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Religious Leadership and the Pakistan Movement in the Punjab

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THE emergence of the Muslim state of Pakistan in 1947 marked a watershed in the religious as well as the political development of Indian Muslims. But surprisingly little has been written on the nature of the religious support for Pakistan. Considerable attention has been focused on the ulama of Deoband, the great majority of whom opposed the creation of Pakistan, but this has done little to advance our understanding of the widespread religious backing for Pakistan in the mid-1940s, backing which made the Muslim League, as Peter Hardy puts it, 'a chiliastic movement rather than a pragmatic political party.'¹ In order to try to understand the sources of this backing, this paper will examine the nature of Muslim religious leadership before 1947 in the province Jinnah called 'the cornerstone of Pakistan'²—the Punjab. It will focus on the structure of religious leadership, particularly in the rural areas, and on the ways that that structure affected the relations of religious leaders with Muslim politics—first with the Unionist Party, which dominated the Punjab in the decades before partition, and finally with the Muslim League in the years leading to the creation of Pakistan.

The Development of Muslim Religious Leadership

To find the roots of the structure of religious leadership in the Punjab, it is necessary to go back to the original conversion of the bulk of the population of western Punjab to Islam in the pre-Mughal era. Though little is known in detail about the conversion of the Punjab, it is usually credited to the work of sufi mystics who established their *khanqahs* in western Punjab in the years following the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate and introduced the sufi orders—the Chishti, the Suhrawardy,

¹ Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 239.

² *The Tribune* (Lahore), April 23, 1943.

and the Qadri—into the Punjab.³ These *khanqahs* served as local outposts of Islam which linked the diffuse, tribally organized population of the Punjab to the larger Islamic community. Subsequently it was these local centers—first the sufi *khanqahs* and later the tombs of these sufi saints—which provided the focus for Islamic organization in most of rural western Punjab, and it was to these centers that the population looked for religious leadership.

Religious leadership at these shrines was usually provided by a *sajjada nashin* (literally, 'he who sits on the prayer carpet'), who was normally a descendant of the original saint. The development of such hereditary religious leadership associated with sufi shrines was a phenomenon, as Trimingham has observed in his study of the sufi orders, found over much of the Islamic world as the influence of sufism was increasingly routinized and popularized.⁴ The hereditary religious authority of the *sajjada nashin* was largely based on the transmission of *baraka*, or religious charisma, from the original saint to his descendants and to his tomb. Because of this *baraka*, which linked the *sajjada nashin* to the original saint, the *sajjada nashin* was recognized as a religious intermediary who could provide access for the devotee to the favor of God. The effect of such hereditary leadership was to give stability to the sufi shrines as local religious centers and to provide access to the religious benefits of the shrine to a wide circle of worshippers. 'The hospices with their associated tombs,' Trimingham has written, 'became the foci of the religious aspirations of the ordinary man who sought the *baraka* of the saints.'⁵

The exercise of this religious authority was associated with certain religious practices at the shrine. The links of the *sajjada nashin* to the original saint and the links of the original saint to God were dramatized every year in a ceremony marking the death anniversary of the saint, or *urs*. The *urs*, which literally means wedding, marked the union of the original saint with God, and the *urs* ceremonies themselves provided symbolic justification for the position of the *sajjada nashin*, who normally had to perform prescribed ceremonial duties which underscored his special links to the original saint as the inheritor of *baraka*,⁶ and thus defined his effectiveness as religious intermediary. The role of the *sajjada*

³ A general account of the conversion in Punjab is given in T. W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1963), pp. 285-7.

⁴ J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 173.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁶ Government of India, *Report of the Dargah Khwaja Saheb (Ajmer) Committee of Enquiry* (New Delhi: Government Press, 1949), pp. 28-9. The report discusses the development of the office of hereditary *sajjada nashin* and the duties the *sajjada nashin* was expected to perform.

nashin as religious intermediary was commonly formalized by the tie of *pir* and *murid*, or master and disciple, between the *sajjada nashin* of a shrine and the worshipper. This did not bind the disciple to follow any rigid spiritual discipline; rather, it bound the disciple to accept the religious leadership of the *pir*, to whom he would usually make payments or offerings, and in return the *pir* provided access to *baraka* for the *murid*, which in immediate terms might include little more than the provision of magic amulets, but which would give the disciple some reasonable assumption that his prayers might be heard.⁷ Religious learning or outward piety were not necessary attributes for a *sajjada nashin*. Though such attributes might increase his reputation and bring him new followers, his effectiveness as a religious leader rested on his descent from a saint, which, through the transmission of *baraka*, gave him access to the favor of God and thus the ability to act as a religious intermediary.⁸

The development of this form of hereditary religious leadership was of considerable significance, not only because it spread widely throughout the Punjab, but also because it facilitated a close relationship between religious and political authority. The transmission of *baraka* helped to stimulate the proliferation of shrines in the Punjab in the centuries following the conversion, particularly as the descendants and the *khalifas*, or deputies, of the original saints spread across much of the Punjab. Networks of shrines grew up which were loosely linked together within the sufi orders; in many cases a large and well-known shrine became the center of a network of much smaller shrines which were monuments to the disciples and descendants of the more well-known saint.⁹ By the opening of the twentieth century, as one British officer noted, the districts of western Punjab along the Indus were 'dotted with shrines, tombs of the sainted dead . . . and to the shrines of the saints, thousands upon thousands of devotees resort, in the hopes of gaining something on the sacred soil . . .'¹⁰ Many such shrines had

⁷ The role of a *pir* is discussed in Adrian C. Mayer, 'Pir and Murshid: an Aspect of Religious Leadership in West Pakistan,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (January 1967), pp. 160-1.

⁸ Trimingham notes that the concept of *wilaya*, or saintship, had no necessary connection with moral distinctions, but rather was based on the ability to experience the favor of God. Trimingham, *Sufi Orders in Islam*, pp. 227-8.

⁹ The best example of such a network of related shrines is that of the Bokhari Syeds, the descendants of Syed Jalaluddin Bokhari of Uch, whose shrines are found in several districts of southwest Punjab. For a list of the numerous surviving branches of the Bokhari Syeds in the twentieth century, see *Jhang District Gazetteer*, 1908, p. 58.

¹⁰ Major Aubrey O'Brien, 'The Mohammadan Saints of the Western Punjab,' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. XLI (1911), p. 511.

their own lines of *sajjada nashins* who served as *pirs* for large circles of these disciples, and the extent of their influence can be readily gauged from the report of one district gazetteer that 'practically every Muhammadan in the district has his pir.'¹¹

Equally as important as the widespread geographical diffusion of this form of religious leadership in rural Punjab was the relationship of these religious leaders to political authority. The diffusion of shrines as local centers of religious authority produced a structure of religious leadership which mirrored the structure of political authority in much of western Punjab, where power was also diffused to a large extent among numerous petty tribal chiefs.¹² The *sajjada nashins* of the shrines were, in fact, in many cases closely associated with these local leaders.¹³ More importantly, the relations of the *sajjada nashins* with the Muslim state followed much the same pattern as the relations of these local chiefs with the state. The base of their religious authority in heredity rather than in piety made *sajjada nashins*, like tribal chiefs and other local leaders, readily susceptible to the common forms of state political control through the granting of honors, appointments and lands.¹⁴ During Mughal times, the state established close ties with many of the important *sajjada nashins*; in one case at Multan the Mughals even relied on a family of *sajjada nashins* to serve as their local Governors.¹⁵ Such connections with the Muslim state added an important political dimension to the authority of many of the *sajjada nashins*, which increased their prestige and gave official recognition to their religious authority. By the end of the Mughal period, therefore, the religious influence of many of the *sajjada nashins* as custodians of the local outposts of Islam had become

¹¹ *Multan District Gazetteer*, 1923-24, p. 120.

¹² The Ajmer Enquiry Committee suggested that the diffusion of shrines as centers of hereditary religious leadership 'presumably . . . received impetus from the feudal organization . . .' which was developing in India. *Report of the Dargah Khwaja Saheb (Ajmer) Committee of Enquiry*, p. 29.

¹³ Though there is not very much evidence of this, such connections were apparently established from the time of the conversion when it was generally not by popular preaching, but by contacts between the sufis and the local chiefs that much of the conversion was accomplished. This, at least, is the tradition of conversion of a number of the tribes. H. A. Rose, *A Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province* (Patiala: Punjab Languages Dept, 1970), Vol. II, p. 412; Vol. III, pp. 417-18.

¹⁴ A detailed example of how such a relationship developed in the medieval Deccan sultanate of Bijapur is given in Richard Eaton, 'The Court and the Dargah in the Seventeenth Century Deccan,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (March 1973), pp. 50-4.

¹⁵ The family is the Gilani Syeds, *sajjada nashins* of the shrine of Musa Pak Shaheed. Lepel Griffin and C. F. Massey, *Chiefs and Families of Note in the Punjab* (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1910), Vol. II, p. 324.

closely associated with their political influence as local outposts of the Muslim state.

