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OF THE EARTHQUAKE AND OTHER STORIES:
THE CONTINUITY OF CHANGE IN PAKISTAN-
ADMINISTERED KASHMIR

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**Of the Earthquake and Other Stories: the continuity of change in
Pakistan-administered Kashmir**

Summary

On October 8th 2005 the villages surrounding Chinati bazaar in Bagh district of Pakistani-administered Kashmir (PaK) were hit by an earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale that affected the lives of more than 3.5 million people in PaK and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. In this thesis I attempt to understand, through the stories and narratives of the people of Chinati bazaar, how they lived through, made sense of, and dealt with the earthquake and its aftermath. I use participant observation and conversations to tell the stories of those affected by the earthquake in their own voices as much as possible. The storytellers of the bazaar lived through two types of events: the earthquake itself and the post-earthquake rehabilitation and reconstruction process. The latter brought with it both positive and negative impacts: if, on the one hand, it brought progress and a new hope that life could be ‘Built Back Better’, on the other hand, it brought a different type of suffering – one that led to a loss of honour and dignity, resulted in social upheavals, and led to the exclusion and marginalization of certain groups. In this thesis I focus on both these ‘events’.

Through these stories I build an argument about post-disaster discourses of change. I argue that while the narratives of the storytellers of Chinati bazaar posit the earthquake as a point of rupture in their confabulated stories, from which the collective memory of the bazaar dates its movement towards becoming modern and global, these changes have their origins instead in ‘bigger’ stories of modernisation and globalisation that pre-date the earthquake and that highlight and emphasise more continuous processes of change that have been occurring over a longer period of time. In this thesis I analyse how these two competing discourses of rupture and dramatic change on the one hand, and slow, continuous change on the other, play out in the lives of the storytellers of Chinati Bazaar.

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Glossary of Urdu and Pahari Terms

Adda: bus stand

Apna: belonging to self, own

Ashraf: (pl. of *sharif*) noble, highborn

Azad: free, liberated

Bahu: daughter-in-law

Bara aadmi: big man, influential

Barani: rainfed, unirrigated land

Barat: groom's party

Behen: sister

Bhai: brother

Biraderi: brotherhood, kinship group

Chacha: father's brother

Charpoy: string bed

Chula: stove, hearth

Dhaaba: roadside eatery

Dhara: vote bloc

Ghar: home

Gharana: household

Izzat: honour, respect

Kaam: work

Kaar: work, action

Kaccha: raw, unripe. Used to describe houses made of adobe or mud.

Kanal: unit of land measurement, 1/8 of an acre

Khala: mother's sister

Khandan: extended family

Kissan: farmer

Madrassah: Islamic seminary

Makan: house

Mamu: mother's brother

Maulvi: caretaker of a mosque, who gives the call for prayer (*azaan*) and leads the prayer

Mauza: revenue village

Mazdoori: labour

Mehram: unmarried kin, used as ‘male guardian’

Menhdi: henna, main pre-wedding festivity

Mochi: shoemaker

Mohallah: settlement

Nai: barber

Nasal: breed, progeny

Niendra: list, used as the name for the main gift exchange ritual

Nikahnama: marriage contract

Pakka: cooked, ripe. Used to describe houses made of concrete, bricks and/or stone.

Paraya: belonging to another

Puppo: father’s sister

Purdah: curtain, physical segregation of the sexes

Qayamat: Judgment day

Quom: nation, caste-like status group

Rishtedar: kinsfolk

Saas: mother-in-law

Shôda: ostentatious

Tabbar: immediate family

Walima: reception, marriage banquet

Watta-satta: bride exchange between two families

Zaat: caste

Zalzala: earthquake

Zamindar: landlord, landholder

Chapter One

The Earthquake and Discourses of Change in Pakistan-administered Kashmir: An Introduction

Introduction

It was November 2008 and I was driving carefully up the winding roads of Bagh district in Pakistani-administered Kashmir (PaK), the disputed territory that lies in the northeast of Pakistan and is administered by the centre as a special territory. It had rained that morning and driving my tiny rented Suzuki Mehran up steep wet roads was tricky work. I was heading to Chinati¹ Bazaar, a small collection of buildings that sat atop one of Bagh district's many hills and that was made up of greengrocers, a few general stores, restaurants and snack stands, a cobbler, a few tailors, two barber shops, two private schools and *madrassahs*, and an *adda*, or bus stand. This was my second trip in about a month. I had visited Chinati bazaar along with a few other parts of the district at the beginning of October when I had come here in search of a location for my doctoral research. The small bazaar along with the six villages that surrounded it, and which it served, seemed like the perfect setting for the questions I had in mind. I had spent a few days here talking to people then – some whom I had previously met when I conducted some fieldwork in these villages in the summer of 2006 – and was now heading back for a second, possibly longer, visit.

It was just over three years to the day from the earthquake that had rocked this land on the morning of October the 8th 2005 and had wiped out large parts of it. The earthquake had measured 7.6 on the Richter scale, had taken more than 100,000 lives in the north of Pakistan, injured over 150,000 people, and caused immeasurable material losses in the affected regions in the form of lost homes, businesses, livestock and arable land. The earthquake had mainly affected PaK and Pakistan's northern province, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, but it had also caused damage all the way down in Islamabad, and had shaken me from my sleep in the centre of the country in Lahore. I had first come to PaK, to its Bagh district in particular, about a month after that day as part of a donor-government effort to assess the extent of damage and loss caused by the earthquake, an evaluation that was to form the basis of a compensation programme. I visited the region

¹ Chinati is a pseudonym. To maintain confidentiality, the names of all the informants and villages discussed in this thesis are pseudonyms.

many times over the following year, and the impression I left with each time was that of destruction, of immense loss, and of complete and total change that had been wrought on the people of this beautiful region within a few minutes on one cold October morning. The scenes I left behind after each visit consisted almost entirely of grey rubble and makeshift huts and tents that temporarily housed the residents of the many villages that dotted the green, thickly-wooded hills of Bagh district.

When I had returned here a month ago, three years after the earthquake, the scene that had met my eyes was vastly different. As I drove down into the valley from Rawalakot city, I noticed that the green landscape around me was now dotted with colour – blue, red, emerald green, orange, yellow, purple and silver – the hillsides seemed to have come alive with every hue imaginable. It had taken me a while to realise that these brightly coloured spots were the rooftops of the new houses that had been constructed over the last few years. Where most houses had once had either brown thatched or grey cemented roofs before the earthquake, houses now had multicoloured roofs made of corrugated galvanised iron (CGI) sheets that had been a big part of the post-earthquake reconstruction efforts of both the state and non-state development agencies. Not only were they coloured but most were no longer the simple, gently sloped roofs that had always dotted these hills. Instead, these new roofs were intricately worked and decorated, some were shaped like Chinese pagodas, others were multi-layered, while some even had turrets on top.

I had expected change in the region after the destruction wrought by the earthquake, but perhaps I had not imagined this. I was to find out later that these roofs were largely the result of changed and more stringent earthquake-resistant building laws that the government had instituted as pre-conditions to accessing compensation. As such, they represented a dramatic point of departure from the past. However, I was also to learn that these fancy roofs had also been made possible by older changes, such as the accumulation of wealth by the families of Bagh's many migrants to the Gulf since the mid-1970s. While before the earthquake this accumulation had been expressed inside the house, mostly through a proliferation of electronic goods and other consumer items, the need to rebuild houses after the earthquake had given Bagh's residents the opportunity to demonstrate their wealth and status, accumulated over an extended period of time, on the outside, observable by so many more people than before. In this the new roofs represented not just a point of dramatic departure, but also a more

continuous, less obvious, process of change that had been slowly occurring inside the house, unobserved by many until now.

This leitmotif – of dramatic points of departure caused by the earthquake highlighting and emphasising more continuous processes of change that had been occurring over a longer period of time – was a constant that I was to come across again and again over the next few months. It was obvious even as I arrived in Chinati bazaar and was immediately pulled into the dense web of stories, myths, rumours and narratives that populated the bazaar through the day. Men from the surrounding six villages – that house most of the informants of this study – gather in the bazaar each day not just to exchange ‘things’ but to tell and exchange stories and to interpret the events that change their lives. It is in this bazaar that I will spend the rest of the year, listening to and recording these stories in order to understand how people interpret the catastrophe that hit their lives the morning of October the 8th 2005.

As I drove up the steep, winding tar road into the bazaar, Hamza – my research assistant – and I headed for the top where the *adda* is and parked our car next to the commuter vans that leave for and arrive at regular intervals from Bagh city and the smaller Harighel town that lay en route to the city. From both urban centres passengers could change taxis and buses for other destinations like nearby Arja – the regional passport office for the district – Rawalakot and some major cities in Pakistan. We headed straight to Imtiaz’s shop that laid right in front of the *adda*, and that was a favourite gathering place for passengers waiting for their van to depart. I had met and been befriended by Imtiaz on my previous visit. He was a young shopkeeper from Sarian, one of the surrounding six villages, who had previously worked as a waiter in Lahore but had returned after the earthquake to help his family. His father had been a migrant worker in Kuwait and had built this shop with the money he had saved during that time. When his father passed away soon after the earthquake, Imtiaz decided not to return to Lahore and took over the shop instead. Over the next year we would spend a lot of time in this shop – not only was Imtiaz extremely entertaining and a great companion, but his shop was a good place to meet and have conversations with lots of other people through the day. Imtiaz had set up a bench outside his shop where people could wait for their van, and this bench stayed populated through the day.

Today the bench had space for Hamza and me, and we soon got into a conversation with Imtiaz and his granduncle, also from Sarian, whose three sons were away working in

Saudi Arabia, and who spent his days chatting with Imtiaz at the shop. Within minutes Jafer *saab*,² a Syed³ from Serabad, one of the six villages that lay just below the bazaar, passed by on his motorbike and stopped immediately to greet us. He was the principal of a public secondary school in Khorian, a village just slightly up the hill, and he had been one of my first contacts in the village because he was the brother-in-law of Ali Naqvi, an advocate in Bagh city, whom I had known since the days of the earthquake, my first gatekeeper in this area. Jafer *saab* greeted us and felt the need to introduce me again to Imtiaz's granduncle as a 'professor' from Lahore who was here to write a book about the region and the earthquake. This introduction not only re-established Jafer *saab*'s central role within the ongoing activity but also categorised us as equals before the others, given our common teaching profession.

At that moment, Omar, the local newspaper vendor, appeared at the shop. He had already completed his delivery rounds and stopped by now to check on our conversation. He had a reputation of being a jokester in the bazaar and spent much of his day moving from group to group, interjecting with funny yet incisive one-liners. At this moment his attention was focused on the fact that Imtiaz was spending more time playing with his mobile phone than in conversing with us, and said pointedly, "*we didn't have mobiles before and now look how common they are.*" Omar was from the same middle-order *biraderi* as Imtiaz and his granduncle – they were all Mughals – but he was from a different village, Thial, that lay just north of Chinati. Imtiaz's granduncle picked up on this comment and said to me, "*A lot has changed since the earthquake. We shifted away from tradition; a lot of things that were gunnah [sinful] are now acceptable, like women working in NGOs and travelling alone.*" Omar, now serious, added that before the earthquake only the ones that migrated had "access to *tabdeeli* (change)" but since the earthquake *tabdeeli* had come to the whole region. Jafer *saab* added that the earthquake and the post-earthquake aid had created a "huge shuffling of classes", with people who used to be rich becoming poor and the poor becoming rich. Omar did not agree. According to him what had happened was that many people who had previously appeared to be poor because they lived in *kaccha* (non-cemented) houses, had actually just been "*sitting on their money like snakes*",⁴ but after the

² A suffix added to the end of most names when referring to them to show respect. It is formally spelled as *sahib* in Urdu, but is pronounced as *saab* in most local dialects.

³ The uppermost *biraderi*/caste in the Pakistani Muslim social stratification system.

⁴ This is related to a local myth, where the king cobra sits on a pot of gold.

earthquake they decided to make better *pakka* (cemented) houses with *shôda* (ostentatious) roofs. Imtiaz, raising his head for only a moment from his mobile, concurred by saying that there was nothing wrong with this; people wanted to become more developed, as “*we are now becoming modern.*”

There, in Jafer *saab* and Omar’s disagreement, was my leitmotif – where Jafer *saab* saw a point of rupture, of a dramatic departure from the past caused by the earthquake, Omar saw a more continuous process of change that had only been made more visible by the earthquake. And there, in Imtiaz’s statement, lay the second leitmotif that I was to come across regularly over the next year – the earthquake as a point of rupture from which the collective memory of the bazaar dated its movement towards modernity. Through the web of stories, myths, narratives, and at times even rumours that are woven in this bazaar, I saw the change that the earthquake had brought about. But within these stories I also saw other stories of another type of more continuous change that was connected to the ‘bigger stories’ of modernisation and globalisation.

Theoretical Framework

In this section I explain the key concepts that guide my thesis. I start by situating the debate in disaster studies on change or continuity and offering a third view: that of continuity of change. I then look at ways we can frame people’s experiences through their narratives and storytelling, using particularly Veena Das’ (1995) work on ‘critical events’. Finally, these narratives were not only about the earthquake, but also about bigger stories of modernisation and globalisation. It is worth noting that this region has a long history of migration:⁵ before independence in 1947 it was an important recruiting ground for the Indian army, a breeding place for soldiers who fought in most fronts during World War II; from post-independence onwards the migration to urban Pakistan increased; and since the mid-1970s large numbers of men have been migrating to the Gulf. For this reason, I engage with the current literature on migration, modernisation and globalisation in the final part of this section.

⁵ For further details, see Chapter Two.

Disasters, Change and Continuity

Despite a now sizeable literature on disasters and social change, the evidence of a relationship between them still remains weak (Hoffman, 1999; Stallings, 2006; Henry, 2011). In the late 1970s Quarantelli and Dynes (1977: 34) noted that many researchers started adopting the principle of continuity, where “*pre-disaster behaviour is probably the best indicator of trans- and post- disaster behaviour*”. While there was “*some evidence that disasters may, in some rare cases, contribute to change*” (Nigg and Tierney, 1993: 2), many authors were of the opinion that, more than creating changes, disasters tended to accelerate or intensify pre-existing changes that were already underway. As several studies had shown, pre-disaster conditions influenced post-disaster recovery, seen in people’s resilience and adaptive capacities (Bates and Peacock, 1987; Oliver-Smith, 1996; Morrow and Peacock, 1997, in Henry: 2011; Hoffman and Oliver-Smith, 1999). The aftermath of disasters is an arena for a struggle over redistribution of aid and power, often used by powerful groups to reinforce their power. As Hoffman (1999: 311) clearly states, “*in response to challenges and contestation, disasters also often promote cultural preservation and resistance to change*”, what Hoffman and Oliver-Smith (1999: 10) call ‘sociocultural persistence’. Overall, while acknowledging that there were some occasions where disasters generated social changes and groups could experience beneficial consequences from them, many researchers posited that “*disasters contribute both to stability and to change, just as they generate both consensus and conflict*” (Quarantelli and Dynes, 1977: 36).

On the other side of the spectrum there is the prospect of disasters creating change: “*not only are there significant alterations in society and culture after Atlas shrugs, but even after Atlas merely shudders*” (Hoffman, 1999: 305). The propensity of disasters to affect societies’ ability to provide for the needs of their members paves the way for new arrangements to be formulated for those societies to continue to function (Oliver-Smith, 1996). In Hoffman’s and Oliver-Smith’s (1999: 10) review of anthropological work on disasters they found clear evidence of disasters affecting the social, economic, cultural, religious spheres of people’s lives and they posit that “*if not actual change, disasters certainly bring about the potential for change.*”

There is a third way of looking at the interaction between disasters, continuity, and change, to which I subscribe, that rather than getting stuck on a dualism of continuity *or* change, takes a different view and posits that disasters allow for a continuity *of* change.

For that though, one must first acknowledge that societies are not static, but constantly changing. Graeber (2001) states that this Heraclitan philosophy emphasising flux and change over stability could be seen in Bashkar's critical realism. Bashkar (1998: 35) maintained that society was both "*the ever-present condition (material cause) and the continually reproduced outcome of human agency.*" According to him,

"Society provides necessary conditions for intentional human action, and intentional action is a necessary condition for it. Society is only present in human action, but human action always expresses and utilises some or other social form. Neither can, however, be identified with, reduced to, explained in terms of, or reconstructed from the other." (Bashkar, 1998: 37)

He develops a 'Transformational Model of Social Activity' in which the emphasis on material continuity could sustain "*a genuine concept of change, and hence of history*" (Bashkar, 1998: 37). This concept of history is a Marxian one, in which "*history is nothing but the succession of the separate generations, each of which exploits the materials, the capital funds, the productive forces handed down to it by all preceding generations, and thus, one the one hand, continues the traditional activity in completely changed circumstances and, on the other, modifies the old circumstances with a completely changed activity*" (Marx and Engels, 1965, in: Bashkar, 1998: 73ft). Quarantelli (2005: 353) notes that of late several scholars saw disasters as "*evolutionary manifestations of ever changing social systems.*" As I mentioned previously, disasters and their aftermath are often arenas for contestation within societies and as such they are "*great motivators of social action, and social action motivates change*" (Hoffman, 1999: 311). Recent anthropological research has confirmed the role of disasters in accelerating the processes of change that were already underway before a disaster (Oliver-Smith, 1996; Hoffman, 1999).

There are other reasons for the continuity of this debate on disasters' impact on change that need to be addressed. Since Prince's (1920, in: Bates and Peacock, 1987) hypothesis that major catastrophes always create social change, in what was the first systematic study of disasters, research has both proved and refuted his stance. Firstly, while there are similarities in people's experiences with disasters, there are several factors that differentiate them and need to be taken into account, including even the definition of disaster. Secondly, there are disciplinary differences within social scientists, not just methodological but also on what is the subject of study. Finally, there

is a timing issue, i.e., how far researchers go in the timeframe of the disaster and the affected populations, both historically (past) and within relief (immediate future), reconstruction and rehabilitation stages (future). I will further elaborate on these reasons in the following paragraphs.

As Hoffman and Oliver-Smith (1999: 7-8) notice, there are some similarities in people's experiences with reaction to and recovery from a disaster regardless of where it took place and of which kind of hazard: there are needs for shelter and sustenance; disaster victims tend to merge together into an 'immediate unit' which later on fragments; they interact with surrounding communities, aid agencies and governing forces; they search for meaning and explanation, bringing forth matters of religion and mortality; they express grief and mourning; relationships and allegiances change; and questions of resource sharing and inequality appear together with problems of self-interest versus community welfare. That said even the impact of a similar hazards, e.g. earthquakes of the same magnitude, can have different social effects, as often hazards are "*not the most important elements in the disasters that occurred*" (Quarantelli, 2005: 343). The reason for conflicting results often lies in an inconsistency surrounding the usage of the term 'disaster' and a lack of specificity of the conditions in which social change can happen (Bates and Peacock, 1987). Following their research on the 1976 Guatemalan earthquake, Bates and Peacock (1987: 327) stated that "*social change can reasonably be expected to result from disasters*", depending on "*the disaster's magnitude, the nature and quantity of external aid, and the duration of the restoration process.*" Also intertwined with the magnitude of the disaster are the extent of the damage and the size of the population affected (Hoffman, 1999). Further factors play a role, including the sociocultural complexity and historical background of the community affected, and the extent of change one is looking for⁶ - major changes or small shifts, what Hoffman (1999: 308) calls "*deep structure versus surface structure.*"

Within the social sciences the study of disasters has been largely dominated by sociologists who until the turn of the century posited that disasters cause little social change, although of late many started to consider them catalysts for social change. Somehow contradicting prior sociological thought anthropologists studying disasters approached human existence from a evolutionary point of view, spearheaded by Oliver-

⁶ We also often overlook the positive aspects of disasters as Quarantelli (2005: 352) stated "*in many cases, we do not find other than negative consequences because that is all we seek.*"

Smith's usage of a political ecology approach, adding to it a level of historicity. More recently, the discussion has moved towards the relation of causality between pre-existing socio-economic, political and institutional practices and disasters (Pelling, 2003; Bankoff *et al*, 2004; Tierney, 2007), stemming from the work on risk, vulnerabilities and resilience by geographers such as Blaikie *et al* (1994). A key thought behind this perceived causality is the fact that social change often appears as both the agent of disaster as well as a solution to mitigate vulnerability, with the latter being "*determined by social systems and power, not by natural forces*" (Wisner *et al*, 2004: 7). By bringing 'vulnerability' into the disaster equation⁷ "*investigators began considerable assay into the long-term processes that lead to the imperilment of certain societies or segments of society*" (Hoffman, 1999: 307). Today it is largely accepted that disasters are primarily the consequence of human action, that they are 'social occasions' (Quarantelli, 2005: 343).

Finally, the timing of the research also has an impact on whether we see change or not, and if we do how much. A quarter of a century ago Bates and Peacock (1987) had already warned us that we needed to differentiate between temporary alterations in people's behaviour caused by the disaster and its aftermath and more permanent ones post reconstruction. In the early days post-disaster changes seem major but over time they seem to lessen. As a result, victims and first-tier relief workers observe major changes as compared to more distant researchers, agents and non-affected citizens who often assume that little or no change has happened (Hoffman, 1999). Particularly within anthropology, Oliver-Smith (1996; and Hoffman, 2002) has been a proponent of disasters as potential factors in socio-economic and cultural change, especially during the reconstruction phase, as it is during this stage that much social and economic change occurs, with a convergence of (often foreign) people and goods which ultimately may even be "*as great a source of stress and change as the disaster agent and destruction themselves*" (Oliver-Smith, 1996: 313). In the case of large-scale disasters this reconstruction can last almost indefinitely, eventually linking disaster recovery to a larger 'development' project (Oliver-Smith, 1996; Quarantelli, 2005; Simpson, 2007).

The first time I visited this region, a month after the earthquake, all I saw was destruction. Ten months later, when conducting a field survey on the impact of the

⁷ Blaikie *et al* (1994) literally came up with an equation to evaluate disaster risk, whereby $Risk = Hazard + Vulnerability$, later on revised to include resilience (Wisner *et al*, 2004) and therefore $Risk = (Hazard \times$

earthquake on informal social protection mechanisms, I saw limited change. Three years after the earthquake, when I started my DPhil fieldwork, I saw continuity while most of my informants saw change. Six years later, while going through my fieldnotes and trying to make sense of the ‘bigger story’ I saw a continuity of change. After a disaster people recover and reconstruct, and while doing so they try to both recount and reinvent their cultural system (Hoffman and Oliver-Smith, 1999). As Oliver-Smith (1979: 96) says, “*a disaster is a historical event - and the aftermath of disaster is process coming to grips with history.*” For people in the villages surrounding Chinati bazaar the October 2005 earthquake was an historical event, a critical event. But it was also an event through which other pre-existing events – part of the social, economic and cultural continuous change – were recounted and reinvented trying to form a whole. To examine how people’s experiences of such critical events are framed through narrative and storytelling I need to engage with the existing literature, particularly Das’ (1995) work, which I will do in the following section.

Stories of the Earthquake: the narratives of critical events

This research is based on stories of change that I was told or witnessed being told to others in the bazaar. Many of the stories were about the earthquake but many others were about other events, sometimes interconnected with stories of the earthquake. At times it seemed that some stories of the earthquake were in fact stories of other events. I contend that in a way, many stories of the earthquake were “*particular stories which we might be able to use to connect to other bigger stories*”, like Osella and Osella (2006: 569) did while analysing how members of a ‘backward’ community in South India represented and made sense of their association with ‘modernity’ in the process of identity construction. White (2000: 5) in her work on vampire stories in Africa argues that the stories she was told with all their inaccuracies revealed the way Africans described colonial power and it was precisely these inaccuracies that gave us “*a way to see the world the way storytellers did, as a world of vulnerability and unreasonable relationships.*” Through narratives, myth-making and stories of change caused by the earthquake people in the bazaar described other changes. To understand how people in bazaar made use of these stories and how they connect to the ‘bigger stories’, I make

use of Veena Das' (1995) seminal work *Critical Events*, as I infer that through these conversations, stories and narratives people in the bazaar recalled and retold not just the earthquake, but other critical events. Das (1995: 5) focuses on certain critical events of contemporary India to analyse various transformations which propelled people's lives into "*new and unpredicted terrains*." These critical events were recalled and retold not only by participants,⁸ but also by others – including the 'community', the state, and academia. After these events new modes of action came into being, redefining traditional categories as well as enabling a variety of political actors to acquire new forms.

Jackson (2006: 33) asks what would happen to our capacity to tell stories when our lives were torn apart, for "*while the need for stories is linked to the human need to be a part of some kindred community, this need is most deeply felt when the bonds of such belonging are violently sundered*." In her analysis, Das builds upon Loizos' (1991, in: Das, 1995: 10) notion of 'collective memories' - which nation states 'create, preserve, and recycle' - by adding that such ideas are not only institutionalised by nation states, but at times also by communities which "*in the process of their emergence as political actors, try to control and fix memory in much the same manner*." In trying to claim rights over its culture a community might try to ascertain "*the right to institute memory in the form of the community's history and the right to live by laws that regulate the personal life of its members*" (Das, 1995: 13). I have found, throughout my conversations in the bazaars, similarities to her conclusion that, "*as political actors, communities redefine themselves and are defined by others not by face-to-face relations but by (a) their right to define a collective past, a definition which homogenises the different kinds of memories preserved in different visions of the community;*⁹ *(b) the right to regulate the body and sexuality by the codification of custom;*¹⁰ *and (c) the consubstantiality between acts of violence and acts of moral solidarity*"¹¹ (Das, 1995: 15). While doing so communities colonise the life-world of the individual just as the state colonises the life-world of communities.

There is another important aspect of her work that I, try as I might, unfortunately could not cover which rendered this thesis incomplete. As it is obvious throughout this thesis

⁸ Many of whom Das calls 'victims'.

⁹ See Chapter Four's narratives of a hierarchical past versus an egalitarian present, and Chapter Seven's myth of self-sufficiency.

¹⁰ See Chapter Six on women's mobility.

the voices, stories, and narratives are mostly men's, as the main site of my fieldwork was the bazaar, a male-dominated public sphere. Arendt (1958, in: Jackson, 2006: 18) argues that storytelling is a "*strategy for transforming private into public meanings.*" Das' (1995) work shows that the concept of community hides an asymmetrical gendered worldview that divides the private and the public spheres, excluding women from the latter and therefore making the male voice the voice of the community. This is a reason why, throughout this thesis, we must not forget Jackson's (2006: 11) assertion that "*for every story that sees the light of day, untold others remain in the shadows, censored or suppressed.*"

Although incomplete, I still suggest that we take a look at people's narratives for we might find pieces of the 'bigger stories' of continuous change that were recounted and reinvented at the bazaar. Bruner (1991: 4) says that "*we organise our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative – stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on.*" Narratives are accounts of particular events that occurred over time, vehicles rather than destinations, about people acting in a setting (Bruner, 1991). Mattingly (1998, in: Osella and Osella, 2006: 573) argues that sometimes life is actually like a story, where people live the story and make it move on, "*trying to shape their story into a satisfying and positive one*" turning events into 'emplotted dramas.' And we do not do this alone; we do it with others. Jackson (2006: 16) considers stories "*a kind of theatre where we collaborate in reinventing ourselves and authorising notions, both individual and collective, of who we are.*" We are both 'who' and 'what', actively participating in the making and unmaking of our world as well as suffering and being subjected to actions by others and circumstances that lie outside our control (Arendt, 1958, in: Jackson, 2006: 12). Like Mohammed Ahmed/Zahra's story¹² in Ben Jelloun's *The Sand Child* (1985) Arendt (1958, in Jackson, 2006: 12) contends that the person who initiated and suffered the events recounted never remains the sole author of his/her own life story, as the story comes into being within an "*already existing web of human relationships.*" By constructing and sharing stories we are "*affirming collective ideas in the face of disparate experiences*" (Jackson, 2006: 18).

¹¹ See Chapter Three on the earthquake and assistance.

¹² *The Sand Child* is the story of Zahra, whose father, frustrated by not being able to have sons, decides to raise her as a boy, Mohammed Ahmed. The story is initially told at the bazaar by a wandering storyteller who claims to have access to Zahra's diary. When the storyteller disappears, the listeners continue to meet and share their versions of how they think the story ends.

We make sense of our lived experiences by trying to craft them into narrative forms (Osella and Osella, 2006), using stories to understand our social world (Carrithers, 1995). Stories at times are counterfactual because they help us believe that “*the world is within our grasp*” (Jackson, 2006: 17). This does not mean that we deliberately tell false stories – as White (2000: 30) reminds us “*true and false are historical and cultural constructions*” – we tell stories that convey ideas and points. In her case (White, 2000: 43), vampire stories revealed a way of talking about “*the world of power and uncertainty which Africans have lived in this century*” similar, to a certain extent, to Das’ (1995) stories which revealed how critical events shaped and transformed Indian contemporary society. When we are reconstituting events in a story we are actively reworking them (Jackson, 2006). Bruner (1991) argues that there is always some measure of agency present in narrative, which Jackson (2006) says is a vital human strategy in the face of disempowering circumstances. What these authors are saying is that “*narrative is action and that action proceeds via narrative*” (Osella and Osella, 2006: 582). These narratives though, as I mentioned above, are not produced by individuals alone but while interacting with others; they are ‘confabulated’ and ‘confabricated’ (Carrithers: 1995: 275). The stories that I heard at the bazaar were confabulations and confabrications of social life in the region. They were stories of and about the earthquake, woven together into a *lihaaf* (quilt cover), inside which was a *razai* (quilt) of other, bigger stories of and about modernisation and globalisation that covered their lives.

The Bigger Stories: migration, modernisation and globalisation

These bigger stories were about modernisation and globalisation. Or, to be precise, they were about ‘myths’ surrounding local people’s encounters with modernisation and globalisation projects. Ferguson (1999: 13) uses the term ‘myth’ to describe modernisation in two senses: myth as a belief based in an inaccurate account of events, which he says the modernisation theory always was; and myth as “*a cosmological blueprint that lays down fundamental categories and meanings for the organisation and interpretation of experience*”, which persists and continues to influence people’s experiences and interpretations of their lives. Several other

authors¹³ (Escobar, 1995; Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997) have shown how the narrative of modernisation, which with time morphed into ‘development’, was an illusion, a myth of the first kind. Flawed as they were, modernisation and development narratives had been accepted (at times with religious fervour) as ‘truths’ until the last decade not only by academics and policy-makers, but by the general public as well. While most academics and some policy-makers now refute these narratives, as Osella and Osella (2006: 584) demonstrate “*versions of the global narrative of modernisation [still] endure at the popular level.*” Likewise, stories of change at the bazaar were punctuated by the myths of modernisation (of Ferguson’s second kind), with expressions such as ‘being modern’ and ‘becoming modern’ used to explain – and even justify – change. While hearing these stories I noticed that though some narrators talked about ‘becoming modern’ submissively – as an unavoidable yet unwanted destiny – others spoke of it teleologically. Although a generational gap contributed to these ways of talking about modernisation, there was another factor of differentiation, namely that those who directly profited from the expansion of global capitalism had a “*clear attachment to values of modernity*” (Osella and Osella, 2006: 578).

In a region so desperately ignored by the state, historically always located at the periphery (Ballard, 2004), migration was seen as the key to engage with this modernisation project. The larger project of ‘becoming modern’, as I will show throughout this thesis, entailed claims of living in a modern (egalitarian and educated) society, having a modern (nuclear) family, and engaged in modern (tertiary) occupations. This larger mythical modernisation project was punctuated by a series of other myths, seen as key ingredients of the global recipe: the myth of equality, seen in claims about the decreasing importance of *biraderi* in networks and social arrangements of mutual support (Chapter Four); the myth of the end of the extended family, speared by the post-earthquake housing reconstruction (Chapter Five); the myth of the empowered women, seen in male discourses about the changing position of women in society (Chapter Six); the myth of the modern mobile individual, explained through the perceived increase of women’s physical mobility (Chapter Six) and men’s detachment from the land and decreasing importance of agriculture (Chapter Seven). This project though, was not to be done

¹³ Often labeled as ‘post-development thinkers’.

without suffering – and we can see painful reminders of this suffering in their mythical construction of loss: the loss of tradition (of foods, occupations, family values), of (agricultural) self-sufficiency, and ultimately – due to the earthquake – of lives. Cutting across these myths was the myth of the earthquake as the point of departure from the past towards a modern present. The earthquake, as I explain in Chapter Three, was not seen as a sole key event but two – it had a dual feature, at times representing itself as the ‘earthquake-event’ while other times becoming a metaphor for the (post-earthquake) ‘assistance-event’.

While human history is filled with accounts of migration and change worldwide (Wolf, 1982) until the 1960s anthropologists, like other social scientists, tended to see migration through the lenses of modernisation theory (Ferguson, 1999; Gardner, 2012). Often portrayed as a dualistic divide between urban-modern and rural-traditional, these ‘myths’ dominated discussions of migration for many decades, reflecting dominant ideas of progress, modernisation and development (Lewis, 2005; Gardner, 2012). The developmentalist optimism of the 1950s and 1960s was counteracted by a more negative view in the 1970s and 1980s, when several authors brought forth the fact that in many instances migration undermined local economies: by ‘taking away’ their most valuable labour force; increasing their dependence on core regions (for accessing labour and commodities); and creating a culture of migration, where younger generations felt they only had a future if they became migrants (de Haas, 2010). Particularly important was a piece by Lipton (1980), in which he finds a negative impact of rural to urban migration on rural productivity and income distribution. In this article he states that often migrants are the main agricultural innovators (who have now left the region) and that remittances are highly fungible, inasmuch as they are mostly used to pay off debts, for everyday consumption, and to finance other family members’ migration, rather than used to invest – in other words, they are used more for capital transfer than capital creation. Many of these findings reverberate the situation existent in PaK, where there is a missing ingredient in the migration-development formula: that of the state. De Haas (2010) bring forth the crucial role the state has in shaping favourable conditions for development to occur – migration and remittances can only contribute for local development if states implement social and economic reforms, i.e., development is a prerequisite for migrant investment rather than a consequence of migration (de Haas, 2010).

The 1990s and 2000s saw the appearance of a more nuanced optimistic view where migration is seen as part of a larger livelihood strategy to spread income risks and improve social and economic status, overcoming developmental constraints in the place of origin (de Haas, 2010). Gardner (2012: 7) argues that anthropologists have rejected modernisation theory and points out to recent ethnographies of migration which show *“complex relationships among underlying economic structures and ideologies, which link movement to urban or industrial centres with modernity and upwards social mobility”*, yet she warns us that much of what is written about migration is still haunted by its assumptions. I believe that this haunting stems, to a certain extent, from a complex relationship between anthropology and development, where anthropologists have taken and still take three intermingling positions in relation to development: that of ‘antagonistic observers’, ‘reluctant participants’, and ‘engaged activists’ (Lewis, 2005). De Haas (2010: 240) reminds us that we need to contextualise migration, as *“the heterogeneity of real-life migration-development interactions is too high to fit them into deterministic theoretical schemes predicting the development outcome of migration.”* At the same time that ‘post-development’ came into being, social scientists started to focus on the *“movement of people between places and the social processes which bind them together”*, rather than studying migrant communities as fixed locations (Gardner, 2012: 11). It was the literary birth of the ‘transnational migrant’ (Levitt, 2001; Vertovec, 2009; Gardner, 2012). Of late, migration is also being analysed through a new lens, that of globalisation. Opposite to transnationalism, which *“calls attention to the cultural and political projects of nation-states”*, globalisation processes are seen as more abstract, less institutionalised and less intentional, situated outside the sphere of nations (Kearney, 1995: 548). De Haas (2010) states that the shifts in the migration and development discourse of the past 50-odd years are part of more general paradigm shifts in social and development theory, and as such the latest discourse – on migration and globalisation – cannot be separated from a larger dominant neoliberal discourse.

Neoliberalism is often used to refer to the recent capitalist globalisation, where individuals are free to participate in markets and markets are free to act unimpeded by the state (Kingfisher and Maskovsky, 2008). But as several authors note (Kingfisher and Maskovsky, 2008; Peck and Tickell, 2002), neoliberalism is not an end-state, a thing that acts in the world, but a process. Yet, many representations of neoliberalism and globalisation today still portray them as naturalised, external forces, linked to tendencies

towards homogenisation, convergence and levelling out a worldwide playing field, with unambiguous causal efficacy (Peck and Tickell, 2002). Central in this discourse is the role that ‘community’ plays – or, as some authors argue (Elyachar, 2003; Peck and Tickell, 2002), has been co-opted and appropriated to play – part of an entrepreneurial model where it replaces the state in the responsibility for welfare and distribution (Kingfisher and Maskovsky, 2008) and where migration and remittances exemplify the principle of self-help (de Haas, 2010). This situation is more extreme in many parts of South Asia, where many elements of neoliberalism existed before the event of neoliberalism itself. Chatterjee (2004, in: Cross, 2010: 367) claims that most Indians do not enjoy the inalienable rights, entitlements and status associated with citizenship as they are “*first and foremost political subjects, who must struggle to achieve recognition as citizens by making claims on government*”, which leads Cross (2010: 370) to say that “*in India the de jure neoliberal exception is the de facto political and economic norm.*” Still, there is somehow a legacy of a welfarist Neruvian state in India, which in Pakistan, apart from a brief moment in history during Bhutto’s regime, and in peripheral areas like PaK never existed – many of the broad economic changes and ideological and political practices of governance that characterise neoliberalism were already present.

Accordingly, although discussions of globalisation might appear recent, Tsing (2000) argues that they are not and Ferguson (1999: 256) warns us that this ‘brave neoliberal future’ “*bears an unsettling resemblance to the past.*” In her seminal work on *The Global Situation*, Tsing (2000: 330) examines the allure of social science globalisms, by which she means the “*endorsements of the importance of the global.*” She argues that the multireferentiality of globalism – “*part corporate hype and capitalist regulatory agenda, part cultural excitement, part social commentary and protest*” – makes us assume that this ‘global’ is new (Tsing, 2000: 332). But as seductive as global newness can be it creates distorted stereotypes of the past. Rather than looking for “*world-wrapping evolutionary stages, logics, and epistemes*”, she asks us instead to find and describe what she calls ‘projects’, “*relatively coherent bundles of ideas and practices as realised in particular times and places*” (Tsing, 2000: 347), just like Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2008: 118) ask us to “*focus instead on concrete projects that account for specific peoples, institutions, and places.*” Like many anthropologists today are able to

critically distance themselves from modernisation, we also need this critical distance while studying globalisation (Tsing, 2000: 351).

In the new globalisms interconnection – created through circulation – is everything (Tsing, 2000: 336). Tsing (2000: 336) equates ‘circulation’ to the notions of capitalist penetration espoused in dependency theory and some kinds of world-systems theory but with a glossy make-over, whereby policies of domination and discrimination are justified by *“the equalities and opportunities of circulation and exchange.”* By focusing on circulation we see the movement of people, things, ideas, and institutions, glossing over *“how this movement depends on defining tracks and grounds or scales and units of agency”* (Tsing, 2000: 337), for *“what we have come to call globalisation is not simply a process that links together the world but also one that differentiates it”* (Ferguson, 1999: 243). For instance, migrant ‘flows’ are movements *“stimulated through [and contingent upon] political and economic channels”* (Tsing, 2000: 338), and not free for all: *“movement is controlled by states and global finance”* (Gardner, 2012: 14). Similar to Osella and Osella (2008: 325) I also find Tsing’s work useful to see the production of narratives on ‘being modern’ at the bazaar not as *“the product of a contradiction or a break or even an interaction between a ‘global force’ acting on a ‘local place’.”*

Argument – The Continuity of Change

The 1755 earthquake and tsunami that hit Lisbon on All Saint’s Day was an important event discussed throughout Enlightened Europe. It made people like Voltaire, Kant and Rousseau question matters of the sublime, theodicy, and man’s relation with nature. It contributed to the beginning of modern seismology and earthquake engineering. A quarter of a millennium later the ‘collective memory’ of that earthquake is that it made Lisbon a ‘modern capital’ – just like the rest of Europe – with its crisscrossed downtown, commercial buildings, wide avenues and its Pombalin¹⁴ architecture. When we travel through Bagh district today, what we see are the new earthquake-resistant houses with their colourful roofs, the new hospitals and schools, the widened tarred roads, and the ever-growing bazaars. In both cases what we see of the earthquakes’

¹⁴ Named after the Marquis of Pombal, the prime minister of the kingdom in charge of the reconstruction.

aftermath are indications of belonging to a modern, global project - of connection and circulation, of networks and exchange.

After a disaster, such as the 2005 earthquake in PaK, people recover and reconstruct and, while doing so, they recount and reinvent their cultural system (Hoffman and Oliver-Smith, 1999). In the case of PaK, people's stories and narratives of the earthquake appeared to use the rupture of the earthquake to break away from the past and reinvent the future. However, a closer look at their discourses often revealed that in their narratives the past was often reinvented. This reinvention was confabulated and confabricated into a 'collective memory' in order to reclassify people of PaK as modern and global, as well as 'different' – different from 'the other Kashmir', different from Pakistan. That is not to deny that changes occurred – the region now has new earthquake-resistant building codes, better means of telecommunication, an increased proportion of foreign labour force, and other aspects of progress and 'modernity'. However, one of the toughest dilemmas that I had to face as an anthropologist was to navigate between stories and measurable change: were these stories about people's perceptions or real change? What could I see in their stories, narratives, myths, discourses: change or continuity? At first glance what was immediately visible was change brought by the earthquake, but once we deconstruct their narratives about this change, what we start to see are more complex, more continuous changes inside that have been going on for a longer period of time – about migration, modernisation and globalisation.

While the study of populations affected by a disaster needs to be historically grounded, in order to get a better picture of the impact of the disaster on the communities I suggest that we should go a step further and take a Heraclitan view of change – of continuity of change. In this region, changes occurred *because* of the earthquake but many other changes had happened before the earthquake, and these became entangled with the post-earthquake changes in their stories. At times it seemed almost as though the earthquake was being used as a 'authentication stamp' for previous changes that had been occurring over a period of time preceding the disaster. By seeing the lives of individuals, as well as of communities, in flux, we get a better picture of how communities reinvent themselves following a disaster. The earthquake as a hazard brought a rupture, a halt into this continuous change allowing for a moment of reflection. Through stories of change people at the bazaar tried to make sense of events, tried to deal with trauma, and

tried to make political arguments. Like some of the communities studied by Das' (1995), they tried to redefine – and reclassify – themselves through their right to define a collective past, one of a hierarchical and self-sufficient society, but also through their right to define a collective future where – through modernisation and globalisation – their society was becoming equal and transnational. They also tried to redefine themselves through “*the right to regulate the body and sexuality by the codification of custom*”, by bringing forth the high incidence of love marriages as accepted custom, as well as by trying to regulate women's mobility. While doing so they colonised the life-world of the individual. Nowhere is this more visible than in the interspersed female silences within the ‘bigger stories’, for the bazaar is a public space and as such a male-dominated one.

By positioning ourselves to see social and cultural life as a continuity of change we can understand how people at the bazaar authenticated previous changes through their stories of the earthquake. For people in the bazaar the earthquake was a critical event, but also one through which other critical events were constantly relived, recounted, and reinvented. By positioning ourselves to see social and cultural life in terms of a continuity of change we can also discern that the confabulated narratives on ‘being modern’ at the bazaar were not a product of contradictions or ruptures caused by global forces acting on local places. Instead, the bazaar was a place that was both ‘global’ and ‘local’. For instance, the housing reconstruction that took place could have never happened if not for their transnational links to global capitalism. The amount of aid given by Pakistan's ‘strategic allies’ would have been much smaller if not for a nearby ‘war on terror’. The influx of international assistance though, might have been better coordinated, targeted, and distributed if not for this region's historical seclusion and peripheral status.

My main argument in this thesis, therefore, is summarised by the two leitmotifs present in the story with which I started. The earthquake is a point of rupture in the confabulated stories of my informants, from which the collective memory of the bazaar dates its movement towards becoming modern and global. At the same time, the events surrounding the earthquake also serve to highlight and emphasise more continuous processes of change that have been occurring over a longer period of time. Both leitmotifs are constants that I came across over and over in the stories told at the bazaar. They were also visible in the dynamics of social hierarchy, in the houses they built, in

intra-family relations, in the mobility of women, and in their livelihood strategies. I discuss each of these areas of change separately in the chapters of this thesis to show how the two competing dynamics of rupture and modernisation on the one hand and slow, continuous change on the other play out in the lives of the storytellers of Chinati Bazaar.

Though not the main focus of my analysis, throughout this thesis I also pay special attention to elements of exclusion and inclusion to show variations in people's experience of the earthquake and its aftermath, and to show that not everyone benefits equally from the project of 'modernity'. In the study of a disaster it is not uncommon for the voices of the excluded not to be heard. Tsing (2000) alerts us to the fact that at times what we do not see – and often do not hear – are the 'policies of domination and discrimination' that control the connection, circulation and exchange. In the Portuguese 'collective memory' we do not hear how important colonisation was to this project; in the bazaars of Bagh district the voices of those who do not get access to (Gulf) migration are at times silenced from the bigger 'collective memory'. In this thesis, I remain aware of the fact that for every element of inclusion there is an element of exclusion. As Ferguson (1999: 238) reminds us "*disconnection, like connection, implies a relation and not the absence of a relation.*" As such the continuous creation and recreation of relationships before and after the earthquake is an important part of my analysis. The stories told at the bazaar show that migrant flows are contingent upon and stimulated through political and economic channels, as several authors argue (Tsing, 2000; Gardner, 2012). Likewise, through these stories we can also see how post-disaster assistance flows were also stimulated through and contingent upon these same channels. This was evident in the way caste, kin, and family relationships were continuously important arenas of struggle to access different forms of capital before and after the earthquake. As we will see in the stories told at the bazaar this struggle was not new, but one to which the earthquake gave new significance.

Methodology

Despite the usefulness of questionnaires and surveys, "*the actual process by which people and communities respond to risk, threat, vulnerability, impact, and recovery are best understood through on-site ethnographic research*" (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman,

2002: 12). After surveying the region since the onset of the earthquake and the subsequent relief efforts, I felt that surveys and questionnaires only gave me a limited view of the impact of these events on people's lives in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.¹⁵ That was one of the main reasons why I felt that my research following the events of October 2005 would be better handled through an anthropological perspective, and therefore I enrolled for a DPhil in Social Anthropology. Due to the dearth of research on PaK, both on the region and its people, I felt that I could contribute to start filling this knowledge gap by conducting ethnographic research on the region. At the same time, I felt that a nomothetic enquiry would contribute even more than an idiographic one. According to Radcliffe-Brown (in: Ingold, 2008: 70) "*an idiographic inquiry aims to document the particular facts of past and present lives, whereas the aim of nomothetic inquiry is to arrive at general propositions or theoretical statements.*" This was my second reason, as "*anthropology is an inquiry into the conditions and possibilities of human life in the world; it is not (...) the study of how to write ethnography, or of the reflexive problematics of the shift from observation to description*" (Ingold, 2008: 89).

Anthropology is also "*a practice of observation grounded in participatory dialogue*" (Ingold, 2008: 87), for "*any study of human beings must also be a study with them*" (Ingold, 2008: 83). As such, the defining feature of my research was participant observation and within it I made use of unstructured interviews, direct observation, life stories, and, as much as I could, participating in 'local life'. In Bagh district and throughout most Pakistan-administered Kashmir (PaK) life, particularly public life, is centred around the bazaar. In this district, characterised by high numbers of migrants to the Gulf, many of the rural bazaars are places that are both 'global' and 'local'. Many shopkeepers are returned Gulf migrants who upon return often decide to invest their savings in opening a shop. Many other shopkeepers have never migrated before, or migrated 'only' to Pakistan, but even they at times benefit from the assistance of kin and relatives in the Gulf in opening up a shop. The presence of such an eclectic number of people with different worldviews – for these bazaars are a world of men who have been everywhere, places where people, things, and ideas pass through – gives to these

¹⁵ This did not mean that throughout my fieldwork I did not make use of questionnaires. In the summer of 2009 I trained and supervised a group of male students from LUMS to assist me in conducting a short survey on the impact of the earthquake in the urban and rural bazaars of Rawalakot, Bagh, Harighel, and Chinati.

rural bazaars a feel of ‘being global’ in an otherwise highly secluded region. One of the many unwanted consequences of the territorial dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir is that PaK was, until the earthquake, a secluded and militarised region of which the world knew little about¹⁶.

The main site of my fieldwork was one such rural bazaar located on the southern part of Bagh district, an area I had previously surveyed in August 2006. At approximately one-hour drive from Bagh city to the north and one-hour drive to Rawalakot to the south, Chinati bazaar stood on the top of a hill surrounded by six villages. These villages were dispersed settlements (*mohallahs*) belonging to three different revenue villages (*mauzas*) and part of Bagh’s southernmost *Tehsil*. On average each settlement had more than 100 houses post-earthquake, of which a significant number was still being reconstructed at the time of my fieldwork. The tarred approach to Chinati from the main Bagh-Rawalakot road, through mostly pine forest sparsely by dispersed settlements, took approximately 15 to 30 minutes, depending on the type of car and weather conditions, with occasional small landslides slowing down the uphill drive during the rainy seasons. Composed of about 60 shops mostly running parallel to the main tarred road, Chinati bazaar was not more than a quarter of a century old. The vast majority of these shops were small groceries and general stores, with shopkeepers mostly involved in petty trade. The bazaar also had a mosque and a madrassah run by a local *maulvi* from a nearby village, where people from the surrounding villages congregated specially for Friday prayers. As such, the busiest days at the bazaar were Fridays and religious holidays. In Chinati most of the shopkeepers were returned migrants – either from the Gulf or from Pakistan. This made Chinati, like other rural bazaars in the district, both ‘local’ and ‘global’. Conversations at the bazaar ranged from local discussions on the price of sugar or the lack of rain, to worldwide events such as the Dubai financial crisis or the Copenhagen Climate Conference of 2009. Often these topics were intertwined - for instance the impact of US industrialisation on climate change and the lack of rain - and hotly debated and contested, as they felt affected by both local and global events. Chinati bazaar was also a place of storytelling and confabulation. In fact, it was *the* place of storytelling and confabulation, where stories, myths, and narratives of the earthquake and other events were told and retold, created and recreated as part of a project of creating a ‘collective memory’. But the fact that Chinati was a public space

¹⁶ Where foreigners were not generally allowed in unless they had a No Objection Certificate (NOC).

meant that it was a space denied to women, which, in a way, make my account of these stories, myths, and narratives incomplete.

I conducted my fieldwork in Chinati bazaar and its surrounding villages from September 2008 until March 2010. Due to security concerns following the Mumbai attacks of November 2008, I relocated my field research to Lahore in December 2008 where I started interviewing PaK migrants in the city. But, as by March 2009 the situation became 'safe' again, I returned to Chinati. Due to a lack of accommodation in the villages, as most houses were still being reconstructed and as a non-related male I could not live with families, I lived in hotels in Bagh and Rawalakot cities and drove daily to Chinati where I spent the day conversing with people. Living in Bagh and Rawalakot also allowed me to engage in conversations with some urban residents, namely the owners, managers, and workers of the hotels where I stayed, government bureaucrats, NGO workers, and some local influentials. This interaction gave my research a regional flare and contributed to my analysis by helping me situate the stories I heard in Chinati within the larger stories told in the region. Once a month I would move to Lahore for a week for family reasons, where I would work on my field notes and conduct secondary research having access to my university's library. In Lahore I also discussed my field conversations and general life in Pakistan, as well as my 'theories', with my colleagues at the university, to which I am eternally indebted. The unstructured interviews that I conducted during my fieldwork were, similar to Gudeman and Rivera (1990), conversations. The idea was not to have just interviews with different informants and observe their everyday activities (and try to participate in some), where often one is more concerned in making sure one is 'getting it all', but to engage in long, relaxed conversations. I noticed from my previous fieldwork in the region that it was relatively easy to engage in conversations, as many locals were eager simply to talk and discuss their experiences, views and thoughts on life before and after the earthquake. Unfortunately back then I was time-constrained, as I had to finish surveys and questionnaires and 'head back' to Pakistan. This time though, I stayed longer.

During my fieldwork in PaK I was always accompanied by one research assistant, occasionally two, who helped me with translations and with whom I engaged in discussing the daily conversations we had at the bazaar. Throughout, I had in total five research assistants, four male and one – at the later stages as I tried to get access to

women's stories – a female. These assistants were all my former students at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), where I was a faculty member between 2003 and 2007, and during which time I ran a series of post-earthquake surveys in the earthquake-affected regions. Three of these research assistants had in fact accompanied me in previous field trips to PaK. The reason for this high turnover of research assistants was that two of them were accepted at different universities abroad for a Masters programme and a third one, despite having a job in Lahore, simply liked this region and to be involved in this research and therefore would join me at every opportunity. Like Gudeman and Rivera (1990: 5) my research assistants and I created a 'conversational community' in which our car "*became not only our means of transport but a mode of inquiry¹⁷ and a marker of*" this community. Particularly while driving back home to the hotel after field conversations, we would engage in discussions of what we thought had just heard and observed. Again, like Gudeman and Rivera (1990: 6) "*translation was only one of several tasks we undertook within our conversational community. More often than we would like to admit, each of us had missed something the other had heard, or heard the 'same thing' differently. This was disorienting and humiliating, because it meant that 'facts' were not external pillars of knowledge but partly constructed through our success in persuading one another, and our ability to listen too (...) so our continuous 'review' in the car and elsewhere had for us an 'interpretive' as well as a 'verification' function, in some sense of those terms.*" Another advantage of our conversational community was the fact that my research assistants knew 'Pakistani culture' - and more precisely 'Punjabi culture' - from growing up in it. Often this knowledge was voiced when I questioned the use of a word, expression, or practice which I did not fully understand, as a sizeable part of these conversations were around the meaning behind words, expressions, and practices and to reflect not just on their stories, but also in the words that they used to tell those stories.

While unstructured interviews through conversations had the advantage of allowing informants the freedom to talk about what mattered to them (or what they felt we were interested in listening to), semi-structured interviews were quite useful when there were topics I wanted to discuss, without the constraint of having a structured questionnaire; informants often moved away from the topic (and brought up things I never thought of asking), but we could then slowly bring them back to the main topics I wanted to

¹⁷ By conducting conversations while giving lifts.

discuss. Quite a few of these semi-structured interviews – as it also happened with unstructured ones – became focus groups, as other informants joined the conversations with their views, opinions, and stories. I found family histories (Miller, 2007) and life event analyses (Whitehead, personal communication) were great exercises to look at which were the main moments of people's lives. By asking “*what were the key turning points in your life*” gave me an idea of not only individual's key moments in life, but also if they shared these moments with others, how were they perceived by different family members, why some were more important than others, and so on. Finally, another exercise which I conducted with selected informants was a ranking exercise, more precisely the ranking of *biraderis*. The aim of this exercise was to see how different people related their *biraderis* in regard to other *biraderis* that they were in contact with. I started by putting on a table (or floor) all the *biraderis* that I knew, with a *biraderi* name per card (in Urdu). I then asked the informant to indicate which *biraderis* he had heard of/interacted with (which stayed in the table) and ask if there were any missing ones. We then started ordering the *biraderis* according to his idea of how they were ranked, while asking questions about their location, origins, similarities, what was allowed to do across *biraderis* (e.g. marriage, loans), and why were they ranked this way. I would finish the exercise by asking why was there such a ranking.

PaK is a politically-sensitive region. There were a few times when some people thought I was a ‘Pakistan agent’, that is, someone who would report back to Pakistani intelligence agencies what they were saying. The constraints of conducting research in such politically-sensitive region which also had recently suffered from a post-earthquake survey-fatigue, as well as to try to make informants more ‘at ease’ and relaxed, made me devise what I call the ‘pelican method’ of note-taking. This entailed not having anything visible in our hands to record the conversations – no notebooks, papers, or tape recorders – and, like a pelican who fishes to eat later, carefully listening to what people were saying, quickly writing key notes on our mobiles either at lunch or while walking between houses or shops and then write them down back at the hotel. Usually during and after dinner we would discuss what we had heard and observed during the day, including what each of us had missed or heard differently as well as the meaning behind words, expressions, and practices. I would then write down these discussions and observations on my notebooks and/or computer. I found this method to work quite well as there were always at least two (sometimes three) listeners and

observers and, as fieldwork progressed, our memorising skills had improved considerably.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is arranged in eight chapters, including the Introduction and the Conclusion. Following this Introduction, where I have set my argument within a larger framework, Chapter Two sets the scene by providing a historical overview of the region and its inhabitants. In this overview I provide some basic information about the bazaar and its surrounding villages. I focus mostly on the bazaar, a place that is both global and local, where things and people pass through, as this was the (public and male-dominated) place of storytelling and confabulation. In Chapter Three I narrate how people in PaK – starting in the capital and ending in the bazaar – lived through the earthquake of October 2005 and subsequent days, how they rationalised this event and its aftermath, and describe the discourses on post-earthquake change that I heard at the bazaar. I then examine the impact of the arrival of outside assistance and how this assistance was provided with all its problematics. I end the chapter explaining how people retold their suffering and relived the earthquake through their everyday lives.

The following four chapters contain the bulk of my argument, and are presented as a series of stories about change in Chinati bazaar in the aftermath of the earthquake of October 2005. These stories constitute the main discourses on change that I was told or that I heard at the bazaar, and that I realised were the main vehicles through which its people framed and made sense of the events and trauma that they had recently lived through. I divide these narratives into four main areas that, according to the people of Chinati bazaar, had seen the most change post-earthquake. These are: (a) social stratification, (b) the house and family structure, (c) women's mobility and work, and (d) agriculture and livelihoods. I sequence the narratives and chapters in this order so as to start with the largest social configuration – the system of social stratification – and then zoom in sequentially to first the family and household, and then to the women who live within these households, before finally looking at the impact of all this on the livelihood patterns of these households.

Specifically, in Chapter Four I investigate how people negotiate between moralities of equality and the realities of hierarchy. I draw on the earthquake and the events that followed, namely access to relief and reconstruction aid, to analyse the extent of change

in social stratification within their society. Chapter Five deals with a series of discourses on change surrounding the house – both the physical structure and the home within it. I investigate the reasons for perceptions of a drastic increase in housing units following housing reconstruction, along with the myth of the breakdown of the joint family. As the earthquake allowed people to rebuild houses in different ways, I question if it also allowed people to rebuild relationships differently. The backdrop of Chapter Six are men's stories at the bazaar of the way women's lives changed after the earthquake. In this chapter I am not representing women's experiences, but instead how men talked about women's mobility and access to work outside the house to discuss change. Within a large spectrum of views there were two main discourses at the bazaar: one linking women's mobility to immorality and social breakdown, and an opposite one linking women's mobility to empowerment and 'being modern'. I finish these series of stories in Chapter Seven by analysing another set of narratives about the demise of agriculture in this region. In this chapter I explore the ways people conceptualised and (dis)engaged with farming over time throughout a series of factors to show that the underlying theme was the shift from self-sufficiency to global interdependence. I conclude the thesis by revisiting the stories, myths, rumours, and narratives of change, in which the earthquake was used as a moment of rupture between a traditional past and a modern future, to restate my main argument that within these narratives of rupture lay more discrete currents of the continuity of change shaped by bigger stories of migration, modernisation and globalisation.

