

The religious identity of the Hazaras of Afghanistan and modern-day Pakistan



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Abstract

‘The religious identity of the Hazaras of Afghanistan and modern day Pakistan’ investigates how the Afghani Hazara tribe came into existence, adopted a branch of Islam that differed from the majority of Afghans and the consequences of that religious adherence. Through the discussion of a history of religious and ethnic persecution in Afghanistan I show how the Hazaras have developed a strong unified sense of identity rooted in their shared ethnicity and religion. Their sense of identity is found and developed as they recognise their difference to others around them, namely the Sunni Pushtons. Their religious and ethnic unity is demonstrated in the way that migrant Hazaras in Pakistan use physical space for their religious expression. Through the sacralising of sacred spaces the Hazaras demonstrate that their presence is legitimate in this foreign land as a minority ethnic and religious group.

Introduction

Who are the Hazaras?

The word ‘Hazara’ conjures up a variety of responses. For the vast majority of the world it is an unknown word or term, and thus will be meaningless. For others it denotes the Afghani¹ ethnic group; the Hazaras. For many of the people of Afghanistan it can mean any Shia Muslim, regardless of ethnicity. For the Hazaras themselves it can be an identification they avoid, or are enthusiastic to embrace and are proud of.

The Hazaras are one of the larger ethnic groups of Afghanistan, however they only came to be named as ‘Hazara’ recently². For many years prior to this association the term ‘hazara’ meant any non-subjugated mountain tribe³. The Hazaras occupied the central region of the country, known as the Hazarajat, for a lengthy period up until the end of the nineteenth century when there was a war with the Amir Abdul Rahman. This event spurred mass migration and changed many aspects of life for the Hazaras who remained in Afghanistan. By the early twentieth century many immigrant communities of the tribe began to be established throughout the world. To this day many Hazaras still live in the central region of Afghanistan, often still referred to as Hazarajat although this region no longer officially exists. They are not, however, confined to this region as many also live in other parts of the country, especially in the major cities. One of the striking features of these people, in their communities throughout the world, is their apparent ethnic unity and their fervent adherence to their religion, the Twelver Shia sect of Islam.

Some research on the Hazaras has been undertaken and composed, although there is surprisingly little work that is entirely focused on them. Also to note is that thus far this research has been conducted almost entirely by men, with the exception of Elizabeth Bacon and Diana Glazebrook. Thus, as a woman, and a westerner, I am keen to add to this discussion, and hope to offer a fresh perspective. It was my particular interest to focus on the community who live in Quetta, a city in the west of Pakistan. Having travelled to this region and met many Hazaras, I desired to gain a better understanding of their religious ideas and practice, and how they came to be part of Hazara culture. It is through an investigation into

¹ I have chosen the term ‘Afghani’ to denote a person from Afghanistan and not ‘Afghan’ as the term is commonly used to refer to a Pushton, thus excluding the other ethnic groups. To avoid being exclusive, and creating confusion, I will use the term ‘Afghani’ to denote a person from the country. For a detailed argument on the use of the term Afghan see Mousavi, 1998.

² Monsutti. (2007b) page 7

³ Centlivers and Centlivers-Demont. (1998), page 50-51, cited in Monsutti, (2007b), page 7

the history of the Hazaras, observation of and interaction with current communities that an understanding of religious identity can be attained and articulated. This is what has been accomplished in the subsequent pages.

What is religious identity?

Religious identity and its formation is part of a complex discussion, of which many people have contributed to and much has been argued. It crosses into various dialogues of anthropology, sociology and cultural studies, resulting in numerous theories emerging. A detailed discussion of these arguments is outwith the scope of this thesis; however certain principles and ideas have to be taken into account that are of use in this discussion.

Firstly historian Iftikhar Malik highlights the point that ‘Muslim’ and ‘Islamic’ are not the same⁴. This is an important point to consider when speaking of the religious identity of a group. In this sense we are talking about a collective identity, not an individual. Collective identity is also cultural and ethnic, thus when looking at Hazara religious identity ethnicity should also be taken into account, not only religious affiliation. Muslim identity is “simultaneously cultural and ethnic”⁵ and in the case of Afghanistan ethnicity implies religion⁶. It must also be taken into account that the Hazaras have a mindset reflective of their culture, which is not as individualistic as the West is. They are very much part of a family group, and part of an ethnic group and perceive themselves as such. A good example of this is when one asks how many people attend a mosque or other institution the answer will be given in the number of families, not number of individuals. Thus religious identity will be considered collectively and not individually, although I will iterate ideas and expressions of individuals from the Hazara community to shed light on topics, as these help to understand the people collectively.

James Clifford’s ‘new ethnography’⁷ has spurred much of the current discussions in regard to ethnography and identity, which are useful in this discussion. Clifford stressed the importance of the ethnographer’s identifying themselves in their ethnographic account⁸. He stressed that

⁴ Malik, (1999), page 17

⁵ Malik, (1999,) page 17

⁶ Canfield, (1973), page 115

⁷ Clifford, James, (1988), *The predicament of culture: twentieth-century ethnography, literature, and art*, Cambridge; Mass; London; Harvard University Press

⁸ Clifford, (1988), page 9

when making arguments about identity relationships must be considered. He says, “I argue that identity, considered ethnographically, must always be mixed, relational, and inventive.”⁹ I have taken this on board in my study of the modern day Hazaras, recognising that I too am part of the ethnographic study, as an outsider. It is widely acknowledged, not only by Clifford, that identity is constructed through noting the difference of the ‘other’¹⁰. Thus when studying how Hazara religious identity is formed close attention will be paid to how they differ from and relate to those around them. The history of oppression, genocides and the ongoing tense relationship with Pushtons are clear factors when looking at their identity and will be one of the central considerations.

Alongside this ‘difference to others’ as a major factor, religious activity and ritual are also acknowledged as significant. Coleman and Collins comment;

“The adoption of religion becomes – among many other things – the acceptance of commonality as well as the difference in relation to numerous others. In this sense religious activity always carries with it a statement of identity, whether the actor intends to make such a statement or not.”¹¹

Agreeing with Coleman and Collins, I have taken into account the significance of relationships with outsiders and religious activity in the discussion of religious identity. Additionally, adopting a primordial stance, I have looked at historical events and practices as I too believe they show how religious identity is formed¹². How a people have come to behave in particular ways is deeply rooted in their past and in the cultural memory it maintains.

A final, and very important point is that identity is unfixed. As Coleman and Collins state, “Processes of identity formation are malleable; they are also extremely promiscuous in their deployment of cultural resources.”¹³ Therefore when forming arguments about religious identity, and its construction, it is necessary to acknowledge its likelihood of change. This is particularly important when looking at a tribe in history, and in modern diasporas, as these are

⁹ Clifford. (1988), page 10

¹⁰ Coleman and Collins. (2004), page 2, Bowie. (2006), page 73

¹¹ Coleman and Collins. (2004), page 8

¹² Coleman and Collins. (2004), page 4

¹³ Coleman and Collins. (2004), page 4

varying. Monsutti adds that that identity is not a cultural fact but a political process¹⁴. Thus malleability and process are two important considerations.

Group religious identity is formed through a history of events and passed down traditions, and their reactions to, and dealings with outsiders. In modern communities these factors should be taken into account as should the current ritual practices and relations with outsiders. I too, being a non-Hazara and non-Shia, am included as one of these outsiders and this is taken into account in my case-study. Throughout all this it is important to acknowledge the malleability of identity formation as it is a process, and not a static cultural fact.

Method

To demonstrate how the Hazaras have formed their religious identity I have drawn upon and assessed the research conducted thus far on their origins, history and processes of migration. These themes include many ongoing debates between scholars, particularly with regard to religious conversion and origins. Part one of this thesis deals with these subjects in some detail. I started with a literary survey, to summarise and introduce the scholarship that already exists and has been useful for this study. I then wrote about the discussion of the Hazara origins, a topic that has created the most debate in the study of the Hazaras. It was necessary, I think, to address this issue as it includes the Hazaras own responses and identification with their origins. Their own identification is helpful in understanding the importance of how they are perceived by outsiders. Following this is a discussion of the Shi'isation of the Hazaras, again a topic which has been heavily debated. This chapter explores how the majority of the Hazaras became Shia, and how they practiced the religion in ancient times. To conclude section one I accounted for the various wars that have affected the Hazaras over the past 150 years, and their migration patterns that followed. In this chapter I begin to show how Hazara identity formation has taken place, through war and migration. All this serves to create a foundation of what is dealt with in Part Two; a case-study of the Pakistani Hazaras during the early twenty-first century. In doing this I agree with Kokot, Tololyane and Alfonso who say, "Even if one diaspora community still may serve as a focus of research, its transnational and global connections, the community's history and means of communication used to maintain it, must equally be considered."¹⁵ Thus section one provides a background for section two, the focus on Pakistan. This section presents the findings of field-work I was able to undertake in

¹⁴ Monsutti. (2007b), page 6

¹⁵ Kokot, Tolollyane and Alfonso. (2004), page 5

the autumn of 2008¹⁶. After introducing the Pakistani Hazaras and performing a brief literary survey I have shown how this migration community forms its religious identity. I approached the field work task from an ethnographic mindset not having, prior to the study, many preconceptions of theories or of what I would focus on. After spending some time with the Hazaras in Quetta it became apparent that sacred places played an important role in their religious practice. For this reason I focused on the creation of sacred spaces in Pakistan as through this many of the significance of religious activities can be articulated. This also serves to show how they relate to other Shia communities and express practices and developments in their religious history. Through an explanation and of an analysis of space and activity, and looking into some of the history of the Hazaras in Pakistan, interesting points can be asserted in relation to identity.

Finally Part Three marries the analysis and conclusion of the findings of this study in sections one and two. I conclude how Hazara have formed their religious identity, drawing on some of the aforementioned theories. Furthermore this section poses questions for further study that have arisen from this particular focus. I have also included some pictures as appendices, which show some of the sacred sites of the Hazaras in Quetta and illustrate the rituals described.

I regret that at present, due to the political conditions in western Balochistan, further research cannot be undertaken. It is my hope to be able to continue what has been a preliminary focus on the Quetta Hazaras in the near future.

¹⁶ This work was partially funded by Glasgow University Arts and Humanities Graduate school

Literary survey

Over the past century various scholars have embarked on the task to investigate the origins, sociology and religion of the Hazara people in Afghanistan, as well as in the other large communities in south Asia and the Western world. Here I will account for what these scholars have contributed to the discussion of the Hazaras to this date. This is exhaustive in as much as it covers the major work that has been completed exclusively written about the Hazaras in English, and German. Additional writers have contributed to this discussion, yet the Hazaras have not been their focus. These are also useful and will be discussed within the proceeding chapters relating to the covered topics. The work that concerns itself exclusively with the Hazaras covers a variety of disciplines and purposes, yet all are useful in their contributions made in the study of Hazaras for varying reasons.

In 1990 Hamilton wrote *A Vizier's Daughter: A tale of the Hazara War*¹⁷ which is a narrative of a family's experience of the war with Abdul Rahman. Her account is based on her experiences in Afghanistan and on stories she heard from the Hazaras whilst living among them. This book gives some insight into the mindset and culture of the Hazaras and the effect of the war on the lives of individual families. Within the narrative are expressions of the Hazaras' desires and beliefs, including many references to religion and their disdain for Rahman¹⁸. Hamilton's work is not intended to be scholarly but is useful in terms of the cultural insight that is offered and examples of personal attitudes. Some of the information relayed in the book has been used in this thesis.

Bunbury¹⁹ was the next person to write exclusively on the Hazaras. He wrote a short article about the history of Hazaras, having served with them in the army in the early twentieth century. He tells the story of how the refugee Hazaras, who had fled to India after Rahman's attacks, were invited to join the British army in Quetta²⁰. Bunbury struggled to find any information about the Hazara's history yet wrote his work in the hope that "it may be of some help to those interested in the Hazaras and revive happy memories in those who had the

¹⁷ Hamilton, Lillias. (1990). *A Vizier's Daughter: A tale of the Hazara war*, John Murray, London

¹⁸ Hamilton. (1990), page 26

¹⁹ Bunbury, N. L. St Pierre. (1949), *A Brief History of the Hazara Pioneers (Indian Army) 1904-1933*, Quetta: ms.

²⁰ Bunbury. (1949), page 6

privilege of serving with these splendid men.”²¹ His work was a good starting point for other scholars.

Anthropologist Elizabeth Bacon made groundbreaking attempts to uncover the origins of the Hazaras. She completed her doctoral thesis on the Hazaras²² and subsequently published several papers concerning them, initiating a discussion that stimulated further research in a variety of academic disciplines. Bacon was the first academic researcher to live among the Hazaras, and so her ethnographic insights are interesting and useful. Bacon’s paper *The Inquiry into the History of the Hazara Mongols of Afghanistan*²³ offers an analysis of the available evidence of the origins of the tribe. She challenged the assumption held by Europeans that the Hazaras were descendants of Chengis Kahn’s military garrisons left in Afghanistan subsequent to the Mongol invasions. In this paper she initiates a new theory, spurring the reactions of future anthropologists. Bacon’s contribution is invaluable as it resulted in the opening of discussions about the Hazaras, their origins and their history. Her pioneering work on the Hazaras was groundbreaking for its time and is both the information it gives about the Hazaras and the discussion that stemmed from it is invaluable.

Wilfred Thesiger²⁴ wrote two short articles on the Hazaras shortly after Bacon, *The Hazaras of Central Afghanistan* and *The Hazarajat of Afghanistan*²⁵. Additionally he wrote about his travels in Hazarajat in *Among the Mountains*²⁶, which was published in 1998. One of Thesiger’s chief focus was the landscape and the agriculture of the Hazarajat. He collected flowers and seeds from the area and wrote about their cultivation. He did, however, note some aspects of the Hazara’s character and customs, which later research drew from. Although Thesiger’s work is interesting and helpful it provided very few new ideas or understanding about the Hazaras that previous travel narratives had not already conveyed.

²¹ Bunbury. (1949), page 2

²² Bacon, Elizabeth. (1951). *The Hazara Mongols of Afghanistan. A study in Social Organization*, Berkeley: University of California.

²³ Bacon, Elizabeth. (1951). *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol 7 No. 3, p230-247; *The Inquiry into the History of the Hazara Mongols of Afghanistan*.

²⁴ Thesiger, Wilfred. (1956). *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 121, No. 3 (Sep., 1955,) pp. 312-319; *The Hazaras of Central Afghanistan*.

²⁵ Thesiger, Wilfred. (1956), *Geographical Magazine* 29:87-95; *The Hazarajat of Afghanistan*,

²⁶ Thesiger, Wilfred. (1998), *Among the Mountains: Travels through Asia*; London; Harper Collins.

Klaus Ferdinand wrote about the Hazaras shortly after Thesiger in his book *Preliminary Notes on Hazara Culture*²⁷. This work is a short description of Ferdinand's findings and his experience of the Hazaras in central Afghanistan during several visits between 1953 and 1955. He commented on their customs and practices, as well as some details about their origins and religion. He wrote about how they lived, their clothes, food, and livelihood. Ferdinand also brought to light the influence of religious authority on the Hazaras and how some of their practices stood outside the umbrella of 'orthodox' Islam. Furthermore he relayed details about the tribal government and how it had changed since the war with Abdur Rahman. His work provides significant observations of the Hazaras that are have been useful for later study.

A discussion of the research of the Hazaras is incomplete without the inclusion of the work of anthropologist Robert Canfield²⁸. After living amongst the inhabitants of central Afghanistan for several years in the 1970's he dedicated much time to writing about the people of the country, including the Hazaras. In his doctoral thesis *Faction and Conversion in a Plural Society*²⁹ Canfield explores the relationship of ethnicity with religion, and why religious conversion is non-existent among those living in central Afghanistan³⁰. He notes the intrinsic correlation between ethnicity and sect among these peoples, and asserts that this was the primary reason for why conversion is so unlikely³¹. Furthermore he explains Hazara customs and relations with surrounding communities, providing an understanding of the Hazaras residing in Afghanistan subsequent to mass migration and war. In addition he wrote about the Hazaras in an essay entitled *Suffering as a Religious Imperative in Afghanistan*³², presented at the 9th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Chicago in 1973. In this Canfield focuses on the poverty of the Hazaras in Afghanistan, which he rightly says is due to their status as second rate citizens because of their adherence to Shi'ism³³. Later

²⁷ Ferdinand, Klaus. (1959), *Preliminary Notes on Hazara Culture*

²⁸ Canfield, Robert L. (1971) *Hazara Integration Into the Afghan Nation: Some Changing Relations Between Hazaras and Afghan Officials*, New York: Afghanistan Council of the Asia Society, (1973), *Faction and Conversion in a Plural Society: religious alignments in the Hindu Kush*, Ann Arbor; University of Michigan

²⁹ Canfield, Robert Leroy. (1973) *Faction and Conversion in a Plural Society: religious alignments in the Hindu Kush*, Ann Arbor; University of Michigan

³⁰ Canfield. (1973), page 15

³¹ Canfield. (1973), page 5

³² Canfield. (1975), in Williams, Thomas R. (1975), *Psychological Anthropology*, The Hague; Paris; Mouton Publishers.

³³ Canfield. (1975), page 465

research has greatly benefited from Canfield, as he was able to spend a substantial amount of time in Afghanistan, unlike Bacon who was prevented from doing so by war³⁴.

Historian Hasan Kakar wrote a short article entitled *The Pacification of the Hazaras of Afghanistan*.³⁵ It is an account of the war of Amir Abdur al-Rahman against the Hazaras in the late nineteenth century in Afghanistan. He covers the reason why the war was declared and briefly comments on the effect it had on the Hazaras. Later, in 1979, Kakar wrote *Government and Society in Afghanistan: The reign of Amir Abd al-Rahman Khan*³⁶, going into further detail about the events that took place. Kakar also covers the effects on the Hazaras from the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in his book *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response*³⁷. These works are valuable sources for underpinning the events that caused the mass migration of Hazaras into other lands and helps us to understand how the Hazaras became unified as a single tribe. Kakar's work was particularly useful for the section on war in part one of this thesis.

Sociologist Owtalajam was the first to focus entirely on the Hazaras in Quetta, conducting an analysis of the socio-cultural change of the tribe. He spent three years living among the Hazaras in the early 1970's and wrote *The Hazara Tribe in Balochistan* in 1976³⁸ as a PhD thesis. In this study Owtalajam notes that the Hazaras migration to Quetta has resulted in massive change of occupation, moving away from farming and into service industries. He says this is due to increasing levels of education for both men and women. He demonstrated that in addition to the physical changes it has also served to transform the attitude of the Hazaras in relation to their traditions, customs and religious practice. Central to his conclusions about the socio-cultural relations of the Hazaras is that their ancient customs are in decline³⁹ and that good education and scientific knowledge are replacing some of their 'superstitious' beliefs⁴⁰.

³⁴ Canfield. (1973), page iv

³⁵ Kakar, Hasan. (1973), *The Pacification of the Hazaras of Afghanistan*. New York: Afghanistan Council of Asia Society.

³⁶ Kakar, M. Hassan. (1979), *Government and Society in Afghanistan: The reign of Amir Abd al-Rahman Khan*; Austin; The University of Texas Press.

³⁷ Kakar, M. Hassan. (1995), *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982*; Berkley; University of California Press.

³⁸ Owtadolajam, Mohammad. (1976), *The Hazara Tribe in Balochistan*; Quetta; Hazaragi Academy.

³⁹ Owtadolajam, (1976), p308

⁴⁰ Owtadolajam, (1976), p404

In 1987 German scholar Bindemann published *Religion und Politik bei den schi'itschen Hazaras in Afghanistan, Iran und Pakistan*⁴¹. This study briefly covers the discussion of origins and history but focuses on the growth of the Hazara involvement in politics over the past fifty years. Bindemann also conveys details of the rise of formal Islamic education in Afghanistan and offers an account of the lives of Hazara individuals who were radically politically in their time⁴².

Hassan Poladi, a second generation Pakistani Hazara, wrote *The Hazaras*⁴³ in 1989. The purpose of this book was to give a detailed account of Hazara history, culture and customs, including information of the modern Diasporas. He discusses their origins, language, religion, war, economy and politics. He also wrote about Hazara slavery, a topic that had been largely ignored. In discussing each of these topics the history is considered alongside the reality of the Hazara situations contemporary to him. Poladi's book includes very detailed accounts of ancient Hazara customs, which are extremely useful in contemporary discussion, but his work is also very valuable because it provides a Hazara perspective on these matters. As a source of information *The Hazaras* has proved invaluable in every aspect of this study.

Harpviken started writing about the Hazaras in 1995 focusing on their political activity during the Soviet occupation⁴⁴. In *Political mobilisations among the Hazaras of Afghanistan: 1978-1992* he discusses how the Hazaras reacted to the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan. Building on the work of Bindemann he shows how the Hazaras united politically and the role of ethnicity and religion. He comments that, "the achievement of a political unity based in the Hazara ethnic identity is historically unique."⁴⁵ Later he published an article⁴⁶ that reiterated some of these points for the *Journal of Peace Research*. Harpviken discusses identity formation in relation to the Hazaras, much of which this work has been able to utilise.

