

## **British Intervention in a Princely State: The Case of Jammu and Kashmir in the Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Centuries\***

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For presentation at the 18<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies

Panel: History of the Indian Princely States

Lund, Sweden, 6-9 July, 2004

### **Abstract**

This paper attempts to draw out the intricacies of the relationship between the British Residency and the ruling house of the Dogras in the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. It highlights the impact of the British intervention in Kashmir from the perspective of its political effect on the ruling house as well as its more general impact on the political economy of the Kashmir Valley, which in turn created the context in which Kashmiri Muslims launched educational and other political reform movements. It argues that British mediation in the processes of state-led land and educational reform brought the princely state and Kashmiris into closer contact with the ideologies and movements prevalent in British India at the turn of the twentieth century.

### **Introduction**

The relationship between the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir and the colonial state was a complex and evolving one in the last few decades of the nineteenth and the first few decades of the twentieth century. This paper highlights some of the main dimensions of this relationship in an attempt to point out that British intervention in Jammu and Kashmir not only shaped the ruling princely house of the Dogras, but its impact on the political economy of the Kashmir Valley led to the redefinition of the relationship between the Dogra state and the majority community of Kashmiri Muslims. Quite as significantly, the articulation of a variety of Kashmiri Muslim identities at the turn of the twentieth century occurred in the context of the establishment of the British Residency in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Kashmir Valley came under Dogra rule (1846-1947) with the ominous terms of the treaty of Amritsar signed between Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu and the British in 1846, whereby the British agreed to “transfer and make over for ever in independent possession to Maharaja Gulab Singh and the heirs male of his body all the hilly and mountainous country with its dependencies situated to the eastward of the River Ravi including the Chamba and excluding Lahul, being part of the territories ceded to the British Government by the Lahore State...”<sup>1</sup> In return for this transfer, Gulab Singh had to pay the British seventy-five lakhs of rupees.

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\* This paper is based on my book, Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003; London: Hurst & Co., 2004; and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>1</sup> C.U. Aitchison, A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighboring Countries (revised and continued up to 1929), vol. XII: Jammu & Kashmir, Sikkim, Assam & Burma

The Dogras ushered in a new stage in Kashmiri history for a number of reasons. Although recognizing its strategic and economic importance to their empires, the earlier rulers of Kashmir had ruled the region through proxy while remaining engaged with the concerns of their larger empires. For the Dogras, however, Kashmir itself was the empire; as a result, the story of Kashmir under the Dogras is intrinsically imbricated with the story of the fashioning of the Dogra dynasty itself. The fashioning of the Dogra dynasty, in its turn, was thoroughly intertwined with the project of British colonialism in mid-nineteenth century India. Doubtful about their decision to hand over Kashmir, which occupied a strategically critical position, to a minor Hindu Raja from Jammu, who also happened to be ruling a Muslim-majority population, subsequent British policy regarding Kashmir was geared towards endowing Gulab Singh's dynasty with ideals of legitimate rule.

While the Dogras would be subject to constant scrutiny, Kashmiris became the subjects of a twice-removed situation of colonial rule, with dual loyalties and no clear means for seeking redressal for their grievances. Although subjects of the greater British-Indian Empire, Kashmiris formulated their identities under the rubric of the apparatus of legitimacy employed by the Dogra State, which continually attempted to balance its definition in terms of the idioms and instruments of Hinduism and the ideal of non-interference with religions so dear to the British.

It is undeniable that even the early Dogra rulers brought Kashmir into closer contact with British India. They displayed the princely state's fealty to the British in overt ways, with the second Dogra ruler, Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1857-1885), providing troops to quell the revolt of 1857 in British India and signing the Commercial Treaty of 1870 with the British, which provided for the import of goods into the state through British India free of customs duties.<sup>2</sup> The extent to which the Dogra rulers framed their right to govern the state through their association with the British Empire and the significant position accorded to the Kashmir Valley within the state's framework is clear from the commissioning of a shawl by Maharaja Ranbir Singh for presentation to the Prince of Wales at the time of his visit to the state in 1876.

This masterpiece of Kashmiri shawl manufacture, which legend has it was twenty-odd years in the making, is embroidered with an intricate street map of the city of Srinagar that includes the river Jhelum, rivulets, forts, gardens, roads, localities, places of worship, bridges and even prominent buildings, which are labeled in the Persian script.<sup>3</sup> More significantly, as its label indicates, Maharaja Ranbir Singh considered the city of Srinagar as the center of his kingdom, which to him was represented by the Kashmir Valley.<sup>4</sup> By presenting it to the Prince of Wales, moreover, he was clearly recognizing the suzerainty of the British Crown, while at the same time laying claim to the much-coveted Valley as the domain of the Dogra dynasty. Despite these moves, however, the

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(Calcutta: Government of India Central Publications Branch, 1929; repr., Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1983), 21.

<sup>2</sup> Sufi, G.M.D. *Kashir: Being a History of Kashmir From Earliest Times to Our Own*, vol. II (New Delhi: Light and Life Publishers, 1979), 794-796.

<sup>3</sup> "Pashmina Shawl with Map of Srinagar," Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, Kashmir.

<sup>4</sup> The embroidered inscription behind the shawl reads, "The map of Kashmir, produced at the orders of His Highness the Maharaja ..."

British were suspicious of the Dogras, particularly as their interest in the affairs of Central Asia increased in the 1870s.<sup>5</sup>

Although the more direct British intervention in the political administration of the state began in 1885, which led to the establishment of the British Residency and State Council to run the affairs of Jammu and Kashmir in 1889, the movement by the British to curtail Dogra authority had been long underway. The British, while conceding to the first Dogra Maharaja's request to not have a British resident placed in his court, had employed the services of a local Kashmiri, Mirza Saifuddin, to spy on the policies of his administration and the general condition of the state. Saifuddin left behind a scathing account in twelve volumes describing in minute detail the misrule of the first Dogra Maharaja. The British viewed Maharaja Ranbir Singh with a mixture of admiration and distrust, particularly when the Afghan and later Russian threat on the northwestern border began to occupy the British with increasing urgency in the late 1870s. A combination of events, including a discussion in the British and British-Indian press of the brutalities carried out by the Maharaja during the famine of 1877, such as the deliberate drowning of a boatload of famine-stricken Kashmiri peasants in the Jhelum, and the Afghan Amir's declaration in 1880 claiming Chitral as part of Afghan territory, made the British move in on the Kashmiri Darbar.<sup>6</sup>

In 1884, Lord Ripon came to the conclusion that there was no alternative but to appoint a permanent Resident in Kashmir. The British presented this direct intervention in the affairs of a princely state not merely as a strategic move to protect the British empire in India, but to alleviate the misery of Kashmiris by reforming the administration.<sup>7</sup> Soon after Pratap Singh acceded to the throne in 1885, and despite his declaration in his accession speech that he would "adopt such measures only as are calculated to secure to my subjects their greatest good, and the fullest enjoyment of their rights and privileges,"<sup>8</sup> he was informed that a British resident would be placed at the Kashmir Darbar. In his speech at Maharaja Pratap Singh's *Dastarbandi* (coronation) in Sept. 1885, Oliver St. John, the Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, stated, "The State of Jammu and Kashmir has fallen behind majority of States of India in progress necessary for the welfare of the people."<sup>9</sup> By 1888, Pratap Singh was de facto deposed and the control of the administration passed into the hands of the British Residency.

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<sup>5</sup> As early as August 1847, Col. Henry Montgomery Lawrence and George Taylor had written to Gulab Singh complaining about the distress of the Kashmiris as a result of the high prices of shali (unhusked rice) and high-handedness of the officials of the Darbar; dispatch of forces by the Maharaja to Gilgit; occurrence of four cases of Sati in the state; and Dharmarth realizations made by the Darbar from the Kashmiris, suggesting the deputation of a British Resident in the state. Maharaja Gulab Singh, while accepting their criticisms, had staunchly refused to accept the establishment of a British Residency in Kashmir. British intervention in Kashmir would become more insistent during the reign of Ranbir Singh. See P.N.K. Bamzai, A History of Kashmir, Political, Social and Cultural From the Earliest Times to the Present Day (New Delhi: Metropolitan Book Company, 1973), 661-662.

<sup>6</sup> N.N. Raina, Kashmir Politics and Imperialist Manoeuvres, 1846-1980 (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1988), 35-37.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>8</sup> "The Maharaja's speech to the Darbar," Sept. 25, 1885, quoted in The Civil & Military Gazette, Sept. 30, 1885. See D.C. Sharma, Documentation on Kashmir: Documentation of English Language Newspapers of India (Jammu: Jay Kay Book House, 1985), 22.

<sup>9</sup> State Department Records, 1885/R-2, Jammu State Archives, 5.

