

# The Politics of Being Buddhist in Zangskar: Partition and Today

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The role of religion in Indian Jammu and Kashmir has been subject to lengthy and sustained debate. Many trenchant analyses of the Kashmir conflict have focused on the more heavily populated and contested valleys of Jammu and Kashmir from which the state takes its name.<sup>1</sup> Although important, such accounts ignore the eastern and less populated half of the state, consisting of Kargil and Leh districts. Together, Leh and Kargil districts account for roughly 58 percent of the state's geographic area but only 2.3 percent of its population. Similarly, the region of Zangskar comprises over half of Kargil district in area but only 10 percent of its population (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> While Zangskar is subaltern to the broader politics of Kargil district, both Leh and Kargil districts are considered marginal to Jammu and Kashmir.

Zangskar reflects a contested set of religious and regional identities that are similar to those characterizing the state more broadly. This essay considers the Himalayan margins of the state in order to understand how religion can be both a strategy and an identity, today as well as during partition. It provides thick ethnographic description of how religion and region intersect to marginalize and politicize the concerns of Zangskari citizens within their district, their state, and their nation. Such an analysis may shed some light on how and why religion has developed such a salient identity today.

I will begin with several narratives that offer a subaltern perspective on the chaos as well as calm that have pervaded partition and as well as contemporary circumstances in both Kargil and Leh district.<sup>3</sup> Before 1979, these two districts were known jointly as Ladakh, a name still used to refer to the entire region. Ladakh, in turn, once comprised a much larger region known as Ladakh Wazarat that accounted for more than half of princely Jammu and Kashmir before partition in

FIGURE 1  
THE DISTRICTS OF INDIAN JAMMU AND KASHMIR



This map shows the Line of Control between India and Pakistan, but does not show the eastern portions of Ladakh seized by China in 1962, known as Aksai Chin. Adapted from the Census of India website, 2001

1947 (Figure 2). The Ladakh Wazarat covered most of the eastern and northern part of the state, stretching from Tibet in the east to the Gilgit Agency in the far northwest.

While more than half of Ladakh Wazarat wound up in India following the pitched war between India and Pakistan from 1947 to 1949, this outcome was hardly certain for most of the conflict. The partition narratives illustrated below suggest a set of confused loyalties and contested identities that played a crucial role in determining how most of Ladakh Wazarat, including all of Zangskar, wound up in India rather than Pakistan. Today Zangskar's central valley lies some 230 kilometers south of the ceasefire line (renamed the Line of Control in 1972) that roughly marked the position of the Indian and Pakistani troops at the close of the war on January 1, 1949. Yet as very few historians have noted, these troops still battled for control in Zangskar some six months after the ceasefire of 1949.<sup>4</sup> This essay analyzes firsthand

FIGURE 2  
JAMMU AND KASHMIR IN 1947, SHOWING THE HISTORIC  
LADAKH WAZARAT



narratives from partition and more recent communal tensions in Zangskar. As my account draws primarily from Buddhist informants, selected Indian military accounts, and contemporary news sources, it does not claim to be a comprehensive account of Zangskari partition or of the contemporary situation. However, it does offer some perspective on the politics of being Buddhist and being marginal in Jammu and Kashmir today.

Recent scholarship on partition has called attention to the elision of minority voices in the making of both history and nations. Gyanendra Pandey has argued in defense of the fragments of society whose minority or subaltern voices intrude upon mainstream narratives of the Indian nation.<sup>5</sup> Pandey and others have challenged official views of partition by exploring the ambiguous loyalties and complex social suffering of this historical moment.<sup>6</sup> As Urvashi Butalia as well as Rita Menon and Kamla Basin have noted, partition was a time when individual interests were erased in favor of majority or national aims.

The renewed attention to subaltern perspectives on power and history are equally central to the recent movement known as public anthropology. One of the aims of public anthropology is to explore the conflicting discourses and practices by which persons and communities participate in the public realm. Such participation includes the strategies of identification examined in this paper, particularly religion, region, and caste. This paper pursues a set of subaltern perspectives that continue to play a small but significant role in the discourse on religion at the margins of the nation.

### **Partition Narratives from Ladakh and Zangskar**

By August of 1947, most of the princely states across the subcontinent had chosen to join either India or Pakistan. Yet the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, a Hindu who ruled over one of the largest and richest princely states in the subcontinent, equivocated. The Maharaja's state was home to a Muslim majority, a sizeable Hindu minority, and fiercely competing parties—the Muslim Conference favoring accession to Pakistan and the National Conference favoring accession to India.<sup>7</sup> As a result of his indecision and the surprise invasion of Jammu and Kashmir by Pathans and Gilgit Scouts, many inhabitants of Ladakh and Zangskar had little idea which nation they would join until the cessation of hostilities between India and Pakistan on January 1, 1949.

Both Veena Das and Ashis Nandy have argued convincingly that Indian partition was a “communal holocaust” or “complete breakdown of society” that often exceeded the possibility of language or analysis.<sup>8</sup> Yet as such breakdown was hardly the norm, it should not be the standard for judging the experience of partition in Jammu and Kashmir, as elsewhere in India. Although many of Jammu and Kashmir's southern and western districts did experience substantial communal atrocities, the Buddhist and Muslim communities of Zangskar and Ladakh did not. Entire communities of Hindus and Muslims were wiped out or displaced in western parts of both Jammu and Kashmir valleys, as people fled the communal carnage in the Punjab and Northwest Frontier Province.<sup>9</sup>

By late autumn, a local paramilitary force spread communal conflict in the northern province of Gilgit.<sup>10</sup> The Gilgit Scouts, whom the British had organized to defend against Russia during the Great Game, pledged allegiance to Pakistan on November 1, 1948 by swearing on the Koran. A small company of Gilgit Scouts

soon attacked an army cantonment in Bunji, where they massacred 150 Sikh soldiers who refused to be converted.<sup>11</sup> As the Scouts then began to loot Hindu and Sikh households in the town of Gilgit, the Wazir of Ladakh ordered reinforcements to the garrison in Skardu, the winter capital of Ladakh Wazarat. The entire Skardu force, consisting solely of Muslim troops, lay under a single Hindu commander whose position seemed increasingly tenuous. The Wazir ordered half of the troops in the Leh and Kargil garrisons—all Sikhs—to be sent to the Skardu garrison. The Sikh reinforcements, along with numerous Hindu and Sikh civilians who took refuge inside the Skardu fort, came under a lengthy siege before they were massacred later in the war.

By January 1948, Buddhists in Leh were alarmed at the rise of communalism in Gilgit and Skardu, towns with which they had strong trading and historic links. Realizing their vulnerability given the departure of half the Leh garrison, Buddhists in Leh soon took the initiative in organizing the town's defense. The urgent telegram that the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) sent to Prime Minister Nehru was of no avail.<sup>12</sup> When the leader of the YMBA, Kalon Tsewang Rigdzin, began to recruit local defense volunteers, he faced concerted opposition from politicians and Muslims whose sympathies clearly lay with Pakistan. The Leh Revenue Officer, Abdul Khaliq—himself a Muslim from Skardu—mocked the Kalon's conscription efforts and argued that Ladakh would be better off under Pakistan.<sup>13</sup> The leaders of both Muslim and Christian communities thwarted the Kalon's enlistment efforts and warned the members of their communities to stay away from the Kalon's organizational meetings.

