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# Reflections on the Post-Partition Period: Life Narratives of Kashmiri Muslims in Contemporary Kashmir

Hafsa Kanjwal

This article examines the political subjectivities of the first generation of post-Partition Kashmiri Muslims and presents their life narratives, both written and oral, as an important vantage point from which to understand shifts in Kashmiri Muslim society in the early post-Partition period. It also explores how these narratives are mediated by the respondent's present, a period after the militancy of the late eighties and nineties, but one in which there remains a mass uprising against Indian rule. This generation was important for a number of reasons. One, they witnessed the erosion of Kashmir's autonomy and the promises of a plebiscite, as well as intense political repression. Two, they were enlisted in the project of state reform and nation building, and thus, effectively participated in those same processes of erosion. As a result, I argue that the conditions

and uncertainty surrounding the Kashmir 'dispute' led to a political subjectivity that sought coherence amidst contradiction and incommensurate political and ideological commitments. In particular, this coherence was reflected in the desire to assert and foreground a Kashmiri Muslim identity, one that existed alongside other class, regional and gendered identities, but was nonetheless sharpened as a political community. I conclude with a reflection on the importance of this generation to understanding the making of political subjectivities in Kashmir today.

**Keywords:** Kashmir, Muslim, Partition, life narratives, militancy, oral history.

## Introduction

A vast majority of Kashmiri Muslims who went to India for study, had a sort of hatred for India, but the air was so oppressive that they couldn't express it. The Kashmiri educated middle class always lived in such a dichotomy. When a Kashmiri Muslim was engaged in government service, he was an Indian. But at home, he was a Pakistani. He cried if Pakistan lost a cricket match, but then when it was time to go to office he changed from his pheran<sup>1</sup> to Western clothes, took dictation from his bosses, and somehow became instrumental in suppressing his own people (Dr. Mir Nazir Ahmed, former Medical Superintendent).

The above quote illustrates the complex entanglements of political ideology, religious identity, and class aspirations that defined Kashmiri Muslims in the early post-Partition period.<sup>2</sup> After the monumental Partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, Kashmiri Muslims found themselves divided between the new nation-states of India and Pakistan (Snedden 2012).<sup>3</sup> As a separate political community that had its own political visions and direction in the late colonial period, they did not seamlessly fit into the political trajectories of either.<sup>4</sup> Those in the Indian-held state of Jammu and Kashmir had to deal with multiple contradictions and dilemmas. One, as contestations over the future of Kashmir still remained unresolved, they witnessed the erosion of Kashmir's autonomy and the promises of a United Nations-mandated plebiscite, as well as intense political repression. As the Indian government sought to stamp out the "provisionality of Kashmir's accession to India", declaring Kashmir to be an integral part of India, political repression was meted out by both the central government, as well as the local Kashmiri state government (Duschinski, et al., 2018: 15-18).<sup>5</sup> The latter operated under a veneer of democracy, stifling all dissent, whereby the demand for a plebiscite by local Kashmiris was seen as an 'antinational position', and oppositional perspectives were censored or jailed. Paradoxically, Kashmiri Muslims had to negotiate their own aspirations for modernity and progress after decades of poverty and misrule under their princely rulers, the Dogras. In the context of state-led socio-economic and educational reform, and patronage that sought to empower the local population, Kashmiris became dependent on the state, "torn between [their] subordination to the state and [their] aspirations for national liberation" (Duschinski, et al 2018: 14-15). By actively taking part in the state apparatus, they contributed to the processes of erosion of the demand for a plebiscite. Furthermore, they also had to situate their

political aspirations vis-a-vis the two new nation-states of India and Pakistan, both of which laid claims to the entire state, and whose borders were heavily militarized. As this article will illustrate, this paradoxical context and these multiple, sometimes conflicting, aspirations (for example, a desire for a political resolution for Kashmir through the plebiscite as well as a desire for jobs and employment) were to leave an impact on the political subjectivities of this post-Partition generation. This article seeks to understand what that impact was, and in doing so, shed light on the ways in which conflict, war, or occupation shape the subjectivities of those who live under its logic of rule and governance. How did Kashmiri Muslims reconcile their personal aspirations with the political context prevalent in the state? How did they justify their participation in the very state that sought to undermine their political rights and demands? How did they traverse the political possibilities made available to them? And finally, which of these dilemmas or tensions endure today?

This article examines the political subjectivities of the first generation of post-Partition Kashmiri Muslims and presents their life narratives, both written and oral, as an important vantage point from which to understand shifts in Kashmiri Muslim society in a time of significant change.<sup>6</sup> It primarily engages with those Kashmiri Muslims who were either part of the Kashmiri bureaucratic state or the primary beneficiaries of state-led policies of socio-economic and educational reform, which included land reform and free education.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the early post-Partition period in Kashmir saw the creation of an upwardly mobile, educated Muslim middle-class that was complicit in the everyday work of the state and bureaucracy. In addition, it also explores how these narratives are mediated by the respondent's present, a period after the armed resistance of the late eighties and nineties, but one in which there remains a mass uprising against Indian rule.<sup>8</sup> As Kashmiri Muslims attempted to navigate the complex political and social terrain of Kashmir's disputed status in the early post-Partition period, I argue that their life narratives reflect an attempt to seek coherence amidst contradiction and incommensurate political and ideological commitments. In particular, the search for coherence in these life narratives was reflected in a desire to assert and foreground a Kashmiri Muslim identity, one that existed alongside other class, regional, and gendered identities, but was nonetheless sharpened as a political community.

Recent scholarship on Kashmir has engaged with the concept of political subjectivities in important ways, drawing attention to the contingent nature of the formation of political subjectivities as a result of broader social

and economic dynamics. Most have primarily focused on the pre-Partition period, as well as the period after the armed resistance of the late eighties. Chitrelekha Zutshi explores how Kashmiri-ness in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries was related to both regional and religious forms of belonging, and how both were linked to the broader economic and political dynamics of their time (Zutshi 2004). Mridu Rai has examined how Islam played an important role under the Dogras, arguing that the protest by Kashmiri Muslims adopted a religious idiom because the Dogra state itself was religiously politicized along Hindu lines (Rai 2004). Other scholars have examined particular groups, including the political subjectivities of members of the Kashmiri left in the period before and after Partition (Whitehead 2010) as well as the subjectivities of Kashmir's minority communities, including the Kashmiri Pandits as well as various communities living in the different regions in the princely Jammu and Kashmir state (Duschinski 2018; Bhatia 2018; Sokefeld 2018; Robinson 2013; Snedden 2011; Bhan 2013). These studies have examined the interplay between the ideologies and practices of the state and the making of political subjectivities amongst these diverse communities. For example, Mona Bhan has examined, in the context of Ladakh, and specifically Kargil, how Indian state and military investments in humanitarianism and welfare were instruments to enforce modes of consent and subjectification (Bhan 2013). In turn, the political subjectivities that were produced were highly aligned with the imperatives of defense and security (ibid). Cabeiri Robinson has examined the shifting subjectivities and frames of reference of Kashmiri refugees in Azad Kashmir after Partition and after the militancy. The refugee identity was transformed as displaced Kashmiris sought to negotiate their multiple relationships with social and political sites of power to include the international community (Robinson 2013). Building off these studies, this article focuses primarily on the immediate post-Partition period, and how it helps us understand the making of Kashmiri Muslim political subjectivities. By focusing on the educated bureaucratic class, it also helps us situate the dynamics that went into the processes of state-formation and nation-building. Furthermore, it is important to note that the desire to seek coherence through religious identity continues in the post-Partition period, because the Indian state was still perceived as the religious 'other.'

## Methods

This article relies on a mix of oral interviews, autobiographies, and memoirs. I conducted nearly 25 semi-structured interviews in Srinagar, the capital of Indian-held Kashmir, between September 2013 and August 2014. This pool is

a generational sample; many of the individuals who can speak directly to the post-Partition period have passed away and some were not available to be interviewed due to illness or old age. My positionality as a Kashmiri, from a Muslim family that had been involved in the state bureaucracy at the time, was critical in opening doors, especially in speaking with former bureaucrats. Thus, after meeting a few individuals that were known to my family, I was directed to the others, which resulted in snowball sampling. Most of my respondents identified as Kashmiri Muslims who had been involved with state institutions, either as government officials, doctors, teachers, students, or engineers. This is important context for this article, given my interest in understanding the nature of complicity with state institutions at this time. The ages of the generation that was in the actual bureaucracy in the immediate post-Partition period ranged in their eighties and nineties at the time of the interview. Those who were students at that time were in their seventies. A majority were male, while three were female. This gender disparity is reflective of the proportion of men to women in the upper and lower echelons of the government bureaucracy in the immediate post-Partition period. A number of the women who were involved in state bureaucracy have already passed away; my interviews were with those who either taught or studied in the schools and colleges at the time.

