Muslim politics in North India

by Raphael Susewind

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First supervisor: Prof. Dr. Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, Bielefeld University Second supervisor: Dr. Lucia Michelutti, University College London

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Summarium: Muslim politics in North India

The 2011 census puts the number of Muslims in India at 172 million people; this third largest Muslim population worldwide lives dispersed across all Indian states (though in higher numbers in urban North India) and usually constitutes a demographic and electoral minority of five to fifteen percent (the exception being Kashmir; Siddiqui, 1976; Kulkarni, 2010). Like other Indians, Muslims are divided along caste, class and sectarian lines (Ahmad, 1973, 1978; A. Alam, 2003; Khanam, 2013), and while most are comparatively poor, their socio-economic situation nonetheless varies across time and space (Sachar et al., 2006; Deolalikar, 2010). It should little surprise that such a large group of people also follows a "bewildering diversity of beliefs, rituals and religious practices" and that "each community carries its own social construct of what is orthodox" (Ahmad, 1981, 11, 18).

The long history of partition (Zamindar, 2010), however, limits Muslims' *political* options in contemporary India. Large sections of the Muslim elites emigrated to Pakistan and subsequent doubts about Muslims' patriotic loyalty furthered the growth of Hindu Nationalism (Corbridge & Harriss, 2000; Jaffrelot, 2006) and serve as divisive reference in Hindu-Muslim "communal" riots (Varshney, 2002; Brass, 2003; Wilkinson, 2004, 2007b). Likewise, global politics post 9/11 cast a lasting shadow of suspicion on Muslims worldwide (Farouqui, 2009), and in some parts of North India, the legacy of Mughal-Rajput rule still troubles contemporary politics (F. Robinson, 2007b). Unlike other disadvantaged groups in India (Jaffrelot, 2003), Muslims thus largely found separate political projects to be futile and rather attempt to participate in the "national mainstream" (Khalidi, 1993). Consequently, they remain under-represented in legislatures (Gayer & Jaffrelot, 2012).

It would be analytically misleading and empirically wrong, however, to conclude that all Muslims would react to these challenges in the same way or that their politics are always driven by ideological concerns and Hindu-Muslim contestation. To the contrary: this dissertation argues that Muslim politics in North India are underpinned by local configurations of power and socially differentiated moral projects much like non-Muslim politics, and consequently vary across time and space in response to different positionalities in the intersectional mesh that constitutes the community (Brubaker, 2004; Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011; Anthias, 2012). Muslims are not exempt from the interlocked trends of regionalization and particularization of politics in India, though this has perhaps been less visible because appropriately fine-grained statistical data remains unavailable and scholars consequently concentrated on studying the history of ideas rather than empirically disaggregating and contextualizing political trends. I endeavour to address these biases. In the first two sections of this summarium, I survey academic literatures on Muslim South Asia and on Indian politics, and flag some imbalances in both. Next, I suggest an overarching conceptual framework and discuss my methodological choices. Finally, I explicate the common thread through the various components of my dissertation and conclude with its limitations and an outlook on future research agendas.

1. Islam and Muslims in South Asia

Muslim South Asia has been studied from various angles; this review considers research on the history of ideas, on Sufism as a specific form of religious practice, on Indian secularism, on economical conditions and development policy, and lastly on Hindu-Muslim riots.

An overwhelming majority of scholars have discussed Muslim South Asia through the prism of competing orthodoxies, focussing on the history of ideas (Shaikh, 1992; Noorani, 2004; Reetz, 2006; Bano & Nair, 2007; M. A. Nasir, 2015). This rendered important insights into the impact of colonialism on "reformist" movements that emphasize "this-worldly" religion and individual agency in the service of society – in a sense a turn towards politics (F. Robinson, 2007b, 2007a). Of enduring importance in contemporary Indo-Islamic discourse (of mainstream Hanafi Sunni flavour) are the theological school of Deoband (Metcalf, 2004), scholars in Aligarh (Lelyveld, 2003), activists inspired by Ahmad Riza Khan Barelvi (Sanyal, 1996) and those following the Islamism of Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi (A. Alam, 2007); similar diversity can be observed in Shi'a strands of Indian Islam as well (Saivid, Mirkhan, & Talib, 1981; Pinault, 1992; Chishti, 1982; Freitag, 1990; Jones, 2012). The usual labels "orthodox-reformist" (Deoband), "traditionalist- syncretist" (Barelvi), "modernist-liberal" (Aligarh) and "fundamentalist" (Maududi) highlight the varying importance of theological doctrine vis-a-vis folk tradition: "if the Deobandis wanted to conserve Islam as they found it in the Hanafi law books, Barelwis wished to conserve it as they found it in nineteenth-century India" (F. Robinson, 2007b, 66). Until today, this difference fuels a political rivalry between the Tablighi Jamaat (a Deobandi missionary movement and possibly the world's largest Islamic organization; Sikand, 2002; Metcalf, 2006), its Barelvi counterpart, the Ahl-e-Sunnat-o-Jamaat (Gugler, 2011) and similar missionary-cum-scholarly movements, lay and clerical alike (Zaman, 2003; Reetz, 2006). Their competition partly plays out in the field of education: that Deobandis and Barelvis run *madrassas* has attracted increasing scholarly attention (Sikand, 2005; Hartung & Reifeld, 2006; Jeffrey, Jeffery, & Jeffery, 2008; Puri, 2010), an influential university was established in Aligarh, and Lucknow once nourished numerous debating clubs that combined religious with civic concerns (Stark, 2011).

