**Performing the Moral Community in Northern Pakistan**

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A primary aim of the in-process dissertation from which this talk is drawn has been to find ways of writing anthropologically about ethics that do not locate ‘the ethical’ entirely within the minds of individual subjects, but reclaim social and intersubjective spaces as ethical terrain. For the Isma’ili Muslim inhabitants of Pakistan’s Hunza Valley, the most salient ethical questions are those which revolve around appropriate relationships between people and the ideal ordering of society as a whole. The salience of international development institutions and projects in Hunza give such questions a particular concreteness and urgency, seeming to offer a set of tools with which people might build the kind of materially and spiritually developed society they desire. Some recent work in the anthropology of ethics invokes the phrase “moral communities” to describe the social worlds that coalesce around such ethical imaginings, desires and aspirations. But on what basis, exactly, can we speak of ‘communities’ in this context? Are these concrete, bounded social units? Must they rely on shared moral rules, beliefs and practices?

David Graeber has argued in *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value* (2001) for an understanding of social totalities borrowed from sociolinguistic theory: as the audiences constituted by a given action. Similarly, we might think of moral communities as the audience—real or imagined—for whom a given ethical action has value. Following this train of thought, I have begun to consider how a variety of practices in Hunza, primarily those having to do with development, gesture toward particular imaginings of community. In this talk, I present data drawn from staged public events known as *functions* in which, through performances in a variety of genres including formal speeches, songs, jokes, dancing and dramatic skits, notions of ‘the community’ are invoked or implied, critiqued, contested and ultimately constituted in moral terms. In what I hope will be an informal and interactive session, I invite the linguistic anthropology workshop participants to help me refine my use of concepts such as ‘performance’ and ‘audience’ to integrate this data with the larger dissertation project.