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Shi'a collective identity in Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan

Magisterská diplomová práce

Obor studia: Kulturní antropologie

Autor: Bc. Aksana Shytsikava

Vedoucí práce: doc. PhDr. Daniel Topinka, Ph.D.

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Podpis

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Poděkování

Na tomto místě bych chtěla poděkovat vedoucímu práce doc. PhDr. Danielu Topinkovi, Ph.D., za vedení práce, cenné a užitečné komentáře a podporu.

Anotace

Jméno a příjmení:	Bc. Aksana Shytsikava
Katedra:	Katedra sociologie, andragogiky a kulturní antropologie
Obor studia:	Kulturní Antropologie
Obor obhajoby práce:	kulturní antropologie
Vedoucí práce:	doc. PhDr. Daniel Topinka, Ph.D.
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Název práce:	Utváření šíitské kolektivní identity v Gilgit Baltistanu, Pákistán
Anotace práce:	Hlavním cílem této práce je zjistit, jak je konstruovaná šíitská kolektivní identita v Pákistánu a jak je spojena se separatistickými hnutími v regionu. Nahlíží na témata různých domén identity, kolektivní identity, etnicity a jejich vzájemného propojení.
Klíčová slova:	Islám, Šíitská menšina, kolektivní identita, Pákistán
Title of Thesis:	Shi'a collective identity in Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan
Annotation:	The main aim is to find out how is the Shi'a collective identity constructed and how it is connected to the separatist's movements in the region. This paper deals with the topics as identity, ethnicity, their interconnection and different approaches to them, various realms of identity and collective identity formation.
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Introduction

Gilgit Baltistan has remained a disputed area among India, Pakistan, and China over several decades, furthermore it is the only Shi'a majority region in Pakistan, as a consequence having strains within the country as well. Through the historic turbulences, especially colonial times, the inhabitants of Gilgit Baltistan have been facing a lot of predicaments and adversities. However after the end of British rule annexation to Pakistan was chosen unanimously. Since that time Gilgit Baltistan has not become a competent province of Pakistan and the people in the region are politically and socially alienated to the downland. The main reason for this alienation is the matter of Gilgit Baltistan people's collective equation with the suppressed group especially through the lens of sectarian affiliation.

Initially designed as a field work in Gilgit Baltistan the research was not possible to carry out because of the travel impossibilities, hence this paper offers a theoretical framework and base for future doctoral research.

The main topic of this paper is connected to the discussion of such terms as identity, ethnicity, their interconnection and different approaches to them, various realms of identity and collective identity formation. The main aim is to find out how is the Shi'a collective identity constructed and if it has any influence on the separatist's movements in the region. To what extent people of Gilgit Baltistan identify themselves with the rest of Pakistan, and to what extent this identification is forcibly imposed by the state in order to gain various political aims.

Main research questions:

How is the Shi'a collective identity formatted in Gilgit Baltistan?

How is the identity of people in Gilgit Baltistan connected with ethnicity and religion?

Sub questions:

What are the processes by which sectarian identity is created or destroyed, strengthened, or weakened?

To what extent is the identity the result of internal processes, and to what extent is ethnicity externally defined and motivated?

What are the factors that lead to nationalism and separatism in the region?

In contemplation of laying out the answers to the questions above, several aspects should be discussed. In the first place the basic information, cultural and political landscape, historical background, the influence of international relations in order to figure out the nowadays context and social environment in Gilgit Baltistan. Further comes the discussion on whether it is possible to think about Gilgit Baltistan in the terms of post-colonization and what is the influence of the improved infrastructure by the building of Karakoram Highway road. Over and above there will be introduced themes of collective identity and memory and ethnic identity, with the accentuate possibility of considering ethnicity without framing it into groups. Subsequent pages are dedicated to the sectarian dichotomy in Gilgit Baltistan, its historical transformation and hardships confronted by Shi'as.

1. The settings

Gilgit Baltistan or The Northern Areas of Pakistan is the only region in Pakistan with Shi'a dominated population within the Sunni majority state. Motley and heterogeneous society of Gilgit Baltistan consists of several ethnic groups, and different languages are spoken in the area. The area is not densely populated, with approximately one and a half million sparse population



1. The map of Gilgit Baltistan. (US Central Intelligence Agency, 2004)

spread over the harsh and mountainous terrain of 72,971 square km. It borders Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan, Azad Kashmir, and Indian Kashmir, Ladakh and China.

Gilgit Baltistan administratively is divided into three divisions: Baltistan, Diamer and Gilgit, which further are divided into fourteen districts. The principal administrative centres are Gilgit and Skardu.

The area remains disputed among Pakistan, India, and China, also it is an inseparable part of the conflict over Kashmir, considered by some a third province of the Jammu and Kashmir state. Pakistan considers Gilgit Baltistan as part of the larger territory of Jammu and Kashmir and links their fate with the resolution of the Kashmir dispute with India (Bodla 2014:125).

Pakistan emerged as a new state in 1947 after the Great Partition of the subcontinent, under the Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of All-India Muslim League. Urdu language is a lingua franca in Pakistan, often called as Muslim Hindi, introduced before the creation of Pakistan, due to the economic relationships in the region. It is the most widespread language in Pakistan, although Urdu does not belong to any ethnic group.

The Islamic Republic Pakistan (*pak* – pure in Persian, *stan* - place), supposed to be a safe haven for Muslims population of Hindustan, almost 80 % of whom are Sunni. The delusive and misleading narrative of homogenic religious society may create a false image of a ‘pure’ place for Muslims, forgetting to tell about the sectarian differences and issues between Shi’a and Sunni. The prevailing symbolism of Sunni Islam is spread all over the country, the main mosque in the capital city Islamabad, the biggest mosque in South Asia a gift from Saudi Arabia is Sunni. It was built as a national mosque, thus symbolizing the Islamic identity of all Pakistanis. Situated in an open space place, easy reached and opened for tourists. On the contrary, Shi’a mosques are fenced and protected, not opened for visitors. “Shi’as often consider Pakistan a Sunni (and, by implication, an anti-Shi’a) state” (Grieser 2015: 102).

The position of Gilgit Baltistan within the country is controversial and not very clear. "The Northern Areas poses for the Pakistan state, it has been placed under direct federal administration, and denied even basic constitutional rights such as the right to vote in national elections" (Ali 2010: 739). After the partition people of the Northern Areas voted for being a part of a new emerged Muslim state, but till nowadays the region has not become a fully integrated part of the country with all the rights of a province. "Gilgit-Baltistan is not a constitutional part of Pakistan but, due to the still unresolved Kashmir dispute, a 'disputed territory' under the administration of Pakistan. This special status brings about a number of political disabilities" (Grieser 2015: 88). The Northern Areas are neither constitutionally nor geographically included into Pakistan. Even the name itself, Northern Areas was just a description of its geographical position, the term Gilgit Baltistan was introduced as the official name of the former Northern Areas of Pakistan in September 2009. Since the term 'Northern Areas' signifies the geography of the region only in relation to Pakistan, people living in the area felt a sense of a shared identity when they came into contact with people from other parts of Pakistan before 2009. "The change of name did not significantly alter the existing relationship with the Pakistani state, which could be described as a relation" (Kreutzmann 2015: 278). The people of the area are border citizens with limited rights, they have no political rights and political representation in the country. "People come in contact with the Pakistani state through the military and bureaucracy" (Bodla 2014:128). Many of these state institutions represent lowlanders wielding considerable influence and a feeling of having little say of their own affairs among locals.

The relations between Gilgit Baltistan and the rest of the country can be characterized by 'peripherality and liminality'. "There is no permanent power structure in Gilgit-Baltistan. Rather it mutates in tandem with the new

configuration of power in the centre” (Kreutzmann 2015: 285). The simplistic formula of ‘no vote, no tax’ just scratches the surface of the complicated and confounded relationships that exists between the down-country and centre and the mountainous outskirts. The people of Gilgit-Baltistan have been disenfranchised; they were once again mere observers in the federal assembly and senate election campaigns. They tend to be oppressed and marginalized as individuals with restricted rights. “People of the region are deprived of their political rights and have no representation in the parliament of Pakistan” (Rizwan 2018: 162). In their peripheral location, a border pass regime gives them certain travel, trade, and tariffs-related privileges in cross-boundary exchange with neighbouring China. Thus, they relive a legacy in which “theoretical boundaries of citizenship were delimited and fastened to geopolitical borders as part of the process of post-colonial state formation” (Kreutzmann 2015: 277). In the last 150 years, three separate forces have ruled over Gilgit and the surrounding mountain region, namely Baltistan: Kashmiri [Dogra], British, and Pakistani. “Instead of locating a uni- or multilinear transition from colonialism to the postcolonial, we discover only transition between specific relations and modes of domination and subalternity in the history of the Northern Areas” (Sökefeld 2005: 940).

Gilgit Baltistan is not simply divided just into Sunni or Shi’a groups, there are also relevant differences within these schools of thought. Very roughly, “the south of Gilgit-Baltistan, Diamer District, is purely Sunni, while to the east, Baltistan, is mostly – though not exclusively – Shi’a, while the northern part of the area, Hunza, is mostly Ismaili. Mixed neighborhoods are actually the great exception” (Sökefeld 2016: 14). In an environment of apparent general instability, distinguishing between Shi’a and Sunni became critical. Social interactions have been largely divided, implying both increased group division and increased interaction within one's own community

(Grieser 2015: 89). Sectarian and doctrinal differences have direct impacts on daily life in Gilgit Baltistan. Over the last 30 years, there has been a marked increase in sectarian polarization, evidenced by trends such as a decrease in inter-marriage between the different Muslim sects, as well as in adjacent living in joint neighbourhoods. The state's systematic support of religious agendas and violence has deliberately promoted sectarian mistrust, while the perpetual paranoia of sectarian forces at work in government affairs derives from the numerous discriminatory policies that have been introduced (Ali 2010: 749).