Most of my respondents were born and lived in Srinagar, often from the Old City (known colloquially as 'downtown') and moved to neighborhoods constructed for government employees in the fifties and the sixties. This results in an 'urban-bias, in this sample. Aside from those who came from families that were involved with local shrines, most of the families were in business, and in particular, shawls, handicrafts, and other small-scale cottage industries. A handful came from the few Muslim families that served in the government under the Dogras. They were primarily educated in government-run schools or in schools run by the *anjuman* (association) Nusrat ul Islam, including the prominent Islamia High School, which schooled many members of the bureaucratic class. Two males had left Kashmir in the first two decades after Partition, and settled in Pakistan, returning to Kashmir in recent years either to visit family or for political reasons. One female had left Kashmir in the seventies and was now settled in the United States. One of my respondents was a Kashmiri Pandit, a retired English professor from the Women's College in Srinagar who was one of the few Pandits to remain in Kashmir during the militancy and is included to provide perspective on how inter-religious relations transformed. All of my respondents benefited in some way from state

policies, either by obtaining admission in educational institutions or gaining employment in the state's bureaucracy, which helped solidify their family's financial status and upward mobility. A few were educated in Lahore before Partition, while some were trained in Aligarh, Amritsar, or Lucknow after Partition. Some were sent by the Jammu and Kashmir government for additional training to the United States or the United Kingdom. Others remained in Srinagar for all of their higher education. Most continue to live in Srinagar, although they may travel to visit family in Delhi and other cities in India, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

During the course of the interviews, I asked a number of questions regarding their families, childhood, schooling days, and work life. Some of my respondents addressed these questions directly, while many focused on pivotal events in their life, specifically around key moments in Kashmiri history, and provided additional details upon my prompting. At many times, I had to re-direct the conversation from their interpretation of Kashmiri history—and the various betrayals of the Kashmiri leadership—towards their own life and experience. The desire to present a collective and corrective history (primarily in contrast to state or Indian and Pakistani nationalist narratives) was one that many of my respondents shared. The interviews were conducted in a mix of English, Kashmiri, and Urdu. I met with some individuals for six meetings, and others for one. With a few, crucial details regarding their role in the bureaucracy or any tensions they faced as Kashmiri Muslims emerged after multiple meetings, once 'trust' was developed between me and the respondent.

The importance of these oral narratives in attempting to understand shifts in Kashmir's post-Partition period cannot be understated. It is through these oral narratives that we see a desire to construct a uniquely Kashmiri subjectivity, one that seems to get subsumed by state-centric narratives of this period that peddle Indian or Pakistani nationalist lines. Not only do these oral narratives provide an alternative history to state narratives, they also depict the desire that individuals and communities have to project a sense of 'wholeness', despite shifts and contradictions, which Katherine Ewing has described as a "universal semiotic process by which people manage inconsistencies" (Ewing 1990: 253). Ewing argues that each self-concept is "experienced as whole and continuous, with its own history and memories that emerge in a specific context, to be replaced by another self-representation when the context changes" (ibid). In the context of Kashmir, these narratives show how the respondents are constructing 'new selves', in response

to 'internal and external stimuli'. Their context limits the available set of self-representations that emerge, and this is also crucial to understanding the range of political aspirations that emerge. For example, a number of my respondents mentioned how they supported the National Conference, a party that later supported the accession to India in the pre-Partition period, because of its seemingly secular and progressive social and economic policies. In the post-Partition period, however, these same individuals grew disillusioned with the National Conference, and as 'secularism' became associated with suppressive state ideology, sought recourse to movements that appeared to be more religiously inflected.

In addition to these oral interviews, this article also engages with autobiographies and memoirs. The most prominent autobiography is of the first prime minister of the state, Sheikh Abdullah, entitled *Aatish-i-Chinar*, which was published in 1982, before the militancy. The rest were published after, including accounts written by former Chief Ministers Syed Mir Qasim and Farooq Abdullah, political leaders of the Plebiscite Conference such as Mirza Afzal Beg and Munshi Ghulam Ishaq, religious leaders such as Qari Saifuddin of the *Jamaat-i-Islam* and educationists, including Agha Ashraf Ali. While I reference a number of these writings, I rely primarily on an autobiography by a premier female educationist and the former principal of the Women's College: Shamla Mufti. This is primarily because Mufti's autobiography goes beyond the realm of political intrigues in Kashmir and speaks directly to issues of social and cultural transformation within families, homes, schools, colleges, and workspaces. Her account, therefore, gives us a unique perspective that is not found in the narratives of the Kashmiri male political and religious leadership. Mufti was one of the first Kashmiri Muslim women to receive her master's degree, in Aligarh. Her autobiography was originally written in Kashmiri and was then translated into Urdu in 1998 under the title *Chilman se Chaman* (translated as *From Darkness to Light*). Writing in the nineties, Shamla provides an overview of her family background, education, marriage and home life, experiences working in the schools and colleges, as well as travels outside of Kashmir.

Given that how people remember and what they remember is historically specific and contextual to the time of writing and contexts of telling, "remembering has a politics" (Smith and Watson 2010: 22-25). Since all of the oral interviews were conducted after 2008, the present iteration of the conflict, in which hundreds of Kashmiri youth have been killed in the latest phase of protests against the Indian state, has permeated these life



narratives. The period of the armed resistance in the late eighties and nineties permeates in the autobiographies and memoirs. This context, which resulted in accelerated violence and militarization, has significantly shaped the ways in which the early post-Partition period is remembered. Thus, the 'history' of this period and the 'memory' of this period overlap and diverge in particular ways.

In situating these narratives, I use the framework of "collective remembering", which allows me to understand how individual recollection is constantly mediated by larger cultural politics (Smith and Watson 2010: 25). The collective remembering of pertinent historical events or themes dominates the life narratives of my respondents, which revolve around particular moments of crisis, including Partition and the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah as well as particular themes of Muslim empowerment and inter-religious relations.<sup>9</sup> As we will see, most of my respondents spoke of the past not as individuals, but in reference to a broader Kashmiri Muslim collective history. The Kashmiri Muslim 'subject', while marked by important fractures, which I note below, was thus constituted through reference to these historical accounts. What is important to note is that this identity emerged out of a sense of a shared political context, as the actual religious practices of my respondents varied. In addition, given that most of these life narratives represented a particular constituency of educated Kashmiri Muslims, I do not situate them as speaking for or on behalf of all Kashmiri Muslims at this time. However, these narratives are important as they reflect on broader processes of state formation and nation building, complicity, and collaboration, in which the construction of a Kashmiri Muslim identity was deeply implicated. What is interesting, then, is to understand why or how these narratives seek to speak in relation to a broader identity, not that they actually do.

I identify a number of themes that re-emerged in these life narratives, both oral and written. The four predominant themes were: situating themselves in a particular Islamic lineage and geography, and highlighting the stark condition of Kashmiri Muslims under the Dogras; the ideological divergences amongst Kashmiri Muslims and the complexity of Partition; the contingent nature of people's decisions and attitudes towards Pakistan in the aftermath of accession and Sheikh Abdullah's arrest; and finally, relations with Kashmiri Pandits. Ultimately, these themes bring our attention to how post-Partition political and social developments consolidated these respondents sense of a 'Kashmiri Muslim identity'.

## Situating the Muslim Middle Class and Dogra Rule

Most of the life narratives began with the narrator's family background, or *khandan*, in an attempt to situate their ancestry in a particular Islamic lineage that traced its origins to Central Asia. Particular reference was made to whether one's family was *sayyid*, *peer*, or Kashmiri Hindus who had converted to Islam. *Sayyids* were descendants of the first Muslim families in Kashmir, who traced their lineage to the Prophet Muhammad. A group of *sayyid* missionaries arrived in Kashmir in the fourteenth century with Shah-i-Hamdan, a Persian Sufi and religious scholar who was seen as influential in spreading Islam to Kashmir (Khan 2003: 139-167). *Peers* were those families who had ties to prominent Sufi orders, and were well-versed in Persian, including poetry, and the religious sciences. Many were caretakers of shrines. Many of the first educated Muslims in Kashmir came from these two types of families, which were broadly considered as *khandani*, or of 'good' and noble family name. To be of *khandani* background was not the same as being wealthy, as some *khandani* families were not well off. Rather, it was a conceptualization of social status that depended more on family name and heritage. At times, those families that were highly educated, but were not *sayyid* or *peers*, were also considered *khandani*. A majority of Kashmiri Muslims were Hindu converts, many of them lower caste Hindus that were attracted to the egalitarian mission of the Sufi orders (ibid). One of my respondents referred to them as "aborigines" of the land.

The desire to narrate a particular Islamic lineage permeated all life narratives, including those Kashmiri Muslims who self-identified as secular or not practicing, as well as those who were more religiously inclined. For example, Syed Mir Qasim, one of the primary left-leaning leaders of the National Conference and the former Chief Minister of the state (1971-1975), begins his autobiography by speaking of his ancestors who arrived in Kashmir from Iraq "four hundred years ago" (Qasim 1992: 1-5). Qasim's family is from the Village of Doru in South Kashmir, near Verinag. He describes how his father's uncle, who recorded the family's history in Persian and also wrote on the life of the Prophet Muhammad, tells him of his family heritage as a *sayyid*, from the line of Shah Mohammad Syedullah, who arrived in Kashmir in 1664 (ibid). In an interview, Ghulam Hassan Shah, a retired Indian Administrative Services officer, also began by describing his family's *sayyid* origins on both his maternal and paternal sides, showing me a *shehjar*, or family tree, that was hung on the wall of his living room.<sup>10</sup> "There was a lot of emphasis...most of the families would write 'Syed' as a prefix to their name,"

he explained, “they were considered noble, they didn’t fight with people, couldn’t harm anyone” (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 12 June 2014). Sheikh Abdullah also begins his autobiography by describing his family as having converted from Hinduism, ‘an aborigine’, but situates his birthplace, Soura, as having spiritual importance for Kashmiri Muslims because it was the home of a prominent saint (Abdullah 2013: 22-24).

Shamla Mufti’s autobiography provides a rich account of life under Dogra rule for Kashmiri Muslims. Not only does she highlight the importance of *khandan*, but she also marks a shared geopolitical space, reliant upon important landmarks and a sense of history. She begins her narrative by providing her family background, and in particular, situates herself as coming from a *peer* family. Shamla is born as the youngest of four in 1925, the beginning of the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh, the last Dogra ruler. Her family lives in a neighborhood called Chisty Koach, close to the banks of a branch of the Jhelum River in Srinagar. On both sides of her family, Shamla traces her *peer* lineage to religious scholars and teachers. While sharing a copy of her family tree in the text, she also adds that her father’s ancestor, Mullah Mohammad, was a close associate of a popular sixteenth century Kashmiri saint, Makhdoom Sahib, for whom a shrine is named in Srinagar. Her mother’s family is affiliated with the prominent Chisty Sufi order. On her maternal side, her ancestor, Sheikh Muhammad Ali Chisty, obtained his training from the order and would do *dhikr* in a loud voice, so that his friends and loved ones were also made aware of the practices of the order. Sheikh Chisty was also responsible for showing the hair of the prophet on important religious occasions at the Hazratbal Shrine. Shamla’s father is a teacher in an Islamic school and her mother, although she was never formally schooled, read the Quran, which she taught to her children.

