

THE HOUSEHOLD, INTEGRATION AND EXCHANGE

Buddhists and Muslims in Nubra Valley

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Summary

The internal organisations of two villages in the Nubra valley of northern Ladakh demonstrate a complex network of cross-cutting ties, so that persons allied in terms of one rule of association are separated by another. Families separated by religion (most are Buddhist but some are Muslim) are nevertheless linked by vital interests in a common water-supply for irrigation. Despite recent political stresses between the Buddhists and Muslims, all households irrespective of religion participate equally in the administration of the village and take part in traditional rites affirming its identity. There is also a parallelism in the traditional inter-family groupings such as *phaspun*. The nature and composition of 148 households are described and tabulated.

The frontier region of Ladakh, now in Jammu and Kashmir state, became part of the Indian nation in 1947. It was added to the dominions of the ruler of Jammu, Gulab Singh in 1846, in agreement with the British, and throughout the 19th century was part of the "Great Game" between China, Russia, and Britain for possessions in Central Asia. Today it forms part of a militarily strategic tract between the nation-states of China, Pakistan and India. Four wars have been fought since Indian independence: with Pakistan in 1948, 1965 and 1971, and with China in 1962. In the last few years, the secessionist movement in Kashmir has also increased the importance of Ladakh to India for maintaining the integrity of the Indian union.

The presence of various routes across its area for trade, pilgrimage, war, etc., linking Ladakh with such areas as Central Asia, Tibet and Baltistan or Kashmir, and the movement of men and their cultural products from different regions until 1947 has made it a many-centred zone. The existence of various social groups in terms of language, religion, and ethnic origin, with differing cultural orientations leads to social conjunction and disjunction; political interests at the local and supralocal levels, between the region and Jammu and Kashmir state, are not allied, and opposition between forces at different levels makes it a locus of criss-crossing interests. Finally, it can be said that the local economy of the region's various

1. This paper is part of the work done for the author's Ph.D. thesis *Culture and community on the frontier; a study of Ladakh*.

communities is not fully integrated in the economy of the state, leading again to different sorts of pulls, ideologically and materially. In this article, taking the ethnographic case of the Nubra valley's villages, I will try and answer the question: What are the limits of the "community" in Nubra given the existential complexity of the region?

This question has to be answered in the background of my fieldwork in the valley, in 1989 and again between 1990-91. When the choice of the village, Tegar, was made, I had proceeded with the somewhat naive assumption that the community lay within the boundaries of the village. I began to live with a Buddhist family in Tegar, a village that contained a single family of Sunni Muslims. As the fieldwork proceeded, I learnt of the past year's tensions between the Muslim and the Buddhist communities in Ladakh as a result of certain political demands, primarily the demand for Union Territory status, and I learnt of the out-migration of Muslim families in some villages, and the existence of a social boycott between the two groups². I decided that in order that I might understand how diverse religious groups inhabited the same space of the village and the nature of the interaction between them, I would live with a Muslim family for a while as well. In Tegar however, it was difficult to reside with a Muslim family for two reasons. Firstly, as the boycott was in force, my moving through the veil drawn between the Muslims and Buddhists in the village would create difficulties for me as an uneasy participant-observer in a time of strained relations, and for them, mutually suspicious, a certain restraint. Events had occurred in the village, and there existed confidential information to which I was privy which would have made my position extremely indelicate if I then went to reside with a Muslim family. Secondly, as there was only a single

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2. The Ladakhis have been insisting since 1947 that Ladakh be included as part of the Indian state directly, on the grounds that with the withdrawal of British power from the sub-continent in 1947, the Treaty of Amritsar that had been concluded in the last century between the Dogras and the British making Ladakh a part of Jammu and Kashmir, was null and void. This demand gathered force in the 1980's, and one outcome of this agitation by the Ladakh Buddhist Association was that, especially from 1989 to 1992, the Ladakhi Muslims, especially Sunnis, came to be viewed as a symbol of domination and difference between Kashmir, whose coreligionists they were, and Ladakh. There has been a long standing perception that rule from Srinagar has been neglectful of Ladakh and Buddhists, but during this period, due to other local triggering factors, the Muslims settled in Ladakh itself, mainly Sunnis, were subject to a boycott by the Buddhists. Since the period of my fieldwork, the Indian government in 1993 offered to give Ladakh Hill Council status; Leh District accepted, but initially not Kargil District which is predominantly Muslim, and the boycott was lifted. By early 1995 this had still not been implemented but under the threat of further civil disturbances by all communities Hill Council status for the whole of Ladakh was gazetted on 9 May 1995.

family (since another family in the village had left since the boycott started and a son of a third family had converted to Buddhism very recently), I felt that I would not really be able to observe the practices of a Muslim community in some detail. So I arranged to move for a while to another village, this time across the river to Hundar, which had a large number of Muslims (of both sects) and Buddhists, in order to observe life from the "other side". I chose to live with a Sunni Muslim family since they were a stigmatised category, affected most by the boycott. Already the idea that a community was a coherent whole was beginning to be questionable. A shared residential space did not mean a shared perception of commonality, and a common practice of one sort could exist with another sort of practice that divided the same group.

The Nubra valley is an ecological niche within the administrative block of Nubra covering the valley of the Nubra and the Shyok rivers. Within this niche, the various villages work according to a particular agricultural calendar; this composite style of life is cross-cut however by differing ritual orientations. The history of Islam and Buddhism in Ladakh is a complex affair and there are present in various valleys, religious groups with differing allegiances. Thus the Buddhists in Tegar village where I did my fieldwork are largely Gelugpa and are locally associated to the main *gompa* (monastery) of the area i.e. Samstanling, while there are some families in a hamlet of the village who also belong to the Diskit *gompa*, both these *gompas* owning some land in the village³. What this means in practical terms is that the monthly ritual called the *lapsang* performed by each household and certain other rites will be performed by a monk of the order to which the household belongs.

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3. Ladakhi terms are italicised in the text of this article, and their contextual meaning given as they were explained to me. Proper nouns are not, nor such words as "Sunni" or "Gelugpa", as they are generally understood. The reason they are not transcribed according to the rules of Tibetan grammar as tends to be the practice with most anthropologists working in Tibetan-speaking societies, is that the dialect in Nubra bears significant differences in vocabulary from the Tibetan dialect, and many words find no place in Tibetan-English dictionaries. To my knowledge, although there exists a standard Ladakhi dictionary and grammar, this is the dialect of Leh and increasingly one used by the press, and other media, in schools, etc. The colloquial language of Nubra differs from this also, and while both Tibetan and the Leh standard are considered to be "high" languages and prestigious, they are not the language of the common people of Nubra. There is the further danger that by transcribing it according to the rules of standard Ladakhi or Tibetan, Muslim speakers of colloquial Ladakhi, whose vocabulary contains words which are neither always Arabic in origin nor Tibetan, may be considered "outsiders". Rather than to participate in the hegemonic project of creating single, "pure" language, my position is that the language of Nubra, like its society, is a locus of cross-cutting ties.

