# Making Them Look the Other Way! The (Ir)rationality of Road Building in the Sindh Borderlands of Pakistan

Mustafa Ahmed Khan

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD/MPhil

7 September 2020

Department of Anthropology and Sociology

SOAS, University of London

# Abstract

The thesis explores the politics and poetics of road making in Pakistan. The material addresses two questions: why do states build roads? What happens to the people and places that roads pass through when roads finally appear?

I conducted eleven months of ethnographic fieldwork on and along 360 kilometres of road built through southern Sindh, from the port of Karachi to a newly discovered coalfield in the borderland district of Tharparkar. The material challenges and complicates a body of scholarship connecting road building to state-making and territoriality. I explore how the 'cartographic anxieties' of India and Pakistan have created 'zones of exception' in their borderlands. Research on borderlands has focused on illicit flows and weak states, but in Sindh the border is a fiercely contested space and highly securitised while also being home to marginal populations, including Hindus and Dalits. This thesis de-constructs the tendency to explain road building as a form of economic improvement because the material from Sindh suggests that road building is a political process influenced more by discourses of national security than by the promotion of economic well-being. Foucauldian perspectives on the study of the state have produced important and necessary insights, but, at times, have also reified the power of the state as a particular universal instantiation of power, and more recently, neo-liberalism. By moving the focus on to the relationship between the citizen and state, this thesis will make an argument that postcolonial states such as Pakistan now face a 'crisis of legitimacy' when they undertake large infrastructural projects, with resistance from communities undergoing displacement, as earlier notions of social, political and legal orders are rearranged.

Overall, this material allows me to develop an argument about borders in the region. The Partition of 1947 did not simply create new territories and countries. Instead, this has been a long and contested process of adjustment, rupture and accommodation - the 'afterlives of Partition'. In many ways, the border is still being made, and roads are just one part of this process. In Pakistan, Tharparkar, like other 'remote places' in Asia, is increasingly reimagined as a resource-rich, unexploited 'wasteland' targeted for large-scale development schemes aimed at national integration and territorial control. New roads have been constructed for the exploitation of a new 'resource frontier'. With roads come new connections with urban Sindh, in particular Karachi, and new spatial realties for older populations.

This research makes an original contribution to the study of state making, citizenship and development in Pakistan. This is the first ethnographic research to be carried out along the borderlands of Sindh and Gujarat-Rajasthan with a focus on the afterlives of the Partition.

# Glossary of Words

Ajrakh: A form of block printed shawl found in Sindh

Autaq: a village gathering place, sometimes a building, where villagers assemble to discuss village affairs. In Tharparkar, most Patels have dedicated outbuildings in their compounds that serve as Autaqs

Babu: A respectful title or form of address for a man, especially an educated one, but can also to be used as a form of sarcasm for someone who is uppity

Band: From the Urdu to close, a strike where everything is closed

Bayabaan: A wild and uninhabited area space

Beggar: A form of forced labour, often carried out by Dalit castes in Sindh

Bhangi: A caste traditionally connected with sweeping, also a term of abuse. There own self-designation is Balmiki

Gupshup:  A casual chit chat, gossip in Urdu.

Chadar: A large sheet, sometimes a blanket

Chai khana: A tea stall

Dharna: A sit-in, or blockade of a road

Dhoti: A rectangular piece of unstitched cloth, usually worn by men

Gauchers: Common pasturage attached to most villages in Tharparkar

Hafiz: In Urdu a someone who knows the Koran by heart

Hartal: A strike, refusal to work

Hotal: A local Sindhi term for a restaurant, originally from the English Hotel

Kekra: Literally a crab, used to describe GMC trucks from the 1960s that have been converted into buses in Tharparkar

Khanabadosh: a nomad, an iterant, someone with no fixed address

Kutchery: In Urdu the building housing the district administration or courts, but in Tharparkar the term is used for village meetings, often held in autaqs

Makaar: A Sindhi word meaning locust, but used as a term of insult for Muhajirs in Sindh

Mohallah: A neighbourhood in Urdu

Nido: A milk substitute powder and milk powder brand manufactured by Nestle. Widely sold in Pakistan

Para: A neighbourhood, a term used in both Dhatki and Sindhi

Patel: A village headman

Saeen: A term of respect for an elder in Sindhi

Sahib: A respectful appellation, initially given to Europeans

Seth: A term for a businessman

Siasat: An Urdu word meaning politics

Tamasha: A drama, but can also mean a public spectacle

Tappadar: An officer of the Sindh Revenue Department who records any changes in land ownership

Thikanadar: A thikana was a fiefdom among the states of the Rajputana Agency during the period of British rule, a thikanadar was the fief holder

Uttar: in Sindhi and Urdu, a word for the north, but in Sindh, refers to the region of north-western Sindh bordering Balochistan

Wanis: A local term in Sindh for a member of the Hindu merchant castes, sometimes used derogatory to describe any rich Hindu

Zalat: An Urdu word, for someone who has commited a despised act, such as fornication

# Acknowledgements

Throughout the writing of this dissertation I have received a great deal of support and assistance. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Edward Simpson, he continually encouraged me. Without his guidance, persistent help and patience, this thesis would not have been possible.

In Pakistan, there were so many who helped me with my endeavours, so I apologise if I have missed you out. In Islamkot, I want to thank Dominic Stephens, Sawai Rathi and Arjun Pattel, and the rest of the team at PVDP, who assistance was invaluable. In Mithi, special thanks are due to Ayoub Memon, Chandar Kolhi, Maljee Rathore, Krishan Sharma, Khatau Jani, Ali Rind and Ramzan Bajeer. Last but not least, Vikram Das, a fellow traveller in anthropology, who was more than friend, and this thesis owes much to his insights. In Karachi, all those at Habib University, but in particular Fahd Ali, Asif Aslam Farrukhi and Hafeez Jamali, who provided me with some excellent feedback as the research progressed. I also wish to thank Hussain Bux Mallah at the Collective of Social Science Research for all your assistance, as I tried to make sense of my new surroundings. Arif Hasan and Javed Jabbar, both took time from their very busy schedules to speak to me, allowing me to have an understanding of Tharparkar. This thesis would have remained a dream had it not been for Irfan Khan, and I thank you with all my heart. At Engro and SECMC, special thanks are due to Fawad Soomro, Haris Siddiqi and the late Jivan Das. Among the 'Sindh guys', all those who devote themselves to the study of Sindh, can I thank Ghulam Hussain, Sadia Mahmood, Ghazal Asif, Kamran Kumbher, Julien Levesque, Rita Kothari and Michel Boivin. Let us keep arguing, dissecting and attempting to understand the beautiful place that is Sindh. I have special appreciation to my extended family in Karachi, in particular the Usman family who offered a great deal of help and emotional support, including giving me a birthday party to remember, as I celebrated my first ever birthday in Pakistan. Last but not least, Mureed Hussain, whose humorous takes on Pakistan were both insightful and encouraging when it felt like giving up.

I would like to acknowledge my colleagues at the SOAS Roads project, in particular Srinivas Chokkakula, Ashok Sukumaran and Shaina Anand for their wonderful support. Ali Rizvi was both a colleague from the Roads project, but more importantly a friend, as we went up and down the Coal Road, laughing, singing badly and attempting to get that damn go-pro to work (pehle rumaal phir dhamaal!). At SOAS, I am indebted to my many colleagues who supported me, in particular Jon Galton, who was always there to give me his own very precious time. I

**Map of the Coal Road**

Map of Sindh showing the Road Network circa 2000

# Chapter 1: Introduction: The Ecology of the Road

It was a late autumn in 2016 and I was sitting in the office of Arif Hasan, architect, planner, NGO advisor, and an acknowledged polymorph, even among those who disliked him. I had come to speak to him about development policies in my field site of Tharparkar. His office was located in his sprawling house, in a wealthy suburb of Karachi, where many of Karachi's 'progressives' sheltered from the ever-louder drumbeats of an aggressive Islam outside. Arif Hasan, universally known as Arif *Sahib*, was credited with the setting up of the Non-governmental organisation (NGO) structure in Tharparkar and had been involved in all sorts of 'development' matters in connection with the district since at least 1974. The discussion led to the emigration of the Jain minority in its entirety from Tharparkar in the aftermath of the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War, during which, for almost a year, the district had been occupied by the Indian Army, and the consequent detrimental effect on the region's economy. I was maybe over-labouring the point that ethnic cleansing is not just bad for the soul, but also the pocket. Arif Sahib was now visibly irritated and said, "Yes the Jains are gone, what Tharparkar now needs is to look the other way". The point here was that Tharis, as residents of Tharparkar refer to themselves, needed to understand that those earlier connections with India were no longer possible. With the partitioning of Britain's Indian Empire, which was both violent and resulted in a continuing strained relationship between the two successor states, India and Pakistan, any residual linkage the district had with India would no longer be possible.

As our conversation progressed, the importance of roads kept coming up, as providers of economic opportunities, bringers of investments and facilitators of employment in the cities. The roads were not just about improved mobility but would bring with them the much-needed clinics and schools. When I naively asked when the first road was built in Tharparkar, however, I was surprised to hear that it was in 1987, a full forty years after independence. When I pressed

Arif *Sahib* about why it had taken such a long time for the first road to be built, the answer related to the geography of Tharparkar, with its borderland location, and the poor state of relations with India. For Arif Sahib, roads were the perfect instrument to make Tharis look the other way, yet that did not seem to be part of the 'state making' process in the early part of the district's history in Pakistan. This thesis is about roads, and in particular a road, which has been built to facilitate the exploitation of a large coalfield in the district of Tharparkar. The story of the road and that of the coalfield are therefore intertwined.

Much time has elapsed since the that first road connecting the district headquarters in Mithi with the city of Mirpurkhas was built in 1987, since then the Sindh government had approved its first road master plan in 1995, and now preparations are underway for the second master plan (Rao 2019). Road making is seen as good for the Pakistan (Rana 2019), not only with regards to the commissions that are expected, a factor which is, of course, noticeably absent in the documents of the international donor agencies who fund many of the roads, but as bringers of a promise of a better future. With an area of 19,638 square kilometres, however, the district still only has 743 kilometres of roads, and the quality of these is still among the lowest for any Sindh district.[1] Sandy tracks are still the main way to get to many of the larger villages. Roads are still a rare commodity in Tharparkar, therefore.

Scientists, town planners and engineers have a discipline which they call 'road ecology'. This is the study of the 'ecological effects' of roads on the terrain in which they are built (Laurance, Goosem & Laurance 2009). These effects may include noise, water pollution, habitat destruction or disturbance and local air quality; as well as wider effects such as habitat fragmentation, ecosystem degradation and climate change from vehicle emissions. There is

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[1] United States Aid: Tharparkar District: Pakistan Emergency situational Analysis May 2014

therefore an acceptance, even among engineers and planners who are broadly sympathetic to road building (see Harvey & Knox 2015), that road construction transforms the environment, although they may argue it does so in a positive way. This thesis argues that roads also have social effects, which I call 'road effects', just as scientists and engineers examine the 'ecological effects', I will analyse these 'road effects'. The thesis asks how community, identity and group processes experience change as they are mediated by infrastructural interventions. Road makers have a particular set of rationalities that are used as justifications for the construction of roads. This thesis will unpack these (ir)rationalities, to understand the particular histories of road making in Tharparkar. It will ask why roads are built, by exploring the geopolitics and state making in the Sindh borderlands, and, more importantly, when they are finally built, what are 'road effects' for the region such as Tharparkar.

The literature on roads is in some way reflective of the rationalities of the road builders, i.e. that roads assist with territorialisation (Dawson & Barwell 1993; deGrassi 2005), they are key sites of government investment in the global South (Harvey & Knox 2015; Dalakoglou 2017; Mostowlanski 2017), connected with mobility (Urry 2007; Cresswell & Merriman 2011), flows (Appadurai 2000), networks (Castells 1996), liquidity (Bauman 2000) or even exhaustion (Brennan 2000). It can be said, therefore, that there are a set of 'mythologies' around roads and road making. For state officials and 'development consultants' they are seen as the iconic symbol of modernity, with roads holding the promise of connectivity, political power, economic growth and cultural status (Rankine et al. 2017). Globally, roads have become the paradigmatic material infrastructure of the twenty-first century, supporting both the information society (in the ever-increasing circulation of commoditised goods and labour), and the extractive economies of developing nations on which the production and reproduction of such goods and labour depends (Dalakoglou & Harvey 2012). The discourse that appears regularly in World Bank reports is one that emphasises how roads are a 'necessity' for

economic development. Roads have also now come to epitomise the 'national project' in the global South, being built as part of "larger projects aimed at investing in infrastructural systems to support economic growth and modernization" (Harvey & Knox 2015: 4). For modernist economists like Rostow (1960:30), infrastructural development would play a key role in the economic development of the newly decolonising states of what was then referred to as the Third World. The increasing commodification of roads and its corollary, mobility, has now become the focus of economists and political scientists as they make arguments in favour of road making. Economists have even developed formulas, often contested by other economists, to measure the exact cost-benefit ratios of mobility (Dawson & Barwell 1993; Edmonds 1998; Ellis & Biggs 2001).

The enthusiasm of the road builders for improved communications and mobility can be contrasted with the 'apprehension' of many sociologists and anthropologists (see Bauman 2000). Literature on roads produced by social scientists unpacks many of the 'rationalities' of the road builders and engages with how new infrastructures simultaneously creates new connections while also reinforcing social hierarchies across a range of spatial and political scales (Bishara 2015; Dalakoglou 2010). As Wilson (2004) notes, development literature simply lists rather than discusses the effects of roads on the communities through which they are built. The road has also been seen as intrusive infrastructure by which once immobile 'local' places and cultures become penetrated by global, national and regional flows (see Tsing 2000). However, there is a very good argument that human history has revolved around a mobility that has mutually defined contacts between social groups, accompanied by traffic in information and goods and struggles for control of these processes (see Adler 1994:3). By placing ourselves on the road, we can provide an extended analysis of broader social and historical trends that have surrounded the 'myth' of the road and road making.

**Why Build Roads: The Territorialisation of the State in Pakistan**

Roads are seen to have geopolitically strategic underpinnings in Pakistan (Haines 2012:7). Making reference to the Karakorum Highway (KKH), built in northern borderlands of Pakistan, Haines argues that the purpose was both to get the state to the margins, but also to encourage movement of people from the periphery to the centre. Gilgit-Baltistan, the region through which the KKH was built, was construed by the planners of the road as "a marginal space, a place in need of development intervention of the modern nation state and the international regime of foreign aid and donor agencies" (2012: 8). Pakistan as a nation state is often perceived as an enigma, with the basis of its creation being as the homeland for the Muslims of British India. A country lacking territorial integrity, with its patchwork of ethnicities, some of whom were lukewarm about the prospects of being part of this new state and this has lead to a 'cartographic anxiety' among the Pakistani elites (Haines 2012: 3). Given Pakistan's continuing description as a 'failing' or 'failed state' (Ali 1983; Lieven 2011), a mindset that has, in part, been internalised by the military (Lieven 2011), the state in question has been particularly sensitive about its margins. Pakistan has suffered territorial fragmentation, with the secession of East Pakistan in 1971, which led to the creation of the independent state of Bangladesh. That loss meant that Pakistani nationalism has had to remodel itself towards a revised notion that Pakistan was not a homeland for all Indian Muslims, but only for non-Bengali subcontinental Muslims who had been physically present within the territory of its western provinces after the end of the calamitous population transfers of 1947–1948 (Athique 2008: 475). Or as Khory (1995) puts it, how both civil, as well as military, regimes in Pakistan have attempted "to construct a nation-state amidst powerful local, regional and ethnic identities that existed prior to 1947, and which continue to challenge the state's conception of a homogeneous national identity" (1995:24). Infrastructure, and in particular road building, has therefore been seen as particularly important in knitting the country together (Haines 2012).

Accordingly, roads in Pakistan have been seen as strategic assets, often built by the military (Ispahani 1989; Haines 2009). The importance of the role of the military in the decisions around road building also meant that the in some regions such as Tharparkar, a decision was taken not to build roads, as it was said to make an Indian invasion easier. Ludden (2003:1062) making a wider point on the recent spatial history of Asia argues that territorialism has habitually led to the 'burying of mobility' inside the new post-colonial territorial order. I argue that much of the early processes of state making in Tharparkar were influenced the 'cartographic anxiety' of the new state towards its margins, with a focus on 'burying' the mobility of population, rather the improving it.

The post-colonial state was also subject to certain expectations, one of which was the provision of infrastructure (Bose 1997). They have also tended to use development schemes to centralise and extend their powers (Adas 1989; Scott 1998; Mitchel 2002). In South Asia, large infrastructure projects also came to represent the essence of newly obtained independence and progress (Anwar 2015:6). Development in Pakistan has therefore not just been about integrating its 'margins', but also about establishing claims to its legitimacy as a modern state. Quoting Haines, "development was intertwined with – and often indistinguishable from the third class of challenge, that of stable political arrangements" (2013: 95). The exploitation of the coal field in Tharparkar has been couched in a language that emphasizes that the Pakistani state is living up to its promise of developing a 'backward region'[2], but I argue that in practice what is happening is the state extending its authority over the region through a regime of securitization.

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[2] Energy from Thar's coal in 2019 21 November 2019, Daily Times (https://dailytimes.com.pk/324516/energy-from-thars-coal-in-2019/) Accessed 17 August 2020

This early optimism towards infrastructural development gave way, however, to a more sombre reality, as the loans from institutional and commercial creditors mounted (George 1988), leading in effect to demise of the state as the 'owner' of infrastructure (Anwar 2015). Infrastructure is now seen more in terms of 'public-private partnerships', and growing research (Gulyani 2001, Anas & Oh 1996) is now underscoring how privately generated power is now a persistent, and can be seen as form of competitive individual liberalism (Anwar 2015:8). Similarly, road making has become increasingly about "profits", the contradictions between road making as a national project and as a commercial venture have become more visible. States are still going to international lenders, arguing for 'investment' based on this idea of mobility as a commodity, and a profitable one at that. Pakistan is no exception, with the Sindh government in 2015 seeking a loan from the Asian Development Bank[3] of over $197 million to upgrade and rehabilitate the provincial highway network in Sindh.

As a consequence of Partition, in Pakistan there was little funding available for roads, with the state still investing in the railways (Imran 2009). The First Five Year Plan (1955-60), produced by Government of Pakistan before the period of large international funding began in the 1960s, privileged the importance of the railways.

> The backbone of [West] Pakistan's transport system is a broad-gauge railway network. It is a system of main lines, one in each of five parallel river valleys, interlinked and stretching from the coast to Afghanistan and India's frontiers.
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> (Govt. of Pakistan, National Planning Board 1957: 485).

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[3] Proposed Loan Islamic Republic of Pakistan: Sindh Provincial Road Improvement Project (https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-documents/46377/46377-002-sddr-en_2.pdf)

At the end of the Second World War, therefore, roads were just one form of transportation available, but were victorious over other means, such as railways, as a result of lobbying by a powerful automobile industry (see Mom & Kirch 2001). Road building really began in the 1960s in Pakistan, with much of the funding directly coming from international donor agencies. Many of the ideas and debates around roads in the United States found their way into the policies pursued by the World Bank, which from the 1960s, showed a marked preference for roads instead of the colonially inherited railway network (Imran 2009). We can see this change in the language of the Second Five Year Plan (1960-65):

> Road transport is particularly suited to the conditions and requirements of Pakistan … the motor vehicle is more adaptable than the railways to varying degrees of traffic intensity and permits a greater degree of speed and efficiency in haulage over short distance … there is close relationship between the volume of transport and the level of economic activity because each depends upon the other (Government of Pakistan, Planning Commission 1960).

Just as the government of Pakistan was shifting its attention towards roads, the World Bank, under its American President Robert McNamara, was transferring a lot of development financing from primary infrastructure projects to rural transport (Dawson & Barwell 1993). Despite this shift towards rural and provincial roads, the district of Tharparkar did not have a single kilometre of 'black top' road until 1987. It was only during the rule of the military strongman Pervez Musharaf (1999-2008), that the road network began to expand considerably, with road building extended to both Sindh and Balochistan (for Balochistan see Jamali 2014; Schaflechner 2017), regions that hitherto had had little investment in road building. This contradicts a general supposition made by social scientists, who have looked at road making as the form of twentieth century territoriality (see Guldi 2012; Dalakoglou 2017; Joniak-Luthi 2016), indeed as the technology for an 'intensified territoriality' (Maier 2000). Demenge (2011) provides a useful contrast, coining the term the political economy of 'non-road making'

for the conditions prevailing in the India Pakistan borderlands as sites of on-going conflict, where both states took strategic decisions not to build roads.

**The Making of the Pakistan India Borderlands**

The partition of Britain's Indian Empire in 1947 has had a profound impact on Tharparkar, with the region now located on the borders of the new Pakistani state. Both the successor states of the British Indian Empire, India and Pakistan, found that their separation was incomplete as they had inherited ill-defined borders and frayed territories (Van Schendel 2007). Making a general point on borderlands, Van Schendel and Abraham (2005) have argued that routine practices of the borderland are difficult to comprehend by those at the centre. This leads to an astigmatic view of the borderland by the state elite, meaning "what cannot be seen must be imagined, and what can be seen must only be the tip of the iceberg" (Van Schendel & Abraham 2005:23). Van Schendel (2005: 3) defines 'borderlands' as a zone or region within which runs an international border, and borderland society as a social and cultural system that straddles the border. The importance here is that these societies 'straddle' the border, rather than ending at an imaginary the line set by the cartographic border. In Tharparkar, the division led to the rupturing of earlier economic, political and kinships ties. Tharparkar is now both a 'borderland region' and a 'borderland society', where the border intrudes into the daily lived experience of most Tharis.

Research on borderlands has focused on illicit flows and weak states (Van Schendel & Abraham 2005; Galemba 2013), but in South Asia thee border is a fiercely contested space and highly securitised, with little of the illicity that has influenced much borderland study. The decolonisation process in South Asia involved partitions with the supposition that borders were needed in order to divide different religious communities who were unable to co-exist (Chester 2008). The border of Tharparkar does not divide Muslim from Hindu, however, but

communities of both Hindu and Muslim that are closely related (Ibrahim 2009; Gill 2014). For the modern state, it is not simply enough to leave zones of transition on their borders, the citizen now must be distinguished from the alien (Colas 2006). State borders are fixed, legal and geopolitical, and establish fences between sovereignties, between state and non-state actors and between actors in the centre and the periphery (Goodhand 2008). In the post partition period in South Asia, the border was perceived by both India and Pakistan as permeable, with borderlands associated with instability and tenuousness, which was translated into a 'cartographic anxiety' about national survival that are now violently mapped out on territory (Krishna 1996). The India-Pakistan border has also undergone changes as a consequence of the wars fought between the two nations. In South Asia, these anxieties have led to borders that are heavily militarised, which is also a legacy of the manner in which the region was decolonised (Conns & Sanyal 2014). Tharparkar, as a consequence, is one of the most securitised region in Pakistan, with checkpoints, military camps and a heavy presence of security agencies, reflecting a very 'astigmatic view' of the region by the centre.

There is very little academic research on the India-Pakistan borderlands, and in the methodology sections of this chapter, I will argue why this may be the case. The little research that exists focuses on the sense of alienation and as well as claims to citizenship. Gupta (2013:47) describes a sense of uncertainty among borderlanders by focusing on a village in what is now northern Indian Kashmir, which had been administered by Pakistan until 1971, when it was occupied by the Indian army. The resultant changes have led to a sense of alienation among the villagers towards both states. This sense of alienation studied by Gupta is broadly reflective of the India-Pakistan borderlands (see Aggarwal 2004; Ibrahim 2009). The few roads that exist in the highly securitized India-Pakistan borderlands have been built by military agencies, such as the Frontiers Work Organisation (FWO) in Pakistan (Ispahani 1989;

Haines 2009) and the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) in India (Aggarwal 2004; Demenge 2011), reflecting a view that roads are 'strategic assets'.

Borderland regions often exist at the margins of state, the in-between spaces that exist between the state-controlled centre and the cartographic border (Baud & Van Schendel 1997). Das and Poole (2004) in their work, Anthropology in the Margins of the State, focussed on the paradox of the modern nation state, in which the so-called 'margins' are necessary for the integrity and legitimacy of state sovereignty. A good way to describe these territorial margins and their relationship to the state is by looking at the exceptions are to the rule. Margins, such as borders, therefore, are not peripheral; they determine what lies inside and what lies outside (Das & Poole 2004). Recent works in South Asia (Haines 2009; Rycroft & Dasgupta 2011; Gupta & Sharma 2011) have shown that regions that have had histories of uneven inclusion by the colonial state, amplified by being marginalised by history, poverty and vulnerability, have also been sites of large infrastructural projects involving large-scale population displacement. Marginal regions, like Tharparkar have now increasingly been reimagined as resource-rich, unexploited 'wastelands' targeted for large-scale development schemes for economic integration and control (Eilenberg & Conns 2019).

This thesis will take the border as its epistemological viewpoint and focus on how particular spatial conditions produce new power hierarchies (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013: 14−19). Donnan and Wilson (2010:7) argue that those studying international borders must look beyond the state narratives of where international sovereignty ends by focusing on the 'everyday interactions' between borderlanders and the state. This thesis will look at how the borderland position of Tharparkar is producing new power heirarchies, while at the same time exploring the everyday interactions in a politicaly sensitive South Asian region. It will also at the same time explore

how Tharis have exercised their agency through transgressive acts, such as sustaining kinship ties with extended family members in India, or maintaining a nostalgia about a past, to the extent that the border could be dismissed as little more than an administrative inconvenience.

**Tharparkar: Building in Borderlands**

The district of Tharparkar lies in the extreme south east of Pakistan. The status of Tharparkar at the margins of Pakistan is compounded by the equally marginal position of the Pakistani Hindus, who are seen as having suspect loyalties (Mahmood 2014; Schaflechner 2017). Tharparkar suffered economic disruption during Partition, and, more importantly, the 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pakistan Wars, which led to the sealing of the borders, and the discontinuation of existing trade networks. The district borders the Indian states of Rajasthan and Gujarat, with which it shares cultural and historical linkages (Ibrahim 2009; Kothari 2013). Tharparkar is sub-divided into seven sub-districts or *talukas*, of which the coalfield and Coal Road are in the *talukas* of Mithi (the district capital) and Islamkot. The unique history of Tharparkar, which I explore in Chapter 2, has had a bearing on how infrastructure interventions have unfolded. Its present configuration dates from 1990, when parts of the district were taken out to form the districts of Mirpurkhas and Umerkot. Tharparkar gets its name from the two regions, Thar the vast desert that extends into Rajasthan, and the mountainous region of Parkar, which forms an 'island' with the Rann of Kutch (Ibrahim 2009: 82). Tharparkar had a population of 914,291 in 1998, the last Pakistani Census for which we have figures, of which the total Hindu population was 369,918 (District Census Report 1998). The proportion of the Hindu population at around 41% is already high for Pakistan and within the coal mining region reaches a majority of 60%[4]. The exact population of Hindus is subject to some controversy. Schaflechner (2017)

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[4] Environment and Social Impact Assessment Block II prepared by Hagler Bailey (https://www.engroenergy.com › wp-content › uploads › 2012/08 › Environment)

gives a figure of between six and ten million, based on the number of Identity Cards issued and relying on the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan figures. The 1998 census gives a figure of 2,443,514 for all Hindus in Pakistan. Among Tharis I spoke to, there was a consensus that the Hindu minority had been undercounted in Pakistan, which reflects the often constrasting figures. The 1998 Census showed that 98% of the population in the district spoke Sindhi, but my own experience of fieldwork was that there were very few native speakers, at least in the region through which the Coal Road ran. Most of the population along the route of the road between Mithi and the coalfield were Dhatki speaking. There has been very little written about Dhatki, other than a monograph produced by the Max Plank Institute (Hammarström, Forkel & Haspelmath 2017). Dhatki is closer in its vocabulary to Rajasthani then standard Sindhi and has no official status in Sindh or Tharparkar. The language of government offices is Sindhi, which adds to the difficulty of those who only speak Dhatki, who are often barred from entry, and this further adds to the marginality of the district.

Tharparkar has a total area of approximately 22,000 square kilometres, of which the Thar Coalfield comprises 9,100 square kilometres, almost ten percent of the district[5]. The Thar Coal reserves were first discovered by the Geological Survey of Pakistan and United States Agency for International Development in 1991, when surveys were being carried out to discover water sources, in what is a water scarce region. The coal deposits, which there are reported to be the sixth largest in the world, contain around 175 billion tonnes (Ali 2014). The coalfield has been divided into 13 blocks, which are to be farmed out to concessionaries. At the time of my fieldwork, only Block II was operating, the concession of which had been given to the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC).

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[5] Block II Environmental and Social Impact Assessment 2012 prepared by Hagler Bailey

The Coal Road, as I call it, which will be the focus of my research, is 360 kilometres long, and was built to facilitate the exploitation of the Thar coalfield in the province of Sindh in Pakistan. The Transport Plan[6] prepared by the Sindh Coal Authority designates the route of the Coal Road. That route includes a section upgrading the existing road from Karachi to the city of Badin in southern Sindh, and a brand-new road leading up to the mouth of the mine near the village of Thariyo Halepota located in the coalfield. The road also includes a section of National Highway 5, from Karachi to Thatta, a total length of 101 kilometres of which is part of the Coal Road, with the upgrading of this section being the responsibility of the Federal Government, while the remaining 259 kilometres were to be built by the Sindh government. Work was completed on this section by 2015, prior to the commencement of my field work. Existing English language scholarship on Tharparkar, or indeed the whole of Sindh, is scarce, which Haines (2013: XXV) has argued is because of the peripheral status of Sindh within British India and even within the Bombay Presidency, of which it was part between 1846-1935. Tharparkar itself has been studied even less, other than a doctoral thesis by Mahmood (2014), two articles by Hasan (2010; 2011) and portion of a recent monograph by Siddiqui (2019). The two histories of region, by Raichand Harijan (1956) and Mangaldas Ojha (2000), were written in Sindhi and Urdu respectively. In these works, Tharparkar is portrayed as region of mobility, with a romanticised pastoralism, but much of its recent history has seen it as an 'alienated borderland' (Martinez 1994), where the borders are functionally closed and cross-border interactions totally or nearly absent. It was also a site of both the 1965 and 1971 wars (Bajwa 2009), a fact which, I will argue, has greatly influenced development policies towards the region. The district is almost entirely desert with a largely agro-pastoralist population. It rates low on the human development index, with the district rated consistently as one of the most

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[6] The Economic and Social Impact Assessment Block VI 2013 prepared by Hagler Bailey

deprived districts both provincially and nationally (Khalti 2015). For example, in 2005, the provincial ranking for Tharparkar was 15th out of 16 districts in Sindh[7]. Ibrahim (2009) has described the region as a 'transition zone' between Kutch and Sindh, with links with both regions. I would argue that the region would only be a 'transition zone', if we treat Kutch and Sindh as discrete bounded units (Ibrahim 2009; Kothari 2013), yet if we do so we are guilty of reifying the existing India-Pakistan boundary. In this thesis, I will argue that this boundary was a product of long negotiation, and as such the term 'transition zone' must be used with caution, as it only acquired a transitionary nature when the border was established.

Nadiem (2001: 88) writing about the Thar and its inhabitants states that "the great desert has always been inhabited by various races, tribes and clans". The term that Nadiem has avoided is caste, and this thesis will explore why this may be the case. Barth (1960) described the class structures of exceptional rigidity that he found in Swat in northern Pakistan as 'castes'. This use of the term 'caste' for Muslim groups has been critiqued for Pakistan (see Alavi 1971). However, I agree with Lyon (2004: 59), who used the term to describe Muslim social groups that inhabited his research area in northern Pakistan, describing castes as a "long term relationship of asymmetrical reciprocity between families which are characterized by economic interdependence". I will not limit the term for Hindu groups, therefore, but make an argument that that the term caste can be used for Muslim groups as well, as I also found a similar relationship of asymmetric reciprocity and economic dependence within Muslim groups and also in relation to upper caste Hindus.

A substantial part of the Muslim community belongs to pastoral groups who sometimes self-designate themselves as Sammat[8], while Hindu groups such Bhils and Kolis, who are often

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[7] US Aid Pakistan Emergency Situation Analysis: A profile of District Tharparkar
[8] Block II Environmental and Social Impact Assessment 2012 prepared by Hagler Bailey

referred to as 'tribals' in India, although this term is unknown in Pakistan, are also largely pastoral. The district is also home to trading communities, some Muslim, like the Memons, and other Hindu, like the Bhatias and Lohanas, who were traditionally involved in the cattle trade, often acting as patrons for the various pastoral groups such as the Sammats, Bhil and Kolis. The Hindu Sodhas, and other Thakurs group had dominated the district, providing much of the landowners, but the 1971 War caused the migration to India of many Sodha lineages and the decline of their power and influence (see Mahmood 2014). In addition, there are groups, traditionally connected with a particular trade, many of whom have been historically stigmatised, such as the Meghwal and the Muslim and Hindu Bajeers, some of whom are now self-designating themselves as Dalits, literally broken, a self-ascribed term coined by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, for the formerly untouchable castes (Rao 2009). The existing hierarchies in Tharparkar are reflected in the background of those employed in the coalfield, government offices and NGO, many of whom tended to come from an upper caste Hindu or Sammat or Memon Muslim background.

Land acquisition is an important aspect of any large infrastructure project ((Le Mons Walker 2008; Adduci 2009; Akram-Lodhi 2009, Mishra 2011; Adnan 2013; Münster & Strümpell 2014). When carrying out land acquisition in Tharparkar, I argue that the state has sought out those who have the correct 'social capital'. The concept of 'social capital' (Bourdieu 1984) allows us to see how inequality is produced or reproduced, demonstrating, for instance, how people gain access to powerful positions through the direct and indirect employment of social connections. Recently, social scientists have used notions of capital (e.g., human capital, cultural capital and social capital) as organising concepts to understand the mechanisms that affect the life chances of individuals and the well-being of communities. Scholarship on neighbouring India (Jeffrey 2001; Mosse 2006) has looked at how a person's political, economic or social status, which includes caste membership, can be an important form of social

or symbolic capital for rural elites in South Asia. This thesis will expand upon the research in India by looking at the resistance to land acquisition in the coalfield, by asking who can protest and what can they protest about, in Pakistan.

Dalit groups in Tharparkar are also increasingly exercising agency by using state narratives of loyalty to distinguish themselves from caste Hindus, and, in doing so, also challenging centuries of marginalisation. Dalits are often referred to as being distinct from castes in local histories (Harijan 1956; Ojha 2000; Nadiem 2001). The Meghwals, a caste traditionally associated with leather work, are now increasingly employed in NGOs, and provide the backbone of what is now a robust Dalit movement in the region. The role of Meghwals in a number of social protest movements, including the only protest movement against the coal field in the village of Ghorano, will be explored further.

## The Coming of the Road: the Discourse of Development and the Making of Legitimate Protest

Decades of elite articulation of Pakistan as a 'development state' (Haines 2013: 213) has had an impact on the way the road and coal mining projects are being perceived locally, with a 'common sense' view of supposed positive impacts of development. Antonio Gramsci's (Harms 2011: 91) ideas of domination through consent allow us to explore why there has been very limited resistance to the coal mining project in Tharparkar, and a generally positive response to the road among many Tharis. Exploring Gramsci's ideas, Harms (2011) argues that 'consent' is produced through an everyday acceptance of a cultural ideology of 'development' even in the face of circumstances such as the uneven gains and displacement of population. Anwar (2015: 98) found that road construction in the core area of central Punjab encouraged

ideas that the newly built roads brought with them the promise of development (Anwar 2015: 99). However, as Fairhead (1992) shows with his example of road making in the Democratic Congo, however, there are limits to the 'consent' of the affected communities. In Zaire, as it was then, the history of colonial and post-colonial road making that involved the use of forced labour led to scepticism in respect to the network of rural roads being built among the villagers he worked with in Kivu state. In Tharparkar, the village of Ghorano was a site of resistance to expropriation of their land by the state to build a reservoir. Despite decades of elite articulation of Pakistan as a 'development state' (Haines 2012), and the highly securitised environment in Tharparkar, I will argue that there are limits to 'consent'.

States now increasingly couch any opposition to infrastructural development as being 'anti-national'. Duncan (2004: 14) has described how the Indonesian government has labelled those opposing large scale infrastructural project in borderland locations as anti-national or, even worse, as communists. In Kutch, Sud (2009: 655) has documented the role of the Indian state during a transfer of 30 square kilometres of forest and coastal land to a cement manufacturing and exporting operation, with those that questioned the gains of the liberalisation agenda being dismissed as "anti-development, anti-national terrorists" (2009: 655). Terms like 'communists' in Indonesia and 'terrorists' in India are often used to delegitimise protest as the work of opponents of the state. However, the process of nation making cannot just be seen to involve force but must have a pedagogy of 'conversion' intended to transform unruly subjects into lawful subjects of the state (Das & Poole 2004). Useful here is Foucault's (1977, 1991) concept of 'governmentality', which refers to the way in which the state exercises control over, or governs, the body of its populace. Governmentality also refers to the way in which people are taught to govern themselves, shifting power from a central authority, like a state or institution, and dispersing it among a population. Development has been seen as a form of

'governmentality' (Escobar 1995;, Fergusson 1990), with its own set of 'knowledge structures', around which development interventions are organised.

There is now some research that infrastructure development that is selective by for example excluding regions inhabited by a particular ethnic group or community, (see Wafer 2012), can play a significant role in political expectations, and ideas of citizenship. There are now growing demands for infrastructural equality from Tharis, and this challenges scholarship that sees 'development' as nothing but a hegemonic discourse (see Escobar 1995). These consequences of the territorialisation processes are often ignored in contemporary literature, with its focus on state making rather than how local communities engage with the infrastructural projects, and how they exercise agency. For those inhabiting regions historically neglected in terms of infrastructure investments, and under authoratarian regimes, roads are one of the very few items around which claims of citizenship can be made (see Wilson 2004). In Tharparkar, the building of the roads was broadly welcomed by many Tharis, who were unhappy with the pure state of infrastructure in Tharparkar. Road making must therefore be seen as a two-way process, both of state making and as an important source of claims making in some of the most marginal locales.

In Tharparkar, by looking at the protests in the village of Ghorano, I explore how the movement went to some lengths to have both Hindu and Muslim participation, to prevent it from being labelled as a 'Hindu' movement. The position of the Hindu community in Pakistan has been influenced by external factors, such as the state's relationship with India (Mahmood 2014; Schaflechner 2017). I will look at the Ghorano protest, and the resistance to land acquisition in the coalfield, using the ideas of both Agamben (1998, 2000) and Habermas (1975) around state and citizen relations. Here I make an argument that long-established ideas around

compensation for loss of land have opened a limited space to challenge state policies around land acquisition.

There is little scholarship on large scale social protests against infrastructural projects in Pakistan (Hasan 2009; Rizvi 2019). Hasan (2011: 259) has looked at the construction of the Lyari expressway in Karachi, the largest city in Pakistan, which displaced over 200,000 people, which was bitterly opposed despite it occurring during the military rule of Pervez Musharaf. Most of the communities that were dispossessed lived in what are referred to as 'unauthorised' localities, often inhabited by recent rural immigrants. Hasan (2010:271-273) makes reference to how their opposition to the expressway was initially articulated by using ethnic and caste networks, but it was only when NGOs became involved that the protest gained traction. The ability to stage a successful protest requires what Crowther and Cooper (2002) and Cummings and Higgins (2006) have called the 'traveller network', i.e. social and environmental activists and/or politicians who have experience in negotiating with the state and are plugged into the global discourses of environmental and anti-infrastructure protests. The Lyari protests managed to produce this sort of 'traveller network', and in this thesis I will try to show why this has not been possible in the Thar.

This thesis challenges some of the literature on social protests in Pakistan, which I believe are premised on assumptions about unlimited state power. Although I acknowledge that the long history of military rule in Pakistan has meant that there has been limited overt resistance to state policies which lead to large scale population displacement (see Shaikh 2014), much of the current research is based on the situation in the Okara military farms in Punjab (see Akhtar 2001; Rizvi 2019), where the land rights of those whose land was being acquired were tenuous and ownership could be challenged . The Sammat groups in Tharparkar fall into a different category in that their ownership of land was uncontested. By focusing on the Okara situation,

the research has given a partial picture, and in my thesis, I will argue that despite a legal regime of 'exception', state power is much more limited, and that a more nuanced approach is required when looking at land acquisition and development induced population displacement in Pakistan.

## The Making of the Road and the Commodification of Mobility

Anthropology has come late to roads, although as Dalakoglou (2017) points out, roads were not absent from early anthropological texts. He makes a pointed reference to Evans-Pritchard's (1960) dismissal of the road in his field site in what is now South Sudan, as something that was only passively accepted. Roads are certainly not accepted as passively by the current crop of anthropologists, certainly very little literature supports Augé, who has claimed that highways lack any 'social significance' and are typical examples of 'non-places' (1995: 73-74). The study of roads has often been in connection with other concepts such as mobility (Urry 2007; Cresswell & Merriman 2011). Indeed, the study of roads has produced an entirely new sub-discipline of the social sciences, the study of mobilities (see Dalakoglou & Harvey 2012). This literature of 'mobilities' focuses on how things move, and by doing so there is a focus also on a processual orientation towards the road (or the Internet, or shipping container, and so on), focusing on movement and the infrastructures, experiences, meanings and representations that constitute movement, as well as the differential patterns of mobility and immobility that form in relation to roads (Merriman 2009). Road making involves the promise (or threat) of future connectivity, although these connectivities are often the basis of the anxiety that has also afflicted many of the ethnographies (see Dalakoglou 2017). This focus on mobilities by anthropologists has also produced a profound ambivalence, and indeed anxiety, towards roads, mobility and transport in the post-colonial South (see in particular Masquelier 2002, but also

Khan 2006; Klaeger 2009; Dalakoglou 2010; Hart 2011). I will argue that these anxieties often deny agency to the communities, whose daily experiences of the new roads can vary.

Lefebvre (2012) has argued that space is a social product, or a complex social construction (based on values, and the social production of meanings) and that this affects spatial practices and perceptions. The idea of space being social produced allows us to focus on the contradictory, conflictual, and, ultimately, political character of the processes of production of space. Tharparkar often appears within the Pakistani media as remote site, but I will argue that this 'remoteness' refers more to its marginal position politically and economically, than any distance from the metropolitan centre (Harms 2012). The new Coal Road has meant that the region is now increasingly accessible, to tourists for example and, more importantly, to a new class of Thari migrants to Karachi. I will use the social science ideas around connectivity and increased mobility to explore the feelings of anxiety mixed with the promise of a better future that many Tharis are experiencing.

The scholarship on road making has often emphasised the centrality of mobility to the modern sensibility, in particular the use of the motor car. This (auto)mobility has deeply influenced how roads have been studied (e.g. Miller 2001; Wollen & Kerr 2002; Merriman 2011; Moran 2009). Urry (2004: 27) has conceptualised automobility as a complex "self-organizing autopoietic, non-linear system that spreads world-wide, and includes cars, car-drivers, roads, petroleum supplies and many novel objects, technologies and signs". The car is not central to the study of mobility in Pakistan, however, and indeed this thesis will be a critique of Urry's ideas. Roads are used by pastoralists, itinerant hawkers, all sorts of animal powered vehicles, and most importantly by walkers. Perhaps the closest thing to automobility being experienced in Pakistan is what Pinch and Reimer (2012) have called 'motobility', the use of motorcycles.

Motorcycles are affordable and flexible, and now Chinese built motorcycles are ubiquitous on the newly-built roads of Pakistan. 85% of the total worldwide sales of motorcycles, some 38.5 million in 2008, were in Asia, notably in China, India, Indonesia, Thailand and Taiwan (Pinch & Reiner 2012). Better mobility also has an impact on how communities view space and time, with the motorcycle clearly improving mobility in Tharparkar, with longer journeys being made from villages to towns, producing a new class of daily commuter. I will critique scholarship that focuses on motobility as a subculture, with an emphasises on recreational use (Pinch & Reimer 2012), by exploring the experience of the daily unglamorous journeys on poorly-maintained rural roads that most Thari motorcyclists experience.

While the decision to build a road is clearly a political decision (Haines 2009; Harvey & Knox 2015), for planners and economists at international institutions such as the World Bank, the rationality behind road making is based on a single logic, that roads alleviate poverty associated with spatial isolation (Bryceson et al. 2008: 460). There is now growing criticism of road building from political economists and sociologists (DeGrassi 2005:52). As important changes in priorities towards transport and development have emerged since the 1970s debates have raged with economic circles about whether roads do indeed alleviate poverty (see in particular Van de Walle 2002). Despite the debates within their ranks, international donors such as the Asian Development Bank are still funding roads, however. Take for example this document from the Asian Development Document arguing for the funding a provincial road improvement programme in Sindh:[9]

> Despite its economic, geographic, and resource advantages, recent growth and social development trends indicate that Sindh is not realizing its full potential. This deterioration has been caused by several structural constraints, including (i) a stark urban–rural bifurcation of the province, which limits economic and social cohesion; (ii)

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[9] Proposed Loan Islamic Republic of Pakistan: Sindh Provincial Road Improvement Project; Project Number: 46377-002 Asian Development Bank

poor infrastructure provision, especially insufficient and unreliable road connectivity (exacerbated by massive floods in 2010 and 2011); (iii) increasing skills, factors, and input constraints impeded growth of production and incomes; and (iv) poor governance and internal security challenges.

The document is useful in that it sets out the arguments that occur in countless other such documents, that a lack of roads hinders economic activity, increases spatial isolation and has a detrimental effect on 'social cohesion'. Documents have performative and phantasmatic quality, the fictions that they create have potency and real effects (Navaro-Yashin 2007). Among road builders and planners, such documents have become a system of belief. This thesis, taken its cue from Navaro-Yashin (2007: 95), will analyse documents produced by international donors and national governments to explore their "messy and excessive potentialities, the multiple and contingent affects which they engender in their holders and transactors".

The idea of the road as a commodity that brings rich financial rewards has increasingly become a 'truth' within development NGOs. Literature on rural roads describes how they are seen as providing access, or as Ellis (1998) notes during this period of 'participatory development', roads come across "as one of the most frequently cited desirable items on village wish lists. For improved rural roads reduce the costs of all types of spatial transaction, including labour, output, and input and consumer markets" (1998: 27). The narrative of the road as an avenue of financial improvement is embedded in NGO literature and NGO discourses that have now filtered into the communities that development NGO activity is focused on, many of whom are, like Tharparkar, rural, and at the margins of the state. Wilson (2004: 525) has shown how a community located in a borderland region of Peru now dedicates much time and energy to road-building, even though this may potentially lead to loss of land, community control and greater impoverishment. In this thesis, I will trace how the impact of 'development' policies,

and their 'logic' of the road leading to prosperity, has affected NGO discourses in Tharparkar. The thesis also engages with Thari narratives of changes in their spatial world in order to understand the complex socio-economic changes that Tharparkar is undergoing, how inequality is produced or reproduced, demonstrating, for instance, how people gain access to powerful positions through the direct and indirect employment of social connections.

## The Epistemology of the Road

The narratives around the building of the first road in Tharparkar are contradictory. Masquelier (2002) has argued that the stories about roads are creative and poetical schemes through which people make sense of the complex global economy and daily life in the age of fast and widespread mobility. Roads can be seen as a point of rupture between tradition and modernity, and can be used to analyse debates on 'modernity' (Masquelier 2002; Mostowlansky 2017). Road construction and its effects, however, should not be seen in isolation as a "single moment […] that by its appearance creates a dramatic and unprecedented break between past and present" (Appadurai 1996: 3). When the road made its first appearance in Tharparkar in 1987, it was part of a long process of Pakistani state making that had started just after independence in 1947, and which had restricted the mobility of the Tharis, many of whom as agro-pastoralists suffered severe economic consequences. The 1987 road in the narratives of my interlocutors was seen as a point of rupture, by following on from Appadurai, I will argue that the 'rupture' should not be seen as a 'single moment', but part of the cumulative territorial processes of state making in the Sindh borderlands.

Roads are never built in a vacuum, and the surfaces they are built upon have unique histories (Harvey & Knox 2015; Dalakoglou 2017; Mostowlanski 2017). The unique history of Tharparkar has affected state policies on infrastructural development. I return to that late autumn afternoon in Karachi and my conversation with Arif Hasan, and Pakistan's reluctance to build roads in Tharparkar. There were periods of agreement, state 'neglect' allowed for the region to be framed in official discourse as 'underdeveloped', thereby justifying the exploitation of the coalfield. For Arif Sahib, however, the coal project was accelerating road building, bringing electrification and mobile phone networks, that were improving accessibility to the region. Roads had finally come to Tharparkar, but did they really bring the much sought after services and improved economic opportunities, with possibilities for Tharis to seek employment in the urban areas of Sindh, such as Karachi? Arif *Sahib* seemed fairly optimistic, despite his caution about the effects of the exploitation of the coalfield, he felt that an increase in road building would bring 'benefits'. The discussion I had that October afternoon in 2016, perhaps at one level can be seen to be replicated in academia. For many social scientists, roads do not bring about the promised economic development, indeed roads have the effect of transforming existing commercial and transport systems for the worst, displacing and relocating populations and generating a new broker economy of contractors and middle men (see Rankine et al. 2017; Murton 2017), while for others there are equally strong arguments around the liberating aspects of infrastructure, in particular for regions which have seen little state investment in roads or electricity (Gidwani 2002; Wafer 2012). In this thesis, I explore both the disorientating and liberating aspects of road building in the Sindh borderlands of Pakistan.

**Methodology and Research Method: Studying the State**

I first heard about the Thar Coal Project from a second cousin in 2012, who was incredibly enthusiastic about its exploitation, believing it to be the solution to the severe power outages that Karachi was suffering from. I must admit, I too was influenced by my cousin's enthusiasm. This led to greater interest in the happenings in Tharparkar. Whenever I made references to Tharparkar, I was repeatedly told by family, friends and NGOwallahs in Karachi, that Tharparkar is 'difficult place', difficult to get too, arid and backward and, for some, inhabited by a suspect population. The excitement about the exploitation of what I was told was a 'cheap' source of energy was tempered with the supposed 'remoteness' of Tharparkar. When looking at infrastructure, Larkin (2008) argues that one must not simply look at it as fixed physical objects, associated costs and technical functioning, but rather that it operates as a powerful symbolic tool through which new possibilities, visions and fetishistic aspects emerge. The possibilities and visions of the future that the Coal Project would bring were not only a cause of excitement for my cousin, but also for many of those I spoke to in Tharparkar. Infrastructure, its complexity and contradictions are now animating social science, and have led to my own journey from that conversation in 2012 to this thesis that I write now.

My own journey to Tharparkar involved the same second cousin who had first told me about the Coal Project, now reluctantly driving me in his battered Suzuki car, on a half built road, with my pocket full of several telephone numbers, and a Pakistani SIM card, which I discovered did not work in Tharparkar. What made the journey interesting was not the difficulty, but the relative ease with which we made it to Mithi. My experience seemed to contradict the accounts of many of the Tharparkar hands that I had been speaking too in Karachi. It was clear that ideas of distance and remoteness were undergoing changes, as I discovered in the newly built bus station in Mithi, when I spoke to a Sindh Ranger who had just been posted to Tharparkar and had arrived from Islamabad, which is over a thousand kilometres away. When I asked the ranger about his journey, he simply said it involved two changes, but roads were now good.

