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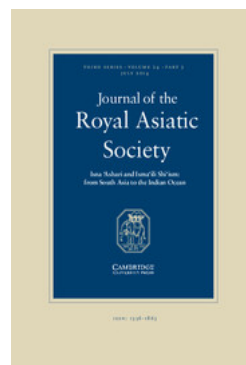
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# *Local Nodes of a Transnational Network: a case study of a Shi'i family in Awadh, 1900–1950*

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MUHAMMAD AMIR AHMAD KHAN

## **Abstract**

*This article studies two generations of the Mahmudabad family, which was one of the largest Muslim landholding families in India: Maharaja Sir Muhammad 'Ali Muhammad Khan and Raja Muhammad Amir Ahmad Khan. The family were Twelver Shi'as and hailed from Mahmudabad in Awadh. Specifically, it shows how intra-community links of marriage and kinship facilitated a flow of ideas, information and people and therefore created new networks. The article then explores these connections through the example of the Madrasa't-ul Wa'izeen, which was founded by the Maharaja and its two main publications, Al-Wa'iz, an Urdu magazine and the English language The Muslim Review. The founding of the madrasa also demonstrates the importance of ideology, pilgrimage, preaching and their corresponding networks. These relationships are analysed keeping in mind local, national and transnational institutions and the role these played in creating ties between Mahmudabad, Lucknow and the wider Muslim world. This article thus presents a typology of a particular kind of Muslim transnationalism, showing how family, marriage, ideology and the importance of preaching mutually reinforced each other. The larger goal is to show how this family could be both 'rooted' in the local while also being part of the transnational Muslim community.*

The Islamic world, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was forced to address new social and political exigencies as a result of imperialism and the increasing push of globalisation. India in many ways represented a microcosm of all these struggles. Although these new interactions propelled debates of reconfiguring and renegotiating ideas of identity, particularly amongst Muslims, they did not entirely subsume older networks as shall be demonstrated in this article. Instead, these new local and transnational networks built upon and expanded traditional links between centres of Muslim authority and peripheral areas, primarily through utilising existing hereditary structures and established lines of authority.

A considerable corpus of scholarship exists on Muslim thought, Islamic modernism and Muslim reformers in India. However, most of this has dealt with areas, issues and people from Sunni schools of thought. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Maulana Mawdudi of the Jama'at-i Islami, Allamah Iqbal, Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi, the Deoband movement, the Nadwa't-ul 'Ulama, the Ahl-i Hadith and Ahl-i Qur'an movements and many other prominent organisations and people have been written about extensively. However, comparatively little work has been done on the sizeable Shi'i community and particularly their *ashraf* (elite) and the role they played in finding a balance between Islam and nationalism and defining their own identities

when faced with the social, economic and most importantly political exigencies of the time. Apart from Athar 'Abbas Rizvi's rich yet broad historical work, Juan Cole's detailed study of the origins of north Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and Justin Jones's timely work on the Shi'a in colonial India, there has been very little focus on the prominent Shi'i families of India.<sup>1</sup> Indeed no work has been done on the Mahmudabad family.

Thus, this article analyses two recent generations of this particular leading Shi'i family: Maharaja Muhammad 'Ali Muhammad Khan (1878–1931 CE), henceforth referred to as the Maharaja, and Raja Muhammad Amir Ahmad Khan (1914–1973), henceforth referred to as the Raja. The Maharaja played a pivotal role in starting and supporting the Home Rule Movement. A close friend of Sir Harcourt Butler, he took an active part in the creation of Benares Hindu University, Lucknow University, King George's Medical College and Aligarh Muslim University as well as other institutions, and was a prominent leader of the All India Muslim League. Like his father, Amir-ud-daula Muhammad Amir Hasan Khan (c.1848–1903), he too wrote poetry. Perhaps the most important and enduring religious legacy of the Maharaja was the creation of the *Madrasa't-ul Wa'izeen*, in memory of his younger brother Muhammad 'Ali Ahmad Khan who passed away at a young age. The *madrasa* was founded as a religious postgraduate college with the aim of spreading correct information about Shi'ism, addressing misconceptions and partaking in *tabligh* (missionary work).

The Raja was a key member of the Muslim League and a close confidant of Muhammad 'Ali Jinnah. Like his ancestors, and perhaps even more so, the Raja was gifted in the arts. Indeed, Rabindranath Tagore wanted him to attend Shantiniketan but Jinnah prevailed over the young Raja, declaring "I shall be your university". Like his forebears "the Raja of Mahmudabad put his faith first throughout his life; he was a member of the Islamic *Jama'at*, and as a believer in Pakistan as an Islamic state he disagreed with Jinnah in the 1940s".<sup>2</sup>

This article will trace the three networks in which this particular family engaged: the local, the national and the transnational. The first section will discuss the links of the *ashraf* to the shrine cities in Iran and Iraq. It will also draw out marriage and kinship patterns and explore how these often reinforced links both to religious institutions and to the wider Muslim community. The second section will explore the links between the *'ulama* and religious institutions, using the example of the *madrasa*. The third section will seek to chart their transnational links and the context in which these networks were created and sustained, drawing on the publications of the *madrasa*. It is important to state that these three spheres or networks were not mutually exclusive, and indeed instances of overlap and areas in which they reinforced each other will be highlighted in the conclusion.

### ***The ashraf, the 'atabat and 'ulama***

This first section will highlight the way in which ties were forged between members of the Mahmudabad family and the *'ulama* of the *'atabat-i 'aliyat* (the holy shrine cities of Iraq),

<sup>1</sup>Saiyed Athar 'Abbas Rizvi, *A socio-intellectual history of the Isna 'Ashari Shi'is in India* (Delhi, 1986); J. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh 1722–1859* (Berkeley, 1988); J. Jones, *Shi'a Islam in colonial India: religion, community and sectarianism* (Cambridge, 2012).

<sup>2</sup>F. Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia* (Oxford, 2000), p. 200.

particularly given the fact that the family had been Sunnis until the late eighteenth century. The discussion will be placed in the context of the wider trend of the influence of the *ashraf* of north India on these shrine cities.<sup>3</sup> Later sections will clarify how the ties were maintained and indeed strengthened.

The late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were an age of great intellectual ferment for the *'ulama* of the Shi'i world. The shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala in Iraq and Qom in Iran established themselves as the flag bearers of Shi'i theology and jurisprudence. Questions relating to temporal authority and an individual's relationship to the state had been at the centre of Shi'i discourse over the centuries. A new era of religious discussion and debate began roughly after the death of Muhammad Baqir Isphani Bihbihani (d. 1791 CE) with "the emergence of a new generation of religious leaders in Shi'ism".<sup>4</sup> Bihbihani arguably pioneered the triumph of Usulism over Akhbarism. The rapid progress in technology also meant safer and quicker travel, which in turn led greater interaction between the *'ulama* and *shurafa* (notable classes) of the greater Shi'i world and the shrine cities. As an illustration, when in 1801 Wahhabis ransacked the shrine of Karbala, the restoration work was funded by Sa'adat 'Ali Khan of Awadh.

The shrine cities "remained open to talented newcomers throughout the last two centuries".<sup>5</sup> One of Bihbihani's students was a young *'alim* (scholar), Dildar 'Ali Nasirabadi, who came to Iraq from Awadh as an *Akhbari*, and, under the tutelage of his mentor, became *Usuli*. Perhaps the largest single regular payment was in the form of the Oudh [Awadh] Bequest. A staggering sum of nearly six million rupees was sent to *mujtahids* (jurists) in Najaf and Karbala between 1852 and 1903 in an effort by the British government to control *mujtahids* indirectly. The British government's hand in distributing the money ensured that the Ottoman government perceived the Shi'a as British allies in Iraq, and also served as a counterbalance to increasing Russian influence in Iran through the form of Russian loans.

