

Chapter 6

Of Flourishing Economic Exchanges and Political Stereotypes: The Complex Relationship Between Jainas and Muslims in Karnataka—Then and Now

1 Introduction

Two important points can be made about both Jainas and Muslims, in Karnataka and in India in general: they have always been minorities in their region, but they were both once rulers of kingdoms. Despite these commonalities, early encounters between the two religions in northern India were not always harmonious, and their common history in Karnataka lacks thorough research.

As has been shown in the previous chapters in this publication, from the fifth to the twelfth century CE, ruling dynasties in Karnataka promoted and patronised Jaina culture with its religious institutions. Muslims tried to promote Islam when they came to rule over parts of Karnataka from the fourteenth century onwards, spreading and developing their religion as well as their art, architecture and literature. Despite their influential roles in the past, both Jainas and Muslims have always been minorities in a Hindu-dominated South India.¹ According to the census of 2001, the percentage of Muslims in Karnataka was 12.2% and Jainas amounted to only 0.8%; their share remained relatively stable in the census of 2011, with a slight percentage increase in the Muslim population to 12.92% and a minimal decrease, to 0.72%, in that of the Jainas.²

1 Although Jainas have most probably always been a religious minority, even during the “golden period” of Jainism in Karnataka (from the fifth to the twelfth centuries), their community has been suffering from dwindling numbers mostly due to the growing popularity of rival Hindu communities. This does not hold true in the case of Muslims.

2 For the data of 2001 see: Government of India, “Census of India 2001: The First Report on Religion Data,” Commissioner Jayant Kumar Banthia, http://lsi.gov.in:8081/jspui/bitstream/123456789/60/1/41020_2001_REL.pdf [accessed 19.10.2022]. For the census data of 2011 see: Government of India, Office of the Census Organization of India, the Commissioner & Registrar General of the Indian 2011 Census C. Chandramouli, “Census 2011,” Religious Groups by Districts in Karnataka, <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/religion/state/29-karnataka.html> [accessed 06.09.2022]. The Census of India 2001 (2011) counted 412 659 (440 280) Jainas and 6 463 127 (7 893 065) Muslims in Karnataka (The data for 2011 is published on: Government of India, Office of the Census Organization of India, the Commissioner & Registrar General of the Indian 2011 Census C. Chandramouli, “Census 2011.” <https://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/karnataka.html> [accessed 06.09.2022].) Although the Indian census was conducted every ten years from 1881 to 2011, the 2021 census was first deferred due to the Covid pandemic and

However, the two communities differ in more than just population share. Muslims in Karnataka are not only a much bigger minority, but their community is also a far more visible one. Since in several respects Jaina laymen are very similar to lay Hindus, Muslims are easier to recognise as such. Many Muslims show their religious identity by wearing a special kind of dress, whereas in Jaina society only naked ascetics are identifiable by their appearance. Jainas speak local languages and do not have a language of their own; Muslims often learn Urdu as their first and sometimes only language. Despite the widespread custom among Jainas of adding the word “Jain” to their name, many Digambara Jainas of South India do not stick to this practice and often share their surnames with Hindus. Most Muslims, on the other hand, use proper Muslim names and surnames. Although Islam on the subcontinent has absorbed elements of Indian culture and religion, Jainism is culturally closer to the Hindu majority. A decisive factor which helps explain this phenomenon is the fact that Jainism is an indigenous religion, which has developed and existed side by side with other Indian traditions for many centuries, whereas Islam has its roots on the Arabian Peninsula.

With these differences and similarities in mind, we became particularly interested in the relationship between Jainas and Muslims in Karnataka nowadays. Is there contact and exchange on a social, economic and religious level? Do the problems and grievances Muslims and Jainas experience through being a religious minority link them with each other? These were the predominant questions of our field research in Karnataka.

Modern social sciences focus on the relationship between Jainas or Muslims and the Hindu majority, while the relationship between Jainas and Muslims has not yet been the subject of intensive research. Therefore, our study cannot be considered to be universal or concluded, but rather a first attempt to understand the complex relationship of Jainas and Muslims in Karnataka. We shall preface the results of our field research with a historical overview of Islam and Muslim rule in Karnataka.

2 A Qualitative Study

Our field study was conducted in Karnataka in February and March 2007. Over the course of one month, we conducted personal interviews with Jainas and Muslims. The interviews (which often lasted several hours) were conducted personally, with one or several informants. During the interviews, we were often joined by acquaintances or

subsequently postponed several times. See, for instance, T.K. Rajalakshmi, “Why is the Government Delaying Census 2021?: It is Crucial for Budget Allocations, Delimitation of Constituencies, and Administrative Planning,” *Frontline*, 23.01.2023, <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/why-is-the-government-delaying-census-2021/article66413377.ece> [accessed 24.10.2023].

colleagues of our informants. Sometimes they added something to the discussions with the main interview partner, but their comments are not taken into consideration here. We did not use a questionnaire for the interviews, but asked all the informants about their contact with members of the other religion. The majority of the interviews were with individuals, depending on the occupation of the informant and the circumstances of the meeting. In 28 interviews, we spoke with 35 Indians (24 Muslims, ten Jains, one Hindu).³ Our interview partners were predominantly male (28 men, seven women) and they were all adults. Furthermore, we spoke mainly to people from an upper middle-class background with a higher educational qualification, such as students, teachers and lawyers. Most of our informants, however, were specialists in Jainism or Islam, either in an academic or a religious sense. Their number included scholars, journalists and missionaries. Due to the amount of data, the limited time for data collection, the origin of information and our method, our study does not claim to represent the views of the gamut of Jain or Muslim society in Karnataka. But since we conducted individual interviews and met many experts (and some religious laymen⁴ and pilgrims) our study can be considered a qualitative one. Our investigation led us to districts inhabited by both Muslims and Jains: urban Bangalore (Beṅgaḷūru) (Muslims: 13.4%, Jains: 1.1%), Bijapur (Bijāpur) (Muslims: 16.3%, Jains: 0.5%), Dharwar⁵ (Dhārwar) (Muslims: 19.7%, Jains: 1.6%), Gulbarga (Muslims: 17.6%, Jains: 0.2%) and Mysore (Maisūru) (Muslims: 8.9%, Jains: 0.6%).⁶ A common feature of these places is that they were ruled by Muslims for a period of time, but Jains have always lived in these areas, too.

3 While conducting ten months of field research for her PhD-thesis about the identity of Digambara Jains in Karnataka, Sabine Scholz also had the chance to ask many Jains for their opinion about the reasons for the decline of Jainism in Karnataka and the importance which should be attached to Muslim rule regarding this development. The results of these interviews, which were not part of the field research conducted exclusively for this chapter in February and March 2007, are included in our argumentation.

4 While we use the term “layman” in contradistinction to “expert,” with “expert” we do not necessarily mean someone like a priest with a religious status or mandate, but also scientists, journalists etc. with a profound knowledge of a particular religion.

5 Dharwar is also spelled Dharwad.

6 Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, “Population Census 2001,” Table C-01: Population by Religious Community, Karnataka – 2001, <https://censusindia.gov.in/nada/index.php/catalog/21491> [06.09.2022]. The data for the 2011 census shows a similar result: Urban Bangalore (Muslims: 12.97%, Jains: 0.86%), Bijapur (Muslims: 16.97%, Jains: 0.4%), Dharwar (Muslims: 20.94%, Jains: 1.57%), Gulbarga (Muslims: 19.99%, Jains: 0.19%) and Mysore (Muslims: 9.68%, Jains: 0.48%); see Government of India, “Census 2011.” Religious Groups by Districts in Karnataka, <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/religion/state/29-karnataka.html> [accessed 06.09.2022].

3 Part I: A Historical Overview—Islam and Muslim Rule in Karnataka

3.1 The Establishment of Muslim Rule

When Muslim rule was first established in the south of India, Jainism had already lost most of its influence over the ruling dynasties and the common people. Contrary to the popular belief that Islam was first brought to India as the religion of Muslim invaders, we find Muslim settlements in South India centuries before the establishment of Muslim rule. The oldest Indian Muslim community, the Konkani Muslims, arrived at the beginning of the eighth century CE as a maritime trading community on the coast of South India. Its members married local women and settled permanently. It was therefore trade, rather than conquest, which brought Islam to India in the first place.⁷ When the famous Maghrebi traveller Abu ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Battūta, better known simply as Ibn Battūta, visited South India in the early fourteenth century, he saw some Muslim trading settlements, and his travel accounts also mention mosques in the Karnataka area. Those early Muslims, however, did not stay exclusively in trade. Many found employment in civil or military service at the courts of Hindu rulers.⁸

3.1.1 The Ṭughlāqs

While Muslims began organised invasion and plundering operations in North India in 1022 CE, it was not until the first half of the fourteenth century CE, under Muḥammad bin Ṭughlāq, that the Delhi Sultanate (which had been founded in 1206) extended its permanent administration to the south.⁹ As Eaton points out, however, “outright annexation of the Deccan was not on Delhi’s mind, at least not yet.”¹⁰ The first step of the Delhi Sultanate’s strategy was the incorporation of South Indian kingdoms into their circle of tributary realms. Intimidated by the most modern military technology in the world, these states were asked to pay certain tributes to the Delhi court. If they were unable to discharge such payments, the Delhi army invaded, plundered and de-

7 Omar Khalidi, *Muslims in the Deccan: A Historical Survey* (New Delhi: Global Media Publications, 2006): 13–16.

8 Ifṭikar Ahmad Ghauri, “Muslims in the Deccan in the Middle Ages: An Historical Survey,” *Islamic Culture. An English Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (1975): 151–52.

