

**Washington University  
ERes Cover Sheet**

Article Title: Recollections of a Hazard Wedding in the 1930s

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Source Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Vol.: \_\_\_\_\_ Issue: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Pages: \_\_\_\_\_

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### 3. Recollections of a Hazara Wedding in the 1930s

*Robert L. Canfield*

1

From late fall 1966 to summer 1968 I was doing field work in the Bamian valley and its environs in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> As part of that research I collected a number of statements by people in the region that provide clues to the nature of social life and affairs in previous decades as well as during the period of field work.

Of course statements like these have a number of problems: people have evident limitations in their knowledge; they indeed convey misinformation, often unintentionally, because they are biased by their vantage points and interests and, with respect to their recollections of the past, they are selective in memory. Just as people create a sense of place and significance in their stories about present situations, they create a sense of the past through their own accounts of it, and in any case the telling itself is typically influenced by issues vital to the narrators at the time of telling. Narratives create reality as much as they reflect it. So we cannot take what people tell us at face value, as if it were a precisely accurate representation of the situations described.

But what people say about their past experience does reveal useful information about them and their social worlds. Their narratives give cognitive and emotional coherence to people's experience, enabling them to identify with a past and to define and negotiate their current experience. They enable people to conceive of what to expect and what to take as the operating conditions of their experience. They contain "schemas" that typify situations, display prototypes of events and roles, showing ideal forms of behavior and their consequences. They thus reveal the beliefs, attitudes, ideologies, visions, and dreams that inform people's imaginative worlds. Stories illuminate what is "real" and important to people. As idealized portrayals of lived experience they reveal the status quo, the grounds of authority that are taken for granted—and so invest the experiential landscape with moral

significance. Oral statements can thus be useful historical texts even if they are not to be taken at face value.<sup>2</sup>

#### BAMIAN IN THE EARLY 1930S

I here recount a statement about an event that took place in eastern Bamian in what I presume to be the early 1930s. Actually what we know about the region at that time is rather feeble. We know that well into the nineteenth century the Hazaras had been highly stratified, dominated by powerful chiefs known as *mirs* who were supported by cadres of close kinsmen and dependents. But as a result of a widespread rebellion against the Amir of Kabul in 1891–1893, Hazara society was thoroughly crushed. Their leaders—not only the *mirs* but also virtually all other notable figures—were either executed or imprisoned, and hundreds, possibly thousands, of ordinary people were carried off into slavery.<sup>3</sup> The structure of social affairs in the Hazarajat in subsequent decades is relatively poorly known.

This is one reason that a statement about affairs in the 1930s is of interest; it gives us a glimpse into what was going on in the Hazarajat in the 1930s, a glimpse from which we may make some surmises about the structure of social relations in that period. We presume that the Kabul regime was gaining administrative strength in its provinces (*wulāyats*, governorships) throughout this period. Governors were receiving better military support and larger administrative staffs, and they stayed in the area for longer periods even if they circulated back to the capital periodically. Government controlled courts were being established. In fact, provinces were getting smaller; the country was being carved up into smaller and smaller provincial administrative units. The four great provinces of the country that had been maintained in the previous century—Kabul (which included Bamian), Kandahar, Herat, and Mazar-i Sharif—were in the twentieth century divided and subdivided. There were seventeen provinces in the 1950s (based on a map produced in the 1950s in my possession) and as many as twenty-eight in the 1960s. This was taking place as the country was being more effectively brought under the direct control of the state. More governmental institutions became accessible to local populations. More government officials came to know the local goings-on in the provinces (Canfield 1971). Despite a general preference among the local populations for resolving disputes through the mediation and adjudication of their own notables, more disputes were being brought to state officials for resolution.

According to local sources, early in the twentieth century government institutions were fairly limited. In the nineteenth century a governor had been established in the markaz of Bamian supported by a few gendarmes.