Sensing the desperate state of defenses in Leh, state officials in Srinagar asked the recently arrived Education Officer in Leh to help organize volunteers. The officer in question, Shridhar Kaul, had recently fled to Leh from Skardu after his Muslim friends warned him of the communal killing of a Sikh couple in Khaplu. Noting the dismal relations between Buddhists and Muslims, Kaul was eventually able to forge some communal agreement around the defense of Leh:

The communities got alienated from one another almost irretrievably. It was clear from the situation that recruitment had to be

confined to the Buddhist areas ... I convened a meeting of the representatives of all communities and with some difficulty persuaded the Buddhist leadership to forget and forgive and combine with other communities to present a united front to the Pakistan invader.<sup>14</sup>

By attending the wintertime monastic festivals that draw visitors from all over Ladakh, the Leh Kalon and Kaul were able to mobilize nearly 500 Buddhists volunteers to join the National Guards in a few weeks. As word spread of the communal atrocities in Skardu, the Muslim community felt insecure. According to Kaul, once they realized the risk of being unarmed during the coming conflict, the Muslims shifted their stance and roughly 50 Muslims joined Leh's National Guards. The defense of Leh received a huge boost in March 1948, when the Lahauli Major Prithi Chand and his tiny platoon arrived in Leh, having spent almost a month marching on foot from Srinagar. Chand organized the local volunteers into two types of defense forces. Speaking of events he had witnessed only months earlier while serving in the Punjab, Major Chand attempted dissuade the citizens of Leh from communalization.

All of you know that in Pakistan thousands of innocent Hindus and Sikhs were killed and their temples burnt. They have also plundered and burnt all Hindu and Sikh houses. In Kashmir Valley, the invaders have not spared even the Muslims. Now if you wish to protect the monasteries, save our culture, and the honour of our women and religion, then come forward, get training in arms from us and join us to fight the invaders ... While I request you to maintain communal harmony, I warn you that whoever sympathizes, propagates or helps Pakistanis will not be spared.<sup>15</sup>

By May 1948, the Pakistani soldiers had captured key forts and the towns of Skardu, Kargil, and Dras. When a rumor emerged that the Gilgit Scouts would attack Leh on May 22, the townspeople fled to the hills and the platoon defending Khaltse deserted their posts. Instead, locals were surprised when the Indian Major General Thimmayya and Air Commodore Mehr Sing successfully landed a Dakota aircraft in Leh. The officers offered ammunition and encouragement but only stayed a few hours.<sup>16</sup> Over the next few months, largely under-equipped

Indian reinforcements trickled into Ladakh, on foot or by air. The uncertainty throughout much of the spring and summer gave Buddhists and Muslims ample motive to cooperate. Firsthand Ladakhi partition narratives suggest that Buddhists and Muslims made pacts to help each other regardless of which side won.<sup>17</sup>

In July 1948, according to Chand, several dozen Indian soldiers and several hundred Ladakhi soldiers successfully held off over 700 Gilgit Scouts, who advanced to within eight miles of Leh. The Scouts used Muslim villagers as spies to report on Indian troop placements, and Chand records that “although most of the Muslims were in our favour, a few were fanatics and agents of Pakistan, who spread unwarranted rumours.”<sup>18</sup> Yet the Ladakhis tricked their enemy with false rumors of Indian reinforcements and fake yak caravans. The yaks were loaded with straw rather than rations and sent to bogus locations to suggest troop movements. By August of 1948, a Pakistani victory seemed possible.

As morale ran low, tensions between Buddhist and Muslim communities intensified. In late August, the newly arrived Lt. Colonel Pratab announced that anyone supporting the enemy would be punished. He tried to promote communal harmony by including Muslims, Buddhists, and Christians in a newly created cabinet for Ladakh. Pratab’s choice of Chief Minister, the Moravian Norman Driver, was soon replaced on suspicion of being loyal to Pakistan.<sup>19</sup> The conflict in Ladakh remained a stalemate until November of 1948, when Indian troops recaptured Dras and Kargil and turned on the offensive.

By then, Zangskar had become deeply enmeshed in the conflict as well. In Zangskar, as in Ladakh, religious divides shaped the roles Zangskari villagers would play during the war. According to local informants, most of the Muslims in Padum voluntarily supplied the Gilgit Scouts, while the Buddhist villagers either fled or surrendered.<sup>20</sup> When Shridhar Kaul learned of the invasion of Zangskar, he went to Delhi to personally apprise Pandit Nehru of the situation. The letter Kaul delivered to Nehru in August 1948 baldly states:

Zangskar which commands several routes to Leh, Changthang and Lahoul must be immediately occupied by force. The 90% Buddhist population of this area is at present passing through hell under the oppression of enemy agents who find here a rich field for the supply of sinews of war to their force at Kargil ... The occupation of Zangskar

is also vital to the safety of Leh, Lahoul, and East Punjab ... When Zangskar is occupied, an airfield should be made on the vast and open plain lying about 4 miles from Padam on the lines of the airfield at Leh.<sup>21</sup>

Despite gaining a personal audience with Nehru, Kaul's request that Indian reinforcements be sent to Zangskar was largely ignored in Delhi. Fifty years later, an airfield has yet to be built in Zangskar, although the army does set up summer camps in the area. Kaul then laid out a several suggestions of how to defend Zangskar:

It would be highly desirable to mobilize the released soldiers of Lahoul and Kulu forthwith. Thakur Pratap Chand, formerly Captain in the Indian army and honorary Magistrate of the Lahoul and at present President of the Lahoul People's Association has told me during my recent talks with him on the subject that Lahoul contains about 400 released soldiers prepared to go to the front to defend Zangskar and Leh.<sup>22</sup>

Although the Indian government ignored Kaul's request, fortunately Buddhists from Zangskar stepped in. Some of the Buddhists living in Zangskar's southernmost Lungnag valley had already fled to Lahaul. A few who had traveled to Lahaul often and knew Thakur Chand, sought out the Lahauli ex-Captain, who was also Prithi Chand's brother. Thakur Chand hastily organized a platoon of 30 retired soldiers who marched into Zangskar in early autumn.<sup>23</sup> By this time, Padum Muslims had warned the Gilgit Scouts in Kargil of the Lahauli plan, and the Gilgit Scouts sent their own company into Zangskar.<sup>24</sup> The Gilgit Scouts had marched into Zangskar largely unopposed and established themselves outside Padum where Zangskar's Muslim minority could supply them. The tiny Lahauli platoon was no match for the much larger force of Gilgit Scouts and the Lahaulis fled back down the gorge the night after their encounter with the Scouts.

After their rout of the Lahauli platoon, the Gilgit Scouts faced little resistance from terrified locals as they fanned out to collect supplies during their ten-month siege of Zangskar. Zangskar's Muslims easily supplied the Scouts, who initially took control of the Ufti fort that had been left derelict since the last occupation of Zangskar, by Dogra forces in the nineteenth century. Local Buddhist leaders made little



attempt to organize a local defense force, due to the lack of motivation, manpower, and equipment such as weapons. Key Buddhist leaders such as the King of Padum and Zangskar's two highest ranking monks, Bakula Rinpoche in Karsha and Stagna Rinpoche in Bardan, soon fled to Lahaul. Yet the Karsha Zaildar, a local official who negotiated Zangskar's annual tax payments during the visit of Ladakh's Wazir, had stayed behind to deal with the Gilgit Scouts. Well accustomed to supplying the Wazir and his men with the food and porters they required, the Zaildar soon negotiated a similar set of terms with the Scout commander.<sup>25</sup> The commander, a native of Shigar called Subedar Mohammad Yasin, agreed not to harm the Buddhist villagers as long as they offered as much sheep, liquor, and other supplies as his men could consume.

Until the winter when Indian reinforcements forced them to flee, the Scouts commandeered a house in Karsha in addition to their base in the Ufti fort. Every household in Karsha and surrounding villages was conscripted to supply the Scouts with five sheep and ten kilograms of butter, and as much barley beer (*chang*) as they wished. As they had during previous invasions in the nineteenth century, many Buddhists simply locked up their houses and fled to nearby high pasture huts or neighboring regions such as Kishtwar and Lahaul. These Buddhist households would hide their valuables, placing religious scrolls, statues, sacred texts, jewelry, and utensils in boxes that they buried deep in the stables or ground floors of their homes. In most villages, a few men were left behind to feed the marauding troops and prevent the houses from being looted.

