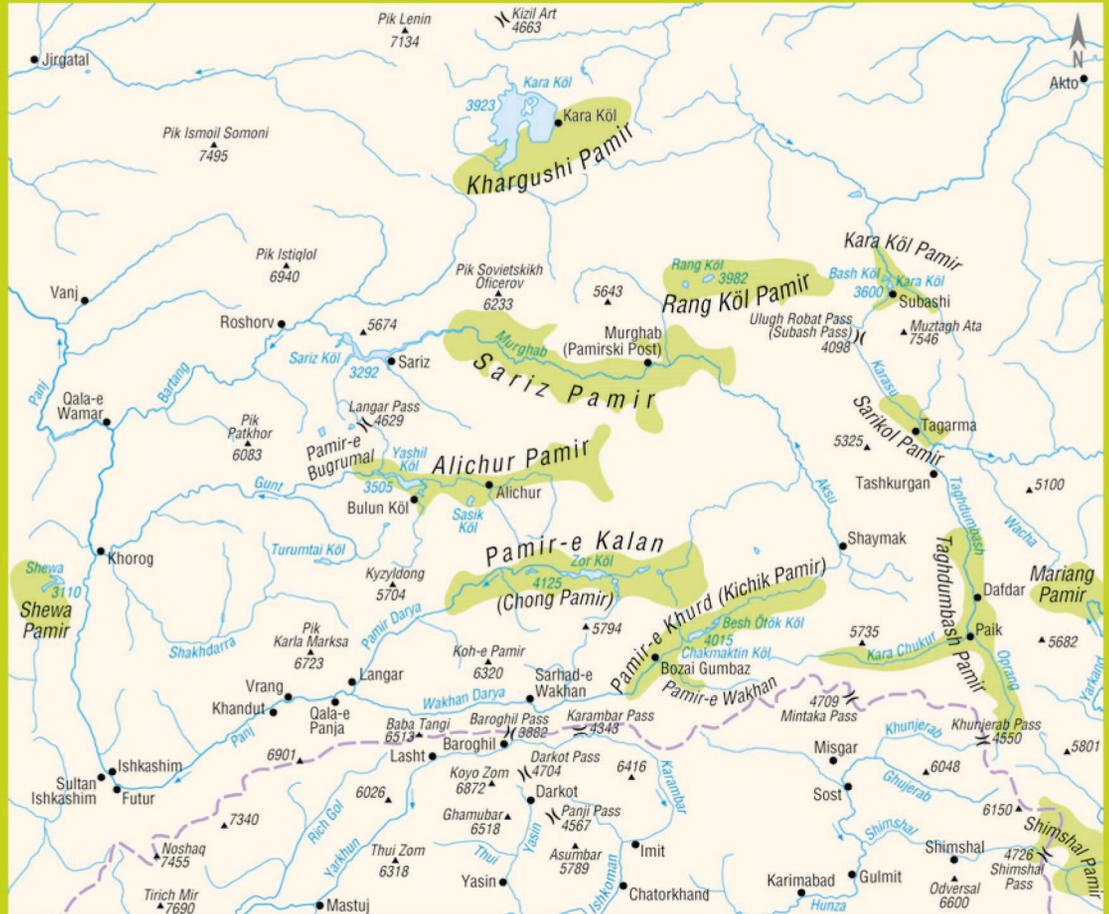


Pamirs at the Crossroads Changing Challenges and perspectives



Edited by

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Changing challenges and perspectives

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2016



*Kara Jilga in the Little Pamir (4,100 m)
Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 11 June 2000*

Table of Contents

Schedule of the meeting of minds: Pamirs at the Crossroads.....	iii
List of participants.....	vi
<i>Hermann Kreutzmann</i>	
Executive summary - Pamirs at the Crossroads - Changing challenges and perspectives	1
<i>Monica Bulaj</i>	
Thematic session I: Setting the stage - The hidden light of Afghanistan.....	17
<i>Stefan Schütte</i>	
Thematic session II: Challenges for resource maintenance and utilisation.....	27
<i>Yi Shaoliang, Wang Jinniu, Wu Ning</i>	
A review of Chinese researches on conservation and development in Eastern Pamirs	29
<i>Nusrat Nasab</i>	
The work of FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance.....	37
<i>Stefan Schütte</i>	
Thematic session III: Education and mobility.....	41
<i>Majeed Khan</i>	
Education and mobility in Gilgit-Baltistan	43
<i>Robert Middleton</i>	
Education and mobility - A historical perspective	47
<i>Andrei Dörre</i>	
Keynotes.....	55
<i>M. Nazif Shahrani</i>	
The life and career of Haji Rahmanqul Khan, 1913-1990.....	57
<i>Muhammet Ekber Kutlu</i>	
Life in Ulupamir Köyü	65
<i>Gönül Açıksarı</i>	
Addition to Muhammet Ekber Kutlu's speech	66

<i>Andrei Dörre</i>	
Thematic session IV: Experiences with regional development.....	67
<i>Ghulam Amin Beg</i>	
Experiences with regional development: Changing challenges and perspectives in Gilgit Baltistan	69
<i>Bernard Repond</i>	
Pamir's Bridges	75
<i>Andrei Dörre</i>	
Thematic session V: Knowledge generation and heritage preservation	79
<i>Odinamamad Mirzoev</i>	
Knowledge generation and heritage preservation in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAR)	81
<i>Nazir Ahmed Bulbul</i>	
Knowledge generation and preservation of Wakhi cultural heritage	85
<i>Markus Hauser</i>	
The Pamir Archive: A world of information.....	87
<i>Yuri Badenkov</i>	
Closing statement and remarks on future perspectives	89

Schedule of the meeting of minds: Pamirs at the Crossroads

Thursday, April 21, 2016

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 9:00 - 10:00 | Registration |
| 10:00 - 11:30 | Thematic session I: Setting the stage
Opening and welcome address
by Hermann Kreutzmann (Chair of Human Geography and Head of the Centre for Development Studies, Freie Universitaet Berlin)
Visual introduction to the Pamirs and Pamirian Peoples
by Monika Bulaj (Photojournalist, writer and documentarian, Trieste)
Discussion |
| 11:30 - 13:00 | Group picture and lunch |
| 13:00 - 14:30 | Thematic Session II: Challenges for resource maintenance and utilisation
Inputs by Yi Shaoliang (Senior natural resources management specialist ICIMOD, Kathmandu) and Nusrat Nasab (Chief Executive Officer FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance, Islamabad)
Discussion |
| 14:30 - 15:00 | Tea break |
| 15:00 - 16:30 | Thematic Session III: Education and mobility
Inputs by Majeed Khan (Director Education, Gilgit), Bohdan Krawchenko (Director General of the University of Central Asia, Bishkek) and Robert Middleton (Senior Development Expert, Crans)
Discussion |
| 16:30 - 18:00 | Keynotes
The life and career of Haji Rahman Oul Khan by M. Nazif Mohib Shahrani (Professor of Anthropology, Central Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Indiana University Bloomington, IN)
Life in Ulupamir Köyü by Muhammet Ekber Kutlu (Professor at Yüzüncü Yıl University, Van) |

Friday, April 22, 2016

- 9:00 - 10:30 Thematic session IV: Experiences with regional development
Inputs by Ghulam Amin (Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, Islamabad), Muzaffar-Ud Din (Country Representative & Chief Executive Officer BRAC, Islamabad) and Bernard Repond (Pamir's Bridges, Marsens)
Discussion
- 10:30 - 11:00 Tea break
- 11:00 - 12:30 Thematic session V: Knowledge generation and heritage preservation
Inputs by Odinamamad Mirzo (Headmaster and museum curator, Namadgut), Nazir Ahmed Bulbul (President Local Council, Gulmit) and Markus Hauser (The Pamir-Archive, Wintherthur)
Discussion
- 12:30 - 13:45 Lunch
- 13:45 - 14:30 Closing and remarks on future prospects
by Yuri Badenkov (Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow)
- 15:30 - 17:30 Visit of Pamir-related exhibits in the Central Asian Collections of the Dahlem Museum

Saturday, April 23, 2016

- 13:00 - 17:00 Visit of the historic city centre of Berlin
- 21:30 Visit of the Reichstag Building (German Parliament)



*Participants of the Meeting of Minds: Pamirs at the Crossroads - Changing challenges and perspectives at Freie Universitaet Berlin, April 20 - 23, 2016
Photograph © Marina Heyink 21 April 2016*

List of participants

Açıksari, Gönül	Istanbul Medeniyet University, Goztepe Reseach & Training Hospital, Istanbul
Açıksari, Kurtuluş	Istanbul Medeniyet University, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Emergency Medicine, Istanbul
Amin, Ghulam (Amin Beg)	Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, Islamabad
Anarbaev, Maksat	Centre for Development Studies, Freie Universitaet Berlin
Badenkov, Yuri	Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow
Bulaj, Monika	Photojournalist, writer and documentarian, Trieste
Bulbul, Nazir Ahmed	Local Council, Gulmit
Dörre, Andrei	Centre for Development Studies, Freie Universitaet Berlin
Goibnazarov, Chorshanbe	Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies, Freie Universitaet Berlin/Tajik National Conservatory, Dushanbe
Hauser, Markus	The Pamir-Archive, Winterthur
Heyink, Marina	Centre for Development Studies, Freie Universitaet Berlin
Ismail, Muhammad	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu
Khan, Majeed	Director Education, Riaz House, Aminabad, Jutial, Gilgit
Kraudzun, Tobias	Centre for Development Studies, Freie Universitaet Berlin
Krawchenko, Bohdan	University of Central Asia, Bishkek
Kreutzmann, Hermann	Centre for Development Studies, Freie Universitaet Berlin
Kutlu, Muhammet Ekber	Yüzüncü Yıl University, Van
Mawlong, Lavinia	Centre for Development Studies, Freie Universitaet Berlin
Middleton, Robert	Senior Development Expert, Crans
Mirzoev, Odinamamad	Museum Curator, Namadgut
Nasab, Nusrat	FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance, Islamabad
Polster, Tim	Centre for Development Studies, Freie Universitaet Berlin
Repond, Bernard	Pamir's Bridges, Marsens
Schmidt-Vogt, Dietrich	Mountain Societies Research Institute, University of Central Asia, Bishkek
Schütte, Stefan	Centre for Development Studies, Freie Universitaet Berlin
Shahrani, Muhammad Nazif Mohib	Indiana University Bloomington, IN
Shaoliang, Yi	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu
Spies, Michael	Centre for Development Studies, Freie Universitaet Berlin
Din, Muzaffar-Ud	BRAC, Islamabad
van Bentum, Sarah	Centre for Development Studies, Freie Universitaet Berlin
Yasmin, Bibi	

Executive summary - Pamirs at the Crossroads - Changing challenges and perspectives

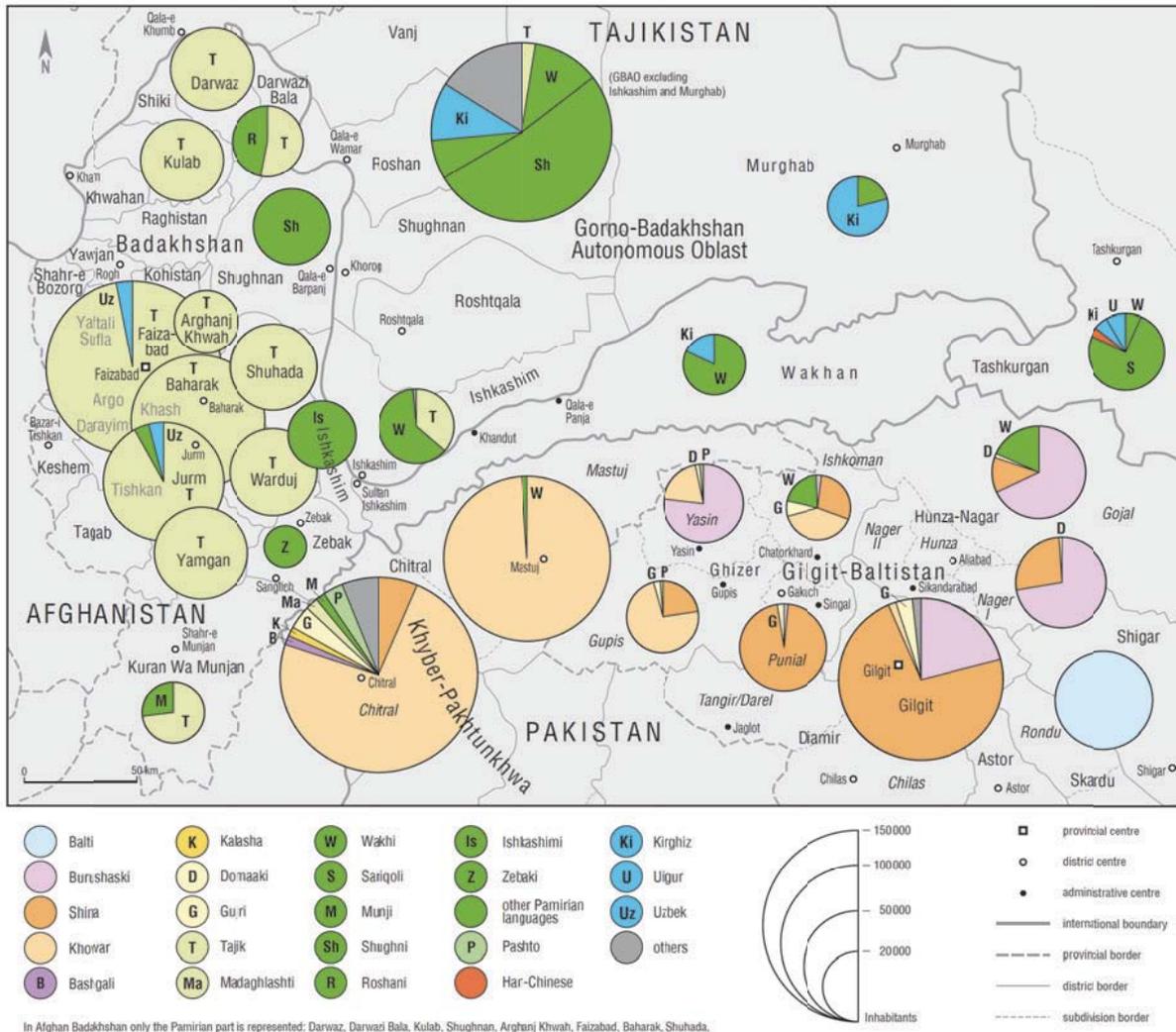
The meeting 'Pamirs at the crossroads' was convened in the framework of the Pamir research project sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation as a final conference that was looking back at what was achieved by previous academic and scientific activities in better understanding the historical heritage for path-dependent development. A further aspect of the 'meeting of minds' was to develop a vision for desiderata, short-comings and urgent needs directed towards Pamir-focused development and research efforts. All persons who could follow the invitation to convene in Berlin were experts in their respective fields thus representing a wide range of different personal experiences, professional backgrounds and upbringings. It was attempted to create a cross-border perspective that was focusing on a remote region in all countries that claim to have a share in the Pamirs. By looking from the periphery on local developments, regional connections, national dependencies and global networks the web of multi-fold interrelationships and contrasting perceptions emerged and illustrated the complex challenges to which this meeting of minds could contribute only some glimpses. The two-day deliberations were structured in five themes, two keynotes, and one summarising statement.

1 Setting the stage

With an impressive visual introduction the photographer Monika Bulaj from Trieste drew the attention to the challenges and plight citizens in Afghanistan in general and Pamirian people in particular have been confronted with through many decades. Her images left a continuing effect on all participants and have shown personal constraints, societal pressures and a resulting individual resilience that might and would allow adequate economic survival and self-determined everyday life under harsh and life-threatening environmental and socio-political conditions.

In a historic review attention was drawn to the first atlas map on the Pamirs in the second edition of the reputed and well-known Diercke Atlas, published in 1883. The same year when a European audience was fascinated by the Pamirian Knot as a geological meeting place of mighty mountain ranges it happened that a quarter of the residents of Wakhan followed their leader Ali Mardan Shah into exile into Yasin, Ishkoman and Gojal which lie in Gilgit-Baltistan, nowadays under Pakistan's administration. His brother Sarbuland Shah led another group to Tiznaf and Tashkurgan in Sarikol, nowadays Tajik Autonomous County Tashkurgan, Xinjiang, in the People's Republic of China. Subsequently the former mirdom of Wakhan was bisected into an Afghan and Russian-administered part which nowadays

belongs to Tajikistan as part of Rayon Ishkashim under the special denomination of Gorno-Badakhshanskaya Avtonomnyya Oblast'.



Source: *Hermann Kreutzmann 2015: Pamirian Crossroads. Wiesbaden, p. 484*

For the meeting of minds it was the desire of the organisers that participants from all four countries where Kirghiz and Wakhi migrated to in the 19th century could be welcomed in Berlin. The 20th century expanded the migratory web of Pamirian dwellers, thus from Erciş in Eastern Anatolia, Turkey Ekber Kutlu participated as a representative of the Kirghiz from the Afghan Pamir in Turkish exile. In addition friends and supporters of the Pamirian crossroads who had succeeded in drawing more attention to a neglected mountain region of Central Asia, who had cooperated with local residents in educational projects and developmental packages augmented the group of experts in the meeting of minds. The select group was invited to continue an ongoing debate and to stimulate further activities in Pamirian studies.

2 Challenges for resource maintenance and utilisation

From the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, based in Kathmandu that follows an agenda in which trans-boundary landscape-based transects play a prominent role Yi Shaoliang and Muhammad Ismail represented the working group on the Hindu Kush-Karakoram-Pamir-Landscape Initiative (HKPL). In their presentation the challenge between nature protection and human utilisation of mountain resources was highlighted as it is perceived by the Kathmandu-based organisation which sees itself as a facilitator for the improvement of trans-boundary national parks to cooperate in fields of nature, culture and social welfare, and to provide data and knowledge for capacity building. Yi Shaoliang articulated that the biggest challenge will remain in balancing the region's potential between preservation and development. The conventional array of reasons for nature protection, the creation of national parks and biosphere reserves were reiterated and supported by arguments for maintaining ecosystems and unique areas of biodiversity. Its embeddedness in climate and global change was reiterated as well. The reconciliation between nature protection and human utilisation strategies is often one-sided in favour of the environment when outside players suggest the design and management of national parks. Certain areas appear on maps as marked spaces.

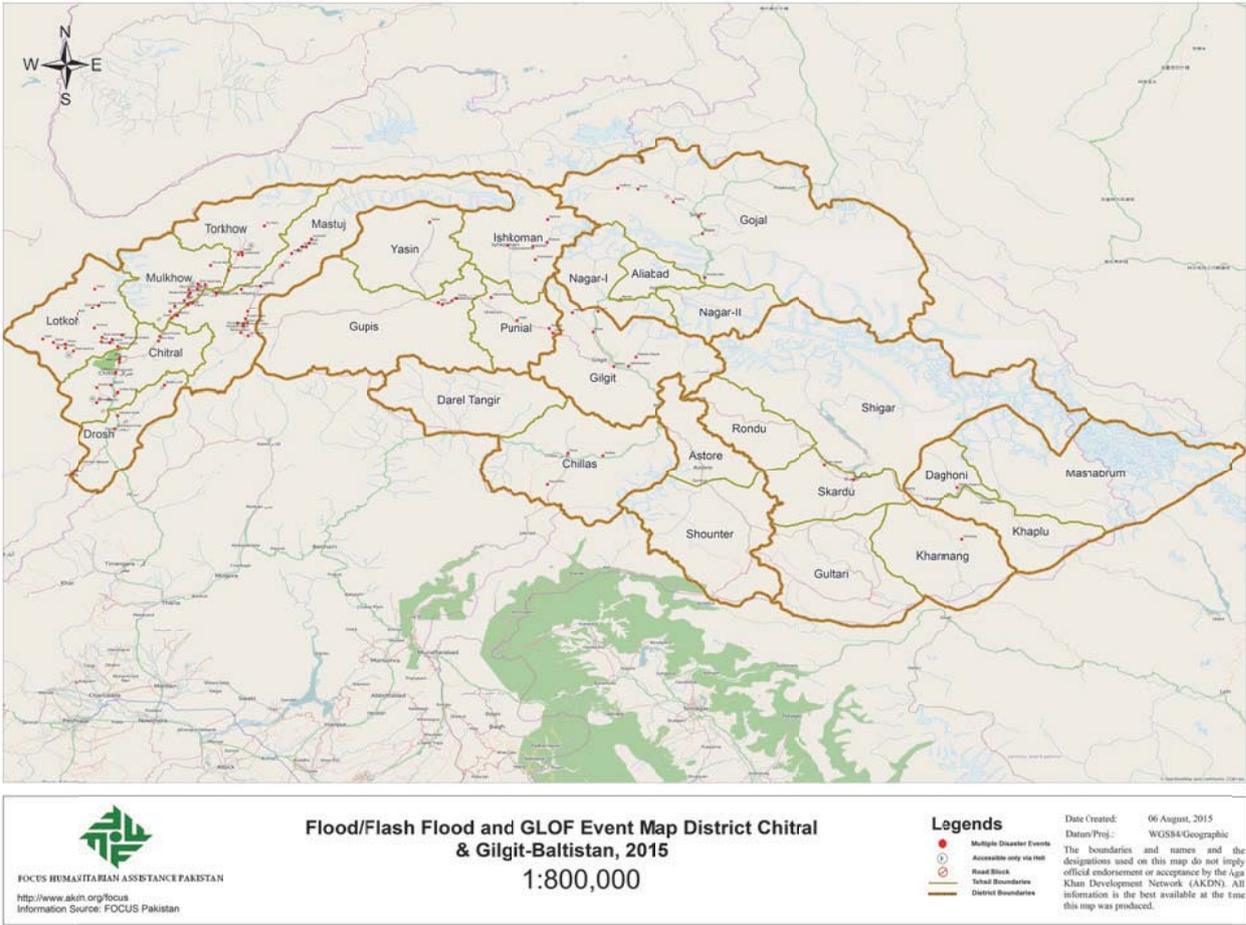
During our discussions it became obvious that some of these preserved areas only do exist on paper without having any impact on the welfare of human beings and nature. The Pamir National Park has operated in such a manner as several participants had observed over the years. Restrictions were reinforced in cases where management interventions were significant with strong impact on local residents. Muzaffar-Ud Din reminded the group of the adverse experiences in Shimshal that suddenly had become mainly lying in Khunjerab National Park that was designed by George Schaller and the Pakistan Government without consultation of local stakeholders. Khunjerab National Park borders on the Tashkurgan National Nature Reserve. The reservations of affected combined mountain farmers in Gojal in general and in Shimshal in particular had led to disapprove and refuse external management plans. In a reconciliation effort that took more than two decades the Khunjerab Villagers Organisation was established and has been acting as a stakeholder organisation for Gojal. The set-up of the Shimshal Nature Trust has been functioning as an overall welfare organisation that allocates income from mountaineering and trekking tourism and trophy-hunting fees to social projects in the village and the trust is managed by the local people themselves. The discussion highlighted the differing perspectives from outsiders, government officials, development actors and donors which often are in stark contrast to the viewpoints of local stakeholders who regard these areas as their heritage, traditional resources, and utilise these areas for a substantial share of the generation of their livelihoods.



