

Red Maulanas: Revisiting Islam and the Left in twentieth-century South Asia

Layli Uddin 

Queen Mary University of London, London, UK

Correspondence

Layli Uddin, Queen Mary University of London, London, UK.
Email: l.uddin@qmul.ac.uk

Funding information

Leverhulme Trust; H2020 European Research Council

Abstract

In the early 20th century, colonised people across empires rejected their status quo with visions and articulations of different emancipatory futures. The more radical and creative of these projects fused socialist thought with national, cultural or religious traditions. Grounded in ideas of equality, redistribution and common ownership, these visions offered futures of freedom beyond nationalism. Islamic Socialism was one of these revolutionary currents alongside Arab socialism, African socialism and Black Liberation Theology. The article reviews the historical scholarship on the relationship between Muslims and Left politics in 20th century South Asia and proposes Islamic Socialism as a new field of study. Some of the earliest articulations and enduring commitment to the politics of Islamic Socialism emerged from South Asia, yet the topic is not easily located in the existing scholarship on the region or elsewhere. Employing a diverse set of texts, I show how we can approach through three categories - time, space, and ideas- and map out subaltern Islam as a future area of research. Existing studies have treated Islamic Socialism variously as crude readings of Islam and Marxism, an immemorial Islamic tradition, the intellectual product of theoretical congruence, or as a novel and creative experiment. Reflecting on its minor status in historiography, the article argues for the importance of Islamic Socialism in thinking beyond Islamic literalism and

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2023 The Authors. History Compass published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

furthering our understanding of decolonisation experiments, everyday subaltern politics, and the possibilities for Marxism and Islam in the Global South.

1 | INTRODUCTION

In February 1970, over 113 members of the *ulama* (religious clergy) in Pakistan issued a fatwa denouncing belief in Islamic Socialism as “*kufur*” (disbelief). As elections approached, the decree was prompted by increasing alarm at the popularity of the ideas of left-leaning parties and their leaders, specifically Maulana Bhashani’s calls to “*jalao*” (burn) and “*gherao*” (surround) factories and farms and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s promises of “*roti, kapra and makaan*” (bread, clothing and housing).¹ Radical demands of land redistribution by the National Awami Party and People’s Party Pakistan compelled the terrified *ulama* to make a remarkable claim that allied God with the propertied classes. The fatwa categorically stated: “To deny the right of individual ownership is, in fact, to deny Quran” (Ghaznavi, 1978). A month later, the Jama’at-i-Islami, the main Islamist party, organised rallies across cities and towns in Pakistan, where protestors marched, shouted slogans and carried placards demanding “death to Socialism” (Uddin, 2016). Just a few decades earlier, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan, declared Islamic Socialism as integral to his political vision for the new state (Toor, 2011). Yet, by the mid 1970s, Islamic Socialism was replaced by discourses on “Islamic banking” and “Islamic finance” (Zaman, 2012), which, whilst contested, provoked no outrage or fear.² Relegated to footnotes and regarded as a minor history, the fragmentary treatment of Islamic Socialism in the historiography of modern South Asia reflects its political fortunes. Neilesh Bose, historian of Bengal notes that “the intellectual history of the relationship between Islam and Communism has yet to be systematically pursued” (Bose, 2011). This paper reviews the scholarship on Muslim engagement with Left politics in 20th-century South Asia to lay the groundwork for Islamic Socialism as a new field of study.³

Islamic Socialism is an unruly concept and a complicated object of study. Its mere mention generates controversy, polarises opinions, and arouses swift contempt of its historical failures as well as an enduring hope in its transformative potentialities.⁴ Further, the relationship between Islamic Socialism and other progressive politics such as Muslim cosmopolitanism or left populism is not always easily distinguished. Popular and scholarly responses to Islamic Socialism vary in four ways, with some overlap. First, those who hold either Islam or Marxism as a “complete science” and “system” assert fundamental contradictions between them. Ideas of historical materialism, class struggle and common ownership in Marxism are deemed irreconcilable with Islamic notions of spirit, ethics and private property. Their combination in Islamic Socialism appears implausible, distorted, or treacherous. The second response claims socialist values as inherent to Islam, and either superior to Western conceptions of socialism (Hakim, 1951; Kidwai, 1912) or compatible with specific elements of it (Alatas, 2021). In this view, conflict with rather static and mechanical Marxism is maintained.⁵ The third set of responses asserts some productive correspondence between Marxism and religion. Both are said to offer comprehensive political programs that respond to existential and ethical questions about the “role of man” in the universe, and share a militant dedication to “human salvation” (Dussel et al., 2009; Rodinson, 2015). Some claim more specifically an “equivalence” between Marxism and Islam (Ali & Raza, 2022; Raza, 2022). M.N Roy, an Indian Marxist intellectual, argued that the transcendental and abstract God in Islam opened up the possibility of “doing without him entirely”, affording Muslims the agency to shape the world in ethical ways. Others argue that the inseparability of the economic and spiritual in Islamic thought opens space for anti-capitalist critiques (Banerjee, 2020). The fourth response posits Islamic Socialism as a historically contingent articulation emerging from the conjuncture of specific interests and forces. In this view, the power of Islamic Socialism was not based on internal coherence but on the “political-cultural work” of its proponents in sustaining the connection despite the presence of contradictions (Uddin, 2016).⁶ Specific instances of Islamic Socialism should be treated as revolutionary experiments rather than derivative or vernacular forms of either tradition (Uddin, 2016, 2021).

This article does not offer any fixed definition of Islamic Socialism but considers a range of historical, variegated and contradictory expressions that combined economic ideas with spiritual beliefs to address socio-economic inequalities, privatisation of land and redistribution of wealth.⁷ Although historical studies have framed the relationship between Muslims and the Left in South Asia as part of a broader politics of anticolonialism or nationalism, this paper explores how historians have understood Islamic Socialism in three main areas: time, space, and ideas. The first section offers a brief overview of Islamic Socialism in South Asia and its current status in historiography. Moving on, the article considers writing on Islamic Socialism across the colonial and postcolonial eras, the network ideas travelled through, and the translations and re-workings of ideas of God, property and class struggle in these discourses. In the penultimate section, I map subaltern Islamic Socialism as a new field of investigation. The article concludes by situating the politics of Islamic Socialism in South Asia within broader histories of emancipation and decolonisation across the Global South.

2 | A BRIEF HISTORY OF ISLAMIC SOCIALISM IN 20TH CENTURY SOUTH ASIA

Much scholarship on Islam and the Left focuses on communities and spaces outside South Asia, more specifically on Muslims in Communist countries (Tasar, 2017; Tuna, 2017) Southeast Asian Marxists (Crawford, 2019; Fogg, 2019a, 2019b; Hassan, 2005; Hongxuan, 2018, 2020; Sidel, 2021; Subijanto, 2017) Arab Socialism (Bardawil, 2020; Guirguis, 2020; Hanna & Gardner, 1969; Salem, 2020; Sing, 2018) and on Ali Shariati's translations and writings (Dabashi, 2005; Davari & Saffari, 2022; Rahnama, 2014; Saffari, 2017). Yet, Muslims are deeply imbricated in the emergence of Left politics in South Asia and some of the earliest articulations of the politics of Islamic Socialism emerged from the region.

