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Editorial Collective

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The interlocutor is often given an unfair reputation. Edward Said once referred to it as "someone who has perhaps been found clamoring on the doorstep, where from outside a discipline or field he or she has made so unseemly a disturbance as to be let in, guns or stones checked in with the porter, for further discussion."[1] Though Said readily admits that his definition is somewhat antiseptic, one needs to remember that the interlocutor carries an ability to intervene in the historical trajectories of strands of minutia.

As stated in our mission, the *Columbia Undergraduate Journal of South Asian Studies* was founded to provide a space wherein undergraduates can publish their work in the broad field of South Asian Studies. The term "South Asian Studies" is misleading – it makes one think of the field as a cohesive unit. However, the submissions to the journal have proved this otherwise: we accept and have received submissions from those who study anthropology, history, political science, and religion – scholarship from across social sciences and humanities addressing the region of South Asia.

With the publication of our first issue, it became clear that the study of South Asia has become increasingly common at the undergraduate level and an interlocutor's intervention in bringing these articles to public view has been necessary for quite some time. Here, the word "common" should not be seen as an inference of a saturated environment containing poor study. On the contrary, we received nearly thirty excellent articles from across the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. After two months of deliberation, we chose three articles to publish, believing that these three represent the best of a highly competitive cohort. These articles reflect the diversity of South Asian Studies, as they are drawn from the fields of history, political science, and film studies. Undergraduate scholarship in South Asia has heretofore been provincialized in the confines of a classroom. We hope that, as a small interlocutor, we can open a space for undergraduates to publish their work. With this, the entire editorial collective at the journal hopes you enjoy Volume I, Issue I of the *Columbia Undergraduate Journal of South Asian Studies.*

Nishant Batsha
January 2010

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1   Edward Said, "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors," *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (Winter 1989), 210.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Mangal Pandey: Drug-crazed Fanatic Or Canny Revolutionary?

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Abstract:

A disjuncture exists between popular conceptions and professional historians' evaluation of the significance of Mangal Pandey to both the rebellion of 1857 and the subsequent genealogy of Indian nationalism. In popular memory he is *Amar Shaheed*, or immortal martyr, and first hero of the Indian independence movement. On the other hand, most historians regard his actions as little more than random, drug-fuelled violence. This paper attempts to recontextualize our understanding of Mangal Pandey's agency through "against the grain" readings of colonial sources and discourses. It finds that, although often exaggerated, popular narratives probably come closer to the truth, while also concluding that both levels of historical consciousness have been unduly beholden to orientalist and colonialist constructions, including an over-emphasis on religious causes of the rebellion.

Introduction

Mangal Pandey's insurrection at the military cantonment of Barrackpore on Sunday the 29th of March, 1857, is the subject of intense historiographical debate. Several issues arising from a resurgence of interest in this relatively obscure event highlight a range of intersecting dynamics influencing contemporary Indian and South Asian politics and society. Against the current backdrop of a culturally ascendant, though contested, ideology of Hindutva - according to which authentic citizenship of the modern nation state of India is effectively reserved for Hindus - the celebration of Brahmin sepoy Mangal Pandey as the nation's first religio-nationalist martyr cannot be viewed as a politically neutral gesture. On another level, until very recent times, there has been a lack of official recognition of his role in the 1857 rebellion, at least in the form of public memorializations. This is a striking omission in a country where monuments depicting elite freedom fighters saturate the landscape of major urban centers. This situation suggests that the post-independence nation state has been at best uncomfortable with adverting to the subversive potential of the subaltern rank and file.

Historians have been at great variance in interpreting Mangal Pandey's significance, often in ways that reflect ideological presuppositions - be they colonialist, anti-colonial or post-colonial nationalist, Marxist or subalternist. He has been both dismissed as no more than a drug-crazed fanatic with little, if any, bearing on the subsequent uprising, and valorized as the first in a chain of noble martyrs who consciously laid down their lives in the cause of a fully-fledged national movement. This paper plies a middle course between these two extreme positions.[1]

Firstly, it establishes, via a mostly straightforward reading of the available evidence, the strong likelihood of Mangal Pandey having acted in association and collaboration with activist sepoys who sought to instigate an uprising against the British. This point has been vigorously denied by generations of colonialist scholars, and more recently by several post-independence writers who appear to have resorted to such positions from an understandable wariness towards the hysteria of nationalistic myth making. Nonetheless, if the original sources considered in this paper are taken together and appreciated in context, there can be little doubt that the belief in Mangal Pandey having acted alone is a relic of the wishful thinking of the British establishment in the moments immediately prior to the explosions of 1857.

More importantly, however, this paper borrows substantially from methods pioneered by the subaltern studies collective, to make an against-the-grain reading of colonial sources and discourse, in order to speculate as to the motives and agency of Pandey and his fellow sepoys who acted or failed to act on the afternoon of the 29th of March, 1857. Subaltern agency is, of course, to a very large extent irretrievable and often ultimately unknowable. Nonetheless, this approach allows us to position such ambiguous agency within a social, political and indeed cultural context, in such a way as to allow us to draw conclusions that are at least plausible, if not definitive.

Specifically, this paper takes the Mangal Pandey incident as a case in point and uses it to add a voice to that relatively recent and small body of scholarship on

1857 that has begun to correct the over-emphasis on native fears of loss of caste and religion as the underlying cause of the rebellion against British rule.[2] This dominant view coincided neatly with the legitimizing rhetoric of colonialism's civilizing mission, and has been built upon evidence drawn uncritically from colonial sources. Consistent privileging of the role of religious nationalism in 1857 has resulted in the accretion over time of a historical consciousness on both sides of the colonial divide that has become as difficult and awkward to challenge, as it is destructive and divisive, in more ways than one.

To be more explicit, the dominant British discourse at the moment of his rebellion and execution, chose to interpret Mangal Pandey as a drug-crazed fanatic. Indeed, as we shall see, an early newspaper report of the incident characterized him as having "heavily drugged himself and run amok."[3] The latter term is derived from imperial experiences further east in Malaya, where natives were perceived to have willingly surrendered self-control in a final ritual act of socially-prescribed, public suicide. The extent to which the cultural institution of "amok" was a colonial invention in Southeast Asia is the subject of considerable academic debate beyond the scope of this paper. What is important here is that such notions were prominent in the minds of the British who prosecuted and condemned Mangal Pandey. It is also quite likely that the concept was also familiar to the sepoys themselves. Some of those present at Barrackpore in 1857 probably served across the *Kala Pani* in the British Straits Settlements and thus had direct experience of British perceptions of the practice, if not of the practice itself, making it possible that Mangal Pandey consciously interacted with such discourse at his trial.

In the tense moments between Mangal Pandey's rebellion and execution and the subsequent conflagration of the wider uprising, the British establishment was unprepared for the impending crisis. To be sure, there were those among the British who wrote fervent letters and editorials in broadsheets such as the *Bengal Hurkaru*, even before Pandey's rebellion, urging the authorities to take the potential for an imminent uprising seriously. Yet, the general tenor of the official position was one of ignorance born of arrogance. This is reflected in the over-confident tone evinced in much of the official correspondence relating to the cartridges or for example in Major-General Hearsay's account of his address to the remaining brigade on the morning of the disbandment of the 19th Regiment of the Native Infantry (N.I.), and reproductions in the press of the same.[4] At its apogee, the Company Raj had become so sure of its ability

2   David Washbrook recently identified "British class and racial arrogance carried to the point of strategic imbecility" as being as important as Evangelical Christianity in provoking the revolt, in "Popular History Versus Academic History," *Revisiting 1857: Myth, Memory, History*, eds. Sharmistha Goopta and Boria Majumdar (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2007), 9. Meanwhile, Saul David, after a close analysis of contemporary sources concludes that the protestations over the greased cartridges were merely a "canard" or "pretext" used to mobilize rebellion, in "Greased Cartridges and the Great Mutiny of 1857: A Pretext to Rebel or the Final Straw?" in *War and Society in Colonial India*, ed. Kaushik Roy (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2006), 101-103. By contrast, William Dalrymple's *the Last Mughal: The Fall of a Dynasty, 1857* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), and *Nile* Green's *Islam and the Colonial Army in India: Sepoy Religion in the Service of Empire* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009) are examples of recent scholarship which have accepted religious sentiments as the primary cause of the sepoy rebellion.
3   *Bengal Hurkaru*, March 31st, 1857.
4   *The Trial of Mangal Pandey: State Papers*, ed. Leela Sarup (New Delhi: Niyogi, 2007), 111. This work reproduces a portion of G.W. Forrest, *The Indian Mutiny 1857-58: Selections from the Letters, Despatches, and Other State Papers*, Vol.1 (Lahore: Sang-E-Meel Publications, 2006), originally published 1893. See also, "Military Gazette," *Bengal Hurkaru*, Tuesday, April 7th, 1857. Hearsey was in command of the cantonment at Barrackpore, and oversaw the disbandment of the 19th and 34th Regiments of the

to command that it failed to recognize the inevitability of the crisis this arrogance had engendered. Rather than recognizing Pandey's act of defiance as a symptom of widely-felt dissatisfaction with the various injustices of Company rule, the British chose to understand him as simply another product of the primitive native culture bequeathed to them by destiny to rule over. In evaluating Pandey's rebellion in terms of his motivations and its later significance, we must keep in mind that everything that was said by Pandey and others involved in his trial, was framed by the power of the colonial state. Rather than interpreting Pandey's laconic silences as evidence that he was not motivated by larger concerns such as patriotism or nationalism, this paper will attempt to outline how we might, given a range of contextual factors, interpret this silence as a strategic response to specific colonialist assumptions. This approach opens the way for us to at least consider the possibility that his reticence to speak at greater length at the court martial was motivated by his solidarity with the movement that was clearly swelling up beneath him, and which would project him into history.

After surveying some key components of the existing historiography of Mangal Pandey and 1857, offering a brief narrative of "the event" for which he is famous, and embarking on a fairly straightforward appeal to the evidence demonstrating his likely connections to the wider rebellion, this paper turns to a discussion of the wider context of some relatively neglected aspects of Mangal Pandey's representation in history and memory: the growing alienation between officers and sepoys, the fact that he was said to be heavily intoxicated at the moment of his rebellion, and the notion that he "ran amok." With such context in mind, an interpretation is advanced here that salvages the significance of Mangal Pandey's valorous sacrifice, but places it within a solidarity more immediate than the lofty (and divisive) religious nationalism with which it is often associated.

Historiographical Background: Causes of the Rebellion

Colonial histories of 1857 were dominated by the notion that the rebellion was prompted by fears of loss of caste and religion in the face of a British conspiracy to pollute soldiers with tainted cartridges, alongside increasing legislative interference with native customs, even as more and more Christian missionaries were operating throughout the country. This tradition clearly betrays a political agenda, serving to buttress the colonialist's legitimizing claims about South Asian culture being backwardly beholden to superstition and thus in need of the enlightening hand of European governance. Intriguingly, even tragically, this emphasis on the role of religion has been shared by many nationalist authors writing in the tradition pioneered by V.D. Savarkar.[5] In what surely amounts to a "derivative discourse", to use Partha Chatterjee's phrase,[6] Savarkar sought to reclaim Mangal Pandey from ignominy and lift him to the status of *shaheed*, or religious martyr. The remainder of this section seeks to survey some key components of the literature speculating on the causes of the uprising and to bring these perspectives

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Native Army, and the execution of Mangal Pandey.

5   Vinyak Damodar Savarkar, *The Indian War of Independence, 1857 (*Bombay: Dhwale, 1947 (1909). Seminal post-colonial nationalist interpretations emphasizing a religious dimension include S.N Sen, *Eighteen Fifty-Seven* (Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1958), and R.C. Majumdar, *History of the Freedom Movement in India* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1962-63).

6   Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

into greater conversation with the Mangal Pandey incident.

Writing contemporaneously with the events of 1857-58 were authors of as divergent ideological persuasions as Karl Marx and Benjamin Disraeli, not to mention the rebellious authors of the "Azimgarh Proclamation" themselves. All argued against the prevailing tide of opinion that the uprising could be understood primarily as a question of military discipline relating to superstitions about problematic ammunition. This dominant supposition, which would come to inform much of the colonial historiography of the "Mutiny", is exemplified by the writings of M.R. Gubbins, an official who served on the British Commission to Awadh at the time of its annexation in 1856. Gubbins reflected on the causes of "the mutinies in Oudh" in a publication released in 1858. Although cognizant of the diversity of arguments being put forward as to reasons for the uprising - Gubbins enumerates several, and promptly counters them with the authoritative weight of first-hand experience - ultimately Gubbins accords primacy to the primitive nature of "the Indian religious mind". He writes, "I conceive that the native mind had been gradually alarmed on the vital subjects of caste and religion, when the spark was applied by the threatened introduction of the greased cartridge…" Echoing Disraeli, (from whom we will shortly hear), he declaims the stupidity of the government's policies regarding native education, which he believed had fostered widely held suspicions among the native population that plans were afoot for the forced conversion of the native populace. He insists, "Suspicion ever marks the barbaric mind."[7]

Published in the name of the last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah on the 25th of August, 1857, the "Azimgarh Proclamation" is one of few surviving documents written during the uprising that espouses the revolutionary cause. [8] Although this call to arms is couched in religious rhetoric, with the British government repeatedly described as infidel and the rebels as "*Majahadeen*", the substantive claims of the document all relate to the material misrule of the Company. It is accused of arbitrary and corrupt handling of zamindari (land tenure) settlements, and of persevering with an unjust monopoly in the trade of "all the fine and valuable merchandise, such as indigo, cloth, and other articles of shipping, leaving only the trade in trifles to the people," with even those trifles being subject to onerous taxation and stamp duties. Finally, the Company is accused of depriving natives employed in the civil and military services of "posts of dignity" or opportunities for advancement beyond the lowest of glass ceilings. One may speculate that the appeal to religion in this instance was little more than emotive rhetoric employed in order to ennoble more mundane concerns. Indeed, loyalist Syed Ahmad Khan, a respected Muslim scholar employed by the East India Company as a judge, rejected religious motivations but stressed rising taxes, seizure of lands and loss of state sovereignty, and the generally arbitrary rule of Company administration as more basic factors in his pamphlet *The Causes of Indian Revolt*, written in 1857, though not published until 1873.[9]

Disraeli, as leading spokesman for the opposition in the House of Commons, used this moment of strife in India opportunistically to attack the incumbent Palmerston government, arguing that the rebellion stemmed from a deep discontent among the general Indian population with the East India Company's "increasing tendency to

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7 M.R. Gubbins, *The Mutinies in Oudh* (Patna: Janaki Prakashan, 1978), 76-77.
8 Ainslie Embree, *1857 in India: Mutiny or War of Independence* (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1963), 2.
9 Syed Ahmad Khan, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt (1857)* (Lahore: The Book House, 1970).

interfere with the established rules and customs."[10] Disraeli focused his criticism on three aspects of government policy. Governor-General Dalhousie's doctrine of lapse, which deprived Indian royalty of their customary privilege of naming successors in the absence of biological heirs, he argued, had dangerously eroded the trust and loyalty of native sovereigns. Similarly, he attacked the folly of the government's aggressive policy of annexation, as carried out most recently and to disastrous effect in the Kingdom of Awadh, from whence many sepoys in the Bengal Army, including Mangal Pandey, had been recruited:

> The Oude Sepoy finds that he has no village to return to, where he is to live the favoured subject of his native Sovereign… The Oude Sepoy returns now to his village, and finds it belongs to the Company, and that the rigid system of revenue is applied to his small property… He finds that he has lost political privileges and his territorial position; and for the first time, the greater body of the Bengal Army is disaffected.[11]

The third plank in Disraeli's argument was, in fact, more or less in tune with the dominant explanation for the uprising as I have characterized it, that is, the Company's complicity in the "tampering with the religion of the people."[12] While recognizing that official Company policy ostensibly upheld the value of protection of freedom of religion, Disraeli insisted that the Company legislation had in fact been "constantly nibbling at the religious system of the natives."[13] He cited the presence of the "Sacred Scriptures" of Christianity in the national system of education, the promotion of female education, widow remarriage and laws allowing religious converts to inherit property as evidence of his assertions.

Marx, in contrast to Disraeli, understood the rebellion in wider terms than the specificities of British misrule in India. In his analysis, first published in *The New York Daily Tribune* on June 30, 1857, the revolt in the Bengal Army was, "beyond doubt, intimately connected with the Persian and Chinese wars," and plainly represented a "national revolt."[14] For Marx, the causes of this national disaffection lay in the "the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia." The source of this revolution was to be found, in his view, in the "…destruction, through free trade, [of] the domestic handicraft industry in India."[15] While fears of loss of religion played their part, according to Marx, such fears were ultimately merely symptomatic and certainly not at the root of the conflict.

