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Whither Kashmir Studies?: A Review

CHITRALEKHA ZUTSHI

Department of History, College of William and Mary, PO Box 8795, Williamsburg, Virginia 23187-8795, USA
Email: cxzuts@wm.edu

Abstract

This paper explores the current state of the field of Kashmir Studies and argues that, whilst scholarship on Kashmir has come a long way since the decades after Indian independence and partition, the political situation in the region continues to cast a long shadow over writings on Kashmir. Nevertheless, and despite the continued difficulties associated with research within Kashmir, a new generation of scholars has emerged at the turn of the twenty-first century, whose writings transcend geographical and political determinism as well as the discourse of Kashmiri exceptionalism, to present Kashmir as a complex, but not unique, entity, that has been shaped by multiple influences. In addition, this scholarship explores the ideas that have given Kashmir a particular shape in our imaginations, through analysis of a variety of sources, including poetry, art, film, and oral histories. A lot remains to be done, however, particularly in the field of Kashmir's medieval and pre-modern history, and in the application of theoretical approaches such as borderlands to the region's past and present.

Introduction

Kashmir Studies has become a veritable industry in the twenty-first century, with everyone from army officials to journalists, not to mention scholars, churning out hundreds of books on Kashmir.[1] In spite of the glut of books in the market, good studies of Kashmir's past and present are hard to find, since most works continue to be

[1] To name just a few published recently: Jamal, A. (2009). *Shadow War: The Untold Story of Jihad in Kashmir*, Melville House, Brooklyn; Dhar, D. N. (2008). *Kashmir's Accession to India: Unravelling the Truth*, Aravali Books International, New Delhi; Joshi, M. (2008). *Kashmir, 1947–1965: A Story Retold*, India Research Press, New Delhi; Sahgal, C. L. (2008). *Kashmir and Kashmiriyat: A Profile of Events*, Unique Publishers and Printers, Delhi; Joshi, A. (2008). *Eyewitness Kashmir: Teetering on Nuclear War*, India Research Press, New Delhi.

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concerned with the political situation in Kashmir (both the Indo-Pak dispute over the territory since 1947 and the insurgency in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir since 1989), and at best consider events as far back as independence and partition, or at worst stay focused on the politics of the past twenty years (1989–2009). In part this can be explained by the fact that it continues to be difficult to conduct research in the state of Jammu and Kashmir due to civil unrest and the conditions associated with military occupation. Scholars within Kashmir itself, on the other hand, for whom sources are more accessible, are victims of an increasing politicization of the past, in which certain perspectives on Kashmir's history and politics are lauded while others are treated with downright hostility. It has thus fallen to a few intrepid scholars within Kashmir, and scholars located outside Kashmir, mainly in the American, British and European academies, to produce works that transcend the bitterness generated by the conflict in an attempt to chart the longer histories of religious identity formation and nationalism in Kashmir.

This review is specifically concerned with trends within the body of scholarly writing on Kashmir in the past decade—rather than the myriad other writings on the subject—since such scholarship, while clearly not above politics, does not pursue partisan ideological agendas at the expense of historical truths. It argues that scholarship on Kashmir has come a long way since the first few decades after India's independence and partition, with scholars and authors unearthing and examining a multiplicity of sources, such as interviews, poetry and photography, and applying a variety of approaches to uncover unexplored arenas of Kashmir's culture, history, and contemporary situation. These trends towards more people-centred writings, however, need to be supplemented with more transnational approaches—such as the borderlands perspective—that would place medieval, pre-modern and modern Kashmir within wider networks of interaction and exchange, in part by bringing together scholars across the disciplines working within and outside Kashmir.

Kashmir as disputed territory

Kashmir Studies appears to have finally emerged from the shadow of the events between 1947 and 1950 that led to the *de facto* partitioning of Kashmir between India and Pakistan, which produced a spate of books into the 1980s on the legitimacy, or lack thereof, of the

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two states' claims and counter-claims on the region. Nevertheless, a sizeable proportion of scholarly writing on Kashmir continues to be devoted to the political situation in the region and its impact on the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan. Rather than taking sides on the issue, such policy-oriented scholarship is devoted to explaining the intricacies of the stance of India and Pakistan and, since 11 September 2001 the United States, on the disputed territory, as well as providing possible policy solutions to the problem.

