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Materializing Multiple Histories: The ethics and politics of life amid ongoing cultural heritage management in Hunza, Northern Pakistan.

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The history-making potentials of cultural heritage conservation projects are often linked in the critical literature on heritage to the production of national identities and state governance (de Cesari 2010). In this paper I'll address a case in which heritage conservation undertaken by NGOs within the institutional framework of international development is involved in complex negotiations of history and identity that hinge on the relationship between one particular locality—the Hunza Valley in Pakistan's mountainous Gilgit-Baltistan region—and the transnational Isma'ili Islamic religious community (*jama'at*)¹ with which the valley and its residents have long been entangled. These negotiations rest, often implicitly, on the construction of narratives that embed particular aspects of Hunza's material cultural heritage—in this case, features of the built environment—in divergent histories of the present. These narratives differ not only in terms of their content, claims and the agents they position as historical actors, but also in terms of their temporal structure and, perhaps most significantly, in their ethical import for present and future development efforts. I therefore propose to think about the

¹ Isma'ilism encompasses several distinct groups with distinct origins and institutional structures; more specifically, I refer to Nizari Isma'ilim, a branch of Shi'i Islam that acknowledges the Aga Khan as the 49th living and present Imam or divinely-guided spiritual leader of the community.

relationship between material cultural heritage, the projects, agencies and practices involved in its conservation, and the symbolic and moral meanings that various parties attribute to them in terms of what Webb Keane has called ethical affordances, or those aspects or qualities of the material world or of objects that, while crucially indeterminate with respect to their moral meanings, that can “as people experience [them], ... be construed in ethical terms” (Keane 2014: 316). That is to say, particular features of the world present themselves to people as being self-evidently ethically relevant. In Keane’s analysis of relics, this is because they are understood to have powers that amount to a form of agency. In the instances I present here, it is the power of the built environment to configure social space and thus to enable or support particular, morally-valued ways of living with others that are recognized and celebrated by people in the village of Altit where efforts to preserve that built environment were underway. In both cases, the socially and morally relevant powers of the material world as construed by the actors involved arose from a view of the world as “ethically saturated” (Ibid.:312).

My attention to material heritage and the built environment as sites of ethical evaluation and contestation was first prompted by a problem that appeared as such not to myself, but to several of my acquaintances who were themselves engaged in various capacities with heritage development efforts. At the time of my primary fieldwork from 2006 through mid- 2008, the NGO Aga Khan Cultural Services (AKCSP) Pakistan was engaged in the restoration of 900-year-old Altit fort, a former residence of the ruling Mirs of Hunza, which looms over the historic core of the village of Altit where I lived. In spite of its high visibility, the project elicited

relatively little enthusiasm outside the circle of those directly involved in it. A young researcher from the Institute of Isma'ili Studies, who had come to Altit for the summer to study the villagers' attitudes about their heritage, expressed frustration at the paucity of personal stories, cultural knowledge or local folklore surrounding the fort and her questions about the future use of the fort by the village community elicited relatively little interest.

Before starting work on Altit Fort, AKCSP had undertaken the restoration and modernization of the village core (known as the *khun*), shoring up its dilapidated structures, paving its alleyways with stone and providing running water, underground electrification and sewerage to each house. By contrast with the fort restoration, this project had proved extremely popular with the village community, with the only complaints coming from those whose houses were located outside the *khun* who would have liked to receive the same benefits for themselves. Large numbers of families who had abandoned their houses in the *khun* moved back in on a seasonal or permanent basis, and the changes this had wrought on the material fabric and social life of the village were frequent topics of everyday conversation. To make sense of these divergent local attitudes toward the two phases of heritage restoration work in Altit, as well as the expectations of those associated with the project that were confounded by the villagers' indifference, I will need to say more about the longer history of heritage conservation and the broader context of development in Hunza.

