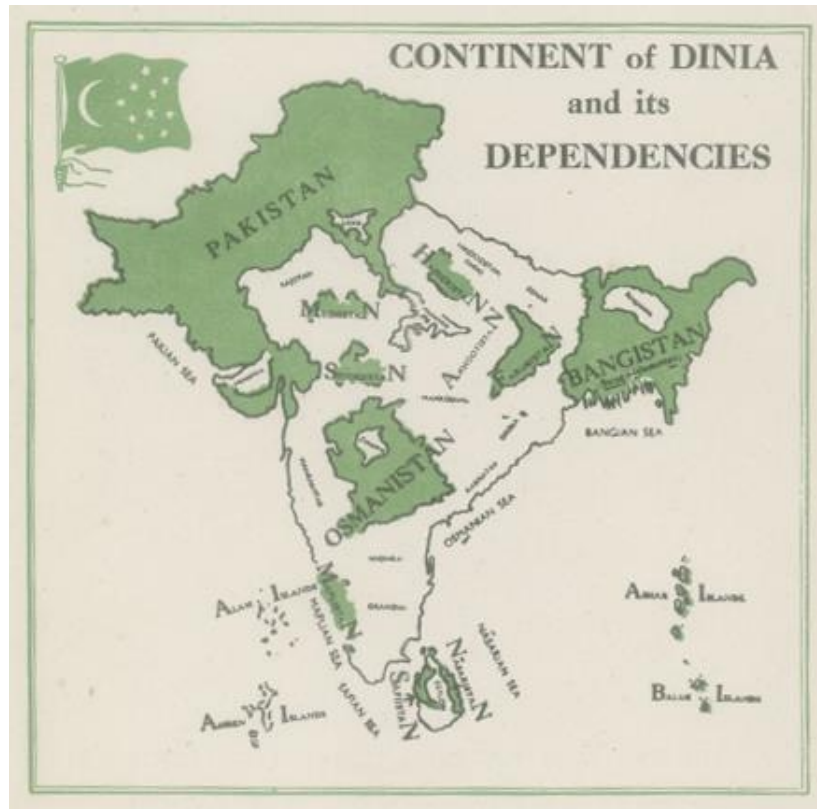


Figure 3. Continent of Dinia and its Dependencies, From *The Greatest Betrayal*, C. Rahmat Ali, 1947.

From the Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, UK.

In this pamphlet, Ali espoused that the categorization of India as a continent made sense not just because of its geography—the fact that India is bounded by mountains in the north, desert in the west and ocean in the south-east—but also due to the common-place definitions of the terms *country* and *continent*. He writes that “the history of a ‘country’ is, in general, that of one land, one language, one culture, one nation, and one sovereign state; the history of a ‘continent’ is in general, that of many lands, many languages, many cultures, many nations, and many sovereign states” (Ali, 1946). In this pamphlet, many new nations within nations have emerged in his vision for the subcontinent and are illustrated on the accompanying map (see Figure 3). He proposes ten Muslim nation-states in South Asia, which appear like green islands

floating in a sea of non-Muslim states, anchored by Pakistan on the west and Bangistan (Bengal, renamed from the earlier 'Bang-e-Islam') towards the east. Of the remaining eight Muslim countries, six are dispersed across the subcontinent, mostly land-locked by the non-Muslim regions. These include Faruqistan (Bihar and Orissa), Haideristan (North India), Muinistan (Rajasthan), Siddiqistan (Central India), Osmanistan (Hyderabad) and Maplistan (Kerala). The two remaining states, Safiistan and Nasaristan, are on either side of the island of Eelam. In this proposal, the number of land locked non-Muslim states inside Muslim states had also increased. He maintained a Sikh state in northern Punjab, though renamed "Sikhia", and added "Hanoodia" and "Handika" for Hindus in the east and south of Pakistan. In another curious feature of the map, a land bridge extends east from the edge of Punjab, enclosing Delhi and Agra within Pakistan. This wouldn't be the last time a bridge connecting Muslim majority regions of India would be proposed.

Many questions can be raised about the specifics of how and why he delineated nations in the way he did, which his pamphlets do not answer beyond the broad proclamation that Muslims must acquire territory proportional to their population. Why, for example, did he split the relatively small Muslim population of Eelam into two states while lumping the much larger Muslim population of western India into a single state, Pakistan? One question his pamphlets do answer, however, is why he thought it necessary for India to split into so many states in the first place. This was part of his effort to avoid what he called "minorityism", which meant that the production of religious minorities should be avoided in any of the new states India would be split into. According to his plan, Muslims must not be left in any "Hindoo lands," and Hindus and Sikhs would not be allowed to live on "our own [Muslim] lands" (Kamran, 2017, p. 104). He envisioned a mass transfer of Hindus from the new Muslim states to the new Hindu states and vice versa. As he had previously written, he believed religion was the primary register around which identity revolved and along which a minority could be produced. This view ignored the fact that the people who shared space, language, customs and similar socio-economic makeups,

despite following different religions, would likely have more in common than Muslims who lived thousands of kilometres away from each other. It also did not consider the minorities along lines of caste, sect, language and class that would inevitably be produced in the resulting Muslim states. This oversight becomes even more evident when he holds Urdu as the lingua franca of all of South Asia's Muslims and even as "one of the most extremely understood languages in the neighbouring Continent of Asia" (Kamran, 2017, p. 96). This claim was false, because Urdu was not widely spoken by Muslims in Bengal, Assam, South India and Eelam.

It's easy to imagine that Rahmat Ali would continue to find more nations within nations in South Asia, instead of letting them disrupt or lead him to question his precise and sanitary plan of creating religion-based nation-states using mass population transfers. He might even continue to propose new states, resulting in ever more complex spatial arrangements illustrated on maps. Instead of recognizing the impossibility and futility of disentangling a highly syncretized region, Ali set out to redefine the categorization of an entire landmass to serve his core belief that the project of each nation is to carve out its own territory and realize itself as a nation-state. Ali ran the Pakistan National Movement from Cambridge (not to be confused with the Pakistan Movement, which was led by the Muslim League), mostly as a solo operation, from 1933 till after Partition and the creation of Pakistan in 1947. He briefly returned to Pakistan in 1948, before being expelled by the country's first Prime Minister, most likely because he had been deeply critical of the Muslim League and the new government of Pakistan. One of his last pamphlets, titled "The Greatest Betrayal," was devoted to a critique of the League and the version of Pakistan it had helped to create. He died soon after his return to Britain in 1951, in the midst of an influenza pandemic (Kamran, 2017, p. 102).

5.5. The Jinnah Archives

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the man who would eventually come to lead the Muslim League and the separatist effort, initially shunned the two-nation theory. When separate electorates were granted to Muslims with the Morley-Minto reforms in 1909, Jinnah, who at the time was a

member of the Congress party, passed a motion deploring the principle of separate electorates. After joining the Muslim League in 1913, which itself had been founded seven years earlier in 1906, Jinnah declared that he had “no love for sectarian cries” and that the League was “rapidly growing into a powerful factor for the birth of United India” (Jalal, 1994, p. 7).

The British Library contains a large archive of Mohammad Ali Jinnah’s personal papers recorded on long rolls of micro-film. The boxes housing these rolls identify their contents as the “Quaid-i-Azam Papers” and have a sticker attached which says that “this film was sent from Pakistan in this condition”. These papers contain dozens of maps and illustrations related to Pakistan that were either given to or produced by Jinnah. The provenance of most of these maps is difficult to trace as most of them are not signed with a name or a date, though all of them seem have been produced before the creation of Pakistan in 1947, since none of them depict the eventual borders of the new state. The only thing that can be said for certain is that these maps were part of the personal papers of Jinnah and that he at some point glanced over or marked up these documents. Though how they may have influenced him or the broader Pakistan Movement is harder to ascertain, together these documents form an aspirational archive of the territorial imaginings of Jinnah and the leaders and followers of the Pakistan Movement. They also underscore the fact that the contours of India’s Muslim nation, and by extension the borders of Pakistan, remained unfixed till the eve of Partition.

5.5.1 Maps from Maulana Haik Rauf

Many of the maps contained in the Jinnah papers demonstrate their use beyond cartographic illustrations on which to demarcate borders. In fact, most of the maps in this archive are used to provide spatial arguments, often rooted in specific historical narratives or carefully chosen demographic data, to make the case for why a specific set of contours should be chosen over others to serve as the borders of any new states which emerge after decolonization. This genre of map is well represented in a parcel sent to Jinnah in September 1944 by Maulana Hakim Abdul Rauf, the president of the Calcutta branch of the Muslim League. A letter, written by Rauf

and addressed to Jinnah, outlines the contents of this parcel as 14 enclosures, most of which are maps, and provides commentary for each item (Rauf, 1944). Reading the letter, it seems Rauf is responding to a request by Jinnah to gather maps of India and perhaps provide his opinion on where the borders for a partitioned subcontinent should lie. In the opening of the letter, Rauf writes that despite a thorough search, he “could not find any big wall map of Bihar” and that he would still keep “trying to get a big map of Bihar or of Bengal Bihar Orissa combined if possible” (Rauf, 1944). Then, stepping through each of the 14 enclosures, which include religious distribution maps, population density maps, maps printed in newspapers and other hand-drawn maps, he makes the case for a specific set of Muslim states in the last map in the package. This cartographic argument is parsed out here.

Many of the enclosed maps are produced based on demographic information. One large map of the subcontinent, titled “Relative Population of Different Communities” and prepared by the Census Commissioner of India in 1932, visualizes population distribution based on religion (Rauf, 1944). Bar charts placed over top of the cartography divide India’s population into the categories of Tribal, Depressed Castes, Other Hindu, Jain and Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, and Others. A 1931 map, titled “Map of India showing Density of Population per Sq. Mile” shows population density in different regions using increasingly dense hatch fills (Rauf, 1944). A pencil line has been drawn, presumably by Rauf, enclosing Baluchistan, Sindh, Punjab, North West Frontier Province and Kashmir into a single state. A line is also drawn around Hyderabad state, though it is unclear if this is proposed to be a separate state. Another line encloses parts of Odisha and Bengal and is labelled “ADIBISTAN.”

Two of the maps in the parcel stand out among the rest, because they are not based on any data, and are included to make a historical and socio-political case for Partition. The first of these is a map printed in the August 31, 1944 edition of *The Statesman*, a Calcutta based newspaper (Rauf, 1944). Titled “India and Europe: A Comparison”, the map shows twenty European countries superimposed onto the Indian subcontinent (see Figure 4). France covers the

North-West Frontier Province and Punjab, while Germany fits over Sindh and Rajasthan. The purpose of this map, according to commentary written out by Rauf, was to show “India as a multinational subcontinent in a vivid and graphic way” (Rauf, 1944). The case being made here is not different from the one made by Rahmat Ali earlier, that India was a multitudinous land of “many languages, many cultures, many nations, and many sovereign states” (Ali, 1946), and that to partition it made sense.

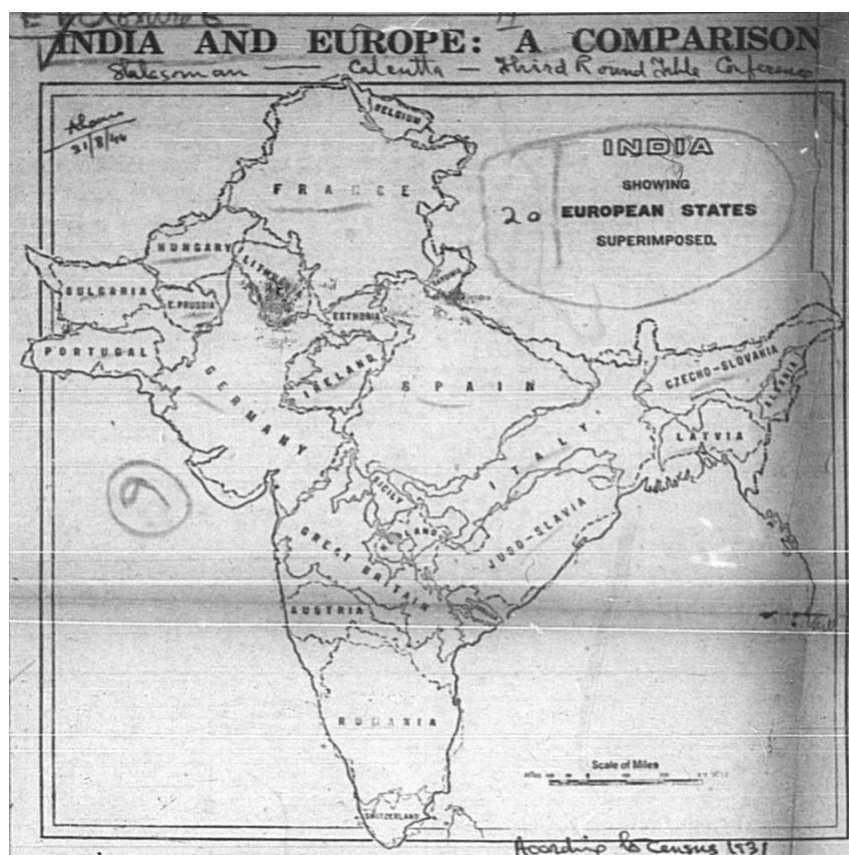


Figure 4. India and Europe: A Comparison. From *The Statesman*, August 31, 1944.