Sayed Askar Mousavi worked on the Hazaras in a similar fashion to Poladi and Owtalojam, undertaking a comprehensive historical and sociological study of the Hazaras. *The Hazaras of*

⁴¹ Bindemann, Rolf. (1987), *Religion und Politik bei den schi'itischen Hazara in Afghanistan, Iran und Pakistan*, Berlin: Ethnizitat und Gesellschaft.

⁴² Bindemann, Rolf. (1987), page 32-33, 45-46.

⁴³ Poladi, Hassan. (1989), *The Hazaras*, Mughal Publishing Company, Stockton.

⁴⁴ Harpviken, Kristian Berg. (1995), *Political mobilisations among the Hazaras of Afghanistan: 1978-1992*; Department of Sociology; University of Oslo

⁴⁵ Harpviken. (1995), page 2

⁴⁶ Harpviken, Kristian Berg. (1997), *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Aug., 1997), pp. 271-287; *Transcending Traditionalism: The Emergence of Non-State Military Formations in Afghanistan*.

*Afghanistan*⁴⁷ is an attempt to depict the Hazaras against the backdrop of the political climate of Afghanistan. Mousavi's work is in response to the situation in Afghanistan and what he sees as the first faithful portrayal of the Hazaras. He comments that prior to his research Afghani writers lacked analytical scholarship and foreign scholars relied on cultural rumours⁴⁸, which to him suggested the necessity of an accurate study of the Hazaras. Furthermore Mousavi says, "The study of the Hazaras can serve to highlight this crisis of national identity in Afghanistan."⁴⁹ His purpose is thus two-fold: creating an accurate study of the Hazaras, and showing up some of the issues in Afghanistan. He explores the Hazaras' origins, reasons for migration and writes a little about the modern communities in foreign lands. *The Hazaras of Afghanistan* provides useful information and reflections that are beneficial to this study and will be unpacked in subsequent chapters.

Diana Glazebrook has researched refugee Hazara communities in Victoria, Australia and in Mashhad, Iran. In 2005 she wrote an article about the Hazara refugees living in Australia⁵⁰. Glazebrook's main point in this is that mobile phone use is important in the settlement process of the Hazara refugees in Australia. She initially intended to write about religious ritual in the refugee community but abandoned the idea after realising most of the Hazaras in Australia were very secular⁵¹. This work is useful as it provides some insight into how the Hazara diaspora in Australia function, as a very detached community in Australian society. In 2007 she co-published an article with Shavazi⁵² that emphasised the attachment the Iranian Hazara community had to the tomb of Imam Reza, marking it as the reason for their not returning to Afghanistan. Very little has been written about the Iranian Hazaras, probably because they are less distinct in Iran than they are in other lands, thus Glazebrook and Shavazi bridges an important gap in current scholarship. The article provides interesting reflections on the Hazara's attachment to shrines, which I explore in relation to the religious practices of the Pakistani Hazaras in part two. In this regard Glazebrook's contribution has been very important.

⁴⁷ Mousavi, Sayed Askar. (1998), *The Hazaras of Afghanistan, An historical, cultural, economic and political study*; Surrey; Curzon.

⁴⁸ Mousavi. (1998), page 4

⁴⁹ Mousavi. (1998), page 13

⁵⁰ Glazebrook. (2005), *Resettlement After Detention: Hazara Refugees From Afghanistan In Australia*, in Waxman and Colic-Piesker. (2005) *Homeland Wanted: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Refugee resettlement in the west*; New York; Nova Science, page 165-189.

⁵¹ Glazebrook. (2005), page 167

⁵² Glazebrook and Shavazi. (2007), *Iranian Studies* Volume 40, number 2, April 2007; *Being Neighbour to Imam Reza*.

Along with Glazebrook, Alessandro Monsutti has studied the Hazaras recently. He has undertaken a detailed analysis of the Hazara's migration movements in *War and Migration*⁵³. Additionally in his co-edited book *The Other Shi'ites*⁵⁴ he wrote about the Quetta Hazaras' practice of *Ashura*, the procession that commemorates the martyrdom of Imam Husayn on the tenth day of *Moharram* and is practiced by Shias worldwide. In *War and Migration* Monsutti shows how through war, and as a result of it migration, the Hazaras have been able to further their economic infrastructure. He also researched the communities in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, and how they function in the modern day. In the chapter about the Hazaras in *The Other Shiites* Monsutti asserts that the Hazaras in Quetta and express in their political ideas in physical demonstration of *Ashura*. This is particularly useful when it comes to showing how Hazara religious identity is formed in Quetta, and is a useful insight into the most important festival, which I have, thus far, been unable to attend.

Thus ample groundwork has been conducted which makes it possible to embark on the study of the religious identity of the Hazaras in the contemporary period. A firm sense of the Hazara's background; historical, social and political has been established by the authors mentioned and there are adequate records of modern historical events that concern the Hazaras. These authors' ideas will be further explored as the history of the Hazaras is discussed through the subsequent chapters. Each of the mentioned authors work raised new questions for further study, some of which will be covered within this thesis. Evidently there are many gaps in this field, as it is a relatively new area of research and many of these authors and others have been prevented from field-work in Afghanistan due to war and political tension. I shall endeavour to fill in some of the gaps, particularly in relation to the Pakistani Hazaras and their manifestation of Shi'a Islam.

⁵³ Monsutti, Alessandro. (2005), *War and Migration: Social Networks and Economic Strategies of the Hazaras of Afghanistan*; Oxon: Taylor and Francis.

⁵⁴ Monsutti, Alessandro. (2007a), *The Other Shi'ites*.

Part One: History of the Hazaras

Chapter One: The dispute over origins

Of all the components in the study of Hazaras the quest for the true theory of their origin remains to be one of most poignant. Scholars who have endeavoured to compile any research on the Hazaras have delved into the topic, often making bold new declarations. The discussion of origins is important to the study of religious identity for, by claiming certain roots, and proclaiming important people as ancestors, a people achieve a sense of belonging. This is crucial to their own self-identification as well as how they are perceived, and associated with by outsiders. This is particularly important for a group that has a history of marginalisation, as the Hazaras do. I shall endeavour to outline some of the theories and contentions that have been asserted in the study of origins thus far. I will not however attempt to make any claims about the certainty on the matter, as others have done before me. The relevance of this discussion within my thesis is the Hazaras' own perceptions of and beliefs about their origins; I am not seeking for a conclusion of the discussion. As is aforementioned the Hazaras themselves have no real idea of their origins. This has been noted by many, including Elphinstone⁵⁵ and Bacon⁵⁶. Within the conversation of origins Hazaras tend to adhere to one particular theory, as I shall elaborate on within the chapter. It should be noted that this discussion is still currently ongoing and, I suspect, will never be closed, as solid evidence for any theory is unattainable. It will always be a problematic expedition as ancient literary sources are scarce and subject to bias. As Mousavi has correctly observed⁵⁷ many of the sources that scholars have used to prove one theory over others are politically loaded and, furthermore the, "oral traditions seek to serve aspirations, rather than present the facts"⁵⁸. Many have tried to trace the roots of the tribe by their name *hazar*, which means 'thousand' in Persian. This method is problematic as the root of their name does not necessarily indicate the origin. Also problematic is the Hazaras' language, *Hazaragi*, which is a dialect of Persian. How the Hazaras came to speak this language has puzzled those who have attempted to find a theory of their origin. Finally their religion, Shi'ism, has also been a confusing factor in trying to discover their origins. Rather than helping to show where the Hazaras came from it adds more questions to the discussion. Thus any person attempting to prove a particular theory of

⁵⁵ Elphinstone. (1839), page 202

⁵⁶ Bacon. (1951), page 232

⁵⁷ Mousavi. (1998), page 31

⁵⁸ Mousavi. (1998), page 31

Hazara origin will never completely be satisfied because of the insufficiency of the data. It is therefore guesswork, as others have concluded before me⁵⁹. Therefore my central aim in tackling this topic is to highlight the work and ideas of scholars, both as a further exploration of the previous Hazara scholarship introduced in my literary survey, and as a beginning of the investigation of Hazara identity. The information yielded from such an enquiry offers an important insight into the self-identification of the Hazaras, and proves useful for the wider discussion.

Scholars, and the Hazaras, tend to accept one of three models, each of which pose a slightly different explanation to how they came to be identified as 'Hazara' both intrinsically and by outsiders. These theories can be categorised into these three major groups; the theory that they are descendents of military garrisons left by Ghenghis Khan or other Mongols, that the Hazaras are an indigenous race of Afghanistan (previously known as Khorosan), and, finally, that they are a mixture of races⁶⁰. Each of these, as I have already mentioned, is flawed.

Mongolian

The most popular and common theory is that the Hazaras are descendents of military garrisons left by Ghenghis Khan. This notion is widely accepted, particularly in non-academic literature on the Hazaras, or academic work that is not focused on them particularly⁶¹. Bunbury, one of the earliest writers to focus on the Hazaras, proposes this theory of their origin⁶². It would appear that this notion stems from the ideas presented in travel narratives from the nineteenth century, prior to any academic research on the Hazaras. Among these are Bellew⁶³, Ferdinand⁶⁴, Vambery⁶⁵, Elphinstone⁶⁶ and Burnes⁶⁷, all of whom wrote about their

⁵⁹ Mousavi. (1998), page 32

⁶⁰ Poladi. (1989) and Mousavi. (1998), also used these categories

⁶¹ For example see Elphinstone. (1839), page 202. Also Rashid. (2001), page 68

⁶² Bunbury, (1949), page 3

⁶³ Bellew, Henry Walter, (1880), *The races of Afghanistan : being a brief account of the principal nations inhabiting that country*, Calcutta : Thacker, Spink.

⁶⁴ Ferdinand, Klaus. (1959), *Preliminary Notes on Hazara Culture*, Kobenhavn

⁶⁵ Vanbery, A. (1865), *Travels in Central Asia: Being the account of a journey from Tehran across the Turkoman desert on the eastern shore of the Caspian to Khiva, Bokhara, and Samarcand*; New York; Harper and Brothers.

experiences with the Hazaras during their travels. Elphinstone and Burnes said that the Hazaras were Tartar⁶⁸, from the army, although they did not specify when, or which one. Many of these travel narratives presumed the Hazaras to be Mongol because of their physical appearance and, through this assumption, concluded that they were most likely left after the Mongol invasion of Khorosan, led by Ghenghis Khan. Bellew and Vambery both concluded this. Bellew confidently asserted, “Regarding the ethnic affiliation of the Hazarah people there can be no doubt, their features and forms declaring them distinctly to be Tartar of the Mongolian division.”⁶⁹ This theory is common among the Hazaras too, and has been upheld for a long time. In 1883 Ferrier stated that some Hazaras he came across, “...pretend[ed] to have been settled there by Ghengis Khan”⁷⁰. Ferdinand notes that the Afghani Hazaras in the 1950’s also attributed their lineage to Ghenghis Khan. He says, “The Hazara will often tell you that they are the descendents of Chinggis Khan and that they are ‘moghol’. This is definitely a tradition in many areas, but it is difficult to judge to what extent it is an original one.”⁷¹ It would seem, from Ferrier and Ferdinand’s experience, that many Hazaras in Afghanistan think they are actual direct descendents of Ghenghis Khan, and not of his militia. Perhaps claiming to be the descendents of Ghenghis Khan’s was a status symbol for the Hazaras in Afghanistan, wanting to be associated with a great leader who conquered so many nations. On speaking of Afghanistan more recently Glatzer says that, along with Ferdinand, he had also heard this claim. He says the reason for the claim is to raise their social standing; “Modern Hazara nationalists claim descent from Chinggis Khan, thus hoping to raise the social status of the Hazara within the Afghan value system of social groups.”⁷² This affiliation for the sake of social status also seems to be the case for many of the modern Pakistani Hazaras. Mousavi drew attention to this in his narrative of the modern community in Quetta. He said that many Hazara he encountered attested to being direct descendents of Ghenghis

⁶⁶ Elphinstone, M. (1842), *An account of the kingdom of Caubul and its dependencies, in Persia, Tartary, and India*; London; Schulz and Co.

⁶⁷ Burnes, Sir Alexander. (1834), *Travels into Bokhara; being the account of a journey from India to Cabool, Tartary, and Persia: also, narrative of a voyage on the Indus, from the sea to Lahore, with presents from the King of Great Britain; performed under the orders of the supreme government of India, in the years 1831, 1832, and 1833*, Volume I, II & III; London; John Murray.

⁶⁸ Burnes. (1834), page 178, Elphinstone. (1842), page 208

⁶⁹ Bellew. (1880), page 114

⁷⁰ Ferrier. (1856), page 231

⁷¹ Ferdinand, Klaus. (1959), page 37

⁷² Glatzer. (1998), in Maley, page 171

Khan⁷³. Mousavi also noticed the glorification of Ghenghis Khan in Quetta, commenting on the many shops named after him and the display of his picture in many public places⁷⁴. The belief in Mongol ancestry is also evident in the names of one of the largest non-government organisations in the area, the Tanzeem-e Nasl-e Naw-e Hazara-ye Moghol meaning, “Organisation of Hazara Monguls new generation”⁷⁵, which is a direct statement about Mongol ancestry. A young Hazara man told Mousavi that the Hazaras were well aware that Ghenghis was not their real ancestor; however they attributed their ancestry to him to gain the respect and improved social status among their neighbors⁷⁶. Furthermore this young man commented; “In any case, as far as foreign scholars are concerned, we *are* the descendents of Changhiz Khan’s soldiers.”⁷⁷ Thus for the Hazaras of Pakistan it would seem that they strongly identify with the theory of Mongol ancestry, especially in attribution to Ghenghis Khan. They took advantage of the early idea travelers had about them being descendents of the Mongol army, and thus have adapted and used the theory to improve their social standing. As has been shown this is widespread across Hazara communities.

Bacon also believed the Hazaras to be Mongolian, however contested the notion that they were members of the army left at the time of Ghenghis Khan. She contended that the Hazaras descend from Mongol troops that entered Afghanistan much later than Khan. She says,

“Thus it would appear that the present day Hazara Mongols are descended not from military garrisons planted by Chingiss Khan, but from Mongol Troops, many of them Chagataian, who entered Afghanistan at various times during the period from 1229 to about 1447 AD.”⁷⁸

Bacon argues that it is not possible for the Hazaras to be descendents of Chenghis Khan’s army as it is extremely unlikely he left any military in the Hazarajat area. She says that he may have “paved the way”⁷⁹ for the future Mongols that eventually became the Hazaras but it was not at this time that they arrived. Bacon’s contention spurred future, alternative, explanations for the origins for the Hazaras.

⁷³ Mousavi. (1998), page 147

⁷⁴ Mousavi, (1998), page 147

⁷⁵ http://www.tnnhazara.org/establishment_of_tanzeem_nasle_n.htm, Electronic resource 14

⁷⁶ Mousavi, (1998), page 147

⁷⁷ Mousavi, (1998), page 147

⁷⁸ Bacon, (1951) page 241

⁷⁹ Bacon, (1951), page 241

Indigenous

A theory that is becoming increasingly popular is that the Hazaras are an indigenous people of ancient Khorosan. Fletcher was the first to state that this was a distinct possibility, although he himself did not endeavour to investigate it⁸⁰. Mousavi asserted this conclusion in his analysis of the theories of origin. He traces the Hazara roots back to the early inhabitants of Bayiman, which was the centre of Hazara inhabited Khorosan. Mousavi thus contends,

“The Hazaras: a) are one of the oldest inhabitants of the region; b) are a mixture of races and ethnic groups, of which Changiz Khan and Amir Timur’s Monghol soilders are but one and relatively recent, and that c) Hazara tribal linguistics structure has been influenced by all these different people.”⁸¹

A senior member of the Quetta community in Pakistan informed me that there were Hazara scholars in Afghanistan who were trying to prove that the Hazaras were indigenous, and not a later formed tribe. The determination of these scholars to prove such a thing alludes to the continued struggle the Hazaras have had against the superior socio-political status of the Pushtons within Afghanistan⁸². If they were able to prove that they were an indigenous tribe, and subsequently older than the Pushtons, the Hazaras would find greater power in validating their status in Afghanistan. Whether this would actually serve to change the political situation within Afghanistan is questionable, and I think unlikely. This sort of proof would, however, give the Hazaras an encouragement in their mindset to remain fervent in their struggle against the Pushtons, and furthermore in their adherence to Shi’ism.

The theory of the Hazaras being indigenous at present has only been developed by Mousavi. However there may be forthcoming literature on this from Afghanistan, by those who are working on this theory at present.

⁸⁰ Fletcher, (1965), page 17

⁸¹ Mousavi, (1998), page 43

⁸² The relationship of the Hazaras and Pushtons will be explored in more depth in Chapter Three

Mixed race

A number of scholars have concluded that the Hazaras must be a mixture of races. Some who conclude a mixture of races believed the Hazaras originated through intermarriage of invaders, creating one quite distinct group that came to be recognized as 'Hazaras'. This is quite probable, especially when the history of the region is examined, with many comings and goings of various people. Among those who proposed this theory is Schurmann who said, "I believe the Hazarajat Hazaras to be a mixed population formed by a fusion of an aboriginal Iranian mountain people with invaders of Mongol affinities."⁸³ Kakar also believed the Hazaras were mixed, claiming that the Hazaras were a mixture of Mongol soldiers that arrived between 1229 and 1447, and indigenous Tajik women⁸⁴. He says that this is the reason why the Hazaras speak a dialect of Persian, as the Tajiks were of Iranian origin and the Mongols learnt the language from them⁸⁵.

According to Mousavi, Temirkhanov came to the same conclusion as Kakar and Shurmann, deciding that the Hazaras were mixed.⁸⁶ However Temirkhanov included Pushtons in the mix, although not to the same extent as Tajiks and Mongols⁸⁷. This theory is not as popular among the Hazaras, I have never heard it mentioned by them, or in the reports of others on the Hazaras they have encountered. Inter-marriage in ancient Hazaras customs and, to a lesser extent, currently is seen as socially unacceptable⁸⁸. Although it is very possible the Hazaras did come to be through a mixture of ethnic groups this theory is probably unpopular among them because of their disparagement of inter-marriage, especially with Pushtuns. This final theory of inter-marriage cannot be proved as factual, and, like the others, is the result of guesswork and probability.

Conclusion

Although nothing can be concluded definitely about the Hazara origins this discussion has

⁸³ Schurmann, (1961), page 111

⁸⁴ Kakar, (1973), page 1-2

⁸⁵ Kakar, (1973), page 1

⁸⁶ Mousavi, (1998), page 30

⁸⁷ Temirkhanov, (1980), page 25-26, cited in Mousavi, (1998), page 30

⁸⁸ Canfield, (1973), page 9

been important. The ongoing discussion of their roots shows that for many of the Hazaras this is an important question. In proving that they are indigenous peoples, or being direct descendents of Ghenghis Khan, the Hazaras gain status that they have never been privileged with in Afghanistan. This serves in some respect to legitimise them as an ethnic and religious minority.

The process of Shi'isation will be discussed in the next chapter and in exploring this it becomes evident that in becoming Shia the Hazaras gained a deeper collective identity. Monsutti's comment here on his own reflection on the Hazaras' origins is useful. He says,

“...a shared identity does not necessarily imply a common historical origin. In the case that concerns us here, the Hazaras sense of belonging rests not upon a Mongol ancestry but on a process of marginalisation that must have begun at quite an early date.”⁸⁹

The next chapter will explore Monsutti's point, and the process of Shi'isation, in greater detail.

⁸⁹ Monsutti, (2005), page 62

Chapter Two: The Shi'isation of the Hazaras

How the Hazaras became Shia rather than Sunni is a question that has fascinated and puzzled those who have studied them. It is unusual that the vast majority of Hazaras became and remained Shia although surrounded by Sunni neighbours and, as the next chapter explores, this religious affiliation brought them under extensive persecution. This topic is imperative as it bears light on the Hazaras' beliefs before they were converted and how they adopted certain practices once they became Muslim. As alluded to by Monsutti it was through the adoption of Shi'ism that the Hazaras became distinct.

Conversion

There are various theories of how Hazara conversion occurred. I shall present the different theories of their conversion and, as with the discussion of origins, not venture to present my own new radical theory of how the Hazaras became Shia. All the conclusions are drawn from probability rather than hard facts, thus my contribution is also a result of these conditions. Instead I intend to use the theories and questions presented as a gateway into the discussion of the practice of religion in the Hazaras' history. These topics are useful to seeing how religious identity was formed in the early stages of Hazara history as Shias.