Throughout her narrative, when recalling her memories of Srinagar city, Shamla shares the names of important shrines and religious spaces, and their significance for Kashmiri Muslims. For example, she mentions the bazaar named after Saeed Ali Akbar Sahib, another Sufi saint whose grave is in that area. When speaking of her in-law’s home, she provides details of the nearby Jamia Masjid, which serves as an important gathering place for followers of the Mirwaiz, a title given to the preacher of the mosque and spiritual leader for Kashmiri Muslims. Her in-laws are involved in the work of ‘*fatwagiri*’ or giving religious opinions.

Most of the life narratives stress an Islamic genealogy and geography, an ‘origin narrative’ that I argue contributes to a particular ‘Muslim’ history of Kashmir, one that gets elided in official narratives—both scholarly and state-propagated—that either focus on the Hindu history of Kashmir or its syncretic history, based on the notion of Kashmiriyat.<sup>11</sup> The desire to assert this history could be interpreted in two different ways. One, it is possible that this is a reflection of the exclusivist meanings that are now being given to Kashmiri identity; in other words, that this identity is synonymous with a sense of ‘Muslim-ness’. For example, Chitrelekha Zutshi sees this development as a direct challenge to Kashmiriyat, a narrative that Kashmiri nationalists constructed in the mid-twentieth century to “draw Kashmir into the ambit of a secular India, while still maintaining its distance from it” (Zutshi 2018: 7). She argues that Kashmiriyat is under fierce attack “in the context of the contemporary conflict, especially between India and Kashmir, as Kashmiris seek to distance themselves from India and claim a greater identification of Kashmir with the Islamic world, defined increasingly in West Asian rather than South Asian terms” (ibid). Zutshi’s analysis fails to address why Kashmir needs to be reclaimed exclusively on South Asian terms given its history at the confluence of multiple regions, including Central Asia. It also views an affiliation with the Islamic world as a problem in and of itself, without explaining what that entails and why. Furthermore, it situates Kashmiriyat as a natural, objective narrative for the history of Kashmir, without acknowledging the way that Kashmiriyat was in and of itself a political construction in its time.

While an interpretation of an exclusivist Islamic identity is possible, it is not reflected by the some respondents’ discussion of their relationships with Pandits, which I go into below. Rather, I suggest that the desire on the part of these life narratives to focus on a ‘Muslim’ history of Kashmir is to challenge the state-sponsored dominant narratives of a shared, syncretic history that either erased or undermined Kashmir’s ‘Muslim’ identity in attempts to seek connection with India. The focus of these life narratives on that ‘Muslim’ identity is to contest and reclaim that history. In addition, an attempt to include histories of learning, writing, language (Persian), and cultural interchange, especially between Central Asia, the Arab world, and Kashmir, is also revealing. Instead of seeing this solely in an Islamic exclusivist paradigm, I suggest that this discussion of origins can be seen as a desire to expand the geographical contours of Kashmir from the limitations

of modern statehood, and the hardening of boundaries, which have situated Kashmir staunchly in the realm of 'South Asia' (which Zutshi seems to have no issues with). For my respondents, Kashmir was a civilizational hub, of language, literature, and religious exchange; a discussion of these older modes of interchange and influence also underscores then how those connections were dismantled and disrupted with the arrival of the Dogra regime, and most recently, the Indian state.

While most of the life narratives began with the Dogra period, a few went as far back as the Mughal period in Kashmir, describing it as starting Kashmir's 'foreign rule'. Their narrative followed a historical account of the Mughals, and then recalled the 'repressive Afghan and Sikh rules'. The discussion of Dogra rule began with the 'sale' of Kashmir to the Dogra ruler through the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846. It continued with a few key moments, including the 'Shawlbaaf Protest', during which 28 shawl weavers were killed at the hands of the Dogra army for protesting against unjust taxation in 1865; the submission of a memorandum in 1924 by a number of Kashmiri Muslim elites to British Viceroy Lord Reading, highlighting the stark conditions of the Muslims; and finally, the events around 1931, what is known as the beginning of the Kashmiri freedom struggle against Dogra rule. In one such example, Shamla describes how the children would be able to see Haji Rather's bridge from their home, and hear of the 'Shawlbaaf Protest' from their elders, marking an important incident in the history of Dogra oppression against Kashmiri Muslims. According to her elders, a Kashmiri Pandit ran the shawl factory, taking a tax of five rupees of the eight a shawl weaver would earn. When the weavers attempted to meet with the government to speak of this injustice, the officials denied them the meeting. They started a procession, and the Dogra army attempted to stop it. On the bridge, the army fired, and a number of them were thrown into the Jhelum River and drowned. Shamla describes this incident as the first in a long line of revolts against injustice, which became the shape of a full-fledged movement in 1931 (Mufti 1994: 24). Here, popular history is narrated to provide a sense of a shared experience of repression under the Dogras, and, reflecting on the contemporary moment, a longer history of revolts against injustice that goes into Kashmir's pre-Partition period.

Whether a Kashmiri Muslim's family background was *khandani* or not, a vast majority of the life narratives referred to the repressive rule of the Dogras for all Muslims. They spoke of the Muslim peasants' economic exploitation under the feudal system and a lack of education. The educated class complained of discrimination when seeking

employment (Abdullah 2013). Many mentioned that their family members went outside Kashmir to places like Lahore in Punjab for better educational and economic prospects. And while Kashmiri Pandits also complained of being discriminated against under the Dogras—as evidenced by the state-subject movement of the 1920's—in these life narratives, Dogra rule was not simply oppressive towards Kashmiris, but in particular, towards Kashmiri Muslims. I suggest that this is because in the 1930s and 1940s, when most of the respondents were still coming of age, Pandits were much more represented in the state's administration as well as in schools and colleges. In contrast, the mostly Muslim peasantry was suffering under heavy taxation. As a result, Dogra oppression was seen as exclusively being meted out to Kashmiri Muslims, which allowed for a sense of a shared history of struggle. As Mridu Rai has stated, it was because of the "lack of recourse available to Kashmiri Muslims from a Hindu king that at the moment of their most dire need they turned to the divine or spiritual realms rather than to the state" (Rai 2004: 9). She argues that the invocation of religion, especially in terms of the forms of resistance against Dogra rule, by Kashmiri Muslims in the period between 1846 and 1947 suggests a "positive cultural and religious affiliation, quite as much as attempts flowing from material concerns to rectify a sense of religiously based discrimination perpetrated by a Hindu state" (ibid). Given that the Dogras politicized religious identities in their processes of state-making, as Rai has shown in her work, there is, therefore, a longer history of asserting religious identities for counter-hegemonic aims. What is an interesting shift in the context of the post-Partition period, however, is that the state is ostensibly secular, and does not rely on religion to construct its legitimacy, as it did under the Dogras. I suggest that the desire to assert a Muslim identity in the post-Partition period had less to do with the secular nature of the Kashmiri state government, and more to do with its practices of state-formation, which enabled a number of contradictory subjectivities that had to be reconciled.

The struggle against Dogra rule was a common theme in all of the narratives; some of the individuals who had reached early adulthood during that period also wrote or spoke of their own involvement in the struggle against the Maharaja, while others recalled what they perceived as 'Muslim backwardness' in that period. Syed Mir Qasim declared that he was "born at a time when the mountains of Kashmir echoed with the sighs and wails of the helpless subjects of the Maharaja Hari Singh's repressive rule... every shanty had a tale of hunger and tyranny" (Qasim 1992: v). By situating himself in the Kashmiri freedom struggle, Qasim attempted to provide legitimacy to his



narrative. He continued that he was only 14 years old when he “raised the banner of revolt against a rich landlord who had exiled his poor tenant from his house. [He] collected a big crowd and made his first public speech... [the] incident gave [him] confidence in [his] own oratory and catapulted [him] into politics with a missionary zeal” (ibid).

By both situating themselves within a broader Islamic lineage and spiritual geography in Kashmir, and also foregrounding the condition of Kashmiri Muslims in the pre-1947 period, the life narratives I collected shared some striking similarities in how they began, and how they provided context for an individual’s life. They situated themselves firmly within a larger moral and cultural universe of Islam, and recalled their experiences by speaking to a shared sense of a Kashmiri Muslim community, one that had its own ‘history’, with key dates, places and events that had shaped its trajectory in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. They also explicitly rejected a shared Kashmiri Muslim and Pandit backwardness under the Dogras.

In the life narratives of the Kashmiri Muslims, the desire to assert a ‘Muslim’ identity and history was, perhaps, in response to the communalized political discourse throughout India. However, these individuals wanted to highlight their sense of ‘difference’, in opposition or outright rejection of the exigencies of an Indian national identity, not their ‘loyalty to the nation’. This shared sense of a particular history today, however, did not entail that the community was marked by a sense of coherence. Indeed, we will see how people recalled a number of ideological divergences that marked Kashmir’s transition from Dogra rule.

### **From Jinnah to Nehru: Ideological Divergence and the Complexity of Partition**

Scholarship surrounding Partition in Kashmir revolves around Sheikh Abdullah and his ostensibly secular nationalist political party, the National Conference, and their alliance with Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian National Congress.<sup>12</sup> While some scholars mention the role of the Muslim Conference, which was a pro-Pakistan party and more in line with the Muslim League, Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah and his followers were seen as a minority voice in the Valley whose Muslims evidently denounced the two-nation theory, and were behind Sheikh Abdullah. The disappearance of those who espoused alternative politics from the archives, and thus, from most scholarly work, is a defining trait of most scholarship, but is beyond the scope of this article. However, the story that emerges from the

life narratives speaks to a much more complicated series of loyalties and allegiances, a story that exists, as it were, in popular memory.