9 K.R. Basavaraja, *History and Culture of Karnataka. Early Times to Unification* (Dharwad: Chalukya Publications, 1984): 176.

10 Richard Maxwell Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300–1761. Eight Indian Lives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 18.

stroyed the whole capital. The case of Warangal (Varangal),¹¹ today in Telangana State, shows that this process also led to the desecration of the temple housing the state deity, which was regarded an important link between the geographical area and the successful rule of the king. A mosque was built on that site and Warangal was annexed by the Ṭughlāq Empire.¹²

Revolts against the Ṭughlāq empire led to the foundation of two large and trans-regional successor states which absorbed the former regional kingdoms along the Krishna River: the Baḥmanid Sultanate in the north and in the south the Saṅgama Sultanate, which soon was to become the Hindu empire of Vijayanagar.¹³

3.1.2 The Baḥmanids and the Deccan Sultanates

The Baḥmanid Sultanate, founded by the Turkish governor ‘Alau’d-Dīn Baḥman Shāh in 1347 CE, with its capital Gulbarga in North Karnataka, was the first independent Muslim kingdom in South India. For strategic reasons, the capital was shifted to Bidar (Bīdar) in 1425 CE. In the course of time, the Baḥmanid Sultanate became more and more disintegrated, mainly due to the rivalry of two hostile groups of Muslim aristocracy.¹⁴

With the decline of the Baḥmanid Sultanate, five independent kingdoms emerged as the Deccan Sultanates. Two of them, namely, the dominions of the Adil Shāhis of Bijapur and the Barid Shāhis of Bidar, are of importance for the further history of the area of the modern Karnataka state. The Bīdar Sultanate, the smallest of the five, was annexed to the Bijāpur Sultanate in 1619 CE. In 1686 CE, the Mughals under Emperor Aurangzeb (Ālamgīr) conquered Bijapur and brought the sultanate to an end.

3.1.3 Sufism

The Adil Shāhi dynasty ruled over an important area of the Deccan for nearly two centuries. In the course of time, the city of Bijapur developed into a cosmopolitan centre which attracted scholars, artists and Sufis from places like Iran, Iraq, Turkey and

¹¹ The kingdom of Warangal was located in the Northern Deccan within the boundaries of what is today Maharashtra. Although north of Karnataka, this example is given because it is the best researched site of Delhi’s conquest in the Deccan. Other annexations probably followed its example.

¹² Richard Maxwell Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan*: 17–22.

¹³ Richard Maxwell Eaton, *Temple Desecration and Muslim States in Medieval India* (Gurgaon: Hope India Publications, 2004): 22.

¹⁴ These two groups were the Dakhnis and the Āfāqīs or Gharīb-ud-diyar. The former were Muslims whose ancestors had been living in India for centuries and who were generally Sunnis, and Hindu converts to Islam. The latter were foreigners from Iran or Iraq, generally Shī‘as, who were attracted to the court of the Baḥmanid *sultāns*. See Ghauri, “Muslims in the Deccan”: 154–56.

North India. Under the Adil Shāhis either the Shī'a or the Sunnī form of Islam was practised officially, according to the preference of the particular *sultān*.¹⁵

Sufi saints were of special importance, not only for the spread of Islam in North Karnataka, but also and especially for the legitimacy of Muslim authority. Even before the establishment of the Baḥmanid Sultanate, some Muslim mystics had come to the Deccan from North India. The systematic organisation of the Sufi movement in the Deccan began at the time of the Delhi Sultān Muḥammad bin Ṭughlāq, who had sent Sufi saints from Delhi to Daulatabad. Like other emerging kingdoms in India, the Baḥmanid *sultāns* sought the help of the saints for the consolidation of their rule. The Sufis not only interfered actively in internal conflicts of the ruling elite, but also helped to create public confidence in the Baḥmanid rule.¹⁶ It was thanks to them that the expansion of the Ṭughlāq Empire came to be associated with religious piety rather than just with plunder and violence.¹⁷ Furthermore, the alliance with well-respected Sufi saints could be used by the Baḥmanids to establish and legitimise their Indo-Muslim rule in the Deccan, which, for the first time, was not dependent on Delhi. The fame of Sheikh Muḥammad Gisu Darāz (1321–1422),¹⁸ who settled at Gulbarga at the invitation of Sultān Firūz Baḥmani, survived the downfall of the Baḥmanid empire and “the grave-site of Gisu Daraz grew to become the most popular Muslim shrine in the Deccan, as it has remained ever since.”¹⁹

From the beginning of the fourteenth until the end of the seventeenth century CE many Sufi orders flourished in the Bijapur kingdom. As Eaton points out in his study of the social roles of Sufis in medieval South India, “the stereotyped conception of medieval Indian Sufis as pious and quietistic mystics patiently preaching Islam among Hindus is no longer valid.”²⁰ He therefore describes the Sufis in the following terms:

Some of them wielded a sword, others a pen, others a royal grant, and still others a begging bowl. Some were introverted to the point of reclusive withdrawal, others extroverted to the point of militancy. Some were orthodox to the point of zealous Puritanism, others unorthodox to the point of heresy.²¹

¹⁵ The practice of the Sunnī or the Shī'a form by a particular ruler depended mainly on his preference for either the Dakhni or the Āfāqī aristocracy. See Basavaraja, *History and Culture of Karnataka*: 187–204.

¹⁶ H.K. Sherwani and P.M. Joshi, eds., *History of Medieval Deccan (1295–1724)*, vol. 2, *Mainly Cultural Aspects* (Andhra Pradesh: Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1974): 176–82.

¹⁷ Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan*: 34.

¹⁸ His name is also spelled Muḥammad Gēsu Darāz.

¹⁹ Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan*: 54. For a detailed account of the relationship between Muḥammad Gisu Darāz and the Baḥmanids, see Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan*: 33–58.

²⁰ Richard Maxwell Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur 1300–1700. Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978): 283.

²¹ Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*: 283.

Those Sufis whose main interest was not politics, but the writing of folk literature, played a crucial part in connecting with the non-Muslim masses. Through their efforts, the public devotion to deceased Muslim spiritual leaders, also practised by non-Muslims, could be combined with the mystic philosophy of Islam.²² The tombs of Sufi saints, the *dargahs*, became centres of public devotion, visited by Muslims and non-Muslims alike.²³ According to Jackie Assayag's studies of popular worship at *dargahs* in North Karnataka, the cult is often focused on offerings to a saint in order to ask him for help in matters of physical or mental diseases and other personal wishes.

In some cases, saints are worshipped for their alleged powers over "demons," and their tombs are usually visited by members of the lower class. Assayag comments in this regard:

But this must be understood in a wider sense. It matters little whether they are Hindus, Muslims or Christians. What is important is the effectiveness of the action taken to control these evil powers, which appear and disappear in no time. When it is a question of combating disease or affliction, religious affiliation signifies only a superficial variation in a common cognitive universe of evil, its causes and its treatment. And it is the same in the case of divine power.²⁴

South Karnataka also witnessed a period of Muslim rule in the eighteenth century when Haider Ali, followed by his son Tipu Sultān, ruled over Mysore. In 1799, the British defeated Tipu at Shrirangapatna (Śrīraṅgaṇa) and brought Muslim rule in Karnataka to an end.²⁵

3.2 Muslims in Power—A Threat to Other Religions?

It is difficult to reconstruct the treatment of non-Muslim communities under Muslim rule and facile generalisations should be avoided. Inscriptions do not necessarily serve as reliable sources, whether set up by Muslims or non-Muslims, and Karnataka belongs to India's understudied regions, as indeed does the Deccan.²⁶

²² Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*: 289.

²³ Today, some *dargahs* are still famous religious centres in North Karnataka, attracting members of several religious communities from all over India. Worship at the shrines of deceased Sufis involves unorthodox features like circumambulations, offerings of flowers and the belief in the healing power of the saints (Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*: 204).

²⁴ Jackie Assayag, *At the Confluence of Two Rivers. Muslims and Hindus in South India* (Delhi: Manohar, 2004): 96–97. The very complex question of religious affiliations and their definition brought up by Assayag in the above-mentioned statement is discussed thoroughly in *At the Confluence of Two Rivers*, a study of Hindu and Muslim interaction in religious worship in Karnataka. See Assayag, *At the Confluence of Two Rivers*.

