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A Tale of Two Eids: Defining the Boundaries of Islamic Community in North India

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In December 2000 the Muslim community of Ladakh celebrated Eid-ul-Fitr twice, an anomalous situation which evoked dismay and confusion from holiday celebrants. This paper presents an ethnographic case study of the bifurcation of the 2000 Eid celebration to examine the causes of controversy.

The celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr is an Islamic practice defined by guidelines which are followed widely within the world Muslim community and promote a sense of a global Muslim identity for many participants. Yet this ethnographic example illustrates that these same rules also emphasize the importance and centrality of local community. In this particular case Ladakh's status as a border region in South Asia, both politically and culturally, has complicated the distinction between local and non-local communities. A series of interviews with the Muslim religious leaders and community members of Ladakh revealed an ongoing debate within the public sphere about the nature of boundaries within Islamic communities, from both a geographic and chronological perspective.

For participants the political and social context of these decisions does not make them less orthodox as Islamic practices; they recognize many aspects of Islamic law and tradition which address the complex relationship between the need for a unified Muslim community and recognition of the particular social and cultural settings for Islamic practices.

Girls, Leaves and Dignity: Children's Forest Use, Cultures of Friendship and the Micro-geography of Work

Jane P Dyson, University of Washington

Drawing on ethnographic field research in the Indian Himalayas, this paper explores forest-related work as a site for young people to build friendships, individual and collective reputations of competence, and a sense of self-respect. In the agro-pastoral regime of the high Himalayas, women and girls spend long periods collecting dry leaves from forest areas. The leaves are collected in woven baskets and are used as bedding for cattle. Villagers monitor girls' leaf collection as they return from the forest, and taunt those who fail to bring back tall and skillfully packed loads.

Through careful attention to what I call the 'micro-geography of work', this paper shows that girls energetically sought

to accord with age- and gender-based expectations of what constitutes a 'good basket' of leaves. Children aimed to meet and exceed these expectations through labouring in small work teams, sharing knowledge of techniques of leaf collection, and collaborating to construct 'good baskets' of leaves. The paper considers the importance of leaf collection in local ideas of friendship and explores how far girls' leaf collection practices reproduce caste and gender norms. In the last part of the paper I reflect on my own experiences collecting leaves in the village and how this participant observation improved my understanding of the work practices of rural girls.

Student Politics in Comparative Perspective: Exit, Voice and Loyalty in Modern Uttar Pradesh

Craig J Jeffrey, University of Washington

Building on Albert Hirschman's notions of 'exit, voice and loyalty' as responses to the decline of powerful organisations, this paper explores how three sets of students have responded to a deterioration in higher educational provision in a government college in north India. A first group of students have reacted to a perceived 'crisis' in higher education and associated fears over the value of their degrees by reaffirming their faith in their college degrees as a basis for individual progress and concentrating on their studies. A second set of students have sought to express voice through organising protests on the college campus, barracking university staff, and cultivating social links with journalists, criminals and politicians. A third group, have chosen to exit from the campus as a space of educational instruction, sociability and protest. Many students reject all three of these apparent 'options'. A substantial number imagine themselves simply to be 'making do' (jugaar), an orientation to college and the future that traverses and unsettles the distinction between exit, voice and loyalty.

The paper seeks to establish the ambivalent nature of student's attachment to particular strategies, and how their decision to engage in exit, voice and loyalty may change. In particular, the paper shows how rising rural violence within the college in the summer of 2004 altered many students' strategies and increased feelings of insecurity and ambivalence. The paper uses these reflections to call for broader comparative geographies of educational credentialism, unemployment and youth insecurity in Asia.

Renovation Versus Conservation: The Treatment of Jrnoddhara

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The talk explores the treatment of jrnoddhara in a wide array of ritual literature of Shaiva, VaiÒÆava and Buddhist provenance. I will argue that in accordance with its literal meaning, the term jrnoddhara refers originally to the taking out (uddhÁra) of what has become decrepit (jrna), i.e. to the removal of a lingam, image or other sacred man-made object that is marred and no longer fit for worship. The texts

prescribe how the uprooted object is then to be discarded and replaced by an equivalent duplicate. Since the need of replacement is implied by the act of removal, the term jrnoddhara comes to acquire by extension its generally accepted meaning of "renovation."

Continuity between the removed object and its substitute is guaranteed by the transferal of the divine essence from the former to the latter. According to this conception of renovation, there is no need in conserving the materiality of the icon. By contrast, the divine essence is best renewed by placing it in an entirely new receptacle. However, there are also hints in the ritual texts that point to a certain reluctance to divorce the sacredness of an icon from its materiality in such a consequent and radical manner, and in particular circumstances the texts do allow that defective object be repaired (rather than replaced) and thereby restored to their original state. It thus seems that the above sketch of jrnoddhara represents an intellectually rigorous but somehow artificial position that is in conflict with common sentiments and not stringently implemented in practice.