The National Conference emerged from the Muslim Conference in the late 1930’s, in an attempt by Sheikh Abdullah to secularize the future direction of the freedom struggle against Dogra rule. Thus, many members of the National Conference were initially the founders of the Muslim Conference, and still held many of the same ideas as before, but went along with the Sheikh for strategic purposes. After the creation of the National Conference, the Muslim Conference was not active for some years, but became active once again in the early 1940s, especially in Jammu, under the leadership of Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas, a Muslim leader from Jammu. The life narratives did not provide a definitive demographic of each groups’ supporters, but they do suggest that the Muslim Conference also had a presence in the Valley. It appeared that the Muslim Conference enjoyed a stronghold in the Old City of Srinagar from a more traditional elite class of Muslims or from rural Muslim landlords who were opposed to the National Conferences’ emphasis on land reform.<sup>13</sup> Many of these were *khandani* families, often with Sufi backgrounds. The National Conference, on the other hand, enjoyed ascendancy with the more left-leaning, newly educated classes, those who were not necessarily from *khandani* backgrounds. In Chilman se Chaman, Shamla described this as the *sher* (lion)—*bakra* (sheep) split (lions were supporters of Sheikh Abdullah and the National Conference, while the sheep were supporters of Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah and the Muslim Conference). She described her in-laws, with whom she lived for much of her early married life, as being supporters of the Muslim Conference, and narrated how the men and women would go to the Jamia Masjid every Friday to hear Mirwaiz’s sermon (Mufti 1994: 97). She recalled one particular incident when Muhammad Ali Jinnah of the Muslim League visited Kashmir in 1944. In front of nearly 100,000 people, he spoke at the Jamia Masjid, propagating the two-nation theory. Shamla remembered how she and the women of the house also attended the speech, and saw Fatima Jinnah, his sister, sitting in their midst.<sup>14</sup>

Qari Saifuddin, one of the founders of the Jamaat-i-Islam in Kashmir, considered himself a supporter of the National Conference until he attended Jinnah’s speech. In his autobiography, he stated that Jinnah’s historic address “changed the way of thinking of the educated class, with the two-nation theory being acceptable, but a large majority here were still holding the flag of the

National Conference” (Saifuddin 1980: 22). The reasons, he continued, were twofold: one, the National Conference “tarnished the reputation of the educated Muslims place to place by calling them ‘government agents’ or ‘beggars of government jobs’—unfortunately, educated Muslims were very rare and few in number” (ibid).

As Kashmiri Muslims increasingly studied outside Kashmir in the 1930s and 1940s, they came across a wide spectrum of political ideologies that were at play in British India. For those Kashmiri Muslims who founded and became active in the National Conference, the struggle against Dogra rule and left-leaning political trends in the subcontinent played an important role in shaping their politics. Dr. Mir Nazir Ahmed, who studied medicine in Lucknow in the 1950s, shared the story of his father, Mir Ghulam Rasool, who was one of two Muslims selected by the Maharaja to go to Harvard for engineering in the 1930s. He spoke to me of the other Kashmiri Muslims, mostly men, who went to Aligarh and Lahore for their studies: “The air was thick with Quit India,” he stated, “they got caught up in it”. When describing his father and his fathers’ colleagues’ initial support for the National Conference, he explained:

They developed a dichotomy in their thoughts... they would recite Alamma Iqbal and go into a trance with his poetry, at the same time, they were influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and Satyagraha. These were antagonistic views. Only few had a clear-cut idea of what they would want. My father was caught up in this middle...this is what happened to most Kashmiris who were educated (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 15 December 2013).

For Dr. Nazir, an attraction to Iqbal and Gandhi is seen today as an ‘antagonistic view’, given the diverging trajectories of both of their ideologies over time. Whether it was seen as antagonistic for people at the time is less clear. Even Sheikh Abdullah, who aligned his politics with the Indian National Congress affirmed his appreciation for Iqbal, who is usually credited with providing the ideological backdrop to the idea of Pakistan. The Sheikh even named a building in the University of Kashmir after him. For the Sheikh, being committed to Islam did not mean that one could not be a secular nationalist. In fact, he declared that his nationalist convictions came from the Quran. This perspective, of course, is not so different from those Muslim leaders in India who aligned themselves with the Indian National Congress, such as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Maulana Husssain Ahmed Madani. As some respondents clarified, a number of Kashmiri Muslims were attracted to the progressive aims of the Indian National Congress, as well as its purported secularism, as they knew

they needed the help and support of Kashmiri Pandits in their fight against the Dogras. Crucially, they also believed, or were led to believe, that they would be able to enjoy autonomy in an independent India. In their eyes, the feudal interests that were backing the Muslim League would not allow Kashmiris to enact land reforms and other progressive policies in the state.<sup>15</sup> Aside from these ideological concerns, I also gathered from these narratives that the National Conference was seen as the more modern party; at a time when Kashmir’s Muslims were desperate to catch up with the rest of the world, the National Conference was ideally situated to bring Muslims out of their purported backwardness. As Qari Saifuddin noted in his autobiography, “in those days it was very rare to see the educated youngsters who had a beard, a majority, rather a big majority of educated people were ashamed to have a beard. They thought it was a sign of backwardness and ignorance. They felt proud to shave it off (Saifuddin 1980: 31). The beard, in this case, symbolized ‘tradition’, a physical marker that must be removed in order to cultivate a particular modern sensibility.

Most of the life narratives acknowledged Sheikh Abdullah’s popularity at the time of Partition, especially given the National Conferences’ anti-monarchical campaign. Yet, some of my respondents clarified that support for Sheikh Abdullah did not necessarily entail support for the Indian National Congress, or India. Indeed, a few shared with me how a number of National Conference leaders were firmly against the accession. One was Anwar Ashai, a retired engineer and former student activist. He was part of one of the first classes to study engineering at the National Institute of Technology. Anwar was also the son of Ghulam Ahmed Ashai, an educator, who was seen as being a close associate of the Sheikh and was instrumental in the creation of the University of Kashmir, of which he served as the registrar during the Sheikh’s government (1947-1953). Anwar’s father was one of the few Muslims who served in the Maharaja’s administration, but was also involved in the Muslim Conference, and later, in the National Conference. Although his government employment did not allow him to fully take part in the National Conference, as a senior Muslim official, he would give its members advice and help them with their statements. However, Anwar recalled that his father was not attracted to the socialist leanings of the National Conference, but rather its emphasis on empowering Kashmiri Muslims, especially through education. Ghulam Ahmed Ashai came from a prominent *khandani* family, which had ties to the Naqshband Sufi order. He stood first in his Master’s in Persian at Aligarh. Anwar told me how his father had travelled to various cities in India before Partition. According to Anwar, his father “became

aware of the insecurity of Muslims in India, he had seen it firsthand, he knew it would not be good for Kashmir” (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 21 February, 2014). He was skeptical of the sincerity of the Indian nationalist leadership towards Kashmir, and attempted to persuade Sheikh Abdullah against aligning the National Conference with them, but as Anwar recalled, the Sheikh was too “lured by power” (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 21 February, 2014). Ghulam Ahmad Ashai was also not drawn to Pakistan for reasons that seem less clear; Anwar believed that his father would have preferred an independent Kashmir.

The confusion that Kashmiri Muslims faced around the time of Partition, and their varying attraction to and skepticism of the two main parties, was a recurring theme in most of the life narratives. It was in the process of making sense of the varying ideologies at the time, that a Kashmiri Muslim political subject was being shaped, one that was responding to multiple aspirations. What we can make from this ‘confusion’ however is that support for either party was based on a series of local concerns, whether it be the consolidation of class interests, the desire for political and economic empowerment, or the desire to end monarchical rule. It was not only linked to the divisions between the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress in the subcontinent, although it was, at various points, informed by it. Nonetheless, when the time for Partition came, it was the impending tribal raid from Pakistan that drew a number of Kashmiri Muslims into the fold of the National Conference and its defense against the raid. They felt that they had no choice; they had heard reports of the brutality and were prepared to defend Kashmir against aggression. This did not mean, however, that they sided with India, as we will see. Those Muslims who were staunchly pro-Pakistan, or aligned with the Muslim Conference voluntarily went across the border to Pakistan, or were forcibly sent there by the Sheikh’s government.<sup>16</sup>

However, as we will see below, my respondents stated that in the post-Partition period, the brutality of Sheikh Abdullah’s government towards its dissenters, in addition to India’s increasing interference in Kashmir’s affairs (outside of the involvement in defense, foreign policy, and communications as marked by the Treaty of Accession) and Hindu nationalist politics in Jammu and elsewhere, led many Kashmiri Muslims, even those that were previously open to the limited accession, to desire an alternative political arrangement.<sup>17</sup> Yet, as I detail, fear and the contingent nature of this period made it difficult for many of them to act.

## Pakistan, the Aftermath of Accession, and Contingencies After the Sheikh’s Arrest

When trying to get a sense of the ideological shifts that occurred after partition, I was struck by the ways in which some of my respondents spoke of their perspectives after partition, which to me, appeared to be in conflict with their public personas as members of the seemingly pro-Indian bureaucratic class. Although a number of the life narratives referred to the ‘confusion’ faced by Kashmiri Muslims before the accession and the multiple influences that were at play in shaping their ideology, a vast majority of them described how a majority of Kashmiri Muslims, including those who considered themselves to be more secular, were pro-Pakistan in the aftermath of the accession, and especially after the Sheikh’s arrest in 1953.<sup>18</sup> What did it mean to be pro-Pakistan in this time, especially when Pakistan was the only other political option made available under the conditions of the United Nations mandated plebiscite? To be sure, recollecting this ‘memory’ could be influenced by the contemporary moment, which is marked by increased anti-India sentiments in the Valley. My respondents might not have felt comfortable divulging if they were, indeed, in support of India in the past. Incidentally, however, this perspective was shared by Karan Singh, the son of Maharaja Hari Singh and Governor of Kashmir, with Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in the 1950s. In a collection of his letters to Nehru, Karan Singh repeatedly expressed his misgivings surrounding the loyalties of Kashmiri Muslim bureaucrats, calling upon Nehru to increase central representation in Kashmir’s bureaucracy (Alam 2006: 124-125, 141). Nonetheless, many Kashmiri Muslims went on to take various postings in the Bakshi administration after Sheikh Abdullah’s arrest. This may seem bewildering at first, given Bakshi’s strong pro-Indian stance, but must be understood in the context of post-Partition developments in Kashmir.