From *India Office Records and Private Papers (IOR Neg 10760/1)*, British Library, London, UK.

The second map, titled *Taqseem-e-Hind Ka Nazara* (A look at the divisions of India), is labelled entirely in Urdu and seems to have been clipped out from a newspaper or magazine (Rauf, 1944). The subtitled reads *Har Tareekhi Daur Kay Aitbaar Say*, which translates to “From the perspective of every historical period.” On the sheet, there are eight small crudely drawn and

labelled maps of the subcontinent, charting the borders of various political and religious bodies which have ruled or occupied parts of India all the way from 2000 B.C. to 1944 (see Figure 5). Each of the maps depicts the spatial arrangement of India during a key historical period, as determined by the author. These periods are, in order, the Vedic period (labelled 2000 B.C.), the Buddhist period (600 B.C. to 500 A.D.), the Rajput period (500 to 1200), the Turkish period (1200 to 1526), the Mughal Empire of Akbar (1600), the Middle English period (1805), and finally *Azad Hindustan* or Free Hindustan (1944).

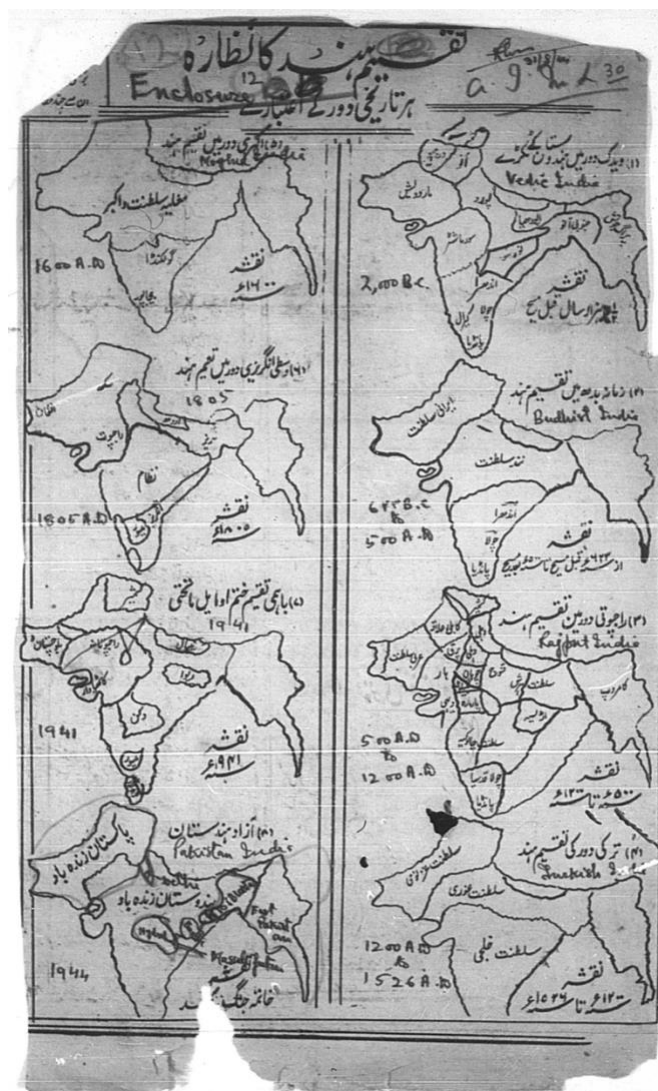


Figure 5. Taqseem-e-Hind Ka Nazara.

From *India Office Records and Private Papers (IOR Neg 10760/1)*, British Library, London, UK, ca. 1944.

In the last map on the clipping, titled *Azad Hindustan*, the subcontinent has been divided into two. The state on the west, comprised of Baluchistan, Sindh, Punjab, NWFP and Kashmir, is labelled with “Pakistan Zindabad” and the rest of India is labelled “Hindustan Zindabad”, both popular revolutionary slogans. Additions have been made to the printed map using a pencil, presumably by Rauf, and labelled in English. The edge of Punjab is extended east to include Delhi, Hyderabad state is circled and labelled, Bengal and North-East India are labelled “East Pakistan”, and Bihar and Odisha are labelled “ADIBISTAN”. The political division of India as depicted on this map is aspirational. It is labelled as if it shows the state of the subcontinent in 1944, but what it depicts—the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan—would not take place until 1947. The decision to place this map amongst seven others which are meant to illustrate historical periods, and to draw and label them all with the exact same visual and typographical vocabulary, provides a fascinating window into the process of pulling the idea of Pakistan into antiquity to make the case for its creation. The Pakistan and Hindustan of 1944 are imagined as independent states with clearly articulated borders drawn in a consistent black line, but the empires, princely states and sultanates which preceded them are given the same visual treatment. This symbology—enclosing regions within uninterrupted and precise borders and labelling them as if they are singular socio-political entities—carries an incorrect implication that political conceptions resembling Western-style states with fixed frontiers existed in India before its colonization. The empires, princely states and sultanates which have been chosen to be represented across these maps is also a matter of curiosity. In five of the seven historical maps, the regions proposed to be part of Pakistan are shown to have been completely independent political units from the rest of India.

The work being done by this map can be brought into sharper relief by visiting a process employed by European colonial powers to exert control over vast swaths of territory, described by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*. European powers, he writes, would eliminate or subjugate native rulers and then post-write the histories of their sovereignties to increase the

amount of land and property which they could claim. These claims were backed up with the use of “‘historical maps’, designed to demonstrate, in the new cartographic discourse, the antiquity of specific, tightly bounded territorial units. Through chronologically arranged sequences of such maps, a sort of political-biographical narrative of the realm came into being, sometimes with vast historical depth” (Anderson, 2006, p. 175). Anderson’s description fits the aforementioned map of India exactly, though in this case, this type of map was being deployed by anti-colonial nationalists instead of the colonial power. This was perhaps a deliberate choice to appeal to the territorial logics of the British Government of India. If the British had initially claimed territory through a specific logic they may later recognize claims to territory made by another party using a similar logic. Making a territorial claim the British would be sympathetic towards was important because they would ultimately be drawing the lines along which India would be partitioned. However, it is also likely that Muslim nationalist leaders had internalized British territorial logics, and what Anderson writes in his book about Southeast Asian nationalists could also be said about South Asian nationalists—that they “had their consciousnesses profoundly shaped by the ‘format’ of the colonial state and its institutions” (Anderson, 2006, p. 175).

The maps included in this parcel use cartography as rhetoric to slowly build up a historical and socio-political case for the contours drawn on the final map sent by Rauf. These contours are drawn overtop a railway map of India produced for Newman’s Indian Bradshaw, a travel guide publisher, in 1942 (Rauf, 1944). The map illustrates the entire Indian subcontinent from Burma in the east to Afghanistan in the west. A pencil has been used to sketch out the borders of numerous proposed states, most likely by Rauf since the map bares his signature (see Figure 6). The largest of them is on the north-western edge of India, labelled “West PAKISTAN”, loosely containing Baluchistan, Sindh, NWFP, Kashmir and the entire Punjab. Curiously, the border is drawn quite imprecisely in the north and the west, between Kashmir and Tibet, and between Baluchistan/NWFP and Afghanistan. On the other hand, the eastern border between Punjab/Sindh and India is sketched with a lot of precision, tracking closely to the

railway lines printed onto the map. This suggests that that pinning down the contours on the northern and western fronts was not very important to the author, and defining the eastern border was the primary objective of drawing on this map. On the eastern edge of the subcontinent, Bengal, Bihar and Assam are outlined simply labelled “PAKISTAN”. Parts of Bihar and Odisha are enclosed and labelled “ADIBISTAN.” Towards the south, Hyderabad state is also outlined, but with an interesting addition: a rectangular parcel of land extends from its eastern edge towards the Bay of Bengal, connecting the otherwise landlocked state to the ocean. This is labelled the “Corridor for Hyderabad-Port of Mauslipatam.” In the Bay of Bengal, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are all circled and labelled “To Pakistan,” even though there was no sizeable Muslim population on the islands at the time.

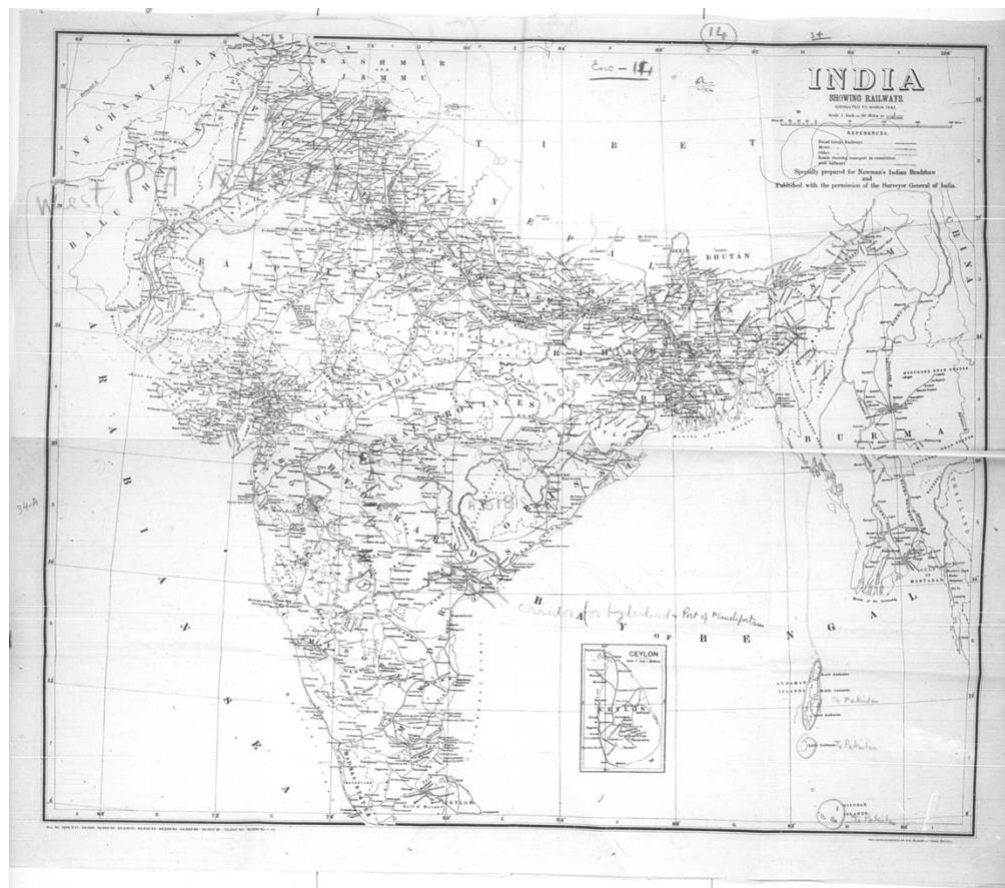


Figure 6. Map of India showing borders presumably hand-drawn by Maulana Haik Rauf.
From *India Office Records and Private Papers (IOR Neg 10760/1)*, British Library, London, UK, ca. 1944.

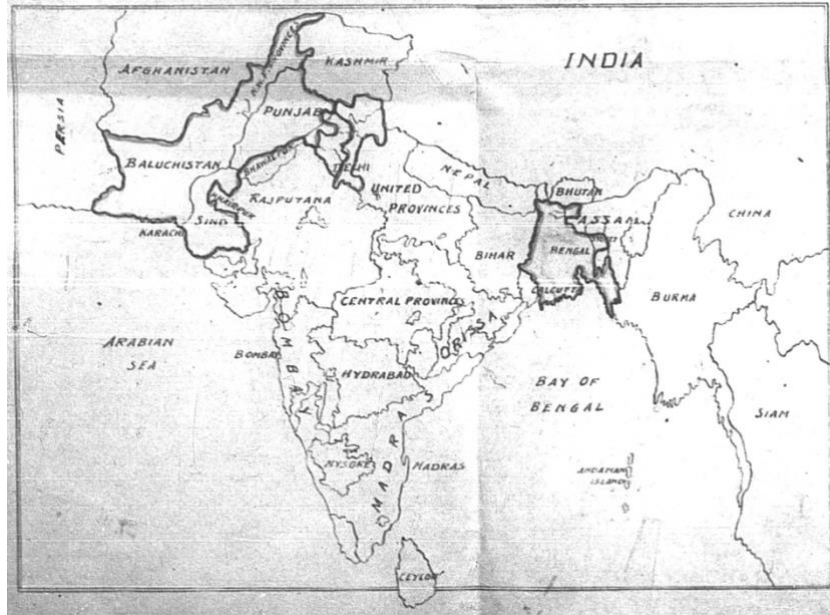


Figure 7. Map in the Jinnah Papers showing hand-drawn borders for Pakistan.

From *India Office Records and Private Papers (IOR Neg 10811/41)*, British Library, London, UK.

