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The Agrarian Question in West Punjab (1885-2020)
Market Formations, Rural Differentiation, and Kissan Politics in an Agrarian Colony

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Abstract

Combining theoretical insights from Marxist agrarian political economy and peasant studies with the practices of agrarian movements, the thesis traces the trajectories of agrarian change and kissan politics in West Punjab from the British-led canal colonisation in 1885 up until the contemporary period. I argue that agrarian politics in West Punjab has been shaped by shifting imperatives of accumulation and reproduction for differentiated agrarian producers, as mediated by changing market formations, new forms of ecological stress and state-led shifts in agrarian political economy. Examining the distinct nature of agrarian crises generated in the colonial, national-developmental and neoliberal periods alongside the contemporaneous development of agrarian movements is critical to bridging the gap between agrarian and peasant studies. I centre the mobilizational strategies and ideological syntheses forged by agrarian struggles led by the Pagri Sambhaal Jatta Lehar (1907), the West Pakistan Kissan Committee (1947-1971) and the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (2009-now) among others to analyse how kissan identities, rural class alliances, and engagements with wider national, anticolonial and socialist politics have dynamically shaped agrarian politics in the region.

Combining fieldwork, archival research, political economic analysis and interviews with kissan organisers, the thesis will engage with debates around peasant struggles, farmers movements, modes of production and the capitalist transition in agriculture. It will show the deepening of capitalist relations of production in the Punjabi countryside since the colonial period has been contested, negotiated and in turn shaped by kissan movements that defy the distinctions between peasant and farmer, feudal and capitalist, and subsistence and accumulation. Thus, the ways in which kissan movements in West Punjab have engaged with changing agrarian markets, production relations, and patterns of rural class differentiation allows the development of new synergies between the Agrarian and Peasant Questions.

Key words: Punjab, Pakistan, peasant movements, rural differentiation, agrarian change

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIKS – All India Kissan Sabha
AMP - Anjuman Mazareen Punjab (Punjab Tenants Assocation)
AQ – Agrarian Question
CPI - Communist Party of India
CPP - Communist Party of Pakistan
FAO – Food and Agricultural Organisation
IMF – International Monetary Fund
KKP – Kirti Kissan Party (Workers and Peasants Party)
MKP – Mazdoor Kissan Party (Workers and Peasants Party)
NAP – National Awami Party
NFM – New Farmers Movement
PKF – Pakistan Kissan Front
PKI – Pakistan Kissan Ittehad
PML-N – Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz
PSJ – Pagri Sambhaal Jatta (Save your Turban, O Jatt movement)
PQ – Peasant Question
PPP – Pakistan People's Party
PKS – Punjab Kissan Sabha
PTI – Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Pakistan Movement for Justice)
WPKC – West Pakistan Kissan Committee
WB – World Bank

Key terms

Arthi – Middleman or trader associated with agricultural markets.
Gherao – Encircling a key building or institution during a protest.
Jalsa – Public political meeting, usually in a large open space.
Jangli – (Semi)pastoral communities who were declared as 'criminal tribes' by the British.
Kissan – Landholding farmer; peasant; cultivator.
Khudkasht – Self-cultivation.
Kirti – Worker.
Mazara – Sharecropping tenant.
Mirasi – Occupational caste group associated with traditional music, and oral records of family genealogies.
Mohajir – Migrants, referring to Partition refugees.
Zamindar – Landlord; landholder.
Qarza – Debt.
Lehar – Wave, uprising.
Dera – Open space for gathering, usually associated with an individual/family.
Arain – agrarian castes who were given smaller land allocations during 1880s canal colonisation.
Jatt – agrarian castes who received peasant/yeoman allocations; also considered 'martial 'races' in colonial knowledge.
Syed – upper-caste Muslims, considered descendants of the Prophet Muhammad.
Rabi – Crops sown in winter, harvested in spring.

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Introduction

The Agrarian and Peasant Questions in West Punjab

The excitement generated by the Anjuman Mazareen Punjab (AMP) in the early 2000s for progressives in Pakistan was palpable. The country was under military rule once again, and much like the early years of most military dictatorships, there was little room for dissent. Amidst the doom and gloom, word spread that tenants at the military-owned farms in Okara and Renala Khurd had rejected the military's attempt to change their tenant status and turn them into leasehold farmers at gunpoint. They began a fight for not just a return to the status quo, but for land rights. The slogan raised by militant Sufi saint Shah Inayat in his 18th century commune in Sindh rose in West Punjab once more as the Okara sharecropping tenants began to shout, 'Jera Wahway O Hi Khaway' ('The one who ploughs, is the one who shall eat.') I was too young in the early days of the movement to know much of what was going on, but by the time I was part of the movement to restore democracy as a young student activist in 2007, the ongoing Okara tenant struggles were very much part of our political imaginary and practice. We would make our way over to attend public rallies commemorating the movements martyrs', which were attended by tens of thousands of tenants. The hope among progressive and left-wing groups in the country was that the Okara movement would inaugurate a national kissan struggle around land reform. This did not happen.

The failure of similar agrarian movements around land rights to emerge across West Punjab sparked an interesting debate amongst progressive scholars in Pakistan. Aasim Sajjad Akhtar (2006), a political organiser and public intellectual who was closely involved with the AMP, put the movement's failure to expand down to the unique circumstances in the Okara struggle, i.e. conditions in which the state operated as a landlord. He posited that "the conditions that gave rise to the revolt on the state farms cannot be replicated in the case of the

rural Punjabi formation at large” (Akhtar, p. 496) because of the specific way in which the Okara revolt combined tenure relations with notions of community (Akhtar, p. 479). Another explanation was offered by Mubashir Ali Rizvi’s book-length discussion of the Okara movement titled *The Ethics of Staying: Social Movements and Land Rights Politics in Pakistan* (2019), where he critiqued the role played by “urban activists” in the movement and echoed a Subalternist, or at least nativist, analysis that affirmed a unique, indigenous relationship to the land for the Okara mazareen, described as a “political theology of property.” (Rizvi, p. 14) This relationship could not be changed despite the push from left-wing activists for broader land redistribution within the military farms area to include landless classes. Rizvi argues that the movement could be explained by “moral claims over land,” (2019, p. 24) and constituted a ‘politics of place’ that is “based on a signification of shared identity as sharecroppers that brought together tenant farmers across caste and religious differences.” (p. 8) Relatedly, Akhtar (2019) argued that the development of cross-class and cross-caste unity in Okara came down to subjective factors, including the influence of urban activists. Specifically, the Okara movement was able to de facto take control over the land and stop paying the crop share, which led to new dynamics of class differentiation, and was swiftly followed by a new round of state violence against the movement in the late 2010s. The movement weakened, Akhtar argued, when it “stop[ed] moving.” (Akhtar, 2019)

The next big agrarian movement to emerge after Okara was the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI) in 2011. This province-wide kissan movement started in the Multan region and rapidly expanded across the province and deployed a range of militant strategies, including blockading national highways, holding electricity officials hostage, and organising gheraos[1] of the Punjab Assembly in Lahore to demand the withdrawal of the IMF-backed increase in electricity tariffs

[1] The gherao is a political practice in South Asia where protestors encircle a significant space, often the legislative assemblies or a government office.

for agricultural tubewells. By 2013, PKI's organising across rural classes forced the federal government to withdraw the electricity price hike. The movement's leadership remains dominated by leasehold commercial farmers, but it was able to build a cross-class alliance between differentiated agrarian classes, including smallholders, around a range of issues, including subsidies, market reform, and support prices. This development raised questions about the changes in Punjab's countryside as well as the political agency of its agrarian classes. However, the PKI hardly provoked the kind of interest that the Okara struggle did, dismissed by left-wing organisers and academics alike as an 'interest-based' movement of only capitalist farmers. This simplistic analysis of the movement reproduced dominant ideas in the field regarding politics around land, subsistence, and agrarian markets, and barely interrogated which agrarian classes were involved in the PKI's movement and why they organised in the ways that they did.

Thus, the PKI was relegated from discussions around progressive agrarian politics and was received in the same vein as 'new farmers' movements'[2] (NFMs) in India, which had been largely dismissed by Marxist agrarian scholars as narrowly representing the interests of capitalist farmers, rather than the peasantry or landless rural classes (Brass 1994, Banaji 1994). The dismissal of the PKI within these debates on rural movements indicates how the rural economy and agrarian politics in West Punjab remain significantly misunderstood due to the deployment of binary categories to analyse rural class differentiation, transformations in production and exchange relations, and the resulting nature of agrarian crisis. This analysis has erected a separation between peasants and capital farmers, reproduction and accumulation, subsistence production and commercial production, and has argued in favour of the existence of distinct, mutually exclusive peasant, feudal and capitalist forms of production in agriculture.

[2] See: Brass, Tom. Ed. 1995. *New Farmers Movements in India*. Routledge, and Baviskar, Amita and Levein, Michael. 2021. Farmers' Protests in India: Introduction to the JPS Forum. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* (Vol. 48, No. 7, pp. 1341-1355)

As a result, the crucial role played by rural class alliances between smallholders, mid-scale farmers, and large commercial leasehold farmers in Punjab's agrarian movements remains understudied and unexplored. I show that complex class alliances can be observed not just in the PKI, but also in left-wing and anti-imperialist kissan movements in Punjab's history. However, the ways in which such movements contest and navigate the politics around markets, prices and the related dynamics of accumulation and reproduction have rarely constituted key concerns in discussions of progressive and revolutionary agrarian politics. (Bernstein, 2010)

This dissertation challenges this narrow view of peasant struggles and farmers' movements alike, offering an analysis of key moments in West Punjab's agrarian history and politics in the colonial, national developmental and neoliberal periods. Examining the dynamics of agrarian change alongside the development of mass-based kissan movements in West Punjab like the PKI, Pagri Sambhaal Jatta (PSJ), Kirti Kissan Party (KKP) and West Pakistan Kissan Committee (WPKC), I contend that throughout its history Punjab's agrarian politics has been decisively shaped by periods of dual crises of reproduction and accumulation through an encounter with changing market formations. While pure 'exploitation' by the state, market actors, and powerful agrarian classes is certainly important, I argue that the dynamic position occupied by differentiated agrarian producers along with what I see as the reproduction-accumulation spectrum shapes how they respond to changes in technologies, inputs, capital requirements, and the nature of agrarian markets. This approach also contests dominant framings of the agrarian transition in the field, which has become associated solely with the Agrarian Question (AQ) of Capital, for understanding changes in agrarian class relations over the last century. Further, I argue that trajectories of agrarian change and politics have both reproduced and reimagined 'kissan' identities through their engagement with broader contingent economic and political contexts, such as state formation, agrarian markets,

the strength of left-wing organising, and the imperatives imposed by International Financial Institutions (IFI) and development agencies.

Studying agrarian transformations and agrarian politics across three key periods – colonial (1885-1947), national developmental (1947-1978), and the neoliberal (1978-now), the chapters in this dissertation explore the ways in which agrarian change and kissan politics exist in a relationship with each other. This will be shown by analysing mass-based agrarian movements in West Punjab that are often pitted on 'opposing' ends of the ideological spectrum. I highlight convergences around how different movements are shaped by crises of reproduction and accumulation, and involve the forging of complex class alliances (O'laughlin, 2016) across differentiated agrarian classes, partaking in advocacy for the so-called 'self-interested' demands around agricultural taxes, debt relief and subsidies. This allows my analysis to go beyond narrow Marxist conceptions (Brass 1994, Banaji 1994) of an ideal type 'revolutionary' peasant politics which mobilises the small and middle peasantry and landless rural classes around land redistribution. Beginning with an account of the colonial period, the thesis will show how the left-wing kissan movement in West Punjab emerged out of the contradictions of its integration within colonial food markets and used these contestations to forge an anti-imperialist agrarian politics. In the national developmental period, it will explore how the socialist West Pakistan Kissan Committee (WPKC) shaped and contested ideas of national development and agrarian reform. In the neoliberal period, it will explore the restructuring of agrarian markets that has led large commercial farmers and smaller subsistence-oriented farmers to find new convergences and divergences around challenges related to negotiating accumulation and reproduction.

In this introductory chapter, I explore the implications of reading kissan politics and agrarian change in West Punjab since 1885 through the lens of the imperative of reproduction and accumulation on the fields of agrarian and peasant studies. I shall lay out the broad contours

of the literature on agrarian change and politics in West Punjab and show how being informed by the binary categories that understands peasant/farmer, reproduction/accumulation and subsistence/commercial as separate and exclusive categories has led to the failure to adequately explain critical components of the development of agrarian relations and politics in the region. I then develop my framework of reproduction and accumulation as combined practices for differentiated agrarian producers, and present my argument for why it offers ways to develop synergies between the analysis of agrarian change and politics. Next, I situate my argument within the trajectories of the fragmentation of the classical agrarian question into the Agrarian Question (AQ) and Peasant Question (PQ). Finally, I will provide an overview of chapters to come and insight into the methodology ordering the dissertation.

Section 1: Re-thinking Agrarian Studies from West Punjab

Punjab is an important node to situate theorisations around agrarian political economy and agrarian politics in the Global South. [3] West Punjab's agrarian spaces offer an archetypal example of the ways in which colonial food markets transformed global agriculture and shaped the long history of agrarian change and templates for resistance and contestation for rural movements. After the loss of the American agricultural colonies, the British imperial apparatus began a process of settling new agrarian colonies in the Indus Basin to produce wheat and cotton in the late 19th century. Through the process of building canals, the hydrology and geography of West Punjab was radically transformed from a pastoral world into a so-called 'peasant utopia' that became known as the 'breadbasket of India.' The re-shaping of the province's agriculture and its integration within the global food markets in the colonial period

[3] The one year long Kissan Morcha across the border in East Punjab that ran from 2020-21 became a symbol of global peasant resistance and has forced academics to revisit long-standing ideas about farmer-led movements.

effectively constituted the 'Punjab peasantry' as a world-historic actor. Rather than being an awkward character stuck in a pre-capitalist world, Punjab's agrarian producers became a central cog in the operation of the British empire's industrial and war machine. This makes the templates of agrarian resistance that developed in the region significant beyond the region.

The above reading contests dominant readings of agrarian change in West Punjab written in the 1970s and 1980s, which represented it as an unchanging primordial space before the Green Revolution. Both political economists such as Imran Ali and anthropologists such as Saghir Ahmed agreed that Punjab's agrarian world had been stuck in a feudal or peasant mode of production, which meant large absentee landholdings, sharecropping and a reliance on labour networks based on caste. Imran Ali's (1988) influential book, *The Punjab under Imperialism 1885-1947* holds the colonial state responsible for producing a landlord-led agrarian structure, which "maligned" (Ali, 1987, pg. 110) the development of agrarian capitalism in West Punjab. In another well-known ethnographic study, *Class and Power in a Punjabi Village*, Saghir Ahmed (1967), another Marxist scholar influenced by "functionalism," (Gough, 1972, p. 73) similarly argued that rural Punjab remained dominated by landlordism and there were little signs of forces of transformation being unleashed in the countryside in the 1950s and early 1960s.

The scale of agrarian change during the Green Revolution made ideas of 'stunted development' hard to maintain. However, even Marxist scholars who tackled the Green Revolution, such as Hamza Alavi (1973, 1976), Akmal Hussain (1977) and Mahmood Hassan Khan (1983A) considered the countryside to be stagnant, feudal and pre-capitalist before the Green Revolution. According to dominant paradigms in the field, agrarian capitalism in West Punjab only began with the Green Revolution, and specifically for Hussain, in the half decade preceding the introduction of high yielding variety seeds (HYVs) in 1964-1965. It was almost as if the canal colonisation process, which created new agrarian settlements and integrated

them within colonial food markets in the late 19th and early 20th century, had constituted a pre-capitalist history, rather than constituting a period of agrarian growth, rural differentiation, and market integration *under capitalism*. Moreover, while there was acceptance that agrarian change was afoot, the work of P. C. Joshi (1974), Alavi (1973), Khan (1983A), and Terence Byres (1986) maintained that the Green Revolution constituted a landlord-led agrarian transition. While it had uneven impact on "different strata of the rural population," (Alavi, 1973, p. 3) smallholding peasants were considered largely passive recipients of agrarian change from above, rather than active participants in both adopting and contesting the nature of agrarian transformations taking place in the 1960s.

Moreover, the literatures on the agrarian transformations in the colonial and national developmental period have not been put into conversation. The bulk of writing on the rural economy in colonial Punjab by Indu Agnihotri (1987), Neeladri Bhattacharya (1983; 1987; 1995) and Imran Ali (1988) was written after key studies of the Green Revolution. This effectively meant that these were not written in dialogue with each other and are still read as separate theoretical strands. A critical reading of this body of literature lays bare its theoretical foundations in the Modes of Production debates in India. Both the literature on the colonial period and Green Revolution in West Punjab engaged with the ongoing modes of production debates on Indian agriculture. Alavi (1975) was one of the key interlocuters in this debate, having articulated the "colonial mode of production" thesis as a segue between the feudal and capitalist mode of production in South Asian agriculture. I argue that this failure to read the colonial and postcolonial periods together has played a critical role in misreading the nature of agrarian relations in West Punjab as pre-capitalist with a transition to capitalism only beginning in the Green Revolution period.

Instead, this thesis will show that West Punjab's integration within colonial food markets meant that its colonial 'peasant' drew on strategies of reproduction *and* accumulation

through participation in local and transnational agrarian markets. Thus, rather than constituting an agrarian transition from pre-capitalist to capitalist relations, the trajectories of agrarian change between the colonial, postcolonial and neoliberal period are in fact shaped by the complex combination of capitalism and non-capitalist forms of production and the constant deepening and transformation of capitalist relations. Through a discussion of three periods, I will show that agrarian change in West Punjab took the shape of processes of continuous differentiation under agrarian capitalism shaped by how different agrarian classes have responded to a range of internal and external pressures, including ecological and economic stress, changing agrarian market structures, and communal and state violence. In the context of West Punjab, I will deploy the term, kissan, which is one of the terms used for agrarian producers in South Asia, and retains the ability to evolve, change meaning, and be contested over time.

In order to grasp the diversity of kissan experience in West Punjab I propose to see them as being structured around two distinctive but intertwined logics or imperatives: that of reproduction and that of accumulation. This resonates with the work of Haroon Akram-Lodhi (1993, 2000) on the choices made by agrarian producers in Northern Pakistan, which shows the "spatial coexistence of capitalist and non-capitalist patterns of household reproduction and accumulation" (Akram-Lodhi, 1993, p. 557). This analysis shows that agrarian producers at the lower end of the landholding spectrum "do not have the capacity to withdraw from market activities," (Akram-Lodhi, 2000, p. 226) which rules out a Chayanovian "retreat" (Akram-Lodhi, 2000, p. 208) due to the necessity of acquiring a cash income for commodity purchase and continuing the plantation cycle in the next season. The survival of smallholder or peasant farming in the Global South also requires understanding the power relations, vis a vis, the market. Shivji (1978) argues that "small peasant production…is not just a remnant of the past but the *basis* of imperialist exploitation" (Shivji, p. 111), which was predicated on non-

equivalent exchange in relation to local or global merchant capital. Akram-Lodhi (2000) argues that a relationship of "structural subordination" (p. 207) exists between peasants and markets, which means smallholders engage with agrarian markets from a position of limited power. In a similar vein, I show how differentiated classes of agrarian producers in different periods engage in cultivation practices which combine reproduction, i.e. simple reproduction, and accumulation, i.e. expanded reproduction. I aim to show how the complex permutations through which accumulation and reproduction are combined have critically shaped agrarian change and the forms of agrarian politics in West Punjab.

Reading Agrarian Movements in West Punjab

These influential analyses of political economy have also left their imprint on the study of rural movements in the region, which has also been informed by the peasant/farmer divide and placed kissan politics in Punjab as a form of compromised politics. Instead, I will show how contesting the trajectories of agrarian change by mobilising around markets, taxation, and subsidies is an integral component of kissan politics in West Punjab. I build on Leandro Vergara-Camus's (2014) observation that "it is not the *expansion* of capitalist relations per se, but rather the *nature* of the *restructuring* of agriculture which explains the emergence of [peasant] struggles." (Vergara-Camus 2014, p. 66) In the context of West Punjab, I explore how the restructuring of agriculture and agrarian markets in different periods shapes the forms of agrarian struggles. While recent literature on the subject has brought nuance to the discussion, proposed frameworks positing a 'political theology of property', (Rizvi, p. 14) a Gramscian-inspired passive revolution thesis, (Ali, 2019; Tirmizey, 2020) or the absence of 'anti-feudal consciousness' (Mukherjee, 2005) retain several shortcomings, which can be

addressed by breaking from the agrarian transitions framework, and instead analysing agrarian movements as constituting contestations of agrarian markets (Bavaskar and Levein, p. 1351).

Imran Ali's dismissal of agrarian politics in West Punjab's canal colonies as being loyalist and self-interested set the tone for scholarship on the subject to follow. Ali's declaration is joined by recent writing by other Marxist scholars like Shahram Azhar (2016) who argues that there was no radical kissan politics in Punjab, Pakistan, in contrast with Punjab, India. Similarly, the works of Hamza Alavi (1976) and Ronald Herring (1979, 1983) on the Green Revolution and land reform in Pakistan respectively do not discuss the role of agrarian movements at all. While Indu Agnihotri's thesis claims to show "the roots of social conflict" (Agnihotri, p. 10) in canal colonies Punjab, it completely ignores the kissan mobilisations that took place in this period. Further, while Neeladri Bhattacharya (2020) recognises that farmers' opposition to the Colonisation Bill of 1906 was based on claims to land ownership, his work does not discuss the movement and its demands beyond beyond the right to land. In a related vein, Mahmood Hassan Khan's (1984) optimism about the structural adjustment processes in agriculture in the 1980s is hard to sustain based on the crisis of reproduction and accumulation faced by small and medium scale farmers, captured by the kissan mobilisations in the 2000s.

In the last two decades agrarian movements in 20th century Punjab have begun to receive attention from scholars. The first significant work on agrarian movements in Punjab is Mridula Mukherjee's (2005) three-volume magnum opus. While providing a dense and textured reading of Punjab's colonial-era agrarian movements in Punjab, Mukherjee's work is limited by her tendency of reading the Punjab peasant movement as a united movement, while downplaying the implications of the split between loyalist zamindar, or landlord, politics and left-wing kissan politics. Moreover, Mukherjee also accuses the left-wing kissan movement of failing to develop an "anti-feudal consciousness," (Mukherjee, pg. 502) which seems to draw more on fidelity to ideas of teleological progress rather than reading how the movement

contested the crisis of reproduction and accumulation across differentiated agrarian classes that had been generated by the market and revenue structures created by the colonial government. Moreover, these conclusions are a consequence of assumptions about the nature of agrarian capital and modes of production within Punjab's agriculture, which have continued to locate real 'peasant' politics in land struggles, while any organising around the reform of agrarian markets has been presented as co-opted or interest based. The consequence of this bifurcation explains why the literature on the political economy of agrarian change in Punjab has rarely engaged with writing on agrarian politics in Punjab.

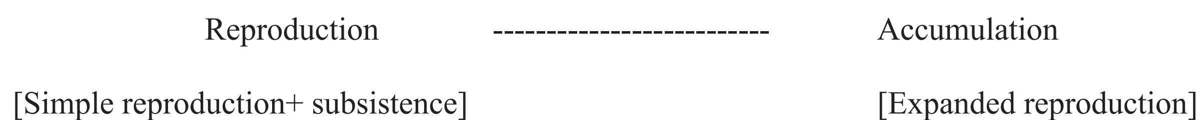
Joining Mukherjee's intervention, recent work that complicates analyses of agrarian politics has emerged around the Mazdoor Kissan Party (MKP) in Southern Punjab and Khyber Pakthunkhwa (Raza 2022, Ali 2019), the Okara tenants' movements (Rizvi 2019, Akhtar 2019), the Ghadar Party and Punjab Kissan Committee (Tirmizey 2020, 2022), the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (Aftab and Ali 2022), and struggles around the Indus River (Kamal 2019). While opening up new debates on agrarian politics in Punjab, I caution against two key theoretical tendencies that accompany this new wave of writing on the subject: nativism and determinism. First, while land is an important node of contestation, presenting a "political theology of property" (Rizvi, p. 14) as Rizvi does can imply the existence of relationships that transcend the contingencies of time and space, and lead us back to looking for unchanging peasantries. Politics, including relationships to land, geographies, and ecologies, are constituted, contested, and reconstituted repeatedly in the agrarian history of West Punjab. The meaning of kissan itself is politically constituted, and cannot be presented as an unchanging category, which shall be elucidated in more detail in chapters 2 and 6. Second, some scholars (Ali 2019, Mallick 2017, Tirmizey 2020) have been too quick to embrace Gramsci's 'passive revolution' thesis to explain the failure of movements to achieve the imagined objective of a revolution. The thesis has already been deployed to explain the withering of social movements in each decade

between 1940 and 1990, which suggests a tendency to over-use the explanation. The entire history of "postcolonial state-making" (Mallick, 2017, n.p.) has been presented as a series of passive revolutions, which have resolved the "crisis of material and ideological hegemony for the historic bloc." (Mallick, n.p.) No doubt, it is important to understand and contextualise the agency of powerful actors like the state and dominant classes, however, this all-encompassing explanation seems to vest the ultimate agency in the hands of dominant actors, rather than recognising subjective factors, including the contradictions within movements, their ability to enact real change, and the role of organised state and non-state violence in shaping their futures. It is also important to engage critically with how farmers' movements navigate and contest agrarian markets (Kadirgamar, Rashid and Shah, 2021). This is certainly not surprising in the context of the agrarian struggles in Indian Punjab in 2020-2021 around the three farm laws[4] to re-structure agrarian markets, but the critical thing to highlight here is that struggles around market formations have been a crucial part of left-wing and populist agrarian movements in Punjab since at least the colonial period. However, despite this, contemporary Marxist scholarship still lacks the language to be able to analyse and evaluate the political implications of agrarian struggles around markets as a part of progressive politics. A recent article by Ali and Aftab (2022) on the PKI recognises this problematic, however, it shies away from accepting the place of the politics around agrarian markets within progressive kissan struggles. I shall argue that analysing agrarian politics though the lens of a crisis of reproduction and accumulation can allow us to address some of these challenges.

Section 2: Reproduction/Accumulation and Studying Agrarian Classes in West Punjab

[4] The three farm laws passed in India in 2020 aimed to remove agricultural price protections, disempower traditional agricultural markets, and reduce the price protections available to consumers for essential agricultural commodities.

Developing an understanding of the agrarian class formation in West Punjab across the 20th and 21st century requires a framework that can explain how differentiated agrarian classes have navigated their deepening integration within the capitalist world order. I argue that transformations in the politics and political economy of differentiated agrarian classes have been shaped by how they navigate the imperatives of reproduction and accumulation. I show how this framework allows us to problematize the 'bifurcated' agrarian economy model, in which subsistence production is separated from commodity production for the market. I argue that agrarian producers in West Punjab have combined subsistence and capitalist agriculture, and have moved depending on the vagaries of the market from simple reproduction to expanded reproduction, and back, in different permutations across the time period under study. This challenges the separation of peasant cultivators and capitalist agrarian classes, and instead places them within the same trajectory of agrarian change in West Punjab.



I define reproduction as a combination of simple reproduction and subsistence activities. I argue that differentiated agrarian classes, which include smallholders and large commercial producers, are confronted by the imperatives of simple reproduction, which involves being able to reproduce the farm at the same scale as the previous season. Subsistence activities, such as growing crops for family consumption or maintaining livestock, have been included within reproduction, which allows combining the market-driven and non-market strategies as part of the same imperative. Reproduction is by no means guaranteed for any class of agrarian producer despite their machinations to anticipate and protect themselves from the vagaries of economic and ecological factors in shaping farm outputs and markets in setting

price. These can lead to non-optimal outcomes, including dispossession, in the case of both smallholders and large commercial producers. For example, in Chapter 5, I will discuss the yearly variation in the size of leaseholds operated by the same large commercial producers, which can reduce from a 3,000-acre leasehold to a 1,000-acre leasehold the next year due to losses. This would constitute a failure of simple reproduction in the Marxist sense, where a producer is unable to replicate their farming operation at the previous season's scale. This 'simple reproduction' squeeze, of course, can be felt much more acutely at the bottom end of the rung, where smallholders can be dispossessed due to a combination of debt and economic distress after a poor season of returns in the market from the commercial segment of their produce. Accumulation, on the other hand, defined as 'expanded reproduction' to use Marx's term, refers to the surplus generated from farming activities, which is reinvested in improving or expanding the agrarian enterprise or investment into other forms of agrarian and non-agrarian capital. Instead, reproduction and accumulation constitute a spectrum where agrarian producers may find themselves depending on the vagaries of the production cycle and capitalist markets.

In defining and elaborating reproduction and accumulation as outlined above I draw on Marx (1867), Bernstein (1979) and Akram-Lodhi (1993, 1995, 2000). First, I explore how Marx defined the role of "simple reproduction" and "expanded reproduction" (Marx, 1867, Chapter 23 and 24) within a capitalist economy. I then move to Bernstein's (1979) adaptation of the simple and expanded reproduction schematic to understand the peasantry under capitalism. I argue that Bernstein's framework runs into contradictions while trying to reconcile the idea of peasants as simple reproducers, and the presence of expanded reproduction within fractions of peasant classes. Finally, I draw on Akram-Lodhi's (1993) work on North West Pakistan to show how he offers a template for combining simple and expanded reproduction, as well as "capitalist and non-capitalist patterns of household

reproduction and accumulation." (Akram-Lodhi, 1993, p. 557) Building on this work, I present a Marxist framework that does not support the notion that reproduction and accumulation are inherent characteristics of a particular agrarian class. Instead, reproduction and accumulation constitute a spectrum where agrarian producers may find themselves depending on the vagaries of the production cycle and capitalist markets.

Marx defines simple reproduction as a process *within capitalism* where the surplus generated from production is spent to continue the "process of production on the old scale." (Marx, Chapter 23) However, Marx argues that "this mere repetition…gives a new character to the process, or, rather, causes the disappearance of some apparent characteristics which it possessed as an isolated discontinuous process." (Marx, 1867, Chapter 23) Moreover, Marx argues that "simple reproduction…converts every capital into accumulated capital, or capitalised surplus-value." (Marx, 1867, Chapter 23) Thus, simple reproduction involves accumulation, as well as the transformation of relations of production, to reproduce the 'old scale' of production. Marx's understanding of simple reproduction translates into a dynamic relationship between simple and expanded reproduction, with shared characteristics including accumulation and the transformation of relations of production.

The crucial difference between simple and expanded reproduction lies in that the latter involves the reinvestment of surplus-value into capital. Expanded reproduction implies successful accumulation or transformation of surplus value into capital while simple reproduction does not. In his discussion on expanded reproduction, Marx states his aim is to investigate how "capital arises from surplus-value." (Marx, Chapter 24) He argues that "to accumulate it is necessary to convert a portion of the surplus product into capital." (Marx, Chapter 24) This allows the producers to undertake the "purchase of commodities that place him in a position to begin afresh the fabrication of his goods, and this time, on an extended scale." (Marx, Chapter 24) Thus, while obtaining surplus-value is a shared characteristic in

simple and expanded reproduction, expanded reproduction refers to the expansion of production relations by reinvesting accumulated surplus value into capital. Thus, Marx notes that “accumulation resolves itself into the reproduction of capital on a progressively increasing scale.” (Marx, Chapter 24) Used in this sense, expanded reproduction, or accumulation, is necessary for the reproduction of the producer’s capital. Additionally, it is important to recognise that Marx’s simple and expanded reproduction schematic does not translate into materiality without contradictions. Bukharin notes “in reality the whole process, since it is contradictory, proceeds far from smoothly and the schemes themselves can be seen as an expression of tendencies with a definite law and nothing more.” (Bukharin, 1933, Chapter 3) And thus, “the process of enlarged capitalist reproduction also appears as a process of the enlarged reproduction of all its contradictions.” (Bukharin, 1933, Chapter 3) Thus, accumulation is a key feature of both simple and expanded reproduction, but only in the later, it is used to expand capital.

Marx’s simple and expanded reproduction model has been adapted within agrarian Marxism to understand the place of the peasantry within agrarian capitalism in the Global South. In one of his early articles, Bernstein (1979) draws on the Marxist concepts of simple and expanded reproduction to provide a conceptual apparatus to understand the African peasantry in the 20th century. While Bernstein’s more recent work has replaced the figure of the peasant with the petty commodity producer, this article remains a fertile space to understand the role of fractions of the peasantry within capitalism. In the article, Bernstein begins by contesting the popular idea of a ‘peasant mode of production,’ (Bernstein, 1979, p. 4) to argue that “if we want to analyse…the nature of the peasantry in the Third World today, we must employ the theory of the capitalist mode of production.” (Bernstein, p. 4) Thus, the relationship between the peasant economy and global capitalism is defined by the “penetration of commodity relations,” (Bernstein, p. 5) which forces “rural producers into commodity

production, either through the production of cash crops or through the exchange of their labour-power for wages." (Bernstein, p. 6) Within the capitalism economy, Bernstein argues that peasants constitute a "homogenous category of simple commodity producers." (Bernstein, p. 14) While admitting that processes of commodification are "extremely uneven…between social formations and within them," (Bernstein., p. 6) Bernstein argues that "the relationship between "capital and peasants" is that of "simple commodity producers *deposited* historically by the destruction of the natural economy." (Bernstein, p. 7) Bernstein's (1979) intervention constitutes an important attempt to theorise the peasantry's incorporation within capitalism. However, this characterisation of the peasantry suggests that they are only engaged in simple reproduction.

Bernstein's framework maintains the separation between peasants producing for reproduction and capitalist farmers producing for accumulation. This draws on the idea of a fundamental opposition between simple reproduction's "logic of subsistence as opposed to the logic of the appropriation and realisation of surplus-value and accumulation of capital." (Bernstein., p. 8) Moreover, Bernstein himself admits that this formulation does not apply to rich peasants, who "maintain a cycle of extended reproduction based on accumulation" and "come to form a category of capitalist farmers." (Bernstein., p. 15) However, as noted earlier, Marx's conceptions of simple and expanded reproduction do not exist in a fundamental tension with each other, but rather constitute templates for where producers may land operating within capitalism. Thus, in the same way as the industrial bourgeois is never guaranteed simple or expanded reproduction, agrarian producers in the Global South navigate both as a terrain of possibilities.

Akram-Lodhi's (1993, 1995, 2000) work on how differentiated agrarian producers navigate agrarian markets in Northern Pakistan provides a template to read reproduction and accumulation as complex, inter-meshed processes. This template draws on Akram-Lodhi's

definition of reproductive strategies as the "enmeshing" of "production relations, labour processes, and surplus appropriation." (Akram-Lodhi, 1993b, p. 569) Focusing on the crucial role played by land, input, labour and output markets, Akram-Lodhi (2000) emphasises the role of power relations in ensuring peasant producers "do not have the capacity to withdraw from market activities" (Akram-Lodhi, p. 226) and are instead compelled to engage from a position of "structural subordination." (Akram-Lodhi, p. 207) Smallholders must engage in "household-based production and processing…to acquire an income that can be used to purchase those commodities required by the household that it does not produce." (Akram-Lodhi, 2000, p. 208; 211) Thus, by providing a template where subsistence and commodity production are combined for both reproduction and accumulation, Akram-Lodhi goes beyond Bernstein's reading of simple reproduction as the 'logic of subsistence'. This is done by emphasising the role of markets as key sites for processes of reproduction and accumulation.

By focusing on agrarian markets, Akram-Lodhi's framework highlights the complex ways in which reproduction and accumulation are combined across the agrarian class structure. Akram-Lodhi argues that markets play a critical role in incorporating agrarian households within capitalism through the "transformation of non-capitalist reproductive strategies." (Akram-Lodhi, p. 575) Surplus-generating agrarian households are compelled to sustain their agrarian surplus through the markets to expand and reinforce their "control over productive assets." (Akram-Lodhi, p. 575) This leads to these households "reorient[ing] their reproductive strategies away from household-based subsistence production and towards market-based production for accumulation." This is how they are "integrated into the capitalist mode of production." (Akram-Lodhi, p. 575) Deficit-generating agrarian households who are unable to "meet subsistence requirements are compelled to utilise markets in order to attempt to obviate consumption shortages." (Akram-Lodhi, p. 575) Thus, at the bottom rung, this alters "reproductive strategies away from household-based subsistence production and towards the

selling of labour-power on the labour market." (Akram-Lodhi, p. 575) Whether successful or not, this reorientation will "integrate households in chronic deficit into capitalist relations of production." (Akram-Lodhi, p. 575)

Akram-Lodhi's work on Northwest Pakistan shows how an approach that is attentive to how differentiated agrarian classes combine reproduction and accumulation strategies can provide important insights on processes of agrarian transformation. In the context of West Punjab, I show how this approach can be adapted to understanding long-term trajectories of agrarian transformation and politics. From the colonial to the neoliberal period, I show how agrarian relations have been shaped by continuous investment in improving technical inputs, transforming labour relations, and growing commercial crops across the agrarian class spectrum. These patterns are shaped by how differentiated agrarian producers combine reproduction and accumulation, which shapes uneven patterns of agrarian development across classes and geographies. Additionally, I show how the challenges of balancing reproduction and accumulation have played a crucial role in shaping the nature of agrarian distress across the three periods studied. Moreover, I show how these imperatives have been translated into agrarian politics by enabling the building of class alliances, developing ideological positions, and raising context-specific demands such as debt-relief, agricultural subsidies, electricity subsidies, and agrarian reform.

Implications for Studying Agrarian Class Relations in West Punjab

In terms of its approach to understanding agrarian class relations in West Punjab, the thesis contests several key approaches towards understanding patterns of rural differentiation in the region. In the thesis, and especially in Chapter 3, I show how the adoption of the feudal and peasant mode of production framework to formulate a bifurcated model of agrarian classes

after the Green Revolution is insufficient. Developed most fully in the work of M.H. Khan (1985), the bifurcated agrarian economy model divided the pre-capitalist (peasant and feudal) and capitalist agrarian worlds. Even though Khan and other agrarian scholars theorised a relationship between the pre-capitalist and capitalist agriculture, this relationship between the two worlds continued to be read as containing a fundamental tension. To show the problems with this framework, I examine a more recent reproduction of the bifurcated economy model to propose a template to understand Punjab's agrarian class structure in a paper by Aftab and Ali (2022). I argue that the patterns of agrarian transformation in West Punjab over the last century and a half make a sharp distinction between peasant and capitalist farmers difficult to maintain. Instead, I argue that a framework that focuses on how the dynamics of reproduction and accumulation have shaped the transformation of West Punjab's agrarian classes offers a more fruitful template.

First, I will explore the bifurcated model of agrarian class relations in West Punjab as articulated by Khan, and Aftab and Ali (2022). I will then argue that the bifurcated agrarian economy model presented in the literature remains limited by focusing on labour relations in agriculture to differentiate the peasant and capitalist sectors. I will then present the categories I use which refer to agrarian groupings based on scale and the form that the relationship to cultivation takes. I advocate an approach that focuses on how different agrarian fractions of class navigate reproduction and accumulation within the capitalist agrarian economy in different time periods, and the contradictions that emerge in the process.

Academic work on West Punjab's agrarian structure classes has continued to present it as 'bifurcated,' i.e. which has emphasized the operation of two logics, namely peasant and capitalist, in shaping the agrarian change. The influential work of M.H. Khan in the 1980s presents a bifurcated model to explain agrarian change in Pakistan, where the emergence of the capitalist agrarian fraction could be traced to the 1960s Green Revolution. Khan also raised the

question of whether the peasant model of the agrarian economy, which relied heavily on labour remittances for its reproduction, would be able to re-assert itself. Based on an analysis of relationships to land and labour markets, Khan comes up with a model which divides the agrarian structure into five classes: landlords, rich peasants, family farmers, sharecroppers, and labourers. Family farmers are defined by the "absence of wage labour." (Akram-Lodhi, 1995, p. 310) This Khan argued came "nearest to the classic peasant farm of Chayanov," which had shown "great resilience in the face of the capitalistic development of agriculture." (Khan, 1985, p. 11) This placement as resilient actors set against capitalist agriculture continues to remain a serious limitation of the bifurcated agriculture model, which continues to rely on defining the peasant sector by the absence of an ideal-type capital-labour relationship**.** This can often lead proponents, such as Aftab and Ali (2022) discussed later, to struggle to justify why certain agrarian classes are placed in the peasant or capitalist sector due to the high penetration of mechanisation and significant role played by market relations in shaping reproduction and accumulation across the agrarian class structure in West Punjab.

In his analysis of Khan's understanding of the peasantry, Akram-Lodhi (1995) argues that his research into agrarian relations in North West Pakistan shows convincingly that the Chayanovian idea of peasantry, referred to by Khan, does not map onto how agrarian classes relate to labour and agrarian markets for reproduction and accumulation. Akram-Lodhi argues that Chayanov "severely limited [the] role" (Akram-Lodhi, 1995, p. 314) of surplus generation and accumulation in the reproduction of peasant households. In the Chayanovian model, household surplus generation only arose for "productivity improvements," which would "re-establish the equilibrium between effort and net income and halt] any further accumulation." (Akram-Lodhi, p. 315) Thus, "investment" in this model "is used to reduce the degree of self-exploitation" and "Chayanovian accumulation is…consistent with maintaining the labour-consumer balance." (Akram-Lodhi, p. 315) Similarly, Akram-Lodhi challenges the

Chayanovian model of the peasantry's relationship to labour markets, in which the peasantry is "disengaged from labour markets" to pursue a "reproductive strategy based upon maintaining a balance between the drudgery of the self-exploitation of labour and the needs of household consumption." (Akram-Lodhi, 1993b, p. 569) In Table 1, I synthesize how Akram-Lodhi describes the reproductive strategies of different agrarian classes with respect to labour.

Table 1 Reproductive Strategies of Agrarian Classes - Labour

Class	Labour relations	Reproductive Strategy
Rich peasant	External labour, at least as much as household labour	Exploitation of labour-power of non-household members
Middle Peasant	External labour less than household labour	Maximise household labour to minimise hiring labour
Small peasant	Limited external labour, working for others less than self-employment	Use household labour to the fullest extent
Poor peasant	Work for others more than work for themselves	Household labour being exploited by others
Landless Labourer	Primarily work for non-household	Household being exploited through labour market

Source: Akram-Lodhi, 1993b, p. 569

Showing how various agrarian classes are differentially integrated with labour markets, Akram-Lodhi argues that "Chayanov's theory of peasant economy sits ill with the peasant farms [studied]." (Akram-Lodhi, 1995, p. 321). Based on this analysis, Akram-Lodhi criticises Khan for the "insertion of the essentially static organisation form of the family farm into an analysis which demonstrates the continued dynamic transformations in the relations of production under which those households operate." (Akram-Lodhi, p. 323) Akram-Lodhi goes

further to argue that the position that “self-reproducing families can constitute a class removes the organisational form from the economic structure within which it operates.” (Akram-Lodhi, p. 323)

In a recent article, Aftab and Ali (2022) present West Punjab’s agrarian structure as conforming to “agrarian bifurcation, a polarized structure based upon highly unequal ownership/control of land and access to capital.” (p. 90) Aftab and Ali divide the agrarian structure into three strata, capitalist, peasant, and labour. These are then sub-divided into three fractions of classes. The classification is based on a combination of labour and land ownership, where the capitalist class “command sufficient capital to invest in agrarian production without contributing their own (i.e. family) labour in cultivation.” (Aftab and Ali, p. 90) Peasants, on the other hand, are defined as “farmers who make use of their own (i.e. family) labour in agricultural production.” (Aftab and Ali, p. 93) The peasant classes “produce both for consumption and for the market, and even marginal differences in access to capital, land, and labour can lead to important differentiation.” (Aftab and Ali, p. 93) This model draws primarily on agrarian census data from 1972 and 2010 and is reproduced below:

Table 2 Agrarian Structure of West Punjab

Capitalist sub-sector	Corporate agriculture
	Landed aristocracy
	“Second-tier” rural capitalist
Peasant sub-sector	Proto-capitalist
	Rich peasant
	Middle Peasant
Agrarian/rural labour	Poor peasant/semi-proletarian
	Landless labourer
	Bonded labourer

Source: Aftab and Ali 2022

The division into nine sub-classes expands earlier models of West Punjab's agrarian structure, which have largely mirrored Khan's five-class schematic. However, Aftab and Ali's template relies on macro data on land ownership, tenure, and tenancy. This does not provide an understanding of the relationship between various on-farm processes, including labour, capital and leasing, and market relations. Despite the model presenting second-tier capitalists, proto-capitalists and rich peasants as distinct categories, Aftab and Ali accept "rich peasants can often blur into the second tier of capitalist farmers." (Aftab and Ali, p. 93) Thus, effectively, Aftab and Ali themselves admit that one sub-class of 'capitalists' and two sub-classes of 'peasants' show significant overlap. A key problem is that second-tier capitalists are defined as "tending to control 25 to 100-200 acres," (Aftab and Ali, p. 90) which they argue constitute the top 2.5 percent of farmers in West Punjab. This constitutes a wide range which, unsurprisingly, contains substantive differentiation, and raises questions about whether the bifurcation into capitalist and peasant subsectors can hold up if two so-called peasant classes share key characteristics with a major capitalist agrarian class. This leads to Aftab and Ali accepting "Patnaik's labour exploitation criterion as a guide" (Aftab and Ali, p. 91) which relies on whether they "employ family labour" (Aftab and Ali, p. 88) in on-farm processes. If they do they are peasants, it they don't they are part of capitalist agrarian classes. While the ratio of family labour to hired labour employed on a farm remains an important characteristic in understanding agrarian classes, this analysis of how different agrarian classes engage with labour and land markets needs to be supplemented by how this fraction of agrarian classes engages with agrarian input and output markets for reproduction and accumulation. Moreover, these factors are not limited to the contemporary period. They were already observable during the colonial period.

Recent work, such as Jan (2017), has also pushed back against interpretations of agrarian relations in Punjab in the colonial period as confirming to a precapitalist template. Instead, Jan (2017) claims that "there was substantial dynamism and a turn towards commercial agriculture in the Punjab, even if the benefits of agricultural growth were unevenly distributed." (Jan, p. 7) during this period. Thus, arguing that Mukherjee's (2005) description of colonial agriculture in Punjab as "semi-feudal" did not "stand when agricultural data is disaggregated from an all -Punjab level to one between canal irrigated areas and unirrigated ones." (Jan, p. 7) This showed "a far greater amount of land devoted to cash crops on irrigated rather than unirrigated lands," (Jan, p. 7) "improved yields" (Jan, p. 7) and a more "labour-intensive" process. (Jan, p. 8) These were one of the key reasons "Punjab emerged as one of the most export-oriented regions in all of India." (Jan, p. 7) This provides further grounds for understanding different agrarian classes as differentially integrated within capitalism. In Chapter 3, I will develop this claim further by engaging with the work of Khan (1985), Alavi (1973), Hussain (1980) and Burki (1972) on the trajectories of agrarian development in the 1950s and 1960s. In Chapter 5, I showcase how these processes of differential integration of fractions of agrarian classes within a capitalist agrarian structure shape patterns of reproduction and accumulation in neoliberal West Punjab.

Across the thesis, I will deploy three scales: small, medium, and large to describe agrarian producers across each of the time periods. In his commentary on Patnaik's (1976) labour exploitation criterion for identifying agrarian classes, Akram-Lodhi (1993b) offers several important insights on the intersections between processes of reproduction and accumulation in the countryside. Akram-Lodhi notes that Patnaik's proposal focused on a "farm's scale of production," instead of previous classification models which "grouped [farms] by average size." (Akram-Lodhi, p. 562) Scale constituted the biggest factor in shaping the "capacity to pursue agrarian accumulation." (Akram-Lodhi, p. 563) This placed the focus on

"important differences in the distribution of productive assets, …the method of production and… the purpose of production." (Akram-Lodhi, p. 562) Drawing on Lenin, Akram-Lodhi posits three key factors that shape scale: a) possession of land and other means of production, b) employment of non-household labour relative to household labour, and c) the ability to generate a surplus higher than consumption, depreciation, and investment. (Akram-Lodhi, p. 563) Moreover, Akram-Lodhi observed that Patnaik's model allowed one to disentangle the "contradictory class location" (Akram-Lodhi, p. 564) agrarian households found themselves in when "emerging dominant patterns of surplus appropriation…intersect the previous reproductive strategy produced." (Akram-Lodhi, p. 564)

Table 3 Agrarian Producers by Scale (Approximated)

Category	Description
Small-scale	Land: Under 10 acres of cultivable land, limited access to capital, land can be owned, cash leased, or sharecropped, combining crops for self-consumption with production for market. Capital: Min-maxing of use of farm-inputs, including seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, machinery. Could own a tubewell, but likely sharing or paying for access to tubewell water. Labour: Family labour crucial, but labour can be hired on barter/cash or cash for more limited roles, especially during planting and harvesting.
Mid-scale	Land: Usually around 10-50 acres, access to more capital that small-scale producers, land can be owned, cash leased, or sharecropped, crops for self-consumption make up a smaller proportion of overall cultivation, Capital: in post-Green Revolution period can own some key elements of machinery, such as tractors and tubewells.

	Labour: Family labour plays a crucial role. High variance in labour arrangements, some labour arranged through mixed barter/cash arrangements, others via labour contractors.
Large-scale	Land: Usually above 50 acres, high access to capital, land can be owned or cash leased, high proportion of crops cultivated for markets, Capital: In post-Green Revolution period: likely own a number of key farm machinery, including tractors and harvesters. Could also have own agro-processing and agro-storage facilities. Some can have their own agro-export businesses. Labour: generally hired through contractors, labour compensation varies based on crop. Some could use captive labour, such as limited sharecropped land, to guarantee access to labour.

In my presentation of agrarian classes, I draw on scale and relationship to land as the key signifiers used across the thesis. The understanding of scale draws on a range of factors, including “area cropped, the amount of rented-in land, the number of animals, availability of water, quality of soil, quality of seeds and fertilisers, degree of mechanisation and availability and use of labour.” (1993b, Akram-Lodhi, p. 563) I will use three scales: small, medium and large, which will draw on combining the factors outlined above. These will be conjoined with additional indicators, such as owner-cultivator, sharecroppers, leaseholder, and landlord, to provide a basic template to understand their relationship to land. While there can be variance depending on the nature of the agrarian geography and other factors, generally a small-scale producer will cultivate less than 10 acres of land. A medium-scale producer will cultivate 10 to 50 acres of land, and a large-scale producer will cultivate more than 50 acres of land. However, there will be variation based on the exact geography involved, access to capital, nature of relationship to markets, and time period. Thus, understanding how differentiated

agrarian producers negotiate reproduction and accumulation will be done through thick description, which will show the complexity of navigating land, labour and output markets across the colonial, national developmental, and neoliberal periods in West Punjab's history.

Additional clarification will be provided in the chapters to explain these terms within their historical context, for example, what are the relations involved for a small-scale sharecropper in the colonial period or a medium-scale owner cultivator in the contemporary period. It is also important to note that an agrarian producer can occupy two positions, for example, in the colonial period agrarian producers classified as owner-cultivators with medium-sized landholdings in official rewards were often leasing parts of their land to sharecroppers, thus, being both owner-cultivators and landlords. In the discussion on the contemporary period, we encounter several smallholding owner-cultivators, who also lease additional land for commercial cultivation. These complexities cannot be captured by constructing ideal-types. Instead, I hope to show that exploring the complex ways in which differentiated agrarian classes approach reproduction and accumulation, both in choices around cultivation and how it shapes politics offer a more fertile terrain to understand the last 150 years of the history and movements of agrarian West Punjab. Also, it is important to note, that local terms for agrarian producers, namely kissan, zamindar, or mazara, do not map onto peasant or capitalist farmer. This does not mean understanding the way in which capitalism operates in agrarian relations in the countryside is not important, but that these investigations should not be overshadowed by looking for neat differentiations where they may not exist. While I focus on how the meaning of kissan has changed over time, the use of the term, peasant, in the thesis hopes to engage critically with the different ways in with how it has been used in the literature on agrarian relations and politics in West Punjab and Pakistan. By using scale, as a combination of land-size and intensity of cultivation, I hope to be able to provide the space for understanding the many relationships that allow agrarian classes to reproduce and

accumulate, but also how kissan movements are able to successfully build class alliances at specific moments around particular issues, but fail to do so at others.

Section 3: Trajectories of the AQ and PQ: A Case for Re-unification

In the mid-twentieth century, the classical agrarian question became bifurcated into the Agrarian and Peasant Questions. The literature on the AQ, associated more recently with Henry Bernstein and Terence Byres, began to focus on agrarian surplus and dynamics of class differentiation in the countryside. Since the 1980s, mediated through the moral economy and Subalternist Schools, the literature on the PQ began to read the cultural world of the peasantry as more and more 'autonomous.' Moreover, neither of these literatures offered a framework to analyse the political mobilisations of 'non-peasant' agrarian classes, namely farmers, on their own terms.[5] By maintaining a dichotomy between peasants oriented towards reproduction and farmers oriented towards accumulation, the gap between the literature on agrarian transformation and agrarian politics has continued to grow. Instead, I shall argue that reading contexts of colonial capitalism, such as West Punjab, as spaces where differentiated agrarian producers grow subsistence and commercial crops, deploy family labour and employ labour, *and* engage with the market to reproduce and accumulate present fertile spaces to develop new synergies between the AQ and PQ.

This section explores the trajectories of the AQ and PQ questions and argues that analysing how differentiated agrarian classes navigate reproduction and accumulation offers ways to re-unify the political and economic components of the classical AQ. First, I will trace the fragmentation of the classical AQ into the AQ of Capital and PQ. I show that this fragmentation of the AQ led to a shift from the political question of the peasantry in socialist

[5] The AQ of capital remains concerned with 'class struggle' in the countryside only in so far as it leads to or inhibits a promised agrarian transition.

struggles to a question of whether the peasantry can survive agrarian capitalism. The section will also chart the trajectories of the Peasant Question (PQ), the political component of the AQ, from its roots in writing by Engels, V.I. Lenin and Mao Zedong, through Hamza Alavi and Eric Wolf's middle peasant thesis, to the theorisation of peasantries as subaltern groups outside capital and the state by James Scott and the Subalternists. It will argue that an understanding of how differentiated agrarian classes negotiate reproduction and accumulation can help develop new synergies between the AQ and PQ.

The founding of the classical agrarian question (AQ) is associated with Fredrich Engels' (1894) inaugural text on the subject titled *The Peasant Question in France and Germany*, which addressed how socialist political parties should engage with the European peasantry during the expansion of capitalism and the threat of cheap food from the colonies. (Engels, 1894, n.p) As a political document for revolutionary organisations, this intervention showed that Engels not only recognised that the economic and political components of the AQ were intimately connected, (Kay and Akram-Lodhi., 2010a, p. 185) but also that the AQ was inherently global. Three tendencies emerged within two decades of the publication of Engels's book, which became associated with Karl Kautsky, Vladmir Lenin, and Alexander Chayanov. Kautsky and Lenin both wrote about whether peasant farming would survive the expansion of capitalist relations in agriculture. (Kay and Akram-Lodhi, 2010a, p. 180) The political economic tendency can be considered more closely associated with Kautsky, despite his concern with the political AQ in the second volume of the *Agrarian Question* (1899). Lenin, in contrast, remained closer to Engels' thesis of a worker-peasant synthesis, where the AQ was "for and about labour and the expression of its agency." (Kay and Akram-Lodhi, 2010a, p. 184-185) The third trajectory is associated with Alexander Chayanov, a contemporary to Lenin, who postulated an autonomous peasant economy which operated outside the logic of capital,

part of which was compiled in the *Theory of Peasant Economy* (1966). The divergences between the three laid the roots of the fragmentation of the AQ and PQ.

The Kautsky line, and parts of Lenin's work, developed into the literature on the AQ of Capital in the late 1980s and shifted the terms of the question from the role of the peasantry in revolutions to the question of the failure of an agrarian transition to capitalism. Having been separated from its political component, the literature began to concern itself with the success or failure of agrarian transitions. Terence J. Byres (1995) re-defined the agrarian question as "the continuing existence in the countryside of poor countries of substantive obstacles to forces capable of generating economic development, both inside and outside agriculture. It represents a failure of accumulation to proceed in the countryside." (Byres, p. 509) The scope of the AQ of Capital had been narrowed to the failure of industrialisation through the transfer of agrarian surplus. Giving up the political agrarian project was further justified by Eric Hobsbawm's (1994) declaration of the 'death of the peasantry.' Just over a decade later, Henry Bernstein (2006) declared the death of the AQ of Capital arguing that global capital was no longer interested in the transformation of agrarian relations and that the peasantry had become petty commodity producers (PCP). Bernstein argued only AQs of labour have been left which "have little connection with any 'peasant question' constituted in the earlier epochs…or indeed with the "classic" AQ of capital." (Bernstein, p. 453-454) Moreover, Bernstein argued that "agriculture in capitalism today is not synonymous with, nor reducible to, farming…Rather, agriculture is increasingly, unevenly, integrated, organised, and regulated by relations between agrarian classes and types of farms…and…capitalist upstream and downstream of farming." (p. 454) The consequence of this is the "fragmentation of classes of labour," which means that "the crisis of labour is a crisis of reproduction." (p. 455)

However, Bernstein's conclusion that the AQ of capital no longer exists appears to be rushed when examined from the context of West Punjab, which retains connections between

the PQ and AQ. Drawing on Sinha's (2021) work on East Punjab, chapter 5 will trace trajectories of accumulation and reproduction will analyse how different agrarian classes take decisions to attempt to reach simple or expanded reproduction in contemporary West Punjab. This shows that agrarian capital continues to shape ongoing transformations in agrarian production, exchange, and class relations. Global capital continues to invest in the transformation of global agriculture, which has also resulted in several agrarian struggles contesting these changes. The struggle over the future of our agrarian worlds is not dead. Instead, the ongoing transformations in global agriculture and agrarian relations continue to have implications for the nature of agrarian movements that emerge in the contemporary period.

This backdrop has shaped the limitations of the analysis of contemporary agrarian movements in South Asia. In the debate on the emergence of new farmers movements in India in the 1970s, scholars associated with the Lenin/Kautsky trajectory such as Tom Brass (1994) and Jairus Banaji (1994), argued that these movements were led by (capitalist) farmers in a context where peasant farming no longer existed in any serious way, and therefore, did not represent the lowest rungs of rural society. On the flip side, Gael Omvedt (1994) and others drew on Chayanovian influences to romanticise these movements (Baviskar and Levein, 2021) p. 1344) as inherently containing progressive traits due to their opposition to agrarian capitalism and the rural-urban divide. Situated in the backdrop of polarised debates, we face a difficult question: what does a progressive political agrarian question look like if the peasantry has been transformed into farmers and semi-proletarians integrated within capitalist relations? I contend that it is the definition of peasants as simple reproducers and farmers as expanded reproducers that plays a crucial part in the failure to understand both the place of agrarian producers in contemporary capitalism and the role played by agrarian movements in contesting the nature of agrarian relations.