Each village also has a *manekhang* (a temple), and the order with which it is associated appoints a monk there as a priest. Tegar has two *manekhangs* each with a priest of a different order. But all the major festivals of a monastery are attended by villagers of any religious affiliation, in the past also by the Muslims who took part in the fair and the festivities of a monastery event. The villages in the valley have *masjids* only where there are Muslim families in fairly large numbers. Tegar has no *masjid*, but Hundar, the other village where I did my fieldwork, has three: one belonging to the Sunnis, one to the Noorbakhshias and the third to a family which has adherents who are both Sunnis and Shias, although the current household head claims to be Sunni. The *masjids* and the *gompas* have ties with Leh as well as with other centres. The Gelugpa owes its allegiance to the Dalai Lama of Lhasa traditionally, while the Drugpa historically had close ties with the Dharmaraja of Bhutan. At present each *gompa* has its own sphere of influence in the villages around it, while the "royal" *gompa* of Ladakh i.e. Hemis, continues to be fairly important. The prevalence of both Shias and Sunnis, as well as Noorbakhshias, who the local people say in the villages near Hundar where the sect is found in large numbers, is a hybrid between the Shia and Sunni sects, makes the orientation of Muslims a complex affair. For instance during *Ramzan*, the Sunnis in Hundar began their fast on the day that their Noorbakhshia neighbours did, only to find that the *Imam* in Leh had not given a call for the fast. The Noorbakhshias however continued to follow the dictates of the *Imam* of Skardu to whom they were customarily affiliated, although today a cease-fire line separates them. On the day of *Id* this kind of ambiguity was evident again for the fast was broken by the Noorbakhshias a day earlier than the Sunnis, but the fact that large numbers of people were congregating in the *masjid* for the *Id namaaz* led the *Imam* of the Sunni *masjid* to celebrate *Id* twice, once according to the calendar of Skardu and the Noorbakhshias, and again according to the calendar of Leh (and Delhi) and the Sunnis. If this is the existential ambiguity of the region, how then is "community" to be defined? An examination of the sometimes turbulent history of the region also points to the diverse cultural ties of this area with others and the varied sources of customary cooperation and conflict between different groups.

A brief history of Nubra valley

There is very little information on the valley before the 14th century; but from the time of King Grags-pa-'bum-lde (1400-1440 AD) there are various historical references. The king's ambitious brother Grags-pa-'bum is said to have paid a visit to Nubra in the hope of

seizing power. A local ruler, Nyi-ma-grags-pa, reigned there at that time and it is said that he assisted a Gelugpa exponent, Shes-rab-bzang-po, who came from the Leh valley to Nubra, where he built the monastery of Diskit, and installed a statue of Tsong-kha-pa, the founder of the Gelugpa sect. He also visited Charasa village near Tegar and installed another statue at the Dwensa temple. At the time of Blo-gros-chog-ldan (1440-70) who brought the whole of western Tibet under his reign, the Pan-chen Lha-btsun was born in Udmara village in Nubra. He went to Tibet for his studies and at the completion of them, acted as the regent for the successor of the founder of Tashilhunpo monastery. In his old age, he returned to Nubra and passed away there, his remains being preserved in Charasa (Shakspo 1990).

In 1500 King Bkra-shis-rnam-rgyal, the first Rnam-rgyal king came to the throne in Ladakh. He had to face the troops of the famous invader from Central Asia, Mirza Haider, both in Nubra and around Leh. There was much bloodshed and the Hor (Turk) army was defeated. This event was significant in Nubra's history because after this, the area came under the king's rule, although the local nobles of Hundar and Diskit continued to have some power. The palaces of the two villages however were taken over and became the residences of the king of Ladakh. The king's son, Tshedbang-rnam-rgyal, came to the throne in 1530, and brought Skardu and Shigar under his rule; he planned to invade the Hor in Xinjiang but was persuaded to give up the idea by the people of Nubra who feared that trade with Yarkand would dry up. It is recorded that from the reign of the next king, Jams-dbang-rnamrgyal (1560-90), the people of Nubra began to pay a regular tribute to the king. At this time Muslims, mainly Shias, began to settle in Nubra. In the reign of Seng-ge-rnam-rgyal, the next ruler, the *gompa* of Hemis acquired land in Nubra, especially at Hundar, Charasa, and Yarma, becoming landlords to a number of households in these villages. Apart from becoming involved with a war with Khapalu in Baltistan and facing the combined might of the Baltis and the Moghuls, a war which he won, the king Bde-'ldanrnam-rgyal (1620-45) carved *mani* walls throughout his kingdom and appointed monks to recite the *mani tung chur* in Nubra as well as in other areas. The Rnam-rgyal kings seemed to have paid attention to religious matters; thus the king Nyi-ma-rnam-rgyal not only rebuilt the palace of Charasa, but also revered the relics of Panchen Lha-Btsun. The king, Tshe-dbang-rnam-rgyal, who came to the throne in the middle of the 18th century, offered Diskit *gompa* to the Rinpoche of Thikse and this arrangement has persisted to this day. He also went to war against the Balti invaders, and was assisted by Nang-gso-bkra-shis, a member of

the leading family of Charasa, and for his successes presented him with land and other items. The king, Tshe-brtan-rnam-rgyal, who came to the throne in 1780, was said to have been a polyglot, and knew Yarkandi as well, and it is possible therefore that he lived in Nubra for some time (Shakspo 1990).

From the time of Tshe-dpal-don-grub-rnam-rgyal in the 1830's, when the traveller William Moorcroft visited Nubra, we find many accounts of Nubra and Ladakh attesting to the links of trade and religion of this region with others such as Central Asia, Tibet, Baltistan, Kashmir, etc. By the time the Dogra invasions in the early part of the 19th century were over, Ladakhi independence was coming to an end. The Dogras destroyed many monasteries and religious objects, besides destroying the authority of the kings. In Nubra, near Hundar, a village named after the Dogra king Pratap, came into existence populated by retainers and other servants of the Dogras, nearly all of whom were Muslims. The heads of the various monasteries and the monks tried to re-establish certain traditions: thus Tshul-khrims-nyi-ma founded the monastery of Samtanling near Tegar in 1834. It is the second largest *gompa* in Nubra with about 35 monks led by the incarnations of Tshul-khrims-nyi-ma, a Gelugpa *gompa* which lays emphasis on the observance of the Vinaya and has a far stricter discipline than other *gompas*. This event notwithstanding, the forces of change were already set in motion by the events of the Great Game, and the continuous threat that was perceived by the rulers of India from Russia on the northern borders of Nubra. Trade did not however come to an end, and the routes to Central Asia passing also through Tegar towards the Karakoram pass, and between Nubra and Baltistan as well as Tibet, continued to be active. The locals supplied pasture for caravans and horses, and also some *begar*, forced labour, for travellers between the passes. It is said that some kind of tax was also collected by the government in kind and deposited at trading and halting posts, for example, at Panamik. The Wazir and British officials occasionally toured this area in the summers.

The traffic on the travel routes, however, did abruptly halt when, in 1948, Nubra became a battle field, along with other parts of Ladakh, between Pakistan and India. When the enemy occupied Skardu and came as far as Skuru, about 20 km from Diskit, the Nubra guard was organised locally to resist the invaders (although some nobles and Buddhists fled, while some other Buddhists converted to Islam fearing that Nubra would be over-run by Pakistan) and villagers rallied with old matchlocks, grain, horses, and their men. The Pakistanis were driven back as far as Bogdang, 80 kms. from Diskit, almost purely due to local efforts. In 1971 Nubra again faced another

attack, but this time there was an organised military set-up which recaptured some of the earlier occupied territories such as Thang, Turtuk, Taksi, etc. At the present moment, the borders of Nubra have been sealed militarily as both in the east and in the west, the Indian and the Pakistani armies confront each other. There is a huge army presence in the valley in a partly symbiotic relationship with the local people: the army buys vegetables from the villagers, uses its labour for building roads and for other construction activity, and also includes a sizeable number of the local men in the Ladakh Scouts regiment.

