

VOICES FROM THE MOUNTAIN

“Does the government want development of people in the highlands? Or development of people outside, based on what they can get out of the highlands?” Himalayan farmer

As the pace of development accelerates in mountain regions, more often driven by the needs of urban, lowland populations and industry than by highland communities, so the social and physical environment is changing. The implications for the wider world are likely to be significant.

Panos has been working with community-based environmental, cultural and development organisations to record the oral testimony of local people, and to communicate their experiences and their understanding of the challenges ahead.

The project has involved local people as both interviewers and narrators. Ten collections have been gathered: in the Himalaya (**India and Nepal**); the Karakoram (**Pakistan**); the central Andes (**Peru**); the Sierra Norte (**Mexico**); Mount Elgon (**Kenya**); the highlands of **Ethiopia** and **Lesotho**; southwest and northeast **China**; and the Sudety mountains (**Poland**). Each booklet contains a selection of the interviews gathered in that locality. The full international archive holds the views and experiences of some 350 individuals, and represents a wealth of material – vivid, challenging, full of human detail and variety – to complement and illustrate other forms of research into sustainable mountain development. For more information on the themes, projects, participants, and the unedited but translated transcripts, visit www.mountainvoices.org.

Each collection is a snapshot, and does not claim to represent an entire mountain community. But the range of individual voices provides a remarkably comprehensive picture of highland societies, their changing environments, and their concerns for the future. The challenge is to meet national development needs without further marginalising mountain peoples. They are the custodians of diverse – sometimes unique – environments, essential to the survival of the global ecosystem. Further erosion of mountain people’s ability to care for those assets will be the world’s loss, not just theirs.

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ORAL TESTIMONY



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VOICES FROM THE MOUNTAIN

ORAL TESTIMONIES FROM
SHIMSHAL, THE KARAKORAM, PAKISTAN



— VOICES —
FROM THE MOUNTAIN

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The Panos Institute exists to stimulate debate on global environment and development issues. Panos' main offices are in Dakar, Kampala, Kathmandu, London, Lusaka, Paris, Washington.

Voices from the Mountain is a series of booklets published by Panos London's Oral Testimony Programme (OTP) as part of its international Mountains project. The OTP has been working through partners with a variety of highland communities for several years, involving local people both as narrators and interviewers. The aim is to explore the changing environment and culture of these regions through the direct testimony of those who live there; to raise awareness and understanding of the accelerating impact of development; and to communicate people's experiences and perceptions of the changes—social, economic and environmental—taking place as a result.

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Booklets are free to the media and resource-poor non-governmental organisations in developing countries. Copies otherwise are £5.00; bulk discounts available. For copies or further details, please contact otp@panoslondon.org.uk.

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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

The interviews are only a selection from those originally gathered. Extracts have been chosen for interest and to represent, as far as possible, the range of concerns, views and experiences found within the overall Pakistan collection. They have been edited, primarily to remove repetition or confusion (and questions). Similarly, some re-ordering has taken place. Square brackets indicate "inserted" text for clarification; round brackets are translations/interpretations; and three dots indicate gaps in the text. Words that are glossed appear in **bold** the first time in an interview. All interviews have been translated, with varying levels of professional experience and in some cases from a local into a national language and then into English, so some misinterpretations may have occurred.

The numbering of the testimonies (eg PAKISTAN 34) relates to the full collection: to view the rest of the material, unedited transcripts, more background information and any new developments in this project, please see www.mountainvoices.org.

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INTRODUCTION

"We have something...that others don't: beautiful nature—the mountains and glaciers, and independence," says Inayat, conveying the pride and attachment Shimshalis have for their environment. The territory of Shimshal makes up a significant part of the Karakoram mountain range in Northern Pakistan and includes many peaks over 6,000 metres, numerous glaciers and productive alpine pastures. Shimshal village lies at 3,100m and most of the cultivatable area lies between 3,000 and 3,300 metres. The short growing season at this altitude only allows one crop to be cultivated in a year; the major crops are wheat, barley, potatoes and peas. Shimshal is one of the few communities in Pakistan's Northern Areas that grows enough food to feed itself (the population is some 1,100 inhabitants). It is the sole steward of vast areas of high-altitude pasture, and extensive herding of sheep, goats, cattle and yaks allows Shimshalis to earn much of their income from livestock.

Shimshalis trace their ancestors back 14 generations to their "grandfather" Mamusing who settled in the area with his wife. Their son, Sher, claimed rights over the Pamir—the pastures—after winning a polo match against herders from Kyrgyzstan. Along with its rich history many narrators describe in detail the festivals and systems of work that have been integral to people's lives. In particular, they talk about *nomus*, the philanthropic system of community development unique to Shimshal. Those with sufficient wealth "sponsor" a bridge, trail or building by providing resources for the project and food for those who give free labour. *Nomus* is always carried out in the name of a relative.

Shimshalis are Wakhi speakers and Ismaili Muslims. Members of the same cultural-linguistic group live in other valleys in Northern Pakistan, the Wakhan corridor of Afghanistan, and parts of China and Tajikistan. Ismailism is a branch of Shia Islam, Ismailis follow their living Imam (spiritual leader), currently the Aga Khan. The influence of Ismailism and the Aga Khan is clear from the testimonies. Many of the social and educational institutions in Shimshal are Ismaili-based and the key development organisations in the region are Aga Khan institutions.

Several narrators recall the era when Shimshal was part of the independent principality of Hunza, ruled and taxed by the Mir. In 1974, President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto declared an end to the remaining princely states in Pakistan, including Hunza.

Since 1974 there have been plans to include most of Shimshal's pastures in the Khunjerab National Park. Khaliq describes the community's response: *"When this Park was established it created much worry in the village, because they were trying to deprive us of our grazing*

and agricultural lands... which we have been using for hundreds of years.” Rather than simply oppose the authorities, some of the younger generation decided to “*prove that we are the best managers of this land*”. They established the community-based Shimshal Nature Trust (SNT) and developed their own environmental management plan to communicate to the authorities how they have always managed their environment sustainably—and will continue to do so.

In 2003, after the interviews were collected, a road linking Shimshal with the Karakoram Highway was completed after 17 years. The hazards of the old journey are vividly described by many narrators. People welcome the development benefits the road will bring, but are concerned that increased migration and access will further erode the unity and independence of Shimshal. Such hopes and fears echo people’s more general comments about the changes in recent decades. Muzaffer’s story illustrates the pace of change: “*Fifteen years ago, I was a shepherd in the village; today I am an executive officer.*”

Male migration has affected gender roles, with women becoming responsible for tasks previously done by men. Female primary education has now become almost universal, and several young women are completing their education outside Shimshal. Women are now invited to participate in most village institutions.

Many men work during the summer as porters for trekking and mountaineering groups throughout the Northern Areas. Their wages make up a large part of Shimshal’s overall income. Whilst everyone appreciates increased standards of living, there is concern that this is leading to greater individualism. Yet the testimonies suggest that the way of life is still relatively collective.

Although the narrators are all from one community, there is much variety in age, occupation and experience. Narrators include farmers, teachers, a world-class mountaineer, a yak herder and a development professional.

Partner and project

The Shimshal Nature Trust (www.snt.org.pk) coordinated the collection of over 60 testimonies between 2000 and 2002. Most were recorded in Wakhi; 34 were translated into English. Interviewers were Rahmat Nazar, Momin Shah, Farman Ullah, Majnoon Khan, Muhammed Amin, Samim Shah, Hajat Shah, Hussn Bibi, Taj Begum, Nighat Patee, Abdullah Bai, Muhammed Khaliq and Jamila Inayat. SNT are producing radio programmes in Wakhi, based on the recorded interviews, for local broadcast. Their own English-language booklet should be completed in 2005. A PDF will be available at www.mountainvoices.org

THE TESTIMONIES

Inayat

PAKISTAN 2

Inayat, 27, is a development professional and gave his interview in English. Although he lives in Islamabad he visits his village regularly and is active in the Shimshal Nature Trust. He explains: “If I talk about myself, I feel I am talking about Shimshal; if I talk about Shimshal, I feel I am talking about myself.” He expresses concern for Shimshal’s “safe transition” in a period of rapid change.

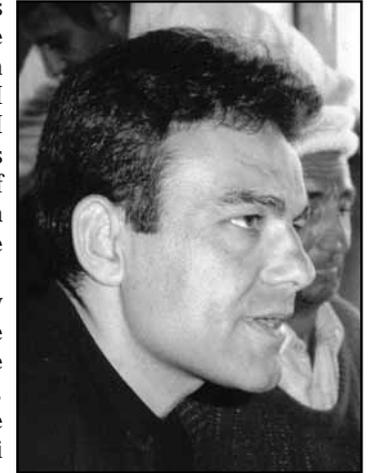
My father...used to construct the village houses and the community centre or anything in the village. So he is one of the earliest [masons] in the village... And since my childhood, because I used to go with him when he was [working]...I have had a very special feeling for my father’s profession. I really like that special smell...of newly built houses, or that feeling...that a family shares when they construct a new house and move there.

