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**“WHEN GLASS BREAKS, IT BECOMES SHARPER”:
DE-CONSTRUCTING ETHNICITY IN THE
BAMYAN VALLEY, AFGHANISTAN.**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE
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SUMMARY

This thesis is a theoretically framed and historically informed political analysis of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley, Afghanistan. Existing literature on ethnicity in Afghanistan is conceptually fragmented and lacks sufficient empirical analysis. To address this, I draw on theoretical literature, the Afghan ethnicity literature, and twelve months of fieldwork (2010-2012) to present a coherent analysis of the emergence and workings of ethnicity, and also a much-needed empirical account of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley.

I view ethnicity as relational, interactional and context-dependent. Moreover, to accommodate the intersectional and punctuated nature of identity I perceive ethnicity as operating through ethnic categories. I also adopt a constructionist approach to ethnicity acknowledging that it is (re)-constructed by broad structural forces, the state, political elites and ordinary people. Additionally, I view ethnicity as (re)-constructed through “everyday ethnicity”. In this regard, I take ethnicity to be experienced in commonplace social situations in the Bamyan Valley. Ethnicity is embodied, performed, expressed in interpersonal interactions; and variably emphasised in different institutional settings. Methodologically, I adopt a critical realist standpoint and utilise an ethnographic method, incorporating a range of qualitative research techniques.

My empirical findings demonstrate the differential impacts of post-2001 political reconstruction and socio-economic development in the Bamyan Valley. I explain the acquisition of productive resources by Hazarahs, their improving status, and the corresponding nature of tensions between Hazarahs and Saadat and Tajiks, respectively. Two case studies demonstrate this dynamic, whilst also exemplifying the role of individuals in the (re)-construction of ethnicity. The first illustrates the increasing salience of sectarian identity between Hazarahs and Tajiks, which has emerged since recognition of the Jafari school of Islam in the 2004 Afghan Constitution. The second concerns the use of ethnicity to legitimise, contest and violently enforce unequal marriage arrangements between Saadat and Hazarahs.

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GLOSSARY

<i>Adabiat-e-moqawemat</i>	Resistance literature
<i>Ailoq</i>	Communal upland pasture
<i>Alam</i>	Flag
<i>Alim</i> (sing.)/ <i>Ulema</i> (pl.)	Religious scholar(s)
<i>Ashura</i>	Shi'i mourning ritual, held in the Islamic month of Muharram
<i>Ayatollah</i>	An honorary title given to highly accomplished <i>ulema</i> of the Jafari school of Shi'i Islam
<i>Baba</i>	A term of respect and familiarity, meaning 'Father' in Farsi, Dari, Quettaqi and Hazarahgi
<i>Bazaar</i>	Marketplace
<i>Buzkashi</i>	Afghanistan's national sport, involving numerous horseback riders competing for possession of a decapitated and bloated goat carcass, which they place in a designated goal area for points
<i>Caliph</i>	From a Sunni perspective, one of a line of successors to the Prophet Muhammad. As such, the political and religious head of a <i>Caliphate</i>
<i>Caliphate</i>	A Muslim state based on <i>Shari'ah</i>
<i>Chai khana</i>	Teahouse
<i>Chopan</i>	Shepherd
<i>Dai</i>	Tribal group (Hazarahgi)
<i>Dambura</i>	A long necked lute popular in Central Asia
<i>Dari</i>	One of Afghanistan's national languages. Also a dialect of Farsi
<i>Dehqan</i>	Agricultural labourer
<i>Din</i>	Religion
<i>Dowazda Imami</i>	A Twelver (literally: Of Twelve Imams) or more formally a member of the Jafari school of Shi'i Islam

<i>Esdewaj fahrari</i>	Escape Marriage or elopement (Dari)
<i>Farsi</i>	Iran's national language. Dialects include Dari and Hazarahgi
<i>Fatwa</i>	Religious decree
<i>Ghanimat</i>	The spoils of war
<i>Ghaza</i>	Holy conquest
<i>Groupa</i>	Groups, a loan word from English (Dari)
<i>Hajj</i>	Pilgrimage to Mecca. Viewed as one of the five essential obligations in Islam
<i>Hajji</i>	An honorary title given to those Muslims who have completed <i>Hajj</i>
<i>Hanafi</i>	A school of Sunni Islam. The most common Sunni school of Islam in Afghanistan
<i>Harakat-e Islami Afghanistan</i>	Islamic Movement of Afghanistan. A moderate Shi'i Islamist <i>mujahedin</i> organisation composed of mainly non-Hazarahs
<i>Hazarah</i>	An ethnic category in Afghanistan. Members are commonly viewed as originating from the <i>Hazarahjat</i> , speaking Hazarahgi, being Shi'i, having a Mongol phenotype, and being of low status. Members comprise approx. 10-15% of the Afghan population and approx. 75% of the Bamyan Valley's population
<i>Hazarahgi</i>	A dialect of Dari. Commonly viewed as the dialect spoken by Hazarahs
<i>Hazarahjat</i>	The homeland of Hazarahs. It comprises parts of nine central and northern provinces of present-day Afghanistan and is centred upon Bamyan Town
<i>Hezb</i>	(Political) party
<i>Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami Afghanistan</i>	The Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan. A Shi'i Islamist and pro-Hazarah <i>mujahedin</i> organization composed of mainly Hazarahs

<i>Hindu Kush</i>	Hindu Killer. A mountain range forming the spine of Afghanistan, which run immediately to the north of the Bamyān Valley
<i>Hoviyat</i>	Identity (Farsi)
<i>Imam</i>	From a Shi'i perspective, a religious and secular leader of Islam descended from the Prophet
<i>Inqelab</i>	Revolution
<i>Isma'ili</i>	A vernacular term for an adherent of the Nizari school of Shi'i Islam. Known in derogatory terms as <i>Shash Imami</i> (literally: Of Six Imams)
<i>Jafari</i>	A school of Shi'i Islam. The most common Shi'i school of Islam in Afghanistan. Known in vernacular as <i>Dowazda Imami</i> or Twelver (literally: Of Twelve Imams)
<i>Jamiat-e-Islami</i>	Islamic Society. A Sunni Islamist <i>mujahedin</i> organisation composed of mainly Tajiks
<i>Janda baala</i>	Flag raising. A ritual undertaken at <i>Naw Ruz</i> ceremonies
<i>Khatm-e-Quran</i>	A complete recital of the Qur'an. Undertaken for good fortune, or to receive a blessing for the deceased
<i>Khums</i>	A one-fifth Shi'i Islamic tax
<i>Koh-e-Baba</i>	Father Mountains. They run immediately to the south of the Bamyān Valley
<i>Kola</i>	Skullcap
<i>Kafir</i> (sing.)/ <i>Kufar</i> (pl.)	Infidel(s)
<i>Kuchi</i> (sing.)/ <i>Kuchian</i> (pl.)	An ethnic category in Afghanistan. Members are commonly viewed as being nomadic and Pashtun
<i>Loya Jirga</i>	Grand Council
<i>Lungi</i>	Turban
<i>Madrassa</i>	Islamic institution for religious education

<i>Manteqa</i>	Area of origin
<i>Marja-i taqlid</i>	Grand <i>Ayatollah</i> . The most senior religious figure(s) in the Jafari school of Shi'i Islam
<i>Masjid</i>	Mosque
<i>Mawlawi</i>	An honorary title, translating to 'master', given to accomplished <i>ulema</i>
<i>Mazhab</i>	Sect
<i>Mellat</i>	Nationality. A term used by the PDPA to classify ethnic categories
<i>Membar</i>	A place of worship dedicated to the Imams. Used by members of the Jafari school of Shi'i Islam. Also known as <i>Takhya Khana</i> in Iran and <i>Imambara</i> in Pakistan
<i>Minbar</i>	A pulpit-like chair found in a <i>masjid</i> or <i>membar</i>
<i>Mir</i>	Local chief in the Central Highlands region of Afghanistan
<i>Mohr</i>	A Shi'i prayer stone ideally made from <i>turbah</i>
<i>Mujahed</i> (sing.)/ <i>Mujahedin</i> (pl.)	Muslim resistance (as religious obligation)
<i>Mujtahid</i>	High-level religious scholar
<i>Mullah</i>	Islamic clergyman
<i>Murid</i>	Followers of a <i>pir</i>
<i>Namus</i>	A concept linking women's shame and men's honour with regard to women
<i>Naw</i> (sing.)/ <i>Nawha</i> (pl.)	Dirge(s)
<i>Naw Ruz</i>	New Year celebrated on 21 st March
<i>Nazr</i> (-e- <i>Imam Husayn</i>)	A votive offering (to Imam Husayn)
<i>Nizari</i>	A school of Shi'i Islam. Known in vernacular as <i>Isma'ili</i> and in derogatory terms as <i>Shash Imami</i> (literally: Of Six Imams)

<i>Pakol</i>	A soft and round-topped men's hat made from coarse wool, which is rolled up before being worn. Commonly viewed as being worn by Tajiks
<i>Pashto</i>	One of Afghanistan's national languages. Commonly viewed as being spoken by Pashtuns
<i>Pashtun</i>	An ethnic category in Afghanistan. Members are commonly viewed as originating from the southern and eastern regions of Afghanistan, being Sunni, speaking Pashto, and being of high status. Members comprise approx. 40-60% of the Afghan population and are not resident in the Bamyān Valley
<i>Pir (sing.)/Piran (pl.)</i>	Saint(s). Often Sayid/Saadat.
<i>Piran tambon</i>	A loose fitting shirt and trouser combination commonly worn in Afghanistan
<i>Qawm</i>	Solidarity group. A fluid concept used to imply common origins and cultural unity
<i>Qawmiyat</i>	Ethnicity (Farsi)
<i>Qizilbash (sing.)/Qizilbash (pl.)</i>	An ethnic category in Afghanistan. Members are commonly viewed as originating from Sabsevar, Iran (having arrived in Afghanistan with the armies of Nadir Shah Afshar), speaking Dari, and being Jafari Shi'i. They are historically perceived as having superior status to Hazarāhs, but inferior status in relation to Pashtuns and Tajiks. Members comprise less than 1% of the population in both Afghanistan and the Bamyān Valley
<i>Quettaqi</i>	A mixed language, which draws on Hazarāghi, Urdu, and English. Commonly viewed as the dialect of Hazarāghi spoken by Hazarāhs originating from Quetta, Pakistan
<i>Rais-e-shura</i>	Head of a village council
<i>Rawza</i>	Sermon recounting the martyrdom of Imam Husayn
<i>Rish sufid</i>	Elder. Literally translates to white beard

<i>Roshanfikr</i>	Secular intellectual
<i>Sahm</i>	A Shi'i Islamic tax for the maintenance of religious institutions
<i>Sayid</i> (sing.)/ <i>Saadat</i> (pl.)	An ethnic category in Afghanistan. Members are commonly viewed as originating from the Arabian Peninsula, being descendants of the Prophet, speaking Dari, and being Shi'i. They are historically perceived as having superior status to Hazarachs, but inferior status in relation to Pashtuns and Tajiks. Members comprise approx. 10% of the population in the Bamyān Valley
<i>Shari'ah</i>	Islamic law
<i>Shura-ye Ittefaq-e Enqelab-e Islami Afghanistan</i>	Revolutionary Council of the Islamic Alliance of Afghanistan. An obsolete Shi'i <i>mujahedin</i> organisation formed under the leadership of Sayid Ali Beheshti
<i>Sina zani</i>	Ritual striking of the chest with open palms, carried out during Muharram, as a sign of lamentation
<i>Tagaw</i>	A broad stepped plateau in the middle of the Bamyān Valley where Bamyān Town is located
<i>Tajik</i>	An ethnic category in Afghanistan. Members are commonly viewed as speaking Dari, being non-tribalised, and being Sunni. They are historically perceived as having superior status to Saadat, Qizilbash, and Hazarachs, but inferior status in relation to Pashtuns. Members comprise approx. 20-30% of the Afghan population and approx. 15% of the population in the Bamyān Valley
<i>Taqiyya</i>	Religious dissimulation
<i>Turbah</i>	Soil from the city of Karbala, Iraq
<i>Urf</i>	The established 'custom' or 'knowledge' of a society
<i>Ustad</i>	A term of respect, equivalent to 'Mr.'

<i>Watan</i>	Region or country of origin
<i>Watani</i>	A vernacular and derogatory term for a Hazarah who has never left Afghanistan
<i>Zakat</i>	A one-tenth Islamic charitable tax
<i>Zaker</i>	A specialist in the recital of religious texts and <i>rawza</i>
<i>Zanjeer zani</i>	Flagellation of the shoulders and neck with bundles of short chains, carried out during Muharram, as a sign of lamentation
<i>Zawari</i>	A vernacular and derogatory term for a Hazarah who has returned from Iran to settle in Afghanistan
<i>Ziyaratgah</i>	Shrine

ACRONYMS

AIA	Afghanistan Interim Administration
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
ATA	Afghanistan Transitional Authority
CE	Common Era
CSO	Central Statistics Organisation (Afghanistan)
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence (Pakistan)
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NZAID	New Zealand Agency for International Development
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PhD	Doctorate of Philosophy
PPSC	Participation, Power and Social Change
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
ROS	Research Outline Seminar
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UoS	University of Sussex
US(A)	United States (of America)
WFP	World Food Programme
WiP	Work-in-Progress

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Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions,
their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation.

Oscar Wilde

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PROLOGUE

“I hope you don’t write anything to harm the Hazarah people,” cautioned Ali,¹ one of my research assistants. We had been working intensely together for over six months and had developed both a solid friendship and good working relationship. This was, in part, kindled by Ali’s sustained efforts to guide me in my navigation of Bamyani society and by his keen appreciation of my research topic.

He delivered this cautionary warning shortly after I had explained to him my preliminary findings. This preliminary analysis centred on my observation that since 2002 Hazarahs were increasingly dominant in Bamyani society. One week earlier, while transiting through Kabul on my way into Bamyan, I had received a similar response from two friends who were well known in Kabul as Hazarah intellectuals. Visibly uncomfortable at my suggestion that the state of affairs in the Bamyan Valley did not match the commonly held and historically justified perception that Hazarahs were a marginalised and oppressed people I was told, “At the national level this is not the case. Hazarahs have been politically marginalised by Pashtuns for over a century and now they are also under pressure from the Tajiks. We have long been persecuted by Pashtuns and if you give them an excuse they will use it against us to cause us more harm”. While I make no claims that my observations in the Bamyan Valley represent changes in the broader Afghan context; these two cautionary encounters gave me pause to think.

These warnings reminded me of the very real power of writing about ethnicity as an academic. There is a great danger in uncritically reifying ‘ethnic groups’² in academic literature. Not only is this literature on ethnicity utilised to legitimise the claims of one ‘ethnic group’ over another; but in numerous cases it has also contributed to the formation of ‘ethnic groups’ following their reification by scholars (Eriksen, 2002).

Many of the early European ethnographic accounts of Afghanistan sought to establish the ‘true’ origins of various ‘ethnic groups’ (c.f. Bacon 1951; Thesiger, 1955). This trend has continued to the present day. Many of the Afghan academics I interviewed in Kabul and Bamyan discussed the on-going intellectual enterprises to ‘prove’ which ‘ethnic group’ first resided in Afghanistan (Schetter, 2005). This was, and still is, an effort to ascertain

¹ This is a pseudonym used for the purposes of anonymity.

² To avoid unintentional reification the terms ‘ethnic group’ and ‘ethnic boundary’, where their usage is required, remain in inverted commas throughout the text. This is done to remind us that ethnicity is a category of identification, not a concrete ontological entity (Jenkins 2008 [1997]).

which group was 'entitled' to dominate the country (Interviews, April 2011). These examples indicate the sensitivity surrounding ethnicity and its documentation.

There are a number of accounts in the Afghan literature regarding the creation of a number of the major contemporary 'ethnic groups' as a result of reification by scholars. Jan Ovesen discusses the construction of Nuristani and Pashai identities at the hands of early explorers and anthropologists in Eastern Afghanistan (Ovesen, 1983). Conrad Schetter claims that H. Franz Schurmann, in his ethnography entitled *The Mongols of Afghanistan* (Schurmann, 1962), created the identifications 'Pashai', 'Farsiwan', and 'Tajik', which were later adopted by those he had categorised (Schetter, 2004).

My goal here is not to provide an account of ethnicity that serves to favour or legitimise one 'ethnic group' over another. Nor is my purpose to devalue Hazarah identity, or any other identity for that matter, by indicating the manner in which it is socially constructed; or the way it has been manipulated, intentionally or otherwise, for material or political gain. My aim is to lay bare the processes that have contributed to the emergence, functioning and contemporary nature of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley, Afghanistan.

While laying out these caveats I should also add that the changing circumstances in the Bamyan Valley are somewhat exceptional not only across Afghanistan but also, to a lesser extent, across the rest of Bamyan Province. Power is configured differently across differing geographical spaces. The unique history of the Bamyan Valley and the specific nature of Bamyan Town—essentially a peri-urban provincial centre—mean that power is configured in very particular ways in my field site. This makes the analysis in the following pages distinct. As such, my goal here is not to develop a grand theory of ethnicity, but to offer a context specific insight into the changing nature of ethnicity in a handful of valleys in the highlands of Afghanistan.

Finally, while I owe much to the many people I spoke with and observed in Afghanistan the analysis here remains strictly my own. Paraphrasing Ali, I alone bear responsibility for any 'harm' that comes to the people of Afghanistan as a result of what I write in the following pages.

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATIONS

One of the first things you're told about Habiba Sarabi, who, at the time of my fieldwork was the Governor of Bamyan Province, is that, "she's the first female and second Hazarah to be appointed Governor in Afghanistan!" Her predecessor Mohammad Rahim Aliyar, Governor of Bamyan from 2003 to 2005, was the first Hazarah to hold the post since the founding of the Afghan state in the early 1890s.

Given her achievement she was surprisingly approachable. From behind the huge mahogany desk that sat at the centre of her office in Bamyan Town, the Governor responded to my question regarding the key issues she had had to manage in the province following her appointment:

HS: ...There are also some ethnic problems in the province. You know, of course, that the majority of the population in Bamyan are Hazarah? We [Bamyanis] are 10% Tajik, and 90%, we can say, Shi'i. This includes the Saadat³ and the Hazarahs, some of whom are Isma'ili...

NA: Can you explain a little more about these ethnic problems?

HS: Well, we experience conflict in Sayghan District, in the northeast of the province, because both Tajiks and Hazarahs live there. But we don't see much violence between Tajiks and Hazarahs in the centre [Bamyan District].⁴ However, there is violence between Saadat and Hazarah here [Bamyan District], and in Panjab, Waras and Yakawlang districts in the west of the province...

NA: Are these ethnic problems of serious concern to you?

HS: Actually, this violence is now a concern. I'm sure you know about the Saadat and Hazarah situation. According to Islam or the Shi'i sect... well, it's not a law but more of a tradition. According to this tradition Saadat do not marry their daughters to Hazarahs. Yet, the daughter of a Hazarah can be the bride of a Sayid. They [Saadat] think she is a kind of servant... The opposite is also

³ Sayid (sing.), Saadat (pl.).

⁴ Bamyan District, a present day administrative region, is mainly composed of the Bamyan Valley and its side valleys.

problematic. Some Hazarah boys are escaping [eloping] with Sayid girls. This sometimes leads to retaliatory violence.

NA: Violence?

HS: Sometimes there are incidents where the Saadat attack the Hazarah boys who have relationships with their daughters.

This excerpt from my informative meeting with the Governor is one of numerous valuable encounters I experienced during my PhD fieldwork in the Bamyan Valley, Afghanistan. I include it here as it helps summarise some of the key dynamics of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley. As the Governor indicated, ethnic tensions have become increasingly acute between Hazarahs and Saadat and relations between Hazarahs and Tajiks remain inflammatory. In the case of the former ethnicity is used to legitimise, contest and violently enforce unequal marriage arrangements. With regard to the latter, the practice of Shi'i mourning rituals in the form of *Ashura*, which utilise ethnic and sectarian identity, has resulted in growing polarisation between Shi'i Hazarahs and Sunni Tajiks.

In addition, it is not insignificant that the Governor of Bamyan Province is Hazarah. Since the fall of the Taliban regime, under which a number of Bamyani Tajiks administered the province, the Karzai government has offered the majority of provincial appointments to Hazarahs, and to a lesser extent Saadat. Since 2001 these appointments are but one of the productive resources that have been claimed in the name of the 'Hazarah'.

But so much was left unexplored in my exchange with the Governor. How exactly has the Bamyan Valley arrived at a situation in which such entrenched rivalries exist between Hazarahs, Saadat and Tajiks? Are these rivalries the result of decades of conflict in Afghanistan, or have the political and socio-economic changes sweeping the country since 2001 played a role? Are these tensions even ethnic or sectarian in nature? And, more importantly, what is ethnicity? Is Bamyani society divided into distinct cultural groups or is the idea of ethnicity simply exploited to suit political ends?

This thesis is a theoretically framed and historically informed political ethnography. It investigates ethnicity in Afghanistan's Bamyan Valley. After reviewing pertinent theoretical literature and accounting for the historical formation of ethnicity from 1500-2010, my thesis draws on twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork—conducted between

December 2010 and March 2012—to both analyse the functioning and document the contemporary nature of ethnicity across the Bamyān Valley. This chiefly includes analysis of the differential impacts of post-2001 political reconstruction and socio-economic development upon the conceptualization of ethnicity; corresponding shifts in ethnic relations; and the manner in which ethnicity is (re)-constructed by individuals and manifest in everyday situations and interactions.

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In this chapter I orient my research personally, conceptually, methodologically and geographically. Section one below features a brief discussion of my personal motivations in undertaking a PhD. This is followed, in section two, with a discussion in which I situate my research with regard to pertinent social science literature. This includes highlighting the added value of my research relative to ethnicity and identity theory and the existing literature pertaining to ethnicity in Afghanistan. Here, I also lay out my research question and highlight the limitations of my research. In section three, I provide an introduction to my field site followed by a discussion of the rationale for its selection. Section four presents the methodological approach I have adopted throughout my research process. The final section of this chapter lays out the structure of the remainder of my thesis.

1. PERSONAL MOTIVATIONS: “DID I DO ALL THAT I SHOULD?”

Wake up naked, drinking coffee, making plans to change the world.

While the world is changing us.

So, what to do with the rest of the day's afternoon, hey?

Isn't it strange, how we change?

Everything we do. Did I do all that I should?

Dave Matthews, Stay or Leave

When I began my PhD I had a simple yet broad purpose in mind: to better understand the people of Afghanistan and the sociological changes they had experienced since 2001. Two related factors nurtured this interest. The first is my ‘mixed ethnic other’ background, and the second, my experiences working in international development in Afghanistan.

Growing up ‘half-Iranian’ and ‘half-English’—whatever that means—positioned me differently than my English peers. I grew up intensely curious in what makes people behave the way they do, what defines us and what differentiates us. In many ways this led

me to first study Applied Psychology and then Applied Development Studies at the undergraduate and Masters level, respectively. Following my Masters, I began working in international development in Afghanistan. Prior to commencing my PhD I spent almost three years in the country. I worked with a women's focussed national non-governmental organisation (NGO), a prominent NGO coordinating body, and the United Nations amongst other organisations. I travelled extensively around the country with long periods of time in the capital, Kabul, and in Mazar-e-Sharif in the north of the country. I also spent a week in Bamyan carrying out a programme evaluation.

During this time my 'mixed ethnic' heritage served me well. I found that dressed in *piran tambon*—a loose fitting shirt and trouser combination commonly worn in Afghanistan—I could pass for 'Afghan'. I felt I could engage with Afghans more easily than most of my fellow aid workers given my ability to adapt my (badly spoken) Farsi to Dari, one of Afghanistan's national languages. This, at times, ensured me a minimal level of social camouflage and security, but also created a common ground with my Afghan friends and colleagues. I found I could grasp some of the basic cultural references and it was relatively easy for me to understand the way Afghans related to one another. Many Afghans, those I met in NGO offices or mountain villages, would point out our supposed cultural or biological similarities. On a number of occasions, after an Afghan colleague would explain my background, people would relax into intimate discussions with me about their lives and personal circumstances.

Yet while my relationship with Afghanistan grew ever more intimate I developed, in parallel, a sense of unease. This was linked to an awareness of the social distance growing between members of the international community and the people of Afghanistan. Deteriorating security resulted in ever-higher walls surrounding the offices and houses of foreign aid workers; an increase in the presence of armed security guards; and restaurants and bars exclusively for the use of 'internationals' (Duffield, 2010). There also existed a parallel conceptual divide. Given the long history of violence in Afghanistan knowledge of the contemporary dynamics of Afghan society was limited. Since the country descended into conflict following the Soviet Invasion of 1979 only a small amount of quality social science research has been conducted. After 2001, sustained insecurity ensured that only a limited understanding of Afghanistan's social and political realities could be grasped. Moreover, international pressure to rapidly disburse large allocations of aid often resulted in interventions being premised, at best, on quick assessments. At worst, they were based

on ill-founded assumptions made by well-intentioned consultants who had been in the country for no more than a few weeks.

This resulted, for example, in development interventions based on the precarious assumption that following prolonged conflict Afghanistan had a 'social void' waiting to be filled (Brick, 2008). In many cases it is presumed that Afghan society is dysfunctional, lacks effective social institutions, and can easily be developed in a liberal form. And, the US-led NATO military agenda included poorly conceptualised and largely ineffective stabilisation operations aimed at 'winning hearts and minds' and strengthening the 'social fabric' of Afghan villages to resist the mounting insurgency (Fishstein, 2010; Gordon, 2011; and Gompelman, 2011). During my time in Afghanistan it became apparent to me that members of the international community, myself included, knew very little of the deep-rooted sociological currents at work in the country (Monsutti, 2009).

It was this combination of a growing intimacy with Afghanistan coupled with the mounting realisation that I knew very little of its nature that led me to my PhD. And, it was a combination of my personal interest in identity and the central importance of ethnicity in Afghanistan that led me to my research focus.

2. CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATIONS: ETHNICITY, IDENTITY AND AFGHANISTAN

Conceptually my thesis sits between three related groups of literature. The first discusses ethnicity theory. The second addresses identity theory, which encompasses the previous sub-field of ethnicity theory. Thirdly, I draw on the existing literature pertaining to ethnicity in Afghanistan. However, this tripartite division oversimplifies the literature I draw on in my thesis. Two qualifications are necessary. First, to be more specific, I draw mainly on pertinent anthropological and sociological sources,⁵ and to a lesser extent from the disciplines of social psychology and political science. This is an intentional focusing of my inquiry with the aim of delivering targeted theoretical and empirical contributions. This will be discussed further in the literature review in the following chapter.

Second, the reason I distinguish between the sub-field of ethnicity theory and the broader field of identity theory is that a number of pertinent theoretical insights, originating in the wider field of identity studies, have not yet been fully assimilated into ethnicity theory. This is perhaps unsurprising when we consider that ethnicity theory is preoccupied with

⁵ The disciplinary boundaries between social anthropology and sociology, especially in relation to ethnicity, are particularly ambiguous (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]).

only one form of identity—ethnic identity—whereas contemporary identity theory investigates not only the interrelationship of numerous forms of identity, but also the functioning of identity as a fragmented and discursively constructed phenomenon. Part of my analytical project is to contribute to the further assimilation of contemporary post-modern thought into the field of ethnicity theory.

As is clear by now, ethnicity is the central orienting concept in my research. To develop my conceptual framework, I initially draw from the most up-to-date theories of ethnicity before integrating cutting edge post-modern thinking from identity theory. However, it is a critical reading of the Afghan literature on ethnicity—and the subsequent application of the broader theoretical literature in a deductive manner—that determines the value added, and therefore the focus, of my research.

The next chapter in my thesis, entitled *Identifying Ethnicity: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework*, extensively discusses this literature on ethnicity and identity theory. To avoid duplication I outline only my core theoretical concepts here. I then move on to provide an overview of the Afghan literature regarding ethnicity, with the goal of identifying the added value of my research.

Core Concepts: Insights from Ethnicity and Identity Theory

As anthropology developed as a discipline a number of different theoretical approaches to the study of ethnicity developed. These included primordialist approaches, materialist approaches, instrumental approaches and, with the emergence of post-modernism, the constructionist approach (Wan and Vanderwerf, 2009). The evolution of these approaches can be linked to the development of theories underpinning thought in the social sciences: from cultural evolutionism, through structural-functionalism, to conflict theories, and post-modernism (*ibid*).

Primordial approaches view ethnicity as innate: individuals are born into bounded ‘ethnic groups’ defined by cultural characteristics (Stewart, 2008). Materialist approaches assume ethnicity is the product of class relations (Horowitz, 2000 [1985]). And, instrumentalist approaches assume political elites create, manipulate and utilise ‘ethnic’ symbols and rhetoric for political and material gain (Banks, 1996; Eriksen, 2002 [1993]). Finally, constructionist approaches, shift the focus of investigation from what ethnicity is to how it is (re)-constructed. This approach perceives ethnicity as constructed by both elites and ordinary people, within broad socio-historical processes (Chandra, 2001).

Throughout this process of theoretical development a number of theoretical insights emerged in relation to the nature of ethnicity. It was recognised that ethnicity is relational (Barth, 1998a [1969a]; Eriksen, 1992), intersectional (*ibid*) and context-dependent (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]).

While the constructionist approach to ethnicity has gained much momentum since the 1980s, the wider field of identity theory produced numerous theoretical critiques targeting ethnicity theory (Chapman *et al*, 1989; Hannerz, 1992; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992; Connor, 1994; Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Gerring and Baressi, 2003; Brubaker, 2004; and Carter and Fenton, 2010). The usage of ethnicity as an all encompassing and stand-alone analytical category was brought into question (Hannerz, 1992; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992; and Connor, 1994). These critiques were premised on insights originating in the wider field of identity studies, including the identification of identity as fragmented (Wetherell, 2010), intersectional (Crenshaw, 1989) and punctuated (Munro, 2004).

Drawing on contemporary theorists of ethnicity—principally the works of Rogers Brubaker and colleagues (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Brubaker, 2004; and Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox and Grancea, 2006)—I respond to these critiques; bridging these two key fields of literature in my research.

Integrating Insights, ‘Groups’ versus ‘Categories’: To integrate the insights emerging from post-modern thinking in the field of identity theory, I employ the notion of ethnicity proposed by Brubaker and his colleagues (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Brubaker, 2004; and Brubaker *et al*, 2006): Ethnicity operates through ethnic categories.

In essence, this conceptualisation of ethnicity—as operating through ethnic categories—is the third in a series of theorisations of how ethnicity functions. As mentioned above, the first, a primordial interpretation, sees ethnicity as the inherent and indisputable characteristic of a bounded and culturally defined group (Jenkins, 2008; Wan and Vanderwerf, 2009). An individual is born into an ‘ethnic group’ whose identity is defined by characteristic cultural traits.

This interpretation of ethnicity is utilised in a number of perennialist (i.e. pseudo-primordial) models of ethnicity today, including the widely cited development literature discussing ‘greed’ (e.g. Collier and Hoeffler, 2004) and ‘grievance’ (e.g. Stewart, 2002, 2008) arguments of so-called ‘ethnic conflict’. However, a reductionist critique can be

levelled at the primordial foundations of this economics-based research agenda. This will be discussed further in the following Chapter. Moreover, while this work is influential in development studies and has gained much currency with donor agencies, my research adopts a differing theorisation of ethnicity. I adopt a socio-political approach to analysis as opposed to an economic one, and in doing so recognise the highly complex nature of social interaction that underpins ethnic relations and the manifestation of ‘ethnic conflict’.

By far the most commonly utilised anthropological theorisation of ethnicity is that of the socially defined ‘ethnic group’. This constructionist interpretation sees ethnicity as operating through ‘ethnic groups’, which have porous social boundaries (Barth, 1998a [1969a]; Eriksen, 2002 [1993], 2010 [1995]). Individuals are able, through the manipulation of their identity and through changing patterns of categorisation, to cross ‘group boundaries’ thereby becoming a member of a different ‘ethnic group’ (*ibid*).

Brubaker argues for a third theorisation of ethnicity premised on the notion of ethnicity operating through ethnic categories. He introduces his argument with a critique of the commonly utilised notion of ethnicity as functioning through ‘ethnic groups’. He claims that by overemphasising ‘groupness’—conceiving of ‘ethnic groups’ as bounded and vested with agency—most constructionist scholars of ethnicity, while trying to emphasise the dynamic and plural nature of ethnic identities, implicitly reify ethnic identity treating ‘ethnic groups’ as unchanging and often unitary (Brubaker, 2004).

In Brubaker’s theorisation ethnicity is understood as a “modality of experience” (Brubaker et al, 2006: 207). By this he means that ethnicity is a way of seeing the world and of behaving in it, not an entity in the world and not something someone ‘possesses’ or ‘is’. Ethnic categories are used in cognitive processes, in that a person is categorised into one of a number of available categories, and they are a discursive resource to be deployed linguistically in the world. Brubaker *et al* (2006) claim that people ‘do things’ with ethnicity. When ethnicity is deployed as a discursive resource people’s ethnic identity becomes relevant. They enact it in response. Ethnicity is therefore an intermittent phenomenon during which people *become* temporarily ethnicised. They are not always ‘Hazarah’ or ‘Tajik’, for example, but become so when their ethnicity is called upon.

One practical clarification is required when distinguishing between ethnic categories and ‘ethnic groups’ throughout this thesis. On numerous occasions I refer to ethnic categories such as Hazarachs or Tajiks. In some instances, where unavoidable, I also refer to *the*

Qizilbash or *the* Saadat. In both of these cases, I am referring to an agglomeration of individuals who self-identify with one ethnic category, where a range of categories exist for them to choose from. I am not suggesting these terms represent groups with common purpose, or even groups with porous boundaries for that matter. I am implying that while they have the potential to operate collectively, they are in most cases not groups at all.

Analytical Implications, ‘Everyday Ethnicity’: Ethnic categories feature in cognitive processes and acts of categorisation. As such, the scope for the examination of ethnicity is greatly expanded: moving beyond the more traditional investigation of ethnicity in terms of broad structural forces and ethno-nationalist politics to a more localised and personal inquiry into the everyday. This analysis of ‘everyday ethnicity’ opens up an investigation of the functioning of ethnicity in daily settings and interactions.

Ethnicity in Afghanistan: An Overview of Existing Literature

This land is Afghanistan. It is the pride of every Afghan.

The land of peace, the land of the sword. Its sons are all brave.

This is the country of every tribe. The land of Baloch, of Uzbeks, of Pashtun, Hazarahs, of Turkmen and Tajiks.

With them, Arab and Gujjars, Pamiri, Nuristanis, Brahuis and Qizilbash. Also, Aimaq and Pashai.

National Anthem of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2006)

As with all analysis of ethnicity at that time, the early Western scholarly literature on ethnicity in Afghanistan was conceptualised from a primordialist perspective. Early English language texts, such as Major H. W. Bellew’s *The Races of Afghanistan* published in 1880, record the expeditions of explorers, diplomats and military officials operating out of British India (see Bellew, 1880; Maitland, 1891; and Elphinstone, 1969). In the pages of these reports the numerous ‘tribes’⁶ of Afghanistan are objectively classified. Moreover, early European anthropological missions map out the territorial distribution of the various ‘tribes’ encountered across Afghanistan, document their material culture, and unearth the biological origins and complex lineages of these distinct groups (see Bacon, 1951; Thesiger, 1955; Wilber, 1956; Bacon, 1951; Ferdinand, 1959; Owtadoiajam, 1976; and Schurmann, 1962).

⁶ The term ‘tribe’ will remain in inverted commas throughout the text to remind us that, often, the ‘tribes’ studied by anthropologists had no empirical existence (Southall, 1976; Kuper, 1988).

Following the publication of Barth's seminal work in 1969 (Barth, 1998a [1969a]), the scholars of ethnicity in Afghanistan slowly adopted a subjective theoretical standpoint (see Canfield, 1973a; Anderson and Strand, 1978; Orywal, 1986). Yet the adoption of this theoretical approach into the analysis of Afghan scholars was slow. Certain academics were still attempting to map out 'tribes' and 'ethnic origins' in the mid-to-late 1980s (see Tapper, 1988 for a discussion).⁷ Some scholars still implicitly assume a primordialist standpoint in their contemporary analysis (see ICG, 2003; Mazhar, Khan and Goraya, 2012; and Saikal, 2012).

Key instrumentalist works regarding ethnicity in Afghanistan demonstrated the manner in which leaders of the *mujahedin*, or Muslim resistance, employed ethnicity during the Soviet Invasion (1979-1989) and subsequent Civil War (1989-1998) to both legitimise the existence of their political movements and mobilise militias for combat (Shahrani and Canfield, 1984; Roy, 1990). More recent publications demonstrate the utilisation of ethnicity in presidential elections (Sharan and Heathershaw, 2011).

Constructionist approaches in the Afghan literature led to accounts of the way ethnicity has been constructed amidst broad socio-historical processes, including the formation of the Afghan state, British colonial endeavours, processes of economic modernisation, and the impacts of chronic conflict and large-scale migration resulting from the Soviet Invasion and the Civil War (Canfield, 1972, 1973a, 1973b, 1976, 1984, 1986, 1988, 2004; Anderson, 1978; Barfield, 1981, 2010, 2011; Tapper, 1983a, 1988, 1989, 1991, 2008; Edwards, 1986; Gawecki, 1986; Schetter, 2005; Shahrani, 1986, 2002a, 2002b; Temirkhanov, 1993; Emadi, 1997; Glatzner, 1998; Harpviken, 1998, 2009; Rubin, 2002; Monsutti, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012a, 2012b; and Ibrahimi, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2012).

The adoption of a constructionist approach to the study of ethnicity in Afghanistan has demonstrated the manner in which certain ethnic identifications have emerged. It has also shown the relational, interactional and context dependent nature of ethnicity in the Afghan context. Yet, there is a strong tendency in the constructionist literature to view ethnicity as operating through monolithic and constantly present 'ethnic groups'. So pervasive is this conceptualisation of ethnicity in the Afghan literature that, to my knowledge, only one scholar—Robert Canfield (see Canfield, 1973a)—explicitly refers to individuals crossing 'group boundaries'; while only two others, Richard Tapper (Tapper,

⁷ Indeed, this is a practice the US-led NATO military in Afghanistan continues at the present time (Reedy, 2012).

2008) and Conrad Schetter (see Schetter, 2004 and 2005)—imply ethnicity operates through ethnic categories. As such, the Afghan literature regarding ethnicity largely fails to capture the episodic or punctuated nature of ethnicity. In addition, few scholars adequately address the intersectional nature of ethnicity beyond the overlapping of ethnic and sectarian identities in the country (c.f. Monsutti, 2012a).

The adoption of a subjective theoretical standpoint, linked to instrumentalist and constructionist approaches to ethnicity, also repositioned thinking on the relationship between the state and ‘ethnic groups’ in the Afghan literature (Shahrani, 1986, 2002b). Much of the earlier literature on ethnicity in Afghanistan was based on the implicit assumption that ethnic, tribal and religious identities were antagonistic to the functioning of the state (Tapper, 1983a; Ahmed and Hart, 1984). Arguments assumed that ethnic, tribal and religious identity undermined state authority. However, the adoption of a social constructionist interpretation of ethnicity led to a different conclusion, in which government actions and policies contribute to social fragmentation and opposition to the state (Shahrani, 1986, 2002b).

Recently, a small body of constructionist literature on ethnicity in Afghanistan has emerged that investigates the manner in which the post-2001 process of political reconstruction has further reified ethnic categories (Schetter, 2004; Simonsen, 2004; Tapper, 2008; and Sharan and Heathershaw, 2011). This literature argues that this is the result of the explicit recognition of ethnic categories in the Afghan Constitution, in state policies and governance processes (*ibid*). Finally, while this recent literature has noted the impact of the state and contemporary political reconstruction on ethnicity, a small number of publications have documented the *differential* impacts of the post-2001 process of political reconstruction upon ethnicity and ethnic relations. This includes acknowledging the growing alienation felt by Pashtuns (ICG, 2003) and the rapidly improving status of Hazarachs (Saikal, 2012). Yet, these publications fall short of exploring the processes underpinning this changing dynamic.

The Added Value of my Research

The overview above indicates three main gaps in the Afghan literature on ethnicity to which my thesis contributes. Firstly, the existing literature is out-dated and lacks theoretical coherence. In this thesis I conceptually unpack and document, in the context of the Bamyan Valley, both the nature of ethnicity and the major processes underlying its (re)-construction. In other words, I illustrate the intersectional and punctuated nature of

ethnicity in the valley, whilst also systematically analysing the role of broad socio-historical processes, the state, and individuals—both elites and ordinary people—in the (re)-construction of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley.

Second, while the relationship between the state and ethnicity has been documented in contemporary Afghanistan there is very limited discussion of the localised and differential impacts of the state upon ethnicity and ethnic relations. The analysis contained in this thesis highlights the localised impacts of political reconstruction and socio-economic development upon ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley, including discussion of the differential impacts on Hazarachs, Saadat, and Tajiks.

Thirdly, existing constructionist analysis of ethnicity in Afghanistan has to date largely focused on processes of ethnogenesis, or the way ethnicity has emerged as socially relevant in the country. Moreover, this analysis treats ethnicity as operating solely through 'ethnic groups'. In this thesis I expand analysis beyond processes of ethnogenesis by analysing the way ethnicity is represented and experienced in everyday settings and interactions. To achieve this I broaden analysis of the emergence of ethnicity beyond the formative role of broad socio-historical processes and, at the same time, expand analysis regarding the operation of ethnicity beyond solely that of 'ethnic groups'. As such, this thesis emphasises the role of individuals in the (re)-construction of ethnicity and includes the functioning of 'everyday ethnicity', hereto an under-researched area in the Afghan literature. The conceptualisation of ethnicity as operating through ethnic categories instead of 'ethnic groups' is fundamental to this analysis.

While the three points outlined above indicate the *theoretical* contribution of my research, I also aim to add value through the production of a contemporary *empirical* contribution to the existing literature on ethnicity in Afghanistan. By documenting the contextual particularities of ethnicity and changing ethnic relations in the Bamyan Valley I provide a valuable addition to a corpus of literature notable for its dearth of empirical case studies.

Research Goal, Question and Objectives

To summarise, the goal of my thesis is: to produce a theoretically framed, historically informed and empirically grounded analysis of the nature of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley from 2010-2012.

In line with this research goal, and to recapitulate the various analytical threads I briefly discussed above, the central research question informing my thesis is: How do we account for the changing salience, functioning and (re)-construction of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley, Afghanistan from 2010 to 2012?

Three key assumptions underpin the formulation of my central research question. First, is the assumption that ethnicity is not only relational, interactional and context dependent in character but also intersectional and punctuated. Given insights from ethnicity and identity theory I start with the assumption that this is the way ethnicity functions. I am also particularly inclined, given its relative absence in ethnicity theory, to demonstrate the intersectional and punctuated nature of ethnicity. Second, and closely related to the first assumption, is that ethnicity operates through ethnic categories, not 'ethnic groups'. I explicitly seek to investigate how this happens in the Bamyan Valley. Thirdly, I seek to understand better the *interaction* of structure and agency, or of individuals drawing upon and (re)-constructing ethnic categories, and how this happens *within* socio-historical processes. In this regard, given the dearth of local level analysis of the (re)-construction of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley, and more generally in Afghanistan, I seek to explore how this process unfolds in my field site.

While I seek to document the nature of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley throughout my thesis, it is these assumptions with which I will critically engage throughout my empirical analysis and conclusion. Therefore, to help clarify the trajectory of my analysis I have further unpacked my research question into a series of research objectives. The research assumptions discussed above feature in objectives iii to v, whilst objectives i and ii represent accounts of the historical and contemporary investigation of ethnicity required for subsequent theoretical analysis.

My research objectives are:

- i. Account for the emergence and changing salience of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley from 1500 to 2010;
- ii. Document the nature of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley, including how ethnicity is represented and experienced in everyday settings and interactions, from 2010 to 2012;
- iii. Assess, where possible, the intersectional and punctuated character of ethnicity, in the Bamyan Valley, from 2010 to 2012;

- iv. Investigate the operation of ethnicity through ethnic categories, in the Bamyan Valley, from 2010 to 2012; and
- v. Analyse the role, if any, of socio-historical processes, including contemporary political reconstruction and socio-economic development, and the agency of political elites and ordinary people in the (re)-construction of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley, from 2010 to 2012.

While the research goal articulated above has essentially remained constant, the research question, assumptions and associated objectives have evolved throughout my research process. This can be attributed to both processual and personal factors in my research. Firstly, with regard to process, the utilisation of a 'grounded theory' approach during the early stages of my fieldwork had an impact. I employed such an approach to minimise potential prejudices arising from the application of existing theory to the context of my field site. This approach necessarily demanded the boundaries of the inquiry be formalised *after* preliminary empirical findings were identified. At the same time, it was only after fieldwork was completed and when a more extensive review of literature on identity theory was conducted that it became clear that there were major gaps in the existing Afghan literature, which this thesis could contribute toward.

Secondly, and from a more personal perspective, I was keen to contribute to the Afghan literature on ethnicity. This was born of my professional background and desire to be more 'applied' in my analysis. This led me to seeing a great value in the integration of new theory (i.e. of utilising ethnic categories, and highlighting the intersectional and punctuated nature of ethnicity). This is discussed further below. In addition, my experiences of fieldwork led me to believe that the existing literature failed to adequately account for the functioning of ethnicity in Afghanistan. This was a product of both my observations and the co-generation of information with research participants, but also stemmed from my personal experiences of reflecting upon the utilisation of my own identity during fieldwork. This will be discussed initially below, before also being analysed in *Chapter Four: Everyday Ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley*.

Given these factors my research question, assumptions and objectives were only finalised late in the process of analysis. Moreover, a deductive approach to analysis emerged at this later stage. This deductive approach involved the application of theoretical insights obtained from a review of state-of-the-art ethnicity and identity theory to the empirical

information co-generated during fieldwork. Ultimately, contributions will be made to the Afghan literature regarding ethnicity.

Research Limitations and Constraints

During my analysis and write-up it became increasingly clear to me that a number of factors had resulted in me taking an overly ethnicised analytical approach in my research. This included my personal motivations, the contemporary salience of ethnicity in Afghanistan and the existing literature on identity in Afghanistan, which takes a predominantly ethnicised view of social relations. This resulted in me initially over-stressing the ethnic dimension of identity as opposed to analytically embracing its multiple dimensions. This is akin to Walker Connor's critique, in which he claims ethnicity is employed, "... as a cloak for several different types of identity" and analytically it, "presumes that all identities are of the same order" (Connor, 1994: 101-102). However, I have attempted to mitigate this overemphasis conceptually in my analysis by both highlighting the intersectional nature of ethnicity and by conceptualising ethnicity as operating through ethnic categories. The latter emphasises the punctuated nature of ethnicity and avoids the inadvertent reification of ethnicity in my thesis.

On a more practical level my fieldwork was constrained by both security conditions and prevailing social norms. In terms of security my movement outside of the Bamiyan Valley was severely restricted and accordingly my research reflects only the perspectives of those residing in this relatively small peri-urban environment. Finally, the requirement for me to work through a host organisation—as stipulated by my University in response to high levels of insecurity in Afghanistan—potentially resulted in my research participants associating me with AKF; and therefore possibly moderating the information they shared with me. AKF—although secular in practice—was founded by His Highness the Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of the global Isma'ili community. It is also a major actor in the delivery of development assistance in Bamiyan Province.

In addition to insecurity the prevailing social norms in the Bamiyan Valley constrained my research. In particular, norms of gendered segregation meant that it was challenging for me to interview female research participants. It was possible for me to interview older women, but only rarely was I able to conduct a private one-to-one interview with them. Accessing younger female research participants was extremely challenging. I was not able to talk privately with young or unmarried Bamiyani women. In a bid to minimise this bias I worked closely with two female research assistants. They undertook a number

of interviews, group discussions and informal conversations with Bamyani women of all ages. These interviews were conducted in unsupervised session with considerable preparation and follow-up with myself. My inability to directly interview female research participants contributed to a gendered bias in both the content of information generated through fieldwork and my subsequent analysis. However, the utilisation of female research assistants contributed to redressing this bias.

3. GEOGRAPHICAL ORIENTATIONS: RESEARCHING BAMYAN

The ethnographic fieldwork central to the investigation of ethnicity in this thesis could have, in theory, been carried out in many parts of Afghanistan. However, a number of considerations, some conceptual and some pragmatic, led to the selection of the Bamyan Valley as my primary field site. The Bamyan Valley composes the majority of Bamyan District, which is the capital district of Afghanistan's Bamyan Province. A small number of key informant interviews were also conducted in the capital city of Afghanistan, Kabul.

This section opens with an introduction to the Bamyan Valley, which is then followed by a discussion of the considerations that led to its selection.

An Introduction to my Field Site: The Bamyan Valley, Afghanistan

In early 2007, for a work assignment, I had driven on one of the two unsealed roads connecting Kabul to Bamyan Town. Now those roads are too insecure to travel. Both pass through Taliban held territory. Returning to Bamyan for my fieldwork in mid-December 2010, I travelled the 125 km from Kabul to Bamyan Town in an old Russian helicopter commandeered by the United Nations (UN) for humanitarian flights.

Flying northwest from Kabul I watched the urban neighbourhoods change, first, to dusty lowland plains and then dramatically to the snow-capped mountains of Afghanistan's Central Highlands region. I peered out of the helicopter's small window and made out the small strips of habitation in this mountainous expanse. Thin green cultivated tracts of land followed the fast-paced mountain watercourses. In the highlands winters last for six months and the agricultural season is short. I saw small plots of wheat, barley and alfalfa dotted around the lower reaches of the upland valleys. The former, wheat, is grown for subsistence and the latter two crops, barley and alfalfa, for animal fodder.

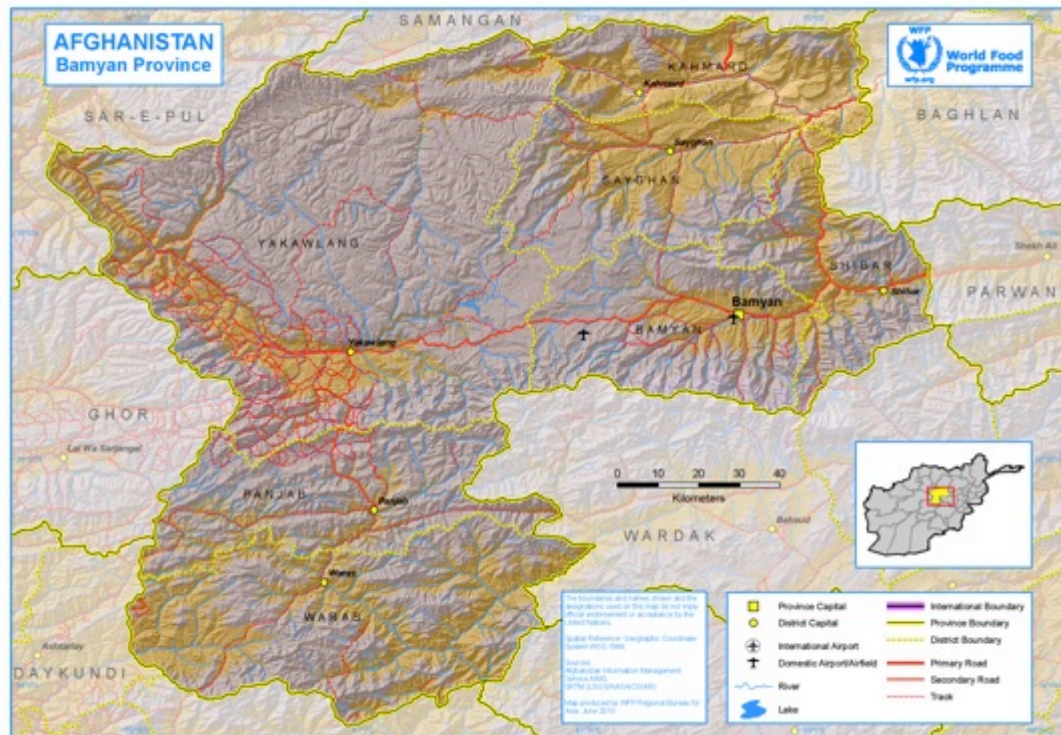


FIGURE 1: MAP OF BAMYAN PROVINCE (SOURCE: WFP, 2013)

I saw, thanks to the helicopter's slow progress, small groups of livestock interspersed between groupings of mud-coloured buildings. Given the relatively small amounts of cultivatable land a household will also subsist on a handful of goats and/or sheep, which will graze in *ailoqs*, or communal upland pastures, in the summer and on stockpiled fodder during the winter. Dry shrubs and herbs are also collected from the upland areas for fuel and medicinal purposes, respectively. Finally, looking down upon the desolate landscape I spotted one or two grazing donkeys. These beasts of burden are commonly used to carry harvested crops or, once a month, goods—such as large tins of cooking oil, sacks of rice, highly prized black and green tea, and bags of sugared almonds for visiting guests—from lowland market centres to the remote upland communities of the highlands.