*National parks and protected areas in the Pamirian Knot
Design Hermann Kreuzmann 2016; cartography Bernd Hilberer*

Local resources are not only endangered from human interventions, but are exposed to natural hazards in forms of earthquakes, heavy rainfalls causing avalanches, landslides, mudflows, rock-falls that result in loss of habitations, infrastructure and village lands. Nusrat Nasab, representing Focus Humanitarian Assistance from Islamabad, drew our attention to persisting challenges and forms of managing threats. Disaster-preparedness training and early warning systems have helped to mitigate crises and to reduce losses in human lives and valuable assets. Her organisation aims to enhance community-based disaster management by developing people's capacities of handling probable and recurring disasters before events take place, during the process and afterwards. Mitigation shall be achieved by rising

local awareness and through education and training. By incorporating indigenous knowledge into modern techniques of zoning and risk-mapping both bodies of experiences could be used for synergies as a key to risk reduction. In addition to the discussion on preparedness other aspects were addressed such as the challenges for relocation and resettlement from disaster-prone red-zone settlements to other habitations, the detrimental effects of out-migration due to changing lifestyles when the protection of local assets and resources is at stake, the loss of local knowledge due to not recording it. Linked to the question of allocation of required funds the pro and con arguments of early warning systems in terms of necessity, acceptance and practicability were discussed. In general it was broadly acknowledged that operations and trainings have significantly contributed to a higher awareness and preparedness in the field of interpreting available information and organising sound measures of handling these challenging situations.



Source: Focus Humanitarian 2015

3 Education and mobility

From three different perspectives experts who have been involved in education development drew our attention to salient features of the nexus of education and mobility. Robert Middleton took a historical approach to the anchoring of education and learning in the Pa-

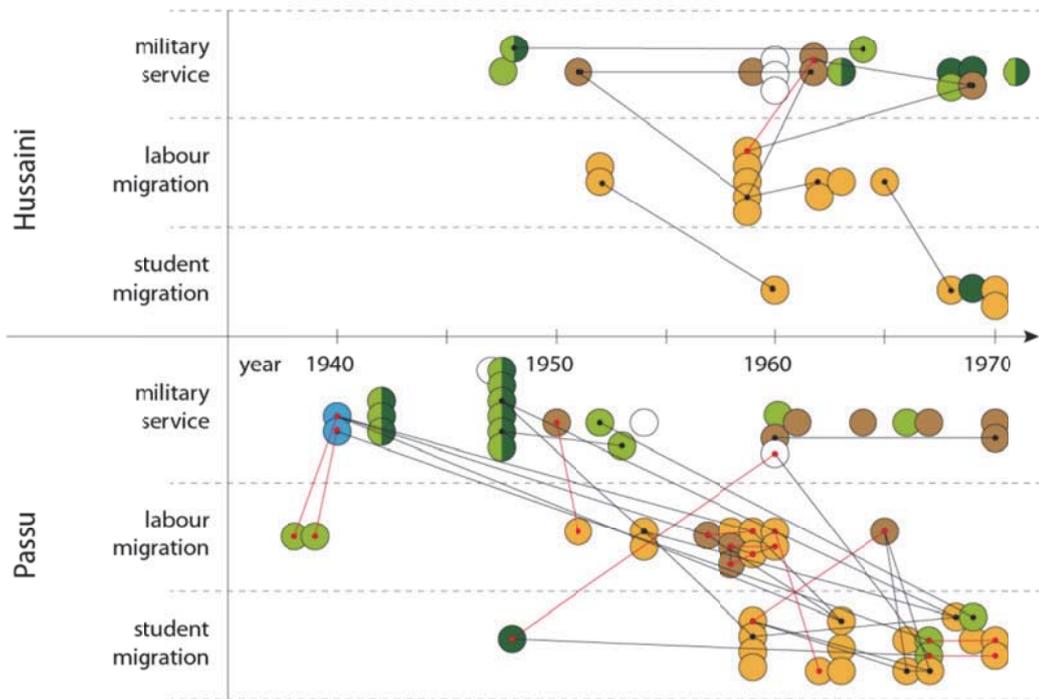
mirs and how it was connected to Ismaili scholarship and cultural expressions. A straightforward and systematic expansion of schooling for everybody took place in Gorno-Badakhshan during the Soviet period which significantly raised the standard of instruction and the quality of education since the 1930s. Many observers have articulated a standpoint that this high level has been maintained since. In his deliberations Robert Middleton emphasised that this is not the case anymore. After a quarter century of independence the quality of school infrastructure, staffing with qualified teachers and maintaining standards of pedagogy have deteriorated to an alarming state. The decline has been accelerated by the high rate of out-migration among the young generation including teachers and students for work in Kazakhstan and Russia. While educational quality has peaked in Tajikistan long ago the neighbouring regions of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan were late-comers in these educational efforts.

Majeed Khan drew our attention to the combined efforts of Pakistan's governmental and private institutions belonging mainly to the Aga Khan Development Network and the local communities in enhancing the standard of education. This full-flung process began in the 1970s and has not reached its peak yet in terms of quality while the qualitative aspects of school attendance and literacy rates are quite impressive for Gilgit-Baltistan, especially in comparison with other areas of Pakistan. The importance that is given in household decision-making to education is reflected in a growing number of Gojali households who have completely relocated to urban destinations where their children can enjoy adequate schooling and better facilities for studying.

The same effects of education could not be recorded for Afghan Badakhshan where the process of introducing female and male schooling has been very slow and bears huge potential. Surprisingly the Tajik minority (*minzu*) - the term Tajik functions as a synonym for all Ismaili people who speak a Pamirian language in China - in Tashkurgan County has always lagged behind other groups and areas in Xinjiang when it comes to formal education. Consequently, in the discussion the effect of boundaries was highlighted. The path-dependent developments were regenerated to different forms of colonial interventions by British, Chinese, Russian/Soviet powers which have had lasting effects until today in design and form of educational institutions.

The mobility aspect was discussed from the perspective of brain drain and out-migration. Although controversial opinions were articulated the overall consensus was that mobility has led to a higher inter-connectedness of Pamirian households with other arenas of economic activities from which local households and individuals benefit.

Early migration from Hussaini and Passu



Destination of migration

- Kashmir and British India
- Gilgit
- GB
- Karachi
- other in Pakistan
- unclear
- close kinship relation
- migration steps of the same person

Data: Based on 48 oral history interviews with former migrants and village elders of Gojal conducted in 2011 and 2012 by the author.

Source: Andreas Benz 2013: *How migrants made their way: The role of pioneering migrants and solidarity networks of the Wakhi of Gojal (Northern Pakistan) in shaping the dynamics of rural-urban migration*. In: *Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series*, No. 11, p. 10

As long as there are no adequate professional positions, niche opportunities for income-generation and possibilities to raise a family based on certain perceptions and standards out-migration will remain a good opportunity for progress and prospects without giving claims and rights to local assets and resources.

From a third perspective Bohdan Krawchenko was painting a socio-economic picture of Tajikistan with not too bright colours. He emphasised on the challenges since independence and especially the additional constraints that are linked to the global economic crisis commencing in 2008. The impact on Tajikistan has been severe, and the role of the University of Central Asia is not limited to provide high quality education in a leading institution for higher learning, but the establishment of three campuses is seen as nuclear cells

for a 'new mountain economy' and for the creation of jobs and employment in the campus vicinities.

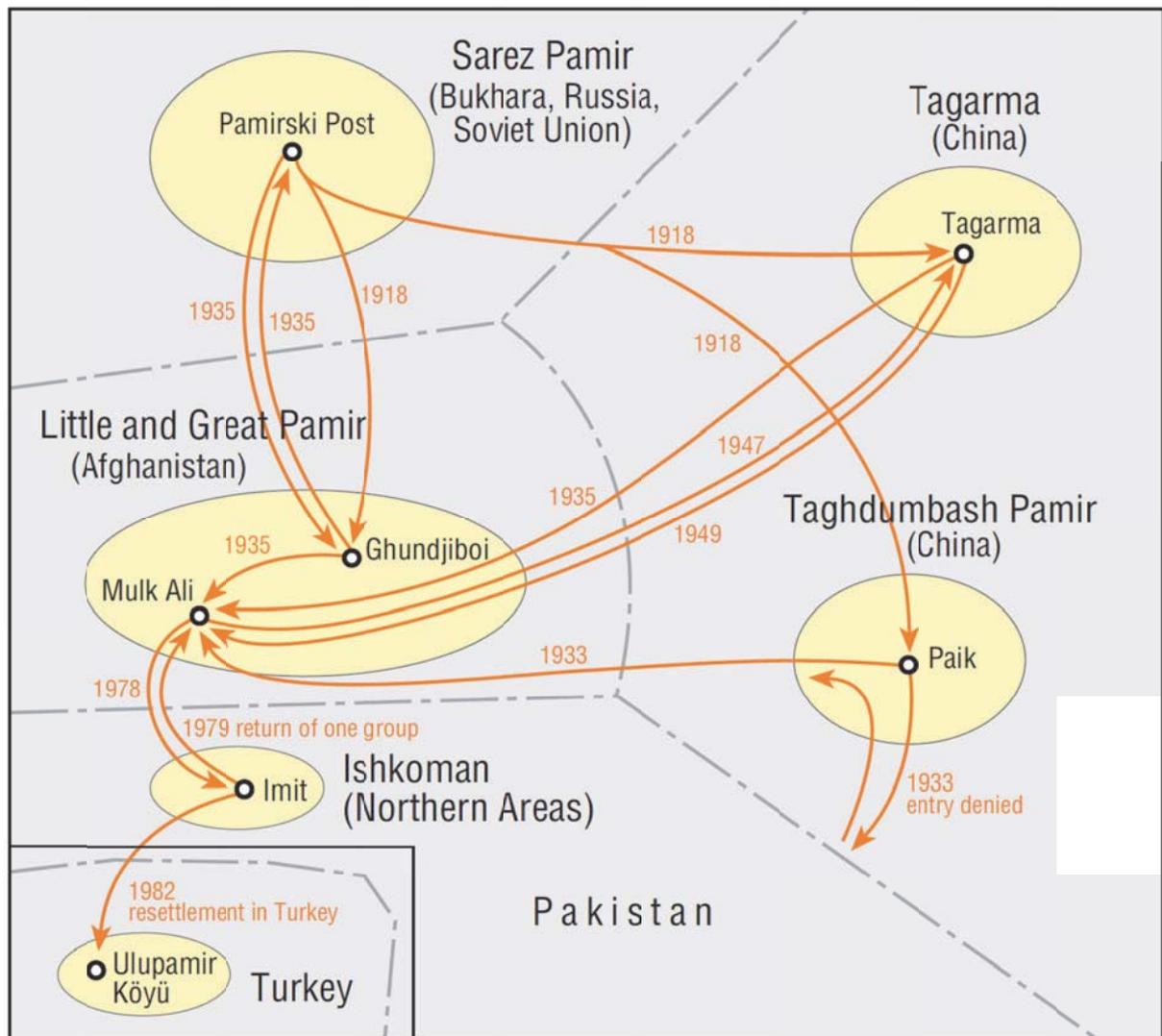


*Information board about the University of Central Asia during the Silk Road Festival in Khorogh
Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 16 July 2010*

4 Keynotes

The final interventions of the first day were reserved for two special talks by contemporary witnesses that were devoted to the Kirghiz community which migrated from the Afghan Pamirs to Eastern Anatolia via Gilgit-Baltistan in the late 1970s and early 1980s. M. Nazif Mohib Shahrani drew the attention to the role of the charismatic leader Haji Rahman Qul and provided an eyewitness account of his encounters and friendship with the leader of the Kirghiz community. He asked the question how the 'last of traditional Turkic frontier khans in 20th century Central Asia' had become the unchallenged head of the community and how his leadership might have affected scholarly debates about authority in pastoralists' communities. As an admirer of this remarkable personality Nazif Shahrani highlighted the qualities of leadership that enabled him to become economically successful and very prosperous. The narrative was embedded in the socio-political Pamirian environment and time frame reaching from the October Revolution until the Saur Revolution. Both events had significant effect on the generation of livelihoods, external trade and communication relations. Haji Rahman Qul's role as the guardian of the Pamirian frontier which was vested upon him by the Afghan King Zahir Shah enabled him to find a special niche for his community and followership. The hiatus was the exodus in 1978 into exile across the passes of the

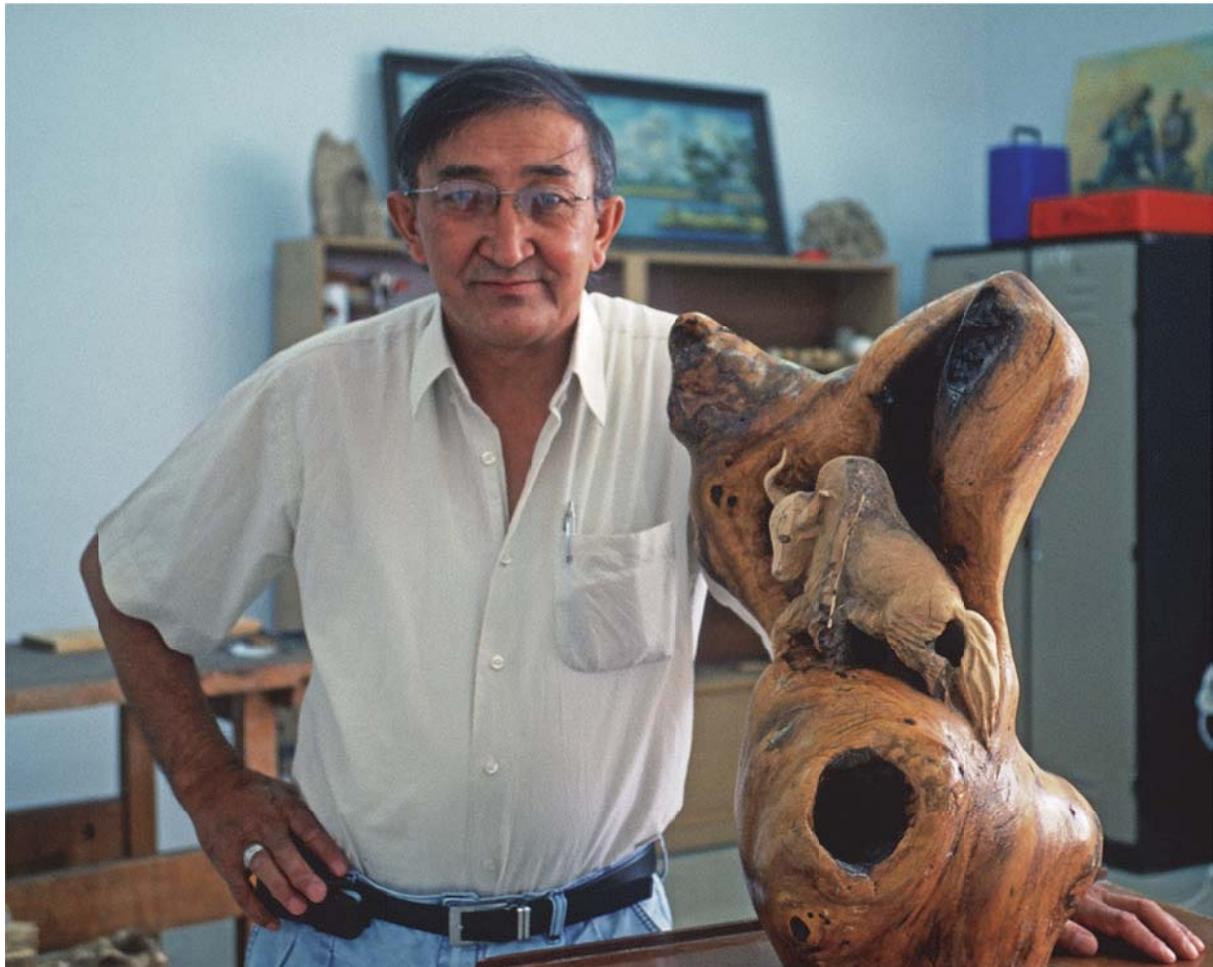
Hindukush into northern Pakistan. His anticipation of a changing socio-political landscape motivated this bold move which challenged the whole community to adapt to changed lifestyles and major losses of wealth. After four years in Pakistan the majority of the community moved to Eastern Anatolia where Haji Rahman Qul passed away in 1990. He had provided the required leadership in times of major challenges and constraints. Negotiations with various governments were not successful until the Turkish government provided a safe haven.



The movements of Haji Rahman Qul across borders during his lifetime
 Source: Hermann Kreutzmann 2015: *Pamirian Crossroads*. Wiesbaden, p. 335

Ekber Kutlu, son of Haji Rahman Qul, was the second eyewitness and as a family member provided an account how the 250 households fared after their arrival in Turkey. Especially impressive in his talks was the story how the first and second generations managed to adapt to Turkish lifestyles and how the connectedness with Turkish society has spread beyond the village of Ulupamir Köyü since they settled there. The young generations has tak-

an advantage of the opportunities offered by the educational system and by economic enterprises; they have been successful and impressive record was mentioned. Ekber Kutlu was full of praise for the good living conditions, the access to educational facilities, the comparatively supportive health, social welfare and security system. His assessment was that the overall situation now was better than in the Afghan Pamirs where a number of Kirghiz households have remained and are making all efforts for their survival there. Both lectures have brought back memories of the better times in the Afghan Pamirs which are always on the mind when it comes to fertile pastures, huge flocks of healthy livestock and independent lifestyles in a remote mountain location.



*Ekber Kutlu with a yak sculpture in his studio in Van
Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 23 August 2005*

5 Experiences with regional development

Regional development has a number of actors and protagonists. Three viewpoints were presented. Bernard Repond contributed the perspective from the bridge-builder between donor and implementer by making a strong argument for the idea that it is only possible to convince individual and private donors in his home country to contribute to local development projects if he can assure them that his local partners are honest and trustworthy.

The success of initiatives such as 'Pamirs Bridges' which is literally building bridges might be questioned when indications about misled funds, corruption and even cultural differences in comprehending each others' responsibilities lead to donor fatigue. Bernard Repond called for continued efforts in further cooperation and mutual learning and urged all participants not to forget the people who are continuing to live in Little and Great Pamir.



*Office of the Kizil Robot Jamuat administration in Murghab District, Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan
Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 15 July 2013*

From his perspective as an employee in the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme Amin Beg drew the attention towards the bottlenecks and hindrances under which regional development takes place in the Hindukush, Karakoram and Pamirs. The undecided constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan within Pakistan and under international law, security challenges due to recurrent detrimental violent activities and questions of border permeability are shaping the relationship of an area with governmental and non-governmental institutions when it comes to a fair share in resources and/or the allocation of development funds.

Gilgit-Baltistan has undergone significant changes since in the early 1970s hereditary rule was abolished and new institutions and cooperative efforts have filled the power vacuum. The opening of the Karakoram Highway as a trans-boundary artery for communication, exchange and trade as well as an internal link of the mountainous regions with down country Pakistan has stimulated an enhanced socio-economic transformation. The activities of the Aga Khan Development Network have begun at a crucial time for the region. One of the

biggest challenge for regional development are the donor-driven agendas which often require the application for funding certain packages that have been invented and perceived by outsiders and which not necessarily serve local needs or fit in an overall strategy for rural uplift. In this respect government development funds and packages serve a more holistic demand than external donors would provide who often depend on fancy developmental fashions and frequently change their agenda.



*Community organisation has managed to maintain the 4,600 metre high pastures in the Shimshal Pamiir by shepherdesses who spend five months away from the village
Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 15 July 2013*

Muzaffar Ud Din illustrated the case of Shimshal in vivid terms and demonstrated how a community that has strong binding forces can achieve something that no outsider would have expected to be possible. The example of the Shimshal Road that was constructed as a unique community effort over a span of 15 years is outstanding in terms of determination and resilience. He underlined the local potentialities that have contributed to an impressive transformation within one generation. The speed of this significant change causes new challenges on the community, household and personal levels. The general discussion made clear that there are eminent examples of communal cooperation, but at the same time there are sufficient cases in which intra-villages adversaries and competition have hampered to work on common issues. In many cases the success of a development package depends on bringing the appropriate idea to the receptive personalities that have the authority to convince a community in such an endeavour.

6 Knowledge generation and heritage preservation

In Namadgut, Rajon Ishkashim Odinamamad Mirzoev has initiated a museum and learning centre for the preservation of Tajik Wakhan's cultural heritage. The location was well selected at a crossroads where from ancient times until today cultural artefacts have survived. The museum concept follows the idea to collect locally found items, the stories linked to them and to inform the interested public about the local usage of tools and utensils.



*Ruin of Zangibar Siaposh fortress near Yamchun, Rajon Ishkashim.
Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 18 July 2010*

Following the recitation of his poem 'I was a shepherd, I am a shepherd' Nazir Ahmed Bulbul shared in his capacity as principal of Al-Amyr Model School in Gulmit with the participants the school's efforts not only to promote Wakhi as local vernacular, but to integrate Wakhi language classes into the regular curriculum. The experiences so far have shown that there is a great response to those classes that are embedded in a concept which draws on rejuvenating traditional dresses, games and cultural heritage as well as inventing new forms of bonding, cultural identity expressions and assigning students with local research that is rooting their interest in their place of residence. The activities initiated in the school blend well with measures implemented by the Ismaili local council that promotes community mobilisation in various fields such as social welfare, economic planning, cultural events and heritage preservation.



*Silk Road Festival in Khorogh City Park
Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 16 July 2010*

The Pamir Archive Collection of Markus Hauser in Winterthur operates in different fields. The repository has merged a growing collection of historical and contemporary maps, books, postcards that were published mainly since the 19th century. The material has been processed and preserved for future usage. His mission is to make it accessible for academic research and public interest, thus providing a hub for Pamirian knowledge. Markus Hauser himself has prepared and published a number of Pamir-related high quality maps and has expanded his collection to historical texts from various languages and graphic designs which he would like to make accessible, readable and to be offered in translated versions to scholars, universities and the interested public.