²⁵ Basavaraja, *History and Culture of Karnataka*: 532.

²⁶ Eaton, *Temple Desecration and Muslim States*: 11–17.

3.2.1 The Situation in the South

In general, Muslim rule was far less aggressive towards other religions in South India than in the north, where the persecution of so-called heretics and Shī'ites and forceful conversions are proven to have taken place.²⁷ Descriptions of the interaction between Jainas and Muslims are ambivalent. Tahir Mahmood, for example, offers a picture of tolerant Muslim rulers in India, who

[...] followed the policy of non-interference in the religions and religious affairs of the Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Christians, Jews and Parsis of India, and did not discriminate between them and the Muslims in non-religious matters.²⁸

Literature on Jainism, in turn, deals with the “clash of civilizations” in a different manner. As Virendra Kumar Sharma says:

The advent of Islam in India [...] delivered a cruel blow to Jainism. As a result of Muslim aggression the Jainas living in various parts of India lost contact with each other; forced conversions of the Jainas to Islam and the policy of destruction and demolition adopted by many Muslim rulers of India weakened the monastic organisation of Jainism.²⁹

It does not come as a surprise that information is not more unanimous insofar as the Deccan and the Muslim rulers' religious policy in this area are concerned. But it seems certain that contact between Muslims and non-Muslims existed, at least in the government apparatus and the army of the different rulers. Contemporary records mention the employment of Marāṭhās, *brāhmaṇs* and members of other non-Muslim communities in military and administrative services. Promoting matrimonial alliances with Hindu women and making grants to non-Muslim religious establishments were also key to the rulers' practice.³⁰ For the sultans, ruling over a majority non-Muslim population, interference into the religious practices and freedom of their subjects would have been unwise and dangerous for the stability of the sultanate.³¹

27 Annemarie Schimmel, *Der Islam im indischen Subkontinent* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983): 28.

28 Tahir Mahmood, *Statute-Law Relating to Muslims in India. A Study in Constitutional & Islamic Perspectives* (New Delhi: Institute of Objective Studies, 1995): 4.

29 Virendra Kumar Sharma, *History of Jainism* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2003): 3.

30 See on this issue Abdul Gani Imaratwale, “Secular Attitudes of the Adil Shahi Sultans of Bijapur,” in *Studies in Medieval Bijapur* (2006): 191, https://www.academia.edu/30605096/Secular_Attitudes_of_the_Adil_Shahi_Sultans_of_Bijapur [accessed 05.09.2022], as well as his article on the history of Jainism in Bijapur (Abdul Gani Imaratwale, “Jainism During the Rule of the Adil Shahis of Bijapur,” in *Studies in Medieval Bijapur* (2006): 67–70, https://www.academia.edu/30460712/Jainism_During_the_Rule_of_the_Adil_Shahis_of_Bijapur [accessed 05.09.2022]).

31 That small religious communities such as the Jainas continued their traditional education in Karnataka throughout the Middle Ages is further evidence that they enjoyed religious freedom (Jyotsana K. Kamat, “Education in Medieval Karnatak (AD 1450–1800),” *Studies in History of the Deccan. Medieval*

However, with explicit reference to the Deccan, historians working on Jaina history also mention the menace from the Muslims: “[...] it is believed³² that the activities of the Virasaivas, the Muhammedans in the seventeenth century led to [the] decline of Jainism in North Kanara.”³³ Shakuntala Prakash Chavan makes Muslims jointly responsible with the Virasaiva/Liṅgāyats and the Vaiṣṇavas for aggressions against the Jainas. In this context, she mentions “a serious menace to the Jain religion in medieval times from the Muslim iconoclasts” and a decline of Jaina religion because “all Indian subcontinent was overpowered by an iconoclast Muslim ruler.”³⁴ Expanding on this rather unreflective exaggeration, Chavan, with some other scholars,³⁵ relates the development of the *bhaṭṭāraka* institution within the Digambara tradition directly to the alleged Muslim threat: “The Bhattaraka was a special type of religious authority evolved by the Digambara Jains during the early part of the medieval period as a policy of survival to meet the severe challenges created by the advent of Muslim rule in India.”³⁶ This argument, found in several accounts of Jainism during the Middle Ages, is, however, a somewhat too simplistic explanation for the development of the *bhaṭṭāraka* institution, since it ignores the influence of dynamics within the Jaina tradition itself. Furthermore, it reduces the interaction of Jainas and their surroundings to a “Jaina minority-Muslim rulers” relationship, which in many cases did not hold true. The *bhaṭṭāraka*, as a dressed representative of the local Digambara community, also mediated between Jainas and Hindu rulers.³⁷

Not even literature on Jainism agrees on the Muslims’ contribution to the decline of Jainism in South India. Some authors do not refer to Islam at all when outlining the history of Jainism in Karnataka, but do mention the threat by the Vaiṣṇava king Viṣṇuvardhana³⁸ or the Virasaivas.³⁹

and Modern, ed. M.A. Nayeem, Aniruddha Ray, K.S. Mathew and A. Rā Kulakarnī [Delhi: Pragati Publications, 2002]: 263).

32 The author explicitly writes “it is believed” since he admits that there is no definite proof of this information, as he makes clear in the following sentence.

33 K.G. Vasantha Madhava, *Religions in Coastal Karnataka, 1500–1763* (New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1985): 81.

34 Shakuntala Prakash Chavan, *Jainism in Southern Karnataka (up to AD 1565)* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2005): 225, 237.

35 For example, see: Vilas Adinath Sangave, *Facets of Jainology. Selected Research Papers on Jain Society, Religion and Culture* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 2001): 133.

36 Chavan, *Jainism in Southern Karnataka*: 225.

37 For more information about the development of the *bhaṭṭāraka* institution and its several functions, see: Paul Dundas *The Jains* (London: Routledge, 1992): 105–7; Kristy L. Wiley, *The A to Z of Jainism* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 2006): 54–56.

38 P.M. Joseph, *Jainism in South India* (Thiruvananthapuram: The International School of Dravidian Linguistics, 1997): 4–6.

39 M.S. Ramaswami Ayyanger, *Studies in South Indian Jainism* (New Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1988): 113, 117.

3.2.2 Temples and Images

Due to the manifold positions and the lack of historical evidence within the discussion about a possible threat of the Jaina community by Muslims, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the religio-political reality of medieval Karnataka. Although Muslim rulers seem to have granted religious freedom to their subjects in general, sporadic persecutions may have taken place. It is unlikely, however, that the Deccan region witnessed the destruction of Jaina temples on a larger scale. As Eaton says, “[...] temple desecrations were never directed at the people, but at the enemy king and the image that incarnated and displayed his state-diety [sic!].”⁴⁰ Therefore, “temples that were not so identified [...] were normally left unharmed.”⁴¹ Destruction of temples followed logical patterns:

The chronology and geography of the data indicate that acts of temple desecration typically occurred on the cutting edge of a moving military frontier [...] when Indo-Muslim states expanded into the domains of non-Muslim rulers. Pragmatism as well as time-honoured traditions of both Islamic and Indian statecraft dictated that temples lying within such states be unmolested.⁴²

Hence, temple destruction was used to conquer new land by delegitimising the former king who was closely connected to a geographical area and a particular deity. Muslims definitely looted Jaina temples in other parts of India, such as Gujarat,⁴³ but, given Eaton’s considerations, it seems unlikely that many Jaina temples were among the sites destroyed in Karnataka, where Jainas had already lost their political power before Muḥammad bin Ṭughlāq reached the Deccan plateau.

Once the area was conquered, temple destruction usually ceased.⁴⁴ Muḥammad bin Ṭughlāq gave anybody paying the poll-tax the right to construct temples in his state territory.⁴⁵ During the third phase of Muslim rule in the Deccan, the Mughal period, it was common to consider any temples within the governor’s territory as state property. Accordingly, they even received protection,⁴⁶ although the great Mughal ruler Aurangzeb forbade the construction of new temples.⁴⁷

Some inscriptions, nevertheless, mention Muslim invaders in connection with the destruction of Jaina monuments and persecutions of Jainas in the area of modern Karnataka. In the village of Mulgund (Mulgund), near Gadag, North Karnataka, one un-

⁴⁰ Eaton, *Temple Desecration and Muslim States*: 46.

⁴¹ Eaton, *Temple Desecration and Muslim States*: 31.

⁴² Eaton, *Temple Desecration and Muslim States*: 38–50.

⁴³ Eaton, *Temple Desecration and Muslim States*: 48.

⁴⁴ Exceptions were made in cases of disloyalty: if a non-Muslim official was considered to be disloyal, a temple associated with him was sometimes destroyed. See Eaton, *Temple Desecration and Muslim States*: 63.

⁴⁵ Eaton, *Temple Desecration and Muslim States*: 50.

⁴⁶ Eaton, *Temple Desecration and Muslim States*: 52.