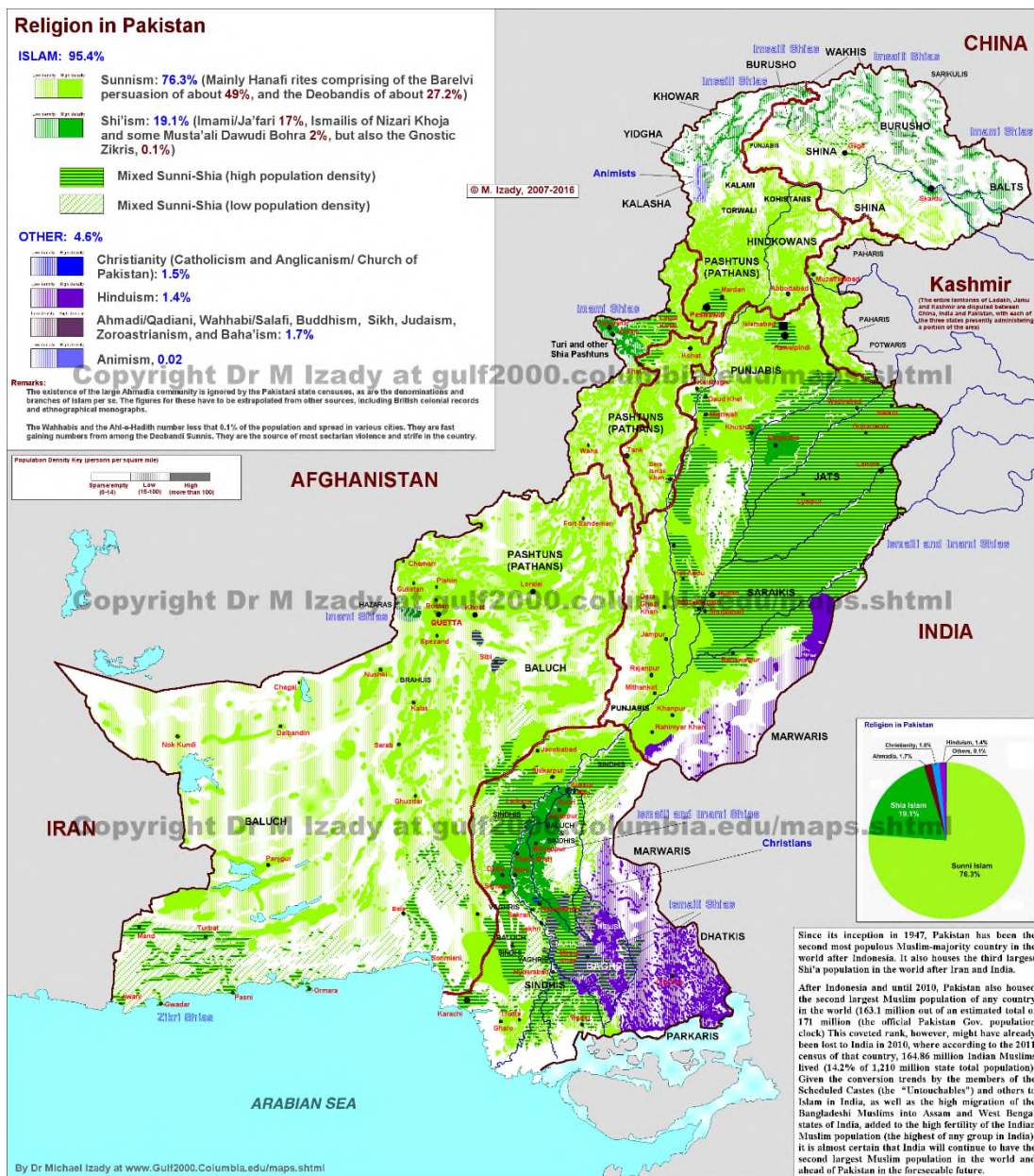
There are numerous cases of violence and attacks on Shi'a in Gilgit Baltistan, which are supported and financed by the government. Suspecting government complicity in anti-Shi'a attacks the alienation felt by Shi'as is so strong that many Shi'a leaders believe Pakistan would disintegrate if the authorities do not stop supporting Sunni sectarian militancy. The situation and the common mistrust among the people of different religious groups was not like this before. Inter-denominational marriages among common people were not a real exception two generations ago. "They have or have not led to the conversion of one of the partners (not always the wife). In 1990, however, those marriages were regarded as disqualified. Family contacts to the (former) relatives ceased some time ago and the people regarded these kinds of mixed marriages as impossible" (Stöber 2007: 389). During present times If exceptionally a marriage is planned between people from different sects, one, mostly the female, has to convert.

Nationalistic discourses are becoming more powerful because of the colonialist attitudes of down-country, as they are perceived, there are several nationalist movements in the region often supported total separation of Gilgit Baltistan. There are no movements in Gilgit Baltistan who are in favor of becoming an official province of Pakistan, but there are movements for separation or asking for full autonomy in the region.

2. History of the region

2.1 Religion in Gilgit Baltistan

In the middle of the 16th century, Shi'a Islam was first spread to the North from Central Asia. southwest in the early 19th century (Grieser 2015: 84). A visionary Muslim cleric (possibly called Syed Ali Hamadani) brought Islam to the region around 1400 AD. As a result, the Baltis embraced a mix of



2. The religious map of Pakistan. (2017)

Islam that included elements of Noorbakhshi Sufism (a Sufi-oriented order found only in Iran and Baltistan) and Buddhism, a variant of Islam that is vastly different from the Iranian-dominated interpretation of Islam seen today in Baltistan (Syed 2011: 45). "The southern district of Diamer is exclusively Sunni. Nager in the north and Baltistan in the east is mostly Shi'a (with a small minority of Nurbakhshis) while Ismailis prevail in Hunza in the north and in Ghizer in the west. However, many geographical areas and political districts are mixed: In Baltistan, especially in Skardu, there are also Sunnis; in Astor we find Shi'as beside the majority of Sunnis; in Ghizer there are Sunnis beside the Ismailis; and in the Hunza-Nager District almost all-Ismaili Hunza is spatially juxtaposed to Shi'a Nager" (Grieser 2015: 85). The Ismailiyya arrived in Gilgit-Baltistan from Badakhshan in the northwest in the late 18th century, while Sunni Islam arrived from the south and

2.2 Colonization

The British Empire colonized Indian subcontinent and put it under their rule in the years from 1858 to 1947. In 1891-92, the British Indian Army conquered Hunza, Nagar and Gilgit, thus bringing the whole area under the British Raj. During the period 1890-1935, the British by forming Gilgit Agency under single administration divided the region into four sub-units: Gilgit, Ladakh, Skardu and Kargil. Gilgit Baltistan preserves its previous form of governing as princely states. It is important to mention that whereas, external affairs were controlled by the British, the internal administration was largely left to the Kashmir Government. Both British and Kashmiri rulers were perceived by local people as oppressive colonizers, but to some extent British rule was less cruel, therefore it made a pavement road for British presence legitimization and created a narrative of British who came to develop the region additionally bringing more rights.

The fact that there were two colonial forces in the region, Kashmiri and British, each ruling with different but not always clearly delineated competences and competing in many ways determined colonial relations in Gilgit until 1947 to a large extent. This rivalry was fought not only for political dominance of the region and its inhabitants, but also for the legitimacy of that control. Legitimacy is required to turn domination by force into domination by power. In the beginning of Kashmiri domination in Gilgit, the British and the Kashmiri discourse on the legitimacy of rule in Gilgit converged. However, during the reign of Gulab Singh's son Ranbir Singh, the British began to doubt whether the maharaja was a faithful and successful trustee of British interests in the northern frontier region, and the two discourses of authority were divided. A result of this distrust was that the British started to pursue seriously their interest directly and with their own personnel. After a few explorers and surveyors had travelled the area, Colonel John Biddulph went to Gilgit in 1877 to become the first British agent there (Sökefeld 2005: 944). Kashmiri domination in Gilgit was a matter of force. It was established violently by conquest. The British established their position in Gilgit by very different means. They never had to conquer the place. The British provided the reason for the maharaja's troops' entrenchment in Gilgit through the Treaty of Amritsar, its prevailing understanding, and British interest in creating the Kashmiri force as a frontier guard in Gilgit—after all, Jammu and Kashmir was a native state in British India. British colonization of the Gilgit Agency is presented simply as a story of progress. After the Gilgit Agency had been reestablished, Kashmiri authorities stayed in Gilgit and so remained the implicit rivalry between the British and Kashmiri, which at times became manifest. “Dual control” was instituted. Formally, competences were divided: Kashmir administered the Gilgit, which comprised the tahsil (subdistrict) of Gilgit (including Gilgit Town), Bunji, and Astor. All other parts of the area

were controlled mostly indirectly by the British. Dual control, however, did not reduce competition for power, but rather fostered it (Sökefeld 2005: 947).

The formation of the Gilgit Scouts Corps, a group of locally recruited paramilitary forces, was the most significant means by which the British assured the cooperation of at least a decisive part of the Gilgit Agency's inhabitants—and possibly the most ingenious instrument of force that they ever established there. Gilgit Scouts were not raised for military purposes only. Much more importantly, they procured an intimate bond between the British and a considerable part of the population. To be a member of the Gilgit Scouts, in addition to all the material gains, was considered a great honor in a society in which questions of honor and rank were of the highest importance (Sökefeld 2005: 951).

2.3 Pakistan after the 1947

Major changes connected with the emergence of Pakistan happened after the Great Partition in 1947, when the Indian subcontinent was divided into India, Pakistan and Eastern Pakistan (the last after the civil war became an independent state of Bangladesh). The independence movement in India for creation separate states after the colonization by the British Empire had been divided into two parts, one led by the Congress Party with Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhi, the other by the Muslim League under Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Mohammad Ali Jinnah was on favor of the idea that there should be two nations in the subcontinent: a Hindu nation and a Muslim nation. According to this two-nations theory, these two nations differed to the extent that they could not live together in a single independent state. Ali Jinnah demanded the partition of the subcontinent into a state for Hindus (India) and one for Muslims (Pakistan). When the British accepted this demand, partition took place. Muslim majority areas were to become Pakistan, while regions with a

mainly Hindu population formed India. In princely states of Gilgit Baltistan, the rulers could decide for either India or Pakistan. The people of the region, who all were Muslims except for a small section of Kashmiri Hindus, clearly favored joining Pakistan. People of Gilgit Baltistan were united under the common perception of belonging to Islam, belonging to Sunni or Shi'a school of thought was not playing a crucial role at those times.

On 1st of November 1947, two and a half months after the inception of Pakistan, the local people of the 'Gilgit Agency' fought for their accession with Pakistan against the Dogras (Rulers) of Kashmir in the name of Islam. Still today, the 1st of November is celebrated as the day of freedom from Dogra, that is, Kashmiri, rule (Bodla 2014: 127). In November 1947, the Government of Pakistan appointed a political agent in response to the invitation by the provisional government setup in Gilgit after the successful revolution. In 1950, the Ministry of Kashmir affairs was established "replacing the control of Government of the region and a political resident as an agent of Governor General was sent to look after the affairs" (Dani, 2001). In 1952, the joint secretary, Kashmir Affairs Division, was entrusted with the additional charge of the post of resident and chief advisor for Azad Kashmir. From 1967 to 1974, the administrative structure of the Northern Areas was reshaped and Hunza and Nagar were absorbed in Pakistan (Zain 2010: 183). Despite the fact that Gilgit Baltistan had become a part of Pakistan, the area remained constitutionally separate from the rest of the country and was ruled directly by the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs in Karachi. Pakistan officially considered Gilgit Baltistan a part of Jammu and Kashmir, and thus under the jurisdiction of Pakistan controlled Azad Kashmir. In 1949 the government of Pakistan formally took the control of Gilgit Baltistan by the infamous Karachi Agreement without consulting anybody from GB (Bodla 2014: 132). Being constitutionally separate from the "down- country" did not mean getting

autonomy, but rather was connected to the deprivation of rights and lack of political representation in Pakistan.

Under the rule of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who was in charge of Pakistan from 1971 to 1973, some political reforms were introduced in the area of Gilgit Baltistan, Princely states were abolished, and there was formed a representative body, named the Northern Areas Advisory Council (Rizwan 2018: 161). But none of the reforms were of religious infill. The biggest turn and the major event linked to the first religious turbulence occurred under the rule of the dictator Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq who was the president from 1978 till his death in 1988. In the Gilgit district of the Northern Areas, the time before the 1970s is remembered as a time of shared life-worlds, when religious identities were fluid and pluralistic, Gilgitis generally practiced mutual tolerance toward each other in terms of sectarian identity. Consequently, inter-marriage across sects was also fairly common, with the result that several families in the Northern Areas today have members who belong to different sects. What mattered more in terms of social identification and differentiation was affiliation with a qoum, an agnatic descent group that might be translated as tribe or people (Ali 2010: 746). In 1988 the massacre of the Shi'a population, which was sponsored and supported by General Zia, took place in Gilgit, and from this point the society in Gilgit Baltistan became polarized and divided in terms of sectarian identity. The Gilgit Massacre happened after the riots which were linked to the dispute over the sighting of the moon for Eid al-Fitr holiday after Ramadan between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims. Another president, Pervez Musharraf had concerns about the region with the Shi'a majority, he initiated a policy of bringing in Punjabis and Pakhtoons from outside and settling them in Gilgit and Baltistan in order to reduce the Shi'as to a minority in their traditional land, also the process continues to this date. "The rapid settling-in of Punjabis and Pakhtoons from outside has created a sense of acute insecurity

among the local Shi'as" (Bansal 2007: 62). Here I should emphasize that the main point of this action was not related to the idea of bringing people from other ethnic groups, but rather from different sectarian affiliation, Punjabis and Pakhtoons are Sunni Muslims.

