



HAZĀRA

HAZĀRA, the third largest ethnic group of Afghanistan, after the Pashtuns and the Tājiks, who represent nearly a fifth of the total population. Their name most probably derives from the Persian word *hazār*, which means “thousand,” and may be the translation of the Mongol word *ming* or *minggan*, a tribal-military unit of 1000 soldiers of the Mongol army at the time of Gen-ghis Khan (Bacon, 1958, p. 4; Schurmann, p. 115; Poladi, p. 22; Mousavi, pp. 23-25). The term *hazār(a)* could have replaced *ming* in what is today Afghanistan, and has thus come to designate a specific group of people. Such an evolution may be witnessed also in the district of Hazāra, north of Islamabad (Pakistan), which takes its name from troops based in the region during the Timurid period.

The Hazāras speak a Persian dialect with many Turkish and some Mongolian words (see section iv below). They originally occupied the central part of the country, a mountainous zone called the Hazārajāt (see section i below). Though some inhabitants of the eastern fringe of the region are Sunnis (Ġorband Valley) or Isma‘ilis (Ka-yān, Šibar), most Hazāras—unlike the majority of the Afghan population—are Twelver Shi‘ites, a factor which has contributed to their political and socio-economic marginalization. The history of the Hazāras is marked by several wars and forced displacements. Many of them fled from the Hazārajāt at the end of the 19th century, when Amir ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān Khan subjugated the region; they settled in Quetta (then in British India, today in Pakistan) and around Mašhad. Driven by poverty, the Hazāras have migrated throughout the 20th century. Many went to the cities, especially to Kabul but also to Mazār-e Šarif and Herat, while others traveled to Pakistan



or to Iran in search of employment. This trend dramatically increased after the communist coup of April 1978 and the Soviet intervention in 1979.

- i. *Historical geography of Hazārajāt.*
- ii. *History.*
- iii. *Ethnography and social organization.*
- iv. *Hazāragi dialect.*