⁴⁷ Eaton, *Temple Desecration and Muslim States*: 56.

dated inscription, found at the Parśvanāth temple, records the burning of the temple by Muslims and the violent death of a Jaina ascetic. Another inscription, dated 1675 CE, found at the Candranāth Temple, mentions the reconsecration of a Tirthaṅkara statue which had been polluted by Muslims. It is not clear if both inscriptions refer to one and the same or to two different attacks by Muslim invaders.⁴⁸

In the area of North Karnataka, in particular, many beheaded Jina statues can be found in or in front of (often ruined) Jaina temples, or in newly constructed museums.⁴⁹ Due to the lack of reliable historical sources, it is difficult to establish whether the aggressors would have been Muslims or followers of some Hindu sects, such as the very influential Viraśaivas. The same area, comprising the districts of Bijapur, Dharwar, Gulbarga and Belgaum, is also rich in Tirthaṅkara statues, which had been buried underneath the ground centuries ago and were recently rediscovered and installed in some existing or newly built Jaina temples. In several cases, local Jainas named the threat of Muslim aggression as the reason for the hiding of the image. Here again, the statements are based rather on local traditions and hearsay, than on any historical records. Whereas the destruction of Jaina temples and Jaina images in the area of Karnataka is a proven fact, the lack of reliable historical sources makes it far less easy to determine who was responsible for the destruction. Bearing in mind that, as we have seen, Jainism in North Karnataka had already lost most of its influence to the adherents of Viraśaivism when Muslim invasions to South India started, it seems to be quite likely that many Jaina monuments had already been destroyed or converted before the beginning of Muslim rule. This issue of responsibility for temple destruction is particularly important for the next section. In our field study, we asked Jainas and Muslims for their perception of the common past in the region.

4 Part II: The Field Study—The Contemporary Relationship of Jainas and Muslims

4.1 The Interpretation of History

For Jaina identity, the historical development of their community and religion is of great importance, especially because the decline of the Jainas' influence over ruling dynasties from the twelfth century CE onwards has never been fully explained by historians. Jainas nowadays often consider the rise of the Viraśaiva movement to be the

⁴⁸ See P.B. Desai, *Jainism in South India and Some Jaina Epigraphs*, Jivaraja Jaina Granthamala 6 (Solapur: Jaina Samskriti Samrakshaka Sangha, 2001 [1957]): 148. During Sabine Scholz's visit to Mulgund in January 2006, local Jainas also showed these inscriptions to her.

⁴⁹ Beheaded Jaina statues can be seen, for instance, at the museum at the Gol Gumbaz, Bijapur, and the State Museum, Gadag.

most important factor in the changing fortunes of their religion. Although Islam is not mentioned as a major factor for their decline, Muslim rule on the subcontinent does not have a reputation as tolerant in religious matters among a large part of the non-Muslim population. In this context, Jains often make allegations about two aspects of Muslim history in India: the destruction of Jaina monuments and forceful conversions into the fold of Islam.

4.1.1 The Jaina Assessment

As far as the destruction of architecture is concerned, several versions of events circulate among Jains. Generally speaking, there is a tendency to dismiss the old stereotype of considering all forceful destruction to be brought about by Muslim invaders. By contrast, Jains lay many destroyed temples and the large number of beheaded statues found all over Karnataka,⁵⁰ especially in the northern districts, to the charge of Hindu fanaticism.⁵¹ Those Jains who do hold Muslims responsible for the aggression shown to their architecture consider the nakedness of their statues to be a possible source of objection for Muslims. But if it was the nakedness that shocked the Muslims, how could they have spared the colossal image of Bāhubali at Shravanabelgola (Śravanabelgola)? This question, raised by a Jain from Gulbarga, was meant not as a scholarly argument, but as a warning against generalisations. Public nakedness is definitely objected to by orthodox Islam, but other non-Muslim communities are not in favour of it either.⁵² When, after a period of decline, the tradition of naked Digambara *munis* was revived in the first half of the twentieth century, the ascetics' appearance in public caused protests among the non-Jaina population which were not confined to the Muslim community. If it were disapproval of their nakedness, therefore, that led to the beheading of Jaina images, then any of a number of faith groups could have been to blame. It is too easy to attribute the destruction to Muslim iconoclasm.

With reference to conversions, the other problematic aspect in Jaina-Muslim history, again a range of answers are offered. Some Jains advance the popular argument that conversions to Islam had always been realised by force. Most Jains doubt that their ancestors converted peacefully to Islam, since they regard the different food habits as an insurmountable obstacle for voluntary conversion. Many, however, mention with appreciation the peacefulness of Sufis past and present. Yet the fact that

⁵⁰ Many of these have been discussed in the previous chapter by Hegewald.

⁵¹ It is sometimes said of crumbling temple buildings, instead, that sacred buildings decay naturally and that their interior has been neglected for centuries. Muslims are only rarely considered to be the culprits.

⁵² At the Mahāmastakābhīṣeka in Shravanabelgola in February 2006, Sabine Scholz met a Vīraśaiva woman from Mysore. Asked for her impressions, she replied that the ceremony had been nice, but that she preferred the Jains to dress their statues.

Jainas converted to Islam is accepted without controversy; the Navaita Muslims around Bhatkal (Bhaṭkaḷ), Uttar Kanara District, are often cited as an example.⁵³

To conclude, many Jainas dismiss the cliché of an aggressive, intolerant Islam, brought by Muslim invaders, breaking forcefully into the indigenous Indian atmosphere of religious tolerance and harmony. Islam is not considered to be a major factor for the decline of the Jaina influence in Karnataka, although Muslim fanaticism is regarded as one of several elements at play in the destruction of Jaina art and architecture and forceful conversions. Bearing the results of Eaton's study in mind, it is likely that the Jainas' experience with Muslim rule in Northwest India is projected onto the south. It is also imaginable that Jainas identify with the Hindus who were the target of Muslim aggression in the Deccan. However, since the question of fixed religious identities and the idea of rather homogenous religious communities such as "Muslims," "Hindus" and "Jainas" is a rather modern phenomenon,⁵⁴ one has to be very cautious in making statements about Indian identities in earlier periods. Muslim invaders were very likely regarded principally as "foreigners" by the inhabitants of the Deccan, whereas the fact that they practised a different religion would not have been the first criterion which distinguished them from the local population. Furthermore, since the separate categories "Hindus" and "Jainas" did not exist at the time of the Muslim invasion, it seems to be very doubtful whether Muslim iconoclasm differentiated between Vīraśaiva, Vaiṣṇava or Jaina temples and monuments.

Warfare between Hindu and Muslim rulers along the Krishna River led to a rhetoric of mutual demonisation which has left its traces up to modern times.⁵⁵ The Vijayanagar empire has often been glorified as a southern Hindu bastion, where indigenous religious traditions, including Jainism, could flourish undisturbed by Muslim

⁵³ More information on the Navaita Muslims will be given in paragraph 4.2 below.

⁵⁴ One factor which led to the emergence of the idea of separate religious communities in India, especially to that of the "Hindus," was the work of the nineteenth-century Western orientalis. For the orientalist construction of the term "Hinduism," see: Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion. Postcolonial Theory, India and "the mystic East"* (London: Routledge, 1999); Brian K. Pennington, *Was Hinduism Invented? Britons, Indians, and the Colonial Construction of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Wilfried Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); Sharada Sugirtharajah, *Imagining Hinduism. A Postcolonial Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2003). Another important factor was the introduction of the census in British India during the second half of the nineteenth century, which aimed at strict classifications of the Indian population, also in matters of religious affiliations. For the early census takings and their impact on the development of notions of distinct religious communities, see Bernard S. Cohn, "The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia," in *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, ed. Bernard S. Cohn (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000): 224–54; Kenneth W. Jones, "Religious Identity and the Indian Census," in *The Census in British India. New Perspectives*, ed. N. Gerald Barrier (New Delhi: Manohar, 1981): 73–101.

⁵⁵ Richard Maxwell Eaton, *Essays on Islam and Indian History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000): 175.

aggressors.⁵⁶ Jainism, although not one of the major religious sects patronised by the rulers of Vijayanagar, nevertheless enjoyed the patronage of some petty chiefs, which is still appreciated by some Jainas today. In the perceived dichotomy between Hindus and Muslims, Jainas have naturally positioned themselves—and have been positioned by others—as belonging to the “non-Muslim” side, which most probably made for a common identification with the Hindus.

