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Religious Ideology and Social Structure: The Muslims and Hindus of Kashmir

To me my religions; to you yours.
The Koran: Surah CIX : 6

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In this paper I am concerned with defining the socio-cultural identity of the Muslims and Hindus of rural Kashmir. Such an exercise will have first to take note of those attributes that the two categories of people themselves judge to be of critical importance. I shall thus examine the images that Muslims and Hindus have both of themselves and of each other. Once the attributes have been defined, discussion will be focused on real life interaction observed in the course of fieldwork. To give historical depth to the materials obtained through interviews and observation, limited use has been made of selected published works. I have not burdened this essay with ethnographical and historical details, but have concentrated on exploring the general principles that may be shown to underlie what people believe in and what they do. In other words, an effort has been made to combine the views from within and without. Needless to emphasize, doing so is not an exercise in simple accumulation of points of view—the effort is to examine not the two views per se but the relation between them.

Situated in the Himalayas at an average altitude of 6,000 feet
above sea level, Kashmir proper—not to be confused with the state of Jammu and Kashmir of which it is a part—is a basin, 85 miles long and 25 miles broad. It is located approximately between 33°—35° N and 74°—76° E, and has an area of 6,131 square miles. The people of Kashmir partake of the common cultural heritage of the subcontinent of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. At the same time, they have their own distinctive cultural traits, social structures, and historical experience. In this respect, the Kashmiris are like any other regional community such as the Bengalis, Maharashtrians or Tamils; but the insights which our study of them is likely to offer would seem to be rare if not unique.

As a culture area, the Kashmir Valley is of crucial importance for our understanding of, for example, the synthesis of Muslim and Hindu world-views and such fundamental principles of social organization as caste. It has not, however, received from anthropologists and sociologists the kind of close attention that it richly deserves.  

Kashmir has a population of 2,435,701 of whom 832,280 live in the southern district of Anantnag. It is primarily from a village of this district that the ethnographical content of this paper is drawn. I have also visited a few other villages in this district and in the central district of Srinagar (population: 827,697). The rural areas of these two districts are generally believed by Kashmiris to be culturally similar. The northern district of Baramulla (population: 775,724) is, however, said to be culturally somewhat distinct in several respects. The present paper may be, therefore, said to be generally descriptive of the rural areas of the two districts of Anantnag and Srinagar. The rural population of Anantnag is 758,046, or 91 per cent of the total. The corresponding figure for Srinagar is 404,444, or 48 per cent (India, 1972a and 1972b).

1 Literature of general interest on Kashmir, including travellers’ accounts, is considerable; sociological studies of Kashmiris are few. Lawrence’s book (1895; reprinted 1967) and gazetteer (1909) are invaluable sources of information. He toured the valley during the 1890s in his capacity as settlement commissioner. The only published major social anthropological study is Madan (1965). For a general introductory account and bibliographies see Crane (1956). Suggestions regarding future research are given in Madan (1969).
Muslims occupy a position of overwhelming importance in the population of Kashmir. They call themselves Musalman which is the Persian form of the word Muslim (see Hughes, 1935). They form 94 per cent of the total population in the three districts taken together—95 per cent in Anantnag, and 91 per cent in Srinagar. If we consider only the rural population of Anantnag, Muslims again account for over 95 per cent of it. The rest of the population consists almost exclusively of Hindus, though Sikhs also are present in a few villages. It must be noted here that there are no Hindus at all in about 56 per cent of the villages of the Anantnag and Srinagar districts (India, 1943). Village boundaries are not, however, impassable barriers, and exclusively Muslim settlements would often seem to have various kinds of relationship with Hindus in adjoining villages.

The native Hindus of Kashmir all belong to the Brahman varna, and are divided into two endogamous subcastes. The Kashmiri Brahmans call themselves Bhatta and are generally known in India as Kashmiri Pandits. ‘Bhatta’ is the Prakrit form of the Sanskrit bhartri which means ‘scholar’, ‘doctor’, or the same as the Sanskrit pandit (see Macdonell, 1924). Since I have elsewhere used the term Kashmiri Pandit (see, for example, Madan, 1965), I will continue to do so in this paper. How Kashmir came to have a single Hindu caste will be described later. I will first take up the problem of Muslim identity.

**Muslim Identity: Muslim Representation**

The problem of mutual identification among the Muslims of rural Kashmir does not arise very often. Within a village all adults know each other. The average population of a village in the district of Anantnag is 511 (India, 1966:5). When a person goes to another village, he stays with his relatives; the purpose of the visit most often is to renew contact with them. A Muslim tenant on a visit to his landowner in another village will stay with him and, if the latter also is a Muslim, eat with him. A Pandit landowner will supply uncooked victuals
to the tenant, who will cook his own meal in the compound. Utensils for the purpose will be borrowed for him by the landowner's household from one of their Muslim neighbours. Mutual recognition in such situations is not problematic; but it is important, for Hindus and Muslims observe different degrees of mutual avoidance. More about this later.

Even when one encounters total strangers, there are several visible signs which identify them as one's co-religionists or otherwise. Thus, Muslims and Pandits do not dress identically: the differences may not appear striking to an outsider but a Kashmiri would never make a mistake in this regard. Besides differences of male and female dress—of headgear, gown, trousers, and sometimes even footwear—many Pandits wear tyok on their forehead: a mark of saffron or some other prescribed paste, oblong among men and round among women. Muslims wear beards more often than Pandits, and of a distinctive cut. There are differences of speech, mainly lexical (see Kachru, 1969:21-27). Though native Kashmiris look very much alike (see Raychaudhuri, 1961, and also Bhattacharya, 1966), two recent Muslims immigrant groups have distinctive features and speak a non-Kashmiri dialect called Paryum (literally, 'foreign', 'alien').

Identification of people in terms of the Muslim-Pandit dichotomy is thus not difficult in the rural areas, except perhaps when the stranger is from a town or is an urbanized villager, and thus likely to be without any of the above visible signs. Any purposive interaction with a stranger is dependent upon the initiation of a specific process of identity establishment. This process usually follows a predictable pattern.

The most crucial cue lies in the family name. Muslim personal names in rural Kashmir are identical with similar names anywhere in the world. Family names such as Baig, Sayyid, Mausodi, and Shaikh refer to the fact of descent: the Baig, Mausodi, and Sayyid are descended from early immigrant families, and the Shaikh, who constitute the overwhelming majority of the Muslims, from converts.8 The immigrant families fall into

8 Shaikh, an Arabic word (pl. shuyukh), literally means an old man or man of authority (Hughes, 1935). The term seems to be widely used
three categories: Arabs, Mughals, and Pathans. There is a fourth category of immigrant Muslims who entered the Valley late in the nineteenth century. They are called Gujar ('cowherd') and Bakarwal ('goatherd'), and constitute two somewhat distinctive groups. They are the Muslims who, as mentioned above, speak a non-Kashmiri dialect among themselves.

Not many Shaikhs use that appellation along with their names. It is more common to use other types of family name. One of the most widely prevalent of such names among Kashmiri Muslims is Bhat, which is, of course, the same as Bhatta, and obviously bears testimony of the fact of conversion. There are other examples of this kind of surname such as Pandit, Koul (Sanskrit kaula, originally the name of a Brahman sect), Naik and Ryosh (Sanskrit rishi or saintly, learned man). There is still another category of common family names which either directly refer to one's hereditary family occupation or indirectly through association. Thus, an Ali Khair is a blacksmith (khar) and a Rasul Navid is a barber (navid). A Samad Vagay will readily be recognized as a milkman, and even referred to as Samad Gur, for the Vagays are milkmen (gur).

All types of surname are called zat, and enquiries about them are made in the effort to obtain identity specification. The important question is what does zat denote? Apparently it points to birth, as does the well known word jati used elsewhere among Hindus. The Kashmiris, however, use the word zat in a broader sense to connote essence or inherent nature. Bad-zat is a term of abuse and is used to condemn an evil natured or mean person rather than to refer to lowly birth, which would seem to be the primary meaning of the term in the original Arabic-Persian (see Steingass, 1957). Similarly, Kashmiri Muslims refer to God as Zat-i-pak, the one whose nature is pure. Zat is also used in classifying breeds of cattle or varieties of

in South Asia to designate Muslims descended from Hindu converts (see Gait, 1911 and Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary). In Kashmir: 'The census of 1891 does not show the divisions into which the Musalmans of the valley fall, but it may be stated that the great mass of the village people come under the head Shaikh, and are descendants of the original Hindus. . . .' (Lawrence, 1967:306). It is likely that some Shaikhs, particularly in urban areas, may be descended from immigrants.
inanimate object such as paddy or timber.³

When used as part of a person's name, zat has the narrower meaning of either birth (e.g., Sayyid, Shaikh) or hereditary occupation (e.g., Khar, Navid, Gur). It does not, however, necessarily indicate a person's actual source of livelihood: a family of any occupational category may have enough land not to want to exercise their traditional calling; or, a particular individual may choose to enter a new occupation. These facts are ascertained by inquiring about kar, a general term for work or occupation, or about kashb, skills.⁴ It may be noted, however, that people rarely move from one skilled or specialist occupation to another, though agriculture is deemed to be open to all. Agriculturists are called Zamindar and non-agricultural artisan groups are designated Nangar, literally 'those in search of bread'.

At this stage it will be helpful to introduce some ethnographical details from a village.⁵ Utrassu-Umanagri is situated 12

⁸ Gould mentions a similar use of the term jati among villagers in eastern Uttar Pradesh: 'One also speaks of jatis of . . . animals . . . of botanical objects . . . (and even of) woven fabrics . . . What we see operating here is ethno-conceptualization. In this instance Indians are manifesting a long established, culturally patterned tendency to regard endogamous, ritually and functionally differentiated social units as if they were natural species' (1969: 23). Marriott and Inden have been engaged in working out a general thesis regarding jatis as natural genera (see Marriott and Inden, 1974).

Eglar reports from the Punjab in Pakistan: 'When a mature person is asked about his zat, which means caste and also identity, he is most likely to answer: 'What identity can a human being have? The only one who has an identity is the Almighty. I am a carpenter (or zamindar, or batter or this, that) by occupation''' (1960:29).

An interesting use of the word zat appears to have been made in Mughal administration. A mansabdar, or noble, was accorded a double rank. His so-called zat rank apparently gave recognition to his social status, and his salary was determined in terms of it; his sawar rank stipulated the number of troopers he was expected to maintain (see Gascoigne, 1971:105).

⁴ Barth has recorded an identical use of these two terms among the Swat Pathans who, however, use quom for caste status (see Barth, 1960:118).

⁵ My first period of fieldwork in Kashmir, the longest so far, was in
miles east of the town of Anantnag. It is a rather large, bi-nucleated—hence the hyphenated name—village of about 1,542 acres, inhabited by 2,644 persons (see Madan, 1965). Of these, 2,122 persons (80 per cent of the total population) are Muslims and the remaining 522 are Pandits. The Muslims are divided into two cultural subgroups; 1,352, or 64 per cent of all Muslims are natives and 770 relatively recent immigrants.

The natives engage in a variety of economic pursuits. Over half of them, totalling 121 Muslim households (728 persons), are agriculturists—peasant proprietors or proprietors-cum-tenants. Another 111 households (624 persons) fall in the traditional category of Nangar, though after the abolition of big landed estates in the State in 1950 (see Bamzai, 1962:716-18) there are no completely landless Muslim households in the village. Enquiries made by me in other villages indicate that the Nangar generally account for about one-third to one-half of all Muslim households. They never seem to outnumber the Zamin-dar. As will be pointed out below, several of the households of Utrassu-Umanagri that I have classified as Nangar in arriving at the above proportions are doubtful cases. But I will first give the distribution of the Muslim households in terms of occupation (see Table 1).

Besides the occupational categories listed in Table 1, I came across the following in other villages or in the town of Anantnag: (i) Aram (vegetable gardener); (ii) Band (minstrel); (iii) Barbuz (grain parcher); (iv) Gada Hainz (fisherman); (v) Hainz (boatman); (vi) Kawuj (attendant at Hindu cremation sites); (vii) Sangtarash (stone-cutter); (viii) Torkachhan (wood carver); (ix) Vonya (grocer).6

1937-58 when I was a scholar at the Australian National University. Since then I have returned to the area of original fieldwork for several short spells. I was there last in 1975. The tense employed in this essay is of the ethnographic present.

Various census reports on Kashmir seem to have failed to distinguish between traditional roles and hereditary occupational groups. Thus, the 1931 report lists groups like Derwish (Muslim mendicant) and Jogi (ascetic) which are not such groups. Many other functional roles could be mentioned: e.g., dandur (vegetable dealer) galadar (grain dealer), ghasl (grasscutter), hamami (attendant at public baths), varinya (midwife) and vaza (cook). A hereditary group which I heard mentioned was that of the Galawan who reared and stole horses (see
TABLE 1

Native Muslim Households By Traditional Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Category</th>
<th>Number of Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Zamindar (landowner-cultivator, tenant)</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Nangar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Dob (washerman)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Dosil-Chhan (builder-carpenter)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) Domb (traditionally, messengers of revenue officials)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) Dun (cotton carder)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) Gur (milkman, cowherd)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vi) Hakim (physician)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vii) Jalakhodoz (rug maker)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(viii) Kandur (baker)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ix) Kanyul-Shakhsaar (basket weaver)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(x) Khar (blacksmith)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xi) Kral (potter)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xii) Navid (barber)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xiii) Puj (butcher)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xiv) Sech (tailor)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xv) Sonur (silversmith)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xvi) Tabardar, Arikash (woodcutter, sawer)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xvii) Teliwoni (oilpresser)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xviii) Thonthur (coppersmith)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xix) Vatul (cobbler)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xx) Wovur (weaver)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xxi) Mallah (religious functionary)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>232</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Muslim Zamindar households of Utrassu-Umanagri may be deemed to be those who have no source of income other than cultivation of land, whether self-owned or leased in, or of both types. There are no landless labourers in the

Lawrence, 1967:311). The 1941 census report lists Potters, Blacksmiths, Carpenters and Oilpressers, and groups all the rest together as Shaikh unless they happen to be Sayyid, Mughal, Pathan or Rajput. (See India, 1943).

