The roots of political instability in Pakistan: The “anti-Qadiani” agitation of 1949-53
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Introduction
The expression "anti-Qadiani controversy" in the historiography of Pakistan usually refers to a series of disturbances which occurred in the Province of Punjab between February and March 1953, that was characterised by a violent attack against the religious sect of the Qadiani (or Ahmadiyya) and that led the central Government to declare - on 6 March - Martial Law.

In this paper, we will consider the wider meaning of the agitation. We will take into consideration not only the February 1953 disturbances - that can be seen as the actual conclusion of the agitation - but the whole campaign against the Ahmadiyya, which started around 1949 and that was led mainly by the organisation called Majlis-i-Ahrar.

The Ahrar was a religious party known for its opposition to the Pakistan demand before 1947. At the time of the agitation, in the 1950s, it did not have a high level of organisation and the number of its members was not much higher that one thousand persons. The fact that this small organisation was able to organise a successful agitation that caused the most serious disturbances in the Punjab after Partition, constitutes an interesting phenomenon which requires a detailed analysis.

In order to understand the causes of the agitation it will be in particular necessary to look at the political and social context both in the Province and in Pakistan at large, in which the movement took place.

The transfer of power from the British to the new state of Pakistan of the Muslim majority areas of India, in 1947, brought within it a fundamental contradiction; the British administration had been operating in those areas with the support and co-operation of the figures that traditionally detained the political authority at local level, like the tribal heads and the religious leaders. It is through a substantial devolution of power to these leaders that the British had been able to control the localities. Therefore, the same transfer of the sovereignty on these areas to
a central government, at the time of the Partition, constituted already a fundamental transformation. This circumstance contributed to create a gap between the state and the Provinces which made it difficult for the new Government to exert its authority and obtain loyalty in the localities.

The solution for this need was found by the Pakistani political leaders in emphasising the "Islamicity" of the state, linking the identity of Pakistan to Islam. It is in this way that it is possible to explain the religious rhetoric which characterised the political life of the country in the late 1940s and 1950s.

If, however, this political use of religion could play the function of giving cohesion to the society, on the other hand, it had the potential to break the balance between secular and religious sectors within the state. In fact, the most important cause for the reassertion of the Islamic opposition in Pakistan in the 1950s is this use of Islamic symbolism, that encouraged the religious parties to enter the political arena. The most evident demonstration of this situation was the debate for an Islamic constitution, which characterised the political life of the state almost until the 1958 military coup.

With this survey, however, we do not want to suggest that there was a sharp distinction between "Islamists" and "secularist" in Pakistan. Indeed, a consistent sector of public opinion, which was close to the Government and that included well-known intellectuals, had been trying to find a compromise between the two visions. This attempt was made through the elaboration of a "modernist" interpretation of religion which tended to see Islam as a moral principle that could inspire the Constitution of a modern state. This interpretation was sustained by the rich tradition of religious reform of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century India. In the emphasis put by this "school" on the concept of *ijtihad* (interpretation), for example, the influence of the great reformer Saiyyd Ahmad Khan was evident.

Nevertheless, the potential of the Islamic symbols and the influence among the masses of the traditional religious leaders, revealed to be too strong for the "modernists".

It is in this context that the Ahmadiyya agitation assumes a much greater relevance that just a religious controversy. In the 1950s the Ahrar, by pushing into the public platform the problem of the non-Muslim communities in Pakistan, in fact questioned the very identity of the state, that is, its existence. The agitation therefore put the Government in the position of having to choose between giving a free hand to the agitation or repressing it, with the danger of damaging the basis on which the state was built.

The role of religion in Pakistan was not the only reason for the development of the agitation. The movement, indeed, found a fertile ground amongst the rivalries...
between the factions which dominated Punjabi politics, and in the lack of institutionalised power. The Ahrar were therefore able to build a coalition of interests - which went from the local Muslim League to the oppositional Azad Pakistan Party - which had the common aim of undermining the central Government.

If the success of the agitation demonstrated once more the great potential Islamic symbols had in Pakistani politics, the reaction of the Government - on the other hand - tells us that the balance amongst the holders of political power in Pakistan was shifting towards the bureaucracy and the army. In 1953 the secular classes decided that the politicians were unable to guarantee order in the country, so preparing the ground for the successive intrusion of the military in Pakistan political life.

**Political and Religious Authority in Pre-Partition Punjab**

In order to fully understand the nature and significance of the Punjab disturbances of 1952-3, it seems necessary to begin the analysis of the agitation by a survey of the political and social structure of the Province. It seems evident - as we will see in fuller details - that the agitation which constitute the object of this paper was not simply the result of a local, circumscribed discontent raised by a few agitators; on the contrary, it had deep roots in the dynamic relationship, which existed in the region since almost one century, between local leaders and the population, on one side, and between these and the central political power, on the other.

When Pakistan came into existence in 1947 it was something different from the "Muslim nation" that its main creator, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, had envisaged. With its 75 million population distributed over two wings, divided by a large portion of Indian territory, speaking - only to consider the main languages - 5 different idioms; with a strong minority of 10 million Hindus and sharp divisions from the religious, cultural, economic point of view, Pakistan represented a difficult task for any authority willing to build a strong, centralised state.

However, what is perhaps more important is the traditional structure of authority that existed in the Muslim majority areas. This structure, which had been present since pre-British times and was reinforced by the colonial administration, constituted the main obstacle to the creation of a homogeneous state. In the Punjab
this structure of authority was constituted in part by the landed gentry, in part by the religious leaders.

a) The landed gentry

When, in the 1870s, the British took control of the Punjab, their main concern was to maintain as much as possible the role of the traditional leaders, as the most effective way to control the Province. This policy - which was summarised by Lord Dalhousie's order of preserving the "Native Institutions and practices as far as they are consistent with the distribution of justice" - based the new system of administration on the traditional social organisation. Therefore, the zail, the basic unit of the British administration in the Punjab, was made to coincide - whenever possible - with the "tribal" boundaries where the British officials had observed in the field. The colonial administrators held as their basic principle to make sure that their organisation was deployed in the "tribal idiom" on which rural Punjabi society was structured. For the same reason, the heads of these units - the zaildars - were usually chosen from among the leaders of the main tribes in the territory. However, it is worth noting that with the distribution of zaildaris, the British had the possibility to influence and modify the local structure of power. In fact, these appointments, which involved a close relationship with the administration, had often the effect of enhancing the status of the persons appointed and of their family, who could claim the leadership of the leading tribe.

The main duty of the zaildar was to act as a mediator between the government and the administration, supervising the villages and presenting local grievances to the local governor. Through this system, therefore, the British could create a class of powerful local leaders, strictly linked to the administration, who often transmitted this role hereditarily. In successive years, the British consolidated further these connections by the granting of lands to local leaders. The administrators had noticed that the ownership of land had often the effect of enhancing the status of the tribal leaders in front of the population. In this way, an identity was gradually created between the position of landlord and that of tribal leader.

2 Ibidem, p. 22
3 Ibidem, p. 24
The policy of the British was, therefore, to create and sustain a hierarchical structure of power formed by leaders able to influence the rural population, linked to the colonial power by the granting of honours and landed grants.

Moreover, the British administrators - contrary to the policy followed by them in other parts of the Subcontinent\(^4\) - envisaged the need to protect this class isolating it from urban influences. When, in the late nineteenth century, indebtedness caused many lands passing to the hands of urban moneylenders, the government was ready to issue a law - the Punjab Alienation of Land Act of 1900 - which halted considerably the process. The law drew a distinction between "agricultural" and "non-agricultural tribes" forbidding the passage of land to the latter.\(^5\)

Another important characteristic of the Punjabi landed gentry was its being largely inter-communal, being composed of not only Muslims but also Hindu Jats and Sikhs. The advantage of protecting the status quo from communal tensions was clear to the government. Indeed, despite the fact that since 1919 communal electorates had been operating in the Punjab, the British avoided applying the system to the District Boards.

Therefore, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the British had in part created and sustained a class of rural leaders who acted as mediators between the government officers and the local population, whose authority was based on the traditional social bonds and whose interest in supporting the colonial power was identified with their rights on the land. Moreover, with the acts issued afterwards by the British, the Punjab Alienation of Land Act and the limitation of communal electorates, the Government helped to consolidate these rural interests, isolating them from the economic and political influence of the urban areas.

\(^4\) The reference is to Bengal where the British policy - by imposing the "Permanent Settlement" in the late eighteenth century - had the long-term effect of favouring the transfer of land property from the rural landlords to absent urban moneylenders; this circumstance modified sensibly the Bengali social structure.