Chapter Two

The Bazaar and its Storytellers: locating Chinati bazaar

Introduction

On my initial visits to Chinati, I used to like to park close to Ali Naqvi's¹⁸ house in Serabad, one of the villages surrounding the bazaar, rather than in the bazaar itself. This gave me the opportunity to greet him on my way in or out, and also made Hamza¹⁹ and I less conspicuous in the bazaar, at least upon arrival. I would drive my rented Suzuki Mehran as far as I could up the steep southern road that lead to Chinati bazaar through Serabad, and park it close to the entrance path to Ali Naqvi's house. The age of the car and its general condition gave us little faith in its brakes, so we would put four rocks behind each wheel – just in case. We would then proceed on foot to the bazaar. Despite the mild autumn temperature of my initial visits the effort of climbing what always felt like a 90-degree slope through goat paths would make us arrive at the bazaar drenched in sweat. We would head straight for Ali's shop, at the very end of Chinati, because it always had the coldest cold drinks in the bazaar. Ali's shop was also in front of the local *adda*, right next to Imtiaz's. Over the year this was to prove to be a good place to meet people and have long conversations with them. However, in our first couple of visits we were not that fortunate. Our status as non-locals only attracted boys from the local schools who wanted to practice their English and an old man who shared with us his knowledge of the history of the sub-continent, but never talked about Chinati. When he did go into the region's history he would say "*but that's another story and we don't have time for it*" and proceeded to explain to us the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, or how the first Mughal emperor, Babar, had conquered Hindustan. By this time we had already become frustrated with our original strategy of door-to-door interviews in Serabad, as either the men were away at work or up in the bazaar, and we could not chat with the women. We needed a different strategy but hanging out at the bazaar was not quite working either.

¹⁸ My first gatekeeper, whom I first met during my post-earthquake research in the summer of 2006.

¹⁹ My first research assistance.

Our luck changed one day when a clean-shaven middle-aged man driving an old blue jeep stopped at the *adda*. While switching on and off during a lesson on Pakistani foreign policy given to us by the old man, I overheard the jeep driver ask Imtiaz “*yeh gora kaun hai?*” (who is this foreigner [literally: white man]?). Imtiaz told him that we were from some university in Lahore and were studying the region. The jeep driver came towards me and in English said, “*You are studying my region? That’s very good. I know a lot about this place. Today I’m busy but tomorrow you should come to my shop; it’s that one over there. Come tomorrow and I’ll tell you everything you need to know.*” That was how I met Bashir, a returned Gulf migrant from the village of Sarian, who, like many returned migrants, used some of his savings to open up a small shop in the bazaar. He kept his promise and told me a lot of what I needed to know about ‘this place’. But more than that, through him I got to know many more shopkeepers, migrants, agents, workers, and schoolteachers. I got to know their stories and, through them, many others that snowballed into this bigger story of life in and around Chinati bazaar.

In this chapter I place Chinati bazaar within the historic context of the Poonch region of Kashmir and look at some of the economic and social changes that have defined this region differently from the rest of Pakistan. For one, it has been more dependent on a remittance economy than the rest of Pakistan, and second, it has better education figures than the rest of the country. I describe both these trends and then move to look in detail at both the bazaar and its people. Given that the economy of the region is defined mainly by migration, I categorise the storytellers of Chinati Bazaar by their migration status: locals who were in the Gulf or had recently returned; locals who had migrated to other cities in Pakistan; those who worked in the region and had never migrated; and those who were migrants to this region from other parts of the country. This categorisation captures a major way that people think of and relate to one another in the bazaar. Even when they introduced themselves to me, or were introduced, their migratory status always immediately followed their residential one. So, a common introduction would go as follows: “*This is Salim, he’s from Bagla and he works in Dubai*”, or “*Mr. Khalil is from Hothala. He’s a metre reader for WAPDA²⁰ and his brother works in Jeddah.*”

²⁰ Water And Power Development Authority of the government of Pakistan.

Historical Background

Although known as Pakistan-administered Kashmir (also called Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Azad Kashmir, or AJK), about one third of this area had only been part of Kashmir for 11 years before 1947. The State of Poonch, situated west of the Kashmir valley, in the region known at the time as ‘the middle mountains’ (Drew, 1875), had been under Hindu rule until the first Afghan invasions in mid 12th century. Later on this region was ruled by the Mughals and the Afghan Durrani, becoming an autonomous state of Mughal India until the beginning of the 19th century, when it was captured by the Sikh armies of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and kept as part of the Khalsa Darbar of Lahore, making it effectively a district of Lahore (Huttenback, 2004).

In 1846, after the defeat of the Sikhs by the British, Gulab Singh, a Hindu Dogra who had been made Raja of Jammu by Ranjit Singh and had switched sides during the Sikh Wars, signed the Treaty of Amritsar in which the British transferred to his power “*all the hilly or mountainous country, with its dependencies, situated to the eastward of the river Indus, and westward of the river Ravi, including Chamba and excluding Lahore.*”²¹ In other words, he became the ruler of the Hindu-majority Jammu, the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley, Mirpur and Muzaffarabad, and the Buddhist-majority Ladakh (Bates, 1873). After Gulab Singh’s death, his son Ranbir Singh added the emirates of Gilgit, Hunza and Nagar (all majority Shia Muslim) to the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir. Gulab Singh’s nephew, Moti Singh, was allowed to set up Poonch as a separate principality, which eventually was recognised as a state by the British Raj in 1901 (Huttenback, 2004).

While the north and south of today’s PaK were part of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir, Poonch remained a separate state until 1936, when it was reduced to a *Jagir*²² by the Maharaja Hari Singh, Gulab Singh’s great-grandson. Wingate (1959: 108), the last Assistant Resident in Poonch in 1921, notes how Poonch society was closer to Punjab than Kashmir, writing in his memoirs the following:

“The people of Poonch bore no relation at all to the inhabitants of the valley of Kashmir or indeed to their ruler. They were Punjabi Moslems of the hills, strong, independent, and good cultivators. During the whole period of Imperial rule, Poonch was one of the most important recruiting grounds for

²¹ Treaty of Amritsar, Article I.

²² A small territory granted for a short term, not exceeding the owner’s (*jagidar*) lifetime.

the Indian Army. There was not a village in Poonch where there were not a dozen or more army pensioners, and the coming and going between Poonch and the Punjab of soldiers on leave and of recruiting parties made it far more a province of the Punjab in outlook and in culture than an appendage of Kashmir.”

Since the beginning of the Sikh rule, the majority-Muslim population of Poonch was dominated not only by Sikh and Hindu landlords – as was the case of Jammu and Kashmir – but also by Muslim landlords. Ballard (1990) points out the fact that compared to directly ruled British India, Kashmiri subjects suffered from heavier taxes. From 1936 onwards, this heavier taxation was imposed in Poonch as well. *“Things were a lot cheaper before Partition, but the taxes were much higher. You even had to pay a tax for having a stove in your house. It was very hard to survive back then”* (Amjad, retired trader from Sarian). In 1937 the Maharaja promulgated the ‘Arms Act Bill’, which allowed the possession of unlicensed arms by the Hindu and Sikh population but declined the facility to the Muslim population. During the Second World War, of the 70,000 Kashmiri soldiers who fought on the British side more than 50,000 were Muslims from Poonch, recruited as ‘Punjabi Mussulmans’ and not Dogra (Korbel, 1954; Dawson, 1994). When they returned from the war, they were not allowed to join the Kashmiri army and instead were told to return to their villages and become sharecropping farmers (Dawson, 1994). This, together with heavy taxation and policies perceived as ‘anti-Muslim’ fuelled further resentment towards Dogra rule, as reported by Symonds, a British Quaker who worked with victims of communal strife during Partition (in Korbel, 1954: 68):

“Poonch is a barren, rocky mountainous country, whose important export is military manpower. Sixty thousand Poonchis served in the Indian Army in World War II. They returned (they said) to find that during the war the Raja of Poonch, under whose mild, if unprogressive rule they had existed tolerably, had been dispossessed by a law suit and that the Maharaja of Kashmir’s direct rule had imposed all the tyrannous taxes of Kashmir and Jammu. There was a tax on every hearth and every window. Every cow, buffalo and sheep was taxed and even every wife. Finally the Zaildari tax was introduced to pay for the cost of taxation, and Dogra troops were billeted on the Poonchis to enforce collection.”

By 15th August 1947 Hari Singh had not made up his mind about adding Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan or India, and was in fact pondering the possibility of remaining independent. The locals of Poonch, mainly retired Muslim army men now sharecroppers spurred by a few Muslim landlords, while calling for freedom (*azadi*) from Dogra rule during several public meeting and demonstrations started a rebellion, to which Hari Singh responded by sending his troops to crush the revolt (Huttenback, 2004). What started as an autonomous liberation struggle, coined the ‘Poonch Revolt’²³, soon turned into a fully-fledged war, with Pukhtoon tribesmen (mostly Mehsoods and Afridis from Tirah and Waziristan) invading the region on the 22nd of October through Muree-Muzzafarabad road, coming to the locals’ assistance,²⁴ surreptitiously aided by individuals in the newly founded Pakistani government (Korbel, 1954; Dawson, 1994). The invading forces, aligned with mostly Poonchi irregulars and volunteers from neighbouring Pakistani Punjab, quickly swept through the region and reached Baramulla, a few miles north of Srinagar three days later. Hari Singh fled to Delhi where, on the 26th of October 1947, he signed the Instrument of Accession of Jammu and Kashmir State to India, making it officially a territory of India. What soon followed was the first Indo-Pakistani war, in 1947-1948. After a UN-negotiated ceasefire, Pakistan established its authority over the Northern Areas (Gilgit and Baltistan) and the state of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (PaK), while India retained control over the Kashmir valley, the eastern portion of Poonch, Jammu and Ladakh.

²³ Not to be confused with the older Poonch Revolt of 1836, when the Sudhans led by Shams Khan rebelled against Sikh rule and were defeated by Gulab Singh (Smyth, 1847).

²⁴ Although leaving a trail of destruction while plundering villages and killing locals irrespective of religion.

Figure 1 – Map of Pakistan-administered Kashmir



Source: Kashmir Family Aid (<http://www.kashmirfamily.org>)

Although the effects of Partition were not as violent as in other parts of British India, namely in Punjab and Bengal, there were some confrontations between Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs in this region, from which almost all the Sikh and Hindu families of Poonch migrated to India and many Muslim families from Indian-Administered Kashmir moved to Poonch. Before 1947, the Muslim population of Poonch was mostly involved in agriculture, with trade and services being run largely by Hindus and Sikhs. There was also a significant number of migrants in British India, serving either in the army or as domestic servants. *“We either fought for them or we cooked for them”* (Sardar Zulfiqar, retired artist from Rawalakot). In Poonch, while many Muslims owned land, a vast number worked as sharecroppers in larger landholdings growing rice, wheat and maize. *“We used to work as sharecroppers, but we were strong pahari [mountain] men and always confronted the zamindars [landlords].”*

After the creation of PaK the sharecroppers in the new Poonch devised an autonomous land reform where the land once owned by Hindu and Sikh landlords was divided through the kinship groups (known as *biraderi*) who farmed this land in each village, or allocated by the new state to refugees coming from Indian-administered Kashmir. At household level though, land was (and still is) divided through a strict following of a local version of the Shari’ah inheritance law, where the land is supposedly equally

divided by the number of offspring with females inheriting half of the males' share, but in this case most often the women after marriage forfeiting this inheritance to their brothers.²⁵ *"Over time, with the population growth, large landholdings eventually just disappeared. It was more of a natural process. Here we do an even distribution of land among brothers. If it doesn't happen, people would go to the courts and it would be evenly distributed"* (Ali Azfar, ex-serviceman from Khorian). Because of the hilly terrain and erratic rainfall, agriculture was always done at a subsistence level and catering only to the needs of the family. *"Farming here was seasonal, depending on rains. We made sure we left everything when the rains came and started ploughing. We made sure to utilise the land to the maximum. We were self-sufficient on maize, vegetables and wheat. Sometimes we had to go very far to get a small amount of water, but we would do it to use it in our lands"* (Amjad, retired trader from Sarian).

Since 1947 most of PaK showed low levels of economic development, with the population mainly depending on rain-fed (*barani*) agriculture. Ballard (2004) suggested the state's lack of investment in the area as the main reason for this underdevelopment, when comparing the 'development' of Jalandhar (Indian Punjab) versus the 'underdevelopment' of Mirpur (southern PaK), both areas known for a sizeable number of migrants in the UK. With landholdings becoming smaller, mainly due to rising population levels and the following of the local version of Islamic inheritance law, more and more households started sending at least one male relative to the army, police or to work in catering, to complement a weak subsistence agricultural system (Werbner, 1990). This was not a new phenomenon, as Poonch had been known as a 'breeding place' for soldiers and cooks before independence, as the numbers of British Raj soldiers show (Wikeley, 1915; Omissi, 1994; Dawson, 1994). What was a novelty was the increased of numbers of migrants – and with them, more migrants started trying their luck in Pakistan's major cities. Poonchis though, did not consider this movement rural-urban migration; for them, they were migrating abroad – to Pakistan.

Following the events of the 1973 oil crisis, Middle Eastern OPEC countries found themselves with an enormous surplus of capital, while facing labour scarcity. Meanwhile, Pakistan was unable to repay its foreign debt, with its imports rising and its exports declining, especially since the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, when the East Pakistani market for West Pakistani goods disappeared (Lefebvre, 1999). In 1974,

²⁵ For more details see Chapter Five.

at the 2nd Islamic Summit Conference in Lahore, Pakistan under the premiership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto struck a deal with the oil-producing countries in the Gulf under which the country would get subsidised oil in exchange for migrant labour. Bhutto's government's reforms in Pakistan had already started indirectly to impact people's lives in PaK, particularly the pro-worker and pro-union labour policies which benefited PaK migrants in Pakistan through better working conditions and wages, translated into more remittances to send home. Bhutto's government, unlike previous governments that had largely ignored PaK, was also keen on showing Pakistani-administered Kashmir as more 'developed' than Indian-administered Kashmir. His government created a series of measures in this direction, namely the allocation, for the first time, of a 2% quota for residents of PaK in government jobs and educational institutions in Pakistan, the introduction of direct elections on the basis of adult franchise, and easing the red tape for acquiring a Pakistani passport and visa to an oil-producing Gulf state, as well as making it cheaper.

The army connection initially also played a role within the Gulf migration pattern, as seen by the geographical origin of the main migrant groups – Poonchis, northern Punjabis and Pukhtoon – the 'martial' groups. Like other Pakistani ex-army personnel, Poonchis initially went to the Gulf to work in security-related jobs, including police and army. With increased demand for construction-related manual labour many of these ex-servicemen, sometimes also working as contractors and foremen, started to sponsor relatives and *biraderi* members to join them in the Gulf. Some did it informally while others made a profession out of it, becoming 'Gulf agents'. With a fast growth of migrant labour came a demand for catering services, where Poonchis once more used their experience and reputation within Pakistan as good domestic servants to insert themselves within this industry as cooks and waiters. A third group of Poonchis to migrate were schoolteachers, who made use of their education to gain access to lower management positions within the construction and catering industries in the Gulf.

Until the early 1970s Poonchi society, largely ignored by the Pakistani state, was primarily engaged with subsistence agriculture subsidised by urban migration, where temporary male migration to Pakistani urban areas and enlistment in the army and police played a significant role in sustaining rural households' livelihoods. Most of the population was involved in a series of informal risk-sharing strategies through family, kinship and caste networks, a system of social protection embedded in local power

relations (Gardner and Ahmed, 2006), adapted to secure a minimum subsistence level for their members (Platteau, 1991). As this system of social protection submerged in the current world market economy, strategies such as the custom of hiring poorer households for seasonal agricultural labour by richer households in exchange for food, or the practice of gift exchange and with it the creation and maintenance of networks that made borrowing possible, rather than disappearing became (further) monetised, with remittances increasing the sphere of the existing gift economy. This phenomenon was not unique to this region and has been witnessed through the world. Yang (1994) mentions ‘gift-giving winds’ in China, recent social pressures to give more gifts and more expensive gifts. Piot (1999) refers to the notion of ‘growing gifts, growing relationships’ in Togo, although here the importance was of the giver’s intention, not necessarily the size of the gift. In Pakistan and Pakistani Diaspora in the UK, Werbner (1990), Lefebvre (1999) and Lyon (2004) mention an upsurge in the size and quantity of gifts directly linked with overseas migration. Likewise, since the mid-1970s, with migration taking the leading role shaping this region’s economy and the demise of subsistence agriculture, many families started depending more and more on remittances, giving preference to preparing their young males to be sent abroad (Pakistan or the Gulf), rather than keeping them to farm their land. “*We grow very few crops now; very little return with heavy work. People don’t work here because there’s always someone abroad*” (Imtiaz, young shopkeeper). The impact of remittances was also visible in the decrease of household debt: in 1972 46% of all households in PaK (60% in Bagh) were under some form of indebtedness; by 2000 this figure had dropped to 9% for PaK and 20% for Bagh District (GoAJK, 1975; GoAJK, 2000).

The bounty of Gulf migration occurred at the same time that drastic political changes were taking place in the region. The opening of space for political parties, a partial devolution of power from the Pakistani-controlled Ministry of Kashmir Affairs to the new PaK parliament,²⁶ and universal adult franchise (Mahmood, 2006), all contributed to a shift of decision-making from the hands of a powerful few, often selected by Pakistan, to the masses. Similar to Pakistan, where villagers voted not as individuals but in blocs (known as *dharas*) and there was a tendency to vote in response to targeted material inducements, so too in PaK voting occurred through clientelistic networks, as the state provided targeted and not universal services. Similar to the initial Gulf

migration strategies, these clientelistic networks were closely interlinked with kin and caste groups; as such politics required influence, groups which had large numbers within their constituencies formed unified vote blocs and supported candidates from within their group. The rationale was that once their candidate was in power they would have preferential access to services and jobs. This in effect made demographics a powerful force within PaK politics, allowing space for larger kin and caste groups – sometimes previously at a lower rank within the social hierarchy – to compete among themselves through *biraderi*-ism (clientelistic *biraderi* networks) for political dominance. For instance, while there was strong *biraderi* allegiance among Jats in Mirpur and Sudhans in Poonch (Evans, 2010) who constituted the majority within these districts, in Bagh – which became a district separated from Poonch district by 1987²⁷ – Raja, Narma and Mughal *biraderis* have competed for political dominance since the arrival of electoral politics.

From the mid-1970s onwards, remittances and clientelistic politics were important factors in improving services throughout the region, albeit in a targeted manner. This was the time that many villages got access to electricity, tarred roads, health centres, and educational institutions. Education – until then more a privilege than a right – was in fact a great indicator of this change, as seen by the drastic increase in public school buildings, teacher hiring and student enrolment numbers (see Table 1). At the time of Partition, the education sector in what was now PaK was almost inexistent, with 254 primary, 30 middle, and 6 high schools, totalling 291 educational institutions. In 2008, only in Bagh District there were 360 primary, 195 middle, and 95 high schools, along with 20 higher education institutes and 187 *madrasahs*, totalling 857 educational institutions – the number for the whole of PaK stood at 6,071.

²⁶ While keeping matters related to finance, defence and foreign affairs under the direct control of Pakistan.

²⁷ The region which used to be the State of Poonch is now the Poonch Division in PaK (composed of Poonch, Sundnoti, Bagh and Haveli districts) and Poonch district in IaK.

Table 1 – Public school enrolment, number of teachers and schools in PaK (primary and secondary)

Year	Enrolment	Teachers	Schools
1974	192,509	4,091	1,526
1989	585,238	20,474	5,757
Increase	304%	500%	377%
2008	556,217	28,615	5,945
Increase	-95%	140%	103%

Source: P&D AJK, 1980; 1990; AEPAM/NEMIS, 2010.

Remittances had a direct impact on education as it was seen by many as a form of investment, a way of making sure the next generations would have access to better employment opportunities as well as higher status. The role of the state was crucial in trying to universalise education. Today the gross enrolment rate at primary level in PaK is 95% for boys and 88% for girls (P&D AJK, 2008). With groups which were once denied access to political power by virtue of hierarchy becoming enfranchised, education became the number one priority in PaK, not only as a service, but also as a form of job creation. *“The focus on education here started not only because it gave people an education, it also created jobs. The Department of Education is the biggest employer in the region”* (Sardar Zulfiqar, retired artist from Rawalakot). Although with a certain gender bias favouring men, the increase of educational provision and enrolment happened for both the male and the female population, with women over time attaining higher levels of education and many becoming schoolteachers themselves. This can be seen today in the gender parity index (GPI) of the region as, by 2007, Bagh district had a GPI of 1 or above for primary and secondary level, much higher than any province in Pakistan (AEPAM/NEMIS, 2010). The combination of increasing remittances and a demand for more and better education created a space for the appearance of private schooling since the 1990s. Many migrants started sending their children to private schools (a reason why public school enrolment decreased), an act which became connoted with wealth and status. *“Private schools’ fees are twice as much as the government schools, so those who can afford such education send their children to private schools”* (Bashir, shopkeeper in Chinati). By 2005 there were 2,295 primary and secondary private schools in PaK, with 16,074 teachers (of which 54% were women) and 223,275 students (AEPAM/NEMIS, 2006).

Together these factors had an impact both outside and inside the home. With larger numbers of males migrating, the demographics of PaK changed and soon women outnumbered men in every district, with a sex ratio below 100 for the population aged

between 15 and 50 (PCO, 1998). As able-bodied males, including often household heads, were away the responsibility to take care of the land and ‘protect’ the women fell upon those who did not migrate: the migrants’ brothers, fathers and sons. The rearrangement of responsibilities became rooted within a reciprocal expectation, whereby the migrant shared his remittances with the family in exchange for the father/brother keeping an eye on his household while he was away. *“I’m proud of my sons, they made enough money and made sure there was plenty in my pocket as well. All of them became bare admi [big men].”*²⁸ *Two went to Saudi Arabia and took care of the ones left behind – the whole family! Not just their own households, even my brothers were taken care of”* (Azfar Khan, retired cook from Sarian). PaK society was deeply embedded in a patriarchal and patrilocal system, where the status of women was measured through their seclusion *“a function of a family’s worth, in an economic sense, but (...) [also] indicative of their social worth, or their honour”* (Jeffery, 1979: 25). As such, women’s honour – and by extension – the family’s honour needed to be kept, a responsibility which non-migrant males took upon themselves to validate gaining access to remittances. This did not mean that inter- and intra-household power struggles did not exist. As I further explain in chapter five, the house was a domestic arena for competition where patriarchal bargains were constantly enacted and re-enacted, particularly between the mother and the wife of the migrant. Another factor that influenced women’s purdah system was the arrival of ‘foreigners’ post-1989. These were refugees from IaK that crossed the territory as the situation on the other side of the border worsened,²⁹ as well as militant organisations which set training camps, freely propagated their views on ‘Political Islam’, and used PaK as a launch pad to cross to the other side and fight Indian forces³⁰ (Human Rights Watch, 2006). Their views and presence,³¹ particularly in urban areas, made many women reinvent seclusion and observe more conservative veiling in public. *“This [college women wearing hijab] is a new thing; it started in the 90s. Not so much in villages, but definitely in every town”* (Sardar Zulfiqar, retired artist from Rawalakot).

²⁸ Meaning successful.

²⁹ This was the fourth wave of IaK refugees coming into PaK. Previously, refugees had come in 1947, 1965, and 1971.

³⁰ Mostly from anecdotal sources, the view was that there were very few locals in these organisations, with most of their people coming from Punjab and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, as well as IaK.

³¹ Together with some Gulf migrants who came back with similar notions of ‘Political Islam’.

Despite the historical presence of men from this region in every continent of the world, due to the territorial dispute between India and Pakistan this was a secluded, militarised region of which the world knew little about. The 2005 earthquake opened, for the first time, the curtain into PaK. When humanitarian and development agencies (including Pakistani) wanted to know more about PaK to respond better to the crises, they soon found out that there was barely anything published on the region or its people. This was because “*prior to the earthquake, [PaK] was one of the most closed territories in the world*” (Human Rights Watch, 2006:6). This thesis will, hopefully, change some of that, at least for one part of the region.

Chinati Bazaar

Chinati bazaar stands on top of a hill surrounded clockwise by the settlements Basantkot (north), Thial (northwest), Khorian (west), Sarian (southwest), Serabad (south), and Bagla (east). On average there were more than 100 houses per settlement post-earthquake, ranging from 30 in Basantkot to 300 in Khorian, of which a sizeable number were still being reconstructed. Of these settlements Bagla and Basantkot are part of Nakkar *mauza* (revenue village), Khorian, Sarian and Thial part of Khorian *mauza*, and Serabad part of Hothala *mauza*. Nakkar and Hothala *mauzas* belong to Nakkar Union Council and Khorian *mauza* belong to Mughal Topi Union Council. Above Khorian stand the settlements belonging to Mughal Topi *mauza* and south of Khorian and east of Sarian the settlements belong to Moori Gali *mauza*. Further downhill, south of Hothala and Moori Gali the Mahl Nullah, a small stream, divides Bagh and Poonch Districts. Three roads lead to the bazaar: from the east the tarred road that links this area to the Bagh-Rawalakot road, to the south a partly tarred road that also links it to the Bagh-Rawalakot road, and to the west a gravelled road that ends up in Mughal Topi.

Figure 2 – Aerial view of Chinati bazaar and surrounding settlements



Source: Google maps

“In the beginning, there was a chinar³² forest where people used to gather to slaughter their animals in the shade. Chinati comes from a shortening of chinari and theri [gathering place]. Since there were no fridges at the time, the meat had to be quickly sold.” That was how Kashif, one of the many storytellers at the bazaar, told me of the birth of the bazaar. Chinati quickly became a gathering place not only for commerce, but also for prayer, as often the meat trade would happen on Fridays and there was enough flat space for people to congregate and pray together. The first shop was built in 1984, a general store close to where the main mosque stands today, before the either the road or the mosque were made. Over time more people started to build shops on the southern side of the gravel road and the Syed family, who owned much of the land between the road and Serabad, donated a plot for the creation of a mosque. The Syed family’s role was also critical in the creation of the main road that crossed Chinati bazaar. Syed Ali Naqvi, at the time an influential member of the Muslim Conference, which he would later take advantage of to get the road tarred, was the acknowledged prime mover. As he said:

³² Oriental plane tree (*Platanus orientalis*).

“I gathered the people around and told them that if a road was ever to be built, it had to be done by the people themselves. Most of the villagers were initially suspicious that it would be too much of an endeavour for them, but eventually people – mostly students – started working on the road, usually during the weekends. We started by forming committees in each settlement that the road would pass by and villagers started widening the main walking paths that connected the bazaar to the Bagh-Rawalakot road, breaking stones and using them to make the base of the road. It took us four years!”

By 2009, Chinati bazaar had about 60 shops most of them running parallel to the main road, with four tailors, two barbers, one butcher, two telephone offices, one blacksmith, two *dhaabas* (roadside eatery) known as ‘hotels’, one shoemaker, one woodsman, and one bus stand at the top of the bazaar. Most of the shops belonged to Nakkar Union Council, except seven located further northwest, which belonged to Mughal Topi UC. The ‘border shops’ shared the same wall. The remaining shops were mostly groceries and a handful of small general stores, mostly selling vegetables and items for household consumption, with only two or three specialising in ready-made clothing. Chinati also had four educational institutions, namely a *madrassah* within the mosque compound, a vocational centre and two private schools. The mosque complex was a two-storey green building with 15 washrooms underneath, a small prayer hall connected to the *madrassah* part by a courtyard, and a tall white minaret surrounded by loudspeakers. It stood at the top of a mound on the eastern part of the bazaar, slightly above both private schools: the Syed-owned Al-Noor, on the southern side of the road, and the Jamaati-Islami-funded READ, on the northern side of the road. Due to the high number of schoolchildren in the bazaar, most of the shops had sweets and snacks, which they sold for Rs. 1 to Rs 20. Opposite to what most bazaars did in this region, that is, to close on the last Sunday of the month, shopkeepers in Chinati had their shops open every day of the month, with the exceptions of the barbers, who came twice a week, and the butcher, who came mostly on Fridays. I ran a survey with 33 shopkeepers, roughly covering about half of the bazaar, to get a more accurate profile of Chinati and see the impact of the earthquake.

Most shops in Chinati were cemented (*pakka*), with a sizeable number of *kaccha* shops. The average age of the shops was about 13 years old, ranging from one to 25 years. Still this average age can be misleading as about one third of the shops appeared after the

earthquake in 2006, i.e., they were at most three years old. Most of the shopkeepers in Chinati belonged to the Mughal *biraderi*, with a few Kiani, Sheikh, Alavi, Nai and Pukhtoon from KP also present. On average shopkeepers had attended school for eight years, with a small number having no or primary formal education, a few others having gone above Matriculation (10th grade), and about half having completed Matriculation. Most were migrants before becoming shopkeepers, either in Pakistan or in the Gulf, and one third had at least one other male family member abroad, mostly in the Gulf, sending remittances. About half of the shopkeepers had been working as shopkeepers in the bazaar before the earthquake. Of the 22 sampled shops that were present before the earthquake half were not affected by it, six were slightly affected, two were heavily affected, and three were completely destroyed. All the affected shops were being rebuilt by the shopkeepers themselves, with no government or NGO assistance, as throughout the earthquake-affected areas both the government and NGOs focused their livelihoods assistance mostly in agricultural projects or in cash grants to poorer families. By 2009 only four out of the 11 affected had recovered from the impact of the earthquake.

The vast majority of shopkeepers did not own their shops but rented them, paying on average Rs. 500 per month. Shops were run as family businesses, with most shopkeepers working alone or with relatives (often from within the family), with the exception of the *dhaabas* which hired based on skills, although even here *biraderi* played a role. About half of the shops restocked directly from the bigger bazaars in Harighel, Bagh or Rawalakot, while the remaining waited for distributors to come by. As a trend though, more and more distributors were coming to Chinati, especially after the earthquake. Only a small percentage of shopkeepers owned a bank account and most did not participate in saving committees.³³ While 13 of the total interviewed said they experienced no seasonality, i.e., that there was no particular period of time when they sold more, 14 said it peaked during *Eid-ul-Fitr* and six mentioned summer, traditionally the wedding season. Most had regular customers, with a slim majority keeping tabs and allowing some customers (5 to 15%) to obtain products while paying later, and a third also lending money to some customers, but again not more than 5 to 15% of their customers. It is worth to mention that customers who had access to tabs and loans were often related to shopkeepers, or belonged to the same *biraderi*. For most shopkeepers

³³ Of the 10 that did, most paid a monthly fee of Rs. 100. Committees ranged from four to 13 members, with membership mostly based on type of business.

the average customer came weekly or fortnightly to their shops and spent about Rs. 10 to Rs. 500, majority spending Rs. 100 or less.

Immediately after the earthquake half of the shops reported fewer customers than usual. One year later 10 shopkeepers still had less customers while a similar number had the same number of customers as they did before the earthquake. Four years after the earthquake, the situation started to normalise with only a small number of shopkeepers having less customers. Yet, 14 shopkeepers (out of 22) stated that they now had less profits than before the earthquake. It is important to add that apart from the earthquake Pakistan and PaK had been affected by a severe rise of inflation since 2008, which played an important part on these figures. Almost all of their homes were affected by the earthquake. All of them received government compensation, ranging from Rs. 100,000 to Rs. 175,000, with the majority receiving the full amount. While before the earthquake most lived in *kaccha* houses, due to the new building codes they had to ascribe to receive state compensation, they now owned *pakka* houses, although only a fourth had CGI roofs.

There were two private schools in the bazaar, the oldest being Al-Noor established by the Syed family in the late 80s. The teachers were either Syed or Mughal, mostly women from the neighbouring villages. Many of them previously studied at Al-Noor themselves and had recently graduated or were now finishing their degrees mostly from the Open University. The male teachers were all Syed and related to each other, with degrees from AJK University or from Pakistan, including two with Masters. Although the teachers said the teaching was done in Urdu, often it was mixed with Pahari. In 2002, the READ Foundation opened up a school in Chinati. Originally built in Sarian in 1999, it moved three years later to Chinati because, according to the principal, it was more central, although some villagers from Sarian say the moved happened because of conflict between READ and some locals. READ had mostly Mughal and a few Kiani female teachers. As they were part of the READ Foundation, teachers regularly went to their regional headquarters in Bagh for further training. READ tried to portray itself as better than Al-Noor by focusing not only on teaching but also on extra-curricular activities. It also benefitted from being part of the READ Foundation which, after the earthquake, had access to a larger endowment fund. As such, differences started to appear, namely in salaries (Rs. 1,400 to Rs. 2,000 at Al-Noor compared to Rs. 2,400 to Rs. 4,000 at READ), teacher training, furniture, computers, and the previously

mentioned extra-curricular activities. By being linked to (and partially funded by) Jammati-Islami,³⁴ READ also differed from Al-Noor by having a gender segregation policy in classes. This was one of the main reasons why some parents preferred Al-Noor to READ, while others preferred READ because of the extra-curricular activities.

Most teachers, regardless of the school, took on average one hour to get from their homes to the school. Classes started at 8 a.m. and finished by 2 p.m., giving female teachers time to engage with their household chores. The biggest complaint teachers had was related to salaries. Salaries at government schools started at Rs. 6,000, much more than either school offered its teachers. During my fieldwork, many female teachers at Al-Noor were thinking of leaving if the salaries did not go up. But low salaries were not a reason on its own why female teachers left; most often it was because they got married and either their new family did not agree to them being away from the home in the initial stages of marriage, or because they did not agree with them being away for such a low salary. Often unmarried or divorced female teachers saved their salaries for further education, as in most cases they would like to go for further studies and did not have the means. Still, despite the low salaries, many more women wanted to become teachers. Being a teacher meant more than having access to a salary; it was one of the few occupations deemed morally and socially acceptable which allowed women to *be* outside their homes. As Razia, an economics teacher at Al-Noor, said “*studying and becoming a teacher has helped me come out of my problems. Two years back a psychologist came to our place and treated many people who were very disturbed [because of the earthquake]. Teaching gives me a purpose.*” An overwhelming majority of female teachers liked to teach. Rehana, a Kiani from Hothala who taught at READ, mentioned she wanted to teach in a government school not because of the higher salaries, but because “*there is no proper education, children want to study and wish to study [in] public schools, but there is a lot of sifarish.*”³⁵ *I wanted to go to the public schools with READ syllabus and teach there.*”

The Storytellers

In this thesis I decided to divide the storytellers of Chinati bazaar not according to caste or *biraderi*, important factors in stratification, but according to migratory status for two

³⁴ The Principal was also a JI member and polling agent.

reasons. First of all, this categorisation captures one of the key ways people think of and relate to one another in the bazaar; even when they introduced themselves to me, or were introduced, their migratory status always immediately followed their residential one. Second, while caste is an extremely important dividing factor in this area it does not necessarily separate people by worldviews; migratory status – or lack of thereof – on the other hand seems to contribute greatly to create different worldviews and therefore different narratives on the earthquake and other events. As such, I have divided my storytellers into: (a) Gulf migrants; (b) Pakistan migrants; (c) Non-migrants, and; (d) In-migrants.

Gulf Migrants

My conversations at the bazaar really started once I accepted Bashir's invitation and went to his shop the morning after we had met him in front of the *adda*. After the initial greetings he told us to sit inside his shop, called for the tea boy from the *dhaaba* across the street and ordered tea for all. *"What do you want to know about my Kashmir? It's very green isn't it? And the bazaar is clean, no? I was the first [shopkeeper] to put a dustbin in front of my shop. Eventually people started putting their own. Some put their garbage in my dustbin, but it's ok, better than garbage all over the street."* Bashir had worked in Dubai as a waiter in a four-star hotel for 15 years. He went with 'no education' (by which he meant 10th grade, the common level of education for most Pakistani men) so he could not speak English. He bought a notebook and every night after work he would write words in Urdu and their translation in English. After 5-6 months he could speak English. He retired in September 2005 and returned to his village Sarian just three days before the earthquake. After the earthquake he bought four shops in the bazaar with his savings. He rented three of these and in the fourth one he set up a general store, selling dry food items, toiletries, cleaning products, snacks and other household items.

Like Bashir, a sizeable proportion of shopkeepers and customers in Chinati had previously migrated to the Gulf. Many upon return, if they had saved enough, opened up shops either in Bagh city, Harighel or Chinati depending on the quantity of savings, as the more money saved, the bigger the bazaar where they opened up a shop. Usually

³⁵ Here in the sense of corruption.

though, before returning from the Gulf they would keep the ‘migration door’ open by bringing in a family member (preferably a son or a brother) to replace them in the Gulf. In a way, they were making a family business out of migration. Once back at home the preferred investment for their savings was to buy plots of land; either in bazaars which could then be rented out, or agricultural land within their villages, not necessarily to farm but as space for future housing needs. If they were still healthy most would try to become businessmen setting up a shop in a bazaar.

The aim of becoming a businessman upon return was not guided by profit as much as it was by other factors. Many of my informants mentioned several reasons, namely that idleness was a sin so if one was still strong and healthy one had to work to live an ‘honourable living’, by being active in the bazaar one was aware of (and involved in) the daily affairs of the region, as the bazaar was the main public forum³⁶ central to social and political life, and it was also a way of gaining status, for many were before migration farmers and labourers, and now traders. Their knowledge of the world – through their first-hand experience as world travellers – was a catalyser for the constant displays of critical thinking and debate which shaped public life at the bazaar. This space was also used to lay claim of their exploits and knowledge of ‘abroad’, to tell of the innovations they brought home, and to share their worldview with the ones who stayed behind. In a way, to tell stories.

“There’s a lot more to the hotel business than meets the eye; so many departments. Here people think it’s all the same as this hotel in front of us [the dhaaba]. There aren’t any good hotels in PaK that’s why people here have no clue what a hotel really is.” Ammar, retired head barman in Dubai

“I introduced biryani and pulao at weddings. People enjoyed it so much that they started cooking with masalas.” Yasin, retired cook in Karachi and Abu Dhabi

Bashir related to me (and others) how migration changed his worldview twice: the first time, when he was a young migrant working in construction in Bahrain and had to share accommodation with Hindus and Sikhs, he realised that everybody ate together, which went against what he was told at home, that people from different religions could never eat together. The second time was when he started working as a waiter at the four-star

³⁶ In a way, the ‘agora’ of rural life.

hotel in Dubai. One day he was supposed to serve food and beverages in the swimming pool area of the hotel and he noticed that there were naked men (with profusely hairy chests) and women around. He tried to juggle with the tray in one hand while using the other hand to cover his eyes, but this proved difficult. For a while he even thought of quitting the job. One Pakistani Punjabi waiter told him that if the guests felt ashamed, they would cover themselves, so he should not worry and serve and look. His point was that one should not judge people by the way they look: *“we are all God’s creations at the end of the day – even the hairy ones!”*

When to return home was not always a migrant’s planned choice. Zulfiqar, who did the rounds with his donkey carrying products from the bazaar to people’s homes, was a gardener in Sharjah’s cricket ground for 15 years. Unfortunately, he developed a serious respiratory disease by inhaling chemicals used in the ground and a doctor told him that the only cure was to live in the hills, away from pollution. Zulfiqar came home, to the hills of Bagh, where he says he is a happier man, relaxed, doing lots of exercise and having no tension. Mohammad Sheikh, a middleman in the bazaar, was desperate to leave for the Gulf, where his two older brothers were, when he finally got the call in 1996. He moved to Dubai where he happily worked for four years. The problem was that he was the youngest child and closest to his mother. *“She used to call me and cry on the phone and would not stop crying, so out of guilt I came back.”* Once back he got married and started a business in Harighel, but since he was used to the life in Dubai he could not take the slow life here. He took his mother and family and moved to Rawalpindi, where he opened a *khokha* (kiosk) similar to the one he had in Harighel. *“Unlike here, there you make good money”*. He made enough money even to lend to people from PaK in Rawalpindi, and he made many friends there. When the earthquake happened, he had to close down everything and come back, since many of his relatives were injured and much was destroyed. It took them a little while to get things in order, their house was slightly damaged, but they were well to-do and he had his brothers abroad, so they coped well. Since he had to close the shop in Rawalpindi quickly, he lost a lot of money. He tried to go back, but he could not afford the initial investment. Also, the people to whom he had lent money either had disappeared or were not in a position to pay him back. *“I got fed up of the place, sold the shop and brought the money here. I then invested in this supply business. Now I’m happy around here – at the end of the day, there’s no place like home”*.

Owning a shop in the bazaar was also at times a good investment if the next generation did not succeed in the Gulf, as it happened with Parvez's sons. Parvez was the owner of the biggest shop in Chinati. He had been a primary schoolteacher before migrating to Dubai in 1978. An agent friend of his had previously tried to lure him into working in the Gulf with the promise of much higher salaries, but money was not a temptation for him, as his father owned a lot of land and his brothers had a successful workshop in Harighel. What made him migrate was the loss of his mother, who died in 1977, and to whom he was close. He just took a one-year leave from his teaching job and thought of coming back, but months turned into years and he started getting good at his job, eventually starting to enjoy living there *"I never drank, I never smoked and I never went after girls. You could do that there, but throughout my time I never did that"*. Initially he was a supervisor at the four-star Dubai Metropolitan, then he was promoted to reception and in four years he made it into the management cadre.³⁷ After some time he arranged for his elder son to join him, then another relative, then another, until he had sponsored 43 relatives plus 100 others. When he came back in 2006, because of the earthquake and his diabetes, his son stayed in Dubai for a while but eventually returned as he could not 'survive' on his own.

"None of my children studied [not more than Matriculation] although I could afford for their studies. Since the father wasn't there and their mother wasn't educated, neither had the influence of the mother nor the strictness of the father to attend classes. I made a shop for my eldest son and he makes some money. For my younger son I even bought him a car to start a business, but he destroyed both. Now I have no choice, but to make him sit with me at my shop. One of the biggest regrets of my life is that I gave my children everything on a plate, I should have made them work hard for everything".

Parvez never charged money for sponsoring migrants, i.e. he never became an agent. *"I never had greed about money, I just did it for the benefit of others. This was a poor region. I could have become an agent and I would have earned in crores and easily be one of the richest men here, but to become a bara aadmi [big man] never fascinated me. My ideal life was to lead a simple and uncomplicated life, which rich people never do"*. There were others though, who after migration became agents. Mushtaq, who had

³⁷ Which meant he even had a private room.

previously worked in Dubai for five years, was one of them. As an associate of Sheikh Ashraf, a self-made *bara aadmi*, he was in charge of finding good workers in the area to send to the Gulf. He was also in charge of Sheikh Ashraf's NGO, the Sheikh Neel Din Foundation, which offered free computer classes in the bazaar and was planning to build a hospital. Similar to other *bara aadmi*, who created NGOs after the earthquake and became involved in the reconstruction and rehabilitation stages bidding for development contracts, Sheikh Ashraf tried in the process to gain political clout and status.³⁸ Sheikh Ashraf was the son of a Hindu who had worked for the Syed patriarch in Poonch city and moved to Serabad with him in 1947, converting and marrying a Raja from the settlement. Sheikh Ashraf had migrated to Kuwait and worked for 12 years for Kuwait airways after which he became an agent and sponsored people from the region, as well as from Nepal and India, to work in the Gulf. In 2006 he obtained a catering contract with the US army, making it the preferred option for many in the region. According to him,

“People prefer jobs in Kuwait and Iraq because all is paid for; ticket, food, accommodation. They get their passports in Arja and then depending on the job, the agents takes care of the rest of the paperwork. In Dubai you get from 600 to 1,800 dirham, but you have to pay for food, flight, and live in poor conditions in containers with the AC off from October to March.”

In Iraq the salaries were US\$ 800 for a mechanic (minimum 3 months), US\$ 700 for a cook (3 ½ months), US\$ 500 for a barber or tailor (5 months), and US\$ 400 for a labourer (6 months). Mushtaq often complained that it was hard to find technical people in the region. During my fieldwork they needed four male nurses in Iraq. Mushtaq found one at the hospital in Bagh and two others were working with ARC, with experience but no formal qualifications. He went to Bagh, got diplomas made on the computer (from some university in Sindh and Balochistan) and sent them. A few months later the employer called very happy with their work and asked for more male nurses. Usually the agents pay for everything and start receiving their commission (starting at Rs. 100,000) from the 3rd month onwards. Agents, like most Gulf migrants, complained about the lack of initiative of Pakistan's and PaK's governments towards migrants, as they felt they were not as active pursuing overseas contracts as were other governments. As Mushtaq once

³⁸ The importance of the agent as *bara aadmi* reached its peak in 2009, when the PaK assembly elected as its prime minister a man whose rise to power was fuelled by his fame as a Gulf agent, having sponsored

told me, while we were having breakfast together on the roof of a new *dhaaba* in Harighel recently bought by the owners of the main *dhaaba* of Chinati,

“Dubai is bad, nothing is happening right now. Kuwait and Qatar are better options. Iraq also, but there’s no government assistance. Indians and Bangladeshis are there with government support, but not our government. We’ve got two overseas ministers who haven’t even been overseas themselves. They don’t know people living outside the country. How can they facilitate migrants? About 80% of people here are migrants. No information about us in Pakistan.”

Serabad-born Syed Ali Shah was another *bara aadmi*. Although a Syed he did not pay much attention to schooling and left at 16 to become a waiter in Rawalpindi and then Karachi. In 1971 he reached Dubai without a passport by dhow. Once PaKs were entitled passports his brother got him one (in Mirpur). Initially he cleaned houses and learnt Arabic at night.³⁹ He then joined the UAE army for four years, where he picked up English with British officers. He later got a job with an Irish company and by befriending the foremen, many of whom were British ex-army officers, became an agent, bringing about 900 people from the area. Today, living in Islamabad, he owns property throughout Pakistan, a construction company, two hotels in Bagh and Muzaffarabad, and is the co-owner of the main private radio station in PaK.

Pakistan Migrants

Every time I would stop to chat at Bashir’s shop Kashif, his neighbour at the bazaar, would come and greet us. Kashif made and sold *pakor*s and *jaleebis* in the bazaar, enough to make ends meet. He had lived in Karachi for 30 years, initially working as a private driver for 25 years and then as a clerk in a Parsi-owned law firm. He was married three times: the first wife, with whom he had a son, died young; he divorced his second wife and a few years before the earthquake he remarried a distant younger cousin. After the earthquake his wife kept on asking him to return to Thial, as she was missing him, felt alone and their son was growing up without a father. He came back but since then could not find a decent job, like the ones he had in Karachi. Eventually he

thousands of people to migrate to the Gulf.

took over the *pakora* shop as the old man who was in charge of it had a heart attack and could not work any more. Not only was his income much lower than the one he had in Karachi, this job was also dirtier. “*You should have seen me in Karachi: starched white shalwar kameez, shiny black shoes, I was someone there, I looked like a bara aadmi*”. In the bazaar his clothes were unkempt and dirty. Kashif compared his life to the one of a Sindhi man – a servant of a *vedera* (Sindhi feudal landlord) – he met in Karachi: his clothes were unkempt, his looks dishevelled, but he was happy to follow his master’s wishes. “*He was a slave, just as I am a slave to this shop*”. Kashif wanted to return to Karachi but his four brothers decided to make separate houses after the earthquake, so he had to stay to take care of his family. “*It’s no longer a joint family. I have responsibilities here, so I’m stuck here*”.

Kashif was one of the many shopkeepers and customers in Chinati who had worked in Pakistan, mostly in the larger urban centres. Some migrated to Pakistan before the Gulf migration boom, while others migrated after. The ones migrating before the boom – if not in the army – mostly went to Karachi, where they worked as personal drivers, in construction and in factories. Despite being historically a big recruitment area, since the 1980s numbers of PaK enlistments dwindled due to, according to my informants, better education and low army pay. Similar to the pattern of Gulf migration, once a migrant established himself he would sponsor other family members to join him, eventually sponsoring other *biraderi* members as well as friends. A group of them – mostly Mughals from Sarian and a few Raja from Serabad – worked in a pharmaceutical factory in Karachi, either in the assembly line or in the refectories. While they were migrants in Karachi, they could rarely save enough money to bring home, until the Bhutto reforms in the early 70s, when labour unions became more powerful and factory wages increased enough for them to start sending money home.

From the mid-1970s onwards a bifurcated pattern of chain migration started to appear in several villages, where men migrated to Pakistan or the Gulf depending on the place where their initial family migrant went. Ashfaq, a male nurse working in Karachi but originally from Thial, told me that his family always migrated to Karachi. “*When a boy is 16 and finishes Matriculation he’s sent to Karachi for further studies and employment. In Thial this is the migration pattern: if a boy has relatives in the Gulf, he*

³⁹ Many migrants proudly mentioned to me the fact they self-taught Arabic and English in the Gulf. That was also a reason why they wanted their children to learn ‘good’ English at school.

goes to the Gulf; if he has relatives in Karachi, he goes to Karachi.” The pattern was not ubiquitous and there were several cases of Gulf migrants’ sons migrating to Pakistan and vice versa. There was a preference though for Gulf migration, as it not only paid much more than migrating to Pakistan but it was also seen as more prestigious to go overseas. Yet, it was much more expensive to send someone overseas – paying for a passport, travel and often commission – as compared to Pakistan, only a bus drive away. Often within families who had more than one son, the eldest would be given preference to be sent to the Gulf and the others to Pakistan.

Families with a single son faced a higher risk though. Omar, who sold newspapers in Chinati and Khorian, used to work in construction in Karachi. Upon his return he had made enough money to own a house in Thial and provide his son with a good education. Unfortunately, his son chose not to study and became a waiter in Bagh. Omar then got a loan from his relatives so he could send his son to Dubai and, in his own words ‘earn a nice retirement’. Unfortunately his son spent all the money in Dubai, coming home empty-handed. He was now unemployed, living off his father, with a pregnant wife and two children. *“We stupid people think that we can just make babies and God will provide – you’re so stupid to think that you can just sit on a rock and some angel comes with a plate of food”*. Omar said that what he made was enough to live – he called it *haway rozee* (light earnings) – getting up to Rs. 40 a day for the newspapers and Rs. 400 per month distributing post from Harighel to Chinati, but because of his son he had extra mouths to feed. He still owed his relatives money that he used to send his son to Dubai, and despite them being kind enough not to mention the loan or wanting it back, he had to live with the mental burden of not being able to pay it back. *“If ever they’ll ask for anything unfair – not that they’ll ever do – I can’t say no”*. Recently, he found out that his old company in Karachi was giving pensions to retired personnel, but because he had a fake ID card (he tried to get a government job when he came back, so he changed his age) he could not get access to the Rs. 3,000 monthly pension. *“My ID can be ‘fixed’ in Muzaffarabad, but I don’t have the money or contacts to do it. My greed got me screwed”*.

Unlike the older generation, most of the young shopkeepers were in fact underemployed. They usually held a diploma or a degree and, either because they could not keep a job in Pakistan,⁴⁰ or because they did not have the right connections in PaK,

⁴⁰ Often not because of themselves, but due to family pressure to return, particularly after the earthquake.

they often were left with running the family's store. The younger shopkeepers who had migrated before did so mostly to the main urban centres of Punjab and constantly thought of migrating again. Imtiaz, a Mughal from Sarian, owned the first shopping building to be made in Chinati, with three shops in the ground floor and four rooms on top. His father built the place with money he saved from working in Kuwait. Imtiaz used one shop as a general store and rented the others to a man from Thial who sold paints and to Ali, a retired Karachi migrant from Sarian who had worked at the same pharmaceutical factory, and always had the coldest cold drinks. He rented the rooms to the cobbler, the bank staff and to two drivers. Imtiaz used to work in Lahore as a waiter, where he picked up English by talking to tourists. His family has a court case in Bagh with the agent who sent his father to Kuwait, because during the First Gulf War he was evacuated and promised compensation, which he never got. It looked like his family was going to win the case and when (and if) they did, he was thinking of using the money to migrate to the Gulf or to open a business in Pakistan. Imtiaz, like most others in the bazaar, said that a business in PaK (or at least in Chinati) was never profitable and the only way to have a profitable business was to have one in Pakistan, away from his community. He mentioned that lending money with no proper return date – and with no lending rate (*riba*) – was a mistake businesswise, but it was what kept them together socially.

“Hum kareeb rehta hai [we are close to each other]. If my shop was in Bagh I would deal with cash, but here people come once a week and buy a whole month's ration. Here is weekly, while in the city it would be daily. Also, most of my business is on credit. If someone buys me four cans of oil, he will pay 40% now and give the rest later – this can take up to a month or even longer. It messes up my whole cycle –I don't have enough cash to restock. No one gives 'me' credit!”

Faraz from Khorian also wanted to one day open up his own restaurant in Lahore or Rawalpindi. He was part of a group of men who worked in catering in Lahore. First he worked as a waiter, then a cook and then went back to being a waiter because, despite being paid less and not a fixed amount, it was 'less boring'. Of his monthly wage he spent Rs. 3,000 and sent the rest home. *“It's very hard spending so little in Lahore, but I need to send money home, otherwise there's no point being away.”* Like most Poonchis, he shared a rented room with friends near Sherpao bridge *“mostly because it's cheap*

and easily accessible to most restaurants and hotels.”⁴¹ When asked why so many people from PaK were working in catering (in the Gulf or Pakistan) Mehmood from Basantkot, also a waiter despite having an FA (12th grade), said “*It’s the easiest non-skilled work you can get and the quickest that can get you on your feet. Now there’s more education but not during our parents’ and our parents’ parents’ time. They were the first ones to go out for catering; we just followed.*”⁴² Some of the people working in Pakistan also profited from having a father or brother abroad to set up their businesses elsewhere. Fahad, living in Sarian but married to a Lahori, started a venture buying and selling food and sanitary items through fairs in Pakistan thanks to his eldest brother’s initial investment, himself a Gulf migrant. While he happily accepted his brother’s assistance, he was more reticent about receiving help from his in-laws. “*My wife’s parents have offered me to start a business in Lahore. I like Lahore a lot, but I would like to settle on my own terms. It isn’t honourable to accept a deal like that.*”

Finally, there was the upper rank of returned Pakistan migrants, the white-collar workers who, for unforeseen reasons, had to return. Such was the case of Ali Naqvi, an advocate at Bagh city’s court. He migrated to Lahore for further studies and, after graduating with a law degree, started to practice in Lahore until his father died and he had to return to Serabad. The story of his life, according to him, was a love story. Just after he finished Matriculation the Syed patriarch of Serabad, an influential Syed in the region, had announced that he would marry his only daughter to the most educated man in the region. Ali Naqvi, who was in love with the daughter in question, decided then that to become the most educated man he should go to Lahore and study law. After he graduated and started working in a law firm in Lahore, he returned to Serabad to marry the Syed *bara aadmi*’s daughter. He lived and worked in Lahore for more than 15 years until his return to Serabad in the late 1980s. Upon his return he restarted his legal practice in Bagh city and entered politics by joining the Muslim Conference, eventually reaching the upper echelons of the party. As seen in the previous section, this connection proved to be a crucial element in the ‘modernisation’ of the bazaar with the tarring of the road.

⁴¹ Situated nearby in Mall road and M.M. Alam road.

⁴² According to some informants the reason why people from PaK worked in catering in the Gulf was because they were more hygienic and better educated than other Pakistanis.

Non-migrants

Syed Ali Raza, who lived in nearby Bagla, had never migrated outside PaK. With a BA degree in Economics from the AJK University's Muzaffarabad campus he taught mathematics, English and economics at Al-Noor for the past four years. After the earthquake he also worked part-time for a government-funded NGO dealing with disabled people, having benefitted from a series of seminars and training sessions in Islamabad with "*specialists from Pakistan and even abroad.*" Working for this NGO also allowed him to rent a small room in the back of one of the bigger shops opposite to the mosque. He furnished it with a computer and printer and, having somehow access to internet, he thought of turning it into Chinati's first cyber cafe. When I met him he was also planning to further his education and had recently applied for a Masters in Sociology back in Muzaffarabad. Until then, he would continue to teach at Al-Noor and work on his cyber cafe.

The non-migrant population in the bazaar was so because either they were too young to migrate, too poor, or because they had a job that did not require them to migrate, although often they had a migrant father or brother(s). Taking into consideration that most of the young ones would, eventually, migrate or have some family member abroad, it appeared that there was only one factor that prevented anyone in Chinati from reaping the bounties of migration, namely poverty. This poverty did not only mean lack of economic capital but, as important if not more, social capital. Here I am referring to Bourdieu's (1986: 248-9) definition of social capital as "*the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.*"

Of the people that worked in and around Chinati bazaar – and were not too young nor with access to remittances – the only ones who had never migrated were two deaf brothers (both of them tailors), one unmarried man who sold bakery items, and the two barbers belonging to the Nai *biraderi* who lived in a nearby settlement. The eldest of the barber brothers was a mason who part timed as a barber because, he said, his father was

a barber⁴³ so he decided to become one as well. This decision though, was also economic since his daily wage as a mason was about Rs. 300, while as a barber he earned from Rs. 700 to Rs. 1,400. His younger brother worked only as a barber, two days in Chinati and the rest of the week in neighbouring villages. Both brothers were known for being very pious and religious men⁴⁴, in a way possibly compensating the lack of social capital through symbolic capital. The unmarried old baker got his bakery items from Harighel; whenever he needed bread they would send a van. His profit margin was minimal and he often used to run at a loss. “*You got to do what you got to do, at least I’m making an honest living*”. Recently though, he started selling more bread and running out of stock everyday. He said that after the earthquake people had become more “English”, having bread for breakfast. Until then people would have *parathas* and *desi gee* for breakfast, “*but now even the poorer ones have a breakfast of eggs and toast*”.

An important occupation in which some men never migrated was that of the drivers. There were several types of drivers depending on the type of vehicle used. Jeep drivers mostly operated between the bazaar and the villages with no tarred roads, transporting goods and people, and between Harighel (and sometimes Bagh) and Chinati, transporting mainly goods. As roads were now being reconstructed, many of which were being upgraded from gravel to tarred, people started to prefer buses and taxis to jeeps as a mode of transportation. At the further eastern end of the bazaar stood the *adda*, the bus stop. This was the place where people took the buses to Harighel or Bagh, with four daily shuttles from Monday to Saturday (two in the morning and two in the afternoon) and twice on Sunday. Most of the drivers were locals, except for two who rented out a room in the bazaar. After the earthquake the number of drivers increased, due to the increase of construction and the need for construction materials, and an increase in the NGO presence (needing local drivers). Many saw the rise in demand for transportation as a good business opportunity and started using their savings to buy a vehicle.⁴⁵ As of late though, there was an overflow of taxi drivers. This was particularly visible in the urban centres of Bagh and Rawalakot where taxi stands and *addas* were packed with taxis, most of them getting no work for days on end. Some drivers even

⁴³ Who even performed circumcisions (*musalmani*), an important marker of male Muslim identity, and a traditional component of the barber’s role.

⁴⁴ Both sporting long beards and no moustache, with their heads always covered.

⁴⁵ Some families even used the money they received for housing reconstruction to buy a car and start a taxi service.

decided to quit the business, like Shoaib who now owned a ready-made clothes shop in Chinati.

Abid was one of those who profited with post-earthquake transportation demand. Having worked first as a truck helper and then as a truck driver in Pakistan, in 1985 he bought a jeep which he operated until the earthquake. After the earthquake he was the first person in the region to buy a Mazda and start transporting construction material from warehouses in Bagh to all locations and projects: from roads, to bridges, to schools. Four years later he owned three Mazda and two jeeps, driving one Mazda himself, his son another and hiring drivers for the other vehicles. His son Wasay drove a lorry because despite having a diploma in mechanical engineering he could not find a job in the region. *“There are about 10 to 15 people in the area with my diploma, but only three or four jobs in Bagh. There is little demand. I’m now trying to go abroad and already started getting in contact with agents.”*

In-migrants

There were two types of people who migrated to Chinati: the ones employed in the formal economy and those in the informal economy, i.e., workers and labourers. The former tended to be educated and mostly from within PaK, while the latter were usually uneducated (or had primary schooling) Pukhtoon who came from KP. The first group consisted of teachers, who came early morning either from neighbouring villages or from Bagh, and the bank staff, who rented out rooms in the bazaar and lived there during the week. The bank manager, Ali, was from Bagh, a graduate in economics from AJK University who had been placed in Chinati since 2004.