Transcending the Peasant/Farmer Binary to Understand Kissan Politics

I contend that these developments in the literature are a result of misreading the nature of integration of the 'peasantry' within global agriculture. The Chayanovian reading, in which peasants participate in agrarian markets for simple reproduction, is not sufficient to understand this equation. Instead, as previously discussed, the work of Bernstein and Akram-Lodhi allows us to develop a framework which integrates simple and expanded reproduction to understand how differentiated agrarian classes are integrated within the global capitalist agriculture. This can allow us to move beyond the peasant/farmer template to understand how agrarian producers contest the nature and forms of agrarian relations to develop agendas, forge class alliances and advocate agrarian reform.

The presentation of peasantries as simple reproducers is a theme that continues to appear in Marxist political economy. Eric Wolf (1999) defined peasants as "populations that are existentially involved in cultivation, make autonomous decisions regarding the process of cultivation [and] keep the market at arm's length." (Wolf, p. xxii) Wolf defined farmers as the opposite, as they "entered the market fully." (Wolf, p. xxiii) Theodor Shanin (1966) defined peasants as "small agricultural producers who, with the help of simple equipment and the labour of their families, produce mainly for their own consumption and for the fulfilment of obligations to the holders of political and economic power" (Shanin, p. 6). In this article, Shanin presented being a peasant as not just a "general pattern of social life," but also "a stage in the development of human society" (Shanin, p. 10). Thus, the way the peasantry was defined contained within itself the prediction of its demise. Even Bernstein, whose attempt to theorise the African peasantry within capitalism, argued that their logic of existing in the capitalist economy was "different both from capitalist class relations and from the neo-classical

economist models" (Bernstein et. al., 2018, p. 707). Whereas the acceptance of a separate logic itself is not a problem, this representation has led to a presentation of peasant politics as situated *outside* capitalism, which has led to polarised debate between those who have romantise this position and those who maintain that it is futile.

In the early 1960s, the Chinese revolution and national liberational struggles of the mid-20th century radically changed the imagination of the role of the 'peasant' in revolutionary politics. The Marxist sociologist Hamza Alavi (1965) echoed Frantz Fanon that "in colonial countries, only peasants can be revolutionary" (p. 241). The peasant was recognised as a political subject. Alavi and Wolf's project attempted to understand peasant politics as projects of emancipation embedded in larger anti-imperialist, nationalist and socialist struggles, rather than isolated reactions to capital's disruption of 'peasant worlds'. They presented the 'middle peasant' thesis as a way of integrating agrarian class analysis with politics, which suggested that it was the middle peasant, who was able to deploy its relative autonomy to become the most radical actor in peasant movements.

However, inward-looking definitions of the category of the peasant became popular after the publication of James Scott's (1977) *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* and Ranajit Guha's (1983) *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*. The two texts laid the foundations of the moral economy and Subaltern Studies schools, which claimed to break from Marxist caricatures by placing "subsistence ethic at the centre of the analysis of peasant politics" (Scott, p. 3). Thus, instead of engaging in complex class analysis, Scott argued that we needed to look at the "normative roots of peasant politics" (Scott, p. 4), which came down to the issue of "moral economy" to explain "what makes them [peasants] angry and what is likely…to create an explosive situation" (Scott, p. 4). He noted "a 'safety-first' principle behind …the technical, social and moral arrangements of a precapitalist agrarian order" (Scott, p. 4). It was this moral economy and subsistence ethic that was violated by "the imposition

of…capitalism and the development of a modern state under colonial aegis" (Scott, p. 7). Thus, Scott argument implied that peasants reacted to the disruption of the pre-capitalist moral world they inhabited and were unable to imagine a radical future within or beyond capitalism. However, Scott admits to not engaging with "a host of intervening factors – such as alliances with other classes, the repressive capacities of dominant elites, and *the social organization of the peasantry* itself" (Scott, p. 4) [My emphasis]. Thus, only by ignoring class alliances, domination, peasant differentiation and, if one may add, ideology, Scott was able to arrive at the conclusion that peasant politics was purely of a defensive character in the face of agrarian capitalism. Moreover, this is also a strange position to take in the case of the Vietnamese peasantry's resistance to French colonial rule in the 1930s. Not only did the Vietnamese peasantry play a key role in socialist struggles, the Indo-Chinese Communist Party was heavily involved in the 1930 Nghe-Tinh Soviet Movement in Vietnam, one of Scott's case studies, which has been called "a point of transition from traditional anti-French resistance to modern Communist-led nationalism" (Bernal, p. 148).

The Subaltern School reached the same conclusions based on their critique of Hobsbawm's presentation of peasants as "pre-political" (Guha 1983, p. 5). Despite this important starting point, the Subalternists ended up reinforcing the idea that peasant resistance was the "pure anti-thesis" of colonialism and capitalism (Guha, p. 2). Thus, Guha's attempt to recover the consciousness of the peasant and tell the history of peasant insurgency in-of-itself, ended up foreclosing the possibility of connections with other histories – of colonialism, of capitalism, of revolution, or nationalism (Guha, p. 4). The influence of Guha can be seen in other Subalternist works such as Partha Chatterjee (2001) and Dipesh Chakrabarty (1989). In drawing a sharp distinction between political and civil society, Chatterjee (2001) argued that the subaltern classes existed in a separate world from the state, while Chakrabarty's (1989) study of working-class politics in Bengal argued that the Indian working class was still

'peasant,' which required analysis through Subalternist frameworks. The insight that the working class in the colonial period, and even now, retains strong links to the countryside is not incorrect, but this does not mean that the either/or logic of it being either working class or peasant is appropriate. While the focus on moral economies, values, histories, and culture could have allowed a more culturally-embedded understanding of how different agrarian classes experience and contest the state, capital and agrarian change, these frameworks instead reinforced the separation between the AQ and PQ.

The binary between peasants-for-subsistence and farmers-for-market does not explain the place of the small to medium-scale producers in globalised food markets. Leandro Vergara-Camus (2017) argues that these limited definitions of peasants as subsistence producers apply to only the "poorest sectors of the peasantry" (Vergara-Camus, p. 427), but even these cannot reproduce themselves today without engaging in markets, particularly as labour. Agrarian producers must adapt to the nature of agrarian markets created in each period. The peasantry must be analysed as a complex class with four key characteristics: access to land, partial social reproduction through subsistence, mobilisation of unpaid family labour or kinship networks, and a collective identity associated with a particular territory (Vergara-Camus, 2017, p. 427-428). This expanded definition allows us to analyse the role played by small to medium-scale producers that are integrated within market formations. Moreover, recent agrarian movements, which have articulated peasant identities across local and transnational scales, suggest it is important to pay attention to so-called peasant classes as not merely engaged in subsistence production, but also practices of accumulation.

The 21st century has brought with it "new agrarian questions" which require "new historical knowledge on the role of peasantries within capitalist transformations" (Vaunhaute, 2008, p. 56-57). Farshad Araghi (2009) argues that the peasant question emerged because it "had a concrete political component that was inconsistent with abstract theoretical

expectations" (Araghi, p. 114-115). The peasantry has consistently refused to accept the role that was imposed on it by Marxist political economy. Cristobal Kay and Haroon Akram-Lodhi's (2010a) two-part survey of the agrarian question contests Bernstein's declaration of the death of the AQ, and instead argues that the AQ "continues to offer a rigorously flexible framework" to analyse "the material conditions governing rural production, reproduction, and the process of agrarian accumulation or its lack thereof" (p. 177). This points to the importance of bringing the political and economic dimensions of the AQ together while accounting for ongoing transformations in global agrarian relations and systems. This is where the thesis hopes to make a crucial contribution by showing how paying attention to dynamics of reproduction and accumulations can help us elucidate the development of kissan politics in West Punjab.

Section 4: Chapter Breakdown

This thesis aims to study the development of mass-based agrarian politics and trajectories of agrarian change in West Punjab since the late 19th century. It will analyse these across three key conjunctures – the colonial period, the national developmental period, and the neoliberal period – to understand the development of crises of reproduction and accumulation in differentiated agrarian classes and the subjective and contingent forms of agrarian movements that have emerged in these periods. Combining the study of agrarian change and political subjectivity across these periods shows how trajectories of agrarian change, the development of kissan movements and agrarian markets shaped each other. This should allow the thesis to present some ways of re-unifying the political and economic dimensions of the AQ, through combining the study of how differentiated agrarian classes have engaged with and contested agrarian transformations through examining their impact on dynamics of reproduction and accumulation. Thus, the thesis re-frames the study of 'peasant' politics and

agrarian change through deploying case studies from West Punjab across three key periods in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The first chapter explains the choice of mix-methods in the thesis to understand the relationship between agrarian transformation, patterns of rural differentiation and emergent politics in West Punjab's canal colonies in each of the three periods. It explains the analytical and methodological choices made in the thesis based on the limitations of existing literature, gaps in existing data, and consistency with the thesis's analytical approach. It develops how the thesis understands three analytical tools: periodisation, agrarian class relations, and movements. It then explains the reasons behind the choice of archival and ethnographic methods for different periods, the data gathering methodology, and the ethical considerations in navigating the fieldsites. Additionally, it also clarifies how the thesis approaches key terms, like kissan, mazara, and zamindar in the context of West Punjab.

The second chapter will engage with the development of the left-wing kissan movement in Punjab in the colonial period (1885-1947) to deprovincialise the politics and political economy of agrarian change in the region. This will be done by exploring the relationship between agrarian colonisation, integration within colonial food markets, and the development of anti-imperialist left-wing kissan politics in West Punjab. I will show how the reproduction and accumulation squeeze by the colonial tax and trade apparatus, the encounters of Punjabi migrants with global Marxism, and engagement with the national and communist movement in India produced a series of interconnected anti-imperialist left-wing kissan mobilisations. By showing the movements' contestation of tax regimes, debt, and the colonial agrarian market formation, I will argue that left-wing agrarian struggles in the region cannot be fully captured by Subalternist and other readings of 'anti-feudal' peasant struggles. (Mukherjee, 2004) Moreover, by engaging in a differentiated class analysis and reflecting on concurrent attempts to develop a loyalist zamindar (landlord) movement in West Punjab, it shows the politicised

and contested nature of the development of 'kissan' identity and its politics in the context of Punjab. These insights form the backbone of the analysis of agrarian politics and agrarian change in West Punjab in the next two periods.

The third and fourth chapters examine the nature of agrarian change during the Green Revolution period, the synthesis of agrarian and national questions developed by the left-wing kissan movement, and the contradictions within it. They engage critically with existing literature to re-frame our understanding of the politics and political economy of agrarian Punjab in the national developmental period. Specifically, chapter 3 engages with the modes of production debates in South Asia and work on the capitalist agrarian transition in West Punjab in the 1950s and 1960s. I argue that the dynamics of uneven growth based on how differentiated agrarian producers access capital and navigate reproduction and accumulation along a spectrum were the critical factors that shaped the nature of agrarian change. Moreover, rather than a transition from a peasant or feudal to capitalist mode of production, the period constituted a deepening of capitalist agrarian relations by allowing richer farmers to lease in land and begin a process of dispossessing sharecropping tenants. Chapter 4 discusses the re-construction of the left-wing kissan movement after Partition as the West Pakistan Kissan Committee (WPKC) in this agrarian context, charting how it organised around agrarian reconstruction, tenancy and land rights in the 1950s and developed a national agenda for socialist agrarian reform in the 1960s. Built on cross-class alliances between tenants, smallholders, migrant farmers, and mid-scale farmers, the WPKC was deeply influenced by the communist movement in Pakistan, and eventually unravelled with the Sino-Soviet split in global Marxism and the contradictions of the national question in Pakistan.

The fifth and sixth chapters tackle the neoliberal period to examine the impact of structural adjustment on West Punjab's rural economy, the concurrent nature of the crisis of reproduction and accumulation, and the re-emergence of mass-based kissan politics in the

2000s. I show how contradictions of class, markets, ecology and development processes in the rural economy of West Punjab constituted the terrain around which kissan movements organised their contestations. Chapter 5 analyses ongoing patterns of reproduction and accumulation across differentiated agrarian producers in the Pakpattan-Sahiwal area in the context of agrarian crisis to argue that agrarian surplus remains a key determinant of ongoing processes of agrarian differentiation, dispossession, investment, and shifting patterns of crop growth. It shows how the liberalisation of agrarian markets in the 1980 allowed for the growth of a new class of leasehold commercial farmers who invest heavily in the cultivation of unregulated commercial crops, like potatoes, in volatile agrarian markets. Simultaneously, ecological stress and the growing cash requirement for subsistence-oriented cultivation is pushing smallholders to invest in risky crops, accentuating the crisis of reproduction at the bottom of the chain. Chapter 6 shows how the crisis of reproduction and accumulation generated by the structural adjustment of agrarian markets translates into the rise of a mass-based kissan movement in the form of the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad, the first rural movement to be able to form a cross-class alliance and provincial mass-based mobilisations in West Punjab in almost 40 years. This chapter will build on fieldwork with the PKI in Sahiwal, Pakpattan, and Arifwala to show how leasehold commercial farmers have been able to forge an alliance with small to medium-holding farmers around electricity prices, access to markets, and subsidies. Moreover, it also shows the complex and contested nature of this alliance, as well as how the PKI presents a new vision for a progressive kissan as the agent for development for Pakistan's ailing economy.

Conclusion

Before the early 2000s, the 'peasantry' had become a missing political actor in the context of West Punjab and perhaps even broader South Asia. The revival of movements of

agrarian producers in the shape of the AMP in 1999, the PKI in 2011, and the Samyukht Kissan Morcha across the border in Indian Punjab in 2020 has forced academics and political activists to re-visit how they understood the politics of South Asia's rural world. Similar trajectories vis a vis the revival of agrarian politics have been seen across the Global North and Global South, both on national (Moyo and Paris 2005) and global scales.[6] These developments challenge the idea that the political agrarian question is dead, nor is it possible to simply reduce it to the agrarian question of labour. The roots of the fragmentation of the AQ and PQ lay in the peasant/farmer binary, which plots the development of capitalism as the replacement of the peasant with the farmer. Popular agrarian movements have, thus, thrust themselves once again to challenge the limitations of theory, much as when classical Marxism had to reckon with the fact that it was the peasantry, rather than the proletariat, that proved itself to be the revolutionary subject during the long 20th century. Thus, this thesis will try to address what West Punjab's agrarian colonies and its agrarian movements can contribute to the process of re-constructing the classical agrarian question for today.

[6] The rise of La Via Campesina as a global peasant movement and the approval of a UN Declaration of the Rights of Peasants in 2019 confirms peasant politics remains alive on a global scale.

Chapter 1

Studying Markets, Rural Differentiation and Agrarian Politics:

Methods in Agrarian Research

The choices made in writing and researching the thesis have been shaped by the concern over how to understand the relationship between agrarian transformation, patterns of rural differentiation and emergent politics in Punjab's canal colonies from the late colonial period onwards. This chapter will first outline the research questions and analytical framework driving the project, then discuss the design of the research methodology, before outlining how this has been applied to the chapters.

Section 1: Research Questions and Analytical Framework

The thesis attempts to trace the relationship between two key questions:

1) What are the patterns of agrarian change in the West Punjab canal colonies between 1885 and now?
2) To what main challenges were the agrarian movements responding to in West Punjab in each of phase of this period?

I am interested in seeing how agrarian change shaped the demands, mobilization strategies and class formation of movements, and how movements through protest, organising, advocacy and class alliances negotiate and in turn impact agrarian change. The thesis argues that dynamics of reproduction and accumulation not only shape developments in agrarian political economy, but also agrarian politics through the development of rural movements through organising complex class alliances. The study required making several key analytical and methodological choices, which were developed based on an engagement with existing literature, gaps in existing data, and proposing an analytical approach that allows to shed new light on the literatures on agrarian change and politics in West Punjab. The objective is to develop a "reflexive," rather than "instrumental," (Harris-White, 2007) approach which allows

us to view the relationships between agrarian transformation and rural movements to be co-constitutive and recognises the political and economic agency of differentiated agrarian producers in shaping the transformation of agrarian relations in West Punjab over the last 140 years. The project deploys three key concepts, periodisation, agrarian class relations, and movements, which inform the analytical approach and how the research methodology was developed.

Periodisation:

One of the key exercises undertaken was to divide West Punjab's post-1885 agrarian history into three key periods: colonial, national developmental, and neoliberal. While these broad categorisations are recognised within the food regimes literature (Araghi 2001, McMichael 2013), the periodisation in the thesis operationalises these within the context of Punjab. Regions integrated within global food markets, such as West Punjab, are both shaped by and shape these formations through their trajectories of agrarian change, the politics of their agrarian movements, and the nature of the agrarian crisis developed in them. Moreover, synthesizing the study across these periods was done to engage with the question of agrarian transition by engaging the modes of production debate (Patnaik 1972, 1990) and other agrarian transition frameworks (Byres 1986, Joshi 1975). Periodisation allows the development of a comparative framework to read the trajectories of the development of kissan movements in West Punjab across time. Through a historical discussion of key demands and issues of agrarian movements, such as prices, markets, and taxation during each of the historical phases, I show how these issues are embedded in political vocabularies developed by movements over time to respond and influence their context, thus problematising the divide between classical peasant movements in the colonial period and New Farmers' Movements in the neoliberal period.

Instead, I show that in each period, significant shifts take place in how capital works in the Punjabi countryside, including the deepening of capitalist relations, changes in how

agrarian producers navigate reproduction and accumulation, and the nature of agrarian class alliance and their politics. The periodisation reflects shifts in the state-led direction of agrarian development, which is the outcome of negotiations between transnational actors, dominant classes within the state, and the ability of movements to shape the direction of agrarian policy.

Table 4 Periodisation

Period	Years	State declared objectives	Movement studied	Movement demands
Colonial	1885-1947	Extractive revenue structure; export-oriented agriculture integrated with London market	Pagri Sambhaal Jatta (1907), Kirti Kissan Party (1927-1935), Punjab Kissan Sabha (1935-1947)	Opposes extractive state apparatus, blames export-oriented agriculture for famine, demand for farmers debt relief
National Developmental	1947-1978	Shift to national industrial development; discourse of self-sufficient agriculture	West Pakistan Kissan Committee (1947-1972), Pakistan Kissan Front (1952-1972)	Support for synergy between national industrial and agricultural development; self-sufficiency in food production and industrial production; importance of land redistribution

Neoliberal	1979-now	World Bank-led agricultural price liberalisation; privitisation of agricultural and food processes industries	Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (2011 – now)	Demands for support prices, subsidies; selective export liberalisation; support for farmers as entrepreneurs

The importance of the periodisation is to understand the long-term differentiated patterns of agrarian change and politics that develop in West Punjab and explore their implications for practices of accumulation and reproduction, transfers of agrarian surplus, the development of agrarian capital, and the forms and practices of agrarian movements. This analysis will include the imperatives of state and transnational organisations, changes in agrarian market formations, the disruptive and reconstructive impact of large-scale projects and policy reforms such as canal colonisation and the Green Revolution, and the impact of transnational events such as the Great Depression, Partition, the Cold War, and the Sino-Soviet split.

Agrarian class relations:

The thesis is also concerned with shifting the terms for understanding agrarian class relations and rural differentiation in the Punjab countryside. Most of the literature has tended to accept a land-size class relationship for agrarian producers, for example, Burki's (1976) articulation of middle peasants as 100-acre landowners, which mapped onto the often poorly conceptualised agrarian census carried out by the state. The limitations of the agrarian census lie in its failure to account for patterns of tenancy and land leasing, pluri-income households, and patterns of accumulation within the countryside. Based on data collected almost a decade

apart, the agrarian census presents land-size and cropping pattern data as a fixed number. Instead, my fieldwork highlights how cultivated land and crop choices are renegotiated in each cropping cycle, and offers space for a more complicated analysis of how agrarian classes navigate key aspects of the agrarian economy. Unlike the census, my understanding of agrarian class draws on the differential ways in which agrarian producers combined land ownership or access, land leasing, access to capital, integration within input and output markets, crop choices, forms of non-farm income, and labour patterns. Thus, the fieldwork was designed to account for differences between farmers who own the same amount of land, which militates against a land-size based approach to understanding West Punjab's agrarian class relations (see fieldwork method below).

In addition to pushing beyond a land-size class approach, the thesis shows that processes of political constituting agrarian classes are critical to understanding how class operationalises within the Punjab countryside. Indeed, it shows how agrarian classes operate as agents within processes of agrarian transformation, who can adapt their patterns of cultivation, market participation, political demands, and political subject position to respond to the challenges they face. Additionally, class positionality within agrarian movements can appear to be more complex that purely economic interpretations of class, for example, the thesis will show how large leasehold farmers are able to claim the political and social identity of 'kissan' in the 2000s, which they proved incapable of doing in the 1920s or 1960s due to the strong-left wing ideology of rural movements in these periods. Nonetheless, even today, this claim is not simply accepted by all agrarian classes, and smallholders continue to maintain a well-developed articulation of the difference between large-scale leasehold farming and smallholders in terms of on-farm processes, as well as market engagement.

Movements:

The thesis reads agrarian movements in West Punjab as engaged and conscious interlocutors in the processes of state-policy, agrarian transformation, and marketisation who were both shaped by and in turn shaped key shifts in agrarian structure and political economy. This analytical framework situates them within their political economic context to understand the economic contradictions, ideological imperatives, and internal struggles. It also examines how these movements engage with the state, markets, and class relations in the countryside to understand their fragmentation, transformation, or collapse. Thus, this approach combines discourse analysis with political economic analysis to understand how agrarian movements contest facets of agrarian political economy, and the contradictions that shape their own formation. This includes combining secondary reading with primary research based on fieldwork and archival sources to analyse their tactics, discourse and mobilisation strategies to understand their objectives, nature of class alliances, and how they address the needs of their support base. This approach towards movements stands at a tangent to the two dominant approaches to agrarian movements in South Asia, namely subaltern studies, which presents agrarian movements as unified and oppositional to agrarian capitalism (Guha 1983), and Marxist agrarian political economy, which has presented agrarian movements as reactionary, interest-based groups representing large farmers (Brass 1994, Banaji 1994). I present my critique and response to the former in chapter 4, and to the later in chapter 6.

Section 2: Research Methods

There are substantive gaps in empirical data available that inhibits the theoretical project driving this doctoral project. The two most crucial absences are:

(1) The absence of substantive studies of agrarian movements in the 1950s and 1960s in West Punjab

(2) The limitations of studies on Punjab's agrarian class formation, especially after the 1980s.

While Alavi (1976) mentions rural upheaval in the Green Revolution period, academic work on the period either ignores or treats left-wing kissan movements in this period as a mere footnote. For example, Ronald Herring's (1979, 1983) influential studies on land reform legislation in Pakistan in 1959, 1972 and 1977 do not mention agrarian movements in this period. The absence of agrarian movements as an interlocuter constitutes a rather significant absence, which turns debates on agrarian reform in Pakistan into negotiations between the state bureaucracy and landed elites, instead of placing them within the context of strong left-wing kissan mobilisations which were contesting and shaping various facets of agrarian policy. Moreover, recent academic work on agrarian relations in West Punjab has not focused sufficiently on understanding changes to the agrarian class formation. Discussed in the introduction earlier the work of Aftab and Ali, as well as Jan (2019), continues to provide an insufficient understanding of how agrarian class is operationalised in the countryside, both economically and politically. This necessitates new fieldwork that can provide an understanding of the nuances and complexities through which rural classes shape agrarian change and politics today.

To address these gaps, the thesis takes on a mixed-method approach which combines fieldwork, interviews, and archival research with an in-depth engagement with secondary literature. The bulk of fieldwork research for the thesis was conducted between August 2018 and September 2019, with an additional month of archival research in the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam and the Dawn newspaper online archives in December 2017. New data gathering was undertaken where existing material was found to be insufficient or where additional data collection was considered important to confirm or develop existing literature on a subject. This new data gathering included,

(a) Archival research into agrarian movements in West Punjab in two periods: 1947-1973 and 2005-2018 (primarily June-September 2019)

(b) Fieldwork observation of the contemporary mass-based agrarian movement, the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad in the Sahiwal division for eight months (Nov 2018-May 2019)

(c) Field observation-based analysis of agrarian change and rural differentiation in contemporary West Punjab, in a cluster of villages in the Sahiwal division for eight months (Nov 2018-May 2019)

To operationalise this analytical framework, a mixed-methods research methodology was designed to address gaps within existing literature, and create new data which would allow me to develop a relational approach between agrarian change and agrarian politics in West Punjab. The importance of combining these methods comes down to the project's interest in the long historical process of agrarian change and the development of agrarian movements in Punjab since the creation of the canal colonies. The fieldwork included participative observation, interviews, focus groups, The archival research included surveying newspapers and movement literature analysis for the 1950s and 1960s.

2.1 Fieldwork method: Site selection, interviews and observations

To understand the trajectories of agrarian change in the neoliberal period from the position of agrarian producers, we chose to conduct fieldwork observation and life history interviews with producers occupying different positions within the agrarian class formation. As discussed earlier, while existing data collection in the agrarian census and other survey-based methodologies is useful to provide a broad picture of the agrarian economy, there remains a much more limited understanding of how the neoliberal agrarian market formation shapes on-farm decision making for differentiated producers. The choice of ethnographic methodology, which included participative observation, life history interviews, and repeated visits, was designed to provide insight into this gap between existing research and agrarian livelihoods.

During the ethnographic research period, nine months between October 2018 and May 2019, I lived in the Sahiwal city area, which provided easy access across three districts: Pakpattan, Sahiwal and Arifwala. There were two key questions driving this research:

1) How were different agrarian producers navigating the current agrarian political economy?
2) How was the PKI organising in the area? What issues were they raising? Which agrarian classes were participating?

Answering each of these required choosing different field sites. To answer the first question, I chose a cluster of five villages along the Sahiwal-Pakpattan road. To answer the second question, I attended public meetings and protests organised by the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI) and conducted interviews with their top and mid-tier leadership, as well as grassroots members. The two field sites exist in a relationship with each other, i.e. several agrarian producers in the village cluster were members of the PKI. For example, village cluster interviews and observations were able to complement field observations of the PKI's protests around the potato price crash in spring 2019, and show the differentiated impact of this across agrarian classes, which could not be determined from the movement's discourse which articulated it as a market event affecting all kissan equally.

2.1.1 Studying Dynamics of Agrarian Change in a Village Cluster

I undertook survey visits to three villages: two in the Sahiwal division, one in the Faisalabad division, which were supported by local informants. I conducted short focus group discussions in the villages, collected broad information on developments within and outside these villages, and read survey reports and conducted other background research to settle on one cluster on the Sahiwal-Pakpattan Road.

Table 5 Field site (Village Cluster)

Village	Landholding (colonial era)	Patterns of Change
Chak Jaffar Shah	Single landlord family (Syed)	Loss of power and land; most land sold in 1970s onwards, sharecropper displacement; now smallholders, medium-scale commercial farmers, and large-scale leasehold farmers lease land
Dera Bodlan	Peasant grants (Syeds)	5-20 acres per family; lease land in and outside village to cultivate for market; own land usually used on mixed crops, which are consumed by family and livestock as well as surplus sold on market
Chak Sanday Khan	Single landlord family (Baloch)	Shift from sharecropping tenancy to owner-cultivated commercial farming in 1990s; tenant dispossession;
Chak 73/D	Peasant grants	Resemble labour colonies; located on main road; land largely leased; some subsistence growing from smallholding (0.5-2 acres)
Chak93/D	Peasant grants	Resemble labour colonies; located on main road; land largely leased; some subsistence growing from smallholding (0.5-2 acres)

There were a several reasons for choosing this cluster, which include (a) the patterns of land distribution in the colonial period were different across the villages, which provides a

good sample for different trajectories of agrarian change i.e. two of the villages were single landlord owned, three villages were peasant allotees, (b) the trajectories of agrarian change converged and diverged between the villages, i.e. farmers were able to trace their cropping and leasing choices to developments in other villages such as the start of leasehold commercial potato farming in the 2000s by large leasehold farmers, (c) there were significant changes in land and labour relations, which included the settlement of migrant farmers in the 1970s and the moving out of labour, (d) the presence of three clearly developed forms of capital-intensive farming, i.e. contract farming, leasehold farming, and owner-cultivated commercial farming, (e) recent changes in cropping patterns, including the adoption of potatoes, peas and maize to replace cotton and sugarcane. These trajectories presented this cluster of villages as a good sample of the differentiated impact of agrarian transformation, with significant developments in landholding patterns, labour relations, crop choices, and market integration.

Chak Jaffar Shah is my partner's maternal village, which allowed relative ease of access. My key informant was Allah Baksh, who belonged to a mirasi family in Chak Jaffar Shah. Allah Baksh himself had undertaken an interesting journey, having spent over 15 years as a farm worker, tractor operator, farm supervisor and leasehold farmer in at least three of the villages. He left farming around a decade ago due to health complications, and moved to Lahore to work as a driver. Now, he was building a new home in Chak 93/D, which operates as a labour colony and agricultural market. Chak Jaffar Shah has allocated to the Shah family during the colonial settlement. However, even though the lambardari (village headman) position is retained by the family, it has become peripheral to day-to-day life of the village. Most of the family land has been sold over time. The rest is leased to smallscale farmers, mid-scale commercial farmers, and large leasehold farmers. The insider/outsider position occupied by me within the space had to be negotiated, which involved explaining the project, the key questions, and why these were important. Some of the interviewees suspected that the Shah

family might be looking to take land back or try to reassert control. I made sure not to ask any financial questions in the first meetings, and kept the discussion focused on their experiences as agrarian producers. Moreover, I stayed in Sahiwal city and Allah Baksh's under construction home in nearby Chak 93/D, instead of the village haveli still belonging to the Shah family. Since the introductory meetings were often with Allah Baksh, these were also opportunities to dispel notions of Syed caste hierarchies. This was trickier to negotiate in Dera Bodlan, where they were surprised that as a Jatt I was married into a Syed family. This was taken to be another indicator of how much the Shahs had fallen from their glory days and eased the Dera Bodlan farmers into conversing with me more openly. I was not provided access to the families of farmers, especially the women, and they often preferred to meet me in public areas or while they participated in different on-farm processes.

During the fieldwork in the village cluster, I used the snowballing method of asking informants for new contacts to interview. Contact was made in advance, often over the phone, and sometimes on site, the project was explained to them, and a time was set for a semi-structured interview. The interviews were designed to provide insight into five key aspects of agrarian political economy, with the broad contours of these questions outlined below.

1) Land: How much land did they cultivate? How much of it did they own? How much of it was rented? Did they lease out any of their land? How have their landholding and leasing patterns changed over time?
2) Crop choice: What crops did they grow? How much of their land was used up by one crop? Have they changed any crops? If so, why? Have they changed the seeds used? Are any crops used for self-consumption?
3) Participation in markets: Which crops do they sell in the market? Who do they sell their crop to? Where do they procure agricultural inputs?

4) Labour: Do they require hired labour? How much family labour is required? What are the roles of the different members of the household? Which tasks require hired labour? How have labour patterns changed over time?
5) Water: how do they access water? How has groundwater and canal water availability changed? Do they use tubewells? Do they own the tubewell? If not, what are the relationships through which they access tubewell water?

These lines of inquiry were combined by visits to the land cultivated by farmers, and a follow-up visit was set during a different time in the crop cycle. The snowballing exercise was useful in scoping out a broad spectrum of the agrarian class positions occupied by different producers and their placement within the processes of accumulation and reproduction within the countryside. In this period, which ran between November 2018 and May 2019, 20 interviews were conducted as well as three focus group discussions. The participants of the focus group discussions were invited by one key contact in the villages to discuss on how agrarian relations have changed in their area. The focus group discussions were held in a public area and participants were able to move in and out of the focus group to allow a less formal setting. These focus groups were recorded, via audio, and I also took handwritten notes on the discussion. Following the scoping exercise, four key informants were chosen as representative of a particular class formation within the area, namely, small migrant farmers who moved here in the 1970s, small-scale producers whose families had received medium-sized grants in the colonial period, medium-scale contract farmers, and large-scale leasehold commercial farmers.

Table 6 Participant selection (Village Cluster)

Selected Participants	Village	Landholding
Small farmer, migrant purchase in 1970s	Chak Jaffar Shah	8 acres, 2-10 acres leased

Small farmers, colonial era allotment	Dera Bodlan	10 acres owned, 0-10 acres leased
Contract farmer	Chak Jaffar Shah	30 acres owned, 50 acres leased
Leasehold commercial farmer	Various, including Chak Jaffar Shah, Dera Bodlan, Midhali Sharif	50 acres owned, 1,000-3,000 acres leased

Follow-up visits were organised every three weeks. While there was a pre-determined agenda to these visits, the meeting would often take place at the fields, which they supervised or undertook different labour processes, or in a public setting with a mix of farmers and agricultural workers. Five follow up visits each took place for each of the four informants over the February to April 2019 period, which provided insight on different phases of the production and distribution process of these farmers.

2.1.2 Studying the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad: Fieldwork Notes on a Rural Movement

While the PKI continued to come up in the fieldwork in the villages, conducting a study of the movement required choosing a different set of subjects and field sites. The planned fieldwork was to attend PKI public events and interview members of the movement, which would include the leadership, mid-tier leadership, and members.

I was provided the contact details of PKI Punjab general secretary Chaudhry by a journalist in Sahiwal. I arranged an introduction and interview with Rizwan at his farmhouse in Arifwala in December 2018. In the meeting, I introduced myself as a PhD researcher writing on the PKI, and that I wanted to attend its public meetings, protests and interview members. I

also explained my own political subject position as a left-wing activist who maintains a relationship with other agrarian movements, such as the Anjuman Mazareen Punjab (AMP) and Pakistan Kissan Rabta Committee (PKRC). Rizwan very nonchalantly responded that he hoped they could convince me that they represented all of Pakistan's farmers, and mentioned that the AMP attends their protests often. Nonetheless, I tried to remain attentive to my own subject position while researching the PKI to understand the formation. While the project is consciously designed to understand mass-based agrarian movements in West Punjab on their own terms, it was important to take an approach that provide me with interviewees that represented a broad variety of rural subjects in order to understand how the movement mobilises its membership, which agrarian classes participate, how it negotiates with officials, and how it manages tensions within and outside its membership base.

I began attending the monthly meetings of the PKI at the Arifwala Townhall and Pakpattan Railway Ground in January 2019 until May 2019. The Arifwala Townhall is located next to the main grain market in the city. The Pakpattan Railway ground is also closed next to a medium-sized agricultural market. I was asked to speak at the first meeting I attended in each of these locations, which provided me an opportunity to introduce myself and explain why conducting research on the PKI was important. I also attended six protests, including one rally to Lahore. The issues raised included the market committee leadership, agricultural commodity prices, and taxes on tubewell operation. I also attended meetings between the PKI leadership and state officials, including electricity and wheat procurement officials. I would take detailed notes of the meeting, take some photographs, and speak to several attendees. The public meetings were where I contacted the mid-tier leadership and members and scheduled interviews after exchanging phone numbers.

Table 7 Participants (PKI)

Interviews of PKI members	No. of interviews
Provincial leadership	1
District leadership	8
Members	25

The semi-structured interviews were guided by several key questions, including,

1) Movement: What was their relationship to the PKI? How long had they participated? Had they been in other PKI factions? Had they been a member of any other movement or rural welfare grouping? What were the strengths of the PKI? What were the tensions within the movement? Is it weaker or stronger now, and why?
2) Class position: How much land did they cultivate? What crops do they cultivate? How has this changed in the last few years? Have they made high profits or losses in any season? How do they think their concerns are articulated or not within the PKI?

The field observation and interviews provided a well-rounded understanding of how the PKI operated in December 2018-May 2019 period, especially with interviews offering background and context for some of the conflicts within, participation levels, and the way in which different issues were articulated within the public meetings and protests.

2.2 Archival methods

Archival research was undertaken for the chapter on agrarian movements in the 1960s, while supplementary archival research was conducted for the chapters on movements in the colonial and neoliberal period. In particular, the archival research focused on "movement texts," (Ahmed 2022) especially literature produced by agrarian movements in the 1950s and 1960s in terms of pamphlets, internal communications, and periodicals. Movement literature provides an important tool to understanding how trajectories of agrarian change and rural

differentiation were interpreted by the movements and articulated in agrarian politics. Periodicals run by key members of the movements reported news, provided analysis, and operated as ideological tools for the cadre. Even where members were unlettered, movements magazines were read to them in public gathering as well as used for organising study circles. Thus, these texts provide important insights into the materiality, public discourse, and subjectivity of class relations and politics. Thus, these magazines provide an important site to supplement and develop analysis of agrarian political economy analysis.

In the colonial and developmental period, much of the official state archive, including surveys and planning reports, have already been explored in existing academic work. Moreover, magazines, personal communications, and pamphlets produced by agrarian movements have already been surveyed recent work, such as Mukherjee (2005), Raza (2020), Tirimzey (2018) and Ramnath (2011). Thus, the most extensive archival research I undertook was on agrarian movements in the national developmental period, namely the West Pakistan Kissan Committee (1948-1971) and the Pakistan Kissan Front (1954-1971). The bulk of this research was facilitated by Ahmed Saleem, a former member of the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP), who began collecting materials connected to left-wing and nationalist movements in Pakistan in the 1980s and now runs the South Asian Research and Resource Centre (SARRC) just outside Islamabad. Saleem's familiarity with the materials came from being a participant in many of these struggles, and he would personally bring any relevant material based on any questions I wanted answers to. Moreover, he pointed out several less well-known publications, such as the Mehnat Edition (1962-1969) and Dehqan (1970-1973), which were important resources in understanding left-wing agrarian movements in this period.

Table 8 Archival Research

Period	Archive	Material	Dates
1885-1947	International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam Punjab Archives South Asian American Digital Archive	P.C. Joshi Archive for material on Punjab Kissan Sabha (PKS), All India Kissan Sabha; Robert Gandre, PhD thesis on PKS Police reports, newspapers Ghadar Party pamphlets, magazine;	December 1-15, 2017 May 15-30, 2019 May 2021
1947-1973	International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam Main Library, New Campus, Punjab University, Lahore South Asian Research and Resource Centre (SARRC), Islamabad	Collections on National Awami Party, West Pakistan Kissan Committee, Mazdoor Kissan Party Dawn, Pakistan Times (1960-1973); selected dates Mehnat Edition (1962-1969), West Pakistan Kissan Committee reports and internal documents, Pakistan Kissan Front reports, Lail-o-Nihar (1969-1974), Dehqan (1970-1973).	December 1-15, 2017 June 1-10, 2019 June 13-August 30, 2019
2005-2019	Dawn (online archives)	Dawn (2012-2019)	December 2020

	Quaid-e-Azam Library, Lahore	Dawn (2005-2011)	May-June 2018

Section 3: Chapter methodology and key terms

3.1.1 Chapter methodology

Chapter 1 and 2 largely involve re-interpretations of secondary literature to present a new reading of agrarian change and kissan politics in the colonial and postcolonial periods. The political economy of agrarian change in the colonial and developmental period has been well-studied, with much of the state records already accessed by several academics. For the purposes of this thesis, it is more important to provide this material coherence by analysing it from a theoretical lens that going beyond the agrarian transition framework. This is done by putting the literature on the colonial and postcolonial period in dialogue with each other to offer a reading of agrarian change that is able to deal with strategies of accumulation and reproduction, changing agrarian policy, transnational developmental imperatives, state violence, and mass dispossession as key facets that shape agrarian change in West Punjab. Chapter 1 is focused on interpreting the development of the left-wing kissan movement in colonial Punjab, which has benefited immensely from the engagement with movement literature in recent scholarship by Mridula Mukherjee (2004), Kasim Tirmizey (2018), Ali Raza (2020), and Maia Ramnath (2011). However, this literature has not adequately theorised the left-wing kissan movement in West Punjab, which is a gap the chapter seeks to fill.

The primary source material for chapter 3 is archival research, which includes newspapers, left-wing magazines, movement publications, and political autobiographies to understand the kissan movement in West Punjab during the 1950s and 1960s. These were collected from former WPKC members, the South Asian Research and Resource Centre (SARRC), and the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, Netherlands. The

documents include the weekly *Mehnat Edition* issued by the Maoist faction of the National Awami Party from 1962-1969, and the magazines *Lail-o-Nihar, Dehqan* and the *Mazdoor Kissan Party Circular*, as well as several pamphlets and internal documents issued by the WPKC and the Pakistan Kissan Front (PKF). These are combined with the recently published autobiographies of WPKC General Secretary Chaudhry Fateh Mohammad and PKF President Shaikh Mohammad Rasheed. These are previously unexplored materials that constitute a valuable archive to conduct more detailed analysis of these movements in the future.

Chapter 4 is based on fieldwork observation and interviews conducted in a cluster of villages of six villages lying on the Sahiwal-Pakpattan Road between November 2018 and May 2019. The methodology included life history interviews with over a dozen farmers, focus group discussions on each of the villages, and observing labour practices around sowing and harvesting for wheat, maize, mustard, rice, and potatoes amongst other crops. The farmers interviewed and observed belonged not only to different classes, but also engaged in different sets of practices around crop choices, labour relations, and market engagement.

Based on fieldwork involving participative observation, chapter 5 studies the mobilisational tactics of the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI)-Khokhar group in the Sahiwal, Pakpattan, and Arifwala districts between December 2018 and May 2019. The research involved life history interviews with half a dozen movement leaders, discussions with dozens of members, attending its monthly meetings at the Railway Ground in Pakpattan and Town Hall in Arifwala, and protests in Pakpattan, Arifwala and Sahiwal outside the officers of the Deputy Commissioners offices. Moreover, my fieldwork also involved attending meetings between the movement leadership and staff at the Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO), as well as observing the process through which PKI officials helped agrarian producers interpret and contest their electricity bills.

3.1.2 Key Terms

While the global lexicon for referring to agrarian producers has developed in the language of the peasant/farmer binary, it is not surprising that this does not map onto different regions of the world. The term 'kissan' is used in West Punjab to refer to small to medium-scale agrarian producers, which is shared across South Asia with the expected regional variations in pronunciation. The term, 'mazara,' is the dominant term used for tenant farmers, but does not apply to large leasehold 'tenants.' The term, 'zamindar,' is also used in a similar way, but will end up being used to differentiate large-scale producers from smaller ones. The usage of such terms is complex and requires sensitivity to their meaning in a particular time and region. For example, zamindars have been politically influential and often held titles or state-mandated control over thousands of acres of land during the Mughal era and parts of the colonial period. However, in the context of canal colonies-era Punjab, as we shall see in chapter 1, there was an attempt to universalise the term 'zamindar' to refer to all landholding farmers no matter the size of landholding in Punjab by loyalist agrarian organisations. Thus, the thesis will also pay attention to how the meaning and use of these terms is politically constructed and contested in different time periods by agrarian movements. Moreover, there are regional and local variations in its use, which often depend on the patterns of landholding and tenancy within a certain region. Noaman Ali (2018), for example, argues that in Charsadda kissan refers to sharecropping tenants, while zamindar refers to landholders (p. 42). However, despite being the local term, kissan in of itself does not allow one to differentiate landholding sizes and scales, as well different types of agrarian producers from each other. Throughout the thesis, I will prefer to use local terminology, such as kissan, zamindar, and mazara. However, I will be deploying the terminology of farmers and peasants strategically to clarify the implications of certain contestations and developments comprehensible for the fields of Agrarian and Peasant Studies.

Chapter 2

The Development of Kissan Politics under Imperialism

Agrarian Colonists, Migrant Revolutionaries, and the Rise of an Anti-Imperialist Kissan Movement in Punjab (1906-1947)

"The peasant movement in Punjab was not a spontaneous one—it was fully planned."

- Bhagat Singh Bilga,[7] member of Ghadar Party, Kirti Kissan Party and Punjab Kissan Sabha.

The canal colonisation of 1885 resulted in the settlement of millions of agrarian colonialists from East Punjab onto the pastoral landscapes of West Punjab.[8] This far-reaching agrarian transformation triggered a cycle of debt, dispossession, displacement and resulting migration for rural classes in Punjab. Yet, analysis has echoed colonial narratives and suggested that these conditions of colonial-led agrarian exploitation hardly elicited any political resistance. Malcolm Darling's (1925) *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*[9] argued that the high rural indebtedness in Punjab in fact reflected agrarian prosperity, positing that Punjab's agrarian colonists largely remained loyal and were co-opted by colonial paternalism, and Imran Ali's (1988) *The Punjab under Imperialism 1885-1947,* presents rural resistance in the canal colonies as insignificant and at most concerned with the day-to-day reproduction of the Punjab peasantry.[10] The prominent exception remains Mridula Mukherjee's 2004 study of agrarian politics in Punjab and its connections to various ideological trends,

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[7] Interview, in Mukherjee (2004), pp. 145.

[8] See: Bhattachrya, Neeladri (2020) for more on the settlement process and the displacement of pastoral populations.

[9] For a critical engagement with Darling, read: Sultan Atiyab. (2017). Malcolm Darling and Developmentalism in Colonial Punjab. *Modern Asian Studies, 51*(6), 1891-1921. doi:10.1017/S0026749X17000208

[10] No doubt, partially informed by the perceived Punjabi domination of Pakistan's politics and its position as the centre to the peripheral status of the other three provinces, Sindh, Khyber Pakthunkhwa, and Balochistan, and semi-autonomous regions of Gilgit Baltistan, Kashmir and FATA.

including nationalism, British loyalism, religious reformism, anti-imperialism, and socialism. Similarly, Raza (2020), Ramnath (2011) and Tirmizey (2018a and 2018b) have allowed us to trace the strong connections between the left-wing kissan movement in Punjab and the Punjabi migrant populations scattered across the British colonies, forcing the point that the story of agrarian protest in Punjab cannot be told without connecting it to global histories of migration, communism and anti-imperialism.

This chapter builds on these crucial interventions to trace the development of Punjab's kissan movement in the colonial period with an account of the transformations in political economy effected by the colonial state. I argue that inter-connected agrarian movements between 1906 and 1947 such as the Pagri Sambhal Jatta Lehar ('Protect Your Turban, O Jatt'), the Ghadar Movement, the Kirti Kissan Party (KKP) and the Punjab Kissan Sabha (PKS) forged an ideological and tactical synthesis between anti-imperialism and peasant radicalism that drew on cross-class alliances, mass mobilisational strategies, anti-imperialist internationalism and a critique of colonial food markets. Further, this politics led to the development of the 'kissan' as a critical political subjectivity that contested developments in capitalist relations of agriculture under colonialism. 'Kissan' emerged as an anti-imperialist agrarian identity for organising peasant politics, defined in opposition to loyalist zamindar (landlord) politics. This allowed kissan organisers in Punjab to build cross-class alliances between agrarian colonists, sharecropping tenants (mazareen), returned migrants, as well as national and transnational left-wing political organisers by framing the challenges faced by cultivators around land rights, taxation, sharecropping, and market failure within a larger anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist political praxis. Thus, rather than being interested in a return to the past, kissan politics in Punjab politics imagined a peasant utopia that responded to contemporary shifts in political economy and engaged with global articulations of peasant liberation in the early to mid-20th century.

Beginning with a discussion of Punjab's integration into the global agriculture through the canal colonisation in 1886, I sketch the contours of colonial agrarian political economy as characterised by colonial capitalism, integration into global markets, and peasant indebtedness, creating ripe conditions for agrarian unrest in Punjab and mass migration away from Punjab among dispossessed groups of the peasantry. I argue that these agrarian transformations created conditions in which practices of survival for differentiated agrarian producers in Punjab came to incorporate strategies of *both* accumulation and reproduction. Although existing theorisation tends to segregate accumulation and reproduction as processes that map onto mutually exclusive social groups such as subsistence-driven peasants and profit-driven farmers, I contend that integration within colonial food markets combined with the colonial tax apparatus forced almost all agrarian producers to sell a portion of their produce in the market. This created dynamics where farmers replaced traditional subsistence grains, like jowar and bajra, with wheat which was in high demand in the national and international markets. Thus, integration within colonial food markets through canal colonisation not only shaped the dynamics of agrarian change, but also compelled agrarian producers at the lower end of the class hierarchy to attempt to accumulate through the market for reproduction. Thus, the marketisation of agriculture changed the nature of agrarian crisis in in Punjab from one that was caused by low yields to a more complicated one in which agrarian producers attempted to balance the imperatives of reproduction and accumulation through crop choices, marketing produce, reducing subsistence and labour migration.

The formative period in kissan politics (1906-1919) is shaped by these transformations, emerging in response to the hardship faced by differentiated agrarian producers, organising through class alliances between small and medium scale landholders, military allottees, and migrant radicals to protect land rights and oppose the colonial taxation system. The first of such agrarian movements to emerge was the Pagri Sambhaal Jatta (PSJ) movement in 1907,

which began as a movement localised in the Chenab colony and combined regional articulations of Jatt identity[11] with the experiences of debt and economic migration of agrarian producers and migrant labour under a global racialised colonial capitalism. This articulation subsequently developed into an anti-imperialist national kissan politics after forging deep connection with Punjabi migrant radicals in the 1910s, mediated through the First Ghadar (1908-1915), which shaped the Kirti Kissan Party (1927-1934) and Punjab Kissan Sabha (1935-1947). These class alliances were forged based on shared experiences of settlement, dispossession, and migration which were a product of the shifting imperatives of accumulation and reproduction within colonial food markets. Additionally, the development of socialist strands of agrarian politics in Punjab crystalised the divide between anti-imperialist kissan politics and loyalist zamindar (landlord) politics. Thus, the political development of the category of kissan in the colonial period allowed it to represent small to medium landowners and sharecropping tenants as a collective kissan identity by connecting the issues faced by these producers around crop prices, market integration, ecological stress, debt, and high taxation into an anti-imperialist agrarian politics.

Hence, the development of the left-wing kissan movement in Punjab saw the intermeshing of anti-colonial nationalism, anti-imperialist internationalism, and peasant politics. Returning Punjabi migrants, namely the Ghadarites from North America, became important peasant organisers in Punjab, and were able to operate not just as internationalists connected to global anti-imperialist and socialist organisations, but strong, located actors, who were able to adapt and organise Punjab's agrarian population. By tying kissan protest in Punjab to the colonial food and labour system, this chapter emphasises the role played by these returning migrants in shaping kissan politics in ways that contradicts how Subalternists and moral economy-inspired

[11] Jatts are a caste group in Punjab who were considered agrarian castes during the colonial agrarian settlement process.

analysists conceptualise peasant politics. Moreover, the important role played by this 'transnationalised' migrant class in Punjab's kissan struggles challenges ideas of peasant struggles in the colonial period as highly localised. Instead, the transnational and local frontiers were being simultaneously traversed by kissan movements in Punjab since the early 20th century. Moreover, I also highlight how the kissan movement made the state a key site of contestation and the forms of peasant protest that developed in this period were rooted in forms of mass anticolonial organising, including publishing, hosting large conferences, and organising gheraos. Relatedly, state repression also had a strong impact on the Punjab kissan movement, forcing kissan organisers to adapt in the face of a hostile state, and adopt new forms of rural organising. In a context where many kissan leaders spent years either underground, jailed, exiled, or confined to their villages, the kissan movement developed populist fronts which linked the related crises of reproduction and accumulation faced by agrarian producers with an anti-imperialist agrarian politics. Different forms of colonial violence, which included executions, shooting protestors, banning organisations, raids, and the eventual Partition of Punjab in 1947, were also significant factors in shaping the movement's limitations. Thus, this reading will challenge notions that rural movements in the colonial period were localised, spontaneous, and focused on preserving pre-capitalist moral economies, instead emphasising their global outlook and organisational discipline, as well as pushing back against the notion that colonial paternalism was successful in shaping agrarian relations in the colonial world in its own image.

Section 1: De-provincialising Punjab's Kissan Movement: Beyond Subalterns and Nationalisms

Paying attention to the development of socialist, anti-imperialist kissan politics in Punjab challenges Subalternist and classical Marxist readings of agrarian politics in the colonial period that either emphasise the ‘autonomy’ of peasant politics or focus on land reform as part of an anti-feudal agenda. The ideological synthesis, nature of class alliances, and forms of mobilisation adopted by the kissan movement in Punjab contradict reading these as either inward looking or unable to develop 'anti-feudal’ consciousness. They instead allow forge a much more fruitful reading when examined without presupposing templates for radical or subaltern peasant consciousness. The pioneering intervention posed by Mridula Mukherjee’s (2004) critique of subalternist readings of peasant protest in colonial India connects pan-Indian anticolonial mass politics with agrarian struggles in colonial Punjab. Using interviews, colonial records, newspapers, and movement literature to present a history of agrarian struggles in Punjab, Mukherjee (2004) allows us to understand their flexible strategies of mobilisation, how they interacted with other forms of politics, and their contradictions. She argues that the readings of both Subalternist and classical Marxist writers are limited by a focus on violent peasant struggles, and ignores peasant participation in “major national struggles” and the emergence of popular rural movements like the “the All-India Kisan Sabha and the Kisan Sabha movements.” (Mukherjee, p. 532) Mukherjee criticises Barrington Moore (1966) and Hamza Alavi (1965) for only considering violent nineteenth century revolts or Communist-led armed struggles such as the 1946 Tebhaga and Telangana movements. However, Mukherjee reserves her strongest criticism for the Subaltern School, arguing that the school refused to read peasant consciousness on its own terms, reading it rather as the *opposite* of elite consciousness. Instead, Mukherjee argues that a ‘Gandhian institutionalist framework’ in which peasants are transformed through the non-violent processes of national development is more apt to understanding peasant consciousness in India.

Despite her critique of the Subalternists, Mukherjee (2004) continues to reproduce ideas of 'unchanging peasantries,' which can be seen how she distinguishes the colonial and precolonial taxation systems and their impact on what she calls 'the rhythms of peasant life' (p. 491). This draws on the insight that agrarian protest in Punjab against high taxes, low prices, and peasant debt were part of the precolonial legacies, (Mukherjee., p. 467-470) and, therefore, even in the colonial period "peasant leaders [were] not as successful in establishing new, modern notions of legitimacy in peasant consciousness as they were in leading struggles based on existing or older, pre-modern notions of legitimacy" (Mukherjee., p. 500). This also leads her to conclude that the Punjab kissan movement was unable to deploy new notions of legitimacy, and thus unable to develop an "anti-feudal peasant consciousness" (Mukherjee, p. 502), leading to its ultimate failure. However, Mukherjee's proposition that the roots of Punjab's kissan movement's political practices did not run deep does not hold up. In fact, an essay by Subalternist Shahid Amin (1988), "Gandhi as Mahatma", which traces 'rumours' around what Gandhi stood for, shows the peasantry in the United Provinces (UP) did not understand Gandhi as a 'non-violent' figure and waged anti-landlord struggles in his name, where "Gandhi had become a militant avowal of the organised strength of peasant volunteers" (Amin, p. 340). Rather than Gandhian non-violence becoming a template for transformation, as Mukherjee contends, the peasantry had transformed the Gandhian message in line with their political objectives. It is not surprising that not shortly after talking about a more fundamental opposition to the development of colonial capitalism in agriculture, Mukherjee accepts that "when change was offered for the better…the peasants did accept, not overnight, but over time, the new system and even learnt to value it and bend it to their needs." (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 510) This is another reminder of the challenges that authors have faced thinking about 20th century Punjab through the peasant/farmer binary, which would be more fruitfully understood as agrarian populations adapting and contesting agrarian transformations that place in this time.

Punjab's kissan movements, in fact, went beyond precolonial peasant moral economies, and actively engaged the contradictions of the Punjab peasantries role in colonial food markets. The proliferation of academic work (Raza 2020, 2011; Ramnath 2011; Tirmizey 2018a and 2018b) around the relationship between Punjabi migrant internationalists and Punjab's colonial-era kissan movements allows us to read them as templates for anti-imperialist political praxis. [12] Described in more detail later, the Ghadar Party was formed in San Francisco in the early 20th century by South Asian migrants with the aim of liberating India from British rule. Many of the members were from agrarian backgrounds in Punjab. Kasim Tirmizey's (2018a) study of the first phase of the Ghadar Party's in the mid-1910s partly fills the gap by showing how the returning migrants were able to translate and adapt local practices of peasant resistance into anti-imperialist and revolutionary practice. It shows how Ghadar militants adapted the practice of dacoity, which was "one of the ways for peasants, landlords and agrarian labourers to struggle against the influence of rural moneylenders," and gave "this mode of resistance… an anticolonial and anti-imperialist character" (Tirmizey, 2018a, p. 142) by calling on peasants to turn their focus on state institutions. Moreover, focusing on connections between the attempt to start an armed insurgency in central Punjab and grain riots and banditry in southwestern Punjab in February 1915, Tirmizey (2018a) shows how the Ghadar militants made "connections between the imperial question and the right to sustenance…[and]… link[ed] questions of food insecurity to the British Empire's presence in India." (Tirmizey., p. 143-144) Moreover, the links drawn between the attempted mutiny in Punjab, and grain riots and banditry in southwestern Punjab (Tirmizey., p. 142) allow us to understand mutiny, riots and banditry as core strategies of peasant resistance, rather than just forms of 'everyday resistance'

[12] Also, see: D'Souza, Radha and Tirmizey, Kasim. 2018. "Special Issue: The Ghadar Movement." *Journal of Socialist Studies*. 13(2)

(Scott, 1985) with no implications for larger politics, whether peasant struggles or anti-colonial, anti-imperial or anti-capitalist struggles.

Moreover, focusing on the co-constitutive relationship between returning migrant Punjabis and the development of the kissan movement in Punjab allow to go beyond the 'internationalist' versus 'local' binary. Tirmizey (2018a) argues that the Ghadar Party was an "inspiration" (p. 172) and "funder" (p. 173) for the kissan movement. However, the returning Ghadari revolutionaries in fact stayed on in Punjab and played a critical role in shaping the development of the left-wing kissan movement itself by forging class alliances by adapting cultural practices, and introducing new forms of agrarian organising, which often drew from templates of anti-colonial organising in India. Moreover, these kissan leaders had spent many years in North America and even in post-revolution Moscow and were heavily influenced by transnational communism connected the ongoing crisis of reproduction and accumulation for differentiated agrarian classes to contest integration in colonial food markets. This meant that the left-wing kissan movement drew on anti-imperialism and socialism to imagine a peasant utopia which was both informed by local cultural practices and internationalist at the same time.