In March 1889 the Maharaja was made to sign an edict of resignation that relieved him of all part in the administration, which was placed, subject to the control of the Resident, in the hands of a State Council, under the presidency of Dewan Lachhman Das, and a year later, Raja Amar Singh. The Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, accepted the edict with these words, “Notwithstanding the ample resources of your state, your treasury was empty; corruption and disorder prevailed in every department and every office; Your Highness was still surrounded by low and unworthy favorites, and the continued misgovernment of your state was becoming, every day, a more serious source of anxiety.”<sup>10</sup> Ostensibly, the British had entered Kashmir to cleanse its administration and alleviate the condition of its people.

The State Council almost immediately assumed all powers of governance and the Maharaja was reduced to giving his approval to all measures enacted by the Council. Furthermore, the Council was composed entirely of Indians imported from British India for the purpose, and followed a policy of recruiting Dogras and other Punjabi Hindus to man all branches of the administration. The Government of India was aware of the need to prevent Punjabis from taking over the Kashmiri administration,<sup>11</sup> but the extent to which it was in favor of employing Kashmiris in their stead is debatable. The Dogra Darbar cited several reasons for the recruitment of outsiders instead of native Kashmiris to the service, including the lack of modern education and their incompetence in the recently instituted language of administration, Urdu.<sup>12</sup>

### **Impact of the Colonial Intervention I: The Land Settlement of the Kashmir Valley**

Soon after its establishment, the Residency persuaded the Maharaja to accept a land settlement of the Valley of Kashmir. In 1887, A. Wingate was appointed to carry out this much-needed task. It is here that the significance of British perception of the economic structures of Kashmir becomes apparent. Following from the tradition of the colonial government in British India throughout the nineteenth century, Wingate made a strong argument in favor of granting occupancy rights to Kashmiri peasants. According to him, the land revenue system in place in the Valley had left the coffers of the state empty because of the existence of the class of officials between the state and the peasantry. Additionally, it had created an itinerant peasantry with no interest in cultivating the land. Therefore, to replenish revenue, and to convert a discontented and thriftless peasantry into a contented, thriving community, peasants had to be given interest in the land they cultivated. To achieve this, Wingate argued, it was necessary to fix the state demand at a fair sum for a term of years and a system of accounts established which would confine the powers of the tehsildars to revenue collection.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Sufi, *Kashir*, 809.

<sup>11</sup> The Secretary of State for India wrote to the Lieutenant Governor of the North-West province: “If Nisbet (British Resident in Kashmir), asks you for native officials for Kashmir, I hope you will kindly help him get good men. It is very important to start with reorganisation fairly and to avoid a Punjabi ring.” See Foreign Department/Secret/726/E, April 1889, Calcutta Records, National Archives of India, 4.

<sup>12</sup> One of the first steps taken by the State Council after its institution in 1889 was to replace Persian with Urdu as the language of administration, the language being imported alongside numerous administrative servants from neighboring British Punjab.

<sup>13</sup> A. Wingate, *Preliminary Report of Settlement Operations in Kashmir and Jammu* (Lahore: W. Ball&Co., 1888), 34.

More importantly, Wingate made this system contingent on conferring on the cultivators the possession of the land they tilled. In a scathing criticism of the Darbar's policies and of middlemen-bureaucrats, Wingate stated:

The Darbar claims to be proprietor of the land. The officials seek to persuade the Darbar that this position implies that the cultivators must have no rights; to maintain this theory, when the cultivators have been dispossessed their complaints must be ignored; the rights of which the Darbar has thus deprived the cultivators and which the Darbar supposes it has reserved to itself, are immediately appropriated by the officials... The Darbar appears to be under the impression that it can govern much as a zamindar manages a private estate by farming with tenants-at-will. Any such delusion ought to be dissipated by the facts disclosed in this report and the Darbar should be convinced that the only way it can preserve its own rights is by entrusting them under proper restrictions to the cultivators.<sup>14</sup>

Wingate suggested that the settlement rules declare the state as ultimate proprietor, and at the same time confer the right of occupancy on all persons entered as occupants at the time of settlement jamabandi (assessment).<sup>15</sup> It is essential to note that Wingate's arguments were designed to bolster the authority of the state through the foundation of a peasantry determined to defend their lands against encroachments, and willing to pay land revenue.

In the tradition of Utilitarians and other free-market advocates, Wingate clearly disagreed with the collection of revenue in kind, which allowed for the state to fix prices of grain and act as the sole grain trader in the Valley. According to him, the price of shali had to rise and fall with the outturn of the harvest, because as soon as it got scarce, huge profits were made by revenue officials in charge of collection. The mendicancy of the peasantry was a symptom of this artificial system historically in place in the Valley. However, although he proposed in his settlement rules for the Valley that the settlement should be made in cash, Wingate allowed for the Darbar "upon report by the Settlement Officer to accept whole or part of the assessment in shali under defined conditions..."<sup>16</sup>

Walter Lawrence, who took over from Wingate as Settlement Commissioner in 1890, followed the principles introduced by his predecessor in the land settlement of the Valley. According to the Lawrence Settlement, as it came to be known, permanent hereditary occupancy rights were bestowed on every person who, at the time of assessment or at the time when the distribution of assessments was effected, agreed to pay the assessment fixed on the fields entered in his or her name in the settlement papers. And so long as the assessment was paid, the occupant could not be ejected. However, the right to occupancy was not alienable by sale or mortgage.<sup>17</sup> In the tradition of the Utilitarians, Lawrence was ambivalent towards the development of rural capitalism in the subcontinent, and continued to view the state as the provider of social overhead capital

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>16</sup> A. Wingate, *Proposed Settlement Rules for Kashmir* (Lahore: W. Ball & Co., 1889), 18.

<sup>17</sup> Walter R. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir* (London: H. Frowde, 1895; repr. Jammu: Kashmir Kitab Ghar, 1996), 429-430.

and a redistributor of resources.<sup>18</sup> He argued at length that giving cultivators the right to alienate their land would create a class of middlemen who would procure land for themselves and rich urban individuals.

The settlement only entered cultivated land as in the occupancy of *assamis* (tenants possessing permanent hereditary occupancy rights), while waste and fallow lands were recorded as *Khalisa*, or state land. Out of this waste-land, however, 10 % was to be left for collective village usage, such as grazing. Furthermore, the revenue assessment was fixed for a period of ten years, to be paid partly in cash and partly in kind, depending on the produce of the village. The sundry taxes that the state collected from the peasantry on walnut trees, forests and livestock were included in the land revenue, except the pony and sheep taxes. In the case of a dispute, the case was to be recorded and decided by the settlement officer.<sup>19</sup>

Lawrence's decision to take revenue partly in kind and partly in cash was a result of the strong opposition of the administration to the idea of a cash settlement for the Kashmir Valley. There were several complex reasons behind the Darbar's and the revenue officials' opposition to a settlement in cash. The most obvious was that a cash settlement would hinder revenue officials from making huge amounts of profits from a sale of grain, which they would have collected in kind from the peasantry. The more significant reason for the Darbar's opposition was the issue of supply of grain to the city of Srinagar, which could not be achieved unless a significant amount of the revenue was realized in the form of shali from the peasantry. Although the state was losing a significant amount of revenue by accepting a cash and kind settlement,<sup>20</sup> the urban elite was adamant that the government continue to supply cheap grain to the city.<sup>21</sup>

This was particularly important with the decline of the shawl trade and the descent of the weaving class into penury. Hajji Mukhtar Shah, a wealthy shawl trader, had appealed to Wingate to exercise caution in introducing a cash settlement because, "The shawl trade is gone and all the artizans (sic.) are ruined. If the cultivators are all at once allowed to sell at any price they please, the artizan (sic.) classes will have to buy dear and will be still further ruined."<sup>22</sup> Taking into account this opposition to a cash settlement and the effects of a sudden change to collection in cash in 1891 by the Governor of Kashmir, which brought about a scarcity of grain in the city, Lawrence gave each village the option to decide the amount to be paid in cash and in kind, with the power of commuting the amount in kind agreed upon by cash payments.<sup>23</sup>

Additionally, Lawrence attempted to reform the system of collection, storage and sale of state grain. He fixed the state demand in kind for the first year; unfortunately, this

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<sup>18</sup> See B.R. Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India, 1860-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 44-46, for Utilitarian views on rural capitalism and cultivators' rights.

<sup>19</sup> Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 426-437.

<sup>20</sup> In 1871, the value of the revenue taken in kind was Rs. 16,93,077 and that in cash was only Rs.9,62,057. However, the state derived revenues of Rs. 6,00,000 from taxation on shawls, an amount that was practically wiped out in the next decade with the decline of the shawl trade. Therefore, the state had a strong financial stake in a cash settlement. See Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 440.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 438-441.