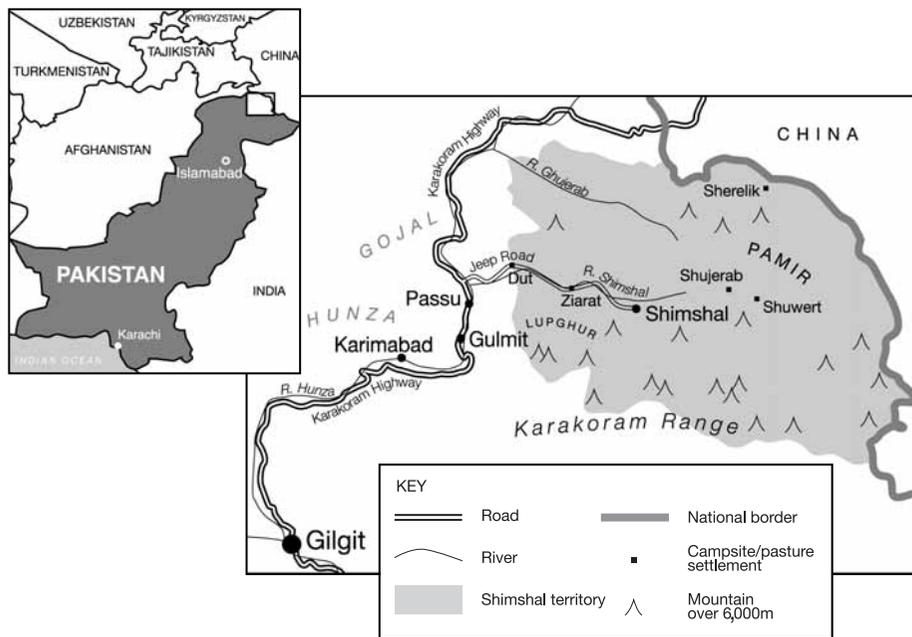
But together with that, my father is very active [in the community]... All through the year we’ve got something the community are working on...[constructing] a bridge...offices, schools or trails... And he’s got one more speciality...he can sing the traditional Wakhi songs... If there are special ceremonies...my father sings there...

My elder sisters got married very young and so my mother was alone...because my father usually [works]...outside the home. So we had to help mother. I was a bit unusual because, usually...making bread and [doing] these home things, boys rarely share... I used to go to the...spring where all the village women gather... Usually I was the only boy there... We called it the “radio station”, because the women would all gather and...gossip and chat...[and] all the news would spread to the village from there.

“I read about the outside world in books”

I’ll try to explain to you about what a child...from such a remote and small mountain village [faces] when you go out [of the village]... For me it was 1985/86 when I...had to go to Gilgit [to high school]. So that was my first time going out of Shimshal; I was 12... I [had] read about the outside world in books and that was all. I’d never seen a car or anything. So everything was quite a shock, everything was just a surprise to me...





It was hard competing with those...coming from different backgrounds, from good schools, from English-medium schools... [Also] my maths was not very good, so I failed [**Matric**]. Then I returned to Shimshal, but that was a kind of shock because people had a lot of expectations... [I] made this cricket bat for myself and I had a lot of boys with me, mostly those—you know—who had failed! And we used to play [cricket] here, and we were the condemned ones... [It] started to hurt me...I felt that respect [for us was]...no longer there... So I left for Karachi...worked hard...[and] passed...Matric. Then I got admission in the college.

“We have something others don’t have”

Going out of Shimshal...taught me to respect myself because I started really [appreciating]...the beauty of my own life, compared to Karachi city life... In Karachi we used to talk about Shimshal... We started realising that actually we had something...that others don’t have—beautiful nature, the Himalaya, the mountains, glaciers, that independence, [and] that most important thing: that you can go about without fear.

After spending three years [in Karachi]...on my first visit [home for] holidays I met some of the Japanese students. That was the

early days when we started a kind of exchange programme... I had a chance to visit Japan...[and] to understand what modernity really is like—because this is not something that we just want to hide from... I tried to see both the good and bad aspects of development. So that really influenced my view of the world.

Things are changing rapidly

What we felt [was]...maybe we were losing very valuable things...[and] that the old people...were trying to close their minds because the younger ones—who migrated to the cities for education, who are...involved in the modern economic system—were no longer able to listen to them, to respect them. So...those traditional role models were no longer there... Instead of respect for a very rational and skilful man...[or for] a woman who has a good command of the working of the home and these livestock systems...things were changing, there was confusion...

So we decided...to work to make people realise that the things they have are valuable. We felt that was the only way we could make them feel pride or dignity, because otherwise this isolation really makes you feel...marginalised... [We said to people]: “You were born in this beautiful nature, you have made no contribution to any damage globally... You’ve got this good relationship in the village. You’ve got this community system, this volunteer working system, helping each other and whoever is in trouble.”

“We live side by side with nature”

In 1974 almost 90 per cent of Shimshal was demarcated as a National Park... In the 1980s, because the government were getting a big grant...[maybe] from some international NGO...they decided to implement the [scheme]... But the community...felt a threat and they resisted it... They couldn’t understand what a National Park meant and what its implication would be for their lives. So they just opposed it and sent back some of the Park wardens who were visiting Shimshal and Pamir...

Muzaffer (M, 32 years), Programme Manager in AKRSP

PAKISTAN 29

Things are changing more rapidly than they were in our parents’ lives. Fifteen years ago, I was a shepherd in the village; today I am an executive officer... Isolation too has a gift of its own: we had a [specific] identity... [it was a] bit mysterious. Yaks, strong people, no road, and things like that. Very few people had access [to us]... But once this road gets here the...most serious challenge for the community will be redefining our identity... I feel the next five or six years will be hard for the community – a sort of crisis of identity... We would no longer be able to maintain the sense of being the sole custodians of this environment. The changes can even turn your strengths... such as your simplicity, your honesty... into weaknesses.

We are part of this nature In 1994 the government of Pakistan hired **WWF** to formulate a new management plan for the Khunjerab National Park... And there was much pressure on the locals to implement the Park rules in Shimshal—meaning that we would have to vacate all those areas demarcated as a National Park and would have to bring our livestock out... Some areas were [also] agricultural land... It was just decided somewhere that this was a National Park and nobody came to Shimshal to analyse...what would be the consequence for people's lives...

Traditionally...we don't have a concept of conservation but our concept of life is that we are a part of this nature... We don't have a concept of self...without this environment... All these hundreds of years we've been living side by side with this nature and these animals... [Now] things are changing because of tourism, because of migration, and because of other things...

We still hunt...[but not] indiscriminately. There is a special system...it's a [matter of] pride to hunt the **trophy ibex**... [You] count the rings of the horn...[to see] how old it is. And people share the meat throughout the community... Or they are mostly hunted by the people who spend the whole winter caring for the community's yaks... People who hunt say it is like an addiction... But we were lucky: from the day the community decided, "OK, we will stop hunting", we witnessed that those people never hunted again. And that was [achieved] without reward...[or] punishment.



"Our village is located far away from the Karakoram Highway"

Planning for the future

The way of social control here is that this is a *mergachjai*, a place of spirits, which means a lot to people, and people have to respect that; we don't require rewards and punishment or guns to control people... But we have to address very different people [from ourselves], who can't understand [our approach]... So we had to articulate everything in a formal way...[in] this management plan for the Shimshal Nature Trust...

We [also] decided that some of the barren lands, which lay around the riverbanks—we should develop them. And some of the pastures—which we call the semi-pasture zone—we can vacate those areas for wildlife; we can surrender them. And we will try to shift more and more [animals] to the newly developed area. But that is long-term planning...

We [also] have in our planning to establish a mountaineering school... We have about 37 trained mountaineers, some of...the best in Pakistan, who provide services for any foreigner visiting [our area] for climbing... So this is our vision for tourism in the future: that it can give a better income to the community as a whole. Otherwise, just working as a porter for companies and groups—we don't feel that will change people's destiny here.

By word of mouth

We decided that in SNT we should form...the Shimshal Culture Programme. The rationale was that we don't have written histories...and everything is transferred [orally] through the generations... People used to gather at ceremonies, and these were usually the topics: anyone who contributes something to the community...[or] helped the community at a difficult time... And our history and the family tree system, and the songs...

[In our system] after a certain age, like in their 60s, [the elders] will come to the land while [we are] ploughing. But they do not work; they will just sit at the edge of the field, and they will gossip, they will talk...about history and everything. And we feel that group of people is very good; that those who are ploughing will feel really rich...[when they] have many old people sitting there; it is very lively... People just plough...and then take a rest for half an hour, and then the next people do the same; and so these are times when people discuss all these things, and these things are transferred to the community.