\(^5\) Ibidem, p. 28
b) The Pirs

The tribal leaders were not the only holders of authority in the traditional Punjabi society. Besides them another source of authority was constituted by the sufi pirs, the descendants of the sufi saints and holy men whose shrines were numerous throughout the Punjab. The cult of the saints who - according to the tradition - had converted the local population to Islam through their preaching and devotion, had a considerable diffusion in the Province, as indeed in many parts of the Subcontinent. Their descendants, the sajjada nishins ("the one who sits on the prayer carpet") were able - through the relationship with their disciples (murids) - to exert a tremendous influence on the rural population.6 "Practically", in the words of the 1920s gazetteer in the District of Multan, West Punjab, "every Muhammadan in the District has his pir".7 This link was still so strong thirty years later that, in 1953, Sahibzada Pir Faiz-ul-Hasan's following was valued by the Intelligence Bureau of Karachi to be around 30,000 murids.8

We do not want, obviously, to suggest that there was a sharp separation between tribal and religious authority. From a sociological point of view, the concept underlying the role of the pirs mirrored that of the rural groups' leaders. In the same way in which the tribal heads acted as mediators between the population and an authority which was perceived as distant, transcendent, so the sajjada nishins - with their hereditarily transmitted spiritual charisma - could fill the need for a mediation between the transcendence of God and the people.9

Moreover, and in a more practical way, since the conversion to Islam of the Punjabi population, links were created between the pirs and the tribes, the conversion of the latter often taking place through contacts with the tribes' leaders. Sometimes the links even assumed the form of family connections, through marriages between the pir's and the clan leader's families.10

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7 Ibidem, p. 488

8 Munir report, p. 137

9 D. Gilmartin, Empire and Islam, p. 42.

In successive ages, Muslim and Sikh rulers were usually ready to establish good relations with the pirs, given their considerable influence. In Mughal times, in the District of Multan, pirs were even appointed as local governors.\(^{11}\)

Therefore, at the time of the British taking control of the region, the shrines were not only centres of religious authority but also of political power. We can note, as an example, that many shrines had control of large amounts of land, like that of Baba Farid in Pak Pattan, whose endowment was about 43,000 acres, or that of Shah Bokhari Saiyid which controlled 10,000 acres.\(^{12}\)

The British authorities of the Punjab had initially not extended to the religious leaders the same kind of connection that existed with the tribal leaders. As we have seen above, it was the conviction of the administration that in order to control the localities, it was necessary to avoid sustaining religious feeling.\(^{13}\) In 1872, the Punjab Laws Act made it possible for "customary law" to have the pre-eminence over religious law in the legal system. Furthermore, we have already noted that the administration tried to safeguard the integrity of the landed gentry by avoiding applying communal representation.

Nevertheless, the significant role played by the rural pirs could not pass unobserved. As the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province, O'Dwyer, pointed out, the fact that some men of influence derived their position from a religious connection did not constitute - if this power could be used for the Government's interest - a valid reason for not establishing with them the same connections there were with the tribal leaders.\(^{14}\) This policy was practically enforced with the already mentioned Alienation of Land Act. Although the act did not include specifically the pirs, the fact that the "tribes" to which these men usually belonged - Sayyids and Qureshis - were enlisted among the "agricultural tribes", guaranteed their property from expropriation.

\(^{11}\) There is evidence concerning the Gilani Saiyid family of pirs (Ibidem, p. 488, n. 15).


\(^{13}\) This was in part an approach which characterised the British policy in India at the general level, the fact that the ulama were considered responsible for the "Mutiny" of 1857 playing a relevant role.

The British policy of fostering powerful local leaders who might detain an authority based in part on kinship, in part on religious loyalty, constituted an important background for the future political balance in the Province. At the dawn of independence, indeed, the Punjab presented a very clear accumulation of political power in the hands of few influential families. If we look at the data regarding the land property in pre-Partition Punjab, we discover that one-half of one per cent of the landlords controlled more than one fifth of the cultivable land, while the numbers for West Pakistan give an impressive 85 per cent of the land controlled by approximately 35 per cent of the owners, with the lands above 500 acres possessed by the 0.1 per cent of the landlords.15

The situation was such to justify the statement that "the key to Pakistan politics is to be found in a little official publication...by the Government of India...and entitled The Landed Families of the Punjab".16 Anyone who would be willing to take the control of the Province had first to win the support of these rural leaders.

c) The Unionist Party and the Muslim League

In the course of the twentieth century, provincial leaders in the Punjab were able to strengthen further their position in the locality and even to influence Muslim politics at the all-India level. This was possible mainly for two circumstances: first, the collapse of the non-cooperation movement in the 1920s; secondly, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919.

The 1920s had shown an intense activity on the part of the nationalist movement led by the Indian National Congress. The party had been able to unite its own popular support, gained under Mahatma Gandhi's guide, with that of some sectors of the Muslim leadership, around the cause of the Caliphate. The anti-imperialist meaning of the movement and its Islamic symbolism, had made it possible to create a large-scale agitation which was unprecedented for Indian politics and that had marginalised the moderate parties like the Muslim League. However, the disappearance of the symbol of the movement, with the abolition by the Turkish Assembly of the Caliphate in 1924, put an end to the agitation. The following crisis in

15 This accumulation of power in the hands of the landlords was also due to the fact that in the first years of independence the industrial potential of Pakistan was of little importance. In 1947 the contribution of the industry to the national income was around one per cent. (T. Maniruzzaman, Group Interests and Political Changes: Studies of Pakistan and Bangladesh, (New Delhi, 1982), p. 48).

16 Ibidem, p. 45.
the Congress' leadership and that of the Muslim League, meant that in the years between the two World Wars the centre of the political activity shifted from the all-India parties to the provincial organisations.

This tendency was reinforced by the constitutional reforms issued in 1919. With this act, the British created the system of "Dyarchy" which - by dividing the Government's activity between the Governors and ministries responsible to elected local councils - gave more power to the provinces, making increasingly difficult for the all-India organisations to pursue their program without making compromises with the provincial politicians.\(^\text{17}\) Moreover, the Reforms reinforced the separation between rural areas and towns, because only people recognised as belonging to the "agricultural tribes" were permitted to candidate themselves for rural areas.\(^\text{18}\)

These developments made possible the formation of the Punjab National Unionist Party, in 1923, created with the specific aim to represent and defend the interests of the provincial gentry who composed its nucleus. It is from this party that the leading Punjabi politicians of pre- and post-Partition periods, whose names betrayed their origin from the largest landed families, like Daultana and Noon, would emerge.

The Unionist Party largely dominated the political scene in the Punjab between 1923 and the election of 1946, when it will be replaced as the dominant party by the Muslim League, which had been successfully reorganised by Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The key to the League's victory, however, was not constituted by the building of a new basis of support; on the contrary, the party relied on the same structures of loyalty which had until then supported the Unionists.

The causes for this shift of political loyalty were linked in part to the economic conditions of the Province, in part to the ability of the League to present itself as the


\(^{18}\) I. Talbot, Provincial Politics and the Pakistan Movement: the Growth of the Muslim League in North-West and North East India, 1937-47, (Karachi, 1988), p. 85; in fact, a residence in the rural areas of four years was required to be allowed to be candidate there (A. Jalal and A. Seal, "Alternative to Partition", p. 425).
organisation most likely to defend the interests of the influential families, and finally to the support of the sufi pirs.

Economic reasons certainly constituted the background for the advance of the League in the Punjab. In the 1940s the restraints caused by the war were felt most acutely in the agricultural areas of the Province. The shortage of goods was not balanced, for the rural masses, by sufficiently high prices for the agricultural products. Moreover, the peasants were badly damaged by the grain requisitions ordered by the central government, which the Unionist leaders were not able to oppose.

This situation was fully exploited during the electoral campaign of 1946 by the Muslim League, which five years before had founded a Pakistan Rural Propaganda Committee with the sole object of breaking the Unionists' dominance. League's workers toured the rural areas bringing medicines and clothes and - even more important - presenting the Pakistan state as the solution to their economic problems.\footnote{I. Talbot, \textit{Provincial Politics}, p. 94.}

In a situation in which the British Raj had already manifested its intention to leave India, many rural leaders started to realise that now the League, not the Unionist Party, had the strength to guarantee their interests. Leading landlords started, therefore, to abandon the Unionist organisation to join the League.\footnote{This was the case of Mian Mumtaz Daultana and Shaukat Hayat, \textit{Ibidem}, p. 94.}

But the most decisive change came perhaps from the stand of the religious leaders.

d) The Pirs and the Chisti revival

As we have previously seen, the representatives of the old shrines of Punjab had traditionally identified their interest with those of the landed gentry, giving their support to the Unionist Party.

The situation changed with the diffusion in Punjab of a network of more recent shrines which did share a different religious outlook from the old established centres of worship. These new shrines were the result of the emergence of the revival of the Chisti sufi order which, originating from the early-eighteenth century Delhi, had
spread to the Punjab, leading to the establishment of a khanqah (hospice) at Mahar in Bahawalpur.\(^{21}\)

The emergence of the Chisti revival can be considered as part of the same process which saw Muslim intellectuals and ulama in many parts of India, in particular in the United Provinces, respond to the decline of Muslim power with a re-interpretation of their faith. In northern India, in the eighteenth century Delhi, this movement gave place to the tradition of religious reform of Shah Waliullah of Delhi, which, in turn, went on to influence many subsequent generations of reformist ulama.