Administrative limits

After the inclusion of Ladakh in the Indian state, certain administrative boundaries have been created : first, the division of the region into two districts — Leh and Kargil —, with Zaskar, Dras and Suru, as parts of Kargil district, and Rupshu and Nubra as parts of Leh district. The political unit is composed of blocks. The block where I did most of my fieldwork is Nubra with its headquarters in Diskit. Towards the south and west lie the other blocks of Leh district: Leh, Khalatse, Nyoma and Durbuk. Nubra has an estimated 10,667 persons (all rural) according to the 1981 census, with 6 Gram Sabhas. It has one village electrified by water power, Diskit, and one village electrified by solar power, Tsati. The number of post offices in the area are five, plus one telegraph office, intending to cover 28 villages, but these facilities are extremely poor. Out of a total reported area of 11,936 hectares, the net cultivated area (which is the net irrigated area) was 1882 hectares in 1989-90. The current fallow area was 117 hectares, and the area not available for cultivation was 9634 hectares. The other uncultivated area was 882 hectares and waste land, 666 hectares. The main crops grown are wheat, grain, fodder, and mustard, and some orchards of apricot and apple trees. Only towards the line of actual control near Pakistan Occupied Kashmir do you have cherry, walnuts, grapes, etc., an area whose climate and mode of cultivation resembles Kargil. The number of plough animals are 2064; dairy animals, 3500; goats, sheep and rabbits, 27600; and poultry birds, 1756 (on 31.3.90). There are a few small scale industries (34) and some village skills like carpentry, weaving and blacksmithing. The valley is mainly oriented towards agriculture. There is a single agricultural cooperative marketing society for Nubra at Diskit which is affiliated to the central one at Leh, and it handles the marketing of vegetables, fodder, fruits, etc. from the village to the army. There is a single police station at Diskit with a Sub-Inspector and a constabulary, one primary Health Centre and 44 schools (primary, middle, and high) in Nubra. (All statistics

are from SBI Annual Credit Plan 1990-91).

The two villages in which my fieldwork was done lie along the elbow formed by the main ridge of the Ladakh mountains and the Karakoram which meet at the Khardung pass. Hundar is located along the Shyok river; at the base of the Karakoram range is Tegar. The two villages, which derived their significance in the past from being on important routes, are now distinguished by being on the route to the sites of the conflict between India and Pakistan to establish fixed administrative jurisdictions — the Siachen glacier in the east and the Baltoro range in the west. Hundar has a middle school, as does Tegar, but neither has a bazaar, only dispersed shops situated on the highway. Most of the population is composed of those who work on land but each village has some occupational differences which will be discussed below.

A record first published in 1890 says of the village "Taghar" that it is a village in the Nubra district situated on the left bank of the Nubra river. It is a halting place on the summer route from Leh by the Karakoram and lies 18 miles below Panamik, and 7 miles above the junction of the Nubra with the Shyok. Barley and lucerne, apricot, willow, poplar and elm, are cultivated here. The river runs in divided streams over a wide bed of shingle and sand on which there are island patches of buckthorn and brushwood. It is frozen over in winter. It is the headquarters of the Nubra *kardari* and contains twenty houses (Gazetteer 1974:806).

Hundar, it states, lies on the left bank of the Shyok and lies about 7 miles below its junction with the Nubra river. It is a halting place on the route from the Nubra valley to Skardu. It is one of the most populous villages in Nubra with fine orchards of apricot trees. The village has about sixty houses, forty of which pay taxes. The inhabitants are said to possess seven horses, sixty-four horned cattle, and five hundred and fifty goats and sheep. A road from here leads up the Hundar stream dividing into two branches; one goes to Leh via the Thanglasgo pass, and the other to the Snimo and Likir valleys. The camping ground is in an orchard, and supplies are procurable (ibid.pp.366-7).

Today, Tegar has three hamlets; the one I resided in contains Buddhists and three Muslim families. However the third hamlet contains a separate *manekhang*, and it also contains families who form, in the eyes of villagers, another group. This hamlet also has a separate *Zimskang* i.e. a family distinguished by some act of bravery, social largesse, or duty to the king, which has been given that title in the past. It even has its own set of members for the village council in recent times (besides the fact that it spatially separated from Tegar by

a few kilometres). These factors which lead one to conclude that it was included within the bounds of Tegar as a purely administrative measure. In this paper, when I refer to Tegar I mean only the first two hamlets with a population of about 93 households. Hundar has five hamlets, each with Buddhists and Muslims living together. The number of Muslim households is about 55, the total number of households in the village being about 200.

Cross-cutting ties

In my understanding, the household is the most basic unit of social life in the Nubra valley. It is the atom of organisation of production and consumption, reproduction and reciprocity in the community. It is differentially related to other households in increasing levels of integration. Levels of integration of social organisation occur through various modalities of exchange and practice within units - either exchange of work, men and women in marriage, ritual services, or the creation of political power. Such levels of integration and practice provide a way of analysing the community as a locus of cross-cutting ties.

There are three levels of integration in local life depending on the type of exchange or practice within each unit: the primary level of integration is the household composed of men and women related by consanguinity and affinity, labouring in the field and at the hearth, opposed to all other households in the village. The household exists in two forms minimally in Nubra: the *khangchen* (the big house) and the *khutu* (the small house) which indicate different stages in the developmental cycle of a family or group of interrelated households. There are groups of households in a village known by the same name, related patrilineally, matrilineally, and sometimes affinally, considered part of what I call the same "kin group". Out of these, the main house which holds the sacra of the family is called the *khangchen*. Within the household, the exchange of work between members and the gender and age based division of labour creates a domain of social life firmly anchored within the territory of the domestic group - the altar for Buddhists, and the hearth, the gardens and the fields owned by a household. In this individuated aspect, households are related to other categories of social life - the *chospun* (ritual siblings) of members of the household, the monk from the *manekhang* or the *gompa*, and the *imam* of the local *masjid*.

The secondary level of integration relates a household to other households in the village through diverse practices - the exchange of work through various kinds of work groups for harvesting, manuring, etc., involving different sections of the village or the whole village;

the ritual exchanges through the *phaspun* (a group of families in the village bound by the idiom of fictive kinship) among Buddhists and the agnatic group (usually) among the Muslims; and the practice of constituting power in the village. The secondary level of integration also includes the occupational division of the community in Ladakh into various ranked categories. Within the secondary level of integration, i.e. that which territorially indicates the domain of the village, also exists the division of the households in the village into two religious groups, as for instance was the case in daily practice during the social boycott.

The tertiary level of integration relates a household to other households by marriage, creating the category of the kindred. This level of integration occupies a domain greater than the village given the dominant practice of village exogamy. A household is also related to other households in political organisations of the Ladakh Buddhist Association and the Ladakh Muslim Association (LBA and LMA). This kind of integration relates Muslims and Buddhists, the town, Leh, and the villages politically, resulting in various sorts of cleavages and coalitions.

The idea that various levels of integration exist in a community is connoted by two words used locally for indicating space and place, and members of a group. *Yul* is a multi-vocal term and can indicate a hamlet, a village, a region, this world, the world of the gods or spirits, etc. The speaker using such a term normally uses it contextually depending on who he is speaking to. Thus two villagers of a valley may use it with reference to themselves and the other, as referring to a village or a hamlet as the case may be. A Kashmiri would be defined as belonging to *Kache-yul* in conversation with a Ladakhi when the issue of his place is discussed, and so on. The second term that is used to indicate that various levels of integration can exist is *pa* (people), used in such diverse contexts as *Kalon-pa* (people of the *Kalon* family), *Nubrapa* (people of Nubra), *Kache-pa* (people of Kashmir), etc. indicating that people can be members of many kinds of groups.