Of the Pukhtoon working in Chinati only one had a shop, the *mochi* (cobbler) who had been in the bazaar since before the earthquake with a young nephew as an apprentice. Originally from Mardan, they also rented a room in the same place as the bank staff. According to most people, the *mochi* had the most profitable business in the bazaar, as he was the only cobbler in a place where people got their shoes fixed rather than buying new ones. In fact, according to most shopkeepers the most profitable businesses were the ones done by outsiders, namely the cobbler, the barber, and the bank manager. Most Pukhtoon had worked somewhere else before coming to Chinati, some even before coming to PaK. One of them, Khan Saab, used to have a shop in Bagh, where he sold

shoes, garments, and toiletries. He used to go to Shaalmi bazaar in Lahore to buy his inventory and make quite a profit: *"I would get a shoe for Rs. 300 and sell it here for Rs. 600. I had an ideal life"*. Unfortunately, his shop was destroyed by the earthquake and because he was not a local he had no access to any type of compensation. Since then he joined the Pukhtoon labouring force working in post-earthquake reconstruction throughout the region. Like many other Pukhtoon he was critical of the way people worked in PaK. *"The problem with people in Kashmir is that they just hate hard work, they rather sit down drinking tea than doing the hard work themselves. It's a good thing for us [Pukhtoon] there's a lot of work and value for us, since they don't do the hard work"*. Pride in manual labour pervaded throughout the discourse of most Pukhtoon labouring in PaK. Adam, a young uneducated Pukhtoon from Upper Dir proudly stated that Pukhtoon as a group were not famous for being intelligent and did not know anything apart from physical work: *"Of course I'm dumb, that's why I work here. If I was smart I'd be in England [where you are doing your studies]"*⁴⁶. Their surprising pride in not being considered intelligent comes from intelligence being linked with cunningness in the case of Punjabis who, according to them, cannot be trusted with money, while they themselves being straightforward to the extent of being considered 'dumb' are therefore honest.

Even Pukhtoon who succeed in life through hard work and ingenuity, often did not credit themselves with being smart. Gulzar, a Pukhtoon from Upper Dir, only made it to grade three. When he was nine he beat up another student and the headmaster called his parents. He got beaten up by both and in anger tore all his books and ran off to Lahore. There he first worked as a dishwasher (Rs. 10 a day), always paying attention to how food was made. He then became a cook (Rs. 12,000 a month) at a kebab shop in Model Town. When he turned 18 he moved to KSA where he worked as a driver for three years, until he got arrested for working outside his contract with a company, as he thought he could make more money on his own. He was in jail for four months and then deported. Back in Pakistan, he moved to Chitral and started working in a timber company. Eventually he started his own timber business and moved to Afghanistan,

⁴⁶ The stereotype of the 'dumb Pukhtoon' pervades throughout not only Pakistan but also within Pukhtoon of all classes and backgrounds - the idea being that they find education overrated because they are either landed and too rich to go to school, or too sturdy and martial not to be involved in physical work. The truth, of course, has more to do with the fact that KP was always a region with some of the worse standards of education, with an enormous divide between the haves and have-nots.

where he was successful initially but lost it all because of the Taliban.⁴⁷ He returned to Chitral where he was working in both timber and construction until the earthquake. He moved to Muzaffarabad, where he attended a vocational training workshop on construction and got into a road construction project. Initially he used to go to people to find jobs, but he developed a good reputation and since then people came to him to offer projects. He has done several jobs in this area, including five homes for Mushtaq and a school in Khorian.

“Many people started reconstructing their houses and if they got quotations for 10 lacs I would do it for nine and I needed to do it for that much and well done, so I could build a reputation. It’s a fluctuating business, my monthly profit changes, but I can make up to Rs. 50,000. On average months I make Rs. 30,000. Mushtaq offered me a job in Iraq, but I told him that I’m not going to work for anybody. If he wants to get me a job, it has to be as a contractor.”

Still, Gulzar did not consider himself smart. In his words, to be successful a person needed to be either very educated or have really good experience. According to him, he was not smart because he did not follow his studies and his experience was all due to hard work. When I said that he too was learned, as people learn through experience, that he had travelled a lot and could speak five languages, he insisted that *“yes, you learn, but that does not make you smart or intelligent.”*

Conclusion

Life in and around Chinati bazaar, like in most other rural bazaars in PaK, was continuously changing. Many of the defining elements that shaped social, economic, and cultural change were rooted in historical processes in which people from this region played a determining role, from the Poonch Revolt that sparked the *Azadi* movement in 1947 – and consequently the Partition of the State of Jammu and Kashmir – to the increase and diversification of migratory patterns and education levels. In October 2005 when the earthquake struck at the heart of PaK, according to many of my informants it ruptured not only the land but also all aspects of everyday life. While its physical

⁴⁷ He refused to pay them bribes.

aftershocks were felt for weeks on end, its economic, social and cultural aftershocks lasted much longer.

For most people the earthquake became a metaphor for rupture and change, the very moment from which they could date various transformations in their lives. However, as this chapter has made obvious, the lives of the people of Chinati bazaar have been subject to change for many decades now. While people have thought of this region as remote and closed off, its people have integrated and negotiated with global capitalism over a long period. Neither their economy nor the project of modernity can be dated from the earthquake. And yet, as the following chapters will show, it is indeed from the earthquake that changes emanate in the minds of most of my informants.

In the following chapters I examine some of the main changes my informants believed had occurred in this region because of the earthquake. In each case I argue that while the rupture caused by the earthquake is rhetoricised in the everyday interactions of my informants, as seen in their stories, many of these changes in fact represent a more continuous process of change that has occurred over a long period of time. In other words, the earthquake did not so much create change as it crystallized, and at times intensified, pre-existing changes. However, before I can do that, I must first look in detail in the next chapter at this great point of rupture, the earthquake, itself, and at the day it shook Chinati bazaar.

Chapter Three

The Day the Earth Shook: The October 8th Earthquake and its Aftermath

Introduction

Through my fieldwork in Chinati bazaar I was always acutely aware of the fact that the stories and narratives I was collecting from the many storytellers of this bazaar were deeply embedded in and contextualized within a trauma and a sense of loss that I could not entirely grasp. My experience of the earthquake, from which everything was dated in this bazaar, was to have been shaken from my sleep and to have slowly walked outside to wait out the tremors before going back to bed. For the people of this bazaar though, there had been no going back to bed. In that instant they had either lost everything, or had witnessed these enormous losses at close enough quarters to have been permanently scarred by them. I could listen to their narratives and look for common patterns that were indicative of an emerging discourse, but it took a very serious effort to truly understand the context within which these were told. In this chapter I go back to the day of the earthquake in an attempt to explain the extent of loss and suffering that my informants, the storytellers of Chinati bazaar, had lived through on that fateful day and in its aftermath.

There were two types of suffering that my informants had lived through. The first was the earthquake itself. The 8th of October 2005 is a day that will forever be in the minds of all the inhabitants of PaK. The official government estimate of the death toll from the earthquake stood at 85,000 with more than 150,000 injured and most housing structures destroyed or damaged. Overall, the earthquake affected the lives of more than 3.5 million people in PaK and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The second was the relief, reconstruction, and rehabilitation process that started in the earthquake's aftermath. This process brought to the scene – through Pakistan's special 'open door policy' instituted to deal with the emergency – development agencies, private sector organisations and other actors – many for the first time. The arrival of these agencies had both positive and negative impact. On the one hand, it brought a new hope that life could be 'Built

Back Better’.⁴⁸ Through these agencies came new ideas and practices in housing, communication, health, sanitation, education, and livelihoods. They brought with them a reason for change. On the other hand, the post-earthquake assistance brought with it a different type of suffering – one that led to a loss of honour and dignity, compelled people to beg for assistance, and led to the exclusion and marginalisation of certain groups through the mistargeting of aid. As a shopkeeper from Bagh city put it, “*God brought on us the earthquake and the devil the aid*”.

In this chapter I examine how people dealt, physically and emotionally, with both these sources of rupture, change and suffering. I also look at how both these events – the ‘earthquake event’ and the post-earthquake ‘assistance event’ – were used by the people of Chinati bazaar to discuss and engage with cultural, social and economic changes, in the process creating discourses of change and suffering. I start the chapter by looking at how people in the region, from the urban centres of Muzaffarabad and Bagh to the villages north and south of Bagh, lived through the earthquake and the subsequent days. I follow this description by examining how people at the bazaar made sense of the earthquake and its legacy, and I elucidate the discourse on change that the ‘earthquake event’ created. After this I discuss in detail the arrival of the development agencies and other ‘outsiders’. I describe how these agencies appeared, how they provided assistance, and analyse the reasons for their successes and failures. Following this section, I look at the separate discourse and legacy of suffering and loss that this second ‘assistance event’ created. I conclude that as with the earthquake, people’s discourses of change *because of the earthquake* were also visible in their stories of everyday life and muddled up within these were other stories of pre-existing changes.

The Day the Earth Shook

On the morning of October the 8th 2005, more precisely at 8:52 a.m., the villages surrounding Chinati bazaar, along with the rest of PaK, were hit by an earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale that originated in the Balakot-Bagh fault, with its epicentre approximately 60 kilometres northwest of Bagh city (Hussein *et al*, 2009).

⁴⁸ This was the motto of the civilian organisation set up by the Government of Pakistan, the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency (ERRA), to plan, coordinate, monitor and regulate the reconstruction and rehabilitation activities in the earthquake-affected areas of PaK and KP. It had also been used during the 2004 Tsunami and the 2010 Haiti earthquake.

Throughout the day, a total of 232 aftershocks were registered after the initial quake, out of which one was classified as strong (6.4) and 26 as moderate (USGS, 2011). While more deaths and injuries occurred further north towards Muzaffarabad – the official death toll for Bagh district was approximately 8,500 deaths compared to 34,000 deaths in Muzaffarabad district – physical destruction was more visible in Bagh District, with 92% of housing units⁴⁹ and 80% of shops damaged, compared to 79% of housing units and 70% of shops in Muzaffarabad (ADB/WB, 2005). This section is about that day, how it was witnessed by the world and lived by the people in the urban centres of Bagh, the migrants who rushed back and the villagers living north and south of Bagh city. Keeping in mind Das' (1995) work which shows that critical events are often recalled and retold more by 'others' than by the participants/victims themselves, I make use of their stories and, as much as possible, their voices to try to give the closest picture of what it was to live through the earthquake.

Muzaffarabad, Ground Zero

While Pakistanis and most South Asians felt a tremor in that early morning and seismographs around the world quickly detected its epicentre, it took some time until the world got the true picture of its impact. In the first few hours people watched on their TV sets the rescue operation in Islamabad where an apartment building had collapsed and news emerged of a hundred or more deaths in KP. Meanwhile, with the epicentre having been located only 19 kilometres northeast of Muzaffarabad, most people began to fear that the worst was still to come from PaK. Efforts to get news from the area were futile, with the roads blocked by landslides and telephone lines dead. After trying to reach Muzaffarabad by three different approaches and failing, a BBC reporter concluded that "*it will be a while before we have a clear picture of the damage (...) From this end, the Pakistan-administered Kashmiri area is completely cut off from the rest of the country.*"⁵⁰ On the way, however, he and many other journalists encountered thousands of villagers that had come down from virtually destroyed villages, trying to take their injured to the city. This gave them and the world an initial idea of what to expect in terms of the damage caused in PaK.

⁴⁹ The disaggregated figure was 56.7% destroyed and 35.6% damaged.

⁵⁰ BBC reporter's log, October 8.

By the second day some people managed to cross the landslides but the roads were still blocked. Some reporters called Muzaffarabad the ground zero of the earthquake, an allusion to the main site of destruction in the 9/11 attacks in the USA. *“I covered the tsunami and the Bam earthquake in Iran, and frankly I have not seen anything as bad as this.”*⁵¹ Most of the buildings had collapsed and people were sleeping in the open, with nothing to protect them from the constant cold rain. Many of the buildings were educational institutions, with hundreds of children trapped inside. Due to the high levels of education in the region and Saturday being a school-day, a large number of people who died were schoolchildren. For this reason people often talked about the loss of a generation. The Pakistani government, through its armed forces, started a helicopter ferry service, bringing food and medical supplies in and carrying the injured to hospitals in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, but the numbers were overwhelming. *“All that one hears is the constant clattering of military helicopters reverberating through the valley and the wailing of women. They say people buried underneath are still alive, and many are trying to move the concrete slabs with their bare hands. Anger against the government is growing by the minute. The mountains around look fragile and on one side of the city, the mountainside is still falling bit by bit.”*⁵²

On the third day the first major road link was re-opened. *“A lone bulldozer has made its way to Muzaffarabad’s main bazaar and is trying to clear the road. The streets have a bad smell to them. Anger is mounting by the minute. Until yesterday, there were many who said they were certain the authorities would soon move in. Today, they have only hatred in their eyes. Many among them have started to wonder if they were, indeed, the lucky ones.”*⁵³ Eventually help started to arrive. By mid-morning the army finally entered the city with heavy hammers, pick-axes and shovels. The level of destruction and chaos was so great though, that *“no one, it seems, knows where to begin.”*⁵⁴ While people were leaving the city in mass, by the end of the day there was also a steady stream of traffic heading towards Muzaffarabad and other affected areas, mostly composed of ordinary individuals arriving with loads of aid as well as relatives checking on their loved ones. The big relief operation was now finally underway.

⁵¹ BBC reporter’s log, October 9.

⁵² BBC reporter’s log, October 9.

⁵³ BBC reporter’s log, October 10.

⁵⁴ BBC reporter’s log, October 10.

Bagh City

Figure 3 – Bagh bazaar one month after the earthquake



The picture in Bagh city was not much different from that of Muzaffarabad. Despite being further away from the epicentre the physical destruction was similar, with roads blocked by landslides, many shops in the main bazaar razed to the ground, all the city's hospitals and government buildings severely damaged, as were the telephone, water and electricity infrastructures. As it was Ramzan the bazaar was sparsely populated, with quite a few shops still closed and many shopkeepers sitting at the steps of their shops. Conversely it was a school day, which meant that all schools were open and packed with schoolchildren. As the first tremor hit Bagh most of these schools caved in, trapping an enormous number of schoolchildren inside. Several people found themselves also trapped when many of the city's mosques collapsed. After the initial shock those who were alive poured into the streets and in disbelief realised that wherever they looked all they saw was rubble and clouds of dust. But the most gruesome picture was yet to come; as the dust settled down they started to see the bodies of those trapped inside the falling buildings. While some in shock and disbelief just stood by the roadside, either silent or crying, others desperately tried to rescue the ones trapped inside Bagh's innumerable collapsed buildings. With thousands buried inside schools, mosques, shops, houses, and government buildings survivors now turned rescuers and used picks, shovels, pieces of metal, and bare hands desperately attempting to dig children, women and men out of the rubble.

Khan Saab, whom I met often in Chinati bazaar, owned a small shop in Bagh where he sold shoes, garments and toiletries. Ramzan had started a few days ago and business

was slow, but as he had woken up early for *sehri*⁵⁵ and was done with his morning prayers he decided to open up his shop anyway. He had just opened a few minutes before and was chatting with his neighbouring shopkeepers when his world came crashing down. His shop collapsed as did most in his street. In our conversations he always told me that reliving that day was too overwhelming. *“I remember every moment, but I don’t want to talk about it – ever. I had an ideal life before. But I was not a local so I couldn’t get compensation. I lost it all, so I had no option but to leave and work in construction.”*

Close to the river, a few streets further down from where Khan Saab’s shop once was, the owner of a tea shop saw the river drying up for 20 minutes and then suddenly gushing black water. *“I think it was black; maybe it was red.”* There were so many dead bodies in the city that the owner of a bookstore nearby, along with other shopkeepers, buried 10 people in a single grave without wrapping anyone in a *kafan* (shroud). Along with the innumerable dead bodies filling the streets of Bagh, several shopkeepers told me of the horror of seeing severed bodies of their own relatives and acquaintances. The owner of a carpet shop said that the trauma of seeing headless children and amputated men and women made him go without food for two or three days.

Migrants

It was into this mayhem of gore and destruction that migrants rushing home from the nearby hills of Muree and the urban centres of Rawalpindi and Islamabad arrived. Riaz was working in Muree when he felt the earthquake. A waiter from Bagh District, like many waiters who worked in Muree, his village was a few kilometres north of Bagh city. He heard from fellow Kashmiris about the situation in PaK before any news appeared on TV. He took off from work and tried to get a bus to Bagh, but there were none. The transport system had collapsed and none of the scheduled busses for the area were ready to go. He got together with a few others from Bagh and persuaded a bus driver to take them there. They had to pay a lot, much more than the normal fare, and the driver told them he would take them only to the closest point until where the cars could go. He drove them as far as he could; there were so many landslides that he eventually dropped them on the road a couple of kilometres after Arja. From there Riaz

⁵⁵ Morning meal before fasting.

and the others proceeded on foot to Bagh. On the way they kept on seeing collapsed houses and people taking the injured on *charpoys*⁵⁶ to the nearest hospital in Bagh. When they got to Bagh what they saw was destruction and chaos. Every shop had collapsed, buildings crumbled with twisted metal rods, rubble everywhere coming into the roads. It was there that they realised that the whole region was destroyed and the chances of their families being alive were very low. As night started to set in, accompanied with heavy rain, frenzy took over them and they felt an urge to get to their villages in the hills. With the sound of landslides rumbling in the hills and the probability of not making it home, some decided to wait while others, like Riaz, dared to keep on walking, crossing landslides in the dark, going home.

When these migrants rushed back, most did not have enough money to support their families at such a time and could not even borrow major sums from anyone. But they had to go home. A migrant from Rawalpindi took five days to reach home and was relieved to see his entire family well and together. Many of his friends from work, he later found out, had lost many family members. Another migrant, also from Rawalpindi, reached home to find some of his family members still in the rubble. Some he saved himself and took to the nearest hospital camp. All migrants kept on stressing how grateful they were to their neighbours, for helping their families out of the rubble, for sharing the little they had. All villagers in fact kept on telling me tales of how people had helped each other. They felt a debt particularly towards the young men who had helped the most in getting people out of the rubble, walked endlessly again and again to the army camps to get relief for their families and for those who could not do it themselves – the widows and households whose men were not present.

North of Bagh

In the villages north of Bagh, where the destruction was ubiquitous and the number of deaths was high, people considered themselves survivors of war. Many people, having physically lived through wars fought between Pakistan and India, either by being shelled (destruction) or by having to relocate (displacement), equated the effects of the earthquake to the effects of war. They all had tales of death fresh in their memories. Nine months after the earthquake, in one of those villages a man told me the story of his

⁵⁶ A bed made up of a frame strung with tapes or light rope.

three daughters. All three were in the nearby public primary school at the time of the earthquake. The eldest was a schoolteacher and the younger two were students. The youngest was misbehaving in class, so the teacher – her sister – sent her out of the classroom and told her to sit outside as a punishment. When the earthquake struck, the school collapsed killing most of the children and teachers. Of his daughters, only the youngest survived. She was sitting quietly near her father, clinging to his *kameez*, while he was telling me his story. Another man in a nearby village was trying to get his brother out of the rubble when a stone slipped out of his hand and hit his brother. His brother died and now this man considered himself a murderer.

The help that they did not get was also fresh in their memory. In their own words, they were made to beg for food, tents and money at a time when they had lost control over their lives. It took about three days for the first help to get to these villages, the ones easily reachable on foot. Villages further in the hills received assistance as late as two weeks after the earthquake. The first help they got were tents and scanty bedding from the army, the first official assistance provider from the state. The army had sent a message to the villagers saying that to obtain assistance they needed to go to a relief collection point, which they had set a few hours' walk further up. The villagers went there for three consecutive days, only to be told that their collection point was actually further down in another village. Every time they would go there, though, they were refused assistance, as their village fell in another sector.⁵⁷ Eventually the villagers got access to tents, some dry ration, and medicine but not without a fight. One night, the villagers saw the army *subedar* in charge of the collection point giving relief goods only to people with whom he had what they called a 'special relationship'.⁵⁸ A fight started and, with many more villagers arriving in a show of strength, the *subedar*⁵⁹ eventually allowed them to access relief goods as well. This interaction with official assistance, though, happened because villagers went to the collection points. The first time the state agents went to their villages was a month after the earthquake, and that only with the purpose of surveying the area.

⁵⁷ While the civil administration divides PaK into constituencies forming Union Councils, the army divides PaK into mapped square sectors. Rarely do these two divisions match.

⁵⁸ When probed further, the villagers told me that a few households were sending their women to collect relief goods, possibly in exchange for sexual favours.

⁵⁹ I had a conversation with this same *subedar* a few months after the earthquake (before I was told this story), where he told me that "*the people here are shameless, with no concept of honour*".

South of Bagh – Chinati

South of Bagh the picture was slightly different. While the destruction pattern was similar, with most housing structures destroyed or damaged, there were few landslides so roads were less affected and more importantly, there were less deaths. Still, that day remained fresh in people's memories when I returned to Chinati in the Autumn of 2008.

Having returned from Dubai just one week before the earthquake, Bashir was sitting outside his house thinking about going to the bazaar to see which plot to buy with his savings to build a shop. His terraced house stood on the southern slope of Sarian, southeast of Chinati bazaar, facing the Bagh-Rawalakot road and the Mahl Nullah. From his veranda he could see the other side of the valley, the Rawalakot side.

“When the earthquake struck I was frozen. I didn't talk, didn't move, I was in shock. Then I heard the cries coming from all over the hills. I looked at my house and saw my family outside. They were all shouting something, but I couldn't hear what. I kept on hearing the cries all around. Later my neighbours came – one of my nephews had broken his arm, so I go in the car to take him to Bagh hospital. I took a few others [injured] too. The scene in Bagh was crazy; so many people, so many injuries and deaths, hospitals and houses destroyed. There were lots of foreign doctors, they had a translator who couldn't explain anything to them, so I started translating. They offered me a job to go with them to Muzaffarabad but I said no, I had to stay and take care of my family. [In the following days] there were so many NGOs around – most of us didn't know what this NGO thing was – from all over Europe, Gulf, America, they came to help us. [In our village] we waited for help and on the third day we got food from a helicopter – I was very happy. In the first few days we slept in the street. Eventually I made a tent-like structure, because it kept on raining.”

In Thial, on the northern side of Chinati bazaar, Babar, a waiter in Dubai, was back home for his annual leave. Sitting in the kitchen floor and sharing a late breakfast with his wife the first jolt knocked him to the ground.

“Most of us managed to escape, except one young niece. While we were all outside I went back. One of the walls had already collapsed and she was frozen. I picked her up and brought her to safety. She is still affected by the

earthquake and so is one of my daughters. After the earthquake we were living in inhuman conditions, in tents and it was a cold winter. Living those moments was so horrible that I don't even wish this to my worst enemies."

Further up in Khorian, where the forest is thickest, Sajida was playing with her son inside her house. Her house, like many others, was *kaccha* with wooded beams. She felt restless and distracted because for some days now she was fearing something bad was going to happen, but she kept on playing. With the initial tremor the beams fell on her and she got internal injuries and bruises. She was so badly hurt she could not take care of her son for days. Her neighbour's houses were also destroyed. All the women remember that they were shoeless for two days and without kitchens or cooking utensils for 20 days.

While there were no casualties at the bazaar, the scene was nonetheless a frightening one. Striking in the early hours of a quiet Saturday morning, when business was slow and some of the shopkeepers had not even arrived, most of the people at the bazaar were the schoolchildren and teachers at the two private schools. Following the initial tremor they all left their shops, some of which were starting to crumble and collapse, and ran home worried about their families. Rehana, a teacher at READ from Hothala, was in Chinati bazaar when the earthquake struck.

"I was teaching that morning, giving an exam. I had a pen in my hand. At first I noticed something strange happening and when I realised it was an earthquake I really felt it was big. I looked outside and saw the wall of the dhaaba falling. My students were busy with the exam and I told them to stop and get out. And the pen was still in my hand. All the students followed me and we stood near a tree. READ is so disciplined that only my class had left. I called from the outside to the other classes to get out. I was calling everybody else. All the students came in proper lines with the teachers heading them. My cousin came to the bazaar, he found me there and I left with him – with the pen in my hand. I was worried about my cousins because I saw the road leading to their house with a big crack. I headed to my house and saw my mother trying to pull out our cow from the [collapsed] shed. There was so much earth on it that we left it there. I still had the pen in my hand. My neighbour's roof fell. There were three ladies inside, but we could only save one. The three ladies were holding hands and shouting, but

there was so much noise that I couldn't hear them. Their hands were set loose. I still remember [one of] the lady's face, with wood and mud in her eyes, her face. It took me one year to recover and I can still see her face.

Everyone was fearing their own houses. For three days we cooked food but didn't eat. Everybody was staying in the gardens and then it started raining. We would go to our homes, but then would come out. The watercourses changed so we had no water. Nobody would go home, there were rumours that another earthquake would happen. I lived in my khala's [mother's sister] house for one year. All the boys came back from their jobs. Only after one year teaching resumed. READ came to the teachers' houses and asked them to come back to teach."

Post-Earthquake Discourses of the Storytellers of Chinati Bazaar

*"And now? We bury the dead and take care of the living."*⁶⁰

The way in which people made sense of the earthquake had a strong influence on how they dealt with life after the earthquake, both physically and emotionally. For many the earthquake was not an event that happened in the past, but one that kept reoccurring in their minds through reminders all around them. Each time there was a mild tremor, each time there was a strange sound, each time they looked at their incomplete homes, the earthquake and its legacy made themselves visible through the sounds, images, and objects of their everyday lives. More importantly they were visible in people's narratives and actions, and it is to this discourse that I turn next.

Rationalising the Earthquake

Three years later, in the stories I heard at the bazaar about that day I could see people's reasoning for why the earthquake had happened through an array of justifications based on theodicies and science. In turn, the rationalisation of its occurrence had an influence on how people perceived its impact on society, with some telling stories glorifying a community spirit that emerged out of the rubble and others narrating the opposite, that it had made members of their society more individualistic and selfish. In this section I

analyse people's perceptions of why the earthquake happened, its rationalisation, as well as its legacies.

After being struck by an unannounced calamity where loved ones died or were injured, where houses and livelihoods were destroyed, people tried to make sense of the event. Two questions kept recurring in people's minds, namely why did the earthquake happen and why did it happen *to them*? Most people used science and religion, or a mixture of both, to answer these questions. As Merli (2005: 106) notes, while historically we have changed the way we see disasters from "Acts of God" to "Acts of Nature" to recently "Acts of Men and Women", these explanations are not mutually exclusive, but co-exist in the same social context.

Regarding the first question, many people thought the earthquake happened because this region lies in the collision area between the Eurasian and the Indian tectonic plates. Using the scientific discourse of plate tectonics theory they concluded that as the Indian plate keeps moving inland towards Asia it creates earthquakes, such as the one of October the 8th. I found most proponents of this explanation among the more educated (schoolteachers, civil servants, professionals) and overseas migrants. Some not only believed in this theory, but wanted others to know it as well. A returned migrant from a village north of Bagh decided that especially schoolchildren should know this and took it upon himself to go from school to school teaching children (and teachers) plate tectonics. Among the people who used a scientific discourse to explain the earthquake there were some who thought that earthquakes happened because there were underground caves filled with gases, which upon the movement of tectonic plates would release these gases, causing the earth to shake.⁶¹ Many others used religion to explain the earthquake. They saw the earthquake – and the subsequent suffering – as an instrument of the purposes of God. Within these, some said the earthquake was a trial sent by God, while others said it was a punishment. All made use of Islamic theodicy to reach this conclusion. Throughout the Quran there are several *suras* which state that "*God has power over every single thing*"⁶² and that God is merciful and compassionate. According to Bowker (1975:112) by seeing suffering both as a punishment and as a trial

⁶⁰ The Marquis of Pombal, on being asked what was to be done after the Lisbon earthquake of 1755.

⁶¹ Kant (1756, in: Reinhardt and Oldroyd, 1983) developed a similar theory after the Lisbon earthquake.

⁶² '*Ala kulli shayin Mushtaq*.'

“the Quran attempts to reconcile the fact of suffering with a belief in God’s omnipotence and compassion”.

As for why the earthquake happen to them, almost all (including the ones that reasoned its occurrence in science) stated that it was God’s will. Soon, a ‘religious reason’ (Simpson, 2011: 426) growing out of people’s experiences appeared to ‘explain and blame’. Many saw the earthquake as a preview of *Qayamat* (Judgement Day), as they drew comparisons between the Quranic description of *Qayamat* and the post-earthquake chaos, destruction and suffering. In fact, many people would refer to the earthquake as *Qayamat*. So if the earthquake was a punishment sent by God, what was God punishing them for? Tariq, a middle-aged unemployed Raja from Serabad said that “*God [was] punishing us for our sins.*” Which sins? There were mainly two explanations of what these sins were, both indirectly linked to migration and each created and recreated by a specific group. One explanation – given mostly by people who had no access to remittances – was that God was punishing them because their society was becoming more individualistic and materialistic. This had been happening since people started migrating to the Gulf and not sharing their wealth through the community. The other explanation, a male-dominated discourse, put the blame of their sins on women and their mobility. In their society seclusion and exclusion practices such as the purdah system were key tenets in the everyday life of men and women. Women, they said, should not be seen without their *mehram* – husbands and fathers – in public. If there were no *mehram* around, then they should be confined to the private sphere of the house. As many men migrated to Pakistan and the Gulf the female population, particularly between the ages of 15 and 50, was greater than the male population. This demographic group was also more mobile, with many young women enrolled in educational institutions and many adult and active women working outside the house. According to these voices the migratory and educational trends that had been in place since the 1970s allowed women to venture into the public space. Their presence in public meant, according to my informants, that they were in direct contact with non-*mehram* men, through which many had become promiscuous and could be considered adulterers. It was for this that they had all been collectively punished.

The Impact on Morality

The way people rationalised the occurrence of the earthquake had an influence on how they perceived its impact on society. Migrants, who were not present when the earthquake happened, would often praise the community spirit that the earthquake triggered in people's minds and actions. Many were extremely thankful for their neighbours' help with removing relatives from the rubble and sharing the little they had in the initial days. They particularly praised the youth for tirelessly walking to relief assistance points, often risking their lives crossing 'live' landslides, to fetch relief goods for those who could not go themselves.

Context-bounded explanations on the state of morality of local communities post-earthquake, with an aim to define social boundaries, were often embedded in *"theological universalistic explanations of the existence of suffering and evil"* through religious discourses (Merli, 2005: 104). Many who stated that the earthquake was sent by God as a trial also praised the 'togetherness' that evolved during the following months, implying that they had 'passed' God's test. Some though, felt that they had failed God and would add their voices to the chorus of disenchanted people who believed God had sent the earthquake as a punishment. These people felt that the earthquake had brought selfishness and greed out of people. Even Gulf migrants such as Ahmed, one of Bashir's relatives from Bagla whom I met while he was on leave from his catering job in Dubai, discussed this greed and selfishness. *"People stopped caring after the earthquake. They became selfish and money-oriented."* Many shopkeepers in Bagh said that people had lost their moral values and singled out the local and non-local businessmen who artificially inflated prices of food and medicine soon after the earthquake. In reality, many felt that it was not the earthquake but the subsequent events, namely the aid that followed, which had destroyed the sense of community and made people individualistic and selfish. For some of these shopkeepers *"God brought on us the earthquake and the devil the aid."* While this perception was mostly enacted by non-migrants who felt that they had received less aid than they deserved or were entitled to, with the passage of time some migrants too stated feeling that the sense of community was a thing of the past. Soon the discourse of 'past-together' versus 'present-separate' started being internalised by many migrants, as they would return and see destroyed houses and – following housing reconstruction where many households decided to rebuilt separately – destroyed homes.

“Things got worse after the earthquake. People used to care about each other, family, neighbours. If you were in trouble, people would help you. Now people are materialistic. Money came in between people. Collectively lots of money came in, but individually it isn’t that much. It wasn’t worth all that individuality for little money.” Mushtaq, Gulf agent

People who received little or no assistance, particularly those in households without migrants and who were not entitled to the full housing compensation, would phrase their disenchantment with the aid process through religion. Bashir, a retired migrant whose house was partially damaged⁶³ and had no relatives abroad said that *“before the earthquake we had the four characteristics needed for a society to function: mohabat [love], bhaichara [brotherhood], humdardi [compassion], and insanyiat [humanity]. After the earthquake all this has vanished. This is not a result of the earthquake, but of the situation people were in.”* Out of his four characteristics, three – love, compassion and friendship/brotherhood – are usually mentioned as reasons to give *sadqah*, or voluntary charity. Like the villagers in some of the unreachable villages north of Bagh who – due to the initial lack of coordination in the relief effort – had to beg for relief, people who were unable to access the aid that poured into PaK felt a sense of deprivation and inferiority (*ehsas-e-kumtari*). Omar, the newspaper seller, explained to me how this sense of deprivation was exacerbated by post-earthquake assistance: *“After the earthquake something has gone wrong ‘up here’. Rich people will talk to rich people and poor people will talk to poor people. People thought that they would all get aid, but since the influentials got aid and they didn’t, that made them feel deprived like never before.”* Some, like Raza the young Syed science teacher at Al-Noor, felt that individualism, which they attributed to being modern, was something that was bound to happen as, even before the earthquake, they *“were becoming modern”*. Their interaction with development agencies accelerated it. Advocate Ali Naqvi posited that their society had become more individualistic because people were now (post-earthquake) more aware of opportunities available – and by opportunities he meant skills and employment gained through development agencies.

⁶³ And therefore was only entitled partial compensation.

Discourses of Change

In the early months of my fieldwork a common topic of discussion with people at the bazaar, particularly those who I knew from my previous fieldwork in this area, was the extent of change that happened through post-earthquake reconstruction. In one of our conversations I reminded Ali Naqvi, whom I had interviewed a year after the earthquake, that he had said it would take more than five years for things to get back to normal. I also told him that most people at the time had said the same and quite a few said things would never be normal again. He thought about it for a while and after having a sip of his tea replied that I had asked that question too early, too close to the earthquake. *“After the earthquake we felt our lives moved 50 years back, but now we realise that we in fact have moved 60 years ahead. A lot of things have improved. We are becoming modern.”*

Ali Naqvi’s positive outlook on the legacy of the earthquake was reflected in my conversations with other informants as well. The motto of the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency (ERRA)⁶⁴ – *‘Building Back Better’* – went beyond physical reconstruction in most people’s minds. It was internalised in people’s narratives of post-earthquake life, with ‘better’ becoming the equivalent of ‘modern’: better planning, better houses, better jobs, better life.⁶⁵ The earthquake and the outsiders it brought were seen as the main agents of modernisation, with PaK often portrayed in people’s discourse as a static, unchanging region before the earthquake that had been frozen in time since 1947.

It is worth remembering at this point that ‘modernisation’ is not a neutral concept, but is, rather, value-laden. While for many being modern was something to aspire to, for many others it was an unwarranted and negative consequence of the earthquake. In PaK the latter group of people would claim that the exposure to the outside world had had an impact on morality: people (especially women and the youth) were becoming individualistic, materialistic, and less religious. This they saw as the destruction of (their) society’s moral fabric. Others though, were grateful that by opening PaK to the world the earthquake had accelerated their progress along the path to being modern.

⁶⁴ The civilian organisation set up by the Government of Pakistan to plan, coordinate, monitor and regulate the reconstruction and rehabilitation activities in the earthquake-affected areas of PaK and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

⁶⁵ The word most often used was *pakka*, literally meaning ‘solid’, but used colloquially to mean ‘formal’ or ‘better’.

Despite decades of migration to Pakistan and the Gulf and interacting with ‘the world’ through consumption, most people in PaK felt that the region had been boxed in until the day the earthquake struck. As Raza, a teacher at one of the private schools in the bazaar who had never migrated said, “*no one knew where PaK was. The earthquake opened up this place to the world. Most people in Pakistan thought there was only one Kashmir, on the other side [in India].*”

Part of this positive discourse on a traumatic event was based on the fact that before the earthquake, the direct interaction between people from PaK and the outside world was mostly unidirectional: men went from PaK to Pakistan, the Gulf and the rest of the world.⁶⁶ The presence of foreigners was rare and even the number of Pakistanis coming to PaK was small, mostly consisting of a few traders, civil servants, the armed forces and, since the late 80s, militant groups. To the outside world – as most of my informants would say – there was only one Kashmir, the Indian one. After the earthquake, however, a stream of people and organisations stepped into PaK, many for the first time, in response to the humanitarian emergency. Some compared this flow of assistance to the Pukhtoon invasion and chaotic ‘assistance’ during the 1947 Poonch Revolt. Sardar Zulfiqar, a retired artist and son of a former prime-minister of PaK with whom I conversed regularly while in Rawalakot, was one of them. “*People came from Pakistan to help just like in the Poonch Revolt*, he said. “*They came with aid, but didn’t know how to do it or who to help. There were no logistics.*” However, to most of my other informants, these outsiders were largely a positive force that brought with them change. From this flowed a discourse of modernity.

In people’s narratives the outsiders were roughly divided into two groups: the ‘formal outsiders’ who belonged to organisations, like NGOs (both national and international), donors and the Pakistani private sector, and the ‘informal outsiders’, mostly Pukhtoon labourers working in road and housing reconstruction. In Chinati bazaar, and throughout much of the region, the term ‘NGO’ was used to identify both local and international NGOs, as well as donor projects, and sometimes even projects that were implemented by the state. The sudden, large and unprecedented presence of NGOs and donors gave rise to a discourse that focused on people’s relationship with the state. The fact that these organisations were perceived to be more efficient and richer than the Pakistani

⁶⁶ Indirectly, however, the interaction occurred in both directions, after the migration boom of the 1970s, mostly through consumption.

state allowed a neoliberal narrative on development to develop, whereby my informants envisioned a PaK where the state would be rolled back. “*Soon the government is going to be completely phased out*”, said Kashif, the pakora seller at the bazaar “*It will be only NGOs and donors [providing services]. Since the earthquake this is happening; the government doesn’t have their capacity.*” Many people in Chinati equated NGO presence with better living. They would talk about the improvements in health, education, and capacity building. Some, such as an informant at the Bank of Kashmir in Bagh city, also pointed out that NGOs had impacted the local economy through the infusion of money and the creation of jobs.

Not all local narratives about NGOs were positive though. While some saw NGOs performing better than the state, others pointed out how they too had mistargeted assistance and were as riddled with nepotism, corruption and incompetence as the state. In some places, particularly in urban areas, a male-dominated discourse appeared blaming NGO presence for the destruction of the region’s morality. Several shopkeepers in Bagh’s main bazaar equated the arrival of the NGOs to an increase of “vulgarity” among locals. By this they were referring to the fact that in most NGOs women were working together with non-*mehram*⁶⁷ men, which many (men) deemed un-Islamic. Rumours abounded in the bazaars of rising incidents of the elopement of female and male NGO staff. People’s perceptions of the moral impact NGOs had in the region developed into a discourse where certain aspects of consumerism and taste⁶⁸ became branded as part and parcel of an ‘NGO culture’, where the physical world was more important than the spiritual.

NGOs, donors and the ‘NGO culture’ were not the only new arrivals post-earthquake that gave rise to a new discourse. New ethnic groups also arrived as part of the massive reconstruction effort and created new dynamics. The largest of these groups were Pukhtoos from KP. Before the earthquake the Pukhtoon population in PaK was limited to a few traders and truck drivers living and working in the urban areas. During the reconstruction stage many more came, inflating their numbers in trading, transport and construction. In urban centres, the Pukhtoon population started to dominate the transportation sector⁶⁹ and setting up new stores. The Pukhtoon though, were not a

⁶⁷ Although the literal translation of *mehram* is ‘forbidden’, as it means a kin with whom a person cannot have sexual intercourse, in South Asia it is often used as ‘male guardian’.

⁶⁸ In a Bourdieusian sense.

⁶⁹ The Pukhtoon are known to dominate transportation throughout Pakistan.

uniform group; while some were wealthy businessmen who had enough capital to trade, many came from poorer villages in KP, willing/having to work for lower salaries and becoming the main daily wage labourers working in road and housing reconstruction. Soon ethnically-segregated Pukhtoon neighbourhoods started to develop in urban areas, as they would live together sharing food, accommodation and language. One such neighbourhood was a new *adda* that appeared in the outskirts of Rawalakot post-earthquake, uniquely Pukhtoon, which eventually became the main *adda*. In the eyes of the local population they were seen as a homogenous group, with their own culture and language. Local post-earthquake narratives painted the Pukhtoon as hardworking, business-minded individuals with a strong sense of community. These characteristics were seen as the opposite of what people in PaK had become following the earthquake. In fact some even hinted that one of the reasons why locals were now less hardworking and more individualistic was precisely the arrival of the Pukhtoon. *“After the earthquake lots of outside labour came and people have changed, they help each other less.”* With time, more negative views of the Pukhtoon developed, characterising them as uneducated, barbaric and materialistic. *“They would sell their own daughters for the sake of business”*, said a shopkeeper in Bagh city. Soon the Pukhtoon were seen as ‘the root of all evil’, blamed for introducing modern clothing and beauty products and even crime to the region. Khalil, the local metre-reader for WAPDA, the national electricity company, with whom I occasionally met while he did his monthly rounds in the bazaar and some of the neighbouring villages, was adamant that *“before the earthquake there were no issues, but since then crime has increased, because people came from outside, especially from KP.”*

In people’s stories of change at the bazaar we can see the earthquake as a point of rupture from which the collective memory of the bazaar dates its movement towards ‘becoming modern’. However, as I have already alluded, the earthquake was not the only event that disrupted their lives. The closely intertwined event that was the arrival of humanitarian and development assistance was to play a key role in their stories of the earthquake. This role was not always a positive one; as seen elsewhere (Oliver-Smith, 1996) the arrival of people and goods can be as stressful as disasters themselves. In Bhuj after the 2001 Gujarat earthquake people referred to the disruption caused during the reconstruction stage as the ‘second earthquake’ (Simpson, 2007). In the following section I describe the arrival of these ‘actors’ on the post-earthquake ‘stage’ and the

impact that their ‘scripts’, often rehearsed for other theatres and other audiences, had on the storytellers of Chinati bazaar.

The Rise of the NGO

The initial response to the earthquake was visible in a time span of a few hours to a few weeks through an array of different actors. Chronologically, the main actors who came to provide assistance post-earthquake were first the locals themselves, then Pakistani citizens from various parts of the country, followed by local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the state, and the international community in the form of international NGOs (INGOs), donors and the UN. Most were new to the region, particularly in the case of PaK, where it was previously difficult and extremely bureaucratic for non-local organisations to enter. Indirectly, not only did the earthquake bring new development agencies into the region, it also increased the presence of existing ones.

The term NGO was used rather loosely in the region – it applied to both local and international NGOs, donor projects, and even some projects that were implemented by the state. All development agencies advertised their input in a project with a banner or a sign with the name of the project and their logo, a form of announcing their active presence in the region, as proof of their contribution.⁷⁰ For people in Chinati – and throughout PaK – if a project had a logo of an NGO, international organisation, or donor country, it was considered an ‘NGO project’. If the project only had a government or ERRA logo, then it was a government project. As many of the reconstruction and rehabilitation projects were implemented through the state but with donor funding or in partnerships with donors and/or NGOs, they displayed donor and NGO logos, and were thus identified by people as ‘NGO projects’. In this section I describe how these various actors that my informants described as ‘NGOs’ appeared and how they provided assistance.

⁷⁰ In-site publicity - an important task to prove to funders their activities in the field - is often a reason why many development agencies prefer funding physical structures to capacity building. As a retired development consultant told me “*It’s always preferable to build a structure or buy a car rather than train people, because we can put our [development agency’s] sticker on things but not on people.*”

The Actors

As news of the earthquake spread to Pakistan, citizens quickly started mobilising food and clothing and organising truck services of relief goods to the affected areas, often being the first to arrive. Unfortunately, due to lack of awareness of the field and lack of coordination, combined with many blocked roads, the public response created traffic jams which resulted in a slowing down of the initial relief effort (Strand and Borchgrevink, 2006). At the time there were 34 INGOs which had formed the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) in 2001 (NDMA, 2007). They met in Islamabad on October the 8th to discuss the approach to take and divided the affected regions between them. Through their local partner organisations (local NGOs already in the field) PHF conducted rapid assessments within 24 hours and started search, rescue and relief operations, in some areas even before the state (Strand and Borchgrevink, 2006).

On the 10th of October the president of Pakistan created the Federal Relief Commission, a military agency to coordinate relief work, through which the army distributed relief goods and medicines, and set up displaced and medical camps. On the 24th of October he established the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency (ERRA), the civilian offspring of FRC.⁷¹ With the government adopting an ‘open door policy’ – relaxing visa and landing permit requirements, customs regulations, and waiving duty on relief goods – many more relief agencies poured into the affected regions. Within a month, there were 140 international and national NGOs registered with FRC and many more smaller local level ones operating in the region (NDMA, 2007). The amount of INGO assistance can be seen in the quantity of relief goods arriving in Pakistan, which combined surpassed the quantity of relief goods sent by any individual donor country, including Pakistan’s strategic allies (see table 2).

Table 2 – Relief Goods by Tonnage

	Tonnage
International NGOs	1,983.41
China	1,827.31
Saudi Arabia	1,074.58
USA	1,018.57
UAE	600.74

Source: NDMA, 2007

The United Nations (UN) decided to pilot test a ‘Cluster Approach’ for disaster coordination in Pakistan, where 11 clusters were divided among UNICEF (protection,

education and water/sanitation), WFP (nutrition, IT/communication and logistics), FAO (livelihoods), IOM (emergency shelter), UNHCR (camp management), UNDP (early recovery and reconstruction) and WHO (health), with OCHA in charge of overall coordination (Strand and Borchgrevink, 2006). As it was a new approach and both UN and NGO staff were unfamiliar with the concept, the high level of confusion created delays and ineffectiveness to the extent that it only became fully operational four weeks after the earthquake (ActionAid, 2006). With a military government ruling Pakistan⁷² and managing relief efforts, the elected bodies which were severely affected by the earthquake were further sidelined from relief and reconstruction plans, for which the UN agencies contributed by often relying more on the army than local democratic structures⁷³ (ActionAid, 2006; ICG, 2006).

Overall these agencies were involved in rescue operations, clearing rubble, distributing relief goods, logistical support,⁷⁴ providing medical assistance and constructing semi-permanent shelters. The latter, through the provision of corrugated galvanised iron (CGI) sheets mostly by non-state agencies, was crucial for the relative success of minimising further casualties and avoiding mass migration out of the affected areas during the following winter.⁷⁵ The government commended donors and INGOs for their operational flexibility and willingness to partner with local NGOs, which in turn created capacity-building for the latter (NDMA, 2007). Yet, most agencies, including state agencies, encountered serious logistical problems particularly with the storage, processing and accounting of relief goods, and an excessive convergence of operations in more accessible areas – to the detriment of far-off ones. Worse still, many communities received less assistance than needed not only during relief, but also throughout reconstruction and rehabilitation stages.

Different development agencies operationalised their work differently according to a multitude of factors, such as expertise, capability, size, and networks. While some agencies – notably the state and UN organisations – tried to cover as much terrain as possible (breadth), others – often local and international NGOs – tried to reach the

⁷¹ Although the head was still an army brigadier and most of its officers were seconded from the armed forces. Seven years later, most of ERRA's higher cadre was composed of retired army officers.

⁷² General Musharraf had come to power in a military coup in 1999.

⁷³ A further example to the sidelining of democratic institutions was the fact that neither the creation of FRC nor ERRA was done through the Pakistani or the PaK parliament.

⁷⁴ A crucial logistic was NGOs and donors' provision of helicopters to reach far-off settlements in this mountainous terrain.

⁷⁵ Fortunately the 2005 winter was a mild one.

closest to the individual (depth). By making use of their networks in the field, many organisations outsourced relief distribution to the armed forces and local NGOs. Later on, during the reconstruction and rehabilitation stages, bilateral and multilateral donors continued this strategy of outsourcing by tendering projects to (international and local) NGOs as well as to the private/business sector. To fully understand the approaches that different development agencies took and their operationalisation, in other words their actions, these must be situated within a political and historical context. Development (and humanitarian) interventions are often politically shaped by the interests and priorities of development agencies and driven not by policy, but by the exigencies of these organisations (Mosse, 2005). Development agencies have particular discourses depending on where they come from. For instance, most development agencies are based in OECD countries, where a development industry tries to change the existing world in certain identifiable, predetermined ways, a way of thinking rooted in European Enlightenment thought “*with it stress on humanity’s ability to understand and control the world*” (Stirrat, 2000: 37). Not only some of these countries but also regional neighbours have a history of involvement and attempt to change the nature of this region. Stirrat (2000: 33) reminds us that many of these agencies can also be seen as metamorphosed versions of older institutions such as missionary organisations (turned into INGOs) and colonial civil services (turned into bilateral agencies). To this equation we must also add the geo-strategic influence of ‘friends of Pakistan’ – such as China, Saudi Arabia and USA – and the fact that the earthquake happened during a critical moment in the ‘war on terror’⁷⁶. But zooming back into the ‘field’, even within similar development agencies there can be differences in approach and operationalisation, as Jasani (2008) discovered in her study of three religious organisations (*Jamaats*) operating after the 2002 riots in Gujarat, which had different *modus operandi* while providing and facilitating refugee resettlement. Moreover – and similar to the macro-level – while largely cooperating among themselves, these *Jamaats* were also competing for establishing doctrinal hegemony.

Out of all these different actors the only one that was already present in Chinati before the earthquake was the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), one of Pakistan’s largest NGOs. NRSP was mostly engaged in ‘community-development’ projects, including assisting the formation of community-based organisations (CBOs) and

⁷⁶ Where supporting a military dictatorship was crucial to defeat the ‘terrorists’, while trying not alienate

providing micro-credit. During the relief stages, besides the state through the armed forces, 10 different organisations provided assistance to the 17 *mohallahs* that composed the three *mauzas* surrounding Chinati (see Table 3). Out of these, villagers from the six *mohallahs* that surround Chinati bazaar and form part of my study received assistance from NRSP, GOAL, Save the Children, OXFAM, Islamic Relief, UNICEF, and the army.

Table 3 – Organisations Providing Relief to three Mauzas (17 Mohallahs) Surrounding Chinati Bazaar

Type of Organisation	Name of organization and number of Mohallahs (in brackets) covered
State	Army (12)
International NGOs	GOAL (14) Save the Children (6) OXFAM (6) Islamic Relief (1)
International Organisations	UNICEF (4) WFP (1)
National NGOs	NRSP (15) Lok Sanjh (1)
Religious Organisations	Jamaat-ud-Dawa (1) Jamaat-e-Islami (1)

Mistargeting Communities

Despite a concerted effort to make post-earthquake assistance universal, most relief and reconstruction assistance was delivered in a targeted manner. Like in other humanitarian crises institutional issues within development agencies made them adopt a pragmatic decision to target aid. “*Sometimes ‘targeting the vulnerable’ can just be a disingenuous way of identifying a number of people that corresponds to the amount of a relief item that happens to have been sent in, because of the unpredictable nature of relief pipelines, and is not an attempt to do more politically informed relief*” (Harragin, 2004: 318). For instance, in the 1984/85 Darfur famine in Sudan relief agencies used a relief model defined not by the situation, but by what relief workers could do about it (De Wall, 1989, in: Harragin, 2004).

During the relief stages targeting was mostly determined by physical access. Two factors were determinant in receiving assistance, namely location and transport. Households living near urban centres and/or metalled roads received faster as well as often more assistance than households living further away. A report from RISEPAK

(2006) notes that particularly in the initial relief stages more than the extent of need, proximity to a major road had a positive association with the level of assistance received, with more remote villages being 25% less likely to be assisted than less remote ones. The same was true for households which had access to private transportation⁷⁷ if road links had not been severely destroyed by the earthquake. For Tierney (2005: 113-114) social class position is “*the most obvious contributor to disaster vulnerability*”, as witnessed during the hurricane Katrina, where community evacuation plans were thought of disregarding lower classes’ lack of car ownership and reliance on (inexistent) public transportation.

During reconstruction targeting was mostly determined by social access.⁷⁸ The ability to create and/or use existing social networks based on kinship, caste, and clientelistic ties accelerated and increased assistance. As I mentioned before, the main actors providing assistance were the state (through ERRA, the local government and the army), NGOs (international, national and local), and to a minor extent political parties and religious organisations. Some actors, namely political parties and religious organisations, worked mainly in urban areas. Households connected with or able to connect with these actors making use of these networks benefited more than those that were not.⁷⁹

In tune with the current practice in the development industry, most agencies agreed on a community-based and community-driven approach for the road to recovery. Mansuri and Rao (2004) notice that regardless of becoming a key form of development assistance, such projects have largely missed the most vulnerable worldwide. A crucial factor for the poor performance of these projects is often the development agencies’ lack of awareness of the complex social organisation of rural communities. The literature maintains that, in rural settings characterised by social differentiation and patronage systems, community-based and community-driven development projects can become avenues for the rich and powerful to strengthen their control over the poor and powerless (Platteau, 2007). Unfortunately, “*the ‘community’ in participatory approaches to development is often seen as a ‘natural’ social entity characterised by solidaristic relations*” (Cleaver, 2001:44). In other words, many development agencies maintain the deep-rooted view that a community is simply a community, regardless of

⁷⁷ Either by owning or being able to rent transportation.

⁷⁸ I am not denying that relief targeting was sometimes determined by social access and reconstruction by physical access.

the historical, political, or social environment of the region. Thus, communities have been idealised, homogenised, traditionalised, and made the object of interventions that upgrade, democratise, and modernise them to fit policy objectives. This makes them *“good vehicles for development intervention because, on the one hand, they demonstrate society as ‘naturally’ self-regulating – an important premise of neoliberal political economy – and, on the other hand, they offer opportunities for improvement”* (Li 2002, in: Mosse, 2006: 696). Improving communities though, requires them to be made technical, so that experts can proceed to what Li (2011: 76) calls *“government through community”*: *“experts have constructed a technical field in which they are licensed and enabled to intervene in the minutiae of peoples’ lives.”*

Besides the notion of an ideal-type community – *“idyllic ‘village democracies’ whose members interact in a free atmosphere of trustful cooperation”* (Abraham and Platteau, 2004: 218), where development agencies can utilise a one-size-fits-all approach – development agencies often equate ‘community’ with ‘village.’ One such example is a study by Dasgupta and Beard (2007), where the authors use the terms ‘community’, ‘village,’ and ‘neighbourhood’ as being at the same political-administrative level while investigating the impact of elite capture in community-driven development in Indonesia. In South Asia, Stirrat (2000) states that development agencies’ persistence in using ‘village community’ lies in their (colonial) dependency on ‘orientalist’ works such as Henry Maine’s *Village-Communities in the East and West* (1881) and Baden-Powell’s *The Indian Village Community* (1896) to understand South Asian society. Sinha (2008: 62) elaborates that these authors’ recommendation to make ‘village communities’ the units of administration for the colonial state led to the creation and patronage of community institutions (controlled by large landowners and village headmen), making them *“internal to [the colonial state’s] logic, encompassing dominant groups within them into its functions and local organisation, which in turn confirmed and enhanced their power.”*

For Cohen (1985: 118) communities are constructed symbolically, *“making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity.”* The common assumption within development agencies was that there was always one identifiable community in any one location, with the same natural, social, and administrative

⁷⁹ Another actor was the migrant family member which, depending on his wealth, contributed with cash and in-kind assistance directly to households.

boundaries (Cleaver, 2001). Yet, as often witnessed, these boundaries are not clear-cut, but blurred and porous. Communities are taken as “*well-defined geographic entities, as opposed to geographically overlapping ethnic or religious entities*”, with their geographic scale determined (or created) by the government (Conning and Kevane, 2002: 381). But as Ferguson and Gupta (2002: 8) rightly warn us, “*the presumption that spaces are autonomous has enabled the power of topography to conceal successfully the topography of power.*” In other words, our insistence on the search for geographically delineated autonomous communities, or the notion that they are naturally self-regulating, leads us to ignore the underlining power structures within.

This was apparent in both relief and reconstruction stages, where development agencies largely ignored caste and kinship networks, despite most of their work being community-based or community-driven. Taking ERRA as an example, in its official documents it stated that it would work at community level with community-based organisations (CBOs) engaged in community-based rehabilitation (CBR) through its devised Community Livelihood Rehabilitation Plan (CLRP). By ‘community,’ it meant ‘village community’ (ERRA, 2006b; ERRA, 2006c; ERRA, 2007a; ERRA, 2007f; ERRA, 2008). Furthermore, ERRA’s documents reveal that it had little or no understanding of the social realities of these regions. This was especially evident in its *District Profiles*. For instance, the *Bagh District Profile* states “*the major tribes of the district are Mughals, Rajputs, Gujars, Syeds, Abass Sudhans, Awans and Khawajas. They all live peacefully like brothers*” (ERRA, 2007b: 3). The *Muzaffarabad District Profile* mentions that “*many prominent tribes make the society of Muzaffarabad (...) each residing in specific/distinct locality in the district*” (ERRA 2007c: 2). The *Rawalakot District Profile* says that “*the mother tongue is a great cementing factor of the Pahari speaking people because they remain so closely associated with each other that cultural ethos transcend all that of distinct beliefs and faiths*” (ERRA 2007d: 2). Nowhere, in any government document do the words *quom*, *zat* or *biraderi* appear⁸⁰. This region was characterised by caste-based and kinship-based networks of patronage,

⁸⁰ This was also true for an overwhelming majority of government documents produced by any ministry related to communities or villages in Pakistan. The state ideology of Pakistan is deeply rooted in the two-nation theory by which Muslims’ primary identity is their religion and there is a clear divide between ‘us’ (Pakistani/Muslim) and ‘them’ (Indian/Hindu). The terminology (and sometimes the social system) of *quom*, *zat* and *biraderi* is very similar to that of Hindu *jatis* and therefore problematises the state’s ideology.

where hierarchy and difference played a role in stratification.⁸¹ By using neutral terms such as ‘tribe’ and stressing linguistic unity, development agencies overlooked the ground realities.

There were three prominent yet interconnected reasons for why development agencies appeared to overlook networks of patronage. First, development agencies – particularly humanitarian ones – want quick results. Development agencies need to know, understand, acknowledge and internalise in their operations the complex social organisation of rural communities; they need a longer-term perspective and engagement when operating in lineage- or patronage-based societies (Platteau, 2007). Pressed for time as well as for results and often with a short mandate, these agencies often overlook local geographies of power. Second, as they are pressed to obtain quick results, development agencies tend to simplify the ‘field.’ Often they portray communities as static, simple, and identical, where the one-size-fits-all approach can be implemented. This phenomenon is visible above all in the activities of development agencies with no previous experience in a disaster-affected area such as PaK, a region which was vastly unknown for most development agencies and vice-versa. *“A well-meaning outsider’s best intentions to provide aid will be futile if none of his or her priorities corresponds with those of the person being helped nor engage with his or her culture and political or economic institutions”* (Harragin, 2004: 325). Third, most development agencies tend to see rural societies – as those visible in PaK – as ‘underdeveloped’ and ‘traditional,’ the opposite of ‘developed’ and ‘modern.’ For Chatterjee (1993, in Sinha, 2008: 59) ‘community’ exists outside modernity because it signalled forms of solidarity arising out of bonds of kinship and not based on common interests. As Stirrat (2000: 40) states, *“the work of contemporary historians, sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists is ignored in a picture of the world which juxtaposes ‘them’ and ‘us’, the past and the present, tradition and modernity, culture and rationality.”* Development agencies rarely venture beyond this dichotomy, not just at the institutionalisation stage, but also during the actual operationalisation.

