INTRODUCTION

In November 2010, the East London Mosque celebrated its centenary. One hundred years earlier, the Aga Khan[1] and Syed Ameer Ali[2] convened a public meeting at the salubrious Ritz Hotel where, with support from some sympathetic members of the British establishment, they set about putting in place a strategy for the construction of a mosque in London, one that would be 'worthy of the capital of the British Empire'.[3] The London Mosque Fund was founded to finance its construction. Often regarded as the first mosque in London,[4] the ELM, like many other mosques in the UK, took a long time to materialize. As with other mosques, the ELM also had to move several times during its long history. From the three converted houses in Commercial Road in the East End of London in which it had finally been set up in 1941, following a compulsory purchase order in 1969, it first moved to a prefabricated structure in Fieldgate Street in 1975 and then on to the present purpose-built one in Whitechapel Road in 1985.[5] This in turn was extended to incorporate the London Muslim Centre in 2004 to meet the needs of the locality's fast-growing Muslim community. The story of its journey enables us to throw fresh light on the changing nature of interactions with wider society

[1]See Appendix I.

[2]See Appendix I.

[3]'On November 9th 1910, a public meeting was convened by [Rt. Hon. Syed Ameer Ali . . .] under the chairmanship of the Rt. Hon. Aga Khan. Following a resolution passed at the meeting, funds were raised for the purpose of "providing a Mosque in London worthy of the traditions of Islam and worthy of the capital of the British Empire".' See ELM Archives, report by Sir Ernest Hotson, Honorary Secretary, contained in the brochure of the Opening Ceremony of the East London Mosque and Islamic Culture Centre, Friday, 1 August 1941; BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 40.

[4]This is open to historical challenge. The Fazl Mosque, built by the Ahmadiyya community in 1926, was reported by *The Times* as 'the first building erected in London for Islamic worship' (*The Times*, 2 October 1926). However, the Ahmadiyya movement has been subject to religious controversy from its inception in the late nineteenth century because, while Ahmadiyyas consider themselves to be Muslim, they are regarded as outside the fold of Islam by orthodox Muslims. See Simon Ross Valentine, *Islam and the Ahmadiyya Jama'at: history, belief, practice* (New York, 2008).

[5]The opening ceremony of the East London Mosque in its Whitechapel Road premises took place on 12 July 1985.

and the relationships between London's Muslim community and the institutions of the British state; the latter's expedient character was starkly reflected, for instance, during the Second World War when Churchill and his government sought Muslim support in a global conflict in which the loyalties of Muslims throughout the British Empire could prove crucial.

The ELM's Minute Books record the debates and dilemmas of meetings of the Trustees of the LMF and the East London Mosque Trust from the first one, held in 1910.[6] They offer a detailed, intimate account of the process of mosque-making, the financial and organizational management of the LMF/ELMT, and its role in building London's Muslim community and its institutions. Drawing on these materials as well as the archives at the East London Mosque and the British Library, this introduction to the context in which these Minute Books were compiled will show how religious activity was shaped by local, national, and international developments. Through this story of mosque-building, we can trace not just a history of immigration but also its connections with empire, trade, and war, and the contours of the process through which the 'Muslim' community in London's East End become established.

Considering later minutes alongside more contemporary records, it is also possible in this introduction to explore the role of the ELM/LMC in the evolution of the Muslim community to the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, in the process revealing complex interactions between the mosque, local communities, and the wider society that has come to exist in London's East End since 1951. We can thus explore the changing symbolic and political dynamics of communities and their identities as reflected in the controversies, debates, and tensions generated by such culturally inscribed, visual appropriations of the built environment – mosques as sites for building a sense of community, 'belonging', and identity; as sites for resisting what was thought to be discrimination against Islam and Muslims and for their empowerment through assertion of cultural rights; and as sites that are viewed as aesthetically and socially disruptive, posing threats to Britain's heritage and to 'the British way of life'.

The history of the London Mosque Fund together with that of the East London Mosque Trust is worth telling, not only because it records the early presence of the Muslim faith and Muslim communities in Britain – something that is not widely appreciated – but because

[6]This annotated edition reproduces the Minute Books that cover the period 1910–1951, and that are currently housed in the ELM Archives. The Minute Books, however, continue until 1982, and these later recordings of developments have also been drawn upon extensively in the writing of this introduction.

its establishment and use was often marked by conflict around sets of issues that continue to exist to this day. Issues concerning the so-called 'Islamization of space' and the reactions against such incursions into autochthonous space are crucial in understanding the contested history of many mosques established in Britain. By locating the history of the LMF and Muslim places of worship in London within the context of imperial and global forces, and by examining the long, and often fraught, struggles about how a Muslim sacred space is created, represented, and used, a politics of identity is teased out as increasing pluralization of Britain's religious make-up has gathered momentum.

In the wake of the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks, the mosque, as a socially dynamic and influential multi-purpose community institution, has come under increasing scrutiny as academic and political debates surrounding identity and belonging, the radicalization of young Muslims, struggles for power within and beyond Muslim communities, and policies on integration and social cohesion reach a new pitch. For a Muslim to feel at home, or for a non-Muslim to recognize a Muslim 'space', the presence of certain Islamic symbols is important. In Britain, the physical construction of mosques has been part of a process of identity formation, something that has become embroiled with non-Muslim concerns over visible and audible Muslim presence. By exploring historically the dynamic interplay between Muslim experience and the institutions of British society with regard to the struggle for a mosque in London, this introduction seeks to deepen our understanding of how Muslims have sought to establish themselves as an integral part of British society, through a specific kind of place-making.

Here questions are addressed that can potentially provide new insights into a central aspect of an arguably misunderstood minority faith community: what is the symbolic significance of the mosque in Britain for identity formation among 'diasporic' Muslims? How does the mosque interact with its local environment – physically, socio-culturally, and politically – and with the communities and institutions surrounding it? Thirdly, and importantly, what functions do mosques and the struggle for their establishment serve? Did they/do they, for instance, reinforce a sense of community belonging and act as 'a potential bridge to non-Muslim communities', or did they/do they also represent a site of contestation and social divisions within and between communities? Through a historical exploration of the effort for the establishment of a mosque in London as a religious, community, and social institution, we can gain a better understanding of the relations of power vis-à-vis wider society and within the Muslim community, the sources of inclusion and exclusion of particular groups, and the struggles that were waged to overcome their marginalization.

Wherever Muslims have established relatively permanent communities in the non-Muslim world, history demonstrates that they have sought to form structures that, they have hoped, will enable them to sustain their religious traditions and practices. While mosques have been perceived primarily as spaces for religious rituals, it is accepted that these do not require dedicated physical space. Traditionally, mosques were not places merely for purposes of worship; they also functioned as centres for religious learning and for the propagation of Islam; this was where believers interacted socially, culturally, and, indeed, politically. It is therefore not surprising that this would be the institution to which they would turn when they began to make new homes in Britain. When we look at mosque-building in Britain, however, what we find is that its significance has changed in the diasporic context as it is recreated and re-imagined in new settings.

The London Mosque Fund and the East London Mosque: 1910–1941

In Britain, the earliest examples of attempts to create dedicated 'Muslim space' go back to the nineteenth century. Congregations were organized by embryonic Muslim communities, primarily in boarding-houses or converted buildings: in Manchester, for instance, Levantine and Moroccan Muslim merchants held Friday prayers regularly in an ordinary house.[7] Similarly, boarding-houses catering for Arabs and Somalis in South Shields and Cardiff had rooms reserved for prayers. Abdullah Quilliam (1856–1932), a convert to Islam, set up a mosque, first, in 1887, in a house in Mount Vernon Place in Liverpool, and then, when evicted from there, in West Derby Road in 1891. In 1889, the Shah Jahan Mosque in Woking, an initiative of an Orientalist, G.W. Leitner (1840–1899) and sponsored by the Begum of Bhopal (Shah Jahan was at the time the female ruler of the princely state of Bhopal in India), was opened on the former's private estate. Though a 'Muslim space', the fact that it was created by an 'agent' of British authority in India (Leitner had worked for years in the Punjab) meant that it reflected colonial relations of power. Rather patronizingly, Leitner declared the mosque to be 'proof of British toleration', to be 'used in that [same] grateful and reverential spirit'. Indeed, his facilities were to be narrowly limited to Islamic religious practices as he understood them, which meant that he was certainly not prepared to permit their use for the conversion of 'Englishmen to Islam, or to introduce new doctrines into that faith, or to promote any religious and political

[7]H. Ansari, *'The Infidel Within': Muslims in Britain since 1800* (London, 2004), p. 70.

propaganda, or to celebrate [what he regarded as] the generally unhappy marriages between Mahommedans and Englishwomen': in short, only those of whom he approved – Muslims of 'good family' background and gentlemanly conduct – were acceptable.[8] Clearly, this was how social distance between the dominant and subject people and the status quo could be most effectively maintained. Operating under such strictures, the Woking Mosque was never in regular or widespread Muslim use during Leitner's lifetime. After his death in 1899, the mosque was closed down by his family and remained practically empty, and more-or-less unused, until 1912. Contrast this, however, with what happened after Khwaja Kamal-ud-din[9] (1870–1932) took it over just before the First World War. Within a few years it became a vibrant centre for Muslims in Britain, a well-attended venue for religious and social festivals alike. Later, during the inter-war decades, a number of Muslim leaders based in London became its Trustees and contributed to its wide range of activities,[10] while visits by high personages from different parts of the Muslim world enhanced its symbolic importance.[11]

In the absence of a mosque in London, congregations and celebrations of Muslim festivals were organized in an ad hoc fashion. Hence, *The Times* reported on 22 December 1903 that 'members of the Moslem [*sic*] colony in London assembled, under the auspices of the Pan-Islamic Society, in Caxton-hall [. . .] to celebrate Eed-ul-Fitr (The Feast After the Fast). The gathering was thoroughly representative, Persians, Turks, Indians, Moors, Egyptians, Dutch, &c., being present in their national costumes'. The service was conducted by Redjai Effendi, Imam of the Imperial Ottoman Embassy. Joy was expressed at 'the true Islamic spirit of unity and brotherhood prevailing among Moslems from all parts of the world now residing in the British Isles', and an appeal was made to the Muslims to contribute towards the Mosque Fund.[12] Around 1905, Khalid Sheldrake,[13] a proactive Muslim

[8] K. H. Ansari, 'The Woking Mosque: a case study of Muslim engagement with British society since 1889', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 21, no. 3 (November 2002), pp. 6–7.

[9] See Appendix I.

[10] Sir Abbas Ali Baig (d. 1933), Syed Ameer Ali, and Sir T.W. Arnold were founders of the Woking Mosque Trust in 1915. See M.P. Salamat, *A Miracle At Woking: a history of the Shahjahan Mosque* (Andover, 2008), pp. 97–99. The latter two were also Trustees of the London Mosque Fund. Others who took close interest in its activities included the Aga Khan, Marmaduke Pickthall, and Lord Headley.

[11] These included the then Begum of Bhopal, the Shah of Persia, the Sultan of Zanzibar, Prince Amir Saud and Amir Faisal of the Saudi royal family, M.A. Jinnah, the 'founder' of Pakistan, King Farouk of Egypt, and Princess Saniyya of Albania. See the various issues of *Islamic Review* for relevant details.

[12] *The Times*, 22 December 1903.

[13] See Appendix I.

convert, began conducting prayers at a house in Peckham,[14] and the Pan-Islamic Society also organized Muslim congregations in rented London halls.[15] So here we see religious space being created – albeit temporarily – often but not always by 'diasporic' Muslims continuing practices belonging to the communities they had left behind. The sense of contrast with the rest of society, and the difficulties of sustaining normative religious practices that were different from those of the majority population, seemed to heighten its merit and the desire for a 'space' where such activities could be conducted.

The need for a dedicated place of Muslim worship in London was felt with added urgency in the early twentieth century. The initiative for a mosque came from a significant cluster of Muslim activists in London who had become increasingly self-conscious and possessed the capacity to articulate the concerns and discontents of their co-religionists. Syed Ameer Ali called public attention to the subject as early as May 1908: as he put it,

> It does not require great imagination or political grasp to perceive the enormous advantages that would accrue to the empire itself were a Moslem place of worship founded in London, the hold it would give on the sentiments of the people or the addition to prestige and influence that would be gained thereby.[16]

In October 1910, *The Times* reported further developments:

> A movement has been started by Mr Halil Halid[17] for the erection of a mosque in London. Subscriptions are already being received by the Ottoman Bank at Constantinople from Turkish sympathisers of the movement and the support of all who are interested in Mahomedans in India, Egypt and Turkey in Great Britain will be enlisted.[18]

In the following month, a meeting, presided over by the Aga Khan, was convened at the Ritz Hotel in London, and a committee was formed, with Syed Ameer Ali (the driving force behind the Fund's creation) as its chairman, to collect funds for the construction of a mosque in London.[19] The fund was opened at the Bank of England, with the Aga Khan promising an initial subscription of £5,000.[20]

[14]M. Everest-Phillips, 'The suburban king of Tartary', *Asian Affairs*, 21, no. 3 (October 1990), p. 325.

[15]Sheldrake remembered the *namaz* (prayer) held at Caxton Hall (London), 'and the worshippers were Ottomans, Indians and Egyptians, myself the only Englishman': see *Islamic Review and Modern India*, April 1917, p. 83.

[16]*The Times*, 5 January 1911.

[17]See Appendix I, under 'Bey, Halil Halid'.

[18]*The Times*, 28 October 1910.

[19]See above, n. 3.

[20]By the end of 1917, donations amounting to about £5,000 had been received and invested in Inscribed Securities held by the Bank of England. The securities stood in the

The Turkish Ambassador, the Persian Minister, the Turkish Minister at Brussels, Lords Lamington, Ampthill, Avebury, and Ronaldshay, Sir Seymour King, Sir William Bull MP, and three members of the Council of India – Sir Theodore Morison, Sir James La Touche, and Mr Abbas Ali Baig – also joined the Committee. The joint secretaries were Mr C.A. Latif, Major Syud Hasan Bilgrami, and Professor T.W. Arnold, with Mr A.S.M. Anik as treasurer and Mr M.T. Kaderbhoy as assistant secretary. Mr Halil Halid was also a member of the Executive Committee.[21] For the Muslims involved in this venture, who hailed primarily from Western-educated classes of Indian society – namely, administrators, merchants, and professionals – a mosque in London formed part of a wider set of strategies designed to advance their individual interests as well as the interests of their community. They were certainly receptive to some 'British' values and ideas, but awareness of the shortcomings of British society also confirmed them in their Islamic faith and many of their own traditions. While conscious of the contempt and rudeness that they experienced in their encounters with many English people, they attributed these attitudes to an unfortunate lack of understanding. Such Muslims, then, while they accepted the hegemony of existing British values, wanted to push at the boundaries of social and political discourse in order to create more space for Muslim concerns. Take Syed Ameer Ali, for instance.[22] He had deliberately adopted English as 'the language of culture and civilised progress'. He regarded himself as a 'bridge-builder' and a 'mediator' – a key member of the group that saw itself as leading the campaign for Muslim representation in Britain, and that believed that a mosque in London would be an appropriate site through which religious needs could be satisfied, misconceptions about Islam removed, and Muslim interests promoted. As suggested in *The Times* soon after the formation of the Fund,

> To devout Musalmans [. . .] the project will be the more attractive from the anticipation that a place of worship in the metropolis of the Empire for the performance of simple devotions of Islam will tend to secure a larger measure of sympathy from observers in the country not familiar with the tenets of the Muslim faith. Moreover, as the scheme includes the provision of a library of Islamic literature to be attached to the mosque, it will aid the work of scholarly research into the history and theology of Muslim people.[23]

names of seven Trustees, five of whom were Muslims and two English noblemen 'whose sympathy with Moslems is well-known, Lord Ampthill and Lord Lamington' (*Westminster Gazette*, 20 December 1917).

[21] *The Times*, 5 January 1911.

[22] See Appendix I.

[23] *The Times*, 5 January 1911.

However, their plans faced a number of hurdles, both historic and contemporary. First, towards the end of the nineteenth century, rising political tensions in Europe together with imperial competition meant that attitudes as well as policy in Britain showed increasing hostility towards Islam and Muslims. For instance, the former prime minister William Gladstone, a committed Christian, who had earlier denounced the Qur'an as 'that accursed book'[24] and Ottoman 'atrocities' in putting down the Bulgarian rebellion in 1876,[25] gave full vent in 1896 to rising popular indignation against the Ottomans in reaction to their allegedly brutal treatment of Armenians, launching a scathing attack on 'that wretched Sultan, whom God has given as a curse to mankind'.[26] Such antagonism towards Islam, perhaps not surprisingly, began to galvanize opinion among Muslims in Britain in defence of the Sultan-Caliph as the key symbol of the *umma*, or worldwide Muslim community. At the same time, as British foreign policy moved away from support for the Ottomans at the turn of the century, several strands of pan-Islam emerged.[27] Quilliam, upon whom the Ottoman Sultan had earlier conferred the title of Sheikh al-Islam of the British Isles, defended him against Gladstone's tirade. Muslims in London, too, expressed concern for the *umma*. Religious festivals became occasions when Pan-Islamic solidarity was vigorously displayed, and British handling of Muslim issues came under thinly veiled criticism. For instance, in 1907, at a dinner celebrating Eid-ul-zuha,[28] M.H Kidwai, the honorary secretary of the Pan-Islamic Society, referring to 'the Musalmans [. . .] groaning under the despotism of Lord Cromer' in the British protectorate in Egypt, called for the Khedive[29] to be given a free hand in ruling his country. He challenged appeals to Christendom to crush Pan-Islamism – that fight, he declared would be in vain; and he restated that the objects of his Society were very peaceful, that its members were loyal subjects of King Edward VII, and that the Society wanted 'perfect

[24]N. Daniel, *Islam, Europe and Empire* (Edinburgh, 1966), p. 37.

[25]See W.E. Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (London, 1876), reproduced at http://www.archive.org/stream/bulgarianhorrorsoogladrich/bulgarianhorrorsoogladrich_djvu.txt (accessed 8 May 2010).

[26]Ansari, *'The Infidel Within'*, p. 81.

[27]See H. Ansari, 'Making transnational connections: Muslim networks in early twentieth-century Britain', in Nathalie Clayer and Eric Germain (eds), *Islam in Inter-War Europe* (London, 2008), pp. 31–63.

[28]The Feast of Sacrifice at the end of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting.

[29]Abbas II (1892–1914) reigned over Egypt at the time that Lord Cromer (1841–1917) exercised executive power as the Consul-General. His repressive policies were criticized in both Egypt and Britain. See A. Sonbol (ed. and trans.), *The Last Khedive of Egypt: memoirs of Abbas Hilmi II* (Reading, 1998).

friendship' between Great Britain and Muslim sovereigns.[30] Even the older generation of 'empire-loyalists', such as Syed Ameer Ali, could not remain unaffected and strove to influence British policy in favour of the Muslim world through constitutional means, albeit within the framework of the empire. Hence, Ali inaugurated the London branch of the All-India Muslim League on 6 May 1908 at Caxton Hall, with the aim of preserving Indian Muslims from disintegration and pauperization, and, in particular, of seeking equitable representation in the political sphere.[31]

With the Italian invasion of Tripolitania in 1911, pan-Islamic sentiment, simmering away since 1908, boiled over. A spate of memorials, newspaper articles, petitions, and manifestos poured out of London. Agitation was mounted and protest meetings organized with the help and support of prominent British men. At the fifth annual general meeting of the London All-India Muslim League, the Aga Khan said that 'the recent Turkish war had demonstrated the solidity of [. . .] Moslems [. . .] their interest in each other's welfare [. . .] the trials and tribulations of Turkey had absorbed Indian Moslems [. . .] The currents of feeling were very strong'.[32] Much disappointment was expressed at the British unwillingness to intervene against the Italian military invasion. These empire-loyalists argued that Islamic feeling towards Britain, especially among Indian Muslims, was changing for the worse, and that this would prove harmful to British interests. While some operating in the ruling circles of the empire expressed sympathy for such views, others within the British establishment, undoubtedly imbued with a mixture of racism, uncertainty, fear, and paranoia, were never confident about the 'clever Native'. King Edward VII himself epitomized this attitude: when opposing Syed Ameer Ali's nomination for membership of the Privy Council in 1909, he wrote that 'you never could be certain that he might not prove to be a very dangerous element'.[33] Nor, given his elitist disposition, did Syed Ameer Ali inspire much confidence even among his own core constituency of Westernized Muslims. While many in the British establishment accused him of 'rocking the imperial boat' thanks to his 'continued attempts to stir up against the British Government in connexion with their Turkish Policy sentiments of hostility and hatred among his

[30] *The Times*, 28 January 1907.
[31] *The Times*, 5 May 1908; 17 November 1908; 24 February 1909; 25 June 1909.
[32] *The Times*, 15 July 1913.
[33] M. Forward, 'Syed Ameer Ali: a bridge-builder?', *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, 6, no. 1 (1995), pp. 50–51.

co-religionists',[34] the emerging Muslim leadership in India also criticized him for 'selling our community'.[35]

Given the nature of the suspicions surrounding Syed Ameer Ali and other Muslim Trustees of the London Mosque Fund, their relative lack of success in generating adequate sponsorship for the mosque becomes more understandable. The initial enthusiasm evident for the project in different parts of the Muslim world, and its concrete manifestation in the subscription of £7,000 by the Begum of Bhopal[36] and £1,000 each by the Ottoman Sultan[37] and the Shah of Persia,[38] receded quickly, partly because of the internal troubles in what was still known as Persia and the urgent need to divert funds to relieve distress and suffering caused by the Tripolitan and Balkan conflicts.[39]

As the First World War erupted, the scheme for building a mosque in London suffered a further setback. Ottoman involvement on the side of Germany created hostility towards Muslims at all levels of British society and immediate doubts about the loyalty of all classes of Muslims living within the British Empire. This antipathy was further exacerbated by the Sultan-Caliph's proclamation ordering Muslims who were being ruled by 'enemy' governments to engage in a *jihad* against them.[40] Not surprisingly, leading politicians such as the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, unleashed in retaliation a barrage of vituperative rhetoric against Islam and the Turks. Lloyd George described the fight against Turkey as a great civilizing duty that would emancipate people from under the shadow of great tyranny, and called the military operations in Palestine 'the British crusade'.[41]

Nevertheless, despite the deeply negative circumstances, Muslims in Britain continued to pursue the mosque project optimistically. The sources for funding that they could consider were threefold: the wealthier class of Muslims based in Britain; Muslim governments,

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 51.

[35] *The Times*, 31 October 1913.

[36] *The Times*, 4 December 1912.

[37] *The Times*, 28 March 1911.

[38] *The Times*, 11 April 1911.

[39] Towards the end of 1911, Syed Ameer Ali, undeterred by the lack of official response, set up the Red Crescent Society, through which funds could be gathered and provisions sent to help the Turks. '[T]he Indian Moslems in London decided yesterday evening to establish a Red Crescent Fund for the relief of the wounded Turks and Tripolitans. The Fund is to be under the joint management of the All-India Muslim League and the Islamic Society and has been headed by a first donation of £400 from the Aga Khan' (*The Times*, 3 November 1911). On 8 November 1911, *The Times* reported that the Red Crescent Society was collecting contributions for the relief of sickly Turks, widows, and orphans in Tripoli.

[40] See 'A universal proclamation to all the people of Islam', in J.M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: ideology and organization* (Oxford, 1994), p. 351.

[41] *Muslim Outlook*, 30 October 1919; 6 October 1919.

rulers, and communities elsewhere; and the British government itself. Having largely failed to attract funding from the first two, it was the last source that they decided to explore, with some expectation of a positive outcome. They argued that, contrary to British suspicions regarding Muslim loyalties, thousands of Muslims were in practice fighting for king and country against Britain's enemies, including the Ottoman Caliphate, the paramount symbol of the *umma*. As Lord Headley, a leading convert, and Maulvi Sadr-ud-din, Imam of the Woking Mosque, jointly declared, by 'freely pouring out their life blood in defence of honour and for the love of truth and justice', these Muslims were demonstrating their unequivocal identification with, and commitment to, the British war effort.[42] Muslim soldiers were therefore entitled to an honourable place in the land for which they were fighting (and often dying). Indeed, they argued that recognition – in culturally appropriate ways – would help to create a bond, as well as mark their acceptance as equal stakeholders in the British imperial polity.