<sup>22</sup> Wingate, *Report*, 26.

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 440-441.

almost immediately led to grain-shortages in Srinagar, which continued into the next century, culminating in a grain-crisis in 1921. Provided with greater market opportunities, petty traders exacerbated grain shortages by grain hoarding and price-hikes. Lawrence himself had persuaded private traders at various staging-places where grain was received in the city to undertake the supply of rice and other provisions to the city population.<sup>24</sup> This merely led to the collusion of grain traders and revenue officials, many of whom still acted as grain traders, to continue to control the grain trade in the Valley.

The extent to which the land settlement was ultimately successful in curbing the powers of the class of revenue officials is debatable. Undoubtedly, the land settlement regarded them as mere *assamis* who were required to pay their share of revenue. However, Lawrence and later settlement officials still depended on revenue officials to carry out the actual settlement, which required an elaborate machinery that the colonial state was not willing to spare for Kashmir; thus precedent, known only to revenue officials, became the basis for settlement policy. More significantly still, revenue officials now became holders of state bureaucratic positions, such as collector and manager of revenue demand, rather than drawing their position from village custom. Since this meant that they could just as easily be dismissed if not living up to the expectations of their official positions, the administrators now redoubled their efforts to collect the revenue on which their jobs depended.

As a result, in spite of being converted into a low-level salaried bureaucrat in the employ of the state, the revenue administrator continued to exercise a fair amount of power in his dealings with the village population. Furthermore, since all land was subject to the settlement, the officials concocted ways to prove their proprietary titles on land; many were even successful in entering themselves in revenue records as proprietors of lands they had been specially assigned by the Maharaja in the past few decades, thus contributing to the growing class of urban landholders. It is clear, then, that although revenue officials were initially reluctant to assist in the land settlement of the Valley, most were able to maneuver within the new system and find new power niches in the radically changed context.

This is not to suggest that the land settlement did not disrupt Kashmiri rural society. The disruption was perhaps most visible in the situation of various jagirdars, the older generation of landholders, a class that had been undergoing transformation throughout the pre-settlement period. Colonial officials in British India regarded jagir lands as most detrimental to the interests of the agriculturists, particularly when farmed out to revenue contractors, which according to them, led to an internal derangement of village tenures.<sup>25</sup> Jagirdars in Kashmir has also assigned portions of their lands to revenue farmers.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, the state had lost control over the parceling out of jagir

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 442-443.

<sup>25</sup> Colonial officials made similar arguments against jagirs and muafis (revenue-free lands) in British India. See Eric Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 72-75.

<sup>26</sup> Although the British presented this as a recent phenomenon that was ruining jagir lands, there are several instances of jagirdars farming their lands out to revenue contractors during the Mughal period. In fact, in 1694, it was reported to the Mughal emperor that some of his mansabdars, who had jagirs in Kashmir, were

lands, and over the ways in which they were inherited. This had led to the division of jagir lands among the numerous heirs of a certain jagirdar without reference to any rule. According to the settlement officials, thus, jagirs had been fragmented into several small holdings run by jagirdars who had no influence or respect. As H.L Rivett, the settlement officer in charge of assessing jagir villages in the Kashmir Valley, commented in his report:

It was perhaps not the original intention of the State that jagir grants should be divided up among a number of heirs, but rather that they should devolve in entirety to one heir, the Government of course retaining the power to regulate the succession to these grants... Jagirdars at present exist absolutely devoid of merit or influence... This has resulted in the jagirs being frittered away among several heirs, and in many of the grantees now being in such a miserable state of the impecuniosity as to render them contemptible in the eyes of the people.<sup>27</sup>

The assessment of jagir lands in 1896-97, under the supervision of Capt. J.L. Kaye, Settlement Commissioner, set about to repair the flaws that had beset the system of jagirdari.<sup>28</sup> Although the State Council had ordered the extension of settlement operations to jagir holdings in December 1894 and the institution of a cash assessment in such lands, it was not until 1896-97 that the rules governing jagir lands were laid down on paper. Ultimately, this resulted in the curtailment of the powers of the jagirdars and the revenue farmers in whose hands their estates had fallen. The Commissioner's report quite clearly suggested the active interference of the state in jagir holdings, along with specifying the status of jagirdars and the tenants on these holdings. *Sanads*, or land deeds were now to be prepared for each jagir, which specified its precise area and value, the term for which, and the conditions under which the grant had been made. Jagirdars, it was stated, were no more than mere assignees of state revenue, and the tenants in jagir tracts were as much tenants of the Darbar and entitled to protection as any of its other subjects.<sup>29</sup>

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farming them on to local men. Although the Mughal court disapproved of this practice, there was nothing to prevent a jagirdar from sub-assigning part of his jagir to any of his officials or troopers. See Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963), 328-329.

<sup>27</sup> H.L. Rivett, *Assessment Report on the Minor Jagir Villages situated in the Valley of Kashmir, 1896-1897* (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1897), 5.

<sup>28</sup> An almost parallel case of jagir settlement in British-India can be found in Sind, where Charles Napier undertook to resume as much as possible of the revenue alienated from the government by various means, including demands for one-fourth of the jagirdars' share of the produce. He attached the greatest importance to releasing all wasteland from the grip of jagirdars, with a view to opening up vast areas of virgin land for the enterprising peasant. Napier's main concern was to secure the loyalty of the Baloch chieftans for the British regime by giving them hereditary titles. Similar concerns propelled the jagir settlement in Jammu and Kashmir; however, as noted in the following discussion, the presence of the Dogra state as an intermediary between the jagirdars and the colonial state led to a somewhat different outcome in the state. See Hamida Khuhro, *The Making of Modern Sindh: British Policy and Social Change in the Nineteenth Century* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999, 1<sup>st</sup> pub. Karachi 1978), especially chapter two, for an insightful discussion of the jagir settlement in Sind.

<sup>29</sup> J.L. Kaye, *Note on the Assessment Report on the Minor Jagir Villages situated in the Valley of Kashmir* (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1897), 14-17.

Jagirdars, on the other hand, were not given occupancy or proprietary rights to their estates. The report argued that the jagirdar, to whom the revenue derived from certain lands had been assigned by the Darbar, could not possibly be a tenant: “The jagirdar stands in place of the Darbar as the collector or assignee of this revenue only... Under the grant he has absolutely no connection with the land, only with the revenue derived from it.”<sup>30</sup> Just as the Darbar could not be its own tenant in *Khalisa* (state owned) villages, according to Kaye, so too jagirdars could not claim occupancy rights that belonged to peasants. Moreover, Kaye argued that jagirdars had no right to collect cesses or to make the villagers pay for items of expenditure which were purely personal, thus cutting short the formidable list of taxes extracted by jagirdars from their peasants.<sup>31</sup> In the same vein, the report also denied jagirdars any right to the wastelands that they had included with their original grants over the years.

In short, the 1896-97 assessment of jagirs brought all jagir lands in line with the land settlement in the rest of the Valley. However, the extent of the impact on jagirs was not quite as far-reaching as the colonial records made it out to be; in any case, the impact was not the one intended by colonial authorities. The jagir settlement and the bureaucratization of the Dogra state exacerbated a process that had been in motion since the mid-nineteenth century, namely, the changing composition of the jagirdar class itself. The jagirdars who had held land in the Valley for centuries were the ones who lost portions of their territory to the state as a result of the settlement. The Punjabi and Dogra administrators for the Dogra rulers, instead, replaced them as the new class of jagirdars, who had been assigned jagirs by the state to ensure their loyalty, thereby bolstering its authority and legitimacy.

Maharaja Pratap Singh’s statement asserting the control of the ruling chief in deciding the terms and conditions of jagirs and defending the rights of the jagirdars, illustrates the relationship between jagirdari and state service:

The jagirdars form the gentry and nobility of the country and have rendered loyal services to the State—they cannot be overlooked on any account. They should be preferred where there are vacancies. They are essential for maintenance of the State’s prestige and their rights should continue as before. The title of Maharaja implies that there are Rajas under him and these jagirdars were meant for serving this purpose.<sup>32</sup>

The rest of his response accepted the regulation of the jagir lands under the principles of the land settlement of the Kashmir Valley, since he had very little choice in the matter.

The significance of state intervention in jagir lands under the residency administration lies in the fact that it threatened the financial and social bases of the Kashmiri landed elite for the first time, replacing them with a non-Kashmiri, Hindu landholding class. Colonial records, such as the 1901 census, recorded that many landed

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Private Records of His Highness, 1898/13, Jammu State Archives. Over the course of his rule, Maharaja Pratap Singh clashed a few times with the British Resident over the question of terms and conditions of jagirs and muafis, his intervention being almost always in favor of jagirdars.

families of note had lost wealth as a result of the better administration, which had led to a loss of their power and influence, “birth alone, nowadays, being no qualification for employment in the civil service of the State.”<sup>33</sup> It was this class, notable within it the Naqshbandis, that would take on the educational and moral reform of the Kashmiri Muslim community with alacrity in the early twentieth century.