A case in point is Sumit Ganguly's edited volume, *The Kashmir Question: Retrospect and Prospect* (2003), in which the Kashmir issue is presented as a bilateral, and deeply resistant, dispute between India and Pakistan.[2] The two-decade long insurgency by Kashmiris against the Indian state in Jammu and Kashmir, insofar as it appears in the articles in the volume, is however subsumed under the politics of the larger territorial question and state security. Praveen Swami's article, 'Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir in Theory and Practice', for example, approaches the insurgency simply in terms of tarring all groups operating within Kashmir with the same 'terrorist' brush and argues that since their ultimate goal is violence against the Indian state, making an ideological distinction between the groups is futile.[3] There are, however, other articles in the volume that examine the situation in the region with more complexity and put forward more imaginative solutions to the bilateral problem.[4]

In general, scholarship on the contemporary political situation in Kashmir, with a few exceptions, is informative but not enlightening, since it rehearses the already well known attributes of the conflict as well as oft-repeated policy solutions without adding anything substantial to this narrative. The exceptions to such scholarship come from political scientists and anthropologists who carry out intense fieldwork in Kashmir and produce people-centred narratives that also make a contribution to larger discourses within their fields.

[2] Ganguly, S. ed. (2003). *The Kashmir Question: Retrospect and Prospect*, Frank Cass & Co., London.

[3] Swami, P. (2003). 'Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir in Theory and Practice', in Ganguly, S. *The Kashmir Question*, pp. 55–88. For a succinct discussion of the insurgency in Kashmir and the groups operating within it, see Leather, K. (2003). *Kashmiri Separatists: Origins, Competing Ideologies and Prospects for Resolution of the Conflict*, Novinka Books, New York.

[4] See for instance, Mattoo, A. (2003). 'India's "Potential" Endgame in Kashmir', and Haqqani, H. (2003). 'Pakistan's Endgame in Kashmir', in Ganguly, S. *The Kashmir Question*, pp. 14–54.

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Sumantra Bose's work, *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace* (2003), based on years of fieldwork in the Kashmir Valley, examines the bilateral dispute over Kashmir in tandem with the insurgency within Jammu and Kashmir, thereby revealing the deep interconnections between the two and the multidimensionality of the Kashmir issue. His interviews in the Kashmir Valley uncover the heterogeneity of views of the Kashmiri people on the situation, which in part is responsible for the complexity and intractability of the conflict. Though intractable, Bose argues that the Kashmir problem is hardly unique, and that creative solutions may be possible through an examination of its characteristics in comparative perspective with similar regional conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland.[5]

While Bose's book implicitly illustrates some of the issues facing the people of Kashmir as a result of decades of war and insurgency, Haley Duschinski's writings on Kashmir focus on the impact of violence, both state-sponsored and insurgent-sponsored, on Kashmiri men, women, and children. Duschinski argues that Kashmiri civilians are perceived either as threats to the state, in which case they are subject to punitive action by the mechanisms of state violence, leading to what she terms 'social suffering and social death',[6] or specific communities, such as Kashmiri Pandits, are perceived as threats to their political cause and targeted by particular insurgent groups. In the latter case they have had to migrate in large numbers from the Kashmir Valley, leaving behind their homes, and producing a political discourse about the community's return to the homeland that attempts to redraw the Kashmiri Pandit community identity.[7] In either case, the impact is one of suffering, forced migration, and violent upheaval for individuals, families, and communities of Kashmir and their relegation to refugee camps, prisons, or interrogation facilities. The solutions to the conflict proposed in both Bose's works and Duschinski's writings—with the former more concerned with solutions at the level of states and Kashmiri political groups, and the latter more interested in non-governmental organizations—is that a lasting solution will be possible

[5] Bose, S. (2003). *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

[6] Duschinski, H. (2009). 'Destiny Effects: Militarization, State Power, and Punitive Containment in Kashmir Valley', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 82:3, 691–718.

[7] Duschinski, H. (2008). '"Survival is Now Our Politics": Kashmiri Hindu Community Identity and the Politics of Homeland', *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, 12:1, 41–64.

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only if a cross-section of Kashmiri society, including women's groups, Islamist groups, and Kashmiri Pandit organizations, are given equal representation in the negotiations on Kashmir's future.