Master of Yogis: Guru Nanak, the Nath Siddhas, and Sikh Tradition

Tushara B. Gude, Asian Art Museum

The Sikh narrative tradition is perhaps best exemplified in the hagiographies of Guru Nanak which are known as janam sakhis (life stories). Although several textual traditions exist, the janam sakhis are similar in treating the basic biographical details of Nanak's life as well as elaborating, to various degrees, the numerous miracles and fantastic events associated with the founder of the Sikh faith. Several illustrated janam sakhis, from the eighteenth century and later, survive, but have, curiously, received little scholarly attention. The episodes chosen for illustration in these manuscripts reveal a great deal, however, about the religious landscape in which Guru Nanak and his later followers strived to establish, enhance, and maintain a distinct religious identity. Among the subjects of the texts and illustrated manuscripts are various encounters between Guru Nanak and other leading religious figures, including the legendary Nath siddha Gorakhnath. Nanak's encounter with Gorakhnath is one of several instances in the Sikh hagiographical literature in which the kanphata yogic order finds mention. Often, the meeting of Nanak and the yogis is framed in a way that confirms the superior wisdom of the former. Apart from the janam sakhis, Sikh religious texts also suggest that the kanphata yogis represented a prominent religious system, both in Nanak's lifetime and long after. This paper will explore representations of Nath siddhas, their beliefs, and their practices, in Sikh pictorial and textual traditions in order to highlight the ways in which Sikhism—like other Indic faiths—confronted, accommodated, and absorbed competing religious ideas.

The Erotic Aesthetics of Ecstatic Ascetics

Sondra Leslie Hausner, Independent Scholar

This paper looks at the ascetic's body as the primary tool of religious practice. The siddha practice of using the body to negotiate desire – and to attain realization -- is a common theme in both historical and contemporary accounts of religious life, and in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions. Negotiating the material world is the fundamental goal of religious practice: a practitioner has no choice but to use his or her body to transcend the bonds of materiality. With all its desires, demands, and potentialities, the siddha body is both an obstacle and a potential tool of great religious fulfillment. The paradoxical role of the body is both commented on by many contemporary yogis, who find the predicament ironic, and reflected in earlier images of siddhas which hover between naturalistic representations of human embodiment and deified representations of great teachers who are no longer beholden to the laws of the natural universe. Based on ethnographic research that relies on the narratives of contemporary yogis, this paper gives an account of the realities of ascetic life and practice in juxtaposition to the idealized images.

The Women's Movement in Nepal: Politics of Age, Politics of Ethnicity

Sushma Joshi, International Center for Integrated Mountain Development, Nepal

In my paper, I look at the ways the women's movement in Nepal is dominated by the urban-based organizations, headed by mature activists. Very few of these organizations are run by young women, which mean their concerns rarely get addressed. The deference to age creates a hierarchy, in which older women get more priority in national decision-making bodies. Younger activists, kept out of the public realm, rarely get to express their views on sexuality, independence, and personal freedom. The women's movement also tends to exclude ethnic and indigenous perspectives: Brahmin, Chettri and Newar women dominate in the NGO sector, presenting their own moral and ethical perspectives as the "Nepali" one, and discouraging cultural differences and grievances through a call to national unity. This effectively excludes ethnic and indigenous perspectives out of international and national forums. The paper will also examine the ways in which funding gets channeled to gate-keeping organizations in the capital which determine the ways community based organizations (CBOs) get funded. The vocal discourse on victimization has also been effective in diverting and routing funds towards a few large institutions, leaving small organizations, especially those that serve marginalized minorities communities like Dalits and Muslims, out of the funding loop.

The Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan: From a Reading Group to a Political Party

Humeira Iqtidar, Cambridge University, UK

The paper aims to outline and understand some of the changes that have taken place in the role of the Jamaat-I-Islami in Pakistani politics. During the 1950s and the 1960s the Jamaat-I-Islami in Pakistan transformed from 'a reading group made up of like minded individuals', in the words of one of its first nazim-e-alaa, to a political organization. The paper outlines the initial role of the Jamaat in Pakistani politics during the 1960s when it emerged as a key organizer and mobilizer against 'the left'. I shall then trace some of the lessons learnt by the organization from unions, women's organization and others it opposed. The changes this interaction brought about in the organization allow us to understand, at least in part, the changes in the Jamaat's stance on many issues including education, women's role, feudalism, and democracy. The lessons that the organization learnt and the changes it has made provide a glimpse also into the subtle interplay of ideology, ambition and political opportunism of its leadership and activists. At the theoretical level, the paper aims to scrutinize more closely the dichotomy between modern-secular and fundamentalist-backward currently dominant in academic literature on Muslim fundamentalism.