Setting out his case in this way, in 1916 Lord Headley wrote to Austin Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for India, recommending building in London

> at the country's expense, a [handsome] mosque in memory of the Muslim soldiers who have died fighting for the Empire [. . .] Just now it would be most politic to mark our appreciation of Muslim loyalty and devotion [. . . It] would have a magical effect [. . .] a gracious and spontaneous act of this kind would be returned to us an hundredfold.[43]

None of this, however, cut much ice with junior and senior officials, who, reflecting accurately the wider mentality of the time, remained generally unsympathetic if not overtly hostile to this project. As Sir Arthur Hirtzel commented: 'I am dead against it – on grounds of both policy and religion [. . . that] a Christian Government should be party to erecting one [a mosque] in a Christian country is to me unthinkable'.[44]

The extent of negative feelings in Britain towards Ottoman Turkey in particular and Muslims more generally intensified as the war grew increasingly bloody. The British government decided that, rather than

[42] *Islamic Review*, October 1914, p. 421. 'By Armistice Day, 400,000 Muslims had enlisted', and had fought on the Western Front in Europe, in Mesopotamia, and in Africa. 'In total approximately 60,000 men perished, 13,000 medals and 12 Victoria Crosses were awarded to Indians for valour and courage.' See Jahan Mahmood, 'The stories of Muslim soldiers on the Western Front; WWI', http://www.britainsmuslimsoldiers.co.uk/images/w1.pdf (accessed 8 May 2010).

[43] BL, IOR, L/MIL/7/18861, Lord Headley to Austin Chamberlain, 23 March 1916.

[44] *Ibid.*, A. Hirtzel's note, 31 March 1916.

address pan-Islamic sensitivities or offer assistance in the building of a mosque in London in fulfilment of Muslim religious needs, even at a time when religion possessed considerable potency, it would adopt a different approach to counter the Turkish threat. On balance, the two-pronged strategy of fomenting an Arab revolt and of recognizing Sharif Husayn of Mecca as the rightful Arab Caliph was considered a more effective option, even though it was acknowledged that Husayn was perceived by non-Arab Muslims as having betrayed pan-Islam and as being manipulated as a puppet by the British. Chamberlain accepted Hirtzel's view and instructed his office that a reply to Headley should ignore the question of a mosque, and tell him instead that 'the most appropriate form of memorial [. . .] a cemetery with a [. . .] gateway on which might be inscribed the names of the fallen [. . . was] under consideration'.[45]

Matters improved little after the war ended. Muslims such as Syed Ameer Ali, together with the Aga Khan, continued desperately to urge the British government to assure the Caliphate's preservation, even after its defeat.[46] With the Allies occupying Istanbul and Greek forces, with British backing, penetrating deep into Turkey in 1920, it seemed that the British government was in no mood to countenance Indian sentiments in respect of any revision of the Turkish peace treaty, even though, as the Aga Khan recalled, 'The Prime Minister [had] told the House of Commons in 1920 that we could not have won the war

[45] *Ibid.*, Austin Chamberlain's note. Indeed, arrangements were made by the Secretary of State for India, in consultation with the War Office, to preserve the graves of Muslim soldiers who died while under treatment in this country at Brookwood near the Woking Mosque and in an enclosed area in Horsell Common. See *The Times*, 18 April 1916. Designed by an India Office surveyor and architect, a Muslim burial ground with arches, minarets, and domed gateway was built by a local firm in 1917; the cemetery received nineteen burials of Indian Army Muslim soldiers during the First World War, and a further five during the Second. The graves were set at an angle to the normal position in a British cemetery so as to allow the body to lie in the correct direction towards Mecca. All the costs were borne by the government. In 1921, the War Graves Commission took over its upkeep. See H. Ansari, '"Burying the dead": making Muslim space in Britain', *Historical Research*, 8, no. 210 (November 2007), p. 561.

[46] In a letter to the editor of *The Times*, Syed Ameer Ali and the Aga Khan, drawing attention to 'the anguish and pain which the threatened dismemberment of Turkey has created among Musalmans', pleaded for the maintenance of the Turkish Empire (*The Times*, 6 June 1919). Later that same year, a memorandum to the Prime Minister from a number of leading figures, including British Indians – for example, the Aga Khan, Lord Ampthill, Syed Ameer Ali, and Marmaduke Pickthall – reminded him of the insult to religious feeling and alienation that would be caused in the Muslim world if Turkey was stripped of its sovereignty. They 'urged upon the Government the imperative necessity of a Policy towards Turkey that would lead to appeasement of the ferment and unrest among the Moslems of the world mainly due to apprehension that it is proposed to further dismember the Turkish Empire and completely to destroy the free life and political power of the remaining Moslem States' (*The Times*, 24 December 1919).

without the aid of Indian troops'. To the large proportion of the Indian soldiery belonging to the Islamic faith, fighting against their 'brother Moslems' had imposed a great sacrifice for which just recompense was due. Hence, the Indian Muslim view was that, in the case of Turkey, the principles of liberty and self-determination of nations proclaimed by the Allies should be scrupulously upheld.[47]

In view of Britain's hostility towards Turkey, antipathy in Britain towards Muslims remained high. This only resulted in further heightening their identification and solidarity with fellow Muslims. Pan-Islamic networks in London became even more resolute in their challenging of the negative perceptions circulating in British society and in their defence of Islam against widespread misrepresentations. Alongside resistance to attacks on the *umma* through a range of lobbying groups, a desire also grew to construct bonds through collective religious observance. With the number of Muslims in the capital rising steadily, the pressure for a mosque mounted. The Trustees of the LMF at this stage decided to take two measures to secure a dedicated space for a congregation in London. First, they started to conduct Friday prayers at Lindsey Hall, Notting Hill Gate, in central London.[48] Then they established a *namaz-gah* (prayer-room) in rented accommodation in Campden Hill Road. Called the 'London Muslim Prayer House', it attracted significant numbers of worshippers and audiences to its services after the First World War.[49] It continued to function as a mosque and a literary meeting place, with the imam of the Woking Mosque (and in his absence Marmaduke Pickthall) conducting congregations there on a regular basis, until 1927, when, with attendances declining, the tenancy was terminated.[50] Second, the Trustees also renewed their appeal for donations to the Fund. In 1923, Lord Headley and Khwaja Kamal-ud-din, Imam of the Woking Mosque, went on pilgrimage together to Mecca, but while the former was decorated by King Hussein, the Sharif of Mecca,[51]

[47] *The Times*, 14 March 1921.

[48] As early as March 1914, a grant of £120 a year was approved to rent a building in London. See below, p. 107.

[49] For instance, in October 1919, 350 officers and privates of the Indian Peace Celebration contingent came to attend 'the Friday Sabbath Prayers. But the Muslim prayer House could not hold them. Arrangements were therefore made at Hyde park for the Cathedral Service' (*Islamic Review*, October 1919, p. 354).

[50] See below, pp. 135–136.

[51] Sayyid Hussein bin Ali (1853–1931) became Sharif (ruler) of Mecca in 1908. He proclaimed himself 'king of the Arab lands' in October 1916. Soon after, Britain recognized him as 'king of the Hejaz' (now part of Saudi Arabia). He initiated the Arab Revolt in 1916 against the Ottoman Empire. In 1924, he further proclaimed himself Caliph of all Muslims. He ruled the Hejaz until 1924, when, defeated by Abdul Aziz al Saud, he abdicated the kingdom in favour of his eldest son, Ali. He is buried in Jerusalem.

no financial assistance for the mosque proved to be forthcoming.[52] With the Ottoman Empire abolished in 1924, the Trustees resolved, in 1925, to invite King Fuad of Egypt, the Amir of Afghanistan, and the Nizam of Hyderabad to become patrons of the Fund in conjunction with the Shah of Persia, in the hope of obtaining financial help.[53] The expediency of approaching the British government for the grant of a site for the proposed mosque was also considered. But, by 1926, while the LMF had grown to a sizeable amount, it was not nearly sufficient for the Trustees to countenance the construction of a fitting mosque.[54]

Consequently, Syed Ameer Ali launched a fresh appeal in April 1927, reminding 'the Mahommedan subjects of the King [. . .] and the Moslem nations in friendly relations with England of the crying necessity for a suitable mosque worthy of the position of Islam as a world religion in the metropolis of Great Britain'. According to him, 'The small mosque at Woking does not serve as the symbol of the dignity of the Muslim faith'. With the opening of the Great Mosque in Paris in July 1926, accompanied by 'great pomp and ceremony', he hoped that the

> wealthy princes and magnates of India and the countries within the ambit of Great Britain's cultural influence would realise their pious duty, and that his Majesty's Government would give to our efforts the same support and sympathy which has been extended by the French Government to the Mosque in Paris.[55]

Efforts to collect funds in India were accordingly redoubled. Headley went to India and came back with a donation of £60,000 from the Nizam of Hyderabad,[56] albeit with the proviso that a new trust – its name, the 'Nizamiah Mosque' – be created for these funds, with Headley a co-trustee.[57] In 1928, the 'London Nizamiah Mosque Trust Fund' was duly established, a site was purchased for £28,000 in West Kensington, and a well-known English architect was even commissioned to produce the design for a mosque.[58] However, with the onset of the Great Depression, the chances of adequate sponsorship

See *ODNB*, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/75900?docPos=4 (accessed on 10 November 2010).

[52] On Lord Headley's reception by King Hussein, see *The Times*, 30 August 1923.

[53] See ELM Archives, LMF Executive Committee Minutes, 24 June 1924.

[54] *The Times*, 6 October 1926.

[55] *The Times*, 26 April 1927.

[56] This was Asaf Jah VII (Osman Ali Khan Bahadur) (1886–1967), whose reign lasted from 1911 until the annexation of the state of Hyderabad by India in 1948. In 1937 he was reported as the wealthiest man in the world (*Time Magazine*, 22 February 1937).

[57] See below, pp. 137–138, for copies of the telegraphic correspondence between Sir Amin Jung in Hyderabad-Deccan, and Syed Ameer Ali.

[58] *The Times*, 5 June 1937.

materializing receded. While, in June 1937, the foundation stone of 'The Nizamiah Mosque' was laid by Nizam's heir-apparent, the Prince Berar, Azam Jah Bahadur, in a public ceremony attended by many Muslim and non-Muslim dignitaries,[59] the mosque itself literally never got off the ground, and the balance of the Fund – which had reached around £77,000 – remained dormant, with the Nizam refusing to make it available for any other mosque projects.[60]

However, the changing context in the 1930s prevented the London Mosque project from fading away permanently. In the run up to the Second World War, fascist states such as Italy and Germany, in pursuit of their imperial objectives, increased their efforts to woo Muslims in the Middle East. The proposals for the partition of Palestine stirred Muslims in Britain as elsewhere in equal measure. Within the empire, as the struggle for Home Rule in India gathered momentum, increased Muslim self-consciousness led to more assertive political demands, first raised in Britain in 1933, for separate communal space.[61] Through the 1930s, as the key promoters of the project slowly began to die away, the quest for a London mosque was taken up by those who had lobbied energetically for Muslim interests, even though these efforts did not produce any significant outcomes, at least in the short run. For instance, at the end of 1933, Margaret Farquharson, President of the National League, a London-based organization that concerned 'itself with Moslem and particularly Arab interests',[62] wrote to R.A. Butler

[59] *Ibid.*; see also ELM Archives, 'Address of Welcome' presented to the Prince by the following Board of Trustees of the Nizamiah Mosque Trust: Abdul Qadir, Hafiz Wahba, Dr. Mohemadi Aqil Jung, and Al Haj Ali Raza.

[60] BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fos 373–374, G.H. Hall of the Colonial Office to Lord Pethick-Lawrence, 24 August 1945.

[61] In January 1933, Chaudhary Rahmat Ali, an Indian Muslim student at Cambridge University, issued a declaration entitled 'Now or never', in which he called for a separate 'homeland' – 'Pakistan' – for India's Muslims. See K.K. Aziz, *Rahmat Ali: a biography* (Stuttgart, 1987), p. 87.

[62] The National League, with premises in St James Street, London, was, as described in its own words, a 'non-Party organisation founded in 1912 by Mary Adelaide Broadhurst and Margaret Milne Farquharson. It has an appeal to all classes, and is organised to maintain the patriotic and pioneer spirit by constructive Policy and Action. It believes in the unity of the British Race. From 1918 to 1922 the League pioneered the struggle to wake the Nation to the dangers of Bolshevism through meetings and the national press'. Between 1921 and 1936, the National League brought together Members of both Houses of Parliament and delegations from Palestine in conferences and receptions. In 1933 it organized several debates and held influential meetings 'to win a just basis for Palestine'. Apparently, its efforts in bringing about greater understanding between Britain and the Muslim world were publicly much appreciated by reputable Muslim figures such as the Aga Khan, Sir Mohammed Iqbal, Hajj Amin Husseini (Grand Mufti of Palestine), Hajee Abdoola Haroon, and the Nawab of Chhatari (India). See BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fos 226–227. Reports of these events appeared, from time to time, in *The Times*: see, for example, 2 October 1931, 30 June 1933,

MP setting out a proposal to build a Muslim Centre in London.[63] Echoing Lord Headley's earlier request, she stressed that the

> spontaneous gesture from the Government of the granting of a Site together with a Parliamentary Grant [. . .] would have a most favourable influence at a critical time, throughout the Moslem World [. . .] the news of such a Grant would create a wave of friendly feeling to the Muslim World through a time of change in a constant, spontaneous, and firm relation to the British Crown, and to the British Government [. . .].[64]

Government officials, however, were dismissive of Farquharson, regarded her as a nuisance and as a person of little consequence, whose requests were unworthy of serious consideration.[65] Butler responded negatively – he was

24 November 1933, 7 November 1934, 6 March 1935, 16 July 1935. The British government viewed the National League as 'a bit of a nuisance': see BL, IOR, P&J (S)/607, 14 June 1933, fo. 256. Anti-Zionist and critical of the mandatory regime in Palestine and the activities of the Zionist organizations, it was regarded by the government as 'a partisan propagandist concern', with which it was inappropriate for Cabinet ministers to associate. A detailed secret official note on the National League stated that, as an 'ill-advised critic of British administration and champion of the Arab malcontent, it is held in unfavourable light by the Home Office' (BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 226). Its supporters included British 'die-hard' politicians such as Lord Lloyd and Sir Alfred Knox (see BL, IOR, P&J (S)/916, 12 July 1934, fos 239–240). According to one government report, it first came to prominence in 1927, when it was conducting propaganda in England and America on behalf of Arabs. From 1929 it was in close touch with the Muslim–Christian Alliance of Palestine, and it was concerned with endeavours to effect a revision of the 1917 Balfour Declaration regarding the Jewish National Home in Palestine, in order (apparently) 'to placate the Muslims'. At a meeting on 7 June 1931 at the Hyde Park Hotel 'to enable British and Muslim leaders to make a united stand for a clear policy on Palestine', it was reported that Lord and Lady Headley and Abdul Majid, Imam of Woking, were present, with Waris Ameer Ali among the speakers. A farewell reception to the Muslim delegation to the Round Table Conference took place on 23 November 1932, at which Lord Lamington took the chair and the Aga Khan was one of the speakers. In a memorandum enclosed with a letter to R.A. Butler, Farquharson 'proposed to consolidate friendship [between Great Britain and the Muslim World] by the building of a Muslim Centre in London'. The League appealed 'to the Crown for a site to be granted in St. James's [together with a Parliamentary Grant] upon which to build a Muslim Centre'. This project, it claimed, commanded the support of 'all the eminent Moslem Leaders [. . .] as well as rank and file [. . .] which also unites all shades of influential British opinion'. Mr Baldwin, however, was advised not to give 'his patronage to the proposal [. . .] In our experience the League is a rather dangerous body and we try to have as little to do with it as possible'. See BL, IOR, P&J (S)/916, 15 June 1934, fo. 245.

[63]Lord Ampthill, writing to A.S.M. Anik, referred to this scheme 'for building not only a Mosque but also a Social Club for Moslems'. See below, p. 164.

[64]See BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 273, Memorandum.

[65]Sir Samuel Hoare advised Lord Willingdon 'to take no notice of the lady. She inundates me with circulars and I never pay the least attention to them'. BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 242, extract from private letter from Sir Samuel Hoare to Lord Willingdon, 7 July 1933. Nevertheless, government intelligence kept an eye on her. An 'Extract from New Scotland Yard', 3 November 1937, reported that 'Miss Margaret Milne Farquharson [was] obtaining money from affluent Indians and Arabs in this country, for the purpose of supporting her

> reluctant to suggest fresh expenditure of such a nature at the present time when every effort must be strained to achieve economy in State expenditure. You will also appreciate that if the concession for which you ask were granted, it would be difficult to resist similar requests made on behalf of other religious communities.[66]

In January 1938, the baton was picked up by an Egyptian merchant, Ibrahim Mougy,[67] who met with officials at the Foreign Office to discuss 'a proposal to found a Moslem Institute in London'. This institute, he was determined, would exclude politics altogether from its scope and function, being nothing more than 'a religious and social centre for Moslems living in or visiting England'. In contrast to the Woking Mosque, which he claimed was in the hands of the Ahmadiyya sect, his institute would preserve a universal Muslim character, 'entirely unsectarian and open to Moslems of all shades of religious belief and of all nationalities'.[68] Yet again, the British government was approached with a request for resources, reminding it that 'the British Empire comprised the greatest number of Moslems in any Empire in the world, and that British relations with the independent Moslem countries were close and important'.[69] By offering to found an institute which would be purely religious, social, and apolitical, Mougy hoped that the authorities would find his proposal more appealing than those already on the table. At the same time, he also went public and presented his project of a mosque for London to an audience of distinguished Muslims at an Eid gathering at the Royal Egyptian Club.[70] But government officials remained sceptical and thought it 'unwise for [them] to depart in any way from an attitude of strict neutrality or commit [themselves] to giving a blessing to any such scheme as proposed until [they] know more about it and particularly whether it has the backing of influential Indian Moslems'.[71]

Meanwhile, the growth of the Muslim community in the East End of London brought into sharp focus the need for a more local religious space. This was recognized by the Trustees of both Trusts. When, in

Pan-Islamist movement. She is devoting the funds so obtained to furthering the Arab cause in Palestine' (see BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 222).

[66] BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 268.

[67] G.W. Randel of the Foreign Office described Mougy as 'at best [...] a somewhat irresponsible adventurer, obviously lacking in balance and judgement' (BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 220, G.W. Randel, memorandum, 24 January 1938).

[68] See BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fos 216–217, L. Baggallay, memorandum recording a conversation with Mougy at the Foreign Office, 14 January 1938.

[69] *Ibid.*, fo. 216.

[70] At the 'Id-ul Azha' congregation, he spoke of the need for a 'Moslem Centre' in London. See *The Times*, 31 January 1938.

[71] BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, p. 196, letter to H.L. Baggallay, 29 July 1939.

1930, Syed Hashimi, the Nizam's emissary, visited London to gauge the situation, he reported to the LMF that

> It is, as you know, the East End parts of London where a number of poor Muslims have permanently settled [. . .] these are the people who need most to have a Mosque and some provision for the religious instruction of their children who shall other wise inevitably drift towards irreligion.[72]

He suggested that the LMF should consider building a mosque in the East End from their funds, leaving 'the project of constructing a grand building' in central London to the Nizamia Mosque.[73] The LMF Trustees accepted Hashimi's proposal, but when the LMF requested 'pecuniary assistance' for running the proposed mosque, the Nizam excused himself on account of 'the present widespread financial depression and the many demands on [the] resources within the State itself'.[74]

As the British economy began to pick up after the Great Depression, the lure of London became stronger and 'jumping ship' by non-British sailors came back into fashion; this increased steadily until just after the Second World War and with it grew a sizeable Muslim community. As the community expanded, so did their cultural and religious needs and concerns. In 1934, Jamiat-ul-Muslimin was founded[75] with the objective of serving 'the cause of Islam truly by creating facilities for the observance of its principles'.[76] Its creation reflected the extent to which, over the course of the inter-war period, a number of Indian Muslims had come to London's East End from farming backgrounds in the Punjab and Bengal – merchants, peddlers, seamen, students, and professionals. I.I. Kazi, its first president, from the province of Sind (now in Pakistan), was a barrister. Others had worked up enough resources to set up cafés and lodging-houses to service the maritime workers who frequented the port. Some also ventured into trading and commercial enterprises (apparently, not always lawful[77]) more widely: 'There were quite a few Punjabis in Backchurch Lane (Stepney) – they had scent and clothing factories'.[78] Sahibdad Khan,[79] for instance,

[72] See below, pp. 148–150, letter from Syed Hashimi to A.S.N. Anik, August 1930.

[73] *Ibid.*

[74] ELM Archives, Mahdi Yar Jung, political member of HEH the Nizam's government, to Lord Lamington, 22 March 1933.

[75] ELM Archives, Minutes of the first meeting on 29 March 1934 in the 'Register of proceedings of the Managing Board, Jamiat-ul-Muslimin'. I.I. Kazi was elected its first president, Said Amir its secretary, and Noor Mohamad Sangha its treasurer.

[76] ELM Archives, Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, Rules and Regulations, August 1938, p. 2.

[77] BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 75.

[78] See C. Adams (coll. and ed.), *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers: life stories of pioneer Sylhetti settlers in Britain* (London, 1986), p. 84.

[79] BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 78.

a Trustee of the London Mosque Fund, ran a perfumery business; Ahmad Din Qureshi,[80] a Jamiat-ul-Muslimin president, was a silk merchant; Said Amir Shah,[81] treasurer in 1943, was reported to have 'in his time run Indian boarding houses in the East End, and also had a shop at 36 Old Montague Street'. He was a member of 'Shah Brothers, Silk Merchants and Warehousemen'.[82] Such men also helped those who jumped ship with accommodation and advice regarding job opportunities. They were the pioneers who became active leaders of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, and in time were at the heart of running the East London Mosque on a daily basis.

The Jamiat-ul-Muslimin's broader objectives, which these men helped to formulate, called for stringency of religious practice, 'insisting upon members to observe all the tenets of Islam', and advocating pan-Islamic interaction 'to promote the preservation of a permanent union between Muslims of different nationalities [. . .] to provide and maintain a comfortable place to bring together, and promote social intercourse between the resident Muslims, thus creating unity, amity and general brotherhood'.[83] An address of welcome presented to the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Amir Sa'ud, stated that its main effort was directed towards 'union and organization of all Muslims over these islands'. It noted that the community of Muslims in London – which it estimated at 300, 'excluding students and occasional visitors' – lacked a place for regular prayers and hoped that it would be able to 'procure means for the building and maintenance of a suitable, conveniently located mosque'.[84]

In the next few years, before the Second World War broke out, the activities of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin began to give organizational shape to the local Muslim community. The organization challenged those who, it felt, had behaved in ways that were harmful to Muslim interests. Denigration of Islam and the Qur'an, and attacks on aspects of Muslim identity, were passionately resisted. A significant example of this was the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin's reaction to passages in H.G. Wells's *A Short History of the World* (first published in 1922) that they felt had insulted the Prophet Muhammad and disparaged the Qur'an.[85] In response, its leaders decided to mount a strong protest;

[80] *Ibid.*, fo. 71.
[81] *Ibid.*, fo. 75.
[82] *Ibid.*
[83] *Ibid.*
[84] See ELM Archives, 'An address of welcome' presented at the Savoy Hotel on 18 July 1935.
[85] The passages that they found particularly offensive included one about the Prophet Muhammad and another about the Qur'an. Wells wrote, 'He [Muhammad] seems to have

'a party of Indian Mohammedans' in London's East End ceremonially committed a copy of Wells's book 'to the flames'.[86] The *Manchester Guardian* reported that a march was being organized to visit the India Office demanding the book's 'proscription'. The Joint Secretary of the Jamiat wrote to the High Commissioner for India, Sir Firoz Khan Noon,[87] who was also an ex-officio trustee of the London Mosque Fund at the time, that a march would take place from Bank to India House on 18 August 1938.[88] A leaflet, entitled *The Most Cowardly Attack on the Holy Prophet and the Holy Quran*, exhorted 'every Muslim to do his duty towards Islam by joining the march and [. . .] bringing pressure on the author to withdraw his remarks from the book'.[89] Noon met Muhammad Buksh and Fazal Shah, both leaders of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, and sought to dissuade them from marching. He argued that the exposure of Wells's book was mischief-making on the part of a Hindu journalist, Mr. Rau, and told them that the protest was 'useless', since they were

> not rendering any service to Islam by falling into the trap of this Hindu, and the best thing they could do was to keep quiet and live peacefully in the East End. After all they were a very small minority and it would do them no good to try and be mischievous in this country, no matter how genuine their grievances were.

He went on that 'it was no use bringing a delegation of 500 people to [him] or to the Secretary of State, because in a matter like this [they] were helpless'. The 'freedom of expression' principles enshrined in British law precluded any useful intervention. Nor could the publishers of the book be persuaded to withdraw it. 'This is a country', Noon said, 'in which there are people who criticise the Christian religion and Jesus Christ'. In a letter from his office he again advised against the organization of the protest march. While he was willing to receive

been a man compounded of very considerable vanity, greed, cunning and self-deception, and quite sincere religious passion [. . .] And then, regarded as literature or philosophy, the Koran is certainly unworthy of its Divine authorship' (H.G. Wells, *A Short History of the World* (place unknown, limited edition published 1 May 2008), p. 144).