In 1912, Mushir Hosain Kidwai wrote the classic text *Islam and Socialism*, in which he attempted to establish a long history of Islamic Socialism.⁸ He traced the advent of it to Prophet Muhammad and concluded the book with a vision of an Asiatic future that would "revolutionise the History and probably also the Geography of the World" (Kidwai, 1912). The text influenced anti-colonial and progressive Indonesian Muslims like H.O.S Tjokroaminoto who heavily "plagiarised" substantial passages of it for his popular book "Islam dan Sosialisma" (Fogg, 2019a). Hasrat Mohani, one of the organisers of the first Indian Communist Conference in 1920 Kanpur, declared himself "a Sufi man of faith (Sufi *momin*) and a Communist Muslim, whose chosen path was revolution (*inqilab*) and unworldliness (*darveshi*)" (C.M Naim, 2013). In the Urdu journal *Urdu-e-Mu'alla*, Mohani explored the radical possibilities of politically combining understandings of Islam and Socialism in several essays titled *Communism aur Hindustan*, *Socialism aur Abul Kalam Azad* and *Socialism aur Islam* (Ansari, 1977; Habibuddin, 1988). One of the earliest translations of the Communist Manifesto was in Urdu, appearing in the 1927 issue of anti-colonial and pan-Islamic weekly, *Al-Hilal*, published by Maulana Abu'l-Kalam Azad (Karat, 1999).⁹ The translator declared his interest in modified Communism in the preface: "the path of truth and reward cannot be one of extremes (*ifraat o tafrit*), it is always the middle path", most likely alluding to the Quranic references of Muslims as the "middle nation".¹⁰ Chaudhury Afzal Haq, one of the founders of the Majlis-i-Ahrar-ul-Islam party in Punjab in 1929, argued that the religious scholar, Shah Waliullah, was the Muslim predecessor to Karl Marx (Haq, 1968) and denounced opponents of Islamic Socialism of possessing the "mentality of a bandit" (Ghaznavi, 1978).

Discursive engagements with Islamic Socialism continued in postcolonial South Asia.¹¹ In the 1950s, Khalifa Abdul Hakim, the Director of the Institute of Islamic Culture in Pakistan, wrote a lengthy treatise contrasting Islamic Socialism with Russian Communism (Hakim, 1951). Writings on the subject intensified in the 1960s. *Nusrat*, the weekly magazine of the left-leaning People's Party of Pakistan, issued regular articles on the topic. The discourse also shifted during this period from "*Islam aur Socialism*" (Islam and Socialism) to "*Islami Socialism*" (Islamic Socialism), with emphasis placed less on difference and more on the unities between both traditions. In October 1966, on a blazing red and green cover, *Nusrat* ran a "*khas number*" (special issue) on Islamic Socialism with over 20 contributions, including writers using pseudonyms like "*Jadid Musulman*" (modern Muslim) and "*Khud-dar Musulman*" (self-sufficient

Muslim) (Nusrat, 1966). In 1967, Ghulam Ahmed Parvez, a Muslim modernist intellectual, wrote "*Mao Ze Tung aur Quran*" (Mao Tse-Tung and Quran) advocating for "Islamic Communes", which were indirectly modelled on Chinese communes (Malik, 1971; Qasmi, 2014).

Islamic Socialism was not simply a textual discourse; it informed the political activities of Muslims involved in Left politics. During the colonial period, Muslims motivated by intellectual and affective attachments to both Islam and Marxism helped to found trade unions, Left parties, and revolutionary movements such as the Workers and Peasants Party, Communist Party of India, and Ghadar Movement. Maulana Azad Subhani, who led the anti-colonial *garha* (handwoven cloth) movement in Kanpur in the 1920s and 1930s, espoused the unity of Islam and Socialism in his writings and speeches (Gooptu, 2001). In the postcolonial period, Maulana Bhashani, leader of the National Awami Party and a major political figure and Muslim *pir* (Sufi saint) of the subcontinent, called on his disciples to destroy capitalism and establish Islamic Socialism (Uddin, 2016). Similar practices were later seen in Punjab and the Frontier Provinces in the early 1970s (Ali & Raza, 2022; Raza, 2022).

Despite the vibrant relationships between Islam and Left politics in South Asia, the question of what kind of new cultures, communities, and lifeworlds emerged from these encounters has generated insufficient analysis.¹² Scholarly preoccupations have been directed towards Islamic reform and modernism (Ahmad, 1967; Robinson, 1997; Tareen, 2020; Zaman, 2012, 2018), the religious cosmopolitanism of 'ulama' in exile (Alavi, 2015), and liberal influences on Muslim thought (Devji & Kazmi, 2017; Sartori, 2014). Islamic Socialism is either or a secondary concern in these investigations. Similarly, despite opening histories of the Left to questions of caste (More, 2020; Shaikh, 2021), gender (Lomba, 2018), and language (Gupta, 2021; Shaikh, 2011), and acknowledgement of the centrality of Muslim characters in origins of the Left, Islam remains "incidental" to those narratives (Caron & Dasgupta, 2016).

The few references to 'Islamic Socialism' in historical scholarship suggest ambivalence about its usage, possibly for a number of reasons. The term ('Islamic Socialism') obscures the range of Muslim engagement with the left in South Asia, particularly in cases where Islam played a negligible role in the intellectual formulation and political practice of Muslim subjects (Ansari, 1990; Chattopadhyay, 2011). Many have understood the combination of Islamic and socialist ideas as instantiations of "Islamic egalitarianism" and part of theological discourses on "socio-economic justice," unrelated to socialist political thought. The challenge posed to conventional studies of Islam and Marxism for thinking about agency, authority, and sites of knowledge production might also further explain the uncertainty about how to interpret this possible combination. Recent scholarship calling for more "specific" yet "capacious" understandings of socialism (More, 2020) and "exploratory" discourses of Islam (Ahmed, 2016) opens up the possibility of new investigations into the relationship between both traditions.

3 | ISLAMIC SOCIALISM IN COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL TIMES

The relationship between Islam and the Left in 20th century South Asia was shaped by different conjunctures in global and local politics, in particular, the interaction of socialist internationalism with anti-colonial organising, and thereafter, anti-authoritarian politics until the mid-1970s.¹³ The form and content of the relationship developed and changed through encounters with Bolshevik internationalism, Third World socialism, and Black Maoism. Muslim students, political activists, ulama and Sufi saints, mobile labourers, and exilic communities, who travelled to and within socialist geographies, and participated in transregional Left or anticolonial networks generated progressive ideas and politics and cultivated Left activity in South Asia (Ramnath, 2011; Raza, 2020; Raza, Roy and Zachariah, 2015; Saikia, 2016, 2017; Stolte, 2021). Circulating global ideas and practices of equality, freedom and justice transformed in their encounter with local vernaculars. The Islamic reform movement of the late 19th and 20th century was central to this febrile atmosphere. Reformist emphasis on human agency, history as a creative and open-ended process, and adaptability of Islamic traditions opened space for emancipatory politics, both internally, and in combination with other traditions (Nandini Gooptu, 2001; Robinson, 2008; Tareen, 2013).

Humayun Ansari's pioneering text *The Emergence of Socialist Thought among North Indian Muslims*, tracing the development of two generations of Muslim socialists in colonial India, explores this relationship between Islamic

reform, socialist internationalism and anticolonial politics (Ansari, 1990). Later studies have since built upon and expanded our understanding of Muslim Left internationalism, pan-Islamist movements and global anti-imperialist networks such as the Ghadar Party during this period (Ramnath, 2011; Raza, 2020; Tirmizey, 2018). Ansari makes several key arguments about how Muslims become socialists. First, Muslim modernist beliefs in rationality, science and progress as expressed by Sayyid Ahmad Khan, the renowned 19th century Delhi Muslim reformer, were instrumental in Muslim interaction with, and responsiveness to, socialist thought – understood by Ansari as a Western tradition, whose essence, scope and meaning were already well-established. Second, early socialist articulations occurred when Muslim *muhajirs* (travelers) encountered Bolshevik revolutionaries and institutions across Soviet Central Asia.¹⁴ These interactions were formative in the muhajir's "transfer of allegiance" from Pan-Islamism to socialism. Ansari's third argument is that proper and recognizable socialist politics only emerged in the mid-1930s with a new generation of Muslim Socialists, who became members of the Communist Party and the Progressive Writers Association, if not completely abandoned.