Because of the pervasive development of such political connections during Mughal times, the decline of Mughal authority in Punjab had a substantial impact on the system of religious authority. Much has been written on the importance of the decline of the Mughal state for the religious development of Indian Muslims, but most of this has focused on the role of Shah Waliullah and his followers at Delhi in trying to reformulate Islam in order to compensate for the loss of state support for their religion. The decline of the Muslim state had a direct effect on the predominant system of religious leadership in the Punjab, however. As the links between the shrines and the Mughal state were snapped with the collapse of central Muslim political authority, many of the old *sajjada nashins* who had wielded local political authority under the Mughals were transformed into petty local chieftains, who were increasingly isolated from any connection with the larger Islamic community.¹⁶ In response to this isolation, a movement developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to infuse new religious awareness into the existing forms of religious influence connected with the shrines to compensate for the collapse of the links between the local shrines and the state. This movement was embodied in a dramatic revival of the Chishti order which, perhaps because of its stronger traditions of independence from state authority, had gone into eclipse in Punjab during the years of Mughal dominance. The impulse for this revival came originally from Delhi, where the decline of the Mughals was most immediately felt, and was reflected in the work of Shah Kalimullah (1650-1729) and later Shah Fakhruddin (1717-85) who sought to revitalize the Chishti order and impart to it a new spiritual intensity.¹⁷ The Chishti revival in the Punjab can be traced most directly, however, from Shah Fakhruddin's most important disciple, Khwaja Nur Muhammad Maharvi, who established a *khanqah* near Bahawalpur in the mid-eighteenth century. Khwaja Nur Muhammad has been credited with having 'fostered the growth of the (Chishti) Silsilah to such an extent that other mystic fraternities seem to have been totally

¹⁶ A good example of this is the *sajjada nashin* of the shrine of Baba Farid at Pakpattan. He asserted his independence of imperial control in the mid-eighteenth century and fought with other local chiefs. *Montgomery District Gazetteer*, 1933, p. 38. A similar pattern was followed by many of the Bokhari Syed *sajjada nashins*. *Jhang District Gazetteer*, 1908, pp. 58-60.

¹⁷ Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, *Tarikh-e-Mashaikh-e-Chisht* (Karachi: Maktaba-e-Arifin, 1975), pp. 366-426, 460-529.

eclipsed.¹⁸ He attracted a widespread following among all classes of the population by emphasizing the mission of the Chishtis to revitalize Islam and by teaching the importance of personal adherence to the Shariat.¹⁹ His influence was spread by a large number of *khalifas* who carried the mission of the Chishtis all across western Punjab. These *khalifas* themselves started *khanqahs* which later became the centers of shrines, and their *khalifas* in turn spread the revival still further.²⁰ The vitality of the Chishti revival continued well into the period of British rule in the Punjab and led eventually to a network of extremely influential Chishti shrines in rural west Punjab. These new Chishti shrines did not completely supplant the older shrines, many of which continued to exercise considerable influence, but the most important shrines of the Chishti revival—at Taunsa in Dera Ghazi Khan District, Sial Sharif in Shahpur District, Jalalpur in Jhelum District, and Golra in Rawalpindi District—became major new centers of religious authority.²¹

The importance of the Chishti revival in the development of Muslim religious leadership was that it brought a greater emphasis on the definition of Muslim identity according to the Shariat to the appeal of Muslim religious leaders in western Punjab, without at the same time challenging the forms of religious influence based on the shrines. Here it is most illuminating to contrast this revival with the religious reforms which grew out of the work of Shah Waliullah. Both Shah Waliullah and the Chishti revivalists were responding to the problems of providing religious leadership without the aid of a Muslim state, but whereas those who drew on the tradition of Shah Waliullah sought to do this by seeking ultimately to develop new forms of organization to produce an independent class of ulama which could set religious standards for the community, the Chishti revivalists sought to do it within the traditional forms of religious authority already popular in western Punjab. They continued to emphasize the *khanqahs* and shrines as local religious centers, and they relied on the traditional forms

¹⁸ M. Zameeruddin Siddiqi, 'The resurgence of the Chishti Silsilah in the Punjab During the Eighteenth Century,' *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1970 (New Delhi: Indian History Congress, 1971), p. 408.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 409.

²⁰ In the major line of Chishti revival *pirs* who were spiritually descended from Khwaja Nur Muhammad, Khwaja Nur Muhammad himself had 30 *khalifas*, Shah Suleman of Taunsa had 63 *khalifas*, and Khwaja Shamsuddin Sialvi had 35. K. A. Nizami, *Tarikh-e-Mashaikh-e-Chisht*, pp. 555-6, 664-5, 706-8.

²¹ Short biographies of the saints who founded these *khanqahs* are given by Nizami. There is a full biography of Pir Mehr Ali Shah of Golra; Maulana Faiz Ahmad Faiz, *Mehr-e-Munir* (Golra: Syed Ghulam Mohyuddin, 1973?).

of influence, the *piri-muridi* tie and the *urs*. This continued organizational emphasis reflected the continued political structure of rural Punjab society, where power was diffused among a large number of rural, often tribally based leaders. The new Chishti *pirs* did not have the local political power of many of the older *pirs* who had politically served the Mughal state, but they were equally tied to local structures of rural authority, for their religious influence was often directed at the local political leaders upon whom they were frequently dependent for economic support.²² In contrast to this, the reforms following on the work of Shah Waliullah were a product of the heartland of Muslim empire, where power had been concentrated in the central state and not diffused among numerous intermediaries to the same extent as in Punjab. In such circumstances, with the collapse of the Muslim state, Muslim religious leaders had been thrown to a greater degree on their own independent resources, and this may explain their greater concern with developing new forms of organization.

The contrast between these two traditions of religious leadership is of great importance in understanding the subsequent evolution of religious authority in the Punjab. The reformist tradition of Shah Waliullah produced eventually a recognizable class of ulama,²³ whose organization was increasingly defined in the late nineteenth century by the polemical defense of Islam from Hindu and Christian attacks and by the development of religious schools. In the Punjab, the most active of reformist religious leaders were the ulama of the Ahl-e-Hadis, whose tradition was drawn particularly from Shah Waliullah's emphasis on the study of the original Quran and *hadis* over the subsequent interpretations of the medieval schools of law.²⁴ In addition, ulama of Deoband, the premier religious school associated with the reformist movement, exerted an increasing influence in Punjab in the late nineteenth century, particularly in the cities and towns.²⁵ Though the Ahl-e-Hadis and the Deobandis differed in many important respects, they were alike in their rejection of the common forms of religious influence centered on the shrines. The Ahl-e-Hadis were the most categorical in their rejection of the forms of Islam based on the sufi

²² Siddiqi, 'The Resurgence of Chishti Silsilah,' p. 409; Maulana Faiz Ahmad Faiz, *Mehr-e-Munir* pp. 297-8.

²³ W. C. Smith, 'The "Ulama" in Indian Politics,' in C. H. Philips (ed.), *Politics and Society in India* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963), pp. 50-1.

²⁴ Barbara Metcalf, 'The Reformist Ulama: Muslim Religious Leadership in India, 1860-1900' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1974), pp. 304-9.

²⁵ Metcalf notes that the great bulk of early monetary contributions to the school at Deoband from the Punjab came from donors in the cities and towns; *ibid.*, p. 194.

orders, but the leaders of Deoband, though usually initiated in the sufi orders and familiar with sufi practices, also rejected most of the organizational forms which had come to dominate popular religion in the Punjab. They did not approve, for example, of the centrality of the worship at tombs in religious organization, nor did they believe in the *urs*.²⁶

In response to such attacks, another distinct perspective developed among those ulama who approved of the forms of popular Islam. This group of ulama, which generally crystallized under the name Ahl-e-Sunnat-o-Jamaat, defended the combination of religious awareness and popular leadership at the shrines which had characterized the Chishti revival. Ironically, in defending the traditional forms of religious organization, these ulama also turned to the newer reformist organizational forms. This was evident in the founding in 1887 of the Dar-ul-ulum Naumania at Lahore, which served as a focus of Ahl-e-Sunnat-o-Jamaat influence,²⁷ and later in the founding in the 1920s of another religious school at Lahore, the Dar-ul-ulum Hizb-ul-Ahnaf, which tied the development of the Ahl-e-Sunnat-o-Jamaat perspective to a similar perspective being developed by Maulana Ahmad Raza Khan Bareilvi in the United Provinces.²⁸ In spite of the founding of these urban religious schools, however, the distinctive significance of this group of ulama lay in its ties to the rural religious leaders associated with the shrines—ties which the predominantly urban based reformist ulama could not match. Several of the Chishti revivalists, such as Pir Mehr Ali Shah, *sajjada nashin* of Golra, took a close interest in the Dar-ul-ulum Naumania,²⁹ and other rural *pirs* in the revivalist tradition, most notably Pir Jamaat Ali Shah, an influential Naqshbandi *sajjada nashin* from Alipur Sayyedan in Sialkot District, had close connections with the Ahl-e-Sunnat-o-Jamaat ulama.³⁰ The significance of the Ahl-e-Sunnat-o-Jamaat perspective was, in fact, that it legitimized

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

²⁷ Hafiz Nazar Ahmad, *Jaiza-e-Madaris-e-Arabiya-e-Maghribi Pakistan*, II (Lahore: Muslim Academy, 1972), pp. 28–9; Iqbal Ahmad Faruqi, *Tazkira Ahl-e-Sunnat-o-Jamaat Lahore* (Lahore: Maktaba Nabviya, 1975), p. 263; *Naqoosh*, Lahore Number (February 1962), p. 538.

²⁸ Hafiz Nazar Ahmad, *Jaiza*, pp. 27–8; Faruqi, *Tazkira*, p. 321.

²⁹ Mohammad Din Kalim, *Lahore ke Auliya-e-Chisht* (Lahore: Maktaba Nabviya, 1967), pp. 143–4.

³⁰ Pir Jamaat Ali Shah was a Naqshbandi, but I have treated him as a revivalist since his religious concerns were very similar to those of the Chishti revival *sajjada nashins*. He made donations to both the Dar-ul-ulum Naumania and the Dar-ul-ulum Hizb-ul-Ahnaf. Haider Husain Shah, *Shah-e-Jamaat* (Lahore: Maktaba Shah-e-Jamaat, 1973), p. 116.

the traditional forms of religious leadership associated with the shrines according to the standards of religious education and debate developed by the reformers.