Leaping forward to a significant 20th century interpretation, we find Eric Stokes advancing an explanation that combines elements of the dominant interpretation centered on religion, with a more materialist understanding of the colonial social order.[16] Indeed, in some ways, Stokes' view reads like an amalgam of Disraeli and Marx! According to Stokes, fears of loss of caste resulting from the use of the greased cartridge, though probably genuine, cannot wholly account for the sepoy rebellion, since native troops willingly used the Enfield rifle and its offensive cartridges to fight the British

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10   Embree, *1857 in India*, 4.
11   Ibid., 11.
12   Ibid., 6.
13   Ibid., 9.
14   Karl Marx, "The Revolt in the Indian Army," *The First Indian War of Independence, 1857-1859* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), 40.
15   Ibid., 20.
16   Eric Stokes, *The Peasant Armed: the Indian Revolt of 1857* (NY: Oxford UP, 1983), 50.

during the subsequent outbreak of hostilities. Rather, Stokes contends that fear of a different kind , namely that of loss of status and privileges of the kind that we have seen postulated by Disraeli, was the more powerful motivating factor in the rebellion. Unlike the armies of the Madras and Bombay Presidencies, the Bengal army had traditionally followed a policy of recruiting almost exclusively from among high-caste peasantry, mostly from the regions of Awadh and Bihar. Reforms and reorganization initiated over the course of the decade or so leading up to 1857 gradually eroded this near monopoly, with increasing numbers of Punjabis and Nepali Gurkhas entering service after the respective annexation and pacification of those regions. The 1856 General Service Enlistment Order was a further source of concern for these high-caste peasant soldiers as it required all recruits to be available for deployment across the Kala Pani, duty that had previously been drafted only of volunteers.

Despite Stokes' insightful revision of the social and political factors underlying the supposedly religiously-minded mutiny, two recent monographs dealing with the Mangal Pandey incident have rather predictably fore-grounded religion as the prime factor. This shared acceptance of the centrality of religion is however, roughly the extent of their common ground. On the one hand, Oxford-trained historian Rudrangshu Mukherjee's 2005 *Mangal Pandey: Brave Martyr or Accidental Hero?* is an attempt to stem the tide of Savarkarian nationalist hysteria that has sought to find in retellings of the events of 1857-58 a glorious "Indian war of independence". While accepting at face value the importance of the greased cartridges and fears of loss of religion and caste, he argues not only that it is grossly anachronistic to understand Pandey's actions in terms of national aspirations, but that there is little to connect his solo rebellion and execution with the subsequent outbreak at Meerut some weeks later. [17] In valiantly seeking to undermine the worst excesses of nationalist mythography, Mukherjee runs the risk of reviving the very colonial structures of power that originally undermined indigenous forms of knowledge.

At almost the opposite end of the spectrum, Amaresh Misra produced a work in the same year purporting to tell "the true story of an Indian Revolutionary."[18] Unabashedly following Savarkar's nationalist agenda, Misra reconstructs a narrative of Pandey's life, using "indigenous sources" composed in the Awadhi dialect of Hindustani, such as the *Aalha Mangal Pandey* ("Ballad of Mangal Pandey") and the *Faizabad ka Itihaas* ("History of Faizabad"). Misra, in no uncertain terms, asserts that Pandey was a nationalist and religious martyr with connections to a conspiracy to revolt against the British, who knowingly sacrificed himself in order to set the attempted revolution in motion. While Misra's lack of credentials as a historian leads one to approach his work with a measure of skepticism, especially in terms of his handling of the historicity and citation of his sources, it is nonetheless impressive that he sought to look past British representations of the event and attempt to portray Mangal Pandey from an Indian perspective using Indian-produced sources.

Attempts to authenticate texts such as the *Aalha Mangal Pandey* according to academic standards may prove fruitless. It may be, partly because they presumably stem from oral traditions committed to written form substantially after their initial composition, that the type of historical consciousness they represent is inconsistent with verifiable standards of empirical "truth". Nonetheless, some recognition and

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17   Mukherjee, *Mangal Pandey: Brave Martyr*, 52.
18   Misra, *Mangal Pandey: The True Story*.

incorporation of the perspectives they offer is surely in order.[19]

The Event as Portrayed in the British State Papers

An account of Mangal Pandey's rebellion as it emerges from records of his court martial trial, and other official British sources, can be reconstructed as follows.[20] Late, between 4 and 6pm, in the afternoon of Sunday the 29th of March, 1857, Mangal Pandey, sepoy, No. 1446, 5th Company, 34th Regiment, Native Infantry, entered the parade ground in front of the "sepoy lines" (or barracks) at the military cantonment of Barrackpore, some 15 miles from Calcutta. The cantonment awaited the imminent arrival of the 19th Regiment which had been ordered to march from Berhampore, and was to be disbanded as punishment for its collective refusal to train with the greased cartridges for the new Enfield rifle. Pandey appeared on the parade ground wearing his regimental red jacket with a dhoti instead of the regulation pantaloons, and carried his musket and *talwar*, or curved sword. He ordered the drummer, John Lewis, to sound the assembly, and seeing a sepoy nearby, is alleged to have asked, "Why are you not getting ready? It is for our religion." He marched up and down the parade ground, exhorting his fellows to, "Come out you *bhainchutes*, the Europeans are here.[21] From biting these cartridges, we shall become infidels. Get ready, turn out all of you."

Pandey fired upon the first European to arrive on the scene, Sergeant-Major James Hewson, but the shot missed. Hewson took cover behind the "bell of arms," a bell-shaped structure for storing arms and ammunition located on the parade ground. Shortly after, the Adjutant, Lieutenant Bempde Henry Baugh rode onto the ground on his horse. Pandey took aim and fired, wounding the horse, which collapsed. Having been helped free of the stricken animal by sepoy Sheikh Paltoo, Baugh fired a pistol at Pandey who was now reloading his musket, but this shot also missed. Baugh and Hewson then advanced upon Pandey with drawn swords, calling on the quarter-guard to load their weapons and assist in arresting the sepoy. They did not comply. Pandey stopped loading his musket and drew his own talwar. In the ensuing melee, Baugh and Hewson both received serious wounds from Pandey's talwar. In addition, Hewson and Baugh were both struck several times from behind with rifle butts wielded by unknown sepoys. Sheikh Paltoo, the only Indian to actively support the British officers during the melee, restrained Pandey by holding him around his waist, until threatened with death by the other sepoys. Paltoo's assistance afforded the two British officers an opportunity to retreat from the scene.

Shortly afterward, the commanding officer of the cantonment, Major-General J.B. Hearsey arrived on horseback with several other British officers, finding large

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19   Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, & Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600-1800* (New York: Other Press, 2003). In this work, supposedly ahistorical texts are read with sensitivity to the literary context and cultural milieu in which they were produced, thus yielding valuable historical insights. Such a method, applied to folk literature like that identified by Misra, may enable us to reasonably ascribe greater agency to Mangal Pandey than Mukherjee, for one, currently deems appropriate.

20   The narrative presented here is drawn from a composite of sources found in *The Trial of Mangal Pandey: State Papers*, Ed. Leela Sarup; official correspondence and the records of judiciary proceedings, such as the separate trials of Mangal Pandey and the Jemadar Issuree Pandey, and further inquires made into the conduct of Sheikh Paltoo and the general state of affairs in the 34th N.I. in the early months of 1857.

21   This refers to the arrival of a small force of 50 British troops by steamer for the purposes of overseeing the disarming the 19th Regiment. *Bhainchute* is a decidedly derogatory term in Hindustani.

numbers of men (estimated 400) turned out in varying states of dress. Pandey was marching back and forth in front of them with his musket in hand, "calling on the men of the brigade to join him to defend and die for their religion and caste." Hearsey, his two sons and several other armed British officers approached Pandey on horseback at a quickening pace. Pandey aimed his musket at his own breast and using his toe, released the trigger. The bullet made a "deep graze, ripping up the muscles of his chest, shoulder and neck, and he fell prostrate." The *jemadar* and a sepoy were instructed to put out the fire which was burning his regimental jacket and shirt, which they did. [22]

Pandey was taken into custody and given medical attention until the date of his trial by general court martial a little over a week later on the 6th of April. He was found guilty of mutiny and violence against his superior officers by all fourteen of the native *subedars* serving on the jury, and was sentenced, by a vote of eleven out of fourteen, "to suffer death by being hanged by the neck until he be dead."[23] This sentence was carried out in front of the brigade at 5:30 am on the 8th of April.

A Refutation of Mukherjee's "Accidental Hero" Thesis

> There is no evidence to justify the view that this sepoy was a martyr and hero who decided to die with honor, betraying none of his co-conspirators, and expressing no regret or remorse. But this is precisely the status that has been endowed on Mangal Pandey by nationalists in India. V.D. Savarkar hailed him as shahid, as the man who started it all – the first rebel of 1857 who lit the spark. He is placed in the Valhalla of martyrs who died for their motherland and freedom. Nationalism everywhere makes its own myths, and Mangal Pandey has become part of that imagination. Clio, where she clearly and self-consciously demarcates her own terrain from Mythos, has to distance herself from that imagination. Mangal Pandey had no notion of patriotism or even of India.[24]

Thus argues Rudrangshu Mukherjee in his 2005 work, *Mangal Pandey: Brave Martyr or Accidental Hero?* Mukherjee completely rejects the notion that Mangal Pandey's rebellion can be reasonably viewed as having a causal relationship with the outbreak at Meerut, a thousand miles to the west, a month and a half later. The two events are separated by too vast a gulf in both time and space, he argues, for them to be linked by responsible historians. He rightly, though perhaps with misplaced emphasis, notes that, "statements by rebellious sepoys are not many, but those that exist do not speak of Mangal Pandey and Barrackpore."[25] The metaphor of Meerut as the "trigger," rather than of Mangal Pandey as having "lit the spark," is, for him, more satisfactory. [26]

And yet, in some respects this position seems inconsistent with some of his own interpretations, following Subalternist and Gramscian thinking, of Mangal Pandey's agency and solidarity with his fellow sepoys. In an earlier article entitled, "The Sepoy

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22   A *Jemadar* was a low-ranking junior officer in the native army.
23   The rank of *Subedar* was the highest attainable by a native soldier in the Bengal Army.
24   Mukherjee, 2005.
25   Ibid, 63.
26   Savarkar's original use of the phrase "lit the spark" has been widely taken up in the rhetoric of popular retellings of the Mangal Pandey legend, whereas Mukherjee and others look to the Meerut uprising as inaugurating the official beginning of the rebellion of 1857.

Mutinies Revisited," he recognizes that,

> …before Mangal Pandey decided to act, there had been midnight meetings in Barrackpore which had been attended by sepoys from different regiments… During his trial, Mangal Pandey steadfastly refused, in a remarkable show of solidarity, to name the sepoys who were implicated. He had only one answer: that he acted on his own. His reiteration of his own responsibility for his actions can be read as an attempt to shield the reality, which was the exact opposite of an individual acting on his own. The collective aspect was again made evident when the sepoys of the 34th, Mangal Pandey's regiment, trampled their caps on the ground when they were disarmed, a gesture of protest carried out collectively, which would in a month's time transform itself to more violent and concrete forms.[27]

One might surmise that Mukherjee's shift in interpretation stems from the emergence, in the interim, of a virulent brand of nationalism which has made the prospect of celebrating Mangal Pandey as a self-sacrificing religio-nationalist warrior less than palatable. Nonetheless, the evidence is highly suggestive that, far from being an isolated actor, Mangal Pandey's actions were spurred by a shared consciousness and occurred in the context of widespread, collective planning for anti-British action. Despite the lack of statements by rebellious sepoys citing him by name, Mangal Pandey's example undoubtedly served at the very least as an indirect inspiration for rebellion.

Certainly, the British hoped to make a cautionary example of Mangal Pandey and the Jemadar, Issuree Pandey, who was also executed, having been found guilty of ordering the sepoys of the quarter-guard neither to restrain Mangal Pandey nor go to the aid of the officers he attacked. On the 20th of April, the secretary of Commander-in-Chief of the Bengal Army wrote,

> The extreme punishment of military law has been justly awarded, and General Anson trusts that the enormity of the crime will be regarded with horror by every native officer, non-commissioned officer, and soldier of his army. Should, however, there be any still undetected, who have looked on with apathy or passive encouragement at the act of mutiny of which the jemadar has been found guilty, his ignominious end, and that of Sepoy Mungul Pandy, will be a warning to them of the fate that awaits all mutineers, and which General Anson would fain hope will have a beneficial influence on their conduct. [28]

Word of these executions would have been widely promulgated before the native soldiery of the Bengal Army via the recently established telegraph network. Even where communications were not intended for the ears of the native army, it seems reasonable that leakages must have occurred occasionally in a system so dependent upon native labor. Although the British monopoly of the telegraph ultimately proved to be a decisive advantage during the war,[29] we can safely assume that sepoys were both directly and

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27   Mukherjee, "The Sepoy Mutinies Revisited," in *War & Society in Colonial India: 1805-1945*, ed. Kaushik Roy (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2006), 117. This essay was first published in Mushirul Hasan and Narayani Gupta (eds), *India's Colonial Encounter: Essays in Memory of Eric Stokes*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1993; reprint 2004, pp 193-204).

28   G.W. Forrest, *The Indian Mutiny 1857-58: Selections from the Letters, Despatches, and Other State Papers*, Vol.1 (Lahore: Sang-E-Meel Publications, 2006), 311-312.

29   Christopher Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication,*

indirectly exposed to considerable flows of information. Certainly, we know that the sepoys recognized the immense value of the telegraph from the fact that one of their first moves upon rebelling at Meerut was to sever the telegraph lines.[30] Even without the benefit of modern technologies like the telegraph, Indian communications employed against British interests during the conflict were famous for their speed operated "in a manner 'almost electric.'"[31] As noted by Bayly, the rapid spread of native channels of communication probably played a role in development of the British mania for identifying the passing from village to village of a variety of objects, from chapatis and lotuses to brinjaul flowers and coconuts as evidence of the dire conspiracies of holy men.[32] While there is no evidence to suggest that Mangal Pandey's name itself was been on the lips of those who participated in the networks of communication that helped precipitate the full-scale rebellion, it seems improbable that events at Berhampore and Barrackpore would have escaped their attention entirely.

If we accept that informal information networks operated fluidly across northern India in 1857, Mukherjee's assertion that events at Barrackpore and Meerut cannot be connected begins to look increasingly untenable. Incendiary fires aimed at destroying British property were widespread during in the early months of 1857, indicating that the mutinies at Barrackpore and Meerut were common expressions of a wave of anti-British feeling that manifested all over northern India and beyond. Fires were reported from the suburbs of Calcutta, Amballa, Agra and Meerut in the west, but even from as far afield as Rangoon, where a catastrophic inferno was estimated to have incinerated up to three quarters of British property at end of April.[33] Perceptively, Major-General J.B. Hearsey, in a communication to his superiors in Calcutta on the 28th of January, drew connections between these fires and the stirring discontent in the ranks, noting that,

> the circumstance of a sergeant's bungalow being burnt down at Raneegunge… and also three incendiary fires having occurred at the station within the last four days; one, the electric telegraph bungalow, and since then two bungalows that were unoccupied; the second occurring only last night; as also Ensign F.E.A. Chamier, 34th Regiment Native Infantry, having taken a lighted arrow from the thatch of his own bungalow; - has confirmed in my mind that this incendiarism is caused by ill-affected men…[34]

British records show ample evidence of an active and widespread conspiracy throughout this period. Hearsey's correspondence to Calcutta of the 28th of January quoted above also makes the earliest reference to sepoy's concerns over the greased cartridges, speculating that such unease had been fomented by religio-political grOxford UPs such as the "Dhurma Sabha" from Calcutta. [35] On the 8th of February, Hearsey again wrote to Calcutta, expressing his concerns that his men were being "tampered with by designing villains when on duty in Fort William and Calcutta," and that "after frequent absences on such detached duty, many of them return to their lines with strange ideas

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1780-1870 (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), 318.
30   Forrest, 250.
31   Bayly, 315.
32   Bayly, 316 and *Bengal Hurkaru*, April 7, 1857.
33   Bengal Hurkaru and India Gazette, May 5th, 1857.
34   Forrest, 108.
35   Sarup, 4-5.

and unsettled minds."[36] Even more troubling for Hearsey was a statement made to one of his officers by a sepoy of No. 8 Company of (Mangal Pandey's own) 34th Regiment Native Infantry, one Ramsahai Lalla, to the effect that he had,

> become cognizant of a plot amongst the men of the different regiments, four in number, at this station… determined to rise up against their officers and commence by either plundering or burning down the bungalows at Barrackpore… to proceed to Calcutta and attempt to seize Fort William, or failing that, take possession of the Treasury… Also, that the men of other regiments were to be informed of what was being done here, and that they were called upon to co-operate with their comrades, the affair being one that concerned them all equally.[37] [Emphasis added.]

Ramsahai's intelligence was corroborated some days later by another informant, Jemadar Durriow, who claimed to have been coerced to participate in a midnight meeting of some 300 sepoys who invited him to join them in rising up and killing their British officers. Durriow volunteered the names of those he knew, though most of the men were unrecognizable, "their heads tied up with cloths, leaving only a small part of their faces exposed."[38] Two days later again, native doctor, Ramjan Khan came forward and made a statement to his commanding officer that he had "overheard a sepoy of the 2nd Regiment Native (Grenadier) Infantry mention at the hospital to someone that a *kossid* had been sent to the *Ung-ka-pultan* at Berhampore and to the regiments at Dinapore, informing them that ten or twelve of us have raised a disturbance and we want you to support us."[39]

Almost two weeks later, on the 25th of February, a guard of 12 sepoys, one havildar and one naick of the 34th N.I. arrived from Barrackpore at Berhampore in the company of a detachment of convalescent European soldiers. These native soldiers of Mangal Pandey's own regiment were subsequently implicated in an inquiry held into the 19th Regiment's dramatic all-night stand-off with Colonel Mitchell and his artillery, which began on the evening of the 26th of January and ultimately resulted in the disbandment of the regiment for mutiny. Two weeks before Mangal Pandey's action, two sepoys from Barrackpore, Boodheelall Tewarry and Boohadoor Sing, were found guilty of mutiny by a Court Martial for their part in conspiring to seize the mint in Calcutta and overthrow the British at Fort William.[40] Clearly, despite Mukherjee's averrance on the point, Pandey's insurrection did not occur in a vacuum but was part of a broader mood of discontent.