Central to Ansari's analysis is the notion of "conversion", a process where South Asian pan-Islamists lost faith in Islam's ability to respond to their individual or communal needs and switched to Marxism to better guide their lives. However, it is in the interstices of this transition that we find articulations of Islamic Socialist politics. Ansari is unable to ignore the fact that the movement from Islam to Socialism was not an absolute, unilinear, or uniform process. Some of the muhajirs and other Muslim intellectuals expressed their belief in the unity of Islam and Bolshevism. A prominent example is Maulvi Barkatullah Bhopali, a pan-Islamist, Ghadar Movement member, and traveller to Moscow. Bhopali wrote in the 1919 pamphlet *Bolshevism and Islamic Body Politik* about the lines of solidarity between Islam and Communism's opposition to European capitalism and argued for the latter opposition to be also treated as divinely inspired. Similar ideas were expressed by individuals deeply involved in the Khilafat movement, who saw parallels between socialist ideas of wealth redistribution and Islamic obligations of *zakat* (charity tax) and *bait-ul-mal* (distribution of revenue). Ansari interprets these attempts as a "reconciliation" between a stagnant tradition (Islam) and a dynamic one (Marxism), which held out the "best hope for survival" in the modern world (Ansari, 1990). Articulations of Islamic Socialism are reduced to political convenience, the Muhajirs' poor grasp of socialist theory and the 'emotional stickiness' of Islam. Ansari describes the transfer from pan-Islamist to Left politics as an "emotional" move, and thus, unstable; "emotional" is understood as the opposite of an educated choice. Ansari's analysis mirrors M.N Roy and Communist Party's dismissal of the muhajirs' beliefs during that period. Although some Muhajirs founded the first Indian Communist Party in exile with M.N Roy in 1920, and others went on to establish Left associations and parties, Ansari asserts that "atheistic socialism," the authoritative version for him, only emerged with a later generation of Muslim socialists whose elite sensibilities and modern education allowed them to grasp "socialist theory" in full.

Similar prejudices and Marxian telos can be found in Suchetana Chattopadhyay's important study of the early Muslim communists in Bengal in the 1920s (Chattopadhyay, 2011). Chattopadhyay investigates the "transformation" of pan-Islamists to class-based political agents and their rejection of emancipatory Islam. Her book traces the early political career of Muzaffar Ahmad, a founder of the Workers and Peasants Party, who, alongside other members of the Muslim intelligentsia, helped establish a strong Communist presence in Bengal. Ahmad, who arrived at Calcutta in the early 1910s, transitions from a "devout Muslim", involved in the anti-colonial Muslim politics of the Khilafat movement and invested in securing "special privileges" for his community, into a Communist in the late 1920s. Chattopadhyay, like Ansari, recognizes that the "transformation" was at times, partial and incomplete. For example, one of Muzaffar Ahmad's closest friends, Kutubuddin Ahmed, a trade unionist for *khansamas* (cooks) also active in the dock and jute workers' movement, was drawn to both Al-Afghani's pan-Islamist writings and Marxist literature, and articulated a "concoction of diverse though overlapping ideologies" (Chattopadhyay, 2011). Chattopadhyay, however, is unable to find anything transformative or radical in this creative interplay of Islamic and socialist ideas, but only the frightening potential lapse into communal politics.

Both Ansari and Chattopadhyay's work interpret Islam and Socialism as discrete and tightly bound traditions of thought and show Islam being eventually rejected by Muslims active in Left politics. Once Muslims understood

Socialism, they became aware of the shortcomings of Islam as outmoded, false consciousness, or limited in its emancipatory possibilities. Other historians have differently interpreted this interaction between Islam and Socialism, identifying porousness and malleability in both systems of thought during this period. Maia Ramnath argued that pan-Islamism, socialism and anti-colonialism were not “ideological monoliths”, but rather “heteroglossic discourses” with comparable ideas and positions on equality, freedom and anti-imperialism. The Ghadar Party and Pan-Islamist political programs shared similar goals and outcomes, and their members often moved between movements. Ramnath suggests that interpretations of Muslim engagement with the left can be seen in more open-ended ways than “rejection” or “transfer” from one set of ideas to another. She shows how both Maulvi Barkatullah Bhopali and Maulana ‘Ubaydullah Sindhi saw Islam and Socialism as, if not completely interchangeable, at least “eminently compatible”. Ramnath argues that both figures “seamlessly” wove together political vocabularies, images and practices from both traditions (Ramnath, 2011).

The interwar period appears in historical scholarship as a moment of opening for progressive Islamic politics that closes with the collapse of the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement, with independence forcing a more violent and antagonistic relationship between Islam and Socialism. However, writings on postcolonial South Asia, especially the rich scholarship examining progressive struggles against state authoritarianism and political contestations over Islam in pre-1971 Pakistan, demonstrate both the continuation and transformation of Islamic Socialist politics. Saadia Toor’s pioneering book, one of the first comprehensive studies of Left politics in the post-independence period, argues against Islam as a fixed political category, suggesting instead that it was a “deeply contested ideological field that was widely and creatively interpreted by a range of actors” (Toor, 2011). Her work shows how while some groups offered deeply conservative visions, others challenged the state’s claims on Islamic Socialism, presenting their own politics of redistributive and just futures. In the 1960s, the discourse on Islamic Socialism flourished among Left political parties, built at the intersection of Afro-Asian and Maoist internationalism and anti-authoritarian struggles in Pakistan. Toor notes a shift between colonial discourses of Islamic Socialism, which she argues were deployed by Muslim modernists not comfortable with Communism, and the postcolonial articulations of a progressive “secular” left, for whom Islamic Socialism was a vernacularised version of Marxism that could be used to appeal to popular religious sensibilities and challenge the authority of the Jama’at-i-Islami. Toor shows how progressive left actors strategically employed the writings of Muhammad Iqbal, the archetypal Muslim nationalist, drawing a relationship between his ideas of the revitalisation of Islam and a socialist project to support their politics. This analysis does not necessarily work for figures like Maulana Bhashani, who suffered none of the discomforts of the Muslim modernists, nor concerns of legitimacy like the ‘secular’ left did. In another work, Kamran Asdar Ali notes that the discourse on Islam was not just a conversation between Left actors and Islamists but an ongoing internal left debate. Ali offers an example of the fractious correspondence between Sajjad Zaheer, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Pakistan, and Ahmed Nadeem Qasmi, the General Secretary of the All-Pakistan Progressive Writers Association, in which Zaheer critiqued Qasmi’s reading of a revolutionary history of Islam and its role as a third force between Communism and Capitalism (Ali, 2015).

Recent studies, reflecting broader scholarly interests, move away from elite agency and text-centred discourses to focus on Islamic Socialism as part of subaltern religio-political movements and praxis (Caron & Dasgupta, 2016; Caron, 2016; Uddin, 2016, 2021, forthcoming; Raza, 2022; Ali & Raza, 2022). Uddin examines the politics of Maulana Bhashani, a popular peasant and worker leader in colonial South Asia, in particular his development of a subaltern and Third Worldist Islamic Socialism, which threatened state actors and the Jama’at-i-Islami in Pakistan in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Arguing against the dismissal of “grassroots activism” in the intellectual histories of Islam, Uddin demonstrates how subaltern movements and lifeworlds were a vibrant and dynamic space for re-conceptualising and producing new forms of knowledge. Bhashani’s politics was built out of his everyday relationship with peasants and workers as their *pir* and political leader as well as his encounters with militant Third World Maoist internationalism. Bhashani created new politics of Islamic Socialism that translated and reconceptualized ideas and practices from both traditions such as *ummah* (community), labour, and property, which were instantiated through village festivals, visions, and Third World congresses. This Uddin argues, was neither a weak copy, a search for a middle ground, nor a recovery

of a pristine past. Bhashani engaged in prefigurative politics that was creative, open-ended, and able to work with contradictions. His transformation of the *ba'yah* (religious oath) into a written oath that pledged to destroy capitalism and establish socialism disrupted the conventional hierarchical nature of the *pir-murid* relationship to broker revolutionary solidarity between Marxists and *murids* (disciples), forging unity across different lifeworlds (Uddin, 2016, 2021).