There are two main theories of how the Hazaras were converted, both dating the conversion within the period of five hundred years, from 1256-1747. These theories set the conversion process in relation to the movements of the leading authorities of the Persian Empire; the Ilkhanates and the Safavids.

Conversion by Ilkhanates

Poladi asserts that the Hazaras were converted during the Ilkhanate dynasty, some time between 1256 and 1335. He maintains that the Hazaras were 'heathen', or Shamanists, until 1295⁹⁰. He says that when Ghazan Khan, who came into power in 1295, became a Muslim and converted Persia to Islam the Hazaras followed and also converted⁹¹. He maintains that on the nineteenth of June in that year more than ten thousand Mongols made their profession

⁹⁰ Poladi, (1989), page 124

⁹¹ Poladi, (1989), page 124

of faith in the presence of Shaikh Sa'd-ud-Din Ibrahim⁹². Poladi maintains that among these Mongols were Hazaras. This claim is sustained by the fact that most of present day Hazarajat was part of the Ilkhanid province of Khorusan. Poladi also states that the presence of Sayeds during Harlan's travels is confirmation of this, as it was the Ilkhanates who sent these Sayeds to the Hazara⁹³. On account of these reasons Poladi thus concludes that the Hazaras were converted during the Ilkhanate Dynasty of Khorosan.

Mousavi to a certain extent agrees with Poladi, concluding that the Hazara's conversion probably began at this time, however he asserts that it was a very gradual process and that the religion was not officially completed until the Safavid period⁹⁴. He says, "The Shi'ization of the Hazaras, like other social and historical phenomena, took place over a long period of time; entering a new phase even during the past few decades."⁹⁵ Mousavi thus suspects that the conversion of the Hazaras was not completed in the Ilkhanate period, but had only just begun to take place. This is possible, as historical evidence neither contradicts nor confirms it.

Conversion by the Safavids

According to Vambery, Kakar and Schurmann it was the Safavids who converted the Hazaras. This theory presumes that because the Safavids were influential in converting the masses to Shi'ism that they also were responsible for the conversion of the Hazaras. Kakar concluded that when Shah Abbas placed an elder over the Hazaras they began to convert to Shi'ism⁹⁶. He says, "Presumably, it was in this period that the Shi'ite faith of Islam began to replace the Shamanism of the Hazaras."⁹⁷ Schurmann admits that there is no concrete evidence for conversion from the Safavids, but contests it as the most likely conclusion for the Hazaras religion⁹⁸. He says that both Shah Abbas I and II were active in the Kandahar region and were responsible for mass conversion⁹⁹. He comments on a story he was told by a

⁹² Poladi, (1989), page 124

⁹³ Poladi, (1989), page 126

⁹⁴ Mousavi, (1998), page 75

⁹⁵ Mousavi, (1998), page 76

⁹⁶ Kakar, (1973), page 2

⁹⁷ Kakar, (1973), page 2

⁹⁸ Schurmann, (1961), page 120

⁹⁹ Schurmann, (1961), page 121

Hazara about their conversion, which stated that Shah Abbas gave the Daulat-beg Hazara tribe the rule of Hazarajat, and with it Shi'ism as their religion¹⁰⁰. He says; "Even though the story is legendary, it suggests the manner in which Shi'ization probably was carried out: conversion of the ruling tribal group and subsequent extension of Shi'ism to the Hazara masses."¹⁰¹

Thus the theory of conversion by the Safavids is probable, but for Kakar and Schurmann this is only a speculation.

The early practice of Shi'ism

There are various problems in understanding how the Hazaras practiced Shi'ism prior to the twentieth century. This is largely owing to the lack of reliable sources. The earliest written information accessible about the Hazaras appears in travel narratives. The accuracy of these writings has been viewed as questionable by scholars for several reasons. One of the concerns is that it is often difficult to establish the level of interaction the traveller had with the Hazaras, and whether he mixed with a large amount of the sub-tribes, or only a portion. This would obviously affect the view of the writer, and could cause inaccuracy. Secondly the motivations for writing are called to account. The opinions of the Hazaras stated are usually very critical and show disdain for their beliefs and practices. This is probably due to a lack of understanding, and could have resulted in aspects of the retelling being exaggerated. Nevertheless these writings, even with their inadequacies, offer useful insights into the Hazaras own perceptions of who they were, as well as the traveller's. They show how they relate to the outsider in their midst, as the scholars themselves were predominantly western. Additionally all these writers convey how they see the Hazaras relating to the other outsiders. Furthermore they are the only sources available for understanding their religion, thus are worthy of some attention. They can be used, but remaining conscious of the objections that have been laid out. For the purpose of this discussion they will be examined as an understanding of the early practice of Shi'ism the Hazaras attempted to be established in their society. This is relevant to a discussion of contemporary religious practice in so far it leads to a better understanding of why certain practices are important for the modern Hazaras. Three areas of Hazara religion will be focused on here, as the information that is accessible is

¹⁰⁰ Schurmann, (1961), page 121

¹⁰¹ Schurmann, (1961), page 121

largely based on these topics; their allegiance to Ali, religious leadership and knowledge, and the centrality and importance of shrines.

Allegiance to Ali

The Hazaras were certainly Shia in the early nineteenth century. Elphinstone reports that the Hazaras were, “Enthusiastic followers of Ali; they hold the Afghans, Timauks, and Uzbeks in detestation for following the opposite sect, and, they insult, if they do not persecute, every Soonee who enters their country.”¹⁰² Some sources state that the Hazaras upheld Ali as a deity, which is alluded to in Elphinstone’s account. Harlan, however, proclaims this to be the case much more boldly. He says that when asked to state their beliefs they declared, “I acknowledge Ali the God upon whom be peace and blessings.”¹⁰³ Mousavi says that Harlan was incorrect in his account and blames his misconception on the sect of Ali Allahi’s (worshippers of Ali) in Afghanistan at that time. He says that there is no further evidence to support Harlan’s contention, thus he must have been mistaken¹⁰⁴. One possibility is that these Hazaras had been following one of the many teachers travelling in Hazarajat at the time. Burnes says that when he was in the Hazara region in 1832 some of the Hazaras, he says about 100, had started following a travelling teacher, who he named a mulla, who had entered their region¹⁰⁵. He says, “A moollah, or priest, however, had lately appeared among them to proclaim some novel doctrine; and, among others, that Ali was the Deity, and greater than Mahommed himself.”¹⁰⁶ Burnes says that although he had some followers, including those who believed that he had the power to raise the dead, the Hazaras determined to correct this man, brought him back to ‘Islam’¹⁰⁷. This would suggest that Harlan’s observation of those who regarded Ali as God may have been of a smaller sect.

Others have endeavoured to understand why this view of Ali appears often in travel narratives, some defending it to be an untrue representation of Hazara belief. Poladi comments that their devotion to Ali was inherited from those who initially accepted Islam,

¹⁰² Elphinstone, (1839), page 212

¹⁰³ Harlan, Josiah, (1939), page 139

¹⁰⁴ Mousavi (1998), page 78

¹⁰⁵ Burnes, (1834), Vol II, page 179

¹⁰⁶ Burnes, (1834), Vol II, page 179

¹⁰⁷ Burnes, (1834), Vol II, page 179

and that they did regard Muhammed as the last prophet and Allah as God, but centred all on Ali.¹⁰⁸ Strong allegiance to Ali was present in other early Shia followings; for example the Bektashis. Their founder, Bektash, claimed that Ali had granted him miracles and had given him a luminous green spot on his hand.¹⁰⁹ It is possible that the Hazaras did regard Ali as a deity, if not they certainly held him in the highest regard, which others wrongly perceived. These people, in Islamic history, were referred to as *ghulat*, meaning exaggerators¹¹⁰. Hogson says, “Much of the Ghulat heritage was absorbed into the Imami and Ismaili movements and disciplined by the exclusion especially of notions implying and *gulat* seems to be rejected by surviving authors, along with the idea that the imam could be a god or prophet.”¹¹¹ The Hazaras were often perceived by outsiders as committing *ghulat* which subjected them to religious persecution, whether the accusation was true or not. For the contemporary Hazaras regarding Ali as a deity would be regarded as highly condemnable.

Religious knowledge and leadership

The Hazaras were not wealthy enough to travel to Persia and gain knowledge and teaching from leading Shia authorities. It was thus inevitable that they would devise their own form of Shi'ism which differed from that of other Shia denominations and incorporated their own culture and values. In addition to their geographical distance they also had no access to a Qur'an for a lengthy period, and thus had little to base their new religious activities and ideas on. Harlan commented, “It is known that the Koran contains the religious law of Mahomedans, but the Hazarrahs have scarcely any other knowledge of this book than is derived from their traditional usages.”¹¹² Ferrier said that when he encountered the Hazaras in 1839, he found hardly any knowledge of Islam or any Islamic practices among them. He stated that “they have a vague idea of Islamism”¹¹³ and that they “never pray”¹¹⁴. Kakar concurred with these comments, concluding that the Shias were ignorant of their faith and

¹⁰⁸ Poladi, Hassan, (1989), page 127

¹⁰⁹ Birge, (1937), page 36

¹¹⁰ Hodgson, M.G.S. (2002), Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol 2, page 1093

¹¹¹ Hodgson, M.G.S. (2002), Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol 2, page 1094

¹¹² Harlan, (1939), page 139

¹¹³ Ferrier, (1856), page 231

¹¹⁴ Ferrier, (1856), page 231

failed to observe the most important Shia festival, Muharram¹¹⁵. Many of the travel narratives are loaded with scathing comments about the Hazara practice of religion as it seemed less formalised and educated than the other Muslims they encountered in Afghanistan. They were, however, not the only Muslims subject to ridicule as these travellers also criticised many aspects of Islamic culture and religion.

Poladi suspects that things began to change when the travelling Sayeds, descendents of Muhammed¹¹⁶, entered the Hazarajat, providing a connection to the other Shias of the world. These Sayeds were responsible for teaching the Hazaras the Shia path, as they understood it, and it is recorded by Harlan that there were Sayeds present in Hazarajat in the early nineteenth century.¹¹⁷ Harlan observed that the Hazaras had no Mullahs or religious leader, but that the chief of the tribe was in charge of all their activities. He noted an adoration of Sayeds among the Hazaras¹¹⁸ going as far as to say that the Hazaras worshipped them, attributing miraculous powers to them. It seems that the Hazaras did not have a strong leadership structure in place when it came to religion. The responsibility lay on the chief, who probably had little or no religious knowledge. This chief, known as a *mir*¹¹⁹, was a tribal elder and religious leadership became part of his responsibilities without the presence of the Sayeds. I have been informed, by Pakistani Hazaras, that in ancient Afghanistan anyone who was literate was named a *mulla*, reiterating the sense of a lack of informed religious leadership. Thus chiefs and travelling Sayeds, for some time, were in charge of the Hazaras' religion.

Shrines

The importance of shrines to Hazaras has been noted in historical studies, particularly in Poladi's research¹²⁰. Travel narratives reveal that the practice of visiting shrines, often referred to as *ziyara*, became important to Hazara religion whilst they were residing in the

¹¹⁵ Kakar, (1979), page 140

¹¹⁶ Encyclopaedia of Islam, (2002), Volume 4, page 115

¹¹⁷ Harlan, Josiah. (1939), *Central Asia*, page 151

¹¹⁸ Harlan, Josiah. (1939), *Central Asia*, page 139

¹¹⁹ Ferdinand. (1959), page 22

¹²⁰ Poladi, (1989), *The Hazaras*.

Hazarajat of Afghanistan, long before any migration. Harlan in his accounts of Hazara occupied Afghanistan¹²¹ gives some insight into the importance of it for the Hazaras. Harlan reports that their love for *ziyara* was so strong that in one case one Hazara tribe were so keen to have their own shrine that they murdered a Sayed so they could create one. He says,

“A Zearitgah was pointed out to me in Hazarrahjaut'h which the villagers had erected over the remains of a holy Syed famous for his miraculous powers. The villagers, in their excess of piety, improved the occasion to secure a permanent blessing in the form of a Zearitgah that would guarantee to themselves and their posterity the composition of their sins for all future time!... they killed their guest and buried the body in a conspicuous place, over which a Zearitgah was erected...”¹²²

Mousavi says that in his research he was also was told a similar story when visiting a Hazara community¹²³, confirming Harlan's claim. This story was also repeated to me by a senior Hazara man in Quetta.

In later years Kakar contends that the Hazaras believed a shrine would save them from the war with Abdul Rahman¹²⁴. He says, “The bulk of the Hazaras, however, believing the shrine of Imam Qasim (a descendent of Imam Musa Reza) in the Tus region of Uruzgan would ultimately cause the defeat of the Amir's army, fought relentlessly...”¹²⁵ Canfield also notes a similar steadfast belief in the power of shrines in his work on the Hazaras in Hazarajat. He says that a Hazara man journeyed very far to a shrine, believing it was the only thing that could save his son¹²⁶. His dedication to the journey demonstrated the belief in a shrine's powerful capabilities.

It is thus evident that for the Hazaras shrines were of central importance in their religious practice from an early stage. Schurmann remarked that in the 1950's it was central to the Hazaras' religion. He says, “There is a considerable amount of shrine (*ziyarat*) worship, and emotionalism seems to characterise the religion in general.”¹²⁷ Poladi says that the *ziyarats*

¹²¹ Harlan, Josiah. (1939), *Central Asia*, Luzac and Co, London

¹²² Harlan. (1939), page 151

¹²³ Mousavi. (1998), page 80

¹²⁴ Kakar, (1973), page 7

¹²⁵ Kakar, (1973), page 7

¹²⁶ Canfield. (1975), in Williams, Thomas R., (ed), *Psychological Anthropology*, page 465

¹²⁷ Schurmann, (1961), page 154

are important mechanisms for the Hazaras in their actions for wish fulfilment¹²⁸. He states that women perform many rituals at these shrines in the hope that through these actions their wishes will be fulfilled. It continues to be practiced and is an important part of the Hazaras' religious performance. The use of *ziyarat* will further demonstrated and discussed in part two, where a modern Hazara shrine will be discussed.

Conclusion

The Hazaras' practice of Shia Islam has varied since their conversion. What these writings tend to show is that after their conversion, which could have commenced as early as the Ilkhanate dynasty, the Hazaras were slow to change much in their practice. Through the improvement of communication with Shia authorities in Iran, it appears the Hazaras began to conform to a more conservative form of Shi'ism. Poladi contends that it was after the war with Adbul Rahman that the Hazaras began to practice Shi'ism in a fashion more similar to those Shias residing in Iran. He says, "Religious leaders, the Sayeds and Mulla, were sent to Iran and Iraq for religious education who, on their return, preached and taught their followers the exact faith of Islam."¹²⁹ Bindemann too accounts for significant changes in religious education and authority in the Hazara communities in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran¹³⁰. This will be somewhat explored in the proceeding chapter.

¹²⁸ Poladi. (1989), page 144-145

¹²⁹ Poladi. (1989), page 128

¹³⁰ Bindemann, Rolf. (1987), Religion and Politik bei den schi'itischen Hazara in Afghanistan, Iran und Pakistan, Berlin: Ethnizitat und Gesellschaft

Chapter Three: War and dispersion

Introduction

War in Afghanistan has resulted in Hazaras migrating to several countries across the world. Some of these wars specifically targeted the Hazaras and therefore also significantly affected their physical organisation in Afghanistan. The Hazaras started emigrating a few years prior the beginning of the first major war¹³¹. It was, however, only after they were specifically targeted by Abdul Amir Rahman that they began to move out of Afghanistan in greater numbers. This war is sometimes referred as ‘The Uprisings’ and occurred at the end of the nineteenth century. It had significant impact on the Hazaras, both in terms of their lives in Afghanistan and migration patterns. Subsequently the Soviet invasion also affected the Hazaras in these ways. It was during the Soviet occupation that the Hazaras started to become politically active, which helped to raise their status in Afghanistan. Finally I shall explore the more recent war in Afghanistan with the Taliban and show how their reign affected the Hazaras, which again resulted in more Hazaras migrating. I shall detail some of the events in these wars and the consequences of them, showing stages of migration and it’s effect on the Hazaras’ religious identity.

The war with Abdul Rahman

According to Poladi in the war against Amir Abdul Rahman more than half of the Hazara population in Afghanistan were killed, or forced into exile¹³². This indicates the extent of the fighting and it’s consequences. The war completely changed the future of the Afghani Hazaras. Prior to the war the people of Hazarajat resided in their smaller sub-tribes, with different tribal and religious leaders, and each were self-contained and self-governed¹³³. They were allowed to live more or less freely and independent from the rest of the country, having little contact with outsiders. The events surrounding the attacks of Rahman's army served to change this, uniting the Hazara tribes in the Hazarajat and changing their status in Afghanistan as people with fewer rights.

¹³¹ Bunbury. (1949), page 3

¹³² Mousavi. (1998), page 156

¹³³ Poladi. (1989), page 53

There are various sources that account for the details of the events of the war, Persian, British and from the Hazaras themselves. These all differ on specifics, making it difficult to establish clarity on the factors and stages of the war. Poladi discovered this when trying to account for the war in his work on the Hazaras¹³⁴. He, like others, deemed it a necessity to communicate the events of this war in their discussions of the Hazaras. As will be shown, this war changed a great deal for the Afghani Hazaras, both in their lives in Afghanistan and in the new immigrant communities that emerged.

Much of the information regarding the war can be obtained from Amir Abdur Rahman himself, which is recorded in *The life of Amir Abdur Rahman* co-written by him and his personal assistant¹³⁵. Additionally Kakar has written about these events in *Government and Society in Afghanistan: The reign of Amir Abd al-Rahman*¹³⁶ and Mousavi¹³⁷ provides a good account in his work on Hazaras. In summarising some of the major events of the war with the information that is accessible, I shall demonstrate how Hazara religious identity began to form in the late nineteenth century.

As stated previously the Hazaras living in the Hazarajat of central Afghanistan were largely independent of the rest of the country, living under their own codes and regulations in smaller tribal groups. They paid taxes but, by and large, were left alone to manage themselves¹³⁸. According to Poladi one of these smaller tribal groups in the Hazarajat, called the Shaikh Ali's, had been persecuted by Afghan soldiers for many years prior to the war¹³⁹. These soldiers frequently travelled through their land, forcing them to pay extortionate taxes and supply them with material objects. Poladi says that in 1881, "As a consequence, they were forced to take revenge on the Afghans and looted their caravans on several occasions."¹⁴⁰ This event spurred the future fighting, which led to the beginnings of the war. In retaliation to the Hazaras' revenge on the soldiers Rahman attacked, killing several hundred Hazaras. He also imposed heavy fines on them and destroyed much of their property. This event drew

¹³⁴ Poladi. (1989), page 183

¹³⁵ Rahman, Abdul. (1980) *The Life of Abdur Rahman: Amir of Afghanistan*, Oxford; Oxford University Press

¹³⁶ Kakar, M. Hassan. (1979), *Government and Society in Afghanistan: The reign of Amir Abd al-Rahman Khan*, Austin; The University of Texas Press.

¹³⁷ Mousvai, (1998) page 120

¹³⁸ Mousavi, (1998), page 120

¹³⁹ Poladi. (1989), page 184

¹⁴⁰ Poladi. (1989), page 184

Rahman's attention to the Hazaras, who subsequently became a collective group which he resolved to conquer in order to tackle nationwide 'rebellion'. It soon became clear that Rahman, unlike the other Amirs, would not allow the Hazaras merely to pay taxes, he destined control over the Hazara region¹⁴¹. In the eight subsequent years Rahman attempted to gain control by sending *Hakims*, governors, to control the Hazarajat region, imposing heavy taxes upon them¹⁴². Rebellion against the Hakims aggravated Rahman and it caused him to attack several Hazara regions on numerous occasions, resulting in many deaths and the imprisonment of a large proportion of Hazara religious leaders.

Poladi says that Rahman used the internal disputes among Hazara tribes to his benefit, noticing the divisions and allying himself with different groups where he could see the advantage. He says, "Amir [Rahman] was also busy breaking the Hazara power by taking sides in the internal disputes of their leaders. Hazara *mirs* were notoriously known for their non-cooperation and disunity."¹⁴³ Mousavi agrees that it was this lack of unity that Rahman used to his advantage. The Hazaras' war against Abdur Rahman broke out in 1889 after Rahman had attacked several times but the Hazaras had not surrendered. Rahman, along with the troops he sent in to attack, wrote them many letters exhorting them to submit to his rule¹⁴⁴. This, unsurprisingly, was not accomplished as by this time the Hazaras had maintained a strong resistance. They joined together in rebellion, determining to fight to keep their land¹⁴⁵. In spite of this, by the time Rahman finally ordered his forces to leave the Hazarajat the Hazaras had been disposed of a large proportion of their land and much of what they had left had been left to ruin and was uninhabitable¹⁴⁶. There was also almost no food left leaving the Hazaras little to live on and as a result a large number migrated to the surrounding countries, namely Iran, Pakistan and Russia. Others surrendered and submitted to Rahman rule, about 10,000 families according to Mousavi¹⁴⁷. There were some who continued to attempt resistance, but were eventually defeated.