After flying deep into the highlands we finally crossed the spine of the *Koh-e-Baba*, or Father Mountains, which make up the southern boundary of the Bamyan Valley and the district of the same name. Bamyan District is one of seven districts that constitute the larger Bamyan Province, and functions as the province's administrative and economic hub. As the helicopter descended, I was greeted with a breath-taking view of the valley. In addition to a number of branch valleys running into the surrounding mountains, the Bamyan Valley forms the core of Bamyan District. At an altitude of 2,500m the large valley, running east-to-west, is nestled between the inhabited *Koh-e-Baba* to the south and the

dry and largely uninhabited *Hindu Kush*, or Hindu Killer, mountains to the north. At the foot of the *Hindu Kush*, on the northern edge of the valley, I was able to see the famous Buddha niches and monastic caves carved into imposing red sandstone cliffs. Following their partial destruction by the Taliban in early 2001, UNESCO awarded these awe-inspiring Buddhist relics World Heritage Site status in 2003.

A few minutes later the helicopter touched down on the rough gravel airstrip outside Bamyan Town's airport: a container and small mud brick building. As I stepped from the helicopter I took a deep breath of the clean and cool mountain air. I relaxed having escaped the dangers, pollution and stress of Kabul. I pulled on a thick jumper and then surveyed my surroundings.

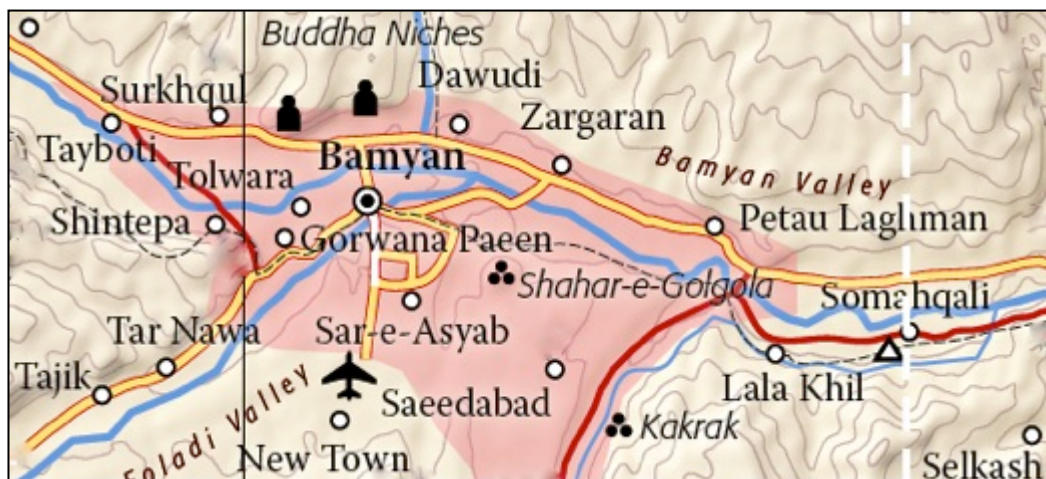


FIGURE 2: MAP OF CENTRAL BAMYAN VALLEY (SOURCE: AKF, 2013)

Bamyan Town is found on the *Tagaw*, a broad stepped plateau in the middle of the normally thin and steep-sided Bamyan Valley. The town itself is nothing more than a group of villages and cultivated land clustered around a central *bazaar*, or marketplace. Spread over a step in the plateau the town is formed of 'upper' and 'lower' Bamyan Town. The upper portion of the provincial centre is composed of the airstrip, the recently founded New Town, the long established Sar-e-Asyab village, and the nearby military base (known as the Provincial Reconstruction Team [PRT], which at the time of fieldwork was staffed by the New Zealand and Malaysian military).

New Town includes recently constructed government buildings and new brick built residential areas. It has been occupied for no more than five years following the establishment of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, which resulted in strict limitations on urban development in 'lower' Bamyan Town. Sar-e-Asyab, on the other hand, is a village

with a long history of government allegiance. In addition to the homes of over one hundred and fifty families, it houses decrepit government buildings from a by-gone era, a handful of hotels catering to domestic and international customers, and the vast majority of office compounds belonging to NGOs and UN agencies.

‘Lower’ Bamyan Town sits directly beneath its ‘upper’ counterpart. The Bamyan Town *bazaar*, running for over a kilometre, starts at the foot of the plateau and snakes across the *Tagaw*. It houses all the major commercial and financial institutions serving Bamyan and includes the province’s road transport hub. In addition to the central Shi’i *masjid*, or mosque, and a large timber yard, banks, moneylenders, antique shops, mobile phone stores, hotels, *chai khanas*, or teahouses, and numerous retailers of food and non-food items can be found in the bustling *bazaar*. The main University of Bamyan campus and Bamyan Hospital can be found to the north of this commercial area. Two important *ziyaratgah*, or shrines, close to the *bazaar*, also form part of the ‘lower’ town. These are the large shrine of Mir Hashim and the smaller shrine of Sayid Ali, both of which mark the graves of legendary Saadat long dead. Finally, a number of villages—including Tolwara that houses the main Sunni *masjid*—are spread around the periphery of the *bazaar* all of which are collectively known as ‘lower’ Bamyan Town.

Most of the buildings in Bamyan Town are made from mud brick, poplar timber and are set upon crude stone foundations. As a result, none are higher than two floors. They are not that dissimilar to the buildings of the mountain villages I had flown over on my helicopter journey. Yet, given the bustling local economy that has sprung up since 2001 some households in Bamyan Town pursue more diverse and profitable livelihoods than their rural brethren. They might, for example, have a small store in the *bazaar* or rear livestock for sale in one of the numerous butcher shops. In some cases inhabitants of Bamyan Town farm cash crops including apples, poplar timber or Bamyan’s ‘white gold’, potatoes. Finally, for those able to secure one, a salaried job with an NGO or UN agency can support an entire family.

A former colleague and friend of mine, Mohammad Reza,⁸ met me at the airport. He self-identifies as a Hazarah, is in his mid-thirties and works for a local NGO. After living in Kabul for many years he returned to his family home in Bamyan Town following the US-led invasion of Afghanistan. After exchanging a bear hug embrace and extensive greetings customary in Afghanistan, we loaded my luggage into his old Corolla. During the short

⁸ This is a pseudonym used for the purposes of anonymity.

drive to my guesthouse Reza updated me on local politics and recent security incidents. I also used the drive to gather some preliminary demographic information from Reza. He explained that the population of Bamyan was hard to estimate as not only had no census been undertaken in recent decades, but also “thousands of Hazarachs and Saadat had returned to Bamyan Town” since relative security was established by the PRT in 2002 (Field Notes, December 2010). This was primarily as a result of Bamyan Province being perceived as the centre of the *Hazarahjat*, or the homeland of Hazarachs.⁹ I later found out from official sources that the population of Bamyan District was estimated, in 2012, at 86,550 (CSO, 2012) and that an estimated 8,345 returnees¹⁰ had resettled in Bamyan District between 2002 and 2012 (UNHCR, 2012).

Reza went on to tell me that, “approximately 75 per cent of the population of the Bamyan Valley are Hazarah” (Field Notes, December 2011), and that “a further 15 per cent are Saadat” (*ibid*). He explained Hazarachs and Saadat live intermingled in mixed communities throughout the valley. Tajiks, Reza informed me, “make up an estimated 10 per cent of the valley’s population” (*ibid*). They reside mainly in homogenous communities running along the northern fringe of the Bamyan Valley, but also in a few mixed communities—alongside Hazarachs and Saadat—in ‘lower’ Bamyan Town. Finally, Reza estimated that, “less than one half a per cent of the population are Qizilbash,¹¹ who live almost exclusively in Sar-e-Asyab village in ‘upper’ Bamyan Town” (*ibid*). These approximate proportions were later confirmed through a number of discussions with key informants, including the Governor and *rish sufids*, or elders (literally: white beards) who self-identified with the various ethnic categories common to Bamyan.

Our discussion on local demographics ended as we arrived at the AKF guesthouse that would be my home for the majority of my fieldwork. I shook hands with Reza and thanked him profusely. He deftly avoided accepting my praise. In return he welcomed me to Bamyan and thanked me for coming to “tell the story of the Hazarah” (*ibid*).

Selecting my Field Site: Why the Bamyan Valley?

In certain ways Mohammad Reza’s presumption regarding the purpose of my research was not incorrect. While my goal of conducting fieldwork in Bamyan was not solely to ‘tell

⁹ The *Hazarahjat* is comprised of parts of nine central and northern provinces of present-day Afghanistan and is centered upon Bamyan Town.

¹⁰ This is the number of assisted returns supported by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). This does not include spontaneous returns or deportation to Afghanistan and as such the actual numbers are likely to be higher than indicated here.

¹¹ Qizilbash (sing.), Qizilbash (pl.).

the Hazarah story', it was part of the rationale for the selection of my field site. In fact, a number of factors led in combination to its selection as my primary field site. These considerations related to ensuring social diversity, utilising my identity, capturing emergent dynamics of sociological change, and minimising risk.

Ensuring Social Diversity: One of my first prerequisites for selecting a field site was an environment that included a broad diversity in terms of social differentiation. In many locations across Afghanistan local forms of identity persist alongside gendered, ethnic, and religious identities. However, in the Bamyan Valley—and indeed across the entire province—a more complex social spectrum emerges with religious identity further differentiated in terms of sectarian identities. The Bamyan Valley is home to not only individuals identifying with differing ethnic categories, namely Hazarahs, Saadat, Qizilbash and Tajiks, but also with sectarian categories. These principally include: (i) *Dowazda Imami* (Twelver, literally: Of Twelve Imams)¹² or Jafari (i.e. an adherent of the Jafari school of Shi'i Islam) in more formal terms; (ii) Isma'ili¹³ or Nizari (i.e. an adherent of the Nizari school of Shi'i Islam) in more formal terms; and (iii) Sunni, or Hanafi (i.e. an adherent of the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam) in more formal terms. As a result of the historical formation of social differentiation ethnic and sectarian identities closely intersect and overlap in the Bamyan Valley. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

Utilising my Identity: As discussed earlier in this chapter, through earlier work in Afghanistan I became acutely aware of the role my Iranian identity played in ingratiating myself with Afghan friends and colleagues. As a result I was conscious of selecting a field site that allowed me to best utilise my identity to build rapport with the various individuals I encountered. In a related manner I also sought to identify a field site in which I could utilize my partial Farsi/Dari language proficiency. The Bamyan Valley provided such an ideal location. Firstly, given the strong sectarian sentiment in Bamyan many Shi'i Bamyanis feel a strong affiliation with Iran. While many Shi'i Bamyanis do not look favourably upon the Iranian *regime*, as a result of the regime's sponsorship of civil war in Afghanistan in 1980s and 1990s, they almost all feel a strong affinity with the Iranian *people* given their shared culture and sectarian beliefs. Moreover, while Tajiks profess a differing sectarian affiliation, they do claim to share Aryan biological descent with Iranians. This allowed me to utilise differing aspects of my Iranian identity to engender

¹² In recognition of the line of twelve spiritual and political leaders they view as the rightful successors and descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. Also known as *Ithna Ashariya* in Arabic.

¹³ In recognition of Imam Isma'il, the son of the sixth Shi'i Imam Jafar al-Sadiq. Isma'ilis, unlike *Dowazda Imamis*, perceive Ismail as the seventh Imam. Also known, in derogatory terms, as *Shash Imami* (literally: Of Six Imams) referring to the first six Imams they commonly recognise with the Jafaris.

rapport with individuals identifying with all of the major ethnic categories common to the Bamyan Valley.

Secondly, Bamyan is an area in which residents predominantly speak Dari, or dialects of Dari, as opposed to some other regions of Afghanistan that are predominantly Pashto speaking. In this regard, all Bamyans spoke a dialect of Dari to which I could adapt my Farsi.

Capturing Emergent Dynamics of Sociological Change: Another criterion leading to the selection of the Bamyan Valley as my field site was my desire to capture recent dynamics of sociological change. As discussed earlier in this chapter, since 2001 major changes have been witnessed in both the relative standing of ‘ethnic groups’ at the national level in Afghanistan and the perceived distribution of political power and material resources between them. By selecting the Bamyan Valley—a location with a large and historically marginalised Hazarah population living alongside other ‘ethnic groups’—I aimed to analyse the role of ethnicity in the changing post-2001 distribution of productive resources.

Minimising Risk: Finally, chronic insecurity and violence in Afghanistan posed a number of challenges in locating a suitable field site. First, to ensure that my fieldwork was of sufficient quality I would necessarily require unconstrained access to and mobility within my selected field site. As is commonplace in Afghanistan, the provision of close protection security would undermine rapport, skew information gathered, and likely draw unwanted attention—and the increased risk of violence or intimidation—to my research participants and I. The Bamyan Valley, one of the safest areas in Afghanistan, was therefore selected to allow for a relative degree of mobility and security during data collection. Moreover, this allowed me to undertake the long-term engagement and observation crucial to ethnographic fieldwork.

Second, as part of the Risk Assessment and Ethical Review process required by IDS and the University of Sussex (UoS) I was required to identify a host organisation. It was through personal relationships, based on previous work experience in Afghanistan, that such a relationship was developed. AKF kindly acted as my host organisation. However, given their specific geographical presence in Afghanistan only a small number of potential field sites existed (i.e. AKF operates, through four regional offices, in seven provinces of Afghanistan). Moreover, given the long-term exposure required to undertake

ethnographic fieldwork the safest of these locations, the Bamyan Valley, was selected as my field site. This selection proved to be wise. During the fieldwork timeframe security in the other locations in which AKF operated rapidly deteriorated.

4. METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS: RESEARCHING ETHNICITY

In this section I discuss the methodological positioning of my research. I begin by discussing the theoretical components of my methodology; including my philosophical standpoint, my research method and analytical approach, and research techniques. I then reflect on my research process, including experiences of research design, fieldwork, analysis and write up.

Philosophical Standpoint: Critical Realism

I was always aware that the philosophical standpoint I utilised in my thesis would shape my research. Given my background as a practitioner I was keen to keep my work, albeit very social in nature, firmly in the realm of applied research. It's important to me that my work is of value to enlightened practitioners working in Afghanistan. It was for this reason that I chose a critical realist philosophical standpoint (Bhaskar, 1997 [1975], 1998; Sayer, 2000). The selection was made based upon my desire to balance a required degree of inward reflexivity with a focus on investigating ethnicity. Critical realism allows for such a balancing: it argues that, ontologically, there is a stratified reality existing independent of human consciousness and, epistemologically, that our knowledge of this reality is socially produced and defined (Davies, 2008 [1998]; Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen, and Karlsson, 2002).

The adoption of such a philosophical standpoint has implications both generally, in relation to undertaking social science research, and more specifically in relation to investigating ethnicity.

Critical Realism and Reflexivity: Epistemologically, critical realism asserts that our knowledge of social reality is *socially produced* and *defined* (Bhaskar, 1997 [1975], 1998; Sayer, 2000; Davies, 2008 [1998]; and Danermark *et al*, 2002). As such, critical realist thinking acknowledges that research in the social sciences, “is inextricably tied to questions of meaning and interpretation due to the self-conscious nature of its subject matter” (Davies, 2008: 6). The ‘self-conscious subject matter’ referred to above includes not only those people studied, i.e. research participants, but also the researcher.

As I outlined in the personal motivations section at the beginning of this chapter, my positionality strongly impacted both my choice of topic and the general approach I have taken in this research. This includes my disciplinary background, professional experiences in Afghanistan, and my identity. Moreover, the relationship I developed with research participants in the Bamyan Valley and, indeed, my very presence there, impacts upon the nature of the information that I ‘co-generate’ with them (*ibid*). Furthermore, these relationships and the co-generation of information they contribute to underpin the subsequent analysis I undertake and the conclusions I draw. Recognising this, critical realism calls for the researcher to also be an object of research (Davies, 2008).

The realisation that social research generates knowledge, which reflects relations of power, is not self-defeating. Critical realism embraces the hermeneutical nature of social science research. Proponents of the standpoint argue it is plausible to investigate social reality by taking account of the socially produced nature of knowledge; including, importantly, the researcher’s role in the generation of that knowledge (Bhaskar, 1997 [1975], 1998; Sayer, 2000; Davies, 2008 [1998]; and Danermark *et al*, 2002). In other words, I can investigate the nature of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley by taking account of the multiplicity of socially-produced understandings of ethnicity held by Bamyanis, but also, importantly, by being sensitive to my role in framing, researching, analysing and representing knowledge on ethnicity (Davies, 2008). As such, I adopt “a continuing reflexive awareness” throughout the process of my research (*ibid*: 23). Following Charlotte Aull Davies (Davies, 2008), I take reflexivity to mean “a process of self-reference”, which in the context of social research “refers to the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personal and process of doing research” (Davies, 2008: 4). In addition, I take this ‘reflexive awareness’ to be ‘continuing’ in that it is to be maintained throughout all phases of my research process, including research framing, information generation, analysis and representation (Roberts and Sanderson, 2005).

Critical Realism, Historicity and Change: Ontologically, critical realism predicates that social reality is stratified (Bhaskar, 1997 [1975], 1998; Sayer, 2000; Davies, 2008 [1998]; and Danermark *et al*, 2002). Thus, critical realism recognises both structure and agency: “society and human individuals represent distinct but inextricably interconnected ontological levels, with each dependent on the other for their existence, yet capable of exerting deterministic force on, or of transforming, the other” (Davies, 2008: 20). Moreover, it is through interaction of these ‘distinct but inextricably interconnected ontological levels’—of structure and agency—that new states of social reality are

elaborated over time (Archer, 1995). In turn, this elaboration results in either the reproduction or transformation of social reality (*ibid*).

The realisation that social reality is stratified has two major implications for social science research. Firstly, it implies that it is necessary to understand the prior conditions that have produced a state of social reality. In turn, this “introduces a necessary historicity into explanation along with an acceptance of the contingency of social explanation” (Davies, 2008: 20). In other words, to understand the nature of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley I must interpret—along with other types of inquiry—the historical formation of ethnicity. At the same time, I must also accept that the understandings of ethnicity I develop are embedded in time and place. They are understanding of ethnicity particular to the Bamyan Valley—contingent on certain historical circumstances—and specific to this current moment in time, which is but one moment in an unfolding process of emergent change (Archer, 1995).

Secondly, recognising the interaction of structure and agency results in social elaboration implies that the (re)-construction of ethnicity can occur through two general processes. On the one hand, Bamyans draw on and conform to existing ethnic categories thereby reproducing these categories. On the other hand, Bamyans negotiate and contest these same categories resulting in their transformation (*ibid*).

Research Method and Techniques

Given my disciplinary background and the topic under investigation, ethnicity, I have chosen to utilise the ethnographic method throughout the various stages of my research process. Following Charlotte Aull Davies (Davies, 2008) I take the ethnographic method to be, “a research process based on fieldwork using a variety of mainly (but not exclusively) qualitative research techniques but including engagement in the lives of those being studied over an extended period of time” (2008: 5). I also utilise a series of qualitative research techniques as components of my ethnographic method. This includes Observation, Informal Discussion, Semi-Structured Interview, Oral History, Group Discussion, Research Assistant and Reflective Diary research techniques.

In addition, drawing on the discussion of critical realism above I adopt both a reflexive and historical approach to ethnography. My approach to ethnographic analysis is reflexive in that it includes, as outlined above, ‘a continuing reflexive awareness’. It is historical in

terms of incorporating both an analysis of historicity and emergent change—resulting from the interaction of structure and agency—into the ethnographic research process.

It is also germane at this point to acknowledge the contingent and socially defined nature of the understanding of ethnicity I attain through my research. I do not develop a meta-narrative or grand theory of ethnicity in this thesis. Nor is my interpretation of ethnicity generalisable: it is not applicable to elsewhere in Afghanistan (Danermark *et al*, 2002). Instead, I generate an explanation of the functioning and (re)-construction of ethnicity grounded in the geographic and temporal realities of the Bamyān Valley from 2010 to 2012.

Reflections of Research: Framing, Fieldwork, Analysis and Write-Up

I presented my Research Outline Seminar (ROS) in May 2010. The ROS is an assessment benchmark required by IDS and UoS, which must be undertaken before fieldwork can commence. Like many doctoral students at this stage, my research was somewhat ambitious and unrefined. At that time my research hadn't fully coalesced around an investigation of ethnicity and instead focused on the more abstract concepts of 'group identity', 'power' and 'social change'. Moreover, while it was focused on Afghanistan it hadn't targeted a particular thematic issue, such as the role of group identity in land disputes or local elections. While the former point was the result of a lack of clarity on my part, the latter was deliberate. Confident that I had a suitable grasp of the context from my previous work in Afghanistan, I intentionally adopted an emergent research approach that would allow me to identify the key thematic issues for investigation in the initial months of fieldwork (Bryant and Charmaz, 2010). This open approach to research, whilst allowing for the organic identification of issues for analysis, also posed numerous challenges in terms of analysis and write-up. Without a clear issue upon which to pin my analysis I was faced with a huge breadth of issues to navigate in my analysis.

Risk Assessment and Ethical Considerations: My ROS also made many people at IDS rather uncomfortable. I was, after all, the first IDS student planning to undertake fieldwork in Afghanistan. In addition, Anthropology in present day Afghanistan comes with a legacy of exploitation. For example, recent attempts by ISAF forces to map 'human terrain' and 'weaponise culture' have received heavy criticism (Network of Concerned Anthropologists, 2009). These concerns resulted in an exhaustive risk assessment and ethical review process. Ethical considerations were chiefly of two kinds: (i) the physical and mental wellbeing of my research assistants and research participants; and (ii) my

physical and mental wellbeing. The corresponding risk assessment was focused on whether chronic insecurity in Afghanistan would permit the research to be undertaken.

With regard to the physical and mental wellbeing of my research assistants and research participants I proposed a number of measures for fieldwork. These related to maintaining confidentiality and anonymity (Davies, 2008; ASA, 2011), and negotiating informed 'meaningful' consent (Homan, 1991; ASA, 2011). 'Meaningful' informed consent is considered to be consent, "based in understanding and free of coercion" (Davies, 2008: 58).

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, all information was from the point of collection to be kept anonymous through the use of pseudonyms. Moreover, information was to be stored securely (password protected) on my laptop and backed up on a separate (password protected) flash drive (ASA, 2011). Furthermore, the importance of adhering to these measures was to be stressed with research assistants.

Ensuring informed 'meaningful' consent was more challenging. Prior to collecting any data the following was to be discussed with potential research participants (*ibid*): (i) the background and professional identity of the researcher or research assistant (including the institutions I represent and have received funding from); (ii) the reason for the study (i.e. as part of my PhD); (iii) the nature of confidentiality and anonymity afforded to the research participant; (iv) the secure and anonymous nature of data storage; (v) the potential products of the research (e.g. publications) and the ways the information research participants contributed could be presented publicly (e.g. quotations and case studies); (vi) that participation in this research is not linked to financial payments or development assistance; and (vii) that participation in the research was potentially hazardous. Furthermore, participants were to be directly asked whether they believed that participating in the research would increase the chance of them being subjected to harm. Where this was the case the discussion would immediately be brought to an end. Following this discussion any questions raised by the potential research participant would also be discussed.

At this point, where a digital audio recorder was required, consent to use the device would be sought from the potential research participant. I (and my research assistants) always offered research participants the alternative option of recording the conversation using the more traditional method of pen and paper. The use of digital audio recorders will be

discussed further below. Consent to participate in the research would then be sought. This, given the high levels of illiteracy in Afghanistan, was to be agreed orally. Where a recording device was used agreement to consent was recorded. The right of research participants to refuse participation would be respected (Davies, 2008; ASA 2011). Finally, in cases where research participants were the subjects of on-going observation or repeat discussions consent would be renegotiated (Davies, 2008; ASA, 2011). This was essential as informed consent is a process not a one time event: on each occasion, both the researcher and research participant bring new understandings to the encounter, potential risks are increased with repeat association, and research participants may become overly familiar with the researcher forgetting that the primary purpose of their presence is to collect data (*ibid*).

One final consideration was required with regard to informed ‘meaningful’ consent. This related to the way that I communicated my research (Davies, 2008). It is important to determine the way research is presented to potential research participants by considering, “the effects of this disclosure in terms of whether it is comprehensible, how it is likely to be interpreted and how it may affect the subsequent behaviour and ideas of participants” (Davies, 2008: 57). In this regard, to assist with comprehension, to avoid comparison with needs assessments undertaken by NGOs in the Bamyān Valley, and to provide an indirect entry point for discussions relating to group identity, I presented my research as, “gathering information to write a book on life in Bamyān”.

These measures were approved through the ethical review process. However, IDS and UoS also specified the following requirements, aimed at preserving my physical and mental wellbeing. I was required to identify a host organisation (whose security protocols I would follow and who I would be accommodated by); secure full ‘war and terrorism’ insurance; only undertake research within the boundaries of Bamyān District (one of the safest districts in Afghanistan); and be prepared to leave Afghanistan at the request of IDS should security significantly deteriorate. I agreed to these provisions. With the kind support of my research team at IDS—the Participation, Power and Social Change (PPSC) Team—I secured full insurance cover for my fieldwork period. In addition, drawing on previous networks in Afghanistan I developed a relationship with AKF, one of the largest NGOs operating in Bamyān Province.

While this latter arrangement was highly advantageous it did pose a major challenge. I was conscious that if I was too closely associated with my host organisation, research

participants might associate my research with on-going development assistance offered by AKF. More problematic was the potential of being perceived as Isma'ili. AKF, while a highly respected *secular* development organisation, was founded and is directed by His Highness the Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of the global Isma'ili community (AKF, 2013). In other circumstances this association would be unproblematic. But, given that sectarian identity was highly salient in the Bamyan Valley the perception of me being Isma'ili could be highly counterproductive in my research. As such, and with agreement from them, I chose to downplay my association with AKF in public. While it was clear to many people in Sar-e-Asyab that I lived at an AKF guesthouse, it was important for me to clarify that I did not work for the organisation. This was primarily achieved by me explaining, whenever possible, that I paid for accommodation in AKF's guesthouse and was simply a guest. Bamyanis generally saw this as acceptable as very few foreigners live outside of guesthouses in Afghanistan.

Fieldwork Process and Approach: With my ROS approved and ethical review complete I was cleared to begin fieldwork. I planned to 'hit the ground running'. Yet, in the weeks following receipt of my approval it became increasingly clear that obtaining a long-term visa to Afghanistan was going to be a challenge. New visa regulations had just been established, and while tourists were still permitted a one-month entry visa (and a stay of up to three months with daily fines) the procedure to obtain a work permit or resident visa was very strict and heavily bureaucratic.

After failing to obtain a work permit, an initial tourist visa was obtained for me by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), a research institute based in Kabul. It quickly became clear to me that I would have to undertake my fieldwork in short two to three months phases. For each phase I would obtain a tourist visa and then navigate bureaucracy and pay fines to remain in Afghanistan for a period of up to three months. As a result my fieldwork took place in four distinct phases between 2010 and 2012. These were timed where possible to allow me to observe major socio-cultural, political, and agricultural events in the life cycle of the Bamyan Valley. The first three of these research phases totalled eight months, spanning from mid-December 2010 to end-November 2011. A six-week reflection break was undertaken, as planned, at IDS between the second and third of these phases, in mid-2011. Other breaks were used to transfer my reflective diary and field notes from notebook to laptop; to develop new interview schedules; and to reflect on emerging research findings. The fourth and final phase of my fieldwork lasted four months and was conducted remotely. My research assistants, who will be discussed

below, carried out research in the Bamyan Valley while I oversaw the process remotely from outside of Afghanistan with the use of email, telephone and Skype.

In the first phase of my research I tasked myself with recruiting and training research assistants; developing some new, and nurturing some old, relationships with inhabitants of Bamyan Town, and importantly—in line with my emergent research approach—identifying both the most salient forms of group identity and pertinent topics linked to these forms of group identity in the Bamyan Valley. Observation, informal discussion, semi-structured interview (using research assistants) and reflective diary techniques became the mainstay of my research, whereas the group discussion technique was primarily used as a validation tool toward the end of a fieldwork phase.

One of the methods I used to develop new relationships was through teaching English in Sar-e-Asyab village. This allowed me to not only establish myself within the community in which I lived, but it gave me a number of excellent opportunities to build rapport with families in the village. This delivered a keen understanding of social dynamics within Sar-e-Asyab and later translated into numerous research opportunities, including invitations to participate in celebrations and commemorations and the chance to conduct interviews and informal discussions. It also provided me a way of reciprocating the time people offered to participate in lengthy interviews and discussions.

I also chose, where acceptable, to use a digital audio recorder during semi-structured interviews, group discussions, and oral histories. I also made this device available to my research assistants to aid their work. While I recognised that the use of a recording device may have the effect of making research participants less comfortable (Davies, 2008) I valued the ability to record discussions verbatim. This was particularly useful during group discussions when it was almost impossible to fully capture the discussion given the fast pace of dialogue and the tendency for more than one person to speak at a time. The use of a digital recorder also allowed me to validate that interviews, at which I was not present, had indeed been carried out. Finally, I could refer back to interviews during analysis or for the purpose of checking quotations.

As my research unfolded, and the skills of my research assistants grew, I developed more niche areas of inquiry. This included, in my second research phase, the utilisation of oral histories alongside other techniques in a bid to investigate the historical formation of ethnicity in the valley. In the third phase of my research, following a period of reflection at

IDS, I began investigating marriage and its relationship to ethnicity; the changing intersectional nature of ethnic and sectarian identity in the Bamyan Valley; and the utilisation of ethnicity in the changing distribution of productive resources. My research assistants completed research in these areas of inquiry in the fourth and final phase of my fieldwork. In support of this research in the Bamyan Valley, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with Afghan academics and researchers based in Kabul. These key informant interviews would take place at the end of each research phase, while I spent a few chaotic days in Kabul navigating the bureaucracy of the Passport Office to pay fines and obtain an exit visa.

After the completion of the first phase of fieldwork I initiated what I viewed as a ‘mid-level’ ethnographic approach to my research. Rather than adopt a ‘traditional’ ethnographic research process that involves deep immersion in a single locality (Malinowski, 1922), or a multi-sited ethnographic approach spanning separate physical, social or virtual field sites (Coleman and von Hellermann, 2011), I conducted my research in a number of physical localities, institutional settings and at socio-cultural events within my larger field site. While I was concerned that this could result in me ‘spreading myself too thin’ and not allow for the exploration of one case in great depth, I felt it would allow me to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the functioning of group identity across a number of different social settings. This approach would allow me to better observe interactions between Hazarahs, Saadat and Tajiks in differing social circumstances to, in turn, develop a broader understanding of the functioning of group identity.

I selected four physical ‘localities’ (i.e. four villages in the Bamyan Valley), in which Hazarahs, Qizilbash, Saadat and Tajiks resided. This included:

1. A locality in which Hazarahs and Saadat reside;
2. A locality in which Hazarahs, Saadat and Qizilbash reside;
3. A locality in which Hazarahs, Saadat and Tajiks reside; and
4. A locality in which only Tajiks reside.

Access to these localities was first brokered with the *rais-e-shura*, or head of the village council, and *rish sufids* before relationships with individual members of the locality were developed. The majority of fieldwork was conducted in these four localities, including research pertaining to issues framed in ‘inter-ethnic’ terms, such as growing violence between Saadat and Hazarahs, the growing politicisation of sectarian identity between

Hazarahs and Tajiks, and the utilisation of ethnicity for the redistribution of productive resources.

I also adopted a hybrid form of sampling in these four localities. This included purposive and snowball sampling techniques. After initially targeting research participants who identified with all ethnic categories in my localities, I located many research participants opportunistically. This involved undertaking research initially with friends who I had rapport with, before working to develop and exploit emerging relationships with people I met on a daily basis across the Bamyan Valley. After engaging with a research participant we would utilise the snowball sampling technique in an attempt to identify suitable research participants. This approach did contribute to a sampling bias favouring Hazarahs (as the proportion of Hazarahs living in the four selected localities of the Bamyan Valley was high) and to some extent residents—mainly Hazarahs, Saadat and Qizilbash—of Sar-e-Asyab (where I lived). However, my research assistant's operated systematically, but also opportunistically, in all four localities. In a number of cases, research participants were interviewed more than once. This was undertaken to develop rapport and to develop more nuanced understandings of research participant's perspectives.

In parallel to fieldwork in these localities, I also undertook fieldwork in a number of 'institutional settings'. Examples of 'institutional settings' include a *ziyaratgah*, a *membar*,¹⁴ a *masjid*, a *chai khana*, the *bazaar*, Bamyan University campus, and government and NGO offices. A number of these settings were located within the localities I principally conducted research in. While this was often incidental, for example conducting a semi-structured interview with a research participant in a village *membar*, I took note to specifically observed the impacts of institutional settings upon forms of group identity.

Finally, I also undertook research at a number of political and religio-cultural events. For example, they included attendance at weddings, funerals, *Buzkashi*¹⁵ tournaments, musical performances, *Naw Ruz* (New Year celebrations held on 21st March), *Ashura* (Shi'i mourning rituals, held in the Islamic month of Muharram), *Khatm-e-Quran*¹⁶ sessions, public demonstrations, and Friday Prayers. Many of these socio-cultural events took place

¹⁴ *Membar*—originating from *minbar*, or the pulpit-like chair of the mosque—is perceived by Jafaris as “the house of worship for Imam Ali”, as opposed to the *masjid* (mosque), seen as “the house of worship for Allah” (Field Notes, January 2011).

¹⁵ Buzkashi, Afghanistan's national sport, involves numerous horseback riders competing for possession of a decapitated and bloated goat carcass, which they then place in a designated goal area for points.

¹⁶ A complete recital of the Qur'an undertaken for good fortune or to receive a blessing for the deceased.

within the institutional settings discussed above. The purpose of attending these events was to understand the way group identity permeated cultural and political life.

Fieldwork Issues and Challenges: My research process unfolded in line with my 'mid-level' ethnographic approach across the latter three phases of fieldwork. And it did so largely as planned. Yet, there were a number of issues I had to carefully navigate. These included: (i) recognising the necessity of working through research assistants; (ii) carefully managing the use of concepts during interviewing and the translation of recorded information; (iii) being sensitive to the heightened mental distress of research participants in the Bamyan Valley; and (iv) understanding the strategic boundaries of my identity.

(i) Research Assistants: While my Dari was conversational, I was aware that to both fully grasp the nuances of language used during research encounters and be able to correctly interpret their associated meanings I would require the support of Bamyani research assistants. In practice, this meant recruiting two research assistants: one to translate and conduct questioning and a second to take notes and observe the research encounter. Furthermore, based on previous research experience in Afghanistan I knew that prevailing norms of gendered segregation meant that it was challenging for me to interview female research participants. Therefore, in addition to working with a pair of male research assistants I also planned to work closely with a corresponding pair of female research assistants who, with limited supervision, would conduct research with Bamyani women.

The recruitment of my research assistants was easier than expected. Given the relatively large number of well-qualified but unemployed returnees and competent social science and English language students at the University of Bamyan I had a veritable pool of potential candidates. Crucially, I also had sufficient savings with which to pay salaries competitive with those of local NGOs. Moreover, working through trusted ex-colleagues and friends I was able to have frank discussions about potential candidates quickly identifying which were most suitable.

The selection of female research assistants was also greatly aided by the presence of the University of Bamyan's female dormitory in Bamyan Town. A number of well-educated young Bamyani women resided there without the close supervision of their family members. This allowed them greater than usual autonomy. At the same time, I was acutely aware of the potentially compromising position that participation in my research may

engender for them. As a result, I regularly discussed whether they were comfortable undertaking certain aspects of the research, and whether their participation could affect the way others perceived them in Bamyān Town. Upon their request, we always met in a professional setting (a friend's office) and conducted our discussions in a conference room with a large bank of external windows. This meant our meetings were perceived as professional in nature and were always conducted in a setting that would allow others to observe the 'appropriate' nature of our working relationship.

Once I had selected male and female research assistants I began a process of skills development. This involved, initially, explaining frankly and openly the purpose and topic of my research. This was followed by discussions on interviewing, group facilitation, and active listening skills; the importance of observation and reflection in research encounters; approaches to note taking and the value of recording dialogue verbatim; and principles of translation and transcription. These 'theoretical' discussions were later employed experientially through preliminary interviews conducted with friends and colleagues. Together, we then set about preparing interview guides, identifying research participants, and scheduling interviews.

During my first and second fieldwork phases I met with my research assistants on a daily basis, six days a week. As their skills developed—and they did so rapidly—I gave them greater control over the process until finally, by the fourth phase of fieldwork, they were capable of independently planning, undertaking and transcribing interviews. My only role, at this point, was checking interview guides and querying the concepts communicated in translations.

However, I had grossly underestimated one simple point, which was brought to light during a preliminary interview with a colleague. The following, taken from my field notes, is a brief account of the incident (Field Notes, January 2011):

Yesterday, our interview with MJ didn't go as planned. My research assistants and I went to his house to conduct an interview... For most of this interview MJ was visibly uncomfortable, which was very unlike him. Given our budding friendship he answered most questions, but sometimes vaguely. As a result, I ended the interview prematurely and discussed general topics to relax him... It only occurred to me afterward that I was sitting having an in depth discussion about Qizilbash group identity, with which he self-identifies, with two Hazarāhs acting as research assistants... This morning, I went to speak with him and after

apologising for my overly direct questioning, he said to me: "By God, that's not the problem. I would be happy to tell you everything about the Qizilbash. It's just that I must be careful when discussing this in front of Hazarahs. The Qizilbash are a small group in Bamyan and we must be careful as the Hazarahs control the government here."

This incident led me to realise that to build rapport and improve the quality of my research encounters, I would have to employ research assistants who identified with the same spectrum of ethnic categories as the research participants I engaged with. My existing male research assistants both self-identify as Hazarah, as did one of my existing female research assistants. The other identifies as a Sayid. This led me to recruiting two additional sets of male research assistants who adopt Sayid and Tajik identities. These research assistants were recruited and trained in the second phase of fieldwork and undertook data collection in the second and third phases of my research.

(ii) Using and Translating Concepts: In the latter part of my first fieldwork stage, I and my research assistants investigated the most salient forms of group identity in the Bamyan Valley. During the semi-structured interviews and informal discussions that marked this investigation it became clear to me that the concepts of identity employed by research participants and research assistants differed from mine. This has implications for not only the way I framed questions (for them to be comprehensible to research participants), but also impacted the very meaning of the question I was asking. Moreover, this also meant that there were implications for the way I carried these concepts into my analysis (Davies, 2008).

I noticed that initially my research assistants used more technical, *Farsi*, terms including *hoviya*t, or identity, and *qawmiya*t, or ethnicity, in their discussions with research participants. This led in some cases to research participants becoming confused or misunderstanding the concepts we were trying to communicate. In discussion with my research assistants we began to use terminology comprehensible to our research participants (Davies, 2008). This primarily included the use of the terms *qawm*, an intentionally fluid term used to imply common origins and cultural unity. It is best translated as 'solidarity group' (Tapper, 1989). We continuously had to elaborate and validate how the term was used to ensure both we and the research participants correctly understood the concept being communicated. Others terms include *group*ha, or groups, a

loan word from English; and the plural forms of ethnic labels such as *Hazarahha*, *Hazarahs*; or *Tajikha*, *Tajiks*.

At the same time, when we translated and transcribed written or recorded accounts of our discussions it became clear that my positionality impacted the way I understood and analysed concepts (Davies, 2008). Often halfway through translating a document I would become deeply confused by a seemingly nonsensical statement, only to have one of my research assistants explain that it was I that had entirely misinterpreted the unfolding trajectory of the conversation. It was only through an exhaustive process of discussing the meaning of terms in Dari or Hazarahgi¹⁷ with my research assistants that I could begin to accurately translate, understand and suitably analyse the information imparted to us by our research participants. I do also acknowledge that I was heavily reliant on my research assistants for this process of conceptual translation and, in turn, their own positionalities would affect the interpretation of information from research participants (Davies, 2008). Yet, this was preferable to my otherwise contextually dislocated interpretation of key concepts.

(iii) The Boundaries of My Identity: One of the factors that determined the selection of the Bamyan Valley as my primary field site was that it allowed me to best utilise the Iranian dimension of my identity to build rapport with research participants. I quickly found that I could strategically deploy aspects of my identity, usually my semi-insider 'Iranian-ness' but also my outsider 'English-ness', to great effect (Henry, 2003). The following excerpt from my Reflective Diary assists in demonstrating this (Reflective Diary, October 2011):

During interviews, or informal conversations, many Bamyanis refer to our similarities. They tell me: "Your father is Iranian, so you are Iranian". This implies cultural and biological similarities. It all depends on whom I'm talking to. Of course, in most cases, these similarities simply don't exist... On a number of occasions, after one of my research assistants explains my background, a research participant will relax into frank discussions with me. I find I over-communicate my Iranian background to build rapport in these moments. I stroke my beard. I sit like an Iranian. I eat like an Iranian. I drink tea like an Iranian. I make sure they register my name, my accent, and my insistence at being proud to be Iranian. I speak in Farsi rather than Dari or English. My 'English-ness' retreats... Of course, this doesn't always work to my advantage. On

¹⁷ Hazarahgi is the dialect of Dari spoken in the *Hazarahjat* and the dialect associated with *Hazarahs*. Although similar to Dari approximately 10% of the dialect is composed of Turco-Mongol words (Weiers, 1972).

the one hand, being Iranian holds connotations of being Shi'i, which I under-communicate when engaging with Sunnis (Tajiks). If not, I end up being treated with polite caution. On the other hand, being English is associated, for good reason, with being an invader and coloniser, meaning anyone (particularly the older generation) may be hospitable but wary. Yet, at other times, my 'Englishness' is advantageous. People like to educate me, the ignorant outsider, on the 'real' differences between 'ethnic groups' in Bamyan. While this is helpful, I need to remember that at these moments they are over-communicating ethnic difference to me.

I found that during my initial days of fieldwork I developed, through trial and error, the best ways to deploy my identity to build rapport with differing people (Henry, 2003). And, it wasn't just a case of deploying my identity. I would often enact my identity in a particular way. Where people responded well to a certain manifestation of my identity I would enact it again in the future, where they did not I would change tack adopting a different representation. At other times, I had less control over this strategic process. I was categorised into a certain identity, such as being English, which in certain circumstances would place me at a disadvantage. Yet, even then I could negotiate the way I presented my identity to others.

A second insight that I developed during the first weeks of my fieldwork was that the way I was perceived had an impact on the *framing* and *quality* of the information I co-generated with research participants. The context and nature of our interaction had a huge impact on the information generated through research (Davies, 2008). However, this realisation was a double-edged sword. While it meant that the strategic deployment of my identity led to greater rapport and presumably better quality information, it also meant that research participants were more likely to frame our discussion in nationalist, ethnic or sectarian terms thereby overemphasising these interpretations of social reality in the information that was co-generated.

(iv) Sensitivity to the Mental Distress of Research Participants: Research in the Bamyan Valley, particularly the use of oral history techniques to investigate the historical formation of ethnicity, necessarily involves discussion of prolonged periods of conflict. I underestimated how traumatic having these discussions would be for certain research participants. It is clear a number of my research participants had experienced high levels

of mental distress as a result of exposure to conflict (Ford, Mills, Zachariah, and Upshur, 2009).

In the second phase of my fieldwork a number of research participants became highly emotional when recounting oral histories. Their discussions related to recounting the events surrounding the murder of close family members, in their presence. In hindsight I recognise I was unprepared to respond to these outbursts, could offer no recourse to psychosocial support, and was generally left feeling like I had contributed to them reliving their trauma (*ibid*). Following these initial encounters with traumatised research participants I was much more careful when conducting oral histories. I spent more time explaining the types of questions I would ask and highlighted the potentially traumatic impacts of discussing past conflict, before seeking consent. I, also, avoided detailed discussions of traumatic events and probed less when I sensed hesitation on the part of the research participant. Partly as a result of these experiences I chose not to utilise oral history techniques in the later phases of my research.

Analysis and Write Up: Between Theory and Practice? Fieldwork was a joy to undertake. It reinvigorated me; it settled the unease I developed during my initial years of work in Afghanistan. Yet, this respite was short lived. The long drudgery of analysis and writing quickly led me to question the value of academia, and to wonder how the extractive and self-indulgent nature of a PhD had anything to offer the Bamyani people. To be honest, I don't think it does. It's therefore not surprising to know that I struggled for some time with the theoretical requirements of my PhD. At the same time, the emergent approach I had adopted in the early days of my research left me without a clear line of analysis or argument. I had found many pertinent issues to analyse and was unsure how to structure my thesis.

It was to this emotional backdrop that I decided that while my thesis was necessarily theoretical I could still ensure that it had some applied value by contributing to the Afghan literature, as opposed to the broader theoretical literature, on ethnicity. This realisation coupled with my 'discovery' of the work of Rogers Brubaker and his colleagues (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Brubaker, 2004; and Brubaker *et al*, 2006) allowed me to structure my analysis in such a way as to contribute fresh theoretical insights to the Afghan literature on ethnicity. It was at this point that the deductive analytical process at the core of my thesis was identified. It was also at this point that I formulated my research question and propositions, which draw insights from theoretical literature to be applied to the Afghan

case. This was a small conceptual step with a big emotional impact. While this thesis may have humble theoretical aspirations, they are aspirations I am comfortable with.

To improve the quality of my work, and to minimise the extractive nature of my research process, I shared my preliminary findings informally with a number of my research participants and my research assistants. The prologue found at the opening of this thesis is a product of these discussions. I also presented my research and findings to other social scientists to further improve my analysis. This was achieved primarily through my Work-in-Progress (WiP) seminar delivered in September 2013. The WiP seminar is the second assessment benchmark required by IDS and UoS, which must be undertaken before a final thesis draft can be submitted. Many of the comments from my WiP related to suggested improvements in the way I organised my analysis theoretically, including how to focus my conceptual framework, how to define the boundaries of my thesis better, and how to better articulate and utilise the concept of ethnic categories. These comments are reflected, where possible, in this thesis.

Following my WiP seminar I carefully considered the presentation of my thesis. I chose to utilise rhetorical devices common to anthropology as a method to formally develop my legitimacy and authority in the text. I use long narrative passages to not only engage the reader and locate myself in the Bamyan Valley (thereby building legitimacy), but also to serve as a metaphor for the analysis that follows (Davies, 2008). In terms of expressing the reflexive element of my research I have not only 'written myself into the text', but also articulated some of the ways that my positionality has contributed to the often implicit choices which underpin the framing and process of this research (Davies, 2008). I include myself, where possible, in the major quotations I use throughout the thesis (*ibid*). And, I incorporate myself, albeit sometimes only superficially, in the descriptions of empirical events, which I use to legitimise and frame my arguments (*ibid*).

Finally, I have also adopted the use of the past tense in my narrative. This is undertaken to intentionally avoid the use of the 'ethnographic present' and the presentation of an unchanging vision of the Bamyan Valley, which denies the historicity of the researched and the researcher (Davies, 2008). I do this to remind the reader that my work depicts a particular period of analysis spanning from late 2010 to early 2012.

5. THE STRUCTURE OF MY THESIS

In this opening chapter, *Orientations*, I framed my thesis by initially introducing my personal motivations for undertaking a PhD. This was followed with an overview of the conceptual basis of my thesis: including discussion of the value added of my work; my research goal, central question and objectives; and research limitations. I then introduce the Bamyan Valley, the primary field site for my research, before discussing my methodology. This is the closing section of this chapter in which I outline the structure of the remainder of my thesis.

Chapter Two, *Identifying Ethnicity: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework*, presents the key theories, debates and critiques in the ethnicity literature while also drawing on key insights from post-modernist thinking in the wider field of identity studies. This includes unpacking the processes underpinning the (re)-construction of ethnicity, whilst also recognising the relational, interactional and context dependent nature of ethnicity alongside the intersectional and punctuated nature of identity. This amalgam of theoretical insights from ethnicity and identity theory results in the interpretation of ethnicity as operating through ethnic categories that, in turn, provides the theoretical foundations for the investigation of 'everyday ethnicity'.

The Historical Formation of Ethnicity, 1500-2010, Chapter Three of my thesis, investigates the emergence and historical formation of ethnicity in Afghanistan. This is carried out through a critical review of the existing Afghan literature relating to ethnicity. Chapter Three is structured around three analytical themes. The first, applying theoretical insights gleaned from the preceding review of ethnicity theory, critically investigates the role of broad structural forces and individual agency in the (re)-formation of ethnic categories in Afghanistan from 1500 to 2010. This includes analysing, on the one hand, the contribution of state formation, foreign intervention, chronic conflict, mass migration, and political reconstruction; and, on the other hand, the impact of *mujahedin* political movements, political leaders, and ordinary Afghans in the (re)-production of ethnic categories in Afghanistan. The second theme in this chapter unpacks the intersectional nature of ethnicity. I do this to demonstrate the range of intersecting identifications subsumed by current conceptualisations of ethnicity in the Afghan literature. The final theme woven through this chapter relates to the changes in the relative standing of ethnic categories. This includes analysis of the changing relationship between Hazarachs, Tajiks and Saadat in recent Afghan history.

Chapter Four, *'Everyday Ethnicity' in the Bamyan Valley*, is the first of three empirical chapters in my thesis. By analysing the commonplace day-to-day functioning of ethnicity I expand the existing theoretical understanding of how ethnicity operates in the Bamyan Valley. Unlike the previous chapter in which I investigate ethnicity from a distance; examining the role of broad socio-historical forces and national level politics in the (re)-formation of ethnic categories, Chapter Four undertakes a more intimate and less overtly political analysis of ethnicity. Through an analysis of 'everyday ethnicity' I demonstrate the manner in which ethnicity is *represented* and *experienced* by individuals in daily life in the Bamyan Valley. This analysis includes illuminating the manner in which ethnicity is embodied, invoked and performed in interpersonal interactions. I also highlight the way ethnicity is reproduced through, and variably emphasised by, different institutional practices and settings in the Bamyan Valley.

Chapter Five, titled *Ethnicity, Regional Identity and Productive Resources in the Bamyan Valley, 2001-2012*, is the second of my three empirical chapters. Having established in the previous chapter how 'everyday ethnicity' operates in the Bamyan Valley, this chapter shifts analysis to focus on the changing nature of ethnicity in my field site. It draws on empirical information to illustrate the manner by which the relative status of ethnic categories have been changing amidst post-2001 processes of political reconstruction in the Bamyan Valley. Analysing the differential impacts of these processes, this chapter discusses the manner in which ethnicity has been utilised to gain control of and access to productive resources across the valley. Chapter Five also highlights the growing salience of the regional categories Bamyani and Ghaznavi and discusses their role in moderating access to newly acquired productive resources.

The sixth and final empirical chapter of my thesis is named *Of Mourning and Marriage: Ethnicity and Individual Agency*. Similar to Chapter Five the focus of this chapter is on the (re)-construction of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley. Drawing on two case studies this chapter discusses some of the most salient issues surrounding ethnicity in the valley. The first case study investigates the impact of Shi'i mourning rituals, which have proliferated publically since the Jafari school of Islam was recognised in the 2004 Afghan Constitution, upon the sectarian identity of Hazarachs and Tajiks in the Bamyan Valley. The second case study concerns the growing tensions and retaliatory violence linked to the elopement of male Hazarachs with female Saadat. It specifically investigates the use of ethnicity to legitimise, contest and violently enforce unequal marriage arrangements between Saadat and Hazarachs.

The seventh and final chapter of my thesis, the conclusion, opens with me discussing the contributions of my research to the wider theoretical and Afghan-focused ethnicity literature. I then draw together the main analytical threads, summarising findings, answering my research question and objectives, and reflecting on the main assumptions underpinning my thesis. I move on to highlight further areas of research before revisiting my personal motivations for undertaking this analytical project and commenting on the lessons learned throughout my PhD journey.

CHAPTER TWO

IDENTIFYING ETHNICITY: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the previous chapter, *Orientations*, I provided a general overview of this thesis. I situated my research personally, methodologically and geographically. I also briefly discussed the core concepts upon which my research is based. In this present chapter I elaborate on these concepts defining my conceptual framework by reviewing the pertinent literature relating to ethnicity and identity theory.