Similar parallels can also be found in the life of "Sufi" Sibghatullah Mazari, a leading member of the Maoist-led Mazdoor Kisan Party (MKP) who developed a theory and practice of "mystical Marxism" in the context of peasant struggle against landlords in 1970s South Punjab (Ali & Raza, 2022; Raza, 2022). According to Raza, Sibghatullah's articulations were based on the belief of "equivalence" between Marxism and Sufism's commitment to *haq* (truth) through "de-mystifying" the material world. One way that Sibghatullah enacted his politics was through his relationship with apprentices in his workshop, who were instructed to write "revolutionary" poems and essays prefaced with a belief in the unity of God and verses of the Quran. Raza likens Sibghatullah's relationship with his apprentices to a *pir-muridi* relationship, drawing comparisons with Bhashani, although it is unclear whether anyone involved ascribed that status to it. Despite Raza's focus on the theoretical correspondence between Islam and Marxism, Sibghatullah's Islamic Socialist articulations appear to be primarily motivated by pragmatism. The Maoist emphasis on the "vernacular" meant that figures like Sibghatullah were "driven to Sufism" as a method for organising the masses for the class struggle (Raza, 2022).

Other writings show that the politics of Islamic Socialism was not always progressive. The Majlis-i-Ahrar-ul-Islam in Punjab persecuted Ahmadis at the same time as they pursued Islamic Socialism as an antidote to the evils of capitalism (Ghaznavi, 1978; Qasmi, 2014). Additionally, the state and other parties employed Islamic Socialist rhetoric at various points to divert people away from Communist politics, which they argued was inherently morally decadent. In the Cold War context, Islamic Socialism was co-opted by state and capitalist interests (Malik, 1971) and weaponised against the Left, with activists and supporters branded as un-Islamic, blasphemous, and anti-nationals (Toor, 2011). The myriad social, political and cultural lives of Islamic Socialism, however, remain under-analysed, and future studies may further illuminate its ebbs and flows.

4 | NETWORKS OF ISLAMIC SOCIALISM

This section turns to the vectors of Islamic Socialism bodies, groups and spaces through which ideas and practices emerged, travelled and transformed. Scholarship reveals the critical influence of figures such as Shah Waliullah, Mohammad Iqbal, Mahmud al-Hasan and Abu Dharr al-Ghifari on Islamic socialist articulations. Their challenges to the status quo, activity during periods of crisis, and creative hermeneutics inspired in turn various other Muslim actors engaged in social and political struggles. Shah Waliullah, the 18th century North Indian reformer, is a towering presence in the history of Indian Islam. As part of his effort to revitalize Islam, he argued for dynamic interpretation of the Quran according to the socio-political context using the method of *ijtihad* (independent interpretation), intellectual pluralism as opposed to dogmatic attachment to the canonical legal schools, and reconciled transcendental and immanent views of God (Ahmad, 1964, 1969; Ahmed, 2014; Stephens, 2018; Tareen, 2017; Zaman, 2012). Waliullah also made scathing critiques of the ruling elite, arguing that "Islam grants no license to any class to compel others to remain as hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Ahmed, 2014), and gave his followers the instruction "*fakk kull nizam*" – unravelling of every order (Tareen, 2017).¹⁵ Shah Waliullah's work of combining multiple traditions, working through contradictions, and demanding socio-economic justice offered a model for subsequent Islamic Socialists, 'Ubaydullah Sindhi and Maulana Bhashani.¹⁶ Tareen and Zaman, respectively, show how Sindhi's ideas of "*inqilab*" (revolution) and "*adl*" (justice) were derived from his own extensive commentary on Waliullah's writings. This "revolutionary" reading of Waliullah divides scholars, from those who see it as either a distortion (Ahmad, 1969), one possible reading (Ahmed, 2014), or a faithful representation of Waliullah's critique of Mughal feudalism (Zaman, 2012). Muhammad Iqbal's writings also animate debate; his poetic exchanges between Lenin and God are for an affirmation

of a possible relationship, while others consider it as a rejection of Marxism and of the inherent sufficiency of Islam (Ansari, 1990; Ghaznavi, 1978; Sevea, 2012; Tareen, 2013; Toor, 2011).

These writings suggest that many Islamic Socialists were drawing on Muslim thinkers for their model of socialism, yet their inspiration wasn't entirely grounded in Islamic traditions. 'Ubaydullah Sindhi's 7 month stay in the Soviet Union had a "significant effect" on his understanding of revolutionary politics (Zaman, 2012), Maulvi Barkatullah Bhopali's publications on the correspondence between Islam and Bolshevism followed his meetings with Lenin (Ramnath, 2011) and Maulana Bhashani devoted a chapter to Mao in the only book he purportedly authored (Uddin, 2016).

Waliullah further illustrates the connection to Deoband, one of the foremost Islamic seminaries in the colonial period and thereafter. Qasim Zaman notes that although socio-economic justice was never a central concern for the ulama, a strain of Deobandis was drawn to anticapitalist ethics because of their anti-colonial activism (Zaman, 2012). Islamic Socialists such as Maulana Bhashani, Abd al-Rahman Popalzai and 'Ubaydullah Sindhi were at Dar ul-Ulum in Deoband around the same time and dedicated students of Shaykh-al Hind and Mahmud al-Hasan (Hartung, 2016). Sindhi, the most intimate with his teacher, was an envoy for al-Hasan in Afghanistan and helped to form a network of Deobandi graduates who could be enlisted for anticolonial politics. Hartung writes that al-Hasan, influenced by a growing number of students from low-caste and rural backgrounds and their understanding of Islam, constructed "Deobandiyat", a worldview premised on ideas of equality, anti-accumulation and common ownership (Hartung, 2016). These Deobandi socialists were also Sufis, part of older devotional traditions, infrastructures and institutions, which represented a communitarian ethos based on "mutual reciprocity", "service", and "anti-territory" (Caron, 2016). The entanglement of Sufism with Deobandi anticolonialism facilitated a radically egalitarian understanding and practice of Islam. The *piri-muridi* relationship was one of the central Sufi institutions used to mobilise people for socialist politics as part of their service to their Sufi master, and ultimately to God (Raza, 2022; Uddin, 2016).

Different geographies within and beyond South Asia were central for the production of the relationship between Islam and the Left. Ansari notes how North Indian *qasbahs* (towns) centred around Muslim institutions and forms of sociability, were home for many Muslim socialists (Ansari, 1990). Belonging to respectable Ashraf backgrounds, these men were steeped in Islamic knowledge traditions and cultures and also had access to modern western education. Ansari argues that their *qasbah* upbringing instilled sensibilities that drove them towards socialist politics, even if they were to later explicitly reject Islam from their politics. For Shi'i socialists like Ali Sardar Jafri, stories of martyrdom enacted in processions and rituals during Muharram in the *qasbahs* of Awadh and Uttar Pradesh attuned them from an early age to ideas of tyranny and justice. Pandey and Gooptu expand on this, noting that *qasbahs* were not only important in the development of elite Muslim politics but also a space from which a religiously empowered artisan community emerged, whose knowledge of Islam was shaped by their livelihoods (Gooptu, 2001; Pandey, 1990). James Caron and Ananya Dasgupta's articles shift attention from areas traditionally assumed to be the heartlands of Muslim South Asia to the "subaltern geographies" of the Indo-Afghan borderlands and rural East Bengal; spaces that they argue enable radical cosmologies and "utopian liberation politics" (Caron & Dasgupta, 2016). In East Bengal, the intimate relationship between rural economies and popular forms of devotional life shaped more progressive Islamic interpretations of labour (Dasgupta, 2013; Uddin, 2016; Uddin, forthcoming). Dasgupta, referring to popular self-improvement tracts aimed at producing the 'ideal peasant,' demonstrates how cultivation was transformed into a symbol of worship and the market a site of "deception" and "misrepresentation" of labour (Dasgupta, 2013).