At the time of the tribal raid, Sheikh Abdullah wrote in his autobiography that the perspective of Pakistan had been tarnished amongst Kashmiri Muslims (Abdullah 2013: 363). Yet, nearly all of my respondents mentioned that most of the Muslims in Kashmir, aside from some members of the senior National Conference leadership, were pro-Pakistan. Being pro-Pakistan in this time ranged widely: some believed that Muslims would be safe in Pakistan and could ‘progress’, while others were dismayed by Hindu right wing politics in India, which had reached their borders in the form of the Praja Parishad in Jammu. Some expressed nostalgia for the social and economic connections between Kashmir and cities in the Pakistan part of Punjab, while others, including those involved in

the Jamaat-i-Islam, expressed the desire for a moral state that would be rooted in Islam. The most common factor, however, was that they became disillusioned by increasing Indian interference in Kashmir, including the Indian hand in Sheikh Abdullah's arrest, which suggests the level to which this stance was intended as a potent rejection of India. As many respondents mentioned, the events of August 1953 solidified anti-Indian sentiment amongst many Kashmiri Muslims. Even Syed Mir Qasim, former Chief Minister, in his autobiography, declared "the faith of people in Kashmir in democracy and in rule of constitution had shaken...when Sheikh was disposed" (Qasim 1992: vii). Agha Ashraf, a prominent educator, added that with the arrest of the Sheikh, "the whole [of] Kashmir had erupted, there were demonstrations from morning until evening in every part of Kashmir, and people in herds joined these processions. This was a type of referendum" (Ali 2010). It is interesting that Agha Ashraf is not clear what this 'referendum' was for. It could have been in favor of Pakistan given the options for a plebiscite at the time would have only included India and Pakistan, but it is also possible that it was simply a referendum against India, suggesting that people's political desires might not have fit squarely into pro-India or pro-Pakistan stances. As Agha Ashraf wrote in the contemporary period where notions of an 'independent Kashmir' are more popular, one wonders if the unclear reference to a referendum would have entailed an expression of a pro-Kashmir sentiment, one that was tied, in this time, to the identity of Sheikh Abdullah. Nonetheless, being pro-Pakistan, albeit for varying reasons, was an example of how the Kashmiri Muslim identity evolved in the post-Partition period.

Khalil Fazili, who was one of the Kashmiris that went to Pakistan in October 1948, met me in Srinagar, where he was visiting his family and friends. Khalil was working with the Dogras before Partition, but had a number of issues with his employer. In his words:

At the time, most people were with Pakistan, they felt that Muslims would be safe there. There was no thinking of an Islamic state... People who went to Pakistan were starting to feel insecure about their positions in Kashmir. They saw that the Pandits had all the jobs, Muslims were discriminated against. So they moved. They had the idea that they would do well professionally, for their families, their futures... and there were so many historical connections between Lahore and Kashmir. People had businesses there, it made more sense for people to go there (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 1 June 2014).

Khalil mentioned that his reason for going to Pakistan was also because of discrimination in Kashmir; it was not for any religious reason as he was more "secular minded". Khalil's desire to assert himself as a secular Muslim, here, is important, as is his mention of an 'Islamic state'. He provided a list of reasons for why Kashmiris were attracted to Pakistan; none of them were drawn from any sort of 'religious ideology'. He repeated this point a number of times, perhaps to contest Indian and Pakistani nationalist tropes that foreground religious ideology as being a determinant of people's choices at the time. Furthermore, in today's global context that has increasingly been defined by the War on Terror, many Kashmiri Muslims did not feel comfortable foregrounding any desire for an 'Islamic state' at that time. For them, Pakistan represented a state where 'Muslims would be safe', rather than one defined by a particular religious ideology. This question has undoubtedly been debated in the historiography of the Pakistan state.<sup>19</sup> Whatever the shift in the ideology of the Pakistan state may be today, Khalil reiterates that his idea of Pakistan then, did not entail what Pakistan is now (a state that is increasingly defined by its religious ideology): "no one had imagined Partition and what would happen. They had no idea about Muslim state or Islamic state... they didn't know what that would bring them" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 1 June 2014).

Ghulam Hassan Shah also mentioned to me that:

Kashmiri Muslims in the bureaucracy wanted to go to Pakistan.... They thought that it was better for Kashmir to go to Pakistan because it was a Muslim country, we would be safe there, and because Indian Hindus had started showing their teeth one way or another (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 12 June 2014).

While Shah did not clarify what he meant by "showing their teeth," I took it to mean that despite 'Indian Hindu' deference to secularism, many Kashmiri Muslims perceived that they were, in fact, communal. This perception animated a number of my conversations, as many made reference to the contemporary state of communal tensions in India exacerbated by the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party and right-wing politics. The discussion of contemporary politics in Pakistan was much more unsettled. A number of my respondents became defensive, arguing that had Kashmir gone to Pakistan at the time, the country would not be in 'the state it is today'. They argued that Pakistan, 'despite its problems', was the only country that raised the issue of Kashmir internationally. Others suggested their indignation at the contemporary political malaise in both India and Pakistan, arguing that neither



country had the best interests of Kashmiris in mind and had exploited the issue to serve their own national interests. While most respondents were able to differentiate between their impressions of Pakistan then, versus Pakistan today, their perspectives on India after Sheikh Abdullah's arrest appeared to be consistent overtime.

Khalil mentioned the historical connections between Lahore and Kashmir, as one of the reasons why Kashmiris were more attracted to Pakistan, which was reiterated by a number of respondents (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 1 June 2014). One of the biggest changes they encountered after Partition was that they were no longer able to travel to places like Lahore and Rawalpindi, where a number of them had gone for higher education or business. This was one of the primary closures of the post-Partition period. The loss of ties to the regions that became Pakistan was described in both emotional and material terms. Many families had individuals who left for Pakistan, or were exiled there, and were unable to see their family members for long stretches of time. In his autobiography, Agha Ashraf recalled his trip to Lahore with his grandfather, and how 'modern' it seemed to him after coming from Srinagar. It was in Lahore, he stated, that he "used a fork and knife for the first time" (Ali 2010: 12). Thus, Pakistan was seen as a space where this aspiration for modernity, that all of my respondents shared, could be met. Some mentioned how Kashmiris would use rock salt from Pakistan, which stopped coming to Kashmir, leading to a shortage of salt in the first few years after Partition. Rock salt and a green handkerchief became an important political symbol for Pakistan; indeed, leaders of the Plebiscite Front, a political opposition organization that led the demand for a plebiscite, would raise both the salt and the handkerchief in rallies and tell those who were gathered, 'This is our foundation'. Furthermore, Zahid G. Mohammad, a writer, stated that Kashmir's historic economic ties to Central Asia went through Pakistan. Timber and fruit would be transported along the Jhelum and into other parts of Central Asia. Kashmiri businessmen suffered great losses when this route was blocked after 1947. Nighat Shafi, who runs a non-government organization, and was one of the granddaughters of Ghulam Ahmad Ashai, mentioned that her grandmother would keep asking the other family members when the road to Pakistan would open again.

Dr. Naseer Shah, the former principal of the Government Medical College in Srinagar, was studying in Lahore at the King Edward Medical College at the time of Partition, and was repatriated to Srinagar. Because of the heightened sense of insecurity at the time, he explained his fear that

Pakistani officials might see him as a spy. His sister, Miss Mahmooda Ali Shah, who was one of the first Kashmiri Muslim women to get educated in Lahore and was involved with the National Conference, told Nehru to speak to Liaquat Ali Khan and asked that her brother be sent back to Srinagar safely. Dr. Naseer is known amongst this class of individuals for being one of the few Kashmiri Muslim men to marry a Kashmiri Pandit woman. Dr. Naseer's wife, Dr. Girja Dhar, was also a prominent doctor in the Valley. They met, and married in London, where they had lived for some years for work. Dr. Naseer explained that his family was 'secular' and 'open-minded' and did not subscribe to the Muslim Conference, but they still wanted to be with Pakistan. He explained:

We were all fascinated to be a part of Pakistan. No one was sure what would happen, but most of us were educated in Lahore. Rawalpindi was next door. It cost 10 rupees to go there on government transport. The bus would leave Srinagar at 9am and arrive in Rawalpindi at 3pm. The drivers knew my family... sometimes we even got a free ride. None of us ever thought of Delhi... it was so far. From Delhi, the newspaper would come after four days. But the papers from Lahore would be here the next morning (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 25 June 2014).

This imaginary of Pakistan, unlike the recent de-territorialized turn in Pakistan scholarship, is territorially grounded. Pakistan was a space that many people had economic, filial, and educational ties with a place that was much more 'proximate' than India.