7 Closing and remarks on future prospects

Yuri Badenkov took the task of summarising the main ideas and findings during two days of discussion and exchange. When looking at the Pamirian Crossroads he emphasised its role as part of the Great Asian Mountain Arch and as part of the global considerations on climate change and nature conservation in relation to sustainable mountain development. In this respect the connectivity to global programmes and agendas was highlighted for the Pamirian Knot. In comparison with existing bridges across physical obstacles and human-made boundaries the potential in terms of biosphere reserves was highlighted. For the Pamirian Crossroads in particular Yuri Badenkov made the link to the Silk Road Economic Belt

initiative which is named 'one belt, one road' in brief. Since 2013 the new Chinese development doctrine is drawing long corridors across Asia and perceives them as the future arenas for regional development and trans-boundary exchange. In this context mountain researchers are challenged to address major issues that are connected with such grand initiatives. What does that mean when these corridors of roads and communication lines cross national parks and bisect biosphere reserves? How does infrastructure development for the connection of dynamic growth poles in the lowlands and urbanised centres affect the mountain areas that are traversed? Do these mountain areas with low population density and limited economic potential as consumers and producers of tradable goods have a role and share in the new dynamism? More socio-cultural and economic-political questions could be raised that are addressing pressing and vital issues for the future of High Asian mountain regions beyond nature preservation and resource utilisation. Consequently, a new initiative was started by the Mountain Societies Research Institute in the University of Central Asia, the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Science, and the Centre of Development Studies of the Freie Universitaet Berlin titled "The Silk Roads crossing the Mountains of Central Asia. Ancient routes and new challenges in times of global change". The meeting is scheduled for September 2017 in Khorog.



The Pamirian Knot, a cross-border region between Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and Tajikistan
 Source: Hermann Kreutzmann 2016: Pamir or Pamirs - Perceptions and interpretations. In: Kreutzmann, H. and T. Watanabe (eds.): Mapping transition in the Pamirs. Cham, p. 17

Monica Bulaj

Thematic session I: Setting the stage - The hidden light of Afghanistan.



The valley of the Panj close to Ishkashim where a bridge allows crossing the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The wide valley floor merges with the flat scree slopes on which the settlements and village lands of Tajik Ishkashim and Afghan Sultan Ishkashim are located. Photograph © Monica Bulaj April 2010

Seven months of walking and hitchhiking, of riding on trucks and horses and yaks. Without ever being 'embedded', but sharing the hunger, fear and weariness of Afghans. Living with Afghan families and staying in their homes. From the Iranian border to the Wakhan border with China, deep in snow, with a notebook and a Leica. Ready for the irreducible intimacy of each new encounter.

Balkh, Pansher, Samangan, Herat, Kabul, Jalalabad, Badakshan, Pamir Khord, Khost. Zig-zagging constantly in order to avoid the Taliban and bandits, following the complex geography of security that all Afghans know so well.

I wanted to see things as they really were: not through the bullet-proof glass of an armoured vehicle, not as an embedded journalist, but as an Afghan sees things on the street. I wanted to feel people's fear, to be as vulnerable as they were. And without ever losing hope that all this will someday end.

Kabul, at night, in winter. Its archipelagos of illegal villages, without sewers or electricity, where children get up at 4 in the morning and walk long distances to fetch water in heavy water cans. The Sufi ceremonies, the magic rituals that make up for the lack of medicine, the villages full of opium addicts because there is nothing else to kill the pain. Brides sold for debts; the male hammams, or bathhouses; the 21st century Afghan warrior body-cult in gyms; the new epidemic of self-immolation; the anti-personnel mines that continue to increase exponentially instead of decreasing.

What do we know about all this? What do we know about the clandestine Shiah rites, or the death threats nailed at night by the Taliban, on the doors of those who dare to send their daughters to school? Who talks about the survivors of kidnappings - the country's most thriving industry? What do we know about the juvenile prisons where female adolescents are incarcerated after escaping from forced marriages? Or the shelters, where these young women seek refuge from the revenge of their clans or their own families?

Who cares about the Kuchis, the last nomads, the very lowest of the low: without pasturelands, reduced to miserable existences, living in the cities in squalid hovels or tents, where half the newborn babies do not survive the winter? But all Afghans are in danger of becoming Kuchis, a displaced and dispossessed people, perched on their bundled belongings, waiting for an escape that never comes.

Yet, in spite of all the horror and misery, the fear and degradation, the Afghan people still laugh and play passionately, make music, and dance and sing joyously. Here is the smiling barber who interpreted Osama bin Laden in a TV series. Here a small neighbourhood theatre full of serious-looking Afghan men who are betting on the outcome of a 'battle royal' between opposing armies of baby chicks. And here other men laugh and joke while watching the ritual camel-fights.

The families of Taliban who are fighting on the frontlines, the village chiefs who are now repentant killers, the children who had to behead a hostage as their initiation rite, the nomad girls working as prostitutes, the hopeless fight of the Kirghizians on the arid mountains of the North.

And the female continent. Women: their dreams, sexuality, emotional geography, expectations, their fight against depression and their striving for self-fulfilment in a repressive tribal context.

In the 'bright garden' of Afghanistan, I followed its paths instinctively, finding centres of hope in the most hopeless places, in the darkest depths of despair.

Kabul, 2012



*Agricultural fields are tilled in the vicinity of Ishkashim. The ploughing takes place in spring. Only a single crop can be cultivated here, therefore there is no pressure on the timing as the plant growth period is sufficiently long for the ripening of the main crops - wheat (*Triticum aestivum*) and barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) on irrigated fields. Photograph © Monica Bulaj April 2010*



*The tomb at Bozai Gumbaz is an important stage along the main route between Sarhad-e Wakhan and the Little Pamir. From here the northeastern route turns to Chakmaktin Köl, the southeastern to the Wakhjir valley and pass, the western route towards Langar and Sarhad-e Wakhan as well as towards Irshad-e Win. Strategically this place commands the major access routes and was selected by Soviet troops during their ten-year-long occupation for a military post. On the right a line of corroded barbed wire marks the outer limits of that post since they left in 1989.
Photograph © Monica Bulaj April 2010*



Photograph © Monica Bulaj



Photograph © Monica Bulaj



Metal water kettles and pots are prime household tools for preparation of the basic liquid food item: saltish milk tea (širčóy). The elevated platform (dildung) contains an opening to the fire below in a 'tanduri' style mud oven. The inner mud walls are used for the preparation of the staple food flat breads (dildungi). The Wakhi daughter-in-law is responsible for the provision in this house in Sarhad-e Wakhan. Photograph © Monica Bulaj April 2010



Photograph © Monica Bulaj



Photograph © Monica Bulaj



Photograph © Monica Bulaj

Thematic session II: Challenges for resource maintenance and utilisation¹

The issue of transboundary mountain preservation raised by Yi Shaoliang posed question of regional cooperation in environmental conservation across the Pamirs, as well as induced debates about the perspectives and usefulness of ICIMOD's policy of establishing protected areas across national borders. These may take the form of National Parks, a Western concept that has invited widespread critique. As an idea of outsiders that not necessarily take into account the aspirations of local populations the creation of such areas is highly contested. Especially the tendency to ignore local knowledge and local resource utilisation in those areas presents problems for people who depend on these resources for their livelihoods. As such, nature protection often takes precedence over the protection human lives and livelihoods and gives rise to local resistance. This general problem of integrating local stakeholders and local knowledge is compounded by the mandate of ICIMOD that does not represent the entire Pamirs. Critically, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have no representation in ICIMOD so that transboundary nature protection will indeed be confronted with added problems.

In his paper that was written in collaboration with Wang Jinniu (Chengdu Institute of Biology) and Wu Ning (ICIMOD), however, Yi Shaoliang attempted to summarise much of the existing Chinese-language literature about conservation and development in the area of the Eastern Pamirs. This provides an invaluable view on an otherwise difficult to access body of scholarship and shows the high attraction the region has had for Chinese scientific work in both the natural and social sciences.

The talk by Nusrat Nasab introduced the work of Focus Humanitarian Assistance, which is part of the Aga Khan Network. She elaborated on the contexts in which Focus works, and the means they employ to address issues of Disaster Risk Reduction in remote mountain villages of Northern Pakistan. Her account concentrated on the challenges and perspectives and the lessons learned for further engagement in terms of supporting community based disaster management systems. This was expanded upon in the discussion around the virtues of community risk mappings and the necessity to ground humanitarian work in an apprehension of local knowledge systems. These in turn must form the basis of local early warning systems that enable local communities and households to anticipate local disasters from natural hazards and mitigate their effects. However, the challenge for building and supporting such systems is presented as one of enabling infrastructural resilience that cannot be established by local communities alone but requires high investments from outside

¹ Based on minutes recorded by Marina Heyink and Tim Polster

agencies. This is true especially in light of growing population pressures in Gilgit-Baltistan that led to the increased construction of buildings in areas with a higher exposure to natural hazards.



*Bulunkul: Desert, steppe and arid conditions leave marginal spaces for Kirghiz pastoralism that are used in a challenging environment above 3,600 metres altitude
Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 15 October 2008*

A review of Chinese researches on conservation and development in Eastern Pamirs

1 Introduction

The Eastern Pamirs, or the Chinese Pamirs, include the entire Taxkorgan County, part of Aketao County and Quqia County. It borders Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and links with the Tianshan, Kunlun, Karakoram and Hindu Kush Mountains. The total area of the Chinese Pamirs is around 30,000km² and more than half of it is under protected area management.

Most of the literature about the Pamir region is in English, Russian, Chinese, and to a lesser degree German languages. However, due to reasons of language, the manifold Chinese research is hardly known or recognised by the non-Chinese speaking scholars.

In order to provide an overview of Chinese literature in this field for a wider audience this paper tries to briefly summarise the relevant work on the Chinese Pamirs in the fields of flora, fauna, climate change and impacts, socioeconomic characteristics, ethnography, natural resources and environments, so as to provide a small window for non-Chinese speakers to learn about the existing knowledge in the region.

2 A typology of Chinese literature on the Eastern Pamirs

This review covers the peer-reviewed journal articles, theses and dissertations for Master and Ph.D. degrees and book publications based on original field studies or analysis of original data. They were identified by searching through the National Science Library, Chinese Academy of Sciences (<http://www.ias.ac.cn>) and the China Network for Knowledge and Information (<http://www.cnki.net>) using the key words "Taxkorgan, Kashgar, Pamirs, Kunlun Mountains, Marco Polo Sheep, Ibex, South Xinjiang". All the identified documents were again screened for their relevance to the topics of conservation and development in the Pamirs or Taxkorgan with the aim to select only literature that has a direct reference to these areas. However, articles about the western Karakoram were also included in case they had a reference to Taxkorgan. Altogether, 113 journal articles, 17 M.Sc. thesis, 4 Ph.D. thesis and 15 books have been identified with high relevance to the Chinese Pamirs and parts of the Karakoram, especially, Taxkorgan. These have been classified in broad subject areas as displayed in Table 1 for an overview.

Table 1: Overview: A typology of Chinese literature on the Eastern Pamirs (own design)

Dimensions	No. of publications, subjects and exemplary references
Botany & vegetation	Total: 43 Including 21 articles, 11 M.Sc. thesis from Shihezi University, and 1 survey report, on general survey; floral distribution and plant biodiversity; and taxonomic studies of Cruciferae, Pedicularis spp.; Leguminosae; Oxytropis spp.; Gramineae; Compositae; Astereae; Sympelalae; Ranunculaceae; Astragalus spp.; Poligonaceae; Rosaceae; Archichlamydae; Sympeladae; Scrophulariaceae; Gentianaceae; Carex family; Bryophytes. Example: Qiu (2005); Xu (2011)
Wildlife & conservation	Total: 18 15 articles, 1 Ph.D. dissertation, and 2 books, on Faunal resources and distribution; Population size, habitats and status of Marco Polo sheep (<i>Ovis ammon polii</i>), Ibex, snow Leopard, blue sheep, fish resources 12 of them have a focus on Taxorgan County or Taxkorgan Nature Reserve. Examples: Gong et al. 2007; Yu et al. (2009); Wang (2012)
Sociology & Development	Total: 23 Including 12 articles, 10 books and 1 Ph.D. dissertation, on Physical features of Tajiks; Iodine deficiency; Tajik society, gender relations, religion, and tourism, disaster and risk management, and explorations of local niche products. Examples: Liu (2014); Luo & Zhao. (2004); Qurban (2011); Wang (2014)
Geology & Hydrology	Total : 23 Including 20 articles, 1 M.Sc. thesis, and 2 books, on rock formation, tectonic movement, geological structures; mineral resources and river runoff, and hydropower potential. 13 having a focus on Taxkorgan. Examples: Mansirik et al. (2008); Li (2013)
Climate & change	Total:23 Including 20 articles, 2 M.Sc. thesis, 1 Ph.D. thesis There are 15 on overall Xinjiang, 4 on South Xinjiang, 2 on Tarim River Basin, 1 on Kashgar Prefecture, and 1 on Taxorgan and its close proximity. Temperature & precipitation (11): Snowfall & spatial distribution (6); Surface CO ₂ /H ₂ O(1); and Extreme Events(5) Examples: Abasi et al. (2012); Liu et al. (2008); Tao et al.(2014)
Climate change impacts	Total: 19 Including 15 articles, 3 M.Sc. thesis and 1 Ph.D. thesis, dealing climate change impacts on general environment (2), sandstorm occurrences (3), agriculture (6), water resources & glaciers (6), Frozen soil/Frost(2). By area, 10 on overall Xinjiang, 7 on South Xinjiang, and 2 for Pamirs. Representatives: Guo & Shi (2008); Yang (2012); Liu et al. (2008)

2.1 Botany & biodiversity

Modern botanical and vegetative studies (Xu 2007, Xinjiang Survey Team of Chinese Academy Sciences 1979) on the Chinese Pamirs and Karakoram started from the 1950s onwards. Systematic botanical studies have been made by survey teams from different institutions of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (in 1959, 1974, and 1978), the Xinjiang General Bureau of Agricultural Reclamation (in 1978) as well as individual researchers from different universities and research institutions of China.

From 1987 to 1992, scientists from China (Chinese Academy of Sciences and other universities), France and Pakistan made a joint expedition for Karakoram-Kunlunshan (including Taxkorgan and parts of the Chinese Pamirs) that focused on four thematic areas: regional geological evolution, landmass uplift and environmental changes, floristic composition and biological resources, and natural environment and spatial differentiation. The survey resulted in a book series on all these different areas.

Supported by the National Science Fund of China (NSFC), Prof. Yan Ping and his team from Shihezi University has made consistent and systematic studies on the plant floristics and taxonomy of the Chinese Pamirs and Taxkorgan area of the Karakoram through extensive field trips in the past twenty years (Qiu 2005; Xu 2011; Yang et al. 2008). The associated scientists are the major contributors of papers, theses and dissertations in this field over the recent years. According to their findings, the Chinese Pamirs have 953 species from 303 genera and 59 families of higher plants while the Karakoram region has 659 species from 205 genera and 47 such families.

Surveys on rangeland resources in the Chinese Pamirs (Su 2013) also started from the 1950s. The most recent and intensive survey commenced in 1979 and lasted to late 1980s. The survey was organised by the central government, implemented by livestock departments of the provinces with technical support from the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Agriculture Science. This large scale survey resulted in the development and publication of the 1:1 million Chinese Rangeland Map, Grassland Resources and Plant Resources on Chinese Grassland.

2.2 Fauna studies & conservation

Apart from the aforesaid Karakoram-Kunlunshan Comprehensive Survey, several major species-wise surveys of fauna in the Pamirs have been developed in the past 30 years, with a particular focus on the Marco polo sheep, ibex and snow leopard. Out of the 15 articles, nine are related to Marco polo sheep, six related to argali and two on ibex. There is one

doctoral dissertation focusing on the snow leopard. Taxkorgan Nature Reserve is the focal area, but several studies covered the whole Chinese Pamirs.

In 1985 and 1986, George Schaller et al. (1987), surveyed the large mammals, in the newly established Taxkorgan Nature Reserve and its adjacent area. Their estimation of the number of Marco Polo sheep living in the Kalaqiku Valley as their major area of distribution amounts to be less than 150.

Gong et al. (2007) from CAS studied the population size, distribution area and habitat availability of the Marco sheep in the Taxkorgan Nature Reserve. Their study indicated that Marco Polo sheep were distributed only in 25.29% of the total area of the reserve and its total available suitable habitat is only 484km² or 3.03% of the total reserve area. The estimated the total number of Marco Polo Sheep to be around 1,500-1,700.

Ablimit et al. (2010) surveyed the population of Marco Polo sheep and ibex in the Muztag area in 2009 and reported that the 708.5km² of studied area had a population density of 1.44 ind./ km² for Marco Polo sheep and 0.558 ind./ km² for ibex.

The most systematic study on the Marco Polo sheep covering the whole Chinese Pamirs was carried out by the Northwest Institute for Endangered Wildlife (Yu et al. 2009) from 1997 to 2007 through a project funded by the State Forestry Administration of China. Their study suggested that the Marco Polo sheep in China was mainly distributed in a very narrow strip close to the Chinese border with neighbouring Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (mainly in Taxkorgan and Aktao counties). They developed the first map of Marco Polo sheep's distribution in China and estimated that the Marco Polo sheep's total population in China to be around 3000.

Wang Jun (2012) studied the ecological niche and population size of the snow leopard in Taxkorgan Nature Reserve from 2009 to 2011, using Infrared camera tracking. Within in a 41 km² area (located within Maryang Township), three to six snow leopards were captured by the cameras, indicating a density of 7.14-14.29 individuals/km² within the surveyed area. In the same study, he also found that 24.6% of the food of the snow leopards was from domestic animals such as yaks, goats and sheep.

All the studies pointed to issues of habitat shrinking and degradation due to infrastructure development and grazing and conflicts between wildlife and domestic animals and the need for transboundary collaboration for effective conservation.

2.3 Sociology & development

The number of articles based on original socio-economic studies is rather limited. Most of the articles in this respect are more general discussions on development issues (technologies, policies, strategies or plans). However, there are a few monographs based on well-designed field surveys of the Tajik communities in Taxkorgan County (Liu 2014; Wang 2014; Luo & Zhao 2004; Qurban 2011).

As a part of the research programme on the economic development of the ethnic minorities initiated by the China Nationality University, Wang and his team developed a detailed study of the Tuo Ge Lun Xia Village of Taxkorgan County at three levels: the village level, household level and individuals (Wang 2014). Their work described in a detailed manner the demography (1430 people), village history, agricultural production and farming systems and their changes, livestock production, forestry, business and cultural customs of the village.

Another similar study was conducted by Luo & Zhao (2004) of Yunnan University, focusing on Tezlaph Village (165 households and 1105 people) of Taxkorgan. This study was part of the University's research programme on Villages of Ethnic Minorities of China. The study also focused on the village history, its utilisation of local natural resources, demography, economy, social organisation and village politics, as well as marriage and family, legal and social control systems, language culture, education, customs, science and technology, public health and religious practice. In contrast to the study of Wang (2014) which took a more descriptive approach, Luo & Zhao (2004)'s work used a comprehensive analytical approach and focused on an analysis of changes in village society.

Against the background of the Chinese government initiative to relocate people for conservation or development purposes, Liu (2014) studied the migration and adaptation of the Tajik communities. Up to July 2005, over 393 households and 2,071 people from over 15 townships were relocated to a newly established town called Abati. Liu (2014) studied in detail how the newly settled people culturally adapt to the new physical environment and its ecological context, their farming practices, living surroundings and community environments.

Qurban (2011) was without doubt the most prolific scholar on Chinese Tajiks. Born in Taxkorgan, Qurban is a professor at Xinjiang University and has over 20 publications on different aspects of the Tajik communities in Chinese Pamirs.

2.4 Climate change & adaptation

Literature on climate change, impact and adaptation in the Pamirs is mostly based on the analysis of the measured data on climatic factors over the past 50-60 years. Very few articles on impacts and adaptation were based on field studies.

Abasi et al. (2012)'s analysis of the climate variations in Kashgar region during 1960-2010 is the one most relevant to the Pamir region. Using meteorological data from five stations, including the one in Taxkorgan, they analysed changes of the major climatic variables in the past 50 years. Their analysis showed that there was a significant warming across the prefecture. The annual mean, the maximum and minimum temperatures have all increased over the period. In the plains, the increase is more visible in winter while in mountains areas such as Taxkorgan the increase is more visible during autumn season. Rainfall also increases over the period, albeit more in mountains than in the plains. Taxkorgan witnessed a steady increase from 71.2mm to 96.4mm per year, mostly occurring during the summer months.

According to Liu et al. (2008), there was an increase in both mean annual temperature ($0.24^{\circ}\text{C}/10\text{a}$) and precipitation ($3.59\text{mm}/10\text{a}$) in Taxkorgan from 1961 to 2006. Temperature increase is more significant during Spring ($0.23^{\circ}\text{C}/10\text{a}$) and Autumn seasons ($0.4^{\circ}\text{C}/10\text{a}$), whereas precipitation increase is most significant during Summer ($4.27\text{mm}/10\text{a}$).

Liu et al. (2008) analysed relationships between temperature and precipitations changes in Taxkorgan and the runoff changes at the Yarkang River using the climate data from Taxkorgan Meteorological Station and the hydro data from the Kaqun Hydrological Station downstream. Temperature was identified as the main factor causing runoff changes in the downstream river (Liu et. al.2008). The correlation coefficient of temperature and runoff was 0.81 while that between annual precipitation and runoff was -0.57. When precipitation was equal, the runoff increased with rising temperature; when temperature was equal, the runoff decreased with an increase in precipitation.

Yang (2012) analysed the four-decade changes of the 1,253 glaciers in the eastern Pamirs during 1972-2011 and their relationship to climate change. During the study period, 680 glaciers have retreated, four disappeared completely and 16 advanced. Summer temperature and annual precipitation have been determined as the two key factors controlling glacier change in the area.

There exists a lot of Chinese literature on the impacts of climate change on agriculture. However, almost all of them refer to rather general discussions (Guo & Shi 2008) and there

is a clear dearth of field-based studies on climate change and its effects on local communities and their adaptation.

3 Gaps & ICIMOD planned surveys

There exist altogether insufficient field-based studies on local climate change impacts and adaptation strategies, as well as on thematic development issues, such as poverty, gender relations, value chain analysis, land tenure relations and land use, and local participation in resources management at community levels. There is also not enough information on pasture resources and their uses by domestic animals and wildlife. However, such information is very important for policy making in conservation and management. Furthermore, no Chinese literature was identified that dealt with issues of transboundary cooperation for wildlife conservation.

Against this background, ICIMOD is currently planning to work with its country partners in Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and Tajikistan to carry out a rapid survey over the course of 2016 and 2017 about the range resources and uses in the Hindu Kush Karakoram-Pamir landscape. The survey will collect information on available pasture resources, seasonal uses of the resources by domestic animals and wildlife and the contribution of livestock management to the household economy. It is hoped that such information will provide a solid scientific basis for planning and implementing country-wise reserve management activities and promoting transboundary collaborations.

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The work of FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance

Focus Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS) was established in 1998 in Pakistan, with a vision to save lives, reduce suffering and create resilience in communities prone to man-made and natural disasters. FOCUS Pakistan is the lead implementing agency for humanitarian assistance of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), and draws upon extensive experience in disaster management and response. During its initial years, FOCUS Pakistan hosted a large influx of Afghan refugees through camp management, providing food, shelter, education and skill development programmes. With support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), FOCUS facilitated the return of approximately 43,000 Afghans to their home country. FOCUS Pakistan's programmatic areas include

- Disaster Risk Reduction - community based disaster risk management, mapping and assessment, provision of stockpiles and early warning system
- Climate Change Adaptation
- Emergency Humanitarian Response and Relief

FOCUS has carried out over 1,600 village based mapping and assessment in its program areas in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

The Pamir region is considered to be rich with natural resources i.e. glaciers, lakes, peaks and mountains, pastures, mineral and medicinal plants - nationally and internationally the Pamir region has been viewed as vitally and strategically important because of its rich natural assets and unique opportunity in the future socio-economic development of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. However, due to climate change related issues possibly leading to resource degradation and increased environmental fragility, its isolation and remoteness, lack of basic services including health and education facilities and infrastructure, scarcity of land and security issues, many areas of the Pamirs have remained ignored and underdeveloped. In addition, out-migration and a resulting brain drain from the Pamir region can be seen as another critically significant issue.