Ultimately British efforts to control the *mujtahids* ended in failure because "charity, however generous, [could not] compensate for the need of religious leaders to maintain popular support by distancing from foreign patronage and tutelage".<sup>6</sup> One such struggle for power was in Karbala over the distribution of the funds from the Oudh Bequest. Mirza Hasan Shirazi, later involved in the Constitutional Revolution in Iran and in the tobacco concessions, vied for power with Shaykh Zain al-'Abideen al-Mazenderani in Karbala. Major Jennings, in his capacity as the British Envoy, sought to persuade the latter to accept Shirazi as the distributor and was angrily rebutted by Mazendarani who said "I am the Mujtahid here".<sup>7</sup> It would seem that the transnational Shi'i community and especially the political and social elite of Awadh, by deciding which *mujtahids* would be the recipients of funds, to some extent affected and controlled the debate between the Akhbari and Usuli *'ulama*. Bahu Begum, the wife of Sa'adat 'Ali Khan, for instance, willed a large part of her estate to specific members of the *'ulama* in the shrine cities. In 1888 when Amir-ud-daula went

<sup>3</sup>For further information about this period, see Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism*.

<sup>4</sup>M. Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq: The 'ulama of Najaf and Karbala'* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 18.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup>M. Litvak, "A Failed Manipulation: The British, the Oudh Bequest and the Shi'i 'ulama of Najaf and Karbala", *The British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 27, 1 (2000), p. 69.

<sup>7</sup>Litvak, *Shi'i Scholars of Nineteenth-Century Iraq*, p. 18.

to Iraq for a year-long pilgrimage and spent time in both shrine cities, he paid off the debt of Mazendarani and in return was given a *shamshir*<sup>8</sup> (sword) and a *sanad* (deed) stating that he had served the *umma* (community) and was a “leader amongst leaders” and a “servant of the shrine and the community”.<sup>9</sup> We see then that deep ties had already been established between members of the Mahmudabad family and ‘*ulama* in the nineteenth century and the next section will establish the ways in which close relationships were cultivated with the ‘*ulama* within India.

The Mahmudabad family could claim a high position within Sunni circles because they traced their ancestry back to the first Caliph Abu Bakr through his son Muhammad.<sup>10</sup> The family, indeed, followed the Sunni school of thought until the time of Nawab Muhammad Imam Khan (d. 1765). His younger son Mazhar ‘Ali Khan was from Bilehra, which was a collateral branch of the Mahmudabad family. Mazhar ‘Ali Khan’s mother was a Shi‘a. His father Muhammad Imam Khan was related to the Shaikhzadas of Lucknow through a marriage to the family of Shaikh Muhammad Mu‘iz al-Din Khan.<sup>11</sup> At the invitation of the latter, Muhammad Imam Khan went and fought the Bangash Pathans in 1750. Nawab Mazhar ‘Ali Khan’s son, Nawab Amir ‘Ali Khan had two sons: Raja Ibad ‘Ali Khan of Bilehra and Raja Nawab ‘Ali Khan (d. 1858). Nawab Mian Musahib ‘Ali Khan of Mahmudabad (d. 1819) did not have children and so adopted Nawab ‘Ali Khan, who was later known as Muqem-ud-daula. Nawab ‘Ali Khan’s son Amir-ud-daula was married to the sister of Bade Chowdhary Sahib whose father was the *darogah* (manager) of the kitchens of Nawab Wajid ‘Ali Shah. Until this generation the family married into other families with similar backgrounds and family histories. Their Sunni ancestors ensured that they had vast kinship networks and were related to families such as the Kidwais, Farooqis and Siddiqis.<sup>12</sup> However, the most important bloodline and also the most valued was that of the Prophet: after all, “family was an important source of identity, zealously maintained in family histories, most especially if claiming descent from the Prophet”.<sup>13</sup> This status was even more cherished if the family happened to be members of the ‘*ulama*.

Marriage therefore was an important part of asserting one’s identity and also declaring a kinship affiliation to other social groups, which in turn also resulted in stronger social and political ties. Marrying into a *sayyid* family was symbolically important because one could

<sup>8</sup>The *shamshir*, a curved sword similar to a scimitar, was originally given to the treasury of the shrine of Imam ‘Ali in Najaf by Fateh ‘Ali Shah Qajar and according to its cartouches, or *toranj* in Farsi, was crafted by a man called ‘Imad Isphahani on the orders of Shah ‘Abbas-i Safavi I (1571–1629 CE) who referred to himself as the *Banda-i Shah-i Wilayat*, the servant of Imam ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib. Perhaps the sword was ordered when the Shah moved his capital from Qazvin to Isphahan in 1598. It is still worn by the Raja of Mahmudabad during various ceremonies in Muharram or on days when the martyrdom of one of the Imams is commemorated. The sword is symbolic of a direct link between the wearer and the shrine of the Imam but is also a sign of the authority it bestows on the owner because of its belonging to the treasury of the Imam.

<sup>9</sup>Original *sanad* document of the *Waqf-i Madrasa-i Ahmadiya* in the archives of the office of the Madrasa’t-ul Wa‘izeen.

<sup>10</sup>Shaikh ‘Ali Hasan, *Tarikh-i Mahmudabad* (MS, Raja Mahmudabad Library, n.d.) Vol. 1, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup>The Shaikhzadas of Lucknow including Shaikh Muhammad Mu‘iz al-Din Khan are mentioned in A.H. Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, translated by E.S. Harcourt and Fakhir Husain (London, 1975), pp. 43–44.

<sup>12</sup>The Kidwais, Farooqis and Siddiqis were Sunni families in India who traced their ancestry back to clans in the Arabian Peninsula.

<sup>13</sup>F. Robinson, “The British Empire and Muslim Identity in South Asia”, *Transaction of the Royal History Society*, 8 (1998), p. 271.

claim to have blood from the Prophet's family, although of course descent from the Prophet could not be claimed as this is patrilineal. One of the points that Ghazi ud-Din Haider made against the Mughal Emperors in trying to prove that he was their equal, if not better, was to underscore and emphasise his descent from the seventh Imam Musa al-Kazim. Later he insisted on being given a daughter in marriage from the Mughal prince Sulaiman Shukuh who was resident in Lucknow. Marriage, therefore, is often recognition of identity and "the alliance created by marriage can vary considerably. Not all marriages unite equals. Indeed, marriages are often the acknowledgments of the superior status of one of the parties, usually the family of the groom".<sup>14</sup> In very rare cases however, this was not the case.