Presumably his main role was to ensure the peace, but he would surely have been commissioned to keep abreast of affairs in the region and to enforce government policy. He exerted much of his influence through the representatives of the local populations, locally called *mirs* (or by the state *maliks*), who were required to collect taxes for the government, conscript troops, and levy workers for government projects as needed. Such was the status of the *mirship* by this time; the great *mirs* of the previous century were long gone, and the local representatives were now, in the early part of the twentieth century, as much agents of the state as they were of the local citizenry they were supposed to represent. They held their office essentially by the sufferance of the provincial governor, who was gradually able to enforce state policies with greater effectiveness. By the 1930s the state loomed in local affairs. Thus, local mechanisms of social control—whatever they were—were giving way to the advancing presence of government.

But what were those local mechanisms? How were the various populations of the rural areas managing their local affairs? This is the value of the oral statements I collected in the 1960s, as they describe events and situations that took place in the speakers' own experience or were described to them by parents or grandparents. Such statements provide clues as to how the society was structured and social affairs managed.

#### A WEDDING STORY

A statement about an event that took place in eastern Bamian in the 1930s gives us some clues. The statement was made by a local notable in Shibar, Mir Gholam Hasan, from the Darghān (Darghū, in local speech) clan of Hazaras, about problems he had in obtaining a wife from Sheikh Ali, a region northeast of Shibar.<sup>4</sup> The narrative was part of a much longer rehearsal of his life. The event he described took place when he was a young man. As he was in his 60s when I knew him, I surmise that it occurred in about the time of Nadir Shah (1929–1933).

When I knew him Mir Gholam Hasan was the *mir* for the Ismailis in Shibar. He could read and write and also had some land and a brother living next door who was also fairly well off. That is, he had some skills for dealing with the government and a bit of leverage in his community. In fact, this was not enough to hold onto his position, as within a few years a rival would bring him down and take his place. His duties brought him into contact with government officials at the *alaqadārī* (a subgovernorship) in Shibar near his home and at the governor's offices situated at the markaz of Bamian. Because he had served as *mir* for some time, he was fairly well known in the wider community. He personally knew the *pir*, the sacred leader, of the Ismailis, Sayyed-i Kayan, and the *pir's* several sons as well as most other *mirs* and *arbābs* of the province. In his long life he had had sev-

eral wives, four of whom had died, but he had no male issue. Two daughters had been born to one of his wives some years earlier and they had grown up, married, and now had children of their own. When I knew Mir Gholam Hasan he had two wives, one about thirty years old and the other about twenty. The younger one had in fact been selected with the help of the older wife, as she had borne him only one child, a daughter who was still small. The younger woman, it was hoped, would bear him a son. But as it turned out she had tuberculosis and would pass away in 1968. The story that follows (minimally polished) is about how he obtained one of his earlier wives, actually the mother of the two married daughters; it was intended to show that families did not like to give up their daughters to suitors from far away.

Before I got this wife there was a man named Gholam Reza from Sheikh Ali who was her father [of the girl], but he died. A man named Mirza Osayn married the widow, who already had four daughters by Gholam Reza. This Mirza Osayn said to me that he would give one of them to me, but he said, "Give me 1,000 *afghanis* [Afghan unit of currency]." He promised his first daughter, whom I had already seen. When I brought the 1,000 *afghanis*, I asked for her according to our agreement, but he didn't agree to give her right then . . . . Then twenty days later, when I went again to ask about the marriage, the man asked for 10,000 *afghanis* for the bride-price. So in ten or twelve days I obtained the money, and took it to him. Then the man made a promise that on a certain day I and my people should come. "Send your gifts and we will have the marriage."