The colonial assessment of the land settlement’s impact on Kashmir’s peasants was similarly rosy. According to these documents, it would appear that within a few years of the settlement, there had emerged in Kashmir a stable, revenue-paying peasantry:

The agriculturists, who used to wander from one village to another in quest of the fair treatment and security which they never found, are now settled down on their lands and permanently attached to their ancestral villages. The revenue is often paid up before the date on which it falls due... Every assami knows his revenue liabilities in cash and kind, and he quickly and successfully resists any attempt to extort more than the amount entered in his revenue-book... The annual dread that sufficient food-grain would not be left for the support of himself and his family has ceased, and the agricultural classes of Kashmir are, I believe, at the present time as well off in the matter of food and clothing as any agriculturists in the world.<sup>34</sup>

The 1901 census noted that cultivators were better off than before and enjoyed peace and prosperity as a result of the settlement and considerable areas had been converted into flourishing fields during the last decade. Not only was the peasant not at the mercy of the revenue officials, but he was now in a position to sell his surplus grain to urban grain traders, thus entering the sphere of legitimate and lucrative trade.<sup>35</sup> More and more wastelands were cultivated, “fields fenced, orchards planted, vegetable gardens stocked and mills constructed.”<sup>36</sup> Moreover, with the increase in wealth, the peasants were also able to make larger purchases.<sup>37</sup> The focus on the peasant’s increasing prosperity by colonial administrators was quite obviously an exaggeration. However, it is important to note that the land settlement did lead to the creation of a class of settled peasants, a class that would become an increasingly important focus of the emergent political discourse in the Kashmir Valley at the turn of the twentieth century.

The negative impact of the land settlement on the peasantry and urban poor is, however, worth discussing. The land revenue demand was not significantly reduced under the land settlement, which meant that those in charge of collecting and managing it continued to exercise a fair amount of power over the peasantry. Even if the peasantry had been released from the grip of revenue officials, as the colonial officials claimed, payment of revenue in cash meant that it was now connected to the larger economic system, and affected by its downturns and upswings. Moreover, by converting the

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<sup>33</sup> Khan Bahadur Munshi Ghulam Ahmed Khan, Census of India, 1901, Vol. XXIII, Kashmir, Part I, Report (Lahore: Civil and Military Gazette Press, 1902), 9.

<sup>34</sup> Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, 450-51.

<sup>35</sup> Khan, Census of India, 1901, Vol. XXIII, Kashmir, Part I, Report, 10.

<sup>36</sup> Old English Records 34/1891, Jammu State Archives.

<sup>37</sup> The Imperial Gazetteer of India Vol. XV Karachi to Kotayam (Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1908; repr., New Delhi: Today and Tomorrow’s Printers, 1993), 132.

hereditary right to occupancy into a juridical one sanctioned by the state, the peasant became a tenant of the state, liable to being ejected from his land and losing his occupancy right simply because he was unable to pay the land revenue in full. Additionally, the Settlement entrenched the *chakdars* (holders of fallow lands assigned to them by the state to encourage cultivation) on their illegally procured lands by recognizing their rights to occupancy in such lands, helping to bolster the new Dogra and Punjabi landed class imported into the Valley by the state. As for the artisans, their access to cheap grain was further restricted as the state began to lose control over the grain trade. The Dogra State, moreover, was ill-equipped to administer this partially installed market-driven economic system.

The transformations brought about by the land settlement in the economic system of the Valley were increasingly aided and abetted by the changing nature of internal commerce and the diversification of external trade at the turn of the last century. Internal trade was converted into a money economy in this period, while external trade became commodity-oriented, as opposed to being solely based on luxury goods such as shawls. The resultant urban growth and the rise of new social classes led to the internal reconstitution of communities alongside the redefinition of their external relationships with other communities and the state.

Furthermore, the old nobility was clearly in decline, including shawl merchants and jagirdars, while revenue officials had come to exercise power within the radically changed context of the semi-colonial Dogra bureaucracy, itself in the process of definition at the turn of the century. At the same time, high-level administrators of the Dogra state had entrenched themselves as the new landholding elite of the Kashmir Valley. Peasants, while not particularly prosperous as a result of the settlement, were now a recognizable class whose interests became the focal point of movements that were to emerge in Kashmir at the turn of the twentieth century.

## **Impact of the Colonial Intervention II: State Educational Reform**

The education system of the state of Jammu and Kashmir underwent a dramatic shift with the deposition of Maharaja Pratap Singh from the throne in 1889 and the establishment of the British Residency and State Council to direct the affairs of the princely state. Education became a central component of the state's drive towards centralization and bureaucratization along the lines of British India. Along with bringing the education system under its purview, however, the state found itself responsible for the education of its subjects, most of whom were Muslim. This section argues that despite British pressure, the Dogra state was ill-equipped and unwilling to take on this responsibility and its educational policies in this period were fraught with ambivalence towards mass education in general and Muslim education in particular.

The Dogra State's policies in the field of education in the late nineteenth century can only be understood in terms of the British colonial project of education. Education had become central to the project of colonialism in British India by the early nineteenth century. If the empire that had already been won by the urban bourgeoisie had to be preserved for profit, then the dominant groups in Indian society had to be included in the colonial enterprise. This involved a creation of a civil society among the natives and

their inculcation into the ethos, rules and symbols of the new order, which could only be achieved through education. Education thus had a significant role to play in the transformation of a commercial institution into a colonial state.<sup>38</sup> As C.A. Bayly has pointed out, the English East India Company had attempted to do this through a mixture of military domination and political suasion. The changes in the educational system introduced in the early nineteenth century were part of this process. For instance, Persian was abolished in official correspondence in 1835 and the government's weight was thrown behind English-medium education.<sup>39</sup>

At the same time, the idea of different types of education for different classes came to define the British educational system in India. As propounded by J.S. Mill and Macaulay, the elite would gain western education through the English language and the rest of the population would be consigned to, if anything, studying their own languages, while receiving western ideas from the elite through "downward filtration."<sup>40</sup> Entrusted as it was in the hands of Indians of status and wealth, education was also supposed to be the chief agency for accomplishing the great moral agenda of colonialism: the eventual conversion of natives to Christianity, since Englishmen governing India were deeply concerned with the development of character.<sup>41</sup> Ironically, western education became, in time, a symbol of secularism for many from among the Indian elite.<sup>42</sup> And, this elite, which not only became a strong arm of the colonial government, but also its most stringent critic by the late nineteenth century, was to become one of the important products of the colonial educational system in India.

Lord Curzon's viceroyalty marked a turning point in the government's education policy, coming as it did after the openly anti-British atmosphere of 1897,<sup>43</sup> which British officials perceived as being a direct result of English education. Curzon presented education as more than an intellectual demand in India, being socially and politically important for the natives. According to him, in India, "education was required not primarily as the instrument of culture or the source of learning, but as the key to employment, the condition of all national advance and prosperity and the sole stepping stone for every class of the community to higher things."<sup>44</sup> However, privately he admitted that "our system of higher education in India is a failure; it has sacrificed the formation of character upon the altar of cram; and the Indian University turns out only a

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<sup>38</sup> Krishna Kumar, Political Agenda of Education: A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas (New Delhi: Sage, 1991), 24-26.

<sup>39</sup> C.A. Bayly, Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 122.

<sup>40</sup> Gauri Viswanathan, Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 149.

<sup>41</sup> Kumar, Political Agenda of Education, 34 and Suzanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, eds., Education and Politics in India: Studies in Organization, Society, and Policy (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 16.

<sup>42</sup> Kumar, Political Agenda of Education, 39.

<sup>43</sup> This atmosphere was clearly visible in Poona, where Bal Gangadhar Tilak and other leaders had launched a bitter attack on the government's anti-plague policies. This ultimately resulted in the murder of Col. Rand, the Collector and Plague Commissioner of Poona, on June 22, 1897. The assassins were subsequently tried and executed. Tilak was accused of sedition and sentenced to 18 months imprisonment.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Aparna Basu, The Growth of Education and Political Development in India, 1898-1920 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1974), 6.

discontented horde of office-seekers, whom we have educated for places which are not in existence for them to fill.”<sup>45</sup> To address these flaws, he reiterated the policy of government intervention in education and pushed for the central control of a planned education system. Despite his idealistic rhetoric, thus, his policies aimed to protect educational institutions, particularly universities, from the “baleful influences of the ambitious and politically interested Indians.”<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the colonial state in general was unable to reconcile its educational, language, and employment policies in the various provinces of British-India.