By and large, however, the vast literature on "Islamic reform" overlooks the resilience of non-reformist projects (Marsden, 2007a; Green, 2011; cf. Ahmad, 2013) and pays insufficient attention to the (trans) formation of ideology in lived practice (Marsden, 2007b; Banerjee, 2008; Sanyal, Gilmartin, & Freitag, 2013; Osella & Osella, 2013). This emphasis on the history of competing ideas "led to 'what I am calling "the overview" (but which could equally be thought of, less flatteringly, as a catalogue) [which] seems yet another example of the way in which Muslims are reduced to religious rather than sociological terms" (Simpson, 2013, 206), a trend undoubtedly propelled further by a self-interested clerics (A. Alam, 2003). Ethnographic studies in turn suffer from their own biases. Most anthropologists concentrate on "lived religion" (Ahmad & Reifeld, 2004; McGuire, 2008) in the syncretic sense, emphasizing that, while "both the nationalist and nineteenthcentury social reform movements [...] define identities in terms of authenticities, [...] folk traditions both derive from and contest 'great traditional' practice." (Mayaram, 1997, 6 and 39). Such liminality ranges from an abundance of shared spaces to whole communities observing heterodox traditions (Blank, 2001; Khan, 2004; Valentine, 2008). Dargahs (shrines of Sufi saints), for instance, frequently acquire "therapeutic, social, economic and political significance; and in contrast to mosques, they provide an alternative source of communication and identity for women" (Malik, 2003, 377; see also Pfleiderer, 1981; Ewing, 1997; Werbner, 2003; Pfleiderer, 2007 and on Muslim gender politics P. Jeffery & Basu, 1999; Z. Hasan & Menon, 2004, 2005; Kirmani, 2011; Hong Tschalär, 2012). Valuable as these studies are in troubling the notion that Islam would be alien to India, however, they nonetheless tend to privilege one specific form of spirituality – Sufism – and often underestimate its entanglement with both "orthodox" and "reformist" theologies.

A third strand of literature on Indian Muslims – besides the delineation of ideological schools and the ethnographic exploration of liminal practice – focusses on the context of a constitutionally secular polity (Bhargava, 1999). Unfortunately, "when the culture of India was introduced to Europe, it was made to look predominantly religious" (Heehs, 2008, 257), a stereotype which still obstructs adequate attention to non-spiritual dimensions of religious belonging. Even if this would have been true historically, latest the postcolonial polity surely nourished "the liberal and secular trends among Muslims", which cautions against the scholarly "glorification of religious seminaries" (M. Hasan, 2008, 132). Secularism indeed became an important ideological point of reference for many Muslims today – and surely a "property of action" (Turina, 2007, see also Williams, 2012) for even more. This is even true for many "Islamist" movements, which often replicate secular ideals in their institutional structure and argumentative strategy (Ahmad, 2009; Iqtidar, 2011).

