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Maria-Magdalena Fuchs & Simon Wolfgang Fuchs

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INTRODUCTION

Religious Minorities in Pakistan: Identities, Citizenship and Social Belonging

Maria-Magdalena Fuchs[a] and Simon Wolfgang Fuchs[b]

[a]Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, Germany; [b]Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies, University of Freiburg, Freiburg, Germany

ABSTRACT
This introduction to the special section of *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, titled 'Religious Minorities in Pakistan', reviews the existing scholarship on this topic, points out gaps in the research, and discusses problematic notions and assumptions in both popular and academic discourses on minorities. Furthermore, it attempts a definition of the term 'religious minority', demonstrates its extensive entanglement with the question of caste—a characteristic specific to the South Asian case—and situates this discourse within broader debates about post-colonial state-building, the history of sectarianism in the region, contestations over religious authority, and the striving for a coherent political and cultural identity in Pakistan, the second-largest Muslim nation in the world.

KEYWORDS
Ahmadis; belonging; Christians; citizenship; Dalits; group identities; Hindus; Pakistan; religious minorities; Shi'ites

The music video '*Yesu Naam* (Jesus' Name)' opens with Pakistani Christian performer Ribqa Arif standing underneath the stone arches of a historic building in her South Asian homeland.[1] Wearing local dress which covers her entire body, including a headscarf, she sings in Punjabi: 'The name of Jesus is like a prayer, it stays in my heart … . From the clouds shines His glory and remains with me'.[2] After a cut, we find her on a fishing boat on a tranquil lake, situated perhaps in the Pakistani part of Kashmir, from where Arif hails. Her lyrics continue: 'His gaze brings healing, it will cure my sickness … . My consciousness is the lamp of God, do not let it be extinguished, keep it lit!' Nothing about the video's setting, the architecture used as a backdrop, the singer's full-length dress covering everything but her hands and face, or the song's traditional harmonies and rhythms mixed with elements of pop music suggest that Arif belongs to a minority that is regarded by many as an 'outsider' in Pakistan. Likewise, no casual viewer would guess that the Pakistani Christian community consists to a large extent of

CONTACT Maria-Magdalena Fuchs maria.m.fuchs@gmail.com

1. Ribqa Arif, '*Yesu Naam*', lyrics and composition by Zeeshan Rafiq, arrangements by Anthony Soshil, video by Sohail Joseph [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rBsWA-k4wU&list=RD7rBsWA-k4wU&start_radio=1, accessed 19 Sept. 2019].
2. Translation by Asim Shaukat, Forman Christian College, Lahore.

descendants of converts from low-caste and untouchable backgrounds, whose multifaceted belief systems mostly emerged in conversation with Hindu religious ideas and practices.[3] Rather, the video abounds with visual references to Muslim cultural markers. But the song's title and some of the imagery employed in the lyrics betray its Christian origin. Since the video was uploaded in November 2017, it has been viewed more than 260,000 times, which speaks to the wide-ranging appeal of Pakistani Christian music both within and outside the country.[4]

Religious minorities, Pakistan and the state of the field

Religious minorities make up only about 4 percent of Pakistan's total population, yet they feature prominently in news reports about the second-largest Muslim nation-state in the world.[5] In contrast to the scenery depicted in the music video, though, the atmosphere for minorities in Pakistan is usually portrayed as anything but peaceful. At the centre of the popular discourse on this topic lies an emphasis on everyday experiences of violence, discrimination and exclusion. Issues range from a lack of access to education, sanitation, transportation and health care, to occupational discrimination and more direct experiences of violence such as abductions and forced conversions, accusations of blasphemy, targeted killings, and frequent attacks on places of worship.[6] This portrayal of religious minorities in Pakistan seems to suggest that little or no normal life is possible for them.

Parallel to the popular discourse, academic debates on Pakistan's religious minorities mirror similar concerns.[7] Scholarly discussions on the topic began to take off about

3. Christopher Harding, *Religious Transformation in South Asia: The Meanings of Conversion in Colonial Punjab* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
4. Many comments under the video were left by Indian Christians, for example.
5. For census purposes, Hindus, Christians, Ahmadis and so-called 'Scheduled Castes' (in this order) are regarded as religious minorities by the Pakistani government. Smaller minorities are collectively labelled as 'other'. According to the 2017 Census, Muslims make up 96.2 percent of Pakistan's population, Hindus 1.6 percent, Christians 1.59 percent, Scheduled Castes 0.25 percent, Ahmadis 0.22 percent, and other minorities 0.07 percent. Most Christians live in the Punjab, while Hindus and Scheduled Castes are overwhelmingly located in Sindh. Ahmadis are evenly spread throughout the country, with some concentration in Islamabad. See 'Population by Religion', *2017 Census*, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, [http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files//tables/POPULATION%20BY%20RELIGION.pdf, accessed 5 Nov. 2019]. Pakistan's Shi'i community, which is not counted as a religious minority in the census, makes up around 20 percent of the total population, with estimates varying widely from 15 percent to 25 percent. See Andreas Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan: A Beleaguered and Assertive Minority* (London: Hurst, 2015), p. xi.
6. Mohammed Hanif, 'Pakistan: Land of the Intolerant', *The New York Times* (19 Oct. 2017) [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/19/opinion/pakistan-muslims-ahmadis.html, accessed 9 Oct. 2019]; 'Ahmadi Professor Found Murdered', *Dawn* (19 April 2017) [https://www.dawn.com/news/1327918, accessed 9 Oct. 2019]; 'Three Ahmadi Men Sentenced to Death on Blasphemy Charge', *Dawn* (12 Oct. 2017) [https://www.dawn.com/news/1363201, accessed 9 Oct. 2019]; Salman Masood and Mike Ives, 'Asia Bibi, Christian Cleared of Blasphemy Charges, Leaves Pakistan for Canada', *The New York Times* (8 May 2019) [https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/08/world/asia/asia-bibi-blasphemy-pakistan-canada.html, accessed 9 Oct. 2019]; Salman Masood, 'Pakistan Church Attacked by Two Suicide Bombers', *The New York Times* (17 Dec. 2017) [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/17/world/asia/pakistan-quetta-church-attack.html, accessed 9 Oct. 2019]; and Maham Javed, 'Forced Conversions Torment Pakistan's Hindus', *Al-Jazeera* (18 Aug. 2014) [https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/08/forced-conversions-torment-pakistan-hindus-201481795524630505.html, accessed 9 Oct. 2019].
7. For the most recent examples, see Farahnaz Ispahani, *Purifying the Land of the Pure: A History of Pakistan's Religious Minorities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); and Tariq Rahman, 'Pakistan's Policies and Practices towards the Religious Minorities', in *South Asian History and Culture*, Vol. 3, no. 2 (2012), pp. 302–15.

four decades ago with Pieter H. Streefland's ethnographic study, *The Sweepers of Slaughterhouse: Conflict and Survival in a Karachi Neighbourhood*.[8] It firmly established the discourse in scholarly debates of the 'double discrimination' against Christians both on religious and caste grounds, but also provided readers with a detailed account of life in a Christian neighbourhood in one of Pakistan's most rapidly urbanising areas, including kinship connections, work arrangements and 'exchange economies'.