4.1.2 The Muslim View

Although Muslims had once been in power in the region, the Muslims we spoke with did not grieve for their former status. “The past was as it was, and now is it over” was a common statement concerning their regional history. Hence, there was hardly any hint of regret for the loss of Muslim territory, nor any sign of remorse for Muslim invasions and their consequences either. They were concerned rather with the contemporary problems facing Indian Muslims, such as poverty and insufficient education. Asked for their opinion about the religious policy of Muslim rulers in Karnataka and the Deccan, all of our informants denied the possibility of Muslim violence or intolerance and stressed the religious freedom given to all citizens. Our Muslim interview partners showed no tendency to glorify Muslim rule in India, with the exception of the historical figure of Tipu Sultān. This is an interesting point, because it was not under Tipu Sultān’s reign, but that of the Mughal Akbar that Islam in India unfolded its richest blossom.⁵⁷ Hence, Muslims in Karnataka look back rather to their last regional reign than their cultural achievements on the subcontinent. Among Muslims, Tipu Sultān enjoys the reputation of having been a very pious and tolerant ruler, but his glorified reputation is based on the fact that he fought against the British, trying to defend his lands against the colonial power. He enjoyed some success, but finally lost the last Muslim bastion of the area to the British.

⁵⁶ For example, see K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India. From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar*, 4th ed. (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1976): 309.

⁵⁷ Schimmel, *Der Islam im indischen Subkontinent*: 56–57. Whereas mythification of Muslim rule in India is focused on Tipu Sultān, Muslims in and outside of Spain glorify the whole period of Muslim rule on the Iberian peninsula—although the last Muslim kingdom of Granada also gains particular importance within the reception of the history of al-Andalus. The peaceful co-existence of the three predominant religions—Christianity, Islam and Judaism—is an important element of the feeling of nostalgia, but another crucial feature is the cultural blossoming of Islam on the peninsula. The expulsion of the Muslims in 1492, in particular, is still remembered today and adds a tragic moment to Islamic rule. Compared to the information of our Indian informants, the nostalgia towards Muslim rule in al-Andalus seems to be a lot stronger, which could result from the fact that Muslims were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula, but not from the Indian subcontinent. The contemporary Muslim reception of al-Andalus has been investigated by Julia Lauer who dedicated her Masters dissertation to this issue.

Considering the argumentations of our informants concerning the Muslims' religious policy in and around Karnataka, it is not surprising that their version of history also differs with regard to conversion. Our Muslim informants regard all conversions as brought about by Sufis and stressed the peacefulness of the Sufi mystics' endeavour. A Muslim historian from Bijapur, Abdul Gani Imaratwale, who has done research on Jainism during Muslim rule, referred to the *attārs*, a community of perfume sellers, who are said to have converted from Jainism to Islam.⁵⁸ Interestingly, the historian described the *attārs* as a "soft community, very soft in their dealings," which showed, he maintained, their former religious affiliation as Jainas. According to his research, Sufi saints were responsible for the conversion of such Jainas as the weavers or thread makers in the Dharwar area. All these conversions, he said, had been peaceful. The fact that Islam does not teach vegetarianism had not prevented Jainas from converting to Islam, since Islam did not force anyone to eat meat. The historian argued that economically poor, low-caste Jainas like the weavers had been among the main communities who were attracted by the preaching of Sufi saints. As "soft-hearted, not stubborn people," the Jainas were more likely to be attracted by the strict and simple teachings of Islam than the "more fundamentalist" Viraśaivas who had formed the religious majority in North Karnataka for some time.⁵⁹

Reliable historical sources about conversions of Jainas to Islam are rare to find. The district gazetteers of the British from the last decades of the nineteenth century contain some statements about the original religious affiliations of some local Muslim classes. In the *Bijapur Gazetteer*, first published in 1884, some alleged conversions of Jainas are mentioned. Apart from the already mentioned caste of *attārs*, which "are probably the descendants of Jain Hindus of the class of the same name,"⁶⁰ some agriculturist castes, too, "are said to represent Jains who were converted by Pir Mahabir Khandāyat an Arab preacher, who came as a missionary to the Deccan about the beginning of the fourteenth century [...]."⁶¹ Further explanations are not given, and unfortunately one has to be content with vague phrases such as "are probably" and "are said to represent." The caste of *attārs* is also found in other districts of North Karnataka, and the corresponding gazetteers of Dharwar, Belgaum and the neighbouring Kolhapur district of South Maharashtra mention Muslim *attārs* as converts of a Hindu caste of the same name.⁶² Since Jainas are not always strictly categorised in these gaz-

⁵⁸ His statement is based on the *Bijapur Gazetteer* of 1884. See James M. Campbell, ed., *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, vol. 23, *Bijapur* (Bombay Presidency, 1884 [Bangalore: Government of Karnataka, 2001]): 289.

⁵⁹ Interview with Abdul Gani Imaratwale, conducted at Bijapur on 11.03.2007.

⁶⁰ James M. Campbell, ed., *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, vol. 22, *Dharwar* (Bombay Presidency, 1884 [Bangalore: Government of Karnataka, 2003]): 289.

⁶¹ Campbell, ed., *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, vol. 22, *Dharwar*: 282.

⁶² See Campbell, ed., *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, vol. 22, *Dharwar*: 232–33; James M. Campbell, ed., *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, vol. 21, *Belgaum* (Bombay: Government Central Press 1864 [Bangalore: Government of Karnataka, 2004]): 205; Arunchandra S. Pathak, ed., *Gazetteer of*

etteers as a separate religious community, and Jainas in several cases are listed as one group within the larger category of Hindus, it is possible that the converts mentioned also included Jainas.⁶³ Regarding the motives for conversion, it does not seem plausible to consider the abovementioned alleged conversions as brought about forcefully by Muslims. It is more likely that Sufi saints, their teachings and worship, must have had an impact, especially on the lower strata of the Jaina community. It is a widely accepted fact that Jainas, while not believing in a religious sanctification of the caste system, are nevertheless divided into several castes, according to their profession. Since the economic position and social standing of a person depends largely on his profession, we also find a kind of class hierarchy among the Jainas, in which several groups belong to the lower classes of Indian society. The *Kolhapur Gazetteer* of 1886 mentions “barbers, washermen, and many other castes who have ceased to be Jains.”⁶⁴ It can therefore be assumed that among not only Hindus, but also Jainas, some lower castes had been attracted to the Sufis’ teachings.

The principle of an Arabic College near Bijapur argued that there were no cases of conversion from Islam to Jainism, but only the other way round. This was evidence to him, an orthodox Muslim, that the principles of Islam were far more attractive than those of Jainism, which he did not consider to be a religion in a narrow sense, but an ideology, an “-ism.”

Both Jainas and Muslims agree with the academic appraisal of Muslim rule in South India as being less aggressive than in the north. On the whole, members of both religions stressed the peaceful role of the Sufis in matters of conversion. Many Jainas, however, rejecting the Muslims’ picture of their rule as peaceful, still consider that Muslims converted non-Muslims forcefully and attacked their sacred monuments, although this idea is on the wane. But how do Jainas and Muslims think about each other today? The following paragraph is dedicated to this question.

the *Bombay Presidency*, vol. 24, *Kolhapur District* (Mumbai: Government of Maharashtra, 1999 [1886]): 148.

⁶³ The notion of the Jainas forming a separate religious community is a rather late development, which has gradually been evolving since the end of the nineteenth century. Before this, Jainism had been classed either as a branch of Buddhism or a heterodox Hindu sect. Although at the present time most Jainas reject the notion of Jainism being part of Hinduism, the Jainas’ status as a separate religious community is nevertheless doubted or denied by some non-Jainas, as well as some Jainas who, for political, economic or social reasons, prefer to be seen as part of the Hindu community. The question of Jaina identity is very complex and cannot be the topic of this chapter. It will be discussed by Sabine Scholz in her forthcoming Ph.D.-Thesis about revival, reform and identity of the Digambara Jainas of Karnataka during the twentieth century,.

⁶⁴ Arunchandra S. Pathak, ed., *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, vol. 24, *Kolhapur District*: 135.

4.2 The Own and the Other: More Similarities than Differences?

Nearly all our informants were familiar with aspects of the other's religion, to a greater or lesser extent. Of course, having a conception of another religion requires the knowledge of its existence. The awareness level of Jainism and Islam differs in present-day Kanarese society. Whereas all Jaina informants knew something of the Muslim religion, the degree of familiarity with Jainism among Muslims is a lot smaller. As mentioned above, Jainas are fewer in number and more similar to Hindus when it comes to dressing, temple architecture and the domination of local languages. They also receive less media coverage than Muslims. Since we spoke mostly with educated people, only very few Muslims had not heard of the Jaina community. Education plays a key role in conveying knowledge of other religions. But, according to those we talked to, it does not enable people to understand another religion, or judge its similarities or differences with their own faith. On both sides, we found highly educated Indians who emphasised differences—or parallels—between the two religions. As far as differences are concerned, food habits are perceived to be a very important point of antagonism: vegetarianism versus non-vegetarianism tends to be the first argument for Jainas who wish to separate themselves from Muslims. The latter, in turn, stress their own monotheism and the possible existence of innumerable gods in Jainism as the biggest difference regarding faith. Besides, members of both religions contrast *karma* and rebirth in Jainism with doomsday and the lack of worldly rebirth in Islam. Nakedness as the ideal for a male ascetic is another feature considered to be distinguishing, since the tradition of naked monks, *munis*, is upheld among Digambara Jainas, but disapproved of by Muslims.⁶⁵

Among those Jainas and Muslims who argue for the similarities between Jainism and Islam, it is common to regard love and affection for human life as well as a general peacekeeping mission as a unifying element. Jainas in particular insist on the Muslims' principle of "live and let live" and the compatibility of vegetarianism with the *Qur'ān*. The believers' modesty and the abstention from "idol-worshipping" are regarded by those on both sides as further similarities, notwithstanding the very widespread practice of image worship in Jainism⁶⁶ and unorthodox practices of many

⁶⁵ Nevertheless, some Muslims we talked to see parallels between Jaina ascetics and Sufi saints, since some rather heterodox Muslim mystics are said to have had abandoned all their clothes.