By the twentieth century, therefore, though the traditional forms of rural religious leadership associated with the shrines had been strongly challenged, the challenge had not gone unanswered. The structure of religious authority based on the shrines remained overwhelmingly dominant in rural Punjab, and the fundamental basis of religious leadership in the rural areas remained tied to the hereditary transmission of religious charisma. The focus of religious authority continued to be diffused among numerous shrines which were, in many ways, tied closely to the local political structures of rural society. But the currents of religious revival had produced a deep impact on the concerns of many of the *sajjada nashins* whose roots were in the Chishti revival. It was these revivalist leaders, who were a product of the era of religious ferment which had produced the reformist perspectives, and yet who were, at the same time, closely linked as rural *sajjada nashins* to the local structures of Muslim power which had survived the Mughal collapse, who were to play a pivotal role in the developing relationship between religious leaders and Muslim politics.

Religious Leaders and the Unionist Party

The impact of the structural position of *sajjada nashins* on their political roles cannot be understood without describing briefly the structure of rural politics which grew out of the system of administration developed by the British in rural Punjab. In the nineteenth century the British had attempted to consolidate a system of rural administration which relied, particularly in west Punjab, on the local political influence of landed, often tribally based, intermediaries. In this the British were not departing from the established traditions of political control in west Punjab. But at the same time the British sought to bolster the position of these rural leaders by isolating the rural areas from the growing economic and political influences emanating from the cities which might have tended to undermine the position of these leaders. This policy found its fullest expression in the Alienation of Land Act of 1900 which, stated in general terms, barred the non-agricultural population from acquiring land in the rural areas.³¹ From these roots

³¹ For a detailed account of the background to the development of the administrative tradition which produced the Land Alienation Act, see P. H. N. van den Dungen, *The Punjab Tradition* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972).

a political tradition developed which emphasized both the unity of interests of the agricultural classes in opposition to the urban population and the continuing leadership of the agricultural classes by these landed intermediaries. It was this tradition which eventually produced the Unionist Party in the 1920s—a provincial party based on a pro-rural agriculturalist ideology and led by the landed leaders of rural society, which dominated Punjab politics for almost a quarter of a century before 1947.

The political role of *sajjada nashins* in Punjab politics during this period must be seen in relation to the Unionist Party and to the British administrative policies which had helped to produce it. Many of the *sajjada nashins*, particularly those associated with the older pre-Mughal shrines, were very strongly tied into these same rural administrative structures which lay behind the development of the Unionists. The political role of many of these shrines in pre-British times has already been indicated; after the fall of the Mughals, many *sajjada nashins* established themselves as powerful local political figures. After the annexation of the Punjab the British soon discovered that in developing their own rural administration they could not ignore the political influence in the rural areas that many of these *sajjada nashins* had acquired. Many *sajjada nashins* were accordingly honored by the British and given positions of local administrative authority. This was particularly true in southwest Punjab, where families of *sajjada nashins* were among the largest landholders in the area and were extremely influential in local affairs. In Montgomery District, for example, the British recognized the *sajjada nashin* of the shrine of Baba Farid Shakarganj at Pakpattan as one of the leading darbaris in the district.³² In Jhang, Muzaffargarh and Multan Districts *sajjada nashins* played leading roles as zaildars, honorary magistrates and district board members.³³

In the twentieth century, as the British attempted to give political cohesion to a class of landed rural intermediaries who could be counted on to support their Government, they recognized the leading *sajjada nashins* as an important part of this class. The foundations for this recognition were provided at the time of the passage of the Alienation of Land Act of 1900 when in nearly all the western Punjab districts *sajjada nashins* were recognized as belonging to the agricultural classes receiving protection under the Act. The lands of these Muslim religious leaders, one British officer noted, required protection under the Act

³² *Montgomery District Gazetteer*, 1933, pp. 108–9.

³³ *Jhang District Gazetteer*, 1908, pp. 58–60; *Muzaffargarh District Gazetteer*, 1929, pp. 75–7; *Multan District Gazetteer*, 1923–24, pp. 106–10.

'for political reasons' as much as those of any other group.³⁴ Later, when the British consciously sought to define a class of 'landed gentry' by distributing canal colony land grants, many of the leading *sajjada nashins* were explicitly recognized as members of the 'landed gentry' class. The inclusion of these religious leaders among the 'landed gentry' was at first questioned by some; H. J. Maynard, for example, pointed out in the case of the Pir of Makhad of Attock District that 'it would be a straining of language to call the *pir* one of the hereditary landed gentry of the province.' But the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, answered that whether truly 'landed gentry' or not, the influence of such religious heads could not be ignored. The Pir of Makhad, he pointed out, was 'regarded with veneration by many of the leading Frontier and western Punjab chiefs,' and such influence had to be taken into account. The same could be said of other *sajjada nashins* whose hereditary religious influence might be put to political purposes. 'If a man has political influence and uses it well,' O'Dwyer argued, 'the fact that he is connected with a religious institution and even to a certain extent derives his influence from that connection should not in my opinion stand in the way of obtaining a grant.' Subsequently many *sajjada nashins* were recognized as 'landed gentry', particularly in southwest Punjab, where in several districts religious families composed over a third of all those receiving 'landed gentry' grants.³⁵

It was this recognition as landed rural leaders which provided the basis for the support of many of these *sajjada nashins* for the Unionist Party. The common political interests of *sajjada nashins* and the landed class which dominated western Punjab had been well established by the British by the time that Sir Fazli Husain began to try to organize a rural party in the Punjab Legislative Council in the early 1920s. Of the 27 members initially returned to the Council in 1920 for rural Muslim seats, five were from influential families of *pirs*,³⁶ and all of them seem to have been Fazli Husain's supporters. Fazli Husain made

³⁴ Under the Land Alienation Act *sajjada nashins* were not specifically recognized as agriculturalists, but Syeds and Qureshis, the 'tribes' to which most *sajjada nashins* belonged, were recognized as 'agricultural tribes' in most districts. The position of Muslim religious leaders as agriculturalist was, however, specifically discussed in the correspondence accompanying passage of the Act. Note by J. Wilson, Punjab Settlement Commissioner, 1 February 1901; Punjab Board of Revenue, File 442/1/00/4.

³⁵ The case of the Pir of Makhad was debated in 1914. The case is in Punjab Board of Revenue, File 301/3/00/164A. Lists by district of those eventually receiving 'landed gentry' grants are in Punjab Board of Revenue, File 301/1176.

³⁶ Great Britain, *Return Showing the Results of Elections in India*, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. XXVI (1921), p. 18.

no special appeal to these *sajjada nashins* to join the Unionist Party when it was founded in 1923, but it was hardly necessary to approach them as a special interest, for their interests, like those of other hereditary rural leaders, were largely defined by their roles as intermediaries in the rural administration and by their support of the Land Alienation Act. The religious concerns of most of these landed *pirs* seem to have been satisfied by the Unionist policy of seeking the advancement of Muslims through the reservation of places for Muslims in schools and in the Government services, and by the protection of the economic interests of the rural Muslims from the assault of the Hindu money-lender. For them it does not seem to have been important that the Party failed to define specifically Muslim interests according to a religious standard.³⁷

Such a position, however, was not particularly calculated to win the support of those *sajjada nashins* who were a product of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century religious revival in rural Punjab. The Chishti *pirs* in particular did not share the tradition of cooperation with the British administration, and their religious concerns extended well beyond the issue of the economic advance of the rural Muslims which dominated Unionist policy. As products of the religious revival, they were concerned with the religious identity of Muslims and with the spreading of a greater awareness of Islam. But significantly, despite these religious concerns, the revivalist *sajjada nashins* did not define politically a set of religious interests independent of the Unionist position. There are two reasons for this, both of which reflect the fact that the revival shrines, like the older shrines, were an integral part of the rural social and political milieu. First, the revivalist *sajjada nashins*, equally with the landed *sajjada nashins*, relied for their religious following, and usually for financial support as well, on the leaders of rural society, who were overwhelmingly Unionist supporters. A *pir* like Syed Mehr Ali Shah of Golra, for example, though he shunned association with the Government, nevertheless had intimate religious ties with many of the staunchest pro-Government and pro-Unionist Muslims,³⁸ and this prevented him from actively opposing the Unionist Party. Second, the political alternative for the revivalist *sajjada nashins*

³⁷ A good example of this attitude is provided by Pir Mohammad Husain, *sajjada nashin* of Shergarh, who was one of the leading spokesmen for the Unionist position in the Punjab Council during the 1920s. His view of the communal problem showed no sign of a distinctive religious perspective; 'the root cause of all the Hindu-Mohammadan disunion in the Province,' he said, 'is the indebtedness of the masses. . .'. *Punjab Legislative Council Debates*, Vol. VI, 1924, p. 229.

³⁸ Maulana Faiz Ahmad Faiz, *Mehr-e-Munir*, pp. 297-8.

was alliance with urban politicians who opposed the pro-rural Unionist policy, and though such an alliance would have provided a platform for religious criticism of the Unionists, it also would have put them in the same camp with the urban reformist ulama, whose attack covered the whole structure of rural religion. In such circumstances, the revivalist *sajjada nashins*, though often unhappy with the religious position of the Unionists, were unlikely to join in a concerted attack which threatened their own religious position in rural society.