The histories of anti-colonial and socialist Islam spill outside the boundaries of the region. Yasmin Saikia found that Muslim revolutionaries "crisscrossed through Central, East, and West Asia; Europe; and North America, calling their travels *hijrat* or migration and building networks for emancipating the Indian people" (Saikia, 2016). Other scholarship shows how Bolshevik Central Asia emerged as a site of immense political, intellectual and affective value for Muslim socialists, even for those who did not end up going there (Chattopadhyay, 2011; Raza, 2020; Stolte, 2021). Additionally, the Indo-Afghan frontiers, as well as Afghanistan itself, were important sites of Islamist Socialist politics and imaginaries (Caron, 2016; Saikia, 2016), described as "uncolonisable", "*azad*" (free) (Saikia, 2016), and the "Japan of South Asia" (Ramnath, 2011) by Muslim socialists. This work suggests new ways scholars can develop the

relationship of South Asian Islam to Afghanistan contra to the overwhelming studies on terrorism, tribalism or ethnic nationalism. However, our understanding of the different geographies of Islamic Socialism remains underdeveloped. For example, we know very little about the relationship between Islam and the Left in South India, where religious, caste and communist traditions structured the political discourse in different ways, or the Muslim futures evoked by Maoist China, whose literature “flooded” Pakistani book markets in the 1960s (Iqtidar, 2011).

5 | CONTRADICTIONS? GOD, CLASS AND PROPERTY IN ISLAM

Islam's entanglement with socialist politics in South Asia meant the production of a rich body of vernacular knowledge and traditions. Ideas of “*taraqqi*” (progress) “*azadi*” (freedom), “*zulm*” (tyranny), “*samyavad*” (socialism), “*sarmaya parasti*” (worship of capital), and “*wahadat insan*” (unity of humanity) were creatively and differently translated, acquiring new histories and meanings (Bose, 2011; Hartung, 2016; Saikia, 2016, 2017; Tareen, 2017). Maulana Bhashani, for instance, offered a dynamic interpretation of “*sarbahara*” (have-nots) that wove together sacred and secular notions of time and history to imbue peasants and workers with a new powerful identity. But how did Islamic Socialists think about the fundamental contradictions of God, class, and property between Islam and Marxism? The scholarship reveals that even if many Islamic Socialists understood these ideas to be in tension, they re-imagined them in ways congruous with socialist politics (Zaman, 2012).

Socialist ontologies emerged from the creative hermeneutics of Islamic texts and traditions. ‘Ubaydullah’ Sindhi interpreted the Quran as a revolutionary “manifesto” containing the promise of “proletariat emancipation” (Tareen, 2017). According to Tareen, although Sindhi maintained that his writings were efforts at recovering the original message of the Quran, his commentaries represented a radical departure from traditional exegesis. Sindhi offered “novel” and “unexpected” readings of Quranic chapters. Traditional commentaries interpreted *Surah al-Muzammil* (The Enwrapped One) as a chapter about the Prophet's exacting spiritual discipline, but Sindhi read it as a “practical manual for an aspiring revolutionary”, instructing believers to organize and gather “comrades” for a Quranic revolutionary party (Tareen, 2017). In other chapters, Sindhi located divine warnings against a “capital worshipping mindset”, “surplus value” and “elitism”. The Quran was not the only source used to re-imagine God, and His relationship to His creation. Some thinkers invoked the Sufi concept “*wahdat al-wujud*” (unity of being), defining God as the only reality and everything else a manifestation of Him, alongside the concept of “*tawhid*” (oneness) to describe an interconnected system between God, man and nature. God was described as “nourisher” of the universe who did not distinguish on grounds of race, gender, religion, ethnicity, and cared for all (Ali & Raza, 2022; Caron, 2016; Raza, 2022; Uddin, 2016; Zaman, 2012). Muslim thinkers such as Abul Hashem, Azad Subhani and Maulana Bhashani expanded God's qualities in their writings on “*rabubiyat*” (lordship), where they argued that as God's viceregents, humans should emulate His qualities of love and care through social service, labour and treating nature as a common (Caron, 2016; Uddin, 2016).

On the issue of property, Islamic Socialists expressed strong anti-accumulation sentiments and posited redistribution as a fundamental right of the poor. Some argued that as God was the owner of everything, and man simply the caretaker, the concept of private ownership was non-existent or extremely limited (Banerjee, 2020; Uddin, 2016). Others like Hasrat Mohani made distinctions between “personal” and “private” property, arguing that while Muslims were allowed personal possessions, this did not include the gifts from God of air, water, and land, which were available for the common good (Dasgupta, 2013). Qasim Zaman asserts that Deobandi scholars Seoharwi and Popalzai did not support an absolute right to private property. They argued that land should be used for the wider benefit of the community, and the state should regulate the size of landholdings (Zaman, 2012). Although many Islamic Socialists upheld the right to private property, some believed *zakat* (charitable tax on wealth) to be the more powerful obligation, with the poor entitled to a share of the wealth of the rich (Dasgupta, 2013; Zaman, 2012). Seoharwi went further and argued that if conditions necessitated, the state could forcibly seize assets from the wealthy even if *zakat* was already paid. Religious scholars active in movements maintained more radical views on redistribution, in certain cases, sanctioning theft from the rich by the poor (Zaman, 2012).

Islamic Socialists may not have deployed the Marxist language of class conflict but instead used Islamic notions of “*zulm*” (injustice) and “*adl*” (justice) to critique economic inequalities and class differences. According to Hartung, Mahmud al-Hasan, the Deobandi anti-colonial scholar, understood *zulm* as a transgression of God's plan for His creation, which was centred on ideas of justice, beauty, and equality. *Zulm*, therefore, had to be repelled by Muslims wherever they encountered it (Hartung, 2016). ‘*Adl*’ was secured through human struggle on earth as much as through Judgement Day (Zaman, 2012). Tareen observed in Sindhi's writings the idea of a permanent struggle between the “oppressed class yearning for justice and freedom and an oppressive class of elites” (Tareen, 2017). Sindhi described the intellectual elite and capitalists as the two main groups of oppressors, and presented jihad as the legitimate means to end tyranny and restore the rights of the oppressed. Despite the revolutionary language, Zaman argued that Sindhi shared the conservatism of other religious scholars and rejected direct action by peasants against landlords (Zaman, 2012). This was not true for Islamic Socialists involved in peasant and worker movements, such as Abd al-Rahman Popalzai in the North West Frontier Provinces and Maulana Bhashani in Bengal and Pakistan (Caron, 2016; Uddin, 2016). In the 1960s, Bhashani explicitly called for direct confrontation against landlords and the state, radical land reform and nationalisation of industries (Uddin, 2016).

The configurations of God, class and property by Sindhi and others were not intended to dissolve the contradictions between Islam and Marxism, but to highlight how Islam could also fulfil the promises of progressive social change. Scholars have primarily examined the religious writings of figures like Sindhi, Seoharwi and Popalzai to understand the legitimacy and relationship of these ideas within a broader Islamic legal framework. By reducing the discussion of Islam and Left to a question of law, though, we miss the full diversity of thinking in this area. Ideas of Islamic Socialism were not only contained in religious writings. Recent attention to Bengali and Pashto poetry, popular vernacular periodicals, agrarian rituals and social movements has expanded the notions of authority and sources of knowledge production in both Islam and Marxism.

6 | SUBALTERN ISLAMIC SOCIALISM?