Cultural Heritage and the Project of “Material and Spiritual Development”

The history of development in Hunza is often represented as beginning with the tumultuous period from 1978-1983, when three major events radically altered the valley's relationship to the world around it.² In 1974, the ruling Mir of Hunza was deposed in the last of a series of reforms by Z. A. Bhutto abolishing the remaining princely states scattered across the Northern and Tribal Areas of Pakistan. 1978 marked the completion of the Karakoram Highway, a 810-mile metaled road linking Abbotabad just north of Islamabad with Kashgar in China and running the length of the Hunza Valley. Finally, 1983, the newly- founded Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) began providing economic and infrastructural development support in Hunza. AKRSP is one of several NGOs under the umbrella of the Aga Khan Development Network, a loosely affiliated group of formal development institutions that represents one contemporary face of efforts begun in the late 19th century to integrate the globally- dispersed Isma'ili populations into a transnational community and consolidate the Imam's authority over them. These organizations are explicitly nonsectarian and participate in the same global development policy trends, discourses and competition for donor funding as their wholly secular counterparts, but their rhetoric is nonetheless infused with the distinctive ethical, if not the identifiably religious sensibility of the Isma'ili Imamate, as exemplified in the repeated invocation of the ideal of "material and spiritual

² Some people in Hunza trace the advent of development back thirty years earlier, to Aga Khan IV's first visit to Hunza in 196[0], which also marked the first time any Isma'ili Imam set foot in Hunza, and a few recall the establishment of the first Diamond Jubilee schools by Aga Khan III nearly fifty years before that. Significantly, each of these events, including the establishment of AKRSP, are understood as personal interventions by the Imam in the course of Hunza's history.

development.”³ From the perspective of Isma’ilis in Hunza, the association between Isma’ilism and the AKDN organizations (and by extension the idea of development itself) is much stronger. It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that people in Hunza understand their efforts to develop themselves as an injunction of their Imam, on the order of a religious duty. As one informant put it, in a humorous tone but with earnest intent, it is as if “development is our jihad.” When I lamented my inability to enter the *jama’at khana* (Isma’ili house of worship) and gather what I presumed to be valuable data on matters of religious practice and theology, my friends would regularly assure me that the issues presented in the Aga Khan’s firmans (formal pronouncements read aloud and stored only inside the *jama’at khana*) were dry and technical, and that, if I really wanted to grasp the substance of the Imam’s guidance to his communities, I should listen to his public speeches, which are readily available, often presented in conjunction with events such as the inauguration of development projects or institutions, and take the challenges of the modern world and the right way to engage in development as their central theme.

While the work of the AKDN is deeply intertwined in both the modernizing progressive teleology that underlies international development efforts in general and with the modern Imamate’s own distinct intellectual project of crafting a singular, unified Isma’ili history (see Steinberg 2013; Purohit 2012), a concern for and tangible engagement with local cultural heritage has also been central to and, arguably, has shaped its approach to development. AKRSP, for instance, drew heavily on local traditions of village-level government by consensus and practices of

³ This phrase appears in accounts of religiously-affiliated development organizations from a variety of traditions; see, for example, Bornstein 2003.

shared labor in designing its early interventions, giving rise to a model then widely adapted elsewhere in Pakistan. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), the international arm of the AKDN concerned with architectural and intangible cultural heritage, has made this focus explicit and in the process has contributed to the objectification of the notion of heritage and the formalization of concomitant history-making. In Hunza, the flagship project of AKTC, through its national partner AKCSP, was the restoration of historic Baltit Fort, last residence of Hunza's Mirs and a perfect icon of the "lost kingdom" imaginary with which Hunza has been associated in literature and traveller's accounts both colonial and contemporary.⁴

Materializing the Princely State

Larger, more accessible and more iconic than Altit Fort, Baltit Fort in Karimabad was AKCSP's first heritage restoration project and was completed in 1996. Baltit Fort's restoration hinged on its conceptualization as a monument of Hunza's culture conceived of in terms of the history of the princely state [IMAGE]. The fort was restored before and apart from AKCSP's later work on other historic structures in the village, primarily the residences of the former Wazirs' lineage. The redesign of the fort's exterior and the space immediately surrounding it reinforce its separation from the daily life of Karimabad; this may well have been the case during the Mir's time as well, but the modern gate and ticket-house add new dimensions to its social and spatial demarcation. From outside, its whitewashed façade and commanding position atop a high ridge make it strikingly picturesque; its image is

⁴ The fictional, paradisaical Shangri-La of James Hilton's 1933 novel *Lost Horizon* is said to be based in part on descriptions the author of Hunza, as well as on Tibet and the mythical Buddhist kingdom of Shambhala.

used to symbolize Hunza in a wide range of media. Inside, the fort has been turned into a museum, with old cookware and furniture on display and portraits of the former Mirs, Ranis and Wazirs (advisers to the Mir all drawn from a single clan, the Diramiting, also known as the Wazirkuts in reference to this hereditary function) on the walls.