Section 2: Contradictions of Accumulation and Reproduction: Agrarian Colonisation and Extractive Infrastructures in West Punjab

Sketching the transformation of Punjab's rural landscape from pastoral to settled agriculture in the colonial period, Neeladari Bhattacharya's (2019) masterful study titled *The Great Agrarian Conquest* compels scholars to confront Punjab as a rural landscape disrupted by the active participation of agrarian colonists in the 20th century. This challenges readings that present agrarian producers in the canal colonies as embedded in pre-capitalist relations

outside markets, instead showing how the 'Punjab peasant' was an active agent in agrarian transformations including the displacement of pastoral communities and landscapes and replacement with extensive networks of canals and markets. However, active participation did not mean co-option as the colonial agrarian political economy's contradictions resulted in tenure insecurity, out-migration and indebtedness for differentiated agrarian producers. The colonial tax system pushed agrarian producers across the class spectrum to sell their produce in the market for reproduction, which necessitated engaging with the market through intermediaries across the agrarian class structure, and the replacement of subsistence crops with commercial crops for accumulation. Moreover, the role of different classes of agrarian producers did not conform to theory, in that "middle peasants, who were supposed to cultivate with family labour and have nothing to do with the market, were found to be deeply linked to it and…were even hiring labour." (Mukherjee, 2005, p. xv) While "rich peasants who related to the reactionary end of the political spectrum…have just as often been found in the leadership of protest movements." (Mukherjee, Ibid.) Punjab's agrarian world was a dynamic space in which the structures through which agrarian producers were integrated within global circuits of capital shaped imperatives of reproduction and accumulation, which in turn was also critical to shaping the forms of agrarian politics that emerged in the colonial period.

The radical transformation of Punjab's agrarian landscape under colonialism created ripe conditions for widespread rural discontent by creating uneven land relations, imposing high revenue demands and integration into the volatile world market for agricultural commodities. The settlement of the Sindnai Colony in the Multan region in 1886 began a process in which agrarian colonists converted around four million acres of pastoral land into settled agriculture through the building of barrages and canals.[13] Only six years later, in 1892,

[13] For more details on the transformation of the hydrology of Punjab, read: Gilmartin, David. 2015. *Blood and Water: The Indus River Basin in Modern History.* University of California Press.

the British began to settle the Chenab Colony, the largest of the canal colonies, which would spread over 1.8 million acres and span the districts of Lyallpur, Jhang, Gujranwala, Sheikhupura, and Lahore. Three key features of the political economy of the canal colonies shaped the trajectories of agrarian change and politics in this period: tenancy, extractive infrastructure, and debt.

The first key feature of the agrarian political economy of colonial Punjab was the expansion of tenancy. This is significant because while the British Raj continued to imagine that it was forging a stable self-cultivating peasantry, but in fact, tenancy emerged as a key mechanism to shape patterns of class differentiation and agrarian transformation in the canal colonies. This can be witnessed by comparing data on land allocations to data on tenancy in the canal colonies. According to settlement reports, land in the Chenab Colony was distributed under three types of grants: capitalist, yeoman, and peasant. (Agnihotri, p. 117-118) Peasant grants were under 55 acres, yeoman grants ran from 55 acres to 160 acres, while capitalist grants were above 160 acres. Land allocation data, presented in Table 9, shows that peasant grants made up around 78 percent of land, while yeoman and capitalist grants combined to make up around 13.5 percent of land. Taken on face value, the grants would suggest that the land allocations mapped onto relations of production in which the grantee managed the land, either through family or hired labour, on their own.

Table 9: Land Allocations in Lower Chenab Colony (Acres)

Peasants[14]	Capitalists[15]	Yeoman	Horsebreeding	Menials[16]	Others	Total
1,377,084	97,716	142,406	7,874	50,367	217,659	1,769,231
77.8%	5.5%	8%	0.05%	0.3%	2.3%	100%

[14] The number was obtained by adding two types of peasant grants, standard and lambardar.
[15] The number was obtained by adding two types of capitalist grants, standard and special.
[16] The number was obtained by adding grants categories as menial, depressed classes, and mazhabi.

Source: Collated from Table 12.4 in Agnihotri, p. 155

However, tenancy data presented in Table 10 shows that, instead of the emergence of stable peasant, yeoman, and capitalist agrarian classes, Punjab's agrarian settlements were primarily shaped by developments in tenancy relations. The combination of technological limitations and labour shortages in the canal colonies meant that most agrarian colonists were unable to self-cultivate more than 20 acres of land. According to Tirmizey (2018b), actual cultivation remained massively in the control of landless agricultural classes and was organised under "exploitative non-capitalist relations." (Tirmizey, 2018b, p. 59) This meant that even the so-called peasant grants masked the presence of widespread tenancy relations across this newly developed agrarian space.

Neelandri Bhattacharya's (1983) essay, "The Logic of Tenancy Cultivation: Central and South-East Punjab, 1870-1935", captures the growth of tenancy and its shifting patterns in the colonial period. Table 10 shows the increase in total area under tenancy between 1875 to 1932 in several key districts that fell under the canal colonization programme. Overall, "the proportion of the total cultivated area under tenancy…went up from 29 percent to 47 percent," (p. 124) which suggests that around half of the cultivated area in West Punjab fell under tenancy relations. Even this figure, Bhattacharya notes, could be "underestimate[d] because the data often categorized tenants as self-cultivators. (Bhattacharya, p. 125) In addition to the sheer increase in tenancy arrangements, Bhattacharya notes new trends of differentiation, including an increase in cash rents and differences amongst rent-in-kind paid by sharecroppers (Bhattacharya, Table 9, p. 153). These rent increases were driven by demand across the spectrum. Small-scale producers needed to increase the land cultivated for reproduction. Middle and large-scale producers also continued to lease in land for "the expansion of cultivation and accumulation." (Bhattacharya, p. 166) This increase in tenancy provides a

contradictory picture, on the one hand, those allotted land on peasant, yeoman and capitalist grants were often leasing out land, and thus, operating as self-cultivators and landlords. On the other hand, demand for more land remained high from small, medium and large-scale cultivators due to factors relating to reproduction and accumulation.

Table 10: Proportion of Cultivated Area Under Owners and Tenants (1874-1923) (Percentages)

Districts	Cultivators	1873-74	1902-3	1922-1923
Hoshiarpur	Owners	55	46	45
	Tenants-at-will	17	31	32
Jallunder	Owners	69	53	54
	Tenants-at-will	20	37	37
Ludhiana	Owners	77	62	57
	Tenants-at-will	18	33	38
Ferozepur	Owners	65	45	45
	Tenants-at-will	17	37	39
Amritsar	Owners	63	47	46
	Tenants-at-will	28	44	45
Lahore	Owners	60	41	42
	Tenants-at-will	28	59	47
Provincial	Owners	66	44	45
	Tenants-at-will	29	43	45

Source: Bhattacharya, 1983, p. 126.

The development of an extractive infrastructure was the second key feature of the colonial agrarian economy. The extractive infrastructure designed by the British connected the

agrarian colonists to the colonial food markets and an extensive revenue infrastructure, which made the canal colonies a profitable enterprise for the British Raj. The revenue extracted from Punjab's canal colonies was such that the British began citing this as proof of the "vivid picture of…prosperity in Punjab." (Agnihotri, p. 180) The Chenab Colony alone paid a "sum exceeding that paid by any other district in India" (Agnihorti). Agnihotri's detailed study of the revenue and finance reports on the canal colonies shows that not only had the colonial state recovered the cost of developing each canal colonies within a decade or two, but Great Britain also continued to receive payments from independent Pakistan for more than "55 million rupees per annum" (Agnihotri, p. 110) as payments for the irrigation system and railways.

The third key feature of the agrarian economy of colonial Punjab was debt. The extractive infrastructure developed by the colonial government in Punjab began to push a growing number of agrarian producers into debt. Agnihotri (1986), Bhattacharya (1985) and Mukherjee (2005) show that agrarian colonists in Punjab were relying on debt for reproduction faced with high taxes and merchant control over the purchase and marketing of agricultural produce. By 1929-30, Punjab had the third highest rural debt in India and only 13 percent of the rural population was free of debt. (Bhattacharya, 1985, p. 305) Debt had different implications across the rural class divide. Landlords and large-scale producers remained relatively prosperous due to receiving rent in cash and kind. Debt reduced small and mid-scale producers to "wage slavery" (Agnihotri, p. 525) and integrated them into "a cycle of forced commerce and subordinated to the power of the money-lender." (Bhattacharya, 1985, p. 305) Thus, patterns of "indebtedness, hypothecation, disposal of produce after harvest, and domination of the merchant-money-lender" (Bhattacharya, p. 308) led to the creation of a new class of 'peasant proletarians,' who retained a nominal hold over land but depended on performing wage labour to secure family consumption. (Bhattacharya, p. 321) The British blamed indebtedness, landlessness, and outmigration on "the indolence, thriftlessness and

ignorance of certain agricultural communities and tribes" (Agnihotri., p. 470), rather the mechanisms of agrarian surplus extraction via taxation and integration into global food markets.

Cash revenue demands and integration within global markets shaped the dynamics of accumulation and reproduction for differentiated agrarian producers in Punjab's canal colonies. The British state shifted the taxation system from crop share to cash, which effectively meant that all agricultural producers would need to market a portion of their produce to gain a marketed surplus, even if it would be channelled back immediately to the colonial state to fulfil revenue requirements. The building of the railways to connect Punjab's agrarian markets with seaports and agricultural trading companies in Karachi, Bombay and Calcutta meant that agricultural prices became connected "with price fluctuations in the rest of India and in other countries." (Mukherjee, 2005, p. 55) The big traders would have their agents at small and large sized agricultural markets in Punjab, but direct purchasing from agriculturalists was controlled by arthis, or middlemen. These networks allowed Punjab to export a large portion of its food and non-food crops, with wheat and cotton being the two major export crops. Mukherjee notes that "a large part of the total agricultural production was grown for the market and made its way to many distant lands." (Mukherjee, p. 55) The London wheat market began to play a significant role in determining the rise and fall of wheat prices in Punjab, which was critical in shaping the agrarian crisis in the province in the 1930s during the Great Depression. (Mukherjee, p. 57)

Integration within the colonial food markets had a differential impact on different size, scale and ownership classes of agrarian producers in Punjab. It is significant that even at the lowest rungs of the agrarian class order, market integration was necessary, which forced an engagement with accumulation strategies even for small-scale producers for simple reproduction. Mukherjee notes that "at one extreme, there were the subsistence and marginal

peasants who were forced into the market by various pressures such as: land revenue payments, scarcity, famine or low prices, leading to indebtedness and interest payments which necessitated the sale of produce; or land revenuer demand necessitating the sale of produce leading to deficit for consumption which resulted in indebtedness, interest payments and again sale of produce." (Mukherjee, p. 61) Smallholders with under 5 acres of land as well as tenants were "net buyers rather than sellers of food." (Mukherjee, p. 61) These small-scale producers received little benefit from "rising agricultural prices because they were forced to market their produce at low prices at harvest time and to buy at higher prices later in the agricultural year." (Mukherjee, p. 61) These agrarian producers also relied on migration and off-farm cash labour to make up the difference, (Mukherjee, p. 62) out of which the former will be traced as a significant development in shaping left-wing kissan politics in the region.

At the higher rungs of the agrarian structure, comprised mid-sized landholdings and landlords, reproduction and accumulation remained tenuous. Their fates remained connected to complex interplay between price fluctuations, actual output, cost of cultivation and debted. The overall tendency for agricultural prices to increase was "offset by the increase in cost of cultivation." (Mukherjee, 2005, p. 63) Moreover, the Great Depression in the 1930s and the World Wars interrupted these patterns to cause distress. Thus, rather than agriculturalists, Mukherjee notes that the classes who "benefited clearly were those who bore little to none of the rising costs of cultivation but only reaped the profit of increasing agricultural prices," (Mukherjee, p. 64) namely, landlords, merchant moneylenders, and mortgagees. In contrast, "the precise position of the upper and specially the middle layers of the peasantry on the spectrum of commercialisation fluctuated." (Mukherjee, p. 64) Thus, Mukherjee argues that "during periods of low prices…these sections found themselves as victims, along with the lower peasantry, of the process of commercialisation. Many of them had their accumulations wiped out." (Mukherjee, p. 64) Landlords, on the other hand, were "clearly the beneficiaries,"

(Mukherjee, p. 64) who even though suffered a loss in income in down periods, would rarely be forced to go into indebtedness to maintain their revenue obligations because they continued to receive 50-60 percent of the crop share.

This was the context in which the left-wing kissan movement in Punjab as the Chenab Colony colonists began to organise themselves in 1906. Rather than a desire to return to the past or limited economic objectives, the kisan movement that emerged in Punjab contested the mechanisms of agrarian surplus extraction, via taxation and markets, by dealing head on with how imperialism had reshaped the province's agriculture.

Section 3: Civil Disobedience and the Anticolonial Peasant: The Pagri Sambhal Lehar of 1907

Insects have destroyed your crops

…Famine has left you penniless

The children are crying

…Princes and Khans attempt to be your leaders

They are setting a trap for you

…how much longer will you tolerate this insult?

… Come together friends, raise the slogan

… Hold on to your turban, O Jatt![17]

Bankay Dayal, the editor of the magazine, *Jhang Sayal*, recited the above poem titled "Pagri Sambhal O Jatta" ('Hold onto your turban, O Jatt!) at the Lyallpur meeting of the 1907 Chenab Colony agitation to an audience of thousands of agrarian colonists. The poem became so popular that the movement came to be known by its name. "Pagri Sambhaal O Jatta" was recited at most of the 28 public meetings organised by the movement in 1907, including in

[17] My translation.

Lahore, Multan, Rawalpindi, Batala, and Gujranwala districts, and remains an anthem for kissan protest in Punjab today. As detailed in the previous section, canal colonisation integrated the Punjab peasantry within colonial food markets and an extractive tax infrastructure. These developments became critical nodes of contestation for Punjab's kissan movements, which became spaces that allowed differentiated agrarian producers to contest the structure of the colonial agrarian economy and its impact on the reproduction of small landowners and tenants. It is this imbrication between colonial relations of extraction and those of commodity circulation that allowed the development of anti-imperialist discourse within the kissan movement. This reading of kissan movements in Punjab contests Ali's reading that agrarian protest "became the basis of consolidating the links between the State and agrarian structure," (Ali, p. 434) and that "the decision to grant proprietary rights to peasant grantees, embodied in the Colonisation Act of 1912, subjected the canal colonies to the same legal and organizational forces that had kept agriculture in a stagnant and backward state in the rest of Punjab." (Ali, p. 433) I show instead that, starting with the PSJ Lehar, successive kissan movements held the extractive apparatus of the colonial state and the uneven incorporation of Punjab's agrarian producers in the colonial food markets responsible for the plight suffered by differentiated agrarian colonists.

Almost 50 years after the 1857 Indian War of Independence, the largest of the canal colonisation projects in Punjab, the Chenab Colony, supposed to be a "model farm for the rest of Punjab," (Barrier, 1967, p. 456) began to simmer with discontent. Crop failure and the falling prices of agricultural commodities had already been creating discontent amongst land allotees when the colonial state passed the Punjab Land Colonisation Act 1906, which allowed the government to reclaim land allotted to agrarian settlers. This is when the PSJ movement emerged, which managed to build a rural class alliance between small and medium-scale landowners, ex-military allotees as well as state tenants against the above-mentioned law,

articulated within a larger anti-imperialist political framework. The movement was able to transcend caste identities and set the stage for the development of left-wing kissan politics in Punjab despite putatively addressing only the Jatts. Known as the 'Punjab disturbances'[18] in colonial records, the movement contested the extractive infrastructure built by the colonial state. In doing so, it began a tradition in which the kissan movement in Punjab challenged the existing relationship between Punjab's agrarian colonies and the colonial food markets. Moreover, rather than taking agriculture into a 'backward' state, *à la* Ali, the movement articulated a critique of the colonial state's extractive mechanisms, which were responsible for the crisis of reproduction for Punjab's agrarian colonists. Another important development to note is that the PSJ movement was organised under zamindar (landlord) organisations. however, in subsequent years, the influence of left-wing organisers and migrant radicals in the 1920s would bifurcate agrarian struggles into zamindar ones associated with loyalist landlords, and kissan organisations that represented leftwing anti-imperialist tendencies within the agrarian movement in Punjab.

In the first decade of the 20th century, many agrarian colonists in Punjab began to recognise that they were facing more hardship than they had bargained for due to excessive taxation by colonial authorities. Heavily reliant on debt to cover both on-farm expenses and the revenue demands of the colonial state, agrarian colonists in Punjab began to lose their lands to moneylenders. In response to fears of agrarian protest, the colonial state passed several laws[19] for the "paternal protection of the cultivating landowners," (Barrier, 1967, p. 354) which included the Punjab Land Alienation Act 1900, which forbade the sale and transfer of land

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[18] For reading how the colonial state responded to the Pagri Sambhal Jatta movement, see: Barrier, N.G. (1967) "The Punjab Disturbances of 1907: The Response of the British Government in India to Agrarian Unrest," Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 353-383.

[19] These included the Punjab Limitation Act 1904, the Transfer of Property Act 1904, the Punjab Pre-Emption Act of 1905, the Court of Wards Act of 1905, and the Punjab Land Alienation Act Amendment Bill 1906

without the approval of the district officer to keep land within the hands of the so-called 'agricultural castes.' If there was a chance to appease the agrarian colonists, it was lost when the government decided to increase the water rate after severe crop failures in Punjab in 1905 and 1906. The Punjab Land Colonisation Act 1906 was introduced to counter the numerous legal victories against the government's attempts to extract more revenue out of the canal colonies, which the agrarian colonists had begun to secure in the courts. It imposed restrictions on the transfer of property, strict conditions on planting trees, sanitation and increased the occupancy fee. It also legalised fines and forbade courts from "interfering with executive orders." (Barrier., p. 359-360). Ronki Ram (2022) notes that even "before the enactment of this Act, landowners in the Chenab canal colony were subjected to various hardships by the local administration in the form of corruption and arbitrary fines… as soon as their land was targeted, landowners turned hostile." (Ram, p. 37-38) The situation was further aggravated by an increase in the "abiana (water rate) under the Doab Bari Act of 1907," (Ram, p. 37-38) which translated into an average increase of 25 percent, going up to 50 percent on certain crops. (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 27) Moreover, there was also a sharp increase in land revenue in the Rawalpindi District, which was put down to a new settlement. Moreover, tenant farmers who were earlier allowed to purchase land after a certain "period of probation as crown tenants" were restricted from doing so. (Mukherjee., p. 28)

In early 1907, the PSJ issued a call to boycott this extractive colonial architecture in Punjab's canal colonies. The movement began under the tamer Bar Zamindar Association (Ram, 2022, p. 38) before coming under the influence of the Bharat Mata Society[20] and the leadership of the socialist leader, Ajit Singh. The movement began to expand rapidly and began to cement the connection between the issues faced by Punjab's agrarian colonists and a wider

[20] Founded in 1906, the Bharat Matta Society was an underground organisation that was founded to oppose colonial rule.

critique of imperial rule. It hosted dozens of public meetings across the Chenab Colony, which included one in Lyallpur on February 3, 1907, which was attended by almost 10,000 agrarian colonists, included military grantees (Ram, p. 38). In a fiery speech, Ajit Singh connected the agrarian struggle to the national struggling remarking, "The soil of India belongs to Indians and the British have no claim over it." (Pal, 2010, p. 455) Later, in the April meeting in Lahore, Ajit Singh raised the stakes by calling on agrarian colonists to stop the export of grain[21] and refuse to pay tax. (Pal, p. 457) This directly threatened colonial mechanisms of agrarian surplus transfer from Punjab. The call began to be heard after over 3,000 agrarian colonists from over 200 villages took an oath not to pay the increased water rates at a major public meeting at Shahalami Gate, Lahore. (Pal, p. 457). Moreover, participants were implored to resolve their disputes in Panchayats,[22] in a show of defiance against the colonial justice system. In late April, in Rawalpindi, Ajit Singh linked the increase in land revenue taxes to the starvation of the Indian people and called on "peasants to stop cultivation until the [water rate] was reduced." (Pal, p. 458) Thus, the movement which was started by the Bar Zamindar Associations around insecurity of tenure and tax increases increasingly began to route its battle around the imperatives of reproduction through an anti-imperialist critique that emphasised boycotts of colonial institutions, including the tax regime, agrarian markets, and legal system.

The British state responded to the movement's challenge by banning public meetings, arresting and exiling the movements leadership, and speculating that the movement was a conspiracy hatched by urban activists to lead the loyal Punjab peasantry astray. British officials were afraid that the movement's popularity amongst soldiers and ex-soldiers meant another armed freedom struggle could be launched on the golden jubilee of the 1857 independence struggle. After a public meeting in Rawalpindi in April, the Deputy Commissioner banned

[21] See: Jan, MA. (2019) "The complexity of exchange: Wheat markets, petty-commodity producers and the emergence of commercial capital in colonial Punjab." *Journal of Agrarian Change*. 19: 225– 248, for more on the development of Punjab's wheat markets.
[22] Local village councils.

further meetings and summoned Ajit Singh and other collaborators to appear before the court on charges of sedition. Over 20,000 protestors arrived at the court for the hearing. Subsequently, a crackdown was launched on the movement which continued till May. Public meetings were banned in five other districts. The government stopped the press from reporting on the movement and made it a penal offense to ask farmers to refuse to pay dues to the government. (Mukherjee., 2004, p. 28) Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai, another important kissan and nationalist leader, were deported to the penal colonies in Burma. The British government conducted several enquiries,[23] which concluded that "the unrest could not be contained without a retreat on the Colonisation Bill and the water rates enhancement" (Mukherjee, p. 28). Both the Colonisation Bill and increase in water tax were withdrawn and the two exiled leaders, Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh, were allowed to return in November.

Thus, the Pagri Sambhaal Jatta movement showed how a broader critique of imperialism and the colonial food markets came to shape articulations of agrarian politics in colonial Punjab. This drew on the experience of differentiated classes of agrarian producers within the colonial agrarian order in Punjab and the challenges around balancing reproduction and accumulation that emerged in the face of volatile markets and high taxation based on cash. The ease with which this transformation from issue-based politics to ideologically-driven anticolonial politics took place set the stage for political differentiation between loyalist and anti-imperialist trends within Punjab's agrarian colonists. This division becomes critical to the separation of the kissan as a politically-constituted identification for agrarian producers distinct from zamindars. The returning migrant revolutionaries associated with the Ghadar Party became a crucial part of the consolidation of this political distinction.

[23] This included one by then Leftinent Governor of Punjab, Denzel Ibbetson, known for writing *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and Northwest Frontier Province.* Bhasha Vibhag Punjab. 1990.

Section 4: Migrant Radicals and the Development of an Anti-Imperialist Kissan Struggle: From Ghadar to the Kirti Kissan Party (1914-1934)

Despite acceding to the PSJ demands, the colonial state continued its crackdown on the movement's key organisers. After returning from deportation in Burma, Ajit Singh, the leader of the movement, was once again forced to go into self-exile, making his way through Iran and Europe[24] to end up in Brazil. It is here that Ajit Singh began correspondence with the nascent Ghadar Party, who had been organising among migrant workers from rural Punjab working in the North American continent. This was the start of the relationship between the Punjab kissan movement and Punjabi migrant anticolonialism. In 1914, the Ghadar Party issued its first call for returning to Punjab to start an armed struggle against the British Raj. This period became key to forging a co-constitutive relationship between returning Punjabi migrant radicals and the development of the left-wing kissan movement in Punjab. Having experienced colonial food markets across the Global North and South, the Ghadarites were able to channel their experiences in agrarian Punjab and North America to fashion an anti-imperialist kissan politics after the brutal crackdown on the first Ghadar (1914-1918). Even in its nascent period in the US, the Ghadar Party began to articulate a clear link between food insecurity and poverty in India and its integration within colonial food markets. This was specifically due to many of the Ghadar Party members being migrants from Punjab, who had to leave due to ongoing agrarian distress in both the pre- and post-canal colonies periods and had often taken up jobs as agricultural workers or farmers in North America. Further, these developments were shaped by the ability of migrant radicals to 'translate' the cultural and political symbols present within Punjab to forge a clearly defined left-wing kissan movement in the late 1920s and beyond.

[24] Amongst the notable revolutionaries he met, included Lenin and Trotsky, who were also in self-exile in Zurich and Paris respectively. See: Singh, Sardar Ajit. 1984. *Buried Alive: Autobiography, Speeches and Writings of an Indian Revolutionary.* Gitanjali Publishers: New Dehli http://www.shahidbhagatsingh.org/index.asp?link=part4

The Ghadar Party was born in 1913 among migrant peasants from Punjab with the launch of the magazine, *Ghadar*, printed in San Francisco. Economic conditions at the turn of the 19th and early 20th centuries had pushed thousands of rural Punjabi peasants to migrate for work.[25] Originally situated along the Pacific coast in North America, the influence of the Ghadar Party spread rapidly amongst diasporic Punjabi populations. The network included branches ranging across destinations as diverse as Vancouver, Panama, Moscow, London, Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Lahore, and Singapore, all areas where Punjabi migrant labour had landed. With the start of the First World War, the Ghadarites issued a call in 1914 to Punjabi migrants all over the world to return to Punjab to start a peasant insurgency and mutiny amongst the Indian Army to bring about the end of British rule in India (Tirmizey, 2018a, p. 135-136). In a pamphlet titled 'A Few Facts About British Rule in India' published in 1915, the Ghadar Party linked ongoing food insecurity and famine in India with colonial food markets, noting that while around 70 million people go hungry, "in 1912-13 India exported foodstuffs of the value of over $260,000,000," as well as the "annual drain" (Ghadar Party, n.p.) imposed by the British state. This drawn-out critique of India's integration into global food markets under colonialism was critical in shaping their interventions in rural Punjab after their return. Over 8,000 Punjabi migrants were reported to have returned to Punjab between 1914-15 to heed the Ghadar Party's call (Ramnath, p. 54). Having settled into their home villages, the Ghadari returnees began to organise amongst the peasantry and military.

However, their plans were foiled by British intelligence. The Punjab government jailed around 250 Ghadarites, placing another 2,500 under house arrest in their own villages (Gandre,

[25] Agrarian crisis in Punjab was critical in shaping out migration from Punjab. There were several famines between 1850 and 1910, as well as reports of high levels of rural debt. Moreover, the recruitment of soldiers from Punjab for British campaigns in Africa and East Asia were also responsible for re-settlement. Most of the migrants were peasants from the eastern districts of Jullundur and Hoshiarpur, as well as some from western Punjab's canal colonies. They took up a range of jobs, including railway construction, sawmills, and fruit farms around Vancouver Island and Victoria, coal mining Calgary and Edmonton, labourers or tenant farmers in the Sacramento Valley, California, and lumber mills in Oregon and Washington. Another important contingent was Indian students in US universities. (Tirmizey 2018a, Puri 1993)

p. 2). Even though the First Ghadar had ostensibly been thwarted, Robert Wilbert Gandre (1984) notes that that "thousands of nationalist Sikh peasants were now settled in villages throughout the Punjab" (Gandre). Although existing literature reads the Ghadarites as 'romantics' out of touch with the realities of Indian Punjab,[26] being put in house arrest in their villages allowed the returning migrant radicals to become interspersed within the agrarian population of Punjab and entrenched them as crucial interlocutors in the rural sphere. This allowed them to add a global anti-imperialist critique to village-level discontent with rural indebtedness caused by high taxation and volatile agricultural prices by adapting local practices of peasant resistance to forge class alliances between sharecropping tenants, small and medium holder peasants, as well as some richer 'yeoman' farmers through their relatively independent position as returned migrants. These practices included touring villages and addressing melas and festivals, (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 31) which resulted in a dialogic process in which "the Ghadar Party's political organizing resulted in a transformation in the language of peasant resistance. In addition, peasant struggles transformed the language of the Ghadar Party." (Tirmizey, 2018a, p. 146)

The development of the Kirti Kissan Party (KKP) in 1926 emerged out of this ideological and organisational synthesis between the agrarian protest inaugurated by PSJ and the anticolonial internationalism of the Ghadarite returnees. Most significantly, the KKP consolidated the transition from the caste-inflected category of Jatt to the broader political identification of kissan, deployed to distinguish themselves from the zamindar-based loyalist

[26] For example, Haresh Puri (1993) argues that the Ghadris failed to bridge the difference in consciousness between the returning migrants and the Punjabi populace. Mukherjee (2005, p. 31) takes a similar position, arguing that "the Punjab of 1914 was very different from what the Ghadarites had expected—the Punjabis were in no mood to join their romantic adventure." Gandre characterises them as "nationalist Sikh" peasants." (Gandre, p. 2)

politics of the Zamindar League founded in 1923.[27] The politics sparked by the 1907 movement against taxation and agrarian markets was grafted onto the category of the 'kissan' through mobilizational strategies, which included cultural activities, analysis in *Kirti* magazine, and mass meetings. Thus, 'kissan' emerged as an anti-feudal and anti-imperialist subject-position around which new forms of political praxis and new visions for the future of agrarian Punjab emerged against the backdrop of mass-based nationalist struggle. The political development of the kissan politics was shaped by Kirti militants to include differentiated classes of farmers but excluded large landlords, who were considered loyal to the British, beneficiaries of the colonial agrarian system and exploiters of sharecropping tenant and labouring classes. Kissan did not map on a neat peasant versus farmer divide and allowed the movement to include agrarian producers who occupied different positions in the reproduction-accumulation spectrum.

The KKP was founded in October 1926, following a two-day meeting held in Hoshiarpur saw the passing of a resolution was passed to set up a strong worker-peasant party. The resolutions passed at the meeting included revenue exemption for small-scale peasants, improvement in irrigation facilities, an eight-hour workday for factory workers, and support for the ongoing mill workers' strike in Kanpur (Ramnath, p. 143). The party's founding objectives promised to "achieve complete Independence from British imperialism by employing every possible method in order to liberate the workers and peasants from political, economic, and social serfdom." (Raza, 2011, p. 104) The movement also ran the *Kirti* magazine which was edited by prominent Ghadar leader, Santokh Singh, who had lived and trained in Moscow for two decades. After Santokh's death, the editorship of *Kirti* was passed to Sohan

[27] See: Gajrawi, S. D., and S. D. Gajrani. 1982. "The Agrarian Problems in the Punjab and the Unionist Party, 1923-45." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*. 43: 530–44. *JSTOR*, for more details on the Zamindar League and the Unionist Party's approach to agriculture in Punjab.

Singh Josh, who was arrested in 1929 along with twenty-six other revolutionaries in the Meerut Conspiracy Case.[28]

The KKP constantly remained under state surveillance and its officeholders continued to be arrested. This forced it to develop strong and relatively autonomous local branches at the tehsil and district levels, which required developed new tools and tactics for organising, which included "rallies, agitations, strikes, public meetings, travelling theatre troupes, musicians, magic lantern shows, and jathabandi." (Raza, 2011, p. 120) Moscow-returned organisers, such as Naina Singh Dhoot, started study circles in which they would "teach Punjabi to the young and encouraged them to memorize poems that sang of freedom and revolution," as well public speaking (Raza, p. 119). Through these tactics, the KKP was able to build a strong cadre in the central and eastern tracts of Punjab. Raza notes that the KKP was strong in "districts…which were at the forefront of migratory trends." (Raza, 2011, p. 100) Thus, the Ghadarite imprint on the agrarian struggles being fomented by the KKP continued to shape its organisational structure and ideological orientation.

The KKP continued to build a successful rural program which incorporated agrarian demands such as the reduction of land revenue, debt relief, and protectionism within an anti-imperialist peasant politics (Raza, p. 118). Between April-May 1928, the failure of the wheat harvest[29] became the focus of their agitations. Public meetings were held to demand the remission of land revenue, fixing the rate of interest, and addressing the issue of the growing rural indebtedness (Mukherjee., 2004, p. 53). The start of the Great Depression in 1929 presented an opportunity for the KKP to demonstrate the link between the agrarian crisis in Punjab and colonial food markets ever more clearly. With the price structure of agrarian

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[28] The British government arrested 27 left-wing for organising a railway strike in March 1929 for attempting to start an armed uprising. The trial ran for almost four years. For more, see: Ali Raza. 2013. "Separating the Wheat from the Chaff: Meerut and the Creation of "Official" Communism in India." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 33 (3): 316–330.

[29] Small-scale producers claimed that they had only managed to reap one-fifth to one-eight of their regular yield.

produce "demolished" (Gandre., p. 6), the KKP organisers began to push the line that this was "a systemic crisis that could not be resolved by mere administrative reform" (Raza, 2011, p. 95) and required disentangling Punjab's agriculture from the colonial food market. The party's organ *Kirti* produced literature and illustrations which made these connections, including a cartoon titled 'Rewards of Patriotism in Hindustan', which listed "hunger, poverty, police surveillance, transportation to the Andamans, and hangings" (Raza, p. 128).

Many of the KKP activists who returned from America understood the context of the American Revolution, in which agrarian colonists had taken themselves out of a dependent relationship with Britain at the end of the 18th century. They believed that the colonial state would be "unwilling to bring out a more fundamental and systemic change in the rural arena through a shift in property rights and relations of production" (Raza, p. 96) to ensure that Punjab's agrarian colonies did not go the same route as the American ones. This meant that the British would uphold the interests of agrarian elites to "maintain a loyalist rural hierarchy subordinate to the interests of Empire", despite understanding the need to grant "stability to the actual cultivator." (Raza, p. 96) The KKP proposed that the only solution was an 'agrarian revolution' (Raza, p. 96) and a vision of 'Kirti Raj' began to take shape based around an emancipatory imagination for the future of agrarian Punjab. An article published in the *Kirti* proposed that the template would be the New Economic Programme in Russia, where land tenure was based on peasant ownership, little to no revenue or rent, and autonomous peasant control of landholdings. Moreover, panchayat councils would determine land distribution and cultivators "would have the option but not the obligation to team up on the use of machinery." (Ramnath, p. 150-151) This utopian vision of Kirti Raj promised to address uneven access to land and capital as well as the colonial tax and agricultural market system.

Agrarian revolution and national liberation operated as part of the same revolutionary horizon for Punjab's left-wing kissan movement. The Great Depression in 1929 intensified the

acute crisis of reproduction and accumulation faced by the small and mid-scale agrarian producers which allowed the KKP to extend its influence in the 1930s. By the second year of the Great Depression, the small-scale cultivator had lost its ability to pay land revenue payments for the rabi ('winter') harvest. (Mukherjee, 2005, p. 96) The "widespread effects of the Depression on every section of rural society…revealed the extent of the commercialisation of agriculture in Punjab." (Mukherjee, p. 92) The price of wheat fell by 75 percent between while the price of rice and cotton fell by 50 percent in a single year between 1929 and 1930. The cost of cultivation and reproduction, as well as revenue requirements, in terms of water and land tax, remained similar. (Mukherjee, p. 93) According to an enquiry committee set up by the Zamindara League even an owner-cultivator who owned 27 acres of land had lost money without accounting for state revenue demands. (Mukherjee, p. 93) Another government report estimated that the net income fell from around Rs27 to Rs4 per acre. This meant "almost 60 percent of landowners who had less than 5 acres had to survive on an income of less than Rs 2 per month. Even an owner-cultivator of 10 acres would earn less than Rs4 per month." (Mukherjee, p. 95) Tenants were affected worse than owner-cultivators, who were often reported to be in a straight loss between 1930-1935 after paying the crop share to landlords. (Mukherjee, p. 96) While landlords were still buffered by receiving a crop share without bearing the cost of cultivation, the Depression affected self-cultivating farmers significantly, with even agricultural labourers often refusing work due to the uncertainty around being paid. (Mukherjee, p. 97)

The Great Depression sparked a new round of kissan organising which rallied self-cultivating farmers, including sharecropping tenants. Still influential amongst migrant Punjabi populations, the Ghadar Party issued a second call for return in 1930-32 (Raza., 2011, p. 116). These factors led to the "mushrooming of peasant organizations at the local level and…a trend towards their radicalization" (Mukherjee, p. 95), with the Punjab governor noting that

"everyone is bidding for the favour of the poor cultivator and small peasant proprietor. The Kirti Kisan Party…have come out in great fettle" (Mukherjee). In 1934, the Amritsar Kissan Sabha began to tour villages, hosting 14 public meetings in two weeks. Moreover, major kissan conferences were held in the Gurdaspur and Hoshiarpur districts (Mukherjee, p. 118). The common demand was for the "reduction in the government's appropriation of surplus via land revenue and water rates" (Mukherjee, p. 119), the remission of the same, in addition to releasing "political prisoners undergoing imprisonment in the Ghadar Conspiracy Cases of 1914–15 as well as others detained without trial as state prisoners" (Mukherjee). The strength of the movement forced the government's hand and it began to remit significant parts of the water and land revenue back to cultivators.

Table 11 Remissions During the Depression Years (1930-1932)

Tahsil/Circles	Total Rs.	Remissions Abiana Rs.	Remissions Land Revenue Rs.
Jaranwala	17,945,655	472,594	8,798,332
Lyallpur	19,864,206	509,712	888,382.
Samundri	17,073,377	437,832	8,379,29 4.
Toba Tek Singh	17,000,919	614,886	9,062,085
New Extensions	1,110,005	5,568	9,541
Sheikhupura district	7,260,708	188,061	300,181

Source: S.R., Lyallpur, 1940, p. 21; A.R., Lahore, 1939, p. 5, in Agnihotri, p. 286

The KKP's expansion coincided with the emergence of the Zamindar League. Formed in 1923, the Zamindar League was run by British loyalist politician Sir Chotu Ram.[30] This effectively spurred a debate to separate the 'zamindar' from the 'kissan' in the discourse and practice of the KKP, with the zamindar identified as a large landowner. While the KKP was building a rural class alliance around the category of kissan, it distanced itself from large-scale landowners, whom it considered beneficiaries of imperial rule. While the programme and demands of the Zamindar League and KKP were similar, there was a "crucial difference...in the nature of the political message that accompanied the economic demands" (Mukherjee, p. 57). Mukherjee notes that there was "no room even for nationalism" in the discourse of the Zamindar League, while the KKP represented a "radical nationalist" trend which "emphasized anti-imperialism, [and] contained references to other struggles, such as those by the Babbar Akalis or the Bardoli peasants and often to the Russian Revolution as well." (Mukherjee) This effectively led to the development of kissan and zamindar politics as two opposing poles within agrarian protest in Punjab, in which the KKP mounted a strong opposition to the development of the loyalist reformism of zamindar politics.

The founding of the KKP by prominent Ghadirites shaped the next phase of Punjab's kissan movement sharpened its anti-imperialist edge and provided an alternate political vision to the loyalist politics of the Zamindar League. This was achieved by drawing connections between the crisis of reproduction and the small-scale kissans integration within colonial food markets to develop an anti-imperialist, socialist orientation within agrarian politics in Punjab. The growing anti-imperialist kissan movement had now began to irritate British colonial officials. They had originally dismissed the possibility of communist influence amongst the Punjab peasantry, with chief secretary H.W. Emerson in 1928 arguing that the patterns of

[30] See: Sultan, Atiyab. 2022. "Combatting Indebtness II: Community Development in Colonial Punjab," in *A Broken Record: Institutions, Community and Development in Pakistan.* p. 75-107

small-holder ownership and culture around land ownership in Punjab would lead to peasant propertiers opposing the "nationalization of land" (Mukherjee, p. 58-59). These statements were based on a misreading of the nature of left-wing kissan organising in Punjab, which had spread by linking the crisis of reproduction for agrarian cultivators with imperialism, rather than calling for the state takeover of land. Not long after, British officials began to send worried notes that the rural classes "have acquired a class consciousness of their own which must find an outlet." (Mukherjee, p. 56) In September 1934, the KKP, along with other left-wing organisations, including the Amritsar Kissan Sabha, the Punjab Kissan League, were banned (Raza, p. 120). This coincided with a shift in Comintern line, which was pushing for the abandonment of worker and peasant fronts and reforming themselves as Communist Parties (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 62). The KKP leadership had managed to resist the Moscow line, but the official ban on the party forced the issue. Having first transformed its social infrastructure into Kissan Qarza Committees (Kissan Debt Committees), by 1937, they formed the Punjab Kissan Sabha, which began a new chapter in which Punjab's kissan movement became part of the larger national left-wing peasant mobilisation under the banner of the All-India Kissan Sabha (AIKS).

Section 5: The Punjab Kissan Sabha: From Provincial Agrarian Communism to a National Kissan Movement (1934-1947)

State-led crackdowns were once again crucial in forcing the Punjab kissan movement to adopt new forms of organising. Rather than getting pushed on to a backfoot, Punjab's kissan organisers embarked on expanding the movement's ambit into organising around debt relief and then forming the Punjab Kissan Sabha (PKS) in 1937. The move from the Punjab-specific focus of the KKP to the All India Kissan Sabha (AIK)-affiliated PKS shows how a 'national

peasantry' and national kissan movement was forged in the mid-1930s which formally linked the anticolonial movement with peasant struggles. Thus, contrary to the Subaltern School's findings, which has pitted the peasant movement and nationalist movement as distinct and autonomous spheres, the Punjab kissan movement in the early 1900s was consciously linked to urban activists and migrant radicals, and by the 1930s had begun to forge strong links with nationalist, anticolonial and peasant organisers across India. This also led to the development of new forms of kissan organising, such as large conferences, kissan morchas (sit ins), and tenant struggles, which have remained core strategies of nationalist mobilisation in the postcolonial period. The mid-1930s also saw the acceleration of the challenge from zamindar-led loyalist organisations, which were largely defeated on the popular front by left-wing kissan organising and began to curiously reposition themselves as kissan. Thus, the category, kissan, was being contested and transformed based on political shifts and dynamics of agrarian change. Rather than operating as a pure class or cultural category, the meaning of kissan was politically constituted and contested through the articulation and practices of agrarian movements.

Between 1934 and 1937, Punjab's kissan organisers set up the Kisan Qarza (Debt Relief) Committees, (Gandre., p. 7-8) which sharpened the critique of the growing indebtedness of rural cultivators. Despite being banned, the strength of the KKP mobilisations had led to the British continuing its 'carrot-and-stick' tactics, by passing the Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act 1934 to appease agrarian colonists. The new law set up Debt Conciliation Boards to settle rural debt under Rs 10,000 as well as fixed the rate of interest on outstanding debt. The KKP organisers saw this as opportunity to re-organise itself and morphed its infrastructure into the Qarza Committees. Kissan organisers went village to village to advocate for debt cancellation. (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 121) They published a popular pamphlet which described peasant debt as a "line of camels loaded with one maund of ruppees [which] would extend to Calcutta" (Mukherjee, p. 123). Much like the KKP before, the Qarza Committee

began to host several large conferences, which included the Daoba Rural Uplift conference in Jullundar, where Sohan Singh Josh was greeted by a sea of flags held up by around 4,000 kissans after his release from jail. The conferences called for debt cancellation, reforming the land revenue system, condemned violence against left-wing organisers, and demanded the release of political prisoners (Mukherjee, p. 123).

After the Qarza Committees and the 1936-1937 election campaign had shown that the movement retain a strong cadre of followers, the time was felt ripe to create Punjab's "first province-wide peasant organisation" (Mukherjee, p. 132-133). Over a dozen attendees from Punjab, including Josh and Karam Singh Mann, attended the formation meeting for AIKS in Lucknow in April 1936. A year later, delegates from 13 districts arrived at the Bradlaugh Hall in Lahore on March 7, 1937 and announced the formation of the Punjab Kissan Sabha (PKS). The founding members included a 15-member organising committee, which represented the KKP, the Communist Socialists, the Communist Party of India, and kissan organisers from the princely states of Punjab (Mukherjee, p. 133). Baba Jawala Singh Thattian,[31] an old Ghadar Party member, was elected the PKS president, while another Moscow-trained Ghadar-Kirti organiser, Kartar Singh Gill, was appointed the secretary. The British seized on the threat and launched another crackdown. A Home Department report linked the PKS to the "Radical League, Congress Socialists, Ghadar Party, and the CPI in spreading discontent in rural areas over such issues as relief from rural indebtedness and opposition to new district land revenue resettlements" and the "preaching of class hatred, dispossession of landlords, and repudiation of debts and legal dues" (Gandre, p. 9). Bhagat Singh Bilga, another Moscow-trained Ghadari, who was elected the PKS general secretary in its Lyallpur Conference in October 1938 was immediately interned in his village and spent only one of the next ten years free (Mukherjee,

[31] Baba Jawala Singh Thattian had migrated to America in the early 1900s and was reported to have a 500-acre farm near San Francisco, which he left to return to Punjab to organise the first Ghadar in the 1910s.

2004, p. 145). Bilga's fate was shared by dozens of other key left-wing kissan organisers associated with the PKS, but the PKS continued to adapt successfully to the state repression.

The PKS was able to push the left-wing kissan movement into "the most vigorous phase of the peasant movement in pre-Independence Punjab" (Mukherjee., p. 137), which included three tactics: massive kissan conferences, tenant struggles and kissan morchas (sit ins). Beginning in September 1937, the kissan conferences were glorious affairs, running several days, attended by over ten thousand participants each, and visibly displayed Marxist symbolism (Mukherjee, p. 138). Hosted in Barapind, Jullunder, the first of these conferences attracted an audience that the organisers claimed numbered fifty thousand. Photographs of Lenin and Stalin were displayed on the stage, while when AIKS general secretary Swami Sahajanand arrived he was carried by a "procession of 2,000 men wearing red shirts, carrying sickles and red flags" (Mukherjee, p. 140). Similar conferences were held in Ferozepur, Amritsar, Gujranwala, Lyallpur, Sargodha, and Hoshiarpur where large audiences were reported (Mukherjee, p. 141). Mukherjee notes that "this qualitative growth in the organizational, ideological, and political strength of the peasant movement had been achieved without any accretion to the list of economic demands and without any "struggles" being fought" (Mukherjee, p. 142). The economic demands around land revenue, remissions, and abolition of extra cesses remained had remained quite similar, and the conferences showed that the left-wing anti-imperialist agrarian politics had now gained popular support amongst Punjab's rural classes.

The 1937 Kissan Conferences gave the PKS confidence that it could introduce "new issues, new demands…[and fortify] older bases" (Mukherjee, p. 145). It began to work seriously among tenants, and led the Neeli Bar tenant strikes in 1938, where over 50,000 tenants decided to strike against paying the crop share. Known as the Neeli Bar Morcha, the tenants of Montgomery (now Sahiwal) and Multan raised the slogan of 'Banney Uttey Adho-addh,' (Crop should be divided half and half') which reappeared in the post-Independence

agrarian landscape in 1948. When the Punjab Finance Commissioner Malcolm Darling arrived to negotiate, he was met with a gathering of 20,000 tenants, and forced to accept the demands, including 50:50 crop share, end of begar (forced labour), provision for animal fodders, and reduction in revenue requirements (Ram, p. 39). Strikingly like the 2020 Kissan Morcha in Dehli, the PKS organised two kissan morchas in Amritsar in 1938 and Lahore in March 1939. The Amritsar Morcha succeeded in the government withdrawing the process of land settlement after over 5,000 kissan volunteers to set up camp in the city for three weeks (Ram, p. 40). The government was in no such mood to relent when the Lahore Morcha of 1939 was announced to reduce land revenue and began a crackdown on protestors. Around 5,000 volunteers were jailed during this six-month encampment of the Punjab Assembly, where participants evade check posts and police raids on their villages to keep arriving in Lahore, even during the wheat harvest in April (Ram, p. 47). Despite its failure, the morcha showed that the roots of left-wing kissan organising in Punjab remained strong and had not lost popular support despite the growing opposition of the Unionist Party and Zamindar League.

The kissan morchas and conferences organised by the PKS began to threaten the loyalist Punjab government, which attempted to organise another populist counter-offensive through the Zamindar Leagues in 1939. Hosting public meetings of their own, the Zamindar League leader Chhotu Ram would raise the slogans of 'Inqilab Zindabad' (Long Live the Revolution) and 'Zamindar Raj Zindabad' (Long Live Landowners Rule) (Mukherjee, 2004, p. 169), which attempted to use the language of revolution popularised by the left-wing kissan movement and broader nationalist movement but contrasted 'Zamindar Raj' with the 'Kirti Raj' utopian ideas popularised by KKP and PKS. The kissan vs. zamindar politics fissure had come out into the open. The Zamindar League attempted to claimed credit for lobbying the government to pass legislations on debt relief and criticised the PKS and other left-wing rural organisers of attempting to create rural disharmony amongst landowners (Mukherjee, p. 171).

While Zamindar League public meetings were well-attended, these were merely able to throw "anti-imperialist forces off balance…for a while" (Mukherjee). In fact, many of the zamindar-based organisations began to change their name to 'kissan' to appear more inclusive. Populated by the radical kissan organisers associated with the Ghadar and Kirti Kissan parties, the PKS had consolidated the development of kissan politics as a left-wing, anti-imperialist political subjectivity. However, this victory also had a significant impact later down the line, as I shall show in chapter 5, as the re-branding of as zamindar organisations as kissan allowed large commercial leaseholders to dictate the agenda of the kissan movement in the neoliberal period.

In the 1940s, in addition to organising around local issues, the PKS through AIKS began to connect agrarian struggles across India. The PKS also played a critical role in mass mobilising around the famine in Bengal, which had been made worse by wartime colonial policies, including the transfer of food grains from Bengal to the British Army. In a mass gathering in 1943, around 80,000 kissan in Lahore gathered in solidarity with the people of Bengal (Damodaran, p. 1-2). Sung amidst of dozens of speakers who had been forced to go underground due to arrest warrants, a poem by Sheila Bhatia which vocalised the suffering of a Bengali women in the 'Heer' folk form brought the audience to tears (Damodaran, p. 2).

Who can I share my grief with? …
I lost my home and family
Why is this a question without an answer? …
There are thousands like me who sing of the same grief[32]

By deploying the story of a Punjabi folk heroine, Bhatia's poem from the stage immediately connected the suffering of the Bengali peasantry with Punjab's kissan populace at an intimate level. The PKS was able to collect around Rs100,000, or around $55,000, to buy grain directly from kissan, and demanded that the government create People's Food

[32] My translation.

Committees, reduce prices for consumers, and ensure reasonable prices for producers (Yardumian, 1945, p. 143).

The connections forged with the national kissan movement, as well as the development of existing and new forms of agrarian protest are characteristic of the PKS period. Much like the kissan movement in Punjab before, the PKS continued to connect the immediate issues faced by the agrarian cultivators in Punjab to a larger anti-imperialist agrarian politics. Moreover, it was also able to counter the loyalist politics of the Zamindar Leagues by maintaining its radical bent, despite operating within a hostile environment. interrupted by the Partition of Punjab in August 1947, which led to displacement and dispossession on a mass scale and directed the energies of organisers towards rehabilitation and re-organising cadres in the aftermath, a transition I explore in more detail in chapter 3 which examines 1950s West Punjab and the reconstitution of the Punjab Kissan Sabha as the West Pakistan Kissan Committee.

Conclusion: The Agrarian Question in the Colonial Period

To recap, this chapter charts the trajectory of agrarian movements in colonial Punjab to examine how they responded to the colonial transformation of markets, taxation and land relations and the crises of reproduction and accumulation hence created for differentiated agrarian producers. Through analyses of key movements and organisations like PSJ, KKP and PKS, it also highlights the negotiations and battles around debt, crop prices and revenue demands by these movements that drew on class-alliances bringing together small and medium scale agrarian producers, as well as migrant returnees associated with Indian anticolonial internationalism. Together, these strands combine to describe agrarian politics as articulating a critique of global food markets and agrarian extractivism in 20th century Punjab, shaping a

shifting, contested ‘kissan’ identity through engagement with anticolonial nationalism and Marxist internationalism. Thus, examining the development of left-wing kissan movements in Punjab across in the late colonial period has opened facets of how agrarian communities responded to integration within colonial food markets. Agrarian – or ‘peasant’ – movements in Punjab connected the differentiated crisis of reproduction and accumulation for rural cultivators to their place within colonial capitalism. In doing so, Punjab’s kissan movement articulated the political and economic agrarian question across the colonial world, rather than being located within the territorial borders of Punjab’s canal colonies.

Moreover, Punjab’s kissan movement not only countered ideas of the success of colonial paternalism, but they also highlight the critical role played by state and non-state violence in shaping agrarian struggles in South Asia. When West Punjab’s canal colonies presented a space where agrarian politics was continuously threatening the colonial regime, the British Raj responded with a violent crackdown, which included confining kissan leaders to their home villages, exiling them to penal colonies, arrests, crackdowns, bans on public gatherings as well as kissan organisations considered too radical. Instead, it also began to prop up loyalist organisations, such as the Zamindar League, which attempted to compete for hegemony amongst Punjab’s agrarian population with the left-wing kissan movement. Moreover, the colonial state found a strong ally in large landowners in Punjab, who would accelerate the eviction of sharecropping tenants to counter any legal gains obtained by the movement, which was witnessed when Mian Iftikharuddin, PKS member and Congress politician, introduced a bill to protect the security of tenants-at-will in the Punjab Assembly in 1946. The outcome was a spate of evictions and anti-eviction struggles in 1946-1947 (Mukherjee, p. 493). This also means that those looking for explanations for the limitations of these movements need to look at the role of counter-revolutionary violence in shaping agrarian change and peasant movements in South Asia.

Punjab's colonial era kissan movements developed new political subjectivities that traversed the local and transnational, allowing them to mount a formidable stand against loyalist agrarian movements and state repression, which allowed the transformation of the term, kissan into an anti-feudal and anti-imperialist subject position. This allowed the development of new forms of political praxis and visions for the future of agrarian Punjab, which drew connections between the crisis of reproduction and the small and mid-scale producers' integration within colonial food markets to develop an anti-imperialist, socialist orientation within agrarian politics in Punjab. Kissan politics was counterposed as an alternative to zamindar politics, which posited choice between peasant and landlord politics for agrarian cultivators. Kissan politics was built on a cross-class alliance that linked the plight of the small and mid-scale producers with loyalist agrarian and commercial classes and how Punjab's agrarian classes had been linked to agrarian markets. This led to the development of a complex left-wing agrarian politics, which cannot simply be classified as 'anti-feudal' or dismissed because of the failure to conform to such as ideal type. Instead, the left-wing kissan movement integrated a range of issues faced by agrarian producers, including revenue, debt, crop shares, and market failure, as critical issues within socialist agrarian struggles. Moreover, the role played by migrant Punjabis associated with the Ghadar networks who became key KKP and PKS leaders and cadres, has also deprovincialized narratives of localisation around peasant movements in South Asia, and places them within the global history of anti-imperialist political practice, rather than spaces of subaltern politics.

These observations have important implications for study of rural movements in South Asia and beyond. When studying agrarian struggles, it is important to pay attention to the actors involved and their place in differentiated rural worlds. In the context of Punjab in the colonial world, there are several actors that are important participants in the kissan movement, including agrarian colonists, returning migrants, pre-colonial agrarian cultivators, and sharecropping

tenants. Moreover, the kissan versus zamindar politics binary, which has briefly been reflected on, shows that agrarian struggles are fraught and often fragmented spaces, which involved contestations around which vision will be hegemonic. While this chapter has focused on framing left-wing kissan politics in Punjab, it would be important for future researchers to examine how the kissan vs. zamindar binary has developed in agrarian politics in the province. The decision by large landowner organisers to start organising around the kissan slogan is certainly something to keen at the back of our mind when we examine the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad in chapter 5, where large commercial farmers were able to form a cross class alliance with small to medium scale cultivators in West Punjab in the 2010s. Moreover, the 2020 Samyukt Kissan Morcha in Dehli, which lasted for a full year, has allowed us to recognise that left-wing kissan struggles in the colonial period, which were consistently referenced on stage, in the morchas, and in public discourse, are very much part of a living legacy.

Chapter 3

Stagnation in the 1950s, a Capitalist Transition in the 1960s?

Technological Change, Agrarian Growth and Peasant Differentiation in West Punjab before and during the Green Revolution

West Punjab saw a massive surge in productivity in farming in the 1960s. From having been a net grain importer in the 1950s, it was able to enjoy bumper crops of the same by the late 1960s. The surplus crops were achieved thanks to a combination of green revolution technologies, including tractors, tubewells, HYVs, fertilisers, pesticides and electrification across villages in West Punjab. Combined with agrarian reform around land, tenancy, and prices, as well as a new wave of agrarian colonization, the 'Green Revolution' as it was "ex post-facto" (Alavi, 1976, p. 318) dubbed came to be celebrated as the triumph of newly decolonised post-colonial states across the Global South. Dominant and state narratives (Burki 1976) celebrated the Green Revolutions for bringing prosperity to the countryside and having a levelling effect on the chasm that separated traditional landed elites from the peasantry through the spread of capitalist relations of production. On the other hand, Marxist scholars remained wary of this rosy picture of the changes being wrought and began to dig deeper into how agricultural development had (or had not) transformed the agrarian structure of South Asia.

The Green Revolution occupies a pivotal place within Marxist scholarship on agrarian South Asia, especially Punjab, inviting widespread analysis and studies as it arguably constituted the single largest transformation of the countryside since the canal colonisation of the region in 1880s colonial India. Focused on questions of agrarian relations including labour, productivity, and mechanisation, the key concern that occupied scholars was whether the transformations of the Green Revolution constituted a capitalist agrarian transition. Under the

influence of the modes of production debate, most key scholars answered in the negative, proposing a number of alternate theses, including the existence instead of a 'feudal', 'semi-feudal' or 'colonial' mode of production. Specifically, influential scholars such as Hamza Alavi (1972), Jairus Banaji (1975, 1976), Utsa Patnaik (1972, 1990), and Mahmood Hassan Khan (1979, 1983a, 1983b) argued that there was little change in relations of agrarian labour and tenancy, a continuity with the feudal past that testified that the development of a capitalist mode of production in agriculture had been stunted.

However, due to this focus on reading continuities in agrarian relations as narrow determinants of the lack of capitalist development, the literature on agrarian transition and modes of production failed to provide an adequate theory of capital in South Asia's agrarian relations. This came down to three key problems. First, despite an attempt to produce a theory of agrarian change free from the trappings of the so-called classical agrarian transitions, the likes of Alavi, Banaji and Patnaik stuck to the core beliefs around the resolution of the agrarian question within national borders, and the development of free wage labour as a precondition for capitalism. Second, this body of literature fails to adequately distinguish pre-capitalist relations of production from those specifically generated in the colonial period, leading to an almost interchangeable deployment of the two. Third, the literature is unable to account for the place of extra-economic force *within* capitalist relations, instead insisting that agrarian relations that embodied this constituted a separate 'mode of production' altogether. These limitations mean, to use a Banaji (1975) quote which will be repeated later, there was "no basis within the limits of [these] forced abstraction for deducing the evolution of capitalist relations" (p. 1892). As recent scholarship by Shahram Azhar (2016), as well as neoinstitutionalist scholarship shows, research on rural Pakistan continues to reproduce these ideas of structural determinism, which posit that the resilience of pre-capitalist feudal agrarian relations continues to stunt agricultural development in the region.