Following this introduction, section two of the chapter undertakes a broad review of literature addressing ethnicity theory. This review includes assessment of the main theoretical approaches, debates and critiques in the study of ethnicity. It also discusses both what ethnicity is and the manner in which it is (re)-constructed. The third section of this chapter investigates relevant insights emerging from post-modernist thinking within the broader field of identity studies. Section four outlines how I accommodate these theoretical insights into my conceptualisation of ethnicity, which takes ethnicity as socially constructed. Indeed, I define ethnicity as: an unfolding yet episodic process; in which individuals—in interaction with broad socio-historical forces—cognitively utilise and discursively deploy, enact and contest, ethnic categories defined in terms of perceived cultural similarities and differences. This section then goes on to discuss how such a theorization of ethnicity permits investigation of its day-to-day operation or, in other words, the analysis of ‘everyday ethnicity’. The final section contains a brief conclusion to close the chapter.

1. ETHNICITY AND THEORETICAL DEBATES IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Since the 1960s ethnicity has emerged as a salient form of group identity across the globe (Eriksen, 2002). It features increasingly in nationalist politics, secessionist and indigenous movements; and has been identified as the source of numerous high profile conflicts (Horowitz, 2000 [1985]). At the same time as ethnicity has become an increasingly common form of group identity in people’s lives it has also emerged as a major analytical category in the social sciences. The rise to prominence of ethnicity in anthropology reflects, in part, its increasing salience in every day life. However, formative currents in the discipline of anthropology itself have also contributed to its increasing use as a category of social analysis. Essentially, this includes the shift in anthropology from the analysis of ‘tribe’ as a unit of social *structure* to ethnicity as a unit of social *organisation*

(Jenkins, 2008 [1997]). But it is not only within anthropology that ethnicity has been debated. Nor is it only theoretical debates specific to ethnicity that have influenced its utilisation as an analytical concept (Wetherell, 2010).

Since the 1950s identity has featured as a key analytical category in the social sciences (Gleason, 1983 cited in Wetherell, 2010). Initially the field of identity studies developed in three main areas. The first relates to the study of individual identity and was largely driven by social psychology research. The second area of literature pertains to the investigation of group identity, including analysis of race, gender, sexuality, disability, nationality, social class, and—of central importance to this research—ethnicity (referred to here as ‘ethnicity theory’). Here research was primarily undertaken from an anthropological and sociological disciplinary standpoint. The third and final area of literature, with which this thesis does not engage, links the study of identity to the emergence of the civil rights movements in the 1960s (Wetherell, 2010).

The former two areas of literature stayed, until the 1980s, largely separate with research on individual and group identity remaining distinct (*ibid.*). That said, from the 1960s onwards questions regarding the relationship between the psychological and social aspects of identity did steadily gained prominence (*ibid.*). Since the 1980s the rise of post-modernist thought across the social sciences has complicated the theorisation of identity and, by default, also of ethnicity. This more complicated theorisation requires accommodation of the fragmented (*ibid.*), intersectional (Crenshaw, 1989), decentred and discursively formulated (Munro, 2004, 2005; Hall, 2007 cited in Phoenix, 2010) nature of identity. These theoretical insights have also resulted in a shift in the focus of theorisation from discussions of *what* identity is to *how* it is (re)-constructed.

As indicated above, the scholarly literature pertaining to identity and ethnicity theory is vast and complex. It includes numerous works from a variety of disciplines including social, cultural, political, cognitive and economic anthropology; sociology; social psychology; political science; international relations, economics; social biology; social geography; social work and educational theory (Banks, 1996). A full review of all of the literature pertinent to identity and ethnicity theory is beyond the scope of this thesis. I therefore have intentionally focused my review of literature on anthropological and sociological sources, and to a lesser extent to those from the disciplines of social psychology and political science. I do this to allow for the later development of targeted and more nuanced contributions to theoretical debates in the field of anthropology and,

ultimately, to the Afghanistan-focused literature on ethnicity and identity. A broad review of literature from numerous disciplinary backgrounds would not allow for such pointed analysis or conclusions.

Before moving on to discuss the post-modernist inspired literature within the broader field of identity studies, I will first review literature specific to ethnicity theory. I do this to expose the main theoretical approaches that underpin the study of ethnicity. These four theoretical approaches are: primordialism (also known as the essentialist approach); instrumentalism (or the interest group approach); materialism (which incorporates Marxist theory); and constructionism (also referred to as the postmodern approach). As implied earlier the evolution of these approaches can be linked to the development of theories underpinning thought in the social sciences: from cultural evolutionism, through structural-functionalism, to conflict theories, and post-modernism (Wan and Vanderwerf, 2009).

In addition, a number of key debates run throughout the ethnicity literature. These include, for example, how to theoretically integrate the social and psychological dimensions of ethnicity (cf. Cohen, 1974); the analytical importance attached to the cultural 'content' of ethnicity (cf. Barth, 1998a [1969a]); and the nature of the relationship between the state and ethnicity (cf. Glazer and Moynihan, 1975; Brass, 1985). The ethnicity literature also places the concept of ethnicity itself under scrutiny. As discussed above, this is largely the result of post-modernist thinking within the wider field of identity theory.

The Primordialist Approach to Ethnicity

Up until the 1970s, and in some cases even later, primordialist accounts of ethnicity were common (see Furnivall, 1948; Narroll, 1964; Smith, 1965; Geertz, 1973 [1963]; Bromley 1974; Isaacs 1975; Shils, 1957, 1980; and Stack, 1986). Classic primordialist accounts generally view ethnic identity as innate, fixed and permanent (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]; Wan and Vanderwerf, 2009). They claim each individual is born into an 'ethnic group' or 'tribe'—the term commonly used up until the 1970s—which is a culturally defined unit. This led to 'tribes' and later 'ethnic groups' being classified by aspects of their material in addition to biological and territorial features (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]). Primordialist accounts imply that ethnic identity serves a fundamental human need for belonging and meaning (Eriksen, 2002 [1993]).

The primordial approach also suggests—in what is more commonly known as the ‘ancient hatreds’ argument—that the fundamental cultural differences and divergent values between ‘ethnic groups’ inevitably results in a ‘clash of cultures’ and the emergence of ‘ethnic violence’ (Furnivall, 1948; Smith, 1965; Ignatieff, 1994; Huntington, 1996; Fearon and Laitin, 2000; Horowitz, 2000 [1985]; and Kaufmann, 2005).

Today few, if any, recognised scholars hold to the classical primordialist approach (Wan and Vanderwerf, 2009). This is largely a result of the critique, originating from empirical research based on instrumental and constructionist approaches, which indicate that many ‘ethnic groups’ are recent phenomena (Glazer and Moynihan, 1975; Kaufmann, 2005). However, ‘softer’ contemporary versions of primordialism—or perennialist approaches—exist, including Anthony Smith’s theory of ethnosymbolism (see Armstrong, 1982; Hutchinson, 1987; and Smith, 1991), and Pierre van den Burghe’s socio-biological approach (see Van den Burghe, 1996; Whitmeyer, 1997; and Vanhanen, 1999). Ethnosymbolism is based on the idea that psychological attachment to ethnic identity emerges from an individual’s cultural and historic background (Wan and Vanderwerf, 2009). The socio-biological approach of Pierre van den Burghe views ‘ethnic groups’ as actual kin groups whose members adopt a strategy of nepotism to further group interests (Van den Burghe, 1996).

Primordialism and ‘Greed’ and ‘Grievance’ Arguments

Primordialist assumptions sit at the core of ‘greed’ and ‘grievance’ arguments of so-called ‘ethnic conflict’. ‘Grievance’ arguments—most famously promoted by Frances Stewart and colleagues (e.g. Stewart, 2002, 2008)—correlate group inequalities, and related group grievances, with intergroup conflict (*ibid*). ‘Greed’ arguments—most commonly advocated by Paul Collier and colleagues (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004)—on the other hand, link a group’s desire for self-enrichment to the onset of group infighting. In both cases, a reductionist critique can be levelled at the perennialist nature of these theories. ‘Ethnic groups’ are perceived as fixed and bounded entities, and as such there is no place for the fluid or instrumental nature of identity in these theories. In addition to this critique, these theories also overemphasise the economic causes of ‘ethnic conflict’. There is little recognition of the complexity of social interaction (Keen, 2012). Not only are these theories unable to explain *how* ‘ethnic conflict’ occurs, but they also neglect to address the political and socio-cultural factors that underpin it (Herbst, 2000; Cramer, 2002; and Gomes Porto, 2002).

Barth, Cohen and the Birth of the Instrumentalist Approach to Ethnicity

Two main contributions to anthropology initiated the challenge to the classic primordialist approach. The first, and most influential, contribution was a collection of papers edited by Fredrik Barth in 1969, which was entitled *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Barth, 1998a [1969a]).¹⁸ His opening essay, that laid out the framework for analysis of the ‘social organisation of cultural difference’, fundamentally changed the study of ethnicity. The second set of contributions were the works of a number of ethnographers: members of the ‘Manchester School’ of anthropology. They investigated ‘tribalism’ in the African Copperbelt of south, central and western Africa from the 1950s to the late 1970s (see Gluckman, 1958 [1940]; Mitchell, 1956, 1969; Epstein, 1958, 1978; Cohen, 1969, 1974; and Mayer, 1971 [1961]).

In his seminal essay, Barth (1998a [1969a]) challenged the primordialist belief that ‘ethnic groups’ were distinct bounded ontological units with innate cultural characteristics, which maintain differentiation due to geographic and social isolation. He did this by acknowledging that social interaction and, indeed, a flow of people between ‘ethnic groups’ was common. Rather than focusing on the cultural content of ‘ethnic groups’ he adopted a subjectivist standpoint, emphasising the forms of cultural differentiation important to social actors in a given situation (Barth, 1998a [1969a]: 14-15):

We can assume no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences. The features that are taken into account are not the sum of ‘objective’ differences, but only those which actors themselves regard as significant. Not only do ecological variations mark and exaggerate differences; some cultural features are used by the actors as signals and emblems of difference, others are ignored, and in some relationships radical differences are played down and denied... The critical focus of investigation from this point of view becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses.

In Barth’s perspective on ethnicity the maintenance of ‘ethnic boundaries’ occurs through interaction of ‘us’ and ‘them’ across the ‘group boundary’ (Eriksen, 2002 [1993]). This interaction, in turn, is characterised by a dual process of ascription—of identification and categorisation—by both insiders and outsiders across the ‘boundary’ (Eriksen, 1992; Jenkins, 2008 [1997]). Identification is a process of *internal* definition in which individuals

¹⁸ Jenkins (2008 [1997]) points out that Barth’s work built upon earlier concepts developed by Everett Hughes (1994 [1948]), Edmund Leach (1954), and Max Weber (1978 [1922]).

or groups self-define who they are; while, categorisation is a process of *external* definition in which one or more people define the identity of others (*ibid*). Moreover, the cultural features that are drawn upon in processes of ascription are not fixed; they are situationally defined. Finally, ecological considerations—in terms of economic competition over ecological niches¹⁹—plays an important role in the generation of ethnic difference. In this way Barth emphasised the relational, interactional and situational nature of ethnicity (Barth, 1998a [1969a]; Eriksen, 1992; and Jenkins, 2008 [1997]).

The relational and symbolic essence of Barth's (1998a [1969a]) thesis was later elaborated in Anthony Cohen's influential book *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (1985). He supports Barth's stance arguing that meaning and culture is created through processes of symbolic interaction across 'community boundaries' (Cohen, 1985; Anderson, 1983).

The second group of contributors to challenge primordialist theories were members of the 'Manchester School'. Unlike many of their contemporaries, who investigated the social structure of 'traditional' black African societies, the ethnographers of the 'Manchester School' analysed the relationship between black 'tribal groups' *and* white colonialists in contexts of colonisation, migration and the establishment of industrialised 'nation states' (Banks, 1996). The research of the 'Manchester School' was, until the 1960s, carried out looking at 'tribal groups' in the Copperbelt. Yet, given their particular research orientation—including emphasis on relational analysis—much of this earlier work on the 'tribes' of the Copperbelt contributed to informing later instrumental and constructionist research approaches to ethnicity (Banks, 1996; Eriksen 2002 [1993]; and Jenkins 2008 [1997]). Furthermore, their emphasis on interpreting the impact of the state upon 'ethnic groups'—something which Barth does not stress—would later become a prominent theme in the study of ethnicity (*ibid*). This will be discussed further below.

The scholarly works of Barth and the 'Manchester School' brought about a fundamental shift in the theoretical perspective of anthropology, which contributed to the rise of ethnicity as a key category of analysis in the social sciences. Their research was central to critiques of structural functionalism that, in the words of Jenkins (2008: 19, emphasis in original) led to a shift from "the evocation of tribal identity as a defining feature of *social structure*, to a recognition of ethnic identity as an aspect of *social organisation*." Rather

¹⁹ In contemporary literature the discussion of 'ecological niches' has been dropped in favour of more explicit discussions of resources and economic activities (Eriksen, 2006).

than emphasise an externally defined system of 'tribal' classification anthropologists began to interpret the cultural aspects of ethnicity through which individuals organise social difference (Barth, 1998a [1969a]).

This was, however, not the only shift taking place in anthropology throughout the 1960s that was linked to ethnicity. In this period anthropology passed through an intense phase of self-criticism following a growing awareness of the complicity of the discipline in aiding and benefitting from colonialism (Davies, 2008 [1998]). Not only had ethnographers aided in the *conceptual* reification of 'tribes' in colonial states²⁰—often identifying 'tribes' that had no empirical existence (Southall, 1976; Kuper, 1988)—but they were also often protagonists in the creation of 'tribes' (Ardener, 1989 [1972]). The *social* reification of 'ethnic groups' occurred by virtue of the subsequent appropriation of 'tribal' categories by colonial subjects (*ibid*).

This critique led to a general preoccupation with reflexivity in anthropology (Davies, 2008 [1998]), but also the more specific emergence of an enduring trend of critical reflection to avoid the reification of 'ethnic groups' in the anthropological literature. Even Barth's seminal essay (Barth, 1998a [1969a]) was challenged. It was argued that Barth's use of the terms 'boundary' (with its physical connotation) and 'group' contributed to the reification of 'ethnic groups' as enduring substantial entities (Cohen, 1978). This remains a major critique of many contemporary studies of ethnicity, where the concrete ontological nature of 'ethnic groups' is assumed resulting in their further reification (Brubaker, 2004; Jenkins, 2008 [1997]).

The work of Barth, in particular, has been explicitly credited with leading to the development of instrumentalist and, more indirectly, constructionist approaches to the study of ethnicity (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]). However, while his seminal essay was no doubt key to changes in the study of ethnicity, the research of the 'Manchester School'—principally Abner Cohen's thesis on the instrumentality of ethnic affiliation (Cohen, 1969)—deserves recognition (Banks, 1996). From their publication in 1969 the works of Barth (1998a [1969a]) and Cohen (1969) both initiated a long-standing debate regarding the primordial versus instrumental nature of ethnicity (Banks, 1996).

Abner Cohen's (1969) study of the Hausa 'ethnic group' in the Nigerian city of Ibadan, mentioned above, is a good introduction to the instrumental approach to ethnicity. Cohen

²⁰ See Prunier (1995) for a discussion regarding Rwanda.

(*ibid*) describes a scenario in which two ‘ethnic groups’, the Hausa and Yoruba ‘tribes’, compete for control of kola nut and cattle trading. Given growing competition from the Yoruba, the Hausa ‘retribalised’ shifting religious affiliation en masse, thereby differentiating themselves from the Yoruba while simultaneously strengthening their ‘ethnic boundaries’. This in turn allowed them to forge reliable trade links outside of Ibadan effectively monopolising trade. In essence the Hausa, faced with competition over scarce resources with the Yoruba, employed their ethnicity instrumentally as a strategy for corporate action (Banks, 1996; Eriksen, 2002 [1993]). From this study Cohen (1969) inferred that the principal function of ethnicity was as a form of informal political organisation. He argued that political elites in some cases create but also use and exploit ‘primordial’ symbols to gain the allegiance of potential followers (Eriksen, 2002 [1993]).

In a later publication, *Two-Dimensional Man*, Cohen (1974) develops his argument further in an attempt to explain how political leaders are able to manipulate members of their ‘ethnic groups’. He argues that while a key function of ethnicity is to meet political ends, often orchestrated by elites, it must also provide some value to group members to foster ethnic allegiance. In this way he concludes that ethnicity is a means to both serve political ends and to satisfy a fundamental human need for belonging. As such, Cohen (1974) implies that the assertion of instrumental ethnic identity requires a struggle over symbolic meaning and instrumental utility to deliver material benefits and political advantage.

In a similar vein, instrumentalist contributions to the study of ‘ethnic conflict’—also known as ‘elite theories of ethnic violence’—posit that elites agitate ethnic tensions and, in some cases, intentionally provoke ‘ethnic conflict’ as a method to either seize power, protect their existing authority, or defend against group threats (Fearon and Laitin, 2000; Kaufmann, 2005). These claims began a long running debate in the literature regarding the ways that the ethnic allegiance of the masses can be exploited, often for political ends, by elites (Horowitz, 2000 [1985]; Kaufman, 2001; and Kaufmann, 2005).

The potential for the use of symbols to generate group cohesion and allow for its manipulation was later excellently articulated in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s edited volume *The Invention of Tradition* (1983). In the opening essay Hobsbawm (1983) explains how many ‘traditions’ that are viewed as old are, in fact, recent phenomena. Moreover, they are also often invented. He goes on to argue that traditions are invented through intentional processes of formalisation and repetition, which are defined in

relation to the past. These invented traditions can facilitate group cohesion, legitimise authority, and produce beliefs, values and patterns of behaviour (Hobsbawm, 1983).

Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan also made a significant contribution to the instrumental approach in their edited collection *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (Glazer and Moynihan, 1975). Unlike Barth (1998a [1969a]) or Cohen (1969, 1974), they framed their discussion of the instrumentality of ethnicity in relation to the state. Crucially, Glazer and Moynihan argue that ethnicity has a “strategic efficacy... in making legitimate claims on the resources of the modern state” (*ibid*: 11). They explain that in both the welfare states of the ‘developed’ world and the socialist states of the ‘developing’ world, “the *state* becomes a crucial and direct arbiter of economic well-being, as well as of political status...” (*ibid*: 8, emphasis in original). The democratic nature of such governmental systems coupled with constitutional commitments to ‘natural rights’ have converted their rural masses and urban migrants into “political actors and voting banks” (Tambiah, 1989: 344). As a matter of “strategic efficacy”, both those asserting claims against the state and those responding to the claims do so on the basis of an interest group of sufficient size (i.e. an ‘ethnic group’) to make concessions significant. In other words, as “the welfare state and the socialist state appear to be especially responsive to ethnic claims” (*ibid*: 9), ‘ethnic groups’ rather than individuals have surfaced as the chief political entities making claims upon the state.

Taking the works of Barth (1998a [1969a]), Cohen (1969) and Glazer and Moynihan (1975), we see that the instrumentalist approach to ethnicity implies ethnic identities emerge as a result of claim making, on the one hand, and categorisation and group making, on the other (Phoenix, 2010).

Instrumentalist approaches to the study of ethnicity have received a number of criticisms. Firstly, the instrumental models of Barth (1998a [1969a]) and Cohen (1969, 1974) have been challenged as being overly individualistic and narrowly instrumental (Paine, 1974; Kapferer, 1976; and Evens, 1977). In other words, they have been criticised for overemphasising the agency of individuals without considering the structures within which they operate.

Secondly, the ‘strong’ instrumentalist stance developed by both Cohen (1969, 1974) and Glazer and Moynihan (1975) have received common criticism. Taking a more extreme standpoint than Barth (1998a [1969a]), they both suggest that the cultural basis of

ethnicity is largely irrelevant (Banks, 1996). While Barth (1998a [1969a]) argues for a focus on 'ethnic boundaries' as opposed to the cultural content of 'ethnic groups' he is still interested in the way cultural variation is socially constructed. Yet, this shared standpoint of Cohen (1969, 1974) and Glazer and Moynihan (1975) has been challenged on the grounds that while the cultural dimensions of ethnicity may be imagined, they are not imaginary (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]). In this way Jenkins (*ibid*) reminds us that ethnicity is context dependent: the cultural forms associated with ethnic identities are contingent on time and place.

Thirdly, a number of scholars have critiqued the instrumentalist approach to ethnicity on the grounds that it overemphasises the role of political leaders and is unable to explain why ordinary people follow self-interested elites (Horowitz, 2000 [1985]). Correspondingly, a number of empirical works argue that it is "difficult to identify elites who made much difference to outcomes" (Kaufmann, 2005: 196). Such critiques demand explanations for the motivations of ordinary people in following manipulative elite behaviour. Yet, more generally, they call for a more detailed understanding of the phenomenological nature of ethnicity (Cohen, 1994; Eriksen, 2001; and Jenkins 2008 [1997]). In other words, an understanding of the importance of ethnic identity to the individual, and of how ethnicity emerges from day-to-day experience, is required. All of these critiques were addressed, to some degree, in the later development of the constructionist approach to ethnicity.

Class and the Materialist Approach to Ethnicity

Before moving forward to discuss constructionist approaches in the study of ethnicity I'd first like to turn to materialist approaches. Materialist approaches to ethnicity are of two main types, both of which are relatively underdeveloped in the anthropological literature (Horowitz, 2000 [1985]). First, are 'crude' Marxist theories including the works of Michael Hechter (1978) and Nagel and Olzack (1982), which consider ethnicity as an epiphenomenon, or a result, of class relations. These 'crude' Marxist theories also suggest that violence between ethnically aligned groups is the result of economic inequalities and elite exploitation (Isajiw, 1992).

The claims of 'crude' Marxists, particularly those of Hechter (1978), received heavy empirical criticism from a wide range of scholars (see Nielsen, 1980; Wilson and Portes, 1980; Makabe 1981; and Portes, 1984). Horowitz (2000 [1985]: 104-105) summarises the critiques of this class-based analysis of ethnicity:

Ethnic groups and social classes rarely overlap perfectly; ethnic affiliations generally seem to elicit more passionate loyalty than do class allegiances; and certainly there has been no marked trend in the developing world for class interests across ethnic lines to supersede ethnic ties.

It is now generally acknowledged in the anthropological literature that ethnicity is not a product of class relations and that there is no one-to-one relationship between the two categories (Eriksen, 2002 [1993]). Yet, it is clear that a relationship does indeed exist between ethnicity and economic activity (Eriksen, 2006). But what is the nature of this relationship? Answering this question brings us to the second set of materialist theory in the study of ethnicity.

‘Ethnic Groups’ and Competition over Scarce Resources: The majority of instrumental studies of ethnicity, such as Cohen’s (1969) inquiry into the Ibadan Hausa discussed above, investigate the competition of ‘ethnic groups’ over scarce resources (Banks, 1996). Yet, early comparisons of these studies revealed an empirical inconsistency. I give two examples to illustrate: Barth argues in his second contribution to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* that there is *no* direct link between ethnic identity and economic activity (Barth, 1998b [1969b]). In a discussion of research undertaken in Swat, Pakistan Barth describes how, due to political competition, ‘Pathans’ strategically switched ethnic identity to become ‘Baluch’. This, importantly, had no impact upon their economic livelihood. Yet, another chapter in the same volume describes how in western Sudan members of the ‘Fur’, leaving agriculture to take up animal husbandry, effectively became members of the ‘Baggara’. In other words, in this case a change in economic activity *did* result in a change in ‘ethnic group’ (Haaland, 1998 [1969]).

Horowitz’s (2000 [1985]) distinction between ranked and unranked polyethnic systems helps understand this apparent contradiction (see also Tambiah, 1989). Ranked polyethnic systems—similar to a caste system—are those in which ‘ethnic groups’ are stratified and access resources on an unequal basis. In such societies members of majoritised ‘ethnic groups’ generally engage in higher status economic activities and members of minoritised ‘ethnic groups’ normally undertake lower status activities.²¹ Alternatively, unranked polyethnic systems represent those societies in which ‘ethnic

²¹ The terms ‘majoritised’ and ‘minoritised’ are used—as opposed to the terms ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ that refer to numerical proportions—to indicate power differentials (Brah, 1996). Moreover, these terms have been utilised here, as opposed to other cognate terms such as ‘superior’ and ‘subordinate’, not only because of their common usage in the ethnicity literature but also to emphasise the relational and processual nature of ethnic relations.

groups' compete for scarce resources on an equal standing. It follows then that, as occupation is linked to 'ethnic group' in ranked societies, individuals changing economic activity (i.e. ascending or descending the stratified system) would also change 'ethnic group'. In unranked societies, individuals changing economic activity could do so without necessarily changing 'ethnic group' given that occupational segregation does not exist (Eriksen, 2006).

Eriksen (2002 [1993]) criticises Horowitz's polarised perspective pointing out that ethnicity may appear, in different parts of the same society, as both ranked *and* unranked systems of classification. He goes on to argue that in the analysis of the unranked segments of societies it would be more appropriate to focus on inter-ethnic competition for scarce resources and processes of 'boundary' maintenance. In addition, he claims that in the analysis of ranked segments of societies it would be more suitable to focus on power relations (*ibid*). Why power relations?

Eriksen (2002 [1993]) argues, in ranked segments of societies majoritised 'groups' categorise minoritised 'groups' to a lower position in the socio-economic order. This process is highly dependent upon power asymmetries: the majoritised 'ethnic group' requires the capacity, or authority, to classify the minoritised 'ethnic group' as inferior (Gledhill, 2000 [1994]; Jenkins, 2008 [1997]). Such social categorisation typically occurs through state classification, including the determination of census categories (Eriksen, 2006), and the popular stigmatisation of minoritised 'ethnic groups' (Baumann, 1996). However, it can also be perpetuated by self-identification of minoritised 'ethnic groups' with negative stereotypes and through informal social networks defined by ethnic affiliation (Eriksen, 2006). This can lead, in ranked aspects of societies, to a situation in which, "whole peoples... are perceived as being naturally suited for distinctive roles in the division of labour, and these 'natural' differences often include cultural as well as physical characteristics" (Worsley, 1984: 236). In such ranked systems, race often becomes a key marker of social superiority and inferiority. Jenkins (2008 [1997]) points out that within the ethnicity literature insufficient attention has been paid to both the analysis of power and, correspondingly, the relationship between race and ethnicity.

Ethnicity and Race: Analytically Separate?

As discussed above, the work of Barth (1998a [1969a]) and Cohen (1969) brought about a shift in analysis from social *structure* to social *organisation* within social and cultural anthropology. Yet, it also stimulated a move away from studying group identity in 'tribal'

colonial societies to investigating the heterogeneous nature of all societies (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]). Given this new analytical orientation, which in turn was driven forward by anthropology's attempts to navigate the fallout of colonialism, a new disciplinary relationship with the exotic 'Other' was witnessed (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]). Initially anthropologists, and indeed many sociologists, began to study migrants arriving in their home countries. Later, the analytical lens was turned on their own ethnic minorities. This analytical reorientation resulted in a greater consideration of race in relation to ethnicity (*ibid*).

Prior to this reconsideration of race, the concept was employed—in what is now termed 'scientific racism'—to explain supposed differences in 'racial' origin (Stocking, 1968; Banton, 1987). 'Scientific Racism' argued that biological differences explain cultural variation. This link between culture and biology is now systematically refuted in anthropology (Boas, 1940; Benedict, 1983 [1942]; Lévi-Strauss, 1952; and Banton, 1959), and it is now widely acknowledged within the discipline that race is socially constructed (Eriksen, 2002 [1993]). Yet, to a large extent sociological analysis of race is still occupied with 'race relations', or the investigation of the relations between phenotypically dissimilar groups (Banks, 1996).

While it is accepted that race is socially constructed in anthropology, the relationship between race and ethnicity is less clear (Banks, 1996; Jenkins, 2008 [1997]). Many anthropologists simply ignore or only allude to this relationship. In the latter case the link between ethnicity and race is either dismissed as being of negligible importance or is left intentionally ambiguous (Banks, 1996). Others yet—in line with the 'crude' Marxist theories of ethnicity discussed above—question the relationship in its entirety, claiming that both race and ethnicity are misrecognised manifestations of class (Wilson, 1945; Castles and Kosack, 1973). A number of anthropologists do, however, treat the relationship with greater intellectual clarity. They believe, as articulated by Marcus Banks below (Banks, 1996: 100), that a more nuanced understanding of race is required:

Any theory of ethnicity that accepts popular understandings of race as somehow fundamental, inviolate, primordial and ultimately unanalysable cannot be a very useful theory.

The resulting debate is characterised by those scholars who, on the one hand, argue that race should be encapsulated by theories of ethnicity and those, on the other, who claim

race and ethnicity are distinct. Karen Blu—a proponent of the former ethnicity-subsumes-race argument—claims that race is a category applied when discussing biological characteristics, whereas ‘ethnic’ is a category applied in relation to cultural characteristics (Blu, 1980). She implies that race is just one of many ways to indicate ethnicity. As such, they can—analytically speaking—be treated in the same manner.

Alternatively, John Rex (1970) sees race relations as signifying relations of inequality. He argues that race relations denote a situation in which ‘ethnic groups’ are distinguished by physical appearance or culture differences *and* inequality, which is justified in biological terms (Rex, 1970). Michael Banton equates this, in a relational sense, to ethnicity being mostly about the identification of ‘us’ and race being about the categorisation of ‘them’ (Banton, 1977, 1983; Eriksen, 2002 [1993]; and Jenkins, 2008 [1997]). Viewed in this way ethnicity and race cannot be elided. They should be treated as related but analytically separate (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]).

The Constructionist Approach to Ethnicity

The constructionist approach to the study of ethnicity is a post-colonial and postmodern elaboration of the instrumentalist approach.²² At the heart of the constructionist approach, as with its predecessor, is the belief that ethnicity is socially constructed. However, unlike the earlier instrumentalist conception ethnicity is ‘constructed’, and done so continuously through social interaction, by both elites and ordinary people. And, crucially, this ‘construction’ of ethnicity is “endogenous to a set of social, economic and political processes” (Chandra, 2001: 7). Needless to say, it was the emergence of the constructionist approach—itself a product of postmodernist thought—that embodied the shift in focus in the ethnicity literature, from what ethnicity is to how it is (re)-constructed.

The emergence of constructionist models of ethnicity can be understood by highlighting progress made against earlier instrumentalist critiques. These include, for example: the role accorded to both elites *and* ordinary people in constructing ethnicity through everyday social action as opposed to an earlier focus solely on elite creation and manipulation of ethnic symbols. Or, of ethnicity being constructed *within* broader historical processes, in contrast to the overly individualistic models of Barth (1998a [1969a]) and Cohen (1969, 1974). However, it is also necessary to understand the broader shifts in anthropology that have shaped the development of constructionist theory.

²² This has led some scholars to argue that the instrumentalist approach to ethnicity is actually one component of the broader constructionist approach (Lustick, 2001). Yet, Eriksen (2001) makes a distinction between instrumentalist approaches focusing on politics and constructionist approaches on ideology.

As discussed above with regard to race and ethnicity, the shift in anthropology toward an analysis of social organisation itself heralded a change in relationship with the exotic 'Other' (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]). Correspondingly, throughout the 1990s anthropology grappled with two related issues that greatly contributed to what we now label as the constructionist approach to ethnicity, these were "how to deal with history, and how to grasp globalisation" (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]): 5). As a result, Barth's interactional model of ethnicity was situated within historical process; which shape both the construction of ethnicity and its on-going (re)-construction. Barth himself in his later research on pluralism (Barth, 1983, 1984, 1989) situates his model of ethnicity within broader 'streams of tradition', which shape the maintenance of 'ethnic boundaries'. Furthermore, recognition of the role of history in the formation of ethnicity also contributes to the primordialist versus instrumentalist debate in the literature. It further emphasises the importance of the cultural content of ethnicity, as only certain aspects of culture can be drawn upon symbolically in the construction of ethnicity (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]).

Much like the sizeable body of literature on ethnicity theory, the sub-field of literature pertaining to constructionist theory is vast and complex (Banks, 1996). It spans numerous disciplinary traditions, investigates topics ranging from ethnogenesis to nationalism, and adopts differing perspectives on what drives (re)-construction. Given the proliferation of so-called 'ethnic conflicts' since the 1960s constructionist theory has also extensively investigated how the (re)-construction of ethnic differentiation relates to the onset of 'ethnic conflict' (see Horowitz, 2000 [1985]; Kapferer, 1988; Tambiah, 1989; Deng, 1995; McGarry and O'Leary, 1995; Prunier, 1995; Woodward, 1995; and Brass, 1997).

Few of these studies acknowledge the reverse relationship: of conflict contributing to ethnic identity (c.f. Laitin, 1995; Kaufmann, 1996; Brubaker, 1999; Mueller, 2000; and Fearon and Laitin 2000). A minority of scholars suggest that 'ethnic conflict' can break out as a result of elite provocation and escalating patterns of reciprocal violence, which *in turn* results in the crystallisation and polarisation of ethnic identities (Laitin, 1995). Other scholars indicate the *ex post* framing of conflict as 'ethnic' is central to concretising ethnic identity and producing the circumstances for further (ethnic) violence (Lemarchand, 1966; McGarry and O'Leary, 1995; and Brubaker, 2004).

To assist in unpacking the vast range of constructionist theory I'll now follow James Fearon and David Laitin's (2000) sub-division of the constructionist literature. They identify three sets of constructionist theory by the manner in which the construction of

ethnicity is characterised. They are differentiated based upon whether “individuals”, “discursive formations” or “broad structural forces” are viewed as the chief agent in the construction of ethnicity (Fearon and Laitin, 2000: 850). Under each of these sub-divisions I will also briefly highlight the nature of their contribution to ‘ethnic conflict’.

Individuals as Agents of Social Construction: The first subset of constructionist theory is largely an expansion of the earlier theories regarding the instrumental approach to ethnicity. Yet, this newer strand of constructionist literature—investigating what is now termed ‘identity politics’²³—recognises the agency of ordinary people in addition to that of elites in the (re)-construction of ethnicity. With regard to the role of ordinary people, this contemporary literature sees ethnicity created and recreated through the everyday actions of individuals, who viewing themselves as associated to a certain ethnic identity act to confirm, contest or propagate those (ethnic) identities (*ibid*).

Eriksen (2001, 2002 [1993]) points out some of the general sociological and ideological features of ‘identity politics’. First, “there is competition over scarce resources” featuring perceptions of scarcity—framed in terms of economic wealth, political power, symbolic power, and recognition—and struggles to maintain or achieve hegemony or equality (*ibid*: 158). Second, “modernisation actualises differences and triggers conflict” (*ibid*: 159). Third, “the groups are largely self-recruiting” in that interreligious marriage is rare and kinship remains a strong organising principle in many countries (*ibid*: 159). Moreover, Eriksen identifies five common ideological features. First, “cultural similarity overrules social equality” (*ibid*: 159), where in-group differences are underemphasised and cultural differentiation takes precedence over equality. Second, “images of past suffering and injustice are invoked” (*ibid*: 159). Third, “political symbolism and rhetoric evokes personal experience” (*ibid*: 159), in that personal experiences are underemphasised relative to group history. Fourth, “first comers are contrasted with invaders” (*ibid*: 160). Fifth, and finally, “the social complexity in society is reduced to a set of simple contrasts” (*ibid*: 160) to aid the targeting of the ethnic ‘Other’.

Andreas Wimmer (2008a, 2008b), a prominent constructionist theorist, also elaborates the five strategies through which individual actors affect change in ethnic categories. These include: (i) expanding or constraining the frame of those included in one’s own ethnic category; (ii) challenging hierarchies within one’s ethnic category; (iii) by changing

²³ Following Eriksen (2001: 42) ‘identity politics’ are taken to mean: “political ideology, organization [sic], and action that openly represents the interests of designated groups based on ‘essential’ characteristics such as ethnic origin or religion, and whose legitimacy lies in the support of important segments of such groups.”

one's standing within an ethnic category; or (iv) by accentuating non-ethnic forms of identity (Wimmer, 2008b).

The Contribution of Individuals to 'Ethnic Conflict': The majority of constructionist literature focuses on the role of individuals—primarily of elites but also of ordinary people—in instigating 'ethnic violence'. Similar to instrumentalist accounts of 'ethnic conflict' most constructionist accounts focus on elites constructing antagonistic ethnic identities to further their goals, which in turn can result in an escalation of violence (*ibid*). Constructionist theories, however, also account for how ordinary individuals can contribute to 'ethnic conflict'. It is suggested that marginalised or non-conforming members of 'ethnic groups' may contest existing ethnic identities thereby constructing new or adapted ones. This, in turn, can result in retaliatory violence from those elites who benefit from the previous form of ethnic identity (Laitin, 1995; Ganguly, 1997; and Fearon and Laitin, 2000). Alternatively, marginal 'ethnic group' members may employ violence aimed at other 'ethnic groups' as a strategy, when seeking to gain increasing acceptance from established members of their own 'ethnic group' (Chauncey, 1994; Fearon and Laitin, 2000).

"Discursive Formations" as Agents of Social Construction: The second set of constructionist theory (see Kapferer, 1988; Tishkew, 1997) states that, much like an actor uncritically following a cultural script, "discursive formations or symbolic or cultural systems... have their own logic or agency" (Fearon and Laitin, 2000: 851). A good example is Kapferer's (1988) claim that the myths of Vijaya and Dutugemunu²⁴ were central to explaining ethnic riots in Sri Lanka in 1977, 1981 and 1983. Yet, it should be noted that such arguments for the construction of ethnicity received criticism. They border on primordialism as they portray culture as an unchanging force central to the construction of ethnicity (Tambiah, 1992; Fearon and Laitin, 2000).

The Contribution of "Discursive Formations" to 'Ethnic Conflict': This small body of constructionist literature focuses on the capacity of discourse to predispose members of one 'ethnic group' to view members of another as natural targets of violence (Fearon and Laitin, 2000). While such theories of ethnicity are generally critiqued for bordering on primordialism, the construction-by-discourse view of 'ethnic conflict' is widely critiqued

²⁴ Vijaya was the founding prince of the Sinhala people, whereas Dutugemunu re-established Sinhala authority by defeating the Tamil king Elara.

for not being able to account for the wide variety in, and variance of, 'ethnic violence' across the globe (Fearon and Laitin, 2000).

"Broad Structural Forces" as Agents of Social Construction: The final subgroup of constructionist theory, which is by far the largest, is preoccupied with the role of broad social, political and economic forces in the construction of ethnicity (see Yancey, Erickson, and Juliani, 1976; Anderson, 2006 [1983]; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1983; Herzog, 1984; Smith, 1984; Brass, 1985; Breuilly, 1985; Horowitz, 2000 [1985]; Tambiah, 1989; Juteau, 1991; Eriksen, 2002 [1993]; Brubaker, 1996; and Jenkins, 2008 [1997]). Many of the major works linked to this subset of constructionist literature are preoccupied with processes of ethnogenesis, or the process leading to the emergence of ethnicity. Ethnogenesis is linked to nationalism, globalisation²⁵ and modernity.²⁶ Few studies look at the circumstances by which ethnicity becomes less salient (Eriksen, 2001). This is unsurprising given the concerns, discussed above, that faced anthropology throughout the 1990s.

The Contribution of "Broad Structural Forces" to 'Ethnic Conflict': This sub-group of constructionist literature argues that "broad structural forces", for example, modernisation can lead to 'ethnic conflict' (Melson and Wolpe, 1970; Brass, 1976; Bates, 1974; and Milne, 1981). Although lacking a general explanation of how 'ethnic conflict' breaks out, this constructionist literature argues that modernisation leads to 'converging aspirations', thereby explaining why 'ethnic violence' occurs. 'Converging aspirations' refers to the changing nature of people's expectations and wants as they engage with modernisation, which results in numerous people developing the same material desires: "It is by making men 'more alike', in the sense of possessing the same wants, that modernization [sic] tends to promote conflict" (Melson and Wolpe, 1970 cited in Horowitz, 2000 [1985]: 100).

The Emergence of Ethnicity: 'The Expansion of System Boundaries'

Primordialists argue that ethnic differentiation is innate (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]). Materialists, on the other hand, see ethnicity as the product of class relations (Horowitz, 2000 [1985]). Instrumentalists attribute the emergence of ethnicity to processes of either

²⁵ Taken as the process of increasing global integration of disparate communities in political, economic and cultural terms. Moreover, it incorporates a growing reflexive consciousness of the global system by the members of these communities.

²⁶ Taken as a process of socio-cultural, economic and political transition toward the adoption of capitalism, rationalisation, industrialisation, and the 'nation state' and its constituent institutions and forms of surveillance.

claim making or categorisation by elites (Phoenix, 2010). However, the majority of constructionists view ethnogenesis as the outcome of broad structural forces, such as colonialism, globalisation, modernity, capitalism and the formation of the 'nation state' (Eriksen, 2002 [1993]).

Tambiah (1989) recapitulates, in his 1988 keynote lecture to the American Ethnological Society, some of the better-versed constructionist arguments regarding modernisation and the emergence of ethnicity. He suggests that while the legacy of colonialism was complex, it set in motion two important processes that contributed to the emergence of ethnicity as a salient form of group identity. First, colonial authorities amalgamated small groups of people and territories into larger administrative units. Often this was done arbitrarily, following physical boundaries, but on occasion it was carried out given social and demographic considerations. Donald Horowitz in his influential and wide-ranging *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Horowitz, 2000 [1985]: 66) supports Tambiah claiming:

Out of the welding together of local environments a great many new groups appeared... They changed their identity by a process of shifting and sorting amongst the range of peoples they now confronted.

Moreover, the policies of colonial authorities, to serve a 'divide and rule' logic, contributed to the exacerbation of ethnic difference whilst a broader consolidation of territory took place (*ibid*). This included the biological categorisation of 'ethnic groups' by colonial authorities—through the use of early ethnographic accounts—and the selective integration of these identified 'ethnic groups' into the colonial administration (Horowitz, 2000 [1985]; Tambiah, 1989; Prunier, 1995).

Second, Tambiah (1989) points out that the establishment of colonies and the implementation of standardised commercial laws, including taxation and trade policies, led to the rapid integration of these new territories into the global capitalist order. Moreover, plantation societies were a common feature of colonialism, in which ethnic identity—in some cases drawing on categorisations of race—was used to structure the division of labour (Eriksen, 2002 [1993]). Furthermore, the mass internal movement and international migration of colonial subjects for work and slavery purposes contributed to their incorporation into the capitalist system of production. For example, a number of scholars argue that contemporary ethnic differentiation in a number of post-colonial countries is a result of migration instigated by colonisation (Peel, 1989; O'Brien, 1986).

Tambiah (1989) goes on to explain that by the middle of the twentieth century 'decolonisation' became a political reality through which Western powers ceded control to local elite groups. The manner by which this occurred, in many cases, further entrenched the emerging pattern of ethnic differentiation in terms of *which* local elites gained in the decolonisation process (Horowitz, 2000 [1985]). Following 'decolonisation', the 1950s and 1960s were characterised by 'nation building' in the newly independent countries. This included the development of 'national sovereignty', 'national identity' and 'national culture' and the downplaying of social diversity and the internal divisions created as a result of colonialism (Tambiah, 1989).

The myth of the 'plural society' did not last long. The processes set in motion by colonialism soon led to what Tambiah terms the 'politicisation of ethnicity' and the subsequent challenging of the 'nation state' by constituent 'ethnic groups' (Tambiah, 1989). He argues that the politics of post-colonial nations framed with 'nation state' ideologies are now, "by virtue of various internal dialectics and differences" (Tambiah, 1989: 341), marred by competition and conflict between 'ethnic groups'. He attributes this to:

World capitalism... and widespread nation building by liberated colonies now ruled by elite intelligentsias who, however, have to react to their divided civilian constituencies.

In addition to capitalism and the establishment of 'nation states', Tambiah also indicates the role of modernity and the growing capability for political mobilization as key processes in the emergence of ethnicity. With regard to the former he points out that the emergence of ethnic political organization is linked to (Tambiah, 1989: 343):

Increasing possibilities of contact through the improvement of transport, of the quick adoption and deployment of modern media, and of raised levels of education and literacy...

With regard to the latter he goes on to state (*ibid*):

Another explanation lies in the proliferation and popularization of street theatres and public arenas, occasions for collective massing of people, ranging from political rallies and elections and referendums to strikes, demonstrations, sit-ins and mass protests.

In addition, the widespread establishment of schools, colleges and universities has also contributed to the massing of activists for the purposes of political action (Tambiah, 1989). Finally, Tambiah indicates the complementary role of rapid population growth and large-scale urbanization alongside this increasing capability for political action (*ibid*).

Eriksen (2002 [1993]) expands Tambiah's (1989) thesis, by suggesting that ethnicity has emerged as a result of "the expansion of system boundaries" (Eriksen, 2002 [1983]: 79). By this he refers to globalisation and modernity, with the latter term incorporating capitalism and the formation of the 'nation state', as the chief sources of ethnogenesis. He also points out that globalisation and modernity can result in growing social differentiation *within* an existing population (Eriksen, 2002 [1993]).

Furthermore, Eriksen (*ibid*) while providing an overview of indigenous ethnogenesis, or the emergence of 'indigenous groups' as minorities within an existing state, discusses the revitalisation of their ethnic identity as a result of integration into the capitalist mode of production and system of consumption. Eriksen (*ibid*) goes on to argue, it is often territorial conflict in the form of infringements on the land and resources of 'indigenous groups' that can lead to their ethnogenesis. He goes on to explain that indigenous ethnogenesis (and, we should note, ethnogenesis in general) is reliant upon the successful 'discovery', reification and communication of communal culture. Here the successful development of usually literate individuals that can articulate, normally in written form, a common cultural history is central to the emergence of a revitalised ethnic identity. Finally, it is through the utilisation of new technologies to communicate the cultural basis of these newly politicised identities—internally, to other 'groups', and to international actors—that minority 'ethnic groups' often successfully challenge the interests of the state that encompass them (*ibid*). Only through such reification can an ethnic identity be constructed and subsequently deployed for political mobilisation.

The State, Nationalism and Ethnicity

As highlighted in the discussion above, an important element of the constructionist literature is the explicit recognition of the role of the state and nationalism in relation to ethnicity.

Numerous scholars discussing ethnicity, including Barth (1998a [1969a]), are unconcerned with the state. Others, such as those of the 'Manchester School', were ahead of their time in this regard and studied the role of the colonial state apparatus in relation

to ethnicity. Yet, it was later sociological analysis of migrant populations in the US and the UK that illuminated the importance of the state in the analysis of ethnicity (Banks, 1996). Discussion of minoritised 'ethnic groups' and ranked social systems, stimulated by Horowitz (2000, [1985]), led to a similar realisation. However, it was Glazer and Moynihan (1975), who first placed the state firmly at the centre of their model of ethnicity. Yet, they conceived of the state as a neutral arena in which instrumental manifestations of ethnicity are deployed (Brass, 1985; Banks, 1996). Paul Brass, on the other hand, in his important contribution entitled *Ethnic Groups and the State* (1985) was one of, if not, the first scholar to discuss the state's *differential* role in the (re)-construction of ethnicity.

In an enlightening analysis Brass (*ibid*), identifying three main interfaces that shape the (re)-construction of ethnic identity, develops an analytical framework capable of accounting for the role of the state (Brass, 1985: 1):

One [struggle] takes place within the ethnic group itself for control over its material and symbolic resources, which in turn involves defining the group's boundaries and its rules for inclusion and exclusion. The second takes place between ethnic groups as a competition for rights, privileges, and available resources. The third takes place between the state and the groups that dominate it, on the one hand, and the populations that inhabit its territory... These three sets of struggles intersect in different ways at different times, but it is possible to specify particular patterns of elite competition within and between ethnic groups, the role of the state in each pattern, and the potential consequences of each pattern for ethnic identity formation and political mobilisation.

Recently, however, anthropology has also drawn upon theories of nationalism—the ideology of the modern nation state—to better understand the relationship between the state and ethnicity. More generally, theories of nationalism also help us understand the relationship between national identity and ethnicity. But this is a two-way street: anthropologists frequently argue that an understanding of the socially constructed nature of ethnicity has much to offer sociological theories of nationalism (Eriksen 2002 [1993]; Jenkins, 2008 [1997]; Brubaker *et al*, 2006).

Three main theories of nationalism are usually drawn upon by anthropologists when discussing the (re)-construction of ethnicity. These theories are those of Ernest Gellner (1983), Benedict Anderson (2006 [1983]), and Anthony D. Smith (1986). Gellner, in his classic work *Nations and Nationalism* (Gellner, 1983), describes how nationalism is a

product of industrialisation and the development of government bureaucracy. He rarely mentions ethnicity in his theory of nationalism. Yet, his theory implies that, in pre-nationalist settings, a dominant 'ethnic group' develops aspects of its ethnic ideology, such as religion or language, into an official nationalist ideology (Eriksen, 2002 [1993]). Slowly, through education and processes of cultural homogenisation, state citizens who have alternate ethnic affiliations, adopt this nationalist ideology as their own. Gellner believes nationalism demarcates a point of discontinuity between old agrarian societies, plagued by ethnic fragmentation, and new industrial ones. Therefore, as the new nationalist ideology takes hold ethnicity largely becomes redundant (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]).

Similar to Gellner, Anthony D. Smith (1986) argues for ethnicity as the antecedent to nationalism, but he does so much more forcibly and with different reasoning.²⁷ Smith, in his influential text, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Smith, 1986), draws upon a perennial approach to ethnicity to argue that an '*ethnie*'—a French synonym for 'ethnic community'—has a historically continuous cultural core. In doing so he argues against Gellner's (and Anderson's, see below) modernist arguments regarding the origins of nations. Instead, Smith proposes that, under the right circumstances, the 'myth symbol' complex—composed of "myths, memories, values and symbols" (Smith, 1986: 15-16)—at the heart of an '*ethnie*' can develop into a nationalism. Thus, ethnicity precedes and is a continuing part of nationalism.

In opposition to Smith, Benedict Anderson draws on what could be described as a constructionist approach, in his foundational work entitled *Imagined Communities* (Anderson, 2006 [1983]). Instead of discussing the origins of nations or the political form of nationalism, similar to Gellner, Anderson focuses on the development and persistence of national identity. He explains how the 'imagining'²⁸ of nation states in Europe was underpinned by 'print capitalism', or in other words, the convergence of capitalism and print information technology. Anderson describes how growing literacy, the spread of vernacular print-languages, and the emergence of 'print capitalism' across Europe in the early 19th century resulted in the development of popular forms of 'national identity'. The widespread usage of vernacular print languages created "unified fields of exchange and communication" (Anderson, 2006 [1983]: 45) through which Europeans "gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people in their particular language field, and at the same time that *only those* hundreds of thousands, or millions, so

²⁷ Banks (1996) argues, however, that Gellner claims nationalism is preceded by ethnicity only in certain pre-nationalist circumstances, where there is an ethnic stratification of class.

²⁸ For Anderson, nations are 'imagined'—but not invented—amidst existing cultural circumstances.

belonged" (*ibid*). Anderson goes on to argue that by the mid-19th century European political elites, fearing exclusion from these coalescing national identities, promoted 'official nationalisms' (i.e. reactionary representations of 'national identity') through the mass media, the educational system and administrative regulations, thereby ensuring the development of nation states under their authority.

Anderson does not at any point in his theory discuss ethnicity. However, Banks (1996: 127), in his review of Anderson's work, helpfully points out:

By substituting the word 'ethnicity' (and cognate terms) for 'nationalism' (and cognate terms) the similarities are obvious: the subjective impression of ethnicity as perduring versus the objective account that it is modern and recent; the widely varying expressions of ethnic identity set against the search for some grand unitary theory; the instrumental uses of ethnicity founded on identities that are shifting, fluid and contestable.

Notwithstanding these comparisons Anderson, unlike Gellner and Smith, does not view ethnicity as a necessary precursor to nationalism. However, in line with Gellner, Anderson's modernist theory of nationalism does imply that the newly 'imagined' nation state renders ethnicity largely unnecessary for its citizens.

Jenkins challenges the tautological nature of Gellner and Anderson's modernist argument—that nationalism supersedes ethnicity—on the grounds that such an argument relies on "definitions of nationalism and ethnicity that are more constraining than may be defensible" (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]: 149). This in turn results in "no authentic place within modern nation-states for ethnicity, other than as axiomatic homogeneity, on the one hand, or an immigrant or peripheral presence, on the other" (*ibid*). Drawing comparisons with Smith's theory (1986), but yet distancing himself from its perennialist elements, Jenkins (2008 [1997]) argues that nationalism emerged from, and continues to be, an ideology of ethnic identification.