There may be no proof positive connecting this discontent in Barrackpore and Calcutta with the outbreak at Meerut. However, the temporal divide between the 29th March and the 10th of May, looks narrower when we consider that Pandey was not executed until the 8th of April, his Jemadar Issuree Pandey until the 18th of April, and that the disbandment of the 34th Regiment did not occur until the 6th of May. Moreover, there seems every reason to think that the disbanded sepoys of the 19th and the 34th regiments, who returned westward in dishonor to their ancestral villages and towns in Bihar and Awadh, would have had little to lose in joining the ranks of

36   Sarup, 17.
37   Sarup, 18.
38   Ibid, 20.
39   Ibid., 40. Christopher Bayly, in *Empire & Information*, glosses *kassid* as "a runner." *Ung-ka-pultan* simply refers to a Regiment.
40   Forrest, Appendix C, 631.

those who marched on Delhi, Lucknow and other rebel targets. Certainly, there was plenty of speculation by the Calcutta press that, at the very least, the disbanded men represented a threat to private property in lower Bengal.[41]

Finally, if yet further evidence is required to establish that Pandey was not merely an "accidental hero," but was in all likelihood motivated to actively participate in the coming rebellion by something approaching a proto-nationalist sentiment, we need only look back to the closing months of 1856. It is highly probable that many sepoys of the 34th N.I. were themselves sons of the soil of Awadh, since this region, along with that of Bhojpur, comprised the main recruiting grounds for the Bengal Army. The annexation of Awadh in 1856 was characterized as early as 1857 by a stern critic of the Company's excesses as "dacoity in exclesis," and has, as noted aboveم, ever since been cited as a key contributing factor in the rebellion of 1857.[42] Mangal Pandey's precise origins are obscure and contested, with one proposed lineage placing him in Nagwa village east of Varanasi in the Bhojpur region and another claiming he his birth in Akbarpur tehsil (or district) of Faizabad in Awadh. We do know, however, that his regiment was stationed in Awadh as part of the "Oudh Field Force" which provided the military strength undergirding the diplomatic ultimatum that relieved Shah Wajid Ali of his throne.[43] In a move that surely heaped injury upon insult, the 34th Regiment, having served the Company's purposes at Lucknow, was in November transferred by river vessel downstream from Cawnpore to Barrackpore, thus becoming the first unit of the Company's forces to be moved under a recent order depriving native infantry of full marching batta, or travel allowance.[44] Thus, it is clear that Mangal and his comrades arrived in Barrackpore with at least two major grievances that must have weighed heavily on their minds; a divided sense of loyalties compounded by a significant reduction in their remunerations. These grievances were soon to be expressed in the climate of incendiary fires, secret meetings and anti-government plots described above and ultimately in Pandey's attack on Hewson and Baugh. To insist that these expressions of discontent in the Bengal Army at Barrackpore should be considered unrelated to similar intimations occuring at Meerut, as does Mukherjee, defies common sense.

A Failure to Communicate:
Growing Distance between British Officers and Indian Sepoys

The Calcutta press had noticed problems in the Native Army well in advance of 1857. As early as January 1850 a letter to the editor of the *Bengal Hurkaru* decried the state of affairs in the Bengal Army, noting that significant erosion had occurred in the familiarity and camaraderie that had once characterized relations between European officers and Indian subalterns. The writer advocated the establishment of a 'Regimental Field School for Native Troops,' arguing that such an institution was necessary in the context of so many newly arrived European officers who were wholly unfamiliar with indigenous languages.[45] This mourning of the passing of easy relations between officer

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41   See for example reports and editorials regarding concerns over the potentially unruly conduct of the disbanded men in *Bengal Hurkaru*, April 1, 1857, *The Hindoo Patriot*, April 2, 1857, *The Friend of India*, April 2, 1857 , and again in *The Hindoo Patriot*, May 21, 1857.
42   Samuel Lucas, *Dacoity in Excelsis or The Spoilation of Oudh by the East India Company* (London: J.R. Taylor, 1857).
43   Military Department, 25 July 1856, No. 28
44   Ibid. See also, Military Department, 28 February 1856 No. 165.
45   *Bengal Hurkuru*, January 10, 1850.

and sepoy will be a familiar refrain to anyone who has read *From Sepoy to Subedar,* the memoir of Sitaram Pandey, who served much of his relatively long life in the Bengal Army between 1812 and 1860.[46] A translation of part of his account reads,

> In those days the sahibs could speak our language much better than they do now, and they mixed more with us. Although officers today have to pass the language examination, and have to read books, they do not understand our language. I have seldom met a sahib who could really read a book or letter although he had been passed by the examining board. The only language they learn is that of the lower orders, which they pick up from their servants, which is unsuitable to be used in polite conversation. The sahibs used to give us *nautches* for the regiment,[47] and they attended all the men's games. They also took us with them when they went out hunting, or at least all those of us who wanted to go… Well, English soldiers are a different breed nowadays. They are neither as fine nor as tall as they used to be. They can seldom speak one word of our language except to abuse us and if they could learn polite expressions as quickly as they can learn abusive once, they would indeed be apt scholars.[48]

Based on such comments, we might certainly speculate that disaffection between British officers and Indian sepoys was in itself a significant factor leading to the mutiny. At the very least, the existence of deteriorating relations between officers and sepoys resulting, in part, from an impaired ability to communicate with each other, should enliven us to the context in which misunderstandings over the question of the cartridges arose on both sides.

Certainly, it would seem that Bernard Cohn's cognizance of the relationship between "the command of language and the language of command" was not sufficiently shared at all levels of the Bengal Army by the late 1850s.[49] Another source intimating a sense of the growing distance between newly-arrived British officers and their Indian subalterns are letters written home to members of his family by Robert William Danvers during the years 1854-1858.[50] Eventually attached to the 70th Regiment of the Native Infantry as an interpreter and accidentally killed by his own men during a

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46   Sita Ram Pandey, *From Sepoy to Subedar, being the Life and Adventures of Subedar Sita Ram, a Native Officer of the Bengal Army written and related by himself, Ed.* James Lunt, trans. Lieutenant-Colonel Norgate, 1873 (Delhi: Vikas, 1970). The authenticity of this text has been questioned by several scholars, including R. Mukherjee who nevertheless uses it extensively to reconstruct a sense of what life was like for sepoys in the service of the East India Company. In my opinion, elements of Sita Ram's writing appear to bear such strong resemblance as to parody certain aspects of colonial rhetoric that it seems very possible that the work as a whole was concocted as an elaborate hoax by some British officer with too much time on his hands. On the other hand, it also seems likely that over the course of 48 years of service, Sita Ram must have imbibed his share of British rhetoric and that we might expect this to color his memoirs.
47   *Hobson Jobson* gives us the definition, "a kind of ballet-dance performed by women; also any kind of stage performance." Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, Ed. William Crooke, *Hobson Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo Indian Words and Phrases, and of Kindred Terms, Etymological, Historical, Geographical and Discursive* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2007), 620. (Originally published 1886).
48   Sita Ram Pandey, *From Sepoy to Subedar*, 24-25.
49   Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 16.
50   Robert W. Danvers, *Letters from India and China, During the Years 1854-1858* (London & Aylesbury: Hazell, Watson, and Viney: 1898).

drill towards the end of the uprising, Danvers' earlier letters represent him as anxiously, and not terribly successfully, seeking advancement in the ranks of the Company Army upon his arrival in India, all the while eying the people and culture of his newfound surrounds with reproachful disdain. In a typical note he relates to his sister a popular story explaining how Delhi came to be so afflicted with flies, as a result of the curse of a Hindu prince. "The stupid natives declare that ever since that time the plague of flies *has* been the curse of the place!"[51] Later, in 1855, he presciently gripes to his brother that, "The Jacks [sepoys] grumble, as they always do, about their huts… There is no trust to be placed in the natives, who, as soon as they saw us denuded, would probably turn upon us, revolt, and the consequences might be serious."[52] Tellingly, in a letter in which he informs his sister on having passed the language exam required to train as an interpreter, he seems altogether less motivated by a genuine interest in Hindustani than he does by the increase in his salary: "I saw myself in general orders the other day as having passed in Hindustani. I can now get my 180 rupees Munshi allowance as soon as I choose to apply for it; this will not come amiss after that loss of mine."[53]

The records of Mangal Pandey's court martial trial also imply that imperfect communication was a feature of workplace relations at Barrackpore. Sergeant-Major James Thornton Hewson, one of the officers who engaged in the melee with Mangal Pandey late in the afternoon of Sunday the 29th of March, gave, in his testimony at the court-martial trial, an ambiguous sense of his own facility with Hindustani. On the one hand, when asked by the prosecutor if Pandey had said anything in the presence of the guard, Hewson was able to affirm, "Yes. '*Nikul ao, pultan; nikul ao hamara sath,*' Come out, men; come out and join me – you sent me out here, why don't you come and join me?" It is interesting that the English gloss given by Hewson contains more information than is given in the Hindustani quote, the phrase "you sent me out here" being absent in the Hindustani. Here, it is clear that Hewson is attempting to implicate other members of the guard, not presently under trial, as having participated in a conspiracy. Other comments in Hewson's testimony indicate that he was not altogether comfortably fluent in the language of his charges. Frustrated with the Jemadar Issuree Pandey for failing to follow his orders and arrest the riotous Mangal, Hewson notes that several sepoys did attempt to communicate with the latter, but that he was unable to understand exactly what was said. "Jemadar Gunness Lalla spoke to Mungul Pandy, the prisoner now before me. I could not understand all he said, nor repeat it in Hindustani. What I heard Gunness Lalla, the Jemadar, say was to give up his arms."[54] While it is quite possible that Hewson's ability to hear what was said was merely impaired by the general commotion, it also appears that he was less than fluent in the native tongue of his subalterns.

"… a sepoy has heavily drugged himself and run a muck…": 1850s Attitudes Concerning Orientalism, Intoxication & Irrationality

The question of Mangal Pandey's state of intoxication at the time of his insurrection is important both because of what it tells us about British presuppositions at the moment of his rebellion and because such presuppositions have ever after

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51   Ibid., 20.
52   Ibid., 21.
53   Ibid., 19.
54   A *Jemadar* was a low-ranking junior officer in the native army.

informed historical interpretations of his agency or lack thereof.[55] Whereas Mukherjee contends that all we know for sure about Pandey's motivations was that he acted under the influence of intoxicating substances, it seems reasonable to infer that Pandey's self-representation at his court-martial trial was framed in response to British understandings of what it meant for a native soldier to be intoxicated (and violently attack his superior officers). The earliest report of Pandey's insurrection in the *Bengal Hurkaru*, dated the 31st of March, noted that "a sepoy has drugged himself extensively and run amuck, shooting at Lieutenant and Adjutant Baugh…"[56] In the pregnant pause before the full onslaught of the rebellion, the British chose to interpret Pandey's actions as those of an isolated and probably insane individual. To be sure, it is impossible to know precisely how Pandey would have self-reflexively understood the British and their perceptions regarding an intoxicated and enraged sepoy, but to ignore altogether the implications of this question amounts to historical negligence.

It would be problematic to assume that highly politicized 21st-century attitudes to drug use and abuse can be automatically applied to interpretations of mid-19th-century British and Indian cultural mores. Rather than assuming that references to intoxication at Pandey's trial carry the same weight of approbation as they might in today's society, we need to recognize that in the 1850s, drugs of various sorts carried a no-less complex, yet substantially different register of meaning. An emerging body of scholarship is beginning to indicate that currently active taboos on the use of psychoactive and narcotic drugs gained strength by the early twentieth century, but held little influence earlier in the nineteenth century.[57] Opium and its derivatives, as the most effective pain relievers then available, were socially acceptable in the earlier 19th century. As Paul Winther notes, "an important factor for the indifference [to anti-opium-trade polemics] was massive opium consumption in the British Isles. There was no stigma associated with the habit so there was no problem linked to consumption elsewhere in the world."[58] Use of cannabis as a drug, by contrast, it would appear was but little known in Europe in the middle decades of the 19th century, and came to be included along with alcohol and opium as a target of temperance campaigners later in the century, almost incidentally.[59]

A report on rare medical trials of cannabis-extract appearing in the *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, published in London in1840, takes considerable pains in attempting to clarify existing confusion over the taxonomy of the drug in question, responding to the apparent common misperception that opium and cannabis were one and the same.[60] The trial's findings were apparently favorable; the extract of cannabis proving to be useful in treating a range of complaints. The point here, however, beyond

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55   Rochona Majumdar makes the excellent point that scholars often "seem to overlook the point that an intoxicant may, under certain circumstances, very well work to facilitate 'agency' for human beings," in Rochona Majumdar and Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Mangal Pandey: Film and History," *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 12, 2007, 1778.
56   *Bengal Hurkaru*, Tuesday, March 31st, 1857, Calcutta: Bengal Hurkaru Press, by S. Smith Co.
57   See Mills, *Cannabis Britannica: Empire, Trade, and Prohibition, 1800-1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
58   Paul C. Winther, *Anglo-European Science and the Rhetoric of Empire: Malaria, opium, and British Rule in India, 1756-1895* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003), 6.
59   James H. Mills, "Colonialism, Cannabis and the Christians: Mission Medical Knowledge and the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission of 1893-4" in *Healing Bodies, Saving Souls: Medical Missions in Asia and Africa*, ed. David Hardiman (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2006), 178.
60   W. Ley, "On the Efficacy of Indian Hemp on Some Convulsive Disorders", *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*, 4 (1842), 407-9. London.

establishing that not all European views held exotic drugs in contempt, is simply that the British at home were at this time mostly ignorant of cannabis drugs.

In India, where they were apparently widely consumed in a multiplicity of forms and in widely divergent contexts according to region and social status, cannabis drugs primarily concerned the British as a lucrative source of revenue. As William Reinhardt put it in the late 1970s, "Marijuana, *Cannabis sativa*, or ganja as it is called in Bengali and Hindi, was as legal in British India as tobacco is in the United States today."[61] Between 1793 and the 1850s, excise on hemp drugs was exacted from retailers, with few, if any, direct restrictions placed on the agricultural and post-agricultural phases of production. After 1854, the onus of taxation was shifted to the wholesaler, with increasing surveillance placed on upon growers in order to determine the amount of raw cannabis present in the system.[62] By the 1870s, the colonial state began to institute new legislative measures in order to attempt to control production, regulate prices and maximize revenue, a process which saw it engage in a cat and mouse game with recalcitrant growers and opportunistic smugglers determined to eke out better profits via a black market trade in hemp drugs. As James H. Mills convincingly argues, the roots of the now widely held association of cannabis drugs with disreputability and criminality can be traced in large part to its increasing association with smuggling and the black market trade of the middle and latter decades of the 19th century.

The most extensive and systematic effort on the part of the Indian Government to measure and describe the extent of cannabis use on an All-India basis was the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission of 1893-94. This body was established as a result of an unlikely combination of pressures on the part of temperance activists who sought to absolve the British Empire of its complicity in the pernicious effects of drug addiction of all sorts, and sections of the establishment who were willing to sacrifice the lucrative revenues derived from cannabis consumption on the subcontinent, in the hope that this concession might preserve, for a time at least, their interests in the ever-so-much-more lucrative opium export trade.[63] Indeed, it appears that the commission was genuinely open-ended. Officers were directed to determine the extent and nature of usage of the various types of hemp drugs including ganja, bhang, majum and charas, and to propose on the one hand the best ways of reforming the taxation system, and on the other to gauge the likely effects in terms in social unrest and economic disruption in the event of prohibition. What emerges most strongly from the published findings of the commission is how widely divergent social customs pertaining to the consumption of cannabis drugs in South Asia were, and, even more pertinently for us, how kaleidoscopically varied British perceptions and opinions were on the relative merits and demerits of the same.