Once the British had de facto taken over the administration of Jammu and Kashmir, the state government could no longer follow a policy of non-intervention in matters of education. The crucial difference, however, was that in Kashmir the main reason behind the education of native subjects in British India—the creation of a class among the elite that could help with the task of administering the vast country—did not exist. And having learnt from the experience of their colonial masters, neither did the Dogras intend on abetting the emergence of such a class. In the late nineteenth century, when this class was already well-entrenched in British India, the Jammu and Kashmir State simply imported these individuals to run its growing bureaucracy. As P.N. Bazaz so scathingly put it:

Armies of outsiders trailed behind the officers from the plains with no more interest than to draw as much as they could, and then to depart leaving behind their kindred as successors to continue the drain; and thus was established a hierarchy in the services with the result that profits and wealth passed into the hands of the outsiders.<sup>47</sup>

The replacement of Persian with Urdu as the court language in 1889, and subsequently the language of administration, further justified the importation of Punjabis into the state administration. That the government did not intend on creating a class of people to administer the state is clear from the State Council’s opinion that mere literary education without a technical component “only serves to create a class of discontented candidates for clerical duties whose aspirations the State cannot afford to meet.”<sup>48</sup> As late as 1909, the Resident in Kashmir, Sir Francis Younghusband, was to admit to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, that there was a distinct tendency among these officials of the state to “secure Kashmir not for the Kashmiris, still less for the British, but for the Punjabis and other Indians.”<sup>49</sup> This would have far-

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<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Suresh Chandra Ghosh, Indian Nationalism: A Case Study for the First University Reform by the British Raj (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1985), 25. The view that the colonial educational system in India had proven to be inadequate and unsatisfactory was widely held in early twentieth century England, particularly among educators. This perspective is expounded on at length in Leonard Alston, Education and Citizenship in India (London: Longmans, Green, And Co., 1910). Alston was director of non-collegiate studies in economics and history, Cambridge University, and had served as temporary professor at Elphinstone College, Bombay.

<sup>46</sup> Rudolph and Rudolph, eds., Education and Politics, 17.

<sup>47</sup> Prem Nath Bazaz, The History of the Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir, Cultural and Political, From the Earliest Times to the Present Day (New Delhi: Kashmir Publishing Company, 1954), 135.

<sup>48</sup> Administration Report of Jammu and Kashmir State, 1893-94, 46.

<sup>49</sup> Sir Francis Younghusband, “Confidential Note on Kashmir Affairs for 1907-08,” Foreign Department R/1/19/358, July 1908, India Office Library, London (Microfilm).

reaching consequences for the cause of Kashmiri as the medium of instruction in schools as well as the language of state administration.

As a result of the importation of Punjabis into the state administration, there was a lack of urgency in the state's efforts at promoting education among local Kashmiris. Claiming a stringency of funds, the State Council did not carry out large-scale educational reforms in the first few years of its rule, but it did recognize the need for formalizing and centralizing the system of education in the state.<sup>50</sup> As early as 1889, Pt. Bhimshember Nath, Inspector Schools, recommended to the State Council that *maktabs* and *pathshalas* should be brought under the purview of the department of education.<sup>51</sup> By the beginning of the twentieth century, the state had already introduced important reforms that would begin the process of state regulation of the educational system.

There were a few weak attempts by the state at expanding educational institutions in this period. The Council also took steps to encourage private enterprise to promote education. Bhag Ram, the Home and Judicial member-in-charge of the state education department, went to the extent of appealing to the private purses of the Maharaja, the Resident, the Rajas, the members of the council and other gentlemen by asking them to "prove very liberal in putting our hands in our pockets for subscribing to education." He intended to use this money "in providing poor, deserving students with scholarships, fees, and so forth."<sup>52</sup> As a result, private institutions were growing at a much faster rate than public educational institutions in this period. For instance, while the number of public institutions for males and females between 1901-04 increased by 24, the number of private institutions increased by 75 in the same period.<sup>53</sup>

By the early twentieth century, however, the state began to present itself as the promoter of education among all subjects of the state. Translated into actual government policy, this meant the rapid creation and consolidation of a state educational bureaucracy. The schools in the state were reorganized along lines of the Punjab University syllabus and affiliated to the University. As a result, the Kashmiri language was relegated to the background in all educational and administrative matters, even by the Kashmiri Muslim leadership. Maharaja Pratap Singh endowed an arts college in Jammu to commemorate the royal visit of the Prince of Wales in 1905. The state set up a Normal School in Srinagar in 1906, increased the number of scholarships to the middle and high departments of schools, and opened girl's schools in several parts of the state. The Darbar also instituted a number of college scholarships for Kashmiris to study in Lahore. Dr. Annie Besant started a Hindu College in Srinagar in 1905, which was taken over by the government in 1911 and renamed Sri Pratap College. The Darbar even began to recognize the need to encourage education amongst the Muslims of the Valley and sanctioned scholarships for Muslim boys studying in Srinagar High School, while also

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<sup>50</sup> The growth and centralization of bureaucracies was one of the most widespread processes in most princely states subsequent to British intervention in their political structures. Furthermore, just as the Dogra State's bureaucracy was composed of Hindus imported from the Punjab, since the Dogra rulers continued to draw their legitimacy from this region, bureaucracies in most princely states were manned by people loyal to the Maharajas. See Robin Jeffrey, ed. People, Princes and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely States (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), 18-20.

<sup>51</sup> "Information on Education in Kashmir," Vernacular Records 194/1957, Jammu State Archives.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Triennial Administration Report of Jammu and Kashmir State, 1901-1904, 563.

appointing an Arabic teacher for the school.<sup>54</sup> The *1910-11 Note on Education* proudly proclaimed the existence of 2 colleges, 5 high schools, 24 middle schools, 172 primary schools, 8 girl's schools and 1 teacher's training school in the state.<sup>55</sup> By the second decade of this century education had become one of the most telling symptoms of the growing centralization of the Jammu and Kashmir state bureaucracy and a greater economic and political integration of the state with British India.

By 1907, however, it had become clear that the state was lagging in developing schemes to impart education to the vast majority of its subjects, since it considered education to be the preserve of the elite. The British Resident, Sir Francis Younghusband, had impressed on the foreign minister the need for improving the educational department of the state with a view to extending education to the people.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, he asked the future educational conference to suggest the best type of education to be given to the various classes.<sup>57</sup> As a result, the review of educational policy in 1907 emphasized the need to provide education to the whole cross-section of the population. And, in a statement that best exemplified the liberal British view of different types of education for different classes in society, the Maharaja proclaimed that mass education could be accomplished only if:

Instruction is as obviously useful and helpful as food, clothing and fresh air, and the aim should be to make everyone fit for some definite calling in life, to give each the opportunity of developing himself to the fullest, to make the agricultural class better agriculturists, the merchant class good businessmen, the artisans useful handicraftsman, the fighting class brave soldiers, the ruling class efficient governors and the intellectual class thinkers and writers. The ancient should retain the glory of the ancient civilization with all the old manliness, courtliness, charity and respect for parents and for authority and add to it the thoroughness, energy and scientific, practical and public spirit of the present day.<sup>58</sup>

The Dogra State seemed to have imported the British-Indian administrative structure for its educational system along with its ideological content.

The state's acceptance of the idea that education should be restricted to the upper tier in society is reflected in the education minister's negative response to the Maharaja's directive that he draw up a scheme for free and compulsory primary education in the state. The education minister rejected the idea of primary education on the grounds that such a measure would be seen as tyrannical by the mass of the Kashmiri population, who were not aware of the duties of citizenship. According to the state, it was not the responsibility of the government to educate the Kashmiri population to inculcate in them the duties of citizenship, but community leaders to encourage education among the members of their respective communities. In the matter of state educational policy in this

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<sup>54</sup> "Note on the State of Education in Jammu and Kashmir State," Education Department 7/17EM/1906-11, Jammu State Archives.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Political Department 101/P-102/1907, Jammu State Archives.

<sup>57</sup> Old English Records 279/1907, Jammu State Archives.