Kashmir in South Asian historiography

While no longer simply interested in the claims of India and Pakistan over the region, scholarship on Kashmir's current political situation is necessarily limited by its time-frame and as a result cannot explain the emergence of Kashmiri religious, regional and national identities in the longer context of Kashmiri history. This void has been filled by recent historical scholarship on Kashmir, which examines Kashmir's transition to Islam in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and charts the development of religious identities and regional affiliations in the context of class and state formation as well as notions of rights and sovereignty in the Kashmir Valley from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. This scholarship highlights the varied influences on the development and articulation of Kashmiri community identities, such as Persian political ideologies, Sufi mystical thought from Central Asia, colonial ideas on the relationship between history and archeaology, and indigenous Kashmiri ideas of belonging to the homeland.

Mohammad Ishaq Khan, one of the few scholars working on medieval Kashmir, and from within Kashmir, has looked closely at the processes of Islamization in the Kashmir Valley, pointing out that it was not dependent on a single individual or event, but was rather a complex process of what he terms the gradual development of 'sharia-oriented culture', in which Central Asian Sufi mystics and indigenous Kashmiri saints played an equal part.[8] My recent book, *Languages of Belonging* (2004), examines a wide range of hitherto unexplored Kashmiri, Persian and Urdu writings to illustrate a complex interaction between regional and religious affiliations in articulating Kashmiri political and communitarian identities in the immediate pre-colonial, colonial, and early postcolonial periods in

[8] See, for instance, Khan, M. I. (2008). 'Islam, State and Society in Medieval Kashmir: A Revaluation of Mir Sayyid Hamadani's Historical Role', in Rao, A. *The Valley of Kashmir: Making and Unmaking of a Composite Culture?*, Manohar, New Delhi, pp. 139–176; Khan, M. I. (1994). *Kashmir's Transition to Islam*. Manohar, New Delhi.

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Kashmir.[9] Mridu Rai's work, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects* (2004), brings out the deep impact of colonial ideologies on the Dogra State, framing Kashmiri Muslim protest against it in terms of a denial of rights to this population.[10] By questioning the existence of a transcendent and unique Kashmiri identity and culture—encapsulated in the term *Kashmiriyat*—this scholarship has succeeded in bringing Kashmir back into the fold of South Asian historiography by contributing to important debates within the field, such as on Islamization in the Indian Subcontinent; the transactions between ideas of region, nation, and religious community in South Asian history; and the importance of colonial ideologies in shaping the political culture of princely states.

Two recently published works, neither written by a historian, are worth discussing in some detail in this section, since they nevertheless contribute to the historiography of Kashmir as they are deeply concerned with Kashmir's past and its relationship to its present. Moreover, rather than focusing on the competing official nationalisms of India and Pakistan and their territorial conflict over the region, both books attempt to highlight hitherto unknown aspects of the Kashmir story. Andrew Whitehead's *Mission in Kashmir* (2007) is focused primarily on the impact of the 1947–1948 conflict between India and Pakistan on the lives of ordinary men and women in Kashmir, a story he tells through their own words;[11] Ananya Jahanara Kabir's, *Territory of Desire* (2009), examines representations and ideas of Kashmir and their incorporation into the popular nationalist imagination that have rendered it into a territory to be desired on both sides of the border in the postcolonial period (although her primary focus is on India).[12]

A Mission in Kashmir sets out to investigate how the events of autumn 1947 in the town of Baramulla in the Kashmir Valley, which was attacked by a tribal invading force from the North West Frontier Province in Pakistan, influenced the emergent Kashmir crisis; it does

[9] Zutshi, C. (2004). *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir*. Oxford University Press, New York. See also, Zutshi, C. (2010). 'Kashmir and Kashmiriyat: The Politics of Diversity in South Asia', in Bhagavan, M. *Heterotopias: Nationalism and the Possibility of History in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, pp. 44–59.

[10] Rai, M. (2004). *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights, and the History of Kashmir*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.

[11] Whitehead, A. (2007). *A Mission in Kashmir*, Penguin/Viking, New Delhi.

