CHAPTER IV

Surat and Beyond

This chapter puts together narratives of riots in the eighteenth century. While three of these narratives relate to Gujarat, two to the city of Ahmedabad and one to the city of Surat in 1795. The other narratives relate to the cities in north India to provide analogous frames to see and compare the Surat riots of 1795 in a larger spatial and temporal perspective.

The study is divided into three sections:

• The first focuses on the narrative of the *Mirat-i Ahmadi* pertaining to Ahmedabad and Surat.
• The second section deals with riots in other cities of north India.
• In section three conclusions are drawn from the above smaller studies.

Community Conflicts: Ahmedabad and Surat

The *Mirat-i Ahmadi*, the eighteenth century Persian history of Gujarat, records two major instances of tension and conflict between Hindus and Muslims in Ahmedabad (1714 and 1716) and one in Surat (1759-60). Our attempt has been to read the narratives of these conflicts in the grain in order to grasp the social realities they embodied and keep the narrative as close to the original documentation as possible.

Ahmedabad: 1714 (A.H. 1126)

The first of these, chronologically, is a riot (hangama) that occurred on the occasion of Holi celebrations in Ahmedabad in circa 1714 A.D. It involved what are called the ahl-i Islam (i.e. Muslims) and Hindus.214

The short account of it is that at that time, one Hari Ram, who was an agent (gumashta) of Madan Gopal sarraf along with Khan Firoz Jung, was playing Holi with abandon (badmasti) at the door of his house with other shroffs and co-religionists (hum- mashraban), pouring colours and gulal on one another. By chance, one of the ahl-i Islam (a Muslim) happened (ittefaqan) to pass by that street. A few of those playing Holi encircled him and began to douse him with colours, gulal, and dust (khak), and thus subjected him to insults.215 He wrenched himself free and in that very state, he took along a few others, went to someone aware of the realities,216 Muhammad Ali the wa'iz (preacher), who at that time was delivering a religious sermon to a group of men from the pulpit. All sections of Muslims, high and low (‘ali wa adna) with disposition and faith went to relate this incident to him and seek redress from him.217 He was drawn to the Jama Masjid by his commitment for defending Islam and the true religion. He sent word to Mulla Abdul Aziz, leader of the Sunni Muslim Bohra community (ra‘is-i- qaum-i bawahir-i ahl-i sunnat jama‘at), about his presence (in the mosque) and about the incident. He arrived at the masjid with his group [of Bohras]. All Muslims, sipahis and

214 The account figures in a chapter with the title: “Rudad-i- Hangama-i- Holi, Miyan-i- Hindu wa Ahl-i Islam” MA, I, pp. 405-09.
215 rasanidan-i ahanat pardakhtand.
ahl-i hirfa (artisans and craftsmen), residents of the city and of the suburbs, in groups and sections (giroh giroh wa firqa ba firqa), shouting "deen, deen" gathered from every corner and side. The mob (hujum-i aam wa ijma'-i ahl-i Islam) was bent upon killing and looting (qatl-o gharat) Hindus. Collectively, it proceeded to the house of Qazi Khairullah Khan to declare to him that because this was an issue of the shari'a and was perverse to Islam (chun muqaddama-i shar'a wa 'ina'd-i Islam ast) he should join them. The Qazi out of fright shut the door of his house. Dejected by the qazi's refusal to comply with their wishes,218 the baser elements (juhhal) of the mob hurled obscenities at him. A group of ruffians (ajamir-i chand) set fire to the entrance of his house.

The mob [now] became more frenzied and recalcitrant. Shops in the cloth market, and those of the shroffs which were then replete with cash and commodities, were destroyed and many were set on fire including the house of Madan Gopal,219 Hindu mahallas with the best of the jauharis,220 the house of Kapurchand Bhansali, the leader of the Hindu community (sargiroh-i firqa-i hunud),221 who at this time was technically called the NagarSheth, in his presence. The long existing enmity ('adawat) between this group and Mulla Abdulla Aziz, the Sheth of the Bohras, either due to religious prejudice/bigotry (ta'assub-i din) or to jealousy, also arrived here and the conflict now took a violent turn. They started to pelt stones and clods of earth from their terraces.