This was now no longer an adventure, but just a 'normal' journey undertaken as part of his employment. These changes with regards to notions of mobility have been rapid, and the two years since I left the field in 2017 has seen further improvements in bus services and the arrival of taxis and even the 'rent-a-car'. This thesis therefore captures the moment of this rapid change, which I must stress are on-going.

The thesis is as much about Tharparkar, the alienated borderland 'surrounded' by India as it is about roads. Any the study of infrastructure involves engaging with the 'state', or more correctly the territorialisation processes in a borderland locale, and I take up Gilmartin's (2010: 522) call with regards to studying Pakistan, that any such undertaking needs to link the 'high politics' with everyday life, by looking at the "never-ending negotiations that sustain community" in its interaction with the 'state', rather than focusing on the machinations in Islamabad (Gilmartin 2010: 523). I spent ten months of fieldwork in Pakistan, starting in September 2016, and ending in July 2017. This included nine months in Sindh and one month in Islamabad, researching the national archives, as well as interviewing members of the Planning Commission[10]. Although archives and current policy documents are important, this research is based largely on ethnographic material, understood as "a mode of knowing that privileges experience" (Das & Poole 2004: 4).

Studying the 'state' raises methodological issues for anthropologists, however, since the state cannot be said to be a fixed and unitary entity that defines the terrains in which other institutions function (Sharma & Gupta 2006). Some direction has been given by social scientist, who argue that the 'state' should not be treated as a natural entity, system or apparatus, but as a historical and contingent constitution (Fuller & Benei, 2001; Hansen & Stepputat, 2001a). In

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[10] The Planning Commission (is a financial and public policy development institution of the Government of Pakistan. The Commission comes under Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms.

neighbouring India, new writings, largely (but not only) by anthropologists, have begun to explore how ordinary people interact with, engage with and experience the 'state' (e.g., Fuller & Bénéï 2001). Gellner (2013: 4) has argued that the study of the 'state' in South Asia has been affected by two contrasting trends, one focussing on the study of the 'everyday state', looking at how people actually interact with the state and what they expect from it (e.g., Gupta 1995; Fuller & Bénéï 2001; Tarlo 2003; Corbridge et al. 2005), while the second trend focuses on studies of the idea of the state, the 'state effect', as it has been called (e.g., Khilnani 2003; Spencer 2007). For Gellner, both of these actually overlap since ordinary people have ideas about the state in order to interact with it, and, in Gellner's words, "any worthwhile ethnographic investigation must engage with both practices and ideas" (2013: 4). I find the suggestion made by Mitchel (2002) useful: that the appearance of the state as a discrete and relatively autonomous social institution is a reification that is constituted through everyday social practices. This study therefore focuses on the social practices or what Trouillot (2001) calls the intrusion of the modern post-colonial state into the lives of its citizens.

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The state in South Asia is complex, however; often documents are filled out and deals concluded in *chai khanas* rather than offices. These are the 'blurred edges' (Gupta 1993) of the state in South Asia. I spent a considerable amount of time at the Town Council offices in Islamkot and district headquarters in Mithi, where much of the engagement with the 'everyday' state occurred. Although access to the Deputy Commissioner was always by appointment, the part of building where the clerks were based was relatively easy to access. Indeed, at times they were overcrowded with Tharis seeking state assistance on any number of issues. Similarly, in Islamkot, I was given access to officers in the Revenue Section, once again without much difficulty. I made regular visits to the district engineer in Mithi, in particular the offices of the

clerks. The method of research in the government offices in Tharparkar was based on participant observation. Participant observation has been defined as "the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study" (Marshall & Rosman 1989:79). The relatively ease of access I had in the three government offices allowed me to get a better understanding of the lived reality of government policies on issues such as land acquisition, as well as allowing me to observe the everyday interactions between Tharis and local officials. Some parts of the state remained opaque, however such as the Pakistan Rangers, who are the state agency responsible for policing the border. Any attempts to interact with them would have opened myself and other interlocutors to possible interest or worse by the state. However, I did have interactions with the rangers at the checkpoints they manned, and the Tharis experience of negotiating the checkpoints, provide useful commentary on state interactions with the region and its inhabitants.

Roads, and indeed infrastructure can be a useful tool to explore the interaction between the state and it subjects (Harvey & Knox 2015:2). In neighbouring India, Anand's (2011) work on the water infrastructure system in Mumbai draws heavily on Foucault. In Mumbai, the high density of the population causes the water supply to be scarce and periodic. Municipal engineers account for this limitation in technical terms (locating slums on a hilltop, the pressure required to move water great distances), but for slum residents it is an issue of political mobilisation. Slums without water build connection with dadas, powerful patrons, who have close connections with politicians. In this context, Anand provides useful ways of studying infrastructure based on the interaction of two systems: water delivery, with its systems of pipes, engineers and bureaucracy that make up the technical end of water provision; and the social networks and forms of patron-clientship. These two differing conceptions of infrastructure serve not, in the final instance, to analyse water supply but to reveal the production of what he terms "hydraulic citizenship, a form of belonging to the city enabled by social and material

claims made to the city's water infrastructure" (2011: 545). Taking its cue from Anand, this thesis engages with *patels* and revenue officers, NGOwallahs and villagers in Tharparkar, to reveal the conflicting ideas around an evolving 'infrastructural citizenship'.

**Research Issues: 'Difficulties' of Studying Infrastructure in Borderlands**

Studying roads with the ethnographic method produces its own problems. As Harvey and Knox (2015: 2) point out:

> When studying infrastructure, the anthropologist must confront the problem of locating an ethnographic site without limiting the scale of description.

To overcome this methological problem, the focus of the research was the coal field and the section of the road between Islamkot and Mithi. By the time of my arrival in Sindh in September 2016, this section of the road had been completed. This thesis therefore is not an ethnography of the the engineering processes involved in road making. My approach was to take "advantage of the possibilities that roads offer for the exploration of current and locally specific 'socio-cultural conditions" (Dalakoglou & Harvey 2012: 460). This thesis is therefore is an exploration of the locally specific 'socio-cultural' conditions, in particular the building of a road in the India-Pakistan borderlands. I spent time in the town of Islamkot, visiting its bazars, municipal offices, the press club, exploring and investigation the on-going social and economic conditions, and how they were undergoing changes.

I treat the Coal Road a single site, where the ongoing arguments about mobility, development, identity and nation occur. The 101 kilometres of National Highway 5 does not make an appearance in the thesis, as this was an existing road, in fact built by the British at the beginning of the 20th Century. Rather, the focus of my research was the region where roads have been absent or nearly absent. This meant that sites of my research were either located beside the road, or within Block II, where I sought to observe the changes being brought about by the

development of the coalfield. The only exception was the village of Ghorano, which is located some 30 kilometres from the Coal Road. Other than Ghorano, all other names have been anonymised, as the protest movement was widely reported in both Sindh and national press. The stretch of the Coal Road, about 40 kilometres, between Mithi and Islamkot was the principal focus of this research, in particular two villages, one of which I call Chakar Rind, quite close to Mithi, and the second I call Memon, located about nine kilometres from Islamkot, and situated at the entrance to the coalfield.

At that time NGOs were coming under increased pressure from the Pakistani government, in particular those based in 'sensitive areas', and I am very conscious of the need to maintain anonymity. Most of the interviews in the Tharparkar were informal, carried out in Sindhi and Urdu. In the villages, where Dhatki is spoken, I did seek the assistance of Vikram Das, who was then employed in one of the local NGOs, and now himself a doctoral researcher. Vikram's ideas and insight were incredibly important, and without him this research would not be possible. Urdu and Sindhi are both widely spoken in the towns of Mithi and Islamkot, and I have good knowledge of both, hence any interpretation was done by myself.

**The Coal Field and towns of Islamkot and Mithi**
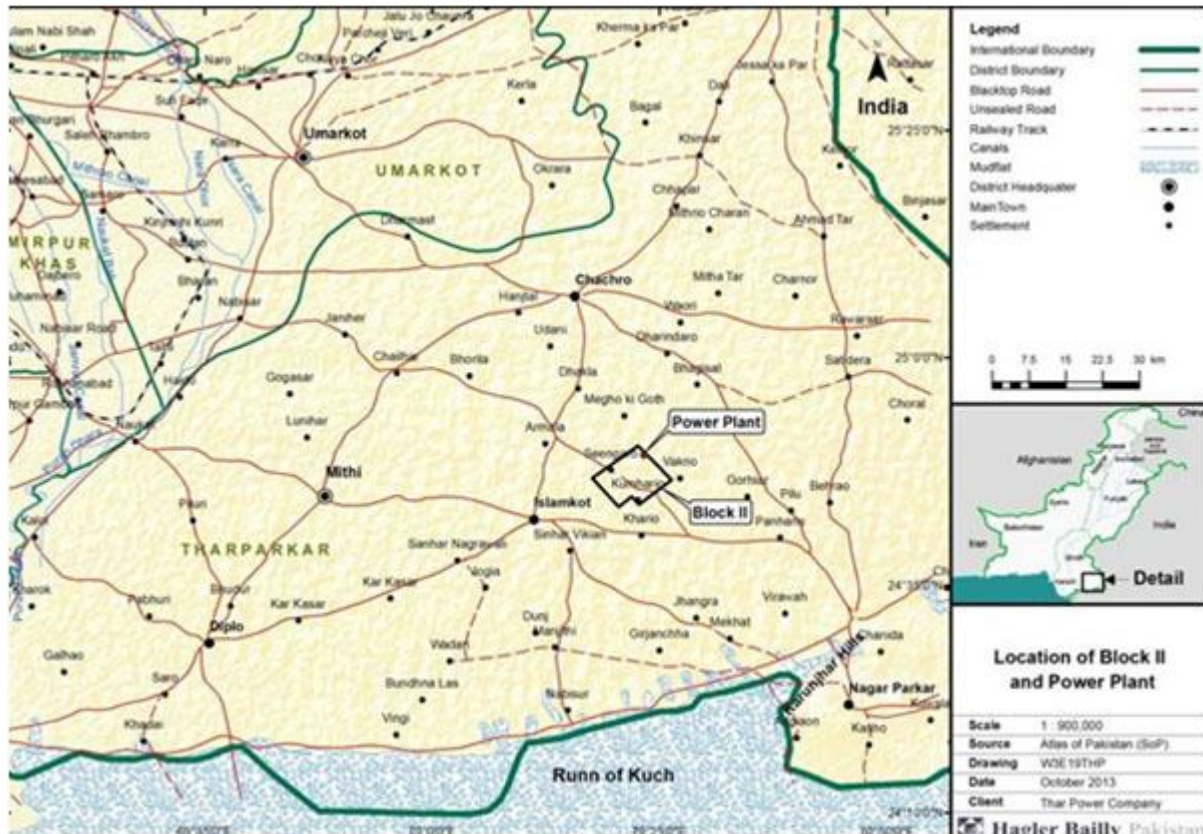
**Map of the Tharparkar**

During the fieldwork, I was partly based in Islamkot, a town with a population of 244,662 (District Census Report 1998), located within the coalfield, but I also stayed for short periods in Mithi, the district headquarters, and longer in Karachi. In both Mithi and Islamkot, I was interested in people's perspectives of the changes brought in by the road and the coal project, and discussions were held with shopkeepers, journalists, politicians, NGOwallahs and other townspeople The town of Islamkot is the largest settlement in the Coal field, and according to 1998 Census was around 80% Hindu. Although a more recent census was held in 2017, the results at town level have not released. The town means the fort of Islam, having got its name not from the majority faith of the Islamic Republic, but Islam Khan, or using local form Salaam Khan (Harijan 1958), the Sindh warlord belonging to Talpur dynasty, who is said to have conquered the region. The fort was built in 1795, as the Talpur rulers attempted to pacify the powerful Hindu Rajput chieftains of the region (Raikes 1856). After the British conquest of the

region in 1843, the fort was dismantled (Hughes 1877), with Islamkot evolving into an important livestock market, which attracted Hindu merchant castes from both Sindh such as the Lohanas and Marwar such as the Maheshris and Shrimali Brahmins. Much of the trade was conducted with Rajasthan and Gujarat, reinforcing political, economic and kinship ties with those regions. The Muslim Memon, from the nearby village of Memon jo Tar, were also active in the livestock trade, although few were found in the town itself. The British had also granted an estate to the local Sodha Rajputs, who throughout much of the 19th and 20th Century were in political competition with the Hindu merchants of the city. Partition led to the complete disruption in that earlier trade network. Islamkot is still an important centre of the livestock trade, with merchants now coming largely from urban Sindh and Punjab, with the improved communications. Further changes occurred in 1971, as a consequence of the India-Pakistan War, when the district was occupied by India, leading to much of Thakur feudal class emigrating to India, allowing for the development of a new Muslim class of landholders in the rural parts of Tharparkar (see Mahmood 2014, Hussain 2019). The construction of the Coal Road was challenging the earlier dominance of the Hindu merchant castes, and I explore this further in Chapter 5.

By the time I started my fieldwork, the SECMC, the coal mining company, had become the most important player in the town. However, they had closed their field office in the town in 2015, and leaving little physical presence in the town, with company employees remaining in a fence compound in Block II. I did have access to the SECMC base camp in Block II, and time was spent with Harris Siddiqui, and other members of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) team. Islamkot was also the site of the Sindh Rangers base, the para-military border police, whose jurisdictions starts just before the town. I experienced difficulty in talking to women, due to the segratation that exists in Tharparkar, and their complete absence from public spaces. I am therefore very conscious of the absence of their voices in this thesis, but as a man,

outside existing kinship networks, meant any engagement impossible. Islamkot, like other towns in Sindh, is residentially segregated, usually along caste and religious lines. As I was based at the NGO offices of the Participatory Village Development Programme (PVDP), which was located in the newer part of time, which was much more mixed then alleyways the older neighbourhood or paras. This allowed interactions with both Hindus and Muslims, many of whom were wealthy businessmen or aspiring politicians, or worked within the still substantial NGO sector.

When I arrived in Tharparkar, I had attempted to establish contact with Hindu villages along this stretch of the road but was unsuccessful. My conclusions are therefore based on the two largely Muslim villages, and I was unable to explore how rural caste Hindus were conceptualising the changes. Pakistan presents itself as explicitly Muslim state, and it would have been useful to know how much of that affected their expectations from the state. I did get the opportunity to discuss issues with Hindus working within the NGO sector, most of whom were from towns of Mithi and Islamkot, as well as activists within the Dalit movement, some of whom coming from rural areas, did provide for some wider context.

My ethnographic approach involved an attempt to deal with "the 'multiple realities' and diverse social practices of various actors", and their "different and often incompatible social worlds" (Long & Long 1992: 5-6). Islamkot, being located in the coalfield, was undergoing more changes then Mithi. My initial focus did not include the village of Ghorano, as it was some distance from both the road and the coalfield; since it became the site of one most vociferous campaigns against the Coal Project, however, omitting it would not do justice to the topic of this thesis. The tool of ethnographic research is 'participant observation' (Bernard 2006). Participant observation, indeed any "observation of the world [...] is inevitably intervention in the world" (Harvey 2004: 171), and its results must take that fact into account. I am conscious

of the fact that such observation must impose a reflexive approach on the relationship between the researcher and researched. However, I am tempted to agree with Tilche and Simpson (2018), that the personal attributes of the anthropologist might influence the production of ethnographic research less than is generally assumed, and the ethnographer must place greater trust in the discipline.

The bus journey between Karachi and Islamkot was an important part of my research, which involved detailed observations as well as the opportunity to engage in informal conversations with passengers. There are different types of buses in Tharparkar, the air conditioned (a/c) buses that ply the route between Islamkot/ Mithi and Karachi, the local buses that run between towns in the district, and the 'express' buses that run inter-district. The a/c buses are the sites of new forms of sociability, that of the 'civil inattention' (Kim 2012). Civil inattention describes situations where strangers "may pass in close proximity, but respectfully act as if they do not see each other" (Kim 2012:268). In this thesis, I explore how new ideas around travel are creating new forms of sociality among the a/c bus passengers.

In Tharparkar, I made acquaintances with Gul, a journalist from Chakar Rind and Mohammadbhai, a civil servant from the village of Memon. Both villages lay on the route of the local bus between Mithi and Islamkot, which was used by commuters and school aged children travelling to either Mithi or Islamkot. The road was less than a year old when I arrived in the field, and memories were fresh as to what had transpired before. In the coalfield I spent some time with the Corporate Social Responsibility team of SECMC, in particular Haris Siddiqui. I was interested in the land acquisition processes, which were still ongoing in the coalfield in late September 2016. In Chakar Rind, I discovered that although mining was not an immediate concern, many of the villagers were also involved with the Coal Project, as daily wage labourers, for example, and the Coal Road and coalfield were enmeshed in a way that

was difficult to disentangle. Similarly, in Memon, there was increased employment in the coalfield, but also anxieties around possible land loss, as parts of the village *gauchar* had been designated as the site of a new hospital.

In Block II my research was focused on two villages, which I call Village A and B, which were subject to relocation. By 'chance' I came across Rasul Bux from Village A. Rasul Bux at the time was engaged in a lengthy disagreement with the SECMC with regards to compensation, and my interactions with him allowed me to get an understanding of the interactions between SECMC and the villagers. I also conducted structured interviews with Rasul Bux and Hamza Khan, both from Village A. I had obtained the services of Yar Mohammad, a taxi driver from Islamkot. Yar Mohammad had just returned from Karachi, after having been a driver there for almost a decade. He and his battered Toyota Corolla provided me with a birds-eye view of the new road, and the new opportunities it was creating. It was not just what I was observing outside the cracked windows, but equally important were the discussions we had. When Yar Mohammad went on to invest in a minibus, taking advantage of the new roads being built in the district, this allowed me ready access to the bus, a symbol of modern transportation. The interactions on the bus gave greater insight into new ideas of mobility, as well as observing how ideas of hierarchy were being reproduced in the space of the bus. The thesis is greatly influenced by these conversation with Yar Mohammad and many others in Tharparkar, Karachi and Islamabad.

Part of the research was carried out at the 'other end' of the road, in the city of Karachi. This involved structural interviews with officials in the Sindh government. These interviews often led to further investigations in Tharparkar. Although I had limited success in establishing contact with the Sindh Highway Authority, I had much better luck with the Sindh Coal Authority. Structured interviews were carried out with the water, mining and social cohesion

officers of the Authority. I also interviewed officers of SECMC, who are also headquartered in Karachi. In addition to the officials, I spent some time with those I call NGOwallahs, who had been involved in the development sector. Most, although not all, of the NGOs that operate in Tharparkar are based in Karachi. Considerable time was spent with Mohammad Khan, who had two decades of experience working for various NGOs in the district. This gave me a rich understand of the history the 'development' intrusions, and the geopolitics that often undergirded them. Since very little has been written about Tharparkar, I carried out archival research in both the Sindh Archives and the National Documentation Centre in Islamabad. This meant that the last part of my research was spent in Islamabad. This included carrying out structured interviews with the officials within the Planning Commission.

This research has been funded by the European Research Council and was part of a project called *Roads and the politics of thought: Ethnographic approaches to infrastructure development in South Asia*. The Roads project also involved working with CAMP, an art collective based in Mumbai, to encourage wider discussion among a broader range of constituencies. As part of the audio-visual component I was involved in filming along the Coal Road. The filming was done largely by Ali Rizvi, a media student at Habib University in Karachi. Ali was also affiliated with European Research Council project that funded my research.

**Ethics**

Tharparkar is a highly securitised region, and this affected the responses from my interlocutors. In particular, I found a great reluctance among caste Hindus to engage with me. While carrying out of my research, I was conscious of the fact this field site is seen by the state as a 'sensitive border region'. Foreign nationals are not allowed into Tharparkar, and these practical restrictions have meant there has been very little research in the India Pakistan borderlands. As

a dual citizen, holding both UK and Pakistani passports, I was granted access but took great care with regards to the safety of my interlocutors. At the onset of the research, I visited the District headquarters and spoke to the District Administrator about the purpose of my research. Throughout my fieldwork, I did not experience any issues of harassment, but remained cautious of possible impact of my research on my interlocutors, some of whom are now good friends. I wanted to have access to earlier maps of the region at the district headquarters, this led to visits by the Special Branch of the Sindh police. Although, the questions they asked were posed in a courteous manner, I decided not to make any further attempts to get access to maps of earlier tracks or documents related to road construction that I knew were kept in the district headquarters.

I believe that any consideration of ethics is much more than a case of procedural compliance with a prescribed set of rules or code of conduct intended to deliver good or safe research in any given context. The Association of Social Anthropology (ASA) code of ethics is perhaps the best place to start when considering ethics for ethnographic research.[11] The ASA code emphasises the importance of "protecting research participants and honouring trust: anthropologists should endeavour to protect the physical, social and psychological well-being of those with whom they conduct their study". Although codes of practice can play important roles, I am also aware that there are other ways in which researchers' own knowledge, beliefs, assumptions, values, attitudes and experience intersect with ethical decision making. Research in borderlands also produces its own unique set of ethical issues. Donnan and Wilson (2010: 7) make the point that borderlands are sites of particularly oppressive security regimes. The ethnographic method means that "anthropologists are immersed in the liminal spaces between

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[11] Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (ASA) Ethical Guidelines for good research practice https://www.theasa.org/downloads/ASA%20ethics%20guidelines%202011.pdf

the imperatives of politics and secure borders" (2010: 7). State officials, particularly in an alienated borderland can be very sensitive as the ethnographer will encounter a "remarkably wide variety of legal and illegal transborder economy" (Donnan & Wilson 2010: 7), some of which local officials would want to suppress. The Pakistan-India border is highly securitised, especially the section in Tharparkar, and there is very little smuggling. Rumours of infiltrators or spies are common in the region, however, which creates an anxiety towards the border as a place of insecurity. Simpson (2006: 336) gives examples of rumours in his field area of Kutch, which borders Tharparkar, about members of the militant organisation Lashkar-e-Toiba infiltrating from Tharparkar, leading to villagers from these border regions being placed in police custody without trial. In this condition of suspicion, when conducting my fieldwork, I was aware of the need not to place my interlocutors in any danger. I always made a point of giving a background to all my interlocutors as to why I was in Tharparkar. In two cases, interlocutors later said that they did not want any mention in the thesis, a request I have complied with. Almost all those who appear in the thesis have been anonymised, the only exceptions are the two heads of Corporate Social Responsibility at SECMC.

As a British Pakistani researcher carrying out 'fieldwork' in my ancestral homeland, in Karachi in particular, I was often asked about my sect, ethnicity or caste. In anthropological research, the historic relationship between 'anthropological self', with histories of colonialism and racism, and the studied Other, often the colonised or subjugated, is rightly problematised. The distinction between 'home' and 'field' is not as clear cut for me as it may be for other researchers. Abu-Lughod (1990:26) refers to the advantage of the 'halfie' anthropologist, people between 'cultures', such as anthropologists, raised in the West but connected to the field site through family origin. These connections for me were partial, the urban areas of Sindh were home to members of my extended family. Abu-Lughod makes a point that the 'halfie' knows that their selves are multiple which allows for a breakdown of "the boundaries of self

and other, subject and object in productive ways" (1990: 26). I also take on board, however, Altorki's (1988:7) caution that any fieldwork research carried out in one's 'own' communities can be affected by how 'reality' is socially and historically situated, and this may colour any conclusion that I reach here.

## Thesis Overview

The thesis asks two important questions: when do roads get built and why do roads get built? Like Rankine et al. (2017), my aim here is to show that any history of road building must focus on how socio-political dynamics "impact" the road as much as the road "impacts" society. The approach I take to road making is one "that situates mobility and movement, routes and roads, within relations of power and political economy" (Wilson 2004: 526). It is these existing relations of power that I explore by first taking a *longue duree* study of state making in the Sindh borderlands, and how much of that was affected by the political impact of Partition. The thesis will then examine the territorialisation processes in Tharparkar and deconstruct the linkage between roads and territorialisation (see Dalakoglou 2017). The concept of territorialisation has now been associated with modern state making (Ellis 2019). Maier (2000: 808) has defined territoriality as "the properties, including power, provided by the control of bordered political space, which until recently created the framework for national and ethnic identity". Road making can be seen as a form of territorialisation and, taking my cue from Wilson (2004:527), who calls roads "stretched out spaces of social relations, allow us to examine the ongoing changes in the social landscape that roads bring". The first two chapters engage with the processes of state making and try to answer the question of why the districts had no roads for much of the existence of modern Pakistan. They explore critical events in the history of the district, and why the territorial process involved a policy of restricting mobility for much of the early history of Pakistan. Chapters 5-7 of the thesis deals with what happens

when the roads get built, and in particular what I call the 'road effects', the social effects of road construction, in the district of Tharparkar. Chapter 7 combines both themes, the why roads get built and what happens when they are built by looking at the large Dalit population of Tharparkar, long ignored and marganalized by state, and now increasing challenging heirachies with the Hindu community as well as seeking greater access to systems of political patronage.

I have divided the thesis into eight chapters, starting with the Introduction. Chapter 2 is entitled *The State and its (dis)Loyal Subjects: Developing the 'Frontier' in Pakistan*, that explores the history and the marginal position of Tharparkar, and how the discourse of loyalty of the Hindu Tharis has been deployed to prevent any resistance to the mining project. The next chapter is entitled *Building Infrastructure in the Borderlands: The Politics and Poetics of (non)road Making in Tharparkar* and explores various accounts of road making, and what these 'myths' tell us about the state of politics and ethnic relations in Pakistan. Chapter 4, *Who gets to do hartals, bands and dharna: An interrogation of Social Protests in Tharparkar*, explores two protest movements in Tharparkar, and answers the question of why the first was successful and the other failed by exploring the importance of who carried out the protests, and what sort of protests are 'allowed' by the state. Chapter 5, *We are now a Mohallah of Karachi: Changes in the Spatial Worlds of Tharparkar*, interrogates how space is socially produced, with the new Coal Road providing easier access to the urban centres of Sindh, ironically at the same time as regimes of territoriality have produced disruptions in the earlier spatial world of the Tharis. The next chapter, *The Road and the Checkpoint: Coercion and Frustration in the Sindh Borderlands*, looks at the proliferation of checkpoints on the road, which I argue is an essential part of road making in South Asia, a manifestation of the 'cartographic anxiety' and newer forms of controlling and managing mobility. The last chapter is entitled *Caste is another Country: The Dalit movement in Pakistan*, which looks at one of the surprising aspects of the infrastructural interventions in Tharparkar, namely, an assertive Dalit movement. I explore how

and why this may have happened, and secondly argue that the particular circumstances of Pakistan, means that the rhetoric of Dalitness differs from India. In Chapter 8, the conclusion, I bring together the arguments and findings of the thesis, the (ir)rationality of road building in South Asia, in particular in its contested borderlands, and how the expanding networks of roads are fostering new kinds of longing, new desires, and new anxieties around new spatial worlds.

# Chapter 2: The State and its (dis)Loyal Subjects: Tharparkar and the (un)making of a Frontier in Pakistan

It was a warm October morning in 2016, and the Sindh Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) was holding a "consultation" in connection with the construction of a power plant near the village of Bitra. It was being held in a large tent on the outskirts of village B, located near the entrance to Block II, the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company's (SECMC) concession. The event resembled more of a fair, with local worthies, their hangers on, including a village headman who had ridden on a horse to the meeting. Among those who were sitting on the stage were the chief executive officers of Thal Nova, the builder of the power plant and the SECMC and the head of the government agency charged with all matters environmental, SEPA, overlooked by several rows of seats, with those with the least social capital sitting at the back. After what seemed like an endless speech by the Head of SEPA, in Sindhi, about how much the power plant was going to benefit the people of Tharparkar, the question and answer session began. The first speaker was a schoolteacher from Village B, who started off his speech with his appreciation of the government of Sindh, and how he was *hubul watan*, literally in Urdu, the lover of the nation, but also used as a term for loyalty, before raising an issue about the non-employment of locals. My initial thought was that there might have been monetary inducements, after all there were rumours that he had been paid handsomely for his support of the mining project. The power plant site had been surrounded by barbed wire, preventing access to pasturage sites important to a number of villages, including Village B; an issue which I had assumed would be raised by the speakers. What followed was a number of speakers, all using slightly different versions of the word *hubul watani* which Ferozsons English to Urdu dictionary translates as patriotism. I had expected some venting of anger, indeed, privately,

several had complained to me, but none occurred. Ferradas (1998: 81) in her ethnographic study of the displacement induced as a result of the building of the Yacyreta Dam in Argentina, argues that encounters between the various agencies of the state and the local population can tell us about the asymmetric relationship that exists between the state and the marginalised. This was not just apparent in the seating arrangement, but also in the language being used. The SEPA consultation was really looking more like an expression of loyalty by Tharis towards the state. Even the word *hubul watni*, comes from a very Arabised register of Urdu used in official documents, as opposed to the more commonly used word *wafadari*, in Urdu, Sindhi and Dhatki, the three most extensively used languages. Why was there no public protest at this event? By taking a *longue duree* of the history of Tharparkar, I show why the existence of the border with India provokes anxieties over loyalty, and how its earlier description as a 'wild frontier' has allowed it to be considered as region requiring infrastructural intervention..

Central to this chapter will be the 'border', the ambivalent spatiality created by the Partition of India, and this will be used as a method to analyse state making in Tharparkar. Prior to independence in 1947, Tharparkar was presented in colonial discourse as a 'wild' region that was home to 'restless communities' such as the largely pastoral Bhils and Kolis (Hughes 1877). These colonial categories have continued to influence decision making by the post-colonial state, which has led to the creation of marginal populations, which are formed out of indigenous or natural subjects, who are at once excluded from the same identities by the sort of disciplinary knowledge which mark them out as racially and civilisationally other (Das & Poole 2004; Baviskar 2004). This description of the region as wild corresponds with the idea of the frontier, which exists only in its relationship to 'civilisation'. Cronon (1996) argues that discourses around wilderness in late 19th Century North America, whose prominence coincided with the passing away of the frontier, essentially mirror notions of civilisation. The Thar was till the beginning of the 20th Century a largely pastoral society (Kothiyal 2017). As Gommans (1998)

argues, however, the frontier in South Asia between the predominantly nomadic, with the other mainly sedentary-agrarian, never served as a borderline, but both sides witnessed the mixing of wandering pastoralists coexisting with peasants. The idea of the frontier therefore works by delegitimising prior rights and claims, as areas "remote from political centres which hold strategic significance or economic potentials for human exploitation, and . . . contested by social formations of unequal power" (Geiger 2008:94).

After the Partition of South Asia, Tharparkar found itself as a 'frontier space' (Tsing, 2003; Barney, 2009; Eilenberg, 2014; Kelly & Peluso, 2015). Frontiers are "novel configurations of the relationship between natural resources and institutional orders that happen at particular moments in particular places" (Rasmussen & Lund 2018). Or, as Wilson and Donnan (1998:9) noted, 'frontiers' are "territorial zones of varying width which stretch across and away from the borders, within which people negotiate a variety of behaviours and meanings associated with their membership of in nations and states". The idea of the 'frontier' is shaped less by geographical conditions than by the impact of those who created them (Lattimore, 1962: 384; Ludden, 2003: 1070). Tharparkar is like other borderlands in the post-colonial present that have become 'frontiers' through a discursive, political and physical production of them as 'vacant', 'ungoverned', 'natural' or 'uninhabited' spaces that then make way for acts of territorialisation (van Schendel, 2002; Scott, 2009; Shneiderman, 2010). These peripheral spaces created by the Partition of South Asia are often sites of silencing (Bouzas 2016). Indeed, the people of Tharparkar often find themselves having to justify their existence within national discourses that often are focused on the centres of political power (see Harris 2013 for a similar situation in the north east of India). Tharparkar was undergoing infrastructural induced changes, and in other regions undergoing similar interventions these often produce some form of community-based activism against proposed construction projects (Teo & Loosemore 2011). There was

very limited protest in this case, however, and the little that has occurred has been couched in the language of 'loyalty' (on borderlands and loyalty see Humphrey 2017).

There is a considerable body of literature around how large-scale construction and engineering projects have enormous impacts on the ecological, social, cultural and economic environments in which they take place (Awakul & Ogunlana, 2002; Mandelik et al. 2005). The agency exercised in these negotiations in Tharparkar has been severely curtailed by the region's geographic position and demographic particularity. Tharparkar has a large Hindu population, a religious minority identified with India (Mahmood 2014; Schaflechner 2017) and has also been the site of two of Pakistan's three wars with India. Whatever resistance there is to the Coal Mining project has therefore been couched in this language of 'loyalty'. The India-Pakistan border remains a site of longstanding issues that range from the sharing of common water-resources, demarcation of maritime boundaries (Haines 2017) to 'cross-border terrorism' (Conns & Sanyal 2014). These narratives of geopolitical tensions often obscure local voices, and how 'loyalty' intrudes into their everyday lived experience. Borderland spaces are now increasingly being opened for exploitation (Ashby 2012:484). In chapter 4, I will explore the single example of protest against the Coal Project in the village of Ghorano, and the circumstances that led to that community-based protest movement, and why their success has been extremely limited.

The English word 'loyalty', according to Humphrey (2017), can be traced back to fifteenth-century French, where it meant fidelity in service and was rooted in the Latin lex [law]; a person who was loyal in the feudal sense was contrasted to an outlaw and he had legal rights as a consequence of his faithful service to a lord. Humphrey (2017) cautions, however, that loyalty cannot simply be translated as loyalty to the state but had "many diverse objects of loyalty: to principles, causes, religions, families, a spouse, teams, regions or ethnic groups, as well as to

leaders, governments, or parties. This implies that it is not the object, but the kind of relationship, that we should focus on" (2017: 400).

The border between Tharparkar and the neighbouring region of Kutch was not demarcated until 1968, almost two decades after Partition (Bajwa 2013). Victor Turner (1969) developed the idea of liminality, deriving from the Latin limen, meaning threshold. For Turner, liminality was the condition of ritual participants who have symbolically exited one 'social space' or state but have not entered a new one; they are figuratively poised over the threshold, or 'betwixt and between' two social roads. For much of the history of post-independence Pakistan Tharparkar occupied this liminal space; on the threshold, allowing links of commensality and kinship to be maintained until the fencing of the border in the late 1990s.

Boundary making was an especially significant feature of European colonisation from the fifteenth century, with attempts to secure external borders by marking, mapping and enforcing them against external powers (Benton, 2002). In Tharparkar, this was a slow process, and in fact took many decades, as shown by an interesting example of Jat pastoralists groups living in Sindh and moving to Kutch in the mid-fifties as result of disputes over the appointment of the tribal chief (Wespthal-Helbush 1986). The Jats of the Indus Delta were Muslims, yet they moved to 'Hindu' India, out of loyalty to their chief, suggesting that ideas of being Pakistani took much longer than the simple act of Partition. The lack of a clear political boundary and a mobile population has accordingly affected the way that the Pakistani state has perceived the Thari population, and its perceived 'disloyalty'.

The border as a method, as a research object and epistemological viewpoint, focuses on borders in relation to their role in the multiplication of labour, which produces new power hierarchies for which established forms for the organisation of political life are unsuitable (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013: 14−19). By using the border method to examine this borderland, I focus on

belonging "defined as a context in which cultural or emotional senses of membership that do not match political or civic ascriptions" (Bouzas 2016:3). The study of belonging reveals issues in bordering processes that can be seen in the high levels of securitisation that Thari experience in daily life but can also be used to show how border inhabitants exercise some agency over the processes of bordering that affect them. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a fresh and original ethnography of border peoples affected by the process of territoriality and to use these materials to suggest a rethinking of the notions of citizenship, belonging, entitlement and progress.

## Introducing the Field: The District of Tharparkar

The region of Tharparkar has been called a "transition zone" by Ibrahim (2009), which reflects works by early British colonial writers such as Stanley Napier Raikes (1856). Raikes ideas have had a profound effect on way the region has been viewed by contemporary writers (see Ibrahim 2009, Kothari 2013; Kothiyal 2017). I would argue that Ibrahim (2009), in calling Tharparkar a 'transition zone', makes an assumption that Sindh, Gujarat and Rajasthan are discrete units, each with their clearly defined "frontiers of culture" (Wilson & Donnan 1998). Tharparkar is really one part of the larger Thar desert region which has been described by Kothiyal (2017:27) as:

> The Thar desert, classically identified as Marusthali or the land of death, signifies the entire arid and semi-desert stretch of land enclosed by the Sutlej basin on the north, Aravalli on the east, the Rann of Kutch and plains of Kathiawar on the south and the Indus basin to the west.

Raichand Harijan (1959) in his Sindhi history of the region calls his book the *"Tarikh Registan"*, the history of the desert and his history does not stop at the current international borders and includes the adjacent regions of Gujarat and Rajasthan. The region is arid, only receiving about 219 mm of rain, although the actual rainfall during a wet season when

monsoons are heavy may be more than twice the average amount.[12] The aridity of the region appears in early British accounts (Raikes 1856; Hughes 1877), together with some romanticising of the region, particular an emphasis on an idealised figure of the Rajput (Freitag 2001) or describing the region as home to mobile trading networks (Jain 1990, Markovits 2000).

The lived experience of the modern Thari, meanwhile, is that of the international border that divides India and Pakistan. Tellingly, Kothiyal (2017: 1) begins her book on the history of the Thar with a simple sentence "the Thar desert at present is divided by an international boundary between India and Pakistan". After making this statement, the book focuses on the history of pastoralists in the Thar, in the 18th and 19th Century, with an ironic emphasis on mobility. The border which runs through the desert, has often divided villages from their wells and *gauchers*. The world of the mobile trader, pastoralist and Rajput professional soldier is now very much in the past. Borders very rarely enclose discrete population groups; they are more likely to divide groups who consider themselves parts of a single 'imagined community (Wilson & Donnan 1998). Barth (1969:15), in his seminal works on boundaries, argued that "the critical focus of investigation becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses". The international border, like ethnic group boundaries can be analysed as the producer of such boundaries, in the case of the India and Pakistan, the border supposedly divides Hindus from Muslims. Yet the building of boundaries on the basis of a shared Hinduness or Muslimness is often challenged in Tharparkar, when both Muslims and Hindus told me about common ancestors, and whole communities, such as the Muslim Memon and Hindu Lohana, narrated myths about a common origin.

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[12] ESIA of Block VI Lignite Mining Project

The India-Pakistan border is 3,000 kilometres long in total, most of which was a product of the line drawn by the Sir Cyril Radcliffe in August 1947 (Chester 2008). The Sindh-Kutch border, however, came about as a result of the border adjustments negotiated much later in 1965 (Athique 2008). It is also unique in that it embeds a high Hindu population within Pakistan, 41% according to the 1998 census (Tharparkar District Census Report 1998), although pretty much everyone I spoke to seemed to think that the number of Hindus had been grossly reduced. Both of these factors have made the Pakistani elites particularly wary of the region. The state has responded in two ways, a very strong public security presence and occasional attempts to co-opt the local elites. For example, in 2004, Pakistan and India commenced trains links between Sindh and Rajasthan, which was seen as attempt by the Musharaf regime to win support among the Tharis.

The existing marriage circles among a number of castes have ignored these 'borders', and intermarriages still occur between the Sodha Rajputs of Sindh and Jadeja Rajputs largely found in Gujarat. It is not just the Sodhas, but marriages and kinship ties also extend to Muslim groups in Tharparkar, with marriages continuing with fellow caste members in western Rajasthan and Kutch, a practice that has only ended recently. The long process of border demarcation had allowed for some degree of mobility. Looking at the Pakistan-India border in this region, Ibrahim (2009: 77) argues that the long process of what she calls 'defining the border', had an important bearing on the way frontier population were able to make creative use of the state's settlement policies on the border to redefine their own identification with religion, region and nation.

The Kalhora rulers of Sindh are said to have extended Sindhi control from the Indus Valley to the Thar region in the early 18th Century (Nadiem 2001). The Battle of Jhara in 1762 saw the

defeat of the Kalhora forces as they advanced southwards to Kutch, limiting their control to territory located at the north of the Rann of Kutch (Ibrahim 2009). Hindu nationalist groups in Gujarat have appropriated this battle in their narratives of Hindu 'resistance' to Muslim invaders. Ojha (1998), however, in an Urdu history of the Parkar region, makes references to invasions of the region by both Jadeja rulers of Kutch and Rathores rulers of Marwar (now part of Rajasthan in India), before the region came under the control of the Sodhas, who were also Hindu. The Sodha relationship with the Kalhoras, and indeed their Talpur successors was more of a tributary nature, and invasions were not unidirectional. According to Ojha, it was the Sindhi warlord Mir Salam Khan Talpur who conquered the various principalities of the region, starting the rule of the Talpur in 1783. Prior to this, many of these principalities had still owed allegiance to the state of Marwar. The conquest of Tharparkar was followed by attempts by the Talpur rulers, like their Kalhora predecessors, to extend their control over Kutch (Huttenback 1962). By 1814, the British established control over Kutch (Rushbrook-Williams 1958), which meant Sindh now bordered territories controlled by the British.

During the colonial period (ending in 1947), Tharparkar District was known as Thar and Parkar, and therefore I shall refer to it as such for that period. For the recently established British authorities, there were concerns about a Muslim group of pastoralists called the Khosa, who made frequent raids into what was now the British protected state of Kutch. The fluid nature of the boundaries was no longer acceptable to the British rulers, and in 1820 they dispatched an expeditionary force under a Colonel Holmes (Huttenback 1962: 14). This force crossed into Sindhi territory, where it came across a force sent by the Talpurs, ironically, to suppress the Khosa raiders, which the British force mistook as Khosa and attacked. The Sindh rulers demanded an apology and followed it up with further raids into Kutch territory. The British response was to demand restitution from the Talpurs or else expect a British invasion (Huttenback 1962: 15). The British demanded that the Talpurs now pay the ruler of Kutch a

substantial compensation, and once received the British may make restitution to the rulers of Sindh. Mountstuart Elphinstone, the British governor of Bombay, wrote:

> being a voluntary remuneration for an accident and the other exacted satisfaction for an intentional act (in Huttenback 1962: 15)

The British arrival in the southern reaches of Tharparkar was therefore challenging traditions of mobility that characterised the region. The earlier system of tribute alluded to by Ojha (2001) was no longer acceptable to the British. According to Kothiyal (2017: 41), the Thar was "the site of vigorous networks of circulation whereby communities, commodities and traditions had travelled the arid expanses of the Thar Desert". The arrival of British rule led to the extensive re-ordering of the region. The British also equated the mobility of certain groups with criminality, and increasingly sought to control them (Kothiyal 2016: 209). Banditry, as I will discuss later, was viewed very differently by the Tharis. Cattle stealing and cattle rearing were important to pastoralist communities in the arid regions of Sindh and Punjab (Gilmartin 2003). A local journalist, Asad, who came from a community of *Manganhars[13]*, traditionally bards of many pastoral groups in the Thar, told me that many of the songs sung by his community for their patrons involved recalling stories of cattle theft from an enemy. Abdul, the cook at the NGO I was staying at, who came from a pastoralist background, also told me that expansion of one's flock may involve theft, as animals in the desert were prone to high mortality. For Abdul, there were limits, for example not stealing from widows or in the holy month of Ramadhan. Huttenback (1961: 18) argues that the British had decided that raids by Tharis on Kutch, would provide them with the justification to conquer Sindh. Nonetheless, internal

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[13] On Manganhars see Ayyagari, Shalini 2012. Spaces Betwixt and Between: Musical Borderlands and the Manganiyar Musicians of Rajasthan Asian Music
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difference within the colonial administration prevented an invasion in 1820. The Secretary to the Governor General wrote:

> Few things in his Lordship's judgement can be conceived to be more impolitic than the War with Sind. Not to dwell on the expense and unprofitableness of such an undertaking, or the chances of failure inseparable from all human enterprises, it is evident that the most prosperous result of war with Sind would be an evil as tending to involve us in disputes, jealousies, enmities, intrigues, negotiations, wars and incalculable embarrassments in the counties beyond the Indus" (in Huttenback 1961: 16)

Sindh was finally conquered by the British in 1843, and we have a memoir produced by Stanley Napier Raikes, who was the first political agent of the newly constituted Thar and Parkar Agency. Raikes (1977 [1856]) made reference to what, for him, was an anomaly of the Hindu Sodha Rajputs, in which the local rulers were able to maintain effective independence from their Muslim overlords, the Amirs of Sindh, as well as close marital ties with the Jadeja rulers of Kutch, while nonetheless remaining loyal to the Amirs. According to the Imperial Gazetteer of the Province of Sindh (1908 Edition), after the conquest of Sindh, the local notables wished to have their region placed within Kutch administration (Imperial Gazetteer Volume 23 page 310). In fact, the southern portions were handed over to Kutch in 1844, but after a rebellion by the Sodha chiefs in 1846, the British decided in 1856 to place the region under Sindh administration (Hughes 1876). Raikes (1856) in his memoirs made the following observation:

> Consequently on the Thurr and Parkur administration having been conducted from Bhooj, together with the general want of information regarding these out-of-way districts, it has often been supposed that they form a portion of the heredity States of the Kutch Principality, or have been transferred to his Highness the Rao of Kutch by the British government. In the map of Sindh prepared by the Quartermaster General's Office, the Thurr and Parkur districts will be observed to occupy a nondescript position; while Thurr and Parkur is only occasionally spoken of with the three other Collectorates as forming an integral part of British Sind (Raikes: 1).

There was some debate as whether to undo Mir Salam Khan's conquests, and for Raikes (1856) it was clear that Tharparkar ought to be integrated into Kutch or Marwar (now western Rajasthan) because the region shared "language, habits and feelings of the people; it constitutes in short a portion of Rajputana" (1856: 2). The region therefore had no place in 'Muslim Sind', and its southern talukas were now included within the British protected state of Kutch, until a rebellion by a Sodha chieftain, the Rana of Verava. The rebellion, and supposed Kutchi sympathy for it, had convinced the British that it was better to control the rebellious Sodhas from Karachi, with Hughes, (1876: 864), author of the first gazetteer of Sindh, now more willing to accept there were connections between Sind and Tharparkar. Raikes's memoirs also show that from a fairly early period the British administration in Sind was categorising the local population as either Hindu or Muslims, with their 'natural antipathy' (Raikes 1856). This idea of Hindu and Muslim natural 'antipathy' later formed the basis of the Partition of India, and the resultant division of the Thar desert.

The Thar region was the centre of a number states, based around desert forts such as Umerkot in Sindh, and the authority of the ruler was based on the control of passage and pasture (Kothiyal 2017). In his analysis of the Balinese state, Geerzt (1981) came up with the concept of the 'theatre state'. For Geerzt, what bound up the pre-colonial Balinese polities was the ideology of rule. The court and capital represented a "microcosm of supernatural order" and an "exemplar centre" which represented a standard to tributaries who were only vaguely controlled by the centre... In the Thar, local rulers were also enmeshed with central authority through ties of kinship, whether it was in the Indus valley, Kutch or Marwar. Looking at the pre-colonial state in South Asia, Stein (1980) had come up with what he called the segmentary state model, arguing that the medieval Indian state was characterised by limited territorial authority as one moved from the core to the periphery, through the intermediate zone. Much like Geertz's 'theatre state model', in the state's periphery, this shaded off into ritual

sovereignty. In his own South Indian model, the medieval Chola kings exercised their power through patronage of temples and cults. A system of replication of uniformity existed across the numerous peasant locality units, or *nadus*, with the Chola centre, which had no monopoly of legitimate state authority. Ojha (1984), the author of Purana Parkar, goes into some details as how the local ruler of Veerava, one of the principalities located in the Parkar region built temples in honour of his patron Sidhraj Jaysinh, the medieval emperor of western India. The problem with Stein's argument is that he envisaged the nadus as unchanging, autonomous, harmonious peasant units, which sustained the medieval Chola state for five centuries. Recent scholarship on pre-colonial polities in western India by Tambs-Lyche (2004) and Sheikh (2009) has uncovered similar systems of what Stein called "ritual sovereignty", but ones which underwent significant changes.

Throughout the period from the early 19th to mid-20th Century, the Thar experienced a persistence of banditry (Peabody 1991; Kasturi 2002; Kothiyal 2016). The existence of banditry during the British rule, and its near absence since independence, is connected with the territorial processes that the Thar desert underwent after Partition. I was often told that the Thar is one of the safest regions, and during the course of some filming as part of the research, we had a chance to give a policeman a lift. He pretty much repeated that his posting in the Thar had been one of *aram*, rest, and that, other than the usual drunken village brawls, there was very little to report. Research on 19th Century banditry and plunder in South Asia argues that those engaging in it made a moral claim, whereby bandits located themselves in hostile geographical and political frontiers and posited challenges to the state (Peabody 1991; Kasturi 2002; Kothiyal 2017). The British led policy of "simplification" of political entities in Thar resulted in the pushing of older ruling groups into the heart of the desert, reducing them to becoming petty chiefs or *thikanadars*. These thikanas, or chiefships, like Pokhran, Chohtan, Barmer, Pugal, Nuggur , Veravow, Bhoyotra and Bakhasar, located in either Tharparkar or the

westernmost extremity of Jodhpur, were where many of those involved in banditry came from (Kothiyal 2017). Despite repeated British attempts to deal with banditry, the British found themselves in a region with an absence of mutually recognised boundaries, with the local princes showing a reluctance to have these clarified, preferring to leave matters of jurisdiction muddled, which allowed people to move between the states. These 'in between' zones, Kothiyal (2016) has called zones of influence, where loyalty was to a particular thikandar rather the province or state. The arrival of the British in the 19th Century also coincided with technological advances, bringing in a new era of 'intensified territoriality'. The rising 19th Century Western European colonial states, taking advantage of the rapid changes in transportation, communication and infrastructure allowed them to embrace an ideal of 'territorial mastery' through uniform centralised control (Ellis 2018). The British also began a process of clearly mapping territory, which saw the ultimately led to the disappearance of these 'zones of influence'.

The district of Tharparkar is now very much an 'alienated borderland' if we follow Martinez's (1994) schemata on borderlands, i.e. one where the borders are functionally closed and cross-border interaction is totally or nearly absent. Scholars of borderlands have argued how borders are politically and socially constructed boundaries contested and negotiated by different actors or agents (Newman 2003; Donnan and Hastings 2010). The focus in borderland literature on contested borders and "illicit flows" has over emphasised the ability of the local population to contest and subvert the centralising forces. In practice, any illicit flow can be severely constrained, as Calvin (1984) has argued for the India-China border, where both countries treat their mutual borderlands as critical frontiers within their national security policy. The borders here, and in other regions of South Asia, are heavily policed (Conns and Sanyal 2014). The Tharis' experience of the Pakistani state in this borderland locale is through a landscape that has checkpoints, watch towers and closed security zones. I was often told that there were

twenty-five security agencies operating in the region, although I could never figure which ones, or indeed if Pakistan even had that many security agencies. The point, though, is that the security agencies are now part of the lived experience in Tharparkar, a sensitive region that requires surveillance.

As the colonial state gave way to the modern Pakistani one, the earlier fluidity of loyalties, often predicated upon bonds of kinship, saw a transition, with new forms of loyalty evolving after independence in 1947. The character of Balwant Singh Bakhasar, who belonged to a thikanadar family from Bakhasar, in what is now the westernmost district of Barmer in Rajasthan, was just such a transitional figure. Bakhasar started off as a bandit, as many thikanadars had been in the past, but ended his life assisting the Indian army during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971. He provided his knowledge of the desert tracts to bypass the Pakistan army leading to the capture of the town of Chachro, then administrative centre of the Pakistani Thar. He has now been appropriated by Hindutva groups in India but, interestingly, when I mentioned his name in Tharparkar, there remained, even among many Muslims, I spoke to, a degree of respect for Balwant Singh. In essence, Balwant Singh symbolises a transition from one set of loyalties to the lineage and locality to a new set of loyalties to the nation state.