But all these systems are breaking down because of education, because of migration and because of modern interventions. And, now, we don't have a chance to sit with all those old people and

We don't have written histories

We should not forget the real values

Aman (M, 41 years), teacher trainer

PAKISTAN 12

The main objective behind my poetry is to work for the survival of our Wakhi language, because many Wakhi words have been lost, or replaced by [words from] other languages. I am trying to get the lost words back. For example, *muthi* (a local medicine used to treat cuts or burns) had been replaced by an Urdu word, *marham*. So I am trying to use these sorts of words in my poetry. Nowadays, I am busy working on the alphabet of our Wakhi language. I want everyone to be able to read our language.

listen to everything, so none of us knows about Shimshal's history. We can't even [fully] speak...the Wakhi language.

"The key to our happiness"

You know, city children understand life... in fragments... Everything has been divided...so they don't have a concept of life as a whole... But here, you know, they understand life, they take life as a whole... The fabric is very complex and very much interrelated... We can't just concentrate on education...and development, and forget other things. So we try to give the students a vision, so that they can understand...how [the things] mix and make a society... I'm confident...that students and [other] people are going in the right direction... As sensitive people, we want a safe transition... Everything is at risk... So for me, all these things I've been doing, or that we are dreaming of [are]...to acquire this safe transition: so that we can transform [ourselves but keep]...something of our own—not everything all adrift. We should not forget the real values...the key to our happiness.

Qandoon

PAKISTAN 4

Qandoon, aged 57, came from Passu at a young age to marry her Shimshali husband. Her son studied and worked in Karachi for many years and she herself spent 18 months with him there. Although she had a "comfortable life" in the city, it did not provide her with "mental peace". "I would always think about my home," she says, "...and the work I had to do in the village."

I was very young at the time of my marriage but I was informed about the village and the people. When we arrived at Shanap, people including the elders and the *lopan* of the village warmly welcomed us. Old people had put on their white *bett* and white woollen caps...which impressed me... From Shanap, we went to my husband's house where we were formally welcomed. Almost every household in Shimshal invited us.

In those days marriages were more expensive than today. On

the occasion of my marriage, 15 *deg* of *beth* were prepared and 20 goats were slaughtered. Because people from two villages participated in the marriage ceremony, it was more expensive...

I acted upon the advice of my father and with the passage of time I became familiar with the norms and traditions of Shimshal... Whenever there were social meetings everyone would participate and would patiently listen to the elders. The young honoured the decisions of the elders.

Life in the pastures

The family where I married...consisted of 25 persons... I would normally go to Pamir with my mother-in-law... I went to Pamir with my three children and later on...we started going to Lupghur. For the last 22 years I have been coming [here] regularly. The conditions in Lupghur in terms of foodstuff were the same as they were in Pamir. We would take *minderich* and *chomorow* as part of our staple food in the pasture, and sometimes we would take bread with *qurut*... Despite extreme poverty, there was tremendous cooperation and sympathy among the people... Each household would prepare and bring food from their houses to a common place where everyone would share the food. We would also graze the livestock jointly from morning till evening...

We derive a lot of benefits from the livestock... From the wool we fabricate socks, coats, trousers and *bett*... Even today we make woollen *bett* and caps for the weddings of our children, which

There was tremendous cooperation



"At the end of May half the population migrates to the pastures along with the livestock" (Shuwert, Pamir)

Mushk (F, 50s), farmer

PAKISTAN 22

[*Nomus*] provides pride for the family and happiness for the community. This exists nowhere else other than in Shimshal. It solves a problem for the community... and it becomes a historical record that this particular person has done this and that, and they have donated such assets to the community... When people use these facilities [provided through *nomus*] they pray for the life and success of you and your family... My son constructed a [community summer] hut in Furzeen as a *nomus* in my name. I donated eight [of my] livestock, around 340 kg of flour and 60 kg of fresh butter—not to mention the tea and milk—for its construction.

reflects the cultural heritage of this village. In our houses we use the carpets made out of yaks' hair, which are very durable. We also sell these carpets in the market. We prepare butter and *qurut*, which we use in our everyday food. So almost all the necessities of life we obtain from the livestock, and those who possess more livestock offer part of their livestock and butter to *nomus*, which facilitates development in the village.

Introducing potatoes

My father-in-law was a famous hunter and a very hospitable man. Whenever he hunted game, he would invite the villagers [to share it]... The population was not so much in those days; therefore such kinds of event were celebrated together... [As he] would often hunt ibex and blue sheep we would eat meat every day. Soon I became fed up and I wanted to eat vegetables... My father sent me potato and [other] vegetable seeds from Passu... My father-in-law...told me that nobody grows [these] in Shimshal. There was a superstitious belief that the cattle would die if they grow potatoes...

Ultimately I was able to convince [him]... and we cultivated [potatoes] and other vegetables in a small area on a trial basis. The crop production was quite high and we started using the vegetables in our daily food; everyone in the house liked it... Nothing happened to the cattle, no cattle died... So the next year we grew vegetables on a large area...

In those days it was quite difficult to prepare food for such a large family, particularly on the occasions of collective work such as harvesting of barley, wheat and fodder fields... When people from the village would come to assist us, I would get up early in the morning and...prepare soup and bread and...carry it to the field.

City life

I have been to Karachi... I was taken around the famous places in Karachi, but it neither inspired me nor provided me with mental peace and satisfaction. I would always think about my home and

the work that I had to do in the village. Despite living a comfortable life in Karachi...for about one and a half years, my thoughts were dominated by the household affairs of Shimshal. [My son] would feed me the best food he could...but I deemed it no better than the dry crispy bread of my village... In the city we [also] have the major problem of language. We cannot converse with the people there.

Raza

PAKISTAN 34

*Raza, aged 37, is a teacher at the government boys' school in Shimshal. He talks about development in Shimshal, from the traditional system of **nomus** to the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme's initiatives in recent decades. Like other narrators he expresses his hopes and concerns about the completion of the Shimshal link road. Ultimately he believes this will bring prosperity and better facilities to the village.*

The educational standard in the village is not as good as in the city... Our village is located far away from the Karakoram Highway; there is no road, resulting in a lack of educational facilities... There is no proper school building: there are only three rooms for nine classes and there are five teachers... Educational standards have improved...but still I feel that our students are not capable of competing with other students in the **down country** areas...

Working together, saving together

Nomus played a revolutionary role in the development of our community. When our ancestors came here there was nothing... It was *nomus* that helped the community to develop its infrastructure... The entire source of subsistence in the village is agriculture and the construction of more and more [irrigation] channels through *nomus* enabled the people to use more land for cultivation and hence increase production. You know that Shimshal was in an isolated location and the journey was extremely difficult. Therefore...we needed reliable trails and...[these] were also constructed through *nomus*... There was no concept of financial aid from the government... People offered their resources in the name of their loved ones, such as fathers, mothers, brothers, wives...

When AKRSP came to the village it organised the people in the form of social organisations. People...pooled their resources and started saving money... It was the general perception...that savings could only be possible with thousands or hundreds of thousands of rupees, but AKRSP taught the people that savings can be made even with a single rupee. [They] advised that if a certain sum was saved weekly it would be a considerable amount after some years,

The journey was extremely difficult

More tourists will visit the village and this amount could be used for the education of children or in any emergency... AKRSP revolutionised development not only in Shimshal but in the entire Northern Areas.

“Prosperity will come with the road”

We were in desperate need of a link road to our village, and when AKRSP asked the community what we intended to do with our savings...[we decided] to undertake the construction work of the Shimshal link road... The government of Pakistan had surveyed this project several times and declared it unfeasible. People knew that prosperity could only come with the link road... The work continued for about six years... The cost of explosives, diesel and food stuff was covered by AKRSP. People provided free labour and set an example to the government. When [it] observed that an NGO, with the help of the community, had initiated this impossible work...the government launched the bid [to continue with] the construction of this road...

Each one of us feels that we can't initiate what we want to do and also that the government has not met our demands for socio-economic development due to the unavailability of the road. We transport our commodities for daily use on our backs even today... This physical exertion causes illness—that hardship will also vanish with the road... Although we have our own electric **micro-hydel** it is insufficient to meet our needs as it is seasonal, but if the road is linked there will be another power station that could be used throughout the year... The government will construct a complete school building... Health problems will also be eased... We have the dispensary...in the village but there are no medicines; we can only transport the medicine on our backs, [or] if by chance a helicopter comes to the village.

“We meet our needs through tourism”

More and more tourists will visit the village; they are reluctant today due to high transportation costs. The tourism industry will flourish in the village...[and] eventually increase the income of the people. It will certainly cause some disadvantages [too]...as people interact with outside communities and [take on] their values... When people return to the village from the cities they undermine our customs and values. Most probably our culture will change, the spirit of cooperation and unity will weaken and people will think and act as individuals. This would create a gap between people...