2.4 Postcolonial or still colonial

Colonization and the post-colonial period had a drastic effect and influence on life and identities of people in Gilgit Baltistan. Not only must one contend with various types of local national identities, but also with the political circumstances that arose in the aftermath of British colonization and the Kashmir conflict, which gave birth to a new, inclusive political identity. A nation of the Northern Areas was in the process of being imagined (Sökefeld 2005: 941). Postcolonial nation building in many countries and continents has taken an uneasy path marked by unmet ambitions, muted identity claims, and contradictory conceptions of national authenticity and purity (Syed 2011: 42). There is no clear line nor edge of a postcolonial state of the region.

The colonial regime is defined by a power structure in which persuasion never outweighs resistance and in which hegemony — defined in these terms — accordingly is never achieved (Guha 1997, 20–23). "Colonialism does not necessarily operate through a simple dichotomy of colonizers versus colonized but is subverted by ambivalence and is continually in need of reconstruction. This certainly holds true for the Northern Areas of Pakistan where the dichotomy has become blurred by intertwining histories of domination" (Syed 2011: 45). When it became clear that Maharaja Singh had proclaimed the accession of Jammu and Kashmir State to the Indian Union on October 1947, under the pressure of many uprisings and the invasion of Muslim warriors, the freedom struggle in Gilgit escalated. The Gilgit Scouts and other local armed forces had grown from subalterns to a powerful

opponent, but they were about to revert to their former status (Sökefeld 2005: 956-958). On July 31, 1947, two weeks before independence, the British left the former Gilgit Agency (as this area was known during colonial times), a remote but strategically important part of colonial India. As a result, the country entered a transformative phase that, according to recent nationalist perspectives, has yet to enter a significant level of decolonization. It wasn't just a case of the West or the rest of the world when it came to colonialism. This is particularly true in Pakistan's Northern Areas. Intertwined histories of dominance darkened the dichotomy here: the region was under British control until 1947, then simultaneously under British and Jammu and Kashmir dominance. Even though India and Pakistan commemorate their independence on August 15, the Gilgit Agency was liberated from British control two weeks ago. On that day, the Gilgit Agency no longer belonged to either India or Pakistan, but was instead 'returned' to Kashmiri jurisdiction. Gilgit has its own Independence Day, which is celebrated on November 1, the date on which the people of Gilgit began their own independence movement – not against the British, but against the rule of the maharaja of Kashmir. Local oppositional parties boycotted the election on November 1 because they see the existing Pakistani government as a modern colonial regime, not a 'rule of freedom'.

Under Dogra rule, the region had minimal autonomy; after independence, Pakistan took over local institutions. The colonial system continues to this day in the form of federal legal directives and the Pakistani government's lack of transparency. In contrast to Pakistan's nation state, the Northern Areas remain marginalized. The peoples of the region are now threatened with forced assimilation (Syed 2011: 53).

Colonization systems leave such profound imprints on the cultures of both the colonized and the colonizers that they cannot be easily erased by a

constitutional declaration of independence. Even after independence, such cultures are strongly influenced by colonial history's 'gravity', to use Edward Said's term (Said 1994: 367). Arguably, decolonization begins before independence with freedom struggles against colonial hegemony and domination. And, it certainly continues after colonization has formally ended, as much time is needed to free social institutions and discourses from often subtle kinds of determination by the colonizing power—if that can ever be achieved. There is no simple dichotomy of the colonial and the postcolonial. Problems of periodization proliferate if 'postcolonial' is taken to label a global process of transition. Yet when we take dates of independence not as 'definite' but as 'critical' points of transition (Sökefeld 2005: 939). Pakistani power in the area increasingly depended on (or was replaced by) force. In contrast with the British, the Pakistani administration did not pay particular attention to local values and customs. The legitimacy of Pakistan's position in the Northern Areas was simply taken for granted by virtue of a shared Muslim nationhood and of 'national interests' in the context of the Kashmir dispute (Sökefeld 2005: 963).

Despite the fact that Gilgit Baltistan is formally independent from the British rule, the area exercises being a colony without basic rights and political representation just within a different political unit – Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Being colonized by the foreign forces like Britain imprinted people's identities. Pakistan is of course a postcolonial state, but this postcoloniality acquires very different meanings depending on different perspectives within the country (Sokefeld 2005: 970). Even though Pakistan is a post-colonial country, the inhabitants of Gilgit Baltistan are still feeling themselves as colonized. The relation between power and knowledge had not yet been decolonized in the Northern Areas. If one wants to conduct a field work in the area, there should be a permission from Islamabad, and not from the local

authorities, it feels like people do not have a possibility to talk on their behalf. Many of the premises that underpin colonialism are still active forces today, according to postcolonial thinkers (Said 1978; Spivak 1988), exposing and deconstructing the ethnocentric, racist, and imperialist nature of such assumptions may be useful in weakening their power of conviction, compulsion, and oppression.

2.5 Gilgit Revolution

Gilgit Baltistan has not, to this day, become de jure a part of Pakistan. The local leaders of the freedom movement quickly realized that their ideals of freedom did not complement those of Political Agent Mohammad Alam within the first days after his arrival. He stripped local people of all power and control. It's unclear how much of the subsequent dispute between the political agent and the local officers was triggered by political disagreements in the Gilgit Agency over self-determination or merely a disillusionment with personal aspirations. It was most likely a mixture of the two. Colonel Aslam (aka Colonel Pasha), a "Pakistani" general from what had been Azad Kashmir, was also given command of the force. The Gilgit Scouts and other local armed forces had grown from subalterns to a formidable force, but they were about to revert to their former status. Everything had seemed to be very different at first. Gilgit citizens had succeeded in ending Kashmiri rule in their region. In Gilgit, a Pakistani administration has been built. Major Brown described the excitement of welcoming Mohammad Alam, the man who would found Pakistan, to Gilgit: "He was greeted enthusiastically by the local populace and triumphantly escorted to the Agency House." He exhorted the people to put aside their party feelings and join as one in the cause of Islam in a few well-chosen terms. This brief speech was met with even more rapturous applause before the crowd eventually dissipated. The Pakistan flag was hoisted on the flagpole at the Agency House at 9.30 a.m. on November 17th, when a Guard

of Honor from the Gilgit Scouts paid full honors and the pipes and drums played the Royal Salute. The ceremony drew large audiences, and everyone seemed to be applauding it enthusiastically. The political agent, on the other hand, made it known to the insurgent officers the next day that the order was now his. Many citizens gradually understood that the goals of their resistance would not be realized under the new administration; According to British sources, Mohammad Alam failed to satisfy the people of Gilgit's hopes. Not only had the scouts reverted to their former status as second-class citizens, but the new government continued all of the exploitative imperialist policies that the people had long despised. People were able to continue paying taxes to support the scouts' actions during the independence movement. However, policies such as high taxes were not eliminated after the war. The rajas maintained their despotic rule in most areas of the Gilgit Agency by remaining independent in internal relations. The people's frustration with the new government grew as a result of these continuities. In Gilgit, a number of citizens began to demonstrate against the new administration's unfair policies, including taxes. The protest was silenced in the name of Islamic unity (which apparently did not allow for dissent with the rulers), and the leaders of the protest were arrested. The Gilgit Scouts continued to serve the dominant power. In 1951 residents of Punial protested the taxation by the raja. The raja of Punial directed some of his supporters to fire at the unruly people when the protests did not end. Six people were killed in the explosion. Immediately, a party of Gilgit Scouts was sent to apprehend those who had dared to show their displeasure, rather than those who had opened fire. The end of the 1960s, a large resistance movement against the despotism of the ruler of Nager demanded the reduction of taxation as well as certain participation of the residents in the public affairs of Nager. Again, the scouts were sent against the people. After shootings at a demonstration at Chalt in Nager in 1970, nine persons were killed and many more wounded. The leaders of the protest were

imprisoned (Sökefeld 1997b, 282). After these events in Nager, many people were shocked that the Gilgit Scouts, who were still regarded as a force of freedom, had turned violently against the people.

Some members of the Gilgit Scouts had also pondered their positions. A massive protest movement erupted in Gilgit at the start of 1971, leading to a general strike. When protesters began targeting the police station and prison to release their jailed representatives, the scouts were forced to fire into the crowd by their nonlocal (Punjabi and Pakhtoon) soldiers. The scouts, on the other hand, declined to follow the order and either shot into the air or refused to fire at all. These events are often referred to as the "Gilgit Revolution" by locals. To bring an end to the uprising, soldiers from the North-West Frontier Province—that is, non-local troops—were dispatched. Soon after, repression gave way to transition, with the governance of the Northern Areas changing dramatically during Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's tenure as Prime Minister and later as President of Pakistan. Raja rule and taxation were also abolished. The territory now known as the "Northern Parts" looked to be on the brink of becoming a full-fledged Pakistani province. When General Zia ul Haq came to power in 1977, the reforms came to an end (Sökefeld: 2005).

A final significant activity of the Gilgit Scouts under Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's administration should be recounted. After 1972, Gilgit's culture was ripped apart by a militant war between Shiites and Sunnis. This dispute was allegedly started in Gilgit by the government in order to split the people's unity. When the Shiite muharram (mourning) procession was fired at from the Sunni main mosque in Gilgit in early 1975, the deputy commissioner arrested the Sunni qaz (head of the main mosque).

To free their leader, a group of armed Sunnis marched from the southern parts of the Northern Areas to Gilgit. When the Shiites heard of the

attack, they marched in force from Nager to Gilgit. The Gilgit Scouts marched out and prevented both the Shiites and Sunnis from reaching the area, preventing a confrontation. Soon after that, the Gilgit Scouts were dissolved; a new troop was installed, the “Northern Light Infantry” (NLI). The Gilgit Scouts had always been a body of locals under the command of nonlocal officers, but in the new (regular) military body, local soldiers were mixed with nonlocals. That is, for the first time, no local armed force existed in the area. Many people in Gilgit drew a connection between the alleged governmental instigation of Shiite-Sunni tensions and the dissolution of the Gilgit Scouts. They said that the scouts were disbanded because they avoided a religious war and thereby thwarted a divide-and-rule policy. Many who harbour such suspicions had their suspicions reinforced by events in 1988, when a Sunni military group invaded Shiite villages near Gilgit and was not thwarted in any way by the regular army—a tribal force capable of stopping the resulting atrocities, as the scouts had done in 1975, no longer existed. Oppositional political activity in Gilgit was almost impossible under Zia ul Haq's military rule. However, since the late 1980s, a number of political parties headed by citizens of the city have emerged with the goal of changing the Northern Areas' unsatisfactory political and constitutional status. This development is also due to general political liberalization since the end of the dictatorship. Political inequality became blatant as a result of this liberalization: since the death of Zia ul Haq in 1988, a number of general elections have been held, but citizens of the Northern Areas have never had the right to vote because the Northern Areas is de jure not a part of Pakistan. The new political organizations of the Northern Areas became the bearers of a nationalist discourse, asserting a distinctive national identity of the Northern Areas in contrast to thus, the idea of national unity with Pakistan, conceived originally on the basis of the assumption of a Muslim nation in South Asia as formulated by Mohammad Ali Jinnah in his two-nations theory, was discursively

challenged. In the body of texts and speeches constituting this nationalist discourse, the Pakistani administration of the Northern Areas is termed explicitly a “colonial” since 1992 (Sökefeld: 2005).

2.6 Gilgit Baltistan influenced by international relationships

Pakistani authorities began to feel uncomfortable having an ‘almost a province’ with the Shi’a majority population particularly after the year 1979. If one has a look from the international perspective, the role of Gilgit Baltistan occurs to be very important. Two major events of 1979: the Islamic revolution in Iran and Soviet Invasion in Afghanistan played an important role. The revolution in Iran created the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was a warning to America. Thus, in the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988), the US supported Saddam Hussain. Although the US was an ally of Pakistan, the Shi’ite population was positively inclined towards Iran and developed an anti-American attitude. After the Soviet Union left Afghanistan, jihadists trained by the USA went to other places including neighbouring Pakistan, where they were focusing on Shi’as, whom they perceived as *kafirs* (infidels). For Pakistan the Northern Areas in relation to “down-country”: as a source of power and water and as a strategic area controlling connections to China. Here, a province controlled by a non-Sunni majority seems to be a risk to main political forces in Pakistan. “Being excluded from civilian decision-making processes, the citizens of Gilgit-Baltistan attribute existing problems and risks to external interests and agents. Regional and national power games have found an arena in its northern periphery” (Kreutzmann 2015: 283). Gilgit Baltistan is not the place where only the highest mountain ranges meet, it is also the place where the greatest superpowers assemble. It is connecting Pakistan and China by the Karakoram Highway, the road, which was built and financed by China, thus China is interested in the region and is not willing to share it with India.

Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the USA contributed to the radicalization in the region. Very often this contribution was conducted through education and went smoothly because of the underdeveloped educational sector in Gilgit Baltistan, religious educational institutions were highly welcomed. The USA and Saudi Arabia supported madrasas (Islamic seminaries) and jihadis in Pakistan and it led to radicalization and to sectarian violence. Pakistani government has essentially allowed Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shi'a Iran to fight a proxy war on Pakistani soil, with devastating consequences for the local people.

2.7 The Karakoram Highway

One more important change came to the region with the construction of the Karakoram Highway, the national highway connecting Pakistan with China's Xinjiang Uyghur region. "Geopolitically it is one of the most sensitive areas of Pakistan and has assumed additional strategic and "political importance with the opening of the Karakoram Highway", which links China to Pakistan and reportedly generates trade worth billions of dollars" (Bansal 2007: 58). "The immigrants from different areas of Pakistan pose a constant threat to the integrity of an already fractionalized society. The opening up of the roads to mountain communities in the form of Karakoram highway has resulted in large migration from different parts of Pakistan, most notably Kahsmir, which has resulted in the demographic shift of the region" (Batt 2014:30).

These areas were virtually disconnected from the rest of Pakistan until the completion of the highway. The construction of the KKH was a landmark for the strategic friendship of Pakistan and China. The impact of this road on the lives of the people living in Gilgit Baltistan has been enormous (Bodla 2014: 127). At the time of the opening of the Karakoram Highway, the Government of Pakistan claimed that this route would bring revolutionary changes to the

Northern Areas, and that it would help to promote national integration of a kind heretofore unknown to the mountain locked inhabitants. Today, China's wish to access the Gwadar deep-water port on the coast of Balochistan from its western provinces makes the KKH important for bilateral trade between Pakistan and China and for their long-standing strategic friendship (Bodla 2014: 128). The highway enabled residents of Gilgit Baltistan to communicate with those in the rest of Pakistan. For higher education, students from Gilgit



3. Terrain in Gilgit Baltistan, Hunza. (Shytsikava 2019)

Baltistan enrolled in universities in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad. In the major cities, many of them founded businesses or got work. Many who finally returned to their hometowns became aware of their peripheral identities and compared the under-development of Gilgit Baltistan with the more developed regions in other parts of Pakistan. Returning students formed numerous minor initiatives in the city to inform the public about their political rights. In the late 1980s, they began to foresee a Balawaristan republic (Sökefeld 1999). Pakistan entered the areas deeply through a web of roads; the state became a visible entity in the region by means

of the construction of roads (Haines 2012: 8). For the government of Pakistan, these roads were important to connect with the geographically and strategically important region. After the Karakoram Highway construction the identities of people in Gilgit Baltistan were opposed to the people of the rest of Pakistan.

3. Identity

The introduction of identity into social analysis and its initial diffusion in the social sciences and public discourse occurred in the United States in the 1960s (Brubaker 2006). It is difficult to give a clear and universal definition to this term, but there are some important aspects of it, which should be discussed. The problem is that the term 'identity' remains semantically inseparable from the idea of permanence, which cannot show the dynamics and fluidity of the collective identity. Identity is not stable; it is situational, and it is always in motion. Also it would be fair to discuss this term in plural, as identities. People of Gilgit Baltistan might identify themselves not only with a particular village, language and ethnicity, their identities depend on the situation. Additionally identities are changing within the time, for example after the partition the self-perceiving of being a Muslim was enough to decide about the belonging to Pakistan. After the Gilgit Massacre the sectarian identities started to play a more important role, in such wise one would rather associate him or herself with a narrower school of Islamic thought: Sunni or Shi'a. Identity can be understood as a production or an action which is never complete but always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall 1996:167).

One can consider different types of identities: language, ethnic, cultural, and so on. But it would be amiss to think about predetermined linguistic identities. People use languages to perform and create their

identities rather than using them because of their identities (Ahmed 2016: 3). According to Foucault identity is the evanescent product of multiple and competing discourses, 'identity' is invoked to highlight the unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented nature of the contemporary self (Foucault 1991). For Charles Tilly identity is blurred but indispensable concept and he defines it as "an actor's experience of a category, tie, role, network, group or organization, coupled with a public representation of that experience; the public representation often takes the form of a shared story, a narrative" (Tilly 1996). I would argue that in the case of Gilgit Baltistan identities would not be so blurred, rather they are sharp because of the history and complicated political environment and strong polarization of society in Gilgit Baltistan in case of sectarian differences. "Social identities and groups are by default relational in the sense that they are defined in relation to other identities, other groups" (Eriksen 1995: 427). "Identities are created, strengthened and maintained through the enactment of contrasts with others. However, they must also be able to draw on some kind of internal solidarity or cultural commonality - be it of a political, economic, religious or symbolic nature. They must have some degree of institutional support" (Eriksen 1995: 434). In the case of Gilgit Baltistan the constant contrast is enacted and perpetuated through the sectarian dichotomy of Sunni versus Shi'a. Additionally there is a cultural commonality based on religious nature, and hence there is an internal solidarity among the Shi'as of Gilgit Baltistan.

The problem with considering identity, according to Brubaker, is that it is both there and nowhere at the same time. If self-understandings are elastic, how can we explain how they can harden, congeal, and crystallize? If external identifications are built, how do we comprehend their sometimes deceptive power? "Social analysis—including the analysis of identity politics—requires relatively unambiguous analytical categories. Whatever its suggestiveness,

whatever its indispensability in certain practical contexts, 'identity' is too ambiguous, too torn between 'hard' and 'soft' meanings, essentialist connotations and constructivist qualifiers, to serve well the demands of social analysis" (Brubaker 2006: 29). We can understand identity as a specifically collective phenomenon, which "denotes a fundamental and consequential 'sameness' among members of a group or category. This may be understood objectively (as a sameness "in itself") or subjectively (as an experienced, felt, or perceived sameness). In Gilgit Baltistan the 'sameness' among members of a group will be based on the belonging to a particular religious school of thought. This sameness is expected to manifest itself in solidarity, in shared dispositions or consciousness, or in collective action or as a product of social or political action, The term 'identity' is used to emphasize the interactive, processual creation of the kind of mutual self-understanding, unity, or 'groupness' that allows for collective action. Strong senses of group boundedness and homogeneity go hand in hand with strong senses of social unity. They imply high degrees of groupness, an 'identity' or sameness between group members, a clear boundary between inside and outside. Interactive, discursively mediated processes through which collective solidarities and self-understandings develop (Brubaker 2006: 34). "One may identify oneself (or another person) by position in a relational web (a web of kinship, for example, or of friendship, patron-client ties, or teacher-student relations). On the other hand, one may identify oneself (or another person) by membership in a class of persons sharing some categorical attribute (such as race, ethnicity, language, nationality)" (Brubaker 2006: 41). The mutual self-understanding or groupness is related to the opposition of Shi'a to Sunni, with the clear boundary which was created because of different political and historical events in the region. These boundaries are maintained due to the constant tension and pressure in Gilgit Baltistan.

State can be an influential identity giver. In the case of Pakistan all people are supposed to be united under the supra identity of Muslims. Pakistan presenting Gilgit Baltistan is an eco-body of the country, emphasizing its natural beauty, the highest mountains, and wide rivers, constructing as a space of nature. By essentially depoliticizing the country by invisibilizing its specificities and social identities, such constructions effectively reduce it to a physical and geographical area. "The state is thus a powerful identifier, not because it can create identities in the strong



4. Entrance to Islamabad. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. (2021)

sense—in general, it cannot—but because it has the material and symbolic resources to impose the categories, classificatory schemes, and modes of social counting and accounting with which bureaucrats, judges, teachers, and doctors must work and to which nonstate actors must refer" (Brubaker 2006: 43).

The arose when the identity putting from Pakistan was not just Muslim but rather Sunni Muslim, that created a collision in Gilgit Baltistan. The Sunni identity is imposed by Pakistan through different means, as for example education. Under the rules of president Zia the Islamic studies were introduced as obligatory, the textbooks for this purpose were presenting the Sunny interpretation of Islam. Local regional and ethnic groups in Gilgit-Baltistan strive for their own separate identity within, they tend to favour a unified identity of the region when Gilgit-Baltistan's identity is made subservient to Kashmir identity. This bifurcation between sub-regional and linguistic identity and the collective identity of the region gives birth to a highly localized discourse of identity as well as a narrative of unified identity of Gilgit-Baltistan against the 'Other' – Kashmir (Dad 2016: 4).

Cultural identity is closely connected to the ethnic identity. According to Hall Stuart there are two different ways of understanding 'cultural identity'. The first define 'cultural identity' in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside many others more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. In this example cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people'. Such a conception of cultural identity played a critical role in all the post-colonial struggles which have so profoundly reshaped our world (Hall 2018: 223). In the second way of understanding what is identity, it is viewed as a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation (Hall 2018: 225). Since ethnic identity is related to a range of culturally specific value values, there are situations under which ethnic

identity can be realized moderately effectively, and also limitations within which such achievement is unlikely (Barth 1969: 25).

Looking at the case of Gilgit Baltistan one should take into account the importance of sectarian identities. "The way in which sectarian identities and relations between the religious communities are imagined are contested and changed in history; they have not always been as important as they are today. Yet today sectarian affiliation significantly structures people's imaginations and actions. This for instance means that sectarian identities become more important than identities related to kinship, language or regional belonging, or that affiliation with a particular sect becomes a kind of premise that to a large extent structures social perception and interaction" (Grieser 2015: 84).

3.1 Collective identity

Discussing collective identity, one should think about it in decentered terms. Again, collective identities cannot be described as static. A collective identity develops within an imagined world which is a realm of interpretation and action generated by the participants of a movement through their shared activities and commitments that imagines the terrain of struggle, the powers of opponents, and the possibilities of a changed world (Holland 2008: 97). Here we are talking about two important aspects: belonging and action. In anthropology and other social sciences, traditional concepts of "collective identity" emphasize identity in relation to difference. People who are culturally, geographically, ethnically, globally, or in any other way unique enough to merit differential treatment are believed to have a foundation for unity and individual belonging. Collective identity is important in terms of collective action and organization. It can be understood as "an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community,

category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly" (Polletta 2001).

Manuel Castells distinguishes three categories of collective identity that can be utilized to understand identity: legitimizing identity, resistance identity and project identity. A legitimizing identity is created by governing institutions in order to justify their domination. This applies to Pakistani identity in Gilgit Baltistan. A resistance identity is authored by those who are in a certain position of authority but who are devalued by others. Sectarian identities in Gilgit Baltistan can be considered as resistance identities. A project identity is a novice identity assumed by actors in order to construe their role in society and to propose social change. Balawar identity of people supporting the independence movement in Gilgit Baltistan can be understood as a project identity. It opens an arena for political struggle and allows imagining Gilgit Baltistan as an independent state (Bodla 2014:133).

A structure of connections and representations makes up collective identity. Collective identity is a concept, a method for analysis, rather than a datum or essence, a 'thing' with a 'real' nature. When it comes to such concepts, it is important to keep in mind that one uses tools or lenses from which he or she reads facts, not reality. The concept of collective identity can function as a tool only if it helps to analyze phenomena, or dimensions of them, that cannot be explained through other concepts or models and if it contributes to the formation of new knowledge and to the understanding of these same phenomena" (Johnston 1995: 76). The degree of group cohesion depends on the degree of external pressure (Eriksen 1995: 428).