Of particular interest here is a supplementary volume detailing certain "answers received to selected questions for the native army."[64] Although the value of this document for the historian in determining precise differences across regional attitudes is limited by the fact that answers were submitted anonymously, no doubt in order to elicit

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61   William W. Reinhardt, "Marijuana in British India: British Policy toward Hemp Drugs", *Language and Society in Modern India*, eds. Robert I. Crane and Bradford Spangenberg (New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1981), 119.
62   Mills, *Cannabis Britannica*, 59.
63   Ibid., 104.
64   India, Department of Finance and Commerce, *Indian Hemp Drugs Commission, Supplementary Volume, Answers Received to Selected Questions for the Native Army*, Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1895 (New York: Johnson Reprint Company, 1971).

morefrank responses from the white officers charged with answering the questionnaire, what emerges most clearly, once again, is that no monolithic attitude towards hemp drugs existed in the army during the 1890s.[65] Indeed, a great deal of confusion appears to have existed on the part of British military officers as to the role of cannabis in the social and religious lives of their men and the peoples amongst whom they served. Whereas many respondents emphatically stated that there was no known connection between hemp drugs and religious rituals or festivals, others embarked on extensive ethnographic description of its association with festivals such as Holi, Diwali and the Shivratri, even providing recipes for bhang preparations enjoyed on specific occasions.[66] In some areas, among them probably the Bombay Presidency and the North West Frontier Provinces, all use of hemp drugs was explicitly proscribed, "All regiments have a standing order against the use of these drugs, and punish for it,"[67] and "Men know they will be punished if caught smoking it, and it is not so easily procured, on account of regimental police patrols,"[68] to take two examples. In other areas, responsible use was tolerated and even recognized as beneficial: "The moderate use of any of these drugs is not looked down upon. There is no opinion in the native army in regard to the practice of the consumption of any of them, though any interference on the part of the Government in the use of them will, it is said, cause great dissatisfaction among all classes, as the use of them generally is considered beneficial and necessary."[69]

While any generalizations based on the evidence presented in this volume must be necessarily circumspect, there is an overall tendency on the part of respondents to imply that hemp drugs as a whole had recently undergone a decline in respectability. Smoking of ganja and charas were increasingly deemed to be the disreputable practices of lower classes and castes, whereas eating and drinking bhang, which was practiced by elite Hindus, maintained a degree of grudging tolerance from some quarters of the British establishment. It would indeed be speculative to posit causes for this decline in respectability, but a contributing factor is probably reflected in the general trend, especially in the Bengal Army, away from privileging upper-caste Hindus, who were widely perceived to have been behind the uprising of 1857. One telling response, which tended towards disapproval of cannabis drugs, notes that usage was "…on the decrease in this regiment, as the Mers[70] are not consumers of drug unless taught by outsiders. The drug was introduced by sepoys who were recruited in Oudh."[71] Although this report was separated from Mangal Pandey's time by a gulf of over thirty-five years (in which British imperialism underwent enormous intellectual and structural reconfigurations),[72] it is noteworthy that Awadhi recruits maintained a persistent reputation as cannabis

65   Some context can be gleaned from references made to locality and the ethnic and religious composition of the regiment in question. The questionnaire begins with the following solicitation for demographic information, "20. Give the total strength of your regiment, and the numbers of each caste or class of which it is composed, showing separately – (a) combatants, (b) non-combatants, (c) authorized camp followers. What numbers in each caste or class smoke ganja and charas respectively? 24. What numbers in each caste or class respectively (a) eat or (b) drink bhang."
66   Ibid., For examples see answers 81 and 32, on pp. 57 and 22, respectively.
67   Ibid., answer 117, p. 33. See also answer 91, p. 63.
68   Ibid., answer 60, p. 43.
69   Ibid, answer 80, p. 56.
70   The Mer are a people of Kshatryia origins from the Kathiawar region of Saurashtra in western India.
71   Ibid, Answer 54, p 39.
72   Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity, in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester and NY: Manchester University Press, 2006).

users. Can we take this to infer that there was nothing particularly unusual about Pandey's drug use in March, 1857? More research dealing specifically with prevailing attitudes of the 1850s is clearly necessary.

On the other hand, there is evidence to suggest that negative British conceptions of cannabis drugs, as they existed throughout the 19th century, were largely shaped by the persistent popularity of a much earlier, "parochially English," traveler's guide composed by one John Henry Grose. First published in 1757 but reprinted in part or whole in numerous publications intended for use by merchants and colonial officers working in India for well over a century, Mills suggests that Grose catered to his "audience's predilection for titillating tales of oriental excess and for reassuring passages on 'the mildness and tolerance of the English government'…"[73] Mills observes that Henry Draper Steel's 1779 work, the *Portable Instructions for Purchasing the Drugs and Spices of Asia and the East Indies* "gave a rare description of the preparation of cannabis, '*Bangue*':

> A species of opiate in much repute throughout the East for drowning care. It is the leaf of a kind of wild hemp little differing as to leaf and seed (except in size) from our Hemp. The effects of the drug are to confound the understanding, set the imagination loose and induce a kind of folly or forgetfulness. Mr. Grose speaks of it in the following manner: 'Bangue is an intoxicating herb; in the use of which it is hard to say what pleasure can be found, it being very disagreeable to the taste and violent in its operation which produces a temporary madness, that in some, when designedly taken for that purpose, ends in running, what they call a muck, furiously killing every one they meet without distinction till they themselves are knocked on the head like mad dogs. But this practice is much rarer in India than it was formerly.[74]

This bizarre reference to the practice of "running amok" as having once existed more commonly in India in the somewhat distance past, (its decline was presumably due to the edifying influences of colonial rule), suggests a conflation of India with the Indies further to the east, since the term "amok" is generally considered to have entered English from the Malay language.[75] Winzeler, writing of 19th-century and early 20th-century perceptions, explains that "amok", which apparently peaked as a phenomenon in Malaya in the early 19th century, "…was believed to be a long-established pattern. It was assumed that the pattern could be explained by certain traditional features of Malay (or Malayan) society and culture, having deep roots in the Malayan character. It was also thought that with modernization, amok would die out…"[76] Regardless, Grose's account certainly indicates the existence of a deep-seated precedent in British perceptions of cannabis use being closely associated with random acts of primitive violence in "the East." It seems likely those sepoys and their British officers who served in Burma and the Straits Settlements during the years immediately prior to 1857, may have carried tales with them back to colonial India, whether first hand or not, of natives

73   James H. Mills, *Cannabis Britannica*, 24.
74   Ibid., 21.
75   Robert L. Winzeler, "Malayan Amok and Latah as 'History Bound' Syndromes" in *The Underside of Malaysian History: Pullers, Prostitutes, Plantation* Workers, ed. Peter J. Rimmer & Lisa M. Allen (Singapore: Singapore University Press for the Malaysia Society of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, 1990), 214.
76   Ibid., 217.

"running amok". Clearly, the notion that Pandey's rebellion bore the hallmarks of this primitive customary behavior had currency in Bengal in the immediate aftermath of the incident.

Here again, the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission provides some suggestive insights into the question, even if its anterior nature makes it a somewhat less than ideal source for understanding the 1850s. For examples see questions 53, "Does any excessive indulgence in any of these drugs incite to unpremeditated crime, violent or otherwise? Do you know of any case in which it has led to temporary homicidal frenzy?", and 54, "Are these drugs used by persons to fortify themselves to commit a premeditated act of violence or other crime?" These questions posed to the Native Army elicited the usual range of contradictory responses, with the majority of respondents disclaiming knowledge of any such effects or uses and not a few denying that hemp drugs were associated with such behavior. Several positive responses were, however, framed in language that evokes the discourse of "amok" in strikingly similar tones as appeared in the context of the Mangal Pandey incident. For example::

Answer 162. The excessive use of these drugs does in my opinion incite to unpremeditated crime. Nearly twenty years ago I knew a man in the regiment to be incited by the use of ganja to a temporary homicidal frenzy.

Answer 200. Have read and heard of instances where sepoys have run amuck or revenged an imaginary grievance after premeditation and the use of bhang.

Answer 209. (54) Yes; it is well known that bhang is thus taken when a man is desirous of running "amuck." A case occurred in this regiment before or about 1870 on parade when a man attacked his European officers and was at once cut down by the other men.

Answer 117. Only one case on record: a sepoy of the regiment ran amuck in 1887 at Yamethinin Upper Burma: he was a known ganja-smoker, though never caught in the act. Ganja, I believe, was found in a parcel sent to him from India, and after he was shot-down a large quantity of majum was found in his kit-bag. This was the only instance I know, and fairly proves that excessive indulgence in hemp incited unpremeditated crime.

Answer 46. I have no experience. A man who runs "amuck" is often spoken of as "bhanged."

Answer 191. No actual case has come within my knowledge: but I know that all the fanatics in Afghanistan were all primed with charas before "running amuck." It is well known that "Ghazis" are well intoxicated by charas before they "run amuck."

Answer 15. Yes, in the same way that a man might take a dram to fortify himself for the same purpose.

Answer 43. Excessive indulgence does lead to crime. Lately a case occurred in the 36ᵗʰ Sikhs: a man known by the name of "Bhangor" – from being addicted to bhang – shot his friend and shot at anyone who approached, and eventually shot himself.

Answer 44. Probably leads to crime, such as causing a man to run "amuck." Have seen no such case myself.

Despite the substantial period of time that had elapsed between Mangal Pandey's death and the 1894 Commission, these responses may provide analogous glimpses into British perceptions of the Mangal Pandey incident of 1857.

Trial by Court Martial

What we do not have, regrettably, is direct insight into the mindset of Mangal Pandey, based on historical sources (unless we are willing to accede to the veracity of the *Aalha Mangal Pandey* as presented by Misra). Pandey's participation in his court-martial trial was very nearly mute. As Mukherjee says, "the records yield nothing as the principal actor refused to speak. The proceedings of the court had offered Mangal Pandey an opportunity to speak to history. He had turned down that opportunity."[77] Whereas Mukherjee has chosen to interpret Pandey's silence as the result of his being "helpless" and "cowed down by fear" in the context of the trial room,[78] it is at least as plausible that his silence was calculated, and that his few words may well have been crafted in response to British preconceptions of drug abuse and the phenomenon of "amok."

Part of Mukherjee's perspective stems from his contention that the sepoy was by definition out of place in the British military courtroom. "In a trial a sepoy was always in a helpless situation. The Mutiny Act was read out to him in Persian and Arabic rather than in the vernacular language of the sepoy."[79] Mukherjee is surely right to follow the Memoirs of Sitaram Pandey, and also Peers[80] in suggesting that "language problems plagued military tribunals and sepoys were often denied the services of accurate and unbiased translations,"[81] yet it should be remembered that the court, apart from the judge and the prosecutor, was comprised of sepoys who had attained the rank of Subedar. Ultimately, how we understand Pandey's demeanor in the courtroom depends more on our own disposition than any guiding evidence. It is just as likely that his silence was the result of an honor-bound compulsion not to implicate his fellows, made all the more pressing by the presence of his peers, as it is that he was struck dumb by fear.

Although he had very little to say for himself, it is highly suggestive that Pandey's scanty testimony adds up to a self-representation remarkably consistent with European descriptions of typical cases of "amok.' Consider the following definition as laid out by Gimlette in 1901,

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77   Mukherjee, *Mangal Pandey*, 49.
78   Ibid., 50.
79   Ibid.
80   Sitaram Pandey, *From Sepoy to Subedar*, 74 & 177, and Douglas M. Peers, "Sepoys, Soldiers and the Lash: Race, Caste and Army Discipline in India, 1820-50," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 23, no. 2 (1995): 211-247.
81   Ibid.

(1) A sudden paroxysmal homicide in the male, with evident loss of self-control; (2) a prodromal period of mental depression; (3) a fixed idea to persist in reckless homicide without any motive; and (4) a subsequent loss of memory for the acts committed at the time.[82]

When asked, "Did you act on Sunday last by your own free will, or were you instructed by others?" Pandey insisted, "Of my own free will. I expected to die." Did he load his own musket to save his own life? "No, I intended to take it." Did he intend to take the adjutant's life, or would he have shot anyone else? "I should have shot anyone who came." Was he under the influence of any drugs? "Yes, I have been taking *bhang* and opium of late, but formerly never touched any drugs. I was not aware of what I was doing."

In Pandey's brief testimony then, we have very nearly all the hallmarks of Gimlette's definition of a native "run amok." He evinced a "loss of self control." He had lately been consuming drugs in the lead up to his actions, something out of his character but consonant with "a prodromal period of mental depression." He certainly betrayed a "fixed idea to persist in reckless homicide," disclaiming any motive besides a propensity to shoot "anyone who came." We are left with the option of accepting Mangal Pandey as the "miserable fanatic" of 19th-century British discourse, or inferring there was more to his self-representation at the Court-Martial than colonialist historiography has been willing to admit.

Conclusions

The contested status of Mangal Pandey as a national hero reflects the imbrication of processes of decolonization with ongoing contestation over competing visions of the modern Indian nation. One aspect of this is illustrated by the nature of the controversy that surrounded the 2005 Bollywood dramatization, *Mangal Pandey: The Rising*.[83] Objecting to the film's "distortion of historical facts and no reference to his native village, Nagwa," a movement comprised of "local intellectuals, theatre personalities and students" demonstrated for three days outside local theaters and ultimately prevented its screening in Ballia.[84] Protestors apparently objected to Mangal Pandey's depiction as a womanizer who associated with "nautch girls" and the implication that he was a disreputable drug abuser. Protests in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh were successful in preventing the public screening of the film.[85] While the objections raised to the film may appear trivial, even absurd, it is instructive that anything deemed to tarnish the sacred reputation of a national martyr so readily gains traction in the current political climate.

At the same time, the film attracted criticism from a range of scholars for its elastic handling of historical facts, despite the disclaimer that "scenes depicted

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82   Robert L. Winzeler, "Malayan *Amok* and *Latah* as 'History Bound' Syndromes," 217.
83   *Mangal Pandey: The Rising*, DVD, Directed by Ketan Mehta (Mumbai: Yash Raj Films, 2005). See: Press Trust of India, "BJP demands ban on Mangal Pandey," Expressindia.com, Thursday, August 11, 2005.
84   Press Trust of India, "UP govt to consider ban on *Mangal Pandey*", Expressindia.com, Sunday, August 14, 2005. See also: "Mob Stops 'Mangal Pandey' Screening in Hometown,' Indiaglitz.com Saturday, August 13, 2005.
85   Rediff.com, "UP govt to consider ban on Mangal Pandey," August 14, 2005.

may be a hybrid of fact and fiction."[86] *The Rising* does go well beyond the types of speculations – those grounded in evidence – indulged in by this paper. For example, in depicting Mangal Pandey's participation in midnight meetings, it shows him not merely as a common sepoy, but as their representative among the emissaries of Nana Sahib and Bahadur Shah themselves. It would seem that such fanciful details are not entirely the fabrication of Ketan Mehta, however, but reflect salient popular traditions.[87] The film also, for instance, elaborates emotively upon a popular folk tradition, apparently without basis in empirical fact, that Pandey was hung from a banyan tree, and not, as the British state papers record, and contemporary news reports corroborate, from a gallows erected for the purpose on the parade ground. It is tempting to speculate that this mode of telling history, privileging, as it does, heroic themes and moral lessons over verifiable facts and accurate chronologies, expresses a puranic sensibility that has long been central to South Asian ways of relating to the past.[88]

Another, more troubling feature of the recent revival of interest in Mangal Pandey is the tendency to play up the extent of the violence he perpetrated,[89] along with the inclination to search eagerly in his history for martial origins of the Indian, and in particular Hindu, national character. Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee and others have traced the genealogy of this stratagem back to the late 19th-century historiography of Bankimchandra, seeing in his efforts to remasculinize a colonized Hindu manhood the germ of militant Hindu nationalism.[90] Rudrangshu Mukherjee is nobly attempting to write against this tradition by insisting on proper standards of empiricism.

Nonetheless, this paper has demonstrated the existence of abundant evidence confirming anyone wishing to eulogize Mangal Pandey as a "brave martyr." Communalism and elitist nationalism can only be combated by arguments directly confronting them on the basis of their own demerits. Despite the potential for Mangal Pandey's heroism to be abducted and misused by those who would seek to claim his memory in the name of communalist rhetoric, or even in the service of a monolithic, centralized state, we do him, and more importantly, ourselves a disservice by disavowing his status as the sepoy who fired the first bullets of 1857.

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86   See Rochona Majumdar and Dipseh Chakrabarty, "Mangal Pandey: Film and History," 1774-75.

87   During recent fieldwork in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh, a local person who had never seen the film, *Mangal Pandey: the Rising*, gave the author an oral account of his understanding of the history of Mangal Pandey and 1857. In the version he narrated, Mangal Pandey was said to have met with Nana Sahib himself to plan the revolt, before personally leading other sepoys in the march on Delhi.

88   Similar ideas are explored in Romilla Thapar, "Society and Historical Consciousness: The Itihasa-purana Tradition," *History and Beyond* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2000), and Vinay Lal, *The History of History: Politics and Scholarship in Modern India* (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2003).

89   The plaque accompanying the commemorative statue at Ballia, erected for the sesquicentennial of 1857, states that Mangal Pandey killed 3 British officers. According to official sources, he severely wounded two men, both of whom recovered and testified against him at his Court Martial trial. I am indebted to Rajesh Pandey of Varanasi for the initial translation of this plaque, and Sai Bhatawadekar of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, for her interpretation of the idiomatic expression, "मौत के घाट उतार डाला."

90   See Ranajit Guha, *An Indian Historiography: A Nineteenth Century Agenda and its Implications* (Calcutta: K.P. Bagchi & Co., 1988), and Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

The Rise of Kashmiriyat: People-Building in 20ᵀᴴ Century Kashmir

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Abstract:

The rise of Kashmiri nationalism in the early 20th century is best explained by an elite-driven, people-building model advocated by Rogers Smith, a political scientist. Sheikh Abdullah, considered by many as the father of Kashmiri nationalism, constructed a new constitutive story known as Kashmiriyat which redefined existing national identities that were previously delineated along religious and ethnic boundaries. The success of Kashmiriyat explains Kashmir's refusal to support Pakistani insurgents in the Second Indo-Pakistan War and the differential success of Muslim nationalism in Kashmir compared to Pakistan.

Introduction

In this paper, I argue that the rise of Kashmiri nationalism is best explained by Rogers Smith's elite-driven, people-building model.[1] I will be working with Ernest Gellner's definition of nationalism as a theory of political legitimacy requiring that ethnic boundaries should not cut across national lines.[2] In addition, I will draw heavily on Robert Bates's material resources logic for people-building and Mark Beissinger's discussion of demonstration effects and cycles of mobilization. My analysis will use these models to focus on the temporal variation of nationalism in the Kashmir Valley from the turn of the 20th century until the Second Indo-Pakistani War of 1965.