What is important to note is that - while the Waliullahi tradition emphasised a form of Islam which owed little to custom-centred, popular Islam and tried instead to minimise the mediatory roles between God and the believers - the Chisti revivalist pirs tried to enable their traditional sufi world to coexist with the new emphasis on the observance of the sharia.\(^{22}\)

The Chisti revivalist pirs established, through their khanqahs and their khalifahs (successors), a network which, although not replacing completely the older shrines, attracted the devotion of large sectors of the Punjabi rural population.\(^{23}\) These religious leaders at first did not differentiate themselves from the representatives of the old shrines. The mechanisms which for centuries had led the pirs to accept favours and protection from the holders of earthly power limited also their freedom of action. An example is given by Pir Fazl Shah, the sajjada nishin of the revivalist shrine at Jalalpur who, despite his attempt to escape the ties with the Unionist organisation, by

\(^{21}\) The founder of the movement is considered to be Shah Kalimullah of Delhi (1650-1729). The Chisti revival reached the Punjab with Khwaja Nur Muhammad Maharvi (1730-1791) who established the khanqah at Mahar (D. Gilmartin, Empire and Islam, p. 57).

\(^{22}\) Ibidem, p. 57; it has to be said that this kind of reformed sufi vision was not new in the Indian Subcontinent, almost since the diffusion in India of the Naqshbandiyya order in the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, the influence of this order does not seem to have been profound in regions like Punjab and Sind, where the traditional "mediatory" sufi vision has always been strong.

\(^{23}\) For example, Muhammad Maharvi had 30 khalifahs; among his disciples, Shah Suleman of Taunsa (1770-1850) had 63; Khwaja Shamzuddin Sialvi had 35 khalifahs. These numbers can give an idea of the diffusion of these centres of cult and religious authority (Ibidem, p. 57).
founding the independent party Hizbullah, was forced by his family connections to support his uncle Ghazanfar Ali Khan who, having been elected in 1937, backed the Unionists.\textsuperscript{24}

Nevertheless, the representatives of the new shrines were eager to support a political party whose program endorsed the objective of an enforcement of the sharia. They were also unlikely to support political associations of ulama like the Jama'at-ul-Ulama-i-Hind, from which they were divided by deep differences; they were in particular not attracted by the reformist ideas of the ulama who constituted the nucleus of the party and by the fact that these ulama were mainly urban based; in fact, they did not share the same basic values. The Chisti revivalist pirs were therefore likely to support a program based on the call for a Muslim state like that of the League.

Indeed, during the campaign for the 1946 election in Punjab, the League made a great effort to appeal to Islamic values and the support of the pirs constituted a determinant advantage.\textsuperscript{25} The larger number of votes, in fact, was won by the League in the districts in which it had the pirs’ support.\textsuperscript{26}

The conclusion of this may not be, obviously, that the support of the Chisti revivalist pirs was the only reason for the success of the League. Other elements have been underlined above. Nevertheless, the great influence exerted by these figures on the rural masses constituted a further relevant advantage.

At the end of the election of 1946, the League had almost won control of the Punjab, winning all the urban seats and 64 out of 75 rural constituencies, while the Unionist Party had only 18 seats in the Assembly.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{24} D. Gilmartin, Religious Leadership, p. 497-8.

\textsuperscript{25} To understand how effectively the cooperation of the religious leaders could win votes for the League, it is sufficient to quote an announcement made by a leading pir through the newspaper Nawa-i-Waqt in January 1946: "I command all those people who are in my silsilah to do everything possible to help the Muslim League... All those people who do not act accordingly to this message should consider themselves no longer members of my silsilah" (Syed Fazal Ahmad Shah, quoted in: I. Talbot, Provincial Politics, p. 99).

\textsuperscript{26} The expediencies of politics even suggested some politicians to emphasise their religious status during the election; therefore, the Nawab of Mamdot, called himself Pir Mamdot Sharif; Shaukat Hayat, the Sajjada Nishin of Darbar Sargodha Sharif (Ibidem, p. 107, n. 67).

\textsuperscript{27} Ibidem, p. 100.
e) Conclusion

The relevance of what has been said until here lies in these basic points: in winning the Punjab for the Pakistan movement, the League did not change the basic structure within which political authority was exerted in the region. This structure was built around the loyalty given by the people to tribal and religious leaders who were traditionally connected to the government through the accordance of honours, landed grants and by the protection of their interests. In 1946, the Muslim League - instead of trying the longer term option of support-building in the localities - chose to concentrate on winning the already existing network of loyalties. The campaign for Pakistan was moreover helped by the influence of the pirs of the Chisti revival shrines, who were sensitive to the Islamic appeal of the League.

In brief, during the electoral campaign, the League exerted basically three kinds of appeal: to the landlords, it presented itself as the party more able to defend their economic interests; to the rural population, the League offered the creation of Pakistan as the solution for solving the economic problems of the region; to the pirs, it appeared as a guarantor of the traditions and, at the same time, the party more likely to enforce the sharia in the future Pakistan state.

The consequence of this policy was that the League did not build a stable, institutionalised basis of support in the Province. The fact that loyalty to the League was given mainly on the basis of localised and factional interest meant that there was no solid structure on which to construct a unified state.²⁸

Rural landlords, as they had turned to the Muslim League to defend their interests, so they could turn against it, once the circumstances had changed; pirs, having obtained Pakistan, were likely to exert pressure for a more decisive enforcement of the Islamic law. Moreover, the campaign for Pakistan had showed how effectively Islamic symbols could be used to channel economic grievances for political purposes. If this policy had mobilised the masses in 1946, it could be done again, but this time against the government. Much of this would happen in 1952-3.

The emergence of the agitation

a) The social and political context in the Punjab

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the landed gentry who - as we have seen - had determined most of the political processes during the British period and that had been preserved by the League's policy in the rural areas, continued to play a dominant role. The political balance of the Province depended, to a large extent, on the personal rivalries between various landlord leaders, whose most influential representatives were the Nawab of Mamdot and Mian Mumtaz Daultana.29

The former, considered the most conservative of the two, was closer to the leading landlord families; however he was not favoured by the central leaders as well by the Governor of Punjab, Francis Mudie. Daultana, on the other hand, was known as the more "progressive" politician and had Jinnah's and Liaquat Ali Khan's support for the leadership in the Province. Daultana's objectives of land reform, however, made him unsympathetic to the landed gentry to which he belonged.30

It is in this factionalism as well as in the uneasy relationship between the Province and the central Government that the ultimate cause of the successive disorder in the Punjab must be found.

In the late 1940s the administrative structure of the Province, already weakened by the loss of large numbers of Hindu and Sikh officers, had been put under tremendous pressure by the flux of about 5.5 million refugees who had entered the Punjab from the eastern border in the first few months of Independence. The situation was also increasingly difficult because of the food shortage which came to be felt acutely in the province.31 The Provincial Cabinet - then led by Mamdot - claimed not to have a fair share of the national resources in order to meet these needs. This element, united with the under-representation of the Punjabi politicians in the central

29 Iftikhar Hussain Khan, Nawab of Mamdot, was the son of a leading Pathan of Punjab and largest landlord in East Punjab. President of the Punjab Muslim League in 1943 and 1944, leading rural propagandist against the Unionist Party, played a relevant role in the direct action campaign which defeated the Punjab cabinet in March 1947.
Mian Muntaz Daultana, from an important landed family, former Unionist member, joined the League in 1944; in the same year General Secretary of the same party; author of the "progressive" program of the Punjab League for the 1946 election. (I. Talbot, Provincial Politics, p. 132; 135).


31 Ibidem, p. 79.
organisms, justified their claim to be victim of a discrimination by the - mainly Urdu-speaking refugee - politicians in Karachi. In fact, the Punjab was the only Province not to be represented in proportion of its population in the Constituent Assembly; moreover, at the election to the offices of the national Muslim League, in February 1949, the bloc formed by the representatives of the North-Western Frontier Province, Bengal and Baluchistan had impeded any Punjabi from obtaining an appointment at the centre.\(^\text{32}\)

The clash between Karachi and Lahore became evident in January 1949, when the Governor-General Khwaja Nazimuddin dissolved the provincial legislature entrusting the Governor Mudie with the administration. Mamdot reacted to this attack by abandoning the Muslim League and forming the Jinnah Awami League. After an alliance with Suhrawardi's Awami League he prepared to challenge Daultana - by then become head of the local Muslim League - at the provincial election of 1951.

b) The use of Islamic symbols

In the electoral campaign of 1951, the Islamic values became once more a powerful weapon for political purposes. The importance of the religious symbols in the political arena, which has been already underlined with regard to pre-Partition Punjab, was no less true for the other provinces. The lack of an institutionalised basis of power made it possible that, in the first years of independence, the Pakistan state was still to be built. In a society based on various holders of power who for years had been largely autonomous and on whom the central authorities had traditionally relied, the only possible unifying element was Islam. In the North Western Frontier Provinces, for example, the call of Islam was seen as the only way to obtain loyalty from the constantly restless tribes. In this region, moreover, the maintenance of a religious "fervour" was necessary if a war with India had to be fought. It was the Government's conviction that the call for a \textit{jihad} would made the tribesmen more determined and loyal. For these reasons, Karachi had resorted to the expedient of financing with 12 crores of rupees every year the local tribal maliks and maulvis.\(^\text{33}\)

\(^{32}\) Ibidem, p. 82.