Overlooking local social stratification and elevating the village as the ‘true community’, development agencies exacerbated exclusion, by allowing elite capture and misreading representation. If there is no clear understanding among development agencies of what constitutes a community, decision-making can be biased toward dominant groups who

⁸¹ On hierarchy and difference see Chapter Four.

claim to be the voice of the ‘community.’ This situation, known as ‘elite capture,’ involves individuals with higher access to social, political, and economic power dominating and manipulating interaction between the community and development agencies to suit their own needs (Conning and Kevane, 2002; Platteau, 2007). In most of rural PaK, where demographics plays a crucial role, dominant groups tended to belong to the majority *biraderis* (World Bank, 2001). In a previous study (Loureiro, unpublished) I asked 30 development agencies selected by ERRRA to operate in the area what was their target community. As seen in Table 4, the vast majority of agencies (80%) defined ‘community’ as ‘revenue village’ and/or ‘settlement’, as opposed to *biraderi*. The other problem of adopting villages as target communities was one of representation. For instance, a revenue village was composed of several settlements, of which the main settlement gave the name to the revenue village. While an agency professed to be working with a revenue village, assuming it was reaching the whole village, it was most often working with the main settlement constituting that revenue village. In other words, the agency failed to reach the remaining settlements in that revenue village. The same happened within settlements: when an agency worked at settlement level, it assumed it was reaching the whole settlement while in fact it was only interacting with the dominant groups, often the majority *biraderis*.

Table 4 – Target communities post-earthquake by local and international agencies

	Union Council	Revenue village	Settlement	<i>Biraderi</i>	Household
Agencies	2	14	10	2	2
– International	2	10	4	2	2
– Local	–	4	6	–	–

Source: Loureiro, unpublished.

The response to the earthquake saw an array of development agencies arriving in and interacting with a historically secluded region. For many this was the first time. Due to a series of physical and logistic factors the initial relief was slow to arrive and when it did it was targeted rather than universal. Central to relief, and later reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts, was the concept of ‘community’. Yet, in their hurry to obtain quick results and by simplifying ‘the field’, development agencies often failed to engage with local social, political and economic institutions. This failure was not only due to logistical issues, but also related to the interests and priorities of these agencies. By overlooking networks of patronage embedded in local social stratification development agencies’ actions contributed in many instances exacerbating the exclusion and marginalisation of certain groups.

Revisiting October the 8th: Post-earthquake Assistance and the Legacy of Suffering

Some of the stories people told me about the earthquake were about suffering. Yet, all their stories about suffering related to the earthquake were not always about the earthquake itself. It only became possible for me to understand the meaning of their stories after placing these into the context of all that I had learned about their lives before, during and after the earthquake. As White (2000: 310) concludes in her work on rumours about vampires in colonial Africa “*the ordinary (or the extraordinary) does not exist separate from the material and the political (...) stories and rumours are produced in the cultural conflicts of local life; they mark ways to talk about the conflicts and contradictions that gave them meaning and power.*” We could be mistaken if we thought of the earthquake as the event, for there were two events interrelated and occurring almost simultaneously, both provoking suffering: the earthquake and the post-earthquake assistance.

In his study of blame narratives in the aftermath of the 2001 Gujarat earthquake, Simpson (2011: 434) asserts that people’s explanations for the earthquake were “*commentaries on profane social trends, divisions and schisms that were well established before the earthquake*”, as well as “*attempts at coming to terms with rapid social change in the aftermath of the disaster*”. People’s stories about the suffering they experienced in PaK were characterised by the dual feature of the earthquake, sometimes representing itself as the ‘earthquake-event’ while other times becoming a metaphor for the ‘assistance-event’. While the ‘earthquake-event’ had a ubiquitous negative impact throughout the region – largely cutting across class, caste, and sectarian groups – the ‘assistance-event’ had an ambiguous impact, as it benefited the ones who had better physical and social access to aid, but excluded many others. Another important difference was the origin of these events, with the ‘earthquake-event’ having a non-human origin, as opposed to the human roots of the ‘assistance-event’. When people talked about ‘living in inhuman conditions’ post-earthquake, these conditions were not always caused by the ‘earthquake-event’, but by the ‘assistance-event’. In these cases the inhumanity was not aleatory, but perpetrated by a human ‘someone’ – often an outsider.

People's stories of the earthquake as 'assistance-event' were often like allegories where the (human) outsider, the 'other', was the villain. These stories though, were as much about the 'other' as they were about themselves. For instance the story of villagers using their womenfolk to gain access to relief goods was not only about the evil army *subedar*, but also about their powerlessness. In a region where women's honour reflects the family's honour, one of the most valued ideals in patriarchal societies such as this one, there were families who had to forgo of this honour in order to survive. In my informants' storytelling the earthquake as 'earthquake-event' made them lose the power they once held over their lives, but it was the earthquake as 'assistance-event' that transformed them from heroes into antiheroes. Arendt (1958) says that storytelling transformed private experience into public meaning. Yet, narratives are shaped as much by individual experience as by the demands of communal identity (Donnan and Simpson, 2007: 5). In a way, there is a dialectic relationship between private and public, where "*private events are translated into public stories and, reciprocally publicised events penetrate our private lives and shape our unconscious imaginings*" (Jackson, 2006: 292). In the *subedar* story, my informants were not only telling me about what the earthquake did to some families' honour, they were telling me about their own honour. The earthquake as 'assistance-event' turned their world upside-down. Used to working for a living in any corner of the world, my informants were now dependent on charity, something beggars did for a livelihood. Worse still, as relief efforts were not universal but targeted – and often mistargeted – they were 'made to beg' for assistance. They felt, as Omar said, "*deprived like never before*".

People's rationalisations of the 'earthquake-event' influenced how they dealt with life (and death) after the earthquake, both physically and emotionally. While interviewing a group of survivors around Bagh city two months after the earthquake, Ansari and Ørner (2008) observed 'social cohesion' and 'narrative coherence' as the two recurring themes emerging from their narratives of coping and adjustment. Their informants stated that sharing loss, suffering and the need to feel safe was the driving force behind coordinated responses to the event. For them, as well as for the people living around Chinati bazaar, "*suffering [was] a social experience*" (Kleinman, Das and Lock, 1997: ix) and enacting it socially helped them to cope with the aftermath of the earthquake. The "*unprecedented destruction in living memory provoked significant challenges to previously held spiritual beliefs, personal values and psychological attitudes*" (Ansari

and Ørner, 2008: 99), which made people look for ways of reinterpreting their beliefs, engendering a sense of meaning and purpose. For most the earthquake strengthened their belief in God, especially the ones who saw the earthquake as a trial. They externalised this confidence in God through their displays (and non-displays) of suffering.

North of Bagh, a young couple lost both their children in the earthquake. The husband was working as an assistant shopkeeper in Bagh city while the wife was in the fields and had left their young daughter in charge of her baby brother at home. During the earthquake their house collapsed killing both children. While both husband and wife talked about their loss to others, they never uttered a word about it to each other. *“How can I talk [to her] about it”* – the husband said – *“if it only brings despair into her heart?”* Bowker (1975: 112) states that in Islam *“the effects of suffering are important: faithfully accepted, suffering helps to produce an equal and balanced character – and conversely fear of suffering is a mark of inadequate trust. Despair is blasphemy.”* While publicly performing their social role and displaying their suffering to and with their community, in the inner depths of their marriage neither spouse shared this suffering with the other, as each saw this action as detrimental to the other’s wellbeing. For Daniel (1996: 123) *“the highest form of sharing – human sharing – also entails caring.”* In this case it appears that this would be true for the public sphere, but not the private. In an event like the earthquake, where all were affected and suffered, sharing their suffering in public appeared to work as a rite of social acceptance as well as a token of caring and empathy. Yet, within the private sometimes it could be the opposite, where not sharing involves caring.

Several people used silence as a display of suffering. Many authors have pointed out how stories of people in crises are often punctuated by silences (Das, 1995; Daniel, 1996; Jackson, 2006; Donnan and Simpson, 2007). In Sarian, a woman lost all her four daughters in the earthquake when the roof of their house collapsed. She was outside when it happened. Her daughters yelled and cried but she could not do anything. Eventually they all died. I was told this story three years after by her relatives while she was in the room. She just sat quietly with a blank stare, not crying, just there. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt (1958: 50) says *“the most intense feeling we know of (...) the experience of great pain, is at the same time the most private and least communicable of all (...) perhaps the only experience which we are unable to transform into a shape fit*

*for public appearance.*⁸² So publicly, we suffer in silence – as a deliberate choice – as it is sometimes “*the only way we can honour the ineffability and privacy of certain experiences*” (Jackson, 2005: 155). Silence can mean a withdrawal from society, but it can also be “*converted to speech as long as it provides ‘witness’ to truth*” (Das, 1997, in: Donnan and Simpson, 2007:17), as was the case with this woman.

Finally, another way in which people displayed social suffering – somewhat in a similar way to silence – was by participating in everyday events through non-participation. Many people cooked food but did not eat it in the first few days after the earthquake, like the owner of the carpet shop in Bagh and the schoolteacher from Hothala. This had a special religious meaning to it as it was *Ramzan*, the Islamic month of fasting. One of the five pillars of Islam,⁸³ fasting during daylight in *Ramzan* (*saum*), is seen as a sacrifice to learn self-restrain. During the first few days many people would prepare food for *sehri* (morning meal) and *iftar* (evening meal) as a way of trying to keep the normalcy of their lives and yet would not eat. Through non-eating many felt they were making a bigger sacrifice – and therefore pleasing God, or passing God’s trial – as well as suffering together with the ones that could not eat. In a way, their abstinence could be seen as a form of silence.

Post-Earthquake Everyday Lives

Along with pain and suffering, the earthquake left people in the region with a mixture of other emotions, many of which they did not know how to deal with. In series of studies on the psychological effects of the earthquake Niaz (2006) reports high levels of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and morbidity in most survivors. In a survey that I conducted nine months after the earthquake with 86 household heads (of which 14 were women) in a village north of Bagh, most informants stated that they often had recurring thoughts of death, felt lonely and sad, lacked energy and felt easily irritated, restless and worried for no reason. In Bagh city, many shopkeepers said that apart from missing their (dead) relatives, they worried too much about the future and would constantly think of death. In the villages around Chinati, despite fewer casualties many people exhibited similar emotional symptoms, namely a sense of high insecurity. Fatima, a Syed housewife from Serabad, said that “*after the earthquake people became*

⁸² Arendt is talking about bodily pain.

very disturbed. There is a sense of somebody snatching some thing from you.” The sense of insecurity was exacerbated by mistargeting throughout post-earthquake relief and reconstruction, as many felt that some families were benefiting from assistance that others deserved and did not get. *“One family would take what was needed and deserved from another”* (Abida, Fieldnotes, February 2010).

Even a few years later, the memory of that day played with their senses. The sounds of rumbling or heavy rainfall would remind them of the earthquake. *“The earthquake sound is hallucinating still. Every time I hear something strange I relate it to the earthquake”*⁸⁴ (Rehana, Fieldnotes, February 2010). The sights of cracked roads, visible faults in hills, ruins of houses, abandoned winter tents and the ‘*qabristan barae zalzala zadgaan*’ (cemetery for the earthquake victims), all made them think of (and relive) that day. Some even mentioned that the smell of medicine would transport them to that period of their lives. Consciously and unconsciously though, some people displayed memory loss. Jameela, a housewife from Sarian, said that after the earthquake her in-laws became very distraught, irritable (*chir chara pan*) and forgetful - not of daily life, but of life before the earthquake. Some parents whose children died in the earthquake took upon themselves to make sure the memory of their children would not die. In Bagh, the owner of a general store renamed his shop after his son who died on that day. In Serabad a woman whose son died in Muzaffarabad framed several pictures of him and distributed them through her family. After the earthquake most married males in her family started making individual houses, so she went to every house and placed his picture in each main living room.

Wilkinson (2011: 467) identifies the experience of suffering *“as a decisive element within the formation of individual personalities and within the overall character of societies.”* Babar, a waiter in Dubai, expressed the same opinion while explaining to me the effect of the earthquake on children.

“When you come from outside you might think people have moved on. 80% we have but we still have 20% of thoughts, fears and anxieties every now and then. It’s even worse with children. It might be that with them it’s 20% fine and 80% of thoughts and fears. When you are a child it’s the time you

⁸³ The others are testimony (*shahadah*), prayer (*salah*), pilgrimage (*haji*), and alms-giving (*zakat*).

⁸⁴ Razia, schoolteacher from Hothala.

are moulded into a man.⁸⁵ The earthquake is what will stay with them and mould them as grownups. It's the same with our houses. We're all slowly rebuilding our houses, going from one structure to another. This means we slowly relive the earthquake with every brick, every room, every part of the house. It indirectly affects us daily; we relive the earthquake daily."

In his discussion on the social suffering of Holocaust survivors, Langer (1997: 55) observes that for survivors of atrocities "*time is durational as well as chronological, and that durational time is experienced continuously, not sequentially as a memory from which one can be liberated.*" For many people living around Chinati the earthquake was not a thing of the past, but an event which kept reoccurring. Like Langer's Holocaust survivors, they too lived simultaneously in the chronological time of everyday life experience and the durational time of October the 8th. That day – and its legacy – was visible in people's memories, discourses and actions, and was triggered repeatedly through the sights, sounds and smells and objects of their everyday lives.

Conclusion

The 2005 earthquake left not only a physical scar but also an emotional one in the lives of the people of PaK. For many, the earthquake was not an event of the past but one that kept reoccurring in their minds, and was constantly evident in their narratives and actions. In this chapter I looked at the day the earthquake occurred, the events of its immediate aftermath, and analysed people's perceptions of why the earthquake happened, its emotional legacy of suffering and loss, and how they dealt with it, or in other words, how they relived the earthquake in their everyday lives.

While the day is remembered as a day of loss and suffering, its legacy is more ambiguous. The earthquake brought with it destruction as well as transformation. Over the course of the reconstruction and rehabilitation stages people in PaK developed various discourses and narratives on change in which the earthquake and the presence of development agencies was used to explain cultural, social and economic changes. The primacy of the earthquake in these narratives was such that it 'hijacked' the role and importance of other agents of change, and of previous social and economic changes that had been going on for a period of time since before the traumatic events of 8th October

⁸⁵ Or woman.

2005. The earthquake was drawn upon both as an event and as an idea. It made people think about change, and they used it as a point of departure with which to organise their ideas about what was happening around them. In a way, the ‘earthquake event’ became an avenue to justify previous changes, especially the ones that questioned prevalent moral discourses.

Yet, much of the social and economic change that people said had happened after (or because of) the earthquake had in fact started happening before the earthquake. In the following chapters I argue that rather than being a trigger of change, the earthquake, both as an event and as a metaphor for post-earthquake assistance, had a magnifying effect on change that had been occurring over the past decades in this region. In people’s stories of change at the bazaar we see the earthquake as a point of rupture from which the collective memory of the bazaar is now dated. However, I argue that muddled up within these stories are other stories of pre-existing changes. Therefore, in most cases what people were talking about was not change, but rather, the continuity of change, where the earthquake and its aftermath magnified or intensified pre-existing social and economic conditions. In the following chapters I further analyse some of these narratives to test this theory.

Chapter Four

Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: The Social Construction of *Biraderi* and Egalitarianism in *Azad Kashmir*

Introduction

In September 2009 after Hamza, my first research assistant, left to go abroad for his Masters degree I brought with me to the bazaar Umer, my new research assistant. He had previously worked as a surveyor in PaK for one of LUMS' studies on the earthquake and, after graduating, had worked as a research assistant for a team of Pakistani economists on a donor-funded study on economic prospects for the region. I was introducing him to the several shopkeepers in the bazaar when, as we were passing in front of the main *dhaaba*, Bashir called us in. While I was introducing Umer to him, Kashif appeared with a plate of fresh *pakor*as and Bashir ordered tea. He then questioned Umer about his background, to which Umer responded that he was a Lahori but his family had originally migrated from northern Punjab and therefore he could speak Pahari, like everyone in PaK. To that Bashir said, “[Pakistan-administered] Kashmir is different from Pakistan. Here we're all equals; we don't have hierarchy. We're close, united communities. The goras are like this as well. We are educated like them, that's why there's equality. Just like Islam tells us.” Kashif, standing at the entrance of the shop, nodded in support. He had worked for 30 years in Karachi and had interacted with people from all over Pakistan, and based on what he had seen there, he too believed that no other place was as equal as PaK.

When describing their society people in the bazaar and its surrounding villages would often proudly state that theirs was an egalitarian society. They would do this by comparing themselves to not only the society of their forefathers but also to the social structure of the rest of Pakistan. According to them, Pakistani society was a highly hierarchical one with stark class and caste-like divisions. They pointed out that their society too had been similarly stratified in the past but since the 1970s the divisions had become weaker and more symbolic. In fact, they believed that in the future social stratification would become meaningless.

However, many conversations, such as the one Bashir had with Umer, also contained a sub-text, often quite explicit, of a continuing differentiation between people. The crucial element for stratification in this region was the *biraderi*, a caste-like and/or kinship corporate entity which was “*the primary factor amongst the primordial loyalties which govern[ed] social organisation*” (Alavi, 1972: 27). The notion and concept of *biraderi* and *biraderi*-based differentiation was a constant part of people’s narratives, of their introductions of one another, and also often of how they related to one another. At the surface of many conversations lay equality, but just underneath lurked repeated references to the importance of *biraderi*. In this chapter I deconstruct people’s claims of equality vis-à-vis the continuing importance of *biraderi*-ism. As I deepened my research in the area I realized that it was indeed through *biraderi*-ism that most people had attempted to gain access to power and resources both before and after the earthquake. And *biraderi*-ism and *biraderi* membership, by definition, define social inclusion and exclusion. My main aim, therefore, is to analyse how the storytellers of Chinati bazaar negotiate between the moralities of equality and the realities of hierarchy that continue to exist around them.

In this chapter I draw on the earthquake and the events that followed, namely the relief and reconstruction stages, to analyse the change in social stratification within PaK’s society that was contained in the narratives I heard in the bazaar. In section two I start by defining the *biraderi* and situating it within the debate on hierarchy and social stratification in Pakistan. *Biraderi* is a complex and often fluid concept that must be localised and contextualised before any attempt can be made to understand how social stratification is lived in this region. In section three I analyse how local notions of hierarchy and social stratification have evolved over time in Chinati, identifying the actions involved in creating, recreating and maintaining stratification, and the factors that have contributed to this evolution. In section four I look at the relief and reconstruction stages that followed the earthquake to show that the networks people in Chinati used to recover from its impact, as well as in local politics, continued to be embedded primarily within *biraderi*-ism. I conclude by stating that PaK’s society still remains stratified, with pockets of social and economic exclusion visible in both minority and lower *biraderis*.

Social Stratification in Pakistan and PaK

“At the end of the day, it’s all about caste.” Zeeshan, Syed businessman in Bagh city.

The literature on social stratification within South Asian Muslim societies is often centred on the question of how closely these societies are related to a caste system (Ahmad, 1973; Bhatti, 1996; Fanselow, 1996). Even though there is a general consensus in the literature on the fact that caste in India is a colonial construct (Mayaram, 1997; Dirks, 2001; Samarendra, 2011), social stratification based on caste-like features is deeply embedded not just within Hindu society but even within South Asia’s Muslim communities. There is, however, great variation across these communities in South Asia. Therefore, the debates about the existence of caste and social hierarchy in South Asian Muslim societies must be localised and contextualised. As Vatuk (1996: 229) puts it, we need to *“try to come to a better understanding of how South Asian Muslims themselves think about identity and difference, equality and inequality”*.

Like several authors⁸⁶ who identify social stratification in South Asian Muslim societies as *“the product of a dynamic interplay between Islamic ideology and the socio-economic and historical forces”*, where the latter played a more influential role than the former (Bhatti, 1996: 247), I analyse PaK’s social stratification as a hierarchy of status groups. According to Bhatti (1996), recent socio-economic and political changes in India have continually had an impact on these societies’ social stratifications, not by bringing more egalitarian structures, but by making these stratifications more fluid. The quest for this fluidity – and not equality – has been recently examined by several authors when studying the political struggle of Indian lower caste Muslims, generally known as Muslim Dalits, versus Muslim upper castes, known as ashraf,⁸⁷ in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (Ali, 2010; Ahmad, 2003). Likewise, in PaK the socio-economic and political changes, particularly the ones originated in the 1970s, did not flatten social stratification but made it more fluid and characterised by an undercurrent of ambiguity. Due to a dearth of literature on social stratification in PaK I will first describe how social stratification is lived in Pakistani Punjab, as its social

⁸⁶ See Ahmad (1973) and Bhatti (1996).

⁸⁷ Plural of *sharif*, meaning noble or highborn, used by South Asian Muslims who claim Arab, Persian, or Central Asian descent.

structure – and the terms used – is the most similar to PaK and, according to my informants, it is how their social structure existed until the 1970s.

Quom, Zat and Biraderi in Pakistan

Most students of Pakistan's social stratification either have the view that – without ruling caste out – the “*system of social stratification and political power [is] based on class*” (Ahmed, 1977: 70), or – without ruling class out – recognise that there is something ‘caste-like’ that “*embodies the primordial loyalties which structure (...) social organisation*” (Alavi, 1972: 1). Most authors use for ‘caste-like’ the kinship system as the main social unit in Pakistani Muslim communities (Alavi, 1972; Alavi 2001; Alvi, 2007; Mohmand and Gazdar, 2007; Shaw, 2000a; Werbner, 1989; Werbner, 1990), which, in Punjab and PaK is often referred to as *quom*, *zat* or *biraderi*.⁸⁸ These networks assume a corporate structure that performs political and economic functions (Mohmand and Gazdar, 2007), with “*notions such as blood purity also playing a tremendous role in defining the boundaries of the group*” (Alavi, 2001: 46).

There are two reasons why *quoms*, *zats* and *biraderis* can be perceived as ‘caste-like’. Firstly, most of them use the names that are traditionally associated with Hindu *jatis* (Shaw, 2000b). Secondly, they share principles of endogamy, hierarchy and sometimes even pollution. Some authors (Ahmad, 1977; Alavi, 2001) state their difference in the fact that *biraderis* are endogamous and less ritualistic (no notions of ritual pollution) while (Hindu) subcastes are exogamous. Yet, Mayer (1970, in: Klass, 1993) and Klass (1993) actually say that (Hindu) subcastes are endogamous and it is *within* the subcastes that exogamy happens,⁸⁹ while Mohmand and Gazdar (2007: 21) witness “*a significant notion of ritual pollution built into the relationship between the [the lower caste] Musalli and other castes*” in rural Punjab. Because these terms are often used interchangeably (Nazir, 1993) there is little agreement in the literature of what constitutes (or what separates) *quom*, *zat*, and *biraderi*, with most authors preferring the use of the latter as an encapsulating term for the whole. Werbner (1989: 294) points that by doing so, *biraderi* “*disguises the immanence of caste behind a facade of fraternal*

⁸⁸ *Quom* can be translated as “nation”, *zat* as “being” and *biraderi* as “brotherhood”. According to Alavi (1972), the latter term comes from the Persian *biradar*, “brother”, although *brether* is a Proto Indo-European word. For instance, a similar word (*phratry*) was used in Ancient Greece for a cluster of several clans allied into a single category.

⁸⁹ In what Klass (1993) calls the ‘marriage-cycles’.

kinship”. This is also related to the root of the words, with *quom* and *biraderi* seen as more ‘neutral’ – possibly even implying equality – “*while the use of the notion of zat implies ranking as well as non-kinship*” (Werbner, 1989: 298), which would go against the egalitarian principle of Islam. This interchangeably is not unique to Pakistan though. In Kangra Parry (1979: 131) discovered that “*the term jat may be used to designate a varna, a ‘caste’ or a clan, and it is only the general context which indicates the sort of unit under discussion.*”

While both Ahmad (1977) and Shaw (2000a) mention three hierarchical categories in terms of production and organisation, they were different inasmuch as Shaw divides them into *ashraf* (noble), *zamindar* (landowning) and *kammi* (artisan), while Ahmad divides them into landlords, peasants and servants.⁹⁰ Alavi (1972) on the other hand, mentions four categories, namely, landlords, independent small landowners, poor peasants, and village servants. This was a simplified classification as there was often overlapping between the first three categories, and “*there are biraderis which include some households which belong to one economic category and other households which belong to a different category*” (Alavi, 1972: 20). He further explains which categories had stronger *biraderi* organisation (namely, independent small landowners), but the interesting aspect in his categorisation was that, like Ahmad and Shaw, he misses one important group: the *musallis*, or Muslim Sheikhs.⁹¹ These are the untouchables in Pakistan’s Punjabi rural areas, who do not fit into any category mentioned above. They are responsible for domestic and agricultural labour, but should not be confused with *kammis*, as the latter are also menial workers but artisans. And it is with the Muslim Sheikhs that traits of ritual pollution appear in Punjab – most ‘higher’ *biraderis* will not touch food or drink (nor the cutlery or crockery used) that has been prepared by Muslim Sheikhs. More recent work started to acknowledge the existence of this group as independent from the *kammi* group, as seen in Mohmand’s (2011) thesis where she divides Punjabi villagers into three ‘nations’ (*quoms*), namely *zamindar*, *kammi*, and *musalli*.

Biraderi itself can be contentious, as Shaw (2000a) noticed with her informants having different definitions (including the same informants) and adding or removing households from a particular *biraderi*. Alavi (1972) realised this problem when he

⁹⁰ It is worth bearing in mind that Ahmad uses class as the main system of stratification.

mentions that there are two constituent principles of *biraderi*: horizontal fraternal ties (contemporaries) and vertical lines of descent (ancestral). He further divides *biraderis* into three broad categories: a more general meaning as a descent group; a more restrained descent group with mutual knowledge of and empirically determinable descent (*biraderi* of recognition – taken from Mayer’s “kindred of recognition”); and a *biraderi* of recognition that participated in gift rituals (*biraderi* of participation).⁹² Werbner (1989: 295) though mentions that, like Eglar (1960) and Ahmad (1977), Alavi (1972) emphasises that the *biraderi* was a patrilineage, defined by a patrilineal descent from a single apical ancestor, but none of them gave any examples “*of such a patrilineage except as it exists in a single village*”. According to her this principle only operates in defining the *biraderi* at village level and at the “*wider, inter-village level the biraderi is a recognised marriage cycle composed of members of a single caste and named section who live in a relatively large number of villages within a locality, and who traditionally intermarry with one another*” (Werbner, 1989: 295). This distinction of *biraderi* as village kin group and as a marriage cycle is important because at inter-village level “*the principle of inclusion or exclusion in a biraderi is based on affinity or prior affinity rather than descent*” (Werbner, 1989: 295). So for instance, if a man is a Sheikh, he identifies himself with all the Sheikhs in South Asia as part of his *quom*; all the Sheikhs that he can identify as related to him through patrilineage or affinity are part of his *zat*; and within these, all the Sheikhs that participate in gift rituals with his family are part of his *biraderi* of participation. When Shaw (2000b: 96) states that “*kinship is the predominant principle of social organisation at village level in rural Pakistan*”, she was actually talking about one category: the *biraderi* of participation. The same happens with Mohmand and Gazdar’s (2007) research in rural Punjab, when exploring the determinants of social exclusion in rural Pakistan. It is at the level of the *biraderi* of participation that most social protection mechanisms occurred according to these authors, as witnessed by Eglar (1960), Wakil (1970) and Alavi (1972) when looking at the main gift exchange ritual called *vartan bhanji* (in Punjabi ‘buying sweets’).⁹³

⁹¹ Alavi does not entirely miss this group; rather he groups them with *kammis* as one category – village servants.

⁹² Wakil (1970) too divides *biraderi* into three similar categories: *Zat* or *quom*; *biraderi* at large; and effective *biraderi*.

⁹³ The name comes from the fact that this gift exchange is done at auspicious moments, during celebrations, which often entail distributing sweets.

The principal mechanism that maintains the *biraderi* structure is endogamy, i.e., marriage within the *biraderi* (Shaw, 2000b), with preferential patrilineal parallel cousin marriage (Wakil, 1970). The first preference is for a man to marry his father's brother's daughter and if demographically impossible, then his father's father's brother's son's daughter. There are several justifications for this practice, a complex mixture of cultural (Shaw, 2000a), religious (Alavi, 1972; Shaw, 2000a) and economic (Mohmand and Gazdar, 2007) reasons. Families in Pakistan like to stay as close as possible. In Islam, a man cannot have sexual relationships with his mother, daughter, sister, paternal aunt, or maternal aunt; so the closest a man can be within the family is by marrying his cousin. Following local interpretations of Islamic law, most of the inheritance passes largely to the sons, therefore the best way to keep the wealth in the family is for a man to marry his father's brother's daughter. Another advantage is for the married daughter to stay closer to her parents' family. Finally, this practice makes sure that siblings are kept together through their offspring. Alavi (1972: 6-7) notes that "*control over marriages is a major factor in maintaining the cohesion of biraderis*" and its degree "*appears to vary directly with the degree of strictness in enforcing endogamy and regulating marriages within the biraderi*". The important factor here is to keep the women of the family within the family, with men's amount of control over women in terms of marriage being the basis of the structured kinship (Alavi, 2001).

Still, as families tend to have a high number of offspring there will have a mixture of different strategies for marriage. One such strategy is the exchange between two men marrying each other's sisters, known as *watta-satta* (Darling, 1925; Eglar, 1960; Wakil, 1991; Alvi, 2007). In such cases, it is also usual for the parents of the brides and grooms to be siblings; in other words it entails a sister giving her son and daughter in marriage to the daughter and son of her brother. Darling (1925: 62) states that this was often an arrangement preferred by the poor, a "*marriage on the cheap*", while others (Barth, 1965; Wakil, 1991) also reasoned caste endogamy and keeping property within the family. This practice is still common today in rural Pakistan, with Jacoby and Mansuri (2010) observing an incidence of 36%. The rationale for *watta-satta* goes beyond the notion of keeping the *biraderi* tight, to making sure that a woman who has left her natal household following marriage – and therefore has moved from being seen as 'own' (*apna*) to 'other' (*paraya*) – can return to being part of the household she left through her daughter (Alvi, 2007). It is not surprising then that women are the ones making such

arrangements. Since women do not generally have a symmetrical number of children, some matches will only be completed in the following generation, leading to an open-ended marriage indebtedness (Alvi, 2007). These marriage strategies are also helpful in transmitting a strong feeling of solidarity towards near and distant relatives into the younger generation (Lefebvre, 1999) and creating some sort of protection from inter-*biraderi* conflicts.

Coming back to the *biraderi* of participation, according to Mohmand and Gazdar (2007: 5) the leaders of this group use their traditional power to make decisions on marriage, exclusion and to “mediate access to social services and livelihood opportunities”. Membership into this group is also maintained by *vartan bhanji*, which Shaw (2000a) called *lena-dena* (take-and-give). The principle is simple: gifts in cash or kind are given to a household during certain ceremonial occasions (e.g., weddings and births), by members of their *biraderi* of participation and, to a certain extent, by close friends (*rishtedars*). The essential feature is that it is not the gift per se, but the obligation to reciprocate on a subsequent occasion (Wakil, 1970; Alavi, 1972; Shaw, 2000a). Next time though, the receiver has to give an amount slightly higher than received, so the debtor becomes a creditor.⁹⁴ This keeps the *vartan bhanji* alive and with it the link between the *biraderi* members. In Punjab, Alavi (1972) further notes that there are two types of *vartan bhanji*: one where even members outside the *biraderi* of participation participate (*rishtedars*), called *katchi vartan* and another, more important, only for the members of the *biraderi* of participation, *pakki vartan*. Both types of gifting were managed by women, as they were “the guardians of *vartan bhanji*, who know to whom and when and how much a family is to give as well as from whom and when and how much it should receive” (Eglar, 1960: 138).

It is important, though, not to see these strategies of gift exchange as a positive force only. As Wakil (1970: 702-703) notes, “the most peculiar feature of the *biraderi*, however, is the melange of a very fierce kind of competition and noble cooperation. In an extremely class and status conscious society like the Punjab the gift exchange acquires a most vicious character and is not usually as loveable an activity as some students of the Punjabi society believe”. This competition and cooperation operate at both levels of interaction, namely inter-*biraderi* and intra-*biraderi*. Looking at the former, it is true that inter-kin relations are very complex and seldom amiable in

⁹⁴ These amounts are fixed by custom.

Pakistan. Several studies (Ahmed, 1990; Mohmand and Gazdar, 2007) have shown that villages often represent arenas for contest among kin. Even abroad, as Ballard (1990) notes looking at the Diaspora in Britain, settlers construct their networks of social solidarity and mutual support through regional, linguistic, religious, caste and class origins, reinforced by the tightly parochial loyalties of kinship. As for the latter, intra-*biraderi* competition and cooperation is visible in everyday practice and strongly embedded in consanguinity established by *pakka bhanji*, e.g., we support our ‘own’ (*apna*) people in conflicts between households or descent groups (Alvi, 2007). And while there is an invidious competition within the *biraderi* (mainly witnessed through gift exchanges), where the aim is not to ‘keep up with the Joneses’ (nor to ‘leave the Joneses behind’), but to ‘keep the Joneses down’ (Wakil, 1970), there is always also a minimum of cooperation, as *biraderis* have numerous integrative functions (Wakil, 1970; Alavi, 1972; Werbner, 1990; Shaw, 2000a). Lefebvre (1999) states that one of the major reasons for this cooperation lies on notions of risk *and* security; in a society where the State does not provide any kind of social security (to which I would add universality of services as well) people trust more their own *biraderi* members than strangers, as the interdependence of these kinship networks mean security (and access to services).

Quom, Zat and Biraderi in Pakistan-administered Kashmir

“Today biraderi is only visible in marriages. Before it used to be really strict – even a rich kammi [artisan] would be below a poor Mughal. He would sit on the ground and eat separately at weddings.” – Ali Naqvi, elder Syed

“The biraderi system is almost gone, but not in people’s minds. Sheikh Ashraf is a big rich man, but people still mention that his mother was a Raja [a lower ranked biraderi].” – Bashir, middle-aged Mughal

“A Mochi [shoemaker, artisan caste] can own 20 kanals, have a majority in the village, be rich and educated and change his name to Sudhan, but he will always be a Mochi.” – Imtiaz, young Mughal

These three quotes give us a broad view of how people in this region talked about social stratification and its evolution. I have chosen these for two reasons: first, to show that despite what many informants said about the diminishing importance of hierarchy it was

still visible in everyday life and in people's minds. Secondly, it brings forth a difference in generational discourse. When talking about the importance of stratification older people would often compare the 'past' – their lived experience of a highly hierarchical society they witnessed when young – to the 'present' – a less hierarchical society. Younger people would only relate to the 'present' and saw stratification as it was lived today. For a lack of literature on social structures and stratification in PaK in this section I mostly use their oral histories supported, to a certain extent, by the larger literature on social structures in Pakistani Punjab and its Diaspora.

In Bagh district the largest *biraderis* are Mughal, Narma and Raja, although there are differences within each *mauza* and each settlement. In most *mauzas* and settlements around Chinati bazaar Mughals are often the largest *biraderi*, though Syed and Kiani are a majority in a few. As seen in Tables 5 and 6, Mughals are not only the majority in Nakkar and Khorian *mauzas* but also in the five settlements out of these mauzas that surround Chinati bazaar – Bagla, Basantkot, Thial, Khorian and Sarian. In Hothala mauza the Kianis and Syeds are the demographic majority, but in the one settlement that was served by Chinati bazaar – Serabad – the Syeds are the main *biraderi*. Though their society was heavily stratified, the stratification itself was loosely defined and much contested, which, surprisingly, made this area much more equal and horizontal in its social composition than Punjab, for example, where *biraderi* stratification and hierarchy seemed to have relatively clearer definitions.

Table 5 – *Biraderi/Quom Composition of Mauzas Surrounding Chinati bazaar*

<i>Mauza</i>	Nakkar	Khorian	Hothala
<i>Biraderis</i>	Awan Bhatti Lohar Khwaja Kiani Mughal Pathan Qureshi Raja Syed	Alavi Awan Lohar Kiani Malik Mirza Mochi Mughal Nai Pathan Qasab Qureshi Raja Satti Sheikh Sudhan Syed	Kiani Mughal Narma Raja Sudhan Syed

Note: Largest *biraderis* in **bold**.

Table 6 – *Biraderi/Quom Composition of Settlements Surrounding Chinati bazaar*

<i>Mauza</i>	<i>Nakkar</i>		<i>Khorian</i>			<i>Hothala</i>
<i>Mohallah</i>	<i>Bagla</i>	<i>Basantkot</i>	<i>Thial</i>	<i>Khorian</i>	<i>Sarian</i>	<i>Serabad</i>
<i>Biraderis</i>	Mughal Raja	Khwaja Mughal	Mughal	Kiani Mughal Raja Sheikh	Mughal Raja Sheikh	Mughal Raja Syed

Note: Largest *biraderis* in **bold**.

Throughout the region there was no apparent clear definition of the terms *quom*, *zat* and *biraderi*. Most people would use geographical markers and size to differentiate the three. All agreed that *biraderi* was smaller and *quom* larger, and locate *biraderi* within the limits of a village or neighbourhood. *Zat* was more ambiguous, with some people stating it was the same as *biraderi*, while others saying it was the same as *quom*. All would translate *quom* into ‘nation’, *zat* as either ‘caste’ or ‘tribe’ and *biraderi* as either ‘tribe’ or ‘kinship’. Similar to what Parry (1979) saw in Kangra with the term *jat* used to mean *varna*, caste or clan, in this region *biraderi* was used as the all-encompassing term for *quom*, *zat* and *biraderi*, depending on the context it was used. Despite most talking generally about the *biraderi* system, they would often acknowledge that this created erroneous generalisations. Mohammad Azfar, a Mughal ex-serviceman from Bagla brought out this point when I asked him what were these groups that called themselves Mughals, Syeds, Awans, Rajas, Mochis, Mirasis, and so on. “*Quom means nation, zat is a caste in a particular area and biraderi is a community with common interests. We actually use the wrong word, i.e., we use biraderi while we should be using zat.*” There was also a gender difference when using these terms to describe social stratification. Men mostly used *biraderi* while women used *quom*. For women the latter was what they identified as caste or tribe, while *biraderi* was a lineage-oriented house. Possibly the reason for this differentiation lied in the fact that for women *biraderi* was closer to the family, while *quom* included strangers to whom they were connected but were not part of their domestic cycle. In this chapter I use Alavi’s (1972: 3) and Wakil’s (1970: 701) division of *biraderi* into three groups to classify local social stratification: I use *quom* as the general descent group; *zat* for what Alavi called the ‘*biraderi* of recognition’ and Wakil the ‘*biraderi* at large’ while taking into consideration Werbner’s (1989) point that this recognition can be through patrilineage or affinity; and *biraderi* for the ‘*biraderi* of participation’, or ‘effective *biraderi*’.

Quom, *zat* and *biraderi* differentiation happened because of *nasal* (breed) and occupation. To be more specific this differentiation happened sometimes because of

nasal, in the case of higher groups such as the Syed or Kiani, and sometimes because of occupation, in the case of lower groups such as the Lohar or Nai. Most people said that this differentiation came from caste divisions based on ritual pedigree (Arab decent, or being related to the house of Muhammad) and historical power (former rulers), and from historical class divisions – Bashir said that “*the rich castes had people working for them, so these workers would be the lower castes.*” All agreed that the present social stratification was rooted in historical factors, where social mobility was inexistent. *Quoms* were roughly categorised in three broad hierarchical yet porous groups, according to their status and power. In a status-conscious and socially stratified society such as this one, the origins of each *quom*, *zat* or *biraderi* were heavily contested, as was their ‘rank’ within the social hierarchy. Table 7 is the result of a ranking exercise I conducted individually with several informants from different status groups.⁹⁵ During the exercise I would ask the informant which criteria was he using to rank their importance. While all informants used ‘status’ to signify importance, their definitions of the former differed. For instance while the Syed stressed descent as the marker of status, the Mughal and Raja informants used economic and political power, without necessarily disregarding descent. All informants also stressed education as an important marker.

⁹⁵ See the Methodology section in Chapter One for more details.

Table 7 – Ranking of Biraderis/Quoms According to Three Informants

Respondent	Syed	Mughal	Raja
Group I	<u>Syed</u> <u>Abbasi</u> <u>Kiani</u> <u>Alavi</u> <u>Awan</u> <u>Qureshi</u>	Mughal <u>Syed</u> – Narma – Sudhan	<u>Syed</u> <u>Abbasi</u> Raja Sudhan Narma – Mughal – <u>Kiani</u>
Group II	Sudhan Mughal Raja – Rajput – Janjua Narma Khwaja Gujjar Pathan – Durani Sheikh Satti Khokar Bhatti	<u>Abbasi</u> – <u>Kiani</u> Raja – Gujjar – Khwaja	Khwaja Lohar / <u>Awan</u> Khokar Gujjar Rajput Julaha
Group III	All at the same level: Mirasi – Kumhar – Mochi – Julaha – Lohar – Nai – Qasab – Kalal	Rajput – Durani – Sheikh Kumhar – <u>Awan</u> – Pathan Lohar – Khokar – Satti Julaha – Bhatti – Qasab Mirasi – Kalal – Mochi – Nai	Nai Mochi Mirasi Kumhar or Kalal Qasab

Note: In **bold**: menial quoms; Underlined: Ashraf quoms.

The higher group generally consisted of *quoms* which were considered *ashraf* and often *quoms* which claimed descent from conquering castes.⁹⁶ In the lower group informants would include *quoms* which traditionally were involved with menial occupations and/or in contact with polluting substances. Finally, the middle group was more ambiguous, as it was composed of *quoms* which were neither higher nor lower, i.e., neither *ashraf* nor *kammis*. In fact, the ambiguity of the middle group could be seen even in the way people referred to these groups, as they had a name for the higher and lower groups (*oonchi zat* and *neechi zat*, respectively),⁹⁷ but not for the middle one. This hierarchy was similar to Werbner's (1989: 290) description of Punjabi Muslim *zats* which were "ranked hierarchically in a system with persons of high ritual pedigree located at the top of the hierarchy, followed by 'conquerors' of Muslim and Hindu origin, followed by categories of agricultural cultivators and artisan castes, with service castes and those coming into contact with polluting substances located at the bottom of the scale." Within each group *quoms* were also placed hierarchically, but if there was limited agreement among informants on which *quoms* belonged where in each group, as

⁹⁶ Note that according to the Syed informant *ashraf quoms* were all of proclaimed Arab or Persian descent, and Afghan and Central Asian 'conquerors' were not considered *ashraf*.

⁹⁷ Similar to what Bhatti (1996) found in Uttar Pradesh.

elsewhere (Ahmad, 1973) their ranking within the groups was even more debatable. There were exceptions to this disagreement, namely in the case of the Syed, always placed in the higher group, and most service castes, placed at the bottom. It is worth mentioning that, like Werbner (1989) witnessed in Pakistani migrants in Manchester, here too informants would often place their own *quom* at a higher level. Higher-ranked *quoms* would have more intricate knowledge about rankings than lower ones, possibly because the former had historically always been more literate⁹⁸ and in a position of power.⁹⁹

The strict hierarchy that defined this region in the past created and was itself a product of social and economic exclusion defined along *quom* lines, with the higher groups using their born-status within the hierarchy to gain access to power and resources, often at the expense of the lower ones. As Hameed, a Mughal mason from Sarian, put it, back then “*there was a feeling of superiority within each level towards the lower level.*” One of the crucial factors that excluded individuals was linked to notions of blood purity. As status and power were closely linked with hierarchy, the only way for someone to move up in the hierarchy would be to marry above his/her status. However this was extremely rare as taking a husband or even a wife from a lower level meant ‘polluting’ the group.¹⁰⁰

This separation between *quoms* was also visible through ritual purity. “*Separation used to happen because of hasab-nasab [meaning progeny, genealogy, family background].*” At particular events where all *quoms* would congregate, e.g., at weddings and panchayat meetings, the seating arrangements were done in a way of showing hierarchy, with lower *quoms* always seating on the ground below the higher *quoms*. At these events, if food was distributed it would be prepared and served separately according to hierarchy. Even during prayers higher *quoms* would sit in front and lower *quoms* in the back. Commensality between higher and lower *quoms* in public was discouraged and frowned upon. Qasim, a Kiani political agent from Hothala still remembers what happened to him when he tried to cross this boundary. “*When I was in school I used to buy and eat bhundi [local sweet] with a Nai [barber quom] classmate. Once I went to a wedding and saw him eating alone in a corner. I went there and started eating with him and all my*

⁹⁸ The Syeds in particular have lineage records to prove their ‘pedigree’.

⁹⁹ Possibly these were the ones from whom the colonial census officers recorded most information on castes.

friends and relatives made fun of me, calling me a Nai.” The reason for this separation lay in the fact that, for all purposes, lower *quoms* were dirty (*ganda*) and sharing food or sitting together meant allowing oneself to be polluted.

The importance and the character of this *biraderi*-based stratification, though, had changed over time. Particularly influential in this process of change were a series of events that started to occur in the 1970s, namely, the introduction of electoral politics, mass migration to the Gulf countries and increasing levels of universal education. In the following section I analyse how notions and practices of hierarchy and social stratification evolved over this period, identifying the factors that made this change possible, as well as the ones that continued to enforce it.

Changes in PaK’s Social Stratification: from ‘hierarchy’ to ‘difference’

Most people in the villages surrounding Chinati bazaar stated that the strict hierarchy that once characterised their society was a thing of the past. There was now more equality among *quoms* and the distinction between these groups was based on ‘difference’ rather than hierarchy. In other words, social stratification had changed from a vertical to a horizontal system, from hierarchy to difference. Hierarchy is only one kind of stratification, one where the layers are arranged vertically and, therefore, ranked. Dumont (1970: 66) defines hierarchy as “*the principle by which the elements of a whole are ranked in relation to the whole*”, placing it in a continuous scale. While some societies are hierarchically organised, notions of difference are dominant in other stratificatory systems, where layers are organised horizontally or separately, rather than vertically or hierarchically, like in the case of language, religion or nationality (Gupta, 1991). In these cases “*there are incommensurable entities or units, that constitute different systems of stratification*”, where instead of being in a continuous scale they are placed in discrete categories (Gupta, 1991: 8).

It is useful to go back to Werbner’s (1989) assertion that Punjabi Muslims used the term *biraderi* (and *quom*) to imply equality – and therefore a social structure more Islamic – instead of *zat*, which entailed ranking. The same can be said for this region and the

¹⁰⁰ In principle taking a wife from a lower group should not have been a problem as descent was patrilineal. Still, it rarely occurred.

preference for using the terms *biraderi* – ‘brotherhood’ – and *quom* – ‘nation’ – terms which imply that their social stratification is based on difference, as opposed to *zat* – ‘caste’ – which is hierarchical and potentially un-Islamic. Yet, this shift in the nature of local social stratification was not an exercise simply based on semantics, it was something that they witnessed in their everyday lives. Something had changed to make them perceive their society as more equal and less hierarchical. To be precise, there were four interconnected factors that made this shift in social stratification possible, namely land ownership, electoral politics, migration patterns, and education. The vast majority of my informants though, would often name education as *the* main factor.

Land Ownership

Since the time of the Mughal rule land ownership has been seen as a privilege more than a right, being identified with belonging to a higher class (Ahmad, 1977; Habib, 1999). In Punjab, the colonial rule further exacerbated this through its Punjab Alienation of Land Act 1900,¹⁰¹ which divided the region into agricultural (or *zamindar*) and non-agricultural tribes.¹⁰² As no such legislation was ever made in PaK (or previously in the State of Jammu and Kashmir) anyone could own land, so long as they could afford it. Following the creation of PaK in 1947 large tracts of land previously owned by Hindu and Sikh landlords were soon taken over by the local population (as well as by refugees from Indian-administered Kashmir), allowing for even non-*zamindari* landless lower castes to own land.

With new job opportunities being created in the mid-1970s by the mass migration to the Gulf countries – and with land ownership still being so closely linked with status – everyone, including lower castes, would buy land as soon as they could, even when agriculture was not profitable. The aim was not to become a farmer (*kissan*) but a landowner (*zamindar*) and thus trying to move up in the rank. Today, PaK is characterised by land being widely distributed, with 86% of private property ownership (P&D AJK, 2008) compared to 37% in rural Pakistan (Agricultural Census, 2000), but

¹⁰¹ While officially the aim was to avoid increasing levels of debt and land being bought by urban, non-agrarian people, the main purpose of this Act was to cultivate certain landowning classes which were patronised by the colonial rulers. For that “*The Board of Revenue shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, determine what bodies of persons in any district or group of districts are to be deemed to be agricultural tribes or groups of agricultural tribes for the purposes of this Act.*”

¹⁰² By tribes colonial rulers meant *quoms* or *zats*.

with landholdings smaller than two hectares. This in turn made land ownership stop being a factor of social stratification and exclusion, opposite to what happens in neighbouring Punjab where it was (Ahmad, 1977; Alavi, 1972) and still is (Mohmand and Gazdar, 2007; Shaw, 2000a) a determinant factor defining hierarchy.

Electoral Politics

Despite being *azadi* from Dogra rule in 1947, universal franchise only appeared in the political spectrum of PaK in the 1970s. In the initial years PaK was ruled by the supreme head of the Muslim Conference (MC) and indirectly by Pakistan through the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs (MKA). Since 1947 Pakistan has *de facto* ruled PaK. The President of Pakistan is the head of the AJK Council, which controls aspects of finance, defence and foreign affairs and appoints the Chief Secretary, the Inspector General of Police and the Finance Secretary. In 1958 General Ayub, the military dictator in Pakistan, banned all political parties in PaK. Soon after he extended his “basic democracy” to the region through the 1960 Basic Democracies Act, where a carefully selected number of “basic democrats” would elect a president.¹⁰³ Following Ayub’s demise in Pakistan, General Yahya Khan dissolved the one-unit system and appointed a new minister for the MKA who allowed the main party leaders of PaK to draft a new constitution and hold elections on the basis of universal suffrage (Mahmud, 2006). As Pakistan introduced a new constitution in 1973 based on a parliamentary system, so too it encouraged PaK to re-draft its constitution. The result was the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Interim Constitution of 1974, where 42 members of the legislative assembly (MLA) were elected directly on the basis of adult franchise for a five-year term (Mahmud, 2006). This created a *volte-face* in the politics of PaK, as for the first time in its history political power was decided by demographics rather than status. Many *quoms* with large numbers within their constituencies started forming vote blocs and supporting candidates from within the *quom*. In a region where the state provides targeted rather than universal services and is the major employer, the rationale was that once their candidate was in power they would have preferential access to services and jobs. Similar to other parts of South Asia¹⁰⁴ a ‘patronage democracy’ soon developed

¹⁰³ Among the criteria for selection were education and income level, basically barring the vast majority of the population from franchise.

¹⁰⁴ See Ali (2010); Price and Ruud (eds) (2010).

where democratic practices were seen as “*direct or indirect ways of getting a share of state resources and as ways to obtain or maximise power*” (Chandra, 2004 in: Michelutti, 2010). Party politics soon became muddled up with *biraderi*-ism and even today “*party leaders seek out candidates with the largest clans and the deepest roots inside their communities*” (Ghauri, 2011). Larger *quoms* that were until then at lower levels within the social hierarchy became elevated through the creation of ‘*biraderi* politics’, effectively increasing the fluidity of the social stratification.

Migration

Following Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s deal in 1974 with the oil-producing countries in the Gulf, under which Pakistan would get subsidised oil in exchange for migrant labour, this region witnessed a significant level of migration. According to Shaffer (2005) 40% of households in PaK today have at least one member working overseas. Partly because of the newly-founded AJK Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chapter in the region and as a way of gaining political leverage, Bhutto’s administration eased the red tape and reduced the price for acquiring a Pakistani passport, as well as facilitating the access to Gulf states’ visas. The initial migrants found jobs within the police and armed forces of these Gulf countries, many were ex-servicemen from the Pakistani army, while others worked in construction workers and catering. The first ones to migrate would sponsor relatives and members of their *biraderi*, but as the migration flow increased exponentially agents started hiring beyond their social networks. This meant that men from all *quoms* migrated, including men from the lower ones, as long as they could afford Gulf migration. As remittances started to flow into this region, migrants’ households would use them to improve their living standards, invest in land acquisitions and/or in educating their children, and eventually showing some level of superfluous consumption. Gulf migrants, on their part, would often return with a different mindset – and money in their pocket – having a knowledge of the world beyond PaK and Pakistan and would challenge the existing social stratification.¹⁰⁵

Gulf migration also contributed to the crumbling of another boundary within social stratification in PaK, namely the one of occupational specialisation. Lower *quoms* – whose identity was linked to menial professions – and small peasants became migrants

¹⁰⁵ Many would also come with a different view of Islam, a more egalitarian one.

and *mazdoors*, and, upon return, shopkeepers and *zamindars*. Their children (through education) could become teachers, engineers and businesspeople – just like everybody else, irrespective of caste. Similar to what happened in other regions in South Asia (Gardner and Osella, 2004; Osella and Osella, 2000) Gulf migration allowed for social mobility of not just individuals, but of whole groups.

Education

Until the 1970s education levels were relatively small and despite an increase in the previous decades in primary education enrolment, access to education (especially above primary level) was still within the domain of higher *quoms*. During the mid 1970s a drastic increase in the creation of public middle schools, high schools and degree colleges changed this situation, with enrolment rates doubling, octupling and quadrupling, respectively. The role of the state was crucial in trying to universalise education: today the gross enrolment rate at primary level in PaK is 95% for boys and 88% for girls (P&D AJK, 2008). With a change of the power basis and groups that were once denied access to political power by virtue of hierarchy now being enfranchised, education became the number one priority in PaK. This shift could be seen not only in the increase of public schools, but also in public sector employment where, by 1980, 42% was in education (P&D AJK, 1980).¹⁰⁶ Since then literacy figures for most of PaK became substantially higher than those of Pakistan (Shaffer, 2005). The quasi-universality of education meant that every child would be together in school: learning together, sitting together and sharing food together. While there was still some discrimination and exclusion within groups regarding children of lower *quoms*, the daily interaction often made these children question social hierarchy, as Qasim stated in the previous example.

Migration (and remittances) also had a direct impact on education. Like migration, the event of education was not a novelty, although its increase had, to a certain extent, replicated the increase in migration patterns. Education was seen by many as a form of investment, a way of making sure the next generations would have access to better employment opportunities. As elsewhere (see Ciotti, 2006), by attaining formal education many middle- and lower-status groups were in effect also trying to attain

higher status. Since education became almost universal and with remittances flowing in, people from all *quoms* started to enrol their children in schools and of late putting them in private schools, to show how serious they were about education. Education became a benchmark of modernity and status, not necessarily what one knows, but that one (formally) knows.

Mehmood, a waiter from Basantkot who worked in Lahore put the interconnectedness of these four factors succinctly:

“The biggest problem in Pakistan is that the rich people don’t allow the poorer classes to get educated and get into a better financial position. These people are the ones in government, making policies that only benefit them. A poorer child can be more intelligent but a richer one will have tuitions, access to private schooling and then a good job and that’s how the cycle goes on. The sad fact is that the poor don’t even know their rights and how this is affecting them. Punjabis have their chaudhrys, Pukhtoon their khans, Sindhis their vederas, and the Balochis their sardars. Here we’re all zamindars.”

Endogamy

While these changes all contributed to a levelling of local social stratification, one crucial factor – endogamy – remained the same. As I mentioned before, the two main factors for the old differentiation and hierarchy were *nasal* and occupation. While occupation disappeared, *nasal* remained. People were constantly being reminded of that. When Yasir, a young Mughal shopkeeper proudly boasted that they (the Mughals) ruled over the bazaar – because they were the majority – someone quickly added, “*Yes, but don’t forget the Syeds will always be on top of you...*” More often than before, marriages did occur between *quoms* of similar rank, mostly within the middle group. But these were a small minority of cases, as most people still married within their *quom*, and within it their *biraderi*¹⁰⁷. Similar to Punjab (Alavi, 1972; Donnan, 1988; Eglar, 1960; Wakil, 1970) there was a stated preference for first cousin marriages, although

¹⁰⁶ As a comparison, after education the two highest public sector jobs were in the police (12%) and in health (8%).

¹⁰⁷ Out of all the marriages mentioned to me during my fieldwork (about 70-odd) only three were inter-*quom*: A Sheikh took a Raja wife, a Sudhan a Mughal wife, and a Mughal a Pukhtoon wife from Lahore.

with a slight difference inasmuch as the common rhetoric being the preference for matrilineal cross cousin marriage, i.e. for a man to marry his mother's brother's daughter, rather than patrilineal parallel cousin marriage. Yet, as Das (1973) warns us, using generic terms like 'cross-cousin marriage' and 'parallel cousin marriage' and assuming that each is a distinct sociological type can be misleading.

In this region it was common for men to refer to their father's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter – i.e. father's siblings' daughters – as *behen* (sister), and for women to call their father's brother's son and mother's brother's son – i.e. parents' brothers' sons – *bhai* (brother).¹⁰⁸ This did not mean that, within the extended family (*khandan*), a man was only allowed to marry his mother's siblings' daughters and a woman her parents' sisters' sons. Considerations of relatedness were important both inside and outside the *khandan* but as elsewhere (Das, 1973; Donnan, 1985; Shaw, 2001) marriage choices were made with a number of pragmatic considerations based not only on cultural rules or preferences, but also on political, economic, and social factors (Shaw, 2001). While studying marriage practices among the Dhund in neighbouring Murree, Donnan (1985: 194) notices that “*kinship and ideas about proper behaviour between kin provide the bases of the rules and the rhetoric for these marriage strategies*” but other considerations not related to kinship also come into play¹⁰⁹. Within the Pakistani (mostly Punjabi) Diaspora in Oxford, Shaw (2001: 326) also notes that “*obligation to kin is important but it is not the only factor taken into consideration*” while choosing whom to marry. In fact, Donnan (1985) advises us to move away from looking at rules and preferences and look instead at strategies.

Matrilateral cross-cousin marriage can be seen as both an exchange between families and a strategy to keep them connected. In this region, as a woman leaves her ancestral home and moves into another family's – although most often within the same village – she potentially not only loses her connection with her siblings and parents but she also gets deprived of her due share of land inheritance as, despite being entitled to a share, it

¹⁰⁸ In Urdu there is no single word for cousin; it is connoted by referring to the specific type of relationship, e.g. the male paternal parallel cousin for a man is called *chacha zad bhai* (my brother from my father's brother), his male maternal cross cousin is called *mamu zad bhai* (my brother from my mother's brother), and so on. In effect, they would use the English word 'cousin' for the cousins who were not considered siblings.

¹⁰⁹ Some of the storytellers in Chinati themselves referred to Donnan's work, saying they knew of a book written about the Dhunds of Murree.

was the local custom that parting brides forfeited their inheritance to their brothers.¹¹⁰ In the next generation though, this woman will try to reconnect with her family by marrying her son to her brother's daughter. If this marriage strategy is looked at across generations one notices that, to a certain extent, there is an exchange of women for entitled land/inheritance between the two families. As Parveen, a Mughal housewife explained to Areej, my female research assistant, "*the first preference* [for a woman] *is to marry the puppo ka beta* [father's sister's son]. *If it doesn't happen, then you marry the other side.*" What Parveen meant for 'the other side' was the mother's sister's son, rarely the mother's brother's son, as in the latter the mother would lose both the entitled inheritance and a woman (daughter) as well. The non-preference for a man marrying his father's brother's daughter was not because of a potential rivalry for control of the property of their common ancestor like in the case of *tarburwali*¹¹¹ with the Pukhtoon in KP (Lindholm, 1996), but because of patrilocality as brothers' offspring, particularly in their first years, are reared as siblings. Again, the non-preference though, did not mean avoidance, as considerations of relatedness were important but not the only factor.

Also similar to Punjab *watta-satta* still occurred within some families in this region, although it was being increasingly challenged by the grooms to be. It happened with Mira and Miryam, two young cousins from a Mughal family:

"My father and chacha [father's brother] planned watta-satta for us. I would marry my uncle's son and Miryam would marry my brother. We didn't like the idea, but we would always marry whomever our parents chose for us. But both boys backed out as they had other interests. The boys liked two girls from the same quom but of different biraderi and from another village. Negotiations are now going on between the families. Meanwhile my puppo has asked for my hand and my khala [mother's sister] has asked for Miryam's."