Before describing the development of Kashmiri nationalism, I will briefly summarize Smith's people-building model.[3] Smith's theoretical framework of people-building on three key assumptions: political communities are neither natural nor primordial, political communities are constructed by elites who articulate and institutionalize conceptions of political peoplehood, and both leaders and citizens have considerable flexibility in the type of people-building they advance and support.[4] In political science, people-building refers to the construction of a community with a common identity.

From these assumptions, Smith argues that competing narratives and constitutive stories will be a prominent component of any people-building process. A constitutive story is defined as an intergenerational national myth that proclaims certain attributes or characteristics as intrinsic to a person's identity, leading to membership in a greater political community. Second, Smith claims that leaders of the community will always pursue two goals: persuading people to subscribe to the political identity they are advancing and to accept the leaders as legitimate authorities. In addition, he argues that people-building is inherently a competitive process that requires leaders to be wary of competing narratives and to continually advance their particular constitutive story. Furthermore, Smith believes that any people-building approach must redefine existing political loyalties or identities. Finally, he declares that people-building must be exclusive: leaders cannot incorporate people that challenge the constitutive story or people who the core constituents would not accept. Many of the attributes of Smith's model follow logically from the definition of people-building. In order to construct a community with a common identity, existing identities must be renegotiated.

Smith then describes the process of people building. He argues that demonstrating trust and worth is necessary and sufficient for people-building. In other words, Smith believes that trust and worth is required for people-building to be successful, and that demonstrating trust and worth by itself will lead to people-building. He defines trust as the belief that the leader is striving to advance the community's interests and worth as the belief that the leader has the capacity to do so. Finally, Smith claims that people-building succeeds once economic power, political power, and the constitutive story are able to attract a critical mass of adherents.

Although Smith describes a general model of successful people-building, he is vague in regards to specific strategies for people-building. As a result, I will draw on a

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1 Rogers Smith, "Citizenship and the politics of people-building," *Citizenship Studies* 5 (2001), 73-96

2 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (New York: Cornell UP, 1983).

3 Rogers Smith is a political scientist famous for his work on political development and citizenship. He is currently a professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

4 Smith, "Citizenship and the politics of people-building," 73-96

modified version of Bates's material resource logic which argues that, "ethnic groups persist largely because of their capacity to extract goods and services from the modern sector…insofar as they provide these benefits to their members, they are able to gain their support and achieve their loyalty."[5] In this case, I will use Barth's definition of ethnicity as a delineated boundary between groups.[6]

Brief Overview of Kashmiri Nationalism as People-Building

The concept of Kashmiri nationalism initially began in the early 20th century as a response to excessive abuse from the Dogra rulers, who were viewed as foreign and illegitimate. The Dogra rulers were descendents of Hindu Rajputs and spoke a separate language known as Dogri. In its nascent stages from 1931 through 1939, Kashmiri nationalism was not originally a nationalist movement but rather a Muslim political movement designed to correct perceived inequities in the Dogra government. Although initially formulated along religious lines, this political movement expanded to include all religions, resulting in the conceptualization of a unique Kashmiri nationalist identity in 1939, signified by the transformation of the Muslim Conference into the All-Jammu and Kashmir National Conference.

The expansion from a Muslim Conference to a National Conference necessitated the creation of a constitutive story known as Kashmiriyat, which posited that Muslims and Hindus in the Kashmir region shared a distinct Kashmiri identity. Sheikh Abdullah[7] and the Kashmiri nationalists spread the idea of Kashmiriyat through a combination of newspaper articles, political rallies, populist appeals for land reform and political equality, and religious sermons. In accordance with Smith's model, Kashmiri nationalists emphasized both the validity of Kashmiriyat as a political identity and the legitimacy of the National Conference as a representative of Kashmiriyat. In addition, competing people-building narratives emphasizing religion as the primary basis of loyalty forced Kashmiri nationalists to redefine previous conceptualizations of Kashmiri identity to embrace all religions. Finally, the inherent exclusionary nature of people-building and the constitutive story prevented Abdullah and the Kashmiri nationalists from fully incorporating all religions and ethnicities, specifically the Jammu and Poonch Muslims and the Dogra Rajputs, into the new Kashmiri political identity.

Trust, the first of Smith's conditions for people-building, was evidenced by the National Conference's populist platform and propaganda and cemented by the *Naya Kashmir* document which called for the abolishment of the oppressive feudal system and the creation of a democratic constitutional monarchy. Worth, the second condition, was demonstrated by the success of the Quit Kashmir movement and the passage of the Abolition of Big Landed Estates Act and the Distressed Debtors Relief Act.

In regards to the process of people-building, the National Conference secured trust and worth by employing a people-building logic focused on material resources. They attracted followers and demonstrated their legitimacy by advancing populist demands such as land reform and debt relief and by guaranteeing greater opportunities

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5 Robert Bates, "Ethnic Competition and Modernization in Contemporary Africa," *Comparative Political Studies* 6, no. 4 (1974), 471.

6 Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (New York: Little Brown & Co, 1969), 15.

7 Abdullah's ancestors were Hindu Pandits who had converted to Islam. Abdullah was a chemist by training, but became politically active after the Dogra government rejected his application for a state government job.

within the civil and military branches. For many impoverished Kashmiris, the National Conference offered greater wealth and opportunity.

Kashmir before 1900

The Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir came into existence after the First Anglo-Sikh War of 1845, when Gulab Singh, a Sikh who had fought on the British side in the First Anglo-Sikh War, bought what is now the Kashmir Valley for 7.5 million rupees.[8] His son, Ranbir Singh, expanded the territory to include most of modern-day Jammu and Kashmir. The state was ruled autonomously until the province came under British rule following the Indian Rebellion of 1857. The relevant aspect of Kashmir's early history is the artificial nature of its creation. Kashmir's territorial boundaries were arbitrarily created by a simple purchase of land and did not reflect the ethnic, religious, or linguistic differences of the region.

Demographics and Geography in the Early 20th Century

The map below (Figure 1) originally appeared in a British gazetteer published in 1909. The boundaries of the different provinces were consistent from the turn of the century until the publication of the map. The Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir consists primarily of the three main provinces circled in the map: Jammu, the Vale of Kashmir, and Ladakh. Poonch, located to the west of Kashmir, was administered as a separate state until its incorporation in 1936. According to the 1901 census, the total population of the Kashmir province was approximately 2.9 million people, with 2.15 million Muslims, 689,073 Hindus, 25,828 Sikhs, and 35,047 Buddhists[9]. Despite the religious diversity, 89% of the population spoke Kashur (used interchangeably with Kashmiri), the Kashmiri language.

Figure 1[10]

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8   Jyothi Das Gupta, *Jammu and Kashmir* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1968).
9   *Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol. 15.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 99-102.
10   Ibid.

The Kashmir Valley, also known as the Vale, was over 93% Muslim but had an influential Hindu minority known as the Pandits. The Pandits were Kashmiri Brahmins and were generally more educated than the rest of the population. The Vale had specific customs and styles of dress not seen in other parts of the state, including the pheran, a long Kashmiri gown, and the kangri, a earthen fire pot used to keep warm.[11] The majority of the Muslims were Sunni but there was a small Sufi population that had created a number of popular shrines visited by both Muslims and Hindus. Almost all of the residents spoke Kashmiri.

Jammu, the southern province, was the center of power of the Dogra dynasty. While the Hindu population comprised 50% of the province's population, they were concentrated near the center. In contrast, Muslims held a 61.3% majority in the periphery. Unlike the Pandits, Hindus in Jammu hailed from a variety of castes. The main languages spoken were Dogri and Punjabi.[12]

In comparison, Ladakh was sparsely populated and had little influence in the state. The population was primarily Buddhist and most of the residents had Tibetan ties. Ladakhi and Kashur were the most common languages.[13]

The great diversity of ethnicities, languages, and religions meant that any people-building approach had to reconcile a number of different potential boundaries and create a coherent sense of national identity. The diversity also indicates the incredible difficulty of incorporating all the different boundaries under one constitutive story.

Subjugation under Dogra Rule

One of the key aspects of the development of a constitutive story is defining the historical enemies of the community. The subjugation of the Kashmiri population under the Dogra throne for nearly eighty years (1857-1931) allowed Abdullah and the Kashmiri nationalists the opportunity to cast the Dogras as foreign oppressors and illegitimate rulers.

Since their accession to power, the Dogra rulers had instituted a number of policies that restricted the economic and political freedom of the other groups in the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir.[14] As noted Kashmiri historian Prem Nath Bazaz argues, "the Dogras have always regarded Jammu as their home and Kashmir [Valley] as the conquered country…they established a Dorga oligarchy…in which all non-Dogra communities were…inferiors."[15] Despite a six percent literacy rate,[16] the Dogras held nearly every civil service and military service position. In comparison, the highly educated Kashmiri Hindus were restricted to minor clerical posts. Unsurprisingly, the Pandits resented the Dogra government's favoritism towards the people of the Jammu province at the expense of the Pandits.[17]

In addition to excluding other Hindus from civil and military positions, the

11 Iffat Malik, *Kashmir: Ethnic Conflict and International Dispute* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 22.
12 *The Times of India*, June 5, 1934.
13 Paul Bowers, *Kashmir* (House of Commons Library, 2004), 11
14 Henceforth, I will refer to the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir as Kashmir and the Kashmir Valley as either the Vale or the Valley.
15 Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of the Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir* (New Delhi: National Book Foundation, 1954), 91.
16 Malik, *Kashmir,* 71.
17 Ibid., 25.

Dogra dynasty also instituted a feudal system that oppressed the Muslim majority, most of whom were farmers. The Dogras granted large fiefs called *jagirs* to landlords in return for taxes that went straight to the Maharaja's personal expenditures. In fact, nearly 1/3 of state revenue was used explicitly for the king's personal expenses, despite a complete lack of rural infrastructure, such as roads and irrigation systems, (what does "rural infrastructure" mean in this context?) and an impoverished population averaging with an average annual household income of $25.[18] In addition, the Dogras prevented Kashmiri Muslims from owning land and actively pursued an unofficial discrimination policy, even going as far as banning portions of the traditional Friday prayer.

The Dogra oppression of both Kashmiri Muslims and Hindus provided an opportunity for competing narratives to emphasize the illegitimacy of the current dynasty. The lack of existing political loyalties meant that any redefinition would be fairly simple. In addition, efforts to build trust and demonstrate worth could focus on a few key areas: land reform, religious tolerance, and equality in appointment to government positions.

In addition, the Dogra subjugation also had important consequences for the future of the Kashmiri nationalist movement and its constitutive story. When formulating his conceptualization of the Kashmiri national identity, Abdullah could not incorporate the Jammu Hindus into the constitutive story without alienating the Pandits and the Muslims Kashmiris due to their close relationship[19] with the ruling Dogra dynasty. As a result, Jammu was not included in the constitutive story of Kashmiriyat, which emphasized only the shared bonds between Kashmiri Muslims and the Pandits.[20] Although Abdullah tried to court the Jammu Hindus for electoral purposes in later decades, the effort was completely unsuccessful. Fittingly, Jammu later developed its own competing Hindu nationalist movement known as Praja Parishad in 1952 that fiercely opposed Abdullah and the National Conference.[21]

Muslim Political Mobilization

Continued subjugation under the Dogra dynasty led to a nascent Muslim political movement known as the Mirwaiz-i-Kashmir in 1905. Rasul Shah, the leader of the movement, traveled to mosques around the Vale and preached against deification of saints while also emphasizing a more conservative interpretation of Islam. The Mirwaiz was incredibly successful – in fact, over 100,000 people attended a funeral procession for one of its leaders in 1931.[22] As a result, the Muslim population was united under a single ruler for the first time in Jammu and Kashmir history. Although Mirwaiz started as a religious movement, it began to petition the state with hopes of correcting political and economic grievance, such as greater Muslim representation. The group issued three memorandums which demanded the appointment of a Muslim to the head of the Education Department, greater Muslim employment in civil services, and land reform,

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18   Alice Thorner, "The Issues in Kashmir," *Far Eastern Survey* 17, no. 15 (August 1948), 174.
19   Jammu Hindus were often given coveted government jobs and positions.
20   Balraj Puri, "Kashmiriyat: The Vitality of Kashmiri Identity," *Contemporary South Asia* 4, no. 1 (March 1995), 3.
21   Norman Palmer, "The Changing Scene in Kashmir," *Far Eastern Survey* 22, no. 12 (November 1953), 159.
22   Malik, *Kashmir*, 29.

respectively.[23] For the first time in state history, a religious community was advancing political causes – a key first step in the development of Kashmiri nationalism.

In accordance with Smith's people-building model, the Mirwaiz cultivated trust by trying to advance the Muslim community's values and interests. In addition, the group had successfully defined its community on the basis of religion and the group's leaders had established themselves as the legitimate head of the community. However, the movement had not attacked the legitimacy of the Dogra dynasty, still lacked a constitutive story, and had yet to prove its worth by demonstrating the capacity to advance the community's interests.

In the 1920s, a group of Kashmiri university graduates began meeting at a Reading Room in Srinagar, the largest city in the Vale. These graduates published articles in widely read Muslim newspapers such as the *Siyasat,* the *Muslim Outlook*, and the *Inqilab* and began distributing pamphlets in mosques. It was the Reading Room that catapulted Sheikh Abdullah onto the political scene. Abdullah's initial popularity stemmed from his rhetorical ability as a religious leader[24] but the charismatic schoolteacher soon found himself at the head of an increasingly powerful political movement.

The Muslim Conference

A series of events in Jammu on July 13, 1931, including the destruction of a mosque, interruption of a sermon, and the desecration of a Quran, led religious leaders in Jammu and Kashmir to declare that their religion was under attack. The Dogra regime responded by jailing the dissenters, prompting further public outcry. Over 7000 Muslims stormed the jail and demanded the release of the prisoners. In response, the police opened fire and over twenty-one people were killed. By the end of the day over 163 people were either killed or injured.[25]

Although most of the victims were Hindu Dogras, the violence was aimed at the state rather than the Hindu population as a whole. As Bazaz notes, "the attack on the jail was in no way directed against the Hindus…it was a fight of the tyrannized against their tyrants."[26]

The events of July 13 prompted the formation of the All-India Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference. Like the Mirwaiz, the Conference's primary intent was to encourage both Jammu and Kashmir Muslims to organize politically. Sheikh Abdullah, the organization's first president, drew support from a diverse Muslim body of leaders united by the belief "that the Muslims were being exploited by the Hindu community."[27]

The growing popularity of the Muslim political movement led Hindu leaders, both Dogras and Pandits, to fear potential Muslim domination. As a result, "the Hindus became definitely hostile to the Muslim movement and openly and solidly joined the Government forces to get it suppressed."[28] This growing distrust prompted Kashmiri Pandits, who had previously supported the Kashmiri Muslim struggle against Dogra

23   Ibid., 31.
24   Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in the Crossfire* (New York: Tauris, 1996), 103.
25   Prem Nath Bazaz, *Kashmir in Crucible* (New Delhi: National Book Foundation, 1954), 150.
26   Ibid., 131.
27   Malik, *Kashmir*, 45.
28   Quoted in Prem Nath Bazaz, *Kashmir in Crucible* (New Delhi: National Book Foundation, 1954), 41.

oppression, to denounce the recommendations of the Glancy Commission Report which called for greater civil liberties for Muslims and more Muslim government appointments. The Rajput and Hindu Associations even put up posters directly attacking the Muslim Conference.

The increasing politicization of religious boundaries threatened to derail the greater struggle against the oppressive Dogra regime. Instead of working together to secure greater political and economic benefits, the Kashmiri Pandits and the Kashmiri Muslims were being turned against each other by competing narratives that emphasized religion as the basis of political loyalty.

National Conference and the Beginning of Kashmiri Nationalism

The growing political unrest in Kashmir attracted the attention of Jawaharlal Nehru, the leader of the Indian National Congress. Nehru contacted Abdullah and arranged a meeting with the National Conference leader in which Nehru urged Abdullah to turn the Muslim National Conference into a secular, nationalist movement. Abdullah himself stated that, "[Nehru] explained that by opening the membership to all, any campaign against the ruler would gain more strength."[29] Sheikh Abdullah had been closely following the Indian campaign for independence against the British, which provided a ready template for widespread mobilization. According to political scientist Mark Beissinger, "cycles of mobilization…feed off connections that agents make."[30] In this case, the Indian national movement and Nehru gave Abdullah the script for Kashmiri political mobilization.

On March 26, 1938, Abdullah redefined the goals of the Muslim National Conference and opened up membership to all people, "irrespective of caste, creed, or religion."[31] In his annual party address, Abdullah stated:

> Like us the majority of Hindus and Sikhs have immensely suffered at the hands of the irresponsible government. They are also steeped in deep ignorance, have to pay large taxes and are in debt and are starving…We must open our doors to all such Hindus and Sikhs who like ourselves believe in the freedom of their country from the shackles of a irresponsible rule.

Abdullah's statement lends credence to Smith's argument that political communities are asymmetrically created by leaders articulating conceptions of political peoplehood, and that these leaders have considerable freedom in the type of peoplehood they choose to adopt.