\(^{33}\) Part of the press criticized this mixture of "Islamic appeal" and money as dangerous and ineffective (see \textit{Civil and Military Gazette}, 03/05/1949, India Office Library and Records, IOL); a similar opinion was expressed
In this way it is possible to explain the religious rhetoric that since 1947 had characterised the Muslim League leaders and government officials at any level. Even the "father" of Pakistan, Jinnah, nationalist par excellence and strong supporter of the secular state who, in August 1947, had stated, in front of the Constituent Assembly: "You are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or every other place of worship...that has nothing to do with the business of the state", after just six months invited the people to "sacrifice and die in order to make Pakistan a truly great Islamic state".34

It is in this continue reference to Islamic symbols - which cannot but impress the reader of the newspapers of the period - that lies the key to the political developments in Pakistan and, in particular, the resurgence and aggressiveness of the religious parties like Majlis-i-Ahrar and Jama'at-i-Islami.35 When, for instance, the Governor-General Khwaja Nazimuddin, addressing a message to the army, emphasised their "mission to perform" as the troops of Pakistan, "the bastion of Islam", it is indeed difficult to understand how he could not foresee the long-term effect that this sacralisation of the Pakistan's internal life was going to have to the balance of power.

In the fragmented political scene of the Punjab election, therefore, the support of the religious parties became decisive. During the campaign Mamdot had been depicting Daultana as well as the Pakistan Muslim League as "un-Islamic", a claim in which he was considerably helped by Maududi's Jama'at-i-Islami.36 In order to counterbalance the opposition's campaign, the leader of the Punjab League decided to sustain a religious agitation by the Ahrar which could provide him with a basis of support in the Province. It is necessary to remember that Daultana's proposal of land reform had alienated from him the support of the powerful landed families. He was therefore eager to find a political basis amongst the religious leaders.

by the British Commissioner: "The voices of these few imams could not save the Government from unpopularity and disaffection if the public were incensed by any noticeable un-Islamic turn of policy" (Memorandum "The Mullahs and Their Influence in Pakistan" prepared for the Foreign Office in February 1951, FO371/98265, Public Record Office, PRO).

34 Both the quotations are from A. Jalal, State of Martial Rule, p. 279.


36 The Jama'at did not enter the campaign directly but declared to support the candidates considered "virtuous"; in fact, only the opposition's candidates resulted to be virtuous enough (Ibidem, p. 197).
Other considerations also made convenient for Daultana to support the Ahrar; indeed, a religious agitation directed against Karachi, which could strengthen the power of the Punjab in relation to the centre, was favourably considered by him.\textsuperscript{37} The choice of the Ahmadiyya as the object of the campaign added further advantages for the Punjabi politicians. An attack against the Ahmadis - who were well placed in the Government's structure - could have opened new possibilities of power for the Punjab, whose men were not represented in the central cabinet.\textsuperscript{38}

Moreover, the initiative of a religious agitation presented advantages also for the Majlis-i-Ahrar, the party which was going to be on the forefront of the anti-Qadiani campaign.

c) The Ahrar

The Majlis-i-Ahrar was an organisation founded in 1930, the nucleus of which was constituted by reformist ulama mainly from the religious schools of Deoband and Ahl-i-Hadiths, in northern India.\textsuperscript{39} The organisation, which collaborated with the Congress in the 1930s during the Civil Disobedience movement, distinguished itself as a group of hard-working men, devoted to the cause of Indian nationalism and Hindu-Muslim cooperation, who gave a relevant contribution to the nationalist campaign. As a consequence of their activism the Ahraris were able to enlarge considerably their basis of support, in later years attracting many Punjabi supporters of the Indian nationalist movement. Moreover, their strong anti-imperialist attitude

\textsuperscript{37} Evidence of a deal between Daultana and the Ahraris was given to the Court of Inquiry on the Punjab Disturbances by Maulana Akhtar Ali Khan and A.R. Shibli, of the newspaper \textit{Zamindar}; for the latter, Daultana promised to allow the Ahrar “a free hand in return for support at the elections”, while the former declared that the Punjabi leader wanted to launch the campaign against Karachi so that the Prime Minister would be forced to ask him to stop the movement, a fact “which would raise Daultana's stock both in the Province and with the Centre” (Reports PHC/20/53 of 06/10/1953 and PHC/23/53 of 17/11/1953, from the UK Deputy High Commissioner in Lahore, DO35/5296, PRO).

\textsuperscript{38} A. Jalal, \textit{State of Martial Rule}, p. 153; the existence of these advantages for the Punjab as a whole can also explain the financial support given to the Ahrar by some sectors of the opposition like the Azad Pakistan Party in February 1953 (Munir report, p. 142).

\textsuperscript{39} D. Gilmartin, "Religious Leadership", p. 490.
united with a concern with social problems made possible to them to enlist the support of the Punjabi lower middle classes and part of the peasantry.\footnote{W.C. Smith, Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis, (Lahore, 1963), p. 253.}

Their main strength, however, consisted of their leaders' skill in addressing inflammatory speeches at public meetings, characterised by constant references to religious symbols. Their leading man - Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari - was considered "India's most effective demagogue", able to "hold with his oratory an audience of thousands inspired and unflinchingly attentive for hours. With a telling use of apt poetry and of Islamic appeal...". This ability of the Ahraris constituted perhaps at the same time their weakness; in fact the group was based more on its leader's popularity than on an effective organisation.\footnote{Ibidem, p. 255.}

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, their activity was becoming increasingly suspect to the Congress leadership because of their too "direct" approach - which seemed to contradict the non-violent outlook of the Congress leadership - and of their clearly communal stand. In Lucknow, for example, the Ahraris - probably in order to win the support of the local Sunnis - took the lead in the campaign against the Shia minority. In February 1941, therefore, Gandhi declared his opposition to enlist "Ahraris as such" in the Congress, unless they joined individually the party and declared their commitment to non-violence.\footnote{Ibidem, p. 256.} This decision left the Ahrar increasingly alienated from the political scene while its extreme wings started to abandon the body to join, on the left, the socialist movement, and to the right, the Muslim League.

The Ahraris - following the majority of the reformist-oriented ulama - stood against the Pakistan demand which was rejected by the Working Committee of the Ahrar in March 1940. From that moment until the Partition, the Ahraris opposed strongly the Muslim League in every possible occasion, accusing them of "vivisectioning the country". They took particular pride in attacking Jinnah, whose westernised customs - and even the fact that he married a Parsi woman - were an easy target for their orators. It was one of the leading Ahraris, Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar, who composed the "verse" in which the title \textit{Quaid-i-Azam} ("Great Leader") given to Jinnah became \textit{kafir-i-azam} ("great infidel"). It is easy to see how this kind of aggressive speech anticipated the violent campaign against the Ahmadi Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Zafrullah Khan.\footnote{Munir report, p. 11.}
Partition nearly saw the collapse of the Ahrar as a party. The failure of their political program as well as the fear for the consequences of their opposition to Pakistan had the effect of disintegrating their organisation. Some of their leaders, therefore, decided to stay in India, while others, like Master Tajuddin Ansari of Ludhiana, Maulvi Muhammad Ali of Jullundur, Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari and Sahibzada Faiz-ul-Hasan, retired themselves to the anonymity of small villages in Punjab.

However, the ambition of these men to play a political role in Pakistan was not dead. Later in 1947, the remnants of the Ahrar gathered at Khangarh - where Ata Ullah Bukhari lived - to decide about their destiny. The final decision was to found an All-Pakistan Majlis-i-Ahrar. Their need to be forgotten as opponents of Pakistan prompted them to emphasise their loyalty to the state. Part of this strategy was their decision, in January 1949, to cease working as a political party and to continue as a religious group. In politics, they stated, they would follow the Muslim League. Under the label of a purely religious movement, in fact, the Ahraris were able to play an even more effective political role.

This offer of loyalty to the Muslim League was promptly accepted by this party, which was always looking for support amongst the religious leaders. The League responded by excluding the Ahrar from the list of nineteen parties whose membership was forbidden to the Leaguers. In this way, the ground was prepared for the tolerance - if not actual support - of some sectors of the Muslim League towards the Ahrar's activity. In later years, the Ahrar were to be able to enlist amongst its financial supporters, persons close to the Muslim League at local level.

In fact, the Ahrar leaders, by renewing their activity, demonstrated political ability. As we have seen, in the late 1940s and early 1950s the political situation in Pakistan offered them enough space for gaining political importance, both at the provincial and national levels. This circumstance can be explained less for their political weight than for their ability to influence the electorate conferring Islamic "blessing" on the fighting parties.