Amir-ud-daula's son, the Maharaja, married a *sayyid* woman, Zakia Begum from Kintur in Barabanki, a district in Awadh. She was from a family of traditional *'ulama* and descendent of Mufti Sayyid Muhammad Quli Khan whose knowledge of Arabic and the Islamic sciences was respected among Shi'i religious circles in Lucknow.<sup>15</sup> The family were Moussavi *sayyids* and came originally from Nishapur, a town near the shrine city of Mashhad in Northeast Iran. Muhammad Quli Khan's son Sayyid Hamid Husain (1830–1888) was the author of *'Abaqat al-Anwar fi Imamat Aimat al-Athar*, a comprehensive history of the Shi'i faith as well as a voluminous study of Shi'i Traditions and theology.<sup>16</sup> The book was subsequently completed by his son Sayyid Nasir Husain and, to this day, is regarded as the pride of Shi'i theological work from India. Another family who had immigrated from Nishapur to Kintur was that of Sayyid Ahmad Moussavi Hindi, who was a contemporary and cousin of Hamid Husain. Sayyid Ahmad subsequently emigrated to Iraq in the 1830s and then back to Iran. He was the paternal grandfather of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.<sup>17</sup>

Hamid Husain was the paternal uncle of Karamat Husain and later also his guardian. Karamat Husain's father Siraj Husain was classically educated not only in the Islamic sciences but also in mathematics and English. Today Karamat Husain is remembered for his important work in developing women's education. The Maharaja met Karamat Husain in Allahabad after the latter had retired and "admitted that he [the Maharaja] had been wrong in the 1890s when he opposed founding a school for girls. Now, while he felt that Crosthwaite School was a very worthy cause, he nevertheless wanted to found a school in Lucknow that would be exclusively for Muslim girls".<sup>18</sup> Subsequently the Maharaja announced an endowment of 600 rupees per month and also donated the land on which the school was built and still stands. It is evident then that marriage also served as a method of not only increasing someone's prestige through bloodlines but also of widening their circle of influence. In marrying Zakia Begum, the Maharaja not only ensured that his descendants would carry the blood of the *sayyids* but also gain access to the world of scholars, jurists and bureaucrats. The marriage also meant kinship ties to extended family networks in Iran.

<sup>14</sup>M.H. Fisher, "Political Marriage Alliances at the Shi'i Court of Awadh", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 25, 4 (October 1983), p. 615.

<sup>15</sup>G. Minault, "Sayyid Karamat Husain and Education for Women", in *Lucknow: Memories of a City* (ed.) Violette Graff (Delhi, 1997), p. 155.

<sup>16</sup>A copy of this multi-volume book can be found in the archives of the Raja of Mahmudabad. The book was written in Farsi and is still untranslated and unstudied. The books have been published in Iran and Sayyid 'Ali Milani has written *Khulāsa-i 'Abaqāt al-Anwār*, as the Arabic translation of the original.

<sup>17</sup>B. Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah* (London, 1999), p. 2.

<sup>18</sup>Minault, "Sayyid Karamat Husain and Education for Women", p. 160.

A magazine published to commemorate the death of Raja Amir Ahmad Khan in 1973 illustrates the important nature of this marriage. One of the leading articles includes an entire section called the '*maadari silsila*' or the maternal line that deals exclusively with the Raja's mother's family. The first sentence mentions the family's descent from the seventh Imam and then lists the accomplishments of her ancestors while mostly focusing on their scholarly works and books. The article goes on to say that "the respected lady [mother of the Raja] was the sister [*humsheera*] of the author of *al-'Abaqat*, scholar [*Allamah*] of his age, Seyed Hamid Husain *Sahib*".<sup>19</sup>

The Maharaja married both his two sons to two sisters from the collateral branch of the family in Bilehra. The two sisters, daughters of Raja Abul Hasan Khan, were orphaned at a young age and their brother died while he was still a child. Subsequently, the Raja married his two daughters into two prominent North Indian Shi'i families. The eldest daughter, Maharajkumari Bibi Baqir-un-nissa, was married to Sayyid Reza Imam of the Imam family<sup>20</sup> from Patna and the younger daughter, Maharajkumari Bibi Sadiq-un-nissa, was married to Kunwar Sayyid Hasan Mehdi, son of Raja Sayyid Abu Ja'far of Pirpur.

Apart from marriage ties, members of the Mahmudabad family also had close connections with '*ulama* who were employed as their tutors and guardians. The Maharaja was taught the Qur'an from an early age by a gentleman who used to come to the entrance of the *zanana* (women's part of the house) because he was not allowed to leave its security. The Raja was educated both by Maulvi Sibte Hasan and his younger brother, Zafar Mehdi. The son of the former, Waris Hasan, would go on to be educated in Najaf and Karbala and then return to Lucknow to become the principal of the Madrasa't-ul Wa'izeen. Thus, we see that the *shurafa* not only maintained links with the '*ulama* through marriage but also through common involvement in and indeed ties to religious institutions, as shall be explored in the next section.

### The '*ulama* and public institutions

Even before the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Lucknow had long been a centre for religious studies. Both Shi'i and Sunni *madrasas* and religious seminaries had established themselves with government patronage as well as patronage from the *shurafa* and *ru'osa* (wealthy classes). Shi'i scholars such as Maulvi Dildar 'Ali Nasirabadi, whose family later came to be known as the Khandan-i Ijtihad, or the 'family of *ijtihad*', studied not only under various Shi'i '*ulama* but also went to lessons given by prominent Sunni '*ulama*, most notably belonging to the Firangi Mahal family. Although initially the Mahmudabad family supported the Aligarh movement, with Amir-ud-daula bequeathing an annual grant of 600 rupees through a *sanad* dated 24 July 1879,<sup>21</sup> this later gave way to disillusionment, and by 1908 there was a concerted movement by members of the Shi'i '*ulama* in Lucknow against

<sup>19</sup>Sa'adat Husain Khan, 'Amir ul-Umara' Raja Muhammad Amir Ahmad Khan Sahib Marhom', *Al-Wa'iz*, 51, 12 (December 1973), p. 5.

<sup>20</sup>Ali Imam (1869–1932) was an eminent jurist and served as head of the Muslim League. His younger brother Hasan Imam (1871–1933) was also an accomplished lawyer and at one time served as President of the Indian National Congress.

<sup>21</sup>Selected Documents from the Aligarh Archives.

Aligarh. A number of people debated amongst themselves the efficacy and indeed moral conundrum of propagating western education amongst Muslims. The Imamiya Conference, the All India Muhammadan Educational Conference and the Anjuman-i Sadr-ul Sudoor, which later became the All-India Shi'a Conference, all sought to try and impose a Shi'i framework on educational models and often these were dominated by the *'ulama*.<sup>22</sup> Not all *'ulama*, however, were opposed to introducing certain aspects of western education, prominent among these being Maulana Nasir Husain, a relative of Mahmudabad through marriage, a leading *mujtahid* of Lucknow and a cousin of Sayyid Karamat Husain.