Originally, the Kashmiri political movement was a response to religious, political, and economic oppression of the Muslim community. However, after Abdullah's meeting with Nehru – a clear example of a demonstration effect – the political movement was re-conceptualized to include Hindus and Sikhs. This demonstrates both that Abdullah was capable of asymmetrically institutionalizing a different concept of peoplehood and that he had considerable freedom to define the boundaries of this community.

According to Smith's model, this articulation of peoplehood required a new

29   Quoted in Aditya Bhattacharjea, *Kashmir: The Wounded Valley* (New Delhi, South Asia Books, 1994), 74.
30   Mark Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 174.
31   Thorner, "The Issues in Kashmir," 174.

constitutive story justifying the inclusion of these groups, an effort by leaders to have these groups embrace membership and acknowledge the National Conference's legitimacy, a constant rejection of competing narratives, a redefinition of existing political loyalties, and an exclusion of other groups.

In the next sections, I show that that the creation and dissemination of Kashmiriyat, the expulsion of conservative Muslim ideologues, the incorporation of other national groups, and the exclusion of non-Kashmiris all match the five points of Smith's model of people-building. In the following section, I describe the National Conference's strategy for securing trust and worth, which was characterized primarily by an emphasis on greater material gain.

Kashmiriyat

In order to expand the membership of the Muslim Conference and turn it into a secular, nationalist ideology, Abdullah and other Kashmiri nationalist leaders had to redefine the basis of political loyalty. Instead of focusing on religious unity, Abdullah pushed forward the idea of Kashmiriyat which emphasized the unique history of the Kashmiri people, the syncretism of various religious beliefs in the Vale, and the historical peace between different religions and ethnicities in the Vale. This represented a marked change from prior conceptualizations of identity which focused primarily on differences of religion and ethnicity between the different groups in Kashmir.

To lend credence to Kashmiriyat, the nationalist movement emphasized the recent discovery of lost historical texts, the most important of which was the *Rajatarangini*, written in 1149 by Kalhana. Using the *Rajatarangini*, Kashmiri nationalists traced the story of the Kashmiri people over the past 2000 years despite the fact that most historians, such as Prem Nath Bazaz, acknowledged the artificial nature of the current Kashmiri state.

The development of the constitutive story and Kashmiriyat lends credence to Smith's first assumption that no political community is natural or primordial. In fact, the copy of the *Rajatarangini* obtained by the National Conference originally belonged to a Kashmiri Pandit who had a vested interest in the new national myth. A review of the accepted translation of *Rajatarangini* in the *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* in 1901 revealed that there were gross chronological inaccuracies in the text, providing further evidence that the idea of Kashmiriyat was an artificial, asymmetrical construction advanced by nationalist elites.[32]

Kashmiriyat was disseminated through religious sermons in mosques, political rallies by the National Conference, and Muslim newspapers and magazines. Prominent writers and historians such as Mohammad Din Fauq were also important in advancing the idea of Kashmiriyat. Fauq reconciled ethnic differences by arguing that "even the people who came from Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan and Turkastan as late as 600 or 700 years ago were so mixed with Kashmiri Muslims in culture, civilization and matrimonial relations that 'all non-Kashmiri traces are completely absent from their life.'"[33] In addition, even Nehru lent credence to the new constitutive story with his declaration that, "Kashmir dominated the intellectual scene of the country [India] for

32   E. J. Rapson, "Kalhana's Rajatarangini: A Chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir by M. A. Stein,"review of Kalhana's Rajatarangini by M.A. Stein, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (April 1901), 357.

33   G.M.D. Sufi, *Kashmir* (New Delhi: Light and Life Publishers,1974), 696.

almost 2000 years."[34] Although Nehru supported the secular Nationalist Conference primarily to undercut the Muslim League and the Muslim Conference which threatened the ideology of the Indian National Congress, his support was essential for winning Hindu support for the National Conference.

By continually emphasizing the shared history and culture of all Kashmiris, Sheikh Abdullah and the National Conference "raised the pitch of the Kashmiri ethnic identity, Kashmiriyat, to such heights that the religious edge of that identity had been subdued."[35] A Muslim political movement was transformed into a secular, nationalist movement.

However, Kashmiriyat never explicitly mentioned Jammu Muslims and instead focused on religious syncretism in the Vale. This had important consequences for future political movements in Kashmir and for the different regional responses to Pakistani invasion in the Second Indo-Pakistani War.

Kashmiriyat and the People-Building Model

The creation and dissemination of Kashmiriyat perfectly reflect Smith's theoretical framework for people-building. Smith's first component of people-building is the creation of a new constitutive story. Kashmiriyat clearly fits this description. It was an intergenerational national myth that traced the history of the Kashmiri people over 2000 years and proclaimed the shared culture and history of the Kashmiri people as an intrinsic part of their identity, fulfilling the first condition of people-building in Smith's model.

The second aspect of people-building involves leaders persuading people to subscribe to the political identity they are advancing and to accept the leaders as the legitimate authorities of that identity. Abdullah and other Kashmiri elites advanced the idea of Kashmiriyat through newspapers, radio, political rallies, and religious sermons. Through the propaganda and his own charisma, Abdullah was able to secure the support of prominent Hindu voices, including the Hindu newspaper *Hamdard*,[36] and of Muslim religious leaders. Both groups acknowledged the National Conference as the voice of the Kashmiri identity.[37]

In addition, people-building requires the rejection of competing narratives and a constant effort to push forth one's own particular conceptualization of peoplehood. By emphasizing Kashmiriyat instead of Islam as the basis of political loyalty, the National Conference alienated some of its members, particularly those involved with the early Mirwaiz movement. Some religious leaders such as Yusuf Shah believed that "any political organization that represented the Muslims had to reflect their religions identity."[38] Shah and his followers subscribed to the ideology of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the father of Pakistan and the head of the Muslim League, while Abdullah and the National Conference allied themselves with the Indian National Congress, a secular, nationalist movement. To combat the influence of Shah and the Muslim Conference, Kashmiri nationalists continually emphasized that religious syncretism and tolerance

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34   Puri, "Kashmiriyat," 4.
35   Riyaz Punjabi, "Kashmir imbroglio: The socio-political roots," *Contemporary South Asia* 4, no. 1 (March 1995), 39.
36   Malik, *Kashmir*, 51.
37   Sumit Ganguly, "Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency: Political Mobilization and Institutional Decay," *International Security* 21, no.2 (Fall 1996), 94.
38   Malik, *Kashmir*, 52.

was an essential component of the unique shared culture and history of the Kashmiri people.

The fourth component of people-building is the redefinition of existing political loyalties. The National Conference used Kashmiriyat to change the nature of political loyalty in Kashmir. Before, political loyalty was based primarily on religious boundaries, demonstrated by the previously mentioned animosity between Kashmiri Pandit and Kashmiri Muslim political groups despite their common goals.

Finally, people-building is inherently exclusionary as it requires the delineation of group boundaries. In this case, Kashmiriyat was primarily directed at people living in the Vale of Kashmir. Although the Muslim Conference initially appealed to all Muslims, including those in Jammu, the National Conference's reach was limited by its constitutive story which emphasized the shared history of the residents of the Kashmir Valley with limited reference to Jammu. In addition, the oppression of the Kashmiri people by the Dogra Hindus also necessitated their exclusion from the constitutive story.

Trust, Worth, and the Material Resources Strategy

After describing the characteristics of elite-driven people-building, Smith expands on his theoretical framework by positing trust and worth as the two necessary and sufficient conditions for people-building. The trust condition is met when the community believes that the leaders are striving to advance the community's values and worth is demonstrated when the community believes that the leaders are capable of doing so.

The National Conference defined its community as all Kashmiris, irrespective of caste, creed, or religion. However, the constitutive story was largely limited to Kashmiris living in the Vale. As a result, I will limit the truth and worth conditions to the people of the Kashmir Valley.

The National Conference articulated its commitment to advancing Kashmiri interests with the groundbreaking Naya Kashmir document in 1944. The proclamation, translated as New Kashmir, called for the abolition of the *jagir* system, the creation of a constitutional monarchy, the protection of basic civil liberties such as the freedom of religion, and greater opportunities for non-Dogras in the civil and military service.[39] The goals of New Kashmir resonated with both the Muslims and Hindus of the Vale. The Muslims, who generally worked on the *jagirs*, hated the oppressive Dogra feudal system. In comparison, the Pandits were tired of being relegated to minor clerical posts and desired the greater government opportunities that New Kashmir demanded. By appealing to the material interests of both groups, the National Conference was able to secure their trust.

Worth, the demonstrated capacity to advance the community's interests, was accomplished through a two-step process. The first was the Quit Kashmir movement started by Sheikh Abdullah. The second, and the most important, was the passage of the Abolition of Big Landed Estates Act and the Distressed Debtors Relief Act.

The Quit Kashmir was another example of Beissinger's demonstration effects. Modeled after Gandhi's Quit India movement,[40] Quit Kashmir denounced the legitimacy of the foreign occupier – in this case, the Dogra dynasty – and demanded

39   Punjabi, "Kashmir imbroglio," 39.
40   Gandhi's call for civil disobedience against the British government.

immediate independence. In Abdullah's autobiography, he declares that, "the people were galvanized. 'Quit Kashmir' was on the lips of every Kashmiri."[41] Thousands of Kashmiris in the Vale protested against the Dogra throne, prompting the Maharaja to arrest Abdullah and 300 of his supporters.[42] As a response, Nehru and the Indian National Congress issued a statement reprimanding the Maharaja and urging Abdullah's release. This was a clear demonstration of worth: Abdullah and the National Conference had the backing of the entire Indian independence movement and were powerful and influential enough to mobilize large numbers of Kashmiris in support of their causes.

The most profound demonstration of worth, however, occurred three years after the partition of India and Pakistan on August 15, 1947. In 1950, the National Conference, which had been granted provisional authority over the Kashmiri state after its accession to India, passed the Abolition of Big Landed Estates Act and the Distressed Debtors Relief Act of 1950. The first act reallocated any land larger than twenty-three acres to landless peasants while the second act provided debt-relief to indebted farmers. As Ganguly notes, "although these initiatives alienated a significant segment of the Jammu-based Hindu landed gentry, they won Abdullah the powerful loyalty of lower- and middle-class Muslims and Hindus."[43] The National Conference clearly demonstrated its capacity to advance the material interests of its targeted community and thereby secured its worth.

Accession, Autonomy, and Jailing

The primary indicator of the rise of Kashmiri nationalism in the Vale was the Second Indo-Pakistani War of 1965. After Partition on August 15, 1947, the princely states of India, which included Jammu and Kashmir, were given the option of joining either India or Pakistan. Pakistan believed that Kashmir, with its large Muslim population, rightfully belonged to Pakistan. However, Islamabad, recognizing the popularity of Abdullah, grew suspicious of the Sheikh's close ties to Nehru. As a result, Pakistan sent troops to the Poonch district, which was largely sympathetic to Pakistan and the Muslim league, to incite a revolt against the state. Pakistani troops nearly reached Srinagar, the largest city in the Vale, forcing Hari Singh, the current Dogra king, to flee to Jammu.[44] The Maharaja requested Indian assistance to expel the Pakistani invaders but was forced to sign the Instrument of Accession in return for military aid, resulting in the formal annexation of Jammu and Kashmir to India.

After annexation, Nehru gave Abdullah and the National Conference authority over the provisional government. Abdullah responded by immediately pushing for greater Kashmiri autonomy. Nationalism, as defined by British sociologist Ernest Gellner, grants political legitimacy when ethnic boundaries do not cut across national lines. As the leading proponent of Kashmiri nationalism, Abdullah fought for greater autonomy for the Kashmiri people in order to secure his own party's political legitimacy. He consistently argued that the Kashmiri people would be the sole decision-makers when it came to the question of independence or accession and demanded a plebiscite to ascertain the wishes of the people.

However, Abdullah's requests were largely ignored by Nehru and the new

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41   Sheikh Abdullah, *Flames of the Chinar: An Autobiography* (New Delhi: Viking, 1993), 82.
42   Thorner, "The Issues in Kashmir," 175.
43   Ganguly, "Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency," 96.
44   Thorner, "The Issues in Kashmir," 177.

Indian government which feared that a plebiscite would result in Kashmiri defection to Pakistan.[45] As a result, Abdullah pushed even harder for greater autonomy and even approached foreign governments for assistance.[46] Unsurprisingly, Abdullah was jailed for treason in 1953, prompting widespread nationalist protests that resulted in the death of sixty Kashmiris.[47] Kashmiri discontent with the state's new puppet government led to sporadic violence over the next ten years, including riots in 1955 and 1957. Kashmiri anger at the illegitimate government reached a tipping point and eventually exploded during the Hazratbal incident in 1963, leading to the Second Indo-Pakistani War.

Kashmiri Nationalism and Operation Gibraltar

The Hazratbal incident referred to alleged state government involvement in the theft of a relic from a Muslim shrine in Srinagar, prompting dissenters to set fire to properties owned by the Prime Minister.[48] The incident, which occurred months after the Indian defeat in the 1962 Sino-Indian War, was viewed by Pakistani officials as Muslim rejection of a Hindu state government and as another sign of Indian weakness in the region. Nehru, recognizing the incident as further proof of growing Kashmiri nationalist sentiment, ordered the release of Abdullah on April 8, 1964 to appease the agitators. However, Abdullah was re-arrested after Nehru's death, leading to "renewed public protests and anti-Government agitation."[49]

Pakistan, misinterpreting the anger of Kashmiri Muslims as support for accession to Pakistan, drew up plans for an invasion into Kashmir that would "liberate" the state from Indian control. The plan, Operation Gibraltar, was to have Pakistani soldiers disguise themselves as insurgents and attempt to instigate a widespread rebellion against the state. On August 5, 1965, 7,000 Pakistani troops invaded the Vale of Kashmir and tried to incite a popular rebellion against the state.[50]

The people of the Vale, who were 93% Muslim and had a decade-long history of grievances against the Indian state, refused to support the Pakistani invaders, much to Islamabad's surprise. The Kashmiri Muslims, identifying with Kashmiriyat and not Islam as the primary basis of political loyalty, turned over the "insurgents" to Indian authorities, sparking the Second Indo-Pakistani War.

The refusal of Kashmiri Muslims to support the invaders was a direct result of the development of Kashmiri nationalism and the success of the people-building approach employed by Abdullah and the National Conference. Before Kashmiriyat, the primary basis of political identity in the Kashmir Valley had been religion – political movements such as the Muslim Conference and the Hindu and Rajput Associations were organized along religious lines. However, the acceptance of Kashmiriyat and its emphasis on the unique shared culture and history of the Kashmir Valley separated religion from political identity.

As a result, Kashmiri Muslims did not identify with the Pakistani insurgents and readily turned them over to Indian authorities. By mistaking Kashmiri nationalism

45   Malik, *Kashmir*, 68.
46   Ibid., 99.
47   Ibid., 106.
48   Ibid., 113.
49   Ibid., 117.
50   Julian Schofield and R.C. Tremblay, "Why Pakistan failed: tribal focoism in Kashmir," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*. 19, no. 1 (March 2008), 32.

and discontent with Indian state authorities as support for Pakistan, Islamabad fundamentally erred in their assessment of Kashmiri political identity. Unlike Pakistani Muslims, Kashmiri Muslims did not define their national identity on the basis of their religion. Instead, their acceptance of Kashmiriyat resulted in a national identity tied to specific local history and traditions. As a result, the Pakistani insurgents were not viewed as fellow countrymen because of their shared religion. Instead, they were viewed as outsiders, explaining why Kashmiris resisted accession to the Pakistani state.

Alternative Explanations

Benthamite

A possible alternative explanation for the rise of Kashmiri nationalism could use a Benthamite framework that moves away from the elite-based approach and instead views national identification as the result of a rational, utility-maximizing process by each individual. Jeremy Bentham, an 18th century English philosopher, articulated the principles of utilitarianism, which advocated policies and actions that resulted in the greatest good for the greatest number of people. A Benthamite framework provides a compelling alternative because of its simplicity and intuitiveness: people will generally act according to their own self-interest.

This explanation would focus on the National Conference's populist platforms and would argue that Hindus and Muslims in the Kashmir Valley supported Abdullah and the National Conference simply because of a desire for greater material gain. The Benthamite tradition would attribute the Kashmiri refusal to support Operation Gibraltar to a rational thought process which foresaw greater material benefits from supporting India than Pakistan. It would point to the poor economic and political situation in Azad Kashmir, the Pakistani-occupied portion of the state, as a reason why the insurgents were not supported.

However, the Benthamite tradition would be unable to explain a number of important events in the rise of Kashmiri nationalism. First, it would have no answer for the shift away from religion as the basis of political identity and the reluctance of certain Muslim conservatives to support the shift. If greater material gain for all Kashmiri Muslims was possible by supporting a National Conference, why was there still a competing narrative emphasizing Islam as the basis of political identity?

Second, it would be unable to explain Kashmiri discontent with the puppet state government. Abdullah himself acknowledged the positive strides made by the Bakshi government, including the construction of two new universities, the establishment of free primary and secondary education, the construction of numerous public works projects, and the development of needed infrastructure. However, as Malik notes, "to some extent this strategy worked, in that there was little trouble in the Vale for several years…however, it failed in that it did not change the people's thinking, something that was to become apparent briefly in 1964."[51]

Events, contingency, and diffusion

Although the impact of various demonstration effects on the development of Kashmiri nationalism has been discussed, an explanation of Kashmiri nationalism based purely on events literature would also ignore a number of key factors.