Similarly, Hansen (2001, 2004) saw not only community purification but also plebeian assertion in Muslim identity politics in Bombay (see also Iqtidar, 2013): socialization through work, craftsmanship and context-specific labour relations add important layers to Muslimness and are propagated through caste-based business and artisan associations, a fourth strand of literature (Wilkinson-Weber, 1999; Harriss-White, 2003; Mohsini, 2011). My own research in Gujarat (Susewind, 2011, 2013a, 2013c, 2013b) and findings from DFID's Religion and Development project (Rakodi, 2007; Bano & Nair, 2007; Mishra, 2007) further suggest that Muslims increasingly embrace idioms of development (Shehabuddin, 2008; Deneulin & Bano, 2009), often with mixed success (D. Gupta, 2011; Williams, 2011). In 2006, an influential government report has shown widespread poverty among India's Muslims, worse than even among Dalits in some parts of the country (Sachar et al., 2006; cf. Misra, Mahmood, Wilson, Singh, & Das, 2007; Basant & Shariff, 2010). Since the Sachar Report's publication, many scholars have linked Muslim poverty to increasing residential segregation in India's cities, most prominently a group of researchers around Gayer and Jaffrelot (2012; see also Mhaskar, 2013). Others have extended the report's findings to the fields of education (P. Jeffery, Jeffery, & Jeffrey, 2008; Azhar, 2012) or public health (Williams, 2011; R. Nasir, 2014), or discussed the desirability of quotas and positive discrimination for Muslims (Ali, 2010; M. S. Alam, 2010; Manzoor, 2013; Khanam, 2013). Generally, however, few of these "post-Sachar" studies properly account for *variation* in the socio-economic condition of Muslims.

The extensive literature on Hindu-Muslim riots finally – a fourth section of academic discourse on Muslim South Asia – similarly rebuts narrow perspectives that see Muslim Indians primarily as Muslims and privilege religious doctrine over lived practice. Most scholars today tend to explain inter-group violence through instrumentalist calculations, a hypothesis popularized by Paul Brass (1974) and since then reiterated in many variations (Brass, 1985b, 1991, 1996, 1997, 2003, 2006; cf. Hansen, Momin, Petersen, & Brass, 2006). Brass argues that "riots [...] first and foremost persist because they are a [...] well-known and accepted [...] part of the general armory of weapons used by activists and interested parties within both communities for personal, local, and political advantage" (Brass, 2003, 356, 366f). His argument was further refined in comparative studies (Varshney, 2002; Wilkinson, 2004, 2007b; Dhattiwala & Biggs, 2012), but only occasionally complemented with attention to non-instrumentalist factors, for instance the social production of disgust (Ghassem-Fachandi, 2012b, 2012a). Similarly, a wider body of literature in peace and conflict studies that sees religion not just as a repertoire for violence but as essentially ambivalent (Appleby, 2000; Hasenclever & de Juan, 2007) with a potential to further

peaceful coexistence also privileges instrumental perspectives, fearing that attention to the substance of religious beliefs and practices would amount to mistaken essentialism (R. Robinson, 2005; Ring, 2006; Williams, 2007; Jasani, 2008; Oommen, 2008; Mander, 2009; Powers, 2009; Bigelow, 2010; D. Gupta, 2011; Nampoothiri & Sethi, 2012).

The review of these diverse strands of academic literature on Muslim South Asia reveals several strengths and weaknesses. Ideological schools, historical legacies, the impact of Hindu nationalism and Hindu-Muslim violence are all well explored. Relatively less studied are more local factors, intra-Muslim diversity, the entanglement and intersection of religion with other social categories (especially class and caste), and methodologically individualist perspectives. Before I discuss how my research attempts to address these weaknesses, the next section turns to literature on Indian (electoral) politics.

2. Indian politics since independence

This second half of my literature review begins with studies on the decline of India's developmental state that spurred a thorough regionalization and fragmentation of power. Some see this as a symptom of crisis. A second group of scholars, however, evaluates the same facts differently and attests a deepening of democracy brought about by the gradual inclusion of marginalized groups. A third strand of research concentrates more on process than valuation, and revives theoretical work on clientelism and patronage. I conclude by highlighting the curious absence of Muslims from most of the literature on group-driven, regionalised politics – a gap I intend to address with this dissertation.