The importance of the first of these considerations can be readily demonstrated by an example from one of the leading Chishti revival shrines. One of the most striking cases showing the importance of local ties in affecting the political outlook of the revivalist *sajjada nashins* is provided by the case of the shrine at Jalalpur in Jhelum District. In that case the *sajjada nashin*, Pir Fazl Shah, seems to have made a concerted effort to maintain the political independence of the shrine in order to press the religious concerns which lay behind the Chishti revival, but despite his efforts he was drawn into the local political factions which lay behind Unionist power. What cemented the ties of the Jalalpur shrine into local political rivalries were marriage connections with locally influential landed families. Pir Fazl Shah's mother was the daughter of one of the leading Rajput chiefs of the district, and his maternal uncle, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, was an ambitious local politico who was later to become important in Punjab provincial politics.³⁹ During the 1920s Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan worked 'hand in glove' with Nawab Mehr Shah, the younger brother of the *sajjada nashin*, in order to build a faction in Jhelum politics.⁴⁰ Despite such efforts to tie the shrine into local factional politics, however, Pir Fazl Shah made an effort to maintain the political independence of the shrine by organizing his religious followers in 1927 into an organization known as the Hizbullah, or 'party of God.' Annual meetings of the Hizbullah coincided with the yearly *urs*, and resolutions were passed on a number of religious and political subjects, thus providing the Pir with a platform for the political expression of an independent religious view.⁴¹ But in spite of the opportunity this provided the Pir for independent religious rhetoric, the strength of his ties to the faction of his uncle and brother seriously undermined his independence when it came to political organizing. The Hizbullah organization carried

³⁹ Dr Abdul Ghani, *Amir Hizbullah* (Jalalpur Sharif: Idara Hizbullah, 1965), pp. 520-4.

⁴⁰ Letter, W. R. Wilson (DC Jhelum), to Calvert, 28 August 1926. Punjab Board of Revenue, File 301/3/C9/186 KW(19).

⁴¹ Dr Abdul Ghani, *Amir Hizbullah*, pp. 337-87.

significant political weight in Jhelum and western Gujrat Districts, but at election time in 1937 Fazl Shah threw its backing not behind an independent religious candidate, but behind his uncle, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan.⁴² Ghazanfar Ali Khan, who had responded sympathetically to many of the Pir's earlier appeals from the Hizbullah platform, initially stayed aloof from the Unionist Party and ran on the ticket of the Muslim League, a primarily urban party at this time which provided him with an independent platform in Jhelum. Almost immediately after being elected, however, he accepted the offer of a Parliamentary Secretaryship from Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, the Unionist Premier, and he became a strong backer of the Unionist Party in the Assembly. The Pir's ability to maintain an independent religious critique of the Unionists was badly compromised, and this was indicated when the Unionists responded to criticism from the Pir by simply asking Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan to keep the Pir in line.⁴³ The case of Pir Fazl Shah thus demonstrates the difficulty for the Chishti revivalists, despite their religious concerns, in escaping politically from the pressures of the rural social and political milieu of which they were a part.

The strength of the ties of these *sajjada nashins* into the rural political scene is even more clearly indicated when their position is contrasted with that of the reformist ulama of the towns. While rural *sajjada nashins*, even revivalist *sajjada nashins* like Pir Fazl Shah, maintained close ties with political leaders in rural Punjab, the political strength of the reformist ulama came from their very independence of such political ties. The thrust of their reforms, particularly the founding of the Dar-ul-ulum at Deoband, had been to provide an organizational structure for Islam in India which did not rely on traditional Muslim political power, either through the state or in the localities. For this reason, in their early development they had been largely apolitical,⁴⁴ but when they did enter politics after the First World War they did so with a new and independent political approach, which offered a religious critique of traditional Muslim politics. Unlike the rural *sajjada nashins*, therefore, many Deobandi ulama were prominent in the formation of the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind, the first independent organiza-

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 355-6.

⁴³ Note by Syed Afzal Ali Hasnie, Resident Secretary, Unionist Party to Sir Sikander, 2 February 1939, and draft letter to Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, n.d. Unionist Party Papers, File G-21. I would like to thank Mr Nazar Hyat Khan Tiwana of Chicago for permission to use these papers.

⁴⁴ Barbara Metcalf, 'The Madrasa at Deoband: A Model for Religious Education in Modern India,' in *Berkeley Working Papers on South and Southeast Asia*, Vol. I (Berkeley: Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies, 1977), p. 266.

tion of Muslim religious leaders in India, and through this organization many of the Deobandis began to play an active role in politics in opposition to the British administration and to the Muslim leaders whose power was tied to the administration.⁴⁵ This independent political role was demonstrated first during the Khilafat movement, when many of the most active reformist ulama supported the Congress non-cooperation program.⁴⁶ Later it was many of these same men who formed the backbone of the Ahrar Party, which was founded in 1929 in opposition to the politics of the dominant rural Muslims in Punjab.⁴⁷ It was the Ahrar who offered the most coherent political challenge to the Unionists on religious grounds, and it was the Ahrar who should logically have provided the political focus for those dissatisfied with the religious leadership provided by the Unionist Party. But the Ahrar, having emerged to a large extent out of the religious concerns of the reformist perspective, were largely cut off from the politics and the religion of the rural areas. Though by no means exclusively a party of the reformist ulama, the Ahrar were, like the reformists, primarily urban in composition and represented socially the urban lower and middle class.⁴⁸ Their appeal represented not only a plea for heightened religious awareness, which did attract some of the rural revivalist *sajjada nashins*, but also an attack on the leaders of rural society, which alienated the support of these *sajjada nashins*. Despite a common concern with infusing Muslim politics with greater religious awareness, therefore, the revivalist *sajjada nashins* and the reformist ulama were generally unable to unite politically.

To a certain extent the differences between the reformists and the rural revivalists can be traced to theological differences which were a product of the increasing definition of opposing religious perspectives during the late nineteenth century. Theological controversies in fact flared with considerable frequency in the early twentieth century, particularly between the Ahl-e-Hadis and their supporters and the

⁴⁵ Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, pp. 189–95.

⁴⁶ Chairman of the Punjab Khilafat Committee was Maulana Abdul Qadir Qasuri of the Ahl-e-Hadis. Other prominent religious reformists in the movement included Maulana Daood Ghaznavi of the Ahl-e-Hadis and Maulana Habib-ur-Rahman Ludhianvi of the Deobandis. For a list of local Khilafat Committee members, see M. Shaukat Ali Khan, *Punjab Men Tehrik-e-Khilafat* (unpublished M.A. thesis, Punjab University, Lahore), pp. 134–8.

⁴⁷ W. C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1963), pp. 270–2. Smith gives the date of the founding of the Ahrar as 1930, but most other sources give the year as 1929.

⁴⁸ Y. B. Mathur, *Muslims and Changing India* (New Delhi: Trimurti Publications, 1972), p. 110.

pirs. One such controversy, for example, saw Pir Fazl Shah of Jalalpur defending the *pirs* and sufis of the Punjab in 1917 against the attacks of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan.⁴⁹ Such differences in religious outlook were, however, even in the 1920s and 1930s not so strongly defined as to prevent in themselves cooperation among religious leaders of different perspectives on a common Muslim issue. Rather, theological controversies gave a cutting edge to the different political alliances of these groups based on their social position in the urban or rural areas. During the Khilafat movement, for example, there were several *sajjada nashins* who did support the movement to varying degrees, but they were generally unwilling to cooperate with the Congress and the Hindus in the more radical phase of the movement largely because in the Punjab, at least, the movement was as much anti-British and anti-rural party as it was pro-Khilafat.⁵⁰ The controversy which flared about the role of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah in the Khilafat movement indicated this clearly, for despite his having collected funds for the Khilafat Committee and having spoken in favor of the Khilafat cause, he was later criticized by the *Hamdard* of Maulana Muhammad Ali and the *Zamindar* of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan for having been pro-British, an attack which did not focus simply on Pir Jamaat Ali Shah, but on the sufis in general.⁵¹ Though Pir Jamaat Ali Shah strongly defended his record, such an attack can be seen in many ways as a general attack, not on his record, but on the social position of such religious leaders and on their ties into the rural power structure which, whatever their religious sentiments, made them unlikely to support the full implications of the critique of Muslim politics offered by the religious reformists and urban Muslim leaders.

The same tension can be seen during the 1930s. The emergence of the Ahrar Party as a popular expression of religious awareness was heralded by the Kashmir agitation of 1931 and 1932. The leadership of this agitation was provided primarily by the same Muslims who had been most active in the Khilafat cause. Politically, as the British assessed it, the Ahrar movement represented 'in the main the urban Muslims,

⁴⁹ Dr Abdul Ghani, *Amir Hizbullah*, pp. 224-5.

⁵⁰ Pir Fazl Shah, for example, helped to organize some *sajjada nashins* at the Pakpattan *urs* to send a pro-Khilafat telegram to the Viceroy, but he opposed boycott of schools, the police and the army as harmful to Muslims; *ibid.*, pp. 255, 262. Of the major *sajjada nashins* in Punjab only the Pir of Sial seems to have actively supported the non-cooperation phase of the movement.