## Cartographic Anxieties of a 'New State'

As I have set out, border making between Sindh and the princely state of Kutch took over a century , and was not resolved till 1968. Both the Sindh and Kutch authorities claimed sovereignty over the Rann of Kutch throughout the 19th Century. In 1885, the Survey of India was engaged to demarcate the boundary between Kutch and Sindh (Ibrahim 2009). During the course of the survey, the district administrator of Thar and Parkar became aware of the fact that Colonel Pullan, in charge of the Kutch topographical party, had 'strayed' into Sindh territory of the Rann. This information was passed on to the authorities in Karachi, the Sind provincial

headquarters (Ibrahim 2009: 84). What followed was a series of correspondence between the Sind and Kutch authorities. The British authorities in Calcutta and London, however, made it clear to their subordinates that they were not interested in getting involved in any boundary disputes (Ibrahim 2009: 84). By and large, the colonial authorities were content to accept the customary rights of the pastoral nomads to the Rann of Kutch. This situation changed drastically, however, with the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947 (Bajwa 2013). Jones (1945) sets out the three stages involved in the mapping, establishment, demarcation, and finally control of the border. While for the British colonial authority, a lack of clear demarcation of the border was acceptable for what was in essence an internal boundary, this could no longer apply to India and Pakistan, who were now part of the new state system. Both states forwarded rival arguments, for Pakistan the Rann was an 'inland lake' or 'dead sea' and according to international principles should be divided down the middle (Untawale 1974). While the Indians claimed that the Rann was a marsh and that all the colonial maps and gazetteers showed that the Rann was entirely in Indian Territory (Untawale 1974). The two states had initially attempted to resolve the dispute peacefully, although clashes did break out in 1956 (Bajwa 2013:65). By 1965, for the Pakistani elites, a clear-cut jurisdiction had to be established at the state's southern border in Tharparkar, even if it meant war. When, in 1964, an Indian patrol arrested three Pakistani nationals near the abandoned fort at Kanjarkot, in what Pakistan perceived as its territory, tensions between the two sides rose (Bajwa 2013). By March 1965, full scale conflict broke out in the Rann of Kutch, which was ended when the British Prime Minister Harold Wilson offered to mediate, an offer which was accepted by both sides (Untawale 1974). India and Pakistan signed the Kutch agreement on 30 June 1965, where they agreed that a three member tribunal would sit, hear both sides of the argument, and finally demarcate the boundary (Bajwa 2013). Under the award made on 19 February 1968, Pakistan was awarded 828 square kilometres or just under 10% of the Rann of Kutch (Untawale 1974).

Nonetheless, the border had remained relatively porous until the 1990s, when India fenced its side of the border. Certainly, as far as Sindh was concerned, the Indian action was seen as 'useful' for the Pakistanis. Colonel Ahmed, a Rangers officer who served in Tharparkar, told me he has just begun his posting when he received news that the border had been sealed. His orders from headquarters in Islamabad was simply to observe, and he said that fencing also made their job 'easier'.

Partition had ruptured old networks of trade, in particular the extensive cattle trade between Tharparkar and neighbouring Gujarat. Krishna (1996) has argued that the perceived permeability, and tenuousness of the borders that the South Asian states inherited has been translated into a cartographic anxiety about national survival, and this has certainly been a feature of how Pakistan has perceived its southern borders. From an early stage, the Pakistani state was suspicious of these links; an early report from the Dawn newspaper from 1948 refers to smuggling, and how untrustworthy the local police and officials were, said to be "in league" with the smugglers. The report dated 13 October 1948 set the tone:[14]

> Heavy smuggling of foodgrains to the Indian Union by unscrupulous profit-mongers in Sindh is past bringing about famine conditions.

It then goes on to state:

> Police and Government officials are reported to be in league with the smugglers, the MLAs of the district give them active support, and the Muslim National Guards and other honest individuals who dare to voice their protests are clapped into prison or otherwise intimated.

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[14] 1948 File No 7(2)-PMS/48

The Dawn article was brought to the attention of the Prime Minister, Liaqat Ali Khan, and the official response from the Sindh Home Ministry was:

> This sort of wild propaganda creates panic amid people the people and does discredit not only Sind but also Pakistan as a whole.

As Zamindar (2007) has shown, the Dawn was very much the voice of the incoming Indian Muslim refugees in 1947, many of whom were critical of the Sindh Prime Minister Khuhro, who was seen as sympathetic to the Hindu minority, and as in particular not taking steps to secure the border. The article makes reference to the Muslim National Guards, who were largely made up of League loyalists or refugees, and their incarceration was seen as a clear example of the disloyalty of the border elites in Sindh. The tension between incoming Muhajirs and the Sindh government was also led to a fraying of relations with the and federal authorities(Zamindar 2007), in particular over the control of the border.. The response from the Sindh administration was therefore obviously to challenge the Dawn reporting and argue that the Dawn article was discrediting the nation. Relations with India continued to deteriorate, with armed conflict over Kashmir in 1948, and in this context the porous nature of the Thar region was increasingly causing concern. This can be seen clearly in a letter to the Prime Minister from the Commander, 51 Brigade, Hyderabad, dated 4 January 1952:[15].

> During my visit to the Pak border from Nagarparkar to Rahim ki Bazar intelligence to the following effect was received.
>
> The Indian army is patrolling Pak territory along the Rann of Cutch and appears to be determined to take possession of the Rann of Cutch up to the Pak Customs line. The patrol is being carried on in trucks and jeeps.

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[15] 1952 File No 2(3)-PMS 52

In the Rann of Cutch to the South of Bhodesar, Indian military in large number had come in trucks and had camped there inside the Pak territory for a couple of days in order to show the whole Rann of Cutch up to Pak customs line was India territory.

The concern about the lack control of the border region was not limited simply to Indian incursions and smuggling, but the fact that it was allowing uncontrolled movement of people. Below is a report from the Federal Home Ministry to the Prime Minister's Office:[16]

In our case the position is more serious because *Hur* outlaws have taken refuge in Jaisalmir and Jodhpur territories. We have reason to believe that they are being given assistance in these two states. In any case, although it is known that they are outlawed murderers and dacoits, no step is taken to apprehend them and proceed against them, even in Bharat. For instance, they could have been detained under the Local Safety Act in view of their dangerous character and activity. They are free to cross the border periodically to commit dacoities, murder and arson in our territories.

The language was strikingly similar in India, where Ibrahim (2017 :83) makes reference to an Indian police report in Kutch:

The Pakistan government has been harbouring dacoits wanted by Kutch who are also able to get arms and ammunition in Pakistan and are even able to move out openly in Pakistan and are not arrested there in spite of the fact that intimation about such dacoits is communicated to the police officers in Pakistan.

As Mohammadbhai, an official in the education department in Mithi, and a member of the Memon community, who were traditionally involved in the cattle trade, told me, there was a degree of overlap between smuggling, banditry and 'regular' trade:

When the *Rao* [17] put up prices, and rains were good in Sindh, we would smuggle them to Kutch Bhuj. Yes, smuggle them. But we also traded, we employed the same herdsmen. Some got clever, these Samma, and started banditry.

The patchy control of the cattle trade exercised under the British colonial rule was no longer something that could continue, and the new state of Pakistan was keen to assert its sovereignty

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[16] File No 7(1) PMS/50
[17] The title for the ruler of Kutch

on its margins. Historically, the multiple jurisdictions that existed in the Thar had allowed

banditry to flourish (Kothiyal 2017). These co-existed with trading networks, such as those of

the Memon community, but both were increasingly seen as suspect by the Pakistani state. As

the Home Ministry report states, what it calls 'dacoits' could operate quite easily from Indian

territory, with kinship ties overlapping the new border. Humphrey (2017) has pointed out that

the Russo-Chinese borders in the mid-20th century had become a "cold border", a highly

securitised region, closed to all but those with high security clearances, as both states imagined

the existing linkages between co-ethnics meant an undermining of the state. This extended to

suspicion towards the locals among officials, and in particular soldiers, who were posted to this

region. This is echoed in a conversation I had with Colonel Ahmed, a retired officer in the

Pakistan Rangers, the paramilitary police that 'guards' Pakistan's border with India:

> Colonel Ahmed: You have to understand my boys are Punjabi, they have never met a Sindhi, let alone a Hindu"
>
> Me: Were there issues of discipline?
>
> Colonel Ahmed: Yes on occasions, but I kept my boys on a leash. The local Muslims misbehaved with Koli girls, and many of my guys thought it was fine. But I told them in no uncertain terms, hands off.
>
> Me: So how did you deal with the local population?
>
> Colonel Ahmed: We got on well. I am a Parmar Rajput, and local notables were also Parmar. I became friendly with Thanu, a local landowner. Actually I got into trouble, and was reported. But there was nothing there.
>
> Me: So was there a policy not to socialise with the locals?
>
> Colonel Ahmed: No, no official policy. Just that they were uncomfortable. I was visiting his house, and he was a Thakur after all"
>
> Me: Is it because they have linkages with India"
>
> Colonel Ahmed: Yes, of course, and who knows some may be spying for the Indians

The fact that a serving officer of the border guards had his loyalty doubted says something about the anxieties of those in the centre about Tharparkar. It is also worth mentioning, however, that the officer concerned did believe that some may be spying for India, and there was thus 'sense' behind the government mistrust. Making a general point on borderlands, Van Schendel and Abraham (2005) have also argued that routine practices of the borderland are difficult to comprehend by those at the centre. Therefore, no one is above suspicion, not even an officer within the Rangers.

Furthermore, the centre exhibited great sensitivity regarding any protest, as I discovered during the course of my fieldwork. This 'sensitivity' was widely known among those who considered themselves as 'activist' in the Thar. During the period I was in Tharparkar, someone who ran an educational NGO was abducted by one of the many security agencies operating in the region. Hansraj, the activist, was detained by the police, and later whenever I met him I found him to be extremely cautious. I was completely unaware that he had been active within the Sindhi nationalist movement when at university. I happened to be in Karachi, and I asked, Mohammad Khan, an ethnic Muhajir from Karachi, with two decades of work in a number of NGOs in the region, why they would pick him up. He was surprised that no one had told me about Hansraj's past, and that the authorities had kept a close eye on him. It transpired Hansraj had spoken in favour of the protest in the village of Ghorano against the SECMC acquiring land for a reservoir, and it may have been a case of rounding up the usual suspects. He was released within 48 hours, and as happens in Pakistan, no charges were laid, and no one really knew why he had been picked up. Arif, an old Communist from the town of Naukot, on the edge of the district, was clear however: the point was simply to spread 'dhesht', fear.

The current border regime has led to the abandonment of many border settlements. The state has also made it very difficult for any activity to occur on the border. At the NGO I was staying at, I once came into the office to do my usual *gupshup*, and discovered Jay Kumar, the manager, filling out what looked a bundle of documents.

> Jay Kumar: Mustafabhai, we have a project on the border, but they keep making it difficult. We now have to fill these forms in triplicate.
>
> Me: What's the situation in the border villages?
>
> Jay Kumar: Very bad. There is no electricity, no proper roads. And they make our life very difficult as well.

The demand for loyalty from the border residents is harsh, and once important towns like Alibander and Rahim ki Bazar, which were both large and prosperous settlements in the 19th Century, are now almost abandoned.

State making in South Asia involves processes of territorialising (Wilson 2004: 530) "where claims to political/social space are constantly being brought into play (and constantly questioned)". This now involves exerting control over people and resources located at the margins. In Pakistan civilian as well as military regimes have attempted "to construct a nation-state amidst powerful local, regional and ethnic identities that existed prior to 1947, and which continue to challenge the state's conception of a homogeneous national identity" (Khory 1995:24). This is coupled weith a cartographic anxiety about the nation's margins , which hasimposed upon the Tharis a need to publicly perform their loyalty.

## The Wagah Syndrome: Performing Loyalty at the Margins

Tharparkar is very much like Aggarwal's (2004: 3) Ladakh, another region on the contested Indo-Pakistan border, this time in India "which is subjected to the daily dramas of chauvinism that monitor cultural identity and citizenship between the two countries". Pakistan came about

as result of the division of the British Indian Empire in 1947. As Van Schendel (2007) argues, however, the post-colonial states in South Asia found that their "separation was incomplete and they had inherited ill-defined nations and frayed territory" (2007:37). For Van Schendel, the successor states in South Asia have employed a particular strategy of territoriality, "spatial strategies to affect, influence, or control resources and people, by controlling area". As Van Schendel says, though, the process has been particularly difficult in South Asia since the geographical spaces they inherited were anything but clearly demarcated. The result for South Asia is that borders are militarised, a legacy of the manner in which the region was decolonised, which ostensibly involved dividing territory along religious lines (Conns & Sanyal 2014). Territoriality in South Asia is often 'performed' by the use of violence, as South Asian states claim exclusive sovereignty over areas that are not sharply delineated. In Chapter 4, I will look in detail at how this ambiguity over boundaries has affected Tharparkar, including the road making policies. Van Schendel calls this type of territoriality the "Wagah Syndrome", named after a ceremony performed daily at the Indo-Pakistani border involving grotesque posturing and symbolic violence carried out by the border guards of the respective states. This public posturing reflects the anxiety about the margins. Racine (2002) has argued that the Pakistani state has faced two challenges that are specific to itself, both of which arose from the seminal event in the nation's foundation, namely the Partition of the South Asia. The first challenge is the unresolved issue of the nature of the state and its relationship with Islam, while the second is the inability to live in peace with India. In Tharparkar, a region on the border with India and home to a large Hindu population, the Pakistani state is forced to deal with both of these factors, and a subtext of Hindu 'disloyalty' therefore always bubbles below the surface.

This constant state of tension and occasional periods of outright war in the Indo-Pakistani borderlands have produced two categories, that of the 'insider' and 'outsider', but these two categories, as Aggarwal (2004:182) found in the borderlands of Ladakh, are "not natural

preconditions of geography or identity; rather emerge from a complex interplay of political and cultural strategies". This can perhaps be seen in the example of Aleemullah, who came from a village near the Rann of Kutch, and who was among the first in his region to go to university. There Aleemullah had joined Jamiate Islami, an Islamist political party, and now back in Tharparkar, held a senior position in Al-Khidmat, the charity arm of the Jamat.

> Aleemullah: Where I am from we are really backword, lots of *Bid'ah*[18]. Quite honestly, in the village we behaved like the Kolis. But we are trying to change that now. There is a mosque, and the villagers are paying for the imam.
>
> Me: When you are at Sindh university, how were you treated by other students?
>
> Aleemullah: Of course they found my accent funny. Also, my dean was weak. But with the help of the Jamat, I got to know Islam. My friends from university now call me Hafiz.
>
> Me: They respect you?
>
> Aleemullah: Yes Yes. They respect me. In fact, if they want something from Al-Khidmat, they call me.

Aleemullah, realised that he could not be just like the Kolis, and had to become an 'insider'. When I last met him at the opening of the Al-Khidmat hospital on the new Mithi to Islamkot stretch of the Coal Road, he was very much the insider, next to the Al-Khidmat, head of southern Sindh, talking with the District Commissioner and the district head of police. He was no longer a *Miyana*, a generally low status caste group from the Rann of Kutch region, but a *hafiz*, a man whose mission was not just religious but actively working towards creating the ideal Muslim society. Nonetheless, although he had shown his 'loyalty' by aligning himself with the Jamat, a party seen as close to both the army and Pakistan's intelligence agency, the ISI, in conversations we had, his views on the road building and coal project had always

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[18] Bid'ah is an Arabic word meaning changes made to Islam, which is a form of sacrilege, as the faith must remain unchanged

remained guarded. Loyalty was an extremely difficult burden to bear, and like the border guards at Wagah, required constant public performance.

The fact that the majority, or at least a large part, of the population of Tharparkar are Hindu adds to the Pakistani state's anxiety. Schaflechner (2017) has argued that the Pakistani Hindus are structurally excluded through their demonisation in educational curricula and in popular fiction. Rochi Ram, a 80 year old lawyer, human rights activist and proud Sindhi told me that the passing of British rule meant those who gave us justice had left, and we would be at the mercy of the Muslims. Although Rochi's family was from Mithi, he was in Karachi during the period from 1947 to 1948 that saw the mass migration of Hindus. Bal (2007: 172), in her ethnography of the Garo ethnic group in Mymensingh, in what became East Pakistan in 1947 argued that the "year 1947 marked the end of British colonial rule and the birth of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan., with East Bengal as the eastern wing. A pro-Islamic government replaced a colonial government, and the status of Islam changed significantly". For her Garo interlocutors, Partition's effect was profound, they became a minority in a state that explicitly claimed to uphold Islam. More importantly, they felt excluded as non-Muslims in this new Islamic Republic. Unlike in other parts of Northern India and Pakistan, where movement of people stopped within a few months of Independence, in Sindh, refugees continued to pour in from India, largely through Tharparkar; with almost a quarter of a million arriving in the mid-1950s as India suffered from recurrent religious violence (Talbot & Singh 2009). Roche Ram, who was a twenty year old in 1954 talked about the dislocation being experienced by many Thari Hindus as Muslim refugees, called Muhajirs, poured in.

> I was in Umerkot, and I saw the trains come in. This was 1954, and we were worried. Your people kept coming. That's why some call you *maakar:* it felt we would be overwhelmed. When the British left, we knew those who gave justice had left. In its place those who robbed were now charge. But I am Lohana, this is my land. We were here when Dahir was here.

Rochi, in his 80s and now a retired lawyer living in a prosperous suburb of Karachi was much more forthcoming then most Thari Hindus about the demographic changes in Sindh. Bal (2007) also noted the sense among Garos of being overwhelmed by incoming Muslim refugees, and the increasing suspicion of the Pakistani state about their connections with India, which was home to a much larger Garo population. Looking at the exodus of Sindhi Hindus, Zamindar (2007: 49) has argued that "the departure of Hindus and Sikhs from Karachi was not merely incidental but rather central to understanding the very tensions of Partition's ambiguous new nations. Could Hindus and Sikhs become citizens of Pakistan, as non-Muslim citizens of a new 'Muslim nation'?" (2007: 49). The exchange of population in Tharparkar occurred much later, mainly after the 1965 and 1971 India-Pakistan wars, which resulted in the migrations of the entire Jain community and many of the upper caste Hindus, also leading to the collapse of the feudal system (Hasan 2010). Schafllechner notes that "fantasies of the neighbouring country are easily projected onto the Hindu minorities inside Pakistan, and, thus their integration into the public sphere as Pakistani Hindus seems anomalous, especially since schoolbooks suggest, through synecdoche, that the habits of some Hindus are habits of all Hindus" (2017: 9). Speaking to an NGO worker based in Islamabad there was considerable bitterness as he described his second class status as a Hindu. In particular, when speaking about Dalit rights, he became bitter, saying his position as a caste Hindu, was particularly precarious, in that they would always call him an Indian, while the Dalits would say that they are oppressed by caste Hindus, and shared a 'common enemy' with Muslims. Sawant, another NGO worker, this time based in Karachi, told me of his first visit to Islamabad, when the hotel receptionist had asked for his passport and visa. I was once told by a driver whose service I often used in Mithi, a Muslim, that he was suspicious about why the Hindus visited India. When I told him so did many Muslims, his response, said partially in jest, was that there were bad people in all religions.

The substantial Hindu presence in Tharparkar has allowed the Hindu communities to sustain a sense of political and social being (Makki, Ali and Van Vuuren 2015). Perhaps this has allowed them to avoid answering the question Zamindar raised, about how Hindus and Sikhs can become citizens of a nation that imagines itself as Muslim. My fieldwork coincided with India's supposed 'surgical strike', when India claimed to have made an incursion into Pakistani territory. The Hindu festival of *holi* occurred during this time. Generally, *holi* is a public event, with loud and boisterous crowds, but during my stay, the celebrations were deliberately downplayed. Jani, an upper caste journalist and president of the local Press Club said they were mindful of the fact that a public celebration may be seen somehow as indicating that Hindus approved of the 'surgical strike'. The performance of loyalty can in this case can mean not publicly celebrating a festival that is very public.

## Sindh: The Restless Province

The province of Sindh in southern Pakistan has had a long history of separatism (Das 2001). Its main urban centre, Karachi, has also been plagued by almost continuous ethnic violence (Tambiah 1990; Verkaaik 2004; Talbot and Singh 2009). Although most post-colonial states, including Pakistan's neighbour, India, have had ethnic strife, Alavi (1991) identifies a qualitative difference between India and Pakistan, in that all forms of 'sub-nationalism' in Pakistan are directed towards what is perceived as a Punjabi dominated central government. Alavi argued:

> The history of the Pakistan movement does not have the depth and character to provide the substance of national memories. It has manifestly proved incapable of providing an over-arching national bond for it is tied too closely with the fortunes of a fragmented and discredited political party. This fact is compounded by the even more significant paradox that the Pakistan movement was at its weakest in the Muslim majority provinces of the India that make up Pakistan.

This failure to create an overarching national myth has meant that the modernisation programme in Pakistan has rested on building a centralised state (Noman 1988). Development for the Pakistani state has always meant state building (Haines 2010; Jamali 2011). To challenge development is therefore to be anti-national. For the most part, Partition hysterography has focused on Punjab (Jalal 1998; Hansen 2002; Ahmed 2011 among many) or Bengal (Van Schendel 2005; Chatterji 2007), with little focus on Sindh, with the exception of Zamindar (2007). Sindh, however, did not escape the partition-related violence with its attendant ethnic cleansing. In all, fifteen million people were displaced by Partition and although the death toll remains disputed, between 200,000 and two million died as a consequence of Partition (Talbot and Singh 2009). Despite the massive movement of peoples, Hindus and Sikhs to India, and Muslims to Pakistan, there remained minorities in each new country and their persistence clashed with the ideals of homogeneity (Conns and Sanyal 2014). The tensions opened up by Partition are kept alive by the very traumatic and bloody nature of those events (Gilmartin, 1998; Van Schendel, 2005; Chatterji, 2007; Zamindar, 2007); the wars that have shaped contemporary geopolitical relations between South Asian states and their neighbours, especially the 1971 Liberation War in East Pakistan/ Bangladesh and the on-going conflict over Kashmir (Bose, 2005; Robinson, 2013). In Sindh, the effect of Partition was twofold: a consolidation of Sindhi ethnic identity on the one hand and, on the other, a demand from central government to "transfer local and regional loyalties to extreme forms of official, ideological nationalism" (Talbot and Singh 2009: 127). The province saw an influx of Muslim refugees from northern India, and a migration of wealthy upper caste Hindus to India (Zamindar 2007). Unlike in other parts of Northern India and Pakistan, where movement of people stopped within a few months of Independence, in Sindh, refugees continued to pour in from India, largely through Tharparkar, almost quarter of a million arriving in the mid-1950s as India suffered from recurrent religious violence (Talbot & Singh 2009).

Rochi's anxiety about the demographic changes in Sindh, discussed earlier, were the catalyst for the rise of the nationalist movement in Sindh. The reaction of the Pakistani state to the growing Sindhi nationalism, meanwhile, was to construct an identity essentially in opposition to Hindu India, an Islamic polity devoid of any 'syncretism', which Sindhi nationalists countered with a counter narrative that emphasised Sindh's Sufi past (Siddiqui 2012). The Pakistani state also has had difficulty accommodating Sindhi aspirations, which broke out into periodic acts of violence, especially in the 1980s. In 1983, the province exploded after a protest called by those opposing the military regime of General Zia turned violent, with the Pakistani army deploying over 45,000 troops (Das 2001). This tension was particularly acute during General Zia's Islamisation campaign with its emphasis on an Islamic Orthodoxy. Below is an extract from Sindhi nationalist M. A Khan (in Das: 26) writing at the height of the insurgency in Sindh in 1984:

> Sindh is an ancient land. Home of some of the oldest of the world's civilizations, it has by its own place in the historical annals of the world. After a long spell of Buddhist and Hindu periods, it became home of a Muslim Arab civilization in the 8th Century AD and for many centuries people of the three faiths lived in relative peace and tranquillity. Just as Buddhist and Hindu cultures flourished together, so did Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism

Even as the rest of the province exploded, however, the Thar remained quiet, with Mithi, the district capital, only experiencing some marginal protests. The general lack of protest in the Thar was seen as a betrayal by many Sindhi nationalists. Ajaz, a journalist and a Muslim who was active in the local press club in Mithi, and a member of one of the now numerous and divided Sindhi ethno-nationalist parties, put it down to what he called 'Hindu cowardice'. Ajaz had been called a progressive by many in Mithi, including Hindus, so his response was rather strange. The trope of cowardly Hindus is often used in school textbooks and other government publications in Pakistan (Schafllechner 2017) but the use of the phrase by someone seen as progressive was perplexing. When I mentioned several prominent Sindhi Hindus activists, such

as Dilip Rai, who was murdered by state in 1970, he slightly changed his argument. Ajaz was not a native Thari and said the trouble with the Tharis was that they 'are not quite Sindhi'. Tharis often said they were going to 'Sindh', when leaving the district. This was often picked up by other Sindhis, as I discovered when I was talking with Jatoi, the deputy head of the Corporate Social Responsibility at SECMC

> You know Mustafa Sahib, we Sindhis think of Thar as our heart. Bhitai wrote about it in his poetry. Everyone knows Umar Marvi, and yet when they say Thar and Sindh I worry. There is only Sindh.

The Sindhi nationalist movement has had to deal with a long history of repression and has developed a strong 'them and us' narrative (Siddiqui 2009). In their conception of Sindhiness, they often overlook the cultural diversity of the province. Tharparkar has had stronger links with western Rajasthan and Kutch, regions now in India, then the Indus Valley, the core area of Sindhi identity (Maini 2013). The tensions between Thari and Sindhi identity also come across when the trans-border linkages are discussed. When India and Pakistan agreed to open the Khokhrapar Munabhao border for a limited train service, there was considerable opposition from Sindhi nationalists, who were arguing that the opening of the train line would see an influx of Indian Muslims into the province (Maini 2013). Ashok Pandit, who heads an NGO in Mithi was bitter:

> I was disappointed quite frankly, I am nationalist, went to jail. But when they called the strike against the opening of the train service, well. You see most of these nationalist leaders, they are from the *Uttar*, their links are with Baluchistan. Only Arisar[19] supported us, and he is from the Thar. We still need to go all the way to Islamabad to get a visa. The Sindhi nationalists are with the army in opposing the opening of an Indian Consulate in Karachi.

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[19] Abdul Wahid Arisar was Sindh nationalist, who was a rare Thari in the ranks of the movement. He died in 2013.

Ashok Pandit was not the only one who felt betrayed by Sindhi nationalist views of the border, and the consequent marginalisation of the Thari population. Many journalists and NGO workers that I interacted with had received their political training within the Sindhi nationalist movement and were close to the likes of Ajaz mentioned earlier. The loyalty demanded by the Sindhi nationalists was an exclusionary loyalty that denied the complex linkages that existed between the Tharis and lands to the east, and many I spoke to resented this. The Tharis are caught between a Pakistani statist discourse that insists that identity be based on a uniform scriptural interpretation of Islam that excludes religious and sectarian minorities, which in Thar means pretty much everyone, and a Sindhi sense of identity that demands absolute loyalty to Sindhiyat—Sindhiness—which in turn denies the Thari their linkages with Rajasthan and Gujarat.

## Are we Sindhi? Thari as a 'District Ethnicity'

The Thar's position as an in-between region has resulted in a strong sense of its own identity. Ahmed (1990), writing about the Hazara region of the then North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), argued that there was something of an evolving 'district ethnicity' which is "artificially created and fostered as a consequence of externally imposed administrative arrangements by a powerful central government" (1990:29). The point Ahmed was making about Hazara was the region was between the so called segmentary Pashtun society and the village-based agrarian system of the Punjab. Although this concept of a distinction between tribal and village Pakistan has come under criticism (Lyon 2004; Lindisfarne 2013), Ahmed has a point in arguing the 'betwixt and between" position of Hazara. A century of the area being defined by the British as an administrative unit, with the requirement to state the district on ownership records, births, deaths and so forth had created a sense of belonging. The liminal position of the Thar, and the improvement in communications with the rest of Sindh is, I

believe, creating another 'district ethnicity'. Like Hazara, Tharparkar's position rather confused early British administrators, with the debates discussed earlier in this chapter. It is worth mentioning, however, that the Thar made regular appearances in the poetry of the 17th Century Sindhi Sufi and poet Shah Abdul Latif (Levesque & Bui 2015). The point being that the district had connections not just with Sindh but with Kutch and Marwar as well, but it was the British decision to create Tharparkar as a separate district that established the set conditions similar to what Ahmed describes for Hazara. The British also took other steps, such as the district schools teaching in Gujarati till the 1960s, while petty officials were often posted from Guajarati speaking areas of the Bombay Presidency.

The sense of a distinct identity has been reinforced by the recent history of Partition and the wars of 1965 and 1971. The new connections with the rest of Sindh and Pakistan are reinforcing this sense of apartness, however. Thari migrants to Karachi increasingly find themselves in close contact with other Sindhis, and the multitude of ethnicities found in the capital of Sindh. I was talking to Rahman Bajeer, who now worked at the guesthouse I was stayed at in Mithi, and who explained the dilemmas faced by many Muslim Tharis. Rahman belonged to the marginal Bajeer community, whose traditional occupation involved working as servants for the Hindu Thakur caste. His experience of Karachi was alienating, he was often taunted by other Sindhis for his accent and was glad to be back in Mithi. Ahmed points to a similar sense of alienation in the formation of a Hazarawal identity, with Hazarawal migrants to Peshawar, the capital of the Frontier Province, being called Punjabis, while in Punjab they were referred to as Pathans. In Hazara, the Hindko language has been used to consolidate a sense of Hazarawal identity (Ahmar 2012). There is no common language in Tharparkar, although Sindhi now acts as a lingua franca. The most widespread language, however, is Dhatki, which is close to standard Rajasthani. Phullo Meghwal, a lecturer at Karachi University, who has just completed his PhD on Dhatki in 2017, was adamant that Dhatki was a distinct language, and not some

errant dialect of Sindhi. Furthermore, there is a Dhatki language movement, which has even been embraced by some Sindhi nationalist groups. As more and more Sindhis use the new Coal Road, it is likely that a Thari movement of some sorts will grow. Sindhis are increasingly getting jobs in sectors which seem closed to Tharis, like foreman in the mining project, in the police force and clerical level jobs in the local administration. In these interactions, it is the Sindhis who tend to be in the powerful position, which is already leading to alienation among educated Tharis. Chandrabhan, who was an accounts officer with an NGO, and an activist within the Dalit movement, was bitter about this, arguing these jobs should go to Tharis and not Sindhis. Nonetheless, he was cautious about a Thari identity, distinct from Sindh, arguing that there were many 'types' of Sindhis, using the English term. In Tharparkar, the 'frontier' location has given agency to the population to redefine their own identification with religion, region and nation.

## Transgressing the Boundary

Despite the aggressive stances taken by the Indian and Pakistan governments towards one another, there have simultaneously been what Purewal (2003) has called transgressive acts, such as maintaining kinship links. Even Raikes (1856), whose focus was on the natural 'antipathy' between Hindu and Muslim, conceded that the continuing intermarriage between groups with Rajput status, even those who had converted to Islam, showed that the boundary between Hindu and Muslim was less clear in the mid-19th Century. In the Thar, the term Rajput has been used to denote both Hindu and Muslim groups (Mukta 1994), and during Raikes's period these groups maintained close linkages, despite the conversion of several of the lineages to Islam. Indeed, Arbab Ghulam Rahim, who served as Chief Minister of Sindh from 2004-2007, was a product of such a mixed marriage, his mother being Sodha Rajput. He was said to be close to the Sodha community.

The current situation on the Sindh border with India is that any population movement is now heavily restricted, with no official border crossings, and the border is fenced in its entirety. Despite these restrictions, however, there are still those who transgress this boundary, often from communities that maintain linkages despite highly restrictive visa policies. Ibrahim (2012) refers to an example of a Meghwal man who successfully crossed over to Kutch from Tharparkar to visit his sister. Although arrested, he was subsequently released and allowed to apply for Indian citizenship. The narrative being that as a Hindu, he was entitled to Indian citizenship and his transgressions as such should be forgiven. This incident is extremely rare, however. The general term used on the Indian side for the illegal movements is infiltration, and the Indian media is full of stories of the vigilance of the border groups to prevent any cross-border movement (Simpson 2006). Mohammadbhai, whose village was located on the Coal Road, had told me almost in passing that his aunt's husband had come from Rapar. The Memon caste in the Islamkot area had traditions of migration from Rapar in Kutch, and marriages had continued right up to almost three decades ago. His uncle was among the last to have crossed the border in the mid-1970s, before the border had been fenced up. Now, however, despite repeated attempts to obtain an Indian visa, his uncle was unable to attend his parents' funerals. Another Memon NGO worker was much more explicit in his criticism about the effect of the closed border.

> Mustafa bhai, we had good links with Kutch, even as far as Rajkot. From Diplo, we used to trade in rice from Badin to Mandvi. After Keti silted, Mandvi became the main port. Our jamat and the Bhuj jamat were close, we intermarried. Our girls there, and their girls here. Marriage still happens, but sending a girl there means accepting that we might never see her. Anyways, our girls now prefer to marry boys in Karachi.

> Me: Do you think the breaking of links is a bad thing?

It's all *siasat*, what can we do. Arbab[20] promised easier visas, but nothing.

The Hindu Sodha Rajputs are one such community that have continued to practise clan exogamy, which forces them to find partners in India for their offspring. I had gone to meet Ram Singh, a retired *tappadar* to discuss the land acquisition regime, and the conversation drifted to the history of the coal mining area. Ram Singh said he was a proud Thakur, a member of the Rathore sub-caste, and taking out his family tree, he advised that the whole of the Singharo[21] area was once a Thakur jagir. We then dealt with the sensitive topic of the cross-border marriages, and Ram Singh gave an interesting argument.

> Ram Singh: You see this country was made on religion, is that correct?
>
> Me: Yes that is correct.
>
> Ram Singh: So our religion says we cannot marry within our *nukh*, like yours says you can't drink. Loyalty to your religion is important to us Pakistanis, that's what our constitution says. So what kind of Pakistanis would we be if we betrayed our religion?

Ram Singh used the word *wafadari*, not *hubul watni*, but both have a similar meaning. The supposed transgression of arranging marriages in India was inverted by saying that loyalty to faith is the essence of Pakistaniness, thus by keeping to their faith the Thakurs were behaving like good Pakistanis. Colonel Ahmed, the Rangers officer, made a similar point as to why he had maintained his links with the Thakur, after all both were Parmar Rajputs, a linkage here that seemed to be as important to him as his loyalty to the Pakistani state.

Purewal (2002:553) has argued that these border transgressions just alluded to challenge the "legitimacy of the border and the hyper-nationalistic rhetoric between the Indian and Pakistani

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[20] Arbab Ghulam, originally from the town of Diplo, was the chief minister of Sindh from 2004 to 2007
[21] The Union Council that covered much of Block II

states which bolsters it would also mean to uncritically understand the historical and politically engineered legacy of the border". Although in principle I agree that these transgressions do challenge the bounded nature of the border, I also argue that narratives used to justify them are couched in the discourse of 'loyalty', which thereby leaves the underlying ideology of Partition and the legitimacy of the border in place.

## Developing the Borderland: (Re)ordering the Frontier

Tharparkar has been perceived as drought prone, with a large semi-nomadic population, scoring low on every aspect of the human development index (Khalti 2015). Mehta (2001), looking at the neighbouring Kutch region of western India, argued how an image of dwindling rainfall and increasing drought served to legitimise the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam. The discourse of scarcity, drought and 'backwardness' is also now being used to legitimise the coal mining project in the Tharparkar. Places that are designated as isolated, traditional or fixed are nonetheless integral parts of the transnational processes, with those living in the 'out of the way' places actively reinterpreting categories of centre, insiders and outsiders (Tsing 1993). The modes of operation (Escobar 1995) of development intervention in Tharparkar have been articulated around the region as the zone of backwardness, or as a 'frontier', that now requires to be colonized through large scale infrastructural interventions (Cleary 1993)..

I was visiting a friend of my father, Dr Mahmood, who had briefly served as an economic advisor to the Sindh Chamber of Commerce. I had not gone to Dr Mahmood to discuss my project, rather it was a social visit to an old family friend. He had over two decades of experience advising commercial organisations on large infrastructure projects in Pakistan, and I had expected him to tell me about how profitable the Coal Project was going to be. Instead I got the following:

> Mustafa you see this project is the most expensive ever undertaken by the Sindh government. You have to understand, the border is really between Hindu and Muslim. We need to extend our border, right now it ends in Badin. Even if that means spending a lot.

Development for Dr Mahmood was clearly linked with a territorialisation processes. Territorialisation is shorthand for the reordering of space through a dynamic that dissolves existing social orders—property systems, political jurisdictions, rights and social contracts (Vandergeest and Peluso, 1995). On a global scale, we are experiencing new patterns of resource exploration, extraction and commodification, creating new territories, which take place within a dynamic of frontiers and territorialisation. Frontiers are now sites where an expanding capitalism absorbs peripheral regions (Cleary 1993). Geiger (2008), putting it more strongly, argues that frontiers are now converted into zones of resource extraction, which are zones of destruction of property systems, political structures, social relations and life-worlds to make way for new ways of resource extraction. Tharparkar has emerged as a frontier space where Pakistani governments, sometimes unwillingly, but often deliberately and selectively, have refrained from infrastructural interventions and now promote what Weizman's (2007: 5) calls "an unregulated process of violent dispossession", as land is acquired for the purposes of development.

## Conclusion

State borders tend to create anxieties for the central authorities about the loyalty of the borderlanders (Humphrey 2017). The peculiarity of state making in South Asia is that it involved explicitly establishing clearly-defined nation states. With Pakistan carved out as a Muslim homeland, the large Hindu presence in Tharparkar has fed into a cartographic anxiety. The constant state of tension and occasional periods of outright war in the Indo-Pakistani borderlands has meant that those borderlands have become heavily securitised These

conditions have made it difficult to sustain an outright movement of social protest against the large coal mining project, constrained by constant demands of loyalty. The argument that infrastructural interventions will very likely lead to some form of community-based activism against proposed construction projects (see Teo & Loosemore 2011) needs to be qualified. In addition to being a borderland, Tharparkar has been seen as a 'frontier space', a wilderness that needs to be colonised. The discursive, political and physical production of frontiers as 'vacant', 'ungoverned', 'natural' or 'uninhabited' spaces had allowed for acts of territorialisation. The inhabitants of these 'out of the way places' (Tsing 1993) can be sacrificed for the 'greater good' of the nation by acquiescing to a large infrastructure project. This is not to unique to Pakistan, and often these communities are unwilling to be sacrificed, as shown by other examples in South Asia (Baviskar 1995; Caron and Da Costa 2007; Pedel 2013), but the unique history of the India-Pakistan borderland has imposed the further burden of loyalty.

The Pakistani state demands a loyalty to a 'boundary', which in their eyes is sacrosanct. Minghi (1963: 407) argued that boundaries "are perhaps the most palpable political geographic phenomena", with states expending resources to surveil and control them. To 'control' their borders, they must restrict unchecked mobility, as the inability to do is seen as an example of state failure. State anxiety has led to the building of border walls, such as those that surround Melilla and Ceuta in Spain from their African hinterland (Ashby 2012). We should therefore not be surprised that the chant 'build the wall' is often related to anxieties in the United States about a 'declining' state, evidenced by the perceived inability to control the border. Borderlands can no longer remain liminal spaces (Turner 1969) the 'betwixt and between' two social roads, but sites of regulation..

The terms mobility and fluidity are rather overused in the description of the Thar region (see Ibrahim 2009; Kothiyal 2017) but, as I have argued, they do reflect a nomadic population with

different conceptions of loyalty, more to their kinship group or thikanadar, then a particular polity. Boundary making represents processes of social belonging, exclusion and authority formation, with the nation state and the local population all engaging in mapping the contested space to fit their own respective designs (Lund & Rachman 2018). By looking at the history of boundary making between Tharparkar and Kutch we can help in the explanation of the 'present-day situations' (Minghi 1963: 427). The concept of loyalty to the boundary for the borderlander is "an interactional relation (as distinct from being, say, a moral virtue, a personality trait, a specifically political allegiance, or a psychological stance)" (Humphrey 2017: 402). Loyalty for the Tharis always implies the possibility of alternatives, as we found with both Ram Singh and Colonel Ahmed, where there was honour in the idea of Rajputhood, whether by maintaining clan exogamy or loyalty to a 'friend', who was a fellow Rajput. This loyalty can be reformulated by the transgressive acts of maintaining kinship ties, or a sense of a shared origin myth. With the district now undergoing large scale government investment, with new possibilities of resource extraction and use prompting new and competing claims to authority, legitimacy and access, earlier notions of loyalty based around kinship or obedience to a feudal lord, or indeed a bandit chief, are being replaced by loyalty to the 'nation state'.

The focus on flows of a licit or illicit nature in borderland literature (Chen, 2000; Chen, 2005; Chen, 2009; Newman, 2006; Pempel, 2005) has involved an emphasis on the global at the expense of the local. The local experiences in the India-Pakistan borderland are deeply influenced by the wars fought in their region, which has meant that the region remains volatile, politically and economically. With the emergence of new types of resource commodification, earlier forms of institutional orders are being undermined or erased outright, and sometimes 'taken apart' and then reinterpreted, reinvented and recycled. Borderlands with fraught and complex local histories, such as the India-Pakistan border, can be used to open up a new

theoretical discussion in borderland studies, framed in the discourse of 'loyalty', thus shifting

the focus from the global to the local.

# Chapter 3. Building Infrastructural in the Borderlands: The Politics and Poetics of (non)road Making in Tharparkar

The literature on road making makes particular reference to the importance of roads in the territorialisation process (see Dalakoglou 2017; Rankin et all 2017), forming an important rationality of the road builder, as a priority mechanism for pursuing governmental goals—vis-à-vis their populations and territory. Indeed for some, road making is the form of modern statemaking (Dawson & Barwell 1993; deGrassi 2005). Virlio (2006) has gone as far as to define modern states as dromocratic societies, from *dromos* meaning road and *cratos* meaning power or state, where modernity and the road are conflated. However, the first black-top was not constructed until Tharparkar in 1987, connecting the district headquarters in Mithi with the city of Mirpurkhas. Tharparkar, for much of its history, has seen very little in the way of infrastructural investment (Khalti 2015; Siddiqi 2019). Several of my interlocutors from the NGO sector said that the area was too exposed to India for the state to undertake any road building. In the conversations I had about Tharparkar with local Tharis, NGOwallahs, and even family and friends, what seems to come up the most was the absence of roads in Tharparkar. Those of a Sindhi nationalist ilk would put the blame on the army, while conversely, those with sympathy to men in khaki put the blame on the Sindh government and its bureaucracy. Demenge (2011) has argued that road making is essentially a political act, and the rational of a government in borderlands may involve a decision not to build them, which he calls the "political economies of not making roads".

There were a number of narratives, somewhat contradictory, as to who was 'responsible' for building first black-top road, finally ending their absence in the district. I will focus on three such narratives, understanding that I am entering into the complex world of the oral historian.

The purpose of this chapter is not simply to collect the otherwise unwritten recollections of prominent individuals for the convenience of future researchers. But to look at these accounts as 'stories' of the road (Demenge 2011). Masquelier (2002) suggest that that these stories on the road and about the road are creative and poetical schemes through which people perceive and make sense of the complex global economy in their daily life in the age of widespread mobility, migration and transnationalism; all the elements involved in modern road construction. What I wish to ask is what are the lowest constituents of the story, and what these 'mythologies' of road making in Tharparkar tell us. Masquelier (2002: 834) suggests that stories or 'poetics' in communities where 'modern roads' have just made an appearance are about how the communities affected make sense of the complexity involved in the multiple processes of road construction. Myths, as Levi-Strauss (1976) recounts, are not mere stories, they are products of sophisticated and communally shared symbolic orders of meaning. In ethnographies of regions where roads have been absent, the presence of the new road can create a particular set of local 'myths' (White 1993; Giles-Vernick 1996, and in particular Masquelier 2002). I argue that many of the 'myths' around road making also need to be re-examined with regards to narratives round road building. The discourse around road building often revolves around the supposed economic benefits of the road (Ellis 1998; Bryceson et al. 2008). Infrastructure building in borderlands is never simply about economics, however, but clearly has a security paradigm; for example, from a military standpoint, roads and railroads are attractive because they facilitate mobility (Das 2012). For the state, the next question is, who benefits from this additional mobility? If the answer is a hostile neighbouring state, then keeping borderland infrastructure poor may perhaps be the better course of action to prevent its use by an invading army (Aleprete Jr. and Hoffman 2011). In this chapter, taking my cue from Claude Lévi-Strauss (1976), I will breakdown the myth of road making in Tharparkar into its constituent units by examining the stories around their construction.

During the course of my fieldwork[22], I was struck by the contradictory aspects of the road making history in Tharparkar. There were of course, some recurrent themes: the issue of the border with India, and the effects of the 1971 war, however there were also clear divergences in these accounts. In two of these accounts, claims were made for responsibility for the construction of the Mirpurkhas to Mithi road. Roads often have particular origin myths associated with their construction (Demenge 2011). Myths are, as Levy-Strauss (1976:172-173) put it, "related to given facts, but not a representation of them". The oral accounts around the building of the first road in the district, about 137 kilometres from the city of Mirpurkhas to Mithi, can be said to be based on a set of given facts based on the particular history of the region. There is also a gap in the written accounts of road building in Tharparkar, with some colonial sources, followed by a period of silence starting with Pakistan's independence, and then a number of documents produced by the World Bank or Asian Development Bank appearing in the early part of our century. Depending on oral accounts in an effort to produce an oral history can have methodological issues. I accept that oral history is a subjective methodology with a reliance on memory stories that are contingent and often fluid, in short arguing that oral sources must be judged differently from conventional documentary materials, but this in no way detracts from their veracity and utility (Abrams 2010). In interpreting oral history interviews, I take my cue from Abrams (2010: 1)

> Conducting an interview is a practical means of obtaining information about the past. But in the process of eliciting and analysing the material, one is confronted by the oral history interview as an event of communication which demands that we find ways of comprehending not just what is said, but also how it is said, why it is said and what it means.

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[22] Carried between September 2016 and July 2017

The purpose here is not to unpick the information to find some sort of 'truth', but to understand the what, how and why. When looking at the symbolic constitution of history at a local level, ethnographers are confronted with the way in which memories are constructed around political contests, not only for resources but also for interpretations of events (Roseman 1996). As Herzfeld argues, the focus on the contrast between "oral lore/book knowledge" and "official discourse/popular understandings" is not so simple, since, although each discourse uses "symbols, lexical forms, and even entire images from each other, . . . they deploy these realia to quite different ends" (1987: 133). The first two accounts of the Mithi to Mirpurkhas road construction are by individuals who are often both credited, sometimes in the same breath, as being responsible for the road. I have given both pseudonyms to protect their identities. The focus here will be on how these local events are interpreted in the context of the ethnic tensions and political cleavages that exist in Sindh.

The second part of this chapter will focus on the village I call Chakar Rind, and how the arrival of the newly-built link road has triggered the imaginations of the villagers. The notion of 'poetics' I explore in this chapter goes beyond the oral creativity of the storyteller to include collective non-verbal improvisations and performance (Dalakoglou 2017). Adler (1994: 3), looking at historic route making, argues that "all human mobility involves mutually defining contacts between social groups, accompanied by traffic in information and goods, and struggles for control of these processes". The construction of a new road brings with it new contacts and information that were not present before, as well as intruding into the existing lived spaces of the communities (Hayano 1990). News roads may "promote hope or hopelessness, expectation or fear, love or hate, stability or instability, mobility, loss, suspicion or subordination" (Dalakoglou: 13). .

Roads in Pakistan, as indeed in the global south, as Harvey and Knox (2015: 7) note "have meanings that go well beyond their physical functionality". Roads are the ultimate symbols of modernity, much beloved by military dictators, multinational CEOs and of course the international donor agencies. However, modern road construction techniques have an interesting history, having emerged in the military laboratory, perfected by soldiers and surveyors, as British state attempted to suppress a Jacobite rebellion in 18th Century Scotland (Guldi 2012: 27). The new methods of road construction spread from Scotland to the rest of Britain through the "'slow trickle of imitation and publication'" (2012: 41), with these now forming the standard followed by current civil engineers. Road building therefore have always been much more than simply about economics. To put it simply, road making is a complex process. By examining three such accounts about road building in the Thar, and in particular the experience of the new Coal Road by the villagers of Chakar Rind, I will explore what they also tell us about the state of ethnic relations in Sindh, tensions between civilians and the military and the increasing securitisation in Pakistan.

## The Political Economy of No Roads: The "Story" of Road Making in Post-Colonial Borderlands

For much of Tharparkar's existence the Pakistani state resisted road building, as did India in its borderland region of Ladakh (Demenge 2011). The Tharparkar district census reports of 1961 and 1981 simply and blandly repeat the fact that the district is devoid of roads. A similar situation existed on the Indian side of the border, where the single road built to the border areas of Kutch, the region of India on the opposite side of the border to Tharparkar, served the sole purpose of providing access to the border to Indian army units after the 1965 War (Simpson 2006). The particular history of the division of the South Asia as a consequence of Partition

has led to the border regions being particularly neglected with regards to infrastructure (Aggarwal 2004; Demenge 2011). Ispahani (1989) makes a very valid point, that those who make decisions on infrastructural development never separate the issue of national security from that of infrastructural development. Tharparkar, like other regions on the Indo-Pakistan border, like Ladakh (Aggarwal 2004; Demenge 2011) and Kutch (Ibrahim 2009; Athique 2010; Kothari 2013), found itself disconnected with regions with whom it had previously enjoyed economic and cultural links, even radically altering rules of commensality. In chapter 2, I have argued that this rupture was a long and contested process..

Road building in these borderland spaces often also revolves around questions of 'national security' (Das 2012). For decision makers, questions of mobility versus immobility affect whether to invest in infrastructure or not. For example, the elites in the newly unified Germany concluded that the best way to deal with threatening neighbours was to increase the density of the transportation network in the border area (Van Creveld 1977: 88). In Prussia, however, the predecessor of unified Germany, the optimal strategy for dealing with threatening neighbours was to restrict their opportunity for cross-border interactions by minimising the extent of the transportation network in the border area (Herrera 2004). Ispahani (1989) argues "that it is possible to evoke the political-geographical evolution of a region by an examination of routes of access" (1989: 2). The route, according to Ispahani has its polar opposite, the "anti-route", i.e. any natural or artificial constraint on access, where these constraints serve a political purpose, that of regulating access. The constraints of the 'anti-route' can be overcome for geo-political and strategic reasons, as Haines (2012) point's out when looking at building of the Karakorum highway (KKH) in Gilgit Baltistan, another borderland location, when both Pakistan and newly Communist China made a decision that the natural constraints of the mountainous terrain would not prevent the building of the road. Or coming back to Ispahani (1989: 6) "Where a periphery takes on strategic importance […] the infrastructure of access

begins to emerge". The absence of this 'strategic importance', however, can lead to disinterest. What the earlier literature on road making in a military context tells us is that the absence of a road did not necessarily hinder territorialisations (Van Creveld 1977; Herrara 2004). In chapter 2, I argue that increased surveillance and curbing cross-border trade was more important than improving communication within Tharparkar, or with the rest of the country. After all, if road making would assist any possible invaders, then it was better not to build any, until 'strategic interests' dictated otherwise.