Yeshe Angmo, one of the founding nuns of Karsha nunnery, recalled how the soldiers killed the sheep and goats they had taken from Karsha households in cold blood. Ani Yeshe was sent to the high pasture huts along with the Zaildar's wife and daughter. Like most of the villagers who had come to the huts, they spent their days milking the cows, making butter, and collecting yak dung. She recalls the shock she had when her father spotted some soldiers climbing up to the huts one day. When he told her to hide, Yeshe and her friends stuffed as much butter as they could into their wicker baskets, and ran up the dry streambed. She recalls how she stashed her basket behind a boulder, and then peeked out to see her father come out of the hut and greet the soldiers. When she saw him gesticulate towards a distant plain of abandoned fields high above the nearby village of Rinam, she

knew he had tricked the soldiers. While everyone in Karsha knew that those fields had not been cultivated for decades, the soldiers tramped up to have a look. While the soldiers climbed up to the desolated plain, Yeshe and the other villagers fled down to Yulang village, which lay on the river floodplain below Karsha.

Although the livestock were left on the Yulang floodplain, as the autumn progressed, Karsha and other Zangskari villagers trickled back to their villages to complete the harvest. During this time, the Gilgit Scouts conducted house to house searches in Karsha and Yulang, looking for valuables. Ani Yeshe recalled the day the Scouts came to search the house where Garkyid, another nun at Karsha, was born many years later. As Yeshe tells it, Garkyid's mother was so frightened she jumped into the household grain bin. When the soldiers entered the storage room and removed the covers from the grain bin, they saw her turquoise headdress and ripped it off. Yet they spared her life, leaving her huddled in the bin where her husband later found her.

Ani Kundzes, a nun from Yulang, reported that her mother had just borne her first child, a son, when the soldiers arrived to search the house. As the soldiers approached the house, her father fled by jumping off the balcony, although her mother stayed inside to avoid polluting the fields in her post-partum state.<sup>26</sup> When the soldiers burst into the room, they saw her mother cuddling something under the blanket. When she refused to lift the blanket, they ripped it off to reveal her two week old son. Patting her on the shoulder, they left to search the rest of the house leaving their guns propped against the wall. Ani Dechen, also from Yulang, reported that her grandmother had been conscripted to bring the soldier's firewood to Ufti fort. Although most other households sent men to carry the firewood across the valley to Ufti, Dechen's grandmother's husband had died and there were no other men to perform the task. When Dechen's grandmother came to the fort, the Pakistani soldiers treated her kindly and allowed her to warm her hands at their fire.

These and other stories suggest the care the soldiers took not to alienate their Zangskari hosts. In early autumn, a few soldiers set off with three of Zangskar's top Buddhist officials to march to Kargil on the pretext that they would negotiate Zangskar's new taxes to Pakistan, which was presumed to be the victor in the conflict. According to the son of the late headman of Langmi, the three men were the Karsha Zaidar, his assistant, and the Langmi headman to Kargil. Once the

men realized they were captives, they tried to escape outside the hamlet of Lungmur which lies before the Pentse La pass separating Zangskar and Kargil subdistricts (*Tehsil*). While the Zaildar and his assistant were shot, the headman of Langmi dove behind a boulder and miraculously escaped. As news spread of the three murders, Zangskari Buddhists began to lose their trust in the Scouts even as they were quick to obey any further demands.

Some time in the winter, a platoon of Indian and Ladakhi soldiers arrived to aid in the defense of Zangskar.<sup>27</sup> After a short skirmish at Pidmo at the mouth of the Chadar gorge in which the Indian side dominated, the Gilgit Scouts fled Karsha and retreated to the heights above Padum. Yeshe recalled the arrival of a column of what she called the “Hindustani” soldiers in Karsha village as vividly as if it occurred yesterday. The women of Karsha came out on their roofs dressed in their finest to offer a traditional welcome of smoldering juniper incense and pots of their freshest curd. The soldiers were treated like visiting dignitaries as monks blew horns and clashed cymbals from the roof of their monastery.

After being hosted in Karsha for a few days, the Indian soldiers marched across the valley to Pipiting village, where they took control of the hilltop chapel that commands an excellent view across Zangskar’s central valley. Yet the Gilgit Scouts commanded an even more unsailable position inside the fortress like Stagrimeo monastery above Padum. For the next six months, the small platoon of Indian soldiers could not dislodge the Gilgit Scouts. According to Tashi Tundup from Yulang, who recalled the events of Partition in amazing detail, because the Muslims in Padum managed to bribe the Indian commander, his forces were unable to effectively besiege the Scouts inside the Stagrimeo stronghold. The Scouts received regular supplies from the Muslim community in Padum and 25 local Muslims soon swelled their ranks.

Tashi Tundup remembered that a kind of *détente* was achieved whereby Padum’s Muslims openly supplied the Scouts and Buddhists took care to host the Indian soldiers. When four more Indian soldiers arrived up the frozen Chadar gorge from Ladakh, they assassinated the Pakistani commander, who had defected to the Indian side by this point. The Indian soldiers soon returned to Ladakh, however, not wanting to be stuck in Zangskar for the remainder of the winter after the Chadar melted. After the Pentse La became somewhat passable in

late May 1949, a platoon of roughly 60 Ladakhi soldiers from the Home Guard marched into Zangskar to declare the ceasefire. Under the command of Kalon Tsewang Rigdzin, the Ladakhi soldiers forced the Scouts to surrender without a shot. They also extradited the Muslim collaborators from Padum.<sup>28</sup> Tashi Tundup recalls that although the men from Padum begged to be permitted to stay in Zangskar, they were sent to Pakistan against their will, as were so many abducted women during the recovery movement in the years following partition.<sup>29</sup> Years later, Muslims in Padum still regret the forced departure of their relatives from whom they hear less and less as the decades pass.

### **Being Buddhist in Zangskar Today**

As the generation dies that directly experienced the division of India and Pakistan, partition has become a hazy memory. Yet the experience of partition continues to have relevance for understanding tensions between Buddhists and Muslims in Zangskar. When I asked Zangskari informants to describe relations between Buddhists and Muslims, elders emphasized the absence of communal violence in the past as much as the present. The elders spoke of the divided allegiances that Buddhists and Muslims displayed during the invasion. Yet they also congratulated both communities for the goodwill displayed during and after the war. Younger informants, who have no memory of partition, were much less hopeful when describing relations between Buddhists and Muslims. They spoke uneasily about the growing tensions between the two communities and were quite cynical about future prospects for communal harmony in Zangskar. Let us consider the growing sense of alienation between Buddhists and Muslims, beginning with the events of the invasion.

For some informants, the invasion of Zangskar following Partition crystallized a moment of difference between Buddhists and Muslim communities in Zangskar. One of Zangskar's more prominent aristocrats, Rigdzin Dawa—the brother of the current King of Padum—described the presence of Muslim soldiers in Padum as polluting to the local guardian deities. Rigdzin explained how the soldiers who occupied the family palace in Padum during partition were partly to blame for the loss of prestige suffered by his own family as well as other Buddhists in Padum. Upon hearing of the advance of Gilgit Scouts, the late King of Padum had fled from the family palace along

with other prominent Buddhists in Zangskar. The Pakistani soldiers had lived in the Padum palace until they retreated to Stagrmo after the arrival of Indian soldiers in the winter of 1948. Rigdzin implied that by killing sheep and smoking, the soldiers polluted the house and thereby incurred the wrath and possible departure of the guardian deities (*pha'i lha*) of his house and clan. The trope of household or village deities angered by pollution is a common one used to explain many kinds of inexplicable misfortune in Zangskar, including death, drought, and other disasters.<sup>30</sup> Although accidental pollution may often occasion a search for ritual cures, the Padum narrative seems focused more on the consequences than either the cure or cause of ritual pollution.

Both Rigdzin Dawa and his brother Phuntsog Dawa offered their story as a morality tale to explain the dramatic loss of prestige they and other Padum Buddhists have suffered since partition, compared with the Zangla royal family and Padum Muslims. While the two brothers from the Padum royal family hold lowly positions as census official and teacher, the youthful inheritor of Zangla's throne occupies the lucrative position as the block development officer for Zangskar within Kargil district. His father, the King of Zangla, did not flee as the King of Padum had, but collaborated with the Gilgit Scouts. Although both the Zangla and Padum royal families lost a share of their property during the statewide land reforms, their fortunes have diverged considerably following partition. The youthful King of Zangla has excellent political connections in Kargil as well as Ladakh, where he lives part time with one of his wives, the Queen of Mulbekh. Rigdzin also implied that the Buddhists in Padum have suffered relative to the Muslims, who collaborated with the Pakistanis during the war. In his view, the Muslim collaborators have had a much easier time securing state employment than the loyal Buddhists who lacked fluency in Urdu and the educational advantages their Muslim neighbors had. After Buddhists gained better access to education and improved their fluency in Urdu, they were able to secure a more proportional representation in Zangskar's government service in the 1990s.