[86] *Manchester Guardian*, 13 August 1938. According to British intelligence, it was at King's Hall, 85 Commercial Road, where the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin met every Friday for prayer, that the book was burnt. See BL, IOR, P&J (S)/716, fo. 1, IOR. However, the report rejected articles 'that have appeared in the Press of the Association's intention to burn an effigy of Mr. Wells [. . .] neither does it intend, at present, to approach Mr. Wells with regard to this attack on the Prophet Mohammed, nor act in any way that would bring discredit on the Association' (*ibid.*, fo. 3). On 14 January 1989, Muslims in Bradford burned a copy of Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*, which they found equally offensive.

[87] See Appendix I.

[88] BL, IOR, P&J (S)/723, fo. 12, letter from A.D. Khan, 16 August 1938.

[89] BL, IOR, P&J (S)/723, fo. 13.

'not more than six leading gentlemen' of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, he strongly deprecated 'any demonstration whatsoever outside India House'.[90]

All the same, it seems that the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin disregarded Sir Noon's opposition and, since the authorities could invoke 'no power to prohibit a procession of this sort', the demonstration went ahead as planned on 18 August 1938. 'Cries of "Down with ignorant Wells!" and "Allah is Great" could be heard when between 300 and 400 Moslems marched through the City of London' demanding the banning of the book.[91] The High Commissioner received a deputation of six men, representing the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin's executive committee, who presented a written petition to him against a passage in Wells's book. The petition,[92] with 136 signatures, 'strongly, vehemently and angerly [*sic*] protested against the false, cowardly and maliciously slanderous statement by H.G. Wells [...] against our revered, respected and honoured prophet Mohammed (peace be upon Him) and our holy Quran'. It demanded 'an immediate public apology' from Wells. The High Commissioner agreed that the passage in question was offensive and he felt it very much as a Muslim. If there was anything that he could do to get it withdrawn he would be only too glad to help. But in England only obscene or blasphemous books could be proscribed, and blasphemy was only against the Christian religion. Proceedings could, of course, be taken in a court of law by individuals or a society if there was any defamation, but on this the best course would be to consult some of the Muslim lawyers who were practising in London. The High Commissioner 'would gladly bring to the notice of His Majesty's Government [...] the fact that the passage had offended Muslim sentiment very strongly and that every effort should be made to get it withdrawn'.[93] In fulfilment of his promise to the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin deputation, Noon then met the Marquess of Zetland, Secretary of State for India, and discussed with him what further steps could be taken. It was agreed that a carefully drafted letter would go from Zetland to Noon that would then be conveyed by the latter to the deputation.[94] For Zetland, it was 'a matter of deep regret [...] that offence had been given to the members of the deputation

[90]BL, IOR, P&J (S)/723, fo. 14, High Commissioner of India's Office to the Joint Secretary of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, 17 August 1938.

[91]*Manchester Guardian*, 19 August 1938. The High Commissioner's Office reported that '500 Indian Musulmans of London marched from the East End to India House' (BL, IOR, P&J (S)/723, fo. 17).

[92]For the petition see BL, IOR, P&J (S)/723, fos 18–24.

[93]See BL, IOR, P&J (S)/723, fos 15–16, note prepared by the High Commissioner's Office, 1 August 1938.

[94]BL, IOR, P&J (S)/723, fos 25–26.

and those whom they represent, on a matter concerning their Faith. But having regard to the freedom permitted to the expression of views in this country', he said that he had 'no power to secure a modification to the passage to which exception had been taken'.[95] Noon, on receiving Zetland's letter, communicated the Secretary of State's remarks to the deputation.[96] Copies of it were also sent to the original publisher of Wells's book, William Heinemann, and to Penguin Books, who had published it in a Pelican edition. While the former in acknowledgement merely noted its contents, the latter intimated that they had 'no authority to alter an author's work without his express permission' and that nothing could be done 'in connection with the passage complained of'.[97] What this episode reveals is that the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, from its base in the East End of London, was already in a position to be able to mobilize Muslims in London collectively to make demands that the British state could not ignore. As we shall see later, the East London Mosque was involved in similar campaigns in the following decades.

In these early years of its existence, the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin also strove hard to achieve its other key objective: 'to raise funds for building a Mosque in the East End of London' and 'By creating an endowment to provide for the maintenance and upkeep of the Mosque'.[98] Concretely, this meant having a space in which 'such festivals [and rituals] as the Birthday of Prophet Mohammad, 'Ashura, Idan [*sic*] and Friday Prayers' could be performed. In 1933, the LMF felt sufficiently persuaded to approve expenditure for 'a Moslem Preacher and Prayer Room in the East End of London'.[99] The Jamiat-ul-Muslimin's first annual report, in 1934–1935, noted that 'Friday prayers along with conversazione have been held regularly throughout the last year at King's Hall, Commercial Road'.[100] Not satisfied with being entrusted with the temporary arrangement of the various religious functions involved, it urged both the LMF and the

[95]BL, IOR, P&J (S)/723, fo. 28, Lord Zetland to Sir Firozkhan Noon, 24 August 1938.

[96]BL, IOR, P&J (S)/723, fo. 29, Sir Firozkhan Noon to Lord Zetland, 31 August 1938.

[97]BL, IOR, P&J (S)/723, fo. 33, letter from William Heinemann Ltd., 9 September 1938; fo. 34, letter from Penguin Books Limited, 12 September 1938.

[98]ELM Archives, Jamiat-ul-Muslimin Rules and Regulations, August 1938, p. 2.

[99]See below, p. 165. The Jamiat-ul-Muslimin Minutes of 7 May 1934 (ELM Archives) record the association's 'sincere thanks' to A.S.M. Anik Esq and Sayed Waris Ali Esq for 'their sympathetic and kind gesture for the association, out of the mosque fund, a contribution towards the cost of hiring a hall for congregational prayer [. . .] The association, however adds that it would be glad if the Trustees could kindly see their way to provide the association with a permanent place that could be used as a Sunday school and a lecture room'.

[100]See below, p. 186, for the reference to 'the dance hall at 85–87 Commercial Road for the holding of prayers and religious observances'.

Nizamia Mosque Trust to 'build a mosque in the East End of London', which it claimed had become 'the centre of Muslim population and the resort of seamen from abroad'.[101]

The search for suitable premises to house the mosque on a more permanent basis continued over the next five years and in 1940, at a cost of £2,800, the Trustees purchased a freehold property in Commercial Road; the first Juma prayer was offered in the new mosque on 23 May 1941. Repaired and remodelled, it was formally inaugurated as the East London Mosque by the Egyptian Ambassador on 1 August 1941.[102] The Jamiat-ul-Muslimin's Eighth Annual Report, 1941–1942, recorded the opening ceremony, the provision of a library, a medical service, and, with the co-operation of the Indigent Moslems Burial Fund that had been set up by some of the LMF Trustees in 1927, a burial service.[103] The Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, now based at the same address as the East London Mosque, supervised all these functions. Its influence and representative character, and its crucial role in the organization of the new mosque's activities, were recognized in its appointment as the LMF's agent, with its office in the same premises. This, then, after thirty years, was the culmination of the LMF's efforts. The Fund, which stood at just over £10, 687 on 31 December 1939, could not afford anything on a grander scale.[104]

However, by the time that Hassan Nachat Pasha, the Egyptian Ambassador, announced his plan for a central mosque in London in January 1940,[105] the British government's position had become

[101]ELM Archives, Jamiat-ul-Muslimin First Annual Report, 1934–1935, p. 4.

[102]See ELM Archives, brochure of the Opening Ceremony of the East London Mosque and Islamic Culture Centre, Friday, 1 August 1941.

[103]ELM Archives, Jamiat-ul-Muslimin Eighth Annual Report, 1941–1942, pp. 3–5. *The Times* on 14 April 1925 reported: 'A fund is being raised to make provision for the proper burial of indigent Moslems dying in this country, in accordance with the rites of Islam. The president of the committee, the Aga Khan, donated £200, A.S.M. Anik, the secretary and treasurer, £100 and Syed Ameer Ali, the chairman, 50 guineas'. The founding Trustees of The Indigent Moslems Burial Fund, A.S.M. Anik and Syed Ameer Ali, were both Trustees of the LMF: see ELM Archives, 'Declaration of Trust', 19 December 1927.

[104]See the Report by Sir Ernest Hotson, Honorary Secretary, contained in the brochure of the Opening Ceremony of the East London Mosque. See also BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 267, 'Extract from Metropolitan Police Report', 14 October 1943. In 1940 the assets of the LMF amounted to £10,417 ('The London Mosque', *Royal Central Asian Journal*, 27, pt. 2 (1940) pp. 221–223). By March 1941 the total assets had risen to just over £11,489 (BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 139).

[105]On 29 January 1940, at a meeting of the Royal Central Asian Society's Dinner Club, the ambassador made a statement on the provision of an adequate and worthy religious centre for Muslims of all nationalities living in or visiting London. He drew attention to the significant fact that the Islamic world was supporting the Allied cause in the war, explaining that 'this was to be expected from the fact that Islam is a democratic religion, and could not hesitate in the choice between the democratic and the aggressive totalitarian conceptions.

more sympathetic. The 'Arab Revolt' in Palestine that took place between 1936 and 1939 under the leadership of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al-Husseini, protesting against British support for Jewish demands in Palestine, had caused widespread anxiety (and sympathy) among Muslims worldwide. The British Government, with war looming, was keen to reduce any growing antagonism. With the Axis powers wooing Muslims in the Middle East (indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that the German SS helped finance the Revolt), the exigencies of the war quickly converted earlier hostility and the present neutrality into active support.[106] 'Experts' canvassed in both the Middle East and India were broadly supportive of 'the proposal to provide a site for the establishment of a Mosque in London'.[107] In Sir Harold Satow's opinion, 'as a tribute to the loyalty of the Moslems of the Empire, the proposed expenditure would be justified'.[108] Most thought that such support would help to improve relations with the Muslim world. Firoz Khan Noon, still the High Commissioner for India and ex officio a member of the London Mosque Fund, felt that

> The idea of a mosque in London is as excellent as it is opportune [. . .] If an appeal were to issue over your signature to all offices in charge of territory where Moslems reside and if the scheme were also backed by Moslem ambassadors and ministers in London I feel you would get sufficient funds to build and endow a good mosque.[109]

Headley's arguments that had been rejected in 1916 were now unabashedly re-invoked in favour of the project. In a memorandum to Churchill, George Lloyd, the Colonial Secretary, pointed out that it was 'anomalous and inappropriate' that in London, which 'contains more Moslems than any other European capital, there should be no central place of worship for Mussalmans'.[110] In his letter to the Secretary of State for India, Leo Amery, Lloyd was even more scathing:

He felt that the provision of a worthy centre of Moslem culture in London was long overdue. He had submitted certain proposals to King Farouk who had fully accepted them and was pleased to give his high patronage'. Sir Hassan Suhrawardy, chairman of the LMF readily expressed his support. See *The Times*, 1 February 1940.

[106]In a letter dated 8 February 1940 to the Viceroy of India, the Marquess of Linlithgow, Lord Lloyd said that 'Quite apart from the intrinsic need of such a mosque, which is great, one cannot be blind to the political and propaganda importance of such a step at the present time' (BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 116).

[107]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 130, 'Opinions regarding the proposal to provide a site for the establishment of a mosque in London'.

[108]*Ibid.*

[109]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 139, Firoz Khan Noon to Secretary of State for India, 24 September 1940.

[110]The co-signatories of the memorandum, dated 10 October 1940, were Lord Halifax, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Leo Amery, the Secretary of State for India (BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 151).

'It is really a scandal that an Empire which has more Muslims in it than Christians should not have in its capital a place of worship for Mohammedans worthy of the Empire'.[111] The announcement that such a mosque was now to be built and that the authorities had provided a site, would, in his view, 'serve as a tribute to the loyalty of the Moslems of the Empire'[112] and 'make a good impression in the Moslem world to-day'.[113] Surely, he said, the support for the mosque project would further reinforce 'the cooperation in the present war by the world of Islam in friendly interest and sympathy with the British Commonwealth of nations'.[114]

Convinced of the political efficacy of the project, Lloyd, shortly after he became Secretary of State for the Colonies, persuaded Halifax (the Foreign Secretary), along with Amery, to join him in submitting a memorandum to the War Cabinet entitled 'Proposals that His Majesty's Government should provide a site for a mosque in London'. The memorandum, stating the, by now well-rehearsed, arguments in support of the project, was approved on 18 October 1940;[115] financial assistance up to £100,000, announced in the House of Commons soon after, was to be a gift or tribute to the thousands of Indian Muslim soldiers who had died defending the British Empire – the form of recognition that, it might be recalled, had been explicitly rejected in 1916.[116]

Following protracted discussions and negotiations[117] between the Central Mosque Committee and the government regarding not only the selection and purchase of a suitable site but also the collection

[111]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 134, Lord George Lloyd to Rt. Hon. L.S. Amery, 16 September 1940.

[112]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 151.

[113]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 134.

[114]Commenting on the gift by the British government of a site in London for a mosque and a Muslim cultural centre entirely under Muslim control, *The Times* of 14 November 1940 said that the 'gift is the more welcome since in the struggle in which Britain and the British Empire are engaged the Muslim communities of the Empire had clearly shown where their sympathies lie. In India, in East and West Africa, Arabia and Malaya there must be over 120,000,000 Muslim subjects of the Crown and Government's gift recognises the value of the support, moral and material, which this great community is giving us in the struggle for civilization. [. . .] Nor must it be forgotten that our Allies in the Near and Middle East are Muslim nations [. . .] and have given abundant proofs of their attachment to our cause'.

[115]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 151.

[116]G. Hall, Under-Secretary, Colonial Office, in his reply to a Supplementary Question by Creech Jones MP, made the announcement on 13 November 1940. See *The Times*, 14 November 1940. See the full reply in *Parliamentary Debates* (House of Commons), CCCLXV, pp. 1710–1711.

[117]Disheartened by the slow progress in the acquisition of a site by the British government, the Egyptian Ambassador threatened resignation from the Mosque Committee. See BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 224, Lord Moyne to Lord Reith, 29 January 1942.

of sufficient funds for the construction of the mosque, Regents Lodge – Lady Ribblesdale's property with substantial lands in Regents Park – was acquired at a cost of £60,000.[118] For the construction of a new mosque, Lloyd had already written to Ali Maher Pasha, the Prime Minister of Egypt, to take the lead, hoping that other Muslim leaders would follow suit.[119] With the Mosque Committee's requests going unheeded, Amery wrote to Linlithgow, the Viceroy in India, asking him to persuade the Nizam of Hyderabad to transfer his fund to this project.[120] The Nizam refused.[121] Realizing that the ongoing efforts were unlikely to bear fruit any time soon, the Mosque Committee decided to make alterations to the existing premises so that they could be put to proper use as a cultural centre as well as a mosque. The property was then transferred to the Mosque Committee, and the Islamic Cultural Centre, which included the so-called 'Central London Mosque', was opened, ceremonially marked by King George VI's visit on 21 November 1944.[122] However, a full three decades were to pass before a building for this Central London Mosque was actually constructed.

Since the property for the Central London Mosque was purchased for £60,000 out of the sanctioned amount of £100,000, Suhrawardy, chairman of the LMF, wrote to Amery at the India Office asking him to consider diverting the residual money from the grant 'to acquire the land contiguous to the present East London Mosque and Islamic Culture Centre'. It would then be possible 'to erect buildings in every way suitable for a mosque [. . .] after the War'.[123] While this particular request was not met,[124] the British government was aware of the significant role that this particular mosque was beginning to play in shaping the attitudes of an important layer of London's Muslim population towards the war effort, as well as regarding political developments in India. For instance, a secret report recorded that Indian soldiers were 'frequenting the East London Mosque, attending daily congregations to observe the Ramdan fast', and that 'The Pakistan Movement [is] propagating among the troops

[118]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 243, Sir Hassan Suhrawardy to the Rt Hon. L.S. Amery, 5 August 1942.
[119]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 117, Lord Lloyd to Ali Maher Pasha, 23 February 1940.
[120]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 166, Paragraph for Secretary of State's letter for Viceroy, 29/10–4/11/40.
[121]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 143, extract from private letter from Lord Linlithgow to Mr Amery, 21 March 1941.
[122]*The Times*, 22 November 1944.
[123]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 237, Sir Hassan Suhrawardy to the Rt Hon. L.S. Amery, 27 July 1942.
[124]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 92.

of the Indian Army in this country and when soldiers visit the Mosque they hear about the scheme whereby Northern India, Bengal and Hyderabad could be federated into an independent Muslim State'.[125] While the British government had now committed itself primarily to the Central London Mosque project, it did feel that some support for the East London Mosque, with a view to developing understanding of British culture among local Muslims, would help to dispose them more positively towards Britain, especially at this critical time. So, with the approval of the India Office, in the autumn of 1941, the British Council started making monetary grants, as well as providing a variety of literature, to the cultural centre affiliated to the East London Mosque.[126]

The project for which the London Mosque Fund had originally been established – to build 'a mosque in London worthy of the tradition of Islam and worthy of the capital of the British Empire' – had still not come to fruition, at least not through the resources mobilized by the Fund itself. What the early promoters of the project had initially envisioned was no ordinary space along the lines of the premises in Commercial Road. Moreover, the congregation that they had had in mind was less the working-class seafaring community of the East End of London and much more the cosmopolitan community of students, merchants, and princes who visited London regularly. The space for which they had lobbied was intended, above all, to stand as a grand symbol of the dignity of Islam and of the power of the worldwide Muslim community – 'the great "cathedral" [. . .] in the centre of London, of stately dimensions, with domes and minarets in graceful Saracenic style of architecture in a conspicuous position'.[127] It was obvious, however, that such an ambitious undertaking was unlikely ever to be successful unless wealthy donors were prepared to commit substantial resources. A committee with the right kind of credentials was constituted with this aim in mind. With connections among the educated upper social classes, the higher echelons of Muslim governments, and the British establishment, it comprised men representing a number of Muslim states, headed by the Egyptian Ambassador. King Farouk of Egypt was invited to take a lead and give the project his 'august patronage [. . .] such a lead [it was hoped]

[125]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 218.

[126]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 197, J.P. Gibson to A.W.G. Randall of the Foreign Office, 4 June 1941. The LMF Minutes of 23 July 1941 recorded the acceptance of 'the offer of a capital grant of £100 and a recurring grant of £75 for this year and if possible subsequent years' (see below, p. 189).

[127]See BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 39, welcome speech by Sir Hassan Suhrawardy, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the LMF, at the inauguration of the East London Mosque.

would be a catalyst for the deriving of the resources for the project from the vast Muslim wealth that was there in the British Empire and in friendly foreign Muslim countries'.[128] But all this was to no avail. Adequate sponsorship for a grand Central London Mosque failed to materialize. Attempts to amalgamate the three existing Mosque funds,[129] which would have been a huge step towards making available sufficient finances for the project, floundered despite the fact that many of the same Muslim notables in London served on all three trusts. The Nizam could not be persuaded to transfer his funds even when the Saudi Minister personally made the request. He declined because he disliked this new project encroaching upon the one that he had started some years ago; in effect, his refusal stemmed from his reluctance to see the prestige of promoting this project pass from himself to one dominated by Arab interests.[130] Mougy and the Arabs, on the other hand, did not wish the project to be monopolized by Indian Muslims. Sectarian issues were another obstacle, given that the LMF had been initiated by Syed Ameer Ali, a Shia, and the Aga Khan, an Ismaili. The project for the creation of space to house a non-sectarian universal Islam was holed below the water line by considerations of power and influence.

Indeed, this examination reveals how far the quest for Muslim space was shaped by the institutions of wider society. The British state became engaged in the project for several reasons, among which maintaining hegemonic power over colonial people and social control over what was viewed as a potentially unstable section of the population were probably significant. To achieve this, it sought to ensure that control of the management of mosque committees lay in the hands of men who were either government officials or very closely allied with the government; men who were on the whole operating on the same political wavelength as the rest of the British establishment. But these Muslims were also striving to gain a greater share of power in the imperial domain, and mosque initiatives were one of a number of ways of achieving that objective. Recognizing that the meagre resources available to them within Britain would be inadequate to fulfil their purposes, they sought leverage from other parts of the Muslim world. Hence their identification with pan-Islam was not only a way of increasing their own power in negotiations with the British state but also represented a political strategy for gaining practical support for the realization of their mosque project.

[128]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 118, Lord Lloyd to Ali Maher Pasha, 23 February 1940.
[129]See Appendix III.
[130]See Appendix III.

The East London Mosque, as has been the case with some of the more recent mosque projects in Britain, also became a site of contestation with regard to identity and power within London's emerging Muslim communities. This Muslim space was a resource whose use was envisaged differently by various individuals and groups, and thus its control was crucial to the shaping of the activities that took place within it. Such control was exercised through ownership of the premises, combined with a firm hold on the finances. Hence, representation on the various committees and trust boards was hard fought. This is evident in the struggle that began to unroll between the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin (which had only a minority representation on the Trust Board) and the rest of the Trustees of the LMF after the inauguration of the East London Mosque in 1941; we will see how that struggle for control was really about shaping the character of this Muslim space.

The London Mosque Fund and the East London Mosque: 1941–1951

After its establishment in Commercial Road in 1941, the East London Mosque quickly became a site where religious activity overlapped with politics. Since different Trustees represented widely varying views and political interests, there arose considerable tension among them. A comment in a New Scotland Yard report suggested that the British authorities disapproved of politics in the mosque; indeed, they viewed as 'unsatisfactory' the use of the East London Mosque 'as a Pakistan propagandist centre' for Indian Muslim soldiers who frequented it when observing the Ramadan fast.[131] However, the chairman of the Mosque's Executive Committee, Sir Hassan Suhrawardy, advisor at the India Office and 'a sympathiser of the Pakistan National Movement', allowed its material to be distributed. Nevertheless, when the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin began initiating activities at these premises that were seen as running counter to, or not broadly in line with, those of more 'establishment' Muslims, sanctions were swiftly applied. Hence, while a Pakistan Movement pamphlet was freely circulated at the ELM's opening in 1941 under Sir Hassan Suhrawardy's benevolent eye,[132] pro-Congress members of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin such as Said

[131] BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 116, extract from New Scotland Yard report, 15 October 1941.

[132] 'Copies of a booklet entitled "The Millat of Islam and the Menace of 'Indianism'", written by C. Rahmat Ali, founder of the Pakistan National Movement, were distributed among the audience by an unidentified "Mohammedan". This pamphlet, which was

Amir Shah (whose 'Muslim Committee was [. . .] violently opposed to the Muslim League and the Pakistan Plan'[133]) were asked to call a halt to activities that were not construed to be strictly in the religious domain. When this instruction was ignored, the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin was given notice terminating its agency status.[134]

There then ensued a ferocious battle between the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin and the LMF's Executive Committee. The Jamiat-ul-Muslimin refused to accept this termination on the grounds that, as the Board and the Executive Committee of the LMF 'were not wholly Islamic bodies', they did not have authority with regard to how the Mosque's affairs should be conducted.[135] Posters were circulated bearing the caption 'Hands off the East London Mosque and the

violently opposed to the inclusion of the Moslem people in a federated India [. . .] was the subject of considerable discussion and argument. It was said to have been distributed at the ceremony with the approval of Sir Hassan Suhrawardy, who is friendly with the author and a sympathiser of the Pakistan National Movement' (BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fos 205–206, extract from New Scotland Yard report no. 199, 6 August 1941).

[133]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 72. Indeed, later on, at one Friday congregation led by Sir Hassan Suhrawardy, he loudly prayed for the victory of the Allies. This invited rebuke from some of the members of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin (according to Majid Qureshi, one of the congregants, Amir Shah asked, 'Why did you pray for the British? We have come for a religious function not to pray for the British' (see Adams, *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers*, p. 162)), who at the time supported the Indian National Congress as the party fighting for India's independence and denounced the All-India Muslim League as not only 'a traitorous organisation in the pay of Great Britain' but also divisive and elitist. See BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 76.