5.5.2 Miscellaneous Maps

Many maps in the Jinnah archives bear no signature or preceding letter which may explain who produced or sent them to Jinnah, and it's unclear whether he marked them up himself. One of these is a set of three neatly hand-drawn and labelled maps. The largest of these is a small-scale map centred on South Asia, evidently meant to sketch out the borders for Pakistan (Maps, IOR Neg 10811/41). Most of Punjab, Baluchistan, Sindh and NWFP are included, much like most other conceptions of Pakistan at this time, but the Bahawalpur and Khairpur regions are excluded (even though they were included in Pakistan in most other maps and would eventually be part of the country). Curiously, Kashmir has not been coloured in as a part of Pakistan, but on the east, all of Bengal is filled in (see Figure 7). Another proposal for the composition of Pakistan has been crudely and quickly hand-drawn on a small sheet of paper (Maps, IOR Neg 10811/41). This version of Pakistan includes all of the same provinces as the last map, but also adds Kashmir, New Delhi, and seems to propose a partition of Uttar Pradesh so that Agra and Aligarh can be included into the country (see Figure 8). The city of Ajmer and the

surrounding area is also labelled “Pakistan”, implying a small land-locked Pakistani city-state surrounded by India. Another map, perhaps visually the boldest of any map in the archive, shows South Asia with a darkly painted West and East Pakistan sandwiching “Hindustan” between them (Maps, IOR Neg 10811/41). Kashmir and North-East India are both included as part of Pakistan, but both are filled in with a darker colour than the rest of the country. The Bay of Bengal has been renamed the Bay of East Pakistan.

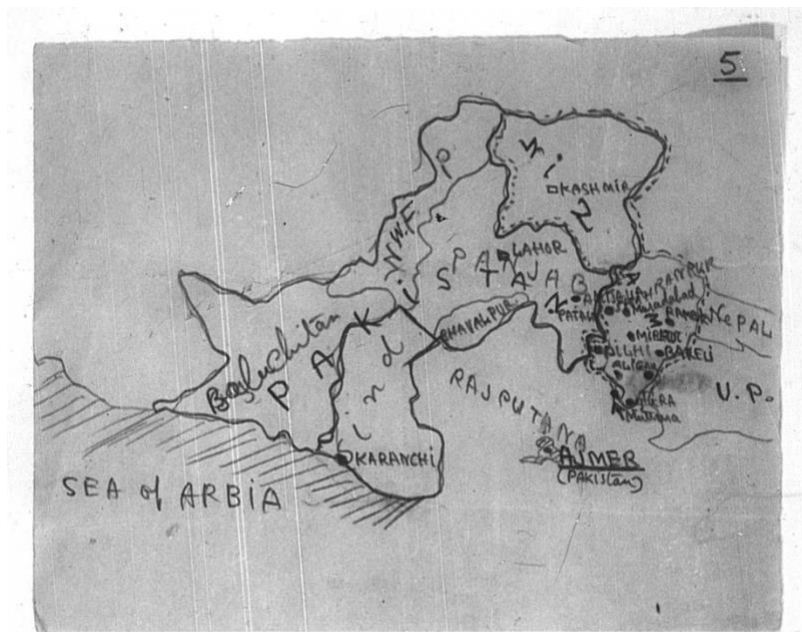


Figure 8. Sketch of Pakistan in the Jinnah Papers.

From *India Office Records and Private Papers (IOR Neg 10811/41)*, British Library, London, UK.

The document which captivated and entertained me most of all in the Jinnah archives is not a map at all, it is a small piece of paper with a rough pencil drawing (Maps, IOR Neg 10821/38). This paper is worth discussing here for its novelty as an illustrated political appeal to India’s most prominent Muslim leader. “Qaede Azam! Kindly don’t enter this door”, it says at the top, referring to Jinnah using his honorific title, which translates to Great Leader (see Figure 9). Jinnah, wearing his iconic karakul hat, is drawn walking a thorny path towards a door which is labelled “Door is open”. This door is guarded by cannons and lined with hazards and weapons of all kinds: snakes, axes, spears and swords. Some of these weapons are labelled

“globalization”, “socialism” and “communism”. A heavy, spiked block, labelled “Akhand Hindustan”, which means undivided India, hangs over the door. This term had been deployed variously by Indian leaders, by secularists to mean a united Hindu-Muslim India and by Hindu nationalists to call for a return to Hindu consolidation of most of South Asia. A giant ogre stands to the side, holding a flower towards Jinnah while saying “Come Dear! Our door is open”. This monster is labelled “Congress”. Though this drawing is neither dated nor signed, the door most likely refers to the proposal presented by the 1946 British Cabinet Mission to India which would have India grouped into Muslim and Hindu provinces instead of being partitioned into separate states—an outcome which Congress preferred. Ironically, Jinnah and the Muslim League would ultimately walk through the door and sign on to this deal, while Congress rejected it because it meant a weak central government—a deal-breaker because the party wanted to quickly implement its globalist and socialist policies across the country.

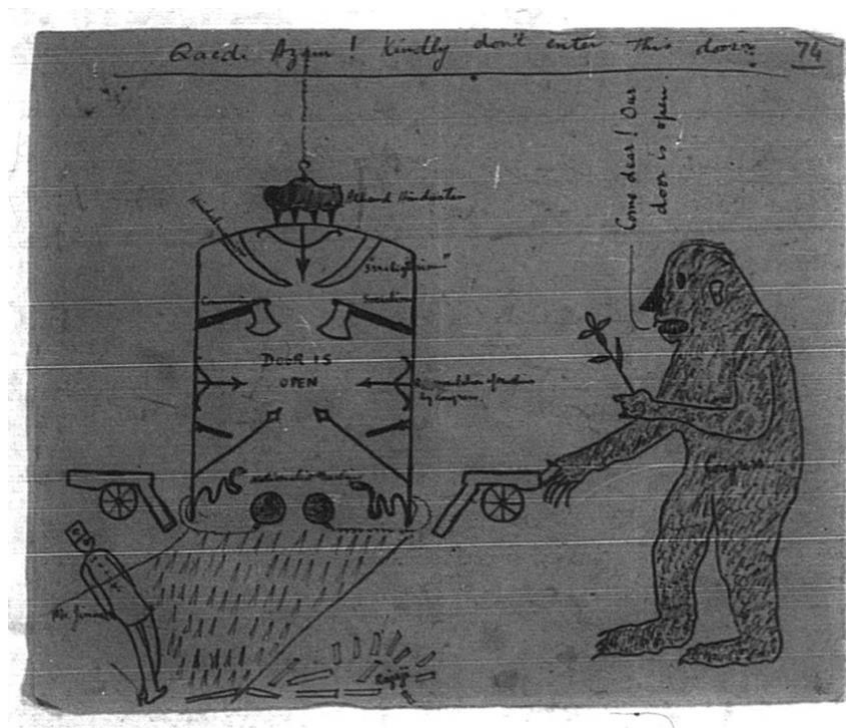


Figure 9. Sketch depicting Congress as an ogre, included in the Jinnah Papers.

From *India Office Records and Private Papers (IOR Neg 10821/38)*, British Library, London, UK.

5.6. Keeping Pakistan Nebulous

On March 24, 1940, the Muslim League formally called for separate Muslim nation-states to be created in South Asia. At a session of the All-India Muslim League in Lahore, party members passed a resolution which declared that “the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-Western and Eastern Zones of India, should be grouped to constitute ‘Independent States’ in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign” (Mughal, 2014). To make this declaration, the League constructed an elaborate stage in Lahore, paying close attention to the visual symbolism on offer by matching the colour of fabric draping the pavilion as well as the party worker uniforms to the same dark green used on its flag. Lucy P. Chester observes that “the absence of maps at a meeting planned with such attention to visual symbolism suggests that the decision not to include maps was intentional” (Chester, 2018, p. 145). There was no mention of Pakistan’s territorial limits in the declaration, nor did the League issue any maps after the meeting to clarify its demand, and would mostly maintain this cartographic silence till Partition. The language and demands of the League were now aligned with the initial proposals of Choudhry Rahmat Ali. Even the term Pakistan was now picked up and openly used by League members and began to be widely adopted into national discourse. However, unlike Ali who had been obsessed with territorializing his ideas by sketching them out on maps, the League rarely produced maps in support of its proposals.

The reluctance of the League to draw maps can be traced to its deliberate decision to keep the borders of Pakistan ambiguous (Chester, 2018, p. 145). After all, as argued earlier, maps offer an arena to articulate the spatial dimensions of nationalist discourse, but when territoriality poses a threat to the nationalism on hand, it follows that no maps ought to be drawn. How spatializing nationalist discourses can lead to the fracture of those very ideas is demonstrated by the progression of Rahmat Ali’s thinking on the fate of India’s Muslims and how he illustrated his ideas on the maps he produced. As he reckoned with the geographical spread and cultural differences between India’s Muslims, his proposals became increasingly complex and Pakistan

began to recede in both territory and population. On the other hand, the Pakistan that Jinnah and the League called for, using the loose language of “territorial readjustments” and “independent states” (Mughal, 2014), was much simpler in that it was undefined and could be variously understood by India’s Muslims on their own terms—encompassing the space around them and representing their interests.

Ayesha Jalal has argued that keeping the idea of Pakistan geographically nebulous appealed to Jinnah’s own interests. “By deliberately keeping the demand for 'Pakistan' vague, and its territories undefined,” she writes that “Jinnah had made it possible for his followers to exploit the League’s communal line without having to face its implications: the partition of the Punjab and Bengal” (Jalal, 1994, p. 242). This meant that Jinnah could claim to represent a vast Muslim nation in his negotiations with Congress and the British, and by extension hold undefined and boundless territory as a bargaining chip. However, this strategy of keeping the demand for Pakistan unspecific was not initially adopted as a negotiation tactic, but as a way to appease the various Muslim factions who held power in the provinces. If he were to define the territorial limits of this nation, and acknowledge that Punjab and Bengal may be partitioned, he would be admitting that large numbers of Muslims would be excluded from Pakistan and risk losing their support for the Pakistan movement. To prevent the erosion of support for the League and a breakup of the “Muslim Camp”, Jinnah was willing to avoid, as Jalal quotes, the “‘discussion or determination of fundamental rights for citizens in Pakistan, or production of a cut and dried scheme for Pakistan’, since these would ‘create controversies and differences of opinion’” (Jalal, 1994, p. 119). It is likely that Jinnah was wielding the idea of a boundless Muslim nation as a threat to extract a favourable deal from the British while attempting to maintain the broadest possible support for his party, and would have settled for a weak All-India federal structure which granted Muslim leaders greater political power in Muslim-majority regions (Khan, 2017, p. 44).

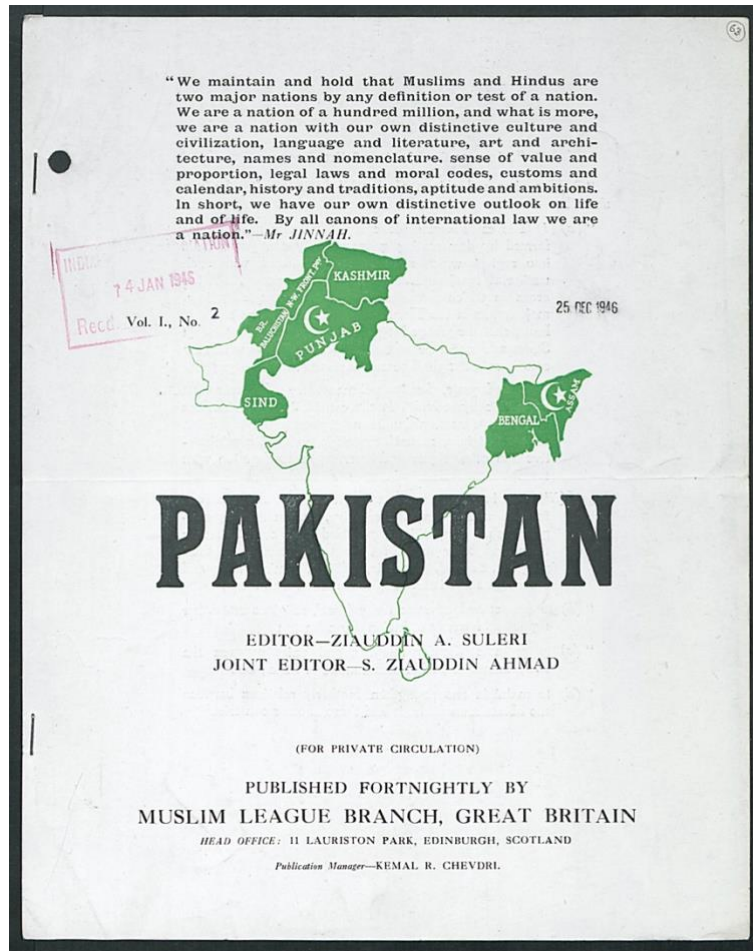


Figure 10. Pamphlet produced by the Great Britain branch of the Muslim League.

From *India Office Records and Private Papers (IOR Neg 10821/38)*, British Library, London, UK, ca. 1946.

In all of the League propaganda I sorted through at the British Library, I found only one document containing a map. This map is on the cover of a fortnightly pamphlet titled “Pakistan” circulated by the Great Britain branch of the Muslim League (Muslim League, ca. 1946). This pamphlet is stamped with the date “14 January 1946”, indicating it was produced sometime before then. A quote from a letter Jinnah sent to Gandhi in 1944 is printed at the very top: “We maintain and hold that Muslims and Hindus are two major nations by any definition or test of a nation” (see Figure 10). Below it, the map is a line drawing of the subcontinent, with the regions proposed as being part of Pakistan filled in with green. The map follows the model of an East and West Pakistan, with Assam and unpartitioned Bengal forming the East, and Kashmir,

NWFP, Sindh, Baluchistan and unpartitioned Punjab forming the West. However, the Bahawalpur and Khairpur regions are excluded from Sindh, similar to some of the maps found in the Jinnah Papers. The edge of Punjab extends to encompass New Delhi, the inclusion of which into Pakistan was commonly expected or desired by many Muslim leaders. This is also the one of the few maps which does not depict the Baluchistan Agency, a union of princely states lead by the Kalat khanate, as part of Pakistan.