If so many Kashmiri Muslims from this class were opposed to the accession and wanted to join Pakistan at the time, why did they continue to take part in the bureaucracy, especially after Sheikh Abdullah's arrest? I posed this question to my respondents. In their responses, most referred to the precarious nature of their decision at this time.<sup>20</sup> A majority of my respondents told me that people did not think that the *halaat* (situation) would go on indefinitely.<sup>21</sup> Even after the Sheikh was arrested, they assumed that since the matter was raised in the United Nations Security Council, India and Pakistan would resolve the issue and a plebiscite would soon take place. In the meantime, my respondents felt that they must get educated, build the infrastructure in the region, and remain employed in the bureaucracy. The realization that things could soon change was also exemplified by their desire to remain in the Valley, and not be transferred to other places in the state, including Jammu. Nighat Shafi told me "a lot of Kashmiri

Muslims didn't agree to be posted in Jammu...because they thought that things would change and Kashmir might go to Pakistan" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 5 May 2014). Besides this, many were afraid of being in a Hindu-majority place, as they had "heard that none of the Hindus rent their houses to Muslims," a sentiment that lends itself once more to the notion of Pakistan being 'safe' for Muslims (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 27 February 2014). In another example, Mohammad Amin Chisti, who served as a registrar in the University of Kashmir, revealed that he "didn't agree to go to Jammu because of the threat... Many Muslims were scared by the killings of thousands of innocent Muslims there" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 27 February 2014).<sup>22</sup>

The Kashmiri state also conducted propaganda about political and social developments in Pakistan, which may have also impacted my respondents' decision to remain in the bureaucracy. The Department of Information gathered material that highlighted how the Pakistani state was beholden to imperial—namely American—interests and was also interfering in the politics of Azad Kashmir. This perception was oftentimes affirmed by letters that were sent between Kashmiris residing in Pakistan and their families in the Valley. I came across one letter sent by Ghulam Ahmad Ashai to his son Ghulam Qadir, who had been exiled to Pakistan by Sheikh Abdullah. The letter is dated 8 August 1952, and was sent from Raj Bagh, in Srinagar, to Bohar Bazaar, in Rawalpindi. While the letter was written before Sheikh Abdullah's arrest, it is still important as it points to perceptions about conditions in Pakistan that may have persuaded a number of educated Kashmiris to reconsider their fate with India. In the letter, Ghulam Ahmad Ashai wrote of his meeting with his relatives, G.K. Drabu:

I have not met G.K. Drabu yet, but to those who he had met, he has given me a really grim and woeful picture of the state of affairs on that side and of the moral and social degradation which is rampant in your country. His account of your and Yasin's life also is not such as could give any satisfaction to any parent. I wish to God that you may be still be saved from the vicious and undesirable habits that seem to be so common there. G.K. Drabu's own habits so exhibited here make me tremble for both of you. It seems that your country is taking the lead in practicing everything and the utmost that is both un-Islamic and immoral. However, so long as your present mood lasts, I feel myself utterly helpless and can only pray to God that he may keep you safe even in that filthy atmosphere. If the treatment of

the rulers to our people there is insulting as stated by Yasin and confirmed by Drabu, why in the name of heaven do people like you suffer this insult and stay on? The only honorable course in such circumstance would be to give up everything, come home and carry on a relentless struggle against the designs of those people by exposing them naked to those who still may have any misunderstanding about them. After all, if it is to be subservience, better have it until there is some respect attached to it. The greatest justification for the stand taken up by the party in power here is the treatment that our people are... [undecipherable]... over there, even in conditions when they had need in fact keen and urgent need of the utmost goodwill of our people. I wonder how they would behave if they obtained power here (Ministry of States, 1952).

While Ghulam Ahmad Ashai did not state explicitly what concerned him, it appears that far from being a 'safe place for Muslims', these reports from family members who had travelled to or lived in Pakistan spoke of 'moral and social degradation' in that 'filthy atmosphere'. Aside from these moral concerns, Ashai also made reference to the "treatment of the rulers to our people there" (Ministry of States, 1952). It is possible Ashai was referring to the shift in the Pakistani leadership's approach to the province in 1952. As Christopher Snedden carefully details, Pakistan-administered Kashmir, which initially enjoyed some autonomy as a province, came into the fold of Pakistan's Ministry of Kashmir Affairs, which allowed the Pakistani state's interests in the region to remain paramount (Snedden 2012). For this reason, perhaps, Ashai urged his son to come back to Kashmir, and let those who still had faith in the Pakistani state know of the developments on the other side of the border. It might not be far-fetched to assume that these discussions permeated throughout the educated and bureaucratic classes, given that many of them had family members who were in Pakistan, and led a number of individuals to forego their initial support for Pakistan. This is an important consideration given that most of my respondents still defined Kashmiri aspirations in the post-Partition period as being aligned with Pakistan. How do we understand the contradictions between their recollections of their views of Pakistan then and Ashai's letter? I suggest that the range of political possibilities made available to Kashmiri Muslims in this time were restrictive; neither Pakistan nor India was able to fully accommodate Kashmiri aspirations at the time. While one option appeared to be more attractive than the other, there was a complex range of social and political

subjectivities that were continuously being shaped and reshaped by the restrictive conditions under Indian rule and political conflict.

The contingencies of the period were also marked by financial insecurity. A number of bureaucrats spoke of their financial concerns at the time. In one case, Abdul Sattar Mir, who was a secretary in the bureaucracy, acknowledged the poverty and financial strain that informed his, and many others' decision to get a government job. Financial insecurity and the reign of fear that pervaded the state, both under the Sheikh and Bakshi, were the two primary reasons that many bureaucrats stated they remained 'silent' on the political developments in Kashmir.

Even those belonging to parties that were ostensibly against the state, such as the Jamaat-i-Islam, were also beholden to its patronage and had to 'compromise' due to financial need. Qari Saifuddin wrote in his autobiography how his friend, Syed Qaiser Qalander, worked as a program assistant at Radio Kashmir. Qalander asked Saifuddin to broadcast a radio program on Islam. The chief of the Jamaat-i-Islam party at the time, Saad Uddin, informed Saifuddin that he should not go on the state-run radio as "it would be a meaningless effort of patching the truth with falsehood and it will give no benefit to religion" (Saifuddin 1980: 36). Nevertheless, Saifuddin mentioned how his father became ill and he had to pay for his sister's wedding, leaving him with little financial means. Under these conditions, Saad Uddin allowed Saifuddin to accept the position at Radio Kashmir, which temporarily resolved his financial problems. He noted however, that while he was to speak on the life of the Prophet Muhammad, he was told not to mention particular incidents that might rouse public sentiment, such as the Battle of Badr, a key battle in the early days of Islam, in which the Prophet's community won against his opponents, the tribe of Quraysh, in Mecca. In the eyes of the officers at Radio Kashmir, perhaps speaking of a 'Muslim victory' over non-Muslims would raise sentiments against India in the region.

When speaking to former bureaucrats, many of them reiterated that despite working in the bureaucracy, they had remained committed to empowering Kashmiri Muslims, and they had 'no other options' at the time. Some said that had Kashmiri Muslims not taken an active part in the bureaucracy, the government would have relied upon Indians from throughout the country, "who would not have had Kashmiris best interests at heart," to formulate policy in the region (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 5 May 2014). Others stated that their jobs in the

bureaucracy were apolitical and were simply for purposes of administering Kashmir. Ghulam Hassan Shah said that he "never did anything that would help the Government of India, so [he doesn't] feel bad" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 12 June 2014). When Shah was in the Law Department, he maintained that he "translated and interpreted [the law] in ways that it would suit Kashmir... Never felt that I was doing what the Government of India wanted me to do" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 12 June 2014). In this conversation, Shah mentioned an argument he had with Jagmohan, the infamous Governor of Kashmir, a few years before the militancy began. At the time, Shah was the Chairman of the Selection Board that hired individuals for various posts in the bureaucracy. He narrated that Jagmohan wanted him to hire more Kashmiri Pandits for various positions. Shah informed him that "90% of the community is Muslim, and therefore they should get 90% of the postings" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 12 June 2014). As he remembered this incident, Shah stated that he had been afraid, but he told Jagmohan "to his face that he would not do anything that is wrong" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 12 June 2014). He speaks of this moment with pride, as he felt that he had not succumbed to or compromised on his principles in the face of an Indian Government official. As we will see in the conclusion, today's bureaucrats in Kashmir repeat these justifications given for taking part in the post-Partition bureaucracy, although in a different political context than that of my respondents, but nonetheless underscoring the conflicting subjectivities that conflict societies produce.

As most of my respondents explained, there were very few Kashmiri Muslims that were 'Indians by heart'. Even those that were in the National Conference leadership, they stated, considered themselves Kashmiris first as being an 'Indian' was a practical matter for them. Mushtaq Fazili, a retired engineer, who was sent by the government to study engineering in Bangalore, told me how he never identified as an Indian; he always identified as a Kashmiri Muslim. This is despite "religion not playing a big role in [his] family...more preference was given to education than going through rituals. The focus was on being a good human being" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 24 August, 2014). The only group that fully aligned themselves with India, Mushtaq mentioned, were the Kashmiri Pandits. "They always said they were the true Indians" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 24 August, 2014). It is to the conflicted attitudes towards Kashmiri Pandits to which I turn next.

The voices that emerge from this section reflect the challenges of the early post-Partition period, and more

importantly, showcase the ways in which my respondents negotiated their everyday realities under Indian rule. These narratives trouble the 'secular' subjectivity that is usually associated with India as well as a 'religious' subjectivity that is associated with Pakistan. Whether or not they viewed their decisions to participate in the state government as a 'compromise' at the time, my respondents today express it as such, suggesting a greater sense of an ideological coherence over time. Almost all of my respondents recalled that people were anti-India, but participated in the state government and its institutions out of necessity. The desire to forge a Kashmiri Muslim subjectivity in the context of political uncertainty and contingency then remains an important insight gleaned from these narratives. It is possible that the making of a Muslim subject was in response to accusations that these individuals were betraying the Kashmiri 'cause' and serving as 'collaborators'. Therefore, the forging of a religiously-based subjectivity also reflected their heightened awareness of being complicit in government bureaucracy.