It is an open question if the Pamir mountain communities will directly benefit from mega projects such as the China Pakistan Economic Corridor project (CPEC). The people in Gilgit-Baltistan for instance are quite uncertain about the possible benefits for their own livelihoods of such a huge international endeavour. The existing feasibility and environmental studies are not made public yet and there remains serious doubt as to the local effects of the CPEC.

Box: The work of Focus in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

The DRR work carried out by Focus encompasses the components of Hazard Vulnerability and Risk Assessments (HVRA), Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) and School Safety Programmes (SFP). In 1999, FOCUS Pakistan helped to pioneer the concept of Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM). The CBDRM aims to build upon local knowledge and technical skills that enable and empower communities to cope with, prepare for, prevent, mitigate, respond to, and quickly recover from natural and man-made disasters in urban and rural areas. Over the years, FOCUS Pakistan has trained over 36,000 community volunteers (over 50% women) as first responders under an institutionalised structure called Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). Emergency stockpiles with items such as tents, blankets, search tools and first aid packages are also provided at the community level to strengthen local response capacities.

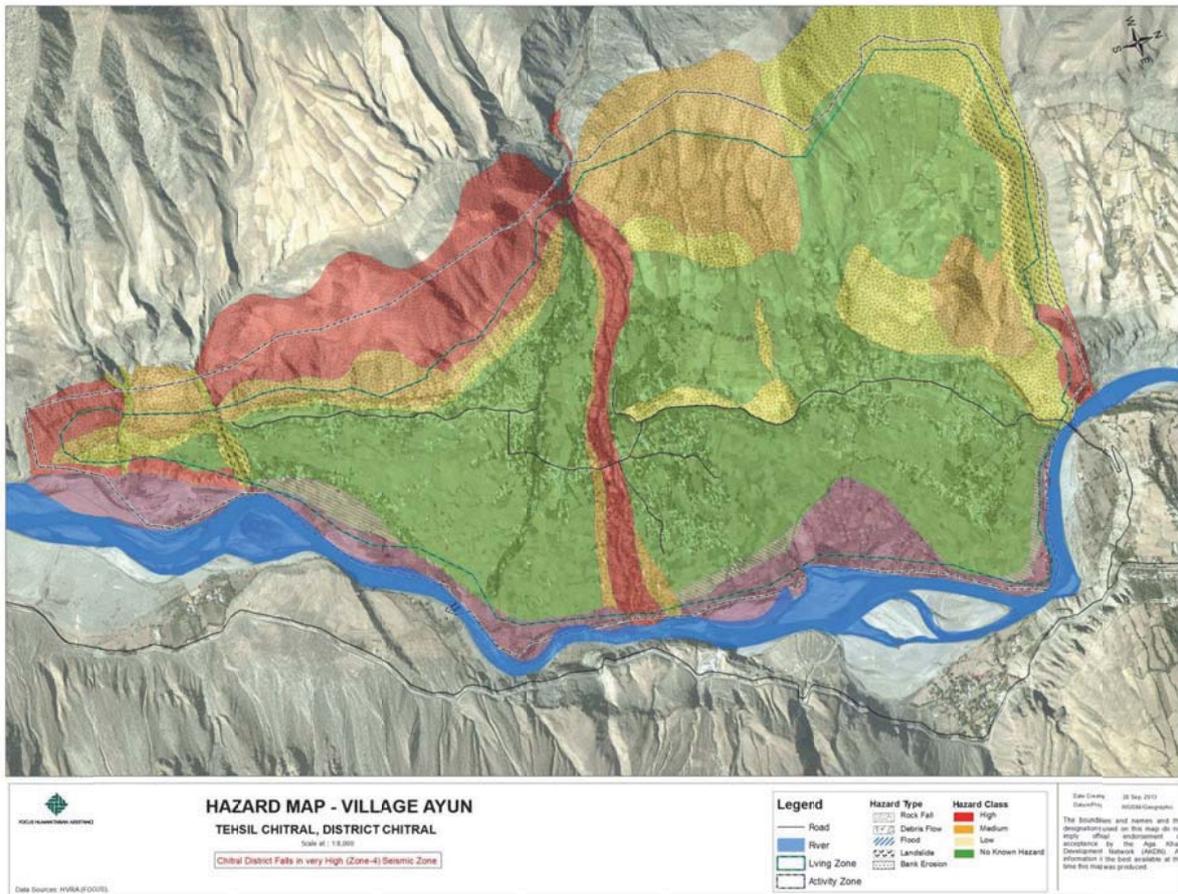
FOCUS Pakistan has produced hazard and risk maps for 658 villages with over 600,000 inhabitants in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral (GBC) and also 112 such maps for urban settlements. These maps are among the best informed tools for Disaster Risk Management (DRM) planning, early warning systems and mitigation that help in reducing risks for vulnerable communities. Moreover, an inventory of natural hazards such as landslides, debris flow and avalanche has been developed for seasonal monitoring.

FOCUS Pakistan's School Safety Programme (SSP) aims to actively engage students and school management in raising awareness, developing emergency and evacuation plans, assess school hazards, and develop response capacity at the school level, by training students, teachers and parents. FOCUS Pakistan, together with its donors and partners, has reached over 600 schools across Pakistan through its school safety programme benefitting over 60,000 students, teachers and parents.

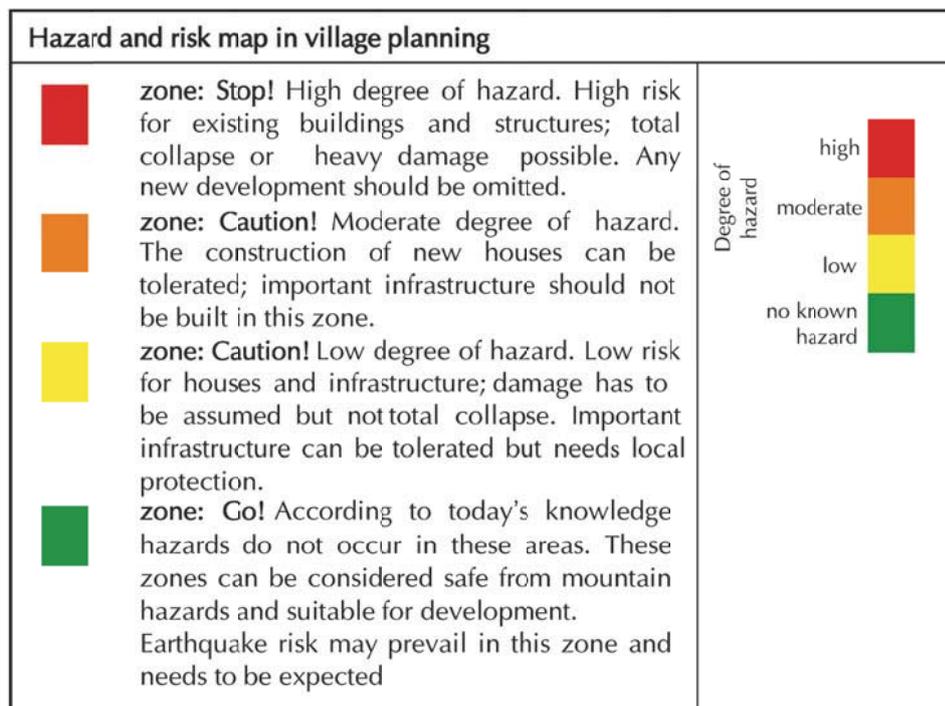
FOCUS Pakistan responds to disasters through its specialised forty-member volunteer Search and Rescue Team (SART) with over 36% women. This team has been trained by experts from United Kingdom, France and Switzerland. The team has been responding to various disasters including the horrific South Asian earthquake in 2005, Marriot Bomb Blast 2008, two collapsed buildings in Karachi 2009 and several local disasters including snow avalanches and debris flow events in Chitral and Gilgit. A Disaster Assessment Response Team (DART) is in place in Gilgit-Baltistan, Chitral and Karachi to help FOCUS and AKDN make informed decisions to respond effectively in an emergency situation. FOCUS has formally built institutional linkages with government, UN and donor agencies in the country.

In 2006, in recognition of its humanitarian and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) work in Pakistan, FOCUS was awarded the "Sitara-e-Eisar" by the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

In 2009, FOCUS' global DRR work was acknowledged by the Jury of the United Nation's (UN) Sasakawa Award for Disaster Reduction and awarded with Certificate of Merit for enhancing disaster risk reduction in Pakistan.



*Hazard Map of the Village Ayun, Tehsil Chitral District, Pakistan
 Design & cartography Focus Humanitarian 2013*



Source: Focus Humanitarian (2013): Hazard and Risk Maps - What are they used for? How are they produced? How are they interpreted?

With the observed increased frequencies of disasters occurring in the region, the already limited local resources are further depleted. Deforestation through free grazing practices of livestock is now very common, and people have not much alternative other than to build their homes in areas at risk to mudflows or landslides. Access becomes a critical issue during disaster as the only accessible roads to these regions are prone to wash away with high costs and prolonged time needed to rehabilitate these critical infrastructures after disaster stroke.

With such situations faced by local communities in Gilgit-Baltistan, natural resource management and adaptation to climate change plays a key role in overcoming the looming disastrous situation. A better understanding of local practices in resource management is a pre-requisite for making informed decisions that could help to support an improved utilisation of natural resources. In this respect, a participatory approach with full accountability and transparency and trust in and a recognition of the ability and capacity of the mountain people to manage their affairs is most helpful. For it is true that in face of scarcity of natural resources and high environmental risks and threats, mountain communities have developed sophisticated indigenous strategies grounded in local knowledge and skills that may indeed represent effective adaptation and mitigation measures.

However, in addition to an improved understanding of local resource management and disaster mitigation systems, the role of regional and cross-border development in resource management and diversification of livelihood options is overly important. For instance, there exists a huge potential for hydro-based power generation, or to promote which could boost local economies, cultural exchange, heritage preservation, and improve capacities in community based development practices.

In light of these broader perspectives, what is needed is more cross-border research and dissemination of knowledge across the Pamirs, possibly to be facilitated through more exposure visits and exchange of expert and community views that would likely result in the sharing of best practices also about the shape and scopes of local early warning systems for disaster risk reduction across the region.

Thematic session III: Education and mobility¹

Education and mobility across the Pamir region is far from representing a unilineal process. Quite on the contrary, it is an example where ‘borders matter’ to significant degrees. The historical conditions of the Pamirs being divided between two imperial powers, the Russian and British empires, gave rise to very strict border regimes and different paths taken toward education also after independence of the former colonies of British India and the former Republics of the Soviet Union (SU), and especially Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO) as the seat of the Pamirs in the former SU.

In British India education was reserved for the elite, while in the Soviet area the educational system was indeed much more egalitarian. This can be interpreted as a result of Soviet ideology, or as an aspect of an early modernisation approach that the Central Asian Countries were confronted with. However, this early promotion of an egalitarian education in GBAO was also geopolitically motivated.

In terms of the current situation the phenomenon of “brain drain” deserves attention. In fact, the problem was identified as common to all countries of the Pamirian region and begs the important question here of how to create local economic dynamics and income opportunities to avoid out-migration of the most educated people. Conversely, the discussion of labour migration seems important too, as the contribution of migrants’ remittances to local development represents one of the most important factors that keep local economies intact. The role of education in this respect is seen as a contributing factor in finding higher paid, skilled labour as a migrant and in turn a higher volume of remittances in support of local economic endeavours.

More generally, it seems obvious that migration always occurs when there is an incentive, and that migration is a ubiquitous process motivated by a plethora of reasons.

A discussion of these aspects was triggered by the papers delivered in this session. Robert Middleton focused in his talk on the situation in GBAO and its very long history of education that is connected to the Ismaili tradition. This can be seen, in fact, by the formal status of education in GBAO that is higher than in other parts of Tajikistan. The same is true for the area of Gilgit-Baltistan where the areas populated by people adhering to the Ismaili faith show comparatively high rates of education. This fact was stressed by Majeed Kahn in his talk on education and mobility in Northern Pakistan. He conceded that the process of providing public education in Gilgit-Baltistan commenced rather late, but that the Paki-

¹ Based on minutes recorded Sarah van Bentum and Michael Spies

stani Government made significant progress since the 1970s in providing education in that remote mountain region.

Both speakers also stressed the problem of what has been termed 'negative mobility', defined as a process of unskilled labour migration to engage in menial work occurring at the expense of formal education. This was identified as a major challenge for policy makers when thinking about encouraging local development directed at providing income opportunities in both skilled and unskilled labour markets.



*Private schools are offering English medium instruction in Gilgit
Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 13 August 2014*

Education and mobility in Gilgit-Baltistan

1 Introduction - Facts and figures on education in Gilgit-Baltistan

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) is comprised of 10 districts with three divisions spread over an area of over 72,000 km² housing a population of 1.4 million. At the time of Pakistan's independence in 1947 there were only 80 primary and three middle schools in the entire region.

Today, the department of education works under a full-fledged Minister of Education from the elected member of the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly. The Secretary of Education is the principal officer assisted by three directors on the operational side. Furthermore there is one officer for planning & Development, who is responsible for educational policy administration in the province.

As of 1998, the overall adult literacy rate in Gilgit-Baltistan is 66.08% for the male population and 38.83% for the female population, with an overall rate of 53.33. However, in terms of regional disparity there is a huge variance across districts, e.g. with Diamer as low as 12% and Hunza, Gilgit and Ghizer with over 76% literacy rates.

There are over 2,543 educational institutions in Gilgit Baltistan operated by public, private and non-profit organisations, out of which 1,618 are schools (primary, middle and high), 93 Madrasas, 63 colleges and one Public Sector University-KIU. In total 294,582 people are enrolled in these institutions. The private and NGO schools comprise of 496 schools with an enrolment of 92,976 students, while the majority of 201,608 students attend public sector institutions. There are 13,074 teachers teaching in these institutions, out of which 8,090 are in public sector educational institutions. A current survey estimates the out-of-school children ratio to be 30% (UNICEF 2016).

2 Positive influences of education and mobility in mountain regions

There have been tremendous changes over the last three to four decades in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) owing to education, the construction of the Karakorum Highway and intervention of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). There is no doubt that education in rural areas has led to upward social mobility of many individuals and groups. People were able to increase their income levels as well as social status and increasingly moved from the old professions of farming and livestock keeping and low government services to new professions and trades which potentially bring more prestige, income and respect both individually and collectively.

Education has helped people to adapt to change and has helped many to move upward in social status while at the same time marginalising others who were not in the position to acquire it. Social mobility is taking place in every region of GB, but with a different pace due to cultural and other conditions. The more liberal the tribal or religious outlook, the more open are the people to educating their children, both boys and girls. A considerable number of educated people have returned to the village and community and provide their time, knowledge and technical skills to build new institutions and help guide the community improving their quality of life

Education has diversified the economic base from agro-pastoral or subsistence farming and livestock herding to new trades and professions leading to overall economic growth and social development. It spawned the adoption of modern technologies including mobile, access to IT education and internet, which has influenced both positively and negatively the attitudes, habits and ideas of people.

3 Challenges for education and mobility in Gilgit-Baltistan

The population of GB is scattered and thinly spread across inaccessible and remote mountain valleys, sometimes with no road access, telecommunication networks and even electricity. It becomes very difficult for the Government to allocate resources to such areas, especially in a situation in which each small village for reasons of physical mobility would like to have higher schools and colleges in each village.

There is also a growing dependence on Punjab/Pakistan for food provision and other basic necessities that make the crafting of a livelihood in the upper and distant valleys very difficult and forces households to send members for work into the low lands. This is against the background of a wide spread inequality across regions and income groups, with over 30% of the population in GB living below the official poverty line of one dollar a day.

Illiteracy can also be seen as an important factor in social and gender inequality. Addressing illiteracy and inequality is a key challenge and I firmly believe that only through education we shall be able to reduce inequality. There are many other reasons for illiteracy including poverty, conservative tribal/religious influences in some areas, lack of awareness and lack of proper investments in the education sector in such areas by the government and other actors.

Physical mobility and migration is linked to affordability and availability of quality educational institutions in remote areas that push people to leave their villages to more resourceful urban pockets. This situation (affordability, quality and mobility) has obvious

stresses and strains the individual, family, village and the whole community in terms of economic, social and psychological impacts.

Children of rich parents have more access to quality education and are more mobile than the poor and medium income groups. As such, inequality is likely to traverse from generation to generation. There is also a mismatch between the demand and the supply of skills in the market. Unfortunately, the education system fails to provide market-driven skills in adequate numbers. There is undersupply in the skills required by the market, and oversupply in those traditional areas of expertise that are today not so much required by the labour market. Brain drain is another phenomenon taking place in a region where the opportunities of employment are quite limited. Furthermore, the public schooling system is not that strong and has nominal linkages with market and industries. The improvement of public schooling requires long term planning, dedicated resources to improve the curriculum, teaching and school facilities as well as tests and assessment methods and regimes. This is likely to be a slow process that may take a whole generation or longer to progress.

In spite of all these problematic issues it needs to be stated that Gilgit-Baltistan has made tremendous progress since the 1970s in terms of education and social mobility, as well as in the capacities of people to adapt to changing situations. This also led to the migration of many to urbanised pockets with relatively better services and employment opportunities. In most cases, the educated people have returned to their villages to earn a living locally and to contribute positively to community development. However, there is still a mismatch between the supply and demand of education in rural areas, as well as there are limited job and employment opportunities to absorb all educated people in the local economy. Hence the obvious choice for young men and women and parents is to move their children out of the remote areas to more urbanised areas in search of quality education, quality earning and better quality of life and aspirations. The Government has too limited resources to establish high quality educational institutions in each area and in order to create employment opportunities for all. Still, proper planning and improving quality education in the public sector may present a way forward. A regulation of the private sector and the integration of technical and entrepreneurial education and information and communication technologies in schools shall be made a priority. Furthermore, lowering the cost of education and supporting local self-employment in the rural areas will likely help to keep the educated people in the area.

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*Aga Khan Higher Secondary School offers quality education in Gilgit
Photographs © Sabine Felmy 17 & 24 February 2011*

Robert Middleton

Education and mobility - A historical perspective¹

The Pamirs have, since time immemorial, been a crossroads of various civilisations. Few have, however, left a lasting mark. The Wakhan and possibly the Ghunt valleys were familiar to Silk Road travellers on their way to the 'Stone Tower' mentioned by Ptolemy.² Early Chinese Buddhist pilgrims and seventeenth century Jesuit missionaries also passed through the Pamirs; there are legendary accounts of visits by Ismaili saints and missionaries such as Shoh Khomoush, Shoh Burhon, Shoh Malang and Shoh Koshon, whose memory is still revered at shrines and other holy sites in the Pamirs (Middleton & Thomas 2012, 634-640); the Ismaili poet and philosopher, Nasr Khusraw, is credited with the conversion of the Pamiri people to the Ismaili faith in the eleventh century.



Statue of Nasr Khusraw in Porshinev village (Shughnan)

Of these, only Nasr had a lasting influence on literacy, and only indirectly and much later.

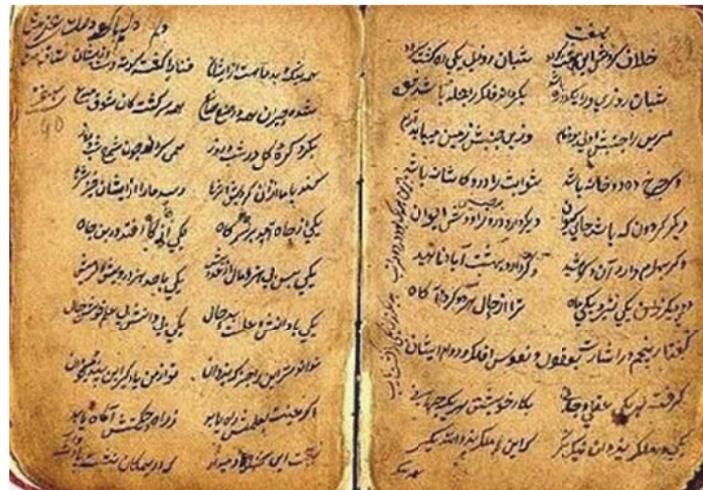
A remarkable recent doctoral thesis submitted at the University of Indiana notes an active production of Ismaili manuscripts from the 18th century onwards, suggesting a high degree of literacy, at least among the religious elite. Daniel Beben (2015) writes: "It was only in the eighteenth century that a written hagiographical tradition connected

¹ This article was published earlier on

<http://www.pamirs.org/Education%20and%20Mobility%20with%20pics.pdf>

² In his *Geographia* (circa 150 CE) Ptolemy described a trade route across Central Asia drawn from the writings of his contemporary Marinus of Tyre. Marinus' work has been lost, but was based on an account by the Macedonian Maës Titianus of his agents' travels to China. The 'Stone Tower' ('Tashkurgan' in Turkic languages) may well have been the city of this name in the Xinjiang province of China. (Middleton & Thomas 2012, 267-294)

with Nasir-i Khusraw took shape among Ismaili communities in Badakhshan. [...] [T]hat hagiographical production served as a medium through which these communities narrated themselves within both the framework of Islamic civilisation and of a transnational Isma'ili identity, and advanced claims to political and social legitimacy within those frameworks." Literacy thus became an affirmation of Pamiri identity.



Shish fasl (Six Discourses), by Nasir-i Khusraw. Persian manuscript, 13th/19th century

The Ismaili faith, combining the notion of Islam as a revealed religion and the unique role of the Imam in interpreting the faith and guiding the faithful through farmans and talikas (oral and written pronouncements), has traditionally attached great importance to intellectual inquiry, learning and knowledge.

The pronouncements of the present Aga Khan and his grandfather Sultan Mohamed Shah in favour of education, particularly for girls, are well known. However, the commitment of the Pamiri Ismaili community to education for both boys and girls was strong prior to the teachings of Aga Khan III and had been recorded already in late nineteenth century reports by explorers. In 1879, Mukhtar Shah, an Indian native explorer ('pundit') sent to the Pamirs by the British administration in India to prepare maps of the region, observed girls' schools in Afghan Badakhshan (Tanner, Colonel H. C. B. 1883, 23); and, in the last years of the nineteenth century, a Danish explorer noted the existence of schools in the Pamirs for both boys and girls with professional teachers who could read and write: "If a man does not send his children to school or to the wandering Mullah, the elders of the town remonstrate with him in the matter [...]" (Olufsen 1904, 136-7)

It was the Russian presence, however, that led to the institutionalisation of education in the Pamirs.