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The choice of an old religious controversy, on which they seemed to be expert, like the right of the Ahmadiyya community to be considered part or not part of the Islamic umma, presented the evident advantage of giving them an easy basis of support among the masses. In the long term, the Ahrar could hope to be forgotten as the "enemies of Pakistan" and to constitute a viable political force, not necessarily allied to the League.

d) The beginning of the agitation

The Ahrar advanced for the first time in public in May 1949 the demand that the Ahmadis be banned from the Islamic community and be declared a minority sect. Such a decision would have had important consequences: it is indeed a commonly accepted theological point that in an Islamic state it is forbidden for non-Muslims to rule over Muslims. Given the usually high level of education of the Qadianis and their being well placed in the governmental structure, their exclusion from the umma would have implied their forced resignation from such positions. The most important of these cases was that of the Foreign Minister Zafrullah Khan, who was a well-known Ahmadi believer. In fact, since the first outburst of protest against the Ahmadis, the Ahraris had heavily attacked Zafrullah Khan, hostility only matched by that against Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, then leader of the Ahmadiyya community.

This public demand, however, had already been preceded by clear signs that the protest had the potential to incite violence. As early as August 1948, an army officer had been murdered in Quetta for his only being an Ahmadi. The absurd

46 The Ahmadiyya was composed by the followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian in Eastern Punjab (from which originated the name Qadiani given to the members of the sect) who were numerous in Pakistan, where they had founded their centre after 1947. The core of the religious controversy rested on the claim to prophethood that Ghulam Ahmad had made in 1901. Such a statement deeply offended Muslim sentiments, given the central importance that the belief in the "finality of the Prophethood" of Muhammad (Khatm-i-Nabuwwat) has in the Islamic faith. Although Ghulam Ahmad had relied on the accepted distinction between the role of the Prophet as law-giver and that as religious renewer, this distinction did not protect the sect from the constant hostility of the Islamic masses. (F. Robinson, "Prophets Without Honour? Ahmad and the Ahmadiyya", History Today, June 1990). Apart from the theological question it is also to consider that the wealth of the Ahmadis did not help them to win the people's sympathy.

47 See below p. 31.

circumstances of the episode should have warned the Punjabi authorities of the seriousness of the agitation; on 11 August 1948, the officer, Major Mahmud, had casually stopped his car near a public meeting in which some maulvis were addressing speeches on the theme of khatm-i-nubuwwat, and during which the Ahmadis were dubbed as kafirs. The police reported that, after the speech, an infuriated crowd "was frantically looking for men with short beards" (a distinctive trait of the Ahmadis). The consequence was that the officer was assaulted and lynched.\textsuperscript{49} This kind of crime, unfortunately, was going to happen again in the successive five years.

What contributed most to excite the crowds was the way in which the Ahraris treated the subject during their public meetings. They did not limit themselves to refuting the theological concepts on which the Ahmadi belief was based, but indulged in every sort of insult against the sect, its founder, its leader and members. The following quotation from a speech of Maulvi Muhammad Hayat can give an idea of the low level of the invective: "We don’t blame Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, false as he was, because he committed fornication only occasionally. Our objection is to the present khalifa who commits fornication every day".\textsuperscript{50}

After the episodes of violence of August 1948, the situation in the Punjab attracted the attention of the authorities of Karachi. In October 1948, the Intelligence Bureau questioned the Punjab Government about the campaign of the Ahrar affirming to consider it "prejudicial to the interests of Pakistan". The Bureau, after warning that the declaration of loyalty to the state by the Ahrar leaders had to be considered "mere eye wash", asked the provincial authorities if some strong action had to be taken. The answer by Malik Habib Ullah on behalf of the Government was symptomatic of the attitude this body was going to take for almost all the duration of the agitation. The reply stated that the loyalty of the Ahraris was to be trusted and that in any case the Government of the Province was exerting a strict control on the

\textsuperscript{49} Ibidem, 13-14.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibidem, p. 15.
organisation. In case of necessity, the letter stated, the Punjab cabinet was ready to intervene.\textsuperscript{51} As we will see, things could not have been further from the reality.

In fact, the campaign of the Ahraris continued without rest during the successive months. After 1949, besides the usual attacks against the Ahmadis, the Foreign Minister was made the constant target of their speeches, the usual accusation against him consisting of the insinuation that, despite his position in the Pakistani government, he was actually working for spreading disorder within the state, aiming to its collapse. The rather dubious motif of all this was that the city of Qadian was in Indian territory, therefore the Ahmadis were looking for the re-unification of the two states. On other occasions, Zafrullah Khan was accused of being willing to leave Kashmir to India, in order to obtain in turn the city of Qadian for Pakistan.\textsuperscript{52}

It is, however, interesting to note that the Ahraris were intelligent enough to link - in their propaganda - the Ahmadiyya issue to the general problem of the Islamicity of Pakistan which, given the current debate on the opportunity to create an Islamic constitution for Pakistan, struck a great chord with the public. Constant references had been made, from the end of 1948, to the supposed un-orthodox practices that were diffused in the state, like that of women not respecting \textit{purdah}. During these speeches, Begum Liaquat Ali Khan - who notoriously claimed a more active role for Muslim women and openly opposed purdah as un-Islamic - was usually the target of heavy invective.\textsuperscript{53} The protests for the enforcement of sharia rules like the purdah or the strict observance of Ramadan began actually to be increasingly frequent throughout the 1950s. Resolutions such as that of the \textit{Jama'at-i-Ulema-i-Pakistan} which, in May 1952, asked for an order to restaurants to respect the fast or for Radio Pakistan not to play music during the prayer hours, could have looked amusing in some eyes but in fact they were the symbols of the enforcement of the Islamic law in Pakistan.\textsuperscript{54} The seriousness with which such demands were taken by the Muslim masses was to be proved a few days later, when

\textsuperscript{51} Munir report, p. 14.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibidem, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibidem, p. 15; “The Mullahs and Their Influence in Pakistan”; according to this memorandum the Begum's effort to organise the patriotic “Pakistan's Women's National Guard” had only partially touched the middle class and the bourgeoisie, who remained attached to the tradition. She was often criticized by the religious leaders, in particular Maulana Maududi.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Dawn}, 06/05/1952, p. 8, IOL.
people in Peshawar and Rawalpindi started to enforce such practices through violence.\textsuperscript{55}

e) The intensification of the agitation

By 1951 it became increasingly evident that the spiral of violence which had captured the Punjab risked to go beyond control. In January 1950, a conference organised by the Ahmadiyya at Sialkot generated riots between the Ahraris and the Ahmadis. More frequent became the cases of violence committed against Ahmadis by persons who had just finished listening to the Ahrar's speeches. In October 1950 two Ahmadis were killed in such circumstances. In May 1951 a crowd of Ahrar's followers attacked an Ahmadi mosque in Lyallpur District and having beaten the believers burnt the building.\textsuperscript{56}

Despite the seriousness of the situation, the Provincial Government seemed not to have any intention of reacting. The Police officers, by contrast, had very clear idea of what was happening. In particular, the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Anwar Ali had been asking, since 1949, the government for strong action against the campaign. In June 1950, he submitted a note to the Adviser for Law - the legal counsellor of the Punjab Government - that is impressive for its lucidity; having summarised the incidents, he stated that

"There are few who question their (the Ahrar's) bona fides or even dare to ask why all this fuss is made about the Ahmadis. The Ahrar have partially achieved their objective; they have rehabilitated themselves and will before long emerge as a political party not necessarily on the side of the Muslim League...The question of declaring the Majlis-i-Ahrar as an unlawful association...should be seriously taken into consideration".\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{55} Ibidem, 08/06/1952, p.7, IOL.

\textsuperscript{56} Munir report, pp. 17-30.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibidem, pp. 19-22.
But the politicians involved seemed to be unwilling to challenge the religious leaders and the feeling of the masses. As earlier in that year, the only kind of action the Punjab Government thought appropriate were mere warnings to the Ahrar's leaders even when their inutility became evident.  

The Adviser for Law wrote on 2 January 1950:

"I do not think it would be advisable to take any action against the Ahrar for the present as the Muslims are very touchy on the point of Ahmadis...To prosecute the Ahrar...would give them an air of martyrdom in the eyes of the public...".  

As it was easy to foresee, this kind of approach had the effect of actually encouraging the agitators, who derived the impression that the Muslim League was supporting the campaign.

f) The incidents of May 1952

The turning point in the agitation, however, was constituted by Zafrullah Khan's decision, in May 1952, to publicly endorse his faith by addressing a public conference of Ahmadis in Karachi. This decision, which had been discouraged by the Prime Minister Nazimuddin, had enormous consequences, giving a direct support to the Ahrar's campaign.

58 A further proof of the Punjab Government's involvement in the campaign is that the newspapers most involved in the agitation like Afaq, Zamindar, Ehsan, Maghribi Pakistan were all patronised by the Government, receiving - between, June 1951 and June 1952, that is in the very days in which they were supporting the campaign - a sum of 200,000 Rs. through the Adult Literacy Fund (Ibidem, p. 83). Moreover, according to the testimony of A.R. Shibli, the most inflammatory articles published by Zamindar "originated from the Muslim League Committee" (Report PHC/23/53 from UK Deputy High Commissioner in Lahore, 17/11/1953, DO35/5296, PRO).