On 19 May 1919, the Maharaja founded Madrasa't-ul Wa'izeen through a registered *waqf* deed, as part of the *Waqf-i Madrasa-i Ahmadiya* of Mahmudabad.<sup>23</sup> The *madrasa* was established as an institution to provide Shi'i students with access to postgraduate study. The other important goal was to encourage *tabligh* (preaching), spreading awareness and correcting misrepresentations of the Shi'i *mazhab*, and to this end the *madrasa* sent many of its graduates to Africa, the Middle East and other parts of India. The Shi'a Conference celebrated the creation of the Madrasa't-ul Wa'izeen and passed a resolution to this effect.<sup>24</sup> The news of its establishment had an impact not only in Awadh and the north of India but also in the other great centre of Shi'ism, Hyderabad (Deccan). Maulvi Sayyid Ghulam Jabbar, a High Court judge there, publicly commended the Maharaja for "starting this work [founding the Madrasa] which is of paramount importance for the Shi'i *mazhab*".<sup>25</sup>

The Madrasa't-ul Wa'izeen was established at a time when Shi'i institutions were increasing in number.<sup>26</sup> This trend continued into the 1920s and 1930s with the creation of the Imamiya Mission, founded by Maulana Sayyid 'Ali Naqi, and the Tanzim-ul Momineen, patronised by perfumers Muhammad 'Ali and Asghar 'Ali, and newspapers such as *Sarfaraz*, *Asad* and *Akhbar-i Imamiya* gained circulation. Although Minault and Lelyveld contend that the Maharaja was not involved in, and indeed distanced himself from the Shi'a College,<sup>27</sup> it seems that they overlooked the fact that two of the main founders of the Shi'a College were the Raja's close relatives. The Raja of Pirpur and Maulana Nasir Husain Kinturi thus did have the covert material and moral support of the Maharaja in their project.<sup>28</sup> The other prominent founder, Nawab Fateh 'Ali Khan Qizilbash, was also a Shi'i *ta'luqdar* from Nawabganj and therefore formed part of the small clique of Shi'i *ta'luqdars* in Awadh. The Maharaja's open support for such an institution would have damaged his national standing, particularly amongst League members. In this way, the Maharaja avoided the fate of Badr-ud-din Tyabji, a founder of the Anjuman-i-Islam in Bombay, who was lambasted by the Muslim community for being pro-Congress, a 'failing' that in turn was ascribed to the fact that Tyabji was a Sulaimani Bohra. In a *The Times of India* editorial, Khan Bahadur Haider Qassam took it upon himself "to expose their [Badr-ud-din and his brother

<sup>22</sup>Jones, *Shi'a Islam in colonial India*, pp.153–165.

<sup>23</sup>Registered *Waqf* Deed in Archives of the Office of the Board of Trustees, Madrasa't-ul Wa'izeen.

<sup>24</sup>Original statement by the Secretary of the All India Shi'a Conference, Sayyid Amir Hasan Forogh Lucknawi, *Shia College News* (Lucknow), 23 January 1920, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup>*Shi'a College News* (Lucknow), 9 January 1920, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup>Jones, *Shi'a Islam in colonial India*, pp.115–125.

<sup>27</sup>G. Minault and D. Lelyveld, "The Campaign for a Muslim University, 1898–1920", *Modern Asian Studies*, 8, 3 (1984), p. 184.

<sup>28</sup>Raja Muhammad Amir Muhammad Khan of Mahmudabad, interview, 20 December 2009.



Qamar-ud-din] pretentious arrogance” in trying to become leaders of the Muslim community when the numbers of Sulaimani Bohras in India were “infinitesimally small”.<sup>29</sup> Tyabji’s staunchly pro-Congress position was opposed not only by leading Sunnis like Sir Sayyid but also by Twelver Shi’as, most importantly Ameer ‘Ali.<sup>30</sup>

The structure of the Madrasa’t-ul Wa’izeen was innovative in that it did not solely give administrative power to the ‘*ulama*. The Board of Trustees stipulated a permanent executive place for the descendent of the Maharaja of Mahmudabad (the current Raja), two members chosen by the Raja including a lawyer and two members of the ‘*ulama*. The balancing of the power of the ‘*ulama* was reflected in the people who delivered keynote speeches on the Madrasa’s inaugural day:<sup>31</sup> Maulana Najm ul-Hasan ‘Mujtahid’, Maulana Nasir Husain Kinturi ‘Mujtahid’, Maulana Sibte ul-Hasan ‘Mujtahid’, Raja Maulvi Abu Ja’far Khan, the Raja of Pirpur, Khan Bahadur Sayyid Tawakkul Husain, the *ta’luqdar* of Lorepur, Sayyid Wazir Hasan and Sayyid Asghar Husain, a judge in the High Court, all shared the stand. Many of these men had ties of kinship, most notably Nasir Husain and the Maharaja. Maulana Najm ul-Hasan was a student and son-in-law of Mufti Muhammad ‘Abbas Shustari al-Jaza’iri who was also the teacher of Maulana Hamid Husain Kinturi, who was mentioned earlier and was the grandfather of Nasir Husain. The Rajas of Pirpur and Lorepur were relatives of Mahmudabad. Although members of the ‘*ulama*, *shurafa* and *ru’osa* were distinguishable amongst this group of people, they were all part of a tight-knit group whose members were either related to each other through marriage or had deep links because of a shared intellectual tradition.

### ***Al-Wa’iz and The Muslim Review: local nodes of a global network***

Following the creation of the Madrasa’t-ul Wa’izeen, the Maharaja founded *Al-Wa’iz*, an Urdu periodical, in 1921 that dealt mostly with theological, jurisprudential and historical questions pertaining to Shi’ism. Its English-language monthly counterpart, *The Muslim Review*, was founded in 1927 and was also published by the *madrasa*. Despite being published under the auspices of an institution of learning, it is interesting that *The Muslim Review* was also used to propagate political ideas. In analysing a selection of editions published between 1927 and 1950, it seems that there were three areas with which the editors were constantly engaged: Shi’ism, both historical and contemporary; the global Muslim community; and national Indian politics.<sup>32</sup> The following section illustrates the ways in which the Madrasa was utilised in order to engage with three distinct issues: transnational Shi’ism, local Indian politics and the wider Muslim world. Furthermore, the magazines can be seen as mechanisms

<sup>29</sup>M. Karlitzky, “The Tyabji Clan- Urdu as a Symbol of Group Identity”, *La Sapienza* (University of Rome, n.d.), p. 191, <http://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/8484987/kgqoyr> (accessed 21 April 2013).

<sup>30</sup>M.Y. Abbasi, *Muslim Politics and Leadership in South Asia 1876–92* (Islamabad, 1981), p. 31.

<sup>31</sup>Records found in the archives of the Madrasa’t-ul Wa’izeen in the Office of the Board of Trustees.

<sup>32</sup>Although five people constitute the Board of Trustees, the registered *waqf* deed stipulates that the chairman and the managing trustee must be the person who occupies the Mahmudabad *masnad*, or ‘seat’. The Maharaja made decisions pertaining to the day-to-day running of the *madrasa* directly or through an authorised deputy and therefore it is assumed that the views expressed in articles in *The Muslim Review* were also espoused by the Maharaja. See the *waqf* deed present in the office of the secretary to the Board of Trustees in Madrasa’t-ul Wa’izeen.

that built upon older networks and, indeed, because of their very nature served to expand these networks too.

### i. Print and Preaching

By the beginning of the twentieth century, printing and publishing had sparked the creation of a number of periodicals and newspapers, which in turn created a medium through which “scholars, whether old or new . . . interacted with each other across the Islamic world”.<sup>33</sup> The *Madrasa't-ul Wa'izeen* also set up a press in 1923 which subsequently published books written by the 'ulama and also by other Shi'i intellectuals. The *Al-Wa'iz* Safdar Press provided a forum through which a multifaceted discussion could take place. This section illustrates how the *madrasa* participated and reported on its interaction with the transnational Shi'i world. The Urdu language magazine *Al-Wa'iz* was founded in 1921 and from its inception was edited by members of the 'ulama. Unlike its English counterpart *The Muslim Review*, which was founded in 1927, *Al-Wa'iz* focused mostly on theological, jurisprudential questions or those matters that pertained to the Shi'i community. In 1922 the first *muballigheen* (preachers) were dispatched to various parts of India and abroad in order to spread the faith and counter the misinformation that they believed was being spread about Shi'ism. The magazine served as a way of reporting on the activities of the young men who were sent abroad. *Tabligh* was conceived as a religious obligation, and so a journey to carry out preaching was in a way a symbolic pilgrimage.<sup>34</sup>