Melucci defines social identity as the act of 'constructing' an action system. Collective identity is an interactive and mutual meaning created by a group of individuals (or groups at a higher level) about the orientations of

their behavior and the area of possibilities and constraints in which such action is to take place. The main idea is that the actions are interactive and shared, components that are built and negotiated through a recurring process of activation of the ties that connect actors together. As a consequence, collective identity is a network of active relationships between actors that collaborate, connect, control one another, negotiate, and make decisions. A certain degree of emotional investment is required in the definition of a collective identity, which enables individuals to feel themselves part of a common unity. Collective identity is never entirely negotiable because participation in collective action is endowed with meaning which cannot be reduced to cost-benefit calculation and always mobilizes emotions as well (Johnston 1995: 70-71). If autoidentification is to serve as a foundation for identity, it must also achieve social acceptance. These 'others' must be able to understand a collective actor's capacity to differentiate itself from others. It's difficult to talk about social identity without mentioning its relational aspect (Johnston 1995: 73). "The relational aspect of group identity must necessarily be linked with an internal sense of community" (Eriksen 1995: 428). Collective identity encourages social actors to behave as united and delimited objects while retaining power of their own actions; conversely, they may act as collective bodies once the positive phase of collective identity has been achieved to some degree. In terms of the observed behavior, collective identity may thus be described as a collective actor's capacity to perceive and assign the consequences of its actions to itself. This understanding underpins their freedom to own the results of their decisions, share them with others, and determine how they can be distributed. The collective identity presupposes:

- a self-reflective ability of social actors
- actors have a notion of causality and belonging

- collective action produces symbolic orientations and meanings which actors are able to recognize.
- “identity entails an ability to perceive duration, an ability which enables actors to establish a relationship between past and future and to tie action to its effects” (Johnston 1995: 72).

The collective identity can be seen from an internal and external point of view. Conflict is important for the collective identity, because “during a conflict the internal solidarity of the group reinforces identity and guarantees it. People feel a bond with others not because they share the same interests, but because they need that bond in order to make sense of what they are doing. The solidarity that ties individuals to each other enables them to affirm themselves as subjects of their action and to withstand the breakdown of social relations induced by conflict” (Johnston 1995: 74).

3.2 Collective identity formation

In order to be effective in merging individuals and creating unity, identities inevitably identify the Other (Pakistan as a political unit with the Sunnis as leaders holding the power and distributing it unevenly) as inferior. Individuals and societies' collective identities are constantly changing, transforming, and modifying in a variety of locations and fields of contentious operation. Personalities are created by differences in dialogues between two or more participants, resulting in the development of new cultural modes of knowledge that are appropriated for use in subsequent encounters. Figured worlds are collectively imagined worlds in which people and groups “do” movement action, such as protesting to assert rights to access natural resources. Collective identities form in relation to a figured world, for instance, the figured world of Shi'a people's rights (Holland 2008:99). The figurate

world is constructed with the different resources: for example, cultural, local and national one.

To adequately confront the dualism between form and context, a detailed rethinking of the idea of collective identity is needed. The concept cannot be separated from the production of meaning in collective action and from some methodological consequences in considering empirical forms of collective action. One must turn from a monolithic and metaphysical idea of collective actors to the mechanisms by which a collective becomes a collective by questioning how people and organizations make sense of their behavior and how we can accept this mechanism. A processual approach to collective identity helps to affect such a theoretical and methodological shift (Johnston 1995: 69).

3.3 Collective memory and cultural identity

A reflection of the history preserved by members of a society, such as a generation or a nation-state, is known as collective memory. Shared beliefs are likely to be tied to the narratives maintained by collective memories, and ethical and political values are ultimately connected to narratives (Knapp 1989: 138). Memory is seen as being distributed in two ways: (1) internally in small group interaction, and (2) instrumentally in the sense that it affects both individuals and memory devices. In the case of social distribution, for example, Mary Weldon has examined the collaborative remembering that occurs when groups of individuals work together to recall information or events from the past (Wertsch 2008: 120-121). In everyday discourse memories can be traced to one person or several people: can be suggested "my memory of a given event" (attributing a memory to one person) or "our memory of a given event" (attributing a memory to several people) (attributing a memory to more than one person). According to this concept, personal memories are

those belonging to a single person, while group memories are those attributed to several individuals (Russel 2006: 793). Recent research on collective memory has largely used episodic memory as a model. History is just a set of facts (semantic memory); whereas, memory (episodic memory) has a subjective dimension: it creates a sense of self that exists or persists through time, an identity (Russel 2006: 799).

In the area of everyday communication 'communicative memory' includes those varieties of collective memory that are based exclusively on everyday communications. The communicative memory offers no fixed point which would bind it to the ever expanding past in the passing of time. Such fixity can only be achieved through a cultural formation and therefore lies outside of informal everyday memory (Assmann 1995: 126). Cultural memory is differentiated by its isolation from the daily, just as communicative memory is distinguished by its similarity to the everyday. Cultural experience has a distinct horizon that does not shift with the passage of time. These fixed points are historical events whose legacy is preserved by cultural creation (texts, rituals, monuments), as well as formal contact (recitation, practice, observance). "Memory implies retaining an emotional bond with the past" (Cole 2001:105).

Collective memory is connected to the collective identity, to the concretion of identity or the relation to the group. The store of knowledge from which a community receives an awareness of its unity and uniqueness is preserved by cultural memory. The objective representations of cultural memory are characterized by a constructive recognition mechanism that defines its ability to reconstruct. No memory can preserve the past. What remains is only that "which society in each era can reconstruct within its contemporary frame of reference" (Assmann 1995: 130). Cultural memory works by reconstructing, that is, it always relates its knowledge to an actual

and contemporary situation. Cultural memory exists in two modes: first in the mode of potentiality of the archive whose accumulated texts, images, and rules of conduct act as a total horizon, and second in the mode of actuality, whereby each contemporary context puts the objectivized meaning into its own perspective, giving it its own relevance (Assmann 1995: 129-130).

The specific character that a person derives from belonging to a distinct society and culture is a result of socialization knowledge and customs. The nature of such knowledge differs from one society to another and from one epoch to the next. The way society is organized, the media it uses, and the structures it has are all extremely complex. A heritage's linking and reflexive character will take on various intensities and manifest itself in various aggregations. One society bases its self-image on a canon of sacred scripture, the next on a basic set of ritual activities, and the third on a fixed and hieratic language of forms in a canon of architectural and artistic types. The basic attitude toward history, the past, and thus the function of remembering itself introduces another variable (Assmann 1995: 132).

In such an example as of Gilgit Baltistan the collective identity is rooted in sectarian affiliation and it plays the pivotal role in everyday life of the local



5. The writing on the wall in Skardu. [Meri shan mera Pakistan] means My pride (glory), my Pakistan. (Shytsikava, 2019)

people. Collective identity is a network of active relationships between people, and the common feeling of pressure and living under the threat from the Sunni majority lead to solidarity within the Shi'as. During a conflict the internal solidarity of the group reinforces people's identity. Individuals will affirm themselves as subjects of their actions and endure the deterioration of social interactions caused by violence because of the unity that binds them together.

4. Ethnicity

Cultural, religious, and ethnic identities are closely connected. People who are culturally and ethnically unique to merit differential treatment are believed to have a foundation for unity and individual belonging. The collective sectarian identity led to different political decisions made by people in Gilgit Baltistan. The determination of becoming a part of Pakistan after 1947 was driven by the bond with other Muslims and as it was mentioned before Gilgit Baltistan inhabitants were mostly Muslims. Nevertheless ethnicity also played a decisive role. "The people of Gilgit also thought themselves ethnically distinct from the Kashmiris and thus felt few bonds to the state. These differences of political history and ethnic as well as religious dissimilarities resulted in the people of the Gilgit Agency feeling resentful for being placed under Kashmir state rule" (Bangash 2010:125). Opposing themselves to Kashmiris, the people of Gilgit Baltistan chose to become a part of Pakistan.

"The population of Gilgit-Baltistan can roughly be divided into eight ethnic groups. These constitute a major chunk of population, but small ethnic groups also reside in the region. The following eight ethnic groups constitute

the region: Baltis, Yashkunsm, Ladakhis, Turks, Kashmiris, Pathans, Moghals, and Sheens" (Butt 2014:30).

Ethnicity is made up of two fundamental components: identity and culture. Individuals and groups seek to solve the problems of ethnic boundaries and context through the development of ethnicity and community. Ethnicity is better understood as a fluid, ever-changing aspect of both individual identity and group structure. Structure and agency play a role in the development of ethnic identity and culture, a dialectic that is carried out between ethnic groups and society as a whole. "Ethnicity is the product of actions undertaken by ethnic groups as they shape and reshape their self-definition and culture; however, ethnicity is also constructed by external social, economic, and political processes and actors as they shape and reshape ethnic categories and definitions" (Nagel 1994: 152). There are so many different meanings of ethnicity that defining it may be as complicated as identifying terms like 'culture'. Nonetheless, two key problems in various ethnicity conceptualizations can be identified. The classic anthropological controversy about whether etic or emic views should be prioritized has been recast as a distinction between 'objectivist' and 'subjectivist' ethnicity concepts. "In a general way, 'objectivists' perceive ethnic groups as social and cultural entities with distinct boundaries characterized by relative isolation and lack of interaction, whereas 'subjectivists' regard ethnic groups as culturally constructed categorizations that inform social interaction and behaviour" (Jones 1997: 57). As a result, in fact, the 'objectivists' seem to adopt an etic viewpoint, defining ethnic groups based on the analyst's understanding of socio-cultural differentiation. On the other hand, the 'subjectivists' give priority to the emic perspective, and define ethnic groups on the basis of the subjective self-categorizations of the people being studied. Definitions of ethnicity are also characterized by a tension between specificity and

generality; that is between generic definitions which are considered to be too broad to be of any analytical use in the analysis of particular cases, and definitions that are so narrow that their comparative potential is minimal and their principal function is descriptive. The definition of ethnicity is often used to both characterize and clarify events. Ethnicity has become almost synonymous with a determinist view of culture, which believes that each population group has a common psychological essence that separates them and has a significant impact on their behavior. It means that certain groups of people behave violently because it is their culture (Allen 1996: 218).

Ethnicity is first and foremost a situational phenomenon; the context in which one interacts is a significant determinant of the degree of inclusiveness in which one labels oneself and others, "the same person can be categorized according to different criteria of relevance in different situations. In operational terms, situational ethnicity can be observed in the interaction of two or more persons from separate groups in which labels are used to signify the sociocultural differences between them. It results from multiple memberships in differently scaled sociocultural groupings, one of which is used to signify the differences between actors in the situation" (Cohen 1978: 388).

In 'western' social scientific traditions ethnic groups are 'self-defining systems' and consequently particular ethnic groups are on the basis of self-identification and identification by others. A theoretical framework based on the creation of ethnic borders in the form of social activity and their organizational properties has primarily influenced such a concept. Ethnicity has been regarded as essentially a consciousness of identity in relations with other groups; a 'we'/'they' opposition (Jones 1997: 84). Kunststadter sought to differentiate between different types of ethnicity. Using ethnicity as a generic notion, he distinguishes three varieties: ethnic group, ethnic identity, and

ethnic category. He refers to an ethnic community as a group of people who have similar beliefs based on shared understandings and values. Popular values can contribute to a certain organization, but how much is exchanged is an analytical concern. He refers to ethnic identity as a mechanism by which people are assigned to one ethnic group or another. As a result, it implies the establishment, maintenance, and modification of boundaries. Ethnic categories, according to Kunstadter, are clusters of people separated by actual or supposed cultural characteristics. It entails the standardization of conduct against the group by those in society, to a greater or lesser degree. Ethnic categories may not correspond to ethnic groups, even when they share the same: name, depending on where and when the categorization is being made, and by whom. According to Wallman 'ethnicity' refers here to the perception of group difference and so to the social boundaries between sections of the population. In this sense ethnic 'difference' is the recognition of a contrast between 'us' and 'them'" (Wallman 1977:532).