The gifts and food were to be sent a few days in advance of the wedding feast. So I put 10 *ser*<sup>5</sup> of flour on a donkey, and 10 *ser* of rice on another donkey, along with two *ser* of *rowghān* [clarified butter] and 5 sheep and 40 meters of cloth and sent them to him. Then we went a few days later to the agreed-upon marriage feast. The distance was great, so I didn't take a lot of men, only forty. Along the way Mirza Osayn came with all the *mirs* of Sheikh Ali on horses. We were on horses too, and they came to a place and stopped us on the road. Then Mirza Osayn asked us, "Where are you going?" And he said, "Go back to your house, there will be no marriage now." Then I said, "I can't go back now, I have brought my *qawm* [clan, lineage] and my people. If I go back now, I will be embarrassed." I had with me Mir Awdur and Sayyed Tabar, and they took the biggest man of Sheikh Ali aside and sat with him—this man was Firqa Isā Khān. Then they offered him a turban and a cloak [*chapan*] to persuade Mirza Osayn to go on with the marriage. Then this man went with them to the house of Mirza Osayn and all went there with them. This was the month of *Ramazan* [the month of fast], and on the way these men with me had not eaten at all. When we got there Mirza Osayn told us that there was no food there; it had all been eaten. Then I bought two sheep from someone else in Sheikh Ali, and I bought *roghān* and rice and flour, etc., and then we took this to him but he still didn't give this to our people. They were left hungry all

night. Then Mirza Osayn brought a mulla, Mulla Faqir, to do the *nekā* [wedding ceremony] and he sealed the marriage. During the night Mirza Osayn fed ten of the elders from his own community [*deh*: village, hamlet] in two separate rooms, but the others of us were left hungry. That night we gave this rich man the turban and chapān and to three other elders we gave three turbans. Then at two in the morning he told me and our people that we must leave now. And he said, "If the people of Sheikh Ali know that you take the girl you will not be able to have her"—that is, we should take her secretly. So we took her that night, and went home. Our men had been away for two days and nights without eating any food. They arrived about two or three in the afternoon.

The next day early in the morning the people of Sheikh Ali came to Mirza Osayn, maybe a hundred men, and said they would not allow him to give this girl to the people of Darghān [Mir Gholam Hasan's clan]. When he told them that the girl had already been taken away they were much distressed, but they went away to their own homes. At my house I held a big party for two or three nights, had musicians and lots of food, and a hundred fifty or two hundred people came. . . .

The idea of these people was that a woman should not go out of their valley. They were angry at me because I wanted to take away that girl. They said, "Are there no men in Sheikh Ali that we should give the girl to him? We are people of Sheikh Ali and he is from the people of Darghān. She should stay here among us, she should not go out. We have plenty of men for our women." . . . They thought, "It is not good that our qawm should not build a household while another qawm does so with one of our women."

The only point of Mirza Osayn was that he should take the money and lie his way out of it. He is now in Kabul. . . .

After four or five years these two daughters were born [to this wife]. The she died. One year after her death, this Mirza Osayn came and said he thought I had killed her. He said, "If I had had time I would have taken blood from you because of this."

This Mirza Gholam Hosayn . . . caused a lot of trouble for his own people in Sheikh Ali. He went to the *alaqadār* and claimed that someone had stolen this or that, then took money from this man [the one he had accused] to leave him alone. He did this several times, and then finally the people of Sheikh Ali complained that "this man has given us enough trouble." He was put in jail. He was there in Charikar for one year. Then somehow he got out, although he was supposed to come to Kabul for two more years. Now he is secretly living in Kabul, and has paid a man to try to spring him out of his jail sentence.

## COMMENTARY

Some clues as to the social conventions of the time can be gleaned from this narrative, although it also leaves us with a number of questions. For one thing, there is no evidence of a formal adoption procedure. It was presumed

that Mirza Osayn had the right to give the daughters of his new wife in marriage however he wished. There is nothing notable here—but this fact accrues more significance as we reflect on the following issues.

