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**"The People Who Really Belong to Gilgit" –
Theoretical and Ethnographic Perspectives on
Identity and Conflict**

by Martin Sökefeld

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Abstract | 97 |
| 1. Introduction | 97 |
| 2. Gilgit | 99 |
| 3. Theoretical Perspectives on Identity | 103 |
| 3.1 <i>Dimensions of Difference</i> | 103 |
| 3.2 <i>A Critique of Ethnicity</i> | 107 |
| 3.3 <i>Conceptualizing Diversity</i> | 119 |
| 4. People of Gilgit and People from Outside | 132 |
| 4.1 <i>Searching for the "Real People of Gilgit"</i> | 134 |
| 4.2 <i>Land – The Symbol of Belonging and Identity</i> | 143 |
| 4.2.1 <i>Change in the Economic Function of Land</i> | 143 |
| 4.2.2 <i>Descent, Settlement and Cooperation</i> | 144 |
| 4.2.3 <i>Uskūn and Sāmī – The Integration of People from Outside</i> | 146 |
| 4.2.4 <i>Xāndānī and Bē-Xāndānī</i> | 151 |
| 4.2.5 <i>Redistribution of Land by the Rulers</i> | 156 |
| 4.3 <i>The Change of the Boundary between Inside and Outside during Kashmiri and British Rule</i> | 158 |
| 4.4 <i>The Effects of the Establishment of Pakistani Administration in Gilgit</i> | 163 |
| 4.5 <i>The Difference Inside-Outside and the Opposition Village-Bazaar</i> | 167 |
| 5. The Conflict between Shiis and Sunnis | 169 |
| 5.1 <i>Growing Antagonism</i> | 169 |
| 5.2 <i>Plural Identities and the Limits of Polarization</i> | 177 |
| 6. Land and Conflict in Manot | 186 |
| 6.1 <i>The Setting</i> | 187 |
| 6.2 <i>The Case</i> | 188 |
| 6.3 <i>Interpretation</i> | 195 |
| 6.4 <i>Identities, Rules and Power</i> | 203 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 7. <i>A Muṭhulfau</i> who Came from Outside – A Biographical Perspective | 206 |
| 8. Conclusions | 211 |
| Glossary of Local Terms | 214 |
| Acknowledgements | 215 |
| References | 216 |
| Photographs | 222 |

**"The People Who Really Belong to Gilgit" –
Theoretical and Ethnographic Perspectives on
Identity and Conflict**

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Abstract

This study deals with identities in the plural society of Gilgit, Northern Areas of Pakistan. It is argued that these identities cannot be grasped conceptually with the ethnological concepts "ethnic identity" and "ethnic groups" because these concepts carry a bulk of implicit meanings that hinder interpretation more than enabling it. Just like the people they study, ethnologists make use of "groups" to structure the social world. But these groups are more often metaphors than groups in an interactional sense so that the discourse about groups has to be supplemented by a discussion of the individuals that produce this discourse. It is suggested to understand identities as frameworks of interpretation of acting individuals. The study follows the perspectives of those who claim to be the "*muṭhulfau*", i.e., the "real" people of Gilgit. In distinguishing themselves from migrants, "people from outside", land becomes a critical issue. Beside this perspective, the antagonism between Shiis and Sunnis is analyzed. In a case study of a land conflict, both lines of dispute are tied together. There are differing understandings about who is "really" *muṭhulfau* and who is not: identities are constantly in the making.²

1. Introduction

Walking along the main bazaar street in Gilgit town listening to the casual talks of men sitting in front of their tiny shops and sipping strong, sweet tea,

¹ This research was made possible by the generous financial support from the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG) for which we are very grateful. It was part of the interdisciplinary research project (*Schwerpunktprogramm*) 'Culture Area Karakorum' (CAK) which began in 1989. The field research for this particular project was carried out from August 1991 until May 1992 and October 1992 until March 1993 in the town of Gilgit, Northern Areas of Pakistan.

² This study is in part a translation of selected chapters of my Ph.D. dissertation (Sökefeld 1997a) with some major changes: the theoretical part (chapter 3) was completely rewritten and the chapter on "land and conflict in Manot", which is not part of the dissertation, was added.

you will hear a lot of different ethnonyms, names for groups and categories of people, in these conversations. In one shop two men are talking about the last tensions between *Shiis* and *Sunnis*, the victims of which have been a *Yeškun*³ and a *Panjābī*. Next door somebody complains about the drug trafficking of *Paḥān*. On the other side of the street a boy tells a joke about *Bagrōṭī*. And a little further on you might hear two bearded old men recollecting their memories about the freedom struggle, confirming to one another that most of the soldiers that time were *Hunzawālē* and that the *Angrēz* did not recruit *Kāsmīrī* into the Gilgit Scouts Corps.

These topics are discussed in many different languages. Most frequently Shina, Urdu, Burushaski and Pashtu are spoken but many more idioms can be heard. There are also many more ethnonyms than the few that I presented as an introduction. Ethnonyms make difference and similarity – they suppose that people termed together are somehow similar to one another and simultaneously different in some respect from other people. Ethnonyms are used to identify oneself or the other. Individuals are not only individuals, they are also classified as members of named groups or categories.

Traditionally, ethnology uses precisely such ethnonyms (and the groups labelled by them) to make sense of a society in description and analysis; just as the members and actors of a society do in their own discourses. This seems to be a promising strategy, but the close observer of society (at least in Gilgit) quickly realizes that people use ethnonyms in quite another way than would be required for scientific analysis: they are juggling with them. By no means do they always predicate a constant body of meanings to a certain ethnonym, nor do they always subsume the same persons under a term. Supposing that ethnonyms make difference and similarity, it is not at all easy to conclude from the conversations of people what these differences

³ Directions for transcription and pronunciation: "š"= engl. "sh"; "ṣ"= retroflex "sh"; "z"= voiced "s"; "c"= engl. "ch"; "ç"= retroflex "ch"; "ž"= french "j"; "ḍ", "ṭ"= retroflex "d", "t"; "q"= uvular plosive (arab. "qāf"); "g"= voiced velar fricative; "x"= voiceless velar fricative; "h"= aspiration; "ā", "ē", "ī", "ō", "ū"= long vowels. Transcription follows spoken language, not Urdu orthography. Names of places and persons are transcribed conventionally. In order to ensure a certain uniformity of writing within this collection, not all terms are transcribed according to these rules. Therefore, for example, "*pardah*" is written instead of "*pardah*".

and similarities exactly are. They seem to change continuously, from situation to situation. Contradictions abound.

How to make sense of this situation? This question will guide me through the whole text. It is a two-edged question, requiring both an answer relating to society in Gilgit and an answer concerning the means of making sense as ethnologist, i.e., means of conceptualizing, interpreting, and writing. After discussing approaches to "ethnicity" and conceptualization of identity I will present and analyze differences on mainly two levels: between the people of Gilgit and people from outside; and between Shiis and Sunnis.

Fieldwork in Gilgit was undertaken for fifteen months in two periods between summer 1991 and spring 1993. My research relied methodologically mainly on the traditional instruments of ethnography: participant observation and interviewing. Because fifteen languages are spoken in the town I worked predominantly in Urdu (which had become the lingua franca of the region), supplemented by some Shina.

2. Gilgit

Gilgit is the capital of the region called today "Northern Areas of Pakistan". Its population grew very fast during this century, after a considerable decrease in the last century. The last official census in 1981 counted 30,410 inhabitants (Census Organization 1984). In 1972 it had been only 17,629 (Census Organization n.d.), and it is safe to estimate that today's population is well beyond 40,000. The population growth is not only due to a high birth-rate but also to a great number of immigrants. Gilgit is the administrative, infrastructural and economic centre of the Northern Areas. Many persons, mostly males, come to Gilgit looking for employment, trading opportunities or education. Gilgit's male population is considerably higher than its female population.⁴ Recent migrants come, among other regions, from the surrounding valleys in the mountains like Hunza and Nager, Punial, Yasin or Astor, but also from Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province and the Chinese province Sinkiang. Formerly, a great number of migrants from Kashmir settled in the town.

Gilgit is situated amidst high mountains at the Gilgit River very shortly above its confluence with the Hunza River. What is today Gilgit town

⁴ The 1981 census counted 18,127 men and 11,583 women.

developed from a cluster of small villages situated in a valley basin surrounded by steep mountain slopes. Even today some of these form quite separate settlements. Gilgit is structured into ten districts that are called *pattī*. From the east to the west they are: Jutial, Sonikot, Khomar, Gilgit Town Area (comprising Kashrot, Majini Mohalla and Ampheri), Nagrel-Barmas-Khur, Napura, Basin and Jagir Basin, all situated on the southern banks of the Gilgit River, and Konodas and Sakarkui on the northern banks of the river.⁵ Formerly, each *pattī* was administered by a *lambardār*. Among his responsibilities were the collection of taxes and the arbitration of minor conflicts. Gilgit is structured into two horizontal levels. Jutial, Barmas and Napura are situated on slopes or terraces above the basin plain, where all other parts are situated. Kashrot and Majini Mohalla are now urbanized to a large degree. Here the centre of the bazaar is situated along with most infrastructural facilities. Only a few fields are still cultivated in these districts. Some of the other "villages", as they are called, have preserved more rural features. Jutial, Sonikot and Khomar have become a kind of suburb where many people working in the centre live, but in the other villages agriculture is still prominent.

As precipitation is insufficient, agriculture generally depends on irrigation. Water has to be taken from side-valleys (called "*nālē*" in Urdu and "*gah*" in Shina) because topography and irregular water level prevent direct irrigation from the Gilgit River.⁶ Jutial/Khomar, Basin and Napura possess their own *nālē* (called Jutialgah, Barmasgah and Shukugah respectively). The settlements situated in the plain are irrigated with water taken by two long canals from Kargah.

Ancient sources tell that Gilgit once belonged to the Buddhist kingdom of Bolor. Both Chinese and Tibetan influences reached the place. Local mythic-historical traditions always start with the story of the man-eating demon king Shiri Badat who was killed by a foreign hero called Azur Jamshed. Azur Jamshed is considered the founder of the Trakhanē, the local dynasty whose descendants, now devoid of political power, still live today in Gilgit. One of the most important members of this dynasty was the Queen Dadi Joari who ordered the two canals to be dug from Kargah, that until

⁵ Jagir Basin and Sakarkui are for administrative purposes not part of the municipal area.

⁶ Only Sakarkui on the northern banks is irrigated directly with river water.

today irrigate the plain in the valley. She enabled a considerable extension of Gilgit's arable area. Since the end of the eighteenth century the kings of Gilgit were weak and the place was liable to many attacks. Gilgit was conquered by kings from Yasin, Raja Suleman Shah and Raja Gohar Aman. Further, in the first half of the last century, the rulers of Kashmir (first the Sikhs and, after 1846, the Dogras of Jammu) developed a keen interest in the place. Struggling to extend their influence in the mountains between Chitral and Ladakh in order to control the trans-mountain trade routes, they tried to win Gilgit from Gohar Aman. A sequence of conquests and reconquests ensued that resulted in heavy losses of local people. Since about 1870 the British also became more interested in the area that was turned into a border zone between Russian and British realms of interest. They established a political agency in Gilgit. Only the British intervention resulted in the final "pacification" of the area.⁷ Gilgit became the locus of dual control: it hosted the British administration of the Gilgit Agency, but the town and *tahsil* (district) of Gilgit remained under Kashmiri administration. Only in 1935 the British also took over the administration of Gilgit town and *tahsil*. When the subcontinent became independent in 1947, the control of the Gilgit Agency was given to Kashmir, which remained for some months a third political entity on the subcontinent beside Pakistan and India because the *maharaja* of Kashmir did not decide for accession to either of these states. When the *maharaja* finally declared accession to India in the end of October 1947, local troops in Gilgit revolted with the assistance of the population and declared accession to Pakistan. Since that time the Gilgit Agency (later called: the Northern Areas) has been administered by Pakistan, but due to the unresolved Kashmir conflict with India it is not formally included into the state and its territory.

Many texts about the town and the region portray it as at least formerly having been isolated, remote and nearly unaccessible, an isolation that was finally broken only by the construction of the Karakorum Highway, the metalled road which connects the plains of Pakistan with Sinkiang across the Khunjerab Pass.⁸ Thus, especially German cultural scientists who worked in the region regarded the Northern Areas as a kind of Noah's Ark where old (particularly pre-Islamic) cultural traits and traditions could sur-

⁷ For the analysis of the rationale of Kashmiri and British intervention in this area cf. Stellrecht (this volume).

⁸ For an example of writing on this cf. Frembgen 1989: 172.

vive, comparatively little disturbed and distorted by outside influence.⁹ Of course, the mountain chains of the Himalaya, Karakorum and Hindukush did and do seriously constrain and impede movement in the region, but they never prevented people from moving. The very diversity of the region's population proves this. In order to counter this preconception of isolation due to the area's physical condition I will show that this does not hold true for Gilgit by describing, in short, the routes connecting the town with the neighbouring regions and the "outside world".

The valley basin of Gilgit town is a strategically important place, accessible from four directions. One route leads westward to the valleys of Puniyal, Ishkoman, Ghizer and Yasin, with passes connecting the region further with Chitral, Badakhshan and also, less importantly, Swat. That route became decisive for the town's political fate during the first half of the 19th century because it enabled attack and conquest from the Yasin Rajas Suleman Shah and Gohar Aman. The next route comes from the north, along the banks of the Hunza River. Beside Nager and Hunza, eastern Turkistan (today's Sinkiang) and, formerly, through a side-valley of Nager, Shigar and Baltistan could be approached. Another way runs to the south-west and connects Gilgit through the Kargah Valley with Darel, Tangir and Kohistan. The last route follows the Gilgit River downstream towards the Indus, leading to Chilas and Astor in the south and Baltistan in the east. The route through Astor from Kashmir became most important in the second part of the last century, for it enabled access of both Kashmiri and British forces to Gilgit. Today, of course, the Karakorum Highway which runs along the Gilgit and Indus Rivers, passing Chilas and Kohistan and leading into the plains of Pakistan via Hazara, provides the most important connection.¹⁰

These routes – and many minor mountain paths – connected Gilgit with its surrounding regions, enabling attack, conquest, migration and, to a varying degree, trade. They were an important precondition for the development of

⁹ For an example cf. Jettmar 1958.

¹⁰ The consideration of the routes enabling access to Gilgit shows that sometimes political changes result in much more important impediments of movement than physical conditions. Thus as a consequence of the Chinese revolution the passes toward Kashgar and Yarkand were closed in 1950 (trade was resumed only in 1969, Kreutzman 1987: 45), and due to the Kashmir conflict the way via Astor to Kashmir has been completely blocked since the first war between India and Pakistan in 1947/48.

the town's population diversity. Gilgit can hardly be considered a melting-pot.¹¹ Differences change, they can be stressed or declared unimportant. But they do not generally vanish.

3. Theoretical Perspectives on Identity

3.1 Dimensions of Difference

People in Gilgit differ from one another in various respects. Of course, there are differences of age, gender, wealth, degree of education and the like, but in the course of my field research in Gilgit I mainly investigated about the differences that are regarded in ethnological literature as somehow "ethnic" differences. I could identify five dimensions of such differences: language, locality (regional or local origin), religion, *qōm* (quasi-kinship) and genealogical descent. People in Gilgit use these dimensions of difference to give order to their social environment. They sort people into categories or groups formed by these dimensions. I wanted to do the same. My task was to do research on ethnicity. Supposing that the dimensions of difference defined "ethnic" groups in Gilgit (and that "ethnic" groups are somehow the units of ethnicity), I wanted to identify these groups or categories and to investigate the relations between them. But quickly I was forced to realize that the search for "ethnic" groups did not at all simplify my efforts to make sense of the complexity of Gilgit's society. Somehow *all* dimensions of difference created numerous categories intersecting one another. Following this way I would have had to deal with almost innumerable "ethnic" groups as, for example, every category could be labelled with an ethnonym.

In order to show the complexity of difference in Gilgit I provide a table (Table 1) of identifications that are used to categorize people along the five dimensions of difference. To prevent mistaken conclusions I have to emphasize that this table gives an introductory order which is only a heuristic instrument. It intends to provide a starting point for the discussion of

¹¹ During the 1960s it became obvious in the United States that the idea of the melting-pot was just the fiction of an ideology of modernization that presumed that all "irrational" differences between human beings will lose importance at the expense of an increasing realizations of rational interests. It had been hoped that people would give up identifying with "ethnic groups" and organize themselves into economic classes instead (Glazer & Moynihan 1975).

Table 1: Dimensions of Differences in Gilgit

| Religion: | Locality: | Language: | Qōm: | Descent groups: |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| Shia Sunni Ismailia | Gilgitwālē ¹² | Shina | Şin | Babusē |
| | Hunzawālē | Burushaski | Yeşkun | Çağrē |
| | Nagerwālē | Khowar | Rōnō | Kaçetē |
| | Gujālī | Balti | Kamin | Pharphusē |
| | Punialī | Wakhi | Ḍōm | Qasimbikē |
| | Bagrōñ | Gujri | Sayyid | etc. |
| | Yasīñ | Domaki | Kaşmīrī | |
| | Gupiswālē | Turki | Ṭhathōñ | |
| | Balfi | Khili | Qizilbaş | |
| | Astōrī | Hindko | Barbarī | |
| | Chilāsī | Pashtu | Mōgul | |
| | Darelwālē | Farsi | Buruşō | |
| | Kolōce | Kashmiri | Gujur | |
| | Khilōce | Punjabi | Waxī | |
| | Hazārawālē | Urdu | Paṭhāñ | |
| | Paṭhāñ | | Hazārawālē | |
| Kaşgārī | | Panjābī | | |
| Panjābī | | | | |

(Note: There is no correlation between the columns of the table.)

the complexity of identities in Gilgit. It must not at all be taken as a kind of map of social reality, showing all relevant groups or categories. The table is an analytical construction, and later I will proceed to challenge seriously and eventually repudiate such constructions.

Only two columns of the table, religion ("sects" of Islam) and language (mother tongues), are complete, they list all differences of these dimensions relevant in Gilgit. All other columns could be extended considerably. They list only the most important differences of the respective dimensions in Gilgit. Locality, for example, can relate to anything between a hamlet or

¹² -wālā (plural: -wālē) is a suffix in Urdu that is frequently a part of ethnonyms. It designates, among other things, basic qualities of persons, e.g., the place to which they belong. A Gilgitwālā, then, is somebody from Gilgit. A shinabōlnewālā is a Shina speaker (bōlnā = to speak).

neighbourhood and the entire country, and could thus be differentiated to a greater extent. Here, I mention only the intermediate level of relevant regions that are used, for instance, to label migrants in Gilgit. People identify themselves of course not only with reference to such regions but also referring to much smaller units of locality.

Qōm is a very ill-defined and polyvalent dimension of difference. It can refer to groupings like the (political) nation, the community of all Muslims or more kinship-oriented groups, with many levels in-between. But the most common meaning in Gilgit refers to groups that have been called "tribes" or "castes" in the older ethnographic literature about the area. If somebody in Gilgit is asked to tell his *qōm*, he is most likely to answer something like "Şin" or "Paṭhāñ" and not "Muslim" or "Pakistani" (although such answers are sometimes given, too). In the first place, *qōm* can be explained as quasi-kinship groups, for at this level the term includes the meaning that all members of a *qōm* are somehow related (in the sense of kinship) among themselves. This does not necessarily comprise the notion of common genealogical descent. Some *qōm*¹³ can be subdivided, e.g., there is a whole series of *qōm* that are all grouped together as Kaşmīrī.

Descent groups are clans the members of which postulate common genealogical descent. Sometimes these clans are segmentarily subdivided into lineages. Often, several clans belong to a single *qōm*. But this is not a necessary condition. There are some cases where members of the *same* clan belong instead to different *qōm* (Sökefeld 1994). There is a great number of descent groups in Gilgit. In my list I mention only a few examples that all belong to the *qōm* Yeşkun.

This table is neither complete nor "objective". It is centered on Gilgit in the sense that it does not give equal importance to all possible differentiations. It mentions just those differences of "general" importance in Gilgit. Thus, the *qōm* of migrant groups, like the *rom* of Hunzawālē or the *xel* of Paṭhāñ are omitted because they are relevant only for these groups exclusively. The subject that knows and uses the identifications given in the table is a hypothetical subject: not everybody knows all these identifications and not everybody knows only them.

¹³ The word *qōm* has been taken over from Arabic. Its grammatically correct plural form "*aqwām*" is used only rarely in Gilgit's everyday discourse. Following the common language usage in Gilgit, I use the form "*qōm*" for both numeri.

3.2 A Critique of Ethnicity

I call a society thus characterized by abundant differences a *plural society*. It has to be realized that plurality in Gilgit is different from the classical examples of plural societies described by Furnivall (1956) or in Kuper and Smith (1969), where a majority coexists with one or more minorities (all of which could be conceptualized as "ethnic" groups). In Gilgit it is by no means easy to identify a majority. Plurality here has to be imagined like a quite detailed mosaic, and a multi-dimensional mosaic as well. There are different sets of relevant differences which engender non-congruent groups or categories of individuals. Within one level that is defined by one dimension or set of differences, categories are mutually exclusive. An individual cannot be simultaneously Shii and Sunni.¹⁴ But categories of different levels lack this exclusivity as somebody can of course be at the same time Sunni and Yeškun. Compared to the more simple traditional examples of plurality we could speak of "multi-plurality" in Gilgit.

All the differences given in the table (and many more) are relevant for people in Gilgit. The problem in conceptualizing and ordering this plurality is that the different dimensions of difference are intersecting one another. People that are grouped together by one difference of one dimension are divided by another difference of another dimension (and the other way round). It is not possible to build all dimensions and differences simultaneously into a coherent, non-contradictory order. As I will emphasize later, these different levels or dimensions of difference cannot be inserted into a unifying model that would regard certain dimensions as superordinate and others as subordinate.

How to make sense of this plurality? And at what dimension(s) of difference do we find "ethnic" groups? Are there "ethnic" groups at all? Or do all levels of difference form "ethnic" groups?

¹⁴ This attribution of mutual exclusivity to the categories of each level is already a simplification. Religious groups are clearly mutually exclusive, but other dimensions lack that clarity. They are much more subject to interpretation. Thus, a man who migrated from Hunza to Gilgit can relate himself in downcountry Pakistan very well to both places. Also, the differences by *qōm* are not always totally clear. For example, membership in the *qōm* Şin and Yeškun can be changed between the generations (it could be at last) and in the course of such change ascriptions whether a man is a Şin or a Yeškun are not always consistent (Sökefeld 1994).

Since the late 1960s ethnicity was the ethnological paradigm to analyze plurality. This approach marked a paradigmatic shift in anthropological objective and perspective. Before, the "tribe", conceptualized as a bounded and ideally autonomous social unit, was the object of the science. But slowly awareness grew that boundaries and autonomy are constructs and reifications at least partly produced by theoretical orientations (for example functionalism) or just for sake of the convenience of research and analysis. It was realized that "tribes" normally live in a common context with other tribes and that it is often not possible to draw boundaries between them "objectively", for example with reference to cultural differences. Simultaneously, anthropology entered new fields. It moved from "simple" or "primitive" societies, conceived as homeostatic and conflict-free, into "complex" ones, and, sometimes, from rural areas into cities. This shift did not necessarily presuppose a spatial move, it was sufficient to change perspective and interests of research. For example, the colonial context of previously methodologically individualized "tribes" could be taken into consideration. Thus it was realized that societies generally are complex. Evolutionistic concepts that presupposed a development from the simple to the complex had largely to be abandoned. Such a concept was "tribe" itself.¹⁵ The tribe had clearly been the ethnological other. It carried pejorative connotations: tribes are primitive, pre-modern, exotic; in short, completely different from the social and cultural world of the anthropologist.

"Tribe" was replaced by "ethnic group". This was not only a shift in labeling but an expression of the change in perspective mentioned above. Contrary to tribes, "ethnic" groups exist in a common social field with other groups. Unlike tribes, "ethnic" groups are not only found in non-Western countries, they can be discovered even in the home society of the anthropologist. Further, they are not necessarily demarcated by "objective" cultural differences but by "subjective" perception and construction, that is, by the "ethnicity" or "ethnic identity" of their members. The anthropologist's attention shifted toward the construction of such boundaries and identities, that is, also from the singular group to the relations between groups. However, if "ethnic" groups do not exist in isolation but in constant exchange

¹⁵ Sahlins wrote about a "tribal level, as distinguished from less-developed *bands* and more advanced *chiefdoms*" (1961: 323, original italics).

with other "ethnic" groups, why do they not just merge and assimilate? How can cultural differences persist? In his most famous introduction to "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries", Fredrik Barth (1969) reversed the relation between cultural difference and social organization in "ethnic" groups: boundaries between groups do not exist because of cultural difference, but cultural difference is rather the outcome of the maintenance of social boundaries between groups. To put it simply: people *are* different because they *make* differences. This includes: differences and identities can be manipulated. They can be stressed or neglected. Symbols can be used as markers of difference and they can be interpreted in various ways. Differences are related to situations, to contexts of action and discourse.

The attention to identities, to "subjective" and manipulative aspects of ethnicity created new conceptual problems. Actors subscribe to whole series of identities. Which of these is the "ethnic" identity? Which of the groups defined by such identities are "ethnic groups"? How can "ethnic" and "ethnic groups" be defined? The answers to these questions are not easily to be found. It seems that the longer these questions are discussed, the less convincing suggested answers are.

The two alternative approaches to these questions are well known. Primordialism suggests that there is something like an "ethnic substance" or fundament provided by the "assumed 'givens'" (Geertz 1963: 109), the primordial attachments of the person, that is, by the fact of being born into certain cultural conditions and therefore belonging to a community with a certain language, religion, social organization, etc. In short, ethnicity is defined by common origin.¹⁶ Taking a more moderate stance we could say that although an individual can manipulate identity, his ability to manipulate is constrained and limited by the "primordial givens" of his existence.

¹⁶ Discussions of different approaches to ethnicity regularly ascribe the primordialist position to Geertz (1963). A great deal of situationalist's criticism against what is believed to be Geertz' position is quite misplaced because in his text Geertz does not relate the discussion of primordial attachments to the definition of "ethnic groups". He discusses them as reasons for the lack of integration in post-colonial states (a problem that was subsequently discussed under the title "ethnicity"). Further, Geertz does not at all represent these attachments as simple "facts". He explicitly qualifies them as "assumed", that is, as constructs of a society's members.

Situationalists question precisely the existence of such primordial attachments and essential conditions. What is primordial and what is not, is a question of interpretation. Identities, including those conceptualized as primordial by primordialists, are not fixed but can be changed. A Hindu can become a Muslim, and a Paṭhān can become a Baluch (Barth 1981). What is considered "given" is again a matter of context and situation. But being ultimately context-dependent, without any fixable basis, "ethnic" identity becomes totally evasive. This evasiveness is the result of a confusion of perspective: identity is evasive for the observer who desperately tries to fix it generally, not for the person that assumes and uses an identity in a specific context.

One can try to reconcile primordial and situationalist approaches to ethnicity by conceptualizing primordial attachment as the *code* and not as the *substance* of ethnicity. Thus Brown states:

"The ethnic group is perceived by its members as a pseudo-kinship group, which promises to provide the all-embracing emotional security offered by the family to the child, which offers practical support, in the form of nepotism, such as the family gives to its members when they interact with others and which, precisely because it is based on the ubiquitous family and kinship ties, is widely and easily available for utilisation in politics."

(Brown 1989: 6f.)

However, this definition does not solve the question of a precise meaning of "ethnic group". It does not attribute a specific referent to the term. Metaphors of kinship and family are used for very diverse kinds of groups and diverse discourses of identity. Priests address their "brothers and sisters in faith" and homosexuals speak about their lesbian "sisters" or gay "brothers" in order to express and stress community and common interest as indicated by Brown. But do lesbians or members of a religious community form an "ethnic" group? At least calling homosexuals an "ethnic group" contradicts our intuitive understanding of "ethnic". Further, strict situationalists have realized this problem and looked for a criterion to distinguish "ethnic" groups from other kinds of interest groups. Mostly, they try to solve this difficulty by reintroducing a (sometimes disguised) reference to origin or descent (not only, as Brown did, as a code for ethnicity, but as its substance). Thus Elwert, although arguing strongly against any "essentialism that conceptualizes ethnicity in terms of descent" (1989: 33), regards the

element of inheritance crucial for distinguishing between "ethnic" groups and other kinds of interest groups. "ethnic" groups include whole families and not only individuals, ethnicity is inherited, that is, it is received ascriptively, by origin and/or descent. The contradiction can hardly be solved.¹⁷

Another problem should be taken into account. Brass asks why we should distinguish at all between processes of identity that refer to symbols of primordiality ("descent", "origin") from processes of identity that are similar in every respect except that they do not make use of such symbols? (Brass 1979: 67f.).¹⁸

Others try to escape from the problem by virtually desisting from ascribing any specific meaning to "ethnic" or "ethnic group", by labelling a whole series of identities "ethnicity". In this way Jenkins defines ethnicity as a series of nesting dichotomies of inclusivity and exclusivity, trying to account for the fact that every individual is a member of not only one "ethnic" group but of an entire hierarchy of groups, formed by different criteria. Which of these groups is activated socially depends on context and situation (Jenkins 1986). Taking the example of Afghanistan, Orywal (1986, 1988) fills this model with specific content. He tells that the individual can belong consecutively to the following levels of group formation: family – regional group – religious group – language group – nation. This order is conceptualized in the form of a taxonomy where each (higher) level includes all the units of the preceding levels. The model explicitly wants to take into account the subjective aspects of identity, that is, the self-identifications of actors. Actors use many different identifications, as many studies have shown. But the content of the model jibs at its form. It is arbitrary in that it places the nation above religion. According to Islamic understanding, religion (that is, in the case of Afghanistan, Islam, the *ummah*, the community of all Muslims) should be placed above the mere temporal state. Orywal arrives at his model by deliberately limiting his approach to the order *within* a state. Thus, contrary to all emphasis of the "subjective", the

¹⁷ Further, as we know from processes of identity change, "ethnic" identity is not always inherited. Sometimes an individual can assume a new identity, different from his or her parents' identity.

¹⁸ Brass discusses the formation of identity among Indian Muslims in colonial times. Their identity resembled "ethnic" identity in every respect (they finally even formed a state conceived of as "nation state") except that they did not refer symbolically to something like common descent.

actor's point of view, the model is ultimately constructed according to the perspective of the ethnologist. This confusion and unacknowledged mixing of "native's" and spectator's perspectives lies at the core of the problems of ethnology's approaches to ethnicity.