59 Munir report p. 16.

60 Such was the opinion of Anwar Ali D.I.G., who wrote in April 1952: "The Ahrar have a feeling that the Muslim League is at their back: otherwise their past is black and they would not have dared to step into the political field": Muhammad Khuda Bakhsh, Superintendent of Police, suggested that "the Muslim League should completely wash their hands off this movement. Their M.L.A.s and office bearers should not only not preside over the Ahrar's meetings but should give clear indication to the public...that they do not want to help the Ahrar in any way". Ibidem, 49; 53.
On 17 May, during the annual meeting of the Karachi Ahmadiyya Association, in Jehangir Park, Karachi, the Police had to charge a crowd of about 500 persons who tried to disturb the conference. During the incidents "anti-Qadiani" slogans were raised. The most serious riots, however, happened the day after, when the Foreign Minister addressed the meeting. About 4,000 persons attempted to penetrate the area with the result of grave clashes with the police. Then, the mob turned to attack Ahmadi shops in Karachi forcing the District Magistrate to promulgate Section 144, which forbad any assembly.\textsuperscript{61}

Such open endorsement by the Foreign Minister of the Ahmadiyya constituted an unexpected help for the Ahraris. In the spring of 1952, in fact, the situation seemed like turning against the agitators. As we have seen above, some leading police officers had repeatedly tried to convince the government of the dangerous potential of the agitation, and of the need to intervene with strong action before the riots went out of control. This pressure started to produce some results in May 1952, when the Chief Minister Daultana began considering the proposal of banning all the meetings of the parties involved in the controversy - a decision which was actually taken on 25 May. Such a measure, if enforced, could have actually isolated the Ahrar and stopped the agitation. Moreover, in mid-1950 the Ahrars had been basically unable to win the support of the other sectors of the ulama. Until that period the only way the Ahraris could claim to be legitimised by the ulama was to quote the opinion of the late Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Uthmani - the Sheikh-ul-Islam of Pakistan - on the religious controversy.\textsuperscript{62}

Great importance, moreover, had been attached to the approach of Maulana Maududi to the controversy. The Amir of the Jama'at-i-Islami whose erudition on Islamic Law was highly respected, had in fact tried throughout the early 1950s not only to keep himself out of the agitation but also to convince the most important

\textsuperscript{61} Dawn, 18/05/1952, p.1, 19/05/1952, p.1, IOL.

\textsuperscript{62} The Deobandi alim had written, in the 1920s, a pamphlet on the theme of apostasy entitled \textit{Ash-Shahahs} in which he had stated that the Ahmadis were apostates and that the penalty for this crime in Islam was death. This opinion was issued during a controversy raised in India after the public killing of an Ahmadi in Afghanistan in 1924; the Ahraris, therefore, gave great emphasis to this pamphlet using it as a fatwa to legitimate their attacks against the Ahmadis. (\textit{Munir report}, p. 18).
Pakistani ulama to do the same. There was obviously no doubt for Maududi about the rightness of the religious issue, nevertheless, he feared that - as it actually happened - the agitation could do harm to the more important - for him - theme of the Islamic constitution; moreover, the Maulana was convinced that the Qadiani problem would have been automatically solved once Pakistan had become an Islamic state, through the re-absorption of the Ahmadis into the fold of Islam.\footnote{L. Binder, \textit{Religion and Politics}, p. 263; S.V.R. Nasr, "The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution", p. 205.}

This situation changed suddenly in May 1952. After Zafrullah Khan's speech in Karachi, the ulama called an All Pakistan Muslim Parties Convention which took place in the capital on 2-3 June. During it, for the first time, the representatives of all the organisations of the Pakistani ulama presented unanimously the demand of the Ahmadis be declared a minority and Zafrullah Khan be forced to resign. Moreover, the religious leaders agreed on organising a "broad based convention" to consider "ways and means of fighting the Ahmadiyya menace".\footnote{Telegram from UK High Commissioner in Karachi to Commonwealth Relations Office, 04/06/1952, FO371/101197, File FY1022/8, PRO.} Among the religious leaders who took part to these resolutions were Maulana Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi, President of the East Bengal \textit{Jama'at-ul-Ulama-i-Islam} - who was considered the leading alim after Uthmani's death in 1950 - and Maulana Abdul Hamid Badayuni, head of the \textit{Jama'at-ul-Ulama-i-Pakistan}.\footnote{These two organisations were the most authoritative bodies of Pakistani ulama, being formed by religious leaders from the most important Indian madrasa (religious schools). The \textit{Jama'at-i-Islam} had been founded in 1945 in Calcutta by a dissident group of the \textit{Jama'at-ul-Ulama-i-Hind} who supported the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan. The Deobandi ulama played a leading role in it. The \textit{Jama'at-i-Pakistan}, on the other hand, was founded in 1948 in Karachi by a group of ulama of the Barelvi school. While the first organisation received patronage from the government, the latter was not officially recognised (L. Binder, \textit{Religion and Politics}, p. 30-31). According to the British observers, none of the bodies had an all-Pakistan basis and the \textit{Jama'at-i-Pakistan} in particular was "little heard of outside the capital" ("The Mullahs and their influence in Pakistan", FO371/98265, PRO).}

The alliance between the Ahrar and the ulama had the effect to put pressure on those sectors of the political scene which had until then tried to remain outside the controversy - like Maududi - or to support it from behind like the Punjabi government. The former, found his position isolated from the ulama and - as we will see - also from the government; Maududi for a while was in the singular position of being the only one trying to minimise the anti-Ahmadiyya controversy. Then, put under pressure by the ulama, he decided to endorse the agitation adding the demand that the
Ahmadis be declared a religious minority to his eight demands for an Islamic Constitution.\textsuperscript{66}

In the case of the latter, the situation seemed to lead Daultana to put his indecision to one side and support openly the agitation. On 26 July, the Chief Minister made an astonishing statement, in front of the Provincial Muslim League Council, that offered legitimation to the religious cause of the movement, although inviting people not to break the law.\textsuperscript{67} Daultana was clearly attempting to follow the way opened by the ulama and trying to ride the movement. This seemed to be the signal that the local Muslim League was waiting for, throwing its weight behind the agitation. The day after Daultana's statement, the Council of the Provincial Muslim League issued a resolution which endorsed the movement. In the first part of the document, the Council expressed its reprobation for the Ahmadi belief, so giving a religious blessing to the movement; in the second part, the resolution went even further by defining the matter "of a constitutional and legal nature" therefore to be devolved to the Constitutional Assembly.\textsuperscript{68} This document was only one of a long series of resolution approved in the summer of 1952 by Muslim League branches in various parts of the Punjab, which asked for the withdrawal of Section 144, the release of the persons arrested and the full support by the central Muslim League of the Ahrar's demands.\textsuperscript{69} On 30 August, Daultana clarified even further his policy by affirming in a public speech that "the Mirzais (the Ahmadis) are themselves responsible for the hatred that has been created against them because of their separatist tendencies".\textsuperscript{70}

The new position of the Chief Minister had been made easier by the decision of the leading Ahraris in July to make a public apology for the episodes of violence

\textsuperscript{66} Binder, Religion and Politics, p. 264; after the publication on 5 March 1953 of his pamphlet Qadiyani Masala ("The Qadiani Problem") - which sold 57.000 copies in 18 days - Maududi came to be considered one of the most active leader in the campaign (S.V.R. Nasr, "The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution", p. 209).

\textsuperscript{67} Dawn, 27/07/1952, p. 7, IOL.

\textsuperscript{68} Telegram from the UK High Commissioner, 28/07/1952, FO371/98265, File E 1073/5, PRO.

\textsuperscript{69} Munir report, pp. 92-9.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibidem, p. 97.
that had happened. The declaration, issued on 21 July, in fact consisted only of a statement in which the Ahraris declared that they had not committed anything illegal in the past and had no intention of doing so in the future, and that the organisation renewed its loyalty to the Punjab Government. Such a declaration should have seemed ironic to anyone, but it was judged by Daultana sufficient to withdraw Section 144 and to release all the persons arrested in the last riots. By the summer of 1952, therefore, the Ahraris, having received the blessing of the Provincial Government and that of the local Muslim League, and having obtained the withdrawal of Section 144, were left free to go ahead with the agitation.

The events of May and the successive alliance between the various sectors of the ulama found a relevant echo in the press. In particular, in June 1952, Dawn ran a series of leaders dedicated to the last developments of the anti-Ahmadiyya campaign. Their common theme was - after an "obligatory" rejection of the doctrine of 'Qadaniyyat" - a strong criticism of the religious leaders, who were accused of trying to appropriate the political power through the means of the religious cause. According to the newspaper,

"...there is the danger that the political life of the country will be so vitiated by religious dogmatism that in the process we shall be reduced to a medieval state where the turbaned clergy - an institution foreign to Islam - will rise as a political hierarchy and dominate all spheres of national activity." 71

In another leader, the newspaper even established a connection between the disturbances and the adoption of the Objectives Resolution for the Pakistan constitution.