Pushing back against the determinism that accompanies the modes of production and agrarian transition literature, this chapter argues that feudal, colonial or mixed mode of production frameworks inadequately capture the uneven processes of how capital reshaped the relations of production and exchange in the countryside. Instead, it argues that processes of agrarian change in rural West Punjab should be understood as dynamics of peasant differentiation driven by the contradiction between reproduction and accumulation, as well as uneven development shaped by the deepening of existing capitalist relations. It shows that rather than distilling rural society into capitalist farmers and waged agricultural labour, capital blurs the boundaries between owner-cultivator, tenant, landlord, capitalist farmer and agricultural worker. This results in a process of peasant differentiation that expands the development of owner-cum-tenants, tenants-cum-captive labour and owner-cum-agricultural worker. Moreover, processes of agricultural growth which took several forms, including new agrarian frontiers, mechanisation, chemical inputs, changing on-farm labour processes, and capital reinvestment, created an uneven capitalist development across different classes and rural geographies. These changes in agrarian political economy and emergence of new forms of peasant differentiation were also reflected in the mobilizational practices and organising forms of the agrarian movements in this period, which I discuss in detail in chapter 4. This chapter will try to address what a Marxist agrarian political economy of the 1950s and 1960s can look like without the teleological limitations of the modes of production and agrarian transition literatures.

The chapter will first look at the existing literature on agrarian change in Pakistan and South Asia during the developmental period. Engaging with the modes of production debate, and arguments around bi-furcated rural economies, it will show how the Marxist political economists in this period built their understanding of the development of capitalist agriculture on flawed understandings of the impact of capital accumulation on farm processes and labour

relations in the countryside. The insistence on the necessary development of wage labour in agrarian relations constrained their ability to theorise how capital accumulation is reshaping the countryside, and how different classes of agrarian producers actively engaged and were reshaped by processes of accumulation and reproduction. It will then move to a discussion of Joshi (1974) and Azhar's (2016) arguments that posit that processes of stagnation and change in West Punjab's agriculture are rooted in landlord-led agrarian reform and transformation. It will argue that this view only provides a limited picture of the actual processes taking place in the 1950s and 1960s which included mass rural reconstruction and a differentiated adoption of agricultural technologies across agrarian classes. In the last section, I expand on my own reading of the political economy of the Green Revolution period, which focuses on the uneven impact of deepening capitalist relations in the countryside as seen in processes of peasant differentiation in West Punjab. While Akmal Hussain (1980) traces the emergence of a capitalist class of agrarian producers in West Punjab, I draw on this work to argue that it allows us to trace the development and impact of capital-intensive farming *across* the agrarian class formation. In doing so, the chapter builds on existing Marxist literature and approaches to agrarian change and offers correctives to the ongoing challenges of theorising how capital reshaped rural South Asia in the developmental period.

Section 1: Agrarian Transitions in the Developmental Period

Conducted in the early decades following independence, major debates took place on how to break South Asian agriculture out of the shackles of both colonialism and its pre-capitalist path. These debates on feudalism,[33] modes of production,[34] formal subsumption, and

[33] For more reading on the discussion on whether there was feudalism in Indian history, see: Mukhia, H. (1999). *The Feudalism Debate*. Manohar: New Delhi.

[34] For a more detailed, but not exhaustive, review of the modes of production debate, see: Patnaik, U. (1990). *Agrarian relations and accumulation: Modes of production debate in India.* Sameeksha Trust.

the development of capitalist agriculture, all asked: what is the nature of agriculture in South Asia in the aftermath of the rapid changes taking place in this period? In Pakistan, it was the journal of the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) that became an importance space where political economists published research and debated the socio-economic implications of agrarian change in Pakistan between the 1960s to 1980s. Hugely informative in opening new frontiers of research on rural Punjab, PIDE and its affiliated scholars were concerned with the question of whether a capitalist transition had taken place in Pakistan's agrarian world.

Delivering a series of lectures at PIDE in 1985, Mahmood Hassan Khan (1985) argued that "three basic agrarian systems…*co-exist* in Pakistan, namely the 'feudal', the 'peasant,' and the burgeoning 'capitalist' system" (p. 16). Detailing his argument, Khan (1983B) argued that the "process of class differentiation under way in the agricultural sector is a manifestation of capitalist development, created by market forces and technology, and supported by public policy" (p. 130). Thus, for Khan, the "agrarian transition in Pakistan is reflected by the disintegration of the peasant (family farms) and feudal (landlord-sharecropper) systems" (p. 130). However, in the same lecture, Khan continued to insist on the 'bifurcated' nature of Pakistan's rural economy, which remained separated into capitalist and pre-capitalist components (Khan, 1983B p. 67). Thus, Khan articulated a dual economy thesis, where the capitalist and precapitalist modes of production were competing for a place in the future. Noting that the development of capitalist farming in Punjab was shaped by land resumption, i.e. landlords taking back land leased to sharecroppers for self-cultivation, Khan (1983B) argued that 27 percent of rural households in the 1970s were now capitalist (p. 134). This led to the development of an agrarian structure with five agrarian classes: landlords, capitalist

farmers,[35] family farmers or middle peasants, sharecroppers, and wage workers, which were defined by both considering land ownership and the nature of production relations (Khan, 1985, p. 11).

At the same time as capitalist farming was expanding, Khan (1983B) argued that the peasant and feudal systems were proving to be resilient. In otherwise capitalising farms, the use of sharecroppers to maintain the pool of attached labour was extending the life of the feudal system (Khan, 1983B, p. 154), while the small peasantry was also continuing to survive and, in some cases, managed to increase their landholdings due to migrant labour remittances (Khan, 1983B, p. 155). The same two observations, in fact, create a problem for Khan's analysis. Rather than suggesting a bifurcated agrarian economy, maintaining sharecroppers for labour on farms adopting capital intensive farming and small peasant reproduction and expansion based on migrant labour remittances suggest that the commodification of relations of production and exchange was re-shaping both sets of agrarian relations. Moreover, these changes showed how differentiated agrarian producers were changing their relationship to the imperatives of reproduction and accumulation mediated through the market. Differing from Khan on the idea of a bifurcated economy, Alavi (1976) instead proposed the existence of an expanded feudal mode of production, which made it difficult to differentiate capitalist farmers from feudal landlords (p. 338). For Alavi (1976), the changes in agrarian structure during the period of mechanisation were not a "transitional" state, but rather constituted a "multiplex mode of production" (p. 342). Noting that "until mechanized farming was introduced, all landowners who owned more than 20 or 25 acres employed sharecroppers", Alavi argued that the "feudal mode of production [was to be] found not only on lands of those who own hundreds of acres but also on the lands of large numbers of landowners who own as little as 20 or 25

[35] Khan uses this category interchangeably with "rich peasants" and "capitalist farmers" (Khan, 1985, p. 11). For Khan, capitalist holdings range between 12.5 and 50 acres of land under cultivation.

acres" (p. 342). Alavi argued that there was no "*structural* criterion differentiating the interests" of big and small farmers to separate them into "separate classes" (p. 342). This meant that "for the bulk of the land affected by mechanisations, namely 86.5 percent, *both* modes of production, the feudal mode of sharecropping and capitalist mode of mechanized cultivation by hired labour, are intertwined [and]… the capitalist component of the enterprise is not self-sufficient and viable without the feudal component" (Alavi, 1976, p. 342).

While both Khan and Alavi understood the transformations taking place in the agrarian structure of West Punjab and broader West Pakistan, both were limited by the trappings of the modes of production debate and agrarian transitions literature in South Asia. Alavi's (1976) argument that capitalist farmers and large landlords do not constitute separate classes rests on the assumption that "their interests do not conflict" on matters of public policies and class relationships in rural society" (p. 340). This is a position that will be challenged in the chapter 3, which shows how Punjab's kissan movements constituted a rural class alliance, made up of small to medium scale farmers who had been integrated into capitalist relations against so-called feudal landholdings, but took a more complex position towards capitalist developments in agriculture. Khan and Alavi's analysis rests on different rural classes operating without a relationship to each other, rather than attempting to understand agrarian transformations in totality. Moreover, the combined and dual modes of production argument rests on the failure to push back harder against Western agrarian transition narratives, which was one of the challenges that faced those writing on South Asian agriculture in the 1970s and 1980s.

Problems of Theorising Capital in Agrarian South Asia:

The difficulties in theorising agrarian change in South Asia in this period cut across the scholarship. Debates on feudalism,[36] modes of production,[37] formal subsumption[38], and the development of capitalist agriculture, all asked: what is the nature of agriculture in South Asia in the aftermath of the rapid changes taking place in this period? Shaped by a desire to confront the legacy of colonialism vis a vis the region's agriculture, Utsa Patnaik (1990) articulates that the literature was a result of:

> …dual dissatisfaction…first, with the idea that the mechanisms and trajectory of development of an ex-colonial country like India were in their essentials the same as those for western capitalist countries; and secondly, with the idea that India was part of a world capitalist 'periphery,' a mere appendage integrated through exchange, with the western world.[39] (p. 2)

This articulation confirms the desire for those seeking to explain processes of agrarian transformation that were taking place in South Asia to be unfettered by the classical agrarian transition and World Systems approaches within Marxist theory, which were deemed inadequate and deterministic in explaining the dynamics of agrarian change in the region. However, this attempt to develop a South Asianist theory of agrarian change in the 20th century, came up against two problems: first, it retained the basic assumptions of the Western/ Eurocentric agrarian transition narrative, i.e that the agrarian question was resolved within national borders through the development of the capitalist farmer-wage labour relationship.

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[36] For more reading on the discussion on whether there was feudalism in Indian history, see: Mukhia, H. (1999). *The feudalism debate*. Manohar: New Delhi.

[37] For a more detailed, but not exhaustive, review of the modes of production debate, see: Patnaik, U. (1990). *Agrarian relations and accumulation: Modes of production debate in India.* Sameeksha Trust.

[38] Formal subsumption is the process through which capital takes command of labour processes that exist outside the capital-wage labour relation.

[39] Here in particular the reference is to the debate between Andre Gunder Frank and Ernesto Laclau about feudalism and capitalism in Latin America. Where Frank argues against the use of the category of feudalism and argues in favour of integration within world capitalism, Laclau posits a dual mode of production thesis, with feudalism and capitalism operating together. See: Frank, A. G. (1967). The Myth of Feudalism. In *Capitalism and underdevelopment in Latin America*. Monthly Review Press; Laclau, E. (1967). Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America. *New Left Review*.

Second, this work overemphasised the resilience of pre-capitalist and colonial relations of production in South Asian agriculture, as well as confused the relationship between the two, often mistaking one for the other.

One of the key scholars of agrarian transitions, T. J. Byres (1986) provides the classical template of the capitalist transition in agriculture which involves "the capitalist farmer/wage labourer relationship…[becoming] dominant in the countryside" (p. 9). This transition was predicated on forging "a new relationship, between capitalist manufacturing industry and capitalist agriculture, mediated by the market" (T. J. Byres, 1986, p. 18). Even though Byres himself catalogued different paths to agrarian transition, the end goal was to achieve the dominance of capital over labour and industry and the market over agriculture. While accepting that the development of a "fully formed, dominant capitalist agriculture" without "successful capitalist industrialization, and consequent capitalist transformation, of the social formation" (Byres, 1986, p. 18), Byres argued that "if...the agrarian question is so resolved…there ceases to be an agrarian question with any serious implications" (p. 18). In doing so, Byres transformed the agrarian question of capital from how capital takes control of agriculture to the question of how agriculture contributes to industrialisation, a much narrower view which found resonance within South Asianist scholarship on agrarian change in the developmental period.

The tension in Byres' (1986) search for the pure capitalist farmer and free labourer is echoed in the Modes of Production debates between key South Asian scholars, including Banaji, Alavi and Patnaik. While all three agreed that the existence of wage labour did not prove the existence of agrarian capitalism, it did constitute a "necessary…condition for a capitalist mode of production [in agriculture]" (Banaji, 1975, p. 1888). Two factors were key in answering the question: did extra economic force exist? Was the enterprise in which the said labour was employed capitalist? (Banaji, 1975, p. 1888) Reflecting on the 1931 Census of India

which showed that around 31.2 percent of the agrarian population was wage labour, Patnaik (1972) argued that while wage labour had existed in India for a long time:

> …production with farm servants and labourers represented a certain form of exploitation alongside the other forms (rent exploitation, usury) typical of a decaying precapitalist mode; but this form continued to appropriate surplus labour on the basis of the old mode, it was a form which in itself did not imply a change of that mode into the capitalist mode. (A-148)

The presence of extra-economic controls meant that it could not be defined as 'free labour'. Banaji (1975) argued that it was important to pay attention to "the character of the enterprise that utilizes such ['free'] labour", which means that the "question…boils down to…whether or not they were…subject to the domination of capital in one of its determinate forms" (p. 1888-1889). While ostensibly not unreasonable propositions to those familiar with theories of capitalist development, Alavi (1975) recognized a problem: "if the situation of the rural wage labourer is as Patnaik describes it, how does he become a 'free wage labourer' when he goes to work for a capitalist farmer, or, as is more likely when his master changes over to 'capitalist' methods of farming? Was he unfree before? Is he anymore free now?" (Alavi, 1975, p. 1247)

It was clear to Alavi that the agrarian structure was undergoing a process of transformation and arguing that the absence of unfettered free labour in agriculture presented insufficient grounds for arguing that agrarian relations in the region were semi-feudal. Agreeing that the changes in agrarian structure in South Asia did not map onto the classical agrarian transition, Alavi and Banaji articulated the colonial mode of production thesis. Rejecting the feudal mode of production thesis (Banaji, 1972, p. 2498), Alavi (1975) articulated that feudalism and rural 'capitalism' in India could only be understood "in the context of the worldwide structure of Imperialism into which it is articulated" (p. 1235). Banaji, in his 1972

essay, concurred with Alavi, arguing that "colonialism must be understood as its own mode of production, neither feudal nor capitalist though 'resembling' both at different levels" (Banaji, 1972, p. 2499). The development of agriculture in the colonies had its own specificity, including the use of forced labour, the reduction of the productivity of the peasantry, and the installation of semi-feudal landed property (Banaji, 1972, p. 2499). The result was that "the colonial modes of production transmitted to the colonies the pressures of the accumulation process in the metropolis without unleashing any corresponding expansion in the forces of production" (Banaji, 1972, p. 2500). Thus, the colonial mode of production thesis was born, and Banaji accused other Marxists of failing to adopt the thesis due to a "widespread tendency…to think the transition to the capitalist mode in terms of the model of the 'coexistence of modes of production'" (Banaji, 1972, p. 2500).

However, only three years later, in 1975, Banaji himself disavowed the colonial mode of production argument, arguing that there was "no basis within the limits of [t]his forced abstraction for deducing the evolution of capitalist relations [in the countryside]" (Banaji, 1975, p. 1892). Alavi (1975), himself, had admitted that "in order to prove that there has been a transition to capitalist agriculture, we restrict the terms of our definition and focus on 'relations of production' conceived narrowly" (p. 1249). And yet Alavi, Banaji, and Patnaik continued to deploy narrow definitions to characterize South Asian agriculture, and overdetermined the influence of precolonial and colonial histories. In the same essay in which he criticised the colonial mode of production thesis, Banaji (1975) argued that the "expansion of the commodity economy in the villages of India…in the late colonial period… [was] 'deformed generalised commodity production'" (p.1891). Patnaik (1990) made similar arguments in arguing that this was a "process of 'forced' commercialisation of agriculture, marked by a relative absence of transformation of the productive base and structural deformation of the economy" (p. 3). India, therefore, was "a country with a pre-capitalist mode of production, [subjugated] by a capitalist

power" (Patnaik, 1972, A-145). Imperialist exploitation had led to the flourishing of "the *anteduvian* forms of capital – trading capital, moneylending capital, land purchasing capital" (Patnaik, 1972, p. 88), thus creating a "new economic environment…constrained by inherited production relations and in particular by petty tenancy" (Patnaik, 1972, p. 3). Thus, even Patnaik remained convinced that agrarian change in South Asia was being stunted by the so-called '*anteduvian* forms of capital'.

This flawed understanding of the agrarian structure and its changing nature stems from a theoretical reliance on an ideal type of agrarian transition that necessarily leads to waged labour in the classical Marxist sense. Farshad Araghi (2009) in the *Invisible Hand, Visible Foot* argues that:

> …moving beyond the original and subsequent debates on the peasant question requires …a rejection of the deterministic, evolutionist and teleological assumptions of both the disappearance thesis…and their permanence thesis; and moving beyond the nation-state and the home-market as the unit of analysis. (p. 118)

The insistence of Patnaik and Alavi on a stalled capitalist transition in agriculture in South Asia continues the legacy of these teleologies, despite presenting itself as an attempt to break away from the so-called Western theory of agrarian transition. The rationale for the stunted development thesis is the failure to develop generalised wage labour for Patnaik, while it is the intermeshing of the feudal and capitalist class of farmers for Alavi. A more fruitful approach would take as its starting point Marx's insight via Banaji (1975), that "capital subordinates labour on the basis of the technical conditions in which it historically finds it" (p. 1891), thus implying that the labour relations in capitalist agriculture need not be consistent with the textbook understanding of free wage labour. All of them understood that their frameworks were struggling to explain the pattern of agrarian change in the region where high

agrarian growth was driven by mechanisation, productivity increases and peasant differentiation.

The argument that Punjab's agriculture has remained stagnant has remained hard to shake off and found new currency amongst neo-institutionalist policymakers. In an article written for the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Malik et. al. (2016) argue that "Pakistan's agriculture is changing while, at the same time, remaining in somewhat of a state of stasis" (p. 69). The blame is put on the British allocation of "large tracts of agricultural land in Punjab and surrounding areas" to elites, which "set the pattern for Pakistan" (Malik et. al., 2016, p. 62). Such a narrative of an unchanging space dominated by large landlords continues to be furnished to justify the need for intervention, which is no longer framed in terms of land reform, but rather the introduction of "new productivity-enhancing technologies" and removing the "high transaction costs found in local land markets or the political power issues that allow large landowners to protect their landholdings" (Malik et. al., 2016, p. 70). This is significant, because it forms the backbone of the rationale for the World Bank's interventions since the early 2000s in 'reforming' the land rights regime in Punjab.[40] These contemporary implications of reading West Punjab's agrarian transition as stunted are significant reasons for why it is important to revisit the story of agrarian change in the 1950s and 1960s. The discussion shall show that the development of capitalist relations in agriculture was a continuous and uneven process, which changed production and exchange relations across rural classes, instead of producing the ideal-type of a capitalist farmer-wage labour relationship.

[40] World Bank. (2017). *In Pakistan and beyond, land records get a digital upgrade.* https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/09/20/in-pakistan-and-beyond-land-records-get-a-digital-upgrade

Section 2: Agrarian Change in West Punjab: from 'Stagnation' to 'Growth'

While the preceding discussion of Alavi, Banaji, Khan and Patnaik sketches the broad debates in South Asianist scholarship on the mode of production in relation to agrarian change, in this section, I interrogate Byres's (1986) suggestion of a 'landlord-led' agrarian transition in Pakistan. Byres remark draws on an essay by Communist Party of India (CPI) intellectual P.C. Joshi (1974) that compares the impact of land reform in the postcolonial period on the agrarian structure of East and West Punjab. In contrast to a 'peasant route' in East Punjab, Byres (1986) postulates that "a form of the Prussian path may have been traversed in Pakistan, in the wake of 'new technology'" (p. 41). The Prussian path, often also called the 'Agrarian Transition from Above,' notably suggests a landlord-led transition to agrarian capitalism, which implies a single class of large landowners led the development of capitalist agriculture by adopting new technologies. In a similar vein, recent work by Shahram Azhar (2016) supports the distinction between a 'landlord-led' transition in West Punjab versus a 'peasant-led' transition in East Punjab by comparing crop yields and productivity. Azhar argues that the lack of peasant-led land reform in West Punjab leads to the region doing 'worse' in terms of crop yields, while East Punjab outperforms its Pakistani counterpart because land reform 'from below' led to higher productivity. However, a closer reading of Azhar and Joshi suggest a differentiated and uneven expansion of agrarian capitalism across rural classes in West Punjab, which included small and mid-scale cultivators, rather than a simple landlord-led agrarian transition. This shows that the adoption of capital-intensive agriculture in the 1960s was a process that involved both confluence and conflict among differentiated rural classes.

Talking about West Punjab, Joshi (1974) argues that "technological forces have appeared…as a much more powerful agent of agrarian change than land reform" (p. 343). The result has been "a re-adaptation of agrarian relations in areas exposed to them", where "the

incipient trends of transformation of feudalistic into commercial landlords have been accelerated" (Joshi, 1974, p. 343). Similar to Alavi and Khan's discussion elucidated earlier, the argument about landlord-led adoption of technologies runs into difficulties when confronted with the land distribution dynamics in West Punjab, which suggest the predominance of small to medium-sized landholdings, as Table 12 shows, around 95 percent of agrarian producers owned under 25 acres of land in 1950, with the number growing slightly to 96 percent in 1971. Cultivators owning 25 to 100 acres, itself a rather large range, increased marginally from 3.5 percent to 4 percent. While over 100 acre landholding reduced from 0.7 to 0.5 percent in this period. This landholding data itself is inconsistent with the notion that large landowners dominated West Punjab's agrarian relations before and after the Green Revolution. These land distribution patterns are inconsistent with an argument in favour of a landlord-led capitalist transition.

Table 12. Change in Distribution of Land Ownership in West Punjab, 1950 to 1971

Size of Holdings	Percent of land	
	1950	1971
5 or less acres	66.3	60.4
5-25 acres	28.9	35.6
25-100 acres	4.1	3.5
Over 100 acres	0.7	0.5
Over 500 acres	0.1	n/a
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

SOURCE: Khan, M.H., 1983c, Table 2, pg. 139

This data raises significant questions about the landlord-led vs. peasant-led transition argument which has been used to compare West Punjab with East Punjab. This has been articulated most clearly in the work of Byres (1986) and Joshi (1974). Talking about India,

Byres (1986) argued “the successful transformation of agriculture is limited to the northwest (Punjab, Haryana, western Utter Pradesh) … [which] has been a peasant route: a form of ‘capitalism from below’” (p. 41) where small to mid-scale producers led the transition to capitalist agriculture. Given the large presence of small to mid-scale producers in West Punjab, any landlord-led transition thesis would need to explain the failure of these classes of producers to adopt more capital-intensive agriculture. Alavi and Khan argue, instead, that land resumption and capital intensification was being carried out by farmers with landholdings of around 25 acres. In fact, Joshi (1974) himself complicates his argument later in the essay, by arguing that “two distinct agrarian patterns can be identified, one characterised by the growing dominance of the large peasant cultivator, part-owner and part-tenant, and the other characterised by the continuing dominance of the big landlords in control of vast tracts of land and getting these cultivated either through hired labour and/or through lease arrangements of various types” (p. 348). Moreover, Joshi claims that “new technology has also accentuated the economic differentiation of the peasantry into prosperous peasants on the one hand and the mass of the poor peasants on the other” (p. 343). Joshi’s argument, in fact, suggests a differential response by three classes to the technological changes: rich peasants becoming part owner, part tenants; landlords hiring labour and dispossessing sharecroppers to expand self-cultivated lands; and small peasants losing out. Thus, a closer reading of Joshi’s work suggests the expansion of capital had an uneven and differentiated impact across rural classes in West Punjab.

Azhar’s (2016) thesis argues that East Punjab outperformed West Punjab in agricultural growth after the Green Revolution on account of differences in institutional factors namely democratic institutions, rural movements, and regional state autonomy and their ability to carry out successful agrarian reform (p. 160). Limited by its focus on yields, Azhar’s thesis makes several conceptual and historical errors, and the actual data presented does not yield the

promised conclusion. Comparing the regions across the colonial and postcolonial periods, Azhar identifies two key junctures: integration in the global supply chain of cotton in the colonial period and land reform in the postcolonial period (p. ix). However, when discussing the colonial period, Azhar is unable to explain why "*despite* a regressive social structure," the zamindari districts versus non-zamindari districts produced a 31-38 percent higher yield (p. 155). Concentrated in West Punjab, the zamindari districts had higher infrastructural development, more extractive political and economic institutions, and a more unequal economic distribution in these districts, however, the fact that they continued to do better on yields suggests that the so-called "regressive social structure" was not a significant influence on agrarian productivity (Azhar, 2016, p. 146). Second, even in the Green Revolution period, Azhar's own data shows that even though the difference in yields may have narrowed, West Punjab continues to outperform East Punjab with a 22 percent higher yield in wheat (p. 146). In fact, rather than doing worse, West Punjab was doing better than East Punjab in both the colonial and Green Revolution period.

The problem lies with Azhar's (2016) assumptions about two key variables: democratic institutions and rural movements. First, Azhar argues that West Punjab's state structure came to be dominated by an "alliance of 'salariat,' 'landlord,' and 'civil-military bureaucracy,' while East Punjab was captured by a coalition of rich and middle peasants in the Indian state of Punjab, which captured power and abolished tenancy" (p. 160). The insight draws on Hamza Alavi's thesis about the 'salariat',[41] which postulated that the state bureaucracy and professional classes controlled policy in Pakistan in the early postcolonial period owing to an 'overdeveloped' state[42] in relation to society. Putting aside Alavi's own theoretical

[41] See: Alavi, H. (1988). Nationhood and nationalities in Pakistan. *Economic and Political Weekly 24*(27), 1527-1534.
[42] See: Alavi, H. (1972). The state in postcolonial societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh. *New Left Review.* I/47 https://newleftreview.org/issues/i74/articles/hamza-alavi-the-state-in-post-colonial-societies-pakistan-and-bangladesh

eclecticism,[43] the salariat thesis hardly applied to the 1970s,[44] when left-wing political parties with agrarian populist agendas were elected to power in Pakistan. In fact, land reform was official state doctrine in both East and West Punjab in this period, even though the outcomes were different. Moreover, Azhar (2016) argues that East Punjab had strong kissan movements in the 1950s around the allocation of evacuee property for migrant farmers and were able to shape the direction of agrarian policy. In contrast, he argues West Punjab's kissan movements were banned early on and its "experience of peasant struggles…[was] negligible" (Azhar, 2016, p. 170). Such a conclusion perhaps stems from a broader left-wing pessimism amongst Pakistani Marxists, where there is a tendency to dismiss the actual histories of left-wing organising for romantic ideas of what they should have looked like. In fact, West Punjab's kissan movements in the 1950s and 1960s also shaped the resettlement of refugee farmers as well as land and tenancy reform in the 1950s, before contributing to and critiquing agrarian policy and the dynamics of agrarian change in the 1960s, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.

This review of Byres, Joshi and Azhar shows that ideas of a landlord-led agrarian transition that inhibited agrarian growth in West Punjab is insufficient to explain how capital reshaped agrarian relations in West Punjab in this period. This work draws on the binary between landlord and peasant to make arguments about the nature of agrarian transition, rather than studying the relations among and within differentiated agrarian classes and their interaction with market forces. While comparative work between the once administratively integrated regions is important, the differences in state and class formations across differentiated geographies within them, and the complex negotiations by rural movements,

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[43] While not the place for a full review of Alavi's legacy, it is not difficult to see how his theory of overdeveloped state clashes both with his work on agrarian change in South Asia explored in this chapter and his ideas of peasant movements explored in the chapter 4.

[44] For engagements with Alavi's theory of state, see: Akhtar, A. S. (2018) *The politics of common sense: State, society and culture in Pakistan.* Cambridge University Press; Azeem, M. (2020). The state as a political practice: Pakistan's postcolonial state beyond dictatorship and Islam. *Third World Quarterly 41*(10), 1670-1686.

require closer attention. The chapter argues that it is important to pay attention to how differentiated rural classes responded to changing economic and political imperatives, rather than accepting a simple narrative of a landlord or even peasant-led agrarian transition.

A Stagnant Agrarian Structure? Countering 'Feudal' Readings of 1950s West Punjab

The 1950s is considered a period of stagnating agrarian growth with Pakistan importing grains and West Punjab's agricultural output showing barely one percent growth. This has often been explained to be a result of the pre-capitalist agrarian structure typical of the feudal mode of production coupled with the state's failure to enact serious land redistribution. However, I shall show how it was not the continuation of the feudal or colonial modes of production which stagnated agriculture in the 1950s, but in fact the low agricultural growth can be explained by the material conditions generated by the displacements of Partition, and the nascent postcolonial state choosing policies that prioritised the development of industry by expropriating agrarian surplus. While agrarian social relations and the nature of peasant differentiation in West Punjab are important, this section will show how two other dynamics explain the low agricultural growth in the 1950s: mass rural resettlement in the aftermath of the Partition and the transfer of surplus from agriculture to industry.

Rather than presenting a picture of stagnation, West Punjab was in fact undergoing serious change in its agrarian structure in the 1950s. After the forced dispossession of millions of Hindu and Sikh farmers and tenants in 1947, the agricultural lands left by them were resettled by a Muslim peasantry who came in the millions from East Punjab.[45] The impact of this

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[45] For studies on the impact of partition on rural settlement in East Punjab, see: Kudaisya G. (1995). The demographic upheaval of partition: Refugees and agricultural resettlement in India, 1947-67. *South Asia 18*, 73-94; Thandi, S. S. (2004). The unidentical Punjab twins: Some explanations of comparative agricultural performance since partition. In I. Talbot & T. Shinder (Eds.), *People on the move, Punjabi colonial and post colonial migration* (p. 298-324). Karachi.

process, which Alavi (1976) called "land reform in reverse" (p. 320), on West Punjab's agrarian structure has only begun to be studied recently. Farmers who owned almost six million acres of cultivated land in West Punjab left the province and moved to East Punjab. Around 2.7 million acres of the land had been self-cultivated by non-Muslim farmers, while the rest was occupied by Muslim tenants (Chattha, 2016, p. 16). Official government surveys claimed that by 1948, "about 3.95 million refugees had been dispersed on 3.39 million acres of evacuees' land in West Punjab" (Chattha, 2016, p. 16). Not surprisingly, given the sheer scale of the rural upheaval, Chattha notes that "while refugee cultivators were quickly dispersed to villages, in actuality the process of settlement was much more difficult and lasted much longer" (p. 16).

This mass dispossession presented both the state and landless agricultural classes in West Punjab the opportunity to fast-track land reform. Left-wing politicians, such as Mian Iftikharuddin[46] and Masood Khadarposh, as well as the left-wing kissan movement began to push for land reform. However, this agenda was thwarted for several reasons. The state changed its policy of allocating agricultural land to the migrant kissans from East Punjab based on family size and allowed migrants to claim as much agricultural land as they asked for if they could produce two witnesses who could verify their landholdings before they migrated. There were winners and losers amongst the new settlers as processes of dispossession went along with the resettlement.[47] Moreover, many of those who took up agricultural lands in West Punjab had little experience of cultivation, and included artisans, shopkeepers, and merchants, and had to learn the ropes (Iob, 2013, p. 117). Moreover, these settler farmers began to build new rural infrastructures from below, including farming cooperative societies, which "by the early 1950s…registered an overall membership of 1,100,000, out of whom nearly 700,000

[46] For more on Mian Iftikharuddin, see: Raza, A. (2017). The illusory promise of freedom: Mian Iftikharuddin and the movement for Pakistan. In A. Qasmi (Ed.), *Muslims against the Muslim League: Critiques of the Idea of Pakistan* (p. 167-189). Cambridge University Press.

[47] Read Chattha (2016) for more detail.

were refugees" (Iob, 2013, p. 118), which had an active interest in improving farming techniques and improving their livelihoods.

The second key factor that explains the low level of growth was the transfer of agrarian surplus to industry. This transfer was pushed through by the state by reorienting mechanisms which were designed to transfer agrarian surplus to the metropole in the colonial period to industrial development within the new nation-state.[48] The government prioritised industrialisation in the first half of the 1950s. Large-scale manufacturing grew by 23.5 percent per year in 1950-55, while agricultural growth remained at around 1.3 percent (Hussain, 1980, p. 12). However, industrial growth began to slow down sharply in the late 1950s in the face of an acute balance of payments crisis and food shortages caused by the "stagnation of raw material exports" (Hussain, 1980, p. 13), with industrial growth falling to 9.3 percent (Hussain, 1980, p. 12). Combined with a "stagnant agriculture", industry began to experience severe input shortages (Hussain, 1980, p. 12). Situated in this context, the government began to transfer agrarian surplus to industry using two methods: imposing high taxes on raw jute and raw cotton exports and compulsory procurement of food grains below market price (Hussain, 1980, p. 12). The imposition of exchange controls, Hussain notes, "not only affected the rate of industrial growth (by raising industrial profits)…but also served to transfer agricultural surplus into the hands of industrial capitalists" (p. 18). Hussain estimates the surplus transfer at around US $300 million per year in the 1950s, which reduced to around $185 million per year in the 1960s (p. 23-24). Even the latter figure constituted around "15 percent of the gross value of agricultural output" (p. 24). The result of the surplus transfer policy was "an absolute decline in rural real per capita income in the period 1949-50 to 1959-60" (Hussain, 1980, p. 24). The high surplus transfer from agriculture to industry was, therefore, acting as a second

[48] See: Patnaik, U. (2011). *The agrarian question in the neoliberal era: Primitive accumulation and the peasantry.* Pambazuka Press: Dar es Salam.

depressor for agrarian growth in West Punjab. The 1960s broke away from this decade of low growth which was a product of the massive agrarian resettlement and the transfer of agrarian surplus to industry. Combined with shifts in the agrarian class structure and state policy on agriculture, the agrarian growth of the 1960s continues patterns of capitals reshaping of agrarian relations in West Punjab, rather than constituting a rupture from a precapitalist mode of production through the adoption of the Green Revolution. Thus, rather than the initiating a new capitalist mode of production in Punjab's agriculture, the widespread changes in productivity and the rural class structure during the Green Revolution period can be explained through the interaction between state policy and farmer-led changes to on-farm processes.

Agrarian Political Economy of 1960s West Punjab: The Connected Role of On-Farm Changes and State Policy

The most critical factor in shaping the Green Revolution were changes in farming practices taking place in the early 1960s. This section will show how the adoption of tubewells, seed experimentation and use of chemical inputs by farmers on their own initiative prepared them for the adoption of HYVs in the latter half of the decade. This move, from the 'ground up,' by farmers was reinforced through state policy around rural electrification, seed research, the installation of public tubewells and the settling of new agrarian colonies. This shows that the agricultural growth was not the result of a sudden rupture in agrarian relations but had already been in the formative phase due to on farm 'modernisation' practices. This runs counter to explanations by Azhar, Alavi and Khan discussed earlier, that frame changes in agrarian political economy through static class contradictions pitching landlord against peasant, which sets up a binary between feudal and capitalist agriculture. Thus, rather than viewing the Green Revolution as a sharp departure from preceding colonial or feudal mode of production in

agriculture, I argue that the Green Revolution was rooted in changes to the policies of the state and farming practices across differentiated agrarian classes respectively.

As shown in the previous section, the agricultural growth in the 1950 can be explained by the resettlement of migrant farmers, low agricultural export prices, and the surplus transfer from agriculture to industry. By the late 1950s, falling industrial growth, the high cost of importing food grains, and simmering rural dissent forced a policy shift at the helm of the state. The government reduced export taxes on agricultural products and controls on food grain prices (Hussain, 1980, p. 19). Combined with the completion of the resettlement process of refugee farmers around the same period, the adoption of tubewells, mechanisation, and the expansion of new agrarian frontiers began to shape peasant differentiation within the agrarian political economy of West Punjab. Often presented as a process led solely by the state and the transnational influence on Pakistan's agrarian policies, we shall see how differentiated and uneven processes of capital intensification at the farm level in the early 1960s were also crucial in shaping the Green Revolution. By focusing on shifts in farming practices on the ground, a complex picture of agrarian change emerges, one that evades the path dependency of the mode of production framework and Byre's suggestion of a landlord-led agrarian transition.

Agricultural growth in the first decade of the 1960s primarily came from increasing the cultivated area through pricing reform, the settlement of new agrarian colonies and adoption of tubewell technologies. The state played a critical role in this process by changing the incentive structure for agricultural producers. In April 1960, the state removed direct controls on the price and movement of wheat within the country and allowed private traders to distribute wheat. It reduced its role to controlling the price of wheat for both farmers and consumers. Around the same time, it reduced the export duty on cotton by one-fourth (Hussain, 1980, p. 51). Breaking the zoning controls and compulsory sale to the government legacies of the colonial state during the Second World War, the impact was immediate with wheat and cotton

output increasingly, with cotton growing at around 7.8 percent per year (Hussain, 1980, p. 52-53). This was followed by another wave of agrarian colonisation in the southern part of the Indus Basin, where new agrarian colonies were set up in the feed area of newly constructed dams and barrages. Supported by the World Bank, the new agrarian settlements added another 5.1 million acres of cultivated area by 1965, which constituted 11 percent of the total cultivated area (Hussain, 1980, p. 60). The new agrarian colonies, as well as increase in on-farm cultivated area, was responsible for 35 percent of the growth in agriculture (Hussain, 1980, p. 115).

The most crucial development in this period, however, was the adoption of private tubewells by farmers. When the state started installing public tubewells across Punjab as part of the Salinity Control and Reclamation Projects,[49] (SCARP) its objective was to control waterlogging and salinity. However, Hussain (1980) argues that the "sinking of public tubewells on a scale unprecedented in the Indus plain" had an "important effect…[in] familiarising farmers with tubewells and their profitability" (p. 62). Farmers began installing private tubewells which allowed "greater seasonal flexibility of the water supply which permitted an increase in cropping intensity and a change in the composition of output towards higher valued crops" (Hussain, 1980, p. 64). The scale of the dramatic developments only became clear in 1964 when PIDE commissioned a survey of agricultural tubewells. Lead researcher Ghulam Mohammad (1965) discovered "as many as 25,000 private tubewells" (Hussain, 1980, p. 67). Taking place outside the ambit of the state, Mohammad (1965) described it as follows:

> One of the most significant phenomena in agricultural development in Pakistan has been the installation of private tubewells by farmers…at an exceedingly fast rate... West

[49] For a more detailed reading on the waterlogging and salinity issue, as well as transnational involvement in setting up the SCARP projects, read: Mohammad, G. & Beringer, C. (1963). Water logging and salinity in West Pakistan: An analysis of the Reville report. *Pakistan Development Review 2*, 250-278.

Pakistan is likely to attain a rate of increase in agricultural production which will be unparalleled in the history of agriculture. (p. 1)

Muhammad's (1965) study argues that "the farmers who have installed tubewells are progressive farmers and probably using a higher quantity of fertiliser even before the installation of tubewells…He wants to grow more valuable crops, to apply fertiliser, and to use other modern inputs to increase his income" (p. 24). While the use of the category of 'progressive farmer' would seem to suggest that this is a separate class of farmer, it reflected a much broader spectrum which included small, middle and large-scale producers installing tubewells. Hussain (1980) estimates that farms using tubewells experience an almost 118 percent increase in the value of output (p. 64). Moreover, tubewell adoption was critical to creating the conditions for the rapid adoption of HYVs through several effects, including increased fertiliser use, increased cropping intensity, a reduced fragmentation of holdings, increased utilisation of bullock labour, an increase in the ratio of hired to family labour, as well as an increase in the total quantity of labour used (Hussain, 1980, p. 87). Moreover, they allowed middle to large-scale producers to resume lands that had previously been leased out to tenants, and in doing so, were critical to shaping the nature of uneven capitalist development in agriculture in the 1960s.

Table 13. Change in Use of Agricultural Inputs in West Punjab, 1950-1970

Year	Water (AF/Ha)	Improved Seeds (Kg/Ha)	Tubewells (Ha/Tb)	Tractors (Ha/Tractor)	Workers (Ha/worker)
1950	3.2	-	-	-	2.16
1955	3.4	-	10,215	30,389	2.10
1960	3.8	-	3,066	4,088	1.88
1965	4.0	-	481	1,290	1.66
1970	4.5	1.2	196	633	1.62

Source: Khan, M.H., 1997, Table 4

The expansion of tubewells was not only unevenly spread across rural classes, but across rural geographies. While there was strong incentive to install tubewells, the opportunity cost of installing tubewells was lower for wealthier rural classes, and geographies which had benefitted most from infrastructural development in the colonial and postcolonial periods were more suitable environments. Rather than the co-existence of feudal and capital modes of production, it was the unevenness in rural geographies that explained the agrarian transformations in this period. Alavi (1976) argues that "because tubewell development is closely related to concentration of land in large farms, the green revolution has tended not only to intensify already large disparities in wealth, but it has also widened disparities between different regions" (Alavi, p. 333). Hussain (1980) also notes an "uneven impact of tubewells on relative income between regions and various size classes of farms" (p. 111). Hussain notes that the "increase in private tubewells was concentrated in 4 districts: Gujranwala, Sialkot, Multan and Montgomery (now Sahiwal), which had 5132 out of [a total of] 6462 private tubewells in 1962" (p. 69). A major factor explaining the jump start for these districts was rural electrification, which had not taken place in other districts of Punjab yet. The state of electrification of districts, as well as existing ground water conditions, were shaping the uneven spread of private tubewells. Private tubewells continue to grow faster, and "by 1965 provided almost twice as many acre feet of irrigation as public tubewells", or almost four percent of irrigation water in the country (Hussain, 1980, p. 63). As we shall see later in chapter 6, private tubewells become a crucial node of contestation within kissan politics in the 2000s.

Table 14. Distribution of Tubewells by Size of Area Owned by Tubewell Owner in 1968

Size of Area	Number of Tubewells	Percent
No area	4,680	7
Under 13 acres	3,320	4

13-25 acres	15,240	20
26-50 acres	18,050	24
51-100 acres	14,240	19
101-200 acres	9,120	12
201-500 acres	5,550	7
501 and over	5,520	7

Source: Rashid, A. 1972. Table 5, p. 26

The adoption of new technologies, including tubewells from the early 1960s, laid the ground for the introduction of the HYVs associated with the Green Revolution after 1964. In this earlier period, farmers had already begun to test improved seeds and chemical inputs. The state itself continued to distribute 'improved' seeds, [50] which performed poorly. However, farmers' themselves planted over 3 million acres of land with locally improved seeds through farmer-to-farmer exchanges (Hussain, 1980, p. 48). The history of seed experimentation, of course, is longer and can be traced at least as far back as the colonial period.[51] The more significant difference in the early 1960s was the increased use of pesticides and fertilizers with new seeds. Hussain argues that even though these did not improve yields in this period, it familiarized farmers with the practices they would need to adopt once HYVs were introduced (p. 48).

Thus, changes to West Punjab's agrarian structure in this period were driven primarily by agricultural producers, with the state enabling on farm changes through indirect, rather than direct policies. Arguing that there were significant differences in the content of agrarian growth

[50] The working paper, Rana, M. A., Speilman, D. J., & Zaida, F. (2015). The architecture of the Pakistani seed system. A case for market-regulation dissonance. Paper presented at *International Conference of Agricultural Economists*, is a good reference to understand the development of Pakistan's seed industry. While it traces four phases after 1947, it does not focus on the seed market in the colonial period.
[51] The article by Singh, S. (1982). Agricultural technology in the Punjab under British rule 1839-1947. *Indian History Congress*, traces experiments "with Egyptian wheat, New Orleans cotton, Otacheitis sugarcane, flax, tobacco, turnips, etc" (Singh, 1982, p. 481) to the 1850s.

in the first and last half of the 1960s, Hussain (1980) demonstrates how the 1960-1965 period primarily involved increasing crop acreage, which set up the adoption of HYVs and subsequent increase in yield per acre in the 1966 to 1970 period (p. 11). These changes driven from the ground up constituted changes to irrigation methods and farm mechanisation. It is important to note that these shifts in agricultural practice only began to receive formal state support in the Third Five Year Plan (1965-1970). Thus, the fact that the "this acceleration in agricultural growth occurred during the first half of the 1960s *before* the celebrated Green Revolution", forces us to pay attention to on-farm changes and the resulting mechanisms of peasant differentiation on the ground (Hussain, 1980, p. 11).

By the time of the Third Five Year Plan (1965-1970), the Pakistani state consciously understood that "an acceleration of agricultural growth was necessary for industrialization effort" (Hussain, 1980, p. 37). This led to a shift in state policies towards subsidising inputs, as well as support for the introduction of HYVs to accelerate the existing trends in adopting agricultural technology. The plan recognized that there had been "a considerable transfer of savings from the agricultural to industrial sector…as terms of trade were deliberately turned against agriculture" (Hussain, 1980, p. 18).[52] It recommended subsidising agricultural inputs, higher output prices, and an increase in public expenditure on the development of agriculture (Hussain, 1980, p. 403). One of the results was a 50 percent subsidy on the price of fertiliser which put it 30 percent below world market prices (Hussain, 1980, p. 42). Hussain calculates that the use of fertilizer gave a 500 percent return on investment, which was a "substantive incentive to…farmers who had the money and political influence to acquire this input at a subsidized price" (p. 42). This both explains the economic rationale for capital investments in

[52] Pakistan Planning Commission. 1965. *The Third Five Year Plan 1965-1970.* Manager of Publications. Karachi: Pg. 7

the use of fertilizer and the uneven patterns of fertilizer adoption, not just across differentiated agricultural classes, but also rural geographies.

Thus, state policies around agrarian re-settlement and modernization, combined with ground-up shifts in technology in the form of tubewells and HYVs, were critical in shaping the dynamics of peasant differentiation and differential adoption of agro-technologies that took place in the next years. This had a significant impact on land resumption and the adjoining dispossession of sharecroppers, as well as changes in cropping patterns. Specifically, the changes in the hydrological regime on the Indus Basin wrought by the growth of tubewells in central Punjab and the new agrarian colonies in the south combined the agency of the state and new waves of agrarian colonists. Combined with mechanisation, changes in crop patterns, and the adoption of agricultural inputs like HYVs, fertilisers and pesticides, these changes in the irrigation regime pushed new imperatives into the agrarian structure of West Punjab. Thus, going against Azhar's argument that the failure of land reforms in West Punjab constrained agrarian development, rural landowners were, in fact, able to initiate processes of on-farm capital intensification, which shaped the processes of uneven capitalist development and rural class differentiation in the 1960s.

Section III: The Uneven Development of Capitalist Agriculture in West Punjab

The debates on the agrarian transition in West Punjab failed to adequately separate two questions: what agrarian classes participated versus what classes benefited from the processes of agrarian growth in the 1960s? The bulk of the literature assumes that it was only the beneficiaries that participated actively in shaping its imperatives. This can be witnessed in the debate between Burki, Khan, Alavi and Hussain, which boiled down to whether it was 'middle class farmers' or 'elite farmers' that led the Green Revolution, effectively rendering all rural

classes that stood outside the core class to be passive recipients of the agency of the benefitting classes. Instead, as we shall see in this section, the relationship between the large and smaller farmers panned out in a more complex way by forcing them to adopt new technologies and patterns of crop intensification. By shifting focus away from deploying farm size as the sole determinant of rural class, and instead using practices of renting in and renting out land for cultivation, what emerges are new patterns of peasant differentiation shaped by the differential scales of adoption of agricultural technologies.

Unlike the models of agrarian change proposed by Byres, Joshi, Azhar, Alavi and Khan, which focus on farm size and land ownership to determine agrarian classes, Hussain's (1980) thesis on changes to the agrarian structure of Punjab focuses on patterns of land leasing as a critical component shaping rural class differentiation in this period. Moving beyond a focus on farm size and wage labour allows Hussain to analyse leasing land as an important development *within* capitalist farming practices. Changes in land leasing patterns were made possible by the introduction of new machinery, including tractors and tubewells, as well as chemical inputs and HYVs, which made it not just efficient, but essential to cultivate larger tracks of land for a higher return on capital. Khan (1983) argued that "under the propitious conditions created by the new technology and supported by public policy, capitalist agriculture has become an increasingly attractive and even necessary alternative to the feudal and peasant systems" (p. 146). Thus, the adoption of technology is not merely an outcome of a capitalist transition, but rather its differentiated adoption across agrarian classes itself shapes the nature of class differentiation in the countryside during the capital intensification in the 1960s, giving rise to new pathways for agrarian development.

In his article, "The Development of Agriculture in Pakistan", Shahid Javed Burki (1976) that it was the emergence of what he calls "middle-class farmers, owning between 50 and 100 acres of land in the Punjab, who produced the revolution in West Pakistan's

agriculture" (p. 309-310). This was done by this class of farmers "first by going in for intensive use of water, and then by quickly adopting the technology made available to them as a result of a breakthrough in the development of high-yielding seed varieties" (Burki, 1976, p. 309-310). In line with what we have discussed before, Burki argued that "West Pakistan's agricultural revolution began with water in the early 1960s, more than half a decade before the green revolution" (p. 309-310). Moreover, Burki insisted that these developments "coincide[d] with the emergence of the rural middle class as a new powerful and independent factor in the political system introduced by Ayub Khan", and in doing so, eroded both the political and economic power of "Punjab's landed aristocracy", which constituted a mere one percent of the province's rural population and numbered one thousand families according to the Agricultural Census of 1959 (p. 309-310). (See: Table 12 above.) Burki's work militated against readings of a feudal of mixed mode of production, instead pointing to shifts within the agrarian class structure which gave rise to a 'middle class' capitalist farmer rather than an elite capitalist farmer.

However, Burki's reading of the rise of a powerful rural middle class was critiqued by Alavi (1976) and Hussain's (1980) findings that opened a discussion on patterns of peasant differentiation, showing a more in-depth picture of how the development of technology and introduction of HYVs affected different rural classes and geographies. Countering Burki, Alavi (1976) argued that the Green Revolution had constituted an "elite farmer strategy," whose "principal beneficiaries were large landholders" (p. 327). In particular, that "farm size" was important in shaping the ability to use technology and the ability to produce surplus over subsistence (Alavi, 1976, p. 324). Hussain appreciated Burki for departing from previous studies, like Gotsch (1968), which assumed equal access to technologies, water and inputs, and attempting to disaggregate size classes of farmers by taking their "political and economic power" in consideration (Hussain, 1980, p. 133; p. 136). However, he agrees with Alavi that

Burki got it wrong. “The class size of farmer than benefited from agrarian growth were in fact large-sized farmers who owned 150 acres and above” (Hussain, 1980, p. 205). Burki’s methodology was wrong for using the increase in rent, rather than increase in productivity, to determine which classes led the process of agricultural growth. Moreover, Burki had simply calculated rent by multiplying the share received by landlords with the average price of the commodity, which would suggest that the crop yields of sharecropping tenants were rising, and that perhaps they were the ones leading the processes of transformation (Hussain, 1980, p. 142-146). This is certainly not what Burki had argued. However, the Burki-Alavi debate shows something interesting: any researcher could find the evidence they wanted to look for since the impact of the Green Revolution adoption of technologies and on-farm capital intensification was spread across agrarian classes, rather than concentrated in one.

However, on-farm capital intensification, even if spread across rural classes, did not lead to the same outcomes. Technology had become an important factor, and those with more capital stood to benefit. Khan (1983A) argued that the spread of Green Revolution technology had reversed the “size-efficiency relationship in favour of large farms” (p. 146). Rather than a process in which one segment of the rural population had adopted the new technologies, capital intensification had resulted in new patterns of peasant differentiation. Khan (1983A) argued that the changes were due to the state adopting a “bimodal” strategy, in which it promoted the “adoption and use of technology which is not scale neutral” (p. 145). The state had assumed that the adoption would be led by “the rich kulak type peasants…and the poor peasants following” (Khan, 1983A, p. 145). Instead, the relationship between the large and smaller farmers panned out in a more complex way by forcing them to adopt new technologies and patterns of crop intensification.

The uneven processes that were shaping the development of capitalist farming in West Punjab were also critical in changing which rural classes leased land, and which rural classes

leased it out, thus impacting the nature of wage relations that emerged. Earlier, it was small and mid-scale cultivators, who would lease land on sharecropping contracts to supplement their originally low landholding. In the 1960s, Khan (1983A) noted that "in Punjab, most of the land rented out by poor and middle peasant is leased by rich peasants, particularly those with 25 to 50 acres and some of it even by farmers with 150 acres or more" (p. 142). With commercial farming more viable, and even necessary, given the capital investments made by investing in tubewells and tractors, this class began to rent more land for cultivation on contracts. This resulted in a change in who made up the category of farmers-cum-tenants. Where this set of relations was earlier dominated by small to medium-scale producers leasing in land, now mid to large-scale producers began to lease land on cash contracts from small and medium-sized landowners. These changes resulted in three trends: small-scale producers leasing out land to mid to large-scale producers, the decline of sharecropping, and the increasing number of capitalist farms "at the expense of poor (and even middle) peasants in Punjab" (Khan, 1983A, p. 144). Khan argued that "developments at the extreme end of the landownership indicate, at least partially, erosion of the feudal base on the one hand and increased number of poor (marginalized) peasants on the other" (p. 138).

Table 15: Changes in Tenant Farms (1960-1972)

Size of Farm (Acres)	Number of Tenant Farms in 1960	Number of Tenant Farms in 1972	Percentage Decline (1960-1972)
Less than 7.5	295,477	245,773	20.22
7.5 to less than 25	477,233	371,886	28.33
25 and over	96,973	66,748	45.28
TOTAL	869,683	684,407	27.07

Source: Hussain, Akmal. 1980. p. 175

Both medium and large landowners began to resume previously leased out lands, dispossessing sharecropping tenants in the process. Khan (1983A) argued that this trend took place not just because the "resumption of land for "self-cultivation" became…profitable," but rather it became "necessary with the increasing pressure of the cash economy and the competition with rich peasants and capitalist farmers" (p. 138). This led to the small to mid-scale farmers, who had previously been renting-in land, to lose out. Farm size was important, but the impact of the adoption of the technologies and inputs had to be read across a much larger spectrum of the rural base. Hussain (1980) argued that there was increasing polarization between farms below 7.5 acres of land and above 25 acres (p. 225). Changes taking place at the 'top of the chain,' so to say, were having their impact all the way to the bottom.

This was the political economic terrain on which West Punjab's kissan movements began mobilising in the 1950s and 1960s. It is significant that the adoption of new technologies, including tubewells and tractors, as well as inputs, namely fertilizers, pesticides, and hybrid seeds, created new pressures on small and medium scale producers. This period of growth in agricultural productivity also intensified the crisis of reproduction for this category of producers, who was forced to play catch up by leasing in more land and renting in or purchasing the new mechanical inputs. This constituted not merely integration within market relations, which had already been achieved in the colonial period, but an engagement with processes of on farm capital intensification, which made it critical to invest capital with no guarantees of increased returns. Moreover, this was a competitive environment in which larger landowners also began to resume previously leased land from tenants and lease in more land, which led to both the displacement of sharecropping tenants and smaller landowners needing to compete with those with higher amounts of capital to lease more cultivable land. These developments

had a significant impact on patterns of class differentiation in the countryside, while also re-shaping the imperatives of reproduction and accumulation.

Understanding Class in the Countryside: the Emergence of 'Capitalist Farmers' and 'new' Social Relations of Production

On farm capital intensification led to not just the resumption of land and adoption of new technologies, but the emergence of a class of farmers that Marxist political economists began to identify as 'capitalist farmers'. However, this 'capitalist' class of farmer was neither solely composed of transformed landlords nor did it lead to the domination of the wage labour relationship. Instead, the development of this so-called 'capitalist' class of farmers did not lead to the predominance of wage labour relations in agrarian relations as necessitated by the classical mode of production debates and understandings of capitalist transition in agriculture. Rather, the social relations of production, in relation to wage labour and tenancy, were determined by labour shortages, the nature of farming processes, and the social origin of the farmer. Moreover, the development of capital-intensive farming impacted small farmers significantly, forcing the adoption of technologies, HYVs and chemical inputs, and pauperizing them if they could not keep up.

Capitalist farmer in West Punjab was "not a size category" (Hussain, 1980, p. 336). This formation included a wide array of actors, including "transformed landlords and urban-based kulaks, including civil and military bureaucrats" (Khan, 1985, p. 30). Based on his surveys, Hussain (1980) showed amongst those who embarked on capitalist farming, "56 percent [were] traditional landlords, 22 percent were from peasant origins, 11 percent were government bureaucrats, 7 percent were urban traders and about 4 percent were urban industrialists" (p. 415). The survey data showed three key trends: one, traditional landlords

were indeed moving to capital intensive farming methods; two, a significant number of small-scale cultivators had also adopted capital intensive farming, and three, entrepreneurial urban classes had also taken up capital intensive farming, albeit this was a smaller proportion. While Hussain's surveys are much more limited in scale, i.e., restricted to his field sites, similar data is neither available in the Agrarian Census of 1960 nor 1972. Moreover, it is also clear from Hussain's insights that the category of capitalist farmer was deployed for those who had successfully adopted capital intensive farming, such as tubewells and tractors. Farmers who did not own tubewells or tractors but were borrowing or renting these technologies from other farmers were not counted as capitalist farmers. The adoption of capital-intensive farming became a necessity across the agrarian structure, rather than being limited to a narrowly defined 'capitalist' class. Instead, the development of capital-intensive farming accelerated dynamics of peasant differentiation within capitalist agriculture for agrarian producers with differentiated access to land, labour and capital.

The growth of capital-intensive farming had several effects that were felt across the agrarian class structure. The cash requirement for the reproduction of small-scale landowners and tenants went up due to the monetisation of previously non-monetised inputs, increases in land rents, and being forced to sell subsistent output at low prices and buying it back later at higher prices (Hussain, 1980, p. 364; p. 394; 416). Small-scale producers adopted mechanisation and new inputs from a position where they had limited capital. Hussain (1980) argues that this made them dependent on capitalist farmers for access to "the new agricultural inputs (such as HYVs, fertilisers, pesticides) and tubewell water", as well as the bureaucracy and machinery, including tractors (p. 386). This had several consequences, which included an increase in the percentage of middle-scale owner-cum-tenant cultivators, as well as a drop in the percentage of pure tenants. Even though the number of mid-scale owner-tenants increased, the total area cultivated by them decreased. This effectively meant that each such household

was now cultivating less land than before (Hussain, 1980, p. 206). Moreover, tenancy contracts began to be shifted from sharecropping to money rent, which was calculated based on potential yields, which did not match up for smaller farmers renting in land due to limited access to capital (Hussain, 1980, p. 387). Not surprisingly, these developments went hand-in-hand with a process of depeasantisation, which resulted from both small farmers and sharecroppers losing land. Hussain (1980) estimates 168 percent increase in the number of agricultural labourers in West Punjab between the 1960 and 1972 Agricultural Census (p. 208). These developments both sharpened the contradictions between small to medium scale cultivators and large-scale farmers, but also created relations of dependence between the two. As the next chapter will show these contradictions played a critical role in shaping kissan politics this period.