[12] Kabir, A. J. (2009). *Territory of Desire: Representing the Valley of Kashmir*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

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so through a look at the stories of men and women who experienced the attack, primarily centred around the Christian mission and hospital in Baramulla. The book is based on the accounts of survivors of the incident; a substantial portion of which relates the trajectories through which the author traced these individuals, some of whom still remain in the Baramulla mission and others who have since left and are scattered all over the world. Tracking down these individuals and recording their memories serves several purposes in the book. First, Whitehead argues that these stories need to be recorded because they are about to be lost forever. Second, the memories of these individuals contain valuable information that explains the nature of the attack of the tribal forces on Kashmir in 1947, which set the course for a chain of events that led to the eventual full-scale war between India and Pakistan and the *de facto* partitioning of Kashmir between the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir and the Pakistani territories of Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas in 1949. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Whitehead argues that while the nature of the conflict in Kashmir may have changed since 1947, '...its root is the same faultline that first opened up as the tribesmen from the Frontier scaled the walls of the mission back in October 1947'.[13]

Since this is the main thesis of the book, Whitehead attempts to establish a link between the events of October 1947 and the current crisis in the Kashmir Valley, by pointing out that the activities of groups such as the Lashkar-i-Toiba, operating in Kashmir today, are not simply about jihad in an abstract sense, but rather that individual operatives of these groups, many from the North West Frontier Province, trace their ancestry back to the Afghan invaders of Kashmir in 1947. Operatives such as Abdullah Muntazer, the Lashkar's information secretary, for example, told Whitehead in an interview that he hailed from a family of jihadis who had fought for Kashmir since 1947, thereby validating his own role in fighting the Indian army in contemporary Kashmir. Whitehead goes even further back in tracing the affinity of Afghans for Kashmir to the fact that Kashmir was part of the Afghan Durrani Empire in the second half of the eighteenth century, from which time Afghans have shared a sense of kinship with Kashmir and its people. His evidence for this claim is a quote by Olaf Caroe, one-time colonial governor of the Frontier

[13] Whitehead, *A Mission in Kashmir*, p. 11.

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Province: 'From that time has come down that curious attachment which Pathans still feel today for this loveliest of lands'.[14]

It is important to point out here that drawing a direct line between the Afghan empire in the late eighteenth century and the Lashkar-i-Toiba in the early twenty-first century, with the tribal groups that invaded Kashmir in the mid-twentieth century somewhere in between, is deeply problematic. Each of these entities operated in Kashmir in radically different contexts, and whilst groups such as the Lashkar-i-Toiba may claim descent from the tribal invaders of 1947, attributing their operations in Kashmir to some sort of Afghan affinity towards the Kashmir Valley is to obscure the global political context in which these groups emerged and operated at the turn of the twenty-first century. The importance of the book lies not in drawing a connection between the tribal incursion in 1947 and the current crisis in Kashmir, but rather in its detailed, meticulous, and objective discussion of the events of 1947, which adds much to our knowledge about the causes and mechanics of the tribal invasion and serves to remove some of the confusion surrounding the political situation in Kashmir in 1947.

The fact that the book explains this situation using the stories and memories of people who experienced this attack makes it all the more compelling. One of the important contributions of the book is to illustrate how and why the tribal lashkar (army) lost favour amongst Kashmiri Muslims, who had initially welcomed its arrival into Kashmir. As Sheikh Ghulam Mohammed, a retired teacher from Baramulla who was a young boy at the time of the incursion, told Whitehead in an interview, the tribals were initially regarded as liberators who would free Kashmiris from the oppressive regime of the Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh.[15] Gradually, however, as it became apparent that they were looting, murdering, and abducting women indiscriminately, even men such as Inayatullah, a businessman from Baramulla, who had welcomed the tribals' arrival, began to turn against them.[16] Whitehead further suggests that, had the tribesmen not stopped in Baramulla for two days as they did to carry out this violence and looting, instead pressing ahead to Srinagar, they might have been able to capture Srinagar's airstrip, making it highly likely that Kashmir would have been taken by Pakistan. Regardless of these conjectures the violence described in the book against Muslims, Sikhs,

[14] Ibid., p. 41.
[15] Ibid., p. 74.
[16] Ibid., p. 124.