First, the prices in this story are difficult to compare with prices at other times because the value of the afghani varied. The price Mir Gholam Hasan paid may have been somewhat larger than what was being paid later. In about 1948 a relatively wealthy Hazara man paid 3 bulls, 3 large copper cooking pots, 1 muzzle loading rifle, and 3000 afghanis in silver coin. In the 1960s a bride among the Tajiks at the Bamian markaz (where things were more expensive than Shibar or Sheikh Ali) went for 10,000 cash, plus 1,000 pounds of rice, 150 pounds of roghān, 8 lambs or kids, 10 donkey-loads of wood, 4 loads of brush fuel, 150 pounds of wheat, 8 pounds of kerosene, 30 pounds of salt, 4 pounds of tea, 35 pounds of sugar, 150 pounds of potatoes, 30 pounds of onions, the non-cash goods being valued at 3,000 afghanis in all (Canfield 1973: 125). This may have been an unusually high price; obviously the reputation of the girl and her family has much to do with the price.

Moreover, cash was not easy to come by in this economy, and the amount of it involved here seems substantial. By the 1960s cash was in broad use in the markaz of Bamian and along the roads where there was considerable traffic, but in the villages of Shibar people didn't have much cash. The amounts of money demanded for this transaction in the 1930s seem much higher (in real terms) than were required in the 1960s. Most curious to me is how quickly the mir obtained so much of it. This was a lot of money. He would have had to borrow at least some of it, perhaps most of it, and from several sources. He might have obtained some by selling some sheep or goats but he would not have sold land, which normally changes hands only *in extremis*.

We might also note that it was not uncommon for the family of the bride to prolong the solicitation process, so Mir Gholam Hasan no doubt expected to have to come up with more money. There is no hint here that he objected to the price. Suitors often had to make several contacts with the family before the final deal could be struck.

It is notable that Mir Gholam Hasan considered a group of forty men from his community a small number at the time. In the 1960s that number would have been substantial. The same holds true for the number of horses. Forty from Shibar, a hundred from Sheikh Ali—in the 1960s nothing like so many horses were in evidence. In place of the horse, of course, had come the automobile. Indeed, the few families who had been able to afford a truck were the only ones that seemed to be doing better in Shibar. Most people's fortunes were declining. In the two-year period I was in Bamian a few people I knew in Shibar rented out their land and moved to the city for work. The decline in the number of horses was merely one indicator of the economic decline of the area.

Another piece of evidence rests on the reality that food constituted a critical kind of currency sealing the bonds among these people. In this society, where storage of food could be a problem, raw food would have been especially appreciated, as it could be disposed of in different ways: given as gifts to pay off debts or cooked for guests.<sup>6</sup> Twice Mir Gholam Hasan provided raw food, and both times it was given to other guests while he and his wedding party remained hungry. In this community, where there must have been few public sources of sustenance, there would have been no other source of food than that provided by one's hosts. That nothing was given was an outrage. Such behavior would have seriously damaged anyone's reputation. In a society where food is perishable and protection requires loyal friends, a reputation for trustworthiness, reliability, and consistency was a kind of currency, the basis for obtaining help and credit when needed. Such qualities were prominently displayed in the way one treated guests.<sup>7</sup> Hospitality was the supreme demonstration of character. A person with a reputation for niggardliness, conniving, or exploiting of friends and neighbors was vulnerable, because fortunes could turn abruptly. The behavior of Mirza Osayn was scandalous.

In the same vein, the feast that never took place was presumably supposed to be a public means of sealing the marriage—not only between husband and wife but also between two communities. But the elders of Sheikh Ali were balking. We are not told what was going on at the feast for the Sheikh Ali elders, but presumably it was given to accomplish something of interest to Mirza Osayn. Was this supposed to be a pay-off for help and loans already given? It seems evident that one reason for the feast was so that Mirza Osayn could persuade them to accept the marriage.

The intensity of the opposition to the marriage, revealed as the point the speaker made of the story, opens a further question. The narrator intended to show how resistant a community can be to the marriage of their girls to someone outside. The stated reason was Mir Gholam Hasan's clan identity as a Darghān Hazara. Was there or had there been animosity between the people of Darghān and Sheikh Ali? Was this the only reason? We do not know if there was anything about Mir Gholam Hasan himself that detracted from his candidacy.