Within the space of this ecological niche in the Nubra valley, the inside and outside, and coalition and cleavage, are not absolute but contextually situated because integration occurs due to different social practices, and for any one unit leads to crosscutting ties. In British social anthropology (from the post-World War Two period until the late 1960's), particularly in the works of E.E.Evans-Pritchard, Gregory-Bateson, Max Gluckman and others, society was conceived of not as a consistent, organic structure premised only on fusion, consensus and societal homogeneity, but also on fission, conflict and

cleavage. Different modes of relating structurally equivalent units — two households, two hamlets/villages, two cultural groups, men and women, etc.— were seen to create not a social system, but social fields. Further it was stated that:

"....societies are so organised into a series of groups and relationships, that people who are friends on one basis are enemies on another. Herein lies social cohesion, rooted in the conflicts between men's different allegiances."

(Gluckman 1960:4).

Two groups are seen not as facing each other as monolithic entities, but as implicated in criss-crossing networks of relations so that each position in the network becomes intercalary. Gluckman (1965) pointed out that in a society with cross-cutting ties, men allied in terms of one customary rule of association are grouped under a different rule with others who have a different allegiance under the first rule. A person's role or position can exist at many different levels and is not unitary because each social position or unit is the site of conflicting interests.

The issue therefore of how differences come to be articulated on a frontier such as Ladakh is related to this principle: because of boundaries of various kinds operating in Ladakh and multi-centredness, and because of levels of integration, cross-cutting ties of many types exist for social units and persons. These ties create alliance by one rule between social groups, cleavage by another, inscribing therefore variety in social existence as a mode of life. Distance and proximity are continually created or negated between units and roles, and dynamism is inherent in the way limits are worked out between them.

Ladakh has traditionally been seen as a homogeneous cultural area, primarily Tibetan Buddhist in character. The possibility of applying to it the concept that it is a site of cross-cutting ties with various levels of integration arises because it has slowly come to be recognised that Tibetan society was not centralized in political economy or society. Rather the figure of the spiritual lama/shaman possessing magical powers and the possibility of his intervention in social affairs, the existence of numerous Buddhist orders, the existence of networks of trade routes, etc. all made Tibetan society plural in character (Samuel, in press). Further, in the case of Ladakh itself, it has come to be recognised that there are, in its communities, various kinds of horizontal and vertical ties (for e.g. Dollfus 1989) as is the case with other frontier communities (for e.g. Aziz 1978).

Below is analysed the secondary level of integration of the community in the two villages; i.e. within the domain of the village.

The number and types of households in Hundar

According to the Bandobast (Land Settlement) for Hundar which I obtained from the office of the Assistant Commissioner at Diskit, in 1908 there were 53 houses whose owners were classified as owners of land, *malik*. Tenants appear only tangentially in the Bandobast since they were not tax payers and it was difficult for me to acquire details about the number of tenants. Out of these, 44 were Buddhists, 8 Muslims (1 *Balti* i.e. Shia Muslim, 2 *Arghuns* i.e. Sunni Muslims and 5 *Bedas* i.e. musicians who could be either Sunni or Shia but their origin indicating possibly that they were Noorbakshia), and 1 *Isahi* (Christian). Hemis and Chemrey *gompas* in the Leh valley and Diskit and Samstanling *gompas* in the Nubra valley were also owners of land. In addition, there were 7 other families who were tenants or servants. Table 3 indicates the Muslim families in the village, now grown into a large number of *khutus* from their original families (I was not able to trace the *Balti* household). I make a distinction here between a household and its members, *nangmi* in local terms (the family in sociological terms) and a group of *khangchens* and *khutus* descended from an ancestor in the village which I call a kin group. The villagers do not themselves have a term for this unity except to call them "the people of" a particular *khanochen* name, thereby indicating descent from it. I call it a kin group and not a descent group because they are formed bilaterally without strong patrilineal and matrilineal tendencies.

All of these families are considered to be Noorbakshia except the first who is Sunni. Besides these families there were 7 other families and their descendants who were not mentioned in the Settlement as *maliks* either because they were tenants and after the Land Reforms in India became owners in the post-1947 period or because they had other occupations when they settled in Hundar. (5) is a Sunni family, while (6) contains descendants who are both Sunnis and Noorbakshias. The original family in (7) was probably Shia but now most of the descendants are married into Sunni families. The others were considered to be Noorbakshias.

At the time of my fieldwork there were 11 kin groups of Muslims indicated in Table 1. The total number of households among the Muslims of Hundar at the time of my census was 55, counted as separate *tutbing* (smokes) in the villagers' enumeration i.e. as separate production and consumption units. They did not comprise a separate territorial area but tended to live in-between their Buddhist neighbours, sometimes in clusters and sometimes as solitary houses. There were 121 males and 118 females and the average household size

was 4.35 souls. There were basically two types of households - **nuclear** and **composite**, though really part of different demographic stages of development of a household, the occurrence of impermanent accretions giving an appearance of greater diversity in structure and size. The **nuclear** household may be simple, consisting of husband, wife, and children, or **accreted**, consisting of those budding and declining accretions such as a son-in-law residing with his father-in-law, a widower/widow/divorcee living with a son/daughter, etc. The **composite** consists of a growing nuclear family at its broadest stage of development prior to division - either through parent and married children or through siblings. Table 1 categorises the Muslim households within these types and Table 3 analyses the Muslim households in detail.

The number and types of households in Tegar

According to the Bandobast for Tegar, in 1908 there were 38 households in all three hamlets classified as owners of land, *malik*. Out of these 37 were Buddhist and 1 was Sunni (*Arghun*). Diskit and Samstanling *gompas* were also holders of land. In the area that we consider to be Tegar for the purposes of this article the number of *malik* were 23. All the figures are given in tables 2 and 4. There were 17 kin groups, (1) to (17) in the table, numbering 69 households.

In addition there were about six kin groups, numbered (18) to (23) in Table 4, who may have been tenants in the past and now own some land. The total number of males is 228 and the total number of females was 197. There were 93 households and the average household size is 4.57. If the Muslim families are excluded, then the total number of males in Tegar, now all composed of Buddhist families, is 217 and the total number of females 191. The number of households is 89 and the average household size is 4.58. Tables 3 and 4 show details of all the households, including the three Muslim families - one composite family with a married son and other members, one nuclear family with husband, wife and children, and one with a widow and her two sons.

Grouping households together on the basis of their religious orientations suggests that the unity and the singularity of the household is cross-cut by other ties that integrate it within the territory of the village, i.e. at the secondary level. This kind of integration suggests other kinds of practices. These are of various kinds, but two such groupings must be mentioned here: first, the integration of the households in the village according to religion; and second, the integration of the villages into a hierarchical system of categories, basically occupational in nature.