Since the introduction of the so-called 'blasphemy laws' between 1980 and 1986 during the dictatorship of President Zia-ul-Haq, academic discussions on minorities have mainly turned to two topics: the political implications of these laws, and the persecution of the country's Christian community. Both aspects are often discussed as intricately tied together.[9] With regard to the Christian minority, likewise, its status as a beleaguered, marginalised and persecuted community has been emphasised time and again.

A landmark study in this regard was Linda Walbridge's 2003 publication, *The Christians of Pakistan: The Passion of Bishop John Joseph*.[10] Like Streefland's account, it is an ethnography that focuses mostly on Punjabi Christians and their life-worlds. In contrast to Streefland, though, Walbridge does not look at discrimination and persecution mainly through the lens of caste stigmatisation, but rather makes the political and legal fallout from the blasphemy laws the centre of her discussion. As the subtitle of her book suggests, she explores these themes mainly through her biography of Pakistan's

8. Pieter H. Streefland, *The Sweepers of Slaughterhouse: Conflict and Survival in a Karachi Neighbourhood* (Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1979). The academic literature on religious minorities in the colonial period for the region that comprises today's Pakistan is much richer. See, for example, Harding, *Religious Transformation in South Asia*; and Harjot Oberoi, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
9. David F. Forte, 'Apostasy and Blasphemy in Pakistan', in *Connecticut Journal of International Law*, Vol. 10, no. 1 (1995), pp. 27–68; Linda Walbridge, 'The Christians of Pakistan: The Interaction of Law and Caste in Maintaining Outsider Status', in Maya Shatzmiller (ed.), *Nationalism and Minority Identities in Islamic Societies* (Montreal: Kingston, 2005), pp. 108–26; John O'Brien, *The Construction of Pakistani Christian Identity* (Lahore: Research Society of Pakistan, 2006); Rasul B. Rais, 'Identity Politics and Minorities in Pakistan', in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, no. 1 (2007), pp. 111–25; David Pinault, *Notes from the Fortune-Telling Parrot: Islam and the Struggle for Religious Pluralism in Pakistan* (London: Equinox, 2008), pp. 38–58; Osama Siddique and Zahra Hayat, 'Unholy Speech and Holy Laws: Controversial Origins, Design Defects and Free Speech Implications', in *Minnesota Journal of International Law*, Vol. XXVII, no. 2 (2008), pp. 303–85; Theodor Hanf and Charles Amjad-Ali (eds), *Leaving the Shadows? Pakistani Christians and the Search for Orientation in an Overwhelmingly Muslim Society* (Bonn: Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, 2008); Theodore Gabriel, *Christian Citizens in an Islamic State: The Pakistan Experience* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Asad Ali Ahmed, 'Specters of Macaulay: Blasphemy, the Indian Penal Code, and Pakistan's Postcolonial Predicament', in Raminder Kaur and William Mazzarella (eds), *Censorship in South Asia: Cultural Regulation from Sedition to Seduction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 172–205; Tahir Kamran, 'Community of the Marginalized: State, Society and Punjabi Christians', in *South Asian Review*, Vol. 31, no. 2 (2010), pp. 66–83; Shaun Gregory, 'Under the Shadow of Islam: The Plight of the Christian Minority in Pakistan', in *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 20, no. 2 (2012), pp. 195–212; Roger Ballard, *The Christians of Pakistan: A Historical Overview and the Assessment of Their Current Position* (Manchester: Centre for Applied South Asian Studies, 2012); Ajay K. Raina, 'Minorities and Representation in a Plural Society: The Case of the Christians of Pakistan', in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 37, no. 4 (2014), pp. 684–99; Amalendu Misra, 'Life in Brackets: Minority Christians and Hegemonic Violence in Pakistan', in *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, Vol. 22, no. 2 (2015), pp. 157–81; Qaiser Julius, 'The Experience of Minorities under Pakistan's Blasphemy Laws', in *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, Vol. 27, no. 1 (2016), pp. 95–115; Edwina Pio and Jawad Syed, 'Marked by the Cross: The Persecution of Christians in Pakistan', in Jawad Syed *et al.* (eds), *Faith Based Violence and Deobandi Militancy in Pakistan* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Qaiser Julius, *Ahmadi and Christian Socio-Political Responses to Pakistan's Blasphemy Laws: A Comparison, Contrast and Critique with Special Reference to the Christian Church in Pakistan* (Carlisle: Langham, 2017); and Paul Rollier, '"We're All Blasphemers": The Life of Religious Offence in Pakistan', in Paul Rollier, Kathinka Frøystad and Arild Engelsen Ruud (eds), *Outrage: The Rise of Religious Offence in Contemporary South Asia* (London: UCL Press, 2019), pp. 48–76.
10. Linda Walbridge, *The Christians of Pakistan: The Passion of Bishop John Joseph* (London: Routledge, 2003).

first ethnic Punjabi Catholic bishop, John Joseph. Joseph was appointed as bishop of the diocese of Faisalabad in 1984, but committed suicide on 6 May 1988 in front of the sessions court in Sahiwal, a city about fifty miles south of Lahore, in protest against the blasphemy laws.[11] The fact that it had taken the Catholic Church more than three decades to appoint a representative of the largest ethnic group of Pakistani Christians to this high-ranking position hints at considerable colonial baggage in terms of institutionalised racism and entrenched power structures within Pakistani church institutions. While Critical Mission Studies have already investigated other former mission fields and led to the recovery of indigenous, and particularly female, believers' voices, research into this topic with regard to Pakistan is literally non-existent.[12] This lacuna should not distract from Walbridge's valuable contributions, however. Having previously researched the Shi'i community of Lebanon, she not only added a wealth of ethnographic observations and new source material to debates about Christianity in Pakistan, but also drew some fascinating parallels between the ritual practices of Shi'is and Christians in the country. Walbridge observed that after the death of Bishop Joseph, Christians took to the streets in demonstrations similar to Ashura mourning processions, beating their chests and wearing heavy chains.[13] Such observations, as well as the fact that both Protestant and Catholic communities in the Punjab counted a number of high-caste converts from Shi'i backgrounds among their most eminent leaders even before Partition, have the potential to open up fruitful debates about intellectual cross-fermentation between Christian and Shi'i theology, spirituality and *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation history).[14] Likewise, the annual fair (*mela*) held at the Catholic shrine of Mariamabad, a majority Christian village in the Sheikhupura district just south of Lahore, which draws more than one million pilgrims from diverse religious backgrounds every year, provides a fascinating opportunity to study historical, cultural and spiritual connections between local Hindu, Sufi and Christian practices. Yet, an in-depth study of the Mariamabad shrine and *mela* still remains a major desideratum.

