

Chapter 18

Pastoralism: A Way Forward or Back?

Hermann Kreutzmann

Abstract Perceptions and experiences differ widely in the world of pastoralism. The case studies presented in this volume provide fieldwork-based insights and evidence from a widespread area between the Pamirs, Tien Shan, Hindukush, Karakoram, Himalaya and the Tibetan Plateau. More important than the ecological breadth and spread of environmental properties and changes seem to be the societal embeddedness of pastoralism, the politico-economic framework and the understanding of ‘modernisation’. The debate on the ‘tragedy of the commons’ seems to have developed through a supposed ‘drama of the commons’ to an institutional ‘tragedy of responsibility’ under similar pretexts as in the early stages. Norms and viewpoints govern judgements about actors and victims in relation to their pastoral practices.

Keywords Pastoral embeddedness • Future of pastoralism • Payment for ecosystem services • Tragedy of responsibility • Norms and values

18.1 Contemporary Perceptions

Pastoralism has often been classified as a backward way of living and surviving. Nevertheless, one observation drawn from our case studies in High Asia is the significant persistence of a utilisation strategy that has mastered severe challenges and major constraints posed by neighbours, rulers, states and their administrations and, not to be forgotten, by development agents worldwide. The transformation of pastoral practices is ubiquitous and a signifier of its adaptive capacity.

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At a recent e-conference, a conceptual grounding of pastoralism was attempted by linking its definition to climate change and livelihood debates:

Pastoralism is a complex form of natural resource management, which requires maintaining an ecological balance between pastures, livestock and people, and it is an adaptive strategy to a stressful environment. This adaptation faces a myriad of challenges, of which climatic change is but one. Indeed, the challenge of climate change seems insignificant to many pastoralists who are faced with extreme political, social and economic marginalisation: relax these constraints and pastoral adaptive strategies might enable pastoralists to manage climate change better than many other rural inhabitants. (Nori and Davies 2007, 7)

This description perceives pastoralism as a singular system that has been adversely affected by a number of constraining influences but is a successful adaptive strategy to cope with a multitude of challenges. Various kinds of socio-economic and politico-historical challenges caused pastoralists to adapt, evade or escape and/or abandon certain practices. Most of these constraints were much more powerful than the felt effects of climate change to date. Global warming and its effects are perceived as a gradual process. It has always been the practice of pastoralists to adapt to gradual changes of that calibre. Mitigation was beyond their scope anyhow. Sometimes pastoralists are even not mentioned when it comes to ecosystem services of mountains in times of climate and global change (Macchi and ICIMOD 2010). Marginalisation and neglect are one approach; modernisation and development discourses meet pastoralists with significant effects. Social experiments such as the Soviet collectivisation and the Chinese ‘great leap forward’ have affected pastoral livelihoods not gradually but in the manner of a pending threat to survival and causing severe disasters. Social organisation and pastoral practices were transformed in a short span of time by external and un-experienced planners resulting in human tragedies and casualties and huge losses of pastoral wealth and resources. Within the twentieth century, these interventions were more forceful than anything linked to climate change. Nevertheless, climate change is on today’s global agenda and therefore referred to more often than social change and political transformations (Schröter et al. 2005). Development practitioners and consultants, decision-makers and regional planners have developed a tendency to neglect social and political effects when it seems to be easier to blame climate change for adverse occurrences (e.g. Kelkar et al. 2008; Kohler and Maselli 2009). Some day we might regret the confusion of ideas as the ‘climate change dilemma’ in a similar manner as Jack Ives commented on the Himalayan Dilemma:

It was a development paradigm that confused cause and effect, resulted in the misdirection of large financial resources, and sidelined some of the real needs of the people. Attempts were made to solve a problem that did not exist, or at least, one that had been exaggerated beyond measure. Thus, ‘development’ was distorted and the identification and prioritization of circumstances that demanded attention was delayed. (Ives 2004, 229)

It would be worthwhile to consider both phenomena as the superimposition of gradual processes related to environmental changes with efficient socio-political interventions that sometimes come in the disguise of development, modernisation and resettlement. The resulting effects are meeting pastoralists’ livelihoods and transforming them. A holistic approach that operates from the perspective of pastoralists might avoid the fallacies of confusing cause and effect as was said above.