5.7. Public Imaginaries of Pakistan

The ambiguous deployment of the term ‘Pakistan’ on the political stage by Muslim leaders also meant that their followers imagined Pakistan as vastly different political or territorial conceptions based on their own aspirations and circumstances. Some of these imaginaries are captured in a travelogue written by Malcolm Darling, a retired Indian civil servant, who rode around North India on horseback near the end of 1946 to find out “what the peasant was thinking” by visiting small villages (Darling, 1949, p. 13). Some villagers he met took Pakistan to mean some kind of a territorial arrangement. In a village near the Chenab river, one individual explained that to them Pakistan meant that “our area must be separate, and the Hindu area must be separate” (Darling, 1949, p. 68). In the village of Mullana near Ambala, Darling met an “ardent Leaguer” and asked “But what will you do here? This area can never be part of Pakistan.” The man responded: “Here where I stand—this is Pakistan” (Darling, 1949, p. 137). Mullana would ultimately lie some three hundred kilometres outside the borders of Pakistan.

Other villagers were ambivalent as to how the creation of Pakistan would improve their lives. In the village of Gadwara near Lucknow, a Muslim revenue official neither wanted Pakistan nor Hindustan. When asked what it was he wanted then, he replied “that things should go on as they are.” Darling countered that it had already been decided that India was to be partitioned. “But that” the man responded “can be changed in a moment,” (Darling, 1949, p. 155) reflecting how quickly the turn towards Partition had taken place, and how quickly it was felt this decision could be reversed. While walking towards the village of Tendukhera near Bhopal,

Darling writes about encountering two Muslims on bicycles. “Do you want Pakistan?” Darling asked them, to which they responded: “Pakistan? What good is that to us?—we want oil, cloth, sugar, wheat. And we want justice—that is all” (Darling, 1949, p. 281).

The extent to which map-making was taken up by India’s Muslim public—to ground, think through and help push for the realization of their aspirations—is difficult to assess due to archival silences. Archives which hold documents from the time of Partition are mostly built around prominent political leaders and organizations which played a key part in the process, and are lacking in documents produced by the general population. One window into the iconography and visual vernacular adopted by the followers of the Pakistan movement is photographs taken at Muslim League rallies. Many of these images, compiled by Ata-ur-Rehman in *A pictorial history of Pakistan Movement*, show throngs of people gathered around stages draped in dark green fabric, with a white star and crescent—the Muslim League flag—painted over top. People in the crowd can be seen waving various iterations of the flag, all bearing the star and crescent but often in different positions and in varying sizes (Ata-ur-Rehman, 1988, p. 137).

After searching through newspapers and magazines printed in the lead-up to Partition, which are the forum most likely to contain photographs taken during Muslim League rallies, I was able to find a single image of a map being held up at a rally. This image appears in the illustrated pages of a magazine published on March 23, 1946, as part of an article titled “India Awaits the Mission” (India Awaits, 1946). No pages which mention the name of this publication have been kept as part of the record. The photograph is of a Muslim League rally in Calcutta; the decorated clock tower of the neo-baroque Metropolitan building is visible in the background (see Figure 11). A painted banner is unfurled by two men, and the title “MAP OF PAKISTAN” is written at the top right in an uncharacteristic art-deco typeface. Below, Jinnah is painted holding the Muslim League flag over an outline map of the subcontinent. The parts of the subcontinent claimed as Pakistan are filled in (presumably in green, following the League’s colour scheme, although the photograph is in black and white). The western half of Pakistan claimed here is

similar to the one proposed on the Muslim League pamphlet discussed earlier: Kashmir, NWFP, all of Baluchistan, unpartitioned Punjab, and Sindh without the Khairpur region. The eastern half includes Bengal, Assam and Bihar, but expands further west than most proposed partition plans. The western edge of East Pakistan is actually concealed behind Jinnah's frame, leaving the frontiers of Pakistan ambiguous and up to the work of individual imagination.



Figure 11. Photo of a Muslim League rally in Calcutta.

From *India Office Records and Private Papers (IOR Neg 10821/38)*, British Library, London, UK, 1946.

Whether Jinnah is intentionally positioned in a way to conceal the border or not, the work this map performs is quite clever. We can evaluate how we would respond to this map today to grasp at the much more heightened effect it may have had that day in Calcutta, during a nationalist rally in a country on the verge of being partitioned. If we were to look at the map uncritically, we would not find the border hidden behind Jinnah to be unclear. We would fill the space behind him with our assumptions, biases, ignorance or aspirations. Everywhere else on the

map, territory is depicted with fixed borders and filled in with solid colours. We would assume this fixity continues behind Jinnah, that the border is right behind him, and we would see it if he were to walk off the banner. If the painting of Jinnah becomes magically animated, and he were to actually walk off, he would leave a hole the shape of his silhouette on the subcontinent. The graphic and territorial continuity we envision is a visual trick—rationally we know there is nothing painted behind him, but European-style political maps are often perceived as settled depictions of space.

5.8. The Boundary Commissions

In the late weeks of June 1947, the Mountbatten-led British government of India raced to determine the make-up of the Punjab and Bengal Boundary Commissions, while seeking input and approval from the Muslim League and Congress. Mountbatten underlined this haste to nationalist leaders by stating that “all parties had unanimously expressed the opinion that it was most desirable that the Boundary Commissions should finish their work by the 15th of August” (Chester, 2009, p. 36). It was decided that each commission would consist of two Congress and two Muslim League nominees, and be led by an independent chairman who could act as an unbiased and objective judge. On 26 June, British officials first put forward the name of Cyril Radcliffe to serve as the chair of both Boundary Commissions. Radcliffe was a highly reputed barrister in London, widely known in British legal and government circles, and familiar to both Mountbatten and Jinnah—but he had no previous training or experience in boundary making. He had also never written about, nor ever stepped foot in India, and he “barely knew where the Punjab and Bengal were” (Lapierre & Collins, 1999, p. 226). Indeed, he first encountered the lands he was about to partition in the form of a map. In an account constructed from interviews with Radcliffe himself, historians Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins write that before he left for India, he met with the Permanent Under Secretary at the India Office in London. The Secretary unfolded a map of the subcontinent on his desk and traced his fingers along the Indus and Ganges rivers to convey the contours of Punjab and Bengal. (Yet another incident in which

powerful individuals gathered around a map and where their fingers touching the map entailed earth-shaking possibilities). As he looked down at “175,000 square miles of the earth's surface all abstracted down to a flat piece of coloured paper on a bureaucrat's desk”, for the first time, Radcliffe learnt of the enormous size of the provinces—then the home of some 88 million people—he was to cut through (Lapierre & Collins, 1999, p. 227).

Radcliffe's lack of knowledge of India was considered an asset in the boundary-making process, because it was assumed that anyone who had studied or visited India was bound to be predisposed to one side or the other (Lapierre & Collins, 1999, p. 227). However, as Lucy P. Chester has argued, Radcliffe's ignorance of India did not mean that he was an independent and impartial actor. While the League and Congress had been preoccupied with making sure the commission chair did not favour either party, they overlooked the fact that the man who had been selected had a life-long record of loyal service towards the British Government and by extension its empire. Chester quotes a historian describing Radcliffe as “the man to whom Governments turned to put out the flames”. At the time, in 1947, he earned close to £50,000 per year by serving on the bar—nearly two million pounds in 2020 (Chester, 2009, p. 41). That he was willing to give such a high income up for the relatively measly payment of £2000 for the monumentally difficult task of partitioning the subcontinent, is testament to the sense of duty and obligation he felt towards serving the British government and its interests. On June 30, the British Government of India announced the formation of the Punjab and Bengal Boundary Commissions, with Radcliffe as their chair, and assigned them a short and vague mandate: “The Boundary Commission is instructed to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of the Punjab/Bengal on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. In doing so it will also take into account other factors” (Chester, 2009, p. 39). From here, much of the debate and conflict between the involved parties would revolve around determining what these “other factors ” were.

Radcliffe arrived in South Asia on 8 July, 1947, believing he would have six months to draw up the partition lines between Punjab and Bengal. Mountbatten soon informed him that he would have just six weeks, till August 15, to complete this task (Chester, 2009, p. 55). Radcliffe was so shocked that he personally reached out to both Nehru and Jinnah to ask if it was essential for the boundaries to be determined by then. Both confirmed that it was (Lapierre & Collins, 1999, p. 235). This meant that he wouldn't have enough time to visit and survey any of the areas his partition line would cut through. In the provinces he was partitioning, he only visited Calcutta in Bengal and Lahore in Punjab. Beyond that, he stayed and deliberated in Simla and Delhi (Chester, 2009, p. 55). Soon after his arrival, Radcliffe also met the four judges who had been appointed by Congress and the Muslim League to advise him during the boundary-making process. It became apparent that the two League nominees, Muhammad Munir and Din Muhammad, and the two Congress nominees, Mehr Chand Mahajan and Teja Singh, had been instructed against any compromise on the overlapping claims of their parties. All of them had a background in criminal law and none of them, like Radcliffe, had experience boundary-making. Radcliffe confided in a friend that he “found it quite impossible to persuade either side to make any modification of their views” (Chester, 2009, p. 55). The sense of urgency wrought by the dramatic condensing of his timeline and the political deadlock between the members of his commission meant that Radcliffe retreated to working out the contours of his boundary award mostly in isolation.

5.9. The Muslim League's Map

Before their deliberations, the members of the Punjab Boundary Commission held public hearings where all concerned parties were asked to propose how they believed Punjab should be partitioned. This process was rife with casteism; influential groups like Congress and the Muslim League could present their case in person, while those with less political power, like Dalits, could only submit their arguments in writing (Chester, 2009, p. 58). Groups submitting proposals were also asked to submit their arguments drawn on maps, indicating “the proposed line of

demarcation between the two new Provinces” (Chester, 2009, p. 66). These groups were told on 14 July to submit their plans by 18 July, and the final documents were delivered to Radcliffe on 20 July (Chester, 2009, p. 66). This meant that the concerned groups had only four days to draw up their maps (along with their written memoranda), and Radcliffe received them just twenty-six days before the date of Partition. The maps attached to the claims of three of the most prominent groups, the Congress and Muslim League parties and Sikh representatives, have been compiled by Mian Muhammad Sadullah in a series of books on the partition of Punjab (Sadullah, 1993). The final volume contains photographic reproductions of the primary maps kept in the Archives of the Punjab Government in Lahore, printed in their full original size. It’s unclear what cartographic materials the parties would have access to in order to produce their maps; Survey of India maps were restricted to “official use only” (Chester, 2009, p. 66).

The map submitted by the Muslim League to the Punjab Boundary Commission is labelled “Map of the Punjab” with the subheading: “Muslim Majority Tehils and Contiguous Majority Areas of Muslims” (Sadullah, 1993). It is neatly hand-drawn at a scale of one inch to sixteen miles, and showing the entire province of Punjab. (In 2020, this coheres with the area covered by India’s Capital Territory and its Punjab and Haryana states, and Pakistan’s Punjab province.) The region’s winding rivers and canals are outlined and coloured in a dark blue, railway lines are drawn with a train track symbol, and the Grand Truck Roads (a network of historic trade routes connecting Central and South Asia) are traced in a thick black line, extending like arteries from small circles marking major cities. These are the only physical features drawn on the map, which suggests that the region’s waterways, railways and roads were determined to be critical infrastructures by the map-makers, or at the very least infrastructures which could be leveraged in support of their claim. The map subdivides Punjab into its administrative units, showing provincial/state, district and *tehsil* boundaries. The Muslim League claim was premised on the idea that all Muslim majority tehsils should be granted to Pakistan (Chester, 2009, p. 68). On the map, almost all of western and central Punjab, where most of the

Muslim majority tehsils lie, is flooded in green, depicting the League's claim. Along the edges of these tehsils, some Muslim majority contiguous areas which extend far into non-Muslim majority regions are also claimed, filled in with green horizontal stripes. One of these salients follows the Sutlej river some two hundred kilometres into non-Muslim areas, the other encloses the Beas river, giving Pakistan increased control over two important waterways (Chester, 2009, p. 147). Congress had been critical of this aspect of the League's claim, saying "you cannot have, while drawing international boundaries, salients of this character with territory eight or ten miles wide penetrating into the other state", though their own map contained much larger salients into Muslim-majority areas (Chester, 2009, p. 69). Two isolated Muslim-majority areas, Ferozepur district and two tehsils close to Delhi, are claimed as part of Pakistan and appear as green islands protruding deep into non-Muslim territory areas. Meanwhile, the holy city of Amritsar, though enclosed by Muslim-majority territory, are left outside the claim, appearing as a bright yellow Sikh enclave completely surrounded by Pakistan. How Radcliffe considered this and the other maps submitted to the Boundary Commission remains unclear, but his final contours would not align anywhere with those suggested by the Muslim League.