The Buddhists in Zangskar unwittingly reinforce a discourse of religious divide when they refer to themselves as "insiders" (*nang pa*) and Muslims as "outsiders" (*phyi pa*), a term also reserved for foreigners in the local idiom. Muslims, by contrast, may refer to Buddhists as either *bod pa* or *nang pa*, while they call themselves *musalman*.<sup>31</sup> The Zangskari term for Buddhist, *nang pa*, derives from the Tibetan term

for interior space, *nang*, and can also mean house or room in the local idiom.<sup>32</sup> Calling Buddhists *nang pa* suggests that Buddhists and Muslims comprise separate households or families. This perception may be related to the more recent settlement of Muslims in the Zangskar valley compared with the Buddhists.

While Buddhists, who make up over 95 percent of the population of Zangskar, have lived in the valley for centuries, the other 5 percent are Sunni Muslims who settled much more recently in the valley. According to both Buddhist and Muslim informants and local histories of Zangskar, most of the Muslim households in Padum and its environs are descended from the soldiers who stayed behind to guard a fort established by the Dogra General Zorawar Singh in 1834 after his conquest of Zangskar. At least one household is said to have descended from the cook/butcher who accompanied a Balti queen betrothed to the King of Padum in the eighteenth century.<sup>33</sup> While the queen, a Muslim from Baltistan, converted to Buddhism, her cook did not. This latter story is relevant to the denigrating view that some Buddhists have of Muslims as ritually polluting butchers. This image is reified by Buddhist requests to visiting Muslim government servants in more remote villages. Although there are Muslim butchers who live in Padum, Buddhists in more far-flung villages often rely on visiting Muslim government servants to butcher their animals. This trope of Muslims as butchers who kill animals in cold blood misrecognizes the Buddhist complicity in the butchering. The Buddhists' denigration of Muslims overlooks a doctrinal logic that imputes the same negative karma to the Buddhist purchaser of meat as to the Muslim butcher.

Muslims are not the only group ostracized as outsiders. Three Buddhist groups—Beda, Mon, and Gara—believed to have originated outside Zangskar are also classified as outcastes by both Buddhists and Muslims alike. Comprising the lowest of the three strata in Buddhist society, these groups are shunned by the upper two social strata, the aristocrats (*sku drag*) and commoners (*mi dmang*).<sup>34</sup> Commoners, who make up over 90 percent of Zangskar's Buddhist population, are forbidden from sharing cooked food, cups, or sex with the lowest strata, and they can share food but not eating utensils with the aristocrats. Most violations between commoners and outcastes result in a kind of social death as the individuals and their progeny are marked as outcastes themselves. Transgressors are no longer permitted to share food or intermarry with other commoners. While Buddhists

do not hesitate to share food with Muslims, the Shi'a Muslims of Kargil will not share food with Buddhists.

Buddhists and Muslims in Zangskar do share food and may attend each other's marriage rites and funerals, albeit less and less commonly due to increasing tensions described below. Yet inter-religious marriages have been rare.<sup>35</sup> Local discourse betrays a deep anxiety about cross-communal marriage or sex. In a highly publicized press conference in New Delhi, a prominent Ladakhi politician and member of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes blamed Kargili Muslims for the conversion of Buddhist boys and girls to Islam. Lama Lobzang alleged that government officials were encouraging such conversions despite the agreement between the LBA (Ladakh Buddhist Association) and the LMA (Ladakh Muslim Association) to prevent such conversions.<sup>36</sup> Most of the young girls I interviewed recognized that any "love-marriage" is problematic, given their parents' preference for arranged marriages. Recent years have seen a rise of more informal marriages known as "stealing the bride" (*bag ma sku byes*) which offers women who may be divorced, single mothers, orphans, children of divorces, or ex-nuns a wider degree of female agency in marriage than in the past. Yet this same liberalism does not extend to inter-religious marriages, which many of my informants agreed would be disastrous if not dangerous. One of my Buddhist informants, a young woman who had lived in Kargil for a few years, expressed the taboo against intermarriage as follows: "a Buddhist girl would be buried alive if she married a Balti [i.e. Muslim from Kargil]."

### The Politics of Religion Today

Although religion remains salient, it is hardly the only important marker of identity. Both Buddhist and Muslim communities are divided along many other lines including class, caste, and region. Region and class intersect in Zangskar, as there are notable differences between the wealthier central valley and the poorer and more remote valleys of Lungnag, Stod, Shun, and Shade valleys. Caste further complicates intra-communal rivalry. In 1989, eight groups—Beda, Mon, Gara, Balti, Bot, Drokpa, Changpa, and Purigpa groups—which made up most of the population of Kargil and Leh district were officially designated Scheduled Tribes.<sup>37</sup> Once the tribal label became an affirmative action tool, the eight groups were pitted as much against one another as against India's dominant castes. Although members of

these groups could now pursue federally mandated education and job quotas, the tribal label has perpetuated the stereotype of Zangskaris and Ladakhis as “backward” or in need of government assistance. Finally, competition among members of the groups has intensified as wealthier rather than poorer members of each group are most likely to benefit from the affirmative action quotas.

Both Buddhists and Muslims in Zangskar have legitimate claims to a so-called “minority complex.”<sup>38</sup> Although Buddhists are a majority in Zangskar, they are a minority in Kargil district, which is dominated by a strong Shi’a majority. While both Buddhists and Sunni Muslims in Zangskar are overlooked by the Shi’a elites in Kargil, the latter are often neglected in the political circles of Srinagar and Jammu. By the same token, Zangskari Buddhists feel overlooked by Buddhist elites in Leh, while Leh Buddhists are often neglected by the elites who manage politics at the state level. The perception of being a minority fuels ongoing anxieties among both Buddhist and Muslim communities in Zangskar and Ladakh. Politicians on both sides have spoken against contraception and abortion in efforts to promote the population growth of their respective communities. In the late 1990s the Ladakhi Buddhist Association propagated its fecundist position on the radio, while actively seeking to prevent distribution of contraception in Zangskar. According to my interviews with local health workers, Ladakhi health teams were forbidden from bringing adequate supplies of condoms and intrauterine devices (IUDs) to Zangskar despite the heavy demand for these contraceptives.<sup>39</sup>

The imbalance between Muslims and Buddhists in government service continues to gnaw at Buddhists in Zangskar and Ladakh. Official statistics for the state bear out Buddhist fears of exclusion. For example, Muslims won seven out of eight seats reserved for Ladakhis in engineering and six out of eight seats in medicine statewide during a two-year period from 1997 to 1999. Leh’s only polytechnic institute admitted 23 Muslims but only two Buddhists in April 2000.<sup>40</sup> The disproportion of Muslims at these educational institutes is more striking when one considers that Buddhists make up more than 80 percent of Leh district. Finally, both Leh and Kargil districts receive equal funds from the state government, although Leh is almost three times the geographic size of Kargil district.

While Zangskar makes up half of the area of Kargil district, it is barely represented at the upper echelons of the government bureaucracy



in Kargil, which is dominated by Kargili Muslims. When Kargil's Employment Office recorded the educational backgrounds of some 370 unemployed persons in 2002, only one Zangskari was listed as a degree holder in engineering, arts, or science and four Zangskaris were recorded as "skilled." By comparison, there were 30 degree holders and 350 "skilled" persons listed in Kargil subdistrict.<sup>41</sup> Such statistics reflect the poor quality and access to education in Zangskar. As one frustrated Zangskari citizen reported in a news editorial, despite the construction of a higher secondary school in Zangskar, three years later the government had yet to post any lecturers to the school.