Photo 18.1 Visitors from Changtang pastoral areas enjoying pilgrimage and urban life in Lhasa (Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann July 30, 2004)

In the framework chapter, we addressed pastoral practices; here, the mosaic of presented case studies attempts to contribute some insights into significant changes in the livestock sector. Furthering the argument, land degradation and measures to counteract these developments become prominent features affecting pastoral practices. At the same time, the transformation of pastoral livelihoods mirrors societal developments that are often planned at urban centres and in capital cities but always have significant effects even in the remotest and mountainous peripheries (Photo 18.1).

In some cases, the adaptive potential might be surprising. In Afghanistan, an environment of insecurity and threat poses the major challenges to pastoralists. Nevertheless, they have shown that animal husbandry can be a profitable undertaking today, fulfilling the important role of supplying the bazaars with valuable livestock products. India and Pakistan have experienced continuous disputes about pasture access, legal rights and grazing fees in their mountainous regions of the North. Since colonial times, agricultural and forest departments have been challenging the space utilised by pastoralists, and revenue officials have been keen on dues from cross-border trade. Although pastoralism remained an important economic resource even after the closure of international borders (Photo 18.2) with China, it is quite surprising how decentralised the attitudes regulating pastoral migration and pasture use appear and how differently the respective administrations treat aspects such as animal health and marketing facilities (Dangwal 2009; Inam-ur Rahim and Amin Beg 2011).

The space left for pastoral activities has been shrinking further since the competition between combined mountain farmers and pastoralists increased the demand for grazing lands, whilst at the same time nature protection and privatisation of common properties are reducing their degrees of freedom. In both countries, a selective process can be observed: sedentarisation of former mobile communities and



Photo 18.2 The Irshad-e-win (4,979 m) resembles a pass separating the Little Pamir (Afghanistan) from the Chapursan Valley (Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan) and connecting both. Politically, both countries do not treat this pass as an official border-crossing point while at the same time Irshad-e-win is an important lifeline for Kirghiz to barter and exchange goods with neighbouring Wakhi who even have acquired the right to pasture their flocks across the border (Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann June 15, 2000)

marginalisation of others. The latter are increasingly becoming more dependent on external suppliers and buyers. They continue to occupy a low social status or are transformed into hired shepherds in a transhumance system, but they remain a vital asset to meet a growing demand for livestock products. A higher degree of regulation has entered the Hindukush-Karakoram-Himalaya realm in the nexus of modernisation and nature protection. With more than 30% of its land surface under protected status (Bajracharya 2011, 128), Nepal is probably one of the most significant examples of the shrinking space in formerly accessible commons. As cattle slaughtering and meat production play only a minor part in the economic activities of many communities, the value attributed to animal husbandry is lower, making it easier to turn to alternative employment or additional income from tourism, outmigration and services (Photo 18.3). These patterns differ from neighbouring China where – as all case studies have significantly shown – a concentrated and centrally guided transformation process in the pastoral sector is under way. The rationale for this is inspired by modernisation theory and justified by green policies that are a response to perceived land degradation and the need for nature protection. The process of implementation seems to be controlled and steered by powerful and effective administrations. Inspired by a similar dual approach of nature protection and modernisation, the Indian model appears to have quite different effects. The public



Photo 18.3 The Lama of the Monastery in Beding (3,692 m; Rolwaling Valley, Gauri Shankar VDC, Nepal) is greeting yaks and its hybrids that are part of household herds. Only a few households practice combined mountain agriculture in which the contribution of livestock is fading. Yaks are still kept for transport purposes and as an investment that can be converted in cash money in times of need (Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann September 29, 2011)

discourse operates along similar lines, the public administration's belief in the messages of modernisation coincides with that of their Chinese colleagues, but China's efficiency and drive as well as the budgetary allocation and implementation of resettlement are not obvious in India yet. The future will show whether the Indian model follows the Chinese blueprint.