6. The Radcliffe Award

6.1. The Revelation of the Radcliffe Award

In early August, after completing their public hearings in Lahore and Calcutta, Radcliffe and the judges of the Boundary Commission moved to Shimla, the summer capital of British India, to deliberate. Then, on 7 August, Radcliffe left for Delhi, where he would spend his remaining time in India and produce the final boundary award (Chester, 2009, p. 70).

"Sequestered in a green-shuttered, stucco bungalow on the edge of Delhi's viceregal estate", he began to draw the partition lines in relative isolation, surrounded only by documents—showing maps, population tables, and statistics—to guide his decisions (Lapierre & Collins, 1999, p. 266). The time left to him meant that he would have to demarcate, on average, one hundred kilometres

a day. On top of the pressures of such a compressed timeframe, he did not to possess the tools he needed to successfully complete his task. He repeatedly tried and evidently failed (based on the maps attached to his final award) to find large scale survey maps to consult and draw his line on. Leonard Moseley, a British journalist who interviewed Radcliffe writes that “One of his principal worries was to obtain a big enough ordnance map upon which he could work and use as a master map” (Chester, 2009, p. 85). Radcliffe also brought up this concern in his interviews with Lapierre and Collins, who write that “it proved almost impossible to find an ordnance map large enough to serve as his master map” (Lapierre & Collins, 1999, p. 267). Nevertheless, he would get to work drawing out the boundaries on maps with inadequate detail, with no first-hand knowledge of the territory flattened out before him, nor with any input from the people who lived there, and with only textual and visual references (surveys and statistics compiled by British agencies) to guide his hand.

Radcliffe completed his demarcations three days before the August 15 deadline (both the Bengal and Punjab awards are dated 12 August) and delivered two copies of his award, sealed in brown manila envelopes, to the viceroy’s office on 13 August (Chester, 2009, p. 107; Lapierre & Collins, 1999, p. 287). On August 15, the British government of India transferred power to the newly formed dominions of India and Pakistan, but Mountbatten decided to hold back the release of the boundary awards. Publicly, he maintained that this was because nationalist leaders were sure to be disappointed with the award, and he wished to avoid ruining relations with them and having that cast a shadow over the independence celebrations. Privately however, he expressed a different reasoning. In a staff meeting on August 9th, he disclosed his worry about the award that “the earlier it was published, the more the British would have to bear the responsibility for the disturbances which would undoubtedly result” (Chester, 2009, p. 106). Put more clearly, he wanted the British to avoid responsibility for the communal violence which was now widely expected in response to the revelation of the new frontier, even though, the boundary-making process had been undertaken by a British official relying on documents produced by other British

officials. In his last exchange with officials in London before Partition, Mountbatten declared: “Let the Indians have the joy of their Independence Day, they can face the misery of the situation after” (Lapierre & Collins, 1999, p. 286).

Mountbatten’s decision to keep the borders secret meant that even as the dominions of India and Pakistan legally came into existence, and independence celebrations took hold of the subcontinent, the leaders of these new states did not know the extents of territory and population they now governed, and the public at large did not know which state their homes fell into. The administrative confusion and political tension wrought by the viceroy’s decision is evidenced by an incident in the Gurdaspur district in northern Punjab. Expecting the tehsils forming this district to be awarded to them, Pakistani officials moved in and raised the Pakistani flag. When it was later revealed that the district had been awarded to India, the Pakistanis were pushed back across the newly emerging frontier (Chester, 2009, p. 107). In her collection of first-hand accounts of Partition, Urvashi Butalia recounts how this confusion was observed by a woman who lived in the district: “Now there was a rumour that it would go to Pakistan, she said, and suddenly stories would fly that it would go to Hindustan. Each time one of these rumours became rife, people of the other community would abandon their homes and run, leaving everything behind” (Butalia, 1998, p. 298). Gurdaspur district would soon emerge as the pivot around which the conflict over Kashmir would revolve. A similar incident took place in the Malda district in Bengal, where the Pakistani flag was flown atop the administrative headquarters before the district was awarded to India, leaving the locals dazed (Khan, 2017, p. 126).

On 16 August, Mountbatten handed the manila envelopes containing the boundary awards to Jawaharlal Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan, the newly appointed prime ministers of India and Pakistan. These were the last documents that the British would hand over to India as its imperial authority; “the final links in a chain that had begun with Elizabeth I’s Royal Charter to the East India Company in 1599” (Lapierre & Collins, 1999, p. 353). Both the Indian and Pakistani leaders were furious at the work of the Boundary Commission, but lacking any avenue

to contest the award, they begrudgingly announced the new borders to the public on 17 August. Dawn, a newspaper founded by Jinnah as the Muslim League's mouthpiece, declared it "territorial murder" (Butalia, 1998, p. 85). The cleaving of Indian territorial space led to a convulsing rupture of its already unravelling body politic, as the confusion surrounding the border seen earlier now gave way to violence. As groups discovered what side of the border their communities fell on, they set out to affirm or contest the contours Radcliffe designed. Murder and rape were deployed to eliminate, drive out and lay claim to the territory occupied by opposing ethnic groups. The 'proper' borders were marked on the ground using dead bodies, as "the dead, thereby became signals to the living of the construction of ethnic boundaries" (Khan, 2017, p. 127; Mayaram, 1996, p. 149). These acts of violence were, at once, a repudiation of Radcliffe's award and an appeal to imperial boundary-making logics. If Muslims were eliminated in a district, surely it could not be awarded to Pakistan. If Pakistan was the hard-fought homeland for India's Muslims, it follows that only Muslims should live in it. Driven by this violence, religious groups who found themselves in the minority abandoned their homes and began to move, packed together in trains or by foot in immense *kafilas* (caravans), towards the country where their community formed the majority. In what is considered the largest mass migration in recorded history, eight million refugees would cross the Indo-Pakistan border before the end of the year, growing to a total of fourteen million by the end of 1951 (Khan, 2017, p. 156; Kosinski & Elahi, 1985, p. 5).

It's difficult not to read these events as a cruel and unwitting execution of Rahmat Ali's scheme to avoid "minorityism": his plan to ensure no minorities were produced in the post-partition states. Though at the time he had drawn up his maps, he had mischaracterized religion as the central organizing logic of Indian society, it had now come to pass that religion trumped all other markers of identity. It was as if the border, demarcated on the basis of "ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims", acted as a filter through which either side could only identify the other by their religious affiliation. In other words, the emergence of a

material formation (the border), derived from a particular marker of identity (religion), lead to the ascendance of that marker in the constitution of the body politic (who belongs to India or Pakistan). The sanctity of this body politic, in turn, could only be preserved by the transfer and obliteration of bodies who did not fit its mould.

6.2. Inside the Manila Envelopes

Now we turn to the documents inside the manila envelopes, whose revelation set off this immense humanitarian catastrophe. A copy of the Punjab boundary award appears in a folder containing the personal files of Cyril Radcliffe, held as part of the India Office records at the British Library (Radcliffe, 1947). The leading document of the award is typewritten, simply titled “Report”, and with no textual or visual indication of the monumentality of its contents, is disappointingly banal in appearance. It is addressed to Mountbatten, and over its six pages Radcliffe summarizes the mandate of the Boundary Commissions and provides commentary on some of his decision-making. Notably, he gives a rationale for why he didn’t award the Muslim-majority contiguous areas along the Beas and Sutlej rivers, which had been claimed on the Muslim League map, to Pakistan. “I have come to the conclusion” he writes, “that it would be in the true interests of neither State to extend the territories of the West Punjab to a strip on the far side of the Sutlej and that there are factors such as the disruption of railway communications and water systems that ought in this instance to displace the primary claims of contiguous majorities” (Radcliffe, 1947, p. 34). Radcliffe’s position that the preservation of essential infrastructure, particularly those built by the British, could override religious majorities is a topic which will be addressed in greater detail later on in this thesis. On its last page, the document is signed by him, and dated 12 August, 1947.

The actual contours of the boundary are detailed in two annexures attached to this report. The first, Annexure A, contains a textual description of the border and Annexure B contains a map illustrating this line. In his report, Radcliffe privileges the textual over the visual, writing that “should there be any divergence between the boundary as described in Annexure A and as

delineated on the map in Annexure B, the description in Annexure A is to prevail” (Radcliffe, 1947, p. 32). Annexure A reads as an unfeeling third person account of a line moving through space: “The line will then turn south-westward ... It will then run along ... The line will then run down ... It will then turn ... It will then run ...” (Radcliffe, 1947, p. 37). In this account, none of the villages, farms, waterways, power lines, railway tracks that the line runs into are able to stop its progress. In fact, it seems the line can’t even recognize that they are there. The line is not familiar with the territories its traverses, but it will reshape them nevertheless.

Annexure B, the map of the entire Punjab partition line, is not included in this file at the British Library. It is also not part of any other file containing Radcliffe or the Boundary Commission’s papers. I attempted to track this map down, with the assistance of John O’Brien, the India Office Records archivist at the Library, and while our search yielded some manual reproductions which were circulated after Partition, we were unable to find the original or any copies of the map produced by Radcliffe himself. This map also isn’t held, or at least made accessible, in Pakistani or Indian archives. Lucy P. Chester, in her deeply researched analysis of the work of the Boundary Commissions, writes that she found it “impossible to trace any original Boundary Commission maps in the British, Indian or Pakistani archives” (Chester, 2009, p. 83). This was disappointing, because when I began this project, Radcliffe’s original map was the document I wanted to find most of all—partially to surface a document of incredible historical significance, but mostly to challenge the dominant visual lexicon of Partition which obfuscates the fact that the roots of the tragedy lay in the imposition of imperial taxonomies on South Asia.

6.3. Endowing Paper with Power

The most enduring images of Partition are black and white photographs of thousands of people crammed inside and on top of trains, of endless columns of people walking towards unknown destinations, and of refugee camps encircling historic *mahals* and gates. The dispossessors—the institutions and forces that drove these people from their homes—are missing from the frame. The refugees captured in these images would cross, or had already crossed the

line Radcliffe drew—but that border, which now existed as a legal fabulation waiting to be asserted onto the ground, was beyond the camera’s capacity to see. With the work of empire invisible, imperial subjects also served as the sole subjects of the camera. In rendering Partition as a calamitous event with ambiguous blame, these images suffer from what Ariella Aïsha Azoulay calls the “dissociation of the camera’s shutter from other imperial shutters” (Azoulay, 2019, p. 25). She defines *imperial shutters* as brief operations that can “transform an individual rooted in her life-world into a refugee, a looted object into a work of art, a whole shared world into a thing of the past, and the past itself into a separate time zone” (Azoulay, 2019, p. 29). If not the photographs, what then can capture the imperial shutters of Partition? Perhaps the document whose revelation set off this catastrophe in the first place.

Radcliffe’s map is symbolic of British imperialism and Orientalism in South Asia; of the flattening of lands and people into legible taxonomies and of the callous application of power from a distance, but it is also, as an object, imbued with power in that its declarations took precedence over the aspirations, demands and livelihoods of the thirty-three million people who lived in Punjab. While the map’s power is enabled by it being a product of and executed within the broader legal framework of British imperial control, I argue that the map itself is a container of power in that it set forth the instructions that imperial (and later national) agencies executed. This reading of documents, as not just records but themselves vestibules of power, is an attempt to resist one of the foundational conceits of European imperial archival practice: to wall off its collections “from the circumstances of their production” (Azoulay, 2019, p. 639). In fact, such a reading tracks closer to how documents were originally viewed within imperial legal frameworks. In the 1500s, the development of the printing press and the spread of cheap paper production methods at a time when the European imperial powers were starting to standardize methods of “inscribing or abrogating rights”, lead to the invention of documents as “the correlation between pieces of written paper and actions” (Azoulay, 2019, p. 640). Azoulay writes

that “actions were assumed to stem directly from documents, similarly to the way a blueprint or a template testifies to the craft of a carpenter or a mason” (Azoulay, 2019, p. 640).

The process of endowing pieces of paper with power is legible in the legal processes that lead to the formation of the Boundary Commission. The Indian Independence Act of 1947 specified that “the boundaries of the said new Provinces shall be such as may be determined, whether before or after the appointed day, by the award of a Boundary Commission” (Chester, 2009, p. 112). Soon after his arrival, Radcliffe wrote to Mountbatten asking to ensure the legal unassailability of the award. This led the introduction of a new clause into the Act which defined the term ‘award’ as “the decisions of the chairman of that [boundary] commission” (Chester, 2009, p. 112). After delivering his award, in the form of text and as visuals on maps, he left India on the day of independence and thereby ended his role in the Partition process. After independence, a legal challenge by the Government of India found the instructions on the award immoveable (Chester, 2009, p. 112). In the eyes of British imperial law, this award, a product of the documents it contained, was now the arbiter of Partition, and its contents could not be challenged. Now that the boundary award was fixed on paper, it gained a magical power which rendered its commands absolute and gave it dominion over material formations. With Radcliffe out of the picture, it was now these documents which issued the border-making declarations that British and national agencies carried out.

These are the reasons why I thought it important to seek out the original Partition map: for its symbolic and evidentiary value, but most of all to amend the visual record of Partition by positioning the map beside the images of the people it turned into refugees; and thereby bring into sharper relief the cruelty of the imperial logics under which a piece of paper can hold hegemony over millions of people.