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51   Malik, *Kashmir*, 108.

An events-based approach to Kashmiri nationalism would emphasize the secular, nationalist nature of both the Indian National Congress and the National Conference. It would pay particular attention to the relationship between Nehru and Abdullah and the similarities between Abdullah's Quit Kashmir movement and Gandhi's Quit India movement. It would point specifically to the struggle for Indian independence as a formative event for Kashmiris and it would argue that this triggered a cycle of mobilization leading to numerous nationalist movements, such as Sikh nationalism and Muslim nationalism.

However, events literature would be unable to provide a satisfactory answer to why the National Conference succeeded while Muslim nationalism failed. In the Indian independence movement, both the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress succeeded since both a secular state and a Muslim state were created. Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League enjoyed immense support among Muslims in India and this could easily have diffused into Kashmir as well, triggering a cycle of Muslim political mobilization. However, the Muslim political movement in Kashmir failed despite having a readily available template to follow. Muslims in the Vale did not follow the script for mobilization established by the majority of Muslims on the subcontinent. Instead, they mostly supported a secular, nationalist ideology advanced by Abdullah's National Conference. Although events literature provides a number of key insights into the spread of nationalist ideology, its lack of theoretical purchase results in a failure to adequately explain the differential success of two competing narratives of Kashmiri nationalism.

Conclusion

A close analysis of Kashmir from the beginning of the 20th century through 1965 reveals that an elite-driven, people-building approach emphasizing material resources is the best explanation for the rise of Kashmiri nationalism. The development and dissemination of Kashmiriyat, the political, social, and economic platforms adopted by the National Conference, and the failure of Operation Gibraltar all support the use of Smith's people-building model as a theoretical framework to understand the nature of Kashmiri nationalism and its implications for contemporary issues, such as linguistic and religious nationalist movements, in South Asia.

Oppression[2]
Indian Independent Political Documentaries and the Ongoing Struggle for Viewership

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Abstract:

The Indian government has developed a prolific, yet carefully regulated, documentary film industry through a virtual monopoly over nearly all financing, production, and distribution networks for documentaries. The government's stranglehold over documentary film production in India has made it difficult for Indian filmmakers who work outside of the government's system of production and distribution to reach audiences within India and around the world. As a result, the story of Indian independent documentary filmmaking remains one of constant struggle against government domination of distribution and financing networks, as well as censorship regulations.

Introduction

The Indian government holds a virtual monopoly over the financing, production, and distribution of documentary films in India primarily through two regulatory bodies, the Films Division and the Central Board of Film Certification. The Films Division is the "media unit" of the Indian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and produces more documentaries than any other organization in the world, distributing over fifty feature-length documentaries and newsreels to over 10,000 cinemas annually.[1] The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) is responsible for reviewing, rating, and certifying all films, television programming, advertisements, and promotional material that appear in cinemas and on television in India.[2] Together, the Films Division and the CBFC have allowed the Indian government to develop a prolific, yet carefully regulated, documentary film industry in India. According to P.V. Pathy, a filmmaking pioneer in India, "the rightful claim to credit for having fostered the adolescence of the documentary film goes to our government. Even the future of our documentary seems to be linked with government sponsorship."[3]

Despite the Indian government's apparent monopoly over documentary filmmaking, there are documentaries being made outside of the government's system of production and distribution. These projects receive no government funding and are made with meager technical resources. Their subject matter is political in nature with messages that "critique the dominant politico-economic system."[4] While these documentaries are hardly homogeneous in subject matter or aesthetics, this paper will deal with them together, as a single genre, which will herein be referred to as "independent political documentaries" (IPDs).

The IPD movement is a relatively recent phenomenon. It was born in 1975 during the Emergency era, a period in which President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, under the guidance of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, suspended constitutional civil liberties and oversaw the imprisonment and deaths of many innocent civilians. It was during the Emergency period that a student filmmaker named Anand Patwardhan made a short subject documentary about student protests called *Waves of Revolution*.[5] Patwardhan shot the film himself and had the footage smuggled out of the country, edited, and released; *Waves of Revolution* was the first true independent political documentary in India.[6]

It was not until the 1990s, however, with the introduction of 16mm film cameras and digital camcorders, that IPDs became a bona fide movement. Compared to prohibitively expensive 35mm film stock and cameras, new technologies were "relatively inexpensive, a far greater number of people had access to (them), and (they) could be updated and re-edited at any point in time."[7] As a result, the number of IPDs being produced skyrocketed during this period and many began to appear in film

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1   Manjunath Pendakur, "Cinema of Resistance: Recent Trends in Indian Documentary Film," *Documentary Box* 7 (1995).

2   Keval J. Kumar, *Mass Communication in India* (Mumbai: Jaico Pub. House, 2000), 168-170.

3   Ibid., 155.

4   K.P Jayasankar and Anjali Monteiro, "Images of the "Other" in India*," Media Development*, no. 3 (2001).

5   Erik Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy, *Indian Film* (New York: Columbia UP, 1963), 208.

6   Pendakur, "Cinema of Resistance."

7   Ibid.

festivals around the world. Within India, these documentaries provided an alternative perspective to the typically jingoistic projects produced by the state; "instead of exotic people, hungry and tortured humans came up as protagonists; instead of ritualistic song and dance, minority peoples from the lands beyond central India voiced their anger, fear and frustration common to minorities in any totalitarian country; instead of the plastic gloss of national pride, the basic formation of the modern State were questioned."[8] According to Thomas Waugh, Professor of Film Studies at the University of Quebec, these filmmakers had become "audio-visual witnesses…(to) a whole spectrum of socio-political dynamics."[9]

While the number of IPDs being produced has increased in the last two decades, these films have nevertheless struggled to find audiences in India. The Films Division's and the CBFC's monopolization of Indian production and distribution networks has made funding for IPDs tenuous, distribution outlets scare, and censorship a legitimate threat. The silencing of this "cinema of resistance" places India's future as a liberal democracy in jeopardy. According to Manjunath Pendakur, Professor of International Communications at Northwestern University, the IPD movement "has the potential to intervene in determining the course of events and public policies of the day because these are the voices of sanity, tolerance, and resistance at a time when the shrill cacophony of fundamentalism, fascism, and greed are louder than ever before."[10]

While the Films Division and the CBFC do indeed present many obstacles for the IPD movement, its future is anything but bleak. New sources of funding, decreasing production costs, and new modes of cinematic representation suggest that viewership of IPDs will increase in the immediate future. For the present, however, the story of the IPD movement remains one of constant struggle, against government domination of distribution and financing networks as well as censorship regulations.

The Indian Government's Challenges to Independent Political Documentaries

Distribution, Financing, and the Films Division

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting created the Films Division in 1948 to facilitate "the production and distribution of newsreels and short films required by the Government of India for public information, education, motivation, and for instructional and cultural purposes."[11] The Films Division's nonfiction projects typically deal with subjects such as India's cultural heritage, traditional Indian song and dance, and biographical information about prominent Indians. The expressed purpose of these films is to boost national pride. In short, the Films Division aims to produce propaganda.

Today, the Films Division is "the largest filmmaking agency in the world."[12] To date, it has produced over 8,000 documentaries, shorts, and animated films and has shot over 50 million feet of celluloid. Between 2004 and 2005, the Films Division had

8   Madhusree Dutta, "In Defense of Political Documentary," *Himal Southasian* 20 (October-November 2007).

9   Thomas Waugh, "Independent Documentary in India: A Preliminary Report," *Visual Anthropology Review* 4, no. 2 (September 1998), 13-14.

10   Pendakur, "Cinema of Resistance."

11   Kumar, *Mass Communication in India,* 157.

12   Srirupa Roy, *Beyond Belief: India and the Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism* (New York: Duke UP, 2007), 43.

nearly 15,000 theatrical releases and another 90 nontheatrical releases. In the same year, the Films Division funded, produced, and distributed 160 films, 58 of which were documentaries, newsreels and other nonfiction genres.[13] The Films Division has also extended its influence beyond cinemas. It accepts commissions for television programming from Doordarshan, the public television broadcasting company of India, and has integrated the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) into its marketing and promotional operations.[14] The annual budget of the Films Division is nearly 40 crore rupees and it maintains a staff of almost 1,500 people.[15]

The Films Division has made India one of the most prolific producers of documentary films in the world. In doing so, however, it has saturated Indian theatres with state-produced and state-approved propaganda. IPDs have struggled to find distribution outlets amongst this glut of government-produced documentaries.[16] But the Films Division does not merely block the distribution of independent documentaries through sheer numbers; it holds a legal, contractual monopoly over Indian distribution outlets as well.

In order to open a commercial cinema in India, theatre owners are required to sign a contract with the Films Division. These contracts are block-booking and blind-booking exhibition deals, in which "the Films Division under(takes) to provide all the approved films the theatre would need to fulfill its obligations for the year, and the theatre (commits) itself to show them and to pay for them," with no prior knowledge of what the films will be.[17] The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting claims that these contracts are necessary to sustain markets for documentaries and newsreels that are crucial for fostering national pride.[18] What these block-booking contracts accomplish in actuality, however, is to prevent the distribution of IPDs in Indian theatres. In fact, any film without the Films Division's financial backing remains entirely unmarketable unless "the Films Division itself (chooses) to buy it, at its price, for distribution."[19]

The Films Division does offer opportunities for independent documentaries to be screened in commercial theatres, though they are limited. Each year, the Films Division allots funding for a certain number of films to be "farmed out" to independent producers. The Films Division selects these projects from a government-issued list of approximately two dozen independent producers who are then "invited to submit competitive bids on film topics designated for outside production." The Films Division also has a budget to purchase independent films that have already been completed.[20]

It is therefore technically possible for independent filmmakers to have their work distributed in Indian cinemas, provided that they can act as suppliers for the Films Division. But with less than 10% of the Films Divisions' theatrical releases comprised of independently produced films, the vast majority of independent projects never make it into Indian theaters. For IPD filmmakers in particular, it is even more unlikely that

13   Films Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, *Annual Report 2004-05* (New Delhi: Government of India).
14   B.D. Garga, "The Indian Documentary," *Cinema in India* 2, no. 2 (April-June 1988).
15   Nithya Subramanian, "Films Division Seeks a Rescue Channel," *The Hindu Business Line*, January 22, 2002, Industry & Economy Section.
16   Garga, "The Indian Documentary."
17   Barnouw et al., *Indian Film*, 186-187.
18   Kumar, *Mass Communication in India,* 157-158.
19   Barnouw et al., *Indian Film*, 186-187.
20   Ibid, 160-162.

their work will be purchased or commissioned by the Films Division because IPDs, as a genre, typically attack the existing political and religious hegemony, messages that the Indian government is extremely unlikely to fund. Lastly, the fierce competition between independent filmmakers for a limited number of government contracts can foster animosity within the IPD community, which hinders the movement's ability to organize to better compete with the Films Division's projects.[21]

The Films Division's monopolization of distribution outlets has had the corollary effect of impairing IPD filmmakers' ability to obtain funding for their films. Even with the introduction of relatively inexpensive 16 mm cameras and digital camcorders, IPD filmmakers have struggled to raise the funds necessary to produce films that can compete for viewers with State-funded projects.

Because opportunities for distribution are so limited due to the Films Division's domination of the market, it is nearly impossible for the filmmakers to support themselves financially with proceeds from selling their work. As a result, most IPD filmmakers must fund their films through "small donations in cash and kind from friends and relatives."[22] IPD filmmakers also solicit sponsorship from NGOs and corporations that happen to have a vested interest in the subject of their films. This, however, is not typical, leaving even the most successful IPD filmmakers to fund their projects through small donations. In an interview with *The Hindu* newspaper, Patwardhan said that he has only recently been able "to survive" by selling his work, but this is only as "long as (he) continues to make low budget films." Before this, Patwardhan, like the vast majority of IPD filmmakers, financed his films with donations from friends and family.[23]

This fundraising approach can be prohibitively time consuming. For instance, filmmaker Brahmanand Singh searched for two years for a financier for his film, *A Burden of Love*, a documentary project on Alzheimer's disease in the Indian context, before an Indian pharmaceutical company agreed to sponsor the project.[24] Other IPD filmmakers have indicated that it takes between three and five years of collecting small donations from individuals to raise the funds necessary to produce their films.[25] This level of commitment can be financially and emotionally unfeasible for many IPD filmmakers, especially over the course of a career. As filmmaker Yukihisa Fujimoto joked at a panel discussion during the 2000 MIFF, "I wouldn't want to be the wife of a documentary filmmaker."[26]

Of course, most IPD filmmakers would say that spreading their message more important than monetary gain. Nevertheless, the inability of these films to make money or find wide distribution in India has had a negative impact on the number and quality of documentaries being produced. Firstly, IPD filmmakers might not have the chance to make their films if they are unable to support themselves or their families while doing it. Secondly, even if potential nongovernmental investors are only interested in spreading awareness about a particular issue and are not concerned about receiving a monetary return on their investment, the inability of many of IPDs

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21   Ibid., 189.
22   R. Krithika, "Filmmaker as Activist," *The Hindu*, May 16, 2004, Magazine Section.
23   Ibid.
24   Gowri Ramnarayan, "Limited Appeal," *The Hindu*, March 12, 2000, Entertainment Section.
25   Raqs Media Collective, ed, *Double Take: Looking at the Documentary (*New Delhi: Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in association with the Public Service Broadcasting Trust, 2000).
26   Ramnarayan, "Limited Appeal."

to reach wider audiences will discourage their sponsorship. What reason would NGOs and corporations have in investing money in a film that will not be profitable and will more than likely never reach a wide audience?

With Indian markets dominated by the Films Division, IPD filmmakers have turned to international venues for their films. Speaking at the 2004 Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF), Thomas Waugh said that international film festivals provide the "best market" for IPD films.[27] And indeed, both short subject and feature length IPDs have performed well at film festivals around the globe.

Supriyo Sen's film about his parents' return journey to their homeland in Bangladesh, *Way Back Home*, won the BBC Audience Award at the Manchester Commonwealth Film Festival as well as the Golden Conch at the Mumbai International Film Festival. Sen was also the recipient of the Berlin Today Award at the 2009 Berlin Film Festival for his short subject documentary, *Wagah*.[28] Four of Anand Patwardhan's films, *War and Peace, A Narmada Diary, Father, Son and Holy War*, and *In the Name of God,* have together won twenty-two major awards at film festivals around the globe.[29] Rakesh Sharma's *Final Solution* won seventeen awards and was an official selection at more than 80 international film festivals.[30]

Ultimately, however, most IPD filmmakers intend for their films to be viewed and appreciated by Indian audiences who have a comprehensive understanding of Indian history, culture, and society. This is suggested by these films' use of language - most IPDs are in Hindi or Urdu - as well as their narrative structures, which typically contains very little background information or context-establishing exposition for the benefit of viewers who might be unfamiliar with the subject matter. Therefore, while film festivals provide IPD filmmakers with international exposure, awards, and critical acclaim, they have done little to improve distribution of IPDs within India itself, something which is, in the end, the very purpose of many of these films.

For example, Anand Patwardhan's *Father, Son, and Holy War* won six major awards at film festivals around the globe, yet was rejected from the Films Division-run 2004 Mumbai International Film Festival.[31] Speaking about the 2006 International Film Festival of India (IFFI), Rakesh Sharma said, "Several documentaries that won international awards are totally missing from the (2006 IFFI) Indian Panorama list. These include Gaurav Jani's *Riding Solo to the Top of the World*, Amudhan's *Pee* and Atul Gupta's *Waiting*, about the missing in Kashmir. *Final Solution* (by Sharma himself) has won 20 international awards by now," and yet was still excluded from the Indian Panorama List[32]

Success at film festivals has also done little to relieve IPD filmmakers' funding woes. Festivals rarely offer significant cash prizes that the filmmakers could use to offset production costs or finance future projects. In rare circumstances, Western European and American television stations, such as Arte ZDF in Germany, the BBC in the

27   Ibid.
28   Ed Meza, "'Wagah' wins Berlin Today Award," *Variety*, February 8, 2009.
29   Anand Patwardhan, "Awards," Films of Anand Patwardhan, http://www.patwardhan.com/awards/index.htm.
30   Kalpana Sharma, "Censor Board Bans 'Final Solution,'" *The Hindu,* August 6, 2004. Entertainment Section.
31   Swati Bandi, "Films From the Margins: Women, Desire and the Documentary Film in India" (MFA diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 2008), 18-19.
32   "Censorship and Festivals Don't Go Together, Say Filmmakers," *Indo-Asian News Service*, November 22, 2006.

United Kingdom, and Home Box Office (HBO) in the United States, have purchased IPDs off of the festival circuit for distribution within their respective countries.[33] In 2007, HBO purchased Ashim Ahluwalia's feature documentary on globalization and Indian call center workers, *John and Jane*, for distribution in the United States after it appeared at the Toronto and Berlin Film Festivals.[34] This is not typical, however, and the vast majority of IPD filmmakers are left without compensation and without the audience they desire.

The Films Division's monopolization of financing sources and distribution outlets in India is so pervasive that it is difficult for films that promote messages that are not specifically endorsed by the State to find enough money to be produced or, just as importantly, find an audience when they are finished. Politically, the Films Division has essentially silenced the voices of disempowered minorities in India. Artistically, it has likely discouraged countless filmmakers from expressing their ideas through documentary. And even if a filmmaker is able to complete a documentary outside of the Films Division's system, he or she still faces perhaps the greatest challenge to having their film seen throughout India: censorship by the Central Board of Film Certification.