People will think and act as individuals

[In the past] our sole source of existence was agriculture and herding but these alone could not meet our needs [today]. We meet

Muhammed Baig (M, 67 years), farmer/weaver

PAKISTAN 10

I think agriculture is more profitable than tourism because tourism is seasonal...and is also dependent on the socio-political situation of the country, whereas agriculture is like a fountain that gives a uniform flow all year round. Similarly the income from livestock and employment is uniform throughout the year. [But people work with tourists because] it is a kind of magic...people have got spellbound by money. [However], due to more income from the tourists our economic condition has changed and now the difference between rich and poor is diminishing.

our needs through tourism. In summer most of the people travel with tourists and earn a handsome amount; that amount is utilised throughout the year to meet their health, education and daily needs. The disadvantage is that the influx of tourists causes pollution and...spoils our beautiful landscape... It is very important that the **clean-up expeditions** that visit Pakistan also visit our valley and [work]...with our own institutions... This will only be possible with the help of the Ministry of Tourism.

“It was difficult to deliver a message”

Radio is very important for Shimshal... I regularly listen to the radio, because there is no other means of information and entertainment... We don't have newspapers and television in the village... Today we have a radio phone...that keeps us in contact with other parts of the area. But prior to it...important events, meetings etc were announced through the radio station in Gilgit...

Certainly it was quite difficult to deliver a message from Shimshal to Gilgit or Passu. In the Mir's regime one way...was to send a **lubi** to convey the message... [When there was] a flood caused by the bursting of Shimshal lake...people were sent to different [viewpoints]... along the way from Shimshal to Passu. When the lake burst the person close to the lake would light a fire in the night or make smoke in the daytime. The next person would immediately make a fire at his place that was visible from the next viewpoint. In this way the message...would reach the **down valley** in minutes. The third way of delivering messages was that when someone came from Pamir he would make a dust cloud and people across the river in the village would understand that there was some emergency [in Pamir].

Conservation and community involvement

In my opinion both the National Park and the **SNT** are working for a common objective, but the difference is that the management style of the National Park is authoritarian whereas SNT believes in community participation. Community involvement is based on

Hunting was the favourite pastime indigenous ideas and practices of conservation, which is more effective than one-man rule... [That] mostly fails, whereas self-motivated community initiatives are long-lasting... [SNT] believes that the community, who have been living in the same environment, is best able to care for their area and the wildlife...

Hunting was the favourite pastime of the people in former times. The individual did not consume the game but it was distributed among the community members... It was the time of poverty; in some pastures people would not find anything to feed their children... People would anxiously wait for [a hunter's] return, with the expectation that he would bring game for them to eat... [And then the hunter] would joyfully describe all the events of his hunting excursions...

At that time there were no restrictions... People respected [hunters]... Today hunters are called thieves... Hunting has been banned all over the country to protect wildlife from extinction. In former times a hunter was rewarded with the title of *siyod*, great hunter, but today he is liable to a penalty or a trial if he violates the ban on hunting [and he could be] sent to prison.

Gulshad

PAKISTAN 17

Forty-year-old Gulshad was interviewed on the first day of the Shegd-tar-charaman festival. She is a volunteer and also a member of the education committee. She believes that "our men must give the women more opportunities to come forward and participate in the institutions".

I was born in Ghulkin...[and] married when I was 14 years old... Shimshal was [my father's] maternal grandfather's village and he couldn't afford to refuse them... So, despite the opposition of my mother, I was married according to the will of my father...

The marriage system...was such that nobody would bother seeking the consent of the girl and the boy; the parents...would decide and would prefer kinship or wealth to the likes or dislikes of their children. The girls were forced, and sometimes beaten, if they refused the marriage... The boy and girl wouldn't even know about one another until the day of marriage; then it would normally end with divorce—hence the complete collapse and destruction of two lives. But today it is not like that... Now they like and understand each other before they enter into the marriage agreement...and both are responsible for the success of their marital life.

Whatever household tasks the men assigned to the women, they would obey their instructions. The mother-in-law shouldered

Hayat (F, 60 years), farmer

PAKISTAN 9

In former times firewood was delivered from the mountains; now the source is depleting rapidly because the population has increased. Our brothers would fetch large quantities of firewood from the mountains. Now, firewood... is hardly found in the mountains. In olden times it was abundant along the trail leading to Pamir, and we would easily meet our fuel requirements... At present, kerosene stoves and electricity are being used, and coal would be the next source, if explored.

all the responsibility for household affairs. She would issue rations to her daughter-in-law and would instruct her to prepare food for the family and also try to save a little bit out of it... The daughter-in-law would prepare food, let her mother-in-law sit close to the fireplace and ask her to distribute the food among the family... A mother-in-law has no importance in the house today; instead the daughters-in-law run the household affairs... Senior members of the family are losing their traditional importance...

There was no source of external earning, due to lack of access to the village. People would depend entirely on local production; therefore, very careful management of these resources was required. Now, those kinds of miseries are over, the jeep road is nearing our village and everyone...[can] import commodities for daily use from Gilgit.

The activities of the men were mainly bringing firewood from the forest, watering the fields and the trees and other agricultural activities... The women were instructed to do work such as making fertiliser from animal waste, and some would fetch firewood. Despite the scarcity of kerosene oil the women would sit the whole night in the light of the fire and card the wool.

The farming year

At the beginning of autumn men collect soil, before the land is frozen, in order to prepare fertiliser throughout the winter months. Fertiliser is prepared in the animal shed and taken to the fields as spring approaches... When cultivation is completed, by the end of May, half the population migrates to the pasture [for five months] along with the livestock. The responsibility and assignment of those people is to look after the livestock...to collect milk...and make butter and cheese out of it, and also to collect the wool and the hair of the livestock and process it...

In the meantime, the people in the village also discharge their responsibilities by watering the fields, growing vegetables [and] potatoes, weeding the crop fields, and also drying vegetables for winter use. Women carry out all the agricultural work while men

The jeep road is nearing our village



Women walking to Shimshal in June 2000 before the completion of the road

go out with tourists to earn [money]. When the crops ripen we harvest the fields and then the threshing is done and the grain is put into bags and is stored for winter use.

Tagam festival

On the day of **Tagam**, we get up early in the morning and prepare **nigan**; then the men go to the house where the **toman** activity is performed. The women then go to the sowing field where the men join them after **toman**. Everyone goes...very well dressed... One man, the **Shogoonpathok**, is dressed up in an animal skin...wearing an ugly mask and looking like a ghost. He comes forward and climbs to the top of the mound of fertiliser and offers prayers. Then we take the newborn babies near the oxen and make them touch the plough. This is the formal inauguration of cultivation. All the oxen are gathered in one place and the seed is sown...

“Today we have access to doctors”

When there were no doctors in the village there was the local way of treatment... Those who suffered from pain in the chest, back or ribs were treated by putting warm ashes in a cloth and these were placed at the location of the pain... When a certain part of the body was affected by the severe cold, this was treated by applying almond paste on the affected area and massaging it with almond oil. **Nausadar** was also applied... In cases of severe illness the patient was wrapped in a freshly slaughtered, warm animal hide or advised to sit in warm spring water... Another kind of treatment was to

Chughbai (M, 65 years), farmer

PAKISTAN 13

If someone fell ill [they] would go to a **mullah** [who] would give them an amulet to dissolve in water and drink, or to inhale. Whatever it was, it would alleviate the pain—this was just our belief. When someone suffered from chest and back pain he would drink the boiled water of **qeech** and would chew the root of this plant. He would also apply this water to the sore area of his body... Today I take [allopathic] medicine and recover quickly—by the next day. But at that time it was not so quick and people would say that it was good to take time to recover.

approach a **bitan**; and whatever he suggested to people, they would strictly follow... Today...we have access to doctors, and modern medicines are used for curing diseases. Every child is thoroughly checked at the time of birth and vaccinated against diseases.

“Only if the wheels are balanced”

I serve the community as a volunteer and I am also a member of the village education committee... I undertook this job in the light of the **farman** of our **Imam**. Our Imam says that volunteers are a very important part of our institutions...

There...are women and men volunteers, boy scouts and girl guides. They extend all possible help to the orphans, widows, poor and needy people. They are always on the alert to...solve their problems, whether in Pamir or here in the village... No one needs to thank [us] for our services. The reward is the blessings of **Maula**...

In former times women...were not allowed to talk in a gathering or take part... It is the **farman** of the Imam that women and men are like the two wheels of a vehicle and the vehicle can only work if the wheels are balanced... Whether it is indoor work or an outdoor task, both women and men share it equally... In every institution...the council, arbitration board or school committee, at least one woman has been given representation... [But] our men must give the women more opportunities to come forward to participate in these institutions.

“We will have to lock our doors”

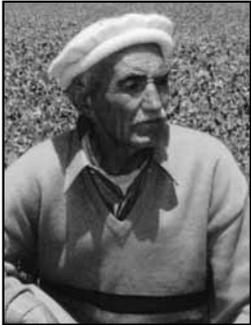
As the road has approached closer to the village it has eased our life; it has removed the load from the backs of our men... The village will develop...[as it has] in the **down valley**... But the freedom of life, which we are enjoying today—this liberty will no longer exist... At present, wherever we want to go within our territory, we can move without fear, but when the link road is completed we will even have to lock our doors, which we keep unlocked today as there is no fear and risk of theft. It seems to me quite possible that we will...not be able to move within our territory without men.