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Hindus and Christians alike, by the men in the tribal lashkar, adds a significant chapter to the historiography of the independence and partition of India, from which Kashmir is usually absent. Not only did Kashmir end up being partitioned as a result of the events of 1947, but the people in Kashmir Valley suffered a considerable amount of violence during the autumn of 1947.

While *A Mission in Kashmir* is mainly concerned with the politics of the events in Kashmir in late 1947, albeit through the voices of the people who lived through them, Ananya Jahanara Kabir's *Territory of Desire* presents an entirely new approach to the study of Kashmir precisely because it asks and attempts to understand why and how postcolonial nationalisms in South Asia have become so wedded to this territory, a fact that is usually taken for granted by most writings on the region. Particularly interested in the roots of the collective desire for the Kashmir Valley in postcolonial India, the book methodically examines the 'symbolic capital' associated with Kashmir Valley's landscape and products, which developed in the colonial period and were inherited by the postcolonial Indian state. It then goes on to discuss how Kashmiris themselves are attempting to reclaim representations of their homeland by offering a counter-narrative that asserts not only a metaphorical but also a literal '*azaadi*' (freedom) from Indian nationalist representations.

Kabir argues that the collective desire for the Kashmir Valley has to be located within colonial modernity which arrived in late-nineteenth century Kashmir through the camera's lens trained on its landscape, thereby rendering it beautiful for posterity. Photographers such as Samuel Burke rendered Kashmir a photographic subject and the circulation of these photographs of Kashmir's natural beauty as postcards and albums, Kabir states, 'augmented the value of Kashmir and transformed it from landscape to fantasy'.[17] It is this visual image of Kashmir Valley's landscape as fantasy that was replicated in postcolonial India through, for instance, films set in Kashmir, which elide over the reality of the postcolonial Kashmiri landscape, studded as it is with the ugliness of conflict. These 'Kashmir films' of the 1960s, such as *Junglee* and *Kashmir Ki Kali*, artfully appropriated Kashmir Valley's landscape to present Kashmir as the embodiment of the Indian nation and its cultural values whilst at the same time creating and legitimizing an urban, modern identity for Indian youth with

[17] Kabir, *Territory of Desire*, p. 71.

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Kashmir's landscape as their playground. Even the 1990s films, such as *Roja* and *Mission Kashmir*, which grapple with the scarring of Kashmir's landscape through political violence, Kabir argues, cannot leave behind the 'self-referential fantasy of Love in Kashmir',[18] thereby rendering it a quintessential part of the Indian nation. She presents a counter-perspective in the documentary by Kashmiri filmmaker Abir Bazaz—*Paradise on the River of Hell*—which not only presents Kashmir's landscape as brutalized, but also comments on the internal fracturing of Kashmiri society that has resulted from the insurgency. The film draws on texts and narratives internal to Kashmir rather than giving into the external fantasies of Kashmir, thereby providing an alternative vision to both the fantasies of the 1960s' films as well as the traumas of Kashmir in the 1990s.[19]

In a similar vein, Kabir presents the Kashmiri handicraft as a fetish and signifier of Kashmiriness, for Indians and Kashmiris, and at the same time discusses how Kashmiri artists are attempting to use their craft as a means of providing an alternative history of Kashmiri subjectivity. Since the nineteenth century, the Kashmiri craft as souvenir has stood in for Kashmir as pastoral, traditional, and the antithesis of the modern. Kabir juxtaposes the production of cheap souvenirs by Kashmir artisans for the mass tourist market in the lanes of Zadibal, Srinagar, with their ability to counter this mass production with individual works that challenge the commodification of Kashmiri crafts. She discusses the work of the craftsman artist, Masood Hussain, whose painted papier mache reliefs return objects of daily Kashmiri life that have become souvenirs to the Kashmiri home, thus 'simultaneously retrieve[ing] the spiritual connection between craft, everyday life and topography that is his definition of kashmiriyat, while attesting to the destruction of that organic connectivity through the forces of collective desire generated by rival claimants to the Valley's territory'.[20]

By uncovering the roots of Kashmir's place in popular culture and tourism, *Territory of Desire* forces the reader to confront received assumptions about Kashmir's position in postcolonial India as a land of beauty and antiquity that reminds the modern Indian nation of its own true self. Further, by examining the responses of Kashmiri artists

[18] Ibid., p. 49.
[19] Ibid., pp. 49–53.
[20] Ibid., p. 132.