There were several clues as to the way public affairs were being managed. First, the notables of the two communities were managing affairs, and they did this by giving favors to each other. The elders of Shibar took aside the "biggest" man in Sheikh Ali and persuaded him and two other men, by means of gifts, to help move the wedding proceedings along. Turbans and chapans, nice ones, were valued and accepted as substantial gifts.

The number of people involved on either side of this transaction—for the marriage was of course a social transaction—marked the importance of the wedding. Here we see more suggestive possibilities. Forty men from Shibar, a hundred from Sheikh Ali—a feast of the elders of these two com-

munities, along with the mulla's nekā—this would have legitimated the marriage. But government officials are conspicuous by their absence. As large a gathering as this was, it included no official. Presumably none had been invited. In fact, we might presume that no alaquadār had been posted in Shibar yet, in which case there would have been no official to invite. I have been told that when the alaquadār first arrived he had no place to live; he rented a room in Bulola until facilities were built for him and his gendarmes. That the alaquadār was later used by Mirza Osayn to exploit his neighbors and that his neighbors complained to the government about him suggests that officials were soon to appear in the region and that state institutions were gaining a larger influence on local affairs.

And then, the "biggest man in Sheikh Ali" was Firqa Isā Khān—a reference to the officer's rank, Firqa Misr (roughly equivalent to a captain). But Hazaras did not normally hold officer's ranks in the army. Could the term have been mere respectful hyperbole for someone who had achieved a non-commissioned rank? Or had he in fact been an officer in the army? His eminence in the community would have come in part from wealth: could his wealth have brought him status in the military? Or did it work the other way around? In any case, he was home, and no longer in military service. And he was influential.

Whatever the mechanisms of social control, by appearances Mirza Osayn was in trouble. In fact, as in many such cases, the way he exploits the situation, that is, the liberties he takes with the conventions of courtesy, reveals something about how the society was constituted; we often learn about how things should be when they are violated. Mirza Osayn's attempts to exploit his guests and his neighbors through the giving of cooked food reveals that in this society this was one way to keep neighbors and kinsmen under control. Eventually, as the narrator tells us, Mirza Osayn pays a price for what was obvious manipulation and exploitation of the people around him. The first batch of raw food sent to him disappeared—according to him, eaten. Perhaps he doesn't dare reveal what he did with it. What were the circumstances? Was he already in debt and obliged to use the food to pay off? His marriage to the widow of Gholam Reza would have been less costly than to a virgin. Perhaps his choice of this wife was a means of gain, as the daughters could be married out for a good bride-price.

The second batch of food, given to him raw, was served to his own neighbors, the elders in his own qawm. Why to them and not his wedding guests? Apparently the feast was an attempt to win their consent for the marriage. Obviously he wanted the bride-price money, but the community was opposed to the transaction. His insistence on pushing the transaction through in any case was revealed in his suggestion to the mir that the girl must be taken by stealth. Mirza Osayn had failed to win the consent of his community. This is evident, if not by his suggestion, by the

arrival of the elders the next morning; a lot of them came to stop the transaction. It looks like he deceived them, agreeing to their demands during the evening feast but allowing the men from Shibar to take her secretly in the night. Mirza Osayn is portrayed here as manipulative and contentious in other contexts. After this affair he made accusations against his neighbors in order to extort money. Eventually the community, the elders, would in disgust bring charges against him, an extreme measure. The main moral message here is that Mirza Osayn was irresponsible, but there is another subtext, that the people of Sheikh Ali were conservative, even backward. In fact, Mir Gholam Hasan may have elided over a historic tension between his clan and Mirza Osayn's.<sup>8</sup>