Orywal defines "ethnic" groups as endogamous groups which take the crucial constituents of their self-understanding from traditions selected from the past. And he adds that it is impossible to give a specific meaning of "ethnic" because the formation of "ethnic" identity depends on the situational context (1986: 74). Anyway, he calls all levels of his model "ethnic levels".¹⁹

It is strange that Orywal (and many others) do not arrive at a very simple conclusion: What is the sense of using a concept without specific meaning? If "ethnic" has no specific meaning, why should we (and on the basis of which criteria could we) call something "ethnic"? It seems only a logical conclusion to exclude the word "ethnic" from ethnological discourse (Sökefeld in press b).

"Ethnic" and "ethnic group" share a conceptual difficulty with many other terms of anthropology. They are designed to make the different similar, that is, comparable. Since its inception, anthropology was regarded essentially as a comparative science. It became science only through comparison.²⁰ Comparison was for anthropology what the experiment was for the natural sciences. This is not the place to analyze and to criticize the conception of science behind this view of anthropology. What we have to understand is the role scientific terms play for comparison in anthropology. Concepts form the fundament of comparison. If two phenomena are called "ethnic groups", they are made comparable by the sheer act of designation. A fundamental comparability is supposed and more detailed similarities or differences can

¹⁹ Another contradiction in his approach is evident in the identification of endogamy as a crucial characteristic of "ethnic" groups and to call at the same time all levels of his model "ethnic levels". Family and lineage are of course not necessarily endogamous. About the other levels (language, region, religion) we, too, have to ask in which sense they are supposed to be endogamous: descriptively or prescriptively? By statistical preponderance? We have to be well aware of the fact that definitions are mostly simplifications.

²⁰ Cf. Radcliffe-Brown's famous sentence: "Without systematic comparative studies anthropology will become *only* historiography and ethnography" (1951: 16, italics M.S.).

be found out on the basis of this comparability. The same procedure is executed with the whole lexicon of anthropological concepts. We identify different phenomena in different societies as "religion", as "economy", as "kinship", "marriage", "tabu", "totemism", and so on. Concepts are the surgical knives of anthropology to cut out units of analysis. But can we take for granted that two things are the same (or at least alike) just because they have been cut out with the same knife?

With what justification do we call different things in different societies by the same name? Very often, an anthropological term (mostly a word of a specific natural language) is defined with reference to a specific ethnographic setting (which the language is a part of). The meaning of the term is related to a specific instance or model. Then the term is extracted from its setting and applied to phenomena of other settings that somehow seem similar. Most probably, the term has to be redefined, because the second phenomenon is not the same and has thus some features that are not warranted by or contradict with the original definition. This process of redefinition has to be (or at least should be) reiterated any time the term is used for another phenomenon. Each time the term is applied and defined anew, its meaning is removed farther from the original meaning. Most probably, "removed" means that its significance becomes less and less specific as the term has to accommodate more and more different phenomena. To apply a concept to a phenomenon is not just an act of designation; it is essentially an act of interpretation. Something is interpreted as being an "ethnic group". The act of interpretation does not leave the meaning of the term unchanged. Of course, this procedure is not only carried out consecutively but also simultaneously. Everybody who is working on "ethnic groups" takes "his" or "her" groups as examples and models for the definition of the term. Definitions furnished from different models will of course contradict one another. Therefore, it is difficult if not impossible to arrive at an understanding of ethnicity that is shared by more or less all anthropologists concerned with the subject.

The result of this anthropological "language game" is that the phenomena categorized collectively by the application of a certain term do not share a common essence (a specific difference, as required in Aristotelian logic), but only what Wittgenstein (1982: 57) has termed "family resemblance". There are clusters of characteristics that can be attributed to the term and the class it covers, but there are no attributes that have to be shared necessarily

by all instances of it. It follows that these terms cannot be defined in the classical way by genus proximum and specific difference. Needham (1975), who was the first to identify this problem in anthropology, demanded that such terms be excluded as far as possible from anthropological discourse, but he also saw that his demand was more or less impracticable.

In the structure of its terms anthropology resembles much more a natural language than a "science". A way out of the definitional problem is to treat it explicitly as such. The categories of natural language are not at all Aristotelian categories. They are circumscribed by family resemblances or, as Rosh and Mervis (1975) have shown, by reference to prototypes, allowing for greater or lesser similarity of the instances and the prototype. Saler (1993) applies this approach convincingly to the endless debate of defining religion. He says that religions like Christianity and Judaism are the most typical instances of religions because they are the religions related most intimately to the cultural field where the term "religion" developed and acquired meaning, and because they are mostly those instances with which anthropologists (still most frequently growing up in a Western cultural environment) acquire familiarity first. In both senses Christianity and/or Judaism are the most typical cases of "religion". In this prototypical approach, ethnology can proceed then with specifying the similarities and differences between these typical cases and other phenomena which have been termed "religions". The approach acknowledges and makes explicit the implicit ethnocentrism of ethnological understanding and interpretation and thus tries to avoid distortions resulting from unacknowledged cultural bias. Of course, the prototypical approach does not yield a definition in the traditional sense of being finite and delimiting the meaning and use of a term. Saler cannot (and does not want to) say where religion ends and non-religion begins. Natural language categories do not have necessarily strict boundaries.

Unfortunately, this approach is not easily applicable to the problem of specifying the meaning of "ethnic" or "ethnic group". Differing from the case of religion, there is no clear prototype around which the term has been built. The relation between natural language and scientific term seems rather inverted here: "ethnic group" it is a term coined in scientific discourse that subsequently has been introduced into everyday (and especially political) discourse.

The term "ethnic group" is, like most other concepts of anthropology, subject to what Anthony Giddens calls the "double hermeneutics" of social sciences. The concepts of social sciences are not purely scientific concepts in that they are often taken from everyday discourse (as in the case of "religion") and/or find their way from scientific language into everyday discourse (as in the case of "ethnic group"). Scientific discourse does not in the final instance determine the meaning(s) of these concepts as:

"[they relate] both to entering and grasping the frames of meaning involved in the production of social life by lay actors, and reconstituting these within the new frames of meaning involved in technical conceptual schemes ... The concepts and theories produced in the natural sciences regularly filter into lay discourse and become appropriated as elements of everyday frames of reference. But this is of no relevance, of course, to the world of nature itself: whereas the appropriation of technical concepts and theories invented by social scientists can turn them into constituting elements of that very 'subject-matter' they were coined to characterize and by that token *alter* the context of their application."

(Giddens 1976: 79, original italics)

"Ethnic group" is not a natural and universal category, as Fardon maintains: "People whom anthropologists study do not necessarily distinguish a category of differences akin to our ethnic differences. When we attribute 'ethnic ideas' to subjects we do more than simply translate, we also attribute a technique of social distinction ..." (1987: 176). But many of the people anthropology studies, we might add, have eagerly taken over the concept for their own purposes, a carefree takeover that of course engendered its own simplifications and sometimes even caricatures.

"Ethnic" has indeed entered political and everyday discourse in a considerable part of the world. "Ethnic conflicts" abound in the present world's scene, even sub-categories like "ethnic movements", "ethnocide" or "ethnic cleansing" have been constructed. But the "ethnic" is not only flourishing in political contexts: "ethnic" music has become very popular and "ethnic" fashion becomes more and more fashionable. You can even buy t-shirts with imaginative designs and the imprint "I am ethnic". In the realms of music, art and fashion the meaning of "ethnic" is quite obvious: it invokes the exotic, strange, different, primitive, as it is imagined by post-modern Western minds. The "ethnic" is imagined mostly as the undifferentiated other, for

otherwise one could speak, for instance, of African and Asian music, or more specifically of Nigerian and Zairian music; there would be no need for a general term that lumps all differences together. "Ethnic" is the other the over-bureaucratized and over-standardized individualistic Western self is sometimes longing for in its desire to experience something "real" and "authentic" in her or his virtual world. But of course, this other has already been colonized by the virtual. It has become a big business: holiday courses for "ethnic" drumming and dancing at African beaches or shamanistic rituals in Alaska are offered for all yearning souls.

In the realm of politics "ethnic" has entered the language of both observers and politicians. In the observer's language the "ethnic" again refers to something ultimately emotional and irrational. "Ethnic" conflicts are not totally explainable by rational analysis, that is, by reference to economic interest, for example. Thus the "ethnic" labels a residual category in politics, something not found in modern, enlightened societies. Again, "ethnic" is the other. Contrary to ethnologists, "ethnic" politicians, for example in the former Yugoslavia, have a very specific understanding of what "ethnic" means and what an "ethnic" group (or nation) is or should be. It shares a unique language different from others, even if this uniqueness and difference has to be invented as in the case of Serbian and Croatian; it shares a distinct culture, religion, a common territory – even if this territory has to be created by war and "ethnic cleansing" – and commands the ultimate loyalties of its members. If we were to find a prototype for "ethnic group" in order to define the concept prototypically according to Rosch's approach, we probably would have to resort to a hypothetical prototype as, for example, "the Serbs" as envisioned by Serb nationalists: a totally bounded group, distinct and different in every respect from its neighbours.

Considering the meanings of "ethnic" in political and everyday discourse we have to realize that in these meanings the shade of the tribe looks around the corner again. Tribes, like the "ethnic", were pre-modern, primitive, and culturally bounded, and Radovan Karadžić would be delighted if the map of the Balkan once resembled Malinowski's conception of the discreteness of tribes.²¹ In short, the term "ethnic" has been appropriated from ethnological

²¹ Malinowski wrote: "Were we to take the map of any continent, Australia, Africa, Asia or America, we would be able to divide it neatly into ethnographic tribal boundaries. Within each such ethnographic area we would find people of 'the

discourse into everyday language – only that all the subtleties and uncertainties of the anthropological discussion of the term that make its meaning so unspecific have been left for the anthropologists. Everyday discourse does not care for such subtleties.

Furthermore, anthropological conceptions have preserved aspects of earlier understandings and constructions of the tribe. In the form itself, Orywal's graphic model resembles models of the segmentary tribe. His arbitrary limiting of analysis to the scene within a state is not far from the earlier limiting of studies to the scope of one tribe, disregarding the ambiguity and malleability of tribal boundaries. Especially in the case of Afghanistan there are good reasons for not undertaking such a limitation, keeping in mind the transnational character of groups like Pathān, Tājik or Uzbek. Probably, "ethnic group" continues to be prominent in anthropological discourse in spite of its unclear meaning because it carries implicit meanings derived from the traditional understanding of "tribe"; implicit meanings that enable anthropologists to take an understanding for granted, to guard the fiction that they are talking about the same thing, and, very often, to do without an explicit definition of the term.²²

Anthropological discourse about ethnicity has not always been as subtle as it should have been. Jenkins (1986) has criticized Barth's approach for its emphasis on "ethnic" boundaries; an emphasis that reifies ethnicity and "ethnic" groups contrary to Barth's own intention. And Handler generally reproaches anthropologists for subscribing (sometimes in a mistakenly understood move to support "their people" in situations of suppression and cultural domination) to quite the same implicit theories of difference as do "ethnic" activists:

same' tribe. On the other side of the boundary another tribe would be found, distinguishable from the first by a different language, different technologies and material objects, different customs and forms of grouping" (1947: 252f.). The inverted commas in the quotation show that Malinowski himself was probably not completely convinced by his conceptualization. We have to note that Malinowski omitted Europe in his enumeration of continents, an unnecessary precaution as the case of Yugoslavia shows. The omission again points to the construction of the tribe as the non-European other of anthropology.

²² Comparing definitions of "ethnicity", Isajiw (1974) finds that 52 out of 65 studies that make use of the term simply do *not* define it.

"Nationalism and ethnicity are social phenomena constituted not merely by cultural differences *but by a Western theory of cultural difference*. Moreover, the culture theory of nationalist ideologues and "ethnic" leaders neatly matches that of mainstream anthropology, which envisions (and authoritatively depicts) a world of discrete, neatly bounded cultures. Given such a deep-seated agreement between scientist and native, outsider and insider, observer and object, students of nationalism and ethnicity must take special care to ensure that their respect for their subject's world does not degenerate into a romantic desire to preserve inviolate the other's subjectivity. In other words nationalism and ethnicity challenge us as ethnographers to distance ourselves from a culture theory, grounded in Western common sense, that we share with the subjects of our studies."

(Handler 1985: 171, original italics)

Coronil interprets the boundedness of cultural units as the result of a process of fetishization analogue to the fetishization of commodities in the capitalist market (1996: 77). We could say that social or cultural phenomena become bounded units (tribes, groups, cultures) by being appropriated into the trade of anthropologists. And, once fetishized and bounded, these units easily can be appropriated into the political marketplace. Thus anthropology runs the danger of being used by nationalists and ethnicists for their destructive ends, for example by providing legitimating theories of ethnicity and cultural difference. This is not only a hypothetical danger as the history of "Völkerkunde" in Germany during the Nazi time has shown.²³ And like "tribe", "ethnic group" as an analytical concept is a concept that reifies the social world. It "freezes" the dynamics of social life.

As a consequence of this discussion, I want to suggest removing the terms "ethnic" and "ethnic group" from analytical anthropological discourse. At least I will not make use of them in the present study.²⁴ Of course, we have

²³ For an analysis of how conceptions of cultural difference are reified and appropriated by the political right in contemporary Europe cf. Stolcke 1995.

²⁴ Levine (1985: 15f.) argues that the ambiguity of a concept is not sufficient to demand the concept's exclusion from social scientific discourse, as language (and social scientific language, too) is generally ambiguous and terminological alternatives will hardly be less subject to diverse and contradictory interpretations. Moreover, since the term's exoticism is ethically questionable, I think it worthwhile to look for alternatives and to try whether we can do without using it.

to continue to discuss these concepts and to explore their meanings, but as concepts of the discourses we analyze and interpret, that is, as native's terms, not as analytical and interpretive concepts. "Ethnic" has become an "emic" concept, because it is used by actors to construct and to interpret their world and to account for their actions, and as such an "emic", cultural concept it has to be the object of ethnology. But it does not help to make sense of our informants' discourses: *we have to make sense of it.*

As a terminological alternative I suggest to speak simply about identity and identifications, as all understandings of "ethnic group" agree that "ethnic" refers to a kind of identity. By "identity" I simply mean a sense of belonging to a group or category that is distinguished (by insiders and/or outsiders) from others with reference to a difference; no matter whether this difference relates to descent, religion, locality, or something else, and no matter whether this difference is encoded and represented as being "primordial" and ascriptive or not. "Ethnic groups" are simply identity groups then. We cannot suppose to know to what differences, symbols or representations an identity refers just because we call it "ethnic" and assume a more or less implicit understanding of "ethnic". We have to specify to what the identity in question refers. Instead of "ethnicity" we can speak of "processes of identity" as "ethnicity" mostly is understood as process of negotiating, constructing and manipulating "'ethnic" identities".

The merit of this terminology is not that it would clarify the character of everything that has been conventionally termed "ethnic". The advance is precisely that it is extremely unspecific and that it therefore prevents implicit understandings associated with "ethnic group" which might lead *a priori* to reifying representations and interpretations of identities. We cannot take anything for granted. The explicit terminological indeterminacy coerces us to bracket as far as possible our presuppositions. Further, it breaks with an essentialism implicit in many definitions and discussions of "ethnicity" and "ethnic group". It is already supposed what kinds of groups are "ethnic" groups, and thus definitions of the term have to be stretched to the extent of accommodating all these groups. Consequently, before an explicit definition of the term is given, it is supposed that *there are really* "ethnic groups", the essence or substance of which has to be captured by a definition. But this essence does not simply *exist*, it is constructed and attributed.

3.3 Conceptualizing Diversity

How to conceptualize diversity then? How to understand and write about the multiplicity of identities in Gilgit? My critique has identified some problems and dangers that have to be kept in mind. We have to be careful not to confuse actor's and observer's perspectives and not to reify dynamic social processes. Or, as writing texts inevitably results in fixing something, we have to keep in mind what we are doing in practicing ethnography and producing texts. We have to objectify objectification, as Bourdieu (1987: 32) demands. Let me start by criticizing the table of dimensions of identifications I have given above (Table 1). We could proceed with this table by trying to construct an integrated model of all dimensions, a hierarchy of identifications as Orywal did for Afghanistan. We would have to specify then, which identifications are subordinate and superordinate to which others. But this specification is impossible in the case of Gilgit (and I suppose that it is impossible also for Afghanistan). Neither is, for example, religion subordinate to region nor the other way round. Within each region we find people belonging to different Islamic "sects", and each religious community includes people from different regions.²⁵ We have to go a step further and to understand that even the construction of the table is problematical. Neither the dimensions of difference nor the differences themselves are my construct. They are used (e.g., in the form of ethnonyms) by actors in Gilgit and they are extracted from their discourses. But my construction is the systematization, the fixed assignment of differences to dimensions, that is, the production of a model. The model attributes a fixed meaning to each difference by assigning it to a dimension. But in discourses of identity in Gilgit the meaning of differences and ethnonyms is not always fixed. Very often their meaning is quite ambiguous. They are polyvalent not only in the sense that ethnonyms are used differently, according to a situation – including the possibility that different groups of people are categorized collectively by an ethnonym in different situations – but also in the sense that an ethnonym can be classed into more than one dimension, depending on the context. For example, the term "Kolōco" identifies by assigning origin from the eastern

²⁵ We could establish a hierarchy only by limiting our analysis to a certain realm: to a region (that would then include people from several religious groups) or to a religious community (comprising people from various regions). But this hierarchy would be a consequence of our *way of representing*, it is not in itself a "social fact".

banks of the Indus River in Kohistan, that is, by regional origin. But people that are not themselves Kolōce use the term mostly in the sense of a *qōm*, whereas Kolōce themselves give their *qōm* with *Şin* or *Yeşkun*. Here, an ethnonym changes its meaning depending on whether it is used as self-ascription or ascription by others. Other ethnonyms like *Paḥān* and *Waxī* refer simultaneously to a language, region and *qōm*, that is, they designate groups that come close to the boundedness of a "tribe". These ethnonyms are polyvalent but clear. In other cases this clarity is missing. Burushaski-speaking Hunzukuts²⁶ call Shina-speaking Hunzawālē "Şin". They do so, not because these people belong to the *qōm* *Şin* (mostly, they themselves give their *qōm* as *Yeşkun*), but because they speak Shina. "Hunzawālē", in comparison, is in Gilgit frequently used as an ethnonym of the dimension *qōm*, maybe because the *qōm* by which Hunzawālē differentiate themselves are little known in Gilgit. In other cases "Hunzawālē" is taken as a religious designation because most Hunzawālē belong to one religious community (the Ismailia), and both distinctions, regional and religious, are equated, although this is "objectively" wrong.

I do not want to discuss all possible meanings of ethnonyms here. My intention is to give some examples of how ethnonyms baulk against the unambiguous integration into a model. One could turn this objection against my particular model, concluding that it distorts social reality. A new, refined model has to be constructed or the entries have to be supplemented with footnotes indicating and explaining ambivalences. One could also take the opposite way and draw the attention of informants in Gilgit to the fact that "Hunzawālē" is not a *qōm* but a regional identification, as I did several times myself, being confused and irritated by this usage. They would easily agree, without irritation. But they would hardly be impressed nor change their practice of labeling.

Another conclusion seems more rewarding: identifications, ethnonyms, assignments of difference, *are generally ambiguous*. They are ambiguous because they are taken from a practical code that is used to make sense of the actor's social world, to reduce its complexity. It is practical in that it does not aim at making sense and reducing complexity *generally*, for all

²⁶ "Hunzukuts" ("people from Hunza") is the self-designation of Burushaski-speaking Hunzawālē. Similarly, Nagerwālē call themselves "Nagerkuts" in Burushaski.

cases, but always in a concrete situation, under very specific circumstances. The order established practically in this way is completely different from the order constructed by the ethnologist; his order is intended to be valid generally and consistently, for all instances. It is a *theoretical* order that fixes and subsumes what was intended to provide "only" practical orientation. The difference between theory and practice becomes obvious if we consider their ends. Theory²⁷ aims at a true or, a little more modestly, correct, description and/or analysis of something else (for example "a" society, "a" culture). The analysis has to be consistent and non-contradictory because conventionally, that is, in the tradition of Western epistemology, we regard consistency and noncontradictoriness as necessary truth conditions of descriptions.²⁸ If an analysis is consistent, it can be true, and if it is inconsistent, this inconsistency is sufficient to reject the whole analysis. Practice, in contrast, wants to *achieve* something through action. In order to achieve this end, consistency is not a necessary condition. Practically, contradiction or ambiguity might well be more rewarding than consequence and consistency. Practice has to be adjusted to the conditions of action and these conditions change continuously. Further, every actor pursues a considerable number of ends, sometimes consecutively but very often also simultaneously. Different aims can be related to one another, and these relations (for example relative importance), too, are always changing. Action will always comprise inconsistency and ambiguity.²⁹ Thus, identifications that are used practically in Gilgit are not subject to a theoretical logic which would insist on consis-

²⁷ Here, I do not use "theory" in a narrow epistemological sense (as, for example, a theory in contrast to hypotheses), I am speaking about an attitude toward the world. For a more elaborate contrast between theory and practice in this sense cf. Bourdieu 1987.

²⁸ The idea that knowledge about humans can be theoretical in this sense is an idea that developed in Europe since the beginning of the 17th century. It was Descartes who propagated that ideas and concepts have to be clear and distinct, that is, unequivocal. Since then, the demand for mathematically precise terms was introduced into philosophy and later into the nascent social sciences. The strife for precision is essentially a "flight from ambiguity", as Levine (1985) writes, that was accompanied by progressive subjection of human life to the control of centralized and standardizing institutions. The flight from ambiguity is also, we can conclude, a flight from reality, for reality inevitably contains ambiguities.

²⁹ That is why people whose actions display a great measure of consistency and consequence are regarded as extraordinary persons. In Christian traditions, they are often regarded as saints.

tency. Their logic is one of usage and practice. Ethnonyms get their meaning because they are applied in specific contexts to specific groups or persons. Their meaning is an *a posteriori* of usage, not an *a priori* of a conceptual model. Only the anthropologist inserts them into a model or system. By this act of systematizing the meaning of identifications has changed; it is no longer meaning for the actor but has become meaning for the anthropologist.

Any conceptualization of difference that wants to preserve the practice character of identifications has to take ambiguity into account, contrary to the traditional intention of anthropology to eliminate ambiguity and to create clear models or structures. Ambiguity is not something like an undesired distortion of ethnographic facts that has to be eliminated by interpretation, it is itself an ethnographic fact which has to be interpreted (and not explained away). The obliteration of ambiguity from ethnographies results from disregard for the difference between theory and practice. Contrary to the actors of a society, identifications have no practical meaning for the anthropologist (Sökefeld 1997b).

In this discussion of identifications we have come down to a level that is very often not entered by discussions of processes of identity: the level of the individual actor. In texts about ethnicity, actors (if they appear at all) are normally subordinate to groups. Frequently, groups ("ethnic" groups, nations, etc.) *appear to be the true actors*. This appearance which I like to call *group realism* is a consequence of theoretical premises and an anthropological rhetoric (both of course are interrelated). Anthropology is about cultures, not about actors.³⁰ Despite the reservations of some founding fathers, culture came to be seen as an independent level of reality.³¹ A common element of most definitions of culture is that it is something shared by the members of a society.³² It is learned by the individual in the course of enculturation. It is something existing both before and after the individual. Culture is understood as the *a priori* of individual life. Because norms and

values are regarded as important elements of culture, culture is used to account for the individual and his or her behaviour. S/he is enacting culture. Culture is depicted as the dominant (nearly determining) force of the individual's life. It is only logical that anthropology is not about actors because these individuals can hardly be represented as actors, for action always comprises an element of indeterminacy.³³

The traditional object of anthropology was the bounded tribe, defined by the possession of "a" shared culture. Group and culture became more or less coterminous.³⁴ Because culture shapes behaviour and group and culture are congruent, group membership also forms behaviour. Thus ethnological rhetoric does not talk about individuals but about "the Nuer", "the Yanomami", or, in the case of northern Pakistan, "the Şin". Ethnographies frequently amount to writing things like: "the Şin are doing x"; "the Şin are saying that y"; and "contrary to the Yeşkun the Şin believe that z". With such sentences, a consistent image of "a group", "a society" or "a culture" can be constructed, but contrary to our conventional truth conditions we can be sure that this image is false, simply because not all people that (sometimes) call themselves "Şin" act, talk, or believe in the same way. Anthropology has its own jargon for textualizing culture and society, a jargon too far away from the things experienced during fieldwork and at times so much simplifying that it is simply falsifying. One of the first things this jargon does is denying individuality to the subjects/objects of ethnography.³⁵ If we consider that anthropologists give greatest emphasis to field experience, this jargon seems all the more strange. For during fieldwork, anthropologists

³⁰ Cohen criticizes the idea that individuals, if they appear at all in ethnographies, are conceded a *cultural* consciousness only but no *individual* consciousness (1992: 204).

³¹ Cf. Service (1985: 254f.) for Radcliffe-Brown's objections in this respect.

³² This applies especially to the American tradition of conceptualizing culture (e.g., Geertz 1973; Kluckhohn 1962). For a critique of this conceptualization cf. Holy 1989.

³³ Consequently, most ethnographies do not speak about individual "action" but only about "behaviour". This understanding of culture contributed to what Wrong (1961) calls the "over socialized conception of man" in the social sciences. Holy (1989: 276) adds that the tradition of conceptualizing culture as something shared (as in symbolic anthropology) not only eliminates the acting individual but also the *thinking* subject from ethnographies.

³⁴ This applies also to Barth's (1969) understanding, although he reverses the relation between culture and society.

³⁵ Consider a sentence like the following: "Social organization during the pre-Islamic period centred on the exchange of women among exogamous lineages" (Keiser 1986: 493). For anybody not fluent in anthropological jargon this sentence formulates sheer nonsense. Does it mean that the most important thing people did in their social relation was exchanging women? Women, of course, are especially badly treated in anthropological jargon. Like here, they are often represented as nothing but commodities for exchange.

mostly experience individuals. They talk with and observe individual people. But, as Sperber laments, this experience gets too often eclipsed in the process of writing, individual voices lose their timbre and their emphasis, individuals become just representatives of groups (Sperber 1989: 15).

This eclipse does not only result in less vivid ethnographies, it also implicates a methodological gap. The step from individual experience to the represented general is not methodologically warranted. The image of a shared culture (or the image of "a structure", if in the vein of social anthropologists we take "the social" to be the primary) that determines the individual's behaviour is a simplification and reification.³⁶ There is no one-way relationship between culture/structure and the individual.

If we take the *ability to act differently* to be the crucial distinction between action and behaviour, the conviction that all humans are able to act should be an axiom of all ethnological endeavour.³⁷ Accepting that axiom, we have to conceive of the relation between culture/structure and the individual differently. The acting individual and structure are interconnected by a dialectical relation of structuration, as Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration maintains. Structure provides conditions for action, but at the same time action takes part in the reproduction of structure, including its possible transformation and change. Structure and action (or individual and culture) have to be understood as a duality.³⁸ Individual action has consequences that

³⁶ This criticism has also to be applied to less mechanical conceptualizations of culture, like the symbolist's version of culture as shared symbols and meanings. It is a fundamental characteristic of symbols that their meaning is not fixed and thus not always shared. Culture is emphatically not only consent, but dissent, too (cf. Rosen 1991).

³⁷ This axiom is an ethical axiom. It equals older convictions that all humans "have" culture, that there are no primitives, or, simply, that all humans are humans. We have to subscribe to this axiom if we do not want to erect another wall between "us and them" that would read: we are able to act (because we are rational and able to judge), they only behave as their culture prescribes.

³⁸ Giddens criticizes: "Both voluntaristic and deterministic schools of social theory actually tend to culminate in a similar viewpoint in this respect: one which identifies 'structure' with 'constraint' and thereby opposes 'structure' to 'action'. Placing the notion of what I have called the duality of structure as central conceptually, connects social production and reproduction by rejecting these oppositions. Structure enters into the explanation of action in a dual way: as a medium of its

put conditions on further action and that reproduces and/or modifies structure. But the "first" action was already conditioned by structure. It inevitably followed an action that preceded it. There is never a first action for it is a primary human condition that the individual is always placed into a scene where others already exist.³⁹ Thus the question as to what can claim primacy, structure or action, equals the problem of the hen and the egg.

To concede the ability to act to members of groups and cultures amounts to conceding them individuality, that is, a *self*. If culture/structure is nothing independent of the individual/actor, ethnology cannot be only about culture/structure. It also has to be about actors and selves, as Cohen demands:

"... our neglect of other's selves must be objectionable for all kinds of reasons and certainly raises serious ethical questions. But the implication on which I want to focus is that it has probably rendered our accounts of other societies inaccurate in important respects, since they must be revealed as generalisations from the only partially perceived, at worst misperceived, elements of those societies – individuals to whom we have denied self consciousness. Addressing self consciousness and selfhood thus brings us up critically and inevitably against two bulwarks of ethnographical practice: generalisation and cultural relativism. Indeed, acknowledging that other people have selves also means recognising that generalising them into such analytic collectivities as tribes, castes and ethnic groups may be a very crude means of categorising, the inadequacies of which we have all experienced in similar categorisations of ourselves. Sensitive ethnography demands nothing less than attention to other people's selves ..."

(Cohen 1994: 5f.)

Being attentive to practice, actors and action (including discourse) results – at least for Gilgit – in not being able to construct a consistent and non-contradictory image of society and culture. It fundamentally questions the possibility to give something like "facts". While undertaking field research in Gilgit I nearly despaired about the abounding contradictions. I could arrive at "facts" only if I asked one informant only once about a subject. If I asked a second person – or even the same a second time – I regularly had to face a

production and at the same time as its outcome in the reproduction of social forms" (1977: 130).

