

Haley Duschinski, Mona Bhan, Ather Zia, and Cynthia Mahmood (eds.). *Resisting Occupation in Kashmir*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2018. Hardback (\$79.95). 312 pp. + 7 illustrations. ISBN 9780812249781.

By Hafsa Kanjwal, Lafayette College

Since 2010, Indian-occupied Kashmir has been immersed in a mass civilian uprising against the Indian state. Unlike the armed resistance of the late 1980s and 1990s, during which large numbers of young Kashmiri Muslim men went across the Line of Control into Pakistan to train and came back to fight against the Indian army, this uprising is marked by a number of different factors. First, it involves an entire generation of mostly young Kashmiri Muslims, of various class backgrounds, boys and girls, who were born and raised under the brunt of military occupation. Second, this young generation uses diverse forms of protest to demand *azadi*, or freedom, from Indian rule, including street protests, stone pelting, candlelight vigils, sit-ins, music, and artistic and literary representations, and is equipped with social media and access to the international arena.

Nonetheless, despite remarkable resistance to a brutal military occupation, the world community, including most Muslim-majority countries, has largely ignored their efforts. While there is occasional condemnation offered during moments of increased brutality, India has managed to utilize its economic soft power as well as its strategic cooption of the War on Terror narrative to keep the international community's attention away from the open wound that is Kashmir. In turn, it has unleashed immense amounts of violence, surveillance, punishment, and control over the region that it repeatedly claims as its "integral part."

It is in this context of immense state repression and youth resistance that a number of scholars have attempted to critically theorize and decolonize studies of Kashmir away from the lens of nationalist parameters. Studying what has been simplistically rendered into a "disputed territory," or a "conflict zone," is not an easy task. It requires a particular attentiveness to the margins, those spaces that are all too easily overlooked in dominant histories and narratives. It requires a level of engagement that is able to question, to disrupt, and even to expose. Most importantly, it requires a level of ethnographic sensitivity and nuance in unraveling multiple modes of repression and resistance. *Resisting Occupation in Kashmir*, an edited volume that brings together 11 scholars who work on Kashmir, does all of the above and is a groundbreaking body of work in the fields of Kashmir Studies and South Asian studies.

In the introduction to *Resisting Occupation*, the editors note that scholarship on Kashmir, throughout the twentieth century until the present day, has "been

dominated by political objectifications that emphasize Kashmir's intractability or reduce it to a bilateral political battle between India and Pakistan" (35). In recent years, however, the study of Kashmir has moved beyond the statist narratives of the two countries, India and Pakistan, that lay their claims on the region, and foregrounded Kashmir-centric perspectives. The edited volume thus comes at a pivotal scholarly and political moment in which naming the nature of the "conflict" for what it is, an occupation, is crucial. For too long, the use of terms like "insurgency," "nuclear hotspot," "terrorism," or "disputed territory" obscured the realities on the ground, but were continuously peddled by scholars. The editors argue that naming the "brutal modalities of power in Kashmir as an occupation is a political and moral choice, a commitment to exposing the Indian performance of democracy, human rights, and citizenship that has continually undermined the basic rights and freedoms of Kashmiris" (35).

The essays in the volume cover a variety of topics that shed light on a number of global phenomena that underscore, but do not exceptionalize, the nature of prolonged occupation and violence in Kashmir. The ethnographic approaches are thus relevant to, and draw from, a number of other political contexts, including the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Decolonizing Kashmir, thus, allows for a comparative understanding of the precarity of Muslim communities and minorities in a number of colonizing/repressive postcolonial nation-states and its impact on Muslim subjectivities. As in Palestine, the editors argue that Kashmir's political liminality characterizes "the status of a yet to be formed nation-state that is neither completely sovereign nor entirely subjugated" (13). This in-betweenness, which is best manifested in its legal provisionality as an administered territory, has shaped people's subjectivities, "rendering the lines between resistance and co-optation, sovereignty and sedition, normalcy and spectacle and life and death murky and not easily separable" (14).

One of the most important contributions of the edited volume is its discussion of the impact of occupation on institutions and individuals, who are forced to operate within the confines of political liminality. In chapter 1, Haley Duschinski and Bruce Hoffman examine the jurisdictional authority of the Majlis-e-Mushawarat, a community organization that was founded as a result of the "miscarriage of justice" in Shopian in 2009, when an alleged rape and murder of two young Kashmiri women occurred by state armed forces. State institutions failed to bring the perpetrators to justice. The chapter demonstrates the possibilities, limitations, and contradictions of seeking justice in the context of a military occupation, as "social actors demonstrate deep ambivalence about and strategic evaluations of the possibilities of using both state and non state legal mechanisms in their efforts to define and achieve justice and bring about meaningful political change within the framework of the freedom movements" (44).

In chapter 4, Saiba Varma investigates the blurring of military and humanitarian efforts in Kashmir, particularly through the use of psychiatric and psychological technologies to heal populations under occupation. She argues that the “widespread use of trauma and PTSD in Kashmir indicates the emergence of medical humanitarianism as a mode of governance in the region in the early 2000’s” (130). Varma interestingly questions the use of trauma and PTSD to make political claims, “including when trauma therapies are imagined by the state as alternatives to political solutions” (131). She shows how different groups operating in Kashmir use trauma for their own ends. International humanitarian organizations like *Medecins Sans Frontieres* (MSF) justify their ongoing intervention in the region by highlighting an ongoing mental health crisis, while human rights organizations use trauma to point to the illegitimacy and violence of the occupation. In addition, the Jammu and Kashmir police use it as a tool of counterinsurgency, to portray a “healing touch” to political agitators (here, we see an interesting parallel to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) strategies of the US government) and Kashmiri psychiatrists embrace it to advance Kashmiri psychiatry as a global form of expertise.