⁶⁶ Apart from Śvetāmbara sects whose members abstain from the worship of images, the veneration of the images of Tirthaṅkaras is a widespread practice among most Jaina communities, which probably goes back to ancient times. Therefore, our informants' statement regarding the Jainas' abstention from "idol-worshipping" probably refers to the fact that, according to Jaina principles, it is not the "idol" that is venerated, but the "ideal" of the perfect soul, which is expressed through the Jina images.

Sufi orders in Indian Islam.⁶⁷ Whereas many Muslims compare the Jainas' attitude of non-attachment (*aparigraha*, meaning both non-possession and non-possessiveness) to the Muslim pillar of *zakat* (paying taxes for a social purpose), only one Muslim considered the remarkable treatment of women to be a common feature. While Jainism, a university professor for history argued, had been the first religion in the region to make a monastic vocation accessible for women, Islam had also upvalued a woman's social position by allowing her private property after marriage.⁶⁸

The majority of our informants mentioned both similarities and differences concerning the relationship of Jainism and Islam. Some Jainas and Muslims emphasised the distinctive features of the two religions, or saw them as "opposites," while only Jainas, in pursuit of harmony, affirmed that they were "very similar." On this continuum, those who considered both religions to have many features in common were less orthodox than those who saw a huge theological difference. Also, the first group tended to describe all religions as similar at their core. However, when it came to positioning one's own and the other's faith in a religious framework, having social contact to adherents of the other religion did not seem to count. Those with neighbours or friends belonging to the rival religion were no more likely to acknowledge a similarity with themselves than those who had never been in touch with it.

According to our informants, Jainism and Islam not only have common features, but have sometimes even been able to fuse. When asked about the relationship between Islam and Jainism in Indian society, four university professors from Hubli and Dharwar referred to a historically unique synthesis of both religions. In different interviews, two Jainas, one Muslim and one Hindu mentioned the powerful influence of Jainism on the Navaita Muslims around Bhatkal, Uttar Kanara District. These are said to be descendants of Jainas who converted to Islam, but upheld their own customs. Since pious Jainas do not eat, drink or travel after sunset, all four informants saw the Navaitas' custom of having dinner before sunset as confirming proof of their thesis.⁶⁹

On several occasions, we found Jainism and Islam perceived as competitors: members of both religions periodically claim that their own tradition is the most scientific. Jainas have been making this argument since Western-influenced Jaina reformers wrote the first English accounts of Jainism around the end of the nineteenth

⁶⁷ In Indian Islam there is no image worship in a narrow sense, but Sufism is often regarded as containing image worship in a wider sense. Orthodox Muslims criticise the veneration of saints, pilgrimage to tombs etc.

⁶⁸ Nowadays, the position of Jaina women in Indian society is better than average for the country, at least in terms of education. In Karnataka in particular, Jaina women have contributed to local literature. Nevertheless, male literacy among Jainas is five times higher. See Vilas Adinath Sangave, "Status of Women in Jaina Society," *Jain Journal* 26, no. 2 (1991): 111–15.

⁶⁹ The four informants referred to the same source, but, paradoxically, the book's author ascribes the influence of Indian religions within the Navaitas' community explicitly to Hindus and not to Jainas. For further reading, see Victor Disousa, *Navayats of Kanara. A Study in Culture Contact* (Dharwad: K.R.I. Karnataka University Press, 1955).

century. The main points at issue are Jainism's rejection of a personal creator god and the claim that all physical laws discovered by modern science had already been implied in the Jaina philosophy for thousands of years. The Muslim claim that Islam is the most scientific religion refers to its theory of creation: According to the *Qur'ān*, Muslims from the Centre of Islamic Studies in Bangalore argued, "in the beginning there was nothing." This corresponded to the theory of the big bang and the discovery of zero gravity. According to them, details about pregnancy, visible only with the electro microscope, had also been mentioned in the *Qur'ān*. Food habits, too, are drawn into the argument by followers of both religions who seek scientific justification and explanations of their own tradition. In contrast to Jainas, for whom the weakness of human canine teeth is biological evidence for man's being a natural vegetarian, Muslims see the mere existence of canines as equally scientific proof that humans naturally eat meat as well as plants.⁷⁰ Whereas most Jainas who told us that their religion was the most scientific, only one had never heard of Muslims claiming this status for Islam. Several Muslims promoting the opposing view knew about their Jaina "rivals" in this matter. The acknowledged link between science and Islam is of great importance to the Muslims working in mission. The Centre for Islamic Studies in Bangalore, for example, has published information on this topic with the aim of promoting Islam among possible converts.

The preceding paragraphs have dealt with the relationship between the Jaina and the Muslim religion in Karnataka historically and at the present day. Despite substantial theological differences, members of both religions recognise unifying elements. They share the endeavour to be the most scientific religion, and the Muslim community of the Navaitas serves as an example for successful compatibility of the two faiths. The next part of this essay is concerned with the question of whether the alleged positive relationship we discerned between them brings their adherents into contact with each other. We have therefore considered social, religious, economic and political dimensions to the relationship.

4.3 Harmony and Threat: Contact in Different Dimensions

4.3.1 Social and Community Interactions

On a social level, contact between Jainas and Muslims exists, but to a limited extent. In Kanarese neighbourhoods, Jainas live alongside Hindus and sometimes Christi-

⁷⁰ These two arguments for and against vegetarian nutrition do not form part of the Indian religious discourse only, but also of Western (popular) science. See, for example Axel Meyer, *Fleisch ade!* (Munich: Goldmann, 2001 [1990]).

ans.⁷¹ Muslims, on the other hand, tend to live in Muslim-dominated quarters like the City Market area in Bangalore or the streets around the Great Dargah in Gulbarga where they have access to Urdu newspapers, *halāl* food, Muslim clothing and ritual paraphernalia. Of course, this is no more than a tendency—in many quarters, members of different religions can be found, sometimes even in the same street. But a house's court would not normally be shared between Muslims and Jains. It is therefore possible for contact to be established in neighbourhoods, but this is more likely to happen at schools and workplaces.

Inter-faith friendships do exist and, according to our informants, invitations to houses where another faith is practised are not rare. Such visits can be problematic, because food habits come into play. Whereas Muslims can easily trust the Jains' cuisine, orthodox Jains would not take food in non-vegetarian households. More liberal Jains and in particular young people interpret the rule less strictly and accept at least fruits, if not even vegetarian meals, even if the household is not a vegetarian one. Muslims with contact to the Jain community know about this, and we met several Muslims who confirmed they had already cooked vegetarian meals for Jain acquaintances. Although we were told about Jains inviting Muslim families to attend a family member's wedding and vice versa, friendship between whole families is a rare phenomenon. It is more likely to exist between two persons of the same sex, and is more probable at a young age. Some married Jains and Muslims had had friendships with members of the other religion during adolescence, but these had ceased with marriage.

Interreligious marriages between Jains and Muslims, often tallied as a measure of the permeability of societies, probably number little more than zero. We found one single hint of such a couple in urban Bangalore, and none of our other informants in Karnataka had ever heard of such a constellation. By contrast, marriages between Jains and Hindus are quite common nowadays,⁷² and also take place—albeit to a much lesser extent—between Muslims and Hindus. For young Jains and Muslims of marriageable age, however, as well as for their parents, such interreligious marriage is unthinkable. The main arguments cited against it are the fear of not being able to practise one's own religion freely and of being treated as a second-class family member.

71 We find our observation confirmed in Sangave, *Facets of Jainology*: 37, who shares the view that Jains tend to live in areas with a large Hindu majority.

72 Despite their small number, Jains used to marry within their community. Among some Śvetāmbara trading communities in West and North India, intermarriage with Vaiṣṇava Hindus has been quite common. Nowadays, the number of intermarriages between Digambaras and Hindus seem to increase even in case of arranged marriages, for the educational and economic background of a possible marriage partner is in some cases considered to be more important than the community he or she belongs to. But questions such as ritual purity, reflected in eating habits, matter a lot. Therefore, in most cases, Jain parents will choose a Hindu from a vegetarian community as spouse for their child.