Moreover, the development of capital-intensive farming did not lead to the predominance of wage labour relations in agrarian relations. Hussain (1980) argued that the social relations between capitalist farmer, tenant and wage labourer took on "complex and varied forms…conditioned by the degree of extra-economic control" (p. 394). He argued that this was shaped by both the "social origin of capitalist farmers" and the nature of on-farm labour processes (Hussain, 1980, p. 415). Moreover, mechanisation reduced the need for agricultural labour, which was only required on a seasonal basis. Despite appearances, these were new forms of wage relation that suited the new dynamics of production, rather than continuing older forms of on farm labour relations. Hussain (1980) insisted that these were processes occurring within capitalism, arguing that "to insist on money wage as a necessary condition for capitalism in this context is to exclude the possibility of a pre-capitalist labour process being used within capitalist production relations" (p. 379).

The wage relations that emerged in this context were shaped by specific articulations of the relationship between capitalist farmers and labour. Even where farmers had adopted capital intensive forms of farming, there were key reasons why non-waged forms of labour

continued. Larger landlords who were adopting capital-intensive farming were keeping sharecropping tenants on as captive labour, especially in areas where there were severe labour shortages. A practice more dominant in the so-called 'backward' barani (rainfed) regions of Punjab, this made for an explosive mix. Landlords had resumed some of their rented-out land for self-cultivation, while the tenants continued to work on reduced landholdings, and were employed to "work on farms on a seasonal basis with wages under the market rate" (Hussain, 1980, p. 383). The tenant-labour would fight back by deploying several methods, including the "theft of wheat, cutting trees, grazing animals, grazing animals on own wheat fields to give less share to landlord" (Hussain, 1980, p. 384). Often leading to violent reprisals from landlords, the "hostility between capitalist farmers and poor peasants was explicit and open" under such arrangements (Hussain, 1980, p. 383). The other reason for continuing payments in kind was the nature of on farm labour processes, which were often "impossible to monitor" (Hussain, 1980, p. 378). For example, Hussain argues that the harvest of wheat took place behind large stacks, which had been cut and deposited in the field. Moreover, the labour processes needed for each crop were different, and farmers made decisions on how to compensate labour depending on their familiarity with "pre-capitalist modes of production" (Hussain, 1980, p. 379).

Thus, focusing on the impact of capital intensification across rural classes, rather than simply looking for a single beneficiary class, shows the impact of differential integration within the expansion of capital in West Punjab's countryside. There is no surprise that processes of capital expansion had an uneven impact across agrarian classes. Those with access to sufficient capital to afford the new technologies and chemical inputs resuming leased out land and began to lease in more land. On the other end of the spectrum, smaller farmers with less capital became more and more dependent on the new agrarian technologies and inputs, which forced them to create a relationship of dependency with farmers who were benefiting from processes

of on-farm capital intensification. These processes increased the cost of reproduction across the board, which in turn increased the need for marketable surplus. While farmers who had successfully adopted new technologies were able to manage, small-scale producers were forced to reduce their cost of reproduction, with many increasingly pushed out of farming in of itself or requiring higher off-farm family incomes, often through migrant work to sustain their landholdings and adapt their cultivation in line with the new imperatives. Where Khan argues that migrant labour practices might allow the so-called 'peasant mode of production' to put up some resistance against the dominant capitalist one in West Punjab in the 1960s and 70s, the chapter has noted that this would be a moot point. Small-scale producers had already adopted capital intensive on-farm practices, and the so-called peasant economy could no longer be said to exist in the terms being used. While there could have been a small producer-led path to agrarian growth in this period, which is the subject of the next chapter, we have shown above that the deepening of capitalist relations in the countryside extended to all rural classes, and it is hard to sustain the idea of a peasantry existing outside these relations of capital.[53]

Conclusion: From Stunted Growth to Uneven Capitalist Development in Agriculture

Following on from the insights in chapter 2 on the integration of West Punjab's agriculture within colonial food markets, the chapter shows how the development of South Asia's agriculture can be understood through reading processes of agrarian growth in the developmental period as representing a deepening of capitalist relations, rather than a situation presenting a mixed or feudal or colonial mode of production. Patnaik's (1990) insight that there "a definite qualitative 'break' between the colonial and subsequent period with respect to the

[53] A significant part of the category confusion around the term peasant in the work of Khan, Alavi and Hussain comes from the failure to clarify its meaning and its relationship to the broader agrarian and non-agrarian economies.

growth of capitalist production in agriculture…related…to the question of accumulation" (p. 3) is a good starting point, but to argue that the qualitative changes merely led to mutually coexisting or conflicting modes of production misses the mark. The chapter has used a case study of West Punjab in the 1950s and 1960s to show how it would be more useful to analyse how agrarian growth resulted in an uneven and differentiated integration within *pre-existing* capitalist relations, both across rural classes and rural geographies.

Banaji and Hussain's insights have shown how the idea that capitalist farming suddenly emerged in West Punjab in the 1960s is insufficient. The modes of production and bifurcated model of agriculture continue to fail to identify where capitalist farmers came from in the first place. This is, in particular, because of the search for an ideal type labour-capital relationship to define capitalist farming. Instead, this chapter argues that the investigation of agrarian developments in the 1950s and 1960s can be better understood as constituting the deepening of capitalist relations took place differentially across a range of agrarian classes. Landlords who were relying on sharecropping as a key income source, began to adopt large-scale agricultural production by renting in land. However, some of these continued to maintain sharecroppers on a smaller portion of their land as a source of captive labour. Mid-scale producers began to rent in land to expand accumulation, via growing a larger portion of commercial crops. Sharecroppers and small-scale producers lost land to become either captive or waged agricultural labour. Moreover, new actors, such as urban traders and bureaucrats, became agriculturalists, bringing with them capital for re-investment into new technologies and inputs.

The transformations of the 1950s and 60s re-constituted the imperatives of reproduction and accumulation for agrarian class in Punjab. Capital intensification through mechanisation and chemical inputs intensified processes of uneven capital development and rural differentiation, which became the political economic context for the development of agrarian

political movements in this period. This led to significant changes in how differentiated agrarian producers related to the imperatives of reproduction and accumulation. The growing marketisation of land, labour and agricultural inputs led to radical changes in tenancy relations. The option of retreating into older moral economies simply did not exist across the range of differentiated rural classes, driven by the growing importance of cash and markets for reproduction for even those at the lowest rungs of the landholding ladder. For those with larger landholding, capital intensification and increasing accumulation were not choices, but necessities, which meant those who could not catch up faced the risk of perishing.

Moreover, it is important to see agrarian growth in the 1960s as a continuation of processes of agrarian change that were unleashed during the agrarian colonisation of West Punjab. Thus, the 1960s did not constitute a fundamental rupture in the meaning of being an agrarian colonialist in Punjab. The emergent social relations of production, in particular, around labour, came out of the unique circumstances of geographical and social inheritance, as well as the presence or absence of a surplus labour force in a particular context. Banaji (1975) notes about the wage labour question, "On this question, both Chattopadhyay (1972) and Patnaik (1972) argued from erroneous premises – Chattopadhyay because of the confusion of 'free labour' with wage labour, Patnaik because of an abstractly sharp distinction between the so-called 'antediluvian' forms of capital and productive capital" (p. 1889). This is fundamental to why this chapter has argued against using waged labour as a criterion for confirming whether a capitalist transition in agriculture has taken place. The search for a pure form of free wage labour was always going to be a futile one. Labour is embedded in concrete social relations, which is what we have shown in the case of West Punjab. Agricultural labour faced a new set of unfreedoms and extra-economic exploitation in the 1950s and 1960s, which can only be understood by avoiding the conceptual trappings of an idealized form of Western European agrarian capitalist transition.

The chapter has shown the importance for Marxist political economists studying agrarian relations in Punjab, and perhaps more broadly South Asia, to refrain from path dependency and deploying notions of 'distorted,' 'blocked' or 'stunted' capitalist growth in agriculture. Some of these problems are the inheritance of the modes of production debate, while others are problems of liberal economic frameworks. In response to Khan's 1985 lecture, the then editor of the Pakistan Development Review and director of PIDE, Dr Syed Haider Nawab Haider Naqvi, remarked that "some discussants [pointed out] that the role of markets out to have been given more prominence. I would like to say that…[because] the agrarian structure is rigid and a large part of the transactions within that structure is in kind, one cannot really speak much of a market" (Naqvi, in Khan, 1985, p. 38). Ironically, the idea of an unchanging peasant and feudal mode of production in West Punjab has had much more serious currency amongst liberal and neoliberal economists, who have continued to insist that agrarian relations in the region are stunted. We have seen in this chapter how agrarian market reform itself was one of the critical factors in unleashing the forces of agrarian growth. West Punjab's integration within colonial food markets, discussed in the previous chapter, suggests that such narratives are merely a counter-factual designed to present this agrarian space as a tabula rasa for transnational and national policy makers. One would hope that a new generation of Marxist political economists, such as Azhar (2016), can provide a narrative that counters these notions, rather than repeating old tropes about stagnant agrarian relations that require external intervention for transformation.

Another important point worth investigating is the relationship between the agrarian and national questions. It is worth paying attention to Alavi's (1976) argument that "far from having established a new political equilibrium, the green revolution has generated forces that have been at the centre of the successive crises Pakistan has experienced" (Alavi, (1976), p. 319). The optimism around the Green Revolution at the level of the postcolonial state mirrored

the hubris of colonial officials who thought the canal colonies of West Punjab had brought prosperity to the peasantry. Much like the agrarian change in the colonial period, the postcolonial developments in agriculture built on existing class contradictions in West Punjab and created new ones. It is rather surprising that Marxist authors like Alavi and Khan have had little to offer on the nature of these class contradictions in the 1950s, 1960s and beyond. Only Hussain reflects on how the changing agrarian relationships have impacted class contradictions between capitalizing farmers, sharecropping tenants and small farmers, arguing that it was important to pay attention to the specific rural geographies involved. Moreover, Hussain (1980) also raises an interesting question, which has not been dealt with in the chapter: why did the larger feudal-type landlords align themselves with the Pakistan People's Party's (PPP) "stance against Monopoly Industrial houses?" (p. 141) If indeed, the decision reflected a breakdown of the so-called feudal-industrial alliance, there are many more questions left about the impact of the Green Revolution period on rural and national class configurations. The next chapter hopes to address some of these missing links by exploring how the processes of agrarian development in Punjab critically shaped the politics, mobilizations and the class alliances that left-wing kissan movements built in the 1950s and 60s, as well as shaped the reasons for their disintegration.

Chapter 4

‘Every house is Toba Tek Singh’:

Left-wing Kissan Movements and Agrarian Reform in West Punjab (1947-1972)

“The Toba conference has stirred waves in the still waters of our national politics, but will it prove to be a flood?”

Editorial, *Lail-o-Nihar* (March 29, 1970)

Hundreds of thousands of kissan thronged to the 1970 Kissan Conference organized in Toba Tek Singh, a small Punjabi city situated within the agrarian heartlands of the canal colonies created by the British. Organised by the West Pakistan Kissan Committee (WPKC), the event was a roaring success. Accounts describe a sea of red caps and turbans, with some farmers astride horses, red flags in hand. Prominent slogans included ‘land to the tiller’ and ‘death to imperialism’, with the proceedings culminating in a charged call by fiery Bengali kissan leader Maulana Bhashani for a ‘farmers’ strike’ (Bashir 1970, p. 27-30). Although the call for an organised strike did not materialise, the Toba Tek Singh Conference sent shockwaves throughout the country, galvanising leftist and agrarian mobilisations and alarming the state and landed elites just months before the first parliamentary elections in Pakistan’s thirty-three-year history. Even though the Toba Tek Singh Conference did not prove to be the flood that was hoped for, the conference is memorialised within the Pakistani left as the highest point of kissan radicalism that West Punjab has seen in the post-1947 period and is a constant reference point and inspiration for rural movements and left-wing political formations since. However, despite being one of the biggest kissan mobilisations in the history of the country, the debates and political activities that led up to and emerged from the conference have received little academic attention.

This chapter addresses this gap in the history of peasant movements in post-colonial West Punjab, spotlighting the Toba Conference, and the activities of its organising body, the West Pakistan Kissan Committee (WPKC) to chart the trajectory of kissan movements in a post-Partition landscape dictated by the concerns of national development, decolonisation, and increasing state authoritarianism. I argue that a close look at key leaders and publications by the movement suggests that the WPKC and another left-wing kissan organisation, the Pakistan Kissan Front[54] (PKF) run by Sheikh Rasheed, grappled with contradictions between their inheritance of an anti-colonial revolutionary peasant politics and their socialist commitment to forge a program for a 'national agriculture' that could finally free the country from the shackles of imperialism. Accounts of left-wing peasant movements in South Asia emphasise the place of redistributive land reform within these movements (Ali 2019, Das 1982, Desai 1986, Rizvi 2019, Singharoy 2004). Engaging with this body of work, my analysis of debates within the WPKC and the PKF complicates the relationship between peasant movements and land reform, reading it as refracted through concerns around the technological and economic needs of national development and agrarian modernisation, as well as the tactical demands of cross-class alliances between different segments of the peasantry. These connections allow us to push back against both culturalist and economistic readings of the kissan movement in West Punjab, focusing on how these movements engaged the agrarian question in tandem with the national question (Jha, Moyo, and Yoros, 2013). In doing so, the movement was embedded not only within the structures of agrarian political economy and historical peasant subjectivities, but also engaged and was shaped by larger national, regional and global movements such as the student and urban communist movement, and the Bangladesh war of liberation, as well as the politics surrounding the Cold War and the Sino-Soviet split. These factors also help explain

[54] While the Pakistan Kissan Front (PKF), founded in 1955 by Shaikh Rasheed, is referred to by many names, including Pakistan Kissan Committee, in its literature. In this chapter, I will refer to it as the PKF to distinguish it from the WPKC.

the reasons for the movement being unable to sustain itself after the country split in 1970, as cadres were once again divided and fractures in the movement solidified into formal splits. In the ultimate analysis, the movement was unable to come up with a political vision that could re-construct a rural alliance in the rapidly transforming agrarian landscape in the 1970s and '80s. Further, echoing insights articulated in chapter 2, I aim to show how the re-shaping of agrarian markets and developmental processes has been an integral part of the agenda of peasant movements, rather than simply an 'economistic concern'. Academic trends have continued to locate the politics of markets and development as more closely tied to farmers' movements rather than peasant movements, while seemingly arguing that these issues sit outside the 'real' concerns of class politics.[55] However, the theoretical distinction between peasants and farmers and related questions of 'peasant consciousness' must be analysed through the interrelationship between transformations in agrarian relations, state formation, and market structure, *as well as* the mobilisational character of rural movements.

Thus, through the case study of the WPKC, the PKF and Toba Conference, I contend that debates and struggles around the issues of agrarian modernisation and the development of capitalist agriculture are as much part of the core concerns within left-wing kissan movements as issues of land reform, land occupations, and militancy. The multiple and interlinked contestations around class, gender, caste, markets, and taxation that have shaped Punjab's rural movements for centuries compel us to reconsider the influential legacy of the Subaltern Studies Collective alongside the reductionism of class-based Marxist approaches. As I demonstrate through a critical engagement with Marxist political economist, Hamza Alavi, and Subalternist pioneer Ranajit Guha, dominant theorisations of the farmer-peasant divide, moral economy, peasant 'culture', the middle peasant thesis, and agrarian class conflict often sidestep the crucial imbrications of agrarian change, state formation, and rural class differentiation. While

[55] See: Special Issue (1994) on 'New farmers' movements in India' in the *Journal of Peasant Studies, 21*(3-4).

Subalternist approaches to peasant movements fall prey to fetishising the peasant as a pre-historic subject occupying an 'autonomous' political and cultural sphere (Sarkar, 1997), Marxist political economy has tended to disregard any movement not led solely by the landless rural poor as having limited potential for transformation. My analysis will show that kissan movements in West Punjab actively engaged in politics around the state, national development, and modernisation, defying neat categorisation in their complex balancing of ideological commitments to anti-imperialism, nationalism, and socialism, with the tactical demands of building a cross-class rural alliance that could simultaneously address the crises of reproduction and accumulation confronting agriculture in the early years following formal independence.

I expand on these histories through an in-depth engagement with the WPKC's and PKF's own literature, examining pamphlets, essays, reports, and autobiographies authored by key kissan leaders, left-wing intellectuals, and communist leaders to bring into focus the complex ways in which peasant movements in the mid to late twentieth century negotiated questions around feudalism[56], land reform, the development of capitalist agriculture, the re-organisation of agriculture for national development, the transfer of agrarian surplus, the displacement of peasantries, and the transformation of agrarian markets. Reading a range of documents and literature produced by those affiliated with the movements, including the weekly *Mehnat Edition* in the 1960s, the weekly *Lail-o-Nihar* in the 1970s, alongside pamphlets and speeches of kissan leaders Ishaque Mohammad, Chaudhry Fateh, Sheikh Rasheed and Maulana Bhashani, I show how West Punjab's kissan movement was integrated into global Marxist debates on the development of capitalism, national economies, and the

[56] While the debates around whether feudalism as a category can be deployed outside Western Europe are acknowledged, the term is deployed here because it is used by Punjab's rural movements in two ways: first, referring to large landholdings, with the bulk of cultivation done through landlord-tenant relationships. The landlord in this case can either be present or absentee. Second, it is used to represent more broadly 'the old ways' of practicing agriculture. This would mean, for example, even if no landlord-tenant relationship exists, a kissan practicing what could be called a 'peasant mode of production' would be labelled feudal. In reading the movement's own literature, it is important to recognise which usage is taking place, since it has different implications.

future of agriculture and agrarian classes on a national and global scale. Moreover, these sources allow us to read the Toba Tek Singh conference, held in 1970 while Pakistan was still under military rule, as part of a larger anti-authoritarian political milieu, rather than an 'autonomous' or localised peasant struggle. I posit that the WPKC and PKF literatures and mobilisations provide an alternative trajectory for what agrarian capitalism in West Punjab could have looked like. Its mobilisations were crucial to pushing through the Tenancy Reforms of 1952, the Land Reforms of 1959, the end of General Ayub Khan's Martial Law, and the Land Reforms of 1972, and for creating the climate for a larger set of agrarian reforms in the 1960s.

The chapter will also offer a view into the arduous process of re-constructing a left-wing kissan movement in Punjab after the displacement, violence and mass migrations of the 1947 Partition of the Indian subcontinent. After the Communist Party of India (CPI) decided to split cadres between Pakistan and India on religious grounds, the political infrastructures built by the WPKC's predecessor, the Punjab Kissan Sabha, was disrupted and almost dismantled by the events of Partition, which effectively constituted a mass uprooting and transfer of rural populations both into and out of West Punjab. The impact can be seen in tracing the story of Chaudhry Fateh Mohammad, the influential general secretary of the WPKC, who arrived in West Punjab after Partition and found himself in a rural world undergoing new processes of settlement, colonisation, and dispossession. In a landscape of cultural and institutional destruction, the WPKC and PKF were able to build cross-class alliances in the 1950s and '60s around a range of issues, including land reform, increasing productivity, market reform, and the end of feudalism. The eventual demise of the movement was brought about by a second round of major political upheaval, as left-wing cadres and organisations suffered yet another partition with the liberation of Bangladesh. This triggered a series of events, including the PPP's Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto becoming prime minister and betraying the movement, splits

within the kissan movement, and another military coup in 1978. With its organising ability crippled once again, the left-wing kissan movement was unable to adapt to ongoing capitalist agrarian transformations and the Toba conference sadly signposting its demise rather than a golden age for kissan mobilisation in West Punjab.

Section 1: The Peasant Question under Developmentalism

As observed in the Introduction, little has been written about peasant mobilisations in West Punjab during the 1950s and '60s. The only notable exception is Hamza Alavi's 1976 essay on the impact of the Green Revolution, which notes in passing that "in 1968, when the largest harvests ever were reaped, the entire countryside erupted with popular discontent on an unprecedented scale" (Alavi, 1976, p. 318-319). In the last decade, academic attention has begun to turn back to the forms of organising and debates within left-wing kissan movements in Pakistan. Recent work by Noaman Ali (2019) and Layli Uddin Ahmed (2016) has interrogated fragments of this story from the vantage point of the Mazdoor Kissan Party and the figure of the iconic Maoist kissan leader Maulana Bhashani[57] respectively. Further, recent autobiographies of two key kissan leaders, Chaudhry Fateh Mohammad's *Jo Hum Pe Guzri*[58] (2015) and Shaikh Rasheed's *Jeddojehud-e-Musalsal* (2011)[59] narrate the story of how these movements were organised, as well as key debates and disputes between them.

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[57] Maulana Bhashani was a left-wing political and peasant leader, associated with the National Awami Party, from then East Pakistan. Read: Uddin, L. (2018). Mao-Lana Bhashani: Maoism and the unmaking of Pakistan. *Jahmoor*. Her blog, https://layliuddin.wordpress.com/, catalogues various audio, visual and textual material on Bhashani.

[58] Chaudhry Fateh Mohammad was the general secretary of the West Pakistan Kissan Committee during the Toba Tek Singh conference and continued in that role until his death in 2013.

[59] Shaikh Rasheed, also known as Baba-e-Socialism (Father of Socialism), was one of the stalwarts of the left in Pakistan. Staunchly oriented towards a peasantist approach, he set up the Pakistan Kissan Front, a parallel peasant organisation with a similar agenda to the WPKC. It is often confusingly referred to as the Pakistan Kissan Committee in Rasheed's own writings and its pamphlets. In this chapter we will refer to it as the PKF. He later

In this section, I draw on this body of emergent literature to interrogate Leninist, Maoist, and Gramscian approaches to Peasant Studies to argue for the need to move away from reductive culturalist and/or class-based theorisations of peasant subjectivity. Instead, I posit a relational approach to peasant political subjectivity that draws on class positionality as located within changing political economies and historical moments. I will also show how left-wing kissan movements in Punjab integrated the agrarian, peasant, and national questions in their mobilisations, but that these often existed in a tense and contradictory relationship to each other.

The Early Development of the Peasant Question

"In the colonial countries the peasants alone are revolutionary." – Frantz Fanon

Much of early Marxist writing was concerned with identifying the revolutionary subject. With the peasantry often appearing more dynamic than the working class, especially in colonised contexts, Marxist academics and revolutionaries[60] turned to peasant movements in the former colonies to understand where the greatest force of change in the late 20th century would come from. In this section, I discuss Marxist political economist Hamza Alavi's influential 'middle peasant' thesis to comment on the limitations of Marxist approaches that in focalising class-based analysis have presented an ossified and reductive view of the place of agrarian classes in rural movements. Situating Alavi as a Pakistani Marxist ideologue, I argue that his class analysis ends up being limited by an engagement with abstract class categories

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joined the Pakistan People's Party, also serving as Agriculture Minister during the Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto government. He was also editor of the left-wing political magazine, *Dehqan* (1971).

[60] For more, read: Blackley, R. (1974). Fanon and Cabral: A contrast in theories of revolution for Africa. *The Modern Journal of African Studies*, 191-209, for a good description of Fanon and Cabral's understanding of the role of the peasantry in anti-colonial struggles.

as shaped by his reading of Mao's Hunan Report, rather than his own intimate engagement with left-wing peasant organisations in South Asia in this period.

The limits of the Alavi thesis signpost the troubled nature of the search for the revolutionary subject which took place at the time. The Middle Peasant Thesis was one of the key frameworks to emerge out of the quest to determine: *which* of the peasant classes was revolutionary? Associated with Eric Wolf and Hamza Alavi, the argument centred middle peasants, rather than poor peasants, as the revolutionary subject of what Wolf referred to as *The Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (1969). In his 1965 essay, "Peasants and Revolution," Alavi went a step further to argue that Mao's influential treatise on the peasant movement in Hunan[61] had mischaracterised the middle peasantry as the poor peasantry (Alavi, 1965, p. 257). Making the important observation that the actual role of the peasantry in the Chinese and Russian revolution did not correspond to theory, Alavi emphasises that Lenin articulated different positions vis a vis the rich peasantry, at one point arguing that the "rural proletariat must fight *together* with the rich peasantry for the abolition of the remnants of serfdom" (Alavi, 1965, p. 248), before changing tact to advocate an alliance of middle and poor peasants against the rich peasantry in 1918 (Lenin 1918). In critiquing dominant readings of Mao, Alavi highlights the complexity of class analysis, problematising the task of looking for a revolutionary subject within a differentiated rural world.

However, in the same essay, Alavi (1965) makes two arguments that over-simplify relations between peasant classes, making the middle peasant thesis hard to sustain. First, Alavi oddly defines the middle peasantry as a "different sector of the rural economy" that does not "stand between rich and poor peasants" (Alavi, 1965, p. 244). Alavi offers no clarification or detail on how this 'different sector' is constituted, nor on what kind of relationship it has to any

[61] The Hunan Report continued to occupy a special place in anti-colonial and postcolonial peasant movements. It was translated and reprinted in at least two magazines associated with peasant movements in West Punjab in the 1960s and 70s.

other 'sectors'. Moreover, this separation of 'sectors' is a flawed one because rural classes are embedded in relations of production that connect classes and social groups across a range of economic activities. Two, the same problem comes up when Alavi (1965) argues that rich or capitalist peasants stand outside the traditional relations of rural exploitation between landlords and segments of the exploited peasanty (p. 244-246). These arguments are hard to sustain based on the insights provided in chapter 3, where labour-capital and landlord-tenant relations within capitalist agriculture in Punjab continue in non-monetary forms and are sustained through (the threat of) extra-legal forms of violence. These weaknesses emerge due to the desire for neat class categorisation. Despite recognising that the picture might be more complex, Alavi's (1965) lack of a relational approach to class means he also fails to account for indirect class contradictions between rural classes, which play out over a range of social, political and economic institutions, including access to input and output markets, subsidies, water, and newly colonised lands, which rural movements are able to recognise (p. 246-247). These problems become more apparent when it comes to the political question of how to deal with 'capitalist agrarian classes.' As a tense and unresolved debate in Marxist analysis, the imperfect answers lie, quoting Alavi (1965), "not in [the] theoretical formulations but in the actual practice" of movements (p. 243). This means paying attention to how kissan organisers in West Punjab understood rural class divisions in their context, and which rural classes they included and excluded in the class alliances they built.

Moral Economies, Subalternity and the Flattening of Rural Subjectivities

In the 1970s, structuralist readings of peasant politics came under attack from the Subalternist school and the 'moral economy' thesis. While paying attention to the cultural aspects of peasant life, both projects hoped to "understand [peasant uprisings] on their own

terms" (Scott, 1977, as cited in Guha, 1999, p. x). These approaches were shaped by two key texts, James Scott's (1977) *The Moral Economy of the Peasant,* and Ranajit Guha's (1983) *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India.* In the foreword to Guha's book, Scott argues that "the grand mass histories of peasant uprisings were devoted to understanding them not in their own terms but, as a prologue or pre-history of the central "social movement/events" of modern histories" (Scott, 1977, as cited in Guha, 1999, p. x). This was an attack on structuralist analysis which allegedly saw peasant movements as an appendage to larger historical events and proved quite popular in the late Cold War era as enthusiasm for more classical Marxism dwindled globally.

While acknowledging their contributions to writing histories from below, the Subalternist and moral economy approaches elide peasant engagements with the state, political economy, and other movements. Consciously, moving the focus away from class conflict within and outside the rural economy, Scott (1977) focuses on the "normative roots of peasant politics," placing a "subsistence ethic at the centre of the analysis of peasant politics" (p. 3). This is an ethic, or so-called moral economy, that "lies behind a great many of the technical, social and moral arrangements of a precapitalist agrarian order" (Scott, 1977, p. 4). He argues that peasant resistance is directed against the violation of this moral economy by "the imposition of…capitalism and the development of a modern state under colonial aegis" (Scott, 1977, p. 7). However, Scott admits to a string of glaring omissions, stating that he does not engage with "a host of intervening factors – such as alliances with other classes, the repressive capacities of dominant elites, and the social organisation of the peasantry itself" (p. 4). Echoing Scott's analysis, Guha (1993) argues that "factors of economic and political deprivation do not relate at all to the peasants' consciousness or do so negatively" (p. 3). Ironically, in critiquing the structuralism of Marxist approaches, they posit a far more rigid structuralism that essentialises 'peasant consciousness.' One wonders how an argument for a peasant moral

economy can be sustained without accounting for "alliances with other classes, repressive capacities of dominant elites, and the social organisation of the peasantry" (Scott, 1977, p. 4)? Moreover, as this chapter will show, 'peasant' movements directly engaged with questions of transforming the state and capitalism, rather than seeing them as purely antagonistic actors, and rarely advocated a return to imagined moral economies of the past.[62]

Similarly, Guha (1998) quotes from the inaugural statement in *Subaltern Studies I*, positing that "parallel to the domain of elite politics there existed…another domain of Indian politics [the politics of the people] … This is an autonomous domain" (p. x). Written against elite histories, this premise helped spark the Subalternists to produce a thrilling new literature of social movements and subaltern life in India. Arvind N. Das's (1993) essay, "Agrarian Change from Above and Below: Bihar 1947-78", published in *Subaltern Studies II*, covers the history of peasant movements, Green Revolution and agrarian reform in the province of Bihar. In parts an excellent essay that traces the micro-history of the Kissan Sabha, the pre-Partition predecessor of the WPKC, and connects it to the larger contours of politics in Bihar, it analyses how "the leadership of peasant movements in Bhojpur… within a century, passed from zamindars to junkers and kulaks and finally to poor peasants" (Das, 1993, p. 221). However, the study which shows much nuance elsewhere, falls prey to the theoretical limitations of the Subalternist framework. The first of these is its suggestion that *organised* peasant or kissan politics only constitutes agrarian change from above. Romanticising the 'spontaneous resistance' of the peasantry, it disavows attempts to bring it under an organised umbrella, arguing that it was the left parties, rather than state and landlord repression, that "transformed

[62] There is more serious debate, in the case of India and the Gandhian legacies within Indian rural movements, of a return to an imagined past informing agrarian politics, it rarely can be read in such a simplistic way. In the case of Punjab's Southern belt, which has been differentially incorporated within agrarian colonisation, and is actively undergoing another round of agrarian colonisation, the ecologies and cultural formations from the recent and distant past inform resistance to agrarian colonisation and infrastructural development. For more, read: Farooq, A. (2013). On people's law tribunals (saths) and water struggles in South Punjab. *Naked Punch*. http://www.nakedpunch.com/articles/159, and Langah, N.T. (2012). *Poetry as resistance: Islam and ethnicity in postcolonial Pakistan*. Routledge, which capture the political, cultural and literary practices of resistance to the above in the Seraiki Wasaib.

[the 1970 Land Grab Movement] from being a real attack by the peasantry on the iniquitous land structure of Bihar to being mere symbolic opposition. By formalising the movement, the [left parties] managed to kill it" (Das, 1993, p. 213). While it may be true that left-wing political parties had something to do with the collapse of the movement, Das does not show why this is the case, instead he presents it as an almost self-evident argument. Second, despite all evidence in the essay pointing to the Bihar peasantry as a well-organised and ideologically driven force, Das (1993) argues that peasant consciousness was in a sense insufficiently political, noting that "the inherent divisions and lack of unity within the peasantry led it more often than not in the course of its movement to ignore the basic question of land redistribution and take up other, subsidiary, issues in its place" (p. 226). These so-called subsidiary issues are barely that: exploitation by indigo planters, unfair land settlement, social oppression, low wages, computation of rents in cash, and security of tenure (Das, 1993, p. 226-227). The problems in the Subalternist approach come to a head in Das's conclusion, in which he argues that "the principal motive force for change…has come from the peasantry itself albeit through halting, sporadic, and sometimes even blundering actions" (p. 227). What is worth noting is how, at the same time as recognising the peasantry as a historical actor, Das dismisses its political actions as 'halting', 'sporadic', and 'blundering'.

Das's (1993) essay highlights one of the most crucial problems with the Subalternist-Scott confluence: they deny peasant political consciousness in the same moment that they put the peasantry on a pedestal. I have shown that while the categories of moral economy and subalternity became significant modes to study peasant mobilisations, they made assumptions that obscure or dismiss significant parts of peasant politics. Peasant movements often actively engage with questions of state, markets, and class formations, rather than ignoring them. Moreover, the argument that peasant politics exists in an autonomous sphere fails to recognise their impact on national and global events. It is important to rescue peasant movements from

such parochialism and let them hold their place in history. In this chapter, we will do so by examining how peasant movements in West Punjab approached prevalent, mainstream debates about the trajectories of capitalist development and possible pathways to rural emancipation. Instead of being stuck in an autonomous subaltern sphere, these movements engaged the state and the economy with projects of radical (and sometimes less radical) transformation. They were integrated not just through links across rural classes, but alliances with urban movements and intellectuals who were critical in shaping peasant politics in West Punjab. Moreover, they participated actively in the Sino-Soviet debates and the larger histories of global Marxism. If the peasant is "a subject of history in [their] own right", the history of peasant movements must be told in connection with other global histories – of colonialism, of capitalism, of revolution, of nationalism (Guha, 1999, p. 4).

Passive Revolution, Economism and their Limits

A new generation of Marxist scholars working on Pakistan have turned to Gramsci's conceptions of hegemony and passive revolution for analyses of agrarian change, movements and the state (Tirmizey 2018a, Akhtar 2008, Ali 2019). Noaman Ali's (2019) thesis on the Mazdoor Kissan Party[63] grounds rural movement studies not just across time, but in relationship to transformations in state and political economy. Focusing on the dialectical relationship between the "impact of state formation on peasant movements led by revolutionaries" and asking "how did movements of rural lower classes… win concessions from landed elites and shape the direction and institutionalisation of state power" (Ali, 2019, p. ii), Ali's work departs from "the notion that [a]…South Asian history of peasant struggles

[63] The foundations of the MKP were laid in a split between in the WPKC in 1967. The MKP consolidated Mao-inspired revolutionaries in West Pakistan around the same time as the Naxalbari movement was emerging in neighbouring India. It is largely identified with a Maoist and peasantist ideology.

needs to look primarily at forms of ‘consciousness’, thereby avoiding the pitfalls of the Subaltern and Moral Economy schools’ absence of any analysis of issues of state, capital, and rural differentiation, while going beyond the narrow focus on discovering abstract revolutionary subjectivity within certain peasant classes of the Alavi/Wolf approach (p. 4). Ali argues in favour of understanding the politics of rural classes in relation to their changing place within agrarian political economy, arguing that “tenant and labourer consciousness… depended on how they were differentially included and excluded from the hegemony of landed elites in the Peshawar valley and a broader post-colonial political economy” (Ali, 2019, p. 18-19). The importance given to the state, local and national elites, the positionality of rural classes, and the decisions of radical organisers (Ali, 2019, p. 11) allows for a much more dynamic and complete story to be told, where the Hashtnagar movement is able to enact “*de facto* land and tenancy rights reform, as well as shifting the locus of power from informal institutions of *khanism* to formal institutions of the state” (Ali, 2019, p. 9). This makes for a far less pessimist reading that a world in which revolution could only either be complete or not happen at all.

The passive revolution approach runs into its limits in over-emphasising the role of the state and ruling elites. In Ali’s (2019) thesis, we can see this in how the concept of passive revolution is deployed to explain the collapse of two moments in the Hashtnagar movement: the early 1950s and the late 1970s. Speaking about the eventual demobilisation of the MKP, Ali argues that it was related to the “Pakistan People’s Party’s (PPP) strategy of “passive revolution,” that is, ceding some concessions to demobilise the masses” (p. 13). Ali quotes Gramsci at some length, arguing that “progress” occurs as the reaction of the dominant classes to the sporadic and incoherent rebelliousness of the popular masses – a reaction consisting of “restorations” that agree to some part of the popular demands and are therefore “progressive restorations,” or “revolution restorations” or “passive revolutions” p. 20). Thus, making an

argument that Pakistan saw “spatially differentiated passive revolution[s]…to preserve the principle of private property and to preserve the domination of landed elites in general” (Ali, 2019, p. 21). While the thesis captures the complex agencies and interactions between state, landed elites, differentiated peasant classes and revolutionary activists, deploying the concept of passive revolution places agency in the fold of the state or ruling elites, and takes away the ability of revolutionary activists, small peasants, and the landless peasantry to have mounted an alternative response. Specifically, the argument that the PPP’s “redistributi[on] of rights in land while restoring the sanctity of private property rights…established a liberal hegemony over tenants”, (Ali, 2019, p. 197) leaves no room to ask: why was the movement unable to respond in a way that it would not be co-opted? Moreover, one could argue that land distribution amongst sharecropping classes and building institutions of peasant self-governance constituted significant victories for the movement, rather than considering them “the very…condition of its demobilisation” (Ali, 2019, p. 284).

The second limitation can be found in Ali’s (2019) argument that all aspects of the agenda of agrarian reform other than land reform were “economistic”, instead of focusing on “political economic issues”, arguing that:

> …although at its core were communists young and old, the Kissan Committee focused on economistic, rather than political economic issues, largely avoiding direct anti-state or anti-landlord politicization…Items for discussing at an organizing meeting of the Frontier Kissan Committee in 1964, illustrate the sometimes dry nature of their policy demands on the government: cracking down on ammonium sulphate black-marketing, addressing difficulties in cultivators selling to mills and markets, investment in fruit processing, ensuring Warsak Canal’s water supply, and ensuring foreign exchange for sugar mills. (p. 154-155)

Issues pertaining to the larger agrarian political economy are not side questions that represent purely 'economistic' trends within peasant movements. Instead, these have remained at the heart of anti-colonial and revolutionary peasant movements, as substantive issues, rather than peripheral or opportunistic trends. While it is true that movement intellectuals themselves have often articulated similar criticisms, perhaps one could flip the question around on the collapse of the MKP in the late 70s and wonder if it would have remained influential if it had an agenda beyond land occupation to offer to the Hashtnagar peasantries. Therefore, one could argue that the movement collapsed not due to a passive revolution, but rather because it was unable to imagine what its role was after the objective of 'land-to-the-tiller' had been achieved.

The Agrarian, Peasant and National Questions: An Uneasy Alliance

Focusing on how left-wing kissan movements in West Punjab engaged with questions of agrarian and national development can address the limitations of the political economy and culturalist approaches outlined above. Rather than seeing them as footnotes in nationalist historiography or viewing their input on national development as a digression from 'real' peasant politics, this chapter shows how the left-wing West Punjab kissan movement saw building an anti-imperialist national state and autonomous trajectory of development to be critical components of resolving the agrarian question in Pakistan. However, it will also show how unresolved aspects of the national question, for example, the issue of regional parity caused tensions and fissures within the kissan movement, impairing its ability to address the new agrarian and national questions that emerged in the 1970s.

In their 2013 essay, "The Classical Agrarian Question: Myth, Reality and Relevance Today", Moyo, Jha and Yoros argue that the agrarian question and national question converged in the process of building anti-imperialist nationalisms in the Global South. Charting the

evolution of the Agrarian Question from Europe to Maoist China, in African nationalism and within revolutionary Latin America and the Caribbean, they criticise "Eurocentric and economistic tendencies" in Marxist political economy for failing to acknowledge "the national question and its land and peasant components", arguing that "the national question marked the culmination of the classical agrarian question" (Moyo et al., 2013, p. 94). This shift went hand in hand with the acknowledgement that "as the AQ moved South, the organisation of the peasantry by the vanguard parties of liberation would be claimed as a fundamental political task; and national self-determination would finally encounter its motive force" (Moyo et al., 2013, p. 96). This chapter will capture the national and global imperatives that West Punjab's kissan movements carried on their shoulders, including rural reconstruction, agrarian development, anti-imperialism and shaping the direction of national development plans in the 1950s and 1960s.

However, while the agrarian question may have been the "central axis of the national question" emerging out of colonialism, this does not mean that the two existed in a harmonious relationship (Shivji, 1987, p. 295). The agrarian and national questions all come with contradictory imperatives, for example, we will see how redistributing land and restructuring land relations comes in conflict with the imperative to increase agrarian production in West Punjab. Moreover, there are larger and much more difficult questions to address when it comes to the relationship between industrial and agrarian development, especially when the experience involves increasing regional and class disparities within national borders. In so much as West Punjab's kissan movements participated in articulating the shape of national development, these challenges continued to come up and were critical to its eventual demise as the chapter will show. In particular, the 1970 Toba Conference, as a hugely successful mass mobilisation that organised around these concerns, provides a productive site for interrogating

how West Punjabi kissan movements negotiated the at times contradictory relationship between revolutionary peasant politics and national development.

Section 2: The Formation of the WPKC: Dispossessions, Migrations and Rebuilding the Kissan Movement in the 1950s

The left-wing kissan movements in West Punjab were re-built out of the ashes of anti-colonial peasant movements in undivided Punjab, whose organisational strength was decimated in the mass dispossessions and forced migrations that ensued in the wake of the 1947 Partition of the sub-continent. As India and Pakistan achieved formal Independence, and the state on either side commenced the task of nation-building and development in a landscape that had seen unprecedented displacement and violence, a new kissan also emerged, constituted through the transfer of populations between East and West Punjab along religious lines, and the widescale resettlement of villages and patterns of land ownership under a nascent post-colonial state. While the splintering of the CPI along geographic and communal borders during Partition has received some attention,[64] there has been little reflection on the formative impact of the same process on South Asia's peasant movements. In this section, I situate the West Punjabi kissan, the popular base of the Toba Conference, within the historic terrain of Partition and post-colonial national development to demonstrate how dispossession and migration shaped the early development of the kissan movement in the post-Partition period. Drawing on Fateh's autobiography, the chapter focuses on how the kissan movement was critical to shaping how rural Punjab was re-settled after Partition, and was in turn shaped by the debates around national reconstruction, complicating frameworks of class-reductionist Marxist political

[64] For more on the Communist Party of Pakistan, see: Ali, K. A. (2015). *Surkh salam. Communist politics and class activism in Pakistan 1947–1972.* Oxford University Press. For a history of the communist movement in pre-Partition leading through post-Partition East Punjab, see Singh, Gurharpal. *Communism in Punjab: A Study of the Movement upto 1967.* (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1994)

economy and culturalist Subalternist approaches by forcing an engagement with the historical and national terrain the movement operated in.

A new Muslim Settler Kissan and an Emergent Leadership

Rural Punjab was witness to several transformations that shaped the formation of the left-wing kissan movement in the late 1940s and early 1950s. These transformations included two sets of dispossessions and a new round of settlement. The violent transfer of hundreds of thousands of predominantly Sikh peasants to East Punjab during Partition riots[65] led to the bulk of the leadership of the Punjab Kissan Sabha (PKS) leaving suddenly and separated the trajectory of the WPKC from its historic roots in the anticolonial peasant movement. Adjacent to this process was the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Muslim agrarian settlers, which, coupled with the departure of the Sikh and Hindu cultivators, effectively meant the canal colonies of West Punjab were re-settled in this period. Much of the leadership and membership of the WPKC came out of the Muslim settlers which had been dispossessed in East Punjab and arrived in West Punjab during the Partition. Moreover, there was an ongoing process of dispossession of sharecropper tenants from lands owned by med and large-scale landowners. In its early years, the left-wing kissan movement organised around these three issues, which shaped the first kissan conferences, as well as the 1956 'gherao' (sit-in) at Mochi Darwaza in Lahore organised by the PKF.

The story of Chaudhry Fateh Mohammad, who became the WPKC's most influential general secretary, is illustrative of the journey of many amongst the movement's support base. Born on May 16, 1925, in the village of Chahar near Jallandar in East Punjab to a landowning

[65] For more on the Partition, read: Zamindar, V. (2007). *The long partition and the making of modern South Asia: Refugees, boundaries, histories.* Columbia University Press; and Virdee, P. (2018). *From the Ashes of Partition: Reimagining Punjab.* Cambridge University Press.

family, Fateh remembers "agitations against local landlords" in the village (Mohammad, 2015., p. 38). Eventually, forced to leave the village due to Partition violence, Fateh and his family made their way to the village Chak 403-JB Sada Araian, in Lyallpur, where a paternal aunt had settled during the first wave of canal colonization under the British (Mohammad, 2015, p. 44-45). Fateh and his brother were allocated a total of 13 acres of land in Chak 305-JB that previously belonged to the former lambardar[66] Indar Singh, who had been forced to migrate to East Punjab. It was here, as a migrant kissan, that he established a connection with the Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP). He met a member of the CPP, Dr Mohammad Abdullah, who was lambardar of Chak 405-JB, when he arrived to settle a village dispute (Mohammad, 2015, p. 46-47). Despite being a lambardar himself, Dr Abdullah suggested the formation of a village committee as an alternative political structure in the village which would resolve local disputes and deal with the state. Fateh was collectively nominated to become its president. While the village attempted to resist appointing a lambardar, local state officials were persistent and the village relented when the tehsildar came to the village and decided to appoint the village committee president, Fateh, in the post. When Fateh went to Dr Abdullah to become the guarantor, Dr Abdullah refused, stating how can "peasants pay tax when they don't have money? We need to start a movement against this". He invited Fateh to the first Punjab Kissan Conference on March 28, 1948, in Dr Abdullah's village (Mohammad, 2015, p. 48-49). Fateh joined the CPP the same year and began to organise among the peasantry. At the Lyallpur Kissan Conference, on April 2, 1950, Fateh was elected general secretary of the district kissan committee, which laid the ground for his rapid rise in the ranks of the WPKC and a lifelong commitment to communist and peasant politics that only ended with his demise at the age of 97 in 2020 (Mohammad, 2015, p. 51-54).

[66] The village lambardar is delegated the responsibility of ensuring that the revenue is collected and put into state coffers. The West Pakistan Land Revenue Act 1967 also defines a lambardar as a 'headman.'

Re-settling Agrarian Punjab: the Struggle for Mazaras and Mohajirs

While Fateh became an ideologue of the kissan movement in his own right, control of the ideological orientation of the WPKC in these early days was in the hands of urban communist intellectuals and trade unionists. In a study circle held immediately after the 1950 Lyallpur Kissan Conference, trade union leader Mirza Ibrahim and lawyer and intellectual C. R. Aslam proposed a new line:

> …international communism has decided to change its policy towards newly independent countries like us. They have rejected the policy of armed struggle for social change. The fight in these countries is no longer for socialism. Instead, we must align with those intellectuals and parties opposed to capitalism and feudalism…to create industrialisation and people's democracy. (Mohammad, 2015, p. 55)

Coming at a time when the Communist Party of India (CPI) accelerated peasant militancy in India with the Telangana struggle in Hyderabad state, Tebhaga in Bengal and Pepsu movements in East Punjab[67], this constituted a stark point of departure for the WPKC.

Peasant militancy, however, was unavoidable in such turbulent times. The rural structure of post-Partition West Punjab was unstable with both old sharecroppers and newly settling kissan being dispossessed by landlords, as new localised movements started against dispossession and the rights of sharecropping tenants. An anti-landlord movement linked with the WPKC had started in the Multan region with the slogan, 'Batai banay utay adho adha, na begar te na katoti' (Crops will be shared half and half; no free labour and no cuts' (Mohammad,

[67] There were a number of major peasant insurrections that broke out in India in the years following Independence with various degrees of support from the CPI. For more, read: Ram, M. (1974). The Telangana peasant armed struggle, 1946-1951. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1025-1032; Dhanagre, D.N. (1976). The Tebhagha Movement in Bengal (India), 1946-47. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 360-378; Gough, K. (1976). Indian peasant uprisings. *Bulletin of concerned Asian scholars*. *8*, 2-18.

2015. p. 66). Mohammad reports that landlords responded by carrying out "evictions on a big scale, which were reported daily in newspapers" (p. 66-67). More reports began to arrive of kissans who had arrived during Partition being evicted all over the province. The WPKC organised kissan conferences in Kabirwala and Vehari in favour of the rights demanded by sharecroppers and opposed the ongoing evictions of both the old tenants and new settlers. The fight against dispossession became articulated as a joint struggle that brought together the mazaras (tenants) and the mohajirs (migrant kissans), while the WPKC had begun to raise the demand for broader land reform. Settler kissans were officially recognised as a distinct category by the state through an announcement introducing a quota for mohajirs in the 1951 Punjab Assembly elections. Fateh Mohammad had planned to contest elections on one of these mohajir seats but was forced to go underground when arrest orders for him were issued after Fateh issued a statement in support of tenants who were being evicted in Lahore (Mohammad, 2015, p. 67-70).

On the one hand, the government launched a crackdown on peasant organising, specifically targeting WPKC leaders, on the other, the Punjab governor was pressured into issuing the Punjab Protection and Restoration of Tenancy Ordinance (PPRTA) in 1950,[68] which made it necessary for landlords to stop evictions without court orders and authorised displaced tenants to get their tenancy restored. However, the Ordinance contained conditions under which evictions could be authorised, including not cultivating, spoiling the land, and not paying their share of rent. Mohammad notes that "being a member of the Kissan or Hari Committees" could be used as a legitimate reason for evicting tenants, although this is not directly mentioned in the text of the law (2015, p. 67). Despite the ordinance promising to protect sharecropping tenants, there was no change in evictions and no attempts to actively

[68] Text of the the Punjab Protection and Restoration of Tenancy Ordinance (PPRTA) 1950. http://punjablaws.gov.pk/laws/62.html#_ftn14

restore displaced tenants. The movement itself was the strongest defence against evictions. The WPKC held its first delegates' conference in Gujranwala in 1952, and organised its third Kissan Conference on February 15, 1953, in Pir Mahal, Toba Tek Singh, where it announced a plan to march to Lahore and threatened a 'gherao' of the Punjab Assembly, which would raise the issue of the dispossession of tenants and migrant farmers once again (Mohammad, 2015, p. 72). The threat of a march on Lahore forced the government to announce two more tenancy reforms, including a proposal for land reforms by Chief Minister Mumtaz Daultana. The proposal for land reforms was watered down in the assembly to an amendment in the PPRTA 1950, which stipulated sharecroppers and migrant cultivators be allotted alternate land before eviction and increased the share of crops for tenants to 60 percent of cultivated crop (Mohammad, 2015, p. 72-73). Rather than passive revolutions, these laws were significant victories, which Fateh notes reduced the number of evictions taking place and led to the allotment of hundreds of thousands of acres of state land to migrant cultivators (p. 72). Moreover, these did not lead to demobilisation, and instead the kissan movement in the 1950s gained momentum from state attempts to accede to its demands.

In 1954, under US pressure, organisations considered to be affiliated with the CPP, including the WPKC, were banned. This led to many communist and kissan leaders forming the Azad Pakistan Party, which eventually merged with the National Awami Party in 1957. With the WPKC banned, cadres were re-organised to form the Pakistan Kissan Front (PKF) in 1955 by Sheikh Rasheed, (Rasheed, 2011, p. 105) with the PKF becoming the only left-wing kissan organisation able to organise openly in West Punjab for the next three years before also being banned after the 1958 military coup by Ayub Khan (Rasheed, 2011, p. 123). The PKF's biggest success was a major sit in at the Mochi Darwaza Ground in Lahore on July 11, 1956, where thousands of cultivators arrived in Lahore despite police crackdowns that started all the way back in their home villages around the issue of ejectments (Rasheed, 2011, p. 106-108).

While Rasheed (2011) notes that strong handed tactics dissipated the protests, including arrests and buying out protestors with land allotments, the government announced the Ejected Tenants and Grow More Food Schemes, which allowed ejected tenants to apply for alternate land allotments (p. 111).

The mobilisations of the WPKC and PKF in the 1950s were able to incorporate the tenant and migrant farmer dispossession and land allocations into the national agrarian question. The left-wing kissan movement in West Punjab was able to organise across small and mid-scale owner-cultivators, tenants, and settler kissans. While the Soviet line, "Capitalism first," remained key in debates, the on-ground politics was shaped by dynamics of dispossession and settlement set forth by Partition. In doing so, the mobilisations of kissan movements had a critical role in shaping how West Punjab's agrarian world was resettled after the Partition of 1947. Moreover, the threat of 'peasant' militancy had become such that the US-backed military dictatorship of Ayub Khan attempted to placate simmering rural dissent by announcing ceiling land reforms in 1959. With both major kissan organisations formally banned, the military regime hoped that its combination of land and agrarian reforms and the opening up of new frontiers of agrarian colonisation in Southern Punjab and Sindh would check kissan militancy in central Punjab. However, the high land ceilings and ineffective implementation meant that the land question re-emerged as the anchor of kissan mobilisations in the early 1960s and even land allocations in the new agrarian frontiers began to be contested.

Section 3: Consolidating Class Alliances: Building a Kissan Movement for Agrarian Reform in the 1960s

Once the ban on political parties lifted in 1962, the WPKC began re-organising itself. In 1963, the WPKC's organising committee began a tour of Punjab, which heavily focused on

creating new district committees in newly colonised areas in South Punjab that had been settled by migrant farmers in the last few years (Mohammad, 2015, p. 111-113). This involved deepening the movement's roots by pushing for a broader agenda of agrarian reform, instead of focusing on tenant and settler farmer rights as it did in the 1950s. This decision was taken at a meeting of all its district committee members on April 27, 1963, in Khanewal, where 'Major' Ishaque Mohammad, who later became one of the key figures in the MKP, was elected the WPKC national convenor (Mohammad, 2015, p. 110). Thus, during the 1960s, the left-wing kissan movement in West Punjab entered another phase of mobilisation, in which the kissan movement directly engaged with the state's agenda of agrarian development. This effectively placed the left-wing kissan movement at different moments as both an oppositional movement and an interlocuter for the state, showing that it did not exist in an 'autonomous subaltern sphere' with a politics removed from national development.

During this period, the WPKC and PKF worked to propose an alternative trajectory of agrarian capitalism in West Punjab, which advocated increasing productivity, land redistribution, security of tenure, strengthening small and mid-scale producers, and incorporating elements of cooperative agriculture. They focused on pressuring the state to incorporate land reform within Pakistan's Third Five Year Plan (1965-1970), which included a significant set of proposals for agricultural development and coincided with the Green Revolution. The state's programme of agrarian reforms focused on increasing the use of HYVs, machinery and chemical inputs by individual farmers.[69] C.R. Aslam, a key communist leader associated with the WPKC, argued that the plan's objective of "increasing the income of cultivators, achieving self-sufficiency in food grains and increasing the productivity of crops in light of the cost of importing food" would not be possible without increasing the income of cultivators (Aslam, 1965, p. 6). The first step towards this would be land rights, which he noted

[69] See: Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion.

had “no mention in the agricultural programme” (Aslam, 1965, p. 6). Moreover, Aslam argued that mechanisation needed to be pursued through cooperatives, else it would only benefit “landlords and industrious farmers” who can afford the machinery privately (Aslam, 1965, p. 7).

Proposing a broader agenda for agrarian reform allowed the WPKC and PKF to appeal to differentiated agrarian classes. Their formative phase in the ‘50s was focused on the immediate questions of tenure security and the reconstruction of agrarian Punjab in the aftermath of Partition and ongoing displacement of sharecropping tenants. Having mobilised successfully in the 1950s, the left-wing kissan movement’s literature and mobilisations in the 1960s show a concern with expanding their support base beyond tenants and landless migrant farmers to include sections of small and medium-scale owner-cultivators. This literature, analysed closely in sections that follow, shows how they were articulating and building rural class alliances within Marxist political practice. In the movement’s view, this process required tying agrarian development to national development anchored around the small and mid-scale agricultural producer. This linked questions of increasing productivity with the agenda of land reform, thus securing support from a broader segment of the rural population, while maintaining ideological commitments to anti-feudalism and anti-imperialism.

The Land Question: Redistribution, Viable Landholdings and New Frontiers

Advocating land reforms in the 1960s involved the kissan movement balancing several imperatives, including ending feudal landholdings, advancing the agrarian mode of production, increasing productivity, creating conditions for viable smallholder farming, and not alienating segments of the rural population. The West Punjab kissan movement advocated ceiling land reforms, which would set the land holding limits at 25 acres of irrigated and 50 acres of

unirrigated land. These were significantly lower than the 500 acres of irrigated and 1000 acres of unirrigated land limits set by the military regime in 1959 in a heavily criticised land reforms package.[70] Continuing to expand its organisation on the ground, the well-attended Punjab Kissan Conference[71] in Toba Tek Singh on April 3-4 1965, called for "revolutionary developments in the agricultural political economy" (Afaq, 1965), which required the resolution of the land question, resettling evicted tenants, and allotting newly colonised lands to small and landless farmers.

This three-pronged approach defined the policy of the WPKC towards the land question. The proposals accounted for the interests of small to medium sized landholders who could be alienated by proposals for collectivising landholdings (Ishaque, n.d., p. 42). In a WPKC pamphlet, "The Organisational Problems of the Kissan Committee," national convenor Major Ishaque Muhammad warned against using the slogan, "End Landholdings!" He argued that its deployment was "a threat to the kissan committees' expansion in areas of Punjab and Sarhad that are mostly settled by small farmers" (Ishaque, n.d., p. 16). Part of the WPKC's Maoist faction, Ishaque argued that rural Punjab was not just differentiated across rural classes but contained different rural social structures. The word 'zamindar' translated differently in different geographies: it could refer to a large landlord or a smallholding cultivator depending on where it was used (Ishaque, n.d., p. 16). The WPKC wanted to break the impression that "the Kissan Committee is a Tenant Party" (Ishaque, n.d., p. 16), supporting land rights for smallholders while advocating taking land away for redistribution from large landowners. The left-wing kissan movement appealed to smallholders on account of the fact their research

[70] For the most detailed exploration of the debates leading up to 1959 land reforms, read: Herring, R. (1983). Land ceilings in Pakistan: An agrarian bourgeois revolution? In *Land to the tiller: The political economy of land reform in South Asia.* Yale University Press (p. 85-124).
[71] It was reported to have been attended by thousands of kissans, including 500 delegates from district committees of the WPKC (*Afaq*, 1965).

indicated that most smallholders were renting land in,[72] and thus occupied the dual position of farmer and tenant - kissan and mazara. This meant that smallholder farmers also shared the experience of tenants, including crop sharing, performing free labour, and facing landlord violence (Rasheed., n.d., p. 7).

One of the critical arguments supporting land reforms was the need for viable landholdings. In 1964, President Ayub Khan admitted that no one could sustain themselves through agriculture with less than nine acres of land (Kissan Kahan Jaein, Afaq, 20 November 1964). However, of the five million families drawing their income from agriculture in Pakistan, around 49 percent had less than five acres of land (Kissan Kahan Jaein, 1964). Simple land distribution was made difficult by the fact that there was not enough land, with an article arguing that "even if land was re-distributed on subsistence grounds, even then only three million families would get land" (Kissan Kahan Jaein, 1964). This would still leave two million rural households landless. This begins to explain how the WPKC and PKF positioned themselves in relation to new agrarian frontiers in southern Punjab and Sindh and new tubewell irrigation schemes in canal-irrigated areas.

The left-wing kissan movement aimed to solve part of the land question by campaigning for newly colonised lands to be distributed amongst landless rural cultivators. The Kissan Committees aligned themselves with agrarian expansion, calling it "potentially the biggest development programme in the country" (Ishaque, n.d., p. 5.). However, they argued that the government was continuing the "tradition set by the English colonisers" by distributing "hundreds of thousands of acres of land brought under cultivation after building new barrages to rich and powerful people" (Ishaque, n.d., p. 5). This reading is only partially correct. As discussed in chapter 2, we have seen that the legacy of canal colonisation lay in the expansion

[72] There is no data available as to the number, geographic distribution, and socio-economic conditions of such families in either the movement literature or Agricultural Census of Pakistan.

of agrarian frontiers itself into territories and peoples that were not quite amenable,[73] and not the concentration of landholdings[74] per se.