¹⁴¹ Mousavi, (1998), page 122

¹⁴² Mousavi, (1998), page 123

¹⁴³ Poladi, (1989), page 194

¹⁴⁴ Poladi, (1989), 203-204

¹⁴⁵ Mousavi, (1998), page 125

¹⁴⁶ Mousavi, (1998), page 129

¹⁴⁷ Mousavi, (1998), page 120

It is clear from a variety of sources that Rahman used religion to manipulate the Hazaras to submit to his plans and then later to convince his supporters to massacre the Hazaras when his tactics failed him. It is evident that prior to the war that Rahman considered the Hazaras as Muslims, as he claimed they were in several of his letters to Hazaras. In one of these letters he stated, “I consider the Hazaras and the Afghans the same, as both are the followers of the same Qaaba and the same prophet.”¹⁴⁸ Thus initially it was not the Hazaras’ religious adherence that caused him to initiate war. Poladi says that Rahman used religion as a justification for his battle, in order to help him win control. He says, “Finding the Hazara delegation unreceptive, Amir tried the last resort – their religion. He knew the Hazaras were fanatic about their religion and any imaginative threat to their religious belief might soften the uncompromised attitude.”¹⁴⁹ He subsequently ordered his secretary to tell the Hazaras that they were to submit to the Muhammadan prince, in an attempt to cause them to surrender for religious reasons. The response of the Hazaras was also to resist these demands, and they did so on religious grounds. They said that as a sign to the world they would, with the help of Ali and the family of Muhammed, refuse to submit to the Afghans. Rahman then convinced his people to attack the Hazaras, again using religion to legitimise his action. He no longer said he believed the Hazaras to be Muslims, as he had in his letters previously, but proceeded to label them infidels. He ordered the *Ulema* (religious authority) to issue a *fatwa* (legal pronouncement) against them, ordered them to be massacred. Kakar says, “The Amir now repeatedly asserted that because the Hazaras were “infidels”, the army and tribal levies were free to act as they pleased with regard to the Hazaras and their property when their land was occupied.”¹⁵⁰ By claiming that it was a religious duty the Amir stirred the Pushtons to fight, including people from British India coming to help. Nasir Hussain, an elder Hazara man in Quetta, says of these events,

“These decrees declared that the killing of Hazaras was a religious service, and when they were annihilated completely, their properties were to be distributed amongst the fighters as war booty. Hundreds of thousands of Afghan (Pushtun) from all over Afghanistan, and the Pushtun belt of present Pakistan, sided with their brothers.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Rahman, cited in Poladi, (1989), page 198, source Faiz 695

¹⁴⁹ Poladi, (1989), page 205

¹⁵⁰ Kakar, (1973), page 6

¹⁵¹ Hussain, Nasir, (2004), page 154

In reaction the Hazaras too declared a religious war against Rahman, saying they would fight for Ali¹⁵². Whether Rahman really did consider the Hazaras as infidels is uncertain. What is clear is that he was able to manipulate the situation using religion as a means to pursue his desires. This serves to demonstrate how fundamental religion had become to the Hazaras and the lengths to which they were prepared to go to preserve their religious freedom and pride. It is evident that by this point being Shia was an essential part of Hazara identity and submission to Sunnism would undoubtedly compromise this.

Abdur Rahman's crusade against the Hazara people has undoubtedly been traceable to their determination to remain independent of his control, as well as to his disdain for their religion. On closer observation it is clear that it was conducted mostly for his own power and control: a major part of his rule involved trying to destroy all perceived rebels, infidels and criminals throughout Afghanistan. He saw the Hazaras living in independence as a threat to his tight control, and thus labelled the Hazaras as religious infidels to justify his oppressive actions against them.

Although these events were in themselves tragic and thousands of lives were lost, they did serve to unify the various Hazara tribes, bringing the divided community together. The attacks resulted in the emergence of the Hazaras as a more united group of Shias. The events of the war led to the destruction of many homes, and a decrease in stability in Hazara occupied areas, thus forcing such mass migration¹⁵³. The new-found unity of the Hazaras as they built new lives in foreign lands testifies how the war brought many of the Hazara sub-tribes together, after years of independence. In conclusion I agree with Poladi's remark that, "their sufferings in the war created a greater sense of unity"¹⁵⁴.

Soviet Occupation

Several scholars have focused on the Hazaras during the time of the Soviet occupation. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan started in 1979 and lasted for nine years. It was an extremely significant time for the Hazaras as they were beginning to play an increasingly important role

¹⁵² Kakar, (1973), page 6

¹⁵³ Kakar, (1973), page 9

¹⁵⁴ Poladi, (1989), page 128

in political actions, which is where the interest lies. Kakar¹⁵⁵, Mousavi¹⁵⁶, Harpviken¹⁵⁷ and Monsutti¹⁵⁸ are some of the most helpful sources for this, offering us insight into the Hazaras' role. The war caused many Hazaras, as well as other minorities and Pushton Afghans, to emigrate in order to escape the occupation. During the war a third of the Afghani population fled the country, comprising about two million people, of all ethnicities¹⁵⁹. According to Kaplan, "The Soviets killed a larger percentage of Afghans than the Nazis killed Jews in World War II."¹⁶⁰ Eleven percent became refugees within the borders of Afghanistan and nine percent of the population was killed.¹⁶¹

During the Soviet war the Hazaras were heavily involved politically, along with the Shia Qizilbashs. Initially the Hazaras did not stand together in unity against the Soviets. Kakar says that during the war there was a certain amount of disunity in their political allegiance, the reason being that they were heavily influenced by their loyalty to Iran¹⁶². The Hazaras were divided, some following Shariati and other Khomeini¹⁶³. The Hazaras broke into different groups, each following different leaders, resulting in heavy internal conflicts. Kakar writes,

"Afterward infighting became common, resulting in the death of about 26,000 Hazaras, a number higher than that the Hazaras lost in clashes with the Soviets. Hazarajat was not the scene of many clashes with the Soviets and the regime, which did not carry out major expeditions there. In the infighting the United Council was ousted from many areas, including its headquarters in Waras."¹⁶⁴

Mousavi says that after the initial disunity, in which Kakar states many were killed, the Hazaras became unified politically. Mousavi contends that having learnt from their

¹⁵⁵ Kakar, (1995), *Afghanistan*, Electronic Resource 11

¹⁵⁶ Mousavi. (1998)

¹⁵⁷ Harpviken. (1995)

¹⁵⁸ Monsutti. (2007b)

¹⁵⁹ Kaplan. (1990), page 11

¹⁶⁰ Kaplan. (1990), page 18

¹⁶¹ Monsutti, (2004), Introduction page 13

¹⁶² Kakar, Hassan. (1995), *Afghanistan*, Electronic Resource 11

¹⁶³ Kakar, Hassan. (1995), *Afghanistan*, Electronic Resource 11

¹⁶⁴ Kakar, Hassan, (1995), *Afghanistan*, Electronic Resource 11

devastating mistakes during Rahman's crusade, they were aware of their need for solidarity¹⁶⁵, they acted accordingly. The result of these clashes was that many more Hazaras migrated to Pakistan, Quetta being the most popular destination. It would seem that the Hazaras in Afghanistan were initially in a contrary position to the war with Rahman, no longer unified as they were previously. However as the war continued they formed an allegiance with their Iranian neighbours and with each other, which allowed them to consolidate. Kakar says that the Hazaras faith in Iran was weakened by the events, resulting in more migration to Pakistan. He writes; "... the Hazaras became disillusioned with Iran. Among the disillusioned ones, those who were forced to seek refuge chose Pakistan, not Iran."¹⁶⁶ The Soviet occupation thus, eventually, helped the Hazaras to establish some political unity. Additionally, it increased migration movements, particularly to Quetta. Kaplan notes that many travelled to Pakistan for medical treatment¹⁶⁷ and many Afghans, including Hazaras, stayed.

Taliban

In a discussion of the Hazaras and war it is necessary to account for the Taliban's effect on the Hazaras. As the work on Hazaras is all, with the exception of Monsutti and Glazebrook, prior to the Taliban's reign in Afghanistan sources are mainly limited to the media and the Hazaras' own reports. Additionally Maley¹⁶⁸ and Rashid¹⁶⁹ have both written books that are good sources of information on the Hazaras during the Taliban's rule.

Before Afghanistan had saw rise of the Taliban there was already a history of tension between the Sunni Pushtons and the Shia Hazaras. This was expressed most clearly in the events during the war with Abdul Rahman. In the late twentieth century these conflicts were still unresolved, and the Taliban served to amplify this tension. Rashid in *Taliban* writes, "The sectarian enmity between the Sunni Pashtuns and the Shia Hazaras went back a long way, but the Taliban had brought a new edge to the conflict for they treated all Shias as *munajaqees* or

¹⁶⁵ Mousavi, (1998), page 184

¹⁶⁶ Kakar, Hassan. (1995) *Afghanistan*, Electronic Resource 11

¹⁶⁷ Kaplan. (1990), page 19

¹⁶⁸ Maley, William. (1998), *Fundamentalism Reborn?: Afghanistan and the Taliban*, Hurst and Company, London

¹⁶⁹ Rashid, Ahmed, (2001), *Taliban*, Pan Macmillian, London

hypocrites and beyond the pale of Islam.”¹⁷⁰ The events surrounding the Taliban’s rule brought to light the unresolved issues of past events and the ever-present conflict between the peoples of Afghanistan. William Maley also wrote about the effect of the Taliban on the Hazaras, highlighting the religious tension that turned the Taliban so passionately against them. He writes; “Hazaras in particular have been victims of repression under the Taliban, since they are tragically exposed both to the Taliban’s anti-Shiism, and to persecution on the basis of deep rooted racist hatreds.”¹⁷¹ Consequently, against their religion and race, the Taliban became responsible for acts of defilement against the Hazaras. The inevitable result of their attacks was a large number of deaths. British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC) reported to the vast number of deaths the Hazaras were facing on a 'Newsnight' report in 2001, when they said; “Even if it comes, the defeat of the Taliban may not bring quick peace for groups like the Hazaras whose graveyards are already too full of war dead.”¹⁷² The same report stated that this was worse than previous attacks on the tribe, and that the persecution from the Taliban was the worst they had ever faced¹⁷³. This, of course, alluded to the previously discussed massacre of the Hazaras under Abdur Rahman.

The Taliban’s intolerance of Shia Muslims is widely acknowledged, but their attacks specifically against the Hazaras are less commonly known and remained largely unreported by the media. It is unsurprising that such severe hatred of the Hazara existed under the Taliban's regime, as their allegiance to Shi’ism automatically set them up as infidels from their theological perspective. Rashid reports that Niazi, a Taliban Governor said that the Hazaras should be exterminated, claiming they were not Muslim, and thus worthy of destruction¹⁷⁴. Also famously quoted on many of the Hazara’s websites are the words of the Taliban commander Nahif; “The policy of the Taliban is to exterminate the Hazaras.”¹⁷⁵ In the years of the Taliban's reign there were constant attacks against them in attempts to obliterate them. There are two events that stand out as the most damaging, in terms of the scale of deaths; the attacks at Mazar-i Sharif in 1998 and the massacre in Bamiyan in 2001.

The first of the large crusades against the Hazaras by the Taliban was the ethnic massacre in the north of Afghanistan in the city of Mazar-i Sharif in 1998. This bloodbath was perpetrated

¹⁷⁰ Rashid. (2001), page 68-69

¹⁷¹ Maley, in Maley, (1998), page 22

¹⁷² The Northern Alliance Strategy, Newsnight 07/11/01, Electronic Resource 3b

¹⁷³ The Northern Alliance Strategy, Newsnight 07/11/01, Electronic Resource 3b

¹⁷⁴ Niazi, cited in Rashid, (2001), page 74

¹⁷⁵ Hanif, Maulawi Mohammed, Taliban Commander, cited at Electronic Resource 6a

for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Hazaras had defeated the Taliban when attacked the previous year, leaving many dead, and so the hatred against them was made stronger¹⁷⁶. Secondly, the Hazaras were Shia, clashing directly with the Taliban's strict fundamentalist theology that branded all Shias as infidels. Finally, to add to these causes, the Hazara women were playing important roles in military defence, again clashing with the Taliban views on women¹⁷⁷. This all led to Governor Niazi declaring,

“Hazaras! Where are you escaping? If you jumped in to the air we will grasp your legs, if you enter the earth we will grasp your ears. Hazaras are not Muslim. You can kill them. It is not a sin. Oh Hazaras! Become Muslims and pray to God as us. We won't let you to go away. Every border is in our control. 10,000 Talibs came last year as guests but you kill them. We will kill you the same way you killed them. They must remain unburied on streets for three days. We kill you and nobody is allowed to bury the dead bodies till three days...”¹⁷⁸

What must be kept in mind was that Shi'ism was not the only factor that led to this massacre. The Hazaras had played a major role in defeating the Taliban in Mazar twice the previous year, once in May and once in October. It was during this conflict that the Hazaras began to join together largely due to pressures from Iran, who was supporting them¹⁷⁹, and also because of the increasing force from the Taliban. Thus the genocidal attack the following August by Taliban militants was a reaction from the previous year and was justified by religious reasons. Nevertheless the attack was brutal; Human Rights Watch reports that more than 8000 Hazara men and women were massacred by Taliban militants in the attack in 1998¹⁸⁰, a staggering statistic. An internet community of Hazaras refers to it as genocide,¹⁸¹ placing the event in the same category as the attacks of Abdur Rahman, over a century ago.

Three years later, further south of the previous attack in the city of Bamiyan, the Taliban attempted another massacre. Several years prior to this event the Taliban had entered Bamiyan to destroy the famous ancient Buddhist statues, in order to cleanse the country of anything 'unIslamic'. Their return to this region was in order to continue this by wiping out

¹⁷⁶ Rashid, (2001), page 58

¹⁷⁷ Rashid, (2001), page 62

¹⁷⁸ Naizi, August (1998), cited at Electronic Resource 6b

¹⁷⁹ Glatzer, in Maley, (1998), page 171

¹⁸⁰ <http://www.hazara.net/taliban/genocide/mazar/mazar.html> Electronic Resource 6a

¹⁸¹ Electronic Resource 6

the Shia Hazaras. It was referred to by the BBC as “Bosnian-style ethnic cleansing...”¹⁸² and resulted in many Hazaras being killed or kidnapped and in women being taken as concubines¹⁸³.

The massacre itself took place only a few weeks before the Taliban regime fell, and the result was piles of dead Hazaras tossed into graves, not to be confirmed until early the subsequent year, of which the Guardian reports, “...three mass graves allegedly containing victims of one of the last Taliban bloodbaths. Pits with what appear to be bodies of people slaughtered last November in a campaign of ethnic cleansing have been found in Bamiyan...”¹⁸⁴ As in Mazar-I Sharif the attacks were bloody and malicious, and took many Hazara lives, leaving the community devastated once again.

Conclusion

What is interesting to observe about the encounters the Hazaras have had with those who have attempted to annihilate them thus far is the determination to maintain ethnic and religious pride, even in the face of certain death. One's denial of Islam is excused in Shia doctrine; a Muslim may deny his or her faith if under compulsion¹⁸⁵. This practice, referred to as *taqiyya*, is considered to acceptable under conditions with Shi'i doctrine¹⁸⁶. Schurmann said it was a belief among the Afghani Hazaras and that they practised it. He says, “The Hazaras practised Taqiya when the situation required them to do so.”¹⁸⁷ Concrete examples of this were not given. The Hazaras, as far as one can tell, did not deny their faith in the situations that resulted in their death under Rahman, or the Taliban's regime. There are no sources that allude to this, and it seems that they were publicly and proudly Shia. This demonstrates the strength of their religious allegiance; they could have denied their religion if so desired, but there is little evidence to suggest that this was the case. It is possible that even

¹⁸² Electronic Resource 3a

¹⁸³ Rashid. (2001), page 74

¹⁸⁴ Carroll, Rory, *Pits Revel Evidence of Massacre by Taliban*, Electronic Resource 5

¹⁸⁵ Sobhani, Ayatollah Ja'far, (2001), page 152-3

¹⁸⁶ Momen. (1985), page 183

¹⁸⁷ Schurmann. (1961), page 140

if they had done so it may not have affected Rahman's and the Taliban's decision to destroy them, as their cleansing was warranted by ethnic reasons just as much as religious.

The Hazaras' determination may have been inspired by their revered Imam Husayn, who was martyred in Karbala in 680. Husayn refused to accept the leadership of Yazid believing it would compromise his belief¹⁸⁸. Husayn is believed to have gone in to battle although his demise at the hands of Yazid was inevitable, thus he is celebrated as a martyr for the faith by Shias. That Husayn's commitment to not compromise his faith is somewhat mirrored in the Hazaras refusal to submit to Rahman's authority and become Sunni. It may have been that this event inspired them to persevere, although how much the Hazara knew of the Imams is open to debate. The Hazara's love of martyrs and veneration of martyrdom is now a very important part of their religious practice. However, as was discussed in the previous chapter, it is unclear how informed the Hazaras were of their religion prior to this war. Subsequently in the war with the Soviets, and with the Taliban, the importance of martyrdom would have been clear in the Hazara mindset, as they were certainly educated about Husayn and other martyrs at this stage. The Pakistanis Hazaras love of martyrs, and centrality in religious practice, is discussed in the subsequent section.

War, although its effects devastating, has worked in the Hazaras' favour through the strengthening of their identity. Monsutti comments, "Conflict situations are the main setting for the emergence and reinforcement of ethnic distinctions."¹⁸⁹ Through the massacre of Abdul Rahman the dispersed Hazara tribes became united as a single entity. It was through this that they emerged in solidarity, uniting on the basis of their common ethnicity and religion. This was maintained in the immigrant communities that emerged as a result of the war, which is shown in the case of Pakistan in Part Two. The Soviet war revealed disunity among the Afghani Hazaras, contrary to the result of the previous war. In the years before the rise of the Taliban it seems that the Hazaras were not unified. This was due to political allegiances. Finally the attacks of the Taliban seem to reunite the Hazaras in Afghanistan, reforming their allegiance to their ethnicity above everything.

Both Rashid and Glatzer have noted the way the Hazaras have become once again unified in an attempt to confront the Taliban's conquest. As Glatzer proclaims, "If this tendency continues the Hazara may become the first major ethnic group in Afghanistan which is able to act as a coherent unity."¹⁹⁰ This factor was also recognised by Monsutti who says, "After a

¹⁸⁸ Tabatabai. (1981), Page 196

¹⁸⁹ Monsutti, (2007b), page 6

¹⁹⁰ Glatzer, in Maley,(1998), page 171-172

long period of division, the Hazaras seemed to have achieved the greatest political cohesion of any ethnic group in Afghanistan.”¹⁹¹

This is an account of brief history of the Hazaras that has related an explanation of their origins, conversion to Islam, and the process of war and migration. Part Two will now address the history of the Hazaras in Pakistan.

¹⁹¹ Monsuttui. (2007b), page 14

Part Two: Case-study of the Pakistani Hazaras in Quetta

Introduction

The Hazaras' dispersion after the attacks of Rahman, and the widespread migration movement subsequent to the Soviet occupation and the Taliban's violence, resulted in new communities forming across the world. The community in Pakistan is interesting because it is one of the longest oldest communities and is still expanding in the twenty-first century. Of all the communities in Asia it is one of the more accessible for westerners, and this is one of the prime reasons I chose to focus on this community. It was, however, only through visiting the region of Pakistan prior to my research that I became aware of the Hazaras, and subsequently chose to undertake this research. Thus in many ways the initial encounters with the community in Quetta were my starting point for the present enquiry.

This section aims to show how one of the migrant Hazara communities form their religious identity in a foreign land, where they continue to be a religious and ethnic minority. As has been demonstrated in Part One it was through marginalisation that the Hazara emerged as a people who embraced a collective identity. They reacted and responded to the other, the Pushtons, as part of the identity formation process. Thus how the community behave and engage in religious performances in a foreign land is the focus of this section.

Chapter One: Introduction, comprising a literary survey

Situated in a basin and surrounded by mountains, Quetta is the largest city of Balochistan and the capital of the province. It is seen a gateway to Afghanistan, which is separated by miles of mountains to the west side of the city. It is also a gate to Iran, which the country borders slightly further south west of the city. Both these bordering countries are connected by frequent trains to Quetta, thus providing strong links with Pakistan. The city is mainly occupied by Pushtons, Balochis, Brahui and Hazaras, but there are also other smaller communities, such as the Punjabis¹⁹². The most significant community of Hazaras in Pakistan reside in the city, and, as has been prior mentioned, they have had a presence in Quetta for over one hundred years.