In *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci noted the growing importance of religion in political life with the entry of the “uneducated masses”. He argued that this subaltern faith was creative, autonomous and distinctive from elite articulations of religion and contained within it the potential for a radical political transformation (Green, 2018). In light of this, what was the role of poor peasants and working-class Muslims in developing politics that spoke for them? Did subaltern Muslims hold specific and different conceptions of Islam to elites, and in what ways did that shape their understanding of work, equality and freedom? Can we talk of subaltern politics of Islamic Socialism in South Asia? These questions remain unanswered, in part due to difficulty in locating material and the historians' compulsion for coherent narratives.

Existing scholarship suggests why studies of subaltern Muslim politics might yield alternative and exciting insights into the history of Islamic Socialism in South Asia. Nandini Gooptu's work on the urban poor in industrial towns like Kanpur in early 20th century Uttar Pradesh illustrates how socialist ideas did not just emerge from encounters with Bolsheviks or “western” literature but also from intimate contact with the Muslim poor during the Khilafat movement. A section of ‘*ulama*’ as well as Sufis such as Azad Subhani and Hasrat Mohani advocated a ‘militant egalitarian version of Islam’ based on working-class Muslim experiences and laboring conditions, believing the combination of Islam and Socialism as “pivotal” to politics of freedom. Their articulations of Islamic Socialism upset “better off Muslims” who recognised the novelty and dangers of this unity for them (Gooptu, 2001). Suchetana Chattopadhyay intimates the importance of a growing Muslim labour force in Calcutta for the pan-Islamist politics of the Khilafat movement. Muslim Khilafat leaders confronted with working-class constituencies shifted their attention to trade unionism and combined their interests in Islamic internationalism with a strong labour agenda. Brief glimpses are offered of the subaltern lives that shaped this radically egalitarian politics in Chattopadhyay's anecdotal accounts of the Muslim working-class female unionist who fought running battles with the police and the East Bengali Muslim pilgrims

who spoke excitedly about the solidarity between Bolsheviks and cultivators (Chattopadhyay, 2011). However, the (meetings of the) social, religious and material worlds of subaltern Muslims are under-analysed as sites of knowledge production. Similar neglect occurs in scholarly work on the 1920 Hijrat movement – the migration of primarily rural communities from Punjab and the Frontiers to Afghanistan during the Khilafat movement. Despite strong anti-colonial egalitarian currents underlying the migration, scholars have interpreted Hijrat as the action of a politically naive community, moved by “emotion” and under the control of religious leaders (Ansari, 1990; Minault, 1982). The content, depth and rationalisations of these emotions, however, are unknown. Finally, Qasim Zaman's analysis of Popalzai's socialist rhetoric notes it as a product of his involvement in peasant struggles but does not interrogate the dynamics of the interaction between Popalzai and peasants, and how this might have shaped his understanding of religion and socialism (Zaman, 2012). Oversights notwithstanding, existing scholarship clearly indicates the integral role of subaltern communities in shaping articulations of Islamic Socialism, and the tangible material sacrifices they made for its actualisation.

Recent scholarship on caste, class and labour among South Asian Muslims points to other ways to investigate subaltern Islamic Socialist histories. Joel Lee's excellent work in North India combines history and ethnography to demonstrate how the experiences of discrimination by low-caste Muslims from the Halalkhor caste shaped Islamic ethics of care, equality and dignity of manual labour (Lee, 2021). Uddin, similarly, in a forthcoming article, investigates the articulation of a radical anti-hierarchical and egalitarian politics in Ahl-i-Hadith Islamic texts in early 20th century Bengal that narrated histories of working-class prophets, rejected respectability and advocated a “felt Islam” (Uddin, forthcoming). Further research on castes, classes, social movements, and popular cultures would help to expand our understanding of the everyday context of the relationship between Islam and the Left.

7 | CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to sketch out a new object of enquiry – Islamic Socialism in the twentieth century South Asia – through a review of the historical scholarship on Muslim engagement with socialist politics. Thus far, work on Islamic Socialism constitutes an uneven body of scholarship, with the topic often a minor focus in larger studies on anticolonial politics, modern Islamic thought, or internationalism. Despite its marginal status, historians have illuminated the conjunctures in which articulations of Islamic Socialism acquired force; first anticolonial politics, then a decolonising project for the Left. Their work also sheds light on the movement of ideas and practices through a range of actors, networks and spaces that included Deobandis, Sufis, qasbahs, frontiers, Afghanistan and China. Finally, they highlight how Islamic Socialists configured ideas about God's relationship to his creation in ways that provided openings for socialist interpretations.

What value does Islamic Socialism hold for scholars in South Asia and beyond given these ambiguities, contradictions and controversies? Islamic Socialism offers a critical study of universals, expanding our understanding of the possibilities, limitations, dynamics and characters of Islam and Marxism. What does the entry of God do for socialist politics? What new visions of ‘political community’ does it generate for those involved, even non-believers? Islamic Socialism offers new perspectives on the practices of lived vernacular Marxism from marginalised Muslim communities. Additionally, Islamic Socialism allows scholars to trace the relationship of ideas and practices travelling across and between sites and scales and to re-think binaries such as “original” and “derivative”, “orthodoxy” and “syncretism”, and “universal” and “vernacular”. Sidaway notes how these concepts become messy for Islam when we consider that the African continent has a Muslim majority and more Arabic speakers than Arabia, the majority of Russian and Balkan Muslim populations are not descended from migrant populations, and that South Asia contains more Muslims than the Middle East (Sidaway, 2022). Similarly, Cedric Robinson mentions how Marxism “acquired historical significance in the Third World” (Robinson, 2000). Beyond Islam and Marxism, Islamic Socialism is a study of creative political possibilities and the historical conjunctures that enable them, a perspective that may be overlooked by approaching concepts with fixed understandings of their ideological goals. As much as the study of Islamic Socialism

is a study of ideas, it is also a method that brings together different disciplines, sources and methods to enable new possibilities in scholarship.

If colonialism resulted in the “thingification” of the colonised subjects, emancipation meant the ability of the people to imagine themselves into the future (Cesaire, 2000). People expressed in different ways the kinds of political institutions, cultural aesthetics and social relations they wanted as part of their free world. The revolutionary projects fused Marxist or socialist ideas with national cultural or religious traditions as a way of addressing the “peculiar uniqueness” of their context, offering emancipatory politics centred on equality, redistribution and the commons (Cesaire, 2000). Islamic Socialism was one of these revolutionary currents alongside Arab socialism, African socialism and Black Liberation Theology. A study of Islamic Socialism in 20th century South Asia offers a specific lens through which we can think about the possibilities and limitations of global emancipatory experiments and enable sharper and creative thinking about present struggles and dreams of freedom.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Debjani Bhattacharyya, Nurfadzilah Yahaya, and the two anonymous reviewers for their generous feedback. Additionally, Matt Birkinshaw and Mahvish Ahmed for intellectual support whilst writing this paper. I also benefited greatly from conversations with colleagues on the ‘*Takhayyul*’ project at University College London, and participants in the ‘*On Leadership and Authority in 20th-Century Muslim world*’ workshop at the University of Freiburg in December 2022. This study was financially supported by the Leverhulme Trust Early Career Fellowship and the ERC StG 2019 TAKHAYYUL Project (853230).