There were only a handful of literate Muslims in Utrassu-Umanagri in 1958; the oldest of them was about 18. This fact ruled out government service as a major source of livelihood for them. The two lambardar (revenue collectors) of the village are, however, Muslims. A few more are employed as forest guards.
village though many agriculturists work on daily wages for other landowners during busy seasons. The Muslim Zamindar of the village are small landowners. The average size of the holding is just under an acre and three quarters, but this figure is somewhat misleading in respect of the Muslims since it is based on all holdings, including those of the Pandits. There are 636 landownership registrations among the native Muslims of the village, the basis of registration being the individual and not the household. Recalling that there are 1,352 native Muslims, it will be noticed that the registrations are indicative of the already mentioned fact of widespread ownership of land. Of these registrations, 139 are in respect of holdings of 1 to 3 acres, 27 in respect of holdings above 3 but below 6 acres, and only 2 in respect of holdings above 6 acres. All the rest are below one acre. The ceiling on agricultural land was fixed at 20 acres through legislation in 1950. No Muslim household lost any land at that time. Only one Muslim landowner had more than 12 acres and was thus affected by the tenancy reforms which fixed the share of the tenant at three-quarters of the produce in respect of such holdings. A large number of tenants, mostly Muslims, received small shares of about 170 acres of land that was compulsorily acquired from Pandit landowners and redistributed among the tillers by the Government.

Turning our attention to the Nangar, it may be noted that:

(i) All the names of such groups, except the Domb, are directly descriptive of skilled work of some kind or of non-skilled but specialized services. The Domb have a traditional calling but their name does not originate in it. They seem to be descendants of a low caste (see Lawrence, 1967:311), maybe of the Domba mentioned in early historical accounts of Kashmir (see Pandit, 1968).8

(ii) Whereas most of the Nangar in the village are stable groups following their respective hereditary occupations, some of them represent the arrival of relatively recent skills in

8“Dom: A widespread caste of scavengers, musicians, and sometimes weavers, traders or even money-lenders; possibly representing an aboriginal tribe of some influence and power (Domra Dombu) (Hutton, 1951:279).
the village, or seem to be more open to recruitment than others. The Bakers, Rugmakers and Tailors of the village, though natives, have had no predecessors there. The Butchers and Weavers seem to be relatively open categories. Only one of the four Butcher households have a tradition of being meat dealers. Similarly, the Weavers seem to be an assorted category, only some of whom are Weavers by birth. Incidentally, most of the Weaver households have a secondary occupation—the breeding of silkworms. Sericulture and silk weaving have been carried on in Kashmir for several hundred years (see Bamzai, 1962:451).

(iii) Some of the households following the above occupations own shops. The Butchers are a good example and so are the Tailors; but the former also sell meat at their homes and the latter divide work between home and shop. Shopkeeping is not treated as an occupation by any group in the village, but grocers in the nearby town of Anantnag have a long tradition of it. Generally speaking, shopkeeping in the rural areas is merely indicative of a group’s or a household’s mode of operation.

Finally, a few words about the Gujar and Bakarwal. As already stated, they number 770, and comprise 98 households. They live on the upper boundaries of Utrassu-Umanagri, along and deep inside the forests. Some of the Gujar—the group which came earlier than the Bakarwal—have taken to agriculture and sedentary life, and a few have even intermarried with native Muslims. There are 71 registrations of landownership in the names of the Gujar. However, most of them continue their traditional occupation, as do the Bakarwal: they graze their sheep and cattle, and those of other people in exchange for grain, and sell dairy products. Most of them leave the village during the winter months in search of warmth and pastures for their flocks. The Gujar and Bakarwal are an important element in the life of the village but they are not of it. They look different from native Muslims, speak their own dialect, live in distinctive huts, follow their own traditional pursuits and customs, and have a system of social control centred round the jirga or tribal council.

* See footnote 6 on p. 27.
Occupations such as the above are widespread and stable categories in rural Kashmir and, therefore, are employed by the people themselves as indicators of socio-cultural identity. In any particular village one encounters them as groups of households, usually but not necessarily related by ties of kinship and/or marriage. The Zamindar category is the melting pot, as it were, inasmuch as anybody might become a cultivator, even if he has no land of his own. The various Nangar groups, however, are characterized by a low degree of occupational mobility and a high incidence of endogamous marriages. Only 9 per cent of the adult Muslims of the village are in skilled or specialist occupations other than those indicated by their zat. A count of marriages among the Nangar, spread over two generations, revealed a little under two-thirds of them to be endogamous. (Here it may be noted that marriage between both parallel and cross cousins takes place among Kashmiri Muslims but is not prescriptive.)

When asked to explain these cultural regularities, my Muslim informants generally stressed three considerations: (i) The most specific of these is what may be called practical considerations. Since every Nangar is assured of a clientele for his goods or services, it is only reasonable that he should pursue his traditional occupation. His relations with his clients are generally on a hereditary and family-to-family basis; land-owning households pay for goods and services in kind according to pre-determined scales, while the others pay in cash. Barter is rarely practised nowadays. The most practical as well as efficient way of learning a craft is to start when quite young, by helping the older members of one's household in their chores. One's son is one's natural apprentice as well as one's successor. (ii) Endogamous marriages are desirable for reasons of compatibility. There often are differences in the life-styles of different groups. Boatmen and Mullah are good examples. Moreover, women often help men in their chores; a Carpenter's daughter would obviously be of no help to a Potter, or a Barber's daughter to a Boatman. (iii) Both pursuit of hereditary
occupation and endogamy are commendable as being inherently right. The word zat (in its adjectival form of zati) is employed in this context also.

It follows from the foregoing that we ask as to how does one acquire one's essential nature, one's true identity, or zat, in terms of which certain actions become inherently right or natural? This was not a question which my informants generally welcomed as they felt that they were being pushed against the wall. Several of them, however, interpreted the word zati as meaning 'at the root or base' which was further paraphrased as 'at or by birth'. One might translate this statement to mean that one's essential nature is endowed upon one by the circumstances of birth. The notion of zat is genealogical but stands for more than the fact of birth.

If the foregoing is a culturally valid position to adopt in respect of the self-ascription of Kashmiri Muslims, the most crucial question that arises is, who is a Muslim?

There seems to be general agreement among the Muslims of rural Kashmir that anyone who avows to be a Muslim is to be regarded as such. They maintain that this is what the Koran teaches. They further assert that a pious Muslim (i) believes in the oneness of God and in Muhammad as His prophet; (ii) offers prayers (namaz) at the appointed times; (iii) gives alms (zakat); (iv) keeps the prescribed hours of eating (roza) during the month of Ramadan; and (v) performs the pilgrimage to Mecca (hajj) when he has enough savings for the purpose. My informants pointed out that lack of means, poor health, and preoccupation with household responsibilities often prevent a person from offering prayers, giving alms, observing roza or performing hajj. Such unwilling transgressions of the desired conduct are to be forgiven a person if he reaffirms the most important tenet of Islam by solemnly reciting the Kalimah on being challenged: La illah illallah Muhammadur Rasul Allah, there is but one God and Muhammad is His prophet.10

10 Whenever Kashmiri Muslim villagers have to cite the authority of religion, they invariably invoke the Koran. Being illiterate, they are unable to cite a specific text. Far from being a disadvantage, their illiteracy and ignorance have emerged as a source of strength inasmuch as doubt has been banished from their lives. Whatever the source of their beliefs, they attribute them to the unimpeachable authority of the
To deny such a person the status of Muslim is to turn against the will and voice of God and the prophet. The accident of birth is irrelevant in this regard. One of my educated urban informants, a Shaikh, stressed this point by asserting that he who embraces Islam out of conviction is a better Muslim than he who follows it as the religion of his parents. ‘Such a man is deservedly called shaikh, the leader who points the path to others’.

In the course of my fieldwork I heard of about a dozen cases of recent conversion of Pandits to Islam. I was able to interview one of these converts and to discuss his case with a number of my informants, Pandits as well as Muslims. Since this case throws considerable light on the notion of zat in relation to religious identity, I will briefly discuss it here.

He told me that his name was Ghulam but that, before conversion to Islam, which took place about twenty years ago, he was known as Darshan Krad, and belonged to a Pandit family of Utrassu-Umanagri. His gotra name was Shandalaya. He had been much persecuted by his cousins, particularly because he was a bachelor.\(^{11}\) He had several Muslim friends in the village and they showed him greater sympathy and understanding than his own kin, who robbed him of his property and would have willingly starved him to death. His Muslim friends fed him and gave him shelter in their homes. Ultimately, he became a Muslim. He was, however, very badly treated by Muslims once he changed his religion. Though he is living with a Muslim household of the village, he is doubtful whether they will give him a decent burial. It is for this reason that he begs and not merely to keep himself alive. He is obviously saving for the rainy day and hopes to have enough money for a shroud for his dead body and for its burial. He lamented over his moral and physical condition and called his act of conversion ‘a stupid act’ (budhi-vinash) by which he became a ‘breaker of karma’ (karma-khandit). As he sees himself, he is a totally lost man.

holy book. Distinctions between the sunnah, hadith, and iman (see Hughes, 1935) are not generally made by common people; only the literate are aware of them. I have dealt with this phenomenon elsewhere (see Madan, n.d.).

\(^{11}\) On the sad lot of bachelor among Kashmiri Pandits, see Madan (1965:101-02).
The Pandits, to whose homes he comes to beg, generally pity him but treat him as a fallen man who is of course no longer a Brahman, even though he had been born one. Small urchins ask him to sing Brahman devotional songs (lila) and promise him handfuls of rice. He often obliges them. My Pandit informants said that he had given me a fairly accurate account of what had happened, but that he had omitted to tell me that he had been promised a Muslim girl in marriage to make him give up his religion. This might in fact be true as Ghulam told me that Muslims often tempt Hindus by ‘showing them birds’ and by making false promises. He did not say, however, that this had been his own undoing too. The Pandits look at such cases as a kind of wicked game which some Muslims play at the former’s cost. It was alleged that such Muslims derive mean satisfaction from a Pandit’s fall.

When I discussed this pitable man’s case with some Muslim informants, they made two points. Firstly, they maintained, it was imperative that one should distinguish between a person who becomes a Muslim out of conviction and one who embraces Islam in the hope of material gain. To them Darshan’s conversion was not a true conversion: he had not been impelled by the best of motives. Nevertheless, a Muslim household has given him shelter, though nobody gave him a wife. What more could he expect?

Secondly, my informants said, Ghulam is a bad Muslim. He does not observe the essential rules of behaviour. For example, he begs and eats at Pandit homes. No good Muslim eats food cooked by Pandits. ‘The plain truth’, as one informant put it, was that Darshan was born a Pandit and could not possibly be as good a Muslim as himself, i.e., the informant, who was a zati Muslim.

The conclusion that seems permissible on the basis of the foregoing discussion is that, the alleged teachings of the Koran notwithstanding, in actual practice the Muslims of rural Kashmir attach crucial importance to the fact of birth in the

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18 Though all believers are called brothers in the Koran (49, 10) and a hadith (saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad) contends that genealogies count for nothing among Muslims (see Levy, 1962:56-57), it is well known that Islam was never able to eradicate earlier social inequalities among Arabs (see Smith, 1903:42-55 and Levy, 1962:
determination of a person’s nature and his legitimate socio-cultural identity. Whether this is an Islamic notion or not, it certainly accords well with Hindu belief.\textsuperscript{12}

Hindu Identity: Hindu Representation

One of the most striking characteristics of the social organization of native Hindus of Kashmir is that they comprise mainly of two Saraswat Brahman subcastes. There is also one Vaishya caste, but it is very small in numbers and is found only in some towns. To the best of my knowledge, this is a social situation unparalleled in any other cultural region of the subcontinent. It is almost like a deliberately set up laboratory situation, and a study of it should yield insights into the Hindu caste system unobtainable elsewhere. The first question that must be answered is, how has this peculiar situation arisen?

Fortunately we have a precious historical document to fall back upon: the twelfth century Sanskrit chronicle \textit{Rajatarangini} by Kalhana.\textsuperscript{13} A perusal of this work yields two relevant conclusions regarding the social structure of Kashmir before the arrival of Islam early in the fourteenth century. First, it is obvious that there were many castes among the Hindus. All the four \textit{varna}—Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra—are mentioned and, besides, we read of castes, sects and classes such as the Chandala, Damara, Domba, Kayastha, Kirata, Nishada and Tantrin. It is not always clear, however, which is which. Thus, the Damara and Kayastha, it seems, were classes of landowners and civil servants respectively, rather than castes. Tribal groups of various kinds are also mentioned. Of these, the Ekanga and Lavanya seem to have been professional soldiers.

The second relevant conclusion is that the caste system in Kashmir between the seventh and fourteenth centuries does not seem to have been characterized by stringent exclusiveness in

\textsuperscript{53-90}. Besides, ‘Birth as a principle of status honour was considerably important in the early Muslim society in India’ (Imtiaz Ahmad 1966: 270 also see Ashraf, 1959:61-63).

\textsuperscript{13} Kalhana composed the \textit{Rajatarangini}, 'River of Kings', in eight cantos of Sanskrit verse in the middle of the twelfth century. Though he draws upon both legendary and historical materials, his work has been acclaimed as an historical text in the true sense of the term (see Pandit, 1968: xiii ff.).
the relations between social groups. We read in the Rajatarangini of low caste Domba queens of Kshatriya kings and Kalhana particularly mentions a low caste aramika (vegetable grower) who had successfully entered the ranks of the Kayastha. A probable reason for the relatively flexible social organization may well have been the influence of Buddhism, which was introduced in Kashmir during Ashoka's reign in the first quarter of the third century B.C. and dominated the cultural life of the Kashmiris for almost a millennium.

By the beginning of the eighth century Hinduism had reasserted itself in Kashmir—the Brahmans, who led the resistance to Buddhism, seem also to have spearheaded its revival. They continued to play a prominent role in the political and cultural life of the Kashmiris till the arrival of Islam in Kashmir. The presence of Muslim (Turkish) mercenaries in Kashmir during the eleventh century is noted by Kalhana. It was only a couple of hundred years later, however, that the Islamization of the Valley began, first through the peaceful persuasion of missionaries and then through the persecution of some of the early Muslim kings. The most prominent of the early missionaries was Sayyid Bilal Shah of Turkistan, who was associated with the Suhrawardi school of Sufis (see Hughes, 1935).