Table 1: HUNDAR VILLAGE
Types of Muslim Households

1. SIMPLE NUCLEAR	
Husband and wife group (old or young)	9
Husband, wife and children	31
2. ACCRETED NUCLEAR	
Widow and daughter	1
Widow alone	1
Widower man alone	1
Widower with married/unmarried children	2
Widower with adopted daughter	1
Widowed half sister with brother's family	1
Two unmarried brothers	1
Widow with married son	2
3. COMPOSITE	
Husband wife and at least one married son	4
Husband wife and at least one married daughter	1
TOTAL	55

Table 2: TEGAR VILLAGE
Types of Households (90 Buddhist, 3 Muslim)

1. SIMPLE NUCLEAR	
Husband and wife group	4
Husband, wife and children	53
2. ACCRETED NUCLEAR	
Widow with married daughter	1
Widow alone	6
Widower alone	2
Widow with married son	2
Woman divorcee with daughters	1
Male divorcee with daughter	1
Widow with niece and her married son	1
Mother and son	2
Father and son	3
Unmarried man	1
Two brothers with elder's family	1
Widower with married daughter	3
Widow with daughters	1
Widow with two sons	1
3. COMPOSITE	
Husband, wife, children including at least one married son	7
Husband, wife, children including at least one married daughter	3
TOTAL	93

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**TABLE 3. HUNDAR VILLAGE:
Census of Muslim households only**

Ref.No.of Kin Group	No. of Households	Members		Occupation	Adults		Children	
		M	F		M	F	M	F
1	5	20	15	Farmer Teacher Doctor Shopkeeper Driver Govt. employee	1 2 1 1 1 2	7 1	12	7
2	12	28	30	Farmer Musician Soldier	8 1 5	13	14	17
3	2	3	4	Farmer	2	2	1	2
4	2	5	7	Farmer Soldier Labourer	1 1 1	4	2	3
5	1	5	5	Farmer Merchant	2 1	3	2	2
6	14	29	25	Farmer Shepherd Moulvi/imam Merchant Soldier Nurse Teacher Govt. employee	2 1 2 1 5 1 1 2	16 1	14	9
7	2	1	3	Farmer	1	3		
8	3	9	5	Farmer Teacher Guard Soldier Servants	2 1 1 1	3	4	
9	3	6	7	Farmer Soldier Servant	4 1 1	5	1	1
10	1	2	2	Farmer Shepherd	1 1	1		1
11	10	13	15	Farmer	11	9	2	6
Total	55	121	118		69	70	52	48
Average household size: 4.35								

TABLE 4. TEGAR VILLAGE:
Census of all households (90 Buddhist, 3 Muslim)

Ref.No.of Kin.Group	No. of Households	Members		Occupation	Adults		Children	
		M	F		M	F	M	F
1	1	3	1	Farmer Teacher	1	1	2	
2	2	7	8	Farmer Soldier Teacher Govt. employee	2 1 2	3 1	2	4
3	3	12	7	Farmer Teacher Driver Contractor	3 3 1 1	4	4	3
4	4	10	11	Farmer Soldier	6 2	5	2	6
5	6	11	16	Farmer Lama Govt. employee	7 1 1	11	2	5
6	5	7	8	Farmer Lama Soldier	3 2 1	6	1	2
7	6	7	15	Farmer Labourer Teacher	4 1	7 1	2	7
8	2	4	3	Farmer Lama Shopkeeper Govt. employee	1 1 1	1	1	2
9	10	21	16	Farmer Govt employee Soldier Driver Travel agent Teacher	6 3 1 2 1	9 1 3	8	4
10	4	10	7	Farmer	5	6	5	1
11	5	13	8	Farmer Lama Soldier Teacher Govt. employee	3 1 1 2 1	5 1	5	2

TABLE 4 (cont.)

Ref.No.of Kin Group	No. of Households	Members		Occupation	Adults		Children	
		M	F		M	F	M	F
12	3	11	10	Farmer Lama Nurse Teacher Soldier Miller	3 1 1 1	3 1 1 	5	5
13	3	10	5	Farmer Govt. employee Soldier Nurse	 2 1 1	3	6	2
14	5	11	13	Farmer Soldier Labourer	3 4 2	6	4	5
15	1	5	4	Farmer Teacher Nurse Clerk	2 1 1	2 1	1	1
16	6	21	16	Farmer Lama Office messenger Soldier Shopkeeper	8 2 2 2 1	9	6	7
17	3	7	3	Farmer Soldier Teacher	4 1 1	2	2	
18	13	33	25	Farmer Lama Shopkeeper Soldier Teacher Mason	11 3 3 2 2 1	17	11	8
19	2	4	1	Farmer	2	1	2	
20	3	7	8	Farmer Labourer	5 1	4	2	3
21	2	6	6	Farmer Soldier	1 2	4	3	2
22	1	2	1	Farmer	2	1		
23	3	6	5	Farmer	2	3	4	2
Total:	93	228	197		148	126	80	71

Average household size: 4.57- Average without Muslim households: 4.58

The first kind of integration assumes some importance particularly in the background of the boycott of the Muslims, especially Sunnis, by Buddhists, and the LBA agitation which gathered momentum after 1989. This kind of separation is however not necessarily permanent and after February 1991, the social boycott in the villages was lifted so that effectively, one may assume that in terms of practice, if not in emotive content, this level of integration disappeared.

Households were hierarchically differentiated into various social categories in the village. The Land Settlement was one basis for the classification of social categories as well as the various land-owning households. The Land Settlement considered definitive is the one known as the Lawrence Bandobast. There is a mapping of two kinds of spaces in this Settlement: firstly the mapping of a social space which defines the various grades and sections of village society; secondly, the mapping of land into different categories, humanized for the purpose of subsistence and settlement. The placing of both these maps onto one another then results in a frame which defines both ownership in land (and transfers in ownership), and sources and items of revenue. The settlement also has details of livestock, mills, the distribution of water for irrigation purposes, etc.

The Bandobast for Tegar classified households according to the following categories: 1 household belonged to the *Kalon* category (Chief minister); 1 household was *Lonpo* (minister); 32 households were *Zamindars* (farmers; and one out of these was *Arghun*); 1 household was *Onpo* (astrologer); 2 households were *Shinkans* (carpenters); 1 household was *Mussalman* (Muslim); and 2 *gompas* held land - Diskit and Samstanling.

The Bandobast for Hundar classified the households into the following categories: 1 household belonged to the *Lonpo* category; 40 households were *Zamindars* (including 1 *Balti* household, 3 *Arghun* households, and one *Isahi*); 1 household was *Larje* (doctor); 2 households were *Gara* (blacksmiths); 5 households were *Mon* (musicians and carpenters); Diskit, Chemrey, Samstanling and Hemis *gompas* were landowners.

There is a further classification of land as that under settlement (houses and canals), *Abad-i-de*, and that which was government land (roads, market areas, gardens and Muslim cemeteries), *Khalsa Sircar*.

What is significant about this classification is that it is partly defined by religion, as for instance in the classification of certain households as *Isahi* or *Balti*, partly by social role or function, as *zamindar*, *larje*, *gara*, *onpo* etc., and partly by social status, the *Kalons* and the *Lonpos* being the highest in the social hierarchy and

the *Mon* being the lowest. It is also defined partly by the ownership/tenancy polarity with the *gompas* and the *Sircar* being landlords and tenants being a sub-category under the landlords; it is defined occasionally by family name, for example *Kalon*.

By contrast Gokhale-Chatterjee (1987) and Mann (1972) describe Ladakhi society as being composed of ethnic groups; among the Buddhists, according to them, are included the *Botos* or Ladakhis (agriculturists), *Gara* (blacksmiths with some land), *Mon* (carpenters and musicians who have no land and only sell their labour); among the Muslims are the *Baltis* (Shias) and the *Arghuns* (of Kashmiri/Turkestanian and Ladakhi parents) who are agriculturists and the *Beda* (wandering minstrels). Besides these there are the Changpas (pastoralists) and the Dards (agriculturists, a section of whom are Buddhists). Mann and Gokhale-Chatterjee do not see that social classification occurs in Ladakh not according to one dominant criterion, but according to various factors not all of which coalesce, as can be seen from the varied categories that the Bandobast uses to define the population. The actual position is that there are a number of criteria for classification — ethnic origins, territory, occupation, religion, rank, etc. which cross-cut each other.