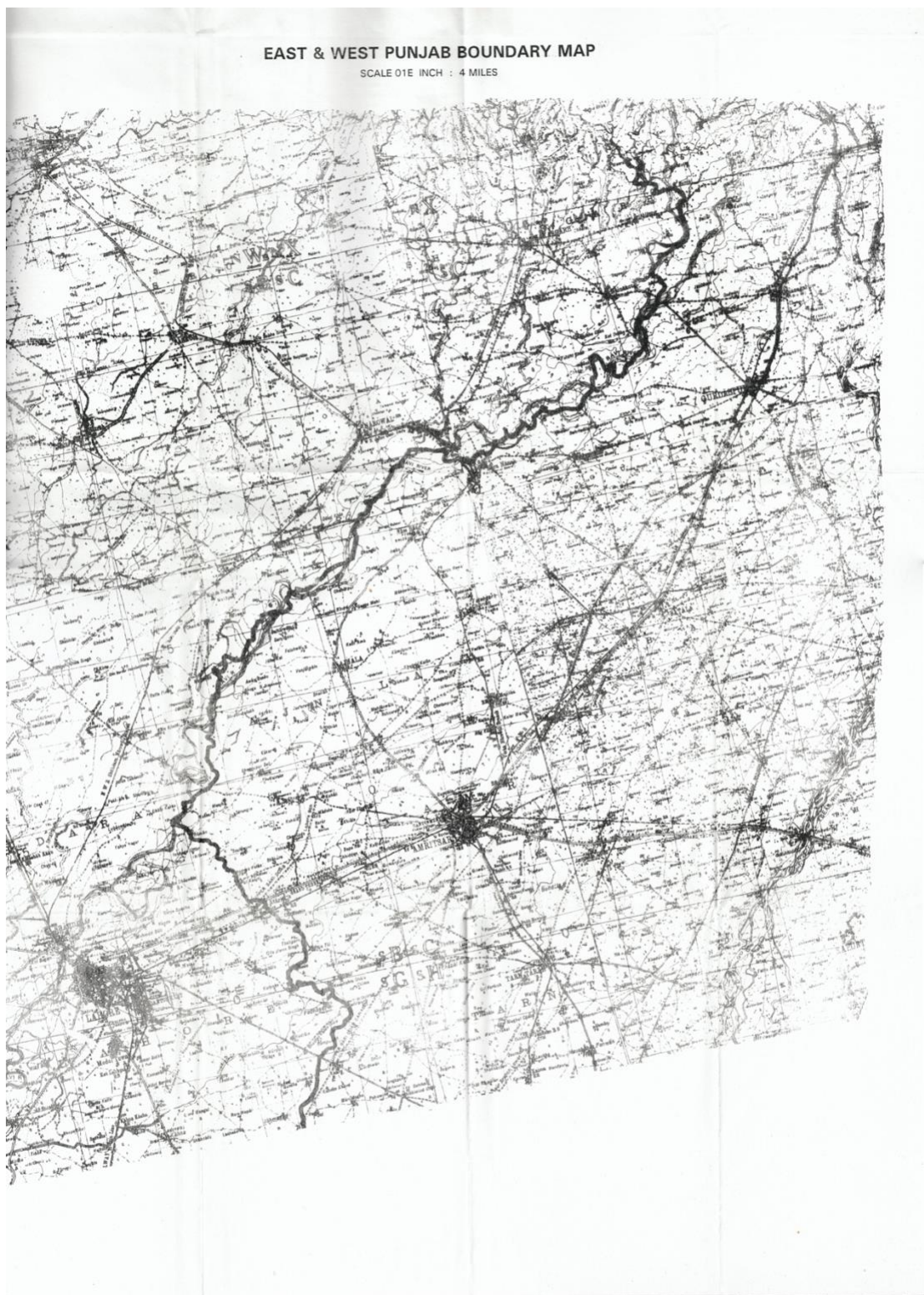


Figure 12. A section of the map (Annexure B) attached to The Punjab Boundary Award in 1947.

As reproduced by Mian Muhammad Sadullah in *The Partition of the Punjab Vol. 4*, 1993.

6.4. Radcliffe's Maps

The only copy of Radcliffe's original map that I could find is published in the previously mentioned series of books by Mian Muhammad Sadullah, which collate the primary documents related to the Punjab boundary drawing process. The caption before the map reads: "This is a full-size reproduction in two parts, the second part to be placed before the first part for reading, of the map (preserved in the Punjab Archives) annexed by Sir Cyril Radcliffe to his Award" (Sadullah, 1993). The maps are split into two pull-outs, printed in black and white and are of poor quality, as if they have been photocopied (see Figure 12). These maps also don't capture the entirety of Radcliffe's original, and only show the sections where he drew the boundary. Near the bottom of the map, Radcliffe has drawn a rough oval and inside it written: "Certified as Annexure B to my Report dated 12 August 1947, Cyril Radcliffe Chairman Punjab Boundary Commission" (Sadullah, 1993). The first detail of note is that Radcliffe did not commission a new map depicting his boundary, and instead chose to draw the border over top of existing maps. It is also apparent that Radcliffe was not able to find maps to draw on that covered the entirety of Punjab at the scale he desired, and to produce a map that could show the full extent of his boundary he cut and taped several maps together. Lucy Chester has identified these as seven maps from the Survey of India's quarter inch topographic series, which were produced between 1941 and 1944 (Chester, 2009, p. 95). The purpose of these survey maps had originally been to abet the territorial consolidation of British India, and later, with the subcontinent firmly under imperial rule, they served as administrative instruments that depicted India as "a land already pacified and controlled" and "a land that produced revenue" (Chester, 2009, p. 96). To serve this purpose, on the survey maps which Radcliffe used both as his reference and canvas, the land was condensed to points of imperial concern, mainly depicting infrastructure important to British governance such as roads, railways and canals, along with rivers, villages and cities. These features were then overlaid with seven levels of British administrative boundaries.



Figure 13. A cropped section of the map (Annexure B) attached to The Punjab Boundary Award in 1947, showing an area where Radcliffe joined four roughly cut maps together. As reproduced by Mian Muhammad Sadullah in *The Partition of the Punjab Vol. 4*, 1993.

All quarter-inch Survey of India maps were printed on large sheets with conventional map features such as a title, a scale, a legend, neat lines and information on the map's authorship. To produce his map, Radcliffe roughly cut away all this information from the seven survey maps and kept only their cartographic matter. These cropped sheets were then imprecisely taped together, most likely due to the haste with which Radcliffe needed to complete his work. As a result, ragged paper edges appear at the points where the maps are joined together. At some intersections the maps overlap each other too much, and at other points there is too much space between them. Entire villages seem to have fallen into the dark voids between the maps. Roads and railway tracks disappear and then appear again half a mile away. Grid lines, one of the most important terms of reference for survey maps, are misaligned wherever the maps meet (see Figure 13). Radcliffe's border though, drawn with a thick marker, flows evenly across the maps, which means that he drew it after the maps were already taped together. At close to a quarter of an inch thick (or one mile wide on the ground) this line is easily the most dominant visual element on the map. The line starts at the southern edge of Kashmir, where the Ujh river enters

Punjab, and circles south around Shakar Garh before cutting through Lahore and Amritsar. It then charts south, forming a salient around the Sutlej river near Kasur, before moving south-west till it reaches Bahawalpur state. Another map attached to the award clarifies the contours of the Kasur salient at a larger scale: 1 inch to 2 miles (Sadullah, 1993). Everything to the east of the line on these maps would be part of India, and everything to the west would be Pakistan. For the most part, the line clings to *tehsil* or district boundaries based on their religious majorities. Even where the line gets close to natural boundaries, such as the paths of the rivers which give Punjab its name, Radcliffe privileges British administrative boundaries by writing that “the tahsil boundaries referred to, and not the actual course of the river Ujh or the river Ravi, shall constitute the boundary” (Radcliffe, 1947, p. 36). This was surely disappointing to Hindu, Muslim and Sikh leaders, who had all advocated for using natural boundaries, such as Punjab’s rivers, to determine parts of the border (Chester, 2009, p. 77).

The line deviates from administrative boundaries in some areas to avoid the disruption of transport or energy infrastructure. Radcliffe explains this in his award by writing that “there are factors such as the disruption of railway communications and water systems that ought in this instance to displace the primary claims of contiguous majorities” (Radcliffe, 1947, p. 34). In an interview with Lucy Chester, Radcliffe’s assistant Christopher Beaumont confirmed that they developed an infrastructural pecking order under which “water was the key. And railways would come second, and electricity would run third.” (Chester, 2009, p. 80). Tellingly, in his award Radcliffe only explains his diversions from the administrative boundaries and never explains why his line mostly sticks to them. Chester observes that “it was taken for granted that decolonization would retain these local boundaries. The question of changing them may never have entered Radcliffe's mind, and it is possible the decision to follow them where possible was unconscious” (Chester, 2009, p. 79). Conscious or not, Radcliffe’s allegiance to imperial conceits meant that the partition line would be determined by religious majorities as they fit into the bounds of British administrative units, and only bend to preserve infrastructures privileged by

the British. The maps which were once used to consolidate British India, and the infrastructures used to extract from it, would also serve as the terms for the empire's dissolution.

Beyond the text of the award and the maps Radcliffe produced, there are almost no primary documents which provide a rationale for why he drew the border in the way he did. In interviews with scholars and letters written after Partition, Radcliffe speaks broadly about his motivations, but these reflections are undoubtedly influenced by witnessing the effects of his line on the ground, and may not align with his actual thinking during the boundary-making process. This dearth of documentation is exacerbated by his famous habit of destroying papers. His own step-son called him "the most thorough destroyer of papers he has known" (Chester, 2009, p. 41), a description he certainly lived up to in the boundary-making process, since, before leaving India, he destroyed "almost all the papers related to his private deliberations on the boundary line" (Chester, 2009, p. 73). One method of gaining insight into his decision-making then is to evaluate the same reference material he consulted, since these records were his primary source of knowledge on the territory he was partitioning. In the next section, I first examine the survey maps which Radcliffe drew on, then analyze the guides used by the surveyors and cartographers who produced these maps, and finally delve into the broader motivations and territorial logics which animated imperial mapping practises.

As mentioned earlier, the copy of Radcliffe's map in Sadullah's book is an incredibly poor reproduction. Though printed at actual size, large parts of the original are cropped out. The Survey of India maps were drawn with a wide palette of colours, and much of detail conveyed by the colours is lost in this black and white copy. The original maps were also drawn with incredibly fine symbology, which is faded, blurred and in some parts not even picked up by the reproduction method used. Given the poor quality of this map, and the mysterious absence of the original in archives, I had planned to create a facsimile of Radcliffe's map. Based on Chester's description, I found the seven Survey of India maps he used at the British Library, and requested high quality scans (I was not allowed to photograph them). The plan was to then cut and align

these maps in the same way that Radcliffe had, and then transpose the line from Sadullah's copy onto them. However, the Library closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and at the time of writing has conveyed no plans to reopen its imaging centres. The tragic irony that Rahmat Ali's nationalist map-making too was thwarted by a pandemic (in that it killed him) is not lost on me.

6.5. Reading the Empire in its Maps

"To read the map we have to dismantle first of all the frame that the cartographer has placed around it"—J.B. Harley, *Deconstructing the Map*, 1992

In his satirical short story, *Del rigor en la ciencia*, Jorge Luis Borges' writes about an empire addicted to the advancement of cartography, pushing towards ever more complete and encompassing maps. Its cartographers had already produced maps of provinces which were the size of entire cities, and maps of the empire which took up whole provinces. Yet, they remained unsatisfied with their work. Eventually, they ventured to create the most exhaustive map of their empire they possibly could, which would coincide with the land "point for point", but this map ended up being the size of empire itself (Borges, 1972, p. 131). This story beautifully illustrates the fundamental issue of cartography; that all maps are simplifications and can never depict a space in its totality. To avoid making a map that is the size of the territory it represents, decisions must be made about what information will be displayed, based on the intended function of the map. Maps are then a composite of the many choices about content and design that prefigure their production: decisions about projection, scale, colour and typography; about inclusions and omissions; and about the distortion of geometries and the creation of hierarchies. Maps are thereby subject to the interests, beliefs and biases of the individuals which produce them, the political systems they represent, the historical moment they occupy, and the geographical context they operate in. As eloquently put by Matthew H. Edney "meaning is invested in all aspects of cartography: in the instrumentation and technologies wielded by the geographer; in the social relations within which maps are made and used; and, in the cultural expectations which define, and which are defined by, the map image" (Edney, 1997, p. 2). Knowing this, we can deploy a

method of analyzing maps in which the social, political and economic forces underpinning the work of the cartographers can be teased out from the features they chose to draw, the symbols they used to mark them, and the information they left out. The standardized Survey of India maps, produced to render the subcontinent comprehensible and governable, are a product of many such decisions.