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and poets to this collective desire for their homeland, the text provides a less destructive site for a conversation between Kashmiri and Indian sides about the crisis in the region. Nevertheless, the book remains virtually silent on the issue of religion and religious identity in shaping representations of Kashmir and Kashmiri counter-representations. The reluctance to address this issue is understandable, given that the conflict in Kashmir is generally viewed through a religious lens with rather dyspeptic and sometimes downright deleterious results. However, one cannot wish away religion in a discussion of Kashmir, especially since not only did Kashmiri Muslims choose religion as a means of identification in the early twentieth century for a variety of reasons, but also because Islam has emerged as a powerful source of identification against the Indian state in the past 20 years, making, as Humra Quraishi, in her book *Kashmir: The Untold Story*, states, 'religious orthodoxy a part of the attitude of dissent'.[21]

While Kabir gives full voice to Kashmiri Pandits who had to flee Kashmir Valley at the outset of the insurgency and to the ways in which they have sought to reclaim their homeland through poetry and other artistic works, she pays little attention to the actual and metaphorical violence of what has increasingly become the most vocal form of dissent and critique against the Indian state—orthodox Islam—against groups within Kashmiri society itself, especially women. This is not to suggest in any way that the Kashmiri movement against the Indian state is a religious one, but rather that the incessant violence and degradation suffered by Kashmiris during the insurgency has led even the most secular of Kashmiris to adopt a Muslim identity as a marker of difference. Inevitably, the focus of this identification has been Kashmiri women, who have become subject to dress codes and moral policing, not just by militant groups, but quite as much by their own families. *Territory of Desire* is about the desire for the landscape of Kashmir and the violence wrought on it as a result as well as Kashmiri counter narratives for *azaadi*, but it fails to address two critical issues: whether this freedom is for all groups within Kashmiri society, and how, in fact, some Kashmiri counter narratives end up being just as homogenizing and hegemonic as the Indian nationalist discourse they are articulated against.

[21] Quraishi, H. (2004). *Kashmir: The Untold Story*, Penguin, New Delhi, p. 133.

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Kashmir studies in Kashmir

The issues discussed above have profoundly influenced the development of Kashmir Studies within Kashmir itself, including historical studies of the region produced in the Kashmiri academy. After all, most of the scholars discussed in this essay, including the author of this essay, write about Kashmir from their privileged positions outside Kashmir. Therefore a brief discussion of the situation faced by scholars and others writing from within Kashmir and the state of Kashmir Studies in Kashmir is imperative here. It should come as no surprise that history is deeply politicized in Kashmir and that intense battles over Kashmir's past are carried out in popular media in Kashmir Valley almost everyday. Though this is hardly novel for India, where the past has always been a political battleground (as the recent brouhaha over Jaswant Singh's book on Jinnah and partition illustrates),[22] in Kashmir these battles take on a deeper existential meaning and actually determine the content of scholarly production on the region.

This has happened in two related ways: first, the fierce opposition to India means that any historical or other work on Kashmir that even hints at a historical relationship between Kashmir and Hindustan is eviscerated in the media and during talks and in other such venues; and second, there is a general move towards glorifying the period in Kashmir's history after the advent of Islam while eliding the region's rich past in the pre-Islamic period. This is understandable, given that starting in the late nineteenth century, Indologists and colonial historians focused on Kashmir as the font of Aryan civilization, an idea that was used by Indian nationalist historians to appropriate Kashmir into the narrative of the Hindu history of the Indian nation. The rise of Hindutva forces in twentieth-century India and their focus on rewriting India's past from the perspective of the development of a monolithic Hindu community has deepened the alienation of Indian Muslims in general and Kashmiri Muslims in particular. It is unfortunate, however, that in questioning these problematic historical

[22] Singh, J. (2009). *Jinnah: India-Partition-Independence*, Rupa & Co., New Delhi. Singh's suggestion in this book that the leaders of the Indian National Congress, such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel, should be held accountable for the role they played in bringing about the partition of British India, led to his expulsion from the Bharatiya Janata Party and generated a fierce controversy in the Indian media over whether Jinnah was solely responsible for partition. It also brought to the forefront the deeply intertwined nature of history and politics in the Indian subcontinent.