The Hindu dynasties had an inglorious end. External invasion, court intrigues and internal disorder resulted in the emergence of the first Muslim king of Kashmir, Rinchana (1320-23). He was a Buddhist prince, a refugee from Tibet at the court of the Hindu king. This combination of circumstances and Rinchana's personal valour led to his seizure of the kingdom. He beseeched the Brahmans to allow him to become a Hindu but they refused. He then turned to Bilal Shah who readily accepted him within the Muslim fold. Thereafter, the Sayyid's mission as a proselytiser seems to have met with success after success. Of later missionaries who peacefully carried Islam into the length and breadth of Kashmir mention may be made of the saintly Sufi scholar, Sayyid Ali of Hamadan, who paid several visits to the Valley beginning in 1327. Many Sayyids came to settle down in these parts around that time.

14 The following account of the political history of Kashmir is based on Kak (1936).
The scholarship, saintliness and peaceful intention of the Sayyids found their counterpoint in the bigotry and fanaticism of some of the early Muslim kings. The most notorious of these was Sultan Sikandar (1389-1413), whom historians have given the name of *butshikan* (iconoclast). Not only did he destroy practically all the Hindu temples of Kashmir (see Kak, 1936, text and plates), he also compelled his Hindu subjects to choose between Islam, exile and death. Whereas some chose one of the latter two alternatives, the majority of those who had resisted the missionaries now accepted defeat. It was thus that the Hindus of Kashmir, along with whatever Buddhists had remained, were nearly wiped out and Islam established in Kashmir during the fourteenth century.\(^{15}\) It seems that only a handful of Brahmans still survived in Kashmir at the time of Sikandar's death in 1414; tradition puts the number at eleven. It is from them that the Pandits of today are said to be descended.

The most celebrated of the Muslim kings of Kashmir is Zain-ul-Abidin, remembered to this day as the *budshah* ('great king'). His reign, spanning half a century (1420-70), reversed the policies of the preceding hundred years of Muslim rule by making it possible for Hindus and Buddhists to live in safety and with honour in their homeland. He abolished the *jizya*, a tax imposed on non-Muslims by his predecessors; called a halt to the destruction of non-Muslim places of worship; showed keen interest in Buddhist and Hindu philosophy and scholarship; and appointed the followers of these religions to high positions in his administration. In his magnanimous treatment of his non-Muslim subjects, he was the true precursor of Akbar, the Great Mughal, who followed a hundred years later.

Encouraged by the king, many Brahmans returned to

\(^{15}\) The similarity between the Kashmir and Bangladesh situations is striking. 'Here (in Bengal), in the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a whole countryside turned to Islam. It is thought that the decaying Buddhism of the Pala dynasty in Bengal had been superimposed upon their rustic animism, that the substitution of the Brahminical Sena Kings for Palas had meant a lowering of status and caste restriction, and that the Muslim conquests of Bengal with its casteless religion offered a welcome avenue of social escape' (Spear, 1967:34).
Kashmir. The descendants of those who stayed behind during the darkest days, and of those who went into exile to return later, maintain a distinction amongst themselves to this day: the former are called malamasi and the latter bhanamasi. More significantly, the Brahmans families acting together took the major decision to study Persian and thus laid the foundation of a changed social organization.

It is clear from Kalhana’s account that the Kayastha category had traditionally been recruited mainly from among the Brahmans. They had for long been accustomed to playing an important role in religious, civic and administrative affairs. Zain-ul-Abidin, who had inherited an administration which was in a shambles, held forth to them the renewed possibility of a similar role. The language of the court and administration had meanwhile been changed from Sanskrit to Persian. The Brahmans’ decision to acquire proficiency in the latter language indicated their earnestness to seize the newly offered opportunities and become karkun (the Persian word for civil servants, revenue collectors, etc.).

The Brahmans’ decision raised a problem: what was to become of their traditional scholarship and philosophical heritage, and who was to ensure the proper performance of rituals so crucial to a Brahman’s life? During the days of Hindu rule they had not faced such a problem, obviously because the Brahman and the king belonged to one and the same socio-religious system and used the same language—Sanskrit—in the performance of their respective roles. The problem that resulted from this separation of the socio-religious and politico-administrative spheres was resolved through a curious strategem: a daughter’s son would study bhasha (‘the language’), i.e., Sanskrit, and administer to the spiritual and ritual needs of his mother’s natal family (see Kilam, 1955:53). Designated

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16 I have been unable to establish the exact meaning of the two terms. The common suffix masi (probably derived from mas, month) suggests a calendarical connotation; the two groups do, in fact, observe the same important ritual occasions on different dates during the Hindu leap year.

17 There is evidence in the Rajatarangini that Brahmans often acted as a corporate group to, for instance, effectively intervene in the affairs of the state.

18 The choice of a daughter’s or sister’s son would seem to have been
Bhasha Bhatta, they were regarded as the privileged category compared to the Karkun; they were the Brahmans par excellence, in deed as well as in name. What began as an arrangement of convenience has since frozen into a rigid division into two endogamous subcastes. What is more, the Karkun have arrogated to themselves the higher status. The Bhasha Bhatta are now called Gor (derived from the Sanskrit guru, ‘preceptor’, ‘teacher’), which term is unmistakably one of contempt.

Both the Karkun and Gor are divided into exogamous gotra categories. According to Lawrence (1967:304) there are 103 Karkun and 18 ‘Levite’ gotras among the Pandits. Koul (1924) mentions 199 gotras and names 189.\(^{19}\) Within each gotra there are families which are identified by surnames called zat or, relatively rarely, kram. The zat among Pandits are sectarian or family nick-names, the latter oftener than the former. These nick-names have their exact parallels among the Browns, Blacks, Longmans, Pidgeons, Swindlers and such other Anglo-Saxon surnames.\(^{20}\) The Gor also have zat but they rarely use the surname. It is instead customary to use the suffix boi (brother) with the personal name of each male priest. I have already pointed out that zat has to do with the establishment of identity by birth among Kashmiri Muslims; the same applies to Pandits. It may be added here that kram, a word of Sanskrit origin, sometimes used as a synonym for zat, means a ranked category and suggests that internal ranking was, as it still is, a characteristic of the Brahmans of Kashmir. Whether the basis of ranking earlier was politico-economic as it is now, or involved other considerations also, is a subject on which I lack any data at present (see Madan, 1965:22-27).

\(^{19}\) For a discussion of the nature of gotra among the Pandit see Madan (1962).

\(^{20}\) For an account (partly fanciful perhaps) of Pandit family names, see Fauq (n.d.).
In none of the villages in the district of Anantnag which I visited did I encounter any other kind of Bhatta except the Gor and Karkun. All the 87 Pandit households of Utrassu-Umanagri are Karkun. The adjacent village of Keri has 7 Karkun and 5 Gor households. Pandit informants drew my attention to the presence of a doubtful and small category of Bhatta, the Buher, who are to be found only in urban areas. (There is a ward in the city of Srinagar named after them.) The Buher (also called Bohra) are Khattris, probably of Punjabi origin (see Lawrence, 1967:302; 1909:40). Hutton (1951:282) describes the Khattri as a trading caste of the Punjab and north-west India. The Buher are an endogamous caste of grocers and halwai (makers of confectionery, cheese, yoghurt and fried savouries of various kinds). In fact, the word buhar (singular of buher) is used in Kashmir in the sense of a grocer. The Pandits do not interdine with the Buher, nor allow them entry into Pandit temples. The Gor do, however, perform priestly functions for them. The Buher have built a Vishnu temple of their own in Srinagar. On their part, the Buher have adopted the life-style of the Pandits and would obviously like to be called Buher Bhatta. Already there are signs that, barring intermarriage, the Karkun and Buher are coming closer to each other in urban areas. The problem does not exist in rural Kashmir.²¹

In Utrassu-Umanagri and surrounding villages the Karkun are served by a large number of occupational groups. The first of these are, of course, the Gor. Each Gor household has a clientele fixed on a hereditary basis, of both Karkun and Gor households. The latter are referred to as yuzaman (derived from the Sanskrit yajamana). When a Gor household dies out, its clientele is usually inherited by the nearest agnatic kin. A Karkun household may employ the services of the most readily available priest for minor purposes—such as consecrating routine food offerings or determining auspicious dates for doing or buying some thing—but on all important occasions only the kola-gor (family priest) will do. If he is ill, in a state of

²¹ There are a few Kashmiri speaking Hindu families in Srinagar called the Purib or Purbi. They are probably descended from an immigrant Brahman group. Some informants told me that the Purbi come to Kashmir from the Chambha valley in Punjab.
pollution, or otherwise unavailable, it is his duty to provide a substitute.

Formerly the Gor were also teachers, not only of priestly lore but also of astrology, Sanskrit and shastra (religious literature) in general. Nowadays, the only pupils they have are their own sons, though not even all of them are willing to follow their traditional calling. The performance of all but the most essential rituals is coming to be viewed as dispensable. The Karkun feel that they do not have the time or the resources for them. The Gor lament the decline of faith and they complain that even the essential rituals are sought to be abridged. Whatever the reasons, the Gor are beginning to turn away from priest-craft. One of the young Gor of Kreri is a school teacher; another has joined the State militia. I was informed that the process of occupational change among the Gor is more visible in urban areas.

The Karkun are of course dependent on the Gor for the performance of rituals. There can be no Pandits without the Gor. The latter’s dependence on the Karkun is merely economic. It is not inconceivable that a small community of Gor could exist without the Karkun and draw their sustenance from land or service. The secularisation of Pandit society has gone so far, however, that the Karkun look down upon the Gor and even consider them inauspicious. Several times during my fieldwork I noticed how a Karkun would return home if he met a priest just after he had started on an errand. There is general denigration of the Gor on account of their style of life and their alleged greed and lack of learning. Their worst fault would seem to be that they accept food and other gifts offered to the dead.\(^{22}\)

The Karkun-Gor relationship has always been hierarchical, being ordered in terms of religious values and moral judgements. The two groups seem to have changed places, however, since the emergence of the division between them about 500 years ago. Even so, as a category, the Gor are essentially pure,

\(^{22}\) I was told that in Srinagar there is a special category of Gor called Achor, who alone accept such offerings. They collect the goods under cover of darkness, either from the home of the gift-givers or from the nearest bathing ghat. See Dumont (1970:58) on the ‘Mahabrahman’.
irrespective of how particular Gor may be regarded by their Karkun patrons. In principle the Karkun and the Gor are one: they are Brahmans—they are the Pandits.

For all other services the Pandits are dependent upon Muslims. An examination of these services is of great importance from the point of view of this paper as it will enable us to grasp the definition of Muslim identity by Pandits.

**Muslim Identity: Hindu Representation**

As stated earlier, Utrassu-Umanagri is a bi-nucleated village. The settlement of Utrassu is older than anybody can remember. Umanagri is, however, quite recent: it was founded about 200 years ago. I have given the details elsewhere (see Madan, 1965: 38-40), and will here confine myself to pointing out that originally there were no Muslims in Umanagri. The Pandits found it impossible to carry on without the services of Muslim cultivators, artisans, village servants, and other specialist groups and therefore invited them to come from other villages and settle down in Umanagri. This historical fact only serves to underline what my fieldwork revealed.

Being Brahmans, the Pandits are traditionally debarred from a large number of occupational activities. Thus, they cannot engage in polluting activities such as barbering, washing clothes, obtaining oil from oilseeds, removing and skinning dead animals, making shoes, winnowing pans and drums, slaughtering goats and sheep,\(^{23}\) and so on. There are so many other types of activities which are not polluting but which no Pandit would engage in because they involve manual labour, no matter how light. Some of the poorer Pandits in Utrassu-Umanagri do engage in cultivation or cooking—the former only in their own village and the latter only outside it—but at the cost of being treated socially as inferiors by the others.\(^{24}\)

\(^{23}\) Kashmiri Pandits eat mutton, wild fowl and fish, but not domestic fowl or their eggs (see Madan, 1975).

\(^{24}\) Things have begun to change since 1947 following upon the drastic political and economic changes that have taken place in the State. During 1957-58, nine Pandits of Utrassu-Umanagri were working as labourers in an Indian Army ammunition depot four miles from the village (see Madan, 1965:146-48).
service (public or private) and shopkeeping are the only sources of household income among the Pandits of Utrassu-Umanagri (see Madan, 1965:149-50). In such a situation it is not at all surprising that the Pandits should regard Muslims as an essential component of their social system. In this connection it is worth mentioning that the 1941 census shows only two villages in the Srinagar-Anantnag districts inhabited by Pandits alone though, as stated earlier, 56 per cent of the villages are exclusively Muslim.

In the Pandits' conception of them, Kashmiri villages are characterized by the simile but sharp distinction between themselves and the Muslims. The latter are regarded in principle as being ritually impure. They are referred to as mlechchha (of lowly birth, outsiders); theirs is the world of tamas (darkness, ignorance). Muslims are outside the pale of values by which a Pandit is expected, as a Hindu, to order his life. In practice, however, the Pandits consider some Muslims as less polluting than others.

In Utrassu-Umanagri no Pandit eats food cooked or even touched by a Muslim. There are no exceptions to this rule except the acceptance of clarified butter from Milkmen, Gujar and Bakarwal. (Some Pandits also accept yoghurt and cheese from these three groups but others disapprove of the practice, which seems to be recent.) If transgressions occur they are so secretive that no Pandit claimed having actually seen another Pandit eating with a Muslim. There seems to have been some kind of a sumptuary ban on the consumption of such forbidden food till about 1925, when Maharaja Pratap Singh, a very orthodox Hindu, died.

Pandits accept uncooked food from all but the lowliest of Muslims (namely, the Domb and Vatal). Grains, vegetables and fruits are included in this category. Uncooked meat also is generally accepted but may be refused for fear of its being beef. (Killing beef cattle is a penal offence in the State, but it would seem that Muslims do sometimes slaughter such animals.) Unboiled milk is freely accepted from Milkmen, Gujar, Bakarwal, and Zamindar but usually not from any other group. The

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85 The 1931 census report lists government service as the traditional occupation of the Pandits (see India, 1933).
Pandits are much more hesitant to accept water from Muslims. Some well-to-do households employ water carriers but invariably choose a Milkman or a Zamindar for the chore and provide him with a pitcher. A Pandit is not expected to drink even milk from a container belonging to a Muslim.

There is no sharing of the hookah between Pandits and Muslims. A Pandit does not touch any part of a Muslim’s hookah — its vase of water, pipe or the chillum (tobacco-cum-fire bowl). A Muslim is allowed to smoke the chillum of a Pandit’s hookah by holding it between his palms but is never allowed to use the pipe.