³⁹ Thus Hannah Arendt (1981) identifies *plurality* as a basic condition of human being.

differing, often contradictory account. Such contradictions did not only refer to "soft" subjects like attitudes toward others but also to subjects like rights and meanings of indigenous terms. Since Geertz, culture is said to be a "web of shared meanings". But culture in Gilgit appeared to be little "fixed" or "shared". The metaphor of culture as a fleece from which individuals are spinning their endless perspectives seems much more appropriate (Cohen 1992: 214). It is impossible to give something like a generalized account of culture in Gilgit while being true to the data. Generalization would distort the data, it would eliminate ambiguity and contradiction. Thus, an "attentive" ethnography has to remain impressionistic, like a collage or medley, including fragments and breaks.⁴⁰

Fortunately, such an ethnographic medley is warranted by more recent understandings of culture which include the fact – concordant with Giddens' theory of structuration – that individuals are not only recipients of culture but also its producers, and thereby cease to conceive of culture as a bounded, fixed and shared entity. Fredrik Barth, for example, writes about a "... confluence of a vast range of cultural materials, variously constituted and reproduced, which people bring to bear on their acts and representations" (1993: 350), instead of talking about "a" culture. Similarly, societies are "... disordered systems, where events are underdetermined by rules ..." (ibid.: 5). Practice (as conditioned but not determined by culture and society) can indeed be identified as the emergent paradigm of anthropology since the 1980s (Ortner 1984).⁴¹ Barth's understanding of social systems as the outcome of social action, Bourdieu's concept of habitus (designed already in the 1970s), Cohen's committed efforts to introduce the recognition of the other's selves into ethnography, and Fox' (1985) conceptualization of culture as product of struggle all point to similar (but of

⁴⁰ Given the popular understanding that science has to produce something like laws and rules, i.e., generalizations, ethnography would look hardly like science, although it is truly scientific in precisely reflecting the character of its data and the limitations of its method. Thus Myerhoff and Ruby conclude: "... the more scientific anthropologists try to be by revealing their methods, the less scientific they appear to be" (1982: 26).

⁴¹ Not only anthropology but also other disciplines became attentive to objects like the action, practice and human subject. Even Michel Foucault who in his earlier works took pains to demask the subject as an illusion of the Western intellectual tradition discovered the subject since the end of the seventies and attributed power and freedom to it, i.e., the ability to act (Foucault 1994).

course not identical) understandings. Sometimes it seems as if the pendulum of emphasis has already swung too much to the other side, when Barth, for example, writes:

"Such an account [of society based on social action] does not link the social by definition to repetition, norms, and shared ideas as blueprints for acts and prerequisites for social actions. On the contrary, it outlines interactional processes which may generate a degree of convergence, with pattern as an emergent property. I see system as an outcome, not as a pre-existing structure to which action must conform."

(Barth 1992: 23)

Of course, structure does pre-exist, as action is never the first; but still, action does not have to conform to structure, it can change it, as Giddens maintains.⁴²

In this discussion of concepts of practice, culture and society, I may seem to have distanced myself considerably from the discussion of processes of identity. But a reformed understanding of these basic concepts is the fundament for a more appropriate understanding and description of the processes of identity. The problem of ambiguity, contradiction and generalization is valid for any kind of society, but it is especially fundamental for plural societies where we, even in the old sense, could not speak about "a" shared culture. Even if we were to employ the rhetoric of group realism, we had to take into account differing and contradictory values, norms, rules, meanings, etc. We could simply ascribe these differences to the various groups of the scene. But this exit is closed now as we have recognized much more fundamental differences: the results of individual action. Further, the "multi-plurality" in Gilgit reduces group realism to absurdity. In Gilgit, we not only have to deal with Shiis, Yeškun and Gilgitwālē existing side by side, but also with persons that can simultaneously be Shiis, Yeškun, Gilgitwālē, etc. (with all these identities comprising differing and contradictory values and loyalties), and that have to interact with others that can be (also simultaneously) Sunni, Yeškun, Gilgitwālē and something else. Actors in Gilgit have *plural identities*. Here, interaction cannot be determined by any kind of structure because different kinds of structures can be taken into account. Actors have to make decisions. In my example, the first person can see the

⁴² Barth himself writes elsewhere more aptly about "... society as the context of actions and result of actions ..." (1992: 31).

second primarily as Sunni (that is, as opponent or even enemy) or as fellow Yeškun, with quite different consequences for interaction.

In this situation it makes little sense to ascribe action to group membership, as any person is a member of various groups.⁴³ Further, the degree to which these identifications are the bases of groups in an interactional sense cannot be presupposed, it has to be investigated.

Action always presupposes an understanding of the situation in which to act, of others, intentions, strategies, etc. Actions need frames of interpretation. I propose then to understand identifications primarily as *frames of interpretation that are used by actors to make sense of situations*.⁴⁴ Action and interpretation are closely interconnected. Even the structure of interpretation and action are analogous if we understand action in Giddens' sense as embedded in a relation of structuration. Just as interpretation, enclosed in the hermeneutic circle, never starts at zero, without preceding understanding, and adds something new to the already existing stock of meanings, action relates to preceding actions and creates (partly unintended) consequences that provide links for further action and that may "transform" into a changing structure. Action not only presupposes understanding but is also accompanied by continuous reflexive monitoring, that is, by interpretation of the action itself and of its consequences (Giddens 1984: 5f.).

⁴³ That action cannot be simply attributed to group membership holds not only true to situations of "multi-plurality" although it is probably more obvious here. But Barth generally demands: "We should not assume ipso facto, as have most anthropologists in their construction of social structures, that formal groups and statuses, because they endure, comprise the most salient components of persons in the sense of being the most important identities they conceive and embrace, and in terms of which they act. As I have stressed, these formal features of organization have undeniable importance in defining and structuring the *arenas* in which people act. But they do not predicate *how* people will act and what their actions will be about, what their experience will be" (1993: 104, original italics). It is thus reiterated: people *do act* and not only behave.

⁴⁴ This proposition conforms with the general emphasis of the symbolic instead of structural character of social reality: "... we now see apparently patterned social processes, such as kinship, or religion, as being symbolic rather than structural and structurally determined. This is not just to divert attention from the behavioural to the cognitive. It also builds on a notion of the symbolic as 'indeterminate', allowing the individual interpretative and creative license to attach meanings to symbols, meaningful content to otherwise vacuous symbolic forms, rather than having these provided by the all-powerful structure" (Cohen 1992: 205f.).

Identifications provide frames of reference for the interpretive structuring of situations in which to act. They can be taken for simple categorization, as, for example, sorting another person into the category "us" or into the category "them", but they can also be taken to ascribe complex judgments of values or expectations about how the other is going to act. Again, we have to emphasize the non-deterministic character of frames of reference/identifications. Interpretations entail judgments, that is, the possibility to interpret differently. Frames of reference provide a stock of meanings to which the interpreting actor can relate, and which can be supplemented and modified by his or her interpretation. Meanings are not determined, they are inherently ambiguous.⁴⁵

This necessity to judge and to choose is increased in a plural society where a multiplicity of frames of reference is available to categorize a person and interpret a situation. The actor of my example above has to choose whether to regard the other primarily as Sunni or as Yeškun. He may start by the first and change to the second in the course of action as a consequence of his continuous monitoring of what is going on; perhaps he realizes that his ends can be achieved in a better way by understanding the situation differently or he takes new ends into consideration. Ambiguity again enters the scene.

At first sight this understanding of identifications as frames of reference for the individual's interpretation of action may seem to support the view of the individual as a voluntary subject. This is of course not my intention. To say that individuals are able to act and that meanings are inherently ambiguous does not amount to maintaining that anything goes. It has to be repeated: structure exists and does reduce the range of the individual's possible interpretations, decisions and actions. It is, for example, subject to

⁴⁵ The "interpretative turn" in ethnology has averted attention to the fact that doing ethnography amounts largely to interpreting cultures. The ethnographer has to enter a hermeneutic enterprise because what s/he is able to just "see" of culture are symbols the meaning of which is not at all obvious. It has to be learned and interpreted, and as a specific meaning is not an inherent characteristic of a symbol (the property that distinguishes symbols from signs), meaning can never be finally fixed. It has to be emphasized that this does not only hold true for the ethnographer but for any individual of a society the culture of which becomes the object of ethnography. They, too, have to interpret continuously (and thus are continuously engaged in reproducing and modifying meanings of cultural symbols). For them, too, meaning remains inherently ambiguous.

power. But to counter contrary emphasis I want to repeat that structure does not necessarily determine. It also does not determine the meaning of identifications. This holds even true to situations where certain meanings of identifications are enforced with exceptional force by a political system. Before the end of Apartheid it was very difficult and dangerous in South Africa to interpret and to realize interaction between blacks and whites in other ways than provisioned for by the laws of Apartheid. Similarly, the possible relations between Jews and non-Jews in Nazi-Germany were strictly restricted and this restriction was sanctioned with ultimate force. Still, even in spite of the threat of severe punishment in Apartheid-South Africa and Nazi-Germany, some people did *not* subscribe to the official interpretation. They interpreted and acted differently.

Understanding identifications as frames of reference that are taken into account in the course of action enables us to account for the flexibility and malleability that is frequently attributed to identities. But we also have to account for the fact that identities may entail strict judgements and unequivocal ascriptions of meaning as, for example, in stereotypes.

Interpretation is not always related directly to understanding specific situations and monitoring concrete actions. Interpretations may also be voiced generally, for example in accounts of an individual's view of the world of the kind anthropologists like to take and record. We have to ask whether interpretations are really related reflexively to the particular circumstances of action or whether it is free from such a reference to concrete action. Giddens speaks about two kinds of consciousness of the individual: practical consciousness and discursive consciousness. I will appropriate these concepts but alter their meaning considerably. By practical consciousness I understand tacit or verbalized knowledge that really guides actors in concrete circumstances of action. It is directly related to and employed in practice. Discursive consciousness in contrast is not related to practice but to general accounts of the world.

Stereotypes and strict attribution of meaning to identifications have their locus in discursive consciousness. It is not mediated by the ambiguities of action. In Germany, stereotypes are frequently uttered about groups of immigrants. But many people talking this way are quick to exempt their Turkish neighbours from such general judgements. They know them more intimately because they are interacting with them. They are not only Turks

but also neighbours. Ascribing meaning to them is not only a consequence of discursive, but also of practical consciousness. Identities are mixed and it becomes more difficult to voice unequivocal negative stereotypes (unless, of course, negative experiences of interaction confirm the general stereotype). Similarly, the Shii Yeşkun of my example may talk very unequivocally about the negative character of Sunnis, but he probably displays a more differentiated attitude toward the Sunni who is his fellow Yeşkun.

The difference between discursive consciousness and practical consciousness resembles Bourdieu's differentiation of theoretical and practical attitudes. Bourdieu employs this difference mainly to distinguish the attitude of a scientist, investigating a society, from the attitudes of this society's actors. He wants to emphasize the scientist's distance from his object of consideration (Bourdieu 1987: 32f.). But actors, too, are capable of the theoretical attitude, producing general accounts with intended unequivocal meanings as displayed in discursive consciousness. Discursive consciousness, like theory, aims at reducing the complexity of the social environment, to use a popular phrase of Niklas Luhman. That is, it disregards precisely that complexity practice always has to deal with.

In discursive consciousness, people employ just the same rhetoric of group realism as do anthropologists in their ethnographies. In this respect, the subjects of a society (who are also the subjects of ethnography) represent their social environment with the same kind of concepts that were employed by traditional ethnology: they speak about themselves and others as neatly bounded entities, attributing actions, characters or attitudes to groups.⁴⁶

This reifying discourse of members of a society forces the ethnographer to be very precise about what s/he is writing about. We cannot just adopt the rhetorics of our informants even if they fit neatly into ethnological ways of writing about culture and society. Richard Handler, writing about the analysis of nationalist discourse, lists certain strategies for guarding ethnography against this taking over of its informant's way of talking. Most of these strategies should be applied to ethnographies of processes of identity in general. The author has to refrain from all rhetoric forms that "suggest the existence of a bounded cultural object" (1985: 178). S/he has to abstain

⁴⁶ Elsewhere I have concluded that this parallel between indigenous and anthropological discourse is due to the fact that ethnography relies mostly on discursive consciousness of society (Sökefeld 1997b).

from collective designations that project a group of people as a "unified actor" (ibid.). That is, s/he has to resist the ethnological rhetoric of what I have called "group realism".

If we take "group realism" as something to be unmasked, we have to remain attentive to the discourses and actions of individuals. They are the data to be interpreted and represented by the author. They must not be invoked only in the course of a rhetoric intended to provide evidence and authority (or authenticity) to the ethnographer's generalized image. We have to work and to write "from the individual up", not from the general down, invoking an individual only as illustrating example.

When, in what follows, I devote considerable space to the representation of individuals' perspectives and discourses of identity, my intention is precisely to represent individuals' perspectives. It is not a rhetorical device intended to elaborate a group's perspective. If I remain true to some basic rules of the scientific enterprise (especially the rule not to interpret more than the data can tell), I have to conclude that *there is no group perspective* (except, of course, in the representation of individuals). There is no way to proceed from what Mohammad Abbas tells to the perspective and identity of "the" *muthulfau* in general. It is not even very clear who is to be regarded as *muthulfau*, as we shall see.

It should have become clear that I am not of the opinion that the individual becomes interesting within the framework of social sciences only after s/he has been submerged into collectivities. We can learn much from individuals' social action and interpretation. Probably we cannot learn how others whom we did not observe and experience would in general act and interpret, but we can learn how social action and interpretation actually works, in particular. This, I think, is a lot.

4. People of Gilgit and People from Outside

My conceptualization of identifications and processes of identity as outlined above does not at all represent the theoretical orientation with which I went "into the field" in Gilgit. It is the direct outcome of my trying to grapple with apparent ambiguities and making sense of the virtuosity and flexibility with which people in Gilgit handle their own and other's identities; a flexi-

bility that sometimes seemed to contradict the very notion of something like a person's basic identity (or repertory of identities), and that is contrasted by the strictness of differences between themselves and others that people display in their discourses. The change of my theoretical orientation during the processes of fieldwork, interpretation of data and writing of texts can be titled with "losing faith in the real existence of ethnic groups". Thus I could not take a particular "group" as the basic unit of and starting point for an ethnography of processes of identity in Gilgit. Instead, I decided to take a basic difference that is made by all people as the thread for analysis, a difference which still is interpreted differently and around which particular people and "groups" are placed in diverse manners. It is the difference between "people of Gilgit" and "people from outside".

People use the difference between "people of Gilgit" and "people from outside"⁴⁷ to distinguish between "us" and "them", but again this differentiation is made with interpretive flexibility, attributing not always the same position on either side to the same people. All dimensions of difference that I have discussed above can be related to that between inside and outside.

Seen from both sides the difference between inside and outside is not value-free. It is intrinsically connected with an evaluation. If a Gilgitwālā⁴⁸ says about somebody else that he is "from outside", this is hardly a compliment. Those from outside are suspect, they are a potential danger to Gilgit's order. Not everybody who calls himself "belonging to Gilgit" is recognized as such by all others. Inside and outside: this is also the question who are the *real* people of Gilgit, the *asl Gilgitwālē*,⁴⁹ the *puštūnī bāšindē*.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ "Giltei žag" and "darine žag" (or simply "darine") in Shina, "Gilgit kē lōg" and "bāhar kē lōg" (or "Gilgitwālē"/"bāharwālē") in Urdu. People from outside are sometimes also called "people from below" ("nīcē kē lōg") or "people from behind/later people" ("pīcē kē lōg").

⁴⁸ My remarks about the relativity of the difference between inside and outside have made clear that it is difficult, or maybe even impossible, to decide in an absolute sense who is Gilgitwālā and who is not. Therefore, I should always write "people who say that they are people of Gilgit". It is of course due to pragmatic considerations that I employ the simple form. In the course of the text the reader will be able to interpret this and similar simplifications.

⁴⁹ The "original people of Gilgit".

⁵⁰ The "legitimate (by descent) inhabitants".

4.1 Searching for the "Real People of Gilgit"

"We have come here first. We have built this house. It is our right, not yours. We were the first to settle on this land. If one sows in March, wheat ripens within four months. If one sows in December, it ripens within eight months. But which wheat will taste better? The eight months old wheat tastes better, it is strong. We are the eight months old people, the others are only here since four months."

(Mohammad Abbas)⁵¹

During the first months of field research I worked mainly in the town's bazaar. The bazaar is the part of the town that is most easily accessible for outsiders. I came to know many people: Hunzawālē, Nagerwālē, Kaśmīrī, Paṭhān, etc. But I never met somebody who "really" belonged to Gilgit. Finally, I asked the uncle of my Urdu- and Shina-teacher, a man from Nager himself, but well known and introduced in Gilgit, whether he could give me the names of some "real" Gilgitwālē. He listed a few persons and recommended especially to meet Mohammad Abbas, an old Gilgitwālā very well versed in the customs and traditions of the place.⁵² I visited that man the next day and he readily agreed to tell me about the people of Gilgit. During the following week he gave me a daily lecture of one or two hours length. His talking really had the character of lectures. He spoke continuously, only sometimes I had to interrupt him when I could not understand something. He himself chose the topics of his lectures.

All his lectures centered about traditions, myths and customary rights of people that are called "*muṭhulfau*". *Muṭhulfau*⁵³ are those people that claim to have originally prepared the soil of Gilgit, that first cultivated the land. In the mountainous environment of the Northern Areas land cannot simply be taken under the plough. It has to be prepared arduously: stones have to be removed, land has to be terraced and levelled, and irrigation works have to

⁵¹ All names of persons in Gilgit are pseudonyms; English translation of the personal communication in Urdu by the author.

⁵² Due to the character of most of the anthropological work that had been undertaken previously in the area, people developed the understanding that anthropologists are mainly researching about the past and that they are especially interested in old customs, myths, non-Islamic folk religion and fairy tales.

⁵³ The Shina-word is built from "*maṭhulo*" (clod of earth) and "*fau-thōk*" ("to break open, to spread"). It can be translated as "those who broke open the earth", "those who spread the soil".

be built as precipitation is not sufficient for cultivation. *Muṭhulfau* were those people that Mohammad Abbas equated with wheat grown in eight months in the quotation above. He belonged to the clan of Babusē that is regarded as the first of the *muṭhulfau* clans in Gilgit. Mohammad Abbas related in a myth how the Babusē settled in Gilgit:

"Six brothers of *dēv*⁵⁴ lived in Napura.⁵⁵ Naupur, Seifur ... the names of the others I have forgotten. They had a sister called Sarvisa.⁵⁶ The sister was at home, her brothers were hunting in the mountains. That time, the whole valley of Gilgit was situated at the present altitude of Napura and Barmas.⁵⁷ It was all the garden of the *dēv*. Later, a flood coming from Yasin washed the garden away and hollowed out the valley as it is today. Only Napura and Barmas remained, the rest was taken away. All land was washed away, it became a desert. Only thorns continued to grow there. Shahzada Bahram came from Khotan. He was accompanied by three brothers, a sister, and their parents. They camped in Danyor.⁵⁸ There is our house, remains can still be seen. Bahram came to Napura. He was on the way to search for Guladam, the daughter of the king of China. He had seen her in a dream and had fallen in love. On the way to her he came to Gilgit. He entered the garden in Napura, set his horse free and laid down to rest. Sarvisa sent her servant to tell him: 'Do not let your horse roam around, do not sit there, but go away. When my brothers come back and find you sitting there, they will kill and devour you.'

Bahram answered: 'I am your guest, send me something to eat!' Sarvisa became very angry about Bahram's impertinent words, called her younger brother and told him what had happened. Furious, he went to Bahram but Bahram defeated him. All brothers of the *dēv* came and all were tied up by Bahram. He was very strong, he was a hero. Finally, he wanted to kill the *dēv*. But Sarvisa said: 'You have come to look for Guladam. Who will

⁵⁴ *Dēv* are the giants of the mythology of the Northern Areas. Often they are portrayed as the male counterparts of the "*pari*" (fairies).

⁵⁵ Napura is a village of Gilgit situated on a terrace high above the plain that forms the greater part of the town at the mouth of the Kargah Valley. It is said to be Gilgit's oldest settlement.

⁵⁶ When Mohammad Abbas told this myth a second time, he named the sister of the *dēv* "Sargina". "Sargin" is said to be an ancient name of Gilgit.

⁵⁷ Barmas is another "old" village of Gilgit, situated at the same altitude as Napura.

⁵⁸ Danyor is situated on the eastern banks of the confluence of Hunza and Gilgit Rivers.

show you the way if you kill all of us? Don't kill us! I will give you a hair of mine, and whenever you hold this hair in front of a fire we will come to help you. We will swear it by the throne of Salomon.' At that time Salomon was the ruler of the whole world.

Shahzada Bahram released the six brothers. He did not marry Sarvisa because he loved Guladam. Sarvisa showed him the way and he went. Finally, he found Guladam and returned to Gilgit. In between the flood had destroyed the place. Bahram went to Danyor to meet his companions that he had left there. They were very happy to see him again. He told them: 'Settle down in Gilgit!' And he brought them there. But that time Gilgit was only wilderness. The three brothers and their father started to clear the ground. They removed the stones from the field and piled them up at the edge. Then they heard a voice coming from the heap of stones. It said: 'Slow down!' A tomcat⁵⁹ emerged from the pile. He called out: 'Stop this work!' The brothers wanted to kill the tom and prepared the sling. The tom said: 'Don't kill me! God has sent me to help you. Go into your house, shut the window, the door and the roof!'

They went into their house and closed it. Būšo [the tomcat] was a *dēv*. In the night the *dēv* prepared the soil and cleared the plain in the bottom of the valley. In the morning, the brothers fed Būšo. All *dēv* left, only Būšo remained. He married Sarvisa. They settled in Bashot.⁶⁰ There, the off-spring of Būšo lives. We are the off-spring of the brother, they are the off-spring of the sister."

In another version of this myth, Mohammad Abbas gave the names of the three brothers that came to Gilgit: Babuso, Burush Bul Singh and Diramiting. Babuso remained in Gilgit and became the ancestor of the Babusē, Burush Bul Singh went to Nager and Diramiting settled in Hunza.

This myth explained a ritual relationship between the Babusē and the land of Gilgit. The Babusē prepared the soil and became *muṭhulfau*. At least they started that work which was completed by the *dēv*. Before, there was only desert and wilderness in Gilgit because a flood had destroyed the garden of the *dēv*. When the *dēv* had completed the work of the Babusē, they left Gilgit. Thus the myth marks the transition of the land from the possession of the *dēv* into the possession of humans. Only Būšo, the *dēv* in form of a tom-

⁵⁹ Shina: *būšo*.

⁶⁰ A neighbourhood of the village Khomar.

cat, stayed. But he married the sister of Babuso and thus became a member of the human family.

The myth presented the Babusē as the initiators of the fertility of Gilgit's soil. From this mythical event the Babusē derived a charisma that made them the guarantors of the country's fertility. This fertility had to be renewed ritually at the beginning of every agricultural season in the festival of first sowing called *bīfau*.⁶¹ The Babusē had the privilege and the responsibility to sow first.

Muṭhulfau were related to the soil in a way completely different from the relation of those who came later. All those who settled later in Gilgit benefitted from the original (and during the festival of *bīfau* ritually renewed) work of the Babusē. Thus, *muṭhulfau* were entitled to certain rights: they controlled the water necessary for irrigation; they decided about the cultivation of uncultivated land; and they had the right to graze their animals and to collect wood in the side-valleys (*nālē*). The word "*muṭhulfau*" does not designate a special group but a relation to the land. The Babusē are not the only *muṭhulfau* in Gilgit, and they are *muṭhulfau* only of that part of Gilgit that is called "*town area*" today, and that comprises Kashrot, Majini Mohalla and Ampheri. In this area the clans Catōrē, Kaçetē and Pharphusē are also said to be *muṭhulfau*. All of them are classed as Yeşkun.

Catōrē and Kaçetē, too, played a role in the festival of sowing. The festival is no longer celebrated in Gilgit and few people remember its course in detail. Ali Hasan, a Catōrō who liked very much to point to the participation of his clan in the festival, described *bīfau* as follows. The people of Gilgit assembled on the day of winter solstice at a certain field of the *raja* of Gilgit that was called "*Sigali*".⁶² The Kaçetē carried the seed in a heavy leatherbag to the field. The Catōrē prepared a big bread weighing one *mand* (about 40 kg) which was shared and eaten among those present after sowing the seed. The *raja* took three times a handful of seeds, mixed them with gold dust and sowed them on the field. Then a *motobār* (a respected man) of the Babusē completed the sowing on the whole field. The festival ended with

⁶¹ "*Bi*" means "seed", "grain", and "*fau*" again comes from "*fau-thōk*", "to spread".

⁶² "*Sigali*" means sandy. The field was situated close to the present Jamat-Khana-Bazaar. Houses have been built on it.

music and dancing at the *raja's* place. Only after that the people of Gilgit were allowed to cultivate their fields.

Many more detailed descriptions of *bīfau* in Gilgit can be found in the literature,⁶³ but today in Gilgit only the question is important which clans played a role during the festival. Today, not only the *dēv* have left Gilgit. Further, the *muṭhulfau* have become a minority. Now their rights are valid only with restrictions and their privileges are of very limited value. Today, nobody waits with cultivation until the Babusē have sown in the fields. Land and agriculture in general no longer form the nearly exclusive basis of life in Gilgit as they did in the past. This is the context in which Mohammad Abbas' myth has to be understood. Mohammad Abbas did not tell it because the Babusē possess a special status in Gilgit. He told it because they have *lost* this status. The myth made a claim. To this very day the *muṭhulfau* continue to claim that they are the real people of Gilgit.

In most parts and villages of Gilgit, the *muṭhulfau* clans belong to the *qōm* Yeškun. Only in the villages Barmas, Nagrel and Khur are they *Šin*. The classical British authors have written a lot about both *qōm*. Here it suffices to mention that, today, no substantial cultural differences between both groups exist. Members of both groups are separated mainly by their respective perception of being different and belonging to the better *qōm* (Sökefeld 1994).

Of all the former privileges of the *muṭhulfau* the right to take uncultivated land into possession is most relevant today and causes considerable conflicts. In some villages of Gilgit there is still uncultivated and unirrigated land that is not allotted to individual proprietors but rather belongs to the whole village. Such land is called "*xālisa-e deh*".⁶⁴ Originally this land was

quite useless. The cultivable area of a village was limited by the amount of available water. Irrigated land (*ābādī zamīn*, inhabited land) bordered immediately on scree desert. At times, such land could be cultivated if the irrigation system and the amount of available water could be increased. *Xālisa* became *ābād*, and the newly won land was called *nautōr*.⁶⁵ The right to take possession of *nautōr* belonged only to *muṭhulfau*. Only if the extension of irrigation works required so much labour that those who were not *muṭhulfau* were asked to assist, the latter *muṭhulfau* became entitled to *xālisa* and *nautōr*. Today, *xālisa-e deh* is also very much sought after if it cannot be irrigated, for it can be used for the construction of houses, shops or hotels. At the same time, the remaining areas of *xālisa-e deh* have shrunk very much. In the central districts of the town land has since long completely been allotted. In the other parts, *xālisa* is subject to intense conflicts, as it is sometimes allotted by the settlement office to people that are not entitled to it, that is, to people from outside.

Mohammad Abbas again told me how people from outside came to Gilgit and how *muṭhulfau* became a minority. From his perspectives he addressed many topics that will be important in the course of this study: possession and loss of land, change of power, honour and values, the status of and stereotypes about different groups, education and change, and the conflict between Shiis and Sunnis.

Mohammad Abbas: "Then [after the Babusē] came the Catōrē, then the Rōnō,⁶⁶ the Pharphusē and then the Ṭhaṭhōn.⁶⁷ Together with them came Taki, the *dādā* of Taki-Het. He came from Koli,⁶⁸ they are Kolōce. They are not a real family [*xāndān*], like the Ṭhaṭhōn. We were the first in Gilgit.

In the time of Wazīr Ghulam Hyder⁶⁹ people came from everywhere. From

⁶³ Cf. Biddulph 1971: 103f.; Durand 1977: 211; Ghulam Mohammad 1980: 50ff. Different descriptions of the festivals are discussed in Müller-Stellrecht 1973: 43ff. An important contradiction exists between the literature and what I was told in Gilgit (not only by Babusē themselves): Ghulam Mohammad attributes the status of the first sowers to the Kaçetē. He does not call them the first settlers of Gilgit (the word *muṭhulfau* is not found in the literature) but states only that they are a strong and rich family.

⁶⁴ "*Xālīs*" means "empty", "*deh*" means "village", i.e., "the empty [area] of the village". After the Dogras conquered Gilgit, *xālisa* became, according to Kashmiri landlaw, property of the state (*xālisa-e sarkār*) (cf. Lawrence 1885: 426). Only Maharaja Hari Singh declared on the occasion of his coronation in the year 1926

xālisa to be property of the village community (Census of India 1941, Vol. 22, 1943: 14).

⁶⁵ "*Nautōr*" means "newly broken [land]" (from *tōrnā*, Urdu: to break). Thus, the word belongs to the same semantic field as *muṭhulfau*.

⁶⁶ Rōnō are regarded as the *qōm* of nobles.

⁶⁷ Ṭhaṭhōn have traditionally been carpenters.

⁶⁸ Koli denotes the Shina-speaking area on the eastern banks of the Indus in Kohistan, that is, not only the valley Koli itself, but also Jalkot and Palas.

⁶⁹ Wazīr Ghulam Hyder was *wazīr* ("minister") in Gilgit in the second part of the 19th century. He was regent at the time when Raja Ali Dad was nominal ruler of

Koli, from Khili,⁷⁰ from Darel, from Punial. They took possession of land here. Wazir Ghulam Hyder was Yeškun. He came to power and settled people here. He gave land to all people."

I: "Kolöce and Khilöce, too, came in the time of Wazir Ghulam Hyder?"

Mohammad Abbas: "Yes, before nobody from outside was allowed to come here. Earlier, there were only Yeškun, Şin, Kamin, Döm, Şoto,⁷¹ Rönö."

I: "Why did Wazir Ghulam Hyder bring these people to Gilgit?"

Mohammad Abbas: "He was *wazir* and the people approached him, offered him gold and said: Give us some land! Taki came, Döm came, Kamin came, Thathön came. They, too, came from downcountry, from Kashmir. They were carpenters. They were given land after they had promised to be our servants. They are no *qöm*, they are servants, that's all. They built houses, they have to build our houses."

I: "Did Khilöce and Kolöce also come as artisans?"

Mohammad Abbas: "Yes, they, too. The people from Taki-Het made cloth. The Kolöce, not the Khilöce."

I: "Are Kolöce Yeškun, too?"

Mohammad Abbas: "Yes. Now they say that they are Şin. But they are really Löhär. Neither Şin nor Yeškun but Löhär.⁷² Today, Thathön call themselves Räjput, Kolöce call themselves Şin. What shall I say!"