The former Soviet Central Asian Republics bear a similar heritage of collectivisation and state-controlled operations in the livestock sector to that in the PR of China (Photo 18.4). Nevertheless, their transition from state to private ownership and their shifting pastoral practices follow a different model in which state interference has diminished except for legislation and allocation of pasture rights. In recent years, the gap has widened between successful pastoral entrepreneurs and subsistence herders. For some, the applicable regulations and enhanced liberties provided the framework to practise a viable form of animal husbandry by creating a value chain that supplies the newly established markets. For others, the summer spent on the pastures is a means to lower the cost of living in an environment where other job opportunities besides outmigration are rare.

All cases have shown the importance of the position of pastoralism within the legal framework and societal set-up of the respective nation states and their economies. In most cases, pastoralists are citizens without a strong political lobby; Afghanistan might be a partial exception (Tapper 2008).

Kyrgyzstan as the land of the Kirghiz incorporates a pastoral tradition in its name. The national symbol – the *tunduk* – refers to the central part of a pastoralist's yurt and is meant to root its society in pastoral traditions. However, the five case



Photo 18.4 The privatised flocks of shepherds from Rangkul are pastured close to the indicator near Chechekti that the Kolkhoz Lenin Zholu (the collective farm named ‘way of Lenin’) was here before (Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann September 6, 2007)

studies on the Kirghiz in different societies – Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and China – have explicated how varied can be the effects of state intervention and resource competition, their impacts on livelihoods and participation in decision-making, the secular and symbolic values of modernisation and development and how they can structure daily life experiences and pastoral practices. Pastoralists rarely get centre stage attention when global agendas such as desertification, nature protection, global warming and/or climate change trigger national politics to implement related policies on regional and local levels. Pastoralists have often become the addressees of ideology-driven modernisation strategies that have significantly affected their livelihoods and pastoral practices.

18.2 From the ‘Tragedy of the Commons’ to the ‘Tragedy of Responsibility’

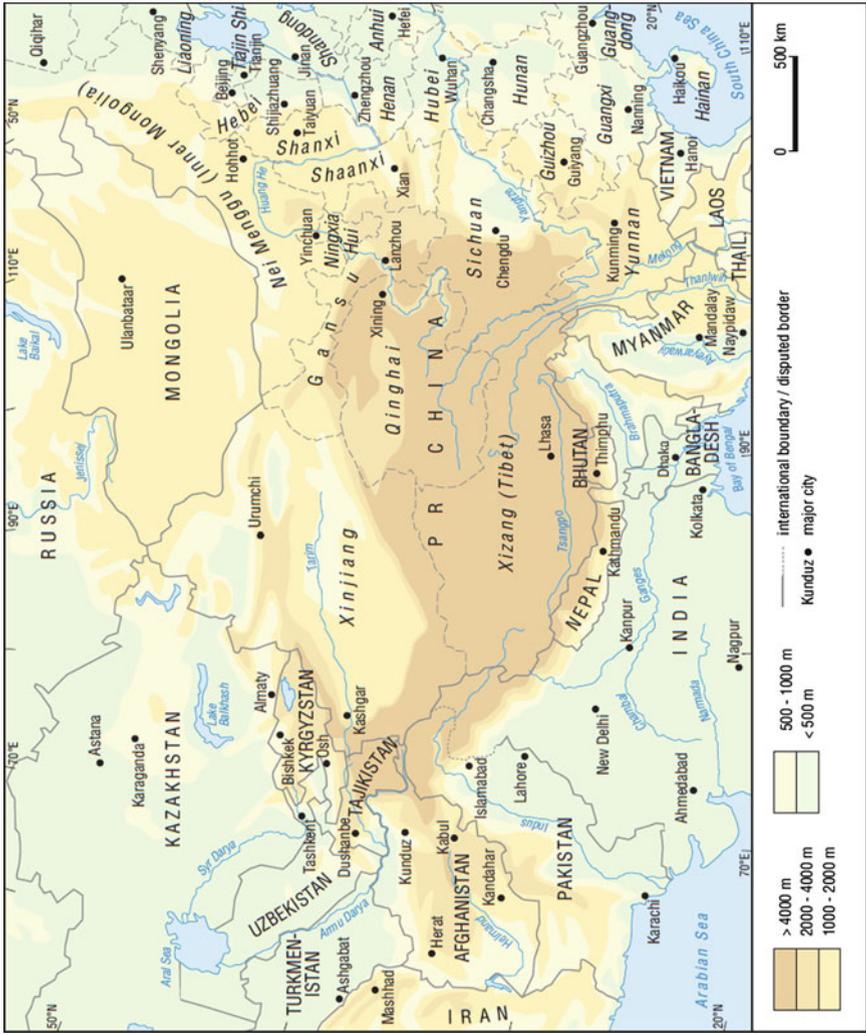
In a shrinking potential environment where growing external demands and powerful interests govern structural changes in the political arena, land-grabbing and encroachments into ‘traditional’ pastures and common properties, it is still surprising how pastoral practices have always adapted to new and threatening challenges and found an outlet to cope with mounting constraints. Societal and political changes have dominated over all kinds of climate and environmental changes. The case studies have revealed that in some regions, pastoralism as a solitary strategy to make