Countering Imperialism, Increasing Productivity:

It was clear to the WPKC and PKF that land reform and new agrarian colonisations alone would not solve the agrarian crisis that existed in the country. Articulating the agrarian crisis as a joint crisis of food and sustainable livelihoods for small farmers, they advocated measures to increase the productivity of cultivated land. In support of increasing productivity, they fashioned arguments about the importance of land reform, citing the higher productivity of small to medium landholdings, the need to change the agrarian mode of production, and building a sovereign economy free from the shackles of imperialism.

An article in the *Mehnat Edition* in 1964 noted that "the current agricultural productivity is not enough for the population of the country. In such a situation, the gains in foreign currency through exporting rice by increasing its productivity and cultivated area are low" (Afaq, 1964, p. 9). Laying out a complex terrain of issues that needed to be dealt with, including productivity, seeds, mechanisation and the growing of commercial crops, it recognises the difficulty in finding a balance between agriculture for industry and agriculture for food. Ishaque noted that Punjab, once "famous in all of India for its productivity", was facing severe grain shortages by 1952 (p. 19). By 1960, 25 percent of the country's import budget was being spent on grain imports, which ran the risk of "famine-like conditions" and slowed down development projects in the country. Rasheed presented the number from a

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[73] Each expansion of agrarian frontiers was actively resisted – and continues to be in the Seraiki Wasaib and Sindh.

[74] While there is little doubt when surveying rural Punjab that British loyalists received more than their fair share of big landholdings, there were more than enough small to medium landholdings that do not suggest a simple pattern.

comparative lens. "Pakistan has low productivity. Based on figures from 1948-49, Yugoslavia, the US, Russia and Australia had yields of 37, 45, 63, and 57 manns per acre, while Pakistan was averaging 12.5 manns per acre of wheat" (Rasheed, n.d., p. 22). Pakistan needed a 30 percent increase in grain production, but the actual growth number was only around two percent per year (Ishaque, n.d., p. 20). Domestic grain production was not just threatened by low productivity, but farmers shifting away from growing food crops in favour of commercial crops, due to the rapid growth of industry. Domestic industries, such as textile, now consumed over 60 percent of their raw material from local agriculture, which had led many farmers to stop growing "important crops like rice and wheat" (Afaq, Nov 13 1964, p. 9). The key push was to break away from farming methods that were "hundreds of years old" (Afaq, 1964, p. 9), through the introduction of developed seeds, agricultural machinery, and price protection for farmers growing rice and wheat (Afaq, 1964, p. 9).

With its insistence on the place of agriculture as an industry, the kissan movement and its intellectuals positioned themselves in favour of a capitalist transition[75] in agriculture that would be predicated on the end of feudalism, land redistribution and the adoption of modern methods of farming. Kissan committees at national, provincial, and district levels advocated solutions that included the creation of grain markets and banks, mechanisation, training farmers, and introducing new breeds of livestock (Afaq, 1964). Moreover, they saw industrial development as a critical corollary to agricultural development. Ishaque argued that "agriculture only develops in countries which are advanced in industries, for example, they organise agriculture using new methods and use new machinery towards its promotion" (Ishaque, n.d., p. 32). The development of agriculture would require increasing the yield per acre, with Rasheed referring to experimental farms run by the Agricultural Development which

[75] This reflects the position of the movements, who identified with the feudal mode of production thesis.

were producing yields of around 50-60 manns per acre in central Punjab. This was four times the current yields in the province.

Both kissan movements saw increasing productivity to be important for building national sovereignty and autonomy without reliance on old colonial ties, arguing that agrarian reform was the necessary mechanism to "change continuities from East India Company rule...and free the country from the capitalist trap" (Ishaque, n.d., p. 33). In a context where "the food crisis in the country is being used by opportunists to put the country back into the grip of imperialism" (Ishaque, n.d., p. 21), Ishaque argued that there was a need to increase grain production and promote self-reliance on commercial crops, such as cotton, oilseeds, and sugarcane. Land reform would be a critical element in the agenda of agrarian reform. The high concentration of land was responsible for low productivity, with Ishaque arguing that "big landholdings are dangerously bringing the agricultural productivity of the country down" (p. 28), while others are left with "landholdings so small that they are only half-employed" (p. 26). Thus, the highly differentiated land distribution needed to be radically transformed to increase the productivity of land and move towards genuine agrarian reform.

To see the left-wing kissan movement's objectives as similar to the state and transnational organisations like the World Bank (WB) and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) would be to miss the point. Rather than positing agricultural technologies as scale neutral, the kissan movement understood that land redistribution was essential to flipping the cards in favour of small and medium scale agrarian producers. This would involve the state backing small farmers, rather than allowing older landed elites to lead the transition to agrarian capitalism. Land reform would go along with larger agrarian reform to make small farming viable going into the future, which was a path supported by "socialist countries and other developing countries committed to national sovereignty" (Ishaque, n.d., p. 28).

Section 4: 'Toba Tek Singh is Red': The 1970 Kissan Conference and Beyond

The mobilisation, proceedings, and symbolism at the Toba Tek Singh conference embodied the WPKC's joint articulation of the agrarian and national questions in the 1960s. Bringing over a hundred thousand kissans together on March 23, 1970, its success was a testament to the widespread popularity of the WPKC's agenda for agrarian reform among dispossessed kissan, sharecropping tenants and smallholding farmers in West Punjab and beyond. As speeches, reports, and other footage of the conference reveal, this mass gathering became a forum for consolidating debates within the kissan movement in West Punjab, integrating the agrarian question on a national scale, while also addressing larger national questions, including regional discord and authoritarian rule in Pakistan. In particular, speeches by Maulana Bhashani and Chaudhary Fateh, whose texts were published after the event in left-wing magazine *Lail-o-Nihar* and Fateh's own autobiography, provide a closer look into how the WPKC leadership translated internal debates on questions of agrarian reform and peasant politics into its popular mobilisational work.

Having expanded its political base, the WPKC was able to organise a tour of West Pakistan for Maulana Bhashani in 1965 which included kissan conferences in Sukker, Lyallpur, and Toba Tek Singh. The slogan, "Long live small landowners, tenants and workers unity", had begun to gain popularity as the country began to enter a period of sustained anti-dictatorship protests (Rasheed, n.d., p. 31). As mentioned before, state-led agrarian reform in the late 1960s had begun to deepen the divisions in West Punjab's agrarian belt. The question of tenant evictions kept coming up as a key one during the many kissan conferences and conventions held in the five years. In this context of ongoing landlord-led and ecological

dispossession[76], WPKC continued to grow stronger with its focus on ending the ‘jagirdari’ (feudal) system in the country (Paras, 1969). The WPKC mobilisations, which criticised the 1959 land reforms, thus connected with ongoing rural resentment against the state’s agrarian agenda. As the military regime promised a transition to democracy and the country’s first general elections scheduled for December 7, 1970, the kissan movement in East and West Pakistan began to scale up their mobilisations.

On January 19, 1970, the WPKC leadership attended a huge Kissan Conference at Maulana Bhashani’s home village, Santosh, in East Pakistan (Mohammad, 2015, p. 129). Impressed by its organisation, the WPKC leadership decided to organise the biggest Kissan Conference yet in West Pakistan. Planned for March 23, 1970, to coincide with the Pakistan Resolution Day, or Pakistan’s Republic Day, the slogan ‘Chalo Chalo Toba Tek Singh Chalo!’ (‘Come, come, come to Toba Tek Singh!’) was approved to mobilise for the conference (Mohammad, 2015 p. 130). As the message to come to Toba Tek Singh spread, it was received as a message for agrarian reform, the end of the military dictatorship, and the hope for a new national project. In a context where a repressive military regime stood poised to crack down on any and every mass gathering or protest demonstration, the bold call to kissan from everywhere to travel to Toba Tek Singh for a massive show of power constituted an assertion of both peasant strength and a popular commitment to democratic struggle. Along with raising funds, distributing pamphlets, and organising corner meetings in the lead-up to the conference, the WPKC leadership encouraged participants to wear red caps at the venue to reproduce the sea of red they had encountered in Santosh. Even the stage was set up in “the tradition of Bengal… a huge stage at the centre of the three-acre venue, which could seat five hundred

[76] Cultivable land was being lost to water logging and salinity. While not discussed in detail here, there is significant discussion in the movement literature around the SCARP projects and using tubewells as a solution to land loss.

people, surrounded by red flags on all sides" (Bashir, April 5, 1970, p. 29). The peasant-organising traditions of West Punjab and East Bengal could be seen together.

Understanding the threat posed to the socio-political order, religious political parties in Pakistan started a propaganda campaign against the conference. Set in the context of the Cold War when Pakistan's Islamists were the darlings of the western world, they began to tell people that the conference's leading slogan was, 'Khuda tumhara, Mao humara' (God is yours, Mao is ours) (Mohammad, 2015, p. 139). The Jamaat-i-Islami, the main religious political party,[77] raised much hue and cry about a poem recited by left-wing poet, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, 'Sar-e-Wadi-e-Sina' (On top of the Valley of Sinai), for containing allegedly blasphemous content.[78] Their propaganda did little to dissuade the tens of thousands who began to arrive in Toba Tek Singh two days before the conference:

> …small groups continued to arrive since morning. And each of them came in their own glory. We say groups arrived from Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar Khan, Bahawalnagar, Vehari, Burewala, Kabirwala, Lodhran, Sargodha, Lyallpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Jhang, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Gujrat…Mardan, Bannu, Kohat, Peshawar, Swat, Quetta, Karachi and Lasbela. How do we count? There is unlikely be a single village in Punjab from which one or two young people had not arrived. (Bashir, 1970, p. 28)

The conference, hosted by the WPKC, became a site for a truly national political and cultural gathering of progressive forces. This helped anchor the links between the agrarian and national questions, with the terms of the debate set by the kissan movement. It attracted a wide array of progressive groups, including the Sindh Hari Committee,[79] student organisers from

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[77] For more on the Jamaat-i-Islami, see: Nasr, S.V.R. (1994). *Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama'at-i-Islami of Pakistan*. University of California Press; and Iqtidar, H. (2011). *Secularising Islamists? The Jama'at-i-Islami and Jama'at-ud-Da'wa in urban Pakistan*. University of Chicago Press.
[78] A bit out of date. (1970, April 3). *Dawn*. https://www.dawn.com/news/1546061
[79] Founded in 1930, the Sindh Hari Committee was a left-wing movement which struggled for the rights of Sindh's Haris or landless peasants. It was one of the movements that co-founded NAP in 1957. For more, see: Khan, M.H. (1979). *Sindh Hari Committee, 1930-1970: A peasant movement?* ILO: Geneva.

Balochistan, Punjab, and Sindh, left-leaning political party workers, writers, poets, actors, theatre groups, and folk-song troupes (Bashir, 1970, p. 28). Thus, the conference, much like the wider politics of the WPKC, represented a nexus where wider communist, student, anti-authoritarian, and counter-cultural struggles convened, shaping and in turn getting shaped by the WPKC's agenda of national and agrarian reform.

This link between the development of agrarian capitalism and national sovereignty was suggested by the WPKC's three official slogans for the Toba conference: "End feudalism, end capitalism, death to imperialism" (Mohammad, 2015, p. 139). Crowds that gathered around the 'Kissan Express,' a train that arrived from Lahore carrying Maulana Bhashani and other kissan activists began to chant, "Cheen lo, cheen lo, sari jagirain cheel lo! Samraj murdabad, Maulana Bhashani zindabad!" (Occupy, occupy, occupy all feudal lands.) Other slogans chanted by kissans included: "those who sow should reap," "Stop charging tax from small farmers", "Stop corrupt, brutal officers", "Land to the landless, homes to the homeless", "free education for all" (Mohammad, 2015, p. 139), "Death to imperialism, long live Maulana Bhashani!" (Bashir, 1970, p. 139). As *Lail-o-Nihar* proclaimed in its coverage of the conference, the slogans countered "those who said the kissan lacks consciousness" and reflected an understanding of how the movement's grassroots kissan politics was linked to a national project of development (Bashir, 1970, p. 28). Thus, the Toba Conference of 1970 became a crucial event in which the struggle for land and small farmers' welfare was articulated alongside the drive to build an anti-imperialist and developmentalist welfare state in Pakistan.

The conference itself started at 10 am in the morning and ran for seven hours. The list of speakers included representatives of kissan organisations from each province, Sindh Hari Committee representatives, trade unionists, student leaders, leftist leaders, political party representatives, media personalities, poets, singers, and performers. Chaudhry Fateh Muhammad was one of the key speakers at the conference, and his speech served to frame the

politics and outlook of the WPKC, arguing for a package of agrarian reforms which included land redistribution, tax relief for small farmers, small industries for rural artisans, controls on international trade, and holding elections on a class basis (Bashir, 1970, p. 29). Situating the agrarian economy in terms of its contribution to national wealth, Chaudhry Fateh Mohammad took to the stage and forcefully argued that a hundred thousand villages contributed towards 78 percent of the country's GDP, but ironically "real farmers struggle to put food on the table twice a day" (Bashir, 1970, p. 29). He continued to describe how the focus of state-led agricultural reforms on "mechanisation has displaced agricultural workers and landless cultivators and increased the concentration of agricultural wealth" (Bashir, 1970, p. 29). On the other hand, landlords, who made up 1.5 percent of rural landowners and controlled 49 percent of agricultural land, "now live in cities, and only come twice during the cutting season to steal our wealth and then leave again" (Bashir, 1970, p. 29). An important speech which represented the politics of the WPKC, Fateh located the WPKC's organising and ideology within ongoing dynamics of agrarian change and class differentiation in the countryside.

Another important moment at the conference was marked by Maulana Bhashani's arrival on the stage. The formidable kissan leader received a rapturous response from the audience, who began to cheer, sloganeer, and throw their red caps in the air. The national anthem was played, after which Bhashani spoke about the threat to Pakistan posed by the ruling and capitalist classes. Promising to expose these groups, Bhashani warned the crowd that these groups "are funding people to spread lies. Islam and the Ideology of Pakistan are being used to distract people. They want to break this country apart" (Bashir, 1970, p. 29). By drawing together the powerful symbolism of the national anthem and the "ideology of Pakistan", Bhashani's interventions at the Toba Conference demonstrate the tactical and ideological confluence between national politics and kissan movements. At the same time, Bhashani warned that "if the issue of provincial autonomy was not resolved, the country would split after

the 1970 election" (Mohammad, 2015, p. 143). This proved to be true and was a reference to rising resentment and resistance in East Pakistan, where the steady disenfranchisement of the Bengali population by a West Pakistani establishment was coming to a head. This was a bold speech at the Toba conference, which made it clear that Pakistan would need to resolve its national and agrarian questions together. Bhashani concluded his speech by proposing a novel strategy by appealing for a farmers strike on April 20. "You must not till your land and stop all trade. There has been no strike in villages before. This will send a clear message" (Bashir, 1970, p. 30). However, by the time, Bhashani arrived back in East Pakistan, the fissures in the country's political circles had gotten deeper and the proposed kissan strike never happened.

The Left-wing Kissan Movements Demise: Bangladesh, Splits, and Co-option

Bhashani's warning at the Toba conference that Pakistan needed to resolve the issue of provincial autonomy proved prophetic. The East Pakistan-based Awami League, which stood for regional autonomy for the province, won the country's first general elections held in 1970. The military and West Pakistani political elites, including the socialist PPP, rejected the result and refused to allow the Awami League to form the government. As a result, mass protests broke out in East Pakistan, and in March 1971, the Pakistan Army began Operation Searchlight, arresting and detaining Awami League leadership, while unleashing genocidal violence against its Bengali citizens to quell the demand for Bangladesh, an independent state for East Pakistanis. This marked the start of the Bangladesh War of Liberation, which ended on December 16, 1971.

As Bangladesh was born, the political and ideological terrain for the national question shifted in both the East and the West, a shift that in turn re-shaped articulations of the agrarian question within the kissan movements. It was in the background of the increasingly charged

tussle between the centre and the province that the next Kissan Conference was announced to be held in Mahipur in East Pakistan in April 1970. With public sentiment in East Pakistan backing autonomy, the police and army presence in Dhaka was increased (Ilyas, 1970, p. 39). Rumours spread that the army was arresting any farmers attempting to come to Mahipur. One of the slogans chanted by the estimated 50,000 participants of Mahipur Kissan conference, "East and West are one. Every house is Toba Tek Singh" (Ilyas, 1970, p. 39). This chant was especially poignant in retrospect, signposting the possibility of a future that never was.

The left-wing kissan movement in West Pakistan went into decline soon after the civil war and the subsequent liberation of Bangladesh. While Noaman Ali suggests that a passive revolution led to the decline of the MKP-led peasant struggle in Hashtnagar, the framework proves limited in analysing the demise of the euphoric success of the Toba Conference. In this section of the chapter, I offer three reasons for this decline. First, the wider crisis surrounding the national question in Pakistan – or in other words, the state's decision to deploy brutal violence on the people of East Pakistan and to a lesser degree, a wide array of worker, student and kissan movements in West Pakistan. This could be read as a counter-revolution by the ruling elite, in part motivated by the desire to quash kissan unrest before it could turn into a more serious threat, in lieu of the Maoist-inspired Naxalbari movement which had taken up arms in East Punjab as well as other major regions in India. Subsequently, under the PPP government, a series of legal and extra-legal forms of violence were deployed against the NAP governments in Balochistan and NWFP, which led to the WPKC's parent party's collapse in the mid-1970s. Second, pro-Moscow and pro-Peking factions in the WPKC formalised their split in 1970, with the pro-Peking factions forming the MKP. Third, Shaikh Rasheed's PKF was co-opted and merged into the PPP after failing to stand up to pressure from big landlords within the ostensibly socialist party.

In the lead up to the 1970 elections, the West Pakistani establishment began to fear East Pakistan's demands for greater autonomy. In his speech at the Mahipur Kissan Conference, Bhashani, himself an advocate of the collective resolution of the agrarian and national questions, promised that "attempts to convert the class war in the country into a linguistic and regional war will be thwarted" (Ilyas, 1970, p. 40). Bhashani, once founding president of the Awami League, an advocate of resolving the national, agrarian and class questions together, chose to stay in independent Bangladesh, which was created in December 1971. The loss of Bhashani, who was also president of NAP[80] and arguably the most popular kissan leader in West Punjab, was a major blow to the WPKC. This was further augmented by a violent crackdown on the activities of NAP in West Pakistan, which culminated in a ban in 1975. In West Pakistan, or what was now simply 'Pakistan', key members of the NAP-Bhashani faction, including Ishaque Mohammad, left to join the Mazdoor Kissan Party while several party workers also joined the PPP. The WPKC, now the Pakistan Kissan Committee (PKC), was left on its last legs.

Moreover, the transitions in global communism, particularly the Sino-Soviet split, and how it played out in the regional context of South Asia also hastened the collapse of the WPKC. Where many have blamed the PPP and Bhutto regime for restoring the position of landlords (Herring 1980, Abbas & Khari 2018, Jaleel and Abbas 2019) it is important to remember that the splits in the WPKC emerged after the Sino-Soviet rift in 1961 had splintered the WPKC. Ishaque (1972), in an interview with *Pakistan Forum* in 1972, noted that "there were two splits: one, the main split between the pro-Moscow and pro-Peking factions; two, the pro-Ayub and anti-Ayub split within the "pro-Peking" faction" (p. 5). Ishaque explains that there were two differences. First, between the pro-Soviet, National Democracy line and the pro-Peking line,

[80] For more on the splits in the NAP in Pakistan, see: Rashiduzzaman, M. (1970). The National Awami Party of Pakistan: Leftist politics in crisis. *Pacific Affairs 43*(3), 394-409. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2754219?seq=1

“which did not give much attention to parliamentary activities and focused on National Liberation led by the working class, using the peasantry as its main force” (p. 5). Second, there were significant differences in their approach to the question of oppressed nationalities, with Ishaque arguing that “most of the feudal and capitalist elements in the party…thought that class struggle was standing in the way of the liberation of the small or the so-called oppressed nationalities” (p. 5). According to Fateh, the first public disagreement happened in the Punjab Kissan Conference on July 1-2, 1967, in Multan, when those associated with then national convenor Major Ishaque Mohammad staged a walk-out when General Secretary Fateh Mohammad was presenting an organising report (Mohammad, 2015, p. 116). Overtly, the issue was organising the conference without Ishaque’s approval regarding the dates. However, Fateh narrates that the issues went deeper, and was rooted in Sino-Soviet tensions. Ishaque had also lobbied for himself to be appointed NAP secretary-general against the will of NAP members associated with the CPP. The split also existed within the NAP, with the so-called nationalist or Wali faction considered close to the Soviet Union, and the Bhashani faction close to China (Mohammad, 2015, p. 117). The WPKC was split in two factions, the Lyallpur group led by Ishaque and the Toba Tek Singh group led by Chaudhry Fateh. Eventually, differences around participating in the 1970 elections and the national question in East Pakistan led to the Ishaque faction formally joining the MKP.

Third, the rise of the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) in 1967 led by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto heralded the end of the PKF, the other important left-wing kissan organisation. PKF president Sheikh Rasheed had joined the PPP as one of its founding members, along with dozens of other prominent left-wing organisers and intellectuals who were attracted to Bhutto’s charisma and Islamist socialist agenda. However, the PPP simultaneously functioned as a bastion of feudal power, with a host of prominent big landlords in its leadership, including Ghulam Mustafa Khar who began to lobby Bhutto to ask Rasheed to dissolve the Kissan Front and merge his

organisation with the PPP (Rasheed, 2011, p. 143). Rasheed resisted at first, but faced with accusations that he was running a parallel organisation, he acceded, and the Kissan Front was no more (Rasheed, 2011, p. 143). Subsequently, in 1973, when the PPP government in the federation accused the NAP government in Balochistan of treason, Rasheed sided with the government, with his magazine *Dehqan,* publishing critical articles on the class character of the NAP leadership (National Awami Party, 1972). Already in a tense relationship with the WPKC, since the two organisations competed to organise the same rural classes, Rasheed also claimed the kissan movement was now under the control of landlords. In an article on October 4, 1971, Rasheed wrote a review of the kissan movement's history, titled "Pakistan Kissan Committee ki jeddojehad ka tajziya" ("An Analysis of the Pakistan Kissan Committee's struggle"). In it, Rasheed re-visited the history of the movement to argue that "landlords that wore masks of being progressive" (Rasheed, 1971, p. 14) had become kissan leaders, and that members of NAP had "showed themselves to be the leaders of the 1950 to 1954 agitation and negotiated a bad deal with the government" (Rasheed, 1971, p. 15). Thus, the shift in left politics with the advent of PPP's brand of populist socialism, and the breakdown in left unity, with even the likes of Rasheed repudiating the past struggles and ideological foundations of left-wing kissan politics also dealt a severe blow to the WPKC's mobilisation.

As recounted in earlier paragraphs, by the end of the year 1970, the tension between the agrarian and national questions had been key to breaking the spine of the left-wing kissan movement in West Punjab. The state's decision to respond to growing left-wing and nationalist resistance across the country was to deploy unprecedented forms of violence, first, against the people of East Pakistan, and then against NAP organisers and worker and peasant mobilisations in West Pakistan. Both attacks involved the active participation of another socialist party, the PPP, in different capacities. The PPP had backed the military junta's decision not to accept the results of the 1970 election, and having found itself in power, it imposed the country's first

civilian martial law. Not long after, NAP began to be targeted, first by state-sanctioned paramilitaries, and then through an outright ban, which led to another nationalist insurgency breaking out in Balochistan. The WPKC, already having lost the Ishaque group in Punjab, to differences on the national question, lost the bulk of its cadre in Balochistan and Khyber Pakthunkhwa (then N.W.F.P). Thus, with the secession of Pakistan's most populous province, East Bengal, which had served as an important base for kissan organising, as well as increasing state repression against Communist and left-wing formations, the national question as articulated in the 1950s and '60s was dramatically re-constituted, compelling left-wing kissan movements to revise their negotiation of the agrarian question in a radically changed political landscape. In a sense, the destruction of institutions and infrastructures of organising, and the displacement of cadres discussed earlier with respect to the 1947 Partition repeated itself, and the movement was forced to reorganise from a point of major setback once more.

Shaikh Rasheed, for his part, after being appointed chairman of the Federal Land Reforms Commission, helped push through the 1972 land reforms,[81] which planned to reduce land ceilings to 150 acres of irrigated and 300 acres of unirrigated land. However, with the Kissan Front dissolved, the WPKC fractured, and its remaining leadership driven underground due to treason charges against NAP members, there was no grassroots organising left to push for the implementation of the 1972 land reforms. Punjab's left-wing kissan movement now survived in the form of the MKP and the Pakistan Kissan Committee under the leadership of Fateh, which by now had lost much of its cadre.

Conclusion: Contradictions and Synergies between the Agrarian and National Questions

[81] For more on the 1972 Land Reforms, see: Herring, R. & Chaudhry, M. G. (1974). The 1972 land reforms in Pakistan and their economic implication: A preliminary analysis. *The Pakistan Development Review 13*(3), 245-279.

This chapter has analysed the history of left-wing kissan organising in West Punjab between the late 1940s to the early 1970s. Drawing on movement literature, it has shown how the WPKC and related struggles attempted to synthesise the agrarian and national questions in West Punjab by mobilising for post-Partition rural rehabilitation in the 1950s and agrarian reform in the 1960s, before being devastated in the 1970s as the contradictions in the national question came to a head. Showing how the WPKC's movement engaged with the Pakistani state, related peasant movements in East Bengal, left-wing political parties, global Marxism and Cold War developmentalism, I analyse how the movement engaged with the capitalist re-shaping of the rural countryside by positing an alternative trajectory of agrarian capitalism anchored in land reform and agrarian expansionism. This poses a serious challenge to Subalternist and moral economy readings of kissan movements in the post-Independence period that fail to capture significant aspects of their ideological imperatives and political practice.

Further, engaging critically with Alavi's (1965) 'Middle Peasant' Thesis and Noaman Ali's (2019) study of the MKP in Hashtnagar, the chapter narrates how two left-wing kissan movements, the WPKC and PKF, engaged with transformations in agrarian political economy to build rural class alliances around an agenda of agrarian reform, which included advocacy for smallholders, sharecropping tenants, and settler kissan in the 1950s and '60s. Debates around productivity, markets, modernisation, mechanisation, the development of capitalist agriculture and its impact on the rural structure were critical to the development of these movements. Rather than advocating a return to a romanticised past, the left-wing kissan movement in West Punjab and its differentiated rural class base demanded the transformation of agrarian structures into more equitable and more dynamic ones, perhaps to a fault with their focus on eliminating feudalism, which stood in for both landlordism and the old agrarian order. The movements were able to position themselves as advocates of those losing out and create

the possibility for the smallholding and landless agrarian classes to dream of a different future for Punjab's rural world. The success of the 1970 Toba Kissan Conference reflected the ability of the WPKC to synthesise the agrarian and national questions in Pakistan within a mass movement, constituting a historic mobilisation that brought together a large chunk of the small and mid-scale cultivators, as well as forging alliances with workers and students across the terse ethno-nationalist divide in Pakistan. However, the increasing deepening of contradictions in the national question in Pakistan led to the separation of the country, as well as the crystallisation of splits within the left-wing kissan movement. The Toba conference became more of a nostalgic memory for the contemporary left, rather than a beginning point for kissan mobilisations in the province and country. Nevertheless, the Toba conference forced the hand of the state, compelling the government to roll out land and agrarian reforms, even as a harsh crackdown was unleashed against left-wing kissan and labour organisers.

With left-wing kissan movements in crisis, the rural world in Punjab had begun to change rapidly. In an interview in 1972, Major Ishaque Muhammad, who left the WPKC to join the MKP in 1970, recognised that the deepening of "imperialist investment in Pakistan... in the form of farm machinery and…fertilizers," was making farming "more of a capitalist venture" (Mohammad, 1972, p. 3). This included a growing dependence on imports for spare parts, fertilisers and oil (Mohammad, 1972, p. 3). Mechanisation meant that labour was needed for much shorter periods in a crop cycle, but many small farmers were being kept on as "part tenant, part agricultural workers" as a source of "captive labour for the harvesting season" (Mohammad, 1972, p. 3). Despite Ishaque's understanding of agrarian change in the post-Green Revolution period closely aligning with insights from chapter 3, the left-wing kissan movements were slow to adapt their politics to the new rural realities. No doubt much of it was down to the crackdowns, fractures and co-option that took place in the early 1970s. However, it is pertinent to note that the re-formed Pakistan Kissan Committee, which remained under the

leadership of Chaudhry Fateh Mohammad until his demise, continued to anachronistically advocate for an end to feudalism in Pakistan as its key agenda (Awami Workers Party, 2015). Further, while the Mazdoor Kissan Party gained popularity and introduced new vocabularies in Punjab's rural politics,[82] it had little notable impact on mass kissan politics in the canal colonies before weakening significantly in the early 1980s. Thus, we have seen how kissan movements in West Punjab were able to build rural class alliances to struggle for agrarian reform during the 1950s and '60s, however, it was left ill-prepared to take up new challenges that were coming up after the Green Revolution. Once the PPP government was replaced by the military regime of General Zia in 1978, the state's approach to agriculture began to move away from developmentalist logics of the 1950s to '70s, which led to different winners and losers. The rural landscape began to transform once again, and new farmers' movements emerged to replace the left-wing kissan movements that had held their own till the mid-70s.

[82] See: Kazmi, S. (2021). Mazdoor Kissan Party circular. Revolutionary papers; and Raza, S. (2022). Sufi and the sickle: Theorising mystical marxism in rural Pakistan. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. https://revolutionarypapers.org/teaching-tool/mazdoor-kissan-party-circular/

Chapter 5

Re-thinking the Agrarian Question of Capital in Neoliberal Punjab

Agrarian Distress, Farmers' Agency, and Changing Strategies of Reproduction and Accumulation

In 2015, the Punjab government declared an "Agricultural Emergency". Yields had begun to fall, farmers had reported loss of income, and there were major shifts in crop-growing patterns. The most significant decline was witnessed in cotton production, which halved in the decade between 2011 and 2021 from 13.6 million bales to 7 million bales a year.[83] Although this is in part due to the fall in the total acreage of cotton cultivation from 2.8 million to 2.1 million hectares, that is not sufficient on its own to explain declining production. The decline of cotton in the neoliberal period, the most significant cash crop in Punjab for almost a century, signifies a deep structural transformation taking place in Punjab's agrarian political economy amidst the IMF-led structural reform of agrarian markets.

Despite calling for an analysis of structural factors contributing to the failure of the Green Revolution in Pakistan, Tarique Niazi (2012) does not account for how the neoliberal restructuring of agrarian markets in Punjab since the 1980s has impacted differentiated classes of agrarian producers, and how they have responded in turn. Pointing to the persistence of "malnutrition and poverty despite the spectacular success of the green revolution", Niazi (2012) argues that its largely celebrated legacy must be re-interpreted to understand the potential impact new policies, such as the growth of corporate farming and the introduction of GMOs in the country (p. 178). Niazi argues that the failure of "advanced biotechnologies…[to] address the interests of small and subsistence farmers" was "brushed aside" in most accounts

[83] Mukhtar, Imran. 2022. How the climate crisis affects cotton production. *Development and Cooperation.* https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/rising-temperatures-have-contributed-50-decline-cotton-production-pakistan

of the Green Revolution (p. 178). He argues it is necessary to remove of “structural barriers to the distribution of dividends from increased productivity,” such as “inequalities in the ownership of key productive resources such as land and capital” before adopting the new technologies and practices advocated by FAO and other major development agencies (Niazi, 2012, p. 182). While appropriate, Niazi’s analysis does not examine the full impact of the neoliberal reform of agrarian markets due to a focus on agricultural technology and land relations.

Recent research on West Punjab’s agrarian political economy (Jan 2017; Amirali 2018) fills part of this gap by focusing on the development of rural commercial capital within agrarian markets in the contemporary period. Jan and Amirali offer an opening to explore the impact of these changes in the relationship between agriculture and the market on differentiated agrarian classes. Nonetheless, while this work focuses on “marketed surplus” (Jan, 2017, p. 10), it does not address the shifts in the practices around accumulating and re-investing agrarian surplus by cultivators which are critical to understanding ongoing patterns of agrarian transformation in Punjab. Drawing on fieldwork conducted amongst potato growers across the border in East Punjab, Shreya Sinha (2020) argues that studying processes of accumulation amidst agrarian distress offers a fruitful path to understanding real shifts in the agrarian political economy (Sinha, 2020, p. 1534). Taking on existing work on the agrarian crisis in India, Sinha criticises Patnaik (2011) for presenting a simplistic and inaccurate picture that suggests that “the process of class differentiation has ended, and neoliberalism has established the same exploitative relation between foreign capital and the country’s masses that was imposed by colonialism” (Sinha, 2020, p. 1534). Moreover, Sinha holds Patnaik “guilty of treating the peasantry as a passive victim of corporate strategies” (Sinha, 2020, p. 1536). Instead, attending to dynamics of accumulation shows that while “liberalisation is an important driver of further class differentiation”, the “crisis narrative cannot be easily extended to large capitalist farmers in

Punjab" (Sinha, 2020, p. 1534) due to their ability to continue to accumulate in times of distress. Thus, the practices of agrarian producers around strategies of accumulation constitute a critical component of attempting to understand the nature of the ongoing agrarian transition, rural differentiation and the transformations in agrarian capital.

However, focusing on accumulation alone runs the risk of providing an incomplete picture of the strategies adopted to deal with agrarian distress across the different classes of agrarian producers. Reproduction remains a critical driver for a range of strategies adopted by small and medium-scale cultivators. Agrarian producers navigate changing landscapes by deploying old and new strategies for reproduction and accumulation, channeling their agency to negotiate "a transformed policy and political context", (Sinha, 2021, p. 1534) which includes growing price-volatile crops, leasing land, and building cold storages. Thus, I argue that attending to the ways in which differentiated farmers negotiate the imperatives of both accumulation and reproduction can help understand the nature of agrarian distress and ongoing processes of agrarian transformation. The chapter will focus on tracing (a) how differentiated classes of agrarian producers negotiate the imperative to reproduce and accumulate under the neoliberal market system; and (b) how agrarian surplus continues to be expropriated and re-invested in contemporary West Punjab. Drawing on insights from a small stretch of villages between Pakpattan and Sahiwal, it will draw on the life histories of differentiated agrarian producers to understand shifting patterns in land use such as cash leasing and contract farming, labour practices and crop choices from traditional cash crops like cotton and sugarcane to new crops like potatoes. I discuss how strategies of accumulation by large farmers expand to re-investment in other forms of capital such as real estate, agro-processing and marketing, while small and middle farmers struggle to overcome their "structural -subordination" (Akram-Lodhi, 2000, p. 207) in relation to the market, labour regime and access to land.

Thus, understanding the nature of agrarian distress in West Punjab requires studying the interactions between market reform, ecological stress, and strategies of reproduction and accumulation for differentiated agrarian classes. The focus on the dynamic of accumulation and reproduction also confirms that the AQ of capital is still shaping the ongoing agrarian transition in West Punjab. While both Lerche (2013) and Sinha (2020) accept the relevance of agrarian capital to agrarian change in India, they stop short of contesting Bernstein's (2006) proposition that the AQ of capital has been "bypassed" and replaced by the "agrarian question of labour" (p. 455). This conclusion was the logical outcome of narrowing the definition of the AQ of Capital to "the issue of how agrarian transition contributes (or otherwise) to the accumulation necessary for industrialisation" (Bernstein, 2006, p. 451). However, accepting it excludes the analysis of a range of capital-driven processes in agriculture, such as the expansion of transnational agribusiness, new patterns in agricultural trade, the development of price speculation in agricultural markets, hedging strategies by capitalist farmers, and adoption of contract farming from the terrain of the AQ of capital. These transformations, including their impacts of peasant differentiation, cannot be fully comprehended under the rubric of the AQ of labour, which is defined by Bernstein (2006) in such a way as to relegate the study of agrarian surplus and accumulation to the terrain of "petty commodity production" (p. 457) rather than a key variable in shaping the development of contemporary agrarian capital and the mechanisms through which agrarian surplus is extracted. By focusing on the reproduction and accumulation strategies of differentiated agrarian producers, this chapter will show how the expropriation of agrarian surplus through relations of production and exchange and its transformation into different forms of capital remains a critical factor in shaping the nature of the ongoing agrarian transitions in West Punjab. By re-constituting the AQ of capital to study the flows of and transformation within agrarian capital, rather than just its mutation into industrial capital, allows us to read the development of crop intensification, the spread of

leasehold farming, building cold storages and agro-processing units as part of a capital-led transformation of Punjab's agrarian relations.

This is also critical to avoid treating the peasantry, in Bernstein's (2014) words, as "capital's other," (as cited in Sinha, p. 1537) that is, situated outside the purview of capitalist relations. Moreover, rather than using the broad term 'exploitation', I prefer to use the term "structural subordination", (p. 207) as deployed by Haroon Akram-Lodhi (2000) in his work on north-western Pakistan, which allows significantly more room to the understand the interrelationships between differentiated agrarian classes and key institutions that shape their choices, such as the state, markets, transnational development agencies, agribusiness, and creditors. Beginning with a critical review of recent literature on agrarian change in Punjab around the development of rural commercial capital and agrarian markets in the province it traces the implications of these developments across the agrarian class divide. It will then discuss Haroon Akram-Lodhi's (2000) insights of small-scale producers operating in a dynamic of structural subordination to agrarian markets. Next, we will trace some of the broad contours of what constitutes agrarian liberalisation in Pakistan generally and Punjab specifically, by sketching its trajectory from the early 1980s. Then, we will move into the fieldwork in the Sahiwal-Pakpattan area to explore how the imperatives of reproduction and accumulation are combining in complex ways through the life histories of different classes of agrarian producers. These will show the complex ways in which agrarian producers respond to liberalised agrarian markets, its implications for ongoing processes of agrarian transition and rural class differentiation, and the important implications for the AQ of capital in contemporary West Punjab.

Section 1: Rural Commercial Capital, Marketable Surplus, and Structural Subordination

There are two key tendencies in the development of the literature on agrarian change in the contemporary period. The first has been the influential declaration by Henry Bernstein (2006) that the AQ of capital no longer exists and so with it also a significant dimension of the political AQ has been taken off the table. Instead, Bernstein and others (Lerche 2013; Pattenden 2018), posit the predominance of an agrarian question of labour, wherein economic and political change in the rural world must be seen through the lens of classes of labour. The second has focused on the role of agrarian markets through the study of rural commercial capital. This literature shows how commercial capital goes beyond Patnaik's narrow reading of it as "anteduvian forms of capital", highlighting instead how it plays a constitutive role in shaping agrarian change and transformations in the agrarian class formation (Patnaik, 1990, p. 3). However, these shifts have precipitated a move away from a focus on studying relations of production to relations of exchange and reduced the importance of studying shifts in agrarian political economy from the vantage point of differentiated classes of agrarian producers.

Jan (2017) argues that 'agrarian capital' cannot be separated from capital in general. Jan analyses the formation of the class of "rural commercial capital," which, he argues, "accumulates capital across the rural-urban, agro-commercial divide" (p. ii). The objective of doing so is to "identify the distinct paths towards the agrarian transition, the social groups leading the process and the type of capitalist development taking place in contemporary Pakistan" (Jan, 2017, p. 8). However, in exploring the dynamic developments within this class, Jan runs into the danger of collapsing the distinction between capitalist farmers and agricultural traders, much like Alavi's (1976) conflation of large landlords and mid-scale farmers in chapter 3. Noting that "a capitalist farmer is likely to pursue strategies towards accumulation that have

more in common with a large trader than a non-accumulating farmer", Jan (2017) argues this is sufficient grounds for moving "beyond a model of rural differentiation" to understand "the changing nature of class relations in a setting where commercial agriculture has penetrated deeply" (p. 12). Thus, Jan (2017) shifts the register for analysing class formations from 'rural differentiation' to "economic stratification across the agricultural marketing system" (p. 19). The argument comes back to the issue of marketed surplus, which is legitimately presented as an important source of accumulation in agriculture. Jan (2017) argues that "accumulation in real marketing systems is not simply reducible to the direct exploitation of labour but also strategic 'control of the market'", which involves "exploiting' petty-commodity producers (PCP) in markets other than labour through a variety of interlinked contracts that lower the price of their produce, but also through asymmetries of payment that starve PCP and prevent any nascent accumulation trajectories" (p. 23).

In a similar vein, development of rural commercial capital and agrarian markets in West Punjab is explored by Amirali (2018) in an ethnography of the Okara Mandi (Market) to show how grain traders – or arthis in local parlance – play an "indispensable" role in "not just… markets, but also…agricultural production" through the provision of "credit" to "millions of farmers" and "the crucial links they provide between masses of anonymous buyers and sellers" (p. 35). Amirali (2018) also shows how agricultural markets are simultaneously "sites of unequal power, resource extraction, and surplus accumulation", in which "processes of contract enforcement, associational activity, and other mechanisms of interest advancement" become the "means by which farmers' surplus…is appropriated in the mandi" (p. 28-29). Thus, agricultural markets are "a site of class formation where some can accumulate, others cannot, and yet others leave with less than they came with" (Amirali, 2018, p. 28-29). Thus, by focusing

on the appropriation of "marketed surplus",[84] Amirali shows how a complex interplay between market institutions, the agency of traders, and agrarian producers shapes how capital works in rural Punjab (Jan, 2017, p. 10).

While the latter are admittedly significant, I will argue that it is important to continue to pay attention to transformation (or the lack of) in agrarian relations of production to understand the nature of agrarian distress in the neoliberal period. The fact that accumulation takes place through market relations in agriculture is not sufficient grounds to justify a shift from the category of 'rural class differentiation' to 'economic stratification.' Jan's argument that large capitalist farmers are, in fact, rural commercial capitalists is insufficient. I show that the investments of large capitalist farmers in expropriating "marketed surplus" are creating direct asymmetrical relationships between them and mid-to-small scale agrarian producers through their ability to control part of the agro-input and agro-processing chains through cold storages and setting up their own arthi businesses. However, these investments in agrarian and non-agrarian capital continue to be funded by agrarian surplus from expanding their commercial agricultural operations, rather than disinvesting capital from direct cultivation. Thus, rather than being lumped together into 'rural commercial capital', it is important to retain their distinct position within agrarian relations of production to understand their role in the ongoing agrarian transitions in a time of crisis. Moreover, the chapter 6 will also explore the important role played by this class in shaping kissan politics in the neoliberal period, which reflects their vested interests within agriculture.

Where Sinha calls for a focus on practices of accumulation by capitalist farmers and Ali and Amirali draw attention towards the expropriation of marketable surplus, the work of Haroon Akram-Lodhi (1993, 2000) offers synergy by analysing the "spatial coexistence of

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[84] See: Harriss-White, B. (2008). *Rural commercial capital: Agricultural markets in West Bengal.* Oxford University Press., and Krishnamurthy, M. (2015). First transaction, multiple dimensions: The changing terms of commodity exchange in a regulated agricultural market in Madhya Pradesh. In *Indian Capitalism in Development.* Routledge.

capitalist and non-capitalist patterns of household reproduction and accumulation" (Akram-Lodhi, 1993, p. 557). Based on his research amongst agrarian classes in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan's north, Akram-Lodhi (2000) argues that "the ways in which the input and output markets are faced by peasant households engaged in sugarcane production in Northern Pakistan may demonstrate structural subordination" (p. 207). The analysis of three markets - land, fertilizer, and outputs – provides a template for understanding how agrarian producers deploy strategies of reproduction and accumulation based on their relationship with local, national and global markets. Akram-Lodhi (2000) shows that peasant producers "do not have the capacity to withdraw from market activities" and engage with these from the position of structural subordination to a range of agents, including "landlords, urea manufacturers, sugarcane producers", who are "in different ways, more powerful than peasant farmers" (p. 226). This effectively rules out the possibility of a Chayanovian "retreat" for smallholders, who must engage in "household-based production and processing…to acquire an income that can be used to purchase those commodities required by the household that it does not produce" (Akram-Lodhi, 2000, p. 208; 211). Smallholders must attempt to accumulate for reproduction, which I shall show, requires mixing up what they grow and whether it is sold on the market or becomes part of household consumption.

This literature allows us to understand how agrarian markets and transformations within them provide the institutional context for the choices made by differentiated agrarian producers. Combining Sinha's focus on accumulation practices, Amirali and Jan's emphasis on the appropriation of marketable surplus and Akram-Lodhi's analysis regarding structural subordination allows a more holistic perspective through which to analyse agrarian change in the neoliberal period in West Punjab. This framing allows us to bring complexity to the choices made by different classes of agrarian producers that combine strategies of reproduction and

accumulation in the context of agrarian distress shaped by volatile agrarian markets and growing ecological stress.

Section 2: Structural Adjustment in Punjab's Agriculture in the 1980s

In 1981, the US-backed military dictatorship of General Zia ul Haq[85] agreed the first structural adjustment programme[86] with the World Bank (WB), which was focused on agrarian market reform. This was the start of the neoliberal restructuring of agriculture in Pakistan, which focused on weakening agricultural price controls, reducing state purchases, and cutting agricultural subsidies. This would be expanded to include opening agricultural trade, weakening national agricultural research institutes, and facilitating transnational agribusiness corporations to set up their distribution networks in Pakistan. Punjab was the frontline of these transformations once again having made up almost 60 percent of the value of agricultural output in the country in 1980 (Chaudhry et al., 1988, p. 539). The outcome of these agreements was a rollback of previous land reforms, public developmental expenditure in agriculture, and the reduction of subsidies for agricultural producers.

The declared objective of the IMF-WB nexus was to "get prices right in the agriculture, industrial and energy sector" (Khan, 1994, p. 540). Masood Hassan Khan (1994) traces the three major components of neoliberal agrarian reform in the 1980s: public development spending, subsidies, and agricultural markets. Public development spending on agriculture was reduced significantly between the Second Five-Year Plan (1960-65) and the Seventh Five-Year Plan (1988-93), from 51.6 percent to 13 percent of public sector spending. Similarly,

[85] While much of the public criticism of the Zia legacy has focused on how it Islamised society, the decade of the 1980s was critical in steering the breakdown of the state sector economy as well as the state's welfare and developmental spending.
[86] See: The World Bank, 1982. *Pakistan – Structural Adjustment Program Project*. Retrieved from https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/731091468286267481/pakistan-structural-adjustment-program-project

agricultural subsidies were reduced from 8.6 percent in 1981 to 2.2 percent by 1992-3, which effectively reduced subsidies by 75 percent within a decade (Khan, 1994, p. 539). This was followed by a series of market reforms, which included disbanding old regulatory mechanisms, setting up new ones, and liberalising the agricultural import and export regimes. The Agricultural Prices Commission[87] was created as an 'autonomous' agency to advise the government on support prices, which aimed to take price regulation outside the purview of the state (Khan, 1994, p. 548). Another agreement was signed in 1988, which on paper, promised "economic pricing of inputs and outputs in agriculture" (Khan, 1994, p. 541). The result was a range of changes which reversed the developmentalism of the 1960s and the socialist planning of the 1970s. These included denationalising flour and rice mills as well as ginning factories, deregulating sugar prices, fertilizers, seeds and the pesticide industry, allowing voluntary wheat procurement, easing exports and imports, and privatization of public tubewells (Khan, 1994, 546-547).

This was a significant package of changes, which effectively constituted a major transformation in the operational structure of agrarian markets in Punjab. While the Green Revolution had been directed at staple crops, such as wheat and rice, the 1980s opened the flood gates for profit-making across a range of crops. Moreover, it opened the space for speculative investments in agricultural crops both by differentiated agrarian producers and market agents, which shaped the nature of agrarian change taking place in Punjab today by changing the imperatives of reproduction and accumulation. The liberalisation of agrarian markets began to significantly shift crop patterns in favour of commercial crops which existed outside price regulatory mechanisms. Cotton and sugarcane began to lose their appeal after years of sustained losses due to the removal of price protections and ecologically-driven

[87] The creation of an autonomous regulator in the agrarian sector was the first of these in Pakistan. The energy sector did not get an 'independent' regulator before 1997.

losses[88]. The state purchase of wheat also reduced significantly, which meant farmers received lower value for the marketed portion of their wheat harvest. Khan and Salam (1997) note "minor crops have shown a more significant and sustained process of growth than that experienced by major crops. They have escaped the government's procurement policies and have responded well to the relatively sharper price increases in the open and unregulated markets" (p. 421). The inability of the price of traditional cash crops to keep with the rising cost of agricultural inputs means selling excess wheat and crops like cotton and sugarcane is not enough for partial reproduction. This has created conditions where, in addition to selling a larger part of their produce and labour in the market, smallholders are compelled to adopt high risk crops like potatoes for reproduction and accumulation.

It is surprising that Khan (1994) drew on his criticism of the Green Revolution to support the liberalisation of agrarian markets in the 1980s and '90s. For Khan, agricultural subsidies in the 1960s and '70s benefited capitalist farmers more than smallholders and rural labour. The processes of structural adjustment had the potential to reverse the gains in favour of smallholders by taking subsidies away from capitalist farmers and making them compete on an even playing field. Khan and Salam (1997) note that there have been three major changes in landholding patterns since the 1960s: "the ownership and area under very small landholdings has increased…a significant fall in the number of very large landholdings…and medium-sized holdings (10 to 40 hectares) [increasing] in both numbers and size" (p. 430). The data, which shows a fall in average landholding from 5.3 hectares to 3.8 hectares and corresponding increase in the percentage of small farms to 71 percent of total landholdings, in fact does not suggest a simple story of small farmers benefiting (Khan & Salam, 1997, p. 430). In addition, Khan and Salam both ignore the growing practice of land leasing by commercial farmers, which complicates the landholding data significantly. Overall, this leads to a misleading

[88] Cotton has been especially vulnerable to disease and climate variations in the last three decades in Punjab.

narrative of the ongoing agrarian transitions in Punjab's agriculture, which would be better served by examining the complex negotiations of how strategies deployed by differentiated agrarian producers for accumulation and reproduction have changed in response to liberalised agrarian markets. As discussed in the previous section, the work of Jan, Amirali and Akram-Lodhi has shown how accumulation takes place through the expropriation of marketed surplus, which is based on the power of market agents and their ability to structurally subordinate differentiated agrarian producers. Thus, while the power of the large commercial farmer is not irrelevant, the important question is what liberal agrarian reform means vis a vis the power of agrarian producers in relation to the market. The macro-evidence, purely from the standpoint of land relations, suggests that liberalised markets present a more challenging environment to small agrarian producers, whose numbers doubled between 1960 and 2000 from 18.72 million to 36.97 million in 2000, which effectively has translated into a loss of land for most smallholders. Moreover, Niazi (2012) notes that five percent of the rural population own 95 percent of rural assets (p. 194). Khan (1994) argues that "land consolidation" is necessary to maximise the gains for smallholders, but the argument in fact suggests that smallholders needed to become 'bigger' smallholders to be able to contend with the changing agrarian space (p. 571). The analysis contradicts the solution, and therefore, "land consolidation" finds little currency in farmer-led politics in this period. Instead, when a province-wide farmers movement develops in the 2010s, in the shape of the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI), it engages in a selective critique of the breakdown of the regulated agrarian markets, rather than focusing on land relations. There is little surprise that a purely land-size based approach to understanding the impact of neoliberal agrarian reform and its relationship (or not) to agrarian distress runs into such problems without focusing on market relations and the strategies through which differentiated farmers approach the relationship between reproduction and accumulation in Punjab.

Section 3: Agrarian Change Under Neoliberalism: Related Dynamics of Accumulation and Reproduction in the 'Potato Belt'

Understanding the nature of agrarian distress under a neoliberal agrarian market regime and growing ecological stress requires taking a snapshot of ongoing dynamics of agrarian change in West Punjab. Anchoring the strategies of reproduction and accumulation adopted by differentiated classes of agrarian producers, Punjab presents complex patterns of crop choice, land leasing, labour hiring, contract farming, and the development of agro-processing units. There are important shifts in landholding and cultivation patterns, shaped by the ability of farmers to find themselves in favourable (or unfavourable) markets and their ability to adapt or not to a rapidly shifting environment for agriculturalists. Some old colonial landlords have gone from directly managing cultivation by ending sharecropping and replacing them with competitive commercial leaseholds. Others have become large commercial farmers. However, one of the most critical factors shaping the nature of agrarian change in the neoliberal period has been the outcomes of smallholder strategies of balancing accumulation and reproduction. These decisions and their contingent interplay with agrarian markets has allowed some to become large commercial farmers, pushed others into ruin, while the majority continue to survive amidst cycles of boom-and-bust.

These observations will be developed in this section based on fieldwork conducted in a cluster of five villages in the Sahiwal division between November 2018 and July 2019. These villages are located between several major agricultural markets, including Sahiwal, Pakpattan, Arifwala, Depalpur and Okara. Based on ethnography, focus group discussions and interviews with farmers with different sizes of cultivated land, it aims to show how differentiated access to markets for land, labour, inputs and exchange is critical in shaping the choices made by

farmers in the spectrum between reproduction and accumulation. Moreover, these transformations have also significantly altered the land, labour and power relations within the village, their social composition, and relationship to each other. This is true of the cluster of five villages - Chak Jaffar Shah, Dera Bodlan, Chak Sanday Khan, Chak 73/D and Chak 93/D – located off the Pakpattan-Sahiwal Road. While located next to each other, each of the villages had a different pattern of land allotment during the colonial settlement process with Chak Jaffar Shah allotted to a Syed family, Chak Sanday Khan to a Baloch family, Dera Bodlan to smallholding Syed cultivators, and Chak 93/D and Chak 73/D were given peasant allotments and are located closer to major road networks. These origin stories are relevant to the transformations taking place today, but certainly did not pre-determine their fate. Instead, it is important to explore a range of subjective factors, including family histories, new and old migrations, technological change, and changes in the market structure to understand the specificity of certain developments. Read together it presents a picture of the complex ways in which agrarian capital is shaping strategies of reproduction and accumulation amongst differentiated classes of farmers in the neoliberal period.

The discussion will centre around Chak Jaffar Shah where agrarian change has led to a shift from a landlord-tenant relations to cash leases and smallholder cultivation in the last half a century. Changes in land, labour and production relations in Chak Jaffar Shah have also influenced developments in neighbouring villages, especially in relation to the commercial leaseholds for potato farming on its lands, which keep coming up elsewhere. Chak Jaffar Shah was part of the Neeli Bar settlement which was started in 1885. The village boundaries were marked by a ‘horse run,’ in which land would be allocated as far as the prospective owner’s horse would run. Lore is that the Shah’s horse ran all the way to the small canal that had been dug up a fair distance away. Around 80 *murabay* (1,600 acres) of land was allocated to Jaffar Shah. Much like other large landowners in the colonial period, Shah turned to sharecroppers to

settle the land. Upon his death, Jaffar Shah was buried in a tomb outside the village, which became the family graveyard. This towering tomb on the outskirts of the village would suggest the Shah family still exerts a significant influence. However, this is no longer true. While the position of lambardar, or village headman, is retained by one of the family's male heirs, the family mostly retains a ceremonial influence. The two havelis in the village that belong to the Shahs are uninhabited. The current lambardar's new house stands abandoned, half-constructed. The family lands have largely been sold off, while a small amount is being leased to commercial farmers, who have set up their deras outside the village boundaries.

Chak Jaffar Shah does not provide an archetype of the types of agrarian transitions that took place in the field site. Combined with developments in Chak Sanday Khan, Dera Bodlan, Chak 93/D, and Midhali Sharif a complex picture emerges, suggesting multiple ongoing agrarian transitions, rather than one trajectory that reached an endpoint (Jan, 2017, p. 70). In Chak Sanday Khan, the current generation, decided to take on large commercial farming after studying agricultural sciences which led to the displacement of sharecroppers and replacement by large-scale owner-cultivation. In Dera Bodlan which is located beyond Chak Jaffar Shah on a paved, but broken road, smallholding farmers have begun to adopt volatile crops like potatoes grown by commercial leasehold farmers in the neighbouring region. Moreover, these developments are also shaped by Midhali Sharif, a former village located almost 60 kilometres away closer to Sahiwal, which is now a town being re-shaped by the investment of agrarian surplus from the lands of Chak Jaffar Shah and other villages by commercial leasehold farmers to build cold storages and housing schemes. Moreover, a full picture of the geographies of land, labour and exchange in this agrarian cluster requires exploring connections with local labour markets, major agricultural markets, cold storages, family-run export businesses in the the Middle East and Southeast Asia, expatriate landlords, and seeds producers in the Netherlands, the US and other major seed exporting countries. The villages of Chak 93/D and Chak 73/D,

which are located on the Sahiwal-Pakpattan Road, now operate as labour colonies for migrant agricultural and non-agricultural workers, many of which left the more interior villages like Chak Jaffar Shah. These agricultural lands are connected to a range of major agricultural markets, including Pakpattan, Sahiwal, Arifwala, Depalpur and Okara, from where their produce gets shipped off on longer journeys across the country, and often into Central Asia.

Agrarian Capital under Neoliberalism: How Large Farmers Navigate Uncertain Markets

The Malik family has been leasing land in Chak Jaffar Shah since the mid-1980s. Until the mid-1970s, the Maliks were smallholding Arain farmers who cultivated tobacco on around five acres of family-owned land in Midhali Sharif. The loosening of controls on agrarian markets in the 1980s allowed profits to boom, especially as they transitioned into cultivating potatoes. Malik Faraz and Haji Akram boast that they lease around three thousand acres of commercial crops in a good year to cultivate potatoes and maize. This includes over 200 acres of land in Chak Jaffar Shah leased from the Shah family, as well as additional land in several adjoining villages, including Chak 73/D, 70/D and Dera Bodlan. The Malik brothers have built a luxurious farmhouse and a cold storage facility on the road to Chak Jaffar Shah. Haji Akram's son is now based in Malaysia, where he operates an agricultural export business for the family's produce. The family has humble origins. In our first meeting at their farmhouse, Faraz informs,

> Our father was a small farmer in Midhali Sharif. He had five acres of land. In the 1970s, he began to grow tobacco. It is a difficult crop to grow. He began to make money in tobacco. He slowly began to lease more land and started growing potatoes. In those days, very few farmers were growing potatoes. It was easy to make a profit. That is where we began to make money.