The Utrassu-Umanagri Pandits avoid any physical contact with the cobblers and winnowing-pan makers (Vatal), who skin dead animals and have traditionally been suspected by everybody of being carrion eaters. (I was informed that in urban areas, where there are two types of Vatal, namely, leather-workers and scavengers, the latter are treated with less repugnance than the former.) Pandits do, however, buy the articles these craftsmen make. The Domb are also regarded as being very polluting and physical contact with them is strenuously avoided. In relation to other Muslims in the village, the Pandits are less anxious to avoid total physical contact. The more fastidious among them will wash their hands after touching a Muslim. I once saw a Muslim servant (a Zamindar) press the feet and legs of his Pandit master but the latter did not wash afterwards. (Only half a dozen or so Pandit households in Utrassu-Umanagri employ Muslim servants; the latter are all Zamindar.) Muslim-Pandit marriages are, of course, ruled out. Illicit sexual intercourse does seem to occur once in a while. This is a subject on which one has no evidence more reliable than village gossip. Among all Muslims, it is the Barber (Navid) and the midwife with whom Pandit men and women, respectively, come in most intimate physical contact. The Barber’s services are particularly noteworthy and may be elaborated upon.

The Navid renders routine and occasional services to his Pandit patrons. The routine services consist of shaving the face and the head or cutting the hair. Shaving is regarded as varzit (derived from the Sanskrit varjit, forbidden) on certain
days of the week and on most occasions when one has to perform a ritual. The act of having one’s beard or hair shaved on such days is inauspicious in itself, and does not seem to have anything to do with the desire to avoid contact with a Muslim. That this is so is indicated by the fact that the Barber is called in to render his services on four highly important occasions of ritual performance. Sanskritic rites are interrupted to have a boy’s zarakasai (zara = baby hair, kasai = shaving, cutting) done; to have a neophyte’s head shaved during mekha: (“waist string”; the investiture ceremony also called yagnopavit or upanayana); and to shave the beard and hair of a mourner at the end of the period of pollution. These rituals would remain incomplete without the Barber’s services. The Barber’s touch is polluting, however, and the person who has been served by him on the special ritual occasions mentioned above must have a bath. On other occasions too having a bath is desirable, but washing of the face and head is all that may be done. The Barber also shaves and gives a hair-cut to a bridegroom before the latter leaves for the bride’s home for the marriage ceremony. During the lagan (marriage ritual), one of the rites involves letting the bride and the bridegroom see each other’s faces in a mirror. This mirror is customarily provided by the Barber of the bride’s natal household.

For his routine services the Barber receives a number of measures of paddy from his patrons at harvest time. Several Pandit households of Utrasu-Umanagri buy grain so as to meet the requirements of such payments to the Barber and other specialists. Many families pay for them in cash. On all special occasions the Barber receives the clothes, at least some of them, which the individual recipient of the services has on him at that time. The Barber also receives other gifts. He is treated as a well-wisher by his patrons, with whom he has hereditary relations.

I have described the Barber’s services at some length because of their value as a paradigm of the relations between the Pandit and Muslim occupational groups. The essential elements of the paradigm may be recapitulated:

1. the services are of routine and special kinds;
2. they have a ritual significance for the Pandit and this is
known to the Muslim specialist;
3. the specialist himself views them in economic terms, but recognizes their traditional character;
4. the threat to his state of ritual purity arising from contact with a Muslim is tolerated by the Pandit because he is otherwise even more seriously in danger of being unable to enter or re-enter such a state;
5. the relations between the patrons and the specialists are on a hereditary basis and are paid for in kind, if possible.

I will take another crucial example: that of the relations between the Muslim Potter (Kral) and his Pandit patrons. The Potter supplies pots and pans of various kinds which he makes both for everyday use and for special occasions. Storage jars for grains, pickles and water; utensils for cooking, storing and serving food; smoking bowls; toys; and many other types of pottery are supplied by him. He provides a wide range of utensils in large quantities at weddings. It is on the occasion of Herath (a feast in honour of Shiva), however, that he makes for his Pandit customers the most unusual of all pieces of pottery.

As I have described elsewhere (see Madan, 1961:129-39), Herath is celebrated over fifteen days during the dark fortnight of the month of Phagun (February-March). Each day has its appointed task; on the eleventh day the Potter carries a basket load of pottery to each patron household for use in its kitchen and in the climacteric rites during the last four days. The number of each type of the various pieces of pottery has to be just right. Shortages are regarded as bad omens and the Potter is rebuked for such lapses. Among the many objects he makes is the rather inconspicuous looking sanipotul (sani=worship, potul=idol), which is the lingam, to be installed as Shiva during the rites. It is obviously phallic in shape. (In fact, it is in the shape of lingam and yoni in coitus, but not even all Pandits seem to know this.)

Though the Potters whom I questioned at Utrassu-Umanagri do not exactly know what kind of an idol the sanipotul is, they are all aware that it is an object of worship for the Pandits. As
Muslims they have no use for such idols, and abhor idol worship, but as Potters they readily make the objects for the Pandits. They look upon the work they do in economic terms; but not so the Pandits, who view the Potter’s services in their relation to such basic activities as the preparation of food and the performance of one of the most important domestic rituals of the year.

More examples of such relationships between Muslims and Pandits could be given, including that of the familiar Watherman and the unfamiliar (among Brahman communities) Butcher. The latter supplies the meat which the Pandit offers to some of his gods and goddesses; in fact, it is the Muslim Butcher who, standing shoulder to shoulder with the Brahman Gor, slaughters the sacrificial goat after the latter has ritually rendered it sacred. Further, it is worth mentioning that, since the Pandits are major consumers of meat in Utrassu-Umanagri, the Muslim Butchers keep track of the capricious Hindu lunar calendar and avoid slaughtering too many animals on days on which Pandits abstain from eating meat, such as the birthdays of vegetarian gods and goddesses.

Limitations of space prevent me from going into the details of more cases. Suffice it to add that most of the services that Muslim specialist groups render to their Pandit clientele are ritual liturgies when viewed from the receiver’s end; but they appear as economic transactions, sanctioned by village tradition, when judged from the perspective of the giver. What are legitimately seen as occupational groups from the Muslim angle are castes, ‘caste analogues’, or ‘caste substitutes’ when viewed in terms of the Hindu caste system which they, in fact, help to constitute in Kashmir.

We will be justified in speaking of the social organization of mixed Kashmiri villages as a regional variant of the caste system if the cardinal principle of hierarchy is found applicable. It is obvious from the foregoing discussion that this certainly is so in the Pandits’ ideological reconstruction of empirical reality. Moreover, the Pandits do not normally render any services to

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26 The case of the Muslim Kawuf—attendants at Pandit cremation sites in Srinagar, and probably in other towns—requires close study; particularly their relations with other Muslims should be of interest. Kashmiri Muslims regard everything dead (except fish) as polluting.
the Muslims nor provide them with any goods. The only exceptions to this rule in Utrassu-Umanagri are a Pandit hakim (practitioner of Graeco-Arab medicine), and some money-lenders, and (if we may include them) shopkeepers. I encountered several instances of a Pandit astrologer being consulted by Muslims. It is clear that all these roles are prestigious. Their representation of village society is shown diagrammatically in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

1—Acceptance of cooked and uncooked food.
2—Acceptance of uncooked food, milk, water.
3—Acceptance of uncooked food only.
4—Flow of goods and/or services without avoidance of physical contact.
5—Flow of goods and/or services with strict avoidance of physical contact.
It will be agreed that (i) the inferior status of Gor vis-a-vis Karkun, (ii) the inferior position of the Muslims vis-a-vis the Brahmans, and (iii) the division of Muslims into three ranked categories are all ultimately based on the same governing principle of superior dignity arising out of moral, i.e., religious considerations. As we move downwards from the Gor through the three rungs of Muslim occupational groups, the element of ritual impurity becomes increasingly salient.

The admission of Muslims into a common social fold is surreptitious, by the backdoor as it were: it cannot occur in terms of ideology but, paradoxically, is defended on the ground that without them the Pandit would lose caste. In other words, the empirical situation in which the Pandit finds himself compels him to establish interrelations of various kinds with Muslim occupational groups; he orders them in terms of hierarchy. Ideally he should have no relations with the Muslims: they are mlechchha, and this word means both ‘an outsider’ and ‘a person of lowly birth’. Common stereotypes about Muslims which I found prevalent among Pandits included, besides mlechchha, ‘dirty’, ‘polluted’, ‘unprincipled’, ‘omnivorous’, and ‘lustful’. Individual Muslims are respected for personal qualities; the two Lambardar (minor revenue official) of Utrassu-Umanagri are Muslims, and I saw Pandits treat them with the courtesy due to their position. Muslim households with wealth may even be accepted as patrons: one Pandit household of the village cultivates a portion of the biggest Muslim Zamindar’s land, though I was told that such a relationship is very rare and amounts to a reversal of familiar roles. As a category, however, Muslims are polluting and contact with them should be restricted as far as possible if it cannot be avoided. It is obvious that Pandits have accepted compromise to avoid being defeated. They are faced with a moral dilemma: to preserve their status as Brahmans they need goods and services which only the Muslims provide, but the latter are themselves a source of pollution. Since the danger emanating from Muslims can be controlled and rectified, the Pandits’ choice has its merits. A Pandit saying is apposite in this context: Yath na push tath na dush (whereof one is helpless, thereof one attaches no blame). This may be regarded as evidence of Pandit
pragmatism; in Dumont's phrase, a concession to coexistence (see Dumont, 1970:206).

That this has not been an easy choice is illustrated by the manner in which Pandits switch codes when talking to Muslims. Though they all speak the same language, Koshur or Kashmiri, there are striking differences of lexical elements so that linguists have classified it into Sanskritized Kashmiri (SK) and Persianized Kashmiri (PK) (see Kachru, 1969:21-27). The speakers of PK are Muslims. I found in Utrassu-Umanagri that their use of PK words is consistent: they employ them with whomsoever they are speaking. The Pandits switch from SK to PK when certain crucial words have to be used in conversation with Muslims. A Pandit will generally stick to such SK words as ponya (water; PK equivalent, ab), khovur (left; PK, khofur), shokrawar (Friday; PK, jummahi). He wavers when it comes to such words as God (SK, Bhagwan; PK, Khoda) and religion (SK, dharma; PK, mazhab) but generally uses the PK words when talking with a Muslim. I never found a Pandit use the SK greeting of namaskar when addressing a Muslim: there is no ambiguity at all on this point. A Muslim greets all, whether Muslim or Hindu, with salam; but a Pandit always says salam to a Muslim and namaskar to another Pandit. Namaskar is thus a marked term: when one hears it said, the only conclusion that may be drawn is that one Pandit has greeted another.

On being questioned, even the most intelligent of my Pandit informants would tell me no more by way of explanation than that it would be improper to say namaskar to a Muslim. 'Is that not obvious?', they asked me. It is apparent that saying namaskar, 'I bow to thee', to a Muslim is improper, for he is mlechchha, an outsider. He cannot be fully admitted into the Pandits' company. There must be no blurring of zati or natural distinctions, that is, of socio-cultural identities. Words like Bhagwan, dharma and, above all, namaskar, are signposts which the Pandits have set up as a boundary maintenance device. Those within are Brahmans; those outside, mlechchha. It is a kind of last ditch defence.
Hindu Identity: Muslim Representation

A question that arises from the foregoing discussion is, do Kashmiri Muslims also feel threatened by the Pandits? The answer, it seems to me, has to be in the negative, though Muslims do regard Pandits as being outsiders, non-Muslims. To understand this situation we shall now examine the Muslim representation of Pandit identity in relation to their own.

The Muslim's view of Pandits as non-Muslims has to be disentangled from his image of them as clients or patrons. Just as Pandits qua Hindus see themselves in opposition to the mlechchha, Kashmiri Muslims qua Muslims identify themselves with umma, the universal Muslim brotherhood, and regard Pandits as kafir ('misbelievers'), destined to go to hell. Internal divisions among the Pandits do not interest the Muslims in the least.

The relationship is hierarchical, based on Islamic values. The exclusion of Pandits stems from moral abhorrence but has nothing to do with ritual pollution. Earlier I mentioned Pandit stereotypes of Muslims; these may now be matched by Muslim stereotypes of Pandits, equally derogatory and expressive of the wish to exclude the other. 'Faithless', 'unfaithful', 'double-dealer', 'mean', 'cowardly', 'corrupt' and 'dirty' are some of the epithets I heard Muslim informants use for Pandits.27

Kashmiri Muslims countenance marriage with Pandits no more than the latter do. They have no objection, however,

27 Probably the stereotype of Pandits most widely used by Kashmiri Muslims is dali-Bhatta, 'the dal or lentil curry Pandit'. Dal is considered the vegetarian dish par excellence and the very opposite of mutton curries; dal eaters are represented as cowardly and meat eaters as brave and courageous. Vegetarianism is actually no more than an occasional dietary restriction among the Pandits. Exceptions apart, I have encountered no vegetarian Pandit households in many years of contact with rural Kashmir, though there are vegetarian individuals. The Muslims also eat dal but never on festive occasions (see Madan, 1975). A well known Kashmiri saying is: Bhattas phaka, Musalmans shakra, Shias baka, the Pandits fast on important occasions, the Muslims wield the sword (to slaughter sheep and goats), and the Shiabs weep.
to physical contact with the Pandits. The latter have free access to all parts of a Muslim house though they themselves do not allow Muslims into their kitchens and into any room where a ritual is in progress or where rituals usually take place (see Madan, 1965:46-50). The Barber and the Butcher, whose role in Pandit religious ceremonies was discussed earlier, perform their assigned tasks just outside the ritually demarcated area. Similarly, the water carrier pours water into a vessel in the kitchen without stepping inside. Pandits are, however, debarred from entering mosques. Moreover, the Muslims of Utrassu-Umanagri do observe strict avoidance in respect of food cooked by Pandits. ‘It is haram (forbidden)—the Koran prohibits it—is the most general explanation given; when pressed to elaborate upon this cryptic remark, some informants used the word *napak* (impure) to describe Pandit food. (Several other less significant explanations were given, including the belief that Pandit food is injurious to health because their curries contain asafoetida, and is tasteless as it lacks onions and garlic.) A few Zamindar who have intimate relations with Pandit landowners were reported as given to eating food from their patrons’ kitchens, but the number of such cases is negligible. Those who transgress this restriction are believed to be guilty of a moral lapse and therefore liable to suffer supernatural punishment. One of the villagers drew attention to his own brother, a sickly and poor Milkman, saying that the latter was an eater of Pandit food.28

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28 I discussed the Muslim attitude to Pandit food with *mufiti* [a person ‘learned in the Koran and Hadith and in the Muslim works of law’ (Hughes, 1935)] of Srinagar, who is also a college professor. He disapproved of the villagers’ attitude and maintained that they were acting out of ignorance and under the influence of long established habits. In this connexion it is worth noting here that a Muslim Wagherman of Utrassu-Umanagri once told me of how he had fallen ill after he had eaten ‘unusual meat’ with some acquaintances in a neighbouring village. On my asking for clarification, he said he suspected that he had been served beef. I doubt if many Kashmiri Muslims would feel likewise about eating beef; what is remarkable is that even a few of them should. The influence of Pandit neighbours is an obvious but unsatisfactory explanation. I guess one has to fall back upon Dumont’s other suggestion, ‘psychological dispositions’ (see Dumont, 1970: 211), preferably qualified as *residual*.
There is one more category of people whose cooking the Muslims of the village do not accept because it is considered impure. The people concerned are the Domb and Vatal. Whenever these families arrange a feast, they engage professional Muslim cooks who bring their own cooking and serving utensils. Other Muslims then readily join such feasts in the houses of these lowly groups, but do not otherwise eat with them. The Domb and Vatal get invited to the homes of other Muslims but they are excluded in a subtle manner. On such occasions four Muslims eat from a single plate. The Domb and Vatal will not be asked to share a plate with one another, or with any other Muslim, even if there are less than four of each of these groups present. Needless to add, the Domb and the Vatal are the two most strictly endogamous Muslim groups in the village.