*Dmitri Lvovich Ivanov
(1846-1924)*

In August 1883, Dmitri Lvovich Ivanov, a Russian officer attached to an exploratory military expedition in the north-eastern Pamirs, left camp near Kara Kul and set off on his own down the Akbaital river to Murghab and Sarez in search of provisions for the detachment. At the village of Sarez (site of the earthquake of 1911 that flooded the valley and destroyed the village) he established the first contact by a Russian with the local inhabitants. This meeting was significant in several respects: on the one hand it awakened in Ivanov an interest in the language and ethnography of the Pamiri peoples that led, after Ivanov's return, to a blossoming of scientific research on the Pamirs in St. Petersburg; at the same time, more importantly for the subject of this presentation, Ivanov recounts that a delegation of local people handed him a letter sent up the valley from Shughnan, requesting that the Pamirs be placed under Russian protection. Presumably, the letter was in Persian script and is again an indication of a high degree of literacy. Subsequent Russian military expeditions were almost always accompanied by experts in various scientific disciplines, including linguistics.



*Russian officers in Murghab
(Filchner 1903)*



*Russian military base in Khorog
(Arved Schultz, 1911)*

A few years later, the Russians established military bases in Murghab (1892) and Khorog (1895) and initiated more systematic social development for the local population. In

addition to protecting the local people from the depredations of the Afghans and Bukharans, the newly arrived Russians began road building, encouraged the use of horses and gradually spread a minimum of basic health care through the Russian *feldsher* system. A road between Osh in Kyrgyzstan and Murghab was opened in 1897 and the connection to Khorog was completed a few years later.



Photo Ralph Cobbold, 1898

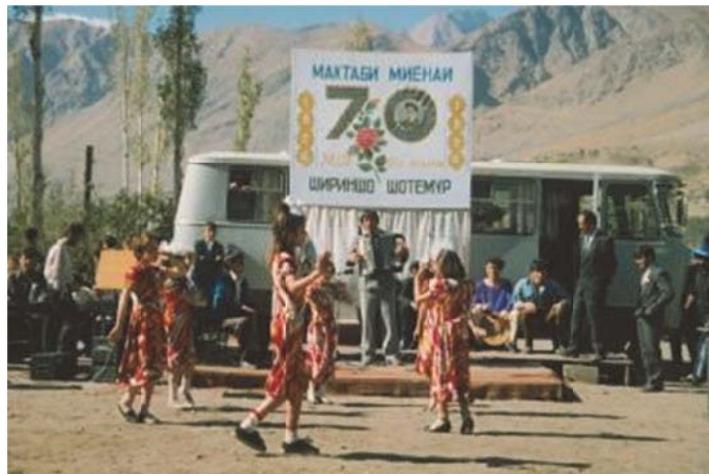
The Russians introduced the first potatoes, cabbages, new seed varieties for cereals and some improvements in livestock. However, with poor soil, the high altitude, harsh winters, and the primitive tools available to the local inhabitants, no fundamental changes could be made to the essence of subsistence farming and nomadic herding. A Russian fact-finding mission in 1904-6 "was shocked by the extreme poverty of the local population [...]." (Bergne 2007, 34)



*Pamiri villager with goitre
(Rickmers 1928)*

However, despite the poverty, the Russians opened a public school in Khorog in 1914. Following the October revolution, the Soviets chose the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) as an example of socialist revolution in a Muslim country and invested

heavily in its modernisation "to show the neighbouring poor peoples to the south [...] the superiority of the Soviet system [...]." (Bliss 2006, 247) A hospital was built in Khorog in 1924; the airport in Khorog was completed in 1932 and the road between Osh and Khorog was fully asphalted and open to motor traffic by 1935. Following from these early Soviet initiatives, schools, hospitals, public meeting halls, power stations and electricity grids, phone lines, roads, and airports were subsequently built in all major areas of the province. School No. 12 in the village of Porshinev, for example, just outside Khorog, celebrated its seventieth anniversary in 1996 - the school bears the name of the first leader of the Tajik communist party, Shirinsho Shotemur, born in Shughnan.



70th anniversary celebrations at school No. 12 in Porshinev (1996)

State-sponsored education during this period began from the realisation that a large majority of party cadres in Tajikistan were illiterate. Schools for the eradication of illiteracy (Likbez) were organised from 1927 onwards (Bergne 2007, 63). Compulsory universal primary education was introduced in Tajikistan as early as February 1931 (Bergne 2007, 83).

The first nursery schools were set up at the end of the 1940s (Bliss 2006, 257); from the 1950s, education was being provided free from kindergarten to postgraduate studies and the literacy rate increased exponentially. In 1926 an official report by the Soviet Sredazburo (Central Asia Bureau) estimated village literacy in Tajikistan at 1.1% for males and 0.2% for females (Bergne 2007, 75); by 1984, the official estimate for the whole of GBAO was more than 99%. Where educational facilities were not available at village level, schooling was taken over by the state farms. GBAO held pride of place in the whole Soviet Union in numbers of higher education degrees and produced a disproportionate number of highly educated professionals who made valuable contributions to Tajik culture and society. Daulat Khudonazar, for example, the Pamiri presidential can-

didate in the first free elections in post-Soviet Tajikistan, was President of the Soviet All-Union Cinematographers Association.



Young man reading, Gudara, Bartang valley (1996)



Schoolgirl addressing 70th anniversary celebration, Porshinev (1996)

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, a 1993 programme feasibility study by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) noted that some three-quarters of the school-age population of GBAO had eleven years of schooling and almost all the remainder at least nine years. In addition, some 12% of school-leavers went on to university every year, 78% of teachers had taken five-year university diplomas and a significant proportion of the remainder had attended colleges of education (Middleton et al 1993, 51¹; Bliss (2006), 257).

During the Soviet period, education in Tajikistan accounted for 40% of GDP and the Tajik education system was considered to be one of the best in the Soviet Union.



Jonboz and musicians at Siponj village, Bartang valley (1993)



Performance of religious songs, Nisur village, Bartang valley (1996)

As in the case of the relationship in the Pamirs between literacy and the writings of Nasr Khusraw, one reason for the high level of literacy in Tajikistan as a whole was certainly the existence of a body of literature in the Persian language, several of the authors of which were claimed as Tajik, even Ismaili. Another reason, of particular relevance in the Pamirs, is the lively tradition of music and dance, with religious (and secular) songs being handed down orally from generation to generation.

State expenditure started to decline in 1992, from 11.1% of the GDP in 1992 to 2.1% of the GDP in 1999. There was a dramatic increase in overall dropout rates (6% in 1989 to 20% in 1997) and in non-enrolment of children (an estimated 25% of girls and 20% of

¹ The report notes that "there are said to be public libraries in all major centres." (Middleton et al 1993, 51).

boys aged 7-18 were not receiving formal education in 1996). In GBAO, however, drop-out rates were considerably lower than in many other regions (Middleton et al. 2003, 51-63).

School buildings were in desperate need of rehabilitation. Essential school supplies such as textbooks, notebooks, paper and chalk were lacking. Teachers' salaries declined sharply, and were often paid in arrears. Highly-qualified teachers were being forced to abandon teaching and turn to other income generating activities or emigrate, leaving behind uncertified teachers with limited teaching experience.

The Aga Khan Foundation's support to the education sector in GBAO started in 1996 and included the immediate supply of textbooks and essential supplies to schools for rent or sale by the schools to parents, thus creating a revolving fund and encouraging community involvement in schools. Using English as an entry point, AKF also worked with teachers to move away from traditional teacher-centred methods to a more student-centred interactive approach and focus on training at all levels of the education system, the revival or creation of local structures, the strengthening of the Institute of Professional Development (the key in-service training institution), and promoting community involvement in schools and local ownership of initiatives.

The challenges arising out of the extremely difficult context described above persist: a comprehensive, well-conceived educational reform plan remains elusive: central control over crucial educational areas such as curriculum and assessment is still almost total; and the concept of decentralised decision-making is only slowly being accepted.

In GBAO, the Aga Khan Lycee and the campus of the University of Central Asia in Khorog are intended to show what can be achieved through "centres of excellence" - they also illustrate, however, the limits of action by private philanthropic initiative, even with the resources available to the Aga Khan network.

More recent developments since the maturing of the AKF programmes are familiar to all those present at this seminar. I would only note two things:

1. The massive emigration of young people to Russia and elsewhere in search of financial support for their families, which has negative effects on local literacy and, above all, on local culture.
2. The strong motivation among young people to learn English. On the one hand it is seen as a passport to opportunities in the West - on the other, as was explained to me - "it is the language of the Imam".

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Keynotes¹

The highlights of the meeting were two keynotes on the extraordinary resilient and mobile Kyrgyz community of the Afghan Pamirs. A community that has dealt successfully with several perilous political situations in the twentieth century by relocating their place of residence across political borders successively, and establishing reliable agreements with the respective political power holders.

M. Nazif Mohib Shahrani, Professor of Anthropology, Central Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the Indiana University Bloomington, Indiana (USA), shed light on the life and career of the fascinating leader of the Kyrgyz of the Afghan Pamir, Haji Rahmanqul Khan. He also shared his general thoughts about the importance and characteristics of local leadership in Central Asia. He challenged the common understanding of traditional leaders as despotic and oppressive that is generally utilised and provided Haji Rahmanqul Khan an example of a loyal and trustful leader, whose smart actions were driven by the motivation to support his people and to protect them from external threats.

Muhammet Ekber Kutlu, son of Haji Rahmanqul Khan and Professor and sculpture lecturer at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Yüzüncü Yıl University in Van (Turkey), described the life of the first and second Kyrgyz generation after their arrival in Turkey. His exciting statements gave an impression about the advantages of the life in the newly built settlement of Ulupamir Köyü and beyond, and the opportunities provided by the Turkish society. His speech was concluded with a short statement by his daughter Gönül Açıksari who is the first doctor from her village. She now works at the Göztepe Research and Training Hospital of the Istanbul Medeniyet University as a senior cardiologist. She underlined the importance and emancipatory potential of enabling conditions for development provided by a society.

¹ Based on minutes recorded by Sarah van Bentum and Michael Spies



Two drawings by Malik Kutlu prior and after the exodus from the Little Pamir. The above scene recorded the sheep-shearing in the Afghan Pamirs while the bottom drawing shows an early scene of life in Ulupamir Köyü. Both drawings are part of the book: Malik Kutlu and Bernard Repond 1992: Afghanistan. Les Kirghizes du Pamir. La Route de l'exil. Lausanne: Association Suisse des Amis de l'Afghanistan and reproduced with kind permission

M. Nazif Shahrani

The life and career of Haji Rahmanqul Khan, 1913-1990

In this presentation, I focus on some key factors - familial, kinship/communal, national, transnational and global - which have helped shape aspects of Haji Rahmanqul Khan's life and career as one of Central Asia's, arguably, last traditional *khans* of the twentieth century. More specifically, I discuss the trajectories of his life and career as the leader of the Kirghiz/Kyrgyz of the Afghan Pamirs by drawing attention to the implications of his life and career upon the common misunderstandings and regular characterisations of widely diverse traditional Central Asian local leaders - *beg/bey*, *aqsaqals* and *khans*. Conceptualisations and constructions of local leadership traits currently in use about Inner Asia are produced and reproduced for over a century within the context of oppressive centralising states, beginning with the tsarist colonial occupation of much of the region culminating into Soviet Russian and later Chinese Communist rule in Central Asia, as well as, the establishments of postcolonial and more recently post-Soviet nation-states with arbitrary borders in South-western Asia as well as former Soviet Central Asia affecting inhabitants of the Pamirs ever since the turns of the twentieth century.

Many Central Asian *khans* and *begs*, together with local influential religious leaders, mobilised and led resistances against foreign colonialists masquerading as forces of modernisation or revolution and liberation of the toiling masses. Local leaders in Central Asia also resisted penetration of autocratic postcolonial modern nation-states intent on internal colonialism in the name of nationalism. Not surprisingly, such local leaders/*khans* and *begs* were condemned categorically both by foreign Communist imperialists as well as nationalist ethnic/tribal hegemons, as oppressive local tyrants, feudal lords and even "scorpions", as was the case in Afghanistan, targeted for elimination, incarceration or exile. Such characterisation and condemnations of local leaders raises the questions of, if such charges were true, how and why were these local leaders able to mobilise people against the Communist revolutionary governments and the self-proclaimed reformist national states? Countless khans and local notables in Turkistan - Russian, Afghan and Chinese or Western, Southern and Eastern - and the Pamirs perished because of their efforts to preserve their communities' integrity against the encroaching Communist Russian and Chinese government policies and practices. The life and career history of Haji Rahmanqul (1913-1990), the Khan of a small community of Kirghiz pastoralists who took refuge in the Afghan Pamirs from both Soviet and Chinese Communist giants, therefore, offers an important window to the re-examination of the role of traditional Central Asian *Khans* and the concept of *khanhood* during the rise, establishment and demise of major colonial and revolutionary em-

pires (British India, USSR & China) as well as ethnic/tribal-based autocratic nation-state of Afghanistan and Islamically inspired Pakistan during the twentieth century.



Rahmanqul¹ was born in 1913 to the prosperous family of Haji Jabbarqul Khan in the Osh/Murghab region of modern day Kyrgyzstan at the eastern end of Fergana (Farghana) Valley. His father and paternal uncle, Ming Bashi Haji, had taken refuge to the heights of the Pamir plateau in response to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, most likely as part of the Revolts of the Begs and Khans (*Beglarden Qozghaleshi*) which had begun in Fergana Valley against the 1916 tsarist policies of conscription of Central Asians to serve as combat support in their WWI fronts in Russia and Europe. The Revolt of Begs (local leaders/dignitaries) and *Ishans* (Naqshbandi Sufi leaders) then continued as a popular opposition to Bolsheviks overthrow of the Kokand Autonomous Government and its after-

math in the Fergana Valley and beyond. A movement which the Soviet media then popularised as the Basmachi Movement (resistance of the highwaymen, oppressors and plunders). Thus, Rahmanqul's childhood had begun an environment of anticolonial revolt, violence and self-imposed exile by his family elders to the safety of the Afghan Pamirs.

When he was not yet ten years old, General Nader Khan, Minister of War of King Amanullah of Afghanistan (reign 1919-1929) had visited the Little Pamir, and memorialised the event in *Sangi Nawishta* (a rock inscription in the eastern most part of the Little Pamir Valley). Rahmanqul's father and powerful uncle, Ming Bashi Haji together with Tokhtasun Khan Haji, the then recognised and famous leader of the Kirghiz in the Afghan Pamirs, had negotiated with General Nader Khan the exemption for the Kirghiz from serving in the Afghan military draft, which had been newly instituted by independent Afghanistan. This celebrated event may have been the first most direct claim of domain by a high ranking Kabul government official in the Pamirs in the twentieth century. However, one that invited occasional inroad to the Pamirs by local officials of the Kabul government from its Wakhan district administrative unit thereafter.

¹ The photograph is reproduced from Rémy Dor and Clas Naumann 1978: Die Kirghisen des afghanischen Pamir. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt: Frontispiece

By early 1929 when Amanullah's reign had come to an abrupt end due to the civil war headed by Habibullah Kalakani and subsequent claim of the Kabul throne by General Nader Khan becoming Nader Shah (reign 1929-1933), relations with Afghan officials had become more problematic. That is, after the passing of much admired Kirghiz leader, Tokhtasun Khan Haji in late 1930s, one of his clansman, a Sartbai Khan assumes the leadership of the Kirghiz. The infamous Sartbai Khan begins, in collaboration with the Wakhan district government officials of which Pamirs are a part, to initiate drafting the Kirghiz men to the Afghan army as pretext for extraction and extortion of goods from the Kirghiz. Rahmanqul, now in his mid-20s with help from his father and uncle successfully challenges Sartbai Khan's decision by insisting that the Kirghiz are exempt from draft based on agreement reached in 1921 with General Nader Khan. This important successful challenge on behalf of the Kirghiz and protecting them against a self-serving Sartbai Khan, raises young Rahmanqul's stature in the eyes of his community, eventually assuming the leadership of the Afghan Kirghiz for decades to come.

By the time Rahmanqul reached his early 30s, he had engaged in his own fight with, and flight from, Soviet aggressions against the Afghan Kirghiz during and following World War II. In an incident in 1945/1946 while Soviets attempted to capture his father, who fearing Soviet aggression had left for Eastern Turkistan Pamirs, abducted Rahmanqul and his older brother taking them as prisoners to Soviet territory. He was released after six month and his brother a year later, who died shortly thereafter. Once back in the Afghan Pamir, Rahmanqul led most of his kinsmen out of the Afghan Little Pamir into the relative safety of the Qara Chuqoor in Taghdumbash Pamirs in the Tashqurghan Region of Eastern Turkistan. Within about two years of residing in the Pamirs of Sharqi Turkistan, Rahmanqul Khan had to fight the Chinese Communist Revolutionary forces of Mao who subjugated Sharqi Turkistan and turned it into the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of PRC in 1950.

Indeed, Jean and Franc Shor, arriving in Little Pamir within days of Rahmanqul Khan's triumphant return from Chinese Pamirs to the Little Pamir with his people, documented the event in a *National Geographic* magazine article¹. Rahmanqul Khan helps the international guests of the Kabul government, the Shors to the safety of British India, across the passes he himself would lead his own Kirghiz tribesmen some 28 years later in 1978 to Gilgit, Pakistan. The news of Rahmanqul Khan's heroic fight and flight from Communist China back to the safety of Afghan Pamirs spread quickly throughout northern Afghanistan and reached the notice of the Royal Government of Afghanistan.

¹ Shor, J. & Shor, F. 1950 "We Took the High Road in Afghanistan", *National Geographic Magazine* 98 (5), pp. 673-706; and also in a book Jean Bowie Shor 1955: *After you, Marco Polo*. New York, Toronto, London: McGraw-Hill.

Rahmanqul Khan's escape from China, also effectively marked the closure of Chinese border for trade and commerce ever since. A fact which also marked closing of one of the main corridors of the ancient Silk route over the Wakhjir Pass in the Pamir which connected China with Afghanistan and Western Asia. The closure of Chinese border also sealed the Afghan Pamirs from all other countries in the region, forcing them to reorient their trade relation towards Wakhan and Afghanistan and to deal with Kabul government in an unprecedented intensity from then on. Hermitically sealed in the Afghan Pamirs and sandwiched between USSR to the north, PRC in the east and Pakistan to the south, Rahmanqul Khan faced the realities of having to manage the small extremely vulnerable Kirghiz community through social, political and economic uncertainties of the high Pamirs. For almost three decades Rahmanqul Khan helped manage wellbeing of his Kirghiz community before facing yet another Communist revolution in Afghanistan (1978), which forced him to lead most of the Kirghiz to another self-imposed exile to Pakistan and eventual resettlement in Van province of Eastern Turkey in 1982. It is to brief narrative account of the making of Rahmanqul Khan's legendary leadership style and substance in managing the welfare of his Afghan Kirghiz community, in a marginal frontier zone in the Afghan Pamirs facing very serious local, national and international uncertainties, to which I wish to turn now.

Kirghiz community after 1950 faced a number of critical challenges, among them were: management of pasture resources within the confines of the Afghan Pamirs year around by adopting new seasonal migration pattern for effective use; new herd management system (*amanat* and *saghun*) appropriate to the unpredictable microclimatic uncertainties within the Pamirs; ensuring access to agricultural food stuff from their Wakhi neighbours through complex trade and exchange; management of trade relations outside the Wakhan Corridor especially with itinerant traders from Afghan towns and cities who frequented the Pamirs with supply of non-agricultural commodities, especially large qualities of black tea and opium in exchange for livestock and animal products; and most importantly managing relations with the distant Afghan government and in Kabul and its outlying avaricious provincial and district branch officials in Badakhshan and especially Wakhan. These important challenges called for skilful frontier leader and Rahmanqul Khan fully rose to the challenges.

Rahmanqul Khan pioneered improvement of pastures on their winter camps on the northern/sunny side of the valley (*kongay*) by introducing irrigation of wide areas of pastures reserved for winter use. This led to Privatisation of pasture grounds especially in the scarce resourced winter camps and strict regulation of the short seasonal migration movement between the sunny and shady or southern sides (*terskay*) of the Pamir's valleys. Privatisation scheme resulted in serious loss of livestock in some parts of the valley due to

unpredictable snow fall or early spring *joot* (freezing ice after a rain storm). In order to assist the unfortunate herders affected by such losses, Rahmanqul Khan again pioneered the introduction of new herd management scheme, the *amanat* or lending animals to the long-term year around care of the herders so that they could live off of the livestock products and have access to fuel from the caked animal dung in their winter corrals. This involved considerable risk to the lender, but for those willing to take the risk to lend animals widely throughout the Pamir valleys, the *amanat* system did not only reduced the lenders overall risk of ever losing all of their herds but ensured chances of substantially increasing their herds in a short time. Indeed, Rahmanqul Khan had taken this risk before any other herder and spread his animals through *amanat* system among more than one hundred families, by early 1970s, all over the Afghan Pamirs. A risk which had made him owner of more than 17,000 sheep and goats out of some 40,000 in the Afghan Pamirs and 700 yak (out of about 4,000). Majority of the animals were loaned to those who were members of his own Teyet clan (*oruq*) and then to the poorest of other *oruqlar*. His generosity and care for the welfare of his people earned him the respect, trust and loyalty of his people and spread his fame and name far from the Pamirs in northern Afghanistan and even the capital, Kabul. He became the sole arbiter of local conflicts with help from the *beys* (camp leaders) and *aqsaqals* (lineage and clan leaders) and the true link to outside world, both traders and government officials and in many instances host to important international guest of the Royal family and even King Zahir Shah himself during a Marco Polo Sheep hunting trip to the Pamirs.

Arguably, Rahmanqul Khan's most successful role as a leader was the management of relations with government of Afghanistan in Kabul. After his return from the Chinese territory in 1950, there seem to have been mutual suspicion and concern between him and the Kabul government officials. Suspicion on the part of Kabul regime regarding a powerful tribal leader in politically sensitive frontier zone where Kabul had no presence at all; and fear on the part of Rahmanqul Khan as to what the government's intention might be regarding his fame and power as a local leader in the Roof of the World. In about 1953-1954, during the beginnings of Sardar Daoud's Premiership, Rahmanqul Khan made the bold decision to go to Hajj with a small group of wealthy and influential Kirghiz which included his sister Maryam Haji, via Kabul. Upon his return from the Hajj, now Haji Rahmanqul Khan, paid his homage reportedly with valuable gifts of Chinese silver ingots called *jambu* and other undisclosed valuables, to King Zahir Shah and met many of his courtiers and high level government officials, including Dr. A. G. Ravan Farhadi, then Deputy Foreign Minister for Diplomacy. This strategic move resulted in Kabul government sending occasional high profile international guest who wished to visit this remote frontier zone of the country and Haji

Rahmanqul Khan hosted them royally. In return, the Kabul government bestowed upon him the title of *Pasbani Pamirat* (The Guardian of the Pamirs). With increased confidence in his warm relations with Kabul government he began to send a few thousands sheep and goats annually to Kabul on a two month long trek to be sold for much higher prices than in Pamir. A bold initiative in which some of the other wealthy and notable Kirghiz also took part, and Rahmanqul and his entourage travelled annually or semi-annually by public transport to Kabul to oversee the sale of their herds.