[134]The Jamiat-ul-Muslimin had been appointed as the agents for 'arranging prayers, supervising the buildings, and doing work for the Indigent Muslims Burial Fund'. A room had been given to them to use as an office. See ELM Archives, Sir Hassan Suhrawardy to the Hon. Secretary of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, 8 July 1941. Earlier, Firozkhan Noon had written to Suhrawardy: 'we do not wish the mosque to be mixed up with a political body [. . .] I think it is best to keep it entirely as a religious place of worship, a mosque, in possession of the Jamiat, and for this purpose' (ELM Archives, Firozkhan Noon to Hassan Suhrawardy, 11 December 1940). A little later he suggested that a clause be added to the agency agreement 'to the effect that no political meetings or speeches will be allowed'. He thought it was 'useful to have this clause in order to protect ourselves against any future controversies arising amongst the congregation' (see ELM Archives, Firozkhan Noon to Suhrawardy, 21 February 1941). Such a clause was added to the agency agreement: according to Clause 4, 'You are to see that [. . .] the said premises are used only for the religious purposes aforesaid and for no other purpose and in particular you are not to allow any meetings or speeches of a political nature to be held or take place on any of the premises' (ELM Archives, Sir Ernest Hotson, Hon. Secretary, London Mosque Fund to the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, 20 May 1941). The notice, dated 23 September 1943, to terminate the agency agreement with the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin was served, but the Jamiat refused to accept the termination, stating it to be in violation of the 'word and spirit of the Quran'. While the LMF's solicitors threatened legal proceedings if the mosque was not vacated, as the Minutes reveal (see below, pp. 241–242), this action was postponed as further discussions with the representatives ensued. See BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 270.

[135]BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 270.

Trust Fund'.[136] At a protest meeting attended by some 400 people – primarily Punjabi and Bengali Muslims – Allah Dad Khan on behalf of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin stated that the Trustees were not 'good Muslims': they put the interests of the British government before their duty to Islam; similarly, they never came merely to pray, but always had sinister or ulterior motives for their casual visits.[137] He alleged, with some justification, that it was the India Office that ran the affairs of the East London Mosque through its representatives such as Sir Hassan Suhrawardy and Sayeedulla (who combined the role of Secretary with that of Indian Seamen Welfare Officer for the London area, appointed by the High Commissioner) and that these were the type of Muslims on the LMF whom the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin wished to replace with more 'conscientious' and 'trustworthy' Muslims.[138] Jamiat-ul-Muslimin leaders accordingly demanded that a majority of the Trustees and the members of the Executive Committee should be drawn from their organization. Their argument, it must be stressed, did not go unchallenged from other delegates present at the meeting. For instance, the delegate from Newcastle said that

> the board of Trustees of the London Mosque Fund had not suddenly become an un-Islamic body. There had always been Trustees on the Board who were not Muslims, and if the Jamiat saw fit to conclude an agreement with the Board in the first place, then the Jamiat could not now legally refuse to accept a notice terminating that agreement on the ground that the Board was not an entire Muslim body.[139]

This was certainly not what the British government wanted, given that the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin leaders were viewed as unreliable figures – political opportunists, active in Indian nationalist agitation, seeking to obtain control of the East London Mosque and the Mosque Fund.[140] Additionally, in the political context of the Congress-led Quit India movement of 1942, the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin's bid for power in relation to the East London Mosque was a genuine cause for concern, even though officials conceded that 'certain of its members had worked hard in the interests of Islam and have assisted in many ways indigent Muslims and others who have suffered misfortune. The Jamiat was a live and efficient organisation', and that, 'whatever may be said to their discredit, Khan and Shah [Jamiat leaders] commanded far greater support in Muslim circles in East London than the distinguished Muslim Trustees of the London

[136] BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 83.
[137] BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 271.
[138] *Ibid.*
[139] *Ibid.*, fos 271–272.
[140] BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 268 and fos 71–74.

Mosque Fund'.[141] As correspondence within government circles reveals, Sir John Woodhead, the LMF's secretary, felt strongly that the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin 'not merely because of its political complexion but also [. . . because] it was made up largely of East End profiteers, ought not to be given a preponderating voice on the Trust or the Executive Committee if that can be avoided'.[142] The Jamiat's drive for control of the mosque was seen as questioning the status quo and the hegemonic power of the British imperial state. That would not do. Rather, the British authorities wanted 'their men' to continue to run the mosque, keeping their objectives and interests paramount.[143] Muslims such as Suhrawardy and Noon were reliable loyalists, culturally assimilated, cosmopolitan men. The leading members of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, on the other hand, were described in a police report as 'bigoted Muslims who, on a religious issue, would not hesitate to subordinate all their other interests to the cause of Islam'.[144] Regarded as rigid in their religious beliefs and practices, they were deemed to be more inflexibly committed to 'traditional' Islam and its prescriptions that they had imbibed from their parents and in Indian mosques and *madrassas* (Islamic schools).

Herein lay the crux of the conflict between the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin and the majority of the LMF Trustees. The chairman of the LMF was authorized to remove misleading impressions caused by the action taken by the Jamiat.[145] While Sir John Woodhead, taking note of the Jamiat's objections to non-Muslims being on the Management Committee, was happy to hand over the LMF's treasurership to a Muslim, the Trustees hoped that 'it would be possible for Sir John Woodhead not to resign'.[146] Given the difficulties that the mosque was then experiencing, the chairman, Dr Hassan Nachat Pasha

[141] BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 268.

[142] See BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 85, Mr Silver's secret report. Sir John Woodhead accepted the post of Hon. Treasurer of the London Mosque Fund in succession to Sir Ernest Hotson in 1941. He was the sole non-Muslim member of the LMF's Executive Committee (see BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 84).

[143] As Mr Silver reported, 'The Jamiat have for some time been making themselves difficult having got into the hands of Congress-minded Moslems [. . .] demanding a predominant share in the appointments both of the Trustees and on the Executive Committee [. . .] They are also objecting [. . .] to the presence of non-Moslems on these bodies (Lord Winterton and Sir J. Woodhead) and are strongly critical of Sir H. Suhrawardy's policy [. . .]. The question arises whether he and Lord Winterton should tender their resignations. If this happens in Sir H. Suhrawardy's absence [on leave in India] there will be no-one to keep an eye on developments from the official angle [. . .] It is obviously undesirable [. . .] and this has kept Sir J. Woodhead from resigning up to now' (BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 84).

[144] BL, IOR, L/P&J/12/468, fo. 268, extract from Metropolitan Police report, 14 October 1943.

[145] See below, p. 242.

[146] *Ibid.*

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(the Egyptian Ambassador), who had also led the scheme for the Central London Mosque, suggested at the December 1943 meeting of the Trustees that the management of the East London Mosque be transferred to the committee of the Central London Mosque.[147] Even though friction between the Trustees and the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin continued, legal action by the former against the latter was avoided. By 1948, Sir John Woodhead, who was still honorary secretary of the LMF, had changed his view somewhat regarding the suitability of Jamiat-ul-Muslimin leaders to be Trustees of the LMF. Writing to Hassan Nachat Pasha, he explained 'that the trouble with the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin has disappeared and that relations between the Trustees and myself on the one hand and the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin on the other have been satisfactory for about three years'.[148]

Nevertheless, during the late 1940s the locus of power was gradually shifting from cosmopolitan London Muslims to local East End community leaders. With India's independence achieved in August 1947, Sir Torick Ameer Ali, who had replaced Sir Hassan Suhrawardy as 'the Moslem Adviser to the Secretary of State for India' in November 1944 and in that capacity had taken over the chairmanship of the LMF, relinquished this role. Three long-standing, leading members of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin – Hatim Attari, Fazal Shah, and Ghulam Mohammad – were elected as Trustees instead.[149] In many ways, the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, using the ELM as its focus, had already given East End Muslims a more organized sense of community, both through its rudimentary set of religious services and through regular gatherings at religious events in the trying circumstances of the Second World War. It had turned itself into an established conduit for the negotiation of Muslim needs with various government bodies and the institutions of wider society, particularly with regard to what many of those whom it represented considered the proper fulfilment of religious prescriptions.[150] Accordingly, it financed funeral services for Indigent Muslims and co-ordinated burial arrangements with the London Necropolis Company for their burials at the Brookwood Cemetery in Woking.[151] In February 1943, the East London Mosque

[147] See below, pp. 248–249.

[148] ELM Archives, Sir John Woodhead to Hassan Nachat Pasha, 14 February 1948.

[149] ELM Archives, LMF Minutes, 5 February 1948.

[150] ELM Archives, letter from S. Jafferji to the Secretary of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, 10 June 1947, regarding the post-mortem of his child that was conducted without his permission (which he would not have given on religious grounds), and the explanation provided by the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin of 'the circumstances and the objection of the Muslim Society to the attitude adopted by the Authorities'.

[151] ELM Archives, Managing Director, Necropolis Company Limited to the Secretary of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, 10 May 1947.

was registered for 'solemnizing Marriages'.[152] The Jamiat successfully lobbied the Ministry of Food for the provision to Muslims, along with Jews, of 'Kosher margarine' on the surrender of their bacon coupons for 'cooking fat allocation'.[153] It protested against what it perceived to be offensive material in the press, such as the 'publication of the Prophet's picture which along with its caption is misleading, incorrect and mischievous'.[154] On such occasions as Eid-al-Adha and Milad-un-Nabi, it obtained official authorization for rationed foods such as rice, butter, and sugar, as well as slaughter of a sheep.[155] It even secured permission from the town clerk of the local council for the use of the council's baths by its members before Eid congregational prayers.[156]

After the end of the Second World War, growing communal conflict in India brought about a sharp rise in Indian Muslim political self-consciousness. Many became disillusioned with the Indian National Congress, which was increasingly perceived by Indian Muslims as an organization that was promoting Hindu interests and nationalism. The two-nation concept – one Muslim, the other Hindu – gathered momentum. In London, Abbas Ali, who had arrived from Bengal to study law, threw himself fervently into the Pakistan Movement, declaring that 'India is a problem of two rival ideologies', Hindu and Muslim.[157] His view was that 'The Muslim demand for a separate State is just the demand for freedom and peace [. . .] Muslims are against Hindu imperialism as the Indians as a whole are against foreign rule, and are determined "to take control of their own affairs"'.[158] Such views resonated with many other Muslim settlers in London, including a large number of those residing in the East End. For Shah Abdul Majid Qureshi, a Sylheti and previously sympathetic to the Indian National Congress, the idea of 'a majority Muslim state where Muslims would be free to perform their religious duties [. . .] a *real* Islamic state'[159] now became emotionally very appealing. Demonstrations were organized, and resolutions were passed. Slogans such as 'Pakistan or we perish' and 'Muslims call to arms'[160] struck a chord; and Friday prayers at the

[152]ELM Archives, 'Superintendent Registrar's certificate of the registry of a building for the solemnization of marriages therein', 11 February 1943.

[153]ELM Archives, Hon. Secretary of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin to the Ministry of Food, 11 February 1943, and the Ministry of Food's reply, 4 March 1943.

[154]See ELM Archives, telegram, 10 February 1943.

[155]ELM Archives, F.J. Adams of the High Commission for India to Suleman Jetha, 18 September 1944.

[156]ELM Archives, letter of confirmation, Town Clerk, Metropolitan Borough of Stepney, 21 March 1960.

[157]K. Hunter, *History of Pakistanis in Britain* (Oxford, 1962), p. 97.

[158]*Ibid.*, p. 98.

[159]Adams, *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers*, p. 172.

[160]See Hunter, *History of Pakistanis*, pl. 17.

East London Mosque became a focus for the British branch of the All-India Muslim League.[161]

In the period between the partition of British India in August 1947 and the beginning of the 1950s, the Muslim community in the East End grew further as maritime workers began to 'jump ship' in greater numbers. The vast majority hailed from Sylhet, a district of Assam that, after a referendum in July 1947, became part of East Pakistan. These included many Bengali Muslim peasants from adjoining Assamese areas who had arrived in Sylhet as 'refugees' after Partition and, lacking any means of subsistence, took the opportunity to come to Britain. By 1951, when the Minutes reproduced in this annotated edition end, 'the community [. . .] from Sylhet living in London had grown to about 300'.[162] They were generally single and male. Most had had little education. They survived by eking out a living from factory, hotel, and restaurant work or seafaring. Few cared overtly for religion – their attendance at the mosque was sparse, not many fasted during the month of Ramadan, and little consideration was given to the consumption of *halal* food. Many co-habited with or married English women.[163] The beginning of the 1950s therefore marked the beginning of a new era in Commonwealth immigration that eventually drew ever growing numbers of Bengalis to London.

The East London Mosque from 1951 onwards

I now turn my focus to developments concerning the East London Mosque's evolution after 1951, when the Minutes reproduced here conclude. Drawing on the later minutes of the ELM Trust it is possible to trace the subsequent history of the mosque as it faced the challenge of ministering to the religious needs of an expanding Muslim community.

As more and more immigrants arrived, their welfare demanded attention. Given its guidance and material support to the community, the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, which (as noted above) had been actively engaged in the running of the East London Mosque since its opening in 1941, became increasingly influential in shaping the religious behaviour of many local Muslims. At the same time, its

[161] Adams, *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers*, p. 54.

[162] *Ibid.*

[163] *Ibid.*, p. 160. Majid Qureshi's oral testimony is supported by Stephen Barton, who, when researching the position of post-Second World War Bengali Muslims in Bradford, observed that the original Bangladeshi migrants 'suffered an almost total lapse of religious observance'. See *The Bengali Muslims of Bradford: a study of their observance of Islam with special reference to the function of the mosque and the work of the imam* (Leeds, 1986), p. 177.

leading members also contributed to the more secular community organizations, such as the Indian Seamen's Welfare Association, which had been set up in 1943 but which was superseded by the Pakistan Welfare Association (PWA) in 1952. Apart from acting as an interlocutor vis-à-vis the relevant British public institutions, such as the social services, given the discriminatory behaviour that East Pakistanis perceived from the West Pakistani-dominated state institutions, the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin also carried out a lobbying function on the former's behalf in bureaucratic dealings with the Pakistan High Commission. Thus, as demand for unskilled and semi-skilled labour in Britain rocketed in the early post-war years, many East Pakistanis wanted to migrate but were concerned that they were being denied opportunities by the Pakistan government's imposition of restrictions over issuing passports to them. In 1954, at a meeting in the packed Grand Palais Hall in Commercial Road, Bengali PWA leaders (including the Sylheti trade unionist Aftab Ali) called for the lifting of curbs on granting passports to East Pakistanis. As pressure continued to mount, the newly installed Bengali Prime Minister of Pakistan, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, agreed in 1956 'to grant one thousand passports to "distressed seamen", their survivors or nominated dependents'.[164] Subsequently, rules were further relaxed, allowing men other than ex-seamen to proceed to Britain for employment purposes. Over the next couple of years, two to three thousand men from East Pakistan joined the existing settlers in London's East End.[165] The ensuing steady stream of East Bengali migrants meant that, by 1962, a community of about 5,000 had become established in Spitalfields and its surrounds.[166]

A number of community organizations emerged to meet these East Pakistani migrants' social, cultural, religious, and welfare needs. The Pakistan Caterers' Association was formed in 1960.[167] Its leaders, who included Shah Abdul Majid Qureshi, Ayub Ali, and Taslim Ali,[168] owned restaurants, boarding-houses, cafés, general stores, and funeral

[164] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[165] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

[166] Sir John Woodhead in his letter to M.A.H. Ispahani, 2 March 1954 (ELM Archives), gave this number as an estimate.

[167] Adams, *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers*, p. 177.

[168] Taslim Ali, from East Bengal and married to an English woman who converted to Islam, opened a boarding-house/restaurant/café and a *halal* butcher's shop (a fish and chip shop according to Salahudeen Haleem, one of the present Trustees) in East London in the 1940s, and became increasingly active in mosque affairs from the 1950s. In 1950 he established a firm of undertakers, Haji Taslim Funerals (see below, n. 189).

parlours.[169] Since the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act[170] meant that migrant labourers were allowed entry into Britain only if they had jobs to go to, the Association – by operating as a sponsoring vehicle – facilitated the granting of work vouchers for Bengali cooks and students who doubled up as waiters in the growing catering industry. Many of these 'caterers' were also active in local religious and welfare organizations such as the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, the ELM, and the Indigent Moslems Burial Fund.

Reflecting these broader trends, by the mid-1950s control of the ELM Board of Trustees continued to pass from the more Westernized 'pro-establishment' Muslims and those non-Muslims who were closely connected with the British authorities to members who were more deeply committed to encouraging the practice of an Islamic way of life among London's Muslims. The influence of the former was also weakening as the result of the shifting of interest on the part of the ambassador-Trustees from Saudi Arabia and Egypt to an ambitious scheme initiated by the Egyptian Ambassador for the establishment of a grand central mosque in the heart of London's West End. Indeed, the latter did not attended trustee meetings after 1955, while the former no longer took part after 1958.[171] Along with a number of other Muslim ambassadors, they became Trustees of the Central London Mosque Trust instead. The High Commissioner for Pakistan, while he remained the chairman of the Council of Management, also adopted an increasingly 'hands-off' approach. Consequently, local representatives of the East London Muslim community, comprising primarily Jamiat-ul-Muslimin leaders, were now the prime movers in the Council of Management's decision-making processes.

Interestingly, there seems to have been little resistance to the shift in power away from the existing Trustees. Indeed, they were content to make changes in the constitution of the London Mosque Fund that enabled its Council of Management to 'be drawn largely from residents of the East end of London where the Mosque is situated'.[172] For Sir John Woodhead, the long-serving honorary treasurer and secretary of the Trust, this was a move in the right direction, as he claimed that he had 'always considered it right and proper that the Moslems who worship at the East London Mosque, should be actively

[169]For Majid Qureshi, see Adams, *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers*, pp. 141–178; for Taslim Ali, see *ibid.*, pp. 53, 87, 160–161, 163; for Ayub Ali, see *ibid.*, pp. 39, 41–44, 62, 85, 161, 163, 174.

[170]See Z. Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Immigration: immigration, 'race' and 'race' relations in post-war Britain* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 75–76.

[171]See ELM Archives, East London Mosque Trust Council of Management Minutes, 27 May 1970.

[172]ELM Archives, Sir John Woodhead to Dr Hassan Nachat Pacha, 14 February 1948.

associated with the management of the "trust"'.[173] As early as 1948, when seeking approval for the appointment of Fazal Shah and Ghulam Mohammed as LMF Trustees, one of the reasons he gave was that they 'live in the East End of London and are connected with the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin'.[174] When, in June 1949, the London Mosque Fund had become a trust corporation, both these men were included among its first Trustees, together with the ambassadors of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, Sir Torick Ameer Ali, and three other leading members of Jamiat-ul-Muslimin.[175]

However, while the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin continued to emphasize the necessity of organizing Muslim lives in line with Islamic principles and values in a non-Muslim environment, its increasing influence in the 1950s on the East London Mosque Trust, which had formally replaced the London Mosque Fund in 1949,[176] did not necessarily mean a strong move towards stringency in religious outlook or practice. The Trust's objectives in 1954 were set out in relatively ecumenical terms – they were concerned with those matters of the Muslim faith that could be conveniently and properly undertaken by the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin Trust. The most important of these were the establishment in London of a religious and cultural centre for Muslims 'from all parts of the world', the provision of 'accommodation for Muslim students with a view to guiding their activities and helping them to live their lives in accordance with the tenets of Islam', and to 'inculcate tolerance and liberal outlook in general'.[177] The social, educational, and occupational backgrounds of the fifteen Trustees of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin Trust in 1954 seemed to reflect the liberality and broadness of their vision. Apart from the High Commissioner for Pakistan, the Trust membership comprised a former lecturer at the School of Oriental and African Studies, a barrister, three doctors, two students, five merchants, a boarding-house keeper, and, interestingly, a so-called 'housewife'.[178]

Nevertheless, those who actively ran the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin projected themselves as committed to the ideal of pan-Islamism and to the embedding and promotion of Islamic practices among Muslims in Britain through their activities. While uneasy about the unravelling political crisis in Pakistan, these Jamiat-ul-Muslimin activists from East Bengal seemed, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, to remain wedded

[173] *Ibid.*
[174] *Ibid.*
[175] See Appendix II.
[176] *Ibid.*
[177] See ELM Archives, 'Memorandum and articles of association of Jamiat-ul-Muslimin Musjid [*sic*] and Students' Residential Centre Trust (London) Ltd.', 1954, p. 1.
[178] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

to the hope of Pakistan becoming an Islamic state, despite their fellow Bengalis receiving what was often perceived to be discriminatory treatment at the hands of the West Pakistani ruling elite. It would appear that in retaining this vision they were ideologically influenced by two religio-political organizations with which they developed close connections: Tablighi Jamaat[179] and the Jamaat-i-Islami.[180] Indeed, members of the Tablighi Jamaat, on their periodic visits to Britain, would stay at the ELM premises,[181] and the JI-inspired UK Islamic Mission, when first founded in 1962, was also initially located there.[182] Taslim Ali, who emerged as one of the key figures in the East London Mosque for several decades after the Second World War, had already been a member of the Tablighi Jamaat for several years.[183] In 1960, he was given the title of 'Honorary Welfare Officer of the Muslim Community of London',[184] and four years later he was appointed Superintendent of the ELM.[185]

The provision of welfare services to the Muslim community remained one of the key objectives of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin Trust, though, in this early period, the orientation of all its activities was overwhelmingly religious.[186] Nevertheless, as the Muslim community in the East End expanded in size, the leaders of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, together with the Trustees of the East London Mosque, became acutely aware of the lack of provision for meeting the needs of their

[179]Tablighi Jamaat (literally, the preaching party), is a revivalist, missionary, non-political Islamic movement founded by Maulana Ilyas (1885–1944), who received his religious training at Dar-ul-Uloom, Deoband. For further details about its ideology and practice, see Barbara D. Metcalf, 'The Tablighi Jama'at in America and Europe', in Barbara D. Metcalf (ed.), *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe* (Berkeley, 1996), pp. 110–127.

[180]Jamaat-i-Islami (literally, the Islamic party), was founded in 1941 by Maulana Abul A'la Maududi (1903–1979), who, educated by Deobandi *ulama* in Delhi (see below, n. 273), qualified in 1926 as a teacher of religious sciences. An Islamist reformist movement, the Jamaat-i-Islami was, ideologically and in its political practice, strongly influenced by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. For details, see Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain: religion, politics and identity among British Muslims* (London, 2002), pp. 40–43 and R. Bonney, *Jihad: from Qur'an to Bin Laden* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 201.

[181]For instance, 'Tablighi Jamat brethren', while on tour in England, had stayed at the mosque 'from end of November 1956 to 31 March 1957 and beyond' (see ELM Archives, Ishrat Hussain to S.M. Jetha, 6 March 1959); and 'Tablighi Jamats from Pakistan, India (and provinces) [. . .] visit this country at intervals and make their head quarters at the East London Mosque' (ELM Archives, Jetha's report as Hon. Secretary of the ELMT presented at the Committee of Management meeting, 7 October 1964, and attached to ELMT Minutes of that date).

[182]Sarah Glynn, 'Bengali Muslims: the new East End radicals?', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 25, no. 6 (November 2002), p. 971.

[183]Metcalf, *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*, p. 226.

[184]ELM Archives, certificate prepared by S.M. Jetha, 17 June 1960.

[185]ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 15 January 1964.

[186]*Ibid.*, p. 2.

Muslim compatriots. In 1954, explaining the need for a paid welfare officer to combine with the social work that was being conducted voluntarily by members of Jamiat-ul-Muslimin, Sir John Woodhead, as ELMT Secretary, wrote to Mirza Abul Hassan Ispahani,[187] its then chairman, that the majority of Muslims in the area were poor and

> in need of help and guidance in many matters [. . .] In some homes children are neglected and require assistance as regards food and clothing [. . .] not infrequently, hospitals approach the Jamiat for assistance in regard to Muslim patients, and at similar times requests are received from Authorities of prisons in which Muslims are serving sentences of imprisonment.[188]

Leading Jamiat-ul-Muslimin members, such as S.M. Jetha, S.M Hosain, Nawab Ali, and Taslim Ali, who were themselves relatively devout Muslims, established mechanisms (in association with the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin and the ELMT) that would enable Muslims to carry out their religious duties properly. For instance, in 1950, Taslim Ali, with his English wife assisting, was given permission to start a mortuary and funeral service from the ELM premises.[189] He, Nawab Ali, and their two English wives together founded the first *halal* butcheries in Britain.[190] Through the ELM and partly funded by it, they also arranged for the religious education of Muslim children in the local community.

A factor that was to have serious implications for the future evolution of the East London Mosque, however, was the increasing political tension between the two 'wings' of Pakistan that had quickly emerged after the country's foundation in 1947. While many Bengali Muslims had been fervently in favour of the Pakistan Movement, they were soon disillusioned by what they perceived as being at the receiving end of cultural condescension, economic exploitation, and political oppression meted out by the dominant West Pakistanis. Resentment at the attempted imposition of Urdu as the national language at the expense of Bengali resulted in violent protests in 1952.[191] Tensions again rose sharply with the dismissal of East Pakistan's Bengali-led United

[187]Ispahani was Pakistan's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom from 1952 to 1954. He was also a Trustee of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin in 1954.