I serve the community as a volunteer

Baig Daulat

PAKISTAN 6

*Baig Daulat, 75, has been the village government representative for 21 years. He describes the tax system enforced by the Mir of Hunza and the importance of **nomus** to Shimshal's development.*



My mother weaned me at Pamir just before returning to the village. After three months in the village, she passed away. I didn't know what happened to [her]... They would only show me my mother's shoes hanging on one of the pillars of our house... [I was] two years and three months old...

At the age of 13, I married, in accordance with the wishes of my father... I was not yet mature but my father, due to his household problems, got me married... After two years...[he] passed away. I was left orphaned. Thereafter I served the village.

“Misery and hardship”

Those who possessed livestock and more family members and those on whom God had bestowed wealth were called **lopan**. They were required to pay **yeelban**...in the form of **sargaz**, yak, etc... Those who were poor were called **borwar**.

Until two years after the death of my father I was treated as a **lopan**. But [then]...the **arbob** came to me and...suggested that I might no longer be able to continue as a **lopan** because I had only a few livestock left. Therefore I must take the rope and carry the load. So I became a **borwar**. I started carrying the **Mir's load**...

The taxes included one sheep and one goat from each **lopan**... [**Borwars**] would give a baby goat, and in addition they would also transport the loads... I carried the load for about 14 years... [Later] I served as the Mir's shepherd in Pamir... The life we spent was full of misery and hardship.

First we would transport the Mir's goods to Hunza. On our return we would go...to the salt mines in Pamir to abstract and refine the salt for the Mir... Salt was one of the main taxable items.

“Salt was so precious”

There were special stoves and pots for refining the salt. The salt ore was first heated and dissolved in ponds made for this purpose, then...[it] was filtered, and then heated in special pots till it turned into salt slabs. Firewood from the forests was used to heat the dissolved salt. At that time salt was unavailable elsewhere in the area... It was so precious that when we would give a piece of salt to the people from the **down valley**, they would first kiss it.

Farman (M, 40s), journalist

PAKISTAN 11

In 1972 and 1973 the late Zulfikar Bhutto, when he became President of Pakistan, abolished these princely states of Pakistan including Hunza state and Nagar state... The people who were used to living in the old Miri system considered the ruler a superhuman... So there was a lot of opposition to this [new political] movement in the area, because people didn't know the benefits of it... They were used to a system which was exploiting them, which was humiliating them, which had created classes... It was not easy for them to accept new ideas, new concepts and a new society.

The tax was enforced in the down valley as well. In central Hunza [it was]...about 50 kg of wheat grain as tax. In Gulmit village they would give apricot kernel oil for lighting [as tax]. The **borwars** would collect apricot kernels from the Mir's garden and would crush them and extract oil... Whereas we would prepare purified cubes of salt [as tax]...

After that, when [it was] **kooch** [and we] would return to the village in the autumn, the **borwars** would make black **sargaz**, and the **lopan** would make fine **sargaz** from the wool of the Mir's animals. In addition the **lopan** would also make one **sargaz** from their own [livestock] resources. All these loads were carried by **borwars**...First of all the butter was presented [to the Mir], then the **sargaz**, followed by carpets... **Sufra** from the **lopan** were presented—their names being announced one by one, such as the gift from Qurban Muhammed, the gift from Ghulam Nasir...

On returning to Shimshal after the delivery of the **sufra** goods, the people of Shimshal would bring with them the **thrangpa** and a **mahram**... There was no proper trail. They were carried on our backs to get them across the river... We would cross the river 29 times. Our legs would get bruised... Everyone would be exhausted at the end of the trip...

There was...“gold tax” and “lead tax”. Two yaks a year were given collectively [by the village] to the Mir as “gold tax”, and a cow per year as “lead tax”...

The Mirs of Hunza...would pay gold as rent...to China for Raskam (land formerly part of Shimshal, now part of China) where

Qurban (M, 60 years), farmer

PAKISTAN 28

There was repression and bonded labour under the [Mir] due to fear of the rulers and the **arbob**. A **chorbu** used to announce...the orders of the **arbob**, or any emergency or community work... There was a silver plate in which about 4 kg of wheat were to be deposited [by those who did not perform collective work]... Those who could afford the penalty paid it, and could do their personal chores, but people like me—who could not afford to pay the penalty—had to turn up.

*We would
cross the river
29 times*

borwar would cultivate for the Mir and also look after his livestock... The food grain was stored there and was sold to the Kyrgyz people, and [in exchange we] would purchase carpets and other goods for the Mir.

“The village was built through generosity”

The way *nomus* worked was that people would get inspiration from each other and they would enthusiastically offer part of their wealth to *nomus*. They built bridges, trails, irrigation channels, and some people arranged banquets for the entire village. This was the pattern of our lives.

People would normally acknowledge the services of their parents, who fed and cared for them. In return, they would discharge their duties as descendants by offering their wealth in the name of their parents. There was no compulsion; only those rich people blessed by God would perform *nomus*. There was no shame on poor people, who could not afford *nomus*...

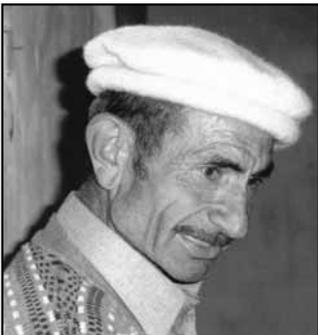
The reason for our successful survival was this custom of philanthropy. Because if our forefathers had not built the livestock shelters, the bridges and trails...who else would have cared about us? This village has been built...through the act of generosity, in the name of God.

I am talking about those things that I have witnessed and which I still recall.

Chughbai

PAKISTAN 13

This 65-year-old farmer was interviewed on a snowy day in December, or Hooptoqsh in the Shimshal calendar. Chughbai is the expert on this calendar, specific to Shimshal, which is based on the position of the sun's rays on the mountains surrounding the village. He can trace his family back through the 14 generations since Mamusing first settled in Shimshal.



In spring, when we cultivate our fields and they become green, we move the livestock out of the village for the sake of our fields. The women accompany them and live at Pamir. They look after the livestock and also prepare butter, cheese and other dairy products. They stay there for about five months... Those who live in the village—they collect and store the agricultural products during the five months, and at the end the agricultural and dairy products are combined: that constitutes the total income of a family for that year...

The men work in their fields... When they have finished the cultivation activities they take their livestock to the pasture [and return]. But nowadays they travel extensively with tourists in summer, while those who are not physically capable of portering work in their fields; they water their fields and trees... [Traditionally], after **Chaner**, most of the men engage in agricultural activities such as cutting fodder and threshing crops. But in the absence of the men, the women [do this]. This year almost all the men were engaged in working with the tourists and...earned a lot of money... All the agricultural activities...were carried out by women...

We would take the load on our backs

“We would take the load on our backs”

We would frequently travel to transport the **Mir's load**, and we would travel together. During such journeys we would extend help to those of our brothers who were physically weak. We would help them cross the rivers and...[along] difficult trails... We would also share the loads of elders and the weak...

We had a lot of hardships when there was no road; we would take the load on our backs and would start walking early in the morning from Passu, and would reach Dut [campsite] in the night. There were no huts. We would spend the night in the cave; there was also no proper bedding there and we would use our *bett* as bedding...as there were no blankets and sleeping bags available at that time... At campsites we would make a fire in order to heat the soil... We would first dry our woollen socks and footpads, and we would repair our shoes at every campsite. We would also carry extra pads to protect our feet from the snow...otherwise there were high risks of frostbite as our local shoes were not as hard-wearing as modern shoes are... [Today] we have waterproof sleeping sheets and warm sleeping bags, but that was the time of scarcity...

People would lend each other clothes and shoes... Hunters could afford good shoes, but people like me who could not afford ibex hide would use goat hide... Today people do not borrow from one another because they possess everything [they need].

“If we cooperate with each other”

Today the road has...eased our hardships and we can reach the village with loads without making a midway stay. Today very few people take the load on their back; most of the people use a donkey for transportation... Income has increased greatly... [but] prosperity and comforts have reduced the unity and cooperation among the people...

When we talk about former times we talk about

poverty...nothing apart from our own resources was available... Nothing except a wooden plate of dried apricots was imported from outside. Now, our source of subsistence has increased, and if we cooperate with each other and build our road quickly we will get more benefits...

“The flood washed away our fields and houses”

In my lifetime I witnessed the disaster of the bursting of the Shimshal [glacial] lake...about three times, but one was really destructive as it washed away half the village... It was summer...people were busy with their agricultural activities. The high tides of the flood washed away our ripe crops, and our fields, houses and gardens. At that time the army was deployed in Shimshal, so they assisted the locals in dismantling their houses and shifting their belongings to safe places. It was the most destructive event I have ever experienced.