Zangskari Buddhists protested their elision from politics and development when they boycotted the initial elections following the creation of Kargil's new governing body in 2003, the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council in Kargil (LAHDCK). The Zangskar Action Committee, which had agitated for years for a Zangskari version of Hill Council or permission to join Leh's Hill Council, was quick to note that it was granted far fewer seats than expected on the council. The committee argued that Zangskar subdistrict should be given ten rather than the three seats it did receive, considering that it comprises 62 percent of the district's area.<sup>42</sup> The committee also charged politicians in Kargil for justifying their decision on communal grounds—namely that since Muslims had been allotted three seats on Leh's Hill Council, only three seats would be given to Buddhists on Kargil's Hill Council.

In February of 2004, the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, responded to the Zangskari protests by announcing that the number of seats allotted to Zangskar would be increased by the next elections and that two blocs would be created in Zangskar to help speed up development. Yet in the summer of that year, when the Chief Minister visited Zangskar, he asked Zangskaris to cease the boycott of the Kargil Hill Council and announced special grants, but did not make any more mention of the promised additional seats on the Hill Council.<sup>43</sup> Zangskari leaders dropped their boycott and a top ranking Zangskari politician, Sonam Namgyal was named one of the four executive councilors. Yet even this gesture was compromised as Sonam Namgyal was awarded the Tourism portfolio—the least prestigious and lucrative of the five seats on the Executive Council.

The elision of Buddhists from the official government website for Kargil district belies the fact that Buddhists make up 20 percent of the

district population. The website's main history page focuses almost exclusively on the Muslim history of Kargil, largely omitting the Buddhists except to note that, "Buddhists remain squeezed in Kargil to the places like Sapi, Phokar, Mulback, Wakha, Bodh-Karbu areas, Darchik Garkon, and Zanskar."<sup>44</sup> How these regions became Buddhist is not noted, nor is any mention of Zangskar's illustrious, 1,000 year Buddhist history. Indeed, Sonam Namgyal's tourism page on the government website offers more details on Zangskari history than elsewhere on the site even as it carefully places Muslim history front and center. The district website's geography page notes that Kargil is comprised of four valleys but neglects to include Zangskar. Finally, the website's official map of Kargil district has shrunk Zangskar so that it appears to comprise only one-third rather than almost two-thirds of the district's area, as it actually does.

The rivalry between Buddhist and Muslim communities over land, grazing rights, or development initiatives has caused further communal tensions in recent years.<sup>45</sup> In 1999, a minor grazing dispute led to a deeper communal split that has yet to be repaired. According to Buddhist informants in Padum, a few Muslim households from Padum had allowed their cows to graze on the fields before the Buddhists had finished their harvest. As a result, cows belonging to Muslims ate crops belonging to Buddhists. When Buddhist youths pelted the cows with stones, the Muslims demanded monetary reparation. The dispute was indicative of a broader breakdown in communal law regarding grazing infractions. In most villages of central Zangskar, the harvest is coordinated so that no single household can allow its animals into the fields until all fields in the village have been harvested. Furthermore, the owner of any animal caught grazing before the harvest is complete is fined a customary sum in grain. Every year, each village appoints a villager, by rotation, to mediate and enforce the infractions around grazing.<sup>46</sup> My informants noted that Padum had ceased to appoint this customary office as Buddhist and Muslims had been unable to agree on the timing of autumn grazing.

### **The Rise of Communal Rhetoric in Zangskar**

In Zangskar, religious or communal identities are hardly as unified as may appear. As both Martin van Beek and Ravina Aggarwal have argued for Ladakh, politicians and local agents often manipulate communal identity in the pursuit of their own ends.<sup>47</sup> In both Zangskar

and Ladakh, Buddhist and Muslim leaders may cooperate in denouncing Kashmiri militants, while fostering further communal division in their other agendas.<sup>48</sup> Zangskari politicians played little role in the communal boycotts that dominated Ladakh politics after 1989. Yet there has been little research on the recent rise of communal tensions in Zangskar, to which we now turn.

When Kashmiri militants shot three monks at Rangdum monastery in Kargil district on July 11, 2000, the Indian media reported the attack as communal. Because the murders marked the first attack on Buddhist monks in Jammu and Kashmir since 1989, the LBA and several reporters assumed the deaths were a retaliatory killing for the inadvertent remark by LBA vice-president Sonam Gonbo that the Koran was merely “another book” not followed by most Muslims.<sup>49</sup> Although Gonbo was arrested and forced to step down from his position, the incident sparked off communal protests in Leh. When a Kashmiri merchant told a Buddhist customer he had “lama meat” for sale, Buddhists protested and the merchant was arrested, while an

FIGURE 3

A MONK WAITS FOR A BUS, IN FRONT OF GRAFFITI DISPLAYING ANTI-KASHMIRI SLOGANS DURING THE LADAKHI AUTONOMY MOVEMENT OF 1989



Photo Taken By Kim Gutschow, August 1989.

indefinite curfew was declared in Leh. By the end of the month, some of the Indian press had concluded that the murderers were militants from the Lakshar-e-Toiba, probably with the aid of Bakkarwal nomads.

When I drove into Zangskar a few weeks after the murders, monks from Rangdum were convinced that the Gujjar and Bakkarwal nomads had been complicit in the murders. I interviewed several monks at Rangdum monastery to gather more detail about the murders. The monks explained that the militants had entered Zangskar from Doda district via the Pentse La pass, which lies between Zangskar and Kargil subdistricts. Posing as hitchhikers, the militants had boarded a truck on the single track that leads from Zangskar to Kargil town and passes the monastery. Several senior monks, who had descended to receive pilgrim's offerings during the full moon ritual, approached the truck to perform a routine check for smuggled fodder or dung. Three of the four monks who asked to search the truck were shot—the abbot and the chantmaster (*dbu mdzad*) who were from Zangskar and the disciplinarian (*dge skos*) who was from the remote village of Dibiling in Leh district. A fourth monk, Tendzin, who was the youngest, escaped by jumping into the river that runs next to the road. I spoke briefly with Tendzin, who still appeared to be suffering from shock. I had first befriended his family in 1991 and had stayed in their house in Tashitongdze near the monastery several times *en route* to Zangskar. Tendzin explained that after the truck had roared off, he heard the gallop of horses. Other monks confirmed that Gujjar horsemen had been heard leaving shortly after the militants fired their shots and that the nomad camp had been abandoned the following morning.

The monks explained that the militants had left the truck a few kilometers further down the road, taking a German hitchhiker hostage from the truck although they had left the truck driver unharmed. Although the police arrested the truck driver and recovered the body of the German hitchhiker a few weeks later, they never found the militants who were presumed to have fled back to Doda. The monks of Rangdum secured further attention after they decided to ban the movement of the Gujjars through their pastureland henceforth. The monks located monastic documents that described the land originally endowed to the monastery in the eighteenth century. By the following year, the monks would win their claim to control some 70 kilometers of pastureland from the Pentse La to Parkachik village from the Jammu and Kashmir High Court.

The Zangskarīs I interviewed in the weeks following the murders offered various theories about why the militants had chosen this

FIGURE 4  
RANGDUM MONKS PROTEST SIGN



Rangdum Monks Posted This Sign To Protest The Collusion Of Bakkarwal And Gujjar Nomads In The Brutal Murder Of Three Monks On July 11, 2000. The Monastery's Demands Include Preventing The Nomads From Trespassing Upon The Monastery's Pasture Lands Henceforth. Photo By Kim Gutschow, July 2000.

moment to attack the monks. Several informants in Padum explained that the militants had entered Zangskar to avoid intensifying army searches in the neighboring Doda valley, a theory supported by the press. Several Buddhists in Padum believed that the Gujjar nomads had hired the militants to terrorize the monks and force them into abandoning the grazing pastures around the monastery that the nomads coveted. Yet others, mostly Muslims, said it was unlikely Gujjars had been involved as they had brought their wives and children with them this year. One Muslim informant argued that the militants had reacted hastily rather than premeditatively when the monks had approached the truck. A Rangdum monk contradicted this version by stating that the militants had deliberately descended from the truck cab and ordered the monks to stand in line before shooting them. Another Muslim informant offered a convoluted conspiracy claiming that Buddhist politicians from Leh had fomented the trouble in Rangdum in order to draw attention away from their leader's inadvertent remarks about the Koran.