Kashmiri Muslims clearly distinguish between dirty (mokur) and impure (napak). The two conditions may exist together as in the case of the legendary pig—the animal is non-existent in Kashmir—whose very sight is forbidden to the Muslim. The best example of the distinction between dirt and impurity was given to me by one of my informants when he explained why Muslims are expected to dry the penis with clay after urination. ‘I may have put on new or washed trousers, but if even a drop of urine falls on them, I cannot enter the mosque for prayers.’ Muslim washing is quite an elaborate affair. However, their notion of pollution is in principle different from the Hindu notion inasmuch as they do not consider it permanent. I was told that if the Domb or the Vatal should give up their present occupations, they too would be accepted as equals by other Muslims. This is of course difficult to confirm, and though there has long been evidence of upward mobility among Muslim occupational groups, I doubt if the Domb and the Vatal could easily live down the stigma of their names, which proclaim their zat.29 The Muslims point out that even a Pandit—any

29 Lawrence calls the ‘social system in Kashmir... delightfully plastic’:... there is nothing to prevent Abdulla, the Dum, calling himself Abdulla Pandit if he chooses. At first the people would laugh, but after a time, if Abdulla Pandit prospered, his descendants would exhibit a lengthy pedigree table tracing their family back to one of the petty Rajas, lord of three villages and possessor of a fort, the ruins of
non-Muslim for that matter—can acquire true faith and become a believer (mumin). This is of course the ideological position, but we have already noted the case of the convert Ghulam alias Darshan and have discussed the significance of the circumstances of birth in the determination of zat.

Before we complete this discussion of the Muslim representation of Pandit identity, I would like to make a final comment on the notion of zat among Muslims. The status of Sayyids is the key to this problem. I have already pointed out that Kashmiri Muslims are not an undifferentiated category, and that they themselves acknowledge this fact. My informants in Utrassu-Umanagri spoke to me of the division between the Sunni and Shah (see Hughes, 1935; Levy, 1962: passim), though there are no Shah in the village. They also mentioned Sayyids, Mughals and Pathans with a certain degree of deference. Muslims falling into these categories are to be found in the town of Anantnag. The position of the Gujar and the Bakarwal has already been mentioned. I have also described how the native Muslims are comprised of many occupational groups including the Domb and the Vatal.

The Sayyids are the descendants of Ali and his wife Fatimah, daughter of the Prophet Muhammad. They are, therefore, entitled to respect. The Mughul and Pathan families are

which still stand in Abdullah Pandit’s village . . . ’ (1967:307). Unless things have changed beyond recognition over the last 75 years, which I doubt, Lawrence’s account seems rather exaggerated. I found no forts in ruins in the Kashmiri countryside and the people, Muslims and Pandits alike, take little interest in genealogies beyond half a dozen generations at best.

30 ‘At the census of 1890 no distinction was made between the Musalmans of the Sunni and Shahah persuasions, but it may be roughly said that the Shahah form only about 5 per cent of the total Muslim. The Shahah chiefly reside in Zadi Bal ward of Srinagar and in the Kamraj (Baramulla) district, though they are found in other parts of the valley’ (Lawrence, 1967:284).

31 According to the 1941 census the Sayyids formed 7 per cent of the Muslim population of Anantnag district, Pathans 3 per cent, Rajputa 2 per cent and Mughals 1 per cent.
also entitled to respect, but why? The Muslims of the village are dimly aware that these people were once the rulers of Kashmir. An equally important reason would seem to be that these groups have been Muslims longer than the others. The principle of proximity to the founder of Islam, which is apparent in view of the genealogical connexion in the case of the Sayyids, and acknowledged by the Muslims, is also applicable to the Mughals and the Pathans. In terms of this logic the Gujar and Bakarwal should also be accorded deference but they are not, though they themselves look down upon the natives. The empirical situation is, therefore, somewhat ambiguous; but the cardinal principle of genealogical relationship emerges clearly in the exalted position of the Sayyids. It is misleading to regard them as the Muslim equivalent of Brahman as some writers have done, because the criterion of ritual purity—or even of moral superiority—is not applicable.

All the above internal divisions among Muslims are ignored when Muslims are juxtaposed with Pandits. The situation then is dramatized by being reduced to stark opposition between the believer and the ‘misbeliever’, the Muslim and the non-Muslim. The Pandit lies completely outside the fold of Islam. His present status is inconsequential to the Muslim; his potential status as a convert, though significant in ideological terms, does not really excite the Muslim, given the latter’s notion of zat. In any case, the convert is not a threat to the community of believers, which is open and to which he is in principle welcome. The contrast with the completely closed community of Pandits is too obvious to need further comment.

The answer to the question posed at the beginning of this section—namely why Muslims do not feel their identity threatened by interaction with Pandits—may now be given. As already explained, Kashmiri Muslims enter into relations with Pandits which they view as traditional economic transactions. The relationship is between a supplier of goods and services and his patron; religious differences are held in abeyance. It is a relationship of mutual dependence, but is asymmetrical. Whereas the Pandit cannot find substitutes or surrogates for Muslim occupational groups in his own community, Muslim specialists are free, at least in principle, to make their living by attending to the needs of their co-religionists alone. This
is what happens in fact in many villages where there are no Pandits within the settlement or nearby. It is true that in mixed villages Pandit households have generally enjoyed enough economic power to make it worthwhile for the Muslims to serve them. The Pandits were favoured by and identified with the ruling class during the hundred years of Hindu rule between 1846 and 1947 (see Bamzai, 1962:553 ff.). Economic need or advantage and political subordination of the Muslims do not, however, create among them a dependence on the Pandits in principle, which alone would be immutable; the existing dependence is purely empiric.

Dependence in deference to a principle characterizes the relationship of Pandits and Muslims. A Pandit cannot continue to retain his ritual status without the crucial services of at least some of the Muslim occupational groups. The dependence is absolute: in principle as well as in practice. To put it differently: the Pandit keeps Muslims out of the sanctum sanctorum of his cultural universe, but has to let them into his social world; hence the strain and anxiety that he experiences. A Muslim, on the other hand, considers Pandits as outsiders, both ideologically and empirically. He does not feel threatened on either plane. This sense of security has been considerably heightened since 1947 by the policies followed by a succession of democratically chosen governments of the State which have been dominated by Muslims.33 The most noteworthy of the decisions taken have been in respect of land and tenancy reforms—the most radical in India—abolition or reduction of the debt burden of the peasantry, and provision of extensive education, health and transportation facilities in rural areas. Educationally, and perhaps economically, the Muslims of Utrassu-Umanagri are not yet the equals of their Pandit co-villagers, but politically they are on the right side of the fence. This would seem to be generally true of rural Kashmir.

32 Lawrence notes that the Dogra rulers had vested revenue administration in the hands of the Pandits, who manned it from the lowest to the highest levels (see Lawrence, 1895:400-01). Also see footnote 25.
33 Since 1948, the heads of government in the state of Jammu and Kashmir have all been Muslim: Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Shamass-u-din, Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, Syed (Sayyid) Mir Qasim, and, currently Shaikh Abdullah again.
The Muslim representation of village society is shown in Figure 2. If we compare it with the Hindu representation of the same society presented in Figure 1, it becomes clear that we are faced with a situation of dual identities and of dual social orders. The only respect in which the two social orders appear identical is the position accorded to the Domb and the Vatal. In this parallelism between the two representations may be seen 'the exemplification of the Hindu Ethic par excellence' (Gould, 1962:194). What explains it? This is a difficult question to answer. With Dumont, we might attribute it to the permanence of 'psychological dispositions'(see Dumont, 1970:211). What I would like to stress, however, is the marginal nature of these two groups in both the versions of Kashmiri rural society.
Conclusion

It will be recalled that this examination of data, drawn primarily from a Kashmiri village, was undertaken with a two-fold purpose. It was hoped that it would, firstly, enable us to define the respective places of Muslims and Hindus in Kashmiri rural society and, secondly, provide some fresh insights into more general problems, such as the nature of Hindu-Muslim ‘synthesis’ and of caste society.

We have seen that the Muslims and the Hindus differ in the images that they have of themselves, of each other, and of Kashmiri rural society. This is a familiar situation in societies characterized by cultural pluralism, with each ethnic category being ‘self-ascribed’ as well as ‘other-ascribed’ (see, for example, Barth, 1970). The data from Utrassu-Umanagri reveal that each group has, in fact, two sets of representations, one stemming from ideological considerations and the other from the compulsions of living.

At the ideological level there is complete mutual exclusion. That this fundamental opposition between Hindus and Muslims exists throughout South Asia, is well known. What is missed, however, is the very important though apparently paradoxical fact that both ideologies command identical behaviour towards non-believers—total exclusion—and are in that sense mutually reciprocal and reinforcing. In other words, Kashmiri rural society, when subjectively defined, comprises two social orders, not one.

At the empirical level we encounter another set of relations, those between the Muslim occupational groups and their Pandit clients or patrons. As we have already seen, the Muslims view

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34 There is widespread agreement on this point. See, for example (i) Aziz Ahmad (1964:73): ‘As a religio-cultural force, Islam is in most respects the “very antithesis of Hinduism”’, (ii) Dumont (1970:211) ‘... Hindus and Muslims form two distinct societies from the point of view of ultimate values’, (iii) A.K. Saran (gist of a statement made by him in the course of a conversation with me in 1970): ‘When the Muslims came to India, the Hindus had only two valid courses of action open to them: a fight to the finish or conversion to Islam. Instead they made a soft choice: they swallowed the poison and pretended they had not died. But only the gods can perform such feats’. 
these relationships in economic terms while the Pandits regard them as ritual liturgies with an economic content. This content is not to be equated with the value of goods or services transacted, for the Pandits’ stakes are higher than can be measured by the economic yardstick. Thus, though the Muslims and the Pandits are mutually dependent, there is no reciprocity of perspective, if we take the surface level view of the situation. At the deeper level, however, there is agreement. The duality of the social orders is thus overcome. In the words of Levi-Strauss (used, of course, in another context), ‘it is not the resemblances, but the differences, which resemble each other’ (1962:77).

The relationship of the ideological and empirical situations may thus be seen as one of complementary opposition. The emic definition of the relationship would, however, seem to be as that of independence. Viewed in its own terms the empirical situation is of a piece; in ideological terms it is a compromise, a concession to the exigencies of co-existence (see Dumont, 1970:206). Compromise and concession spell ideological defeat; and it is as much in terms of it as of economic interdependence that, viewed from the outside, a synthesis may be seen to have been worked out by the peoples of Kashmir.

Turning to the problem of caste, we have seen that both Muslims and Pandits recognize the notion of zat as the crucial factor in identity specification and in determining an individual’s natural or moral conduct. Further, Muslim specialist-Pandit patron relations were seen to be a close approximation to the familiar jajmani pattern. It was, in fact, argued that from the Pandit’s point of view a caste system does exist in Kashmir. The significance of this situation lies in that it demonstrates more clearly than any other regional social framework that the castes of a ‘Hindu’ society, other than Brahmans, are not necessarily ‘Hindu’ by religion. The Kashmir data reveal how the Brahman will conjure up a system of caste substitutes even out of a non-Hindu environment. His capacity to do so is, of course, dependent both upon ideological compromise and upon politico-economic power. In the recent past—between 1846 and 1947—the Pandits had the monopoly of both political and economic power in rural Kashmir. In
1947 they lost the former. Though economically they are yet no worse off than they were earlier, their economic monopoly has certainly been broken and their association with land-ownership has been abolished. The future may yet hold an unprecedented challenge to the Pandits in the form of the withdrawal of cooperation from Muslim specialists. There have been a few straws in the wind to indicate that such an eventuality cannot be ruled out.\textsuperscript{35} It remains to be seen what solution the proverbial Pandit ingenuity will find for such ritual lacunae.

The above considerations should not mislead us to conclude that the Kashmiri Muslim social order itself is a modified system of castes as might be suggested by the manner in which some scholars have dealt with so-called Muslim castes (see, for example, Dumont, 1970:210, Ansari, 1960; and Hutton, 1951:2). The temptation to do so is particularly strong in Kashmir where the bulk of the Muslim population is of Hindu ancestry (see Lawrence, 1967:286 but also 306). It is an easy way out but fail is to attach sufficient importance to the Muslims’ self-ascription today. I do not mean to suggest that the anthropologist should not venture beyond native models of social reality; he must not, however, ignore them.

Another pitfall would be the temptation to discuss Kashmiri rural society solely in terms of a system of economic classes based on occupation, on the ground that the caste model is totally inapplicable to Muslims in view of their ideology (see, for example, Saghir Ahmad, 1970). I trust this discussion has convincingly shown that our understanding of the peculiarities of rural social organization in Kashmir is dependent upon a prior knowledge of the Hindu caste system, which is not the same thing as saying that Muslim groups are modified castes.\textsuperscript{36} The class model is an independent construct.