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218 The expression used by Ali Muhammad Khan to describe the mob's reaction to the Qazi not opening the door of his house, once it was shut, is mayus gashand, MA, I, p.406.
219 He is identified as the source of the fitna, ibid, p.406.
220 MA, Eng. tr. pp.358-59: "the best locality of the jewelers".
221 The term firqa used here by Ali Muhammad Khan approximates to our sense of a large religious community. Throughout this account it is evenly applied to Hindus and Muslims, but also in reference to Bohras. However, the compound ahl-i Islam, which could be used in the singular, generally seems to be a more expansive category describing a large assemblage of Muslims that has evidently cut across ethnicity, class, and status gradations, Cf. MA, pp.405-07.
Kapurchand Bhansali was in the past a frequent visitor to the offices of the Nazim and the Diwan. He also had around him a few Gujarati soldiers who sat at the gates of streets of shroffs and merchants every day, looking for means of subsistence fraternized with the Hindus. Arrows and guns now superseded stones and clods of earth. Many people on either side of the divide were slain and wounded.

The rioting continued for two days. It subsided when the Nazim, Dawood Khan, who was out collecting peshkash from zamindars and making arrangements for containment of mischief mongers (mufsidan) in zila' Sabarmati at the time the riot broke out, dispatched a contingent to intervene with instructions to allow none to be refractory. The wise counsel of the elite of the city put an end to the fitna.

Ahmedabad: 1716 A.D.

The year saw a Hindu-Muslim conflict over the sacrifice of a cow. It began as a clash between some Bohras of the locality of Kalupur and a Hindu havaldar of that neighbourhood, but soon spread out to engulf what looks like the city of Ahmedabad as a whole.

Since the account is brief I shall present it in the form in which it is given in the near-accurate English translation of the Persian text, with marginal modifications to conform to the latter. Wherever necessary the original terms/phrases will be shown in square brackets or indicated in footnotes.

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222 The author's formulations are more telling of the situation he describes and of the premises of his own observation (as compared with the facts of his narration): "Unemployed soldiers imagined such events as means of earning subsistence. They sat at the gates of streets of shroffs, merchants every day for worldly trash without now thinking of help to religion. On the other hand, they prepared themselves for fight on behalf of the Hindus. They sold religion for the world." MA, Eng. tr., p. 359.

223 MA, Eng tr., p.371
“This year’s Id-uz Zuha approached. Muslims [ahl-i Islam] bought goats, sheep, cows, [and] buffaloes for sacrifice. The Bohras [firqa-i bawahir] mostly sacrifice cows and buffaloes. By chance (ittefaqan) a havaldar [of the street] of Kalupur, where these people reside, thought of an act of reward according to his belief (ba i’tiqad-i khwish amr-i sawabi). Secondly, he was emboldened as the Maharaja was the Subedar and Hakim to seize a cow by force and compulsion (jabran) from one of the Bohras. Members of the Bohra community (qaum-i bawahir) gathered together and went to Qazi Khairullah Khan to apprize him of the incident. He sent word to the officials (ba kar-pardazan) of the Maharaja but he failed to receive a reply, which may avert the consequences of this incident. Thereupon Muslims of the city and suburbs collected together and became a source of riot and revolt. The matter was about to turn to massacre and plunder. Some prudent (aqibat andesh) persons explained this matter to the Maharaja who sent word to the Qazi that Muslims were free to do anything according to the tenets and practices of their religion. No one will prevent them from so doing or molest them. The Qazi carried the cow to the musjid on the Id day and sacrificed it after performance of the namaz”.

Surat: August 1759

The last explicit community conflict recorded by the Mirat-i Ahmadi is for Surat in the year 1759, which it describes as a disturbance at Surat between Muslims and the Maratha mukasdar, subsequently identified with “Dakhani Pundits”.