Maulana Anwar Husain, a young cleric, lived and travelled around Africa,<sup>35</sup> Maulvi Kifayat Husain went to Rangoon “on the request of believers there”,<sup>36</sup> and then later on to Basra in Iraq, while Maulvi Sayyid 'Ali preached in Madagascar, Mogadishu, Mombasa and Aden.<sup>37</sup> Closer to home, Maulana Javed Husain was sent to Multan and Sayyid Mumtaz Husain went to Kathiawar.<sup>38</sup> The network of preachers gradually expanded so much so that in 1931 Maulana H. Din, founder of the *Jam'iyat-ul-Ittihad wa Taraqqi-ul-Islam* in Sierra Leone, wrote a long letter to Maulana Haidari, who was referred to as a “missionary” in the *madrasa*. H. Din complained about the advent of the Qadianis [or Ahmadiya<sup>39</sup> movement] in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The sect was seen as deviant by both Sunni and Shi'i 'ulama and therefore such an appeal would have been taken all the more seriously. H. Din accordingly prayed that “your noble institution would come to our aid in our feeble efforts in the cause of Islam by establishing your Branch Mission in Sierra Leone, and thus save the situation”.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>33</sup>F. Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860–1923* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 56.

<sup>34</sup>The increasing need felt by certain Muslim groups to send missionaries or preachers out to ‘spread the faith’ seems to have been very much characteristic of the time. Just four years later, Muhammad Ilyas founded the *Tablighi Jama'at*, which perhaps most openly reflected such efforts at proselytisation. See K.M. Masud (ed.), *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama'at as a transnational Islamic movement for faith renewal* (Leiden, 2000).

<sup>35</sup>Report in *Al-Wa'iz* (Lucknow), 22, 55, Nov 1942, pp. 2–3.

<sup>36</sup>Report in *Al-Wa'iz* (Lucknow), 1, 2, Oct 1921, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup>Report in *Al-Wa'iz* (Lucknow), 5, 7, March 1926, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup>Report in *Al-Wa'iz* (Lucknow), 22, 55, Nov 1942, pp. 2–3.

<sup>39</sup>A nineteenth-century sect, whose founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908), claimed to be the awaited Messiah and a prophet of Islam.

<sup>40</sup>Letter from H. Din to L. A. Haidari, *The Muslim Review* (Lucknow), 3 and 8 March 1931, pp. 16–20.

The links with Shi'i institutions abroad had been initiated as early as during Amir-ud-daula's trip to Iraq in 1888. Thus in 1922, when the body of his wife was sent in a funeral cortege to Karbala to be buried next to the shrines there, a number of the most prominent 'ulama attended the burial. Shaikh 'Ali Hasan, who accompanied the cortege, made arrangements for the participation of nearly 1,500 people.<sup>41</sup> In order to ensure that no trouble would arise, the Shaikh went personally to invite the *killidars*, or 'key keepers', of the shrine. The *killidars*, who were politically very powerful,<sup>42</sup> promised to participate in the procession near the shrine.<sup>43</sup> Chief among the 'ulama who participated in the funeral was Ayatollah Zain al-'Abideen al-Mazenderani, who arrived with thirty students and, as mentioned earlier, was one of the chief recipients of the Oudh Bequest.<sup>44</sup>

Indeed, *The Muslim Review* dealt extensively with the Bequest, detailing the various payments and outstanding amounts that were paid to people in Iraq and Iran.<sup>45</sup> Additionally it consistently provided news of Shi'i political organisations in India and abroad. Although non-sectarian in its approach, the magazine periodically reported on the activities of the All-India Shi'a Conference and also encouraged the support of Shi'i organisations like the orphanage and hospital.<sup>46</sup> In reporting on the proceedings of Muharram in Rampur State, for instance, the participation and recitation of *Wā'iz* Maulana Sibte Hasan was underscored before "His Highness himself performed the ceremony at the Imambara". The title *Wā'iz* was used to denote a graduate of the *madrasa* and illustrates not just how inter-regional contacts and exchanges were facilitated by the *madrasa*, but also emphasises the importance of the *madrasa's* graduates who were called to the premier Shi'i states in order to read *majalis*.

To increase the *madrasa's* prestige, not only amongst ordinary Shi'as but also amongst the 'ulama, its missionary and publishing sections were patronised by a highly-respected member of the 'ulama. Sayyid Najm-ul Hasan (1863–1938) was a prominent 'alim and the founder of the Nazimiya Madrasa in Lucknow. The Raja used to refer to him as 'Dada' (grandfather).<sup>47</sup> It has been demonstrated by many scholars that the 'ulama at this time tended not only to be part of an elite in their own societies, but were also members of a transnational elite. The Maulana was the student and son-in-law of Muhammad 'Abbas Shusturi, an Arab 'alim, who also taught Maulana Hamid Husain Kinturi as mentioned earlier. Thus, we see that by marrying into a family of 'ulama, the Maharaja had extended his network beyond that of the landed elite to that of the 'ulama and scholars, which, in turn, assisted the creation and running of religious institutions. Nearly all editions of both the Urdu and English language magazines carried small advertisements announcing his patronage of the Madrasa't

<sup>41</sup>*Dhamima-i Tarikh-i Mahmudabad ya'ni safarnama-i 'atabat-i 'aliyat*, 1922, Travel Diary compiled by 'Ali Hasan, p. 180.

<sup>42</sup>In more recent history, the reader will remember the murder of Saiyid 'Abdul Majid al-Khoe'i on his return to Najaf in 2003. Al-Khoe'i had gone to meet the *killidar* of the shrine from Saddam's era and the crowd which later lynched both men had initially wanted al-Khoe'i to hand over Haider ar-Rufai'i, whose family had a long tradition of being the key keepers of the shrine.

<sup>43</sup>*Dhamima-i Tarikh-i Mahmudabad*, p. 181.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>45</sup>"The Oudh Bequest", *The Muslim Review* (Lucknow), 2, 3, March 1928, pp. 29–34.

<sup>46</sup>*The Muslim Review* (Lucknow), 2, 3, March 1928, p. 61.

<sup>47</sup>"His Holiness Najmul 'ulama", *The Muslim Review* (Lucknow), 30, 4–5, April and May 1941, p. iii.

ul-Wa'izeen for "the missionaries" good work in Zanzibar, Uganda, Mombasa, Darussalam, Singapore, Shanghai, &c'.<sup>48</sup>

## ii. Muslim Views, National Politics

Despite being a religious monthly, *The Muslim Review* assumed a strong position on what was often called "the communal problem of India".<sup>49</sup> Apart from the occasional article about some aspect of Hindu Law, or about potential areas of reconciliation between Muslims and Hindus, it seems that the magazine took up two major strands of political thought. The first was a friendly yet wary engagement with Gandhi's politics, and the second a more open and frank support of Ambedkar's views. The distrust that many members of the Muslim League had developed for Nehru was evident in their gradual disengagement from him. But these personal connections were maintained by the next generation and Jawaharlal Nehru often visited the Raja at Butler Palace and Mahmudabad House in Lucknow.