Rajab

PAKISTAN 23

Rajab, 50, was the first Pakistani mountaineer to climb all five peaks over 8,000 metres and was awarded the President’s Award for pride of performance as a sportsman. He started his mountaineering career as a high-altitude porter for international expeditions. He believes there should be a limit set on the weight porters are expected to carry, and that their pay should be improved. One of his sons died recently in a mountaineering accident.

A person can’t be [born] a climber or brave—this all comes through experience... I started portering because I am a farmer, born into a farming and herding family... I have travelled in the mountains and am acclimatised to the high altitude... Gradually, with experience, I started working as a high-altitude porter...with the winter 1987 **K2** expeditions... Then I joined expeditions as a Pakistani member...at least one group a year...

There are five big peaks [above] 8,000 metres in Pakistan. I have climbed all five...and in Nepal I have climbed Mount Everest, but could not reach the summit because of bad weather... I successfully climbed **Nanga Parbat** [known as the Killer Mountain] with a team from the Pakistan army. I was really pleased, because...people used to frighten me that [Nanga Parbat] was very [difficult] ...

[Mountaineering] is a hard and risky job but you can get recognition and a comparatively good income too... I won the prestigious Presidential Award... Money is something that comes and goes, but the awards and certificates I have received are

Qudrat (M, 31 years), mountaineer

PAKISTAN 24

In this profession no one can think of happiness and excitement, because when you are climbing a mountain, it means you are competing between life and death, and happiness comes to your mind very rarely.

valuable for my family and me...

I have a dream...to give the young men from the area a chance, and training... The young from Shimshal are physically strong and acclimatised to the height. But in certain areas, such as techniques for climbing and safety [they require training], and secondly they need to learn the rules and regulations of the job... With the help of the Alpine Club of Pakistan I conducted training at the Malangudi Glacier with our young people... I have great expectations of these trainees...

Here in Shimshal I would say we have 14 or 15 people [who] are good climbers. They have climbed peaks above 8,000 metres...most of them are my own students. I think it is a big achievement for a small village...

I believe that once the road reaches the village we will get a lot of tourists... Most of the community is economically dependent on tourism. Shimshal would be affected if tourism were to end, because we are not very educated and few people are working in other fields.

“Portering needs rules and regulations”

There is too much suffering and difficulty in working as a porter... Changes need to be made. For higher altitudes...the weight should be reduced... To carry a 25 kg load, together with your own rations and sleeping and clothing stuff, is really heavy and difficult... We should work together to ask for more wages when crossing high passes... [But there is a risk of losing business.] In Nagar area they had a lot of tourists but they increased the porter rates. Because of that tourists have changed their route...

Portering...[will be] better once the road reaches the village...[and] we can effectively impose rules and regulations... We would run it like **down country**. Right now we do not clearly know who [is working]... Individuals go from the village and wait at the road camp, or porters are taken from down country. When the road reaches Shimshal from here it should be possible to manage it effectively.

“I tell my son not to carry loads”

[Some] boys from the village...leave their education and carry loads for foreigners... I dislike this, because education is the number one [priority] for life... I tell [my son] to go to Islamabad to study and not to go to the mountain...to carry loads...

*Education
changes life*



"There is too much suffering and difficulty in working as a porter"

Education changes life... [Without] education we will be left behind in this meritocratic world. If people acquire education then whatever they do, be it a farmer or herder or whatever, they will be successful, because education shows one the right path... If my son gets an education and...[then] comes into tourism, that would be very good.

Laili

PAKISTAN 16

Laili, now in his 40s, became a herder at the age of 15. He has an intimate knowledge of Shimshal's many pasture areas: "I know which place is suitable for which time, and how many yaks can be grazed for how long in a particular place." He is concerned that the villagers have too many yaks, causing overgrazing, and believes they should sell more yaks rather than keeping them until they die of old age. He also favours irrigating some barren places in Pamir, to create new grazing areas.

I started grazing yaks when I was...only 15... It was not as difficult for us [then] as it is today because people had fewer livestock... There were only 100 or 150 yaks in Shimshal, and the grazing was very easy and enjoyable...for the *shpuns*. But now the number of yaks is increasing every year and it is very difficult for only eight

people to graze 800 or 900 yaks at a time... Goats and sheep harm trees, whereas yaks are the animals of the mountains and no extra care is needed for their growth. The hair of the yaks is also...valuable for producing the local carpets, called *palos*, which last for some 200 years...

We meet our basic needs from these animals

[In my youth], we had not been recruited by the army and we had no other means of [making a] living. So I adopted this because it is our tradition and...livelihood. We meet our basic needs...[for]meat, butter, cheese and milk, from these animals... [Yaks] have so many advantages—we can sell them, and the income can be saved in a bank for the education of our children.

We have to spend the whole year with them; and we identify some through their colours and some through the owners' identification marks. There are yaks of many colours, such as white, brown, light blue, which makes their identification easy.

The grazing system

There are different *doors*—or valleys—where we take our yaks for grazing. In Pamir, first we take our yaks to Ganjdoor, where we keep [them] for two months... [There] we divide them into two groups. The male yaks, the bigger ones—we take them to another pasture called Sherelik; and the very young yaks, along with their mothers, are kept in...Ganjdoor. During that period, five of us live in the main pasture, Pamir, while three of us live in Sherelik. There is a place in Sherelik called Shireen Iloq—from Ganjdoor it takes five days to reach that place—where we spend at least one and a half months...[but] if the weather is cold, yaks can only spend 15 days or less there... [Then] we move to...a valley called Arab-a-Door... When snowfall starts [there]...we move to...Rost-a-Door, and then to Ghor Sar, and then back to the main pasture when the breeding season begins. At that time we separate the male yaks and take them to Ghorjerav, where they spend one and a half months. Female yaks that are ready to give birth have to remain in the main pasture.

Our valleys are not suitable for grazing a large number of yaks at a time... In Sherelik, if the weather is not fine, it is not enough for more than 200 yaks. Presently we have 800 yaks. And in future we must consider the space we have to accommodate our animals. There is a wrong system of keeping the female yaks for a very long time, until they...die of old age. We sell the male yaks when they are young. I think this idea must be [applied] to the female yaks as well... The birth rate per year is 200 yaks. So we should sell at least 100 yaks per year to get the benefit; otherwise this productivity will be useless.

We have to take care about the grazing Usually, when the number of yaks reaches 900...the graph falls, and it never reaches 1,000. The [main] reason is shortage of grass, due to heavy snowfall... Sometimes diseases spread, which also kill many animals... Unfortunately, due to the unavailability of medicines we cannot cure these diseases...

Our grazing valleys...are very far from the main pasture...but we usually spend most of our time in the main pasture, Pamir. I think that...in autumn...after shearing...we should move our yaks from Pamir to Sherelik for grazing, and in this way we can save the grass of the Pamir area for the winter season.

“Shpuns face many problems”

Our women go to graze the livestock during summer... Zarsunik is a place that is called a **vushdon** by our forefathers. So our women must be careful that [it is not]...grazed during summer... During the last two years I saw [them] grazing the Zarsunik area in summer, and [so] nothing is left for the winter season... That is why the *shpuns* [caring] for the yaks in winter face many problems... For the better growth of our yaks we have to save some of our pastures in Pamir. If we don't do that in summer, it is possible that many yaks, especially the females, will become weak and give birth to weaker calves, which may not survive the harsh winter season...

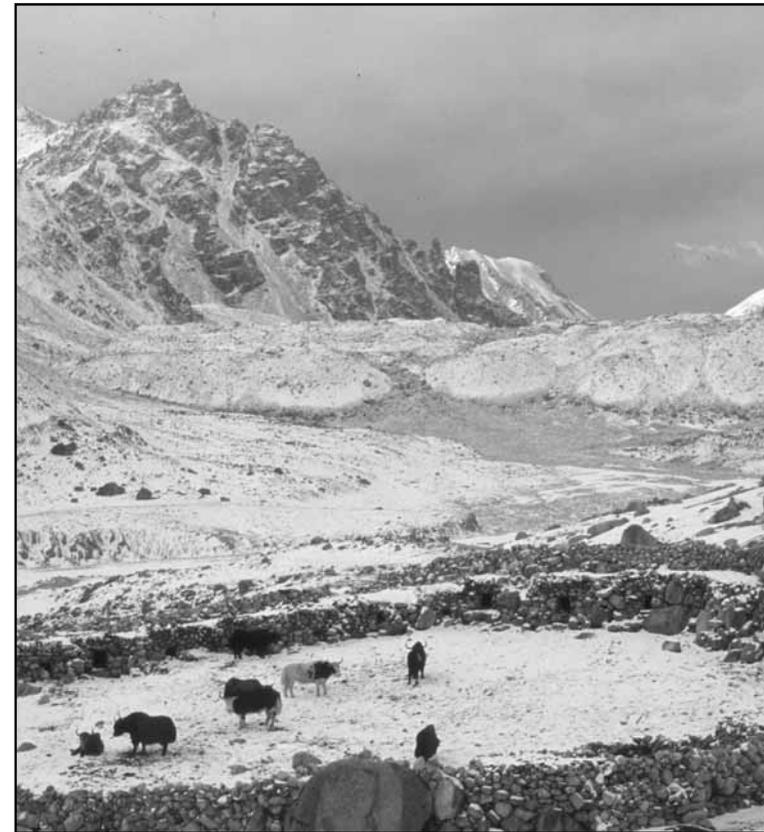
We separate the yaks into two groups: those ready to give birth are kept in the plains [near the Chinese border] under close observation, while the others are kept in the valleys. We always keep a close eye on those yaks that are ready to give birth so that the baby yaks might not die or some wild animal prey on them...