Such promising leads on historical continuities and similarities between minority communities were rarely further explored in scholarship in the decades following the publication of Walbridge's book. Rather, the focus remained firmly on the blasphemy laws, and the portrayal of minorities, and particularly Christians, as 'a beleaguered community, some of whom constitute the wretched of the earth, simply surviving from day to day while facing a multitude of humiliations'.[15] Only recently have some authors begun to push back against the Christian community's portrayal as passive recipients of violence by emphasising its members' contributions to the political discourse and their involvement in social and media work.[16] In a ground-breaking study, Detlef

11. *Ibid.*, p. ix.
12. For a highly informative contribution to Critical Mission Studies in the context of Ottoman Syria, which highlights the contribution of local Protestant Christians, and particularly women, see Deanna Ferree Womack, *Protestants, Gender and the Arab Renaissance in Late Ottoman Syria* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).
13. Walbridge, *The Christians of Pakistan*, p. 186.
14. On high-caste converts from Shi'ism to Christianity, see Maria-Magdalena Fuchs, 'Adding Layers: Convert Identities in Late Colonial Punjab', unpublished Master's thesis, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK, 2012.
15. Walbridge, *The Christians of Pakistan*, p. ix.
16. Sara Singha, 'Christians in Pakistan and Afghanistan: Responses to Marginalization from the Peripheries', in Daniel Philpott and Timothy Samuel Shah (eds), *Under Caesar's Sword: How Christians Respond to Persecution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 229–58.

Hiller has explored how the growing impact of Pentecostal churches, many of them boasting international connections and focused on so-called 'faith healing', has the potential to endow Pakistani Christians with a new and activist self-confidence: adherents of Pentecostalism in Pakistan 'do not perceive themselves any more primarily as a powerless and casteless colonial remnant within a state that is increasingly influenced by Islamist powers, but rather as part of a global and dynamic movement of the Holy Spirit'.[17] A tiny fraction of the available research is also devoted to other aspects of Christian lived experiences, such as intersections with caste, narratives of historical origins, or attempts at establishing dialogue with other communities of faith, but this remains an exception.[18]

Compared with the Christian community, much less scholarship is available on other minorities, such as Shi'is, Ahmadis, Hindus and Sikhs.[19] This omission is particularly glaring with regard to Hindus, who, at least numerically, make up the same percentage of the population as Christians, but have much deeper roots in the history of the subcontinent.[20] With regard to the Ahmadiyya, a notable intervention was made by Ali Usman Qasmi's analytically grounded, historically rigorous study, *Ahmadis and the Politics of Religious Exclusion in Pakistan*.[21] This monograph provides an in-depth engagement with the community's social and political history in the context of its relationship with the Pakistani state. Qasmi demonstrates in particular how political calculations, a decline of the (instrumentalised) modernist interpretations of Islam held by the Muslim bourgeoisie, and the rising influence of Muslim religious scholars (*'ulama*) have all converged in denying Ahmadis the right to call themselves Muslims in Pakistan today. In another major study on the subject, Saadia Saeed points out how the lack of a 'concrete official ideology committed to equal citizenship rights for all

17. Detlef Hiller, *Das neue pakistanische Christentum: Die 'Charismatisierung' des Glaubensverständnisses und der Glaubenspraxis pakistanischer Christen untersucht anhand der Bedeutung von 'healing and deliverance'* (Neuendettelsau: Erlanger Verlag für Mission und Ökumene, 2014), p. 268.
18. Exceptions include O'Brien, *Pakistani Christian Identity*; and Fuchs, 'Walking a Tightrope'. See also the six-volume history of Catholic Christianity in Pakistan written by John Rooney, a missionary belonging to the Saint Joseph's Missionary Society of Mill Hill, UK, titled *Shadows in the Dark* (1984), *On Heels of Battle* (1986), *Into Deserts* (1986), *On Rocky Ground* (1987), *The Hesitant Dawn* (1988) and *Symphony on Sands* (1988), all published as part of the Christian History Monograph Series by the Christian Study Centre, Rawalpindi.
19. Khan Muhammad Waliullah Khan, *Sikh Shrines in Pakistan* (New Delhi: Kalpaz, 2000); Ian Talbot, 'Pakistan and Sikh Nationalism: State Policy and Private Perceptions', in *Sikh Formations*, Vol. 6, no. 1 (2010), pp. 63–76; Sadia Saeed, 'Political Fields and Religious Movements: The Exclusion of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan', in *Political Power and Social Theory*, Vol. 23 (2012), pp. 189–223; Asif Arif, *L'Ahmadiyya: Un islam interdit: Histoire et persécutions d'une minorité au Pakistan* (Paris: Harmattan, 2014); Jürgen Schaflechner, 'Forced Conversion and (Hindu) Women's Agency in Sindh', in *South Asia Chronicle*, Vol. 7 (2017), pp. 275–317; Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan: A History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), pp. 164–94; and Gurharpal Singh, 'The Control of Sacred Spaces: Sikh Shrines in Pakistan from the Partition to the Kartarpur Corridor', in *Sikh Formations*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (2019), pp. 1–18.
20. This gap has only recently begun to be filled by studies such as that by Jürgen Schaflechner, *Hinglaj Devi: Identity, Change, and Solidification at a Hindu Temple in Pakistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); and Jürgen Schaflechner, 'Hinduism in Pakistan', in Tracy Coleman (ed.), *Oxford Bibliographies in Hinduism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019) [https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399318/obo-9780195399318-0220.xml, accessed 1 Dec. 2019]. For the appeal of the Pithoro Pir shrine in the Thar desert, which manages to attract devotees from outside the Hindu community proper, see Michel Boivin, 'Shivaite Cults and Sufi Centres: A Reappraisal of the Medieval Legacy in Sindh', in Michel Boivin (ed.), *Sindh through History and Representations: French Contributions to Sindhi Studies* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 22–41. For some observations on popular expressions of Hindu piety, see also Pinault, *Notes from the Fortune-Telling Parrot*, pp. 11–37; and Haroon Khalid, *Shiva: A Study of Folk Religious Practices in Pakistan* (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2015).
21. Ali Usman Qasmi, *The Ahmadis and the Politics of Religious Exclusion in Pakistan* (London: Anthem Press, 2014).

religious groups' meant that the Ahmadi question continued to crop up in the political field. Saeed singles out the 'religio-politicization of the courts' since the 1980s as putting a final end to the remarkable ability of the legal sphere to protect 'the rights of Ahmadis as full citizens of the state'.[22]

With respect to the Shi'i community, Andreas Rieck's recent publication, *The Shias of Pakistan*, is the first book-length study solely dedicated to the topic.[23] Drawing on a wide range of fresh sources, Rieck meticulously details both the internal tensions among Shi'is as well as their struggle to claim communal rights and protection from the Pakistani state.[24] Simon Wolfgang Fuchs' *In a Pure Muslim Land: Shi'ism between Pakistan and the Middle East* complements Rieck's lens by shedding light on the dialectics of local and transnational Shi'i religious thought while also providing a reinterpretation of sectarianism in Pakistan.[25] Yet, despite these valuable contributions, the focus on exclusion and discrimination remains pervasive in the scholarly literature on minorities in Pakistan.