The households in Tegar and Hundar present some disparities in wealth, occupation, prestige and influence. In the past there were ranked social groups sustained by rents and customary obligations. Gokhale-Chatterjee says that in the past society was classified into four different strata (including therefore the ethnic groups) in any local context: the royalty, including the king and ministers; the nobility; the peasants, who also supplied the revenue officers, the village headman, the temple guard, the master of the castle, the doctor, the astrologer and the oracle; and the outcastes, who included the blacksmiths, carpenters and musicians, and wandering minstrels (ibid.pp.459-461).

After the inclusion within the Indian state, the abolishing of the monarchical system (a process which began after the Dogra wars), and the Land Reforms, this system has altered. Only *gompas* were exempt from the act and continue to hold a large amount of land. The socio-economic processes of the Indian state have also created forces which resulted in new forms of social differentiation by creating bureaucratic offices, military positions of power, a commercial life which far exceeds in volume what existed previous to the closing of the borders and the traffic with Central Asia, Tibet, etc. A person can thus advance himself/herself by state patronage, through education, piety, commerce, and so on. Only the starting point of power is land and such paths as mentioned above which take men and women outside

the settlement also bring strangers into it.

In the two villages, people tend to identify the following groups in terms of their occupations:

1. *Skutag* (old nobility, the upper strata, generally large landlords);
2. *Zingbatpa* (peasants);
3. *Mullahs*, *lamas* and *chomos* (religious persons);
4. *Mulazzim* (anyone connected with administrative work)
5. *Sepahi* (soldiers in the Indian army); and
6. *Mon*, *beda* and *gara* (the lowest rank).

The first and sixth form the clearest positions in the social hierarchy, being the highest and the lowest group. In the middle ranges, issues are more complex: for this differentiation is largely by occupation, past and present, and in the same household may be combined in a complicated form. It is not just relative wealth which decides, but also such factors as those with whom they are married or can marry. The monks are usually celibate, only some Drugpa monks marry. The other strata tend to form relatively endogamous groups - 2, 4, and 5 form one such group; the higher positions among 4 and 5 tend to form another such group with 1; 6 tends to be another group. This is less due to a formal rule than due to political, strategic and existential choices. These broad groups are complicated also by various sources of status and power today. In general it can be said that there are two systems of role positions currently that combine in a complicated fashion within a household and between households: given the considerable expansion in population and material resources, especially non-agricultural, it follows that if the classification given by Gokhale-Chatterjee is accurate, i.e. comprising of the royalty, the nobility, the peasant, and the outcaste (though we must include in this classification also the clergy who rank with the nobility or the peasants, depending on the rank of the monk), then this earlier role complex has been replaced by one that is far more complicated as indicated in the tables earlier for each household in the two villages.

Apart from the two modalities mentioned earlier i.e. according to religion and occupation, households within the secondary level of integration are grouped according to three other modalities. The first is the work group for all major occupations in the field; the second is the group which assists the household in life-crisis rituals called the "phaspun" in the case of the Buddhists and what I shall call the "iftarspun" in the case of the Muslims. These two — the work group and the ritual group — are not equivalent. The third is the minimum locus of political power — the village — which associates the household to all the other households in the locality and opposes it to other localities.

The work group

Within the limits of agricultural space and ecological time the village households organize themselves into fairly stable units for work. The smallest kind of work group is the household 'the unit of restricted simple exchange'⁴. The household is the locus of consumption and production and revolves around the axis of the hearth and the field made available by the joint efforts of the members. Day to day tasks in the field, such as watering, planting and transplanting vegetables, fencing, taking care of animals, collecting wood, etc., and in the house, such as cooking, spinning, etc., are done with certain basic tools which are owned by every household — the spade, the pick-axe, the hoe, the stove, the basket, and so on, requiring human labour.

But there are also tasks for which these do not suffice. Larger tools are pooled together by a stable group of various households composed of some kin and neighbours, or in the case of landlords, also including their tenants. These tools include the plough, the large winnowing plate, etc. used by what I shall call the extended group of simple exchange. Again there are tasks which involve all the households of the village for example, the cleaning of water channels, and involve 'the unit of complex exchange'. Since both fall within the territory of the village, they are a part of the secondary level of integration.

Men and women of the unit of simple extended exchange:

(1) harvest mustard and barley; (2) plough and sow fields for mustard and barley; (3) take manure to the fields and (4) take animals to pasture.

Women of the simple extended exchange unit do the weeding of the large fields.

Men and women of the complex exchange unit (1) de-silt the water channels and (2) prepare the main canals for water for irrigation.

These groups are fairly stable over time although in the period 1990-91 the Muslims had organised themselves into a new grouping and had disassociated themselves from their Buddhist kin and neighbours due to the anti-Muslim boycott.

The phaspun

The *phaspun* includes kin groups that are not related by affinity since there is a custom that one cannot marry one's *phaspun*

4. These terms are used in the same sense as they were used by Terray (1972).

member. The *phaspun* is mutually exclusive and it becomes visible in its corporate form during life-crisis rituals of various sorts — birth, marriage, death, etc. They may belong to the same village or to adjoining villages although the importance of their presence makes it necessary that they do not belong to far-flung ones. They meet at a feast twice a year. Each *khangchen* of a kin group calls every other kin group of the *phaspun* for a grand meal in turns. The first occasion when this happens is during *shrupla* when the sickle is removed from the house for cutting grass in the fields. This usually occurs during the month *Dawa Tukpa* (mid-July to mid-August). On the 12th /13th day of *Dawa Tukpa* all households in the village go to the main sluice of their fields and pour *chang* into it in an act of consecration. They then cut a basket full of grass from the fringes of the field and bring it to the house. A ring of grass is made and tied to the main pillar of the house, usually in the kitchen which is simultaneously the axis mundi and the dwelling of the god of the house. This cutting is only symbolic and the main work of grass cutting begins on a day fixed by the village headman. The *phaspun* affirm their solidarity at a feast in the nights of *shrupla*. The other occasion on which they meet is during the New Year festival, *Losar*.

Some writers in the past have emphasized the common ancestor within a *phaspun* and assume that the *phaspun* is a clan, and its members blood relations. However it is my view that a clan is not an accurate description of the *phaspun* in this area. Firstly this society does not have strong patrilineal or matrilineal tendencies in the practice of kinship and it functions on a bilateral basis. Secondly, in terms of practice, it can be observed that it is not consanguinity that is the decisive criterion. According to Brauen (1980) the *phaspun* is a group of people belonging to more or less closely situated households who have reciprocal privileges and duties, the adoration of a mutual tutelary deity, and a jointly owned furnace for the dead in common. A *phaspun* contains about 4—6 households he states, although in the village of Tegar one observed many more kin groups and therefore many more households. Being a member is not bequeathed through males only; all children succeed to their father's *phaspun*, or in the case of uxorilocal *magpa* marriages, to that of their mother. Change in residence can also lead to a different membership. Thus blood relations can belong to different *phaspun*. The fact that at funerals it is the *phaspun* that takes care of all the funerary arrangements which are taboo to the blood relations proves that it is not consanguinity that is a decisive criterion, either patrilineal or matrilineal, but the idiom of fictive siblingship through the *phas-lha* that is decisive. The apex of the group is the *phas-lha*, which is a symbol of unity whose support

is sought for prosperity and well-being; it is either a god or goddess. Brauen states that the Ladakhis are not in agreement over whether intermarriage is possible; there are indications that the rule of exogamy as now practised in the more distant areas of Leh was more strictly applied in the past. All these observations of Brauen's also apply to Tegar.