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224 az dast-i yake az aanha jabran wa qahran rehanidah girift.
225 Jamhur-ahl-i Islam saknah-i baldah wa purajat majm’a namudah ma’dar-i shoorish wa fasad gashtand.
226 wa nazdeek bud ke gatl-o gharat
227 mowafiq-i-din wa aijin, khud-mukhtar and
228 The official honorific for the Qazi, Shariat Panah, is employed here.
229 MA, Eng. tr., p. 883. The term mokasa referred to the three-fourth fraction of the Maratha levies. Mokasadar signified the holder of land or land revenue; see Andre Wink, Land and Sovereignty in India, Cambridge, 1986, xvi.
In the month of Bhadon, Muharram (1173 A.H.), the *ahl-i Islam* are said to have raised "a disturbance" at Surat port against the Maratha mukasdar" on the occasion of the worship of Ganesh. The account notes that the Deccani Pundits (*punditan-i dakhani*), in keeping with the Hindu calendar (*ba nisab-i Hind*), mould mud images of their god Ganesh, which are worshipped for a few days. On an appointed day they take out a procession, seating it on an elephant or in a *palki* (a palanquin) with great pomp, magnificence and honour and immerse it in the river. From the beginning of the Dakhani (Maratha) rule, this practice was annually observed in Ahmedabad. However "at Surat port, the local pundit dared not publicly practice it" owing to the government of Safdar Muhammad Khan and Ali Nawaz Khan. In this year Syed Achhan, who had come to power with the support of Peshwa Balajirao, took it into his head to observe the custom in Surat as in Ahmedabad. The idol of the deity was to be placed in a house, "with decoration and embellishment and worshipped." The place that Syed Achhan thought suitable was a compound in front of his house. It so happened that there was a small *masjid* in the same compound. Having come in groups and parties, a large congregation of worshippers had assembled. In the port lived "Arabs, Persians, Rumi, Rohilas, Negroes, Muslim residents and travelers. They learnt about the worship of an idol in the House of Eternal God (*Bait us-Samad*); they were seized with Islamic zeal (*hamiyat-i Islam wa ghairat-i deendari*) and having made the Qazi their leader, in a body (*unwan-i hujum-i aam az khas o aam*) set out for his house for breaking the idol." The Dekhanis now confronted them and a war ensued. Many people from both sides were killed or wounded. Eventually the *ahl-i Islam* (Muslims) rushed in a body from the *masjid* seized the idol and smashed it. The house was vandalized.

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230 *Hangama aara-i ahl-i-Islam*, MA II
232 The description is far from clear as to the exact relative location of the *masjid* and the idol.
233 The account here says that the Muslims "took out the idol from the *masjid* and cast it on the dust of disgrace." Possibly Ali Muhammad Khan at this point of his narrative is expressing what may have seen the popular perception.
The Pundit mukasdar was distraught and wanted to go out and campaign for retribution. Syed Achhan apologized to him for his helplessness in a popular religious upsurge (*balwa-i aam wa muqaddima-i deen wa kasrat-i ahl-i Islam*) involving a very large number of Muslims. He conciliated the mukasdar with sympathy and warmth.

**Beyond Gujarat**

**Agra: 1720 A.D.**

In July 1720 a Hindu girl was converted to Islam after she had decided to marry her Muslim lover. The relatives of the girl lodged a complaint against the man the girl was to marry. A certain Lala Ratan Chand was instrumental in ordering "the kotwal" to parade the girl in a humiliating fashion through the streets of Agra. When the girl passed through a mosque, the Muslim congregation there decided to attack her guards and free her. However, they were unable to take any action and the threatened riot was averted.\(^{234}\)

**Srinagar (Kashmir): at the time of the Sayyid brothers**

Rizvi, basing himself on *Muntakhab-ul Lubab*, gives a rather detailed account of this very significant conflict. Because of its extensive ramifications I would like to be excused for quoting and paraphrasing Rizvi *in extenso*.

The occurrence of the incident is placed before the downfall of the Sayyid brothers. Rizvi describes it as "a fierce communal and sectarian riot", which had come to a head because of the hostility of a local Muslim

\(^{234}\) Much as one would like to know, there are no more details in Rizvi (p.198) whose account is based on *Muntakhab-ul Lubab* (II, p.884)
leader, Mahbub Khan (alias Abd un-Nabi), towards the Hindus. "Using the political crisis as a pretext (?), Mahbub Khan demanded that the deputy governor, Mir Ahmad Khan, and the Qazi ban Hindus from riding horses, wearing costly dress or turbans, from keeping arms, organizing picnics in gardens and from observing their ritualistic bathing festivals. These he demanded on the basis of certain rulings of the Shari'a. The deputy governor on the ground turned down the arguments that "he would follow rules which the court and the authorities controlling the Shari'a had introduced for Indian dhimmis (Hindus), and would not make any new laws for Kashmir".