The Hazaras are distinctive in Quetta, as they were in Afghanistan, both by their physical appearance and religious affiliation. Though there are some other Shias in Quetta, the Hazaras constitute the largest proportion. They are also a distinct people as they, on the whole, do not integrate with other tribes inside the city. Within higher education institutes, such as colleges and universities there are a mixture of ethnicities, and some young women informed me that they have friends and acquaintances from other ethnic groups. In spite of this I have never seen any of them come into the Hazara sector. The Hazaras thus, to a certain extent, live quite separately from the other ethnic groups in the city; they have their own schools, hospital and commercial enterprises and, importantly, places of worship.

Some work has been compiled on the Hazara community in Pakistan, although very little exclusively concerns them. Within these studies there have been numerous useful contributions towards the study of the Hazaras religious practice, to which this study is greatly indebted. Most significant are those of Owtadolajam, Poladi, Mousavi and Monsutti.

Owtadolajam was the first to write a book that focused entirely on the Quetta Hazaras. His central aim was to show how the Hazaras who had moved to Quetta had changed in their customs and culture through settling in Pakistan¹⁹³. As was stipulated earlier, he concludes that a higher level of education is leading to the abandonment of many of the ancient practices and superstitions¹⁹⁴. Owtadolajam's work is useful as it highlights an extensive range of religious beliefs and practices that existed among the Quetta residents during the 1980's, and is thus an important reference for any later study of Hazara religious practice. He remarks that

¹⁹² Pakistan government website; <http://www.quetta.gov.pk/History.htm>

¹⁹³ Owtadolajam. (1986)

¹⁹⁴ Owtadolajam, (1986), page 243-244

due to the pattern of departing from ancient ideas that, “future generations will refrain from beliefs in superstitions by more than 50 – 60%.”¹⁹⁵ Within this study the accuracy of Owtadolojam’s prediction will be considered.

Poladi, himself a Hazara from Quetta, speaks a little about Pakistan in his work, although his focus was on the Hazaras globally. Poladi’s work is useful for the study of Pakistani Hazaras as he, on many levels, is representative of Pakistani Hazaras’ religious ideas. His comments on religion suggest some forms of Shamanism are embedded in the Hazara’s practice of Shi’ism, a topic that requires further research. In what little he does say about Quetta he principally writes about migration to the city, the reasons behind it and the stages of the process. Poladi importantly notes that the Hazaras in Quetta remained quite closed off from the other, non-Shia, communities surrounding it¹⁹⁶. This is contrasted to the Hazaras from the North West Frontier who fought alongside non-Hazara Shias. Poladi writes, “This has never happened in Quetta where the Hazaras have kept their identity as pure as possible; by and large Hazaras are operative as a closed group with almost no affinity with people of other religious and ethnic groups.”¹⁹⁷

This is an important observation which others have also noted. Like Poladi, Mousavi highlights the independence of the community within the city, how there is a minimal level of interaction with other non-Shias. From this he is able to conclude that the Hazaras remain firmly tied to their ancient practices. He says, “The Pakistani Hazaras have maintained to a large extent a strong sense of their origins and traditional identity, along with their tribal and social structure.”¹⁹⁸ This observation is important for later studies, as the statements and observations Mousavi makes can be assessed today. Mousavi, like Poladi, only wrote a little about the Hazaras in Pakistan, nonetheless what has been observed is very useful.

Finally Monsutti’s very recent work on the Pakistani Hazaras in *War and Migration*¹⁹⁹, Monsutti, Allesandro, 2007b, *Heurs et malheurs de l’islamisme chez les chiïtes d’Afghanistan : de la révolution sociale à la construction identitaire*²⁰⁰, and *The Other Shiïtes*²⁰¹ provides

¹⁹⁵ Owtadolojam, (1986), page 267

¹⁹⁶ Poladi, (1989), page 263

¹⁹⁷ Poladi, (1989), page 263-264

¹⁹⁸ Mousavi, (1998), page 145

¹⁹⁹ Monsutti, (2005)

²⁰⁰ Monsutti, Allesandro, (2007b), *Heurs et malheurs de l’islamisme chez les chiïtes d’Afghanistan : de la révolution sociale à la construction identitaire*, in Mervin, Sabrina, *Les mondes chiïtes et l’Iran*, Karthala; Institut français du proche-orient, Paris. English translation by Patrick Camiller, unpublished.

considerable insight into and analysis of political and religious identity. In the former Monsutti draws attention to the ongoing persecution that the Hazaras face in Pakistan. He questions whether Quetta is a haven for the Hazaras, revealing the reality of recent target killings and the anti-Shia mentality that exists among their neighbours²⁰². Another important observation that Monsutti makes is the difference between the Pakistani Hazaras and the refugee Afghani Hazaras who live in Quetta. According to Monsutti they are quite distinct, and live quite separately²⁰³. This is a geographical distinction as well as a social one. This is relevant to the present discussion and must be taken into account in any further study of the people. My contact and knowledge is mainly of the Pakistani Hazaras, and thus the study of sacred spaces is relevant to the stable Pakistani community rather than the Afghani refugees.

In *Heurs et malheurs de l'islamisme chez les chiïtes d'Afghanistan : de la révolution sociale à la construction identitaire*²⁰⁴ Monsutti writes about how the Hazaras came to acquire a political voice during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and how this helped to give the Hazaras a stronger identity. Monsutti argues that,

“Islam was thus the vehicle of a certain political modernization among the Hazaras and, more generally, the Shiites of Afghanistan. But it seems to have gradually given way to ethnic demands that crystallized the expectations of large and historical marginalized swathes of the Afghan population.”²⁰⁵

In *The Other Shiites*²⁰⁶ Monsutti articulates the political role that the *Ashura* rituals play for the Quetta Hazaras. He says that the Hazaras' economic and political exclusion in Afghanistan provides the context for the examination of their relationship to their religion²⁰⁷. He contends that as the Hazaras gained political power they also grew stronger in their religious adherence²⁰⁸. Monsutti concludes that *Ashura* for the Hazaras is most important as it

²⁰¹ Monsutti, Naef and Sabahi (eds), (2007a), Peter Lang, Bern

²⁰² Monsutti, (2005), page 114

²⁰³ Monsutti, (2005), page 101

²⁰⁴ Monsutti, Allesandro, (2007b), *Heurs et malheurs de l'islamisme chez les chiïtes d'Afghanistan : de la révolution sociale à la construction identitaire*, in Mervin, Sabrina, *Les mondes chiïtes et l'Iran*, Karthala; Institut français du proche-orient, Paris. English translation by Patrick Camiller, unpublished.

²⁰⁵ Monsutti, (2007b), page 16

²⁰⁶ Monsutti, Naef and Sabah (eds), (2007a)

²⁰⁷ Monsutti, (2007b), page 188

²⁰⁸ Monsutti, (2007a), page 189

demonstrates the longing for divine justice to rectify the wrongs that have been committed against them. He says, “Above all, it remains for Hazaras a mourning ritual that actualises the myth of a better world to become, a celebration through which suffering and defeat are magnified and become a powerful tool for social and political mobilisation.”²⁰⁹ I shall return to this important point raised by Monsutti as I account for some of the practices and rituals among the Quetta Hazaras today. Endeavouring to continue and develop further the speculations of Monsutti and others about how Hazara religious identity is formed by. I have considered the way the Quetta community has made use of space throughout their vicinity. Through an exploration of some of the most popular loci of religious activity significant observations become worthy of further thought. Drawing on this, and on the work accessible, they provide a basis on which statements about identity formation can be made.

²⁰⁹ Moonsutti, (2007a), page 191

Chapter Two: The Sacred Spaces of the Pakistani Hazaras

In a discussion of the concept of diaspora Safran notes the following characteristics;

“...diasporas comprise special kinds of immigrants because they have retained a memory of, a cultural connection with, and a general orientation toward their homeland culture and/or religion; they relate in some (symbolic or practical) way to their homeland; they harbour doubts about their full acceptance by the hostland; they are committed to their survival as a distinct community; and many of them have retained a myth of return.”²¹⁰

Safran’s observations on diasporas will be very useful in the discussion of the Pakistani Hazaras, as they portray each of the characteristics he mentions. I have taken the concept of sacred space as a way of exploration into religious and ritual activity. Firstly I shall cover the significance of physical space in Islam, and in Shi’ism in particular, to set this discussion in the wider context. I have chosen three of the spaces within Quetta that are used for ritual activity and regarded as sacred. These three are only a small selection of local sites, however they were chosen as they seem to be the most popular, each in its different way and for various reasons. Additionally they present different kinds rituals and therefore provide a wider framework for analysis. I describe what takes place at these locations, why they are regarded as sacred and what the space and rituals represent to the Hazaras. Finally I shall draw some conclusions about what these things may represent and signify within the discussion of religious identity.

Physical space plays an integral role within religion. This is seen particularly within ritual, both those that are performed communally and those that are individual. In addition to the obvious necessity of sufficient room to be able adequately to perform a ritual it is also apparent that spaces also act as symbols and serve to represent history, particularly within a diaspora. Countless sites have become central and important to religions both on a regional and global level, and this number is constantly increasing. Consequently some of these spaces have been named “sacred”. A variety of meanings can be attributed to this definition, and will depend on the religion and region. Generally something or some place that is deemed sacred can mean, “Dedicated, set apart, exclusively appropriated to some person or some special purpose”²¹¹. Within the development of Islam specific sites came to be considered as

²¹⁰ Safran. (2004), in Kokot, Tölölyan and Alfonso (eds), 2004, page 10

²¹¹ Oxford English Dictionary, Electronic Resource 1

fundamental to the religion. Physical space has played an incredibly important role in the life of Muslims throughout historical and current practice. One of the most palpable expressions of this is Mecca. The importance of this site is verified in its centrality to *salat* and *hajj*, two very important practices within Islam. This space is upheld as sacred by Muslims across the world and is the most important physical place, on earth. The central point of this sacred space is the black box called the *Ka'ba*, which Wensinck says is “the most famous sanctuary of Islam, called the temple or house of God”²¹². If possible, a pilgrimage must be made to Mecca to walk around this “house of God” at least once in one’s life. Daily *salat*, prayer, must be performed facing towards the *Ka'ba* as it is most sacred, and dead bodies should be buried facing toward it. Bearing testimony to its importance Saida Khalifa comments in a narrative about the *hajj*, “The Kaabah tugs at the heart because it is truly the place most honoured by God in Islam.”²¹³ Mosques are also sacred spaces in Islam, set aside for these daily prayers towards the Mecca. The sanctity is evident in the name; “The expression *Bayt Allah* ‘house of God’, which at first was only used of the *Ka'ba*, came to be applied to any mosque.”²¹⁴ Thus these places are not understood as ordinary, but stand as distinctly sacred in believers’ mindsets. This is demonstrated in the way they are treated, for example removing one’s shoes and covering one’s head upon entering these places.

Visiting sacred spaces other than Mecca and mosques is very common in Islam, particularly within Shia and Sufi sects. *Ziyara*, meaning ‘pious visitation, pilgrimage to a holy place, tomb or shrine’²¹⁵, is regularly practised. It is believed that the burial places of pious people, called saints, are sacred and that at these places miracles have, and will, be achieved through the righteousness of the saint. The holiness of the deceased person is understood to still be present and thus has power to transform the future of the living by interceding on their behalf. The same concept is applied to places that holy people visited and where significant events have taken place. By visiting these places pilgrims anticipate that their prayers will be answered and blessings will be received, because of the site’s sanctity. The practice of *ziyara* became increasingly important within the Twelver Shi’ism branch of Islam as it expanded throughout the Middle East and Asia. By visiting the tombs of the Twelve Imams one showed honour and love for those who fought for their faith²¹⁶. Its significance is notable in that

²¹² Wensinck, A. J. (2002), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Volume 4, page 317

²¹³ Khalifa, (1977), page 34

²¹⁴ Hillenbrand, R. (2002), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Volume 6, page 654

²¹⁵ Lambton, A. K. S. (2002), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Volume 6, page 525

²¹⁶ Lambton, A. K. S. (2002), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Volume 6, page 525

different research attests within certain Islamic communities visiting a *ziyarat* (a holy place) constituted a viable alternative to the obligatory *hajj*²¹⁷. Saheb drew attention to an instance of this in India. He said that within certain underprivileged communities a pilgrimage to local saint's tomb, if completed seven times, was seen as equal to the *hajj*²¹⁸. The practice of *ziyara* is still prevalent all over the Islamic world and plays an important role in the religious practice of Shia and Sufi communities. It is one of the most striking example of how space and place can become sacred to believers, and how that impacts religious practice.

Among the Hazaras of Quetta there are many local places that are recognised as sacred. These numerous sites are integral to the religious practice of the community. On a preliminary research trip to Pakistan²¹⁹ a number of these physical spaces stood out as central; a local shrine, the community graveyard and several of the *imambargahs*²²⁰.

Holy places can be easily recognised as they will always be marked with several *alams*, the word commonly used for a flag²²¹. The *alam* is an important symbol to Shi'a Muslims globally, as it resembles an important event in early Shia history. Hazrat Abbas, who was martyred at Karbala, was Imam Husayn's *alamdar*, flag-bearer. He is held in high esteem by Shias as a great martyr who struggled on to death to provide water for Husayn's camp at the battlefield. Consequently holy sites are marked as such by placing an *alam*, or several next to it. This serves as a reminder of the tragic events of Karbala and makes a statement about the ground the *alam* is part of. They are also used in great numbers during the commemoration of Husayn's death. They are held high in the procession to remember the events at Karbala. I was asked by a Hazara woman not to refer to an *alam* as a 'flag' as I was equating it with the secular. The *alam* itself is regarded as sacred, as is the ground it is immersed in. Sufi shrines are also marked with flags, thus this is not a practice that is unique to the Hazaras, or to Shias. It is possible that the Hazaras used flags to mark sacred sites before they were even Shia, as scholars hold that they were practising some form of Shamanism before conversion²²². In ancient Mongolian Shaman shrines were commonly marked by placing a pile of rocks at the

²¹⁷ For example during strife between Safavids and Ottomans, Nakash, Yitzhak, (1995), *The Visitation of the Shrines of the Imams*, page 155, also Iraqi history tribesmen saw visiting shrines of the mamas were substitute for hajj, see Nakash, Yitzhak. (2007), "*The other Shiites*", page 135.

²¹⁸ See Saheb, S.A.A. in Werbner, (1998), *Embodying Charisma*, page 57

²¹⁹ Data for this was mainly collected on a field-trip in October/November 2008

²²⁰ 'Imambarga' is the Urdu word for Hussainia, the congregational hall which Shia use for rituals, most during Muharram. In Quetta Imambargahs are also used as mosques and have a separate room for prayers.

²²¹ David-Weill, J. (2002), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Volume 1, page 341

²²² Poladi. (1989), page 126, Harlan, page 151-152,

site and erecting a flag in the centre²²³. The increase of Hazaras in Quetta has included a significant multiplication of these holy places and as a result the amount of *alams* that have been erected. They can be seen all across Hazara inhabited Quetta.

Within Quetta two distinct Hazara communities have been established; a seemingly permanent older community, which has existed for a long period of time, and a shifting refugee community, which is subject to constant change as residents come and go. Monsutti accounts for this distinction in *War and Migration*²²⁴, explaining that the distinctly different communities occupy opposite areas of the city²²⁵. It is the older, established area in which the sacred sites visited are part of. Although the Hazaras were granted Pakistani nationality shortly after the partition with India²²⁶ they are not entirely settled in Quetta. There is a sense that they do not permanently belong there. Mousavi noted this in *The Hazaras of Afghanistan*²²⁷ reporting that the result of a public meeting among the group the decision was made that if an opportunity arose to return to Afghanistan they would leave Pakistan²²⁸. On speaking with a variety of Hazaras in Quetta over the past three years I can concur with the contention that the feeling still persists and even many of the third generation of Hazara men and women consider Quetta merely a temporary home. Many of them are leaving, or are seeking an opportunity to leave for other lands. They mostly move to western countries but some desire to live in Iran and other parts of the Arab world. These Hazaras refer to themselves as “Persians” not Hazaras and not Pakistanis, giving clues about their self identity. They are also identified and named ‘Persians’ by some people out with their community. This proclamation of identity is interesting, as the Hazaras’ ethnic roots do not stem from Persia. Their language, however, is a dialect of Persian. Therefore this identification is either for linguistic or religious reasons, Iran being the central to Shi’ism. It displays a lack of identification with Pakistan; I have never heard a Hazara refer to herself as Pakistani. Thus although the Hazara community appears from the outside well settled and permanent, their occupancy of Quetta is more temporary in their own self-understanding. Safran noted that *disapora* implies the tension of physically being in one place whilst thinking regularly of

²²³ See Steward, 2000

²²⁴ Monsutti, Alessandro. (2005)

²²⁵ Monsutti, (2005), p109-111

²²⁶ Owtadolajam, (1986), page 220

²²⁷ Mousavi, Sayed Askar, (1998), *The Hazaras of Afghanistan*,

²²⁸ Mousavi, (1998), page 148

another²²⁹. This is evident in their self-identification and is also reflected in their use of space, as will be demonstrated by reference to specific sacred sites. Additionally the way these Shia Muslims have utilised their space reflects their need for communal religious experiences.

The Graveyard

The largest of these holy spaces is the graveyard, which is an ever-expanding plot of land by the mountainside. It is not only used for burying the deceased from the community but also for religious rituals and social gatherings, for example meeting of senior men. There always appears to be a group of men sitting in the graveyard discussing politics, religion and other topical issues. On asking who they were I was told ‘simply old men who have nothing better to do!’ It seems that it is commonly used as a recreational space. Although the graveyard is a space for social gatherings it is also a central place for carrying out a form of *ziyara* and for honouring deceased family members. Both of these carry supernatural significance, and are important activities in the Hazaras’ religion.

The busiest day in the graveyard is Friday. Every week on this day it is congested by thousands of people who come to pay their respects to the dead. They visit the graves of their family members in order to show honour and to make supplications for them. On approaching the grave of a deceased family member it is customary to greet the ancestor by knocking on the grave three times. It is believed that the deceased can hear this but are unable to respond. This specific ritual of greeting is performed to show honour and, if possible, is undertaken weekly. Ferdinand says that the Hazaras in Afghanistan held a festival for the dead, called ‘Eid-il-Mordo’ where lamps would be lit for deceased relatives²³⁰. This lacks confirmation from other sources and I have not seen or heard of it being practised in Quetta. Owatolojam mentioned another ritual concerning the dead that I have never encountered among the Quetta Hazaras. He says that some older men seek the permission of the deceased before embarking on a journey by visiting their graves and asking²³¹. It is likely that this practice has died out, however visiting dead family members is still considered highly important.

²²⁹ Safran. (2004), page 12

²³⁰ Ferdinand. (1959), page 45

²³¹ Owatolojam. (1986), page 275

Visiting the grave of a family member who has recently passed away is particularly important. On these new graves water is poured on to the mud (it is covered in concrete a few weeks later) and *Sura Fatiha*, the first chapter of the Qu'ran, is recited seven times. They say;

“Bismi Allahi alrraheemi Alhamdu lillahi rabbi alAAalameena Alrrahmani alrraheemt Maliki yawmi alddeeni Iyyaka naAAabudu waiyyaka nastaAAeenu Ihdina alssirata almustaqeema Sirata allatheena anAAamta AAalayhim ghayri almaghdoobi AAalayhim wala alddalleena.” Translation Yusuf Ali: In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful [All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds – The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful, Sovereign of the Day of Recompense. It is You we worship and You we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path – The path of the those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray.)²³²

With each recitation a line is draw in the earth of the grave, thus totalling seven lines altogether. This is done in the hope that Allah will see this offering and act to grant salvation to the departed. As that person is now unable to act for their salvation it is the responsibility of family members to act on their behalf and Qur'anic recitation is seen as one of the most effective methods. It is common that on the burial day men will be employed to recite the entirety of the Qur'an continually for two days at the side of the grave. This is considered very likely to increase the chances of the deceased person's salvation. When visiting the graveyard offerings are bought and distributed among the public, it is seen as improper to come empty handed. On one occasion I joined a group of women who came to pay respect to their recently deceased grandmother. They came with a big bowl of boiled rice and passed smaller bowls around to people at the surrounding graves. They insisted that I also ate some rice proclaiming it sacred food because of its use as an offering. I was informed that the food would help to bless me and thus I was encouraged to eat plenty.