One final, contemporary, theory of nationalism is worth reviewing here. Brackette Williams, in her wide ranging and well-argued article named *A Class Act: Anthropology and the Race to Nation Across Ethnic Terrain* (1989), presents a model of the roles of ethnicity, race and class in the rise of nationalism. She argues that an elite class, by claiming superior racial characteristics, defines the 'boundaries' of national identity. Moreover, those who cannot meet the 'boundaries' of national identity lag behind in the 'race to nation' and are

categorised into problematic ‘ethnic groups’. Success, on the other hand, can only be achieved by reducing ethnicity to tokenistic cultural traits (e.g. folk music and traditional costumes) and by forgoing ethnic interests in favour of those of the nation. By default, the dominant ‘group’ is not just another ‘ethnic group’ but is synonymous with the nation (Banks, 1996).

Beyond Constructivism?

Andreas Wimmer (2008a) presents a sweeping critique of both the primordialist and constructionist approaches on the grounds that they both fail to account for the variation in the characteristics of ethnicity. These characteristics, according to Wimmer, include social closure, political salience, cultural distinctiveness, and historical stability. In response, he offers a multilevel process theory of ‘ethnic boundary’ making to show how ‘ethnic boundaries’ are the product of classificatory negotiations between actors situated within a social field. Finally, Wimmer argues that the characteristics of a social field—including the institutional order, distribution of power, and political networks—determine the ‘ethnic boundary’ making strategies available to an individual actor.

Critiques of Ethnicity as an Analytical Category: ‘Everything and Nothing’

I want to close this section with a brief discussion of the critiques that have been levelled at ethnicity theory since the rise of post-modernism in the field of identity studies in the 1980s. Rather than discussing specific critiques, aimed at particular approaches to ethnicity, I will present those criticisms levelled at ethnicity as a category of social analysis. These critiques stem from the all-embracing, and sometimes spurious, usage of ethnicity as an analytical term, which has led to what a number of scholars argue is an over-ethnicised interpretation of social reality (Hannerz, 1992; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992).

These general critiques are of two main types. On the one hand, there are those scholars who call for a ‘rethinking’ of ethnicity (Eriksen, 2002 [1993]; Brubaker, 2004; and Jenkins, 2008 [1997]). On the other, are those who call for its outright abandonment (Chapman *et al*, 1989; Hannerz, 1992; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992; Connor, 1994; Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Gerring and Baressi, 2003; and Carter and Fenton, 2010).

Eriksen (2002 [1993]), Brubaker (2004) and Jenkins (2008 [1997]), in addition to numerous other scholars, argue for greater *conceptual* clarity regarding ethnicity - much of which has been integrated in the literature review above. Jenkins (2008 [1997]) also

argues for greater *analytical* clarity calling for increased attention to be paid to power relations, processes of social categorisation and the relationship between ethnicity and race.

Yet, as mentioned above, there are also those scholars who call for the demise of ethnicity as an analytical concept (Chapman *et al*, 1989; Hannerz, 1992; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992; Connor, 1994; Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; and Carter and Fenton, 2010). Connor (1994), echoing the core argument of most critics, points out how the tendency to use ethnicity as a catchall concept for many varieties of group identity results in a loss of analytical depth. He claims, using “... ethnicity as a cloak for several different types of identity... presumes that all identities are of the same order” (Connor, 1994: 101-102). Ethnicity, it is argued, is therefore everything and nothing.

It is the postmodern literature that underpins this critique, to which I now turn.

2. IDENTITY AND THE ‘DISCURSIVE TURN’: FRAGMENTED, INTERSECTIONAL AND EPISODIC

From the 1980s onwards the field of identity studies became increasingly complicated. A decentring of identity has been witnessed within identity theory, with the idea of identity being innate and persistent being systematically challenged (Wetherell, 2010). This was primarily a result of fundamental shifts in thinking across the social sciences and humanities brought about by post-modernism; known in other forms as post-structuralism, queer theory, post-colonialism, and the ‘discursive’ or ‘cultural’ turn (Wetherell, 2010).

These paradigmatic changes, manifest in the emergence of the constructionist—or post modern—approach to ethnicity discussed above, have resulted in a shift in the focus of theorisation from discussions of *what* identity is to *how* it is (re)-constructed. Yet, many of the debates within identity theory, brought about by the ‘discursive turn’, have not adequately been incorporated into ethnicity theory. This includes theoretical insights pertaining to the intersectional nature of identity emerging from the ground-breaking work of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989); and the realisation that identity is discursively formulated, and therefore punctuated, based upon the influential genealogical studies of Michel Foucault (e.g. Foucault, 1975).

Punctuated Identity: Language and the Invocation of Identity

[...] It is one of Michel Foucault's greatest insights that to become 'subjects' we must be 'subjected' to discourses which speak us, and without which we cannot speak.

As Stuart Hall (Hall, 2007: 274, cited in Phoenix, 2010: 310) indicates in his quotation above, the 'discursive turn' brought with it an investigation of how identity was 'spoken' by language. Yet, postmodernism also produced a parallel investigation of the forces that normalise the boundaries of what can be 'spoken'. This literature on 'governmentality'—drawing heavily on Foucault's genealogical method—investigate the way 'discursive formations' create identities and produce subjects through the use of political and administrative power (Wetherell, 2010).

In opposition to Foucault, other post-modern thinkers, such as Rolland Munro (2004, 2005) place more emphasis on the role of the actor in constructing identity. Investigating narrative and the act of speaking, these scholars argue that the individual is not only 'subjected' by discourse but also has a role to play in the construction of the 'subject' through language (Wetherell, 2010).

The postmodern realisation that identity is discursively constructed had major implications for its study. Firstly, it implies that identity is punctuated (Munro, 2004). Rolland Munro (2004), furthering discussion of the discursively constructed nature of identity, introduced the concept of 'punctualisation'. Munro (*ibid*) argues that an individual's identity is summoned into being—through language—at a particular time and place, and is performed in response to this summoning. He stresses the importance of the temporal nature of punctualisation, in that the invocation of an identity in the here and now supersedes any earlier invocations of identity. Identity is a chain of individual moments unfolding over time. Each link, connected but not totally defined by the previous, is summoned into being at a specific moment.

Secondly, this decentred interpretation of identity construction also allows us to understand that identity is fragmented (Phoenix, 2010; Wetherell, 2010). For some time in the social sciences, it has been recognised that identity is multiple and often contradictory. Yet, it was assumed that these multiple dimensions were facets of an innate, persistent and core identity (Wetherell, 2010). The 'discursive turn' challenged this conception

instead demonstrating that, at any one time and place, a multitude of different potential identities could be 'spoken' into being.

Thirdly, the discursive construction of identity also implies that a multitude of voices continuously negotiate the (re)-construction of identities (Wetherell, 2010). While this resulted in research necessarily accommodating and analysing the plurality of perspectives in identity construction and the role of power in shaping them (Maybin, 2001), it also resulted in Judith Butler's valuable research on gender and 'performativity' (Butler, 1988, 1990, and 1993).

Butler (1990) explains how sex, gender and sexuality categories, discursively formed by numerous agents over time, maintain an apparently coherent and stable form. She argues that it is 'performativity', or the iterative performance of gender, normalised and constrained by 'regulative discourses', which produces the apparent coherence of 'natural' gender categories (*ibid*). Butler, borrowing from Foucault, takes 'regulative discourses' to be processes that regularise and constrain; deciding in advance what possibilities of gender are acceptable and coercing individuals to perform them (*ibid*). In other words, it is through the repeated performance of stylised acts that categories of identity seem coherent, although they are the production of an on-going negotiation by a multitude of voices.

Intersectional Identity: The Interweaving of Social Categories

Ever since Barth (1998a [1969a]) drew attention to the subjective nature of ethnicity numerous forms of identity—religious, class, racial, and others—have fallen within its purview. This has caused definitional and analytical problems manifested, for example, in the debate regarding how to treat the analysis of race in relation to ethnicity and Connor's (1994) critique of ethnicity's all-encompassing analytical nature. It is to this backdrop that recognition of the intersectional nature of identity is vital.

While intersectionality had for some time been implicitly utilised in analysis (e.g. Combahee River Collective, 1977), it was Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) who popularised the term in response to the realisation that black women were unaccounted for in US surveys of violence against women (Phoenix, 2010). This corresponded with certain currents in feminist thoughts at the time, which argued that black, lesbian and working class women experienced greater oppression than other women (Combahee River Collective, 1977). Intersectionality, therefore, refers to the recognition that, "people are always

simultaneously positioned in many [social] categories so that there is no essence to any [one] category" (Phoenix, 2010: 303).

Furthermore, intersectionality also suggests that the interwoven nature of identities can be utilised strategically, allowing for temporary shifting alliances and the varied utilisation of one or more of the interwoven identities in social action (Phoenix, 2010). However, while intersectionality has proliferated in identity theory there are critics who argue that a more nuanced utilisation of the concept is necessary (Alexander and Mohanty, 1997; Skeggs, 2006; Yuval-Davies, 2006; and Anthias, 2007). These critiques remind us that all categories cannot be analysed in the same way (Skeggs, 2006); and, as all categories are linked to relations of power, the relationship between them can shift in time and place (Anthias, 2007).

The understanding of the intersectional nature of identity outlined above can be expanded further. Building upon insights regarding the punctuated nature of identity, it is possible to see how intersectional identities—composed of more than one social category—could be *invoked* at any one time in a given context. For example, when an ethnic identity is invoked an individual could also simultaneously assume gender, religious, racial and/or class identities; the combination of which would depend upon the particular social context at that moment.

3. INTEGRATING THEORETICAL INSIGHTS: PUNCTUATING AN INTERSECTIONAL ETHNICITY

As can be inferred from the preceding discussion, defining ethnicity is a challenging task (Cohen, 1978; Isajiw, 1992). The variety of theoretical approaches to the study of ethnicity has resulted in ethnicity having multiple, and often contradictory, meanings. Many scholars therefore adopt 'minimal' definitions of ethnicity (Gerring and Baressi, 2003). Minimal definitions of ethnicity are broad definitions that allow for a variety of interpretations. Yet, given both the anthropological positioning of this chapter and its to aim to garner theoretical insights regarding ethnicity, I intend to be specific in my definition. Based on these theoretical insights I adopt a definition explicitly premised upon the social construction of ethnicity. I define ethnicity as: an unfolding yet episodic process; in which individuals—in interaction with broad socio-historical processes—cognitively utilise and discursively deploy, enact and contest, ethnic categories defined in terms of perceived cultural similarities and differences.

Ethnic Categories: 'Seeing' and 'Doing' Ethnicity

To accommodate the insights emerging from postmodern thinking in identity theory I utilise the conceptualisation of ethnicity proposed by Rogers Brubaker and his colleagues (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Brubaker, 2004; and Brubaker *et al*, 2006) that takes ethnicity to operate through ethnic categories, not 'ethnic groups'.

Criticising what he labels as "clichéd constructionism" (Brubaker, 2004: 3), Brubaker argues that 'ethnic groups' in existing constructionist theory continue to be conceived of in substantialist terms: they are viewed "as entities and cast as actors" (*ibid*: 3). He goes on to claim that they are incorrectly conceptualised, "as if they were internally homogenous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purposes" (*ibid*: 8). Brubaker argues that, "'groupness' is a variable, not a constant... it may wax and wane over time, peaking during exceptional—but unsustainable—moments of collective effervescence" (*ibid*: 4). As such, he proposes a focus on ethnic categories to be more analytically rewarding (Brubaker, 2004).

Ethnic categories are a "perspective on the world, and a way of acting in the world" rather than an entity within it (Brubaker *et al*, 2006: 208). As such, ethnicity operates through countless acts of categorisation; where categorisation (Brubaker *et al*, 2006: 209, emphasis in original):

[...] Is both a mental process and a social practice. As a cognitive process, it involves perceiving (ordinarily seeing or hearing) or conceiving (imagining or remembering) someone as a member of a particular category. As a social practice, it involves expressly or implicitly characterising or formulating the identity of a person in this way.

In other words, ethnicity is both a way of perceiving social reality and a discursive tool. It is something people *do*, not something people *are* (Phoenix, 2010). Perceiving ethnicity this way also infers that it is not a continuous state of being; people do not *have* an ethnicity, they *think* or *do* ethnicity at a particular time and location (Brubaker *et al*, 2006). Ethnicity is therefore also punctuated. It is a chain of individual moments unfolding over time that, as a result of performativity, maintains an apparent coherence.

Brubaker and his colleagues (Brubaker *et al*, 2006) point out that while ethnicity works through categories, it does not *always* work through *ethnic* categories. Depending upon

context other categories can also be used to invoke ethnicity, including racial, class, religious, regional, and nationality categories. Moreover, the reverse is also true. Invoking ethnicity also calls into being other categories, including gender and sexuality categories in addition to those mentioned above.

‘Everyday Ethnicity’: From National to Local and from Politics to Experience

Acknowledging that ethnicity operates through ethnic categories has major implications for the way ethnicity can be studied. Given that the examination of ethnicity becomes an analysis of the utilisation of ethnic categories, as opposed to the investigation of ‘ethnic groups’, the scope of possible analysis is greatly expanded. Analysis of ethnic categories, and therefore, ethnicity can be extended to the realm of the personal and interpersonal. Ethnicity therefore comes to be studied not only through the lens of national politics and socio-historical processes, as is traditional in the study of ethnicity, but also through the more personalised and localised lens of ‘everyday ethnicity’. ‘Everyday ethnicity’, a term coined by Brubaker (Brubaker, 2004), refers to the analysis of the utilisation of ethnic categories in the largely mundane realm of daily life. But researching ‘everyday ethnicity’ does not only demand a shift in analysis linked to *where* ethnicity operates. It also requires a shift from the ‘top down’ analysis of long-term processes regarding the formative role of socio-historical process and the nationalistically motivated machinations of political elites, to incorporate ‘bottom up’ examination of *how* these processes unfold in daily life, and how ethnicity is *experienced* and *represented* in the everyday. This is a shift that moves the focus of analysis from what ethnicity *is* to what it *means* in everyday circumstances (*ibid*).

Rogers Brubaker and colleagues, in their investigation of *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox and Grancea, 2006), elaborate on some of the ways that ethnicity features in the everyday lives of Romanians and Hungarians in the town of Cluj-Napoca in Romania. Following their discussion of ethnic categories; they claim that ‘asymmetries’ exist in the way Romanians and Hungarians experience ethnicity; before, finally, undertaking an exhaustive analysis of ‘everyday ethnicity’ in Cluj-Napoca. Two points in their discussion of asymmetries are relevant. This includes distinguishing between marked and unmarked categories and the way Romanians and Hungarians experience ethnicity differently.

Brubaker and colleagues (*ibid*) distinguish, in their analysis of ethnicity, between marked and unmarked categories. An unmarked category is the, “normal, default, taken-for-granted category” (Brubaker *et al*, 2006: 211), whereas a marked category “is special,

different, 'other'" (Brubaker *et al*, 2006: 211-212). Unmarked categories do not normally need to be expressed in most contexts, which is central to why they are unmarked. Marked categories, on the other hand, are made explicit and stand out in most contexts (Brubaker *et al*, 2006). In Cluj-Napoca, 'Hungarian' is a marked category, given the minoritised position of Hungarians in Romania, and 'Romanian' is an unmarked category. Finally, Brubaker and his colleagues (Brubaker *et al*, 2006) note that in certain circumstances these marked relationships can be reversed. They give the example of neighbourhoods in Cluj-Napoca populated by Hungarians, in which 'Hungarian' is the norm and thus unmarked and 'Romanian' becomes a marked category (*ibid*).

Brubaker and his colleagues (*ibid*) go on to argue that Hungarians are more disposed to experience the social world in ethnic terms compared to Romanians. Hungarians, they argue, are more sensitive to ethnicity largely as a result of their marked and minoritised status, of which they are reminded consciously and unconsciously on a daily basis (*ibid*).

In their lengthy analysis of 'everyday ethnicity' in Cluj-Napoca, Brubaker and his colleagues unpack the variety of ways ethnic categories are utilised in daily life. In their analysis of the cognitive aspects of identification they discuss how embodied ethnicity, in terms of physiognomy, is an unreliable cue to ethnic category membership. Yet, they find language, dialect, and names to be more useful cues (*ibid*).

Shifting their analysis to look at identification in terms of social practice, Brubaker and his colleagues (*ibid*) focus on the *enactment* of ethnicity. They analyse what people *do* with ethnic categories. In this regard they find choice of language and choice of dress communicate ethnicity (*ibid*). They also investigate the ways ethnicity is deployed as a discursive resource in interactional settings, finding people use ethnicity to account for one's stance, to challenge another's, to claim legitimacy, and to police and mark category membership (*ibid*). Their analysis also demonstrates the moments in interpersonal interactions in which, otherwise non-ethnic, exchanges *become* ethnicised. This includes expressions of disagreement and conflict; joking and teasing; avoidance; and choices being made between ethnically marked alternatives (*ibid*).

Finally, Brubaker and his colleagues (*ibid*) investigate the effects of institutions upon ethnicity. Investigating the Hungarian 'world' located in the Hungarian neighbourhoods of Cluj-Napoca, they uncover two important findings. Firstly, they investigate the manner by which undertakings in a variety of Hungarian institutions explicitly or implicitly deliver

nationalist messaging. This includes identifying: overly nationalistic history instruction and subtle nationalist preferences in Hungarian school curricula; sermons promoting 'Hungarian-ness' in churches; associations' efforts to exclusively bring Hungarians together to enact Hungarian culture; nationalist editorials in the Hungarian language press; and the efforts of pro-Hungarian political entities in lobbying for the rights of Hungarians (*ibid*).

Secondly, and more importantly, Brubaker and his colleagues (*ibid*) argue that it is not so much the delivery of nationalistic cultural *content*, such as that discussed above, which sustains the Hungarian 'world' on a day-to-day basis. Instead they claim that it is the "social-relational, linguistic, and socio-cognitive *form* or *framing*" (Brubaker *et al*, 2006: 300, emphasis in original) of the institutional system that primarily (re)-produces the Hungarian 'world'. In terms of socio-relational form, they claim the matrix of Hungarian institutions provide a network of acquaintances, potential work colleagues, friends and, importantly, spouses that ultimately bounds interactions and contributes to ethnic endogamy. In terms of linguistic framing, Brubaker and his colleagues (*ibid*) argue that it is not so much *what* is communicated in Hungarian institutions, but the very fact that it *is* communicated in Hungarian as an *unmarked* language, which enables the possibility of a Hungarian 'world'. Finally, with regard to socio-cognitive framing they contend that, as 'Hungarian-ness' is taken-for-granted in Hungarian institutions an interest in Hungarian issues, such as Hungarian history, sports, or politics becomes naturalised. This in turn perpetuates a distinct Hungarian 'world' in Cluj-Napoca (*ibid*).

As can be expected given their focus on the operation of ethnicity, Brubaker and his colleagues (*ibid*) do not suitably engage with discussions on the (re)-construction of ethnic categories. To be fair, they do lay out the historical formation of ethnic categories in the opening chapters of their book. However, throughout their analysis they neglect to account for the ways that either, the variety of competing interpretations of ethnicity held by individuals, or emerging socio-historical processes, contribute to change in ethnic categories. This point will be reflected upon further in Chapter Seven.

4. CONCLUSION

Throughout this chapter I have shown, drawing on contemporary ethnicity theory, that ethnicity is socially constructed (Barth (1998a [1969a]; Eriksen, 2002 [1993])). From this literature I also take ethnicity to be relational (Barth (1998a [1969a])), interactional (*ibid*) and context dependent (Jenkins, 2008 [1997])). Moreover, drawing on current identity

theory I incorporate insights that identity is intersectional (Combahee River Collective, 1977; Crenshaw, 1989), and punctuated (Munro, 2004). To operationalise these insights I conceive of ethnicity as functioning through ethnic categories (Brubaker, 2004; Brubaker *et al*, 2006).

In addition, I perceive individuals to (re)-construct ethnicity amidst broad socio-historical forces (Eriksen, 2002 [1993]; Chandra, 2001). This is made possible through the interaction of structure and agency (Archer, 1995), during which individuals intermittently deploy, enact and contest apparently coherent ethnic categories (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000; Brubaker, 2004; Munro, 2004; and Brubaker *et al*, 2006). I take the apparent coherence of ethnic categories to be the result of 'performativity', or repetition of the regularised performance of ethnic categories (Butler, 1988, 1990, and 1993). Moreover, through the deployment and subsequent enactment or contestation of ethnic categories, ethnicity is either socially reproduced or transformed through an emergent process (Archer, 1995).

By emphasizing these elements of the literature I have indicated the conceptual framework that I employ in this thesis. This is also the literature that has contributed to the development of my central research question and objectives. Or more accurately, it has shaped the assumptions I employ in the framing of my research question and objectives. It is also this body of literature, in addition to the Afghan literature on ethnicity, to which I contribute throughout my empirical analysis and conclusion.

In the following chapter, Chapter Three, the Afghan literature pertaining to ethnicity is critically reviewed. This is undertaken in a bid to analyse the historical formation of ethnicity in the Central Highlands of Afghanistan, and more specifically the Bamyān Valley, from 1500-2010.

CHAPTER THREE

STATES, SCHOLARS AND CONFLICT:

THE CHANGING SALIENCE OF ETHNICITY

IN THE BAMYAN VALLEY, 1500 – 2010

Shisha ke maida shod, tiztar moosha.

When glass breaks, it becomes sharper.

Bamyani Proverb

*Hajji*²⁹ Ali Shah,³⁰ a respected Hazarah elder, spent over half an hour explaining to me why he thought the status of Hazarahs in the Bamyani Valley had been improving in recent years compared to other *qawm*, or ‘ethnic groups’. When there was a natural break in our discussion I asked him how the differences between these various groups came about. *Hajji* Ali Shah took a drink of his tea to buy himself a few moments before answering. As if recalling an unpleasant memory a frown creased his brow. After a moment’s pause his frown broke. His eyes reconnected with mine, he smiled, and then offered me the proverb quoted above.

My continuing discussion revealed that *Hajji* Ali Shah was referring to the impact of decades of war and violence upon ethnicity in the Bamyani Valley and the rest of Afghanistan. He believes violence triggered by the Soviet Invasion in 1979 led to intractable divisions between Hazarahs and members of other ‘ethnic groups’ in the country. While *Hajji* Ali Shah is correct, I suggest here that ethnic differentiation emerged much earlier and the factors leading to its salience are more varied than conflict alone.

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In this chapter I discuss the factors contributing to the emergence, changing salience and (re)-construction of ethnic categories in the Bamyani Valley, from 1500 to 2010. I achieve this through critical engagement with existing literature regarding identity in the Central Highlands of Afghanistan,³¹ through the application of theoretical insights gleaned from

²⁹ *Hajji* is an honorary title given to those Muslims who have completed *Hajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca, which is viewed as one of the five essential obligations in Islam.

³⁰ This is a pseudonym used for the purposes of anonymity.

³¹ This is the result of much of the available historical literature focusing on the Central Highlands region of Afghanistan, as opposed to only the Bamyani Valley.

the review of theoretical literature outlined in the previous chapter. In addition, my analysis in this chapter is not confined to the Bamyan Valley, the Central Highlands region, or even Afghanistan as broader processes have influenced the salience of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley throughout the period under study.

My investigation includes analysing broad socio-historical forces and the actions of organisations and individuals. With regard to the former I investigate the varying role of regional empires since 1500; the role of the Afghan state including its establishment in the 1890s; the role of regional regimes; and the impacts of conflict and migration. With regard to individual agency I discuss the role of Western and Soviet academics; Afghan authors; *mujahedin* leaders and militias; *ulema*,³² or religious scholars; and, in some cases, ordinary Afghans, in the categorisation and utilisation of tribal, ethnic, sectarian, and racial categories. Discussing the actions of this last group, ordinary people, is particularly challenging given the tendency for the literature to focus on broad socio-historical forces with regard to ethnogenesis in Afghanistan. In addition, there is limited local-level ethnographic data upon which to draw.

In a related fashion, throughout this chapter I also detail the emergence of the ‘cultural content’—perceived cultural similarities and differences—that are socially generated to ostensibly represent ethnic categories. This analysis also lends itself to identifying the manner by which ethnic hierarchies were constructed and are changing through interactional processes in the Central Highlands (including in the Bamyan Valley). Finally, to lay the foundation for later empirical analysis regarding the impacts of this changing social order upon ethnic relations, I make explicit relevant factors and events defining relations between Hazarachs, Saadat and Tajiks respectively.

This introduction forms the initial part of the chapter. Throughout the rest of the chapter I present a chronologically ordered discussion of relevant events, factors and processes contributing to the formation of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley. To more clearly articulate my analysis I divide my investigation into four distinct socio-historical periods, as follows. This analysis opens with investigation of the emergence of ethnic and sectarian categories as a result of the actions and policies of regional empires that, from the start of the 16th to the late 19th century, competed for control of the territory of present-day Afghanistan. Secondly, I move on to look at the impacts of the establishment of the Afghan state in the early 1890s. This includes an inquiry into both the politicisation and communication of

³² *Ulema* (pl.), *alim* (sing.).

Hazarah culture and Shi'i sectarian affiliation taking place in Afghanistan up until the middle of the 20th century. My analysis then, thirdly, investigates the growing salience of ethnicity in circumstances of violence, investigating events spanning from the outbreak of chronic conflict following the Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan in 1979 to the collapse of the Taliban regime in late 2001. Fourthly, I discuss both the impact of post-2001 state policy upon ethnicity in Afghanistan and the resulting shifts in the majoritised and minoritised status of ethnic categories at the national level.

1. ETHNOGENESIS OR THE CHANGING SALIENCE OF ETHNIC CATEGORIES?

It seems logical to begin the analysis of the historical formation of ethnicity in the Central Highlands of Afghanistan (and the Bamyan Valley) with a discussion of ethnogenesis, or the process by which ethnic identity and ethnic relations *emerge* in a given area (Eriksen, 2002 [1993]). For a number of reasons, this is much more challenging than one would think. Firstly, a shift in the conception of ethnicity as operating through 'ethnic groups' to functioning through ethnic categories demands a parallel shift in perspective regarding ethnogenesis. The emergence of 'groupness', or the process by which the utilisation of ethnic categories results in collective identity, is conceived in this thesis as an intermittent phenomenon (Brubaker *et al*, 2006). Ethnicity therefore is not a continuous state of being. In some moments ethnicity is relevant to social action, at other times it is not; and, on other occasions, it is so significant that it motivates large-scale collective action and even violence. As such, analysis of ethnicity becomes the study of *fluctuations* in the *salience* of ethnicity.

Yet, given this conceptual shift, it should still be possible to identify the point at which ethnic categories emerge as politically relevant *for the first time*. However, this task is particularly challenging in Afghanistan given the dearth of historical sources; the questionable accuracy of those that do exist; and, perhaps most importantly, historiographical questions relating to the theoretical approach and biases an author employs in the generation of historical information (Carr, 1961).

However, it is possible to identify the process by which certain ethnic categories became politically salient in Afghanistan. In a number of cases scholars and early explorers were responsible for the generation of ethnic categories (Centlivres, 1979; Ovesen, 1983; Snoy, 1986; Roy, 1990; and Schetter, 2004). This process began with scholars 'identifying' ethnic categories that held no ontological existence. Later, through processes of categorization and identification individuals adopted these ethnic categories for their own use. The

'Tajik' category is one such example. Conrad Schetter (2004)—drawing on the work of Pierre Centlivres (1979) and Peter Snoy (1986)—claims that, “anthropologists such as Schurmann³³ invented ‘ethnic groups’ such as the Pashai, Tajiks, Mountain-Tajiks or Farsiwans, neglecting the fact that some of these terms contain different meanings in regard to the social context” (Schetter, 2004: 4). He goes on to explain how the *term* ‘Tajik’ had a negative connotation and was used in conversation to refer to, “somebody who did not belong to any group but merely shared the belief in a common tradition” (*ibid*: 4). The term ‘Tajik’ was later applied, by Soviet and Western academics, to represent an ‘ethnic group’ encompassing Sunni, Dari speaking and ‘non-tribalised’ (i.e. without a shared ‘common origin myth’) individuals (*ibid*). Olivier Roy claims that it wasn’t until the chronic conflict of the 1980s that certain Sunni Dari speakers, in opposition to Pashtuns, self-identified as Tajik (Roy, 1990).

The starting point for most contemporary constructionist accounts regarding ethnogenesis in Afghanistan, particularly in relation to the Central Highlands, is the establishment of the Afghan state in the early 1890s (Canfield, 1972, 1973, 1976, 1986; Harpviken, 1998; Ibrahimi, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; 2012; and Monsutti, 2005, 2007, 2012a, 2012b). In many ways it is a suitable starting point given the challenges associated with ethnogenesis outlined above. Moreover, the early 1890s does signify the point, as described by Eriksen (2002[1993]), at which an ‘expansion of system boundaries’ takes place. This includes the violent subjugation and integration of the Shi’i inhabitants of the Central Highlands into the emerging Afghan state and marked the widespread settlement of Sunni Pashtuns and Tajiks in the Bamyan Valley (Canfield, 1972, 1973; Kakar, 1973, 1979; and Tapper, 1983b).³⁴ It also acts as a watershed after which Shi’i and Hazarah identity was more firmly (re)-formed in relation to the widespread oppression it perpetuated (Canfield, 1973a, 1976, 1984, 1986, 1988; Poladi, 1989; Harpviken, 1998, 2005; Mousavi, 1998; Ibrahimi, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; 2012; Rubin, 2002; and Monsutti, 2005, 2007, 2012a, 2012b).

However, without falling back on a primordialist argument, I would like to suggest that ethnic and sectarian categories may have been salient in the Bamyan Valley before the 1890s. For example, almost sixty years prior to the establishment of the Afghan state,³⁵ Sir Alexander Burnes, a captain operating out of British India noted the following of a group

³³ Schurmann (1962).

³⁴ Although Lal (1834) and Masson (1842) both report small groups of Sunni troops, from Kabul, stationed in Bamyan Town during their respective trips.

³⁵ At this time inhabitants of the present day Bamyan Valley did nominally offer fealty to the Kingdom of Kabul. Yet, no state structure was in place (Burnes, 1839 [1834]).

of prisoners when travelling through what is now Sayghan District of Bamyan Province (Burnes, 1839 [1834]: 164):

[...] The captives are Huzaras [sic], on whom the Uzbeks nominally wage war for their Shiah [sic] creed, that they may be converted to Soonees [sic] and good Mahommedans [sic].

While this is but a short excerpt and could well be questioned for its validity it indicates the challenges of identifying a definitive start point to processes of ethnogenesis, while also suggesting that ethnicity and, in particular, sectarian identity were salient prior to the formation of the Afghan state in the early 1890s. It appears that sectarian identity may have been salient in the Central Highlands of Afghanistan, and the Bamyan Valley, from as early as the start of the 16th century, if not before (Shahrani, 1986; Poladi, 1989).

2. THE EMERGENCE OF SECTARIAN AND ETHNIC CATEGORIES: FRONTIER WARFARE (1500-1747) AND THE DURRANI EMPIRE (1747-1880)

Nazif Shahrani (1986) explains how, in 1506, the collapse of the Timurid dynasty of Herat resulted in three ascendant empires vying for control of the region composing present-day Afghanistan. He goes on to claim that the annexation of the Central Highlands by the Shi'i Safavid Empire and their territorial disputes with the Sunni and Uzbek Shaybanid Empire brought about the politicization of sectarian affiliation in the area, and laid the foundation for future violence justified primarily in sectarian terms (*ibid*).

At the same time, Shahrani (*ibid*) points out, that long-running and often violent tensions between the Safavid Empire and the Moghul Dynasty—plus their respective policies of indirect rule—were instrumental in reshaping Pashtun 'tribal' relations in the south of Afghanistan. This led to the rise of the Abdali 'tribe' in Afghanistan under the leadership of Ahmad Khan Abdali in 1739. The fall of the Safavid Empire and the subsequent death of Nadir Shah Afshar (r. 1736-1747), in 1747, opened up the opportunity for Nadir Shah Afshar's commander, Ahmad Khan Abdali—later known as Ahmad Shah Durrani (r. 1747-1773)—to assume control thereby founding the Durrani Empire. The Durrani Empire was administered primarily by Pashtuns but also by a number of Qizilbash (Kakar, 1979). Qizilbash, whose oral traditions indicate they had arrived in Afghanistan with Nadir Shah Afshar's Safavid forces in 1738³⁶ (Interview, March 2011), had acted as senior officials and

³⁶ Qizilbash are also known as 'Afshars' as a result of their claim to be members of the Afshar 'tribe' with which Nadir Shah Afshar identified.

bodyguards in his government apparatus. They mostly maintained their positions in the new Durrani administration (Shahrani, 1986).

Shahrani also explains that while kinship was central to the functioning of the Durrani Empire, succession brought great instability (*ibid*). This resulted in civil war, which only ceased following unification as a result of the first Anglo-Afghan War (1839-42). The first reign of Ahmad Shah's great grandson, Shah Mahmud (r. 1802-1804), came to an end when an opponent utilised sectarian tensions to overthrow him. The influence of the Shi'i Qizilbash at the senior levels of the empire had contributed to the growing disenchantment of a number of Pashtuns holding senior positions in the Durrani administration. In 1804, an altercation between a Qizilbash and a Sunni man was exploited with help from the *ulema* who framed the incident in sectarian terms. This resulted in a large-scale pogrom in Kabul between Sunnis mobilised from Kohistan and Logar and almost 10,000 Hazarachs amassed from the Central Highlands region (Elphinstone, 1815 cited in Shahrani, 1986). This incident, Shahrani claims, stands as the first occasion in which the *ulema* and religious identity featured in the national politics of Afghanistan (Shahrani, 1986).

My purpose in outlining Shahrani's claims regarding the formation of primarily sectarian but also ethnic and 'tribal' identity from the early sixteenth century is to both establish the foundations of later historical events and to suggest that the emergence of ethnicity in the Central Highlands of Afghanistan may indeed have preceded the formation of the Afghan state in the early 1890s. While Shahrani's (*ibid*) analysis can be accused of reifying 'ethnic groups' it cannot be as easily charged with primordialist tendencies, as he claims that it was the actions and policies of these early empires (and subsequent state governments), not innate cultural characteristics, that led to the emergence of antagonistic sectarian, ethnic and 'tribal' identities. While state formation is no doubt instrumental in the contemporary salience of ethnicity in Afghanistan, Shahrani's analysis suggests that the politics and violence corresponding with the establishment, expansion and decline of earlier empires may have contributed to the development of ethnic and sectarian identity.

3. THE EMERGENCE OF THE AFGHAN STATE: ETHNIC OPPOSITION AND SECTARIAN DISSENT IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS (1880-1979)

Notwithstanding Shahrani's analysis above, the founding of the Afghan state stands as a pivotal event contributing to the increased salience of ethnicity in Afghanistan, the Central Highlands and the Bamyán Valley (Canfield, 1972, 1986; Centlivres and Centlivres-

Demont, 2000; Monsutti, 2005, 2008, 2012a; and Ibrahimi, 2009a, 2009b, 2012). This is particularly the case for Hazarahs and, to a lesser extent, for members of other Shi'i categories who suffered greatly at the hands of the emerging Afghan state authorities.

In 1890, the British and Russian Empires agreed to create a 'buffer state' between British India to the south and Tsarist Russia to the north (Kakar, 1979; Monsutti, 2005, 2012b; and Ibrahimi, 2009b; 2012). Following this agreement Abdul Rahman Khan (r. 1880-1901), a self-professed Pashtun nationalist and the Amir of the Kingdom of Kabul, seceded control of his foreign affairs to Great Britain. Carefully balancing the interests of both empires, he embarked on a bold plan to extend Pashtun control and formalise the Afghan state (Ibrahimi, 2009b; Kakar, 1973). The term 'Afghan' is the Farsi synonym for 'Pashtun' (Schetter, 2004). In this regard the establishment of the Afghan state equates to the formation of a Pashtun nation, which—building on the foundations laid by Ahmad Shah Durrani—explicitly privileged Pashtuns over non-Pashtuns and Sunni (Hanafi) over Shi'i (Jafari and Nizari) Islam (Shahrani, 1986).

At the core of this drive to establish a Pashtun state was the violent conquest of the Shi'i Central Highlands region, the pagan lands of Kafiristan (present day Nuristan, in eastern Afghanistan), and Afghan Turkestan (the north and north-eastern areas of present day Afghanistan) (Kateb, 2011 [1912]; Kakar, 1979). The former conquest, of the Central Highlands, was epitomised by the Hazarah War of 1891–93. It was part of this renewed expansion, northward toward the borders of the Russian Empire, which ultimately led to the integration of the Central Highlands and its inhabitants into the emerging Afghan state.

Prior to this conquest, social organisation in the Central Highlands, as discussed by Shahrani (1986), included sectarian and ethnic differentiation, which defined difference relative to members of opposing categories perceived to be located *outside* the region. However, 'tribal' identity was allegedly also salient distinguishing between tribal categories *within* the Central Highlands (Maitland, 1891; Monsutti, 2005; and Ibrahimi, 2009b).

Lieutenant-Colonel Maitland, a British intelligence officer and member of the Afghan Boundary Commission, produced in the late 1880s an extensive report documenting the territorial presence and assets of various *dai*, or 'tribal groups', in the region. He identifies the presence of a number of *dai* including Dai Zangi, Dai Kundi, Dai Kalan, Dai Chopan, Behsudi, Foladi, Khatai, and Dai La. However, in his analysis he indicates that individuals

inconsistently applied these tribal categories. A reading of Maitland's report indicates this clearly puzzles him, which is perhaps unsurprising given his primordialist assumption that tribal categories represent distinct bounded units in the social mosaic of society. He attributes this inconsistent usage to the declining salience of 'tribal' relations. Maitland states (Maitland, 1891: 36):

The tribal system, if it ever attained to any great perfection, is now more or less broken up, and the Chiefs, where they still retain authority, rule over districts rather than clans.

While a decline in the saliency of 'tribal' identity—or what Maitland terms 'the tribal system'—may indeed have been underway, it is also likely that the shifting utilisation of *dai* categories could be accounted for by the socially constructed nature of 'tribal' identity, including its fluid nature. Yet, Maitland's observation is not without merit. First, he identifies the saliency of 'tribal' identity (which is no longer salient in the Central Highlands). Secondly, he identifies the territorial basis of a *mir's*, or local chief's, authority indicating it did not necessarily stem from 'tribal' hierarchies but instead was a product of economic organisation; in this case primarily the control of land (Kopecky, 1982; Ibrahimi, 2009b; and Monsutti, 2008, 2012a).

Economic and political forms of organisation in the Central Highlands, and the Bamyan Valley, prior to the establishment of the Afghan state were interrelated and highly hierarchical. *Mirs* were large-scale landowners. A large network of *dehqan*, or agricultural labourers, would cultivate the lands owned by a *mir*. These serfs, by default, would pay allegiance to the *mir*, giving him authority to preside over large areas corresponding to his land holdings. Thus, land formed the basis of the *mir's* authority and status (Kopecky, 1982). At the same time a *mir* would offer land or in some cases a daughter to a *pir*, or a saint, and thereby gain his allegiance. *Piran*, or saints, were often highborn Saadat, who through a pattern of endogamous marriage would maintain their ostensibly 'pure' patrilineal descent line from the Prophet Mohammad (*ibid*). As such, they would often take a *mir's* daughter as a second wife. Given their perceived superior religious status, *piran* maintained large networks of *murid*, or followers, over whom they would hold influence (Canfield, 1973b). In exchange for *khums* (a one-fifth Shi'i Islamic tax)³⁷ a *pir* would offer spiritual guidance to and mediate conflicts for his *murid*. Importantly, *khums* was collected by the *mir* from those residing in the area over which he ruled. As such, the *mir* and the *pir*

³⁷ *Khums*, prescribed in Shi'i doctrine, should not be confused with *zakat* (a one-tenth Islamic charitable tax) or *sahm* (a Shi'i Islamic tax for the maintenance of religious institutions).

represented secular and religious forms of leadership, respectively, who relied on one another to maintain strict forms of social organisation (Kopecky, 1982).

My purpose in outlining economic and political organisation here is two fold. Firstly, I lay the foundation for a later discussion, which outlines how the formation of the Afghan state resulted in changes in economic organisation that favoured not only newly settled Pashtuns and Tajiks, but also Saadat. This will be discussed below. Secondly, I draw attention to the foundations upon which Saadat have, in the Afghan literature, typically been categorised as a 'caste' endogenous to the Hazarah 'ethnic group' (e.g. Mousavi, 1998). Without descending in a discussion of categorical definitions I simply wish to point out that I treat the Saadat—albeit closely related to Hazarahs—as a distinct ethnic category. One who define themselves increasingly as a distinct 'group', and that has increasingly come to be defined in relation to the Hazarah ethnic category as a result of changing socio-political circumstances that I will describe below.

The Hazarah War and Ethno-Sectarian Oppression

To mobilise forces on a scale large enough for the subjugation of the Central Highlands Abdul Rahman relied on both British financial support and Sunni (Hanafi) loyalties (Kakar, 1979; Shahrani, 1986). He called for *ghaza*, or holy conquest, and promised *ghanimat*, or the spoils of war, to those who participated. Branding the Shi'i inhabitants of the Central Highlands as *kufar*, or infidels, he gathered a mighty force. Hassan Kakar (1979: 213, 227) explains further:

The Kahn-e-Mulla [sic] of Kabul, in consultation with other mullas [sic], declared religious war against the Hazaras [sic]... In 600 proclamations which the Amir distributed throughout the country, the Hazaras [sic] and all the Shias were declared to be kafir. The task of inciting the Sunnis was entrusted to the Sunni mullas [sic]... stipendiary mullas [sic] were ordered to accompany the tribal levies, and preach ghaza... For the first time all the Sunni population rallied to the Amir. It increased his power and prestige, and infused a sense of unity among his subjects.

Furthermore, the *ghaza* set into motion by Abdul Rahman had a galvanising effect on the inhabitants of the Central Highlands. They sought a *fatwa*, or religious decree, from the Shi'i *mujtahids*, or high-level religious scholars, in Mashhad, Iran to mobilise their response (Edwards, 1986). Again, Kakar elaborates (1979: 218):

Never in the past had the Hazaras [sic] been so united among themselves as they now were against the Amir. In an assembly... Timur Shah a sayid descendant of Imam Musa Reza, was elected as their Khalifa for the purpose of religious war against the Amir... The Hazaras [sic] declared, "We will fight for one true God and his prophet, and for Ali against these Kafirs [sic] and allies of Kafirs [sic]".

By 1893 the Amir was victorious, but the war was an extremely costly affair. In an attempt to both generate funds spent on his war effort and to further subjugate Hazarachs, the Amir imposed an array of sixteen types of taxes on the people of the Central Highlands (Mousavi, 1998). The Amir also rounded up, imprisoned and executed the existing religious (*piran*) and secular (*mirs*) leadership in the Central Highlands. In addition to the killing of many Hazarachs and Saadat, tens of thousands of Hazarachs were enslaved (Mousavi, 1998). As many as four hundred thousand Hazarachs were also displaced from their lands (Kateb, 2011 [1912]). Hazarachs had already established an enclave in Mashhad during the reign of Nader Shah Afshar (Ibrahimi, 2012). This enclave and other communities in Iran, now partially accommodated the massive displacement of Hazarachs from the Central Highlands.³⁸ Likewise, under the leadership of Sayid Timur Shah an enclave of Hazarachs and Saadat was established in Quetta, Pakistan (Kopecky, 1982).

Ghanimat, in the form of land and female Hazarachs, promised to the Amir's forces during mobilisation was distributed to a number of Pashtuns who had participated in the conquest of the Central Highlands (Kakar, 1979; Tapper, 1983b). This led to the further enslavement of Hazarachs and the occupation of the most fertile lands in the area by Pashtuns, and to a much lesser extent, Tajiks who had participated in the war. These lands included those found in the *Tagaw* surrounding Bamyan Town. More importantly, the upland pastures of the Central Highlands were opened up to Kuchi, or nomadic Pashtuns, who would migrate there to graze their livestock in the summer months (Ferdinand, 1961). In the years following the Hazarah War Kuchis began money lending to Hazarachs on unfavourable terms, which led to the further appropriation of vast tracts of their land (Ferdinand, 1961; Tapper, 1983b).

After his victory Abdul Rahman also forced Sunni Islam on the Central Highlands (Kakar, 1979; Poladi, 1989). Large numbers of Sunni *mullahs*, or Islamic clergyman, were

³⁸ Ibrahimi (2012) notes that the members of this enclave identified themselves not as Hazarah, but as Barbari, to overcome the pain of persecution and to emphasize commonalities with their Iranian hosts.

dispatched to the area to spread their brand of Islam (Poladi, 1989). Moreover, the *membars* of the region were destroyed or turned into Sunni mosques (*ibid*). He also banned the mourning rituals associated with Muharram, including *Ashura*. As a result, the vast majority of Shi'as across the highlands began to practice *taqiyya*, or religious dissimulation³⁹ (Edwards, 1986; Poladi, 1989). They prayed,⁴⁰ undertook ablution,⁴¹ and otherwise practised Islam in line with Sunni (Hanafi) beliefs and practices. Shi'i (Jafari and Nizari) beliefs and practices were still adhered to, but only in private circumstances.

Similarly, the Amir took steps to minimise the strong position of Shi'i Qizilbash in the emerging state administration in Kabul. Suspecting the involvement of Qizilbash in the unification of Hazarachs under the *mujtahids* of Mashhad, the Amir promoted the persecution of Qizilbash on the grounds of their sectarian affiliation (Edwards, 1986). Moreover, he converted all *membars* in Kabul to mosques and appointed *mullahs* to ensure the attendance of Qizilbash and other known Shi'as at Sunni religious ceremonies in the capital (Kakar, 1979; Edwards, 1986; and Poladi, 1989).

The Hazarah War fundamentally changed social, economic and political organisation in the Central Highlands, including in the Bamyan Valley (Monsutti, 2008). As discussed above, large tracts of land were redistributed that resulted in limitations in the ability of *mirs* to maintain vast networks of authority over *dehqan*. Furthermore, the widespread incarceration and elimination of the *mirs* and *piran* left the highlands without any significant leadership (Ibrahimi, 2009b). Whilst this largely undermined the traditional forms of authority it did also, *crucially*, result in Saadat using their ethnic identity—in terms of superior status granted by their claimed descent from the Prophet Mohammad—to take on secular leadership roles. They utilised their superior religious status to mediate between the remaining inhabitants of the Central Highlands (including in the Bamyan Valley) and the newly established state authorities (Canfield, 1972; Harpviken, 1998; and Monsutti, 2012a). This transition ensured the superior status, both religious and secular, of Saadat in the Central Highlands, which—as I will discuss below—contributed to the later emergence of tensions between Hazarachs and Saadat in the region. To a lesser extent, given their inferior numbers, Qizilbash also utilised their previous involvement with the

³⁹ Shi'i doctrine allows for *taqiyya*, the concealment of one's religious beliefs, under circumstances of threat, persecution or compulsion (Poladi, 1989).

⁴⁰ Sunnis pray with their hands crossed on the torso, while Shi'as pray with their hands open by their sides. A Sunni places their head upon the ground during prayer, whilst a Shi'i will place it upon a *mohr*, or a prayer stone, which is ideally made from *turbah*, or the soil of Karbala. Finally, while a Sunni will ideally pray five times per day, a Shi'i may pray only three times per day.

⁴¹ Major differences occur in the ordering, number of times, and direction in which hands, feet and the head are washed.

state to adopt the roles of interlocutors between the local government and the inhabitants of Bamyan Town (Interview, March 2011).

At the same time the resettlement of Sunni Pashtuns and Tajiks in the Central Highlands—particularly in the Bamyan Valley—resulted in radically new sets of relations and patterns of interaction, which correspondingly reframed identity. In this way, the Hazarah War contributed to the decline of ‘tribal’ identity in the Central Highlands (Monsutti, 2012b). The usual reason cited, in the Afghan literature, for the decline of ‘tribalism’ is the elimination of the landed *mir* elite and the direct intervention of the state in ‘tribal’ affairs (see Banuazizi and Weiner, 1986). While the removal of the *mirs* is no doubt a contributing factor, it seems possible that the dramatic ‘expansion of system boundaries’ from that of the Central Highlands *region* to the more heterogeneous Afghan *state* delivered a wider ‘scope’ within which social difference was to be organised. Therefore, rather than primarily differentiating between tribal categories in the Central Highlands it may have become more important to differentiate between ethnic categories at the level of the emerging Afghan state.

Secondly, while sectarian identity and, to a lesser degree, ethnic identity had been salient prior to the Hazarah War; they became closely related and central to emerging forms of social organisation. Hazarah, Saadat and Qizilbash ethnic categories became inextricably linked to Shi’i sectarian identity, whereas Pashtun and Tajik categories overlapped closely with Sunni sectarian identity (Canfield, 1973, 1986; Rubin, 2002; Ibrahimi, 2012; and Monsutti, 2012a). In the decades that followed this intersection of identities developed to such an extent that it was commonly perceived that Hazarahs, Qizilbash and Saadat could not be Sunni and Tajiks could not be Shi’i. Indeed, if a ‘Hazarah’ or ‘Tajik’ changed their sectarian affiliation they would automatically also change their ethnicity, becoming ‘Tajik’ or ‘Hazarah’, respectively (Canfield, 1973a).

Thirdly, the emerging salience of ethnic and sectarian identities was compounded by the categorisation of racial and class identities in the case of the Hazarah ethnic category. The enslavement and integration of many Hazarahs into the lower echelons of the emerging capitalist state economy resulted in their categorisation—by majoritised Pashtuns—as racially inferior and, furthermore, resulted in them being perceived as ‘low status’ (Ibrahimi, 2012). Sven Gunnar Simonsen (Simonsen, 2004: 709) describes the assimilation of Hazarahs into the Afghan state as, “a gradual institutionalisation of discrimination against Hazarahs/Shi’as which has turned the Hazarahs into an ethnically

defined underclass". As suggested by John Rex (1970) and Michel Banton (1977), in the previous chapter, the 'Hazarah' phenotype—broad face, narrow eyes, flat nose and scant facial hair—emerged to signify racial and socio-economic inferiority in the Afghan context.

This racial categorisation of Hazarachs and their minoritised status also resulted in growing differentiation between Hazarachs, on the one hand, and Qizilbash and Saadat, on the other. While all three ethnic identities were categorised as inferior by the state due to their Shi'i profession of faith, both Saadat and Qizilbash maintained higher social status relative to Hazarachs. Saadat maintain this relative superiority given their religious and newfound secular leadership roles, and Qizilbash also secured their position through continued engagement with the state apparatus (Canfield, 1972; Harpviken, 1998; and Monsutti, 2012a).

Fourthly, the widespread oppression experienced by inhabitants of the Central Highlands also acted as a catalyst in the *redefinition* of sectarian and ethnic identities. They are still commonly recounted in the Bamyan Valley today. Numerous, and very emotive, examples of persecution and injustice were available that could be drawn upon to (re)-construct these identities. As suggested by Cohen (1974), Hobsbawm (1983) and other instrumentalist anthropologists, this also resulted in the generation of numerous symbols of oppression, which could be drawn upon for the instrumental use of sectarian or ethnic identity. With regard to sect the politicisation of identity has been primarily driven by the utilisation of Shi'i mourning rituals, including *Ashura* (Edwards, 1986). In terms of ethnicity, Hazarah identity in particular has drawn heavily on symbols of oppression and injustice. In both cases the reification and widespread communication of Shi'i and Hazarah identity was essential to their increasing saliency (Eriksen, 2002 [1993]).

The Politicisation of Shi'i Identity and the Reification of Hazarah Culture

In the decades that followed the conquest of the Central Highlands both Shi'i and Hazarah identity were (re)-constructed and became increasingly salient. Shi'i identity, in relation to the Sunni state, was galvanised using the narratives of Sunni oppression central to *Ashura* mourning ceremonies (Edwards, 1986; Monsutti, 2007).⁴² This will be discussed further in Chapter Six. Likewise, the cultural markers denoting the Hazarah ethnic category were defined through literary works, and done so primarily using narratives of injustice at the

⁴² This ceremony mourns the martyrdom of the Shi'i spiritual leader, Imam Husayn, at the hands of the Sunni Umayyad Caliphate on the plains of Karbala in 680 C.E.

hands of Pashtun oppressors. These two forms of identity were mutually reinforcing and born of similar ideology and symbolism.

The violence inherent in the conquest of the Central Highlands and the continuing oppression that followed it led to the publication of a number of books by Hazarachs who had fled Afghanistan as a result of the Amir's conquest. These books—including *Hazaristan* published by Muhammad Azim Beg in 1898, *A Short History of the Moghul Hazarachs* published by Mullah Afzal Uruzgani in 1914, and *A History of the Situation of the Barbari Tribe* published by Shah Ibrahim in 1929—represent the first popular accounts of the conquest of the Central Highlands by the Afghan state. They discuss the shared oppression of Hazarachs at the hands of the Pashtun-led state (Ibrahimi, 2012). In doing so they represent the first attempts at articulating a shared 'Hazarach' history; defining a common 'Hazarach' dialect in the form of Hazarahgi; and establishing a 'Hazarach' homeland in terms of the geographical area of the *Hazarahjat*, or homeland of the Hazarah (*ibid*). However, this imagining of Hazarah identity was partial, in that it primarily reached only literate and urbanised individuals.