Once I had the occasion to tour Baltit Fort in the company of my primary interlocutor at AKCSP and an eminent professor of responsible tourism from the UK who had been hired to develop a coordinated approach to promoting and managing tourism in Hunza among all the relevant AKDN agencies. As we strolled gradually up through the cobbled streets of Karimabad and around the fort, the Professor emphasized the need to connect the disparate items of heritage (the fort, an old water-mill, the residences of the *Wazirkuts*) into a tourist 'circuit' connected by a narrative that could be conveyed to the visitors by guides who, from the terrace surrounding the base of the fort, could gesture toward the other monuments visible around us, including the water channels, the *shavaran* (polo ground) and, in the distance, the heavily-scaffolded Altit Fort. The goal was to increase visitors' "length of stay," by letting them know how much there was to see and do in the immediate area. Inside the fort, the Professor explained that on his last visit his imagination had been caught by copies of treaties between the Mir and the Imperial Chinese Governor held in the fort's library. This time, the professor was particularly excited about a series of pegs he had been shown in the wall of Altit fort that had functioned

as a timetable to aid in the regulation of the irrigation system.⁵ Warming to his theme, he told me that these were the kinds of stories that needed to be told.

It went unsaid that the kinds of stories that could best be used to tie the monuments together and package them for touristic consumption were those most readily rendered coherent by the figure of the princely state. The shared history of Hunza was the history of the state, and the “collective identities” produced through its commemoration were, implicitly, those of subjects of the proudly isolated mountain kingdom (De Cesari 2010:625). If heritage is perceived by its trustees as part of “a general democratic disposition toward the public good” (De Cesari 2010:629), the public good here is presented as bound up with an image of the primitive but paternal state, materialized and represented by the fort itself and the artifacts it houses. As the central historical actor in this narrative, the princely state dispenses water through the bureaucratic technopolitics of timetables and centralized planning, while playing its own hand in the “Great Game” amidst the imperial powers surrounding its mountain fastness.

Interestingly, Isma'ilism is at best a muted presence in the narrative constructed through the presentation of the fort and its artifacts. This is perhaps not surprising in light of the AKDN's own complex positioning vis-à-vis its own secular form, nonsectarian commitments and religious entanglements. In light of the centrality of Isma'ilism to Hunzakuts' own self-conception and to their narratives of development, however, it is noteworthy. To the extent that Isma'ili Islam enters this

⁵ A feature of the physical landscape closely tied both to the history of the princely state and to village-level governance and the ideal of egalitarian cooperation that informs local politics—there is much more to be said about this.

story, it is through tropes of arrival and of conversion, understood as singular events. Local and foreign scholars debate the timing of these events, searching for clues in historical documents as well as in the fabric of the built environment itself, but it is generally understood that it is the Mir's conversion that matters, establishing a religious identity for the whole of his domain. Isma'ilism, then, can be located in the linear progression of historical events, as an outside force or, alternatively, as another historical actor, the distant Imamate, establishing relations with Hunza through emissaries in the form of *pirs* or *da'is*. These early events of arrival and conversion can be linked, implicitly, to later events (also, incidentally, framed as a succession arrivals from outside) such as the re-establishment of contact between the Imamate, now based in Bombay, and its farflung peripheral communities in the late 19th century; the succession of the present Aga Khan to the Imamate in 1957; the inauguration of the era of development by AKRSP in 1983 and so on, up to the restoration of the fort itself by AKCSP. This is Isma'ili history as a linear series of events, causally linked within a succession of other, equally significant events, such as the conquest of Hunza by the British in 1891, independence in 1947 and the end of the Mirdom in 1976. The era of the Mirdom gives way the era of development, which gestures progressively toward the future.