I: "Did your family marry with them?"

the area (he was put on the throne at the age of one). He became involved in intrigues against the Kashmiri administration and was removed from office in the late 1880s.

⁷⁰ Khili denotes the Kohistani-speaking area in Kohistan opposite of Koli, that is, on the western banks of the Indus.

⁷¹ Kamin, Döm and Şoto are *qöm* with low prestige. Döm were traditionally musicians and blacksmiths. Today, many have specialized in welding and automobile workshops. Şoto are said to have been leatherworkers. I did not meet a single man of this *qöm* during my stay at Gilgit.

⁷² "Löhär" means "blacksmith", a very despised trade.

Mohammad Abbas: "No, we did not marry with them. We married only our own Yeškun."

I: "For example Catöre?"

Mohammad Abbas: "Yes. We give them our girls and get their girls. We marry also with Pharphusë and Kaçetë."

Mohammad Abbas went on to tell how the army of the *maharaja* of Kashmir conquered Gilgit: "The *maharaja* made war and won. The people here said: This land is your *jāgir*⁷³ now."

I: "Who said that?"

Mohammad Abbas: "The *raja*, *lambardār*, *wazir*, *motobār*. The *maharaja* said: 'It is now *māl-e sarkār*'.⁷⁴ You have to cultivate the land and to pay taxes. The land was assessed, the settlement was made. Not even a tiny patch of land was ours, we only had to cultivate it. Then Cooke⁷⁵ *sāhib* came. The English government came, the *maharaja* went away. The *maharaja's* army, too, left and the Angrëz brought the Scouts. One day, Cooke assembled the people, *lambardār*, *motobār*, and said: 'The land was property of the *maharaja*, it was *māl-e sarkār*. Now it is *māl-e zamindār*'.⁷⁶ Cooke *sāhib* did that. And what did the peasants do then? We had no eyes, no reason, no house. We sold the whole land. We sold it to Pathän, to people from Hunza, Nager, Chitral, Yasin, Kashgar. Now Gilgit became big. The time of the *maharaja* was good. At that time the land was with us. We ate his bread. Our stomachs were full and no people from outside settled on our land.

Now, many people have come and we are quarrelling. We no longer speak the same language. Why? Because people from outside have come. The people of Gilgit are one and the people from outside are one. They are against one another. It is not good."

I: "The people of Gilgit are the *muthulfau*?"

⁷³ "Jāgir" meant a landed property that was exempt from taxes. Today, it is just a synonym for large landed property.

⁷⁴ Property of the government.

⁷⁵ Cooke was assistant political agent in Gilgit from 1935 until 1937 (Administration Report of the Gilgit Agency 1937; IOR L/P&S/12/3288).

⁷⁶ Property of the peasant/cultivator.

Mohammad Abbas: "Yes."

I: "And the people from Hunza who have been living here since fifty years, they are people from outside?"

Mohammad Abbas: "Yes, they, too, are from outside. People from outside came here and went to school. They became *munṣī*, *xān sāhib*, *tahsildār* or *paṭwārī*.⁷⁷ In comparison, we were backward and now they ride on our backs, the people from outside. We became useless, we *muṭhulfau*. Today, Gilgit is so cramped, I can't tell. We do not like the Pakistani administration. People from outside came, quarrels rose.

Now, there are many Kaśmīrī, Darelwālē, Kolōce, Sunni. And Shiis are only few. We are suppressed. We don't like that. Now, the people of Gilgit regret. In the administration all are Sunni. No officer is Shii. Many of our men are unemployed. Sunnis oppress Shiis. Shiis have done nothing.

Such people are living here. They are not *qōmī* people. They are *bē-qōm*, *bē-xāndānī*.⁷⁸ They settled here and became educated. Therefore they are clever. We *muṭhulfau* just ate the bread of our land. We quietly sat on our land. We became stupid. When education came here, reading and writing, the *qōm* of Gilgit were no longer valued. We live in the shadows. Now the people are ashamed to tell that they are *muṭhulfau*."

I: "You say that the people from outside are *bē-xāndānī*. How do you call them in Shina?"

Mohammad Abbas: "We say *xānabadōś*!⁷⁹ They have left their own house and went away. They are people from outside, they have earned their bread here. We do not give them wives and do not invite them to our marriages. When we assemble, we do not call them. These people pass their days working and eating their bread."

I: "Because they came here without their families?"

Mohammad Abbas: "Yes. They have left the land of their fathers. *Xānabadōś*."

⁷⁷ "*Munṣī*" means "writer", "*xān sāhib*" was a honorary title bestowed by the British, "*tahsildār*" is a medium level officer of the administration (*tahsil* = sub-district), and "*paṭwārī*" is a writer in the settlement office.

⁷⁸ See below, chapter 4.2.4.

⁷⁹ *Xānabadōś* (originally Persian) means literally "the house on the shoulder", i.e., nomads, homeless.

I: "Like the Paṭhān that come here today?"

Mohammad Abbas: "Paṭhān! They work during the day and steal at night. They collect stolen property. Then they come to Gilgit via Chitral and open shops here. Such people they are. Paṭhān are the worst of all families. They are robbers. If you leave your pen ten years in my house, not even a tiny piece of it will be missing. Why not? In order that our family does not get a bad name. Those people [Paṭhān] do not endure their own family."

The thread running through Mohammad Abbas' views is his sense of deprivation, a lament about the loss of importance of the *muṭhulfau*. For him, they have totally been forced into the defensive. This perspective in its entire negativity is not the view of all *muṭhulfau*. Mohammad Abbas' views will have to be interpreted in the context of the story of his family. But first I want to leave this personal framework to deal more generally with a topic that was prominent in Mohammad Abbas' discourse: land.

4.2 Land – The Symbol of Belonging and Identity

4.2.1 Change in the Economic Function of Land

Land played a most important role in Mohammad Abbas' discourse and in the discourse of *muṭhulfau* in general. The myth related about how the Babusē prepared the land in Gilgit, and *bifau* testified the special relation between *muṭhulfau* and the land. Then, Mohammad Abbas explained how other people who did not belong to Gilgit came there and took the land, how it was lost by the *muṭhulfau*.

Until three or four decades ago agriculture, supplemented by animal husbandry, was the most important branch of economy in Gilgit. Trade was poorly developed in the Karakorum. Due to shortage of transport facilities, basic supplies could not be imported into the area. Other sources of income were of minor importance. Artisans, for example, were given pieces of land for cultivation as remuneration for their services.

Life depended on agriculture and its products. The most important factors of production were cultivable land that had to be prepared by arduous work, and water which had to be lead through sometimes long channels on difficult terrain to the fields. Both scarce means of production, land and water, were themselves products of human labour. *Muṭhulfau* represent themselves as its producers.

Scarcity or loss of land resulted immediately in poverty as there were neither alternative sources of income, nor could basic food be imported. This is very different today: the greater part of the food supply is imported from downcountry Pakistan and people can resort to a number of economic avenues beside agriculture. An important consequence of this change is that land is today less valuable as a means of production in agriculture than as site for the construction of houses, shops, hotels, etc. The economic function of land has been extended greatly: it became an opportunity for the investment of capital. This change in the function of land was made possible mainly by its becoming saleable. Consequently, its symbolic meaning for many *muḥulḥfau* also changed. Because they have sold much land, it is no longer a symbol of their higher status and privilege vis-a-vis the immigrants, but became a symbol of loss, deprivation, marginalization and heteronomy. Because the "real" people of Gilgit are no more the sole proprietors of land, land became a symbol of dispossession. In the representations of Mohamad Abbas and others, land had been the foundation of a moral and social order which was seriously challenged by modern development.

4.2.2 Descent, Settlement and Cooperation

Gilgit's population, both Gilgitwālē and people from outside, is divided by the rule of patrilineal descent into clans. Especially for *muḥulḥfau* these clans are important sources of identity. People are proud to belong to Babusē, Catōrē or Kaçetē. In the past, each *muḥulḥfau* clan possessed a song that praised its ancestors and their deeds. On the occasion of a marriage, the family of the groom had to sing the song of the bride's family before they were allowed into their house, and vice versa. Thus, each marriage became a dramatization of the pride and honour of the clans. The people had to recognize each other's honour before a marriage was possible. The memory of these songs that are no longer sung today⁸⁰ is still a source of self-esteem for the *muḥulḥfau*-clans, as is the memory of their participation in *bīḥfau*.

Descent is reflected in the settlement structure. In Gilgit Town Area, clans live localized in neighbourhoods that are called "het". Mostly, these *het* bear the name of the clan or an ancestor. Those who were not *muḥulḥfau* also live

⁸⁰ I was not even able to record these songs as nobody remembered their text. Maybe the invocation of these "ancient songs" is just another element of the *muḥulḥfau*'s own myth.

in localized patricians. But at least since land can be sold and bought all *het* have some inhabitants that do not belong to its main clan. Today nearly every *het* and every clan possesses its own mosque where most members meet in the morning and in the evening for prayer. During the month of *ramadān* the men of the clan meet at sunset in front of the mosque to break the fast. *Het* are more open forms of settlement that developed presumably only after the pacification of the area.⁸¹ Before, people lived in very compact settlements that had the character of fortified villages. Such *kōḥ* can still be found in some parts of Gilgit, for instance in Jutial, Napura and Barmas.

Het and *kōḥ* formed important groups for cooperation. Today, only some survivals of a system of reciprocal assistance that is called *būe* can be found. Works that required more hands than a single household could provide, for example harvest or the construction of a house,⁸² were shared in the neighbourhood community. When a house called out: "Today is *būe*!", every household of the neighbourhood was obliged to send a man to assist those calling. The house that required *būe* had to feed the workers but did not give any remuneration. Participants in the exchange of *būe* were always "old neighbours", that is, families that have lived for a long time in a neighbourhood and that were often connected genealogically or by marriage. At least today newcomers are not integrated (and do not integrate themselves) into the network of *būe*.

More inclusive units of settlements like whole villages or districts of Gilgit have to cooperate in the maintenance and repair of irrigation channels. Such cooperative actions for the whole village (and not for an individual household) are called *rājaikī* or *ālēsērī*. Again, every household is required to send a man to assist in these activities. Some villages still assemble at the beginning of the irrigation season at the head of their channel to celebrate *īlei karelō*.⁸³ On this occasion, a ram bought with money collected from all households is sacrificed at the head of the channel.

⁸¹ Cf. Jettmar (1980: 53) who holds this hypothesis for the southern side-valleys of the Indus.

⁸² Today, *būe* is mostly required for construction works as agriculture is mechanized.

⁸³ "I" designates the headwork, "karelō" means "ram". *īlei karelō* is celebrated mostly on *naurōz*, that is, the traditional beginning of the New Year on the occasion of spring equinox. *Naurōz* is celebrated only by Shiis and Ismailis.

While its meat is cooked the head of the channel is repaired. Finally, a representative of each household gets a portion that has to be consumed on the spot. *İlei karelō* marks the beginning of a strict reclamation of water. Now it is most needed but still scarce as it is still cold and the waterlevel of the streams is still low. From *İlei karelō* until summer, when water is abundant, only people that are entitled to water are allowed to irrigate their fields.

4.2.3 Uskūn and Sāmī – The Integration of People from Outside

The Shina terms *uskūn* and *sāmī* designate statuses with reference to a relation to the land of a family. *Uskūn* are "the own people". The term includes first of all the patrilineal relatives, but only those whose landed property and households are separated. Brothers are not *uskūn* as long as they share the property of the family. There are close and distant *uskūn*. Close *uskūn* are primarily the *cācāzād*, the sons of brothers. *Uskūn* are related among themselves by rights and obligations. They fulfill important tasks in festivals of the life-cycle.

The most important relation between *uskūn* is based on their land. They possess pieces of land that are shares of a common heritage. They are *mirāskhor*, heirs; literally, those who eat a (common) heritage. They hold mutual rights on their land. A Babusō from Majini Mohalla once told me about his *uskūn*, a Babusō of Ampheri: "If he does not eat his land,⁸⁴ we will eat it. When we do not eat our land, he will eat it. The land is to be shared by us." *Uskūn* hold mutually *haq sūba* on their land. If a man wants to sell one of his fields, his *uskūn* hold a pre-emptive right.⁸⁵ He has to ask them first whether they are themselves interested in buying before he is allowed to offer it to persons who are not *uskūn*. If land has already been sold to the latter without the consent of the *uskūn*, the sale can be cancelled by the

⁸⁴ "To eat" something is a common expression for making one's living by something. Thus, a *rāja* is eating his kingship, and a peasant is eating his land.

⁸⁵ The correct form of the term is "*haq-e šufa*" (Arabic: *shafa'a*, to give the right of pre-emption; Cowan 1976: 478). *Haq sūba*, as it is called in Gilgit, probably indicates that land was formerly the collective property of clans. Jettmar also writes that land could not be sold to others without the consent of the lineage (1980: 47). Manzar Zarin and Schmidt mention for Kohistan "shu'fa:i haq, 'pre-emptive right', which stipulates that land may not be offered for sale to non-relatives unless the seller's relatives are unable to buy it themselves" (1984: 24).

settlement office. *Haq sūba* is a customary right that is also sanctioned by the judiciary. The relationship founded on land is so strong that it can turn non-patrilineal relatives into *uskūn*. *Sāmī* can become *uskūn*.

Immigrants that obtained land from *muḥulfau* are called *sāmī*. In the beginning, I understood *sāmī* simply as "people from outside", "immigrants". But *sāmī* are only those immigrants that have a special relationship to *muḥulfau* because they possess land that was formerly the property of *muḥulfau*. If a *muḥulfau* sells land, he only sells the land but not the right to obtain water necessary for its irrigation. Water right is inalienable, at least in the representation of *muḥulfau*. As soon as the regulation of water is put into force by the ritual of *İlei karelō*, a *sāmī* is not entitled to the use of water in his own right. He has to ask "his" *muḥulfau*, that is, the former proprietor of his land, for water. He then gets a part of the water the *muḥulfau* is entitled to. In turn, the *sāmī*, too, is obliged to assist in the maintenance of the irrigation system. Further, the other rights of *muḥulfau* are not shared by *sāmī*: they are not allowed to graze their animals in the *nālā* and to collect wood there, and they are not entitled to occupy *xālisa*.

The relationship between *muḥulfau* and *sāmī* based on the sale of land is comparatively weak. A stronger relationship is founded, when a *sāmī* acquired the land in another way. I learned about this possibility when I met Subedar Ataullah. He introduced himself to me with the following words: "We are Şin, we are Catōrē." I was quite confused because as far as I knew, Catōrē were Yeşkun. Subedar Ataullah and his brother Inayatulla Shah told me that their *pardādā*⁸⁶ Zeydin had come as petty cloth trader from Koli to Gilgit. Zeydin had a tiny shop close to the present Sunni *jāma masjid* (central mosque). He became friend of a Catōrō living in Majini Mohalla. This Catōrō offered Zeydin to marry a girl of his clan in order to make Zeydin stay in Gilgit. Zeydin agreed to remain in Gilgit, but he was not ready to marry a Yeşkun girl as he himself was Şin. He found a Şin family in Minawar, a village close to Gilgit, that offered him a daughter on the condition that he first acquired some land, because they were not ready to give their girl to a poor, that is, somebody without landed property. The Catōrē gave him a piece of land in Majini Mohalla. Then Zeydin married the girl from Minawar. They had three sons. When Zeydin died, his brother Imam came from Koli and married his widowed sister-in-law. Again, three

⁸⁶ Paternal great-grandfather.

sons were born. Later, a son of Zeydin married a Catōri girl. The off-spring of Zeydin and Imam in Catōri-Het were still called Kolōce (people from Koli). They were *sāmī* of the Catōri-Het, but they shared the same rights as the *muḥhulfau*.⁸⁷

I frequently discussed the case of this Kolōce with Ali Hassan, a Catōrō of Ampheri who was also *uskūn* of the Catōrē of Majini Mohalla. He claimed that the Kolōce got land of the Catōrē in Majini Mohalla because they were their servants. This remark gave the relationship between Kolōce and Catōrē an asymmetrical character that was strictly negated by Subedar Ataulloh. If there was a lack of symmetry, then in the opposite sense, for Zeydin refused to marry a girl of the Catōrē.

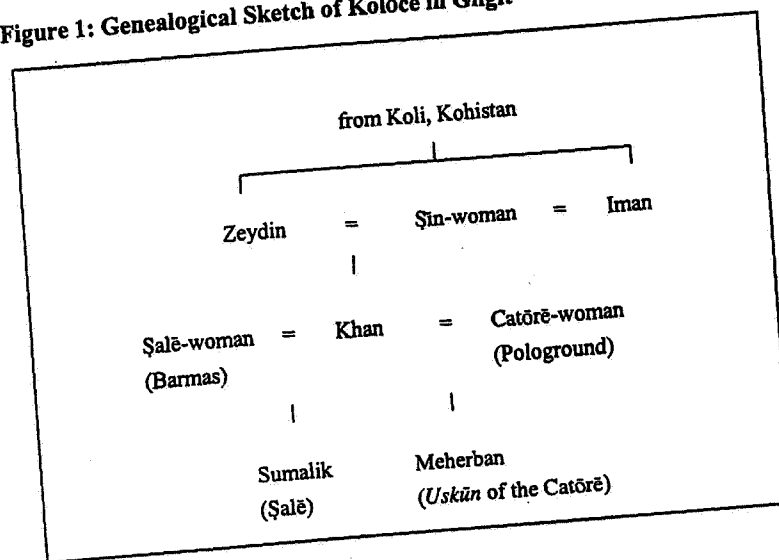
Ali Hassan called the Kolōce both *uskūn* and *sāmī* of the Catōrē. He said: "They became Catōrē because they were sitting on our land." This Kolōce were not the *sāmī* of a particular Catōrō, but of the clan in total. But not all descendants of Zeydin were *uskūn* and *sāmī* of the Catōrē. Zeydin's first son, Khan, married a woman from Barmas that belonged to the clan Šalē (that mainly belong to the Šin *qōm*). He became *ghar damād* ("son-in-law in the house") in the house of his father-in-law.⁸⁸ If a man has no male heir, he can

⁸⁷ Today, these rights are quite useless in Majini Mohalla. All *xālisa* has long been allotted and water is not regulated as only little land is still cultivated in this part of the town. Nowadays, the channels in Gilgit Town Area are more used as sewerage than for irrigation.

⁸⁸ Beside *ghar damād* also *motobana* (from Arabic "*tabana*", to adopt) and *bāgō* are used for this relationship. Some of my informants made (varying) distinctions between the meanings of these terms. Thus a Šin from Khur told me that the *motobana* inherits the land of his father-in-law and loses right to inherit from his own father, whereas in the other cases the land is inherited by the daughter. Contrarily, Ali Hassan emphasized that the land is always inherited by the daughter and never by the son-in-law. He explained that the peculiarity of the *motobana* is that he is a patrilineal relative of his father-in-law. According to Ali Hassan, a man who wants to take a *bāgō* into his house, has to ask all his *uskūn* that are entitled to *haq šūba* whether there are any objections. If the *uskūn* agree, a goat is slaughtered and fed to the *uskūn*. After that, no objections can be made. In Barmas the difference between both terms was this: A *motobana* marries a daughter who inherits the total land of her father, whereas a *bāgō* marries a girl that gets only a part of her fathers property because she has brothers that are the main heirs. *Ghar damād* was mostly used as the general term, covering both *bāgō* and *motobana*.

leave his land to his daughter. If this happens, the daughter does not leave the house of her father at the time of her marriage and does not move to the house of her husband's family. Their marriage is uxorilocal. The landed property remains in the possession of the woman, it is not passed on to her husband. In this construction, heritage and descent is reckoned for one generation through the woman: her children belong to her clan and not to the clan of their father. Thus, the off-spring of Khan became Šalē and *uskūn* of Šalē. Because Šalē were in turn *uskūn* of the clans Žarē and Čučē in Barmas, the off-spring of Khan in Barmas were their *uskūn*, too. They mutually hold *haq šūba*. But they were not *uskūn* of the Catōrē, they no longer possessed any of their land because Khan, as *ghar damād*, had no right to inherit a share of his father's land. But the story was still a little more complicated. After Khan had married the Šalē-woman and became *ghar damād* in Barmas, he entered a second marriage with a Catōri-woman of Majini Mohalla. She received a piece of land from her father's possessions. The son from the first marriage, Sumalik, inherited the land in Barmas, whereas the son from the second marriage, Meherban, inherited his mother's land and settled in Majini Mohalla. His off-spring were *uskūn* of the Catōrē and not of the Šalē.

Figure 1: Genealogical Sketch of Kolōce in Gilgit



A *ghar damād* himself does not become *uskūn* of his wife's clan because he does not possess any of its land. Only his sons which inherit the land of the clan and the clan membership of their mother, become *uskūn*.

Uskūn, *sāmī* and *ghar damād* designate possibilities how people from outside could be integrated by the *muṭhulfau* via marriage and land into their clans and villages. There are different levels of integration. The integration of the *ghar damād's* children was almost complete. To them the rule of patrilineal descent was almost never applied. To put it differently, the criterion for clan membership was more possession of a clan's land than descent (for descent is conceived always as patrilineal); or, in other words, the logic of the practical advantage to secure the continuance of one's family was given priority over the formal logic of descent. New genealogies are constructed. When I asked the sons of Sumalik to give me their genealogy, they listed the ancestors of the Ṣalē. And as far as land rights are concerned, they really share all the rights of this clan. But still the integration is not totally realized. The "real" Ṣalē of Barmas know that they are not "real" Ṣalē. Another Ṣīn, who was present once when Sumalik's eldest son Subedar Hassan narrated "his" genealogy, told me afterwards that he wanted to point to the fact that his ancestors really had come from Koli. But he excused himself: "Subedar Hassan is older than me, thus I remained silent." Another time, when I asked Sumalik's second son about his descent from Kohistan, he responded: "Forget about Koli!" He insisted on being Ṣalē.

The off-spring of Zeydin and his brothers would like to erase their origin from Koli in the memories of their fellow Gilgitwālē because it implies a certain stigma. The majority of the Kolōce living in Gilgit today are not the descendants of traders. Their fathers had to leave Kohistan because of *duśmanī*, bloodfeuds. In Gilgit at first they mostly became tenants (*dehkān*) or landless labourers. That they had to leave their home country showed that they were "weak". Their reputation is not very good in Gilgit. Kohistan is more or less equated with *duśmanī*, it is regarded a stronghold of uncivilizedness. Kohistānī have an image of uneducated, violent hillbillies, and that image also rubs off on the descendants of Zeydin. They try to distance themselves from that stereotype by hiding their "real" origin. Their integration in Gilgit has been quite successful as they are recognized by local Ṣīn as *qōm* members of equal value and potential partners for marriage. This does not apply for all Kolōce that call themselves "Ṣīn". People are quite disparaging about them, just like Mohammad Abbas remarked: "Now they

tell that they are Ṣīn. But they are really Lōhār. Neither Ṣīn nor Yeškun but Lōhār! Now the Ṭhaṭhōn call themselves Rājput, Kolōce call themselves Ṣīn. What shall I say!"⁸⁹

The descendants of Khan in Barmas were not *sāmī* of the Ṣalē. As children of a *ghar damād* they themselves became Ṣalē. This was different for the Kolōce in Majimi Mohalla. In their genealogies there was no *ghar damād* relation to the Catōrē. They were *sāmī* of the Catōrē. When they called themselves (or were called by Ali Hassan) "Catōrē", it was obvious that they did not speak about the same manner of being Catōrō that applied, for instance, to Ali Hassan himself. Still, a relation, *rišta*, developed because the Catōrē bestowed a part of their land to Zeydin. "*Rištēdār*" means, in the restricted sense, "kin", "relative". More generally the term is applied to persons with whom somebody shares a relation through descent, marriage or shared landed property. This equation of kinship with shared property seems logical if we accept the thesis that land was once owned collectively by the clan. If land was the unalienable property of the clan, it could be given only to a foreigner if this foreigner was somehow made a member of the clan. Only then land was not *alienated*. It was not lost for the clan and could not be passed on to other foreigners. The foreigner became part of their own people. Thus the land remained their own, the clan did not give up their right to that land. This construction introduced a degree of flexibility into a seemingly rigid order. If male heirs were missing in a family, the danger of extinction could be averted. People from outside that seemed worthy could be bound to and integrated into the clan. The difference between inside and outside was defined by the land: all who did not possess land in Gilgit were *xānabadōś*, they had no rights, they did not belong to Gilgit. But this difference could also be lifted or at least made permeable through land, controlled by *muṭhulfau*.

4.2.4 Xāndānī and Bē-Xāndānī

Inside and outside is not a neutral difference. Landed property possesses not only economic value. Somebody who had to leave his home country to earn his living revealed that he had lost the land of his forefathers. His clan was too weak, he could not safeguard his property and ensure the living of its

⁸⁹ If Mohammad Abbas was in a bad mood, he voiced the same judgement about the off-spring of Zeydin.

members. Such a clan was not really a clan, such a family was not a real family. Therefore, people from outside that came to Gilgit to make their living as tenants, labourers or artisans were called "*bē-xāndānī*", i.e., "without family", "not belonging to a family". Seen in the light of the meaning of land, this term fits exactly. Just as somebody was included into a family when he received a piece of its land, a person who lost the land of his family also lost his family. He belonged to nobody and nowhere. Somebody who had to leave his land and home because of loss of land, feud or poverty, to earn his living far away, was not only materially, but also socially poor. He had lost the community that bestowed him rights and that made the individual a respectable and respected person.⁹⁰

A *xāndānī* man, on the contrary, lives in the community of his family and clan. He is respected before he personally gains respect because his clan's honour is transferred to him just as the misdemeanour of a member of the family would cause the whole family to fall into dishonour. Just as the family watches the conduct of all its members, every member has to defend the honour of the whole family. The homeless is *bē-xāndānī*, and because he has no family he also lacks honour. If he has to flee because of a feud, his flight is his admission that he was not able to defend the honour of his family. He has to work for others (as labourer or artisan) to ensure his livelihood. He has not equal, symmetrical relations to those he is working for. They do not dine with him, they would not give him a wife.

The categorization as *xāndānī* or *bē-xāndānī* is voiced as a strict judgement about groups that assigns a certain value to the individual, according to which groups he belongs to. But still, the evaluation is not fixed unequivocally for all cases. A *muḥhulfau* clan that has entered into marriages with

⁹⁰ Eggert reports from Moolkho and Turkho in Chitral that the lower class of tenants and artisans were literally *bē-xāndānī* because they were not organized as clans or lineages (unfortunately, Eggert does not tell whether the term "*bē-xāndānī*" was used also in Chitral). They did not possess lineage names. The lower classes in Chitral were actively prevented from forming kinship groups by the ruling classes. Members of the lower classes were often sold by the rulers into slavery. Further, the rulers were the sole proprietors of the land. Eggert interprets the prevention of clan formation in the lower classes as a measure of the rulers to prevent the surge of resistance against exploitation (Eggert 1990: 35ff.). In Gilgit, "*bē-xāndānī*" has to be understood more symbolically because *bē-xāndānī* people are also organized as clans.

people from outside will categorize these people as *xāndānī*, for one simply does not marry with *bē-xāndānī* people. Other clans that do not have similar relationships with those from outside may judge differently. Therefore Ali Hassan's evaluation of the Kolōce that are his *uskūn* differed from Mohammad Abbas' opinion.

Xāndānī designates a strictly ascriptive honour. Individuals that belong to a *bē-xāndānī* group but have achieved individual respect by way of education, affluence or a respected office, are never called *xāndānī* but *šarīf* (honourable).

Mohammad Abbas related the decay of the moral order in Gilgit and of the economic position of the *muḥhulfau* that he perceived, directly to the immigration of people from outside. They did not observe the old values. Mohammad Abbas explicated this connection with the example of a symbol of the old order: the *sili thali*, a kind of memorial that was erected for chaste and respectable women.

Mohammad Abbas: "Now I will talk about *sili*."⁹¹ Once there was a very good and *xāndānī* man. His name was Taki, he was Catōrō. He had a daughter. He put his daughter together with her mother into a house around which seven other houses were built [i.e., one was built into the other]. Inside the sound of a passing horse could not be heard. Nothing passed through the doors of the seven houses, there were no holes in the doors. She [the girl] did not know what was the sun, what was day and night. Inside there was no light. In her sixteenth year she became mature. Here marriage was prepared. It was announced to the relatives of her mother that she would come out of the house. The relatives of her father were also informed. Some brought stones, others brought earth and they built a *thali*.⁹² They built a *sili thali*. The relatives brought a sheep and an oxen. They were butchered, a meal was prepared. The relatives of the father prepared ornaments, the mother's relatives made clothes. They made a bride of the girl. The father's family spoke: 'If your girl has seen nobody, has heard neither a horse and a dog nor has spoken to anybody, then we will bring a goat'. They took a goat of two years and put her clothes on. They seated the girl between two old women. The goat was put in front of the girl. The old women said: 'When she [the goat] pees, then she [the girl]

⁹¹ "*Sili*" means "pure", "chaste".

⁹² "*Thali*" means a platform built from stone slabs.

has met a man. If she is completely pure, the goat will bow down in front of her'.

The goat bowed down, the drums started to play and a big *tamāśa*⁹³ began. Her mother's people danced on one side and her father's people danced on the other side. Everybody was very happy.

Now the girl was to be married. Her parents did not give her for two hundred *tōla*⁹⁴ gold. They also did not take silver for her. What was the price to be paid for her? It was an area of land on which twelve *mand*⁹⁵ seeds can be sown.

She was married. Twelve boys and twelve girls accompanied the bride. Twelve boys on twelve horses and twelve girls in silk robes. In the morning a goat was sacrificed, they were fed and bid farewell. They went to the bridegroom's house.

Whenever a great day came, when we sowed grain or something else, we prepared bread and carried it to the *sili thali*, and there we prayed."

I: "Where was the *sili thali*?"

Mohammad Abbas: "It was close to the old pologround. It has now been destroyed and a mosque was constructed there. At the place, where the Kolōce live. They destroyed *sili thali* and built a mosque in its place. Since *sili thali* has been destroyed, Gilgit is also destroyed. Now there is no longer in any house twenty or thirty *mand* wheat, twenty or thirty *mand* corn. Grain has to be bought in the bazaar. When we cannot get grain in the bazaar, we have to starve. Houses were built on the land, nothing is sown any more."

I: "At which occasions did the people bring bread to the *sili thali*?"