Politics in independent India are post-colonial (Chakrabarty, 2000; Chatterjee, 2010) and post-partition politics (Manor, 1990; Khilnani, 1992; Zamindar, 2010). Unlike in presumably organic "nation states" of the global North, Indian elites and masses had to actively appropriate a state which at least partly preceded the advent of self-rule and nationhood – or so the argument goes. More than perhaps elsewhere, scholars of Indian politics thus focus on state-society relations (Bailey, 1963; Kothari, 1970; Kohli, 1990; Brass, 1997; Khilnani, 1998; Fuller & Harriss, 2001; Kohli, 2001; A. Gupta, 2012). Indeed, the developmental state of the 1950s and 1960s "etched itself into the imaginations of Indians in a way that no previous political agency had ever done" (Khilnani, 1998, 41; see also Rudolph & Rudolph, 1967; Frankel & Rao, 1989, 1990). While universal franchise got entrenched, however, political competition remained limited by a stable elite compromise between three "proprietary classes": industrial capitalists, rich farmers and career bureaucrats (Bardhan, 1984, 1988), held together in the single-party "Congress system" of governance (Kothari, 1964, 1967, 1974; also see Brass, 1965; Weiner, 1967). This power balance began to tilt with the success of the green revolution and subsequent empowerment of new agrarian elites (Kohli, 1990), who opposed Indira Gandhi's aggressive centralization efforts and her desperate declaration of a state of emergency in 1975 (Tarlo, 2003). In the late 1980s, the declining appeal of "developmental utopias" (Chatterjee, 1986) and allegedly soaring corruption in India's "license raj" (A. Gupta, 1995, 2012) led to a shift from (state-led) pro-business to (anti-state) pro-market policies (Kohli, 2006b, 2006a), which in turn provoked violent backlashes by Maoist (Shah, 2010; Chitralekha, 2011; Kunnath, 2012) and separatist forces (Thomas, 1992; Jodhka, 2001; Nag, 2002). Meanwhile, the majority of a growing middle class either chose to pull out of electoral politics all together, retracting to gated communities (Falzon, 2004; Rao, 2010; Nelson, 2011; Perera, 2011), engaging in liberal politics outside the electoral system (Chandhoke, 2003; Fadaee, 2014), or sponsoring Hindu-nationalist projects (Ludden, 1996; Jaffrelot, 2006; Sharma, 2006), leading to growing success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – strategies that Corbridge and Harriss (2000) aptly titled "elite revolts".

Today, some scholars thus attest multiple crises of the Indian state. Z. Hasan (2000) for instance lists four: the unequal distribution of growth and the extension of patronage to more and more sections of society lead to crises of output and governance by multiplying demands (Kohli, 2007) and overstretching resources (Kothari, 2007), while social movements and the rise of Hindu nationalism lead to crises of legitimacy and institutions. Indeed, the resulting fragmentation of power spurred a thorough regionalization of Indian politics (Yadav, 1999; Yadav & Palshikar, 2003; Jenkins, 2004a, 2004b; Heath, 2005; Yadav & Palshikar, 2008; Jaffrelot & Verniers, 2009; A. Kumar, 2011), a trend to which the central state reacted by reconfiguring federal structures (Rudolph & Rudolph, 2010, 2011; Tillin, 2013a, 2013b; Varshney, 2013) and devoluting power to the local-level *panchayati raj* institutions (Matthew, 1994; Mathur, 2013). This process had electoral underpinnings and repercussions (Palshikar, Suri, & Yadav, 2014), so that ecological analyses – the first prominent kind of election studies in India – show that elections are now decided in state-or even constituency-specific ways (Blair, 1973; Elkins, 1975; Dasgupta & Morriss-Jones, 1975; Blair, 1979, 1981, 1990; Chhibber & Nooruddin, 1999; Kondo, 2003).

Precisely because of these electoral underpinnings of regionalization, however, other authors strongly disagree with the idiom of "crisis". They do not contest the fact that power is increasingly fragmented and devoluted, but argue that the decline of the centrist developmental state reflects a veritable if "silent revolution" (Jaffrelot, 2003; see also M. Robinson, 1988; Frankel & Rao, 1989, 1990; Kohli, 1990) in which historically disadvantaged groups (other than Muslims) gradually entered formal politics, embraced and "vernacularized" the idea of democracy (Michelutti, 2007, 2008a), and began to consider elections a "sacred duty" (Banerjee, 2007, 2009, 2011) as well as an opportunity to assert citizenship claims vis-a-vis entrenched elites (Carswell & De Neve, 2014). In a seminal article, Yadav (1999) wrote of a "second democratic upsurge" (the first being the formal introduction of universal franchise), an upsurge that was driven by the triple dynamics of emphmandal (referring to affirmative action for OBC castes in addition to existing quotas for SCs and STs), *mandir* (referring to the rise of Hindu nationalism) and market (referring to the shift from pro-business to pro-market policies). It is ultimately this democratic upsurge, Yadav argues, that explains the transition from India's first electoral system of Congress dominance through a second anti-Congress phase to the truly multi-party, coalition-driven and state-centric third electoral system that one sees today.

This rather more benign perspective garnered substantial empirical support from an ever-growing body of election surveys – the second major body of literature on elections in India (see edited volumes by Sheth, 1975; Jena & Baral, 1989; Sission & Roy, 1990; Gould & Ganguly, 1993; Wallace & Roy, 2003). Particularly prominent are the Lokniti "National Election Surveys" and similar state election surveys, conducted for each major election since 1967 (CSDS, 2014). They confirm that, contrary to global trends, voter turnout among India's poor now equals and at times even surpasses turnout among the rich; even without tangible material benefits, the poor clearly embrace the idea of democracy.