As I have already suggested, the history of the Hunza state is not one that engages many of the people I knew in Altit. People's investment, or lack thereof, in this particular way of constructing the history of the present was manifested in attitudes toward heritage restoration projects and toward the heritage itself. Razia, the young researcher I mentioned earlier, had hoped to elicit stories, memories and

practices surrounding the fort from her informants, but the young people we talked to could summon few such concrete, sensory associations, either positive or negative. She had expected, not unreasonably, to find links between the fort and the colorful folklore and rituals described in accounts of Hunza. The Mirs and their officials often play a key role in such accounts, as in Thumushilling, a festival commemorating the slaying of the mythical cannibal king of neighboring Gilgit, Shiribadat, by a local culture hero, or Ginani, the barley harvest, during which grain was set aside for the Mir's tithes. Few of her informants had ever been inside the fort, however, and most of their associations with it were negative. Altit fort had stood empty and neglected for many years, and, in its crumbling state, was perceived as a hazard by those who lived directly under or climbed upon it. One girl said that in the statue of a *markhor* that stands on the top of the fort's tall tower once fell onto the roof of her family's house in the *khun*, badly startling them. These sparse accounts expressed what was to Razia a frustrating lack of tangible connection to or interest in the fort itself or its history.

When it came to the *khun* restoration, or to the many jobs being created for Altit residents—a group of twenty young women, in particular, were being trained as surveyors—or the future benefits of increased tourism, Razia's informants were more voluble. From the perspective Razia had learned through her training in cultural heritage preservation and management, however, the goal of contemporary heritage development was to take up and strengthen people's connections to their cultural identity by preserving and celebrating their historic past as materialized in

its monuments. The goal of her research was to find ways of making the Altit Fort restoration accessible and relevant to Altit's people, their concerns and interests.

Rather than reflecting a singular or static perception on heritage, however, Razia's stance reflected a process of reflection by which members of the AKDN and affiliated institutions had learned from their own past efforts. The new project was to be more than a tourist attraction or museum, as the Baltit Fort had largely become. In service of this ideal of a kind of living heritage, Razia hoped to discover and draw upon a latent relationship between Altit residents and the fort. Her finding of an apparent lack of interest in the fort in any capacity except its income-generating potential, was a setback to this ideal of heritage development theory and practice.

There was no such attitude of indifference or ambivalence toward the already-completed *khun* restoration project, however. Whereas the Baltit Fort had initially been treated as a single freestanding monument, its restoration conceived independently of the surrounding structures and the space of the village as a whole, in Altit AKCSP reversed its strategy. Rather than beginning work on the long-empty and disused fort, it had begun with the restoration of the ordinary houses and common spaces of the *khun*.

Sharing Labor, Sharing Shade: Built Environment as Ethical Affordance

While the modernization of the *khun* houses was a source of envy and dissatisfaction for some whose houses were situated outside its boundaries, from the perspective of *khun* residents and the AKCSP team alike, the *khun* restoration

project was a resounding success.⁶ According to both AKCSP staff and Altit residents, before 2003, Altit *khun* was nearly uninhabitable. Its unpaved alleyways were sometimes impassible with mud and standing water, where mosquitos bred in summer. Electrification had occurred piecemeal and haphazardly, resulting in a spiderweb of jury-rigged lines suspended overhead and occasionally draped across buildings and walkways. The houses were small-- in most cases a single room at ground level with a partially enclosed rooftop shelter above for use in warmer weather. While once the crowding and the presence of animals (mainly goats and sheep) sharing the ground floor with humans during the winter were once considered tolerable, even desirable for the warmth they generated, by the 2000s few people wanted to live this way. According to the accounts of numerous Altit residents, by the time AKCSP began its work there the houses of the *khun* were only about half occupied and its public spaces were often empty. With the expansion of available land for farming, the availability of food sources other than subsistence agriculture, and the loosening of strictures against the building of houses on arable land (formerly prohibited), people had begun to move out of the *khun* and into new,