The consolidation of the Afghan State following the ascension of King Zahir Shah (r. 1933-1973) to the throne, however, expedited the widespread emergence of Shi'i and ethnic identity in Afghanistan (Shahrani, 1986). The expansion of the Afghan government under Zahir Shah's regime led to rapid growth in the population of Kabul, which was directly correlated with the influx of Hazarachs from the Central Highlands into the capital (Edwards, 1986). Although not directly benefitting from the economic expansion that followed government growth, Hazarachs became military conscripts and low paid day labourers in Kabul. They congregated en masse in the traditional Qizilbash enclaves, of Chindawal, Kart-e-Sakhi, and Qala-i Musa, which ringed the city (Ibrahimi, 2012). In these urban settings individuals identifying with different Shi'i ethnic categories began to intermingle and, unified by their perception of mutual oppression at the hands of the Sunni state, began to develop a common sense of identity expressed in terms of Shi'i ideology. This sense of oppression was furthered with Zahir Shah's strong orientation toward Pashtun nationalism, which included the appointment of Pashto as the official state language (Shahrani, 1986). Following the reopening of a number of *membars* in Kabul, sanctioned by Zahir Shah, the mourning rites of Muharram—including *Ashura*—became increasingly commonplace in Kabul and were central to promoting collective Shi'i

identity (Edwards, 1986).⁴³ As these ceremonies were carried out under the watchful eye of the king they were generally apolitical in nature, but that did not stop the emotive and symbolic nature of *Ashura* contributing to the development of a common sectarian identity (*ibid*).

Throughout the 1950s and 60s, King Zahir Shah's reign also saw the proliferation of political ideologies, which greatly influenced ethnic and sectarian identities (Edwards, 1986; Rubin, 2002; Ibrahimi, 2012; and Monsutti, 2012a). This process was expedited with the establishment of Afghanistan as constitutional monarchy in 1964. As *ulema* and *roshanfikir*, or secular intellectuals, graduated from *madrasas* (Islamic institutions for religious education) and secular universities, respectively, new forms of political thought entered Afghan politics. Most common were Communist and Islamist ideologies. The former were heavily influenced by Marxist philosophy propagated by the Soviet Union. The latter were based on religio-political thought founded on the premise of aligning the state with the *Shari'ah*,⁴⁴ originating in Iran, Pakistan, and parts of the Middle East. More specifically, the politicised Jafari doctrine influencing Shi'i sectarian identity in Afghanistan was driven primarily by *madrasas* in Qom, Iran and was later popularised by *Ayatollah*⁴⁵ Ruhullah Khomeini following the Iranian Revolution in 1979 (Khomeini, 1981; Interview, November 2011). Both sets of ideology greatly influenced Afghanistan's domestic politics and contributed to the salience of class and sectarian identities, amongst *literate* Shi'as (Edwards, 1986; Ibrahimi, 2012; and Monsutti, 2012a). One crucial outcome of the emergence of these ideologies was the, often competitive, framing of Hazarah identity in both religious and secular terms (Ibrahimi, 2012).

With regard to secular framings: A small group of Kabul-based *roshanfikir* Hazarahs known as *Moghol Parta* were active in promoting discussions regarding the persecution of Hazarahs (Ibrahimi, forthcoming). However, strong nationalist movements did not emerge from *within* Afghanistan given the watchful eye of the state. In the early 1960s Hazarahs who had migrated to or were studying in Najaf, Iraq established *Shabab-ul-Hazarah*, or Hazarah Youth. This organisation planned Hazarah cultural events to highlight collective Hazarah identity (Ibrahimi, 2012). In the 1960s and 70s Hazarahs in Quetta also adopted a secular approach to the framing of Hazarah identity. Educated Hazarahs in Quetta focused specifically on Hazarah history and politics. In 1963, the *Anjuman-e Fallah wa Behbudi*

⁴³ The freedom to practice *Ashura* had, for a short period, been possible following its inclusion by Amanullah Khan (r. 1919-1929) in the 1923 Constitution of Afghanistan.

⁴⁴ Islamic law.

⁴⁵ An honorary title given to highly accomplished *ulema* of the Jafari school of Shi'i Islam.

Hazarah, or the Hazarah Welfare Organisation, was founded. Similar to *Shahbab-ul-Hazarah* in Najaf they highlighted Hazarah identity through social activities (*ibid*). More importantly, *Anjuman-e Fallah wa Behbudi Hazarah* was the forerunner to *Tanzeem-e Nasle Naw-e Hazarah Moghul*, or Organisation of the New Generation of the Moghul Hazarahs. *Tanzeem* strongly promoted the notion that Hazarahs are the Moghul descendants of Chengiz Khan, which is still held by the Quetta-based Hazarahs of today. *Tanzeem* also published the cultural magazine *Zulfiqar* that reached readers in Kabul and Iran (*ibid*).

Throughout the same period, efforts were also underway to propagate a more sectarian framing of identity. In the late 1950s, in parallel to the rise of Shi'i Islamist ideology, some of the first Hazarah Shi'i *ulema* trained in *madrasas* in Najaf, Iraq and Qom, Iran arrived in the Bamyan Valley (Roy, 1990). Although not the first,⁴⁶ one such important individual—known only as *Moqadas*, or the holy one—arrived in Bamyan Province and started a campaign of Jafari Shi'i proselytisation (Interview, March 2011). His son, Sayid Ali, later continued this campaign. *Moqadas* established a *madrasa* in the Bamyan Valley and, throughout the 1960 and 70s, trained a number of *ulema* and *mullahs*. He was also responsible for educating Hazarahs in the ways of Jafari Shi'i beliefs and practices, urging them to limit their practice of *taqiyya* and to openly practice their religious rites (*ibid*). This understandably led to rising tensions with Pashtuns and Tajiks throughout the Bamyan Valley.

This proselytisation also resulted in growing number of Hazarahs travelling to Najaf and Qom to attend *madrasas*. In the 1960s there were approximately 1,000-1,500 Hazarahs attending *madrasas* in Najaf (Bindemann, 1987 cited in Ibrahimi, 2012). The growing numbers of *ulema* across the Central Highlands resulted in the emergence of trans-local religious networks linking remote valleys to religious centres in Iran and Iraq (Monsutti, 2012a). This was also paralleled by the replacement of traditional and small-scale *pir-murid* networks by religious networks in which all followers would necessarily follow one *marja-i taqlid*, or Grand *Ayatollah* (i.e. the most senior religious figure) (Ibrahimi, 2012). This led to a growing capacity for the use of sectarian identity in collective mobilisation across the Central Highlands, which would be effectively utilised following the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 (Harpviken, 1998; Roy, 1990; Ibrahimi, 2009a; and Monsutti, 2012a).

⁴⁶ *Hajji Akhund*, a Hazarah from Behsud District in Wardak Province, was also active in Bamyan Province before the arrival of *Moqadas*.

4. A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE: COMMUNISM, ISLAMISM AND CONFLICT (1979-2001)

The Islamist and Communist political currents strengthened by the establishment of Afghanistan as a constitutional monarchy in 1964 would soon plunge the country into prolonged violence. This conflict—initially experienced in the Central Highlands in the form of an internal power struggle (1979-1992), then as national Civil War (1992-1996), and finally in terms of atrocities perpetrated by the Taliban (1996-2001)—had profound impacts on both the salience of ethnic categories and the nature of ethnic relations.

In April 1978 the Communist and Soviet-backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) overthrew the regime of Mohammad Daoud Khan (r.1973-1978) (Rubin, 2002; Barfield, 2010). The PDPA swiftly began to implement communist policies linked to land redistribution, women's rights and schooling. They also introduced a Soviet-style Nationality Policy—recognising eight *mellat*, or nationalities—and conducted a national census to support it (Naby, 1980). This policy, similar to that employed by the Soviets during their control of Central Asia, was aimed at minimising ethnically organised opposition. This was carried out by recognising a range of national minority languages, teaching all children in their mother tongue, and by encouraging minoritised ethnic categories to participate in government and promote their culture (*ibid*). However, at this time, the Nationality Policy had limited impact in the Central Highlands for a number of reasons. First, the Central Highlands was one of the first areas to revolt against PDPA authority and fell outside of state authority for the majority of the Soviet Occupation. Second, in the highly political process of identifying which nationalities to recognise, Soviet advisors viewed Hazarahs, “as a prime example of an ethnic group that, because of unalleviated oppression, has lost its identity” (Naby, 1980: 244). They also did not recognise Saadat or Qizilbash. Finally, it was deemed that given their physical isolation from co-religionists in Iran, the recognition of a ‘Hazarah’ nationality would deliver few political benefits in the wider region (*ibid*).

While the PDPA aimed to address inequalities with their communist policies they failed to win the broad-based support of the population (Harpviken, 1998). Religious leaders soon challenged the heavy-handed methods and the widely proclaimed atheism of the PDPA (Roy, 1990; Ibrahimi, 2012). The Central Highlands revolted against PDPA authority in the spring of 1979. Islamic identity, constructed in opposition to an atheist communist identity, was utilised to rally Afghans from across the country against the PDPA (Shahrani, 1986). As a result of the growing unrest across Afghanistan the Soviets occupied the country later that same year. The Soviet-backed regime, focusing on the areas of greatest

instability, concentrated on enforcing state authority outside of the Central Highlands. As a result the region effectively gained its independence in mid-1980 (Roy, 1990; Ibrahimi, 2009a).

Until February 1989, when the Soviets withdrew, only a small contingent of Soviet and PDPA troops maintained control of Bamyan Town. This effectively left the Central Highlands ungoverned, which for the first time in almost a century meant that the region could develop its own form of governance (Shahrani, 1986; Ibrahimi, 2009a; and Monsutti, 2012a). This importantly included regaining the use of pasturelands from Kuchis or, in some cases, demanding sizeable rents for grazing privileges (Roy, 1990). This opportunity to reorganise was inherently political and competitive. It highlighted inequalities between Saadat and Qizilbash, on the one hand, and Hazarachs on the other. The situation of statelessness, coupled with Islamist ideology and Iranian financial support, resulted in a significant opportunity for Hazarachs to challenge these entrenched inequalities (Harpviken, 1998; Monsutti, 2008, 2012a; and Ibrahimi, 2009a).

In September 1979, a high-level meeting was held in Waras District, in the west of Bamyan Province. The goal of the meeting was to form an organisation capable of implementing self-administration in the Central Highlands region. At this meeting the *Shura-ye Ittefaq-e Enqelab-e Islami Afghanistan* (Revolutionary Council of the Islamic Alliance of Afghanistan), the first indigenous *mujahedin* organisation was formed in the Central Highlands. While Sayid Ali Beheshti, a powerful *alim* from Waras District, was officially elected as the leader of *Shura* four socio-political groups vied for control. These were the *mirs*, the Saadat, the *ulema*, and the *roshanfikir*. Initially, the *mirs* controlled *Shura*, but their authority had been waning form many years given government intervention (Harpviken, 1998; Monsutti, 2012a). Furthermore, they relied on their ability to interact with the state on behalf of the people they presided over. With the state withdrawal they were left with a limited role (Monsutti, 2012a). The limited social networks of the *mirs*, which at best were limited to a single valley, compounded this weakness. On the other hand both Saadat and the *ulema*, who were beginning to receive support from the post-revolutionary Iranian regime, could mobilise much larger support through their religious networks. In mid-1981 the Saadat, with the support of the *ulema*, eliminated their *mir* and *roshanfikir* competitors within *Shura* (Harpviken, 1998). Again, Saadat—a number of whom were also *ulema*—managed to maintain authority across the Central Highlands.

In 1980, *Shura* put in place a state-like administration, but without revenues it failed to operate effectively (Harpviken, 1998; Ibrahimi, 2009a; and Monsutti, 2012a). At the same time post-revolutionary Iran, in a bid to ‘export its revolution’, began to support members of the *ulema* to establish pro-Khomeini Islamist groups. In total nine Shi’i Islamist groups, registered in Iran, operated in the Central Highlands. These included *Shura*, but also *Sazman-e Nasr-e Afghanistan* (Victory Organisation of Afghanistan), an Islamist organisation with a strong Hazarah nationalist agenda linked to Iran’s Foreign Ministry; *Pasdaran-e Jihad-e Islami Afghanistan* (Guardians of the Islamic Jihad of Afghanistan), a radical Islamist organisation closely linked to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards; *Harakat-e Islami Afghanistan* (Islamic Movement of Afghanistan), a moderate Islamist group following the Islamist orientation of *Ayatollah Kho’i* of Najaf, Iraq; *Hizbullah* (Party of God), *Nahzat-e Islami Afghanistan* (Islamic Movement of Afghanistan), *Jabhe Muttahed-e Inqelab-e Islami Afghanistan* (United Front for Islamic Revolution of Afghanistan), *Hezb-e Da’wat-e Ittehad-i Islami Afghanistan* (Party of Invitation for Islamic Unity of Afghanistan), and *Sazman-e Nairooy-e Islami Afghanistan* (Organisation of the Islamic Forces of Afghanistan).⁴⁷ As a result, many Saadat—who had utilised their superior status to access religious education—played down their ethnic identity instead identifying themselves as *ulema*. Tensions began to escalate between *Shura* and two of these Islamist groups *Nasr* and *Pasdaran*. Unsurprisingly, *Shura* and its Saadat leadership partnered with the only non-Khomeini Islamist group *Harakat*, which was led by Shi’i Pashtuns and Qizilbash. This resulted in an important fracture in politics in the Central Highlands, which is still felt in the Bamyan Valley today. On the one hand, Saadat and Qizilbash tried to enforce traditional forms of authority, while on the other hand Hazarahs sought to change the established status quo (*ibid*).

By the mid-1980s, while the Soviets left the Central Highlands unto itself, this power struggle consumed the region. As a result of this descent into chaos a large proportion of residents of the Central Highlands migrated to established enclaves in Mashhad and Quetta (Ibrahimi, 2012). Ultimately, differing perspectives on Hazarah nationalism, Islamist ideology, the roles of traditional elites, and competition between Iranian government factions drove the conflict onward (Roy, 1990; Harpviken, 1998; and Ibrahimi, 2009a).

⁴⁷ *Shura* aside, this plethora of groups can be attributed to the patronage of different and competing entities within a fractured post-revolution Iranian government.

Although attempts were made, by Iran, to unify the various *mujahedin* groups their infighting continued until the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan in early 1989 (*ibid*). Following their withdrawal the Sunni *mujahedin* organisations established an interim government in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. They decided that the Shi'i *mujahedin* organisation would have no role in the new government. The Shi'i groups recognised the need for their unification if they were to have any involvement in the future of Afghanistan (Harpviken, 1998; Ibrahimi, 2009a; and Monsutti, 2012a). The main Shi'i *mujahedin* organisations, under the direction of the Iranian regime, convened in Bamyan Town in July 1989. The remnants of *Shura* and some members of *Harakat*, who by this point had fallen out of favour with Iran, did not attend the meeting. The outcome was the formation of *Hezb-e Wahdat-e Islami-ye Afghanistan* (The Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan), which was essentially an amalgamation of the participating pro-Khomeini Islamist groups. Key leadership positions in *Wahdat* were taken by *alim* Hazarachs originating from *Nasr* and *Pasdaran*. Abdul Ali Mazari, a *Nasr* commander and a Hazarah was appointed the head of the Central Council. The formation of *Wahdat* was a major milestone in the unification of the Shi'i *mujahedin* groups (*ibid*). Furthermore, whilst an Islamist organisation, it espoused a strong Hazarah nationalist standpoint much like its chief constituent group, *Nasr*. As a result, most Saadat, Qizilbash and Shi'i Pashtuns tended to support the independent *Harakat* (Ibrahimi, 2009a).

This ethnicised political division was further intensified during *Wahdat* leadership elections held, some years later, between Mazari and the Qizilbash Mohammad Akbari. A hotly contested election returned Mazari as head of the Central Council, with Akbari as his deputy. In essence, the influential Hazarachs of *Nasr* backed Mazari whilst the non-Hazarachs (i.e. Qizilbash, Saadat and a handful of Shi'i Pashtuns) and members of other parties including the majority of *Pasdaran*, backed Akbari (Ibrahimi, 2009a). By this point the organisation was effectively split with these two senior individuals operating separate wings of *Wahdat*. A few weeks after the elections Mazari forcibly expelled Akbari and his allies from the ranks of the organisation. This split furthered the already sizeable division amongst the Shi'as with the majority of Hazarachs allied to *Wahdat*, and the majority of Saadat and Qizilbash affiliated to *Harakat* and the *Wahdat* splinter group led by Akbari (*ibid*).

In early 1992, almost three years after the establishment of *Wahdat*, the Communist government in Kabul was under great pressure due to dwindling Soviet support and widespread violent resistance perpetrated by a host of *mujahedin* organisations. In April

1992 the Communist government abdicated. *Wahdat* rapidly secured the southwestern areas of the capital, which are mainly populated by Shi'as (Roy, 1990; Ibrahimi, 2009a).

Later that month, the Sunni *mujahedin* organisations based in Pakistan, minus *Hezb-e Islami* (Islamic Party),⁴⁸ agreed the Peshawar Accords, thereby establishing the interim government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan (Rubin, 2002; Barfield, 2010). Again, the Shi'as of Afghanistan in the form of *Wahdat* and *Harakat* were excluded (Roy, 1990; Ibrahimi, 2009b). However, this did not prove to be an issue for long; a few days later *Hezb-e Islami* forces began to indiscriminately shell Kabul. This violence, aided by a general breakdown in the agreement between the Sunni *mujahedin* organisations, began a decline into a state of protracted civil war focused on Kabul (*ibid*). Violence in Kabul was intense. Much of the city was destroyed. Ten of thousands of people were killed, *mujahedin* and civilians alike. And, atrocities were commonplace. One such incident, the Afshar Massacre, is particularly relevant. In February 1993 the forces of *Jamiat-e-Islami* (Islamic Society)⁴⁹ and *Ittehad-e-Islami* (Islamic Union),⁵⁰ engaged and pushed *Wahdat* forces out of the neighbourhood of Afshar in the southwest of Kabul. In the fighting the neighbourhood was severely damaged. Hundreds of Shi'as—Hazarahs, Saadat and Qizilbash—were killed and many more were abducted, tortured and then subjected to forced labour (Ibrahimi and Winterbotham, 2012). The Afshar Massacre stands, today, as an important symbol of Sunni oppression for the Shi'as of Afghanistan.

This descent into civil war, and the intense violence between differing *mujahedin* groups in Kabul between 1992 and 1996, was pivotal in the increasing salience of ethnicity across Afghanistan. This was primarily the case as the onset of civil war shifted the scope of the war from conflict to expand or hold regional territories to conflict to govern the country. It was at this national level, in particular, that ethnicity was increasingly used to legitimise the actions of *mujahedin* organisations (Schetter, 2004). For example, ethnicity was used instrumentally by *mujahedin* leaders to legitimise the political existence of their *mujahedin* organisations; to articulate their claim to the country; to mobilise militias for combat; and to justify cases of ethnic cleansing (Roy, 1990; Schetter, 2004).

This emergence of ethnic identity, forged in the midst of conflict, was in many ways also underpinned by the earlier Soviet legacy of *mellat*, or nationalities. These pre-existing

⁴⁸ A Sunni *mujahedin* organization dominated by Pashtuns and headed by the Pashtun Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

⁴⁹ A Sunni *mujahedin* organisation dominated by Tajiks and headed by the Tajik Burhanuddin Rabbani.

⁵⁰ A Sunni (Wahhabi) *mujahedin* organisation composed mainly of Pashtuns and led by the Pashtun Abdul Rasul Sayyaf.

categories presented an ideological base upon which ethnic categories were modelled (Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont, 2000). At the same time, the articulation of the emerging ethnic categories in Afghanistan was made possible by reference to ethnoscaples, or the spatial frame of origin commonly perceived by members of an ethnic category (Schetter, 2005). The emergence of these various ethnoscaples led to *mujahedin* organisations fighting to assert a state of ethnic hegemony within their perceived homelands (*ibid*).

Furthermore, Olivier Roy (1990) explains that the conflict contributed to the stressing of what he terms 'macro-ethnic groups'. He explains that the prolonged conflict raised political awareness regarding ethnic identity. Four 'macro-ethnic groups', namely Pashtun, Tajik, Hazarah, and Uzbek became widely recognised and politically salient in Afghanistan as a result of the unfolding war. He goes on to describe how small kinship groups, making claims at the national level, were pushed to identify with these 'macro ethnic groups' in order to be perceived as legitimate. As a result he claims that many small 'ethnic groups' were absorbed by these emerging 'macro ethnic groups'. Finally, Roy (*ibid*) points out how the onset of chronic conflict—primarily as a result of the displacement of many Pashtuns to Pakistan—resulted in a reduction in the majoritised status of Pashtuns and a notable increase in that of the other three emerging 'macro ethnic groups'.

Roy's (*ibid*) analysis is extremely insightful. In essence he is discussing not only the instrumental use of ethnicity for the purposes of conflict, but his analysis of 'macro ethnic groups' essentially describes not only the growing salience of ethnic categories at the national level but also their use in 'calling into being' new manifestations of ethnic identity. However, although primarily adopting an instrumentalist/constructivist approach I would suggest his analysis suffers from limitations in terms of his overemphasis of 'groupness' and through neglecting to acknowledge the fluid nature of identity. It could be argued, for example, that his assumption that smaller 'ethnic groups' were absorbed by the emerging 'macro ethnic categories' assumes their primordialist nature, and forgoes the possibility that the members of these smaller 'ethnic groups' were perhaps utilising the multiple and fluid nature of their identities. Furthermore, I would also offer that Roy's assumption regarding the majoritised status of Pashtuns declining as a result of the changing demographic of their 'ethnic group' overemphasises the essentialist characteristics of ethnicity. This argument could also be accused of neglecting to acknowledge potential shifts in political and economic circumstances, which may be linked to the changes in ethnic hierarchies he describes. However, as this thesis only

analyses contemporary changes in ethnic hierarchies, I would recommend further research be undertaken on the subject.

Soviet Occupation, Civil War and the Reification of Hazarah Culture

At the same time as the Central Highlands was consumed by violence renewed attempts were being made to reify Hazarah culture and history within the context of oppression and injustice. Unlike previous attempts, these efforts were focused on widely communicating this reification of Hazarah culture to the *illiterate* masses in Afghanistan and beyond. Three main sources propagated this revival of Hazarah culture and history. First, a body of prose and poetic literature known as *adabiat-e-moqawemat*, or resistance literature, was produced throughout the 1980s. In addition to opposing Soviet occupation, issues pertaining to persecution and marginalisation prior to the war were also highlighted (Ibrahimi, 2012). It was, in part, communicated orally reaching illiterate audiences.

Second, a number of Hazarah writers contributed to the revival of Hazarah history and a common experience of oppression. These writers included Muhammad Esa Gharjistani, a Hazarah writer based in Quetta following the April 1978 coup. He published over a dozen books that presented the circumstances of Hazarahs in Afghanistan, and importantly countered official pro-Pashtun accounts of Afghan history promoted by the Afghan state, to “lay the foundation of revival of a new history of the Hazarajat [sic]” (Gharjistani (1988: vi) quoted in Ibrahimi (2012: 14)). In addition, a number of authors—despite the strong Islamist sentiment—in Iran also published books, in Farsi, that aimed to counter the official history presented by the Afghan state. These authors include *Hajji* Kazim Yazdani and Basir Ahmad Dowlatabadi.⁵¹

Third, the Hazarah diaspora in Quetta strongly popularised Hazarah culture through music. This was initiated with the launch of *Radio Hazarahgi* in 1975, which before later expansion was a half hour slot on Radio Pakistan aimed at audiences in Afghanistan. The show, presented by Hazarahgi speakers, broadcast music played on the *dambura*, a long necked lute popular in Central Asia, and included many cultural programmes. It became especially popular in the Central Highlands region (Ibrahimi, 2012). After the Soviet Invasion, Quetta continued to be a centre for the production of politicised artistic and cultural expression. Throughout the 1980s and 90s a series of music concerts were

⁵¹ More recent works by Poladi (1989) and Mousavi (1998) attempt to do the same for an English speaking audience.

organised in Quetta that attracted many prominent Hazarah singers and *dambura* players. The music that was planned was highly political in nature, and slowly the *dambura* itself attained a strong political significance for Hazarahs (*ibid*). Not only did the music produced in Quetta in the 1980s and 90s promote Hazarah culture and a collective identity but, unlike the earlier published works of authors writing about Hazarah culture and politics, it reached many *illiterate* Hazarahs.

The Taliban and Sectarian Violence

In 1994 in response to the declining security situation throughout Afghanistan the Taliban—funded by a variety of entities including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Afghan-based business groups, and trained by Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)—swept through southern Afghanistan (Rashid, 2000; Rubin, 2002; and Barfield, 2010). In March 1995 the Taliban approached Kabul from the south. They invited Mazari and senior members of *Wahdat* for a dialogue regarding the formation of an alliance. Upon their arrival at the meeting, Mazari and his companions were arrested and tortured. The following day Mazari was executed (Ibrahimi, 2009b). This assassination, along with numerous other incidents, provided Hazarahs with a fresh and very potent symbol of oppression and injustice. It stands today as a key symbol articulated by Hazarahs. In the wake of this tragedy, and given the intense fighting that followed, *Wahdat* forces withdrew to Bamyan Town (*ibid*). This return of the majority of *Wahdat*’s forces to Bamyan resulted in an exodus of all remaining Pashtuns and the vast majority of Tajiks from the province (Roy, 1990).

It was at this point, following the exodus of Pashtuns and most Tajiks from Bamyan Province, that *Wahdat* took a small but significant step in terms of changing economic organisation in Bamyan Town. The then-existing Bamyan Town *bazaar*, owned almost exclusively by Tajiks, had been the scene of significant confrontations between rival *mujahedin* organisations and PDPA forces during the preceding years of conflict. As such, it was in a state of disrepair. Converting what was previously a large government-owned park in Bamyan Town, *Wahdat* established the new Bamyan Town *bazaar* orchestrating the sale of market plots (Interviews, October and November 2011).

In 1997, after capturing the western city of Herat in 1995 and Kabul in 1996, the Taliban pressed on to attack the strategically important city of Mazar-e-Sharif in the north of the country (Singh, 2001; Ibrahimi, 2009b). A spontaneously mobilized *Wahdat* resistance force from within the city thwarted this attempt. Almost 2,000 members of the Taliban

were captured and killed in Mazar-e-Sharif; their bodies dumped in mass graves or left to rot in the desert (*ibid*). Shortly after this event, and most likely in response to it, the Taliban established an economic blockade on the Central Highlands. Their aim was to strike back at *Wahdat* and the population of the region so that they could later capture key locations, including Bamyan Town, thereby taking control of the highlands. This blockade had devastating effects on the region (*ibid*).

While the residents of the Central Highlands starved, the Taliban attacked and took Mazar-e-Sharif in August 1998. They carried out targeted mass killings of some 6,000 to 8,000 Hazarachs and *Wahdat* members across the city (Rashid, 2000). Bodies were left to rot in the streets in retribution for the killings of their Taliban comrades the year before (Singh, 2001). From this point onward the sectarian nature of the Taliban's perspective was self-evident. Immediately following the massacres in Mazar-e-Sharif:

The Governor of Mazar reputedly delivered speeches throughout the town's mosques, criticizing the Hazara [sic] for being Shi'a, and labeling them as kafir, or infidels, who should convert. Thus, the Taliban also: 'ordered some residents to prove they were not Shi'a [sic] by reciting Sunni prayers'.

Human Rights Watch (1998, cited in Singh, 2001: 209)

Following the fall of Mazar-e-Sharif the Taliban entered Bamyan Province from the north via the districts of Kahmard and Sayghan. Finding sympathisers in the local Sunni population, the Taliban took on a number of Tajiks to act as guides in their conquest of Bamyan Province (Interviews, November 2011). Arriving in the Bamyan Valley in mid-September 1998, they faced no opposition. Members of *Wahdat's* Central Council had crossed the *Koh-e-Baba* range and escaped by helicopter to Iran. The Bamyani Hazarachs, Saadat and Qizilbash had also fled into the *Koh-e-Baba*. Others fled west to Yakawlang District. In the days that followed, while a huge exodus of Hazarachs, Saadat and Qizilbash was taking place, the Taliban captured the western districts of the province with little to no resistance (Interviews, June and November 2011). As they advanced through the Bamyan Valley into Yakawlang they razed vast tracts of land destroying almost 6,000 houses between the district centres of Bamyan and Yakawlang (Interview, June 2011). Hazarachs commonly allege that, at this time, the Taliban were also assisted by a number of Saadat who helped identify which properties belonged to Hazarachs as opposed to their Saadat kin (Interviews, March and April 2011).

After the Taliban secured Bamyan Province, a number of Tajiks from the northeast of the province settled in Bamyan Town to oversee its administration. *Mawlawi*⁵² Mohammad Islam Mohammadi, a local Tajik, was appointed Governor of Bamyan Province under the Taliban (Interview, June 2011). The provincial capital was moved from Bamyan Town to the Shikari Valley in the northeast of the province. Under *Mawlawi* Islam, the Taliban established a commission to tax the land owning Shi'i residents of Bamyan Province. Finally, the Taliban forced each Shi'i village in the Bamyan Valley to provide recruits to bolster their troops against the fighters of the emerging Northern Alliance.⁵³

Between January 1999 and January 2001 there were three main clashes between *Wahdat* forces and the Taliban in Yakawlang (Interviews, November 2011). This was partly instigated by the return of *Wahdat* leaders from Iran. Yakawlang Centre changed hands a number of times before the Taliban were finally victorious in late 2000. Given the extremely cold winter some residents chose not to flee Yakawlang Centre. A large group of over 300 residents, mostly Saadat, remained in Yakawlang Centre and surrendered to the Taliban. Hazarachs in the Bamyan Valley today commonly suspect that Saadat who remained behind believed they could re-negotiate an alliance with the Taliban given the support they had previously offered them when they had first arrived in Bamyan (Interviews, March and April 2011). Regardless of whether this is indeed true, the Taliban—with the support of ardent anti-Shi'i Pakistani militants—massacred all 300 individuals (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

The Taliban maintained control of Bamyan Province throughout most of 2001. In March of that year, they destroyed the famed Buddhas of Bamyan claiming they were the work of *kafir* (BBC, 2001). Shortly after, following the advance of the Northern Alliance and the military intervention of the United States, the Taliban fled the province in October 2001.

A number of important themes, relating to the relationship between conflict and ethnicity, can be gleaned from the events taking place between the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the fall of the Taliban regime. Firstly, the rapid changes brought about by *de facto* statelessness and the onset of chronic conflict in the Central Highlands allowed Hazarachs to challenge their minoritised status in relation to Saadat and Qizilbash (Harpviken, 1998; Ibrahim, 2009a; and Monsutti, 2008, 2012a). This was made possible through the

⁵² An honorary title, translating to 'master', given to accomplished *ulema*.

⁵³ Officially known as *Jabha-ye Muttahid-e Islami-ye Milli Bara-ye Nijat-e Afghanistan* (United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan). The Northern Alliance, initially made up of Tajiks but later joined by Uzbeks, Hazarachs and some Pashtuns, was a mujahedin organisation that, under the guidance of Ahmad Shah Massoud (and Abdul Rashid Dostum) was essentially a non-Pashtun organisation opposed to the Taliban regime.

utilisation of Shi'i Islamism: using an ideology that espoused egalitarian tenets; by obtaining funds and weapons from the Iranian regime; and the mobilisation of individuals through religious networks (Roy, 1990; Harpviken, 1998; Ibrahimi, 2009a; and Monsutti, 2008, 2012a). In addition, as a result of a number of incidents mainly, but not exclusively, related to the manoeuvrings of political elites in *Nasr* and later *Wahdat* growing tensions developed between Saadat and Hazarahs. To a lesser extent this included Qizilbash, but with only small numbers they represented a minimal threat to the claims of Hazarahs.

At the same time, the broader (re)-construction of the Hazarah category—and the opportunities it created for collective mobilisation—was made possible not only through sectarian identity (and Shi'i Islamism) but also through the reification of secular forms of identity. Reified accounts of shared Hazarah history and oppression were communicated to educated and literate Hazarahs, but also more importantly on a larger scale to *illiterate* Hazarahs (Ibrahimi, 2012).

This was, in turn, made possible by constructing Hazarah and Shi'i identity in relation to Pashtun and Sunni categories, and through the corresponding development of symbols of oppression and injustice. With regard to Shi'i identity *Ashura* was central to the popular perception of sectarian oppression, with Shi'as contrasted with Sunni oppressors (Edwards, 1986; Monsutti, 2007). Popular audio-visual mediums were central to communicating Hazarah oppression framed in reference to Pashtun injustice and violence perpetrated during the founding of the Afghan state (Ibrahimi, 2012). Moreover, while sectarian and secular framings were often utilised competitively, they both had the effect of reinforcing perceptions of injustice and, therefore, opposition to Sunni and Pashtun categories.

In certain cases, this construction of sectarian and secular forms of identity were only made possible by migrants having left Afghanistan, who free of state surveillance (i.e. in Iran and Pakistan), could contribute to an articulation of a shared history and culture (Monsutti, 2004, 2005; Ibrahimi, 2012). At the same time, the inability of PDPA to intervene in the Central Highlands region resulted in *de facto* statelessness. This, in turn, granted Hazarahs a level of autonomy that enabled them to further construct narratives of a shared history and culture (Roy, 1990; Ibrahimi, 2009c; and Monsutti, 2012a).

At the same time, clashes between ethnically categorised *mujahedin* organisations during the civil war and earlier violence in the Central Highlands provide ample new examples

with which to extend narratives of oppression at the hands of other ethnic or sectarian categories (Monsutti, 2007, 2012a; Ibrahimi, 2012). In addition, atrocities carried out by the Taliban that were sectarian in nature—or, indeed, were later framed as sectarian—including the treacherous murder of Mazari, massacres in Mazar-e-Sharif and Kabul, and the devastation wrought upon Bamyan Province also provided numerous fresh examples of injustice to be utilised by political and religious elites in (re)-constructing sectarian and ethnic identities. Crucially, these fresh examples of ethnic and sectarian injustice were rooted in personal experience and are, therefore, more potent and emotive.

As can be seen in Olivier Roy's (1990) extensive analysis above ethnicity was used instrumentally for the purposes of legitimacy and military mobilisation in Afghanistan. Roy also indicates one aspect of the reverse relationship, namely the impact of conflict upon ethnicity. However, while highly valuable his analysis is somewhat limited in scope and is, to my knowledge, the only serious account of this relationship in the literature. Notwithstanding Roy's valuable analysis, it appears that the Afghan literature has failed to engage with a number of pertinent issues with regard to the impacts of chronic conflict upon ethnicity. Based on my empirical data I would like to map out some of the dimensions of this relationship.

Firstly, given that Roy's fieldwork was conducted early in the conflict (1980–1985), I propose that he did not benefit from observing the evolution of the conflict in terms of its impact upon identity. As such, I would like to suggest that throughout the course of the conflict the salience of differing forms of identity (e.g. ethnic and sectarian identity) could fluctuate in *relation* to one another. In other words, the framing of conflict as sectarian, prior to or following violent events, is likely to temporarily emphasise sectarian dimensions of identity over, say, ethnic ones. This was, for example, indicated in my discussion with *Hajji Ali Shah* (Interview, January 2011), referenced at the beginning of this chapter:

NA: Has ethnicity always been important in the Bamyan Valley?

HAS: From the beginning of the jihad [against the Soviet Invasion] ethnic and sectarian issues didn't really matter... At that time there was no real problem. Just a few minor issues. We were just mujahedin. That was the most important thing. [There was] no problem regarding which sect or party a mujahed belonged to. The main issue was just being against the Soviets. Then, after the mujahedin captured Kabul, the situation changed. The issue became more

ethnic. Finally, during the Taliban period it became more sectarian. The Taliban came here to kill Hazarachs, but more importantly they came to kill Shi'as.

While this could be interpreted as a nostalgic memory of resistance or one biased as a result of more recent sectarian propaganda, it does suggest that the salience of the intersecting identities subsumed under popular conceptions of ethnicity fluctuate *in relation* to one another. While not particularly profound this suggestion implies that while ethnic identity is intersectional, the relationship between intersecting identities alters over time. I suggest that this is the result of the manner in which pertinent events are framed at the time of, or more importantly, after their occurrence. Looking back at events in this chapter, for example, we see secular or communist framings of Hazarah ethnicity emphasise racial, class or other non-sectarian 'ethnic' similarities and differences, whereas Shi'i framings logically emphasise sectarian identity and correspondingly accentuate a sectarian interpretation of events. This would suggest that at any given time (and for different individuals), one of the forms of identity that intersect to form ethnicity could be perceived as more or less salient than another. While this is likely to be the same in circumstances of non-violence, I suggest here that conflict has the effect of more rapidly emphasising the salience of identity given its highly emotive nature; corresponding increases in feelings of threat easily reoriented by elites toward other social categories; and as a result of the increased frequency by which ethnic categories may be utilised amidst violence. This is, of course, only a tentative assumption and given the paucity of my evidence this topic requires further study.

Secondly, the above discussion raises a related point. Many of the examples of atrocities and incidence of violence I have described in this chapter are interpreted in the Afghan literature—and, indeed, in my analysis—as 'sectarian' or 'ethnic' in nature. However, as suggested by Brubaker (2004) in the previous chapter, it may indeed be the framing of conflict as 'ethnic' or 'sectarian', *after* it has occurred, that contributes to furthering ethnic and sectarian identity. This occurs primarily when political and religious elites act as *political entrepreneurs* deploying ethnic categories and associated symbols to frame violence as ethnic, usually for their own material and political benefit (*ibid*). This is also a feature of the reification of ethnicity in academic literature (*ibid*). In most sources the 'ethnic' nature of conflict is implicitly assumed. Unless made explicit in some way, it is near impossible to assess whether ethnicity has been applied *ex post facto* in analysis of historical events in the existing Afghan literature.

Thirdly, the Afghan literature discussing the relationship between conflict and ethnicity also appears to entirely neglect the manner in which conflict structures space and, importantly, interactions between those individuals identifying with opposing ethnic categories.⁵⁴ As such, I would also like to make one final observation, drawing on the theory of Eriksen (2002 [1993]). To demonstrate my point, I draw on an excerpt from my field notes (August, 2011):

Now that I'm working with Hazarah, Saadat and Tajik research assistants the extent to which members of different sects, in the Bamyan Valley, do NOT interact is becoming increasingly clear to me. In most cases this is a product of physically residing in different locations, but I suspect it also extends to limited patterns of social interaction. I have witnessed a number of functional transactions (i.e. Tajiks buying household goods from Hazarachs in the bazaar, the selling of potatoes farmed by Hazarachs to Tajik tradesmen) but they always appear to be perfunctory in nature...

... There are instances in which social interaction does occur between those who affiliate with differing sects. These primarily relate to intermarriage and the celebration of births, weddings, and deaths. It is highly uncommon for them to attend one another's religious events. In cases where they previously occurred, inter-sect marriages ended shortly following the Soviet Invasion. In a minority of cases, Shi'i-Sunni marriage has recommenced in the last 2-3 years. But this is only between villages where a precedent was set before the war. Jafari-Isma'ili intermarriage, which was common before the emergence of Iranian-inspired Islamism in 1960s, is no longer practiced...

... There is also one village in the Bamyan Valley with mixed residence (albeit in two separate parts of the village). While this appears not to effect daily interaction, there are clearly some deep-seated divisions resulting from the tit-for-tat confiscation of houses and land during the Civil War and Taliban regime...

... Conflict has clearly resulted in the physical separation and cessation of intimate social interaction between the vast majority of Jafaris, Isma'ilis, and Hanafis in the Bamyan Valley. I wonder to what extent this continues to

⁵⁴ While the work of Robert Canfield (1973b) does look at issues linked to ethnicity and the spatial dimensions of power, it fails to discuss issues linked to interaction between 'ethnic groups'.

contribute to, if not at the very least fails to overcome, some quite extreme stereotypes and unfounded perceptions they hold of one another?

While my fieldwork did not systematically map the networks of social interaction between individuals identifying with differing ethnic or sectarian categories, I would like to tentatively argue that conflict may have led to a shift in patterns of social interaction and familiarity between individuals identifying with differing sects in the Bamyān Valley. In turn, I suggest this relative social isolation and unfamiliarity contributes to, and fails to mitigate, the instrumental manipulation of ethnicity and related symbols, and outbreaks of ethnically/religiously incited violence. Again, this assumption is based on my observations rather than systematic inquiry and as such further research would be required to reach a conclusive answer. This issue will be discussed further in Chapter Six with reference to changing patterns of social interaction between male and female Hazarāhs and Saadat following the collapse of the Taliban regime.

5. LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD? THE KARZAI REGIME, POLITICAL RECONSTRUCTION AND ETHNICITY (2001 – 2010)

At the end of 2001, following the ousting of the Taliban regime, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was established in Afghanistan. That same month, following the ratification of the Bonn Agreement, the Afghan Interim Authority (AIA) was established. Hamid Karzai was appointed as its chairman. The AIA held an emergency *Loya Jirga*, or grand council, in July 2003, which led to ratification of the Afghan Constitution in early 2004 thereby establishing the Afghan Transitional Administration (ATA), again, headed by Karzai. The Constitution also called for presidential and parliamentary elections. The ATA was responsible for holding democratic elections that, in June 2004, nominated US-backed candidate Hamid Karzai as the President of the newly established Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Parliamentary elections were held in 2005. Furthermore, with the establishment of the new government the international community initiated large-scale state-building and development interventions (Schetter, 2004; Simonsen, 2004; and Barfield, 2010).

Human and minority rights were central to the 2004 Afghan Constitution. While the Constitution is currently far from comprehensively upheld, it acknowledged the rights of all Afghans to practice their own variants of Islam (those professing other religions are free to practice but in line with state law) and to equitably participate in the socio-economic and political spheres of the country. This allowed the Shi'as of Afghanistan to

freely and publicly observe their religious rites, including *Ashura* (Schetter, 2004; Simonsen, 2004).

The political process initiated by the donor backed Afghan government had a profound effect on ethnicity and ethnic relations across Afghanistan (Schetter, 2004; Simonsen, 2004; and Tapper 2008). Conrad Schetter (2004) claims that as a result of the primordialist assumptions held by policy makers regarding ethnicity, a critical mistake was made in pushing for the *explicit* recognition of ethnicity in the Afghan Constitution and political reconstruction processes. Equitable ethnic representation was also maintained in the composition of the *Loya Jirga*, AIA, ATA, and in the balancing of ethnic representation in Cabinet appointments and in the President's Office, through the appointment of more than one Vice Presidential position (Simonsen, 2004). The recognition of ethnicity has resulted in an escalation in the salience of ethnic identity in Afghan politics and society (Schetter, 2004; Simonsen, 2004). By formally recognising 'ethnic groups' in the political reconstruction process, ethnicity has become the *modus operandi* of post-Bonn systems of governance in Afghanistan.

Richard Tapper (2008) also demonstrates the impacts of the reification of ethnic categories in post-Bonn political reconstruction in his discerning analysis of the Kuchi. He points out how reification of the term, or in fact the plural *Kuchian*, is enshrined in the new Constitution in which commitments are made to improve Kuchi livelihoods and education. Moreover, according to Tapper (*ibid*) the term is now reified as an ethnic category, which is selectively employed by Kuchis depending on the practical benefits it offers in terms of recourse to political and material benefits offered by the state.

It quickly becomes apparent that the explicit ethnic orientation to the political reconstruction process has resulted in political elites making claims chiefly, if not consistently, in ethnic terms (Schetter, 2004). These claims, framed in democratic language, are made on the basis of their representation of the 'people' of Afghanistan (*ibid*).

Drawing on the theoretical insights emerging from consideration of the analysis of Glazer and Moynihan (1975) and Tambiah (1989) in the previous chapter, I also propose that this process has been compounded by the need for political leaders to respond to ethnic claims in a bid to secure votes in elections. In this regard, Hazarachs, for example deserve—perhaps for the first time in Afghanistan—consideration in the allocation of resources and

socio-political freedoms proportionate to the perceived number of votes such concessions would deliver. I also suggest this radical shift in political organisation would have implications upon the relative status of minoritised ethnic categories, such as Hazarachs, Uzbeks and Tajiks. Hazarachs, in particular, would benefit from this reconsideration, as voter turnout is higher in the safer locations of the Central Highlands and Kabul (where most Hazarachs reside). In addition, based on the perception that the mobility of female Hazarachs is less constrained than that of other Afghan women, political leaders may expect to accrue additional dividends, in the form of the votes of female Hazarachs, from responding to Hazarach needs. In this regard, the instrumental utilisation of ethnicity seen, for example, in the 2009 Presidential Elections further indicates the consolidation of ethnic identity by the international community since 2001 (Sharan and Heathershaw, 2011).

6. CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this chapter—after recounting *Hajji* Ali Shah's perspective on the origins of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley—I suggested that the roots of ethnicity stretched back earlier than the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, and that ethnicity emerged as a result of more than conflict alone. I also suggested that an appropriate analysis of ethnogenesis must assume that the salience of ethnicity is consistently shifting, always waxing and waning.

With this in mind, my analysis has shown that the actions and policies of the state (and empires), violent conflict, and to a lesser extent migration, capitalism, colonialism and urbanisation have influenced the changing salience of ethnicity in the Central Highlands and the Bamyan Valley. I have argued that ethnic and sectarian differentiation gained salience as a result of frontier warfare and imperial policies commencing in the 16th century. However, it was the establishment of the Afghan state that reaffirmed a process through which ethnic and sectarian identity became *politically* relevant, and from which most contemporary Shi'as and Hazarachs draw symbols of oppression and injustice for the maintenance of their identity. However, it seems to be conflict—with its emotive nature, frequent invocation of ethnicity, and goal of state control—that has most deeply entrenched ethnic categories in the minds of the Bamyani people. More recently, the manner in which the international community and the Karzai government have approached political reconstruction has *formalised* ethnicity in Afghan political life. This ethnicisation of Afghan systems of governance will ensure the continued salience of ethnicity in the daily lives of Afghans, including those resident in the Bamyan Valley. It

seems that *Hajji* Ali Shah was largely correct in his assertion that conflict had ‘broken the glass’ of Afghan society. Yet, he’d be wise to add that it is now the Afghan state that continues to ‘sharpen’ the remaining shards of ethnic identity.

My analysis throughout this chapter also indicates that two main forms of agency have contributed to the growing salience of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley. The first is the reification of the shared ethnic history and culture of Hazarahs produced over an extended period of time by Hazarah writers, poets, musicians, radio broadcasters, newspaper editors and members of cultural organisations. Likewise, Western and Soviet academics have also contributed to processes of ethnogenesis, for example, in the case of the categorisation of the ‘Tajik’ category by Franz Schurmann (1962) and other anthropologists (Centlivres, 1979; Ovesen, 1983; Snoy, 1986; Schetter, 2004; and Ibrahimi, 2012). Second is the manipulation and deployment of ethnic categories and associated symbols by, albeit not exclusively, political and religious elites such as *mujahedin* leaders and the *ulema*.

As implied throughout the chapter, these above mentioned processes have led to the emergence of commonly perceived cultural markers linked to Hazarah, Saadat, Qizilbash and Tajik ethnic categories. Although often negotiated—with differing people emphasising or contesting differing aspects of their cultural content—the following cultural markers are commonly held, as a result of performativity (Butler, 1988, 1990, and 1993), as the core of these ethnic categories.

The Hazarah category in the Bamyan Valley is commonly associated with the following cultural markers: (i) common origin in the *Hazarahjat*; (ii) speaker of Hazarahgi; (iii) follower of Shi’i (Jafari or Nizari) Islam; and (iv) has a mongoloid phenotype. As such, Hazarah ethnicity is composed of ethnic [markers (i) and (ii)], sectarian [marker (iii)], and racial [marker (iv)] identities. Moreover, given the category’s perceived low social status, which is maintained through racial and sectarian identity, the Hazarah category has historically been minoritised in relation to all other ethnic categories.

Likewise, the Saadat ethnic category in the Bamyan Valley is generally linked to the cultural markers outlined below: (i) descent from the Prophet Mohammad via the Alid line; (ii) speaker of Dari; (iii) Arab descent; and (iv) follower of Shi’i (Jafari or Nizari) Islam. Therefore, Saadat ethnicity is comprised of ethnic [markers (i) and (ii)], racial [marker (iii)], and sectarian [marker (iv)] identities. Given the category’s association with

Shi'ism, the Saadat category in the Bamyan Valley have historically been minoritised in comparison to the Pashtun and Tajik ethnic categories, but majoritised in relation to that of the Hazarah.

The Qizilbash category in the Bamyan Valley, on the other hand, is regularly associated with the following cultural markers: (i) common origin in Sabsevar, Iran (arrival in Afghanistan with the armies of Nadir Shah Afshar); (ii) speaker of Dari; and (iii) follower of Shi'i (Jafari) Islam. In this way, Qizilbash ethnicity is made up of ethnic [markers (i) and (ii)] and sectarian [marker (iii)] identities. Similar to the Saadat, the Qizilbash category in the Bamyan Valley have historically been minoritised in relation to the Pashtun and Tajik ethnic categories, but majoritised in relation to the Hazarah category.

Finally, the Tajik category in the Bamyan Valley is mainly associated with the cultural markers listed: (i) speaker of Dari; (ii) non-tribalised lifestyle; and (iii) follower of Sunni (Hanafi) Islam. As such, Tajik ethnicity is composed of ethnic [marker (i) and (ii)] and sectarian [marker (iii)] identities. The Tajik category in the Bamyan Valley has historically been minoritised in relation to the Pashtun category but also majoritised with regard to the Saadat, Qizilbash, and Hazarah categories.

Throughout this chapter I have also demonstrated the manner in which the intersectional nature of ethnicity came into being. With reference to the founding and consolidation of the Afghan state I argued that ethnic categories in Afghanistan are composed of both ethnic and sectarian identities. Moreover, the Hazarah ethnic category is also composed of a racial identity; which emerged as a result of their categorisation and integration into the expanding capitalist state economy. Furthermore, I tentatively suggested that the salience of the differing forms of identity subsumed within ethnic categories change in relation to one another. For example, following the salience of ethnic identity in the Bamyan Valley during the Civil War, sectarian identity later became increasingly relevant as a result of the actions of the Taliban.

In a related fashion I have also laid the foundation for a discussion of the process through which the minoritised status of Hazarachs is changing. I initially demonstrated how the integration of Hazarachs into the lower levels of the emerging Afghan economy and their widespread servitude resulted in their minoritised status, relative to Sunni Pashtuns across Afghanistan and to Saadat and Qizilbash in the Bamyan Valley. Yet, as a result of *de facto* statelessness and conflict their relative status began to change from 1980 onwards.

This shift is also a product of leadership clashes within *Shura* and later *Wahdat*. Plus, I also found the growing value placed on Hazarah political participation has compounded this shift since 2001. In essence, changes in economic and political organisation, resulting from the policies of the state and periods of conflict, have resulted in changing patterns of social organisation. This issue will be investigated in more detail within the context of the Bamyan Valley in Chapter Five.

While discussing the (re)-formation of ethnicity I also touched on some historiographical questions regarding the manner in which ethnicity may be projected back upon history after it has become salient. This question is as valid for religious and political elites acting as political entrepreneurs as it is for those scholars whose works I have relied upon in this chapter. Indeed, it is just as relevant for my own analysis. For example, to what extent did the subjugation of the *Hazarahjat* by Abdul Rahman Khan actually formalise ethnic and sectarian identities? Or, do the narratives of oppression based on events at that time, while no doubt very real, only feature in Hazarah and Shi'i oral traditions because they support *contemporary* imaginings of ethnicity? Furthermore, was the Central Highlands even conceived of as the *Hazarahjat*—as a Hazarah homeland—in the 1890s or, as implicitly implied by Ibrahim (2012), is this the product of the subsequent efforts of Hazarah (and Western?) scholars?

The answers to many of these questions can only be attained through conjecture. In turn, this is based on the theories of ethnicity one adopts and the manner by which one interprets historical sources. Acknowledging the limitations in my analysis, it is here that I will leave them. However, in the following chapters I draw upon my empirical findings to address these, and other, important questions.