[188]Sir John Woodhead to M.A.H. Ispahani, 2 March 1954, ELM Archives.

[189]Taslim Ali 'was the first one who organized the Muslim mortuary – he rented a room near the mosque. He used to pick up the dead bodies from the hospital, wash the body, and give the funeral service according to the Muslim rites'. His wife was also fully trained to conduct Muslim funerals for Muslim women. See Adams, *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers*, p. 161.

[190]*Ibid.*, pp. 86–87.

[191]Willem van Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 113.

Front government in 1954.[192] Relations between East and West Pakistan worsened still further with the onset of Punjabi-dominated military rule in October 1958,[193] eventually culminating in the establishment on 16 December 1971 of an independent Bangladesh, following a war of independence.[194] Not surprisingly, East Pakistanis in London also felt aggrieved at these developments. As one influential Bengali resident, Majid Qureshi, put it, 'the big posts were all held by West Pakistani people. In the Military, in all the Government posts, there was some unfairness'.[195] More specifically, he had witnessed the '[dismissive] treatment of Bengalis by the West Pakistani Officers, in the Pakistan Embassy itself', where 'the [West] Pakistanis were all the *burra sahibs* (''big shots''), and they had Bengalis to serve them only in clerical jobs'.[196] Newspaper reports in the late 1960s suggest a great deal of dissatisfaction at what appeared to be the High Commission's lack of assistance in dealing with Bengalis' problems, especially with regard to attacks against them as immigrants in the British press.[197] The Trustees of the East London Mosque, still under the chairmanship of the High Commissioner for Pakistan, sensed simmering discontent and the growing politicization of the East Pakistani community in London along nationalist lines, and accordingly advised that the 'Mosque premises be solely used for religious purposes and no political agitation meeting be allowed there'.[198]

While the Trustees of the ELM were successfully able to 'keep politics out of the organisation'[199] as far as the struggle for Bengali self-determination was concerned, serious divisions among the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin's leading members, vying to wrest control of the ELM's resources, had surfaced in 1959 and thereafter caused acute controversies and tensions within the mosque, seriously affecting its administration and strategic direction. Complaints regarding representation on the LMF and malpractices at the mosque, including irregularities in its administration, proliferated in 1959; these continued for several years, with individuals from both factions making accusations against each other.[200] Two rival groups claimed

[192] *Ibid.*, pp. 116–117; see also Charles Peter O'Donnell, *Bangladesh: a biography of a nation* (London, 1984), pp. 49–50.
[193] Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*, p. 117.
[194] *Ibid.*, p. 172.
[195] Adams, *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers*, p. 173.
[196] *Ibid.*, pp. 172–173.
[197] *The Times*, 15 February 1968.
[198] ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 30 March 1967.
[199] ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 2 May 1968.
[200] According to S.M. Jetha, interested persons were making 'illegal claims to hold posts on the Trust and in the Jamiat. They had also written to the Trust's bank, misleading

representation on the Council of Management of the East London Mosque Trust.[201] The Deputy High Commissioner for Pakistan then called a special meeting of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin at the Grand Palais Hall in Commercial Road to resolve the issue. A meeting attended by 200 people unanimously confirmed Zafar Iqbal Qureshi as president.[202] This vote of confidence did not end the dispute, however, as the ELM Trustees were not fully satisfied that the office-bearers of either of the two factions had been properly elected.[203] The dispute escalated to a point where abuse was hurled and violence threatened.[204] Both the factions turned up at the Council of Management meeting in December 1959, though its chairman had ruled, in the absence of 'proof' of their 'true' representativeness, that neither would be invited.[205] However, when, as director and secretary of the Council of Management, S.M. Jetha sought legal advice as to which of the two factions should be recognized as the 'true representative', it was suggested that the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin should be notified at its registered address of the next Council of Management meeting.[206] As the two factions operated from separate addresses, the Trust's solicitors informed both that the Council of Management '[could] not recognise representatives of Jamiat-ul-Muslimin until it [was] fully satisfied that they were the accredited officers'.[207] This dispute remained unresolved for years, with the Council of Management appearing content to

the manager' (ELM Archives, Jetha's letter, 13 October 1959). Likewise, in Jetha's view, 'I am afraid the seed of dissensions and disunity amongst East End Muslims are sown, and bitter fruits will have to be reaped' (ELM Archives, S.M. Jetha to Sir John Woodhead, 15 November 1959).

[201] ELM Archives, Ghulam Mohammed, Secretary, to Ouvry & Co. (the ELMT solicitors), 25 October 1959.

[202] *The Times*, 17 August 1959.

[203] ELM Archives, ELMT to M. Arshidullah, 23 September 1959.

[204] S.M. Jetha reported to the Council of Management that certain persons 'have not only created "false rival trust" but also they have forcibly taken possession of the upper parts of the Mosque premises [. . .] on Friday last i.e. on 13th the congregation had hardly finished their prayer when [xxxx] suddenly started shouting and threatening Mr Ghulam Mohammad and myself [. . .] he rushed to attack and hit me' (ELM Archives, Jetha to the High Commissioner for Pakistan, 15 November 1959; see also ELM Archives, Jetha to Officer-in-Charge, Arbour Square Police Station, 13 November 1959). Jamil Fazal Dean, superintendent of the East London Mosque, asked for police protection against the alleged threat of violence at a meeting of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin in the congregation hall of the mosque (see ELM Archives, Jamil Fazal Dean to Superintendent of Police, Arbour Square Station, 19 May 1959).

[205] ELM Archives, Director and Hon. Secretary ELMT to Newbury, 5 December 1959.

[206] ELM Archives, Newbury to Jetha, 8 December 1959.

[207] ELM Archives, undated memorandum from Messrs. Ouvry & Co., solicitors for the Trust.

admit to its meetings the faction that had represented the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin until 1963.[208]

As the 1960s advanced, the East London Mosque Trust, while unable to establish a unified leadership, became increasingly preoccupied with the practical needs and concerns of its growing congregation. A combination of factors – the deteriorating political situation in Pakistan, the introduction of tougher immigration controls, and the continuing availability of economic opportunities in Britain – meant that the vast majority of the migrants opted to settle in their new surroundings. They were soon being joined in large numbers by their families, relatives, kin, and friends.[209] As they put down local roots, they faced resentment, hostility, and racial discrimination from wider society and its white-dominated institutions. The attacks on migrants were spearheaded by opportunistic politicians, such as the former Conservative minister and subsequently shadow spokesperson Enoch Powell. His 'rivers of blood' speech in April 1968 is credited with bringing out 1,000 dockers and 600 Smithfield Market porters to march past Parliament in protest against his 'victimization' and in support of his opposition to immigration.[210]

With the emergence of political uncertainties and economic turmoil created by a bloody 'civil war', from 1971 the volume of Bangladeshi migrants to Britain, both educated and illiterate/semi-literate, rose sharply, as did the flow of their dependants. During the 1970s, this immigration led to considerable demands being made on schools, health, and welfare services. There emerged a broad separation between whites and Bangladeshis in housing, education, and employment in London's East End – the latter became concentrated in the local garment industry, catering trade, and small shop-keeping sectors. Their lifestyles contrasted sharply. Extreme right-wing organizations such as the National Front took advantage of the rising tide of popular racist sentiments and mobilized significant numbers of mainly white working-class young people against 'coloured' immigrant communities, particularly in the East End of London.[211] Seen as a threat, Asians (predominantly Bangladeshis) in Tower Hamlets were increasingly targeted by teenage 'skinheads' and aggressive white juvenile males – their attacks turned

[208] ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 27 February 1977.

[209] For instance, Abdul Mahmud from Talukpur, Sylhet District, taking advantage of the relatively open labour voucher system in the 1960s, brought eleven Talukpur men to Britain on restaurant work permits on one trip. K. Gardner, *Global Migrants Local Lives: travel and transformations in rural Bangladesh* (Oxford, 1995), p. 55.

[210] *The Times*, 23, 24, and 25 April 1968.

[211] A.J. Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens and Asians: Huguenots, Jews and Bangladeshis in Spitalfields 1600–2000* (London, 2005), pp. 212–213.

sporadically into violent assaults, popularly called 'Paki-bashing'.[212] The National Front, which had established a significant presence in Tower Hamlets, was instrumental in instigating these attacks by 'skinheads' on Pakistanis.[213] By early 1970, according to both the *Observer* and the *Sunday Times*, they had become a regular occurrence.[214] In April of that year, *The Times* reported that Gulam Taslim, 'son of the Imam at the East London Mosque [Taslim Ali]', had documented thirty-eight attacks that had occurred in the previous few months.[215] 'The Imam', it stated, 'had hospital treatment after being kicked in the mouth and hit with an iron bar. The windows of the Muslim parlour next door to the mosque were broken five times in one week. Bottles had been thrown at mourners'.[216] This racial violence escalated further later in the year. Two Asian employees of the London Chest Hospital in Bethnal Green were physically attacked, and Tausir Ali, a fifty-year-old Pakistani kitchen porter, was murdered by a white youth in Bow, East London.[217] The violence peaked in July, when 150 white youths ran amok through Brick Lane, injuring five Bengalis.[218] The *East London Advertiser* reported the sentencing of a youth from Poplar, East London, convicted of manslaughter of a Pakistani;[219] in November 1970 it reported an attack on a Pakistani by two teenage youths.[220]

The East London Mosque, identified as probably the most distinctly visible symbol of the Muslim immigrant communities' presence in the vicinity, not surprisingly attracted the attention of local racist groups. A letter, signed 'Anglo-Saxon', which was delivered to the mosque on 27 April 1970, warned that

[212] See *Daily Telegraph*, 7 April 1970. Here is a graphic newspaper account of 'Paki-bashing' in *The Sun*, 9 April 1970: 'Tonight the boys will be out again. Along Brick Lane, Stepney, and at nearby Mile End underground station, where the skinheads meet up to plan the "sport" for the evening. "What about a chunter dahn the Brick?" The pattern is set. One helpless man runs for his life, a 10-strong pack on his heels. The boot or knife goes in. The game's over.' Three youths likewise openly boasted on the Thames Television programme *Today* about 'Pakistani bashing' in the East End: see *The Times*, 9 April 1970.

[213] The National Front, formed in 1967, represented various strands of 'revisionist neo-fascist and radical populist politics'. R. Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: a history, 1918–1985* (Oxford, 1987), p. 275. Riding the crest of the anti-immigrant wave, it attracted considerable support from the white working-class populations in England's inner city areas and mobilized groups of disaffected white youth in direct action against the anti-racist left and 'coloured immigrants'.

[214] See *The Observer*, 5 April 1970; *Sunday Times*, 19 April 1970.

[215] *The Times*, 7 April 1970.

[216] *Ibid.*

[217] *East London Advertiser*, 24 July 1970.

[218] Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens and Asians*, p. 213.

[219] *East London Advertiser*, 24 April 1970.

[220] *East London Advertiser*, 6 November 1970.

> it would be wise for 6,000 of you who have crowded into the East End of our capital city, to know that we are not going to tolerate this. You will go home of your own free will [. . .] or we will bomb you out [. . .] Indians and Pakistanis are the creeping scourge of the earth. Get out or die.[221]

Anti-immigrant feelings shared by large sections of the Tower Hamlets white population continued to rise during the 1970s, as did the incidence of racist attacks on Asians. In September 1978, a report compiled by the Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council documented 105 specific assaults, stressing that these cases 'appear only to skim the surface of what has been happening'.[222] In those housing estates where they were in a minority, Bengali families suffered violent assaults not just on the streets in their neighbourhoods, where women and children were the easiest targets, but also in their homes, as stones were thrown through their windows, and excrement and petrol bombs pushed through their letter boxes.[223] Articles in newspapers, which negatively portrayed London's East End Asian immigrants as 'backward, fearful, and disliked', actively fuelled antagonism towards them, provoking racist assaults, particularly against the Bengalis. These became a very ugly feature of East End life through the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s: 'in total five Bengalis died in racial violence in London's East End in 1976'.[224] In June 1978, *The Times* reported that a mob of youths had rampaged through a Bengali area in the East End of London: 'they smashed windows, hurled bottles and lumps of concrete and shouted insults as they charged through the street [Brick Lane]. They damaged five shops and a car. And an Asian man whose face was cut by flying glass [. . .] received hospital treatment.'[225] The National Front gained in strength as it focused its racist literature – and its leaders their speeches around the Brick Lane area – on the growing Bengali community, mobilizing the locality's 'disillusioned, frustrated and alienated youth'.[226] Anti-immigration marches were organized through Asian neighbourhoods, and, faced with daily incidents of violence, community leaders such as the Reverend Dr Clifford Hill of the Interdenominational Newham Community Renewal programme warned of the growing danger of the 'outbreak of a race war'.[227] As *The Times* reported, 'From their pitches [market stalls] they would swear and spit at any Bengalis that walked past'.[228]

[221] The letter is available at the ELM Archives.
[222] *The Times*, 25 September 1978.
[223] Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens and Asians*, p. 214.
[224] *Ibid.*
[225] *The Times*, 12 June 1978.
[226] *The Times*, 14 June 1978.
[227] *The Times*, 13 June 1976.
[228] *Ibid.*

The East London Mosque was vandalized on a number of occasions.[229] In November 1973, Taslim Ali, its superintendent, informed S.M. Jetha, its honorary secretary, that 'a gang of youths broke windows and a fanlight'.[230] Jetha reported the harassment experienced by the worshippers to the local police. 'For some time', he wrote, 'we have been disturbed constantly whilst saying our prayers by young people who have been throwing stones at the windows of the Trust's premises.' Could the police, he asked, not increase their 'vigilance'?[231] However, the police force's indifferent response, its apparent lack of sympathy to their plight, and its inability to deal effectively with racial crime engendered frustration and resentment.[232] The feeling in the community was that there was not much point in reporting such matters. Public statements by police officers on why racial crime was not a priority caused further disenchantment and anger, and confirmed perceptions of police attitudes towards such attacks: for instance, after the April 1970 murder of Tausir Ali, the reasoning offered by a detective belonging to the local police for its lack of effort was as follows:

> This could escalate to a civil war in the East End. We don't want it. We're not even sure we could handle it. Regrettably, it's safer in the long run if an occasional coloured man gets beaten up than to have two sides facing each other with all sorts of weapons.[233]

A report by the Pakistan Workers' Union insisted that the police were unable to give them adequate protection.[234] Others in the community offered examples of the police's unsatisfactory response. When Taslim Ali, who combined his role of superintendent with that of imam of the East London Mosque, was assaulted from behind by a gang of skinheads while fastening the shutters on a friend's shop in Commercial Road, he reported the incident three times and claimed that nothing was done.[235] As 'race-hate attacks' continued, immigrant businessmen in Forest Gate, East London, accused police

[229] ELM Archives, Jetha to the Guardian Royal Exchange Assurance Group, 17 November 1973, regarding insurance for damage to windows of the mosque caused by stone-throwing youths. In a reply, dated 20 November 1973, the company refused to pay out unless the 'incident be accepted as a Riot'. See also *East London Advertiser*, 1 February 1974.

[230] ELM Archives, letter from Taslim Ali to Jetha, 14 November 1973.

[231] ELM Archives, Honorary Secretary of the ELMT to Chief Superintendent of Police, Arbour Square Police Station, 17 November 1973.

[232] The report from the Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council criticized the police severely for lack of action in investigating cases reported to them, and said that the Bengali community had virtually no confidence in the police. See *The Times*, 25 September 1978.

[233] *The Sun*, 9 April 1970.

[234] *Daily Telegraph*, 7 April 1970.

[235] *The Sun*, 9 April 1970.

of 'inefficiency' in responding to emergency calls for help as white youths provoked violent confrontation, shouting and swearing, and smashing windows of a restaurant with bottles.[236]

What caused a deterioration in relations between these immigrants and local and national institutions was the latter's lack of willingness to treat the former's concerns in ways that would infuse trust. Influenced to some degree by the negative portrayal of Asian immigrants, particularly in London's East End, public representatives and government officials refused to accept that the police's attitude towards attacks on the local Bengali community was in the least bit questionable. Even Peter Shore, the Labour MP for Stepney and Poplar, who had praised 'the people from Sylhet' (a significant and rapidly growing population in his constituency) for showing 'great initiative, and courage as well as adaptability in making the immense change from village life [. . .] to that of a great modern city', and had criticized the media's depiction of Asian immigrants in his area as 'backward, fearful, and disliked' for causing offence and upset to the Asian community, nevertheless insisted that the police had made a special and very thorough investigation of the twenty-two incidents that immigrant organizations had highlighted to him. Perhaps even more dismaying for the East End's immigrant community was the dismissive refusal of the Home Secretary to recognize the racial nature of the assaults on Pakistanis. In a letter to Peter Shore, Reginald Maudling declared that, while he accepted that 'assaults, some of a fairly serious nature had been committed against Pakistanis', that the robberies had occurred, that windows of immigrants had been broken, and that children had made themselves a nuisance outside their homes, all these occurrences were typical of what went on generally in this part of London. In his view, crime figures did not support the claim that 'Pakistanis' were being exclusively singled out and, for him, 'the situation as a whole had been greatly exaggerated'.[237]

As racial attacks mounted, the East London Mosque's leadership struggled to develop an effective strategy to protect the communities that the institution represented. As a Pakistani welfare worker put it, 'we told people to keep quiet, not to go out at night unless really necessary, and to stick together when coming home from work'.[238] The mosque was acutely aware of the hostility that the community was experiencing. Suleman Jetha, secretary of the ELMT, had brought it up in his report at one of the Council of Management meetings, referring to it as 'the present hardships and suffering [that are being]

[236] *East London Advertiser*, 18 September 1970.
[237] *East London Advertiser*, 31 July 1970.
[238] *The Times*, 9 April 1970.

inflicted on our brethren especially in East London, where a handful – commonly known as skinheads – are committing these cowardly acts on lonely law-abiding Indians and Pakistanis'. 'On one occasion', he continued, '30 to 40 hooligans tried to damage their shops'. Apparently, only 'the timely arrival of a few brethren' saved the situation. But aside from this ad hoc 'fire-fighting', all that Jetha was able to suggest was for the Pakistan High Commissioner, still the Council of Management's chairman, 'to take this matter to a higher level to the Home Office and to see that these vagabonds and thugs are properly punished and due vigilance and protection is given by the Metropolitan Police to these innocent victims'.[239] That the ELMT had thus far been unable to develop a coherent plan of action was reflected in the speech that Salman Ali, the Pakistani High Commissioner, gave when he visited the East End of London after the murder of Tausir Ali. At a meeting attended by over a hundred local Muslims (including victims of attacks), he was unable to offer anything more than an expression of his concern about the increasing frequency of attacks on life and property.[240] The Trustees argued that they did not want to provide the skinheads and the National Front with 'the oxygen of publicity' that they craved. Instead the mosque, perhaps a bit naively, wanted to 'open up a dialogue so that they could come to know it better'.[241]

The community and ELM leaders continued to work with representatives of the police, the church, and other relevant institutions. But reporting racial incidents to the police had not, it seemed, improved the situation significantly. Realizing that the police were still failing to protect the victims of racial attacks, the leaders initiated independent community action. Street patrols, along the lines that had proved successful 'in the Euston area where the [Pakistani Workers' Union] had four or five groups standing by to rescue Pakistanis or hit back at attackers', were formed in East London. In the Brick Lane area they were supported by the Anti-Nazi League in organizing their self-defence.[242] As the problem worsened, they combined with the largely white Anti-Nazi League[243] to combat the

[239]ELM Archives, Jetha's report to the Council of Management, 29 April 1970. In the meeting with the East End's Pakistani community after the murder of Tausir Ali, Salman Ali said he had been assured in his discussion with the Commonwealth Office 'that the matter would be put before the Home Office and the authorities concerned'. See *The Times*, 9 April 1970.

[240]*The Times*, 9 April 1970.

[241]Author's interview with one of the Trustees at this time, Mueenuddin Chowdhury.

[242]*The Times*, 1 November 1978.

[243]The Anti-Nazi League was a broad-based pressure group set up in November 1977 to oppose the anti-immigrant racist activities of the far-right groups in Britain. It was at its

National Front, which had become increasingly active and aggressive in Brick Lane. For instance, in June 1978, in a demonstration organized by the Anti-Nazi League, some 2,000 people marched through Brick Lane in protest against violent anti-Bengali disturbances of the week before.[244] A month later, another demonstration occupied the site habitually used by the National Front to sell their party newspaper and other inflammatory literature.[245] When Altab Ali, a young Bangladeshi machinist was murdered in May 1978, the community was outraged. A mass rally was planned. More than 5,000 Asians marched peacefully in protest against what they regarded as the racial killing of a Bangladeshi. Starting in St Mary's Churchyard off Whitechapel Road, where Ali had been repeatedly stabbed, the procession made its way to Hyde Park and then on to 10 Downing Street where a petition was handed in.[246] The Anti-Nazi League joined the march, along with trade unionists. Dissatisfied with the way police were dealing with racist attacks in Tower Hamlets and Newham, Bengalis in London's East End called for a Home Office inquiry on policing;[247] an action committee against racist attacks, reported in the local press as 'the first move towards Asian vigilante patrols in the East End', was set up soon after the news of Ali's murder,[248] and, while a conference of immigrant organizations supported 'the formation of multiracial community self-defence groups in immigrant areas "to complement and assist the efforts of the police"', it decisively rejected a suggestion to form vigilante groups.[249] In July 1978, responding to an Anti-Nazi League call, Asian traders and factory workers in the Brick Lane area struck for a day against 'racialism'.[250] In September 1978, the East London Anti-Nazi League, in response to the National Front march into the East End of London, decided to 'occupy' Brick Lane.[251]

During this period, the East London Mosque remained on the sidelines and preferred to play a calming role behind the scenes. While the Trust showed its support for the Anti-Nazi League's efforts

height between 1977 and 1979. It organized several well-supported protest marches, public meetings, and rock music concerts. It joined the march protesting at Altab Ali's murder, which, it was reported, 'happened in a week of rising frustration for racists and fascists, with the anti-Nazi carnival attracting 80,000 people and the National Front defeated at the polls'. See *East Ender*, 13 May 1978. Its decline followed that of the National Front after the 1979 general elections. See S. Saggar, *Race and Politics in Britain* (London, 1992), pp. 183–185.

[244] *The Times*, 19 June 1978.
[245] *The Times*, 17 July 1978.
[246] *The Times*, 15 May 1978.
[247] *The Times*, 27 June 1978.
[248] *East Ender*, 13 May 1978.
[249] *The Times*, 31 July 1978.
[250] *The Times*, 18 July 1978.
[251] *The Times*, 23 September 1978.

by making a donation of £25,[252] there is little evidence to suggest that the mosque officially participated actively in its campaigns. Similarly, three years later, in a spate of racist incidents in East London (including Poplar and Spitalfields)[253] that included Mrs Baris Khan and her three children being burnt to death in Walthamstow in what was suspected to be a racially motivated arson attack,[254] while a protest march organized by the Khan Massacre Action Committee took place locally,[255] the mosque, while it recognized the racially violent nature of the deaths, confined itself simply to offering prayers for the four victims.[256]

Based on this cumulative experience, a perception emerged among London's East End Pakistani/Bangladeshi community in the 1970s that the institutions of wider society could not be trusted to take up their concerns in a fair way and that the only strategy open to them if they wanted their issues addressed (in particular the problem of racial attacks) was to form their own community organizations that would represent them more robustly and effectively. Given that the East London Mosque had not been able to offer any credible approach or leadership for the defence of the local Muslim community, a viable alternative seemed to be to organize actions on the basis of common ethnic and cultural distinctiveness and interests. In this process, in the 1970s and the 1980s, community groups in Tower Hamlets were helped by a number of policy developments at the governmental level. In order to regenerate the declining local economy and improve the environmental and housing conditions of an area where the proportion of the Bangladeshi population was increasing rapidly, and in recognition of its 'special needs', Bangladeshi pressure groups, especially tenants' associations and youth groups, were encouraged with allocation of resources. Government-funded centres were established to help Bangladeshis in respect of housing, education, employment, health, women's rights, recreation, and community relations. Consequently, Bangladeshi voluntary organizations in the area expanded quickly, though this did not happen without conflicts among various sections of the community. Of the 112 organizations in the Borough of Tower Hamlets, a substantial proportion were run by Bangladeshis.[257] For instance, the Kobi Nazrul Centre, named in

[252] ELM Archives, Minutes of the emergency meeting of the Council of Management of the ELMT, 25 April 1979.

[253] *East London Advertiser*, 10 July 1981.

[254] *The Times*, 4 July 1981.

[255] *East End News*, 10 July 1981.

[256] ELM Archives, Minutes of the 23rd Annual General Meeting of the ELMT, 11 July 1981.