⁶ The unanimity of residents' appreciation for it was so consistent as to present itself as a problem to a visiting researcher who was hired by AKCSP to conduct an impact study on the project. At the end of her second day of administering surveys the consultant, Dr. Rehman, a professor from a well-known downcountry university, vented her frustration to me: the only criticism she could extract from her interview subjects was from those outside the *khun* who wished the electrification, sanitation and other benefits had been provided free to all the houses in the village, rather than just to those in the historic core. Dr. Rehman found it utterly improbable that such a large project could have provoked no dissatisfaction at all from its beneficiaries, and expressed suspicion that someone at AKCSP had manipulated the selection of subjects for her to interview to achieve a biased result.

multi-room houses, often built of concrete and other modern materials, loosely scattered around the village land on people's individual plots.

These new houses were felt to have many benefits, not least of which was their capacity to serve as markers of a family's status and material wellbeing. The Hussein family, for example, lived in an impressive 6-room structure just outside the village core, surrounded by outbuildings, a kitchen garden and a small lawn with a formal border of flowering plants. A wall with a gate separated the plot from the alleyway along its upper boundary, which, like the other features mentioned above, is far more characteristic of dwellings in downcountry Pakistan than the traditional architecture of Hunza. In this way, the house reflected the biography of its owner; Ghulam Hussein, in his seventies at the time of my research, had spent decades downcountry, first in the army and later rising through the ranks at a large national bank. With his savings, he had bought several plots of land in Gilgit and built a second house there, as well as helping to found Moray School, Altit's only private English-medium primary school. On his retirement, he moved his family back to Hunza and set about establishing himself as an important man (Bu.: *uyunkosís*) and a village leader. The house, with its rectilinear construction, its formal dining room and multiple separate bedrooms, and its modern conveniences, such as built-in countertops and cabinetry in the kitchen (rare even among the other new houses I visited) and a washing machine (also rare, though defunct when I lived there) served to index his status, ambitions and allegiances.

For all the advantages of space and modernity afforded by newer houses like the Husseins', however, many people expressed dissatisfaction with them. For one

thing, they were cold: with their uninsulated cinderblock construction, larger floor plans and higher ceilings, they were far more difficult to keep warm in winter than the small houses of the *khun* with their contiguous structure. The privacy and separation afforded by the new houses, both with respect to fellow members of the household and in relation to others, did not appear to be valued in practice as much as it was valued symbolically. The Hussein family's own way of inhabiting their house was indicative of what appeared to be general patterns of preference. In spite of the many rooms available, when they were on their own or with frequent visitors, the Husseins spent nearly all of their time in a single room. The central room of the house had been built to replicate many of the stylistic features of the *há*, the traditional one-room Hunza house (including the layered ceiling construction, skylight, sunken floor and raised seating areas around the walls), but this room was only used for formally entertaining important guests, as during the two weddings that took place in the house. While I lived with the family, I claimed one of the back bedrooms, but between my departure and the marriage of Karim, the family's eldest son, it was used only for storage. The room used by the family the majority of the time was the kitchen, which was well-heated by the wood stove used for cooking. The room also held the television and the mats for sitting and sleeping. During good weather the outer door was propped open and the paved porch outside became the center of social activity.

Other people I knew also found that their newly constructed houses were not perfectly suited to life as they preferred to live it. Especially for those whose houses were located at some distance from the *khun*, the new houses meant more isolation

from their neighbors than they considered ideal. ACKSP's decision to restore and refurbish the *khun* itself before beginning work on Altit fort proved to be a consequential one for both the private and public life of the village, at least as I heard it after the fact. AKCSP paved the alleys of the *khun* with stone, shored up walls that had been in danger of collapsing into the street, refurbished the public seating alcoves (*baldi*) and the central square (*jatáq*) and provided underground electrification and sewerage to all homes. They accomplished all this with an eye to maintaining aesthetic continuity, but with at least one significant limit. Along with agreements over the division of responsibilities for funding, planning and labor, the contract between AKCSP and the village community included the stipulation that all livestock be moved permanently out of the *khun*.