Repackaging the Mughal Past

Iftikhar Dadi, Cornell University

This paper explores the relationship between the Lahore based Chughtai brothers during the early to mid 20th century to the Mughal past. Abdur Rahman Chughtai was a celebrated painter and Dr. Abdullah Chughtai was a historian of Mughal visual culture (calligraphy, architecture, painting, ornament). Both produced an extensive body of work, and in addition, Abdur Rahman has written (in Urdu) an important body of writings on aesthetics. Abdur Rahman's painting themes recall the Mughal past, and while his style is clearly influenced by the Bengal School, he insisted that his work was instead part of the Lahore School. The artistic and visual rediscovery and reconstruction of the Mughal past has implications for questions of identity and nationalism in 20th century South Asia, and serves as an illuminating example of "repackaging." Invocation of the Mughals is a key strategy for Muslims in the subcontinent, enabling them to point to a source of visual culture still influential and valued there. Given the reputation of the Mughals for fostering an integrative Indo-Persian cultural system, this focus on the Mughal past allows us to address questions about when certain kinds of borrowings are acceptable, and to whom they are important, especially as they now occur in the very different context of the Islamic state of Pakistan.

Out of Text: Religious Identity and Citizenship in the Northern Areas of Pakistan

Nosheen Ali, Cornell University

The Shias of the Northern Areas of Pakistan are doubly excluded from the category of the Pakistani "citizen." First, their disputed region is constitutionally not part of Pakistan and hence they are denied even the most basic citizenship rights such as the right to vote and have representatives in Parlia-

ment. Secondly, the Pakistan state has sought to suppress their Shia identity and practice because they contest the religious sensibility which the Sunni-dominated state seeks to normalize for its citizens. In this paper, I will explore how these modes of political and religious subjection are linked, and how the Northern Areas Shias have struggled to overcome their multiply marginal status. My focus will be on the recent "textbook controversy" (2000-2005) which emerged when the Pakistan state introduced new, overtly Sunni Islamic textbooks in the Northern Areas, and the local Shia population began to agitate for a separate Shia curriculum. The demand for the recognition of Shia identity in religious education soon turned into a call for the establishment of a separate textbook board (like other provinces), and became linked to broader claims for regional autonomy and political rights. I will analyze how the participants in this movement strategically used the liberal discourse of citizenship to link the struggles for religious, educational, and regional rights, and to counter government and media representations that portrayed them as promoters of "sectarian conflict." I will also situate the movement in relation to the struggles for Shia acceptance and inclusion that have taken place in the rest of the country.

Issues of Citizenship and Cultural Identity among the Nepalese of Bhutan

Rajesh Kharat, University of Mumbai, India

Traditionally, Nepali nationals in Bhutan were denied civil and political rights until the implementation of the Nationality Act of Bhutan, 1958. During the development programs in Bhutan, free education and health services and employment opportunities attracted many Nepalese into Bhutan. To restrict this influx, the Royal Government of Bhutan introduced the New Citizenship Act of 1985, which nullified the previous Act of 1958 and granted citizenship retrospectively only to those inhabitants who could prove that they were inhabitants of the country from 1958. It created problems of identity for those of Nepali origin who were either born after that date or held no record from that period. Obliviously, they revolted against the government for implementing these citizenship laws. As a result, Bhutan decided to bring them into the national mainstream and integrate them into Bhutanese society and culture through introducing the ideology of One Nation, One People in 1991. Since most of the Nepalese resisted this policy, and refused to surrender their ethnic and cultural identity, they became non-nationals in their own country. This paper examines the numerous socio-economic and political factors that deny citizenship to Bhutanese of Nepali origin and also examines the challenges to their ethnic identity. In conclusion, the paper suggests some possible ways to overcome this crisis.