These rituals and customs related to the deceased are common among other Shia denominations, so they are not distinctive to the Hazaras. However graveyard activity does not consist of only that which is described above. Within this graveyard there are two separated sections reserved for the graves of the Quetta martyrs where forms of *ziyara* are performed. The concept of martyrdom is very important in Shi'ism, as each of the twelve Imams are considered as such²³³. The greatest of these martyrs is Husayn, who, along with

²³² Ali. (1985), page 14-15

²³³ Momen. (1985), page 23

other family members, was killed at Kerbala. Aghaie asserts that, “For Shi’is, this event has become the root metaphor upon which many of their religious beliefs and practices are based.”²³⁴

In Shia doctrine there are different understandings of martyrdom²³⁵. From the time I have spent with the Pakistani Hazaras it would seem that anyone who is a good Muslim and subsequently dies is considered a martyr. The cause of their death does not seem to be relevant, thus whether they are murdered or die of sickness their status is the same. Whilst I was in Quetta in the autumn of 2008 a *mulla* was killed whilst travelling home in a taxi after *Joma Salat* and the title of ‘martyr’ was rapidly bestowed upon him. In some circles all Shia Muslims are considered martyrs, irrespective of how they die²³⁶. It would seem, from what has been observed and discussed so far, that the Quetta Hazaras share this doctrine, although they hold those who have been killed for their faith in higher regard. Thus there are many Hazara martyrs in Quetta, and those who have been killed on account of their adherence to Shi’ism are buried within two specific sections of the graveyard. The smaller of these holds the graves of those killed in 1984 during *Moharram*, the festival in which *Ashura* is remembered. These men are held in high esteem because they died whilst refusing to aide by the government’s prescription to cancel the *Ashura jaluze* (procession) for all citizens of Quetta. *Moharram* rituals are very important for Shias as they are a mechanism for expressing their faith, particularly in a non-Shia country. Aghaie says, “...the rituals associated with the battle have historically served as a vehicle for expressing and strengthening a variety of political and social relationships, association, and identity...”²³⁷ Thus for the Quetta Hazaras in 1984 it was essential that they had their *Moharram* procession, although it resulted in death for many of them. Above each of the martyrs’ graves is an *alam* and on many a description of how they died. Women frequently enter the graveyard and recite *Sura Fatiha* over the graves. They also touch and kiss them showing respect and honour. These women hope that they will receive blessings from Allah for visiting the martyrs, and increase the possibility of their prayer being answered.

The second of these separated sections within the graveyard is bigger and is on an elevated platform. It is central in its physical position and in activity within the graveyard. Within it lie the graves of those killed in 2003 during *Joma Salat* at the main Shia mosque in Quetta. A

²³⁴ Aghaie. (2004), page 9

²³⁵ Encyclopaedia of Islam, (2002), Volume 9, page 206

²³⁶ Encyclopaedia of Islam, (2002), Volume 9, page 206

²³⁷ Agahie, (2004), page 9

giant *alam* stands high in the centre bearing the names of the twelve imams. On occasion I have seen both men and women weeping at the foot of the *alam*, clinging to it. However the regular practice I observed was that women on approaching the *alam* would take off their shoes. Then they proceeded to press their foreheads against the *alam*, would kiss it and finish by reciting *Sura Fatiha*. I would often see people stroking the *alam* with their right hand, and offering *du'a*, free prayer. These acts are demonstrations of respect and honour; it is a holy place and is acknowledged as such by these actions. After completing this initial ritual many then proceed to visit the graves of the martyrs, some of who they may have know, others who were unknown to them. Some of the graves are of erected on behalf of very young boys whilst others are older men. Women offer *du'a* at some of the graves, requesting that they might be heard of behalf of the righteousness of the martyr they stand at the grave of. Some tie ribbons or threads to the graves symbolising their wishes. Each of the graves is marked with the *alam*, signifying the status of the place. It is common to tie a knot in the fabric, again symbolising the prayer asked. Sometimes Qur'anic recitation is played and can be heard in this part of the graveyard and many sit and weep next to the speakers listening to this. These people are almost entirely women. This aspect of the graveyard use is somewhat reflective of *Jannat al-Baqi*, where four of the Imams and many of the prophet's family and companions are buried. This graveyard is considered a very sacred place because of the status of the people buried there, many considered to be martyrs. Thus it is visited to show respect and in the hope of receiving blessings both in this life and in the hereafter. Abu-Zahra, in her book *The Pure and the Powerful*, says that in Egypt there is a small cluster of shrines which has been given the name 'The Baqi of Egypt' as it contains the graves of those believed to be descendents of the prophets. She writes, "Thus the replica is the spontaneous creation of the Egyptians to satisfy their longing to be near to the house of the prophet and express their love for its members, which they believe leads to God himself.²³⁸" The people of Egypt have expressed a desire to be closer to the holiest places and the naming of this graveyard is an expression of that. Although the Hazara graveyard does not go to the same extent in naming the graveyard as such the status and use of the space bears a striking parallel. By centralising the graveyard on these martyrs they show their desire to be close to those who are near God and a desire to be close still to the Imams. It is a way of localising the rituals for the Imams and the Prophet's family, whose graves are physically far away. For many of the Hazaras it is impossible to go to Medina because of the expenses, thus their local graveyard gives them the opportunity of emulating this ritual experience.

²³⁸ Abu-Zahra. (1997), page 112

Alongside being a space for performing *ziyara* the graveyard is also important to the Hazaras because of their hope in Divine justice. They are very consciously waiting for doomsday when they expect to see those who have persecuted them punished by Allah. Their graveyard is a constant reminder of the future judgment, especially because of the central location of the martyrs. There is a strong sense of this amongst these people in Quetta as they are often victims of target killings due to their adherence to Shi'ism²³⁹. Every time I have been in Quetta a Hazara has been killed and the hope in judgment is articulated passionately. Many of the women who have expressed their anger and frustration at these target killings have told me about divine justice at doomsday and their longing for it. Mousavi and Monsutti have also noted this in their research among the Quetta Hazaras²⁴⁰. Thus the graveyard is a tangible reminder of this future hope, both because of the martyrs who are buried there, and the belief that the dead will be raised up on judgement day from this location.

Imambargah

The various *imambargahs* are also very important to the Hazaras, and many are situated throughout their occupancy of Quetta. Like mosques, they are considered to be sacred places, and there are two in particular which stand out as most significant. Firstly the Iraqi *Imambargah* is a building that was converted from a house, and a place to which many miracles are attributed. The story behind its creation is well known and talked about. Thirty years ago the man who lived in this house had a dream in which an angel told him to convert his home into an *imambargah*. He was obedient to this and several years later passed away. His body is buried within the *imambargah* and has been transformed into a popular shrine, with his grave as its central feature. The deceased man's wife is caretaker of the shrine, she is a very elderly and frail woman and makes money by selling cloth that is usually tied to her husband's grave. Wednesday is an especially popular day to visit the shrine and weekly many local Hazaras travel to it carrying hopes that their desires may be fulfilled by it. In the courtyard entrance of the *imambargah* a huge *alam* has been erected. It is respectfully greeted and kissed, additionally *Sura Fatiha* is sometimes recited. After this has taken place visitors walk upstairs to the room where he is buried. After removing their shoes they enter and usually proceed by circling the grave three times. The grave is in the centre of the room and is surrounded by a grill which is covered in *alams*, ribbons and padlocks. The roof of the grave

²³⁹ Monsutti. (2005), page 120

²⁴⁰ Monsutti. (2007a), page 191, Mousavi. (1998)

has been converted into a highly elaborate dome. A woman told me that this was in order to mark the status of the place; holy. The first time they simply circle it, moving in a counter-clockwise direction. During the second circulation women untie any of the knotted *alam* and re-tie them, asking for Allah to fulfil the wish of the person who last tied the *alam*. On the third circulation they bring before God their own desires and requests, tying knots on the *alam* attached to the grill. Sometimes they recite the Qur'an in addition to the desires expressed in *du'a*. They also attach padlocks onto the grill, hoping they will mysteriously be unlocked. It is a popular notion that if one of the padlocks is unlocked it is confirmation that the desire has been fulfilled. Often the request of the padlock symbolises the desire for a good husband, either for themselves or for their daughter, but it can also symbolise other wishes. Some women perform *salat* next to the grave hoping that their physical proximity to the holy shrine will aid them in the desire to acquire blessings.

A local man told me that there is a well known story about the Iraqi Imambarga which makes it so popular amongst the women of Quetta. He related the following story to me; a few years ago a desperate woman was praying at the *imambargah*. This woman had no money and no husband and was struggling to provide for her children. During her prayers an angel appeared by her side, she was terrified and continued to pray. When she looked up again the angel had disappeared having answered her prayers – she now had enough money. (I am not aware of how the money was received). The woman told this story of this miracle to others in Quetta and it has increased the popularity of making a visit to the shrine. It is always very crowded and there is a strong belief in its power and miraculous potential. The room where the aforementioned miracle took place is locked and nobody permitted to enter. Its presence is a reminder to people seeking answered prayer of the possibility of their wishes being granted. As an *imambarga* it also serves as a mosque holding a men's and a women's prayer room. Within the women's prayer room women of all ages perform *salat*, and my host went to do so after she had circled the shrine. It is noteworthy here to remark that the Hazaras never pray without the *turbah*, a piece of clay from Karbala of which Shias use to place their forehead on when praying. A Hazara girl said to me "we believe we must pray on holy ground, so must use the ground from Karbala for our prayers." Although this is a universal Shia practice it further demonstrated the desire to be near holy places, and is an active expression of this desire.

In the Iraqi Imambarga there is a section of the prayer room devoted to another ritual activity. On the occasion I visited a large circle of older women were sat in the far corner reciting the Qur'an, an activity they refer to as *kharthma*. This is with the hope their wish or desire will be fulfilled, as is the goal with visiting the shrine and tying the ribbons. A woman will vow to recite a certain number of times and then begin, using sweets to count how many times she

has recited. The Hazara women believe that the sweets that they have used for the purpose of counting somehow become sacred through the recitation. They are additionally sacred because of the holy place in which the recitation was undertaken. Thus on completing the recitation they are taken home and given to people, believing that on eating the sacred sweets the blessing of God will also fall on that person.

Another *imambargah* within the Hazara area holds significance because of the miracle that it is associated with. Within the Nachari Imambarga is a large scale model of Husayn's tomb at Karbala, which is used in rituals particularly during *Ashura*. People walk around the shrine three times, as with the Iraqi Imambargah. They also tie ribbons, *alams* and padlocks to the grill. When I was taken to see this *imambargah* I was informed that a few years ago, when many had gathered to mourn the tragic events of Karbala the model had started to bleed. It is reported that because the mourning was so intense blood came from the dome of the model and ran down the sides. Thus, as with the Iraqi Imambargah, this place has become holy because of the miracles, which are seen as signs of Allah's presence within it.

The Ziyarat

Finally the sacred space that is most talked about among the Hazaras is a place referred to as 'the ziyarat' or simply 'ziyarat'. On the Marriabad mountainside stands a shrine that was erected after mysterious markings were discovered approximately fifteen years ago. These markings were believed to have been the hand-print and forehead print of Hazrat Ali, the first Imam. Daily, throughout the year, men and women climb the mountain to reach this shrine. I visited the shrine on two separate occasions, both on Wednesdays, which are exclusively reserved for women. Although custom gives priority to women on this day people can climb any day they please, thus there were some men on both the occasions I visited. They climbed the mountain and came up to the shrine but did not enter the rooms where all the women were.

A local man told me the story of how the shrine was discovered; he was a witness to these things having been a young boy of about 10 at the time the events took place. He related to me that a woman had been informed by an angel in a dream that there was a sacred place on the mountain. The details of this place were unclear so she sent her son, Nazir, into the mountains to find this place, and after five days he finally did. He found the markings of a hand, a forehead and of some faint Arabic writing. These were believed to be the handprint of Ali and verses from the Qur'an, because of other instances of mysterious marking that have been discovered. One of these is in Pir Punja in Pakistan and the other in Hyderabad, both

considered to be miraculous marking of Ali. On returning to the discovered markings Nazir and his mother slaughtered a chicken at this place as an offering, which symbolically declared the place as sacred. This site soon became a shrine and its presence became widely known. People from throughout Quetta came to visit the shrine. I was informed that seven months after the handprint had been discovered a man called Sayed Jumma became quite aggravated about the activities that the shrine's presence had incurred. He was unable to tolerate the fact that men from other communities were coming to visit this shrine as it resulted in them freely mixing with Hazara women. Only to increase this anger one day he came home and found his house locked; his wife was climbing the mountain to visit the shrine. In his fury he destroyed the shrine, by smashing the rock with the markings on it and throwing it into the valley. I was told that at first everybody was devastated, however after some time it was apparently forgotten about. The man who related the story to me told me that he remembers it so well because it is recorded in an old Hazara folk-song, written by a man called Sayed Pashta. The song starts,

"Ike Nazir Chatche, Yachto didaa, Koi Ali raceeda..."

Nazir has had a dream, the cruel mountains Ali has reached²⁴¹.

The song finishes by describing Sayed Jumma's anger and destruction of the shrine. Unfortunately I do not have the exact wording of these lines. According to my source the current generation is not aware of these events, and I have thus far never heard it from anyone else thus far. It would explain the lack of its recognition in all the studies undertaken on the Quetta Hazaras thus far when it is such a central part of their religion. It was something that had always puzzled me, especially in Owataolojam's²⁴² study, which details religious activities. This story is an explanation of why he does not mention it as, if this story is true, this was the period after destruction. However the shrine exists today, despite it's being destroyed, so I asked how this was possible. I was told, by this same man, that in the 1980's an employee of the Pakistani Broadcasting Cooperation, Hussain Ali, had a dream in which he was instructed to go and revive the shrine that Sayed Jumma had destroyed. He went up to the place where the handprint had previously appeared every Thursday for 40 weeks. Every night he would light a lamp at the place until it eventually became recognised as a shrine once more. It is likely that a reconstruction of a handprint was made to replace the destroyed original, but the details of which are unknown. Now a house has been built next to the shrine as well rooms for visitors; one for prayers and the other for taking rest and refreshment.

²⁴¹ Translation the Hazara story-teller

²⁴² Owataolojam. (1986)

The story of the recreation of the shrine is unsurprising when the history of the Hazaras religious practice in Afghanistan is examined. As was stipulated in Part One, shrines were always important in Hazaras' religion from when they first became Shia, and very likely prior to this when they were Shamanists. The love of shrines, and importance of having one in their locality, is clear. The reconstruction of this shrine in Quetta was in many ways quite predictable, as having a local shrine is of key-importance to Hazaras. This is evident too in the Hazara diaspora in Masshad who refuse to return to Afghanistan because they need to be close to the grave of Imam Reza²⁴³. Glazebrooke and Shavazi write that the Hazaras stay so close to Imam Reza at Masshad because, "such proximity is believed to enhance one's life chances in the present and chances of salvation in the afterlife."²⁴⁴ Thus they see being near the shrine as a necessity. The importance of the reconstruction of the shrine in Quetta emulates the Masshad Hazaras' desires. It is well summed up in the comment of a senior Hazara man; "I think they needed a shrine".

The women of modern day Quetta have never shared the story of reconstruction with me or any stories of the creation of shrines in the past. On asking when the shrine was discovered most say that they do not know, and some say that it is very old, as they believe it has been there since Ali's death. None have any specific details about it, and it does not appear to be a matter of importance. The significance lies in what the shrine physically is and the possibilities of blessing it enables, not where it has come from, or how it came to be. As with the *imambargahs*, stories of miracles are commonplace about the *ziarat*. I was told that a person had been very critical of the *ziarat*, not believing that it was really a miracle or Ali's marks. The story concluded that when this sceptical person visited the *ziyarat* he was suddenly struck down dead because of his unbelief.

When I visited the shrine on the first occasion it was extremely busy. It was shortly after quite a big earthquake that shook the city for two weeks, which increased the number of pilgrims travelling to the site. Although it was the next town, called Ziarat²⁴⁵ that suffered the most damage, many people in Quetta were fearful of a repeat of the 1935 earthquake that destroyed Quetta, thus desperate to make pleas for safety. One young woman told me the earthquake was a sign of God's wrath, and she was fearful they would all be destroyed. Thus increasing

²⁴³ Glazebrook and Shavazi. (2007), Iranian Studies Volume 40, number 2, April; *Being Neighbour to Imam Reza*.

²⁴⁴ Glazebrook and Shavazi. (2007), page 195

²⁴⁵ Ziarat is a small town in Balochistan, famous because of Jinnah's old house, which is situated there.

chances of Allah's blessing by visiting holy places, such as the Ziyarat, is a method the Hazaras sometimes use in situations like this.

On that busy day we (four sisters with their male cousin and I) started our journey in the Hazara refugee area of Quetta, called Hazara-town. As we began our ascent up the steps many people were beginning and ending their own journeys. Some of those travelling up had baskets containing offerings; mostly live chickens. Fatima²⁴⁶, one of the women with me, explained to me that they had received answered prayer and, owing it to Ali's hand-print, were returning with the offering for those who take care of the shrine. As we climbed, what was most salient was the increased amount of *alams* that had been erected, marking the way up to the shrine and symbolising that the ground we were walking on was holy. Some of the *alam* contained knots, symbolising the wishes of people. Fatima, along with her sisters stopped at most of them and touched her forehead to the *alam* and then kissed it, whispering prayers. Fatima struggled for breath and had to rest many times. I offered her some water but she refused, saying that it would increase her chance of blessing if she refrained from drinking and eating. She informed us that she had decided this prior to the visit. This was only her second visit to the shrine. The trip was very important to her as she had taken time out of her busy schedule to seek blessing, and she wanted to honour me, the guest, and take me to the shrine. Some people are able to visit regularly, but for others, like Fatima, this was an infrequent pilgrimage. Many pilgrims climbed with no shoes, again to demonstrate their fervency and dedication. The ground was dusty covered with sharp stones and the air was very cold, making the journey uncomfortable. After passing multiple *alams*, which we stopped at and greeted, we reached the top. Fatima's cousin, abiding by the women only rule, waited for us outside the shrine area. On entering the shrine area there was a sign – explaining the women only rule. Then, on the wall on the left there was the revered hand-print²⁴⁷. It had been painted black, possibly to make it clearer, however the mark is very faint. On entering pilgrims greeted Ali and prayed in front of the stone. Then they put their hand over Ali's hand-print and some of them kissed it. Some people placed bags of sweets over the stone, offering *du'a* and reciting the Qur'an as they did this. Next to the handprint there was the mark of Ali's forehead. Again the same actions were performed as those at Ali's hand. Unsurprisingly, there were a few large *alam* erected next to the markings. On this occasion there was a man weeping, sitting on the floor and clinging desperately to the *alam*. The girls I was with tied pieces of thread to the *alam*, making wishes as they did so. They whispered their prayers quietly, hopeful of answers. Some boys were sitting nearby lighting candles. The

²⁴⁶ The name has been changed

²⁴⁷ See appendix 3, page 76

lighting of candles to symbolise prayers is frequent, not only at the shrine but throughout Hazara religious rituals. We proceeded to enter inside the building. It was crammed full of women eating and drinking *chai* and talking loudly. The walls of this room were elaborately decorated with *alam*, pictures of the *Ka'ba*, Arabic writing and other devotional art. There was a smaller room attached to this space that is reserved for prayers. The room was crowded, full of women, most of who were praying. Some adopted traditional *salat* postures whilst others lay on the floor weeping. Some women lay over a small coffin, most commonly used during *Moharram* mourning rituals but also part of the activities at the shrine. Some women offered money in the coffin through a small slit and asked for healing, for themselves and for others. Fatima pushed her way to this and fell to the floor very dramatically, then started praying. Her sister stood before a large picture of Ali's hand, also at the back of the room and prayer there. They had brought some cloth from the Iraqi Imambarga with them, which Fatima lay over the coffin. Other ritual objects were scattered and piled around the room, some cradles, again more commonly used during *Moharram*. The cradle is rocked in mourning for Husayn's son, Ali Ashgar, who died during the battle of Karbala. Many ladies handed out sweets, and encouraged me to eat them and ask for anything I desired. I was told that my prayer would certainly be granted as these sweets were sacred.

After some time in the prayer room we went back into the noisy room, and I was told I must eat a little of the sacrificed food. This, again, is considered sacred, and on eating it, the Hazara women believe the chances of their desires being fulfilled are greatly increased. One should not leave without having eaten or drunk even just a little. Fatima telephoned her mother to ask if the sweets they had bought should be distributed or taken home. It was agreed that some should be taken home, and some distributed at the shrine, as seems to be customary. On both occasions I visited the shrine I was constantly handed sacred sweets by almost every woman. The sweets present an opportunity for Fatima's mother who were not present to partake in the blessing, even though she was physically unable to join us on the climb. On leaving Fatima was pleased that she was able to visit the shrine and had high hopes that her desires would be fulfilled. Her sisters tried to drag her away but she kept returning to get another touch of the hand and whisper final prayers. On the way back down the mountain she and the others were extremely happy and satisfied by the expedition, all memory of a difficult climb had been erased and replaced with high hopes of desires being fulfilled. Later, at her home I was given some more sweets and instructed again that I, and any of my friends, should eat these and any wish we have will be fulfilled. Through the sacredness of the shrine they believe that these sweets have also become sacred and have the potential to bring about further blessing.