In Chapter Five I investigate the manner in which the policies and actions of the Karzai state have translated into shifts in the relative standing of ethnic categories in the Bamyan Valley. In Chapter Six I unpack in more detail the implications this has on relations between Hazarahs and Tajiks and Saadat, respectively. In this chapter, through the use of a case study relating to the murder of a member of the Bamyan Provincial Council, I will also look at the manner in which violence is framed as 'ethnic' and 'sectarian' and the way this is utilised by political and religious elites to make claims upon the state. Before doing so, however, in the following chapter, I will investigate the way that ethnic categories—whose historical formation has been documented above—are utilised in circumstances of 'everyday ethnicity'. Furthermore, in this following chapter, I will also analyse the impacts

of conflict upon patterns of interaction within the context of the role of institutions in everyday manifestations of ethnicity.

CHAPTER FOUR

‘EVERYDAY ETHNICITY’ IN THE BAMYAN VALLEY

NA: In what ways do you think people identity themselves in Bamyan?

SKM: I think people identify themselves through their religion and sect and sometimes by their forefathers, like the Saadat... Also they identify themselves through their culture and customs. Such as playing local games and listening to dambura, and also by the language they speak. When a person speaks with a Hazarahgi dialect it identifies them as Hazarah. Also, facial features tell you someone is a Hazarah. Facial features are a good way to tell a person's identity.

(Informal Discussion with SKM [Male, Saadat, ~30], February 2011)

In the previous chapter I critically analysed the existing Afghan literature to discuss the historical formation of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley. This analysis, while addressing the agency of individuals, mainly focused on broad socio-historical forces such as the establishment of the Afghan state and prolonged periods of conflict initiated by the Soviet Invasion. While in the last chapter I analysed the emergence and changing salience of ethnicity from the ‘top down’ and over a long period of time, this chapter analyses ethnicity in a more intimate and immediate manner. I conduct my analysis from the ‘bottom up’. I demonstrate how ethnic categories, which arguably have been emerging since the 16th century (if not before), are utilised and deployed in everyday circumstances in the Bamyan Valley. In other words, I investigate the daily experience of ethnicity in my field site - the manner in which it is manifested and represented in everyday settings and interactions. In this chapter I am analysing ‘everyday ethnicity’.

Following this introductory section, I briefly describe the popular conceptions through which ethnicity is conceived before moving on to explain the various ways in which ethnicity features in daily life in the Bamyan Valley. I open my analysis of ‘everyday ethnicity’ by employing Brubaker *et al's* (2006) conception of ethnic ‘asymmetries’ in the context of the Bamyan Valley. I then move on to discuss the embodied nature of ethnicity, before investigating how ethnicity is enacted using the spoken word. This is followed by an assessment of the manner in which ethnicity features in day-to-day interactions. Finally, I undertake analysis of how institutional practices and settings affect ethnicity.

1. POPULAR CONCEPTIONS OF ETHNICITY: *QAWM*, *MAZHAB*, *MANTEQA* AND *HEZB*

As can be inferred from the description of cultural markers at the end of the last chapter ethnic identities in the Bamyan Valley are not only indicated by ethnic categories, such as Saadat or Tajik, but also with sectarian categories. In this sense ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley is most commonly articulated through the terms *qawm*, or solidarity group, and *mazhab*, or sect (Canfield, 1973a, 1978, 1986, 1988).

Qawm, as discussed in Chapter One is a characteristically fluid term. Its ambiguity lies in the 'level' of identity it is used to communicate. For example, it is often employed to imply common ethnicity, 'tribe', sectarian affiliation and nationality, but also linguistic, regional, occupational, and extended family groupings (Canfield, 1986, 1988; Tapper, 1989). The way it is employed is often dependent upon who is speaking, to whom and in what context (Tapper, 1989). While it is used in the Bamyan Valley for all of the forms of identity outlined above, I found the term to be mostly frequently used to represent ethnicity and extended family group. Yet, this may have been a result of my general preoccupation with discussing ethnicity and family groupings (with regard to discussions of marriage).

Mazhab, on the other hand, is relatively clear in its implication. As a sub-category of *din*, or religion, it is most commonly used to differentiate between Shi'i and Sunni, or more specifically between Jafari, Isma'ili and Hanafi sects in Bamyan (Canfield, 1973a, 1978, 1986, 1988; and Tapper, 1989).

Not only do sectarian categories imply ethnicity, but there are also other ways of insinuating ethnic category affiliation. While not always definitive these categories can *indirectly* suggest ethnic identity. Common examples include place of origin and party affiliation. Place of origin can be articulated at two main levels. This ranges from the smaller scale *manteqa*, or area of origin, which normally relates to one's village, valley or district, to the larger scale *watan*, meaning region or country of origin. Both terms, in different ways, can potentially imply ethnicity. In the case of the former indicating one's village or valley can, where its 'ethnic' composition is presumed, suggest ethnicity. Similarly, where one's *watan* is indicated as the *Hazarahjat*, ethnicity—or at the very least sectarian affiliation—could be indicated through the choice of this term to express one's region of origin. As we will see below, if a Hazarah indicates their *manteqa* or *watan* and it does not correlate with the *Hazarahjat* (e.g. in the case of a Hazarah from Pakistan), they can face accusations of not being sufficiently Hazarah. More generally, *manteqa* stands as an important form of identity in the Bamyan Valley.

As a result of the strong correlation that developed between *mujahedin* organisations and ethnic identity throughout the prolonged period of conflict in Afghanistan, affiliation to a particular *hezb*, or party, can suggest ethnic identity (Roy, 1990). While this is not assured, given that the 'ethnic' membership of parties was not exclusive, distinctions such as membership in *Jamiat* or *Wahdat* may indicate Tajik or Hazarah ethnic category affiliation, respectively.

In addition, racial identity is also widely believed to indicate ethnicity. This is particularly, but not exclusively, the case with Hazarahs given the phenotype commonly perceived to denote their ethnic category (Ibrahimi, 2012; Monsutti, 2012a). However, as this distinction is most often implicitly assumed from an individual's physiognomy I will discuss this topic below in relation to embodied ethnicity.

2. ETHNIC CATEGORIES AND 'EVERYDAY ETHNICITY' IN THE BAMYAN VALLEY

As discussed in Chapter Two, I take ethnicity to operate through ethnic categories. At particular moments, ethnic categories become relevant and ethnicity happens. It is an intermittently employed view of and way of acting in the world. Individuals perceive others through ethnic categories and/or they can deploy these same ethnic categories as a discursive resource. In the latter regard, ethnicity has an interactional dimension. Therefore, in the following sections of this chapter I first investigate the manner in which ethnicity functions as a cognitive process (i.e. ethnic categories are employed in perceiving everyday encounters). This initially includes discussing asymmetries in the manner in which ethnicity is perceived by those who affiliate with differing ethnic categories. This analysis is then followed by an evaluation of embodied forms of ethnicity and the role of names, titles and language/dialect. Then, I take my analysis forward to analyse how ethnicity operates as a social practice (i.e. ethnic categories are deployed as a discursive resource in interactional contexts). This aspect of my analysis assesses the various ways that ethnicity is performed (and concealed) during commonplace interactions.

Minoritised Ethnic Categories and Asymmetries in the Perception of Ethnicity

Before discussing the way ethnic categories are *employed* in the process of cognitive perception—say, for example, in identifying an individual as Qizilbash—I would like to briefly comment on the variable *prominence* of ethnicity in these mental processes. To achieve this I draw on Brubaker *et al's* (2006) discussion of asymmetries in the experience of ethnicity, which I reviewed as part of the literature review in Chapter Two. This review included discussion of 'marked' and 'unmarked' categories, and the contribution of the

former to generating asymmetries in how individuals identifying with minoritised ethnic categories experience ethnicity in their daily lives.

Since the early 1890s Hazarachs have been generally viewed as inferior given their racially associated minoritised status. In many parts of Afghanistan today they still, to some degree, represent a 'marked category'. In this regard Hazarachs 'stand out' given the supposedly easy manner in which they are racially profiled. To a lesser extent this is also the case for Saadat and Qizilbash, who like Hazarachs have a minoritised—and therefore marked—status given their sectarian affiliation. Through their interactions in wider society those who affiliate with these ethnic categories are consistently reminded of their marked and minoritised status. However, this is significantly greater for Hazarachs given the purportedly visual nature of their racial characteristics, which is compounded with affiliation to a marked sectarian category. In this way, like Brubaker and his colleagues (Brubaker *et al*, 2006) and based upon my observations of and interactions with individuals identifying with different ethnic categories, I would suggest that ethnicity is *experienced* as more salient for Shi'as and in particular Hazarachs, in the Bamyan Valley. By this I mean that Shi'as and especially Hazarachs are more likely to revert to ethnic categories and associated narratives to explain everyday events than, for example, Tajiks. This is not to suggest that Shi'as think differently to Sunnis, that Tajiks do not perceive ethnicity or that they are more inclined than Hazarachs to promote ethnic harmony. I simply wish to suggest that Hazarachs and to a lesser extent other Shi'as—given their exposure to extended periods of oppression and the mechanisms by which their identities have been politicised—have been *socialised* to perceive, deploy and enact ethnic categories *more frequently* than Tajiks.

Embodied Ethnicity: Dress and Physiognomy

Hazarachs have always been oppressed. We can't disguise who we are... When the Taliban came, they could tell we were Hazarachs just by looking at us. We have this face, these eyes and this nose and we can't even grow a beard to hide like other Shi'as.

(MM, Hazarah, ~35, Male, January 2011)

On countless occasions throughout my fieldwork, Hazarachs and non-Hazarachs alike would comment on the purported Mongolian phenotype of Hazarachs. This would normally be used by non-Hazarachs to justify difference or inferiority and would serve Hazarachs as a way of claiming how severe and inescapable their oppression at the hands of Sunni

Pashtuns had been. At the same time, non-Hazarah Shi'as (i.e. Qizilbash and Saadat) would often articulate how they would use their 'Tajik-like' appearance coupled with the practice of *taqiyya* to avoid detection during the Taliban regime. At certain times this could also backfire, as Rahima Gull Jan,⁵⁵ a 45-year-old Qizilbash woman, describes to me in the example below.

Rahima sat cross-legged on one of the brightly decorated cushions that were spread across her front room. I sat opposite her on another. Between us, on the carpet, sat Rahima's twenty-something year old daughter. After serving me tea and offering me a bowl of sweets she sat quietly listening to her mother talk. The fact that Rahima was well educated and the head of her household (her husband was currently trying to illegally enter Australia) meant that it was permissible for us to meet for an interview.

We were almost an hour into an oral history interview. Rahima was recounting her memories of clashes between various mujahedin groups in Kabul, where she then lived, in the period 1992 to 1996. "The fighting got worse, so we returned to Bamyan", she explained. Rahima's eyes twitched left to right as she searched her memories. She continued: "We came by road, but my husband and his brother came secretly as Wahdat were in control of Bamyan at that time".

"Secretly?", I interjected. She seemed surprised. "Whenever he left the house the mujahedin would beat him. They thought he was Tajik," she responded. Sitting back, she laughed. At first she laughed heartily, but quickly her amusement disappeared. It was clear her laughter masked painful memories. "Anyway", she said her attention returning to me, "At that time we stayed in my brother's house and all the men in my family couldn't go out because they would be beaten for looking like Tajiks".

Much less commonly discussed than the supposed Hazarah and Tajik phenotypes examined above, is the Arab phenotype associated with the Saadat. While Saadat commonly emphasise their claimed descent from the Prophet, they very rarely advertise their apparent Arab lineage. This is a result of the connotation, in Afghanistan, that links Arabs with being Sunni.⁵⁶ This was communicated to me in an informal exchange between myself; SS, one of my female Saadat research assistants, aged 22; and AHM, a 20-year-old male Hazarah research assistant (Field Notes, January 2011):

⁵⁵ This is a pseudonym used for the purposes of anonymity.

⁵⁶ A number of Arab *mujahedin*, such as Osama Bin Laden, came to Afghanistan to support the Taliban and to fight the Soviets and, more recently, ISAF and US forces.

NA: So, please explain to me the heritage of the Saadat? You are descendants of the Prophet, is that correct?

SS: Yes, we are very proud of our heritage. We are descended from the Prophet himself. Some people say we are the Prophet's children. And this means we are special...

AHM: But you are also Arabs? [AHM says cheekily].

SS: Yes. We are Arabs because the Prophet came from Arabia [she pauses], but [she pauses]...

NA: Is that important to the Saadat, being Arab I mean?

SS: Well, I am proud of it. My ancestors were Arab. But, it's not something that we really think about. It's not so important. We are from Afghanistan, that's what's important...

AHM: [To me] Most people in Afghanistan think of Arabs as Sunni, you see.

Another aspect of physiognomy in the Bamyān Valley relates to facial hair. As MM's quotation at the start of this section indicates, Hazarāhs are commonly perceived as not being able to grow a full beard given their 'Mongolian' lineage. Whereas, Qizilbash and Saadat purportedly can. MM goes on to say that growing a beard is useful to 'hide' one's Shi'i affiliation. What he is referring to here is the ability to grow a full beard, which is commonly perceived to represent more zealous Sunni sectarian affiliation. Older male Tajiks in the Bamyān Valley, for example, are often seen with long beards; which in turn provides a cue to their ethnicity. Furthermore, under the Taliban's conservative interpretation of Islam men, across Afghanistan, were expected to grow a beard two clenched fists in length. Oral history interviews (May 2011) conducted with Saadat and Qizilbash men indicated that they, as opposed to Hazarāhs, grew beards during the Civil War and Taliban periods to mask their ethnicity and sectarian affiliation.

Lastly, certain items of clothing may provide cues regarding a Bamyāni's ethnicity. For example, on a day-to-day basis those individuals who affiliate with the Tajik category are more commonly identified by their headwear. For example, Tajiks more commonly wear a

lungi, or turban, and *kola*, or skullcap. They are also often seen wearing the characteristic *pakol*⁵⁷ popularised by the Tajik *mujahedin* leader Ahmad Shah Massoud during the Civil War. Furthermore, Saadat wear *black* turbans that differ from ‘Tajik’ turbans, which are varied in colour. However, Saadat only wear these turbans on religious and more formal occasions.

All of the embodied cues discussed above do not of course objectively define one’s ethnicity. What is important is that they are perceived to do so. While in many cases these cues are not consciously communicated, for example in terms of Hazarah physical appearance, in other cases individuals can intentionally choose to communicate (or suppress) cues linked to their ethnicity. An example would be the growing of beards to hide one’s ethnic or sectarian affiliation.

Ethnicity and the Spoken Word: Names, Titles and Dialect

ER: Naysan, they are real Hazarahs! They speak a strong form of Hazarahgi...

AHM: ... Some Hazarahs in Bamyān Town cannot even understand them. So, I will speak in a strong Hazarahgi dialect, no Farsi, no Dari, and they will be comfortable with us.

(Informal Discussion with ER and AHM, February 2011)

Ethnicity in Afghanistan and, indeed, in other contexts, is also closely linked to language. Language and dialect are themselves cultural markers of the Hazarah and Tajik ethnic categories in the Bamyān Valley. As such, they provide relatively reliable linguistic cues to an individual’s ethnic category membership. A major distinction elsewhere in Afghanistan is between Pashto and Dari (Banuazizi and Weiner, 1986). Yet, with few Pashtuns in the Bamyān Valley this use of Pashto as a cue is of little value on a daily basis. However, the distinction between dialects is particularly useful. Dialects commonly heard in the Bamyān Valley include Dari, Hazarahgi, Farsi and Quettaqi.⁵⁸

Speaking in *Hazarahgi*, as indicated in the excerpt at the beginning of this section, is taken to clearly mark the speaker as Hazarah. However, given its common usage across the valley it is not uncommon to hear Saadat and Qizilbash speaking Hazarahgi when in

⁵⁷ The *pakol* is a soft and round-topped men’s hat made from coarse wool, which is rolled up before being worn.

⁵⁸ A mixed dialect/language of Hazarahgi, Urdu, and English that is commonly spoken by Hazarahs who were raised in Quetta, Pakistan.

conversation with Hazarahs. Otherwise, they like Tajiks speak using a Dari dialect. Tajiks consistently speak in Dari and in this way it can function as a cue for their ethnic affiliation, albeit inconclusively.

Farsi and Quettaqi are also common in the Bamyan Valley and are typically spoken by returnees or those who have worked or studied in Iran and Pakistan, respectively.⁵⁹ While they do not serve as cues for ethnic categories directly (beyond excluding the speaker as a Tajik), I include them as they are commonly utilised, in the Bamyan Valley, to denote an advanced level of distinction and education. In this regard, they play into interactions in which the authenticity of an individual is legitimised or contested using ethnic categories. This will be taken up below when discussing the use of ethnic categories in interactional circumstances.

However, it is not only the dialect that an individual commonly speaks that relates to ethnicity. *Choice* of dialect can also be used to enact or suppress ethnicity. Take, for example, my choice to communicate in Farsi in certain research interactions as a way to accentuate my 'Iranian-ness'. Or the way AHM—in the quotation at the start of this section—suggests the use of Hazarahgi, not Dari or Farsi, to ingratiate himself with research participants. Moreover, choice of dialect can be utilised to indicate commonality at the *expense* of others, for example through switching dialects to talk amongst 'insiders', which also simultaneously indicates 'outsiders' in a group setting. By way of example, consider the following excerpt from an informal group discussion (Field Notes, October 2011), incorporating dialogue between myself; QM, a Hazarah; and SAI, a Saadat:

NA: [In Dari] So, from what you are telling me there are some tensions between Hazarahs and Saadat?

QM: [In Dari] A little. There are some specific problems, but we don't experience these on a daily basis...

SAI: ... [In Dari] It's mostly caused by specific cases when Hazarah boys escape with our girls, but this doesn't happen very often.

QM: [Switching to Hazarahgi and turning to talk to fellow Hazarahs] I thought it was caused by the Saadat feeling superior [he laughs].

⁵⁹ It goes without saying that Iranians would also speak Farsi.

Names and titles can also indicate ethnic or sectarian category affiliation. Bamyanis are commonly named after major religious figures in Islam. The name Muhammad, for example, is especially common throughout Afghanistan. Yet, certain names correlate with Shi'i or Sunni religious figures. Classic examples include 'Ali', 'Husayn' or 'Hassan' for Shi'as. Similarly, certain family names are unmistakably from certain regions and therefore suggest ethnicity. For example, the surname of one of my research participant's was 'Bamyani', which immediately indicates he is a Hazarah. Likewise, certain honorary religious titles provide cues to an individual's ethnic category membership. The title 'Karbala'i' is one such case. Those Shi'i pilgrims who have undertaken pilgrimage to the shrine of Imam Husayn in Karbala, Iraq take up this honorary designation.

Physical appearance, dress, names and titles, and dialects all—with varying degrees of accuracy—contribute to perceiving an individual's ethnicity. They are cues that are utilised, often jointly, when associating an ethnic category with an individual. However, ethnicity also has an interactional dimension. Therefore, in the following section I discuss how ethnic categories are deployed in everyday interactions.

'Everyday Ethnicity' in Daily Interactions

In addition to the cognitive aspect of ethnicity, ethnic categories are utilised in everyday interactions. At the most basic level this includes them being discursively deployed to call ethnicity 'into being'. As implied above this can be done directly by invoking an *ethnic* category or more indirectly through the use of other categories or through the use of ethnic cues. We also consider that ethnic categories are deployed for a purpose. This may be as innocuous as simply suggesting commonality with others, but could include more insidious ends such as for one's personal benefit or to challenge another's legitimacy. Furthermore, in response to the invocation of ethnicity the individual, who at that precise moment *becomes* ethnicised, responds with an enactment of identity. This enactment, in turn, will either reinforce or contest the category by which their ethnicity was called into being in the first place.

Let me take my Iranian identity as an example. If we think back to Chapter One in which I discussed the manner in which a research participants invoked my identity with the phrase, "Your father is Iranian, so you are Iranian" we see how social categories—in this case the category Iranian—can be discursively deployed. And, my identity was invoked for a purpose. In this case it was to seek commonality and familiarity. In response I chose to enact my 'Iranian-ness'. I did this through the use of the Farsi dialect and through

performing embodied cues that would signify me as Iranian. Furthermore, I had a purpose in doing so. This was to further emphasise the sense of commonality between the research participant and myself in a bid to build rapport (Henry, 2003). At the same time, in fieldwork encounters where, for example, my English identity was invoked so as to challenge my legitimacy, I would respond by suppressing this aspect of my identity. I would make my 'English-ness' retreat. These are also some of the means to, and ends of, deploying ethnicity in interactional settings. This section deals with these interactional aspects of 'everyday ethnicity' in the Bamyan Valley.

Interactional Purposes of Deploying Ethnic Categories: There are a number of ends to which ethnic, or other associated, categories are deployed as a discursive resource in the Bamyan Valley. Although done so in a variety of ways, ethnic categories are ultimately utilised to either support or undermine one's own or another's perspective, agenda or actions (Garfinkel, 1967; Brubaker *et al*, 2006). This occurs in a number of ways including: (i) accounting for a perspective; (ii) marking membership; (iii) justifying unexpected behaviour; (iv) invoking insider status; (v) policing category membership; and (vi) accounting for ethnic categories.⁶⁰

(i) Accounting for a Perspective: Most straightforward is the way ethnic categories themselves are offered as an explanation for a perspective in and of themselves. For example, when I inquire for an explanation of why someone behaved a certain way I would often be told, "What do you expect he is a Hazarah!" or "I must do this, I am Saadat". As such, the explicit indication of ethnic category affiliation alone can account for an action or perspective. However, I should add that these expressions were almost always directed at me, as an 'outsider', to justify actions or perspectives that would otherwise be taken for granted.

(ii) Marking Membership: Ethnic categories are also deployed to directly claim or challenge the legitimacy of an individual through the marking of category membership. This is undertaken through the explicit qualification of *degrees* of ethnicity. For example, a person can be categorised as a *real* Hazarah, a *pure* Hazarah, a *true* Tajik, as *very* Qizilbash, and as *more* Sayid than another person claiming Sayid identity. Of course, it is also possible to categorise an individual with a negative qualification, for example describing them as an *impure* Qizilbash, or as *not very* Tajik. In a similar way to 'accounting for a

⁶⁰ I draw here on a number of the ways Brubaker and his colleagues describe ethnic categories being mobilised for interactional purposes (Brubaker *et al*, 2006: 226).

perspective', described above, marking membership relies solely on the inherent ability of an ethnic category to deliver or undermine authenticity.

(iii) Justifying Unexpected Behaviour: In cases where actions or perspectives are uncharacteristic of that associated with an ethnic identity, categories could be deployed for justification. Where this related to another's standpoint ethnic categories would be employed to account for unexpected behaviour. For example, during a group discussion attended by male Hazarahs in their mid-twenties, MW outlined the following:

NA: ... But, do you have friends or colleagues who are not Hazarah? Is that common?

MW: I have a good friend who is Tajik. He's Tajik, but he's a really nice guy. He's not like other Tajiks. I mean he doesn't have any problems with Hazarahs... and he even commemorated Ashura with us last year.

In this case it is necessary to use the word 'but' and to explain in which way a person's behaviour differs from that expected by a member of their ethnic category. Ironically, the very act of trying to suggest that ethnicity is unimportant in this interaction only further accentuates its significance.

(iv) Invoking Insider Status: Furthermore, when one seeks to justify one's own unexpected behaviour, or alternatively to stress one's legitimacy when making claims in line with expected behaviour, the invocation of insider status can be utilised. While these two purposes commonly utilise the invocation of insider status they differ in terms of the expectation attached to their purpose.

The first variant, invoking insider status to justify one's own unexpected behaviour, is demonstrated in the following example. During an interview between SS my Sayid research assistant and MH, a twenty one year old female Sayid, the following exchange took place (Interview, October 2011):

SS: Why do you think this issue [of elopement] between Hazarahs and Saadat is so sensitive? What has caused it to become like this?

MH: To be honest, although I am Sayid, I don't feel that this should be such a big issue. People these days should be free to marry whom they want.

SS: Oh! So you think a Sayid girl should be free to marry a Hazarah boy, if she wants?

MH: Well, yes. As a Sayid, I understand the issue. But, I also think that boys and girls should be free to marry anyone they want. We should be free.

MH's status as a Sayid is twice invoked—particularly after being challenged by SS with the exclamation 'Oh!'—to account for her standpoint. In essence, MH uses her ethnic category membership to justify her response, which deviates from that expected of her as a Sayid. In a similar way, individuals will invoke their insider status to claim legitimacy when overemphasising expected behaviour. For example, while taking lunch with some friends in one of the teahouses in the Bamyan Town *bazaar* the conversation turned to the future prospects of the country. A Hazarah friend passionately made the following comment to the rest of the group: "As a Hazarah I can tell you that they [*Tajiks*] are just biding their time. If the Taliban returns Tajiks will again be our enemies. I know this because I am Hazarah!"

Both variants that rely on invoking insider status, whether to justify an expected or unexpected standpoint, utilise ethnic category membership to *promote* the legitimacy of their standpoint or behaviour. As with the preceding interactional purposes, this is undertaken mainly by directly referring to an ethnic category. This is deemed sufficient for the justification of acceptable or deviant actions or perspectives.

(v) Policing Category Membership: This interactional purpose, policing category membership, includes challenging individuals or standpoints that are deemed to contravene accepted norms of category membership or behaviour. In the Bamyan Valley this frequently occurs in relation to differences imputed to Hazarah returnees, on the one hand, and those Hazarahs who have never left the valley on the other. This is driven by the very large number of Hazarahs who have returned to the Bamyan Valley since 2001. Furthermore, their generally higher socio-economic status contributes to a clear perception of difference.

An excerpt from an interview with AA and SB, two Hazarahs who have resided in the Bamyan Valley all of their lives, helps demonstrate the way policing category membership works (Interview, December 2010):

AA: *You can see that many Hazarahs are coming from Pakistan. They get an Afghan national ID and say, "I am Hazarah". They were born in Pakistan, were raised in Pakistan, and don't have any connection to the Hazarahjat.*

NA: *From where in Pakistan do they come?*

SB: *From Quetta mostly. We call them 'snobby' Hazarahs because they are always trying to show how much better they are than us.*

AA: *These people come here to Bamyan. These are the ones who say, "We are the descendants of Chengiz Khan. Our ethnicity is pure. We are not mixed with other people. We will never marry with those from other ethnic groups. We have to maintain our purity and be proud to be Hazarah. [SB shakes his head].*

SB: *They tell us we should not speak with a Kabuli accent! They say we should only speak in Hazarahgi...*

AA: *... Yes, but when we are talking to them they say things like, "Bachem, wakht-e-ke school rafti ba side the road buro ba god-e-aksadan nakani hospital de gam operation ta ma maman".*

NA: *I've heard this before. Can you explain what it means? [AA and SB laugh].*

AA: *He is trying to speak Hazarahgi! 'Bachem' is 'my son'. 'Wakht-e-ke' is the 'time'. Then he says, 'school rafti' which means 'to go to school' and 'a side road buro'... [AA laughs]*

SB: *... 'Ba god-e-aksadan nakani'. 'God' means 'car' in Urdu. And then 'baz de hospital da gam-e-operation ta ma maman' [I laugh]. He is speaking in three languages, this is not Hazarahgi! It's Quettaqi! [SB laughs].*

AA: *And they accuse us of not speaking Hazarahgi properly. I say to them, "Where does 'road' come from? Road is English!"*

This example shows how 'policing' and 'counter policing' is deployed in the context of negotiating what it means to be Hazarah. This contestation occurs in terms of policing the

‘appropriate’ dialect to be spoken and the ‘correct’ interpretation of lineage, which mark individuals as Hazarachs.

The contestation of the ‘authenticity’ of differing Hazarachs is exemplified, in the case of those returning from Iran, by the derogatory distinctions *Zawari/Watani*. Given that a high proportion of the returnees arriving into the Bamyān Valley since 2001 have done so from Iran, these opposing categories have become common, albeit largely derogatory, vernacular. ‘*Zawari*’, which originates from the honorary title awarded to Shi’as who have undertaken pilgrimage to holy sites in Iran, is now commonly applied to all Hazarachs who have returned from Iran to settle in Afghanistan. It suggests a level of distinction, education and (mostly religious) open-mindedness, whilst also signifying a sense of ‘ethnic’ illegitimacy. Moreover, it is associated with speaking Farsi. Alternatively, the term ‘*Watani*’, which is derived from the word *watan*, or country of origin, is applied to all those Hazarachs who have remained in Afghanistan. It implies a sense of ‘ethnic’ legitimacy, but also suggests a sense of ‘backwardness’ and excessive religiosity. Furthermore, it is associated with speaking Hazarachi; yet this latter association is not especially negative given the centrality of Hazarachi to Hazarachi ethnicity.

My two male Hazarachi research assistants, who were close friends, commonly deployed these categories with reference to one another. The first AHM is a recent returnee from Iran, who as a result is very well educated and speaks English fluently. The second ER, a lifetime resident of Bamyān Province, is also relatively well educated and speaks a moderate level of English. They consistently joked with one another, and myself, using the categories *Zawari* and *Watani*. Following is an example. AHM was in the process of explaining to me certain local traditions associated with Shi’ism in Bamyān, when ER interrupts him:

ER: [Interrupting AHM]... Naysan, don’t ask him. What does he know about Shi’ism? He is Zawari [He laughs]... He’s probably never prayed in his life.

AHM: [Laughing]. Yes? So, he should ask you? You’ve never been outside of your village. You Watani! You’d probably want us to practice Islam like some sort of Shi’i Taliban! [They both laugh].

(vi) Accounting for Ethnic Categories: As illustrated in the example above, in which AA and SB ‘police’ the use of the Quettaji language/dialect with regard to ‘Hazarachi-ness’, there is reference to contesting the notion of Hazarachs as the descendants of the famed Mongol

conqueror Chengiz Khan. Ethnic categories can be deployed for the explicit purpose of legitimising or undermining opposing conceptions of ethnicity itself. This particular interactional purpose is common in the Bamyan Valley in terms of policing one's own ethnic category (particularly in terms of contesting sectarian or secular perspectives on ethnicity), but also in terms of contesting the categories of others (especially Hazarah-Saadat and Shi'i-Sunni contestation).

This is carried out in two main ways. Firstly, direct claims are made to justify or undermine a category's respective legitimacy. Secondly, appeals to logic are employed to 'rationally' compare categories. By this I do not mean to suggest that the former are illogical and that only rational claims are valid. I simply seek to distinguish the manner by which justifications are made. With regard to the former, statements such as, "We are correct because we are Sunnis. We follow the true path of Islam", or "Shi'ism is the only true form of Islam, as we follow the Imams" are sometimes deployed with 'insiders'. However, in terms of the latter, individuals would make appeals to *my* sense of logic in an attempt to reason with a sympathetic 'outsider'. For example, on two separate occasions a Shi'i Hazarah, MA, and a Sunni Tajik, TAK, argued the logic of undertaking ablution with regard to their respective sectarian beliefs.

TAK: ...We [Sunnis] believe that you should completely wash your feet when undertaking ablution. Shi'as don't, they just quickly wipe their feet with water. Think about it. Why wouldn't you wash your feet? If you're going to wash before you pray, then you should at least do it properly.

(Informal Discussion, December 2010)

MA: ... When it comes to ablution there are some differences between Jafari [Shi'i] and Hanafi [Sunni]... We only partly wash our feet, whilst they spend a lot of time washing theirs. But, if this is not specified in the Qur'an why would you spend so much time doing it?

(Informal Discussion, November 2011)

Throughout this discussion of the differing interactional purposes for which ethnic categories are employed, we can observe that a perspective or action can be evaluated through the *direct* deployment of an ethnic category (e.g. "Why would you talk to him, he is Tajik?"). Yet, it is also possible to *indirectly* deploy a category by questioning or justifying one's 'ethnic' authenticity in relation to the cultural markers that commonly denote ethnicity (e.g. "She speaks Quettaqi, what does she know about being Hazarah"). In

this way, descent, dialect, and sectarian affiliation are commonly invoked to indicate how legitimate (or illegitimate) an individual's stance is. Moreover, in the case of Hazarahs racial characteristics can also be utilised.

In this regard there is another method through which Hazarah and Shi'i categories can be indirectly, and *highly* effectively, deployed to either legitimise or undermine an action or standpoint. This is through the invocation of symbols of Hazarah and Shi'a oppression, often linked to *Ashura* mourning ceremonies. While this can occur in everyday encounters between individuals, it is a technique more commonly employed by political and religious elites. This will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Six and as such will be discussed no further here.

Dealing with Ethnicity in Interethnic Interactions: The discussions above generally deal with occasions in which ethnic categories are intentionally deployed to achieve a predetermined purpose. Moreover, this is mostly undertaken amongst individuals who identify with the same ethnic category. Yet, there are times where ethnicity *emerges* as relevant between individuals with differing ethnic category affiliation. For example, two neighbours, a Sayid and a Hazarah may be gossiping about events in their village when the discussion naturally arrives at the sensitive issue of the elopement of a local Hazarah boy with a local Sayid girl. At this point ethnicity becomes relevant. Their otherwise neutral discussion becomes ethnicised. And, of course, there is a range of ways to address this ethnic 'moment' in mixed interactions. These include disagreement and conflict, avoidance, and joking/teasing.

A discussion of ethnicity with regard to disagreement and conflict must necessarily address both the way interethnic interactions can generate conflict and the manner in which disagreement or conflict is framed in ethnic terms (Brubaker *et al*, 2006). With regard to the latter, let me provide an example. During an afternoon of interviews in Bamyān Town *bazaar* I was distracted from an informal discussion with a shopkeeper by the noises of shouting outside. When I reached the street I saw what moments earlier must have been a scuffle at the centre of a large crowd of people. The crowd was in the process of dispersing. I recognised a middle aged Hazarah who had witnessed the altercation and asked him what had happened. He responded by confidently telling me that two men had been fighting; one of them, a Tajik, had accused the other, a Hazarah, of being a dog. Ultimately, they fought—"because Tajiks don't like Hazarahs" he said—and the fight was broken up some moments later. Yet, AHM, my research assistant, who had

been buying a notebook from the shop in which the fight had started, told me the following: an argument had developed between two Hazarahs. One, the shopkeeper, had tried to short-change the other, his customer. An argument started. Then a struggle ensued. It spilled out into the street and, after drawing a crowd of onlookers, was broken up by AHM and others. Some days later I politely confronted the middle-aged man about his version of events. He responded by admitting that while he didn't really know what had happened, it was most likely caused by "a Tajik picking a fight with a Hazarah" (Field Notes, April 2011).

I recognise that the misinformation I received may have been the result of the way my research was perceived by the middle aged man discussed above. Yet, this was one of a number of incidents in which non-ethnic disagreements were later framed in ethnic terms. Ethnicity, therefore, provides a readily available lens through which to explain conflict. Yet, while disagreements and conflict (or, indeed, any interactions) can be retroactively framed as ethnic, there are circumstances in which the participants are driven to take ethnic 'standpoints' on an issue. Let me extend the example of the Hazarah and Sayid neighbours introduced at the beginning of this section to make my point.

When the conversation turns to the sensitive issue of a Hazarah boy eloping with a Sayid girl, the interaction becomes ethnicised. The participants, who previously did not experience the dialogue as interethnic, suddenly *become* 'Hazarah' and 'Sayid'. One possible way of responding to this ethnicisation of the interaction is to adopt an ethnic 'standpoint' on the issue. While I do not suggest that there are *commonly* agreed 'Hazarah' and 'Saadat' standpoints on the issue, or indeed only two perspectives, it is easy to see how this encounter could lead to an escalation of tensions that ends in a disagreement. In this way, ethnicity can produce conflict in an otherwise non-ethnic daily encounter.

But, of course, this is not the only potential response. Bamyanis, or at least those who seek to avoid confrontation between individuals who affiliate with differing ethnic categories, commonly avoid discussing such sensitive topics. For example, during an interview with a Hazarah *mullah*, HMB, I was told the following (Interview, October 2011):

NA: What are your thoughts on tensions between Saadat and Hazarahs?

HMB: The Saadat believe in something they shouldn't. They think they are a superior ethnic group and shouldn't give their daughters to Hazarahs. This is

invalid in Islamic Law. Yet, even though I know it is invalid I do not support the aggravation of such tensions. I don't support it, at all.

NA: Why is that?

HMB: If we challenge the Saadat we will be faced with tensions. This is unproductive. We end up fighting with our Shi'a [sic] brothers.

However, ironically, the avoidance of addressing ethnic or sectarian differences can in certain circumstances transform interactions that have not been experienced as 'ethnic' into ethnicised exchanges. The very act of neglecting to discuss ethnicity at a point in a conversation that would normally require it indicates an *intentional* avoidance due to the perception of co-conversationalists as affiliated to ethnic categories. Therefore, ethnicity can be implied through an omission or a silence.

Another way of handling a potentially sensitive issue once an interaction has become ethnicised is through the utilisation of joking or teasing. In this way the sensitive issue is managed in a way that allows for the potential diffusion of 'ethnic tension', without having to rely upon a strategy of avoidance that may itself further complicate the situation. Reflecting on the example above, of neighbours discussing the awkward issue of elopement between a Sayid girl and a Hazarah boy, I draw on an informal discussion held with a fifty year old, male, Hazarah friend (Informal Discussion, June 2011):

In the past Hazarahs would give their daughters to the Saadat. It would make a man very proud if he married his daughter to a Sayid. But now things have changed. Now there are some problems... But, these things can get out of control. People get emotional. So, I think it's best to joke with my Saadat neighbours. I tell them to pay back our debt. They owe us some of their daughters. [He laughs]. They say, "It's not good if a dog has sex with a sheep" and I reply to them, "It's equally bad if a sheep has sex with a dog!" [He laughs].

Civil Institutions and the Reproduction of Ethnicity: Ideology and Framing

I now move away from discussion of the manner in which ethnicity functions within interactions to investigate the role of civil institutions in (re)-producing ethnicity in everyday settings. Following Brubaker *et al* (2006), I will discuss the everyday impacts of institutions upon ethnicity in two main ways. These include the manner in which

institutions promote ethnic 'ideology' and cultural rhetoric; and the way they frame 'unmarked' space and patterns of interaction.

I have already outlined, in Chapter One, how the residence of individuals who affiliate to differing ethnic categories varies across the Bamyan Valley. Hazarahs, Qizilbash and Saadat to varying degrees live interspersed with one another. Tajiks, on the other hand, predominantly live in separate localities except for one mixed Hazarah-Tajik village in the valley. This is not to say that 'social space' in the Bamyan Valley is always interpreted in ethnic terms, but that the distinct geographical distribution of ethnic category membership is matched with institutions perceived as ethnically oriented. Given their increased tendency to perceive ethnicity, Hazarahs more frequently conceive of institutions as ethnically oriented. All members of ethnic categories do articulate to some degree institutions in this way. Therefore, Bamyans perceive 'Tajik' schools, cultural organisations, and workplaces; 'Qizilbash' shops and farming associations; 'Saadat' NGOs, hotels and kindergartens; and 'Hazarah' media services, teahouses and a 'Hazarah' University. While not everyone necessarily engages with institutions matched to the ethnic or sectarian category to which they affiliate, there are distinct Tajik/Sunni enclaves within a broader Hazarah/Shi'i Bamyan Valley.

This linking of institutions to ethnic categories can be seen as deliberate or unintentional. This linkage could be a product of the actions of one or more of the individuals working within the institution, or the result of an institution's physical location (i.e. in an area populated by Hazarahs) or its core purpose (i.e. a *membar* or *mujahedin* party office).

Civil Institutions, Ideology and Cultural Rhetoric: A number of institutions promote ethnic ideology or cultural rhetoric in the Bamyan Valley. These include religious, educational, media and developmental institutions.

Unsurprisingly, religious institutions—*masjids* and *membars*—occupy a central position in this regard. Religious institutions by their nature directly promote 'ethnic' ideology in the form of Islamist, or at the very least, sectarian rhetoric in the Bamyan Valley. They are also one of the primary sites for socialisation, with Friday sermons at the *masjid* typically engaging with ethnic and sectarian related issues. Likewise, *rawza*, or sermons incorporating emotive recitations of the last days of Imam Husayn—framed in terms of Sunni oppression—are weekly occurrences within the *membar*.

Bamyani schools also play a role, albeit smaller than religious institutions, in disseminating ethnic ideology and rhetoric. Afghan school curricula is nationally standardised, yet certain schools within the Bamyān Valley are perceived as promoting pro-Hazarah interpretations of historical events, for example, related to Abdul Rahman Khan's oppressive subjugation of the *Hazarahjat* (Interviews, October and November 2011). Political symbols of oppression and accounts of Hazarah history are disseminated to young Shi'as and Hazarachs. This constitutes one of the main processes of socialisation through which ethnic identity is imparted (Jenkins, 2008 [1997]). Similarly, 'Tajik' schools in the Bamyān Valley are perceived as promoting an interpretation of history much more oriented to their ethnic and sectarian affiliation (Interviews, October and November 2011). Finally, Bamyān University is seen as a 'Shi'i' university in that almost all university age Tajik students leave the province for their university education (Interview, October 2011). Moreover, the Iranian authorities maintain a standing cultural centre at the University, which is aimed at encouraging Shi'i students to engage with pro-Iranian Jafari Islamist literature (*ibid*).

The media also features as an important institution in Bamyān. Radio, television and satellite coverage is almost ubiquitous in Bamyān Town. Numerous 'ethnically', religiously and politically aligned television channels target particular ethnicities, evoking ethnic and sectarian categories and framing international, national, regional and local issues in ethnic and sectarian terms. Iran, Pakistan, USA, the Afghan state and individual *mujahedin* commanders all back competing stations. Of particular relevance is *Tamaddon* TV, or Civilisation TV, a Shi'i television station run from Kabul by *Ayatollah* Muhammad Asif Mohseni, the founder of *Harakat*. This television station is backed by the Iranian regime (Interview, December 2011). Given the Iranian regime's desire to promote a common Shi'i identity as opposed to divisive ethnic identities in Afghanistan, *Tamaddon* TV promotes pro-Shi'i (and pro-Iranian) rhetoric. Ideology is heavily promoted and sectarian symbolism is thickly deployed (Interviews, January, February and December 2011). In 2009, for example, following the ratification of a Shi'i Personal Status Law penned by *Ayatollah* Mohseni, *Tamaddon* TV was used as a medium through which to rebuff widespread criticism emerging from national and international human rights activists (Oates, 2009). Utilising Shi'i symbolism, anti-Western rhetoric common to Shi'i Islamist politics, and labelling critiques of the law as *kafir*, *Tamaddon's* coverage impacted upon the perceptions of many Hazarachs (Interviews, January, February and December 2011). At the same time Iran has backed the widespread distribution of Farsi language literature (Siddique, 2012), with a particular emphasis on supporting cultural centres and the

dissemination of the key religious works of Islamist Jafari Shi'i *ulema* (Interviews, November and December, 2011).

Governmental and non-governmental developmental institutions also have a role to play in reproducing ethnic categories in the Bamyan Valley. A number of national and international NGOs (e.g. Oxfam GB, AKF, Catholic Relief Services, and Solidarités) and United Nations agencies operate across the valley. They typically receive funding from North American and European donor countries and the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID). These developmental institutions impact ethnic categories not only through supporting ethnic ideology and cultural rhetoric, for example through supporting cultural events that emphasise Hazarah culture, but also through channelling resources—often unintentionally—through social networks shaped by ethnic allegiance. In some cases programming is specifically targeted based upon ethnic affiliation (Interviews, November and December, 2011). In this way, ethnic categories are reified for the purposes of accessing developmental resources.

At the same time, the perceived identity of developmental institutions can contribute to the concretisation of social identities. For example, AKF—although operating an entirely secular development programme—raises awareness of the Isma'ili category and influences perceptions of Isma'ili status given the financial resources the organisation have access to.

The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) also has a provincial office and strong presence in the Bamyan Valley. The AIHRC, and their close collaborator the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), contribute to the ongoing reification of ethnic categories in a very particular manner. Through their continuing intervention in Hazarah-Saadat elopement cases—based on upholding an individual's right to choose a marriage partner—they emphasise ethnic identity and inadvertently support rhetoric surrounding Hazarah challenges to Saadat superiority. This issue is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Six.

In turn, all of these institutional modes for the promotion of 'ethnic' ideology and cultural rhetoric have some impact on the reproduction of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley. However, it is a differing aspect of the civil institutional environment that most *effectively* reproduces ethnicity in its everyday functioning. An aspect that is linked to the manner in which institutions frame day-to-day social interactions.

Civil Institutions, Unmarked ‘Social Space’ and Constrained Interaction: I mentioned above that the Bamyan Valley consisted of Sunni/Tajik enclaves within a wider Shi’i/Hazarah area. In this regard the Bamyan Valley differs to the rest of Afghanistan. Elsewhere in the country Hazarahs, and indeed Shi’as, generally denote the ‘marked’ category. They stand out as atypical and noticeable. Yet, in the Bamyan Valley the reverse is true. Since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, ‘Tajik’ has come to represent the marked category across the valley. In other words, Tajiks were disempowered and began to stand out as abnormal in the Bamyan Valley. This is part of the broader shift in their status from a majoritised category under the Taliban to a minoritised category in the present day Bamyan Valley, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

This has a very important impact upon the reproduction of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley. Above, I outlined the ideological and rhetorical *content* that certain institutions promote. While this without doubt contributes to reproducing ethnicity, a *more* important effect of their existence is in the way they collectively *shape* religious, racial and linguistic normality and *frame* patterns of interaction.

Firstly, while the promotion of ideologies and rhetoric contribute to ethnic reproduction, it is *how* and in what social *context* information is communicated that is of greater interest. A network of institutions that result in the Hazarah ethnic category being unmarked means that, on the one hand, Shi’i religious rites can be practised without stigmatisation and can be done so publically with pride. On the other hand, educational instruction can be conducted in Hazarahgi, the *default* dialect of the majority of students in the Bamyan Valley. In addition, media can be consumed not only *in* Hazarahgi, but also *on* Hazarah issues. Furthermore, business transactions can be conducted in a *bazaar* in which the majority of customers can operate without being racially profiled and (mis)treated accordingly.

Secondly, two quite separate social spaces exist. I argue that this is to a large extent the product of the establishment of the Afghan state and subsequent periods of prolonged conflict. These socio-historical processes have resulted in a tendency for individuals to associate with others who affiliate with the same ethnic category. Similarly, there is a tendency to avoid people who do not affiliate with a common ethnic category. However, these tendencies are compounded by the propensity of the institutional environment to bound patterns of social interaction. By this I mean, that in addition to simply favouring ‘in-group’ and avoiding ‘out-group’ association, the increased likelihood of studying with

Tajiks, befriending Tajiks, socialising with Tajiks, working with Tajiks, praying with Tajiks, and eating with Tajiks, means that a Tajik's social networks are simultaneously also ethnic networks. Ethnic categories are 'organically' reproduced through this relational logic. Endogamous marriage becomes an increased likelihood. There are vastly increased probabilities that colleagues and friends will share the same ethnic category. Patterns of social interaction are thereby entrenched and ethnic categories are *structurally* reproduced.

3. CONCLUSION

Throughout this chapter I have outlined some of the ways that ethnicity operates through ethnic categories and is manifest in 'everyday ethnicity'. This includes identifying the popular discourses—*qawm*, *mazhab*, *manteqa* and *hezb*—through which ethnicity is conveyed in the Bamyan Valley. I described the forms of dress and physiognomy through which 'ethnic' cues are typically perceived. I accounted for the manner in which the spoken word—names, titles, and dialect—suggest ethnic category membership. I catalogued the interactional purposes for which ethnic categories are evoked and discussed the differing ways that individuals affiliated to differing ethnic categories dealt with *becoming* ethnic in mixed interactions. Finally, I laid out the ways that civil institutions contributed to the reproduction of ethnic categories through promoting 'ethnic' ideology, shaping social normality, and framing patterns of interaction.

I undertook the majority of this analysis—of the functioning of 'everyday ethnicity'—in quite a simple and straightforward manner. I drew on examples that in many cases were simply accounts of commonplace interactions: of jokes between friends, discussions over a cup of tea, and differences of opinion between classmates. Yet, it is this character—the very ordinary nature of 'ethnic' cues, the almost routine uses of ethnic categories, and the typically trivial nature of ethnic 'moments'—that represents their everyday nature. It is the *normalised* perception and enactment of ethnic categories that frames the experience of ethnicity in daily life.

Yet, the apparently banal and low intensity nature of 'everyday ethnicity' is central to the very existence of ethnic categories. It should not be underestimated. In addition to state policy, violent conflict and the ethnic entrepreneurialism of political and religious elites, it is through countless and very ordinary acts of categorisation, evocation and performance that ethnicity persists in the households of the Bamyan Town. It is also the regular deployment of ethnic categories for the daily purposes of policing category membership,

for example, through which ethnic categories are reformulated in the minds of Bamyanis. And, it is the day-to-day reproduction of ethnicity as a result of the provision of 'unmarked' social spaces and structured patterns of 'ethnic' interaction that contributes to the continued relevance of emotive ethnic categories in the Bamyani Valley today.

This chapter highlighted the workings of 'everyday ethnicity'. In the following chapter my empirical analysis turns to the address the changing nature of ethnicity within the Bamyani Valley. This analysis focuses on the differential impacts of government policy in the valley; the use of ethnicity to compete for scarce productive resources; and the contemporary changes in the historically established hierarchy of ethnic categories. Chapter Five will also broach the emerging regional categories of Bamyani and Ghaznavi Hazarachs and the manner in which they relate to accessing productive resources.

CHAPTER FIVE

ETHNICITY, REGIONAL IDENTITY AND PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES IN THE BAMYAN VALLEY, 2001-2012

Another [Hazarah] commander had appropriated state land in Toopchi in Bamyan District and handed it over to his own relations to farm. Officials expressed less concern about this case as, "Daoud [King Mohammad Daoud (r.1973-1978)] had wrongly given that land to Kuchi anyway".

(Wily, 2004: 14-15)

As the quotation above indicates, disputes over land in the Bamyan Valley—one of the most scarce and valuable resources—are often framed in terms of ethnicity. Furthermore, its ‘successful’ redistribution—a highly political and contested act—often involves political elites and the state. In this vein, following on from the interpersonal-level analysis of ‘everyday ethnicity’ in the previous chapter, this chapter investigates the relationship between ethnicity, the state, political elites and the redistribution of productive resources in the Bamyan Valley from 2001 to 2012. I take productive resources to equate to political appointments and influence; economic resources including agricultural and residential land, the *bazaar*, trading opportunities; and access to education and health provision.

I have indicated previously that major shifts are taking place in the status associated with ethnic categories in the Bamyan Valley. I illuminate below how this shift has unfolded since 2001 and how it is presently characterized. I investigate how assumptions and actions regarding ethnicity in national level political reconstruction coupled with the actions of national and local level political elites—made possible through the instrumental use of ethnicity—has resulted in changes in political and economic organization in the Bamyan Valley. This reorganisation, in turn, has compounded the on-going reformation of ethnic hierarchies emerging since the 1979 Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan.

This introduction constitutes the first section of the chapter. In section two, I begin my inquiry by returning to my analysis presented in Chapter Three. In doing so, I identify the post-2001 national level changes that have translated into political reorganization in the Bamyan Valley. Then, in the third section, I investigate the way Hazarah political elites have utilized ethnicity and associated narratives of oppression to gain increased control over and access to key economic resources in the Bamyan Valley. In section four I expand this analysis to suggest that a particular dynamic of regional identity has emerged as a

means by which privileged Hazarachs frame entitlement and compete for access to these newly secured productive resources. In section five I draw my conclusions for the chapter.

1. CATALYSING ETHNIC CHANGE: FROM CONFLICT TO POST-CONFLICT POLITICAL RECONSTRUCTION

The 1979 Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, the *de facto* statelessness it engendered, and the chronic violence it unleashed, catalysed the reorganization of social relations in the Central Highlands and the Bamyan Valley (Ibrahimi, 2009a, 2012; and Monsutti, 2012). It allowed mainly Hazarah *ulema*, armed with Islamist ideology and funding from the Iranian regime, to facilitate the broad mobilization of Hazarachs through *mujahedin* organizations (*ibid*). The emerging participation of Hazarachs in the civil war, embodied in *Wahdat*, also gained them newfound recognition at the national level (Roy, 1990). This turn of events meant that from 1980, and for the first time in almost ninety years, the Shi'i residents of the Central Highlands would not have to stand as inferior to Pashtun and Tajik majoritisation. It also brought an internal power struggle, which was in part marked by the challenging of Saadat authority by Hazarah *ulema*. Given these factors I argue ethnic hierarchies in the Bamyan Valley have been in a state of flux since 1980.

However, the momentum and direction of change was heavily arrested with the emergence of the Taliban. There was a partial resurgence of Tajik authority under the Taliban, with some local Tajiks and possibly also some local Saadat conspiring with them. However, it was events set in motion following the establishment of the Karzai regime that again expedited shifts in the relative standing of ethnic categories. This also translated into significant changes in ethnic relations in the Bamyan Valley. This latter issue will be investigated in greater detail in the next chapter.