Censorship and the Central Board of Film Certification

Censorship is the most significant obstacle for IPDs in India today. The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), popularly known as the Censor Board, regulates film and television content standards in India. Like the Films Division, the CBFC was created in the 1950s and is a subsidiary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.[35] The Cinematograph Act of 1952 and the Cinematograph Rules of 1958 vested immense powers in the CBFC and it is presently responsible for reviewing films, assigning ratings categories to these films, and issuing "censor certificates," which all films must possess before they may be screened in Indian theatres. The CBFC has the authority to ban films outright, or refuse to issue censor certificates to certain films unless specific alterations or cuts are made.[36] Rakesh Sharma explains how censorship works in India as follows:

(1) By law, any film that has to be screened in public or sold must have clearance from the Censor Board. In India, the Censor Board is not self-regulated by the industry but run by the government. It's directly controlled by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, which has the power to cut entire sequences or scenes.[37]

(2) This level of government control over censorship standards is facilitated by two structural f eatures of the CBFC: concentration of power and

33   Mini Pant Zachariah, "Making Business Sense of Documentary Filmmaking," *Hindustan Times*, February 23, 2007, Cinema Section.
34   Indian Documentary Producers' Association, "John & Jane Cinema Release," press release, http://www.idpaindia.org/update_08/headlines_idpaupdate_08_5jun.html.
35   Sridala Swami, "Indian Documentary: Introduction,"*Pratilipi: A Bilingual Quarterly Magazine* 1, no. 4 (October 2008), http://pratilipi.in/2008/10/indian-documentary/.
36   S.V. Raman, "Cutting Edge: Senseless Censors," (paper presented at the Centre for Civil Society Liberty, Art and Culture Seminar, Kolkata, India, November 6, 2004).
37   Sarah Stähli, "Fighting Censorship in India," *Berlinale Talent Campus* 7 (2007).

secrecy.

Power in the CBFC is concentrated in the hands of a small group of politically motivated bureaucrats. A single chairman runs the CBFC with the help of between twelve and thirty-five advisors, all of which are appointed by the State. These officials serve two-year terms and are *never* held accountable to the electorate.[38] As a result, the CBFC staff is more loyal to the government officials who appoint them than they are to the Indian people. Also, the committees within the CBFC, which are directly responsible for reviewing films and issuing censor certificates, the Advisory Panels, the Examining Committees, and the Revising Committees, are comprised of a very small number of members. With the censorship standards of the entire country controlled by such a small number of people who are loyal to empowered politicians, it is therefore easy for the State to maintain its stranglehold over public discourse.

For instance, the Advisory Panel that refused to issue Patwardhan's *War and Peace* and a censor certificate without significant alterations to the film was comprised of only four members.[39] Furthermore, according to Patwardhan, an "informal conversation" after the ruling was handed down revealed that "two out of the four members (of the Advisory Panel) were functionaries of the ruling BJP," the right-wing Hindu fundamentalist party in India. [40]

When Sharma's *Final Solution,* which has a run time of over three and a half hours, was screened for the CBFC Advisory Committee, the committee reviewed the film, deliberated upon it, and issued a complete ban all within "less than three hours."[41] The Advisory Committee had clearly not watched the film in its entirety before it delivered its ruling.

The second organizational feature of the CBFC that facilitates State control of censorship standards is an institutional lack of transparency. Under the Amendment Act of 1983, "all previews of films for the purpose of certification and the reports and records related to it, will be treated as confidential."[42] This "confidentiality clause" mandates that the names of committee members that rate a particular film may not be released following the review process. Also, the "applicant or his representative (is) not allowed to be present in the preview theatre" or privy to the committee members' discussion of the film.[43]

Technically, this confidentiality clause has been challenged and overturned in court. In 1983, the Madras High Court ruled that if the CBFC refused to grant an applicant a censor certificate, the committee that issued the ruling would be required to specify the guideline that the film violated.[44] Despite this ruling, however, secrecy remains an integral part of the censorship process. For example, when the Advisory Panel ruled that Patwardhan had to make six significant cuts from *War and Peace* before the Censor Board would issue it a censor certificate, the filmmakers were "repeatedly prevented" from discussing the film with the members of the Panel. A month later,

38   K.N.T. Sastry, "Documentary in India Today," *International Documentary: the Newsletter of the International Documentary Association* (1998), 17-18.
39   Barnouw et al., *Indian Film*, 184-190.
40   Anand Patwardhan, "21 Cuts Demanded by Censor Board on 'War and Peace'," http://www.patwardhan.com/writings/press/082402.htm.
41   Sharma, "Censor Board Bans 'Final Solution."
42   Kumar, *Mass Communication in India,* 170-171.
43   Sharma, "Censor Board Bans 'Final Solution."
44   Kumar, *Mass Communication in India,* 171.

when a Revising Committee demanded that Patwardhan make an additional nineteen cuts, the filmmakers were again denied the right to discuss these demands with the committee members that had issued them.[45]

Concentration of authority and secrecy allow the empowered majority in the Indian government to control the public discourse through the CBFC's rulings. It is no surprise, therefore, that the censorship standards "do not reflect 'a lack of consensus,' but seem to be drafted with a single-minded political agenda."[46] According to journalist Shradha Sukumaran, the CBFC is first and foremost an extension of State ideology whose primary goal is to "safeguard (the State's) interests.... (and prevent) any viewpoint other than the State's (to) exist in the public discourse."[47] This paternalistic approach to content regulation has manifested itself in vague and even irrational justifications of censorship rulings. IPDs, which, as a genre, are "resistant to the political culture of the Indian state and the free-market agendas of India's corporate and modernizing elites," have particularly suffered from the State's control of censorship standards.[48]

For example, Ramesh Pimple's documentary on the 2002 riots in Gujarat, *Aakrosh*, was denied a censor certificate on the grounds that "it depicts violence… (and) the overall impact is negative as it will lead to communal hatred wherever it is screened."[49] Sharma's *Final Solution* was banned on the grounds that it:[50]

> promotes communal disharmony among Hindu and Muslim groups and presents the picture of Gujarat riots in a way that it may arouse communal feelings and clashes among Hindu Muslim groups…. (*Final Solution*) attacks the basic concept of our Republic i.e. National Integrity and Unity. Certain dialogues involve defamation of individuals or body of individuals. Entire picturisation is highly provocative and may trigger off unrest and communal violence. State security is jeopardized and public order is endangered if this film is shown.

In the summer of 2002, the Advisory Committee and the Examining Committee demanded the twenty-one cuts from *War and Peace* before the CBFC would issue a censor certificate.[51] Patwardhan's reaction to the first of the CBFC's demanded cuts, a shot of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination by Nathuram Godse, authentic footage of a documented historical event, perfectly encapsulates the irrational nature of the Censor Board's ruling:

Even for someone expecting the worst from the CBFC, this cut comes as a shock. Is it now illegal in India to state that Nathuram Godse killed Gandhi? The visuals in question (a close up of a country-made revolver being fired) have been taken from an old documentary film made by the Gandhi Film Foundation. The Censor

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45   Patwardhan, "21 Cuts Demanded."

46   Ibid.

47   Shammi Nanda, "Censorship and Indian Cinema," *Bright Lights Film Journal* 38 (November 2002).

48   Vinay Lal, "Travails of the Nation: Some Notes on Indian Documentaries," *Third Text* 19, no. 2 (March 2005), 175-85.

49   Rama Lakshmi, "Indian Filmmakers Feel Sting of Censorship," *The Washington Post*, January 17, 2004, A Section, Final Edition.

50   Sharma, "Censor Board Bans 'Final Solution."

51   Anand Patwardhan, "Censor Board of India at War with 'War and Peace'," press release. http://www.patwardhan.com/writings/press/060202.htm.

Guideline 2(xii) used to justify the cut is" visuals or words contemptuous of racial, religious or other groups are not presented;" CBFC does not specify exactly whom they wish to protect from contempt.[52]

The CBFC does not only create bureaucratic barriers to IPD distribution, it is also willing to intervene physically to enforce its rulings. At the premiere of *War and Peace* at the government-run Kolkata Film Festival in 2003, a CBFC regional officer cancelled the screening, claiming that the reel of the film had not arrived at the theatre in time. When it was revealed that a copy of the film had, in fact, arrived in time for the screening, the official made the "flimsy excuse" that the print was damaged and could not be screened. CBFC officials broke up another screening of *War and Peace* that Patwardhan was holding at a private residence in Mumbai only a few weeks later.[53]

Also in 2003, a collection of IPDs about the religious violence at Gujarat was set to be screened at a college campus in Bombay. However, the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the student wing of the BJP, filed a complaint to the CBFC that the films would cause rioting. The Bombay police intervened and confiscated the films on the grounds that they were endangering public safety. Cinematographer and author Shammi Nanda said of the confiscation of these films, "Instead of providing protection to those who want to show the film, which is their fundamental right, the police stopped the screening on the insistence of those who were party to the riots."[54]

The Censor Board's powers only continue to expand. In 2004, the CBFC extended its authority to Indian film festivals, an area that had previously been outside of its jurisdiction. The Censor Board mandated that every film that appears at the Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF) receive a censor certificate before it could be screened.[55] Notably, foreign entrants to the festival are not required to meet the same standards. It is further significant that the CBFC has targeted this festival specifically, as the MIFF is a festival for only documentary, short and animated films. Filmmaker Bishakha Datta believes that this targeted regulation indicates a "clampdown only on the (Indian) documentaries. Otherwise, why would they bother with the MIFF?"[56]

To avoid controversy with the CBFC, Indian film festivals have begun to anticipate government censorship by rejecting controversial IPDs. The Mumbai International Film Festival, for instance, "is notorious for consistently rejecting films that are anti-establishment and actively critical of state policies."[57] Also, several IPDs, including Sharma's *Final Solution*, were turned down from the 2004 Bombay Film Festival before cuts of the films were even reviewed by the censors.[58] Speaking on the extension of the CBFC's jurisdiction to film festivals, Sharma said, "By convention, (Indian) film festivals are exempted from censor certificates. Delegates to these festivals are usually film professionals and students. You are showcasing your work within the fraternity; for us, the last surviving space is lost."[59] The Censor Board therefore

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52   Ibid. Patwardhan's website features the director's specific reactions to each one of the Censor Board's demanded cuts. His discussion is too detailed to be included here. His notes, however, are a useful reference for further reading.
53   Shradha Sukumaran, "Making the Cuts - On Film Censorship in India," *Documentary Box* 22 (October 2003).
54   Nanda, "Censorship and Indian Cinema."
55   Swami, "Indian Documentary: Introduction."
56   Sukumaran, "Making the Cuts."
57   Bandi, "Films From the Margins," 18-19.
58   Lakshmi, "Indian Filmmakers Feel Sting of Censorship."
59   Sukumaran, "Making the Cuts."

continues to make it difficult for IPDs to find audiences in India.

While the CBCF is a powerful organization, its rulings are not absolute. Several IPD filmmakers have waged successful campaigns to have bans or edits of their films lifted. After a lengthy legal battle, the Supreme Court of India repealed the Censor Board's ban of *Final Solution* and the film premiered on Indian television in October 2004. Anand Patwardhan's *Father, Son and Holy War* and *War and Peace*, were also broadcast for the first time on Indian television in 2006 under court order.[60]

Though Sharma and Patwardhan have succeeded in having the bans on their films lifted, their victories are Pyrrhic ones. The legal process to have a ban overturned can take many years. Waging these battles requires an investment of time and money that is unfeasible for many IPD filmmakers. Furthermore, because the effectiveness of IPDs often depends on the timeliness of their release, a several year delay in a film's release can diffuse its message.

If the CBFC only provided a ratings system, like the MPAA in the United State or the CBA in Australia, and did not have the power to ban, censor, or otherwise affect public access to IPDs, then the political maneuverings of the CBFC would have a minimal impact on IPD viewership. As it currently operates, however, the CBFC concentrates too much power in the hands of a small group of politically motivated bureaucrats and, as a result, many documentaries with controversial political or artistic content have had their messages cut short or, in some cases, not heard at all.

The ultimate arrogance of the CBFC is that it presumes that a handful of bureaucrats may legitimately determine what content is and is not suitable for a nation of 1.15 billion people to see. This attitude is deeply engrained in the Indian government. Writing on the role of the Censor Board in Indian culture, the Supreme Court of India wrote,

Film censorship becomes necessary because a film motivates thought and action and assures a high degree of attention and retention as compared to the printed word. The combination of act and speech, sight and sound in semi darkness of the theatre with elimination of all distracting ideas will have a strong impact on the minds of the viewers and can affect emotions. Therefore, it has as much potential for evil as it has for good and has an equal potential to instill or cultivate violent or good behavior. It cannot be equated with other modes of communication. Censorship by prior restraint is, therefore, not only desirable but also necessary.[61]

This paternalistic control of public discourse in India has manifested itself in ambiguous, arbitrary and unfair censoring of films, a disproportionate number of which are enacted upon IPDs whose only crime is promoting ideas that are not specifically endorsed by the Indian government. Indeed, censorship remains the most significant obstacle for IPDs reaching wider audiences.

Concluding Remarks: Looking Forward

A great irony of the IPD movement is that its films essentially find themselves in the same position as many of their subjects – oppressed by a government whose

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60   Simantini Dhuru, Gaurav Jani, and Anand Patwardhan, "Filmmakers Win Legal Battle Against Censor Requirement at National Film Awards," press release, http://www.patwardhan.com/Censorship/No%20More%20Censorship%20at%20National%20Film%20Awards.htm.

61   Kumar, *Mass Communication in India,* 170.

Constitution vows to uphold "liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship."[62] The government's domination of the Indian film industry with organizations like the Films Division and the CBFC has made funding for IPDs scarce, limited their opportunities for distribution in Indian cinemas, and silenced their messages through politically motivated censorship. And yet, in the face of these obstacles, several developments suggest that IPDs will expand their audiences within India in the not-so-distant future.

For instance, new sources of funding allow IPD filmmakers to make more films "than ever before." Media collectives such as Media Storm in Delhi and the Janamadyam Cieds Collective in Bombay have begun funding and producing documentaries independently of the Films Division.[63] The past decade has witnessed an explosion of nongovernmental organizations and not-for-profit groups in India and around the world. Many of these organizations are interested in spreading awareness about various forms of oppression and injustice, and IPDs are an attractive target for their sponsorship because of the filmmakers' passion for their subjects. According to Iikka Vehkalahti, an executive producer for Steps India, a Delhi-based non-profit organization supporting documentary films, "In Europe today, most documentaries are boring because filmmakers are living in very 'safe and stable environment'. In India and China, where tremendous changes are happening, many interesting stories are emerging. Because people have to work in tight budgets, they are passionate about their work."[64]

IPD filmmakers will also continue to benefit from the declining cost of high-quality digital film equipment and editing software. Prices of digital film equipment in India have fallen between 10% and 30% between 2002 and 2006.[65] Falling prices of filmmaking equipment has been produced primarily by globalization, a topic that is, somewhat ironically, a frequent target of IPD films. Japanese and American electronics companies such as Sony, JVC and Canon have engaged in a "price war" over Indian markets in an attempt to profit from the nation's rapidly expanding middle class. When coupled with the new sources of funding from NGOs and nonprofits, these declining costs promise to boost the number of IPDs being produced, which could allow IPDs to better compete, at least numerically, with the Films Division's projects.

The IPD movement has developed aesthetically as well. New modes of cinematic representation in several recent IPDs promise to make films more engaging as well as entertaining for audiences.[66] For example, in 2004's *Way Back Home*, director Supriyo Sen enhances the audience's experience of the film's thematic content with stylistic flourishes such framing, collision montage, and nondiegetic sound. Ashim Ahluwalia shot his film, *John and Jane*, on high quality 35 mm film and uses smooth, tracking Steadicam and dolly shots throughout the film; it looks every bit the part of a high quality fiction film. The ability of a film to entertain as well as inform may seem like a minor point, but it should not be discounted. A film's entertainment value is crucial for attracting audiences, regardless of its message. If these new aesthetics continue to spread throughout the IPD movement, IPDs could begin to attract viewers who may have otherwise never seen the film.

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62   The Constitution of India, preamble.
63   Pendakur, "Cinema of Resistance."
64   Zachariah, "Making Business Sense of Documentary Filmmaking."
65   Jayasankar et al., "Images of the "Other" in India."
66   Pendakur, "Cinema of Resistance."

While the IPD movement still faces many challenges from the Indian government, it nevertheless seems inevitable that IPDs will find wider distribution in India in the not-so-distant future. What remains to be determined, but is ultimately beyond of the scope of the discussion here, is whether or not IPDs will be able to preserve their messages and aesthetics as the genre evolves. While developments such as new sources of funding, decreasing production costs, and formalist aesthetics might allow IPDs to compete more effectively with the Films Division's projects for viewership, they could also threaten their very identity as a genre. For instance, IPD filmmakers may feel a need to distort their messages to obtain funding from NGOs and non-profits that want to promote specific agendas that might differ from those of the filmmakers. Also, taking advantage of the effects of globalization on equipment prices or adopting aesthetic flourishes that could be associated with Western filmmaking techniques in order to "entertain" audiences could be viewed as betrayals of the uniquely Indian voice of the IPD movement. Ultimately, the future of IPDs in India remains uncertain. In the meantime, these filmmakers continue to struggle to have their messages heard by the Indian people.