a living might be abolished in the near future for some practitioners, but pastoral practices might prevail in other niches and offer ample opportunities to those who are connected and embedded in their way of accessing resource potential that others still cannot utilise in a meaningful way. The niches are shrinking, but there may well be a way forward.

Growing pressure on the commons has changed the attitude of policymakers and rangeland management planners who had treated rangelands and their inhabitants over long periods as 'marginalised people in regions of neglect'. The debate on the 'tragedy of the commons' triggered off by Garrett Hardin (1968) has developed and gained pace. In times of land-grabbing and expropriation of resources when customary rights can easily be breeched and community practices do not count, it could well be that the notion of a 'drama of the commons' (Ostrom et al. 2002) is much more appropriate. Even during the last decade, the pressure on land resources has grown further and led to an unequal positioning of interests (Fig. 18.1). Hardin's solution for alleviating the 'tragedy of the commons' was privatisation. The presently observable process of selling-off vast tracts of agricultural land resources to powerful multinational state and private investors in Africa and Asia is exactly stimulating the land-grabbing and expropriation of weak communities without lobby. The 'drama of the commons' gains pace and appears to be a 'drama of responsibility' where the vital interests of rural people and communities are at stake and grossly neglected.

In our case, neglect is meant to express the notion of inadequate policies for pastoral communities and their stakes. The subsequent information on policies and legislations will document that attempts at state evasion (Scott 2009) have been in vain since the 1950s at the latest. Administration and bureaucracies have penetrated pastoral areas with different degrees of efficiency. China has been mentioned in great detail already, and it has become obvious that man-made changes to the environment are treated in different ways. Sometimes they are explained as caused by natural hazards and climate change; in rare cases, ideology-based experiments and societal transformations are made responsible for adverse effects in the rangelands.¹ Whilst China has a legacy of top-down interventions accompanied by all kinds of legislation, incentive packages and modernisation programmes, other neighbours are beginning to rethink their attitudes. In India and Pakistan, rangeland management was inherited as a colonial legacy, and policymakers of today refer to early legislation such as the 'Cattle Trespassers Act' of 1871 and the 'Forest Policy' of 1894. In Pakistan, the 'National Forest Policy' of 1962 was the first step towards a rangeland management strategy after independence, this policy being extended to wildlife in 1980. To further the new 'Pakistan Forest Policy' of 1991, a 'National Rangeland Policy' has been announced; a decision about the draft is still pending. Nevertheless, the vested interests of pastoralists and tenure issues are mentioned only in passing.

As late as in 1988, India envisaged a paradigm shift with the 'National Forest Policy' in which rangelands played an important role – followed by the 2006 'National Environmental Policy' – that affects the four mountain provinces (Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim) and to a minor degree Arunachal Pradesh and parts of West Bengal. The intention of Indian rangeland policies is to intensify livestock production in an arena of decreasing rangeland



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Cartography: B. Hilberer

Fig. 18.1 The position of High Asia and its rangelands within the wider context of Asian boundaries and political systems

availability. Inherited legislation has been adapted to current challenges and is probably failing to cope with them. A lack of coordination and adaptation to specific frame conditions is prevalent.