Mahbub now set a foot a subversive movement. With a party of Muslims he began to harass Hindus, making it "impossible for them to move about the streets and markets". The crisis reached a flashpoint when a Kashmiri Pandit, Majlis Ray, decided to take a group of brahmins on a picnic. Suddenly, a group of ten to twelve thousand strong of Muslims, followers of Mahbub Khan, attacked the party. "Majlis Ray escaped and took shelter with the deputy governor, Mir Muhammad Khan". The aggressors ransacked the town. Majlis Ray’s house was attacked, as well as other Hindu houses, which were plundered and set on fire. "Anyone, either Hindu or Muslim, attempting to stop them was either killed or wounded". Eventually Mir Ahmad Khan, himself under siege, led an army against Mahbub Khan, supported by the Bakhshi, Mir Shahwar Khan and other officers. Mahbub Khan, however, got the upper hand. The deputy governor and his supporters were cornered in the bazaar, which the recalcitrant proceeded to burn. Women and children joined Mahbub Khan in stoning Mir Ahmad’s army. Many people were killed, including Mir Ahmad’s nephew and the deputy Kotwal, Zulfaqar Beg. Mir Ahmad Khan himself could escape with extreme difficulty. Many people were wounded. Following this the Hindu quarters were invaded again. Any building left standing was set on fire. Majlis Ray and his associates, who were hiding in
Mir Ahmad’s house, were dragged out into the street. Their noses and ears were split, they were circumcised, and some even had their genitals removed. The following day a large number of Muslims assembled in the Jama Masjid. Mir Ahmad Khan was replaced by Mahbub Khan as deputy governor and assumed the title of Dindar Khan. This, however, was supposedly an interim arrangement so that Mahbub Khan could introduce strict Shari’a a rule until the arrival of a new deputy governor. For five months Mahbub Khan held the government, holding court in the mosque. During this time, Mir Ahmad Khan remained underground.

When the Delhi court received information of the riot, it appointed Momin Khan Najm Thani as the deputy governor of Kashmir. Kazim Khan, the diwan of Kashmir, was transferred and a large number of prominent officials were dealt with firmly by the imperial government. At the end of Shawwal, Momin Khan reached Srinagar, remaining some six miles outside the city.

Mahbub Khan now began to repent his violence and approached Khwaja Abdullah, “a leading Kashmiri officer in the administration, to lead a procession of ulama and scholars to welcome the new deputy governor, and to bring him into Srinagar with full honours and ceremony, thus symbolizing reconciliation. Kashmiris being born intriguers, says Khafi Khan, Khwaja ‘Abdullah advised Mahbub Khan to go to Mir Shahwar Khan Bakhshi and apologize for the atrocities. The Khwaja then organized an ambush en route to the Mir’s house. In the melee, Mahbub Khan’s two sons were killed first, as they walked before him reciting verses in praise of the Prophet Muhammad. The death of Mahbub Khan then followed, provoking smouldering resentment amongst his supporters, who then retaliated by attacking the Shi’i residents of Charbili and Hasanabad where the ambush had occurred, looting and burning the houses there. The locals lost the fight and at least two or three thousand were killed. The excesses of
rape and murder committed by the mob were, according to Khafi Khan, indescribable. The houses of both the qadi and the bakhshi were set alight and razed to the ground, although both men escaped with their lives. After entering the town, Momin Khan sent Mir Ahmad Khan out of Srinagar and gradually restored peace in Kashmir”.

Delhi: 1725 A.D.