⁵¹ Maulana Maulvi Mohammad Abul Majid Khan Qasuri, *Pir Syed Mohammad Jamaat Ali Shah . . . ke Mukhtasar Qaumi Karnama* (Agra: Agra Akhbar Press, 1925), pp. 1-2. This pamphlet, which was written to defend Pir Jamaat Ali Shah, describes the controversy.

who are jealous of the ascendancy of wealthy landowners in the Legislature and Executive.⁵² But as a religious agitation, and one which combined the assertion of the Muslim right to practice their religion in Kashmir with an assertion of Islamic orthodoxy in attacks on the role of Qadianis in the All-India Kashmir Committee, the Kashmir movement attracted support well beyond the social class of the Ahrar leaders who were directing it. As the agitation expanded in late 1931, even 'the Pirs,' the Chief Secretary wrote, 'have begun to take a hand and declare the efforts of the Ahrars to be activated by the right spirit of Islamic sympathy . . .'⁵³ Pir Fazl Shah praised the spirit of the common Muslims during the Kashmir agitation as indicative of their willingness to sacrifice for Islam,⁵⁴ and Pir Jamaat Ali Shah donated 500 rupees to the cause.⁵⁵ But when it became necessary to define the political aims of the Kashmir movement, the differing perspectives of the groups became clear. The Ahrar leaders leaned toward the Congress as the center of anti-British sentiment and the chief organizational alternative to the landowning class represented by the Unionists in the Punjab, and eventually they tried to turn the movement toward more openly pro-Congress and anti-Government aims.⁵⁶ As long as the movement had been religious in character and directed against the Hindu ruler of Kashmir, its support had been broad-based, but this pro-Congress move alienated much of the purely religious sympathy the Ahrar had gained and prevented it from incorporating many of the rural religious leaders into the organization as a united religious front. Even though the Ahrar later tried to play down their connections with Congress, as far as the Kashmir agitation was concerned the damage had been done and the movement had lost much of its popular support.⁵⁷ The Ahrar remained, in fact, up until partition, essentially an urban movement.

The conflicting claims on the allegiance of the revivalist *sajjada nashins* in the political climate of the 1930s—claims of their own religious urges on one side and of their social position in the rural areas on the other—were nowhere more graphically dramatized than in the

⁵² Punjab Fortnightly Report for the first half of November 1931. National Archives of India (NAI), Home Political, File 18/11/31.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Dr Abdul Ghani, *Amir Hizbullah*, p. 349.

⁵⁵ Akhtar Husain Shah, *Seerat-e-Amir-e-Millat* (Alipur Sayyedan: published by the author, 1974), pp. 403-4.

⁵⁶ Punjab Fortnightly Report for the second half of February 1932. NAI, Home Political, File 18/4/32.

⁵⁷ Punjab Fortnightly Report for the first half of March 1932. NAI, Home Political, File 18/5/32.

Shahidganj agitation of 1935 and 1936. The agitation over the Shahidganj Mosque in Lahore, which began after the Sikhs demolished the mosque in July 1935, produced the largest response from the *sajjada nashins* of Punjab of any religious cause before the movement for Pakistan. The *sajjada nashins* supported the agitation as a purely religious cause, which was on this occasion in no way compromised by the political leanings of the Ahrar, who were more concerned at the time about maneuvering for the upcoming provincial elections. The initial leadership of the agitation in Lahore came instead from a group of urban agitators who were generally opposed to the pro-Congress attitude of the Ahrar, the Majlis Ittihad-i-Millat led by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan. After many of the leaders of this group were externed from Lahore, however, an attempt was made to give the *sajjada nashins* leadership in the agitation. At a special Shahidganj conference in Rawalpindi in September 1935, the Shahidganj agitators turned to Pir Jamaat Ali Shah to lead the agitation and appointed him Amir-e-Millat, or dictator of the agitation, at the same time inviting 'all Pirs and other religious leaders to openly identify themselves with the struggle . . .'⁵⁸ This was an attempt, with the agitation otherwise stalled, to tap the thousands of religious followers of these *pirs* in the rural areas; the hope was, as one newspaper later put it, that 'simultaneously with the appointment of the Pir as the Amir his followers would enlist as volunteers.'⁵⁹ Some hoped that by naming Pir Jamaat Ali Shah to head the agitation they might even be able to embarrass the Government by enlisting the thousands of followers of the Pir who were serving in the army.⁶⁰

Assuming the leadership of such an agitation, however, put a rural *sajjada nashin* like Pir Jamaat Ali Shah in a very difficult position. Though other *pirs*, including Pir Fazl Shah of Jalalpur, Pir Qamaruddin of Sial Sharif, and Pir Ghulam Mohyuddin, the son of Pir Mehr Ali Shah of Golra, offered support for the agitation,⁶¹ Pir Jamaat Ali Shah wavered in trying to chalk out a program. At the Rawalpindi conference he had apparently joined in the general call for starting civil disobedience in order to regain the site of the mosque, but with his many connections to wealthy pro-Government Muslims he could not

⁵⁸ CID Report of the Rawalpindi Conference, 3 September 1935. NAI, Home Political, File 5/21/35.

⁵⁹ *Inquilab* (Lahore), January 15, 1936. Punjab Civil Secretariat, Press Branch, File 8331, Vol. XI-A.

⁶⁰ CID Report of the Rawalpindi Conference, 3 September 1935. NAI, Home Political, File 5/21/35.

⁶¹ Dr Abdul Ghani, *Amir Hizbullah*, p. 351.

take too strong an anti-Government stand. As the Chief Secretary wrote immediately after the conference, 'Deeply as he may have appeared to have committed himself, there is some reason to think that he is not altogether comfortable about his position, and he may retreat from it. Influences are being brought to bear to this end.'⁶² After conferring with other religious leaders, including many of the Barelvi ulama, he ultimately announced a plan to raise a million volunteers,⁶³ but in fact, other than organizing special days of mourning for the Shahidganj Mosque, little was done to organize the agitation, for Pir Jamaat Ali Shah himself was wary of the more radical demands of many of the urban agitators. By January 1936 the urban agitators of the Ittihad-i-Millat had become highly critical of the Pir's leadership. Two urban leaders issued a blistering attack on the Pir charging that 'the rich Muslims' were undermining the agitation and that the Pir was their tool,⁶⁴ while a Lahore daily charged that the Pir's statements seemed to reach the Government before they reached his own followers.⁶⁵ In order to try to salvage the agitation, Pir Jamaat Ali Shah called a special Shahidganj conference at Amritsar in January 1936, but the results of the conference only seemed to confirm the criticism, for it fell largely under the control of some of his wealthy Unionist followers, including Mir Maqbul Mahmud, one of the Pir's *murids* and the brother-in-law of the Unionist leader, Sir Sikander Hyat Khan.⁶⁶ Apparently to save his own prestige, the Pir left immediately on Haj. The fate of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah in the Shahidganj agitation illustrates dramatically the conflicting pulls on the revivalist *sajjada nashins* and indicates why, despite their religious concerns, they failed to develop effectively a religious attack on the Government and the Unionist Party.

When the Unionists swept the elections of 1937, therefore, they did not have to face any general religious opposition to their position. The Ahrar Party, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan's Ittihad-i-Millat Party, and the Muslim League, which in Punjab at this time was primarily a small group of lawyers around Allama Iqbal, all contested the elections,

⁶² Appreciation of Shahidganj situation, F. H. Puckle, 6 September 1935. NAI, Home Political, File 5/21/35.

⁶³ Punjab Fortnightly Report for the first half of November 1935. NAI, Home Political, File 18/11/35.

⁶⁴ *Inquilab* (Lahore), January 11, 1936. Punjab Civil Secretariat, Press Branch, File 8331, Vol. XI-A. The statement was made by Syed Habib and Mian Ferozuddin Ahmad.

⁶⁵ *Ihsan* (Lahore), January 12, 1936. Punjab Civil Secretariat, Press Branch, File 8331, Vol. XI-A.

⁶⁶ *Ihsan* (Lahore), January 22, 1936. Punjab Civil Secretariat, Press Branch, File 8331, Vol. XI-A.

but none showed significant strength in the rural areas. The Unionist program, which was based on the economic advance of the rural classes and the support of the Alienation of Land Act, was a defense of the existing power structure in the rural areas. This program had the strong support of most of the landed *sajjada nashins* on economic and political grounds. For the rural revivalists the Unionists offered no special religious appeal, but the tacit support of most was won either indirectly, through their personal ties to landed Unionist politicians in the localities, or else by reason of the lack of an acceptable religious alternative which did not threaten the structural and administrative bases of their position in rural society. The active religious support of such *pirs* for the Unionists was not required; their failure to join the religious opposition was enough to ensure Unionist success. As one of the local Unionist organizers analyzed the situation in 1936, 'The Ahrars have begun with an awfully vigorous propaganda. At least they presume to have captured the towns. Still we don't fear if they do not begin with the villages. Villagers, you know, follow these "Pirs" blindly. . . . Take care of the "Pirs". Ask them only to keep silent on the matter of elections. We don't require their help but they should not oppose us . . .'⁶⁷ In 1937, very few *pirs* opposed the Unionists, whose election victory reflected in many ways the triumph of the rural classes, both secular and religious, in the Punjab's political system.

Religious Leaders and the Muslim League

The relations between the Unionist Party and religious leaders in the 1920s and 1930s demonstrated that the political roles of religious leaders were determined primarily by their structural position in the rural or urban areas. The main division among the religious leaders in the Punjab, that between the *sajjada nashins* and the reformist ulama assumed political significance because it paralleled the most important political cleavage in the Punjab, that between rural leaders and urban. The Unionists were able to gain at least the passive support of most of the *sajjada nashins* because the pro-rural Unionist ideology subsumed the concerns of many of these *sajjada nashins* as hereditary leaders whose position was tied closely to the structure of rural society. This did not mean that many of these *sajjada nashins* did not have strong religious concerns, but that as long as politics were channeled primarily by the

⁶⁷ Letter, Mohammad Bashir of Gurdaspur to Unionist Party headquarters, 9 May 1936. Unionist Party Papers, File D-17.

urban-rural cleavage, these religious concerns could not easily find political expression.