Perhaps one of the most notable events of the Maharaja's political career was his Chairmanship of the Lucknow Joint session of the All India Muslim League and the Indian National Congress in 1916. The Maharaja, like Dr M. A. Ansari, had at one time been a member of both the League and the Congress and therefore was especially concerned with a rapprochement between the two. The result of the session was interestingly referred to as the "Hindu-Muslim" pact by *The Muslim Review*.<sup>50</sup> The session was held in Mahmudabad House in Lucknow. The Maharaja had developed close relations with Motilal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu and other Congress leaders while he was in the Viceroy's Council (1906–1917) in the pre-First World War years, and his "association with other India political leaders in that body provided a basis for subsequent Congress-League co-operation".<sup>51</sup> This experience had also ensured that the Maharaja's politics were generally conciliatory without compromising Muslim interests. In his presidential address to a special session of the Muslim League in Bombay in 1918, the Maharaja referred to the Congress as the League's "sister organisation"<sup>52</sup> and went on to describe the amicable agreement that had been reached at this event, only to be later scuppered by the 1919 Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms. The speeches of the Maharaja also showed that he was keenly aware of, and made links between, international events and the League's actions:

"The manner in which your organisation represented feeling during the period of the Tripolitan and the Balkan wars, at the time of the sacrilege of the shrine at Mashhed, the honourable part it played in the crises created by the Cawnpore mosque affair, coupled more recently with its truly statesmanlike action in taking the initiative in acquainting the Government with the current

<sup>48</sup>For example please refer to the back inside cover of *The Muslim Review* (Lucknow), 8, 5, May 1931.

<sup>49</sup>Indeed, the importance of this was later made clear when the first chapter of *The Pirpur Report* dealt specifically with this issue. See Raja Sayyid Muhammad Mehdi of Pirpur, *Report of the Inquiry Committee appointed by The Council of the All India Muslim League to Inquire into Muslim Grievances in Congress Provinces* (Lucknow, 1938).

<sup>50</sup>*The Muslim Review* (Lucknow), 8, 5, May 1931, p. 49.

<sup>51</sup>D. Page, *Prelude to Partition: The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control, 1920–1932* (Delhi, 1982), p. 15.

<sup>52</sup>, A. M. Zaidi, *Evolution of Muslim Political thought in India Vol. 2: Sectarian Nationalism and the Khilafat* (New Delhi, 1975), p. 99.

Mohammedan feelings with regard to the question of the Caliphate . . . are chapters in its history of which the All-India Muslim League may well be proud”.<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, this particular quote aptly illustrates the various identities – Indian, Muslim, Shi’a – which the Maharaja was balancing, and furthermore shows how he sought to occupy a neutral ground by touching on subjects that mattered to all the various factions of the League without compromising the League’s “reasoned loyalty to His Majesty the King Emperor”.<sup>54</sup>

It seems *The Muslim Review* also acted as a mouthpiece for the positions that the family took in nationalist politics and this is perhaps most clearly illustrated by a series of articles about Gandhi and Ambedkar. In an editorial by the chief editor of the magazine, Sayyid ‘Abid Hasan Naqvi, Gandhi’s politics are viewed through a distinctly Shi’i lens. Indeed, even the non-violence espoused by him was understood as a continuation of the policy of the second Imam, Hasan ibn ‘Ali, of quiescence and non-violent disagreement. The editor praises Gandhi for being a “staunch Unitarian” and his sincere effort “to emancipate India from political subjugation”.<sup>55</sup> He is then lambasted, however, for playing into the hands of *pandits* on account of his indefinite fast in support of untouchables being acknowledged as Hindus. His insistence was seen as nothing more than an effort to increase the numerical superiority of Hindus albeit with good intentions. The author, in keeping with *tabligh*, the main aim of the *madrasa*, then went on to invite Gandhi to “put off the cloak of Hinduism and please . . . accept Islam”.<sup>56</sup> In an interview in another edition the journalist was pleased when Gandhi replied that he “believed in One God” and also thought that Muhammad’s teaching provided “a comprehensive message of the Kingdom of God” that “no other religious teacher gave”.<sup>57</sup> The interviewer, a Shi’a named Karamali Abdul ‘Ali from Bombay, proceeded to ask Gandhi why he did not recite the *kalima*,<sup>58</sup> to which Gandhi almost comically replied, “I read the *kalima* at all times and can read it now also”. He then proceeded to recite the declaration but ended it by saying “but it cannot change my caste. I am a *Bania*, you know”.<sup>59</sup> Although this statement is ostensibly in jest it also reveals the deep unease that many Muslims had developed with Gandhi’s perceived syncreticism. The Wardha Scheme and campaign for Hindustani as opposed to Urdu made it clear that “at least to [sic] Gandhi’s mind, [Hindustani] was something quite different from Urdu”.<sup>60</sup> In a reply to an article in *The Times of India* in which Gandhi stated that “India wants Ram Raj . . . The present is the age of democracy . . . My democracy is depicted in the Ramayan . . . In such a raj even a dog cannot be wronged”,<sup>61</sup> the editors of *The Muslim Review* wrote a scathing

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>55</sup> S. A. H. Naqvi, “An Appeal to Gandhiji”, *The Muslim Review* (Lucknow), 26, 1, January 1940, p. 39.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Interview, *The Muslim Review* (Lucknow), 19, 4, October 1936.

<sup>58</sup> The declaration that is recited when converting to Islam.

<sup>59</sup> Interview, *The Muslim Review* (Lucknow), 19, 4, October 1936.

<sup>60</sup> Muhammad Amir Ahmad Khan, ‘Some Memories’, in *The Partition of India*, (eds.) H.C. Phillips and M. D. Wainwright (Aberdeen, 1970), p. 387. Please also refer to the *Pirpur Report* for a more detailed discussion of the differences between Congress leaders on the language issue, see Raja Sayyid Mohamad Mehdi of Pirpur, *Report of the Inquiry Committee*, pp. 28–36.

<sup>61</sup> *The Times of India*, Mail Edition, 4 Feb. 1928, p. 4.

reply and ended by emphatically stating that “we Muslims, perhaps with the exception of a few Congressite Muslims, can never idealise the Ram Raj as depicted by Gandhiji”.<sup>62</sup> So Gandhi was viewed not so much as someone who was inimical to Muslim interests, even drawing praise for “his virtues, his services, his sacrifices, his indomitable spirit”,<sup>63</sup> but rather as a leader who had let the Muslims down by his insistence on “the compulsion to sing Bande Mataram in school . . . the insistence on retaining the Hindu symbol of the lotus and the Muslim Mass Contact scheme”.<sup>64</sup> The magazine’s point of view, in large part, reflected the opinions of the Raja who was managing trustee at this time and was active in the Working Committee of the Muslim League. The Raja’s gradual shift into the League and its politics had not always been certain, and in his *Memoirs* he explained his decision:

“With all my nationalistic tendencies and my association with Congress and other progressive political workers and leaders some of whom I personally knew and admired, I might have joined the Congress. But my enthusiasm cooled when to my great disappointment I found that instead of trying to understand the League politics, Jawaharlal Nehru showed nothing but contempt for the Muslim League and its leader to whom I had given undivided loyalty”.<sup>65</sup>

The anti-Muslim polemics of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, Lala Lajpat Rai and other members Congress Party and opposition to the Vidya Mandir scheme in Nagpur and the Wardha Scheme all over India further catalysed the Raja’s drift away from the Congress Party.