Three or four years previous to the incident a Hindu government clerk had been converted to Islam. His wife and daughter refused to do so. The clerk appealed to the chief Qazi stating that his conversion automatically made his daughter, who was a minor, a Muslim. The girl countered this by affirming before the Qazi that three months after her father's conversion she had entered puberty, implying that she was no longer a minor. The Muslims demanded she should embrace Islam, while the Hindus argued that as she was no longer a minor she was free to choose her own religion. The matter came to be referred by the Emperor, Muhammad Shah, to Mir Jumla, the Sadr us-Sudur (d.1733). The latter opined that menstruation was not necessarily a sign of puberty. A mufti violently disagreed with him. The Emperor's order that the girl be handed over to the custody of a Hindu cloth-seller increased Muslim agitation. The following Friday an excited Muslim mob prevented the recital of the khutba and forcibly circumcised two or three Hindus. The Emperor summoned the Chief Qadi and the muftis to discuss the matter and imprisoned the girl to pacify the mob. A few days later she was murdered and buried according to Islamic rites to satisfy Delhi Muslims. They were placated by the re-imposition of jizya on Hindus. However, the Emperor was unable to realize the jizya and transferred the qadi and the Muftis from the capital. This put an end to the disorders.
Delhi: 1729 A.D.

These riots started with a fight between Punjabi shoe-sellers of Delhi and Shubharan, a jeweller. The trouble started at the corner of Sadullah Khan’s Chawk, which was lined with shoe-sellers’ shops. The entry to the Jawhari Bazaar... was by way of the road occupied by the shoe sellers. “In the first half of the month of Sha‘aban both Hindus and Muslims enjoyed themselves discharging fire-works, squibs and rockets. On 8 Sha‘ban 1141/9 March 1729, a Hindu jeweller called Shubhkaran, who was also a mansabdar, passed through the bazaar on his palanquin. Someone let off a squib close to Shubhkaran’s palanquin, which slightly burnt his court dress. This sparked off a fight between his servants and the owners of the shoe shops inside the bazaar. Shubhkaran’s men, although armed, were driven off by the large number of Shoemakers who joined in the fray, wielding rasps. That night Shubhkaran sent his men to avenge the day’s defeat. In the melee a young Muslim boy was beaten to death and one Hajji Hafiz, who had rushed to the scene to restore the peace, was also killed when he attempted to save the boy. The following morning the shoemakers and other Muslims in Delhi decided that the Hajji’s body would not be buried until he had been avenged. The Muslim mob took the dead body on a cot and, crying Din, Din, laid it before Shubhkaran’s door. The latter had already left his house and sought refuge with Sher Afgan Khan Panipati, the Khan-i Saman, under whom Shubhkaran worked. Leaving the dead body there, the mob rushed to the imperial palace to seek justice, but before reaching there they spotted the Emperor on his return to the palace. The Emperor, upon hearing their story, ordered his wazir and Nawwab Roshan ud-Dawla Zafar Khan (Turra-baz Khan) to arrest Shubhkaran but Sher Afgan refused to comply with the order to give him up”.

On 12 March 1729 (Friday) the shoe-sellers marched in a procession to the Jama Musjid, where a large number of Muslims had
assembled, including the presence of Arabs, Abyssinians, and Turks from Istanbul. The rioters interrupted the prayers, proceeding to beat the Qazi and Khatib for having sided with the infidel criminal. The wazir and Roshan ud-Dawla rushed to the mosque with their retinue to pacify the mob, but the sight of Sher Afgan Khan, who happened to arrive about the same time from another direction, further incensed them. “Being largely unarmed, they hurled their iron-heeled shoes at them. A vicious fight ensued when the Afghan followers of Roshan al-Dawla leapt in to defend their master. Some of the mob were armed with pistols and began firing but were overpowered by the by the Afghans. Mughal troops rushed to rescue the wazir and a number of rioters were killed. Nevertheless, the mob carried the day and Sher Afgan Khan and the Wazir beat a hasty retreat. During the night the mob demolished Shubhkaran’s house and buried Haji Hafiz’s body. A mosque was erected on the grave and the heroic war of the shoemakers was immortalized in Persian and Urdu poetry”.

The overall patterns:

Taking these spatially widespread conflicts as a whole we can see several levels of empirical and normative concordance between them, indicative of the larger processes at work in Indian society. Specifically, the materials assembled here provide us leads into major themes: contestations over public space and religious symbols, the nature of social discourse, and the cultural framework of the medieval state and its constituent communities.

At the most explicit level, the events fructify around contestations over a wide spectrum of religious symbols, beliefs and rituals; festivals, sacred animals, conversions with claims and counter-claims buy Hindus and Muslims, demands for the implementation of a certain reading of the Shari'a, such as to reduce the dhimmis to an inferior status, forced
conversions. Secondly the narratives leave us with an impression of vigorous and, certainly at the point of eruption, violent attempts at religious self-definitions with reference to a hostile other.