The significant development in Punjab politics after 1937 which was to affect most deeply the political allegiances of religious leaders was the emergence of the Muslim League as a political party transcending the rural-urban distinction which had previously dominated Punjab politics. The key to this development was the League's emergence as an all-India party, which, unlike the Unionists or the urban parties of the Punjab, was concerned primarily with representing the interests of Indian Muslims at an all-India level *vis à vis* the Congress and the British. As leader of the League, Muhammad Ali Jinnah's all-India reputation allowed him to establish after 1937 a position of authority in Punjab Muslim politics independent of the provincial political parties which dominated Punjab affairs. But the establishment of such a position in Punjab politics was not accomplished immediately, nor was it an easy task for Jinnah. Jinnah's initial efforts to establish the League in the Punjab before the 1937 elections had brought him far closer to the urban parties than to the Unionists; it was the Ahrar, in fact, who were most sympathetic to his call for a united Muslim political party in 1936, while the Unionists, secure in their provincial strength, strongly rejected Jinnah's overtures for cooperation. But though Jinnah's interest in a new organization for Indian Muslims brought him closer to the urban Muslims, he was not an ideologue in the mold of the reformist ulama; he was interested in solid political strength and he was willing to compromise to develop it. Less than a year after the Unionist election victory of 1937, therefore, Jinnah forged a pact with the new Unionist Premier of the Punjab, Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, by which Jinnah essentially recognized the authority of the Unionists in Punjab politics in return for their joining the Muslim League and supporting it at the all-India level. This did not, in the short run, give Jinnah much additional authority in the Punjab itself, where the Unionist Party maintained its separate identity, but it established the League as a representative Muslim body, to which both the urban and the rural Muslim leaders of Punjab looked for the expression of Muslim political aspirations at the all-India level.⁶⁸

The Sikander-Jinnah Pact was subsequently to arouse considerable controversy in the Punjab, for it did not end the conflicts between urban

⁶⁸ Jinnah's and Sir Sikander's motives in forging the Pact at Lucknow in October 1937 remain the subject of considerable controversy. The best survey of the various factors involved is provided in Dr S. M. Ikram, *Modern Muslim India and the Birth of Pakistan* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1970) pp. 237-51.

and rural Muslims. The effect of the Pact was instead to bring such conflicts to a large extent within the League itself. Though some of the urban Muslims, including the Ahrar, became increasingly hostile to the League after Jinnah's compromise with the Unionists, a large part of the urban Muslims supported the League after 1937, but they criticized sharply the role of the Unionists in the League and tried to block Unionist efforts to gain organizational control of the Punjab branch of the League after the Sikander–Jinnah Pact. Jinnah was bombarded in the years after 1937 with complaints from urban League supporters in Punjab that the Unionists were taking over the provincial Muslim League organization only to stifle its expansion.⁶⁹ In fact, there was considerable truth in this charge, for the Unionists, though they supported Jinnah at the all-India level, were not seriously interested in an active Muslim political organization in Punjab, and they sought to dominate the League at the provincial level largely in order to keep it inert. Jinnah, however, though he realized the justice of this charge, was wary of taking action so long as the Unionists were politically dominant in rural Punjab. He put pressure on the Unionists whenever possible to adhere to League policy and to strengthen the League organization, but he could not intervene to stop their efforts to take control of the Punjab League without sacrificing his position of neutrality and openly identifying himself with urban Muslim opinion.⁷⁰ Though Jinnah was successful in keeping the League above the urban–rural conflict in the Punjab, therefore, it was, in the short run at least, largely at the expense of the development of an effective League organization in the province.

It was not until after the death of Sir Sikander in late 1942 that Jinnah saw an opportunity to free the League from its dependence on Unionist support in the Punjab without sacrificing the League's position of neutrality in the urban–rural political conflicts of the province. Sikander's death touched off considerable factional maneuvering within

⁶⁹ An example of the kind of complaints against the Unionists to which Jinnah was subjected is provided by a letter from Malik Barkat Ali, leader of the urban faction in the Punjab League, to Jinnah in 1940. As a result of the Sikander–Jinnah Pact, Malik Barkat Ali wrote: 'the only persons who now form the so-called Muslim League are the Unionists, who owe allegiance first and last to Sir Sikander. Sir Sikander's only desire was to capture the organisation of the League and then to keep it inert.' Letter, Malik Barkat Ali to Jinnah, 4 December 1940; File #215, Quaid-e-Azam Papers, Quaid-e-Azam Papers Cell, Pakistan Ministry of Education, Islamabad.

⁷⁰ Jinnah's attitude was exemplified when, as late as February 1943, he refused to give his sanction to an attempt by many of the urban Leaguers of Punjab to form a Muslim League Workers Board independent of the regular Unionist-dominated provincial League organization. *Eastern Times* (Lahore), February 12, 1943.

the Unionist Party which led to the emergence of a group of young rurally-based leaders who opposed the new Unionist Premier, Malik Khizr Hyat Khan Tiwana, and rallied to the Muslim League standard.⁷¹ With the support of this group, Jinnah began to put increasing pressure on the Unionist Premier to take steps to put life into the League organization and to give the unequivocal support of the Unionists to the concept of establishing Pakistan, which had formed the basis of the League's creed since 1940. When this pressure failed to force Malik Khizr Hyat to subordinate his own party interests in the Punjab to those of the League, Jinnah decided that, with a group of rural leaders now at his back, he could at last force a showdown with the Unionists. As a result, when Malik Khizr Hyat refused to accede to League demands in 1944, Jinnah abrogated the Sikander-Jinnah Pact and Malik Khizr Hyat was expelled from the League. Jinnah apparently hoped that this would spark a large-scale shift of rural leaders from the Unionists to the Muslim League, but in the short run he may have miscalculated for, despite continued factional defections to the League, the Unionists continued to enjoy the support of the great bulk of rural Muslim Assembly members.⁷² In the long run, however, Jinnah's policy paid off, for with the League firmly established as a symbol of Muslim political aspirations which was no longer associated exclusively with the urban Muslims, the League was able to force a showdown with the Unionists in the 1946 elections and to challenge them in the rural areas themselves.

The League's ability to appeal successfully for religious support in its attack on Unionist authority was in large measure the result of the independent position it had established. In his efforts to promote the League in 1936, Jinnah had initially developed fairly close contacts with the reformist ulama of the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind,⁷³ but since

⁷¹ Prominent in this group of young anti-Unionist and pro-League supporters were Mian Mumtaz Daultana, Nawab Iftikhar Husain Khan Mamdot, who was president of the provincial Muslim League, and Sardar Shaukat Hyat Khan, Sir Sikander's son, who was initially taken into the Ministry under Malik Khizr Hyat but who later split with the Unionists and was dismissed from the Ministry.

⁷² The suggestion that Jinnah may have initially miscalculated comes from Imran Ali Khan, *Punjab Politics in the Decade Before Partition* (Lahore: South Asian Institute, University of the Punjab, 1975), pp. 42-3.

⁷³ Jinnah's relations with the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind at the time of the 1937 elections are indicated by the first point of the election program of the Central Muslim League Parliamentary Board, which called for 'due weight' to be given in all religious matters 'to the opinions of Jamiat-ul-Ulema Hind and the Mujtahids.' Syed Rais Ahmad Jafri (ed.), *Rare Documents* (Lahore: Muhammad Ali Academy, 1967), p. 147.

1937, in trying to establish the neutrality of the League he had shunned contacts with religious leaders of any kind. At the time of the League's break with the Unionists in 1944, therefore, its contacts with religious leaders were very few. Paradoxically, however, it was precisely this long isolation from any organized group of religious leaders which was now to prove most important in facilitating the League's ability to gain religious support against the Unionists in the rural areas. Though Jinnah's isolation from religious leaders and his compromises with rural Muslim politicians had alienated his one-time allies among the reformist ulama, his policy had at the same time almost inadvertently opened up a new field of potential religious support from rural religious leaders. Appeals to rural *sajjada nashins* for support in opposition to the Unionists could now be made without associating the League with the religious attacks of the reformist ulama on the structure of rural society—attacks which had alienated the rural *sajjada nashins* in the past. League leaders in the Punjab, who had been left with little solid political organization in the rural areas as a legacy of the Sikander–Jinnah Pact, were not slow to take advantage of this. In 1945 a number of Punjab League leaders began to appeal strongly for support on a religious basis, and among these, rural leaders took a prominent part. A good example is provided by Sir Sikander's son, Sardar Shaukat Hyat Khan, who played an important role in helping to escalate the League's religious propaganda in the rural areas. In June 1945 Shaukat was present at a Sargodha (Shahpur) District Muslim League conference at Sial Sharif, site of one of the major revival shrines, where he promised that as a Muslim League leader he would not deviate from the path of Islam.⁷⁴ Several months later Shaukat declared that Pakistan would have a 'government of the Quran,'⁷⁵ and by January 1946 he was urging that as the Muslim League was fighting for Islam, 'every Muslim must take part in this jihad.'⁷⁶ By that time Shaukat's appeal was typical of that being made by many Leaguers, and rural religious leaders responded to such appeals by coming out strongly in favor of the League and Pakistan.

The most vital religious support for Pakistan came from the *sajjada nashins* of the revival shrines, who had long sought an outlet for expressing their religious concerns in the political arena. The logic of the support of these religious leaders for Pakistan, as they entered

⁷⁴ *Eastern Times* (Lahore), June 6, 1945.

⁷⁵ *Saadat* (Lyallpur), January 14, 1946. Reproduced in *Punjab Gazette*, Part III (September 13, 1946), pp. 867–8.