In Mira and Miryam's case the first marriage choice was actually patrilineal parallel cousin and only after the 'grooms' opposed the match did the families decided on matrilinear cross-cousin marriage. Their example is one of many where people used different strategies beyond the professed first preference of matrilinear cross cousin

¹¹⁰ The (local) rationale being that women were moving into another home where they would access their husbands' land.

¹¹¹ Rivalry between patrilineal cousins.

marriage. What really mattered though, and what I witnessed during my fieldwork in the region, was that more than within the *khandan*, the vast majority of marriages happened within *biraderi* or *quom*. Like in the nearby Murree Hills (Donnan, 1985), even marriages within *quoms* of similar rank were still frowned upon. The importance of *quom* and *biraderi* endogamy is not unique to PaK: back in the early 1970s, Qazi (1973, in: Wakil, 1991) finds ‘caste’ to be the number one reason for choosing whom to marry in rural Faisalabad; in his exhaustive study among the Dhunds in Murree, Donnan (1988) finds that of all marriages 52% were within kin and 92% were within *quom*; in her sample of Oxford Pakistani Diaspora, Shaw (2000a) accounts for 87% of marriages happening within the *biraderi*; and in Bristol, Charsley (2005) finds no evidence of preference for patrilateral marriages – instead the clear distinction was between marrying out of or within the *biraderi*. Two facts come out of these cases: first, figures are extremely high for marriages within *biraderi* or *quom*; and second, there is no clear border between what constitutes *biraderi* and *quom* – and it is Shaw (2000a) that rightly identifies the central importance of the flexible notion of *biraderi* for the reasons between pragmatic and theoretical marriage choices. This flexibility can be witnessed not only in marriage choices, but also if we look at who participates (and how) in the main rituals involving the contract of marriage, i.e., the wedding. The following paragraph is an account of a ‘typical’ wedding taken from my fieldnotes, based on my experience as a ‘participant’ and Chinati’s storytellers’ accounts:

“A wedding in this region usually happens in three days. The first day (at night) is the mendhi, where the people invited are members of the groom’s and bride’s family, extended family, and biraderi members from the groom’s village and sometimes nearby ones. The mendhi is a joyous occasion, with music played by members of the Mirasi (musician) or sometimes Nai (barber) quom. The groom’s family provides the dinner. The barat happens on the second day, where the groom’s family members and people belonging to the biraderi will go to the girl’s house (sometimes in another settlement) to sign the nikahnama (marriage contract) and bring her to the groom’s home. Both the groom’s and the girl’s families will have with them musicians, making it a more joyous event than what is witnessed in Pakistani Punjab. There is food at the groom’s house for his family and his biraderi members. The walima is on the third day (evening), when the

groom's family organises a reception for his and her families, biraderi members and neighbouring villagers from other biraderis and quoms. This is a sober event (no music) where again the groom's family provides food. Biraderi membership plays a part in weddings in both receiving and giving aspects: only biraderi members are invited to all the functions (receiving), and only biraderi members are expected to offer a gift (giving), usually in the form of money. This gift exchange ritual – similar to vartan bhanji or lena-dena – is called niendra, meaning “list”, i.e., both the giver and the receiver will have a list of which presents were given (or received), by (or from) whom and on which occasion. Non-biraderi members can also give niendra, but they are not obliged to do so – except if they have a niendra relationship with the groom's family¹¹².”

Similar to what Wakil (1991: 48) notices in northern Punjab, “*since the gift-exchange cannot be carried out within the entire biraderi (...) families usually find themselves in a gift-exchange relationship with a manageable number of families*”, which he identifies as the ‘effective biraderi’ and Alavi (1972) as the ‘biraderi of participation’. So despite talking about general *biraderi* participation at weddings, there are in fact different types of *biraderis* participating at different moments. Several authors (Das, 1973; Shaw, 2001; Wakil, 1991) posit that in the future the importance of marrying inside the family might diminish, but arranged marriages within biraderi(s) will continue. In line with these predictions, many informants in Chinati also brought up the point that many marriages were now happening outside the *khandan*. Ijaz, a Syed ex-serviceman said, “*initially we only married within the khandan. Because of health problems we've stopped marrying first cousins, but we still marry within our quom.*” More importantly, like in Sylhet (Gardner, 1995: 192) “*rather than only being a transaction between households, marriage [had become] increasingly to do with partnership*”, as seen by the importance given to love marriages in peoples' marital choices.

As they used education to justify changes in the structure of social stratification, it too – as seen elsewhere (Donner, 2002; Grover, 2011) – was used to potentially affect

¹¹² This creates bonds cutting across *biraderis*. Apparently this is becoming a trend especially among families with migrants in the Gulf (more access to money to engage in across-biraderi *niendra*).

endogamy, particularly through love marriages.¹¹³ *“Science has proved that mixed marriages generate more intelligent children, but still people here marry mainly in their own quom. It’s changing, especially with boys and girls going to college together”*, Ali Naqvi told me. Most informants though, stated that only small minority of love marriages were due to co-education. Mostly they happened because families would meet and visit each other, and boys and girls would interact. The idea that education was changing marriage practices, although not to the extent of challenging marriage outside the *quom*, was seen because the younger generation was becoming more vocal on choice. Hameed said *“boys and girls have more say in weddings than before. They are realising that they are individuals, living their own life and have a right to decide for themselves.”* Some informants said that girls too were also asked for their marriage preferences. Abida, a Mughal teacher at READ stated that *“now we ask our daughters whom they want to marry. Girls here are very shameful, they only convey through others. However sons tell their parents.”* Many girls felt that this was not entirely true. Zainab, a young Raja student rhetorically asked Areej *“what’s the point in loving [mohabat] someone or being in a lustful [ishq] relationship if my father is very strict?”* In Mira and Miryam’s case, they felt disappointed because their fathers never asked them whom did they want to marry; as Mira said resignedly *“we have to marry whoever our parents chose.”* The problematisation of love marriages though, was not necessarily because people wanted to marry outside the family or the *biraderi*. Sometimes it was problematic to marry within the family, as Bashir’s case when he tried to marry the ‘wrong’ cousin:

“First my father proposed to one family for me. The girl had four brothers who could always help my family with agricultural work. I put up a fight; I told my parents I was getting married not them, so I should choose when and to whom I should get married. My father said he knew what was better for me and beat me up with a stick. I persuaded my chacha and puppo to talk my father out of the idea and left for Pindi. My father eventually agreed and asked me to come back. When I came back I fell in love with my cousin [father’s sister’s daughter]; I would go to her house to be with her brother and she was there, all handsome although one year older to me. One day I asked her and her brother to come to my place. There I cornered her and

¹¹³ I use Donner’s (2002: 83) definition of love marriage where the crucial marker is *“the agency of the*

asked her if she would have a problem if we would get married. She lost it and told me off for being so bold and how could I speak to her – a single woman – like that. Then she left and after cooling down a little she contacted me and said that if I really wanted to get married I should ask her brother – her father was dead – and not her. So I went to my chacha again and asked him to talk with my father. My father went crazy again, threatened to kill me, because she was my puppo's daughter. I told my father that if he wanted me to get married this was the only one I wanted. Eventually my father agreed and we've been married ever since. I was a trend-setter."

Today many marriages started with the boy telling his parents he wanted to marry a particular girl. In most cases he would already be in a relationship with this girl. Aasim, a young Mughal electrician explained to me the 'hidden' rule: "*You can date whoever you want. But when you're falling in love, then go for a girl of your [own] quom.*"

The earthquake also impacted dating and courtship, or more precisely the means of communication used to date and court. While before the earthquake courtship happened mostly through the exchange of letters, following the post-earthquake arrival of mobile phones these were substituted by text messaging. Some boys, jokingly, told me that Chinati bazaar sold more phonecards than Bagh. The initial contact though, still happened the same way, with a boy dropping a chit of paper with his mobile number near a girl and, if the girl accepted his courtship, her texting him from her mobile. As most young people owned mobiles post-earthquake, many people started saying that dating had increased after the earthquake, as well as the number of love marriages. In reality, as many of my (young) informants told me, the arrival of mobile phones made dating easier, while not necessarily increasing dating. For dating to happen, as Aasim reminded me, "*either a letter or a text message, the girl still has to reply!*" When describing dating in this region my young informants also mentioned that it was easier for it to happen in rural areas as opposed to urban centres as the rural forested landscape was more propitious and with many settlements being inhabited by the same *quom* *purdah* was more relaxed, so women could move about more freely.

Most of my young informants stated that while dating cut across *quom* lines (as well as wealth and education), when it came to marriage the choice had to be for a girl from

partners in initiating a pre-marital relationship".

their own *quom*, as mixed-*quom* marriages were still frowned upon (although not impossible). When the relationship became 'serious' and they were from the same *quom*, then the boy would ask his parents to go to the girl's family and propose. One afternoon at Imtiaz's shop, Hameed explained to me how love marriages proceeded: *"You can't have public affairs, but once it's out or the couple decide to get serious, the boy's side goes to the girl's side and during the proposal they would mention that 'our children are in love'."* In urban Calcutta Donner (2002: 84) witnessed parental concern of affairs becoming publicly known, because both the girl's honour and the boy's reputation would be at stake as *"pre-marital relationships limit[ed] the prospects to find a good match."* In this area though, once 'it was out' the idea was of damage control and most often than not, the marriage proposal was accepted, as long as the boy had means to provide for the girl. The notion of the *"providing husband"*, which Grover (2011: 37) stated being of great importance in arranged marriages, was here as important in parents' approval of love marriages. *"If the boy is a charsi [drug addict] or doesn't have a job, no matter how much love, parents won't allow it. Minimum he should provide two meals a day"*, said Hameed. Although most people professed that the option of choosing a marriage partner was still allowed only within *quoms*, sometimes love marriages also occurred outside *quoms*. In extreme cases, when an unmarried girl would get pregnant, the problem appeared to be dealt with differently depending on whether the couple belonged to the same *quom* or not. *"If a girl gets pregnant and he's from the same quom, we'll force them to get married. If he's from another quom, we ask him to leave the region and never come back; in the old days we would hunt them down and kill them. We do nothing to the girls, because usually in these cases girls are naïve, their brains are in their ankles [aurat di akal, unde giteau waich hundi he]."* Yet, even if they were not from the same *quom* but of similarly ranked ones, the marriage would proceed, as it did when a couple from different but similar ranked *quoms* were caught in a compromising position in a village further north of Chinati and got married the day after.

As a result of this allowed choice, many marriages in this region are a mix of love and arranged marriages. Still, these love marriages mostly happened within *quoms*, or sometimes with *quoms* ranked similarly, but never with lower *quoms*. According to Imtiaz, *"Mughals will never marry a Nai even if he's the Prime Minister, rich with a PhD. They would marry Sudhans because they are of equal quom."* Similar to Grover's

(2011: 207) findings in urban Delhi, where caste was more important than education, employment, and class mobility, here too “*prejudice against certain inter-caste (...) unions remained intense.*” The reason that people from *quoms* belonging to the higher and middle groups used to justify not marrying lower *quoms* was one of ritual purity, which they would equate to honour. Hameed told me “*lower quoms are ganda [dirty], that’s why we don’t marry them. Not because they’re poor, but because they have no honour.*” According to some of my informants the perception of lack of honour in lower *quoms* was linked to women’s honour (“*if their women are groped they won’t do anything*”)¹¹⁴. But, as Bêteille (1993, in: Grover, 2011) notes when analysing Indian middle class professionals, they added that with the passage of time and education they had become more honourable. Qasim, the Kiani political agent, linked this education with equality: “*Nowadays all are treated with the same respect. There is shahoor [consciousness] and education. In the next 25 years the whole biraderi system will disappear.*” Until then, though, lower *quoms* were still excluded from marrying above and, therefore, accessing the other *quoms*.

The nature of social stratification in PaK, which was once characterised by a hierarchical order enforced by strict endogamy, occupational specialisation and ritual pollution, had changed over time. It appeared that there was now more equality among *quoms* and the distinction between groups was based on ‘difference’ rather than hierarchy. Four interconnected factors contributed to this change, namely land ownership, electoral politics, migration patterns, and education. While these changes all contributed to a perceived horizontalisation of social stratification, one crucial factor, endogamy, remained the same. As access to power and resources was often channelled through *quom* and *biraderi* ties, the inability of lower *quoms* to marry above could be translated into powerlessness. However, as stratification slowly became more horizontal, demographics started to play a more major role. In the perceived shift from ‘hierarchy’ to ‘difference’, social exclusion reappeared, based this time not on a ranking but on the dominance of numbers. Larger *biraderis* were now more dominant, and used their large networks to get preferential access to jobs and other resources. Since society was still stratified by *biraderis*, numerically smaller *biraderis* now faced exclusion. The

¹¹⁴ While having this discussion, a curious conversation happened when Imtiaz was talking about Mirasis. “*The problem with Mirasis is that they sing and play for money. We do it for fun at weddings, that’s alright because it’s not for money.*” When I asked him if famous musicians, who sang for money, were also dirty and had no honour, he replied “*big musicians are fine because they are international artists, it’s like waiters at big restaurants getting tips.*”

shift from ‘hierarchy’ to ‘difference’, therefore, added a new dimension to social exclusion and inequality continued to exist, though in a slightly altered form. If, on the one hand, there were still elements of hierarchy that continued to reinforce pockets of social exclusion based on status among its lower *biraderis*, on the other hand, the new realities of demographics created new pockets of exclusion among its minority *biraderis*. More worryingly, sometimes these *biraderis* were one and the same. Nowhere was this form of exclusion and inequality more obvious than in the aftermath of the earthquake, when it was magnified and highlighted by the process of reconstruction and rehabilitation.

The Politics of the Earthquake

One day at the bazaar, while moving from shop to shop, Ali Naqvi called across to me from Mehfooz’s shop – one of the oldest in the bazaar and which sold grain – and invited me for a quick chat and a cup of tea. Mehfooz, an older Mughal from Bagla, cleaned an old wooden bench and told me to sit down, amusedly saying, “*All day long you go from shop to shop and never sit down. You’ve started looking like Omar [the old newspaper seller].*” During our cup of tea I asked both Mehfooz and Ali Naqvi how were people mobilising themselves in post-earthquake community-based projects. Ali Naqvi said that things were getting better. “*We’re becoming more efficient in utilising networks. Because of awareness and exposure, people started forming all these committees [organised by the NGOs after the earthquake], so networks got improved with other villages as well.*” Mehfooz added that after the earthquake people had become more opportunistic. “*People use their contacts and milk them as much as possible to get as much as they can.*” Both agreed that after the earthquake people mobilised themselves more through ‘common needs’ than *biraderi*. “*Biraderi is still important, but less than before*”, said Ali Naqvi.

Due to the earthquake, this region received an unprecedented attention from both the Pakistani state and the development industry, with national and international NGOs flooding PaK. During relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation stages these agencies were involved in a series of community-based and community-driven projects designed to assist the locals (particularly the more vulnerable) in recovering from the impact of the earthquake. Often perceived as originators of ‘neutral’ networks – based on common

goals and needs – these projects became reflections of or magnifying lenses for the existing social stratification and exclusion. In this section I use the post-earthquake relief and reconstruction stages to show that the networks people used to recover from the earthquake's impact, as well as the networks used in local politics, continued to be embedded primarily within the *biraderi*,¹¹⁵ creating (or exacerbating) social and economic exclusion.

The Earthquake and the Politics of Biraderi-ism

As seen in chapter three, most development agencies' targeted assistance overlooked the existent networks of patronage embedded in local social stratification. By allowing 'elite capture' and misreading representation their actions contributed in many instances to exacerbate exclusion. The problem of elite capture and representation was visible in the way *biraderi* politics affected reconstruction. Even pre-existing autonomous community-based organisations (CBOs) suffered from *biraderi* politics, as was the case of the Khorian Social Welfare Association in the villages surrounding Chinati bazaar. Founded autonomously in 1993 by locals of all *biraderis* belonging to five nearby settlements, this CBO was engaged in giving loans without interest and food-for-work to poorer people in the region. Its committee collected funds from within these villages (including *fitrana* and *zakat* donations) and identified potential beneficiaries. Following the earthquake it worked as a go-between with relief NGOs until it lost out due to political pressure. Aslam, a Mughal from Khorian and the treasurer of this association, narrated to me how this CBO was affected by *biraderi*-ism:

“After the earthquake our Association was still working. We would go to different NGOs, show our [membership] cards and get stuff to distribute. Later the funds started to get passed on through MLAs and they would give preference to [their] family and biraderi. This caused fights within the Association and it died, victim of biraderi politics.”

As the relief stage progressed towards reconstruction, development agencies began to formalise assistance and channelled it through either the different state agencies (with ERRA being the main coordinator) or by subcontracting local NGOs, many of whom

¹¹⁵ In this section I use the word *biraderi* for both *biraderi* and *quom*, as this was the word used when discussing politics.

were recently formed. While the main agencies publicised this channelling as a way of making assistance more efficient, transparent and equitable, the lack of awareness of power hierarchies within the region did not prevent these channels of being hijacked by the more powerful elements. Mohammad Sheikh stated, like many of my other informants, that *“some staff at ERRA and NGOs were nepotists and would help mainly their biraderis, or were corrupt and made money through aid.”* Mistargeting was detrimental to the whole relief and reconstruction stages not only because many of the more vulnerable were excluded, but also because sometimes it channelled assistance to better-off groups, drastically increasing the gap between the *haves* and the *have-nots*. Zaidi *et al* (2010: 396) when assessing the targeting of the World Bank-funded livelihood cash grant discovered that *“nearly one-half of deserving families (...) were excluded. Moreover, one in two families that did not deserve the benefit because they were ineligible according to the ERRA–WB criteria were selected and awarded the dividend.”* Similarly a report by the Auditor General of Pakistan showed that during 2006-07 ERRA paid Rs. 94 million in housing cash grants to 1,255 ineligible claimants, Rs. 410 million to claimants which required confirmation of eligibility, plus several cases of beneficiaries being paid twice (Khan, 2008). In most cases, both exclusion and inclusion were attributed to *biraderi*-ism playing a role in determining who would get access or not.

As with the case of the Khorian Social Welfare Association politicians, government officials and NGO staff would often channel resources and funds to the people who helped them attain these positions and to whom they owed primordial loyalties¹¹⁶ – their *biraderis*. According to locals, people in PaK felt trapped in a prisoner’s dilemma: they all identified a relation between *biraderi*-ism and nepotism, but no one was willing to be the first one to step out of it, as others would continue to use their *biraderi* contacts. According to Kashif, *“nepotism is not a problem with politicians, it’s a Kashmiri thing. We’re always used to the biraderi connection. It goes beyond government jobs – even in NGOs and private business people would ask you who was your reference.”* *Biraderi*-ism was embedded in all levels of power leading to nepotism, which they recognised as corruption. Corruption though, was ambiguous and seldom purely wrong as it was a special case of wider practices of mutuality and dependence. It was, in the wider context of social life, *“only one among many outcomes of habitual*

¹¹⁶ Using Alavi’s (1972) terminology.

practices [involving] habitual networking, negotiation and manipulative application of ideas and moral arguments – it just happen[ed] to involve a holder of a public position” (Ruud: 2000: 271). But the pervasiveness of the need for a reference to get access to jobs had even created self-doubts in many people about their qualifications. Raza was one of those: *“After the earthquake I applied for a data entry job with NRSP. I had a BA in Economics from AJKU and a 6-month diploma in MSOffice. I didn’t have contacts. The guy that got the job didn’t know how to use a mouse. For [this NGO] I passed two interviews and was put on top of the list. I seriously think that if it wasn’t for a relative inside the NGO I wouldn’t have got the job.”*

‘Interview’ was the word commonly used for exploiting the *biraderi* connection when applying for a job.¹¹⁷ It meant using a contact during the application process, someone from your *biraderi* who could put in a word for you. *“If you try to get a job in the government you need the biraderi connection. Friendship doesn’t work”*, told me Abbas, the Mughal owner of the *adda* at the bazaar. Being able to get an interview is vital in this region, as 25% to 50% of the economically active population is unemployed (Shaffer, 2005) and, one would assume, levels of underemployment are also very high. Umar, a young local with a technical engineering diploma who worked in a grocery shop was applying for a job in AJKPTV because someone from his *biraderi* was a Minister and had arranged an interview for him.¹¹⁸ With demographics playing a major role in *biraderi* dynamics – and majority *biraderis* becoming dominant due to their size – the lack of interviews plagued especially minority *biraderis*, including higher ranked ones that used to be more powerful such as the Syeds. Ali Naqvi was quite vocal about this: *“Politicians use biraderis, so Syeds lose out. A Narma minister will choose a Narma with an FSc over a Syed with an MSc. My sister’s daughter had an MA in Botany and my daughter a BEd but they couldn’t get an interview. If Europe was like us, nothing would happen;”*¹¹⁹ *that is why the West is ahead of us.”*

That *biraderi* affected politics was evident in the election results for this constituency. Evans (2010: 18) found strong *biraderi* allegiance among the Jats in Mirpur and Sudhans in Rawalakot, stating that *“in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, political*

¹¹⁷ In a similar way as the word *sifarish* (reference or recommendation) is commonly used in Pakistan, except in this region *sifarish* always had the element of money added to it.

¹¹⁸ The higher the contact, the better chances people had of getting an interview within any ministry. As a Raja informant told me, *“[Politician X] was construction minister but if someone from his biraderi needed a job in education he would talk to the education department.”*

organisation among biraderis remains as influential as political parties". The same applied to Bagh District, where for the past 40-odd years Narma,¹²⁰ Mughal and Raja candidates have been battling for power using a mixture of clientelism and *biraderi*-ism. These candidates acted like 'bosses' (Price and Ruud, 2010:xxiv) redistributing "resources in relatively small-scale domains (...) with a first (amoral) imperative of maintaining the dominance of the leader and his establishment", often practicing the role of the local middlemen – the 'fixers', known here as political agents – between vote blocs¹²¹ and the state machinery. As a Kiani influential told me one day at the bazaar, when we were alone, "*Mughals and Narma dominate Bagh District. Narmas are big in Bagh city and around. Mughals are illiterate but well organised. They listen to their leaders and vote in bloc.*" Mohmand (2011) makes the same point for rural Punjab, showing clientelism and *biraderi*-ism as the two main forces that organise the vote. During my fieldwork, the MLA for this constituency was a Narma. A recurrent comment in the bazaar was the fact that since there were very few Narmas in these villages, they received very little attention from the government, as the villages surrounding Chinati bazaar belonged to a larger constituency within the Bagh District which also included villages where Narmas and Rajas were the majority *biraderi*.

"The current MLA is a Narma so he doesn't come much here. He only cares about his own people." In this constituency the 2011 elections were contested by a Mughal (PPP), a Raja (MC), and two Narmas, one campaigning for Jammāt-e-Islami (JI) and the other – the previous MLA – running as an independent candidate.¹²² All four candidates had previously won in this constituency, sometimes representing different political parties (the Mughal candidate in 90-91 as independent and 96-01 in another constituency with PPP; the Raja in 75-77 with PPP and then 91-96 and 2001-06 with MC; one Narma in 96-01 with JI; and the other in 2006-11 with MC). The PPP/Mughal candidate won with almost twice the number of votes of the nearest candidate, the Narma running as independent who was the incumbent MLA, while the MC/Raja and the JI/Narma candidates finished third and fourth, respectively. While a sizeable population voted according to political allegiances, the majority voted once more around *biraderi* lines.

¹¹⁹ Interestingly, *biraderi* politics was also prevalent in the British Diaspora (Akhtar, 2003; Dale, 2008). In a recent report Wilks-Heeg (2008) even mentions bloc voting across *biraderi* lines.

¹²⁰ Both Narma and Raja considered themselves Rajput. While some stated that their *quom* was Rajput and *zat* Narma and Raja, others said that Narma and Raja was both their *quom* and *zat*.

¹²¹ Known in Punjab as *dhara* (Cheema and Mohmand, 2006).

Imtiaz told me that “*the Mughal candidate uses the Mughal connection. It’s not because people believe in him as a politician that they vote for him. It’s because they know he will help them once he’s in power.*” This explained the division of MC votes among the Raja candidate and the independent Narma (who used to be MC), as well as the division of Narma votes among the JI candidate and the independent one.

An important actor in the electoral process was that of the fixer – using Price and Ruud’s (2010) terminology – or political agent. Often not associated with a political party (nor pledging allegiance to the same candidate throughout elections), political agents acted as middlemen between vote blocs and candidates, promising votes to the latter and jobs to the former for a small fee. One such agent was a man from Khorian who called himself “*Sher-e-Khorian*” (The Lion of Khorian). He claimed to know all the people in government, especially the ones appointed by Pakistan (Chief Secretary, IG Police and the Finance Secretary), carrying with him clippings of local newspapers where we was seen shaking hands with ministers. Some people would pay Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 20,000 for him to arrange government interviews. Qasim, a Kiani from Hothala, a village where Kianis were the vast majority, was also a political agent. In his words, the problem of nepotism and *biraderi*-ism lay with political agents, not politicians.

“For years I did nothing but later I became a political agent and joined PPP. In the early 90s, when Khaled Ibrahim established Jammu and Kashmir People’s Party (JKPP) I joined it. Just before the earthquake there was a plan for a 5-mile road to my village. The MC government through the MLA of the area talked to my older brother and asked us to join MC so that the road would go ahead. We did and now we have a road. JKPP is mainly about merit while MC is about contacts and biraderi-ism. I get votes for MC during elections and in between elections I get jobs to the voters, regardless of merit. The blame of corruption should not be on the leaders, but on political workers like me who destroy meritocracy.”

Corbridge *et al.* (2005: 191) assert that in India the minimal presence of the state in rural areas and therefore rural citizens’ interaction with the state being sectional – framed by kin and caste and mediated by those with power at the local level – made local political society “*often constructively engaged in providing links between*

¹²² Which, a month before the elections, pledged his allegiance to Pakistan Muslim League-Noon (PML-N).

'government' and 'the public', as well as brokering deals and forming patterns of authority that hold these deals in place." Recently, Mohmand (2011:170) discovered that in rural Punjab voters' political preferences were shaped by local vote blocs and their leaders, where most voters were members of vote blocs either because of *"a negotiated relationship that enable[d] them to access public services and other material benefits, or as a form of collective action in which they [could] act together with other members of their family or kin group to improve their material circumstances. Any given vote bloc [could] be both a vertical network of patrons and clients, or a horizontal network of social solidarity and collective action."* In PaK electoral politics were heavily affected by political organisation through vertical clientelistic networks and horizontal *biraderi* lines. With the introduction of majority rule in the early 1970s majority *biraderis* became often the dominant *biraderis*, using their networks to access power and resources in a society where the state did not provide universal services nor social security. Post-earthquake assistance was also not universal but targeted. Despite efforts to reach the more vulnerable, often this assistance was highjacked by the ones closer to power, namely the elites within the majority *biraderis*, who proceeded to distribute this assistance by incorporating it in their clientelistic networks.

Within the Biraderi: inter- or intra- politics?

As seen so far, *biraderi* demographics played a crucial role in accessing assistance during both relief and reconstruction, just as it did in accessing services and employment before the earthquake. But what happened when villages where the majority (and dominant) *biraderi* was the same tried to access services? Similar to rural Punjab, where *"the main ethic of the biraderi is not 'to keep up with the Joneses' but 'to keep the Joneses down' (...) to impede any process that might raise either absolutely or relatively the social or economic level of the member of one's biraderi"* (Wakil, 1970: 703), intra-*biraderi* competition appeared to stall several reconstruction projects. An example of this fierce competition was seen during the negotiations for a Basic Health Unit (BHU) among villages where there was – according to my informants – the same majority *biraderi*. Yet, this 'same *biraderi*' needs to be contextualised otherwise we might fall in the fallacy of seeing *biraderi* as the all-encompassing unit which is not.

In the summer of 2009, the then Health Minister, the Mughal belonging to PPP who was elected in this constituency in 2011, approached a group of villages from two different Union Councils with a majority Mughal¹²³ population and asked them to choose a location for an upcoming BHU. For Kashif, like for many others, this was purely a political move. *“He wants to do something in this region because all that has been done so far was done by the MC. But he warned us that if there was no agreement on the location, the BHU would go somewhere else.”* After a first round of negotiations these villages organised themselves into two groups, one composed of villages at middle altitude which preferred the BHU to be made close to Chinati bazaar and the other a group of villages at a higher altitude which preferred the BHU to be further up from the bazaar. The first group justified their preference with the fact that they all belonged to Nakkar UC, which had no BHU and had to go to Hari Ghel, while the others belonged to Mughal Topi UC which already had a BHU. The second group stated that there was not enough space to build a BHU near the bazaar and their proposed space even had a water source, essential for a BHU. For the following months both groups met several times without reaching a decision to the despair of many. Imtiaz put forth this despair one day when I asked him, many months after the initial consultation, what was the news on the BHU:

“These [expletive] just like to talk. Everybody likes to have his piece of mind, but at the end nothing happens, nothing will happen. These people just like to show-off their apparent influence and power. They don’t deserve a right of opinion – the government should have just got here, grabbed land and built the damned thing. Then they complain that the government doesn’t take their point of view in decisions – this is why the government doesn’t do it! They [locals] make a mess of it. They’ll only notice the mistake when someone from here will die on the way to the hospital in Bagh. Two groups who cannot compromise on 10 minutes’ distance. They’d rather both loose than one win a bit and the other win a lot.”

As witnessed by Wakil (1970) in rural Punjab, so too in these villages intra-*biraderi* competition revolved around impeding members of their own *biraderi* from gaining an advantage within the group. If not able to achieve a win-lose situation, members would often prefer to reach a lose-lose rather than a win-win situation, even if it was at the

¹²³ Some villages where Mughals were a minority or did not exist were never part of the consultation.

expense of accessing needed services. But if we probe this example deeper, we see not intra-*biraderi* competition, but intra-*zat* competition. As I mentioned previously, the ambiguity of the term *biraderi* allows it to be used as *quom* (descent), *zat* (recognition) or *biraderi* (participation). In this case, while all parties considered themselves as part of the same *biraderi-quom* of the Health Minister, they differed from him in their *biraderi-zat* and, more importantly, were differentiated among themselves into two groups composed of several *biraderis* of participation.

As before the earthquake, the politics of *biraderi* seeped into all spheres of relief and reconstruction. “*Many companies that initially came here after the earthquake were outsiders so they would hire on merit. Eventually MLAs would advise them on who to hire or their contracts would finish*” said Mohammad Sheikh, the trader. Having the right contact to access assistance entailed being a member of the ‘right group’. This membership though could only be attained by birth or in some cases by marriage, virtually denying access to the ones that were born in the ‘wrong *biraderi*’. *Biraderi* though, was not a universal category, as it was – depending on the context – used as caste or as kinship, triggering in some instances a more detailed targeting and exacerbating exclusion, while at other moments widening this targeting and enabling a larger number of people to be included. The ambiguity of the terms used to define and rank different groups within the local social structure and its fluidity was, to a large extent, intensified by the impact of recent socio-economic and political changes witnessed in PaK as elsewhere, and particularly visible during the post-earthquake relief, reconstruction, and rehabilitation stages.

Conclusion

There was a general perception among the people of the bazaar that their society was egalitarian. In saying so they referred to the fact that over time, given a number of events – such as entitlements to land ownership, the introduction of electoral politics through universal suffrage, mass migration to the Gulf countries and an almost universalisation of education – social stratification in their region had evolved from being based on ‘hierarchy’ to being defined by ‘difference’.

However, despite these changes, historical cleavages based on caste and kinship continued to exist. Although notions of hierarchy and social stratification had evolved

over time, the social position of individuals, and social and economic exclusion, were still defined by birth, through membership in a *biraderi*, an all-encompassing term for caste and kinship social structures. This was particularly true for individuals from lower *biraderis*, for whom the strict rules of endogamy rendered their eligibility to become a member of a higher *biraderi* nearly impossible. Despite all the changes, it was still through *biraderi*-ism that most people attempted to gain access to power and resources, both before and after the earthquake.

While most claimed that this differentiation was now based on ‘difference’ rather than ‘hierarchy’, inequality continued to exist through the unequal power of majority and minority *biraderis*. Since society was still stratified by *biraderis*, numerically smaller *biraderis* now faced exclusion. If, on the one hand, there were still elements of hierarchy that continued to reinforce pockets of social exclusion based on status among its lower *biraderis*, on the other hand, the new demographic realities created new pockets of exclusion among its minority *biraderis*. Often these *biraderis* were one and the same. Therefore, while the stories and narratives of the people of Chinati bazaar spoke explicitly of change and equality, and of the slow death of *biraderi*-ism, the details of their conversations about social organisation and how society functioned revealed instead continuing differences and exclusion, that had been changing and evolving in form over a long period of time. Once again, their stories of change had a sub-text of continuity. In the next chapter I take a step deeper into societal dynamics by going from the *biraderi* group to the family unit, and analyse how the two competing dynamics of rupture and modernisation on the one hand and slow, continuous change on the other play out even in intra-family relationships.

Chapter Five

Upside Down and Inside Out: The Continuity of Change in the House, Home and Family

Introduction

Figure 4 – Written on the bumper: “tum kiya wafa ki baat kartey ho; wafa tau un dinno thi, jab makaan kacchey aur log pakkey hua kartey the” (What do you know of loyalty; loyalty existed when houses were kaccha and people were pakka)



It was past noon and, as on every other weekday, a rush of schoolchildren from the two private schools flooded the bazaar, ‘invading’ every shop that sold sweets, as well as Kashif’s pakora shop. Despite his pakoras being quite tasty, which I happily devoured twice a day, the schoolchildren only had an eye for the other delicacies that Kashif served: *jaleebis*¹²⁴ and chips. I waited for the rush of schoolchildren to subside and then sat at the entrance of his shop for my daily dose of pakoras and *gup shup* (informal chat). Raza, having just finished teaching, joined me from the other side of the road, carrying tea. Kashif was complaining that he needed a new roof for his house but did not have the money for it. Before the earthquake he lived in a joint family with his brothers within the same house, but after the earthquake they had decided to build separate houses. As the eldest he kept the old house, but it was in a bad shape so he decided to build a new one. Raza said this was a problem for everybody after the

¹²⁴ A sweetmeal made of sugar, oil and saffron in circular shapes and soaked in syrup.

earthquake. *“Because you had to show that you were rebuilding your house to access government compensation, people went ahead and started building multiple individual houses to get more compensation. This initiated the end of the joint family system. There are many more houses now than before the earthquake. Joint families had many advantages, but it was a normal thing [to end] as we are becoming modern.”* Like Raza, many people associated the recent increase in the number of houses with post-earthquake reconstruction, and this reconstruction with changing patterns of residence, namely, the shift from a joint family system to a nuclear family. Their rationale for these associations was based on the fact that the number of houses had increased of late, as had different types of arrangements in family living.

This chapter is about the discrepancy that existed in people’s perception of change in housing and the extent of actual change that occurred after the earthquake. My argument centres on the fact that residents in the villages surrounding Chinati bazaar said they had witnessed changes in housing following the earthquake, both quantitatively and qualitatively. According to them, there was not only an unprecedented increase in housing units, but also an increase in ostentatious houses, creating a wider rift between wealthier and poorer families. Along with this increase in housing, residents pointed out that there had also been a change in the spatial organisation of families, with younger households moving towards more independent living away from the family. This in turn had created a change within family relations. They explained this by pointing out that since most people needed to rebuild their houses following the earthquake, it gave wealthier families the excuse to use the new building codes to display their status, and younger households the opportunity to build separate houses. In this chapter I use census data and their narratives of everyday life (as opposed to their narratives of change) to show that neither the increase in housing units nor the use of the house as a status symbol was new, nor was there a breakdown *per se* of the classical patriarchy. The earthquake and post-earthquake reconstruction intensified and crystallised pre-existing social conditions, including the continuity of power relations and social inequalities both inside and outside the house and the home. I reach this conclusion by looking at how households continued to create, negotiate and reinforce family ties in their everyday lives as ways to increase their social and symbolic capital, as well as to access informal social protection.

In the following sections I analyse the real and perceived changes in housing arrangements that took place in the villages around Chinati bazaar post-earthquake, and their real and perceived impact on the domestic arenas. In section two I explain the perceived increase in housing reconstruction following the earthquake and analyse the reasons why people may have come to perceive this change. In section three I move inside the house and similarly establish that changes in the domestic organisation, perceived to have been caused by the refashioning of the houses, were simply a continuation of pre-existing patterns linked primarily to migration. In section four I analyse how despite perceived notions of household independence, the earthquake did not change the fact that the family continued to be the main source of informal social protection. I conclude by stating that there was a continuity of pre-existing social relations and that the earthquake did not create change, but rather, crystallised a process of change that was already underway.

Change and Continuity in the New House

In people's narratives at the bazaar the earthquake was the main reason why people had started building not just new houses, but new types of relationships within the family. However, as I had more and more conversations about this in the bazaar, a second reason appeared within these narratives. This had to do with the fact that they were 'becoming modern' and as such they were shifting from a joint family system to a nuclear family. In India, where there is a larger literature on what Cohen (1998: 89) calls the "*taken-for-granted decline of the joint family*", this literature bases the decline on Westernisation, modernisation, industrialisation, and urbanisation. Similarly, in Pakistan several recent studies (Ali and Kiani, 2003; Itrat *et al*, 2007) also identify modernisation, industrialisation, and urbanisation as the reasons for this decline. However, what these studies all have in common is the lack of baseline or longitudinal data with which to support this assertion (Lamb, 2000). Those that have used longitudinal studies in their work (Cohen, 1998: 103; Lamb, 2000: 93; Uberoi, 2005: 371) point out that "*multiple studies exist that suggest the joint family system has not declined in any simple sense*" (Cohen, 1998: 103) as the "*proportion of joint over nuclear households does not appear to be decreasing*" (Uberoi, 2005: 371).

The situation in Pakistan is not very different. While a 1998 survey-based study claims that “about one half of the households in Pakistan are now nuclear” (Sathar and Casterline, 1998), other studies that date back to the 1960s and 1970s argue that the dominant or supposedly universal pattern of patrilocal extended family of the past is essentially a myth. Wakil (1991) points out that according to the Pakistan Housing Census of 1960 only 54% of people in rural areas lived in some type of joint family. A survey by Khan *et al* (1979: in Wakil, 1991) in rural Sindh shows that about one of every two families was a nuclear family with only the parents and their unmarried children living together. The tendency to conduct studies without using longitudinal data has contributed to the perception that the joint family is in decline, whereas there is literature on South Asia that indicates that there has been little change in residential patterns, and that both joint and nuclear families have been part of these patterns over many decades now, in some cases, in almost equal proportion. Cohen (1998: 104-105) sees the myth of the declining joint family system as a narrative where ‘Western modernity’ is the villain who abducts the self together with its idealised joint family. In her study of (Indian) Punjabi families Das (1979: in Uberoi, 2005) identified the joint family as an ‘ideology’ and a ‘code of conduct’ where household relations were subordinate to a larger collective identity. I advance that Uberoi’s (2005: 362) assertion about the ideal Indian joint family, which she says “*has long been an important ingredient in the national self-imaging as the social institution that uniquely expresses and represents the valued aspects of Indian culture and tradition*”, is also true of the ideal Pakistani joint family, including in PaK. In our case, the stories told at the bazaar were also filled with an idyllic ‘past-joint’ versus a ‘present-nuclear’ discourse where the earthquake was viewed as the key moment in this rupture. Before looking at the changes inside the house though, in this section I describe and analyse the various reasons why people had come to perceive a drastic growth in the number of houses and explain how this may have helped to confabulate the myth of the decline of the joint family.

How Many Houses?

Despite the fact that an increase in housing is neither new nor recent, most of my informants seemed to believe it was. Yet, the extent of growth in the housing sector appears to not be simply linked to post-earthquake reconstruction, as it was visible in

the preceding years to the earthquake. For instance, while in the 1998 Census the number of houses for Bagh District was 53,275 (of which 38% were considered *pakka*),¹²⁵ the housing survey conducted by ERRA in early 2006, to ascertain the number of houses eligible for reconstruction compensation, accounted for 94,752 houses. In other words, according to ERRA there was an increase of about 56% in housing structures in the preceding seven years to the earthquake. Although this figure might have been inflated, there had been an increase in housing, which was directly linked to an increase in remittances. Building a house is considered a preferred way of using remittances especially, as many of my informants often stated, in a region where there are very few opportunities to invest. According to the World Bank (2012) dataset on workers remittances for Pakistan, remittances received in the country were of the order of US\$ 2-2.5 billion annually from 1980 until 1990 (peaking at US\$ 3 billion in 1983), decreased to a range of US\$ 1 billion to US\$ 2 billion annually from 1990 to 2001, then increased to US\$ 4 billion for the 2002-05 period, and have been increasing at the rate of US\$ 1 billion per year ever since. A reasonable number of houses destroyed in the earthquake were in fact fairly new and some were even unfinished.

Nevertheless many locals believed that this increase was recent for a series of reasons, which I will now elaborate on. Firstly, it seems that the slower increase of housing construction before the earthquake might have passed unnoticed or, at best, was not as visible as compared to a drastic shock like the earthquake, after which houses *had* to be built. While previously people built their houses throughout the years, after the earthquake they built them almost simultaneously, thus giving the feeling of a rapid increase in housing.

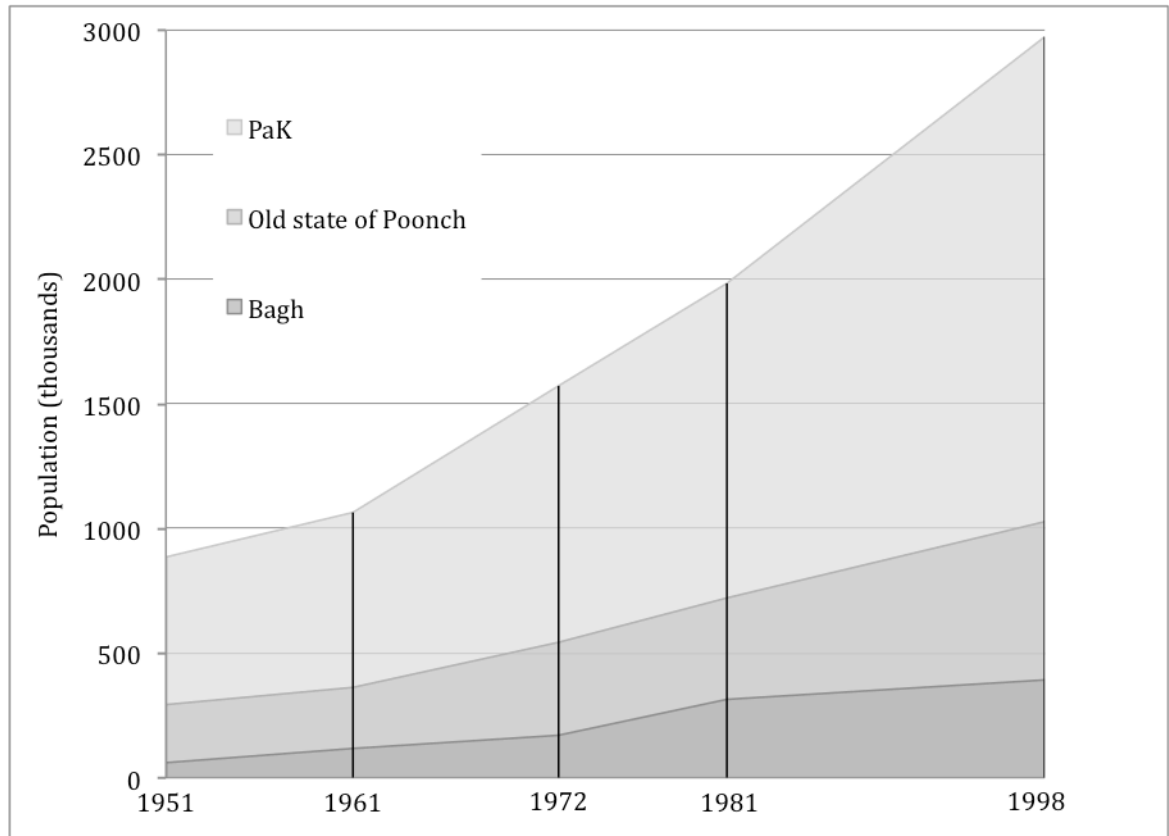
Secondly, many informants used a perception of population growth and population pressure to justify what they saw as an increase in housing and a potential shift from joint family systems to nuclear. Increasing family numbers was a strong reason for building new houses, preferably with extra divisions for future generations. These new houses were costly to build, even for many migrant-sending families, as remittances were spent over time in daily household consumption, children's education, and social events such as weddings and funerals. Before the earthquake people would often just build extensions to the existing houses. Post-earthquake, many felt that government

¹²⁵ *Pakka* means cooked, ripe. In housing it is used for houses that are solid, usually made of concrete, bricks and/or stone. The opposite term is *kaccha* (raw, unripe), for houses made of adobe or mud.

compensation and the need for reconstruction gave them an incentive to build separate houses, to ‘steam off’ population pressure. This population pressure, though, might not have been as high as people perceived. Growth rates in Bagh District are relatively lower compared to PaK as a whole. As seen in Figure 5, while there was a steady yet fast increase in population in PaK, in Bagh the increase had been more subdued. Still, as families had augmented and living space was becoming smaller, they said, many opted for building more houses, rather than create attachments to the older houses. *“Earlier everyone used to live in one house but now they live nearby [in separate houses]”*, said Jameela Bibi, a resident of Serabad. Often these new houses were built in the same plot where before the earthquake there was a single house, thereby creating a cluster of buildings, a compound, due to the limited availability of land and as a way of maintaining patrilocal residence. In effect, these new houses became extensions of what rooms used to be, i.e., where before a joint family in a larger house would allocate rooms to households, today these rooms have been detached and given their own roofs. Where before the roof was the unifying element of the joint family, in a reversal of space – from above to below – it now appears that the courtyard has taken this role.¹²⁶ This trend though, was not the only one adopted in the region post-earthquake; in many families married brothers decided to pool in their resources and build a single larger house, others built a simple three-bedroom house and rebuilt the older house as their winter house-cum-kitchen, and others even built something like semi-detached houses, with a nuclear family per floor. Many, especially the poorer ones and the ones who did not get access to compensation, built what they could, which often meant the same house spatially, but with a tin roof.

¹²⁶ Besides roofs, in the next section I further explain what households shared and not shared before and after the earthquake.

Figure 5 – Population Growth in Pakistan-administered Kashmir



Source: P&D AJK, 1980; 1990; 2008

Thirdly, a misunderstanding regarding entitlement to government compensation became an incentive to build more houses. The total compensation given by the government to rebuild a house in the earthquake-affected areas varied from Rs. 25,000 (minimal damages) to Rs. 175,000 (complete reconstruction). Housing compensation was given in four tranches for destroyed houses: an initial Rs. 25,000 to cover immediate shelter needs, Rs. 75,000 for mobilisation, Rs. 25,000 upon completion to plinth level (base), and Rs. 50,000 upon completion of the walls. For partially destroyed houses, after the initial Rs. 25,000, people were entitled to one single instalment of Rs. 50,000. As a large number of the population was entitled to (and received) the first tranche, at this point a misunderstanding developed on who was entitled to compensation and how much. According to news reports, soon after the earthquake Musharraf promised that the “*Federal government will construct and provide a new house in place of [a] razed house in NWFP and AJK*” (PakTribune, 2005). While the vast majority of the population in PaK understood “compensation” as total compensation, the Federal government, despite what its leaders said to the press, meant ‘partial subsidy’. Also, as the initial instalment was given to households – identified by stoves – and not houses –

identified by roofs – most assumed that the rest of the instalments would continue this way. The government, on the other hand, had other plans:

“If more than one family are residing under one roof and during the initial damage assessment Rs. 25,000 were given on the basis of stoves, second tranche will only be given to one who is the owner of the house and undertaking will be obtained from other residents that they have no objection on subsidy given to one person who will build the house on behalf of all.” ERRA (2006a)

As Raza said, “you had to show [the government] that you were rebuilding your house” according to the new directives in order to get compensation. This obligation to rebuild, together with the perceived promise of funding, especially for those who received the initial instalment, became an incentive to build more houses.

Building a house, especially a *pakka* one using new materials, became an endeavour far more expensive than many predicted, including the locals and the government. In their initial assessment the ADB and the World Bank stated that a “*typical home in the affected areas houses 6-7 persons, is 400 sq. ft. and consists of one or two main rooms, a veranda and a bath and kitchen which may not be attached*” (2005). This depiction of an average house in the earthquake-affected areas of both PaK and KP, became the one adopted by the government to the detriment of places like the villages surrounding Chinati bazaar, where it fell short of the real picture of a house. In this area a typical home housed more than seven persons, was 500 sq. ft. and consisted of three or four main rooms, a veranda, and a bath and kitchen often not attached. On top of that, “*material quantities and construction costs were estimated (...) as they existed prior to the earthquake*” (ADB/WB, 2005). One of the immediate effects of the earthquake was an inflationary increase of the cost of construction materials and labour. Rebuilding a simple three-bedroom house with a simple tin roof would initially cost from Rs. 400,000 to Rs. 800,000. As total compensation was of Rs. 175,000, people had to make up the difference by using their savings, by borrowing, or by increasing their income. As time passed, despite a feeble attempt by the government to regulate costs, construction expenditures increased, linked to increased inflation levels in Pakistan. Hameed, a mason from Sarian, explained to me how costly it was to make even his house. “*I’ve put around 12 lacs and [my house] is 90% complete. Maybe three more lacs to complete it. The major problem in making a house is the availability of wood. I*

get the wood from Hari Ghel and have to let the guy know by three to five months in advance.” The construction of the new earthquake-resistant houses with tin roofs required extra amounts of wood. Due to a successful combined reforestation effort in the 80s by the government and its citizens, there was a tight control of logging in the region, meaning that local wood was hard to find. Often it came from outside PaK, further adding to the costs.

Fourthly, many migrants who had savings did not automatically spend those savings on improving their houses before the earthquake, living instead in *kaccha* houses or building simple *pakka* houses, with stones rather than brick and cement. Similar to the 1998 Census figures for Bagh District, in the villages I studied only about 37% of the houses were *pakka* before the earthquake. The earthquake and the potential government compensation gave them an incentive to improve their houses. As Omar the newspaper seller said in my initial story, many people who had previously appeared to be poor because they lived in *kaccha* (non-cemented) houses, had actually just been “*sitting on their money like snakes*”, but after the earthquake they decided to make better *pakka* (cemented) houses; the earthquake gave them the motivation to build *pakka* houses. ERRA’s motto, to ‘*Build Back Better*’ was largely adopted, if not in reality at least in aspiration, by most of the population post-earthquake. As Raja Yasin, a returned migrant from Serabad, said “*the earthquake was a good thing because (...) everybody now has pakka houses, there is better living*”. The earthquake gave them a new aim: to rebuild their houses in a ‘proper’ way, meaning using modern materials such as cement and paint, preparing for future earthquakes by using tin roofs, and creating more housing units for future family expansion.

Finally, one particular material used in the new houses might have also contributed to a perceived increase in housing numbers – the tin roof. Before the earthquake, most houses were *kaccha*, meaning they were made of mud walls, a large wooden beam crossing the roof and covered with pine (or grass) thatch. *Pakka* houses were made in stone masonry, with the mortar being a mix of gravel, mud and sand, and a flat slab roof or, sometimes, a tin roof. These roofs had higher status linked to them and were generally rare in the region. In one of our first conversations Sardar Zulfiqar pointed out that “*before the Gulf migration, there were only three tin roofs in Rawalakot: the mosque, my father’s house and another Sardar. Since the 80s, the numbers started increasing and after the earthquake, you can see for yourself.*” Government

compensation for housing reconstruction came with specific guidelines, of which the most visible one was the obligatory erection of tin roofs. Compared with other materials, e.g., wood, thatch or cement, tin sheets are more noticeable as they reflect the sun (see Figure 6). This heightened the sense that many more houses were being built after the earthquake, as tin roofs were rare before and became the norm after.

Figure 6 – Sun-reflecting Tin Roofs in Bagh District (morning and afternoon shot)



Due to this series of factors, namely simultaneous construction, perceived population pressure, a misunderstanding on eligibility for government compensation, a refashioning of houses from *kaccha* to *pakka*, and a proliferation of (more visible) tin roofs, people felt the earthquake caused a recent increase in housing, whereas much of this was because of processes already underway that were exacerbated by the earthquake.

Showing-off Through Roofs

People not only identified the earthquake as the main cause for the perceived recent increase in housing, but also perceived post-earthquake housing reconstruction as the reason for an increase in inequality among families. Reconstruction, though, did not increase inequality inasmuch as it made pre-existing inequality visible.

To build the new earthquake-resistant houses people needed other sources of capital besides limited government compensation. Families who had members working abroad had access to remittances and therefore access to more capital. It not only paid to have family members working abroad, but it made sense for these members to stay abroad

longer, as they would make more money. Receiving remittances not only meant a higher chance of building their house faster, it also increased the possibility of building a more elaborate house, or even several housing units for each household within the family instead of one house as before. Noticeably, the higher the remittances received, the more expensive housing reconstruction became. Abdullah, an unemployed Mughal from Thial who owned a joint house with three brothers who worked in Kuwait, showed me his house during one Eid. As he proudly stated, *“I have a kaccha winter house and a pakka summer house. I’ve spent Rs. 4,000,000 so far in this [summer] house. The paint came from Saudi Arabia and the roof is like the Malaysian ones.”* Soon a gulf appeared between families with migrants in Pakistan and families with migrants in the Gulf,¹²⁷ as the latter’s salaries (and remittances) were much higher than the former. Kashif had told me in one of our first encounters that *“there is a jealousy between the Gulf migrants and the Pakistani migrants; if Pakistani migrants earn 300, Gulf migrants earn 30,000. When people got money, they started building big houses to show-off. This is not helpful, it only causes more jealousy in the area.”*

This propensity to show-off, known locally as being *shôda*, took to new realms with housing reconstruction and was most visible in the elaborate CGI roofs – locally called ‘tin roofs’ – which had always been a symbol of status. A particular aspect of the housing reconstruction process in this region was the amount of labour, money, and attention spent on the construction of roofs. While some people started rebuilding their houses with a simple wooden frame and plain tin roof, others went for something more elaborate; they started creating kitschy pieces of art with their new roofs (see Figure 7). A correlation quickly developed between place of emigration and roof style; the bigger and flashier the roof was, the higher the probability that the house belonged to someone who was a migrant in the Gulf, Europe or North America. Hasnain, a teacher from Serabad put it succinctly when he said, *“most remittances are spent on showing off.”*

¹²⁷ And a wider gulf between families with access to remittances and families without.

Figure 7 – Various types of new roofs



Tin roofs, as I mentioned previously, were not a novelty in Poonch per se, but they were rare and of simple construction. Throughout the relief stage many development agencies provided CGI sheets to build semi-permanent shelters, which contributed to a proliferation of tin roofs. Unlike the simple, colourless slanted tin roof that appeared in the 80s, many of the new roofs were colourful, elaborately constructed and could harbour one or two storeys inside. Bashir was a very proud owner of an orange new roof: *“In the 80s, people started making roofs like this because you don’t have to clean the snow – it just falls. After the earthquake we got colour. The technology came from Australia and now these [CGI sheets] are made in Karachi.”* There was some dispute on the origin of these types of designs; many informants stated they were created by carpenters from Muzaffarabad (where there was more snow), while others said that the idea came from the south, from Mirpur, where there was no snow, but houses were known to be very ostentatious.

It appears that this was what migrants were waiting for to show off their livelihood. Some returned migrants mentioned that when remittances started coming (late 1970s onwards), they never thought of building a new (flashy) house, as they already had a house. Instead, they ‘packed’ their houses with appliances –fridges, satellite dishes, microwave ovens, and so on. Bashir’s house was one of those: *“I had a brilliant house, with fridge, the best furniture, the best house.”* Now, since they had to rebuild their houses, why not make something that could show access to gulf remittances on the *outside*? Because of the hilly terrain, houses were not always visible (at least not the

whole house), but roofs were. This, it appears, was a reason why most of the (migrant) houses had these ‘arty’ roofs, which were often complete before the rest of the house was finished. Sardar Zulfiqar was not so sure that this ostentation was beautiful. “*Why are houses and roofs brightly painted? There’s a guy who honks every time he passes by this road. He does it to tell people it’s him passing by.*” More important, in a socially stratified society such as this one, many migrants from middle- and lower-ranked *biraderis* started to propagate the use of ostentatious houses and roofs as markers of wealth and status and, in a way, challenging the prevailing social hierarchy. That not everybody, particularly people from higher status groups, agreed with ostentatious houses and roofs as markers of wealth and status was visible in the way people talked about these houses and roofs, with owners and kin calling them *izzatwala* (respectable) and others calling them *shôda*.

Houses and roofs subsequently became a yardstick for defining ostentation and became a measure by which other *things* were compared. For instance, a young schoolteacher from Khorian while describing why, in his opinion, education was not valued in this region equated it to ostentation: “*Education is not a means to a goal, rather it’s an end in itself. People get their children educated because it becomes a status issue – so everybody gets educated. But if they have to choose between funding their children for higher education and making a big flashy house, 90% would go for the latter. Education is not a long-term investment; it’s a shôda item.*” Ballard (2004) describes houses as ostentatious symbols of migratory success when analysing the case of the Mirpuri Diaspora. When comparing houses built by migrants to Europe and to the Gulf he states:

“Far from being machines for living in, they are best understood as vehicles which very publicly express the extent of their builder’s achievements, most especially in comparison with those of their immediate neighbours. Hence the competitively driven urge to add extra storeys and ever more flashy decoration (...). But although such buildings are very effective symbols of ‘modernity’ and ‘progress’, they are not of much use for anything else. (...) In this respect I noticed a striking contrast between the building styles favoured by returnees from the UK and elsewhere in Europe, and those from the Gulf, who had no prospect of taking up permanent residence overseas. Gulf returnees displayed little interest in building ‘skyscrapers’.

Instead they preferred the secluded courtyard style, which is much more in keeping with the demands of everyday domestic life.” (Roger Ballard, 2004:46)

Ballard’s reasoning for the distinction between European and Gulf migrants is that the latter preferred practicality and comfort because they *had* to return, as opposed to European migrants who did not live in these houses and used them as status symbols. After the earthquake, housing reconstruction in other parts of PaK managed to combine practicality, comfort and *shôdapan*.

Making a new house became an imperative in the earthquake-affected areas of PaK, but it became linked, more than before, with status and honour. Even people who did not need to rebuild their houses wished they had to. Imtiaz’s granduncle was one of them. *“Almost all my sons and nephews have completed their houses; this is new. Most of our houses were destroyed in the earthquake. I wished mine would have been destroyed, so I could have built a nice-looking, izzatwala like the others.”* Kashif, the retired migrant from Karachi who made pakoras in the bazaar, had such a dilemma. His problem was not the lack of money to live, but the lack of a new roof for his new house. It was not that he did not have a liveable house, just that he did not have a *new* house. He perceived his lack of a new house as a lost opportunity to be respected, i.e., his status in the bazaar was lower than it would have been had he owned a new house. He had reached a state where he had to be mindful whether to accept being invited to other people’s houses, because he would be expected to reciprocate the invitation to his simple, old house. However, if he refused, he would be left out of the reciprocity chain and hence would have less access to informal social protection.

As the spatial organisation of the house was turned upside down, with the courtyard replacing the roof as the unifying element of the domestic group, so too was ostentation turned inside out, with the explosion of colourful new houses and new roofs in the landscape of Bagh as symbols of wealth and status.