Persecution and other preoccupations

Such a one-sided discourse can be problematic for several reasons. One aspect it overlooks is that many of these traumatic experiences are not restricted to religious minorities. Rather, they are shared by many Pakistani citizens, who are facing an increasingly failing legal system, a brutalising state, and the absence of rule of law in a number of areas.[26] In 2019, the country's overall human rights record is abysmal, as reports by

22. Sadia Saeed, *Politics of Desecularization: Law and the Minority Question in Pakistan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 42–3.
23. Some earlier works include Muhammad Qasim Zaman, 'Sectarianism in Pakistan: The Radicalization of Shi'i and Sunni Identities', in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 32, no. 3 (1998), pp. 689–716; Syed Hussain Arif Naqvi, 'The Controversy about the Shaykhiyya Tendency among Shia "Ulamā" in Pakistan', in Werner Ende and Rainer Brunner (eds), *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 135–49; and Vernon J. Schubel, *Religious Performance in Contemporary Islam: Shi'i Devotional Rituals in South Asia* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993). Compare also several articles by Mariam Abou Zahab, for example 'The Sunni–Shia Conflict in Jhang (Pakistan)', in Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld (eds), *Lived Islam in South Asia: Adaptation, Accommodation and Conflict* (Delhi: Social Science, 2004), pp. 135–48; '"Yeh Matam Kayse Ruk Jae? (How Can This *Matam* Ever Cease?)": Muharram Processions in the Pakistani Punjab', in Knut A. Jacobsen (ed.), *South Asian Religions on Display: Religious Processions in South Asia and in the Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 104–14; and 'The SSP: Herald of Militant Sunni Islam in Pakistan', in Laurent Gayer and Christophe Jaffrelot (eds), *Armed Militias of South Asia: Fundamentalists, Maoists and Separatists* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 159–76.
24. Qasmi, *The Ahmadis and the Politics of Religious Exclusion*; and Andreas Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan: An Assertive and Beleaguered Minority* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).
25. See Simon Wolfgang Fuchs, *In a Pure Muslim Land: Shi'ism between Pakistan and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019).
26. Secret military courts and 'speed trials', the violation of basic rights by paramilitary and security forces, mass telephone and online surveillance, press censorship, and the persecution of human rights activists, journalists, academics, political dissidents, spokespersons for ethnic minorities and women's rights advocates are just some of the points regularly raised. See, for example, Jeffrey Gettleman, 'Gulalai Ismail, Feminist Hunted by Pakistan's Authorities, Escapes to US', *The New York Times* (19 Sept. 2019) [https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/19/world/asia/gulalai-ismail-pakistan-activist.html, accessed 9 Oct. 2019]; Salman Masood, Mujib Mashal and Zia ur-Rehman, '"Time Is Up": Pakistan's Army Targets Protest Movement, Stifling Dissent', *The New York Times* (28 May 2019) [https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/28/world/asia/pakistan-pashtun-dissent.html?module=inline, accessed 9 Oct. 2010]; Umair Javed, 'Justice Awaited', *Dawn* (23 Sept. 2019) [https://www.dawn.com/news/1506835/justice-awaited, accessed 9 Oct. 2019]; Taha Siddiqui, 'Dear Pak, Kashmir Needs Solidarity—So Do "Missing" Pakistanis', *The Quint* (4 Sept. 2019) [https://www.thequint.com/voices/opinion/pakistan-solidarity-with-kashmir-human-rights-abuse-by-army-missing-pakistanis, accessed 9 Oct. 2019].

several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and watchdogs confirm.[27] Contrary to popular perception, Pakistan is not only a dangerous place for minorities, but indeed for a great number of its citizens. This shared experience of violence, and the resulting negative effects, cannot be emphasised enough, and it connects minorities in Pakistan with other sections of the population. Still, given their much smaller numbers, religious minorities are often disproportionately affected by these incidents. They are frequently singled out or deliberately targeted for their religious belonging, and also have less access to resources that could help them cope with these traumata. Some official legislation, such as select passages in the Pakistan Penal Code, also directly targets minority groups, especially the Ahmadiyya, who consequently face widespread ostracism and human rights abuses.[28] In addition, some of the legal framework of the state itself, including parts of its constitution, can be interpreted to mean that only Muslims are full citizens with guaranteed rights.[29] As a result, Pakistanis who belong to religious minorities are rendered more vulnerable by their religious affiliation and the resulting precarious status of their citizenship. Yet, their experiences also have to be analysed as part of a larger framework of state failure, the rise of authoritarianism and the resurgence of nationalist as well as communalist ideologies, instead of being reduced to simplistic explanations involving a pervasive 'intolerance' allegedly 'inherent' to Islam or processes of 'Islamisation'.

A second problem that emerges from a narrow focus on persecution and exclusion is that it creates the impression of a homogeneity of experiences, as if minority members were an unidentifiable mass of oppressed people all suffering from the same fate. Seemingly, it does not matter whether a person is Shi'i, Ahmadi, Christian, Hindu or Sikh because, at the end of the day, all minorities are equally victims of a perceived collective rejection on the part of the Pakistani state and society. Such a consistently perpetuated narrative serves to eradicate a minority member's individuality, personal history and agency. It also narrows down her complex life-world and religious experiences to questions of religious exclusion and a daily battle against majoritarian 'bigotry'. Rather, minority belief systems, including their religious thought and practice, questions of piety, religious community and identity, are complex and diverse phenomena, varying considerably across region, social class and denomination. So far, we know very little about them, though. For example, in what ways have Ahmadi conceptions of Islamic law and theology evolved over the last decade? To what extent has the meaning and celebration of Hindu and Sikh festivals been shaped by the context of Pakistan? How were non-Muslim religious scriptures translated into local languages, interpreted over the course of history, and influenced by majority discourses? These are just some of the questions that have not been sufficiently explored so far in scholarship.

27. See Human Rights Watch, 'World Report 2019: Pakistan, Events of 2018' [https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/pakistan, accessed 9 Oct. 2019]; Ataurehman Saman (ed.), *Human Rights Monitor 2018: Religious Minorities in Pakistan* (Lahore: National Commission for Justice and Peace, May 2018) [http://www.ncjp-pk.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/religious-minorities-in-pakistan.pdf, accessed 16 Nov. 2019]; and Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, 'Forced Conversion of Religious Minorities in Pakistan: A Socio-Cultural Perspective' (2017) [http://www.ncjp-pk.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/forced%20conversion%20of%20religious%20in%20pakistan.pdf, accessed 9 Oct. 2019].
28. See Siddique and Hayat, 'Unholy Speech and Holy Laws'.
29. *Ibid*.

Additionally, what the prevalent discourse of 'victimhood' obscures is that minority members have many overlapping identities and concerns connecting them with larger society, such as ethnicity, gender, linguistic and cultural belonging, regional history, caste, social class, political allegiance and occupational status. For instance, and as mentioned previously, the overwhelming majority of Christians in Pakistan are ethnic Punjabis, and while they are a religious minority, they share historical, ethnic, cultural and linguistic ties with other Punjabis. Socially, minorities also often find themselves within a much broader spectrum. As Ammara Maqsood has argued in her recent study, Lahore's emerging middle class displays a shared emphasis on education, a 'rationalised' understanding of religion, and progressive thinking that cuts across sectarian and religious boundaries.[30]

In sum, much of the current discourse on minorities seems to suggest that their lives are left untouched by broader historical, social and political developments, as if they are floating in a timeless and unbounded void. It implies that their situation is locked into a permanent and unchanging present with no hope for improvement, while the larger society around them is constantly evolving. This ahistoric and disconnected reading of minorities as communities in isolation from broader societal developments is misleading and an artificial construction. As a result, while there is awareness that members of minorities face a multitude of difficulties in Pakistan, we know very little about *who* they actually are.