Although Ladakhi and Kargili politicians and army officers came to Rangdum to offer their condolences, many Zangskaris remained angry weeks after the incident. Eventually, Zangskari Buddhists organized a series of protests (*dharna*) in Padum to get the attention of the wider Indian media. On August 19, Buddhist women from central Zangskar organized a march upon the office of the Superintendent of Police in Padum. Their demands, seen in Figure 5, request the government to catch the militants, to stop the Gujjars and Bakarwals from grazing on Rangdum lands, to deploy the army more permanently in Zangskar, to establish Union Territory Status for Zangskar, and avoid reverting to the pre-1953 status of Jammu and Kashmir when it had not yet formally acceded to India. The protest included about 100 women, of varying ages, many of whom held government jobs or were active in village politics. Contrary to the superintendent of police's assurances that day, the terrorists have not been apprehended, the Gujjars have not been thrown out of Zangskar, and the army has yet to establish a permanent outpost in Zangskar.

## Conclusion

This barbaric and dastardly act has sent shockwaves across the whole of Ladakh. It has proved beyond doubt the design of the militants and anti-national elements to extend their terrorist and anti-national activities to Zangskar Valley and indeed to the whole of Ladakh. We

FIGURE 5  
THE DEMANDS STATED BY WOMEN'S PROTEST MOVEMENT FOLLOWING  
THE MURDER OF MONKS IN RANGDUM

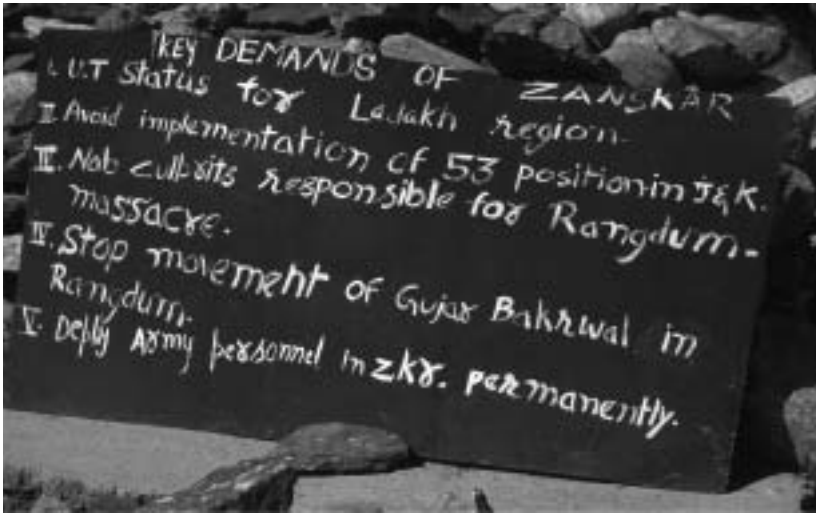


Photo taken by Seb Mankelov, August 19, 2000.

also suspect the active connivance of the Nomadic Gujjars in the Rangdum episode. In the circumstances, it is imperative that Army units or the ITBP be stationed at Rangdum and in whole Zangskar to keep the strict vigil on the movement of the Gujjar Bakarwals.<sup>50</sup>

This is how the Rajya Sabha, India's lower house of parliament, officially summarized its discussion of the Rangdum murders. The statement portrays Zangskar as a defenseless region susceptible to terrorists or "anti-national" elements. By implicating Ladakh within the threat to Zangskar, the Delhi politicians used a familiar refrain. Their rhetoric recalls Kaul's shrill letter to Nehru after Partition about the defense of Zangskar. As Kaul noted in 1948, "the [i.e., our] occupation of Zangskar is also vital to the safety of Leh, Lahoul, and East Punjab ... For as long as we hold Leh and Zangskar, we hold the entire district and guard Kashmir, Changthang, and Lahoul against possible invasion."<sup>51</sup> Although Kaul's letter was largely overlooked, its message is as relevant today as it was then.

From the perspective of the nation, Zangskar requires little attention except in times of crisis. Even then, the concern is not so much for Zangskar per se as to the broader border region that Zangskar symbolizes.

A year after the Rangdum murders, the town of Leh observed a complete strike (*bandh*) in July 2001, to protest a proposal by the state government to relocate the army deployed in Zangskar. In response, the Indian army did maintain a small presence in Padum and built more permanent barracks in Rangdum. Yet the army quietly decamped from Padum that year well before winter snows swept over the passes. Like most of the other non-local government servants, the soldiers were eager to avoid spending a winter in Zangskar sipping butter tea. As during Partition, Zangskar was left to its own defenses. It is not surprising that many Zangskaris consider their region abandoned in times of crisis.

From a Zangskari perspective, the nation and even the state are distant and arbitrary presences. In local discourse citizens of Zangskari represent India or Jammu and Kashmir less as places to which they belong and more as places to which they travel. When journeying south or west of Kargil district, Zangskaris may say they are “going to India” (*rgya gar la cha byes*) or “going to Kashmir” (*kha cul la cha byes*), neatly ignoring their citizenship in Jammu and Kashmir or India. Those living south of Zangskar are called Indians (*rgya gar pa*) and those living west of Zangskar are called Kashmiris (*ka cul pa, kha che'i pa*), again omitting the fact that Zangskar is part of both these regions. This discourse reflects the systematic inability of most Zangskaris to participate in the wider political or social discourse at a state or national level.

Most Zangskari, Buddhists and Muslims alike, express a clear allegiance to the nation. Yet their strategies of identification are hardly so simple. They may choose to articulate a Buddhist identity at one point, a regional one at another, and a household or village identity in most daily interactions. This essay has attempted to expose the some of the discourses by which Zangskari identity is expressed today. It has argued in favor of unpacking local strategies of identification in order to understand the dynamic of religious identity in the Indian Himalaya. This hermeneutical approach may provide offer a deeper understanding of the causes and consequences of religious identity in one part of rural India today.

## NOTES

1. Examples of this literature are Sumantra Bose's *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), Sumit Ganguly's *Conflict Unending: India Pakistan Tensions Since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), Prem Shankar Jha's *Kashmir 1947: Rival Versions of History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), and Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan, and the Unfinished War* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000). Those writing on the Kashmir