Between the summer of 1952 and the declaration of Martial Law in March 1953, the agitation increased in intensity. In this period as many as 390 public meetings were organised in support of the anti-Ahmadi campaign. 72 It is worth noting, however, that despite the public endorsement by the Provincial Government, in the

71 Dawn, 04/06/1052, p. 5, IOL.

72 Munir report, p. 99.
second half of 1952, the agitation started choosing as its target the central and provincial Governments, accused of inefficiency and corruption.

In the dramatic reports that - despite the quite different approach of their Government - the Police and Intelligence officers continued preparing, this point was fully evidenced. A report of 15 December 1952 stated that the anti-Government propaganda had intensified and that the food-shortage was being exploited; the following passage seems to be particularly interesting to understand the feeling that was spread in the Province in that period:

"People who return from Karachi...say that Secretariat officers and other high-ups seem to have lost faith in the future and talk as a collapse is imminent...The position is desperate and if the nation is to be saved from chaos and anarchy, effective measures should be taken without delay".73


**g) The "direct action" and the repression of the movement**

The ulama officially presented their demands to the Central Government in the summer of 1952. The deputation which, on 13 August met the Prime Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin, asked the Government to declare the Ahmadis a minority, to remove Zafrullah Khan from the office of Foreign Minister, and to remove the Ahmadis from the key posts in the state.
The Prime Minister's position faced with these demands was ambiguous. During the previous months, Nazimuddin had been trying to win the ulama through personal contacts, his reputation of being a pious Muslim and his good relationship with Maududi helping in the task. According to various testimonies, the Prime Minister had been discussing the religious controversy with some leading ulama and Ahraris and after having read some of the Ahmadi publications that they had brought with them, he was said to have been "horrified".  

Nazimuddin had therefore expressed sympathy with the agitation but, he stated, he was unable to accept the demands if the food-shortage had to be solved. According to the Prime Minister, "not a grain of wheat could be got from the US if Zafrullah went".

On 14 August, Khwaja Nazimuddin, in another attempt to soften the position of the ulama, issued an ambiguous press statement in which all Government members were advised not to use their official position to undertake any religious proselytisation. The move was obviously directed to Zafrullah, who felt obliged to reply with a public statement in which he declared his agreement with the message of the Prime Minister.

The ulama had expected that Nazimuddin, on the occasion of the Pakistan Day, 15 August, would - if not endorse - then almost indirectly support their demands. In fact, the Prime Minister did not say one word on the subject.

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74 Ibidem, p. 125.

75 This version of the conversation was given to the Court of Inquiry on the Punjab Disturbances by Maulana Abul Hasanat and confirmed by Master Tajuddin Ansari, President of the Majlis-i-Ahrar (Report PHC/20/53 from the UK Deputy High Commissioner in Lahore, 06/10/1953, DO35/5296, PRO); S.V.R. Nasr in "The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution", having personally interwed Sayyad Amjad Ali, who negotiated the wheat loan from the US, writes that he recollected no such threat on the part of the United States Government (p. 208).

76 One of the charges that the agitators had often moved against the Foreign Minister was the alleged use of his position to make converts to Ahmadiyyat.

77 Munir report, p. 127-8.
At this point, the ulama, having failed their attempt to obtain an acceptance of the demands from the central Government, decided to go ahead with their action.

In January 1953 the All Muslim Parties Convention approved a resolution which recognised that no other way of action was left to them except "direct action". Therefore, the ulama gave the central Government one month notice after which they were going to declare the abandonment of constitutional methods.78

Khwaja Nazimuddin utilised the month of notice to try to split the ulama by exploiting the differences between their factions. With this aim he had a series of meetings with the religious leaders, trying to explain the impossibility of him accepting their demand while promising, at the same time, to take a personal interest in the alleged cases of misconduct by the Ahmadis.

However, the agitation followed with increasing intensity. As the police officers noticed, at this stage, after months of preparation and announcements of action, the people were so excited that it would have been difficult even for the ulama to stop the agitation. On 16 February, during a trip by Khwaja Nazimuddin to Lahore, the ulama showed him their strength in mobilising the masses. An "impressively complete hartal" was observed in the city, with exhibition of "black flags". By this time no prudence was used in the approach with the Government; after the Prime Minister's refusal to consider the demands, the leaders of the agitation asked openly for his resignation together with that of Zafrullah Khan.79

In the second half of February the situation seemed to go increasingly beyond control. Reports from the local Police and Intelligence officers warned the Government that a large-scale movement was going to be launched in the next few

78 Ibidem, p. 131.

79 These developments seemed to go in the direction wanted by Daultana. Mamdot, leader of the opposition, said to the British High Commissioner that the hartal of 16 February was "arranged at the Chief Minister's own behest as a further demonstration of the strength and nuisance value of the Punjab public opinion". However, the Inspector-General of Police refused this version, stating that the protest was "solely the handiwork of the mullahs". In any case, it was clear that if Daultana had not arranged the protest, he did nothing to prevent it (Report PHC/4/53 from the UK Deputy High Commissioner in Lahore, 24/02/1953, DO35/5296, File CON 227/6/3, PRO).
hours. The agitators were able to fall back in their religious authority in order to enlist volunteers for direct action. In the meeting of the All Muslim Parties Convention of 16-18 January, the agitation had received the blessing of the Pir of Golra Sharif (Rawalpindi), Syal Sharif (Sargodha), Alipur Sayyadan (Sialkot), Pir Shaukat Husain (sajjada nishin of the Darbar Pir Sahib, Multan), who could rely on the support of thousands of murids. Information collected by the Superintendent of Police showed that more than 55,000 volunteers had been enrolled in the Punjab.\(^{80}\)

Faced with the spectre of a mass disobedience movement and having been informed that the volunteers were planning to reach the houses of the Governor-General and the Prime Minister, the central Government decided to take - for the first time since the beginning of the agitation - a strong action. On 26 February Nazimuddin called an emergency meeting, which was attended by the Governor and the Inspector-General of Police from Punjab, the Governor and the Chief Minister of the North-Western Frontier Province, the Governor of Sind and the top-ranks Police officers of Karachi. Among the decisions taken at this meeting were: to arrest all the leaders of the agitation, including Maulana Akhtar Ali Khan of the newspaper Zamindar which had supported the Ahrar; to ban the newspapers involved in the campaign, Azad, Zamindar and Al Fazl; and to prevent the volunteers from reaching Karachi.\(^{81}\)

On the morning of 27 February, moreover, the central Government gave the first official response to the demands of the ulama, stating that no section of the people could be declared a minority against their wishes and that no Government officer - included the Foreign Minister - could be removed from office on the ground of his being an Ahmadi.\(^{82}\) At the same time, with a cipher telegram, the central authorities sent to the Punjab Government the lines to be followed in dealing with the agitation. It was clear, in these orders, the need to avoid a direct clash with the ulama, which could have irretrievably damaged the image of the Government in front of the masses. They stressed the need to "isolate the Ahrar" and to concentrate attacks on it,

\(^{80}\) Munir report, p. 144.

\(^{81}\) Ibidem, pp. 144-5.

\(^{82}\) Ibidem, p. 147.
emphasising the organisation's past opposition to Pakistan and its criticism of Jinnah. In order to realise this objective, the Punjabi authorities were invited to "look for saner elements" able to influence the public opinion.

In this way it was built what became the "official" version of the disturbances: the Ahrar had not reconciled themselves with the existence of Pakistan and therefore they were trying to destroy it by spreading disorder.\(^{83}\) Accordingly, \textit{Dawn} of 28 February published on its first page an article with the headline "Ahrars inspired by Pakistan enemies; cloak of religious movement". But the newspaper did not limit itself to following the instructions received. In the same issue, it published an editorial which criticised strongly the slowness of the Government's action:

"The press communiqué of the Government...will be acclaimed...as the first positive indication that our rulers have begun to understand their duties as a Government. Their weakness and hesitancy...had made many people wonder if there was in this country a Government worthy of its name."

Moreover, the article criticised the "policy of appeasing with reactionary elements", which seemed a direct reference to Nazimuddin's approaches with the ulama.\(^{84}\)

The decisions taken by the meeting of the Government were rapidly enforced both in Karachi and in the Punjab. In a few hours, on 27 February, the members of the Action Committee of the All Muslim Parties Convention were arrested in Karachi. All the volunteers were in the successive hours arrested in the Punjab or on their way to Karachi.