There is no system [of grazing one's own yaks separately]. The only thing that the *shpun* gives to his own yaks is small balls of flour. Another way they favour them is that they do not milk their personal yaks so that the baby will become healthy. These rules are for all the *shpuns*.

Asmat (M, 55 years), driver/retired soldier

PAKISTAN 3

I have heard from our elders that when our ancestor Sher visited Pamir he saw many Kyrgyz around the lake area. Sher claimed his proprietary rights over Pamir and asked the Kyrgyz to leave his land. But they also claimed Pamir as their property. The argument continued until they [decided to settle it]...by a polo match on the plain of Pamir. Sher, our “grandfather” chose a yak for the polo match – as the performance of yaks in high altitudes is better than horses – and the Kyrgyz used a horse. They decided that...if our grandfather drove the ball over the pass towards China, he won Pamir, and if the Kyrgyz drove the ball over the pass towards Shimshal, they would become the owners of the whole of Pamir... Our grandfather [won]... and since then, we have been the legitimate owners of Pamir.



“Yaks are the animals of the mountains” (Shujerab, Pamir)

The two separate groups [of *shpuns*]...meet each other on the 21st March. At that time we sing songs; we dance together; we play different games together. We enjoy that time together as much as we can. We cook different types of dishes. *Shpuns* in Pamir mostly play polo and **tuksori**. Polo has now lost its importance due to the lack of horses, but we still play *tuksori*.

“Ours is a sacred place”

I am familiar with all the small pastures in Pamir, and I also know which place is suitable for which time, and how many yaks can be grazed for how long in a particular place. Throughout the year we have to remain very careful about the grazing of the pastures, because in the past our yaks faced starvation...[for] lack of grass. We learnt a lesson from that...[but with the numbers of yaks]

We have to remain united increasing every year, the chance of starvation is also increasing... The villagers must do some thinking to overcome this problem...

We are not benefiting from the unused areas. We have another barren place to be cultivated, which can also be used to overcome the shortage of grass for our animals. If we made these lands cultivable, fewer of our yaks would die every year... It would be a very time-consuming and hard task to construct [irrigation] channels for the barren places, but I think it would be very good long-term planning for future generations...

Our area is a very sacred place, so we have to live very carefully and [remain] united.

Roshan

PAKISTAN 21

Like several other female narrators, Roshan, aged 50, is not originally from Shimshal. She explains: "Passu is my birthplace...but today my home is Shimshal, and Shimshal is everything to me." Roshan has recently returned to the village after living in Karachi for 18 years with her husband and children. She looks forward to the time when her children can support themselves in Karachi and her husband can come home, so that they can spend the rest of their lives in Shimshal together.



My husband took me to Karachi and I spent 18 years [there]. When my children became able to live on their own with my husband I thought I should go back to my village...because we were only in the city for the education of our children and we never thought to live permanently in Karachi. That is why I came back to Shimshal three years ago [and]...started doing my farm activities again... But without a man you cannot do all the agricultural and other work...

I am alone in Shimshal but...the villagers are helping me in each and every sphere of life... My husband will spend a year or two [more] in Karachi with our sons and then he will come back to Shimshal, when our sons are able to live alone in the city. I would like us to be able to spend the rest of our lives in Shimshal together...

You can say that city life is a game of money. You have to pay for everything, like water and fuelwood... We are grateful to God for giving us this land... Tea, salt, rice or cooking oil: these are the only things we buy from outside. People who live in cities have to pay for everything... [They] always remain worried... "I have to pay the

rent of my house", "I have to meet other household expenses"... If someone pays the rent then he might not be able to pay for his children's school fees. These sorts of anxiety are always present in city life...[whereas] we work with our own hands, we have our own lands, homes, free drinking water, and we have our own local products, such as milk, and we never face any problems getting these things.

Women's responsibilities

In our society the man is always supposed to be an outsider; he is not aware about the inside of a home. Home always depends on the woman... Now women have more tasks to perform, compared to the past...[when they] had only to do knitting, weaving and other tasks inside their homes. Fetching fuelwood was previously the responsibility of males, but now women are doing this... Because now we are, you can say, greedy to get money. And our men are going with tourists or doing some labour to make money. And the reason is that if we haven't got money we aren't able to get tea and other necessities for our daily use. That is why women are having to do inside as well as outside tasks on their own...

We had our own sheep, goats and yaks. We used to go with our mothers-in-law as shepherds... In Pamir our responsibilities were grazing livestock, fetching fuelwood from far-off places and producing butter from yoghurt by means of a local handmade machine called a *sagho*. When grazing the livestock we used to go along with girls of the same age, to make the grazing time more joyful... There were difficulties, but we never felt [them]. During the collection of fuelwood, we usually sang songs. While going to the livestock shelters with our mothers we used to sing songs, mostly "*Noonik noonik*"... Whenever I remember that life, I feel it was a beautiful life we spent together.

"We went to the village with great joy"

Later we moved to Shujerab, the lower pasture, and started preparing for *kooch*...because the weather becomes too cold and we wished to go back to the village. We had to divide into three groups called *room* for travelling to the village. Before starting our journey we used to advise each other that if someone had some problem...[we] should not be angry...but try to help each other, because the Vayeen Pass is very difficult. If we were to go happily together, then we might not feel the difficulties. Our journey took two days, and we had to wait for [our mothers with] the yaks at Zartgarban, the first resting place. From Zartgarban on, we had to follow the yaks. One group had to go and stay at Tang, the second

City life is a game of money

Gul Khatoon (F, 95 years)

PAKISTAN 32

Once I was in Pamir and four [female] shepherds were in Ghujerab pasture. . . They had to pass through a river gorge before reaching the next grazing place. The day they crossed the gorge they were hit by rock slides rolling down the mountain. All four of them died. One of them had a small baby, who survived because it was in the hut at the time of the accident. One of the women from the pasture had to walk to the village to inform the villagers of this accident.

resting place, and the remaining two groups had to go to Bandesar—a place opposite the village—and we usually joined each other at that place. When we met we used to talk about the dresses being made for us for the **Kooch festival**; and in the same place we used to take baths and wore new dresses to go to the village, with great joy. The family in the village would come to receive us at the river crossing.

Chiragh

PAKISTAN 8

Chiragh, a farmer aged 48, talks in detail about some of Shimshal's many festivals, celebrated both in the village and in Pamir (the pastures). He explains that many of them are in decline, largely because people are busy working outside the village: "Today nobody is available even to irrigate their crop fields, so who can afford time to celebrate these festivals?"

I was the only son of my parents... [who] had me married when I was eight years old... My wife and I were born... [on] the same day [and] our parents decided that we should be married... We were betrothed the day we were born... On the occasion of my marriage, 15 **deg** of **beth** were prepared and 15 goats were slaughtered and all the villagers were invited to the banquet...

I was too young to differentiate between good and bad things, how to shoulder the responsibilities of having a wife, and how she would make the adjustments with me... I would very often make my father realise the mistake of getting me married at such a young age... I would not condemn the practice as it was the system of that era. But I think that the custom of betrothal practised today is much better because today people get married in accordance with their own will...when they mature. They plan their future, so as to live a better married life.

Festivals and celebrations

We start our festivals with **Tagam**... We take the seed to the field on the first day of April... We also gather the oxen in the field [to] plough the land... After offering prayers and sowing seeds in the



Drama being performed at an Ismaili festival

main field, everyone returns to their houses and...sows seed in their own fields...

When cultivation ends and the plant sprouts from the seeds, we celebrate another festival... [We] welcome the young plant by applying some flour and butter to the newly sprouted plant. This festival is called **Safza Sar**.

After this celebration, the **Kooch festival** takes place... On the day of Safza Sar the elders decide the date for the migration to the pastures and then two or three persons are sent to Pamir to bring the yaks back for transportation... Then women, along with the livestock, leave for Pamir.

When they reach Pamir...the most senior woman, after confirming the correct position of the stars and [determining] the horoscope...starts milking the yaks and [other] livestock... Three days later another custom called **Mirgichig** is performed. Then the first fresh butter is donated to the community centre in the name of God. Thereafter everyone formally begins producing dairy products from their livestock...