Mohammad Abbas: "When grain was sown we brought *cupatī*⁹⁶ and *ghī* there. There were little children, they got the bread in the name of God."

I: "Was *cupatī* only distributed by the Babusē?"

Mohammad Abbas: "When you sow today, you will bring the bread today. We sowed before, thus we brought the bread before. Whoever cultivates

⁹³ Music and dance.

⁹⁴ A gold weight.

⁹⁵ One *mand* is about forty kg.

⁹⁶ A thick bread prepared over hot ashes.

his field brings bread to *sili thali* and gives it to the people who come there."

I: "Did this bring a blessing?"

Mohammad Abbas: "Yes, it brought a blessing. From the day on which *sili thali* was destroyed Gilgit became spoilt. The people of Gilgit were very good. Now such people are no longer found in Gilgit. There was one such man, Colonel Hassan.⁹⁷ But he, too, died."

I: "When was *sili thali* destroyed?"

Mohammad Abbas: "I think it was in the time of the *maharaja*, maybe sixty or seventy years ago. I saw it myself. The times have changed. Now one becomes *member*.⁹⁸ Before we had the *raja*, the *wazīr*, that is finished. Now the son of a poor becomes *member*, just as the son of a rich person. Today nobody understands what is a great man and what is a small man. This time has passed."

I was very surprised that Mohammad Abbas related the destruction of *sili thali* to the construction of a mosque. Mohammad Abbas was himself a pious Shii who went daily to the Shii *jāma masjid* for the midday prayer, who had undertaken several pilgrimages to the holy places in Iraq and who refused several times to tell me about traditions that he himself categorized as "un-Islamic", in order not to "defile his mouth". In view of the conflict between Shiis and Sunnis – a conflict that dealt with the question of who are the better (or real) Muslims – nobody questioned the value of Islamization as such. But here it was obvious that Islamization in Gilgit was part of a process of change that was viewed ambivalently by some *mūthulfau*, at least of the older generation. In their eyes the past became a golden age. This glorification was the counterpart of a concrete critique of the contemporary conditions: bad persons could no longer be distinguished from good persons. There was no order any more. *Raja* and *wazīr* always came from good and estimated families, but now anybody, without regard of his family, could become *member*. Further, land had lost its "real" function: agriculture. Gilgit was no longer self-sufficient but depended on the import of grain. It

⁹⁷ Colonel Hassan was a hero of the freedom struggle against Kashmiri rule in 1947.

⁹⁸ Mohammad Abbas alludes to the members of the local bodies that are elected in the Northern Areas.

was dependent on Pakistan. We could say that Gilgit in total had become landless (judged from the original function of land), and therefore, according to "traditional" standards, Gilgitwālē had become *xānabadōs* – in their own country. They did not leave their place, but they became dependent on the produce of others. They were not fed from their own land. Just as before *bē-xāndānī* people from outside depended on the produce of the *muḥhulfau*, the Gilgitwālē now could not survive without produce from outside.

Agriculture was regarded the only respectable occupation because a man who cultivates his own fields (or the fields of his clan) is independent of others, he is obliged only to his own clan. *Qōm* that are traditionally connected with occupations other than agriculture are evaluated very negatively by the landowning clans of *Ṣin* and *Yeṣkun*. The negative image of *Dōm* is well known.⁹⁹ But I was surprised to learn that *Ṭhaṭhōn* (carpenters) were hardly regarded to be better. *Ṣōto* (leatherworkers), *Kamin* (agricultural workers) and *Gujur* (shepherds) had to bear a similar stigma. *Zargar* (silversmiths) which are the largest *qōm* of *Kaśmīrī* in Gilgit were regarded better but still as *bē-xāndānī*. In view of these strict differences of status it is hardly surprising that the British who came as colonial officers via India to Gilgit mostly termed these groups "castes". *Kaśmīrī* are generally not judged favouritely by *Ṣin* and *Yeṣkun*. There are only very few marriages between them. But those *Kaśmīrī qōm* that were traditionally connected with no other occupation than agriculture (like *Sāmō*, *Rāwat*, *Pāyar* or *Mīr*) are viewed comparatively positively.

4.2.5 Redistribution of Land by the Rulers

Of course, all *qōm*, and also those regarded strictly as *bē-xāndānī*, do possess land in Gilgit. But they are nobody's *sāmī* or *uskūn*. They were not integrated by marriage or bestowal of land into *xāndānī* groups.

Land was unalienable. Cultivable land (*ābādī zamīn*) could not be bought but only conquered. The most important way how land changed its possession until the second part of the 19th century was a special form of conquest: through the dispossession of subjects by the ruler and the allocation

⁹⁹ In Jammu and Kashmir *Dōm* were officially categorized as "untouchables"; they were the only group regarded in this way in Gilgit [cf. List of castes which have been classed as 'untouchables' for census purposes in the Jammu and Kashmir State, IOR R/2/1068/100].

of this land to groups that supported the ruler and that he wanted to favour. The power struggles which were endemic in Gilgit during the last century resulted in an enormous redistribution of land. As no contemporary data about this redistribution is available we can only judge its scope from present day sources and reminiscences.

Shah Rais Khan describes in his "*Tārīx-e Gilgit*" how the supporters of Raja Suleman Shah from Yasin used their relations after his conquest of Gilgit to evict proprietors and appropriated their land (1987: 235f.). A few pages later the author tells that Raja Mohammad Khan, after he had reconquered Gilgit, again distributed land among his followers.¹⁰⁰ All the battles in Gilgit resulted in great losses of life. The local population was further reduced by the cruel practice of the conquerors from Yasin, Suleman Shah and Gohar Aman, to sell a large number of people into slavery (Müller-Stellrecht 1981). We have to assume that large areas must have become uncultivated because of a lack of farmers. Therefore there was considerable need and space to settle immigrants in Gilgit.

The last regent of Gilgit that redistributed land in Gilgit in an autocratic manner was Wazīr Ghulam Hyder. Mohammad Abbas has mentioned already that during his reign "people from everywhere came to Gilgit". The Wazīr's grandson Khan told me some details about this allocation of land. Wazīr Ghulam Hyder gave land in Majini Mohalla to Kolōce. Presumably, this land was taken from Babusē as some members of the clan claimed. One Sartol who was Paṭhān according to Khan, obtained land in Kashrot. Ibrahim from Chitral got land in Basin. And the clan Āmdōkē obtained land in Ampheri.¹⁰¹

It is impossible to verify these examples in detail, but they can be taken as hints that land really was appropriated and redistributed by the rulers to a considerable extent. Today, many groups from outside live in Gilgit, the

¹⁰⁰ Shah Rais Khan writes that the land between Khomar and Kargah, that is all the land on the plain of the Gilgit Valley had been property (*malkiat*) of the *rāja* of Gilgit. Rāja Mohammad Khan allocated this land to the families that supported him and made them swear loyalty to the Trakhanē, the dynasty of the *rājas* of Gilgit to which Shah Rais Khan himself belonged. The inhabitants of Basin, Napura, Topchar (Ampheri), Nagrel, Sigali, Khomar and Sonikot were also given land.

¹⁰¹ A member of this clan told me once: "We are Yeṣkun, our forefathers came from Kabul!"

immigration of which the *muṭhulfau* today do not trace back to a bestowal of land by their ancestors. *Muṭhulfau* say about these people stereotypically that they have been settled in Gilgit by the rulers. Sometimes it is added that the rulers brought these people as servants. Among these people all Kaśmīrī, the Ṭhaṭhōn and a number of minor *qōm* are counted. They are neither *sāmī* nor *uskūn*, and most of them are emphatically called *bē-xāndānī* by *muṭhulfau*. Of course, land that was given by the rulers to people from outside without the consent of *muṭhulfau*, and, in most cases apparently against their will, could hardly establish a positive relation between *muṭhulfau* and immigrants. In the view of *muṭhulfau* these people are still not people of Gilgit in every respect, although their families may live in the town for more than seven generations.

This redistribution of land by the rulers indicates that *muṭhulfau* probably never were proprietors of the land to the extent they like to claim today. If the statements of Shah Rais Khan (see above) are historically correct, this would mean that even before the conquest by Kashmir, land in Gilgit was something like "*māl-e sarkār*", and that the peasants were not absolute proprietors of land but enjoyed only the right to cultivate. It is no surprise that the rulers' and the subjects' (i.e., the *muṭhulfau*'s) accounts about conditions of property and the relations to land differ to the extent of contradiction. I do not know any independent sources that would prove either version, but it seems probably that possession of land was more a question of *power* than of *right*. There are no proofs that the *muṭhulfau* are really the descendants of "original" inhabitants of Gilgit. Therefore, we cannot preclude that perhaps their families themselves had been settled in the place by the rulers just like those that are called "people from outside" today. The myth of the Babusē does not preclude this possibility, because in this story as well the *muṭhulfau* were brought to Gilgit by a king, by Shahzada Bahram.

4.3 The Change of the Boundary between Inside and Outside during Kashmiri and British Rule

The change of political conditions in Gilgit during the colonization, first by the Kashmiri troops and later by the British administration, also affected the boundary between inside and outside. In the perspective of *muṭhulfau*, the relation to the land defined the difference between people of Gilgit and people from outside and between *xāndānī* and *bē-xāndānī*. *Muṭhulfau* represent themselves as the original masters of the place who were entitled to

dispose the land so that they could leave it for cultivation to immigrants who were thus integrated into local clans. This representation probably depicts the claims of *muṭhulfau*, rather than historical conditions. It is still likely that much more people from outside were settled by rulers on appropriated land than by *muṭhulfau* on the land of their clans. We have no independent source about land relations at that time. But we know more precisely what happened after colonization. Whether or not the *muṭhulfau* had any right or power of disposing land before that, this right was certainly abolished after the establishment of Kashmiri power in Gilgit. Just as in Kashmir, the land was now considered property of the state: "In the Frontier Districts, Kashmir Province and the milkiat-i-sarkar tracts and tehsils of Jammu Province all Land is regarded as the absolute property of the State and the people (cultivators and others) hold it directly from the State" (Census of India 1911, Vol. 20, Part 1; 1912: 8).¹⁰² Any flexibility that had characterized the former conditions (either in rights of *muṭhulfau* or in the power of the local ruler to settle people from outside) was destroyed by the new order. The peasants of Gilgit were no longer the owners of their land and thus they could not settle people from outside on it.¹⁰³

The boundary between inside and outside was fixed by Kashmiri power not only through the establishment of new relations of land but also by the establishment of regular border controls and the strict regulation and

¹⁰² The "Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh" states laconically: "In Kashmir the land belongs to the ruler, and the cultivators are his servants" (1991 [1890]: 104). It is not clear at what time after the occupation of Gilgit by the *maharaja*'s troops land was declared *māl-e sarkār*. Maybe there was no formal declaration and the conquered land was simply regarded as property of the ruler, just as the governors from Kashmir did in the past. In Kashmir land was, even before the Dogra rule, property of the ruler, as the German traveller Carl Freiherr von Hügel reported in 1840 (Vol. 2: 337).

¹⁰³ But sometimes they found ways to circumvent the rules, as the story of Surat, a Shii scholar (*axun*) from Hunza shows. Because of an old foster-relationship to the *rāja* of Astor he travelled there quite often, always passing through Gilgit. He became friend of some Gilgitwālē and married his three daughters to men in the town. After a conflict between Shiis and Ismailis in Hunza which occurred around 1930 he decided to move to Gilgit himself. His son-in-law Rustam wanted to give him some land in Ampheri, but due to the Kashmiri regulation he was not allowed to do so. Somehow he managed to get that land declared a religious donation on which Surat constructed a small mosque. As a religious scholar he was then allowed to live in this place.

restriction of short-time immigration into Gilgit. People in Gilgit recall that there had been three control posts that sealed off the place from its surroundings. One was situated in Jutial, the second in Basin at the Kargah River and the third at the suspension bridge across the Gilgit River in Konodas. The rationale for this restriction is quite clear. Only after a long endeavour and many defeats had the Kashmiri been able to really establish their control in Gilgit. Since their first attack on Gilgit they continuously had to face bitter resistance from the surrounding areas. Thus they took pains to control the movement of all suspicious subjects.

Simultaneously with this restriction of movement the slowly developing bazaar and the first opportunities of employment under the British-Kashmiri administration made Gilgit more attractive for immigrants. Day visitors received the permission to enter the town, but they had to leave its area again before the fall of night. In Konodas, at that time not a part of Gilgit, a hostel was constructed where visitors (mostly from Hunza and Nager) that entered Gilgit for petty trading or minor service could spend their nights.¹⁰⁴

In 1933 Maharaja Hari Singh conferred the property right of land to the peasants that were cultivating it. *Māl-e sarkār* became *māl-e zāmindār*. This right of property included the right to sell land. But to restrict the sale of land by the peasants and to prevent the development of large-scale land-holdings it was fixed that a farmer was strictly allowed to sell not more than 25 percent of his property within ten years, and that he could sell his land only to other farmers (Census of India 1941, Vol. 22; 1943: 16). The *State Subjects Rule* had already determined that only subjects of Jammu and Kashmir could possess land in the state.¹⁰⁵ This rule was also valid in the

¹⁰⁴ Not only was immigration into Gilgit restricted but also emigration from the states of Hunza and Nager. Every man who wanted to travel from these states to Gilgit needed the permission of the ruler. Even when the British wanted to encourage migration of Hunzawālē because they wanted to take new areas around Gilgit under cultivation, they had to urge the *mir* to let his subjects go.

¹⁰⁵ The *State Subjects Rule* was established with the intent to restrict the activities of immigrants in the state. In 1888 Maharaja Pratap Singh was temporarily deprived of power under the charge of conspiracy with the Russians. The state's affairs were then decided by a State Council. The majority of the council's members were Panjābī. The council declared in 1889 Urdu instead of Persian to be the official language of the state. After that, many local officers were no longer able to do their service (Bamzai 1973: 701; Sufi 1949, Vol. 2: 813). The fact that many local officers were replaced with Panjābī resulted in considerable unrest

Gilgit Agency. But the regulation of 1933 that made land alienable was not applied in the Gilgit Wazarat.¹⁰⁶ In Gilgit the sale of land was still not allowed. But after the British had taken over the administration of the Gilgit Wazarat in 1935 they pushed the issue. On May 28, 1936, the Resident in Kashmir put the *Jammu Alienation of Land Regulation* with some minor changes into force in Gilgit. In Gilgit, the sale of land became more restricted than in Jammu and Kashmir. It was only possible to sell land to other inhabitants of the Gilgit Agency, and not generally to *state subjects*.¹⁰⁷

The first person who bought land in Gilgit was a *subedar* of the Gilgit Scouts, Mohabatullah Beg from Hunza. He acquired land in Sonikot in 1938. Other Hunzawālē followed and bought land mostly in Jutial, Khomar and Sonikot. At about the same time the British started to allocate *xālisa* as *inām* (exceptional reward) to deserving non-commissioned officers of the Scouts Corps.

The Gilgit Scouts that previously had come to Gilgit only for some weeks of training during summer were now stationed permanently at Gilgit to

among the Kashmiri subjects of the state, especially among educated Hindus. After renewed protests it was decided in 1912 that only subjects of the state of Jammu and Kashmir were entitled to be employed in the administration. For the first time it was defined who was a citizen of the state: only a person that possessed an *ijāzat nāma* that certified that he was entitled to all rights of citizenship could be a state subject. Because immigrants could also easily get hold of that paper, the situation remained practically unchanged (Bazaz 1954: 135f.). The campaign against immigrants was renewed after 1925 and resulted in a new and much stricter definition of state subjects. At the same time, beside the restriction of employment, it was fixed that non-state subjects were not allowed to hold agriculturally used landed property in the state (ibid.: 145f.; Teng, Teng & Bhatt 1977: 323f.).

¹⁰⁶ The government of Kashmir had decreed two regulations: the *Jammu Alienation of Land Regulation* and the *Kashmir Alienation of Land Regulation*. There were no rules for those areas of the state which (like Gilgit) belonged neither to the province Jammu nor to the province Kashmir (cf. Letter of the Political Agent to the Extra Assistant to the Resident in Kashmir; Gilgit, February 15th 1936; IOR R/2/1068/112).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. "Gilgit Subdivision Alienation of Land Regulation"; IOR R/2/1068/112. The regulation was backdated to August 1, 1935, the date of the British take-over of the *wazarat*. According to the regulation, the sale of land included the sale of the connected water rights. This rule contradicts all oral information by *mūthulfau* about the unalienability of water rights and with the present practice.

compensate the withdrawal of Kashmiri troops. At least in 1935 the restrictions on immigration into Gilgit were also lifted.¹⁰⁸ From then on, the number of Paštūn coming via Dir, Chitral and Gupis to Gilgit increased, who established their trade in the bazaar.

The politics of Kashmiri and British in Gilgit had a twofold effect on the boundary between Gilgitwālē and people from outside. First, the boundary became much more rigid. All customary avenues to integrate immigrants into the local society had been blocked by Kashmiri measures. The flexibility of the old delimitation between inside and outside that valued local interests and practical considerations higher than the strict execution of rules had to give way to regulations that served only the interest of a foreign power. Second, the administrative changes after 1935 resulted in a general opening up of Gilgit and the development of a range of economic opportunities in the town for people from outside. The local economy became monetarized and the extension of the administration resulted in the development of demand and thus triggered the growth of the bazaar. The administration also needed employees and created a small labour market. That is, immigrants no longer depended on the establishment of close relations with Gilgitwālē for developing economic opportunities in the town. They no longer had to become Gilgitwālē in order to make a living in the place. They could remain people from outside, not related with Gilgitwālē via marriage or land. Land became only one basis of subsistence and status among others. Land became itself a commodity. Thus the old value system of *xāndānī* and *bē-xāndānī* that was based on the indispensability of land for subsistence became slowly deprived of its fundament. The change of political conditions that resulted in the development of trade, employment and also education made spatial and social mobility possible – a mobility completely dissociated from the interests of those that considered themselves to be the real people of Gilgit, the *mūṭhulfau*.

¹⁰⁸ I am not aware of written sources neither about the establishment of the border control nor about its abolition. But the existence of the control is part of the "collective memory" in Gilgit. Information about the date of its abolition varies but those statements that link it to the establishment of the British administration in the *wazarat* seemed most probably.

4.4 The Effects of the Establishment of Pakistani Administration in Gilgit

It seems that in the beginning the implications of these fundamental changes were hardly realized. Gilgitwālē readily sold their land, happy to earn some money which they could spend for the new commodities offered in the bazaar. Land was hardly considered something limited or even scarce. Another change in administration was necessary for a sense of deprivation and loss of rights to be induced among Gilgitwālē.

At the time of independence of the subcontinent and the creation of Pakistan, the British also evacuated the Gilgit Agency and left its control to the *maharaja* of Jammu and Kashmir. A Kashmiri governor was installed at Gilgit in August 1947. But a few months later, on 1st of November, the Gilgit Scouts and some Kashmiri Muslim officers with the support of the local population revolted against the *maharaja's* rule and succeeded in throwing out the Kashmiri troops from the Gilgit Agency. Immediately, the merger of the Gilgit Agency with the newly-founded Muslim state was offered to the government of Pakistan. And about two weeks after the revolt a Pakistani representative, Mohammad Alam Khan from Mansehra, Hazara, assumed control and office of the political agent in Gilgit.

The revolting Gilgitwālē had reached their goal but they soon began to realize the ambivalence of their achievement: the Pakistani political agent executed his administration in quite an autocratic way which he could do without regard to local interests because his office was vested with all competences. The "Revolutionary Council" that had lead the revolt and the administration before the new political agent's arrival was simply dissolved, it was not even retained as a consultancy body. Local "heros" like Colonel Hassan Khan that instigated the revolt were humiliated and deprived of power.¹⁰⁹ Administrative changes that were hoped for, like the abolition of certain taxes and compulsory services, did not take place. And after the ceasefire in 1949, *xālisa* in Gilgit was allotted as *inām* (reward) to veterans of the war, most of them Hunzawālē (that is, people from outside), because many men from Hunza had served in the Gilgit Scouts. A strong resentment developed against people from outside that had taken over the administration and that were now allotted the land of Gilgit.

¹⁰⁹ For a detailed account of these events and a critical evaluation of its various sources cf. Sökefeld (in press a).

Especially Hunzawālē became the target of a protest movement because Ismailis from Hunza had established their own, exclusive institutions in Gilgit, centered around the central *jamāt xāna*. The *jamāt xāna*, the adjacent bazaar and a hostel made the establishment of people from outside in Gilgit visible to an hitherto unknown degree. Beside this, resentment of Shiis and Sunnis against the Ismailia contributed to the rejection of Hunzawālē.

At the beginning of the 1950s massive protests and demonstrations against people from outside and especially newly arrived Hunzawālē occurred in the town. The initiator of this movement, that was called "*puštūnī bāsindē*"¹¹⁰ because it fought for the rights of the "real" inhabitants of Gilgit, was a Kāsmīrī. The rejection of people from outside was not limited to the narrow circle of *muṭhulfau*. The demands raised in the demonstrations were: abolition of all taxes; no more allocation of *xālisa* to people that were not entitled to it; and the prohibition of sale of land to people from outside. For the purpose of the movement "*puštūnī bāsindē*" was defined quite generously. To preclude unnecessary antagonism all families that had possessed land in Gilgit prior to 1947 were considered *puštūnī bāsindē*. But still the movement and its demands were opposed decidedly by the administration. The leaders of the demonstrations were imprisoned and two *ulemā* (Islamic scholars), a Shii and a Sunni, were asked by the administration to speak against the movement. They preached in front of a demonstration that all Muslims were brothers and that therefore no Muslim should be excluded from the owning land in Gilgit. Ali Hassan who was a young supporter of the movement commented: "These *ulemā* were themselves people from outside."¹¹¹ Today many people regret that they did not support the movement. But now it is too late."

After that it was clear that the administration did not intend to safeguard what Gilgitwālē (no matter whether *muṭhulfau* or others) considered to be their rights. We can say that the administration used its power to establish Islam instead of *xāndān* and descent or locality as the basic paradigm of identity in Gilgit. All other identities had to become subordinate to the rationale of the common religion that was the very fundament of the new state. In Gilgit, too, Islam had been the primary motive for the revolt against

¹¹⁰ "Original inhabitants", "*pušt*" means "descent".

¹¹¹ One of them came from Punial, the family of the other stemmed from Nager and Astor.

the rule of the *maharaja* and for the merger with Pakistan. But Gilgitwālē were not prepared to give up their customary privileges and rights to land for the sake of a new ideal of equal rights of all Muslim brothers and fellow citizens of Pakistan. Probably, the political agent's move to get his policy sanctioned by the *ulemā* was only a legitimatory step. It is safe to conclude that the administration's aim was more to fix Pakistan's control in Gilgit than to establish Muslim brotherhood, because the inhabitants of Gilgit (and the whole Northern Areas) were denied their share in the equal rights of Pakistani citizens.¹¹² At any rate, the people of Gilgit were devoid of power to enforce their claims, and had to bow to the administration. Nominally, the rights of *muṭhulfau* toward the land are still valid, but especially the allocation of *xālisa* is said to be subject of much bribery and corruption, that is, of the arbitrariness of administration.

Immigration continued and still increased. Gilgit became mainly a market town. A crucial step in this development was the opening of the Indus Valley Road which became later part of the Karakorum Highway. This road facilitated the import of huge quantities of goods to Gilgit from where they were distributed into all parts of the Northern Areas. Even today the growth of the bazaar has not reached its limit.¹¹³

The construction of the Indus Valley Road also changed the pattern of migration. As early as in British times Paštūn from two villages in Dir had arranged a considerable quantity of trade to and in Gilgit. They brought their commodities with mule caravans via Chitral and the Shandur Pass, a long and tiring journey. The opening of the new road enabled jeep transport via Swat and the Indus Valley. The time needed for travelling was considerably reduced and became still shorter when the road was improved. Further, it now became possible to travel all the year round. The improved facilities induced many more Paštūn to engage in trade in Gilgit. Traders from Dir were joined by merchants from other places in the North-West Frontier

¹¹² Due to the pending Kashmir conflict, the Northern Areas are still not regarded a part of the constitutional territory of Pakistan. Therefore, the inhabitants of the Northern Areas do not have the right to vote in the elections of the constitutional bodies of the country and they are not entitled to approach the higher judicial institutions of Pakistan.

¹¹³ More and more bazaars are constructed in the town. In 1995, even the former barracks of the Gilgit Scouts that occupied a large area in the centre of the town were demolished and converted into a bazaar.

Province, like Mohmand. These people no longer settled permanently in the town but kept on moving between their home villages and Gilgit. They operate their shops together with companions, mostly brothers or other close relatives and became seasonal migrants. For two or three months they do business in Gilgit; then they are relieved by their companions and go home for the next months. While in Gilgit, they are living in rented houses together with men (mostly relatives) sharing the same life. All their families remain at home.

The implications of this way of life are obvious: these traders remain strangers who do not at all intend to integrate themselves and enter into social relations with Gilgitwālē apart from business relations. They do not come in contact with Gilgitwālē except in the bazaar. They do not learn the local language. Their living apart supports the development of strict prejudices and stereotypes: Pathān¹¹⁴ are considered homosexuals because they live together only with men. They are regarded *bē-xāndānī* because they live without family. They are suspected to be traffickers of drugs and arms.¹¹⁵ Pathān have become people from outside par excellence. They are considered a danger for the local order. They are viewed with equal suspicion by all other people in Gilgit, whether *muḥhulfau*, Kaśmūrī, immigrants from the surrounding valleys, or others.

Paštūn keep on moving between Gilgit and their villages because they are not at home in the town. And they never can be "at home" there because they are always moving. It is this continuous migration that makes Paštūn most suspect for Gilgitwālē. They appear not to be bound to a place or a family, they cannot be grasped. They also cannot be trusted in business. Also in business they cannot be trusted. "They come here, take our money and disappear again", people frequently formulate their reservations against Paštūn. Their trade is as suspicious and enigmatic as is their whole way of life.

¹¹⁴ I use both the ethnonyms "Pathān" and "Paštūn", because "Pathān" is the term employed by non-Pathān, whereas "Paštūn" is the self-designation.

¹¹⁵ For an analysis of these prejudices and stereotypes cf. Sökefeld (in press c).

4.5 The Difference Inside-Outside and the Opposition Village-Bazaar

Today, the difference between people of Gilgit and people from outside is reflected in the spatial structure of the town. The bazaar is the area of strangers. Not only many shopkeepers are men from outside but also their customers. There are so many shops that they could not survive by only serving the inhabitants of the town. The bazaar is the target of many visitors from the surrounding valleys who come for one or a few days.

For most of these visitors "Gilgit" and "the bazaar" are more or less synonyms. Unless they have relatives in other parts of Gilgit they will not leave the bazaar area during their stay. Here they can buy goods, approach the authorities, go to the doctor's and find the *hōtels* where they have tea, eat or pass their night. The bazaar is Gilgit's *public space*, the part of the town that strangers are allowed to enter.

The opposite pole of the bazaar is the private house into which no stranger is admitted. Visitors are welcomed in a separate guest room. The spatial extension of the house is its neighbourhood, often identical with one's own kin: the village, where one is at home. Strangers cannot simply enter the neighbourhood. Any man who wants to enter is stopped by the inhabitants and has to justify his visit.

The opposition of bazaar and village becomes most apparent in the behaviour of women and the rules of *pardah* (veil), that is, the rules of separation of the sexes. Females have to be hidden from the view of non-related males. Their own house is the place where women can move without restrictions. The farther women move to the outside the more their movements are restrained. They even do not enter the guest-room of their own house as long as a visitor is present. Within their own neighbourhood they are relatively free to move and visit other houses. But here, again, they will not stay without cause "outside", on the paths between the houses. A woman will leave her village only exceptionally. If she has to leave, for instance, to visit a clinic, she will go only in the company of a male relative and she will most probably cover her body completely with a black *burqa*. Her face will also be hidden behind a veil.¹¹⁶

In the bazaar, that is, in the anonymous public, normally no woman is seen. The bazaar is the space of men. Bazaar and village are separated by

¹¹⁶ For a cogent analysis of gender and space in Gilgit cf. Gratz (in press).

the rule of *pardah*. The practice that women do not enter the bazaar by far exceeds the Islamic standards of separation of the sexes. The veil hides the woman and thus safeguards the honour of the man. An unveiled woman equals a naked woman and is exposed to all kinds of temptations. The Shina expression *nātō bužok* describes what is to be prevented by *pardah*. "*Nātō bužok*" means to "cut off one's nose", i.e., to lose one's face. A young Yeškun from Jutial told me: "If somebody's nose is cut off it will never take root again. If a woman once fell into dishonour her family's honour is sullied forever."

Temptations and dubious morals are especially threatening in the bazaar. There, it is not the values of the family that are given importance, but individual profit. "*Bāzārī*" is a contemptuous designation for a man who values profit more than honour. The morals of the many strangers in the bazaar are difficult to assess and thus pose a danger. The strict rule of *pardah* developed only in consequence of the evolution of the bazaar, in response to the transformation of Gilgit into a centre that attracts strangers. The Census of India, 1901, still stated: "The *parda* system is almost unknown in the whole Frontier districts" (Vol. 2, Part 1; 1902: 87).

For the people of Gilgit especially the foreign traders, and among them in particular the Paštūn, constitute the danger in the bazaar. No customer comes from as far outside as do the Paštūn shopkeepers. Interestingly, Paštūn themselves assess the bazaar in quite similar terms. This is the reason why they leave their families and in particular their wives behind in their villages. They (like many people from rural places of the Northern Areas) regard Gilgit in total as a *bāzārī* place. They have no place in the town where they could retreat and where they would feel their families to be safe. Gilgit's villages are taboo for them, they are not allowed to rent a house there. Most of the houses of seasonally migrating Paštūn are found in the bazaar area or in Konodas, the part of the town on the other side of the river that was previously not regarded part of Gilgit. It is the place where in Kashmiri times one of the border controls was situated and where foreigners had to sleep in a hostel because they were not allowed to pass their nights in Gilgit. Today, migrants from many places are living there.