The absence of any reference to the women may not be surprising—after all, this is a man's story—but like the dog that didn't bark, the absence of the role of women in it is a powerful statement nonetheless.<sup>9</sup> In fact, of course, the women were not marginal to these affairs. They would have prepared the food that was served. And of course the girl was the prize. In this polygynous society, where several women could be matched to one man, marriageable girls were always in short supply. The story reveals the limitations on the rights of the women. Their life and their world were confined to the household. In whatever sense the women exerted influence, it was limited to the household sphere. And control of the women by the men was considered only natural.<sup>10</sup>

The limited power of women was implied in Mirza Osayn's accusation of murder. That Mir Gholam Hasan's new wife had died was apparent, but no one could know for sure precisely what caused her death, as social life took place within the walls of the household (the *awlī*). The women's world was inside the *awlī*; no one outside the family could know for sure all that took place there. No one could be sure in the case of her death that she was not killed, so there was room for suspicion. That she died could be taken as a sign of abuse. And it could be used against the male of the household.

In fact, in this society rumors abound, and the rumor that the mir's wife had been killed was in the air. I was told more than once that Mir Gholam Hasan had killed several wives. I asked one person how he knew this: "They are all dead, aren't they?" he said. No one outside the household could know for sure the cause of the woman's death. *Purdah*, the seclusion of women, provided privileged seclusion as well for men. As the men of the family—a father or older brother in a woman's natal household or a husband or husband's brother in her married household—had responsibility for household affairs, the practice of seclusion provided opportunities for them to do things that were quite inaccessible to outsiders and invited insinuation. In a society in which gossip was powerful because reputation, a "name," was the main ground on which one developed alliances, acquired credit, and obtained help, Mirza Osayn's accusation was a serious threat.

Two nuances can be derived from the accusation of murder. From one

point of view women's rights were assumed to be in the hands of the men—fathers, brothers, husbands. From another viewpoint it was morally wrong for a man to kill his wife, even if the act could not be discovered. The uncertainty entailed in the seclusion of women—a broadly accepted social practice—allowed the insinuation of murder—a broadly proscribed social action—to be used as a device for character assassination. No one will ever know whether any of Mir Gholam Hasan's wives was murdered, and that ambiguity allowed gossip to besmirch his reputation. But it is worth noting that by the 1960s state institutions were being used by women as well as men, perhaps in greater numbers than before. I came to know of several suits by women against the men of their household, most of them over rights to land. The status of women was no doubt changing.

#### REFLECTIONS ON THE CONCEPTUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS TEXT

Such are the images that can be conjured on the basis of this text. But Mir Gholam Hasan's tale raises some conceptual issues for the comparative study of the human condition. My colleague John W. Bennett has often remarked that what is enduring of ethnographic writing is the details, not the theory that is proposed to inform it. This is because theory is subject to fads, and each particular fad of the time fades—whereas ethnographic descriptions often have elements that continue to hold interest. True, the professional social scientist does gravitate to the ideas in an article or book; we only glance over the details in order to get to the point and the conceptual issues it is supposed to reveal. But the non-professional, easily bored with the abstract, responds to narratives. What most people respond to is the human interest. Pierre Bourdieu has noted that the theoretical formulations of some social scientists can be likened to a map, "an analogy that occurs to an outsider who has to find his way around a foreign landscape," whereas for an insider—a native of the terrain—a place, a custom, a social practice, is discovered experientially, sequentially; one comes to know one's own terrain through "practical space of journeys actually made" (1977:2). It's the difference between learning how to live in a society through direct encounters with people and places rather than learning a set of rules that govern behavior. Bled out of our theoretical formulations, says Bourdieu, is the uncertainty entailed in human affairs. What animated Mir Gholam Hasan about this affair was the outrage, the offense of people who failed to follow ordinary courtesies. He thought he had paid the price for a bride, but it turned out his payment disappeared and he had to pay again. Even then he had to carry off the girl in the dead of night in order to have her. In this affair there were surprises

at many points: a band of horsemen on the road to block his way, a prospective father-in-law reluctant to hand over the girl that had been paid for, an evening in an inhospitable community, extra costs for the food that wasn't served, and the near failure to obtain the bride who was the object of the whole expedition. A social world devoid of those surprises, of the ambiguities and uncertainties entailed in the course of affairs, as Radcliffe-Brown or Levi-Strauss would have it, might have seemed systematic and orderly but would have lacked the critical elements of his experience. No wonder the non-professional considers "theory" boring.