The Reification of Ethnicity, 'Ethnic' Interlocutors and Political Patronage

Ethnic categories were made explicit in the make-up of post-Bonn state institutions and in the Afghan Constitution of 2004. In this way ethnicity was reified, formalized and became central to the functioning of the emerging post-2001 Afghan state (Schetter, 2004; Simonsen, 2004; and Tapper 2008). It was in this way, and given the value placed upon the political participation of *all* Afghans as potential *voters*, that previously minoritised ethnic categories gained newfound prominence at the national level (Glazer and Moynihan, 1975; Tambiah, 1989). In addition, 'ethnic' interlocutors emerged as representatives of the various 'ethnic groups' making up the Afghan citizenry (Schetter, 2004; Simonsen, 2004).

It is perhaps unsurprising that these highly skilled political entrepreneurs were mostly comprised of those *mujahedin* leaders and *ulema* who had established themselves in the preceding years of conflict. With regard to Hazarahs: Karim Khalili, the-then leader of *Wahdat*, was appointed as Karzai's Second-Vice President. He remains so today. *Hajji* Mohammad Mohaqeq, the current leader of the largest faction of a now fragmented *Wahdat*, holds office as a Member of Parliament (MP). And, *Ayatollah* Muhammad Asif Mohseni the founder of *Harakat* stands outside of government as the head of large Shi'i *madrassa* in Kabul, which is ostensibly backed by the Iranian regime (Interview, December 2011).

An example of the changing political importance attributed to previously minoritised ethnic categories, and the role 'ethnic' interlocutors play, can be demonstrated with reference to clashes between Hazarahs and Kuchis in Wardak Province in 2010. Parts of Wardak Province, south of the *Koh-e-Baba*, have operated as summer pasturelands for Kuchis since Abdul Rahman subjugated the Central Highlands in the 1890s. Just prior to parliamentary elections in 2010, clashes broke out when Kuchis on their annual migration settled in areas of Wardak permanently inhabited by Hazarahs. Shortly after these fatal clashes well established Hazarah and Kuchi MPs, and other prominent Hazarah and Kuchi political elites, challenged President Karzai to resolve the issue in their favour (Rassul, 2010). *Hajji* Mohaqeq, who was key in securing Hazarah votes for Karzai the previous year, went on an eight-day hunger strike and proclaimed in front of a large public gathering of Hazaras, "In last year's election we supported Karzai. Now if he does not meet our demands, we will show him that we have the courage to challenge him" (Afghanistan Votes, 2010 cited in Rassul, 2010: 1).

As a result of the deadly clashes in Wardak, the claims of MPs, and other agitation by political elites, thousands of Hazarahs were mobilised and demonstrated violently on the streets of Kabul (*ibid*). In response Karzai issued a Presidential Decree temporarily barring Kuchis from the pasturelands of the Central Highlands. This move was heralded as a major victory for the Hazarah, and was commonly seen to be both a concession made to Hazarahs for their support in the 2009 election and a move to stifle future Hazarah political dissent (Interviews, January and February 2011). More importantly, the Hazarah MPs and other political figures that made demands of the state were increasingly perceived as legitimate representatives of the Hazarah people (*ibid*).

The recognition of minoritised ethnic categories as valuable political commodities, in

terms of their electoral potential, also translated into political representation at sub-national levels. Given the widespread conception of the *Hazarahjat* as the homeland of Hazarachs, a large number of political appointments were made to Hazarachs, and to a lesser extent Saadat, in Bamyan Province (Interviews, November and December 2011). With the support of Second Vice President Karim Khalili, Mohammad Rahim Aliyar was appointed the Governor of Bamyan Province in 2003. He was the first Hazarah ever to be appointed to the post of Governor in the history of the country. Mohammad Aliyar was a member of *Wahdat* who had worked closely with Khalili during the years of civil war and opposition to the Taliban (Interview, November 2011). The appointment of Governor Aliyar and that of other senior figures in the provincial administration not only ensured the continued control of Bamyan Province by *Wahdat*,⁶¹ but it also established a system of political patronage stretching from Kabul to Bamyan Town. Furthermore, these appointments and the large redistribution of political authority to Hazarachs resulted in the appropriation of key economic resources throughout the Bamyan Valley. To a large degree this redistribution of economic resources was complete by the time Habiba Sarabi was appointed Governor in 2005.

An excerpt from an interview with Mehdi Uruzghani,⁶² a thirty-two year old Hazarah who for many years worked at senior levels with the local government helps unpack the issue. Although his perspective is somewhat biased in favour of Hazarah claims, he clearly outlines the change in political organization and its impacts upon both the control of economic resources and ethnic relations in the Bamyan Valley (Interview, November 2011):

NA: Can you describe to me the situation of the various ethnic groups in the Bamyan Valley following the Taliban regime?

MU: When we talk about Bamyan at this time, we need to be aware of what happened before, during and after the Taliban... During Zahir Shah [r. 1933-1973] and Daoud's [r.1973-1978] regimes, the situation in Bamyan was very different. All the land, the valley itself, was owned by the Tajik community. The Hazarachs lived far from the district centre in side valleys. Old Hazarachs tell stories of how difficult it was for them to come to the bazaar. They were insulted

⁶¹ It should be noted that appointment of senior officials and the deployment of security personnel through the Departments of Justice and Defence, respectively, in the Bamyan Valley are controlled from Kabul. This often results in the appointment/deployment of Tajiks originating from outside of the valley (Interviews, November and December 2011).

⁶² This is a pseudonym used for the purposes of anonymity.

in the bazaar. They were fully dominated by Tajiks... When the mujahedin took power, they actually captured Bamyan and established Hezb-e-Wahdat. Hazarachs slowly began to dominate Bamyan from this time... Before the Taliban came most of the Tajiks, who lived in Bamyan, fled. During that time the old bazaar was destroyed. And Wahdat distributed new plots in the current bazaar. From then onwards, Hazarachs started living in Bamyan Town... Then, after the Taliban regime [1996-2001] collapsed Bamyan was again taken by Wahdat. Second Vice President, Khalili, was in Bamyan then. With the establishment of the interim government he moved to Kabul. But the power in Bamyan remained in the hands of Khalili's followers. So the first Governor of Bamyan, after the Taliban, was Khalili's man. He was called Muhammad Rahim Aliyar; he was a Hazarah from Yakawlang.

NA: Aliyar?

MU: Yes. During his time as Governor he distributed land from Zargarán to Toopchi ⁶³ and in Ahjdar. ⁶⁴ Many Hazarachs returning from outside of Afghanistan started constructing houses in the area between Zargarán and Toopchi. These places are located near Tajik villages, and it caused a big dispute with the Tajiks. And, while I think Tajiks are not correct in their claims I admit that this issue was not fully under the control of the government. So, the municipality, the mayor, may have made some backhand deals with people.

NA: A big dispute?

MU: Yes, but they couldn't do much about it because while Aliyar was Governor many Hazarachs were in power... For example, he appointed a number of Hazarah District Governors in Yakawlang. This weakened the role of the Saadat in relation to Hazarachs in both Yakawlang and Bamyan District... The Saadat lost a lot of power in Bamyan because of Governor Aliyar.

NA: [...] Is it still like this?

⁶³ This area forms the northern border of Bamyan Valley, running approx. 10 kilometres eastward from Bamyan Town. Before the settlement of Hazarah returnees this area was mainly occupied by a number of Tajik villages.

⁶⁴ Ahjdar is a small side valley 1-2 kilometres west of Bamyan Town.

MU: Well, in March 2005 Governor Sarabi was appointed. She arrived in Bamyan without the agreement of Mr. Khalili. He wanted someone from his party to be appointed, to maintain the control of Wahdat. The Tajiks also wanted to have influence in Bamyan. So, different parties were trying to appoint members of their own parties to government positions in Bamyan. The Tajiks started protesting against the Governor. They were putting lots of pressure on her claiming they had no share of authority. It was not true, as some heads of departments were Tajik then.

A number of preliminary conclusions can be drawn from the excerpt of Mehdi's interview presented above. Firstly, following the establishment of the Karzai regime a significant redistribution of political appointments took place across Bamyan Province. Secondly, these political appointments, to a large extent resembled a system of political patronage that was aimed at maintaining *Wahdat*, or in fact Second Vice President Khalili's, influence in the province and beyond. Thirdly, the resulting pattern of political organisation largely excluded Saadat and Bamyani Tajiks. This contributed to a reduction in the political standing of Saadat and more generally contributed to deterioration in relations between Saadat, Tajiks and Hazarahs, respectively. Fourthly, under the Governorship of Muhammad Rahim Aliyar (2003-2005) gains in political reorganisation were translated into economic gains, particularly in relation to the bazaar and the redistribution of land in the Bamyan Valley.

In the following section I further investigate the control of the Bamyan Town *bazaar*, the illicit appropriation of land, and the redistribution and provision of land to Hazarah returnees in the Bamyan Valley.

2. THE REDISTRIBUTION OF ECONOMIC RESOURCES IN THE BAMYAN VALLEY

Abdul Siddiqi,⁶⁵ a forty-two year old Tajik man from Toopchi Village, welcomed me into his home with all of the pleasantries one expects when meeting an Afghan for the first time. After a series of greetings he offered my Tajik research assistant and I the only cushion resting upon the mud-baked floor of his reception room. He son brought us tea and sugared almonds and, finally, he politely inquired as to whether I liked Afghanistan. Only then did we began our discussion about the disputed lands adjacent to the village (Interview, November 2011):

⁶⁵ This is a pseudonym used for the purposes of anonymity.

AS: [...] We have two main problems when it comes to land in Toopchi. First, a large area of land that belongs to some of the Tajiks in this village was taken from us by a Hazarah commander. He was with Khalili. He took this land for himself. And, then there is the land above the village. This area is called Pusht-e-Serai. This land belonged to another of the Tajiks in the village. We agreed to provide some of this land to build a school, as we didn't have one, but now Khalili's people gave the rest of the land to Hazarahs from outside of Bamyan. Many Hazarahs live there; they have come from Ghazni and other places and have built houses on our land.

NA: Hazarahs often tell me that much of the land in the Bamyan Valley was originally theirs and was taken from them by Abdul Rahman... [AS interrupts]...

AS: But, we have proof that Pusht-e-Serai belongs to us! [He unfolds two pieces of paper from his pocket and presents me with the first, a photocopy of a land deed]... This is a copy of the deed for the land. And, this is a letter from President Karzai [he hands me the second document].

NA: Okay. Tell me more about these documents.

AS: Pusht-e-Serai was bought from Hindus. This deed is from 1933. It shows we own the land. We also went to President Karzai and he gave us this letter explaining the land is ours. We took this letter to the Governor, his name was Aliyar. He was also with Khalili. We took this letter to him and he didn't even read it. He did nothing for us.

NA: What about the other land? The farmland that was taken from you?

AS: The Hazarahs don't help us. They tell us this land is not ours, but our father's fathers were working on this land. They are very nationalistic. Even where we have people in government, like my cousin... Even Tajiks in government can do nothing. My cousin can do nothing for us. He told me that all the Hazarahs think this land belongs to them... He even has the same problem. In his village, Dawudi,⁶⁶ the graveyard was taken from them to build a school! You find this same issue in all of the Tajik villages from here to Dawudi.

⁶⁶ Dawudi Village sits immediately north of Bamyan Town on the Tagaw.

NA: [...] Why do you think the government gave the land at Pusht-e-Serai to Hazarachs from outside of Bamyan?

AS: Firstly, this is not an issue with the government. It is an issue with Khalili. There were many big problems before this Governor [Sarabi] came. And, why? Well, they want to drive the Tajiks out. They settle many Hazarachs here so that we drown in their piss!

As can be inferred from my exchange with Abdul Siddiqi, ethnicity and ethnic narratives are central to both the motivations and the justification of land redistribution, be it through 'legitimate' government redistribution or forcible occupation of lands by Hazarah political elites. Leaving aside questions of how 'legitimate' the actions of the local government were under Governor Aliyar, it is clear that it is not only the *actions* of the government that are important to the appropriation of resources. It is also the *inaction* of the government in the face of Hazarah political elites forcibly occupying large tracts of land. As Liz Wily (2004) shows in her analysis of land relations in Bamyan District, the local government demonstrates a general lack of political will to intervene in cases where the appropriation of land is justified with reference to Pashtun injustice.

Seeking to better understand the 'legitimacy' of the government's redistribution of land, including that at Pusht-e-Serai, I asked Mehdi—during our interview—to clarify (Interview, November 2011):

MU: Many people make this an issue of ethnicity, claiming that Abdul Rahman took this land from Hazarachs or that by giving this land to Hazarachs it is making amends for this earlier injustice. Regardless, according to the laws and regulations of Afghanistan, all land above the highest water channel on the valley side belongs to the government. If you have land there, you have no right to it. The Tajik people felt that where they had land below the channel, the land above was an extension of their land. So there are asking, "Why are Hazarachs settling there?" Ultimately, it is government land!

NA: But why do you think it is that returnees were mostly settled in places next to Tajik communities?

MU: Well, this was the only free land. Where else could we settle thousands of people? But I think you have to realize that Tajiks are not as powerful as they

were before. I think they have accepted this. Bamyān is for Hazarāhs and day-by-day the Hazarāh population in Bamyān District is growing.

NA: I see...

MU: And, Tajiks are not able to compete. Day-by-day the Hazarāh population grows, and ultimately they will lose. For example, if we want to vote for the mayor or if we want to appoint a Provincial Governor, they will lose.

Mehdi's justification for the redistribution of 'government' land to provide accommodation for Hazarāhs is highly rational and, as he points out, is within the bounds of Afghan law. Yet, it fails to acknowledge the highly political nature of government. Land distribution in the Bamyān Valley under Abdul Rahman greatly benefitted Pashtuns and, to a lesser extent, Tajiks. Likewise, the agenda of Governor Aliyar, while 'legal', serves a clear agenda: an agenda that serves him, *Wahdat*, and more generally other Hazarāhs. Mehdi himself, in the excerpt above, discusses some of the political implications of the redistribution of 'government' land upon Hazarāh-Tajik relations.

A Long Term Investment: Gaining Control of the Bamyān Town Bazaar

Shortly after discussing the appropriation of land with Mehdi our discussion turned to the appropriation of other economic resources, namely the Bamyān Town *bazaar*. Responding to my question about the establishment of the bazaar Mehdi told me (Interview, November 2011):

I was actually in Bamyān at that time. It was almost [he pauses to count]... fourteen years ago. It was 1997. The old bazaar had been damaged in some fighting. For a long time the front line was in the vicinity of the old bazaar. So, it wasn't some sort of planned event to destroy the Tajik shops. However, Bamyān needed shops. So, Wahdat redistributed plots on government farmland in the area of the current bazaar. As many of the Tajiks had fled Bamyān, there were only few here. And, they were not interested in buying these plots.

Muhammad Aziziyar, a sixty-year-old Tajik living in Dawudi Village painted a somewhat different picture (Interview, November 2011):

MA: We don't know what happened to the old bazaar. Few, if any, Tajiks were in Bamyān then. Maybe Wahdat destroyed it, maybe they didn't. That's not

important. What is important is that Wahdat took government land and sold it to Hazarachs for their mutual benefit. They paid no consideration to the Tajiks.

NA: So, no Tajiks own land in the bazaar?

MA: Well, 95% of the bazaar is owned by Hazarachs. Maybe 5% is owned by Tajiks. Khalili sold the bazaar plots to his own people. Some Tajiks did buy plots, but these were Tajiks that had supported Wahdat during the conflict. There were a few of them. Since that time the government has made sure the bazaar is developing and benefiting the Hazarah people. Any Tajiks who want to work there have to rent shops from the Hazarah. We have no alternative.

As can be seen in Aziziyar's excerpt above, it is estimated that over 95 per cent of the plots in the new *bazaar* were sold to Hazarah residents of the Bamyan Valley (Interviews, October and November 2011). It is unclear whether the sale of plots was prohibited to those few Tajiks remaining in the Bamyan Valley, or whether they chose not to participate in what was seen as a Hazarah endeavour. Regardless of this, the founding of the new *bazaar* essentially shifted a major productive resource from Tajiks to Hazarachs. However, the benefits accruing from control of this economic resource were limited in the short term, primarily as a result of the imminent arrival of the Taliban in Bamyan Province.

While the establishment of the Bamyan Town *bazaar*, by *Wahdat*, predates the arrival of the Karzai administration, its legitimization and expansion has taken place increasingly since 2003. This has principally benefitted those Hazarachs to whom plots were originally distributed. At the same time, no attempt has been made to redevelop and invest in the old *bazaar*, which stands in ruin.

The previous two sub-sections described the utilisation of political appointments and political influence to effect changes in the control of key economic resources in the Bamyan Valley. While this shift to some extent was driven by political patronage and self-interest it had a wider effect in securing productive resources for Hazarachs. At the same time, members of other ethnic categories were to varying degrees marginalised. In the next section I discuss some of the more recent changes brought about by this shift in political and economic organization.

3. REGIONAL IDENTITY, ENTITLEMENT AND PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES

It was a spring afternoon in Bamyan Town. In preparation for a multiple day trip to one of the villages in which I was conducting fieldwork, I was shopping in the *bazaar* with two of my male Hazarah research assistants. We were purchasing a few treats to see us through the long nights of transcription and discussion.

Although the *bazaar* is sizeable in Bamyan Town, there are two shops that stock a wider range of products—mostly foreign imported goods—than others. As a result, they tend to be the destination of the more discerning customers in the *bazaar*. As I approached the shops, that sit side by side, I was greeted by a friend of mine, Hassan.⁶⁷ Hassan is a thirty-something year old Hazarah originally from Bamyan Town. He spent most of his adult life in Tehran, Iran (and therefore qualifies as *Zawari*). He currently works as the Bamyan-based reporter for one of the main national news agencies in Afghanistan. Throughout the course of our discussion I explained my intention to buy a few items for my pending research trip. After wishing me luck on my trip, Hassan made a passing but cryptic remark: “Don’t go into this shop. Go in the one next door”. When I asked why, Hassan offered me the following answer: “This shop is run by Hazarahs from outside of the province. It’s better to go next door to make sure the money you spend stays in Bamyan. It would be best to support the people of Bamyan, no?” (Field Notes, April 2011). Without much thought, I took his advice and entered the shop he had indicated.

Perhaps ten minutes later as I was browsing products, I heard raised voices immediately outside of the shop. I exited with my research assistants and witnessed an argument involving Hassan, the shopkeeper of the store next door and perhaps an additional 5-10 Hazarahs. Much shouting and pushing took place, and quickly a number of spectators became involved. Given my average level of proficiency in Dari, I didn’t catch much of the heated exchange. What I did register, however, was one of the members of the crowd aggressively telling the shop owner to, “Go back to Ghazni!”⁶⁸ (Field Notes, April 2011).

On the walk back to my guesthouse, as we climbed the steep plateau separating ‘lower’ and ‘upper’ Bamyan Town, I asked my *Zawari* research assistant AHM what the fight had been about. He began (Field Notes, April 2011):

Well, in Bamyan, there is a tension between Ghaznavi and Bamyani Hazarahs.

⁶⁷ This is a pseudonym used for the purposes of anonymity.

⁶⁸ Indicating either Ghazni Province or the provincial capital of the same name. Hazarahs account for approximately 25% of the population of Ghazni City (Interview, November, 2011).

Ghaznavis are known to be educated people, and they come to Bamyan to look for work opportunities. They are benefitting from the opportunities that have arisen in Bamyan since 2001.

Having reached the top of the plateau AHM stopped. Turning to take in the vista of 'lower' Bamyan Town behind us, he pointed to the *bazaar* below. He continued (*ibid*):

As you know, the room ER [my other research assistant] rents is in the bazaar. Many Ghaznavis also live there. They are here to take advantage of business opportunities and work with NGOs. [He then pointed at a newly constructed five star hotel in the centre of 'lower' Bamyan Town]. The head of the AIHRC built the five star hotel you see. She is from Ghazni. People also suspect the government might be in partnership with her. And, then there is the Governor. She is from Ghazni. And, she has brought many of her people to work with her. We Bamyanis don't get much of a chance.

Finally, as we weaved between the freshly ploughed fields, back toward my guesthouse, he continued (*ibid*):

A Ghaznavi student in my University [University of Bamyan] was insulting one of his Bamyani classmates saying, "You Bamyanis are donkeys!" Or something like that. All the Ghaznavi [university] students in his class started beating up this Bamyani. So, the Bamyani [university] students came and started beating up the students from Ghazni. It was a big fight. The Governor ended up taking the Ghaznavi side. It was a really big problem.

Some weeks later I had the opportunity to interview Mehdi Uruzghani on the topic. Although introduced above, I should add Mehdi originates from Dai Kundi Province⁶⁹ and was educated in Iran. Although not a Ghaznavi, the following excerpt provides an insight into the perspective of those non-Bamyani Hazarabs working in the Bamyan Valley (Interview, April 2011):

NA: Okay, let me ask you a controversial question... One of the things I was told is about tensions between Hazarabs from Ghazni and Hazarabs from Bamyan. Can you explain this?

⁶⁹ Dai Kundi Province lies to the south of Bamyan Province and has a sizeable Hazarab population. It is perceived as one of the provinces comprising the *Hazarahjat*.

MU: Erm... [He seems a little uncomfortable]... Actually, the problem was that there were not enough capable, educated people in Bamyan. Yet, there are educated people from Ghazni and elsewhere... [he pauses]. I think there is one thing I should tell you: Bamyan is not only for those people who are living within the geographical area of Bamyan Province. Bamyan is a mirror for all Hazarachs; they want to see themselves in Bamyan. So, for example I am from Dai Kundi. I have worked hard for Bamyan and have done nothing for my own province. My thinking is that Bamyan is my mirror... It is the only place we Hazarachs can say is ours. That's one thing. Secondly, as I told you, the number of educated people in Bamyan is very low. The third issue is that according to the Constitution any Afghan citizen can work anywhere. There are many Bamyani people in Dai Kundi now. There are many Bamyani people in Kabul. So, Hazarachs, because of their remote origins, have migrated to different places. Nowadays there are many Hazarachs from Dai Kundi living in Ghazni, for example. This is a social change resulting from geographical isolation and job opportunities, and some other reasons. Now the big concern in Bamyan is that people are leaving their villages and moving to the cities for better jobs. So, to those people who are saying, "Why are people from Ghazni coming here to work and take opportunities from us?" I say, that's really bullshit!

As can be seen from the preceding discussion ethnicity, although important, is not the only social category employed in attempts to influence the redistribution of productive resources in the Bamyan Valley. Regional identity, principally the distinction between Hazarachs originating from Bamyan and those originating in other areas of the Central Highlands, is being utilised *in relation* to political and economic organisation in the valley.

Regional identity is a key dimension of the broader identity of the residents of Bamyan Province. It has been and remains a common way of identifying oneself (Canfield, 1973a, 1978; Tapper, 1989; and Allan, 2001). Yet, what I argue here is that certain regional categories, namely 'Bamyani' and 'Ghaznavi', are particularly *salient* in the Bamyan Valley, emerging as relevant to claim-making with respect to the distribution of productive resources. This distinction has arisen given the generally high number of Ghaznavis exploiting employment opportunities in the Bamyan Valley and, more specifically, as a result of a number of high profile Ghaznavis, including the Governor, holding high-level political appointments.

Much like the distinction *Zawari/Watani*, identification with either category suggests one is Hazarah. In this way regional identity indicates, albeit inconclusively, the associated ethnic category Hazarah. Furthermore, not unlike ethnicity, regional identity is based upon 'cultural markers' linked to one's *manteqa*, or area of origin, and implies related cultural similarity (*ibid*).

Most importantly I propose that regional identity is more *salient* for educated Hazarahs: either educated Ghaznavis accessing political or economic opportunities in the Bamyan Valley, or those Bamyani who have enjoyed the opportunity to be educated outside of Afghanistan, usually in Iran or Pakistan. But, reviewing the excerpts I used above it is clear that it is not *specifically* education that is important. It is the *opportunity*, or the sense of *entitlement*, education brings for Hazarahs in the Bamyan Valley, which is key. It is those Hazarahs who can *potentially* or are *actually* benefitting from political and economic opportunities—senior political figures, government advisers, journalists, university students, hoteliers and shopkeepers—who most commonly deploy, or are implicated in the deployment of, these regional categories. In this regard, I argue that the Bamyani/Ghaznavi distinction is one that represents the *emerging* competition over *access* to productive resources in the Bamyan Valley, given that these resources have *already* been secured by Hazarah political elites over the previous decade.

This takes me to my final point. Much like the rising salience of the regional categories Bamyani/Ghaznavi, the categories *Zawari/Watani* also distinguish Hazarahs in terms of perceived levels of education and privilege. They reflect migratory or sedentary personal histories and the differing opportunities they engender. In this way, and similar to the regional categories discussed above, they also demarcate differences *between* Hazarahs. In other words, in the last decade it has become politically salient for Hazarahs to distinguish their *relationship* with the productive resources now available to them. In this sense, I argue that the categories Bamyani/Ghaznavi and *Zawari/Watani* indicate the emerging importance of *class* relations and identity in the Bamyan Valley, which have resulted from increasing levels of education, patterns of migration and, critically, the appropriation of economic resources by and for Hazarahs.

4. CONCLUSION

I argued here that post-Bonn political reconstruction, premised on the explicit recognition of ethnic categories, coupled with the introduction of representative democracy has resulted in a greater recognition of previously minoritised ethnic categories in

Afghanistan. This has also resulted in the emergence of national-level 'ethnic' interlocutors who act as 'gatekeepers' to a citizenry largely perceived in ethnic terms.

This newfound value placed on the political participation of minoritised ethnic categories has translated, in the case of Hazarachs, to the granting of political appointments in the Bamyan Valley. This is principally a product of Bamyan Province being viewed as the centre of the *Hazarahjat*. The appointment of Governor Muhammad Rahim Aliyar (2003-2005) and other Hazarah officials, under the political patronage of Second Vice President Karim Khalili, not only resulted in the marginalization of Saadat and Tajik elites, but also the appropriation of economic resources in the name of the 'Hazarah'. This included legitimization of the Bamyan Town *bazaar* established by *Wahdat* prior to the arrival of the Taliban; the redistribution of large numbers of Hazarah returnees in disputed areas conspicuously close to Tajik villages; and a lack of political will to intervene in cases where Hazarah political elites had forcibly (re)-appropriated land seen as confiscated following the conquest of the Central Highlands.

Ultimately, I argue that post-Bonn political reconstruction *expedited* a process of ethnic change, marked by the alteration of ethnic hierarchies and shifting ethnic relations, which was initiated by the withdrawal of Soviet and state forces from the Bamyan Valley in mid-1980. This occurred *directly* through the newfound emphasis placed upon the political participation of previously minoritised ethnic categories. And, *indirectly*, it was the product of political appointments favouring Hazarachs in the Bamyan Valley, and the subsequent pro-Hazarah restructuring of economic organization this made possible.

In this chapter, I have also tried to show how ethnic identity is not the only, or always the most salient, form of identity in the Bamyan Valley. While, by definition, ethnicity features as a prominent form of identity when differentiating between and making claims in relation to the members of other ethnic categories, the use of Ghaznavi/Bamyan regional categories implies the growing importance of *competing* claims made by *Hazarachs* in regard to recently secured productive resources in the valley. To a large extent the same could be said of the distinction *Zawari/Watani* in terms of differentiating between those Hazarachs who are more or less educated and, therefore, better or worse placed to exploit emerging economic opportunities in the Bamyan Valley. I also, tentatively, speculate that the use of these contemporary distinctions represent the growing relevance of class relations in the Bamyan Valley.

In the following chapter I analyse the ways in which the changes in ethnic hierarchies taking place in the Bamyan Valley impact upon ethnic relations. With respect to the ongoing deterioration of relations between Hazarachs and Saadat, I investigate tensions surrounding *esdewaj fahrari*, or elopement (literally: escape marriage), of young male Hazarachs with young female Saadat in the Bamyan Valley. In terms of the fundamentally altered relations between Hazarachs and Tajiks, I analyse the emerging effects of *Ashura*, a key Shi'i mourning ritual, which since the ratification of Afghanistan's new Constitution in 2004 has been widely and publicly practised in the Bamyan Valley.

CHAPTER SIX

OF MOURNING AND MARRIAGE: ETHNICITY AND INDIVIDUAL AGENCY

I arrived in Bamyan, to start my fieldwork, in mid-December 2010. I timed my arrival to witness *Ashura*, an important—if not the most important—religious ritual in the calendar of the Jafari Shi'as. Some six years prior, in 2004, the new Afghan Constitution recognised the right of all Afghan Muslims, including Shi'as, to freely practice their religion. Following this, *Ashura* has become a public event with a rising significance across Afghanistan (Interview, November 2011). Having read a number of accounts of *Ashura*, including Alessandro Monsutti's (2007) account of his participation with Hazarahs in Quetta, Pakistan, I understood some of the fundamentals of the ritual.

Ashura—commemorated on the tenth day of Muharram—marks the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, grandson of the Prophet Mohammad and son of Imam Ali. Shi'i tradition holds that on the tenth day of Muharram in 680 C.E. Imam Husayn, his family and a small band of warriors, met with the superior forces of Yazid ibn Mu'awiya, the Umayyad *Caliph*.⁷⁰ In an attempt to challenge the legitimacy of the Umayyad *Caliphate*, Husayn was en route to Kufa when he was besieged by Yazid on the plains of Karbala. Prevented from reaching the Euphrates River by the encircling forces, a terrible thirst beset Husayn and his followers. Foreseeing his own death Husayn requested his companions to save themselves. They refused, staying at his side. Then, following a failed attempt to reach the river, and the subsequent deaths of a number of his companions, Husayn faced his adversary. He and many of his followers were slain. He was beheaded and his dismembered head—along with his sister, Zaynab (the granddaughter of the Prophet), and infant son—were taken to Damascus. Here, despite being unveiled and humiliated, Zaynab overwhelmed Yazid with a masterful speech. In doing so she saved herself and the son of the slain Imam Husayn, thereby ensuring the continuation of the line of Imams revered by the Shi'a today. I was told by Hazarah friends that Imam Husayn's martyrdom—described to me as an *inqelab*, or 'revolution'—is perceived as an act of rebellion undertaken to awaken the Shi'a to the treachery of the Sunni Umayyad *Caliphate*.

In the build up to *Ashura*, there was a widespread display of sombre black—and Iranian produced—*alam*, or flags, and banners across the *bazaar* and villages of Bamyan Town. A foreboding black cloth archway was erected spanning the main road in the *bazaar*. It read,

⁷⁰ From a Sunni perspective, one of a line of successors to the Prophet Muhammad. As such, the political and religious head of a *Caliphate*, or a Muslim state based on *Shari'ah*.

amongst other phrases, '*Ya Husayn Shahid!*' or 'Oh, Husayn the Martyr!' This distinct visual exhibition was accompanied by the rhythmic chants of *nawha*, or dirges, played from passing cars and mobile phones. Meanwhile, those seeking a boon would take advantage of the event to prepare *nazr-e-Imam Husayn*, or a votive offering, in this case to Imam Husayn. On the roadside, makeshift stalls provide offerings of sweet milk to passers-by. On a larger scale, the village *membar*, funded by members of the village, offered *nazr* in the form of lunch for over a hundred residents and their guests. After lunch, on each of the first ten days of Muharram, *rawza* were played through the loudspeakers of the *membar*. By early evening this built to a crescendo, immediately prior to the gathering of the majority of the village in the *membar*.

Upon reaching the *membar*, on the evening of *Ashura*, I noted it had undergone a dramatic transformation: tall black *alam* were mounted on each side of the door, and its sparse interior was decorated with numerous black banners hailing Imam Husayn and his sacrifice. Each of the almost five hundred men present—a smaller number of women occupied an adjacent building—were dressed solemnly in black. Save for a few toned down smiles required upon greeting, all present were grave-faced. After the exchange of pleasantries, I sat cross-legged on the floor with the other participants to await the start of the main *rawza* of the evening, which was followed by a display of *sina zani*,⁷¹ or ritual striking of the chest.

Following a short introduction by a member of the local community, and a further emotional recitation of the events surrounding the martyrdom of Imam Husayn delivered by a *zaker*, or specialist, two *ulema* delivered the main *Ashura rawza*. They were an Iranian *alim* from Qom, with his distinct tightly wound turban and Farsi dialect, and a Hazarah *alim-cum-MP* with a large Shi'i following in Kabul.

Sitting quietly upon the top tier of the *minbar*, a pulpit-like chair, with prayer beads cycling through his right hand, the Iranian *alim* began his slow paced sermon in hushed tones. He spoke for almost thirty minutes of the importance of *Ashura*, depicting the events leading up to the martyrdom of Husayn. His voice slowly grew stronger, his tone more forceful, and his delivery gained pace. Likening the plight of the Shi'a peoples of Afghanistan to the injustices wrought upon Imam Husayn and his followers, he initially compared the Umayyad *Caliphate* to the Sunni-dominated Afghan state and, later, to their

⁷¹ *Sina zani* is the striking of the chest with the open palm of the hand, carried out during Muharram, as a sign of lamentation.

newfound 'Zionist' backers (i.e. the 'pro-Jewish' USA). Finally, building to an emotional highpoint in his speech, he recalled the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. His voice broke with emotion, he paused in anguish. His head fell into his hands and wails and sobs swept through the audience. As the grief subsided, he continued to talk in hushed tones of the arduous journey to Damascus, of Zaynab's humiliation at the hands of the Sunni *Caliphate*, and her ultimate reprieve. The remainder of his speech was accompanied by crying and lamentations from those assembled in the *membar*.

After a pause of some five minutes, during which the assembled group dried their eyes and stretched their legs, the Hazarah *alim* climbed the *minbar*. Starting in a similar hushed mode of speech, he began a long impassioned sermon. He extolled the importance of *Ashura*, and engaged the crowd in dialogue speaking of the oppression wrought upon Hazarahs and members of other Shi'i groups. He drew comparisons between the Sunni Pashtun state and the Umayyad *Caliphate*, and finally, at the culmination of his speech he made countless references to the "one million Shi'i Muslims killed in Iraq", to "the problems faced by the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples", and to "the oppression of the Shi'a peoples of Afghanistan" (Field Notes, December 2010). Moving from ethnic imagery to sectarian symbolism he ended by pointing out the common oppression felt by all Muslims at the hands of "Jews and Zionists" (*ibid*). Following this high point in his speech, his sermon settled into weeping and emotive lamentations regarding the tragic circumstances of Imam Husayn's martyrdom.

After almost thirty minutes the Hazarah *alim* ended his speech. Stewards of the *membar* swiftly reorganised the audience. Two groups of unmarried young men and boys, in some cases in their early teens, were assembled. One group, twenty abreast and four rows deep, knelt facing a second group of equal numbers. They were dressed in black. The majority—clearly organised for the event—had makeshift headbands, reading '*Ya Husayn Shahid!*', tied around their foreheads. Others simply joined the ranks of youth preparing for *sina zani*. The remaining members of the audience sat behind the two opposing groups as spectators. A sense of anticipation hung in the air.

Within moments of the groups being assembled the Hazarah *alim* began the rhythmic chanting of a *naw*, or dirge, which signalled the beginning of *sina zani*. The *naw* was sung in rhyming couplets, with the assembled young men repeating the words chanted by the *alim*. As these couplets were recited the participants forcibly struck their thighs. Upon reaching the chorus, which symbolically equated the *membar* to Karbala, the open hands

of the collected youth were raised above their heads and brought down with a loud slap upon their chests. This rousing, and no doubt painful, display gained pace and ferocity. A group of stewards circulated tea and biscuits while another moved amongst the crowd spraying rosewater. Leaving the boys sitting, the young men stood, quickly received short bundles of chains, and began *zanjeer zani*;⁷² powerfully striking their shoulders and back in sync with the chanting. The pace quickened, two sequential strikes became three, and the stewards urged the participants to strike faster and more ferociously. Sweat trickled down bruised shoulders. Finally, after more than thirty minutes the ritual ended as suddenly as it had begun. The participants put their shirts back on. They quickly drank glasses of water and, brandishing a flag displaying the name of the *membar*, swiftly departed. They spent the night touring, one by one, each of the six other *membars* in Bamyan Town. In each they carried out the same ritual of *sina zani* and *zanjeer zani* demonstrating their commitment to *Ashura* and the memory of Imam Husayn. As they left the *membar*, the remaining—mostly older members—of the congregation prepared to receive their first visiting group of youth. This continued all night and, before ending, the blood of the young men marked *Ashura*.

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The account of *Ashura*, above, is the first of two main case studies that investigate changing ethnic relations in the Bamyan Valley. The first, centred on *Ashura*, investigates a key dimension of the contemporary relationship between Shi'as, mainly Hazarachs, and Sunnis (Tajiks) in the valley. The second addresses *esdewaj fahrari*, or elopement, of young male Hazarachs with young female Saadat, a major manifestation of the growing rift between Hazarachs and Saadat in the Bamyan Valley. I also utilise a number of smaller case studies in relation to *Ashura* to provide supporting information for my argument.

In the last chapter I argued that the role of the Afghan state, in terms of the reification of ethnic categories in political reconstruction efforts, and subsequent changes in political appointments in Bamyan Province, laid the foundation upon which national and local Hazarah elites utilised ethnicity to control and gain access to productive resources. To a lesser extent development interventions, particularly education provision, also contributed to this process. This has led to a reversal in the 'marked' category of Hazarachs and has fundamentally altered ethnic hierarchies in the Bamyan Valley, and to some

⁷² *Zanjeer zani* is the flagellation of the shoulders and neck with bundles of short chains, carried out during Muharram, as a sign of lamentation.

extent, across the rest of Afghanistan as well (ICG, 2003; Mazhar *et al*, 2012; and Saikal, 2012).

I argue that a major shift in social organisation, brought about by the fall of the Taliban and establishment of the Karzai regime, has expedited trajectories of change in the perceived status of ethnic categories in the Bamyan Valley that have been underway since the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The case studies I discuss here are in large part a product of these shifts in socio-historical circumstances and represent the growing majoritisation of Hazarachs in the Bamyan Valley. These case studies while presenting accounts of the nature of these twin sets of relations also demonstrate the manner through which individuals, both elites and ordinary people, (re)-construct ethnicity amidst broad socio-historical forces in the Bamyan Valley. The former case study—of *Ashura*, ethnicity and sectarian relations—investigates primarily the agency of political and religious elites. The later case study—of elopement, ethnicity and gender relations—chiefly analyses the agency of ordinary Bamyani men and women. As can be inferred, I also intend to highlight the intersectional nature of ethnicity in both of these cases.

In the following, and second, section of this chapter I will further unpack the *Ashura* case study. I will argue that this mourning ritual, similar to an ‘invented tradition’ (Hobsbawm, 1983) represents the intentional manipulation and deployment of symbols of oppression to facilitate collective sentiment. I will then also describe how violence, and indeed non-violent events, can be framed as ‘ethnic’ and ‘sectarian’ through the deployment of these symbols. In this way ethnic categories can be evoked, through which religious and political elites can gain legitimacy and related political benefit (in this case by making claims upon the state). Finally, I will briefly analyse the impacts of *Ashura* upon Shi’i-Sunni relations in the Bamyan Valley.

In the final section of the chapter I outline an example of elopement and its repercussions, before elaborating some Hazarah and Saadat perspectives on the incident. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, this is not to suggest that I believe there are commonly agreed ‘Hazarah’ and ‘Saadat’ perspectives on the issue, or indeed that there are only two perspectives. My analysis, however, demonstrates the way ethnicity is being used to justify patterns of ethnic and gendered inequality, through positive marriage rules, between Saadat and Hazarachs. I then move on to show how elopement is being used by both, ordinary people to contest Saadat ethnicity and associated inequalities, and by Saadat political elites to violently enforce existing ethnic and gendered inequalities in the Bamyan Valley.

Ultimately, I conclude that this form of elopement not only represents a way for Saadat women to challenge patriarchy; but also mainly a method for Hazarah men to gain control of the sexuality of Saadat women as a means of demonstrate their increasing 'ethnic' status.

1. OF POLITICAL ELITES: *ASHURA*, ETHNICITY AND SECTARIAN RELATIONS

Alessandro Monsutti (2007), in his notable account of the mourning ceremonies of *Ashura*—experienced with Hazarahs in Quetta, Pakistan—outlines the significance of this religious ritual for Hazarahs. In doing so he masterfully demonstrates that *Ashura* at once fulfils a fundamental need for belongingness that also, through ritualised practice, creates ethnic allegiance. Given the centrality of his account to discussions of Hazarah ethnic identity I quote from his work at length:

Muharram celebrations function as a kind of outlet for tensions and frustrations accumulated during the year. In the sermons (rawza), the sufferings endured by the Hazara [sic] were constantly compared to those endured by Husayn and his family. The thirst which tortured the Imam's companions, prevented as they were from drawing water from the Euphrates, was compared to the Taliban blockade of the Hazarajat [sic] between summer 1997 and autumn 1998. Then profanation of Husayn's body was twinned with the tragic end of 'Abdul 'Ali Mazari, the Hazara [sic] leader captured and killed by the Taliban in 1995; and, more generally, the fate of the victims of Karbala was compared to the massacres inflicted on the Hazaras [sic].

Monsutti (2007: 187)

The reinforcement of identity in political speeches and its resonance among the population are the result of a socio-historical process linked to past and recent conflicts.

Monsutti (2007: 190)

[T]he 'Ashura' ceremony carries a highly emotional charge that extends the feeling of solidarity beyond daily relationships between neighbours and relatives and thus permits the emergence of an imagined community. Above all, it remains for Hazaras [sic] a mourning ritual that actualises the myth of a better world to come, a celebration through which suffering and defeat are magnified and become a powerful tool for social and political mobilisation.

Monsutti (2007: 191)

As the excerpts above show, Monsutti (2007) eruditely articulates that *Ashura*, and the symbolism linked to it, is a central mechanism delivering a sense of belongingness to its Shi'i participants. He goes on to explain that the increasing salience of Hazarah identity—associated with *Ashura*—is a result of socio-historical process, which generates social and political mobilisation. However, I argue here that *Ashura* is not *solely* the product of broad social-historical forces, which have imbued this 'discursive formation' with the *inherent* potential for mobilisation. As described by James Fearon and David Laitin (2000: 861), whose work I discuss in my literature review, "arguments that rely upon discursive formations that have their own logic or agency tend to portray culture in a way that borders on primordialism".

Eric Hobsbawm (1983: 2) takes 'invented tradition' to mean:

[A] set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.

By applying Hobsbawm's (1983) concept of the 'invented tradition' I argue the role of local elites is *central* to the (re)-production of the *Ashura* 'tradition' and the (re)-construction of ethnic and sectarian categories associated with it. Furthermore, the utilisation of the mourning ceremonies associated with *Ashura* by elites, not only (re)-constructs Hazarah and Shi'i identity but also legitimises their authority and provides instrumental utility: allowing for the deployment of the symbolism surrounding *Ashura* to evoke ethnicity and subsequently claim-making against the state in the contemporary Bamyān Valley.

***Ashura* and the 'Invention' of Tradition**

Extensive analysis of the origins of *Ashura*, in terms of the events taking place on the plains of Karbala in 680 C.E. or the historical emergence of the associated mourning rituals, are beyond the scope of this thesis (c.f. Hussain, 2005). Yet, an increase in the politicised nature of the mourning rituals associated with *Ashura* can be linked to the rise of Islamist ideology in Iran under *Ayatollah* Khomeini (Momen, 1985). On the day of *Ashura* in 1963 Khomeini famously spoke at the Fayziya *Madrasa* in Qom, Iran. Comparing the then-Shah and his government to Yazid and the Umayyad *Caliphate*, and implicating them as the puppets of Israel, Khomeini used the symbolism of *Ashura* to stir up great anti-Shah sentiment among the *ulema* (Khomeini, 1981). Moreover, in the period immediately prior to the Iranian Revolution in 1979, imagery linking the Shah to Yazid was very potent and widespread (Momen, 1985).

Over the same period, the mourning rituals associated with *Ashura* became a central element in the development of Shi'i political dissent in Afghanistan (Edwards, 1986). As discussed in Chapter Three, upon ascending the throne Zahir Shah (r.1933-73) permitted the re-opening of a small number of *membars* in Kabul. This led to the public practice of *Ashura* in the capital, albeit in a somewhat apolitical form as commemorations were carried out under the watchful eye of the King's representatives. With the rapid urbanisation of Hazarachs coming from the *Hazarahjat*, *Ashura* became central to an emerging Shi'i identity and the formation of Shi'i political dissent in Afghanistan (*ibid*). At the same time, *Ashura* was also practised in private in the Bamyan Valley. From the 1950s onwards, with the arrival of Shi'i *ulema* from Qom, Iran and Najaf, Iraq, *Ashura* began to be commemorated publicly (Interview, September 2011). This, in turn, resulted in growing tensions with the Sunnis (Pashtuns and Tajiks) of the Bamyan Valley (*ibid*).

Examples of the politicised nature of the recently re-introduced *Ashura* ceremonies can be seen in the first of the selected quotations taken from Monsutti's (2007) account above. Here, the trials faced by Imam Husayn and his companions are emotively likened to those of the Shi'a, or more specifically, the Hazarah. We see a number of emotive comparisons: the Taliban are compared to the Umayyad *Caliphate*; their blockade of the *Hazarahjat* to the *Caliph's* forces preventing access to the Euphrates; and more fundamentally, Imam Husayn's band of warriors to the Hazarah people. By making these comparisons the communal suffering of the Hazarah and the atrocities carried out by the Taliban are viewed as recent events in a long line of Shi'i oppression perpetrated by Sunnis. Referring to my own experiences of *Ashura* in the Bamyan Valley, we see a somewhat different emphasis albeit in a similar form. The Sunni-dominated state is compared to the Umayyad *Caliphate*, backed by the 'pro-Zionist' international community. Challenges made against the Afghan state are laid out alongside pan-Shi'i and, to a lesser extent, pan-Islamic rhetoric. The influence of the Iranian regime upon this imagery is clear: the imagery seeks to both defy the government and its Western backers by linking the Hazarah cause with broader Shi'i and, indeed, Muslim oppression. In the same way, this linking of ethnic and sectarian categories further strengthens the existing intersection of ethnic and sectarian identities in the Bamyan Valley.

I should note that I do not wish to suggest here that *Ashura* is an '*imagined*' tradition, in the sense that it is conjured from nothing. There is a very real history of marginalisation, injustice and atrocities upon which it draws. What I wish to suggest is that it has been (re)-constructed in its *present* form as a politicised ritual and cast as 'tradition' at the hands of

religious elites (Hegland, 1983, 1987; Momen, 1985; Keddie, 1995; Aghaie, 2001; and Deeb, 2005). *Ashura*, as an 'invented tradition', has been formalised as a core Shi'i ritual that is undertaken on an annual basis. Moreover, it is defined in relation to the past—the martyrdom of Imam Husayn in 680 C.E.—stirring up symbols of long standing oppression and injustice.

As such, the *Ashura* mourning ritual primarily functions as ethno-religious symbolism intentionally crafted to not only establish collective identity but also political discontent. Underpinning this political dissent is a feeling of solidarity, or 'groupness' generated amongst participants through the mourning ceremonies. In this way, ethnic categories or the symbolism connected to them can be utilised to momentarily raise the salience of ethnicity to heights that result in the manifestation of collective action. In a temporary but very real sense, an 'ethnic group' comes into being. Yet, I would add that this sense of solidarity relies not only on common participation. It also relies on linking the symbolism of Imam Husayn's oppression and martyrdom to the past violent experiences of individual participants. It draws on the memories of past suffering and injustice held by participants, but yet demands a collective imagining of past group suffering to supersede these personal memories. Collective memory is, therefore, emphasised as a result of, but also at the expense of, that of the individual. And yet, *Ashura* does still more than foster group allegiance. It also allows for the legitimization of authority, of religious leaders, of political figures, and others who invoke the symbolism associated with *Ashura*. It allows them to evoke ethnic and sectarian categories and through memories of oppression, 'groupness', with which in turn they seek political and material benefit. The following case study aims to demonstrate how invoking the symbolism associated with *Ashura* calls ethnicity 'into being'.

The 'Martyrdom' of Jawad Zuhaak: Invoking Symbolism and Evoking Ethnicity

The first thing I saw upon arriving by air into Bamyan Town, save for the towering peaks of the surrounding mountains, was a metal archway spanning the newly asphalted road heading into town. The words 'Welcome to Bamyan' were set to a background of black, red and green mirroring the Afghan flag that flew from the top of the arch. Immediately beneath the flag, at the archway's crest, was a framed photograph of President Hamid Karzai. Lower down was a larger photograph of *Baba*⁷³ Abdul Ali Mazari, the Hazarah leader of *Wahdat*, assassinated by the Taliban in 1996.

⁷³ A term of respect and familiarity, meaning 'Father' in Farsi, Dari, Quettaqi and Hazarahgi.

On the morning of 7th June 2011, this lone archway became the scene of an anti-government demonstration. Following news of the brutal murder of Jawad Zuhaak—the Hazarah who headed Bamyan's Provincial Council—a group of some 200 Shi'i students, predominantly Hazarachs but also Saadat and Qizilbash, gathered under the arch. Stories of Zuhaak's kidnapping, brutal torture and execution in Ghorband—an insecure and Pashtun dominated area on the road from Kabul to Bamyan—agitated Shi'i fears of growing geographical isolation and historical oppression. A handful of enraged young men ascended the steel archway. They carefully climbed past Mazari's photograph. Upon reaching the top the young men threw the Afghan flag to the ground. Members of the mob then furiously stamped upon it. Next, the photograph of Karzai was kicked and struck until glass broke and frame split. The torn photograph was thrown, piece-by-piece, to the angry mob waiting below.

Later that afternoon Zuhaak's body, arriving by military helicopter from Ghorband, was received by Governor Sarabi. After a ceremonious handover on Bamyan's airstrip the body was released to a crowd of almost 2,000 mourners; a crowd on a scale thus far unseen in Bamyan Town. Processing under the desecrated metal archway the crowd solemnly escorted the body to the central Shi'i *masjid* in the town beyond.

Over an hour later, when the massive procession had arrived at the central mosque, *Ustad*⁷⁴ Aliyazada—the brother of the previous Governor and a well-respected local political figure—delivered an emotive sermon at Zuhaak's funeral ceremony. Drawing upon the bedrock of Shi'i identity *Ustad* Aliyazada compared Zuhaak's 'martyrdom' to that of Imam Husayn at the hands of Yazid on the plains of Karbala. Immediately after invoking the ethno-sectarian imagery implicit in this analogy, he reminded the assembled crowd of the importance of Hazarah leaders. Adding that whilst those present may undervalue local leaders the *Taliban* did not, instead viewing them of sufficient importance to eliminate them. After whipping the crowd into an emotive frenzy with deft oratory skills and sectarian symbolism, and after extolling the importance of local elites, *Ustad* Aliyazada left the mourners with the message, paraphrased below (Field Notes, June 2011):

The government has done nothing to protect Ustad Zuhaak, and if they value the Hazarah people they will have to take steps to provide them better security and more development opportunities.

⁷⁴ A term of respect, equivalent to 'Mr.'.

The following day a young Hazarah friend of mine who had attended the funeral, summarised his sentiments (*ibid*):

The Afghan government did nothing for Ustad Zuhaak... The Hazarah people are feeling very nervous. We expect major leaders from the other non-Pashtun groups to be assassinated as well. This may not be the Taliban but someone in government, perhaps with Karzai's knowledge, who is doing this. We receive little aid and are surrounded on all sides by Pashtuns. We have everything to lose.

The above description of the events surrounding the death of Jawad Zuhaak demonstrate the manner in which the imagery associated with *Ashura* mourning ceremonies are used by local elites to temporarily summon ethnicity into being. To borrow a phrase from Rogers Brubaker, local elites of this kind can better be thought of as “ethnopolitical entrepreneurs... who may live ‘off’ as well as ‘for’ ethnicity” (Brubaker, 2004: 10). In other words, while they seek to gain benefits for the ‘ethnic groups’ they ostensibly represent, they also reify them through on-going instances of evocation with the intent of legitimising their position as ‘ethnic’ interlocutors.