Th Politics of Place and Performance among Musicians in Uttaranchal

Stefan Fiol, University of Illinois

My paper examines shifting conceptions of locality and region in the context of pahari music in Uttaranchal, North India. While localized attachments to mountain village, patti and river valley continue to be central to indigenous epistemologies and cultural practices, a pan-regional consciousness of possibility surfaced during the movement for a separate hill state in the 1990s. In the aftermath of Uttaranchal's formation in November 2000, however, increased migration to and economic reliance on the plains cities of North India have mobilized pahari pan-regionalism around shared experiences of alienation, neglect, and frustration. While an ideal concept of citizenship is well-articulated by most Uttaranchalis, who have long histories of organized political agitation, the experience of citizenship is mediated as much by geographical location as by class, caste, and gender issues. Thus, village-based traditional musicians are seeing their status and economic position deteriorate with the shift to plains-oriented patronage and aesthetics. The regional music industry, meanwhile, has been flooded with new pahari commercial singers who, as migrants and intermediaries between rural/urban, local/regional, and pahar/plains, give expression to the problems and opportunities of the current political environment. As the opportunities of citizenship in the new hill state expand outwards towards the plains cities, village-based social structures and cultural practices become stagnant or contested. In this politicized context, I present the aesthetic and political strategies of pahari musicians who simultaneously incorporate locally-meaningful and pan-regional/national expressions of belonging and marginalization.

Becoming Indigenous: An Essay on the Cultural History of the Religious Minorities in Assam (1985–2005)

Arupjyoti Saikia, Gauhati University, India

When the Supreme Court of India in a recent judgment scrapped the Illegal Migrant Detection Tribunal Act 1983, the Assamese vernacular newspapers reported the dawn of a new era in the political history of the province of Assam. In spite of scattered violent protests from the political groups representing the interest of the minority Muslim communities, there was noticeable amicability between the majority and minority on the illegal migrant question. Even the All Assam Students Union -- unambiguously expressing the interests of the majority -- and organizations representing the religious minorities agreed with the decision. I argue that this happened because of two-decades of cultural and political negotiations by the minorities in the cultural history of the state. In the post-Assam agitation era, these religious minorities negotiated with the dominant social groups, which were heirs to a history of an exclusive nationalism. Minorities successfully re-affirmed their faith in the cultural institutions of the majorities. They swelled the positions of various low-paid salaried jobs and in them they now have a public

voice to assert their rightful place as true citizens of the state. When the Indian state made an attempt to define indigenous, they vigorously contested the hegemonic definition advanced by the majorities. At the close of the 20th century, they control the institutions of the agrarian economy. Their centrality in the state economy is well recognized. This paper examines the cultural history of the process of the emergence of the minorities as a discernible voice.

'School Choice' and the Question of Sectarianism in Pakistan

Matthew J. Nelson, SOAS, University of London

For several years, international donor agencies with an interest in education have worked with local governments in Pakistan to broaden the scope of neo-liberal economic reforms, believing that an effort to promote "school choice" would generate competitive pressures for stronger secular schools. Nearly 700 interviews with parents conducted in various parts of Pakistan, however, led me to question the assumptions that lie behind this idea. In fact, "school choice" initiatives rarely privilege conventional notions of secularism. Instead, for reasons related to the influence of local religious elites (and extremely low levels of religious literacy on the part of ordinary citizens), these initiatives have had a rather alarming tendency to shift community resources away from secularism towards sectarianism. Today, children routinely find themselves drawn into sectarian rivalries reinforced by local mullahs, rivalries in which the terms of religious conformity, or unity, are used to draw distinctions between pious "insiders" and dissenting (even heretical) "outsiders." Unfortunately, after reading the Qur'an in Arabic, few children proceed to read the Qur'an in a language they understand. The terms of religious "conformity," therefore, are never permitted to interact with the possibility of individual, or interpretive, "difference." Many argue that the solution to this dilemma lies in suggesting that "demand-driven educational reforms" should exclude "demands in favor of religion." But I disagree. The challenge lies in coming up with constructive forms of engagement, even within the context of religious education. Qur'anic recitation "in translation" is just one among many examples. Please note: Contact information above is good until January 2006, when Professor Nelson begins an appointment at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

Distrust of Islamic Educators: Madaris Reforms in Comparative Historical Perspective

Christopher Candland, Wellesley College

In 2001 and 2002, Pakistan's President General Pervez Musharraf, promulgated ordinances designed both to create new model government madaris and to regulate and monitor the operations of existing madaris. Achievements, years later, have been few. By the account of the government reformers themselves, very little has been achieved, other than the antagonism of madaris educators and students. The government of Field Marshal Ayub Khan (1958-68) attempted to impose similar reforms on madaris, including the creation of government madaris. The conventional explanation for the failure of those early reforms is that the country was divided – in 1971 – before the reforms could be implemented. The implementation of those reforms in East Pakistan, and their success in Bangladesh, contradicts that explanation. The paper traces the history of madaris reform initiatives in Pakistan, in the 1960s and since 2001, and compares the stated purposes and evident shortcomings of the two periods. Based on extensive interviews with madaris educators and with government education officials involved in both eras of reform, the paper argues that it is government officials' deep distrust of Islamic education and Islamic educators that explains the failure of reform attempts, past and present.