ORCID

Layli Uddin  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8177-9428>

ENDNOTES

- ¹ All political parties pledged land reform in their election manifestos, the more radical claims were made by National Awami Party-Bhashani (NAP-Bhashani) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Yet, it was only NAP-Bhashani that demanded an end to private property, whilst PPP maintained their commitment to it.
- ² Syed Hussein Alatas notes how capitalism is normalised in Islamic discourses unlike Socialism, where its distinct alien-ness to Socialist thought is emphasised by scholars and other commentators.
- ³ Left politics is broadly conceived here to talk about a range of progressive political activities; association and movements.
- ⁴ Social media offers some insight about the type of response that Islamic Socialism generates in contemporary political discourse.
- ⁵ Enrique Dussel in his discussion of Latin American Liberation Theology talks about distinctions made between ‘young/humanist’ Marx to the older and ‘dialectically materialist’ Marx. See Dussel et al. (2009).
- ⁶ The responses build to a certain extent on Stuart Hall's understanding of the term “articulations” to think about the unity of different political ideas, processes and relations: “The form of the connection that can make a unity out of two different elements, under certain historical conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute, and essential for all time.” See Lawrence Gossberg (1986) and for a more detailed overview, also see John Clarke (2015).
- ⁷ The paper will use Marxism, Socialism and Communism interchangeably, although acknowledging distinctions between and within these terms. I am partly guided by the texts I draw on that don't make such hard distinctions, but also because they are part of a tradition of thought that share common views on capital, labour, and class.
- ⁸ At the time of writing, he was training for the Bar in London and held the positions of Secretary of the Pan-Islamic Society in London and Commander of the Osmani Order in the Ottoman Empire. Kidwai wrote several important progressive texts on gender, property, swaraj and love.
- ⁹ The translator was apparently ‘Abd al-Razzaq Malihabadi’, a close friend and biographer of Abu'l-Kalam Azad, and a student of Shibli Nu'mani, founder of the Nadwat al-'Ulama'. I thank Roy Bar-Sadeh for the reference.
- ¹⁰ “‘Communism’ aur uske maqaasid”, Al-Hilal, 4 November 1927.

- ¹¹ There exists very little historical scholarship on the relationship between Islam or Muslims and the Left in postcolonial India. The predominant focus in work on Muslims and Islam is on citizenship, human rights, communal violence, and community life.
- ¹² The author is currently preparing a full-length monograph on the transnational history of Islamic Socialism in South Asia.
- ¹³ The onset of military dictatorship in Pakistan and Bangladesh, and the Soviet-Afghan war in 1978 diminished scholarly interest in Islamic Socialism as an intellectual or political force. Anti-authoritarian politics and militant movements from the 1970s onwards up to the recent Shaheen Bagh protests in India or the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement in Pakistan offers scope for consideration of the relationship between Islam and Left.
- ¹⁴ See also Raza (2020); Stolte (2021) and Ramnath (2011).
- ¹⁵ There have been slight yet important variations to this translation. Maulana Bhashani apparently interpreted the statement to mean 'destroy all political orders', interview with Syed Irfanul Bari, 2014.
- ¹⁶ I use the identity category of 'Islamic Socialists' for figures who whilst not referring to themselves as such, used the term "Islamic Socialism" to refer to their politics or committed to a discourse/politics that combined Islam and socialist politics.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, A. (1964). *Studies in Islamic culture in the Indian environment*. Clarendon Press.
- Ahmad, A. (1967). *Islamic modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857-1964*. Oxford University Press.
- Ahmad, A. (1969). *An intellectual history of Islam in India*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Ahmed, I. (2014). Islamic reform in Asia. In B. Turner & O. Salemink (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of religions in Asia* (pp. 144–157). Routledge.
- Ahmed, S. (2016). *What is Islam?* Princeton University Press.
- Alatas, S. H. (2021). *Islam and Socialism*. Translated by Sharifah Afra Alatas. Gerakbudaya Enterprise.
- Alavi, S. (2015). *Muslim cosmopolitanism in the age of empire*. Harvard University Press.
- Ali, K. A. (2015). *Communism in Pakistan: Politics and class activism, 1947-1972*. I.B.Tauris.
- Ali, N. G., & Shozab, R. (2022). Worldly Marxism: Rethinking revolution from Pakistan's peripheries. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 42(2), 489–504. <https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201x-9987970>
- Ansari, A. Y. (1977). *Hasrat Muhani: Ek Siyasi diary*. Awami Press.
- Ansari, H. (1990). *The emergence of socialist thought among North Indian Muslims, 1917-1947*. Book Traders.
- Banerjee, P. (2020). *Elementary aspects of the political: Histories from the Global South*. Theory in Forms, Duke University Press.
- Bardawil, F. A. (2020). *Revolution and disenchantment: Arab Marxism and the binds of emancipation*. Theory in Forms, Duke University Press.
- Bose, N. (2011). Muslim modernism and trans-regional consciousness in Bengal, 1911-1925: The wide world of Samyabadi. *South Asia Research*, 31(December), 231–248. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026272801103100303>
- Caron, J. (2016). Sufism and liberation across the Indo-Afghan border: 1880–1928. *South Asian History and Culture*, 7(2), 135–154. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19472498.2016.1143667>
- Caron, J., & Dasgupta, A. (2016). Popular culture, radical egalitarianism, and formations of Muslim selfhood in South Asia. *South Asian History and Culture*, 7(2), 107–116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19472498.2016.1143666>
- Cesaire, A. (2000). *Discourse on colonialism*. Monthly Review Press.
- Chattopadhyay, S. (2011). *An early Communist: Muzaffar Ahmad in Calcutta, 1913-1929*. Tulika Books.
- Clarke, J. (2015). Stuart Hall and the theory and practice of articulation. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 36(2), 275–286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2015.1013247>
- Crawford, O. (2019). *The political thought of Tan Malaka*. Thesis, University of Cambridge.
- Dabashi, H. (Ed.) (2005). *Theology of discontent: The ideological foundation of the Islamic revolution in Iran* (1st ed.). Transaction Publishers.
- Dasgupta, A. (2013). *Labors of representation: Cultivating land, self, and community among Muslims in late colonial Bengal*. Thesis. University of Pennsylvania.
- Davari, A., & Saffari, S., & Philosophy Documentation Center. (2022). Mystical solidarities: Ali Shariati and the act of translation. *Philosophy and Global Affairs*, 2(1), 91–104. <https://doi.org/10.5840/pga202283128>
- Devji, F., & Kazmi, Z. (2017). *Islam after liberalism*. Oxford University Press.
- Dussel, E., Hodgson, I. B., & Pedrozo, J. (2009). Liberation Theology and Marxism. *Rethinking Marxism*, 5(3), 50–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08935699208658023>
- Fogg, K. W. (2019a). Indonesian Islamic Socialism and its South Asian roots. *Modern Asian Studies*, 53(6), 1736–1761. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0026749x17000646>
- Fogg, K. W. (2019b). *Indonesia's Islamic revolution*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ghaznavi, M. (1978). Interaction of Islam and Socialism in the religious thought of Muslims of British India. *Journal of Central Asia*, 1(2), 69–80.