\textsuperscript{35} Since 1947 some Muslim specialists of Utrassu-Umanagri have on two occasions threatened to deny their services to the Pandits: the Potters in around 1948 and the Barbers in 1967. Also see Madan (1966).

\textsuperscript{36} Intiaz Ahmad, for several years now, been pleading for the study of the nature of interaction between Hindus and Muslims (see, for example, Intiaz Ahmad, 1965, 1966). He believes that the Muslim
The inescapable conclusion—so it seems to me at least—is that, instead of trying to completely assimilate the Muslim and Pandit representations of Kashmiri rural society, we should acknowledge the existence of dual social orders, which are, however, accommodated within one overarching framework. The latter is defined partly in cultural terms (language, customs, etc.) and partly in terms of the politico-administrative set-up. Its members are not, as such, the Muslims and the Pandits, but rather people, Kashir (that is, Kashmiris), who either have the Muslim identity or the Pandit identity. Within this overall framework, the Pandits need the alternate Kashmiri identity to function, whilst the Muslims do not, but only use it conveniently because that is the framework within which they can, given the Pandit requirement, deal with their Hindu co-villagers. This is precisely what I mean when I claim that the Pandit identity is intrinsically a caste structured or 'related one, the Muslim is not so, and, again, the Kashmiri one is. Moreover, such a view of the relation between religious ideology and ethnic identity may turn out to be of value beyond Kashmir in helping us comprehend the situation not only of Muslims but also of other non-Hindu groups in South Asia and, mutatis mutandis, even of Hindus in such places as Sind in Pakistan or in Afghanistan.37

occupational groups of Uttar Pradesh whom he has studied are appropriately described as 'caste analogues' (see Imtiaz Ahmad, 1966) but does not clarify from whose point of view—the anthropologists', the Hindus', or the Muslims'.

37 In the writing of this paper I have been greatly helped by the comments and criticisms of Kris Lehman, McKim Marriot, Jit Singh Uberoi, and Nur Yalman. Shernavaz Billimoria helped with the census reports and the dictionaries, and Mukul Dube with his editorial talent. I am grateful to all of them.
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Islamization and Muslim Ethnicity in South India

Mattison Mines

The purpose of this article is to examine the structure of Muslim ethnicity in South India and to explain why the Muslims are undergoing a process of Islamization in Tamilnadu’s northern cities despite their close identification with and integration into local society. I speak of the structure of ethnicity in order to emphasize that the components of Muslim identity form a framework which reflects the social order within which the Muslims live. Identity is not simply a name or a list of values and customs. A people’s identity has a structure which sometimes involves a symbolic order and at times a corporate or social order. Thus, in India the identity of a caste group involves a symbolic structure associated with their caste including style of dress, caste speech dialect and caste specific ritualism as well as the social order of the caste structure.

It is also my purpose in this article to consider the generation of Muslim Tamil ethnicity, for the Muslim Tamils have

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1 Data on the Muslims of Tamilnadu State are based on research conducted between September 1967 and February 1969. I wish to express my appreciation to the Foreign Area Fellowship Programme which supported this research. In this article I restrict myself to a discussion of the Muslim Tamils all of whom belong to the Sunni sect of Islam (see Mines, 1972a; 1972b). The Sunnites form the vast majority of Tamilnadu’s Muslim population.
emerged as converts from the Hindu Tamilian population with whom they share a common cultural heritage. While it is commonly felt that ethnicity is an adaptation to political and economic competition (see, for example, Barth, 1970; Bruner, 1974). Muslim ethnicity in Tamilnadu is not. It develops in response to other factors, particularly internal needs to acquire status and a sense of social position rather than in response to external relations. Like Deshen (1974), I find that ethnicity may find its basis in cultural considerations while political and economic considerations appear inconsequential. The implications for a theoretical understanding of ethnicity is clear. Ethnicity is more complex than generally recognized. In particular we need to know more about the way ethnic distinctions arise. The Tamil-speaking Muslims illustrate ethnic development where ethnic identity provides little political or economic advantage.

It has long been recognized that Muslim ritual and behaviour often owe as much to local custom as they do to Islamic tradition. Accordingly, it is not surprising to find Indian Muslims combining Indian and Islamic traditions. This is not to imply that Indian Muslims form a homogeneous population or that Islam is a monolithic religion: neither is true. Muslims in India are culturally, politically and linguistically highly diverse, and the character of Muslim identity and integration varies greatly. Thus, over much of northern India Muslims are characterized as reluctant acceptors of their minority status (see, for example, Spear, 1967:48). However, in Tamilnadu they are considered well integrated acceptors. While Muslim-Hindu antagonism is common in northern India, just the opposite characterizes such relations in Tamilnadu. As one might expect, the Tamil Muslims identify closely with their Hindu Tamilian neighbours. It comes as a surprise, therefore, to discover that in recent years in the city of Madras many Muslims have tried to purify their ritual behaviour and, through language and dress, to establish more clearly their distinct identity as Muslims. In so doing they have differentiated themselves from the Hindu population by Islamization.

Since they have lived in a state of harmonious syncretism with their Hindu neighbours for centuries, why should they seek to differentiate themselves? Why should they wish to Islamize?
Has a growth in religiosity caused the Islamization process and hence the differentiation of Muslim and Hindu? Or does Islamization bring political or economic advantages? Or is it the outgrowth of other forces, perhaps an undercurrent of anti-Muslim sentiment? This is the explanation Aggarwal (1966) gives for the Islamization process experienced by the Meos in Rajasthan and Haryana. However, this interpretation seems unlikely in Tamilnadu where the friendly nature of Muslim-Hindu relations is common knowledge. What, then, is the explanation?

The Tamil Muslims are the offspring of Arab traders and local converts. They are an autochthonous population which, it has often been remarked, bears the stamp of Tamil culture and the political heritage not of conquest and rule, but of mercantilism and integration (see D'Souza, 1955:43-6). As merchants the Muslims are known for their astuteness and honesty. And while trade took them abroad to Southeast Asia where, as in Malacca (see Ryan, 1967; Arasaratnam, 1970), they were for centuries an important economic and political force, India has always remained their home to which they have returned. As an integrated population the Muslims identify the bulk of their cultural traditions with those of the Tamil population. Thus, they claim Tamilian origin, speak the Tamil language as their language, in the countryside dress in much the same way as Hindu Tamilians, and even refer to Muslim contributions to Tamil literature, the sine quo non of the locals' view of Tamil culture. As a result, the extent to which the Muslims are distinct from their Hindu neighbours is the extent to which they have emerged as Muslims from the local population. An examination of urban Muslims in Pallavaram town reveals the extent to which this differentiation has taken place in the environs of Madras City, which is Tamilnadu's cultural and political centre.

The emergence of the Tamil Muslims as a distinct population separate from Tamil Hindus is particularly evident in Tamilnadu's northern cities. In this article I refer to these Muslims
as Muslim Tamils in order to emphasize their orthodoxy in contrast to the Tamil Muslims who have not Islamized their customs. In the Madras metropolitan area, Muslim Tamils are readily distinguished from Hindus by their appearance and attitudes. In contrast to the Tamil Muslims, the majority wear clothes which distinguish them from the Hindu population. Men wear lungis (a sarong-like garment) and topis (distinctively Muslim hats), sometimes a shawl, and women wear brightly coloured saris of a kind Hindus do not wear. Frequently women observe some degree of purdah, which is a custom that has not reached Hindus in South India as it has in the north, and when in public wear a burqa or a white cloth to preserve their modesty. Muslim Tamils also distinguish themselves by language, because many do not share a loyalty to Tamil with the Hindus. Hindu Tamilians are zealous defenders of Tamil and its heritage, which they consider to be one of the world’s great literary languages. In contrast many Muslim Tamils, especially those in the State’s northern cities within the last three generations, have tried to replace Tamil with Urdu as their household language. They have done so under the misconception perpetrated at one time by Muslim League, that Urdu is the language of Indian Muslims. And they have wanted to be proper Muslims. It follows that the Muslim Tamils’ loyalties lie not so much with their Tamil heritage, as popular knowledge would have us believe is true for all Tamil-speaking Muslims, as with what they think of as being Muslim. They see themselves as sharing and partaking in Tamilian culture, but also as separated from it by Muslim traditions and world view which they wish to emulate (Mines, 1972b; 1973b).

It is their vision of what a Muslim ought to be that lies at the base of their own conceptual separation of themselves from Hindus. Muslim Tamil world view and values emphasize equalitarianism, independence and a strong work ethic in contrast to the Hindu view which emphasizes social hierarchy, interdependence and status dependent on the ability to command others to work (Mines, 1972b; 1973b). While it is important to stress here that the contrast involves different perceptions of ideals, nevertheless Muslims are conscious of the distinctions, and their ideology does affect their behaviour even though it does not describe their behaviour. They are equally
consciously that Muslims elsewhere do not fulfil their ideals, so they see themselves as standing between Tamil culture and their Muslim values which they strive to fulfil.

Because they identify themselves as Muslims, they want to be good Muslims. Accordingly, in Pallavaram, a suburb of Madras, the leading Muslim Tamils attempt in their behaviour to set an example of austere orthodoxy which is generally accepted as a standard for behaviour. As Sunnites of the Hanafi and Shafi schools, they attempt to follow closely the laws of Islam and their school’s interpretation of the hadiths. They believe that minimally a Muslim should observe the jummah namaz (Friday prayer, the most important prayer of the week), although ideally the five daily prayers should be observed. They believe there is no mediator between the individual and God. And they believe that Id (festival) days should be observed with prayer, alms-giving and sacrifice, when requisite, and the appropriate feasting or fasting. It must be noted that what is considered orthodox by Pallavaram’s Muslims is influenced by local beliefs. Among the community rituals they observe are Moharram, Akhir-e-Chahar Shamba (last Wednesday of Safar), Milad-e-Nabi (the Prophet’s Birthday), Laylatu-i-Miraj (the day the Prophet was invited to heaven), Shab-e-Barat (a kind of All Souls Day), Bakar-Id (festival, commemorating Ibrahim’s faith), and Ramazan (the month of fasting) including Idu-ul-Fitr. Despite orthodoxy, Sufi-inspired saint worship forms an important popular undercurrent to the orthodox Islamic standards of the Muslim community’s leadership, and certain saint’s days (urs) are observed at various times during the year. The most important of these is the Abdul Kadar Jilani Urs commemorating the death of Mohaiyadeen Abdul Kadar Andakai Jilani (alternately: Pir-i-Dastgir, Ghaus-ul-A’zam Muhiy-ud-din), a Baghdad saint born in Ano Hijra 471. Throughout Tamilnadu, he is the most important saint, and his shrines (dargahs) are everywhere. Pallavaram has four dargahs dedicated to him under various names.

Pallavaram’s Muslim Tamils disagree about the orthodoxy of all these ceremonials. For example, some think that celebrating the Last Wednesday of Safar is improper, since it is not in the hadiths, and accordingly argue that it should be ignored.
Similarly, the orthodox disapprove of certain activities associated with the Prophet’s birthday (*Milad-e-Nabi*). Many Muslims in the vicinity of Madras City make the birthday an occasion for pilgrimage to the top of Pallavaram Mount where they view the Prophet’s tunic (*jibbah*) enshrined there, pray for the Prophet’s assistance in their affairs and offer special prayer (*fatihas*). Pallavaram’s orthodox Muslim Tamils consider the pilgrimage reprehensible idol worship and make a point of saying that most of the pilgrims are not Muslim Tamils. The Muslim Tamils observe the birthday by attending speeches by *moulvis* (Koranic college degree holders), by listening to *moulut* (book commemorating the Prophet) readings in the mosque and to Tamil and Urdu speeches about the Prophet’s life. A few consider even the *moulut* reading unorthodox. And so it goes; everyone is concerned with being a proper Muslim and follows practices which, according to his knowledge, are orthodox. Each is perfectly aware that his behaviour is being judged by others and accepts the standards set by religious leaders in the community.

Sufi-inspired *urs* celebrations stand in contrast to the austerity of most Muslim Tamil festivals and represent a different, more folksy focus. *Urs* festivals are pervaded by a holiday spirit and are much livelier, more joyous affairs than are the comparatively sombre, standard ceremonials such as *Bakr-Id*. Perhaps because of this they have a very wide appeal. The *urs* are in many ways reminiscent of Hindu festivals, since, in addition to detailing the wondrous feats of faqirs, they include processions and the sanctification of Muslim residential areas, much as Hindu cart festivals do. Nevertheless, in Pallavaram some effort is made to circumscribe *urs* festivals with orthodoxy, and saint worship represents a more popular undercurrent to the tenor of Islamic ritual than the dominant theme which orthodoxy represents. Thus the orthodox stress that saints are great men worthy of respect, but that prayers should never be offered to them, except, some argue, with the understanding that the saints will pass them on to Allah. Only Allah should be the recipient of prayers. Nevertheless, saints often become objects of worship and their worshippers become guilty of *shirk* (idolatry and establishing associates to God). As a result, most of Pallavaram’s religious leaders stay away from
**urs** celebrations, and argue that people should participate more for the fun than for the sake of worship. Nevertheless, almost everyone does worship on these occasions and all seem to enjoy **urs**.

Standards of orthodoxy set by religious leaders affect non-ritual behaviour too, and further differentiate the Muslims from Hindu Tamils. For example, Muslim men sit close together at feasts so that they touch and may pass delicacies from plate to plate, a practice which is radically contrary to Hindu behaviour. Hindus generally consider such acts ritually polluting, but Muslims encourage such practices as expressive of their equality. So, too, many Muslims have adopted Urdu as their household language, because they associate it with being Muslim. The orthodox also avoid a number of activities which many Hindus enjoy, including attending the theatre, playing cards, drinking alcohol, and using music for ceremonial purposes. Again, avoidance of these activities separates Muslims and Hindus. Quite clearly, the Muslim Tamils have a view of the ideal Muslim which is distinct from the Hindu ideal. This ideal creates a tension among Muslims which reflects their wish to be seen as orthodox by their fellows, that they be considered good Muslims even when it is not always clear what is orthodox. Viewed from the perspective of their social origins, Muslims are stressing their distinctiveness, not their similarities, with the majority population. Their social status as Muslims comes not from their relationship with Hindus but from how closely they fit the Muslim ideal: that they dress, speak and behave like Muslims.