The collisions involve large groups of people, several thousand when the accounts are quantitative, but otherwise too when they are descriptive; such as Ali Muhammad Khan’s references to people pouring out from baldah wa purjat (from the city and suburbs). Or, the ones which try to capture mobs in action, burning and looting shops and residential quarters. Together they are suggestive of a certain level of mobilisation.

The contesting groups draw upon a number of ethnicities. Thus Syeds, Afghans, bunkars, Rumis, Habshis, Arabs, ordinary Muslims, could, momentarily at least, shed their ‘primary’ identifications, and participate in a general contest over symbols. An enabling circumstance here was perhaps the availability of a more homogenizing discourse. In the Mirat-i Ahmadi, while there are expressions such as qaum and firqa to describe a particularistic group, such as the Bohras, for instance, there is frequent recourse to a more encompassing category, the ahl-i-Islam, to denote the larger community of Muslims.

Similarly, Hindus, Jains, jauharis, ordinary shopkeepers, unemployed soldiers, Brahmins could be the participants in what acted, in certain situations, as a social divide, Given this, along with the numbers involved, these conflicts were not confined to “neighbourhoods”.

The resurgent groups are found pitted against the imperial officers who, by and large, throw their weight in the interest of the besieged party. This is most clearly so: in Srinagar, where the deputy governor risked his

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235 The term is used for the weavers involved in the Surat riots, Report of the Committee investigating the riots, Bombay Archives, pp.2-3 (henceforth Committee Report).
236 Cf. the Deccani Pandits who are embroiled in the Surat riots of 1759-60.
life trying to curb a populist, near xenophobic movement. His nephew and the kotwal, however, were killed in the engagement, in Ahmedabad (1714), where the house of Qazi Khairullah Khan was burnt down by the mob for his failure to rise-up to his duties of protecting the Shari'at. On Khafi Khan’s authority, when the opposed parties represented their cases at Delhi, Ahmedabad’s governor, Daud Khan, issued a mahzar blaming the aggression on the Muslims, on the basis of which the Muslim deputation was imprisoned, despite the fact that their case was represented by three leading 'alims. A careful gleaning of the sources (including the specimens we have here) will definitely amplify this record. Presumably, representatives of public authority, by and large were still working within the Mughal ‘syncretic’ ethos of governance with its cultural blueprint in the “Akbar Paradigm.”

However, our evidence also indicates that the paradigm was under pressure. This pressure is featured in a telling fashion in the few conflict narratives we have been able to gather here. The agency of this pressure rests with crowds that have reposed confidence in a new set of populist leaders, whose idiom is religious: The aggrieved Muslims of Ahmedabad proceeded straight to the preacher (wa'iz) Muhammad Ali Khan, who was in the midst of a sermon. Afterwards they went to the Qazi, where they felt let down. Soon after the Surat riots of August 1795, the bunkars (weavers) who were involved in it, applied to the Nawab for permission to hold an assembly of three to four thousand weavers (“of their caste”) for which they had collected money and invited a preacher.

237 The document was signed by the qazi and other government officials. Kapurchand Bhansali went armed with it. The Muslim deputation was represented by three leading 'alims of Delhi. Their release could only be secured after the Bakhshi’s intervention. Cf. S.A.A. Rizvi, op. cit., p.199.
238 The expression is used by Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Josh in Struggle for Hegemony in India 1920-47: Culture, Community and Power, vol. III, pp. 52-53 (Delhi, 1994), where a significant attempt is made to wean away the study of pre-colonial India from the excesses of political economy and to look at religious contestations from the perspective of cultural hegemony.
239 Committee Report, MSA, pp. 2-3. The permission was turned down by the nawab.
It is perhaps indicative of the sway of these preachers that even in this limited survey we should have found three instances where the cry of “Din Din” becomes the rallying point of a very large and varied body of people: Ahmedabad, 1714, Delhi, 1729: Surat, 1795.