### On Kashmiri Pandits

Discussions of relations between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits were fraught with a number of tensions. Nonetheless, they remained coherent in their description of similarities and personal friendships between members of the two communities, while at the same time denouncing what was seen as the Pandit's allegiance to and 'working for' India at the expense of Kashmiri Muslims, which left a number of them to feel betrayed. This desire to assert one's positive relations with Pandit neighbors, friends, and colleagues must be situated in the context of fraught tensions between the two communities today, a lingering impact from the militancy and the forced departure of a majority of the Pandit community outside of Kashmir. My respondents often tried to explain the absence of Pandits to me, and acutely reflected on the causes of the toxic relations today.

Most of my respondents recalled how they respected and looked up to Kashmiri Pandits. Dr. Naseer mentioned how they were seen as being more cosmopolitan and educated than Kashmiri Muslims. Others mentioned how most of the good teachers were Kashmiri Pandits, as they were interested in their work, and the Muslim teachers 'would not be as interested'. Many families would hire Pandit teachers to give their children tutoring in various subjects, and unlike the Muslim teachers, the "Pandit teacher would make sure that the students would understand the material" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 17 November 2013). Pirzada Hafizullah Makhdoomi, who was a Political

Conference activist at the time, mentioned how Pandits were the seat of Kashmiri culture and language, "which is now dying after they left" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 17 November 2013). Neerja Mattoo, the only Kashmiri Pandit I spoke to, recalled how the Pandit and Muslim bureaucrats would mix: "they all came from downtown, were upwardly mobile, had a modern way of life. They were educated, lived in bungalows and brought land" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 24 May 2014). She had many Muslim friends, and they did not "even notice the difference," she repeated a few times (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 24 May 2014). They would "watch films, wear the same clothes and hairstyles, and eat in each other's homes" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 24 May 2014). She clarified that the earlier generation would not eat together, but for her generation, it was 'not an issue'. Some Muslims also spoke of how Kashmiri Islam was unique because "we were originally Kashmiri Pandits...proud of the Sufi aspect of Kashmiri Islam which is mystical and draws upon Shaivism and Nund Rishi" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 17 November 2013). While earlier my respondents felt the need to assert a history of Kashmir that spoke directly to its Islamic past, when asked about Pandits, they unequivocally reiterated their important role in Kashmir's cultural history, as well as the 'Sufi aspect of Kashmiri Islam'. This suggests that my respondents did not seek to elide other communities from Kashmir's history, but rather assert a Muslim identity that they felt was being erased from dominant narratives.

Even those affiliated with Islamist politics, such as Qari Saifuddin, presented their relations with Pandits in Kashmir in a positive light. He saw Pandit officials as being honest, while the National Conference's Muslim leaders were disingenuous. He mentioned how a Pandit lawyer, Jia Lal Chaudhary, defended him and others who were charged with engaging in a riot against the National Conference. At the same time, however, he noted his opposition to a cartoon that was printed in the paper, which showed the heads of the three main faiths in Kashmir— Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism— as being part of one body. Under the cartoon, it was written: "*Naya* (new) Kashmir will be religion of Kashmiris, they look three, but they all are one [sic]" (Saifuddin 1980: 33). Saifuddin said he found the statement to be intolerable:

Is new Kashmir to be the religion of Kashmir?...  
In the evening I made this sentence and cartoon my topic of speech. I emotionally criticized the new Kashmir and the maker of new Kashmir. The audience was silent because in this area, to be vo-



cally angry on Kashmir's leadership, it's like a blast which rocked the whole area (Saifuddin 1980: 33).

Here, again, Saifuddin is expressing opposition to the state and its ideology of Kashmiriyat, that he sees as undermining Islam, not necessarily one that appears to be intolerant of other religions.

Despite the friendly relations between individual Muslim and Pandits, a number of my respondents referred to varying moments in recent history in which the relations between the two communities were challenged. M.A. Chisti described how 1931 played a pivotal role as that is when 'the uprising of Kashmiri Muslims had begun'. He stated:

There were a few incidents of misbehavior of Muslims with their Hindu neighbors, though they were very few, some of the Pandit neighbors and those living in other Muslim majority areas, preferred to move to Pandit dominated areas. Then in 1947, when tribesmen attacked the Valley, they moved to other places, some of them even to neighboring Punjab and Delhi. In 1990, there was almost complete exodus from the valley of Kashmiri Pandits. When they lived in the Valley though, Muslims had very good relations with them (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 27 February, 2014).

1947 was seen by some in a different light, however. As Ghulam Hassan Shah emotionally recalled, "Kashmiri Muslims protected all Hindus at the risk of their life...we can't live without them. It didn't even matter that they were all pro-Indian" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 12 June 2014). Nonetheless, he added that the situation changed after 1947, as Pandits began to see themselves as 'Indian instead of Kashmiris'. Makhdoomi situated 1953 as the turning point, as it became increasingly clear that "Pandits were for India, and Muslims were for Pakistan" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 17 November 2013). Even the bastion of Kashmiriyat, Sheikh Abdullah, wrote in his autobiography that Kashmiri Pandits would use themselves as instruments of tyranny against the majority community, perhaps referring to a number of Kashmiri Pandits in Srinagar and in Delhi who were instrumental in his arrest (Abdullah 2013). Almost all said that the differing ideologies did not get in the way of their personal friendships with Pandits, however.

Neerja Mattoo mentioned that some of the Hindus might have 'resented' the land reform acts, given that much of the landed aristocracy was Hindu, but that her father and his associates, who were involved in the National Conference, were happy to give up their land. According to her, resentment started building as more accommodation was made for Kashmiri Muslims in the schools and

government bureaucracy. Zahid G. Muhammad described this as Kashmiri Pandits being "unable to reconcile to Kashmiri Muslims growing in society or accepting them as their equals" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 14 November 2013). The last straw was when protests arose after a Kashmiri Pandit girl married a Muslim in the late sixties. Right-wing Hindu parties in India tried to exploit the situation, and the Kashmiri state government jailed and beat up a number of Pandit protestors. This was one of the turning points in the relationship between the two communities.

When asked why the Pandits had left in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of my respondents looked uncomfortable. One looked away and said, "They didn't want to leave...but I can't say much" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 25 June 2014). Makhdoomi only said that he "had heartache when they left" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 17 November 2013). Another former bureaucrat said that the Pandits were made to leave by Jagmohan's government, who promised them that they would return once he had unleashed a brutal policy on Kashmiri Muslims.<sup>23</sup> A few mentioned that the atmosphere in the Valley had become such that Pandits did not feel they would be safe. Yet, it is on this topic where a number of respondents were silent or did not respond at length. I suggest that this discomfort was registered as a result of feelings of both betrayal and guilt, and sadness at the state of affairs between the two communities today. The guilt was perhaps an acknowledgment of the ways in which Islamist discourses were elevated during the militancy, as calls for *azadi* (freedom) and a demand for *nizam-e-mustafa* (the order of the Prophet) rang from the mosques. Perhaps my respondents were aware of how this might have contributed to Pandit fears about their survival in Kashmir in that period. At the same time, many also felt betrayed, feeling that the Pandits "just left us here, without letting us know... it seemed they didn't care what would happen to us under Jagmohan" (Interview with participant, Srinagar, 12 June 2014). Whatever they felt about the causes for the departure of the Pandits, most agreed that the present generation in Kashmir suffered a loss, as they had grown up without 'knowing any Pandits'.

My respondents affirmed that Kashmiri Pandits were an important part of Kashmir's history, and that on some level there was a shared culture between the two communities. At the same time, they spoke to the changes that occurred between the two communities once Kashmiri Muslims were seen as being empowered. As a result of the political context in the state, on some level, a Muslim identity was being constructed in opposition to what was seen as a privileged Pandit one.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have presented life narratives—both oral and written—of Kashmiri Muslims that lived through the early post-Partition period. The article helps situate how political subjectivities emerge in zones of conflict, war, and occupation. Political conflict produces paradoxical demands and aspirations that individuals are forced to reconcile. I conclude that it is through the creation of these paradoxical subjectivities that the state of conflict is sustained. Today, over 70 years after Partition, debates over collaboration and resistance, political aspirations and economic stability, continue in Kashmir as the past decade has witnessed the rise of a “new intifada” (Kak 2011), which pits the current generation of Kashmiri youth against the brute force of the Indian state. Given the heightened forms of modern day surveillance, Indian militarization, as well as the use of state violence and the clamping down on any form of dissent, Kashmiris are once again forced to reconcile their desire for political freedom with their desire to lead ‘normal’ functional lives. With such restricted modes of political possibility made available to them, people continue to live their lives, as Gowhar Fazili articulates, “as occupied subjects [who] are constrained by circumstances to exist somewhere on the spectrum defined by resistance and collaboration and marked by a bit of both” (Fazili 2018: 206). The initial compromises made by the earlier post-Partition generation reflect on contemporary circumstances, as debates rage over the role of the Kashmiri bureaucrat or the police official who is seen as instrumental in the suppression of his or her own people. In particular, a number of Kashmiri Muslims have aspired to join the Indian civil services, including the case of Shah Faesal, who was pushed into the limelight for being the poster boy for the model that Kashmiri youth should aspire to (Huffington Post 2016). In a scathing critique for the *Kashmir Reader*, three Kashmiri youth argued, “these local henchmen of Indian occupation play a more pervasive role in helping to consolidate the illegal rule of India over the insurgent nation” (Dar et al. 2016).

Yet, these very same bureaucrats or police officials argue that they are serving their community and operating as an important buffer between the Indian state and its Kashmiri subjects, not unlike those among the post-Partition generation. Some have also insisted that their mandate is ‘mundane and miniscule’, and it is simply a job like any other job. As the piece in the *Kashmir Reader* continues, state collaborators argue that “their only job is to ‘sign papers’, ‘prepare budgets’, ‘manage the workforce’ or ‘dole out orders’...the signature may approve a PSA (Public

Safety Act) detention, a budget might be used to purchase weaponry, and the workforce could be a lethal group of child murderers” (Dar et al. 2016).