Ambedkar, on the other hand, was viewed as someone who echoed the views of Muslims in India. *The Muslim Review* frequently reprinted Ambedkar’s various articles and gave prominence to one such article entitled ‘Abolish Hinduism’ which was advertised on the cover page.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps Ambedkar endeared himself to Muslims because he too spoke of a “united India” and also acknowledged that he was not against Pakistan for “it is founded on the principle of self-determination, which it is now too late to question”.<sup>67</sup> The Maharaja in his last speech in 1928 had also realised that “at no time in the history of India, was there a call for unity more insistent than there is now”.<sup>68</sup> Gandhi had become very influential in the 1920s due to his involvement in the Khilafat movement and therefore to some extent overshadowed the Muslim League. Perhaps this was another reason why leaders of the Muslim League were uncomfortable with his politics. The Mahmudabads, and therefore the staff at *The Muslim Review*, had even more reason to be uncomfortable because of Gandhi’s proximity to the Sunni leader ‘Abdul Bari of Firangi Mahal with whom the Maharaja had disagreed in 1919.

<sup>62</sup>Naqavi, “An Appeal to Gandhiji”, p. 23.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>65</sup>Khan, “Some Memories”, p. 386.

<sup>66</sup>B.R. Ambedkar, “Abolish Hinduism”, *The Muslim Review* (Lucknow), 19, 2, August 1936, pp. 36–41.

<sup>67</sup>B.R. Ambedkar, *Words of Freedom: Ideas of a Nation* (New Delhi, 2010), p. 55.

<sup>68</sup>Speech to the 20<sup>th</sup> session of the All India Muslim League, Calcutta, 26–30 December 1928, in A. M. Zaidi, *Evolution of Muslim Political Thought in India, Vol 3: Parting of Ways* (New Delhi, 1975), p. 116.

## iii. Cultural pan-Islamism

In the aftermath of the First World War, it seems that the editors were deeply involved in reflecting on the place of Indian Muslims within the larger Muslim *umma*. The editors engaged with pan-Islamism in a highly critical manner, and disagreed with Afghani's theories concerning a global political movement that would bring together "the organisation of the entire Muslim world". While rejecting any impulse towards a political movement, a "cultural Pan-Islamism" was encouraged in order "to distinguish between the very genuine cultural unity as between the various Muslim races of the world, and the bogey of political militant Pan-Islamism set up by Western Imperialists in order to foster anti-Muslim sentiment".<sup>69</sup> The Maharaja, who lamented the fact that the question of the Caliphate in Turkey had become "a shuttle-cock for European diplomacy to play with",<sup>70</sup> echoed this sentiment in a speech during a session of the Muslim League. Thus, questions pertaining to the Muslims of India, although a part of "the Muslim brotherhood", had to be seen from "the point of view of the Mohammedans in India",<sup>71</sup> reinforcing Robinson's argument that "Muslims made their pan-Islamic identity subordinate to a Muslim national identity".<sup>72</sup> Pan-Arabism as a political movement was similarly regarded as a pipe dream:

"We do not think that pan-Arabism, in the shape of a definite political confederation of Arab States is a practical possibility, any more than pan-Islamism in the shape of a confederation of Muslim States; just as we believe in cultural Pan-Islamism, we think that a cultural and possibly economic entente between various Arab countries and races would be most desirable, and indeed beneficial."<sup>73</sup>

Perhaps it was with a view to supporting this cultural global movement that by the late-1930s the editorial board contained international associate editors: Dr Baron Omar Rolf Ehrenfelds in Vienna, Harry E. Heinkel in America, Dr. M. A. Salmin in Bombay and Prof. Dr Fritz Krenko in England. A number of issues gave synopses of various Muslim countries and even organisations abroad. The editors were profoundly saddened by the "resignation of Sir Hubert Stewart Rankin from the presidentship [sic] of the British Muslim Society". By 1940 *The Muslim Review* described the magazine as "The Only Advocate of Old Islam", and printed this beneath the title on the cover. This may have been an effort to increase legitimacy in the eyes of the Sunni majority and counter the rapidly growing Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia, which was intrinsically opposed to Shi'i Islam. It is of note that although the magazine shunned any sectarian bias against Sunnis, it actively opposed the Wahhabi school of thought. One of Wahhabism's key criticisms of Shi'ism is that the latter indulges in *bid'a* (innovation). In an article entitled 'Innovations in Hejaz', the editor reported that the kingdom was "introducing many innovations" because the king had signed contracts with a British company to establish wireless stations: indeed, "Wahabism in Arabia

<sup>69</sup>"Pan-Islamism", *The Muslim Review* (Lucknow), 8, 3, March 1931, pp. 48–51.

<sup>70</sup>Address to 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the All-India Muslim League, Calcutta, 30 Dec 1917– 1 Jan 1918, in A.M. Zaidi, *Evolution of Muslim Political Thought in India Vol. 2: Sectarian Nationalism and the Khilafat*, (New Delhi, 1975), p. 73.

<sup>71</sup>Presidential Address to a Special Session of the All-India Muslim League in Bombay, 31 Aug – Sept 1918 in Zaidi, *Evolution of Muslim Political Thought*, p. 111.

<sup>72</sup>Robinson. *Separatism Among Indian Muslims*, p. 135.

<sup>73</sup>"Syria and the Pan-Arab Movement", *The Muslim Review* (Lucknow), 9, 2, Aug 1931, p. 43.



seemed to be in direct negation to every tendency, which was making headway in the other Muslim lands". The solution, as proposed by the magazine, to the political problems faced by Muslims was defining and creating "Muslim national self-governing units",<sup>74</sup> which was not dissimilar to the scheme proposed by Iqbal in his *The Reconstruction of Islamic Political Thought* whereby he encouraged Muslims to look inward and nurture nationalism until these separate units were powerful enough to merge together.<sup>75</sup>

We see then that *The Muslim Review* was not only a religious magazine but also a mouthpiece for the political opinions of the Mahmudabad family. Shi'i identity was subordinated, but by no means forgotten, to create a national unity in the face of the colonial power. In an editorial, Shi'as – "in this age of general disruptance [sic]" – were encouraged to "assert their existence as a political community and therefore have all the sympathies of the Muslims and the Muslim League and work shoulder to shoulder to combat the aggressive onslaughts of the Congress".<sup>76</sup> Although Shi'ism was a necessary determinant of politics, it was never the overriding factor for the Mahmudabad family:

"Some of the greatest leaders of Islamic modernism have been Shi'i in the technical sense: Amir 'Ali, Seyedayn, and others. Jinnah, also, is a Shi'i, and many of the Leagues least dispensable figures: eg., the Rajas of Mahmudabad and Pirpur. But these men have functioned not *qua* Shi'i but *qua* Muslim".<sup>77</sup>

But while Cantwell Smith was perceptive in realising that the audiences that were being addressed were Muslim and not simply limited to the Shi'a, it would probably be too simplistic and reductionist to say that these men *only* functioned '*qua* Muslim'. It is evident, for instance, from their writings that often the language used by them, and the ideas expressed therein, were rooted in Shi'i theological and historical discourse. Furthermore, it is evident that although their Shi'i identity formed the basis of their worldview, it did not lead to a myopic understanding of politics. Shi'as themselves were divided in their support for the Muslim League. Most notably the Maharaja's younger son, Maharajkumar Muhammad Amir Haider Khan, was staunchly opposed to Shi'i involvement in the Muslim League. Jinnah wrote to him that he was "sorry that your [Maharajkumar's] mind is still working in the direction which is not likely to benefit Shias . . . You will forgive me if I do not see eye to eye with you. The proper policy for the Shia is to join the Muslim League wholeheartedly".<sup>78</sup> The editors of *The Muslim Review* hoped that "the Maharaj Kumar Sahib would prove himself to be the Reza Shah of the Shi'as of India", due to his work for "the scattered forces of his fraternity".<sup>79</sup> Interestingly, the Maharajkumar's participation in the All India Shi'a Conference was not seen as antagonistic towards the policies of his brother.<sup>80</sup> After Partition, the Maharajkumar chose to stay in India and wrote "I have not yet gone to Pakistan

<sup>74</sup>"Islam and the Present War", *The Muslim Review* (Lucknow), 30, 4–5, April and May 1941, p. 44.