4.3.2 Economic Exchanges

Whereas social contact can be problematic and is not a matter of course, economic exchange works much more easily and with few religious obstacles. Both Muslims and Jains buy from each other's shops, tea stalls and market stands. The religion of an institution's owner or salesman does not seem to count, and what is decisive are rational advantages like the quality and price of the goods and whether the shop is nearby. Only one Jaina student who had a very poor opinion of Muslims in general avoided their stores because she felt sexually threatened.⁷³

At the workplace itself, contact takes place on few occasions. Many Jains and Muslims we met did not have colleagues of the other religion. Inter-faith professional contacts tend to be made in educational and governmental institutions rather than in small-scale businesses, where any inter-faith contact is more likely to be between two companies than between a single company's employees. Jains and Muslims perceive each other as working in different economic sectors. Whereas Jains are said to work frequently as traders, professors, lawyers and jewellers, Muslims are associated with repair shops, butcheries and wholesalers.⁷⁴ Still, contacts are made, since single enterprises depend on each other. A Jaina, for example, would consult a Muslim mechanic to get their bike fixed, or purchase technical components from Muslim traders for their factory. Muslims, in turn, would consult a Jaina moneylender to start up their own business. Muslims are also found working in Jaina households. This division of work suggests a clear hierarchy. But although Jains and Muslims reject the caste system on religious lines, they claim to cope well with the social hierarchy. Adherents of both religions considered the division of labour to be complementary and necessary for the balance of the regional and national economy. Even among Muslims we did not find any trace of envy or resentment towards Jains, who—generally speaking and in comparison with a majority of the Muslim population—are economically better situated.

Nevertheless, again on an economic level, the image of the other religion can affect decision-making. A Jaina principal of one of the Karnataka colleges emphasised that he recruited his employees according to their abilities—but Muslims were always his second preference. Since he blamed them for destroying the system with their terrorist tenden-

⁷³ At this point, at the latest, it became evident that many prejudices of European and US orientalism also circulate in India: Edward Said, who investigated the Muslims' reputation in the Western world, found they were seen as wild, uncivilised, sexually dangerous and dishonest. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Delhi: Penguin, 2001 [1978]).

⁷⁴ This statement about the main professions of Jains in Karnataka applies in towns and cities, where most of our informants resided. The image of Jains as a wealthy trading community does not take account of the southern Digambaras who are for the most part a rurally based farming community. Nevertheless, for the last decades, more and more Jaina youths from agricultural backgrounds have been going into higher education and now work as professionals.

cies and their inclination to steal, employing Muslims—according to him—could easily harm the institution he led. But he contradicted his own statement. With the intention of providing us with Muslim contacts, he presented one of his employees whom he supposed to be a Muslim because of his surname. During our interview, the man in question turned out to be a Hindu. So ultimately, at least in this case, religion had not mattered in the question of his employment.

Another example from Bangalore shows that economic interests can break down social barriers. A downtown moneylender would prefer to have as his neighbours Jainas or Hindus. His business, however, is located in a street with many Muslims and Muslim facilities, because they are his main clientele.

4.3.3 Work Relations

Work can also make a religion itself more accessible, and not only to members of its community. Anwar Baig, the chairman of a university in Hubli, is an unusual example. He is a practising Muslim, but wrote his doctoral thesis on Jaina society during the Hoysala period. The choice of the subject was pragmatic: many of the sources he needed were written in Kannada or Prakrit, whereas his language abilities in Urdu and Persian were not sufficient for his original plan of doing research on Islam. Although he personally never felt attracted to the other faith, he did not tell his parents what he was working on and so they never realised that their son was a specialist in Jainism. His secretary who typed his thesis used to call him “Jaina Muslim” which did not bother him at all; on the contrary, he enjoyed the acknowledgement of both his religion and his work.

Among Jainas, too, we found people who took a keen interest in the Muslim religion. The retired lawyer A.B. Pandit, a 73-year-old Jaina living in Gulbarga, is secretary of the *dargah* at the nearby historical site of Malkhed (Maḷkhēḍ). Although A.B. Pandit is a believing Jaina who would not pray at the Sufi shrine, he acknowledges the importance of the buried saints for other religions because of their spiritual power. For forty years, he has been promoting the *dargah* as a spiritually important place. Furthermore, he has organised meetings as well as helping in the coordination of the annual *urs*, the anniversary of death of a Sufi saint. At the functions, scholars, politicians and *svāmīs* (Hindu saints) give lectures on national integration. His activities, A.B. Pandit told us, would not lead him into trouble. It was simply his “task,” he said, and a “service to mankind.”⁷⁵ Besides, he could assist the president of the *dargah* who had been a pious Muslim and was highly respected by him and many other Muslims, Hindus and Jainas.

75 Interview with A.B. Pandit, conducted at Gulbarga on 04.03.2007.

Anwar Baig and A.B. Pandit each have an exceptional approach to the other's religion. However, several other Jainas and Muslims who were asked about the contact they had with the other religion had some encounter to relate. All the Jainas we met had been to mosques in that area, and Muslims who knew Jainas said they had visited Jaina temples. Occasions for visiting the sacred architecture of other religions often arose at school, where classes visited the holy sites of distinct religious communities. School was often the place to convey knowledge of other religions. A Jaina chief traffic administrator who attended a Karnataka government school from 1954 to 1957 recalled how already half a century back, his teachers had taught him the principles of different religions in India. There he had learned the five pillars of Islam and the history of Muslims in India. He had also been taught how to recite the Muslims' *basmala* (*bismillāh*), a qur'ānic term referring to Allah (al-A'lā) which accompanies the five daily prayers.⁷⁶ Led by his particular interest in Islam, he has even read parts of the *Qur'ān* and visits mosques every once in a while. For him, it is no problem to pray there to his personal Tirthankara. Although he prays sitting and not in the Muslims' prayer style, he said he felt welcome there. The editor of *Islamic Voice*, a liberal print and web magazine on Muslim culture in Bangalore, confirmed that some Jainas took an interest in Islam. According to him, there were members of other religions among his subscribers, including some Jainas.

Nonetheless, we picked up hints that contact with the other religion might not always be as harmonious as it is often made out to be. According to a Jaina student in Dharwar, annual visits to holy sites with her school turned out to be difficult. It was common, she said, for some of her classmates, in particular Muslims, to refuse to visit temples. She suspected that these classmates were influenced by their parents, who had also sought to prevent their children from learning Kannada or from having non-Muslim friends.

4.3.4 The Politics of Minority Status

With reference to politics, we did not find that the minority status of the two groups united them in any tangible way. No political parties or associations drew Jainas and Muslims together to defend their interests as minorities. This is not surprising, given that neither Jainas nor Muslims are to any degree politically organised in Karnataka. Furthermore, many Jainas would be put off making common cause with Muslims because of the resentment they feel at what they see as the special treatment accorded to Islam under Indian law. India is a democracy without a state religion and was defined as a secular state by an amendment to the preamble of the constitution in 1976. This means that the Indian state aims to treat all subjects equally, independent of

76 "Bismillahi ar-rahmani ar-rahimi": "In the name of God, most Gracious, most Merciful."

their religious confession. There is an important exception, however, within the principle of “One Nation—One Law”: the personal law, which can be derived from religious traditions. Because of this exception, Muslims have the right, for example, to polygamous marriage, which is denied to members of other communities. The codified Hindu personal law is applied to Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs, since these communities lack an officially acknowledged codified personal law of their own. Since the first half of the nineteenth century, some Jains in legal cases have been trying to enforce an independent “Jaina Law” for their community. Among the lay Jaina leaders of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, there were several lawyers who wanted to prove that, in their opinion, a key element of Jainism’s independence and distinctiveness from the Hindu tradition consisted in a separate Jaina law, different from the Anglo-Hindu law, codified through the efforts of the British. But what the Jaina reformers claimed was a uniform and universally accepted Jaina law was really more of a collection of local traditions, mostly concerning customs of inheritance and adoption.⁷⁷

The “special treatment”⁷⁸ of Muslims is in fact regarded by many non-Muslim Indians as a contradiction to the “One Nation—one Law” policy, and Jains are no exception here. The topic of religious minorities—in particular, how they are defined, and what their rights are—is a sensitive one for many Jains. Having already been counted as a distinct religious community since the Indian Census of 1881, Jainism has also been considered in several law cases before and after Independence as a religious tradition separate from the Hindu religion. Furthermore, unlike other religious minorities such as Christians and Muslims, Jains are a very small minority not only all over India, but also in every single Indian state. Bearing all this in mind, it does not come as a surprise that Jains are puzzled at not being officially granted religious minority status nationwide. Whereas other religious communities were granted this status on a nationwide basis, the decision was left to every single state in the case of

77 For the Jaina leaders’ efforts and motivations to create an independent Jaina law see Peter Flügel, “A Short History of Jaina Law,” *Jaina Studies. Newsletter of the Centre of Jaina Studies* 2 (2007): 24–27.