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narratives, Kashmir's history has become 'Islamic', thereby becoming a mirror image of what it seeks to oppose.

These two trends are visible in the controversy surrounding the publication of the vision document of the Institute for Kashmir Studies at Kashmir University. Established in 2006 to analyse, debate, and re-evaluate Kashmir's rich cultural, spiritual and intellectual heritage, the Institute was inaugurated in 2008 by the President of India. The vision document, issued soon thereafter by the director of the Institute, G. M. Khawaja (pen name Meem Hai Zaffar), stated that, 'Kashmir has been an integral part of the cultural mosaic of India and no study of Kashmiri thought and culture is possible without situating it within the broader perspective of Indian thought and culture'.[23] Although the document equally extols Kashmir's historical interconnections to Persia and Central Asia, a campaign was carried out in the media against the director for being a traitor to the Kashmiri cause and for wilfully attempting to rewrite Kashmir's history. This is one of many examples of intellectual terrorism that has stymied open scholarly discourse in Kashmir, both in English and in Urdu, and prevented the Institute from realizing its full scholarly potential. Most graduate students pursuing graduate degrees at the Institute and the University in general steer clear of controversial topics and any real analysis for fear that it may lead to reprisals, both from the government and other entities, and an early end to their careers.

Not surprisingly, it is fiction and poetry that has provided the creative outlet for Kashmiri writers across the political spectrum to voice their fears, disillusionments and hopes. In this regard, it is worth mentioning a recently published collection of Urdu short stories, entitled *Yeh Basti Azaboon Ki* (This Place of Agonies), by Mansoor Ahmed Mansoor.[24] The stories in this collection are thinly veiled, fictional depictions of the political situation in Kashmir during the insurgency and the great damage it has wrought on the place and its people. Just as the fictional narratives on the partition of British India transcend the need to blame particular groups, instead presenting its human aspects, so too *Yeh Basti Azaboon Ki* succeeds in illustrating the permeation of violence through the entire fabric of Kashmiri society and the resultant decay and desolation brought on by two

[23] The Institute for Kashmir Studies. (2008). *The Institute for Kashmir Studies Vision Document*, The University of Kashmir, Srinagar, p. 5.

[24] Mansoor, M. A. (2009). *Yeh Basti Azaboon Ki*, Mir Publications, Bandipora, Kashmir.

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decades of civil and military conflict. While the state is clearly the chief perpetrator of violence, Mansoor presents the brutality of Kashmiri groups against 'traitors', and ordinary Kashmiri men towards women with equal intensity; there are no heroes or villains in these stories. The collection is an elegy to the disintegration of the composite culture of Kashmiri society and the long-term impact of the spiritual, intellectual, and corporeal carnage on everyday life.

The future of Kashmir studies

Regardless of the problems faced by scholars writing on Kashmir, Kashmir Studies, both inside and outside Kashmir, has taken a welcome turn away from the purely political aspects of the territorial conflict over the region and the insurgency, towards a more people-centred approach. Whether it is through

- an analysis of the stories and memories of people who lived through the tribal incursion of 1947;
- a discussion of the ways in which Kashmir has been represented and incorporated into the Indian popular imagination even as individual Kashmiris contest these representations;
- an illustration of the heterogeneity of Kashmiris' views on the political situation;
- a discussion of Kashmir's political culture in the colonial period through Kashmiri and other writings;
- or fictionalized accounts of the brutal impact of the insurgency on Kashmiris' lives,

scholarship and fiction are both attempting to move beyond conventional political science/historical approaches to the study of Kashmir, through, in part, an analysis of a variety of sources, including poetry, art, film, and oral histories. However, since most scholarship still remains chronologically limited to the post-1947 period, large parts of Kashmir's past remain uncharted, particularly its early and medieval history.