During these visits Haji Rahmanqul Khan made strategic gift of sheep to important contacts in the government and enjoyed state hospitality for the duration of his stay in the Kabul guesthouse of the High Office of Frontier Affairs, normally reserved for the Pashtun tribesmen along the Pakistan borders in the east. Haji Rahmanqul Khan used his strategic ties with Kabul as a frontier leader to keep the potential abuse of his people from the corrupt and avaricious Badakhshan provincial and Wakhan district officials of which Pamirs were a part. These close relations with the Royal court and high government officials became Haji Rahmanqul Khan's trump card in managing the Kirghiz relations with the itinerant traders as well as their interdependency with Wakhi peasant neighbours from whom they obtained all their cereal grain and various pulses to complement their normally rich diet in meats and milk products. In a few occasions when drought and poor harvest afflicted the Wakhan, he sought and received considerable food and medicine from Kabul government via Soviet Union.

These remarkable strategic decision by Haji Rahmanqul Khan to engage the central government in Kabul to protect his own economic and political interests as well as those of the entire Afghan Kirghiz community against the threats from both Soviet and Chinese Communist empires and re-routing trade and economic ties due to Soviet and Chinese closed borders speaks volumes about the skills and wisdom of this late twentieth century khan in the Pamirs. To achieve his legendary leadership career, he also had support of large and successful family of at least nine very talented sons and two daughters, and the backing of his Teyet clan, the largest among the Afghan Kirghiz. Haji Rahmanqul Khan was also, minimally schooled in traditional Islamic curriculum and read both the Qur'an and Persian and Turkic (Chaghatai) text which were available in fair amount among the Kirghiz, including his own collection of books, even newspapers he received from Faizabad, the provincial capital of Badakhshan. He maintained written accounts of all his herds distributed as *amanat* or *soghun* and expected annual accounting of the state of his lent animals from the herders. Rahmanqul Khan had also bought transistor radios very early when they became available in Afghanistan and was regular listener of news broadcast from Radio stations both national, regional international such as the BBC and VOA among others. He

was also extremely inquisitive about national and international events and asked questions of all his frequent outside visitors and official guests incessantly, including this ethnographer. His knowledge of the animals care, local pasture and ecology of the Pamirs were vast and deep. Although of quick temper when crossed, Haji Rahmanqul was a devout and fair minded local Muslim leader who tried to resolve local problems via consensus of the community leaders but with reference to their understanding of Islamic shari'a. Traits which enabled him to retain the loyalty, trust and respect of his people especially in moments of crisis.

In April 1978, when he heard the news of the Soviet inspired Communist coup in Kabul on his transistor radio, he immediately dispatched his eldest son, Abdul Wakeel, to Faizabad, the provincial capital of Badakhshan to ascertain the nature of this new government. Affirming the Communist and Soviet supported nature of the "Revolution" in Kabul, he told the elders of the Kirghiz in Little Pamir that because of his close and friendly ties with the previous regime, he felt unsafe and that he wished to leave for safety of Pakistan. He urged the rest of the Kirghiz to stay on and keep his animals if they wish. But if they wanted to join him in his exodus with his family they are welcome to do so. The entire Kirghiz of Little Pamir numbering some 1,200 souls joined him in their self-imposed exile to Pakistan. Only about 10 families opted to stay behind and they were left alone. Once in Pakistan, he became an object of suspicion by the Pakistan's infamous Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) during the first year of their refugee life scattered in the Northern Areas of Pakistan. Through his international contacts, Haji Rahmanqul Khan secured UNHR assistance to his community in Gilgit and then launched his efforts to find a new home for the Kirghiz in Alaska, the United States of America. That unlikely projects, despite much local interest on the part of Alaskan government, did not work out. However, the plight of the Kirghiz with Haji Rahmanqul Khan's capable leadership was heard by the then President of Turkey, General Kenan Evren, during his official visit to Pakistan in 1981. After four years of refugee life in northern Pakistan, Haji Rahmanqul Khan and his people were airlifted to Adana, Turkey and from there to their resettlement place in Van province of eastern Turkey in summer of 1982.

The Turks, upon arrival assigned last/family name to the Kirghiz, and now "*Agha*" rather than Khan/Han of the Kirghiz he became Haji Rahmankul Kutlu, the leader of the Afghan Kirghiz. He ably negotiated and oversaw the construction of their new village in Altindara, in a picturesque valley about 20 km inland from the town of Ercis on the western shore of Lake Van. The village was given the name of Ulupamir Koyu (Great Pamir Village) and the Kirghiz were moved from their temporary shelters in Karakunduz near the city of Van and the city of Malatya in 1987/88 to their permanent new homes. The Kirghiz youth who had

begun attending UNHR School in Gilgit continued their schooling with great enthusiasm in Turkey, and within a year most of the Kirghiz adults, both men and women, also completed adult literacy courses in modern Turkish. Haji Rahmanqul Kutlu died peacefully in the new village of Ulupamir Koyo in 1990 and is remembered with considerable admiration by his grateful community who have thrived in Turkey, and some of them have been making annual summer visit to the Afghan Pamirs, especially after the fall of the Taliban government in Afghanistan in 2001. Their older generation continue to recount their difficult but heroic times and lives in the Pamirs, and the youth, now for the most part well educated and urbanites in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, take pride in their Turkish-Afghan Kirghiz identities, thanks to efforts of their fondly remembered and trusted Khan, Haji Rahmanqul Han Kutlu.

The case of Haji Rahmanqul Khan Kutlu suggests that traditionally monolithic characterisation of local leaders based on wealth alone and characterising them as feudal, oppressive, exploitative etc., is misleading and detracts from the complexities of the existence of different styles and substance of khanship in Central Asia and especially in the Pamirs. We must explore the ecological and sociopolitical circumstances resulting extremes of wealth and poverty in traditional Inner Asian frontier societies. As the Kirghiz case shows, the reason for economic inequalities may not be outright exploitation and abuse by the rich, especially in traditionally kin-based societies. It is also important to explore how such inequalities leading to massive loss ownership to property are mitigated by insuring access for the poor to productive resources, such as herds of animals. We also need to move on from relying on Weberian ideal types of "traditional" form of leadership based on categorical loyalties based on customs of eternal yesterday as such. Haji Rahmanqul Khan represents a particularistic form leadership based on acquired loyalties buttressed by mutual obligations, trust and support. Indeed, his career history as a late twentieth century khan exemplifies co-production of local leadership giving rise to distinct style and substance within the changing political ecologies of local, regional, national and international environments during a volatile and violent century. *Pasdaari* Pamirs, as a frontier leader, lived his life as the first among equals and saw himself as the guardian of the Kirghiz of Afghanistan, in the tumultuous twentieth century Central Asia. He fulfilled his role with care and compassion, leaving behind a grateful community thriving in their new homeland, in Ulupamir Koyu, in eastern Turkey.

Muhammet Ekber Kutlu

Life in Ulupamir Köyü

Selam ve Teşekkür

I come from the City of Van, Ercis District, Ulupamir Village, Turkey. I am the son of Rahmankul Khan. I am working at Van Yüzüncü Yıl University's Faculty of Fine Arts as a sculpture lecturer.

The Kyrgyz immigrated from the Pamirs of Afghanistan to Pakistan in 1978 and later immigrated to Turkey in 1982.

For four years we lived in Karagunduz, which is a suburb of Van City in the eastern part of Turkey. Four years later, the government built 300 houses and moved us to these houses in Altindere, which is located about 30 km from Ercis, another suburb of Van. When we first came to Turkey, we were 1,200 people in total belonging to 250 households. The government gave each family 10,000 m² land for farming, 20,000 m² land for animal breeding, and 10 sheep. We planted shamrock on our farms since the land was not suitable for growing grains like wheat or barley. Thus, our main income source became animal breeding. However, due to the lack of flat lands this was limited. Most families survived through animal breeding and government funds only.

However, schoolchildren were sent to schools, and adults were taught how to read and write. Women learned handicrafts in public courses, and men were taught animal breeding techniques. A healthcare unit provided healthcare services. Thus, we easily adapted to our new lives in Turkey. Later some families moved to more central cities to work or study. Today our community is distributed in Turkey in the following way: 60 families live in Ankara, 40 families are based in Istanbul, 17 found new homes in Malatya, twelve moved to Van, and 52 remained in Ercis. In total, 181 families live in different parts of Turkey.

When it comes to education, there is a primary and a secondary school in our village and 306 students currently are receiving an education there. In addition, there are 256 students who are receiving a high school education - some of them in our district centre, and some of them in other cities. Currently, 75 students are receiving a university education. We also have 450 graduates who are currently working in the State's different foundations as doctors, engineers, advocates, lecturers, teachers, and nurses. The Turkish Government and State has always given support for this. Everybody and every family has a full understanding of the importance of education and they make great efforts to ensure their children obtain an education. Therefore, the education status that we have is one of the highest compared to other districts of Van.

When we look at the medical services, everyone has social security and we benefit fully from doctor and hospital services. Furthermore, we are free to use our own language and practice our own religion. Over the last thirty years, we have been able to set up Kyrgyz festivals in May and June in order to make our culture and manners widely known. Hand-made products are exhibited on these occasions, Kyrgyz food is offered, and cultural entertainment such as Kyrgyz dances and music have been presented. These events strengthen the connection between Turkish, Kurdish, and Kyrgyz people.

When I evaluate the current position of our people in comparison to those in the Afghan Pamirs, we are in a far better condition in terms of health, education, and quality of life. This quality of life is at a high level, and it remains promising for the coming generations.



*Altindere or Ulupamir Köyü
Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 22 August 2005*

Gönül Açıksari

Addition to Muhammet Ekber Kutlu's speech

I am the first Kyrgyz child that was born in Turkey, in 1982. I am the first doctor of our village. Now, I work for Istanbul Medeniyet University Göztepe Research and Training Hospital as a senior Cardiologist. I understand the importance of the migration from Afghanistan to Turkey via Pakistan, and I believe that our leader Rahmankul Khan was a forward looking leader and he did his best for us.

I thank our families who completed this hard migration, leaving their own lands and finding a new homeland for us. We also have seen what can be done if the opportunity is given to the Kyrgyz people from the Pamirs of Afghanistan.

Thematic session IV: Experiences with regional development¹

The fourth session of the workshop consisted of three contributions that dealt with different aspects of regional development in the Pamirs. Two presenters focused on the role, the strategies, and the effects of the activities of international development organisations, from an internal and external perspective. A third presentation underlined the importance of local efforts for rural development in peripheral high mountain regions, using the example of the settlement of Shimshal, Gilgit Baltistan (Pakistan).

Ghulam Amin Beg, Program Head of the Institutional Development/Civil Society Strengthening & Thematic Lead, Youth Employability and Leadership Program of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in Gilgit, Gilgit Baltistan (Pakistan), presented his personal views and assessments of the challenges development programmes face in the region. He provided a historical overview of successful activities the AKRSP and other organisations of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) have pursued in Gilgit Baltistan since the 1980s, and concluded that local development should be determined by local participation and decentralised local decision-making, rather than solely by top-down approaches and external agencies.

Muzaffar-Ud Din, at that time Country Representative & Chief Executive Officer of BRAC, Islamabad (Pakistan), presented the colourful example of the formerly isolated and poor settlement of Shimshal, where, with the support of AKRSP, the proactive local community managed the challenge of constructing a road passing through difficult mountainous terrain. Due to this new interlinkage with the road network of Pakistan, Shimshal became one of the most prosperous villages in the region.

After a presentation about the Swiss organisation 'Pamir's Bridges', its President Bernard Repond gave a stirring introduction to the importance of bridges for local communities in terms of connection with the outer world, and accessibility to economically important, though remote, places such as high mountain pastures. He emphasised that the local implementation of such infrastructure rehabilitation projects and the following maintenance activities are crucial for the creation of responsibility and ownership among the local population, which are crucial prerequisites for sustainable rural development.

During the discussion, it was emphasised that romanticisation and generalisation of successful examples must be avoided because there are many counterexamples where such community mobilisation did not work. Another point stressed during the discussion was the

¹ Based on minutes recorded by Michael Spies and Tim Polster

importance of leadership for local development efforts, which is often underestimated in development work.



Karakoram Highway and Kulma Pass Road have been developed to be the modern arteries of commercial exchange and human mobility
 Design Hermann Kreutzmann 2016; cartography Bernd Hilberer

Experiences with regional development: Changing challenges and perspectives in Gilgit Baltistan

The paper deals with my experiences and views on regional development perspectives and challenges in Gilgit Baltistan (GB). What I am sharing with you is a community perspective and my own assessment of the discourse and not necessarily reflects Aga Khan Rural Support Programme's (AKRSP) views.

1 Introduction

Pakistan is a huge country with a population of around 200 million people stretching from the Arabian Sea to the Himalayas and Pamirs. The Country is divided into four major ethnic provinces or regions and additional territories administered by Pakistan, which are outside its constitutional ambit, like Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and GB. The country has mainly agriculture-based economy with over 70 % of the population living in rural areas.

The discourse on regional development is not a new topic in Pakistan. The notion has been discussed in both the developed and developing regions in the context of rural poverty, rural to urban migration and in dealing with the question of centre to periphery relationships, equitable distribution of resources and also related to the political question of national integration and decentralisation, local and provincial autonomy and of political participation over the years; In Gilgit Baltistan Region, when we talk of regional development it essentially looks at four aspects, mainly external drivers that drive the discourse. They are:

First, political and constitutional; meaning how to integrate a geo-strategically important region with Pakistan through institutional means and participate in national decision making, when the region remains outside the constitutional ambit of Pakistan. In a constitutional void or vacuum, the measures are mostly ad-hoc using instruments of political control and narrowly interpreted security paradigm;

Second, the economic driver; meaning how to create economic incentives to create economic dependency with the central government and national markets and controlled border trade with friendly countries like China, through subsidies and other measures. For example, supply of wheat to GB has long been subsidised, as well as petroleum products. No direct taxation was imposed (though it has started recently in this direction) as well as the government is the biggest employment provider and investor in major infrastructure projects to promote gradual integration of the region with Pakistan;

Third, is provision of needed space to non-state actors including civil society organisations like the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and conservation agencies to promote social development, conservation of natural resources, following bottom-approaches to promote self-reliance, self-sufficiency and addressing issues of poverty and improving quality of life of the rural populations;

Fourth, geo-politics; meaning what happened in the early to late 1970s around Pakistan and closer to GB before the creation of AKRSP in 1982 and what is happening now around GB and the wider region has its implications for regional development thinking. Some key events shall be mentioned here: the India-Pakistan war in 1971, the creation of Bangladesh, a left-leaning Bhutto taking over remaining Pakistan, abolishment of feudal states in Pakistan including GB, martial government in Pakistan, Prime Minister Bhutto was hanged, Afghan spring revolution and the CIA-led Jihad against the revolution and the Soviet intervention, Islamic Revolution in Iran and its impact in the region including GB, and most importantly construction and opening of the Karakoram Highway (KKH) by Pakistan and China in 1979 passing through GB linking Pakistan with China through this only border.

These events have influenced the thinking about regional development. In this backdrop AKRSP was founded in 1982 by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) to benefit from the new opportunities and address the old and new challenges posed by the changing geo-political and development landscape with two simple objectives: double the per capita incomes of rural farmers and develop a replicable participatory rural development model. A number of donor partners including the government of Pakistan provided full support to this new program. The approach that AKRSP followed was based on the German rural cooperative model popularly known as the Raiffeisen cooperative model tested in Germany earlier and in some countries in Far East. Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan from Comilla Academy in East Pakistan and later his ardent student Shoaib Sultan Khan who become the first General Manager of AKRSP tried the model in the mountain area context. The three principles of the cooperative model 'organisation', 'upgrading skills' and 'generating own capital by the poor' was seen as a best fit to the conditions in GB and Chitral (GBC) region. In the late 1970s and mid-1980s, the region was passing through institutional vacuum created by the then Bhutto Government in Islamabad, by demolishing the old feudal states across Pakistan. In Gilgit-Baltistan, there was no proper transition plan in place on how to replace the old system with new forms of modern organisation to manage production and organise labour for communal development and local government; absence of any cash flows in a rural subsistence economy and new productive and management skills that were required to benefit from the opening of KKH and new technologies introduced by AKRSP and the market.



AKRSP is pursuing community-based development projects since more than three decades. The Sost tunnel to irrigate and cultivate new lands was one of the first efforts in Gojal. Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 1 November 1985

Therefore, in the initial years, the AKRSP development package consisted of trainings, technology transfers and inputs, and supplies in agriculture, forestry and livestock. Other approaches were micro savings and micro credit, secondary community infrastructure including access roads, bridges, irrigation channels, protective works and renewable energy-micro hydels and other technical installations. Other AKDN agencies including Aga Khan Health Service and Aga Khan Education Service were long investing in some areas already and the literacy rate in those areas was comparatively higher than in other districts. However, communities were never mobilised for production after the abolition of the old state systems for almost a decade, hence a vacuum existed, creating hopelessness, despair and confusion. In some respect AKRSP did miracles in the early decades by organising the rural poor into village and women organisations for undertaking bottom up, community-based development. Over 4,700 organisations (Village and Women Organisations) were fostered, reaching out to over 90 % of the households and villages. Poor farmers were enabled to save over 500 million rupees through micro-savings, and more than a billion rupees has been granted as micro credits. Additionally, more than 3,000 small and micro infrastructure projects were realised, and over 65,000 activists were trained in various productive and management skills.

Over the years, the World Bank evaluated the impact of AKRSP at four different intervals. The evaluation concluded that AKRSP has actually contributed immensely towards poverty reduction in the area, per capita incomes doubled, and even tripled. The AKRSP approach was consequentially replicated across Pakistan by the Governments in the form of Rural

Support Programs (RSPs), across South Asia including India by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and across Africa and Central Asia by AKF. Together it forms the largest civil society movement, established during the last three decades in the region.

Currently AKRSP is focusing on two pillars. The social pillar rests on strengthening village and women organisations through federating them at union council levels into intermediary local civil society institutions called Local Support Organisations (LSOs) focusing on mainstreaming women, youth and the marginalised groups into leadership positions in LSOs and youth organisations. Additionally, this approach strengthens partnerships with local government systems and supports capacity building of activists, elected tiers and officials. The economic pillar rests on renewable energy, value chain development in key sectors like high value horticulture, gems, tourism and trade. It also pursues youth technical and vocational training and youth entrepreneurship, women social and economic empowerment and livelihood enhancement programs for the extreme poor.

2 New Opportunities and Risks

Of late the central government has provided more institutional and political space to the local people compared to what it was like five to ten years back. The new Gilgit Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance Order 2009 (GBESG) provides a framework for decentralisation and participatory governance. However, many of the key growth sectors (like energy, forestry, minerals, tourism, taxation etc.) and key decision-making still rests with the centre and is dominated by the GB Council. Weak political leadership, a rotten elite sticking to power, patronisation of sectarianism by state apparatus and corrupt politicians, corruption and lack of administrative and development capacities at local levels also provides the central government with the excuses for following a gradualist and minimalist approaches, besides the question of tied international obligations vis-à-vis the Kashmir dispute.

China's new One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative and the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a new opportunity, which in Pakistan is considered a game changer with implications for GB as the road passes through this region. There are also other mega projects related to this like the Diamer Basha Dam, the Bunji Dam, up-gradation of Karakoram Highway, a rail link, broadband access, and allied logistical services that would create new economic opportunities for access to clean and renewable energy, employment creation and knowledge highways as well as information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Like Pakistan, GBC has a youth bulge and a comparatively large literate population. There is increased interest in education, and increased public and private investments in school

education provide new opportunities, and, at the same time, also developmental risks like educated unemployment.

The establishment of the first university in GB - the Karakoram International University (KIU) - is a great hope and opportunity for the future of this region. KIU has the potential to serve as a development catalyst and knowledge hub to promote exchange with national and international partners. The linkages with the University of Central Asia (UCA) and the network of mountain universities will help to foster regional development.

However, there are also risks and challenges connected to the development efforts, such as maintaining the fragile peace and security, and sectarian harmony. In this regard, the continued illegitimate rule by bureaucracy and establishment imposed by Islamabad and denial of the fundamental freedoms and human and constitutional rights to the people of Gilgit Baltistan to govern their own affairs on their own land, is a major challenge and risk for regional security. Others risks and challenges include; increasing socioeconomic disparity between income groups and districts, gender inequality and youth unemployment, the increased pace of rural to urban migration, pressures on urbanised towns for delivery of services, as well as lack of peri-urban development planning can be seen as especially burning issues. Additionally, an increased pace of natural disasters, pressures on water, land and social resources and ruining decades of development investments make the situation even more difficult.

More accessibility means sometimes more outside investments and interests in the land and the area by outside players risking displacement of locals by offering huge sums of money and alienation of local people. There are no laws to protect the basic and customary rights of the local people to own private and communal lands, like it used to be during the British colonial period. The notion of State Subject Rule used to protect the rights of the local people, which is still implemented in the Pakistani and Indian administered Kashmir, but not enforced in Gilgit Baltistan, opening way for Pakistani and other citizens to settle in Gilgit Baltistan and own land especially in urbanised and strategic areas, with huge impact on demography, economy and politics.

Similarly, the CPEC projects, large dams and other projects are driven by external security interests of national and regional actors with no local participation in decision making. Consequentially, these security paradigms mean less ownership, participation, more political restrictions on local voice groups, and even clipping the wings of the civil society actors, which were earlier given space to operate to supplement and complement government efforts.

In conclusion, regional development challenges and perspectives in Gilgit Baltistan is in a continuous flux and is mainly driven by external drivers. Local Civil Society-led bottom-up approaches worked well and even did miracles in fragile and vulnerable regions like GB where the state capacities are weak, resources meagre and population is scattered with least social and natural endowments and huge disparities. However, such interventions have its limitations in terms of legitimacy, sustainability and scaling up good practices and wider ownership of the government machinery and in general by masses.

Therefore there is a need to strengthening the local government system for participatory governance, creating public and private partnerships between civil society and the local governments to promote political participation, equitable development and using local governments as instruments and engines for economic growth at local levels. In order to adapt to and mitigate the risks of natural disasters and climate and global changes at local levels, there is a need to do hazard and vulnerability risks assessments, land-use and town planning and developing framework for peri-urban development to create transitional spaces and economic zones to tackle the issue of rural to urban migration, and to assess the carrying capacities of towns for services and for sustainable development.

Strengthening local civil society sector is key to regional development and need to be nurtured to tackle issues of inequality, youth and women empowerment, poverty, media and legal empowerment, disaster risks and humanitarian assistance, health, education, housing for the poor and other marginalised groups.