A third strand of research avoids normative evaluations of the "crisis" and/or "democratic upsurge" and rather unpacks how precisely either works. These scholars found that the quantitative expansion of democracy ushered in new models of governance (Javal & Pai, 2001; Zavos, Wyatt, & Hewitt, 2004) and introduced more "muscular" (Michelutti, 2008b, 2010) and "plebeian" (Hansen, 2001, 2004) political styles to India's "political society" (Chatterjee, 2004). From this perspective, the "second democratic upsurge" evolves around particularistic group identities, and thus challenges the universalist ideal of liberal democracy (which partly explains why some see a crisis). Many case studies – the third body of literature on elections (reviewed by Narain, Pande, Sharma, & Rajpal, 1978; Brass, 1985a; Kondo, 2007; Lama-Rewal, 2009) – consequently point to the impact of ethnic coordination on party allegiance (Horowitz, 2000), even when daily bread-and-butter issues guide voters' choice (as they often do). This reflects a widespread belief that only "one's own" (whoever that is in a specific context) would guarantee security and wellbeing through targeted redistribution (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2002; Chandra, 2004), an observation that has revived theoretical work on factionalism (Hardiman, 1982), clientelism (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007), neo-patrimonialism (Kohli, 2012) and patronage (Piliavsky, 2014b).

Muslims however remain curiously absent in much of this literature; what begs explanation is why Muslims fare so badly precisely when most other marginalized groups did very well. Partly, this might reflect the fact that the formation of dedicated Muslim parties – the strategy used by other disadvantaged groups – is not viable given widespread anti-Muslim prejudice and the demographic dispersion of the community (Khalidi, 1993). Sixty years after independence and partition, political representation of Muslims thus appears dismal except perhaps in for that don't matter much (Gayer & Jaffrelot, 2012; Jaffrelot & Verniers, 2012; Verma, 2012; Verniers, 2014). Consequently Muslims' chances to capture state resources and participate in patronage networks remains limited; often, they can only strategically attempt to elect the least threatening – rather than the most promising – candidate (Michelutti & Heath, 2013; Michelutti, 2014). At the same time, however, scholarly debate also remains stuck in "generalisations on the political behaviour of Muslims" with "little empirical evidence" (M. S. Alam, 2009), revealing a lack of conceptual and methodological rigour. Take the idea that Muslim voters en bloc support or reject specific parties to swing electoral outcomes, allegedly on clerical recommendation (Chhibber & Sekhon, 2014). Locally grounded studies generally point towards such "vote banks", citing ethnic mobilisation (Michelutti & Heath, 2012; Muralidharan, 2014; Dhattiwala, 2014; Berenschot, 2014) – but most quantitative research, including the Lokniti surveys, merely confirms Muslim rejection of the BJP, but fails to find evidence of "vote banks" in a strong sense (M. S. Alam, 2009; Palshikar & Suri, 2014; Devasher, 2014). In light of this disparate literature, M. S. Alam (2009, 93) simply concedes defeat, concluding that "the participation of Muslims in voting does not reveal any fixed pattern".

In sum, research on Muslim politics lags behind the study of Indian politics at large; it continues to privilege national ideological contestation and pays insufficient attention to local configurations of power and socially differentiated moral projects *within*. Before I outline how I intend to address this imbalance through five interlocked articles, the next two sections suggest an overarching conceptual framework and discuss my methodology.

3. Power and morality

While my five articles stand for themselves and engage different literatures (on elections in article two, on corruption and the local state in article three, on group violence and morality in articles four and five, and on ambivalence and ambiguity in article five), they all concern the entanglement of religion with other social categories (especially class and gender), and the link between politics (the instrumental use of power; Luhmann, 2000) on the one hand and (particularistic) moralities (practical codes of conduct and ways of relating derived from broader ethical, often religious, orientations; Das, 2010) on the other. These commonalities and connections come to the fore when one reads the five articles from a unifying theoretical perspective. Newer literature on patronage (Piliavsky, 2014b) lends itself to this task since it combines a concept of group-driven politics with attention to morality and thus moves beyond work on factionalism (Bailey, 1963; Hanson, 1966; Kothari, 1970; Hardiman, 1982) and clientelism (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007).