<sup>58</sup> "Note by Daya Kishen Kaul," private secretary to Maharaja, dated August 26, 1907, Private Records of His Highness 279/1907, Jammu State Archives.

period, it is clear that the Dogra State did not conceive of Kashmiris as citizens and did not intend to make them citizens of the state through education.<sup>59</sup>

In response to the idea of compulsory primary education, the Inspector of Schools suggested that Meghs and Doms, low-caste Kashmiri Muslims, should not for the present be required to send their boys to school.<sup>60</sup> The Headmaster of the Hindu High School, Srinagar, articulated the state's concerns on mass education in more concrete terms. Expressing dislike for the fact of upper-class Hindu and Muslim boys studying alongside those of lower classes, he suggested that schools ought to be classified according to classes of subjects living in Srinagar. He stated:

The Hindus and the high-class Mussulmans will not like to see their children learn a profession while surrounded by the other Mussulman children, at least for some time till these come up to the standard of Hindu children or the children of high class Mussalmans... It is not at all desirable that the children of the Hanjis [boatmen] and sweepers and the like should be allowed to mix with other children.<sup>61</sup>

The issue at hand, clearly, was one of class rather than religious affiliation, since the elite of both communities was expected to and did gain an education. Tellingly, at this stage, the state discourse on education rarely focused on the backwardness of Kashmiri Muslims in education. In the following years, however, the state was forced to recognize the fact that there was a congruence between class and religious affiliation, since most agriculturists were uneducated Kashmiri Muslims while most administrators were educated Punjabi Hindus, and to a lesser extent, Kashmiri Pandits.

The state did not intend to keep the lower classes uneducated, however. It was interested in imparting to them a different type of education. The Punjabi officials who ran the state saw no need for educated Kashmiris threatening their hold on the meticulously controlled bureaucracy. They did, however, feel the need for economic returns on their educational reform policies. This was possible only if technical education was imparted to the agriculturists and artisans with a view to making them more efficient at their respective occupations. Since citizenship was a hollow concept for the Dogra State, with a sole focus on the duties of the subjects towards the state, but devoid of a guarantee of political and social rights to them, the Kashmiri lower classes had to remain satisfied with technical and vocational training, which was not formalized until the establishment of the Amar Singh Technical School, Srinagar, in 1914.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> That the Kashmiris were not "citizens" of the Dogra State is obvious from the denial of civil, political and social rights to them by the state. T.H. Marshall's influential work argues that "the right to education is a genuine social right of citizenship... Fundamentally it should be regarded, not as the right of the child to go to school, but as the right of the adult citizen to have been educated." See T.H. Marshall, Class, Citizenship and Social Development, Essays by T.H. Marshall (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1973), 81-82.

<sup>60</sup> "Scheme for Imparting Education to the Masses in Kashmir," Political Department 101/P-102/1907, Jammu State Archives.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. In 1891, the percentage of Hanjis to the Muslim population was approximately 4.47%, most of whom lived in and around Srinagar. See Lawrence, Valley of Kashmir, 313.

<sup>62</sup> Hari Om, Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir: A Study in the Spread of Education and Consciousness, 1857-1925 (New Delhi: Archives Publishers, 1986), 64.

The state's focus on class in defining the role of education in Kashmiri society meant that the majority of the Kashmiri Muslim population remained uneducated in this period. Even at the beginning of 1910, there were only 15 educated Muslim males as compared to 453 Hindu males per thousand of population in the Jhelum Valley.<sup>63</sup> By the census of 1921, this number had jumped to a mere 19 for Muslims, while going up to 508 for Hindus.<sup>64</sup> The Muslim agricultural castes had no representative among the educated in the Census of 1911. Kashmiri Pandits were the most educated social group in the Valley, and the state as a whole.

The Census of 1911 explained away the lack of literacy among Muslims of Kashmir by stating that education did not hold any value for the Kashmiri Muslim agricultural classes, who formed the majority of this community and who “would rather retain their children for cattle-grazing, crop-watching and other agricultural pursuits than send them to school.”<sup>65</sup> A folk saying among the Muslim agricultural castes was used to sum up their attitude towards education: “Education brings ruin. It is by ploughing that a good living can be ensured.”<sup>66</sup>

Nevertheless, the number-crunching by the census operations in Kashmir served to bring into the limelight the “backwardness” of Kashmiri Muslims in the field of education, amongst other areas, a recurring theme in colonial discourse on Muslims of British India since the 1871 publication of W.W. Hunter's *The Indian Musalmans*.<sup>67</sup> Lawrence performed a similar role in the Kashmiri context through his book, *The Valley of Kashmir*, first published in 1895, in which he expounded at length on the dismal condition of Kashmiri Muslims and their exploitation by Kashmiri Pandits.<sup>68</sup> In the context of early twentieth century Kashmir, where social change threatened to dislodge the Muslim elite, the emergence of this idea onto the political landscape provided them with a sound pretext for regaining their foothold in the community as well as the political arena. Furthermore, the emergent Kashmiri Muslim leadership, precisely from the classes that were losing out in the new political structure due to their lack of conversance in English education, recognized the need for promoting the educational interests of the Muslim community as a whole. It was clear to them that the indigenous system of education was no longer enough if Muslims were to be integrated into the state system of education.

### **Impact of the Colonial Intervention III: Kashmiri Muslim Educational Reform Movements**

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<sup>63</sup> Mohammad Matin-uz-Zaman Khan, *Census of India, 1911, Vol. XX, Kashmir, Part I, Report* (Lucknow: Newul Kihore Press, 1912), 169.

<sup>64</sup> Khan Bahadur Chaudhri Khushi Mohammad, *Census of India, 1921, Vol. XXII, Kashmir, Part I, Report* (Lahore: Mufid-i-Am Press, 1922), 121.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 167

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Om, *Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir*, 82.

<sup>67</sup> W.W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans* (first published 1871, repr., Delhi: Indological Book House, 1969).

<sup>68</sup> Apart from exposition, Lawrence also cited statistics to prove his points: In the year 1891-92, out of a total population of 757,433 Muslims, only 233 were being educated in state institutions, while out of a total population of 52,576 Hindus, 1,327 were receiving state instruction. See Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 228-229.

The time was certainly ripe for the moral and educational reform of Kashmiri Muslims, particularly given the increasing interest exhibited by Punjabi Muslim organizations in their social condition. This section details the response of the Kashmiri Muslim leadership to the Dogra State's halting attempts at articulating its philosophy of education. It is evident from the following discussion that the contours of the emergent public discourse on Kashmiri Muslim identities was shaped within the political framework provided by the state educational policies under the guidance of the British model.

Mirwaiz Rasool Shah, head preacher at the Jama Masjid in Srinagar, claimed the leadership of the Kashmiri Muslim community through his activities on the educational front, founding the first reform association for Kashmiri Muslims, with an affiliated school. Founded in 1889 with the financial assistance of eminent Punjabi Muslims, the Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam, literally meaning the Society for the Victory of Islam, sought to unite the Kashmiri Muslim community around the concept of *Tawheed*, or the unity of Allah. The Anjuman opened its doors to all Muslim sects, to cleanse the Kashmiri Muslim community of its "un-Islamic" aspects. A *madrasa* was soon attached to the Anjuman with a view to improving the lot of the Kashmiri Muslim population through pure Islamic education.

The aim of the school until the early years of the twentieth century was to provide its students with a traditional Islamic education to create a class of religious leaders who would guide the community on the path to pure Islam. The traditional syllabus of the school, with an emphasis on Arabic and Persian to facilitate memorization of the *Quran*, bears testament to this goal.<sup>69</sup> Similar moves were made by the heads of various shrines to establish schools within a few years of the foundation of the Madrasa Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam. For instance, the *Sajjadanashin* (spiritual head) of the Khanqah-i-Mualla Shrine, Pir Yusuf Shah Khanqahi, helped found a school in the courtyard of the shrine, which was also dedicated to furthering religious education among Kashmiri Muslims.<sup>70</sup>

The political and economic needs of the time, however, dictated that these institutions alter their nature and project. Although the Madrasa Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam was turning out mullahs with an ability to recite the Quran in good numbers, none of them was literate in Urdu, the language of the administration. State schools needed teachers who could teach a variety of subjects in Urdu, while the mullahs were trained in Arabic and Persian.<sup>71</sup> As a result, Moulvi Rasool Shah reorganized the Madrasa along the lines of Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam, Lahore, and a new building was constructed for it in 1901. Munshi Mahboob Alam, editor *Paisa Akhbar*, Lahore, and Hakim Mohammad Ali Lahori raised Rs.400 for the school and finally the Maharaja of Baroda came forward with Rs.2000 for the repayment of the building loan. A few years later, in 1905, now renamed the Islamia School, the Madrasa became a recipient of state grant-in-

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<sup>69</sup> *Halat wa Rouidad*, Annual Report of the Convocation of the Madrasa Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam (Lahore: Hindustan Steam Press, 1913), 2.

<sup>70</sup> Mufti Mohammad Shah Sadaat, *Jannat-ul-Duniya* (Lahore: Mahir Electric Press, 1936), 34, and Mufti Mohammad Shah Sadaat, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir ki Rozana Diary, 1846-1947* (Srinagar: Noor Mohammad Ghulam Mohammad), 618.