By the time of my fieldwork, many families had moved back into the *khun*. A number of families I knew had established a seasonal pattern of residence, living in the *khun* through the winters and moving out to their 'summer houses' in the fields when the weather grew warmer. One such family was that of Darvesh, whose teenage daughters, Rehanna and Rubina, told me that they enjoyed their residence in the *khun* more because of the constant visiting back and forth between neighboring houses. While the Hussein home, located at the edge of the *khun*, seemed to draw visitors at all hours and times of year, I generally found Darvesh and his family on their own when I visited them at their more distantly situated summer house.

The frequency and mutuality of my own social interactions increased dramatically when I moved from a rented room in a disused hotel on the edge of

Altit into a small house in the center of the *khun* whose owners had not elected to return. People I had never met before felt free to enter and introduce themselves, while long-term friends took the initiative to come and see me more often, expressing, in various ways that they felt far less constraint on visiting me in such a close and familiar setting.⁷

Most importantly, living in the *khun* drew me into socially significant relationships of neighborliness and mutual help in a way that had been difficult to establish before. People in Hunza, I have argued elsewhere, form intimate relations with others primarily through everyday agricultural and household labor that is given or shared in specific forms, on particular occasions and with a variety of degrees of expectation or obligation, voluntarism or generosity implied. Even the most “given” of kinship ties (Bu.: *sukúyo*, one’s close patrilineal kin) are made through the forms of labor by which people fulfill, or do not fulfill, acknowledge or repudiate their obligations to one another. Other relationships, particularly those of neighborliness (U.: *hamsaya*, lit.: those who share shade), are singled out and celebrated precisely through the disavowal of obligation preceding or resulting from a given act of giving labor. Finally, labor in the form of voluntary service is one of the central religious duties of Isma’ili Islam, as valued, if not more so, by people in

⁷ I had already realized that residence in a hotel, especially one whose owner was known to host occasional drinking parties on the premises, had slightly unsavory connotations that made it difficult for my female friends to visit me, while the fact that I lived alone made it awkward to receive male visitors. Other reasons for my isolation were revealed more gradually. The smaller settlement clusters far from the village center, like the area called *matoom das* where my hotel was located, are situated in or near areas of barren or unused land (Bu.: *das*), which are felt to be inhabited by *buut* (U.: ghosts), *bilás* (Bu.: monstrous witches), and other potentially dangerous non-human entities, causing many people to avoid them near or after dark.

Hunza as elsewhere in the jama'at. Labor in this context is a practice through which people perform the work of ethical self- transformation that is also work on their relations with others, including God; they both cultivate ethical qualities and reveal them for evaluation. As such, labor is a site of moral reasoning and reflexivity, modes of relating to the world widely thought of as conditions for ethical being and action (Foucault 1984; Faubion 2001; Rasanayagam 2010).

Uniting both ends of the spectrum from obligation to generosity in the field of daily labor is the idea of love, *mohabat* (U.) that comes from and motivates acts of working alongside and on behalf of others. Not only people's willingness to labor and sacrifice for others but their apparent capacity to take pleasure in doing so is evaluated morally; people work with as well as for one another, taking what opportunities arise to create moments of mutual enjoyment and fun (*mazaq*) as they work together. Laboring with and for others is a sign of virtue not only in individuals but also as a form of collective identity, and, as Joseph Hankins (2014:17) notes, in his work on labor and identity in Japan, the labor that produces such signs transforms the laborer as well as the object of her labor.

The love that arises from sharing labor and sharing shade is also revealed in moments of ease, relaxation and sociability during temporary lulls in the daily and seasonal rounds of tasks. Visiting between households and gathering on rooftops in the evenings are two such activities greatly facilitated by the dense, interconnected fabric and horizontal orientation of the *khun* dwellings. On the conjoined rooftops of the *khun* I spent many summer evenings with my neighbor, Yasmeena, splitting apricots for drying by the light of gas lanterns, absorbing her stories and listening

while all around us similar groups talked and sang, and greeting friends who wandered from roof to roof.