In Nepal, the creation and expansion of protected areas contributed to the exclusion of herders from their inherited pastures. Low production and low productivity can be held responsible for such an approach. The ‘Pasture Nationalisation Act’ of 1975 has transferred the right to provide access to rangeland to the authority of local communities. The present state of affairs can be linked to general observations and to the perception of inefficient traditional management, non-adaptation of scientific knowledge, lack of investment, confusion of ownership and conflicts resulting in a low national priority and the neglect of indigenous knowledge, skills and techniques. The ‘Nepal Biodiversity Strategy’ of 2002 has highlighted the need for a ‘National Rangeland Policy’. The outcome is to be awaited, and it remains to be seen whether the envisaged improvement of herders’ livelihoods based on an increased productivity will materialise.

Only in Bhutan were rangelands nationalised as part of the government forests. In the framework of the 2007 ‘New Land Act of Bhutan’, the government recognises pastoralists as eligible users. Through a ‘*tsamdro* management plan’, pastures can be leased for periods of up to 30 years and beyond. Pastoralists are assumed to constitute a tenth of Bhutan’s population, and they are supported from the top in order to create an environment in which herders remain in high-altitude areas.

In Afghanistan, the ‘Pasture Law’ of 1970 codified the property rights of the government. The law was last amended under the Taliban in 2000 and is currently being re-drafted under the guidance of international agencies to incorporate community-based pasture management systems, but the provisions of 1970 remain the official policy to date with little effect on pastoral practices (Kreutzmann and Schütte 2011).

In the former Soviet Central Asian Republics, a process of transition from state-owned property rights to leasehold and private and/or community-based pasture rights is still in the making. Whilst Kyrgyzstan passed a new law on pastures in 2009 and Tajikistan has also already achieved some legislation, the implementation and practical value of an allocation of pastures to local communities and the decentralisation of responsibilities still have to be awaited.

All brief descriptions of policies and plans reveal a varied set of attitudes towards the management of the commons.² Still, a ‘tragedy of responsibility’ may be observed in countries such as India, Nepal and Pakistan – whilst others have recognised a new challenge that demands an answer. Whether the design of national policies might be an adequate answer to the challenges for the livelihoods of pastoralists remains unanswered here.

18.3 Actors and/or Victims: The Future of Pastoral Practices

Perceiving pastoralism solely from the organisational and strategic aspects of its adaptive potential, its ‘direct and indirect values’ (Davies and Hatfield 2007) and/or its appropriateness for utilising a widespread and extensive natural potential would

omit a discussion about the people that are involved. The case studies presented here cover a wide range of experiences and experiments with changing attitudes, strategies and societal set-ups. In the following, a narrative is related about people of differing backgrounds and biographies who met at two international conferences on pastoralism in 2010.³

The story begins 20 years earlier when land disputes increased in Gojal, Upper Hunza Valley, Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan (Photo 18.5). Amongst the main arenas of disputes and conflicts were encroachments in pasture areas by neighbouring villages and communities, questioning of traditional pasture rights and outright refusal to provide passage and access to formerly used grazing grounds. In an area without land assessment and cadastral surveys, without written documents and maps, the disputes gave all sides some negotiation power and leverage:

Never before have village funds been spent to such an extent in legal disputes in religious and civil courts... The village of Gulmit is the most severely affected of all and serves here as an extreme example. Gulmit's pastures lie scattered comparatively far away from the permanent settlement and are not located just above the homestead... During the 1990s different disputes arose with neighbours about the hereditary rights of pasture use. In 1990 a severe dispute began with Shishket across the Hunza river. The Bori kutor clan of Gulmit was to be deprived of its right to access Gauth, and the Ruzdor clan had similar experiences in Bulbulkeshk and Brondo Bar. Although kinship and marriage relationships exist between the inhabitants of Gulmit and Shishket, no solution could be reached through the local institutions and negotiations by mutually accepted and respected neutral persons. The whole conflict escalated and became a major affair of defending property rights that had not been laid down in written documents. Representatives of public and religious institutions were consulted in vain before the legal proceedings started. Up to the present day [2003] more than 0.5 million Pakistani Rupees have been spent on lawyers and court fees alone by the people of Gulmit. Similar or even higher contributions were invested by the opponents, not counting all travel expenses and secret meetings of representatives. No solution is in sight, despite 'stay orders' issued by the courts permitting both sides to use the pastures. The funds spent exceed by far the commercial value from animal husbandry in these pastures for the next decade. (Kreutzmann 2004, 70)

The case described here has been only one of several disputes in addition to quarrels about the exclusion of pastoralists from the Khunjerab National Park (Knudsen 1999). In sum, the Gojali people spent significant amounts of money on finding a legal solution for their disputes and a basis for a future understanding. Looking back at the Gauth case, the villagers from Gulmit and Shishket have since made sure that always at least one representative shepherd from their respective villages is present in Gauth during the summer season. Their huts and corrals are located next to each other (Photo 18.6).