[257] J. Eade, *The Politics of Community: the Bangladeshi community in East London* (Aldershot, 1989), pp. 31–32.

honour of a famous Bengali Muslim poet, opened in October 1982 with the remit to organize Bengali cultural events. The Bangladeshi Youth Programme offered advice and guidance to Bangladeshis in areas of housing, employment, and social and welfare services – it also organized recreational activities. The Bangladeshi Educational Needs in Tower Hamlets was likewise set up to co-ordinate the improvement of educational resources for Bangladeshis, especially in Spitalfields.[258]

While still trailing the secular voluntary bodies in attracting community support and recognition from the institutions of wider society, given the Greater London Council's commitment to addressing the specific cultural (including religious) needs of its hard-pressed minority ethnic communities in the context of urban regeneration, the mosque leaders conducted tough negotiations with the GLC between 1969 and 1982 that enabled them to make a relatively successful transition from what were by now rather dilapidated premises in Commercial Road to the grand building in Whitechapel Road. It is worth looking in detail at this process through which the East London Mosque was able to articulate the particular interests of some layers of the local Muslim community and arrive at the threshold of being accepted as a significant representative for them.

As part of its plan for the redevelopment of the Commercial Road area for social housing, in December 1969 the GLC had made a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to acquire the premises in which the mosque was located, but with the proviso that the Trustees of the mosque should not be required to vacate it until an alternative site had been found.[259] From the Trustees' perspective, this decision had not taken their needs sufficiently into account and they immediately protested against the order. Major E.W. McArthur (in whom the mosque found a doughty ally), secretary of the East London Federation of Industry and Commerce (of which Jetha had opportunistically become a member[260]), argued that Muslims were being 'ignored and ridden over roughshod', with the result that the needs of local Muslims were being 'disregarded just to fit in with the plans of the GLC'.[261] He asked why, when 'considerable attention' was normally given to the retention of religious buildings in redevelopment and planning, no such consideration was being afforded in this case. He urged

[258] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[259] ELM Archives, Greater London Council, 'Report on relocation of East London Mosque by Controller of Planning and Transportation, Director of Housing and Director of the Valuation and Estate Department'.

[260] ELM Archives, Jetha's report to the ELM Trust, 29 April 1970.

[261] *Hackney Gazette & North London Advertiser*, 17 July 1970.

that the mosque, which now served an estimated 12,000 Muslims in the area, should be excluded from the CPO. The GLC officials, while agreeing that 'most places of worship were left undisturbed', argued that in this particular case it was not possible to do so for practical reasons. In their view, Muslims were not entitled to special consideration where 'the greater good of the greater number' was concerned – as in the re-housing of people in good accommodation.[262] Proposals for offering them alternative accommodation were under consideration, and a synagogue in Brick Lane, Bethnal Green, had been offered.[263] Indeed, Jetha, accompanied by other members of the ELMT, visited the synagogue but rejected it on the grounds that it was 'too big'.[264] McArthur, on the other hand reasoned that, given that 'the two religions were "virtually at war" negotiations between them would be impossible'.[265] Despite the Trustees' spokesman pressing their case robustly, the Secretary of State for the Environment confirmed the CPO.[266] That left the Trustees seeking the maximum amount of compensation possible. They showed great tenacity in the ensuing negotiations, which finally ended in an agreement between the GLC and the ELMT in November 1982.[267] This stipulated the permanent relocation of the mosque to a site held by the Planning Committee on the south side of Whitechapel Road, Tower Hamlets. When the temporary relocation of the mosque to Christian Scott School was deemed unsuitable, the Council agreed in May 1974 to erect a temporary mosque – at a cost of £45,000 – in Fieldgate Street, to the south of the proposed permanent site, to which the Trust moved in May 1975.[268] Lengthy discussions then took place between the Trust and the Council in its role as planning authority, with the Trust wishing to construct a building that could accommodate the expanding Muslim community and hence required a much larger site than that occupied by the original mosque. In 1982, in the final settlement, £192,000 was paid to the Trust in compensation for the

[262] *Ibid.*

[263] This refers to the negotiations to buy the synagogue on the corner of Fourier Street and Brick Lane. See ELM Archives, E.W. McArthur to Jetha, 27 November 1970.

[264] See ELM Archives, Minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting of the Council of Management of the ELMT, 29 April 1970.

[265] *Hackney Gazette and North London Advertiser*, 17 July 1970.

[266] ELM Archives, McArthur to Jetha, 21 September 1971.

[267] See ELM Archives, Greater London Council, 'Completion of purchase' form, 30 November 1982. Purchase money, or compensation, was stated here to be £192,000.

[268] *East London Advertiser*, 4 July 1975. The keys of this mosque were handed to S.M. Jetha on 9 May 1975. See ELM Archives, Jetha's speech on the occasion of the foundation-stone-laying ceremony, 23 September 1982.

Commercial Road premises and a further site was allocated, costing the Trust £25,000.[269]

The East London Mosque and increasing Islamic observance

In the 1980s, the East London Mosque emerged as one of the more influential institutions of London's East End Muslim community. Its increasingly important role was shaped by a number of internal and external social, cultural, and political developments. First, the 'civil war' in East Pakistan in 1970–1971 meant that, given its devastating impact, those migrants who might have thought of returning to Bangladesh under normal circumstances decided to settle permanently in Britain – sojourners had turned settlers. The passing of the 1971 Immigration Act effectively put a stop to Bengali primary immigration and the vast majority of those who were allowed to enter were family members. As families reunited and settled on a more permanent basis, the communities that they formed began to change in their attitude to life in Britain, to its people and its institutions. The arrival of families had broadened the scope of interaction with wider society, especially over matters concerning education, health, and social welfare. At the same time 'chain migration'[270] had brought along distinct ethnic, linguistic, and regional residential clustering, leading to the establishment of communal organizations as effective channels for conducting business in areas of need. Segregation ensued along village-kinship, ethnic, and sectarian lines. These Muslim immigrants became anxious about the fate of their cultures, traditions, and values. They wanted to create the best possible conditions for practising their faith as they understood it, and they also wanted to ensure that it would survive through its effective transmission to future generations. With this further growth and consolidation of the Bangladeshi immigrant community in East London, bodies with a distinct Muslim identity, such as mosques, were able to gather substantial resources through contributions from individuals and groups within the communities, which, in turn, enabled them to grow and become firmly established.

[269]See ELM Archives, report submitted by Controller of Planning and Transportation, Director of Housing and Director of the Valuation and Estates Department; see also the purchase order of the GLC, 2 November 1982.

[270]Chain migration is a 'movement in which prospective migrants learn of opportunities, are provided with transportation, and have initial accommodation and employment arranged by means of primary social relationships with previous migrants' (J.S. MacDonald and L.D. MacDonald, 'Chain migration ethnic neighborhood formation and social networks', *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, 42, no. 1 (January 1964), p. 82).

Community identity began to be defined relatively more strongly in religious than in ethnic terms. Mosques took on many of the services that had previously been offered by the minority ethnic organizations that had received the overwhelming share of the public funding disbursed during the 1970s.

The Conservative Party's victory in the 1979 general election prompted a substantial dismantling of the policy of multiculturalism that had been at the heart of previous government policy, as far as ethnic minorities were concerned, since the 1960s. The policy changes wrought by Margaret Thatcher's government during the 1980s, especially its restrictions on local government support of community organizations, had a radical impact on the development of Muslim organizations. This was further exacerbated by the abolition of the Greater London Council in 1986. With the sidelining of the minority ethnic groups in the East End, the balance of power shifted increasingly to those groups who saw Bangladeshi concerns primarily through an Islamic prism. Mosques – the ELM perhaps rather more than the Jamme Mosque in Brick Lane – became an important form of self-organization for Tower Hamlets' Muslim community. Never having relied on public resources, they appeared relatively more independent and less compromised, though it soon became clear that their dependence on funding from the Middle East was bound to have some effect on the shaping of their perspectives and strategies. With funds drastically reduced for secular community groups, bodies with a distinct Muslim identity (which, in the past, had received few resources from the state and so had had to rely largely on contributions from individuals and groups within their communities) survived the Conservative government's onslaught on sources of support for the voluntary sector relatively well, and emerged with an enhanced profile in the eyes of the authorities.

As the role and influence of the East London Mosque increased from the 1970s, its Trust witnessed vigorous debates about what the mosque did or should do. Its chairman, still – rather anomalously, bearing in mind the Trust's Bangladeshi links – the High Commissioner for Pakistan, suggested that the mosque, apart from being a place of worship, should also act as 'a cultural and meeting centre for the community'.[271] As a centre for families, 'womenfolk and children', it should offer religious instruction for adults and children.[272] The Council of Management accordingly discussed issues such as the accrual and disbursement of financial resources; the provision of welfare services such as funeral arrangements, marriage facilities,

[271] ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 29 April 1970.
[272] *Ibid.*

donations, and loans; and the performance of other forms of ritual. The ideological influence of the Deobandi tendency emerged in a range of areas of the mosque's policies and functions.[273] This could be seen, for instance, in discussions about the role of the imam and the qualifications required for the performance of his duties. Indeed, the appointment of a qualified imam became part of a 'prolonged discussion'.[274] Eventually, it was agreed that the selection criteria for such an appointment would be based on the *Shariat*.[275] In this regard, a sub-committee of the Trust was 'appointed to go into the question of Shariat'.[276] After much deliberation it suggested the appointment of

> a Sanadyafta Aalim Maulvi[277] and [...] Hafiz[278] who should have [...] knowledge of Arabic & Urdu and if possible English and Bengali languages, and who should give daily classes to children, Guide Adults in their day to day Masails[279] and lead Five Times Prayers as well as Juma Prayers with Sermon according to practice and traditions.[280]

That the Sub-Committee held a particular doctrinal view regarding what it considered to be the *Shariat* with regard to the qualifications for an imam is made clear in the following note:

[273]Deobandis are followers of a Sunni Islamic reform movement that originated in the Islamic seminary in the town of Deoband in northern India in 1866/1867. It emphasizes a scripturalist approach to Muslim life and the use of Islamic law as central to societal interactions. As such, it rejects the separation between the religious and political spheres. For more information about the founding of this movement, see B.D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860–1900* (Princeton, 1982). Both the Tablighi Jamaat and the Jamaat-i-Islami were founded by Deobandi-trained scholars, and the ethos, interpretations, and programmes of these organizations, while displaying some significant differences in practical terms, evolved out of Deobandi thinking and principles.

[274]ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 27 May 1970.

[275]Islamic law: 'It was unanimously decided to have a "Pesh-Imam" for the East London Mosque with qualification laid down by the *Shariat*' (ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 14 June 1975).

[276]ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 27 May 1970. This sub-committee met on 26 June 1970. It found that there was no imam at the East London Mosque with the appropriate qualifications, and that the existing imam did not fulfil the required conditions for the position as laid down in the *Shariat* and the Traditions of the Prophet. See ELM Archives, 'Report of the sub-committee on the appointment of the imam of the East London Mosque', 24 July 1970. The sub-committee strongly urged the appointment of a qualified imam, who should not be a 'disputive [*sic*] figure'.

[277]Religious scholar who has been awarded a certificate of qualification from a recognized Islamic seminary.

[278]A person who has learnt the Qur'an by heart.

[279]Matters that require religious advice and/or guidance/opinion.

[280]See 'Report of the sub-committee on the appointment of the imam'.

> growing the beard to the required length according to the Sharriyat-e-Muhammadi S.A.W.,[281] and to do such act as trimming or cutting shorter the hairs or shaving the beard is Entirely Haraam[282] [. . .] for which there is no Ikhtilaaf[283] or differences of Interpretation by Muftiyanul Ummat[284] of India and Pakistan. An Imam who does not have a proper length of beard [. . .] and still performed the Prayers, then such prayers are Makrooh-Tehreemi which is very near Haram.[285]

Later, when Isa Mansuri was appointed as the Pesh Imam[286] he soon attracted criticism from some members of the Trust. However, it was unanimously decided that if he were to be replaced, the candidate would have to meet the qualifications laid down by the *Shariat*[287] – he would be assessed by the Trustees on the quality of his delivery of the sermon (*khutba*) and how he led the Friday prayer.[288] The criteria for the selection of the mosque's imam formulated by the sub-committee and the authority invested in its report clearly reflected the growing ideological hold by Deobandis over the mosque's affairs.

This growing Deobandi control, which could trace its influence there back to very soon after the Second World War, began to create unease among many Muslims arriving from East Bengal, who traditionally had tended to be of the Barelwi persuasion.[289] Doctrinal cleavages within the West Pakistani–East Pakistani communities in

[281] *Sharrayat-e-Muhammadi* literally means the *Shariat of* Muhammmad; S.A.W. is the abbreviation for *Sallallahu Alehe Wassalam* (Arabic for 'Blessings and peace be upon him', that is, the Prophet Muhammad).

[282] Arabic word for 'forbidden'.

[283] Arabic word for 'dispute' or, in this context, 'difference of opinion'.

[284] Reference to the *muftis* (jurists) (who provide *fatawas*, 'legal opinions') of the *ummat*, the Muslim community.

[285] According to Mufti Taqi Usmani, 'It is mentioned in the Hanafi books that the jurists are unanimous on the ruling that a Muslim is obligated to grow his beard to the extent of one fist'. See http://www.albalagh.net/qa/beard_hanafi_deobandi.shtml (accessed 20 November 2010). *Makrooh* in Arabic means 'disliked', 'detested', or 'hated'. *Tehreemi* is a derivartion of *haram*, which means 'forbidden'. See 'Report of the sub-committee on the appointment of the imam'.

[286] See ELM Archives, Minutes, 29 November 1975.

[287] See ELM Archives, Minutes, 14 June 1975. Presumably, this meant *Shariat* as understood by the sub-committee.

[288] See ELM Archives, Minutes, 1 May 1976.

[289] The majority of Bangladeshis in Britain hail from the district of Sylhet. There, local Muslims broadly followed 'Barelwi' Islam, which emphasized the role of custom, shrines, and *pirs* ('sufi' or mystical saints); for instance, Shah Jalal's shrine remains a very popular centre of pilgrimage and devotional singing in this part of Bangladesh (see Adams, *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers*, pp. 4–5). This partially sufistic strand of popular South Asian Islam takes its name from Rae Bareilly, the home town in India of its founder, Ahmad Raza Khan (1856–1921). Barelwis believe the Prophet Muhammad to be imbued with superhuman qualities, such as knowledge of the unseen. Upholding the legitimacy of intercession by holy Muslims (living or dead), custom, and devotion around sufi shrines all play an important

London's East End were further widened by the political crisis into which East Pakistan/Bangladesh was plunged from the beginning of the 1970s. During the 'civil war' in 1971, the Jamaat-i-Islami, given its pan-Islamic vision and political ambitions, had supported the Pakistani state's efforts to retain 'East Pakistan' as part of the Muslim realm.[290] Those who ran the East London Mosque at the time, irrespective of their ethnic affiliations (Punjabi, Gujarati, or Bengali), saw themselves as Muslims *and* Pakistanis. While the Bangladeshi proportion of the East End's Muslim community was increasing rapidly, the membership of the Council of Management of the ELMT in the 1970s remained ethnically very mixed – Punjabi, Bengali, and Gujarati. It seems that these leading men at the ELM could not let go of the sympathies that they had acquired through a close association with TJ/JI ideologies and personnel; these sympathies had deeply penetrated their consciousness over the years and had come to guide their practice. On a more practical level, continuity with the past was reflected in that many of the Committee of Management's meetings were still held at the Pakistan High Commissioner's offices. While many other political issues, especially those of direct concern to Muslims, were considered at the ELMT meetings, curiously there is not a single record in the Minutes of that time regarding the catastrophic events of the war and their impact in Bangladesh, even though tensions among Pakistani immigrants had been running high and had erupted into violent clashes, leading *The Express* to note that a 'civil war' was breaking out in the East End 'among Pakistani loyalists and supporters of the East Bengal separatists'. Petrol bombs were reported to have been hurled at 'West Pakistani traders by militant Bangli Desh [*sic*] extremists'.[291]

Clearly, as mentioned earlier, the political upheaval in what became Bangladesh caused many people there to move to Britain. These new arrivals included people who had either been involved in the struggle for Bangladesh's liberation or who had opposed East Pakistan's secession. However, the majority of the Bengali Muslims making Britain their home at this time considered themselves as victims of ruthless West Pakistani actions. Furthermore, perhaps the majority of Bangladeshis, especially those belonging to the first generation,

part in their religious life. These theological positions are totally rejected by Deobandis. See Lewis, *Islamic Britain*, p. 40.

[290]This conflict has come to be viewed as a complex struggle 'between Bengalis and non-Bengalis, and among Bengalis themselves, who were bitterly divided between those who favoured independence for Bangladesh [the majority] and those who supported the unity and integrity of Pakistan' (Sarmila Bose, 'Anatomy of civil war in East Pakistan in 1971', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40, no. 41 (8–14 October 2005), pp. 4463–4470).

[291] *The Express*, 14 May 1971.

were coming to find the East London Mosque's style and its rejection of Barelwi practices as *bid'a* ('heretical innovation') indigestible. The widening doctrinal cleavages in the congregation of the East London Mosque gradually led to a substantial proportion of these Bangladeshis seeking the establishment of a mosque in which they felt more at ease. In 1976, some worshippers broke away, purchased the synagogue in Brick Lane, and converted it into a mosque, leaving the East London Mosque even more firmly in the Deobandi camp.[292]

This split did not, however, mean the end of conflict in Fieldgate Street. The struggle between the two factions of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin for representation on the Council of Management of the Trust that had taken place at the end of the 1950s re-ignited in 1976. The faction of which Mohammad Irshad Baig was now the president, and that had thus far been excluded from the ELMT, renewed its request to be admitted.[293] Again, when this group, led by Messrs Baig, Aslam, and Malik arrived at an 'ordinary' meeting of the Trust on 1 August 1976 in the hope of obtaining entry, emotions became charged;[294] they were allegedly 'insulted and thrown out'[295] of the meeting.[296] In November 1976, it yet again unsuccessfully sought representation on the Trust, something for which, it claimed, it had been 'fighting' since 1964.[297] Feeling frustrated, this group arrived in full strength at the 'extraordinary' meeting of the Council of Management on 2 February 1977 to plead its case; but again there was uproar.[298] The decision regarding who should represent the

[292]The Jamme Masjid Mosque in Brick Lane claims to be able to accommodate up to 4,000 worshippers. It was originally built as a Protestant chapel, along with a small school, by the Huguenots (refugees fleeing French Catholic persecution) in 1742. In 1898, with the arrival of a large number of Jews escaping pogroms in eastern Europe, it became the Great Spitalfields Synagogue. See http://www.portcities.org.uk/london/server/show/conMediaFile.6057/The-Great-London-Mosque-on-Brick-Lane.html (accessed 10 January 2010).

[293]At the meeting of the Council of Management held on 29 November 1975, M.A. Farooqi asserted that he was the rightful representative of the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin – the faction that had not been allowed entry since 1964. This claim was rejected and those who had been representing the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin 'for the last about 11 years' were declared as 'truly the office bearers of the present Jamiat-ul-Muslimin. M.A. Farooqi was therefore asked to leave the room, which he did' (ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 29 November 1975).

[294]Apparently, this group was a delegation sent by '100 members of the East London Muslim Community [. . .] with various complaints' (ELM Archives, P. Bawa to the Hon. Secretary of the ELMT Ltd., 5 January 1977).

[295]ELM Archives, M.I. Baig to the Trust's Secretary, letter received 15 November 1976.

[296]ELM Archives, Minutes of ELMT ordinary meeting held on 1 August 1976 in the Library room of the Mosque, under the chairmanship of Dr Ali Mohammad Khan, contain the following phrase 'Messrs. Mohd. Aslam, I.A. Malik and Irshad Beg left the meeting', though this can be seen to be struck out.

[297]ELM Archives, M.I. Baig to the Secretary, ELMT, 10 November 1976.

[298]ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 2 February 1977.

Jamiat-ul-Muslimin on the Trust was, on the suggestion of Illahi Bakhsh Somroo (Minister at the Pakistan Embassy and Council of Management chairman at this meeting) deferred to a future public meeting of the Muslim community. At the Trust's next meeting it was decided that, as the present members representing Jamiat-ul-Muslimin had been participating for the previous fourteen years, they would be allowed to continue.[299] Thus, by the beginning of 1978, the control of the mosque was firmly in Deobandi hands. The Pakistan Ambassador was dispensed with as chair of the Council of Management, and 'an active' chairman, A.T.M. Abdullah (a barrister), was elected instead.[300] This move marked a watershed in the mosque's administration, with the Trustees seeking to put it on a more professional footing.[301]

At the same time as the local Muslim population of the East End began to pay greater attention to their religious practices, the mosque's guidance in its daily affairs increased. Among its activities, it issued fatwas on *halal* meat and certified *halal* butchers.[302] For those who wished religious recognition of their marriages, the mosque could provide *nikah* certificates on the presentation of the registrar's certificate.[303] It provided a mortuary and made arrangements for funerals and burials.[304] It offered guidance in respect of inheritance and, certainly in terms of donations to the mosque, it ignored English law in favour of the Islamic law of inheritance. An important example of this was when Syed Monawer Hossain, a long-time Trustee died

[299]ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 27 February 1977.

[300]ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 6 July 1978.

[301]In December 1979, Abdullah was appointed chairman cum managing director of the ELMT, to work three days a week for a period of four years, on a salary of £6,000 per annum. His responsibilities included the planning of mosque activities and running its day-to-day administration, public relations and contact with business communities, Islamic organizations, and missions, 'and all related matters regarding the project of new mosque building'. See ELM Archives, letter of appointment from S.M. Jetha, Hon. Secretary to A.T.M. Abdullah, 7 December 1979.

[302]'Mr Rupa Miah [. . .] in my opinion [. . .] carries out animal slaughter as per Moslem rites and I therefore feel that his slaughtering will be acceptable to all Muslims' (ELM Archives, Director and Hon. Secretary, ELMT, to Messrs Barnard & Harbott of Romford, Essex, 28 March 1960).

[303]'The certificate must be given on the Mosque's letter heads' and 'must be countersigned by the Hon Secretary and the marriage parties must hand over a duplicate copy of the marriage certificate issued by the Registrar for the Trust's records. No "nikah" (Islamic formal wedding ceremony) is to be performed before making sure that the marriage has been first registered in the Registrar's office and a proper certificate is produced' (ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 14 June 1975).

[304]Taslim Ali, appointed as Superintendent of the East London Mosque, applied to the Trust for the use of the business premises at the mosque as a funeral undertaker parlour for the 'Goosal (washing of the corpse), Kafan (shrouding), and burials etc. of deceased Muslims' (ELM Archives, Taslim Ali to S.M. Jetha, 4 July 1964).

in 1973, leaving two-thirds of his property as a gift to the mosque in his will.[305] This move would certainly have been valid under English law. However, the Mosque Trustees decided to apply *Sharia* law, as they understood it, and to keep only one-third, disbursing the rest to his nephew Mahmud Hossain and other heirs.[306] All these functions increased the mosque's influence among sections of the local Muslim community. As its influence increased, so did the tussle for control of the substantial and growing resources that it was accumulating.

While the dispute about who should represent the Jamiat-ul-Muslimin on the ELMT faded in the next few years, concerns about the running of the mosque's affairs simmered within the congregation.[307] On 24 December 1981, the discontent became manifest. Over 100 *Mukthadis* ('prayer performers') of the East London Mosque signed and sent a petition to its secretary in which they articulated a number of their complaints. The petition accused the secretary of misuse of mosque funds, as well as the mismanagement of *fitra*[308] donations and loan distribution. It complained that the imam did not lead all the daily prayers[309] (as he should have been required to do),[310] that the *fitra* money was not being distributed fairly and equitably to the deserving, that tens of thousands of pounds of loans were being approved to those who were either themselves members of the Trust or closely connected with the Trustees, and that 'the proper teaching of children was not being done as the imam was not available'.[311] At a well-publicized General Public Meeting held on 7 February 1982, many of these questions were addressed by the chairman and the secretary of the ELMT,[312] and the *Mukhtadis*' challenge was seen off for the time being.

[305]See ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 13 September 1973.

[306]See ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 17 November 1979.

[307]See for instance, ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 1 June 1978 and 6 July 1978. In 1980, it was decided that 'from now on loan giving should be stopped and no committee member should be allotted a loan. If there is any needy and really deserving applicant then the amount of help should not be more than £500.00' (ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 24 May 1980).

[308]A type of alms-giving that is obligatory for anyone who is not poor. It is due before or at Eid-ul-Fitr, i.e. the celebration marking the end of the month of Ramadan.

[309]See ELM Archives, A.T.M. Abdullah's Memorandum, 8 October 1979, and ELMT Minutes, 17 November 1979.