Emerging from a common cultural matrix with the Hindu Tamilians, the emphasis on orthodoxy differentiates the Muslims and represents the formation of a separate Muslim Tamil ethnic identity. An ethnic community is a population which:

1. is largely biologically self-perpetuating,
2. shares fundamental cultural values;
3. makes up a field of communication and interaction; and
4. has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order (Barth, 1970:10-11, following Narroll, 1964).
An important aspect of the first criterion is community's sense of being biologically distinct—that their origins if not their race are unique. The Muslim Tamils are an ethnic community which has emerged from a homogeneous cultural setting after the introduction of Islam. The definition obscures the obviously dynamic character of group boundary formation and maintenance. Further, it suggests nothing about how ethnicity becomes an important component of social identity.

It is easier to explain how Muslims maintain their ethnic identity than it is to explain their group boundary formation. Disregarding modern conversions to Islam, which are few, the Muslim Tamils are biologically self-perpetuating and consider themselves as different from other Muslims and from Tamil-speaking Hindus. They marry among themselves and only rarely marry Muslims from other groups. This is largely a result of the Tamilians' marriage preference for kinsmen rather than any restriction on establishing marriage ties with other Muslims. In any case, the pattern helps maintain the Tamilians' separate identity. Similarly, their sense of self-awareness is heightened by the central role of the mosque in their social and religious lives. Usually children learn about Islam in schools associated with mosques, and the management of mosque affairs provides a context for community leadership in much the same way that temple management does for Hindus. Through Urdu, the mosque, and Tamil newspapers (especially Nuurul Islaam, Maru Malarsi, and Urimai Kurul) oriented towards Muslims, a field of communication and interaction is created. Further, since Muslims have their own standards for determining prestige and status, they distinguish themselves from others on the basis of orthodoxy as well as distinctive dress and sometimes speech. In other words, newspapers, marriage ties, particularly Muslim standards for behaviour, Koranic schools and mosques contribute to the maintenance of Muslim identity. The Tabligh Movement (a reformist religious movement) and the Muslim League have also

\* I purposely choose to use the term community instead of group in this context in order to avoid implying any group organization or corporateness.
contributed to this consciousness even though neither organization now draws much support from the Muslim Tamils. But why Muslims have consciously differentiated themselves from Hindus by language, dress and orthodoxy is less clear, especially given their comfortable integration into Hindu Tamil society, for, in many ways Muslims are integrated and think of themselves as an integral part of Tamil society. Is the answer to be found in political or economic considerations? Does orthodoxy lead to political or economic advantages?

In many spheres of urban life, Muslims and Hindus (as well as other minority communities) interact closely and share the same opportunities. Most significantly, a relatively large number of Muslims are prosperous, reflecting their success as businessmen throughout Tamilnadu. Their relative success adds to their sense of involvement in Tamil society, which is reflected in many of their activities. Muslims and Hindus of similar economic interests often interact cooperatively when they feel it is in their interest, and in Pallavaram they have jointly organized and now head a merchants' association for their mutual benefit. They do so because it is in their best economic and class interests to do so. Religious identity is not nearly as significant as these practical interests for determining interaction and cooperation among merchants. Mayer's (1970:19) study of Muslim political attitudes in the city of Trichy indicates that south of Madras arrives at a similar conclusion: class considerations are politically more significant than religious affiliation. A simple case in point is the cooperation merchants show in lending money to one another without charging interest when they are in a pinch (Mines, 1973b), or in their live-and-let-live attitude toward black-market activities, a potential sore point among competing businessmen. Cooperation arising from coincidentally shared economic interests results in a high level of Muslim-Hindu integration in the bazaar.

Similarly, Muslims and Hindus interact freely in politics, joining with others of similar persuasion regardless of religion in their support of various parties. The lack of political unity among Muslims reflects the absence of a perceived external threat which might otherwise unify them. Instead, Muslim political behaviour to some extent parallels that of the Hindus.
Very few of the Muslims are first and foremost supporters of the Muslim League, which we might take as a sign of their pursuit of religious separatism into the political sphere; and those that do are often regarded as fanatical even by Muslims. In contrast, they do support in large numbers Tamilnadu's ruling party, the DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam), just as Hindus do, and they have participated in its membership for years. Incidentally, the DMK espouses a strong separatist ideology for Tamilnadu, and Muslim support consequently is in line with their local identification as Tamilians. Muslim Tamils of different political persuasions support Indira Gandhi's Congress. In Pallavaram, members of both religious communities hold local leadership roles in these parties. A Muslim is the head of the local DMK organization and has a large Hindu and Muslim clientele. Similarly, Muslims and Hindus participate jointly in the administration of Pallavaram (see Mines, 1972a:20). Muslims feel they have equal opportunities to achieve class status and prestige as well as leadership positions.

The Pallavaram Merchants' Association similarly demonstrates inter-community cooperation. It has members belonging to all the major religious communities—and of course without the help of its members, the Association could not exist. This association does little more than regulate shop hours and bazaar holidays during normal times, which is an important function in itself. But in times of crises and when problems of mutual concern arise, it provides the organization for taking quick and effective action concerning a wide range of activities. During the Indo-China altercation in 1962, for example, the Association donated Rs. 2,000 to the Indian effort. And in 1969, when Annadurai, the popular Chief Minister of Tamilnadu State, died, it organized a feast for the poor in his name. Muslim and Hindu merchants from both the main parties participated. The merchants cooperated because it was in their personal interest to do so. Annadurai was such a popular man, that merchants of different political persuasions had little choice but to agree to sponsor the feast. The Merchants' Association, therefore, cuts across ethnic and religious lines and in conjunction with the foregoing supports the contention that ethnicity provides little economic or political advantage to
the Muslim community as a whole. I say little rather than no
advantage, because economics and politics are far-reaching
phenomena and it would be unrealistic to say that no such
advantages occur. It is clear, however, that in Tamilnadu to
consider these advantages as being primary would give the
analyst little heuristic insight into the phenomenon of Muslim
Tamil ethnicity.

Perhaps as good an indicator as any of the Muslims’ relative
position in Tamilnadu is the intensity of their expression of
felt integration. Granting their minority status and the exist-
ence of inequality, Muslim Tamils in Madras City and
Pallavaram consistently point to Hindu-Muslim sociability and
are adamant about Hindu-Muslim good-neighbourliness. They
get along and they are fond of pointing out how well they do
so, well aware that elsewhere Hindu-Muslim relations are not
so convivial. They attend one another’s weddings; they have
friendships with one another; and they even contribute to one
another’s shrines.

Muslim Tamil ethnicity provides no overt political or eco-
omic advantages. Except for the Mosque administrative organi-
zation which restricts itself almost entirely to mosque and
inner-Muslim affairs, there are no exclusively Muslim voluntary
associations in Pallavaram. I have already noted that the
Muslim League has only a handful of supporters, so there
are no corporate groups organized on the basis of ethnicity
designed to advance or safeguard Muslim Tamil interests, even
though other Muslim groups do have such organizations. For
example, the Da’udi Bohras have the Anjuman-e-Burhani, a
voluntary association designed to promote Bohra social and
economic welfare. Consequently, the Muslim Tamils’ concern
with their ethnicity does not stem from economic or political
considerations, but from some other basis. Economically and
politically, they are an integrated population.

Clearly, Muslim Tamil integration in the cities involves the
dichotomization of religious and secular activities. The
Muslims seek to separate themselves as Muslims from Hindus,
yet participate as an integrated population in other spheres of
life. Hindu tolerance allows them the freedom of a strong
religious identity separate from their relations with Hindus,
while the lack of discrimination allows Muslims to pursue
opportunities on a par with Hindus in areas of life not dominated by Islam. Yet the question of why they have sought to differentiate themselves ethnically through the process of Islamization remains unanswered. Clearly, Islamization is not a reaction to Hindu hostility. Nor does it provide political or economic advantages. To what is it then a reaction?

Is the nature of Muslim integration and identity uniform throughout Tamilnadu? Is there this same separation of religious identity and behaviour from secular behaviour, this same push to Islamize? My observations in the village of Edai-kottai, near Dindigal City in Madurai District, demonstrate that the answer to both questions is no. In Edai-kottai village, Muslim Tamils do not maintain a separate ethnic identity. First of all there is not the uniformity of dress which distinguishes Muslims from Hindus in the city. Many Muslim men wear the dhoti in the same manner as non-Brahmin Hindus. Women, however, do observe purdah. Second, Tamil, the local language, is spoken both within the mosque and in the village, and Urdu is not considered the language of Muslims. Third, and most significantly, there is not as clear a separation between Muslims and Hindus during Muslim ritual activities as there is in the cities. Furthermore, an individual’s Muslim identity and public status are not based on orthopraxy as they are in Pallavaram. On the contrary, class and caste-like interactions, not only among Muslims but also among village Hindus, are particularly important for determining status and prestige, while identity is determined by descent. A Muslim is born a Muslim just as a Hindu is born into his caste group. What makes the differences noted here all the more important is that the Muslims of Edai-kottai do not live in the village all the year round. They are city-dwelling merchants who return to their native village annually in order to attend the festival (urs, known in Edai-kottai as kurs) of the Baghdad saint, Abdul Kadar Jilani. During the year, most of them live in Madras City and its environs, including Pallavaram. In other words, they are the same Muslims described above as striving to Islamize. Accordingly, village behaviour provides a striking
contrast to urban behaviour. In Pallavaram and Madras, saint worship occurs more as an undercurrent to the orthodox rituals of Sunni Islam, while in Edaikottai saint worship provides the focal ritual of the year. Furthermore, the village's saint worship is much more opulent and dramatic than is seen in either of the two northern cities. Clearly, social contexts determine the particulars of self-image and Muslim integration in the two different settings—one urban, the other rural. Since it is the same Muslims behaving differently, it is possible to isolate the factors which account for the differences between the two social contexts.

A short description of Edaikottai’s Kadar Jilani Kurs serves to illustrate how different it is from the Muslim festivals observed in Pallavaram and Madras, and how different there the basis of Muslim identity is. The festival itself is influenced by Hindu custom, and is in fact reminiscent of Hindu annual cart festivals when village gods circumnavigate their villages on temple carts, sanctifying the villages and their inhabitants for the coming year. The Kadar Jilani Kurs lasts eight days, the last three involving nightly processions circumambulating the village. These processions are the most important part of the festival, and the Muslims of the village return from all over the State to attend them. The processions sanctify the participants and the village. Sandalwood paste, flowers and sugar which are carried in procession are distributed at the end of the eighth night and are believed to be a powerful prophylaxis against disease.

The processions are influenced by Hindu tradition. The image taken out on the sixth night is a floral and paper replica of the saint’s grave (the image is called vasaga malai, garland of recitation, referring to the recitation of the saint’s genealogy). The image carried on the seventh and eighth nights is a kurs, a towering cone of brightly coloured paper and lights, crowned by peacock feathers which are thought to have strong curative powers. The processions begin at midnight and last until dawn, beginning and ending with a fatiha (prayer). At each crossroad, the procession stops and the men of the street make floral offerings of jasmine. The processions stop every few yards.
The processions are preceded by neon lights and the roar of a generator. Immediately in front of the image walks a group of faqirs with tambourines, emitting a cacophony of sounds and calling the praise of the saint; then comes a nagaswaram (a double reed musical instrument which Hindus associate with joyous occasions) troupe, a three-piece western band, a group of Hindu drummer-dancers and a group of men demonstrating their skills at lathi (bamboo pole) fighting.

While the processions proceed at night, during the day the Muslims rest, talk, arrange marriages, feast the poor, renew old acquaintances and compete with one another in their efforts to demonstrate their business successes. In other words, the days are crowded with status competition, the formation of new alliances and the continuation of disputes. For the Muslims who live scattered throughout the state for the rest of the year, these nightly processions represent the symbolic unity of the village Muslims. In Victor Tuner’s terms the ceremonial creates a feeling of communitas (Turner, 1969:96) when the unity of the village Muslims is felt and social differentiation is minimized. The daily activities represent the opposite: diversity and status differentiation. Anti-structure is sought at night and structure dominates the days.

There are several features about the kurs which are strikingly different from the festival occasions in Pallavaram and Madras. First, there is the use of music as an important aspect of the ritual occasion. Muslims do not use music in this manner in the cities. One has only to recall that many riots between Muslims and Hindus have been sparked by the music of Hindu processions to realize the significance of the Edaikottai Muslims’ behaviour. Not only are the processions accompanied by music, but the Muslims are the same ones that in Pallavaram, Madras and other cities would be offended by such behaviour.

Second, the processions involve non-Muslims as well as Muslims interacting in relationships of inter-dependence. The vasaga malai and the kurs are carried on the shoulders of large numbers of Harijans, members of untouchable castes. The drummer-dancers are also Harijans. The relationship between the Harijans and Muslims is traditional, as is the grain and money payment the Harijans receive. The musicians and faqirs are paid in a similar manner. This inter-dependence is contrary
to Muslim ritual activities in Pallavaram and Madars, where Hindus of any caste, let alone Harijans, are not participants. In the cities, Muslim festivities are exclusive affairs. In Edaikottai, Muslim religious activities are not as clearly segregated. Muslim and Harijan inter-dependence in Edaikottai is hierarchical and the Muslims are in the superordinate position.

Third, the use of the vasaga malai and kurs images runs contrary to urban orthodoxy, where images are not carried even during urs ceremonies. The village practice smacks of idolatry and saint worship (shirk), which in the urban setting is rejected by Pallavaram's Muslims but which in their village they accept as appropriate behaviour. In Edaikottai the stress is not on Islamic orthodoxy but on pomp and wealth, and Sufi-inspired saint worship is the focus of religious activities. Identity is a product of birth, while prestige and status are achieved not by orthodoxy, but first and foremost by the Muslims' demonstrations of wealth and social super-ordinance.

How are the differences between the behaviour of these same Muslims in Pallavaram City and Edaikottai village to be explained? How is it that in Pallavaram religious behaviour stresses orthodoxy while the same Muslims in Edaikottai blatantly ignore their austere urban standards of orthodoxy in favour of music, saint worship, pomp and display? And what does the explanation tell us about Muslim identity and Islamization?