As debates rage, I suggest that the scope for collaboration today is different than it was in the post-Partition period. The earlier generation lived in a period of multiple contingencies; they could not predict that India would erode Kashmir’s autonomy so unceremoniously and that the plebiscite would be rendered obsolete. They witnessed these processes taking place in their lifetimes; today’s generation has no such illusions. While the justifications the earlier generation had for its complicity may have held for that time, Kashmiri Muslims who are associated with the state today are confronted with an overt rebellion on a scale that the earlier generation never confronted. The changed conditions after the armed resistance, as the Indian state has made clear its mandate to completely obliterate any desire for self-determination through the destruction of lives and property, render this collaborative position wholly politically suspect. Furthermore, the rise of Hindutva in India has brought to fore the contradictions under Nehruvian secularism and has devastating consequences for the Muslim-majority region. In sum, the difference between the early post-Partition period and the post-armed resistance period is that the earlier period was far more contingent. Today, that fluidity has all but disappeared.

Nonetheless, through the example of this post-Partition generation, I hope to demonstrate how local Kashmiris’ active involvement and agentive roles helped them to make sense of their world and create coherence out of disparity. They were not passive victims of the state; while these accounts certainly provide a sense of how the early Kashmir state government shaped Muslim identity, they also point to how a number of them made use of and benefited from institutional mechanisms in ways that made the most sense to them. These narratives help us think through political subjectivity as a process that occurs at the nexus of class, religion, and politics, in addition to individual personalities and subjectivities, and more importantly, that these subjectivities are shifting, in response to changing contexts.

What these life narratives most clearly elucidate is the extent to which this class of Kashmiri Muslims contested the logic of the two nation-states, India and Pakistan, but were also subject to these dominant narratives. The overarching narratives of the Indian and Pakistani nation-state and their respective nationalisms leave Kashmir, and Kashmiris, wanting. In treading the path of political

subjectivities in this period of nation-state formation, these life narratives allow us to envision a different collectivity, one that foregrounds a Kashmiri Muslim-centric narrative that was formed through particular historical moments, such as the 1931 agitation and Sheikh Abdullah's arrest in 1953. The encompassing Kashmiri Muslim collectivity was a product of a repressive political context; at the same time, however, this article suggests that uncertainty and political repression created a rich environment for alternative and creative political imaginings. In sum, these life narratives represent the Kashmiri Muslim nostalgia for lost futures.

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## Endnotes

1. A *pheran* is a type of shirt work by Kashmiri men and women. It is loose, reaches the knees and is often made of wool for the long winter months.
2. In this article, even though I am referring to the period after British colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent, I use the term 'post-Partition,' instead of post-colonial or post-independence, given the popular perception amongst most Kashmiri Muslims that there has been no post-colonial period in Kashmir as India remains a colonial power in Kashmir. In the same vein, Kashmiris believe that their land did not become independent as with the rest of the subcontinent; rather, it was occupied.
3. As the Indian subcontinent was divided into Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority India, Kashmir was one of the few princely states in which the religious identity of a majority of its population was different from the religious identity of its ruler, the Dogra Maharaja Hari Singh. As the Maharaja brutally squashed an uprising of Muslims in the region of Jammu, he sought military protection from India against a subsequent invading tribal raid from Pakistan who came to 'liberate' the regions Muslims. A murky transfer of sovereignty by the Maharaja led a majority of the territory to be incorporated into the Indian Union through a treaty of accession, which gave India control over the foreign affairs, defense, and communications of the region. The treaty promised that the state's future would be determined 'by a reference to the people.' Both India and Pakistan went to war in 1948, resulting in two-thirds of the former princely state to be controlled by India, which I refer to as Jammu and Kashmir, or alternatively, Indian-held Kashmir. One-third was controlled by Pakistan, which is referred to as Azad Kashmir or Pakistan-held Kashmir. While Indian-held Kashmir includes the region of Jammu, Ladakh, and the Kashmir Valley, I will primarily be focusing on the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley, which remains the primary site of state violence and resistance against Indian rule. For brevity, I refer to this portion simply as 'Kashmir.' Kashmiri Muslims are a Kashmiri-speaking ethnic group that constitute a majority of the inhabitants of Kashmir. See Snedden, *The Untold Story*.

4. In 1931, Kashmiri Muslims began their agitation against the Dogras, a Hindu monarchy that governed Jammu and Kashmir as a princely state during the period of British colonial rule. They demanded democratic governance and better economic and educational rights, especially for the region's marginalized Muslim community.

5. This provisionality is marked by multiple UN resolutions for plebiscite, as well as the cease-fire line, which situates Kashmir as a 'dispute'. In the introduction to *Resisting Occupation in Kashmir*, the editors state, "Kashmir's provisionality poses a threat to India's identity as a secular and integrated nation.... It also enables India's governance in the region, most notably through Article 370 that establishes the terms of Kashmir's relationship to India by granting a degree of autonomy to the state." However, India has used Kashmir's provisional status to maintain "a facade of democracy, the intentional framing of Kashmir as a dangerous border zone and threat to the integrity of the nation, and the continued implementation of laws of exception that establish the foundations for the intensive militarization and concomitant institutionalization of impunity in the region." See Haley Duschinski et al, "Rebels of the Streets," in *Resisting Occupation in Kashmir* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018) 15-17.

6. I use the term 'life narrative' to refer to these sources, as it is a term that signals shifting self-referential practices in narratives that engage with the past, and reflect an identity in the present. Life narratives exist in a variety of diverse media and take the producer's life as their subject. They allow for an understanding of the complex relations between public and official constructions of history and private recollections, a process that results in the constitution of 'popular memory'. See Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010) 1; Mahua Sarkar, *Visible Histories, Disappearing Women: Producing Muslim Womanhood in Late Colonial Bengal* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008) 134.

7. Unless directly referencing the Government of India, I use the term 'state-led' or 'state government' to refer to the Jammu and Kashmir state government, which was primarily at the helm of crafting state policies in this period although it received a vast majority of its funding from the Government of India.

8. During the armed resistance of the late eighties and the nineties, thousands of young Kashmiris went across the border into Pakistan to train and returned once more to fight against Indian rule. A vast majority of Kashmiri Pandits, the region's Hindu minority, left the Kashmir Valley out of fear of a militancy that was increasingly inflected with Islamist discourses; some lived in camps in Jammu, while others lived in cities in India and abroad.

During and in the aftermath of this iteration of the militancy, Kashmir became heavily militarized as over half a million Indian troops patrolled the region and bunkers and security zones arose in various neighborhoods. As a result, most of the narratives I gathered were deeply embroiled with this political present, as my respondents attempted to 'explain' or 'understand' contemporary Kashmir through their recollections of the past. Since 2010, as a result of immense state violence and brutality against Kashmiri youth, a new generation of 'home-grown' militants has once again emerged. The numbers, however, remain in the hundreds, and have not yet reached the levels of three decades prior.

9. Sheikh Abdullah was the first Prime Minister of the Jammu and Kashmir state. After initially supporting the state's accession to India, he began to call for a plebiscite to determine the future of the region. On August 8, 1953, the Sheikh, who was heralded as the 'Lion of Kashmir' and had led the movement against the Dogras, was arrested and replaced by his Deputy Prime Minister, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, who was more amenable to the Government of India.

10. I have obtained permission to share identifiers from my respondents.

11. The term Kashmiriyat refers to a shared, secular syncretic Kashmiri culture that was popularized by the post-Partition Jammu and Kashmir governments, in an attempt to both create a distinct Kashmiri cultural identity, but also ensure that the state's accession to 'secular' India would be solidified through the propagation of a secular Kashmiri identity.

12. While the National Conference officially stood for the ideals of secular nationalism, a number of scholars have noted that the party and its leadership, especially Sheikh Abdullah, did not hesitate to use religion for particular political ends.

13. This is similar to the social base of the Muslim League in North India and urban Bengal.

14. Jinnah's visit to Kashmir in 1944 was a critical moment in defining the National Conference's alliance with the Indian National Congress. Jinnah was hosted by both parties—the National Conference and the Muslim Conference—but purportedly did not get along with Sheikh Abdullah, and during his speech to the Muslim Conference at Jamia Masjid, affirmed that they were the main representatives of Kashmiri Muslims, which angered the National Conference party leaders.

15. Their fears were not unsubstantiated, given the lack of land reform in Pakistan.



16. For example, Anwar's two brothers, who were against the National Conference, despite their father's close ties with the Sheikh, went to Pakistan.

17. Chitrelekha Zutshi also makes this argument. See *Zutshi, Languages of Belonging*, 314.

18. After the Indian government installed Sheikh Abdullah as the Prime Minister, he was unceremoniously arrested and jailed, and replaced by his second-in-command, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. As the post-Partition period saw Kashmir slowly losing its autonomy under Indian rule, the Sheikh had begun to question the finality of Kashmir's accession to India.

19. See, for example, Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League, and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Farzana Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India 1860-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Venkat Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam, and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

20. This uncertainty has been referred to by a number of South Asian historians, including Neeti Nair. In her book, *Changing Homelands: Hindu Politics and the Partition of India*, which contests essentialist understandings of Muslims and Hindus, Nair describes how none of her respondents, mostly Hindu refugees from Pakistan, believed that they would have to 'leave forever'. This "'moment of reckoning,' the decision to leave their homeland for a new political configuration or nation lasted a few hours for some, several months for others... But the memory of the contingent quality of that decision to leave stayed," she states. Similarly, Vazira Zamindar examines the contingent nature of defining citizenship, as people transversed borders, through passport regimes in the immediate post-partition period in India and Pakistan. See Neeti Nair, *Changing Homelands: Hindu Politics and the Partition of India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011) 220; Vazira Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

21. My respondents used the term *halaat* to generally speak of the Kashmir conflict, and the political situation, whether it was referring to Naya Kashmir or in the contemporary period.

22. Chisti was referring to the events of 1947, when the state massacred nearly two hundred thousand Jammu Muslims who had rebelled against Dogra rule.

23. Jagmohan was the controversial governor of the state during the crucial years of the militancy.

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