Though many people found her manner brusque and off-putting, Yasmeena was a tireless teller of stories, and she had a deep interest in “*hamare culture*” (our culture) and *hurutas-diyeyas* (Bu.: lit. “sitting- standing”; way of doing things⁸) that was rare among young people. On such occasions, the stories Yasmeena told often centered on the joys of similar evenings in the near and distant past. She loved to tell me of the era she could only just remember, when there was no electricity in Hunza and no satellite TV, when people would sit together just as we were doing but with only tiny *plíto* (candles made from seed paste) for light. The houses were small and the light dim, forcing people to huddle close together, and from this bodily closeness a closeness of the spirit was nurtured. Through such chains of memory and sensuous associations, people attend to their own bodies and those of others in what Thomas Csordas (1993:138-139) calls somatic modes of attention; “culturally elaborated attention to and with the body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others.” Such modes of attention and the habitual practices in which they’re embedded link embodied sensation to particular modes of sociability and to features of the material world highlighted and construed as relevant. Such practices, therefore, are not only a domain of ethical reasoning and reflexivity, but also of embodied moral dispositions, sentiments and modes of relating. Through reflections like Yasmeena’s, a sense of Hunza’s distinctive cultural traditions and

⁸ This is likely a calque from the Urdu *utna-betna*, with the same meaning.

their ethical content is anchored to the built environment via both present practice and images of an imagined past.

Other, more self-conscious performances of heritage also take place within the space of the *khun*. In the summer of 2008 the yearlong Golden Jubilee celebrations commemorating the 50th year of the present Imam's tenure were at their height, during which time an unusual number of *tamasha* (festivity with music and dancing) were held in the central *jatáq* to celebrate both the event itself and the many weddings that were planned that summer to coincide with it. Thus, for the whole of that summer the *jatáq* and the surrounding rooftops were regularly crowded with people pressed around the walls to leave the central space clear for groups of male dancers to perform.

What these modes of sociability add up to, I suggest, is a mutual entanglement of the symbolic dimensions of the built environment and the lived, bodily experience of it. Savova (2009:550) calls this "heritage kinaesthetics," the bodily practices by which people relate to and bring to life the built environment, in contrast to "heritage aesthetics" in which people encounter their environment through its static qualities. Opening a neighbor's door and stepping inside uninvited, joining others on the rooftops to work, gossip or to sleep, and joining a neighbor in a routine task are all ways of engaging in social life in the present in ways understood to be deeply tied to configuration of physical space and that also have resonance with ideas about how things were in the past and with notions of tradition and culture. Such practices are the substance of the virtue of 'cooperation' that is often cited as the reason for Hunzakuts' success in development. As such, they are

moments where a connection between a particular version of history and a set of possibilities for the future is not only thought about but also embodied. [Back to Keane: ethical affordances.]

Embodied and experiential forms of reflexivity may be difficult to recognize as such by the “conditions of social intelligibility” (Tambar 2014:654) imposed by modern disciplinary modes. However, I argue that in Hunza today it constitutes a valued form of engagement in the social and material world (Rasanayagam 2010:2-3) and grounds a relatively cohesive sense of cultural and religious identity. I would go further, in fact, to suggest that Altit residents’ distinctly greater enthusiasm for the restoration of the quotidian domestic space of the *khun* than for that of the monumental heritage of the fort constitutes a subtle but pointed argument in favor of their own version of ‘material and spiritual development’ and of their relatively egalitarian local configuration of Isma’ilism in contrast with that of the intensely hierarchical and bureaucratic institutional structures of the transnational *jama’at*, as that which arrives from elsewhere and inaugurates a progressive, linear history linking traditional past with developed future through the figure of its own non-territorial yet state-like polity (Steinberg 2013).

The value of the *khun* project in the official discourse of AKCSP publications and documents is complex. On the one hand, its attitude, though couched in the technocratic language of NGOs and shaped to the requirements of its particular audience, this passage from AKCSP’s (n.d.) letter nominating the Altit restoration for a UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Award for Cultural Conservation is closely in line with what I have been describing as the attitude of Altit residents:

Beyond its purely architectural significance, the rehabilitation of the old settlement was undertaken on the premise that an intimate relationship exists between the build environment and the living culture it houses. The physical structures of the settlement reflected and sustained a particular social structure and set of cultural values. The idea for the conservation project was to make the old structures livable and responsive to the desire of the residents for the basic comforts and conveniences of a modern life. The physical structures of the settlement embody its history; unlike monuments such as the Altit fort, they tell the story of the ordinary citizens of Altit.