The arguments brought forward in the dispute were informed less from a pastoral point of view than from a perspective highlighting honour and land entitlements. It would be a loss of community honour if a piece of land inherited from their ancestors were to be surrendered to neighbours even if – as in this case – they are close blood relations. The second argument brought forward was directed towards entitlements to land rights, mining and water. Nobody knew at this point whether the pastures would be future settlement grounds, as has happened in many other cases nearby. Neither was there any evidence whether

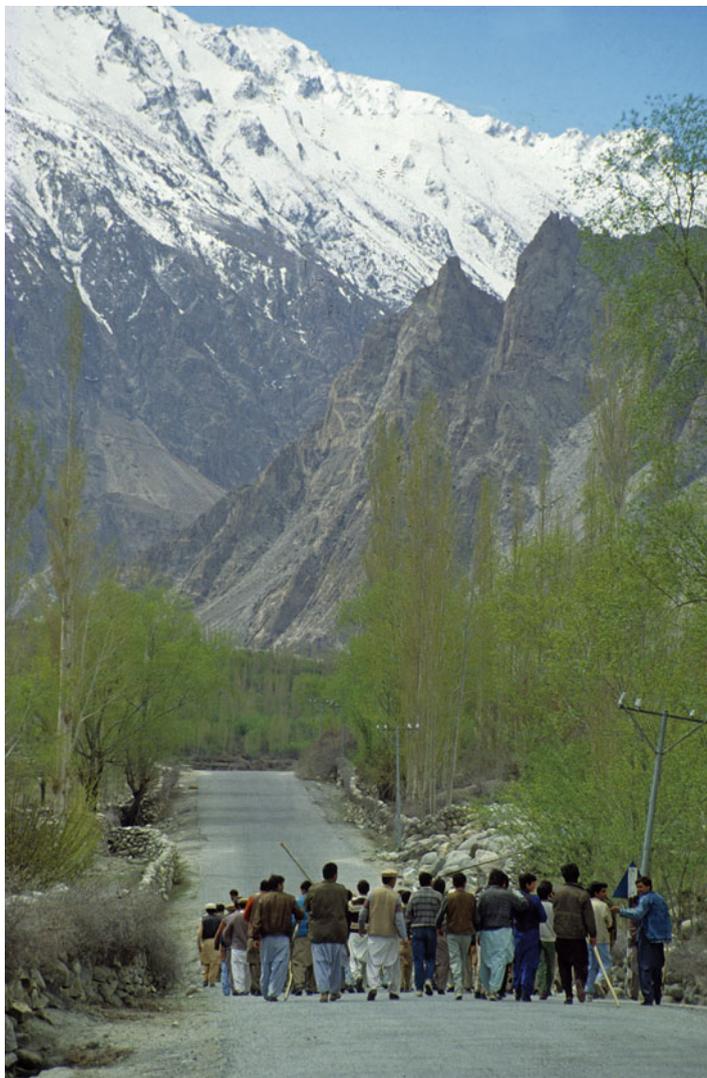


Photo 18.5 Wakhi mountain farmers have left their village of Gulmit to fight with their relatives from the neighbouring village of Shishket about the pasture rights on the mountain slopes in the left background. For more than two decades, monetary funds and other resources were invested in this and similar disputes about pastures in Gilgit-Baltistan. Nevertheless, a lasting solution has not been reached yet (photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann April 29, 1990)

mineral wealth was located here and whether extractive industries might become interested in future.