Inside the House: the domestic sphere

As seen in the previous section, a direct impact of post-earthquake reconstruction was the refashioning of housing structures in the earthquake-affected areas of PaK with a preference for, although not ubiquitous, single housing units. Did this refashioning have

any impact on domestic structures, that is, did post-earthquake housing reconstruction change the home as much as it changed the house? In this section I step inside the house to establish that the perceived post-earthquake changes within domestic organisation were also a continuation of pre-existing patterns and what the earthquake did was, to a large extent, to reset the developmental stage of the domestic cycle.

The Gharana

In the cluster of villages surrounding Chinati bazaar, as throughout PaK, a house could mean the physical structure (*makan*), or more often, the place where people lived, i.e., home (*ghar*). It is important to differentiate home from house because the former could exist in one house or in several, in the same plot of land, either adjacent or in storeys, or, as it was common in high altitude villages, in two plots at different altitudes: a summer house (high altitude) and a winter house (low altitude).

The most elementary composition of a household or *gharana* (literally “belonging to the home”) in PaK was a husband, wife and their unmarried children. This though, was only a norm as household composition was constantly changing over time according to its development cycle, “*whereby nuclear households expand, become extended, and then, at the death of the household head, split once more into nuclear units*” (Gardner, 1995: 102). Uberoi (2005) points out that in India, despite a predominance of nuclear households, most people experienced living in several different types of households throughout their life. Often in the same *ghar* several married couples could (and did) coexist, depending on the developmental stage of the domestic cycle.¹²⁸ At its maximum number, a male-headed domestic group¹²⁹ would be composed of the head of the family, his spouse, his brothers, their spouses and their children, his (unmarried) sisters, his children and their spouses, and his parents (if being supported). As for female-headed domestic groups, and following Handa’s (1994) reasoning that we should not treat them as a homogeneous group, there were roughly three main types: the *de facto* female-headed one, where the male head had died and his spouse had taken control of the family until one of her sons became the head (and she became a supported

¹²⁸ Using Fortes’ (1958) terminology.

¹²⁹ I use the word ‘domestic’ and not ‘household’ or ‘family’ for the social structures inside the home for “*at the core of most conceptions of ‘domestic’ are two sets of functional activities: those pertaining to food production and consumption and those pertaining to social reproduction, including child-bearing and child-rearing*” (Yanagisako, 1979: 166).

parent); the absent male-headed domestic group, where the male head was away (usually migrated) and his spouse became the head during those periods; and a third type similar to the previous one, except the decision-making role of the head was delegated (often not her choice) to her father-in-law or one of her brothers-in-law.

The most common domestic development cycle in the villages around Chinati bazaar, if we take a man as the ego, would start with him marrying and starting his conjugal life in the house of his parents. Initially his wife would cook together with his mother and unmarried sisters for the whole household, depending on the mother's decision. As his own family expanded his wife might start to cook separately, although still living in the same house and often still sharing the same resources. Eventually he would build an extension to his parents' house or, if he could afford it, a separate house within the same compound, therefore creating a new household within the immediate family (*tabbar*). If he had brothers with time they too would marry and bring to the house their wives, eventually forming more households within the same house. As per tradition in this area, the sharing of the inheritance was often done while the parents were alive, particularly the division of land as it allowed the sons to own the plot where they could build a future house. When the patriarch of the house died, the eldest brother would become the new head if they lived in the same house, otherwise, if they lived in separate houses and the eldest had his own house, the next elder brother would inherit the main house.

Within the home the key identifier of the number of households present was the number of cooking stoves (*chula*); whoever ate meals prepared on a particular *chula* belonged to that household. Yet, there was a multiplicity of ways by which different households made use of these *chulas* that defied this definition: often households would eat breakfast in separate *chulas* and dine from a unifying one; at times different households would have breakfast from the matriarchal's *chula* and dine in separate *chulas*; some households whose women worked outside the home would rotate among them the responsibility for a unified breakfast, but separate at other meals; and there were homes where the younger housewife would prepare meals for her household in her *chula* and then move to her in-laws' *chula* to prepare their meals. As several authors have pointed out, (Sharma, 1980; Gardner, 1995) 'common hearth' is but one of many criteria including co-residence, economic cooperation, mutual finances and joint property. Identifying the number of households within the *tabbar* was not a simple exercise. As

they aged and contributed less to the economy¹³⁰ of the house the older patriarchs' power in decision-making was reduced over time. To the extent that, though a household themselves, they stopped being counted as one when it mattered. For instance, in a house where a *tabbar* lived together – composed of an older married couple (patriarchs), their three married sons (plus wives and children), one unmarried son and an unmarried daughter – when discussing power relations within the house the daughters-in-law said, “*we are three households in this house and maintaining relationships becomes difficult*”. When asked as to how many households lived in the house they mentioned four.

People who lived in the same house did not necessarily belong to the same *tabbar* and sometimes did not even belong to the same extended family (*khandan*). Like in other cases (Yanagisako, 1979), in this region too there was sometimes a distinction between household and family, with the former being related to proximity and the latter to kinship. During Partition, there were several instances of (mostly Sikh) children who stayed behind and were ‘adopted’ by Muslim families, eventually converting and taking the name *Sheikh* as their ‘new’ *biraderi* and, in effect, becoming part of the household but not the family. This distinction appears to have intensified particularly after the earthquake, with an increase of houses taking in new members – from outside the *tabbar* and even the *khandan* – whose livelihoods got severely affected as a result of the death or disability of the household heads.

The impact of the earthquake (and post-earthquake reconstruction) inflated some domestic groups and deflated others. The increase in size was witnessed in a multitude of combinations, either by pooling in resources – with married brothers or even married cousins rebuilding one or several houses together with one or several *chulas* – or by adopting members from outside the pre-earthquake domestic group. While the pooling in of resources was primarily an economic decision – and there were other considerations, such as keeping the women together in one home (making it easier to ‘protect’ them), or dividing household chores – the adoption of new members from outside the family was often a moral choice, incurring an increase of expenses. In Sarian, one family neighbouring Bashir’s took upon them to take care of two young boys from another village and different *biraderi*. Safina, the matriarch told us the story: “*There’s a family in Mughal Topi whose father has epilepsy and the mother doesn’t*

¹³⁰ Literally “household management”.

work, so they stopped educating their children. After the earthquake their two younger sons came to live with us, so we can get them educated. We are sharing our budget with this family." The decrease in the size of domestic groups happened because of two reasons, both linked to the earthquake and migration: either due to an absence of members – because they either died during the earthquake or were migrants – or due to the creation of new smaller domestic units – through post-earthquake housing reconstruction and through remittances that sponsored the creation of such units. These smaller units were referred to as 'single families' and while conceptually similar to nuclear families the terminology could be used to express the opposite, for many people in the region used the word 'nuclear' for joint families.

Jameela, a young wife from Sarian, complained since their household had a low income they could not make their own independent house and have what she called a 'single unit'. *"The preference is to have single units, but due to constraints we have a nuclear family."* When she stated that there was a preference for single units, she did not necessarily mean that this was a preference for single families; there was a difference, in their discourse, between residing separately and living separately. As elsewhere, (Gardner, 1995: 121) the domestic group was seen as a set of relationships and transactions beyond co-residence and *"simply because households [were] physically separated [did] not mean that they stop[ed] being households."* Particularly with the post-earthquake reconstruction there had been an increase of single unit houses, often built together in the same (or adjacent) plot where previously one larger house existed. This created the feeling of separate residence, as they were separate houses, while the day-to-day domestic activities, in many cases including cooking together, remained the same as before. Yet, not everybody liked the idea of single units. Many criticised the fact that by building single units people were potentially accelerating the destruction of the joint family system and with it, destroying the social fabric. Hasnain, a Syed schoolteacher at Al-Noor lamented this destruction. *"There used to be more love. People in the old days used to get guidance from parents on living together, cooperation. Now parents are abroad, so these kids only see money coming in, better houses and new clothes – they become selfish and greedy."*

Single family units, though, were not new. In fact, similar to Schild's (2011) findings while studying the representations of 'home' in post-earthquake Muzaffarabad, people used the earthquake to justify separation, holding a nostalgic view of joint families as

ideal patrilocality, a sort of together-past and separate-present. While for some living separately was something not approved of – “*Separation is not considered good in [Pakistan-administered] Kashmir*” – for others it was desired – “*It is a prestige and relief if a son can afford to live by himself*”. This prestige associated by some with living separately in a single family was talked about across wealth groups, which went against Nadvi’s observations of northern Punjab, where “*for the wealthier and better endowed the extended family reflects status and provides economic benefits*” (Nadvi, 1999: 153).

Generally, young migrant households were for the creation of single families, while older or non-migrant households were against it. The former drew upon an increase of privacy and autonomy in decision-making as advantageous reasons for single families, while the latter brought forth the access to support systems and protection of the women of the house as reasons why joint families should be maintained. Like in many other classical patriarchal societies (Kandiyoti, 1988), women’s honour was a reflection of the honour of the family, and as prized valuables they must be protected (and controlled) at all times. Bashir, like many other migrants, preferred the joint family system because of protection. “*We don’t leave our women alone so the joint family helps in keeping at least one man at home to protect the women.*” Proponents of single families associated them with having more privacy and more freedom in decision-making, especially in managing expenditures and in deciding how much to save. While with male household heads being away many women exercised considerable control over resources (Sharma, 1980), this increased responsibility did not mean that these women thought of it as “*giving them ‘autonomy’ and ‘freedom’*” (Rashid, 2008: 220). Rather, the household as a unit was more autonomous and free from the family. Opponents stated that this freedom carried with it an added responsibility that, in the case of single families where the male was a migrant, women could not cope with. Parveen, herself the wife of a migrant, complained about the fact that, for migrants’ fathers and brothers “*women are considered dumb and irresponsible or not reliable enough to manage a household. Even [migrant] single families feel that they too are controlled externally by fathers-in-law and scorned upon for their expenses. Freedom is equated with irresponsibility.*”

The post-earthquake housing reconstruction created a chance for younger migrant households to break away from their progenitors. With an increase in single housing units, many felt that there had been an increase in the number of single families. In

reality, while the house (*makan*) – the physical structure – might have changed, the home (*ghar*) – the domestic arena for competition – remained the same. As the main dwellers of the home,¹³¹ much of this competition was between the women of the house(s), specifically between the mothers and the wives of the working males – the *saas* (mother-in-law) and the *bahu* (daughter-in-law) – and their ability to exert control over them. While mothers used the moral obligation sons have for the labour expended in their upbringing (White, 1994), symbolised by breast milk and known as “milk debt” (*doodh ka qarz*), wives tried to counteract by “keeping their husbands in hand” (husband *ko hath mei rakhna*).

Keeping the Husband in Hand

The house is a hierarchical world and the everyday activities that happen there are not as neutral as we perceive them to be, but embedded in social meaning and involved in the reproduction of meaning (Bourdieu, 1990). If we ignore the production and re-enactment of gender subordination in the house, something easily done if we analyse houses as isolated units, “*without reference either to wider social or economic structures, or to the nature of relationships within the unit*” (Harris, 1981: 140), we are giving men (as family heads) the misguided opportunity to represent and speak on women’s behalf, confining them to the domestic sphere. As seen in this section, the house was not only internally differentiated, but was also a political arena with each individual bargaining, contesting and manipulating allocations (Whitehead, 1981; Hart, 1992; Moore, 1992). The *saas-bahu* dyad was one of many relationships within the house where we could witness this bargaining, contestation and manipulation. I have chosen it above others not only because it tended to be the most visible, but also because it was often the one through which others were expressed (Sharma, 1980; Gardner, 1995). As seen throughout this section, the earthquake and post-earthquake housing reconstruction did not change domestic organisation, it only crystallised pre-existing trends of competition within the home.

Similar to what happened within *biraderis* (Wakil, 1970), family relations too were regulated by a mixture of cooperation and competition. As I mentioned previously, this cooperation and competition was more visible in women’s everyday lives. In the

¹³¹ By ‘main dwellers’ I mean individuals who spend the longest time in the house.

economy of the house, while men were usually the main earners, women were often seen as the main managers, similar to Pahl's (1980, in: Whitehead, 1981: 104) 'allowance system', where "*the husband hands over a portion of his wage as housekeeping to his wife and keeps the remainder*", and the wife has ample control over what is purchased. Khalid, a returned Gulf migrant and trainer at the bazaar's vocational training centre, echoed this view of women as managers. "*The basic tool behind saving are the women in the family; it's their worry. Especially with remittances: it's the woman's choice how much to spend and how much to save.*" Conflicts and competition often arose between the women who had the closest relation to income-earning males, namely the mothers and wives.

Women as mothers were recognised not only for their child bearing but equally important, for child rearing, being in charge of both biological and social reproduction (Harris and Young, 1981). This was especially the case in families where the active males had migrated, entrusting their wives with the children's upbringing. The close daily relation between mothers and sons, where the mother ends up being the most important person in her sons' lives (until marriage), should not be seen as an altruistic gesture alone, but also as a relation embedded in reciprocity, as the mother expects later on in life to be taken care of by her sons. Her sons are indebted to her through the "milk debt", the moral obligation to provide old-age social protection to their mothers. The situation is slightly different with daughters as they will move to another family after marriage, and therefore shift from being seen as "own" (*apna*) to "other" (*paraya*).¹³² Close ties between mothers and sons were visible in the number of anecdotes of migrants not being able to migrate until their mothers had passed away, or of having to come back earlier than expected because they were being missed (by their mothers). As Kandiyoti (1988: 279) states, "*since sons are a woman's most critical resource, ensuring their life-long loyalty is an enduring preoccupation. Older women have a vested interest in the suppression of romantic love between youngsters to keep the conjugal bond secondary and to claim sons' primary allegiance. Young women have an interest in circumventing and possibly evading their mother-in-law's control.*"

Women as wives, from the beginning of wifehood, must then compete with their mothers-in-law for the attention and care of their husbands. As Sajida, a migrant's wife

from Khorian, said: “*When households live together, the most important thing for the wife is to keep the husband in hand, to make sure she is top priority for him within the family, more important than her mother-in-law.*” Wives used both physical and mental attributes, such as looks and intelligence, to impress their husbands. The aim is to make sure he is attracted to her and thinks she is clever – clever and reliable enough to manage a household by herself. Fahad, who sold household items in fairs throughout Pakistan, was married to Jameela, a Lahori-born woman from a different *biraderi* whom he met when her family was on holidays in this area before the earthquake. Despite living in Sarian for the past seven years, Jameela still had some difficulties adapting from an urban life to a village setting. She used this ‘maladjustment’ to keep him in hand through love. “*I get scorned by my wife because she’s having difficulties getting used to being here. She gives me a hard time emotionally, but I do love her, she has to understand my situation. She use to have dahi bhallas¹³³ every day, but there are none here. So I go to Rawalakot and buy a stack of them and freeze them. At the end of the day she has to understand she has to adjust. I did the same when I went abroad.*” By keeping her husband in hand, Jameela managed to be induced to village life very slowly: for the first year she did not carry water, as her husband persuaded one of his sisters to carry it for her.¹³⁴

Yet, in joint families daughters-in-law not only had to please their husbands but their in-laws as well. Their reputation as good, caring and modest daughters-in-law, was “*an important form of cultural capital (...) to accrue support from their husbands as well as gain better status within the family*” (Rashid, 2008: 227). For instance, “*out of deference to her elders, a young wife will not claim greater freedom than her mother-in-law*” (Sharma, 1980: 46). Living in a joint family tended to create more conflicts than in a single family, as Parvez, the owner of one of the biggest shops in the bazaar, said “*the more people [living together] the more problems and fights*”. These conflicts revolved around the sharing of resources, both physical (kitchens, bathrooms) and monetary. Many daughters-in-law would publicly profess that by deferring all decisions to their mothers-in-law such conflicts were often avoided. Hameed’s sister, who married into another family but of the same *biraderi* and in the same village said that in her new

¹³² In fact, for many families in northern South Asia daughters are *paraya* since birth. A common saying in Punjab says *beti paray ghar ki amanat hoti he* – ‘my daughter has been entrusted to me [by another family]’, i.e., she was never ours from the start.

¹³³ Deep fried balls of lentils spiced, soaked and served in yogurt, common throughout Pakistan.

¹³⁴ “*It’s like having a live fish in on your head*”, Jameela said.

family “*we all live together, but we don’t fight. If there is any issue, the eldest [women] would solve it. They’re here to solve problems.*” While Grover (2011: 69) identifies “*conflicts of interest between the conjugal home and the natal home*” as a “*constant source of friction between women, their husbands, and their in-laws*”, in Chinati this was more subdued, as not only marriage contracts were endogamous and mostly within the family, but also in many instances the mother-in-law was the daughter-in-law’s *puppo* [father’s sister]. Yet, as Vera-Sanso (1999: 582) discovered in South India, “*even close-kin endogamous marriage does not ensure good mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relations nor effective natal support for brides*”, as their economic interests may still conflict and “*because families have multiple social and economic ties, natal families can be less willing to support their daughters/sisters for fear of jeopardising kin relations.*”

Usually, in a joint family the daughter-in-law gradually took on most of the household chores previously done by the mother-in-law, as “*household chores [were] often distributed by the elderly women leaving the younger women to perform their assigned roles*” (Rashid, 2008: 222). This passing on of household responsibilities was also a strategy by the mother-in-law to keep her daughter-in-law so busy as to not pay enough attention to her husband. Hamida, a young housewife who lived with her in-laws in Bagla while her husband was away in Iraq, talked about this pressure: “*In a joint family there is so much work and pressure that often the husband is ignored [by the wife]. Then he tends to side with the family in terms of trust and expenditures and he is constantly forced to think about how to keep the joint family together.*” Similar to White’s (1994) case in Turkey, this ‘patriarchal bargaining’¹³⁵ was generally accepted by the daughters-in-law, as they knew that in the future, when their sons marry and bring new daughters-in-law to the house, it would be their time to be in power: “*the hardships that younger women endure are eventually superseded by the control and authority they exert over their own daughters-in-law. The cyclical nature of power through the life cycle encourages women to internalise patriarchal values*” (White, 1994: 44). The internalisation was visible even with unmarried girls’ preference for TV dramas. “*We don’t watch Indian dramas because our parents don’t let us and we don’t like them. Watching Indian dramas might make you run away. The difference between*

¹³⁵ Using Kandiyoti’s (1988) terminology.

PTV and Indian channels is that PTV actors don't dress up and don't do politics; the saas and bahu don't fight", said Mira and Miryam.

Another feature of domestic cooperation and conflict could be witnessed within the life and activities of the units of production within and across households and homes. In this region, as throughout rural South Asia, women were responsible for child rearing as well as for the set of activities associated with daily family maintenance (Beneria, 1979). There was a clear gendered division of domestic labour within the home, where women were in charge of the vast majority of household chores. This gendered segregation of domestic labour started at a young age, with young daughters assisting their mothers in most of these activities, while sons' contribution to household chores being limited to small errands, mostly purchasing last minute groceries at the bazaar and serving male guests when the patriarch was entertaining them. Within the hierarchical world of the home younger women were under the control of the matriarch and younger men under the control of the patriarch. These networks of control were extended within families and across households, where family patriarchs and matriarchs used their status and power to co-opt male and female family labour force, respectively. As such, not only daughters assisted mothers and sons assisted fathers, but also even other members of the *tabbar* assisted the matriarchs and patriarchs. This was particularly visible with *bahus* not only being responsible for the daily maintenance of their households but at times having to assist their *saas* in their households' maintenance as well.

This contribution to the in-laws' unit of production was not limited to household chores, as seen in the family's agricultural activities. Throughout the region, men are in charge of preparing the fields, sowing and harvesting staple foods and women responsible for the rearing of such crops as well as the family's livestock and vegetable gardens. At the household level the women belonging to those households rear their vegetable gardens independently, although at times women from different households but of the same *tabbar* do operate together if living within the same compound. Traditionally, sons helped their fathers and daughters their mothers – for instance, girls were often the ones in charge of putting out the household's livestock to pasture. Offspring's input in agrarian production though, has diminished over time as often they are away in school, particularly when such activities are done in the morning. While the reduction of the family male labour force – due to migration and the pursuit of education – can be substituted by hiring casual labour, as it often happens mostly within families with access to remittances, in this region there

was barely any concept of hiring female labour to assist women in their activities. As such, mothers-in-law – especially in families whose livelihoods still depended heavily on agriculture – often regarded their daughters-in-law as part and parcel of their unit of production and expected them to contribute to their (mothers-in-law) household agrarian production. Despite feeling an obligation to assist their mothers-in-law in their agricultural activities, in many instances *bahus* felt this to be another example of their *saas*' attempts to keep them busy and away from their responsibilities towards their own households.

By persuading their husbands to build single housing units younger women were separating, as much as they could, their husbands from their mothers. This only happened though when their husbands could afford to build a separate house, as was the case in quite a few households where the husbands were Gulf migrants. Similar to Gardner's (1995: 100) findings, where migration fed into, was influenced by, and influenced local households, "*and the ways in which people perceive[d] them*", there was no breakdown of the classical patriarchy, which, according to Kandiyoti (1988: 282) "*results in the earlier emancipation of younger men from their fathers and their earlier separation from the paternal household*". While the new houses were often built separately, i.e., not sharing a roof, many were built within the same compound, and therefore shared the same floor (though not necessarily the same kitchen). Older males within domestic groups could consequently use 'protection' to validate the need for migrants' wives to live close by, warranting them the authority to collect and distribute remittances.

Keeping their husbands in hand was especially important for younger wives' access to remittances within domestic groups. While in most cases remittances moved through the migrant's father or, if he was absent, through a brother, there were women who, by successfully keeping their husbands in hand, were able to make sure their household received remittances almost directly. Receiving remittances directly was very rare, for regardless of utilising formal (banks) or informal (*hundi*) transaction methods women still faced mobility problems, as local notions of *purdah* limit women's access to the bazaar. Even when husbands sent remittances to their wives, rather than their brothers or fathers, there would always be a male mediating the transaction. This created tension between families, with wives being stigmatised as being 'too powerful' over their husbands and migrants being criticised for not performing their moral duty and responsibilities towards their parents (Rashid, 2008: 226).

For men, not having access to their sons' or brothers' remittances was a cause for conflict, for families felt entitled to a migrant's remittances, as they were often the ones who had sponsored the migration in the first place. Sending a male to work abroad was a family strategy to increase the income of the domestic group. That was Hameed's reasoning for why his brothers should assist him monetarily. *"I earn Rs 200 a day. I can't survive [with this income], so we send family abroad. I have two brothers abroad. They help me [with remittances] and I help their families."* This expectation was particularly visible with returned migrants, who before coming back helped their sons or brothers migrate, often to take over their jobs abroad. Apparently, sending remittances directly to wives rather than the family happened in the initial stages of mass migration to the Gulf. Imtiaz's granduncle said that *"in the beginning migrants would send their money directly to their wives; they would spend it in their houses without taking into consideration the head of the family and did not help the family head's brothers – then they started sending it to the head and brothers."* The resentment of bypassing the family fuelled the myth of the *"irresponsible fat wives and spoiled children"*, as Jafer Saab put it, as migrants' households started to exhibit the materialistic symptoms of social mobility, creating islands of increased superfluous consumption and perceived idleness.¹³⁶ Although this resentment was generally universal within the family, it was often vocalised by the migrants' mothers.

Following the earthquake, wives gained access to a new 'weapon' for their struggle to keep their husbands in hand – the mobile phone. Communicating with a migrant before the earthquake was a difficult endeavour, as it would be done by letters (made harder if one was illiterate), or by telephone, a rare item in rural areas. For instance, before the earthquake there were no more than a handful of private telephones in each village and one or two public ones in Chinati bazaar. Migrants would often receive only snippets of everyday life at home, being exposed to it only when on holidays. Many informants, like Ahmed from Bagla who worked in Dubai, commented that although they would be homesick and missed everyday home life when they were away, they sometimes regretted staying too long, as they would get 'too much' everyday life: *"This one is sick, that one needs new clothes, everybody's fighting... I can't wait to go back!"* With all

¹³⁶ The negative perception of women's idleness (and generally the quantity of work they do) can be witnessed in the following anecdote. Asked how did their household start the day, a husband told me: *"I wake up at 5.30 for morning prayers, then my wife wakes up, followed by my daughters, and then the other men of the house."* His wife's tale was different: *"I wake up at 5, clean the place, make breakfast, fix clothes, then at 6 my husband and the children wake up."*

private mobile companies based in Pakistan allowed to enter the PaK market post-earthquake, within months almost every corner of the region was under mobile coverage. This explosion of private mobile companies made communicating abroad easy,¹³⁷ with many people in the region buying mobile phones. Raza remembered the first weeks post-earthquake when so many people bought mobile phones. *“The first tranche [of housing compensation] went into good mobile phones. It even became a joke. Everybody had to buy one, because it was a new, modern thing.”*

With mobiles, wives were able to talk to their husbands whenever they needed to, not just about daily life, but also about matters of the heart (*hum dil ki baatein kartey hain* – we talk about our love). In fact, some women said that they would try not to talk much about household matters not to worry their husbands. Sajida, while talking about her phone conversations with her husband, told my female research assistant that *“we only kiss on the phone [hum pappi kartey hain], he doesn’t know how we are going through life.”* Yet, eventually many conversations would end up dealing with household matters, like my assistant overheard her calling her husband the next day and complaining: *“I got up unwell this morning, your brother’s wife is complaining that I do nothing and your brother is refusing to take me to the doctor.”* With the help of mobile phones, wives could now come into the migrants’ everyday life. Notwithstanding the fact that mothers also started using this new technology, they did so at a much lower rate than wives, as they were averse to using modern gadgets and would often delegate this ‘task’ to the men of the house.

A direct impact of post-earthquake reconstruction was the simultaneous refashioning of many housing structures, with a preference for single housing units. This refashioning, a sort of a collective dispersion phase within the domestic cycle, was visible almost exclusively within families where the husbands were Gulf migrants. Yet, as these housing units were often built within the same compound, there was no breakdown *per se* of the classical patriarchy and the competition between mothers and wives remained much alive.

¹³⁷ See Vertovec (2004) for the changes in communication between migrants and kin due to the recent advancement in telephone technology.

Outside the House: the extended family

The house, though, should not be seen as a bounded unit, as its boundaries are highly permeable, but rather as a nodal point in a system of redistribution, and it is this system “*which links the household to the kinship system, to village organisation, to regional political and economic structures, to the state, and to the wider international context*” (Moore, 1992: 131). I infer that this permeability of the boundaries of the house is most visible when we analyse the layer between house and kinship – the extended family, or *khandan*. In this section I analyse how despite perceived notions of household independence, the earthquake did not change the fact that the family continued to be the main source of informal social protection. I use the *khandan*, the permeable boundary between the household and the kinship system, to reach this conclusion.

The Khandan

Despite changes in family forms, throughout South Asia traditional values and structures have largely been retained (Lamb, 2000; Parry, 1979; Uberoi, 2005; Vatuk, 1972). Gardner (1995: 99) advances the idea that “*rather than fixed institutions, [household arrangements] appear as strategies, moulded by circumstance.*” Like in Sylhet, local people in Chinati did not think or operated in narrow sociological categories, with boundaries around domestic groups being blurred and constantly defying easy classification. As Das (1973: 40) states in her work on marriages in popular Urdu fiction in Pakistan, “*it is extremely difficult to define the khandan in terms of the accepted classifications of kinship groups.*” I assume this is one of the reasons why different authors have translated it into English as “family” (Shaw, 2000a), “lineage” (Cohn, 1959) or “extended family” (Vatuk, 1972). While other terms for family are relatively easier to identify – e.g., *gharana* as the household, *tabbar* as the immediate family with its node being a common paternal grandfather, and *kumbah* as lineage with its node a common ancestor – people in PaK often use the term *khandan* liberally. Here I use *khandan* to define what locals call the extended family: a group of people related by blood or marriage, whose relations are a level above the *gharana* with or without propinquity. This can be problematic as, according to my definitions, the *tabbar* is the immediate family and the *khandan* is the extended family, but at times the *khandan* encompasses the *tabbar*. Similar to *biraderi*, where the ambiguity of the term

was also used as a strategy to include people in or exclude people out of larger networks of power, I infer that the vagueness of the term was not accidental, as its ambiguity facilitated all parties to gain more access to informal social protection.

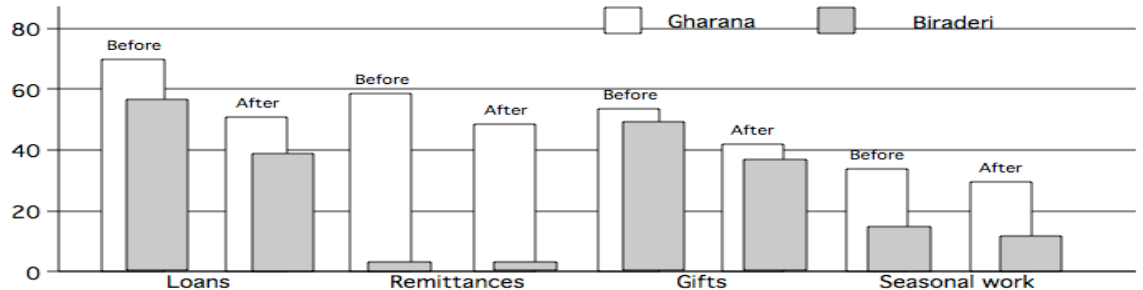
In Pakistan, and by default in PaK, informal social protection is more prevalent than state-mediated or formal arrangements, with these confined to the formal economy and a small percentage of urban working class, often failing to reach the poorer segments of the population (Beall, 1995; Sayeed, 2004; Kabeer *et al*, 2010). It comes as no surprise then that “*strong social networks are an important source of social protection in Pakistan*” (Sayeed, 2004: 16). In rural PaK, as in Alavi’s (1971: 114) rural Punjab, “*the pivotal institution in the “traditional” social structure (...) is (...) the kinship system*”. It is through this language of kinship that a great deal of informal social protection is mediated, with families being the “*safety nets of first resort*” (Kabeer *et al*, 2010: 5). It is then safe to argue that in rural areas the crux of informal social protection is embedded in the social meaning of ‘family’. In villages where most people belong to the same *biraderi* (like the case of most villages in this study) or where each *biraderi* is very large, the expression “*we help our own*” can lose its significance, as most people are considered ‘ours’ (*apna*). In these situations belonging to the *khandan* can work as a multiplier effect – not only you belong (and have access) to your immediate family, but also to other families – and therefore it is best to keep its meaning ambiguous, in order to belong (and have access) to a wider number of immediate families. In other words, the aim is to create and maintain relations closer to other homes. This might be a reason, for instance, why cousins were referred to as brothers (*bhai*) and sisters (*behen*), and close friends as relatives (*rishtedar*).¹³⁸

In August 2006 I conducted a study on vulnerabilities, resilience and coping mechanisms in a set of earthquake-affected villages in PaK and KP, with a team of students from LUMS. Out of these, the results shown in Figure 8 are for 17 settlements in and around Chinati bazaar, based on two gender-segregated focus groups interviews per settlement (one male and one female). In these focus groups we asked informants to quantify the proportion of households per settlement that had access to different informal social protection mechanisms pre- and post-earthquake, through a series of actors, from the *gharana*, to neighbours, *biraderi*, NGOs, and the state. In Figure 8 I

¹³⁸ There are, obviously, other reasons, such as altruism and love. I am merely pointing out another possible reason for this use of relationship terms.

have charted the four most important informal social protection mechanisms that people had access to pre- and post-earthquake through the *gharana* and the *biraderi*.

Figure 8 – Impact of the Earthquake on the Proportion of People Accessing Informal Social Protection Mechanisms Through the *Gharana* and the *Biraderi* (percentage)



As seen in Figure 8, in these villages the main informal social protection mechanisms people mentioned having access to were, in decreasing order, loans, remittances, gifts and seasonal work. In line with Kabeer *et al*'s (2010) statement, more people had access to these through the *gharana* than the *biraderi*. This was especially the case for remittances, which were rarely shared within the *biraderi*. Belonging to the *khandan* gave households better chances to access other households' remittances, along with more loans and more seasonal work than through the *biraderi*. More than *biraderi*, the language of *khandan* was used to ask for assistance in times of need (such as recovering from the impact of the earthquake), to start a new venture (including migration),¹³⁹ and to be taken care of in old age. This was particularly visible following the 2005 earthquake and, more recently, the rampant inflation that had hit Pakistan and PaK since 2009. The following two dialogues are my rendition of real conversations I overheard in the bazaar between shopkeepers (both owning small general stores) and their relatives. They exemplify how the language of *khandan* was used to create bonds of assistance.

Dialogue 1: Bashir's shop. Bashir's nephew (sister's son) walked into his shop and struck up a conversation about the current food inflation. Bashir quickly picked up his mobile and started chatting with someone, at which his nephew complained he was not paying attention to him. Bashir took his sweet time on the phone. Eventually the nephew told him that his mother (Bashir's sister) had asked him to get two chickens, a kilo of tomatoes, two packs of milk and some crisps for his younger brother.

Bashir – *Are you kidding?*

¹³⁹ When helping others to migrate, migrants sponsor first household members, followed by other relatives and then members of their *biraderi*.

Nephew – *About what?*

Bashir – *I don't have these things.*

Nephew – *You don't have crisps?*

Bashir – *I can't do it.*

Nephew – *Do what?*

Bashir – *You do realise that I'm not a millionaire, that I have problems of my own. Times are hard for all of us, the money I make is barely enough for all of us, I can't provide for the whole village.*

Nephew – *I'm not asking you to provide for every person in the village, but we're family [khandan].*

Bashir – *It's fine for a few times, but it amounts to Rs. 6-7,000 per month, and sometimes even Rs. 12,000. It has even gone up to Rs. 20,000 once. What do you expect me to do? Why don't you start helping your family more and apply yourself harder?*

Nephew – *I'm doing everything that I can! How much more do you expect from me?*

Bashir – (quiet for a while) *Listen, I have these crisps and milk, but chicken and tomatoes I don't even sell them, how do you expect me to help you there?*

Nephew – *Ok, fine; talk to my mother yourself.*

Bashir – (talking with his sister on the phone) *Ok, I can send you the stuff I sell in my shop, but that's it. And your bill is piling up, at least pay me some of it.*

Bashir gave his nephew whatever he had (crisps and milk) and wrote it down in his book.

Dialogue 2: Ibrahim's shop. Ibrahim is chatting with his maternal cousin Imtiaz when their maternal great uncle walks in to buy a packet of cigarettes. Ibrahim gives him the packet and asks for the money.

Great uncle – *How can you ask me for money? I am your elder!*

Ibrahim – *It's only Rs. 20 for a packet, what's the big deal?*

Great uncle – *It's not about the money, it's about showing respect for the elders. It shows you have respect for us.*

Ibrahim – *It's not about the money for you, but it is for me; I have to make a living. If everybody here said the same, as most are my relatives [rishtedar], I wouldn't have the money to live. Each and every day is about survival for us now. We barely make it for our expenses.*

Keeping the Khandan in Hand

In their analysis of social structures in rural Pakistan, Mohmand and Gazdar (2007:4) state that, “*while the rules governing membership within a kin group are often determined by factors such as marriage or descent, kin networks also incorporate a wide range of cultural practices, most commonly observed in the various rituals and ceremonies that serve to reinforce kin solidarity.*” While entering the *khandan* occurred automatically through marriage or blood ties, staying in the *khandan* required active participation in rituals and ceremonies. Because of the fluidity of *khandan* the participation in these rituals and ceremonies must not be taken for granted, as relationships were constantly being negotiated. People, then, needed to *keep the khandan in hand*.

The enactment of family bonds through the *khandan* was most visible during the creation and the reinforcement of these bonds, of which two good examples were, respectively, marriage and visits. While in the former the roles and responsibilities of different actors within the *khandan* were clearly recognisable during particular moments of the domestic cycle, i.e., the wedding and its set of rituals and ceremonies, in the latter they could take subtle forms which might make them almost invisible in everyday life to the observer. Migration, particularly to the Gulf, affected the way these visits to relatives occurred, inasmuch as it often created or reinforced power relations within the *khandan* and made the subtle obvious.

As sisters married and moved out of the house to another family, there was usually a concerted effort by both brothers and sisters to keep the sibling bond intact. The importance of the bond between brothers and sisters has been comprehensively studied throughout South Asia (Jeffery, 1979; Sharma, 1980; Agarwal, 1995; Rashid, 2008; Grover, 2011). Despite being entitled to inherit property from her natal home, women often relinquish this entitlement to their brothers. As Bashir said, “*Here [in PaK] inheritance is equally divided even with girls. But most of the time 90% girls say they*

don't need inheritance, they'll get it from the new house." Often seen as an investment (Agarwal, 1995), women play the role of the 'good sister' (Sharma, 1980) by not claiming their inheritance preferring to cultivate the goodwill of their brothers. There is also an element of practicality, as women lived in their conjugal home and therefore could not control natal property (Rashid, 2008). By considering their brothers' needs, women gained access to their gifts and protection in case of divorce (Jeffery, 1979). As the brother of one of Grover's (2011) informants said, as long as he was alive he had a duty towards his sisters. Their brothers' lifelong support was a form of accessing social capital which they often preferred to material capital (Rashid, 2008), *"for a woman to press for her inheritance rights would be tantamount to losing her brother's favour"* (Kandiyoti, 1988: 279).

As seen in the previous chapter, many informants mentioned the preference for men to marry their mother's brother's daughters (*mamu ki bhatti*). This preference was cultivated while sisters visited their brothers. These family visits demonstrated the closeness and strength of post-marital bonds with the natal kin, which happened not only during ritual times, but also in casual visits (Grover, 2011). When brothers came from the Gulf, carrying with them the bounties of migration, married sisters moved in to their brothers' house. Bashir's wife, despite herself being a migrant's wife, did the same every time her brother came from the Gulf. *"My brother went to Bahrain and took his family with him. They come and take good care of us; they bring a lot of material goods beyond our needs. We [married women] have a tradition of going back to our brother's house and staying there for days. I go to his place when he comes and I stay there. He brings me things, so it's my duty to go to him."*

More than remittances, gift-giving was *"a sign of status and power, as well as reproducing social relationships"* (Gardner, 1995: 124). Migration and its related wealth had, in many cases, turned these visits into an obligation, creating a feeling of vassalage that sisters owed to (better-off) brothers. Staying at the brother's house was a way for married women to gain access to foreign goods, as well as sometimes loans and even sponsorships for their husbands or sons to migrate. Gardner (1995: 123) postulates that in Bangladesh *"close kin in divided households [did] not normally expect any regular support, although again, in times of special need they might be sent money."* As seen in Figure 8, access to remittances – in the form of gift or loan – happened largely through the *gharana*. By cultivating closer ties to households which received

remittances, other households within the *khandan* aimed at getting more access to these remittances. The earthquake and the need for post-earthquake reconstruction exacerbated this obligation, as beyond seeking help from their brothers, men (especially non-migrant ones) sought help from their (migrant) brothers-in-law through their wives.

Visits during Eid were a particularly crucial way of keeping the *khandan* in hand. *Eid-ul-fitr* was known in the area as “big *Eid*” and deemed more important than *Eid-ul-azha* unlike in Pakistan where it was known as “little *Eid*” for being less important than *Eid-ul-azha*.¹⁴⁰ The rationale for this importance lay in the fact that during *Eid-ul-fitr* a person was obliged to visit every family member and possibly every *biraderi* member with whom one had a *niendra* relationship¹⁴¹, therefore making it essential in reinforcing social networks. Most of my informants said that with so many relatives and *biraderi* members it was now getting to a stage that they could not visit everybody. As people started narrowing down the number of homes they could (and had an obligation to) visit, the priority was to keep alive the linkages with the closest ones and the ones with which they had (or intended to have) a debt relation – those who could (or did) help them access migration or its rewards and, more recently, with their recovery from the earthquake. As reciprocity was a crucial element of these visits, i.e., one visits and is visited, following the post-earthquake reconstruction these visits increased their standing as avenues for reclaiming status, with the wealthier showing off their new houses, as well as becoming honour traps, as seen in Kashif’s conundrum.

To sum up, just as they did before the earthquake, households continued to create, negotiate and reinforce family ties in their everyday lives as ways to increase their social and symbolic capital as well as to access informal social protection. In a region where families are the main safety nets and social protection is mediated through the language of kinship, their aim continued to be to maintain relationships closer to other homes, especially better-off ones. While better-off households aspired to more independence from the family, they too did not wish to sever ties with the family at large, as not only did these linkages offer them ways to increase their social and symbolic capital, but they also kept them within the reciprocity chain.

¹⁴⁰ Many informants said that in recent years *maulvis* had been trying to persuade people to consider *Eid-ul-azha* the “big Eid”, but for them visiting family was more important than distributing meat.

¹⁴¹ The main gift exchange ritual, similar to *vartan bhanji* and *lena-dena* (see Chapter Four).

Conclusion

The earthquake that struck Pakistan-administered Kashmir in October 2005 brought with it obvious destruction and perceived change. According to those affected by it in Chinati bazaar, it transformed their houses, homes and family structures in several ways. They said they had witnessed an increase in the number of houses and associated this increase with post-earthquake reconstruction, and this reconstruction with changing patterns of residence, namely the shift from joint to single unit families. The earthquake had indeed caused some significant changes in the spatial organisation of the house, which had not only been turned upside down – with the courtyard replacing the roof as the unifying element of the domestic group – it had also been turned inside out, with ostentation now visible on the outside through the explosion of colourful new houses and roofs. However, I argued in this chapter that since most new housing units were often built within the same compound, there was no breakdown *per se* of the classical patriarchy, and intra-family relations, and competition between members of the joint family over common resources, remained alive and unchanged. The changes that had occurred in these relationships were related more to the earlier process of migration than to the earthquake.

Similarly, I argued that for a host of reasons – such as simultaneous construction, perceived population pressure, a misunderstanding on eligibility for government compensation, a refashioning of houses from *kaccha* to *pakka*, and a proliferation of (more visible) tin roofs – people felt the earthquake caused a recent increase in housing, whereas much of this was because of processes already underway that were exacerbated by the earthquake. Even in terms of the extended family, though people talked of the weakening of links and the growing independence of individual households, I argued that the earthquake did not change the fact that the family continued to be the main source of informal social protection. In this chapter I, therefore, conclude that rather than creating change, both the earthquake and post-earthquake housing reconstruction intensified and crystallised pre-existing processes of social change at the level of the house and the home that were already underway. In the next chapter I take an even closer look within the household through men's stories about women in particular, in order to analyse discourses of change regarding women's mobility and access to work outside the home that had proliferated in the aftermath of the earthquake.

Chapter Six

Through the Prism of the ‘Other’: Stories of Women’s Work, Mobility and Morality by the Men of Chinati Bazaar

Introduction

In September 2009 I encountered Khalid, a trainer at the vocational training centre in the bazaar. We had met a few times over the year in the bazaar but we had never had a chance to sit down for a proper chat before. One day while I was in Imtiaz’s shop, Khalid came across to have his gas cylinders filled. While he waited we started talking – in English. As was usual with most people I met at the bazaar, Khalid started by asking me what I thought of PaK and, if I had travelled through Pakistan, how different did I think this region was from Pakistan. I had developed a standard response by now, mostly because I had had to repeat it so many times. And like everyone else I met in the bazaar, he too informed me that many changes had happened around Chinati after the earthquake, one of the biggest being an increase in women’s empowerment. This he attributed largely to the presence of NGOs. “*After the earthquake many women came outside [the home] to work and most found jobs in NGOs*” he explained.

I had heard this from many others as well. The post-earthquake exponential increase in the presence of NGOs, together with that of the state through ERRA, in close proximity to Chinati had helped create new forms of employment. Throughout the reconstruction and rehabilitation stages they contributed directly and indirectly to job creation by hiring local staff, imparting new skills, and providing credit to new ventures or rehabilitating existing ones. According to most development agencies and locals, both men and women benefited from this. Most also inferred that this interaction with development agencies had had an impact on increasing women’s physical mobility and access to employment opportunities as a group.

Traditionally, it is not considered respectable for women in PaK to work outside the house, as by doing so they have to engage with male-dominated public spaces. Even now many people expressed their reservations about this. The notion of women working outside the house clashed with prevalent seclusion and exclusion practices enacted and re-enacted through the *purdah* system (Jeffery, 1979). The prevalence of these practices did not mean that they existed uncontested; there was a constant struggle by an array of

actors to challenge and recreate them. In this chapter I argue that this struggle could be best witnessed in men's narratives on labour and work, and how these applied to women. In line with the theme of my previous chapters, I extend the argument that this struggle pre-dated the earthquake, but that the earthquake made it more visible. At the same time, I demonstrate that the increase of female work outside the house was, in fact, minimal and that people at the bazaar used the perception of the increase to explain – through stories, myths and rumours – how they engaged with 'becoming modern'.

In this chapter I analyse post-earthquake narratives about women's mobility and work. Because I do not have enough data directly from women, I am not trying to represent women's experiences. Instead, this chapter is about men's stories at the bazaar about women's work and mobility and how, in men's stories, women's lives changed after the earthquake mostly due to the presence of development agencies. Men's stories though, were not uniform. In their narratives I could see both discourses of acceptance and challenge of the 'official' patriarchy, similar to Kadiyoti's (1994: 211) assertion that *"behind the enduring facade of male privilege lie profound ambiguities which may give rise to both defensive masculinist discourse and a genuine desire for contestation and change."*

In section two I set the scene by exploring local notions of work and labour and their association with honour and status, while at the same time positioning women as a group within these notions. Both proponents and opponents of increasing women's employment opportunities – the two extremes of a wide spectrum of opinions on this issue – identified the earthquake and the greater presence of development agencies in its aftermath as the main catalysts for the perceived increase both in women's work outside the house, and in their physical and social mobility. In section three I analyse how these narratives evolved in the aftermath of the earthquake. Despite professing similar narratives, inasmuch as both proponents and opponents of women's access to work outside the home said that it had increased, each group interpreted the impact of the same event differently. While proponents used the earthquake to justify and enhance the increase, through a discourse built around 'awareness' and 'risk', opponents used it to curtail mobility by questioning the morality of women's presence in public spaces. In section four I investigate how different actors used these similar narratives differently. I conclude with a proposition that beyond access to work, the underlying struggle that the men in the bazaar spoke of was also for women's access to public spaces and action.

Again, despite this struggle being attributed to the aftermath of the earthquake, in the sub-texts of the narratives I heard I was able to witness a more continuous process of change that revealed that the struggle had gone on for a much longer period of time and, in fact, predated the earthquake.

Men Work, Women Labour

In the months and years that followed the earthquake there was a common perception that there had been an increase in both women's presence in public spaces and in their employment outside the home. Most people with whom I spoke in the bazaar pointed out that this increase was an indirect consequence of the earthquake. In the various narratives that people developed on this increase, notions of labour and work were frequently present. Before delving into people's post-earthquake narratives on the increase in women's presence and work in the public sphere, I first explore the role of women *as women* within the larger debate on women, Islam and patriarchy in South Asia, and then situate the women of PaK as a group within local discourses on labour and work.

Seclusion: women, Islam, and patriarchy

A visible trait of PaK society before and after the earthquake was the importance placed on seclusion and exclusion practices such as the *purdah* system in everyday life of men and women. "*Purdah entails much more than the physical separation of men and women. There are multitudes of complex social arrangements which maintain social and not just physical distance between the sexes*" (Jeffery, 1979: 4). As Kirmani (2009: 54) noticed while interviewing Muslim women in Delhi, women's definitions of and opinions about *purdah* revealed "*a flexibility and creativity amongst women in the appropriation and application of such discourses in their own lives.*" Differences in class and income, residence, education level, occupation, religious affiliation, group membership, and individual circumstances all contribute to a wide array of types of *purdah* observance, where its crucial characteristic remains the limitation of male and female interaction (Papanek, 1982).

While the general rules of seclusion in South Asian Muslim societies are based on a series of Quranic prescriptions, as several authors point out (Jeffery, 1979; Papanek, 1982; Kandiyoti, 1991) one must look beyond religion (and its different interpretations) and probe the workings of social organisation and local patriarchal systems to get a better picture of how seclusion exists, how it is interpreted and how it is enacted and re-enacted in these societies.¹⁴² In her groundbreaking work on gender and land rights in South Asia, Agarwal (1995: 377) demonstrates “*the strength of cultural commonalities over religious differences*”, where the patterns of northwestern Indian Hindus are closer to Pakistani Muslims than to south Indian and Sri Lankan Hindus, and Sri Lankan communities show greater similarity across religious affiliation as compared to their respective religious brethren further north. Similarly, in a cross-regional study of five socio-cultural setting and groups distinguished by region (Pakistani Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu) and religion (Muslim and Hindu), Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001:708) discover a wide variation in levels and determinants of women’s autonomy, with what they call the “*social institutions of gender*” within each community shaping women’s autonomy. According to them, the influence of social system is stronger than religion or nationality, with women’s autonomy in the highly gender-stratified Punjab and Uttar Pradesh shaped by traditional factors such as family structure and coresidence with mother-in-law, and size of dowry. In Pakistan, several studies in both rural and urban areas on women’s participation in the labour force¹⁴³ identify the socio-economic status of the family (Shah, 1986, in: Naqvi and Shahnaz, 2002), observance of *purdah* (Ibraiz, 1993, in: Naqvi and Shahnaz, 2002), the presence of adult male members, remittances (Rashed *et al*, 1989, in: Naqvi and Shahnaz, 2002; Kozel and Alderman, 1990, in: Naqvi and Shahnaz, 2002), and patriarchal prohibition of working outside the house (Naqvi and Shahnaz, 2002) as having a negative impact on participation.

For Kandiyoti (1991) this region is defined by classical patriarchy, reproduced through the patrilocally extended household with women’s access to resources mediated through the family. Women adopt interpersonal strategies of subservience and manipulation that do not structurally change this system, but allow them to maximise their life chances. The hierarchical stratification imposed by class and *biraderi* add further complexities to this system, with seclusion and exclusion practices such as *purdah* observance and

¹⁴² Muslim women themselves state that it is men’s patriarchal misinterpretations of religion that oppress them and not Islam (see Kirmani, 2009).

¹⁴³ Pakistan has one of the world’s lowest female labour force participation rates.

female non-work also signalling status. Women's seclusion and honour is an important aspect of male control, a measure of their protectors' status (Papanek, 1982: 193). According to Kandiyoti (1991: 35) "*the material bases of classic patriarchy crumble under the impact of new market forces, capital penetration in rural areas, and processes of economic marginalisation and immiseration*", with men's economic protection of women challenged by the necessity of every household member to contribute to survival, especially among the propertyless and the dispossessed.

Yet, the collapsing of the material bases of classical patriarchy does not mean the collapse of classical patriarchy itself. Several authors note that market forces can produce more seclusion (Gardner, 1995) and gender roles can be renegotiated (Kabeer, 2000). Both women and men use 'patriarchal bargains'¹⁴⁴ to challenge women's positioning within their society *within* classical patriarchy. These patriarchal bargains "*exert a powerful influence on the shaping of women's gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology in different contexts*", "*influence both the potential for and the actual forms of women's active or passive resistance*", and "*are not timeless or immutable entities, but are susceptible to historical transformations that open up new areas of struggle or renegotiation of the relations between genders*" (Kandiyoti, 1991: 27). Harris and Young (1981: 130) argue that in places where gender differentiation is highly stressed "*the sexual division of labour will often allocate men and women to categorically different forms of work, with the result that the tasks and the amount of work carried out by each sex will be rendered strictly non-comparable. One major consequence of this is that what women do is assigned a completely different status in analysis and is frequently not counted as work at all.*" Gender though, as Moore (1999) and Green (1999) argue using Judith Butler's work, is not only culturally constructed but has to be performed. Gender discourses, regardless of being male or female, "*act as a reflection on the capacities of the genders and their interactions*" (Moore, 1999: 28). Idealised gender models then, "*need to be seen not as fixed descriptions of what people are, but as ways of describing and judging what they do*" (Cornwall, 1998: 51).

Male stories at the bazaar were precisely this; ways of describing and judging what people did, in this case what women did after the earthquake and after the arrival of the development agencies. But, more than opening a new area of struggle, I suggest that the

¹⁴⁴ Using Kandiyoti's own terms.

2005 earthquake as an event widened a pre-existing area of struggle and was used by both men and women to renegotiate the relations between genders. The area of struggle that I am referring to was women's increased physical and socio-economic mobility, a struggle not only for access to work but also for access to public spaces and action.

What People Do: active life in PaK

In my conversations at the bazaar I noticed that people had two different words for agricultural work differentiated by land ownership: *mazdoori* if working in someone else's land and *kaam* if working in one's own land.¹⁴⁵ Most often the former was translated into English as 'labour' and latter as 'work'. The difference between *mazdoori* and *kaam* though, was deeper and more complex than ownership of resources (or means of production). *Mazdoori*, whose roots come from *muzd* (remuneration), was translated by Platts (1884: 1028) as "*bodily labour, to work for hire, to toil and labour for a living*". In this definition we can see in *mazdoori* a notion of labour characterised by non-freedom, as well as an element of repetitiveness and hardness. The term was also used in PaK for heavier, harder activities – people do 'hard labour' (*mehenat mazdoori*), not 'hard work'. If *mazdoori* was, on the one hand, used to identify activities related to the primary sector of the economy, *kaam*, on the other hand, was used to identify activities related to the manufacturing or secondary sector and the service or tertiary sector. Although only one word was usually used to describe work – *kaam*¹⁴⁶ – there was in fact another word that formed the root of work-related words – *kaar* (Platts, 1884: 804 and 799, respectively). In both these words there was an element of instrumentality, as both were employed for 'use' or lack of; e.g., *nekaama*, a person of no use and *bekaar*, a useless person or object. In both words there was the sense of artificial fabrication and of this activity being under human control, with *kaam* also meaning handiwork and an artisan being called a *kaarigar*. While both words can also mean action, it is especially *kaar* that gives its power to this activity. So for instance, the word commonly used for 'action' was *kaarwai*, an activist (such as an NGO

¹⁴⁵ In Chapter Seven I discuss further the changing character of agricultural work/labour.

¹⁴⁶ While *kaam* in Urdu means work, in Old Persian it means desire. The multivalence of this word was often used by Mir and Ghalib in their ghazals (see Pritchett, on-line).

activist) was a *kaarkun*,¹⁴⁷ a social worker was a *samaji*¹⁴⁸ *kaarkun*, and a political activist (or political worker) was a *siyaasi kaarkun*.

The way people at the bazaar contextualised notions of ‘*mazdoori*’, ‘*kaam*’, and ‘*kaar*’ are reminiscent of Arendt’s (1958) categorisation of human activity, or *vita activa*, in her book “The Human Condition.” She divides human activity hierarchically into labour, work, and action – the three basic conditions under which humans live – with the latter being the most important for being human.

“Labour assures not only individual survival, but the life of the species. Work and its product, the human artefact, bestow a measure of permanence and durability upon the futility of mortal life and the fleeting character of human time. Action, in so far as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the condition for remembrance, that is, for history.”
(Arendt, 1958: 8)

Labour, a repetitive, never-ending pursuit yielding nothing permanent, represents the biological necessities of human life necessary to maintain human existence, and is characterised by non-freedom. In fact, the recognition of labour as involuntary is a distinctly human quality. Work, under human control, is all that is constructed in the human existence, the artificial fabrication of surroundings and building both physical and cultural structures and borders. It is characterised by instrumental necessity, while there is also an element of freedom. It is public and between individual human beings. Action represents the initiatives that form the system of social and cultural negotiation manifested in societies, communities and cultures. It is unpredictable and it can only be judged and given meaning by its public reception, and therefore always a public activity. It is not bound by instrumentality (like work), but characterised by its quality of not being subordinate to anything else. In other words, it corresponds with full freedom of human activity: human beings are free to initiate action and are free to do so as long as they act.

It is in *kaarwai* and related words that we can encounter the publicness and freedom associated to Arendtian action, representative of the initiatives forming the system of social and cultural negotiation within the community. And it is this that makes me believe that there was a gendered struggle not only for work – *kaam* – but also for work

¹⁴⁷ Or a *sargaram* (literally ‘hotheaded’) *kaarkun*.

and action – *kaar*. Although it might appear that I am portraying these factors as providing clear-cut divisions, they did not. There was a fuzziness about these three conditions of human activity in the villages surrounding Chinati bazaar and people did not clearly divided their activities into ‘labour’, ‘work’, and ‘action’. Furthermore, narratives on these three types of human activity differed from person to person and from case to case, enough for not existing a clear consensus. Yet, within this fuzziness it was still possible to witness a gender bias – with women playing a role of lesser ‘citizens’¹⁴⁹ – where the value attributed to women’s activities within the labour/work/action distinction closely mirroring the work of several authors on the reproductive/productive divide (Beneria, 1979; Beneria and Sen, 1981; Harris and Young, 1981), who state that women’s subordination and the little or no value attributed to their activities is a result of the gendered division of labour, their assigned role in biological and social reproduction, and the nature of their participation in production.

As I previously mentioned, ownership of the means of production is a factor that can help us differentiate human activity between labour and work in this region. Not only in agriculture, but in many other activities owning (or renting) the tools used in production and/or distribution can set apart a labourer and a worker. As an Algerian informant told Bourdieu (2000:22) on the emergence of the full-time shopkeeper in the 1960s:

“Everything’s a métier¹⁵⁰ now: one puts three boxes of sugar and two packets of coffee in a shelf and calls himself a grocer. One who can nail four planks together calls himself a joiner. Everywhere there are drivers, even if there are no cars: all you need is a licence in your pocket.”

This point also touches upon two other factors: one, of the linkage between activity and status, whereby one’s status increases by moving up in the hierarchy of human activity, and two, of the importance of location in one’s activity, as seen in this case where the shopkeeper becomes detached from the land and the shop detached from home. In the latter, it is as if there is a public-private divide among human activity, with many labour-related activities being done in private spaces, such as the house and the adjacent fields, many work-related activities done in public, such as the bazaar or abroad, and all

¹⁴⁸ From *samaj*, community.

¹⁴⁹ For Aristotle (Politics, book 3) a citizen is someone who had a share in the “*privileges of rule*.” In Ancient Greece women, children, foreign residents, some labourers and slaves were not citizens, and therefore excluded from these “*privileges of rule*”.

¹⁵⁰ Job, trade, profession.

action-related activities done in public, in – again – the bazaar and abroad, but also mosques and even in the privately-public spaces of the house, such as the veranda and the guest-accessible living room. Several other factors influenced a distinction between labour, work, and action in this region, namely autonomy – working for oneself or labouring for others – the type of remuneration – being paid or not and when – and the nature of the actors themselves. Who performed ‘what’ also contributed to distinguish what ‘what’ was. Here determinants of hierarchies of power, such as gender as well as class and *biraderi*, played an important role. For instance, most of women’s activities were considered labour, sometimes work, and seldom action. On the other side of the spectrum higher class and/or *biraderi* males rarely laboured, often worked and acted.

Finally, the placing of these activities within Arendt’s three conditions, akin to Kandiyoti’s patriarchal bargains, is also susceptible to historical transformations. In this case, access to Gulf migration and increase in levels of education, which accelerated the social mobility of not just individuals but of whole groups as seen elsewhere in South Asia (see Gardner and Osella, 2004; Osella and Osella, 2000), opened up new areas of struggle and renegotiation for the classification, promotion and demotion of different human activities. Particularly in the case of labour and work, jobs are not permanently confined to one or another activity. For instance farming, which used to be mainly classified as work, had been ‘demoted’ to labour over time, due to access to new livelihood opportunities, the unprofitability of the occupation, and the shift in actors – from owning males to females and hired labour.