The connection between road making and state making itself has an interesting history. Guldi (2012) has described how the modern state came to be the 'infrastructure state', by looking at Britain and the growth of road building that went hand-in-hand with the growth of state power. In the early 18th Century 'the state had no presence at all in the care of the roads' (2012: 3), but as the new British state faced unrest in Scotland, a large scale road building programme began between the mid-1720s and the mid-1740s, when the state began to police the Scottish clans who had being involved in the Jacobite rebellion more systematically. The need for surveillance at the peripheries of empire led to the building of 250 miles of new roads in Scotland between 1726 and 1737, and by the early 19th century, 900 miles of military roads had been built and were being maintained by the British state in Scotland – the first large-scale state road-building programme in Britain. Coming back to Ispahani (1989) when the natural or artificial constraints of the "anti-route" serve no purpose, the state begins to use roads as 'tools' of state making.

The ideas of late 19th Century military thinkers about limiting infrastructure (Van Creveld 1977; Herrara 2004) have been replaced by newer logics that road making is an important way of integrating margins (Joniak-Luthi 2016). Looking at the Chinese road building programme

in the western borderlands of Xinjiang, Joniak-Luthi argues that 'is in the process of a thorough spatial reorganization as new roads increase connectivity, as well as the circulation of some people, some goods, and some capital' (2016: 120). The purpose of road building in Xinjiang has a clear "territorial function: it organises space in a specific way, demarcates it, and contributes to the production of a particular type of spatial connectivity that focuses on administrative power centres" (Joniak-Luthi 2016: 120). In Xinjiang, roads have meant better connectivity with eastern China, but disruption to links with Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan, with whom the border region shares a long period of historic interactions. Road building was neglected by the Chinese government until the 1960s, because improved transportation networks would, it was feared, further facilitate the expansion of Soviet influence into Xinjiang (2016: 120). Like the Chinese in Xinjiang up to the 1960s, the Pakistani state had long neglected road building in Tharparkar (Khalti 2015). In Xinjiang, the recent road building has led to a change in the organisation of space, and notions of distance, and facilitates the creation of specific forms of spatial boundedness that focus on regional administrative centres and, more importantly, eastern China. Looking at the geopolitics of road making in Pakistan, Ispahani (1989) argues that an important purpose of roads is to provide the new state with access to the peripheries.

In Chapter 5 I will discuss how the spatial world of the Thari was changed when the first road was built in the district in 1987, connecting the district headquarters of Mithi with the city of Mirpurkhas. Unlike the roads studied by Harvey and Knox (2015:6) in Peru, roads in the Thar were not part of the 'social geography of the area'. They were something new and have certainly been seen by many as something positive, reducing the journey time by bus to Karachi, the political and economic capital of Sindh, to a mere eight hours. Bose (1997) argues that the post-colonial state is under certain expectations, one of which is the provision of infrastructure. I certainly encountered greater expectations of state largesse among many in the

Thari elite. Sometimes, the demand for roads can come from the most marginal of communities, as Schaflechner (2017) discovered in respect to the Makran Coastal Highway, built in the Baluchistan province of Pakistan, where support for the road came from the Hindu minority since it would provide access to a Hindu temple dedicated to the goddess Hinglaj. Conversations I had with middle class interlocutors, friends and family often saw a conflation between the conditions of the road network, and the political 'problems' that Pakistan was said to dealing with. Better roads are therefore were seen by many of them as important for the longed after economic improvements and political stability.

The lack of roads in Tharparkar was also a common theme in discussions I held in NGO land, whether in Karachi or the Thar. Whenever I mentioned roads, NGOwallahs would tell me that I should speak to Asif Hussain or Jamil Jamal . Their names seemed to be conflated with road building, yet when I did speak to both they gave very different accounts of how the road was built. Both their accounts focus on claims based on a social criteria that there was moral value to 'public works' and that it was the obligation of governments to attend to those on the margins.

## Asif Hussain: Roads and the Economic Imperative

Perhaps more than anyone, I was told by NGOwallahs, Thari of every shade, and even government officials, that if I wanted to understand the 'development' that occurred in the Thar, I should speak to Asif Hussain. I first met him at his house in an exclusive suburb of Karachi on an early Autumn day in 2016. He has made a career as a 'development consultant', and his work had started in Thar. His family, like many I found in the higher ranks of the civil society in Karachi are Muhajirs, refugees from India, Asif Sahib, as he was known as, had roots in the arid region of Haryana, in some ways resembling Tharparkar. The Muslim League party, the party that led the demand for a separate Muslim homeland was dominated by Muslims from

Northern India, and at independence in 1947, many migrated to Pakistan and came to form the elite of the new state (Low 1991, Talbot & Singh 2009). Asif Sahib came from such a family, his father was a retired civil servant, and Asif Sahib had studied overseas, returning to Pakistan to, as he put it, help the nation recover from the catastrophic defeat at the hands of India in 1971, which led to the secession of Bangladesh. It was 1975, and Asif Sahib had been part of a team that had been sent to reconstruct the district after the 1971 war. Pakistan had lost it during the fighting and had only just regained it after the signing of the Shimla Agreement in 1972.

> Me: So how bad was the damage?
>
> Asif Sahib: It was pretty bad. Chachro had been destroyed. The Indians had either taken what they could or destroyed it.
>
> Me: So what was your recommendation?
>
> Asif Sahib: Very rough. Although in Islamkot, we stayed in Nihal Chand's[23] place.
>
> Me: So how was the conditions of the roads?
>
> Asif Sahib: Roads were in a poor conditions, but of course, but they weren't interested then.
>
> Me: Who are they?
>
> Asif Sahib: Well the establishment[24].

The military had vetoed roads, something I had heard from Mohammad Khan, the NGO worker, and Tharis such as Ashok Pandit and Jani. Asif sahib thought that the security argument his military interlocutors were making that the construction of any roads would leave Tharparkar vulnerable to another Indian invasion, could be turned on its head, it would also

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[23] Nihal Chand was Town Council chairman of Islamkot during the 1971 War
[24] A term used to describe the military in Pakistan

make it difficult for Pakistani units to get to region in the situation of an Indian invasion. Indeed, this was precisely what had happened in 1971. He also had no doubt that road building was essential to the Thar, although in his defence, he was more sceptical of a number of other road schemes outside the Thar; his favourite story being his standing up to the military strongman Musharaf over the construction of the Lyari Express. Asif Sahib's unreconstructed modernism came from a period of Rostovian optimism concerning roads starting just after the end of the Second World War in 1945. As DeGrassi puts it "the idea that more roads mean more development" is part of conventional wisdom and is so deeply entrenched in the development discourse and practice that it is often taken for granted (2005: 52). There is of course no official documentation that I could have access to referring to the military moratorium on building roads, however the fact that there were no roads in the district does lend credence to the existence of some sort of ban. Haines (2012) has argued divisions within Pakistan are compounded by foreign interests, in particular relations with India. India has provided fuel to the military establishment to justify its dominant role place in Pakistani politics, society and economy. The Pakistan army was not something that would deter Asif Sahib, however, and when he returned to the Thar in 1987, in his role now as UNICEF assessor, after a particularly bad drought, the document that he was involved in producing devoted ten pages on the topic of road building. For Asif Sahib, road building would immediately reduce the likelihood of drought, as there would be easy access to the market. He writes approvingly of the newly built Mithi to Mirpurkhas road, and how the bazaar had expanded. As the report identified, the Thari were struggling to sell their livestock in the Indus Valley, the agricultural heart of the Sindh province. His request was overruled, and the military did not allow the construction of any more roads. The trouble, as Asif Sahib admitted, was that almost all the trade of Tharparkar was with territory that was now in the Indian Union, as the Hughes author of the 1877 Gazetteer of Sind makes clear:

> The exports from the Thar and Parkar district consist principally of grain, wool, ghi, camels, horned cattle, hides, fish, salt, chiniha, a type of reed from which pankhas are made. The grain, chiefly rice and wheat, oil seeds, cattle, goats and sheep are sent to Gujrat, Pahlanpur and Jodhpur; hides and wool to Hyderabad and ghi to Kacch and Gujrat (p860).

That trade had pretty much evaporated as both India and Pakistan took steps to police the frontier. Smuggling carried on but was getting more and more difficult as India and Pakistan both used violence to patrol their mutual border. In chapter 2, I have shown how the supposed threat of smuggling was used as a justification to introduce intrusive border controls. For both its supporters and opponents, the road in Tharparkar had become symbol of Pakistani state presence. A 1987 document produced by the team that included Asif Sahib argues:[25]

> One of the major problems facing the health and education departments and banks is the non-availability of manpower. This is because doctors, teachers etc. are not willing to work in inaccessible areas. The roads will open up the taluka headquarters to normal transport and to a great extent this problem will be overcome. Functioning of government departments will generally improve as better supervision and greater mobility will be made possible (p58).

The document reinforces what Asif Sahib had been arguing, that the veto on road building had to be undone. The lack of a road meant an 'absence of government', something that might make the military relent. The economic rationale articulated by Asif Sahib and the document about rural roads was reflective of changes within the wider 'development nexus'. The 1970s saw an important change in priorities in terms of transport and development. With the shift towards agriculture, rural development and basic needs that started under Robert McNamara[26], the American president of the World Bank from the late 1960s, a lot of development financing was transferred from primary infrastructure projects to rural transport (Dawson & Barwell 1993; Edmonds 1998; Ellis & Biggs 2001). Also, studies by development economists in the 1970s

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[25] Comprehensive Assessment of Drought And Famine In Sindh Arid Zones leading to a realistic short and long term emergency Intervention Plan 1987
[26] He was President of the Bank between April 1, 1968 and July 1, 1981

and early 1980s noted that rural areas had been neglected, that the majority of villages fell outside the map of road transport, and that the poor were making infrequent use of public transport. Development interventions and roads were now built to target the rural poor and possibly to generate agricultural growth, following the 'producer-surplus' approach (Dawson & Barwell 1993: 7). The World Bank produced a report entitled Rural Access and Mobility in Pakistan: A Policy Note:[27]

> Rural areas in Pakistan are home to 100 million people or two thirds of the total population; they are also home to more than three quarters of the poor or 42 million people living below the poverty line. One in every five villages, where 15 percent of the population live, is still not accessible by all-weather motorable roads. Combined by a lack of transport services in three of every ten villages, a large proportion of rural Pakistan lacks motorized access to markets, basic services, as well as physical, social and political opportunities. Poor people and poor communities in rural Pakistan are least likely to have access to transport infrastructure and services. At the same time, low accessibility to roads and transport services are associated with lower human development outcomes. For instance, the data suggest that girls' net primary school enrolment rate is 50 percent higher in communities with all-weather access.

The language of the policy paper is clear, the absence of roads meant no access to markets and the failure of any poverty alleviation scheme. The connection between roads and poverty reduction found among its staunchest supporters the economists. Van De Walle (2007: 2) argued that:

> The literature on rural roads and economic development has emphasized impacts on transport costs and prices, and the consequent welfare impacts. For example, rural roads may allow farmers in remote (and often poor) rural areas to get higher prices for their output, and/or reduce the prices they face for inputs and consumer goods. Initial conditions in remote poor areas are often characterized by highly geographically incomplete and non-existent markets.

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[27] http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/455561468067733530/Rural-access-and-mobility-in-Pakistan-a-policy-note (accessed 1 June 2020)

In another article, Van De Walle (2002) makes similar arguments, that rural roads are essential for economic development. Wilson (2005: 526), however, cautions that when looking at rural road building it is important "to discuss the considerations that lie behind it and ask whether greater accessibility can always be assumed to bring lower transaction costs, greater prosperity and an easier, more secure, way of life for rural people". Indeed, despite the discourse that road building has much-vaunted economic benefits, there have always been critics. Basing his findings on his field work in Africa, deGrasse (2005) suggests that transport development that attempted to increase agricultural growth in order to reduce poverty might have had very contradictory effects: "rising productivity may not raise rural wages if new roads increase labour supplies" and "increased food production may not lower prices for poor consumers if improved transport increases food exports; and increased income might not result in job creation if it is spent on imported commodities (2005: 53). While studies on Pakistan are few, a recent study of the effect of road construction in the Basho Valley in the Baltistan region of Pakistan indicated that the forest of Basho has been reduced by at least 50% after the valley was opened up through the construction of a link road in 1968 (Ali et al. 2005). Large-scale legal and illegal commercial harvesting was carried out after the construction of the road, with the government itself being involved in both legal and illegal commercial harvesting of timber. Nonetheless, this trope that the road will make us rich is certainly now the 'common sense', filtering through to communities that are sites of these developmental interventions, even if, as the example for Baltistan shows, the beneficiaries of rural roads may just be the local elites.

As the World Bank took this 'rural roads turn', money became accessible to countries such as Pakistan. OP, chief civil engineer for Tharparkar district in 2016 and, rarely for this high position, a Hindu, was clear:

> OP: I spent time in the Indus Valley. The funds were there. We were making roads everywhere, Dadu, Larkana, everywhere.

Me: Why not build here?

OP: Well, I think, Mustafa sahib, you know, (aab ko pata hai) why not here?

As OP makes clear, rural roads were being built in other regions, and the World Bank was keen on funding them, yet no road was built in Tharparkar. I asked Asif Sahib why the military relented, and he referred to Mohammad Khan Junejo, the Prime Minister at the time of his 1987 fact finding mission, who finally overcame the objection. Junejo had been appointed as Prime Minister by the military ruler General Zia, and was seen as a somewhat peripheral figure in Pakistani politics (Burki 1998; Talbot 2015). Asif Sahib had a meeting with the Prime Minister, after his UNICEF report, around 1986, where he was clear that roads were essential, and the World Bank, still very much under the shadow of McNamara, had the funds for rural roads, yet no further road construction occured. Junejo will occur in all three accounts of the roadand is no doubt the central character in our story.

## The Political Economy of No Roads: Jamil Jamal and the Language of Patriotism

Jamil Jamal, like Asif Sahib, is from Karachi, another Muhajir, this time from far off Chennai, who set up the first 'indigenous' NGO in Tharparkar. In 1972 Jamal had established an advertising agency, which benefited greatly when the military took over in 1977 and liberalised the markets. Jamil told me his first visit to the Thar was in the late seventies, and he was shocked by the poverty, one of the reasons for which he believed was the lack of roads. He also told me, however, how impressed he was with the resilience of the Thari. Jamal was involved in the production of a film Ramchand Pakistani, a fictionalised account of a Dalit boy from Tharparkar who inadvertently crosses the border between Pakistan and India. Although the film remains very much within the classic Pakistani narrative of a hostile Indian state imprisoning a young boy, the helplessness of the boy's mother with regards to the Pakistani state perhaps tell us that Jamal is not entirely uncritical of the Pakistani state. In our meeting,

Jamal was always very careful in sticking to the party line with regards to the hostility of India. He was also very proud of the fact that in his account the first road in the district was built on his initiative.

> Me: So why was there no road in the district?
>
> Jamal: Well, the military were opposed to it. I was a Senator, and Junejo was the Prime Minister. You see he was from Sanghar, so he knew the concerns of the Thar.
>
> Me: So you convinced Junejo, and the road was built?
>
> Jamal: No it wasn't that easy. I went straight to Zia. I convinced him and the road was built. I said they will just get stuff smuggled from India. With the road, they will get access to markets.

Jamal was and is close to the military, something he freely admits, so it is possible that, unlike Asif Sahib, he was successful in getting the first road built. But his argument centred surprisingly on a rights based discourse, the people of Tharparkar 'deserved' a road. It is interesting that Jamal went straight to General Zia, the military ruler, bypassing the office of the Prime Minister. Both Asif Sahib and Jamal make a case for the road, but Jamal was clear in his view that it was simply not about economics, there was also a moral case for a road to be built. According to him, his NGO was also driven by the same ideas, that Tharis, as citizens of Pakistan, deserved better services then they were getting. Harvey and Knox (2015) found similar discourses in Peru, where road building in regions with little infrastructure meant that the state was embracing its responsibility 'to the public good'. I am not sure how much of what Jamal told me was influenced by his over three decades of involvement in the NGO sector, which is replete with a certain 'lexicon of development', with terms such as 'rights-based approaches' and 'poverty eradication', however hollow their meaning, is now regularly used in NGO publications (Cornwall 2007). However, the different approach to 'development' between Jamal and Hussain also reflects the death of Rostovian modernism and the rise neoliberal economics which began in the 1970s and essentially abolished the "mixed

economies" of the three postwar decades, resulting a greater focus on the role of markets, including international markets, in political-economic governance (Alvarez et al. 1998: 22)). Neoliberalism argues that privatization and decentralization will result in a less corrupt and less bloated government, one less dependent on clientalist relations to get things done. NGOS, it is held are better placed to take up the slack resulting from decreases in social services (see Escobar 1995).

## The Subaltern Account: Shabanbhai and Sindhi Technical Prowess

While those in the drawing rooms of south Karachi, cooled by the breeze of the Arabian Sea, were convinced that road building, or indeed lack of road building was all about machinations in Islamabad, and maybe even New Delhi, I heard a different story involving Sindhi intelligence and persistence in Mithi. The central figures in this story are all Sindhi, and I will argue that their absence in the previous accounts is just as revealing as the central role that they play in this account. Sindhis have both been distrusted and marginalised by the Pakistani state (Talbot & Singh 2009: 127)

In addition, the province saw an influx of Muslim refugees (Muhajirs) from northern India, and a migration of wealthy upper caste Hindus to India, creating a fractious and competitive relationship between Sindhis and the Muhajirs (Zamindar 2007). Taking my cue from Bates (2007: 5), subaltern should not simply connote "the poor and wretched but all those placed in relationship of subordination and domination", which many Sindhis find themselves in. I focus on the account given by Shabanbhai in Mithi, which had a completely different narrative as to why the road had not been built.

Shabanbhai had worked in the Revenue Department for over forty years, and, I was told, is a generally the person to go to with matters historic. Shaban was born in a village just north of

the Rann of Kutch near the town of Diplo. Shabanbhai is rare, he did his Master's in Political Science from Sindh University, when most Samma pastoralists, the community he belonged to, had remained largely illiterate. He was in Hyderabad when the 1971 war broke out, which saw the occupation of his village and, he told me, he immediately left for the Thar. Over four thousand square kilometres were in Indian occupation, and Shabanbhai organised relief in those areas still in Pakistani control. With peace returning in 1972 with the signing of the Shimla Accord, Shabanbhai's activity came to the attention of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the then Prime Minister. Bhutto was looking for a Thari to head the Relief Department, and appointed Shabhanbhai. This was despite the fact that his particular sub-caste of Samma's was aligned with the Arbab family, traditional opponents of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party. Shabanbhai was a passionate Bhutto supporter, and critical of his family's support of the Arbabs, but this support did not extend to the People's Party itself. In 1974, he was asked to work with Asif Hussain's team that had come to re-build the district after the devastation of the war. When we began to speak about the roads, or the lack of them, Shabanbhai, no fan of the military, had a completely different story. The road had not been vetoed by the military, there was no road in the Thar because it was technologically impossible to build them there. In the early 1980s, the military strongman General Zia wanted a road built and asked his Punjabi engineers to build it, and they were unsuccessful. Shabanbhai instead highlighted a Sindhi engineer, indeed from Sanghar, a district that occupied the northern portion of the Pakistani Thar. Ghulam Ahmed Junejo[28], the engineer, had been experimenting with materials and had built a short section of road in the Thar. As in our other accounts, the name Mohammed Khan Junejo comes up. Junejo was also from the Sanghar region, like the engineer Ghulam Ahmed. Junejo heard about Ghulam Ahmed and summoned him to Islamabad. In their meeting Ghulam Ahmed said he

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[28] Ghulam Ahmed has sadly passed away

could build the Mirpurkhas to Mithi road. Junejo then had to convince General Zia that what his Punjabi engineers had failed to achieve Ghulam Ahmed could do. According to Shabanbhai, General Zia wanted this road built and relented, allowing Ghulam Ahmed to build it. This was a story I had also heard from one or two others in Mithi, but in Karachi no one took it seriously, after all, for many Muhajirs, Sindhis simply lacked the skills. Ring (2006: 11) describes something similar in her ethnography of a Karachi apartment block, describing how many Muhajirs thought of "Sindhis as rural, backward, a relic, out of place in the city". Ring (2006: 121) describes how many of her Muhajir informants felt towards Sindhis:

> The fact that the epithet *jahil* is often used with *ganwar* – giving the meaning "ignorant villager"- is indicative of the symbolic convergence of national categories with spatial and ethnic coordinates. Muhajirs – who are only ever urban – are cast as sharif: modern, rational, temperate citizens. Pathans, Sindhis, Baluch and even the power wielding majority, Punjabis, cannot escape their association with all things rural, provincial, tribal and feudal; they are considered jahil ganwars: ignorant, irrational, and intemperate.

Sadly, I often heard similar views from family and friends in Karachi about Sindhis. Haines (2013) makes reference to how dam building projects undertaken in Sindh, just after independence in 1947, were seen to showcase the technical and scientific expertise of Sindhi engineers, not just to very sceptical and recently departed British, who were still involved in the construction, but also to a central government wary of Sindhi capabilities. In the same way, perhaps, when speaking to me, Shabanbhai would be aware he was speaking to a Muhajir, albeit a diasporic, and he never overtly criticised them, but he was keen to emphasise the Sindhi involvement in the construction.

Guha (1982) came up with the concept of 'subalternity', taking ideas from the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci, following which, subaltern classes are deemed to have limited means of representation. The subaltern narratives in Mithi focused on overturning established tropes in

Pakistan, that Sindhi Muslims are 'lazy'. As Chattopadhyay and Sarkar (2005:357) argue, subalterns do not inhabit an 'autonomous' domain.

> The subaltern has come to be seen as inextricably linked to elite discourse, even in resistance, allowing for the possibility of seeing subalternity both as radically relational, and scrupulously singular, not easily flattened into class identity.

Tellingly, this story was not heard much from Thari Hindus, with Ashok Pundit giving me a wry smile, as many of them shared the opinion of Sindhi Muslim inefficiency although never incompetence, held by many Punjabis and Muhajirs. For Thari Hindus, their further marginalisation in Sindh as members of a very vulnerable Hindu minority would also make them more cautious in taking sides in this intra-Muslim.

Roads can have symbolic meaning, as Shabanbhai's account shows, which gives agency to the Sindhi Muslims in their building in Tharparkar. As Roseman (1996:838) puts it, "that who may acquiesce and thus partially accommodate themselves to the terms set by state bureaucracies, landowners, and other powerful individuals and institutions regard the interpretation of such (apparent) acquiescence as fair game for debate". It is interesting that Mohammad Khan Junejo plays an important role in two of these accounts. Junejo was seen as a lame duck prime minister (Burki 1998), yet he plays an important role in the story of the construction of the road. For my Sindhi Muslim informants, he is no longer the 'lame duck' prime minister dependent on General Zia, but a man keen to help out fellow Tharis.

**The Discourse of Incompetent Politician**

I met Colonel Ahmed in Rawalpindi having been introduced by a friend who had also completed her PhD on Tharparkar. Colonel Ahmed came from the small town of Gujarkhan, located just south of the capital Islamabad, a town whose people had been declared as 'martial' by the British colonial power to help provide them with the cannon fodder needed for their

colonial armies, and many Gujarkhani still served in military. Colonel Ahmed came from a military family and had served in the Pakistan Rangers, the paramilitary force that guards the Pakistani border, and was now a lecturer at the National Defence University in Islamabad. When I raised the question of the lack of roads and a military veto, he raised his eyebrows and then smiled.

> Me: Why did it take so long to build the road?
>
> Colonel Ahmed: Actually tanks can now go over dunes now, the Indians have them. So actually the Mithi road made our lives easier. We would have had more roads in the 1990s, but you know both Benazir and Nawaz Sharif had only one purpose, to loot the state.
>
> M: So did the military veto road making?
>
> Colonel Ahmed: Well what sort of network did Sindh have in 47. Not much. So you can't say we stopped them making roads.

This might certainly be the case, and there may be indeed be economic reasons for the late construction of roads in Tharparkar. There is an economic rationale that building roads in sparsely populated regions is not cost effective (Glover & Simon 1975). However, the building of the Karakorum Highway that connects Pakistan to China over high mountain passes was seen as a project of national importance, despite what at the time of its constructions was seen as its limited economic benefits (Haines 2011). Or as Ispahani (1989) had put it, one can understand the political-geographical evolution of a region through an examination of routes of access. For Tharparkar, as military technology improved, the need to obstruct the road became less of an issue, as the Colonel put, Indian tanks could now go over sand dunes.

The Rangers officer also followed a standard trope in Pakistan, that civilian politicians are corrupt. The Pakistan army has repeatedly taken power, ruling the country for almost half of its current seven decades of independence. These interventions are ostensibly to protect the nation from the exploitative landlord, the greedy merchant, the demagogic politician, and the

corrupt civilian bureaucrats (Cohen 2002). The point I wish to make is that the for close to four decades, it seems that the military had prevented road building, despite the changes in international development regimes, which positively encouraged rural roads. The lack of roads also encouraged smuggling, which then had the ironic result of the region being seen as 'suspect'. John Buclerk, who was involved with the first large scale NGO in Tharparkar, the Save the Children project, which started in 1993 as a result of the report which Asif Sahib had helped write, noted to me that smuggling was endemic:

> Me: So was smuggling common?
>
> John: Yes, we had stationary made in India. We obviously didn't tell Karachi, but it was easier and quicker to go get these things from the bazaar.
>
> Me: So the bazar had lots of Indian products?
>
> John: Oh yes, the Indians had not fenced the border.

The difficulty of getting goods from Karachi, and the ease of getting them over the border was giving an opening to the smugglers. Colonel Ahmed was also of this view:

> I was always telling them that best way to deal with smuggling was to get the roads built. They understand that now, but it took some time. Yes, I will agree with you, it was their right to have a road, after all they have roads in other parts.

The technological changes and a growing discourse that infrastructure developments expand state presences across spaces where central governance has long been absent, also coincided with a period where funds were available from international donors, leading to the construction of the Mithi to Mirpurkhas road. The 1980s was also the moment when the relations between India and Pakistan became more conflictive, allowing for Tharis to make claims of citizenship based on provisions of better infrastructure.

**The Arrival of the Road and Change in Chakar Rind**

The village of Chakar Rind lies a mere six kilometres from the Mithi, yet prior to the building of the Coal Road, it took almost ten hours to get to Mithi. The building of the Coal Road is opening new opportunities and ending its 'isolation'. Ontologically, I do not take remoteness as a given, but will explore how the discourse of isolation was created through the NGO narratives that percolated among the villagers. As Dalakoglou (2017:13) argues, "the meaning of the road as a product is open to those who use it, experience its existence, are simply aware of it existence or even just expect it or its rhythmic flows". With the building of the Mithi to Mirpurkhas road in 1987, the villagers became acutely 'aware' of the road as an idea. The arrival of the road in villages where they have been historically absent has been called the most 'salient' event (Roseman 1996) or a confirmation of citizenship (Wilson 2004).

When I met the *patel* of Chakar Rind, now is his sixties, the first thing he told me that the lack of the road became a growing discussion point, and this period coincided with the arrival of the NGOs in the mid-1990s. Literature on rural roads describes how they are seen as providing access and during this period of 'participatory development' roads come across 'as one of the most frequently cited desirable items on village wish lists (Ellis 1998). For improved rural roads reduce the costs of all types of spatial transaction, including labour, output, and input and consumer markets' (1998: 27). Earlier I explored how Asif Hussain had made a plea for roads to be built in the Thar giving the same rationalle. At the NGO where I was based, its founder was even more explicit, telling me that without roads the Thar will die. In rural northern Spain Roseman (1996) found that the arrival of the road was portrayed as a crucial turning point by villagers who accepted the existence or lack of a paved road as a significant indicator of a community's degree of social and economic 'progress'. In often repressive regions in the South, the demand for a road can be the only political expression permitted (Wilson 2004). Ellis's point must be qualified, i.e. were the increasing demands for a road a product of NGO activity and their hegemonic discourses, and the only form of claims making available to villagers when

dealing with a repressive regime, or are villagers such as those of Chakar Rind really exercising their agency by demanding the road?

The absence of black-top roads did not mean Tharparkar was not a site of trade and communication. OP, the civil engineer told me that the paths and tracks were well maintained until the 1971 war. The Gazetteer of the Sind (Hughes 1876: 861) noted, however:

> The roads in the Thar and Parkar district are numerous, but traveling in the desert in the Thar or desert portion, is very tedious and difficult, owing to the numerous sand-hills which have constantly to be crossed.

These 'tedious and difficult' roads which were really tracks, did allow for extensive trade between the hinterlands of Rajasthan and Gujarat and the ports of Sindh, however (Kothiyal 2017). The Indian Route Book published in 1921 for motorists lists the track that ran between Mithi and Islamkot as part of the Karachi Ahmedabad route 13. Many of the village communities were also connected through pilgrimage sites, marriage circles and trade. Hari, a Hindu Meghwal from the village regularly went to the annual Ramdev fair held in the town of Tando Allahyar, even before the road to Mithi had been built. Similarly, Hari told me that Meghwal marriage circles hugged the route that ran from Mithi to Rapar in what is now the Indian state of Gujarat, although I could never verify this. Even the village founder of Chakar Rind is said to have followed the old road from Hyderabad, settling near a well after a hard-fought fight with the local Thakurs. The road also brought the lineage of the *patel*, members of the Sayed caste, this time from Palanpur, at the invitation of the Rinds. Demenge (2011) has called these journeys a "real culture of mobility", connected with an intimate knowledge of the place in which people lived and moved. Hyslop (1984) has shown how an extensive road system maintained by the ancient Inka of Peru, without the presence of the wheel, had provided a means of communication for the Inka Empire to administer its far-flung peripheries. The paths that traversed the Thar were equally extensive, allowing for comodities to moved from

Northern India to the port of Karachi (Kothiyal 2017). Roads create 'landscapes of movement' as Snead, Erickson and Darling note that they "move things, including people, livestock, and material goods. Such movement can reflect tribute, trade and other elements that make political systems work" (Snead, Erickson & Darling 2009: 13). This 'landscapes of movement' was severely disrupted in Tharparkar as the result of Partition and 1971 War.

In Demenge's (2011) field site in Ladakh, Partition and the Communist takeover of Tibet, had ended the region's position as a crossroads of trans-Himalayan and trans-Karakoram trade, between India, Tibet, Central Asia and Afghanistan. Demenge found that many Ladakhis felt that the importance of breaking their isolation by building new roads. Among the villagers of Chakar Rind, many still remembered that 'landscape of movement', but this often qualified by the period just prior to the Coal Road being built, when journeys were difficult, and how the arrival of the road made life easier. The earlier connections with pasturage and pilgrimage sites in India had been disrupted by the 1970s, which coincided with an overarching neo-liberal territorialising regime which imposed greater pressure on Tharis to secure greater connectivity and accessibility with metropoles such as Karachi.

Gul, a local journalist who was usually found in Mithi Press Club, was from Chakar Rind, and had invited me to visit the village. The village had been connected to the Coal Road by a short stretch of connecting road, which six years after it was built, already had bits that had been washed away. Chakar Rind was the second village as one travelled on the Coal Road from Mithi towards Islamkot, the first village was multi-caste Hindu, but my attempts to arrange a visit there had failed. Ashok Pundit, whose assistance I had sought, simply said that the Thakurs are *parda nasheen*, literally those who keep their women secluded, and would not want me to visit the village. I suspected that it might have to do with a level of suspicion I was experiencing with caste Hindus, as many of the Muslims in Chakar Rind also practised parda. It was during

these discussions, that Gul had stepped in and offered that I should come to his village. According to the patel, the village had a population of about 6,000. The results of the 2017 Census of Pakistan have not been released at village level at the time of writing, so I have no way to confirming this. Once again, depending who one listened too, sixty to seventy percent of the population were Muslim. It certainly had a large mosque, where Muslims from other villages, which were all caste Hindu dominated, came to perform Friday prayers. Chakar Rind lay on the historic road that ran between Umarkot, then district headquarters, and Nagar Parkar, with the route bifurcating there, one going to Rapar and the other to Palanpur, both in modern Gujarat (Hughes 1877). The patel certainly remembered the GMC trucks using the path, but also remembered the expanding and contracting dunes making journeys difficult. But walking to the nearest truck stop itself was fairly long and arduous. Agricultural produce, largely sorghum, was often consumed locally, or was stored as fodder. It will be difficult to refer to a single village community, and I am also cautious of using terms such as 'community', as they often work to reduce and deny social differences within a particular group. French (2009: 105) argues that words such as 'community' are often used to "paper over the fractures, feuds, and cleavages that are always present, constituting and reconstituting, that makes the community a dynamic, processual space and place". Chakar Rind was indeed a site both of fractures and attempts to paper over them. The condition of the village road that connected the village to the Coal Road often exposed these fractures both in the road and within the 'village community'. Importantly, Chakar Rind was not part of the coalfield, where the extraction of coal and the building of the Coal Road were often conflated. The village got its name from a Baloch adventurer who was said to have come to the Thar from Hyderabad during the period of the Talpur conquest of the region in the 18th Century. The Rind Baloch no longer had the headmanship, however, which had passed to a family of Sayeds, originally from Palanpur in

Gujarat. For Gul, though, this was through an act of treachery, and the Rind were still the 'real' leaders of the village.

Gul was the first person in his family to get a degree and was active on social media. Like most local journalists, he was never paid on time, and told me his father wanted him to get a proper job, preferably with the *sarkar*, a government job, with the security that entailed. Gul remembered the difficulties involved in travelling to Mithi before the road had been built. While attending school in Mithi, he would only go back to his village at weekends. Transport was dependent on discarded ex-Pakistan army GMC trucks, which meant sitting in the back of the truck exposed to the elements. Journeys were long and arduous, and certainly not for the faint hearted. The building of the Coal Road, however, and the road connecting the village to the Coal Road, has now meant there is a direct connection to Mithi. Chakar Rind was now a stop on the airconditioned buses that ran from Islamkot to Hyderabad. In addition, *Qinqis*, motorcycles that have been modified to carry six people by adding a canopy, run almost hourly between the village and Mithi. The availability of these new forms of transport were making journeys easier, and I was told that over a hundred people commuted between Chakar and Mithi. Kashmir Chawk, a large road junction located in the centre of Mithi was full of Qinqis at around five each afternoon taking day labourers, but also students, back to villages that had been connected to the Coal Road. It now took just about half an hour to get to Chakar. Qinqis also ran late, so Mithi was now accessible for social trips in the evening as well. Many villagers had also bought Chinese motorcycles, but at the time of my leaving the field in 2017, no one owned a car. Dalakoglou (2017) has referred to how, in the West, road making was directly connected with the increasing use of transport and communications technologies, and in particular with the widespread use vehicles, largely cars. But Dalakoglou (2017:9) admits that this 'critical approach' of the modern post-war highway was ethnocentric. Historically, in non-

capitalist or non-Western contexts, the mass construction of roads is not necessarily accompanied by the widespread introduction of automobility.

The *patel* had told me that they had been waiting for the road for a long time, and the building of the connecting road had answered their prayers. He had two sons, both of whom were now working at the Islamkot airport construction site, located about thirty kilometres away, with the contractor having them picked up in the morning and dropped off in the evening. Nonetheless, they remained involved in helping him with managing his herd, something that would have been lost if they had been forced to move to Karachi for employment. Gul himself regularly visited his village now, almost on a daily basis; while, Hari, who worked for an NGO was a daily commuter. Mohammedbhai, whose village was located further up the Coal Road nearer to Islamkot, said travelling before had been like a sickness, but now he liked nothing better than driving his motorbike on the new road. The narrative seemed to be that the road had ended their isolation. Porter (2002), in a study of off-road villages in sub-Saharan Africa, emphasises the human costs of isolation and difficulties faced by women and men who live 'in a walking world', unable to access services available at rural centres or make their voices heard in local politics. But Demenge (2011: 93) argues that "the concept of isolation defines a state of separation between persons or groups and carries ideas of immobility, backwardness, encapsulation, and autarky. Yet isolation and its corollary – autonomy – are also relative and subjective concepts" (Demenge: 93). 'Roads' has existed previously, as referenced by the 1877 Gazetteer, but journeys had been "tedious and difficult". Howevver, for many Chakar villagers, they had experienced different types of 'landscapes of movement', such as pilgrimages made by many Muslims and Meghwals, migration to the Indus valley by many Bhils looking for seasonal work, and a marriage system that encouraged village exogamy along the path of the historic roads.

The arrival of the NGOs in Chakar Rind began in the late 1980s. The village was after all easier to reach as it was not too far from Mithi, one could get there in a jeep in a couple of hours. Like the World Bank, NGOs have increasingly seen roads as essential to development (Ellis 1998). The modernist discourse of 'development' has been seen as a form of 'governmentality' (Fergusson 1990; Escobar 1995) adopting from Foucault's concept (1976, 2003), with development intervention articulated as being organised along a set of 'knowledge structures'. As Gidwani (2002) noted, however, looking at a century of canal expansion in Gujarat, the "outcome of development should be interpreted as counter-work: the syncretic product of interactions between dominant actors and those in the positions of subalternity" (2002: 5). I also agree with Gidwani that Escobar and others come close to referring to poverty, hunger and malnourishment as signifiers with no transcultural properties, with no moorings in material reality. The 'counter-culture' of road building includes the hegemonic discourses of nation-building but can also be seen to be inclusive, where local communities' aspirations of better educational and employment opportunities are connected with road construction. Gul, Hari and the patel all had competing ideologies which revised, reimagined or rejected aspects of the development ideology (Gidwani 2002). For example, Gul as a journalist, was well aware of the opportunities for corruption that came with road building. Nonetheless, he was convinced, like Porter (2002), that the 'walking world' reduced opportunities for the villagers, including his own earlier experiences of journeying to Mithi. The patel was conscious of the fact that his sons were using the feeder road to work at the airport construction site, which also meant that they would remain involved in the raising of cattle. Despite the ease of communications, Gul still preferred to live in Mithi for the sake of his personal freedom, but like many of his fellow villagers, he had bought a Chinese motorbike. Chakar Rind and Mithi were no longer separate 'spaces'.

**The Paradox of Infrastructure: He Who Makes the Road Wins?**

In Tharparkar, the poor conditions of the earlier non-blacktoproads had to do with the ruptures caused by the 1971 war, the earlier roads were regularly maintained by the colonial authorities and by the Pakistani state until 1971. OP told me that these roads were good enough for jeeps. In 1971, however, after the occupation of the district by the Indian army, the system of maintenance ceased. Asif Sahib said that by his visit in 1975, mobility was severely restricted, and system of *dharamshala*, resthouses maintained by local communities to house travellers, were all in a state of decay. By the time the NGOs arrived in the 1980s, the 'landscape of movement' had been drastically changed. Journey times had increased, as existing paths and roads were not being maintained.

Although the Coal Road was completed in 2015, the section near the village had been built in 2009, which had raised expectations that the connecting road to Chakar Rind would be built soon. The largest NGO in the Thar had come to be dominated by the Meghwal caste who, depending on who you spoke to, formed between twenty, thirty and, from the Meghwals themselves, forty percent of the village population. Gul had told me that the Meghwals had played an important role in getting the feeder road to the Coal Road built. This is not unique to Pakistan: there a number of examples of roads coming into existence through the local initiative of villagers in an effort to be connected to the next town, market or hospital ((Beck, Klaeger & Stasik 2017:1). A number of Meghwals had got employment with the NGO in the early 1990s, and a supportive Meghwal had helped Gul with his schooling, and then plugged him into the Thari networks at Sindh University. Gul's family, as well as members of his Rind sub-caste of Baloch, had historically dominated the village, but it was Meghwal, traditionally Dalit, who had expanded their social and political capital in the recent decades, with increasing migration to urban areas, and taking up employment in the NGO sector. When the Coal Road was planned

in 2009 by the then newly installed People's Party government, according to Gul, the village Meghwal had approached Engineer Gianchand, a Meghwal politician who served as a Senator, and played an important role in getting the connecting road built. When I spoke to the patel about this, however, he made a point of telling me that the road came first to the patel's *para*, his neighbourhood. Chandrabhan, a Dalit activist, who also worked for the largest NGO is the district was also convinced that the connecting road was only built because of the Meghwals' political connections. Chandrabhan, a Koli from the Coal Zone was bitter about his own community's lack of, as he put it, using the English term, 'connections'. When questioned about why the road first went to the patel's para, however, Chandrabhan did not seem to have an answer, other than the possibility of geography. It was first neighbourhood of the village one would upon if coming from the direction of the Coal Road, which was perfectly plausible reason. The supposed building of the connecting road through Meghwal efforts was seen as challenge to the traditional hierarchy of the village.

The road connecting Chakar Rind to the Coal Road had been built by a well-known contractor who was said to have links with the army. Just after the village link road was built in late 2009, Pakistan suffered heavy rains in the monsoon season of 2010, damaging the road. The conditions had remained poor and it was possible that the next set of severe rains would simply wash away the road. For the patel, this was a point of increasing concern, as he was shown not to have the right connections to get it fixed. He told me he been he had been to Mallani's[29] *kutchery* a number of times, but to no avail. Howe et al. (2016: 2) have referred to the 'paradox of infrastructure' whereby:

> The first paradox of infrastructure, ruin, suggests that even as infrastructure is generative, it degenerates. A second paradox is found in retrofit, an apparent ontological oxymoron that attempts to bridge temporality from the present to the future and yet

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[29] Mahesh Mallani, the local member for the Sindh Assembly in 2016.

ultimately reveals that infrastructural solidity, in material and symbolic terms, is more apparent than actual. Finally, a third paradox of infrastructure, risk, demonstrates that while a key purpose of infrastructure to mitigate risk, it also involves new risks as it comes to fruition.

The village was caught up in this 'paradox' of infrastructure; what had been built will necessarily decay. OP told that me local politicians often campaign for a road scheme, but the roads department's maintenance budget was non-existent. Gul, however, viewed the poor condition of the road as a reflection on the competence of the patel, and the Sayed dominance of his village, after all, he told me, none were educated, and they had usurped the Rinds, who had founded the village. The building of roads has brought disruptions in the lifeworlds and values of the villagers where "certain modes of authority are constructed, contested and/or reconstructed by people struggling to give some order, goals and targets to their lives, and thus to legitimise their actions" (Arce & Long 2000: 12). The relative 'success' of the Meghwal in getting the link road built was contrasted by Gul with the relative failure of the patel to have it fixed, thereby challenging locally understood notions of heirarchy.

## Conclusions: Why have roads now?

This chapter has explored a set of stories or myths about the construction of the 1987 Mirpurkhas to Mithi road, and an equally important road connecting the village of Chakar Rind to the Coal Road, making wider points about road construction and about de-constructing myths. Road construction is happening everywhere in Pakistan, with projects such as the Lowary tunnel connecting the northern region of Chitral through the high mountain passes of the Hindu Kush reflecting a determination to overcome nature. Road making is state making, or as Harvey (2005: 126) puts it, "roads inevitably lead us to the state". Equally, for many people I spoke to in Tharparkar, it was that the absence of the state increased their marginality, and the Coal Road signified a change of intent. I return here to Levy-Strauss (1976: 172-173)

on how myths are related to given facts, but not as straightforward representations of them. The 'given facts' in road making are that roads improve accessibility to expanding markets and connect remote communities to the metropole, allowing them access to better health and educational facilities. As Gupta (1995) notes, however, the post-colonial state wants to create a spatial order at one level by "becoming a translocal presence, covering its domain with hierarchic administrative divisions, and implanting local representatives, offices and practices in which the overarching regime is instantiated (Gupta, 1995: 375–6)". Roads here are the solid manifestation of the post-colonial state: their physicality gives the state its 'translocal presence', with clinics, police stations and district headquarters built along them (see also Harvey & Knox 2015; Dalakoglou 2017 on this point). After all, roads are planned, executed and owned by the state, and roads "demonstrably bring that state into being, creating and recreating its territorial form and enacting its paradigms of ownership and control" (Harvey & Knox 2015: 186). As Ispahani (1989) noted, however, road making is as much about 'access' as 'accessibility', and access always serves political ends. Here we are not talking about access to better education or health or even the markets, but access for the state to become a 'translocal presence' through regimes of discipline such as checkpoints and identity cards.

Borderland locations in South Asia have had a history of very poor infrastructure, often with little or no roads (see Aggarwal 2004; Demenge 2011). So why do states decide to build roads? For Murton (2017: 239), looking at roads built in a 'remote' borderland location in Nepal, the position is simple:

> Border regimes are formed through a physical, bureaucratic and social convergence of infrastructure, commerce and mobility. Seeing discrete territorialisations of state space as a recurrent outcome of expanding capital circulations, new systems of sovereignty and governance are unfolding across South Asia's borderlands where new roads, traffic and business proliferate between China and Nepal.

I agree with Murton, and indeed infrastructure development has found willing supporters among state bureaucracy, precisely on the basis of the commodification of mobility. As borderland locations are transformed from marginal places to areas of resource extraction (Eilenberg & Conns 2019), the political economy of non-road making has drifted into the mists of history. That, then, I would submit is the politics of road building. What gets neglected in looking at the politics are the poetics, stories on the road and about the road which can be seen as creative and poetical schemes through which people perceive and make sense of the changes in their daily life in the age of widespread mobility, migration and transnationalism, i.e. of all the elements involved in modern road construction. These stories are important; they can tell us as much about a road as any policy document. Much of my account here relies on the memories of the recent past, which may be open to criticism, however I agree with Roseman (1996: 850) that those whose stories I write "have the advantage of moral persuasion with the employment of the locutions 'I was there' or 'my father or mother [or grandmother or uncle and so on] was there'". For Asif Hussain, that trip to Tharparkar in 1974, and destruction he experienced led to a lifelong commitment to Tharparkar. His account, and that of Jamil Jamal, revolved around an argument based on a premise that there was 'moral value' to road making and an obligation on governments to attend to those on the margins. For Shabanbhai, centring his account on Sindhi technical prowess was equally as important, because this challenged a general image of Sindhi incompetence, held by many in positions of power in Pakistan. In case of the villagers of Chakar Rind, the road was the ultimate symbol of development and the memory of its construction, as such, "is attached to membership of social groups of one kind or another" (Fentress & Wickham 1992: ix). These accounts of the effects of the new link road had striking similarity, with villagers emphasising how they gained direct access by new forms of public transport to urban services (such as hospitals) and a choice of commercial establishments. Like Shabanbhai, Gul's contempt for the patel's inability to 'fix' the road

contrasted with his admiration of the traditionally marginalised Meghwals, who had used their 'connections' to get the link road built; thereby challenging traditional notions of hierarchy. These narratives about past events are also therefore intertwined with individual and community-level plans for the future prosperity and stature of the community.

## Chapter 4: Who Gets to Do *Hartals, Bands* and *Dharna*: An Interrogation of Social Protests in Tharparkar

I was sitting at the *autaq* of Rasul Bux, whose village, which I call village A, was located in the coalfield, and was about to be 'relocated' because of the Coal Project, with his uncle and cousin. We were talking about the last stretch of the Coal Road, just completed a month ago, which meant that they could go to Karachi in six hours, and Islamkot within half an hour. The conversation drifted towards the coalfield and the imminent resettlement. His uncle was bitter, "what good is this road, we are now going to be *khanabadosh*. We are the sons of Lakho Punyani,[30] we were masters of this land. Now because of Rasul Bux, we have nothing". Rasul Bux, who was close SECMC, the Coal Company, was said to have helped them with land acquisition in the village. Rasul Bux remained quiet throughout the conversation, respectful of his uncle. His cousin however was more sympathetic toRasul Bux. "Without *saeen* Rasul Bux, we would not have gotten a just rate for our land". During the land acquisition process, Rasul Bux had initially resisted, arguing that the price offered for the land was not sufficient, eventually forcing SECMC to make a compromise. Throughout my time in the field, Rasul Bux was referred to by both those attacking and supporting the Coal Project, as someone who either stood up to or sold out to SECMC. In this chapter, I will argue that due to the location of Tharparkar, the options available to him were very limited, there was both resistance and compromise.

There had been very little resistance within Tharparkar to the Coal Project, except for the village of Ghorano. I met Ashok Kumar, one of the Ghorano protest leaders, who was aw professor, at his office at one of Karachi's oldest law colleges. The office was in a cavernous

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[30] The supposed ancestor of the Samma Rajputs. See Samira Sheikh, *Forging a region : sultans, traders, and pilgrims in Gujarat, 1200-1500* Delhi: Oxford University Press (200(9)

space in what was a late Victorian construction, funded by the great and the good of Karachi in the last decade of the Empress's rule. The building was in a state of ruin, perhaps reflecting the decay in the Pakistani legal system. Ashok Kumar belonged to the village of Ghorano and to a moderately wealthy Meghwal family. The coal seam lies below a layer of water, and SECMC had decided to build a reservoir at the village of Ghorano to store the water removed in the extraction process. Ashok Kumar and Jaychand had led a movement to oppose the construction of the reservoir.  Ashok's position was clear, that SECMC were doing a wrong in flooding the village's *gauchar*, and the villagers had no option but to resist. Ashok said it was 'their coal', and what was the benefit they got from the Coal Project, indeed they were going to lose, and more importantly, they were going to become landless. Conflicts over rural land expropriation can pose a significant threat to a country's social stability, as they have in other parts of Asia (Zhao 2009). Large infrastructural interventions can also produce community-based activism against the proposed construction projects (Teo & Loosemore 2011). Much of this research takes a very broad approach, however (Okoh 2007; Stewart 2008). I will focus very narrowly on two individuals, Rasool Bux and Khairumal, both of whose land was being acquired by SECMC in Block II, and protests in the village of Ghorano, to offer new empirical material and insights into regimes of land acquisition and state policy in Pakistan. I will explore the ideas of both Agamben (1998, 2000) and Habermas (1975) around state and citizen relations. This chapter will also examine how the Pakistani state in Tharparkar has 'managed' to avoid conflicts with a mix of co-option and coercion, in particular how the discourse of 'fair compensation' for land has allowed for the concealment of existing caste and religious inequalities. It will ask the question, *who* gets to protest, and *what* can they protest about in Pakistan.

The region of Tharparkar has long been marganalized by the Pakistani state, but within the district, there are heirarchies based on caste and religion. The social landscape in the district,

indeed in Pakistan as whole, clearly resembles what Stewart (2008) calls sites of major horizontal inequalities, where there is inequality between different communities living in the same society which are not based on economic disparities, but "inequalities in economic, social and political dimensions or cultural status between culturally defined groups" (Stewart 2008: 3). In Tharparkar, land ownership is very much restricted to certain castes, with others, such as the Meghwal, historically entirely landless. These horizontal equalities, I will argue, have influenced the outcomes of the Ghorano protests. In particular, attempts by the Ghorano protestors to overcome these horizontal inequalities have had a significant effect on the ultimate failure of the movement.

Surendra (2009) has looked at why certain regions of Pakistan have 'rebelled' against central authority, while others have remained quiescent. I agree with Surendra's characterisation that Pakistan's immense diversity has collided with policies that favour strong central governments with this collision giving rise to separatist and subnational movements. Where I disagree with her is her argument that only an oppositional movement is likely to achieve its aims, as any other movement would simply be not be able to generate the momentum and would fizzle away. The problem with Surendra's argument is that it is based on too binaries, either you resist violently, or your resistance fails. This has certainly been the way that Pakistan appears in the literature (see Fair 2014 in particular), as a state willing to use force at the first opportunity. The argument I wish to make here is that the literature fails to acknowledge that particular events in local histories that can create opportunities for "challenging dominant meanings of security and sacrifice, place, and development and the very legitimacy of the state's ruling power" (Caron & Da Costa 2007: 416). In Tharparkar, long established ideas around compensation for land acquired by the state allowed Rasul Bux to challenge the state narrative around security and sacrifice.