<sup>71</sup> General Department 1609/E-17/1923, Jammu State Archives.

aid and was converted to a high school in 1912. The school provided a course of study that included a firm grounding in Islamic theology along with a study of secular subjects.

The Muslim leadership's vision for the Kashmiri Muslim community in this period is reminiscent of the European enlightenment ideal of progress through the moral uplift of society. This vision recreated the dichotomy characteristic of colonial as well as Indian nationalist discourse: a morally superior teacher and a society whose character was in need of reform. The task of reforming society entailed not only making Kashmiri Muslims aware of their inadequacies, but also awakening them to the benefits of modern education, which was an inextricable component of a truly Islamic unified society. The aims and objectives of the Madrasa Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam shed light on the twin agenda of the Muslim leadership of this period: "to ensure religious and worldly education for Muslim children who are backward in education" and "to create an aptitude for reforms, social awakening and mutual unity amongst the Muslim community."<sup>72</sup>

The Mirwaiz leadership subscribed to the vision of the Islamic period in Kashmiri history as the ideal, when illiteracy was allegedly unknown. It was during this period that the Muslim community, united under an Islamic authority, attained the zenith of civilization and made Kashmir the envy of the world. Most speeches delivered at the annual convocations of the school hearkened back to this Islamic period in Kashmiri history when it was a center of learning and scholarship.<sup>73</sup> In his speech to the annual convocation, the general secretary of the Anjuman lamented the march of time that had transformed Kashmir from a land dedicated to patronizing Persian and Indian masters of art and letters, to a poor country with an illiterate population of Muslims.<sup>74</sup> The leadership had made the period of Islamic rule in Kashmir synonymous with a high level of education among Kashmiri Muslims and the following periods with illiteracy and ignorance.

Thus, for the members of the Anjuman, the ignorance besetting the Kashmiri Muslims was a symptom of the larger malaise of Islam's decline in Kashmir, caused by the loss of temporal authority. However, much like the Muslims of British India in the late nineteenth century, the reattainment of this temporal authority was not the main focus of the leadership's vision. Instead, their goal was the internal regeneration of the Kashmiri Muslim community so that Muslims could recover their Islamic identity through education. In his speech to the annual convocation in 1912, Mohammad Ayub, a student at the Islamia High School, described Islam as a sick child in need of its mother's sympathy and care. He continued by giving the example of Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan, who had laid the foundation of Aligarh College for the advancement of the Muslim community.<sup>75</sup> A poem presented at this function by Moulvi Ghulam Hassan Vakil captures the Kashmiri Muslim elite's appeal to the community to rise out of its stupor:

Until when will I be worried about this qaum?

Until when will I cry and complain like women?

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<sup>72</sup> Halat wa Rouidad, 1913, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Halat wa Rouidad, 1912-1915.

<sup>74</sup> Halat wa Rouidad, Annual Report of the Convocation of the Madrasa Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam, (Srinagar: Salagram Press, 1912), 2.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41.

Until when will I mourn the condition of my qaum?  
Until when will I hang my head like a dying flower?

I present to you the courage and determination of Sir Sayyid,  
I will also sacrifice myself for the qaum like him.  
If our qaum is steeped in the sea of ignorance,  
Then only he is a man who saves people from drowning during the storm.<sup>76</sup>

The recurrent references to Sayyid Ahmad Khan in the discourse of this movement are significant because they point to the self-perception of the Muslim leadership as modernizers. Although its leadership was composed entirely of the religious elite, the discourse of this movement attempted to provide for the regeneration of the Muslim community alongside its advancement in Western education. Unlike British India, where the Deobandi and Farangi Mahali *ulema* were launching bitter critiques of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, the Kashmiri religious elite had appropriated his methods as a model for the educational and ultimately economic advancement of the Kashmiri Muslim community.

In the face of an overtly interventionist Hindu state, educational institutions became a means of defending Islam, and through them, the collectivity itself, by, it is important to note, appealing to the British Residency. This project is amply illustrated in an incident that was meticulously recorded by a poet at the turn of the twentieth century. Witty and humorous, the Kashmiri poem entitled, significantly, *Aijaze Quran* (Miracle of the *Quran*), describes an incident in 1891 in which a Kashmiri Pandit bureaucrat in the Dogra administration stormed into a *madrassa* near his house in Nava Kadal, Srinagar, and insulted the moulvi and the *Quran*. According to the poet, Pandit Hargopal Khasta demanded that the moulvi stop the loud recitation of the *Quran*; when the moulvi refused to comply, Khasta threw the holy book on the ground. Furious at this insult, the Muslims of Srinagar organized a deputation to the Maharaja, which began at the Khanqah-i-Mualla shrine and grew in size as it passed through the five major shrines of the city. The Maharaja promptly rejected their petition to expel Khasta from the state, asking them to appeal through the court system instead. The custodians of the Hazratbal and Naqshbandi shrines then petitioned the Resident, on whose personal intervention Khasta was banished from Jammu and Kashmir in 1891.<sup>77</sup>

More significant than the veracity of the details of this incident is the fact that it was recorded at the turn of the century and clearly asserts the authority of the Muslim leadership on the community's educational institutions against threats from the state. Furthermore, the poem frames the incident in religious terms. It does not describe a random insult to a random individual, but instead an insult to the Kashmiri Muslim

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>77</sup> M.Y. Teng, "Kashiri Adbuk Godnyuk Sahafati Dastavez" [The first journalistic tract of Kashmiri Literature] in Teng, *Talaash: Tahkiki te Tabkidi Majmoonan Hinz Sombran* [Quest: A Collection of Essays on Research and Critical Studies] (Delhi: J.K. Offset Prints, 1988), 36-54. The poem was probably recorded around 1899-1900. This type of incident was common in other parts of the subcontinent as well and the response of the colonial state in such instances was similar to that of the Dogra state in Kashmir.

collectivity through the insult of its most sacred book. It is also significant that the incident ends in success for the Kashmiri Muslims and their representatives who are able to challenge the legitimacy of the Dogra State by appealing to the higher authority of the British colonial state. The defense of the religious collectivity through the protection of its educational institutions was an integral aspect of the articulation of identities by the Kashmiri Muslims, in relation to both the Dogra State and the British Residency.

Since this identity was inextricably linked to the Muslim leadership's vision of progress for the Muslim, henceforth, the Muslim community's moral and economic well-being would be measured in terms of the success or failure of its educational career. As Munshi Ghulam Mohammad Khadim declared at the second annual convocation of the Madrasa Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam: "No *qaum* can progress and no *qaum* can claim to be civilized until it has reached the zenith of its educational career."<sup>78</sup> Progress now not only meant the community's adherence to a particular version of Islam, but also its acquisition of modern education. The latter was becoming increasingly important as its benefits became apparent.

The advent of the British on the Kashmiri political scene and the simultaneous state regulation of the education system had given the Kashmiri Muslim leadership the opportunity to press its social and political demands on the state. Since the Dogra State was modeling its education system on British lines, it also followed that those who went through the system would be advantageously placed for state employment. Moreover, the Kashmiri Muslim leadership could always point to colonial educational policies towards Indian Muslims, some of which were designed to provide incentives for Muslim educational progress.<sup>79</sup> Education thus came to mean more than just an advancement of Kashmiri Muslim civilization, since it now also held the additional rewards of employment in government service, the traditional preserve of Kashmiri Pandits. This, combined with the decline in the traditional system of Muslim education,<sup>80</sup> enhanced the Kashmiri Muslim leadership's stake in being recognized by, and included in, the state system of education.

Supported by Muslim organizations of British India, particularly the Punjab, the Kashmiri Muslim leadership began pressuring the state to play a more active role in redressing the discrepancy between the educational status of the two communities of the Valley. Kashmiri Muslim expatriates in the Punjab had retained emotional and familial ties to their native land and felt compelled to raise the banner of freedom for Kashmir and their brethren in the Valley, launching bitter critiques of the Dogra administration.<sup>81</sup> In its 1913 address to the Maharaja, the Kashmiri Muslim Conference, one of the main

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<sup>78</sup> Halat wa Rouidad, Annual Report of the Convocation of the Madrasa Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam (Srinagar: Privately Printed, 1900), 6.

<sup>79</sup> The Resolution of 1885 adopted by the colonial state was emphatic in its directive that a special section of the annual education reports should be devoted to the Muslim community so that the government could be kept informed about its progress in education. See Peter Hardy, The Muslims of British India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 122.

<sup>80</sup> The 1915-16 Note on Education stated that 24 makhtabs run by Moulvis had to be closed during that year. See Education Department 321/E-11/1914, Jammu State Archives.