The Maliks' journey is in line with the broad trajectories around expanded cultivation and land leasing discussed in chapter 3. However, the development of agrarian capital and rural differentiation in the 1980s relied heavily on the deregulation of agrarian markets rather than the introduction of new seeds and technologies in the 1960s. Moreover, the trajectory of the Maliks does not involve a simple shift from 'peasant' to 'capitalist' farming, but an expansion into agro-processing and agro-exports through which they keep a larger proportion of the marketable surplus. Moreover, the development of an urban real estate business has also allowed them to expand their business and mitigate against the risk created by the expansion of speculative commercial farming across Punjab. This confirms that, despite the larger narrative of agrarian crisis, the Maliks continue to extract and re-invest agrarian surplus into cultivation and marketing, as well as transform it into other forms of capital, such as real estate. In contrast to arguments positing a landlord-led transition to capitalist agriculture in West Punjab, these stories suggest that a segment of smallholding farmers were able to take advantage of the transformation in production and market relations to complete the transition to capitalist farming. Jan (2017) questions

> …how far the Leninist schema of landlord and peasant-led capitalism is useful in understanding agrarian change in Pakistani Punjab or if it needs to be replaced by a more complex framework that does not pre-suppose 'agrarian capitalism' as an endpoint and is mindful of status identities, state policy, as well as the role of mercantile groups in understanding agrarian change. (p. 70)

He shows how four different caste/status groups, aristocratic landlords; 'peasant' cultivators; non-agrarian mercantile castes and kammis,[89] "have evolved into a more coherent 'provincial' rural-commercial capitalist class". However, "their different origins are important in understanding both their attitude towards accumulation as well as the

[89] Kammis are service/artisanal/menial 'lower' castes.

continuing tension between class and social/status positions that persists to this day" (Jan, 2017, p. 70).

The story of the Maliks shows how there has also been a shift in agrarian caste hierarchies from Jatt/Syed to Arains emerging as the dominant caste in the area. During canal colonisation, Jatt farmers received larger land grants as colonial officials considered them the most adept farmers. Arain farmers received more nominal landholdings and became known for growing vegetables, considered to be less important than grain and cotton growing which corresponded to the priorities of the British Empire. Jatt farmer dominance also meant that farmers' politics before the neoliberal period was organised around staple crops, like wheat, cotton, sugarcane and rice due to their importance for trade, national food security and industrial development. In contrast, vegetable farming was ignored by the colonial and developmental state. The rise of Arain farmers reflects a significant shift, where the opening of private agricultural trade pushed the prices of vegetables up due to an open export market. While state-regulated crops like grain, cotton and sugarcane also experienced growth in the years following the Green Revolution, the ability to earn high profits remained limited. Instead, the less 'protected' – and arguably – 'under-developed' markets for agrarian goods, such as potatoes, tomatoes, and tobacco, became the spaces where high returns on investment became possible.

In terms of the connection between agrarian capitalism and industrialisation, in the context of East Punjab in India, Sinha (2020) notes an interesting paradox, that despite Punjab being high in terms of producing "agrarian surplus… has lower levels of industrialisation compared to many other states" (p. 1540). Looking for an explanation, Sinha argues that this forces "look[ing] beyond the internal dynamics of agrarian class differentiation and capital accumulation to understand the agrarian question of capital in different contexts" (p. 1540). This description would not fit West Punjab, which remains the most industrialised region in

Pakistan, and has seen the development of a robust textile industry, which relies massively on cotton growing within the country, as well as other agro-processing industries, including rice, wheat, sugarcane and oil mills. The expansion of the potato crop has been met with an adjoining increase in the presence of potato processing plants, both in the form of cold storages and finished products for consumers, such as frozen potato products and processed crisps. The story of the Malik brothers constitutes a significant chapter in the development of agrarian capitalism in Punjab by showcasing how small-scale producers till the mid-1970s have been able to become large-scale leasehold capitalist farmers, as well as imbricated within an expanded notion of agrarian capital through their involvement in agro-processing and agro-exports. Similar farmers have also at times invested in setting up agro-input shops, which includes setting up an arth (agricultural trade office) and taking on contracts with national and transnational agrochemical and seed companies.

However, despite the Malik family investing in the so-called 'advanced' and industrial forms of capital, the expansion of agrarian surplus remains a critical imperative for the family. This is achieved by not just increasing cultivated area but by investing in agri-processing and setting up their own agri-export business. Haji Akram's son has set up a potato export business in Malaysia for the last five years, which he explains "is important to make sure that we can make a profit when domestic prices are low". Speaking at the family's cold storage at Chak Jaffar Shah during the process of sorting and packing potatoes, Malik Naveed delivered a long lecture on how the country needed an ethical leadership. The workers sitting on the ground shared joked amongst each other. As I leave the cold storage, one of them came up to me and said, "He gives such lessons in ethics, but what about paying your workers well?" This lesson in ethics fits with how the Maliks have re-positioned themselves as mediators of cultural and

religious values, through investing part of their surplus in accumulating cultural capital[90]. Their patronage of a previously unknown *faqir* (spiritual leader) led to the village of Midhali having the word "Sharif' added to signify a place of spiritual significance. A festival to commemorate the *faqir* has become an annual event with the Malik brothers as its patrons, whose tomb is accessible from Malik Faraz's house. Having established a spiritual lineage, the Malik brothers have also made overtures to the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), a right-wing religious political party.[91] In 2018, the Malik brothers hosted a rally at this cold storage in which the TLP's now deceased leader Khadim Hussain was present. This challenges the historical cultural hegemony of the Shahs in Chak Jaffar Shah, who were not only the landed elite in the village, but also considered to the highest caste in Punjab's social hierarchy. Now, with the Maliks threatening their cultural hegemony, even the Shah family's lambardar announced himself to be a member of the TLP.

The rise of the Maliks from smallholders to large lease-hold farmers has challenged the economic and symbolic order of Punjab's rural political economy. In addition to renting land, setting up a farmhouse and cold storage in Chak Jaffar Shah, the scale of the mini-agrarian empire built up by the Malik brothers can be seen in their home village of Midhali Sharif. Situated west of the city of Sahiwal, Midhali Sharif can no longer be called a village. There are two types of capitalist transformations of space taking place: the building of housing schemes on rural land and the building of cold storages. Both transformations are led by the Malik family. When I met Malik Faraz in Midhili Sharif, he spoke with pride about establishing the first housing scheme in Midhali Sharif. "We started the process of making Midhali Sharif *more than a village*. It has been able to carve a name for itself separate for Sahiwal", (my emphasis) Faraz said. While the boundaries between Sahiwal and Midhali Sharif are hard to separate,

[90] In this case, cultural capital involves being able to place themselves as patrons of a saint, which allows them access to a spiritual hierarchy.
[91] Whose political objective is to strengthen Pakistan's blasphemy laws

Midhali is marked symbolically by the Malik brothers. The Maliks have been reinvesting agrarian surplus to expand their control over the agricultural supply chain by building over half a dozen cold storages in Midhali, as well as hedged their bets on converting a part of their agrarian surplus into speculative financial capital through the development of housing schemes on previously agrarian land. With a footprint scattered across multiple villages, their ability to operate largely successful leases growing potatoes over hundreds of acres of land in a climate in which the Punjab government has declared an 'agricultural emergency' reinforces Sinha's (2020) point regarding the importance of paying attention to processes of rural differentiation and accumulation and not falling for the "all-encompassing narrative of Punjab-farmer-in-distress" (p. 1541). It is important, that despite the reinvestment of agrarian surplus into other forms of capital, the Malik family continues to prioritise expanding its presence in the agrarian sector to both mitigate the risks of market functions and minimise the portion of agrarian surplus that leaves their own coffers. Thus, ensuring agrarian surplus remains critical to their future planning.

Accumulation for Reproduction? The Structural Subordination of Smallholders

In Indian Punjab, Sinha (2020) argues that the "considerable financial investment" required to grow the crop means that potato growing in East Punjab is "specific to capitalist farmers" (p. 1544). In contrast, in West Punjab, where the crop "receives no state support either in production or marketing" (Sinha, 2020, p. 1543), a much larger cross-section of farmers, including smallholders, are growing potatoes due a range of factors. These include the rising cost of subsistence production, the impact of ecological distress and the disproportional power of market agents on traditional commercial crops like cotton and sugarcane. The growth of the potato crop as the favoured choice across differentiated

farmers looking to accumulate agrarian surplus has significant consequences, with its adoption being considered down the chain as a potential way out of agrarian distress. This is despite the high costs, which Sinha notes in East Punjab are "enough to deter petty producers and most small capitalist farmers from investing in potatoes" (p. 1544). This is the case in the smallholder village of Dera Bodlan, where agrarian producers have begun to grow potatoes as a way of negotiating financial stress and uncertain markets. This demonstrates the strong link between production-for-subsistence and production-for-market, which means smallholders must be able to make a profit on marketed produce to grow for partial reproduction via their lands. The following discussion will show how the shift to potato farming shapes processes of rural differentiation, highlighting how changing crop choices cannot be understood through the subsistence versus market binary. Instead, it must be understood through strategies of accumulation and reproduction.

Unlike Chak Jaffar Shah, the neighboring Bodla village was what would be more classically understood as a settlement of classical peasant proprietors. The lands were allocated to Bodla Syeds with none of them allocated more than 20 acres in the original settlement plan, which has now been sub-divided into smaller parcels. While the landholding patterns in this village remain the same, there have been significant changes in the choice of crops, leasing patterns, and the methods of cultivation, which is connected to the larger story of agrarian change, via the growth of commercial leasehold farming in the area. Their small-scale proprietor status has meant that land relations have not transformed even remotely as radically as in Chak Jaffar Shah and Chak Sanday Khan. Moreover, the village's rather distant geographic location, situated much further way from the better road connections available to the other two villages kept it outside the net of the expansion of lease farming and adoption of commercial farming for a longer period. This expansion itself has been limited strongly by smallholder landownership patterns, which has arguably acted as a much stronger barrier to the

expansion of commercial farming. However, the expansion of commercial leases on its outskirts has begun to have an impact on what is grown on the village lands. There are three leaseholds for commercial farming and a chicken farm on the land between Chak Jaffar Shah and the Bodla village. The commercial leases have change hands over the years. A decade ago, these belonged to the Butt family, who used to lease around 100 acres of land, but lost money and left agriculture. It has now been taken over by the Maliks to grow potatoes.

After almost a century of growing cotton, most small to mid-scale farmers in the Bodla village began to abandon the crop in the early 2000s. The practices around growing the traditional wheat and cotton crops began to change significantly in the early 1970s due to the adoption of mechanization and hybrid seeds. However, the choice to abandon cotton[92] opened the lands up to new commercial crops. The Punjab cotton crop suffered two disease and climate-driven failures in 1992-3 and 2003-4. These crop failures sped up the informal introduction of controversial genetically modified BT-cotton varieties,[93] which also failed to solve the cotton crisis. Having seen their cotton crops fail, the Bodla farmers watched the continuing growth of leasehold farming for potatoes and witnessed the wealth of big potato growers. Ghulam Hussain, a middle-aged farmer, explains, "We only knew how to grow two crops: cotton and wheat. After the cotton virus, we shifted to maize or paddy rice. We did not know how to grow potatoes. It was the Arains who began to take land on lease and grow them. We saw that and slowly started growing them ourselves". Despite adopting potatoes, the Bodla farmers did not know how to grow potatoes, which are considered another notoriously difficult crop to cultivate. "Many of us switched to maize first, before growing potatoes. It is cheaper to switch to maize and less labour-intensive. But we saw that those who began growing potatoes made the most profits", Hussain continued.

[92] Cotton, of course, itself constituted a commercial crop integrated into the imperial world market in the colonial era, and then through Pakistan's export-oriented textile industry into the world market.
[93] See: Rana, M.A. (2021) When seeds becomes capital: Commercialisation of BT cotton in Pakistan. Journal of Agrarian Change. (Vol. 21, Issue 4): 702-719

The potato boom in the district came after potato prices spiked in 2013 when producers reported selling an acre of produce for up to Rs500,000. Those who had not done so, changed their *rabi* crop to potatoes. Potatoes are also more expensive to cultivate than maize, and it is harder to recover from losses sustained on potato crops. “Growing a single acre of maize requires around three litres of diesel per acre, while potatoes need more than 10 litres of diesel per acre”, informs Jaffar. Both maize and potatoes are grown from imported seeds – potato seeds are imported from Netherlands, while maize seeds are bought seasonally from the global agricultural conglomerates Pioneer or Syngenta. The cost of cultivation for potatoes is more than double that of maize, coming at Rs90,000 per acre compared to under Rs40,000 per acre for maize without counting the cost of the lease. Maize is also rarely grown on leased land. Where the price boom of 2013 pushed land leases higher, the potato market has become saturated, with the price crashing almost every year during harvest. Rather than Rs500,000 in net income per acre, the farmers reported that they were now only being offered around Rs50,000 per acre, which meant losses of around Rs40,000-80,000 per acre. Since 2015, the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI) has organised protests regularly to stem the falling potato prices. In Bodla village, the effects of the potato boom and bust can be seen in the high number of incomplete constructions in the village. Pir Jaffar Shah explains that “most of the new constructions you see in the village started after the high prices of potatoes in 2013. Those who were growing potatoes then made good money. But since then, we have only made losses. The constructions stopped midway”. Thus, the conversation of agrarian surplus was halted by a crisis of accumulation.

The choice of which commercial crop to grow to be able to ensure reproduction remains a challenge. The ecologically-driven abandonment of cotton has brought immense uncertainty, but the consensus is that the price of potatoes is “too unreliable and it is bad for [the regenerative ability of] land”. Hassan, one of the farmers, says he left his potato crop

unharvested last season due to the low prices. Ghulam Hussain explained the painful process of hiring tractors to destroy the crop in time for the next season of cultivation, “I had to throw so many potatoes away. They piled up in small heaps and created a very foul smell. All the spray and the fertilizer on the crop means that the rotting potatoes end up poisoning the land. It burns the land”. While the pattern in the Bodla village remains to use half of the land to grow wheat and fodder for social reproduction of their families and livestock, the losses suffered growing potatoes has also forced them to sell more wheat on the market. Further, faced with competition from large commercial leasehold farmers who own their own cold storages, small producers in the Bolda village are aware that the crop may not offer the redemption they are looking for.

Thus, the adoption of potato farming has different consequences across the rural class spectrum and has led to the amplification of the crisis of reproduction and intensified processes of rural class differentiation through the existence of an unstable market. The potato market is similar across the border where Sinha (2020) notes that “for farmers who do move into potato…the risks are compounded by a volatile market” (p. 1543). The price continues to vary significantly, often in relation to the international market. In Indian Punjab, in 2013-14, a “poor crop in Pakistan generated strong export demand and raised prices considerably” with reported profits of INR40,000-INR100,000 per acre (Sinha, 2020, p. 1543). However, the next year, in 2014-15, farmers reported losses of around INR30,000 per acre. The same issues emerged in West Punjab, where the year 2013-14 was also one of high profits, with reported profits of up to Rs200,000 per acre. This played a critical role in pushing the wider adoption of potatoes as a serious choice for commercial crop, in effect pushing through a new agrarian transition with consequences for the expropriation of agrarian surplus and rural class differentiation. Unlike East Punjab where seeds “are supplied mostly from seed farms in the Doaba region”, farmers in West Punjab import almost all seeds, usually from the Netherlands, which pushes the cost

of growing even higher, compounded by an "increase in lease rates" (Sinha, 2020, p. 1543; 1550). Sinha notes that:

> …due to these risks, large capitalists engaged in potato cultivation may also experience varying degrees of success. In other words, this active engagement by capitalist farmers could be successful but could also make them victims of the structures underpinning potato production and marketing. Accumulation through potato cultivation in its current form is, therefore, exacerbating tendencies of class differentiation. (p. 1551)

Strategies for Survival: Navigating the Neoliberal Agrarian Economy

The changes in agrarian markets in the neoliberal period have had forced differentiated agrarian classes in West Punjab to adapt their strategies of accumulation and reproduction. Jan (2017) has contested the tendency amongst certain authors (Alavi 1976; Hussain 1982) to emphasise the so-called "'polarization' of rural society into capitalist farmers and proletarians in the wake of the green revolution" (p. 9). Instead, he points to a more complicated reality in West Punjab where "small holdings have continued to reproduce themselves continuously, and though capitalist farming has become quite prominent, it has existed alongside small farmers continuing to persist even increase in numbers over time" (Jan, 2017, p. 9). However, the manner in which smallholders navigate the re-configuration of agrarian markets to be able to support partial or complete reproduction remains a significant challenge. As witnessed with the Dera Bodlan smallholders, the impulse to expand their commercial production for reproduction remains critical, which falls in line with Akram-Lodhi's (2000) insight that they exist in a relationship of structural subordination to the market. Smallholders face a different set of challenges and often participate in cultivation from a different orientation compared to middle and large-scale commercial farmers. Thus, rather than relating to the market from the

point of view of profit maximisation, smaller landowners continue to grow a significant part of their landholding as subsistence crops or staple crops with relatively stable prices and supplement by growing one or two commercial crops. This leads to risky strategies that combine elements of subsistence and accumulation, the latter of which is necessary to obtain the cash requirement to reproduce their families, livestock and status as farmers in the next season. Moreover, unlike large-scale commercial farmers, the question of productivity is about hitting optimum yields, rather than maximising productivity by optimising the use of agricultural inputs according to their budget, which includes the ability to access credit through formal and informal mechanisms.

The key to making a profit on potato cultivation is not to sell at the time of harvest. This is not a choice available to small producers like Ashraf, who cannot afford to foot the Rs400 per potato sack cost of putting their produce in cold storage. All he can do is hope for the best: "I have made a loss on the leased land most years, even this year, but next year I am hopeful it will yield a profit". Walking in a small field of mustard flowers, I meet Mohammad Ashraf, one of the Arain colonist families who has remained in Chak Jaffar Shah. I spot two women arrive in a donkey cart to collect the mustard flowers. "They are going to be working for me during the harvest season, so I have to allow them to take some produce for their animals," Ashraf says, "We, small farmers, need to entice labour to come to our fields". Ashraf owns nine acres of agricultural land in the village, which is the highest amongst the remaining Arain families. Ashraf's family was amongst twenty Arain families who moved from Pakpattan to Nawabshah, Sindh, in the 1960s agrarian colonisation, but returned to Punjab after the 1972 language riots in Sindh[94] to purchase around 50 acres of land in Chak Jaffar Shah in 1974,[95]

[94] Agrarian colonisation, to no surprise, was contested by local populations in both the Seraiki Wasaib and central Sindh. In this case, it means that the movement of the family of peasant colonists we encounter in Chak Jaffar Shah was circular: moving from Punjab to Sindh, and then returning to Punjab in the face of a hostile environment.
[95] This sale of land began the process of evicting sharecropping tenants and the Shah family's disentanglement from the village's economy.

which was distributed amongst them in small parcels. Many of them have given up farming and moved to towns nearby for work. This allowed Ashraf to increase his landholding through familial ties. “Most of our family has now left the village. It is difficult to maintain one’s position as a small producer. I have been leasing land each year to grow risky crops. Who knows how long I will be able to sustain this?” Ashraf informs me.

Ashraf grows subsistence crops on his own land, and leases around six acres of land to grow commercial crops, with any profits going back into reproducing the same cycle in the next year.

> I grow a little bit of everything - wheat, peas, mustard, rice, fodder - but the main [commercial] crops are maize and potatoes. On my own land, I am growing mustard flowers, fodder, rice, and wheat. The wheat will be replaced by maize next season. The crops I grow on my own land are for us and our animals and we give a share of the produce to the labour.

Small farmers are unable to compete with commercial lease farmers across a range of markets, including labour. “We pay labour more than big farmers like Haji Akram. They take all the labour. We must maintain relationships in labour villages like Chak 93/D throughout the year. Labour is allowed to take a share of the crops throughout the year, and even then, we pay them higher than the big farmers”. Small farmers, including Ashraf, reported needing to Rs350 per row of potatoes in labour costs, while the commercial farmers, like the Maliks, reported that the labour rate they pay can be as little as Rs250 per row, due to their ability to offer guaranteed work for a longer period of time.

Small farmers’ choices cannot be explained in the market versus subsistence binary given the importance of the cash in the wake of the liberalisation of agrarian markets for inputs, credit and trade, as well as the cash requirement for hiring labour. “My own land is not sufficient for our family’s needs. I started hiring land from Dr Mohammad Hussain, who lives

in the UK and bought some land from Mansoor Shah. This season I am growing peas and potatoes," Ashraf's mixed strategy of combining subsistence and commercial production has been part of the long history of reproduction strategies used by small farmers in Punjab. Farmers with small landholdings used to supplement them by taking up more land as sharecroppers. This would reduce the need for cash for leasing in land. Producers like Ashraf are compelled to intensify cultivation, sell more of their produce, and choose riskier crops purely to fulfil the intensified requirements for reproduction. Ashraf explains that he "no choice but to take out the lease. I cannot recover my costs from subsistence crops," citing the costs of labour, running tubewells, purchasing seeds, pesticides and fertilizers. "How can I continue to farm at a loss?," Ashraf says, as he notes one of the Arain families left the village a week earlier after being unable to sustain themselves through farming.

The cash lease mechanism makes it no longer viable to grow staple crops like wheat on leased in land. Even though Ashraf argues, "If you own enough land, wheat is a safer crop to grow", his detailing of the cost of lease, cost of growing and harvesting wheat, and the market price for wheat seems to guarantee a loss. The costs per acre are: Lease: Rs30,000; Seeds: Rs3,000; Fertilizers: Rs3,500; Land preparation: 8,000; Water: Rs4,000; Pesticides and harvesting: Rs8,000. On top of this, Ashraf adds that "the middleman and harvester take 8 maunds of wheat per acre", which adds up to around Rs53,000 per acre. In a good season, Ashraf reports a yield of around 50 maunds of wheat per acre. Given a purchase price of around Rs1,000 per maund, Ashraf estimates a Rs10,000 loss per acre if wheat is grown on leased land. "I have asked the landlords to reduce the lease to Rs40,000 per acre, but they only care about money. Big farmers come and say they will pay more because they are planting potatoes or tobacco. I grow potatoes because everyone grows potatoes." Choosing to grow potatoes in what has become Punjab's potato belt remains a poisoned chalice for small-scale producers.

At the time of harvest, the norm is for potato prices to crash to below the cost of cultivation each season before rising in the following months.

With the cost of cultivation and renting in land increasing, small farmers are increasingly compelled to deploy riskier strategies for reproduction. Rather than reading the presence of cultivators like Ashraf as constituting incomplete transitions to capitalist farming, it is more important to focus on the qualitative difference in how they relate to markets for seeds, labour and produce. Despite having an extensive knowledge of the seed market, Ashraf makes the choice of seeds to buy based on affordability, combined with local knowledge networks which rely on social relationships. “Last year, a friend of mine was able to purchase good quality seeds from Holland and told me to sow them near the road so other farmers could see the yields. I had double the yield, and many farmers purchased seeds from me”, Ashraf reported. In the labour market, Ashraf must maintain a relationship with labour, which includes access to crops throughout the year. In terms of selling produce, Ashraf reports that the choice of whether to sell or consume the crops themselves depends on the “price in the market. If it’s high, I sell more of the harvest. If it’s low, we use them in feed [for livestock] or turn them into seeds”.

Moreover, smaller farmers also remain sceptical of the possibilities of becoming large commercial farmers due to the more challenging environment and high risk attached with becoming big farmers. “It was a different time when small farmers became big farmers. The Maliks grew when there was no competition for potatoes. Labour would come to farmers and ask for work. Farmers would be able to bargain on the price”, Ashraf notes. However, the context has now changed, “Everyone started to grow potatoes. Prices fell. Those who had land near cities sold a few acres of land and built cold storages. Small farmers would pay Rs400 per bag to store their produce during a price crash. The cold storage owners increased their income, and the income of small farmers fell. No small farmer can rise again. We can just protect what

we have”. Not only does the story show the limited prospects for small farmers today, it charts new relationships of expropriating surplus in the agrarian political economy – namely through cold storages. Small-scale cultivators who had their surplus production expropriated before by landlords, tax collectors, and middlemen, must now siphon another chunk of their harvest to those who operate the cold storages, who are often large capitalist farmers. Thus, the cold storage is operating as a mechanism through which capitalist farmers can directly siphon surplus from small-scale cultivators. However, unlike colonial landlords who were invested in the ability of tenants to reproduce themselves, the new capitalist farmers stand to gain when land previously tilled by smaller producers becomes available for commercial leases. Effectively, the relationship between large-scale commercial cultivators and small-scale cultivators in the countryside has been re-constituted by liberalized agrarian markets. Ashraf suspects that commercial farmers are not making as much money as before, noting:

> Now it is a time of competition. Big farmers are not making as much as they used to. The Maliks stopped leasing land from Colonel Sahib [sic.] after he increased rent by Rs10,000 per year. They are running at a loss. They have left a lot of their lands. If they were making profits, they would have paid the extra money. There are big ups and downs for big farmers. Many big farmers have been left penniless.

Ashraf talks about one of the first successful capitalist farmers in the village, who used to cultivate hundreds of acres of land in the area whose sons are now security guards in Sahiwal. “It is a difficult balance to save ourselves from that happening”. Ashraf concludes. The cousins Usman and Chaudhary Mithu in Chak Jaffar Shah could not save themselves from a similar fall in fortunes. They are taking on contract farming to prevent a similar collapse in the future.

Perils of Accumulation: Contract Farming and its Uncertainties

Usman and Chaudhry Mithu are medium-scale[96] leasehold farmers that own and rent land only within Chak Jaffar Shah. I met them both supervising the harvest in early March at their fields, where they were growing potatoes for Pepsico. They were effectively growing the crop under a contract arrangement with the multinational corporation, which they told me was the best way to ensure “a stable price in a volatile market”. Their strategic decision to shift to contract farming is effectively a result of scaling down their leaseholding after losing out in the open market, which threatened to throw them out of business. They have instead begun to adapt to the grading and inspection regime of various agro-processing companies preparing potato-based goods for consumer markets.

Unlike the Malik family which only began leasing land in Chak Jaffar Shah in the 1990s, Mithu’s father leased 10 acres of land in the village in the early 1970s from the Shahs. His brother, Usman’s father, also leased a similar amount. Focusing on growing potatoes, the two brothers were able to expand their leased land to over 300 acres. However, rather than their fortunes following the Malik family, they began to take serious losses when more farmers began to cultivate potatoes and the market became saturated. “The only thing that saved us was that we owned some of our land”, Mithu says. Today, Mithu cultivates 10 acres of his own land, and leases another 30 acres, while Usman, who is a graduate in agricultural sciences, owns around 20 acres of land and leases another 70 acres. Both say that they are nowhere near the heyday of commercial farming that their fathers were able to organise.

Both Mithu and Usman suffered large losses in the open market. “Land became too difficult to manage. Leasing is expensive and maintaining small parcels of land in different locations is not easy. Labour is also not easy to get when you need it. We made a lot of losses in recent years. I decided to reduce the amount of land we lease”, Usman explains. This informed their decision to switch to contract farming for growing potatoes in 2015. “We also

[96] This is relative to large-scale leasholding cultivators, such as the Maliks, discussed earlier.

began to produce potatoes for Pepsico. This is working better for us and I managed to rent more land this year than before", Usman says. Contract farming is a risk mitigation strategy that poses new challenges. Instead of growing potatoes exclusively for the open market, both have agreed contracts with Pepsico to grow potatoes for them on one-third of their land. The seeds are bought from Pepsico at the start of every season. The crop has to pass multiple inspections throughout the process from plantation to harvest. Once the harvest has been completed, the corporation sends staff to grade the potatoes and only those that make the cut are brought for its Lays plants. The rest of the potatoes are discarded. Both cousins are never sure what percentage of the harvest will make the grade. Despite the challenge of adapting their cultivation process in line with the companies' requirement, Usman and Mithu are trying to work with agricultural processing plants to ensure stable prices for their produce. Mithu explains the attraction:

> Yes, the inspection process is more difficult for Pepsico, but the open market became too risky for us. There is a growing demand for graded potatoes from new potato processing plants being set up in the area. It is better for us to have a contract with a fixed price already agreed with the company. You must have seen the Fresh N Freeze processing plant being set up on the Pakpattan Road on your way here. There are many plants like that coming up in this area. Grading is a challenge. We are still in the process of learning. This is why we have not contracted all our land to Pepsi. It is an experiment. But in the long term, we want to learn to work with these companies. It promises us guaranteed profits.

While contract farming is relatively new for potato growers, informal contract farming was a widespread practice in the heyday of the now defunct Ittefaq Sugar Mills[97], spread over

[97] The mill is reported to be owned by the influential Sharif family, where the two brothers, Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif, control arguably Pakistan's biggest political party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz. There is an ongoing case in the Supreme Court of Pakistan challenging the relocation.

hundreds of acres of land. The mill would give farmers an advance for growing sugarcane with the condition that they would sell the produce back to it. The Sahiwal-Pakpattan Road would be lined with hundreds of tractor-trolleys loaded with sugarcane for weeks as mill owners would delay purchasing for as long as they could. Exploitation by sugar mill owners was cited as a major reason why farmers in the Sahiwal division have abandoned commercial sugarcane farming, even though some still grow it for household consumption and diversifying animal fodder. Farmers reported that the Ittefaq Sugar Mill was shut down and moved to the Bahawalpur district in 2015 after farmers began an informal boycott of supplying to the mill over billions of rupees that were owned to them by the mill. The sugarcane regime in Punjab forces farmers to sell their produce to sugar mills within their district, as well as limits the number of sugar mills allowed in a single district. This, in addition, to the loans provided by sugar mills to farmers created a regime of informal 'contract farming' in sugarcane, which 'structurally subordinated' sugarcane farmers in relation to sugar mills in Punjab, which is in line with Akram-Lodhi's (2000) observations for the Khyber Pakthunkhwa province.

This experience with informal contract farming means mid-scale leasehold farmers like Usman and Mithu have yet to fully commit to the practice. For now, it appears to offer a solution to one critical problem: price. Unlike the Maliks, who can store and export potatoes when local prices fall, Usman and Mithu's experience of renting the use of cold storage facilities has only increased their losses. But as medium-scale leasehold farmers with a far more limited access to capital, they express a greater sense of vulnerability to the vagrancies of price, cost of inputs, and the declining productivity of land. Usman takes me to see blight spreading amongst his potato crops, "We must use herbicides before harvest every season due to this disease. This was not in our lands before but came with the potato seeds we import from Netherlands. Once it enters the soil, there is no solution". As a graduate in agricultural sciences,

Usman brings up the possibility of moving to agro-ecological farming but argues it does not make financial sense to do it on leased land.

> If we try to negotiate the rent down, the landlords will get someone else to lease the land. Organic farming without fertilizers and herbicides is much better, it would restore the natural nutrients of the soil and help eliminate disease, but the process needs us to leave land fallow. Landlords would never allow this. And it does not make sense for us to pay Rs60,000 per year to rent land and leave it fallow.

As mid-scale leasehold farmers, Usman and Mithu, are more precariously positioned. While accumulation for reproduction requires choosing the market imperative, they must find ways of mitigating market risk. Their foray into contract-farming for potato processing companies is one such strategy. Where big capitalists such as the Malik family can make bolder choices, such as building cold storages, becoming exporters, and moving agrarian capital into other sectors, these choices are not available to Usman and Mithu. Instead, they are attempting to find a niche within the market, which promises more secure returns via contract farming, in the absence of any support price for the potato crop. There have been similar developments in contract farming in other crops, such as tomatoes, sugarcane, maize, sunflower and milk, which have similarly unprotected markets. "We need a much more stable pricing system. We cannot be sure if we will make a profit or a huge loss when we grow crops for the market. We have supported the PKI's demand for support prices for crops", Mithu says. The liberalised markets for crops have created a crisis of accumulation which threatens their reproduction.

Conclusion: A New Agrarian Question of Capital in West Punjab

Reading the story of agrarian change in the neoliberal period in continuity with the colonial and developmental periods shows how capital continues to be a critical factor in shaping the imperatives of accumulation and reproduction and the processes of peasant

differentiation in Punjab. Transformations in agriculture have been shaped by the re-constitution of the AQ of capital, which has involved the development of new mechanisms of surplus accumulation within the sector. Today, agrarian surplus is being expropriated through the expansion of a plethora of national and transnational agribusiness corporations, the development of new forms of agro-processing, the setting up of agri-export enterprises and the development of speculative agricultural markets. This contrasts with the developmental period when it was state price controls and taxation on agri-exports which were the key mechanisms of the transfer of agrarian surplus to processes of industrialisation.

This chapter has focused on how this new AQ of capital has shaped processes of accumulation and reproduction for differentiated agrarian producers in a cluster of five villages between Sahiwal and Pakpattan. Their stories highlight the operation of dynamic strategies by large commercial farmers and smallholding cultivators in responding to a range of challenging internal and external factors, including volatile markets, ecological stress, the rising cost of cultivation, and the increasing cash requirement for reproduction. For commercial farmers, these responses have included the construction of cold storages, using leaseholds as a way of increasing or decreasing risk, creating their own agri-input and agri-export businesses, the re-investment of agrarian surplus in other sectors such as real estate, and adopting contract farming. Smaller cultivators have attempted to adapt to the high cost of reproduction and expanding cultivation by renting in small parcels of land for cash crops, min-maxing the use of agricultural inputs, and relying on social ties to obtain seeds and labour, which allows them to hedge their bets on prices and yields holding up at the time of harvest. Even though the neoliberalisation of agrarian markets has created additional pressure to maximise productivity and increase the marketed produce, smallholders continue to be forced to balance reproduction and accumulation through their relationship to land and markets.

In the neoliberal period, the reduction of subsidies and expanded marketisation of inputs, household consumption and farm labour and machinery has pushed the cash requirement up significantly. Earlier, it was possible for a smallholder to rent in more land on sharecropping contracts, where the payment to the landlord was contingent on the eventual produce. The shift to cash leasing means that land rent must be paid up front and both the crop yield and market price are not relevant. Similarly, agricultural inputs, including seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, electricity, diesel, and other machinery must be paid for through incurring debts or cash payments, and for much higher prices than before given the steep reduction in agricultural subsidies. Moreover, smaller farmers also end up paying labour higher than commercial farmers due to agricultural labour shortages. Where commercial farming in Punjab has, indeed, developed wage labour-capital relations, small-scale farming continues to rely on much lower levels of capital and a more complicated relationship to agrarian labour, markets and land productivity. Partial subsistence through cultivation remains a critical component to the reproduction of small agrarian producers within an integrated agrarian political economy, rather than existing as relics of a world outside the global capitalist economy. Where some smallholders, like the Maliks, have made the transition to large commercial farming, they remain the exception, as most smallholders still struggle to balance the tightrope between subsistence production and production for the market to ensure reproduction.

These stories also explain some of the factors shaping the development of the complex agrarian crisis which led to the rise of the first mass-based popular farmers' movement in Punjab since the early 1970s, the PKI, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The emergence of the PKI was underpinned by a crisis of accumulation and reproduction which both separates and combines the interests of differentiated agrarian classes, who are cognizant of where their interests' conflict and come together. While macroeconomic numbers have

shown that agriculture in Punjab has been in a state of decline for almost two decades, they are unable to show the complex ways in which farmers are responding to changing market and ecological conditions. Niazi (2012) notes that “Pakistan has seen hunger, malnutrition, and poverty worsened since the green revolution took roots in the 1960s and elevated the country’s growth to its highest level since its independence in 1947” (p. 189). In the case of smallholders, in line with Akram-Lodhi (2000), we have been able to trace evidence of structural subordination, which has translated into the transfer of more surplus from small-scale farmers to agrobusiness, agricultural traders, creditors and large-scale farmers. In the case of the development of the politics around the crisis, one could argue that there has been a similar subordination to large leasehold farmers, which imposes limits on which facets of their struggles for reproduction make their way into political articulations.

Agrarian relations continue to remain dynamic in response to new challenges, but both smallholders and commercial leasehold producers continue to sustain themselves precariously. There is also something to be said about large landlords from the colonial era and the fate of sharecropping. Four snippets can be recounted. First, there are landlords who have either sold or lost their land and transitioned into rentier landlords on a part of their lands like was witnessed in Chak Jaffar Shah. This has led to the removal of sharecroppers and their replacement by smallholder owner-cultivators and leasehold farming. Second, there are old landlords like those at Chak Sanday Khan who have transitioned into commercial farming, which has led to the displacement of sharecroppers and replacement by mechanization and wage-labour relations. Third, there remain some more traditional landlords that survive, such as the Khagga family, who was rewarded with thousands of acres of land for helping quash the Kharal rebellion against the British Raj in the 1857 Indian War of Independence, who still boast one of their family members is the ‘Ravi ki Jagirdarni,’ or the ‘feudal lord of the Ravi River.’ Fourth, the Pakistan military continues to maintain sharecroppers in several military

farms, where there is an ongoing political struggle to protect tenancy and struggle for land rights by the Anjuman Mazareen Punjab's (Punjab Tenants Association). These snippets show a wide array out of social relations and struggles that continue to take place within the canal colonies that go beyond those outlined and hinted at in this chapter.

Chapter 6

Farmers Movements in Neoliberal Punjab, Pakistan:

Class, Ecology, and Markets in the Politics of the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (2011-now)

While India saw the rise of new farmers movements (NFM) in the late 1970s, nothing comparable emerged in neighbouring Pakistan despite shared historical trajectories of agrarian change and politics. The first kissan movement to emerge in Punjab in the neoliberal period was the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI) in 2011, which was able to build a cross-provincial and cross-class alliance between rich commercial cultivators and small-scale cultivators. Having organised primarily against the increase in electricity prices for agricultural tubewells, the PKI was dismissed for representing capitalist farmers, who were organising for their narrow class interests. Similarly, in the early phase of the Delhi Kissan Morcha in 2020, communist and left-wing intellectuals in India made similar arguments about the emergent kissan movement which had barricaded the borders of Dehli in two large encampments. Despite divergences in class composition, ideology and leadership styles, both the PKI and the Samyukht Kissan Morcha [United Kissan Movement] have been analysed as 'new farmers' movements,' ostensibly based on a rupture between the ideological and mobilisational strategies between left-wing kissan mobilisations in the first 75 years of the 20th century, and the more interest-based mobilisations in the last four decades in the two Punjabs.

In the 1980s and 1990s, in Punjab, Pakistan, agrarian protest continued to take the form of issue-specific protest and the formation of small, often localised, interest groups in the early neoliberal period. This changed when, in December 2009, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government[98] took the decision to withdraw electricity subsidies for agricultural tubewells after

[98] The PPP government replaced the General Musharaf-led military regime that ruled Pakistan from 1999-2008, which was heavily favoured by the US due to its status as a key ally during the so-called 'War on Terror.'

pressure from the US and IMF.[99] The US Ambassador to Pakistan Robin Raphel at the time publicly defended the price hike for agricultural producers. (Sobahi, December 2009) In the midst of massive electricity outages, farmers warned of a 50 percent fall in wheat harvest if the price hike was not reversed. As farmers switched to using tractors to operate tubewells, the price of diesel was also increased. (Kalhoro, February 2010) Around six months later, in May 2010, Punjab was hit with one of the largest floods it has seen in its recent history, which left around one-third of the country's landmass under water. The growing ecological crisis came together with the rising cost of agriculture to drive agricultural producers to the brink, whose nascent attempts at organising became a province-wide militant movement by mid-2011, bringing together differentiated classes of agricultural producers around the single issue of restoring the tubewell tariff subsidy. Despite the price hikes for consumers across the power sector, the PKI's strong organising ensured that farmers were the only social group receiving highly subsidised power until 2020.[100]

The story of the PKI reads like the story of the rise of the Bharatiya Kissan Union (BKU), which was able to consolidate itself after a rise in power prices and irregular power supply in northern India in 1988. With state-subsidized tubewells replacing canal water as the key source of water for agriculture in Punjab since the late 1960s, the PKI managed to consolidate itself around the removal of electricity subsidies on agricultural tubewells. Since its successful protests on the issue of tubewell tariffs, the PKI has moved to demand subsidies on inputs, support prices for produce, and the representation of farmers in local agrarian markets. Moreover, the narrative of 'agricultural emergency' created by the PKI's politics has

[99] Information Minister Qamar Zaman Kaira made a sheepish defence of the decision saying, "For us it is very difficult to take [this] unpopular decision as we are an elected government that assumed power on the strength of public support. Still, the economic compulsions have forced us to withdraw the subsidies" (Sobahi, December 2009)

[100] The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government ended tubewell subsidies in 2020. The PKI organised a march on Islamabad, as well as other localised protest, but these were not as effective as the 2011-2013 protests. Butt, Shafiq. 'Farmers begin march on capital over non-fulfillment of demands.' Dawn. June 24, 2020. https://www.dawn.com/news/1564776

prompted the Pakistani state to announce several agricultural support packages over the last decade. However, although upper-caste farmers are said to maintain a hegemonic hold on the movement in India, in Pakistan, the PKI successfully displaced Jatt caste dominance by putting Arain capitalist farmers, who had gained from speculative agricultural markets, at the forefront of the movement. The PKI's membership is organised around tubewell ownership, and the tense class alliance between small farmers and leasehold capitalist farmers is maintained through strong mobilisational tactics, negotiation with the bureaucracy, and channelling charismatic leadership. The PKI leadership actively avoids talking about caste solidarity, and instead raises the slogan, Kissan Ittehad (Farmers Unity), to keep the cross-class alliance in place.

While the PKI is not a left-wing kissan movement, analysing the PKI offers an opportunity to understand the nature of agrarian crisis through the eyes of farmers, offering insight into the types of class alliances and political practice that emerge, and the contradictions and contestations that keep the movement moving. In previous chapters, this thesis has shown through discussions on left-wing kissan movements in the colonial and national developmental periods that on the ground, movements are often more complex than their representations. Even self-professed left-wing agrarian movements had limitations in terms of their class-base, political practice and vision for agrarian transformation in the countryside. Specifically, the examination of the WPKC in 1950s and 1960s in chapter 4 showed some of the contradictions of how it engaged with debates and politics around land reform, feudalism and capitalist agriculture in the context of the large-scale dispossession of small farmers and tenants. Moreover, popular kissan movements in earlier periods have also actively attempted contest and reshape agrarian markets. As I have argued earlier, popular agrarian movements are worth studying not merely to decide whether they are 'revolutionary' or 'reactionary,' but to understand how they negotiate ongoing crises of reproduction and accumulation *within*

agrarian markets structures. A similar thrust animates recent literature on the Delhi Kissan Morcha in 2020 and the PKI, which has pushed beyond the NFM debates in the 1990s, arguing against interpretations of agrarian movements through the narrow confines of the farmer/peasant binary.

In this chapter I focalise the PKI to argue that NFMs contest the contradictions of the neoliberal agrarian market structures through cross-class alliances that channel ongoing crises of reproduction and accumulation in South Asian agriculture. Moreover, in contrast to the Subaltern School and the debates around new farmers' movements, which both agree that such movements are looking towards re-creating a historical peasant subject, I will show how the PKI attempts to fashion a vision of a kissan who takes part in the national development process through maximising agrarian production and profitability. This reading allows me to analyse the contradictions in the rural class alliances from the vantage point of the contradictions of class, ecology and labour without falling into the trap of reading the PKI through the binary lens of either politically conservative or progressive. Instead, I posit that new farmers' movements must be understood within the existing dynamics of agrarian change, rural class differentiation and ongoing patterns of dispossession in the countryside. Moreover, the chapter will also further develop analysis on how rural movements navigate and contest changing agrarian markets as active subjects, engaging with debates on agrarian change, class alliances, political ecology, and emerging rural politics in South Asia.

The chapter will show how the peasant vs. farmer binary has limited the analysis of NFMs in South Asia, before discussing recent academic literature produced in the aftermath of the Indian farmers' protests in 2020 that attempts to go beyond these binaries. I shall argue that adding an approach that understands the contradictions of class, ecology, and markets around the combined strategies of reproduction and accumulation allows a better understanding of the strengths, fractures, and blind spots of contemporary kissan movements in South Asia. The

chapter will then trace how the PKI developed as a cross-class alliance between large-scale farmers and mid and small-scale farmers through the convergence of neoliberal economic policies and the ongoing ecological stress in rural Punjab.[101] I will draw on fieldwork with the PKI to demonstrate how it politicised issues of markets, ecology and labour, and draw out the contradictions within these articulations. The chapter will also analyse the PKI's vision for a progressive kissan, situating it within the political economy of agrarian change in contemporary West Punjab.

Section 1: Beyond Agrarian Populism and the 'Peasant' Myth: A Critical Look at the Debates on New Farmers Movements

The academic debate on NFMs in South Asia has remained highly "polarised," operating as a binary between Marxist and "populist" analyses of post-Green Revolution movements in South Asia. (Baviskar and Levein, 2021, p. 1341) Deploying a class-based approach to studying rural movements, Brass (1994), Dhanangre (1994) and Banaji (1994) labelled farmers' movements as "conservative rural coalitions" (Banaji, p. 239), arguing that "these new farmers' movements primarily represented large-to-medium farmers' (kulaks) from the dominant castes and had the baneful ideological effect of glossing over class differentiation and caste oppression within the countryside." (Baviskar and Levein., 2021, p. 1343) The so-called populists, Omvedt (1994) and Lindberg (1994) instead argued that these were progressive articulations of peasant/rural 'collective identity,' which "theorised a very different contradiction…between peasantry and state-based exploiters," (Omvedt, 1994, p. 126) and thus provided new templates for revolutionary politics. The terms of the debate left little room

[101] The chapter does not study violence both enacted by the movement and the state against it. This is because I did not encounter any substantive instances during the fieldwork, however, successful PKI protests, including the most recent one in October 2022 have all faced various degrees of violence, including arrests, baton charge, and tear-gas shelling.

to find any middle ground, leading Marxist scholars to effectively dismiss agrarian distress as an economic and political reality for differentiated agrarian producers. In the aftermath of the 2020 Indian farmers' movement, Baviskar and Levein (2021) declared that the debate was "no longer adequate for the agrarian milieu of the twenty-first century" (p. 1341) because of long term transformations in markets, ecology, and agrarian and non-agrarian economies. I argue that the debate around new farmers' movements during the 1990s represented a missed opportunity for Marxist scholars to fashion a more robust critique of Subalternist and new social movement-driven theorisations of peasant movements, which required going beyond the peasant/farmer binary and engaging with the robust demands of the farmers' movements around the contradictions within the liberalised post-Green Revolution agrarian political economy. This would allow locating these movements within ongoing agrarian transformations, peasant differentiation, ecological distress, and class contradictions, rather than being simply dismissed as 'populist.'

Agrarian movements in India, including the Bharatiya Kissan Union (BKU) in Uttar Pradesh, the Shetkari Sanghatana in Maharashtra, and the Karnataka State Farmers' Association (KRRS) in Karnataka, showed 'new' characteristics, including a shift from peasants to farmers, land to prices, non-party affiliation, new methods of agitation, and the inclusion of environmental and women's issues. (Brass, 1994a, p. 2) The first two of these characteristics were misidentifications since the peasant/farmer binary made little sense in these contexts and the contestation of agrarian markets remained a critical component of left-wing kissan movements in the colonial and national developmental periods. Moreover, the growing consciousness around the ecological crisis in agriculture, which early 20th-century movements were not unfamiliar with, cannot be dismissed so easily. Marxist scholars like Brass (1994a) dismissed these emergent movements as influenced by the ideology of the Subalternist School's "undifferentiated rural universe," (Brass, p. 2) and labelled them

‘agrarian populist’ due to the purported opposition drawn between “small-scale ‘people’s production and…large-scale capitalism.” (Brass, p. 14)

Central to this critique of progressive readings of NFMs was Brass’s attack on the category of the peasant, which, he argued, belonged in the “conservative pantheon of ‘natural’ categories.” (Brass, 1994b, p. 29) Moreover, Brass argued that the peasant was in fact dead, with the only evidence cited being Lenin’s predication that the “capitalist penetration of agriculture converted the former into a rural bourgeoisie and the latter into a *de facto* proletariat, while middle peasant(s) (or petty commodity producers) were depeasantised.” (Brass, p. 30) This analysis came out of a commitment to the idea of the disappearance of the peasantry, rather than the nature of agrarian relations and crisis in South Asia. It may have instead been useful to take on the Subaltern School’s own contradictions, which Sumit Sarkar (1997) described as a “tendency… towards essentializing the categories of ‘subaltern’ and ‘autonomy,’” (Sarkar, p. 87-88), by implication suggesting that the subaltern was the peasant and represented an undifferentiated community which exists outside the state and market. For instance, Partha Chatterjee (2008) argued that farmers are committing suicides in India because “peasants feel that the markets for these commercial crops are manipulated by large mysterious forces that are entirely beyond their control.” (Chatterjee, 2008, p. 61) Even though the article admits the old Subalternist norm in which the peasant considered the state a ‘mysterious’ force was wrong, and that they were not integrated within the state, Chatterjee maintains the same language to describe the ‘peasant’ relationship to markets. As this thesis has shown thus far, markets were hardly ‘large mysterious forces’ for the kissan, where agrarian producers in West Punjab have actively engaged with markets by combined strategies of accumulation and reproduction, as well as contested agrarian market structures since the colonial period.

Similarly, NFMs in India continued to contest the state and agrarian market formation, much like the left-wing kissan movements of the colonial and developmental periods.[102] This raises serious questions about whether NFMs genuinely represented a shift from peasant to farmer and new forms of politics, or whether it represented more the kissan movement losing a left-wing ideological impulse. Rather than paying attention to the political and ideological divergences between different agrarian movements in this period, Brass and Banaji condemned both the anti-WTO BKU and pro-WTO Shetkari Saghantana as “conservative rural alliances” (Banaji, p. 238) in the same brush stroke. The failure to explain the difference in the politics of two agrarian movements with ostensibly the same class composition is a serious blot on the analysis of both Marxist and ‘populist’ theorising. This came down to both their proponents and critics agreeing that the primary inspiration for these movements came from nostalgia and populist ideology. (Brass, 2020, p. 989) This analysis conflated demands for national protected markets and globalised free trade-driven markets and produced an untenable proposition in which all forms of agrarian policy seem to have had the same impact on the agrarian relations, and differences between the ideologies of rural movements are moot. In other words, despite the emergence of strong agrarian movements in the 1970s and’80s, the political AQ remained dead for the Marxist political economists as they remained tied to ideal types of peasant and farmer.

NFMs and the Political AQ in the Neoliberal Era

Existing literature around the peasant/farmer binary was fundamentally challenged by the emergence and eventual victory of the 2020 Indian farmers’ movement in India. Although

[102] For example, the BKU has consistently taken an anti-global trade stance, which is reflected in its participation in the 2020 movement against the three farm bills which aimed at corporatizing agriculture. In contrast, the Maharastra-based Shetkari Saghanta has supposed the same bills, in line with its long-term political position in favour of opening Indian agriculture to international trade.

it brought together farmers from across India, Punjabi farmers made up the majority of the rank and file of the movement. The farmers laid siege to the borders of Delhi for an entire year, combining critiques of the religious fascism of the BJP-led government with an indictment of its policies for neoliberalising agriculture. The movement drew participation in the thousands from a range of groupings, including left-wing political parties, students, diasporic Punjabis, and coordinated nation-wide resistance against the authoritarian Indian state. At the core of this mass-based popular movement was an engagement with the issue of crop prices and agrarian markets, and the state's regulation of agriculture, articulated through a kissan identity defined by cross-class alliances between small, medium and commercial capitalist farmers. Thus, the movement's support base, demands and ideological articulation clearly defied long-held ideas in Marxist analysis around the emancipatory potential of farmer-led movements concerned with the politics of markets. (Kadirgamar, Shah and Rashid 2021)

By posing a challenge to the right-wing fascist government in India and contesting the corporatisation of agriculture, the Delhi Kissan Morcha in 2020 compelled academics to revisit their assumptions about the conservative or progressive nature of farmer-led movements. In the JPS Forum on the 2020 Indian farmers' protests, Baviskar and Levein (2021) argue that understanding the movement requires "going beyond a discussion of 'current events' to situate farmers' protests within longer histories and patterns of agrarian change." (Baviskar and Levein., p. 1342) Other articles in the issue have posed several explanations, including the gains of the Green Revolution hitting their ecological limitations, the declining profitability of Green Revolution agriculture, and the exclusionary patterns of post-liberalisation growth. (Baviskar and Levein., p. 1344) Citing Jens Lerche (2021), Baviskar and Levein argue that "farmer-labourers have been "squeezed on both fronts" by agrarian crisis on one side, and jobless growth and highly flexibilised labour markets on the other." (Baviskar and Levein, p. 1345). They offer an alternate interpretation that the "farm laws [were] seen as a death blow

not to self-sufficient agriculturalists, but to diversified yet highly precarious households…" (Baviskar and Levein, p. 1345) Thus, the current protests must be located within the "multi-pronged squeeze on social reproduction of increasingly diversified households whose livelihoods cross the rural-urban divide." (Baviskar and Levein, p. 1345) However, a curious claim by Baviskar and Levein is that we must be more open to contemporary farmers' movements, even when led by large farmers, because "large farmers are not so large anymore." (Baviskar and Levein, p. 1346) At least across the border in West Punjab, a decline in large farmers is not an identifiable pattern. In fact, chapter 5 of this dissertation has traced the expansion of leasehold farming, which has increased operational landholdings in ways that was not previously possible under landlord-tenant relations. Thus, as I discuss in detail in subsequent sections in the current chapter, what allows large commercial farmers to build alliances with smallholders is shared concerns around a combined crisis of reproduction and accumulation, rather than shrinking land holdings.

In a similar vein, recently published work by Aftab and Ali (2022) on the PKI recognises the changing agrarian political economy in which this class alliance emergences, arguing that it has "united different classes of owner-cultivators who are largely not in direct relations of exploitation with each other." (p. 1) Moreover, they argue that the PKI "advances the interests of 'second-tier' rural capitalists who exploit rural labourers while underplaying the interests of owner-peasant farmers." (Aftab and Ali, p. 1) Combined with Dhanagare's (1994) insight that new farmers' movements have involved "the use of populist ideology by rich farmers as a form of hegemony over middle and small producers," (Dhanagare, 1994, p. 72) this allows us to understand the basis of the class alliance between leasehold commercial farmers and smallholders. The PKI has put its weight towards the fashioning of a progressive kissan who accesses national and global markets through a strong negotiating position. Rather than the fetishization of smallholder farming, the PKI's vision engages and contests

mechanisms of agrarian surplus transfer within the capitalist agrarian economy, in which differentiated producers seek to address ongoing crises of reproduction and accumulation.

Section 2: Building a Kissan Alliance under Neoliberalism: The Rise of the PKI

The rise of the PKI caught the state off guard. Even though the PPP government understood that removing tubewell subsidies would anger farmers, no one expected that a national kissan movement would emerge. Existing kissan unions such as the Jamaat-i-Islami's Pakistan Kissan Board rarely engaged in militant forms of protest and largely issued only press releases. While protests would take place outside a certain sugar mill during harvest season over non-payments and delays, these would largely be localised. However, the change in water source for agriculture in Punjab, which had shifted decisively from canals to tubewells, has proven to be an important catalyst for the scale of agrarian politics to expand rapidly.

Punjab's canal colonies can now rightfully be called the tubewell colonies. The colonial hydrology of agriculture in Punjab was built around canals and was the site where the anti-colonial kissan movement in Punjab emerged with the 1907 Pagri Sambhaal Jatta Lehar around contestations of water rates. Cheap water has been a consistent demand from differentiated agrarian producers, who would struggle to maintain the tense balance between reproduction and accumulation with higher water prices. It took less than a century for the canal system to make way for tubewells. The role of the canals diminished with the state's support for ground water extraction by differentiated agrarian cultivators since the Green Revolution period, which has been discussed in detail in chapter 3.[103] Punjab's much cherished perennial canal network is, in fact, notoriously inefficient for delivering water. Only one-tenth of the water released into

[103] Tubewells were advocated in the 1960s as a solution to a range of issues, including water logging, salinity, canal water shortages and the theft of water by those upstream. (Muhammad, 1965)

canals from barrages and dams reaches agricultural fields. The rest either evaporates into the atmosphere or seeps into the vast, and fast-depleting, ground water aquifer of the Indus River Basin. This 'waste' is crucial as canal water seepage translates directly into the availability of ground water for tubewells. Thus, the contemporary hydrology of agriculture in Punjab rests upon the agricultural tubewell. This effectively transformed the tubewell into a mobilisational tool for a province-wide, cross-class agrarian movement in neoliberal Punjab after the IMF-led removal of electricity subsidies.

"The PKI was an accidental convergence," Chaudhry Rizwan, Punjab general secretary of the PKI-Khokar group tells me at his five-acre farmhouse just outside a village in district Arifwala. Rizwan is one of five brothers who cultivate over 3,000 acres of land as large-scale leasehold farmers. Back in the 1970s, Rizwan says he was from a smallholder Arain family where his father made high-profits growing tobacco. Today, the expansion of their commercial farming operation means that the large open space in the front contains various agricultural machines including tractors and harvesters. The house for him and his family is built behind a wall. He greets me sitting on a charpoy in the veranda and invites me inside. "We were meeting other local farmers to discuss what to do about the electricity price increases. Our bills have increased four times. No one had any ideas. News came that kissans were burning their electricity bills in Multan and Burewala. I called a meeting of tubewell owners at the Arifwala Grain Market in July 2010. Over 200 kissans showed up. We decided we would follow the strategy adopted by Multan farmers."

Overtures were made to the Multan group, which was led by Chaudhry Anwar Gujjar, who now leads another major faction of the PKI. The PKI began to build its membership structure around tubewell ownership, which became crucial to bringing together differentiated agrarian classes. "Tubewells are a common good. The two-acre farmer uses them as well as the 100-acre one. We built our membership around tubewells," explained Rizwan. Even though

individual farmers were offered membership cards, the PKI asks farmers to contribute to organisational funds based on the number of tubewells they own. This remains the case even when the tubewell tariff struggle had been replaced by other concerns around prices, inputs shortages, and export restrictions.

"At our peak, almost 90 percent of Arifwala's 8,000 tubewell owners were members of the PKI. It was similar for other districts in Punjab," says Rizwan, adding that "We met Chaudhry Anwar and decided to name ourselves Pakistan Kissan Ittehad to represent kissan unity. I was made the general secretary." The success of the Arifwala meeting, combined with the launch of a new organisation, marked a high in organising efforts. Several district wide meetings were called and Rizwan reports that the PKI was able to create units in 18 districts in Punjab within six months. "We were able to bring together all farmers. Small, medium and large. Obviously, the corporate farmers[104] and landlords stayed away. But we were able to bring everyone else together," Rizwan says. The PKI does not include two major kinds of agrarian producers: corporate farmers and old "feudal-type" landlords, who retain their own independent mechanisms for accessing the state. They were represented in government in 2018 through figures like the appointment of corporate farmer Jehangir Tareen[105] as the (de facto) head of the Prime Minister's Agricultural Emergency Programme, and large hereditary landlord Shah Mahmood Qureshi as Foreign Minister. This represents a significant shift in the politically constituted identity of kissan, with large-scale leasehold being able to successfully claim the identity as part of a class alliance with small to medium-scale cultivators.