The *phaspun* duties included, in Tegar, assistance in life-crisis rituals since it is the *phaspun* who are supposed to stand by you in 'sorrow and happiness'; mutual support is expected in political disputes and occasionally, though it is not a rule, in agricultural work. There was some disagreement about whether Muslim households were also *phaspun* members. In Tegar there were seven *phaspuns* comprising of between 2-5 kin groups each and it is said that in the past the *Arghun* household used to be a member of a *phaspun*.

The iftarspun

The Sunni Muslims in Hundar (and I was given to believe this is the practice among the Noorbakshias as well) also have a group based on sibblingship, although not fictive in the case of the *phaspun*. This group consists of a set of households related by ties of marriage and agnation, *khutus* of a given *khangchen* who meet primarily during the *iftar* (the evening meal that breaks the Ramzan fast daily). It is my understanding that this group which call the *iftarspun* also assists in the main rites of passage although I did not observe any cases. I call it thus because this is a group which can be observed according to the practice of meeting at *iftar*, though the people themselves do not have any name for it. It appears to be equivalent to the kin group. For e.g. they give assistance and participate in such rituals as the birth of a child, a boy's circumcision, death, etc.

On the fourth day after the death of a person, the Koran is read and 5 or 7 rotis and 150 gm of meat is said to be distributed to all the village households. Between the first and the fourth day, people in the area visit bringing a small quantity of barley flour and some money with them. Until the fourth day, food and water in the house of death are not ingested because of pollution. On the 40th day again the Koran is read because the *ruh* (spirit) is said to inhabit the house until then. After a year, *Lokhor*, about fifteen people gather and read the Koran to "give peace to the *ruh*"; food is distributed to all those gathered, and those who have prayed for the dead are paid a compensation of five rupees or so.

On the occasion of the birth of a child the *azan* is spoken into the child's ear. On the 7th day it is named, an occasion called *akhikat*. The naming takes place by a sort of lottery where pieces of paper

holding various names are put into a container and a child is asked to pick one piece. A goat is slaughtered on this occasion and a part given to the mother to replace the milk and blood she has given to the baby. The rest is distributed to the poor and others.

On the day of the *sunnat* (circumcision), which is usually performed before a boy is 11-12 years old, relatives and friends, both men and women, go with incense, eggs, milk, and other gifts to give *mubarak* or greetings. Ritual scarfs are also exchanged.

On the occasion of marriage as well, the *iftarspun* is present. A lawyer is appointed to speak for the girl and two witnesses to vouch for the proceedings. In a separate room, the *imam* verifies the girl's acceptance of the proposal. The boy also gives his acceptance before a congregation. The *imam* reads out the *dua* (prayer) and ascertains the dowry. The *nikkah* ceremony takes place in the groom's house, or if it is a *magpa* marriage, in the bride's.

The *iftarspun* is usually a family consisting of brothers, father's brothers, sisters, etc. i.e. the branches of a *khangchen*, although it is my understanding that given the number of virilocal marriages among the Muslims in Hundar, it is usually a agnatic group. They meet by turns at *Ramzan*. In the period 1990-91 this group collapsed into the work group in the context of the Muslim boycott by the Buddhists. This coalescence is described below.

The calendar of agricultural work for a Muslim household is similar to the Buddhist one for the area. The ritual calendar is different but periodically at the completion of a cycle of festivity, the cycle of work provides a space and time in the ways of life of Buddhists and Muslims, of convergence. Besides the collective rituals such as *Id* there were those activities in the life cycle of individuals which involved also the *iftarspun*. Earlier the festive and ritual period and space also accommodated Buddhist neighbours and kin. In the period prior to 1990-91, there was an exchange of food, gifts, visits, etc. which ceased for that period. This was reflected in the work process as well. Hundar is divided into five geographical areas for the purpose of certain agricultural activities such as the cleaning of the canals, taking manure to the fields, etc., similar to the division of labour involved in Tegar. During 1990-91 they ceased to be a unit in all but the basic necessity i.e. the cleaning of the channel.

At the time of the agitation, the Muslims split into three groups in the village: Noorbakshias who sided with the Buddhists since they were excluded from the boycott; Sunnis who were intimidated by the threats and said they would support the LBA in its demands; and the Sunnis who opposed the LBA and were boycotted. This was in the period late-1989 onwards. But in late 1990, two

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movements occurred to change this grouping. All Sunnis came together as the LBA became more extreme in its approach and the Noorbakshias began to oscillate between the two groups. Towards mid-1991 when there was a possibility of elections being organised in Jammu and Kashmir, the LBA realised that it would not win the Congress-I ticket unless it attempted a rapprochement with the Muslims. Some Buddhist families began to borrow tools, animals etc. from Muslims for work purposes and also began to buy goods from their shops, or travel in their vehicles which hitherto had ceased. In the meantime Muslims had begun to assist each other in work, meet for the Friday *jumma*, and form themselves into smaller work units for mutual assistance. When questioned, the Sunnis claimed that they formed one group as Muslims since they were a cohesive ritual and work unit although clearly in terms of origin and social and religious factors there were differences. The Sunnis were descendants of both Ladakhis and others — Kashmiri and Yarkandi traders, officials etc. - while the Noorbakshias were mainly tenants and servants of wealthy Buddhist families in Hundar who received land after the reforms.

But in 1990-91 the *iftarspun* and the work group for a Muslim household had tended to become unified, being linked to their Buddhist neighbours only in the most formal sense i.e. for the purpose of cleaning and regulating the water canals for which the labour and co-operation of the area's households was unavoidable. Prior to the boycott, the ritual and the work group were not identified. I do not know how far the current political reconciliation between Buddhists and Muslims from the end of 1992 has altered this situation.

The village

The minimal and customary unit of political power in the valley is the village. From a height, a village is usually a triangular patch fanning out towards the river. The only ecological constraint for the founding of a village is that there must be water in the form of a glacier-fed stream since Ladakh is a cold desert. Villages are usually found by the side of a major channel sharing water sometimes with a neighbouring settlement. In the case of Hundar, water was shared between three villages, while in the case of Tegar, it was shared with another two, the times of receiving water being fixed by custom and need. As a rule, villages in the area are either formed by the farming land being at the base of the settled area of the village as a whole or by it being around each household. Both fieldwork villages were of the first type. A village has a *manekhang* with a priest, a *Zimskang*, and sometimes a noble family, branches of a family in Leh.

In a purely spatial sense again, territories of villages are separated by large distances, especially in a region where the population is extremely thin and the inhabited area small, making a village easily identifiable. A number of villages also have "gateways" to them (hollow entrances standing in the middle of the road), though not all. A large enough cluster of households usually forms a separate village, identifiable, as we said, as a patch of green near a mountain stream.

In general, one may say that there are three components of political power in Tegar or Hundar:

- (1) the village headman and his council;
- (2) the symbolic unity of the village seen as a relationship of gods to man, or of men to their significant others;
- (3) the material culture of the village, primarily in the form of the irrigation system and the arrangements for labour in agriculture.