⁷⁶ *Nawai Waqt* (Lahore), January 13, 1946.

the Muslim League struggle in 1945, was not nearly so well developed as was, for example, the religious position of reformist ulama like Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, who had long opposed the idea of Pakistan. But the basis of their position can be appreciated by briefly comparing their outlook with that of the Deobandi ulama. The Deobandi conception of the political role of Muslims in India had been, as Peter Hardy has observed, shaped deeply by the nature of their religious reforms. They emphasized religious education as the key to the united participation of Muslims in politics. Having answered the decline of the Muslim state by working to develop a Muslim community guided by a class of educated ulama which could regulate its own affairs, they were wary of the authority of Muslim politicians and of the idea of yielding power to a state controlled by such politicians. They had, as Peter Hardy says, developed a view of religious solidarity which was itself political and was based on the authority of the ulama, who interpreted the religious law and Muslim public opinion.⁷⁷ This view was threatened by the idea of a Pakistan in the hands of traditional Muslim politicians, such as those rural leaders who were increasingly coming to the support of the Muslim League. For the revivalist *sajjada nashins*, the idea of a Muslim community politically regulated by the ulama was a novel one. The thrust of their concern had always been to influence the political leaders and their followers to regulate their lives according to religious injunctions. This view had been dramatized in their religious relationships with local rural leaders, for example in Pir Mehr Ali Shah's insistence when accepting a leader like Sir Umar Hyat Khan Tiwana as a *murid* that he observe the injunctions of the Shariat.⁷⁸ The idea of a state in the hands of such leaders was for them perfectly natural, for in the establishment of such a state based on the Shariat, they could see the projection of their local religious work into a larger political arena.

This view explains in large part the attitude of these *sajjada nashins* toward Muhammad Ali Jinnah, which was in sharp contrast to that of the reformist ulama who generally distrusted Jinnah as a political man with little real awareness of Islam. The attitude of the revivalist *sajjada nashins* was well exemplified by that of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah. Jamaat Ali Shah had himself been Amir-e-Millat during the Shahidganj agitation, but he now congratulated Jinnah on having taken up this

⁷⁷ Peter Hardy, *Partners in Freedom—and True Muslims: The Political Thought of Some Muslim Scholars in British India, 1912–1947* (Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, 1971), pp. 40–1.

⁷⁸ Maulana Faiz Ahmad Faiz, *Mehr-e-Munir*, p. 297.

mantle for the Muslim community.⁷⁹ He is reported to have answered criticism of Jinnah at a Sunni religious conference at Benaras in February 1946 by saying: 'think of Jinnah Sahib whatever you like, but I say that Jinnah Sahib is "Wali Allah".'⁸⁰ He is then said to have quoted Quran and *hadis* to prove it. Later, in another typical gesture, Pir Jamaat Ali Shah wrote to Jinnah advising him on the performance of the Haj and offering to accompany him. '... This proof of your fidelity to the strict principles of Islam will put your enemies to shame,' he wrote, 'and they will never be able to raise their heads before you ...'⁸¹ This kind of relationship with political leaders was nothing new for most of these *pirs*, and in contrast to the position of the reformist ulama of Deoband, it provided the political basis for their support of the Muslim League and Pakistan. The revival *pirs* had long been closely associated with the leaders of the Unionist Party at the local level, but they had at the same time, like the reformist ulama, been uneasy with the essentially secular basis for Unionist political organization in provincial politics. With the transfer of an important section of the rural Muslim leadership to the Muslim League in the political realignments after 1944, the revivalist *pirs* found in the Muslim League under Jinnah's leadership a political platform which allowed them to maintain their local political and religious connections and at the same time to express their religious concerns in politics at the provincial and national level.⁸²

Ironically, however, the same structural considerations which disposed the revivalist *sajjada nashins* after 1944 toward the support of the Muslim

⁷⁹ *Nawai Waqt* (Lahore), January 30, 1946.

⁸⁰ Letter, Hamid Hasan Qadri to Jinnah, 22 July 1946. Punjab Vol. II, Shams-ul-Hasan Collection, Karachi. I would like to thank Khalid S. Hasan for permission to use this collection.

⁸¹ Letter, Jamaat Ali Shah to Jinnah, n.d. (July 1946?). Punjab Vol. II, Shams-ul-Hasan Collection, Karachi.

⁸² The importance of local religious ties between these *pirs* and their politically prominent followers should not, in explaining their support for Pakistan, be interpreted in too narrow a sense. By and large, it was not direct economic and political pressure from their followers so much as a more general concern for the shape of the new political system which pushed them toward support of the Muslim League. The Pir of Sial, for example, was one of the first revival *pirs* to actively enter the political field in support of the Muslim League, in spite of the fact that among his more wealthy *murids* were many of the Shahpur Tiwanas, who remained Unionists. Direct economic pressure from these local magnates is difficult to observe and seems in the emotionally charged religious atmosphere of 1945 and 1946 to have had little effect on the Pir's stance. One of the bigger Tiwana landlords, Nawab Allah Bakhsh, for example, continued to have a close religious relationship with the Pir of Sial in spite of their sharp political opposition, and before his death in 1948, the Nawab sought to dedicate 15 squares of his land in *waqf* as a family graveyard with the Pir of Sial as *mutawalli*.

League and Pakistan, also rendered them particularly difficult for the Muslim League to organize politically. As the Muslim League began to organize religious leaders behind its cause in 1945, it found that the only existing model for the political organization of religious leaders was the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind, which had grown out of the organizational reforms of the reformist ulama—reforms which had, in fact, sharply distinguished the reformists from the *sajjada nashins*. Nevertheless, the leaders of the League, who had had little experience in the past in the organization of religious leaders, attempted to use the Jamiat as a model for a parallel organization of religious leaders. To create such a parallel organization they naturally turned first to ulama experienced in this form of organization, and this meant the minority of Deobandi ulama who showed sympathy to the League cause. Foremost among these was Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, who had once been an active member of the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind, and who now was called upon to head the new, pro-Pakistan Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam. Ironically therefore, it was a group of Deobandis who led the new pro-Muslim League organization, but with the inauguration of the Punjab branch at Lahore in December 1945,⁸³ an attempt was made to expand the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam to include the rural religious leaders who comprised the bulk of the League's religious support. Maulana Ghulam Murshid, *khatib* of the Badshahi Masjid at Lahore, who organized the Punjab branch of the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam was well placed to do this, for though he had studied at Deoband and had been a student of Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, his family came out of the rural revivalist tradition in west Punjab.⁸⁴ Ghulam Murshid attempted to dramatize the representative character of the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam by organizing a big provincial session at Lahore in January 1946, at which he selected as chairmen of the different sittings of the conference ulama of different religious perspectives: Pir Jamaat Ali Shah at one sitting, Maulana Muhammad Ibrahim Sialkoti of the Ahl-e-Hadis at another, and Maulana Zafar Ahmad Thanvi of Deoband at yet another.⁸⁵ But for all the enthusiasm the conference generated, particularly by its resolve to defy a Government regulation prohibiting the use of undue spiritual influence in electioneering, the conference was limited generally to urban ulama and

⁸³ *Inquilab* (Lahore), December 16, 1945.

⁸⁴ Ghulam Murshid's father was a *khalifa* of the Pir of Taunsa, and, in addition to Deoband, he studied at Ajmer. He was also principal for a time of the Dar-ul-ulum Naumania. Interview, Maulana Ghulam Murshid, Lahore, December 31, 1975.

⁸⁵ *Ihsan* (Lahore), January 29, 1946. Reproduced in *Punjab Gazette*, Part III (September 13, 1946), p. 861.

politicians. Few of the *sajjada nashins* other than Pir Jamaat Ali Shah appear to have participated. Though Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani subsequently issued a poster calling for support of the League in the name of the 300 or so ulama and *mashaikh* who attended the conference,⁸⁶ the new Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam was in fact ill-suited for the organization of the rural religious leaders who formed the backbone of the League's religious support, and whose influence remained diffuse and centered on the shrines.

The rural *sajjada nashins* who supported the League thus remained largely outside the Muslim League organization. But as the elections approached, this independence from the League organization proved to be a reflection of what was, in fact, their greatest political strength—their traditional ties into local rural politics which allowed them to exert influence in the local factional contests on which the election hinged. The significance of this can be readily appreciated from a preliminary election analysis published by the *Eastern Times*, a pro-League daily, in September 1945. The *Eastern Times* observed that, as in other elections, the outcome of the Unionist–Muslim League contest was likely to be decided by factional allignments in the rural areas. But the Muslim League, it noted, had gained a powerful weapon in countering the Government influence of the Unionists in such factional rivalries, for the League had ‘not only a powerful slogan but also the support of practically all the important “pirs” in the province and “sajjada nashins” of the famous shrines of Tonsa, Golra, Alipur, Sialsharif, and Jalalpur.’⁸⁷ That the *Eastern Times* mentioned these five particular shrines was no accident, for these were probably the five most prestigious revival shrines in the Punjab. Though *sajjada nashins* of many of the older shrines played perhaps an even more active role in factional politics than the revivalists, as a group they were not able to match the role of the revivalists in using religion to undermine traditional Unionist factional strength in the countryside. In Multan District, for example, the family of the Gilani *sajjada nashin* of the pre-revival shrine of Musa Pak Shaheed provided the factional backbone of Muslim League support in the district, but its influence was countered by that of its traditional factional rival, the family of the *sajjada nashin* of the shrine of Bahawal Haq, which supported the Unionists.⁸⁸ Though

⁸⁶ Poster, ‘Ulama aur Mashaikh-e-Islam se Appeal,’ n.d. Mian Abdul Aziz Collection, Lahore. I would like to thank the family of the late Mian Abdul Aziz for permission to use this collection.

⁸⁷ *Eastern Times* (Lahore), September 6, 1945.