<sup>81</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the politics of Kashmiri Muslim expatriate community in the Punjab, see Ayesha Jalal, Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850 (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 352-360.

Kashmiri Muslim expatriate organizations in the Punjab, made a strong case for improving the status of Muslim education in the state by employing Muslim teachers in state schools, as well as providing religious education in these institutions. If, the Conference claimed, enough educated Muslims did not exist in the state, then Muslims should be imported from British India to teach in state schools. The Conference kept up its pressure on the Darbar to requisition the services of competent Mohammadans, preferably Kashmiri Muslims from the Punjab, for educational services within the state.<sup>82</sup> It is essential to point out that Kashmiri Muslim expatriates in the Punjab faced discrimination in terms of recruitment to the army, educational institutions and other areas. Therefore, petitioning the Dogra State for the recruitment of Kashmiri Muslims from the Punjab into educational institutions clearly had an economic motivation for this group.

The Dogra State's initial response to these moves was one of dismissal. The Maharaja made a supercilious reply to the Conference, particularly towards the idea that more Muslims would be attracted to schools if their teachers were Muslims: "Once upon a time, the fame of Kashmir as a literate country was well-established and then the Pandits were usually, if not exclusively, the teachers of Persian to Mohammadans." "In matters of imparting and receiving education," he continued, "all questions of creed and nationality should be set aside." In the same reply, the Maharaja also declared that orders had been issued by the Education department for the employment of *moulvis* in all Primary schools having more than 10 Muslim boys on the roll.<sup>83</sup>

Throughout this period, the state followed schizophrenic policies towards the creation of a distinct category for Muslims within the state's educational system. While the 1908 State Educational Conference had dismissed Khan Sahib Peerzada Mohammad Hussain's proposal regarding the advancement of Muslim education in the state as of a "purely sectarian nature and hence not proprietary to be taken up,"<sup>84</sup> in 1914 the state appointed a Mohammadan Assistant Inspector of Schools whose "chief duty was confined to the improvement and propagation of education among this backward community."<sup>85</sup> The education department had also provided 70 primary schools with Arabic teachers for making education popular and raising the number of Muslim scholars in public schools.<sup>86</sup> By doing so, in its view, the state was bridging the gap between secular education as provided by state schools and religious education as provided by *madrasas*, so that Muslims, seen as being inherently more religious, would be attracted to these schools.

Since the colonial state was the Dogra state's main inspiration, the ambiguities and inconsistencies in British education and language policies could also be noted in Kashmir. These are most comparable to the Punjab, where the script, the medium of instruction in government schools, and the language of administration were far removed from the regional vernacular.<sup>87</sup> A similar situation prevailed in Kashmir, a fact that was

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<sup>82</sup> Political Department 217/P-96/1913, Jammu State Archives.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>84</sup> Political Department 101/P-102/1907, Jammu State Archives.

<sup>85</sup> Administration Report of the Education Department, Jammu and Kashmir State, 1914-15, 7.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> See Jalal, Self and Sovereignty, chapter three.

never raised or addressed by the state or the Muslim leadership. Instead, the state focused on the issue of languages most suited for religious instruction. Hence, the Inspector of Schools, Srinagar, stated in 1912 that if the policy of moral and religious education in schools was to be successfully implemented, then provision had to be made for the teaching of Hindi to Hindu boys, in the same way that Urdu was taught to Muslim boys. This led to the abolition of Sanskrit and Persian in the primary departments of schools in 1911 so as to enable boys “to receive a better grounding in their own vernacular tongue i.e. Urdu or Hindi before they take up a study of a classical language like Persian or Sanskrit in the Secondary schools.”<sup>88</sup>

The Dogra State had made Urdu synonymous with Muslim education and Hindi with the education of Hindus, developing parallel systems of “vernacular” education, such as in the North Western Provinces, ignoring the glaring fact that neither Kashmiri Hindus nor Kashmiri Muslims spoke anything other than their regional vernacular, Kashmiri, in either their homes or places of business.<sup>89</sup> This might explain the absence of a language controversy generated as a result of this blatantly sectarian policy.<sup>90</sup> It is also important to note that the complete unwillingness to implement the mother tongue as the medium of instruction was in large part responsible for the high illiteracy rates among Kashmiri Muslims.

What is most peculiar, perhaps, is the complete silence on the part of the Muslim leadership on the subject of Kashmiri as the language of instruction in schools. However, this silence is an interesting comment on the class-basis of the educational reform movements in Kashmir. Since education in the Kashmiri language would have benefited the lower classes the most, but not appreciably served the interests of the elite, (since their main motivation in acquiring an education was to be conversant in the language of the administration, Urdu), the Muslim leadership was unwilling to raise the banner of Kashmiri as the medium of instruction. Kashmiri, thus, became a victim of the interests of the early twentieth century Kashmiri Muslim elite, which, while purporting to represent the cross-section of the Muslim community, clearly framed its demands to serve the interests of its upper-tier.<sup>91</sup> In effect, then, the narrative on Kashmiri Muslim identities elided over linguistic assertions for Kashmiri.

The growing nexus of state and community educational institutions was increasingly visible in the early decades of the twentieth century. Following from colonial policies, the public funding of private institutions through the system of grants-

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<sup>88</sup> Administration Report of the Education Department, Jammu and Kashmir State, 1911-12, 4.

<sup>89</sup> This is the case in contemporary Kashmir as well, where the Kashmiris interact with each other in their regional vernacular, at home, on the streets, in shops, in administrative offices, in places of business and so on, while the language of administration is Urdu and English, with the former being more prominent at lower levels.

<sup>90</sup> Since Kashmiri was not to be the language of instruction or administration, the question of the script it would be written in did not arise. The Valley did witness a communitarian debate on script in the early 40s, but that had very little to do with Kashmiri. For a detailed discussion of this controversy, see chapter six.

<sup>91</sup> It is interesting to note that in the Punjab, the call to introduce Punjabi as the medium of instruction in educational institutions was met with opposition from the Muslim elite, who saw in it a conspiracy to keep Muslims uneducated in the language of administration, Urdu, and a move to divide Muslims and Hindus. See Jalal, Self and Sovereignty, 133-138.

in-aid, had become the norm in Kashmir.<sup>92</sup> By 1915 the Darbar had brought all religious educational institutions of the Valley, none of which could survive without the annual state grants-in-aid that increased steadily through the years, under its direct control. Educational officers made regular reports on the status of these schools, “the staff and standards” of which were not “as could be desired.” But since the aims of these institutions was “spreading education amongst a backward community,”<sup>93</sup> the Darbar continued to sanction the grants year after year.<sup>94</sup>

Clearly, the indigenous school of previous decades had been successfully transformed into an arm of the state and the traditional teacher into its paid servant. The informal system of indigenous education that had prevailed in Kashmir only four decades earlier was systematically converted into a state-sponsored system, far more centralized and homogenous in nature. Education, thus uprooted from the community and attached to the state, was unable to live up to the expectations created by state’s own ambivalent rhetoric on the education of the masses as well as its conflicted language and religious policies. In the coming decades, the backwardness of Muslims in the field of education, and the insistence on state recognition of Muslims as a separate category in the field, became central components of the Kashmiri Muslim leadership’s appeals to the Residency, and after the return of powers to Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1924, directly to the colonial state.

## Conclusion

Colonial intervention had a profound impact on the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. The intervention not only shaped the forms of legitimacy employed by the Dogra princely house to rule the Kashmir Valley, but it also led to the centralization and bureaucratization of state structures along lines of British India. The land settlement created a settled peasant class and attempts at state educational reform spawned Muslim educational reform movements that attempted to bring Muslim demands to the forefront of the state’s agenda. Living under the twice-removed situation of colonial rule, Kashmiris, particularly Kashmiri Muslims, clearly framed their demands not only in terms of the structures and ideologies of the Dogra ruling house, but quite as much those of the colonial state.

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<sup>92</sup> The public funding of private institutions was the educational norm in nineteenth century England. In 1854, the directors of the East India Company wrote: “The most effectual method of providing for the wants of India... will be to combine with the agency of the government the aid which may be derived from the exertions and liberality of the educated and wealthy natives of India... We have, therefore, resolved to adopt in India a system of grants-in-aid which have been carried out in this country [England] with very great success.” Quoted in Rudolph and Rudolph, eds., *Education and Politics*, 15.

<sup>93</sup> Political Department 76/P-11/1914, Jammu State Archives.

<sup>94</sup> In 1914-15, the Darbar was giving grants-in-aid to 14 such institutions in the entire state, including 25 Makhtabs and Pathshalas as compared to 11 institutions in 1911-12. See *Administration Report of the Education Department 1911-1912*, 4 and *Administration Report of the Education Department, 1914-15*, 9.