Predominant statistics and the hidden question of caste

This special section wants to address this problem by deliberately steering discussions away from a primary emphasis on exclusion and discrimination. In the context of this publication, we focus on Hindus, Christians and Dalits, thereby following the categorisation of religious minorities adopted by the Pakistani government for census purposes. An important qualification is that we add a comparative look at Pakistan's Shi'i community, which is not labelled as a minority according to the census, but do not discuss Ahmadis in detail.[31] The census speaks of 'Scheduled Castes', which is in itself an interesting fact given that caste is not primarily a religious, but rather a social category. Its usage in official terminology is also surprising because the Pakistani state officially disavows the caste system, as Hassan Javid and Nicolas Martin argue in their contribution to this special section. In contrast to the terminology applied in the census, however, we have chosen to use the more common term 'Dalit' to refer to a variety of people with (former) untouchable and low-caste status.[32] This allows for direct comparison with the Indian case and the history of Dalit movements across the border. Both 'Dalits' and 'Scheduled Castes' are terms frequently used by the authors of this special section. Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Baha'is, Kalash and others, who in the census are

30. Ammara Maqsood, *The New Pakistani Middle Class* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).
31. This special section was initially conceptualised to include a contribution focusing on Ahmadis too. Unfortunately, and due to circumstances beyond the control of the author, the article had to be withdrawn.
32. For a contemporary example of an author retaining the term 'untouchable' in his text since it is supposed to act as 'a provocation against those concepts that pass unchallenged in some segments of Indian society, even today', see Jesús Francisco Cháirez-Garza, 'Touching Space: Ambedkar on the Spatial Features of Untouchability', in *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 22, no. 1 (2014), p. 39.

summarised under the category of 'other' minorities, are present in Pakistan as well, and their histories form an important part of the country's past.[33] However, as none of the articles assembled here focuses specifically on them, they unfortunately fall outside the scope of this issue of *South Asia*.[34]

We are aware that such a numerically-oriented definition of 'religious minorities', which rests mainly on statistics created by state institutions, is marred by many problems. First, it risks privileging a narrow and historical contingent nationalist perspective on the question at hand. New nation-states in the twentieth century became preoccupied with the sudden 'emergence' of minorities as a threat to national unity, a concern which was foreign to premodern empires in which a tiny minority often ruled over a vast conglomerate of various religious and ethnic communities.[35] Yet, this 'threat is intrinsic to the ideology of nationalism because the modern concept of nationhood regards linguistic, ethnic, and cultural characteristics as a legitimate basis for people's claims to self-determination and independent statehood'; consequently, the League of Nations in the 1920s became instrumental in instituting minority treaties to 'regulate this dual character of "national minorities"'.[36] After World War II, there was even less appetite to accommodate difference: 'the mood in the General Assembly was for enforced assimilation and against any mechanisms that might retard this since new and old states alike agreed that minorities had undermined the stability of Europe'.[37] Pakistan was not isolated from such a trend: instead of institutionalising clear and enforceable constitutional safeguards for minority protection, the language remained vague. Debates in the country's Constitutional Assembly mostly focused on the 'hospitality' and 'generosity' exhibited by the Muslim majority, as Ghazal Asif demonstrates in her contribution to this special section: 'Neither of these gestures could accommodate the specificity of Dalit emancipation based on state recognition and constitutional safeguards as well as redress for historical oppression'.[38]

33. The Kalash are a tribal people who speak a Dardic language, reside in the Chitral valley in northern Pakistan and practise a form of animism. See Viviane Lièvre and Jean-Yves Loude, *Le chamanisme des Kalash du Pakistan: Des montagnards polythéistes face à l'islam* (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1990). Historically, Jews were present in Pakistan as well, although it seems the community has all but ceased to exist, mostly due to migration to Israel after 1947. See Shalva Weil, 'Pakistan', in Norman A. Stillman (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2010) [https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world/pakistan-SIM_0017240?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world&s.q=pakistan, accessed 5 Nov. 2019]. See also Tibor Krausz, '"Last Jew of Pakistan" Bemoans Israel Travel Ban', *UCA News* (20 July 2018) [https://www.ucanews.org/news/last-jew-of-pakistan-bemoans-israel-travel-ban/82864, accessed 4 Oct. 2019]; Saif Tahir, 'The Lost Jewish History of Rawalpindi', *Express Tribune* (23 Feb. 2016) [https://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/32513/the-lost-jewish-history-of-rawalpindi/, accessed 22 Oct. 2019]; Adil Najam, 'The Jews of Pakistan', *Pakistan Link* (30 Sept. 2005) [https://www.pakistanlink.org/Opinion/2005/Sep05/30/04.HTM, accessed 4 Nov. 2019]; and Zeeba T. Hashmi, 'The Jews of Pakistan', *Daily Times* (12 Nov. 2015) [https://dailytimes.com.pk/97778/the-jews-of-pakistan/, accessed 4 Nov. 2019].
34. For a detailed account of religious celebrations by Pakistan's Zoroastrians and Sikhs, see Haroon Khalid, *A White Trail: A Journey into the Heart of Pakistan's Religious Minorities* (Chennai: Westland, 2013), pp. 179–94, 213–326.
35. For premodern conceptions of empire, see Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 9–21.
36. Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 52–3.
37. Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 141.
38. Ghazal Asif, 'Jogendranath Mandal and the Politics of Dalit Recognition in Pakistan', in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, no. 1 (2020), DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2020.1689472.

To be sure, as soon as the nationalist framework is left behind, a group which constitutes a minority within the boundaries of a particular nation-state can quickly become a majority elsewhere. For example, while Shi'is form a minority in Pakistan, they constitute the majority of the population in neighbouring Iran. Both communities have intimate ties and Iran serves as an important destination for Pakistan's Shi'is in terms of religious education and pilgrimage.[39] A similar dynamic of minority–majority applies to Pakistan's Pashtun community. After crossing the border into Afghanistan, a Pakistani Pashtun has effectively become part of the largest ethnic group there.[40] This does not mean that Pakistani and Iranian Shi'is, or Pakistani and Afghani Pashtuns, are necessarily similar in all aspects of their lives. The larger point is that minorities, and their specific situatedness in post-colonial states, are first and foremost a product of nationalist ideologies, marked by the maps, boundaries and passports that come with those ideologies. In turn, this implies that minorities are easily in danger of being perceived as a 'fifth column', as Anushay Malik demonstrates in her contribution to this special section, which discusses how charges of spying for India were directed against Christians in the context of the 1965 war.[41] The flipside of the coin is that Christians, Hindus and Shi'is all exert significant energy in foregrounding their unmitigated loyalty toward the nation, as the contributions by Ryan Brasher, Jürgen Schaflechner and Simon Wolfgang Fuchs show.[42] There is a stark public–private divide to such performances of identity. Pakistanis from Hindu, Christian or Ahmadi communities often resort to outspoken patriotism in the public sphere. They are extremely careful, however, when it comes to debates over their beliefs, religious practices or views on Islam. This private–public fault-line maps onto the complicated 'hybrid identities' which minorities in Pakistan constantly have to negotiate.[43] However, minority histories, their sense of belonging, identities, and cultural as well as religious practices reach back long before nineteenth-century nationalist movements.