This demotion was visible in the way Manshaat, a migrant in Dubai whom I met at the bazaar while he was on his biennial leave, described people’s engagement with agriculture in the past and today: “*Compared to us, our forefathers used to wake up early in the morning, they would work hard. Now everybody has fields but no one works [kaam] in the fields. They feel they’re too big to labour [mazdoori] in the land, they just want office work. Agriculture is below our status.*” Teaching was another noteworthy case, where the reasons for the ‘demotion’ of farming from work to labour seemed to be somehow similar, namely, access to better livelihood opportunities, unprofitability of the profession, and a shift in actors, with more and more women becoming schoolteachers. It appeared that a renegotiation of teaching as work was taking place in this region. “*Most teachers are women because salaries are very low. This is pocket money, so only women can afford to do this*”, told me the (male) principal of READ. As

in north India “*the definition of women as primarily domestic workers enabled their work outside the home to be undervalued and hence underpaid*” (Sharma, 1980: 7) and therefore their salaries being seen (by men) as ‘pocket money’.

Women’s Vita Activa

So how was women’s *vita activa* lived in PaK? A clear distinction of women’s activities was delineated by space, i.e. between private and public, with activities in the realm of the former classified as labour and in the latter as work. Within the private sphere women laboured both in the home and in the fields as, throughout northern South Asia (Sharma, 1980: 43), household land was considered an extension of the home and therefore “*women [could] move about in their own fields with confidence in their right to be seen there.*”¹⁵¹ Outside the home, women overwhelmingly engaged with teaching as work. As witnessed in rural Malaysia (Stivens, 1996: 83) the shifts in female occupation through the decades mirrored to some extent the growth in education, with rising levels of female teachers correlating with educational expansion (Table 8).

Table 8 – Number of teachers in Bagh district

	Public (2008)		Private (2005)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Male	2254	56	604	41
Female	1736	44	871	59
Total	3990	100	1475	100

Source: AEPAM/NEMIS, 2006; P&D AJK, 2009.

The division of labour within the home followed strict age hierarchies, with older women responsible for the cooking and younger women in charge of cleaning and fetching water. Mira, a young teenager from Sarian said that “*we [daughters] do the safai [cleaning] and mother sits on the chula [stove].*” The sharing of household chores among the women of the house created at times conflicts,¹⁵² as well as bonds of ‘mutual reliance’ (Grover, 2011: 71), depending on the dyad. Mothers and daughters routinely depended on each other, with daughters taking on chores when mothers were ill or absent and mothers ‘training’ their daughters in ‘housework’ from an early age to become ‘good wives’. Mira’s cousin Myriam said that in her family the daughters made rotis when the mother was away. “*I can’t remember when I started making them.*” The mother-daughter bond was nurtured (through visits) beyond the time the daughter

¹⁵¹ In Chinati the fields were adjacent to the house.

married and moved away. In Delhi, Grover (2011) notices that a married daughter's ability to do chores is more valued than unmarried daughters or daughters-in-law as she is considered more experienced and familiarised within the natal home.

The value of being a 'good housewife' who did household chores was reverberated across gender lines and ages. Zubaida, a housewife from Thial said that "*clothes, decorations for the house and a clean house; those are the wishes of a woman.*" Raja Yasin, who had previously worked as a cook for an English couple in Dubai, mentioned that one characteristic that struck him at the time was that the couple shared chores. "*Here women do all the housework [ghar ka kaam].*" Despite using the word *kaam*, the meaning attached to it was that of 'labour'. Equally, when Papanek (1982: 198) describes the defining interdependence and division of labour among gender where "*men generally do not do things which are defined as being 'women's work' but are dependant on women to do them [and] outside the home, women are equally dependent on men*", this gendered division of labour can be seen as an interdependent male-work-public and female-labour-private dichotomy.

The fact that men did not do household chores meant that women who worked outside the home were left with a conundrum. On the one hand they were responsible for 'houselabour' and, on the other hand, they wanted (or needed)¹⁵³ to work outside. Overwhelmingly these women fell under what Beneria and Sen (1981) call 'the burden of the double day': they engaged with productive activities outside the home while at the same time being responsible for the bulk of reproductive tasks within the home. As Saadia, a married schoolteacher at READ said, "*women working is fine as long as your house and your children are not affected.*"¹⁵⁴ *Teaching is not a good thing, because when you're trying to divide yourself in two places, your health gets affected.*" This was particularly problematic for married women with young children who did not have other women in the house capable of taking over their share of 'houselabour'. In fact, as Rashed *et al*'s (1989, in: Naqvi and Shahnaz, 2002) study show, the likelihood of women being employed increased with the presence of other women in the house. The refusal to renegotiate 'houselabour' might had to do with men's reluctance on "*any encroachment on their leisure time*" (Kabeer, 2000: 124), although, as Harrison (2001)

¹⁵² See Chapter Five on the *saas-bahu* dyad.

¹⁵³ In Bangladesh's garment industry women more often entered the labour market more by need than choice (Kabeer, 2000).

shows in rural Zambia, rather than being idle, men are often occupied in creating, maintaining and improving social networks and contacts, in the hope of gaining access to better economic opportunities. Also important in these negotiations was men's image as breadwinners *outside the house* (see Grover, 2011). Women working outside (and men inside) "*not only destroys husband's image as a 'provider', but also the status of the family*" (Rashid, 2008: 233), and can be taken as a public statement of men's ability to fulfil the roles of provider and protector (Kabeer, 2000).

The decision for women to work outside – overwhelmingly as teachers – had therefore to be done in consultation with their families. In these consultations, a form of renegotiating the patriarchal bargain, women treaded "*a balance between their basic needs and social expectations of gender norms*" (Rashid, 2008: 235), as often they were "*valued as producers of heirs rather than as producers of food*" (Sharma, 1980: 14). Working women renegotiated the patriarchal bargain not only by proving to be capable of working outside the house and yet still play the role of the 'good daughter' or 'good mother/wife', but also by having to prove that their work was morally and socially acceptable. An important factor in these renegotiations was their relative power in relation to the other household members, which also determined the effective possession of the resources she produced or earned (Whitehead, 1981). For instance, a 'good daughter' or a 'good wife' always shared her income with the household head out of her goodwill. Zainab, Ali Naqvi's unmarried daughter said: "*I keep the money [salary] for me and spend it on food and clothes, but I also contributed to rebuilding the house. My father never asks me for money, I give it myself.*" From the mid-1970s onwards, due to a drastic increase in male migration, women found a type of work which, despite being public, was morally and socially acceptable – teaching.

The multiple effects male migration has on gender relations in South Asian Muslim communities has been described by several authors (Gardner, 1995; Gardner and Osella, 1994; Rashid, 2008): it can increase the independence of migrants' wives, allow women to enter (some) public male spaces, yet it can also increase female seclusion and women's workload. In this region male migration to the Gulf also affected women's access to work by, on the one hand, increasing a demand for education – for both men and women – and, on the other hand, motivating many male teachers to migrate,

¹⁵⁴ The ideology of maternal altruism, where a mother and wife always put the family and children first (Whitehead, 1981: 107).

therefore creating a vacuum to be filled by women. Still women needed to negotiate, both within and outside the home, the fact that teaching was considered a public activity. As Kabeer (2000: 329) states, “*intra-familial relationships (...) reflected the family’s insertion into larger social hierarchies*”; consequently the family’s class and caste position and “*the extent to which it valued, or could afford to value, dominant norms about the division of labour among family members*” also influenced this negotiation. The underlying elements in this negotiation were that of status and honour. As Rashid (2008: 211) states, “*mere money does not bring status and prestige for women and their families, especially not if the money is earned in a process which is not socially acceptable (...) women earn their status by being a good mother, wife, and daughter-in-law.*” Throughout northern South Asia not having women working (outside the house) is often a sign of high status, as Gardner (1995: 209) identified in many studies of gender in the region, “*which focus on two intersecting phenomena: the sexual division of labour, and ideologies of female modesty and shame.*”

“*Women in South Asia bear a special responsibility for family honour; insofar as a woman conforms to certain standards of modest feminine conduct her family’s status is maintained or even improved, whilst unwomanly conduct is a blot not just on her personal reputation but on the reputation of the whole family.*” (Sharma, 1980: 3)

While still having to prove that employment outside the home was morally and socially acceptable for women to perform, in this region they had the advantage that teaching itself was an occupation which was morally and socially acceptable: it involved minimal interaction with men and more with children; it was easily assimilated into traditional feminine role concepts; there was a need for more teachers; in most cases the physical distance between the house and the school was minimal; and education was a status marker, traditionally linked with the Syed *biraderi*. Yet, due to the physical mobility aspect of teaching, women also had to renegotiate the concept of *purdah*, which they did physically by using veiling as a strategy to legitimise working outside (Rashid, 2008), and intellectually by attempting to reinterpret *purdah* based on a practical morality, akin to Kabeer’s (2000: 91) “*purdah of the mind*” and Kirmani’s (2009: 55) “*purdah of the heart.*”¹⁵⁵ Finally, as Gardner (1995) discovered in rural Bangladesh, veiling and other external indicators of *purdah* also created female status

¹⁵⁵ In fact some of my female informants used the latter expression.

and added to their personal power,¹⁵⁶ as seen in this region with some female schoolteachers engaging in the organisation of Quranic readings and *Milaads*¹⁵⁷ for other women.

As in other South Asian Muslim societies, in PaK too the gendered division of labour rooted in local ideologies of honour and status limited women's engagement with public activities. Due to the prevalent seclusion and exclusion practices, women mostly 'laboured', only sometimes 'worked', and seldom 'acted'. The drastic increase in male migration to the Gulf and its spillover effect of an increment in the demand for more education opened up a space for women to engage with work outside the home, signalling a shift from private-labour to public-work. Many women successfully renegotiated gender roles, allowing them to become schoolteachers. Yet they first had to prove that their work was morally and socially acceptable. The question remains as to how the earthquake as an event further affected, if at all, men's narratives and actions regarding women's activity. In the next sections I analyse these narratives – as well as how they were used differently by different actors – in order to examine if the earthquake was indeed a catalyst for an increase in women's mobility and work outside the home, and what this entailed.

Narratives of Post-Earthquake Mobility and Work

The place of women in society was a hotly debated topic at the bazaar, with narratives centred on women's mobility – physical, social and economic. There was a wide spectrum of views on women's mobility and access to work that ranged from a more conservative view – which created a discourse based on religion and 'local values and culture', whereby women's seclusion was imperative for a good society – to a more progressive view – which saw local expressions of women's seclusion as excessive and preventing their society from keeping up with the rest of the world and becoming 'modern'. Regardless of the discourse, however, almost all the men I talked to about this in the bazaar associated the perceived increase in women's mobility and work in public spaces with the arrival of development agencies, particularly NGOs, and, to a lesser extent, new traders in the urban bazaars. In an Arendtian sense, I argue that that

¹⁵⁶ Let us not also forget that *pardah*-related behaviour is more than just about status as it is "central to women's inner spirituality, helping them grow closer to Allah" (Gardner, 1995: 219).

¹⁵⁷ Celebrations of *Milaad-un-nabi* (birthday of the prophet).

through the changes revealed in the stories, women were trying to shift their activities from ‘labour’ to ‘work’. In this section I analyse these narratives and examine how they were created and recreated, by whom and for what purpose.

The Earthquake and NGOs

The impact of development agencies’ relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts was perceived by most in Chinati as largely positive. Within these agencies NGOs received most of the praise for the work done. In fact, most people regardless of gender, age, status group or wealth equated the NGO presence with better living conditions. Throughout their stories about post-earthquake change they would talk about the improvements in health, education, and ‘capacity building’ that happened in the region due to the arrival of these NGOs. For instance, Ali Naqvi, commenting about OXFAM and Save the Children’s work in the area said that “*NGOs helped us think of hygiene and health, people learnt and are now living better.*” Mushtaq, the Gulf agent from Sarian, argued that despite this region having both public and private schooling, education benefitted from the arrival of the NGOs: “*We had lots of schools but after the earthquake NGOs built better ones. They teach a better curriculum with English at an earlier age, like the schools in Rawalakot.*” Mohammad Sheikh, a trader at the bazaar, mentioned that schoolchildren were not the only ones who learnt new things, as “*people learnt new skills due to the NGOs. Because of that many have started their own businesses.*”

This narrative though, was not ubiquitous. Some people pointed out how NGOs mis-targeted assistance and were as riddled with nepotism, corruption and incompetence as the state. Especially people in Bagh city, who witnessed a flurry of NGO activity, were very suspicious of their performance. “*All the earthquake money is going to workshops and jeeps. Nothing really happens. When it does, it’s extremely late. They [NGOs] keep on having workshops, meetings and seminars. It’s just talk, talk, talk.*” Some people in some places developed a discourse blaming NGO presence for the destruction of the region’s morality.¹⁵⁸ The voices of discontent directly linked this loss of morality to a loosening of women’s honour, which they could observe in the increase of women’s mobility, both physical and social. This increase, they said, was a causal effect of the

NGO presence. The creation and recreation of this discourse was not haphazard – there was a visible trend in who said it and where. It was largely a male-dominated discourse, as exemplified by a shopkeeper in Rawalakot who complained to one of my (male) research assistants that “*the NGO’s promotion of women workers [samaji kaarkun] [had] influenced the [patriarchal] social fabric of the region*” and therefore challenged “*our local values and culture.*”

What at first glance appeared to be a disapproval of women engaging with work-*kaam* was in fact also a disapproval of women entering the more public space for Arendtian action through work-*kaar*: through the arrival of NGOs women were now getting jobs as *samaji kaarkun*. Mostly men stated that women’s public exposure was against religious and cultural practices and that as a shopkeeper in Bagh said – “*women [were] now forgetting their rightful place in society*”. These voices were also older, with many people from the older generations who viewed themselves as guardians of these values and culture, such as an old *dhaaba* owner in Bagh, blaming “*the ‘NGO culture’ that developed [in PaK] through which people became fashion-conscious and less religious*”. Religion was used to justify the righteousness of this discourse, with *purdah* as the centre tenet. Despite Jeffery (1979: 17) rightly pointing out that “*Islamic doctrines can, at best, provide only a partial explanation for the seclusion of women*” these were the ones that were vocalised when justifying the need to curtail women’s mobility. It is of no surprise then that an influential group propagating this discourse were the religious clerics, or *maulvis*, who regardless of sect saw an increase in women’s mobility – and NGOs as instigators of this mobility – as *fitna*.¹⁵⁹ *Jummah* prayers, one of the most important male public congregations, proved itself the right place for *maulvis* to spread their message on *purdah*. At the mosque in Chinati bazaar, the local *maulvi* often warned the faithful that “*this is one of the most important parts of Islam. This community thinks it’s modernising and they think that keeping purdah is backward. I want to tell those people that they are stupid [bewakoof]!*” Linked with observing *purdah*, at times he would also warn of the dangers of women working with men: “*Women mingling with non-mehram men is becoming too normal now, too common. I cannot stress enough how God really hates this.*”

¹⁵⁸ The words often used were *beghairat* (without honour) and *beyhaya* (shameless), meant as ‘involved in immoral behaviour’.

¹⁵⁹ In the sense of ‘sedition’.

Another group of men who moulded their discontented voices to this discourse were those who had less access to these NGOs and to relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation funds, and particularly those who saw the bounty of development aid arriving in the region – to which they felt entitled – only to see it be distributed to others.¹⁶⁰ Their resentment was often directed at women, as they saw women stepping on their turf – the public turf.

Overall, this discourse was public, more urban than rural, and grew louder the further we moved from the epicentre of the earthquake. NGO offices were based in urban centres, often in the male-dominated public bazaars, where both male and female workers would interact and were seen by all entering and leaving these offices. For many, who had limited or no dealings with these NGOs, what happened inside these offices was a mystery, as the walls were a curtain¹⁶¹ between the outside and the inside of the NGO. The owner of a general store in Bagh's main bazaar said that vulgarity had increased because of the NGOs, as they not only allowed but incentivised men and women to work together, which he deemed un-Islamic. Close to the UN containers which served as offices for the Bagh District bureaucracy, an old lawyer friends with Ali Naqvi told me that since the arrival of the NGOs there had been an increase of court cases. According to him, the reason for this increase was that unmarried women working in NGOs started eloping with their male counterparts. The women's parents, on the basis of Pakistan's Islamic personal laws, initiated these cases and he had counted more than 60 cases in Bagh district just in the first three months of 2009.

In rural areas people dealt not with NGOs, but with NGO workers and in the overwhelming majority of cases these contacts were gender segregated, with female NGO workers interacting with rural women and male NGO workers with rural men. As such, the curtain was drawn between sexes and not between NGO outsiders and insiders. Finally, distance from the epicentre was also a factor in how people viewed NGO presence. A recent study by Andrabi and Das (2010) shows that people living closer to the fault-line had a more positive attitude towards foreigners (including Europeans and Americans), mirroring the higher provision of foreign aid and foreign presence in these areas. In 2009, together with a group of students from LUMS, I conducted a short survey on the impact of the earthquake in rural and urban bazaars of

¹⁶⁰ See Chapter Three on targeting assistance.

¹⁶¹ In Persian, *purdah*.

Rawalakot and Bagh, where I also observed that shopkeepers in Rawalakot bazaar, which was less affected, were more vocal about the ‘NGO culture’¹⁶² than shopkeepers in Bagh city.

On the other side of the spectrum, proponents of increasing women’s mobility and access to work outside the home also concurred with opponents that an increase had happened and that too because of the NGOs. Mobeen, a district secretary and member of JKLF¹⁶³ from Thial, said that *“the earthquake changed our area a lot, women’s horizons were broadened. This was because of international NGOs; people coming from outside taught them about a better lifestyle.”* This group consisted of younger men, NGO workers, active migrants (particularly Gulf migrants) and younger women – students, workers and young housewives. They talked about the lack of investment on women’s futures – like Khalid, the vocational trainer, who complained that *“we have both men and women, but there’s no training for women. We don’t care for about 50% of our population, they just stay at home”* – while praising the NGOs for their role in emancipating women’s lives. They criticised the patriarchal values which linked a family’s honour to women’s seclusion – like the vice-principal of one of the private schools at the bazaar who said that *“women are still suppressed in education and choices in life. Women do work in NGOs and banks, but it is not considered honourable. Teaching is the only honourable profession [for women].”* – and appreciated how the presence of NGOs helped them challenge this view. More importantly, they created a discourse based on risk, as seen in Sajida’s comments where *“the earthquake changed our lives, there is more awareness[agaahi]. Nobody used to educate their women, now people do it because they realised that they have less securities in life. Women are expected to do jobs.”* – to justify their entering the male-dominated public working space.

Their narratives were permeated by ‘buzzwords and fuzzwords’ (Cornwall, 2007) similar to the ones used in the development industry’s discourses, such as ‘gender equality’, ‘empowerment’, and ‘awareness’, which were associated with ‘building back better’. These buzzwords were not created in a void, but often by interacting with the

¹⁶² Curiously, unlike in Bangladesh where there was a widely view *“that women who worked in the garment industry were of loose moral character (...) that even the epithet of ‘garment girls’ had come to assume a pejorative meaning within local discourse”* (Kabeer, 2000: 83), here the ‘lack of morality’ was blamed on NGOs and not on the women working for them.

¹⁶³ Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front, the main political organisation seeking independence of PaK and IaK from both India and Pakistan.

development industry through the NGOs and the state. For instance, regarding ‘gender equality’ and ‘empowerment’, the state’s ‘Gender Policy for Earthquake Affected Areas’ (ERRA, 2007e: iii), proclaims that “*gender equality must be considered as an integral part of all ERRA policies, programmes and projects*” where “*women’s social and economic empowerment is central to achieving [this] gender equality.*” In a way, these buzzwords infiltrated these narratives through the use of the word ‘better’, which was what Jauhola (2010) discovered in the post-tsunami reconstruction in the Indonesian province of Aceh. She argues that the ‘better’ in the ‘build Aceh back better’ slogan adopted by many development agencies involved in post-tsunami reconstruction was not understood to be just about technical reconstruction with better quality, but also about reconstructing ideas, ideals, and norms, in which “*bodies [became] sites for deployment of ethical and political values*” (Jauhola, 2010: 189).

There were, of course, other views in the middle of this spectrum. Many informants told me that they approved of women working as social workers, as long as they worked relatively close to their homes so they could reach them before dark. Ali Naqvi laid down ‘the rules’ while explaining to me which types of occupations women could do: “*Teaching is considered the most respectful [occupation] for women. They also work in hospitals or become social workers with NGOs. But we make it clear to them: females shouldn’t work very far from home. They should work at a place which is accessible through a pakka road and they should come back home in the evening.*” The problem for them was not that women working questioned men’s role as ‘provider’ but as ‘protector’ – men, after all, ‘allowed’ their women to work with these NGOs initially. Bashir’s description of how this event turned out was as following: “*Many NGOs¹⁶⁴ came after the earthquake and some women from our village started working with them, mostly doing surveys. After seeing women travelling to far-off places and coming home at night our people in the village opposed that. Soon, women stopped working for these NGOs.*” By arriving late at home women were not fulfilling their part of the patriarchal bargain as good housekeepers and, more importantly, women, particularly young women, were seen as vulnerable and therefore should not be left alone nor far from home.

¹⁶⁴ By NGOs he was referring to UNICEF, ERRA, NRSP, and Lok Sanjh, i.e. an international organisation, the state, a national and a local NGO.

Economically, the impact of these NGOs was felt not only through the quantity of money they brought in,¹⁶⁵ but also through job creation. Many people within the region sought employment with development agencies, especially with international NGOs as they provided very competitive salaries. Raza said that before the earthquake “*people’s priority job used to be teaching [in government schools] but since the earthquake it was NGO job. Not so much now, as international NGOs have left and local NGOs pay local salaries.*” Despite most international NGOs wrapping up their programmes one or two years after the earthquake, as many of them were relief-oriented, many local NGOs continued to hire staff throughout the reconstruction and rehabilitation stages. For instance, the number of staff in the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), Pakistan and PaK’s largest NGO, increased from 86 before the earthquake to an average of 500 to 600 in the relief and reconstruction stages, and stabilised at 200 plus in the rehabilitation stage (see table 9).

Table 9 – Number of NRSP offices and staff in PaK before and after the earthquake

	March 2005	March 2006	March 2011
Main offices	4	8	8
Sub-offices	6	48	6
Total offices	10	56	14
Total Staff	86	485	236

Source: NRSP employee records

The increase of employment opportunities had not only an economic impact but, perhaps more importantly, a social one.¹⁶⁶ It impacted particularly in the perception that the gender composition of the local work force had begun to shift towards there being more women workers. Most of the ‘proof’ that proponents and opponents of enhancing women’s access to work outside the home could draw on concerned the increase, following the earthquake, in the number of women working for NGOs. Although the absolute number of women working in NGOs had increased, the relative proportion of women to men remained numerically insignificant¹⁶⁷ – but the increase was morally significant. Taking NRSP again as an example, while the number of female workers had increased post-earthquake, so had the overall number of employees, but the proportion

¹⁶⁵ An officer at the Bank of Kashmir told me that their turnover before the earthquake was around seven million rupees per month. With the arrival of NGOs and the government housing compensation scheme a year after it was thirty million.

¹⁶⁶ It also had a political impact, as NGO jobs were often contested through existing patronage networks (see Chapter Four).

¹⁶⁷ The same applied to International Organisations. For instance, of a total of 78 World Food Programme employees working in PaK until December 2011 only nine were women, a total of 11.5% of their workforce (Source: WFP employee records).

of women to men had in fact slightly decreased (see table 10). When probing deeper the perception of the increase in women's NGO employment, through conversations with NGOs' staff and school principals (the presumable employers), I was told that many of these NGO jobs were in fact teaching positions in privately-funded or NGO-funded schools, where a sizeable proportion of the new positions were filled by women who had lost their previous teaching jobs following the destruction of their old schools – a redeployment of unemployed women.

Table 10 – Gender-wise distribution of NRSP staff in PaK before and after the earthquake

	March 2005	March 2006	March 2011
Total Staff	86	485	236
Women	14	64	32
Women (%)	16.3	13.2	13.6

Source: NRSP employee records

Likewise in private businesses, the increase in women's employment was no more than a perception. A good example was that of private telecommunication companies, which did not exist before the earthquake and mushroomed all over PaK. These companies mostly hired young male adults or redeployed the same male adults who used to work in PCOs. The fact that people heard a female automated voice (regardless of telecommunication company) made many think that there was a sizeable number of women working in these companies.

Finally, the 'proof' that people used to show the increase in women's mobility was the number of women in public spaces, i.e., it concerned women's physical mobility. The perceived increase in the number of women in public spaces was directly and indirectly linked to NGOs: directly as providing working places, seen in Ali Naqvi's assertion that *"before [the earthquake] you would see one woman – usually with a sick child – in a bus; now you see up to 40% women going to jobs"*; and indirectly as the salaries obtained from working in NGOs were – according to people who opposed women working outside the home – used to consume luxury items. As Bashir complained: *"Women are becoming more materialistic. They waste their [earned] money in make-up and new clothes."*

During my fieldwork and travels in PaK, mostly in rural and urban bazaars, I observed not more than a few women in these public spaces. Even in the offices of NGOs, the number of female staff could be counted on one hand. Yet both proponents and opponents of increasing women's access to work outside the home hyped these numerically insignificant figures and made them morally significant. Both groups

developed a series of similar narratives whereby the earthquake and the arrival of development agencies, namely NGOs, were the origin of a perceived increase in women's mobility. While doing so, both groups were stating that, because of the earthquake and its aftermath, there was a shift of women's activities from 'labour' to 'work-*kaam*' and 'work-*kaar*'. However, comparing pre- and post-earthquake employment figures reveals that the pre-existing gender relations in the region's workforce remained largely unchanged after the earthquake. Furthermore, despite voicing similar narratives each group created different discourses for different aims, with proponents trying to increase women's access to work outside the home and opponents trying to curtail it. In the following section I analyse how the same events – the earthquake and the arrival of development agencies – were used differently according to the agendas of different actors.

Using the Earthquake to...

Most people in the region voiced similar narratives on the earthquake as an event that had increased women's access to work outside the home. Yet, there existed a polarity in their explanations of the meaning of this increase. People's interpretation of the same event differed according to their predisposition and actions towards women's emancipation. On one side of the spectrum proponents of increasing women's access to work outside the home used the earthquake to develop a discourse that sought to continue this increase; on the other side, opponents developed one that aimed to curtail women's mobility. The stories on both sides revealed that this struggle for an increase in women's physical and socio-economic mobility – a struggle for access to 'work' and 'action' – was not new. Accounts of active life before the earthquake showed that it had also existed before the earthquake. However, the earthquake gave it a new impetus.

...Curtail Mobility

In April 2009, when the night temperature is still cold in the hills of PaK, my research assistant and I arrived once more at what was my initial 'base camp' in the region: Rawalakot. After an eight-hour drive from Lahore, we initiated our 'ceremonial' routine. We stopped first at the brightly lit Gulf Departmental Store, the newest supermarket in town built after the earthquake, stretched our legs and amused ourselves

by blowing steam out of our mouths in April (in Lahore the temperatures were already above 30°C). After a quick *salaam* to the clerks, we went in to buy American chocolate cookies, Pringle crisps, Ceres juice, Nutella spread and all other ‘essential’ items for breakfast and late night snacks. From there we drove through the dimly lit Pukhtoon *adda* to the PDA Guesthouse; again more salaams, this time with hugs as we were starting to be considered *rishtedars* (“*our brothers from Lahore*”), a short discussion on what to eat for dinner (the options always being chicken *karahi* or *daal*), and we finally entered the eternally cold rooms in which we always stayed. I threw down my bags, switched on the TV, went in for a quick wash and, ... there was nothing on TV! I flicked through the channels and nothing, except PTV. When Aziz, the cook-cum-waiter-cum-everything came in with our meal we asked if the cable was operational and he said that cable TV was now banned. “*Why?*”, I enquired. “*Pornography*”, he said. “*The cable operator had a channel showing local girls naked, so the police stopped transmission and the guy ran away. The police is now looking for him to arrest him.*” Having to make do with the rest of what promised to be a quiet night, I got into bed with Eric Wolf’s *Europe and the People Without History* and made a mental note to probe the next morning what this hullabaloo was all about.

“*They’re all crazy, all of them. The maulvis, the police, even the local government!*” Sardar Zulfiqar was not pleased with the latest events in Rawalakot. While sipping hot tea early morning in the garden at the back of his house he told us the whole story:

“A few days ago some maulvis got together and complained to the AC that the cable TV was showing pornographic films in one of its channels. They told him that these films were made with local girls. Some said by sons of influential people, others by NGO workers filming their female colleagues naked. They had used these new mobile phones with cameras. Now they were asking the government to do something about it. In a knee-jerk reaction, the government decided to ban cable TV, ban the youth from carrying mobiles, and ban women from walking alone in the bazaar. They even banned cassette players in public transport!”

“*What about the cable operator?*”, I asked, “*Why did he run away?*” Sardar Zulfiqar gave me a dirty look. “*He didn’t run anywhere; when all this happened I called him to ask what was going on. He had no clue of what was happening. By coincidence he was away in Islamabad buying more hardware for his business and he was in shock when I*

told him the whole story. Right now he's still there, waiting for things to calm down, but he already called the AC and told him that these are all lies. Even if he had access to porn, why would he put it on cable for everybody to see?"

After tea we drove by the bazaar to see the impact of the latest bans. While the (already small) number of women had dwindled, the number of police had swollen. We later found out that the increase in police numbers was to make sure that women were not seen walking alone, that young men were not carrying mobile phones, and that buses and taxis were not playing music.¹⁶⁸

Despite the ban being only two days old, it was the main topic of discussion in Chinati bazaar. As I entered Imtiaz's shop he immediately told me of the rumour that *"the government in Rawalakot has imposed a ban on girls walking alone in the bazaar and a ban on cassette players in buses. It was because some NGOs started making pornographic films with local girls."*

This story is a good example of the kinds of activities some people took to curtail the perceived post-earthquake increase in women's mobility, by linking it to what most believed was its originator: the NGOs. Analogous to the case of women employed in the garment industry in Bangladesh (Kabeer, 2000: 84), the general disapproval of women working for NGOs *"was constantly fuelled by rumours about 'incidents' of a sexual nature relating to [these working women], spread by word-of-mouth or reported in newspaper articles, and often assuming a very exaggerated form."* As White (2000: 310) states, *"stories and rumours are produced in the cultural conflicts of local life; they mark ways to talk about the conflicts and contradictions that gave them meaning and power."* Likewise, people who opposed women's access to work outside the home in post-earthquake PaK created and recreated rumours such as this one to talk about the contradictions of enabling women to work. As in this example, opponents of increasing women's access to work outside the home used three kinds of action in their endeavour: they developed a discourse linking post-earthquake women's presence in the public sphere to a loosening of the region's morality; tried (and often succeeded) to reinforce physical segregation in public spaces; and – as a measure of last resort – protested

¹⁶⁸ This did not mean that the population took the bans lightly: an older woman who was stopped by the police for being alone in the bazaar publicly shamed the police's mothers so loudly that they gave up on her; boys started a game of 'take a picture of the police' with their mobiles; and drivers would switch on their radios as soon as they would leave Rawalakot.

(sometimes using violence) with the government to ban agencies or *things* that the earthquake brought, which challenged the ‘moral values’ of their society.

The common public space used to spread this discourse was the mosque, mostly during the obligatory¹⁶⁹ *Jummah* prayers. The theme of the discourse was *purdah*, where the community was reminded of the need to keep women secluded, particularly in the changing post-earthquake scenario. The discourse was not religious *per se*, but was claimed to be based on religion, or to be more precise, based on an (often distorted) interpretation of religion. And it was for all to hear – despite women not attending *Jummah* prayers, *maulvis* would sometimes directly addressed the female population in their speeches. The following are some snippets told by the local *maulvi* during his sermons at *Jummah* prayers in the bazaar: “*Fatima was the best woman ever, as she kept purdah all her life. When she was dying, angel Azrael came to collect her soul, but she didn’t want it, as he was a man. So God collected her soul. Mothers, sisters and daughters, if you hold Fatima as your mother, start observing purdah!*” The aim of the discourse was to restrict women’s mobility – physical and social. Physically, the aim was to curtail women’s movements (thereby preventing them from working outside the house) and, in a region where often their husbands are away, to even question the sanctity of other males of the house. “*Someone came to Azrat Mohammad and asked him if a brother-in-law could sit together with his bhabhi. He said no. You people actually think that families getting together and mingling is ok, but let me tell you that brothers-in-law are the evil of society. Brothers-in-law are fitna. Women should even be careful when going on a journey [alone] with their fathers-in-law!*” Socially, the aim was to remind people of women’s ‘rightful place in society’: to complement men’s activities, not to compete with men to perform men’s activities.¹⁷⁰ “*In Islam women can wear perfume which is colourful, but of no smell. Otherwise they shall feel God’s wrath. They can wear it with smell only for husbands and at home. Men can use perfume. But if women start imitating men, it’s the beginning of the end. It starts with perfume, then starts a chain reaction and it ends in rape. This is what leads to the destruction of society. Umar saw a woman wearing perfume and he whipped her with 10 lashes.*”

As before the earthquake, post-earthquake gender-based physical segregation occurred in both rural and urban public spaces, although it was more pronounced in urban areas.

¹⁶⁹ Due to peer pressure this obligation was as much social as religious.

¹⁷⁰ The kind of ‘sexual apartheid’ Jeffery refers to (1979: 21).

This segregation was many times more subtle, with a rearrangement of male and female public spaces conducive to ‘separate development’. For instance in Rawalakot, with the sprawling of the bazaar following the reconstruction stage, a new market appeared close to the women’s degree college.¹⁷¹ This was a custom-built market catering to young women’s needs, with shops selling women’s clothing, cosmetics, food, books and stationary, and therefore young women did not need to go to the (male) main bazaar. In a region where most private and, due to a lack of girls schools, even some government middle and higher schools are co-educational, some religiously-oriented (and funded) private schools started segregating their classes. As Ayub, the principal of READ, proudly conveyed to me at his office one day, “*ours is the only school that isn’t co-ed. Although so far only the 9th grade is segregated, we are planning to segregate middle classes soon as well.*”

Physical segregation was not only applied to women. Sometimes efforts were made to deter men from idly congregating in large numbers in public places close to female areas. In Chinati bazaar there used to be two *karamboard* rooms where men of all ages would spend their time playing the game. These rooms were located nearby the private schools, where female teachers were the majority. The local *maulvi* used the mosque’s loudspeakers to complain that this activity was unIslamic. His reasoning was based on the fact that gambling was illegal, it created idleness, and idle men would stare at women. “*He said men would tend to gather around and when there are men gathered around it is very difficult for women to pass, as men would stare at them.*” The *maulvi* also said that random people would start coming to their bazaar and thefts would happen. After much persuasion, the *karamboard* rooms were closed until five years after the earthquake, when another room was ‘secretly’ opened.¹⁷²

Finally, a third type of action people used to curtail women’s work outside the home was by protesting and demonstrating against the those who provided them with work, the NGO agencies. These protests were mostly organised and spearheaded by the *maulvis* who, similarly to Kabeer’s (2000: 82) Islamic economists in Bangladesh, professed that women’s employment not only took work away from men, “*the natural breadwinner of the family, but it represented a threat to the very fabric of the moral order.*” The situation turned violent in August 2006, after a group of *maulvis* in Bagh

¹⁷¹ Itself on the outskirts of Rawalakot.

¹⁷² A few steps down the mosque and in between the two private schools.

city threatened violent protests if aid agencies would not dismiss all their female employees.

“We have told the administration that we will not allow NGOs to exploit our women and asked them to give a date suitable to them for removal of all female workers. If our demand is not met then we will take direct action and extreme steps. There will be demonstrations and damage may be caused to public property and a law and order situation would be created in the area. They [NGOs] hire beautiful girls and take them to Islamabad for enjoyment. They keep women in offices as decoration pieces because we know that women have no work and there is no such work that men cannot do.” Syed Atta Ullah Shah, *maulvi* of Bagh’s central mosque (AFP, 2006)

Despite negotiations moderated by the government between aid agencies and the *maulvis*, the latter mobilised sizeable crowds a few times after *Jummah* prayers to protest. A small number of these turned violent, with mobs breaking into NGO offices and burning their vehicles. When all aid agencies stopped their operations for a short while, the unhappy population (and government officials) pressured the *maulvis* to stop the protests, which they did. A few years later, I met some of the protesters in Bagh city, including a fruit vendor who still blamed NGOs for the post-earthquake ‘modernism’ in the area. He proudly told me that he was part of the group that protested against them and attacked their offices *“but the NGOs had managed to stay with government’s help.”*

...Increase Mobility

On the other side of the spectrum, proponents of further enhancing women’s access to work interpreted the impact of the earthquake differently. While concurring with opponents of women’s access to work outside the home that – following the earthquake and the arrival of development agencies – this access had increased, proponents used the earthquake to advocate a continuation of this increase. They created a counter discourse based on risk where the increase of post-earthquake women’s work outside the home was essential for a return to normality. This counter discourse also challenged the idea that an increase of women’s mobility would made women less honourable by pointing out that honourable women belonging to high-status *biraderis* also worked outside the home. Finally, there was another clear difference within these discourses,

inasmuch as the opponents backed their stance using a new element – the arrival of development agencies – whereas proponents used an existing one – education. By linking the need for more women’s education to minimising future risks, proponents were in fact ‘proving’ that there was a need for an increase in and diversification of women’s work.

For a vast number of families the level of housing reconstruction needed after the earthquake was, even after receiving government compensation, beyond their financial means. Not only did the houses have to be rebuilt, but most of their household possessions had to be re-bought, having been damaged or destroyed during the collapse of the houses. Especially during the first few months, household bills increased with rising prices of goods and the added burden of medical bills for those who had been injured during the earthquake. Many people’s livelihoods were affected by the earthquake – from shopkeepers whose shops got destroyed, to schoolteachers who had no schools in which to teach, to farmers who lost all their cattle and whose access to water vanished with the changes in watercourses and drying up of *chasmas*. More than just remaking houses, many families had to remake their lives, a long, painstaking endeavour to which the more members of the house could contribute, the less insecure their futures would be.

Ali Naqvi’s *khandan*, a relatively better-off Syed family, was one of those. Before the earthquake they owned a considerable amount of land, a couple of buffaloes and all the working-age males were employed, most in white-collar jobs in the region. Although the women within the family were highly educated,¹⁷³ their affluence allowed them not to work outside the house. The earthquake changed all this; most of their houses were damaged, many possessions were lost, and their cattle died when the sheds collapsed. Even more crucial was the impact the earthquake had on their livelihoods, as most of their workplaces were affected and for some months they did not have access to income, at a time when their savings and incomes were essential to recover. That forced them to adopt some unwanted measures such as selling parts of their land – which Dadijee, Ali Naqvi’s mother-in-law, lamented by saying that “*we used to be very affluent. We used to have lots of land but the earthquake shook us*” – and borrowing from relatives, and rethinking livelihood strategies, namely increasing the number of working family

¹⁷³ Most having degrees.

members. In the case of Ali Naqvi's household, that meant his wife and his elder daughter becoming schoolteachers.

The fact that, following the earthquake, more women from higher *biraderis*, such as the Syed and the Kiani, known for their stricter enforcement of *purdah*, were working outside the house without losing honour, gave women in general the chance of working using this observation as a 'principle of precedent'. This precedent though, was based on the premise that women had the required qualifications. In many cases they did, thanks to the 'trendsetting' women from higher *biraderis* – according, of course to these women – such as in the case of Rehana, a Kiani schoolteacher:

“In Matric I was focused on education, but my relatives had rishtas [marriage proposals] from both sides. My father decided who I should marry and I got engaged to a cousin who was also my class fellow. He left for the Gulf and after some time he refused to marry me. There was a lot of tension for eight years and then my brother sent me to Bagh where I did my BA. Then after everybody followed my brother's idea and started sending their daughters to Bagh for further studies.”

In the early eighties, Douglas and Wildavsky developed a “*cultural theory of risk*” (1982, in: Douglas, 1992: 46), where they stated that risk was socially constructed, i.e., the way people decided which risks to take and which to avoid depended on their social organisation and cultural values. Douglas and Wildavsky's notions of risk perception are crucial in trying to unravel how societies react to risk – as Shaw (2000b) notes, risk perception and decision-making have to be understood in the cultural context where they are embedded. Yet, this theory “*construes individuals as socially constrained*” (Boholm, 1996: 70) and therefore lacks “*active agency*” (Paine, 2002: 67), as according to Douglas (1992: 78) “*individuals transfer their decision-making to the institutions in which they live*”. In the villages around Chinati, proponents of increasing women's access to work outside the home made use of the earthquake to re-construct notions of risk intertwining it with the need for women's emancipation.

In their narratives of access to work, men and women used risk and insecurity as a discourse to push for more social and economic mobility,¹⁷⁴ as well as to bridge the gap between social hierarchies. “*The Syed family is more focused towards studying and they*

¹⁷⁴ As did Kabeer's (2000) respondents.

give high priority to it, but after the earthquake things have changed. We have to send our daughters to study so they don't worry about crises", said Siddiqui, a Raja from Serabad. Yet, for women from higher *biraderis*, as well as for women from other *biraderis*, working as teachers outside the house was not an activity triggered by the earthquake. As seen previously, a large percentage of teachers before the earthquake were women. But in a way, the earthquake as an event was worded into a wake-up call. Many people used the term 'awareness' (*agaahi*) when explaining how the underlying post-earthquake insecurity made many families rethink the role of women as household earners. Mobeen, the JKLF member, thought of it as a radical rupture: "*The earthquake changed our lives. People started watching more TV, more awareness, nobody used to educate their women, now people do because they realised that they have less securities in life. Women are expected to do jobs.*" This wake-up call was not because women were previously denied an education, nor were they denied opportunities to become teachers. This wake-up call was for women to obtain an education that would allow them to go beyond teaching, to have careers needed in the region, such as doctors and social workers (*samaji kaarkun*). Particularly health-related careers were seen, after the earthquake, as essential to 'becoming modern'. In my interactions with Mobeen he often complained that 'occupied Kashmir' (meaning IaK) had four medical colleges and PaK had none.¹⁷⁵ Women too, complained about the lack of health care providers and facilities and remarked how health-related careers were acceptable for women but that there were no opportunities. Jameela, the Lahori-born housewife from Sarian said:

"We need first aid service. We have to call nurses from far whenever we are sick. People here can't even check blood pressure. We have to spend a lot of time travelling, it costs Rs. 1,200 to reach a doctor. My husband is only earning Rs. 4,000 month. My sister-in-law is educated, but she doesn't know how to treat people. Life changed here after the earthquake. Now we are aware that women have to be self-sufficient."

Competing for what traditionally was seen as a male activity in a region where (male) unemployment and underemployment was high, aspiring to have a career (particularly a *kaar*-related career) meant having to prove that women would be better than men. A starting point was to acknowledge that women were better students than men. Despite

¹⁷⁵ One year after my fieldwork, PaK witnessed the creation of its first medical colleges (one public and one private).

everybody agreeing with this statement, there was a noticeable discrepancy between male and female narratives regarding the number of years women spent in school. Mohammad Riaz, a Gulf migrant, told me that “*girls are better students than boys. They stay longer in school and many become teachers.*” Jameela, on the other hand, complained that “*here, when women are in 9th grade the talks start for marriage. This is something that is keeping women from progressing.*”¹⁷⁶ There was also a male/female discrepancy in how far from home women could go for schooling. Ali Naqvi told me that girls were more educated than boys and that “*boys are sent to Rawalpindi and degenerate, while girls are more responsible and go for higher studies. Girls come back and teach or work for NGOs if families allow it.*” The counter-narrative, of which Akram Bibi’s comment was representative, was that “*girls are not educated beyond a certain time for there is a lot of travelling.*”

Although in some cases women did manage to migrate temporarily to urban centres in Pakistan for further studies,¹⁷⁷ most women’s options were curtailed due to physical (im)mobility. Still, that did not prevent them from aspiring to have careers and trying to circumvent their physical immobility through distance learning,¹⁷⁸ or by setting up special arrangements to enhance ‘secluded’ mobility. Bashir told me of one: “*Schools in villages teach up to Matriculation. For college education boys and girls have to go to Bagh and Rawalakot. There is a [special] van that picks girls up in the morning and drops them back after college.*” Yet, it was rare for women to challenge directly classic patriarchal values, as illustrated by women’s choices of careers other than teaching. Papanek (1982: 200) mentions that the assumptions of the purdah system were still persistent in the early 1980s in Pakistan when women tried to enter the modern sector of the economy as “*most occupations either [grew] out of the demands of a purely female clientele or they [were] assimilated to traditional feminine role concepts*”. The same can be said of this region, as the vast majority of younger schooled women aspired to become teachers or better still, doctors.¹⁷⁹ With medicine and teaching as ‘honourable’ professions, women’s aspired role was still one of caring and rearing, an extension of their responsibility for social reproduction (Harris and Young, 1981).

¹⁷⁶ This observation might help explaining the change in Bagh district’s student enrolment: until grade eight there are more girls than boys enrolled in public schools, but from grade nine onwards the numbers switch (P&D AJK, 2009).

¹⁷⁷ There were a few women who were studying in Islamabad and living with relatives.

¹⁷⁸ Many women were enrolled in the Allama Iqbal Open University.

Even though a common narrative about the earthquake as an event that increased women's mobility developed in Chinati bazaar, its interpretation varied, depending on people's understanding and practices of women's seclusion and exclusion. These different interpretations gave way to different strategies. At one end of the spectrum, opponents of women's work outside the home developed a discourse linking post-earthquake mobility to a loosening of the region's morality, tried to reinforce physical segregation in public spaces, and actively protested to ban actors and *things* that the earthquake brought which challenged the 'moral values' of their society. All of this was done in an attempt to curtail women's mobility. At the other end of the spectrum, proponents of increasing women's access to work outside the home created a counter discourse based on risk and status. These opposing forces made use of the same event – the earthquake – to both narrow and widen the area for women's contestation of access to 'work' (*kaam*) and, indirectly, 'action' (*kaar*).

Conclusion

It is inevitable that a major event such as the earthquake should have an impact on the lives of women in a different way than it affects the lives of men. According to the narratives and discourses developed by the men of Chinati bazaar, the greatest change of all that had come about in the lives of women (according to the accounts of men) was in the arena of women's mobility and in their access to work outside the home. Their stories revealed, however, that this change had affected not just the women but also the men, in that it raised large questions about their society and their value systems. Some thought that their social system was endangered by these changes and that the very fabric of their society had been torn apart, while others believed that this change indicated that they were now well on their way to becoming 'modern'.

In this chapter I contextualised these male discourses on women's work, mobility and morality within local notions of work and labour, and conceptualised them using Arendt's theory of human activity. I argued that in this region most of women's activities were considered 'labour', only sometimes were they 'work', and very seldom were they considered 'action', and that there was a gendered struggle not only for 'work' (*kaam*), but also for 'action' (*kaar*). The earthquake as an event appeared to

¹⁷⁹ There were, of course, exceptions. Aneela, a young daughter of a jeep driver often said – when passing

widen this pre-existing area of struggle and, according to the storytellers of Chinati bazaar, was used by both men and women to renegotiate the relations between genders.

As in previous chapters, and in keeping with my main argument, I found that, even within this arena, changes that were attributed to the ‘earthquake event’ and the ‘assistance event’ – which brought with it a multitude of development agencies – actually pre-dated the earthquake. This was evident in the men’s stories of active life in the villages around Chinati bazaar before the earthquake. However, recent events allowed people to develop their arguments and to develop different strategies that made use of the earthquake to narrow and widen (respectively) the area for women’s contestation of access to ‘work’ and, indirectly, ‘action’. It also seems that the earthquake provided the opportunity to strengthen an on-going underlying struggle by women for access to and control of public space.

Chapter Seven

Out with the Old, In with the New: The Demise of Agriculture around Chinati Bazaar

Introduction

“Progress came after 1974; before [that] we were agriculturalists.” Ali Naqvi, elderly Syed.

As I started my fieldwork in Chinati bazaar and its surrounding villages one of the first things that struck me in the stories I heard was the apparent diminishing importance of farming as an occupation. This was surprising, largely because agriculture, be it subsistence, had always played a major role in people’s lives in this region. The decline of agriculture was not linked to a single factor or event. Instead, a series of factors were responsible for this, some of which had their origins in events that occurred more than four decades ago with the beginning of mass migration to the Gulf, while others were as recent as the 2005 earthquake. Yet, like the arenas of change that I discussed in the previous chapters, the earthquake played a key role in the demise of agriculture according to the storytellers of Chinati bazaar. Most stories of changes in farming patterns started with a reference to the ‘earthquake event’, and villagers would then go on to explain why they had stopped farming in its aftermath. They pointed out that the earthquake had caused many *chasmas* (streams) to either change their course or simply run dry, thereby making agriculture nearly impossible due to the lack of water.

In this chapter I examine these narratives in detail and look at the shifting trends in people’s way of thinking about agriculture in PaK, and at how farming practices changed in the villages surrounding Chinati bazaar after 2005. However, as in previous chapters, I also pay attention to and analyse the underlying sub-texts of these narratives, and listen attentively to their stories of everyday life in the region before the earthquake. These help me unveil, once again, the larger theme behind the disengagement with agriculture, namely the shift from a traditional self-sufficiency to a modern global interdependence. This, I argue, reflects a more continuous process of change that pre-dates the earthquake, but was highlighted in its aftermath.

The Demise of Agriculture

The assumption that farmers in this region had been dependent on watercourses to water their crops makes us believe that some form of irrigation was used in the fields, when, in fact, only 0.22% of farms, a minute percentage, used any method of artificial irrigation (GoAJK, 2000). Bagh District, like most of PaK was part of what Frederick Drew (1875) calls ‘the middle mountains’, situated in the Southwest of the Pir Panjal range which, similarly to northern Punjab, is known for its rainfed farming system, locally described as *barani* (rainfed).¹⁸⁰ This means that rarely was water used for irrigation, as crops survived due to rainwater, making them dependent on potentially erratic rainfall. This dependency made farming a risky occupation, seldom profitable, and therefore the association of *barani* areas to subsistence agriculture.

This region usually witnesses two rainy periods throughout the year, which translate into two rainfed cropping seasons: a winter season, where crops (known as *rabi*) are sown in early winter and harvested in late winter or early summer; and a summer season, with crops (known as *kharif*) sowed in early summer and harvested in late summer or early winter. Summer is the most important cropping season, with 84% of the total cropped area in Bagh District used for *kharif* crops, compared to only 15% used for *rabi* crops, with the remaining 1% being occupied by orchards (GoAJK, 2000). The most important *kharif* and *rabi* crops in this region are maize and wheat, respectively (see Table 11).

Table 11 – Share of different crops within cropped area in Bagh District (percentage)

	Maize (grain)	Wheat	Rice	Fodders	Vegetables	Others
Cropped area	78	15	1	4	–	1
<i>Kharif</i>	94	–	1	5	–	–
<i>Rabi</i>	–	95	–	2	1	2

Source: GoAJK, 2000.

At a first glance it appeared that most people used the earthquake and its impact on water availability as a way of thinking about the demise of agriculture. When probed deeper though, I noticed that water shortage was a crucial element in people’s lives beyond agrarian production: changes in watercourses had disrupted daily life. According to the 1998 Census (PCO, 1998), only 34.6% of PaK’s rural population had access to piped water, while more than 65% used to fetch water from communal sources

¹⁸⁰ From the Persian *baran* (rain), literally meaning “land watered by rain”.

before the earthquake. After the earthquake, about 1,641 water supply schemes were damaged throughout the region, drastically increasing the number of rural households dependent on communal sources. As some villages had more access to water than others, the ones with limited access devised mechanisms to share the limited availability of water through rationing. In Sarian the village committee decided that each house would get access to half an hour of water every 24 hours. This water was to be used only for cooking and drinking, with rainwater collected from the (new) tin roofs used for washing and laundry. For some houses hosting sometimes several households (and therefore numerous families) even this water was not enough for day-to-day life.

As throughout Pakistan “*inter-annual rainfall values varied significantly, often leading to successive patterns of floods and drought*” (GFDRR, 2011: 3). People had witnessed an alteration in weather conditions in recent years, although not necessarily decreasing the overall average precipitation figures. Still, precipitation patterns had changed, with rainfall becoming more erratic (both in summers and winters) and the region experiencing warmer summers and colder, drier winters. In the winter of 2009/10 the lack of precipitation and potential future drought was such that in January the then Prime Minister of PaK asked people to offer *Namaz-e-Istasqa* (prayer for rain), which was done in most cities and villages of PaK, including Chinati. Expressing a narrative of environmental change, villagers in Chinati associated the change in weather patterns to ‘climate change’ and ‘global warming’, concepts debated in the public arena of the bazaar. For instance, the Copenhagen Climate Conference of 2009, which was happening during my fieldwork, was actively discussed in the bazaar. Some justified this narrative by stating that due to the industrial revolution and the subsequent increase in pollution levels, rainfall was now more unpredictable and temperatures were getting higher. The unpredictability of rain had, then, a direct impact on agriculture in these *barani* areas. It is important at this point to clear our head from images of arid or semi-arid hills, receiving little or no rain, making it impossible for farmers to grow crops. One should not equate *barani*/rainfed with lack of water. In fact, most areas within PaK are actually considered the wettest in Pakistan (Hussain *et al*, 2009), with high levels of precipitation during both winters and summers, a humid sub-tropical climate averaging above 1,600 mm of annual precipitation, more than enough to grow most crops. The problematic of farming being *barani* in this region was not the quantity of rainfall, but its erraticism. It seemed then that the issue with water was not so much one of lack of

water, but more of water harvesting. While there were some NGOs involved in post-earthquake reconstruction of water tanks and dissemination of water harvesting techniques, its targeting was relatively small.

Despite being the more prominent factor in people's narratives of the demise of agriculture, water availability was not the only one. Another reason that most villagers mentioned was the diminishing size of landholdings, this being directly linked to land fragmentation (see Table 12). Due to high population growth and associated overpopulation, and the following of local Shari'ah inheritance laws, the size of farming plots had, in many places, reached a stage where agriculture was simply not profitable and was no longer sufficient to feed a family. According to Conway (2011:2) "*farms of less than 1 hectare [2.47 acres] and with few resources are usually unable to produce a surplus for sale and cannot provide enough work or substance for the family.*" Taking into consideration that the average household size in Bagh District was 7.4, this meant in fact that a plot which was initially small – the overall average plot size in Bagh District diminished from 2.7 acres in 1972 to 1.9 acres in 2000 (GoAJK, 1975; GoAJK, 2000) – became further divided into smaller plots, making it unsustainable to grow crops, especially staple foods such as maize, wheat or rice. For instance, in Sarian Hameed's grandfather owned 21 *kanals* of land; his father inherited seven out of which he inherited two (respectively, 2.625, 0.875, and 0.25 acres). Within these two *kanals*, Hameed still had to find space to make a house. The fact that Hameed (and many others) used *kanal* as a unit of measurement for agricultural land was evidence enough of how small plots were in this area. *Kanal* is used in Pakistan as a unit of land measurement for urban and not rural plots; in rural Punjab, the lowest unit of measurement is the *keela*, which is equivalent to one acre. The *kanal* is 1/8 of an acre, 1/20 of a hectare.

Table 12 – Number of Farms in Bagh District

Size of farm (acres)	1972		2000	
	Number	%	Number	%
Under 1.0	4,229	17	15,444	34
1.0 – 2.5	9,979	40	17,339	38
2.5 – 5.0	7,223	29	9,264	21
5.0 – 7.5	2,174	9	2,071	5
7.5 – 12.5	1,052	4	851	2
12.5 – 25.0	125	1	180	*
25.0 – 40.0	10	*	20	*
Above 40.0	9	*		*
TOTAL	24,801	100	45,169	100

Source: GoAJK, 1975; 2000.

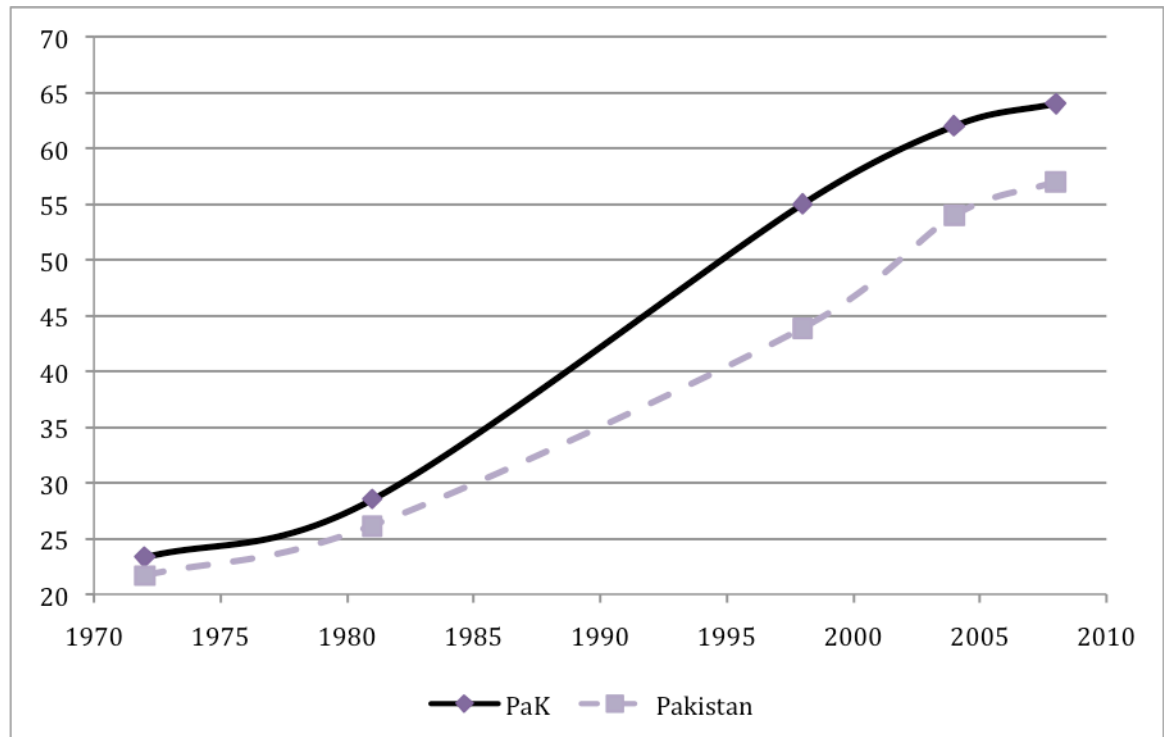
A third factor was linked to the terrain, i.e., hilly, making it hard to work the land. The land itself, i.e. the soil, was agriculturally very good. Almas and Saeed's (2000) study of the fertility status of agricultural land in PaK showed that this region was mostly composed of loamy soils, with adequate organic matter, ideal range of pH level, and available content of phosphorus and potassium – some of the best agricultural soils in South Asia. Due to the size and relief of agricultural plots, most of the work had to be done manually, as there was limited scope for mechanisation. According to the latest agricultural survey (GoAJK, 2000) in Bagh District only 7% of farms used tractors and 11% used both tractors and draught animals, with the remaining 82% making use of only draught animals. Plots needed to be first levelled, which meant the need for terracing. The vast majority of terraces in the villages surrounding Chinati were built more than 50 years ago. Most villagers said that they did upkeep their terraces, which took one to four men from a few hours to about five days annually. While usually men stated they kept them to prevent land loss and landslides (through water seepage), women mentioned that terraces were worth keeping to provide a platform to grow fodder for animals, showing men's responsibility for keeping the land and women's for keeping livestock. Terracing was one of the hardest agricultural chores that I witnessed, as it involved manually building (or rebuilding) a wall with small boulders in a steep hill and then compacting the land. When terraces became old they started to crumble and boulders from the wall fell downhill. This meant that they had to be carried up the hill, through narrow and steep goat paths or even from where there were no paths at all. Terracing also needed to be done when building a house; in fact it was obligatory in the new building codes to access government compensation. Terracing, therefore, involved hard labour and most families depended on strong, healthy males to upkeep them. Unfortunately, many of these strong healthy males were either absent – being migrants – or, the younger ones, simply had started to decline doing a task that they consider below their potential, as after so many years of schooling they aspired to 'work' and not 'labour'.