A first and fairly generic attempt to grasp the group- rather than programme-driven character of Indian democracy centred around the concept of "faction", defined as "something 'more' than parochial politics [...] and something 'less' than [...] impersonal allegiance to a party as an institution or as an ideology" (Brass, 1965, 114). More specifically, the idea was that "factional" ties supersede those of ethnic identification. This assumption could not, however, be substantiated by much empirical evidence, and in hindsight seems too indebted to the optimist ideals of modernization theory (Hardiman, 1982).

While "factionalism" lost its appeal, the emphasis on groups and networks rather than ideologies and institutions lived on in studies on "clientelism" (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007). In marked contrast to the earlier literature on factionalism, political scientists studying clientelism argue that particularistic politics are indeed inherently prone to drift *towards* ethnic markers, largely because these more effectively reduce information insecurities and thus allow more precise targeting of club goods (Chandra, 2004, 2007; I make a similar argument with regard to corruption in article three). "Clientelism" thus not only explains why India's second democratic upsurge rests on particularistic appeals, but also, and more specifically, on appeals to caste and religion (Wilkinson, 2007a).

Most recently, anthropologists added a normative twist to this literature by reviving the concept of "patronage", which, they argue, is "a living *moral idiom* that carries much of the life of South Asian politics, and society at large" Piliavsky (2014a, 4, emphasis in original). Politicians building patronage networks – while certainly being non-universalist in how they approach democracy and the state – are seen by many Indians "both as essentially *useful* persons and as *good* ones" Piliavsky (2014a, 16, emphasis in original). In this sense, clientelistic politics not only imply an "eruption of sociality into governance" (Piliavsky, 2014a, 29), but also the continuation of particularist moralities that have deep roots in Indian society. In following this line of argument, I am not outright rejecting the impact of instrumental and strategic calculations, overarching national concerns, or systemic factors on Muslim politics. But especially in articles four and five, I nonetheless foreground in my analysis how particularistic moralities get entangled in local concerns and configurations of power, attempting to think politics and morality *together*.

4. Ethnography, Big Data and comparisons

My dissertation combines both quantitative and qualitative methods, even though only article three integrates both simultaneously in an explicit mixed methods design. Since the entire first article is devoted to statistics and Big Data, I here concentrate on my actor-centric qualitative methods, summing up the articles' respective method sections.

Articles three and four are based on ethnographic material from Lucknow, political capital of Uttar Pradesh and cultural centre of Shi'a India (on the city itself, see Graff, 1997; Susewind & Taylor, submitted). Following a "model of science that embraces not detachment but engagement as the road to knowledge" (Burawoy, 1998, 5; see also Wikan, 2012) and that is based on "methodological refinement of quotidian strategies" (Elwert, 2003, 7), I lived for 17 months between September 2011 and December 2013 in Wazirganj, a largely Muslim neighbourhood in the old city. I participated in the neighbourhood's everyday life as well as in extraordinary events such as religious holidays or political rallies (Schatz, 2009; S. Kumar, 2014). In three consecutive years, for instance, I took part in processions and congregational assemblies during Muharram, the Shi'a month of ritual mourning that is particularly relevant in Lucknow (as discussed in article four). Moreover, two elections to the state assembly as well as municipal corporation were held during my stay and I witnessed the run-up to the latest elections for national parliament (analysed in article two). I also conducted semi- and un-structured interviews with residents, bureaucrats, brokers, real estate developers, businessmen and political activists; these were mostly conducted in Hindi and Urdu, often audio-taped and later transcribed, but also at times recorded in written fieldnotes. Article five in turn builds on biographic interviews and structured questionnaires collected over a four-week period in 2008 together with a local female assistant in rural Halol district and in Ahmedabad, capital of Gujarat (discussed in depth in Susewind, 2013a, chapter 2). Last but not least, the quantitative analysis in my first three articles involved substantial fieldwork as well, both to obtain data itself and to better understand the circumstances of its generation (Jensenius, 2014).

All empirical articles deliberately concern rather small geographical units and social spaces characterized by everyday interaction: the level of parliamentary constituencies and assembly segments (article two), of rural (article five) or urban neighbourhoods (articles four and five), or of the heterogenuous space of a city (article three). These are the levels, I argue, on which statistically relevant variation occurs and on which ethnographic research makes most sense. These levels also lend themselves to intra-country comparisons that retain a degree of control over variation by exploiting India's sheer size and diversity while holding certain institutional parameters constant (Jenkins, 2004c; Tillin, 2013a; Pai, 2013). Indebted to an intra-country comparative paradigm, I focus on two Indian states: Gujarat (articles two and five) and Uttar Pradesh (articles two, three and four). Uttar Pradesh is a natural choice, widely acknowledged as central to India's Muslim history (with a current population share of about 20%) and often called the political "heartland" of India, characterized by multi-party competition (Kudaisya, 2006; R. Jeffery, Jeffrey, & Lerche, 2014). Gujarat meanwhile has much fewer Muslims (about 9%) and more conventional two-party competition, but is of particular interest as a "laboratory of Hindu nationalism" (Sud & Tambs-Lyche, 2011): in 2002, the state saw widespread anti-Muslim riots that gave rise to India's current Hindu nationalist Prime Minister.