Mir Gholam Hasan's tale of interruptions, extortions, misrepresentations, threats, and demeaning behavior reveals another dimension of human experience that is poorly captured in social theory: namely, that the human imagination is animated by struggles over what is right or wrong, what ought to be and isn't. It is through the recounting of an experience that one grasps its moral import. The moral assumptions that go without saying are internalized through such recounting (White 1992; Brison 1992). This, in the end, is the broader or deeper significance of Mir Gholam Hasan's account of his attempt to get a wife; it was a story about a world that human beings long for and yet never quite discover. What he learned—about what not to expect, what not to do the next time—is implied in this account. Unfortunately, we do not know how it affected his next attempt to get a wife, nor how his richer understanding was rewarded.

The more we know about the ambiguities and contradictions, the disappointments, deceptions, and uncertainties of people like Mir Gholam Hasan, the more reason there is to disavow the common supposition that the lives of people in other societies are simpler, more predictable. It is not that old certainties are now disappearing in the modern world, leaving our societies with multiple solutions, multiple attempts to characterize the human condition, but that there never are and never were many certainties in practice. Uncertainty has always been the human condition. It is only from a distance, as we look with nostalgia on other peoples and societies, that we can regard their life as ordered, regular, and systematic. In fact, the better we understand the words of other peoples, the more clearly we understand that their life is anything but. What we discover in the lives of human beings—in other societies, in other times, as well as our own—is conflict and ambiguity, anxiety, frustration, disappointment. And that draws us back to our starting point, the quest to understand through narrative.

## NOTES

1. Bamian town, locally known as "markaz," the center, is the provincial capital of Bamian province. The affair described here took place in the eastern extremity of the province, Shibar.

"Philosophy behind the Collection," (<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/oral/philosophy.html>). For a fuller discussion of these issues as well an extensive list of sources, see Brison (1992).

3. Kakar 1971:159 ff.; Mousavi 1998:120 ff.

4. Writings on marriage practices in Afghanistan are considerable. Most ethnographic reports on this region have something to say about marriage practices and weddings. Tapper (1991) has an extensive discussion of marriage as a custom and practice, mainly among Afghan Pushtun. Grima (1992) provides a rich sense of the women's attitudes and experience among Pakistani tribal Pushtun. Emadi's critique of the treatment of women in Afghanistan (2002) is a recent discussion of marriage practices. See also Centlivres-Demont 1981; Shalinsky 1989.

5. A *ser* is 16 *paw*, which technically is 15 pounds, a *paw* being slightly lighter than a pound.

6. This is a familiar topic in anthropological literature. The most famous work on the subject was Mauss (1954) but many others have commented on the importance of food in solidifying social relations: Bourdieu (1977); Firth (1929); Levi-Strauss (1990).

7. Edwards (1996:67 ff.) discusses hospitality as a Pushtun custom, but it is no less mandatory among the Hazaras.

8. See my article on Birgilich for a suggestion that there may have long been tension between these two clans on the basis of the importance of a Sayyed family situated at the frontier between their respective territories.

9. See Canfield (2004).

10. This control extended to brothers as well as fathers and husbands. In *Behind the Burqa* Salima, a progressive Afghan woman, says (according to Yasgur, 2002:55-56), "It was not uncommon for a brother to kill a sister if he believed she was being rebellious, promiscuous, or disobedient. It was considered an honor killing." After their father died, her brother refused to allow her to attend medical school. "Why would you do this to me?" she asks. His answer: "Because I can."

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