Ethnicity is an individualistic strategy. For example Barth argues that "individuals pass from one categorical identity to another in order to advance their personal economic and political interests, or to minimize their losses" (Jones 1997: 74). Eidheim's study of Lapp identity suggests that people suppress their identity in some situations and emphasize it in others depending on the social advantages and disadvantages which a particular identity engenders in different situations. According to Cohen ethnicity, as presently used in anthropology, expresses a shift to multicultural, multiethnic interactive contexts in which attention is focused on an entity-the ethnic group-which is marked by some degree of cultural and social commonality, but the structural features however, are still there. Cohen defines ethnicity as "a series of nesting dichotomization of inclusiveness and exclusiveness. The process of assigning persons to groups is both subjective and objective, carried

out by self and others, and depends on what diacritics are used to define membership” (Cohen 1978: 386).

The pervasive use of the term ethnicity to refer to a number of socio-cultural phenomena has resulted in substantial controversy over ethnic groups' existence. A number of variables have affected race definitions, all of which interact with one another. There are some of them:

- the impact of different theoretical and disciplinary traditions
- the particular aspects of ethnicity being researched (ranging from the socio-structural dimensions of ethnicity in a plural society, to the cultural construction of ethnic difference, to the effects of ethnic identity on individual performance in education, and so on)
- the region of the world where research is being conducted
- the particular group that is the subject of research (Jones 1997: 56).

Ethnicity is constructed out of the material of language, religion, culture, appearance, ancestry, or regionality. The location and meaning of particular ethnic boundaries are continuously negotiated, revised, and revitalized, both by ethnic group members themselves as well as by outside observers (Nagel 1994: 153).

4.1 Instrumentalist and relationalist approaches

Ethnicity, according to instrumentalists, is a tool used by individuals and organizations to unite, coordinate, and mobilize communities in order to achieve broader goals. These priorities are mainly political in nature, and include demands for self-governance, autonomy, access to resources and influence, respect for the group's identity and culture, and minority rights, among others. Instrumentalists argue that ethnicity has little to no separate

status outside of the political process, and that it is equivalent to other political affiliations such as ideological views or party membership in terms of character (Reuter 2007). Ethnicity, according to instrumentalists, is a personal preference that is entirely unaffected by the situational context or the influence of cultural and biological traits.

Ethnic identity may be ignored in cases where it carries a social stigma, and it may even be meaningless as a basis for interaction in other situations (Cohen 1978:395). As a consequence, ethnicity, in addition to its segmented and fluid nature, is a variable whose significance varies depending on whether it is a meaningful factor in the structuring of social interaction.

Instrumental approaches have retained a currency among anthropologists. Detailed, local level ethnographic research has commonly demonstrated that ethnicity becomes sociologically important at times of social change, particularly when this involves urbanization or migration, and that its expression by a corporate group relates to utilitarian objectives. If ethnicity is only instrumental, then a wide range of identities should be possible. In fact, for most anthropologists, pure instrumentalism has never been entirely convincing. It may be an adequate way of understanding some manifestations of 'political ethnicity', but the underlying assumption that the motivation of individuals and groups is practical, rational and ultimately aimed at political and economic betterment does not fully accord with anthropological understandings of human behaviour (Allen 1996: 228).

The relationalist viewpoint is not that ethnicity is objectively primordial, but rather that ethnicity's very usefulness as a way of promoting collective goals is contingent on those who make statements of its name seeing it as primordial. Ethnicity can take on characteristics that make it look important, because it can be felt as if it is essential, since it becomes a part of

the thought texture (Allen 1996: 234). Ethnicity is most commonly interpreted by anthropologists as a phenomenon which may have utilitarian aspects, but is contingent, emotive, symbolic and by no means entirely the product of conscious thought. It is neither an essentialist 'given' nor an instrumentalist 'tool', but an aspect of social relations linked to the maintenance of boundaries. This position, which may be termed relationalist (Allen 1996: 229). "The cultural contents of ethnic dichotomies would seem analytically to be of two orders: 1.overt signals or signs — the diacritical features that people look for and exhibit to show identity, often such features as dress, language, house-form, or general style of life, and the second basic value orientations: the standards of morality and excellence by which performance is judged. Since belonging to an ethnic category implies being a certain kind of person, having that basic identity, it also implies a claim to be judged, and to judge oneself, by those standards that are relevant to that identity" (Barth 1969: 14).

Of course an instrumentalist might take a similar view of the newness of many ethnic categories, particularly those which have obviously been manipulated by political leaders to mobilize mass support in their pursuit of power. But relationalists make an additional point. While recognizing that particular ethnic labels may be invented or changed, that ethnicity may be employed for utilitarian purposes, that ethnic boundaries are not static or necessarily impermeable, they also accept that ethnicity relates to the unconscious as well as conscious motivations (Allen 1996: 233).

The term 'ethnicity' can be defined as a "dynamic and situational form of group identity embedded in the organization of social behaviour and also in the institutional fabric of society" (Jones 1997: 72). The role of ethnicity is important in the mediation of social relations and the negotiation of access to resources, primarily economic and political resources.

4.2 Ethnic groups

According to Harald Eidheim “ethnic groups are social categories which provide a basis for status ascription, and consequently that interethnic relations are organized with reference to such statuses” (Barth 1969: 39). Ethnic groups and cultural units, according to Barth, are not the same thing, and ethnicity studies should concentrate on how ethnic distinctions are formed and preserved. “A categorical ascription is an ethnic ascription when it classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background. To the extent that actors use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for purposes of interaction, they form ethnic groups in this organizational sense. It is important to recognize that although ethnic categories take cultural differences into account, we can assume no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences. The features that are taken into account are not the sum of ‘objective’ differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant. Some cultural features are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some relationships radical differences are played down and denied (Barth 1969: 13).

Cohen, who has viewed ethnic groups as interest groups, has proposed that the normative effects of tradition and its power in constraining individual actions must be considered. An ethnic group is not simply the sum total of its individual members, and its culture is not the sum total of the strategies adopted by independent individuals. Since they are the common expressions of a group and are supported by the pressure of the group, norms, beliefs, and values are powerful and have their own constraining force. Cohen put a stronger focus on ethnic groups as a politically coordinated strategy for economic and political interest and security (Jones 1997: 74).

By ethnic group is understood a group of people who:

- shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms
- makes up a field of communication and interaction
- has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order (Barth 1969: 12).

Ethnic groups, according to Barth, are not the product of cultural distinction in a passive way. He concluded that the existence of borders can be explained as adaptation to a specific social or ecological niche, focusing on the relationship and interdependence of ethnic groups (Barth 1969).

Ethnic groups are seen as a form of social organization. "Ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves, and thus have the characteristic of organizing interaction between people" (Barth 1969: 12). In keeping with this emphasis on the social dimensions of ethnicity Barth claims that ethnic groups should be defined "on the basis of the actor's own categorizations of themselves and others". Besides that, where a categorical ascription classifies an individual in terms of his most fundamental, most general identification, presumptively defined by his origin and background, it is an ethnic ascription. To the extent that actors use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for the purposes of interaction they form ethnic groups in this organizational sense. Culture does not play a significant role in determining ethnicity; instead, social structure, or the organization of social ties, plays the most important role. Ethnic groups aren't formed solely or even mostly as a result of the colonization of restricted territory. The ethnic divide canalizes social life, implying an often complicated organization of behavior and social interactions.

Ethnic groups only persist as significant units if they imply marked difference in behaviour, i.e. persisting cultural differences.

In most political regimes, however, where there are less security and people live under a greater threat of arbitrariness and violence outside their primary community, the insecurity itself acts as a constraint on inter-ethnic contacts. In this situation, many forms of interaction between members of different ethnic groups may fail to develop, even though a potential complementarity of interests obtains. Forms of interaction may be blocked because of a lack of trust or a lack of opportunities to consummate transactions" (Barth 1969: 36).

4.3 Ethnicity without groups

'Group' would appear to be a core concept for sociology, political science, anthropology, demography and so on. 'Group' or 'groups' function as a seemingly unproblematic, taken-for granted concept (especially in studying ethnicity), apparently in no need of particular scrutiny or explication (Brubaker 2006: 7). Brubaker finds the persistence of 'groupism' in social sciences surprising, but also, he underlines that there are other perspectives of social analysis, more individualistic approaches, taking into account rational choice, game theory, agent-based modeling, but also network theory, cognitive theory, feminist theory. Ethnic groups continue to be understood as entities and cast as actors. Categories of ethnopolitical practice should not be automatically and uncritically adopted as our categories of social analysis. Brubaker argues that "Ethnicity does not require groupness. It works not only, or even especially, in and through bounded groups, but in and through categories, schemas, encounters, identifications, languages, stories, institutions, organizations, networks, and events" (Brubaker 2006: 4).

There is an important question of how to go beyond this ‘groupism’? Here Brubaker suggests the rethinking of what is ethnicity and ethnic conflict. And he does not consider it to be the matter of seeking agreement on a definition. Ethnicity, race, and nation should be conceptualized not as substances or things or entities or organisms or collective individuals—as the imagery of discrete, concrete, tangible, bounded, and enduring ‘groups’ encourages us to do—but rather in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful, and disaggregated terms (Brubaker 2006: 10-11). Ethnicity, race, and nation is to be taken as a dynamic process, so one can talk about ethnicization, racialization, and nationalization as political, social, cultural, and psychological processes. The point is not to reject the existence of ethnicity, race, and nationhood, but rather to minimize the significance and power of them. “the reality of ethnicity and nationhood—and the overriding power of ethnic and national identifications in some settings—does not depend on the existence of ethnic groups or nations as substantial groups or entities” (Brubaker 2006: 10-11). It is important to perceive groups as variable and contingent. The group is seen as an event, as something that just happens.

Brubaker claims that it is important to distinguish between groups and categories. If by ‘group’ one means mutually interacting, mutually recognizing, mutually oriented, effectively communicating, bounded collectivity with a sense of solidarity, corporate identity, and capacity for concerted action, or even if we adopt a less exigent understanding of “group,” it should be clear that a category is not a group. It is at best a potential basis for group-formation or ‘groupness’. “Ethnicity, race, and nationhood are fundamentally ways of perceiving, interpreting, and representing the social world. They are not things in the world, but perspectives on the world” (Brubaker 2006: 17).

4.4 Ethnicity as cognition

It is useful to consider and use cognitive sciences while analyzing ethnicity. By building on the observational observations and methodological methods of cognitive psychology, the incipient cognitive turn in the study of ethnicity may be applied in fruitful ways. Strong cognitive expectations underpin nearly all accounts of how race, ethnicity, and nation work in nature, even though they are largely unacknowledged and therefore unanalyzed. When we classify an act of violence as culturally, ethnically, or nationally motivated; when we examine the workings of racially, ethnically, or nationally charged symbols; and when we label policing activities as containing ‘racial discrimination’, we are using the term ‘racial profiling’. When we assign ideologies or preferences to racial, ethnic, or national groups; when we examine nationalist collective behavior; when we interpret an action as meaningfully oriented to the race, ethnicity, or nationality of another individual. We draw cognitive assumptions on how people parse, frame, and understand their experience as we define a word as an ethnic slur—in these and countless other contexts. At the very least, we conclude that they are categorizing people, acts, risks, challenges, opportunities, responsibilities, loyalties, desires, and so on in terms of race, ethnicity, or nationality rather than some other interpretive scheme. Using cognitive anthropology and cognitive psychology to help define, rather than merely presuppose, the cognitive pathways and processes involved in ethnicity's workings will reinforce the micro foundations of macroanalytic study in the field. The promise of cognitive interventions is that they will help us align our understanding of what goes on in people's minds with our understanding of what happens in public (Brubaker 2006: 70). “Instead of speaking routinely of racial, ethnic, or national “groups,” for example, which carries with it the usual implications of boundedness and homogeneity, and biases the discussion by presuming the relevance of a racial, ethnic, or national

frame or self-understanding, a cognitive perspective suggests speaking of groupness as a variable (Brubaker 2006: 80). Ethnicity, and nation are not entities in the world but ways of seeing the world.