**This is Our Land; This is Our Coal**

In the coalfield, time and time again I heard the argument that Tharparkar was 'their land', and so was the coal below the surface. Rasul Bux had emphasised the fact that the coal was found in his land, and as such he was 'entitled' to demand a better compensation. Like peasants in rural China (Zhoa 2009), however, Thari landowners did not have high expectations of the Pakistani state which, using prerogatives under the doctrine of eminent domain, had already instigated large population displacements in other parts of the country, coupled with a long history of government neglect of the district (on neglect see Siddiqi 2019). Throughout South Asia, large scale development displacement has become the norm, so much so that Feldman and Geisler (2012: 973) argue that India is now at the 'epicentre of displacement'. Land appropriation for industry and infrastructure had begun during the period of British rule, but the post-colonial state deploys the discourse of national projects of modernity and development, which require a 'sacrifice' by the people (Padel 2011). Scholarship in South Asia has focused on how state-sponsored property speculation and business interests lead to the ongoing dispossession of farmers, whether in the form of Special Economic Zones (Levien 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013; Cross 2014), large scale mining projects (Padel & Das 2010), conservation (Münster & Münster 2012), agribusiness and aquaculture, housing or industrialisation (Le Mons Walker 2008; Adduci 2009; Akram-Lodhi 2009, Mishra 2011; Adnan 2013; Münster & Strümpell 2014). Disputes over the loss of land have increasingly provided the main cause for social protests. Local elites can be both beneficiaries and losers in large infrastructure projects, often they are both. The strategies of local elites are influenced by how they perceive a particular project. Rasul Bux, for example, was widely credited by others in Tharparkar for getting a 'good deal' for the landowners. This contrasted with the Ghorano protests which involved Ashok, which ultimately were unsuccessful. Here the aim of the protest was to stop the land acquisition rather renegotiate a better deal. In chapter 2, I have discussed

how Tharparkar's unique history during the early stages of the formation of the Pakistani state is one of the reasons why there has been little protest against the Coal Project. There were protests in Ghorano, however, and fact that the process of land acquisition in Rasul Bux's village did not go as smoothly shows that local elites do use strategies through which they manipulate the allocation of resources and influence the pace of change in large infrastructural projects. I will examine the methods through which local elites seek to intervene in the process of development and how the process of social and economic change affects their power base. Sites of resource extraction have experienced catastrophic social and economic impacts, with resultant conflict between local communities and the state, as well as in-coming migrant workers (Peet & Watts, 2002; Ross, 2004). Land issues also often provide the catalysts for social protests, and sometimes violent conflict (Ukiwo 2008). For things to turn violent, however, the identities that have been mobilised must be sufficiently important for those to commit themselves to actions that may or may not lead to violence (Stewart 2008). The options for the Thari were limited, with the Hindu population always subject to test of 'loyalty'. Stewart (2008: 11) that "where there is limited freedom to switch group that group's boundaries are particularly important in terms of creating potential group grievance, and hence in terms of mobilization". Indeed, in the Ghorano protestors were largely members of the Hindu Meghwal caste, which meant that, despite repeated claims that this was a movement of all Tharis, SECMC was able to exploit Hindu-Muslim differences.


An unresponsive government can lead to groups resorting to mass demonstrations, *hartals*, strikes and civil disobedience to force a response from the government (Mitra 2002). This may lead to violence, with Tambiah (1990), who have theorised inter-communal violence in South Asia, noting violence is seen as a means of achieving political goals, whether by the

politicisation of ethnicity, especially in competitive elections, or by the use of successive violence as a means to achieve political power (see Brass 2006).. I agree with Berenschot (2015), however, that in any political or social movement in South Asia participants are only likely to invest in a social identity when this is likely to yield benefits to them. The particular circumstances of Tharparkar meant that in the Ghorano protest, the protestors eschewed any religious or caste mobilisation, as it would be likely to be detrimental to the movement. Where states refuse to grant the leadership of affected populations the status of legitimate intermediaries, this can contribute to the stridency of their style, and acts as an incentive for the articulation of genuine demands in terms of challenges to public order (Mitra 2002).

## The Domain of Eminent State

In Pakistan, under the doctrine of Eminent Domain, all land is held in trust by the government for the 'benefit of the public' (Shaikh 2004). On the other hand, the land acquisition regime inherited from the colonial state explicitly accepts that a landowner must be compensated for any loss of land. The Land Acquisition Act of 1894 ("the Act"), which forms the basis of land acquisition is so expansive in its meanings, however, that the state can, and often does, acquire land for pretty much whatever it determines. Baviskar (2004: 81) argues in the case of India, which for much of its recent history had an almost identical land acquisition system to Pakistan, that in the "wider interest of the nation, the state exercises is prerogative of claiming eminent domain (the greater good of the nation) to pre-empt resources for itself". Article 24 of the Pakistan constitution explicitly confers eminent domain upon itself (Shaikh 2004).

The Act is a very old bit of legislation, passed in 1894 during the highwater mark of British colonial rule, and is the foundational legislation which provides the legal basis for acquiring land by the state directly, or on behalf of a company engaged in a public purpose. The Collector (district administrator), an official appointed by the central government, also determines the

amount of compensation to be paid on account of such acquisition. The exercise of the power of acquisition has been limited to what amounts to 'public purposes'. Under the Act, 'public purpose' means any purpose furthering the general interest of the community as opposed to the particular interest of individuals but it is not the 'community' which decides what 'furthers' its interests; this power being deputed to the Collector. If the Collector is satisfied that the land in any locality is needed, or is likely to be needed, for any public purpose or on behalf of a company, he directs the issuance of a notification that the land is to be acquired and the amount of compensation paid. The public purpose test gives almost carte blanche to the state, with no successful challenge yet by any affected community in the 70 years since Pakistani independence. After independence, the law remained untouched allowing the Pakistani governments, both civil and military, to acquire large amounts of land for various kinds of development and infrastructure projects

Agamben (1998, 2000) famously described how the state produces a category of people who are deemed expendable, applying the Roman Law concept of the *homo sacer* (a person who may be killed but not sacrificed in a religious ritual). Agamben uses this figure of the *homo sacer* as a tool for understanding the modern state, and how modern political and legal codes contain within them numerous 'states of exception' through which citizenship can be revoked, or populations expelled. Agamben argues that it is not simply that membership to the polity is denied, but that individuals are reconstituted through the implementation of legal frameworks and policies under which new regulations can be exercised on them. In the context of land ownership, the legally-framed language of the Act has allowed the state in South Asia to act above the governed for the 'greater good' of all, which has made the region the 'epicentre of displacement' induced by large infrastructural projects (Feldman & Geisler 2012: 973). Those whose land has been designated for acquisition now fall under a "regime of exception", with their rights to their property invalidated. For Kothari (1988), the state in South Asia is guilty

of 'foisting' an urban centric 'techno-managerial' structure on the rural population, often dismissing its rural subjects as 'backward'. More recent research has taken a more nuanced approach, arguing that the 'everyday state' is much more amorphous (see Gupta 1992; Fuller and Benei 2001). For example, a 'techno-managerial' regime in Pakistan has argued for the need for better water management (Shaikh 2005) and this led to large scale population displacements in the 1960s at the Mangla Dam and Tarbella Dam sites. In the case of the former this led to the displacement of 30,000 people (Shaikh 2005; according to Cernea 1990, 90,000) and in the case the latter the figure amounted to 96,000 (Shaikh 2005). In South Asia, much of the displacement has occurred in marginal locales of exception which have had histories of uneven inclusion by the colonial state, amplified by being marginalised by history, poverty and vulnerability (Haines 2009; Rycroft & Dasgupta 2011; Gupta & Sharma 2011). Much of the funding for large infrastructural projects has come from the World Bank (Anwar 2015), where there was an in-built assumption that large infra-structure projects will require 'non-voluntary population relocation', and this displacement would be imposed through state power (Cernea 1990). The infrastructural regime, then, relies on a special category, the *homo sacer,* whose rights to their land no longer apply.

**Those with the Big Stick Get the Buffalo**

When discussing land acquisition in Tharparkar, I often heard the refrain that 'those with the big stick get the buffalo', meaning that those with more power were more likely to get a fair response from the state. Rahman was clear that it was the *patels*, *wanis* and, of course, *babus* like me, with the right connections who were the wielders of the big stick. In this chapter, by looking at two villages' experiences of land acquisition in the coalfield, I argue that despite what is clearly a draconian regime, a much more nuanced picture emerges on the ground, with

those with greater 'social capital' being able to negotiate a much better 'deal' with the government. A system of brokers and middlemen inhabit this landscape and often what exists on the ground bears little resemblance to any policy document prepared in Karachi or Islamabad. The caste, class, ethnicity and religion of the affected communities all play a critical role in how processes of land acquisition and compensation are enacted.

One of the few cases in Pakistan where the local elites have had some success in resisting displacement occurred in Hingol in Baluchistan (Schaflechner 2017), which involved mobilising along religious identity. The Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) planned to build a dam on the Hingol River, very close to the temple of the goddesses Hinglaj. If the dam had been constructed, it would have flooded the valley, which would have led to the disappearance of part of the temple complex. This clash between WAPDA engineers and members of the Hindu community was resolved in the favour of the latter. Throughout their negotiations with the state, members of the local Hindu elite stressed the sacredness of the site. Many of the members of the Hinglaj Seva Committee, who managed the temple complex, were successful businessmen, many of whom were contractors with close relationships with government officials. As the state in Pakistan increasingly adopts a 'market economy' (Anwar 2015), a nexus between contractors and the officials and bureaucrats who broker land deals, has transformed existing modes of governance with far-reaching consequences at all levels. The fact that the disappearance of a site sacred to Pakistani Hindus was too much of a risk, even for the Pakistani state, coupled with the existing close links between temple management and local officials and bureaucrats, created the right set of circumstances for the project to be cancelled. Waving of the metaphoric 'big stick', in this case the loss of a sacred site, was therefore required to prevent the loss of the temple. The lesson of this is that the state, despite what appear to be unlimited powers, does in practice often have to negotiate and compromise with those with the right 'social capital'.

**Sacrificing for the Nation: Language of Acquisition in Tharparkar**

The Thar coal project has earmarked two villages for eviction, which for the sake of convenience and anonymity I will call Village A and Village B, although more villages are expected to be displaced as the project expands to the other blocks. In South Asia, the state has shifted from being the owner of industry in the post-Independence era to being a land-broker for private multinational and national corporations in the 2000s (Levien 2013). In the Thar coalfield, which covers an area of 9,100 kilometres, almost ten percent of the total area of the district, land is being expropriated by the Government of Sindh on behalf of the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC). SECMC has been granted a concession of 90 square kilometres of land of which 30 square kilometres has to be acquired in the first stage. The concession is referred to as Block II and is 70% Hindu and 30% Muslim. The footprint of the mine and associated facilities will extend to include the whole of Village A and B. The relocation requirement will initially affect Village A, commencing in 2018, while for Village B, the process will begin around 2025.

The Thar coal reserves were first discovered by the Geological Survey of Pakistan and the United States Agency for International Development in 1991, when surveys were being carried out to discover water sources, in what is a water scarce region (Ali 2014). The coal deposits, which are reported to be the sixth largest reserves in the world, spread over 9000 square kilometres and contain around 175 billion tonnes – said to be sufficient to meet Pakistan's fuel requirement for centuries. Interest to develop the field was first shown by the Hong Kong entrepreneur Gordon Wu, who brought the Consolidated Electric Power Asia Ltd. to Pakistan with a promise to invest $5.5 billion in a coal-fired power plant to generate 5,280 megawatts of electricity, and another $2 billion to build the transmission infrastructure. This deal fell through when the government of then Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto fell in 1996, and her

successor Nawaz Sharif cancelled the agreement, citing costs. The matter remained dormant until 2005, when the Shenhua Corporation of China sought to acquire a concession. Since the military government of Pervez Musharaf faced political difficulties, however, this deal also fizzled out. By 2008, Pakistan was facing severe power shortages (Anwar 2015), and to deal with this, the Government of Sindh created the Thar Coal Energy Board which was set up to oversee the field, and twelve blocks were created to be farmed out to the concessionaries. To progress matters, the grant of Block II was made to the Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SEMC), a joint venture between the Sindh government and Engro Corporation of Pakistan (Dawn 14 July 2014). As part of this deal, SEMC is supposed to mine 22.5 million tonnes of coal annually from a block II, which is spread over 95.5 square kilometres with about 2 billion tonnes of reserves (proven 0.414bn tonnes, exploitable 1.57bn tonnes)[31] while its subsidiary, the Thar Power Company, would subsequently develop 4,000 megawatt mine-mouth power plants, in two phases. In return, the Sindh government are required construct or improve 369 kilometres of roads, as well connecting the mine mouth to the rail network, transmission lines and arranging fresh water supply and mining-effluent disposal for Block II. This on and off situation with the Project has fostered a state of disbelief among many of those I interviewed. Nanakdas, a retired doctor from an important Lohana family said:

> If this was in Punjab, we would have had this. In Sindh, we wait, as we have always waited. This is all a drama.

In Mithi, when I first visited in 2014, there did seem to be a view that project was being deliberately delayed. Jani, a journalist and active in the Mithi press club, was especially suspicious of the of the departure Shenhua Corporation:

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[31] Thar coal projects delayed Dawn 14 July 2014 (https://www.dawn.com/news/1119130/thar-coal-projects-delayed) accessed 14 December 2019

You know Musharaf came. You know why they call the SECMC offices China Camp, because that's where Shenhua built their camp. It was a done deal, and then nothing happened. This was sabotaged.

Jani however was also concerned about the expected influx of what he termed 'outsiders'.

Jani: Why can't they train the Thari to do the job.

Me: I suspect that open cast in quite technical.

Jani: But they can train our boys. We are willing to sacrifice, we want development. But yes they should train our boys.

Not everyone in Mithi was that keen on the project, however. Rahman, a Muslim Bajeer, was much more critical, which was reinforced by his experience of work in Karachi.

Mustafabhai, you say I am very good manager. This other madam, she was so happy with my work, promised she would get me a job in an NGO. Never heard back from her. It's the same with the coal. Without connections, no one will get a job in the coal mine. Shaikh[32] promised jobs at the press club. Why would they give jobs to us? They will give jobs to their own people.

Jamali (2014) found similar mixed emotions in Gwader port, which was the site of a large port development in another borderland location. The building of the port had divided local landowners from the Med Baloch fishermen, with the former deeply engaged in the process of negotiating selling off their land and breaking the existing patron–client relationships. Just as the Med had felt disempowered and ignored in the process of the building of the port, the local elites' perceived self-interest in Tharparkar did not go unnoticed, as Mohamad Khan, the former NGO worker said:

They have sold their people down the drain. They have all supported the project, even the Dalit rights guys.

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[32] Shamsudin Shaikh was the CEO of SECMC between 2009 and 2018

The existing tensions between those who own land, and those who are landless are often exacerbated when issues of land compensation occur. Gardner and Gerharz (2016:4) argue that:

> As land changes hands and usage, the implications for rural economies that were once based on agriculture are enormous. In most instances there are few economic opportunities for newly landless people, for even if the land has been cleared for Special Economic Zones or extractive industries, these rarely employ local people.

Rather, what awaits are increasing immiseration for those with the least social capital and opportunities for vast profits for those with the most, almost always resulting in a heightening of social and economic inequality (Corbridge & Shah 2013). In cases where the state somehow obliges the local elites, Powell (1986) argues that "riots and protests are less likely to appear under these conditions, perhaps because of the opportunity for protest leaders to work within the system". For some local actors in Tharparkar, resisting development per se was seen as irrational. Ashok Pundit, a landowner who ran his own NGO, was clear that opposing development was a type of madness.

The modern post-colonial state has built its legitimacy on the promise of providing development (for Pakistan see Haines 2013, Anwar 2015). Ashok was not unique in taking this position, Mohammadbhai, who had lost land to the Coal Road was also adamant that one must take some pain if 'khushhali' (prosperity) was to be brought about. The support for the displacement was always contingent, however. As Sudhir Mallani, then president of the District Pakistan People's Party (PPP), and nephew of Mahesh Mallani, the then Member of the Sindh Assembly, said regarding the Ghorano protest.

Sudhir: We expect the villagers will be adequately compensated.

Me: Those who don't have land?

Sudhir: We have asked SECMC to build much better accommodation for them.

This echoed what Ashok was saying: there has to be equity in the sense it was understood locally. That meant a payment above the locally understood value of the land, as the additional element of the sacrifice needed to be recognised.

## Land and honour: Rasool Bux the Successful Intermediary

Village A was located three kilometres from where the Coal Road ended, approximately twenty-five kilometres from the Taluka headquarters in Islamkot. As of writing, the village was in its last stages of resettlement. I met Rasool Bux by accident, when I was visiting Haris Siddiqui, who had taken over as head of corporate social responsibility for SECMC in 2016.[33] I had come to meet Haris at the SECMC site offices and discovered him in the middle of an argument with Rasool Bux, which got progressively worse. They were arguing over the allocation of shops in the new village that SECMC would build. Rasool Bux was also arguing on behalf of a relative who had put in a claim for the loss of livestock. Haris then suddenly said it was Maghrib, and he was going pray, and left, leaving me with Rasool Bux. During the whole altercation, Rasool Bux had generally kept his cool. I introduced myself, and the purpose of being here. Rasool Bux was said he was from Village A, which was going to be 'martyred' (he used the word Shaheed). And he proudly told me that the village was named after an ancestor of his, and the village belonged to his lineage, who were a sub-caste of the Samma Rajputs, whom Rasool Bux reminded me often were the traditional rulers of Sindh. According to the survey carried out by SECMC, the village was in fact only 43% Muslim, a majority of whom were Samma, and the remaining, largely Hindu, population belonging to the Bhil and Koli castes. In general discussions I had in Tharparkar, I was often told that a particular village

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[33] Haris resigned in 2017.

belonged to a particular caste, often the caste of the patels, or headman. So Rasul Bux was not wrong, the village did 'belong' to his sub-caste.

Going back over two years from my meeting with Rasul Bux in October 2016, I had a brief discussion with Jeevan Das, who was then head of corporate social responsibility for SECMC, at their Karachi headquarters, located in a glass skyscraper. Jeevan had been extremely confident that the land acquisition regime would go to plan. His enthusiasm was not shared by others, however, and there were complaints about how the land acquisition was occurring. The *tappadars* were said to be taking bribes and, for SECMC, who wanted the procedure dealt with quickly, this was causing unnecessary delay. By the end of that year, SECMC had taken over the land acquisition process. No one seemed to tell me how and under what law SECMC had taken over matters from the Revenue Department, but what was interesting was that, despite the fact that, on paper, the Sindh government had unlimited powers, in practice, they were unable to begin the process of land acquisition. When I met Jeevan Das in 2015, who was also now de facto dealing with acquisitions, he said point blank "masla bahut hain", there are lots of problems, but we will sort them. Their original timetable was to acquire the land in Village A by 2015, but it seemed that deadline would be not be kept. At the time of my first meeting, the Deputy Commissioner had already approved the land acquisition on paper. When I returned to Thar in 2015, the deadline had been missed and Jeevan did not sound that positive. Tragically he passed away within two months of our meeting, said by friends to under tremendous pressure. So why was this process taking longer than anticipated?

The land acquisition regime in Pakistan is based on a fiction that all the land has been surveyed and ownership is uncomplicated. The reality is that in Tharparkar, as indeed in other parts of the country, the land records simply do not reflect the reality on the ground. Just to get the transfer of ownership can require a significant amount of time and money. Secondly, the day-

to-day management of the land acquisition is handled by the *mukhtiarkars*, who are locally appointed and open to influence. Each district in Sindh is divided into *talukas*, and mukhtiarkars are also the senior administrative officers. The talukas are then split up into *tappas*, which are administered by tappadars, who in other parts of Pakistan called are patwaris. It is the job of the tappadar to record any changes in the land ownership. Interestingly, the Sindh Revenue Board's own website admits that "Due to shortage of staff, vehicles, inadequate office accommodation, the field revenue organization is facing serious problems"[34].

According to the Economic and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) carried out by SECMC, the average land holding per landowner in Block II is less than 30 acres. Rasool Bux told me his family owned more than 200 acres, although I could never confirm his claim. More importantly, he belonged to the lineage of the village *patel,* which has now for over two generations been divided such that the village did not have a headman. The institution of the *patel* had been formalised under British rule in the 19th Century, where they were expected to assist the local police and local revenue administration (Cheesman 1998). For his efforts, the patel was granted land, known as *seri grants* (Hughes 1877), which tended to be between twenty and thirty acres. Families chosen to be patels by the Political Agent in Thar and Parkar often gained ready access to local officials. The institution of the patel in Tharparkar was formalised by the Sind Village Officers Act 1881, which included a quasi-judicial role. The Deputy Collector of Thar and Parkar wrote the following in 1890 about the aura around the office of the patel (Cheesman 1998:109):

> a value in the eyes of the people altogether out of proportion to the amount of assessment which in many cases does not exceed two or three rupees.

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[34] Sindh Revenue Board website (http://www.srb.gos.pk/AboutUs/introductionSrb.jsp)

After Independence in 1947, the system of seri grants was converted into *yek sala*, or five year leases. The office of the patel does not now have any official status, but there is still a great deal of symbolic capital associated with it. In Village A and other villages in Tharparkar that I visited, both government officials and SECMC officials paid due attention to the patel lineages. Imam Hussain, the NGO social mobiliser, in one of his many pieces of always sound advice had advised that I visit the patel before anyone else in the village. I was told that Humza Khan, a rival of Rasul Bux from Village A often hosted Shaikh, the CEO of SECMC at his *autaq*. However, Humza Khan was very rarely seen in the village, and he lived in the city of Mirpurkhas. Many of the Bhil families that had been his dependents had begun to shift towards Rasool Bux, as unlike Humza Khan, Rasul Bux was said to be also available to assist with any problem. Although that 'value' the Deputy Collector had referred to in 1890, still seems exists in Tharparkar towards those of the patel lineage, the example of Humzah Khan shows that to maintain any influence, one must remain active in village affairs.

Rasool Bux, was in his mid-thirties, and worked for WAPDA, the local electricity company, as a lineman, an occupation that itself allows one to create a system of patronage. He also had a Bachelor of Arts degree, a rare achievement in Block II, where, according to a baseline survey carried out by SECMC, the total literacy rate was 21%, which was much lower than the literacy rates in rural Tharparkar, and below the 28% average for the district. The lineman is responsible for constructing and maintaining electricity transmission lines. In rural Pakistan, where infrastructure is poor, good relations with the lineman can make the difference between having a regular electricity supply or not, and those linemen who can provide an unlimited supply of electricity possess a critical symbolic capital in rural Pakistan. Rasool Bux would also never fail to tell me his *mamoo* (maternal uncle) was a police officer, and he had good links with the 'administration'.

Coming back the village, the Collector had approved the land acquisition of Village A, a total of six square kilometres of residential, commons and agricultural land. The government had suggested an arbitrary rate of 100,000 PKR per acre. At the first consultation meeting, Rasool Bux and his supporters had left, and when I met Jeevan in 2014, negotiations had stalled. He was bitter about the supposed greed. Secondly, ownership was so unclear, with many of the title holders being dead. Other titles had multiple claimants, the *khata* or share as it is called, although the record was in a single name. As Jeevan told me with a straight face, the Pakistan government does not compensate the dead. To resolve these issues, SECMC had appointed a retired tappadar, Jagtomal Suthar. Jagto was a close associate of the local taluka president of the PPP, Kamlesh Kumar. Kamlesh, meanwhile, was close to Rasool Bux, and according to a number of interlocutors, a meeting was arranged with Rasool Bux. When I asked Rasool Bux, he confirmed that meeting had occurred, but said that it was really a social meeting with Jagto and Kamlesh, who were good friends. When I spoke to Jagto and Kamlesh, both denied that any specific meeting took place, but said they were there to help. Jagto did confirm that he suggested the figure of 180,000 PKR per acre as being fair to Rasool Bux, and that he should accept this. When I met Rasool Bux in May 2017, he was adamant that without him, land acquisition would not have occurred. There were rumours that Rasool Bux had been given catering contracts, as well as providing employment to Kolis and Bhils in Village A, who were dependents of his family. I was also told that Rasool Bux was the first in the village to get compensated, and his brother had been leased land for a market gardening project initiated by SECMC.

For some, Rasool Bux was hero who had stood up to SECMC; for others, like his uncle, he had turned the villagers into *khanabadosh*, those who wander from place to place. His infamy had also spread among opponents of the Coal Project. Imam Hussain, who worked at the NGO where I was staying, and who also dabbled with poetry had indeed written a poem attacking

Rasool Bux which he had posted on his Facebook page, only later to take it down,. He had received a visit from the local special branch, who gave some 'friendly' advice that he should take down his post. But Rasool Bux did have supporters, people like his cousin, who accepted that resistance to the Coal Project was not possible. Pakistan has had periods of military rule and these constant interventions by the military have prevented mobilisations along party lines, since parties themselves are fragile, which has limited the ability of the rural poor to organise (Martin 2017, Mohmand 2019). Rasul Bux, however came from a family that were perceived to have legitimate status as 'leaders', which allowed him to mobilise support among those who were dependent as clients to family allowing him to resist attempts by SECMC to ignore him.

## The Unsuccessful Claims of Khairumal

Khairumal was in his mid-fifties, and owned a vegetable shop in Islamkot, where his family had now been settled for generations. I had met him through a relative, who was active in the Dalit movement. Khairu's wife was from the village B, the other village that was to be displaced. Khairu's caste, the Hindu Koli accounted for 26% of the total population of the village according to the SECMC baseline survey. Khairu had inherited ten acres from his father-in-law, which was substantial for a Koli, since most were landless. Khairu's memory of going to the village were often quite bitter. He remembers visiting on one occasion, when his father-in-law was ill and unable to carry out his customary *beggar* duties (in southern Sindh, it is still common for certain castes to provide labour, especially during the harvest). Khairu recalled how on that occasion the Muslim whom the beggar was due ,shouted out why he could he not send his son-in-law instead. At this point, I asked him why his father-in-law was acquiescing to beggar, despite owning land. The Kolis had long carried out beggar for Muslim landlords in village B, and challenging that would be seen as challenging the Muslims, which may lead to inter-religious conflict that the Kolis were bound to loose . Surveys teams from the

revenue department had arrived and held consultations, but none were held in the Koli para (neighbourhood). Khairu had told me that the Koli were originally members of the upper Rajput caste, but the because of a famine they had been forced to eat dead meat, which lead to their present predicament. His lineage, the Wadiyara, were seen as indigenous by others in the region, and Khairu often told me that when dealing with others in the Thar or the rest of Sindh, even though they were 'malak makan', landlords, they had to ask permission from the rest whom he called 'kariadaar' or tenants, literally newcomers. The local Muslims in Village B, the Halepota, were seen as being in a somewhat anomalous position by the Wadiyara, but they now recognised them as having possessed superior political and economic power as a consequence of Partition.

SECMC had initially focused on acquiring land in Village A, but by the time I arrived in early September 2016 at the start of my fieldwork, they had begun the mapping and measuring land in Village B. Like in Village A, they had discovered discrepancies, and the retired tappadar, Jagto Suthar, was once again asked to resolve these issues. The land that was in the ownership of Khairu's wife was still in his father-in-law's name, despite his death almost five years previously. Khairu had not bothered changing the title, since up to now his claim had not been challenged. He had been renting it out to another Koli. To get the title changed required both money and effort. Khairu knew Jagto, and they had met a few times, and he had even made promises. Khairu was also being approached by other Kolis in Village B, but thus far his, and many of his fellow Kolis' issues, remained outstanding. When I spoke to Haris at SECMC, he said they were dealing with those landowners with 100 acres or more first, which in Village B, according to the Baseline Survey, was only 9% of the landowners. Khairu had asked a few times if I could arrange a meeting with Haris, which I had failed to do. Haris kept telling me he was busy, yet on a few occasions we met he was with Village B's Patel family, or with other Muslims, largely Halepotas.

**All Samaats are Brothers: Bonds of Social Capital**

Bourdieu's concept of social capital can be used to explain the different experience of Khairu and Rasool Bux. The concept of 'social capital' allows us to see how inequality is produced or reproduced, demonstrating for instance how people gain access to powerful positions through the direct and indirect employment of social connections. Works by, among others, Jeffrey (2001) and Mosse (2006) in neighbouring India have looked at how a person's political, economic or social status can be an important form of social or symbolic capital for rural elites in South Asia, and Bourdieu's (1984) concept of 'social capital' and 'habitus' can be a very useful tool in analysing this. Recently, social scientists have used notions of capital (e.g., human, cultural and social) as organising concepts to understand the mechanisms that affect the life chances of individuals and the well-being of communities. In Bourdieu's own words:

> Social capital represents the total of actual and potential resources connected with the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relations of mutual recognition.... The total capital which the individual members possess serves them all and bestows on them, in the widest sense of the word, creditworthiness (Bourdieu 1996, 15-16).

In the Thar, among Muslim agro-pastoralists, I often heard a claim that they were descended from Lakho Punyani. Ali Mohammad, who came from the Patel lineage in Village B explained:

> Mustafabhai, here you have the Halepota, in other villages you have the Dars, then Bilalani,[35] he is a Hingorja, we are all children of Lakho. We are all Samaat.

According to Lambrick (1964:130) Sammat "is the Arabic plural of Samma and is used to cover all the Sindhi agricultural tribes deriving from those of old Hindu kingdom". The term therefore is fairly expansive. Indeed, when I asked Ali Mohammad who is a Sammat:

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[35] Sher Mohammad Bilalani was the Member of Parliament between 2013 to 2018

Ali Mohammad: Mustafasahib, all of Punyani's children are Samaat.

Me: Are the Hindus Samaat?

Ali Mohammad: No, I don't think so. Actually I would say the Memons, the Faqirs they are not Samaat.

Me: But Rao of Bhuj, isn't he a Samaat?

Ali Mohammad: Yes, yes he is. I know there are lots of jagirs of Hindu Samaat. But here in Islamkot, we are only Muslim.

Samaat was a vague enough term to encompass a large grouping, who were seen as equal. It was also contingent; in the local context Samaat could only be Muslims, but in a wider sense the term could include Hindus. The town council in Islamkot, and indeed the bazaars and the local NGOs were dominated by Hindus, so for many of the Muslims in the rural hinterland, referred to as *barary*, there was a clear distinction between them and the urban Hindus of Islamkot. Rasool Bux, and indeed other Muslims of *patel* lineages, stressed these connections when building links with local officials.

Rasool Bux was very much part of the informal local political networks which existed in the district and for which a sense of Sammat caste solidarity was often significant in securing help from state officials. These officials, although mainly urban-based, often claimed a similar religious and caste heritage. I often found many Samma landowners at the mukhtiarkar's office, doing their usual *gupshup*. These informal gatherings were notable for their absence of Hindus and other Muslim groups. When asked why caste Hindus were not in attendance, I was often told they too busy making money and the Memons, potential rivals of the Sammat in the district, were even worse, they were 'makhee chooz', literally someone who even sucks the blood of flies.

It was simply not enough for Rasool Bux to use his Sammat connections, however. As a major landowner, with dependent tenants, whom he could mobilise against the state, he posed a

potential threat to the smooth running of the land acquisition regime. The British policy of consolidating power in the hands of the patels had left a lasting legacy. SECMC had little option here other than to negotiate with him, with the ultimate threat of use of force always kept in the background. His job as a lineman had given him access to locally influentially individuals, who were keen on a steady supply of electricity. Indeed, Rasool Bux knew Kamlesh and Jagto through his position as a lineman. His involvement with the PPP arose out his status as landowner and lineman; indeed he joined the party in 2014, just when SECMC has become active in Block II. The trump card for Rasool Bux was his status in the caste hierarchy in Block II; his sub-caste, the Dars, were said to have founded the village, and they had used their political and economic power to consolidate their dominant position into 'decisive dominance' (Srinivas 1987). This very position, however, also allowed his detractors to blame him for selling out his inheritance, making his kinsman khanabadosh, people with no fixed abode.

Khairu simply did not have that creditworthiness, he was Dalit and Hindu, and as such marginal. Haris never seemed to find time to meet him, for example. Jeffrey (2001) found something similar in his field site in North India; that Dalits had difficulties accessing the networks of influence, limited not only by their poverty and lack of local political clout, but also "constrained by their inability to master appropriate and largely caste-specific styles of masculine behaviour that characterise interactions between state officials and those seeking patronage" (2001:230). More recent work by Nelson (2011) and Martin (2016) on Pakistan has focused on how clan based patron–client relations allow local leaders to divert public resources to benefit kin, friends and clients, thereby subverting the attempt of the Pakistani government to implement policies. I would argue that Nelson's view of the Pakistani state misses the point, in that on the ground, at the taluka level, there is much more complicated picture. Instead of subversion, we often have collusion between locally-appointed officials, many from a similar social background, sharing common aims and interests. I think Rasool Bux was right when he

said that he could stall the land acquisition process, despite the power and influence of SECMC and the authority of the state. In Khairu's case, meanwhile, his position as Hindu and a Dalit made it possible for the state to ignore him.

## The Village of Ghorano: A Site of a Very Loyal Opposition

I was making last minute preparations to go to Pakistan in September 2016, and my friend Mohammad Khan, Whatsapped a message with an article attached. The article made reference to the village of Ghorano, where the locals were petitioning the Sindh High Court against the building of a reservoir. The nature of the coal seam in the Thar is such that it lies 80 metres below the surface, with the presence of at least three aquifer zones: one above the coal zone (the top aquifer), one within the coal and the third below the coal zone. In order to extract the coal, therefore, the water in the top two aquifers had to be disposed of. The initial plans involved building a pipeline and disposing of the water in the Rann of Kutch, a large salt march located at the southern edge of Tharparkar, through which runs the India-Pakistan border. Sometime in 2014, however, it was decided instead of disposing of the aquifer water in the Rann, the Government of Sindh would build a 2,700-acre reservoir near the village of Ghorano. The Effluent Disposal Scheme (EDS) would now consist of a 37.5-kilometre-long pipeline of 50 cusecs and two reservoirs, at Dukkur Cho and Ghorano. No one seemed know exactly why this change had occurred. Haris Sidiqui, the then head of Corporate Social Responsibility at SECMC seemed to think the Indians were upset, and that the Rann was a *Ramsar*[36] site, hence the change of plans. While the Chief Executive of SECMC, Shamsudin Shaikh refused to answer my question, simply stating that blackmailers were behind the protest. The protest

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[36] A Ramsar site is a wetland site designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. (https://www.ramsar.org)

against the two reservoirs seemed to be gaining traction when I started my field work in September 2016, with the protestors using three strategies, seeking judicial remedies as well as staging sit-ins in Mithi and Islamkot as well as seeking support from the local elites. When the protests started, there was a large amount of coverage by the Sindhi press and although it was seen as a 'local issue' by national press, it was later also picked up in the English-language media. The protests were becoming a growing headache for SECMC, and the CEO Shams Shaikh had accused the protestors of 'disloyalty'[37], arguing that "all the patriotic people were supporting their firm in their sincere efforts to generate power from Thar coal". For Habermas (1975), a state is perceived as being legitimate when its citizens treat it as properly holding and exercising political power. In other words, actors, institutions and social orders can be seen as being either legitimate or illegitimate. When political actors engage in the process of legitimation they are pursuing legitimacy for themselves or for another institution. Social protests and conflicts can therefore lead to the delegitimisation of prevailing socially-accepted systems of rule. Like Rasul Bux, the leaders of the Ghorano movement, Ashok Kumar and his brother Jaychand, were very aware that their movement must work within the existing narratives around fair and adequate compensation as well as 'loyalty' to Pakistan, and jokingly called their movement the 'loyal opposition', using the English term. According to the brothers, their land was being taken away arbitrarily, when there was option of the EDS flowing into the Rann, and in conversations with me they were explicit in their support for the Thar Coal Project as a whole. However, this strategy also prevented those leading the protest in Ghorano from seeking out external support, what Crowther and Cooper (2002) and Cummings and Higgins (2006) have called the 'traveller network', the transnational network of social and environmental activists who are plugged in to the global discourses of environmental and anti-

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[37] Save Thar from coal projects: The Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company is going to deprive Thar of its natural gas and ruin its natural beauty Daily Times November 26 2017

infrastructure protests, because any such connection would open the villagers to the criticism of 'disloyalty', and delegitimise their movement. The lack of these traveler networks would have a baring of why the movement failed in the end.

Ghorano is a village located some thirty kilometres south of Block II, the site of the SECMC concession. Unlike Block II, and the area surrounding the new road, Ghorano will see very few 'benefits' and the villagers will furthermore lose a large part of their pasturage and agricultural lands. According to Khamiso Bhil, the chairman of the Union Council of Gharyacho, where the village is located, it has a population of over 5,000, living in the main village and a number of hamlets, locally referred to as *paras*. The village was said to have been founded by a lineage of Rathore Rajputs, who had arrived from Marwar, and after their settlement in Tharparkar had converted to Islam. Like most villages in the region, it had a both Muslims and Hindus, with the former have a slight majority. The Rathore are then said to have invited other castes to 'their village', which included the Meghwals, the caste of the brothers.

SECMC's plan was to build a reservoir that will store the water from the second aquifer, which will cover a significant part of the *gaucher* and agricultural land of the village and nearby hamlets. The worst affected communities were the Bhil hamlet of Shiva jo tar and the hamlet of Hajjam, inhabited entirely by members of the Muslim Hajjam caste, traditionally employed as barbers, which has been bisected by the EDS, leaving a third of the village uninhabitable. In June 2016, crews from Baluchistan Constructions, contractors for SECMC, had arrived and cleared much of the *gaucher*. Ashok Kumar, one of the two principal leaders of the protest had told me that the villagers had not received any warning, and this was never really contradicted by the SECMC staff. During the hearing of the petition at the High Court of Sindh in Hyderabad, Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), charged by the GOS to enforce environmental rules, had confirmed that no formal approval had been given to SECMC to start

building the reservoir.  When I first met Ashok Kumar in 2016, who at that time was employed as a law lecturer in Karachi, he couched his commentary on these events very much within the discourse of 'loyalty'.

> We love Pakistan, and we love the Thar. We want to protect the environment. When it rains it is like Kashmir, very very green. The land provides everything for us. I have been posted here in Karachi, but I love my village. Once my job is finished here, I will go back. But ignore the rumours, we are protesting because we love Pakistan. Engro can make the reservoir at some other site. We have shown them. But they don't listen to us.

Ashok and his brother Jaychand, who was organising the sit-ins in front of the Karachi and Mithi press clubs, belonged to the Meghwal community, traditionally associated with leather working, an occupation that carried much stigma. Crowther and Cooper (2002) argue that for there to be a successful protest movement, it must have a centralised core of highly dedicated and persevering protestors. This core group is critical to movement continuity since they foster intergroup alliances and relationships, set the strategic direction of the movement, organise activities which tie the group together and demonstrate leadership through fierce commitment to the cause. The brothers and a close group of Meghwals provided something resembling a core group. In fact, the Meghwal domination of the core group, allowed their detractors, such as Haris Sidiqui, head of CSR at SECMC, to repeatedly make reference to this movement of the 'Meghwal brothers', generally seen as a 'low caste', in order to delegitimise the movement. The brothers had built a large cement house on a hill, over-looking the para of the Rathores, which consisted of a cluster of adobe huts. The building of this large house was often used by their detractors to show how they were 'disrespecting' the real owners of the village. When I first visited the village in December 2016, the Muslim Rathores, who had provided the patels of the village, were no longer actively involved in the protest. I was told by Sohail, a local Thari who worked for the BBC, that SECMC had gone some way to detach the Muslims of Ghorano from the movement, often making references to the brothers' Meghwal background.

The loss of the Muslim Rathores, according to Sohail, was great concern to the brothers. During a conversation with Jaychand at the Islamkot press club, where a protest was occurring, Jaychand was keen, however, to report that the whole village, indeed the whole district, were supporting their protest.

> Jaychand: This protest is for everyone. We have people from all the para.
>
> Me: Also from Rathores?
>
> Jaychand: I got a call from someone, he said I was a RAW agent. I am a Pakistani, I have never been to India. I am a Thari. Everyone in the village supports our struggle. We are farmers. Even if the compensate us how are we going to survive?

For Jaychand, it was important that he dispel rumours that the movement somehow did not have Muslim participation. When I first visited the village with Sajjan who worked as a driver for a wealthy Sindhi Hindu businessman in Karachi, also made the point that by protecting the environment, they were like soldiers protecting Pakistan. After all, what they were asking was due to them, after all they were citizens of Pakistan. Nonetheless, differences in the village were becoming apparent when I visited with Ali, a documentary filmmaker in the spring of 2017. We wanted to organise a *kutchery*, a meeting held in the village common with participation from all the communities. The attendees were largely Meghwal, however, and Muslim attendees were members of the Hajjam and Mehranpota communities, neither of whom had a dominant social status in the village. What became clear to us was that the Rathore, the 'traditional owners' of the village were absent. Although the brothers had devoted considerable effort in trying to accommodate the Rathore, even wanting one of them to be a spokesman of the movement, the prominence of the brothers in particular with regards to press coverage, was resented by the Rathore. Despite the supposed deference to the Rathores, it was difficult to hide the fact that the protest leadership, Crowther and Cooper's (2002) dedicated group, were almost entirely Meghwals, which allowed SECMC to drive a wedge into the movement.

Looking at the anti-road protest movement in the United Kingdom, Drury, Reicher and Stott (2003) have argued that the anti-road activists through the way they resisted road building, sought not only to affect society but also the ideas of other, less politicised, participants, who might thereby come to recognise the wider significance of the 'local' road-building scheme. The strategy of the brothers and others who got involved in the Ghorano protest was very much predicated on convincing villagers that their livelihoods were at stake but when talking to me or the press they emphasised how the environmental damage would have a wider impact. The brothers were clear in their conversations with me that land loss would be catastrophic for the villagers. Studies in other parts of South Asia (Gardner and Gerharz 2016) confirm the brothers fears, where land loss has a negative effect on rural economies, with few opportunities for newly landless people, with local people rarely employed in the new extractive industry.

For any protest movement to succeed, Bickerstaff et al. (2006) have argued that it must foster a sense of collective identity to mobilise and retain activists' participation in protest. In the public pronouncement, the brothers were keen to emphasize the collective loss to the village that the building of the reservoir would cause[38]. Sajjan made this point when he took me to affected farmers, in particular those whose land had already been lost. For a further symbolism, the land that had been acquired was now occupied by the SECMC site office. Two of the farmers, members of the Mehranpota Muslim caste, and who had so far not accepted the compensation money, told me in halting Urdu that they were illiterate and what would they do with the money. The brothers were keen to present the movement as united, because as Dalits and Hindus, their position vis à vis the Pakistani state was fragile. The Meghwal-led movement certainly showed growing confidence as they held sit-ins in Karachi and Mithi. Ejaz the

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[38] Thar villagers protest against construction of drainage reservoir Daily Times December 19, 2016 (https://dailytimes.com.pk/39695/thar-villagers-protest-against-construction-of-drainage-reservoir/) accessed 1 August 2020.

journalist and Sindhi nationalist, associated with the Awami Tehreek political party, was keen early supporter, as well as a source of information for both Urdu and Sindhi newspapers. In December 2016, the veteran Sindhi nationalist, the late Rasool Bux Palijo[39], announced a month-long march from Tharparkar to Karachi to protest among other things, the building of the reservoir in Ghorano[40]. This was the highwater mark for nationalist support for the Ghorano protestors. However, the brothers were reluctant to be identified too closely with nationalists, with Jaychand on one occasion denying all knowledge of Ejaz, and the other Awami Tehreek activists. Sindhi nationalists were perceived as 'anti-national' (Das 2012) by state, and the brothers were reluctant to be closely associated with local activists who had nationalist connections, which I believe they felt would bring unnecessary attention from the state security agencies. When I returned to Tharparkar in 2019, Ejaz and many of the nationalists were now lukewarm in their support, disappointed by the brothers decision to publicly disassociate themselves from the wider nationalist movement in Sindh.

In one of my meetings with Jaychand at the Islamkot press club, when asked about the lack of participation by the Rathores, in an unexpected break from the narrative of unity, Jaychand said what could he do if they had not got themselves educated enough to understand the seriousness of the land loss. This was a rare moment, however; on almost every other occasion he was always careful to argue that the destruction of village land was a wider issue, and that the protest was needed for the interests of the whole village. For the brothers, and others such as Sajjan, the protest movement gave them increased confidence, as they had become the 'face'

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[39] Palijo died in 2018
[40] Keeping Sindh intact: Awami Tehreek to hold month-long protest march The Express Tribune December 19 2016

of the Ghorano movement, they also understood the need to project unity; it was important for them to maintain the idea of unity when dealing with external actors. Reicher and Hopkins (2001) have argued that the identity of the protestor, i.e. their understanding of their position within a set of social relations, allows them to consider the possible and proper action flowing from that position. For the protestor, therefore, identity is something dynamic, and will change in the course of an event to the extent that one's position changes through interaction with external forces. Therefore, except that lone criticism of the Rathores, the brothers were keen to maintain an image of the unity among the Ghorano protestors.

According to Crowther and Cooper (2002), the centralised core of the protest movement plays a critical role as a conduit for the transmission of ideas, information, assumptions, beliefs and perceptions about development risks. The brothers certainly kept the core of the protestors informed; and many, as I have already mentioned, came from a close kinship group of Meghwals. They were also keen to keep the Mehranpotra onside, partly to give the impression that the community was not divided, but also to use the caste networks, since the Mehranpotra were a sub-caste of the Nohri, whose chief was Arbab Ghulam Rahim, who had been chief minister of the Sindh province from 2004 to 2008. He had changed parties a number of times, and around the time of the protest was associated with the Muslim League of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. It is worth pointing out, however, that as chief of the Nohri, Arbab was automatically expected to support the movement. As Ashok Pundit said to me:

> After the shoe incident,[41] Arbab was in the wilderness. This Ghorano drama is helping him get back into politics. The local elections are happening. Let's see if he gets anything from this.

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[41] Karachi: Arbab attacked by party activists Dawn 8 April 2008 (https://www.dawn.com/news/297126)

Arbab did assist to a degree. His brother visited the protestors who were camped outside Islamkot press club. The Arbabs also provided linkages with the Sindhi press, who the brothers knew would be slightly more sympathetic to their cause. Competitive electoral politics, which in neighbouring India (Mitra 2002) has allowed for patronage networks to develop consisting of the local elites, who have access to the local administration. However, in the borderlands of South Asia, there are severe limitations in what the elites can achieve. India and Pakistan, both afflicted by the "Wagah Syndrome", severely restrict meaningful protest in the borderlands. Much of the administrative duties in the India Pakistan borderland are carried out by security agencies, directly under the control of central authority, who are less dependent on local elites. Gupta (2011) found in Kargil, which is located in the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir, that demands for a transborder road connecting Skardu (Pakistan) Kargil (India) was constantly brought up in electoral hustings, but local politicians realised that they could do very little to support the sentiment. The protestors in Ghorano in the end faced similar situation where local politicians were limited in the support that they could offer.

The movement also had their detractors in the Thar. Sudhir Mallani, the PPP youth district president was clear that this was a 'conspiracy' against the district. Ashok Pandit was more damming:

> Mustafasahib there is story behind this protest. The original contract was given to Pak Oasis in 2015. You know that's Zardari's company. They did nothing, so SECMC took over the project. These two brothers, they are a front for Zardari. He wanted a cut from SECMC, who refused to pay. That's why we have this protest. The district needs to advance, and these people are stopping it.

The idea that there was someone behind the protest was often encouraged by Haris. When I asked him why there were protests, he was always keen to suggest hidden hands.

> Mustafa you have spent too long in Britain. Here there has to be an angle. Look, go to Ghorano, there was nothing there. We have built a reverse osmosis plant, and we will

> give them electricity, and improve the road. The brothers, they have been with the PPP, and what have they done for the village. Nothing. There is someone behind all this.

The Ghorano protest has begun to fizzle out by late 2018, with SECMC on the verge of completing the reservoir. Speaking to Jaychandin early 2018, I have learnt that the Mehranpota have accepted the increased payment. The brothers were under increased pressure, according to Sohail, Jaychand had received a phone call from the much-feared Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), urging him to stop supporting the movement. Hansraj, an activist from Mithi, who had been supportive of the movement was also arrested at this time. These pressures led the brothers to decrease many of their public engagements, which led to both the local and national press losing interest in the protest.

What was unique about Ghorano, however, was that the Pakistani state had tolerated the protest. The initial reaction in the Thar was that the Ghorano villagers needed adequate compensation for the loss of their land, which had not been forthcoming. Mohamadbhai, who was generally skeptical of the protest, however felt that experiences of the two villages in Block II had shown that the compensation granted to them had not sufficient, and the Ghorano protestors were entitled to demand more. Here I come back to Habermas's ideas (1975); on how successful protest involves delegitimising state narratives. As I argue, the principle of compensating landowners for their loss is widely accepted in Pakistan, and indeed enshrined by the law. Had the Pakistani state repressed the movement at the onset, then such action would be seen to illegitimate. Haris Siddiqui at SECMC CSR had confirmed that 'masla hal karna hai', the problem has to be resolved, rather than overridden, with at least some concessions. The concession here was promises of electricity, a new road and considerably more payment

for the land then had occurred in Block II. However, when the brothers insisted that reservoir not be built, this was seen as a bridge to far. For most Tharis, ideas around the need for development were the 'common sense'; as Ashok Pandit said it would be madness to oppose the various infrastructural projects, a process which Gramsci calls domination through consent, the acceptance of cultural ideology in the face of circumstances that would undermine it (Harms: 91).

The Ghorano protest was the only example of a grassroots' collective action in Tharparkar that focused on collective efforts at the local level aimed at the advancement of local interests. (Teo & Loosemore 2011). The existing 'horizontal inequalities' in Tharparkar affected political participation, as any successful protest movement is dependent on ownership of "assets" (financial, land, livestock and human and social capital) (Stewart 2008), which the Ghorano protestors lacked. Throughout the protest, the brothers invested considerable effort to sidestep the existing horizontal inequalities. However, unlike Rasul Bux, they lacked the legitimacy of belonging to the patel lineages of the village. I was often told by their critics that the brothers were upstarts, who had ignored the Rathores to their detriment. Their caste and religious background meant that lacked the 'social capital' (Bourdieu's 1984) to provide leadership. They could have dealt with this disability by incorporating their movement into the transnational network of social and environmental activists who are plugged in to the global discourses of environmental and anti-infrastructure protests (Cummings & Higgins 2006). However, any such move would be seen as a sign of 'disloyalty' by a cartographically anxious Pakistani state. In the end, these complexities meant that the movement was unlikely to have succeeded and has all but fizzled out by 2020.

**Conclusions**

Individuals being displaced by large scale infrastructure projects have been referred to by some as development refugees (Mahapatra 1983). Cernea (1990), a former World Bank employee, has argued that, compared to other refugees, development-related displacements inflict upon the uprooted population material losses that are often greater, or definitive. For instance, refugees fleeing their homelands because of civil war, persecution, or flooding may in some cases eventually return, at least to their farming land; those displaced by dam reservoirs, however, will never get the same lands back, and simply cannot return to their earlier homes. Unlike Mitra's (2002) India, the Pakistani state has not looked at democracy and development as twin pillars of its policy. Disputes over loss of land are therefore unlikely to turn violent, since those leading them know that the state's response may be unpredictable.