5. Dissertation outline

As stated, my dissertation attempts to raise the discussion on Muslim politics to the level of methodological and conceptual sophistication characteristic of research on Indian politics at large. I see two reasons for the scholarly bias towards ideological and macro-level factors at the expense of material and local ones, and for the widespread ignorance towards the spatial and social variation of moral registers: the relative invisibility and marginalization of Muslims in patronage networks that underpin contemporary Indian politics – and a lack of appropriately fine-grained statistical data to unpack spatial variation.

In the first part of my dissertation, I focus on the latter and create the data basis necessary for a proper disaggregation of Muslim electoral politics (as well as for more general quantitative inquiry into the condition of Muslims in India). While official statistics on religion remain coarse and scarce in India, name lists such as the electoral rolls, property registers or lists of people below the poverty line are often much more readily accessible. In my **first article** (Susewind, in press), I thus introduce a probabilistic linguistic algorithm which exploits the social connotations of names to estimate the share of Muslims and non-Muslims on such lists, turning them into a novel and often much more fine-grained source of quantitative data. Where others presuppose the existence of clear group boundaries on the level of individuals, however, my algorithm treats this as an empirical question, and probabilistically accounts for the empirical messiness of name associations. Consequently, it can provide a fairly accurate estimate of Muslim and non-Muslim population shares on aggregate levels without assuming clear-cut group membership on the level of individuals.

This algorithm feeds **two data publications**, which are published under an open license in line with recent advances in research data governance. The first dataset contains a fine-grained breakdown of the electorate of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh by religion, based on a booth-by-booth classification of names on the electoral rolls (Susewind & Dhattiwala, 2014c). The other provides GIS shapefiles of the geo-spatial boundaries of India's parliamentary and assembly constituencies generated from the official locations of polling booths through a heatmap processing chain (Susewind, 2014); this enables spatial analyses of electoral results without recourse to expensive commercial geo-data.

My second article (Susewind & Dhattiwala, 2014a, 2014b) presents a first empirical application of these new datasets: a quantitative overview of Muslim vote pattern in the 2014 general elections in both Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh based on an ecological Seemingly Unrelated Regression model. While ecological inference arguably works best for contextual arguments ("in which kind of place does party X win?") rather than compositional ones ("how do Muslims vote?"; see Voss, 2004), we deliberately chose to make the compositional argument because it is so prominent in debates on Muslim politics - and because we think that our unique identification strategy (using intra-station-interbooth-variance) is sound enough to avoid ecological fallacies. For the first time, this article quantifies the extent of spatial heterogeneity in Muslims' electoral choices beyond the state level, showing that Muslim politics are indeed as locally varied as non-Muslim politics. We argue that the unresolved debate on Muslim "vote banks" (which ethnographers find, but surveys don't) could be reconciled by shifting the spatial focus further down from statewide assessments to the level of parliamentary constituencies and even assembly segments: Muslims might indeed vote $en \ bloc$ – but the explanatory power of this assumption rises with each step of disaggregation. While a rejection of the Hindu nationalist BJP can be seen in almost all constituencies, for instance, the preferred alternative varies greatly, as does the relative relevance of "vote banks". We further speculate that this spatial variation might partly reflect different demographic balances, different histories of group violence, and ethnic co-ordination between Muslim voters and candidates – but statistical methods alone are ill suited to conclusively uncover such links.

Using a mix of quantitative and ethnographic data, my **third article** (Susewind, forthcominga) unpacks the political economy of real estate in Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh. I argue that Muslims' differential access to and control over local patronage networks are a major cause of residential segregation. This shows that the demographic distributions which we identified as one potential cause for the spatial variation in Muslims' electoral choices in Susewind and Dhattiwala (2014a, 2014b) are partly an outcome of the very patronage politics that also drive ethnic co-ordination; what we had described as two distinct factors might indeed point to the same root cause. With regard to wider literature on Indian cities, this also demonstrates that residential pattern need not be driven by prejudice or Hindu-Muslim antagonism alone, as often alleged, and thus further moves the debate away from an over-emphasis on ideological discourse towards local and material factors: in Lucknow, Muslims are segregated not because of social and political disenfranchisement, but quite to the opposite because of their (differential) inclusion in the political economy. The article thus also reveals the "social life" of corruption and renders the state a thoroughly social entity, adding to the long literature on state-society relations in India. Last but not least, it demonstrates how statistics can only be properly understood in light of qualitative insight: conventional econometric analysis rendered contradictory results, but an ethnographically informed reading of the same results rendered an internally coherent – and thus more convincing – interpretation.