<sup>75</sup>M. Iqbal, *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1930, reprint Lahore, 2006), pp. 126–130.

<sup>76</sup>"Editorial Note", *The Muslim Review* (Lucknow), 26, 3, March 1940, p. 57.

<sup>77</sup>W. Cantwell Smith, *Modern Islam in India* (Lahore, 1946), p. 345.

<sup>78</sup>Letter from Jinnah to Maharajkumar, 8 April 1940, in S.I. Husain, *The Life and Times of Raja Saheb Mahmudabad* (Lahore, 1990), pp. 263–264.

<sup>79</sup>"Editorial Note", *The Muslim Review* (Lucknow), 16, 1, Jan 1940, p. 50.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*



and have no intention of going to Pakistan”.<sup>81</sup> In another letter to his tutor, J. A. Chapman, he explained that he would do everything he could to prevent the fate of Indian Muslims being that of the Moors in Spain.<sup>82</sup>

The Raja also chose not to go to Pakistan and in August 1947 he crossed over from Quetta to Zahedan in Iran with his family on a Dakota plane, “broken by the experience that Partition turned out to be”.<sup>83</sup> From Iran he continued on to Karbala and settled for some time in the shrine city, which is part of Shi‘ism’s most sacred geography. While the Raja settled in Karbala, his younger brother took over the day-to-day running of the *madrasa* after 1947.<sup>84</sup>

### Conclusion

Perhaps the most important argument that this article seeks to make is that, despite being members of a “double minority”, prominent Indian Shi‘as successfully maintained, negotiated and built upon their local, national and transnational networks in order to continue engaging with the social, religious and political requirements of the time. Specifically, the three aforementioned networks have been charted through the tropes of marriage and kinship, ideology and the importance of printing. These linkages have been mostly explored by analysing the patronage of educational institutions. The exploration of marriage and kinship patterns shed light how members of the Shi‘i community viewed themselves and their future for “marriage expresses a mutual recognition of some degree of shared identity”.<sup>85</sup> These relationships, most often to the world of the *‘ulama*, helped facilitate new ways of engaging with the Shi‘i community and also led to the creation of educational institutions like the Madrasa’t-ul Wa‘izeen, which was set up as a religious seminary but also came to serve as a political platform, with its magazines serving as a method of spreading the political views, prose and poetry of both the Maharaja and the Raja.

These new marital connections to the world of the *‘ulama* in part support the argument for a move away from what could be seen as a more “establishment Shi‘ism” of Nawabi nobility to “something of an elemental redefinition”.<sup>86</sup> The Maharaja’s marriage to Zakia Begum illustrates this shift to some extent and furthermore his founding of the Madrasa as a hub for *tabligh* demonstrates a willingness to engage with the exigencies of the time without being hindered by tradition.

Using the Madrasa’t-ul Wa‘izeen and its publishing organs as an example, this article has also sought to illustrate Minault and Lelyveld’s arguments concerning “the confluence of education and politics in modern India”.<sup>87</sup> The example that Minault uses in arguments is that of the campaign for a Muslim University in Aligarh. The creation of the *madrasa*, an institution founded for and dedicated to the propagation of the Shi‘i religion, also provides an interesting example for understanding how the Maharaja might have viewed politics. In

<sup>81</sup>Letter from Maharajkumar to Chapman, 27 March 1949, in ‘Letters from Naboo’, Chapman Papers, p. 374, Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 349.

<sup>83</sup>G. Pandey, “Can a Muslim be Indian?”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41, 4 (Oct 1999), p. 617.

<sup>84</sup>The Raja was an Indian national until 1957 when he became a Pakistani citizen.

<sup>85</sup>Fisher, “Political marriage alliances”, p. 593.

<sup>86</sup>Jones, *Shi‘a Islam in colonial India*, pp.19–20, 225–226.

<sup>87</sup>Minault and Lelyveld, “The Campaign for a Muslim University, 1898–1920”, p. 145.

particular, we see the ways in which the Urdu and English magazines were utilised, to a large extent, to deal with different issues, which in turn facilitated the simultaneous inhabitation of several public spheres. In all the copies of *Al-Wa‘iz* and *The Muslim Review* that have been examined, the common anti-Sunni polemics were notably absent, and at most the editors occasionally criticised Wahhabis for deviating from Islam. This example can perhaps act as a counterweight to Justin Jones’s argument that the Shi‘a tended towards a distinct, separate (*alehda*) and inward-looking identity.<sup>88</sup> While the experience of one family may not be symptomatic of the wider community, it does illustrate how there was also an attempt by traditional Shi‘i institutions at creating bridges not only domestically but also transnationally. *The Muslim Review* published regular contributions from leading Sunni writers, some of who also sat on the editorial board. Simultaneously the *madrasa* was training young clerics to preach in Africa, the Far East and other areas of India, thus highlighting that even this ostensibly religious institution, while in overall terms guided by the precepts of Shi‘ism, had many internal sub-narratives.

It is evident that the Mahmudabad family worked towards making the Madrasa’t-ul Wa‘izeen a local hub of a network that spread its nodes both domestically and internationally. More importantly, the intra-community links of marriage and kinship facilitated this flow of ideas, information and people. The importance of religion in shaping the world-view of Indian Shi‘as in general and “the lived experience” of the Mahmudabad family specifically is illustrated by the marriage and kinship patterns of the clan. Political ties were often also cemented by ties of marriage not only amongst other *ashraf* families such as the Imam family of Patna or the family of the Raja of Pirpur but also with members of the ‘*ulama*. These links, as we saw with the Maharaja’s marriage to a daughter of the Kintur family, not only provided links with ‘*ulama* who participated in the creation of institutions like the Madrasa’t-ul Wa‘izeen, but also established links with ‘*ulama* interests.

Analysis of all three spheres – the local, national and the transnational – makes it possible to argue that these often mutually reinforced each other. It is also possible to argue that the family dealt with various ecumenes in different ways. For instance, the content of *Al-Wa‘iz* magazine was mostly aimed at a national and transnational religious audience while *The Muslim Review* tended to focus more on the national and international political issues of the time. However, both magazines overlapped in trying to create a new space for Shi‘ism by arguing for a form of ‘cultural pan-Islamism’, which resulted in prominent Shi‘as like Jamal-ud-din Afghani and Sayyid Amir ‘Ali, apart from the Mahmudabads, abrogating their minority status and becoming a part of the discourse of a wider cross-section of Muslim society. This tendency to talk ‘qua Muslim’ rather than ‘qua Shi‘a’ as Cantwell Smith stated also meant that the creation of the *madrasa* for the purposes of *tabligh* was not at odds with the involvement of the Maharaja and the Raja in nationalist politics. It is evident, then, that an ever evolving and intertwining set of relationships populated the identity of the Mahmudabad family, that drew upon their kinship ties, political links and their associations with religious institutions. <maak2cam.ac.uk>

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<sup>88</sup>Jones, *Shi‘a Islam in Colonial India*, pp. 114–146.