Another problem with the prominent focus on statistics is that these are never mere 'figures' but rather highly-politicised and often heavily-contested messages which emerge in a specific context. This becomes clear by looking at the run-up to the 2017

39. These close connections are also demonstrated by the impact of the Iranian Revolution on Pakistan. On this topic, see Fuchs, *In a Pure Muslim Land*, pp. 119–51.
40. It is commonly assumed that Pashtuns make up around 40–50 percent of Afghanistan's population. See Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 24–6. For the question of Pashtun ties across the border, see Elizabeth Leake, *The Defiant Border: The Afghan–Pakistan Borderlands in the Era of Decolonization, 1936–1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Amin Saikal, 'Afghanistan and Pakistan: The Question of Pashtun Nationalism?', in *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 30, no. 1 (2010), pp. 5–17; and Bijan Omrani, 'The Durand Line: History and Problems of the Afghan–Pakistan Border', in *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 40, no. 2 (2009), pp. 177–95.
41. Anushay Malik, 'Narrating Christians in Pakistan through Times of War and Conflict', in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, no. 1 (2020), DOI 10.1080/00856401.2020.1685204.
42. Ryan Brasher, 'Pride and Abstention: National Identity, Uncritical Patriotism and Political Engagement among Christian Students in Pakistan', in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, no. 1 (2020), DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2020.1689459; Jürgen Schaflechner, 'Betwixt and Between: Hindu Identity in Pakistan and "Wary and Aware" Public Performances', in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, no. 1 (2020), DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2020.1692277; and Simon Wolfgang Fuchs, 'Reclaiming the Citizen: Christian and Shi'i Engagements with the Pakistani State', in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, no. 1 (2020), DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2020.1689616.
43. Naika Foroutan, 'Hybride Identitäten: Normalisierung, Konfliktfaktor und Ressource in postmigrantischen Gesellschaften', in Heinz-Ulrich Brinkmann and Haci-Halil Uslucan (eds), *Dabeisein und Dazugehören: Integration in Deutschland* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2012), pp. 85–99.

population census in Pakistan, for example, when the country experienced intense debate over the question of how minority members would be counted.[44] Almost all religious minorities in Pakistan routinely accuse the state of underreporting their numbers or, in the case of the minorities summarised in the category of 'other', not even acknowledging their existence in the first place. Consequently, during the 2017 census, minority leaders called on their communities to register so that their presence would be better reflected in the statistics and their political representation boosted. Religion in this context, then, is turned into a category of political representation as well as a crucial way for a state to create categories of 'majorities' and 'minorities', which are subsequently used to implement policies, distribute resources and fuel identity discourses.

Third, to focus on religion as a primary marker of identity runs the risk of overemphasising religious belonging vis-à-vis other forms of identification. It also creates the impression of an internal homogeneity of minority communities, while in reality many fault-lines exist among the often highly-fractured minorities themselves.[45] Ethnic, social, caste or political allegiances frequently eclipse religious affiliation and prompt minority members to align with members of other communities, depending on the issue at stake. Minority members are also often connected to wider networks that reach beyond national boundaries. For example, the Ahmadiyya with its extensive diaspora community and branches all over the world connects Pakistani Ahmadis with a much larger group of people (which is not to imply, though, that the community is not internally diverse itself and fractured along many lines as well).[46]

Caste is an even thornier issue. Dalit communities in both India and Pakistan define themselves mainly through a long history of struggle against caste oppression. Consequently, their interests often run counter to those of (high-)caste Hindus. Yet, in a popular discourse in Pakistan, both are usually collapsed into the same category and described as 'Hindus', a process that had already begun in the immediate post-Partition period, as Ghazal Asif's contribution shows, even though Dalits and caste Hindus have widely diverging histories and outlooks. This is complicated by the fact that very little research exists to date which explores the religious beliefs of Dalit communities in Pakistan, in contrast to India.[47]

44. Kor Grit, '"Christians by Faith, Pakistani by Citizenship": Negotiating Christian Identity', unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands, 2019, p. 38.
45. For an insightful study on Christians in Kerala, see Sonia Thomas, *Privileged Minorities: Syrian Christianity, Gender, and Minority Rights in Postcolonial India* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018).
46. For the transnational Ahmadi experience, see Gerdien Jonker, *The Ahmadiyya Quest for Religious Progress: Missionizing Europe, 1900–1965* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); John H. Hanson, *The Ahmadiyya in the Gold Coast: Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the British Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017); and Nicolas H.A. Evans, *Far from the Caliph's Gaze: Being Ahmadi Muslim in the Holy City of Qadian* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, forthcoming).
47. Existing explorations include Ghulam Hussain, 'Understanding Hegemony of Caste in Political Islam and Sufism in Sindh, Pakistan', in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 54, no. 5 (2019), pp. 716–45; and Ghulam Hussain, '"Dalits Are in India, Not in Pakistan": Exploring the Discursive Bases of the Denial of Dalitness under the Ashrafia Hegemony', in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 54, no. 5 (2019) [https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909619863455, accessed 14 Oct. 2019]. For the Indian case, see, for example, Joel Lee, 'Lal Beg Underground: The Passing of an "Untouchable" God', in Knut A. Jacobsen, Mikael Aktor and Kristina Myrvold (eds), *Objects of Worship in South Asian Religions: Forms, Practices, and Meanings* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 143–62; and Joel Lee, 'Jagdish, Son of Ahmad: Dalit Religion and Nominative Politics in Lucknow', in *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, no. 11 (2015) [http://journals.openedition.org/samaj/3919, accessed 5 Nov. 2019].