- conflict who take events in Ladakh as central to their narrative include Ravina Aggarwal's *Beyond Lines of Control: Performance and Politics on the Disputed Borders of Ladakh, India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); Martijn van Beek, "Identity Fetishism and the Art of Representation: The Long Struggle for Regional Autonomy in Ladakh," PhD Dissertation, Department of Sociology, Cornell University, 1997; Martijn van Beek, "Beyond Identity Fetishism: 'Communal' Conflict and Ladakh in the Limits of Autonomy," *Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 15, No. 4 (2001), pp. 525–69; and Navnita Chadha Behera, *State, Identity, and Violence: Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2000).
2. Administratively, Kargil is comprised of two subdistricts, Zangskar and Kargil, each of which make up half of the districts total area 14,086 square kilometers. Yet Zangskar's 12,169 people account for less than 10% of the total district population of 119,307.
  3. Gyanendra Pandey's *Remembering Partition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) provides a succinct example of a subaltern history of partition, which examines the "faceless" or nameless citizens in whose name partition happened. The subaltern studies group's alternative approach to history is summarized in Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
  4. Indian military histories of Kashmir that describe Ladakh's role in the 1947–49 war include S. N. Prasad and Dharm Pal, *History of Operations in Jammu and Kashmir (1947–48)* (New Delhi: Ministry of Defense, 1978) and L. P. Sen, *Slender Was the Thread: Kashmir Confrontation 1947–48* (New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1969). Sources reporting the invasion of Zangskar include M. L. Chibber, *Pakistan's Criminal Folly in Kashmir: The Drama of Accession and Rescue of Ladakh* (New Delhi: Manas Publications, 1998); H. Dani, *History of the Northern Areas of Pakistan* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1991), pp. 400–401; Kim Gutschow, *Being a Buddhist Nun: The Struggle for Enlightenment in the Himalayas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 25–8; Shridhar Kaul and H. N. Kaul, *Ladakh Through the Ages: Towards a New Identity* (New Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1992), pp. 181–2; and Tariq Ali Khan, "Little Tibet: Renaissance and Resistance in Balistan," *Himal* Vol. 11, No. 5 (May 1998), pp. 14–21.
  5. Gyanendra Pandey's oft-cited "In Defense of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 36, Nos. 11–12, pp. 559–72, calls for a historiography of secularism and communalism that privileges the overlooked but threatening minorities or fragments in Indian society.
  6. The more recent re-readings of Partition include Suvir Kaul, *The Partition of Memory: The Afterlife of the Division of India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices From the Partition of India* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1998); Urvashi Butalia, "Community, State, and Gender: On Women's Agency During Partition," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 27, No. 17 (April 24, 1993); Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998); Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, "Recovery, Rupture, Resistance: Indian State and Abduction of Women During Partition," *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 27, No. 17 (April 24, 1993); Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Veena Das, "National Honor and Practical Kinship: Of Unwanted Women and Children," in *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 55–83.
  7. The Maharaja's eventual accession to India in October 1947 has been the subject of considerable historic and scholarly debate and is not our concern here. See Jha's *Kashmir 1947* and Bose's *Kashmir*, as well as Alistair Lamb, *Incomplete Partition: The Genesis of the Kashmir Dispute, 1947–1948* (Hertingfordbury: Roxford Books, 1997).
  8. See Veena Das and Ashis Nandy, "Violence, Victimhood, and the Language of Silence," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* Vol. 19, No. 1 (1985), pp. 177–95. Veena Das makes an analogous argument about the impossibility of representing the violence of Partition in her essay "National Honor and Practical Kinship."

9. Sumantra Bose's *Kashmir*, p. 40, notes that entire communities of Muslims and Hindus in Muzaffarabad, Bagh, Rawalkot, Kotli, Mirpur, Kathua, Jammu city, and Udhampur were either killed or exiled during this period.
10. Akbar Khan, *Raiders in Kashmir* (Islamabad: Pak Publishers, 1970) offers fascinating details about the Pakistani army's complicity in the invasion of Jammu and Kashmir in late 1947. More details on the invasion can be found in Jha's *Kashmir 1947* and Bose's *Kashmir*, while the fall of Gilgit is described in careful detail by Kaul and Kaul's *Ladakh Through the Ages*.
11. Shridhar Kaul offers a firsthand account of the attacks on Sikh and Hindu civilians during the fall of Gilgit in Kaul and Kaul, *Ladakh Through the Ages*, pp. 162–9.
12. Chibber's *Pakistan's Criminal Folly in Kashmir*, p. 146 describes the Kalon's recruitment efforts and cites from the YMBA telegram to Nehru which states: "we have arrived with bows and arrows to defend Ladakh. Request, send arms and ammunition and reinforcements." Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict*, p. 66, describes Nehru's rather casual attitude towards the Pakistani invasion of much of Jammu and Kashmir in a letter Nehru sent to Patel "this is of no great military significance and we can capture lost ground."
13. Kaul and Kaul's *Ladakh Through the Ages* (p. 170) notes the difficulty the Leh Kalon faced by describing the Tehsildar as "steeped and dyed fast in the traditions of the Revenue Service and a true-blood Muslim Leaguer at heart, though paying lip homage to nationalism and the accession of the State to India."
14. See Kaul and Kaul, *Ladakh Through the Ages*, p. 173.
15. See Major Chand's speech in Chibber, *Pakistan's Criminal Folly in Kashmir*, p. 154. Chand's army unit had served on an internal security detail in the Punjab between 1946 and 1947, where he witnessed the genocide of Partition firsthand. Chibber's *Pakistan's Criminal Folly in Kashmir*, pp. 163–4, reports that Chand notes "I was pleasantly surprised to see that the Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists were inter-related by marriage."
16. In an interview I undertook with Major General Mani Rai of New Delhi in 1999, the general recalled that because Dakota airplanes had never been flown above 11,000 feet, an extra engine was tied onto the wings creating what he called a "hyper-Dakota." As Chibber reports in *Pakistan's Criminal Folly in Kashmir*, p. 30, General Thimmayya noted that the higher authorities had forbidden him to fly to Leh, because "Dakotas cannot land at Leh." As Chand adds, the plane landing was such a novelty that a senior monk of Spituk approached the pilot to ask what should be offered the plane in the way of food and drink. Further details on the battle for Leh are found in Prasad and Pal, *History of Operations in Jammu and Kashmir (1947–48)*.
17. The Ladakhi partition narratives can be found in a special edition of *La dvags keyi Shes rab zom [Sheeraza Ladakhi]* Vol. 20, Nos. 3–4 (1998–99). While some of the authors are well known figures like Tashi Rabgyas, Abdul Ghani Sheikh, Kalon Rigdzin Namgyal, others like Sonam Wangdus of Basgo or Tsetan Namgyal of Phiyang Chubi are Ladakhis whose service to their nation might otherwise be forgotten. The volume is entirely in Ladakhi and merits broader translation for an Indian audience.
18. Chand's recollections are cited in Chibber, *Pakistan's Criminal Folly in Kashmir*, p. 189. his recollections are occasionally at odds with the Defense Ministry's report given by Prasad and Pal. For example, while Chand lists the names of the 17 soldiers who marched with him to Leh, the Defense Ministry claims there were 40.
19. Major Chand accused the British Reverend Norman Driver of propagating false rumors for Pakistan. Thus, when General Thimmayya visited Leh on August 29, 1948, he nominated Chand to replace Driver as Leh's new Chief Minister. See Chibber, *Pakistan's Criminal Folly in Kashmir*, p. 190.
20. Tashi Tundup confirms that the Pakistani invaders arrived around the time of the Sani festival, which takes place in the sixth Tibetan month (late July/early August). Kaul and Kaul (1992) note that the *Buenos Aires Herald*, August 23, 1948, reported that Pakistani soldiers had stolen tapestries and statues from a monastery in Padum. The story proves the arrival of Gilgit Scouts by August of 1948. Between 1994 and 2003, I interviewed several Zangskari villagers who had lived through the 1948–49 invasion including Tashi