⁸⁸ Rivalry between these two families had been going on in the Multan Municipal Committee and in the District Board for decades. In 1945 and 1946, the competing

the revivalist *sajjada nashins* were not themselves factional leaders of the standing of these religious families, it was they who injected a religious fervor into the politics of Punjab which upset most the traditional factional alignments on which Unionist political strength had rested.

A good example of the influence of these *sajjada nashins* in local politics comes from Jhelum District, where the local faction associated with Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, the uncle of Pir Fazl Shah of Jalalpur, had shifted into the Muslim League at the time of the League-Unionist break in 1944. This faction was opposed in Jhelum by a strong Unionist group which continued to control the local boards even after Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan's shift to the Muslim League. But during the second half of 1945, as the issue became an increasingly religious one and the *pirs* openly entered the contest, the Unionists found it impossible to hold this faction together. Not only did Pir Fazl Shah begin to campaign openly for the League, but other *sajjada nashins* also entered the field. 'The Muslim League has started very intense propaganda on religious lines,' one Unionist worker wrote to his Party headquarters in December 1945. 'Pir M. Husain Shah, son of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah, is making a tour of the Jhelum Tehsil and issuing *Fatwas* that Muslim League is the only Islamic community and that all the rest are *Kafirs*.'⁸⁹ Two weeks later the Unionist organization in the district was desperate. 'I must bring to your notice,' the district organizer wrote, 'that 80% population of this district is "Pir-ridden". They are blind followers of Pirs. Pir Jamaat Ali Shah's son's personal contacts and *Fatwas* have created great obstacles in the way of our workers. . . . No amount of individual propaganda can convert the blind adherents of the Pirs.'⁹⁰ Under such pressure the Unionists watched almost helplessly as their factional support dissolved in Jhelum District. In the final election result the Unionists lost all three Assembly seats in the district, and the Muslim League carried over 75 per cent of the rural Muslim vote.

A similar story emerges in other districts as well. In Rawalpindi District, the influence of the family of Pir Fazl Shah was given a large

Muslim League and Unionist parties in the district were often referred to as the Gilani party and the Qureshi party. See, for example, personal file of Abdus Sattar Shah, Unionist worker, Multan; Unionist Party Papers.

⁸⁹ Letter, Bashir Husain, Jhelum District Organizer, to Mian Sultan Ali Ranjha, Zamindara League (Unionist Party) Secretary, 13 December 1945. Unionist Party Papers, File D-44.

⁹⁰ Jhelum District Organization Monthly Report for December 1945, 2 January 1946. Unionist Party Papers, File D-44.

measure of credit by the Unionists for tipping the scales against them in Gujar Khan Tehsil,⁹¹ while in Rawalpindi Tehsil the Unionist organizer felt in December 1945 that it was the Muslim League candidate's 'old machinations and election tricks, coupled with the out and out support of the Pir of Golra,' which was responsible for the Muslim League's commanding position.⁹² In Montgomery District Unionist leaders expected to carry the district until the very eve of the election, when the arrest of a local *pir* for openly violating the regulation against the use of undue spiritual influence caused a sensation in the district. Analyzing the subsequent defeat of all four Unionist candidates in the district, a local Unionist organizer remarked that the 'prosecution of Chan Pir was the chief cause of the general conflagration which had upset the jangli mind in all four tehsils.'⁹³ The influence of these *pirs* was certainly not the only factor in these elections, for in Montgomery District a reaction against the open exploitation of Government pressure by the district Unionist leader and the last minute defections of certain leading families to the Muslim League undermined the Unionist position in the final days before the election. But there is little doubt that the widespread support for Pakistan of the revivalist *sajjada nashins* in particular played a major role in the popular perception of the Muslim League campaign in the rural areas as a religious movement, which undermined traditional Unionist factional strength in the districts.

Perhaps the most ironic development in this connection was the almost desperate attempt by the Unionists, as the support of the *sajjada nashins* for the League escalated, to counter this religious element by turning for religious support to the ulama of the Ahrar and the pro-Congress Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind, ulama who had long been their severest critics. The Unionists had made some organized attempts to win support among the *sajjada nashins*, but among the revivalists they had little success. As the religious nature of the campaign became more pronounced, they found that the only well-organized groups of religious leaders in opposition to the Muslim League were the reformist ulama who backed the Ahrar and the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind. Unionist workers in the field in late 1945 and early 1946 were desperate for some sort of religious counter to the propaganda of the *pirs* and asked for

⁹¹ Report of Mufti Murid Ahmad, Divisional Organizer, to headquarters, 3 February 1946. Unionist Party Papers, File E-105.

⁹² Report of Rawalpindi Divisional Organizer, 19 December 1945. Unionist Party Papers, File F-29.

⁹³ Letter, Agha Barkat Ali Khan to headquarters, 8 January (February?) 1946. Unionist Party Papers, File D-59.

religious support from wherever it was available. As the district organizer for Jhelum wrote in December 1945, political propaganda was of no use against religious appeals, and 'Fatwas in rebuttal are the only antidote, now.'⁹⁴ Either first-rate religious speakers like Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari should be sent, he wrote, or else *fatwas* against the Muslim League should be obtained from Deoband or Bareilly and circulated in the district. The story was much the same in other districts. The last-minute telegram from Multan to Unionist headquarters—'Kindly send Maulvies . . . '—was typical.⁹⁵ And the Unionist leaders could only respond with those maulvis who were willing to attack the Muslim League. As the Unionist Secretary responded to the request from Shahpur District, 'I am sending a party of eight Maulvis who have come to me from Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Hind, Delhi . . . '⁹⁶ This alliance of the Unionists with their old enemies naturally seemed strange, and particularly so to the Muslim League, to whom it seemed to be pure opportunist politics. The pro-Muslim League daily, *Nawai Waqt*, made fun of this effort by the Unionists to get religious support, charging that they were so desperate that they were sending not trained maulvis, but Deoband undergraduates who were paid 30 or 40 rupees a month to do their propaganda, and were calling them Deobandi Fazal Ustads (or graduates).⁹⁷ In fact, the best of these religious men, like Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari, were moving religious orators, but their use by the Unionists only pointed up dramatically the fact that the Muslim League had almost completely taken over the rural religious base on which the Unionist Party itself had once relied.

Summary and Conclusion

In this paper an attempt has been made to delineate the background of the religious support for the Pakistan movement in the Punjab by looking in particular at the connections between the structure of religious leadership and the structure of Muslim politics in 20th century Punjab. Only the rough outlines of these connections have been provided, but nevertheless some important patterns have emerged. From

⁹⁴ Letter, Bashir Husain to Mian Sultan Ali Ranjha, 13 December 1945. Unionist Party Papers, File D-44.

⁹⁵ Telegram, Nur Mohammad to Mian Sultan Ali Ranjha, 18 January 1946. Unionist Party Papers, File D-51.

⁹⁶ Letter, Mian Sultan Ali Ranjha to Nawab Allah Bakhsh Tiwana, 16 January 1946. Unionist Party Papers, File D-45.

⁹⁷ *Nawai Waqt* (Lahore), January 23, 1946.

the time of the conversion to Islam of much of the western Punjab at the hands of sufi saints, religious leadership in the rural areas was focused on the hereditary *sajjada nashins* of the shrines of these saints. The position of these hereditary religious leaders was tied closely into the political organization of the rural areas, and this produced a considerable unity of political and economic interests between the religious and the secular leaders of rural society. Such common interests were strengthened by the British, who, in molding a system of rural administration in the Punjab, recognized the *sajjada nashins* of these shrines as part of a single ruling class of hereditary rural leaders. When the Unionist Party emerged in the 1920s as a party of rural interests led by this class of rural leaders, the *sajjada nashins* as a group were strongly disposed, therefore, to support it and to oppose the religious attacks on the Unionists which emanated from primarily urban reformist leaders.

As a result of a widespread revival of sufi influence in western Punjab in the post-Mughal era, however, many of the *sajjada nashins* in twentieth-century Punjab had also developed very strong religious commitments to spreading a deeper awareness of Islam. This revival had spread initially through the Chishti order but was later widened by the development of the Ahl-e-Sunnat-o-Jamaat group of ulama who gave religious legitimacy to the continuing emphasis on the forms of religious influence centered on the shrines. The *sajjada nashins* who drew on this revival tradition were not satisfied with the secular basis of the political system developed by the Unionists, but due to their structural grounding as *sajjada nashins* in the rural political milieu, they did not generally give the Unionists active opposition. The Unionist Party was thus able, with tacit religious support in the rural areas, to build a strong system of political authority based on rural control, and this propelled the Party to its sweeping victory in the 1937 elections.

With the emergence of the Muslim League, however, which transcended the political question of rural interests versus urban, the revivalist *sajjada nashins* saw the opportunity to put rural politics on a more solid religious foundation. The concept of Pakistan was seen by them in traditional terms as the establishment of a religious state, ruled by the traditional leaders of rural society but firmly based on the Shariat. In the elections of 1946 the revivalist *sajjada nashins* provided the vanguard of religious support for Pakistan and played an important role in carrying the Muslim League to triumph over the Unionist Party. The victory was a sweeping religious mandate for Pakistan and marked the most important step on the road to Pakistan's formation.

The important role of the *sajjada nashins* in the Muslim League's election victory was also an important pointer to the nature of the Pakistan state which was to emerge. Structurally, the revivalist *sajjada nashins* were themselves deeply rooted in rural society and their support for the Muslim League in no way represented a repudiation of the class of landed leaders who had long wielded power in western Punjab under the Unionist banner. The victory for Pakistan represented only a call for a new religious definition of the old rural order, not for a new alignment of political power such as the reformist ulama had called for. The further definition of this system, however, remained to be developed in the new Muslim state.