5. The Conflict between Shiis and Sunnis

5.1 Growing Antagonism

I have written above that Pakistan's administration tried to establish Islam as the all-embracing identity in Gilgit, as the identity to which other identities like locality and descent should be subordinated. To a certain extent this effort was successful. Religion, Islam, indeed provided in many respects the most important bond of belonging. The question is only *which* Islam: there is not only one Islam in the town. People in Gilgit can be distinguished according to three different Muslim denominations: Shia, Sunna and Ismailia. They all provide differing versions of the Islamic tradition and relate people to different sets of religious social institutions. Each tradition possesses its own mosques or prayer halls (*jamāt xāna* in the case of Ismailia) and networks of religious functionaries that are tied to social organizations reaching far beyond the local or regional context.

Even at the time Gilgit came under the influence of Kashmir probably all inhabitants considered themselves to be Muslims. But with conquest by Kashmiri troops a development that lasts until today was triggered which I call "Neo-Islamization": the increasing emphasis of orthodoxies (and orthopraxis) of either denomination at the expense of local heterodoxies (and -praxis). Most of the Muslims in Gilgit in the middle of the 19th century belonged to the Shia, if the difference between the "sects" was made at all. Ismailis were mainly found in the north and west of Gilgit. In Hunza, Ismailia became state religion in 1838 and only a few people there remained Shiis (Holzwarth 1994: 26f.). From Chitral, both Ismaili and Sunni influence had reached Ghizer, Yasin and Punial. The south of Gilgit, under the influence of missionary zeal from Hazara and Swat, was nearly exclusively Sunni.

The attacks from both the Yasin *rajas* and Kashmir on Gilgit brought the place under the pressure of Sunnis. The *rajas* of Yasin, Suleman Shah and Gohar Aman, are still remembered as cruel persecutors of Shiis in the region. It seems that under their power people have been forced to convert to the Sunna.¹¹⁷ The influence of Kashmir was much more refined. The

¹¹⁷ The conversion of others was an indirect result of this power. Many people fled Gilgit and took refuge in Darel, where, again, they were exposed to Sunni influence.

leader of the Sikh army that attacked Gilgit from Kashmir in 1842 was the Muslim Nathu Shah. He was not only concerned with establishing the power of his ruler, but also with changing the habits of the local people. Drew comments:

"... he acquired over these Dards a great influence, and he exerted it to make 'good Muhammedans' of them, to get them to attend more carefully to the forms of their religion. It is in fact that before Nathu Shah came (say in 1842) the Astor people used to burn their dead and not to bury them as Muhammedans should."

(Drew 1980 [1875]: 429)

Biddulph adds that Nathu Shah made the people give up non-Islamic festivals and persuaded the women to observe *pardah* (1971 [1880]: 102). This move continued even after power in Kashmir was taken over from the Sikhs by the Hindu *maharaja*. Leitner explicitly gives Kashmir the responsibility for extending the influence of the Sunna.¹¹⁸ Whereas hints of Nathu Shah and the early Kashmiri religious influence can only be found in books, the memory of the Kashmiri Governor (*wazīr-e wazārat*) Sardar Mohammad Akbar Khan who held office around the turn of the century is still alive in Gilgit.¹¹⁹ The beginning of the separation of Shiis and Sunnis in prayer and ritual is ascribed to his policy. The story about this is often told in Gilgit. Once Sardar Mohammad Akbar Khan received the *maharaja's* order to erect a Hindu temple in the centre of Gilgit, at the place where today the Sunni *jāma masjid* is situated. Being Muslim, the *wazīr-e wazārat* did not like the idea to build a temple in the centre of a Muslim town. He gathered the people of Gilgit without regard of their religious affiliation and gave them the order to construct a mosque at the place in question during the following night. The next day he sent the message to Srinagar that there was already a mosque at the assigned place and that he could not tear down the mosque

¹¹⁸ "Sunnism, however, is advancing in Dardistan and will, no doubt, sweep away many of the existing traditions. The progress, too, of the present invasion by Kashmir, which, although governed by Hindus, is chiefly Sunni, will familiarize the Dards with the notions of orthodox Muhammedans and will tend to substitute a monotonous worship for a multiform superstition" (Leitner 1985 [1887, 1894]: 49f.).

¹¹⁹ Sardar Mohammad Akbar Khan was (with some interruptions) for about ten years until 1907 the *maharaja's* governor in Gilgit. He was Muslim and Paštūn, and he is the only *wazīr-e wazārat* still remembered by many people in Gilgit.

and build a temple instead without provoking strong resistance. Therefore he proposed another site for the temple where it finally was built. Both Shiis and Sunnis came to the new mosque for prayer. But after some time the *wazīr-e wazārat* began to fear that one day a conflict about the mosque might emerge between the two communities. Therefore, he again gathered the inhabitants of the town and ordered them to construct an *imāmbarga*, the hall where Shiis assemble to mourn their martyrs and remember the events of Kerbela. It was built at Nagrel. When it was completed, the *imāmbarga* was given to the Shia community whereas the mosque was given to the Sunni community.

This is related as the first time that Shiis and Sunnis were formally separated in ritual. Mohammad Abbas stated:

"Sunnis and Shiis are separate. The Sunni *jāma masjid* was constructed by Shiis and Sunnis together. Both *firqē*¹²⁰ assembled there for prayer. Sardar Mohammad Akbar Khan came here and separated Shiis and Sunnis. Then Shiis and Sunnis built together the *mātamsarāi*.¹²¹ After that these took this and those took that."

I: "What was the reason for conflict that time?"

Mohammad Abbas: "There was no conflict. First we were together, then we separated. We had become different. Then, Sardar Mohammad Akbar Khan said: 'You will sit here, and you will sit there'. He separated us."

I: "Did the people of Gilgit want that?"

Mohammad Abbas: "Yes. That time nobody spoke about Shia or Sunna. Nobody knew who was Shii, who was Sunni. The government came and the people became enemies."

I: "Sardar Mohammad Akbar Khan separated Shiis and Sunnis?"

Mohammad Abbas: "Yes."

I: "Earlier it was not known who was Shii and who was Sunni?"

¹²⁰ *Firqa* (plural: *firqē*) stems from Arabic "*farq*", "difference". It is used most frequently for religious communities and thus equals the English "sect". But the word can also be applied to all other kinds of groups, like clan and *qōm*.

¹²¹ *Mātamsarāi* is another word for *imāmbarga*.

Mohammad Abbas: "Yes. In the past, we married with each other. Now conflict emerged."

The process of separation of the sects lasts until today. After the verdict of the *wazir-e wazarat*, Shiis also continued to pray in the Sunni mosque. But the emphasis on orthodoxy and the separation of sects was increasingly taken over by local agents. Since about the 1920s the first local men left Gilgit for Islamic places of learning and returned as religious scholars (*ulemā*). The Sunni community came more and more under the influence of the Deoband school. Formal organizations of the communities were founded in Gilgit. The awareness of difference grew. Since the end of the sixties, agents of the Sunni lay missionary movement "*Tablīgī jamāt*" have begun to visit the area.¹²² Although Sunnis emphasize that the *Tablīgī* never preach against other sects but only invite people to become good Muslims, Shiis often hold them responsible for the increased antagonism. It is told that in the beginning of the 1970s a *mulla* visited Gilgit who preached publicly against the Shia. For Shii identity, a most important date is 1979, the year of the Islamic revolution in Iran. In whole Pakistan the Shia, being only a minority, had been put under pressure by the policy of Islamization initiated by Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and intensified under the rule of General Zia ul Haq. Islamization meant Islamization according to a certain version of Islam and that version was certainly not the Shia. The events in Iran imparted a new self-consciousness to the Shiis. Today, a portrait of the Imām Khomeini is displayed in every Shia household in Gilgit, and many young men left the town for religious education in Iran.

The emphasis on religious, Islamic identity in Gilgit resulted not in an increasing value of community and equality, but, on the contrary, in growing antagonism and awareness of difference. The antagonism even culminates sometimes in questioning the Muslimhood of the other community. The first open conflict arose in Gilgit in 1972 on the occasion of the mourning procession of the Shiis during *muharram*. Sunnis objected to a customary assembly in front of the Sunni *jāma masjid* in the course of the procession. Tension grew with each *muharram*. Some years later, the first people were shot and killed during tensions. The administration tried to intervene but without success. Shiis mostly accused the administration to support the cause of the Sunnis. Beside the route of the processions, other

¹²² For an account of this organization cf. Metcalf 1994.

symbols became sources of conflict. For instance, Sunnis objected to the burning of *cirāgān*, Shii bonfires, on the mountains above Sunni religious schools. Antagonism culminated in 1988: in that year Sunnis felt offended because Shiis in Gilgit broke the fast of *ramadān* one day earlier.¹²³ During the next days several Shii villages close to Gilgit were attacked and destroyed by a Sunni force from the southern parts of the Northern Areas. Many people were killed. Besides this, during the following years many died in "religious tensions".

This is not the place for a detailed analysis of the development of the conflict. What is important here is that this conflict is again frequently interpreted in terms of the opposition inside – outside. Many people in Gilgit recall that there had been no antagonism between the religious communities in the past. People from outside have imported the difference and the conflict into the area. Thus it is again people from outside who destroyed the peaceful local order and subjected the people of Gilgit to antagonism and violence.¹²⁴ Further, many Shiis say that not only the conflict but the Sunna in general has come from outside. An image of the golden past is constructed when people of Gilgit enjoyed community, peace and, of course, their traditional rights and privileges. This image mainly hints at the experience of a present regarded as disastrous.

When I did field research in Gilgit relations between Shiis and Sunnis were highly polarized. The experience of conflicts accumulated in antagonism and increasing social separation. Social relations had been cut off in more and more realms. The experience of violence eroded on both sides the possibility for compromise.¹²⁵ As early as in the late 1960s marriages were

¹²³ The end of *ramadān* and therefore the end of fasting is ascertained by the observation of the new moon. There is an official committee in Pakistan to decide about that issue but frequently Shiis do not rely on that committee but make their own observations.

¹²⁴ Many British accounts report instead that even at the time of Kashmiri conquest and before, the relations between the different sects were not very peaceful. Cf. Biddulph 1971 [1880]: 15; Leitner 1985 [1887]: 52f.; Neve 1984 [1913]: 126.

¹²⁵ The development of the conflict in Gilgit fits Kuper's description of polarization: "Polarization is conceived here as involving mutually hostile action ... I reserve the term for an intensification of conflict by aggressive action and reaction. Polarization then is a process of increasing aggregation of the members of the society into exclusive and mutually hostile groups, entailing the elimination of the middle ground and of mediating relationships. Episodes of conflict accu-

no longer arranged between Shiis and Sunnis. No new bonds of kinship were established between the sects. The cultivation of existing relations decreased steadily. For example, when I was in Gilgit only few people still visited their relatives of the opposing community at occasions of marriage or other festivals. In some villages and parts of Gilgit antagonism even resulted in a resettlement process: people of a community that were a minority in a particular village moved to neighbourhoods where their community formed the majority. In addition, the local body elections of 1992 were fought nearly exclusively on the Shia-Sunni issue.

In contrast, cooperation within the communities was intensified. Formal organizations like welfare organizations and cooperative societies mostly did not cross religious boundaries. Conflicts between members of the same community were increasingly solved by Islamic procedure in order not to expose internal disunity to the public of the courts. Long lasting feuds between members of the same community were arbitrated and solved in order to promote unity.

The antagonism had become a premise that defined perception and the experience of life. How powerful this premise had become I understood during an event in March 1993. When I passed through Jutial and Khomar on my way to the bazaar I saw that everywhere along the road policemen were posted. I learned that in the night before a man had been murdered in Khomar: Mirza, a Hunzawālā who had become Sunni long ago. He was killed during night prayer in his own house. His wife reported to the police that she had noted nothing suspicious. Immediately the rumour was born that Mirza had been killed by a Shii.

I went to the house of the Shii Ali Hassan and found him engaged in conversation with an *axun*, a Shii religious scholar. They were talking about the murder. The *axun* complained that nothing was known about the murderer,

mulate. There are corresponding ideologies ... presenting simplified conceptions of the society as already polarized into two antagonistic groups with incompatible and irreconcilable interests, rendering inevitable the resort to violence" (1977: 128). Religious ideologies that define the highest and most important values are especially apt to legitimize polarization. The victims of their own groups are called "martyrs", and thus the ideology not only rationalizes killing for its purpose but also dying for it. Mediating relationships are declared illegitimate. The ideologies are much more uncompromising than everyday social interaction, but such interaction increasingly comes under pressure.

but everybody thought about the religious conflict and suspected the Shiis. Ali Hassan recalled the misdeeds of the Sunnis and claimed that a year ago a Sunni *mulla* had been caught raping a girl in a religious school. Then he quoted from a newspaper that a Sunni political party had recently designated the Zikris¹²⁶ as non-Muslims, and he related how Sunnis had assaulted the prayer hall of the Ahmadis in Gilgit after they had been declared non-Muslims, and how the Shiis at that time tried to protect the Ahmadis.¹²⁷ "You see", he continued, "Shiis never would do something like that. But actually the Sunnis would also not do that. It is a new religion!"

In the afternoon Mirza was buried. A big crowd gathered at the cemetery. A Sunni politician held an address and accused the Shiis. I visited the house of the Sunni Hidayatullah Khan and he, too, immediately spoke about the murder:

"You see, again they have killed somebody. Since a long time no Sunni has killed a Shii. But they continue to kill innocent people."

I asked: "Is it now sure that it was a Shia-Sunni murder?"

Hidayatullah Khan: "We don't know ... But the murderer was a close relative of Hussein Ali [who had been killed by a Sunni nine months before]. Murderer and victim were closely related. I have heard that there was some argument between them."

I: "Is it really known who was the murderer?"

Hidayatullah Khan: "I have heard it, it is told. I don't know whether the police have already arrested somebody. Mirza was a scholarly man, he was old. What harm can an aged man do? I knew him from the time I was a young boy. He had learned reading the Koran and then he taught us. He was my teacher. And he liked me very much."

I: "Is it known about what he quarrelled with his relative?"

¹²⁶ The Zikris are a religious community in Baluchistan. They are mainly regarded as another Islamic sect.

¹²⁷ The Ahmadis were officially declared non-Muslims in 1974. This declaration provoked violent riots against them.

Hidayatullah Khan: "I do not know, maybe about land, about religion, who knows? Since the death of Hussein Ali there was no assassination of a Shii. You see? They are like this. They continue to kill."

These conversations with Ali Hassan and Hidayatullah Khan were remarkable and revealing because both men were no uncompromising partisans of their respective community. On the contrary, both frequently emphasized that they regretted and disapproved the conflict very much. Both were committed to cultivate the relations with their kin from the opposite community as actively as possible. Still, they were unable to view the murder without prejudice but perceived it under the premise of the Shia-Sunni conflict. Ali Hassan set the accusation against the Shiis off against the misdemeanour of the Sunnis. And Hidayatullah Khan could not refrain from accusing the Shiis although he had to admit that nothing was really known about the murder. The conflict had become the premise of perception and interpretation of events. The conflict was not only an experience itself, it had become a category that generally structured further experience.

In this atmosphere of rumours taken as facts after Mirza's assassination the situation became very tense. A further outbreak of violence between the communities was imminent. The administration took precautions and intensified patrolling of police in the streets. Ten prominent leaders of both communities were taken into preventive custody. Shiis were incensed by the arrest of their *ulemā* and felt harassed by the administration because there was no proof that a Shii had killed Mirza.

In the context of the Shia-Sunni conflict, rumours were so powerful that even the administration felt forced to act on their basis. But the administration's action only threatened to increase tension. Although less Shii *ulemā* than Sunnis had been taken into custody, Shiis felt offended and interpreted the administration's move as further proof of its conspiracy with the Sunni community.

After a few days the murder case was resolved. Mirza had been killed by his own (Sunni) son-in-law. First, the son-in-law had been covered by the family, and in between he had taken refuge in Darel. There was no connection between this murder case and the Shia-Sunni conflict, but the connection was construed. And it did not vanish after the case was solved. Sunnis still judged it reasonable to have suspected Shiis first, and Shiis felt their

position confirmed that Sunnis fanned the conflict with rumours and unfounded suspicion.

5.2 Plural Identities and the Limits of Polarization

So far, I have described how the conflict has polarized relations between both religious communities. The conflict divides the population into two antagonistic blocks. Non-antagonistic relations between them on the basis of kinship, neighbourhood or shared political interest became less and less possible. It was nearly impossible to define interest independent of the conflict. For example, it became an interest a priori that a candidate of their own community won elections. Experience became pre-structured by the religious antagonism. Polarization also meant that the other identities of a person lost importance in comparison. Polarization implies a tendency of de-pluralization. But this pre-structuring of experience and de-pluralization of identities was not total. Religious identity did not become the sole identity, not even in every case the most important, most fundamental identity.

Before I understood that the different identities in Gilgit cannot be sorted into a fixed hierarchy, I frequently asked people as to which identity was their most important one. Mostly, either *qōm* or religion was mentioned, but not every informant was ready to decide the relative importance of both identities. Some men, who had declared religion to be their most important identity at one occasion, regarded their belonging to their *qōm* more fundamental and important in another situation.

I discussed these questions with Ghulam Hussein, a Sunni Şin from the village Khur. His statements proved the ambiguity of the topic. When I asked him about the contemporary relevance of *qōm* in Gilgit he answered:

"Today, Şin, Yeşkun, etc., *qōm*, is unimportant. There are only Shiis and Sunnis."

I asked: "What is most important for yourself, to be Sunni or to be Şin?"

Ghulam Hussein: "Religion is very important. Compared with religion, *qōm* is nothing. But you can change your religion whereas you cannot change your *qōm*. Therefore *qōm* is more fundamental than religion!"

Ghulam Hussein distinguished between ascriptive identity, which is unchangeable and fundamental for this reason, and non-ascriptive identity

that is of comparatively less importance. Practically, religious identity is also allocated by birth in Gilgit because there are no conversions any more. But theoretically religious affiliation can be changed.¹²⁸ The relative importance of *qōm* and religious identity is especially ambiguous for persons that I will call "traditionally minded". They are persons that stick to the importance of the value order of *xāndānī*, that is, to an order which is less oriented at personal achievement than at values and statuses that are ascribed by birth. These persons have to live with contradictions inherent to different values and identities. Remember how Mohammad Abbas evaluated the destruction of *sili thali* and the erection of a mosque in its place, that is, the exchange of traditional values for Islamic ones, very negatively, but how he always took pains to present himself (and to be!) a very pious Shii.

As unmediated as in my discussion with Ghulam Hussein real life rarely demands a decision between *qōm* and religious affiliation. Other than my questions provoked there is normally no exclusive alternative between both identities. Every person belongs both to a *qōm* and to a religious community. Depending on context and specific situation one or the other can be regarded as more important. One result of the polarization between Shiis and Sunnis is that religion became relevant in more and more contexts that are not originally "religious". But still polarization was not total, religious affiliation did not supersede all other identities. Kuper maintains that plural societies are rarely completely polarized, that polarization mostly coexists with countermovements:

"Dualism, ambiguity, ambivalence – I am not sure what terms to use – generally characterize the relations between the plural sections. Outside of absolute genocide there are always elements of both convergence and divergence, of cleavage and integration, between the plural sections."

(Kuper 1977: 109)

¹²⁸ Sometimes, *qōm* membership can also be changed individually. I met many Yeskun in Gilgit that were patrilineal descendants of Šin. They always explained that one of their ancestors had "written" Yeskun instead of Šin in administrative files which made use of the category *qōm*. This new *qōm* membership was passed on to their off-spring (cf. Sökefeld 1994). What differentiates religious affiliation and *qōm* membership is not the factual unchangeability of belonging, but an inverted relation of theory and practice: *qōm* membership is theoretically fixed once and for all but can be changed practically, whereas religion is theoretically changeable but can hardly be changed in practice today.

He emphasizes that this ambivalence is not only a characteristic of situations in plural societies, but also of acting individuals. S/he often has the choice between various orientations. That is, how a situation is evaluated which is not fixed a priori, also depends on the interpretations of the actors involved. Kuper mentions a "middle ground" between the polarized groupings:

"By the middle ground, I refer to those relationships between people of different racial, religious or ethnic background, and those ideologies, which might form the basis for movements of intergroup cooperation and of radical change, without resort to destructive violence ... Where the distinctive identities are maintained, the basis for mediation might be sought in a network of cross-cutting relationships including joint participation in associational activities."

(Kuper 1977: 109)

In a plural society like Gilgit, where different sets of identities cross-sect one another, this middle ground which prevents total polarization mainly consists in those identities that do not run parallel to the polarized ones. A situation can be related to a different context in which non-antagonistic identities are relevant, or where even a common identity can be found.

Ali Hassan, the Shii Catōrō, is like Ghulam Hussein a person that does not in every case subordinate his other identities to his religious belonging. He has shown me that in spite of the endemic conflict between Shiis and Sunnis it is possible to act "unconventionally", that is, contrary to the tendency of polarization. Beside his affiliation with the Shia he values especially his *qōm* membership (Yeskun), his clan (Catōrē) and his local identity as a *muṭhulfau* and *motobār* of Ampheri.

One result of the conflict between Shiis and Sunnis is that disputes between members of the same community are often solved by the intervention of their *ulemā*. Disputes should be solved quickly to promote internal unity, and they should not be brought to public courts in order not to expose internal disunity, as I have pointed out above. But Ali Hassan showed me that quite the contrary is possible: he, a respected Shii, arbitrated a dispute between Sunnis.

Ali Hassan was a retired employee of the administration who is now only part-time engaged in agriculture. His fields were cultivated by a labourer

and he only had to supervise the work. Ali Hassan possessed a very extensive network of social relations which he fostered mainly through a considerable visiting activity. The basis of this network was mostly "kinship". His kin were not limited to Gilgit, to the Shia or even to his *qōm*. He had relatives nearly everywhere. More importantly, he knew who was his relative, that is, he knew how to relate others to himself. He defined "kinship" or "relatives" very extensively. Nearly everybody he wanted to accommodate within this realm, he was able to accommodate. Kinship also included *unīlo*, that is, "milk-relationships". Literally, "*unīlo*" means "foster-relationships". In the past, babies or little children especially of families of higher status were often not reared in their parents' family but in other, not patrilineally related families. Frequently, these families belonged to different *qōm* and had a lower status. *Unīlo* created bonds in certain respects similar to "real" kinship. For example, close *unilē* (plural) were not eligible as spouses because such a relationship was regarded as incest. *Unīlo* also can be declared symbolically without a real foster-relationship. Thus, *unīlo* is an instrument to create kinship and to extend one's network. Ali Hassan had *unilē* among Śin, Gujur, Kolōce, Hazārawālē and other Yeškun families. Sometimes he simply declared all Yeškun to be his relatives.

Ali Hassan was a pious Shii. He never left out prayer and held his *ulemā* in very high esteem. He considered the conflict between the communities a great evil and he considered the Shiis to be in the right. Frequently he said that the Shiis just continued as they always did, whereas the Sunnis changed and took to a new religion. He judged many Sunnis to be no longer real Sunnis but "Wahābī".¹²⁹ He differentiated between "real" (that is: traditional) Sunnis and others. He especially took pains to maintain the relations to his Sunni kin.

One afternoon in *ramadān* I was sitting in Ali Hassan's house when Hamid, a man from Jagir Basin, came to see him. He asked Ali Hassan to come to his house the same evening and to arbitrate a dispute.

¹²⁹ There were always rumours among the Shiis that the more extreme Sunnis in Gilgit were sponsored by Saudi Arabia and its Wahabiyya version of Islam. The Wahabiyya also has some tradition on the subcontinent. In the 19th century, Sayyid Ahmad Bareilly fought a war in the North-West Frontier Province against the British powers in the name of the Wahabiyya (Ahmad 1966).

Hamid was a Hazārawālā. He had been born in Hazara but came to Gilgit when he was a little child because his father drove mule caravans from Balakot across the Babusar Pass to the town. His mother tongue was Hindko, he also spoke Pashtu, but he explained that most frequently he used Shina. Many years he had lived close to Ali Hassan's house in Ampheri. Only recently he had moved to Jagir Basin. Ali Hassan told me that Hamid's wife was his *unīli*. I was surprised to learn that but he did not explain the relation. I also was not told what the dispute was about.

We went to Jagir Basin but stopped on the way in the village Basin to take Abdul Shah, Hamid's son-in-law, who was also involved in the dispute. Abdul Shah was Kolōco and Yeškun. We arrived at Hamid's house and went into the guest-room. Beside the persons already mentioned, a young Kolōco, two elder Yeškun from Basin, a son of Hamid, Hamid's wife, and later also his daughter were present. Except Ali Hassan and me all were Sunnis.

From the heated discourses of Hamid, Abdul Shah and one of the Yeškun from Basin I learned the reason of the dispute: Alam Shah, Abdul Shah's father, had repeatedly beaten his daughter-in-law, that is, Hamid's daughter. When he had beaten her again that day she finally ran away and came to her father's house. Now it was to be decided whether she should return and what compensation was to be demanded for the beating. The discussion was very agitated. All were unanimous in that Alam Shah had acted wrongly. He was repeatedly called "*pāga!*", that is, an insane person. His son Abdul Shah also did not support his part. Hamid indicated that he felt deeply humiliated. Obviously, there was no difference between his daughter and her husband Abdul Shah.

Ali Hassan just sat there and listened calmly. Only rarely did he speak a few words. One time he pointed to the fact that he was the only Shii in this assembly. Hamid responded: "Yes, Shiis are better than Sunnis!" Slowly dusk was falling. The discussion was superseded by another unrest; time to break the fast was coming close.

When it was time for the Sunnis to break the fast, the young men lighted cigarettes and began to smoke intensely. A plate with dates was passed around. Shiis break their fast only few minutes after Sunnis. Therefore Ali Hassan took a date in his hand but did not eat. Repeatedly he asked me the time and only when it was late enough he put the date in his mouth. Tea and

biscuits were brought, and then a complete meal with rice and *nasālo*.¹³⁰ After the meal one of the Yeškun from Basin left. The other man started a long-winded discourse in which he explained his view of the dispute. Ali Hassan kept silent except for asking the speaker several times to hurry up. When he finally came to an end, Ali Hassan simply pronounced his arbitral award: Hamid should forgive Alam Shah and his daughter should return to her father-in-law's house the following day. Abdul Shah, acting for his father, offered a goat as compensation. But Ali Hassan forgave this compensation, for, he explained to me later, "these are all poor people". After Ali Hassan had finished, Abdul Hamid stood up, and offered his hand to Hamid. Hamid remained seated and did not take the hand but kept his arms folded and murmured unwillingly: "When one is dishonoured one time, one can forgive. The second time, too; but one time or another it becomes too much." Then Abdul Shah took Hamid's feet, lifted them a little and kissed them. After that he took seat again. Ali Hassan offered a prayer. He prayed in Shina for the family's well-being and reconciliation and concluded with an Arabic prayer.

After we had left the house I asked Ali Hassan whether Hamid had accepted his arbitration, because I had got the impression that he had not been pleased. "Sure", Ali Hassan answered, "this is solved." He added: "Did you see, this old man talked all the time and I said nothing. But I alone made the decision!"

When I visited Ali Hassan the next afternoon, he told me that Alam Shah had come in the morning to thank him for the arbitration. Alam Shah had explained that he had beaten his daughter-in-law because she had been sitting in the garden, glimpsing outside. Ali Hassan: "I asked him: 'And, was there another man?' Alam Shah answered: 'No.' I said: 'Then, what fault did she commit? There was no reason to beat her!'"

Ali Hassan told me that both Hamid and Alam Shah were *harāmī ādmī*, that is, bad men, but that Hamid's wife and daughter were very good women. About six years ago, when Hamid was still living in Ampheri, Ali Hassan already had solved a dispute between the two families. That time, the marriage contract (*nikā*) between Abdul Shah and Hamid's daughter had already been concluded, but the woman was still living in her father's house.

¹³⁰ *Nasālo* is dried meat taken from animals that are butchered at the beginning of winter to prevent scarcity of fodder.

Due to some reason Hamid did not let her go and even talked about getting her divorced again. One night he was assaulted in his house by Abdul Shah and some companions. Hamid and his wife were injured with knives, and Abdul Shah abducted his wife who voluntarily accompanied him. They took refuge in Koli (Kohistan). The next day Hamid's wife came to Ali Hassan and asked him for assistance. She wanted to show him her wounds but due to *pardah* she could not expose herself in front of him. Therefore she declared herself to be Ali Hassan's *unīlī-dī*¹³¹ and by thus becoming a close relative could show her wounds.¹³²

Abdul Shah's companions that were involved in the assault were arrested by the police. A *jirga* was constituted that should solve the case.¹³³ The *jirga* made Hamid to accept a compensation of 8,000 Rupees from Abdul Shah. On bail of again 8,000 Rupees the culprits were released. Ali Hassan gave the money for the bail because the culprits were poor. I asked him whether he got the sum back and he replied: "No, I gave it to Abdul Shah in order to pay the fine." I inquired again, whether he did not finally get it back: "Yes, later I took it back again from Hamid!"

Further, Ali Hassan had promised Hamid to get his daughter back from Koli. The police had already tried four times unsuccessfully to make Abdul Shah and his wife return to Gilgit. Then Ali Hassan travelled to Koli. He explained that he could go there because he had relatives in the place. By

¹³¹ "Milk-daughter".

¹³² Hamid's wife here displayed an example of practical dealing with *pardah*-norms: she changed her relationship with Ali Hassan from *bē-harām* to *muḥaram*. *Muḥaram* are all persons that cannot be married because this marriage would amount to incest. They are ego's siblings, children, grandchildren, parents and grandparents, and his or her parents' brothers and sisters. *Unīlī* that have the analogous *unīlo*-relationship to ego are equally *muḥaram*. All other persons (of the opposite sex of course) may theoretically be married, they are *bē-harām*, that is, marital relations with them are not forbidden (*harām*). *Pardah*-norms do not rule one's relations with one's *muḥaram*, because sexual relations with them are already precluded by the incest taboo. Hamid's wife, by declaring herself Ali Hassan's *unīlī-dī*, became his *muḥaram*. Thus *pardah* between them could be lifted.

¹³³ Sometimes criminal cases are still solved by a *jirga*, i.e., a council of respected and elderly men. In such a case the magistrate delegates the case to the *jirga*. The solution of the case has to be conveyed to the magistrate. When the magistrate accepts the arbitration, the case is closed.

"relatives" he meant that there were Yeškun. He said: "They are all our people!" He knew that Abdul Shah and his wife had taken refuge in the house of a *malik*.¹³⁴ Ali Hassan knew this *malik*. Once the *malik* had stayed in Ali Hassan's house when he had to come to Gilgit for some trial. Ali Hassan promised the *malik* that Abdul Shah would not be arrested in Gilgit. He personally guaranteed for Abdul Shah's freedom with another sum of 9,000 Rupees. Then Abdul Shah and his wife returned together with Ali Hassan to Gilgit. The decision of the *jirga* was conveyed to the magistrate and the case was closed.