[310]This allegation was incorrect, as can be seen by looking at Abdullah's Memorandum, in which he had suggested that the imam 'should lead prayer whenever he is present in the mosque at the time of the prayer'.

[311]ELM Archives, letter from the *Mukhtadis* to the Secretary of the ELMT, 24 December 1981.

[312]ELM Archives, report of the General Public Meeting held at the East London Mosque on 7 February 1982.

It should be noted that, while it is true that some of the challenges mounted against the mosque's leadership in the 1980s stemmed from 'grievances between the large Bengali community and the mosque's ruling committee', this was not essentially a sectarian tussle between JI/Deobandi and Barelwi rivals within the mosque. Rather, it represented a conflict that was instigated by personality clashes, ethnic divisions, and ambitions of power, at the heart of which lay the drive to secure control of the mosque's substantial resources and decision-making apparatus. By the end of the 1980s, the struggle for power had descended into an unprecedented level of bitterness and violence. In 1987, local newspapers reported that the police had been called to intervene in fights between rival factions within the mosque.[313] The following year, a feud between rival Muslims erupted into violence there on New Year's Day, when youths armed with staves and iron bars clashed with scores of worshippers during the Friday lunchtime prayer service and had to be separated by the police. The fighting, 'the worst in a series of incidents' at the mosque over the previous six months, was thought to have started when a notice appeared on the mosque building that fifteen Muslims were banned from entering by a High Court injunction. Among those banned was the sacked imam, whose expulsion had become one of the chief causes of the dispute between part of the congregation and the mosque's management committee.[314] His defiant holding of Friday congregations, apparently under police guard outside the mosque over several weeks, helped to provoke the clashes.

A further bone of contention at this time was who controlled the very substantial financial resources accumulated by the mosque. As the congregation grew, so did the mosque's wealth, with donations through *zakat*[315] and *fitra* and income from investments running into thousands of pounds. Those who sat on the Trust had full control over decisions about the disbursements – inevitably, loans were approved to other like-minded religious establishments and mosques, such as Dawat-ul-Islam, Glasgow, the Waltham Forest Muslim Association in East London,[316] and the Talim-ul-Islam Madrassa, Dewsbury,[317] while the loan application of the predominantly Bengali Tawakkulia Society of Bradford,[318] which belonged to the Barelwi persuasion, was

[313] *East London Advertiser*, 22 May 1987.
[314] *Docklands Recorder*, 7 January 1988.
[315] Islamic alms – the giving of a percentage of one's income to the poor. See ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 6 January 1978.
[316] ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 8 August 1981 and 20 June 1981.
[317] ELM Archives, EMLT Minutes, 10 May 1975.
[318] For the Tawakkulia Society of Bradford, see Barton, *The Bengali Muslims of Bradford*.

deferred.[319] The Trustees' awareness of the concerns of the *umma*, combined with their pan-Islamic sympathies, meant that they were also prepared to provide financial help to those in need internationally – for example, the 'Iranian victims of war' with Iraq, and the 'Afghan Mujahideen' (fighting against the Soviet-backed Afghan regime).[320] Support was demanded for the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Lebanese upon Israel's invasion of the latter's territory in 1982.[321] Relief was provided for the victims of the cyclone disaster in Bangladesh and, interestingly, for the earthquake victims of Italy, showing empathy for humanity at large.[322] In the disbursement of loans to individuals in the Muslim community – to start up businesses, for hard-up students, and for distressed women – the decisions seemed to be based on an ad hoc consideration of each case, reflecting the client–patron relationship that seemed to be at work here.

As early as the mid-1960s, there had also emerged concerns regarding the religious legitimacy of the Trust's investments and the incomes derived from them. Government stocks and bonds, into which funds had been invested in order to generate income to meet the Trust's expenditure right from the inception of the LMF in 1910, had begun to cause much unease among the leading members because of their interest-bearing character.[323] As a source of income, these were felt to be Islamically unlawful.[324] Alternative

[319]ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 14 October 1982.

[320]ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 18 February 1981.

[321]In an undated letter written by Jetha to the Council of Management, he said, 'As you are aware that the present Israeli regime with premeditated and planned design ruthlessly invaded Lebanese territory resulting in thousands of deaths of men, women and children, cities and villages demolished and over a half a million people homeless, with a view to destroy the P.L.O. Zionists are committing the same barbarous acts which were met out to them by the Nazis. In my humble opinion Jihad [various literal Arabic meanings include 'exertion', 'effort', and 'armed struggle'] has a very wide meaning appropriate for all occasions when Muslims are in trouble. While we are unable to go and fight shoulder to shoulder with the Palestinians, we could at least offer a reasonably substantial financial assistance to the P.L.O and the Lebanese in their dire need.' See ELM Archives, letter attached to ELMT Minutes, 19 June 1982 (since Israel invaded Lebanon on 6 June 1982, this attached letter must have been written after that date).

[322]ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 18 February 1981.

[323]For instance, Jetha (not long after his appointment in 1963) reported in October 1964 that 'Some Muslims have been making objections on the grounds that an income is being derived by way of "interest"'. See ELM Archives, Jetha's report attached to ELMT Minutes, 7 October 1964. A committee was set up 'to discuss [. . .] Interest matters' (ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 1 September 1971).

[324]When the audited accounts were presented at the Council of Management in 1973, 'the question of interest was raised by one of the Trustees Mr Abdul Salam'. It was decided to defer the matter to the next meeting, when 'some useful ways could be found to spend this sum for welfare and other appropriate works according to the Islamic Sharia'. See ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 13 September 1973. In 1982, when some members of the East

methods of Islam-compliant income generation were suggested. For instance, in 1970 the honorary secretary, Jetha, suggested investment in equities and offered his own property, a house, for sale to the Trust. This investment, he argued, could generate rental income, a religiously legitimate source, instead of earning interest.[325] A finance sub-committee was set up to investigate the matter[326] and, after its meeting in May 1970,[327] its recommendation to the Council of Management to purchase the property was unanimously accepted in September 1971.[328] Examination of 'ways and means of utilising interest money'[329] that would be ideologically acceptable did not stop. Soon afterwards, it was agreed that monies derived from interest-bearing investments[330] should only be used for social welfare purposes and not for the purposes of the mosque.[331] So, a separate welfare fund[332] was opened, from which nothing could be spent on mosque expenses.[333] The Memorandum of Association was amended to stipulate that any income from interest-bearing funds would 'not be spent towards the promotion of the objects of the trust not being in conformity with the Sharia Law and [that] such funds shall be spent for the care and upliftment of poor and needy Muslims'.[334]

From the early 1980s, the vision of what the mosque represented was largely shaped by men such as Suleman Jetha, Taslim Ali, and Mueenuddin Chowdhury. Their ideas regarding its structure and activities continued to be influenced by TJ or JI strategies. Because of these TJ/JI connections, both ideological and programmatic, with

London Mosque's congregation accused its administration of the unlawful disbursement of sums of money by way of loans, Jetha, who was chairman at the time, while denying the charge, explained that the help to needy and distressed Muslims was provided from the interest on bank deposits that could not be spent on 'the mosque causes' owing to religious prohibition, and was therefore collected in a separate 'Welfare Fund' for this purpose. See ELM Archives, T.V. Edwards & Company to The Secretary of the East London Mosque, 15 October 1982, and S.M. Jetha's reply, 9 November 1982.

[325]See ELM Archives, Jetha's letter to the Trustees, 8 May 1970.

[326]ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 12 September 1970.

[327]ELM Archives, Report of the Finance Sub-Committee, 22 May 1970.

[328]ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 1 September 1971.

[329]ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 1 June 1978.

[330]For instance, the interest of £2043.49 on deposits of £221,000 at Barclays Bank: see ELM Archives, Barclays Bank to Jetha, 13 September 1982.

[331]ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 1 June 1978.

[332]'It was finally decided to open a separate Welfare Fund account and all the interest money so far accumulated be transferred into this account and also future interest money earned be put in this account. These amounts should NOT be spent on Mosque expenses' (ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 6 July 1978).

[333]*Ibid.*

[334]The amendments to the Memorandum of the Articles of the Association of East London Mosque Trust Ltd. were approved in the meeting of the Council of Management on 3 January 1979. See ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 3 January 1979.

similar formations in Saudi Arabia and other parts of the Middle East, when it came to the next stage of the mosque's development – the construction of the new mosque to replace the temporary, government-financed building in Fieldgate Street – the Trustees looked to potential sources in those quarters for financial support. Apart from the Trustee Tariq Rafique's suggestions to the mosque's building committee for fundraising such as house-to-house collections, sponsorship from founder members and other influential persons and organizations, and donations from Muslim businessmen, banks, and insurance companies, their ambitious multi-pronged plans for the new East London Mosque (the likely cost had mounted to £1.5 million[335]) included fundraising trips to Jeddah, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, and Cairo. The Trustees also sought help from the governments of Pakistan and Bangladesh. In their negotiations for compensation from the GLC, they again enlisted the support of the Muslim trustee-ambassadors. Hence, the election of Khurram Murad of the Islamic Foundation (closely associated with the Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan) as one of the new Trustees may well have obtained the mosque project a sympathetic hearing from potential benefactors in the Middle East.[336]

The strategy paid off. While the Mosque was able to negotiate compensation of around £200,000 from the GLC and to accumulate some £700,000–800,000 through individual donations from local congregants, it was the generous donations from the Middle East, from wealthy Muslims, and, in particular, £1.1 million from King Fahd of Saudi Arabia that enabled the achievement of the £2 million needed for the completion of the new mosque building.[337]

[335]David Rolfe Associates, Chartered Quantity Surveyors, estimated the cost of the project to be £1,436,000. See ELM Archives, David Rolfe Associates to A.T.M. Abdulla, chairman of Council of Management of the ELM Trust, 6 April 1979. 'The Chairman of the ELMT reported on this discussions with the architect and quantity surveyor in regard to the erection of the new Mosque and said that it had been conveyed to him that the estimated cost had now risen to £1 1/2 million.' See also ELM Archives, Minutes of the Emergency Meeting of the CoM [Committee of Management] of the ELMT, 25 April 1979.

[336]According to the Minutes, Khurram Jah Murad 'was connected with the Middle East, and was the Director-General of the Islamic Foundation. He was a Mid-east civil engineer and was responsible for the construction of the *Haram sharif*' (ELM Archives, ELMT Minutes, 18 August 1979). *Haram sharif* is the 'noble sanctuary' in Mecca, surrounding the *Kaaba*. The *Kaaba* (meaning a 'cube-shaped room' in Arabic) is a stone structure built in the middle of the Sacred Mosque. Muslims believe that it was built by the Prophet Abraham as a landmark for the House of God, for the sole purpose of worshipping of God alone. It is also the centre of the circumambulations performed during the pilgrimage (*Hajj*), and it is towards the *Kaaba* that Muslims face in their prayers (*salat*).

[337]For a list of the most generous donors, see ELM Archives, brochure prepared for the Opening Ceremony of the East London Mosque, dated 12 July 1985. Apart from King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, the list of donors included Sheikh Muhammad Akbar Ali Safat, Kuwait (£100,000); Rabitul Alam Al-Islami, Saudi Arabia (£85,000); M/S

However, this also meant that the mosque remained firmly within the Deobandi/JI/Wahabi ideological nexus.

Over time, the more the mosque succeeded, the more its influence in the community grew, bending community practice to its religious prescriptions. Those who disagreed had already left to join other mosques, such as the one in Brick Lane. While it is undoubtedly the case that the East London Mosque's authority came to be disputed by substantial sections of the East End's Muslim population – its ideological position and religious guidance is by no means hegemonic – nevertheless, it has continued to exercise considerable influence over significant sections of this population and acts as an interlocutor vis-à-vis many institutions of wider society, locally and nationally. Through its interactions with influential people in a wide range of Muslim countries, it has gained a measure of recognition as a representative of particular layers of British Muslims. When the new building was inaugurated in 1985, its symbolic importance was demonstrated by the cosmopolitan character of those who were assembled on that occasion – the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia and the Imam of *Kaaba*, local MPs and the Mayor of the Borough of Tower Hamlets, and Muslim and non-Muslim dignitaries from around London and other British cities. That had also been the case at the Foundation Stone-laying ceremony in September 1982,[338] when Akbar Ali from Kuwait, who had initially anonymously donated £100,000 towards the mosque building fund, had been the chief guest.[339] It seems that the mosque leadership also tried to show that it genuinely wished to engage with the process of integration in the evolving multicultural and multi-faith community that the East End of London had become, and of which Muslims were now an integral part. Indeed, Suleman Jetha, who was the chairman of the Trust in 1982, hailed the construction of the mosque, adjacent to the synagogue and a nearby church, as the building of 'a new Jerusalem!'[340]

From the time of its 1985 opening in Whitechapel Road, the East London Mosque steadily deepened its role in the affairs of the

Zahed Tractors, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (£28,000); H.H. The Aga Khan, Paris (£25,000); Islamic Solidarity Fund, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (£12,000); Ministry of Awqaf, Government of Kuwait (£11,000); Sudan Embassy, London (£10,000); the Government of Pakistan through the Embassy in London (£5,000); and the Government of Bangladesh (£1,000).

[338]The conditional permission for the construction of the mosque was granted on 19 May 1981. See ELM Archives, undated letter from the Director of Development, London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Planning approval was also reported in the local press: *Hackney Gazette*, 19 May 1981; *New Standard*, 1 June 1981.

[339]See ELM Archives, Jetha's speech on the occasion of the foundation-stone-laying ceremony, 23 September 1982.

[340]*Impact International*, 8–21 October 1982, p. 2.

local Muslim community as the politics and discourses of identity changed their orientation from ethnicity to religion. One influential factor that strengthened the ELM's hand was its association with Islamism,[341] whose global appeal had risen rapidly. With secular radicalism retreating under attack from the new Right, Islamism seemed to offer persuasive solutions to the needs and concerns of many young Muslims, most powerfully with regard to matters of their identity and self-esteem. After the 1986 local election, the Liberal/SDP alliance's reintroduction of housing policies in Tower Hamlets, differential entitlements and allocation that had favoured white families at the expense of their Bangladeshi counterparts, and that had been shelved in the early 1980s as inherently racist, resulted in further disillusionment with the mainstream political parties among large sections of the Bangladeshi community. With their secular community groups increasingly sidelined, local Bangladeshis saw greater possibilities of being more effectively represented by such entities as the mosque even though it viewed their concerns through the Islamic prism. Not having relied on public funding, it (along with other mosques) appeared relatively more independent and less compromised, though it soon became clear that dependence on funding from the Middle East was bound to have some effect on the shaping of perspectives and strategies. Moreover, having survived the Conservative government's onslaught on sources of support for the voluntary sector rather well, bodies with a distinct Muslim identity (which, in the past, had received few resources from the state and so had had to rely largely on contributions from individuals and groups within their communities) emerged with an enhanced profile in the eyes of the authorities.

The position of those who wished to emphasize Islamic needs was strengthened in schools, and also in mosques, prayer halls, and *madrassas*. Community identity began to be articulated relatively more strongly through religious institutions, where Muslim solidarity could be publicly celebrated, and rather less so on the basis of ethnic affiliations, family, village, and class. Indeed, between 1986

[341] An Islamist is a Muslim who 'believes' that 'Islam as a body of faith has something important to say about how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary world and who seeks to implement this idea in some fashion': Graham E. Fuller, *The Future of Political Islam* (Basingstoke, 2003). According to Bobby Sayyid, writing on Islamism from a British Muslim perspective, 'an Islamist is someone who places her or his Muslim identity at the centre of her or his political practice. That is, Islamists are people who use the language of Islamic metaphors to think through their political destinies, those who see in Islam their political future.' For him, Islamism is not some kind of monolithic edifice without variation or internal differences. See Bobby Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the emergence of Islamism* (London, 1997).

and 1990 Islamist groups associated with the East London Mosque intervened on a number of communal issues, including provision of *halal* food and prayer facilities in schools, as well as *The Satanic Verses* protest. The controversy over Salman Rushdie's novel (which was partly set in Brick Lane)[342] that erupted in 1989, was a watershed in the shift from the politics of ethnic identity to those of religious identity. Muslim protesters right across Britain were greatly agitated by the book's perceived attack on the Prophet; 'Cockney Muslims',[343] already feeling embattled by British racism, felt that they had been insulted by Rushdie's satirizing of their religion – he had offended their deepest beliefs and values. The opposition from the British establishment and the public at large, who saw the Muslim agitation as an attack on the principles of free speech, thought, and expression, was equally intemperate and condemnatory. In Britain and the West more generally, it was the core values that produced the fault lines between Muslims and wider society, the liberals arguing that no one 'should be killed or face the threat of being killed, for what they say or write';[344] many committed Muslims countered that no one should be free 'to insult and malign Muslims' by denigrating 'the honour of the Prophet Muhammad'.[345] Instead of sympathy, Muslims found themselves attacked by wider society for their perceived rejection of British values. East End Muslims accordingly vented their anger in public meetings organized both in the Brick Lane and East London Mosques and at large rallies in Hyde Park. The Young Muslim Organisation,[346] which, in alliance with anti-racist groups (Bangladeshi

[342]Rushdie refers to the Brick Lane Mosque thus: 'Jamme Masjid [. . .] used to be the Machzikel HaDath synagogue which in turn replaced the Huguenots' Calvinist church', (Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London, 1988), pp. 299–300).

[343]C. Douglas, 'A Cockney mosque', *Tower Hamlets News*, September 1986.

[344]Timothy Garton Ash, 'No ifs and no buts', *The Guardian*, 23 June 2007.

[345]See *Aljazeera*, http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2007/06/200852512314659732 1.html (accessed 13 October 2010).

[346]The Young Muslim Organisation (YMO), a section of the Islamic Forum of Europe, is a reformist group engaged in practical grassroots programmes. According to its website, 'in October 1978 young Muslim men gathered in a house in London to bring together a dynamic band of youth who would respond to the challenges faced by their community with deep faith, true commitment and a positive and comprehensive work plan [. . .] Dawah is an essential component of YMO UK's work; indeed it is essential to the Islamic tradition. It is vital simply because without being actively engaged in inviting people to Islam, social change based on Islam cannot be accomplished. YMO UK strives to ensure that its Dawah is comprehensive as well as suited for the specific circumstances of the youth in different parts of Britain. The School Link Project (SLP) and the College Link Project (CLP) working in schools and further/higher educational institutions respectively, organise a wide range of activities from seminars and awards ceremonies to camps and sports activities. Parallel to Dawah work in educational institutions, the YMO UK Community Teams work in neighbourhoods and residential areas across Britain, encouraging the youth

and otherwise), had previously spearheaded the movement against the National Front and racist violence in the East End of London with encouragement from the East London Mosque, participated energetically in the protests against Rushdie. At the rally in Hyde Park in February 1989, 'the chants of their [YMO] leaders could be heard above all others'.[347] Abdal Hussain Choudhury co-ordinated the UK Action Front's demonstration[348] and preceding march from the East London Mosque.[349]

These initiatives dovetailed with wider processes of Islamization, undertaken by groups such as Dawatul Islam[350] and the Tablighi Jamaat among East London's Bangladeshi community, in close association with the East London Mosque, which encouraged a greater conformity with regard to the dress code and religious rituals as defined by Islamist activists. Furthermore, during the 1990s, events in the Middle East (the first Gulf War in 1991), Kashmir, and eastern Europe (especially the plight of Bosnian Muslims) helped create an ever deeper sense of being part of the global Islamic community and of being 'Muslim'. Perceived injustices abroad resonated with discrimination at 'home', creating a powerful sense of Muslim identification. Post 9/11, the coalescence of these factors played a significant role in hastening the move towards Islamization within the Muslim community of Tower Hamlets, especially among the younger generation, most significantly through the growth of Islamist organizations, such as the YMO and the Islamic Forum of Europe,[351] which, with the demise of the Left, were able to present themselves as

to commit their lives to Islam and contribute positively to their society and community. It is our belief that organised collective action; [*sic*] for the sake of Islam is a duty and a necessity.' See http://www.islamicforumeurope.com/live/ife.php?doc=ymo#top (accessed 13 October 2010).

[347] *The Independent*, 20 February 1989.

[348] *The Guardian*, 22 July 1989.

[349] *The Guardian*, 5 May 1989.

[350] In 1977–1978, the Bangladeshi members of the UK Islamic Mission separated from it and formed Dawatul Islam 'to promote work among that community'. All the same, according to Philip Lewis (*Islamic Britain*, pp. 104–105), 'There is considerable overlap between the memberships of the Islamic Foundation, UK Islamic Mission and Dawatul Islam'. The Dawatul Islam website states that it is 'an organisation providing an effective platform to propagate Islam as a balanced and comprehensive way of life'; it aims 'To inform and influence public policy and services in order to achieve better outcomes for British Muslims, their families and communities', and it has 'worked with all sections of society to develop and deliver programmes that deal with education, community cohesion, and respect of other faiths and cultures' (http://www.dawatul-islam.org.uk/index.php?id=37 (accessed 13 October 2010)).

[351] For more information about how the Islamic Forum of Europe presents itself, see its website, http://www.islamicforumeurope.com/live/ife.php (accessed 22 November 2010).

a persuasive political alternative, thereby accentuating the influence of the East London Mosque among local Muslims.[352]

The support for the East London Mosque also increased during this period because, having accumulated considerable experience of dealing with British institutions, its leadership came to be seen as having engaged effectively in the public sphere: it had gained recognition alongside other special interest groups and functioned with similar agendas, its distinctiveness highlighted primarily by its explicit Muslim identity. Local politics provided the main arena in which it developed and exercised influence, negotiating skilfully with various dimensions of local government, seeking compromise, and reaching ad hoc deals in a typically British fashion. By the end of the twentieth century, the East London Mosque was indisputably one of the more influential institutions of London's East End Muslim community. This was reflected when, in November 2001, the Prince of Wales joined in the breaking of the fast during Ramadan.[353] Later that same evening, he spoke at the launch of the construction of the London Muslim Centre, 'congratulating the East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre' on all that it was doing, and promising to 'take the closest personal interest'.[354]

In strengthening its role and influence within this community, the East London Mosque was helped in no small measure by the coming to power of New Labour in 1997. The state's multicultural policies began to move away from the recognition of purely ethnic claims to encouraging faith groups to play a bigger part in civil society and local governance. The government declared that its departments sought 'to ensure that [faith] communities [were] given the opportunity to participate fully in society through voluntary activity and other faith-based projects and that the Government [was] committed to working closely with them to build strong active communities and foster community development and civil renewal'.[355] The East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre (opened in 2004) accordingly declared their commitment to the provision of broad

[352]Writing about Muslims in the East End of London, Sarah Glynn observed that 'Though they may not follow the detailed politics of Jamaat in Pakistan and Bangladesh, most young revivalist Muslims share its ideology and believe that the ultimate ideal would be to live in a world governed by Islamic Law, and that "so far as the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah [the exemplary practice of the Prophet Muhammad] are concerned, they are eternally binding".' S. Glynn, 'Bengali Muslims: new East End radicals', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 25, no. 6 (November 2002), p. 985.

[353]http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/1671797.stm (accessed 22 November 2010).

[354]http://www.princeofwales.gov.uk/speechesandarticles/a_speech_by_hrh_the_prince_of_wales_titled_an_example_to_all_243436887.html (accessed 22 November 2010).

[355]Cited in Sarah Glynn, 'Playing the ethnic card: politics and segregation in London's East End', *Urban Studies*, 47, no. 5 (May 2010), p. 1005.

'holistic, culturally sensitive services for the communities of London'.[356] For its part, the Tower Hamlets Borough Council's sympathetic engagement with local Muslim institutions was reflected in its regular communications and dealings with the East London Mosque and its willingness to draw the mosque into their 'partnerships'.[357] The mosque's role in helping the police and the Tower Hamlets Council to put a stop to 'Bangladeshi upon Bangladeshi' gang violence was widely acknowledged.[358]

In 1998, one particular campaign, led by the East London Mosque, 'demonstrated their strengthening position both within the community representation and in the struggle for local resources'.[359] As part of The East London Communities Organisation (TELCO),[360] it waged a determined struggle to prevent the Borough Council giving a property developer permission to build 'luxury flats' next to the mosque. It mobilized thousands, who marched through Whitechapel, demanding that the local Council allow the land adjacent to the mosque to be purchased by the mosque and developed as a community centre. Throughout the year, the mosque continued to lobby the Council for the extension of its premises. When it appeared that the Council was reconsidering the developer's scheme, the mosque mobilized around one hundred worshippers, who 'laid siege to council offices in Bow claiming planners had gone back on a promise over the future of the Whitechapel mosque'.[361] Eventually, after two years of struggle, a solution 'agreeable to everyone concerned, especially the local community was found [. . .] and planning permission was granted for the Mosque to build a community centre and 40 low cost homes on the site in collaboration with the Bethnal Green and Victoria Park and LABO Housing Associations', a solution that met the 'needs of the local residents and worshippers at the mosque',[362] and which was broadcast by the mosque as an example of 'a genuine partnership with the Council'.[363] By the time that the building of the London Muslim Centre began in 2001, the Council 'were fully on board and ready

[356]See East London Mosque and London Muslim centre website, http://www.eastlondonmosque.org.uk/vision (accessed 8 October 2010).