- Tundup of Yulang, Yeshe Angbo of Sendo, Phuntsog of Langmi, Lonpo Sonam Angchug of Karsha, Geshe Ngawang Tharpa of Karsha monastery, Ani Yeshe Angmo, Ani Kundzes, and Ani Dechen Angmo of Karsha nunnery.
21. Shridahar Kaul's letter, written to Pandit Nehru on August 17, 1948, is reported in Kaul and Kaul, *Ladakh Through the Ages*, pp. 353–7.
  22. Kaul and Kaul, *Ladakh Through the Ages*, pp. 354–6.
  23. Both Ladakh and Zangskar might not lie in India today if the two brothers from Lahaul, Prithi Chand and Thakur Pratap Chand, had not organized such a rapid defense of these regions. Their contributions have been largely overlooked by many authors writing about Kashmir with the exception Prasad and Pal's *History of Operations in Jammu and Kashmir (1947–48)*, Sen's, *Slender Was the Thread*, Kaul and Kaul's *Ladakh Through the Ages*, and Chibber's *Pakistan's Criminal Folly in Kashmir*. Only the latter two mention Thakur Chand's role in the defense of Zangskar.
  24. Chand's account of the defense of Zangskar, from Chibber's *Pakistan's Criminal Folly in Kashmir*, tallies with the Zangskari narratives I gathered on most points. He differs on the question of the arrival of Indian reinforcements and the surrender of the Gilgit Scouts.
  25. Kaul and Kaul's *Ladakh Through the Ages*, pp. 107–17, offers a vivid portrayal of the oppression the Zangskaris faced at the hands of Wazirs and other officials in Kargil before 1947. Zaildar's duties are described more generally in D. G. Barkeley's *Directions for Revenue Officers in the Punjab Regarding the Settlement and Collection of Land Revenue and Other Duties Connected Therewith* (Lahore: Central Jail Press, 1875), which was adapted from the directions used more widely in the North Western Provinces and Jammu and Kashmir.
  26. Gutschow's *Being a Buddhist Nun* (chapter 7) describes the way in which birth and death pollution (*bang nga*)—which lasts between two and four weeks in most Zangskari households—is used to define the hierarchical relationship between insider/outsider as well as male/female within Zangskari ritual discourse. Aggarwal's *Beyond Lines of Control* relates several narratives regarding funerals that produce tropes of borders and belonging within the Buddhist and Muslim villagers of Achinathang.
  27. Most Zangskari accounts insist that Indian reinforcements arrived via the Chadar in the winter of 1948–49 and that the Gilgit Scouts only surrendered in June of 1949. However, in Chibber's *Pakistan's Criminal Folly in Kashmir* Chand notes that reinforcements came from Kargil and that the Scouts surrendered as early as March of 1949.
  28. Interestingly, during the 1971 war with Pakistan.
  29. The debate about the forcible recovery of tens of thousands of women regardless of what they may have wanted is addressed in Das, "National Honor and Practical Kinship," Butalia's *Other Side of Silence*, and Menon and Basin's *Borders and Boundaries*.
  30. Kim Gutschow's *Being a Buddhist Nun* (chapter 6) analyzes the discourse surrounding purity and pollution in Zangskar that illustrate the link between guardian deities, purity, and prosperity.
  31. Both Martin van Beek and Ravina Aggarwal (personal communication, October 10, 2005 and October 15, 2005 respectively) report similar terminology in Ladakh. Aggarwal notes that Muslims in Achinathang refrain from calling Buddhists insiders. For an interesting genealogy of the term *mussulman* from the Persian, see Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical, and Discursive* (New Delhi: Rupa and Co., 1986 [original 1886]), p. 603.
  32. S. C. Das's classic dictionary, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary* (Calcutta: Gaurav Printing, 1902), pp. 732–4, offers a detailed exegesis of the Tibetan use of the term *nan pa* and *phyi pa*, referring to Hindus. His parable, "the Buddhists are inwardly pure, while Hindus have outer purity" (*nan pa'i nang gtsang phyi pa'i phyi gtsang*) relates to the philosophical notion that Buddhists practice inward purity through meditation while Hindus practice outward purity through Brahmanic ritual.
  33. Local informants reported the stories about the origins of Padum's Muslim community, but see also James Crook and Henry Osmaston's *Himalayan Buddhist Villages* (New

- Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), p. 461, in which they cite James Crowden's allegation that one family is descended from the cook of the last ruling king.
34. Chapter 2 and 6 of Gutschow's *Being a Buddhist Nun* describes Zangskar's stratification as well as the discourse around purity and pollution. Compare Aggarwal's discussion of caste in Achinathang in *Beyond Lines of Control* and Brauen's list of Ladakhi strata in *Feste In Ladakh* (Graz: Akademische Druuk und Verlaganstalt, 1980).
  35. I did not hear of any inter-communal marriages in Karsha or its surrounding villages in the 15 year period during which I conducted fieldwork. However, my work was not based in Padum, where such unions would have been likely. Gutschow's *Being a Buddhist Nun* specifies the manner in which wedding ceremonies help produce and reify communal solidarity and hierarchy, while Aggarwal's *Beyond Lines of Control* describes communal rhetoric surrounding the boycott of a funeral in Achinathang, Ladakh.
  36. Lama Lobzang's remarks on the problem of Buddhist conversions to Islam are reported in the *Daily Excelsior*, July 26, 2000.
  37. The census in 2001 reported that the 183,963 persons identified as eligible for Scheduled Tribe status made up only 2.5% of the population of Jammu and Kashmir but 88.7% of the population in Leh and Kargil districts, as Martijn van Beek noted (personal communication). The imposition of the tribal label in Ladakh is discussed in Aggarwal's *Beyond Lines of Control*, as well as Martin Van Beek, "The Importance of Being Tribal; or the Impossibility of Being Ladakhis," in Thierry Dodin and Heinz Räther, eds., *Recent Research on Ladakh 7: Proceedings of the 7th International Colloquium of Ladakh Studies* (Ulm: Ulmer Kulturanthropologische Schriften, 1997), pp. 21–42, and Martin Van Beek, "Beyond Identity Fetishism: 'Communal' Conflict and Ladakh and the Limits of Autonomy," *Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 15, No. 4 (November 2000), pp. 525–69.
  38. Stanley Tambiah uses the term "minority complex" to explain how a Buddhist majority in Sri Lanka may feel under attack, despite its majority status in his *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Tambiah's *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist and Collective Violence in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) offers a useful summary of the recent literature on communalism in South Asia.
  39. My interviews with both Zangskari and Ladakhi health workers who were involved with a Ladakhi health team visit to Zangskar in 1995 confirmed the active interference of the LBA in preventing the distribution of contraceptives.
  40. Lama Lobzang reported these statistics on Buddhist and Muslim access to education and government jobs in the course of a speech at New Delhi Constitution Club covered in the *Daily Excelsior*, July 26, 2000.
  41. The statistics are cited from the Kargil District's official website, <http://kargil.nic.in/departments/departments.htm>.
  42. The *Daily Excelsior*, July 13 and July 17, 2003, reported the comments made by the Zangskari Action Committee in response to the implementation of the Kargil Hill Council. Zangskar was allotted three seats, as was the Shakar–Chigtan bloc, although Zangskar has one-third more people than the latter.
  43. The *Daily Excelsior*, February 14 and July 23, 2004) reports the comments by Chief Minister Mohammad Sayeed regarding the boycott and the development of Zangskar.
  44. Kargil district map and history can be seen at <http://kargil.nic.in/profile/profile.htm>.
  45. Seb Mankelov's "Watershed Development in Central Zangskar," *Ladakh Studies Newsletter* No. 19 (March 2005), pp. 50–57, mentions conflict between Buddhists and Muslims in Padum over access to the newly established Watershed Development Program.
  46. Chapter 2 of Gutschow's *Being a Buddhist Nun* describes the customary office that mediates grazing disputes and is known in local idiom as *lo ra pa*.
  47. See Martin Van Beek's *Identity Fetishism and the Art of Representation* and his more recent article, "Dangerous Liaisons: Hindu Nationalism and Buddhist Radicalism in Ladakh," in S. Limaye, M. Malik, and R. Wirsing, eds., *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia* (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2004), pp. 193–218. Aggarwal's *Beyond Lines of Control* offers a multi-sited view of the

communal conflict in Ladakh, presenting both the political view in Leh town as well as rural repercussions in the mixed Buddhist–Muslim village of Achinathang.

48. When I first traveled to Ladakh from Srinagar in 1989, the Ladakhis sent Kashmiri militants a clear message in graffiti along the Leh–Srinagar highway: “Kashmiri Dogs Go Home.” Over the next few years, as militancy engulfed the Kashmir valley, Buddhist politicians in Leh district fought for political and economic autonomy within the state and began to implement its Hill Council in 1996.
49. Praveen Swami, “Murder in Leh,” *Frontline* Vol. 15, No. 15 (August 4, 2000), cites LBA vice-president Sonam Gonbo’s gaffe. Other accounts of the murder in Rangdum are found in “Tension Simmers in Ladakh After Killings,” *Indian Express*, July 13, 2000; “Indefinite Curfew Clamped in Leh after Buddhists’ Killings,” *Daily Excelsior*, July 14, 2000; “Ladakh Muslims Flay Lama Lobzang’s Statement,” *Daily Excelsior*, July 19, 2000 ; “German Tourist’s Body Recovered From Kargil Sector,” *Daily Excelsior*, August 5, 2000.
50. The synopsis of the Rajya Sabha debates for August 22 was found at <http://164.100.24.167/rsdebate/synopsis/190/sy22082000>.
51. See Kaul and Kaul’s *Ladakh Through the Ages*, p. 356.