I would suggest that a broadening of the scope of Kashmir Studies to include historical studies of the early, medieval and early modern periods has much to offer both South Asian and world history and is imperative precisely because Kashmir's past is such hotly disputed terrain. Since Kashmir historically lay at the crossroads of South, Central, and East Asia, it can be studied as a region where

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multi-religious interactions, composite political practices, and multiple imperial influences alongside the indigenous came together to produce a distinct political and social culture. A study of Kashmir's past from a borderlands perspective would not only add to borderlands scholarship but also reveal hitherto neglected aspects of Kashmir's history.[25] It is somewhat ironic, if also apropos, that this land of contested pasts has a rich tradition of historical writing, much of which was produced in the medieval and early modern periods. A study of this literature would not only make a contribution to the scholarship on ideas of history and traditions of historiography in South Asia, but also increase our understanding of the multiple ways in which Kashmiris conceived their land, its geographical location, its past, and the bearing of the meaning of its history on the present.

This type of scholarship, however, is possible only if scholars and writers of Kashmir around the world engage in meaningful dialogue to bridge the gap between the practice of Kashmir Studies within and outside the region. A recent edited volume that took on this task and succeeded admirably—and could serve as a model for future volumes on Kashmir—is *The Valley of Kashmir: The Making and Unmaking of a Composite Culture?* (2008), a volume begun by Aparna Rao and finished by T. N. Madan after Rao's death. The volume is unique within Kashmir Studies for a number of reasons: first, it brings together scholars from across the disciplines, including historians, linguists, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and literary critics; second, the volume engages in a dialogue between Kashmir's past and its present, so that it is not simply about its history, or its current political situation, but rather about how they act on each other; and, finally, and perhaps most importantly, its contributors are drawn from Kashmiri, European, and American academies. As T. N. Madan put it in his foreword, 'The contributing authors are scholars of distinction working on three continents, and include several Kashmiris, resident in the Valley or outside. I do not know of any book quite like this one'.[26]

The topics explored in *The Valley of Kashmir* range from mass conversion to Islam and the relationship between Shaivite and Sufi traditions in medieval Kashmir[27] to the discourse of the Kashmiri

[25] See Zutshi, C. (2010). 'Rethinking Kashmir's History from a Borderlands Perspective', *History Compass*, 8/7: 594–608.

[26] Madan, T. N. (2008). 'Foreword', in Rao, A. *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. xii.

[27] Hangloo, R. L. (2008). 'Mass Conversion in Medieval Kashmir: Academic Perceptions and People's Practice', in Rao, A. *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp. 97–138;

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insurgent movement[28]; from Kashmiri language and music in the context of the Muslim near East and Central Asia[29] to Kashmiri exceptionalism in a long historical context;[30] from the idea of Kashmir as paradise on earth to the transformation of the role of Kashmiri women from icon to agents in the contemporary conflict in Kashmir,[31] amongst many others. Ronald Inden's essay on Kashmir as paradise on earth draws on Kashmir's early Sanskrit texts, medieval writings, and modern films to illustrate the discourses and practices that are responsible for the tenacity of the concept of Kashmir as 'privileged locale', which to some extent explains the continued intensity of the Indo-Pak rivalry over the region. The essays in the volume thus remind us not only about the historical and political facts that made or make Kashmir what it is, without indulging in geographical and political determinisms, but quite as much about the ideas that have given it a particular shape in our imaginations. The future of Kashmir Studies, encouragingly, seems to lie in this direction.

Kak, J. (2008). 'Lalla's Relation to the Shaivite and Sufi Traditions in Kashmir', in Rao, A. *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp. 177–206.

[28] Behera, N. C. (2008). 'The Rhetorics of the Kashmiri Militant Movement: *Azadi* or *Jihad*', in Rao, A. *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp. 605–652.

[29] Kachru, B. B. (2008). 'The Dying Linguistic Heritage of the Kashmiris: Kashmiri Literary Culture and Language', in Rao, A. *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp. 303–338; Pacholczyk, J. (2008). 'Kashmiri Music in the Context of Music of Muslim Near East and Central Asia', in Rao, A. *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp. 339–364.

[30] Madan, T. N. (2008). 'Kashmir, Kashmiris, Kashmiriyat: An Introductory Essay', in Rao, A. *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp. 1–34; Evans, A. (2008). 'Kashmiri Exceptionalism', in Rao, A. *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp. 713–741.

[31] Inden, R. (2008). 'Kashmir as Paradise on Earth', in Rao, A. *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp. 523–562; Manchanda, R. (2008). 'Kashmiri Women and the Conflict: From Icon to Agency', in Rao, A. *The Valley of Kashmir*, pp. 653–712.

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