The skeptic might argue that taking cognitive science seriously risks rejecting the social constructionist agenda in favor of a psychologistic and individualistic approach. As a result, one will come to the conclusion that the study of cognition isn't necessarily individualistic. The domain of the 'mental' is not identical with the domain of the individual. Cognitive construction, in short, is social construction. It is only in and through cognitive processes and mechanisms that the social construction of race, ethnicity, and nation can plausibly be understood to occur (Brubaker 2006: 86).

Rather than take 'groups' as basic units of analysis, cognitive perspectives shift analytical attention to 'group-making' and 'grouping' activities such as classification, categorization, and identification. By its very nature, categorization creates 'groups' and assigns members to them; but the groups thus created do not exist independently of the myriad acts of categorization, public and private, through which they are sustained from day to day. Race, ethnicity, and nationality exist only in and through our perceptions, interpretations, representations, classifications, categorizations, and identifications. They are not things in the world, but perspectives on the world—not ontological but epistemological realities (Brubaker 2006: 70).

4.5 Constructing ethnic identity

Ethnic identity is inextricably linked to the question of boundaries. Ethnic boundaries define who is and is not a member, as well as which ethnic groups are required for individual recognition at any given time and place. Deliberations on where ethnic boundaries can be drawn and the collective significance of ethnic groups are important elements of ethnic construction.

Ethnicity is created and re-created as different groups and desires present conflicting conceptions of society's ethnic diversity and debate about which ethnicities should be rewarded or condemned. Ethnic identity is therefore the product of a dialectical mechanism involving internal and external views and procedures, as well as the individual's self-identification and others' ethnic designations—that is, what you think your ethnicity is and what they think it is. Since ethnicity changes situationally, the person has a set of ethnic identities that are more or less prominent in different circumstances and in front of different audiences. As audiences change, the socially defined array of ethnic choices opens to the individual changes. “This produces a ‘layering’ of ethnic identities which combines with the ascriptive character of ethnicity to reveal the negotiated, problematic nature of ethnic identity” (Nagel 1994: 154). Specific options are constrained by the ethnic groups available at the particular time and place, so ethnic identity is both optional and compulsory. That is, while an individual can choose from among a set of ethnic identities, that set is generally limited to socially and politically defined ethnic categories with varying degrees of stigma or advantage attached to them. The range of ethnicities available can be very limited and constricting in some cases. When ethnic definitions are enforced by others, the degree to which individuals or groups can openly create ethnicity is severely restricted. These restrictions on ethnic identity may be formal or informal. Externally imposed racial distinctions may be important determinants of both the content and sense of specific ethnicities in any case (Nagel 1994: 154).

Individual identity, ethnic group forming, informal ascriptions, and official ethnic policies are all indicators of how ethnic identities are formed, stressed, selected, and discarded in communities. “As the result of processes of negotiation and designation, ethnic boundaries wax and wane. Individual ethnic identification is strongly limited and influenced by external forces that

shape the options, feasibility, and attractiveness of various ethnicities” (Nagel 1994: 160)

Identity and culture are the four essential elements of ethnicity. Individual identity and group structure are best understood as a complex, ever-changing component of ethnicity. Structure and agency are important factors in the formation of ethnic identity and culture, which is a discourse that occurs between ethnic groups and society as a whole. Ethnicity is, above all, a situational phenomenon. Ethnicity has been regarded as essentially a consciousness of identity in relations with other groups; a ‘we’/ ‘they’ opposition. Language, religion, culture, appearance, origins, and regionality are all components of ethnicity.

According to Barth ethnic groups should be seen as a form of social organization. Ethnic groups are ascribed and defined by the actors themselves, and hence have the characteristic of organizing human interactions (Barth 1969: 12). Opposed to this concept Brubaker suggest viewing ethnicity without groups. “Ethnicity does not require groupness. It works not only, or even especially, in and through bounded groups, but in and through categories, schemas, encounters, identifications, languages, stories, institutions, organizations, networks, and events” (Brubaker 2006: 4). Ethnicity, race, and nation should be thought of as relational, processual, complex, eventful, and disaggregated structures rather than independent, explicit, tangible, bounded, and lasting groups, as the imagery of discrete, concrete, tangible, bounded, and enduring groups urges one to do. It is important, according to Brubaker, to differentiate between groups and categories. If a ‘group’ is perceived as mutually interacting, mutually identifying, mutually centered, efficiently connecting, bounded collectivity with a sense of unity, organizational identity, and potential for collective action, it should be clear that a category is not a group. It is at best a potential basis for group-formation or ‘groupness’.

Ethnic identity is the product of a dialectical process containing internal and external beliefs and procedures, as well as the individual's self-identification and the ethnic designations of others—that is, what you believe your ethnicity is and what they believe it is. Ethnic identities are important in the context of Gilgit Baltistan, but the decisive role is played by sectarian identities.

5. Shi'as in Pakistan

5.1 Shi'a vs. Sunni

The identity of people in Gilgit Baltistan is perpetuated within the continuous contrasting of the sectarian affiliations. "Sectarian affiliation is a highly significant category for the perception and ordering of places: People generally know where people of which sectarian affiliation—Shi'a, Sunni, Ismaili, and in Baltistan also Nurbakhshi—live, and villages, urban wards or sometimes entire valleys are sectarianly tagged" (Grieser 2015: 83). The people living in Gilgit Baltistan perceive themselves as estranged towards the downland Pakistan. "The main cause for the growing alienation in the region is the perception that the sectarian and ethnic identity of the region is being diluted often with the state connivance" (Bansal 2007: 67). The theological differences themselves do not play a crucial role in the existing tension and conflict. The main point of contention between the two sects is about who should have replaced Prophet Muhammad as Caliph or leader of the Muslim community. Following Muhammad's death in 632 AD, there was a minority of Muslims who claimed that the mantle should have fallen to Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, Ali. However, with Ali preferring to follow the early three Caliphs (632-656 AD), and with the selection of Ali as the fourth Caliph it seemed the controversy would wither away. Ali's sons, Hassan (allegedly poisoned) and Hussein, who were appointed as Caliphs by Ali's followers,

were killed by Muawiya and his son Yazid, resulting in a lasting schism between Ali's followers and the rest of the Muslim community (Behuria 2004: 157). The existence of two sects is not the cause of the problems in Gilgit Baltistan.

The history of Islam in South Asia shows that the Sunni and Shi'a sects lived side by side in perfect harmony and coexisted peacefully in the region till the 1970s. After the formal incorporation of the Northern Areas into Pakistan between 1972 and 1974, a strong sense of religious separation has arisen and become socially and politically important. Part of the reason for this incorporation was the emergence of secular-nationalist voices in the region, which questioned the oppressive rule of princely kings as well as Pakistani military-bureaucratic officials and requested equal citizenship. The Pakistan state was able to pacify the local population by abolishing the princely kingdoms that had formerly governed the territory but satisfying local demands for political representation and basic constitutional rights was considered troublesome in the wider sense of the Kashmir conflict (Ali 2009).

The zeal of Zia-ul-Haq to impose Islamic Sharia— especially a Sunni Hanafi-Deobandi form of jurisprudence—created the conditions for sectarian powers to appear more forcefully on Pakistan's socio-political horizon. Much of this occurred against the background of Iran's successful Shi'ite revolution in 1979. While Zia's focus on Islam and attempts to turn Pakistan into an Islamic state preceded the Shi'ite revolution in Iran, the latter's popularity increased the pace of a state-sponsored Islamic revolution in Pakistan. “In order to prevent a further joint uprising of the local people, non-local ‘radical’ Sunni ulema were sent to a madrasa in Gilgit in order to preach against Shi’as” (Grieser 2015: 88). However, Zia's focus on Islamization with a distinct Sunni flavor eventually revealed the divisions between the two sects. As Sunni militant claim against Shi’as rose in Pakistan in the 1980s and 1990s, the

relations between Pakistani Shi'as and the Iranian government grew stronger. This provided the context for institutionalization of different groups and politicization and radicalization of sectarian identities (Behuria 2004: 158-160). The efforts by Zia-ul-Haq to bring Sunni Deobandi Islam to the region intensified Gilgit and Baltistan's sense of alienation. As a result, extremist Sunni Deobandi groups extended their tentacles in this isolated tribal territory, forcing Shi'as and Ismailis to succumb to their puritanical hostility. The local population perceived the local administration to be siding with these Sunni extremists. This resulted in the first major violent manifestation of their discontent by the majority Shi'as in Gilgit in May 1988. This was perceived by Pakistani establishment to be an Iranian sponsored 'Shi'a Revolt'. Zia put a Special Service Group (SSG) group commanded by then Brigadier Pervez Musharraf to suppress the revolt and Musharraf responded by transporting "a large number of Wahabi Pakhtoon tribesmen from the NWFP and Afghanistan" to Gilgit "to teach the Shi'as a lesson. These tribesmen massacred hundreds of Shi'as" (Bansal 2007: 61). Following that, state authorities – primarily the army, security services, and the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas bureaucracy – embarked on a 'divide-and-conquer' strategy aimed at sowing sectarian divisions in order to stifle secular-nationalist hopes and regional cooperation. The division project started with state funding of Sunni and Shi'a religious groups, which were expected to incite sectarianism in order to redirect political energy and consensus. Intelligence agencies paid mawlavis (Islamic scholars) from both sects to participate in dehumanizing tirades against sectarian others by wall-chalking, mosque loudspeakers, and publications. Although each sect was placed against the other – mainly the Sunni against the Shi'a and vice versa – the Sunni was granted preferential treatment, as the Shi'a identity has become distinctly antithetical in a Sunniized Pakistan (Ali 2010: 747). On January 7, 2005, Pakistani sectarian militants assassinated Agha Ziauddin Rizvi, the Gilgit region's foremost Shi'a

leader and a supporter of self-rule for Baltistan and Gilgit. His assassination sparked a surge of terror, with curfews in Gilgit and Baltistan lasting more than six months (Hasnain, 2006). Retaliating against Rizvi's murder, rogue elements roamed the streets of Skardu, smashing shop windows and burning buildings owned by people belonging to sects other than Shi'a (Syed 2011: 50).

The prohibition of the traditional Ashura procession in Gilgit in 1974, influenced and provoked a major sectarian clash in this Shi'a-majority city, was one of the first acts of repression. This is the time period that is often associated with the start of "sectarian strife" in public memory and discourse. Furthermore, the year 1988 is remembered as a seminal moment in intersect relations, when the Zia government sponsored the deployment of well-equipped Sunni lashkars (military forces) into the Northern Areas to orchestrate "sectarian" riots. In the massacre that followed, Shi'a-dominant villages such as Jalalabad, Bonji and Jaglot were completely destroyed, and even people's animals were slaughtered. The official death toll was put at 300, but unofficial accounts estimate the number of deaths at 700. No official inquiry was undertaken to investigate this campaign, and many Shi'a leaders still demand accountability and compensation for the losses that the community sustained in 1988 (Ali 2010: 747). In 2006, a new principal at Gilgit's prestigious and "secular" Army Public School implemented bio-data forms for teachers and students that allowed them to declare their sectarian affiliation. In order to fill out the applications, teachers had to ask students – including kindergarten students – to figure out or validate their sectarian identification from their parents (Ali 2010: 742). Children start to self-segregate because they are aware of each other. This spatial setup of Shi'as and Sunnis live in near proximity but in different – and sometimes spatially opposing – neighborhoods of the town is possibly one of the main factors that has enabled

the conflict's escalation. However, increasing spatial isolation is often a major result of dispute (Sökefeld 2016: 14).