In its early period, the PKI strongly relied on militant protest tactics: roadblocks, sit - ins, public burnings of electricity bills and *gheraos* (encircling) of local electricity officials. It

[104] Corporate farming in West Punjab involves local or international agro-business firms running large-scale commercial farming operations, often through the direct ownership of land or long-term leaseholds.
[105] Jehangir Tareen is the CEO and majority shareholder of the JDW Group, which operates large-scale sugarcane cultivation and processing facilities, as well as experimenting in the large-scale cultivation of new commercial crops.

was able to get its membership base to respond quickly to repressive state tactics, which included arrests and attempts to cut electricity connections. In the period between 2010 and 2013, dozens of arrest warrants were issued and hundreds of farmers courted arrests as many of Punjab's villages almost became no-go zones for state officials. However, the government refused to compromise on tubewell tariffs. It took three years of protests to get the main demand of bringing back agricultural tubewell subsidies approved. Chaudhry Rizwan argues that initially, the caretaker government in May 2013 attempted to crush the PKI by launching another crackdown. "I was arrested in the summer of 2013 by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB)[106] for failing to pay electricity bills," Rizwan said. He reported that an unmarked van chased his car on his way to a PKI meeting. "We called our organisation to be ready to block all roads, but they managed to stop us and men in plainclothes blindfolded me and put me into the van. The van driver was told to get out of our areas fast and they took me directly to the NAB office in Raiwind in Lahore," reports Rizwan. The objective of the arrest was to force Rizwan to pay his electricity bills to demoralise the PKI. Rizwan reported custodial torture, including being handcuffed to the bars on a cell and left standing for two days. The PKI did not know who had arrested him or where he had been taken, until the information was shared by state insiders that Rizwan was being held in Lahore. Thousands of farmers arrived for a sit-in outside the NAB office demanding Rizwan's immediate release. The pressure was such that NAB officials promised to release Rizwan if the protestors returned home. "Thousands of farmers chanted that my release would be the only acceptable condition for them to leave. No one is ever released in Pakistan on a Sunday. Our strength forced them to release me."

[106] Constituted by military dictator General Musharraf in 1999 to keep politicians in check, via a remit to investigate corruption, the remit of NAB has continued to expand under IMF agreements to include unpaid electricity bills – even though there is a strong case for NAB operating outside its remit in Rizwan's arrest.

Rizwan's refusal to compromise in jail and the strength of the protest emboldened the PKI. The caretaker government agreed to their demands and restored the previous price of electricity for agricultural tubewells. This became the basis for the PKI-Khokar group's narrative of collective struggle, suffering and honest leadership, which it reminds attendees of in its meetings. At a meeting in Arifwala in February 2019, key Pakpattan organiser Chaudhry Ashraf said,

> "My kissan brothers, you remember how we faced tear gas, baton charges and arrests when we protested before the Punjab Assembly during the Nawaz Sharif period. I salute those of my kissan brothers who were able to cross Data Darbar and made their way to the Punjab Assembly. I received the news in jail that our protest had been successful. The government had made its intention clear that it wanted to eliminate the PKI, but we were successful in asking for the prices of fertilizers to be reduced. The PKI has come to this point through the sacrifices of its members and its leaders."

Much has changed in the PKI from its early days of militancy during my six months of fieldwork from December 2018 to May 2019, which included attending protests and public meetings, and interviews and informal discussions with members and leaders of the movement. The first major split in the PKI took place in 2014 between the Anwar Gujjar and Khalid Khokhar factions. In this period, both factions maintained their political independence, and used the street, rather than positions of influence, to get their demands met. The importance of street power is a key reason why the PKI-Khokhar group organises one public meeting each month in each district, even if there are no major protests planned. In the research period, the PKI-Khokhar group organised one march on Lahore and five localised protests in the Sahiwal division. I also attended one protest march to Lahore by the PKI-Gujjar group. While I did most of my interviews and fieldwork with the PKI-Khokhar group, which is more prominent in the Sahiwal division, I met members and leaders of the PKI-Gujjar group in the same area.

The split between the Khokhar and Gujjar group has been followed by more fragmentation recently, which was discussed by kissan organisers, including PKI members, in a talk I conducted with them in Pakpattan on this research in November 2021.[107] The official narrative by the PKI-Khokar group on the 2014 split is that Anwar Gujjar compromised with the government. "He was sold by the simple offer of a helicopter flight," Rizwan argues. However, Rizwan also contradicts himself by arguing that the Gujjar group is too militant. "Our agreement was that we will pay our bills if the electricity tariffs are removed. The Gujjar group members still refused to pay their legitimate electricity bills. This is giving us a bad name," Rizwan said, before bringing up old tropes about colonial settler agriculturists versus the agriculturalists and pastoralists who inhabited Punjab before the colonial settlement. "The people who support Anwar Gujjar are from the *bar* area (on the western side of the river) and are 'janglis.' They are known to have a criminal mindset," Rizwan said. This narrative is a stark reminder that the fractures of settler versus native continue to play out within kissan politics even in the older canal colonies.[108] Moreover, unlike Rizwan, who said that they were only "threatening the government with protests to capture the support of people," the PKI-Gujjar group had been protesting against low sugarcane prices in nearby Burewala, where arrest warrants had been issued against thousands of unnamed farmers.

All PKI groups have received support from opposition political parties, including the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). This support has changed based on who is in power. Compromising with the political party in power was considered being unfaithful to the movement, while PKI factions openly keep good relations with political parties out of power. Having been decimated in the 2013 election due

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[107] For more: read Aftab and Ali (2022), which discusses nascent small farmer-led attempts to organise outside the PKI.

[108] A part of the PKI-Gujjar membership cultivates land on barani – or traditionally rain-fed – areas, which did not come under canal colonialization. However, these areas adopted the use of agricultural tubewells after incentives were offered from the 1960s onwards to reduce the reliance of such farmers on weather patterns.

to its unpopularity, the PPP repositioned itself as a champion of Punjab kissans and attempted to build bridges with the PKI. The PML-N, who once stood with them, now began to deploy a mix of appeasement and repression. In response to the PKI-led agrarian protests in 2015 and overall fall in agricultural growth rates, the PML-N government announced an agricultural emergency – or Kissan Packages - worth hundreds of billions of rupees. At the same time, it cracked down on any attempt by the PKI to protest in Lahore or Islamabad, the provincial and federal capital respectively.

Through ethnographic observations, this section will explore the mobilisational tactics of the PKI, and the ways in which the leadership deploys this organisational structure to navigate the three key issues of markets, ecology, and labour, and the contradictions that emerge therein. The movement's attempts to balance the interests of differentiated agrarian producers remains key to its politics, especially in relation to access to capital, market integration and forms of labour relations. The 'kissan ittehad' (kissan unity) of the PKI requires maintaining a tense balance, which broke within the first five years over contradictions between mobilisation strategies, protest tactics, political alliances, class politics, and rural ecologies. However, despite the split, the factions are sometimes able to come together for collective protests for demands around tariffs, subsidies, prices and agrarian market reform. These protests have also been joined by the AMP which is leading the Okara military farms land struggle.

One of the most important organising tools of the PKI-Khokar group is to organise monthly public meetings in each district. Between December 2018 and May 2019, I attended these meetings at the Railway Ground in Pakpattan and Townhall in Arifwala. If there was an ongoing political issue, the PKI would call a joint meeting that would turn into a protest rally. Out of 12 public meetings attended, almost half were protests on specific issues, including new taxes on electricity, the fall in potato prices, reform of district marketing committees, and

shortages in inputs. The Arifwala meeting would usually be smaller with around 50 and 150 participants. The Pakpattan meetings were public spectacles organised in an open ground with attendance ranging from 100 to over 500. The meetings took the form of a top-down public rally, featuring a list of speakers. I was invited to speak to the attendees a couple of times, and I introduced myself and spoke about why it was important to write about their mobilisations. The meetings were a space where farmers raised several issues, including market committee reforms, low prices for their produce, poor seed quality, poor harvests, and concerns around wheat procurement. The PKI leadership also reminded those attending of its sacrifices, the importance of kissan unity and their regular participation. The PKI leadership would often sit down for a discussion with attendees on issues they were facing and work out what strategies to adopt. The meetings also practically helped farmers understand their electricity bills. Farmers would bring their electricity bills and seek advice from a designated PKI member, who would then report to the PKI leadership. Several times, the PKI district and provincial leadership met with local electricity officials after the public meeting to take up any issues pertaining to bills.

In this period, the PKI-Khokhar group also announced that it would re-organise its grassroots structure. Pakpattan general secretary Chaudhry Ashraf told a meeting in Arifwala that, "Organising the PKI around tubewells made sense when we started. We did not have any problems because the iron was hot and every farmer was affected by the high tubewell bills. Now, we need a new local leadership to effectively mobilise our membership base." The PKI leadership felt that too few farmers were taking the responsibility for organising on a village and tehsil level, which had weakened its protests. The leadership would complain publicly about how farmers had become less active after their victories around tubewell tariffs. In a public meeting in Pakpattan, Mauza Mal union council (UC) general secretary Mohammad Tufail issued a plea to those in attendance, "Not enough farmers are attending meetings

anymore because we are no longer struggling. The PKI needs to be introduced on a UC level. This way it can be strong in each village like before. We ask you to volunteer to organise your UC level meeting." Even though the PKI's monthly meetings would be reasonably well-attended, Ashraf remembered a time when "thousands of farmers attended the public meetings during the mobilisation around tubewell rates." While the PKI has moved to organise around other issues, the strength of the tubewell rates agitation has not been achieved again. Despite the desire to create an organising structure no longer centered on tubewells, there was little progress on that front during my fieldwork period.

Navigating the Market: Balancing Differentiated Class Interests in a Kissan Movement

The PKI has been able to position itself as a mediator between differentiated farmers vis-à-vis their relationship to the market, carefully balancing the contradictory relationship between large-scale and small-scale farmers in Punjab's rural political economy. However, these contradictions, especially in relation to potato prices, remain unresolved within PKI's politics. This is evidenced by convergences and divergences on these issues between smallholders and leasehold capitalist farmers. The previous chapter showed how the rising cost of reproduction for agricultural producers has pushed smallholders to take greater risks in crop choices. However, smallholders do not have access to enough capital to place their harvest in storage during periods of low prices. The class divergence between smallholders and leasehold commercial farmers on the issue of crop prices complicates the possibility of class alliance between the two, leading to contradictions between the PKI leadership and its smallholder political base.

Not surprisingly, these issues came up during mobilisations against the almost annual price crash for potatoes close to the harvest period between January and March 2019. Potato

cultivation is expensive, with cost per acre ranging from Rs80,000 to 110,000 per acre, depending on whether land and machinery are owned or leased. In comparison, wheat costs around Rs25,000 to 30,000 per acre to grow, while maize costs around Rs40,000 per acre to cultivate. Not a traditional crop in Punjab's canal colonies, potato cultivation began to replace the cash crops of sugarcane and cotton in the southern belt during the late 1990s. This area is now estimated to produce almost 80 percent of the total potato crop in Pakistan. Cotton and sugarcane cultivation was stopped due to disease and unfavourable market conditions, which included control by textile magnates and the 'sugar mill mafia' which operates as an oligopoly over a single district. Ahmed, who I met at the Arifwala public meeting, explained that the sugar mills had complete control over farmers. "There was only one major mill in Sahiwal district which was owned the Sharif family.[109] They would give out loans and force farmers to sell directly to them at low rates. Farmers would line up with tractor-trolleys outside the mill for weeks. If the mill accepted your crop, they would say they would pay next year, and sometimes not even then," Ahmed explained. "The mill began to owe farmers billions of rupees. In the early 2000s, we took a collective decision to stop growing sugarcane. The mill is now shut. They still owe us money."

The demise of sugarcane not only shows the structural power of market actors over farmers, but also the farmers' agency in being able to push back by changing their crop choices. However, the importance of commercial cultivation for all classes of farmers to fulfil their requirements of accumulation and reproduction forced them to find an alternative: potatoes. Potato prices began to spike around the time of the global food crisis of 2008-9. With a smaller number of potato growers, farmers made profits of over Rs200,000 per acre. This was significantly higher than the marginal returns on sugarcane and cotton. Large farmers in the

[109] The mill was reportedly owned by three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif and four-time Chief Minister Punjab Shahbaz Sharif through other family members.

region began to adopt potatoes as their main commercial crop, while smaller producers began to grow it on smaller parcels of owned or leased land. The price hike had also been a function of global agricultural trade, with the Central Asian market through Afghanistan becoming lucrative after some degree of stability prevailed post the US invasion. Even though post-procurement price speculation around several crops has been usual, this is usually done by market agents and mill owners. However, the potato price hikes were among the rare instances when farmers made huge profits. Big potato farmers were able to set up their own potato export businesses on the Eastern and Western routes, which included the Gulf, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia - all major opportunities for selling what was now a bumper crop.

This period of boom was unlikely to continue as more farmers adopted the highly volatile potato crop. Since 2010, the potato harvest season has resulted in a collapse of the potato price. In 2018-19, potato growers were offered under Rs600 per bag of potatoes. Given an average yield of around 100 bags of 120 kg each per acre, this was a loss of at least Rs30,000 per acre of potato cultivation. While larger farmers were able put their harvest in cold storage or deploy their export networks to get a better price, smaller farmers looking for enough of a profit to continue the cycle of crop production for another season did not have the same luxury. Hussain, who cultivates 20 acres, told me at a PKI meeting that he had already taken a loan to grow potatoes: “How can I borrow Rs400 more per bag when the price falls like this? The arthis will never offer us a loan, especially when they know they can force us to sell them our potato harvest at a low price. They will be the ones making the profits when the prices eventually rise.” Given that it is the arthis or agricultural traders who themselves offer loans to small-to-medium holders, there is little incentive for them to advance a loan to the farmer to pay for cold storage, as they would rather purchase the crop from the farmer at a low price and place it in cold storage themselves as an investment that can help maximise agrarian surplus extraction.

Back in 2014, the PKI made a name for itself after unloading a truck of potatoes in protest in front of the Punjab Assembly in Lahore. These protests which opposed the import of duty-free Indian potatoes and vegetables were hugely successful, as the PKI demanded the "same support the Indian government gives its farmers."[110] The protests were supported by the Potato Growers Society, Cold Storage Association and Fruit and Vegetable Market Association,[111] which shows that they integrated the interests of several agrarian capitalist classes. Moreover, they also relied on nationalist discourse drawing on anti-India sentiments to mitigate the potato price crash.

Trade liberalisation is a multi-pronged issue whose winners and losers are complex. In taking positions on agricultural trade, the PKI has to balance the interests of commercial and small farmers. While it was easier to oppose Indian vegetable imports, it was much more difficult to articulate political demands around low potato prices in 2019. In a public meeting in January 2019 at the Pakpattan Railway Ground, PKI-Khokhar Punjab general secretary Chaudhry Rizwan announced a march to Lahore to protest against low potato prices, stating that "Our kissan brothers who cultivated potatoes are suffering. We need the government to allow potatoes to be exported to Afghanistan. We need the government to announce a support price." The pro-trade position went against the PKI's earlier demands to restrict agricultural imports from India. Moreover, the protest announcement did not sit well with all of those in attendance. In the middle of the speech, a group of farmers interrupted Rizwan to say, "Potato growers are not amongst us. They don't support our protests." Rizwan responded to say, "No, this is not the case. All kissans must be together. One day, we support them, the next day, they will support us. We cannot break the unity of all kissans." At this moment, Chaudhry Ashraf

[110] See: Daud, Khalid. 'Farmers call off potato protest.' The Nation. August 23, 2015. https://nation.com.pk/23-Aug-2015/farmers-call-off-potato-protest

[111] 'Protest against potato import called off.' Dawn. May 10, 2014. https://www.dawn.com/news/1105319/protest-against-potato-import-called-off

stepped in to raise the slogan, “Kissan Ittehad, Zindabad!” (‘Long live farmers’ unity’) Half of those in attendance joined in, albeit with a bit of persuasion.

Chaudhry Ashraf’s intervention may have stemmed the eruption of more serious dissent at the meeting, but still, the proposed march to Lahore was a failure. Even though potato prices were a pressing issue for the PKI, it was not translating into powerful mobilisations. This was made clear through one of the larger gatherings I witnessed at the Railway Ground in Pakpattan in January 2019 with over 500 farmers in attendance, and extra seats being brought in in the middle of the public meeting. However, when those attending were asked to join an impromptu march to the main road, over half of them did not join. The marchers only walked for around 200 yards, blocked one side of the road, burned a small amount of potatoes, and chanted slogans of ‘Give us a good rate for potatoes’ for around half an hour. Similarly, in the Lahore march in early February, barely 500 protestors reached the Punjab Assembly. When we spoke at the February meeting in Arifwala, Chaudhry Ashraf confided that potato farmers were not very reliable in protests.

Despite the weak protests, the media coverage of the protests pressurised the government to announce a support price for potatoes and a commitment to encourage exports. However, nothing came of this announcement, by which point small farmers who had grown potatoes had either already sold their harvest at a loss or destroyed it. The demand to open the Afghan border was not fulfilled due to skirmishes between the Afghan and Pakistan armies. The PKI threatened another march to Lahore in the last week of February if the government did not announce a support price and reopen trade. The march never went ahead. Ashraf said that it had been postponed due to the ongoing warmongering between India and Pakistan after the Pulwama attack in Indian-occupied Kashmir. However, the real reason was that potato prices had begun to recover. In the six-week period between the harvest and the increase in potato prices, small-scale growers who had sowed potatoes to fulfil their cash obligations had

already made a loss. The PKI leadership did not demand compensation for these losses, and the issue faded from their political demands.

The fissure around potato prices is at the heart of the contradictions assailing the class alliances that form the PKI. Despite annual protests during the potato harvest period, the PKI has refused to articulate consistent demands, which have ranged from input subsidies, support prices, zoning of potato growing areaa, bans on Indian potato imports, and support for Pakistani potato exports to Central Asia and Southeast Asia. India continues to reappear in the demands of the PKI, with the PKI president Khalid Mehmood Khokar telling the press that, “Our agricultural products are uncompetitive in the international market due to a high cost of production. We can barely compete with India because of the subsidies and facilities the Indian farmer gets from the government.”[112] For the PKI, India is both a competitor that needs to be neutralised, but also a model that could be replicated. However, in this period, there was little recognition of the challenges faced by Indian farmers and farmers movements across the border. This significantly changed in 2021 after the global recognition of the Delhi Kissan Morcha, but the PKI’s engagement with it is largely limited to acknowledging the importance of an honest leadership and farmers’ unity to get demands accepted, without a deeper comparison of the nature of agrarian crisis across the border.

The PKI has not just protested around potato prices. Its mobilisations have tried to increase or implement support prices for several crops, including wheat, rice, cotton, maize, and sugarcane. However, the overall politics around trade and support prices continues to be refracted from the lens of large-scale commercial farmers. This has led to fissures within the movement, where small farmers have questioned the sincerity of the PKI’s advocacy around

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[112] ‘Bumper potato crop inflicts pain to farmers in Punjab.’ NewsLens. January 2019. http://www.newslens.pk/bumper-potato-crop-inflicts-pain-to-farmers-in-punjab/

these issues and have accused the leadership of inadequately representing their interests. Large commercial potato growers have not backed the protests either. The contradiction between smallholders' ability to compete in markets dominated by large commercial producers, who can hedge their investment storage and have direct access to export markets, has not been articulated within the movement. Small-scale producers admit to understanding this contradiction within the PKI when spoken to during protests and meetings, but trusted the PKI to deliver based on its track record over the agricultural tubewell tariffs issue.

'Allah brought Water to my Turbine' – Tubewell Rates and the Ecological Contradictions of the PKI

The PKI maintains its cross-class alliance through the issue of water by positioning itself as a mediator between farmers and the state bureaucracy around issues related to water in Punjab's canal colonies. Faced with combined economic and ecological stress, the PKI proposes state support and technological solutions as the way forward against water shortages. In addition to negotiating with the central government, the PKI plays a critical role in helping its members gain local access to electricity and water officials to provide smaller farmers a sense that their interests are being represented to the authorities. Moreover, its discourse around falling water tables takes the shape of a combination of techno-fixes and miracles, which reflects longer-term contradictions between the Punjabi kissan and the ecology of the canal colonies. As discussed in chapter 2, Punjab was shaken by kissan protests around water rates almost a full century ago, a reminder that water issues have contributed to the development of numerous peasant and farmers' movements in the region's history. Water constitutes a node which brings together differentiated farmers to collectively bargain for the 'right to water.'

When the British created the canal colonies, the canals themselves were seen as an instrument for revenue collection from cultivators. It was kissan protest against the water rate and growing ecological issues coming from canals that transformed the canals into a 'public good.' On appearances, it is much easier to see canals as a public good, and tubewells as a private good. However, in a context where the Pakistani state itself deployed tubewells as a public good, it is not hard to see why tripling the electricity cost of operating tubewells was interpreted as an attack on a public good by farmers. Chapter 3 and 5 have discussed how tubewells were introduced in the 1960s as a technical solution to the ecological problems caused by the canals, which were rendering large tracts of land unfertile due to water logging and salinity. This meant that farmers were allowed to install and operate tubewells at highly subsidised rates to deliberately reduce the water table. Farmers, of course, were aware that groundwater could not replace canal water, which brought with it a new layer of fertile topsoil and reduced the need for fertiliser use. However, tubewells offered a degree of flexibility that has temporarily circumvented farmers' reliance on canals, which are far more susceptible to weather patterns and the political wrangling around access to water. Thus, despite attempts by the state to articulate tubewells as private resources, they continues to be viewed as a public good by agricultural producers in the region.

The expansion of tubewells and turbines across the cultivated region has played a significant role in the ongoing depletion of groundwater. In the Sahiwal division, groundwater depletion is a story that one hears of in every village. It is common to see new tubewells or turbines being constructed across the area. In Chak Jaffar Shah, an old tubewell from the 1970s, which has been re-dug several times, is no longer functional and is being replaced by a turbine. Water tables over the last three decades have fallen from 30 to 50 feet underground, to over 350 feet underground. The greater depth at which the water is extracted, the more saline and contaminated it is. The deeper it goes, the higher the fixed and variables costs of extracting

enough water to supply the crops. With canals more and more unreliable for water supply, multiple arrangements for building and operating tubewells have emerged. In villages where landholding sizes are relatively small and leasehold farming has not become dominant, it is common to see tubewells that are collectively owned and operated with mutually agreed timetables. On lands operated by large landowners or large leasehold farmers, there can be over a dozen tubewells owned and operated by the same farmer. Moreover, there are many arrangements in the middle, for example, where small farmers are allowed to use the tubewell owned by a larger farmer for a fee or by agreeing to use their own diesel. The tricky part is that seepage from the canal system has meant that groundwater levels have remained in a precarious balance: either rising too much (from the 1900s to 1970s) or falling significantly (from the 1980s to now). While these contradictions have been articulated by farmers' movements in the Seraiki Wasaib, which has been at the peripheries of the mass hydrological transformation of central Punjab that began in the late 19th century, the PKI's membership has struggled to articulate the same on account of its base among agrarian producers who have relied on the tense relationship between modern hydrology, canal water and groundwater.

Nevertheless, water is critical to the PKI's ability to reproduce its alliance across agrarian classes. This is articulated through discussions and politics around various technical and governance instruments. Tubewells, being critical to the coming together of the PKI, were discussed in each of the meetings. Moreover, the PKI leadership also made promises to force the government to de-silt the canals, as well as oppose a newly applied motor tax on tubewell electricity consumption. The PKI's meetings, however, fail to articulate how underlying ecological stress threatening agriculture in Punjab in relation to the issue of the fast-depleting water table. This is not to say that the difficulties in digging tubewells and finding groundwater are not articulated during PKI's monthly meetings. For instance, in the February meeting, Mian

Tufail, an aged farmer, took to the podium and began to talk about the 'miracle' of how water sprouted from a hole dug for his new turbines.

> Farming is so difficult. My tubewell was no longer pumping water, my crops were rotting, so I decided to install a turbine. The labourers came, and dug a well that was 400 feet deep, but there was no water. Then, they dug another well on my land, which was even deeper, but there was still no water. I was becoming desperate that I would no longer be able to cultivate my land and had already spent over Rs300,000 on digging the wells. I had no choice. I told them to dig another well as a last opportunity. No water came out of that one too. People told me that my land had been cursed. Then, I decided to sit near the well and pray all night. In the morning, I was woken up by one of the labourers who said water had begun to flow from the well. This was a miracle.

Tufail raised parallels with the miraculous sprouting of water in his land to the story of how water sprouted from the Arabian desert for the Prophet Abraham, his wife and child in the middle of severe distress. The 400 strong audience of farmers heard the story with mixed levels of attention. Many continued to chat amongst themselves, and few knew how to respond. While most speeches were met with cheers or applause, there was none of it as Tufail left the stage, although there were a few "Mashallahs" (Praise Allah) from the audience. The farmers present at the meeting recognises the growing ecological stress faced by them when it comes to both groundwater and soil depletion, but they are unable to see a way out of it. Much of the agrarian practices in the region developed in the colonial period, when water was plenty and high water usage through the canals was actively encouraged for revenue purposes. This was then followed by three decades from the 1960s onwards during which the Pakistani state, with WB and US State Department support, actively encouraged the installation and use of tubewells.[113] Groundwater depletion in this period was considered a good thing, an antidote to waterlogging

[113] Recent agricultural support schemes have included the installation of the solar powered tubewells.

and salinity, even if it meant using more water than was essential for healthy crop growth. After Tufail spoke, one of the farmers, Ishaq, turned to me, and said:

> This is an issue that all farmers are facing. We need our tubewells to work because we cannot rely on canal water anymore, but every few years, we need to re-dig the tubewell, because the water level has fallen. Even then, you can't be sure that the water is going to be useable. Most of the groundwater in this area is saline and is not suitable for farming, but we make do with what we can get.

The question of how to solve the groundwater crisis itself rarely comes up in the meetings, despite everyone agreeing in private and public that this is a serious issue. This is partly the reason for the PKI advocating canal cleaning. Rizwan informed those present at a meeting that the PKI were urging the government to do this so that farmers could get canal water, but also so that some groundwater could be replenished. However, Rizwan also warned that canal cleaning would not happen without the farmers putting in their own labour in support of the government.

This shows us that the issue of water brings together a tense balance between the public and private spheres, as well as individual and collective labour within the PKI. Moreover, the movement understands the link between groundwater and surface water, but it remains wedded to a techno-fix, namely, that replenishing canal water would be enough to solve the groundwater crisis. The 'miraculous' water that Mian Tufail reported so proudly to other farmers will dry out and new and deeper wells will need to be dug. The PKI can ask the government for support to install new tubewells, but this does little to address the contradictory relationship of the Punjabi kissan to water in the canal colonies.

'If Farmers are doing well, Agricultural Workers will do well' – PKI and the Question of Agrarian Labour

A closer look at the relationship between PKI's discursive treatment of the question of agricultural labour and the actual, material relations of production that tie together different classes of farmers within its ranks reveals that the PKI subsumes agricultural labour under a discourse of mutual benefit. The PKI articulates a kind of 'trickle-down' effect, i.e. if farmers are doing well, so will hired field workers. This captures neither the complexity of relations between the two, nor the concrete antagonisms between different rural classes. In this section, I show how despite the PKI's mobilisational emphasis on class alliances, the movement's discourse struggles to capture the differences between how small producers and large commercial farmers employ labour. This divergence is born out of differential access to capital and labour, reliant often on different circuits such as interpersonal relations and access to subsistence crops for small producers, while large-scale commercial farmers are often able to employ labour in bulk through labour contractors on cash contracts.

Class-based approaches in existing literature on new farmers' movements posit an antagonistic relationship between agricultural labour and post-Green Revolution farmers. For instance, Jairus Banaji (1994) writes how "a victory for the farmers' movements would be a direct blow to these sections [labour], apart from enormously strengthening the hand of employers against workers." (p. 233) Thus, as Omvedt points out, farmers' demands for "high crop prices" have been considered antithetical to "the interest of urban and rural wage-labourers." (1994, p. 128) Diverging from Banaji's position, 'populists' like Omvedt (1994) have argued that "higher crop prices will benefit wage labourers and lead to higher growth in agriculture and labour-intensive rural industries." (p. 128) This is also how the PKI leadership articulates the relationship between farmers' and agricultural labour. However, this harmonious vision of the rural world in which workers and peasants morph into each other does not map onto an organisation like the PKI, in which agricultural labourers are not kissans.

In the February 2019 public meeting of the PKI-Khokar group, Punjab general secretary Chaudhry Rizwan said, “If Pakistan’s farmers do well, everyone in Pakistan will do well. If farmers are paid a fair price for their produce, agricultural workers will also be paid a fair wage." This was the only time in almost a dozen public meetings that I had attended that agricultural labour even came up as a topic. When I had met Rizwan earlier in December 2018 at his farmhouse, he had given me a quizzical look when I asked if agricultural labour had a place in their politics. “The wages for agricultural workers are set by labour contractors. We pay workers the going rate,” Rizwan responded. As large commercial potato growers who lease anywhere between 1,500 and 3,000 acres of land, Rizwan and his brothers hire hundreds of agricultural workers through labour contractors during the potato harvest season. His family were small-scale vegetable growers with around 5-8 acres of land in the 1960s. Now, they employ over a dozen permanent farm managers, who are paid a monthly wage and also receive a portion of the wheat grown on the family-owned land as part of their salary package.

Despite the lack of an agricultural workers’ movement in Punjab in recent decades, big commercial farmers continue to see their relationship with agricultural labour through an antagonistic lens. Haji Akram, whose brother is one of the vice presidents of the PKI-Gujjar group, argued that they preferred growing potatoes because it is “not very labour intensive.” Akram makes it clear that he would prefer to use machines over daily-wage workers, “There are machines for everything now. Labour is only trouble. You can control machines, but you cannot control labour.” Despite controlling large amounts of capital, commercial leasehold farmers like Akram continue to hire dozens of workers during the harvest and processing period. As we speak, over three dozen male and female workers that are separating potatoes from potato seeds, quality checking, and sorting them into three piles at the cold storage. On each acre of leased lands next to the warehouse, there are almost a dozen female workers that are bagging potatoes after a tractor, driven by a male worker, uproots them from the ground.

“We would prefer that we did not need to hire labour, but they are still essential to harvesting and processing,” Akram says. The conversation is audible to the workers, which perhaps suggests the threat to replace workers with machines is also a discursive tactic to keep labour from questioning their precarity. Thus, far from farmer prosperity improving the wage of agricultural workers, large commercial farmers like Akram would rather eliminate agricultural workers altogether.

However, Aftab and Ali’s (2022) observation that the “profits of capitalist farmers are a consequence of their exploitation of rural wage labour” (Aftab and Ali, p. 19) generalises the complex relationship between differentiated producers, specifically small farmers, and agricultural labour. Small-scale producers face constant labour shortages, and need to develop mutual relations of exchange with agricultural workers to ensure that there is labour available at important times in the cultivation cycle. Speaking at the Bodla village, Pir Bodla reveals that it is difficult for small farmers to hire labour. “All agricultural workers are hired by these big lease farmers. No one wants to work for us.” Small to medium-scale cultivators in the Bodla village, who are also active members of the PKI-Khokar group, are unable to employ labour contractors due to their small landholdings and their inability to pay an advance. Instead, they must rely on cultivating relationships with workers throughout the yearly cycle. Another farmer, Akram, says, “We pay labour a higher wage. We also allow them to take some of our crops for subsistence throughout the season. This is a way of making sure that they will show up when we need them. Some of us have tried to use labour contractors, but they do not show up if someone else makes a better offer.” Large commercial farmers and smallholders are not only competing for land, but also for labour. The exodus of agricultural labour from villages is a long-term trend, which was explored in the previous chapter in Chak Jaffar Shah and Dera Bodlan. Families of agricultural workers have moved to neighbouring Chak 93/D over the last few decades, which is a semi-urbanised village on the Sahiwal-Pakpattan Road. Even labourers

who benefit from having access to subsistence crops from the small to medium-scale farmers all year round participate in the broader labour market to facilitate reproduction. Very few labourers across genders are purely agricultural workers. Some of the other forms of work that are being taken up include food processing, both at home or in numerous small to medium food processing plants that are now operational in Sahiwal division. In this changing agrarian landscape of Punjab, it is much more difficult for smaller to medium farmers to find agricultural workers who want to maintain a 'mutually beneficial' relationship.

At Haji Akram's cold storage, a couple of the labourers begin a conversation on the way out. Malik, one of the older workers says, "We are paid per trough harvested, not per worker. Who knows how much the labour contractor gets paid. Work is scarce. We take what we get." Labour 'contracts' for large commercial farmers are arranged by munshis (accountants) with a labour contractor, who will contact a 'head woman', who arranges for other women to join her for the harvest. Labour compensation itself is decided according to the crop, rather than the amount of time worked. This means that a group of workers will be paid collectively based on the number of troughs they have sown or harvested, which will then be divided amongst them. The low rate of compensation and payment, akin to piece rate in factory work, means that agricultural workers cannot afford to slow the pace of the harvest down if they want to move on to the next harvest. During a single potato harvest season of around three weeks, each labourer will have worked on anywhere between 3-12 different fields. "We know that these big farmers are making millions while we are struggling to make our ends meet… Even the labour contractors and munshis are becoming millionaires through us," adds Abdul, who looks like he is in his 30s and is carrying an oversized sack of potatoes on his back.

The political economic terrain of the labour contradiction in agrarian Punjab is not merely between farmer and agricultural worker, but between small-scale cultivators and large-scale commercial farmers. Differentiated cultivators engage with labour through two distinctly

identifiable labour regimes based on labour contractors and cash wages and based on personal relations and access to subsistence crops. This landscape means that while relations between farmers and agricultural workers retain an element of hostility, they continue to converge around the seasonal patterns of cultivation, harvesting and processing. Even though the divergence in how smaller and large farmers relate to labour is significant, it is small farmers that continue to suffer from labour shortages, which is inevitable in a context where the cash requirement for reproduction of the rural household is ever increasing. Labour exercises its agency by choosing where to live, who to work for, and what form of payment to choose. The 'freeing' of agricultural labour that occurred during and after the Green Revolution can be seen in the movement of labour away from agrarian villages into those that resemble labour colonies. This freedom has not rid labour of exploitation, underemployment, impoverishment and the threat of becoming disposable. Instead, workers are compelled to thread their path within the many labour regimes of the agrarian and non-agrarian world for survival.

The PKI speaks of agricultural labour benefiting from farmers doing well. However, the reality is a lot more complicated. Different farmers have different relations to labour. Moreover, the rate of exploitation of labour has little to no relation to the rate of profit obtained from a particular crop. Instead, small farmers who often make losses or lower profits than large farmers pay labour more, while large commercial farmers pay labour a lower wage but offer more days of guaranteed work. Thus, the differentiated classes of farmers in the PKI's class alliance compete for the same agricultural workers. Large commercial farmers threaten to capture the labour market, much like their growing domination of land and agrarian markets. This means that smaller farmers, who are also part of the PKI, must adopt a strategy that involves direct and 'mutually beneficial' relations with agricultural workers to be able to compete in the labour market. This means that if small farmers were to thrive in rural Punjab,

it would have significantly different consequences for agricultural labour compared to the triumph of commercial farmers.

Back to the conversation outside Haji Akram's cold storage, I asked a dozen agricultural workers what the victory of the PKI would mean to them. One of them answered, "It would be good if the farmers survive, but we ask: which kissan? They all exploit us. Some more than others. If they are kissan, we are also kissan. This is not a movement for us. Of course, some of us join the protests, but this is not our fight." Agricultural worker participation in PKI's protests remains limited with the organisation making limited efforts to include landless rural classes in its politics. The 'trickle-down' discourse of agricultural workers benefitting from farmers' prosperity seems more like an afterthought, rather than a method of expanding class alliance.

Re-inventing the Kissan in the Neoliberal period: Prosperous Farmers for National Development

The PKI has mobilised farmers across rural class divisions and articulated a vision for the place of the kissan in a context of agrarian, ecological, economic, and national developmental crises. This vision has engaged with and reinterpreted genealogies of kissan identity and politics in Punjab. As detailed in earlier chapters, during the colonial and national developmental periods, left-wing kissan movements managed to exclude large commercial farmers and landlords from determining the popular agenda of agrarian movements in Punjab, entrenching a clear political and discursive divide between the zamindar and kissan. However, the ability of some smallholders to become large leasehold capitalist producers by combining Green Revolution technologies and liberalisation of agrarian markets has allowed these classes to bypass the label of zamindar or landlord, and instead project the image of a prosperous kissan

who is a by-product of his ingenuity, work ethic and ability to predict the behaviour of agricultural markets. By managing to take over the leadership of the kissan movement in West Punjab, this new class of agrarian producers has reworked the historical entwinement of the kissan with the politics of anticolonialism and national developmentalism into a narrative centring a prosperous, capitalist farmer poised to jointly address sovereign debt, and agrarian and national development in a post-IMF Pakistani economy.

Even though the PKI formed directly around the contestation of tubewell prices, it had a keen awareness of and engagement with the larger context of Pakistan's international debt crisis and IMF-led structural reform. Rather than being invested in returning to a golden period in the past, commercial classes of farmers have pushed the narrative that the kissan can be a key agent in the national development process, and pose a solution to the transnational debt crisis. In March 2019, PKI-Khokar Pakpattan president Chaudhry Sabir articulated this vision in a speech: "Fifteen years ago, each Pakistani was Rs15,000 in debt. Now, it is Rs100,000 per person.[114] If farmers are supported, if they get a fair price for their produce, then Pakistan will be able to eliminate its debt problems and its economy will grow." This narrative is repeated consistently: that over 80 percent of Pakistan's population are kissan, they can provide food, support the industrialisation process, and become large exporters to bring foreign exchange into the country. Thus, the PKI is not merely interested in the reproduction of the kissan, and instead it advocates government intervention in favour of commercial farming.

This vision for the national development of agriculture also involves the key participation of national agricultural research centres, as well as agribusiness corporations. Even while its key members use imported seeds, the PKI articulates the importance of localised seed research and re-development according to local climatic conditions. Its leadership talks about the need for agricultural research, bringing advanced seeds, and supporting the

[114] The numbers themselves are not exactly accurate.

technological advancement of agricultural practices in the country. It also organises cultural events, such as kabaddi festivals, in collaboration with national seed and fertilizer companies. In 2015, the PKI also organised protests to support state-led agricultural research. In a conversation after a meeting in Arifwala in March 2018, Chaudhry Rizwan said, “One of the major reasons Pakistan’s farmers are not doing well is the lack of agricultural research. We don’t get the latest seeds or technology. BT cotton in Pakistan has failed because we only introduced the oldest variety. The government needs to support seed research.” Rizwan insists that this is not merely something that the PKI talks about, but that they are a “unique movement. We even protested in Islamabad when the government announced it was going to move the National Agricultural Research Council in 2015. We also managed to stop the sale of some of its associated land.” The PKI’s support for national seed research and marketing considers the ever-rising costs and decline in output exhibited by imported seeds from large agribusiness corporations over time. However, much like its position on agricultural trade, it remains open to the regulated import of HYVs, such as newer varieties of BT cotton as potential short-term solutions to the falling yields and viability of growing cotton.

The PKI’s advocacy for state intervention in and reform of agrarian markets through subsidies, support prices, and access to favourable agricultural markets is based on the same logic. During the period of my fieldwork, the PKI protested in favour of enforcing open bidding in district markets, and mandating that the chairman of district agricultural market committees be a small farmer with under 10 acres of land. These interventions suggest that the PKI advocates a shift in the patterns of agrarian surplus flow in the economy, and for a greater share for farmers. Other than the large commercial farmers who own their storage facilities and export businesses, agrarian surplus extraction remains in the hands of arthis, market agents, and a growing number of food processing industries, such as sugar mills and potato processing plants. The question of which class of farmers these changes would benefit remains an open

one, but it does seem quite clear that rich, commercial farmers could benefit more from profit guarantees if the underlying issues around access to land are not resolved. By mid-2022, annual rent for leasing land had increased from around Rs60,000 per acre in 2019 to over Rs150,000 per acre. I did not encounter the political vocabulary to articulate land as a critical part of contemporary mass agrarian politics, despite attempts to provoke conversation around whether land had a place in kissan politics.

While the PKI has been able to remain relevant as a political formation that represents the interests of agrarian cultivators, it has been in a process of fragmenting and reforming since almost a decade. However, as a two-week gherao led by a faction of the PKI outside the Parliament in Islamabad in October 2022 shows, the movement still retains the strength to mobilise differentiated classes of farmers, shape the understanding of agrarian crisis, and provide a template for agrarian reform. The current vision retains significant contradictions, which has produced a "divergence of interests" that has "contributed to the fragmentation of the PKI along class and political lines." (Aftab and Ali, p. 1) As the Delhi Kissan Morcha, which brought together over 30 farmers' organisations shows, fragmentation in of itself has not posed a challenge for kissan politics in Indian Punjab, which once shared thr trajectories of its agrarian politics with Pakistani Punjab. Raising the slogan, 'Kissan Ittehad, Zindabad!' (Long live, farmers unity!) will not alone be sufficient. After the unsuccessful protest march to Lahore in January 2019, the PTI Pakpattan president angrily chastised those attending the February meeting in Pakpattan, "80 percent of Pakistan's population are kissan. How will anyone know if they don't show up? You should have some pride, you should have some shame." However, becoming a stronger movement requires a more serious engagement with the contradictions of class, labour, and ecology within the countryside, as well as a push from within and outside to re-think how aspects of its agenda affect smaller and medium-scale agrarian producers.

Conclusion: Reading Farmers Movements Beyond Binaries

This chapter has charted the development of kissan politics in neoliberal Punjab through an account of the emergence of the PKI. Studying farmers movements like the PKI offers insight into the political articulation of agrarian crisis and the contradictions within it. Economic stress, transnational debt, and neoliberal market reform combined to shape the formation of a strong multi-class rural alliance around negotiating agrarian markets and supporting agrarian producers. The PKI consolidated itself as a 'national' representative of kissan interests through its mobilizational tactics, ideological positioning, and narratives that projected the important of farmers' unity. It has engaged with the state and markets on issues of the governance of agrarian markets, open bidding, support prices, electricity bills, and subsidies. Bringing together small and large farmers in a post-Green Revolution landscape rested on the successful navigation of converging interests relating to the imperatives of reproduction and accumulation across differentiated agrarian cultivators. After their success in the struggle against the increase of agricultural tubewell tariffs, contradictions between small and large farmers have emerged within the PKI around fluctuations in prices, access to capital, and the ability to employ labour.

This chapter also hopes to have provided grounds to locate and examine farmers' movements in neoliberal South Asia beyond the simple binary of progressive versus conservative. Farmers' movements are not a substitute for rural labour movements, as they have largely reduced the question of labour to the question of wage, and labour has to be evaluated from its own class position. The structuring of agrarian markets in the post-Green Revolution era has significantly changed the agrarian class formation. The PKI has allowed a new class of commercial farmers to consolidate their position politically through integrating

their interests into kissan politics. Building an alliance with small-scale farmers has pushed them to find shared narratives and demands, in turn reshaping the political meaning of 'kissan.' This means that it is unlikely to see movements that mirrored those that emerged under the tutelage of Marxist political parties in the colonial and national developmental periods. However, the PKI does take up similar issues as left-wing kissan movements including markets, ecology and national development. The PKI has brought to the fore political questions around commercial crops as core issues in agrarian politics in West Punjab, and consolidated a shift from anti-imperialism and left-wing developmentalism, which placed food security, land distribution, and national sovereignty first, to a strategic pro-trade developmentalism, which articulates commercial farming as a solution to Pakistan's developmental crisis.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the intersection between agrarian change and kissan politics in West Punjab across three periods in the 20th and 21st century. It has investigated the intersection between ideological and cultural factors and changing agrarian class relations and market formations to show how the Agrarian and Peasant Questions have intersected and shaped each other. By focusing on how agrarian producers have negotiated the complexities of reproduction and accumulation, it has challenged dominant theorisations that remain trapped within the farmer versus peasant binary. It hopes to have shown that breaking from the limitations of these categories allow us to focus on how classes of farmers build alliances, draw on ideology, and develop political praxis to contest and shape the nature of agrarian change in the region.

Critically, the dissertation has reflected on the nature of the agrarian crisis in West Punjab across three periods, the colonial, national developmental, and neoliberal. This has focused on the nature of agrarian transformation in this periods and how differentiated agrarian producers respond through strategies of accumulation and reproduction that cut across agrarian class divisions. Across these periods, we have seen how strategies adopted by farmers with more land or capital have impacted the nature of agrarian change and agrarian classes below them. In the colonial period in chapter 2 we saw how large landholders who relied on renting out land to sharecropping were largely unaffected by the collapse of global commodity prices during the Great Depression, while small-scale cultivators pushed deeper into cycles of indebtedness. In the national developmental period, the Green Revolution brought with it technological change in methods of cultivation including on-farm mechanisation, and new farm inputs, including seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. This introduced mechanisms that required middle to large farmers to intensify cultivation and accumulation, leading to the increased

pressure on smallholders to adopt crop intensive methods and increase their marketed produce, as well as leasing in land by cultivators with enough capital. These changes also shaped the demise of sharecropping in West Punjab. In the neoliberal period, the practices of high-risk commercial agricultural, especially around the potato crop, have led to the rise of a new class of leasehold commercial farmers. These crops exist outside the state-backed price protections available for stable crops, like wheat, sugarcane, rice or cotton. Combined with growing ecological stress and monopolistic practices for traditional cash crops like cotton and sugarcane, smallholders have entered the cultivation of highly volatile perishable crops like potatoes for reproduction and accumulation.

These emblematic stories contest narratives of stunted agrarian development in Punjab, and instead posit an approach that combines the study of agrarian change, class differentiation, rural markets, and changing strategies of accumulation and reproduction to understand transformations and contestations of agrarian capital. Moreover, I hope to have shown how tracing these mechanisms in terms of their impact across agrarian classes challenges the entrenched narrative of a landlord-led agrarian transition in Punjab or, indeed, a halted or stunted transition. In fact, agrarian and non-agrarian capital remains critical in shaping the nature of agrarian transformations and impact on patterns of class differentiation, including dispossession and (semi)proletarianization across the region. Thus, echoing Sinha’s (2021) and Akram-Lodhi’s (2000) emphasis on accumulation practices in agrarian markets in their analysis of agrarian crisis, I argue that accumulation is a part of reproduction strategies for small and middle-holding farmers. Thus, the relationship with the market has remained critical for almost all classes of farmers and has been important in shaping periods of agrarian crisis.

This is the socio-economic context that kissan movements have contested through the development of political discourses, intra-class alliances, and mobilisation strategies. Mass-based agrarian movements in West Punjab have contested the ways in which agrarian markets

intersect and shape the accumulation and reproduction strategies of differentiated producer in facing the challenges of the rural economy. Being located at these intersections has allowed agrarian political movements to engage with questions around not just the future of agriculture, but larger questions of national development. Critically, this means that kissan movements have been able to transcend the so-called interest-based politics of agrarian classes and been able to offer ideologically informed visions drawing on anti-imperialism, socialist developmentalism, and market regulation. These visions exist within contested agrarian political spaces, which are challenged from both within the movements we have surveyed but also from competing actors, such as other agrarian movements, other agrarian classes, national planning priorities, and transnational development organisations. The discussion has shown that rather than being stuck in pre-capitalist moral economies, agrarian movements in West Punjab are located as self-conscious actors within the global capitalist food markets who contest and develop political practices around alternative visions of the agrarian future.

Moreover, the thesis has shown how it is important to move beyond the farmers vs. peasant politics divide which frames farmers' movements as simplistically 'interest-oriented' and therefore reactionary and romanticises peasant movements as necessarily progressive. While I acknowledge the importance of critically distinguishing between agrarian movements in terms of the emancipatory potential of their political program, it is important to locate our critiques at the intersection between agrarian economy and politics in a specific context, rather than tied to a priori conceptions of the peasant or the farmer. The successes of the Delhi Kissan Morcha have shown that academic dismissals of the farmers' politics of the 1980s and 1990s were out of touch with the nature of agrarian crisis in agriculture in the post-Green Revolution period. Kissan movements in the Punjabs are complex class alliances that intersect with ideologies, styles of leadership, and a range of other factors which shape their outlook and

political practice. They must be evaluated on their own terms, rather than contrasted with pre-packaged ideas of what radical agrarian politics looks like.

Further, as the dissertation has shown, the term kissan has been politically re-constituted between the colonial period and the contemporary. In the colonial period, agrarian politics was organised around Jatt and zamindar identities before left-wing tendencies consolidated an anti-imperialist articulation of the kissan as distinct from landed zamindar and caste-inflected Jatt identity. This articulation of the kissan was expansive enough to include sharecroppers as well as small and medium-scale agrarian producers and allowed the development of a template of kissan politics that was largely continued in the 1950s and 1960s by the West Pakistan Kissan Committee, which used kissan identity to bring together the above-mentioned classes, as well as migrant farmers who had been uprooted during 1947 Partition. By the 2000s, the repositioning of large-scale commercial cultivators, who would be labelled zamindar in an earlier period, as kissan, was successful, as the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad emerging as a rural class alliance led by large commercial farmers. The interesting thing, however, is that these commercial farmers were not landlords, but were rather small to medium-scale cultivators who had benefited from structural adjustment to become large commercial farmers. Moreover, with the PKI, the articulation of kissan politics shifted from an anti-imperialist, socialist politics to developmental politics that articulated a 'progressive' kissan identity, referring to the adoption of highly commercial practices of farming, as an apparent solution to Pakistan's developmental woes. This articulation however only inadequately captures how a large segment of the PKI's support base composed of small to medium cultivators navigates the complexity of survival in volatile agrarian markets by combining strategies of reproduction and accumulation.

To recap, chapter 2 charts the integration of Punjab within colonial food markets through canal colonisation, the development of a market and transport infrastructure, and the

settlement of millions of agrarian colonists to construct a new agrarian society. The colonial government relied on two mechanisms of extracting agrarian surplus: taxation and cheap crop prices. Combined with the control of local agrarian market infrastructures, Punjab's agrarian faced significant challenges balancing reproduction and accumulation through cultivation. This set the stage for the emergence of left-wing kissan struggles in the canal colonies which emerged around the Punjab Colonisation Act 1906 and the subsequent increase in water taxes, which threatened to dispossess cultivators of their right to land. The 1907 Pagri Sambhaal Jatta (PSJ) movement became the basis for forging linkages and solidarities between Punjab's agrarian struggles and migrant Punjabis who had left due to agrarian distress to become labour in different parts of the British Empire. The next chapter of the Punjab kissan movement was shaped by the return of radical migrant Punjabis in the form of the Ghadar Party in 1914, whose migrant revolutionaries had developed strong ties to the global anti-imperialist and social movement, and set the stage for the emergence of the Kirti Kissan Party (KKP). This was followed by anti-debt struggles during the Great Depression period, and the emergence of a national kissan movement through the formation of the Punjab Kissan Sabha (PKS). The kissan movement was forged in opposition to the zamindar movement, which was considered loyal to the British and representing large landlord classes, which constituted kissan as an anti-imperialist position occupied by small to medium holders.

Chapter 3 re-interprets the political economy of agrarian change in West Punjab in the 1950s and 1960s. It contests dominant readings of an agrarian landscape defined by stunted growth, a transition from a feudal to capitalist mode of production, and/ or a landlord-led transition. Instead, the chapter shows that this period was marked by uneven and differentiated patterns of agrarian growth across classes and regions within agrarian capitalism shaped by the complex negotiation of the imperatives of reproduction and accumulation across agrarian classes in their encounter with changing developmental imperatives, new technologies,

changes to the agrarian market structure, and introduction of new inputs, such as HYVs, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Further, the chapter highlights how this was a period of rural reconstruction after the events of Partition, involving the resettlement of around four million agrarian cultivators on land emptied due to forced outmigration. The integration of this new wave of migrants meant that agrarian relations in West Punjab were significantly altered once again. Moreover, I show how agrarian growth, in fact, started before the formal Green Revolution during the 1960s through the combination of state policy, expansion of private tubewells, and capital intensification by differentiated classes of agrarian producers. This significantly impacted patterns of land leasing, with medium to large-scale farmers beginning to take land back for expanded cultivation. Among the key outcomes was the dispossession of sharecroppers. Combined with the introduction of HYVs and expanded use of chemical inputs after 1965, pressure increased on smallholders to expand commercial cultivation for reproduction. This shaped new dynamics of dispossession, proletarianization and uneven growth which in turn affected shifts in agrarian relations during the period.

Chapter 4 addressed the re-construction of the left-wing kissan movement in West Punjab after Partition in the form of the West Pakistan Kissan Committee (WPKC) and the Pakistan Kissan Front (PKF). It showed how these movements integrated the national and agrarian questions, articulated a broader anti-imperialist development programme, and linked regional and class-based inequalities within the agrarian agenda. Moreover, the WPKC and PKF built links with left-wing political parties, including the Communist Party of Pakistan, National Awami Party, and Pakistan People's Party amongst others, and forged deep connections with agrarian movements in East Pakistan, which is now Bangladesh. Moreover, this period saw the continuation of sharecropper dispossession that began in the late 1940s. Overall, land reform and sharecropper rights remained a core part of the left-wing kissan movements' broader agenda of agrarian reform in the 1960s. Alongside this, the kissan

movement continued to advocate the importance of agrarian growth, increasing yields, new agrarian colonisation and reform of agrarian markets within an anti-imperialist nationalist agenda. Moreover, they also recognised the challenge of the land reform agenda in areas in Punjab which were dominated by smallholders. The movement was able to successfully mobilise differentiated classes of farmers around this agenda in the lead up to the mass mobilisation of the 1970 Toba Tek Singh Kissan Conference.

Chapter 5 examined the political economy of the agrarian crisis in neoliberal West Punjab by zooming in on patterns of rural class differentiation, strategies of reproduction and accumulation, and labour relations. Based on ethnographic observations and interviews conducted in a cluster of five villages in the Sahiwal division, it traced how changes in crop patterns, development of agro-processing, and expansion of landleasing are key factors in understanding the nature of agrarian change. It showed that agrarian surplus is an important variable in shaping the reproduction and accumulation strategies adopted by differentiated agrarian producers and remains critical for the reinvestment of agrarian capital to build new infrastructures of surplus accumulation by large leasehold farmers, including agro-processing, cold storages, export businesses, as well as re-investment in non-agrarian capital, such as real estate. The chapter charted the rise of a new agrarian class of leasehold commercial farmers who have displaced traditional landlords in their control over land, labour and agrarian surplus. However, it has also changed the relations through which these three resources are expropriated: cash rent has replaced crop share, cash wage has replaced partial payment in crops, and marketed surplus has replaced expropriation of a tenant labour. These classes of farmers cultivate price-volatile crops, hoping to benefit from the vagrancies of national and transnational trade. On the other hand, smallholders are compelled to choose new cash crops due to the rising costs of cultivation and reproduction on account of shifts in ecology and market structure. However, they also continue to plant a significant portion of their crops for

subsistence consumption for their families, livestock and maintain social relationships with farm labour. Thus, agrarian crisis in Punjab has translated into new patterns of rural class differentiation, and the adoption of new, high-risk crops, rather than leading to stagnating growth.

Building on the insights gleaned in chapter 5, chapter 6 presents a study of the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI), the first province-wide, mass-based kissan movement to emerge in West Punjab since the mid-1970s. Its emergence is rooted in the transformation of the hydrology of agriculture from canals to tubewells, changes in agrarian market relations and crop choices, and patterns of rural class differentiation in the context of the IMF-led structural adjustment of agriculture. The PKI emerges as a class alliance between large commercial farmers and small and medium-holding cultivators, a significant departure from previous rounds of agrarian mobilisation that had successfully excluded large landholders from kissan politics. The PKI's politics also indicates a fundamental shift in Punjab's agrarian ecologies from canals to tubewells. Further, the chapter dealt with the contradictions between the movement's large commercial farmer, and the smallholders among its ranks around prices crashes and agrarian market reform. Moreover, the chapter also discussed the ecological contradictions around a falling water table and attempts to solve it through mobilising around price, as well as the contradictory (and absent) place of agricultural labour within the discourse of the PKI. The chapter detailed the significance of the differences in labour hiring practices between smallholders and large leasehold farmers to suggest that the political implications of the survival of one over the other would be significantly different for labour. It also explored changing notions of the kissan, examining how the PKI articulates that government support for a progressive kissan can solve the national debt and development crisis.

It is also important to recognise that kissan politics has not been able (or has been unwilling) to address the concerns of landless agricultural workers, who are more often than

not women. In both the 1960s and 2010s, West Punjab's kissan movements have largely articulated the question of agricultural labour as the question of wage, which could partially be solved by addressing the plight of landholding cultivators. This thesis in itself does not examine the struggles and political economy of agricultural labour, especially from a gendered lens. Even recent work (Gill 2014) which has aimed to de-centre the kissan in Punjab's agrarian history has largely reflected on the limitations of agricultural labour politics in the region. It certainly seems that the question of agricultural labourers and their place in the historical and contemporary political economy and agrarian politics of Punjab remains an exploration that requires going beyond existing sources. More recently, we have come across documents from the Mazdoor Kissan Party (MKP) about the Dehaat Mazdoor Tehreek (Agricultural Workers' Movement) in the 1970s in Punjab, whose formative documents have been reviewed by Sara Kazmi (2021). This points to the existence of a range of previously unexplored archives of the lives, transformations and politics of agricultural labour in Punjab's rural world, crucial to a better understanding of agrarian Punjab that can address the limitations of existing forms of agrarian politics.

The other important line for future inquiry is presented by other agrarian ecologies of Punjab, like the Thal desert, the Suleiman mountain range, and Pothohar plateaus, which combine different hydrologies, cropping patterns, land relations, market integration, and patterns of rural class differentiation. This thesis has explored the development of Punjab's agrarian colonists from the 20th century, who are one part of the complex story of Punjab's agrarian landscape. While these colonists were active participants in the reshaping of Punjab as part of the large-scale transformations in its hydrology, market integration, and rural structure that were initiated under late British colonial rule in India, the canal colonies where they made a home for themselves are by no means the only kind of agrarian settlements found in Punjab. Moreover, the native populations, including pastoralists and fisherfolk, that were

replaced in processes of ongoing agrarian colonisations, still actively contest these processes, and articulate alternate visions and forms of politics. While some of these worlds have been explored in recent academic literature, [115] there remains significant room for expanding our understanding of these spaces, and what they mean for the meaning of kissan and the future of agrarian transformations and politics in West Punjab.

[115] See for instance, Kamal, A. (2019) Saving Sindhu: Indus Enclosure and River Defense in Pakistan. PhD Thesis. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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