[357]Glynn, 'Playing the ethnic card', p. 1004.

[358]*Independent on Sunday*, 30 August 1998.

[359]J. Eade and D. Garbin, 'Changing narratives of violence, struggle and resistance: Bangladeshis and the competition for resources in the global city', cited in Glynn, 'Playing the ethnic card', p. 1005.

[360]The East London Mosque is a member of TELCO, which includes various faith-based organizations. See http://www.citizensuk.org/about/london-citizens/ (accessed 31 January 2011).

[361]*East London Advertiser*, 5 November 1998.

[362]*East End Life*, 30 November–6 December 1998.

[363]*Ibid.*

to advertise their involvement. Their website described the London Muslim Centre as the result of innovative joint working between the Council and its partners in the Tower Hamlets Partnership, the East London Mosque, the Greater London Authority and the European Development Fund.'[364]

Finally, let us look at this process of Muslim space creation from the vantage point of 2010–2011, the year of the East London Mosque's centenary celebrations. In 1910, the LMF's initiative for a mosque at the heart of imperial Britain was a way of asserting Muslim presence and symbolizing community belonging; it was a relatively modest attempt to embed distinctive cultural values in a new environment. At the same time, by inviting involvement of non-Muslims in the management and activities of the project, a process was started through which social and cultural bridge-building could be carried out and some degree of inclusion in the mainstream attempted. On the other hand, the British establishment and state were prepared to support the mosque project strictly on grounds of political expediency. Post 9/11 and 7/7, growing Islamophobia in wider society, a British foreign policy that is perceived by many British Muslims as inimical to Islam, and the draconian measures introduced by the Labour government to combat Islamist terrorism have tended to alienate significant layers among British Muslims. It should also be remembered, however, that, to counter radicalization especially among young Muslims, the local authorities have viewed the ELM, though not unreservedly, as a relatively 'moderate' religio-political partner. Perhaps the reason why many parts of the British establishment saw the ELM as a moderate mosque was because it openly rejected groups such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT):[365] the period 1992–1995 saw physical confrontations in the prayer area of the mosque, with YMO members ejecting HT activists from the premises;[366] the mosque further attracted heavy criticism from HT and Al Muhajiroon when it took to encouraging the Muslim community to exercise their right to vote in the 1997 elections. Incidents of physical struggle occurred with the Saved Sect in 2007, when the East London Mosque organized a careers day with its mainstream partners such as the London Development Agency and the Job Centre, encouraging careers in the Metropolitan Police and the armed forces. Members

[364]Glynn, 'Playing the ethnic card', p. 1005.

[365]See, Suha Taji-Farouki, 'Islamists and the threat of Jihad: Hizb al-Tahrir and al-Muhajiroun on Israel and the Jews', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36, no. 4 (October 2000), pp. 21–46.

[366]Ed Hussain, *The Islamist* (London, 2007), pp. 126–127.

of the Saved Sect accused the ELM of 'selling out'.[367] The mosque believed that funnelling resources through its hands enabled it to contribute to its goal of community cohesion in Tower Hamlets. From 2002, initiatives such as ISAP, Way to Work, and Faith in Health were designed to ensure that the whole community would benefit. Particular care was given to ensure that non-Muslims would be comfortable in accessing services that addressed common concerns such as unemployment, health inequality, and school attainment.

That said, in many ways, the community that was being built was increasingly socially encapsulated and separated from local non-Muslims. As Sarah Glynn has pointed out, the ELM and its affiliates now provide 'the means for local Muslims to live in an increasingly separate social sphere, almost from the cradle to the grave' – replacing other ethnic voluntary bodies as a channel for providers of local services. Its ever-expanding programme of activities includes a so-called Islamic playgroup, Islamic summer schemes, sports activities organized in what is described as a 'sound moral atmosphere', gender-segregated youth groups, advice on jobs, and, for Muslim women and the elderly, a wide range of cultural, educational, and recreational activities. At Ramadan, Muslim Community Radio invites listeners to 'tune in with the whole family'.[368]

By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the East London Mosque was clearly an important player in terms of shaping the attitudes and behaviours of substantial sections of the local Muslim community. That it enjoyed a great deal of support within them can be gauged from the hundreds of thousands of pounds of individual and corporate donations that it received for the construction of the mosque in the early 1980s, as well as the millions that it collected to build the London Muslim Centre in the new Millennium. The 15,000 worshippers attending the Friday congregation at the inauguration of this Centre in June 2004, according to the Muslim Council of Britain, symbolized the 'triumph of community spirit',[369] providing ample evidence of the level of popular support commanded by the ELM. The BBC reported that more than 18,000 congregated for Eid prayers there in 2008.[370] Through these developments, the local Muslim population

[367]Information received from Dilowar Khan, Executive Director of the East London Mosque, 17 November 2010.

[368]Glynn 'Playing the ethnic card', p. 1004.

[369]'Triumph of community spirit: inauguration of western Europe's largest Muslim centre', 19 July 2004, Muslim Council of Britain website, http://www.mcb.org.uk/features/features.php?ann_id=409 (accessed 9 October 2010).

[370]See http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/content/articles/2008/09/30/tower_hamlets_eid_feature.shtml (accessed 8 October 2010).

has become more deeply connected with the mosque and in doing so has 'increased [the latter's] authority as arbiter of all aspects of life'.[371]

More generally, the ELM has been able to present its Islamic prescriptions as the only valid way of life. This has also meant that, from outside its core constituencies, the mosque has recently come to be accused of harbouring extremists and propagating 'jihadism', even though it has been unequivocal in its condemnation of the 9/11 and 7/7 atrocities. Despite its self-proclaimed commitment to 'British' values of democracy, fairness, tolerance, and rule of law, it is still suspected by some observers of aspiring to a radical Islamist transformation of society.

An alternative assessment of the East London Mosque's pronouncements and actions, however, may suggest that it has tried to go as far as it can in coming to terms with the plurality of British society while remaining true to its core values and ideals. Understood in this way, it could be argued that the ELM is not playing any kind of conspiratorial double game, but trying, quite pragmatically, to achieve the best possible outcomes for its constituency, keeping as much as possible to its own frame of reference. This does not necessarily mean that the ELM is not committed to community cohesion as declared in its public pronouncements. But it wishes to promote this cohesion within the framework of its, perhaps inevitably exclusivist, Islamist strategy for attracting people to its standpoint; a strategy based on social activism and civic participation, governed by a religious ethos. Hence, it welcomes an open engagement with non-Muslims[372] (exemplified through the development of the Tower Hamlets Interfaith Forum (THIFF), a multi-faith network that demonstrated unequivocal solidarity in the aftermath of 7/7).[373] But, arguably, it does so primarily as part of its aspiration of creating an Islamic Britain. In practice, this means that, while the ELM has been successful in creating cohesion within layers of the local Muslim population, it has perhaps done so at the expense of its relations with those who are outside its fold.

While there is no official estimate of the number of mosques in Britain, there may now be well over 1,600, with scores in London

[371] Glynn, 'Playing the ethnic card', p. 1005.

[372] For example, see the Lord Chief Justice Lord Phillips's speech, 'Equality before the law', delivered at the London Muslim Centre, 3 July 2008, http://www.eastlondonmosque.org.uk/uploadedImage/pdf/LMC%20Lord%20Chief%20Justice%20booklet.pdf (accessed 22 November 2010). See also the ELM's response, http://www.eastlondonmosque.org.uk/uploadedImage/pdf/ELM-LMC%20PR%20-%20LCJ.pdf (accessed 22 November 2010).

[373] Tower Hamlets Prevent Action Plan, April 2008–March 2011, pp. 13 and 52, http://www.towerhamletsfoi.org.uk/documents/3034/LBTH%20%20Prevent%20Action%20Plan%20June2010.pdf (accessed 21 November 2010).

alone.[374] In carving out this religious space, while Muslims have continued to confront many of the same issues with which they had to grapple before, they have succeeded, through mosque-building, in becoming recognized as significant contributors to the enrichment of Britain's cultural and religious landscape. This has been possible in large part due to the settlement of several million Muslims in a Britain radically different from the one in which the LMF began its campaign in 1910; a Britain in which Muslims as citizens see themselves in a different relationship to wider society and its institutions. With regard to the present-day East London Mosque, one of the largest in Britain, we discover that, as the Muslim community in the East End of London has grown from a few hundred to tens of thousands,[375] so too has power (or control) within the East London Mosque gradually shifted from individuals and institutions far removed from the local community to its direct representatives. The growth of the community has given it greater stature in the eyes of the institutions of wider society, a change that is reflected in its physical and administrative structures and in the character of its activities. That it is able to assert considerable autonomy and authority in institutional decision-making also vouches for the relations of power between the community and the state. And its impressive buildings tell us about the changing relations of power in an increasingly plural Britain. They suggest the increasing capacity of Muslim communities to mobilize resources needed (the

[374]This was the estimate in 2006. See IslamOnline, http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&pagename=Zone-English-News/NWELayout&cid=1162385841442 (accessed 17 January 2011). In 1997, the *British Muslim Monthly Survey* put the figure at around one thousand for registered and unregistered mosques: cited in S. McLoughlin, 'Mosques and the public space: conflict and cooperation in Bradford', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31, no. 6 (November 2005), p. 1045. In 1963, there were just thirteen mosques recorded with the Registrar General: see J. Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe* (Edinburgh, 1992), p. 44.

[375]The London Borough of Tower Hamlets, formed in 1965 through the merger of the three boroughs in the East End of London – Stepney, Bethnal Green, and Bow – has the largest concentration of Bangladeshis in England. By 1981, it was estimated that Bangladeshis formed between 15% and 20% of its population. According to the 2001 Census, it contained 70,000, overwhelmingly Muslim, Bangladeshis. In the borough, historically, Bangladeshis have been concentrated in the four western wards of Spitalfields, St Katherine's, St Mary's, and Weavers. Until recently they were the last in the line of poor migrants to come here, arriving at a time when the local population was declining rapidly. They were confined to council blocks from which white residents had moved. Bangladeshis increasingly occupied space that white people did not want. They experienced some of the worst residential and working conditions in a borough whose population was predominantly working class. They, along with the local white population, suffered from higher than average rates of unemployment. In the 1960s and 1970s, substantial numbers of Bangladeshis, too poor to buy property or ineligible for council housing, occupied privately rented accommodation. Having bought into 'the myth of return', which meant saving as much as they could from their meagre incomes, they lived in overcrowded accommodation.

London Muslim Centre affiliated to the East London Mosque alone cost £10.5 million[376]), not only from within the community but also from the wider Muslim world. Yet, because the construction of the East London Mosque and the London Muslim Centre was funded in considerable measure by the local community itself, this has given it a greater sense of ownership and 'belonging' in the locality in which it is based. The investment needed to put down permanent mosque structures, the establishment of facilities for the religious education of Muslim children, and the appointment of a salaried imam marked the commitment to settle. All of this means that the mosque and its institutional growth have become important markers of community formation. It has become a convenient place for social gatherings and a resource for women, children, and elders, accommodating a crèche, counselling and advisory services, and a library. It has played an educational role for non-Muslims by hosting visits from local schools, and is active in inter-faith dialogue.

The history of the East London Mosque since 1985 has been, in some ways, a narrative of struggle, in which the efforts and sacrifices of Muslims have been met with suspicion and opposition of public authorities and powerful residents' associations. First, there were the prolonged and tortuous negotiations regarding the shift from the Commercial Road premises and then to Whitechapel Road. Soon after, a dispute arose regarding the *azan* (call to prayer): worshippers demanded an increase in the number of calls, while local residents and businesses complained to the Tower Hamlets Council and the Secretary of State for the Environment about the 'noise nuisance'. The local press reported, 'Ritual chants summoning thousands of East End Muslims to worship twice a day hit a sour note with local residents', with Tower Hamlets Council receiving 'a flood of complaints'[377] and considering 'legal action to "pull the plug" on loudspeaker broadcasts [of the *azan*] from the East London Mosque'.[378] Jetha, the long-serving chairman of the Trust, countered by accusing complainants of being 'intolerant' towards other religions: 'I suspect', he remarked, that 'the

[376] 'Over 50% of the building costs for the London Muslim Centre were raised through donations from local worshippers and from around the UK. 23% was derived from public and charitable sources; 10% from international sources including Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Islamic Development Bank; and the balance from the sale of trust assets' (East London Mosque website, http://www.eastlondonmosque.org.uk/?page=faqs (accessed 8 October 2010)).

[377] One complaint noted that: 'My office is adjacent to the minoret, consequently I get the full blast of the tannoy, making it impossible to carry out a phone conversation' (*East London Advertiser*, 2 May 1986).

[378] *East London Advertiser*, 14 April 1986.

real reason behind many of these complaints is racial prejudice'. The complaints to him smacked of double standards, since nobody, he suggested, objected to the ringing of church bells.[379] Local Muslims angered by the dispute urged their religious leaders 'to INCREASE the volume of the prayer calls broadcast', claiming that they could not hear the 'ritual chants'.[380] Eventually, a compromise solution was reached by reducing the volume.[381]

Since the events of 7 July 2005, the ELM/LMC has been targeted more sharply than ever before by the media, politicians, and think-tanks, often with their own axe to grind. Indeed, many of the ELM's detractors view it as a Janus-like organization – they claim that, while its public image is that of a 'moderate' Islamist organization with a 'moderate' message, significant evidence in relation to its internal communication with its members betrays a radical and subversive Islamist hidden agenda. For instance, the Channel 4 *Dispatches* programme, 'Undercover mosque' (broadcast on 15 January 2007), and Denis MacEoin's report, 'The hijacking of British Islam', published in October 2007, for the 'Conservative think-tank' Policy Exchange,[382] suggested that, among other things, the East London Mosque provided a home for extremist, separatist, and sectarian literature. 'This literature', MacEoin declared, 'not only condemns non-Muslim society, but also frequently denigrates other Muslims – those whose standards of Islamic observation are deemed by authors to be insufficiently pure or rigorous'.[383] In 2010, Andrew Gilligan's 'Britain's Islamic republic', shown on 1 March, again on Channel 4, claimed that the 'fundamentalist' Islamic Forum of Europe, based

[379] *Ibid.* One letter to the editor, entitled 'Noisy bells', did complain about the tolling of the bell at the nearby church, defending the *azan* broadcasts: 'I live off Cable Street and am often disturbed by the repetitive sound of church bells from St. George's Church and the church in Wapping. These bell practises [*sic*] sometime go on for an hour or more and can be very annoying but I put up with it [. . .] why can't people here be more tolerant to two or three minutes calling from the mosque?' (*East London Advertiser*, 9 May 1986). A number of local Church of England clerics also thought 'two short periods [of the *Azan* . . .] entirely reasonable' (*East London Advertiser*, 25 April 1986).

[380] *East London Advertiser*, 2 May 1986.

[381] *East London Advertiser*, 14 April 1986 and 2 May 1986. Regarding the complaints, the *London Standard*, on 14 April 1986, reported: 'The ritual chants summoning thousands of East End Moslems to worship twice a day have hit a sour note with residents. Tower Hamlets Council has received many complaints [. . .]'. In reaction to protests over 'excessively loud' prayer calls, a mosque official suspected that the reason for the complaints might be racial prejudice (*The Star*, 14 April 1986).

[382] *The* Times, 30 October 2007, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article2767252.ece (accessed 17 January 2011).

[383] Denis MacEoin, 'The hijacking of British Islam: how extremist literature is subverting mosques in the UK', Policy Exchange, 2007, http://fliiby.com/file/36648/onr78fia7u.html, p. 7 (accessed 6 October 2010).

in the London Muslim Centre and thought to be closely associated with the East London Mosque, was an organization in possession of an extremist 'Islamist' ideology. Gilligan asserted that it was not the moderate 'social welfare' organization,[384] committed to community cohesion and tolerance, that it claimed to be; on the contrary, he argued that it sought to exploit, through 'deceit',[385] the democratic process, and to 'infiltrate'[386] the local Labour Party (whose secular values were opposed to those of the IFE), so that it could 'subvert the local council' and bend it to its own programme.[387] Gilligan's claims, however, were strongly denied by non-Muslim local activists involved in collaborative work with the ELM. [388]

The fact that Gilligan's report drew on evidence in support of his accusations furnished by individuals in the local Muslim community, as well as IFE documents,[389] suggests that considerable tension still exists between competing interests and ideological positions in the community, who are determined to challenge and undermine the influence that ELM/LMC exercises within it. In a letter to *The Guardian*, a number of community activists representing many 'impeccably non-sectarian Muslims [. . .] who are capable of opposing both racism and fundamentalism', as well as some organizations based in London's East End, while condemning the 'visible rise, in some parts of the country, of anti-Muslim bigotry', also expressed 'legitimate concerns about the leadership of the East London Mosque and the Islamic Forum of Europe', for allowing 'intemperate clerics to speak on its premises, some of whom have promoted values antithetical to

[384]Andrew Gilligan, 'IFE loses its grip on Tower Hamlets', *The Guardian*, 19 May 2010.

[385]Andrew Gilligan, 'IFE: not harmless democrats', *The Guardian*, 4 March 2010.

[386]Andrew Gilligan 'Islamic radicals "infiltrate" the Labour Party', *Daily Telegraph*, 27 February 2010.

[387]Inayat Bunglawala, 'Watch out: democratic Muslims about', *The Guardian*, 3 March 2010.

[388]In a letter to Channel 4 after the broadcast of the *Dispatches* programme, Neil Jameson, lead organizer for London Citizens, commented: 'The recent Dispatches programme: Britain's Islamic Republic broadcasted on Channel 4 on 1st March 2010 gave a very negative and distorted image of two of our members, The East London Mosque and the Tower Hamlets Branch of Islamic Forum of Europe. The East London Mosque was a founding member of The East London Communities Organisation (TELCO) in 1996, joined in 2004 by the London Muslim Centre and in 2009 by The Tower Hamlets Branch of the Islamic Forum Europe. Although IFE formally joined TELCO last year I have known their leadership since 1996 and have been aware of the close relationship and overlap in membership between IFE and East London Mosque. All are thus active and responsible members of LONDON CITIZENS' diverse community alliance' (http://www.eastlondonmosque.org.uk/uploadedImage/pdf/2010_11_15_20_58_56_Letter%20to%20Ch%204%20from%20Neil%20Jameson.pdf (accessed 21 November 2010)).

[389]Gilligan, 'IFE: not harmless democrats'.

those required in a tolerant and progressive society'.[390] These clerics, so the letter claimed, had intimidated and bullied other Muslims into accepting their contested theology as undisputed truth. Similarly, when the English Defence League[391] threatened to march in Tower Hamlets to protest against a meeting organized under the auspices of the Federation of Student and Islamic Societies, a broad-based coalition (including the Brick Lane Mosque), while condemning the 'fascist EDL', also criticized the Islamic Forum of Europe for claiming to 'act as the sole representatives of ordinary Muslims [. . .] operating under the direction of their parent organization Jamaat-e-Islami in Bangladesh'.[392]

It appears that Islamophobic media attacks and anti-Muslim street mobilizations have become part of a 'culture war' in which particular relatively influential anti-Muslim groups and politicians in British society, threatened by the growth of Muslim institutions as embodiments of Islamic power, pursue a range of strategies to weaken them. In this situation, for its congregation at least if not for the Muslim communities more widely, the ELM/LMC represents a fortress to be defended. In a climate fraught with anxieties and threats regarding identity, in an increasingly plural Britain, the contestation of cultural values and rights has become much more politically intense. As opposition to cultural and religious symbols has grown, resistance to this 'backlash' from wider society has resulted in the strengthening of community solidarity. The more that popular concerns about 'militant Islam' and its erosion of 'a British way of life' have risen, the more a sense of being under siege has developed, increasing determination

[390] *The Guardian*, 3 April 2010. Inayat Bunglawala, formerly spokesperson for the Muslim Council of Britain, also felt that 'Gilligan's video clips of events held at the London Muslim Centre – which is largely run by IFE – showing two speakers, albeit from an outside organization that had hired the LMC hall, engaging in deeply offensive rhetoric about gays and women – cannot be easily shrugged off'.

[391] 'The English Defence League emerged from the angry scenes in Luton last March [2009] when a group of Islamist extremists protested as the Royal Anglian Regiment paraded through the town on its return from Afghanistan' (Dominic Casciani, 'Who are the English Defence League?', *BBC News Magazine*, 11 September 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8250017.stm (accessed 22 November 2010)). According to Matthew Taylor, 'It has become the most significant far-right street movement in the UK since the National Front in the 1970s' ('English Defence League: inside the violent world of Britain's new far right', *The Guardian*, 28 May 2010). According to John Cruddas, its mobilizations, 'bring[ing] together a dangerous cocktail of football hooligans, far-right activists and pub racists', have focused on popular anti-Muslim sentiment, 'providing a new white nationalist identity' through which its supporters 'can understand an increasingly complex and alienating world and instigating them to defend their Britain against the threat of Islam' ('English Defence League is a bigger threat than the BNP', *The Observer*, 10 October 2010).

[392] 'Tower Hamlets community stands up to fight fascism in all its colours', 19 June 2010, http://www.spittoon.org/archives/6766 (accessed 6 October 2010).

among groups of Muslims to present a united front in the face of this onslaught.

The ELM/LMC, too, has fought back. It denounced, for instance, the Gilligan documentary as a 'distorted and utterly misleading portrayal of the East London Mosque', which, it said, '[t]hrough factual errors, innuendo and an extraordinarily disingenuous selection of commentators, [left] viewers with an entirely false impression of the Mosque'. It reiterated its openness to Muslims and non-Muslims alike, its commitment to the promotion of religious and social tolerance, and its opposition to and condemnation of 'violent extremism in all its forms'. The mosque's representatives, in a lengthy statement in early 2010, declared that it

> actively encourages the congregation to engage in the democratic process, particularly voting during elections, without ever suggesting who to vote for; no organisation or person – and this includes IFE – is allowed to canvass for political parties or candidates in the Mosque or London Muslim Centre. While we try to ensure that those who use our facilities, including for speaking engagements, reflect the values of moderation and tolerance we hold and adhere to, on rare occasion it may be that someone, speaking at an event for which a room or hall has been hired for example, says something we neither agree with nor approve of. It would be very misleading to characterize our Mosque on the basis of these few exceptions, rather the norm of the great diversity of the speakers who maintain the highest standards we aspire to. It is not possible for any organisation in a position such as ours to vet and approve in advance every statement to be made by every speaker addressing audiences at the Mosque and Centre. Intellectual, political, social and religious debate is one of the cornerstones of a democratic society and many organisations (including the ELM and LMC) permit a wide range of speakers who hold varied and often conflicting views. Self-evidently that does not mean that the organisations in questions support or espouse every view expressed by every speaker they host and it would be ludicrous to suggest otherwise.[393]

When the English Defence League marched through central London in March 2010, with placards including the demand 'Close the East London Mosque now', the mosque was able to assemble a powerful coalition of public figures, politicians, and religious and trade union leaders calling for solidarity and support for it.[394]

What has happened in the century-long struggle to build the mosque that now stands on Whitechapel Road has thus depended

[393]East London Mosque 'Response to Channel 4', 2 March 2010, http://www.eastlondonmosque.org.uk/news/231 (accessed 8 October 2010).

[394]'Islamophobia is a threat to democracy', *The Guardian*, 25 March 2010. It is noteworthy that, on 21 June 2010, the leaders of the East London Mosque, together with other community leaders, 'worked hard to discourage disaffected youngsters from getting involved in trouble in Whitechapel after the anti-fascist march in the East End': see http://www.eastlondonadvertiser.co.uk:80/news/community_leaders_worked_for_calm_after_whitechapel_demo_1_672445 (accessed 21 November 2010).

a great deal not only on the size and composition of the Muslim community in London but also on the structure of religious life in British society and the relationship between the state and religion. It was in this nexus that the East London Mosque became a site for cultural negotiation and identity formation for local Muslims. By looking at this particular process of mosque-making, we gain a clearer sense of how particular Muslim spaces (in this case mosques) arose out of negotiations between local and global concerns, competing and conflicting interests, dominant and subaltern loyalties. Indeed, what the unfolding history of the East London Mosque symbolizes, and the Minutes of its Trustees' meetings reveal, is the complex growth of the Muslim presence in Britain as it has become steadily and ineffably woven into the fabric of both local and national British society.