While Duschinski, Hoffman, and Varma show the impact of occupation on legal and medical humanitarian institutions, in chapter 6, Gowhar Fazili explores the political subjectivity of an individual Kashmiri police officer. The police officer claims to be faithful to the interests of his community and may privately share popular political subjectivity that questions the legitimacy of Indian control in Kashmir. However, he is simultaneously involved in a repressive counterinsurgency effort that demands he “eschew such subjectivity and represent and articulate the authority and interests of the state” (187). Through a case study of a police officer, Fazili interestingly explores the “fractured nature of the wider political subjectivity in Kashmir and the nature of subjectivity under occupations more generally” (206). Occupation forces all within its fold to degrees of collaboration and resistance simultaneously.

The ways in which Kashmiris resist and memorialize their histories are also explored. In chapter 8, Farrukh Faheem argues that *azadi* mobilizations in Kashmir were a part of the ordinary and everyday routine of the people from the late colonial period, even before the partition of the Indian subcontinent. He shows how broken promises by the political leadership in the aftermath of partition reinvigorated demands for self-determination and plebiscite. As a result, the shared awareness of betrayal and injustice as well as an urgency for collective action in the 1990s borrowed from patterns of denial and dispossession from the past.

In chapter 9, Mohamad Junaid examines the martyrs’ graveyards that are strewn across Kashmir, holding the bodies of those who have died fighting against or are killed by Indian soldiers since the armed resistance began in the early 1990s. He argues that these graveyards “not only become evidentiary markers of violence

and repositories of collective memory but have also engendered affective dispositions that establish new forms of sociality and community among Kashmiri subjects” (249). In analyzing the spatio-temporal configuration of these graveyards, Junaid argues that they serve as “‘narrativizable events’ and not simply as places, that help ‘Kashmiris make sense of the chronic violence that pervades everyday life’” (249).

The impact of the global war on terror on Kashmir is made evident in Ather Zia’s chapter on Afzal Guru, which showcases how “Kashmiri bodies are constructed as traitors to Indian sovereignty and marked as deviant and killable in the nationalist imagery” (103). Afzal Guru was executed in 2013 to satiate the “collective conscience” of the Indian nation in the aftermath of the Parliament attacks in Delhi in 2001, despite weak evidence. Zia explores how the keffiyah-clad bearded images of Guru that circulated prior to his death portrayed him as a “Muslim terrorist.” His death served to consolidate “the nation-state project of India and for concretizing India’s irrefutable sovereignty over Kashmir” (103).

The use of sexual violence in Kashmir as an intrinsic component of the occupation is discussed in chapter 5. Seema Kazi discusses two cases of rape—one in the villages of Kunan Poshpora and the other in the town of Shopian—by armed forces, and the institutional collusion in subverting justice in both these cases. She argues that “rape in Kashmir is imbued and encoded with multiple and frequently obscured and unacknowledged messages and meanings—neither only a gender-specific war crime against women nor only an instrument of ethnic cleansing” (154). In particular, rape is used to punish the community for their support for militants and for the movement (158).

While most of the chapters focus primarily on the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley, where both occupation and resistance are the most heightened, two chapters extend the discussion to other regions of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Crucially, these chapters do not seek to undermine the Kashmiri demand for freedom, but rather, situate the impact of prolonged conflict and occupation on these other regions as well, despite what their respective political aspirations might be. In chapter 7, Ershad Mahmud highlights the governance issues that the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (which is a province of Pakistan) face on a daily basis and how the conflict has restricted their development. It shows how the failure of political settlements and cease-fire violations along the Line of Control threaten the communities living along the border.

Finally, Mona Bhan’s chapter on the radicalization of the (Buddhist) Brogpas in Ladakh shows how race tourism constructs Brogpa identity as one that is indigenously Hindu and Aryan, and extends Hindutva’s religious national project in Kashmir (79). The Hindu national resurgence along the frontier lines plays a critical part in territorially reimagining the Indian nation, especially as a primordial battle

between Islam and Hinduism that allows Kashmiri aspirations for freedom to be recast as Islamic terrorism (77).

While the edited volume covers a broad range of themes, this reader hopes that future research on occupation and resistance also directly analyzes the role of religion, especially how it has evolved over time in the freedom movement in Kashmir. How and when is religion used to make claims, and how does it inform both how the Indian state views Kashmiri Muslims (for example, are there some schools of thought that it has buttressed over others) and how Kashmiri Muslims resist?

Nevertheless, significant scholarship on Kashmir, especially since the militancy of the 1990s, has attempted to understand and rectify India's mistakes in Kashmir, so that Kashmiris could be integrated to Indian rule. In contrast, this edited volume has charted new territory for Kashmir studies, in its framing of Kashmiris as agentive subjects, with their own hopes, aspirations, and understandings of their past and present.