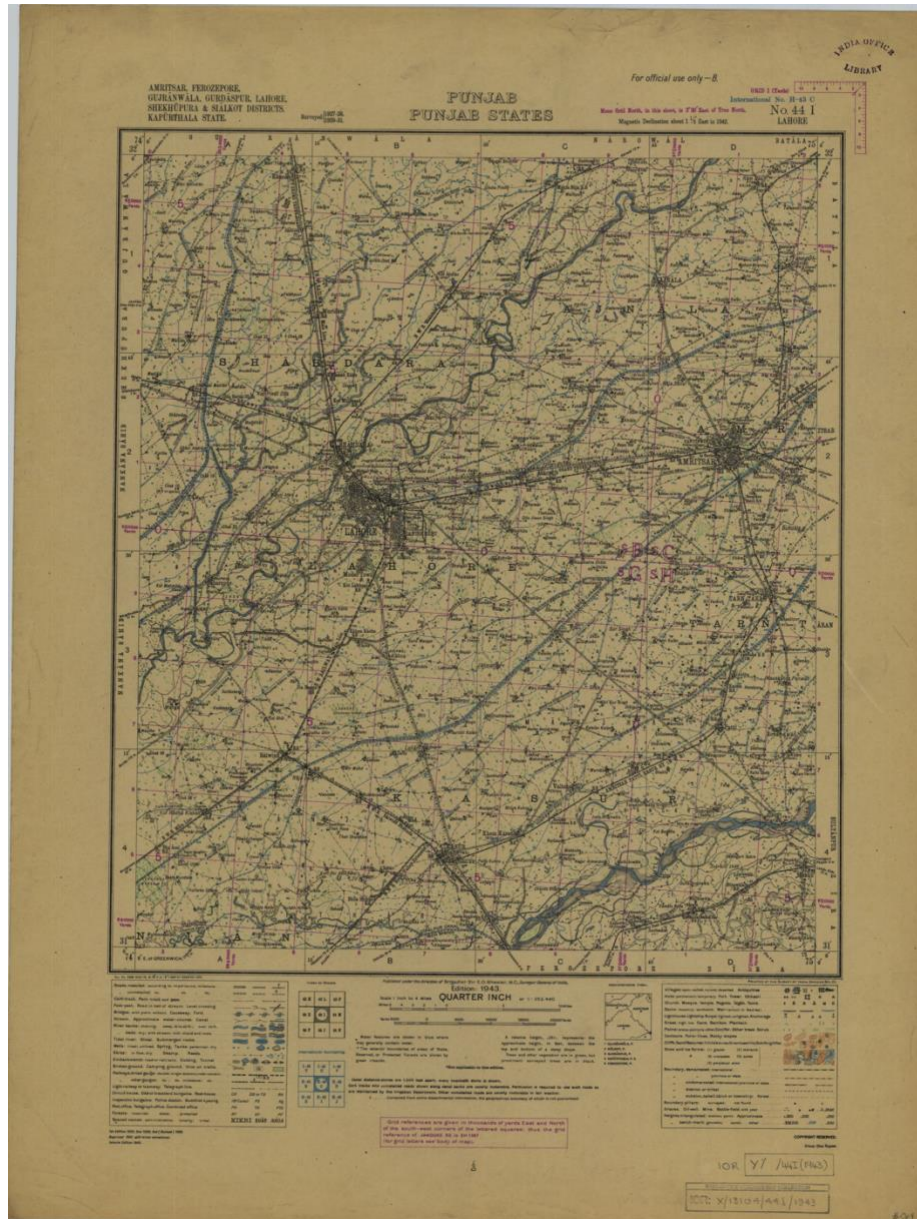


Figure 14. Survey of India Quarter Inch Series, Punjab, No. 44I, Lahore,
From *India Office Records and Private Papers (IOR/X/13104/441/1943)*, British Library, London, UK, 1943.

The following analysis of Survey of India maps is based on one of the seven sheets Radcliffe consulted and on which he marked his boundary (No. 44I, Lahore, 1943 interim edition), an image of which is hosted on the British Library's digital catalogue (Survey of India, 1943). At the top of the sheet, it states that the area being depicted was surveyed between 1927 and 1931, which means there was at least a sixteen-year gap between the date this information was recorded and the date Radcliffe consulted it in 1947. The map is produced with a palette of five colours: black is used for labels, boundaries and artificial structures, blue for waterways, green for vegetation, brown for terrain and magenta for grid lines. The map depicts Punjab as a dense web of British-built and maintained infrastructures linking together its large cities, and points out features of economic value or military concern to the Raj (see Figure 14). In each of the symbols drawn on the map, we can parse out the workings of the colonial economy, the methods used to subjugate the local population, and broadly how the British understood and administered the land and the people they had colonized.

6.5.1. Transport Networks

Railways were first built in India in the 1850s, largely funded and managed by private British companies, and built using local labour. Billed as “the iron road that is probably destined to change the habits, manners, customs, and religion of Hindoo, Parsee, and Mussulman”, the rail was widely viewed by British orators as a gift to India from a superior civilization (Kerr, 2007, p. 6). Still, histories of the Indian railway reveal that its tracks mostly served the economic and military interests of the Raj. The first tracks were laid for freight trains connecting central India to its port cities, which were the nerve centres of the colonial economy. The development of the dense rail network which followed meant the military could now quickly be dispatched to any “trouble spots” to quell local resistance (Kerr, 2007, p. 12). This point was emphasized by James Broun-Ramsay, the governor-general of India in the 1850s, who wrote that the rail would enable Britain “to bring the main bulk of its military strength to bear upon any given point in as many days as it would now require months” (Kerr, 2007, p. 18). Most importantly, trains enabled the

spread of “large-scale technical systems” which included “networks for the production and distribution of electricity, telegraph systems, and telephone systems” (Kerr, 2007, p. 9). If infrastructures are “matter that enable the movement of other matter,” (Larkin, 2013, p. 329) then the railways of India were infrastructures that enabled the movement of other infrastructures crucial to the functioning of the Raj. The importance of the railway and other transport links to the British is evident on the survey map, in that they are easily the most prominently visible feature. This is partly because of sheer breadth of the networks which line vast swaths of the landscape, but also because they are drawn with the darkest colour, with simple and bold symbols, and with much more granularity than most other features. The various transport networks are divided into fifteen categories each with unique symbols—more than any other type of feature represented on the map—which include six types of roads, cart-tracks, bridges and tunnels. Half of the transport symbols are for railways, distinguished by gauge, double or single tracks, stations, and lines under construction.

6.5.2. The Colonial Economy

When the British conquest of the subcontinent began in the 1790s vis à vis the East India Company (EIC), India accounted for nearly 25% of the global manufacturing output (Clingingsmith & Williamson, 2005, p. 34) and was the world’s largest producer of cotton textiles (Broadberry & Gupta, 2009, p. 279). As it expanded its land-base, the colonial government enacted tax policies under which tariffs of up to 80% were placed on exports of Indian textiles to Britain, while British goods were imported to India without any duties. At the same time, raw Indian cotton could be imported into Britain without tariffs, and the EIC and other British merchants in India were encouraged to export raw materials instead of textiles (Cypher, 2014, p. 97). This meant that “India no longer produced its own textiles, but now exported raw cotton to Britain only to import British-made cotton textiles” (Cypher, 2014, p. 97). This policy decimated India’s manufacturing industries and pushed its economy towards the export of agricultural products and other raw commodities (Clingingsmith & Williamson, 2005,

p. 11). By the early nineteenth century, India's economic output had dropped to 1.4% of the global total (Clingingsmith & Williamson, 2005, p. 34), and Britain was now the world's largest producer of textiles (Broadberry & Gupta, 2009, p. 279). The effects of this massive economic shift are also palpable in the symbology of the survey map. No symbols are offered in the legend for any factories or manufacturing centres, but the locations of natural resources of concern to the colonial government are specially marked. There are unique symbols for three types of crops: cane, bamboo and plantain. Palms are divided into three categories—areca, palmyra and others—each illustrated with their own distinct symbol. These plants were of particular economic importance to the British in India as well as their colonies in South-East Asia and Africa (Giacomin, 2018; Guha, 1983; Robertson, 1930). All other vegetation is divided into four broad groups: grass, conifers, scrubs and other trees. The Raj's expansion of India's canal and irrigations systems, which accompanied its turn towards a resource economy, is also well represented on the map. After transport links, the blue lines marking canals are the second-most common symbol on the map. Other points of resource extraction noted on the map include oil wells, which are marked with a crosshair, and mines, which are drawn as a black circle.

6.5.3. Military Establishments

Though maps had previously been used to aid the annexation and conquest of territory by the British, by the time this survey map was produced in 1943, India was largely depicted as “a land already pacified and controlled” (Chester, 2009, p. 96). However, markers of historical and ongoing imperial violence still permeated the landscape. A symbol showing two crossed swords, labelled with a date, is distributed across the map. In the legend, this symbol is labelled “Battle-field” and marks the sites where the East India Company's militia and later British armies confronted local resistance. For the most part, only colonial victories are recorded in this way, and their losses, when shown, are depicted with the same symbol as the triumphs (Chester, 2009, p. 94). Any structures associated with the British Indian Army are drawn prominently on the map. Cantonments, which contained troop barracks and training areas, are labelled with all

capital letters, receiving the same prominent typographic treatment as large cities. These establishments are surrounded by rifle ranges, military reserves and aerodromes. Survey maps also indicate the locations of “reformatory settlements”, markers of one of the least discussed policies of the Raj, the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871. This legislation designated entire communities and indigenous tribes as “habitually criminal” and considered anyone born amongst them as born criminal (Bates, 1995, p. 10). These designations aligned with and reinforced the biological determinism of the South Asian caste system, and also included communities who were considered an anathema to Victorian sensibilities such as the Romani and the Khwajasara, encompassing some thirteen million people (Quraishi, 2006, p. 51). Members of these communities and tribes were sent to reformatory settlements under the guise of assuaging their supposed criminality, and were forced to perform hard labour under strict surveillance. Fittingly, these maps, brazenly marked with historical instances of colonial violence and ongoing genocidal campaigns, would serve as the canvas for one last imperial blow.

6.5.4. “Antiquities”

One of the clearest indications of the biases embedded in the survey map is found in the symbol used for “Antiquities”. Referring to any ruins from the historical civilizations of the subcontinent, “Antiquities” are marked on the ground with their name written in a textura style blackletter typeface. Textura was originally carved in 1450 by Johannes Gutenberg for the first printed book, the Gutenberg Bible, and introduced to England two decades later. It was largely replaced by Roman type amongst English printers by the end of the 16th century. At the apex of its use, textura was colloquially referred to as “English”, and subsequently as “Old English” as its usage waned (Galbraith, 2008, p. 16). The use of textura to denote “oldness” on survey maps underscores the fact that these maps were primarily intended to be used by British officials, and thus map symbols were designed to be familiar and legible to them. In the legend, the medieval Bengali capital of Gaur, which was abandoned in the late 16th century due to an outbreak of the plague, is provided as an example of “Antiquities”. The bizarre pairing of a gothic typeface,

signifying British history, with settlements built and deserted well before British colonization reads as an attempt by the Raj to trace and root itself into the subcontinent's past.

6.5.5. Religious Sites

Nothing on the survey map alludes to complex social fabric of the Punjab, a product of the followers of many faiths, themselves punctuated by sect and caste, living together in tightly knit communities. The only hint of the diverse religious and cultural make-up of the Punjab is found in six unique symbols representing religious sites: churches, mosques, temples, pagodas, idgahs and tombs. However, this neat division of religious structures and their purposes raises questions about the criteria used to categorize and disentangle otherwise syncretized religious practises. For example, there are distinct symbols for a mosque and an idgah, a large mosque used for Eid prayers, but both Sikh and Hindu temples, which are architecturally unique and cater to entirely different religions, are represented by the same symbol. There is also no indication as to the relative importance of these sites. In Amritsar, the Golden Temple, the spiritual centre of Sikhism, is marked with a small temple symbol which fades in relation to the military establishments surrounding it. In Lahore, the Badshahi Mosque, one of the largest in the world and also an idgah, is just marked with a mosque symbol. The survey map, produced as an instrument to aid British administration, depicts Punjab as a land which is home to infrastructures instead of people. It is not surprising then, that Radcliffe held up the preservation of infrastructural links, not social relations, as the only criterion which could displace British administrative boundaries in determining the new border.

6.5.6. British Administrative Boundaries

On the survey map, British administrative boundaries are overlaid on top of all these physical features, demarcated using dashed and dotted lines. The *thana*, defined as the jurisdiction of a local police station, was the base unit of British administration (Chester, 2009, p. 20). Exercising and maintaining control at the thana level was key to the stability of the colonial government, which meant that police power formed the bedrock of the Raj. An aggregation of

thanas formed a tehsil, above which was the district and then the province or state (Chester, 2009, p. 64). Due to its scale, only tehsil, district and province boundaries are shown on the map.

6.5.7. The Origins of the Survey of India

The map is labelled as sheet 44I, which refers to its place in the standardized grid system of the Survey of India. In this grid, sheet 43L covers the area to the north of this map, 44J to the south, 44M to the east and 44E to the west. A full set of survey maps comprises of hundreds of such sheets extending in all directions until they reach the edges of British India. The story of how the British came to control much of the subcontinent is embedded within these maps, as the territorial expansion of the British Raj and the British mapping of India were concurrent and interdependent processes.