78 It should be stressed that what is considered “special treatment” by some non-Muslims is sometimes used in anti-Muslim communal propaganda. It is often concealed that the official acknowledgement of a separate personal law does not apply to the Muslims alone since there is no “specific reference to Islam or Muslims anywhere in the Constitution of India” (Mahmood, *Statute-Law relating to Muslims in India*: 6). In this regard, the jurist Tahid Mahmood states: “That now only the Muslims continue to have a separate personal law is a popular myth [...] The only difference [between the religious communities] is that while the Christian and Parsi personal laws had been codified during the British rule, and the Hindu-Buddhist-Jain-Sikh personal laws have to a great extent been codified after Independence – the Jewish law wholly, and the Muslim law to a large extent, remain uncoded. The codified “Hindu” law has been extended to the Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs because these communities since times immemorial did not have any scripture-based personal law of their own and followed only certain customs and usages different from Hindu law.” (Mahmood, *Statute-Law Relating to Muslims in India*: 15–16).

the Jainas. Karnataka is among the few states which have granted them minority status. Nevertheless, the *Dakṣiṇ Bhārat Jain Sabhā*, a more than one-hundred-year-old Digambara Jaina organisation based mainly in Southern Maharashtra and North Karnataka, keeps working hard for a nationwide recognition of Jainas as one of India's religious minorities. The principal activists, who have been engaged in the matter for years, state that their main intention is not to gain any economic advantages for their community, but to obtain for it from the government the same rights which have already been given to others who have not spent years campaigning and sending petitions. It seems that the main point of grievance for Jainas is that their community has not been given the same treatment as other minorities. Jainas are proud of upholding one of the oldest indigenous religious traditions still existing on the subcontinent today, and interpret this refusal to acknowledge them as a religious minority as a lack of respect. When asked about the reasons for their treatment, most Jainas hold Hindu nationalism responsible.⁷⁹ According to them, if Jainas were awarded nationwide minority status, pro-Hindu activists would no longer be able to consider Jainism as a Hindu subject.⁸⁰

The differential treatment of Muslims and Jainas in the issue of religious minorities is little understood by Jainas, who feel that their community is discriminated against. On the other hand, several Muslims we talked to doubted that the Muslims' recognition as a religious minority did any good to their community.

Many Jainas are afraid of the Islamisation of India. They often suppose Muslims to have separatist intentions. The Muslims' comparatively high birth rate, in particular, is interpreted as an attempt to achieve majority status in the country and is thus perceived as a threat to the other communities.⁸¹ We asked five Jainas for their perception of Islam in its political dimension, and all of them said they were afraid. Current

79 There are also a few Jainas who argue against the acknowledgement of their minority status, among them some Jaina members of the BJP who are in favour of a union with Hindus.

80 A short introduction to the Jaina minority status issue is given in Joseph Benjamin, ed., *Minorities in Indian Social System*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2006): 189–96. For our account we also used interviews with Bal Patil who has been the main activist on behalf of the *Dakṣiṇ Bhārat Jain Sabhā* for more than ten years, and written petitions and official letters provided to us by him and other members of the *Dakṣiṇ Bhārat Jain Sabhā*.

81 The percentage of Muslim population in India rose from 10.7% in 1961 to 13.5% in 2001 (14.2% in 2011), whereas the percentage of Hindu population experienced a modest decrease (Stephanie Kramer, "Population Growth and Religious Composition," Pew Research Center, 21.09.2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/09/21/population-growth-and-religious-composition/> [accessed 05.09.2022]). The growth is often explained with the socio-economic status of Muslim communities and education, but Padilla y Sotelo and Kumar Acharya blame Islam for impeding the use of contraception. See Lilia Susana Padilla y Sotelo and Arun Kumar Acharya, "Religion and India's growing population: evidence from some selected States of India," in *Caminhos de Geografia* 6, no. 15 (2005): 1–12, <https://seer.ufu.br/index.php/caminhosdegeografia/article/view/1538> [accessed 05.09.2022].

Muslim world politics and fear of terrorism dominate the Jainas' image of Muslims as a political group.⁸²

Conversely, Jainas as a political group enjoy a good reputation among Muslims. Of all our Muslim informants, not a single one doubted that they were politically modest. All Muslims we spoke with confirmed the image of the Jainas as a peace-loving community which propagates non-violence as its main message.

5 Conclusion

Jainas and Muslims in India and in Karnataka can both look back on a history of having once ruled over large areas, and both groups are now a minority in a Hindu-dominated state—or indeed, country. Nevertheless, they differ from each other in number, religious belief and practice and in their degree of cultural proximity to Hindu society.

In our exploration of the relationship between the two groups, in our qualitative field study in Karnataka, we found that, despite serious differences concerning belief system and social rites and habits, members of each religious community tended to perceive the other as not too different from themselves, in some cases even pointing out similarities. Furthermore, Muslims try to compete with Jainas by claiming to be “the most scientific religion.”

The quality and quantity of contact and exchanges between Jainas and Muslims depend on the dimension that is taken into consideration. On a social level, members of both communities declared that they had a good inter-faith relationship, characterised by contact and friendship. In this dimension, the greatest problem consists of particular food habits that complicate the visits of Jainas to Muslim households. On an economic level, exchange is easier than in the social sphere. According to our informants, members of both religions visit each other's shops, buy from one another and accept the division of labour. Our case studies show that economic exchange can be capable of breaking borders that exist in a social dimension. On a religious level, we found that both Jainas and Muslims were interested in the substance and history of the others' religion. This interest was not motivated by an appetite for conversion, but resulted from the consideration of education as an end in itself or served for scholarly work. As far as the religious sphere is concerned, in particular, our study cannot

⁸² This argument is also part of the Hindu political discourse. Members of the right-wing Hindu movement VHP suggested prohibiting all conversions to assure their own majority. Earlier, a law was passed in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu to forbid conversions “through fraud, force or allure.” This includes conversions to Islam and Christianity for material benefits. Many converts are from low castes trying to overcome their socio-economic drawbacks. See Charles Haviland, “Fears for India's Secularism,” BBC News, 06.06.2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2967196.stm [accessed 05.09.2022].

claim to be representative as we mainly talked to highly educated Indians only. Up to this point, both Jainas and Muslims talk in harmonising terms about each other. When they refer to the perception of the other's religion and to interactions on a social, economic and religious level, members of both communities are emphatically tolerant and respectful, keen to promote contact and foster productive exchange.

However, on a political level, the tide turns. Whereas Muslims appreciate the Jainas as a political community for their propagation of non-violence, Jainas, on the contrary, mistrust Muslims, assuming that they have separatist intentions and are trying to achieve a majority share of the population in order to finally rule over India. Many Jainas feel threatened by the idea that an Islamic regime might come to power, and see secular India as being in danger. One could easily assume that their historical experience with Muslim rule in the region was an underlying factor for this fear. But this does not seem to be the case. Asked for the experience with Muslim rule in Karnataka in the past, Jainas did mention Muslim destruction of their holy sites and statues. Although stereotypes of an aggressive, intolerant Islam can still be found among Jainas (and among Hindus), but the tendency to explain all destruction and persecution as caused by Muslims is getting weaker,⁸³ thus upvaluing the Muslims' position, from a historical point of view. The Jainas' negative image of Muslims in India on a political level is determined less by historical experiences on the subcontinent than by riots on the part of Muslim and Hindu fanatics, which have kept breaking out since the traumatic experience of India's partition and its violent aftermath, and by worldwide acts of terrorism. In this sense, the Jainas' perception of Muslims resembles that of the Hindus. Both traditions have been developing on the Indian subcontinent side by side since ancient times, so similarities in many cultural aspects are only to be expected. Within the communalist polarisation between Muslims and Hindus, Jainas will generally be much closer to Hindus.

Despite the fact that Jainas and Muslims are both religious minorities, the problems they face differ, in particular in the political sphere. Muslims are often considered a dangerous, anti-national and pro-Pakistan community. Although acknowledged as a nationwide minority, many Muslims feel that the main problems of their community are being ignored by the government. While popular debates about the rights of Muslims as a religious minority tend to focus on the protection of a distinct Islamic culture and the Muslim personal law, a majority of Muslims experience pressing socio-economic problems, especially a high rate of illiteracy and poverty, which remain unresolved. The declaration in 1983 that the Muslim community in India was a "backward community" changed little about the situation.⁸⁴ Jainas, in turn, lament the de-

⁸³ Interestingly, while the cliché of the aggressive Muslim is slowly being dismissed, the stereotype of the tolerant, peaceful and never fanatic Hindu is also fading away.

⁸⁴ For a discussion of the minority rights of Muslims, see Kamaljit Bhasin-Malik and Yamini Aiyar, "Minority Rights, Secularism and Civil Society," in *In the Making. Identity Formation in South Asia*, ed. Kamaljit Bhasin-Malik [Gurgaon (Haryana): Three Essays Collective, 2007]: 99–116.

nial of the acknowledgement of their nationwide minority status, which they consider a lack of recognition of Jainism as a separate, independent Indian religion. Being a religious minority, therefore, does not serve as a unifying bond between Jainas and Muslims in India.

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