- Gooptu, N. (2001). *The politics of the urban poor in early twentieth-century India*. Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society, Cambridge University Press.
- Green, M. E. (2018). Gramsci's concept of the "simple": Religion, common sense, and the philosophy of praxis. *Rethinking Marxism*, 30(4), 525–545. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08935696.2018.1552048>
- Grossberg, L. (1986). On postmodernism and articulation: An interview with Stuart Hall. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10(2), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019685998601000204>
- Guirguis, L. (2020). *The Arab lefts: Histories and Legacies, 1950s 1970s*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Gupta, C. (2021). Vernacular Communism: "Marginal" history of Satyabhakta. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 56(23), 56–64.
- Habibuddin, S. M. (1988). Radical nationalism of Hasrat Mohani and India's quest for freedom. *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, 27(4), 60–68.
- Hakim, K. A. (1951). *Islam and Communism*. The Institute of Islamic Culture.
- Hanna, S. A., & Gardner, G. H. (1969). *Arab Socialism: A documentary survey*. E.J. Brill.
- Haq, Ch A. (1968). *Tarikh-i-Ahrrar*. Maktabah-yi Majlis-i-Ahrrar-I Islam.
- Hartung, J.-P. (2016). The praiseworthiness of divine beauty – The "Shaykh al-Hind" Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan, social justice, and Deobandiyat. *South Asian History and Culture*, 7(4), 346–369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19472498.2016.1223719>
- Hassan, R. (2005). *Local and global: Social transformation in Southeast Asia: Essays in honour of professor Syed Hussein Alatas*. Brill.
- Hongxuan, L. (2018). Sickie as crescent: Islam and Communism in The Netherlands East Indies, 1915-1927. *Studia Islamika*, 25(2), 309–350. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v25i2.5675>
- Hongxuan, L. (2020). *Ummah yet proletariat: Islam and Marxism in The Netherlands East Indies and Indonesia, 1915 - 1959*. Thesis. University of Washington.
- Iqtidar, H. (2011). *Secularizing Islamists? Jama'at-e-Islami and Jama'at-Ud-Da'wa in urban Pakistan*. South Asia across the disciplines. University of Chicago Press.
- Karat, P. (1999). *A world to win: Essays on the Communist Manifesto*. LeftWord.
- Kidwai, S. M. H. (1912). *Islam and Socialism*. Luzac and Co.
- Lee, J. (2021). *Deceptive majority: Dalits, Hinduism and underground religion*. South Asia in the Social Sciences Series, University of Cambridge Press.
- Loomba, A. (2018). *Revolutionary desires: Women, Communism, and Feminism in India*. Routledge.
- Malik, H. (1971). The spirit of capitalism and Pakistani Islam. *Contributions to Asian Studies*, 2, 59–78.
- Minault, G. (1982). *The Khilafat movement: Religious symbolism and political mobilization in India*. Oxford University Press.
- More, S. (2020). *Memoirs of a Dalit Communist: The many worlds of R.B. More*. Translated by Wandana Sonalkar. LeftWord.
- Naim, C. M. (2013). The Maulana who loved Krishna. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 48(17), 37–44.
- Nusrat (1966). *Islami socialism*. Muhammad Hanif Ramay.
- Pandey, G. (1990). *The construction of communalism in colonial North India*. Oxford University Press.
- Qasmi, A. U. (2014). *The Ahmadis and the politics of religious exclusion in Pakistan*. Anthem Press.
- Rahnema, A. (2014). *An Islamic utopian: A political biography of Ali Shariati*. I.B.Tauris.
- Ramnath, M. (2011). *Haj to utopia: How the Ghadar Movement charted global radicalism and attempted to overthrow the British empire*. University of California Press.
- Raza, A. (2020). *Revolutionary pasts: Communist internationalism in colonial India*. Cambridge University Press.
- Raza, A., Roy, F., & Zachariah, B. (Eds.) (2015). *The internationalist moment: South Asia, worlds, and world views 1917–39*. SAGE Publications India.
- Raza, S. (2022). The Sufi and the sickle: Theorizing mystical Marxism in rural Pakistan. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 64(2), 300–334. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0010417522000068>
- Robinson, C. J. (2000). *Black Marxism: The making of the Black radical tradition*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Robinson, F. (1997). Religious change and the self in Muslim South Asia since 1800. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 20(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856409708723286>
- Robinson, F. (2008). Islamic reform and modernities in South Asia. *Modern Asian Studies*, 42(2–3), 259–281. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0026749x07002922>
- Rodinson, M. (2015). *Marxism and the Muslim world. Critique, influence, change*. Zed Books.
- Saffari, S. (2017). *Beyond Shariati: Modernity, cosmopolitanism, and Islam in Iranian political thought*. Cambridge University Press.
- Saikia, Y. (2016). Uncolonizable: Freedom in the Muslim mind in colonial British India. *South Asian History and Culture*, 7(2), 117–134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19472498.2016.1143670>
- Saikia, Y. (2017). Hijrat and Azadi in Indian Muslim Imagination and practice: Connecting nationalism, internationalism, and cosmopolitanism. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 37(2), 201–212. <https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201x-4132821>
- Salem, S. (2020). *Anticolonial afterlives in Egypt: The politics of hegemony*. The Global Middle East, Cambridge University Press.
- Sartori, A. S. (2014). *Liberalism in empire: An alternative history*. University of California Press.

- Sevea, & Singh, I. (2012). *The political philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal: Islam and nationalism in late colonial India*. Cambridge University Press.
- Shaikh, J. (2011). Translating Marx: Mavali, Dalit and the making of Mumbai's working class, 1928-1935. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 46(31), 65–73.
- Shaikh, J. (2021). *Outcaste Bombay: City making and the politics of the poor*. University of Washington Press.
- Sidaway, J. D. (2022). Beyond the decolonial: Critical Muslim geographies. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20438206221121651>
- Sidel, J. T. (2021). *Republicanism, Communism, Islam: Cosmopolitan origins of revolution in Southeast Asia*. Cornell University Press.
- Sing, M. (2018). The tempestuous affair between marxism and Islam: Attraction, Hostility and accomodation since 1917. In B. H. Würzburg (Ed.), *Muslims and capitalism: An uneasy relationship?* (pp. 51–102). Ergon Verlag.
- Stephens, J. (2018). *Governing Islam: Law, empire, and secularism in South Asia*. Cambridge University Press.
- Stolte, C. M. (2021). South Asia and South Asians in the worldwide web of anti-colonial solidarity. In M. Framke & H. Fischer-Tiné (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of the history of colonialism in South Asia* (pp. 463–473). Routledge.
- Subijanto, R. (2017). Mediating Asia enlightenment and the revolutionary press in colonial Indonesia. *International Journal of Communication*, 11(0), 1357–1377.
- Tareen, S. (2013). Narratives of emancipation in modern Islam: Temporality, hermeneutics, and sovereignty. *Islamic Studies*, 52(1), 5–28.
- Tareen, S. (2017). Revolutionary hermeneutics: Translating the Qur'an as a manifesto for revolution. *Journal of Religion and Political Practice*, 3(1–2), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20566093.2017.1286750>
- Tareen, S. (2020). *Defending Muhammad in modernity*. Notre Dame. University of Notre Dame Press.
- Tasar, E. (2017). *Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalization of Islam in central Asia* (Illustrated edition). Oxford University Press.
- Tirmizey, K. A. (2018). Learning from and translating peasant struggles as anti-colonial praxis: The Ghadar Party in Punjab. *Journal of the Society for Socialist Studies*, 13(2), 134–153.
- Toor, S. (2011). *The state of Islam: Culture and Cold war politics in Pakistan*. Pluto Press.
- Tuna, M. (2017). *Imperial Russia's Muslims: Islam, empire and European modernity, 1788–1914* (Reprint edition). Cambridge University Press.
- Uddin, L. (2016). *In the land of eternal Eid: Maulana Bhashani and the political mobilisation of peasants and lower-class urban workers in East Pakistan, c. 1930s-1971*. Royal Holloway University of London.
- Uddin, L. (2021). Kagmari festival, 1957: Political aesthetics and subaltern internationalism in Pakistan. In L. Hoek & S. Sunderason (Eds.), *Forms of the left in postcolonial South Asia: Aesthetics, networks and connected histories* (pp. 65–96). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Uddin, L. Casteist Demons and working-class prophets: Subaltern Islam in Bengal, c. 1872-1928. Forthcoming. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*.
- Zaman, M. Q. (2012). *Modern Islamic thought in a radical age: Religious authority and internal criticism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Zaman, M. Q. (2018). *Islam in Pakistan: A history*. Princeton University Press.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Layli Uddin is a Lecturer in the Politics and International Relations of South Asia at Queen Mary University of London. She is completing her first book 'Land of Eternal Eid,' focussing on subaltern struggles and progressive Muslim political thought in the making and unmaking of Pakistan. Her new project 'Red Islam' brings together conversations of class, caste and social movements to weave together a transnational 20th-century history of Islamic Socialism.

How to cite this article: Uddin, L. (2023). Red Maulanas: Revisiting Islam and the Left in twentieth-century South Asia. *History Compass*, e12787. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hic3.12787>