Consider: *Ustad* Aliyarzada draws on the imagery of oppression linked to *Ashura*. He compares the ‘martyrdom’ of Zuhaak at the hands of the Sunni/Pashtun/Taliban to the death of Imam Husayn at the hands of the Umayyad *Caliphate*. He then presses the importance of Hazarah leaders—like himself—before challenging the state and, finally, making claims for material and physical benefits for Hazarahs. This format is one I witnessed regularly at public events in the Bamyān Valley: first, invoke the symbolism of *Ashura*, then extol the qualities of local leaders, challenge the effectiveness of government, and finally make demands upon the state in the name of the ‘Shi’a’ or ‘Hazarah’. This sequencing of these events is no accident. The legitimisation of local leaders and the claims for political or material benefits they make are only made possible by deploying symbolism linked to ethnic and sectarian categories. At the very instant of invocation a particular incident or event is framed as ‘ethnic/sectarian’. Ethnicity is (re)-produced and a sense of collective identity is heightened. In this way *Ustad* Aliyarzada frames the death of Zuhaak as ‘ethnic’/‘sectarian’ and in doing so reifies Hazarah group identity. The legitimacy of *Ustad* Aliyarzada, who has deployed the symbolism, is (re)-confirmed and claims can be made in the name of the Hazarah/Shi’as whose identity was evoked. I should add that it is not relevant whether this event was or was not ethnically motivated.

Importance is attached to the framing of the event as so, in a bid to gain personal and collective political advantage.

Moreover, it is only by framing this event as ‘ethnic’ that legitimate demands can be made of the state. This is particularly the case as the symbolism invoked is directly linked to the oppression of Shi’as *by* the Sunni-dominated state. In many ways it is quite ironic as it is state-sponsored changes in the political sphere that permit the public commemoration of *Ashura*, and the present reification of ethnic categories by the state that results in the utility of ethnic claim-making. Yet, the ‘ethnic’ claims that are made—much like the desecration of the Afghan flag and picture of Karzai at the beginning of this case study—challenge notions of national identity and state authority.

However, this symbolism of *Ashura*—linked to sectarian and ethnic categories—is not only of value in framing violent events. It lends itself to other more everyday public occasions. The same format applies: invoke symbolism, extol the quality of traditional leaders, challenge government, and make claims upon the state. The following case study demonstrates this with regard to *Naw Ruz*, or New Year, celebrations held on 21st March.

Invoking Symbolism and Evoking Ethnicity, Again

Mir Hashim’s Shrine sits at the centre of Bamyan Town, and is held to have particularly auspicious powers. Over the first three or four hours of the morning almost 4,000 people, myself included, had patiently filed into the grounds of the shrine to watch the annual *janda baala*, or flag raising, ceremony. Tradition holds that every year for *Naw Ruz* a flag shall be raised in the shrine. Foremost, the manner in which the flag is raised indicates what the coming year holds. If the flag is raised smoothly, a prosperous year lies ahead. Yet, uncertainty or danger is foretold should the flag be raised in an erratic manner or, worse yet, be dropped.

I had paused a moment to take in the crowd. Scratchy music was played on speakers that couldn’t manage the sound. Bodies were pressed together under strings of colourful flags running between trees and buildings. People stood, squatted and sat in groups eating nuts and talking excitedly. Vendors wove between the crowds selling nuts, sweets and soft drinks. Journalists stood beside television cameras mounted on tripods, and waited patiently for their story to unfold.

As people arrived they would go directly to the shrine itself to pay their respects. This involved walking the five-metre circumference of the shrine, three times. All the while one hand is trailed on the shrine's surface, and in some cases the shrine is kissed and a boon requested. After completing this ritual men strolled into the crowd, greeted friends and shook hands. Likewise, women and girls moved further afield to a dedicated area for them to mingle. This gendered segregation was not the only visible social division that day. Older men and notable local figures, perhaps 50 in total, sat on rows of chairs on a raised dais. At one end was a podium heavy with microphones and cabling. With prayer beads running through their fingers the ageing notables overlooked the sea of bodies that milled beneath them. All in all, people were jovial, expectant and in the mood to celebrate.

The music quietened and the celebrations began. The proceedings started lightly with a warm greeting by the announcer and a group of young school children singing of spring delights. The tone became slightly more serious when the head of the Council of Religious Scholars took the podium. Unsurprisingly, he immediately stamped a sectarian framing to the event. He explained that *Naw Ruz* marks the day when, almost fourteen centuries earlier, Imam Ali finally "sat on his chair" and claimed "a great victory for the Shi'as" (Field Notes, March 2011). He was referring to the leadership schism at the centre of Shi'i-Sunni ideological differences, which was later manifest in the death of Imam Husayn at Karbala. The *alim's* monologue was short, evocative and laden with sectarian references. He often talked directly to the television cameras. His speech was quickly followed by that of an ageing *rish sufid* who praised the healing powers of the shrine: "Anyone who comes here on *Naw Ruz*, be he blind, lame or sick, will be healed" (*ibid*). And then came the core message.

While *Baba Mohseni*, an elderly and extremely well respected *alim*, prepared to take his place at the podium, one of the designated attendants at the ceremony—a man I knew to work closely with the *ulema*—stepped to the podium. Almost as an aside, he offered a quick addition to the day's proceedings. Priming the audience for *Baba Mohseni's* coming speech, he complained to the assembled crowd and television viewers that the Governor has chosen not to attend the ceremony (she was in Kabul on official business). However, before he stepped aside for the eagerly awaited next speaker, he took a moment to praise the religious scholars, elders and other notables for making the effort to attend, while the Governor had not. He pointed out their importance and their willingness as always to serve the Hazarah people.

Baba Mohseni began his speech in measured tones, but quickly gathered momentum. Gesturing to the eight-metre flagpole, which lay before him on the ground, he referred to the prophetic powers of the flag raising ceremony; and questioned what the future held for the Shi'a of Bamyan. Pointing out that Bamyan was surrounded by the Taliban and was highly vulnerable; he berated the Afghan government, the PRT, and the international community, for the planned withdrawal of ISAF forces in the months that followed.⁷⁵ Rousing the crowd, who responded with chants and calls of approval, he called upon the government and international community to respond to the plight of the Shi'a of Bamyan.

Following *Baba* Mohseni's powerful oration, a young and rather anxious-looking representative from the Governor's office approached the podium to deliver a pre-written speech. The difference in tone was stark, as if he was reading from a different script. In a rather apolitical message the Governor apologised for her absence, conveyed her regards for the special day, and then recommended the planting of trees. It was spring after all. Before he finished, the Governor's representative added his own message: He assured the gathered crowd that the Governor would convey 'their' message, regarding the perils of the impending security transition, to the central government and would seek a solution.

With the speeches completed, the moment arrived for the raising of the flag. The crowd hushed. We looked on expectantly. A group of young men quietly assembled to hoist the flag into place. Coordinating their movements carefully, they raised the flag with nothing but a slight vibration. The crowd erupted; people clapped, and those at the front pushed forward manically in a bid to touch the flag for good luck. Amidst the commotion I turned to one of my Hazarah friends and said, "I hope the future of Bamyan is as positive as the flag raising suggests". He turned to me smiling. While he was still clapping he responded, "I doubt it. You know what Pashtuns are like".

***Ashura* and Sectarian Relations in the Bamyan Valley**

The religion of the state of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is the sacred religion of Islam. Followers of other religions are free to exercise their faith and perform their religious rituals within the limits of the provisions of law.

Article 2, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2004)

⁷⁵ The transition of security from international military forces to domestic security forces was undertaken three months later in Bamyan Province, in July 2011.

In 2004, Article 2 of the new Afghan Constitution stipulated the right of all Afghan Muslims to freely practice their brand of Islam. After an extended period, the new Constitution signalled the right to practice Shi'i variants of Islam in Afghanistan. As can be seen from the preceding discussion of these mourning ceremonies, they are emotionally charged events that signify deeply perceived differences between Shi'as and Sunnis. This contributes to the (re)-construction of collective identity, but it does so in relation to an oppressive Sunni 'Other'. An 'Other' that is present in the Bamyan Valley in the form of those Bamyans affiliating with the Tajik category. Recalling that ethnicity is interactional, it is perhaps not surprising that the relatively new introduction of a public and highly emotive set of mourning rituals, has had the effect of perpetuating and, indeed, intensifying the sectarian dimension of ethnic differentiation in the Bamyan Valley. This is reflected in the two comments below:

Since the establishment of the Karzai regime we can practice our religion freely. Now, we can commemorate Ashura... I now know how a Shi'i should feel and I now know what being a Shi'i really means... I also learned about it from books, for example, Ayatollah Khomeini's Hokumat-e-Islami [Islamic Government].

(Informal Discussion, Hazarah [Jafari], ~35, December 2010)

Tensions between us [Tajiks] and the Hazarah are highest during Muharram. Hazarahs are tense at this time and they target their anger toward us. We generally stay out of their way throughout Muharram, especially during Ashura... They make a point of highlighting the differences between us during Ashura.

(Interview, Tajik [Hanafi], ~25, June 2011)

My goal here is not to exhaustively demonstrate the increasingly minoritised position of Sunnis (Tajiks) compared to Shi'as in the Bamyan Valley, as this has already been broached in Chapters Four and Five. In those chapters I showed the 'Tajik' category now stands as the 'marked' category in the Bamyan Valley and that their perceived status and control of productive resources has significantly deteriorated since 2001. What I would like to stress, however, is the officially sanctioned public commemoration of *Ashura* and associated Shi'i mourning rituals, has since 2004 further intensified the social impacts of Taliban atrocities. By this I mean that not only has *Ashura* contributed to an outright increase in the salience of sectarian identity, but it has also emphasised sectarian identity *in relation* to other forms of identity, which comprise ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley.

I now turn to my second key case study that investigates ethnic relations between Hazarachs and Saadat through an analysis of rising tensions and violence linked to the elopement of male Hazarachs with female Saadat.

2. OF ORDINARY PEOPLE: ELOPEMENT, ETHNICITY AND GENDER RELATIONS

As argued in Chapter Three the growing distinction between Hazarachs and Saadat emerged following the 1979 Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan. Yet this growing divide was built upon a foundation of Saadat religious and secular leadership since the establishment of the Afghan state in 1890s. However, it is only in the last decade that it has manifested in day-to-day tensions and intermittent violence linked to elopement in the Bamyan Valley (Interviews, June, October and November 2011). While I do not claim that this form of elopement did not occur prior to 2001, I do argue that elopement is not only increasingly common but also more commonly acknowledged in the Bamyan Valley. This latter point is partially attributable to a number of high profile cases featuring in the burgeoning local media.

Marriage in Bamyan is a highly strategic affair. Normally arranged by parents, marriage presents a major political and economic opportunity (Taper, 1991; Smith, 2009; Coburn, 2011). It is political in terms of the possibility of reinforcing existing or establishing new relationships between families, and also in terms of shows of prestige. Economic opportunities relate to the major financial incomings or outgoings associated with the numerous marriage transactions.

Typically, marriages are arranged between cousins. As such, the pairings are between members of extended families. However, it is not uncommon for marriages to take place between unrelated families, although it is atypical for marriages to be arranged between families subscribing to different ethnic categories. It is even less common for individuals affiliating to different sectarian categories to marry. As such, 'love marriages' are uncommon but not unheard of. Elopement, especially between two individuals identifying with differing ethnic categories, is perceived as socially unacceptable. While Bamyani women accept that this is the reality of marriage, those reaching marriageable age do often privately express a desire to choose their partner (Interviews, September and November 2011).

In the case of Hazarah-Saadat elopement discussed in this chapter, gendered and ethnic identity intersect. Given the central importance of a 'pure' line of patrilineal descent for

their ethnic identity (i.e. a pure blood line from the Prophet), Saadat are in essence endogamous (Kopecky, 1982). Saadat women are prohibited from marrying those who identify with a differing ethnic category. A Sayid man, on the other hand, will ideally marry a Sayid woman; yet, can also choose to marry a non-Sayid woman. Given their perceived high status, Saadat have customarily been wife-takers and Hazarahs wife-givers. This matrimonial convention, of only taking women from equal or inferior social categories is common throughout Afghanistan (Roy, 1990). Lucas-Michael Kopecky (1982: 97), in his study on the mechanisms employed by Saadat to maintain their elite position, concludes that, “the preference and the actual marriage practice of the Imami Sayyed [sic] serve to perpetuate their religious, political and economic influence”.

Defying the social controls used to enforce these positive marriage rules, as you can imagine, results in great shame for the couple and their respective families. Yet, the eloping Saadat female incurs much greater dishonour, which is in turn central to the contestation of Saadat ethnic identity in the Bamyan Valley today. This can be best understood with a brief analysis of the concept of *namus*. Nancy Tapper (Tapper, 1991), in her highly respected account of politics, gender and marriage in northern Afghanistan, explains how the concept of *namus* links women’s shame with men’s honour. A man’s honour is dependent upon the maintenance of appropriate behaviour by the women in his family. Any dishonourable act a woman perpetrates brings shame upon her father and brothers. Male control of women’s sexuality therefore, “can become almost the very definition of community and a means of differentiation of one community from another” (Meeker, 1976: 267 cited in Tapper, 1991: 22). Tapper concludes that, “women act as *status demonstrators* for the men who control them” (Tapper, 1991: 22, my emphasis). However, she points out how this provides women—and I should add men—with the potential to challenge gender constructions through subversive action, including ‘institutionalised elopement’ (Bates, 1974; Tapper, 1991).

A Sayid friend of mine suggested I contact Sayid Anwari⁷⁶ to better grasp the nature of this complicated issue. I was told Sayid Anwari was well known, held a position as the head of a local NGO, and could talk authoritatively on recent high profile Hazarah-Saadat elopement cases. I met him on two occasions and we talked at length about the variety of Hazarah and Saadat perspectives on the issue. Sayid Anwari struck me as an intelligent and fair man. He explained in a balanced manner the logic behind elopement and the retaliatory actions of Saadat (Interview, September 2011):

⁷⁶ This is a pseudonym used for the purposes of anonymity.

SA: Religiously there is no problem. Hazarahs, mainly those who are educated and have studied religion, are trying to put pressure on the Saadat to make them understand that there is not a religious reason [for not marrying one's daughter to a Hazarah]. But, this is a very sensitive issue for the Saadat community. They do not want to hear anything about the issue. But, from my point of view there is no religious reason not to marry Hazarahs.

NA: Why is it such a sensitive issue?

SA: The Saadat have been leading the Hazarah for many centuries. They are proud of being of Muhammad's bloodline, peace be upon Him. They are trying to maintain their leadership of the Hazarah. And, on the other hand, the Saadat... [he pauses choosing his words carefully]... believe they should be respected. They want to preserve that respect. Even... [he searches for the right words]... though religiously there is no problem, there is urf [custom]. If you look at the customs we have in Afghanistan mainly in Bamyan, mostly in remote areas, families are not giving their daughters to other families. They feel ashamed... [he seems uncomfortable]. If I ask my uncle about these issues he will not reply, he will just say, "Leave it!"

NA: It's very sensitive?

SA: It's so sensitive they will never talk about it! They don't have a clear answer; it is just customary. Religiously there is no reason for it.

NA: So, you are saying there are two causes. First, people are ashamed to give their daughters? And secondly, it's a custom linked to the leadership of the Hazarah by the Saadat?

SA: Yes. Yes. Let me be very clear: Now the Hazarah are trying to make the Saadat understand that this is not a problem. But the Saadat are very sensitive about this issue and a 'gap' between these groups is growing as a result. Hazarahs say, "The Saadat can easily marry our daughters but we are not able to marry their daughters, and at this time there is no problem religiously". They are right as well, but that's a really sensitive issue [he laughs], which no Saadat

will accept. They are happy to kill their own daughters if they try to marry a Hazarah!

It was a few days after our second meeting that one of my Sayid research assistants told me that Sayid Anwari was at the centre of one of the highest profile cases of elopement in the Bamyan Valley. Through a series of interviews with both Hazarahs and Saadat I compiled the following account.

Humeira,⁷⁷ Sayid Anwari's sister, had met Jalil,⁷⁸ a young Hazarah at the University of Bamyan. They studied in the same class. While keeping in touch, secretly, by mobile phone their relationship blossomed. Humeira's sister occasionally ran as a go-between exchanging gifts between the couple. Almost 18 months later, after Jalil's father refused to approach Humeira's father to request an engagement, they eloped to Kabul.

Immediately upon discovering the elopement of his daughter, Humeira's father rallied other Saadat elders citing the elopement as an affront to the Saadat community. Following allegations that Humeira had been kidnapped by Jalil's family, and in response to pressure exerted by a number of influential Saadat, Jalil's father spent a short period of time in prison. Furthermore, after tracking his daughter to Kabul, Humeira's father had her forcibly returned to Bamyan. Jalil fearing for her life contacted the Hazarah-dominated AIHRC, who with the support of UNAMA, intervened. Acting to preserve Humeira's right to choose her partner, AIHRC placed her in a government-supported NGO safe house for women in Bamyan Town. Shortly afterward she was relocated with Jalil to Herat, where a mullah provided by the state married them.

Again, mobilising Saadat elders, allegations were made by Humeira's father that she had been taken against her will. After some months of concerted pressure, and in a bid to refute the allegation that Humeira had been kidnapped, AIHRC escorted both Humeira and Jalil back to Bamyan Town. In a supervised exchange with her father and brother—Sayid Anwari—Humeira told them she had left voluntarily with Jalil. She explained she was now married and expecting his child.

After a tense exchange Humeira's family left. She was then escorted with Jalil back to the safe house in Bamyan Town. They made it as far as the gate of the AIHRC compound. Here

⁷⁷ This is a pseudonym used for the purposes of anonymity.

⁷⁸ This is a pseudonym used for the purposes of anonymity.

they were attacked. Jalil managed to defend himself but Humeira was stabbed three times in her stomach by her brother, Sayid Anwari. He was detained and she was rushed to hospital, alive, but with potentially fatal injuries. An hour later while in intensive care in Bamyan Hospital she was attacked again by another of her brothers. Police posted at the hospital quickly restrained him. Thankfully Humeira and her baby survived. They have since been relocated with Jalil to an unknown location.

In one of the interviews conducted to clarify this event, AAG, a thirty-year-old female Hazarah schoolteacher from Bamyan Town, outlined her perspective. It mirrors the views of the majority of the male and female Hazarahs interviewed (Interview, January 2012):

The Saadat think of themselves as superior. We respect them and kiss their hands, but they don't think we are even human... They say, 'We are made of light and Hazarahs are made of dust'. They ask, 'Why would a thing of light marry a thing of dust?' Now, Hazarahs no longer give their daughters to the Saadat... There is no religious reason for a Hazarah boy not to marry a Sayid girl. Mullahs have stated this, but still the Saadat won't accept it. They rise up against the smallest issue.

During a preparatory meeting organised to plan interviews on this topic, my two male Saadat research assistants entered into a heated debate. One of my research assistants, SH, a twenty-six year old Sayid originating from outside of Bamyan Province and educated in Pakistan told me he saw no problem in a Sayid woman marrying a Hazarah man. He went on to tell me his cousin had been married in such a manner, which was not uncommon in his home province of Ghazni. SS, a twenty-four year old Sayid from a village near to Bamyan Town, was horrified at SH's assertion that such a union was acceptable. He passionately appealed to me as, thus far, I had refrained from entering their debate (Field Notes, November 2011):

We do not give our daughters to Hazarahs because the Saadat are superior! Hazarahs give many of their daughters to us because they respect us. They know we are the descendants of the Prophet. But we do not give our daughters to others. My family will never marry their daughters to non-relatives, never mind Hazarahs... The main reason that we do not want to give our girls to Hazarahs is that the Saadat are close to Prophet Muhammad. So, how can we give our daughters to these other groups? Our group will be diminished. We will have

fewer members. The Saadat think we should be the same as Hazrat⁷⁹ Muhammad, our Prophet. We should follow his line [i.e. preserving the purity of the line of patrilineal descent], as we are Saadat. If we do not follow his line, then we are the same as other groups, the same as Hazarahs.

Contesting Ethnicity, Negotiating Status

I argue, here, that the increasing elopement of male Hazarahs with female Saadat constitutes a direct contestation of Saadat ethnicity, in terms of challenging the applicability of their 'pure' patrilineal descent, and their professed high status relative to Hazarahs. This tension is increasingly manifest in the past decade as a result of the changes in perceived status, or decreasing minoritisation, of the Hazarah category in relation to that of the Saadat.

It is important to point out that similar tensions with the members of other ethnic categories (i.e. Qizilbash and Tajiks) occur to a much lesser extent. In the former case, this is a result of the extremely small numbers of those affiliated to the Qizilbash category, who also tend to intermarry with members of all other ethnic categories—including with Tajiks—as a political strategy (Interview, February 2011). In the case of the latter, while social sanctions prohibit intersectorian marriage (except in a small number of cases as discussed in Chapter Four), a general lack of patterns of interaction between Shi'as and Sunnis in the Bamyan Valley limit the opportunities for illicit sexual relations.

This latter point, however, is one of the contributing factors to growing cases of Hazarah-Saadat elopement in the Bamyan Valley. Education and schooling are having a very tangible impact on changing patterns of Hazarah-Saadat interaction (Interviews, December 2011 and January and February 2012). I argued, in Chapter Four, that different patterns of interaction between Sunnis and Shi'as in the Bamyan Valley structurally reduced probabilities of interethnic interaction and contributed to the reproduction of ethnic categories. Here, I argue the opposite. Increasing patterns of interaction between Hazarah and Saadat boys and girls in the numerous new schools and the expanded University that have emerged across the valley since 2001 have radically increased interethnic and cross gender interactions. This leads to greater opportunities for romantic liaisons, which are later exploited through largely unrestricted *virtual* interactions using rapidly emerging mobile phone technology in the valley (Interviews, December 2011 and January and February 2012).

⁷⁹ An honorary title corresponding to 'His Majesty'.

In addition, it is also important to note the impact of the *content* of what is taught in classrooms across the Bamyan Valley. Huge emphasis has been placed on the recognition of Women's Rights in the Bamyan Valley since 2004, particularly given the presence of an AIHRC office in Bamyan Town. This has contributed to a growing awareness of a woman's right to freely choose her partner and a related breakdown in intergenerational controls over educated young men and women in the Bamyan Valley (Interviews, December 2011 and January and February 2012).

Finally, state policy and action has an important bearing on this issue. As discussed above, the promotion of Women's Rights through AIHRC has raised awareness of the role of the state in supporting a women's right to marry freely. As discussed above in relation to Humeira's case, the state has colluded with NGOs to operate safe houses for women. The intervention of the state, and the actions of the pro-Hazarah AIHRC, make elopement—and particularly the form of elopement I am discussing here—an increasingly viable, albeit still challenging, option in the Bamyan Valley.

Patriarchy, Inequality and the Instrumental Use of Ethnicity

As discussed above in Humeira and Jalil's case, elopement often results in the retaliatory deployment of Saadat ethnicity to muster a collective response. This includes political mobilisation to lobby state institutions and other relevant organisations. Or, mobilisation of sentiment to initiate and justify violent reprisals targeting both the Hazarah man and Sayid women in question. The man is targeted in a bid to (re)-categorise Hazarahs as inferior, while the woman is targeted to make amends for the shame brought upon her immediate family, but also the members of her ethnic category.

For many Saadat young women, like SS discussed in Chapter Four, their ability to freely choose their life partner is paramount with respect to this issue. Female Saadat may choose to seek sexual and conjugal relations, through illicit relationships and elopement, with Hazarah men as a way of expressing their challenge to patriarchy. In this way they elope to subvert gender relations and to claim control over their sexual and reproductive lives.

As SS's case demonstrates some Saadat women express this issue in gendered terms. Yet, just as many of the women whom my research assistants interviewed—see, for example, AAG's comment above—and all male research participants articulated this issue in ethnic terms and with regard to the relative status of Hazarahs and Saadat. This implies two

things. Firstly, this issue of elopement calls into being intersectional forms of identity. When ethnicity is evoked through events related to this form of elopement Saadat women, for example, assume both gendered and ethnic identities. In turn, they subscribe to and/or contest constructs associated with both forms of identity. Yet, for young Hazarah men, who may or may not be sympathetic to a Sayid women's desire to freely choose her partner, elopement is primarily viewed in ethnic terms.

Secondly, this 'ethnic' issue involves Hazarah men taking control of the sexual and reproductive capacities of female Saadat, of 'status demonstrators', from the male Saadat who currently regulate their sexuality. In doing so, this act expresses and reaffirms their own majoritised status. It very powerfully contests the very foundations of Saadat ethnicity while also demonstrating the rising status associated with Hazarahs. In this way, even where Saadat are successful in challenging cases of elopement—either through killing one or both elopers or through more legitimate means such as lobbying judicial institutions—the high profile and repeated nature of these cases signifies an important symbolic challenge to their authority. This challenge will continue to contribute to undermining the perceived standing of the Saadat category in relation to that of the Hazarah. AHM, my male Hazarah research assistant, succinctly summarized this point in response to a question I asked him regarding the impact of these elopement cases (Field Notes, November 2011): "These cases of elopement are very bad for the Saadat. It makes them look weak. Every incident questions their authority a little more".

Before beginning my concluding remarks, I should acknowledge that my analysis of elopement in this chapter is primarily focussed on its role in the (male) contestation of ethnic categories as opposed to (female) contestation of patriarchy. I recognise the gender bias in my analysis, but have chosen to focus on the argument linked to the contestation of ethnic categories as it speaks more closely to the topic of my research.

3. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have documented and explained two key relationships that exemplify the contemporary dynamics of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley. Both are born of the increasingly majoritised status of Hazarahs in my field site.

I argued that *Ashura* and related Shi'i mourning ceremonies are central to increases in both the objective and relative salience of sectarian identity. Through discussion of *Ashura* and through utilisation of other related studies, incorporating the events surrounding the

death of Jawad Zuhaak and *Naw Ruz* celebrations, I showed how political and religious elites invoke symbolism, evoke ethnicity and through corresponding legitimization of their authority make claims upon the state. I also demonstrated how this process was similarly employed in relation to both violent and non-violent events.

Through a discussion of elopement between male Hazarahs and female Saadat I have shown how this issue summons an intersectional form of identity in terms of the overlap of gendered and ethnic identities. Moreover, through my analysis I show how narratives surrounding Saadat ethnicity and corresponding positive marriage rules serve to justify gender and ethnic inequalities. I also demonstrated the manner in which this form of elopement represents not only the contestation of these forms of ethnic and gendered relations by ordinary men and women but also the direct challenging of narratives that underpin the Saadat category. In particular, Hazarah men seek to claim control of Saadat women's sexuality to demonstrate the changing status of their ethnic category in comparison to the Saadat category. Finally, this case study specifies how ethnicity is deployed by Saadat *rish sufids* to violently counter elopement in a bid to enforce inequalities of power.

While discussing these two main case studies I also wished to demonstrate the way that individuals (re)-construct ethnic categories. In the first case study I showed how *political and religious elites* were responsible for the intentional political manipulation of symbols of oppression underpinning ethnic categories. The manipulation and subsequent deployment of these symbols have fundamentally altered the nature of ethnic identities in the Bamyān Valley. In other words, existing ethnic categories were transformed. The *agency of political elites* led, in this case, to the (re)-construction of ethnicity.

At the same time, in my second case study I stressed, although not exclusively, the role of *ordinary people*, of male and female Bamyānis, contesting the patriarchal use of existing ethnic categories as a result of changes in the wider social environment; of changes in forms of governance, levels of educational attainment, patterns of interethnic and cross gender interaction, modernisation, and shifting gendered and intergenerational relations. Again, in this case ethnic categories were also transformed. But here the (re)-construction of ethnicity was made possible by emerging changes in the *broad social forces* that bound the agency of individuals.

While I acknowledge that it is not changes in 'structure' or 'agency' alone that transform ethnic categories—but, in fact, the interaction of these interrelated ontological levels—my goal here is to illuminate some of the dynamics that influence the manner in which individuals (re)-construct ethnicity *amidst* broad socio-historical forces. In the following, and final, chapter of my thesis I not only lay out a concluding argument clarifying the way this happens, but also highlight the *static* nature of Brubaker *et al's* (2006) insightful theorization of ethnicity. Finally, I also draw together the main threads of my research to answer my central research question and address my research objectives.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This thesis was conceived as a theoretically framed, historically informed and empirically grounded analysis of the nature of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley during the period 2010-2012. In laying out this research goal, my objective was to develop a state-of-the-art theoretical approach, which drew together current thinking on ethnicity and identity theory, to guide analysis of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley.

In essence, this was carried out for two main purposes. Firstly, I wished to reframe the terms of the debate in the Afghan literature on ethnicity. This was achieved by arguing that ethnicity operates through ethnic categories. Furthermore, I proposed that such a theorization allows for an investigation of ‘everyday ethnicity’, or the functioning of ethnicity in daily settings and interactions. In this way, I provide a contribution to the Afghan literature on ethnicity opening up a new realm and method of investigation. At the same time, I have sought to make a modest contribution to the broader field of ethnicity theory. I have identified some of the mechanisms through which ethnic categories are (re)-constructed in everyday interactional processes. These will be discussed in greater detail below.

Secondly, I aimed to contribute empirically to the existing literature addressing the sociology of contemporary Afghanistan. Complimenting the existing constructionist accounts of ethnicity that mainly focus on broad structural forces and their shaping of ethnogenesis, my contribution to the Afghan literature emphasises the role of individuals—of Bamyani—in the (re)-construction of ethnicity. Furthermore, this thesis stands, to the best of my knowledge, as one of the only contemporary studies of the *differential* impacts of the post-2001 state upon ethnic categories at *local* levels. More generally, my empirically based research contributes to a body of literature marked by a dearth of empirical analysis.

There is, however, a broader relevance to the findings in my thesis. The analysis in this micro-level ethnographic study highlights the complex socio-political processes underpinning the reproduction of ethnicity. In doing so, my research approach provides an opposing standpoint to ‘greed’ and ‘grievance’ arguments promoted by Paul Collier (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004) and Frances Stewart (Stewart, 2002, 2008). My analysis

contributes insights for development policy and practice that a reductionist economic analysis could not.

Insights include, amongst others, the way policies and actions of the state and non-governmental development institutions impact ethnicity and related violence; the means by which ethnic and sectarian identity is manipulated to serve the political agendas of elites; and the differential impacts both political reconstruction and socio-economic development have upon ethnicity and ethnic relations.

Implications for development policy and practice are as follows. First, with regard to policymaking, the approach adopted in my thesis highlights the need for a more holistic framing of policy. One that in opposition to dominant policy framings—which are currently based upon ‘greed’ and ‘grievance’ arguments—can address not only the economic, but also the social and political dimensions of ethnicity. There are also a number of implications for development practice. For example, knowledge of the way ethnicity can be deployed to control productive resources could minimise the possibilities of resource capture in programming activities. At the same time, a more nuanced understanding of the narratives underpinning so called ‘group’ grievances and identification of the processes and events that instigate violence, could assist in the honing of peace building initiatives. And, clarification of the manner in which development institutions impact ethnicity and related violence would translate into development programming with an improved sensitivity to conflict.

To achieve my research goal, discussed above, I not only had to apply a state-of-the-art theoretical framework to a historical analysis of the formation of ethnicity, but also to twelve months of fieldwork conducted mainly in the Bamyan Valley from 2010-2012. In this capacity I addressed my central research question, which asks: How do we account for the changing salience, functioning and (re)-construction of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley, Afghanistan from 2010 to 2012?

A number of assumptions underpin my research question. These include: firstly, that ethnicity is not only relational, interactional and context dependent in character but also intersectional and punctuated; secondly, that ethnicity operates through ethnic categories and therefore can be observed in everyday circumstances; and, thirdly, the (re)-construction of ethnicity is the result of *interaction* between structure and agency—or of individuals drawing upon existing ethnic categories—*within* broad socio-historical

processes. Therefore, to better define the boundaries of my central research question, and to make explicit the assumptions that inform it, I unpacked it into a series of research objectives. They are as follows:

- i. Account for the emergence and changing salience of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley from 1500 to 2010;
- ii. Document the nature of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley, including how ethnicity is represented and experienced in everyday settings and interactions, from 2010 to 2012;
- iii. Assess, where possible, the intersectional and punctuated character of ethnicity, in the Bamyan Valley, from 2010 to 2012;
- iv. Investigate the operation of ethnicity through ethnic categories, in the Bamyan Valley, from 2010 to 2012; and
- v. Analyse the role, if any, of socio-historical processes, including contemporary political reconstruction and socio-economic development, and the agency of political elites and ordinary people in the (re)-construction of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley, from 2010 to 2012.

In this concluding chapter, I not only weave together the various threads of my thesis to explicitly answer my central research question through a discussion of my research objectives, but I also identify further areas of research, before finally reflecting on my PhD experience.

1. ANSWERING MY CENTRAL QUESTION AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Given that my central research question is broad and demands an investigation of not only the *changing salience* and *functioning* of ethnicity but also its *(re)-construction*, I have unpacked it into a series of research objectives. Through a discussion of each of these objectives I answer my central research question.

(I) The Emergence and Changing Salience of Ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley from 1500 to 2010

Acknowledging the punctuated nature of ethnic categories, I argue that an investigation of the *fluctuations* in the *salience* of ethnicity would be more rewarding than analysis of ethnogenesis. In this regard, the changing salience of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley can be attributed to a number of factors. These include—in line with the constructionist approach to ethnicity adopted in this thesis—both the agency of individuals, political elites

and ordinary people, and the broad socio-historical forces that shape the exercise of agency.

Key socio-historical forces producing the increased salience of ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley include the policies and actions of the Afghan state (and preceding empires), violent conflict, and to a lesser extent migration, capitalism, colonialism and urbanisation. Individual agency also contributes to the increasing salience of ethnicity. It is through a process of reifying ethnicity that individuals, be they elites or ordinary people, frame events as 'ethnic' thereby promoting the salience of ethnicity. Two main groups have been central to this process in the Bamyan Valley. First, are those writers, poets, musicians, radio presenters, newspaper editors and members of cultural organisations who have reified and widely communicated notions of shared ethnic history and culture to the illiterate masses. We should also include, in this group, the predominantly Western, but also Soviet and Afghan scholars who have reified ethnic categories in academic publications. Second, are the political entrepreneurs, or the political and religious elites who live 'off' and 'for' ethnicity. Local leaders, *rish sufids*, *mujahedin* commanders, *ulema* and more recently potential or acting political representatives regularly invoke ethnicity for political and material benefit. These actions have resulted in the 'imagining' of forms of ethnic collectivity.

(II) The Nature of Ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley from 2010 to 2012

In the contemporary Bamyan Valley ethnicity is undergoing a distinct period of change primarily, but not exclusively, given events following the establishment of the Karzai regime. These include the increased value placed on the political participation of Hazarachs and, to a lesser extent, other Shi'i ethnic categories at the national level; the shift in the distribution of productive resources in the Bamyan Valley; and the recognition of Shi'i schools of Islam in the 2004 Afghan Constitution. These events have expedited trajectories of change underway since the outbreak of violence in 1979.

Two key changes are occurring with regard to ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley. First, a general shift in the status associated with ethnic categories in the valley is occurring. Second, sectarian identity is becoming increasingly salient. With regard to the first impact, ethnic hierarchies are changing. Hazarachs, previously perceived to be of low status, are increasingly viewed as the majoritised category in the valley. Tajiks, on the other hand, are increasingly viewed as minoritised. As a result of the changing *comparative* status of ethnic categories ethnic relations are in a state of flux. The historically superior status of

Saadat in relation to Hazarachs is being re-negotiated in the present-day Bamyan Valley. This re-negotiation is primarily manifest in tensions with regard to sexual relations and elopement of young male Hazarachs with young female Saadat. I argue that this form of elopement, while presenting Saadat women with opportunities to challenge local forms of patriarchy, represents a contestation of Saadat status by young male Hazarachs. By taking control of the sexual and reproductive capacities of 'their' women, male Hazarachs are expressing their own majoritised status in relation to that of the Saadat.

The alteration of ethnic hierarchies in the Bamyan Valley has been reinforced by corresponding changes in political and economic organisation. Numerous political appointments were made to Hazarachs, and to a lesser extent, Saadat in the Bamyan Valley since 2004. Furthermore, this allowed Hazarah political elites to use ethnic narratives of oppression to reclaim valuable agricultural land distributed to Pashtuns and Tajiks following the subjugation of the Central Highlands by Abdul Rahman Khan in the early 1890s. Furthermore, the establishment of the 'new' Bamyan Town *bazaar* by *Wahdat*, in the period 1995-1997, was legitimised. The economic benefits of the mainly Hazarah owners of shops in the *bazaar* were, therefore, secured. Linked to these changes and, indirectly, to ethnicity I argue that the contemporary emergence of the regional categories Bamyani and Ghaznavi represent the *emerging* competition over political and economic opportunities, following the securing of productive resources by Hazarah political elites following the establishment of the Karzai regime. In turn, I also argue that increasing salience of these regional categories indicates the growing importance of class relations and related forms of identity in the Bamyan Valley.

At the same time, Hazarah civil institutions have proliferated in Bamyan Town. While these have, in some cases, promoted notions of shared Hazarah history and culture, they have crucially shaped religious, racial and linguistic normality and framed patterns of interaction, both of which strongly contribute to the reproduction of ethnic categories in the Bamyan Valley.

As mentioned above, the practice of Shi'i religious ceremonies is now widespread in the Bamyan Valley. This is a result of the ratification, in the 2004 Afghan Constitution, of the right of all Afghan Muslims to practice their variant of Islam. This has resulted in the annual public commemoration of Shi'i mourning rituals during Muharram, particularly *Ashura*. I argue that compounding the impacts of Taliban atrocities upon ethnicity; the

practice of *Ashura* has contributed to the growing salience and politicisation of sectarian identity in the Bamyan Valley.

Although highly relevant to this research objective, the nature of 'everyday ethnicity' in the Bamyan Valley will be discussed under research objective (iv) below.

(III) The Intersectional and Punctuated Character of Ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley from 2010 to 2012

Drawing on identity theory, my research assumes that ethnicity is intersectional and punctuated. I found this assumption to be sound given the following analysis.

The violent establishment of the Afghan state and the integration of the inhabitants of the Central Highlands resulted in the elaboration of the intersectional nature of identities in the Bamyan Valley. This included for example, Hazarah identity being commonly perceived as comprising ethnic, sectarian, and racial identities. Of particular interest is the categorisation of Hazarahs into the lower echelons of the emerging Afghan state economy on the grounds of their supposedly Mongolian racial phenotype.

Moreover, the *relationship* between intersecting identities comprising ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley is also changing. The acknowledgement of the right of all Afghan Muslims to practice their brand of Islam enshrined in the 2004 Afghan Constitution and the subsequent widespread practice of politicized Muharram mourning rituals, particularly *Ashura*, has resulted in the growing salience of sectarian identity as a *dimension* of ethnicity in the contemporary Bamyan Valley. In this way, sectarian identity has not only become *generally* more salient in the valley, but it has also emerged as more salient *in relation* to other forms of identity that intersect to form ethnicity.

At the same time, the invocation of ethnic categories through, for example, the deployment of symbols of oppression by *ulema* during *Ashura* denotes the *punctuated* character of ethnicity. In these moments individuals *become* ethnicised. And, in these instances they respond with an enactment (or suppression) of ethnicity: for instance, Shi'as cry in memory of Imam Husayn. In doing so, we reiterate the intermittent nature of ethnicity.

Finally, the contemporary elopement of male Hazarahs and female Saadat, and the violence this engenders, in the Bamyan Valley illustrates the intersectional nature of identity. More specifically, the gendered and ethnic identities of Saadat women are

simultaneously called into being. They are also often done so in contradictory terms. This occurred, for example, when female Saadat justified their positions for or against the appropriateness of this form of elopement, with my female research assistants. In these instances, they were both 'women' and 'Saadat' and caught between their desires to challenge patriarchy through articulating their freedom to choose their life partner, or to support unequal gendered relations entrenched in constructions of Saadat ethnicity.

(IV) The Operation of Ethnicity through Ethnic Categories in the Bamyan Valley from 2010 to 2012

In comparison to the more overtly political and explicit manifestations discussed in reference to research objective (ii) above, ethnicity is represented and experienced in *everyday* settings and interactions in the Bamyan Valley. In this way, ethnic categories are utilised in both cognitive and interactional processes. Cognitively, this occurs through the perception of both visual signs, linked to dress and physiognomy, and audial cues, including names, titles and dialects. Furthermore, the discursive deployment of ethnic categories can serve a number of purposes within everyday interactions. These include: (i) accounting for a perspective; (ii) marking membership; (iii) justifying unexpected behaviour; (iv) invoking insider status; (v) policing category membership; and (vi) accounting for ethnic categories. Lastly, when ethnicity *happens* in interethnic situations, for example, through encountering an ethnically sensitive issue in an otherwise 'neutral' conversation, three main potentialities arise. Firstly, ethnicity can produce disagreement and conflict. Secondly, participants can choose to avoid the sensitive issue, which in turn only further emphasises the salience of ethnicity. Or, thirdly, they employ joking or teasing to indirectly address the issue.

In addition, ethnicity does not solely operate through *ethnic* categories. Alongside the ethnic, sectarian and racial categories that constitute ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley, ethnicity can also be implied through reference to place of origin (*manteqa* or *watan*) and political party (*hezb*) affiliation. In this regard, the emerging categories *Zawari/Watani* and *Bamyani/Ghaznavi* also imply Hazarah ethnicity.

(V) The Role of Socio-Historical Processes and Individual Agency in the (Re)-Construction of Ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley from 2010 to 2012

The assumption that ethnicity is (re)-constructed by individuals, either elites or ordinary people, amidst broad socio-historical forces has underpinned my thesis. It is the key word '*amidst*' in the phrasing of my assumption above, upon which I wish to dwell.

The (re)-construction of ethnicity is an *emergent* product of the *interaction* of structure and agency. In other words, the (re)-construction of ethnicity occurs as a result of individuals drawing upon existing ethnic categories. It is also the case therefore, that transformation of the existing ethnic categories comes as a result of shifts in either structure (i.e. the socio-historical forces bounding action) or agency (i.e. the social action of individuals), which through a process of interaction is *emergently* manifest and observable in the actions of individuals.

I argue, for example, the contestation of Saadat ethnicity inherent in the elopement of Hazarah men with Saadat women is brought about by wider shifts resulting in Hazarah majoritisation and changes in gendered and intergenerational relations in the Bamyan Valley. In other words, changes in broad socio-historical forces have resulted in the transformation of ethnic categories. At the same time, I also proposed the intentional '(re)-invention of tradition' of *Ashura* mourning rituals by the *ulema* contributed to the growing salience of Shi'i collective identity. Here, I claimed individual agency resulted in the transformation of ethnicity.

I should point out that, while I demonstrate, through my empirical analysis, that ethnicity is indeed (re)-constructed through the action of individuals *amidst* broad social forces, this is not novel to my analysis. Yet, I suggest here a number of conclusions that may potentially contribute to the theorisation of the (re)-construction of ethnicity.

My first conclusion relates to the *structuring of trajectories* in the transformation of ethnic categories. Most analysis of ethnicity, including most of mine in this thesis, investigates the increasing salience of ethnic and sectarian categories. Ethnicity appears to be a self-reinforcing phenomenon, in that once salient it is increasingly drawn upon through the action of individuals, which ultimately contributes to its (re)-construction and *increasing* salience. I would like to suggest that, there is also a *structural* dimension to this self-reinforcing process. Patterns of limited interethnic social interaction are brought into being through the instrumental utilisation of ethnicity in conflict. Moreover, as observed in the Bamyan Valley, civil institutions further contribute to entrenching these largely separate social 'worlds' through the shaping of interactional probabilities.

Secondly, conceiving ethnicity as operating through ethnic categories opens up the possibility of analysing 'everyday ethnicity'. However, such a conceptualisation of the functioning of ethnicity also implies that ethnic categories are, therefore, (re)-constructed

through the frequent albeit low-intensity utilisation of ethnic categories in daily settings and interactions. While this form of ethnic (re)-construction may be less pervasive than, say, the more potent and far-reaching actions of political and religious elites it will still feature, given its regular occurrence, as a central mechanism through which the reproduction and transformation of ethnic categories occurs.

Thirdly, following my line of argument in the previous paragraph, I conclude that ethnicity is (re)-constructed by processes of negotiation wherein the *multiple differing perceptions of ethnic categories* contribute to their transformation. This ties directly into discussions of 'performativity'. While an application of Butler's (1988, 1990, and 1993) theory implies that a regularized and iterative performance of ethnic categories contributes to their coherent appearance, it could also inversely indicate that the sustained contestation of an ethnic category by a number of individuals in everyday circumstances, could ultimately lead to its transformation on a larger scale. In other words, the repeated use of an ethnic category in an atypical manner, by a collectivity of individuals, could result in its alteration.

Finally, the preceding discussion highlights the *omission* of discussions regarding the (re)-construction of ethnic categories in the otherwise highly valuable theorisation of ethnicity offered by Brubaker and colleagues (Brubaker, 2002, 2004; Brubaker *et al*, 2006). While this is no doubt a product of their intentional attempts to highlight the everyday *utilisation* of ethnic categories as opposed to the *(re)-construction* of said categories, it does indicate that the theorisation of ethnicity proposed by Brubaker and his colleagues is largely *static* in nature. While their theorisation does indicate the role of civil institutions in the reproduction of ethnic 'worlds', I would argue they do not sufficiently identify the *mechanisms* through which ethnic categories are (re)-constructed. More specifically, they do not explicitly accommodate the processes of negotiation through which the multiplicity of differing perceptions of ethnicity contribute to the transformation of ethnic categories.

It is through the identification of this critique, and the corresponding demonstration of how the contestation of, or indeed adherence to, ethnic categories in everyday interactions leads to the reproduction and transformation of ethnicity, that I chiefly make my theoretical contribution in this thesis. This incorporates identification of the structuring of trajectories of transformation in ethnic categories, and recognition of the manner in which 'everyday ethnicity' and the multiple differing perceptions of ethnic categories feature in the (re)-construction of ethnic categories.

2. FURTHER AREAS OF RESEARCH

There are a number of further areas of research suggested by my findings. I divide these into four themes as follows: (i) ethnicity in post-2014 Afghanistan; (ii) ethnicity, 'governmentality' and institutional practices; (iii) ethnicity, aid and development interventions; and (iv) ethnicity and peace building/conflict mitigation initiatives. Where the first two themes are more theoretical in nature, the latter two are somewhat more applied. This represents my current thinking with regard to ethnicity. It is indicative of my desire to utilise a theoretically framed, historically informed and empirically grounded understanding of ethnicity in more applied circumstances.

Ethnicity in Post-2014 Afghanistan

I believe further research investigating the *changing salience* and *nature* of ethnicity, at both the national and local levels, in Afghanistan post-2014 would be of great value. However, this is not a claim for more research for the sake of it. At the time of writing the future political trajectory and stability of Afghanistan is unclear. US and NATO troops are expected to have largely withdrawn from Afghanistan by end-2014. Furthermore, aid levels are projected to decline in tandem with troop withdrawal delivering major economic impacts (World Bank, 2013). While the collapse of the current Afghan state is not necessarily assumed, the pending security and economic transitions could plausibly lead to a descent into ethnically fuelled civil war and/or the political resurgence of the Taliban (either as a result of a power sharing deal or the collapse of the current regime). Regardless of which of these scenarios unfold, after 2014, the current political circumstances in Afghanistan will undergo a major transformation in the near future. This political transformation, and the potential conflict it will engender, will trigger a corresponding shift in social organisation. Ethnicity will no doubt feature prominently in responses to the transition. At the same time, patterns of social (and economic) organisation—in areas such as the Bamyān Valley—will also be significantly altered by conflict and changes made to the trajectory of political reconstruction currently underway throughout the country. I would suggest, therefore, a greater understanding of the impacts of transition upon ethnicity and related aspects of social organisation post-2014, would be highly informative.

Ethnicity, 'Governmentality' and Institutional Practices

Another area of potential research would be the investigation of 'governmentality' and the organisational life of ethnic categories. To gain the scope of analysis required in my thesis I was intentionally wide-ranging, for example, rapidly shifting from the impacts of recent

political reconstruction and other factors upon the salience of ethnic categories, in Chapter Three, to an investigation of their everyday utilisation in Chapter Four. Furthermore, my analysis of the ethnicity-related impacts of civil institutions operating in the Bamyan Valley is only a partial investigation. As a result, I believe a detailed investigation of one or more organisational settings would be extremely useful in understanding the manner in which ethnic categories are institutionalised in administrative procedures and embedded in organisational practices. More generally, an investigation of the manner in which ethnic categories feature in the policies of the Afghan state and its practices—ranging from those of the President’s Office and key ministries at the national level, to the provincial-level Governor’s Office, and down to district-level line departments—would help illuminate process of ‘governmentality’ inherent in the workings of government.

Ethnicity, Aid, and Development Interventions

Notwithstanding the investigation of the broad impacts of education service delivery and gender-related awareness raising by AIHRC, I largely neglected to analyse the relationship between ethnicity and aid throughout my thesis. This was intentional, but I would suggest that a better understanding of the relationship between ethnicity, aid and development interventions would be germane.

This could be undertaken at a number of levels. Firstly, an investigation of how ethnicity is utilised by political entrepreneurs at national and local levels, to ‘capture’ and ‘direct’ aid and developmental resources, for their own political and material benefits would be highly valuable. Such research is vital to understanding the unintended impacts of aid and, moreover, could contribute to better developmental impacts.

Secondly, such analysis could also inquire as to the framing of narratives surrounding aid provision and their utilisation in justifying the actions or agendas of ‘ethnic groups’ and the state. For example, in the Bamyan Valley the low levels of aid directed to the province is used to justify claims of neglect of Shi’as/Hazarahs by the central government, and feeds into rhetoric disseminated by political and religious elites and the Iranian authorities.

Thirdly, analysis could be undertaken investigating specific development interventions at the local level to understand the way they impact upon the everyday representation and experiences of ethnicity, or the manner in which they serve as a ‘space’ for, or a driver of, contestation and conflict between individuals identifying with differing ethnic categories.

Ethnicity and Peace Building/Conflict Mitigation Initiatives

Finally, I propose an investigation of the impacts of so-called social cohesion, peace building, conflict mitigation, and stabilisation-type development interventions in Afghanistan. Khibar Rassul's (2010) analysis of the violent clash of Hazarachs and Kuchis over pastureland in the Central Highlands, discussed in Chapter Five, provides a valuable understanding of the historically constructed nature of the conflict and the utilisation of ethnicity in its unsustainable resolution. But analysis could go further, by, for example, investigating interventions aimed at mitigating conflict between individuals who identify with these or other ethnic categories in Afghanistan. I'm not suggesting programme evaluations, in this regard, but a more nuanced analysis of both the impacts of conflict mitigation efforts upon the interactional process through which ethnicity is (re)-constructed, and the broader socio-historical processes that shape them.

3. A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON MY PHD EXPERIENCE

On a personal level this thesis was about getting to know Afghanistan better. It was about getting 'behind' the, often poorly thought through, world of development practice in Afghanistan. It was an attempt to better understand a much more organic world of social change. While illuminating, this transition was a highly challenging process for me. Stepping outside of the 'bubble' that was my professional life in Kabul for many years, was quite frankly a distressing experience. It made me recognise the generally inconsequential nature of my previous work. I came to realise that three years of intense work and high stress had delivered very little, if any, actual benefit to the Afghan people I was supposedly working for. In reality, it served me more than it did them.

Yet, as I write these words I realise that the sense of unease with which I started this PhD has diminished. I am reassured by both the process and outcomes of my research experience. My fieldwork in the Bamyani Valley was invigorating. By getting a little closer to everyday Bamyani life, and by being able in many circumstances to blur the line between 'insider' and 'outsider' through the use of my Iranian identity, I felt I was able to develop a more meaningful relationship with the Bamyanis who shared their time with me. In addition, having both the time to reflect on my experiences and a theoretical framework with which to do so, I feel that I've got a step closer to my personal goal of understanding the sociological processes facing Afghanistan since 2001.

On the other hand, the 'outcomes' of my research, or my analysis and findings, while still largely inconsequential to Afghans, are of great value to me. I have, to some degree at least,

better understood the impacts of state policy, conflict, scholars, political and religious elites, and even ordinary Afghans upon the changing salience and (re)-construction of ethnicity. These processes have indisputable impacts on socio-political and economic life, at both local and national levels, across Afghanistan. And, importantly, such an understanding of the dynamics of ethnicity is a first step in concretely engaging to minimize their negative impacts on the daily lives of individuals in Afghanistan and, indeed, elsewhere.

While a discussion of the more pragmatic implications of these outcomes is beyond the scope of this thesis, I value the insights they offer in relation to processes of constitutional development and reform; the structuring of national and sub-national governance institutions and processes; the integration of conflict sensitization in aid delivery; and to processes of peace-building and conflict mitigation. Ultimately, a contextualised understanding of the dynamics of social, political and economic organisation in the Bamyan Valley will assist me and others to better engage with development interventions in Afghanistan and beyond. This is a future I look forward to.

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