This brings me to two other factors which not only played an important role in relegating farming to a less-preferred occupation within society, but became over time the main reasons for the diminishing importance of agriculture in people's lives: migration and education. What initially started as an economic strategy to complement

barani agriculture,¹⁸¹ soon became one of the main economic activities and one of the most sought after. Once a migrant became stable in his job in the Gulf, not only was his salary enough to send remittances back home, but it was sometimes also enough for other members of the household not to work. Migration, and particularly Gulf migration, had divested the region of manpower as well as it had divested the will of men to *be* manpower in their own land. A complementary factor interlinked with migration was the increase of education levels in PaK. Since the 1970s literacy figures in most of PaK were substantially above the rest of Pakistan (Figure 9). Like migration, education was not a novelty although its increase had, to a large extent, replicated the increase in migration patterns. Migration (and remittances) had a direct impact on education. Education was seen by many as a form of investment, social mobility and status, by ensuring the next generations would be more educated and therefore become more than farmers. The increase in education levels was not only quantitative, it was qualitative too: while most of the young adult population was illiterate around Partition, the 1950s and 1960s saw an increase in primary education enrolment, the 1970s and 1980s an increase in secondary education, and more recently, from the late 1990s onwards, higher education. As Ali Naqvi told me, “*a generation ago, when parents were illiterate, they only wanted their children to get some shahoor [consciousness]. Now parents prepare their children to become doctors, engineers, CSP [Civil Service of Pakistan] officers, etc.*”

¹⁸¹ Often more by need than choice.

Figure 9 – Literacy Rate in Pakistan-administered Kashmir and Pakistan (percentage)



Source: AEPAM, 2006; 2010; P&D AJK, 1980; 1990; 2009; PCO, 1998.

On the back of this education boom, the earthquake made quite an impact; more than half of deaths and injuries were of schoolchildren, as they were inside school buildings during that Saturday morning.¹⁸² But while as an event the earthquake had a negative impact on education, in the aftermath of the earthquake – albeit slow – the region saw an increase in school institutions,¹⁸³ both public and private, as well as an increased demand for better education. Indirectly, the earthquake had a role to play in the aspirations of the younger generations, with more and more people deciding that education and a job outside the village was the way forward, a way of avoiding risks, such as the risky business of *barani* agriculture. Yet, job opportunities within the region were still limited and government interventions had not kept up with the rising levels of education. Junaid, a bus driver whom I met at the bazaar's *adda*, complained that “*they [government] don't give us any opportunities for employment, and the education level here is above Pakistan. Whoever wants to make it, has to go to Pakistan or abroad.*” State, donor and NGO post-earthquake livelihood programmes focused mostly on agricultural projects and some vocational training (often sewing for women and masonry for men) together with microcredit projects.¹⁸⁴ The problem was that, like

¹⁸² This can be seen in Figure 9, where the literacy rate curve ‘slowed down’ from 2005 to 2008.

¹⁸³ Including the creation of the first medical colleges (one public and one private) in PaK.

¹⁸⁴ Along with targeted cash grants to poorer families.

Mirpur since the 1980s, the market-based economy had reached an over-capacity and Bagh District had “*an excess of entrepreneurs as compared with opportunities to make money*” (Ballard, 1983: 127). Despite the motto of ‘*Building Back Better*’, development agencies ‘built back the same’. As Bashir lamented in one of our final conversations, “*it’s so difficult to find jobs these days; so we mostly send our children abroad, just like before the earthquake.*”

All these factors contributed over time to a shift in the way people thought about agriculture in PaK, visible in a dualistic narrative of farming as something traditional and not modern, a type of ‘labour’ and not ‘work’, and an activity increasingly done by the women of the house and not the men. It was also connected to the notion that, despite food self-sufficiency still being considered honourable, one could attain greater honour and status by producing¹⁸⁵ abroad and consuming at home.

From Tradition to Modernity

Figure 10 – “Chemical fertiliser makes the land barren”, Lok Sanjh Foundation



Sitting under the shade of a kahu tree on the perch of his house, after a day’s work at the Bagh court, advocate Ali Naqvi and I were sipping a cup of tea and discussing changes in PaK. Looking down the valley, through the dark green of the forested areas, the bright green of pastures, and the light green of the maize fields,¹⁸⁶ populated by the blue, orange, red and silver newly built roofs, Ali Naqvi started his description of what had changed over time by saying “*progress came after 1974; before [that] we were agriculturalists.*” The event he was referring to was the beginning of the mass migration to the Gulf, which dramatically changed the working patterns of this area.

¹⁸⁵ In the sense of capital accumulation.

¹⁸⁶ Itself an indication of nitrogen deficiency.

Able-bodied men, in numbers much higher than ever before, left the fields to go abroad, to serve initially in the armies and eventually in the houses, hotels and restaurants of other rulers. In the past they had been mercenaries, builders, and caterers to the British in the subcontinent, now they did the same in the Arabian Peninsula. There were some differences between then and now (more precisely, before Partition and post 1970s): then, there were few migrating (most of the soldiers in the British Raj from this region were from the other side of the valley, the Rawalakot side), and remittances were rare – their pay was so little that few managed to save enough to send back home. Then, they were close enough to return to their lands when it was time to sow and harvest. Azfar Khan, a retired cook from Sarian said that *“farming here was seasonal, depending on rains. We made sure we left everything when the rains came and started ploughing. We made sure to utilise the land to the maximum.”* Now, almost every house had someone abroad¹⁸⁷ and access to remittances was virtually ubiquitous. Now, only those who stayed worked on the land – and not all of those who stayed did that.

With reference to Ali Naqvi’s comment, what struck me was the clear differentiation, in fact opposition, of progress to agriculture. In other words, for him, like for many others in this region, farming in PaK was something linked to the past and, therefore, not progressive. He used the word ‘agriculturalist’, not as a technical term for an expert on agriculture, but in the way it was used under the British Raj for agricultural castes, to describe people whose livelihoods depended on agriculture. He was not the only one not to classify his forefathers as farmers (*kissan*) and himself as landowner (*zamindar*). In PaK, approximately 86% of rural households owned land (P&D AJK, 2008), in stark contrast to 37% in Pakistan (GoAJK, 2000). Considering oneself a *zamindar* went beyond the simple fact of owning land, a key resource throughout the sub-continent. It puts one within what many authors identify as a higher class since the time of Mughal rule (Ahmad, 1977; Habib, 1999). Especially in Pakistani Punjab, the neighbouring province with which many Poonchis had most linkages with, the title of *zamindar* was strongly correlated to political and socio-economic power. As everywhere else in South Asia, more than working the land what mattered most was owning the land.

In this region, farming was seen not only as an ‘old’ occupation, but also as an outdated one. Farming tools were outdated if we compared them to the tools used in more modern professions. While “agriculturalists” used hoes, sickles and ploughs, teachers

¹⁸⁷ ‘Abroad’ including Pakistan.

and shopkeepers used ‘modern tools’, such as books and mobile phones. Even farming calendars were old. The calendar used for farming practices, commonly known as the ‘local calendar’, by which farming activities were planned and implemented, was the Nanakshahi calendar, i.e., the Sikh calendar (see Table 13). This was related to the fact that in this region most landlords pre-Partition were Sikh and as such their vernacular was the one used for farming activities – which has lasted until today.

Table 13 – Farming Calendar

Gregorian Calendar	Local Calendar		Nanakshahi Calendar	
	Pahari	Days	Punjabi	Days
December – January	Pôh	30	Pôh	30
January – February	Maagh	29	Maagh	30
February – March	Phaagan	30	Phagun	30/31
March – April	Chait	30	Chait	31
April – May	Besaakh	31	Vaisakh	31
May – June	Jaith	32	Jaith	31
June – July	Haar	31	Haarh	31
July – August	Saawan	32	Saawan	31
August – September	Bhadon	31	Bhadon	30
September – October	Asooj	30	Assu	30
October – November	Katak	30	Katak	30
November – December	Maghar	30	Maghar	30

While people in many parts of Pakistan have modernised their agriculture, particularly since the event of the Green Revolution in the late 1960s, most landowners in PaK have not. In contrast to the use of new technologies and new tools on the other side of the Jhelum river¹⁸⁸, most landowners in PaK still farm as their forefathers did. Not only do they use limited amounts of inorganic fertiliser and no pesticides (see Table 14), but they also use draught animals when preparing the fields for sowing instead of tractors. Consequently ploughing was severely affected by the 2005 earthquake, as many animals died. It left many landowners with one or no livestock, when they needed two to pull a plough. The end result was that many fields were left unploughed, mostly those that tractors could not reach, i.e., the steeper ones further from roads. As mechanisation increased in large parts of Pakistan (especially in the neighbouring Punjab), in PaK agriculture still mostly involved manual labour. One still must bear in mind that there were other reasons for the limited use of tractors (and other forms of mechanisation), namely relief and the small size of landholdings. Yet, just across in northern Punjab, where agriculture is similarly rainfed, done in small landholdings in hilly terrain, and

¹⁸⁸ Pakistan.

where a large number of men migrate to the Gulf or enlist in the army, people still modernised farming.

Table 14 – Farms Reporting Use of Inorganic Fertilisers and Pesticides (percentage)

Year	Fertiliser			Plant Protection		
	Bagh District	PaK	Pakistan	Bagh District	PaK	Pakistan
1972	11	18	52	0	0	22
2000	25	37	75	0.04	0.24	27

Source: GoAJK, 1975; 2000.

In this region though, the continuous lack of investment in agriculture combined with the diminishing size of landholdings meant that farming became over time considerably unprofitable, to the extent that even unskilled migrant labourers abroad earned wages higher than the income generated by their families in traditional agriculture. Rather than off-farm employment complementing families' incomes, as it was the case until the 1970s, from this period onwards the bulk of family income was generated by off-farm employment, as much as 70% according to one estimate (Fida, 1991, in: FAO, 2003). Since then, most households in this region started considering farming neither as subsistence nor as fulltime, but as a complementing activity. Similar to Ferguson's (1999: 84) urban workers' conceptions of town and country using local versions of "*modernist metanarratives of social science*", here too the myth of modernisation theory linked smallholder subsistence agriculture to notions of 'developing', 'traditional', 'rural', and 'poor'. Curiously, while PaK had the smallest landholdings compared to other Pakistani territories, its poverty levels were much lower.¹⁸⁹ Taking into consideration that the vast majority of the population of PaK lived in rural areas, as seen by an 88:12 rural/urban ratio (Bagh District had a 94:6 ratio), compared to Pakistan's 67:33 (PCO, 1998), rural poverty levels in PaK were half or less than any other Pakistani territory before the earthquake (Table 15).

Table 15 – Poverty Incidence (percentage)

	Urban	Rural
Pakistan-administered Kashmir	14.5	15.6
Balochistan	28.4	24.6
Khyber Pukhtunkhwa	31.2	44.3
Punjab	26.5	32.4
Sindh	19.0	29.2
Gilgit-Baltistan	22.6	36.5
Federally Administered Tribal Areas	22.6	44.5

Source: Federal Bureau of Statistics, 2001

¹⁸⁹ No doubt due to non-farm work and remittances.

When probed deeper, these notions of farming as the antithesis of being modern appeared even more in the younger generations' discourse. Young people often substantiated their avoidance of being involved in agrarian production with the fact that agriculture gave little or no profits, that it was something that required lengthy investment in terms of time and physical labour, as opposed to a job with regular monthly returns. Having been brought up after the 1970s' migration boom, younger generations were more educated than previous generations and thus had higher aspirations. For them, farming was 'here', at home, and not farming was 'there', outside the house, preferably abroad. They equated working on the land with no access to the Gulf (or Pakistan's urban centres), no remittances, and stagnation. They saw farmers as *kissan*, not *zamindar* and they yearned to be in the tertiary sector, not the primary. They felt that their education was the passport to modern, not traditional, work. They wanted to be teachers, doctors, engineers, civil servants, migrants, and traders, not farmers. For them farming was not a business; sometimes it was not even 'work', it was 'labour'.

From Work to Labour

As seen in the previous chapter, over time there was a paradigm shift in how people in this region viewed agricultural work. While older generations talked about farming as work (*kaam*), younger ones that had migrated or had higher levels of education saw farming as labour (*mazdoori*). Some did not even consider agriculture to be a profession, seeing it as restricted to the house and as a subsistence activity as a result of the smallness of landholdings. It was especially the youth as a group who challenged the concept of farming as work. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the placing of 'work' and 'labour' (in an Arendtian sense) is susceptible to historical transformations. Access to Gulf migration and increase in levels of education opened up new areas of struggle and renegotiation for the classification, promotion and demotion of different human activities. Particularly in the case of labour and work, jobs were not permanently confined to one or another activity. Agriculture, which used to be mainly classified as work, had been 'demoted' by many to labour over time, due to access to new livelihood opportunities, the unprofitability of the occupation, and the shift in actors – from

owning males to females and hired labour. For many agriculture was labour: a never-ending pursuit yielding nothing permanent and characterised by non-freedom.¹⁹⁰

They prescribed agrarian production therefore to labouring groups, i.e., *mazdoors*, the ones who migrated to PaK in search of labour (mostly from KP), lower-ranked *biraderis* who always had worked the land for higher-ranked *biraderis* (regardless of owning themselves land), poorer people who did not get access to migration, and, to a certain extent, women. This shift was witnessed by Ballard (1983: 127) in Mirpur where returned migrants “*seek to avoid any kind of contact with agriculture, regarding it as far below their dignity.*” Although the case in Chinati was not as extreme as Mirpur still, as Manshaat said¹⁹¹ “*agriculture is below our status.*” It is worth remembering that the two words for agricultural work, *kaam* and *mazdoori*, also entailed ownership: the former used when someone worked in his own land and the latter when someone worked in someone else’s land. Farming itself entailed the notion of private ownership, as seen by the words used for it here – *kheti bari* (from *khet* – field and *bar* – fence). Although I say that farming shifted from being seen as work to being seen as labour, this does not mean that farming changed from being *kaam* to being *mazdoori* for everybody. For instance, people who owned no land but worked on others’ referred to agricultural work as *mazdoori*, while some members of the Raja *biraderi*, who owned land *and* worked on others’ referred to it as *kaam*. The rationale was that they worked (*kaam*) in their own fields and farming was their major occupation, which they extended to other fields.

A good example of the shifting nature of the perception of agricultural work in the region could be seen during the month of *Asooj*. When farming was the main occupation in PaK, *Asooj* was the busiest time of the year. “*If someone dies in Asooj, put him in a trunk and bury him later*” was a popular saying in this area. As it coincided with maize harvesting, some older people said that *Asooj* was the name for both maize harvesting as well as grass cutting, and associated it with the autumn harvest. However, others believed that there was no relation per se, that these two events just happened to coexist time-wise, and *Asooj* was only the name for the practice of communal grass cutting. Regardless of being linked to maize harvesting or not, *Asooj* had always had a feel of a harvesting festival (some informants even compared it to *Basant* in Punjab). In

¹⁹⁰ Many of my informants talked about being ‘stuck to the land’.

¹⁹¹ See section two of Chapter Six.

the old days, every family would invite people from their village and even other surrounding villages to cut the grass on the family's parcel of land. This seemed to be a romanticised view of *Asooj*, as we cannot ignore that there were at the time strong power hierarchies and commensality embedded in the language of *biraderi*. The wealthier ones would offer a simple lunch and an elaborate dinner and everybody, men and women, children and old, would cut the grass together. Once they would finish, they would move on to the next family landholding, eventually cutting the grass in every family plot. This grass was then used both to feed livestock and smallstock over the winter, and to thatch roofs.

Today, and especially after the earthquake, *Asooj* was done by others, mostly Pukhtoons who moved to the region searching for work during post-earthquake reconstruction. Yet, the earthquake was not the decisive factor in these new labour arrangements during *Asooj*. As more and more males started migrating to urban centres and abroad since the 1970s, there was a dearth of manpower within many families during this month. This created a class-like cleavage between families with access to labour and access to capital (through remittances) with which they could hire such labour. Usually a family with a diminished work force was a family whose manpower had migrated and who, therefore, had access to capital to hire labour from families with more manpower because its men had not migrated. Generally family members would still cut the grass of their own plots aided by relatives from within the village, but the assistance across *biraderis* was less, as some members now had the capital to hire labour. The earthquake brought with it a new group of labourers – the Pukhtoons – who effectively stopped even the need for inter-family assistance, especially in less poor families. It also reinforced the notion that *Asooj* was not 'work', it was 'labour' and as such labourers did it.

Asooj and many other farming activities – from ploughing to harvesting – were often marked by undertones of caste and class differentiations. Some higher-ranked *biraderis*, such as the Syeds and Kianis, mentioned customary agreements between their *biraderis* and lower-ranked ones, where the former traditionally employed the latter as labour force to work their lands, as farming – one Syed informant said – was not their occupation. In many instances remittances from Gulf migration enabled many families – including from lower-ranked *biraderis* – to move up the social scale, to a position where they could now physically disengage from farming by hiring labour to work their

lands. Many informants often mentioned that only poor people were farmers (*kissan*), unlike those who migrated or were able to acquire jobs in the formal economy. The increase of cheaper labour available post-earthquake – with the arrival of Pakhtoon *mazdoors* – not only affected at times customary agreements, with higher-ranked *biraderis* now preferring to hire these to the detriment of lower-ranked *biraderis*, but it also allowed more families to start hiring labour to farm their lands. Still, many households depended on their *khandan* to either help them farm their lands or to employ them to farm their extended families' land, especially during ploughing and harvesting.

So, on the one hand, because their healthy males moved abroad (to Pakistani urban centres or to the Gulf), many families lost manpower. On the other hand, as in other migratory societies (Gardner, 1995), they gained capital to hire manpower to substitute their labour loss, fittingly improving their stakes (and status) at being identified as landowners and not landworkers or farmers. A relation developed between work and location, with people's activities abroad being associated with 'work', and those at home with 'labour'.¹⁹² When migrants returned and decided to work, most often they would get involved in trade by opening a shop in the nearest bazaar or by starting a distributing company. In other words, returned migrants engaged in the tertiary sector. As for the younger generation, their aspirations were higher. They tried their best to acquire as much education as possible in order to access jobs in the tertiary sector, preferably abroad or in the urban centres. These shifts did not, however, mean that everybody stopped farming in the region, although there was a decrease of production in most crops (Table 16). There were many families who, either because they could not access jobs outside farming or because their landholdings were large enough to make agriculture profitable, were still engaged in agrarian production. Finally, what many families did was to bring farming into the house, through their women.

Table 16 – Farms Reporting Crops in Bagh District (percentage)

Year	Maize	Wheat	Rice	Oilseeds	Fodder	Vegetables
1972	99	50	36	25	1	1
2000	92	25	31	*	6	1

Source: GoAJK, 1975; 2000.

¹⁹² In fact, according to the work they do and the ownership of the means of production, they work or labour at home and work or labour abroad (they own their land and therefore *work* the land, and often are hired to work abroad and therefore are *labourers*).

From Men to Women

Figure 11 – “The production and protection of local seeds has been the traditional duty of female farmers”, Lok Sanjh Foundation



The importance of women in agrarian production was to a certain extent like beauty – it lay in the eyes of the beholder. When talking to most men, the majority disregarded and devalued women’s role, summarily relegating them to the sphere of the house, as involved in ‘kitchen gardens’.¹⁹³ When talking to women, they not only brought forth the significance they attributed to these kitchen gardens, but also their role within many other agricultural activities – and how their importance changed over time. When men started migrating in significant numbers, the demographics of the region started tilting towards women, more specifically the young, healthy population. This migration created a decline of the male labour force in the region, which meant a decline in farming. The increase in cash income from migration further marginalised farming and, with women becoming the main actors in the region’s agrarian production, further marginalised the value of women’s work. The negative impact of migration and remittances on agricultural production, more an exception than a rule worldwide, was not unique to this part of PaK, as Ballard’s (1983) study of Mirpur shows, nor confined to PaK alone. For instance, in Palestine Moors (1995: 29) also noticed that women’s labour was less valued due to “*the greater centrality of male wage labour and cash*

¹⁹³ Not in the French sense of *potager*, but more like a vegetable patch.

income for the livelihood of the households and the marginalisation of agriculture, largely directed towards subsistence and defined as women's work."

The impact of male migration in shifting the gendered nature of agrarian production towards a greater female role was recorded in a FAO study before the earthquake (2003: 3), which states that this migration "*resulted in crop farming and livestock raising and management becoming increasingly women's domain.*" In this consultation, FAO reports a senior officer within the region's Department of Agriculture stating that in about 90% of households livestock rearing was solely a woman's job. The same study acknowledges women playing a more significant role in previously male-dominated activities – such as harvesting, cleaning and storage of major crops, namely wheat, maize, and fodder – as well as the importance of the vegetable gardens as a source of nutrients and even income for many families, with women being in charge of these in 85% of households. Yet, as farming was mostly seen as the production of staple crops – namely cereals – with the key activities being ploughing, sowing and harvesting, in the villages surrounding Chinati bazaar most men and women stated that farming was a man's job and that women's role in agrarian production was limited to kitchen gardens.

Within the decline of agriculture in this region many people at the bazaar mentioned not only a decline in produce of the main crops, namely cereals and rice, but also in variety, i.e., type of crops. This picture was more complex than it seemed, as according to the various agricultural censuses the area under cultivation for maize, wheat and rice across the region as a whole did not change with the onset of mass migration – but it drastically decreased for minor cereals, such as pearl millet and sorghum – and the number of farms involved decreased. One explanation was related to the fact that even with major crops men were not involved in all stages of production, being mostly involved with ploughing the fields, sowing (together with women), harvesting and sometimes processing. Women (and sometimes children) were then responsible for 'rearing' the crops, what they called *palna*.¹⁹⁴ This meant that men were only needed during two moments: ploughing and harvesting. As not all men migrated to the Gulf,¹⁹⁵ non-migrants and men who had migrated to urban areas of Pakistan who could manage to come for these two times of the year often covered for this missing manpower. Weeding, pest management and all daily agricultural activities were done, as always, by

¹⁹⁴ *Palna* was also used when rearing a child or a domestic animal.

the women. Men were mostly involved with the beginning and the end of farming, i.e., the main visible moments of a crop entering and leaving the land (ploughing, sowing, harvesting), as well as in activities linking the land to the outside world (buying the seeds, taking the harvested grain to the mill, taking the flour to the market). Women's role could pass by ignored, as their actions were ingrained in 'everyday farming'. Men were also busy with energetic food (cereals and rice), as opposed to women who grew nutritious food (vegetables, protein, and vitamins). There was a similar pattern with livestock rearing, that is, men were involved in buying and selling (or killing) animals, but women (and sometimes children) were in charge of rearing. The role of men as providers (not only as breadwinners, but as suppliers) and women as rearers was one that suited existing social norms, where women's mobility was limited to the house.¹⁹⁶

Another change that migration brought about was an increase in women's decision-making within the house. As I mentioned in the previous chapters, as the male heads of many households migrated, they often left their wives in charge of the household, and as such in charge of the *economy*.¹⁹⁷ Women felt an increase in decision-making power over some matters, including several that they already managed, for example, what to feed to whom (household members and guests) and what to grow. But migration brought not only an increase in decision-making power, but also an increased budget through remittances. Women could now decide if it was worth investing in dairy (a cow or a buffalo), chicken, in certain seeds, or on education. Again, this is a simplified version, as many households lived together and women's decision-making abilities within families were determined by their relative power vis-à-vis other household members, especially their husbands and in-laws. Still, not only did women gain more power in deciding what to grow, but also in what not to grow. With remittances, women started making food choices based on taste and functionality, a luxury that they did not have before migration. For instance, women started mixing vegetables at the table, that is, consuming both local and market vegetables as local varieties were often considered sour. They started consuming more wheat flour when making *rotis*, rather than maize flour, as flour *rotis* were easier and faster to make and were better digested than maize

¹⁹⁵ Despite the significance of the Gulf migration and the vast number of migrants, one must not forget that these were a large minority within the population.

¹⁹⁶ The house in this context being more than just the physical structure, i.e. the *home*, with one's fields being considered part of it.

¹⁹⁷ Literally, 'household management'.

rotis.¹⁹⁸ And post-earthquake they started eating sliced bread for breakfast, especially when they had guests.

With the earthquake, as mentioned before, agriculture came to a halt, at least in the first months after it. One of the biggest impacts of the earthquake was the death of many animals and the loss of draught power and milk. In the following years, some of the NGOs working in the area tried to ‘reinvent’ agriculture by especially targeting female farmers (see Figure 11) and their main farming activities, namely animal rearing and kitchen gardens. Two NGOs in particular ‘helped’ people improve their agricultural practices and gain access to inputs in some of these villages, NRSP and Lok Sanjh. They provided information on accessing free or cheap seeds and fertilisers (with Lok Sanjh promoting a more organic and less conventional agriculture – see Figure 10), trained female farmers on more efficient farming methods for vegetable production, and subsidised or provided credit for the purchase of animals (chicken, goats and cows). As Rehana, a Kiani from Hothala said, “*Until 10 years ago everybody used to grow maize and vegetables, but the new generation stopped [farming]. Now after the earthquake the NGOs started encouraging them to return to subsistence farming.*” The combination of smaller agricultural plots, male migration and access to remittances, availability of market food (namely wheat), and the post-earthquake assistance helped bring agriculture into the sphere of the house, making farming more of a household chore. Recently, creeping inflation intensified the importance of homegrown food as a way of reducing costs in most households throughout PaK, irrespective of wealth. Several development agencies – particularly those involved in agricultural projects – used this food insecurity to advocate a discourse of self-sufficiency as a ‘good’ livelihood approach (see Figure 12), not only to make sure households were not food deficient but to incorporate notions of a healthier diet and a more frugal life, a ‘simple life’.

¹⁹⁸ For the past decade or so, the importance of maize shifted in most households from being a human staple to animal feed.

Figure 12 – “Self-sufficiency in food production at the household level is an important need of the time”, Lok Sanjh Foundation



From Production to Consumption

“The Gulf changed our food pattern. In the old days food [consisted of] milk, yoghurt and butter, plus herbs with rock salt and green chillies: chutney, lassi, curry, makkan roti. When we grew wheat it was for cattle feed – not harvested, just cut. Meat was desi chicken; [it took] 5 years to grow, hard to cook. We didn’t boil milk, just let it curd. Dessert, considered a delicacy, was a sweet pancake [made with] butter, milk, egg, and sugar. To entertain guests you’d give them pancake. Guests would pop in, and after gup-chup and chai someone would send a kid running after a chicken. Very few people used to drink tea – if you did, you’d often do it without milk. From the 1970s onwards eating patterns changed – masalas, desi ghee, industrial chicken, Milk Pak, Wheatabix, wheat roti. Now a lot of people don’t exercise, and have heart and blood pressure infirmities.”

Sardar Zulfiqar, retired artist from Rawalakot.

Despite being in close contact with Punjab for hundreds of years and having migrated to many of the main urban cities of the British Raj, working not only as soldiers but also as servants and cooks, people in this region did not eat Pakistani/Punjabi food until the mid 1970s. From then onwards, however, remittances brought people a new purchasing power which quickly created demand for new foods throughout the region. A member

of the Raja *biraderi* told me how he brought this new food to PaK. In the early 1970s he used to work as a cook in Karachi and later on as a caterer in Kuwait. One day a migrant with “*a bit more money to spend*” asked him if he could cook and cater for his daughter’s wedding. He decided to make *biryani* and other *desi* dishes; people liked it so much that they asked for the recipes. Since then, he said, everybody started eating Pakistani food. Although slightly exaggerated, this anecdote contained the ‘secret ingredient’ which did not exist in the previous centuries of contact with Punjab – due to the Gulf migration there was now a sizeable number of households that could afford the spices, wheat and sugary desserts that were once considered a luxury for the very rich.

Since then, many new ingredients, foods, and recipes arrived in PaK. From the *masalas* that increased the spiciness of local cuisine, to the wheat flour that made *rotis* fast to prepare and easy to digest, the ready-mix custard packets which were now the main dessert dish, the *biryanis* served in every wedding, the sliced bread for breakfast that appeared post-earthquake, PaK cuisine has been radically changed. Saadia, a schoolteacher at one of the private schools at the bazaar, commented that “*when my brother migrated, we were able to go more often to town. In town there are hotels and we like food there.*” Yet, not everybody liked this food invasion; I often heard negative comments from the older generation about this synthetic, plastic, fast food – as opposed to the organic, healthy local food. Many of these comments were also linked to the concept of taste, with migrants saying tastes had become more refined, while older people – particularly from higher status groups – questioning the quality, both nutritious and taste, of the new cuisine.¹⁹⁹ The clash of tastes was also, to a large extent, a struggle for social mobility (see Bourdieu, 2000). Food was not the only thing that was consumed differently since the migration boom. Energy also started to be consumed – in bottles. As the Forestry Department started a reforestation campaign in the 1980s, roads started being built and villages electrified. People started using less firewood particularly since the 1990s, with gas cylinders becoming relatively cheap. Recently, though, with increasing inflation many people reverted to burning wood for cooking again.²⁰⁰

Apart from food and energy, many more things started to be utilised. Some of the first were electronic goods, often directly from the Gulf – the ubiquitous refrigerator, which

¹⁹⁹ As they did with the aesthetics of the coloured roofs.

²⁰⁰ In fact gas cylinders could be used as an indicator of wealth in this region.

in many houses was not connected to the electricity supply, nor was it used as a refrigerator,²⁰¹ the satellite dishes, the cassette players, the electronic alarm clocks, and the gold wristwatch, a mobile symbol of the Gulf migrant. These objects were more than just objects; they were symbols of status. They were not only valued for their use, but sometimes more for what they represented. Recently, after the earthquake, people started using tables and chairs to eat at. These items were not new, but often were only used when guests were around. Otherwise people usually just ate sitting on the floor around the stove in the kitchen. While this still happened throughout the vast majority of houses in this area for breakfast, many people started using furniture usually reserved for guests for themselves. And, as seen in chapter five, also after the earthquake the well-to-do households started building new roofs. Finally, for a long time people had been investing in education, not just quantity-wise, but quality-wise too. Of late, within this educational investment there was special preference for private schooling, which taught ‘good’ English and with extra-curricular activities. Ultimately, if someone in PaK did not want to produce food, there were not many more options of employment, except, of course, consumption-based jobs.

From Kashmiri to Pakistani Dependency

“People here used to work in agriculture. We used to grow maize, homemade chicken; maize and vegetables were even exported to Pakistan. Now it’s the other way around, everything is linked to Punjab, there’s nothing here – people don’t work here, there’s no opportunity.” Ali, bank manager at the bazaar.

Pakistan-administered Kashmir and particularly what used to be the state of Poonch always had stronger links to Punjab than to the Kashmir Valley. Before Partition it would take people one day to reach Rawalpindi by foot, as compared to four days to reach Srinagar. Most of the migration during the British Raj was mainly towards Punjab.²⁰² The languages spoken in this region, Pahari and Poonchi, are more closely related to Punjabi than Kashmiri. The Poonch Revolt, which sparked the first Indo-Pakistani conflict and the division of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, started in this area and was considerably assisted by people from the other side of the Jhelum river in

²⁰¹ Often padlocked, in a way showing that it is an important object, worth protecting.

Pakistan. When this part of the old State of Jammu and Kashmir came to be administered by Pakistan, the people of PaK relinquished their ability to independently dictate foreign policy, create their own law, or print their own currency. In other words, they became dependent on Pakistan.²⁰³ While in the first decades post-Partition people in this region continued to be self-sufficient, this self-sufficiency was largely based on attaining basic needs while having limited wants. The older generations often mentioned how generally poverty would cut across *biraderis* and that the definition of poverty changed over time and the bar was raised higher, so that some people who were now considered poor would have not been so five decades ago.

With the migration boom to the Gulf countries there was primarily a shift in cereal consumption, when people started consuming less maize flour and more wheat flour. As PaK did not have the most suitable conditions to produce wheat at this scale it had to come from outside PaK, more precisely from the breadbasket of Pakistan, Punjab. As people's incomes rose, their appetite for more elaborate foods also increased, many of which were rice-based, which again had to be imported from Pakistan. Following the energy-rich food imports came the nutrient-rich imports, namely vegetables and legumes and – reflecting a worldwide trend, whereby when incomes increase, sugar and fat consumption increases – sugar and *desi ghee*. With the increase in infrastructure, namely roads and electricity, the availability of these products became omnipresent and relatively affordable. As farming started to diminish soon many of these products became not only a want, but also a need. This need was not entirely generated by Pakistanis or Punjabis,²⁰⁴ as many of the traders were in fact from this region.

The different Pakistani governments also played a role in this dependency. Like in Mirpur, where the stagnation of its economy had “*been systematically under-developed as a consequence of policy decisions taken by governments located elsewhere, to whom the interests of the local population have been of little importance*” (Ballard, 1983: 128), this region's economy was also not of importance for Pakistani policy-makers. If before 1947 this region was ‘underdeveloped’ because of being on the periphery of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, since then it has become a periphery of the Pakistani

²⁰² Including recruitment to the Indian Army, as they were considered ‘Punjabi Mussulmans’.

²⁰³ Regardless of willingness to do so.

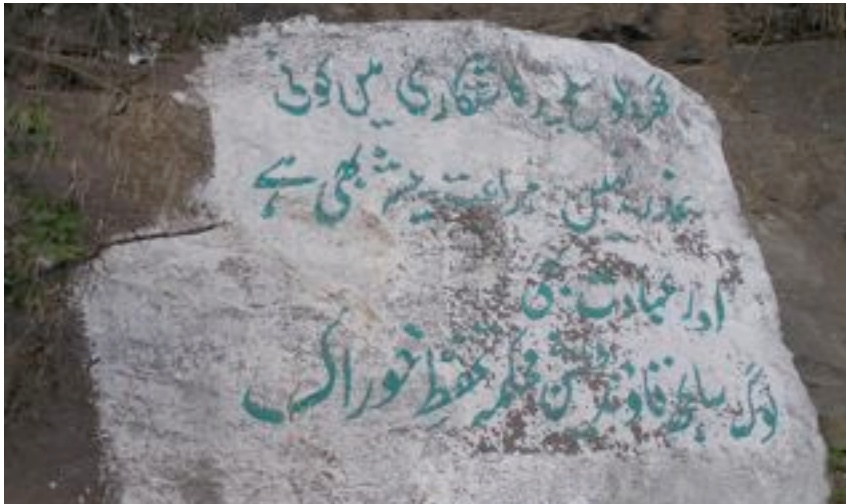
²⁰⁴ As often many disgruntled locals complained.

state, which, apart from a few token endowments, never actively invested in the region.²⁰⁵

As the levels of education rose, people started looking for better-suited employment, that is, employment that fulfilled their aspirations. As PaK had a very limited number of ‘good jobs’ available, the options then were migration, either abroad to the Gulf or to the urban centres of Pakistan. In addition to migration for work, there was educational migration, given the limited number of higher education institutions in PaK. The younger generation started migrating to the main academic centres of Pakistan, aspiring to get ‘better education’ that would enable them to get a ‘better job’. Summing up, while Pakistan-administered Kashmir was politically dependent on Pakistan, over time it also became food dependent. This dependency was not exclusively created by Pakistan,²⁰⁶ but also by a society that, for the various reasons discussed earlier, shifted its focus from a traditional, hard-labouring subsistence livelihood to a ‘progressive’, service-dependent and market-based livelihood on its path to becoming ‘modern’.

From Vita Activa to Vita Contemplativa

Figure 13 – “There is no shame in household-level farming – Agriculture is a profession as well as a form of worship”, Lok Sanjh Foundation



Throughout this region, agriculture was still associated with notions of pride and honour. This honour stemmed mostly from the ownership of means of production (land) and from being a *zamindar*. As a member of a lower-ranking *biraderi* put it, “if you can

²⁰⁵ The same can be said of the whole of Pakistan.

²⁰⁶ But to which nonetheless heavily contributed by stifling its economy.

produce [food] on your own, it means you have land'. This idea of being a producer was linked to being able to work one's land, as compared to other people who laboured on someone else's lands. Some people also believed that farming was a sacred profession because it had ancestral value; this value again being linked to the ownership of ancestral land, or *mukami ghar* (home of living). This was a strong reason why selling land was frowned upon, and considered acceptable only as a last resort, or when someone migrated and permanently settled somewhere else. In the latter case, such people stopped being considered *hamsaya* (neighbour). At the same time, being a farmer in this region also connoted a lack of mobility, which in turn was associated with not having migrated and not having enough education to have a salaried job.

At a second level, farming was seen as a healthy option not only in terms of physical work, but because 'healthy food' was being produced. This food was healthy because it was organically produced, without artificial fertilisers and other chemicals, which again brought in the non-modernised view of agriculture in this region. There was a certain romanticism in this analysis, where the old way of farming was still seen as a 'good' way to produce food. This applied not only to food but to the entire way of living, with people preferring to walk rather than drive, a lifestyle that the older informants called the 'good simple life'. Many older generations felt that this 'simple life' – connected with notions of frugality and living a modest life – was being lost because of new food habits, new types of jobs, migration and its negative impact,²⁰⁷ and too much education. One of the *maulvi*'s regular messages during the *Jumma* prayer sermons at the mosque in Chinati bazaar was for people to keep food habits, as well as lifestyles, simple.

According to most of my informants, idleness was frowned upon in Islam. Work, they said, was seen not only as a right but also as a duty and an obligation, professing a kind of Weberian "Protestant work ethic", which had been rediscovered in reformist Islam (Esposito, 1998: 80). This narrative though, was present across informants irrespective of religious sect, the basic tenet being that people must earn a living in an honourable way. For many people in this region agriculture was considered a form of worship – like in the Lok Sanjh Foundation message (Figure 13) – because it was a way of earning a livelihood working with one's hands (*hath ki kamai*), just like, as Kashif explained to me, "*all our prophets worked with their hands to earn their livelihoods*". They saw a clear relation between being idle and leaving the land idle. This was actually used as an

²⁰⁷ The "fat wives and spoiled children" complex (see Chapter Five).

explanation for why many migrant households who had given up on farming would still hire someone to at least grow fodder in their fields to feed the animals. And it was this avoidance of land idleness that some NGOs used as a rationale for encouraging people to re-engage with agriculture in the region. The idleness of the returned migrant was a contested issue. Many informants – not Gulf migrants themselves – often mentioned how returned migrants from the Gulf would be seen “sitting on a rock” (being idle), and that they only worked abroad and did nothing once back home. While many returned migrants wanted to ‘act’ and became involved in the political and social life of the region, others felt that they had ‘done enough’ for the household, family, and *biraderi* and it was now time to dedicate oneself to more spiritual and intellectual activities. Many would devote their time to reading – mostly the Quran – and contemplating life. Aiming to experience the eternal (Arendt, 1958) they had shifted their activities from *vita activa* to *vita contemplativa*.

Conclusion

The storytellers of Chinati bazaar viewed the earthquake as a point of rupture between a bucolic, self-sufficient and communal past, and a modern, globally interdependent, and yet individualistic, future. According to the narratives and stories of the bazaar, the earthquake had resulted in the demise of agriculture. However, when these narratives are combined with people’s stories of active, everyday life and agricultural practices in these villages before the earthquake, a series of factors begin to emerge that have little to do with the earthquake itself, and that have actually been playing out slowly over a much longer period of time. The main amongst these is migration to the Gulf and other urban centres, and this is closely accompanied by associated factors such as an increase in education, increased access to capital for consumption, greater wealth differences and shifting gender roles.

Despite people’s tendency to attribute the demise of agriculture to the impact of the earthquake, these other factors are able to provide more complete explanations for the shifts that occurred in both farming practices and in the ways people think about agriculture. These included a shift from traditional livelihoods to more modern and global occupations; from agriculture as ‘work’ to agriculture as ‘labour’; from farming being a male domain to it becoming a female activity; from being largely producers to

being primarily consumers; from self-sufficiency to food dependence; and finally, from living a ‘*vita activa*’ to living a ‘*vita contemplativa*’ in the case of returned migrants. These shifts meant that the way people conceptualised and engaged with agrarian production as an activity changed over time: it became the antithesis of being modern, reduced in importance to a type of labour, associated with household chores and, therefore, physically tied to the house, in contrast to the mobility of being a global migrant. Through these shifts agriculture had, indeed, been dying a slow death since the 1970s. When the earthquake struck on 8th October 2005, these slow, blurred changes were suddenly brought into sharp focus and made more visible.

Chapter Eight

The Continuity of Change in Chinati Bazaar: A Conclusion

There is little the world knows about Pakistan-administered Kashmir (PaK), both in terms of the region and its people. This lack of knowledge was particularly evident in the aftermath of the 2005 earthquake that affected the lives of millions. It was during this period that I, as part of a research team trying to assess the impact of the earthquake, realised that this dearth of knowledge would have a serious negative impact on any ‘developmental’ project planned for this region. I returned to PaK three years after the earthquake with the aim of learning about it. The previous work I undertook in the region and the literature that I engaged with on disasters and vulnerability stimulated my initial research questions, veering them towards issues of social protection, resilience and remittances. However, once I had selected my field site, Chinati bazaar, and started to get to know its people, I was confronted with stories, myths, rumours and narratives about the earthquake and the changes that it had brought in its aftermath. I had come looking for affected populations and I found instead storytellers who – like Bashir – insisted on “*telling me everything I needed to know*”.

There were two types of narratives that I heard in Chinati bazaar. The first talked almost exclusively of the earthquake and the vast changes it had brought with it. These stories saw the earthquake as a moment of rupture from which almost any type of change – both positive and negative – could be dated. The second referred to everyday life before the earthquake, and through these stories I was able to connect post-earthquake narratives of change to longer and older processes of change that pre-dated the earthquake but had become interwoven in the narratives of the earthquake. These ‘other’ stories were largely about the impact of migration and globalisation that by most accounts had started in the 1970s. Some storytellers – like Ali Naqvi and Sardar Zulfiqar – told me older pre-Partition stories that dated the processes of migration and globalization from before the partition of India and Pakistan. Some, often younger, storytellers – like Imtiaz and Raza – told me stories about the future, of ‘becoming modern’, enmeshing the earthquake with the continuing processes of migration and globalisation. And then there were storytellers – like Omar and Kashif – who reminded me how, in all these stories, there were relations of connection and disconnection,

elements of exclusion and inclusion. Once I was back in the UK, I knew that I needed to tell these stories *as* stories; so like them, I too became a storyteller confabulating stories of continuous change in the lives of storytellers living around a rural bazaar in PaK.

This thesis reads as a series of stories about change, about continuity, and about a group of people making sense of how certain critical events transformed their lives. These stories are also about how they decided to engage with these events and, through storytelling, reinvent a collective memory of the past and the future, because “*narrative is action*” and “*action proceeds via narrative*” (Osella and Osella, 2006: 582). As I stated in my introductory chapter, and argued through the other chapters, the earthquake was a point of rupture in the confabulated stories told by the storytellers of the bazaar, from which their collective memory dated its movement towards becoming modern and global. At the same time, the events surrounding the earthquake also served to highlight and emphasise more continuous processes of change that had been occurring over a longer period of time. For these reasons the work of Das and Jackson inspired me to look inside their stories, to see not only what they were telling me but also how they were choosing to frame these stories: which critical events were they talking about, how were they transformed into action, and how within their storytelling was “*a vital human strategy for sustaining a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances*” (Jackson, 2006: 15). The work of Tsing and Ferguson was equally important in enabling me to see how the confabulated narratives on ‘becoming modern’ at the bazaar were not the product of a rupture caused by global forces acting on local places. The bazaar was, and had always been, a place that was both ‘global’ and ‘local’.

Throughout this thesis I reflect on how people talk about certain processes. I follow, to a certain extent, Radcliffe-Brown’s philosophy of process, and of social life as a continuous process. According to him (1952, in: Ingold, 2008: 77) “*the concrete reality with which the social anthropologist is concerned (...) is not any sort of entity but a process, the process of social life.*” In a seminar held at the University of Chicago in the spring of 1937 he called for a Heraclitan view of the world as flux to support his processual view of reality (Radcliffe-Brown, 1957). By emphasising continuity through change Radcliffe-Brown’s understanding of social reality was comprehensively historical (Stanner, 1968, in: Ingold, 2008: 77). I follow a similar strategy in this thesis. I argue that despite the dramatic rupture of the earthquake in the lives of the storytellers of Chinati bazaar, the stories they told could be historicised within continuous processes

of social change, some of which pre-dated the earthquake by a few decades, while others had lasted a good part of the last century. I discuss how these processes of change were visible not only in their stories but also in the dynamics of social hierarchy, in the houses they built, in intra-family relations, in the mobility of women, and in their livelihood strategies. As Marx famously pointed out, men make their own history but do not do so under the conditions of their choosing. The earthquake was certainly a circumstance that no one chose, but it became one through which the storytellers of Chinati bazaar created their own history, as well as their future.

The Bazaar as a Stage

Crucial as it might have been to the making of their history – and despite often being signalled as the point of rupture between past and present – the earthquake was not the only factor of change in the region. One has to acknowledge other larger changes in which people from this region actively participated, particularly the more recent ones, such as migration and globalisation. General narratives of modernisation – often used as synonyms for globalisation and neoliberalism – still existed at the popular level, partly because many of the broad economic changes and ideological and political practices of governance characteristic of neoliberalism had been present in this region long before the earthquake. However, I am not inferring here that globalisation and neoliberalism should be seen as abstract external forces with unambiguous causal efficacy, which proceed to create a homogenous, convergent and levelled playing field, but as processes that they are (Kearney, 1995; Kingfisher and Maskovsky, 2008; Peck and Tickell, 2002). And, as I previously mentioned, if we position ourselves to see social life as a continuity of change, social life as *process*, then we can see how these processes played out and were problematised in the bazaar, a place that was both ‘global’ and ‘local’.

We can observe this problematisation in the way people at the bazaar described their collective past, or to be more precise, the way they tried to redefine themselves through their right to define a collective past. The rupture of the earthquake was used to break away from the past, by reinventing not only a new future but also a new past. In their collective memory, the creation of this new past allowed them to redefine themselves as modern and global, as well as different – from Pakistan and the other Kashmir. Yet, the global newness linked to globalisation creates distorted stereotypes of the past (Tsing,

2000). If we take a linear approach to development – like people who believe in modernisation projects do – before being modern and global one has to be traditional and local. Therefore, we need to reinvent and simplify the past. If the present society is egalitarian, in the past it had to be hierarchical; if its family structure is nuclear, in the past it had to be joint; if its women are empowered and physically mobile, in the past they were secluded and kept away from the public sphere; if it is dependent on global networks for labour markets and food consumption, in the past it was self-sufficient.

We can observe how migration was seen at the bazaar as the key to engage with a modernisation project, aptly fitting the neoliberal principle of self-help (de Haas, 2010). The bazaar was filled with stories of how migrants ‘made it’ on their own, of how important family, kin and caste were key to their success, not only in capital creation but also on distribution and welfare. While acknowledging that this project created losers and winners through (local) policies of domination and discrimination, the mythical equalities and opportunities of circulation and exchange, of capital penetration (Tsing, 2000), were often used to condone such policies. Still, not all storytellers agreed with this project and some voices did exist against it, although at times subdued or too far from the bazaar to be heard. These were often the voices of the ones that did not reap the bounties of migration and remittances, the ones that felt they had less power now, and the ones that still felt unable to act (in an Arendtian sense) in society.

We can also observe how in this modernisation project the key actor was the modern mobile individual. In their stories of ‘becoming modern’ there are at times undertones of neoliberal concepts of freedom and individuality, where the individual is free to participate in markets – and markets themselves free to act unhindered by the state (Kingfisher and Maskovsky, 2008). This freedom and individuality appears in their stories of the ‘new’ nuclear families, where the (male) migrant tries to break away from commitments to the extended family and portray himself as an individual first and a member of the community second. It also appears in their stories of love-cum-arranged marriages, where the youth – both boys and girls – seem to be (and allowed to be) more vocal on whom to marry and parents saying that they now place more importance on the characteristics of the individual rather than his/her family. And it appears in the professed and hotly debated changing position of women in society, with the notion of women as empowered individuals.

Despite the apparent primacy of the individual, the community also had an important

role to play in this modernisation project. In the neoliberal process, as part of an entrepreneurial model, communities are co-opted and appropriated to replace the state in the responsibility for welfare and distribution (Elyachar, 2003; Kingfisher and Maskovsky, 2008; Peck and Tickell, 2002). This was visible at two levels: first, in how ‘community’ was often redefined by decreasing the importance of *biraderi* and replacing it by (neutral) networks of mutual interest; second, in the way communities and other non-state actors, particularly NGOs, were to replace the state. Many saw the state as outdated, inefficient, ineffective, and corrupt, particularly in its efforts of post-earthquake reconstruction and rehabilitation. Instead, NGOs and communities were often portrayed as the obvious future replacement for development to happen. Still, especially in the case of NGOs, there were many voices of discontent about how these agencies acted in the region – as there were voices reverberating de Haas’ (2010) point on how the state has a crucial role to play in shaping favourable conditions for development to occur.

Lighting up the Bazaar’s Stage

Until the electrification of these villages in the 1980s, people used to celebrate *Shab-e-Qadr*²⁰⁸ (Night of Power) by lighting a *muthah* (a bundle of light) in front of their houses. The *muthah* was made by bunching together resinous pine sticks in which each stick represented a family member and the whole bunch represented the house. It was then put on a long pole in front of the house and lit at night, dotting the hills with light. My approach in this thesis to studying discourses of change is not unlike these *muthahs*. Following Tsing’s (2000: 347) suggestion that we “*break down the units of culture and political economy through which we make sense of events and social processes...[to find] relatively coherent bundles of ideas and practices as realized in particular times and places*” I present a series of stories about change bunched together in *muthahs* of ideas and practices as they were understood at a particular time and place. In one *muthah* discussed in Chapter Two I show that even though this area had historically always been part of a global project, even before Partition, its continuous peripheral status made people feel that they were never allowed to fully benefit from this project. In another *muthah*, presented in Chapter Three, I examine how the discourses of post-

²⁰⁸ The night when the Quran was revealed to Muhammad.

earthquake change were used to make sense of events, suffering and trauma, as well as to make political arguments not only about the past but also about the future. In the subsequent *muthahs* analysed in the following chapters, I investigate how people negotiated between moralities of equality and the realities of hierarchy (Chapter Four), how they debated a series of myths surrounding the house (Chapter Five), how men at the bazaar talked about women's lives after the earthquake (Chapter Six), and how they explained the demise of agriculture in the region (Chapter Seven). Put together, all these *muthahs* bring to life a story of change and its continuity, for present within all these bundled stories were the two leitmotifs indicated in my first story of Chapter One: that the earthquake was a point of rupture in the confabulated stories at the bazaar from which the collective memory of its people dates its movement towards becoming modern and global; while simultaneously their narratives about events surrounding the earthquake also serve to highlight and emphasise more continuous processes of change that have been occurring over a longer period of time.

Running as a common thread through these chapters are also the oft-repeated themes of modernisation, globalisation, and exclusion. According to the storytellers, before the earthquake migrants had had to leave home and go abroad in order to access change, but after the earthquake change had come to them, to Pakistan-administered Kashmir in general and to Chinati bazaar in particular. Their stories show that even though many people in PaK considered themselves global before the earthquake, the seclusion of their region had kept them from being modern. The earthquake gave them and the region an opportunity to become – or aspire to become – both global and modern. Their stories also show us the importance of connection and disconnection (Ferguson, 1999), as the elements of exclusion that permeated their global project were also often replicated in the post-earthquake assistance that flooded this region. In their confabulated collective memory of life before and after the earthquake the larger components of 'being global' and 'becoming modern' at times hide this exclusion. Therefore, I had to remain conscious of looking for the untold, censored or suppressed stories that were hidden within the bazaar's narratives (Jackson, 2006).

By retelling and analysing the stories of Chinati bazaar, I hope to have contributed to an increased knowledge and understanding of this region. At the most basic level, I have provided an ethnography of a region that is severely understudied and, that will hopefully serve as a foundation for further studies. At another level, this thesis is a

description of a ‘project’ that adds to Tsing’s (2000: 347) proposed collection of projects. The *muthahs* of ideas and practices as realised in particular times and places allow us to understand the “*institutional proliferation of particular globalisation projects*” in a globally informed investigation of global and local processes that avoid the pitfalls in which we fell many years ago with modernisation theory. And at yet another level this thesis contributes to the literature on disasters, especially on matters relating to the complexity of the interaction between disaster assistance and migration patterns. We know that migrant flows are contingent upon and stimulated through political and economic channels (Tsing, 2000; Gardner, 2012); and we know that migrant flows are often essential in the rehabilitation of disaster-affected populations. The stories of the bazaar add to this knowledge by highlighting that often post-disaster assistance flows are also stimulated through and contingent upon these same political and economic channels. This means that groups and individuals who do not benefit from migration connections might be further excluded during post-disaster assistance. Finally, by adopting a Heraclitan view of the continuity of change, this thesis contributes to a better understanding of how disasters such as the 2005 earthquake affect individuals differently within the same affected population, and how such events are then used differently by these populations and individuals to make sense of their collective past and future. In other words, I argue that we should see disasters as manifestations of continuously changing social systems.

Other Actors, Other Stages

In this thesis I look at a particular place and a particular time and I narrate a series of stories, myths, and rumours about several events that occurred in this place during this time. In Chapter One I used the allegory of the *lihaaf* and the *razai* to talk about how these confabulated stories of the earthquake, modernisation and globalisation were woven together by the storytellers of Chinati bazaar, and how these covered and explained their lives. But these *lihaafs* of stories are patchworked and embroidered, and there are still many patches that are either missing altogether within these stories, or that have not yet been embellished enough. I identify three of these missing patches here.

Most glaringly, the voices of women are missing in this study. As a foreign male researcher in a conservative society, I had no direct access to the stories of the women

that lived in the six villages around Chinati bazaar. What I know of them comes from the stories of their men. These men told me that the biggest impact on women's lives after the earthquake came from their increased physical mobility and their greater access to jobs. However, I do not know whether this is also what the women consider the greatest post-earthquake change in their lives. Further research that focuses on the lives of women and that goes beyond the bazaar into people's houses – from the public into the private, from men's world into women's world – is, therefore, needed.

In this study I conducted research in only one of many different regions of PaK that have different histories but were equally affected by the earthquake. It would be interesting to find out which of the stories discussed in this thesis are also being confabulated in other areas of PaK. What types of discourses of change did people develop in the urban bazaars of Bagh and Muzaffarabad; in other rural areas equally affected by the earthquake but with a much smaller migrant population; in the areas that were not affected by the earthquake but had equally large numbers of migrants; and finally, how are these stories being created and recreated, told and retold by migrant Kashmiri populations abroad in the Gulf or in the urban centres of Pakistan.

The increase of terror attacks throughout Pakistan has also now reached PaK. An unfortunate consequence of the escalation and spread of terror attacks is that this region has started to become more secluded again. I noticed this trend close to the end of my fieldwork, when suddenly I started to get stopped and questioned by different members of the security apparatus not only each time I entered and left PaK, but also while moving within the region.²⁰⁹ Now that most international agencies have packed up and left PaK, headed to other stages and other disasters, and the 'open door policy' is now almost shut, it is once again becoming harder to conduct fieldwork in PaK. Despite the fact that the world now knows that there is 'another Kashmir', we still know very little about it. Far more research on the region is required, focused this time on these more recent changes that are now occurring because of terrorism and greater regional insecurity. The stories presented in this thesis can hopefully become the basis on which this future research can be built.

²⁰⁹ Eventually I had to get myself a No Objection Certificate despite having a Pakistan Origin Card.

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Annex – List of Informants

Gulf Migrants

Ahmed (Mughal) waiter in Dubai, from Bagla
 Ammar (Mughal) retired head barman in Dubai, from Khorian
 Babar (Mughal) waiter in Dubai, from Thial
 Bashir (Mughal) returned Gulf migrant now shopkeeper, from Sarian
 Khalid (Mughal) returned Gulf migrant now trainer at vocational centre, from Khorian
 Mohammad Sheikh (Sheikh) returned Gulf migrant now trader, from Khorian
 Manshaat (Mughal) migrant in Dubai, from Basantkot
 Mushtaq (Mughal) Gulf agent, from Sarian
 Parvez (Mughal) returned Gulf migrant now shopkeeper, from Khorian
 Sheikh Ashraf (Sheikh) Gulf agent and businessman, from Sarian
 Siddiqui (Raja) migrant in Iraq, from Serabad
 Syed Ali Shah (Syed) Gulf agent and businessman, from Serabad living in Islamabad
 Yasin (Raja) returned Gulf migrant, from Serabad
 Zeeshan (Syed) businessman in Bagh city, from Moori Gali
 Zulfiqar (Mughal) returned Gulf migrant now a porter at the bazaar, from Thial

Pakistan Migrants

Aasim (Mughal) electrician in Karachi, from Sarian
 Abid (Syed) contractor, from Serabad
 Ali Azfar (Syed) ex-serviceman, from Khorian
 Ashfaq (Mughal) nurse in Karachi, from Thial
 Azfar Khan (Mughal) retired army cook in Pindi, from Sarian
 Fahad (Mughal) trader in Pakistan, from Sarian
 Faraz (Mughal) waiter in Lahore, from Khorian
 Imtiaz (Mughal) retired waiter in Lahore now shopkeeper, from Sarian
 Kashif (Mughal) retired driver in Karachi now shopkeeper, from Thial
 Mehmood (Khwaja) waiter in Lahore, from Basantkot
 Mohammad Azfar (Raja) ex-serviceman, from Bagla
 Omar (Mughal) retired mason in Karachi now newspaper seller, from Thial
 Sardar Zulfiqar (Sudhan) retired artist in Karachi, from Rawalakot
 Syed Ali Naqvi (Syed) advocate in Bagh city (previously in Lahore), from Serabad

Non-Migrants

Abbas (Mughal) owner of the *adda*, from Sarian
 Abdullah (Mughal) unemployed, from Thial
 Abida (Mughal) female teacher at READ, from Khorian
 Amjad (Mughal) retired trader, from Sarian
 Aslam (Mughal) treasurer of the Khorian Social Welfare Association, from Khorian
 Ayub (Mughal) principal of READ, from Sarian
 Fatima (Syed) housewife, from Serabad
 Hameed (Mughal) mason, from Sarian
 Hamida (Mughal) housewife, from Bagla
 Jameela Bibi (Raja) housewife, from Serabad
 Khalil (Kiani) metre-reader for WAPDA, from Hothala
 Maulana Abdul (Mughal) *maulvi* at the bazaar, from Sarian
 Mehfooz (Mughal) shopkeeper, from Bagla
 Mira (Mughal) secondary school pupil, from Sarian
 Miryam (Mughal) secondary school pupil, from Sarian
 Mobeen (Mughal) district secretary and member of JKLF, from Thial
 Parveen (Mughal) housewife, from Sarian
 Qasim (Kiani) political agent, from Hothala
 Razia (Mughal) female schoolteacher at Al-Noor, from Bagla
 Rehana (Kiani) female schoolteacher at READ, from Hothala
 Saadia (Mughal) female schoolteacher at READ, from Sarian
 Safina (Mughal) housewife, from Sarian
 Sajida (Mughal) housewife, from Khorian
 Syed Ali Raza (Syed) schoolteacher, from Bagla
 Syed Hasnain (Syed) schoolteacher, from Serabad
 Syed Jaffer Saab (Syed) public school principal, from Serabad
 Tariq (Raja) unemployed, from Serabad
 Wasiq (Nai) mason and barber, from Moori Gali
 Yasir (Mughal) shopkeeper, from Bagla
 Zainab (Syed) female schoolteacher, from Serabad
 Zubaida (Mughal) housewife, from Thial

In-Migrants

Adam (Pukhtoon) labourer, from Lower Dir
 Ali (Narma) bank manager, from Bagh city
 Gulzar (Pukhtoon) contractor, from Upper Dir
 Jameela (Pukhtoon) housewife, from Lahore
 Khan Saab (Pukhtoon) labourer, from Mardan