My fourth article (Susewind, forthcomingb) turns to the second potential factor for spatial variation identified above: the impact of group violence. It addresses the cultural underpinning of popular politics at the example of a violent sectarian clash between two groups of Muslim real estate developers in Lucknow – and explores what happens when (political as well as clerical) patronage networks come under pressure. It adopts a minorities-in-minorities perspective (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2010), unpacking the category "Muslim" to reveal sectarian and class differences, arguing that *intra*-group contestation over boundary management is as relevant as *inter*-group conflict; frequently, the former indeed underpins the latter. I demonstrate that the instrumental calculations that are so prominent in much research on inter-group violence can explain the clash itself, but not its rapid escalation; the discursive significance and political impact of the "Wazirganj Terror Attack" can only be understood in light of contentious politics of religious reform and an emerging "middle class morality" (Saavala, 2010). The article privileges the creative surprises that ensue when instrumental calculations fail in practice, drawing attention to the spaces of freedom inherent in individual agency. It also takes up a key insight of newer literature on patronage: that particularistic rather than universalistic politics are nonetheless sustained and legitimized through specific normative projects. Here, a specifically Muslim take on middle class morality limits social responsibility by reducing an ethics of equality to a narrow code of individual propriety – a "moral register" (Schielke, 2009a, 2009b) that ultimately escalates sectarian tension.

This concern with moral agency in the context of group violence finally carries through to my **fifth article** (Susewind, 2011) as well. The groupist reduction of Muslims to being only Muslims need not always be a mistaken analytical choice – it can at times also reflect empirical reality, in particular in harsh post-conflict settings. My final article thus returns to Gujarat, the second state analysed in Susewind and Dhattiwala (2014a, 2014b), and explores which political options remain in a scenario where Muslims' prospects to improve their lot through electoral means appear futile. In this context, I contrast the "biographical navigation" (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011, 2013) of two female Muslim activists in a deliberately individual-centric research design (Mines, 1994; Arnold & Blackburn, 2004; Hammack, 2008) and describe the tensions which they encounter within the community to whose fold they are forcibly reduced. This highlights the variation in Muslims' moral agency in contemporary Indian politics, complementing the (often futile) aim for clarity and univalence that characterises the "middle class moralities" discussed in article four with the two alternative registers of ambivalence and ambiguity (Susewind, 2013a).

6. Limitations and outlook

Taken together, these articles extend arguments about the regionalization and devolution of Indian politics in general to the specific domain of Muslim politics where they have so far not been as prominent. I also make a substantial methodological contribution, demonstrate the benefits of mixing quantitative and qualitative data, and add to the growing literatures on urban politics and on the ambivalence and ambiguity of the sacred. Let me conclude with a reflection of limitations and potential for further research.

Firstly, there surely is room for more stringent comparisons within India and globally. As far as the electoral statistics in article two are concerned, our current model is also inept to analyse electoral trends in very rural areas because its innovative identification strategy requires multi-booth polling stations which tend to be located in (semi-)urban areas; while most Muslims do live and cast their votes in cities, more sophisticated modelling of spatial auto-correlation could potentially improve coverage of rural areas. Last but not least, I also actively work on integrating my fine-grained data on the Muslim electorate with village- and ward-level socio-economic data to improve the fit of our vote bank model by incorporating additional variables and replacing the currently crude approximations.

Secondly, one could further advance theoretical work on the link between politics and morality. Building upon the conceptual contributions in articles four and five, I intend to explore further how the emergence of new middle classes not only impacts politics but also morality – and how it impacts politics *through* morality. In this regard, it remains to be seen whether newer literature on patronage is indeed the best possible theoretical framework or whether other theoretical perspectives (for instance the literature on ambivalence and ambiguity, or work on charismatic leadership) might not prove more fruitful in the long run. Either way, I do hope that other scholars join me in this endeavour, and look forward to continue my inquiry into Muslim politics in North India.

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First article

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Second article

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Third article

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Fifth article

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