Somehow the villagers have proved to be right. The pasture of Gaush lies above the village of Goshben (lower Gaush). Goshben was flooded and completely inundated due to a major landslide that occurred on January 4, 2010 (Kreutzmann 2010);



Photo 18.6 One of the disputed pasture settlements in Gaush (3,600 m) is now divided between the two villages of Gulmit and Shishket (cf. Photo 18.5) from where the permanent settlements are clearly visible. Each village needs to be present here with at least one shepherd in order to claim the persistence of their ‘traditional’ pasture rights (photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann July 7, 1991)

all village lands were lost. The pasture has remained dry and high above the lake level. Nevertheless, the common notion in both contesting villages is that it remains a burden to send shepherds up to Gaush every year and that the economic returns do not justify the effort.

A son of the contesting combined mountain farmers from Gulmit, who has become a development practitioner and consultant, participated in the above-mentioned two conferences and in the related fieldtrips. When the participants were crossing Kulma Pass (4,363 m) from Gorno-Badakhshan in Tajikistan into the Kizil Su Kirghiz Autonomous Prefecture of Xinjiang, PR of China, delegates from Nepal, Pakistan, Tajikistan and China had the opportunity to see with their own eyes the effects of transformation. In Tajikistan, two major transitions had occurred in the twentieth century, with collectivisation and privatisation as their ideological markers. Similar transformations had taken place within the PR of China, albeit at different times and in varying contexts. Whilst pastoralists in Tajikistan are struggling – with few exceptions – to make a meagre living from animal husbandry, the situation observed in Xinjiang was quite different for all delegates. Here the state was present at all instances: infrastructure development, provision of planning and extension, veterinary services, marketing facilities and now resettlement. It needs to be noted that all delegates from Nepal, Pakistan and Tajikistan admired a ‘caring government’ that supports pastoralists in becoming ‘modern’. The observation in Bulunkul (see Photo 6.3) was inspired by admiration and by criticism for their own respective governments. Delegates familiar with the Tibetan situation mentioned that the

backward pastoralists of Xinjiang would now enjoy the same developments that are well known from the Tibetan Plateau: fencing, housing and resettlement. A further package is being experimented with already. Payment of ecosystem services could be an alternative, thus enhancing pastoral lifestyles whilst at the same time contributing to nature protection (Wilkes et al. 2010). It might be worthwhile to consider the advantages of having pastoralists as active landscape managers instead of removing them in great style from pastures that have been utilised for centuries. The indigenous knowledge accumulated by pastoralists over many generations seems too valuable to be just neglected or omitted. The framework of these two conferences provided a forum where ‘experts’ and ‘practitioners’ could meet and be exposed to the experiences made in other societies. The aim of the book presented here has been to provide further insights into background, circumstances and prospects of pastoral practices in High Asia. Whether the route is always straight or whether it involves backward and forward turns has to be judged from the respective viewpoints and norms. Changing practices are the result of the application of norms and their implementation. A sound measure would be to listen to the voices of the pastoralists whose lifestyles and economic prospects are being addressed and considered.

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Notes

1. The explanation of causes and effects is surprisingly weak as Harris (2010, 8) observed for the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau: ‘... there has been very little rigorous Chinese research into the reasons for overgrazing and rangeland degradation. Most Chinese biological research has not asked, much less answered, questions regarding human motivations among the pastoralists using the rangelands...’.
2. This information on recent policies in the Hindukush-Karakoram-Himalaya was derived from the presentations of country papers during the ICIMOD workshop on ‘Regional Rangeland Management Programme (RRMP). Development and policy review for the Hindukush-Himalayas’ held in Kathmandu August 22–23, 2011. I am indebted to Imtiaz Ahmad (Pakistan), Ruchi Badola (India), Shikui Dong (China), Tsering Gyeltshen (Bhutan), M. Arif Hossini (Afghanistan) and Devendra Kumar Yadav (Nepal) for sharing their insights during the workshop. For Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, evidence was presented by Ermeke Baibagushev (2011), Bernd Steimann (2011), Andrei Dörre and Tobias Kraudzun (cf. Chaps. 5 and 7 in this volume).
3. Both conferences were organised by InWEnt – Capacity Building International (renamed in Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in 2011), aiming to bring together academics, decision-makers and development practitioners. The proceedings were published by Kreuzmann et al. (2011a, b).

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