When Ali Hassan had completed his narration of the case, he said:

"You see, I am Shii, they are all Sunnis. Still I have solved the dispute. There is nobody among them who could do that. Yesterday I told them: 'I am the only Shii here but you can do me no harm.' They agreed!"

I asked him: "Would you again go to Koli today?"

Ali Hassan: "Of course! In 1988, I went to Darel only five days after the tensions had ended because one of my relatives at Samigal¹³⁵ had become ill. He had sent me a letter and I visited him. Five days after the tensions! When I was there, I told them: 'You are all Sunnis, I am the only Shii. If you want, you can kill me.' But they cannot, because I am strong! I went there via the road,¹³⁶ and all along the road there are Sunnis. But they cannot harm me."

He showed me his open hand and said: "Look, when your hand is good, everything is good, everything will have a good outcome."

Then he clenched his fist: "But when your hand is like that, everything will be bad!"

The simple course of events, the conflict and its arbitration by Ali Hassan gave the impression that no conflict existed which had polarized relations between Shiis and Sunnis and reduced social relations to a minimum. Ali Hassan was a *motobār* of his village and his *qōm*, and as *motobār* he arbitrated a conflict without regard to the fact that the parties involved belonged to the opposite religious community. But Ali Hassan knew very well the peculiarity of his role. Several times he explicitly pointed to the fact that he

¹³⁴ A "big man".

¹³⁵ Samigal is the main village of Darel.

¹³⁶ That is, he went there via KKH and did not take the shortcut via Kargah.

was the sole Shii among Sunnis. He had no fear and he did not curry favour. To the contrary, he let shine through that he was very proud to be Shii. And Hamid instantly confirmed that Shiis were better than Sunnis. When it was time to break the fast, Ali Hassan stage-managed his position as that of the Shii that holds the fast longer and thus more consequently than the Sunnis. While they were already smoking and eating, he waited until the time permitted him to chew the date. I am quite sure it is no overinterpretation to suppose that Ali Hassan was very pleased by his role of the Shii who was called to arbitrate among Sunnis.

These events contradict the trend I have described before: that both Shiis and Sunnis were eager to solve internal disputes internally in order not to appear divided and thus weak. Exactly that image that was conveyed by Ali Hassan and the disputants, that the Sunnis took pains to suppress – as were Shiis in the opposite case. This contradiction cannot be solved. It is another proof of the plurality of society in Gilgit. In spite of the conflict and of polarization that had become an ever present context of everyday life, there were persons that did not deduce all norms and guidelines of their actions from this antagonism. In Gilgit, there were not only those identities that were deduced from membership in religious groups, but many more identities, and thus obligations, values, loyalties and bonds of belonging.

I do not know why Abdul Shah and Hamid did not call a Sunni arbitrator. But their action shows that they did not belong to those Sunnis that judge religious affiliation as most important. Ali Hassan seemed an appropriate arbitrator because of his personality and the respect he commanded as *motobār*. Further, the disputants were related to him by various (and differing) affiliations. Abdul Shah and Alam Shah were, like Ali Hassan, Yeškun. Hamid had lived many years, like Ali Hassan, in Ampheri. Because of these affiliations Ali Hassan felt obliged to them, although they were not only Sunnis but also belonged to two groups that were not very esteemed in Gilgit (Hazārawālē and Kolōce) and although Ali Hassan called each of them individually a *harāmī ādmī*. Ali Hassan gained much prestige from his role. He was affirmed in his position as *motobār*, he was superior as Shii to Sunnis, and he could present himself as such in front of me. There were considerable differences in status between Ali Hassan on the one hand and Alam Shah and Hamid on the other. These differences were enlarged in favour of Ali Hassan by his acting as arbitrator. He was rich, they were poor; he was *mūthulfau*, they were people from outside; he was *motobār*,

they were *harāmī ādmī*, and, this amounted also to a difference in status in this situation, he was Shii and they were Sunnis.

This arbitration by Ali Hassan is an example for a situation that is obviously not interpreted by the actors involved through only one of the contexts provided by the plurality in Gilgit. A necessary context for the understanding of the events was the common local belonging or *qōm* membership of Ali Hassan and the disputants. But by his staging of his position of a Shii among Sunnis, Ali Hassan also introduced the religious antagonism to this context. Although the choice of the arbitrator and the action of those involved were not determined by the religious conflict, it became something like the background context of the situation.

Ali Hassan's role in these events cannot be generalized. Not every Shii could arbitrate between Sunnis, and not all Sunnis would have called and accepted a Shii (and of course not any) as arbitrator. One needs the appropriate means, both symbolic and real capital, to be eligible for such a position. Ali Hassan's symbolic capital, his prestige, is decisive, but the Rupees which he had invested in the first dispute can also not be neglected.

Abdul Shah and Hamid called an arbitrator whom they knew "practically", who had already arbitrated successfully, and from whom they thus could expect a reasonable decision. They put practical reasoning to the fore, not theoretical considerations of group membership. The plurality of Gilgit's society increased their possibilities to choose because it relativized the polarization between Shiis and Sunnis. For a person was not only a member of a religious community, a condition that could preclude his arbitration, but he also possessed other identities that established relations and thus made a mediating action possible.

6. Land and Conflict in Manot¹³⁷

Not all conflicts can be solved as smoothly as the dispute between Hamid and Alam Shah. There are other conflicts with many more parties involved, with antagonistic interests that cannot be arbitrated and with, regarding conditions of power and resources, much more different opponents. Such conflicts can continue for years. In this section, I will focus on a conflict

¹³⁷ In order to disguise the identities of the persons involved, in this chapter not only the names of individuals but also the names of villages are pseudonyms.

that meets these characteristics: the struggle about rights to *nautōr* in Manot. This conflict is a kind of synthesis of the issues considered before. Here, the discourse of the *muḥulfau*, the opposition between people from Gilgit (in this case from Manot) versus people from outside, parallels the Shii – Sunni antagonism.

Identities here are used as general framework to make sense of the situation, that is, as interpretive framework. But they are also used to define rights or legitimate claims and at least some parties involved seem to use different identities as resources to enhance their power basis. The plurality of interests and identities that are involved results in quite disordered webs of perspectives and contradicting narratives which cannot really be disentangled. It is only possible to try to single out some strands and to follow and confront some perspectives.

Xālisa was a bone of contention in Manot for many years. The *muḥulfau* of the village who considered themselves to be exclusively entitled to *xālisa* always complained that the administration allocated *xālisa* to people from outside, that is, to people who were not entitled to enjoy *xālisa*. In my understanding the conflict was an issue between *muḥulfau* of Manot on the one hand and people from outside and the administration, mainly the settlement office, on the other hand. But when the issue became an open conflict again and a matter of everyday conversation in the village, I realized that it was much more complicated and that many more perspectives and interests were involved.

6.1 The Setting

Manot is a village close to Gilgit. It mainly consists of two parts: the old village, where *muḥulfau* and *sāmū* (people from Hunza and Nager) live, and some new colonies built on unirrigated land (*xālisa*) inhabited by more recent migrants from different regions. Further, large areas of the village are occupied by the army and by the civil administration for schools, offices and the like. Manot shares a *nālā* and thus water with Haban, a larger village situated further down.

Muḥulfau are a minority today in the population of the village. It is told that in the first land settlement in 1905 five or six houses were included. In 1912, the next settlement also included a few houses from outside, for example a family from a neighbouring village and one from Chilas. For-

mally, that is, according to the *wājib-ul-arz*, the written record of customary rights, they share all the rights of *muṭhulfau*. The majority of the *muṭhulfau* are Shiis. But of course this family from Chilas is Sunni and one house of *muṭhulfau* also has become Sunni. A man of the family from Chilas had been elected *member of municipal committee*. All *muṭhulfau* are Yeškun. Because the census lumps the population of Manot together with the population of other settlements, no exact figures of the village's population are available. According to my estimation there must be about 400 houses in the village. The houses of *muṭhulfau* number about fifty today.

Residence in Manot is highly valued because the place is not far from the town but still distant enough from the congested bazaar area. It is also well connected by road. Many migrants want to live there and land has subsequently become very costly. Many people of Gilgit also try to get *xālisa* in the village in order to let it to immigrants or to sell it at a high price. Further, army and administration have made attempts to extend their possessions. Thus there are many different parties trying to get a share of *xālisa*. *Muṭhulfau* are struggling hard to safeguard their right in *xālisa*, that is, they want to have it allotted among themselves in order to prevent its allotment among people from outside. But they are severely handicapped in that they are considerably few and lack the right leadership. In particular, they do not have anybody with intimate connections with the administration and knowledge of the legal apparatus.

6.2 The Case

In 1993 I learned that inhabitants of Manot had occupied *xālisa* in the outskirts of their village which had already been allotted to non-inhabitants by the settlement office. Part of the land was also claimed by the forest department. The men from Manot had occupied an area of about 600 *kanal*¹³⁸ and tore down walls surrounding some of the plots in question. The people demanded that the land was allotted among the villagers. The police arrested some of the occupants but the action continued. Men of the village were still sitting there all the day guarding the land. Funds had been collected from the villagers to plant some trees on the plots. But the settlement office confirmed the rights of those to which the land had already been allotted and

¹³⁸ One *kanal* is about 505 m².

prohibited the irrigation of the newly planted trees. They were about to die from drought.

This short paragraph can be regarded as representing something like the facts of the actual conflict. But it is not the whole story. Around these "core events" a multitude of partly to completely contradicting narratives were woven. In these narratives not the "truth" was at stake (that is, the "real" actions and events, or the "real" rights) but the interests of those involved.

It is impossible here to narrate all versions and details involved. I will rather concentrate on some personae that were important to my understanding of the case. I will first contrast two perspectives with each other: Rahmat Hassan and Gul Ahmad. Both men could be regarded as *muṭhulfau*. But still their perspectives are hardly compatible. In my subsequent interpretation, other perspectives will be taken into account.

Rahmat Hassan

Rahmat Hassan was Shii *muṭhulfau* of Manot. His father married a Shii girl from Hunza and sold, even in British times, the first plot in the village to a Shii relative from that valley. After that, many other landholders in Manot started to sell land to migrants from Hunza, first to Shiis but later also to Ismailis. Rahmat Hassan's family had many *sāmī*. His own wife was from Hunza and he was able to speak Burushaski. Rahmat Hassan operated a small shop on the main road. Many persons including myself continued to pass along his shop during the day, stopping for a chat. Thus he was always well informed about what was going on.

When I asked Rahmat Hassan about the case, he told me:

"Finally the people of Manot have joined together to guard their rights! Three days ago we occupied the land that had illegally been allotted to people from Astor, Nager, Hunza and the like. We tore some walls down. Then police came and arrested some of us. Those to whom the plots had been allotted produced papers of the settlement office to the effect that the land was theirs. But we were able to prove that this land is *xālisa* of Manot and that these people have no right in it. Thus it came to light that a corrupt *naib-tahsildār*¹³⁹ had allotted the plots after accepting bribes. He

¹³⁹ A medium-level officer in the settlement office.

also had given a wrong report to the DC [deputy commissioner]. He was jailed but was released on bail."

Another man, sitting with us, said in contradiction: "No, he is still in jail!"

I asked Rahmat Hassan since when *nautōr* had been allotted illegally in Manot. Rahmat Hassan: "Since about 1980 or 1981. That time a DC from the Punjab allotted the land. When we protested, he threatened to throw all of us into jail. He also contended that the land was situated outside of the village area. That time we were weak, we were not united. But we joined up with the people of Haban. They staged demonstrations, they were united. Then every house of *muṭhulfau* in Manot was allotted four *kanal*. And because the people of Haban had helped us, they also got some land."

I: "How did you now succeed in building unity among the people of Manot?"

Rahmat Hassan: "We have been angry for a long time. Now we have decided to do something!"

I: "What about the people of Hunza and Nager that have been living for a long time in Manot?"

Rahmat Hassan: "They also participate. They are our *sāmī* and therefore we have called them. The more people unite the more powerful we are. We have promised them land, too. They shall get half of the land we get per house."

A week later Rahmat Hassan continued his narrative. He said that the land they were struggling for had been allotted in 1981. There was a rule that a person from outside that was allotted land had to settle on it within three years. Otherwise he lost the allotment again. All the land was still vacant. Thus the people of Manot had to get it back anyway. Rahmat Hassan also reported that the officer who had been charged with corruption had been sentenced to three months imprisonment. But I had met the officer the other day. "Yes", Rahmat Hassan said, "but he is not allowed to work." But I had seen him working in his office. Rahmat Hassan explained: "You see, his brother had been a very high official!"

Rahmat Hassan also claimed that the land of the new colonies in Manot had been allotted by fraud. That time the administrator, the "governor" of the Northern Areas, had maintained that the area was outside the limits of

Manot. The inhabitants of the village protested, but not even their petitions were accepted. The people to whom the land was allotted quickly built their big houses on the plots. They were all people from outside, from Hunza, Nager, Astor, etc. Some of them received the land as *inām*, as pension. The people from Manot protested and demanded that Hunzawālē were given *inām* and *xālisa* in Hunza and not in Gilgit.

I asked whether these people have become *sāmī* of Manot. He responded:

"No! They do not get a single drop of our water! We have nothing to do with them. Nobody of us lives there."

I: "Then these people do not share in the present struggle, but only the *sāmī* living in the old village?"

Rahmat Hassan: "No! This time we even do not allow our *sāmī* to participate! We have become very angry and now we are struggling all alone! Only we *muṭhulfau*! The *sāmī* have got land before, in the seventies. At that time as well the people of Haban got something because they had supported our cause. Now it is only for us!"

Many months earlier Rahmat Hassan had told me about the history of Manot. He had maintained that his *dādā*, that is, the forefather of the *muṭhulfau*, had been on very good terms with the British. Therefore, he was given the land in Manot where he founded the village.¹⁴⁰ Now I asked him again about that story and he now protested:

"No, the British came much later! We are *muṭhulfau*! We are so much *muṭhulfau* that we have been the very first! The oldest village of Gilgit is Napura. It was a village of the *dēv*. You know, Teifur, Seifur, and so on. When the *dēv* were still living there, my *dādā* came. He lived there, in Napura. His cattle grazed in Manot, there was only jungle. Then my *dādā* brought the land in Manot under cultivation and settled here. Since that time we are here, since the *dēv*! So much are we *muṭhulfau*! We are the very first here!"

Again, after some days, Rahmat Hassan related that there were no new developments in the case. The guardians were still sitting on the disputed plot. I asked him whether the Sunnis of Manot were involved in the case,

¹⁴⁰ This story is of course plainly wrong because Manot was already existing at the time the British entered the country. Still, he repeated it several times.

and he answered: "No. But they are supporting our cause. And they have occupied their own *nautōr*." When I inquired whether this *nautōr* was legal or illegal, he only responded: "Nobody will file a suit because of them!"

Gul Ahmad

Gul Ahmad belongs to the Sunni family from Chilas in Manot. He is a well-educated teacher. Gul Ahmad's father, Mohammad Khan, was the brother of Rasul Mir, the *member* (of municipal committee) of Manot. Meherban, the father of Mohammad Khan and Rasul Mir, had to leave Chilas in the beginning of the century because of *duśmanī*, and settled in Manot. He obtained some irrigated land there and was treated as *muṭhulfau* in the *wājib-ul-arz*, that is, he shared all their rights. Meherban became an army contractor and acquired some wealth. He made friends with some Sunnis from Hunza and his son Mohammad Khan married a Sunni Hunzawāli. Therefore, the family also had many relatives among Ismailis.

Gul Ahmad said: "When my *dādā* came to Manot, there were only four or five houses. He was the real founder of the village!"

I asked him whether he also shared the right in the disputed *xālisa*, and whether he was involved in the struggle. He answered: "Yes, I share the rights, too, but I am not involved in this action. What they are doing is nonsense! My father had fought many suits with the administration about *xālisa*. Whenever the army or the civil administration had needed some land they just took the plot and perhaps gave a nominal compensation. My father fought for appropriate compensations! But the people of Manot never supported his stance. He struggled all alone! Now my father is fed up, he moved to Islamabad. He was the real big man here!"

I asked why the *muṭhulfau* were apparently so disunited in Manot. He explained: "This is because of sectarian tensions! Years ago, the Shii *muṭhulfau* had already conceded rights to *xālisa* to other Shiis that had no rights at all, for example, to people from Haban. My father had protested against that, but in vain. He demanded that the land was given to those entitled to it, without regard whether they were Shiis, Sunnis, or Ismailis. But 1,600 *kanal* were given to the people from Haban! Most of this land was later cheaply bought by big people of the village like Hussein Khan

[the *member* of Haban]. Even before 1988¹⁴¹ *xālisa* had become a sectarian matter, mainly through the involvement of the people of Haban."

Gul Ahmad spoke about his father and politics in Manot: "Many times the Shii *muṭhulfau* had approached my father and asked him to become *member*. But he always refused. He said: 'I will do for the village whatever I can. But when I am *member* bad people will sit the whole day in my house and ask me favours. I don't want that!' Even the first local-body elections, in 1971, had a sectarian aspect. That time Ghulam Beg, a big Shii trader from Hunza stood for the elections. He was illiterate. There were some people in Manot that did not like an illiterate representative. Thus, Mir Hassan offered his candidature. He was well educated and belonged to a respected family. He lived in Kashrot but he also possessed some land in Manot and therefore was allowed to stand for the elections here. He slaughtered a cow, fed the people in Manot and made them swear to give him their votes. They feasted and swore and elected Ghulam Beg. Because he was Shii and Mir Hassan was Sunni."

"In the middle of the eighties there was a big case about *xālisa* in Manot. Both the army and the civil administration were requiring the land. And the people of Manot also filed a suit for their rights. That time the minister gave the order to suspend all allotment. Before, the commissioner had given an allotment order to everybody who bribed him. Of course, allotment continued after that, the allotment orders were just dated back and the signatures were forged."

I asked why all the people apparently wanted to get land in, of all villages, Manot.

"It is because they know that the people are divided between the communities. Therefore it is easy to get land! In Dassot, for example, it is very different! There people are united although they are Shiis and Sunnis. The administration allotted some land there to people from outside but these people were unable to get hold of the land because of the resistance of the villagers! In Manot, the real trouble-makers are persons from Haban. They use the people from Manot and want to buy their land cheaply. When the commissioner came to Manot some days ago to have a look at the case,

¹⁴¹ That is, before the attack of Sunnis on the Shii villages around Gilgit in 1988 that brought the polarization between the communities to a peak.

Hussein Khan [the *member* of Haban] was the spokesman. Only I told the commissioner that he was not from Manot!

The Shiis of Haban and Manot make all the difficulties. The best people here are the Ismailis. Then come the Sunnis. They are mostly liberal and do not think only in sectarian terms. But the Shiis are all devils!"

Rahmat Hassan

I asked Rahmat Hassan again why the people of Manot were so disunited.

He explained: "There were always some people from outside that looked only for their own profit and made the trouble! People like Mohammad Khan and Rasul Mir!"

I countered that they, too, share the rights of the *muḥulfaū* and are thus not people from outside.

"Yes", Rahmat Hassan continued, "but they have these rights only because we had given them some land! My own father had given them land! It was irrigated land, settled land! Partly they got it for free, only a part of it they had to buy! That time we were on good terms. Mirbaz [the father of the present *lambardār*] even married a sister of Rasul Mir and Mohammad Khan. In the past, there were many *motobarān* in Manot, but they were all uneducated. Rasul Mir and Mohammad Khan were educated and therefore they sat in all *jirgē* (assemblies) and cultivated relations with the officers. And then, in the seventies, they somehow arranged with the administration that no land was to be allotted without their consent. Then they themselves have been allotted much land which they sold again, or which the army took after compensating for it. This way they became rich! Because they have cheated us, we do not let these Sunnis from outside participate in our actions now. Even Haban will get nothing, there is too little left."

Rahmat Hassan spoke about past issues: "In 1972 we had a conflict with the army. They wanted to occupy our *xālisa* without compensation. That time we filed a suit. The people of Haban joined us on the pretext that they were using the land for grazing their animals. We promised to give them some land for their support and we won. After that, each house in Manot got some of the land, also our *sāmī*. Another area was given to Haban and allotted among its houses. Later these plots were sold and the colony was built there.

Around 1950 the forest office wanted to establish a forest plantation in Manot. We gave them the land. But they were not successful. Then this land was tacitly allotted to others, to people from outside. First we did not know about it, because there were still the watchmen of the forest department. And the new owners did not build anything on the plots in order not to make the fraud public. But we demand that the area is given back to us!"

6.3 Interpretation

The dispute in Manot was about rights involving land and rights are normally related to rules that determine them. But the rights were claimed by different parties and there were no rules independent of the dispute that could define rights. These rules themselves, their application and interpretation, were a matter of conflict. This application was less a question of rights than of power. The postulation of an opposition of rights versus power pervades the rhetoric of Rahmat Hassan's narrative. I will take this opposition as the starting point for making sense of the differing perspectives on the issue.

For Rahmat Hassan it is very clear that the *muḥulfaū* have the right in *xālisa*, but not the power to assert that right, whereas the administration (and the people from outside) have the power to take *xālisa* although they have no right in it. But as power is not force, and rights need to be justified, both opponents need strategies of legitimation.

In Rahmat Hassan's narrative a whole series of oppositions can be related to the opposition of rights vs. power, all of which can again be subsumed under the opposition inside vs. outside:

| | | |
|------------------|--------|---------------------|
| rights | versus | power |
| rules | | corruption |
| powerlessness | | power |
| <i>muḥulfaū</i> | | people from outside |
| <i>muḥulfaū</i> | | administration |
| Manot | | other places |
| Manot/Haban | | other places |
| Shiis | | Sunnis |
| illiteracy | | education |
| <i>lambardār</i> | | <i>member</i> |
| disunity | | unity |
| inside | | outside |

Rahmat Hassan's rhetoric developed consecutively in response to my inquiring.

Muṭhulfau had become a minority in Gilgit. Their resources were very limited, not only regarding their number but also regarding factors like education, connections with the administration, and money. In order to enhance their power, *muṭhulfau* had to find allies. But to win allies the *muṭhulfau* had to share, and that is, to a certain extent, to give up, their rights. There would have been no supporters if they had not been promised a share in the *xālisa*. This sharing of rights did not only diminish the area of *xālisa* that could be expected by the *muṭhulfau* (because part of it had to be given to others) but also the general legitimacy of their position because according to the rules these others *have no* rights. Thus Rahmat Hassan did not tell me about the others involved but asserted only that finally the people of Manot had developed unity and thus were in the position to take up the struggle. Only when I explicitly inquired about the role of the others (the *sāmī*), he admitted to their involvement and the rationale behind it: "The more people unite the more powerful we are." But, worse for the legitimacy of the position of *muṭhulfau* involved, this inclusion of others that have no rights amounts to the exclusion of some that share in the rights: the Sunni *muṭhulfau*. Again, he admitted to this condition only when I confronted him with my knowledge about it. And still he represented their relation to the case in an appeasing manner, not admitting the conflict behind: "But they are supporting our case. And they have occupied their own *nautōr*."

The *muṭhulfau* were trapped in a dilemma. The effort to enhance their power base curtailed the legitimacy of their claim. Rahmat Hassan seemed to be conscious about that ambivalence and, meanwhile, again denied the involvement of persons that had no right in *xālisa*.

Rahmat Hassan resorted to mainly two strategies to support the legitimacy of the *muṭhulfau*'s stance: first, negatively, he exposed the illegitimacy of the administration's action of allotting *xālisa* to people not entitled (which he considered proven by the arrest of an officer charged with corruption), and second, positively, he asserted the position of his family and the other Shii *muṭhulfau* of having really been the "very first" in the place. Like Mohammad Abbas he claimed that his family had been present in Gilgit since the time of the *dēv*. Because of this position he, that is, the Shii *muṭhulfau*, finally claimed the right to bestow rights to others (from out-

side) – or to revoke them again. The *muṭhulfau* gave these rights to Meherban from Chilas. Now they want to give rights to *xālisa* to their *sāmī* and deny them to Rasul Mir and Mohammad Khan.

The conflict represented by Rahmat Hassan in the opposition inside vs. outside was related, obviously, to the opposition rights vs. power. For the right to *xālisa* clearly belonged to the inside, whereas the power to take it belonged to those from outside. But, again, which groups and persons were included on which side of the opposition was a matter of strategy and interests. The administration was clearly outside, but all other parties were assigned variable positions. Migrants (as *sāmī*) could be inside and *muṭhulfau*, if Sunnis, could be outside. We can say that being inside or outside was not a question of essence, that is of "objective" origin, but of conduct, that is of perceived loyalty to the *muṭhulfau*.

There are other claimants to the inside status: the *muṭhulfau* of Haban. People from the village asserted that Haban shared the rights of Manot in the *xālisa* because both villages shared the *nālā* and thus the water. But this claim was seen by Rahmat Hassan not as a matter of right but of strategy and alliance: there were more *muṭhulfau* in Haban than in Manot and therefore Haban provided a necessary enhancement of power to the claims of Manot.

For Gul Ahmad the *muṭhulfau* of Haban were clearly people from outside in this case. He even charged them with being the real troublemakers. In his view, they used their shared religious affiliation with the Shii *muṭhulfau* from Manot to get hold of part of the *xālisa* in the past, and they later bought still more plots that had been allotted to people from Manot. Now the member of Haban even acted as spokesman for the *muṭhulfau* of Manot. Gul Ahmad charged the Shii *muṭhulfau* of Manot with having introduced sectarianism into the issue of *xālisa* in order to win alliance and enhance their power position. In his view, the Shii *muṭhulfau* clearly lost the legitimacy of their claim by this move. He represented the role of his family, especially of his father, as having always fought for the rights of those entitled to *xālisa*, without consideration of religious affiliation.

For both Gul Ahmad and Rahmat Hassan it was clear that the *muṭhulfau* of Manot lacked able leadership. The old *motobarān* of Manot were still respected in the village, but they were all uneducated and could not command respect and influence outside of Manot. The old *lambardār* of Manot,

Mirbaz, was illiterate and could not even speak Urdu but only Shina. His son, Yussuf Ali, was acting in his place as *lambardār* but he was not a very energetic person and he was himself not well-educated. In some parts of Gilgit the *lambardār* still played important although more informal roles. Some of the *lambardār* also had become elected *members*. This was not the case in Manot. Realizing that the office of an elected representative in the municipal committee needed more qualifications than they commanded, the *motobarān* always chose people from outside to be elected as *members*. Mostly they were not even Shiis. When I asked Yussuf Ali why these people had been elected, he simply asserted: "We were all uneducated, we could not read and write. There were some educated men and we thought it would be good to be represented by them. Only later did we realize that these people from outside do not work well for the *muṭhulfau*."

Gul Ahmad objected to his family being called "from outside". Of course, his *dādā* Meherban had come from Chilas, but that was long ago. He had been included in the settlement with all the rights of *muṭhulfau* and Gul Ahmad even called Meherban the "real founder" of the village because there had been only a handful of houses before his arrival. Gul Ahmad's father had offered his juridical efforts for safeguarding the rights to *xālisa* to the Shii *muṭhulfau*, but they declined to follow because they did not understand the importance of action, or due to sectarian considerations.

But Rahmat Hassan insisted that Gul Ahmad's family had acquired rights in Manot only by the grace of the *muṭhulfau*: "They have these rights only because we gave them land!" Rahmat Hassan obviously felt betrayed by them. In his view, the family of Gul Ahmad had ruined all the credits and trust originally imparted on them by the *muṭhulfau*. They used this trust not to work for the *muṭhulfau* and thus to repay the credits, but to enhance their own wealth and power base by acquiring independent relations with the administration and using them for getting land and selling it at high rates.

Gul Ahmad's perspective on the role of his family amounts to the very opposite. His father was the real defender of the rights of the villagers in the numerous suits he fought because he was strongly against the sharing of rights to *xālisa* with people not entitled to it, be they people favoured by the administration, or people favoured by the Shii *muṭhulfau* like the *sāmī* or the people from Haban.

Rahmat Hassan identified the disunity of Manot's population by religious difference and the uneducated condition of its Shii majority as the reasons for the powerlessness of the *muṭhulfau*. Here a topic was implicitly referred to that Mohammad Abbas (see above) had already taken up: people from outside were able to acquire and make use of new resources and instruments like education, whereas the people of Gilgit just enjoyed their "old" resources, the land, which gradually changed its meaning.

Ali Madad, a young and probably the best educated Shii *muṭhulfau* in Manot, who had just returned from Lahore after completion of his M.A. degree, clearly realized that. Contrary to Rahmat Hassan, Ali Madad did not relate the allotment of the land of the new colonies in Manot to fraud but to lack of understanding:

"That time the *motobarān* of the village were asked for their consent. They did not know about the value of the land. They were uneducated, they could not imagine that this barren land was valuable. The *motobarān* willingly made their fingerprints on the allotment papers. My own father could get some of the land but he just said: 'What shall we do with it, we cannot even make use of all our land here! Much less can we use this *xālisa*!' He threw the papers away! Manot was overwhelmed by the fast development from a village to a town. People could not adjust. There was not even a generational change in between!

Many influential people from other parts of Gilgit have *nautōr* in Manot. You need money and influence to get some land. Poor, uneducated *muṭhulfau* will hardly get something. They cannot push through their demands. The people of Haban are very different. They are cunning! When there was land allotted in 1981, they got more land per house than the people of Manot!"

Ali Madad was strongly against the actions taken by the Shii *muṭhulfau*. Like Gul Ahmad he considered it as "sectarian" action:

"The conflict has become a Shii-Sunni matter. About 120 houses are involved in the occupation of the land and have contributed some money to the planting of trees. They are all Shiis! Not all of them are *muṭhulfau*, there are also migrants from Nager and Hunza among them who have only been living in Manot since a few years. On the other hand the Sunni

muṭhulfau like the family of Rasul Mir and my own *cācā's*¹⁴² family have no share in it. I have strongly argued against this action because I fear that the relation with the other communities in Manot could become too strained. But they did not listen. Until now we have always tried to prevent tensions in our village!