The answers are to be found in what the Muslims stress in their evaluations of themselves and others, and in the structural basis of their identity. Identity, status and prestige are all closely intertwined. In the northern cities of Madras and Pallavaram, a Muslim's identity is based on his group identity as a Muslim and on his personal prestige and status. But in no case is his identity a purely ascribed appellation; it is something which he establishes in his relationships with others and in the way that they perceive and evaluate him. Identity is something which is actively pursued and maintained. It is a plastic thing, so if he changes his behaviour in a significant way he also changes his identity. Thus, in terms of his personal prestige and status, a Muslim is judged on the basis of factors like class,
political affiliations, wealth, power, education, intelligence, likeableness, as well as on the basis of what kind of a Muslim he is. Among urban Muslims, this latter factor is particularly important because it determines how they relate with one another. Since all the Muslim Tamils are Sunnites, in Pallavaram they evaluate one another in terms of their orthodoxy and perceived behaviour, the standards for which are set by the leaders of the Muslim community.

The two aspects of Muslim identity—religious identity and personal prestige and status—are not mutually exclusive. A wealthy man, for example, may be considered a low status Muslim. Muslim merchants who sell liquor often display wealth but are given a low status by their fellow Muslims. They find it difficult to arrange marriages for their children with families of similar wealth. Obversely, a person may have considerable status as a Muslim and yet be poor, as the case of Kabir illustrates. Kabir is a poor man, but he is one of the religious leaders of Pallavaram. His political influence among his followers is considerably greater than that of many wealthier men. His followers look to him for advice on all aspects of their lives, and I found that members of his community often took his word as final. Among Muslims, a wealthy, capable man, who is also considered orthodox, ranks high as an individual and as a Muslim. Few men hold high status in both identity spheres. Typically, the wealthier a man becomes, the harder he strives to establish an identity as an orthodox Muslim.

The appearance in Pallavaram of Muslim-Hindu integration stems from social contexts where Muslim identity is not socially relevant, but where Muslims and Hindus coincidentally share political, social, or economic interests. In these instances, Muslims and Hindus as individuals interact according to their interests. They join together to achieve common goals, to enforce bazaar rules which are beneficial to them, to support the political parties of their choice, to further their business interests or to maintain friendly relations with business associates.

To speak of the dominance of the majority group when discussing these relationships is misleading, because it suggests an actively subordinate position for the Muslim minority and an actively superordinate role for Hindus. Instead, both Muslim
and Hindu individuals interact independently, coming together in joint efforts when they see the value of the other’s support, both accepting the same standards of success. In this sense, Muslims are compliant with the interests of the majority population and are integrated (see Schermerhorn, 1970:6-7), as is also indicated by their contributions to the Indian war effort against China in 1962 and by their sponsorship of a feast along with Hindu merchants in 1969 to commemorate the death of Annadurai. In their pursuit of wealth and political power, Muslims are able to achieve success sharing the standards of the majority society. But their religious standards are different from the Hindus’; they cannot achieve status as a Muslim among Muslims except by pursuing their own standards. In order to establish their Muslim identity, they have ‘Islamized’ and segregated themselves from Hindus. Thus, urban Muslim Tamil ethnicity stems from an internal need among themselves to achieve status. It currently owes little to Hindu-Muslim relations. Yet it is possible that the rise of ethnic distinctions may open the door to subsequent discrimination in so far as it emphasizes the Muslim Tamils’ visible distinctiveness. May not Hindus resent this ‘clannishness’?

How do the Hindus view the Muslims? It is apparent that Muslims offer no social threat to them. Tamil Hindus do not fear Muslims, and, like the Tamil Muslims, they point to cooperation and to friendship between the communities. Thus a Muslim acquaintance of mine was invited by his Hindu friend to the latter’s first viewing of his bride. Hindus recognize Muslim distinctiveness but are unconcerned about Muslim ethnicity. This nonchalance is possible because Muslim ethnicity is not an attempt to regulate external relations with Hindus and Hindus are not affected by it. Consequently, boundary maintenance, which Barth (1970) finds so important in contexts where ethnicity does define external relations, is not a source of political or economic tension among Muslim and Hindu Tamils. It is clear, therefore, that analytic approaches which consider ethnicity as a population’s adaptation to political and/ or economic competition are taking an unnecessarily limited view. Muslim Tamil ethnicity is for the internal consumption of Muslims and arises in response to the dictates of what is considered orthodox. This orthodoxy is non-Tamilian in nature,
having a decidedly northern character involving as it does the acquiring of Urdu. This northern influence is also apparent in the hiring of Hafizes from the Daru-l-Ulum Deoband to recite the Koran during Ramadan in Pallavaram's mosques.

Status and identity in Edaikottai village appear in striking contrast to the urban situation. The dual aspects of identity found in the urban setting are still present, but, significantly, Muslims do not have to segregate themselves from Hindus in their religious activities. This is because their identity as Muslims is not something they must achieve; on the contrary it is ascribed by birth. In the village, therefore, little concern is paid to establishing an identity as a Muslim. Most are concerned about establishing their personal status and prestige. Within their own community this is done through personal displays of wealth and power. Hence, status-seeking explains several of the ceremony's characteristics. A kurs as elaborate and as opulent as that performed in Edaikottai involves a great deal of money in terms of the cost for decorations, feasts and fireworks, as well as for the performers, so it provides opportunities for individuals to display their wealth and successes through contributions to the festival as well as through public feasting. In addition, the kurs is a demonstration of the Muslim community's wealth, religiosity, and relationships to all others in the village. The kurs, therefore, combines ritual and secular features with status seeking. Muslim status is expressed through the medium of their ritual relationships and the grandness of their ceremony.

Edaikottai's Kadar Jilani Kurs begins to make sense. On the emotional level, it is a time of excitement and fun, a chance to get away from daily routines. It is also a ceremonial which acts as a prophylactic against disease and misfortune. At the more abstract level of social relations, its significance is three-fold: First, the kurs is a ritual expression of the social unity of the Muslim village community. It is a joint endeavour and the circumambulation of the Muslim residential area sanctifies it and the residents. Second, the festival provides an arena of status competition among the Muslims while demonstrating the symbolic cohesiveness of the group. And, third, it is an expression of ritual status which indicates the relative hierarchical position of Muslims compared with other castes which form their audience
in the village. At the highest level of abstraction, the *kurs* expresses the multiple relationships that exist among the Muslims, their village, and a supernatural, their village saint. It is the second level of meaning which is most pertinent to an understanding of Muslim identity and integration.

In the performance of the *kurs*, individual identity is of secondary importance compared to the demonstration of group unity and wealth expressed in a ritual milieu. Being a Muslim in the village means something different from what it does in the city. It is an identity determined not by religiosity but by birth. To be a Muslim is to be part of a group which holds a status *vis-a-vis* the other communities within the village. It is the Muslim community as a whole that sponsors the festival, and their status relative to other communities is determined by their combined demonstration of power and wealth. A corporate Muslim identity of this sort is absent in the city because the community is dispersed and is not a unit of social interaction as households and voluntary associations are. The *kurs*, therefore, provides a symbolic expression of Muslim status as a corporate group within the village, and in its use of music and in its stress on saint worship it is comparable to customary veneration of a village deity. It takes this form understandably because in effect the Muslims are playing to a village audience where such behaviour is traditional. Urban orthodoxy, in contrast, would be meaningful only to themselves and would not establish their position in village society as it does in the city. In other words, the village Muslims are completely integrated into the village society. They share not only the Hindus' standards of success, but also their standards of religiosity founded in group identity.

The Muslims say that at some time in the past they were converted from Hinduism. Conversion began a process of religious differentiation which still goes on. Partap Aggarwal has documented such a process among the Meos of Rajasthan and Haryana (1966). The Meos were originally nominal converts to Islam. They retained their Hindu names and continued after conversion to interact with the Hindu of their region as a dominant caste. This included maintaining ritual ties with caste Hindus. During the period leading up to and following the partition of India and Pakistan, the Meos underwent a process
of Islamization. They changed their names to Muslim ones, they purified their religious practices and ended their ritual ties with caste Hindus. In other words, they moved from a state of complete integration to a state where at least in the religious sphere they were no longer integrated.

A similar process of Islamization is observed in Tamilnadu. The Edaikottai Muslims have emerged from their Hindu environment, have left the village for the city and there have Islamized themselves. But the process is not uni-directional; it is contextual and reversible. Why? Because urban Islamization is a response to differences in rural and urban social structure rather than to deep-lying social change such as the Meos have experienced which prevents reversibility. The Meos have lost their pre-partition social position as a result of radical political and economic change emanating from the division of India and Pakistan. But the Muslim Tamils have not experienced a similar change and are able to respond more flexibly to different social environments. There appears to be no pressure from the dominant Hindus forcing Tamilnadu’s Muslims to Islamize. On the contrary, urban Muslims have consciously chosen to Islamize their customs. In the city, Muslims lack a corporate identity and religious identity is achieved, as are status and prestige. In order to establish and maintain their religious identity they have found it necessary to create a new group sense through Islamization. Muslim identity in the village, however, is corporate so that religious identity is ascribed, but social status and prestige are achieved.

The argument which grows out of the particular case of the Muslim Tamils is that social structure is the determinant of the structure of identity. Village social structure is characterized by hierarchy defined by interaction and closed corporate status defined by birth (see Marriott, 1968:105-07). Muslim identity structure is ascribed as is that of closed corporate groups which are ranked. Urban structure, in contrast, is relatively open. Status is defined by readily-apparent attributes and behaviour (Marriott, 1968b:103-05). Class is more significant than corporate rank (consider Mayer, 1970:19), and group identity is
that of vaguely-ranked ethnic categories. The cultural content of identity is not determined by social structure, but it is influenced by it. In the village an identity based on orthodoxy would make only limited sense to fellow Muslims but contributes little to the Muslims' identity and status in the community. Descent, interaction and displays of wealth establish religious identity and status in the village. However, in the open urban context, group identity is vague. Identity in cities cannot be based on corporateness, because fellow villagers are dispersed. Identity as a Sunni Muslim is all that remains and orthodoxy helps to establish and maintain this identity.

In sum, when the structure of society is open, then Muslim identity will be based on attributes and the appropriate Islamic behaviour will be stressed. However, when the structure of society is closed and when identity is corporate, the Islamic content of behaviour need not be stressed, while local traditions for determining status will be, and they may contradict Islamic customs as they do in Edaikottai.

The implications of the rise of Muslim Tamil ethnicity are multiple. Barth (1970), Cohen (1974) and Bruner (1974) all see ethnicity heuristically as adaptations to political and economic niches where ethnic boundary maintenance and the regulation of external relations are important. Bruner, for example, shows how urban ethnicity operates in Indonesia to affect job hiring and to determine which ethnic groups will dictate standards of etiquette in different urban settings. In other words, Bruner finds ethnicity important in the regulation of inter-group behaviour and economic competition. Similarly, he finds ethnic lines clearly defined and boundary maintenance important. This is very different from what we find among the Muslim Tamils. Their ethnicity is not adaptive and has nothing to do with the regulation of inter-group behaviour and economic competition. The process of Islamization that the Muslim Tamils are experiencing is confined to the regulation of inner-relationships among Muslims. It develops as a response to an internal need among Muslims to achieve status where the standards of behaviour are not Tamilian but orthodox. The adaptation and ecology-oriented approach, therefore, fails to provide the perspective necessary to understand Muslim Tamil ethnicity. Shortcomings arise out of the etic nature of the approach. This
etic approach carries an analytic bias which, in some cases, leads to insight, while in others, such as the case in point, it obscures the causes of ethnic development. In fact this shortcoming raises the whole question of whether ethnicity can be adequately analyzed without emphasis on the emic view. Without it Muslim Tamil ethnicity is incomprehensible. This is not to deny that political and economic approaches to the study of ethnicity have proved insightful. They have. But an emic approach which views ethnicity as a cultural phenomenon should prove equally fruitful. This is the approach which Deshen (1974:282) calls for and which proves most fruitful in the analysis of the Muslim Tamil’s ethnicity.

The main forms of ethnicity that have been recognized by scholars are tribal ethnicity, racial ethnicity and national ethnicity (see Enloe, 1973:23-4). It is clear that the Muslim Tamils do not fit within this tripartite classification. I suggest that a fourth type, ‘congeneric ethnicity’, which is common to India, be added. Congeneric ethnicity is ethnicity which arises when corporate castes are replaced by non-corporate identities which retain some of the symbolic identity of the original group including, in particular, the general caste name and a sense of separate origin. The Muslim Tamils who moved from their villages have lost their corporate identity but they have retained their sense of a distinct origin as Muslims and, with few exceptions, clearly distinguish themselves biologically in terms of origins from local Hindu castes. They retain instead an identity as Muslims which is much broader than their identity in their native villages. The Islamization process reflects their wider identity base as part of the greater Indian Muslim community. They are seeking identity as Indian Muslims rather than as Tamil Muslims.

Hindus in their turn are undergoing a similar process. Caste fusion has been associated with urbanization in recent years in India. As a result, groups of related castes are joining together on the basis of what they consider common biological origins and forming new caste communities which advocate...

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*My selection of the term congeneric ethnicity is to emphasize the former’s similarity to racial and national ethnicity while simultaneously suggesting its differences.*
intermarriage within the new group. These new caste identities are also examples of congeneric ethnicity. They retain a common cultural distinctiveness based on caste plus a sense of separate biological origin which to the outside observer appears fabricated. It is nonetheless real to the community members.

In general terms, congeneric ethnicity occurs in India because of the particular nature of its social structure. Caste and religious community form an important aspect of individual identity. A person is always a member of a particular group. In the village this is a corporate jati or caste-like group. In the modern Indian city, this corporateness is lost, but the caste appellation or general community identity is retained as in the case of Muslim Tamils. These groups now have a much broader base than the corporate caste groups of the village. Consequently, the boundaries of the new groups are less restrictive in terms of criteria of membership, since the aim is at fusion of groups of people who previously claimed distinctive identities. In addition to the community name of caste appellation, these groups retain a sense of separate biological origin usually expressed in terms of their shared descent from a common ancestor who is viewed as different from the ancestors of any other community. These communities are ethnic groups of the congeneric type, and many modern expressions of caste in urban India are examples of it. Although he does not use the term ethnicity, this is what Hardgrave (1970) describes as the direction of change of the Nadar caste in Tamilnadu. It is also what the Barnetts (1974) describe among the South Indian castes. And it is the pattern which the Muslim Tamils are following. Islamization is an expression of this new identity among the Muslim Tamils. Congeneric ethnicity is its outcome.

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