\(^{84}\) \textit{Dawn}, 28/02/1953, p. 1; 5, IOL. Other parties manifested support for the Government's action, like the Governor of East Pakistan who, in a public speech on 25 February, took the occasion to attack those people "who wished to push Islam back into the Middle Ages" (Report n.4 from the UK Deputy High Commissioner in Dacca, 25/02/1953, DO35/5298, File CON 227/6/3, PRO); many newspapers in Dacca also praised the action of the central Government.
After the news of the Karachi arrests were diffused in the Punjab, the situation rapidly deteriorated. On 28 February an hartal was declared, and as many as 29 persons, including many "well known ulama" were arrested. On the same day, the orders of banning *Al Fazl* (the Ahmadiyya organ) and *Azad* (the Ahrar newspaper) were applied by the Provincial Government.

In the first days of March the disorders took alarming proportions, and it seemed likely that the police alone would not be able to cope with the situation. Therefore, on 3 March for the first time troops appeared on the scene.\(^{85}\)

On Friday 6th all rail, telephone and telegraph communication with Lahore were interrupted and the essential services were going to be suspended. Lahore was almost isolated.\(^{86}\)

It would not be an exaggeration to define the situation within the Punjab Government as one of almost complete panic. The testimonies for March 6th present the image of the Governor, the Chief Minister and some Ministers gathered in a room, desperately trying to contact Karachi by telephone.\(^{87}\)

Daultana probably understood that he had lost his game and that his attempt to drive the agitation had failed. Nevertheless, he decided to make a last attempt to present himself as the representative of the Punjabi masses and take the lead in the protest, when the Punjab Government announced its willingness to open negotiations with the Council of Action of the Khatm-i-Nubuwwat movement. Daultana, as President of the Punjab Muslim League, had begun contacts with the President of the Pakistan Muslim League presenting the demands, because they were "the unanimous demands of the nation". With the same message, Daultana announced that he had sent a Minister to Karachi to present the demands and press for Zafrullah Khan's resignation.

This announcement - which was withdrawn four days later given its uselessness - did not impress the central Government. Nazimuddin - and even more

\(^{85}\) Report PHC/5/53 from UK Deputy High Commissioner in Lahore, 10/03/1953, DO35/5296, File CON 227/6/3, PRO.

\(^{86}\) Ibidem, DO35/5296, File CON 227/6/3, PRO.

\(^{87}\) Munir report, p. 165.
the top-ranks of the bureaucracy and the army - did not trust any longer Daultana and his expediencies.

At 7.15 p.m. of 6 March, Radio Lahore diffused a communiqué by Major-General Muhammad Azam Khan - military commander of the Province - who announced that a few hours before Martial Law had been declared in the city. The decision - the high officer stated - had been necessitated by the "direct action policy" which "had defied law and order"; "in the name of Islam", he went, "I appeal to all to stop this unlawfulness".88

The circumstances that led to the Army taking control of the Province and to Daultana's resignation are still not completely clear and further research is probably required. Nevertheless, there is evidence to support the hypothesis that some sort of deal was concluded between Daultana, the central Government and the military, which guaranteed the Punjabi leader freedom from prosecution for his complicity with the agitation if he resigned at once. Further weight is given to this version by the fact that, although throughout the acts of the Court of Inquiry on the Punjab Disturbances Daultana's responsibility emerges clearly, his position is never treated in details.89

The consequences of the agitation

Despite the prudence that should always characterise historical writing, we must consider responsibility for the emergence of the Punjab agitation - the Provincial Cabinet, in the first place, and secondly the Central Government. As we have seen above, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that there existed a deal between the Punjab Ministry and the religious opposition represented by the Ahrar. This agreement was due in part to Daultana's personal aspiration of improving his own political weight within the Province, with the prospect of an appointment to a top office in

88 Telegram n.415 from UK High Commissioner in Lahore, 07/03/1953, DO35/5326, File CON 234/4, PRO.

89 S.V.R. Nasr, “The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution”, p. 210. According to the British Commissioner in Lahore the general expectation was that "the Court will largely exonerate Daultana for the charge of complicity in fomenting the agitation" (Report PHC/22/53, 03/11053, DO35/5296, PRO); in another report the British officer gave credit to the theory "that it is been decided to let Daultana off lightly" (Report PHC/23/53, 17/11/53, DO35/5296, PRO).
Karachi; in part, to the tension that existed between the Punjabi politicians and the centre over the distribution of financial resources and power to the Province.

However, the responsibilities involve also Nazimuddin's Government. The reasons for its weakness and slowness in reacting to the agitation are to be explained by the religious symbolism of the anti-Ahmadiyya campaign, which touched deeply the Muslims' feelings and that had the support of the most influential ulama of Pakistan. These circumstances made it difficult for the central Government to intervene without damaging the delicate balance between secular and religious sectors that characterised Pakistan's political life. We have already noticed that, when the Prime Minister decided to repress the agitation, he used all his influence on the press in order to persuade it to distinguish between the ulama and the Ahhrar, and to concentrate the attack on the latter.

It is however paradoxical that the first and most important consequence of the anti-Qadiani agitation was that of breaking - even if not permanently - that carefully maintained balance between secular and religious stances. The search for a mediation between these two sectors had shaped the debate over the character of the future Pakistani Constitution, leading in 1949 to the draft of the "Objectives Resolution". This document had provided a "delicately balanced blend of Islamic terminology and Western liberal principles"90, by uniting the provision for a parliamentary system to the acknowledgement of God's sovereignty.

Then, the agitation had the effect of reopening the whole debate on the Pakistani constitution by adding to it a new point of discussion, that of the place of the Ahmadiyya community - and in general of the non-Muslim minorities - in the state; a question that the Government of Pakistan could not ignore.

Government's action, however, also gave an unintended support to the Ahhrar. In fact, the prudent attitude of Karachi towards the agitators had the effect of isolating the position of the more moderate ulama, putting pressure on them and finally contributing to their decision to join the agitation. We have already seen, moreover, that Maulana Maududi's decision to support the demand that the Ahmadis be declared a minority was taken in the same circumstances. In fact, the slowness of the

90 "The Mullahs and Their Influence in Pakistan", FO371/98265, PRO.
Government in reacting to the disturbances pushed the anti-Ahmadiyya controversy - and with it the entire question of the "Islamicity" of Pakistan - onto the public platform, weakening the position of the more moderate groups.\textsuperscript{91}

Another important effect of the agitation was to demonstrate once more the importance that Islamic values and symbols had in Pakistani politics. This element was already clear since the formation of Pakistan, thanks to the use of Islamic symbols made by the Muslim League during its campaign in the 1946. In the 1950s, moreover, this element proved to be even able to oppose deeply rooted structures of power, like those present in the Punjab; the fact that Daultana resorted to the support of the religious leaders in order to counterbalance the landed gentry's opposition seems to give evidence for this point.

A third relevant consequence of the anti-Qadiani agitation that must be emphasised is that the position of the bureaucracy - and within it of the Army - in the balance of powers came out clearly strengthened by the disorders. After February 1953 it was easy for the secular-minded civil servants and Army officers to point out the politicians' weakness in dealing with the religious sectors as the cause of the Punjab disturbances. This point is more clear if we consider two circumstances: first, that there is evidence indicating that the declaration of Martial Law in March 1953 was directly ordered by General Iskandar Mirza - Secretary of Defence - from Karachi\textsuperscript{92}; secondly, the fact that the Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad, a few days after the repression of the agitation, dismissed the Prime Minister Nazimuddin.

It seems, therefore, correct to suggest that the Punjab disturbances represented the first manifestation of the dominant role the armed forces were going to play in determining the political destiny of Pakistan.

The 1953 disturbances, however, did not mark the end of the troubles for the Ahmadiyya community. In the following decades, their position was again threatened. In 1974 new violent attacks were launched against the centre of the sect in Rabwa. In the same year, Z.A. Bhutto's Government decided to endorse the demand that the ulama had made for the first time twenty years before, to include in the Constitution...

\textsuperscript{91} L. Binder, \textit{Religion and Politics}, p. 259.

\textsuperscript{92} S.V.R. Nasr, "The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution", p. 209; the author quotes in support of this thesis General Mirza's unpublished memories.
the provision that Ahmadis were to be considered as a non-Muslim minority. Ten years later, the sect was again under pressure; with the Ordinance XX issued by the Government of Zia ul Haq, the separation between the Ahmadis and the rest of the Muslim population was increased further, through the prohibition to the members of the sect on using Muslim titles or on following some everyday Islamic practices.\textsuperscript{93}

Despite the fact that international influences were utmost in these new manifestations of hostility against the sect\textsuperscript{94}, the general causes were not dissimilar from those of the Punjab disturbances of 1953. Bhutto's and Zia's regimes found themselves under increasing pressure from the Islamic parties and, as before, the presence of the Ahmadiyya community within the borders of Pakistan gave these interested elements an easy opportunity to question the adherence of the Government to the ideology of the "Islamic Republic". The situation was not changed in the waking of Benazir Bhutto's and Nawaz Sharif’s democratic regime.

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\textsuperscript{93} F. Robinson, “Ahmad and the Ahmadiyya”, p. 45.

\textsuperscript{94} In the 1970s, in particular, there was a strong pressure on the Pakistan Government from the powerful oil-producer Islamic countries (\textit{Ibidem}, p.45).
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