Those who occupied the land are supported by influential persons from Haban, like Hussein Khan [the *member*]. He has given money for bribes and the like. He is just making use of the people of our village! Some people are just waiting that Shiis, Sunnis and Ismailis in Manot start to quarrel about the land. And when they are busy with quarrelling, a few people will get the land allotted, just like before. And those who have given money, like Hussein Khan, hope that they can buy the allotments at a cheap rate!

The minister¹⁴³ has already directed the local administration to prevent sectarian tension in Manot. Therefore the land has been granted to the forest office. When our village protested against this, the administration responded that the land cannot be allotted now because allotment is banned in Manot since 1986. In that year there was already a conflict about *xālisa*. Therefore allotment was officially stopped. But unofficially it continued for people with money and influence, their papers were just dated back!"

The parties involved in the conflict applied the Shii-Sunni conflict as a framework to interpret the issue. Interestingly, their applications of this framework differed considerably. Gul Ahmad attributed the roots of the whole conflict to the unreasonableness of the Shii *muṭhulfau* to value common religious affiliation higher than political understanding and customary rights. Thus the Shiis had preferred to elect an illiterate Shii as their first *member* and not an able Sunni. Later on they allowed land to be allotted to Shiis from outside (from Haban, Hunza or Nager) who had no rights in it. It became even worse because now the Shii *muṭhulfau* intended to give these Shiis land at the expense of the rights of local Sunnis. Gul Ahmad charged the Shiis with using "sectarianism" as a resource in the conflict, as a basis

¹⁴² "Cācā" is the father's brother. Ali Madad's *cācā* married a sister of Rasul Mir. Her father made his conversion to the Sunna a condition for the marriage.

¹⁴³ That is, the minister for Northern Areas and Kashmir Affairs, a member of the central government.

for common action. He contrasted Sunnis and Ismailis with the Shiis because contrary to the former the latter were acting on "sectarian" terms.

Ali Madad was always troubled to keep out of the sectarian conflict and to have a more neutral perspective. He, too, identified the occupation of *xālisa* as "sectarianism", instigated mainly by people from Haban that tried to take advantage of the conflict.

Rahmat Hassan also identified the religious issue as a basic cleavage, but he did not attribute the sharing of *xālisa* with the *muṭhulfau* of Haban and the *sāmī* of Manot to the common religious affiliation. He was even very reluctant to admit that only Shiis were involved in the actual action. He did not attribute the exclusion of Rasul Mir's family to their being Sunnis but to their being from outside. He knew that the sectarian conflict was regarded as a severe evil by most people in Gilgit (although they mostly felt obliged to be loyal to their respective community). To admit action on sectarian basis would have heavily damaged the legitimacy of the *muṭhulfau's* claims. He justified the involvement of others only due to the need for an alliance to increase power.

Others that also participated in the action declined to reveal the religious affiliation of those involved. When I asked Mirza Khan, a Shii *sāmī* from Hunza who actively took part in the occupation, about the matter he was not ready to answer. But another Hunzawālā, Nasirullah, an Ismaili who had lived for many years in Manot until he moved to another place some time ago and who had once even been elected *member*, did not hesitate to tell that he had heard that the whole action in Manot was started at the instigation of the Imamia Students Organization (ISO). The ISO was the Shii youth organization which was frequently accused with fanning sectarian tensions. The difference between Mirza Khan and Nasirullah was that the former was directly involved in the matter, but the latter was not.

One could expect the whole issue to be a matter that could easily be solved by the administration. But that was not the case. First, the administration (often simply called "government", *hukumat*) was not a monolithic agent. Different departments were involved. In the eighties even a conflict between the army and the civil administration about some plots needed for construction had occurred. For Rahmat Hassan and other *muṭhulfau* the administration clearly belonged to the outside. It was an agent that deprived the *muṭhulfau* of their customary rights. Further, relations with the administra-

tion and its officers were a power resource in the conflict; a resource that people from outside like Rasul Mir, some influential persons from Haban and the many that wanted to be allotted some plot in Manot commanded, but not the Shii *muḥulḥfau* of Manot.

Rahmat Hassan understood the arrest of a settlement officer (and also his subsequent release) as an admission and proof of corruption and thus of the negative involvement of the administration.¹⁴⁴ It was quite obvious that the prescribed procedures for allotment were not always followed by the office. A subaltern settlement officer once explained to me the rules of allotment: if somebody wanted to be allotted *xālisa*, he first had to approach a *paṭwārī* who made a sketch of the plot and conveyed the papers to his superiors. The larger the plot the higher the officers had to be that had to give their consent. They of course had to take local custom as written in the *wājib-ul-arz* into account. If the officer approved, a public notice had to be made in the village concerned. Within a month, people of the village could register their objections. If there were no objections, the notice was signed by the *lambardār* and the allotment order was taken to the files. "But", the officer added, "it nearly never happens like this. Normally, the superiors tell the *paṭwārī* not to give public notice of the allotment. After a month, the forms are signed by some people that have nothing to do with the issue, and the papers are taken to the files. That's it!"

Then he spoke about the case in Manot and claimed that the problem was the *lambardār* Rasul Mir. I objected that Rasul Mir was not *lambardār* but *member* of the local body. "Yes", the officer said, "but the administration treats him as *sarbarā*.¹⁴⁵ He is not *muḥulḥfau* and has no right in *xālisa*. But he signs the allotments." He continued that the people of Manot had filed a case and that their chances were pretty good, regarding their rights. "But normally they try to bribe the plaintiffs by allotting them something. Then the unity of the plaintiffs breaks up. Otherwise the case has to go through all the courts. And this takes years!"

¹⁴⁴ Ali Madad told an entirely different story of the settlement officer's arrest. According to him, the arrest had nothing to do with the persecution of corruption, but only with the difficult personality of the deputy commissioner who had felt offended by the officer in the course of a minor event.

¹⁴⁵ "Sarbarā" means "performer", "manager". Here it refers to the person acting in the place of the *lambardār*, because there is no actual holder of the office or because the actual *lambardār* is unable to accomplish his tasks.

The administration and also courts are generally not perceived in Gilgit as institutions that work according to "objectively" prescribed rules and procedures, but rather as instruments that can be used strategically, if one commands the resources to do so. But of course, the administration also is a power in its own right that has to guard its legitimacy. In Manot, the administration tried to do so by officially banning all allotments, that is, by not openly supporting one of the sides in the struggle and by trying to confine the sectarian issue. The people in Manot were quite suspicious. They had their own experiences with agreements with the administration. Mirza Khan, the Hunzawālā, told me, that the land in question in Manot had been entrusted to the forest department: "We gave that land to the forest department on the condition that we get it back when need arises. But all the forest people with whom we made the agreement have died. And the agreement was only oral!"

6.4 Identities, Rules and Power

The conflict about *xālisa* in Manot was a dramatization of the opposition described by Mohammad Abbas between people of Gilgit and people from outside. Those who saw themselves as belonging to the inside tried to defend their rights against forces from outside, were they the administration or individual people that tried to appropriate some plots in Manot. The conflict exemplified the sentiments of *muḥulḥfau* that they were on the losing side. Their customary rights were challenged and they possibly would not be able to defend them. They had lost supremacy in their own village because they had become a minority. They were unable to adjust to and to take advantage of overwhelming changes, contrary to many people from outside. But they were struggling hard to make the best of their situation.

One could expect the issue to be simply decided according to the rules and prescriptions that existed about the allotment of *xālisa*. I myself, in many discussions with those involved in the case, tried to find out, who was really entitled to allotment and who was not. But later I realized that to ascribe power to rules amounts to an over-simplified image of society based on consensus; that is, to a Durkheimian or generally functionalist understanding of society. In Gilgit and Manot a great number of rules which could be applied to the case existed. There were rules about customary rights to *xālisa*, partly orally transmitted and remembered, but partly also formally

inscribed and codified in the *wājib-ul-arz*. There were further procedural rules about how to allocate land and also about how to handle cases of allotment in the courts, rules about the actions of judges, of plaintiffs, advocates and the like. But these rules alone did not preclude or solve conflicts because the conflict was precisely about these rules; about how to define and how to apply them, that is, about how to interpret the situation.

What emerges in this case is an understanding of rights and identities quite incompatible with a conception of culture as a consensus pre-existing to and guiding the action of individuals. Rights, rules and identities do not exist as pre-structuring forces prior to the struggle: they are what the struggle is about. It is impossible to draw an image of Manot as a village where action is pre-structured by norms and statuses or identities. Actions were often expressions of *claims* to statuses and identities. For example, there was no consensus about who was actually *muḥulfaū* in Manot. It was a question of interpretation, and Rahmat Hassan and Gul Ahmad interpreted quite differently.

The conflict was about interests and the power to pursue them. Power, the capacity to achieve outcomes, as Giddens (1984: 257) defines, here appeared to be a negotiated combination of two resources: force and legitimacy. Legitimacy can be defined as the relative acceptance of one's position by others. In Foucault's terms, legitimacy is that aspect of power which allows the subject of that power to be recognized as a subject of action. The subject's ability to act is not crushed by violence (Foucault 1994: 254). Legitimacy forms a kind of political capital of actors that can be accumulated or spent.

Neither of the two resources alone was sufficient to achieve a desired outcome. On the one hand, *muḥulfaū* may possess legitimate rights in *xālisa*, but without some force to give voice to this legitimacy, they were most likely not to succeed. On the other hand, the administration may possess the force just to allocate *xālisa* and to stop the occupation, or people from outside may have means to make the administration allocate them *xālisa*, but without some possibility to legitimate its actions the administration will most probably not undertake these steps. For the administration, pure force was not enough to achieve its ends, just as pure legitimation was not sufficient for the *muḥulfaū*. Therefore, each party involved tried to negotiate the resource of power it possessed for the other resource it was lacking. The

Shii *muḥulfaū* exchanged part of their legitimacy (in the form of customary rights to *xālisa*) for a number of supporters that increased their force. Similarly, the administration suspended part of its force (that is, they suspended the forced allocation of *xālisa*) and thus gained some legitimacy by appearing to occupy a more neutral position. Or, in the opposite way, Gul Ahmad accused the Shii *muḥulfaū* of illegitimate action thus trying to enhance the legitimacy of his own stance.

Rules are also subject to power. Durkheim and the functionalists would explain this subjection of the rules to power as "anomie" or "change". But I am quite sure that the conditions of Manot are not simply the results of something like the disintegration of society but that they represent a fairly normal state of affairs. Of course, *muḥulfaū* say that in the past they had possessed the right to occupy *xālisa*, but, remembering Shah Rais Khan's representation of the redistribution of land following the conquest, most probably these rights were hardly less disputed in the past than they were now. The representation of rights as undisputed in the past was itself a strategy in the power game.

In the conflict in Manot different identities provided different frameworks of interpretation of actions: they were used to increase or to deny legitimacy to an action. Identities then were instruments in the struggle for power. Rahmat Hassan framed the conflict within the opposition people from Manot vs. people from outside. Within this framework, his and his fellow Shii *muḥulfaū*'s occupation of land was legitimate because they claimed rights that the others, by and large, still recognized. But Gul Ahmad placed the same action within the opposition Shiis vs. Sunnis and in this frame of reference the action was illegitimate because no rights to land could be claimed on the ground of religious affiliation. The actor's identity was a central parameter in the evaluation of action. But actors possessed and could be ascribed multiple identities and therefore actions could be evaluated differently. We can discern another level of struggle that was about influencing other's opinions of how an action was to be interpreted. This struggle was of course part of the effort to build legitimacy.

When I became involved in the narratives about the case in Manot, I quickly felt that what people told me was mainly intended to convince me of their perspective. I felt as if I was a judge that had to decide about what perspective was true. I was not personally involved and had no material inter-

ests in the case, thus one could expect that people simply told me their stories without particular intentions directed toward myself. But I realized that I actually *was* behaving like a judge: I questioned witnesses, recorded and scrutinized their testimonies and confronted them with other's differing stories. Sometimes, for instance, my respondents kept silent about some aspects they regarded as unfavourable for their position in my perception, and admitted these points only after I heard about them from others and confronted them again. A number of such points can be found in Rahmat Hassan's accounts.

I became part of the game. People tried to convince me of the legitimacy of their stance. The relation between the people of Manot and myself was far from the image of the ethnographer recording the objective and dispassionate statements of his informants. It was like Maranhao describes:

"The informant develops a sense of trust (live) towards the ethnographer, and talks, but he does not do so merely to inform, as Spradley rather naively assumes [1979]. He tries to persuade the ethnographer of something, or, at least, he adapts his discourse to meet the need of a certain other he has built in his representations."

(Maranhao 1985: 298)

My involvement in the struggle resulted in considerable confusion on my part. I felt unable to disentangle all the different perspectives and to account for all contradictions. However, I had to accept this confusion as an ethnographic "fact". For my writing about the case I selected only some of the perspectives on it. This selection already simplified representation and eliminated part of the confusion. But my purpose was not to construct a smooth tale which would have been far from what I heard in Manot, but to convey the fragmentation and ambivalence of perspectives experienced in the village.

7. A *Muḥhulfau* who Came from Outside – A Biographical Perspective

This text focuses on the difference and opposition between people of Gilgit and people from outside. *Muḥhulfau* and their perspectives have been allocated a prominent role in this ethnography. The concepts that guided the interpretation and representation of the boundary between inside and outside were taken from the world view and language of the *muḥhulfau*. Words like

muḥhulfau, *sāmī*, and *uskūn* are mostly unknown (or only known in a simplified meaning) to those who are not themselves *muḥhulfau* or who do not have a close relationship with *muḥhulfau*. *Uskūn* are relatives of the father's line, I was told by one of the Kaśmūrī who at all had heard the word before. Especially the word "*muḥhulfau*" is very little known. I had learned it some months after beginning fieldwork and subsequently used it quite often to confront and identify new acquaintances. The short dialogues mostly ran:

I: "Where do you come from?"

Stranger: "I am from here, from Gilgit!"

I: "Then you are *muḥhulfau*?"

Stranger: "What?"

A person who reacted like this was no *muḥhulfau*, that was certain. If my new acquaintance by chance was *muḥhulfau* he probably was very excited that I knew this word.¹⁴⁶

Muḥhulfau are not a uniform group. They belong to different *qōm* (Şin and Yeşkun) and clans. They are unified by a consciousness of their special relation to the land and by their claim to be the "real" people of Gilgit. But the conflict in Manot made clear that it was not at all easy in every case to decide who was *muḥhulfau* and who was not. And I had to realize that even persons who obviously seemed to be *muḥhulfau* could be something different.

I have used my conversations with the Babusō Mohammad Abbas as guidance and source for the discussion of *muḥhulfau* identity. At the beginning I pointed to the fact that Mohammad Abbas assumed a quite rigid position with his strict exclusion of all those who were not *muḥhulfau* (just remember his evaluation of the Kolōce) and his very negative evaluation of the *muḥhulfau*'s present situation. Ali Hassan, the Catōrō, for example, assumed in both respects a less strict stance. Mohammad Abbas' perspective has to be understood in the context of his family's history and his life situation, and

¹⁴⁶The ignorance of the word "*muḥhulfau*" does not simply distinguish Shina speakers from speakers of other languages. Kaśmūrī, for example, who regard themselves as Gilgitwālē but who are not *muḥhulfau* are of course Shina speakers. According to my knowledge, the word is also unknown to Şin and Yeşkun from Shina-speaking areas other than Gilgit. I tested this with some informants from Bagrot, Astor, Chilas and Darel.

his rigidity can be explained by his not "really" being what he claimed to be. Again, he shall have the word:

Mohammad Abbas: "Then the *maharaja* took Gilgit. My *dādā* Akbar Khan did not offer him salute. The half of Gilgit was our possession. That time my *dādā* left Gilgit and went to Kandahar. He married there. The in-laws of my *dādā* are in Kandahar. They are Pathān. He stayed there twelve years. Then he went to Darel and stayed there 24 years. He gave twelve *tōla* gold and got land there. He died there. After that my father came to Gilgit with his mother. My father was born in Darel. My *dādī*¹⁴⁷ came here when Sardar Akbar Khan [the *wazīr-e wazārat*] was in Gilgit. She said [to him]: 'I am Pathān and you are Pathān. You are my brother, I am your sister.' He said: 'Show me the land of your husband!' Thus my family got sixteen *kanal*. We have more land than the *raja* of Gilgit. But our family is very big. My *dādī* got the land in Gilgit."

Mohammad Abbas' father had three brothers. Each of them inherited four *kanal* land. Mohammad Abbas also had three brothers, each of whom received only one *kanal*. Mohammad Abbas left Gilgit as a young man between 1915 and 1920 to enter the British-Indian army. He retired from service after eighteen years and six months. From his pay he bought forty *kanal* land in Naikui, a new settlement between Barmas and Napura. He married a woman from Bagrot who died after one year. His second wife came from Chaprot (Nager). Both women were Šin and being Yeškun himself Mohammad Abbas had to pay a considerable bridewealth. One of Mohammad Abbas' five sons married a Kaśmīrī girl. One of his three daughters was married to a Kamin from Barmas. And one of his granddaughters even married a Panjābī.

When I got to know him he was about ninety years old. During the day he was frequently sitting in front of the workshop of a blacksmith that was situated close to his house at the main road in Majini Mohalla. Every noon he undertook the long walk to the Shia *jāma masjid* for prayer.

When I met him again at the beginning of my second term of fieldwork, he told me:

"Before, the British cared here for order. They did not allow any stranger for more than three days into the town. Since Pakistan was established,

¹⁴⁷ Father's mother.

Gilgit became a dog's kennel. Now nobody cares for *xāndānī* or *bē-xāndānī*. The only thing important is to have enough money in one's pocket. If you want to get your son married nobody asks any more whether he is *xāndānī* or *bē-xāndānī* but only whether he is educated or not.

Before, you were *xāndānī* when you had land. Without land you were *musāfir*.¹⁴⁸ Further, the *raja* was only *musāfir* when he had no land. Today, everybody can buy land, it is only a question of money."

During the four months that I had stayed in Germany, Mohammad Abbas had become considerably weak. After a short time he became seriously ill and was no longer able to leave his house. I visited him regularly. One day he told me:

"I will give you a piece of advice: when you are still young, you have to enjoy everything that you are able to enjoy. Above all, you have to eat and drink well. And every day you have to put a little money aside and to hide it well. Neither your parents nor your wife and your children shall know about it. For your children will forget you when you are old, they will go their own ways and enjoy their life. Nobody will care for you. Therefore, it is good to have saved something. I have still two or three thousand trees in Naikui, but I am too weak to get the wood and sell it. Otherwise I had some money. Now I have nothing."

In February 1993 Mohammad Abbas died owing to his illness. Shortly before his death another Babusō surprised me with the remark that Mohammad Abbas was no "real" Babusō. He said that the family originally had come from Darel or Tangir. One of their forefathers had married a Babusi girl in Gilgit who had brought a piece of land into the marriage. The next day I asked Ali Hassan about this. He affirmed what I had learned. When I said to him that Mohammad Abbas never had told me about that, he simply replied: "He was ashamed of it."

It did not lack a certain irony that the man whom I had approached because he was said to be a "real" Gilgitwālā and who was expert in the stories and traditions of the *muḥulḥfau* turned out to be one of those people that he rejected so strongly. He, who could tell the myth about how the Babusē were the first to cultivate the land in Gilgit and who deducted their right as

¹⁴⁸ "*Musāfir*" literally means "traveller" but here it carries a negative connotation of "homeless", "nomad" (cf. *xānabadōš*).

the masters of the place from this mythical event, was a descendent of people that had once come from outside. But this "revelation" helped me to understand his strict rejection of those from outside. Probably this rejection and his emphasis on the value of *xāndānī* and the *muḥhulfau* had to be understood as primarily compensatory. Maybe he had suppressed the consciousness that he was not Babusō to the extent that he had liked to be. Certainly he wanted to repress the knowledge about this from public consciousness. Just as the son of Sumalik who was not "really" Kolōco and who saw himself as Ṣalō did not want to be reminded of the fact that according to his own criteria he was not what he pretended to be: "Forget about Koli!"

In the history of Mohammad Abbas there was not only the "stigma" of an origin from outside to be suppressed, but also the fact that his grandfather, after his family had settled in Gilgit, again had to flee from Kashmiri conquer. He became homeless, he had to leave his land, the land of the Babusē. According to Mohammad Abbas' standards he became *xānabadōš* and *bē-xāndānī*. Moreover, he had to take refuge in Afghanistan and married a Paštūn woman, that is, a member of the group which today Gilgitwālē make responsible for all evils in the town. And only through this woman the family could get back part of its land in Gilgit.

Also Mohammad Abbas was not always able to arrange the marriages of his children and grandchildren in a way consistent with his standards. One son married a Kaśmīrī, a daughter he gave to a Kamin family and now a granddaughter was even married to a Panjābī – a group that nearly equals the Paṭhān in their unpopularity. When Mohammad Abbas told me about that marriage he added despisngly: "They are still here, but very soon I will send them away."

Finally, Mohammad Abbas also experienced the decay of his own status within his family. He felt not only neglected and weak because of his illness and the exhaustion of his age, but also because the generation of his children was not living in the same world in which the old had lived. Mohammad Abbas felt isolated and complained that he was not cared for by his family in the way he felt he deserved. He who talked so frequently about the value of *xāndānī* was disillusioned with his own family. Now it was money and education that counted, not family and descent. Achievement had replaced ascription in many respects. Land had become a marketable commodity and had thus lost its original symbolic meaning. Further, Mohammad Abbas'

complaint about the monetarization of culture and values did not lack a certain irony because he himself had already long ago invested money into status and "bought" Ṣin wives.

However, the values Mohammad Abbas conjured up were not already completely lost. The stories and fictions are being continued. One day while I was sitting at the sick-bed where Mohammad Abbas was sleeping, his eldest son told me:

"We are the eldest here. All others in Gilgit came after us. When they say that they are *muḥhulfau*, they are lying. When a Panjābī or a Paṭhān comes to Gilgit and learns Shina, then he says: 'I am a Gilgitwālā'. But when you come from Germany and build a house here, then your grandchildren are still Germans and not *muḥhulfau*!

Today, our children do not know any more to which *qōm* and family they belong. The times have changed. Before, the Babusē were tall and strong, they needed twelve *gaz*¹⁴⁹ cloth for their clothing! They had bodies of heroes, they were heroes!"

8. Conclusions

What general conclusion can we draw from this ethnographic irony? How to deal with it? Mohammad Abbas spoke about *muḥhulfau* as if he himself was one of them, but he was not, I was told. Is it allowed then to take him to represent the matter in an ethnography? It is, I think. It is not my task to decide who is "really" *muḥhulfau* and who is not. This question is dealt with by the people in Gilgit. They have to argue about what the standards are to be *muḥhulfau*. Who belongs to Gilgit and who does not? To follow some strands of this discourse was precisely the topic of my text. And precisely in the contradictions between the strictness of his narratives and the ambiguities of his being Mohammad Abbas presented a striking example of the problems of this discourse.

But it is certainly not justified to take Mohammad Abbas' lectures as representations of "the" *muḥhulfau*. This is not because of some essentialistic argument that would point to the "fact" that he "was" not *muḥhulfau* and thus could not represent these people. I did not quote him with the intention of presenting the authentic views of a *muḥhulfau*. The problem is not that he

¹⁴⁹ One *gaz* is about 80 cm.

"was" not "really" *muṭhulfau*, but that it is quite unclear how and who "the" *muṭhulfau* (understood in an essentialistic manner) generally are. "The *muṭhulfau*" (like other groups) is a fiction of the persons who conjure that group up. It is an effective fiction, no doubt, which is used as framework of interpretation in the course of acting and speaking. But these fictions, the meanings attributed to them and the ways of using them as frameworks of interpretation are quite diverse. To write about "the *muṭhulfau*" in an ethnography just adds another fiction to these. This is why I have argued to dispense as much as possible with the rhetoric of group realism.

My instrument of representation or rhetorical means to renounce group realism was the quotation of individuals as individuals, not as representatives of groups. To prevent misunderstandings I have to reiterate that this means was not applied with the intention to provide enhanced authenticity to my text or to privilege a certain perspective at the expense of others.¹⁵⁰ The quotations are not very authentic because they are translated, and to a certain extent edited and sometimes shortened. O'Hanlon and Washbrook (1992) fear that what they call post-modern strategies of representation which seem to concede certain informants a kind of co-authorship, fall back into colonial ways of ethnography that privileged the views of some "experts" at the expense of others and took them for the image of the whole. In their criticism O'Hanlon and Washbrook refer to the "brahmanical view of caste" in India that developed precisely through privileging of pandit's expertise. To a certain extent such privileging is inevitable because the ethnographer always learns only the views of a few selected members of a society. If culture is not generally shared and if we do not want to present the views of a few as a representation of the whole, we cannot do other than privileging some perspectives. But that privileging must never go hand in hand with the intention of presenting the authentic. There is no authentic perspective or culture – except, of course, in the representations of a society's individuals that intend certain ends with their claim to authenticity. Mohammad Abbas surely presented his representation of *muṭhulfau* culture as the authentic one.

If culture is not shared, is identity? Probably not, except in a very broad sense. "Ethnic identity" is normally defined as a "shared" identity. But we have to ask what exactly is shared in this identity. If people do call them-

¹⁵⁰ For a questioning of ethnology's striving for authenticity cf. Handler 1986.

selves "*muṭhulfau*" or "Shii", they share a name, a designation, but what else? In the course of this work it became clear that they do not share all the meanings attributed to these words. There are various interpretations about what it means to be Shii or *muṭhulfau*, and this variation is not only found between Shiis and non-Shiis, but also among those who relate themselves to one and the same "group". There are quite diverse approaches as to what it means in practice to belong to a religious community. Should one's disputes then only be handled within the community or not? Even an identity that had become as rigid in the course of militant conflict as the religious identities in Gilgit does not make all persons give the same answer.

If we understand identity as a part of culture, then, like culture in general, identity is also continuously struggled about, not only between persons of different identities, but also between persons who "share" an identity. What does it mean to be *muṭhulfau*? Who can legitimately call himself *muṭhulfau*? What rights are related to being *muṭhulfau*? These questions are probably never answered once and for all, neither by the ethnologist nor by the *muṭhulfau* themselves. They are permanently argued about. Like culture, identity is continuously in "the making" (Fox 1985: 196ff.).¹⁵¹ This making of identities is subject to structural conditions like power relations (for example: which rights are *muṭhulfau* in Manot able to defend or push through?), but also to personality and individual experience.

Of course, plural society in Gilgit is still more complicated than represented here. Many identities are involved, and many, if scrutinized intimately, are as ambiguous and contested as is being *muṭhulfau*. Among Paštūn in Gilgit, for example, it is disputed who is "really" Paštūn. Only those from Afghanistan or those from Peshawar? Are those from Dir "really" Paštūn or only Parāca (mule drivers)? Are those migrant families from the N.W.F.P. that have been living in Gilgit over one or two generation still "real" Paštūn or have they lost the essence of Paštūnhood?

¹⁵¹ In the following quotation from Fox I simply replaced "culture" with "identity": "What if the rules of identity games are made up only as individuals and groups play them? Rather than pre-existing rules known to the players, all games are really fights, where the limits of what can be done, what can be achieved, and what can be believed are constantly tested. ... The identity pattern is the product, not the determinant of society" (1985: 197).

Ethnologists use identities and ethnonyms to construct order of societies, just as do the societies' members. But these constructions and representations of order hide a fundamental disorder. Ethnography should not be content with constructing another order. It also has to explore the disorder behind.

Glossary of Local Terms

The explanations given here are merely intended as an aid towards reading the text. They are not to be mistaken as definitions of the terms, as many of them have rather complex semantic structures that are explored in the paper.

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| <i>ābādī zamīn</i> | irrigated land |
| <i>angrēz</i> | originally "English", today generally used for Euro-American foreigners; sometimes it includes also Japanese |
| <i>asl</i> | original, actual, real |
| <i>axun</i> | low degree of Shii learning |
| <i>bē-xāndānī</i> | not of a family, of low status and respect |
| <i>bīfau</i> | festival of sowing |
| <i>būe</i> | system of mutual assistance |
| <i>dādā (pl.: dādē)</i> | paternal grandfather, patrilineal ancestors |
| <i>dēv</i> | giant, mythological being |
| <i>duśmanī</i> | enmity, feud |
| <i>firqa (pl.: firqē)</i> | sect, difference, group |
| <i>gah</i> | Shina term: sidevalley with stream |
| <i>haq sūba</i> | preemptive right of patrilineal relatives to land |
| <i>harām</i> | impure, forbidden |
| <i>het</i> | open village, neighbourhood |
| <i>imāmbarga</i> | Shii assembly hall |
| <i>inām</i> | reward |
| <i>jāma masjid</i> | main mosque |
| <i>jirga (pl.: jirgē)</i> | council of elders |
| <i>kōṭ</i> | fortified village |
| <i>lambardār</i> | former village headman |
| <i>māl-e sarkār</i> | property of the government |
| <i>māl-e zamīndār</i> | property of the peasant |

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>malik</i> | important man |
| <i>member</i> | elected representative in a local body |
| <i>motobār</i> (<i>pl.: motobarān</i>) | elders, respected men |
| <i>muharram</i> | Islamic month, Shii month of mourning |
| <i>muṭhulfau</i> | "autochthonous" people of Gilgit |
| <i>nālā (pl.: nālē)</i> | side valley with stream, source of irrigation |
| <i>nautōṛ</i> | a piece of unirrigated common land that has been taken into individual possession |
| <i>paṭwārī</i> | clerk of the settlement office |
| <i>patī</i> | area under the responsibility of a <i>lambardār</i> |
| <i>puštūnī bāśindē</i> | original inhabitants |
| <i>qōm</i> | quasi-kinship group, nation, etc. |
| <i>ramadān</i> | Islamic month of fasting |
| <i>sāmī</i> | immigrants, related to autochthonous people via land |
| <i>ulemā (sing.: ālim)</i> | religious scholar |
| <i>unīlo (pl.: unīlē, fem.: unīlī)</i> | milk-relationship, foster-relationship |
| <i>uskūn</i> | people related via land or patrilineality |
| <i>wājib-ul-arz</i> | written record of customary rights related to land |
| <i>-wālā (pl.: -wālē)</i> | suffix denoting a person possessing a certain quality, origin, ability, etc. |
| <i>wazīr-e wazārat</i> | Kashmiri governor |
| <i>xālisa</i> | unirrigated land |
| <i>xānabadōś</i> | homeless, refugee, nomad |
| <i>xāndānī</i> | belonging to a family, of high status and respect |
| <i>xel</i> | Pashtu: clan, lineage |

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