The shrine is proudly discussed by all women I have spoken to in the community, and also by some of the men. Although not all visit often they proudly speak about its presence as a miracle and talk about it. The Hazaras are very happy to be situated so close to what has become a very important place in their religious activity. Shrines are very important for small religious communities and, as Courtwright emphasised; “Shrines serve to protect and engender the vitality of the religious traditions to which the bear witness.”²⁴⁸ This is certainly the case for the Pakistani Hazaras.

Conclusion

Examining the sacred spaces of the Hazaras reveals interesting insights into their religious identity. These can be seen in relation to; how they have marked their territory, their relationship to the wider Shia community and social unity within Quetta.

Firstly the sacralisation of spaces in Quetta shows how the Hazaras have marked their territory in Pakistan. In proclaiming sites as sacred the Hazaras legitimise their presence as Shias in Pakistani, a predominately Sunni country. Naef and Sabahi state that the public performance of rituals by Shias makes statements of their religious presence in a Sunni land²⁴⁹. This is evident in the Hazara community in their rituals and furthermore in proclaiming the places where these rituals take place as sacred. This serves to demonstrate that the space is somehow touched by the supernatural, blessed by God. Having been subject to persecution in Afghanistan the Hazaras have marked their presence on Pakistani soil by making places sacred which makes a political statement about their right to be there. The miracle of the Ziyarat is a prime example of that. The Hazaras have been subject to target killings, and it is not uncommon to hear of fighting between them and other groups. Whilst I was in Quetta in Autumn 2008 one of the city’s girl colleges had recently been closed because of physical fighting between a Hazara girl and a Pushton. This, according to locals, was not an uncommon occurrence. It appears that although the Hazaras have been in Quetta for a significant amount of time they are still seeking to legitimise their presence, and the sacralising of spaces is one way of accomplishing this.

²⁴⁸ Courtwright. (1993), in Eliade, 1993, page 302

²⁴⁹ Monsutti, Naef, Shahabi, (2007a), page 8

Many of these spaces are representative of other, better known, holy places in other lands, a number of which the Hazaras aspire to move to or to visit. All of the sacred places in Quetta are considered advantageous to visit, however they are incomparable to visiting Mecca, Kerbala, Medina or any of the burial places of the Imams. These sacred places in Quetta are localised reflections of the holiest places, providing opportunities for the poorer members to partake in rituals and experiences in lands they cannot afford to visit. This type of ritual activity takes place at these other places. For example at the Imambargahs, both the Iraqi and the Nachair, the women walk around the shrine. This emulates the ritual of walking around the Ka'ba as part of the hajj to Mecca, although it is not done as many times. Although the Hazaras would not verbally equate or acknowledge this practice as an imitation of *hajj*, as an outsider it is noticeable and certainly reflects the ritual at the *Ka'ba*. This is also true of the graveyard, in the way it reflects the holy graveyard at Baqi.

All these spaces show the Hazaras desire to be close to the wider Shi'a community, in particular those who live near what are considered to be the holiest places. Furthermore, as with the wider Shia community, the Hazaras only perform *Salat* with the *turbah*, the piece of clay from the holy Kerbala. This is also a demonstration of wanting to be near a holy place, as the ground they pray on is considered one of the most sacred places on earth.

Each of the sacred sites mentioned provides a mechanism for social integration and unity. Regular rituals at these places bring the Hazaras together in their common beliefs. Although at the places mentioned many of the rituals are performed individually they share a physical space for their acquisition and thus include many levels of social interaction. This mostly consists of helping and serving each other. The constant retying of ribbons to help another's prayer to be answered is present at every sacred site and demonstrates a level of interdependence. Additionally the sacralising and sharing of sweets is also an important marker, particularly with regard to the shrine. Visiting graves to recite verses from the Qu'ran is a way of serving those who have departed, and provides a practical opportunity for the Hazara to do. Thus many of these acts involve serving and sharing with the community. The rituals described here are individualistic because they are not formal, community events. These are different to what takes place during *Muharram* and *Ramadam* where the rituals are performed communally and almost everybody will attend. The rituals that have been discussed can be performed whenever one chooses, although particular days are often more popular. These rituals are usually centred on wish-fulfilment, either for oneself or on behalf of a friend or family member. One decided to perform the ritual in the hope to see their desire answered by God. At each of these places I encountered a lack of patience for others who were also performing rituals. People pushed through crowds and climbed over each other to get to where they could retrieve blessing. This, I think, is partly cultural and perhaps stood out

to me as it was counter to my own culture. Thus although the rituals incorporate serving each other there is an individual element too, and the motivation for ritual performance is usually individual.

As Safran has noted diasporas reflect their homeland's religion in symbolic and practical ways²⁵⁰. This was shown in their love of the shrine on the mountain, its importance mirroring the old Hazara tradition. These spaces are important markers of religious identity as they are outward expressions and manifestations of a communal belief. They legitimise Hazara presence, provide locals accessible ways to be part of the wider Shia community and bring people together, uniting them. They mark them as separate from the other ethnicities and religions in Quetta, strengthening their sense of identity as they are not submerged into the wider Quetta population. Kokot, Tölölyan and Alfonso rightly conclude that; "Diasporas may transcend boundaries, but space, place and locality remain important points of reference on a symbolic as well as on a physical level."²⁵¹ We have seen here that holy sites in Quetta are integral to regular religious rituals, and in turn symbolise other places that are acknowledged as holy by the wider Shia community.

²⁵⁰ Safran, (2004), in Kokot, Tölölyan and Alfonso (eds), (2004), page 10

²⁵¹ Safran, (2004), in Kokot, Tölölyan and Alfonso (eds), (2004), page 5

Conclusion: How is Hazara religious identity formed?

“Hazara identity has been built around the evocation of past injustices and protests against exploitation.”²⁵²

In the introduction I established that the basis for religious identity could be formed on the premise that it is a reaction and relation to outsiders that is manifested in rituals, and is malleable. Additionally historical events serve to form cultural memory and this is intrinsic in a community’s religious identity. Thus, under these premises, I shall articulate how Hazara identity is formed.

Relationship to outsiders

Group identity is largely formed by the relationship of the group to the ‘other’²⁵³. Through looking at how the Hazaras have related, and still relate, to non-Hazaras a sense of their religious identity has been shown.

Through the discussion of their history we have seen that the Hazaras remained separate from other Afghani ethnicities until they were forced to disperse by Rahman. It was their intention to remain distinct through a lack of communication, inter-marriage and devotion to Shi’ism. Canfield comments; “A group that endeavours to remain distinct from its neighbours ascribes to itself plainly contrary identity.”²⁵⁴ Canfield has noted that the Hazara became identified as opposite to the other tribes. It appears then that the Hazaras, through their deliberate separation from other ethnic groups, were identified as contrary to the other, the Sunnis. Through the adoption of Shi’ism the Hazaras were to remain largely distinct and separate from other Afghanis. Coleman and Collins say, “The adoption of religion becomes – among many other things – the acceptance of commonality as well as the difference in relation to numerous others.”²⁵⁵ Monsutti concluded in his analysis of the Hazara’s conversion that; “The conversion of the Hazaras to Shiism might be the result of a process of detachment from the neighbouring people.”²⁵⁶

Thus, agreeing with Monsutti, I think the adoption of Shi’ism began this process of recognising the ‘other’ in Afghanistan, although the Hazaras did remain in their smaller sub-

²⁵² Monsutti, (2005), page 68

²⁵³ Clifford, (1988), page 10

²⁵⁴ Canfield, (1973), page 14

²⁵⁵ Coleman and Collins, (2004), page 8

²⁵⁶ Monsutti, Alessandro, (2004), page 62

tribes. However they gradually emerged as a collective identity because they had their religion in common, which represented a minority. The bringing together of the Hazaras largely took place through the war with Rahman, in which they became passionately and collectively Shia in their resistance to the dictator. The result of this not only emphasised the difference between the Hazaras and the other Afghans but also brought them together as a single group. It was from this point that their strong sense of sect affiliation grew, which has been articulated by several scholars who encountered them subsequent to this event. Ferdinand says that;

“Hazara and Shia are nearly identical both in their own opinion and in that of others: A Hazara will deny that he is of the same tribe as a Hazara Isma'liya, and a common Afghan, who is Sunni, will often in his general antipathy to the Shias call a Qizilbash a Hazara.”²⁵⁷

In Afghanistan during the 1950's the word 'Hazara' meant Shia Muslim. They were considered interchangeable. Poladi too says that there is a very close correlation between ethnicity and religion²⁵⁸. He says that the feelings among the Hazaras about their religion are so strong that they sometimes overrule ethnic sentiments²⁵⁹. Thus much of the Hazara's religious identity is tied into their ethnicity; they are perceived by the 'other' as almost the same thing. They too consider themselves Shia because they are Hazara. Canfield noted that in Afghanistan Hazaras who converted to Sunnism, an extremely rare incident, were no longer considered to be Hazara. He says, “This correlation between ethnicity and sect identity is so close that when informants mentioned instances of Hazaras converting to Sunnism, they spoke of them as having 'become Tajik'.”²⁶⁰ Thus ethnicity and religion have become inseparable and are intrinsically linked for the Hazaras in Afghanistan and how other Afghans perceive them.

The self-identification of the Hazaras is also a marker of how the outsider is perceived. The discussion of origins showed that the Hazaras usually identify themselves with Ghenghis Khan, for the purpose of upgrading their status²⁶¹. Also the Hazaras in Quetta frequently using

²⁵⁷ Ferdinand, Klaus, (1959), page 16

²⁵⁸ Poladi, Hassan, (1989), page 128-129

²⁵⁹ Poladi, Hassan, (1989), page 128-129

²⁶⁰ Canfield, (1973), page 5

²⁶¹ See page 14

the word 'Persian' rather than Hazara to describes themselves shows a desire to want to better themselves.

The strong presence of Pushtons in Quetta has influenced the Hazaras' identity. The Hazaras in Pakistan have remained very strongly religious, unlike the community in Australia, which is very secular²⁶². Maintaining religious pride is very important to the Hazaras as they are living very closely to the Sunni Pushtons, and the memory of their marginalisation by the Afghani Pushtons is very present.

I found that the Quetta Hazara's response to me as another outsider showed me how religious they were. Even with the few I thought were more secular once I began to speak with them I found strong religious pride embedded in their thoughts and actions. They were keen to tell me about the miracles they had witnessed, their knowledge of the Qur'an and religious doctrine. I remember on one occasion having *chai*, tea, with two young women, one aged thirteen and the other seventeen. The former became very frustrated when she was unable to recite some verses she had recently learnt. She felt very ashamed and frustrated that the situation had occurred in front of the foreigner and a non-Shia. Being openly a Christian they showed me great respect, however were keen to see me converted and asked me to renounce Christianity and accept Islam on several occasions. The Pakistani Hazaras have a deep religiosity that is a response to the strong Sunni presence around them. They remain fervent in their following showing themselves to be different from others around them. They are proud to be Shia and, despite frequent attacks, see their religion as integral to their ethnicity. This is the opposite of the Hazaras in Australia who, not facing the religious persecution from Sunnis, have become more secular²⁶³.

Ritual activity and sacred spaces

In section one there was little recorded about ritual activity, although it is evident that the Hazaras engaged in some sort of religious ritual. Section two showed that the Hazaras in Quetta exhibit different aspects of their group identity in their rituals and sacralised spaces. I noted that these rituals show how the Hazaras have legitimised their presences and marked territory by sacralising space. I also showed that these places are representative of what are

²⁶² Glazebrook, Diana, (2005), page 169

²⁶³ Glazebrook, Diana, (2005), page 169

considered the holiest places and often reflect them, and additionally their homeland. This was seen in the graveyard, a substitute of the Baqi, and in the Iraqi Imambargah, a substitute for the *Ka'ba*.

Finally I stated that through these rituals Hazaras are able to serve each other and integrate even though they are primarily individualistic rituals.

Acts of ritual are loaded with political statements, as Monsutti has observed in relation to the Ashura procession of the Quetta Hazaras²⁶⁴. Thus when they are performed they are showing their political stance and determination.

In the rituals explored in part two I have recounted how the Hazaras express many things about their religious identity. Most of them relate in some way to martyrdom and suffering, which is mainly because of the memory of Rahman's crusade against them. This is a constant reminder as it one of the primary reasons why so many Hazaras are in Quetta. Monsutti says that the events of the war have left the Hazaras with "a whole register of symbols associated with suffering."²⁶⁵ Of all the rituals accounted for in this text it is most pertinent in the graveyard where the Hazaras mourn the loss of Hazara martyrs, crying out to God to be recognised because of the martyrs' righteousness. This encapsulates the centrality of martyrdom to the Shia faith; the memory of the Imam's martyrdom and the reality of the persecution the Hazaras. Obviously these sentiments are deeply embedded in the Moharram procession which I have not yet been able to witness, but Monsutti highlights as entrenched with political symbolism²⁶⁶. He says;

"The suffering of today's victims is exalted through association with that of Imam Husayn, while the crimes of the Hazaras' enemies are compared to those of caliph Yazid. The young bare-chested Hazaras who vaunt their courage are embodying the expectation of an entire population that its rights will finally be recognized."²⁶⁷

This is not only mirrored in the *Ashura* procession but also in the graveyard rituals, where their sufferings are a constant reminder. This is an essential element of Hazaras identity, particularly where the Hazaras are still a religious minority, as they are in Pakistan. According to Coleman and Collins, ritual carries a statement of identity with it²⁶⁸ and the

²⁶⁴ Monsutti, Naef, Shahabi (eds), (2007a), *The Other Shiites*, Peter Lang, Bern

²⁶⁵ Monsutti, (2007b), page 6

²⁶⁶ Monsutti, (2007a), page 191

²⁶⁷ Monsutti, (2007a), page 191

²⁶⁸ Coleman and Collins, (2004), page 8

Hazaras determination to remain fervently Shia in the face of persecution is evident in the graveyard rituals, and in *Moharram* processions.

Malleability

Articulated in the introduction, the malleability of identity is an important consideration in this discussion. Canfield notes that, “Anthropomorphically speaking, a society is constantly asking questions about its identity in relation to its neighbours.”²⁶⁹ Thus this questioning and relating to others is a constant process that the Hazaras have experienced throughout their history. It took many years for the Hazaras in Afghanistan to adopt a communal ethnic and religious stance, even in the face of extreme persecution. In modern times it is evident that the way the Hazaras behaved prior to dispersion is very different from how they were in Afghanistan in later years and, furthermore, in the variety of modern diasporas. The fervent religiosity of the Quetta Hazaras compared to the relatively secular Australian Hazaras is telling of this factor. It shows us that identity is malleable, as it is primarily formed by the relationship to the other. Hazara religious identity has been subject to many changes, and will continue to change as they continue to disperse and face persecution. As they ask who they are in relation to those around them they will continue to adapt and alter the way they are identified.

Boundaries in research and questions for the future

Unfortunately, due to the current political climate, I have been unable to continue with research of the Quetta Hazaras, for now. There are many areas that are worthy of exploration and require fieldwork, not only among the Pakistani Hazaras but also among the other diasporas.

Many questions stand out, such as why is Wednesday a ‘sacred’ day for the women in the Hazara community? Are the female Hazaras more active in religious rituals and *ziyara* than men? Whether the practice of Shamanism was embedded among the present Pakistani Hazaras was a question I intended to investigate, and was encouraged to do so by a member

²⁶⁹ Canfield, (1975), page 12

of the community. This is an area which requires further research and, at present, is unable to be conducted.

Although I had, on the whole, a fruitful fieldtrip to Quetta I encountered many difficulties as part of it. I can relate to Pnina Werbner's frustrations and difficulties in her ethnographic research on a Sufi community in Pakistan²⁷⁰. Like Werbner I sometimes encountered misunderstandings of Hazaras about my intentions for wanting to study them, thinking I perhaps wanted to become a Muslim²⁷¹. I also experienced the familiar criticism of being told I could not study Islam as I was not a Muslim, a frequent difficulty of many researchers. Furthermore the majority of my contact was with the Hazara women, although I was able to converse with some older men I was mainly restricted to speaking with the women. This is the opposite of Monsutti who found it very difficult to speak to any women²⁷². Two days into the trip there was an earthquake in the nearby town of Ziarat, which was felt very strongly in Quetta. It was one of the biggest problems I encountered as it happened at the beginning of my trip and prevented me from going to many places, as people were afraid of further tremors. It did, however, provide me some insight into religious ideas about events and gave me some understanding about how past events maintain a significant influence in local mindset. For the ethnographer the time constraint is one of the biggest problems for research, and I too have experienced this. What has been accomplished through this study constitutes as a vehicle for future research.

²⁷⁰ Werbner, (2003).

²⁷¹ As did Werbner, (2003), page 301

²⁷² Monsutti, (1998)

Appendix One: Glossary

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| <i>Alam</i> | religious flag |
| <i>Ashura</i> | 10 th day of Mohorram when Husayn's death is commemorated |
| <i>Chai</i> | tea |
| <i>Du'a</i> | spontaneous/free prayer |
| <i>Eid-il-Mordo</i> | 'Festival of the dead' |
| <i>Hajj</i> | Pilgrimage to Mecca |
| <i>Hazaragi</i> | Dialect of Persian spoken by the Hazaras |
| <i>Hakims</i> | Governors |
| <i>Imambargah</i> | Shi'ite place of worship for commemoration of Husayn and daily salat |
| <i>Jaluze</i> | Procession |
| <i>Joma</i> | Friday |
| <i>Joma Salat</i> | Friday ritual prayers |
| <i>Ka'ba</i> | House of God. The building at the centre of the Mamsjid al-Haram (Mosque) at Mecca |
| <i>Kharthma</i> | ritual recitation of the Qur'an |
| <i>Mohorram</i> | Period of mourning Hussain's martyrdom |
| <i>Salat</i> | obligatory ritual prayer |
| <i>Sayed</i> | descendents of the prophet through the marriage of Hazrat Ali and Fatima Zahra |
| <i>Surah Fatiha</i> | 1 st chapter of the Qu'ran |
| <i>Taqqia</i> | dissimulation |
| <i>Turbah</i> | clay from Kerbala to rest forehead on during <i>salat</i> |
| <i>Ziyara</i> | visiting a shrine/holy place |
| <i>ziyarat</i> | shrine |

Appendix Two: Maps

Map of Afghanistan

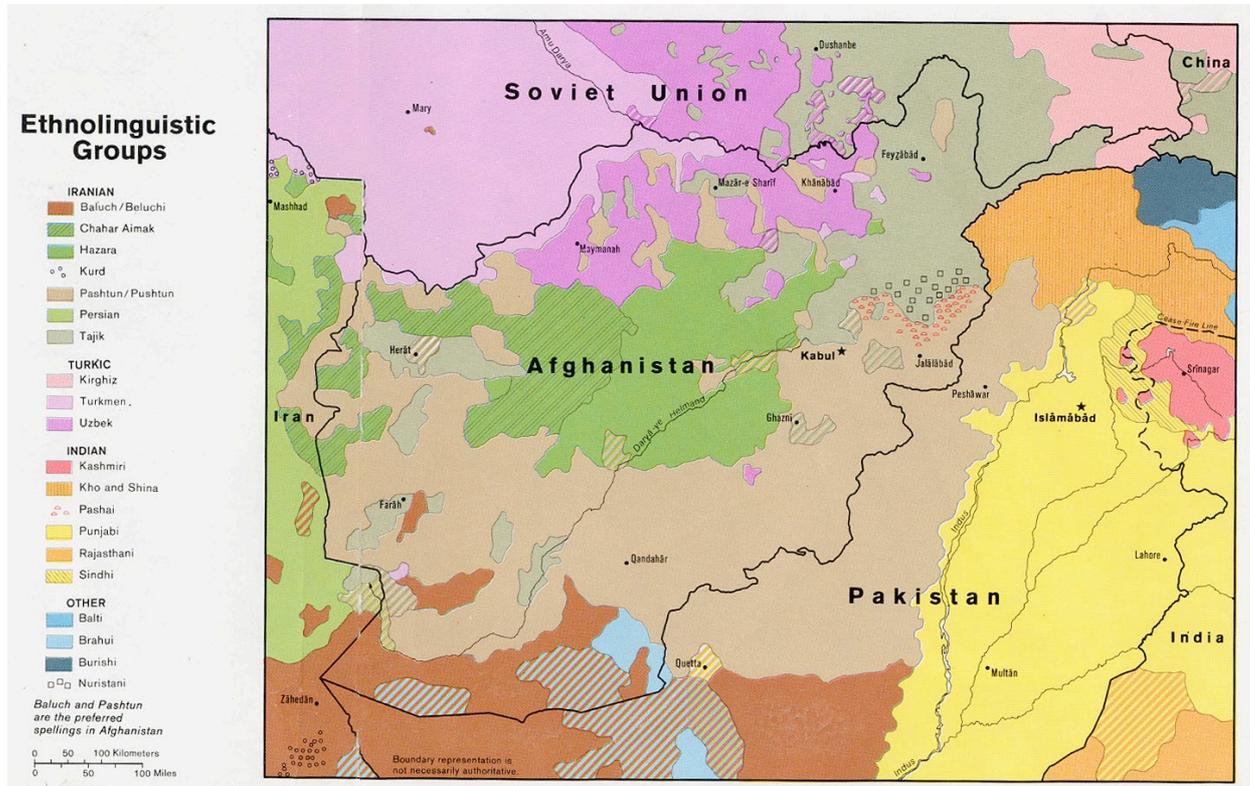


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This map shows the modern boundaries and regions in Afghanistan.