All these are in turn affected by political institutions larger than the village which impinge on its internal affairs such as the LBA or the LMA, the administration in the form of the Assistant Commissioner, the District Commissioner and officials of the block, and the army, although in this article I will not deal with them.

(1) The representative of a village's political unity is the village headman, the *goba*, and the village council. In the past the position of the village headman may have been hereditary, the families of the nobles and the *Zimskang* also having de-jure political powers in addition to their being large landlords. This was largely customary, because power as such was not centralised, rather such nobles and petty chiefs had a great deal of autonomy, sending some gifts of tribute to the king in Leh and occasionally raising an army for him, but with the power to make or break him. The nobles and the *Zimskang* owned a large amount of land in the villages in an area as did the monastery, with a number of tenants, this itself being a source of great power. While relations within a village may have been oppressive, between the centre of the king and the local landlords, chiefs, ministers and monasteries, power seems to have been a site of centrifugal and centripetal forces rather than a clear-cut centralized system in which the clergy and the nobility were allied. (This is suggested by Samuel (1993) as well). In the present period, this power is considerably diminished both economically and politically, and the *goba* is chosen by rotation among the households for a period of two years. A male member of a household (the villagers admitting that it was rare that women become *goba*) is chosen at *Sakha*, the day ritually marking the beginning of an agricultural calendar, to be a *goba* for the next two years. A village council with six members or so is also chosen by

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rotation every year. The village council and *goba* maintain authority for the period of their office by agreement on the part of the people. The exchange is equal and commensurate, and every household has a chance to assume authority, each household acceding to the power of a deputed representative for a defined period. The political power of the *goba* includes (a) the settlement of disputes in the village; (b) control over the fair distribution of water along with another person, the *churspon*, appointed for that purpose for that year; (c) mediation between the district authorities and the village; and (d) assumption of a leading role in some rites like *Losar*.

(2) The field of power in the territory of the village is constituted by many items: authority and obedience in the choice of the *goba*, the gods whose blessings must be invoked i.e. sacred beneficence, and work. This field of power is also constituted by the thoughts, actions and words of its members, all of which form the "life-force", *la*, of the community, embodied in the *yul-lha* (the god of the village or settlement) which is affected and affects the life-force of individual members. Thus a rise in the disputes in the village, a decline of morality, a lack of participation in work and ritual by some of the members, etc. is felt to affect this power. This last aspect is described from the Buddhist point of view although there exists an analogy between the concept of the *ruh* (spirit) and the *la* used by Muslims and Buddhists respectively. I do not know if the Muslims also subscribe to a belief of a community spirit although there does exist a sense that the individual and the social are inter-related intrinsically. I was however told that at Turtuk near the ceasefire line, a nearly completely Muslim village, the *yul-lha* is propitiated by Muslims. Bray (1991) cites a similar case at Khuksho in Purig.

The symbolic unity of the village as opposed to other villages, the internal field of power and well-being, is affirmed in the presence of the *lha* of the village settlement. Each settlement has a stone-cairn or *lhato* where the god is felt to dwell. Every year at *Jipa Chukshik*, the 11th day of the fourth month, the *yul-lha* of Tegar has its annual *lapsang*. The 'waist band' of the *lhato* is replaced with a fresh one during the cleansing and *shukpa* (juniper incense) is burned, with organisers providing these items to the praying monks. These organisers belong to the entire village and two families take turns every year to be the officiants. Both men and women may be present. The *pumpa*, sacred little pots containing seeds, are removed from the body of the *lhato* and replaced. There is a direct relationship between the seeds, the agricultural crop for that year and the well-being of the village. If that year the seeds are not depleted in the pot, then it is read as an omen of good fortune and auspiciousness; otherwise some

danger is felt to be augured for the village community. The *yullha* is also felt to be a protector of the community and propitiated if need be.

The second time when the boundaries of the village as a locus of power become visible is during *Losar*. This time the community of persons in the village is acknowledged by all groups in the village, although again in the context of the boycott, Muslims did not participate in the festivities as they had done in the past. The participation of the households in the village in its events, the exchange of gifts and visits, the assembly of the village men at a bonfire to burn the evil of the past year of the community, etc. affirms its boundedness and unity.

The third time is during the ritual called *Bumskor*, in *Dawa Tukpa*, the sixth month of the Buddhist calendar. This occurs at mid-point between sowing and reaping, when the sacred books of the monastery or *manekhang* are carried by the villagers on their backs in a path around the village. Men, women and children participate in charting the path that forms the limits of the village, including fields and houses.

These symbolic aspects of the village's boundedness are complex in nature: it can happen that a certain rite can come to be perceived as a rite of a particular group as was the case in the three occasions cited above, when it was felt by the Muslims in Tegar and Hundar that these were specifically Buddhist rites. In the past, the New Year festival also formed an instance of the unity of the village. Although it has achieved the status of a Buddhist festival, this idea of a festival to mark the winter solstice and view it as a rite of transition to a new period is common to a number of agricultural communities. Certainly there are a number of elements in the festival which are neither Buddhist nor Muslim but merely those of peasants; the monastery does not even participate in the round of feasting, drinking and games. Even if it is assumed that it was a Buddhist festival, the exchange of gifts and counter gifts ensured that the Muslims were also part of festivities marking the New Year; they visited the houses of their Buddhist neighbours to give *mubarak* and in turn were visited and greeted during such festivals as *Id*. It is possible that such an exchange has been resumed since the boycott has been called off.

(3) The material culture of the village as a factor in power situations in the village, including both Muslims and Buddhists, was most evident during the constitution of the complex unit of exchange which involves the labour of everyone within the bounds of the community for the purpose of the very conditions of their existence — the channelling of water through the canals for agriculture. The place of water systems in the constitution of unity and a decentralised system

of power has not really been addressed in the case of Ladakh. As explained in the earlier section, when the village community was under threat by the anti-Muslim boycott, its material unity nevertheless continued in a very basic sense due to the system of water management in Ladakh's villages. (I do not know of any instance during the boycott when water was denied to Muslim farmers, although there was one case in Hargam village when pasture was denied). In most villages in Ladakh, water systems encompass more than one village, their usage fixed by ancient custom and more or less continued during the Dogra rule and after 1947. As Gutschow (1993) has suggested, the analysis of water systems in various societies of the Tibetan ecological zone provides clues as to the practice of politics in these societies. Thus, in Tibet, water rights were adjudicated by a district official responsible to the Dalai Lama of Lhasa, and relatively centralised. In Ladakh and Zaskar, they were less centralised and managed by a village official in the former and by inter-household consensus in the latter. Disputes were also decided at the village level, rarely reaching higher authorities, and one may presume that this was true of most other conflicts. Gutschow points out that, similarly, power is not concentrated in Ladakh and Zaskar, but the tightness that the web of water management exercises creates both intimacy and control. Water has to be channelled to every field by a strict system of rotation and equality; everyone in the village keeps a strict watch on the usage of water and on each other so that although, as Gutschow suggests, the problems of distribution are complex, exploitation is rare. (see also Osmaston *et al.* 1994)

Conclusion

In this article I have tried to lay out the organisation of the "community" in two villages in Nubra valley, taking as a domain of description and analysis, the secondary level of integration, i.e. the territory of the village. The thesis of this article was that "community" can be understood as a locus of cross-cutting ties, so that persons allied in terms of one rule of association are separated by another. Roles are therefore not unitary in their enablements, but are premised on social variety. Further, by providing examples of Muslims and Buddhists in the valley, I have tried to show that there is a parallelism between their patterns of organisation, even though the current political situation has created a sense of separate identity.

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