Before there could be a British Indian Empire, there had to be an ‘India’ on which the Empire could be premised. However, India—as a specific geographical entity which could be drawn and pointed to on a map—was itself a product of orientalist imaginaries. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Europeans conceived of the lands to the east of the river Indus, beyond the edges of the Hellenistic world, as the Indies (Edney, 1997, p. 3). After Christopher Columbus landed in the Bahamas in 1492 and insisted that he had reached the Indies, the Caribbean Islands came to be known as the West Indies, and the region previously called the Indies started to be referred to as the East Indies or East India (Edney, 1997, p. 4). This history is captured in the name of the British trading outfit which initiated the colonization of the subcontinent: The East India Company. Locally, though present day borders in South Asia make this hard to comprehend, the Indian subcontinent was not understood as a bounded and fixed geographical entity. Many empires, sultanates and khanates governed within and extended beyond the bounds later placed on the region by British rule. As B. B. Mishra writes in his history of India’s territorial formation, even though contemporary India stands as “a unified geographical category equipped with national frontiers, the Indian subcontinent has hardly ever been a single, integrated political entity” (Edney, 1997, p. 16).

The East India Company first established a foothold in the subcontinent in the early 17th century, and initially focused on establishing monopoly trade against rival European companies. The promise of profits from land taxation led the Company to rapidly expand its territorial base in the 1750s through a series of battles against local forces (Edney, 1997, p. 8), most notably the Battle of Plassey with which it gained control of Bengal. Over the next hundred years, the Company used its private army, the largest military force in India at the time, to consolidate most of the subcontinent under its rule through annexation and conquest. During this time, the Company “undertook a massive intellectual campaign to transform a land of incomprehensible spectacle into an empire of knowledge” (Edney, 1997, p. 2), and as part of this project the Company’s officers drew detailed topographic and cadastral maps required to administer land taxes. These maps were apparent to locals as instruments of British power. In the first major rebellion against the British in 1857, Indian mutineers targeted “the apparatus and infrastructure of colonial rule,” including many of the transport and communication networks later drawn on survey maps, but they also destroyed the Company’s maps themselves (Gopal, 2020, p. 72). This mutiny led to the dissolution of the Company in favour of direct rule over the Indian subcontinent by the British Crown.

The Survey of India was established in 1878 as the British reasserted control over the subcontinent, with the goal to present the newly reconstituted ‘Indian’ space at “one uniform scale,” rendered “directly comparable and normalized” (Edney, 1997, p. 25). The survey was animated by Enlightenment ideals which held that correct and complete archives of knowledge could be produced through scientific, rational processes. However, as Matthew Edney writes in his detailed history of British cartography in South Asia, “many aspects of India’s societies and cultures remained beyond British experience,” and thus “India could never be entirely and perfectly known” (Edney, 1997, p. 2). In their survey maps, the British merely “mapped the India that they perceived and that they governed” (Edney, 1997, p. 2). The ‘India’ these maps depicted—as a clearly defined geographical entity in South Asia bounded by the extent of British

power—was later taken up uncritically by nationalist leaders as a conception which preceded the Raj (Edney, 1997, p. 15), and thereby also served as the territorial foundation for the aspirations and demands of their movements. Ironically, the India of these maps would also serve as the canvas on which Radcliffe drew his partition line, heralding the division of a land the British themselves had consolidated.

6.6. The ‘Radcliffe’ Line

Today, the India-Bangladesh border as well as the Punjab section of the India-Pakistan border are still often referred to as the Radcliffe Line. This name is a holdover from a curious semantic change made soon after Partition, in which what was previously known as the ‘Boundary Commission award’ began to be called the ‘Radcliffe award’ (Chester, 2009, p. 110). This party reflected an attempt by the Indian and Pakistan governments to deflect responsibility for the decision of the Boundary Commissions and the violence it caused. Both parties maintained that the commissioners who represented their interests wielded relatively little influence in the boundary-drawing process. A Pakistani newspaper quotes a cleric’s declaration that “the responsibility of the massacre of Muslims in the East Punjab is on the shoulders of the Chairman, Punjab Boundary Commission” (Chester, 2009, p. 111). At the same time, the British found a convenient scapegoat in Radcliffe, who himself insisted that the border was “entirely his own creation” (Chester, 2009, p. 111). This follows a long tradition of imperial powers attempting to contain the blame for their crimes within specific moments, towards individual actors and inside ‘infallible’ documents, instead of allowing the entire structure of imperialism to be implicated (Azoulay, 2019, p. 640).

While historical records do corroborate that the border was drawn solely by Radcliffe working in relative isolation, the fact that he had to rely on surveys maps produced by British agencies to make his decisions meant that his hand was guided by the cultural biases and territorial logics embedded within these documents. In the maps he consulted, Radcliffe encountered a land deeply marked and profoundly shaped by colonialism. These maps

summarized the Raj's history: how it had consolidated and continued to maintain control of the land and the local population through its police, military, and carceral institutions; while also pointing towards the Raj's futurity: the transport networks which allowed the empire to reproduce itself by circulating its methods of control ever more widely. The final border, as it exists today between Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, was predicated entirely on the administrative divisions and infrastructural links developed over two hundred years of British colonial rule. These pre-existing delineations were thereby the co-authors of the boundary award.

Weighing the influence of individual actions against historical forces is a key concern of historical analysis, and it is of course impossible to completely disentangle the work of an individual from the political structures, geographies and cultural moments they are embedded in. However, the colonial ordering of India, accrued over two centuries of British rule, would seemingly present any individual with few possibilities for where the partition line could be drawn. This argument is supported by a sketch map of a proposed partition line made by Archibald Wavell while he served as the Viceroy of India. Wavell's term as viceroy ended well before Radcliffe's appointment, and there is no evidence that his sketch map was ever shown to Radcliffe, yet the final boundary award and the border drawn on the sketch are remarkably similar (Chester, 2009, p. 76). That a man who served in India for six years, who had likely visited many of the regions being partitioned, and who had access to far more resources than Radcliffe, arrived at the same line as him illustrates that the colonial order imposed on India could only be reconfigured in limited ways.

Instead, we should look towards the logics of empire, under which a single individual is empowered to draw a border through regions he has no knowledge of, and given just six weeks to do so; under which it is possible for him to never step foot in these areas and make decisions based on textual and visual representations produced by the empire itself; and under which a crude cut-and-paste map is vested with unquestionable authority over one of the most densely populated regions on the planet and all the people who call it home. In each instance, power

flows from the metropole towards individuals and documents. A critical analysis of documents, and the manner in which individuals engage with them, allows us to better understand the working of the system which allows them to be able to wield such immense power over millions of people and vast swaths of land.

7. The Legacy of Radcliffe's Award

7.1. "Cartographically Indivisible"

In the weeks and months after Partition, a fascinating correspondence regarding maps began to take place between the India Office and various British agencies. Evidently, the bureaucracies and business models of many British institutions were dependent on up-to-date maps of South Asia, which depicted countries with clearly marked borders. In the wake of Partition, it seemed that no authoritative map of South Asia which illustrated the new border between India and Pakistan had circulated. The letters sent to the India Office requesting such maps, and the responses sent back by its officers, open a window towards understanding the wide and varied use of maps as instruments of governance and commerce; and highlight how the depiction of space as fixed was both expected and necessary for the maps to be useful in their intended context.

The letters discussed here are all held at the British Library, inside a folder simply titled "Partition of Provinces of Bengal and The Punjab," and with no other information as to its contents (Partition, IOR/L/I/1/770). These letters are dated between October 1947 and May 1948. "Help!" starts a letter from the British Council, "Our people are having trouble with such things as mailing periodicals to India. We are not quite sure whether various minor places are in Hind— or Pak—. Can you let us urgently have a map, or a list, or something that will prevent these gaffes or sending one's stuff to the other?" On top of this, the recipient has scribbled "Can you send him a map showing the new boundaries?" Another letter sent by McDougall's Education Company reads: "Dear Sir, we should be grateful if you could supply us with any maps or

detailed information concerning the boundaries of India and Pakistan and the position of the Princes States, to assist us in the preparation of Geography textbooks.” In response, the India Office sent two maps showing the partitions of the Bengal and Punjab, and counseled the Company to contact the Governments of India and Pakistan directly for more information.

At one point, the Office was contacted by a member of the 1948 London Olympics organizing committee, who wrote: “I have been asked for a map showing the official boundaries of India and Pakistan, and I am asking your advice how best to get or make one that is completely authoritative.” The recipient has handwritten at the bottom: “Could you please send him the Punjab and Bengal maps and explain that there are no complete maps available.” The maps which were forwarded to the Olympics committee are not included in the folder, but in a response the committee member seemed unsatisfied with the maps he was sent, asking if there was “any unofficial map of any other boundaries to which I could with reasonable safety refer?” The India Office responded to a number of other requests by referring to maps of the new border published in newspapers.

One of the most interesting letters in the folder is from a Colonel of the British Defence Staff to an employee at the India Office. “I think it would be most tactless,” the letter starts, “to even suggest to the most ignorant that India and Pakistan are cartographically indivisible! With the possible exceptions of Kashmir and Hyderabad States the boundaries of the two Dominions are firmly fixed even if not actually demarcated.” Though the letter that prompted this response is not included in the folder, one can imagine an employee at the India Office, exhausted from receiving dozens of requests for maps and unaware of the fact that the boundary had already been settled, had suggested to a British army officer that perhaps India and Pakistan could not be disentangled. Indeed, it was impossible to completely sever the spiritual, social and cultural links which had developed in the subcontinent over thousands of years, and India, Pakistan and Bangladesh still remain deeply entangled through their infrastructures, economies, familial links

and national identities, but British India, with its fixed and modular units, was ‘cartographically divisible’ and had already been pulled apart by the time this letter was received in May 1948.

7.2. The Digital Frontier

Today, though we seem far removed from the time when one had to write letters to secure paper maps, the issues surrounding cartographic representation, and the place maps hold in our geographic imaginaries, remain much the same as then. Maps continue to be the dominant method of communicating spatial information, though they are now updated and circulated at incredible pace over the internet. The India-Pakistan border, though clearly visible from space, still continues to be negotiated on maps. The world’s most widely used mapping application, Google Maps, shifts the contours of the border depending on its audience (Bensinger, 2020). Users in India are shown a custom world map in which all of Kashmir, even the regions controlled by Pakistan and China, are depicted as a part of India using a solid outline. Meanwhile those located in Pakistan are shown a ‘global’ variant of the map which depicts the various contestations over Kashmir using dashed lines. As this shifting border on Google Maps demonstrates, even the most ‘authorial’ sources of maps can offer information that is incongruent with the ground-truth, and deliberately misleading in their attempt at catering to local nationalisms. Outer Space, it seems, may provide the only vantage point from where Radcliffe’s line is still visible as he drew it.

8. Conclusion

Examining the cartographical legacy of India’s partition demonstrates how maps are used to conjure and negotiate geographic imaginaries, and impose the nation-state fiction on the ground. Pakistan and India existed as independent states two days before they had territorial outlines, and as amorphous national identities well before then. Once the new borders were revealed, the fiction began to plant its feet on the ground, as political, economic and military apparatuses began to emerge around these lines and reinforce them.

The partition of India into multiple countries was the most radical outcome in terms of the new physicality it would impose on the subcontinent and the effects that would have. It entailed the creation of hard borders along religious lines which would inevitably be followed by large scale population transfers. But it was also the least radical option in terms of imagining the kinds of syncretic polities that can exist in a place where people of disparate socio-historical makeups, speakers of hundreds of languages and adherents of dozens of religions brush up against each other in one of the most densely populated regions of the world. In a famous critique of Anderson's notion of an 'imagined community', Partha Chatterjee asked that if "nationalists in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine?" (Chatterjee, 1991, p. 521). Though the Pakistan movement began with a rejection of the European nation-state model and aspirations towards a new "contractual organism", its revolutionary potential to devise forms of anti-colonial social organization suffocated under a leadership trained in and sympathetic to European law. These leaders, in turn, had to water their schemes down further by drawing up post-partition plans which could be legible (i.e. following the traditions of European state-making) to the British bureaucracy. In contemporary Pakistan, the British style parliamentary political structure, the hegemonic concentration of power by the political and military elites, the endurance of colonial-era law, sham elections and mass disenfranchisement would have one wonder if white masters have simply been replaced with brown masters and if "even our imaginations must remain forever colonized" (Chatterjee, 1991, p. 521).

Had Jinnah and Rahmat Ali lived longer, they would have witnessed the dangerous ramifications of the assumption made by them and other Muslim leaders that the Muslims of India formed a singular nation that could be defined exclusively along religious lines. The Pakistan that emerged in the wake of decolonization was a bloc of two geographically separated units: West Pakistan (NWFP, Sindh and a partitioned Punjab) and East Pakistan (partitioned

Bengal). The suppression of Bengali culture and language, the imposition of Urdu as lingua franca by the Pakistani government, the genocide of Bengalis by the Pakistani military and the resulting Bangladesh Liberation War would lead to the break-up of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Today, as the Punjabi-Sunni led civilian and military establishment of Pakistan imposes hegemony across the entire country and concentrates its wealth, often violently, movements by its Baloch, Pashtun, Christian, Shia, Ahmadi minorities form solidarity and resistance along shared socio-economic and cross-religious lines. All this to say, though the British Raj is over, the nation-states which emerged from its wake seem to have absorbed the empire's extractive and possessive logics. In response, within the nation-state created in the name of South Asia's Muslims, ever more nations are always emergent.

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