At the same time, the document does not avoid the temptation to describe Altit, its history and inhabitants with reference to other monuments deemed culturally and architecturally significant and to a specific history that links these monuments. Collectively, they lend themselves to narration in terms of a version of Hunza's history that will be readily recognizable to a reader even distantly familiar with the tropes of lost kingdoms and princely states hidden in the mountainous borderlands of empire (AKCSP n.d.):⁹

Altit settlement is located in central Hunza in close proximity to the historic settlements of Ganish and Karimabad. It is said to be one the earliest settlements of this region: most scholars agree that it was established in the 15th century A.D. Altit's historic value lies in its having

⁹ Note that the timeframe for the fort's construction in the quote below (15th century) is out of step with claims about the age of the fort given in the same document and other sources as either 900 or 1,100 years old; the confusion seems to stem from scholarly disagreement and possibly the building of the fort in different stages.

been the first capital of the ruling Mirs of Hunza. Its cultural importance is further magnified by the presence of the magnificent Altit Fort, perched commandingly on the edge of the 700-foot Hunza gorge. The elders remember that the village once had a fortification and eleven shikaris (watchtowers), presently buried under the rubble of memory. The original fortified settlement (khun) of Altit is located at the base of the towering fort, protecting its approaches.

This ambiguity is present throughout AKCSP's documentation of the *khun* restoration and of related projects. One interlocutor within the organization suggested that the ambiguity stems from the fact that while many AKCSP staff members have nuanced views about the meanings of heritage, the princely state and its history, those in charge are primarily architects by training who have less concern for the meaning and politics of the monuments they restore than for their value *qua* objects of historical significance and their preservation as a set of technical challenges. The involvement of AKCSP in planning and presenting its projects for consumption by tourists (and for other outside audiences, as the UNESCO nomination document demonstrates) likely plays a role as well.

The ultimate fate of Altit Fort was undecided when I left Hunza in 2008, but the Baltit Fort provided a clear example—to AKCSP, to my interlocutors in Altit, and to myself—of alternative ways of imagining heritage and its possibilities.

Conclusions

Appadurai (2003:46) writes regarding the production of locality that, “physical spaces are part of the material that individuals work from, draw on, to

some extent take for granted, and in other instances highlight, sharpen, consciously use.” Different kinds of spaces, with their different associations in history and memory and daily practices, are suitable for such uses in differing ways and available to particular people to different degrees. That Altit residents were not interested in the fort— or not interested in the way that some of those involved in its restoration might have hoped— is less a sign of their indifference to their cultural heritage than an indication of what, precisely, the very ideas of heritage, of culture, and of history, mean to them, and how they relate them to development and its possible futures, both as sites of desire and anxiety.

In this paper so far I have presented the two forts and the Altit *khun* as materializing contrasting ideas about and relationships to history, heritage and cultural and religious identity; the structure of my argument may also imply a clear opposition between the perspectives of the village community and the institutions engaged in heritage conservation, such as AKCSP. In fact, the relationship is not nearly so binary. As I hope I’ve shown, AKCSP has learned as it goes along, incorporating the lessons of the focus on monuments above living heritage and the museumification of Baltit Fort into its approach in Altit and subsequent projects. And AKCSP itself is neither a singular entity nor an entirely foreign one: most of its local staff are themselves from Hunza and surrounding regions, and are as thoughtful and reflective about the place of heritage in the everyday life of Hunza as anyone. Furthermore, Hunzakuts have a complex relationship to the institutional structures of global Isma'ilism, simultaneously embracing the material and religious potentialities it offers and wary of its power to further transform the social and

ethical landscape of Hunza. It is at precisely such sites as heritage conservation projects and through such practices such building walls, sharing shade, and narrating history on rooftops and museum walls that the production of Hunza as a locality at the crossroads of multiple histories, identities, and ethical aspirations takes place.