Piecemeal approaches by donors and the large development agencies should be avoided. A longer term approach is required, not working only in project modes of touching one issue, leaving it unsolved and moving to the next. There is a need to adopting cluster and multi-input approaches to regional development and addressing issues of rural poverty, migration, youth unemployment, women development and strengthening the capacities of local governments, the private sector and local civil society groups to tackle the issues mentioned above.

Lastly, large civil society and development networks including Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) need to proactively create space and build confidence of local communities and civil society groups in governing their own affairs, making and taking their own decisions in their own context whether in peace time or in crises situations in order to create local ownership, sustainability and genuine participation without risking crowding out local actors. Local decisions need to be made locally, not in Islamabad, Karachi or anywhere else.

Bernard Repond

Pamir's Bridges

PAMIR'S BRIDGES, a Swiss NGO, was established in 2001. All six members of the committee work on a voluntary basis. Today, PAMIR'S BRIDGES counts 125 members and over 300 friends and donators. It was founded by three people who went together in 2000 for a riding trek of 21 days in the Tien Shan Mountains of Kyrgyzstan. PAMIR'S BRIDGES is Member of Fribourg-Solidaire (assoc. of NGO of Canton of Fribourg, Switzerland).

1 My links with the Pamirs

Since my teenage years, I was interested in the mountains of Pamir, Karakorum and Himalaya. History, geography, culture, ethnology, sports were my hobbies and passions. In 1976, I had the chance to travel alone in a VW bus for three months in Afghanistan and my main goal was to reach the Wakhan Corridor and Little Pamir. I went up to Jurm and Baharak and was turned down by police. No permit.

January 1979: together with my wife, by chance we met Rahman Kul in Gilgit/Pakistan and stayed one week with his family up in Imit, greeted by Muzaffar-Ud Din, son of a former Raja, and Malik and Aref, sons of Rahman Kul.

September 1992: first travel to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Since then, every year I have spent between one and three months in Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan.

September 2010: four weeks expedition to Wakhan Corridor & Little Pamir.

2 PAMIR'S BRIDGES & development

Development for us means changes, moving forwards, adaptation to different life styles, project implementation, access to education and autonomy for all and without forgetting the history... This is a real challenge.

When you do development projects in former Soviet Republics, take into consideration that you are facing an educated population in every single corner of the countryside, many of them being bi-lingual, or even tri-lingual, a population that went to school from the age of seven to sixteen and more. This aspect is very important and it makes the approach not easier than in a really under-developed society.

Don't forget the endemic corruption in the whole region: it's a harsh reality. Just one example for illustration: In November 2016, I was talking to a university student in Bishkek and he said to me very openly: "It's very difficult for us to avoid corruption because we are living daily in a wild corrupted society".

The beneficiaries of our programs are shepherd's families and villagers of mountain settlements of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Besides building bridges, our aim is to establish a cultural exchange between the Alps and the Pamir regions. Another activity is the adviser help we offer to young entrepreneurs to set up eco-tourism agencies in order to create jobs in the mountains to avoid a bigger exodus.

Local reliable partners are a crucial point: We are working with CAMP Alatau since 2001. We are glad to say that we have achieved quite a good number of projects:

Sixty-four bridges were rehabilitated in Kyrgyzstan, and one in Paktur Village, Gunt Valley, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan. Locals do all the preparation work including civil engineering and presentation of a bridge project. There is no expat. The bridges are built completely by villagers and shepherds of the same valley who are going to use this bridge after rehabilitation. It gives them the sense of responsibility to maintain their bridge afterwards. This is a very important factor to develop the sense of responsibility. Our national partner CAMP Alatau and members of our committee inspect, every year, the progress of the projects what gives credits to the villagers.

From 2001 to 2015, PAMIR'S BRIDGES has financed the rehabilitation of 65 bridges for a total amount of CHF 166,650. The average cost of a bridge was CHF 2,564.

Our organisation conducted various other activities since its establishment in 2001. In 2005, there was the realisation of the promotion film "Bridge 53". Five years later, we financed the translation of Ella Maillart's book "Turkestan Solo" into Kyrgyz (following her 1932 expedition) and the free distribution of 3,000 books in Kyrgyzstan. We sponsored an exhibition of 120 photos of Ella Maillart along with 40 drawings of late Malik Kutlu (brother of Ekber Kutlu, son of late R. Kul) in the Fine Arts Museum in Bishkek in 2012. 6,000 people visited this exhibition. In terms of promoting economic capacities we offered six training courses for mountain cheese-makers. Due to our support four eco-tourism agencies could be established:

- Shepherd's Way Trekking in Barskoon (Kyrgyzstan): exclusive horseback riding agency. Director: Ishen Obolbekov, www.kyrgyztrek.com
- MCT in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan): hiking, mountain biking, ski tour: Director: Talant Kirseev, www.montscelestes.com
- Pamir Guides in Murghab (Tajikistan): hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, culture: Director: Saidali Gaibuldaev, www.pamirguides.com

- EcoNomad in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan): hiking & culture tours. Director: Nuraly Turganbaiev, www.eco-nomad.com

The economic support and cultural impacts of eco-tourism activities for the mountain populations of the Pamir and Tien-Shan are very important in terms to reducing the exodus towards towns, cities and abroad.

Finally, also everyday life-connected activities have to be mentioned. We helped to construct new toilets in Savnop Village, Bartang Valley, and to rehabilitate the boarding school of Shaymak Village, located in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan. Finally, Pamir's Bridges is supporting the extension of the Karakol Regional Museum. A hall dedicated to Ella Maillart will hold a permanent exhibition of her photos taken in 1932. This exhibition is a very important historical account and testimony for the Kyrgyz people.

3 How do we collect funds?

We organise so called "Pamir events" including films, slideshows, a mini *yrta*, bazaars and talks every winter in Switzerland, Europe, and even the USA. Additionally, we try to raise funds through our website and media support, but that is a very difficult task.

4 Present & future challenges

To be always in phase with the local realities and to be very careful of the links with the administration to avoid being "used" are very tricky challenges for us. We want to give our local partners large but controlled autonomy, but we should organise the control and inspection of each project by our people or reliable partners. This gives them the sense of responsibility and ownership. To have local / national reliable members in our NGO committee helps to foresee better what the needs of the local population are, and it helps and teaches our partners to learn how a democratic association works.

This circumstance leads to human rights and obligations. Both points are extremely important to avoid "assisted people" who just are sitting, drinking *tchai*, and waiting to receive money.

We have to continue the implementation of every single mission, not keeping successfully finished projects as trophy in our bookshelves. Our hope is to see a serious and devoted organisation taking really care of the forgotten population of Little and Big Pamir. Up there it is SURVIVAL, not life. For being in twenty-first century, it's a scandal and a shame.

THIS IS OUR CHALLENGE

PAMIR'S BRIDGES



*Pasu women are frequently crossing the bridge across the Hunza River to maintain their agricultural fields in Kharamabad
Photograph © Hermann Kreuzmann 30 June 1985*

Thematic session V: Knowledge generation and heritage preservation¹

The final session of the 'meeting of minds' included three contributions from speakers of different origins and educational backgrounds about diverse aspects of knowledge generation and heritage preservation in the Pamirs.

Odinamamad Mirzo, former headmaster and current curator of the museum in Namadgut, Ishkashim District of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (Tajikistan), provided interesting background information on historical knowledge generation in the Wakhan and Ishkashim Regions of modern day Tajikistan. He emphasised the general importance of communication corridors for knowledge generation and education in remote mountain regions, and described the effects of Soviet educational expansion in the Tajik Pamirs. He concluded his presentation with an introduction to the local Museum of Namadgut, which was established under his guidance.

Nazir Ahmed Bulbul introduced himself as being a 'shepherd' preserving and generating knowledge about the Wakhi Culture. In his various functions as the President of the Local Council of Gulmit, Gilgit-Baltistan (Pakistan); the headmaster of the local school; and a poet, he pursues different approaches to promote Wakhi culture and language and to preserve the cultural heritage of his people.

Markus Hauser, a Swiss cartographer from Winterthur with a long standing enthusiasm for the high mountains of Tajikistan, presented the 'Pamir Archive' project, which he started 20 years ago. Since then he has continuously collected, digitised and catalogued sources for the project, including: books and articles, maps, images, and postcards with the objective of systematising, preserving and making information available about the Pamirs and adjacent regions.

The discussion that followed dealt with the advantages and challenges of putting an oral language such as Wakhi into writing, the question of whether development and cultural preservation are contradictory or mutually beneficial processes, and the importance, and often overseen, potentials of local knowledge for heritage preservation. As a possible solution for the latter problem, 'public archaeology' with its high degree of local participation in research and preservation activities was proposed.

¹ Based on minutes recorded by Marina Heyink and Sarah van Bentum



*Religious shrines (aston) form a major asset of cultural heritage in Tajik Wakhan and have been studied by various local scholars
Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 10 August 1999*

Knowledge generation and heritage preservation in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAR)¹

I would like to start with the observation that for a long time our German friends have shown interest in the investigation of the nature and society of the Pamir Region. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the German geographer Karl Ritter studied the people of the upper parts of the Syr Darya and Amu Darya Rivers, i.e. the Pamirs, the Hindukush, and western Tibet. German (M. Humbach), Italian (G. Neole), and British scientists (M. Miller) confirmed Ritter's findings in the end of the nineteenth century. The latter added the idea that Pamirian people migrated southwards to India, and from the fifteenth century onwards even to Europe. Currently, new hypotheses about the migration from the Pamirs are being discussed. In 2009, Bulgarian scholars from the University of Sofia visited my museum with the aim to detect traces between the Wakhan Region and a people living in Bulgaria naming themselves 'Wakhandar'.

In 1928, the participants of the Soviet-German Complex Expedition gathered rich material about natural resources of the Pamirs and their economic utility. During the hard time at the end of the twentieth century, Germany offered humanitarian aid to Pamirian people. Since 2000, German organisations have supported the development of the regional economy and nature conservation in various ways. Most visitors to my ten year old museum are coming from Germany and France.

1 Importance of communication corridors

Mutual contact between neighbouring and distant peoples and boundary-crossing exchange are important for the generation and development of knowledge. Communication corridors such as roads have a specific meaning for mountain regions; they enable the contact with the outer world. The Pamirs being the very centre of Asia historically represented a cross-roads of communication between the West (Europe), the East (China), the North (Russia), and the South (India). In ancient times, the most southern branch of the so-called Silk Roads led through the Pamirs. In the thirteenth century (1271-1295), the European explorer Marco Polo passed on his way to China, travelling along the historically year-round traversable Wakhan Section running on both sides along the Panj River. Besides being a trading route, this branch of the Silk Roads Network was also used by Chinese pilgrims on their way to and from India. Books were transported on these roads and were seen as especially remarkable goods. It is said that the caravan of the Chinese traveller Xuanzang passed the

¹ Translated by Andrei Dörre.

Wakhan Region in the seventh century transporting twenty-two horse loads of books from India to China. During that time, Buddhism had spread out in the region of the upper Panj River. There were several Buddhist monasteries, like the one that was discovered by archaeologists in 1970 in the settlement of Vrang. In 1729, the Chinese pilgrim Hoi-Chao noted that Buddhism had completely replaced Zoroastrism in the Wakhan.

2 Knowledge generation

In the course of the arrival of Islam in the Pamirs, Arab and Persian script, religious literature, and written poetry subsequently proliferated. When the conditions were suitable, a couple of passes over the Hindukush enabled the inhabitants of Wakhan and Ishkashim to travel to India to obtain commodity items and books. Some of these travellers received some education in Badakhshan (today Afghanistan) and opened their own schools after returning to the Wakhan and Ishkashim. In the eleventh century, the Tajik poet Nasiri Khusraw spent the last fifteen years of his life in Badakhshan. He visited Ishkashim, Wakhan, Shugnan, Rushan, and Darwaz and disseminated Ismaili thoughts and literature-based philosophical knowledge amongst the people. In the same century, several religious leaders like Shokhi Koshon, Shokh Kambar, and others visited to the Pamirs to spread the Ismaili interpretation of Shia Islam. In the course of time, more and more schools were established and subsequently the first native religious leaders, authors, and poets emerged. Muboraki Wakhoni from the eighteenth century was one of them.

However, the literacy rate in the Pamirs remained very low until the 1920s. There were no schools offering courses in the basics of modern science. The first Soviet school in GBAR was opened in the regional centre of Khorog in 1923. The subordinate districts received their first schools one year later. The objective of the Soviet Cultural Revolution in the 1930s was the elimination of illiteracy amongst the Pamirian population. Two strategies were pursued: first, the number of elementary schools for children was increased, and second, writing and reading classes were offered for people up to fifty years old. In 1949, an obligatory seven-year school education program was introduced, which was systematically extended in the following years. From 1970 onwards, eleven years of school education were made compulsory. The Soviet education system promoted the continuous raising of the individual education up to an age of fifty years. In the course of time, Pamirian people born in the 1920-1930s continued to attend evening and other schools after finishing their elementary education.

In the 1970s, the Pamirian population had the highest share of people with middle and high education degrees (525 out of 1,000) in the whole Soviet Union (483 out of 1,000). After Tajikistan gained independence in 1991, the Research Institute of Humanities of the Acad-

emy of Sciences, a State university, and a vocational training centre of the University of Central Asia were established in Khorog. Since 1969, the Pamir Biological Institute has been in charge. Nowadays, a remarkable share of academics in Tajikistan have Pamirian origins.

3 Heritage preservation

At the present time, considerable work is being done in Tajikistan for the preservation of historical monuments. Sixty-nine archaeological objects can be found in Ishkashim District including ancient fortresses such as Qala-i Qakh-Qakha and Qala-i Yamchun from the third or second century B.C.E., settlements, watchtowers, monasteries, petroglyphs, and others. Since 2009, Yamchun Fortress has been listed on Tajikistan's tentative list for possible UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

There are three museums in Ishkashim District, one of them is the Namadgut Museum. It was opened in 2005, and is focused on seventeen historical monuments and consists of three rooms. Its largest monument is the Qakh-Qakha Fortress located right above the Panj River in the middle of the valley. The fortress is 650 meters long, up to 250 meters wide, and has 56 watchtowers. A sacral place called 'Shokh-i Mardan', which is dedicated to Islam's victory over Zoroastrism is located right across the fortress. 'Hiding-caves' and stone inscriptions dated from the same period are located not far away. Petroglyphs from the eighth century are located some three km away. Graves from the fifth century can be found seven km away from Namadgut. Additionally, ancient irrigation installations, an old Pamirian house, orchards, and other things can be visited. Etymologically, the name of Namadgut comes from the old-Persian word for 'worshipping place'. The settlement used to be the centre of the Wakhan, the centre of the Zoroastrian religion. After the spread of Islam, Namadgut became an Islamic centre. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were three religious schools and a mosque in Namadgut. This rich heritage formed the basis of the museum.

The museum also exhibits semiprecious stones, national dresses, ceramics and metal dishes, musical instruments, jewellery, portraits of important religious and secular persons, books about local beliefs, customs and activities, and other things. The information presented in this paper was published in 2010 in my book 'Wakhan. A scientific, historic and ethnographic study'. Another book with historical pictures from Namadgut will be published.



*Kishwar Abdulishoev explains imaginations of heritage preservation in the newly built cultural centre of Khorogh
Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 16 July 2010*

Knowledge generation and preservation of Wakhi cultural heritage

It is a great honour for me to be in Berlin to present my views among the prominent figures and brains having lifelong efforts and love for the Pamirians. Especially, I am indebted to this unique university and the faculty who made it possible for us all to share our viewpoints on challenges and opportunities in the Pamir Region. Above all, I am thankful to Professor Hermann Kreutzmann for his selfless efforts in strengthening our school, language and pride in identity.

The context of knowledge generation and heritage preservation is characterised by several challenges such as identity crises, heritage degradation, youth engagement, climate change, security issues for the community, and difficult political and economic conditions.

As a Wakhi poet, a school head and President of the Local Council I would like to focus my talk on my experiences about knowledge generation and preservation of Wakhi cultural heritages both tangible and intangible. However, some other initiations would also be touched.

1 As Wakhi poet

As a poet, I have had immense love and respect from Wakhis around the globe. Being Wakhi, I felt that most of our people are a bit shy about their identity as shepherds. Now, most of them sing that

Mari yem faxr xīkem wuz, šur̄nem tu šur̄nem tey
Kūli imone zikem wuz, šur̄nem tu šur̄nem tey
Tremis žun mol-holišt tu, nivem de ilme helga wuz
Xayolet fikrveš p̄yem, šur̄nem tu šur̄nem tey
..... continued

Translation

I was shepherd, I am shepherd
I am proud that I am Wakhi, I was shepherd, I am shepherd
I am the language of absolute faith, I was shepherd, I am shepherd
In the past I owned cattle, now I am in the pasture-hut of knowledge
Herding thoughts and ideas, I was shepherd, I am shepherd
Holding stick of pen in hand, my luggage of voyage are my books
Exploring the butter-store of knowledge, I was shepherd, I am shepherd
Skimming the butter of intellect, from the delicious curd of knowledge
Decanting the milk of ideas, I was shepherd, I am shepherd
The entire world is our green field, everywhere we nestle to herd
In every field, at every slope, I was shepherd, I am shepherd

The aim of this poem was to illustrate the pastoral life, convey message with preserving the unique words that were endangered due to economic migration.

There are several poetry-specific challenges which I have to face such as to choose a script for Wakhi language, to generate knowledge, to preserve and present the language, to illustrate the mountain life through words, to arise pride in identity, to step into knowledge society and to inspire young generations to write books like my collection of Wakhi poetry 'Biyoze Bulbul' published in 2014.

2 As teacher

As school head of the community based Al-Amyr Model School I and the school staff have taken the several measures to boost cultural identity, such as the use of traditional cap as uniform and traditional robe (*chupan*) in ceremonies, teaching Wakhi language in school, stimulating students to conduct small scale research and documentation about their area and culture, supporting the revival of local games and local music in school.

3 As president of local council

The Local Council governs the community socially through different portfolios managed by volunteers. The activities have the following targets: guidance about harmonious life for security of the community, economic progress through economic planning board, youth engagement through youth and sports board, women empowerment through women portfolio, ensure health and education through education and health boards, helping people in need through social welfare board, and preservation and promotion of culture through cultural portfolio.

The main initiations by the council are arrangements of festivals and celebrations for harmony and brotherhood like the revival of old festivals and addition of new ones like the blossom festival, community mobilisation towards civil society efforts accompanied by school, health and drinking water-related self-help projects, women entrepreneurship such as ladies shops, restaurants and handcraft centres, the initiation of a Wakhi music school (*Bulbulik*) with collaboration of the Gulmit Educational and Social Welfare Society, as well as patronising boy scouts and girls guides and other youth programs such as youth camps. In collaboration with FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance, we are conducting awareness sessions and train youth to any manageable calamity to meet climate change-related hazards. Finally, we promote culture and heritage for tourism, and work on the establishment of a new museum.

In a developing country like Pakistan, we need to believe in ourselves and strengthen civil society programs at large.

The Pamir Archive: A world of information

My love for the high mountain country Tajikistan, my interest in the history of Central Asia together with my profession as cartographer prompted me to start building up The Pamir Archive 20 years ago. The result is not only a very large book collection of over 7,000 books in many languages dealing with Central Asia, but - with special emphasis on Tajikistan and the Pamir Region (ethnography, culture, history, archaeology, cartography, geology, glaciers, mountains, flora, fauna) - also a collection of very important maps showing the progress of knowledge about Russian Turkestan and adjoining areas from the eighteenth century up to recent times.

Especially valuable are the many maps from Russian origin, either not available in libraries outside Russia and the CIS countries, or folded away and hidden in books. There is also a dangerous lack of awareness of the historical value of maps in libraries and archives throughout Central Asia. The digitisation of these maps is a possibility not only to preserve the maps but also to present them on the internet all over the world. Three examples show the quality of the scans:

- <http://tinyurl.com/ht9tq3z>
- <http://tinyurl.com/zlnvypc>
- <http://tinyurl.com/byjq6nt>

A collection of over 1600 postcards from the beginning of the twentieth century up to the 1930s complements the physical collection. The digitisation of these postcards creates new potential for research. The quality of the scans can be seen here:

<http://tinyurl.com/jdgn74h>

The digitisation of ten thousands of articles and books dealing with all aspects of Central Asian matters and the following Optical Character Recognition (OCR) gives the possibility of machine translation in many languages and the text-to-speech option allows handicapped people to hear these texts either in the original or in any translated language. These prints and photographs were also digitised with high resolution. One example can be seen here: <http://tinyurl.com/juncoh6>

The cartographical output over the many years travelling in Tajikistan resulted in the three sheet tourist maps of Tajikistan 'North Tajikistan', 'South Tajikistan' and 'The Pamirs' sponsored by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) available in Tajikistan at different selling points and online from the Swiss distributor Geckomaps.com. Out of these mapping data a 'School Map of Tajikistan' was produced, printed in 50,000 copies

and distributed to all schools of Tajikistan. Many smaller mapping projects (i.e. for the Odyssey Guide Book 'Tajikistan and the High Pamirs') complete my work and there is still a lot to do to improve the tourism in Tajikistan with high-end cartographical outputs.



The Pamirs
Design & cartography Markus Hauser 2016

Closing statement and remarks on future perspectives

The conference devoted to the Pamirs is reaching final moments. It was organised in the most perfect manner by the Centre for Development Studies, Freie Universitaet Berlin. Special thanks go to Prof. Hermann Kreutzmann and his excellent team. The conference was preceded by the publication by Prof. Kreutzmann's "Pamirian Crossroads. Kirghiz and Wakhi of High Asia", the volume presenting the outcomes of a unique research carried out in the best traditions of the German geography school. This classical German *grossbuech* includes a detailed review of the environment, history, culture, and traditions of the Pamirs, starting from the period of the Great Game until recent times. In this connection, it would be proper to mention the phenomenon well known in geography: German scientists demonstrate unfading interest in the Asian Region and in Central Asia, in particular.

I would also like to recollect several important dates that have been both directly and indirectly relevant for the theme of the Conference:

- In 2018, we shall mark 90 years since the famous Soviet-German expedition to the Alai and Pamirs carried out by the Academy of Sciences of the USSR with participation of German geographers and mountain climbers;
- In 2017, we shall mark 25 years after UN Earth Summit on Environment and Development (Rio 1992), which adopted the Global Agenda-21 having for the first time included the issues of mountain development in the list of global priorities;
- In 2016, we shall mark 16 years from publication by Chinese scientists Lu Tsan-Fu and Gu Tsa-yui of their article 'Reflections on Transnational Development of the Eastern Central Asian Economic Zone and Construction of the Eurasian [Transportation] Continental Bridge Across Mountainous Altai' (Lu Tsan-Fu & Gu Tsa-yui 2000). This article was the first Chinese 'touchstone' preceding the ongoing Chinese initiative 'Economic Belt of the Silk Road. One Belt. One Road' that has commenced in 2013.
- In 2016, the first campus of the University of Central Asia will open its doors in the city of Naryn, Kyrgyzstan. This University was built under the initiative of the Aga Khan (1996) and its focus is directed on the exploration of mountains of Central Asia, as well as on training of the leaders in sustainable development of mountain territories. In 2017, the UCA is expecting to open its second campus in the city of Khorog, Pamirs, Tajikistan. In 2019, construction of the third campus of UCA is to be finalised in the city of Tekeli, Kazakhstan.