The questions I asked at the start were who gets to protest, and what can the protest be about. Habermas's (1975) ideas that a state is perceived as being legitimate when its citizens treat it as properly holding and exercising political power is more useful for our analysis. Hansen and Stepputat (2001) expand this point by arguing that the state itself is the audience that see itself as consumers of its own legitimating acts, reassuring itself of its power and relevance. Both the Ghorano protestors and Rasul Bux were challenging the legitimacy of the state's actions, with a narrative that loss of land required fair and adequate compensation. The regime of land compensation is seen as legitimate by both the state and the villagers in the coal field. I believe that Agamben's (1998, 2000) ideas are too prescriptive, the legal framework for land acquisition in Pakistan theoretically creates a category of people deemed 'expendable', but as we saw with Rasul Bux, his position as landowner and from a 'patel' lineage, with its symbolic capital was enough for SECMC to negotiate. The Ghorano villagers were also challenging a hegemonic discourse that development was something good. Bose (1997) has argued in South

Asia, despite the fluctuations in policy and its attendant institutional innovation, the emphasis on development has greatly affected the nature of state–society relations after independence. This emphasis on 'development' has produced in the region what Gramsci calls a 'domination through consent (Harms 2011:91) where 'consent' is produced through an everyday acceptance of a cultural ideology of 'development' even in the face of circumstances such as the uneven gains and displacement of population. Whether development took on a Rostovian modernist turn, or a neo-liberal one, it was seen as a 'good thing'. By opposing the reservoir, the Ghorano protestors were far more controversial, and eventually the protest fizzled out.

# Chapter 5: We Are Now a Mohallah of Karachi: Changes in the Spatial Worlds of Tharparkar

When I first arrived in the Thar in 2014, I was talking with Hitesh, whose family owned the guesthouse I was staying at. When I told him that I had taken the new Coal Road, which was still under construction, he looked horrified. You know it goes through nothingness you should have used the road through Mirpurkhas. The existing roads in Tharparkar had followed the wells, while the Coal Road went through an arid patch of 40 kilometres, running in an almost in a straight-line westwards from Mithi towards the town of Wango Pattan. This was, and still is, a sparsely populated region of Tharparkar (Nadiem 2001). Wango, and the area around it, was historically connected with Kutch, its caste and religious composition reflecting those links, as well as those with the Indus Delta, and city of Karachi beyond. Mithi and the rest of Tharparkar was connected to Rajasthan and northwards towards the *Patt,* literally meaning the head or northern region, a region of rich canal-irrigated lands, with the city of Mirpurkhas acting as an important regional centre. In between lay an arid stretch of the Thar, sparsely populated. When I was leaving the field in the summer of 2017, I was told, half-jokingly, by Jaani, a local journalist, that the Thar was now a *mohallah* of Karachi. Karachi had been a far-off place, but now Tharparkar was reduced to being a neighbourhood of the large metropolis. There were also implications in this reduction of Thari identity with regards to the ongoing and anticipatory social change in Tharparkar. In what was a comparatively short period, the Tharis spatial conceptions had changed, with the Coal Road acting as bridge linking the district to Karachi. Social scientists have argued that concepts of space and time are socially constructed, but they operate with the full force of objective fact and play a key role in processes of social

reproduction (see Lefebvre 1974; Harvey 1990; Cresswell & Merriman 2011). I was repeatedly told by bureaucrats or NGOwallahs how Tharparkar was a remote region, requiring development, with road building being essential. Here, I will look at how discourses of mobility are produced by a social construction of 'space' and 'remoteness', which have now been reconfigured by the construction of the Coal Road. I argue in this chapter that these changes have been both alienating and empowering for the Tharis.

For the optimists who subscribed to the modernisation theory in the post-war world, roads were considered to be an important catalyst of economic development (Rostow, 1960). Despite the subsequent discrediting of modernisation theory as simplistic, roads have continued to be seen as a talisman for development and that elusive goal, connectivity (Wilson 2004). In Pakistani official discourse, infrastructural development, such as dams and roads, are seen as the precursor of the 'good life' (Anwar 2015:2). With anthropology taking a post-modernist turn, the relation between modernity, mobility and accelerated living have subsequently become standard tropes in contemporary social science. Terms such as mobility (Urry 2007; Cresswell & Merriman 2011), flows (Appadurai 2000), networks (Castells 1996), liquidity (Bauman 2000) or even exhaustion (Brennan 2000) have entered the standard lexicon and are frequently used, either metaphorically or pragmatically, to describe and analyse the conditions of late capitalism. Roads, as Dalakoglou and Harvey (2012:459) argue, are now giving social scientists a platform to examine how "the powerful sense of mobility that they promise carry us back and forth between the sweeping narratives of globalisation, and the specific, tangible materialities of particular times and places". If the space is 'social construction', then the lines that connect that space are equally social constructed. Current research on roads and issues of mobility have focused on physical mobility (Miller 2001; Wollen & Kerr 2002; Moran 2009; Merriman 2011). Masquelier (2002), however, points out the profound ambivalence that has developed towards roads, mobility and transport in post-colonial Niger, which has heavily

influenced the ways other studies have focused on how people experience (auto)mobility, space and modernity (Khan 2006; Klaeger 2009; Dalakoglou 2010; Hart 2011). Ethnographies of mobility often explore this profound ambiguity between fears and desires. The newly-constructed roads in the Global South often have poor safety records, and are sites of horrendous road accidents, yet the 'thrill of speeding' is much sought after (Lamont 2013). New modes of transport, such as buses or motorcycles have an influence on mobility and the usage is linked to the economic stratification of the population, which affects the levels of benefits that individuals may derive from the appearance of new road networks and roadwork improvements (Bryceson, Bradbury & Bradbury 2008). The complexities between anticipation, expectation and ambiguity in how mobility is experienced will be explored further in this chapter.

## Mobility and Remoteness: The Social Production of Space

I started off this chapter with my conversation with Hitesh, who had cautioned me against using the newly-built Coal Road as it was going through what he referred to by the Urdu term *bayabaan*. This contrasted sharply with my conversation with Mohammadbhai during my last visit to Tharparkar in 2019, who told me I should use the last bus leaving at midnight. When I expressed concern about doing the overnight journey, he said they get quickly to Karachi, as there was less traffic at that time. This was now an uncomplicated matter of convenience, the traffic rather than the wells being now the most important consideration, demonstrating how the centuries-long connections with the wells was already becoming an historic memory. The Indian Route Book published in 1922 by the Government of India for those early intrepid motorists, has an important section devoted to the availability of water and supplies. The wells are no longer as important to the new roads that are being built, as OP, the chief engineer of Tharparkar at the time of my fieldwork told me; the terrain and cost of building were now the

principles guiding new construction. Lefebvre, in his book, *The Production of Space* (2012), has argued that space is a social product, or a complex social construction (based on values, and the social production of meanings) which affects spatial practices and perceptions. This argument implies a shift of the research perspective from space itself to the processes of its production; the embrace of the multiplicity of spaces that are socially produced and made productive in social practices; and the focus on the contradictory, conflictual and, ultimately, political character of the processes of production of space. Lefebvre is often credited for the spatial turn in anthropology (Urry 1995; Cresswell 2004). Since space is a socially constructed idea, it evolves as a social category "through interactions and practice" (Scheflechner 2017:) and it is these interactions that give space its meaning. According to Lefebvre, space is not a merely three-dimensional area where life happens but rather more complex, produced out of representations and discourses about space. He describes "space as an arena of struggle where productions and reproductions of spatial phenomena, like land territories and site happens" (Schaflechner 2017: 182) It was not just space, but place which has been socially produced. This was explained by Harvey (1993: 5) as "The first step down the road is to insist that place, in whatever guise, is like space and time, a social construct. The only interesting question that can be asked is, by what social process(es) is place constructed?" If both space and place are socially constructed, then I will argue that the building of the Coal Road has fundamentally changed the way in which both are understood in Tharparkar.

Literature on roads often has an emphasis on mobility and the resultant improved communications (Urry 2007; Cresswell & Merriman 2011), indeed mobility has been called the 'cardinal concept' in contemporary social science (Bauman 1998; Beckmann 2004). If space and time are connected, the ability to reduce time through improved mobility, the speeding up of travel (Bauman 2000), has led to the twinning of mobility with modernity (Urry 2000: 2). Dalakoglou and Harvey (2012) state "roads and the powerful sense of mobility that

they promise carry us back and forth between the sweeping narratives of globalisation, and the specific, tangible materialities of particular times and places". Salazar and Smart (2011: i) reinforce this point when they look at mobility, theorising it as "a concept-metaphor [that] captures the common impression that our lifeworlds are in constant flux, with not only people, but also cultures, objects, capital, businesses, services, diseases, media-images, information, and ideas circulating across the planet". They go on (p. ii) to say that they believe that there is almost a given trajectory towards better mobility. They set out the following three presumptions on this lineal progression of mobility:

(1) the ability to move;

(2) the ease or freedom of movement; and

(3) the tendency to change easily or quickly.

Under the current neo-liberal economic order, however mobility now distinguishes the powerful from the powerless (Bauman, 1998). Salazar and Smart's definition of mobility I would argue is simplistic, as the promise (or threat) of future connectivity, is always embedded in local particularities. The ability to move may not be dependent simply on the existence of a road, but other social, political and economic factors, and In Chapter 6 I will explore how new roads may be sites where mobility is restricted.

Those who have taken the 'spatial turn' have often seen roads as symbols of dominance (Urry 2007, Cresswell & Merriman 2011). Lefebvre (1991:165) describes the effect contemporary road constructions as that of a knife cutting apart space:

> In order to dominate space, technology introduces a new form of pre-existing space – generally a rectilinear or rectangular form such as a meshwork or chequework. A motorway brutalizes the countryside and the land, slicing through space like a great knife. Dominated space is usually closed, sterilized and emptied out.

Recent ethnographies (Dalakoglou 2017; Mostowlanski 2017) have challenged this view as one-sided, with roads seen as emancipatory in borderland locations This binary approach was certainly challenged by the lived experiences of the Tharis, who often had quite positive views of the Coal Road, and of roads and infrastructure in general. Harms (2011) discusses how his interlocutors in peri-urban Saigon felt that development and urbanisation gave them a place in socialist Vietnam, where the government had marked focus towards the larger urban centres. In Tharparkar, meanwhile, development was seen as legitimising their claims to citizenship.

Road making in 'remote regions' is always about what Harms (2011:92) calls the politics of 'time orientation'. For Harms, the architects and engineers who conceive road schemes focus on journey times from the centre to the periphery to be reduced. Zimmerer et al. (2017: 443) has defined remoteness as an "overall low degree of connectedness to powerful national and global territories and sites". The purpose of the road-making is therefore to overcome remoteness by connecting the margins with 'powerful global territories' of capital and resource extraction. Looking at Pakistan, Haines (2012: 2) argues that "roads orient the spatial and temporal worlds of people and integrate them into the multiple sociocultural spheres they live in". In neighbouring Xinjiang, Joniak-Luthi (2016: 120) argues that Chinese road building programmes were specific in their aims for a "thorough spatial reorganisation as new roads increase connectivity, as well as the circulation of some people, some goods, and some capital". The purpose of road building in Xinjiang has a clear "territorial function: it organises space in a specific way, demarcates it, and contributes to the production of a particular type of spatial connectivity that focuses on administrative power centres" (Joniak-Luthi 2016: 120). Lefebvre (1974) describes highways as an emblematic element of dominance over a landscape. In Xinjiang, roads have meant better connectivity with eastern China, but disruption to links with Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan, whose border regions share a long history interactions. Road building was neglected by the Chinese government until the 1960s because improved

transportation networks would, it was feared, further facilitate the expansion of Soviet influence into Xinjiang (2016: 120). Like the Chinese in Xinjiang up to the 1960s, the Pakistani state had long neglected road building in Tharparkar (Khalti 2015). In Xinjiang, this road building has changed the organisation of space and notions of distance and facilitates the creation of specific forms of spatial boundedness that focus on regional administrative centres and, more importantly, eastern China. Improved mobility therefore has to be problematised. In Tharparkar, roads are achieving the twin aim of turning a liminal space into a regulated space and producing a new spatial connectivity.

**The Past is a Faraway Place**

In conversations in Karachi, Tharparkar was repeatedly referred to as 'remote'. I was often also told prior to my first visit that it is 'impossible' to go there; the roads, if they existed at all, were in a terrible state. The journey I undertook to Tharparkar on the Coal Road at the start of my fieldwork would seem very much at odds with the warnings I was receiving, however. I arrived in Mithi, the district headquarters of Tharparkar, on 2 October 2016, within just seven hours. What was interesting about this journey was how uneventful it was. I got to what are called bus stands in Karachi in Teen Hatti district, a largely working class part of Karachi, where industrial units, including bus garages, lay interspersed with houses, many four stories tall. Most of the drivers I encountered on the bus lived in Teen Hatti, and many were Pathans from the northern regions of Pakistan. The bus company offices were in a shack, located underneath a flyover. The week before, I had arrived at the bus office, and had been given a little card with the bus timings. On the day of my travel, the bus arrived on time (12:40) and left on time. The bus was an old reconditioned Korean Daewoo, typical of those that ply the provincial routes in Pakistan. This was a new route, having started a few months before. Buses had previously used the 1987 road going through Hyderabad and Mirpurkhas, but with the

opening of the Coal Road, journey times had been reduced to seven hours from almost eleven previously. These new buses were referred to as 'coaches' and ranked higher than the common buses in the hierarchy of road users. The road from Karachi to Thatha took us along the wreckage of the Rostovian modernisation that Pakistan had undertaken since independence, namely the large port at Kharo Chan Island, named Bin Qasim, after the young Iraqi who is said to have conquered Sindh for the Caliphate in 712, and the Pakistan Steel Mills, built by the Soviets during the 1970s, when the Soviets were trusted elder brothers who would rid Pakistan of its dependence on the hated Americans. Both of these lumbering state enterprises were making a loss, but political practicalities meant neither were likely to close. The passengers were a mixture, the classic Sindhi cap and *ajrakh* of the Delta region mixed with the Thari turban and *dhoti*, with the *babus*, possibly government employees, or even salesman wearing their uniform of shirt and trousers. There was little sociability, most keeping to themselves. If we accept Tambs-Lyche's (2004) argument that bus journeys in South Asia are about dealing with the Other, then on the new air-conditioned buses that are increasingly plying the roads of Pakistan, it is indifference that seems to be the response.

Almost on time, I arrived at Kashmir Chawk at 7 pm. The bus glided over the newly built road from Wango to Mithi. This contrasted even with the first journey I made to district in 2015, in an ancient Suzuki car, when the road was half built, taking almost ten hours. The journey I undertook could have been undertaken anywhere, with petrol stations and billboards all along the road, the material culture of international road travel was coming to Pakistan.

Social change can also be seen as a 'temporal concept'and looking at how social actors give meaning to the "sequence, interval, duration, and change to the lived experience of time" (Harms 2011: 92) can allow us to understand that social change better. The building of roads is altering the 'lived experience' of time in Tharparkar and reflects on the ongoing social

changes. When I had arrived in Karachi for my master's dissertation, I was making enquiries about Tharparkar at a think-tank, and the instant response was that only the most dedicated would work there. For NGO workers, working in Tharparkar had acquired 'symbolic capital' as a 'remote' place. Like 'place' and 'space', 'remoteness', is also socially constructed. Anderson (2014) argues that the trope of 'remoteness' really relates to certain ways of life, while, for the urban NGOwallahs, the journey to Tharparkar was long, for the nomadic pastoralist who has lived in the Thar region, large scale travel was of course part of their earlier lived experience of time (Kothiyal 2017). Remoteness as a concept has been under-theorised within social sciences. For geographers, remoteness suggests a challenge of accessibility, both with respect to human mobility and the extension of state capacity (Kuklinaa & Holland 2018). This remoteness was often exoticised in the past, with Tharparkar being seen as a site of something illicit: alcohol was said to be readily available, all smuggled from India, and it was home to 'tribal' people, living in adobe huts. With the arrival of the British in the mid-nineteenth century, Tharparkar began to be seen as a barren, isolated, sometimes 'worthless' place, often being portrayed as a marginal, unwieldy and difficult land (Hughes 1877). NGOs workers often would tell me in detail the difficulty of getting there, with anecdotes of the poor condition of the roads. Mohammad Khan, for example, described his first visit in the late 1990s, almost a decade after the first road was built:

> We finally made it to Mithi, I was in a Suzuki jeep. The journey had been back-breaking. The road was damaged, because of flooding. Massive potholes. From Mirpurkhas, it took us over four hours, what should be an hour and a half journey. The next day, I said I wanted to visit Nagarparkar, and I got this laughter. *Sir jee,* it will take over 24 hours to get there. Now with Coal Road, you have families in their Suzukis going there (from Karachi) after Monsoons. I still can't believe it.

The complete absence of roads until the late 1980s was a running theme in many conversations. There was real incredulity about the fact that families from Karachi were going on holiday to far off Nagarparkar. Mohammad Khan remembers spending a night on the road, when their car

broke down. There was an absence of petrol stations and mechanics, essential to the smooth running of roads. The first available mechanic could not make it till the morning, and the 1998 road was in a poor condition due to heavy rains. John Beauclerk, the Englishman who arrived a decade earlier to run an NGO, just when the original road had been completed, described his first journey:

> John: I had a police convoy, after Mirpurkhas. There was no petrol station on the road from Mirpurkhas to Mithi, so we had to carry everything. The petrol in jerrycans, spare batteries, food, anything Save the Children in Mithi would want. The jeep was packed.
>
> Me: So how was the journey to Islamkot?
>
> John: Our Toyota jeep kept getting stuck in the sand dunes. It took us five hours to make it to Islamkot. Everything had to come this way. Things like building material cost a fortune. I had to keep telling Karachi why everything cost so much.

There was often a tinge of regret about the increased accessibility of the region from many of the ex-NGO workers. For John Beauclerk, accessibility would mean greater 'exposure' to the rest of the country, but, never a romantic, for him the better communications would also mean better access to hospitals and roads.

The town of Naukot often came in the conversations about the pre-road journeys to Hyderabad and Karachi. The Thar did not have and still does not have a university. Further education, as we have seen in Mohammadbhai's case, meant leaving the district. Dr Nanakdas had qualified as a doctor from Sindh University a year before the road linking Mithi to Mirpurkhas and the rest of the province was built in 1987. The doctor was much sought after by journalists and other visitors to the Thar. He came from a well-established Lohana family, and his father ran a shop in the bazaar. When I asked him about the delay in the building of the Mirpurkhas to Mithi road:

> Dr Nanakdas: No, I was happy with Mithi the way it was. We had fresh milk, none of this powdered stuff. The road brought us *Nido*.

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Me: But the journey was difficult?

Dr Nanakdas: Yes, but everyone got on. I remember the *kekra* that left Naukot, where the narrow-gauge railway from Mirpurkhas ended. It left at five, just after sun rise. It usually took twelve hours, but sometimes, the trucks would break down. Everyone helped the driver. We also brought *chadars,* as we might have to spend the night, if the dunes were difficult. Everyone shared their food. In the new a/c buses, no one even talks to each other.

The doctor was even more excited to tell me about his early journeys to Karachi with his father:

It took a full three days. At that time, we didn't have the kekras, but the jeeps had just arrived. Our family were well off, others were still using camels. The jeep took longer, and was overflowing with goods. We also had our sleeping mats. It took almost a day to get to Naukot. Then we took the train to Mirpurkhas, and would stay with a relative. You know we knew everyone on the train. We knew who would get on it in Digri, and we would exchange pleasantries, gossips. It ran slowly, it let us breathe. Nowadays, everything is quick. You have fish masala to cook the fish, just go buy it in a shop. There is a pleasure in travel, just like preparing the masala to cook the fish. In Mirpurkhas, we always met family members. They would ask to bring things from Karachi. Then take the train to Karachi. We arrived fully prepared.

For the doctor, the journey on the Coal Road does not prepare one for Karachi. Perhaps the doctor was right, I would often drift off and awake to see the industrial suburbs of Karachi, a landscape that was very different from the sand dunes of the Thar. Dr Nanakdas was especially nostalgic in respect to the narrow-gauge railway that ran from Naukot, in the northern-most portion of Tharparkar, to the city of Mirpurkhas. Construction had begun in 1909 from Mirpur Khas and was completed in 1935. An extension of this line was to cross or go around the Rann of Kutch, to link up with the then narrow-gauge Bombay-Baroda and Central India Railway, but the Second World War intervened (Mughal 2009). With Partition in 1947, any plans to extend the railway southwards were permanently shelved. It took me some time actually to find Naukot station, hidden behind a petrol station, the irony lost on the truck drivers relieving themselves in its grounds, whose trucks had made the railway redundant. The current state of the station suggest that roads were always going to be the winners, however in the post-war period, even in the United States, a land associated with the motor car, highways were just one

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form of transportation available, but were victorious over other means such as railways as a result of lobbying by a powerful automobile industry (Mom & Kirch 2001). In Tharparkar, until the late 1980s, the train was very much the victor, as its rival, the road, did not exist. Mohammadbhai was slightly more critical of the train, arguing it took seven hours, a journey that now only takes an hour and half on the bus. Perhaps, as a Muslim, he did not need to prepare for the journey into the largely Muslim urban Sindh.

The town of Naukot has literally been left behind by the construction of the Coal Road. Construction of new roads often influences the geography of economic activity, and since most of the Karachi-bound traffic was now using the new road, businesses in Naukot bazaar were suffering. I spoke to a petrol station owner, who told me that trucks from Karachi or indeed Punjab are all using the Coal Road, and he might have to close the pump. Naukot's status as an important stepping-stone in many Tharis' journey to the urban centres of Sindh is rapidly disappearing.

Gibson et al. (2010) have argued that remoteness is tangibly measured in distance travel times and metaphorically measured in the figurative perception of the remote as removed from the political and cultural mainstream of the state. Development and improved mobility can therefore be understood "as a form of advancing through time" (Harms 2011: 114). Tharparkar, with the recent road building, is no longer as far removed from the political centres. The ongoing social changes were producing nostalgia, however, and a longing for a mythologised past, allowing for many Tharis to escape from their imperfect present.

**The Rhetoric of Connectivity: We Deserve a road; the Subaltern Discourses Along the Road**

Many intelocutors were often effusive about the changes brought about by the Coal Road. Mohammadbhai, from the village of Memon that stood on the Coal Road, a mere five miles from Islamkot, describes its isolation:

> There was no electricity in the village. To get to Islamkot was an adventure. My father decided we will move to Hyderabad. He wanted us to be educated, not shopkeepers. When I joined the Education Department, and moved back to Mithi, we have the unpaved old road. I remember going to the village. It was such a difficult journey. Because of my duties, I travelled quite a bit in the district. We had to pack like we were going to war. Honestly travelling was like having a disease. Now, whenever I need, I go the village. Yesterday I got a call, there was an errand to do, got on my motorcycle, and was in the village in 30 minutes.

Larkin argues that infrastructure (2013: 329) can generate "forms of desire and fantasy and can take on fetish-like aspects that sometimes can be wholly autonomous from their technical function". These desires and fantasies are mediated"by particular histories of infrastructural intervention, as well as particular geopolitical configurations, engineering (im)possibilities, and political desires" (Reeves 2017:712). For Ashok Pandit, running his own NGO and from an influential Brahman landowning family, the lack of roads in Tharparkar was seen as a sign of the region's marginality. Speaking to me in Karachi, the end of the state of remoteness revolved around the issues of citizenship and equality:

> Ashok Pundit: "You know how difficult it was to travel to Karachi. I spoke to you on the phone this morning, did my chores, and we left for Karachi, and now I am sitting here in *Dreamworld*[42] talking to you in person. That shows that the Thar is important. Gilgit had a road, but we didn't. They will not forget us"

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[42] Dreamworld is a resort, hotel and golf course in Karachi, where I first met Ashok Pundit

> Me: Do you think the government would have built the road if it wasn't for the discovery of the coalfield?

> Ashok Pundit: I don't know. But now we have the coal, and they have built the road. You see how busy the new bus terminal in Islamkot is. The a/c buses are the norm. More importantly, we can take our sick to the hospitals. Building houses in the Thar was so expensive. We now have the road, and things are easier/

With both accounts, we can see that it would be difficult to refer to the Coal Road simply as a 'dominated space'.. Wafer (2012 notes, with reference to post-apartheid South Africa, argues that infrastructure plays a significant role in political expectations as the state attempts to re-frame citizenship as a way of righting the wrongs of a previous regime that was selective in infrastructure development. In Tharparkar, the lack of infrastructure is seen as displaying a disinterest in the welfare of Tharis, which showed that they were not seen as 'proper Pakistanis'. For Mohammadbhai, the Coal Road was one of the many changes that were making him feel like a 'proper Pakistani'.

> Mustafabhai, I did computer training in Hyderabad, at Technical Institute, training to become a computer programmer. My classmates would make fun of my Sindhi accent, and one of the Muhajir instructors had asked me whether I was a Muslim. Now we have KTN,[43] mobiles phones and of course the Road. My boy is training to be an engineer. He speaks excellent Sindhi, and of course excellent Urdu. No one will make fun of his accent. I am now renovating my house. We have land along the Road, you know, I am looking to maybe build *hotal* and I am looking for a partner, there is a lot of passing trade to pick up. Not just the truck drivers, but military traffic and tourists in the monsoons.

The new Coal Road was not just a site of greater economic opportunities, it was also being used to access health and educational facilities. I was visiting Jan Mohammad in Village B in the coalfield. When I arrived at his compound, I was told that his daughter-in-law had gone into labour. Assuming that he had taken her to Mithi, I asked if I could meet Jan Mohammed at an NGO office, where he tended to stay. I was told that they had gone to Karachi on the

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[43] Sindh cable t.v. channel

advice of the doctor, since there had been complications in a previous pregnancy. Jan Mohammad had family in Karachi, which made the trip possible. When I asked Khairu, whose wife was from the village, if others were also using the new Coal Road to access medical facilities in Karachi, he said with a smile, if they had the money, they would. The point I wish to make is that Karachi is now seen as option for education and medical treatments, although the existing inequalities were making it difficult for all Tharis to access these. The 'difficulty' of getting to Tharparkar was also something Jivan Das, the late head of CSR at SECMC brought up.

> Jivan: When I first came here, in the late 90s, the journey was a *tamasha*. When SECMC was formed, everyone understood that things were serious. We needed to import machinery from Australia, China. This could only be done with a good road. Karachi is not far, but we need a good road.
>
> Me: Are you confident that the road will be built?
>
> Jivan: Of course, you used it to get here.
>
> Me: Yes.
>
> Jivan: It's no longer going to be remote. Everyone can come now, even people from London.

Jivan said that the government was 'serious', the new 'common sense' in Pakistan would be that Tharparkar was not going to be 'remote'. Like the Peruvian villagers that Wilson (2004) studied, being 'off the beaten track' may have been a source of autonomy in the past but, for many in the Thari elites, the absence of the state reinforced their marginality, even if the state's sudden appearance may potentially lead to loss of land, community control and greater impoverishment. After all, they are Pakistani, and like the people of Gilgit, deserved their road.

## The Bypass to the Mandi

The consequences of sealing the India-Pakistan border for the local economy were said to be dire. The construction of the Coal Road was, I was told, opening up new opportunities. Amir, an Islamkoti Memon, who had served as President of the Market Association, told him how important the Coal Road now was.

> We can now deal directly with transporters in Karachi. I now send onions from Nagarparkar to the *Sabzi Mandi*[44] in Karachi.

Amir said that the Tharparkar variety of cattle was especially prized and had accompanied me to the new cattle market held every Thursday in Islamkot, situated next to the Coal Road. Road making in Tharparkar was not only opening new markets for Thari merchants but was allowing others to access Tharparkar. There were buyers from just about everywhere in Pakistan, with Toyota trucks overladen with cattle and goats, and I was told by Amir that there were now new players in the cattle trade in Thar. Traditionally, Hindus, mainly Srimali Brahmans and Maheshris had dominated this trade, and this was especially the case before the sealing of the border. The newer buyers were mainly Punjabis, many from Mirpurkhas, who themselves were middlemen for buyers in Karachi or Lahore. Amir himself was unsure as to whether to invest in the livestock trade and avail the opportunities of the new market, telling me that the Punjabis were much more aggressive. Abdul, who was a cook at the NGO I stayed at, and who belonged to a family of Muslim pastoralists, was also very critical of the 'sharp dealings' of these Punjabis. As Abdul said "hum seedha log hain – we are straightforward". These interactions reflected the existing tensions between Sindhis and Punjabis, but both Amir and Abdul were also critical of the supposedly corrupt practices of the previous Hindu merchants, often

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[44] Vegetable wholesale market

reinforcing prejudices that exist against the Hindu Other (Scheflechner 2017). Nonetheless, they both claimed that there was a degree of understanding that no longer exists with the Punjabis. New roads offer new possibilities and opportunities of transport-related work, but as Masquelier (2002: 836) cautions, roads are often cast "as pathways to wealth and status for those who know **how to use them**". The development literature often ignores the "messy reality, power relations and the uncertainty and unpredictability of outcomes in everyday life" (2004: 526).

The cattle market was located near the newly built bus terminal, and further up was the still half built Mosque and markaz of the Jamate ul Duwa, (JUD) the 'civilian' wing of the militant Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LET). This gave the newly-created public space an exclusionary character. Jay Kumar, who was the manager of the NGO I was staying at, and who belonged to a Mahesheri merchant family, also felt uncomfortable at the fact that the cattle were being taken to be slaughtered. Traditionally, the cattle that were sent mainly to Kutch and other parts of Gujarat were mainly for breading purposes (Hughes 1877). Amir accepted that this new space was exclusionary:

> We in the Thar have avoided conflict. When I was market president, the first Muslim one, I always spoke with the Hindus. They are big *vyapris*, but the selling of cattle for slaughter, I see nothing wrong with it. You know, only twenty years ago, no Muslim could open a shop here. Now we have many. I am hoping someone will do this commercially. In my village, Engro are thinking of putting in machines for milk. Vankwani[45] is so rich, if he cares so much for the cattle, why did he not put this machinery for milk?

The arrival of Punjabi traders shows that the Tharparkar is no longer remote. Another group that is increasingly present in the Thar are the Pathans, many of whom have become moneylenders. I was visiting Gul Khan, who owned a cloth shop in Mithi bazar. He was one

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[45] Ramesh Vankwani, a politician and businessman from the currently ruling PTI party

of the pioneers, having moved to Mithi in the late 1990s from the tribal region of Bajaur, near the Afghan border. Conversations, as often, started off with the effect of the new road:

> Me: Gul Khan, how has the Coal Road improved business?

> Gul Khan: It was expensive to get anything from Karachi, and it took forever. This t-shirt, I buy from a Muhajir in Mirpurkhas. He has links in Karachi. See with the new road, I can go straight to Karachi.

> Me: So business is now better?

> Gul Khan: Yes business is better, but you see we are a minority here. All of them, they work against us. That's why I support the JUD. I sent my son to the JUD school. But with the new road, we can bypass the Hindus. I now deal directly with Pathans in Karachi. The Muhajir was cheating me. I now want to buy the shop, but the *Brahman* doesn't want to sell.

The new road was clearly straining existing networks. For Gul Khan, this meant no longer dealing with the Muhajir middleman or the Hindu who owned his shop. The Pathan moneylenders were also stepping into the shoes of the previously dominant Hindu groups, such as the *Soni*, *Shrimali* and *Maheshri*. Dilip was a young lad, who belonged to the Balmiki community, and worked as a sweeper in the guesthouse I often stayed at in Mithi. He always had the latest smartphone and managed to get the Wi-Fi code for me. He told me that alcoholism was real problem in the Balmiki para. Most of his salary went to a Pathan money lender to pay the family debt, and the remainder to a Kutchi *Muhajir*[46] who owned a mobile phone shop, to pay off the loan on his new phone. When I asked Rahman, the hotel manager about this, he simply said that yes, the Pathans were tough, the Hindus often had accepted unpaid labour, and there had been a trust that had developed between the moneylenders and the Balmiki, which was not the case with the Pathans. He told me that just a few days ago, a Balmiki had been beaten senseless by a newly arrived Pathan. When I asked Jaani, who ran the

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[46] A term used to describe an Indian Muslim refugee or someone descended from a Indian refugee

local press club, he seemed uninterested. He said the poor are spendthrift but agreed with Rahman that the older money lenders had a code. At weddings, for example, they were willing to make a payment vacation. There is no empirical data that I have at hand, other than articles in newspapers and anecdotal evidence that I found in Mithi, to show that Balmikis and other Dalits were particularly vulnerable. As this newspaper article shows:[47]

> Like many residents in the Christian locality, Masih, a sweeper, ended up losing his father's house after he was unable to pay the high interest rate on an informal loan. "I took Rs100,000 in loan for my daughter's wedding with a 100 per cent interest rate. When I could not make one installment, armed lenders barged into my house, slapped my wife and threw our things out."

> Initially introduced by Afghan and Pathan immigrants, this informal and undocumented lending system has dug its claws deep into the densely populated area of minorities. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan vice-chairperson Amarnath Motumal said minorities are forced to seek informal loans because of the lack of equal opportunities. "The government should take serious initiatives to eradicate poverty. The ministry for minorities gets millions of rupees but where does the money go?"

Greater mobility has meant that many money lenders are moving along the Coal Road. Gul Khan was never clear on whether he was involved in money lending himself but did say that the *Bhangis* were to blame for their own predicament, as they were drunks, and very tardy in making repayments.

## The Materiality of the New Road: Karachi is now in the Neighbourhood

The new 'spatial practices' (Lefebvre 2012:38) that the Coal Road was producing included the now repeated acts of travelling to and from Karachi. Migratory movement has occurred throughout history, where people have travelled vast distances, engaging in complex networks of cross-cultural exchanges and creating trans-local identifications (Barnard & Wendrich

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[47] Milk the cow: With 100% interest rates, minorities stagger under debt payment. The Express Tribune February 25 2014. https://tribune.com.pk/story/675723/milk-the-cow-with-100-interest-rates-minorities-stagger-under-debt-payment/

2008). The literature on the region has indeed often emphasised the nomadic 'nature' of the local population (Ibrahim 2009; Kothiyal 2017). This clearly contradicts urban Pakistan's 'common sense' view of Tharparkar as being remote. This representation was both owned and disowned at times by Tharis. I was speaking to Rahman, who worked as a receptionist/ cum manager at the hotel, and I mentioned how Jaani had said that the Thar was now a *mohallah* of Karachi. Rahman was more cautious, yes you can get there, but the minute you get off the bus in Karachi, you are lost. The point being that yes Karachi was near, but not so near. Unlike a *mohallah* in Mithi, spatially segregated by caste and religion, where one always knew where one was and where one was going too; these certainties eluded the migrants to Karachi. Roads can fail in their promises of forging new connections, and indeed too often they entrench the "violent exclusions of established political and material orders" (Dalakoglou and Harvey 2012:460).

The construction of roads in Tharparkar has sped up migration to Karachi. I discovered that a number of the villagers in the coalfield worked in the garment factories of Karachi. They were part of a growing number of circular migrants, that often come back for sowing season in August and return in November for the harvest. What is making this circular migration, and other trips to Karachi more possible are the increasing frequency of buses. There is one bus every hour from Mithi and every two hours from Islamkot to Karachi. When I arrived in October 2016, the new bus terminal had just been built in Islamkot, and new routes to Umarkot, the former district headquarters, and Mirpurkhas, the largest city in the region, had just started. Rahman came from Mithi, belonging to the marginal Muslim Bajeer community, largely landless and who were seen as the 'original' inhabitants of the city. He was a pioneer, having been the first in his family to complete the twelve years of compulsory education. He had taken advantage of the connections his family had with Pratap, a Meghwal, and one of the earliest migrants to Karachi in the early 1990s.

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Rahman: I decided that I was not going to make money here. I knew this guy Pratap, he was already working at Mehran Foods, and I had been bothering him for some time. He said come over and see what will happen. The interview went well, I got a job in the food lab. We have to wear these special clothes. It was a good job.

Me: It's owned by Gul Mohammad Mithwani, the Memon from Diplo, right?

Rahman: Yes, but he doesn't care about us. It was my friend who helped me get a job.

Me So how long did you stay?

Rahman: I was there for almost six months. But as you know, Karachi was violent. Lots of people dying because of the MQM and Pathans fighting with each other. My parents were worried. Also it was more expensive to travel then. We only had one bus line. Now there are many.

Me: Did you come back?

Rahman: My mother was so worried. So I left, and returned. But there was no work. All this Coal business has only started in 2015. So I decided to go back

Me: So how long was it this time?

Rahman: My supervisor was good. He allowed to me to come back for a month. You see for Thari people, they worry about Karachi. But the money is better. I helped some of the Bajeer boys from the para to get a job. The new road really helps. I got this job here in 2016. Lots of the coal people stay here. The money is not as good as Karachi, but at least my mother does not worry.

Although Rahman was the first in his family to migrate, he was only able to find a job because of his friend Pratap, a Hindu Meghwal. Friendships were just as important in facilitating the migration as traditional ties of kinship. According to Hasan (2010), a seasoned watcher of Tharparkar, there were good reasons why castes such as the Bajeer and Meghwal were the first to move to Karachi. When the road linking Mithi to Mirpurkhas was built in 1987 it brought cheaply-manufactured industrial goods which rapidly replaced Thari products, leading many of the occupational castes to consider migration as an option. My own, less than scientific, surveys of the Karachi migrants did show that those working in the industrial sector were disproportionally from the artisan castes. Hasan (2010) has argued that, during the Musharaf period, there was a boom in the textile sector, just when the existing crafts were dying and new

road networks were being built. Pratap, who had helped Rahman get his job, had taken advantage of the economic boom in the early part of the century to work in the textile industry but had more difficulty in keeping his job.

> Pratap: I went to Karachi in 2004, as we had very little land. I got a job in Korangi, working in garments. I went back like this for almost ten years. The journey took almost 12 hours; you know how bad the road was to Mithi. Sometimes, the supervisors were difficult. Sometimes, I would not get re-hired, but during the Musharaf time, the factories were doing fine. But then I had enough. I helped a lot of the village guys to get a job. You see they like Tharis in Karachi, we are not like the Pathans or Muhajirs. We keep our head down. But finally I decided to return. I had saved enough to buy two cows, and some land. You see Karachi is very dangerous. It was time to come back.

Mohammadbhai had also left Tharparkar, and so had Amir, but, like Rahman, they had returned. The key difference here, however, was that migrants from the Lohana and Memon communities tended not to participate in circular migration. Amir, the former President of the Islamkot Market Association had worked in Karachi for almost a decade and had moved his family there. Similarly, Mohammadbhai had spent almost a decade in Hyderabad. The Meghwal, and others with backgrounds in the occupational castes, however, whether Hindu or Muslim very rarely took their families with them (Hasan 2010). The nature of migration is circular at this stage, with many of the migrants returning for the sowing and harvesting seasons. Bhima, a Hindu Bajeer who often visited Rahman, now worked as cook in Karachi, but returned home in August to help out with the sowing. His employer was a Hindu Thakur, who had settled in Karachi, and this meant Bhima was in a better position to return. Bhima was not unique, Sajjan who came from the village of Ghorano worked as driver for a wealthy Lohana in Karachi, who also was quite flexible, allowing him to return for the sowing season. Much of this employment is in the informal sector, indeed the large majority of workers in the global South are subject to 'informal' labour arrangements, including workers in the 'formal' sector (Akhtar 2011). For Akhtar (2011:161) employees in the informal sector are exploited by employers who "are ruthless, rely on personalised patronage networks, and rise to dominance

not only through a marriage of convenience with the State but also through the particular way power is practised in and through markets." While I agree with some of what is being said, I would argue that this very informality allowed both Sajjan and Bhima to assist with agricultural labour and that their families are as dependent on this as on their remittances.

Dilip, a Balmiki from Mithi was an interesting example. He had gotten a job as a cleaner in a service area on the M9 motorway, known locally as the Super Highway. Here he had befriended truck drivers and used to get free lifts back to Mithi. This type of employment was new, the service areas only started appearing at the beginning of this century. Dilip told me that the arrangement was informal, he left whenever he wished. He said that when the *seth*, a Sindhi Muslim, needed his services, he would get a telephone call. Dilip's employment status was precarious, and reflected a new mobility produced by the building of the Coal Road and the improvements to the M9 motorway and other trunk roads.

The migrants all saw Karachi as 'dangerous', but still rationalised that it made economic sense to migrate there, even if this was seasonal. Throughout nineties and noughties Karachi was a place of violence (see Khan 2010). There is very little research on migration within Pakistan but, as Ilahi and Jafarey (1998) have argued, looking at Pakistani migrants to Europe, the extended family plays an important role, providing loan guarantees and informal loans between migrants for financing the costs of international labour, and there is in general a dependence on existing kinship networks within the region they choose to migrate to. The Meghwals pioneers, such as Pratap, have established connections with employers in Karachi, particularly in connection with the garment industry, and now assist others from their villages and families to undertake the same journey. Indeed, traditional linkages played a key role in the ability to procure employment. Bhima had got his Karachi job through existing links that tied his family

to the Thakur landowner. He had then assisted others in the village to get jobs in Karachi. Pratap had been helped by a Meghwal, who in turn helped Rahman with his job at Mehran Food Industry. Although Rahman dismissed the fact that Mehran was owned by a Thari, Mohammadbhai, who had worked as a private secretary to Mithwani, was adamant that he supported the employment of Tharis. These patron–client relations often involve a level of labour control and, more specifically, extra-economic coercion, that differed from earlier form of patronage in Pakistan (Akhtar 2011). Outside textiles, Mehran Food was an important area of employment. Both Pratap and Rahman had worked there and were very critical of the long hours of work, and unlike the traditional *patel* who maintained an *autaq*, a public meeting house, Mithwani was never available, and indeed both met him only very rarely. Their complaints were never dealt with, and the threat of dismissal was always hovering over them. I agree with Akhtar (2011), that the distinction between informal and formal labour is very blurred in Pakistan, although theoretically their employment in Mehran Industries differed from the informal set up of Bhima and Sajjan, in reality Rahman and Pratap were no more secure in their jobs. The Coal Road was, and indeed other road projects assist in the providing informal labour to urban Pakistan. Pratap, Bhima and Rahman were also very clear that the new Coal Road was encouraging others to try their luck in Karachi. Karachi is also now seen as less a 'dangerous', perhaps also, a less far off place. Dalakoglou (2017) has called this the 'domestication' of the road; in his case, the road that was part of field site was increasingly being used by migrants for their circular migrations between Greece and Albania.

The arrival of the bus, often referred to by many migrants, was important in their 'journey'. Public transport in Tharparkar prior to the building of the roads consisted entirely of decommissioned GMC trucks of the Pakistan Army. Most were said to have been abandoned with the collapse of the army in 1971. The buses have increasingly become a symbol of the new modernity, therefore. Khuram Shahzad, the assistant chief commissioner of Tharparkar

during the time of my fieldwork, spoke glowingly of his part in the building of the new bus terminal in Islamkot. The bus has become a site where hierarchies are both negotiated and reinforced, however; something I will explore further in Chapter 7.

**The Chinese Motorbike: The Ultimate Symbol of (Moto)mobility**

Increasing work by anthropologists on roads has focussed on the concept of automobility (Dalakoglou 2010, Harvey & Dalakoglou 2012, Kleager 2013). The concept of automobility denotes mobility which is 'auto' in a double sense: self-propelled and autonomous (Featherstone 2004; Urry 2004). According to Urry (2004: 27) "social life irreversibly locked into a mode of mobility that automobility generates and pre-supposes". This leads to a great degree of emphasis on car ownership, resulting in a sub-urbanism that fosters commuting and large retail centres at urban peripheries. Urry's ideas pre-suppose a dominance of car ownership, which to date has not been case in Pakistan. Indeed, much of this analysis faces real challenges when looking at Pakistan. I am not denying that the auto-mobility is not something to consider in Pakistan. It is telling that the new Pakistan census will count car ownership in its household survey, which reflects a growth. Edensor (2004) has distinguished what he calls the British 'motorscape', with an elaborate driving regulatory apparatus and sharp differentiation between road and off road with India's paucity of formal rules, its different 'street choreography' and its vast assortment of animal drawn and motor vehicles that compete for the road simultaneously. Superficially, there is merit in what Edensor says. Roads, especially rural roads in Pakistan have a cacophony of users, from animal drawn carriages, to cycles and the new Chinese motorbikes that are ubiquitous, to the pedestrians, with most road journeys that I observed involved walking. The Pakistani road user on the face of it challenges the bureaucratic attempts at self-discipline. But there are rules that are followed; the 'street choreography' is choreographed. The roads in Pakistan can be seen as 'inverse infrastructural building' (Egyedi

& Mehos 2012), where rules are largely negotiated by road users. In the Thar, I often hired a car, and my driver Yar Mohammad had said we have simple rules, the bigger vehicle gets priority. But what about the animals, for the new roads in the Thar had interesting new users, cattle herders. They were causing great irritation with the SECMC, and an alleged complaint by SECMC to the military had been ignored. So far as animals were concerned, Yar Mohammad's rules did not apply, as animals always got priority. As Yar Mohammad said, killing an animal involved affecting someone's livelihood.

Urry (2004: 27) describes automobility as a complex 'self-organizing autopoietic, non-linear system that spreads world-wide, and includes cars, car-drivers, roads, petroleum supplies and many novel objects, technologies and signs'. In Pakistan, and certainly in Tharparkar I do not see this hegemonic takeover of the roads by the private car. In fact, the real kings of the road is the Chinese motorbike, both on the Coal Road, but also on the new rural roads that were being built to connect with it. Binnie et al. (2007: 169) argue that "different modes of mobility – cars, trains, buses, trams, aeroplanes, bicycles, walking – offer up different challenges for thinking through how mobility is produced". The literature on (auto)mobility has often ignored the motorcycle, but I will argue here that motorbikes are essential in looking at any form of Pakistani (auto)mobility, and they are furthermore creating a uniquely Pakistani (auto)mobility. Pinch and Reimer (2012) have called this automobility '(moto)mobilities. Unlike the car, the relative affordability and flexibility of motorcycles make them important geographically and historically across different national landscapes and systems of automobility. This has especially been the case as the Chinese have now flooded the Pakistani market with very cheap motorcycles. The invasions of cheap Chinese motorbikes is not limited toPakistan, globally the total sales of motorcycles amounted to 38.5 million in 2008, over 85% were within the developing economies of Asia – notably China, India, Indonesia, and Thailand – the majority of which were small, low cost and low power utility vehicles (Pinch & Reimer 2012: 441).

In Chakar Rind village, I was told that there were over a hundred motorbikes, and Gul, the journalist, had said that investing in motorbikes had even involved selling livestock. Rakeshbhai owned a motorcycle showroom at Kashmir chowk in Mithi. He was extremely optimistic as to the growth of his business. He imported the motorbikes from Karachi and told me he was now getting two shipments a month. Rakeshbhai was an optimist, he expected that more rural roads were likely to be built to connect with the Coal Road. In a survey of rural roads in Ethiopia and Zambia, it was found that the choices of how far to travel were dependent on factors such as to whether there was going to be an overnight stay at the destination (Bryceson, Bradbury & Bradbury 2008). In Zambia, the authors found a correlation between the monthly trip frequencies and trip times and the conditions of the roads. Poor roads and a possible investment in an overnight stay would drastically reduce the frequencies with which trips were made. Mithu, who worked at the NGO I stayed at in Islamkot, was clear that the availability of the cheap Chinese motorbikes and the condition of the road were important factors in his travel decision. The road that connected his village to the Coal Road was not 'blacktop' but the part of his journey on the un-metaled tarmac was only three kilometres long. The motorcycle was sturdy enough to take this sort of journey, but villages further away from the Coal Road were less accessible to the motorcycle. Mithu belonged to the Bhil community, traditionally extremely marginalised, who were now active consumers of the motorcycles. Ajay, a social scientist and Dalit activist, whose multi-caste village was more than ten kilometres from a blacktop road confirmed that there were few motorcycles in his village, but those who were part of the remittance economy were buying motorcycles. In Village A, in the coalfield, that was about to be displaced, the compensation money was often used to buy motorbikes. The motorcycle was now allowing a new type of journey, the daily commute. Mithu used to arrive at the NGO on Sunday and leave on Friday. Now, however, he had saved enough to buy a motorbike and was engaging in a daily commute. Like the Chakar Rind

villagers, the commute was now part of his daily routine. Mithu was also facing something new, however, the expectations of the NGO manager that he arrives 'on time'. Threats had been made that his salary would be deducted if he failed. This was not the case when he spent the night on the charpoy, in the courtyard of the NGO. The motorbike was both providing freedom in that Mithu could now commute to work, but on the other hand, there were increasing expectations that he arrived 'on time'.

Automobility literature, with its focus on social geographies of flows and movement, has had an important aim "to construct understandings of the emotional geographies and sensuous experiences provoked by automobility" (Pinch & Reimer 2012: 442) and the kinds of embodied skills and practices involved in driving (Thrift 2004b; Sheller 2004; Sheller 2007). In that context, the motorcycle is not only important to the commuter, but also increasingly being used as part of leisure activities. Abdullah, who also worked at the NGO. was desperately saving to buy his bike. Younger than Mithu, and not married, he was excited by the races that now occur on the Islamkot bypass road. A new form of sociability is being formed by those who regularly participate, and this involves not just the thrill of speeding but also the danger from those manning the nearby Rangers checkpoint, who may at any point decide to take some action. When I was there the Rangers seemed to be taking a pragmatic of view and not interfering with the races. The donkey cart, which had traditionally been the most common form of transport in the Thar, did not have the same social capital. Gul, was also excited by the speed of the motor bike, telling me he gets to Chakar Rind in less than fifteen minutes, racing on the Coal Road, and taking risks as it is used by large trucks from the Coal Company and military transporters. During my fieldwork, there had already been two fatal crashes. The motorbike is providing a form of (auto)mobility that is new in Tharparkar. As I found with both Mithu and Gul, however, the motorbike is often used by relatives, and when trips are undertaken to Islamkot or Mithi, they often have passengers. There is therefore something communal about Pakistani

(auto)mobility. The motobility in Tharparkar is not a subculture, with an emphasises on recreational use (Pinch & Reimer 2012), but an experience of the daily unglamorous journeys on poorly- maintained rural roads, largely for the purpose of commuting.

**The Rhetoric of Connectivity: The Commodification of the Road**

Naukot may have suffered from the building of the Coal Road, but for multinational donors and banks, road building was viewed as important for social integration, economic development and modernisation; all in all a 'good investment' (Harvey & Knox 2015). Spatial reorientation of populations at the margins may be an implicit aim, but what drives much of the rhetoric around road building is the treatment of mobility as a 'commodity', which should be treated like other commodities as an 'object' of economic value. Commodities are defined as objects of economic value, but this value is never an inherent property of objects, but a judgment made about them by subjects (Appadurai 1988: 3). There is a clear link between politics, and how a commodity is valued and demand is created (Bayly 1988). Documents produced by international donors such as the World Bank, and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), often make an argument about importance of mobility as economic generator, while ignoring the problems of traffic congestion, air and noise pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions.

If we examine official Pakistani government publications,[48] they often argue that the mobility roads bring support economic activities by connecting major economic centres and helping in the management and effective utilisation of existing resources. This was also reflected in the

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[48] See for example Transport Plan Study in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (2006) (PTPS)

government officials I spoke to in Karachi or Islamabad. Chaudhary, a middle ranking official, who had helped in the production of the 2006 plan argued:

> Me: So are roads a good thing?
>
> Chaudhary: Of course, they improve connectivity.
>
> Me: Is that good?
>
> Chaudhary: Of course, with connectivity, you sell your produce, and make money.