The current sectarian condition was also supported by foreign intervention, mainly from 'brother' Islamic countries, a dysfunctional judiciary system, the proliferation of small arms, the mushrooming of sectarian madrassas, and the use of religious parties to achieve Pakistan's internal and external policy objectives. Ironically, the impoverished residents have no alternative but to place their children in madrasa - the ubiquitous nurseries of religious extremism due to a lack of financial resources. As a result, today, Gilgit-Baltistan generates more religious scholars than other regions of Pakistan, which are far more populated. Owing to a lack of true interpretation of Islamic teachings and an indifference to modern science and technology education, the ulema unwittingly and at times deliberately incite sectarianism, which often results in abuse (Bansal 2007: 68). Sunni-Shi'a violence has a huge effect on everyday life in Gilgit Baltistan. Periods of conflict, known locally as tensions, have erupted every few years, or sometimes more often, since the late 1980s. In 2012, for instance, there were three periods of tensions. Unlike in previous situations, the violence that sparked tensions did not occur in Gilgit town; rather, Shi'a passengers were assaulted on buses traveling from or to Gilgit on the Karakoram Highway (Sökefeld 2016: 14). Due to the mistrust and weakness of government officials, people turned to religious clerics for security. By using various reasons, the territory has been stripped of its constitutional existence, governed by the Federal Government by a bureaucracy, and the people have been stripped of their political rights. As a result, governmental institutions' importance has declined. Sectarianism has also influenced the region's political actions (Rizwan 2018: 162).

It is too essentialist to think that just the existence of different sects leads to tension and conflict in the region. Mobilization of political Islam, training of

jihadis during the Cold War and national islamization of Pakistan by General Zia are the main reasons of escalation of sectarian violence in Gilgit Baltistan. “The Islamization process under Zia ul-Haq fostered specifically Sunnite positions, even if Shi’ites managed to challenge this successfully by applying public pressure in the zakat campaign. During Zia’s reign, religious (Sunnite) positions among the military and bureaucracy as in other parts of the society became stronger than before” (Stöber 2007: 404). Religious and sectarian identities in Gilgit Baltistan have become dominant since the 1980s when the Iranian revolution was at its peak and the Saudi Arabian government supported the establishment of madrassas across Pakistan in order to support Sunni Islam: “Support rendered by Iran, Saudi Arabia and some other Muslim countries to various Shiite and Sunni groups of Pakistan resulted into the outbreak of sectarian proxy war” (Bodla 2014: 130). Wahabi groups were the principal supporters of Deobandi seminaries and jihadist organizations in Pakistan beginning in the 1980s. Furthermore, when attacks on Shi’as in Afghanistan and Pakistan became a favorite pastime of Wahabi groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Iranians stood by Shi’as. They started promoting Shi’a madrassas. While the madrassas provided an alternative system of education to the poor in Pakistan, the very fact that the state either approved of or rather hesitated to intervene in their affairs gave them an unhindered space to emphasize their separate exclusive worldviews. “These madrassas taught the students their separate interpretations of the history of Islamic thought” (Behuria 2004: 160).

Nosheen Ali speaks of a pervasive sectarian imaginary in Gilgit: the region’s society is imagined in sectarian terms and as a consequence it is “impossible to think and to act without taking one’s own and other’s sectarian affiliation into account” (Grieser 2015: 89). It is important to investigate the everyday forms through which religious conflict is produced and perpetuated,

as well as the specific political contexts in which religious identities are created and shaped. "Sectarian imaginary – a normalized mode of seeing and interacting with the sectarian other through suspicion and resentment – has come to structure inter-sect relations in Gilgit" (Ali 2010: 739). It is visible even when there is no link, people have to bring religion in between from somewhere or the other! Baat baat mein mazhab dal deytay hain [people bring in religion in every other matter]. Sectarian imaginary in which people imagine their social existence and interaction in relation to sectarian identity (Ali 2010: 741).

5.2 The textbook issue

In the year 2000, new textbooks were launched in the Northern Areas, which the local Shi'a population viewed as having a visibly greater Sunni orientation. Between 2004 and 2005, the so-called "textbook controversy" erupted into a full-fledged sectarian dispute, in which nearly 100 people died, educational facilities were shut for half a year, and everyday life in Gilgit was crippled by a perpetual curfew. While it has been suggested and can be reasonably believed that at least part of the stronger Sunni orientation of the textbooks comes from the domination of the Punjab Textbook board by members of the Jamaat- e-Islami, or others who profess a fundamentalist Sunni sensibility many people in Gilgit Baltistan – and particularly the Shi'as – felt that 'divide-and-conquer' was the key reason behind the change in curriculum (Ali 2010: 748). Textbooks and the curricula they are based on are often used to promote specific identities that may or may not be shared by a large portion of the population. And textbooks will cause violent outbreaks if they come into contact with pre-existing strife, which can only be understood in the sense of the underlying dispute. "The Shi'ites received the impression that in the prescribed Islamiyat studies as well as in other books, Islamic practices (such as prayers) were presented in a strictly Sunnite way" (Stöber 2007: 390).

5.3 Zakat issue

The imposition of Zakat, an Islamic tax that the government decreed would be immediately collected from people's bank accounts, was a hallmark of the military regime's Islamization policy. However, as in many other areas of law, the regulations on Zakat vary significantly between Shi'i and Sunni schools of law. The government's decision to implement the tax in accordance with the Hanafi school of Sunni law sparked widespread outrage among Shi'a and served as a potent catalyst for their political mobilization in Pakistan (Zaman 1998: 693).

6. Balawaristan: the rising identity

As Holland claims, a collective identity develops within an imagined world which is a realm of interpretation and action generated by the participants of a movement through their shared activities and commitments that imagines the terrain of struggle, the powers of opponents, and the possibilities of a changed world. Being a religious minority in the context of Sunni dominated state, feeling the lack of basic rights and being under the pressure with identity imposed by the government, lead to a counter-pressure that is embodied in various nationalist movements like Balawaristan National Front (BNF). The party is divided into two main groups, yet both parts disseminate the same discourse of history and identity of Gilgit Baltistan that is also shared by other nationalist parties like the Karakoram National Movement (KNM) (Bodla 2014: 126). "Nationalist local parties have started to emerge in the late 1960s and are in favor of a separate constitutional arrangement for the region. Their irruption in the public-boosted social mobilization has animated the discussion on the region's position as a marginal area" (Dad 2016: 8). The name itself does not have any historical background, though Balawaristan sounds familiar with Boloristan, the historic name of areas around Gilgit. The name

was formulated by Nawaz Khan Naji in 1988 and published for the first time in a pamphlet titled Balawaristan. Since then, the number of people who identify with Balawaristan's nationalist rhetoric and discourse has gradually increased. The Balawaristan discourse about Gilgit Baltistan contradicts the Pakistani state's historical stance over the region (Bodla 2014: 125). Balawaristan is a classic example of what Benedict Anderson has termed 'imagined communities' (Anderson 2006: 6). Anderson portrays a nation as a socially constructed group envisioned by those who consider themselves to be members of it (Anderson 2006: 6). "Regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (Anderson 1991:7). According to Anderson, the nation is an imagined political community both inherently limited and sovereign. "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 2016: 6).

The BNF proposes an autonomous state called Balawaristan, which will include the GB plus the districts of Kohistan and Chitral, which are now part of Pakistan's province Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as well as Indian-controlled Ladakh. In a situation where they are surrounded by India, Kashmir, and Pakistan's struggle to take or retain control of the region, the BNF is attempting to empower the local people to make sense of their own identity. While the BNF is not formally outlawed, it is vilified by government officials as an anti-Pakistan party. Local residents had previously refused to associate with the group because it sought a separate homeland for the inhabitants of Gilgit Baltistan. The BNF's force is the youth of Great Britain who are studying in

down-country Pakistan, such as Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. In these towns, students from GB have founded the Balawaristan National Student Organization (BNSO). Gilgit Baltistan is home of diverse languages, ethnicities, sectarian and tribal identities. Different identities are claimed by people in different contexts, yet there is no singular identity that would unite them politically. Such an identity is proposed in the name of Balawar (Bodla 2014: 133). The Balawaristan narrative unites all the sects and GB and envisions a state in which religion is a matter of self-identity rather than a state-imposed identity.

Conclusion

The central theme of this paper is the exploration of concepts like identity, ethnicity, their interconnections, and diverse approaches to them, as well as various areas of identity and collective identity construction. The key goal is to determine how Shi'a collective identity is formed and whether it has any bearing on separatist movements in the region. To what extent do the people of Gilgit Baltistan associate with the rest of Pakistan, and to what extent is this identity forced upon them by the state to achieve different political goals.

In Gilgit Baltistan, colonization and the post-colonial era had a significant impact on people's lives and identities. Even though Gilgit Baltistan is officially free of British and Kashmiri control, the region continues to operate as a colony with no human rights or political representation within the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The Shi'a collective identity has been constructed through different historical events. The period prior to the 1970s is viewed in Gilgit Baltistan as a time of shared life-worlds, when religious identities were complex and pluralistic, and people usually exercised collective tolerance in terms of sectarian identity. The turning point and the transformation and

radicalization of sectarian identities came after the 1970s reform and islamization in Pakistan, that lead to sectarian conflict never known before in Gilgit Baltistan. The construction of the Karakoram Highway contributed to the opposing of identities of people from Gilgit Baltistan, they started to apprehend themselves as being a part of underdeveloped region towards the rest of the country.

Identities are not stable, they are situational, and they are always in motion. The term identity is used to emphasize the interactive, processual creation of the kind of mutual self-understanding, unity, or groupness that allows for collective action. Strong senses of group boundedness and homogeneity go hand in hand with strong senses of social unity. Additionally, identities change over time; for example, after the partition, simply identifying as a Muslim was enough to determine Pakistani citizenship. Following the Gilgit Massacre, sectarian identities began to play a larger part, and people began to align themselves with a narrower school of Islamic thought, whether Shi'a or Sunni.

State is an influential identity giver. In the case of Pakistan all people are supposed to be united under the supra identity of Muslims. The identity imposed by Pakistan is not simply Muslim but rather Sunni Muslim, hence that created a collision in Gilgit Baltistan. The Sunni identity is imposed by Pakistan through different means, as for example education. When considering the case of Gilgit Baltistan, it is important to remember how important sectarian identities are. Still today sectarian affiliation significantly structures people's imaginations and actions. This indicates, for example, that sectarian identities become more relevant than kinship, language, or regional belonging, or that identification with a specific sect becomes a kind of premise that shapes social perception and interaction to a large degree.

In an imagined world, which is a space of interpretation and action created by movement members by their mutual actions and commitments, a collective identity emerges that imagines the environment of struggle, the forces of opponents, and the possibilities of a changed world. Collective identity is a network of active relationships between actors that collaborate, connect, control one another, negotiate, and make decisions. According to Manuel Castells there are three different types of collective identities, one of which is a project identity, that is a novice identity assumed by actors in order to construe their role in society and to propose social change. Balawar identity of people supporting the independence movement in Gilgit Baltistan can be understood as a project identity. It opens an arena for political struggle and allows imagining Gilgit Baltistan as an independent state. A structure of connections and representations makes up collective identity. Conflict is important for the collective identity, because during a conflict the internal solidarity of the group reinforces identity and guarantees it. People feel a bond with others not because they share the same interests, but because they need that bond in order to make sense of what they are doing.

Collective memory is connected to the collective identity, to the concretion of identity or the relation to the group. The store of knowledge from which a community receives an awareness of its unity and uniqueness is preserved by cultural memory.

Ethic identities are important in the context of Gilgit Baltistan, but the decisive role is played by sectarian identities. In the region collective identity is rooted in sectarian affiliation and plays a critical role in local people's daily lives. Collective identity is a web of active relationships between individuals, and the Shi'as' common sense of strain and life under pressure from the Sunni majority has led to solidarity and intensive perception of being opposed to the down country and hence the need of a separate state. People assert various

identities in various ways, but there is no one identification that will bring them together politically. In the name of Balawar, such an identification is proposed. The Balawaristan narrative unites both sects and the Gilgit Baltistan, imagining a state where religion is a matter of self-identity rather than a state-imposed identity.

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