²⁷³ University of Texas, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/afghanistan.jpg

Ethnolinguistic map of Afghanistan



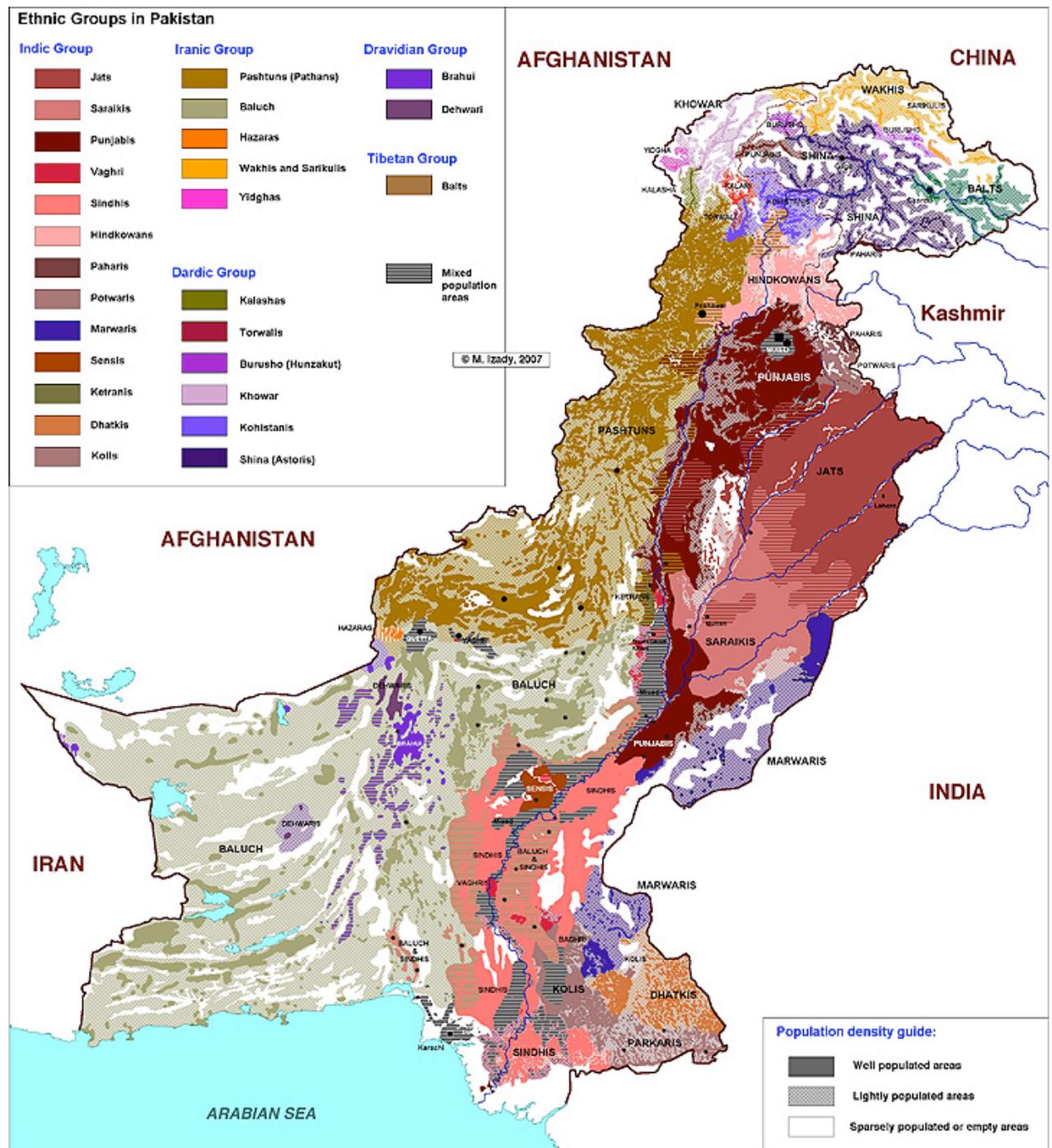
274

Ethnographic distribution in Afghanistan as known in 1983²⁷⁵. The green region shows what is still sometimes called the “Hazarajat”, yet is significantly smaller in size than before the crusades of Rahman.

²⁷⁴ University of Texas, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/afghanistan.jpg

²⁷⁵ University of Texas, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/afghanistan.jpg

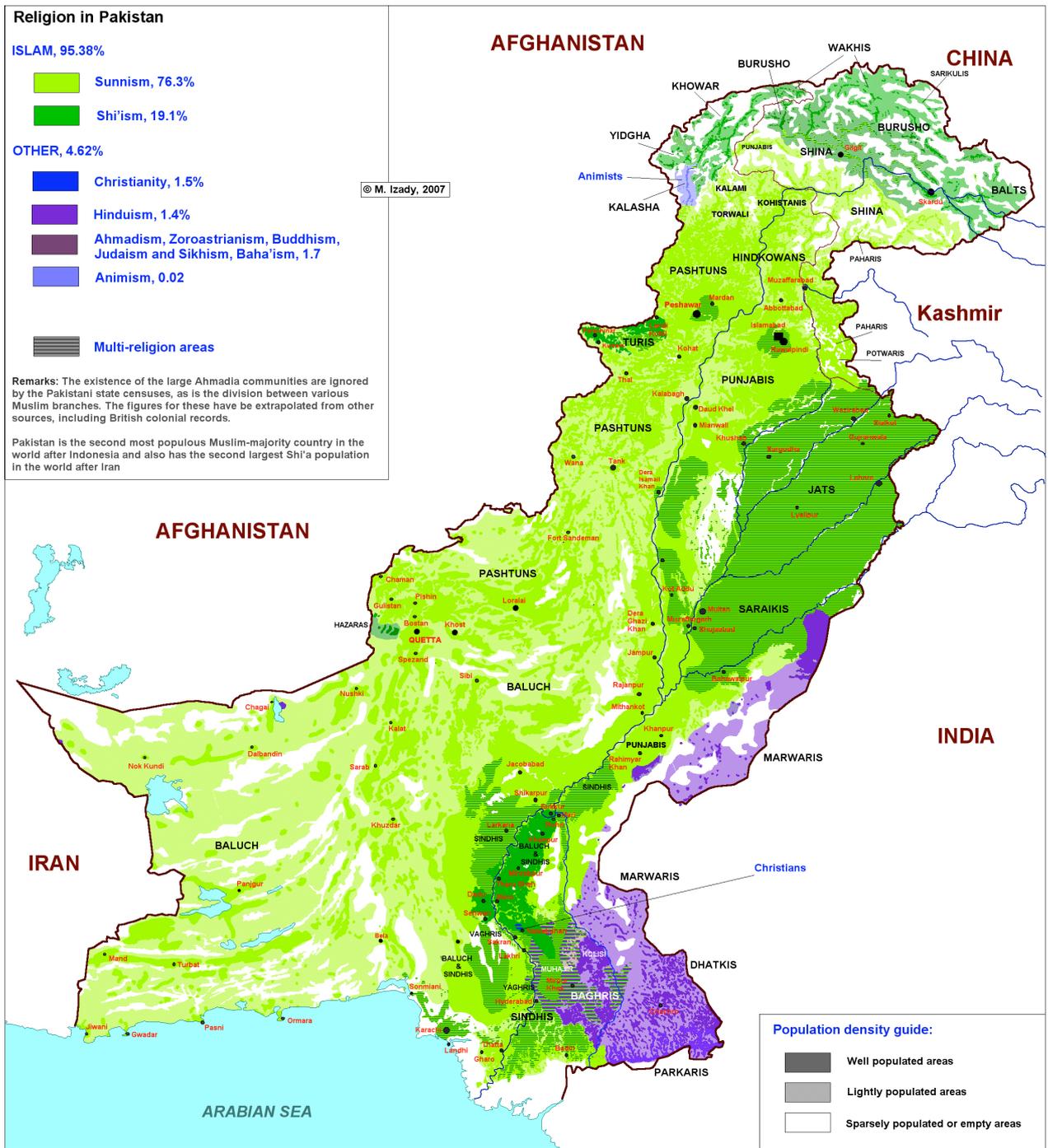
Ethnographic map of Pakistan



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Ethnic groups in Pakistan, orange area next to Quetta denotes the Pakistani Hazaras' occupancy.

²⁷⁶ http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Pakistan_Baluchistan_Ethnic_sm.jpg

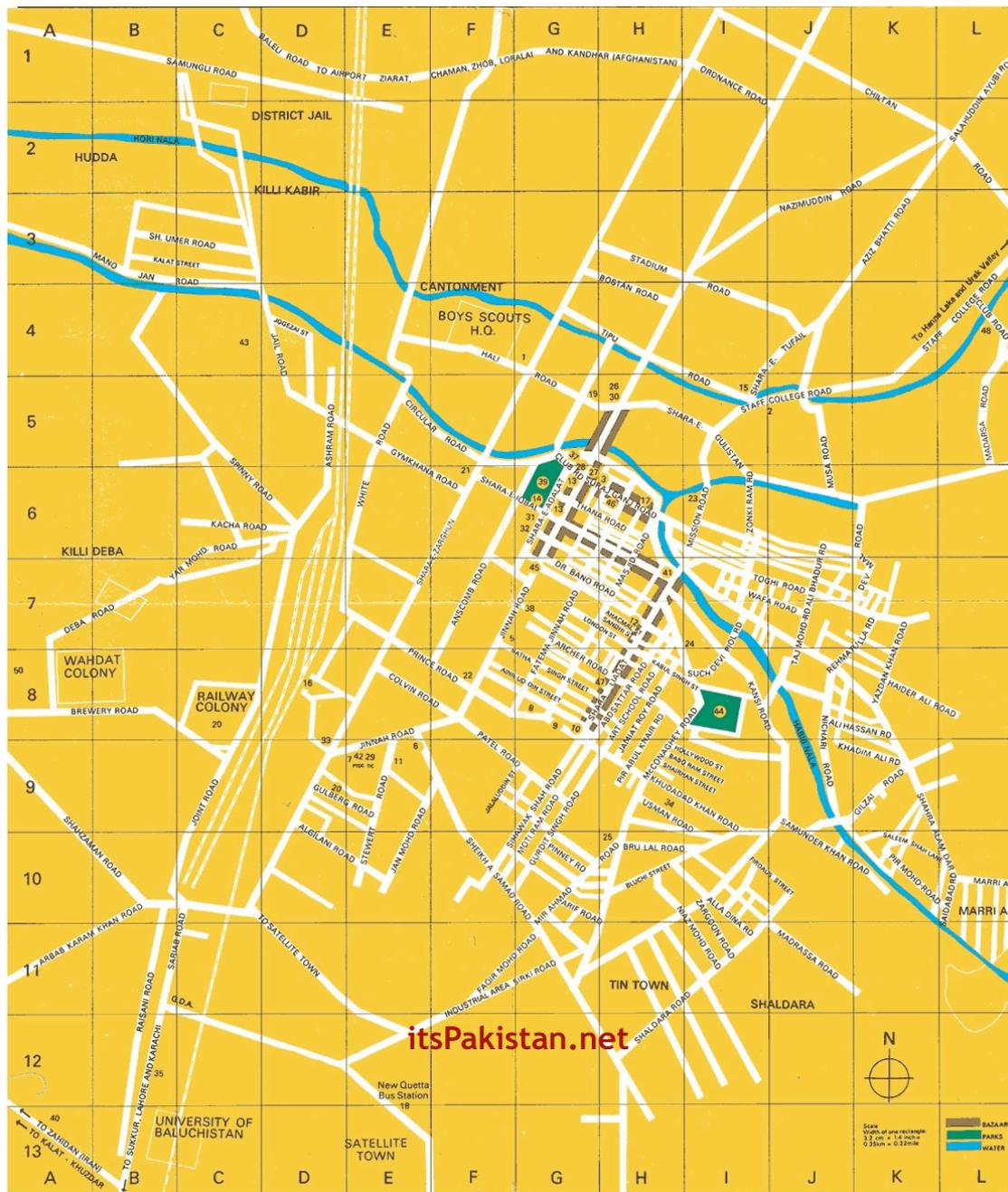


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A map displaying religious distribution in Pakistan. It shows that Shi'ism is a minority religion in the west of the country, thus making the Hazaras a minority religious group in their area.

²⁷⁷ http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Pakistan_Religion_Ig.jpg

Map of Quetta's main streets



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In this map of Quetta 8-12 J & K represent Marriabad, the centre of the established Hazara community.

Appendix Three: The Quetta Ziyarat Photos

These are photos from the Ziyarat on the Hazara mountainside. They show some of the surrounding areas, the Hazara rituals and activities that are described in greater detail in Part Two.



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The pathway up to the Ziyarat is steep and marked with *alam*.



Some pilgrims carry water as offerings for the wishes that they desire to be fulfilled, or in acknowledgement of wishes that have been fulfilled. This Hazara man is also walking barefoot, a sign of his gratitude and willingness to suffer.

²⁷⁹ All photos taken by Jennifer Creasy in November 2008



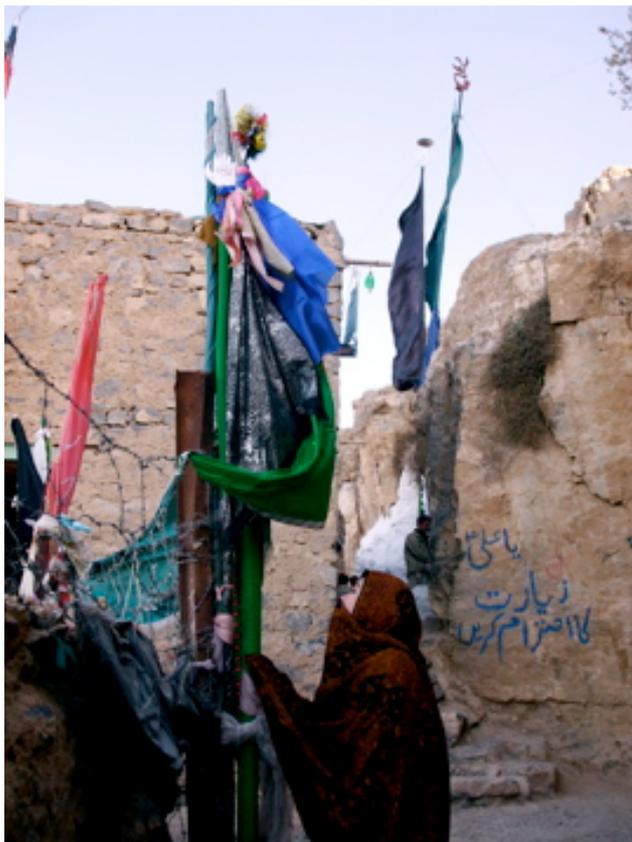
Above many of the standards lies a hand resting in a crescent. This is a common Shia symbol and each finger represents a revered person within the religion.



Some men also climbed on this day, although it was officially a family day and so mostly reserved for women.



The shrine building, for refreshment and prayers. The keepers of the shrine reside in a building further up the hill.



The *alams* outside the shrine is kissed and greeted by a Hazaras woman. She recites *Sura Fatiha* here.

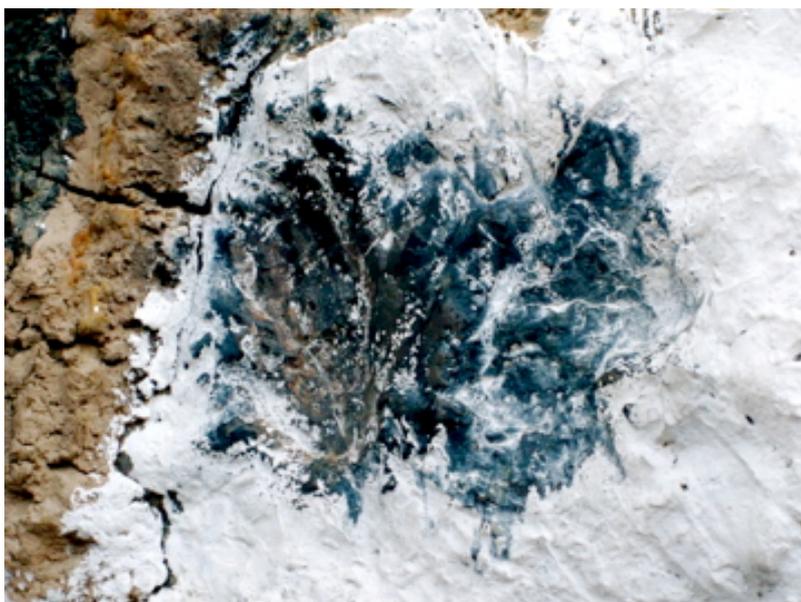


The notice just outside the Ziyarat. The 4 corners say (from top right);” O Allah, O Muhammad pbuh, O Fatima, O Hassan, O Hussain!” Top centre, “Durbar Maula. Oh Ali help. Notice.”

There are 4 points of information on the notice board. They read;

1. Wednesday is mostly a family day so people who are not accompanied by their family should visit on another day as it is inconvenient for women.
2. Unethical acts and controversial topics should be avoided to give respect to the shrine.
3. As one can see there is some construction work going on, visitors are asked to donate money, construction material (cement, iron rods, gravel, sand etc) to help with the efforts. They will gain reward for it.
4. Be polite to the administration people.

We expect all our brothers and sisters to abide by the above mentioned rules. Thanks from Administration of the Durbar.”



The central point of the shrine: the handprint attributed to Ali, painted black to mark it out to visitors. The Hazaras kiss this, touch it and recite *Sura Fatiha* at it. They also rub sweets and cloth against it, making it holy and able to bless.



A marble sign by the prints. It is a series of greetings for Ali. "In the name of God the merciful the compassionate; Peace be upon the commander of the faithful, peace be upon the beloved of God, peace be upon the attributes of God, peace be upon the friend of God, peace be upon the proof of God, peace be upon the Imam for guidance, peace be upon ..."



There is a place to light candles next to the hand-print. Candles are lit to symbolise prayers by those who have travelled to the shrine for specific wishes.



Another mark, which is believed to be a indent from the forehead of Ali. This is treated in a similar way to the handprint; touched, kissed and used to acquire spiritual blessings.



The room beside the shrine (this was taken and provided by Peter Mansfield in the summer of 2007)



The journey downhill; people are usually elated by the experience and the journey down is filled with hope and expectation.

Appendix Four: Photos around Marriabad

Graveyard



The Graveyard, taken from the mountainside. The central white alam marks the martyrs graveyard, discussed in part two.



Close view of the martyrs' graveyard.



The smaller of the two martyrs' graveyards



Women entering and leaving the central martyrs' graveyard.

Ritual Objects, Street scenes and images of Hazara culture



Religious and ritual objects: The hand, prayer beads used for Quranic recitation and an *alam*. The name of God, “Allah” has been painted on the wall.



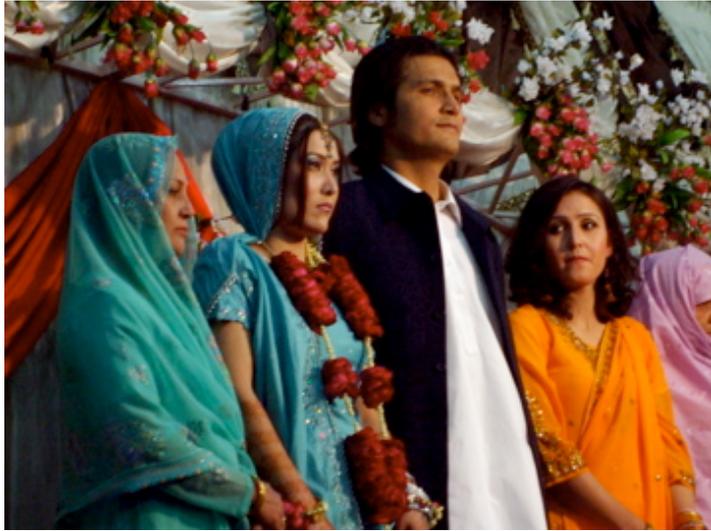
A street in Marriabad.



A Hazara shop and shop-keeper who is preparing a sugar-cane drink.



Hazara wedding: the entry of the bride and groom on the *henna* evening ceremony, which takes place the night before the wedding



A Hazara bridal couple



A Hazara girl wearing traditional Hazara jewellery from Afghanistan



The typical Hazara dish called "Aash" made from minced meat, chickpeas, yoghurt and noodles.

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