The focus in both official documents and government officials on the economics of roads simply reflects the similar discourse emanating from international donors such as the World Bank and IMF.[49] It is telling that, until prodded, Chaudhary did not make any reference to easy access to hospitals or schools. DFID funded the South Asia Regional Trade and Integration Programme (SARTIP) between June 2012 – 2016, a programme to improve roads to help facilitate intra-South Asian trade. Like the Pakistani documents, SARTIP[50] also has an emphasis on financial well-being:

> DFID's support will address the low levels of regional economic integration in South Asia, which is a constraint to growth and wealth creation for the poor in one of the world's poorest regions. Specifically DFID will help the multilateral banks to effectively support increasing demand from countries in the region to reduce the time and cost its takes to trade across their to trade across their borders.

When I met Bajwa, operational head for roads at DFID in Islamabad, he was very excited at the new prospects for road building. Pakistan had just entered into an agreement with China, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The CPEC were a series of loans to build four corridors of roads, with the first phase covering 968 kilometres of roads. The DFID document

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[49] See Rural Access and Mobility in Pakistan: A Policy Note Mohammed Dalil Essakali Transport Note No. TRN-28 The World Bank, Washington 2005

[50] iati.dfid.gov.uk › iati_documents - South Asia Regional Trade and Integration Programme

is silent on how these loans will be paid back. The Coal Road, as Bajwa was keen to point out, was not about regional connectivity, and as such was of little interest to DFID. After all the road ended in Islamkot near the border with India, and relations between India and Pakistan are such that any talk of cross border infrastructures is seen as a type of madness. During my discussion with Bajwa I broached the subject that the Coal Road could technically connect to the ports in Kutch in India, he simply gave me a look of incredulity. Although the DFID document and other such national and multinational documents are filled with a language that quantifies mobility as a highly valued commodity, this often leads to a collective amnesia towards the geopolitical reality of South Asia, with its highly regulated borders. These documents, however, have performative and phantasmatic quality, the fictions that they create have potency and real effects (Navaro-Yashin 2007). Among road builders and planners, the document has become a system of belief, used and exchanged, to justify the road building as a rational and technical act.

If we look at road making in the Global South, especially in regions of territorial dispute, particularly those that run parallel to state borders or that traverse disputed territory, they serve as much to demarcate and separate as they do to connect (Demenge 2011; Kernaghan 2012; Salamanca 2015). Similarly, roads built for the sole purpose of providing access to extractive industries do not necessarily increase the level of interconnection between regional residents and the central state. Recent research (see Pedersen & Bunkenborg, 2012; Jackson 2015) has shown that roads built in Mongolia to exploit the rapidly expanding mineral extraction in that country can be positioned as a 'technology of distanciation' (Pedersen & Bunkenborg 2012) which separate the majority of local residents from those employed in extractive industries. The compound that SECMC has built is surrounded by barbed wire, and SECMC vehicles race along the road until they reach the compound. SECMC employees very rarely visit Islamkot or Mithi.

**Conclusions**

When I started this chapter, I emphasised the absence of roads in Tharparkar, but with the building of the Coal Road, they have now become a "basic precondition" (Mostowlanski 2017) in the lived experience of Tharis. The sealant properties of asphalt (Dalakoglou 2017) now allows for the fixation of the Coal Road on the landscape, and with it the imprint of the Pakistani state on the deserts of the Thar. The building of the road in a straight line westwards also reflects how new technologies, and an almost unlimited optimism towards infrastructure in Pakistan, encouraged by the availability of finance, haves meant that no terrain is too difficult to build a road through. This chapter then moves from why roads are built to what happens when they are built. The 'spatial turn' in anthropology inspired by Lefebvre (2012) and Harvey (1990) has allowed us to consider that space is a social product, or a complex social construction (based on values, and the social production of meanings) which affects spatial practices and perceptions. Those who have taken the spatial turn see roads as symbols of dominance (Urry 2007; Cresswell & Merriman 2011), but I believe that there has to be rethink here and Wafer's (2012) work in South Africa is a clear illustration of how unequal infrastructure development in multi-ethnic or multiracial societies plays a significant role in political expectations, with infrastructural equality being a demand for an inclusive citizenship.

I was often told in Tharparkar that the Coal Road brought in improved communications with the rest of the country, although these discussions alternately held an air of triumph or a wisp of nostalgia. The discourse in Tharparkar is evolving, and I encountered many critical voices, not just among the caste Hindus, as they attempt to make sense of the spatial changes being brought in, and their place in the new Tharparkar. The discourse of roads being essential to development is such that much of the criticism is muted, however; reflecting the process that Gramsci calls domination through consent: "the everyday acceptance of cultural ideology in

the face of circumstances that would undermine it" (Harms 2011: 91). The language of government and multinational donor agency documents also revolves around a discourse of mobility being viewed as a commodity. Roads, however, are also seen as symbol of citizenship, with their absence in Tharparkar reflecting that the region was not quite part of Pakistan. This feeling of 'connectedness' was also producing a new category of internal migrants, largely men, who were increasingly becoming part of the wage economy.

Commuting is now increasingly part of the lived experience of many Tharis, with a new form of (moto)mobility that shares aspects with the (auto)mobility studied elsewhere but with its own particular characteristics. As we have seen with the example of Dilip, however, the new roads in Pakistan are also creating a new kind of precarious migrant, often employed in the informal sector, whose job is literally only certain for the day it is being undertaken. All along the Coal Road, new petrol stations and *chai khanas* are appearing, which often employ Thari migrants, but which are often owned by outsiders. I have contrasted my own journey to Tharparkar with those who undertook that same journey only a decade before, and which involved a state of 'preparedness'. Starr (2002), an early ethnographer of infrastructure, remarked that infrastructure is frequently mundane to the point of boredom, when it is used routinely, it then loses the wow factor. I would argue its usage is also a form of self-discipline, in that its rules and regulations impose a certain type of hegemonic discourses of timetables, seat numbers in buses, and demands for the commuter to be 'on time'. Although I agree with Starr that infrastructural use can seem mundane, we must not forget the disciplines it imposes, which makes it mundane. At the onset of this chapter, I mentioned the conversation that I had with Hitesh. When I next met Hitesh, just as I was leaving the field site in 2017, he did not seem to remember the conversation. I had asked him if he was using the new Coal Road, and he seemed surprised that I would be asking him this question, why wouldn't he use it? Local discourses around roads can change, as Roseman (1996) discovered in her field site in northern

Spain, a road constructed with forced labour, after three decades, went from being something alien that locals disliked to simply being seen as a convenience connecting the village to the nearest town. Like Roseman's villagers, the Coal Road is being reclaimed by the Tharis through their 'poetics' (Dalakoglou 2017: 132) with a focus on the "centrality to their own version of road building", through narratives of connectivity. Dalakoglou's (2017) road in southern Albania, which was seen as a 'Greek road', and the road in Thar was still viewed by many caste Hindus with apprehension. After all, it was legitimate to ask the questions, for whom was the road being built and who really benefited from the increased mobility to the metropoles of Pakistan?

# Chapter 6: The Road and the Checkpoint: Coercion and Frustration in the Sindh Borderlands

> The bus slowly stops at a checkpoint, just before the town of Islamkot in southern Pakistan, forty kilometres from the Indian border. The border police officer keeps sitting on a chair next to the checkpoint for what looks like eternity. Finally, he summons one of his men to go into the bus. All are quiet including me, but that doesn't stop him from looking straight at me, and I am asked for my Identity Card. As I fumbled to take it out, he shouts out what my name was, and once he is told, his response was that it was a good name. At that moment, the ID card comes out, is glanced at, and border policeman leaves, leaving everyone visibly relieved. The bus slowly begins to move, and the chatter returns.

The incident happened on a trip I made from Mithi to Islamkot, at a checkpoint located west of the city, next to the Islamkot headquarters of the Sindh Rangers, the paramilitary force that 'guards' the Pakistani frontier with India. The Islamkot checkpoint is the furthest a non-Pakistani can go near the border in Sindh, afterwards special permission has to be sought from the Ministry of Interior in Islamabad, while Pakistanis must also give a reason as to why they are visiting the Tharparkar borderlands. The important point here is that actual border is still about forty kilometres from the checkpost, the state is undertaking the policing the borderland rather than the actual border and one way to do so is by restricting mobility. Borderlands in South Asia are now sites where states have implemented legislation that allows governments to operate 'temporarily' in an aggressive manner (Jones 2009). Indeed, Colas (2006) making a general point for the modern state, that it is not simply enough to leave zones of transition on their borders, the citizen now has to be distinguished from the alien. In chapter 2, I show how for Pakistan state, the liminality of Tharparkar was threatening, which led to the creation of a highly securitized border regime. The construction of the Coal Road has not allayed the earlier 'cartographic anxieties' of the state towards Tharparkar. It is this 'cartographic anxiety', which have produced the checkpoint, with the purpose of sorting, dividing and separating of mobilities. In this chapter I argue that the  anthropology of roads, and indeed infrastructure, have associated roads with mobility and modernity (Urry 2007; Cresswell &Merriman 2011),

however, especially in 'alienated borderlands', roads often produce something quite different, the checkpoint. Tsing (2005: 6) argues against the uncritical focus towards 'unbounded movement', by observing the "kinds of 'friction' that inflect motion, offer different meanings, with coercion and frustration joining freedom as motion that is socially informed. By looking at why the Coal Road created the checkpoint, and how have these became sites where citizenship becomes 'contingent', we can look at different interpretations of (im)mobility and address how 'coercion' and 'frustration' are important parts of the mobility story.

The focus of mobility studies has been on hypermobility or extreme (im)mobility, which lacks nuance in respect to understanding the ongoing processes that undergird globalisation (Salazar & Smart 2011). Increasingly, social scientists are challenging the theoretical tendencies that celebrate unbounded movement, focusing instead on the political-economic processes by which people are bounded, emplaced and allowed or forced to move (Cunningham & Heyman 2004). Roads have now become sites of hundreds of checkpoints, roadblocks and other barriers to movement, in regions where the relationship between the state and citizen is contentious (Bishara 2015). In any journey on the road undertaking in Tharparkar, the user must be able to negotiate through the various checkpoints. The question the state asks at checkpoints is are you a threat to us? This chapter will try to unpack what that means in practice to the Sindh Rangers who man the checkpoints.

The post 9/11 era is full of examples showing how globalisation dynamics produce significant forms of immobility for the political regulation of persons. (Pallitto & Heyman 2008). We now see  sharply rising law enforcement budgets for border controls, new legislation targeted at unauthorized entries and mobilities, the deployment of sophisticated surveillance and information technology, stricter visa controls and the augmented role of military personnel,

methods and hardware, what we are witnessing is nothing less than the 'rebordering' of the state (Huysmans, 1995; Bigo, 2002; Pallitto & Heyman 2008). Borderlands are now becoming spaces and instruments for the policing of a variety of actors, objects and processes whose common denominator is their 'mobility' (Adey, 2004), or more specifically, the forms of social and political insecurity that have come to be discursively attached to mobilities (Huysmans, 1995; Bigo, 2002). The checkpoint is where we have three elements; the checkpoint itself, the form of identification requested and the subject. Pakistan is very much like Jeganathan's (2004: 69) Sri Lanka, a territory of checkpoints, "large or small, important or minor, confused or precise, official or unofficial". The mobility within the nation state itself in some ways an act enclosure, allowing free movement within borders but restricting it across them (Bishara 2015).

The checkpoint is the site of both of coercion by those that represent the state and frustration of the road user. Larkin has described infrastructure as "the means by which a state proffers representations to its citizens and asks them to take those representations as social facts" (2013: 335). The road system is such an everyday site, where Pakistanis come into contact with the work of the state, and thus represent an opportunity to examine popular conceptions of citizenship and the state. In Zaire, Fairhead found that many men were in fact afraid to walk along local roads because they were likely to be robbed by political cadres, such as the police, the gendarmes and the soldiers, all of whom tended to stay near roads when not on other duties. While checkpoints in Tharparkar are not as predatory as they were in the late 1980s in Zaire, they are sites of uncontrolled state power. Foucault argued for a form of critical social analysis focused on 'events', moments when an existing regime of practices is reinvested, co-opted and redeployed by new social forces and governmental rationalities. To study events is to rediscover "the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies and so on which at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal

and necessary" (Foucault, 1991: 76). The proliferation of the checkpoint is such an event under which new regimes of self-discipline are being normalised.

## The Cartographic Anxieties of the Pakistani State

For Jeganathan (2004: 76), the purpose of the checkpoint is a question; "Are you the enemy of the state, and does your enmity extend to violence upon its citizens?" I believe that this is not sufficient to explain checkpoints in Tharparkar, for only the first part of the question really applies, since the district has been entirely peaceful for much of its history. The causes underlying their proliferation in Tharparkar have to do with questions of existentiality. For the Pakistani state, certain groups are more 'suspect' then others, with Hindu minority often seen as 'fifth columnist' of India (Mahmood 2014). The border of Tharparkar does not divide Muslim from Hindu, however, but instead we have communities that are closely related 'being' divided by this border (Gill 2014; Ibrahim 2009). In addition, the district was occupied by the Indian Army in 1971 with relative ease in a matter of days, and its loss has further added to the 'cartographic anxiety' of the Pakistani state. The purpose of the checkpoint here is therefore not simply that citizen be distinguished from the alien (Colas 2006) but regulate those whose loyalties are doubtful (Bishara 2015).

Das and Poole (2004: 3–4) have suggested that 'margins' are to the state as the exception is to the rule. The 'state of exception' (the patterns of inclusion and exclusion at the behest of the state) is laid bare at the margins and therefore margins are a good place to start asking questions if you want to understand what is happening at the core. For the state, therefore, the peripheries are "necessary and fundamental to the nation building project itself. Without the supposedly troublesome minority around which divergent interests can be disguised and represented as the interests of the majority, there is no project" (Simpson 2006: 335). The border represents the margins of the sovereign's authority however it is not marginal to it; instead, the performance

of sovereignty at the border creates, reproduces, and expands the claim to authority over that territory (Jones 2009). This persistence of minorities clashes with the ideal of a homogeneous national territory, for Pakistan, a *pak* [51]Muslim homeland (Conns & Sanyal 2014). These tensions are kept alive by the issue of the very traumatic and bloody Partition of South Asia (Gilmartin, 1998; Van Schendel, 2005; Chatterji, 2007; Zamindar, 2007); the wars that have shaped contemporary geopolitical relations between South Asian states and their neighbours, especially the 1971 Liberation War in East Pakistan/ Bangladesh and the ongoing conflict over Kashmir (Bose, 2005; Robinson, 2013). This has meant that in South Asia borders are "policed, patrolled fenced and land-mined" (Van Schendel 2005: 4). The road in Tharparkar is as much about disconnecting as connecting.

## The State and the Checkpoint

Driving along the Coal Road, one comes across four major permanent checkpoints: at Wango, located at the start of the district as one drives from Karachi,  manned by the Sindh police; Mithi, also by the Sindh police, beyond which foreign nationals are not allowed; and just before Islamkot, manned by the Sindh Rangers. Unlike the police, the Rangers are controlled directly by the central government in Islamabad, and their 'mission' is to 'guard the border'. The final checkpoint was manned by the Pakistan army, situated at the entrance of Block II, beyond which only those with prior authorisation from SECMC could go. There was does a clear hierarchy in checkpoints.

There are clear distinctions between the various 'uniformed forces' that man these checkpoints. While at the police posts, there is an element of jollity between bus drivers and other regular

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users of the road, none of that takes place at the Rangers' posts. The Sindh police are locally recruited, and although largely Muslim, I certainly came across some Hindus, including at the checkpoints. This contrasts with the Rangers checkpoint, which is manned by men from the north, Pathans and Punjabis, with the occasional Rajasthani Muhajir, most of whom are on short tours of duty. On one of the very few occasions that I did get a chance to speak to a Ranger, a Pathan, he found the posting difficult, and but then becoming mindful perhaps that he was talking to a someone who may be a government employee, said he was a *mujahid*, and was proud to 'defend' his country. There also tended to be very little interaction between the locals, and the Rangers.

Checkpoints can reinforce hierarchy and marginalise and stigmatise groups, what some political scientists have called differential mobility (Pallitto & Heyman 2008; Wæver 1995; Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998). I was based at an NGO in Islamkot from whose offices I had a clear view of the Rangers checkpoint on the Coal Road. In addition to the permanent checkpoints, there were a number of temporary ones that appeared and disappeared without any obvious patterns. At times, buses were stopped, and passengers forced to disembark, while often there would be a simple nod, and the bus would move. I come back to Jeganathan's (2005: 76) point, the question that is being asked is "are you an enemy of the state?" or the more general question "what is your political identity?". If the soldier/policeman/border guard decides that the answer is that you are threat, he is likely to detain you. The question then is how does the police/soldier/border guard decide that you are an "enemy of the state"? For the Rangers and police who manned the checkpoints, the first hurdle to cross for those who are being 'checked' was whether they possessed a document called the National Identity card (NIC), which is a 'biometric' card containing one's name, address and date of birth in addition to a picture. There are in fact a number of types of these cards. People of Pakistani ancestry are issued National Identity Cards for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP), while refugees or those who

are 'temporary residents' are issued with residency cards. Each has a different colour, giving those who check these a clear warning as to the possible position in a sliding scale from suspect to 'law abiding' citizen. There was a clear difference between NICOPS and Residency cards: those who had the former could after a year's residence acquire the normal ID. In post-colonial South Asia, identity papers of various types now play a vital part in certifying and authenticating claims to citizenship (Chhotray & McConnell 2018). The context of the history of state formation, continuous migration flows and the rise of right-wing majoritarian politics has created an uncertain situation for individuals deemed to be on the 'margins' of the state. I discovered the vital role identity cards play in authenticating claims of citizenship during a trip to Adhigam, a town located very close to the Indian border in the Parkar region of Tharparkar. Adhigam lies within the twenty-kilometre border zone, where policing responsibility is passed on to the Rangers and not the police. At the checkpoint, the ranger manning the post asked me what my nationality was, and I replied that it was Pakistani. He then said that I had a NICOP, therefore I must have another nationality, Pakistani was clearly not the 'right answer' on this occasion. Once I said British, there were some furtive discussions on his radio. His colleagues on the other hand struck up a conversation, asking me about, of all things, the weather in the UK! The last officer he had served under had family in the UK, and apparently, the officer had visited the country. On his return had complained of the weather. The other Ranger came back, and said they would let us into Nagar town, but no further south. He was half apologetic but said the rules did not allow NICOP holders to go any further towards the border. I could never find anything official about this decision, it was a random decision. The point was that one could never argue with this 'bureaucratic decision'. Das (2002: 225) has argued that an:

> attention to the sociologies through which claims are made and sustained, on one hand, and the authority of the state as neither purely rational-bureaucratic organisation nor simply a fetish, but as a form of regulation that oscillates between a rational mode and a magical mode of being.

Magic for Das does not mean that the state 'tricks' the audience, rather "characterizing magic as having consequences that are real" with the forces mobilized for the performance of magic are not transparent". The Pakistani state uses these 'magical modes of being' to confound the Tharis. The completely arbitrary appearance of the temporary checkpoints generates rumours since the decisions behind their creation are illegible or magical. One particular checkpoint, located on the main road linking Islamkot with Chachro, another Taluka headquarters, created a number of rumours. The Rangers had turned up in mid-November, and started to check all the vehicles, and stopped pastoralists from using the road. No one seemed to know why, and just as quickly as it emerged, a month later, without any fanfare, it disappeared. Most of the locals knew other routes, so it was mainly buses, trucks and other commercial traffic that was being stopped and checked. In Tharparkar, there is always a potential for danger or illegibility in the public's encounter with the state.

## Who Goes There! Differential Mobility at the Checkpoint

The questions that are asked at checkpoints are those of identity, and I will focus on what that means in Tharparkar. States often categorized and sort groups in many aspects of everyday life, which mark some bodies as acceptable and others as a threat to the stability of society (Jones 2009). The state anticipates that the site of the checkpoint is where it is the most vulnerable, such as those that ringed the various 'Green Zones' in the war of terror (Duffield 2007). Growing concerns around supposed vulnerabilities has seen the growth of 'securitisation', a situation which has been aptly described as where what were issues simply to study and address over time have become the issues that were somehow essential to national security (Wæver 1995; Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998). Roads have become the sites of these regimes of securitisation, where the checkpoint now 'regulates' those who are perceived to engage in

anticipatory violence. According to Jeganathan (2004: 69), the checkpoint configures anticipation in a double way:

> To pass through the checkpoint is to remember why checkpoints exist – is to recall the possibility of a bomb. The few who are in fact, carrying or have knowledge of the bomb would also, I imagine anticipate its explosive impact. But on the other hand, there is another kind of anticipation-that of the soldiers checking the flow of traffic and people, asking questions. They anticipate violence in another way.

Greater securitisation in the 21st Century has allowed states to categorise individuals into groups based on surveillance-obtained knowledge of the details of lifestyle and consumption patterns, what Gandy (1993) has called the 'panoptic sort'. Because the state is in a position to observe intimately and incessantly, it can now generate elaborate groupings of individuals based on in-depth knowledge. Categorising certain groups for surveillance has a long history in Pakistan, with indeed a colonial pedigree. For example, some groups were categorised as criminal, on account of being nomadic, and have remained of interest to the state as it perfects new forms surveillance (for a similar situation in India see Nigam 1990).

In Tharparkar, with its Hindu majority, the checkpoint also serves to remind the populace that the state is maintaining its 'panoptic view'. Much of the literature on checkpoints have focused on sites and populations that are under a military occupation, that affects every dimension of their lives (Jeganathan 2004, Bishara 2015). This is not the case in Tharparkar, and the checkpoint for many Tharis is the site where they test out their relationships with the state and make claims of citizenship. Indeed, I encountered the occasional arguments between bus and truck drivers, and the rangers, if the latter were being particularly thorough with their checks. The most obvious victims of rigorous checks tended to be wealthy Hindus merchants, locally referred to as *vania*. They often drove Suzuki Mehrans, which are five door hatchbacks, manufactured locally in Pakistan under licence from the Suzuki Corporation of Japan. Hamidbhai, a Memon, originally from the town of Diplo in western Tharparkar, but brought

up in Karachi, remembers a 'misunderstanding' as to his identity. He was employed on a short-term contract by an NGO based in Islamkot and was returning to Mithi on the recently built Coal Road. The Ranger base outside Islamkot had also seen improvements, and was now much larger, with proper barracks. The new road and new barracks had reanimated the Rangers. Hamidbhai was returning to Mithi from Islamkot, it was late evening, the car was packed with boxes in the back seat, and he was sitting in front with his driver. As he himself admitted, he looked like an Islamkoti vania taking his goods to Mithi.

> He (the Ranger) came over, and asked us to pull over. Once we had parked, he told me to start taking out all the boxes. I motioned to my driver to help, but the Ranger shouted at him, saying he should remain in the car. I felt very humiliated. I start taking the boxes and he shouted quicker. At this point I snapped. I said do you think I am an Islamkoti vania, well you are wrong. I am a Memon from Karachi on official business. At this point the Ranger went quiet. He then said, put the boxes back in, and gestured we leave.

I observed to Hamidbhai that he had taken risk; after all, the Ranger could have detained him, and he could have been subjected to physical violence. He said he was willing to take that risk and was offended that the Ranger would confuse him with a Hindu merchant. As a Muslim, brought up in Karachi, he expected his 'state' to treat him with a respect that was due to him. He emphasised the Karachi connection, the Memons in Karachi are a wealthy community and were very likely to be connected. The Ranger had to make a snap decision, and the fact the Hamidbhai had shouted at him, meant that his claim was probably correct. Recently, in Georgia in the United States, a woman stopped by police for speeding through a stop sign at sixty mph (97 kph) told officers they should not arrest her because she was a "very clean, thoroughbred, white girl", police said.[52] Clearly Hamidbhai was not being as crude as the speeder in Georgia, but both were making the same point: their unnecessary detentions meant that those manning

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[52] Woman tells police not to arrest her because she's a 'clean, thoroughbred, white girl' Wednesday, August 8th 2018 Kutv (https://kutv.com/news/nation-world/woman-tells-police-not-to-arrest-her-because-shes-a-clean-thoroughbred-white-girl)

the checkpoint were failing to understand its purpose, namely, to pose the question: 'Are you the enemy of the state, and does your enmity extend to violence upon its citizens?' The enemy of the state label here is extended to all those who one would anticipate would be likely to cause harm but was also extended to any 'suspect', such as minorities. By staking a claim to citizenship, Hamidbhai was effectively denying the same rights to those he referred to as Islamkoti vania.

For many Tharis, however, any claims-making exercise could not simply rely on Muslimness. Ashok Pandit also told me about a difficult incident he faced at exactly the same checkpoint.

> I was returning from Islamkot and was asked to pull over. The Ranger asked for my ID card. He then asked where I lived, which matched with the address on the ID card. He then said I should wait, and he disappeared. I sat in the car for what felt like a long time. I was phoning my wife to tell her I was going to be late. Just then he reappeared and shouted at me to end my conversation. At this point, I was losing my patience. I spoke in Punjabi, to tell him I knew his commanding officer, and told him I had the deputy commissioner's number on speed dial. He then told me to go. No explanation as to why I had been detained.

In Ashok Pandit's case, he did not have the same claim to citizenship that Hamidbhai had. As a Hindu, as far as the Ranger was concerned, he was automatically in the category of those who may cause harm to the state. It was only when he spoke Punjabi, the language of authority spoken by senior members of the military and bureaucracy in Pakistan, followed by a reference to the name of the commanding officer, did the Ranger consider that there may be more to Ashok Pandit then simply being a Hindu. The checkpoint is a site of 'differential mobility', where the hierarchy and marginality of certain groups can be clearly seen (Pallitto & Heyman 2008; Wæver 1995; Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998). However, the example of Ashok Pandit clearly shows that the hierarchy and marginality of certain groups is contingent, dependent on ones social capital, and in Tharparkar, this can be used to challenge the authority of those manning the checkpoints.

## The Difficulties of Getting Identity Cards

The document that is invariably asked for is the ID card. The NIC, as I have said is the gold standard of citizenship. Under Pakistani law, every citizen is required to carry national identity cards, and failure to carry one allows immediate detention. As a matter of course, whenever I left home, I would always carry mine. Foucault (1977: 215) came up with the concept of 'discipline', which was reducible neither to a particular institution nor apparatus but was instead "a type of power, a modality for its exercise comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a 'physics' or an 'anatomy' of power, a technology". Discipline confronted the 'floating population' of eighteenth-century Europe. It is an 'anti-nomadic technique'; this is why it "fixes, arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering about the country in unpredictable ways; it establishes calculated distributions" (Foucault, 1977: 218–19). Much like the 'floating population' of the Eighteenth Century, the Identity card is form of 'discipline', dissipating individuals who would have wandered about on the new roads being built in Pakistan. During the course of my fieldwork, Afghan nationals were being rounded up for deportation,[53] while at the same time the government was increasing registration of Pakistani population, with claims that 96% of the population had been registered.[54] Although the ID card is an obvious instrument of social control, the political violence that had been part of the everyday life of many urban Pakistanis for almost a decade meant that I found little resistance from urban Pakistanis. Indeed, the discourse around identity documents often focuses on how

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[53] Afghan refugees in Pakistan face mass deportation DW 16 January 2018 (https://www.dw.com/en/afghan-refugees-in-pakistan-face-mass-deportation/a-42167366)
[54] 96pc adults registered in Pakistan: Nadra Dawn August 18, 2011 (https://www.dawn.com/news/743082)

they facilitate welfare through the pursuit of governance objectives like efficiency, transparency and accountability (Chhotray &McConnell 2018).

For the governments of newly independent India and Pakistan the question of citizenship had been complicated by the question of the massive exchange of people across the new borders at Partition (Chatterji 2007; Jayal 2013). At the onset, any idea of dual citizenship was ruled out and, over the years, courts were faced with the unenviable task of deciding upon the 'evidentiary' value of passports and, subsequently, other identity documents like electoral and ration cards. As a result, experiences in the post-Partition Indian subcontinent refute the conventional expectation that the "possession of citizenship enables the acquisition of documents certifying it" (Jayal 2013, 71). For Tharparkar, that process has been compounded by further movement across the India–Pakistan border in 1965 and 1971, with the movement continuing till the fencing of the border in 1999. Mohammadbhai had told me about his aunt's husband who had arrived from India just after 1971 and struggled to acquire an identity card. The ability to acquire such a card depended on where one lived, and what sort of documentation one could provide in support of one's application. Urban dwellers were likely to attend schools, and school leaving certificates were useful as supporting documents. In Tharparkar, with a largely nomadic population, proving citizenship can be difficult, and many have struggled to obtain ID cards.

One of the consequence of the Thar coal project, is that the Thari now have to negotiate the increasing proliferation of checkpoints. These sites of interaction between the local population and the Pakistani state present certain barriers in advance, in the form of inspection techniques, with some better able to overcome the barriers than others. The ID card is no longer some distant bureaucratic inconvenience for the people of Tharparkar, but an everyday necessity. If we bear in mind that most locals, whether Hindus or Muslims, do not have birth certificates,

the vetting process can therefore be long and arduous, often requiring financial lubrication which many can ill-afford.

## Conclusion

The history of Tharparkar, historically a region with unmarked and fluid borders, home to a supposedly 'suspect' population, created the cracks and fissures in the narrative of the sovereign state and become spaces that now require substantial security and patrolling to create the perception of absolute sovereign authority. It was these the circumstances which lead to the securitization of the region and the proliferation of checkpoints. Foucault's (1977) ideas of 'discipline' are useful to analyse how modern post-colonial states are increasingly involved in controlling mobility through new technologies Governments are now utilizing political borders and visa regimes to restrict mobility to create and enforce their sovereign authority through the biopolitics of submission and confession (Jones 2009). The new 'technologies' of the checkpoint and identity cards are increasingly used in contested borderlands such of those of South Asia to control and monitor mobility. The road therefore is no longer a site of unbridled mobilty, but that of submission and confession.

Identity cards can allow us to think critically of the relationship between the citizen and the state. The cards allow the state to identify and sort in the many aspects of everyday life, those who are acceptable and others who are in the state's view a threat to the stability of society. The lack of an ID card in Tharparkar means those without them are prevented from accessing what might have been the place they pastured their animals. In effect the state has criminalised uncontrolled mobility. However, the the interactions with the Rangers at the Islamkot checkpoint show, the Pakistani state remains unsure whether one is a 'friend' or 'enemy', and that can depend more ones economic status as opposed to membership of the Hindu minority.

Those who operate the checkpoints may argue that that any decision made in respect to permission or refusal is entirely based on technical considerations, but what these mobility restrictions do is to heighten inequalities. Some groups in Tharparkar are now seen as high security risks, needing to be questioned often and repeatedly. This suspicion can simply be as flimsy as those who belong to the Hindu minority. Generally, Hindus and Muslims have distinct names, and the ID card confirms this distinction. Hindus in Tharparkar are also often conflated with India, and India is the enemy and therefore dealing with Hindus requires greater vigilance. For those guardians of the Pakistani state manning checkpoints, therefore, and dealing with all the complications of history, hierarchy and exclusion, Mustafa Khan, is indeed a good name.

# Chapter 7: Caste is Another Country: The Dalit Movement in Pakistan

> Can anybody prove where Dalits in Pakistan are! Any authentic book, any authentic survey, UN sponsored!
>
> On the issue of Scheduled Castes, I think there is confusion. In our constitution, we do not have this scheme. Yes, we have that issue of majority and minority, but we don't have Scheduled Castes, we don't have Dalits. Maybe in India—but in Pakistan, we have a sizable Hindu community living in the province of Sindh bordering India, in the desert Thar. But they are not called Dalits. They are also not Scheduled Castes. […].[55]

The above statement exchange occurred between the Pakistani representative and a Dalit rights activist in Geneva at the 2470th meeting of the 90th Session Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination, held in August 2016. This chapter will interrogate the origin of such a stark denial, and what that has meant for Dalit identity in Pakistan in general and Tharparkar in particular. Despite the speaker's assertions, Scheduled castes are a legal category in Pakistan, with the list prepared for the 1936 Scheduled Caste Order being incorporated in the Pakistani Constitution (Shah 2006). The speaker was therefore either unaware of this, or deliberately misleading his audience. Caste, however, is absent in official Pakistani documentation (Hussain 2019). In previous chapters, I argue that Hindus in Pakistan have been treated as second class citizens, with Dalit communities, often being doubly marginalized. Upper caste Hindus provide much of the communal leadership of the Pakistani Hindu community, which means that Dalit voices and issues are rarely taken up by them (Schaflechner 2017). In

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[55] Barrister Zafarullah, Pakistani permanent representative to UN CERD - UN Web TV 2016 http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/human-rights-treaty-bodies/watch/consideration-of-pakistan-contd-2471st-meeting-90th-session-committee-on-elimination-of-racial-discrimination/5097578876001/?term=?lanarabic&sort=popular

discussions with Dalit activists, I was often told about their lack of 'connections', had prevented the early appearance of roads in the district. The provision of infrastructure in South Asia, such as roads electricity and water are often dependent on informal patronage networks (Anand 2011). Historically, the lack of 'social capital' among Dalits groups in Tharparkar has meant they have not been able to access these networks. In this chapter I explore how recent changes in Tharparkar are allowing for a Dalit voice to be heard, which has been hitherto silent, with possibilities of a new Dalit elites being incorporated into the district's existing patronage networks.

The rise of the Dalit movement in Sindh must be seen in a context, where the existence and persistence of caste is seen by the Pakistani authorities as undermining the very foundation of the two-nation theory, where the egalitarian concepts of Islam would not allow for ideas of caste to persist (Shah & Jodhka 2010). This has been contrasted in official discourse with a 'Hindu India', with caste said to be a specific type of socio-religious stratification associated with Hinduism (see Gazdar 2007). Therefore, unlike India, the literature from Latin America is more useful in analysing the Dalit predicament in Pakistan, where the ideology of *mestizaje*[56], with a similar emphasis on the egalitarianism, distinguishes the supposed Latin American experience of racial mixing with one of racial hierachy in Anglo America. This has led to the 'invisibilisation' of existing Amerindians communities in the region, whose marginalisation is ignored, as they are supposed to have intermarried with the European population and 'disappeared' (see Wade 2002; Gordillo & Hirsch 2003 for similar arguments in Argentina and Uruguay). In Pakistan, any claims of Dalit exclusion are often dismissed, on the basis that while there might Dalit communities in the country, the liberating influence of

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[56] A political ideology in Latin America which emphasize cultural and biological mixing rather than ethno-racial difference see Wade 2002; Gordillo & Hirsch 2003

Islam has long done away with any discriminatory behaviour. Dalit activists are dismissed as charlatans seeking economic benefits from naïve western NGOs (for similar claims in Latin America see Tilley 2007). The Dalit movement in Pakistan, therefore, has evolved in a particular set of historic circumstance which distinguishes it from other Dalit movements in South Asia.

The Dalit Sujhaag Tehrik (DST), the larger of the Dalit activists groups now organising in Sindh, is providing a narrative of a Dalit presence that withstands state efforts to conceal, privatise or shut out caste rom the public discourse (for similar discourse among Indian Christians see Mosse 2009: 207), as well as challenging a hegemonic discourse that constructs Sindh as a monolith, with caste nearly absent (Schaflechner 2017, Hussain 2019). Dalit activism has focused on the potential for mobility, which had started offby efforts toget more Dalit elected to Parliament and combatting the more egregious aspects of caste exploitation, such as bonded labour. In this chapter, I explore the impact that the Pakistani state and Dalit mobilising efforts have had on each other, as well as the role of transnational nongovernmental organisations, and neoliberalism more broadly, and the increasingly tense relationship between India and Pakistan and its effects on what it means to be Hindu.

The unexpected roots of the Dalit movement Pakistan lie in the economic crisis that Pakistan faced in the early 1990s. To resolve fiscal, legitimacy, and governability crises has agreed from at least the early 1990s to conditions set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to adopt neoliberal reforms to promote democratization, economic liberalization, and decentralization. The bloated state in the Global South had to be cut down through policies of "social adjustment" (Alvarez et al. 1998, p. 22) with measures taken to foster movement toward a more participatory civil society and to take up the slack resulting from decreases in social services. The Musharaf period (1999-2008) was when the Pakistani state was embracing

these ideas (Malik 2014) and those in the NGO sector I have spoken to have called this period their 'golden age'. It is not surprising that the Dalit movement arose in this period, as increasing number of Tharis were employed by NGOS. NGOs throughout the global South were enlisting discourses about tradition and community that resonated with neoliberal discourses on community solidarity and social capital (Sieder 2002, p. 18). The predominance within the DST of NGO employees has created a cautionary organization, and at present it is unlikely to follow the examples of Dalit activism in India, where Dalit rights movements have morphed into political parties (Gorringe 2005; Mosse 2009). The DST often frames itself as part of a movement within what is termed as 'civil society', and this English term was widely used in Tharparkar. Civil society here refers to the "political and sociocultural spaces for of freedom for collective mobilisations that are dependent on the state for legitimacy but also autonomous for their functioning" (Waghmore 2013:3). These claims for legitimacy have meant that the DST has taken a particular route, which involves distancing itself from the wider politics of the Hindu minority in Pakistan. The state is never purged from any civil society movement, rather these movements served as infrastructure to strengthen the legitimacy of the state. For example, the Dalit activists in Pakistan have not tried to 'shame' the Pakistani state into admitting caste, like the Christian Dalit activists studied by Mosse (2009) in Tamil Nadu have by critiquing existing ecclesiastical structures. The present situation of the Hindu minority in Pakistan has had an important effect on how Dalit identity has been mobilised, in particular the constant conflation of Hindus with India (Mahmood 2014; Schaflechner 2017).

## Being Hindu in Pakistan

The figure for the exact population of Hindus, including Scheduled Castes, is subject to some controversy. Schaflechner (2017) gives a figure of between six and ten million, based on the number of Identity Cards issued, and relying on the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

figures. The last census for which figures for religion are available, however, gives a number

of 2,443,514. The contrasting figures reflect a distrust of official figures which are said to

undercount Hindus (Mahmood 2014). Dalit activists in Pakistan insist that the figures for

Scheduled Castes are underestimated, and one of the earliest DST campaigns in southern Sindh

was to encourage the ticking of the Scheduled Caste category in the census form. In 1956,

Pakistan government declared about 32 castes and tribes as Scheduled Castes in the country,

most of them were taken from the list prepared for the 1936 Scheduled Caste Order (Shah

2006). Like in India, the category of Scheduled Caste only covers those who are Hindus, but,

unlike in India, Sikhs and Buddhists are excluded from the Schedule. The status of groups that

are now adopting the label Dalit in southern Sindh has been extremely marginal (Shah 2006;

Jodhka &Shah 2011). In Sindh, the largest Dalit caste is Meghwal or Menghwar, with

Balmikis, Bhils, Kolis and Vagris also found in large numbers (Hussain 2019). The DST is

seen as Menghwar dominated, although its current president Radha Bhil[57], belongs to the Bhil

ethnicity. Overall, southern Sindh, in an area stretching from the east of Karachi to the Indian

border, is home to large Hindu communities, ranging between ten and sixty percent of the

populace. The predicament of Pakistan's Hindu minority is best explained by Schaflechner

(2017: 12):

> The structural exclusion of Hindus within the governmental education system, their
> demonization in parts of popular culture, and the very foundation of the two nation
> theory itself, the Pakistani Hindu identity exists in a kind of purgatory, caught betwixt
> and between.

According to Haq (2010), three issues are central to understanding the relationship between

religion and politics in Pakistan. The first is that it revolves around the conflict over what type

of state is Pakistan: is it an Islamic state or a state for Muslims? Secondly, the inability of

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[57] In 2018

religious parties to win seats, which means their focus is on their ability to bring their supporters on to the streets, and finally, the impact of religion on Pakistani foreign policy. It is telling, however, that in all this the Hindu minority, despite is visibility, is very rarely considered, and is often ignored in discussions about the state and the position of religion (see Haq 2010; Lieven 2010; Jafferlott 2014).

I was sitting in Ashok Pandit's office in Mithi, and the discussion came to his meeting with the Director of the ISI,[58] who had previously served head of the Sindh Rangers:

> He looked at me, and said we want to make Muslims of the people of Tharparkar. I said, they are Muslim, at least half of them. He said, well right now they are under your influence. But I said are we not Pakistanis, and the Director General went quiet.

I asked him what that silence meant.

> I will be honest with you. I don't think he considered us as Pakistanis.

It is difficult to say what the silence meant, are the Pakistani Hindus perpetually in 'purgatory', or maybe the silence reflected an unwillingness to publicly exclude themColonel Ahmed, of the Pakistan Rangers, who had served in the region, was more explicit, 'of course they are citizens'. But citizenship here is of a restricted kind. Mahmood (2014) has referred to the set-up of state policies that has led to the 'minoritisation' of Hindus in Pakistan. For example, Hindu marriages were only recognised by the state in 2017, and inheritance laws have still not considered Hindu religious traditions. As I will explore further, the DST has made a conscious decision to distance themselves from the category of the 'Hindu', as they seek to claim a space

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[58] The principal Pakistani intelligence agency see Owen L. Sirrs: Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate: Covert Action and Internal Operations (2018)

within Pakistan. I will argue, however, that this distancing from 'Hinduness' will not necessarily lead to the acceptance of the Dalits.

**We Don't do Caste in Pakistan**

I was sitting in a dining room of an NGO worker, Krishan, in a middle-income locality of Islamabad. Krishan was upper caste Hindu who worked for a Scandinavian charity. He originally came from Tharparkar, but after completing his studies in Islamabad had never returned. We were meeting to discuss issues related to the Islamabad temple, which despite three decades of promises had still not been built. The conversation drifted to what I thought was caste, as we were speaking a mixture of English and Urdu.

> Krishan: Our NGO takes castes seriously, every project is casted.
>
> Me: So you look at the impact on caste on all your projects?
>
> Krishan: Yes Yes.
>
> Me: Do you hold censuses for example?
>
> Krishan: Yes, we check the castes.

The conversation went on for some time before I realised that Krishan was actually talking about 'costs'! His International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) was greatly interested in 'rationalising expenditure', but it seemed completely uninterested in caste. After I explained what I meant by referring to the commonly used term *quom* in Urdu and Sindhi, which can translate as caste, Krishan was more circumspect. His argument roughly was yes there was something called caste among the Hindus, but it was really a private matter, and it should be kept as such. With regards to Muslims in the Thar and other areas, he simply professed ignorance. Speaking to Mohammad Khan, who had almost two decades of experience of data collection and analysis for a number of NGOs and INGOs in rural Sindh,

about the invisibility of caste in NGO literature, he told me about his own personal experience of the anxiety about discussing caste. He had been instructed to carry out a caste survey as part of an NGO project looking at whether there was any connection between caste and issues of accessibility to public services. Halfway through the data collection, he was told the project had been discontinued. The official reason was that funds had run out; another case of costs triumphing over caste in Pakistan perhaps. Some of the trustees had also threatened to resign, however, and those in the NGO supporting the survey had lost out in the factional infighting. One of those was Shahabano Aliani, who wrote in her blog, quoted by Singha (2016):

> When questioned, however, if caste is a problem, most Pakistanis will disagree. Many will argue quite heatedly that it's only a problem for most Hindus across the border. Using circular reasoning, they will insist that the caste-system is not Islamic and since the majority of us are Muslims, therefore, there is no caste problem in Pakistan.

She further asserts (In Singha 2016: 2):

> Public denial of caste is so ingrained and widespread that there is no official legislation that acknowledges and addresses caste-based discrimination.

Tragically, Sherbano Alyani was terminally ill when I was carrying out my fieldwork and I was unable to speak to her[59]. When I was in the field area, I tried unsuccessfully to get hold of the survey results that Mohammad Khan had complied, but on each occasion, I was told to come back, and they would be available. Aliani's survey had been buried deep, and I suspect it will remain there. As Mohammad Khan said, "we don't do caste in Pakistan". Gazdar (2007) has argued that this silencing of caste is born out of 'embarrassment' within the Pakistani elites about the continuity of 'traditional' social forms in the face of modernist aspirations of the Islamist and cosmopolitan types respectively. The Dalit movement has had to deal with two

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[59] She passed away in 2019

sets of issue, caste as not Pakistani, which is perhaps unique, but also efforts to conceal, privatise or shut out caste from the public discourse, something that it shares with other Dalit movements (Mosse 2009: 207).

I was repeatedly told that any reference to caste in official documentation is discouraged. This often extends to the NGOs working in the development sector. Coming back to Krishan, once we had cleared up the caste/cost conundrum, he was slightly more candid.

> We don't raise it. When Shah was doing his survey, our instructions were clear. Stay away. The government will not let us operate if we talk.

Dalit activism in neighbouring India has been boosted by development NGOs, which have provided a platform for the creation of the transnational campaigns (Mosse 2009), but this, on the face of it, is absent in Pakistan. Harris Gazdar, who runs the Collective of Social Science Research (CSRC) in Karachi, a thinktank that researches social policy, economics, poverty, gender studies, health, labour, migration and conflict, often funded by INGOs, has been increasingly frustrated by the generally cool response that he gets from his donors when he raises the issues of caste. He was tired of his donors telling him that caste is India, extremism and terrorism is Pakistan. In this world of binaries, caste has been silenced in Pakistan. Gazdar (2007: 86) writes in an article in Economic and Political Weekly:

> It is easy enough to think, speak and write about 'economic' poverty in Pakistan – the government's point men notwithstanding. Societal causes of deprivation and marginalisation such as caste, religion and ethnicity find few takers and many detractors.

When I met Gazdar, after he had asked to make a presentation on my early research findings, at the offices of the CSRC, or the Collective, as it is known among NGOwallahs in Pakistan, his frustration was obvious, but he was keen on exploring the idea of Dalit politics, which he considered emancipatory. In survey after survey that the Collective had carried out on all those from rural agricultural workers to those working in hazardous industries such as brick kilns, he

found a correlation between caste backgrounds and economic and social marginalisation. His opprobrium was focused on what he called the Pakistani left, who had, according to him, repeatedly denied that a social phenomenon called caste existed.

The officially professed political ideology in Pakistan is that of the two-nation theory, which provided justification for the formation of a separate nation. This was premised on the fact that, socially and culturally, south Asian Muslims were different from the Hindus. While Hindus believed in caste hierarchy, Muslims were all equal and hence constituted a separate nation. The state seems to feel that pointing out the existence of caste in this Islamic Pakistan, even if it exists within religious minorities, somehow challenges its very foundation. As Gazdar (2007:68) noted:

> There is little tolerance in the public domain of any serious discussion about caste and caste-based oppression, social hierarchies, and discrimination. The Right silences such talk by shouts of "we are all Muslims" and "caste is another country" - obvious which country that might be. In fact, the denunciation of "the evil caste system" is a standard hymn in the rightist intellectual's repertoire on India, Hindus and the Two-Nation Theory.

Additional complications arise from the fact the country's two largest minorities, the Christians and Hindus, are largely made up of Dalits (Jodhka & Shah 2010). As Jodhka and Shah (2010: 104) note:

> The official denial of caste also works to the double disadvantage of the Hindu and Christian dalits of Pakistan. While being members of a small religious minority, they confront a hostile majoritarian state and civil society; being dalits they are also marginalized within their own religious communities.

This conflation between caste and religion can clearly be seen in an incident involving the recruitment of sweepers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (KPK). In July 2013, Pervez Khattak, the chief minister of KPK and a member of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the cricketer Imran Khan's party, made a statement to a local newspaper that only "non-Muslims

will be recruited as sweepers" in the province. Despite a social media firestorm, Khattak remained unapologetic in an interview, this time in a widely read English daily, *The News*:[60]

> I made the comment in the provincial assembly in good sense. I stated the fact that non-Muslims normally do these kind of jobs in Pakistan and that they should have the first right to any openings in the government departments.

The matter ended there, with Khattak remaining unapologetic, but what it clearly demonstrates is that the existing widespread prejudice against religious minorities is compounded by fact that many come from a Dalit background. Khattak by giving his second interview in *The News* was directly addressing his critics in the English-speaking media that they read and understand. I asked Mohammed Khan why they gave up, and his simple answer was 'well, technically, he was right'. After all, most sanitary jobs in Pakistan are still performed by Hindu and Christian Dalits, the structural reasons behind it, he argued were not something the Twitter uses had 'time' to consider. This silencing of caste is not unique to Pakistan, Mosse (2009: 189) found something similar within the Catholic Church in Tamil Nadu:

> The practice of caste in the Church is characterized by its public denial, which makes it hard for social researchers to investigate caste within Catholic church.

The silencing of caste does not mean that caste is absent in the public discourses. Shah (2006:7) noted in his survey notes:

> Caste is so obvious and important in Pakistan that you go on streets and talk to people, first question you would be asked is about your caste.

It might not be the first question asked, but it was asked in conversation I had with interlocutors in Tharparkar. For many Dalits I spoke to, this question was something they found particularly

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[60] Khattak's remarks on minority rights trigger social media debate. *The News* July 14, 2013 ttps://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/631720-khattak's-remarks-on-minority-rights-trigger-social-media-debate

difficult to answer. Untouchability is the extreme and vicious aspect of the caste system, prescribing stringent social sanctions against those placed at the bottom of the caste structure. Untouchables fall outside the caste structure and hierarchy and their touch pollutes others, invoking terrible punishments, fatal attacks and atrocities. Research on Untouchability in India (Thorat 2002) has looked into how the institution is grounded in economic and political inequality and consistently perpetuated by the ideology of Hinduism and its caste hierarchy. Shah's (2006) survey of the conditions of Dalits in Pakistan found something similar, with 83% of their sample survey being landless, with the remaining 17 percent owning between one and five acres. Almost all were somehow dependent on caste Hindu or Muslim landowners.

The largest Dalit caste in southern Sindh are the Meghwals, also sometimes spelt Menghwar, who are often disparagingly referred to as Dheds, a Sindhi occupational term for someone who skins dead cattle. I was meeting a senior education official, who introduced himself as a Maharaj. I was accompanied by a Memon, who worked under this officer, and once we were at his house for lunch, he told me that the officer was in fact a Gurira, a caste that ministered to the Meghwal, and that he was really a Dhed. I often heard this term used by Muslims to describe Meghwal, although never from caste Hindus. As Meghwals' become economically successful, as indeed many are, it is clear that they are facing a backlash from both caste Hindus and Muslims. The perceived 'low status' of the Meghwal, even appears in the 1998 Census Report on Tharparkar when referencing the Meghwal, sometimes called Menghwar, the largest Dalit community, the document says:

> The Menghwar have largely abandoned leather work, and have devoted themselves to less demeaning skills such as weaving (Census Report 1998: 7)

There is no explanation as to why leather work is demeaning, the reader is expected to know that it is. The acknowledgement in an official publication of the stigma of leatherwork tells us more about caste than the loud denials of the Pakistani representative to UNCERD.