Caste also heavily intersects with religious identity in other ways. For example, with regard to the Asia Bibi 'blasphemy' affair, many observers pointed out that the initial accusation was not primarily about religion, but rather about caste.[48] While working in the fields of the rural district of Shaikhupura, the Christian low-caste labourer Asia Bibi was rebuked by other women for drinking from the same cup as them. Only later did an accusation that was originally centred on ritual pollution turn into a blasphemy case.[49] Historically, the overwhelming majority of Christians in Pakistan are descendants of converts from untouchable or low-caste backgrounds who came into the Christian fold as a result of the activities of European and American missionaries during the colonial period. Despite their attempts to leave caste behind by converting to the religion of the colonial rulers, many Christians still carry a caste stigma in today's Pakistan. Only a minuscule elite of Goanese Christians, who migrated to Karachi from southern India after Partition, and the descendants of a handful of high-caste Muslim and Sikh converts during the colonial period, form an exception to that.[50]

Yet, as one of the most persistent and prevalent institutions in South Asia, caste is an entrenched part of Pakistan's social and cultural fabric, even though it is often publicly disavowed or identified with 'Hindu' India. An overwhelming majority of Pakistan's population, regardless of its religious affiliations, acknowledges in one way or another the implications of caste and its hierarchies, or has at the very least a strong awareness thereof. Faisal Devji goes so far as to argue that religious discrimination in Pakistan today often takes the form of caste discrimination.[51] He states that caste as a tool of exclusion has been internalised by Muslims who would otherwise attribute this practice to either an erased and rejected Hindu past, or to the Indian 'other', who is invariably Hindu.[52] Muslims cannot adhere to caste per se, this discourse claims, because it runs counter to an allegedly egalitarian system of 'Islamic brotherhood' enshrined in the very idea of Pakistan. However, by internalising caste discrimination and projecting it outward toward non-Muslim communities, Devji holds, Muslims in Pakistan are enabled to minimise their own (caste) differences and homogenise their community. In the course of this process, Muslims have adopted the role of former high-caste Hindu and Muslim elites who dominated both colonial politics as well as the immediate post-colonial period, and taken on the role of the former 'oppressors'. Instead of calling it caste discrimination, they give it a religious terminology: 'The increasing refusal of Muslims to share water or food with Christians suggests an inability to come to terms with a past that defies the religious identifications meant to structure all of Pakistan's social relations', as Devji puts it.[53] The Asia Bibi case illustrates this process of disavowing a Hindu past and at the same time striving for the creation of a homogenous identity which forms the basis of Pakistani nationalism, as Devji also

48. Krzysztof Iwanek, 'Aasia Bibi and the Plight of Pakistan's Untouchables', *The Diplomat* (5 Nov. 2018) [https://thediplomat.com/2018/11/aasia-bibi-and-the-plight-of-pakistans-untouchables/, accessed 19 Oct. 2019].
49. See Rollier, '"We're All Blasphemers"', pp. 54–5.
50. See Avril Powell, 'Pillar of a New Faith: Christianity in Late Nineteenth-Century Punjab from the Perspective of a Convert from Islam', in Richard Frykenberg (ed.), *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross-Cultural Communications since 1500* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 223–55.
51. Faisal Devji, 'How Caste Underpins the Blasphemy Crisis in Pakistan', *The New York Times* (18 Dec. 2018) [https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/18/opinion/caste-blasphemy-pakistan.html, accessed 3 Oct. 2019].
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*

explains in his Postscript to this special section, 'Changing Places: Religion and Minorities in Pakistan': 'the Muslim identification with caste has to be disavowed in a psychic as much as politically instrumental way'.[54] Relatedly, Hassan Javid and Nicolas Martin in their contribution explore the curious case of why caste remains so conspicuously absent from political mobilisation (and hence visibility) in Pakistan. As they argue, a major explanation for 'the elimination of caste as part of the country's communal lexicon was an outcome of attempts by the state to enforce an Islamic identity that ostensibly unified a divided polity and legitimised authoritarian governments'.[55]

Uncomfortable pasts and ubiquitous enemies

If these arguments about caste are developed further, it would imply that the very existence of minorities in Pakistan serves as an uncomfortable reminder of past events, or of alternative imaginings of hierarchies and power structures, which have been suppressed in the 'collective unconscious' of Pakistani majority society. For example, the presence of Hindus and Sikhs conjures the troubling history of violence connected with the communal 'cleansing' before, during and immediately after Partition.[56] However, their presence also points to the deep and lasting spiritual and historical connections between local Hindu, Sikh and Sufi practices which evolved over centuries and still persist in today's Pakistan. Muslim reformers since the colonial period have often attempted to 'purify' these practices and recover an 'original' and 'undiluted' Sufism which they see as being closer to its Islamic 'origin'. The presence of Hindus as guardians of Muslim shrines, and the joint celebrations of Hindus and Muslims who collectively participate in Sufi rituals and festivals at Sehwan Sharif in Sindh, for instance, resist such easy categorisations and challenge reformist impulses.[57] As Jürgen Schaflechner elaborates in his article, Hindus in Pakistan display a firm grasp of their precarious situation in Pakistan. Attempting not to 'rock the boat' while also not being relegated to a status of passivity, they react to it through carefully calibrated 'wary and aware' practices.

Beyond being an (uncomfortable) reminder of a shared past, or alternative possibilities of shared spaces, Christians, Hindus and Sikhs—notwithstanding their small number—constitute a further challenge. They symbolise the category of 'enemies from without' who present a threat of other allegiances towards the central idea around which Pakistan is constructed, such as a tenuous suppressed memory of colonialism and imperialism (in the case of Christians) or communalism (in the case of Sikhs and Hindus). Their continued existence could thus be seen as an 'intolerable deficit in the

54. Faisal Devji, 'Changing Places: Religion and Minority in Pakistan', in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, no. 1 (2020), DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2020.1694466.
55. Hassan Javid and Nicolas Martin, 'Democracy and Discrimination: Comparing Caste-Based Politics in Indian and Pakistani Punjab', in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 43, no. 1 (2020), DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2020.1691831.
56. The noted South Asian writer Saadat Hasan Manto famously recorded many of these atrocities in short stories such as '*Titwal ka Kutta*', '*Thanda Ghosht*' and '*Khol Do*'. See Ayesha Jalal, *The Pity of Partition: Manto's Life, Times, and Work across the India–Pakistan Divide* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013). Compare also Jürgen Schaflechner, 'The Hindu in Recent Urdu Horror Stories from Pakistan', in *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Südasienstudien*, Vol. 32 (2018), pp. 323–51; and Schaflechner, 'Betwixt and Between'.
57. See Schaflechner, *Hinglaj Devi*, pp. 84–90; on the shared religious space and the Hindu Sufi lodges of Sehwan Sharif, see Michel Boivin, *The Hindu Sufis of South Asia: Partition, Shrine Culture and the Sindhis in India* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), pp. 167, 180.

purity of the national whole' that has the potential to elicit the Muslim majority's 'rage'. This is the case because non-Muslim minorities frustrate the desire of Muslims in Pakistan to perceive themselves as 'a whole and uncontested ethnos'.[58] As Anushay Malik elaborates in her contribution, such anxieties were not present from the outset. Rather, in Pakistan's early years, Christianity was not labelled as foreign 'because it was *not* foreign to an idea of a state that was interested mainly in building up its army to protect its borders from India and pushing its economy into the modern industrial age. Islam and its spread were not the main priority in Pakistan's early years'. Given this initial experience, Christians in Pakistan have been keen to refer to this 'lost utopia', as Simon Wolfgang Fuchs underlines. Surprisingly, as elucidated by Ryan Brasher, the initial Christian embrace of Pakistan casts a long shadow. In his survey of local university students, he found that Christians stand out in comparison to other minorities when it comes to the expression of uncritical patriotism and support of Pakistan's armed forces. They 'seem quite grounded in their Pakistani identity, rather than alienated. And they are just as uncritically proud of their country as their Muslim counterparts'.