I believe that the dates mentioned above are the important keystones in the most recent history of exploration of the mountain areas of Central Asia, of their transformation and development trends. All of them are directly or indirectly interrelated and are of acute interest for the researchers and the practitioners.



New Silk Road economic belt initiative

Source: Trade and container shipping homepage; http://www.joc.com/international-trade-news/so-what-china%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98one-belt-one-road%E2%80%99-thing-anyway_20150407.html; accessed 2 June 2016

What issues were raised by the participants of the conference in their presentations?

The issues may be grouped in accordance with the thematic sessions proposed by the conference organisers and following the chronology of the meeting.

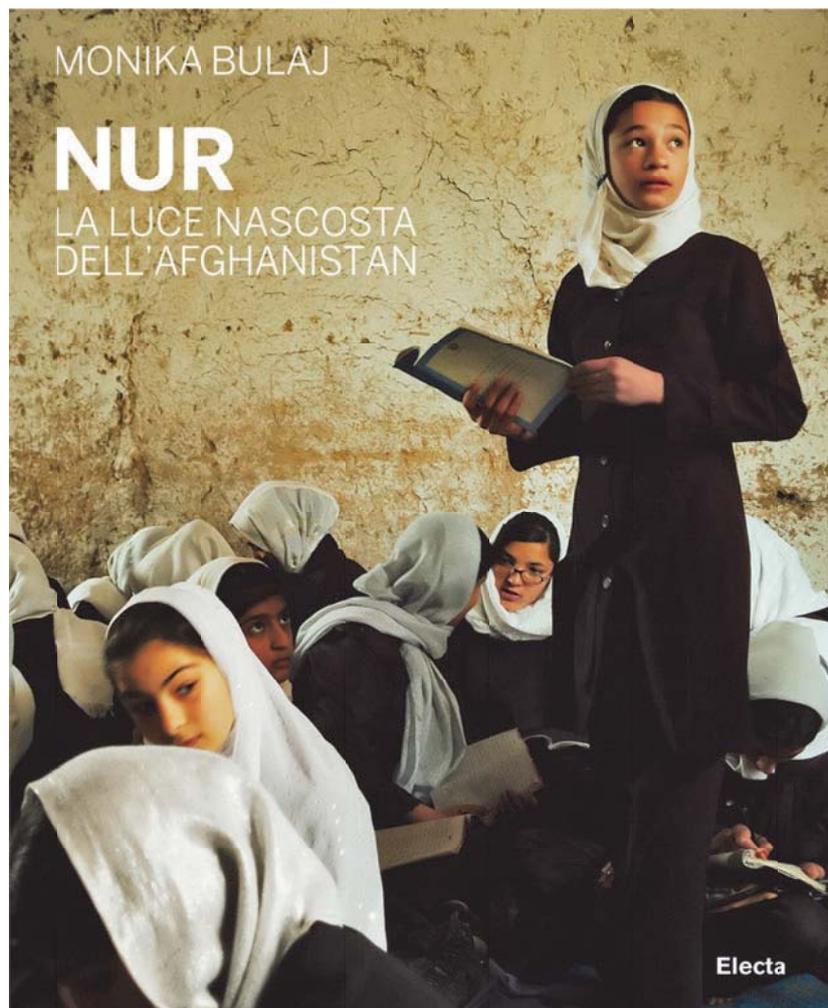
1 Setting the stage

Professor Kreuzmann opened the Conference by saying the following: This conference is planned to be a meeting of minds under the title 'Pamirs at the crossroads'. Borderland studies have taken a new direction and have occupied an important place in social and political sciences. The studies have gone beyond looking at border-lines; nowadays emphasis is laid on the permeability of boundaries and selectiveness trespassers, traders, migrants and refugees in border regimes. The region concerned has been one of the central objectives in our joint research programme 'Crossroads Asia'¹. From a second perspective these border regions have become of global interest nature protection and biodiversity

¹ See the webpage of Crossroads Asia: <http://crossroads-asia.de/en/home.html>. All working papers and other publications can be downloaded from this site.

preservation are at stake. The conference is shifting the perspective from the places of political decision-making in the lowland capitals of the respective countries into the centres of attention which we have located in the mountainous interface named as the Pamirs, but which reaches far beyond. Remoteness and marginalisation should be reversed for the purpose of highlighting vital issues that are concerned with the peripheral mountain areas of the Pamirs.

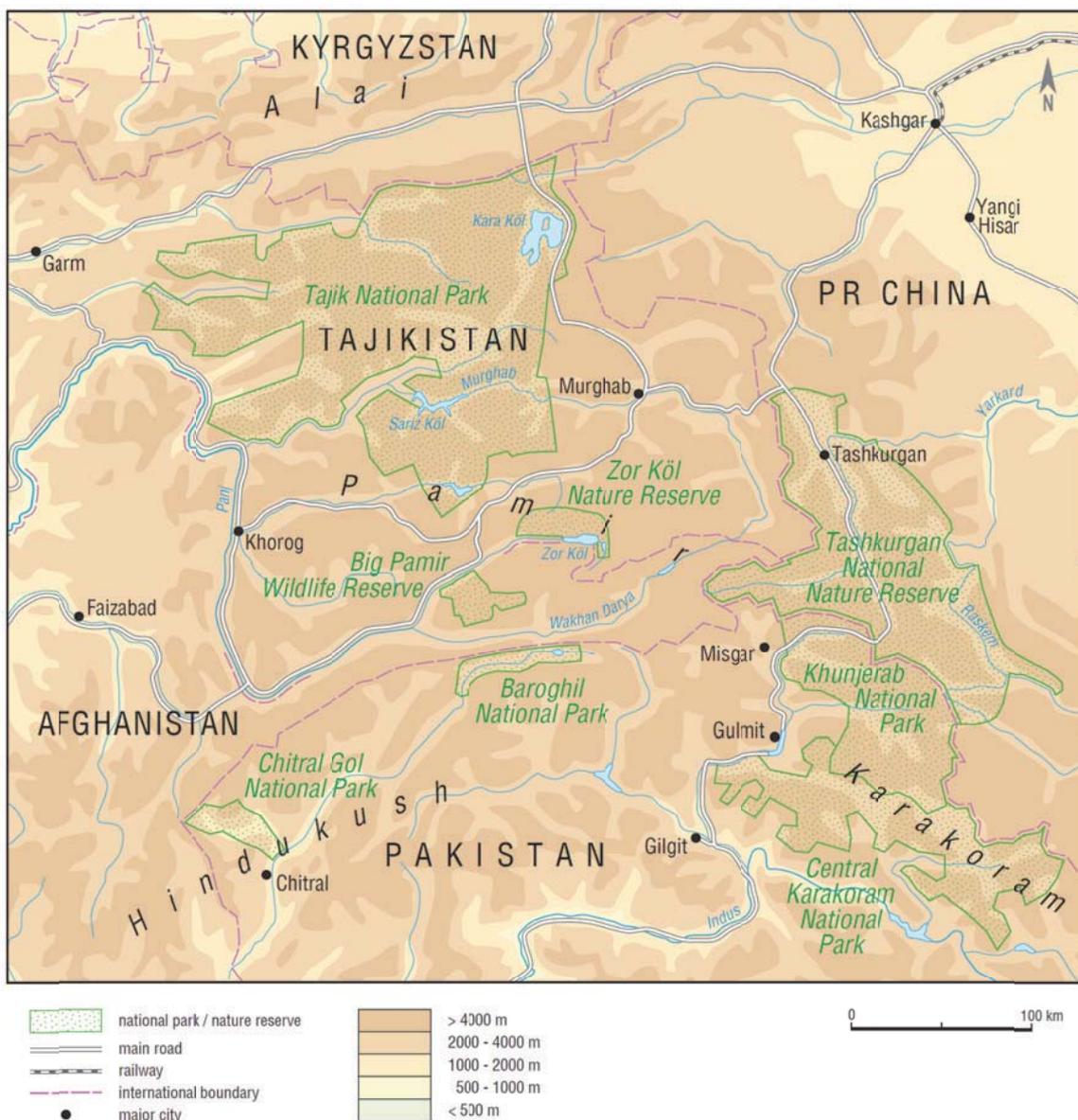
The brilliant photo presentation by Monika Bulaj: 'Nur. La luce nascosta dell'Afghanistan' was based on photographs taken by her between 2009 and 2012. It has brought us in the midst of actual life of Badakhshani, Kirghiz and Wakhi, and made the participants feel the atmosphere of the Afghan Pamirs. Monika Bulaj issued a strong statement to look at the challenges Afghanistan has been facing and how Afghan faces have been imprinted by the effects of war, confrontation and flight. She succeeded in creating an atmosphere that geographers have defined as the sense of place. And from the very beginning this gave the conference a special tonality - openness and desire of each participant to share the knowledge and views on the issues and the development potential of the Pamirs.



Source: Monika Bulaj 2013

2 Challenges for resource maintenance and utilisation

Yi Shaoliang stated that due to effects of globalisation and climate change the Pamir-Hindu Kush-Himalayan region has undergone great changes in the past decades. The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) sees the biggest challenge in balancing the region's potentials between preservation and development. In its role as a facilitator ICIMOD aims to improve the management of trans-boundary national parks as 'natural, social and cultural resources'. During the discussion in the plenum the function of national parks in their present set-up and the role of ICIMOD were questioned in a way that demanded an intensified stakeholders' integration, both on national - i.e. Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan - as well as on a regional level.



National parks south of Kashgar crossed by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
 Source: Hermann Kreutzmann 2016: Pamir or Pamirs - Perceptions and interpretations. In: Kreutzmann, H. and T. Watanabe (eds.): Mapping transition in the Pamirs. Cham, p. 4

The cases of Tajik National Park as a non-functioning park and Khunjerab National Park as a repressive outsider's scheme without reasonable local participation and adequate compensation measures for the loss of pasture were taken as examples of misdirected funds with shallow effects. The integration of the local populations and their extensive knowledge seems still to be an exception even after decades of addressing these vital issues. The spatiality of cutting out certain areas as nature preserves and protected territories seems not always to be in tune with watersheds, glaciated areas and their extent in order to have a positive effect. Another unsolved and increasingly important issue will be the commercial idea proposed by neighbouring governments for introducing a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as it cuts through several national parks and nature reserves. On its way from Kashgar to Islamabad heavy truck traffic will cross the Kizil Su Pamir Plateau Wetland Nature Reserve, the Tashkurgan National Nature Reserve, the Khunjerab National Park and the Central Karakoram National Park. Its long-term effects on nature and society cannot be estimated yet.



*Zor Köi Nature Reserve is located in the Great Pamir at the Afghan-Tajik border where Kirghiz pastoralists use the pastures on a seasonal basis
Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 14 July 2013*

Nusrat Nasab explained how Focus Humanitarian Assistance has aimed to enhance community-based disaster management by developing the people's capacity of handling possible disasters before, while and after their happening. Mitigation shall be achieved by awareness-raising, education and training for which indigenous knowledge is seen as the key to risk reduction.

The debate in the plenum focused on the challenges of relocation and resettlement as a preventive measure. Experiences so far have shown convincing results that are due to early warning and sharing of weather forecasts from various meteorological services with village communities. Another aspect was who is bearing the high investment costs for improving the infrastructural resilience measures. In this context the issue of out-migration was raised as a form of brain-drain of local institutional wisdom as migrants take their knowledge with them and will not be at the place when it might be required. In addition the multi-local lifestyles of many households have a detrimental effect on being prepared for a wide range of crises that occur in the mountain villages. Here issues related to migration and knowledge preservation came into the picture for the first time.

3 Education and mobility

Three viewpoints were offered about the nexus of education and mobility. Robert Middleton emphasised upon the early effects of Ismaili religious scholarship and training which was much later augmented by a sophisticated Soviet school system. The latter approach serviced all communities irrespective of their physical remoteness and had established a comprehensive schooling and training system that has changed the income opportunities of people from Gorno-Badakhshan. The last quarter century though was characterised by a deterioration of education in the mountain villages due to dwindling funds, civil war and economic crises in Tajikistan. Thus, we find a quite different development of the educational sector here that in neighbouring Afghanistan or Pakistan. Majeed Khan shared his experiences as director of education in Gilgit-Baltistan and highlighted the efforts that have been implemented during the last two generations by governmental institutions in northern Pakistan. Here quite significant achievements could be recorded. Finally Bohdan Krawchenko presented his perception of the frame conditions under which the socio-economic development in Tajikistan takes place and in which the activities of the University of Central Asia are embedded. Certain challenges for training and job creation are connected with the upcoming new institutions of higher learning. The following plenary discussion expanded the perspectives on Afghanistan and China where we have two other extremes of educational attainment. In general the question was raised what is the contribution of basic education and higher learning and how is it connected to out-migration. In conclusion it was acknowledged that though a growing number of educated people from the mountains is not finding adequate jobs the investments in education since the second half of the twentieth century have had a salient effect on providing income from multi-local sources that is contributing to the well-being of the relatives who reside in the mountain villages and maintain the inherited resources.



*Meeting of international delegates of the Global Mountain Forum with principal, teachers and staff of Al-Amyr Model School Gulmit
Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 31 August 2015*

4 Experiences with regional development

Bernard Repond who founded the non-governmental organisation 'Pamir's Bridges' made a strong point about accountability and reliability. This gives an NGO certain tasks in two directions. To motivate and stimulate individual private donor's interest in continuing support - in his case in Switzerland - it is inevitable to guarantee and safe-guard the credibility of a project. This can only be achieved by 'giving local people a sense of responsibility' and by cooperating with trustworthy partners that cannot be found everywhere. He concluded his deliberations with a personal wish that we should forget the people in the Afghan Pamirs whom he called 'the poor and forgotten people there'.



*Board on display at the newly opened tunnels along the Karakoram Highway in Gojal
Source: Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 28 August 2015*

Ghulam Amin Beg highlighted the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme's (AKRSP) role in northern Pakistan and emphasised detrimental frame conditions such as the semi-autonomous constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan within Pakistan, security questions and border issues. Economic dependencies on Pakistan play important roles in regional development. Since 1972-74, when small feudal states were dissolved many changes have occurred. The Karakoram Highway played an important role. Development efforts by AKRSP started then. The integration of Pakistan's mountainous areas with the lowlands was accelerated due to the infrastructural assets and political reforms. The government institutions have played a central role for the sustainability of projects as they have remained the biggest donors. Donor-driven development means that the agenda of measures and packages comes from outside which is not necessarily in tune with the demand of local communities. Consequently, he highlighted the importance of integrated rather than piece-meal approaches to development.

Muzaffar-Ud Din took his home village Shimshal as a case in point to show how important the fabric of a local community might be for achieving their own goals. Shimshal was formerly very isolated, no support was extended by government, but people themselves were very active: During 15 years of self-organised communal work and with material support by AKRSP the village community constructed a link road over a distance of more than 60 km from the Karakoram Highway to the village. Shimshal used to be a poor village, but now it is one of the most prosperous villages in the area. The villagers managed to achieve this by themselves. Shimshal is only an example, there are many other villages where people did extraordinary things by themselves.

In the discussion the question was raised what are the factors and parameters that allow certain mountain communities to prosper and others to fail? What have been the reasons for these extraordinary achievements in Shimshal? One answer that was offered mentioned the abstract concept of resilience. In this difficult environment, working together is central for survival. Ismaili factor might play an additional role, but there are other communities e.g. in Baltistan that follow different denominations. Another reason might be the aspect of ownership; people tend to work hard for the maintenance of their own resources. An important point is not to romanticise such examples as Shimshal, because there are many villages where such community action does not work. From the outsider's perspective it was mentioned that the leadership component is also essential; one has to find the 'diamond' in the village, meaning that certain communities benefit of their own visionaries and social activists. Communities are heterogeneous, there are always people who are more active than others and have the ability to convince them. Projects must fo-

cus on common objectives; when the majority of the community benefits, the project is more likely to succeed.

5 Knowledge generation and heritage preservation

Odinamamad Mirzoev presented the example of cultural heritage preservation in the Museum Namadgut, in the Western Pamirs of Gorno-Badakhshan in Tajikistan. As a former headmaster and present-day museum curator in Namadgut he shared his experiences about the difficulties to raise awareness about one's own cultural heritage. He provided an overview of his on-going work dedicated to the preservation of Pamirs' cultural heritage in Tajik Wakhan. Situated at the ancient Silk route, Namadgut in Ishkashim District was a frequented transit station for traders as well as Buddhist, Zoroastrian and Muslim pilgrims. This is one reason why the road is sometimes named a Buddhist road. Over the last centuries the region has been an important crossroads within the Pamirs which is documented and evidenced by numerous artefacts that have been collected over time or which are visible witnesses along the road in form of ruins of previous castles and fortifications, shrines and other sacred places. Today many cultural sites as well as the historical rock paintings in Langar with more than 5000 petroglyphs remind us of those times. The challenge has been and will remain one for the future to collect and preserve artefacts. Giving those artefacts a shelter and to preserve and display them in an adequate manner needs further expertise and support.

Nazir Ahmed Bulbul from Gulmit has been involved in culture-related projects through a variety of functions. As a poet and painter, writer and dramatist, but as well as principal of a private school and as Local Council president he has identified a variety of everyday projects that can help in his agenda of strengthening Wakhi communities by education and preservation of the local culture. He identified himself as a 'shepherd' within the flock of 'knowledge generation. His work is dedicated to the protection, maintenance - and shepherding of local thoughts and ideas. His conclusion to the challenges of heritage preservation within the knowledge generation is to strengthen the civil society by education and local culture, so that the Wakhi can trust their own potentials.

From an external perspective Markus Hauser explained the activities and usefulness of the Pamir Archive for present and future generations of scholars, travellers and the interested public. As a Swiss cartographer Markus Hauser has persistently built up the Pamir Archive with the objective to collect, process and thus preserve information about the region. By now, the archive contains books, historical and topographical maps, geo-data, postcards, paintings and photographs; all made available both in digital and print format. The digitised material is made available in high resolution and contains additional and new (geo-

)information. Textual materials are edited by intelligent text recognition, so their accessibility and legibility will be enhanced. All digitised material is accessible for the general public and can be found online (<http://www.pamir-adventure.com/pamirmountains/>).

In the discussion the question was raised on the mere process of transferring Wakhi, as an oral language, into a scripture. As regional languages (language groups) do not correspond with national borders, the importance of trans-boundary cooperation was highlighted. The importance of enabling and motivating people of the Pamirs to write down their own histories and to participate in the cultural preservation process was highlighted as being essential. Then the plenum turned towards the question whether development and cultural preservation are by nature contradictive processes or whether both endeavours can be combined in a beneficial way. It was argued that tourism - seen as one of the main economic present and future forces in the field of cultural preservation and maintaining hereditary practices - highly depends on the historical and natural wealth of the region. Moreover these sites are resources for study and research and as such must be financially supported and maintained by science.

A much-discussed aspect was that the aspect of 'culture' has not entered into the objectives of 'development' yet. Thus, the current mantra of economic development in the Pamirs would impede cultural, historical and social heritage preservation. The point was made, that culture is not valued in financial terms - 'Most donors will not give you a grant for culture'. Others were of the opinion that a combination of culture and development is feasible and that some donors honour such endeavours; e.g. UNESCO, Swiss embassy. Cultural centres are needed to raise awareness for the necessity of preservation. Techniques like those introduced by Markus Hauser were seen as useful methods that fulfil the main objective to provide access to those materials for everybody. Therefore, the necessity to turn the University of Central Asia not only into an educational centre of higher learning but also into a cultural and research centre for the Pamirs was highlighted and the idea endorsed by all participants.

6 The way forward

According to Yuri Badenkov the discussion of new global challenges and future research areas and development trends of the Pamir mountain communities, and of other High Asian regions, should bear in mind the historical experiences accumulated through centuries of cultural and economic development of the mountain countries placed within the Great mountain arch of Asia: from Himalaya-Karakoram- Hindukush, Pamirs, Alai and Tien Shan to the northern mountain massifs of Altai, Sayans, and Transbaikal areas, and further along the Amur River to the Sea of Ohotsk and Sakhalin Island.

The above areas possess remarkable environmental and ethno-cultural diversity; therefore, two key aspects will be relevant for their exploration and development:

- Proper accommodation of the local and regional context in the development studies of specific mountain massifs, and broad involvement of various stakeholders representing interests of diverse social groups and institutions (based on participatory and partnership principles)
- Concerted studies in key mountain regions of Central Asia experiencing new global challenges. Such studies should be based on common principles and approaches and be implemented as a series of joint mountain projects designed under a common umbrella. An important element of such studies should be a comparative analysis of the outcomes, and their implementation in management and development practices. Participation of all potential stakeholders in such studies and exchange of knowledge and information shall be the factors for promoting the success of studies and proper strategies and plans ensuring adaptation of social, environmental, and economic systems to change.

Routes of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative



The vision of a Silk Road economic belt that traverses the Pamirian crossroads with Central Asia as a commercial hub

Source: China Daily 15 April 2015

These, roughly, are the approaches needed for an implementation of the joint project 'The Silk Roads crossing the mountains of Central Asia. Ancient routes and new challenges in times of global change' (2017-2019) pursued by three institutions: Mountain Societies Research Institute, University of Central Asia; Mountain Group MAB-6, Institute of Geography/Russian Academy of Sciences; and Centre for Development Studies, Freie Universitaet Berlin. It is expected that the project shall be carried out under the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI) Programme, and shall cover three major mountain regions of Central Asia:

Pamirs, Tien Shan, and Altai. The project should be completed by an integrating workshop presenting the research outcomes. In this perspective, the current conference may be viewed as a starting event for this future project.

The format of the conference that was proposed by the organisers has perfectly corresponded to the themes and objectives of the conference. It ensured discussion of the diverse aspects of life and development in the Pamirs, a remote mountain region subject to global change impacts, and also falling into the sphere of interests of China and its new large scale initiative 'Economic Belt of the Silk Road'. The conference was attended by representatives of a broad range of professions and stakeholders from many countries and regions: scientists, experts, practitioners, journalists, writers, etc. Many of them originate and live in the Pamirs or in the vicinities, carried out studies and continue to explore these areas, and possess profound knowledge of the region, its environments, cultural and humanitarian values and traditions of the Pamirian peoples inhabiting today the territories of four countries Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and China. This trans-disciplinary format of the conference ensured valuable discussions and debates of diverse aspects of life and development in the Pamirs and its interrelated changes of various expressions and on different scales. We have heard various views from each other, and got a better understanding of the challenges involved. I also hope that we were successful in identifying the key opportunities of research and development for the future. This is, in fact, the major outcome of our work during the conference. There is no doubt that outcomes of the conference shall provide new impetus for studies of the Pamirs, and for exploring the potential for development in the Pamirian crossroads.

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