In 2006, the IDSN based in Holland that was mentioned earlier was keen to carry out surveys of Dalit groupings in South Asia, outside India. The IDSN was founded in March 2000 to advocate for Dalit human rights and to raise awareness of Dalit issues nationally and internationally. It is essentially an Ambedkarite organisation[61] (and found an unlikely partner in the Pakistan Institute of Labour and Economic Relations (PILER), an NGO focused on labour issues. Zulfiqar Shah, who carried out the survey, was clear that as a socialist organisation, PILER had some ideological concerns. Shah had been active in the trade union movement, and thought more in terms of class then caste. PILER's founder, Rehmat, told me that as an organisation, PILER was greatly influenced by the works of the Pakistani sociologist, Hamza Alavi. Alavi, a structural Marxist, took the view that caste as then understood by the likes of Mayer (1966) did not exist in Pakistan. Alavi (1971) writes:

> All biraderis in the endogamous system have zat names. Such names are used locally, as surnames, to identify the biraderis. The existence of such zat names has been taken by some scholars to indicate the existence of caste in the Muslim societies (see Inayatullah, 1958). I do not share the view of many urban educated Pakistanis that caste does not exist in the Muslim society of Pakistan simply because the religion of Islam does not sanction it; that is an ideological view because it is based not upon observation of society but upon the interpretation of ideas and ideals without reference to social realities. But, at the same time, I would suggest that the question whether the existence of zat names signifies the existence of caste in the contemporary society is highly problematic. The central criteria of caste-oriented behaviour, namely that of ritual pollution and associated purificatory rites, do not exist. No dietary restrictions differentiate people with different zat names; such dietary restrictions as do exist are those which are enjoined by Islamic law and are observed in equal measure by all groups. Nor are there any restrictions on commensality. There is no hierarchy of castes. (Alavi 1971:26)

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[61] Influenced by the ideas of late Dr Balasahab Ambedkar see Raghavendra R.H. 2016. Dr B.R. Ambedkar's Ideas on Social Justice in *Indian Society Contemporary Voice of Dalit* 8(1) 24–292016 on Ambedkar's ideas

Alavi had warned that framing Pakistani society in terms of castes distracted from looking at the social structure in terms of class and/or occupational categorisation. This has had a great influence on how caste is looked at by the Pakistani left. Aasim Sajjad Akhtar (2001), generally seen as a leading leftist intellectual, argued that class not any other 'primordial' loyalty is the best analytical tool for looking at social protest. Akhtar's argument is very similar to Alavi's:

> This was because ultimately both the peasants and the kammis were subordinate to the farm administration, and thus shared what was a common subordination to one authority (2001: 488).

Alavi's ideas have been critiqued by both Lyon (2004) and Martin (2017), tellingly both non-Pakistani's anthropologists, reflecting Alavi's influence among the current crop of Pakistani social scientists, with both argueing that membership of certain castes carried clear stigma, which was ascribed and inherited. My own experience of the field in Tharparkar makes me agree with Lyon and Martin, and I share their scepticism of Alavi's orthodoxy. For Shah and others at PILER, it had been heresy to question Alavi's ideas. Nonetheless, Shah, an upper caste Sindhi Muslim himself, was clear that caste was an issue, especially in the agricultural sector, and any mobilisation of workers in that sector required an understanding of the caste dynamics.

> I would go to a village, and we would try to get all the *haris* together for a meeting. Someone would object, sorry I can't eat with him, object to our selection of an organizer on the basis of his caste and so forth. We really needed to understand the mechanics. As I say in the intro to Long Behind the Schedule, the first question we were asked was what was our caste? Even the kids we spoke to knew their caste.

Gorringe (2005) gives us a Bourdieusian analysis, that this early socialisation is fundamental to the persistence of the caste habitus. Like Gorringe (2005), I found that ideas on caste, and hierarchy were almost internalised in Tharparkar, which many of the Dalit activists now challenged.

**Na-pak in Pakistan**

Historically, the Dalit empowerment strategies in Pakistan involved conversion to Christianity or Islam, or at least a denial of their stigmatised roots. This, as Singha (2015) has pointed out, when studying Christian Dalits in Punjab, involved creating 'counter-narratives' that focused on veiling caste identity and creating a new genealogical history for their community that is not connected to their Dalit ancestry. Despite these attempts to deny their heritage, Streefland (1979), commenting on a Punjabi Christian community working as sweepers in a municipal slaughterhouse in Karachi comments:

> The point is that these people perform tasks which according to the Muslim majority are impure, and/or they come from groupings which had specialized in such tasks. (p13)

Streefland furthermore observed that:

> Muslems look down on them as inferior on the basis of their origins and their work. They are every bit as stigmatised as their ancestors, the Chuhra's (p13).

Chandrabhan, an activist with the DST, was extremely critical of the Christian missionaries, many of whom were actively proselytising among the various Koli groupings.

> We have chased away these Padre. So if we become Christian, they will call us Chuhra. We are Dalits, why should we be ashamed?

Martin (2017) makes a similar observation of the Mussalli, converts from the untouchable Hindu Chuhra caste, who have, despite repeated attempts at 'reform', mainly through overt religiosity for example, still face a situation where few would eat or drink with them. There is a long history in South Asia of Dalit efforts to envision new political and social structures free from caste Hindu dominance, and this has included conversion (Jodhka 2016). Dalit rights activists in India are now increasingly arguing that the focus on instituting social and political reform practices denies the Dalits agency (Guru 1995; Rawat and Satyanarayana 2016). While I accept this critique, in Pakistan at least, previous Dalit attempts still revolve around discarding

practices considered demeaning, such as the Ravidasi movement (Jodhka 2016), or the conversion strategies looked at by Streefland (1979), Singha (2015) and Martin (2017).

Studying Muslim groups in Kutch, a region bordering Tharparkar, Simpson (2006) observed the existence of two categories, that of *pak* and *na-pak* relating to two kinds of purity. The state of na-pakness "relates to blood, as substance, and the bio-moral combinations it sustains" (2006: 96). Blood can, therefore, be pure and impure as well as the array of conditions in between the two extremes. Hussain (2019) makes a similar point that caste-based hierarchies in Sindh are rationalised through certain normative values and political narratives, such as *Ashrafia*[62] hegemony that excludes Dalits, based on pride in one's Sayed and/or Arab genealogy. Looking at the Dalit movement in Tamil Nadu, Gorringe (2009) argues that Dalit activism involves creating counter narratives, which has involved embracing the new terms such as Dalit. Dalit literally means those who have been broken or ground down by those above them in a deliberate and active way. This challenges the belief that there is an inherent na-pakness associated with their caste identity, stating rather that they have been deliberately suppressed. Incidentally, the word Pakistan means land of pure, pure here being the Muslim majority, thereby by implication excluding those who are *na-pak*. Dalit politics in Pakistan is therefore about inclusion, not just in the Dalit paras they are confined too located at the edge of villages, but also the wider world of Pakistan.

Gorringe (2005:146) has pointed out the difficulty in the use of the term Dalit, which "has not reconstituted the social category described as such. Dalit, therefore, functions as a proxy for untouchable". The DST is dominated by the Meghwal community, who were traditionally leather workers and weavers, and who are often disparagingly referred to as Dheds, as they are

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[62] Literally well born in Urdu, refers to 'upper caste' Muslim who trace decent from out with South Asia see Ahmed (1978)

acutely aware. Vijay, a Meghwal DST activist, said "Dalit sadly still rhymes with *Zalat*", a phrase often used by those who oppose the Dalit movement. Among many DST activists, I found commonalities with the Chamar communities studied by Ciotti (2005), who viewed education as leading to the acquisition of a new substance, often of a moral nature, which was collectively shared and believed to act upon an inherited Chamar substance. The Chamar substance carries derogatory characteristics, historically assigned due to their association with ritual pollution. Ashok, another activist working as a researcher at a prestigious social science institute in Karachi, was explicit:

> The Meghwals are educated. We even have commissioned officers in the army. Not like the Bhils who migrate to the irrigated areas and eat khairat of the rich Sindhi Muslim landlords. We are pak.

An upper caste NGO worker spoke approvingly of this new pakness, where in Dalit parts of his village women no longer appear without the dupatta, the piece of cloth covering the head. Education and behavioural changes are emphasised. These changes including challenging the practice of *beggar*, the forced labour expected by landlords of certain Dalit groups, which is widespread in Sindh. This however is increasingly bringing them into conflict with the authorities, who thus far have taken no real interest in the movement.

The DST has been active in embracing an Ambedkarite discourse of pride in being Dalit. For example, for the DST activists I spoke to, conversion to Islam and Christianity will not erase the stigma they face in society. The DST are careful not to frame their struggle as being against the state, however, but rather their 'oppressors' the upper caste Hindus. As Ramji said:

> You see the upper castes, they forced us to have demeaning names, some would be called a hyena for example. The Brahman would come on the naming ceremony and say you are Dhed, call your boy a hyena. They scavenge like you scavenge. Now we give our children beautiful names. That's our struggle.

Like the Dalit Christian activist studied by Mosse (2009) in Tamil Nadu, however, the DST is not averse in embarrassing the state into making concessions. As Ghulam, a rare Muslim DST activist told me:

> We want the world to know about this. They can't keep denying the facts. We will bring this up at every forum.

The denial of caste extends to the way Sindh is imagined in Sindhi nationalist discourses. These discourses revolved around the themes such as the Sindhi language, the poetry of Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, the Indus and "above all, Sufism and mysticism" (Verkaaik 2010:197). Upendra Thakur (1951), a Sindh Hindu intellectual, writing just after Partition, argued that the caste system is almost absent in Sindh, as Sindhis were essentially a "Sufi people" given to mysticism and religious tolerance. Verkaaik (2010) notes that these ideas have become embedded among Sindhi nationalists as a counterpoint to an Islamist Pakistani narrative. Ibrahim Joyo (1947: i), another Sindhi nationalist writing in a similar vein just before Partition:

> Whether in the proposed set-up for Pakistan or in that for Hindustan, we, more than four million in all, are promised to be treated merely as so many individuals with our collective homogeneity and corporate existence as people absolutely not recognized.

For Sindhi nationalists, Sindh is homogenous with an egalitarian Sufi past unencumbered with notions of hierarchy (Hussain 2019). DST activists have therefore often been in the firing line of nationalists for pointing out the existence of caste. Ghulam, the Muslim DST activist, a PhD candidate in Germany, said he was tired of the constant attacks he received on social media and, worse, the threats received on the ground in Sindh. Ghulam is critical of the Sufi discourse:

> The Sufi is always a Sayyed. How does that encourage equality? Hindus always go to dargah, where the bones of the Sayyad are kept. When do you ever see a Sayyad in a temple?

For him, the discourse of Sufi Sindh simply silences the hierarchy that exists at local levels. There is resistance within Scheduled Caste communities to the use of the word Dalit, however.

## The Dalit Sujhag Tehrik: Making the Invisible Visible

The DST really began its tautology in 2004, during the parliamentary elections that took place under the then military ruler General Musharaf. Parliament has 23 seats reserved for religious minorities, a legacy of the two-nation theory and separate electorates. These seats are given according to party performance in the general election. In 2004, almost all the minority seats went to upper caste Hindus or Parsis in Sindh. Ramji, a DST activist who worked at an NGO was quite critical:

> Mustafa sahib, we were very angry, all the seats went to the upper castes. We spoke, those of us in the NGOs, that something needs to be done.

Traditionally, these minority seats were sold to the highest bidders, which often tended to be caste Hindu and Parsi businessmen in Sindh. General Zia, the Pakistani military ruler in the 1980s had also created separate religious-based electorates, which meant that for Muslim candidates, there was little incentive to seek the support of religious minorities, even in southern and eastern Sindh, where their vote could make a difference (Shah 2006: 48). In 2002, however, under another military strongman, General Musharaf, the separate electorates were abolished. Ramji and another prominent Dalit leader, who also headed the largest NGO in the Thar, was closely affiliated with the People's Party, as indeed were most Dalit activists. I asked Ramji when he became aware of the word Dalit, and he told me it was on one of the trips to Kathmandu, which is where most NGO meetings in connection with South Asia are held due to the difficulties that Indians and Pakistanis have obtaining visas in each other's countries. The problem at that time was that the People's Party was in opposition to General Musharaf, so membership of the party at that time was not improving the ability of Ramji and other activists to facilitate any change. Shah (2006) observed:

> There is not a single scheduled caste or even a low caste Muslim in the PPP's 40-member Central Executive Committee (CEC) and 57-member Federal Council, two top

policy-making institutions of the party. Similarly, PPP has not made any efforts to bring in the scheduled castes in the National and Provincial Assemblies, as there is not a single scheduled caste among the party's 131 legislators (Senators, MNAs and MPAs) in the current parliament (2002-2007) (p 48).

This remains the case, with Hari Ram Kishorilal, a high caste Lohana, as the only minority member from Sindh, with the central executive still, in 2018, does not have any 'low caste' Muslim or Dalit member. At a district level, however, the atmosphere at the beginning of this century was sympathetic to the Dalit cause. For Ramji it was important that the Dalit movement steered clear of the PPP, and that it should be seen as an 'NGO'. At this time Sherbano Alyani was heading up the largest NGO in Tharparkar and was also sympathetic to the ideals of the Dalit movement, many of whose leaders were colleagues in her or other NGOs working in Tharparkar. Mohammed Khan was asked to carry out his survey around 2003, but as I have stated, in the power struggle at the NGO, the Alyani faction lost out to those who were less sympathetic to the Dalit cause. Increasingly, however, the label Dalit was being used in southern Sindh. This was not uncontested, however, and Zulfiqar Shah told me he decided to use the less politically charged word Scheduled Caste for his survey.

These informal discussions, in which a former head of the largest NGO in Tharparkar and a successor to Alyani, played an important part, were also helped by the spread of social media, allowing for the dissemination of material on the Dalit discourse readily available on the Internet. Broadband internet became widely available in Pakistan from 2006 onwards, and this gave a fillip to the spread of Dalit ideas. Chandrabhan, who is now very active in the DST, was someone who picked up these transnational ideas. He was a communications graduate from Sindh University, much younger than Ramji. A Parkari Koli, his involvement in the Dalit movement shows the elasticity of the term in Pakistan. As a caste group, the Koli have not experienced the exclusion from public spaces that Dalit groups like the Gurira, Meghwal and

Valmiki have. As Chandrabhan explained, however, the largely landless Koli are unable to challenge dominant Muslim groups such as the Khosa caste:

> If the Koli tenant argued with the Khosa, then he would ask the tenant to be picked up by the police. He would then call the thanadar, and tell him to keep him for the night. The distraught family would go the Khosa. He would be very nice with them, and promise that he would help. The next day, he would summon the family, and take them to the police station. He would say, for a small sum, the Koli would be released. The thanadar would keep half, and the rest would go to the Khosa. The Kolis would probably end up being indebted, but more importantly they would know their place.

For Chandrabhan, the Dalit movement provided a challenge to this idea of knowing your place. The Parkar region forms an island surrounded by India, with the population speaking an extremely divergent dialect of Gujarati. Over time, many Koli have become completely landless, indebted to the Khosa and caste Hindus. Chandrabhan's father had a caste Hindu benefactor who paid for his education, and he set up a successful legal practice. In neighbouring Punjab, studies by Lyon (2004), Martin (2016) and Nelson (2011) have shown how the landless lower castes, in there examples largely Muslim, have become almost entirely dependent on local landlords who act as patrons through their monopoly over local state institutions and economic resources, as well as through physical coercion.

The Thar, however, is undergoing something similar to what Mosse (2009) observed in Tamil Nadu, where, in the early 1990s, leaders emerged from amongst Dalit professionals, "broadening the scope of their own forums and existing caste association". The largest NGO in the Thar, Thardeep, was also sympathetic to the Dalit cause in those early days of the 2000s. John Beauclerk, an Englishman, who was responsible for setting it up in the Thar was quite open, "if we found a clever one, we would encourage them". But John said he was careful not to make public what were in fact employment practices that were positively encouraging Dalits. Many of these early NGO employees such as Ramji now have offspring who are becoming doctors and other professionals.

Although Alyani failed in her earlier attempt to make the issue of Dalit exclusion central to NGO aims, Shah was assisted in his work by NGOs in Tharparkar, which led to local activists such Ramji and others being brought under the umbrella of the Pakistan Dalit Solidarity Network. The involvement of the IDSN, and other transnational activism, whether on the issue gender or sexuality, is increasingly having an effect on the ground. As a consequence of the Shah's survey, PILER and IDSN set up the Pakistan Dalit Solidarity Network (PDSN). PDSN was heavily dependent on funds, particularly from a large local NGO. Under pressure from the government, however, the NGO in question stopped funding the PDSN and its activities ceased. In those early days, however, it provide a vehicle for the spread of Dalit ideas. Prakash, a Mali, a caste above the Dalits in Tharparkar, who had assisted Shah in his survey, told me that meetings were held in Mithi, and even Islamkot. These were important in extending the reach of the movement into the Thar and preventing it from being confined to social media and the air conditioned conference rooms of Karachi. Ambedkar also began to become an important symbol. As Prakash told me, "I was unaware of him, but I read an Urdu translation". His photo now appears at all DST meetings, and the word Jay Bheem[63] is often used publicly. The greeting now distinguishes Dalit activists from other Hindus, who persist with more traditional greetings. A Muslim Rajput observed, "we used to say parnam, now we say Asalaikum, and we feel happy. If Jay Bheem makes them happy, then so be it". With the PDSN being wound down, in 2011, under the leadership of a Muslim sociology graduate, these activists set up the DST. The organisation was formally registered in 2016.

The recent increases in the mobility of people, capital, goods and ideas are providing new opportunities for would-be political entrepreneurs to construct transnational and global

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[63] A greeting used by followers of Dalit activist Dr Ambedkar. Jay Bheem literally means "Victory to Bhim" referring to B. R. Ambedkar, an Indian jurist, economist, politician and social reformer and the principal architect of the Constitution of India.

political strategies by drawing on new types of transnational networks and resource bases (Adamson 2005). This is particularly true of the Internet, which is allowing Dalit activists to bypass the state through the use of social media for example (Rawat and Satyanarayana 2016). Adamson argues that transnational ideas are dependent on:

> …structural conditions that lead to increased mobility and interactivity across territory also create a number of pull factors for political entrepreneurs by facilitating the creation of transnational networks and resource bases that emerge independently but can then be harnessed by political entrepreneurs during the process of political mobilisation. (Adamson 2005:33).

The DST has an active Facebook site, and the growth of mobile phones, also incidentally as a result of recent state investments in infrastructure connected with the Coal Project, which meant that mobile phone transmitters were built alongside the new Coal Road, improving mobile reception exponentially. Ghulam told me that ten years ago, this movement would have struggled, without the presence of social media platforms such as Facebook. Indeed, Facebook was briefly banned by the Pakistan government[64] due to fears that it disseminated 'blasphemous ideas'. Increasingly, improved communications are providing access to global forums, with Ghulam for example using his position in Europe to work closely with IDSN.

Unlike in neighbouring India, where changing the 'untouchable' status of Dalits has meant that Dalit activists have faced conflict and violence from caste Hindus (Jaoul 2006; Waghmore 2013), the weak position of Hindus in Pakistan has led to many Meghwals and Kolis questioning the label Dalit. Dalit activists have been accused of dividing the already politically

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[64] Pakistan lifts Facebook ban but 'blasphemous' pages stay hidden The Guardian Monday 30 May 2010 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/may/31/pakistan-lifts-facebook-ban

weak Hindu minority. Krishna Kumari, who was the second Hindu woman ever elected to the

Senate was touted as the first Dalit Senator. Krishna objected to the term, however:[65]

> We are not Dalit in Pakistan. These discriminations exist in India but not among us
> indigenous Hindus in Pakistan.

She further goes on to say:

> The issues in India are not directly related to us, because we are indigenous Pakistanis.
> I am from Nagarparkar, Tharparkar, so I can't say much for what is going on in India.
> But what I can say is that these lines don't exist in Pakistan – even though some
> members of the local community do want to establish them.

For the Senator and other critics of the DST, Dalit identity is manufactured, and in essence

demeans communities that have embraced Dalitness. The Dalit movement also faces criticism

that it 'divides' the Hindu community.Jay Kumar, the manager of the NGO I had stayed with

was critical:

> You go outside Tharparkar, you are Hindu. Does it matter to anyone if you are a Dalit
> or not?

There is also a strong scepticism in Pakistan about the existence of caste, or at least

untouchability. Tilley (2005) found that indigenous activists, struggling with similar narratives

of denial in El Salvador, were seen by sceptical observers as "gold-digging type" (2005: 41),

funded by naïve Europeans. Arif Hasan (2010:42), who is credited in setting up the NGO

structure in Tharparkar wrote:

> Because of the wars with India, as a result of which large areas of Tharparkar were
> occupied by Pakistan in 1965 and by India in 1971, the old Hindu-dominated caste and
> feudal system collapsed, with the result that the artisanal castes were freed from
> serfdom. Since they, unlike the peasants and herdsmen, possessed skills that were
> required by the urban economy, many of them became economically well-off and have

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[65] Pakistani Hindu Senator from Untouchable group rejects caste https://cms.ati.ms/2018/03/pakistani-hindu-senator-untouchable-group-rejects-caste/

subsequently become doctors, lawyers and NGO activists who are involved in the political and development affairs of Mithi.

As far as Hasan is concerned, caste was related to the old feudal order in the Thar, and with the departure of a large part of the Hindu feudal elite, the institution has collapsed. In one of my meetings with Hasan, he was very sceptical of the existence of caste as such in Pakistan, a position also held by many within the NGO structure. The term Dalit for him was foreign and made little sense in a Pakistani context and was merely an example of identity-based politics. Discussing Krishna Kumari's comments with Chandrabhan, a Parkari Koli like the Senator, acknowledged the stigma associated with acknowledging ones Dalit background. But for Chandrabhan, denial would simply reinforce the notions of hierarchy and entrench the exclusion that many Dalits experienced in their daily life. The term Dalit is contested, and more so among Kolis, some of whom such as Chandrabhan are active supporters, but others of whom are more critical. There is more to it than just acceptance of the Kolis status as largely landless, however (Young 1984). Emmanuel, a Christian Koli, told me that we are *Kshtraya*, the traditional warrior caste among the Hindus, and as such had no business in being involved with the Dalits. He used the term *faalto*, which has multiple meanings, but is often used in the sense of waste of time or unnecessary effort.

Contemporary research on Dalit movements focus either on making claims for power (Gundimeda 2016) or a type of Dalit activism that is based on strategies deployed for self and community improvement (Cioti 2006). The DST is in some ways like the latter, which officially eschews any demands for political power, yet, as I will argue, at times the distinction between the two types of Dalit activism is blurred. Beth (2005) looking at the Dalit melas, increasingly being celebrated by Dalits in India, argued that their 'public' nature, had an influence on the political performance of Dalit identity. She noted a shift:

> …from the Dalit basti's *guli* (neighbourhood lane) to the urban centre's *sarak* or *marg* (main street) is symbolic of a growing acceptance and incorporation of the Dalit mela as a civic affair. This, in turn, reflects a shift in the audience of the Dalit mela and represents the Dalit community's attempt to break the upper-caste hegemony over the street, pointing to important connections between space and debate in Dalits' engagement with the public sphere (2005:398).

Like Beth's Dalit activities in India, the DST is trying to reclaim public space for the Dalits, and to end the hegemonic discourses that make them invisible.


## The *Babus* and the *Haris*: Horizontal Inequalities in Tharparkar

Dalit groups in Pakistan occupy a marginal position, both politically and economically they suffer from horizontal inequalities (Stewart 2008). There is now a class of Dalits working in the NGOs, however, who are no longer dependent on upper caste or Muslim patronage for jobs and are disparagingly referred to as *babus*. Stewart (2008) has called these cleavages 'horizontal inequality', focusing on four areas: political participation, economic aspects, social aspects and cultural status. Stewart (2008:13) defines these four aspects as follows:

> Political participation can occur at the level of the cabinet, the parliament, the bureaucracy, local government or the army amongst others. HIS in economic aspects encompass access to and ownership of assets (financial, land, livestock and human and social capital), employment opportunities and incomes. HIS in social aspects encompass access to various services (education, health, water, sanitation, and housing), and human outcome indicators (such as measures of health and educational achievements). HIS in cultural status include the extent to which society recognizes (or fails to recognize) a group's cultural practice (for example, in matters of dress, holidays and so on).

Mohammad Khan was sceptical about the Dalit activists and their lack of concern towards the haris, landless sharecroppers, who is southern Sindh tend to be Dalits. In southern Sindh, most Dalit's are sharecroppers, often exposed to exploitation of labour, as the majority of bonded labourers come from Scheduled Caste groups (Shah 2007). The lack of *hari* representation in the DST has opened them up to criticism. Ramji was aware of this but argued that at this point what was important was raising awareness of the Dalit cause. Tilley (2005) found similar

criticisms against indigenous organisations, where the membership was said to be narrow, and agendas were dependent on international funding. Vijay was also concerned by this donor dependence and was keen that the DST would not become similar to other '*chai pani'* NGOs; literally those who were only concerned about where there next funding was coming from. These internal Dalit tensions are likely to have a significant impact on how the Dalit movement in Pakistan will evolve.

## Dalit Spaces and Public Spaces

Dalits have struggled to gain access to public spaces such as roads, common lands available in the villages, cremation and burial grounds and water points. Stories in Pakistani newspapers about the refusal to allow Dalits access to graveyards, wells and common pasturage are common. Jacoby and Mansuri (2011), looking at low educational attainment among lower castes Muslims in Punjab, found that lower caste children were deterred from enrolling when the nearest school was in a hamlet dominated by high caste households. There was a distinction between village spaces reserved for the upper castes and what the authors (Jacoby and Mansuri 2011) have called low caste spaces. Ramji, a Meghwal growing up in the village of Memon said:

> We never went to the Memon para to play. We remained in our para. I only went to school, when I stayed with my uncle in Mithi.

When I arrived in Islamkot, and went for chai in the *hotal,* with a documentary maker from Karachi, both dressed in Western clothes, we were offered seats. There were many who were sitting on the floor, however, and my friend the urban Karachiwal did not seem to think anything of it. When prodded, he put it down to the lack of education, and when pushed conceded that it may be the racism against lower castes. We were speaking Urdu which many of those sitting there would understand, but none spoke up to respond to my comments. Where

one sits or indeed stands in public spaces in Sindh, whether or not in *hotals*, can depend on where one's caste lies on the social hierarchy. When I raised the question with Haris Siddiqui, head of CSR at SECMC, about why none of the consultation meetings took place in Dalit *paras*. His response was that none of the *izetdaar* (respectable) would go there, so my idea was nonsensical. In rural Sindh, therefore, there are Dalit spaces and public spaces, in the latter of which Dalit ability to express any form of agency is limited. Vijay, the DST activist, said that in his village, food seems to always go one way, Muslims would send sweets on Eid which was cordially accepted, but there was never any question of reciprocating.

## The Bus as a 'Public Space'

As I have argued, the Dalit position in 'public spaces' in southern Sindh is often one of subordination. The absence of roads in Tharparkar has meant that roads as 'public spaces' are something new. In particular, I will explore the use of buses, a comparatively new mode of transport. Geographers and political scientists are increasingly moving their focus from residential segregation to consider the alternative perspective of how ethno-national and socio-economic groups can encounter each other in the public realm, with a particular focus on public transport (Legeby, 2013; Rokem & Vaughan 2018). How are traditional rules of hierarchy being renegotiated when new sets of public spaces are created? The focus here is how "infrastructural systems lay out patterns of social integration or differentiation, create feelings of belonging or alienation, connection or isolation, and lead to political engagement or lack thereof" (Angelo & Hentschel, 2015: 311).

Public transport in Tharparkar prior to the building of the roads consisted entirely of decommissioned GMC trucks of the Pakistan Army. Most were said to have been abandoned by the army after their collapse in the 1971 Indo–Pakistan war. The roads that are being built have allowed the growth of new bus lines, however. As an upper caste Hindu informant from

Mithi told me: "The Mianwali[66] people are finally creating a united Pakistan. We can travel everywhere as their buses crisscross the country". The buses have increasingly become a symbol of the new modernity. Khuram Shahzad, the assistant chief commissioner of Tharparkar, spoke glowingly of his part in the building of the new bus terminal in Islamkot. He was keen to tell me how this modern means of communication, the bus, would connect and improve mobility. For the reasons given, these new 'public spaces' in Tharparkar, are also sites of contestation. Shah (2006: 6) interestingly starts his survey on Scheduled Castes by an incident he experienced on the bus.

> It was a hot August day last year when I boarded a Kundri-bound bus at Mirpurkhas. A few minutes later, the bus stopped to pick up passengers. As the door opened, three women clad in traditional Thari clothes accompanied by six children entered and made their way to the middle of the vehicle. There were no vacant seats and the group stood there -- the children clinging tightly to their grownup escorts. The bus motioned forward.

> It stopped again half an hour later, this time picking up four women in more fashionable attire. They sure woke up the chivalrous gentleman inside the conductor. He nudged the men sitting around asking them to make room for the 'ladies'. Two stops, two batches of women... It was as vivid a contrast as placing the sober images of modern life against the fast fading shades that are indigenous to Thar. For someone from among the passengers that was a bit too strong to take. "Can't you see that there are other women on board who have not been given seats?," he said to the conductor, gesturing towards the four Thari women and their six little companions, and drawing a none too gentlemanly remark in response.

> "Oh they! They may remain on their feet. They are Koli. They are Bheel."

> An argument ensued, one man against another -- one just a whistle-blower, the other a powerful conductor. Finally, someone did intervene -- on behalf of the status quo... "It is okay for women belonging to a scheduled Hindu caste to stand." (p6)

When I met Shah, I asked him why he mentioned the road incident. His response was that this was a public space, and buses were a symbol of 'modernity' and he found the replication of

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[66] Mianwali is a district in Punjab, and many of the transporters are said to be from there

hierarchy difficult to comprehend. After all, the new bus lines were competing for passengers, and it made little sense to mistreat possible sources of future revenue. Tambs-Lyche (2004) noted when looking at public transport in neighbouring Gujarat that the bus was the main meeting-place of the local communities, defining boundaries. Unlike in Gujarat, buses are new in the region, those in the *Pat* region only started running at the start of this century, while the bus lines in Islamkot taluka had only begun in the last five years. But this new form of transport is, like the buses in rural Saurashtra, are now becoming a site of boundary making.

In rural Sindh, buses are privately owned, and the air conditioned (AC) coaches which run between taluka headquarters and larger cities like Karachi and Hyderabad are priced in such a way that they are beyond the means of most. As a frequent user of the AC coaches, I never experienced the sort of incident described by Shah, but I suspect the bus line owners took the view that the ticket price itself assured that only 'respectable' people sat in their buses. If you have the money, the AC coaches allowed you to forget hierarchy, at least during the course of the journey. Users of these AC buses tended to businessmen, wealthy farmers and officials journeying to Karachi or Hyderabad for some important transactions. The a/c buses were the sites of new forms of sociability, that of the 'civil inattention' (Kim 2012). Civil inaction describes situations where strangers "who may pass in close proximity, but respectfully act as if they do not see each other" (Kim 2012:268). As Tambs-Lyche (2004: 220) puts it for first class rail travellers, there "is an implicit acknowledgement that first-class passengers generally are respectable people". Wealth therefore buys anonymity in new the public space that is the AC bus.

Local buses, meanwhile, which I took less frequently were often used by a wider variety of clientele: commuters going into work from villages, on fridays people going into the markets and official business with taluka officials. They may include those who used the AC coaches

but also included day labourers and people visiting kin. The drivers were more sociable, often Sindhi, and occasionally Thari. The non-AC, or as they are referred to in Urdu, Dhatki and Sindhi, the 'local' buses are often old British-made Bedford buses, cast off from plying the streets of Karachi, and now reduced to connecting taluka headquarters with mandi or larger villagers. In the Thar was people using buses went from the villages to the towns, from the towns to Karachi, the longer the journey, the better one's social capital.

The Bedford buses that within a short time now connect all the taluka headquarters are now increasingly becoming part of the social landscape. They have a driver and a conductor. Although as a 'Babu', I was often the subject of some sarcastic comments, when I struggled to get on, albeit often a guaranteed a seat. I often found that certain groups, particularly groups that are referred to as 'tribals' in India, such as the Bhil and Koli, were often on the receiving end of the worst treatment. Conductors were invariably Muslim or caste Hindu. Some of the Muslims were Muhajirs from the town of Digri, a town on the border of Tharparkar and the Patt, who found working in Tharparkar onerous. The curiosity of some of the bus conductors often led one to conversations, since *babus* rarely travelled in the locals, and on one occasion, this time a Muslim Khatri, also from the Patt region, was particularly expressive in his contempt for Hindus and the Bhils, whose presence made the bus dirty. The conductor's views appeared to be rather widely shared when I spoke to a Sindhi language lecturer at a private university in Karachi. She recounted her experience of travelling on the locals in the mid-eighties, when the first roads were built in the Thar, in her case travelling to the desert town of Kunri in Umarkot District.

> I remember it well. I was young and these women would sit in the bus. They would stink, and the smell was overwhelming and I would vomit. I felt sorry for the conductors.

Baviskar (2004) noted something similar in Madhya Pradesh, where Bhil were often treated very badly by conductors, almost all of whom came from groups higher in social status.

The bus that ran from Singharo, located on a newly built road that connected to the Coal Road was in the ownership of ex-NGO worker, Ashraf, a Muslim from the Bhati Rajput community who was trying his luck in the transport business, and who had bought an old Mazda coach that had plied the roads of Karachi for what I suspect was a long time. The coach had Bhati painted on it, with the Islamic prayer the Shahada. Interesting Bhati was written in both Sindhi and English. Modes of public transport such as Suzuki Jeeps, local buses even *Qinqi*, motorbikes with a carriage attached at the back, often had the caste of the owner painted on them, with either the Om sign or the *shahada* indicating the religion of the owner. Ashraf was always busy, so I never got to meet him properly, but he did visit his friend Imam Hussain, who still worked at the NGO I was based at. He never really exchanged more than pleasantries. His driver, Yar Mohammed was from the Bajeer caste, who came from Hindu Bhati Rajput dominated village, which Ashraf had always described as members of his *kutumb*, extended family. Yar Mohammed had been recommended by a Hindu from his village, and had experience of working for a few years in Karachi. Yar Mohammed was typical of the increasing number of Thari migrants returning to the Thar to take advantage of the new opportunities being created by the roads. Unlike his employer, Yar Mohammed was chatty, and he realised that I was a good source of possible income, overcharging me for my first couple of journeys, until Imam Hussain at the NGO discovered this and gave him a public dressing down. Yar Mohammed was civil with most of the passengers but took a very dim view of the Bhils and Kolis, with whom he was extremely discourteous, my presence not really making much of a difference. The bus users, other than the odd anthropologist, were from a set of villages, and generally knew each other. Although the route passed the China Camp, the main office of the SECMC, the coal company, most of their employees were provided transport. The bus, therefore, was

only used by locals, and it was a regular complaint that the they should also be provided with company transport, as they were in the coalfield. There was therefore no anonymity, people knew what caste or religion one was. Dress was also a particular marker. As Kanetani (2006) noted, looking at clothing in neighbouring Kachchh, clothing items were often connected with particular castes and often extenuated differences between communities. Clothing patterns signified the wearer's caste or community, much like painting caste names on buses. The Bhil women, I was told repeatedly had the most distinct dress, and as such were most identifiable. Conversely, as Tambs-Lyche (2004: 215) says "Western clothes make a person difficult to classify according to the diacritic marks of caste, and what they signal is something else: the person's general respectability in terms of dress". If one were to look at social relations on the new Singharo to Islamkot bus, despite the hopes that the modernity of this form of transport would produce and be an agent of equalisation, in fact the 'friction' of existing hierarchies was proving to be a formidable roadblock. Indeed, despite claims of modernity and mobility, public transport can play a key role in the matter of segregation (Legeby 2013; Legeby and Marcus 2011; Legeby et al. 2015: 3).

## Conclusion

The Dalit communities in Pakistan are very much like their peers in South Asia: on the margins or outside the opportunity structures. What makes their position distinct from other Dalit groupings is the stark denial of their very existence, their "invisibilisation". In neighbouring India, Dalit studies has emerged as an important counterbalance to reassess the study of Indian society and history (see Gopal Guru 1993; Gorringe 2005; Cioti 2006; Jodhka 2012; Rawat & Satyanarayan 2016). The Dalit movement in India has evolved in a socio-political set up where state policies of affirmative action, however badly implemented, allow for Dalitness to be expressed publicly. The category of Scheduled Caste is enshrined in the constitution, with

reservations in educational institutions and public sector employment (Rawat &Satyanarayana 2016). None of these are available to the Dalit movement in Pakistan.

The rise of the Dalit movement is an unexpected outcome of improved communications in Tharparkar, which include building of roads in Tharparkar.  So, what is future for Dalit identity politics in Pakistan? Giving that accepting caste is seen by the Pakistani authorities as undermining the very foundation of the two-nation theory, it is worth asking at what stage the state restrict the circumstances in which they enact that perceived right, and under what circumstances is that right denied to them in practice. Dalit activists are criticised by those on the progressive left and by Sindhi nationalists (Hussain 2019), who, variously, see the movement as dividing Sindh and Dalit activists as dupes of 'agitators' from other countries and international NGOs, or assert that the Dalit project impedes Sindh's journey toward modernity. Identities are of course malleable; they may be constructed but can just as quickly disappear (Bal 2008). The sense of being 'Dalit' may as quickly disappear if it fails to concretise the aims of upward mobility (Ossella and Ossella 2000). The Dalit movement in Sindh may also start to disappear under the pressures from the state. The persistence of practices of caste-based exclusion, however, which, as I argue, have extended to 'new' public spaces such as the bus, means that the Dalit movement is unlikely to disappear. At the start of this chapter, I make reference to the exchange that occurred at UNCERD, and the insistence of the Pakistani representative, that there were no Dalits in Pakistan. The question had been put by the IDSN, with IDSN being assisted by Pakistani Dalit activists in universities in Europe. As  Dalit activists appear on the international scene and engage with INGOs, the lillyhood of the Dalit political discourse disappearing becomes unlikely.

As I was leaving the field site in July 2017, a local Pakistan People's Party member, a Muslim, was acknowledging that the DST would be useful in getting votes. There was a now a possibility for the new Dalit elites to form new patronage networks in the district. Ramji, in one of our conversations, was equally clear thar the Dalits must not 'throw away' their vote. Voters in patronage-democracies (Martin 2017) are keen to secure some of the material benefits at the disposal of those who implement policy, which includes provisions of roads or electricity. In Chapter 3, I made reference to the supposed connections of the Meghwals of Chakar Rind that allowed the building of the road that connected the village to the Coal Road. These earlier informal networks of Dalits employed by NGOs are now becoming more institutionalized, with the rise of the DST, and providing greater access to political parties. The absence of the road in Tharparkar may have been partly due to the marginal status of its largely Dalit population, but as Dalits mobilize, with new possibilities of political empowerment, demands for roads are less likely to go unanswered.

# Conclusion

At the outset of this thesis, I started off by asking two questions, why roads get built and what happens when they are built? I have conceded that road making does engage the state, since roads are planned, constructed and occasionally funded directly by the state. Indeed, the physicality of the tarmac roads and roadside checkpoints are popularly linked with 'the state', with the presence of the state reproduced through the mundane practices of mobility (Joniak-Luthi 2016). By focusing on what I call the 'road effects', however, the political, economic and spatial effects of road construction on the territory on which it is built, I argue that roads must not been seen simply in light of their role in territorialising process. The infrastructural interventions in Tharparkar are leading to ideas around citizenship being contested, reconstituted and reimagined. The changes in practices of mobility brought in by the Coal Road can tell us about how ideas of citizenship and belonging are now being understood and enacted in Tharparkar.

The border as a method, as a research object and as an epistemological viewpoint, allows this research to focus on the story of road making in Tharparkar, by providing fresh analysis on the state-making processes in Pakistan. What is now referred to by some social scientists as border studies has come a long way during the past decades (Newman 2003). Current scholarship has moved away from the study of the hard territorial line separating states within the international system, with a new focus on the process of bordering, through which territories and peoples are respectively included or excluded within a hierarchical network of groups, affiliations and identities. In South Asia, scholarship now engages borders as margins of the state and nation, places at once removed from and central to debates about identity, security, risk and survival (see Conns and Sanyal 2014). The India–Pakistan border has been a very public site of performance of state sovereignty, with recent works focusing on the techniques of social

control through 'regimes of exception' (see Aggarwal 2004; Van Schendel 2004). The region being subject to special laws, with both countries limiting investment in infrastructure (see Aggarwal 2004; Demenge 2011; Siddiqi 2019). Tharparkar has been a site of such debates around security and identity, with the large Hindu population seen as 'suspect'. Indeed, the few roads that were built in the early decades after independence in South Asia were entirely for military purposes, such as the road linking the border areas of Kutch with its district headquarters (see Simpson 2006). By tracing the history of state making I have unpacked the 'politics' of road building in Tharparkar. The (ir)rationalities around road building are clearly much more than simply issues around overcoming technical or financial hurdles.

Histories of Tharparkar in Sindhi and Urdu (see Harijan 1959; Ojha 2000) emphasise the mobility of the population involved either with trade or pastoralism. The trade networks were expansive, often involving intercontinental trade (see Kothiyal 2017), with commodities being shipped from the ports of the neighbouring region of Kutch and Sindh. Merchant communities, such as the Muslim Khoja and Memon, and Hindu Lohana and Bhatia (see Simpson 2006), were often part of large trading networks that extended to Africa and South East Asia. After Partition in 1947, the new Pakistani state was full of anxiety regarding the existing economic linkages with India, with attempts to restrict 'smuggling', in particular the widespread cattle trade. Colonel Ahmed's satisfaction, , described in chapter 2 above, at the building of the border fence by India, which ultimately led to the sealing of the border, was very clearly not limited to him. I could not find any evidence of Pakistani protests against the Indian built security fence in Sindh, which contrasted with often stringent voices of condemnation of the fencing of the intra-Kashmir border by India at the line of control with Pakistan.. Sindh, as I have argued, has had a long history of separatism (Das 2001), which has added to the 'cartographic anxiety' of the Pakistani state towards the province.

There has been little research on the role of infrastructure in the territorial process in Pakistan (see Haines 2007 as a rare exception). The territorial process is fundamental in the formation of the modern nation state (see Ellis 2018), and modern ideas of territoriality have developed alongside modern ideas of sovereignty. This thesis provides an insight into the dual processes of sovereignty and territoriality developed in Pakistan's southern borderlands. Building on the ideas of Lefebvre (1974, 2012), I have argued that road making is a form of spatial reconfiguration. Road networks can facilitate specific forms of circulation within, and enhance connections between, the margins and the metropole, and can be crucial in reinforcing a specific spatiality. Harms (2011) argues that road making in 'remote regions' is always about the politics of 'time orientation'. I have engaged with theories that argue that concepts of space and time are socially constructed, but that they nonetheless operate with the full force of objective fact and play a key role in processes of social reproduction (see Lefebvre 1974; Harvey 1990; Cresswell &Merriman 2011). Harvey (1990:418) has argued that the social definitions of space and time operate with the full force of objective facts to which all individuals and institutions necessarily respond. The building of the Coal Road in Tharparkar has brought a new configuration of space and time, with the introduction of new modes of transport, such as buses or motorcycles, which influence mobility and although that usage is linked to economic stratification of the population, which affects the levels of benefits that individuals may derive from the appearance of new road networks and road construction

As I have established, road making is a complex process rather than simply a matter of 'state making', where "roads also exceed the state as they become part of the mundane material fabric of people's lives, producing possibilities and limitations that go beyond any specific plan for integration, connectivity, or even abandonment" (Harvey & Knox 2015: 186). Literature on road making, with its emphasises on state making, however neglects the elements of claims making (see Masquelier 2002; Dalakoglou 2010; Dalakoglou and Harvey 2012; Harvey and

Knox 2015; Dalakoglou 2017). I argue, however, that local elites in borderland locations lobby for improved mobility with the centre as part of the claim to citizenship. Or, as Wilson (2004) puts it, in states with a long history of authoritarianism, the demand for a road is one of the few options available if one wants to make a demand on state resources. Ashok Pandit summed it up best when he said if the mountainous and difficult terrain of Gilgit Baltistan could have had a road built through them in the 1970s, why not Tharparkar. The lack of infrastructure in a multi-ethnic state also provides a public demonstration of a state's discriminatory policies. I accept, however, that in regions of resource extraction, "road construction may be oriented less towards territorial integration and the promise of political incorporation than with facilitating the 'off-shoring' of mineral wealth by connecting mines to seaports" (Reeves 2017:712). The 'promise' of infrastructure for a region such as Tharparkar, however, is a claim to equal citizenship that has historically been denied to the Tharis, despite the likelihood of much the wealth being 'off-shored'. Indeed, infrastructure development very rarely fulfils its promises (for Pakistan see Haines 2009; Haines 2011; Anwar 2014). Those caught in the middle of these state interventions often exercise agency in creative ways. The exploitation of the coal field is providing some Tharis with economic opportunities. As I was leaving the field, I discovered that Ashok Pandit's son had taken up a position as a mining engineer in the SECMC site, with the coalfield providing more opportunities for at least those within the Thari elites.

Where roads were absent, the construction of a new road brings with it new contacts and information that were not present before (Hayano 1990). The rise of the Dalit movement in Tharparkar is a clear example of how the infrastructural intervention is providing unexpected aftereffects. Dalit communities in southern Sindh are affected by rural poverty, poor school performance, and often find themselves as bonded labour. On the other hand, the Thar is seeing the emergence of leaders from amongst Dalit professionals who are looking beyond parochial caste interests to mobilise around ideas of Dalit emancipation. The term Dalit had no past usage

in Sindh, and I argue that when looking at self-representational strategies, it is worth emphasising that identities themselves are multiple, fluid and abundantly positiona1. The critique made by some of my interlocutors of the Dalit movement, fail to acknowledge the complexities in any claims-making movement. The stories of the Dalit migrants that I have narrated, show how the newly-built roads have allowed them to become 'commuters' to Karachi by providing an opportunity to break away from the oppressive patron–client relations.

Tharparkar has seen little outright resistance to the displacement being caused by the exploitation of the coalfield. The ownership of land has provided the only means of resisting the state. By looking at the ideas of both Agamben (1998, 2000) and Habermas (1975) around state and citizen relations, I have shown how the Pakistani state in Tharparkar has 'managed' to avoid conflicts through a mix of co-option and coercion, in particular how the discourse of 'fair compensation' for the land has allowed for the concealment of existing caste and religious inequalities. The land on which these roads are built has now become a much sought-after commodity. Land, therefore, has become the central arbiter of power, and for those with access to the 'land', wild dreams of accumulation can be strategically 'encouraged'. Development in 'frontier spaces', such as borderlands is now creating 'zones of exception', where existing rules governing property systems, political jurisdictions, rights, and social contracts are often cast aside. As new types of resource commodification emerge, these can act as catalysts in undermining existing institutional orders, which are sometimes erased outright, and sometimes 'taken apart' and then reinterpreted, reinvented and recycled ((Rasmussen and Lund 2017). In Tharparkar, the Thar coal project is creating new competing claims to land, and this thesis shows how social, political and legal orders are rearranged in these transitional spaces.

In light of the history of state formation in the India–Pakistan borderlands, it is not a surprise that the new roads built in Tharparkar are sites of checkpoints. Identity papers of various types

now play a vital part in certifying and authenticating claims to citizenship. In South Asia, the history of state formation has involved continuous migration flows and these now contend with the rise of right-wing majoritarian politics, creating an uncertain situation for individuals deemed to be on the 'margins' of the state. The purpose of the checkpoint is to carry out the panoptic sort. The checking of identity documents allows for the state "to see its citizens for the purposes of explicit control" (Chhotray & McConnell 2018: 111). Identity documents of various types play a vital part in certifying and authenticating claims to citizenship. The difficulty of obtaining identity documents in Tharparkar can render people stateless. Completing the application involves a high degree of social and economic capital. The newly-built roads, constructed on a discourse of mobility are now sites of new regimes of discipline, where citizenship can be both challenged and affirmed.

South Asia is undergoing an incredible amount of road building. There are currently numerous road making schemes in Asia, each with its own of acronyms, such as China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or its Pakistani version, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). CPEC is expected to bring billions of dollars of infrastructural investment from China and has been sold as a 'game changer' for Pakistan (Chaziza 2016). Roads are now seen as a means to achieve economic prosperity. Investment in road making is often also seen as having guaranteed returns, and there are now infrastructure-focused sovereign wealth funds have facilitated a surge in road construction in Asia, although seemingly not as successfully as first anticipated (Financial Times 2019). They join earlier 'investors' in road making, such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, who also actively funded road building. Yet as Haines (2010) shows for the Karakorum Highway, for much of its early history, to put it crudely, the road did not pay for itself.

I make three points in this thesis, which attempt to understand the rationality behind the construction of the Coal Road, and how the road has now intruded and affected the people of Tharparkar. Firstly, the state-making process in Tharparkar led to the region's economic impoverishment, but this subsequently provided a justification for infrastructural interventions, starting with the first road built in 1987. The literature on roads makes little or no reference to borderlands, where security paradigms often trump development paradigms. That omission than creates a set of the myths of road, with studies on roads being guilty of reifying mobility, which has been called the 'cardinal concept' in contemporary social science (Bauman 1998; Beckmann 2004). Indeed, the study of migration, diaspora and exile; cosmopolitanism and transnationalism; global markets and commodity chains; and global information and communication technologies, media and popular culture all revolve around the ideas of mobility. This thesis engages the idea of mobility in a holistic way, by acknowledging its centrality in the study of infrastructure, but accepting that it must not be used to simplify the complex processes around the building of roads. Colonel Ahmed's argument was that the improved mobility of Indian tanks over sand dunes meant that roads in Tharparkar were no longer seen as a 'threat' to national security. This challenges some assumptions about mobility in social science, namely that: (1) there is (increasing) mobility; (2) mobility is a self-evident phenomenon; and (3) mobility generates change—often conceived of as an improvement. In Tharparkar, the promise of improved roads only came after the Indian tanks could overcome dunes, not through a linear process of state making connected with improved mobility.

Secondly, I engage with the spatial turn in social anthropology, in particular the ideas set out by Lefebvre, in the *Production of Space* (2012), that space is a social product, or a complex social construction (based on values and the social production of meanings) which affects spatial practices and perceptions. The border-making process in Tharparkar has produced a narrative around the 'remoteness' of the region which the new Coal Road purports to overcome

by 'reconfiguring' it as a neighbourhood of Karachi, with the large port city now part of the new spatial world of the Tharis. Although Jani might not have meant it in this way, the use of the term neighbourhood, or to use the Urdu word, *mohallah*, implies a certain degree of subordination to metropolitan Pakistan.

My third and final point is that building a road can bring unexpected changes, not ones conceived by their planners. The rise of the Dalit movement, with their ability to use improved communications to mobilise what have historically been extremely marginalised communities is perhaps the most unexpected of the outcomes of the newly built roads. The 'road effects' that I describe in this thesis must be seen in the light of these three points.

I began this thesis with the conversation that I had with Arif Hasan, and the need to make the Tharis acknowledge their position within Pakistan, or as he put it to make them look the other way. The state-making process in Tharparkar has been about the incorporation of the region, through a series of administrative processes, some disciplinary such as issuing of identity cards, backed up with promises of healthcare and education provisions (very rarely kept), but most importantly through the building roads. The Coal Road has fostered new kinds of longing, new desires, and new anxieties around entrapment in the region. Practically, the building of the road will affect people's consumption, production and livelihoods, by lowering transport costs, which will in turn probably increase the consumption of imported goods and expand the cattle markets that have sprung up. I argue that the process of making them look the other way has been resisted by the Tharis in novel ways, through maintenance of kinship and marital ties with India, resistance to land acquisition and claims made towards their rights as citizenship. Perhaps, like Roseman's (1996) Galician villagers, the people of Tharparkar will one day claim the road, like Shabanbhai, by asserting how they played a part in building of 'their road'.

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