By contrast, different anxieties are triggered in majority society by the existence of Shi'is and Ahmadis in Pakistan. While the first represent the trauma of an early Muslim schism, the second arguably transgressed the major Islamic taboo that there cannot be another prophet after Muhammad, the 'seal of Prophethood' (*khatm al-nubuwwat*). Both hence qualify—to varying degrees, for sure—as symbols for an alleged 'enemy from within' inimical to a national identity that is already experienced as unstable and fragile, as representing the threatening possibility of internal strife (*fitna*), or even as deception (*taqiyya*) directed toward the 'true' Muslim community. There is ample historical evidence that during the run-up to Partition, Deobandi scholars in particular entertained fantasies of a future Pakistan that would live up to its 'pure' reputation and rein in wayward Muslims (such as the Shi'is) or, as they saw it, 'heretic' Muslims in the vein of the Ahmadis.[59] Beyond holding 'wrong' beliefs, Ahmadis have the additional disadvantage of also being deeply entangled with the modernist genealogy of Pakistani nationalism that was already at loggerheads with more 'traditionalist' interpretations of religious political identity during the colonial period.

Unlike the Ahmadis, who were already under attack in the early 1950s, lingering fears about Pakistan as a potentially oppressive and exclusively Sunni project did not initially materialise towards Shi'is after Partition. The Deobandi scholar Ihtisham al-Haqq Thanavi played a crucial role in this regard. In 1951, he convened an '*ulama* gathering which also witnessed participation by Shi'i scholars. The meeting agreed on a resolution that detailed 22 principles of an Islamic state. Importantly for our purpose, this document contained a clause that enshrined the right for each 'established Islamic sect' to be bound by its particular interpretation of Islamic law. Shi'i scholars did not

58. Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 53.

59. For a discussion of late colonial Shi'i reservations about Pakistan, see Fuchs, *In a Pure Muslim Land*, pp. 38–47; and Justin Jones, '"The Pakistan That Is Going to Be Sunnistan": Indian Shi'a Responses to the Pakistan Movement', in Ali Usman Qasmi and Megan Eaton Robb (eds), *Muslims against the Muslim League: Critiques of Pakistan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 350–80. For colonial discussion on the Ahmadis in general and the role of the Ahrar in particular, see Qasmi, *The Ahmadis and the Politics of Religious Exclusion*, pp. 35–64.

hesitate to embrace this initiative and to thus make common cause with their Sunni colleagues in their demands to declare the Ahmadis a non-Muslim minority.[60] Despite modernist push-back against such plans, later developments saw an increasing demonisation of the Ahmadis, culminating in a ban on them 'posing' as Muslims.[61] Similarly to Christians, conspiracy theories about the Ahmadiyya abound in Pakistan, which portray them as agents who allegedly aim at undermining the stability of the Pakistani state.

The very existence of minorities in Pakistan, then, is often perceived as a challenge to the central narrative around which the state is constructed and imagined, as in so many minority contexts in modern nation-states. The presence of these 'other' communities calls into question established ideas of citizenship and belonging, and evokes anxieties about the stability of a centralised and flattened 'Pakistani' national identity. This special section wants to steer the discussion away from both a focus on Pakistan's majority society and problems of discrimination and exclusion. Instead of looking at minorities through the lens of an oppressor/oppressed dichotomy, it aims to highlight the complex and often unexpected ways in which the Pakistani state impacts minority lives. As a result of hegemonic and non-inclusive notions of citizenship, members of minority groups can frequently experience being relegated to the position of 'second-class' Pakistanis. At the same time, such a narrative can serve as a deliberate defensive strategy that signals the non-threatening character of the minorities towards the self-perception of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Constructing multiple identities

The assembled articles in this special section are written from anthropological, literary, historical, sociological and political science perspectives. They explore questions of belonging, citizenship, identity, caste, gender, history and political representation. Geographically, the case studies presented here mostly focus on the Punjab and Sindh, with a few exceptions. Beyond some of the dynamics outlined above, they mainly attempt to highlight the agency of minority members in defining, shaping, constructing and expressing their respective identities. The authors in this special section proceed from the assumption that members of minorities inhabit multiple overlapping identities that are constantly in the process of being constructed, shaped, redefined and publicly performed.[62]

Building on the work of Naveeda Khan, the texts in this special section proceed from the assumption that since its inception in 1947, the Pakistani state has been in an

60. See Leonard Binder, *Religion and Politics in Pakistan* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1963), p. 98.
61. Asad A. Ahmed, 'The Paradoxes of Ahmadiyya Identity: Legal Appropriation of Muslim-ness and the Construction of Ahmadiyya Difference', in Naveeda Khan (ed.), *Beyond Crisis: Re-Evaluating Pakistan* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 273–314.
62. See Anh Nga Longva and Anne Sofie Roald (eds), *Religious Minorities in the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Jeffrey Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Maya Shatzmiller (ed.), *Nationalism and Minority Identities in Islamic Societies* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005); Gino G. Raymond and Tariq Modood (eds), *The Construction of Minority Identities in France and Britain* (London: Palgrave, 2007); and Rowena Robinson (ed.), *Minority Studies* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), to name only a few.

ongoing process of 'striving' for a shared national identity, but also a phenomenon which Sadia Saeed describes as 'desecularization' in which various actors are constantly aiming to align institutions and political practices with competing religious norms and sensibilities.[63] This makes religion and religious identity contested issues of nation-building and modern politics. In a state with 'unsettled state–religion relationships' as is the case with Pakistan, the 'normative relationship between religion and state formation is deeply contentious', as Saeed puts it.[64] In this context, minority identities by their very existence complicate debates about the place of religious difference in a liberal political framework, and challenge processes of nation-building that primarily or even just rhetorically rely on narratives of religious belonging. Following Qasim Zaman, we also interpret the contested status of minorities in Pakistan as the outcome of deep-seated conflicts between Islamic modernists and the *'ulama* about the political and ideological leadership of the newly-founded state of Pakistan, and the definition of a national identity. As has already been pointed out, 'internal' Muslim minorities such as the Ahmadiyya and the Shi'is particularly unsettle the ideational boundaries that the state is trying to guard, and reactivate debates about the relationship between Islam and modernity that were already prevalent in the colonial period. Both Shi'is and Ahmadis have 'conjured up the specter of modernism' for Muslim traditionalists in Pakistan, and especially prompted the Islamists and the *'ulama* to renew their claims to interpret and steer the intellectual trajectory of the Pakistani nation-state.[65]

As a state built on a religio-political idea, Pakistan is surely an outlier and exception that needs to be taken seriously. At the same time, as all the contributors to this special section highlight, the focus on the exceptional has blinded us to comparative processes. In recovering strategies by minorities to inhabit this Muslim homeland in the subcontinent, we also aim at normalising the problematic exoticisation of Pakistan.

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63. Naveeda Khan, *Muslim Becoming: Aspiration and Skepticism in Pakistan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); and Saeed, *Politics of Desecularization*, pp. 22–4.
64. Saeed, *Politics of Desecularization*, p. 5.
65. Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan*, p. 41.