The Srinagar episode provides the most striking example of the power wielded by these new leaders. Mahbub Khan’s following was large enough to overwhelm the deputy governor in a military engagement, forcing him to go underground for a few months. Soon thereafter, at a large gathering at the Jama Musjid, he replaced the imperial deputy governor on a mandate from the people.

All these are clues to the elaboration of a public realm, that seems invested with new meanings and political possibilities, independent of the formal state apparatus, and, frequently, in opposition to it. Conceptually, as a sphere of collective rituals and symbols, it seems familiar to Sandria Freitag’s description of public arenas, with the difference that it considerably predates her model.

This realm seems informed by a social discourse that can only be glimpsed in fragments. One such fragment comes from the narrative of the fierce movement led by Mahbub Khand in Srinagar, a major demand of which was that the Qazi and deputy governor should ban “Hindus from riding horses, wearing costly dress or turbans, from keeping arms, organizing picnics in gardens, and observing their ritualistic bathing festivals”. These he demanded on the basis of certain rulings of the Shari’a. The demand of course was turned down, equally on grounds of the Shari’a. But, the reason why we refer to this passage at all is that we have come

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across three other references to the same formulation, the first three terms of which are almost identical, in sources widely separated in space and time. The fragments, I therefore presume, are part of a discourse with a long history.

The Zakhirat-ul Muluk, written in Srinagar towards the close of the fourteenth century, sets twenty disabilities upon the dhimmis of which three are: “They are not to ride on horses with saddle and bridle... they are not to possess swords and arrows... [and] they are not to abandon the clothing which they have had as a sign of their state of ignorance so that they may be distinguished from Muslims”.242

The Mirat-i-Ahmadi in its account (drawn from the Mirat-i-Sikandari, a chronicle of the early seventeenth century) of the conquest of the banth lands in Gujarat during the time of Sultan Mahmud II, specially mentions that the Girasias of Idar, Sirohi, Dungerpur, Banswara, Lunawara, Rajpipla, etc were a source of disturbance and therefore thanedars were appointed and the Rajputs and Kolis were vanquished; “Practice of Islam... gained such ascendancy during the reign of the Sultan... that no Hindu in the city rode a horse and he never were a garment without a patch of red piece”.

The Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi of Barni, written about the middle of the fourteenth century, contains the last and the earliest of these fragments. It features in Barni’s description of Alauddin Khalji’s tough measures to wrest control of the Doab countryside by crushing the powers of the rural aristocracy represented by the ‘trinity’ khuts, muqaddams and

chowdhuries.\textsuperscript{243} It also figures in the sultan’s dialogue with Qazi Mughisuddin who is ordered to answer if the various measures of the sultan are in accord with the rulings of the Shariat.

In Barani’s narrative, this class occupies a double, ambivalent space. One, as a socio-political category, whose markers are essentially secular, they oppose, rebel, ride on horses, carry arms, wear fine clothes, and chew betel leaf.\textsuperscript{31} They must be reduced if the Sultanate is to become a reality. Simultaneously, the class is conjured in religio-cultural terms, the ‘Hindus’ a mono-ascriptive category that, as the Qazi urged upon the Sultan, must be dealt with in accordance with the rulings of the Shariat. Barni’s narrative continually slides between these two categories and it is difficult to decide which of the two is privileged. Perhaps both.

To conclude abruptly, the important point is, that like his rejection of every prescription of the Shariat the Qazi cited (trembling for his life) as required of the ruler, Alauddin also rejected the premises of the Shariat in dealing with the khuts and muqaddams. They would be reduced any way; but, for reasons of state, he tells the Qazi in a scoffing way. It is my hunch, that the disjunction (along with varying degrees of overlap) between the orb of the state and that of a scriptural community are to be traced in these fragments.

Hamdani, the author of \textit{Zakhirat-ul Mulk}, who stayed in Kashmir for four years, too, “did not find enthusiastic support for his missionary zeal,” from Sultan Qutbuddin (1373-1389)\textsuperscript{9} and left the kingdom in disgust.” Some three hundred years later, some one could pick up elements of his discourse and fill it with content. Perhaps, fantasy-space...time was waiting for it.

\textsuperscript{243} Cf. Irfan Habib, Essays in Indian History: Towards a Marxist Perception, Delhi, 1995, 1995, pp.88-90.