Two **shartwurza** go to Pamir from the village; then every household at Pamir invites them to their houses and serves them with special food. The next day [everyone goes] to Wulyo [for another ceremony]... People return to [Pamir] from Wulyo in the evening. The next day they see off the **shartwurza**. *Shartwurza* collect

Important festivals should be preserved

Yeenat (F, 51 years), farmer

PAKISTAN 26

We collect butter in Pamir throughout the summer and transport it to Shimshal and store it [underground] in *yeenjui*, where it ferments and the taste changes... Fresh butter is not available... all year round... The [fermented] butter is... used on the occasions of marriages and deaths, and for other requirements... It makes the *bat* tasty, as compared to *bat* made with fresh butter. It is a symbol of prestige to use fermented butter on such occasions.

one kilogram of butter from every household and load up two yaks to transport the butter to Shimshal...

When the *shartwurza* reach near Shimshal all the villagers...escort them to a central place where the *shartwurza* give each person their butter...

I have been to Pamir twice as a *shartwurza*... [By the second time] the system of *shartwurza* was declining and our elders were worried about it... [They] came to me and told me that nobody was willing to go to Pamir as a *shartwurza*. So they requested me to volunteer for it so that the custom was celebrated and the people's requirements [for fresh butter] were also fulfilled.

"The customs are in decline"

Our ancestors lived an agro-pastoral life in Shimshal. And they left us certain customs connected to that mode of life... The business of life has caused a decline in the enthusiasm for celebration of these festivals... Nobody is available nowadays in the village. The commitments of people have increased, migration is taking place for the sake of employment and more tourists are coming to the village and most of the people travel with them and earn their subsistence... When [people] return they deem such festivals as a waste of time. In this way the customs are in decline.

It seems to me that the traditions that were practised by our ancestors were for the reason that people had surplus time and they all lived together in the village... But today these customs can no longer work, because today our *Maula* and the government insist upon us acquiring an education... Everyone is busy and nobody has time to celebrate these festivals...

Asmat (M, 55 years), driver/retired soldier

PAKISTAN 3

The reason for cooperation in the old days was that, due to the geographical isolation, everyone would stay in the village. Nobody would go outside, except those four or five *shpuns* who would go to Pamir to look after the yaks. There are three main clans in Shimshal, named Bakhti Kathor, Ghazi Kathor and Boqi Kathor... All the people belonging to the same clan would perform the agricultural activities communally.

Personally I was in favour that we should not abandon our customs... Those important festivals such as **Chaneer** and Tagam should be preserved, lest our culture vanishes and our children remain ignorant of their past...

New organisations are coming into being which insist on the preservation of culture... [But] today nobody is available even to irrigate their crop fields, so who can afford the time to celebrate these festivals? ... If all the people do not participate in the festival then there is no true enjoyment. I think the customs...and traditions...will decline...as a result of modernisation.

"We would sing the poetry of our elders"

In the beginning, when there were no musical instruments available, people would sing local songs such as "**Namekdon**" and "**Khun shaheen**". Then, in our era flutes were used... Dramas were also performed... In [one] drama...a baby ibex was grazing with her mother when he saw a hunter approaching them.

Baby ibex: *Mama! A hunter is approaching!*

Mother: *No my baby, it's not a hunter but a shepherd.*

Baby ibex: *Oh mama; he is carrying a gun, what to do now?*

Mother: *No baby: don't worry, be courageous, it's not a gun but a stick.*

Baby ibex: *Mama what to do now? He's fixing the target (taking aim).*

Mother: *Don't worry, baby. He's is not taking aim, He's looking through binoculars.*

Each event of this sad song of the ibex was demonstrated dramatically to make the people realise we should not hunt in the breeding season... [At gatherings] we would sing the poetry of our elders... Nowadays everything is lost. The orchestra and the singers are all dead.

Gul Khatoon

PAKISTAN 32

Gul Khatoon, mother of Rajab (Pakistan 23), was interviewed in 2001 when she was 95 years old; she died in 2003. She describes daily life in Shimshal in the past.

I was married...when I was about the age of my granddaughter (nine years)... I was so young that on the day after my marriage I ran back to my parents' house... My mother...came out with a few apricots in her hand and then she picked me up and held me in her

We used to respect our elders a lot arms; [then] she brought me back to my father-in-law's home. A year later I went to Pamir with my mother-in-law. I was so young that I could not work and my mother-in-law used to scold me...

In the olden times during the engagement ceremony the girl was kept out of the discussion and was only asked to declare her willingness during the **nikah** ceremony. Sometimes, if the girl kept quiet, this was taken as her willingness... Nowadays boys and girls can see each other and...sometimes decide before the parents come to know, while we used to hide ourselves whenever we saw someone from the groom's family...

We used to respect our elders a lot. But now, if I tell my granddaughter something, she ignores it. In those days four or five families lived together, and we were very happy living together. Now if a person is married he wants to divide [the family] and live separately...[but] in a joint family system you can divide work amongst family members so everyone only has to do a little work.

During our time it was a world with so many difficulties... After that God opened the door of his blessings and gradually we became comfortable.

"Harsh weather and less food"

For food we ate **doon**... We used to make **shapik** to eat during **darth kheshn** [when we took dung from the animal sheds to the fields]. We used to consume that hard **shapik**...

When we used to go to the pasture it used to be very difficult for us to survive during bad weather... We used to bear the harsh weather and less food, and wait for the harvest to come. Our sons and brothers used to bring sacks of freshly ground flour for us from the village to Pamir at the time of **Chaneer**...

For our **kuryar** we served dried apricot soup to the family as well as to those who helped the family... Women spent most of their free hours at home making yarn out of sheep's wool for clothing. We used to do **tikmai** and our children used a **charkh** to spin the wool...

We also used to take care of the **Mir's** animals. People of the village used to work for the Mir without payment; they used to prepare the wool by spinning and weave cloth, carpets and ropes for him. But in the 1970s, all free labour for the Mir finished and since [then] it's been all our own time, and whatever we do we do for ourselves... I owned almost the same number of yaks as the Mir. It was a good time... From the milk of just two yaks and a few sheep and goats I used to make seven sacks of butter every year. Now, from 14 yaks and a great number of goats and sheep, my daughter-in-law makes [only] two or three sacks a year. It is

because [in the past] there were fewer animals; now there are more animals and there is less grazing land.

We used to prepare food for the [wedding] ceremony for four days. The food used to be **beth**, **molida** and meat. The entire village gathered in the bridegroom's house to share the food. People danced and visited the bride's house... They used to distribute [the **beth**] to every household. In those days there were fewer households in the village. We used to freeze that **beth** [in an underground cold store] and store it for consumption [later]. Those were hard times, so we had to carefully manage everything. The frozen **beth** was utilised for many days. We did that because of poverty.

"I used to work like a man"

I have worked for about 13 years for my village's **Jamat khana**. But now I am too old even to go there for prayer. I have faced many difficulties, especially in farming... We got permission from the community to develop [some barren] land. Initially some people opposed it, but when we started working on it many people joined in and now it is beautiful... I used to plough the rough surface. It was very hard. When I was working in the field one of my infant children would lie in a hut near the land. I used to work like a man. Now you can see that I have converted this barren land into agricultural land. I have two orchards and quite a vast cultivated area.

Hayat

PAKISTAN 9

Hayat, aged 60, is the wife of Baig Daulat (Pakistan 6). She describes changes that have taken place in the way of food and clothing. She regrets that today's women and girls do less wool work than before and calls for these skills to be taught to girls at school. She says the main reason for the decline in wool work is that "women have taken over the assignments that were normally carried out by men in the past".

In olden times the poor would beg from the rich fellow...for wool and cloth. They would also borrow foodstuff...from one another and in return they would provide free labour... But God has eliminated the difference between the poor and the rich... They are no longer [so] dependent on each other...

At Pamir people help each other with making butter from milk, grazing livestock, and with the delivery and transportation of animal dung for fuel... [Mutual help] exists even today but it has decreased...as most of the people go out in search of employment...

The tradition of volunteer work in Shimshal is very old but...institutions were formed [only] in the recent past and now

At Pamir people help each other

My daughters don't know how to spin people serve the community through these... I still continue my services with the volunteer corps... I was [also] nominated as vice president of the Village Women's Organisation. I served [it] for about five years... We started saving 2 rupees a head at every meeting... and pooled this. After some time it became a handsome amount, which was sufficient to cover the expenses of the volunteers. Thereafter we started collecting wheat grain... We stored this...and other people purchased it and the [payments]...were deposited... [This was] the foundation of the women volunteers' savings.

Managing the food supplies

The senior woman of the family would issue rations from the stock and the junior [woman] or daughter-in-law would prepare the food. It is not like that today—everyone has free access to the food stock. For example, any of my daughters-in-law—whoever is available at home—gets the food from the stock and prepares it...

At that time, soup was prepared from dried apricot; mutton and **qurut** were extensively used... Bread, with **daghove**, was taken for lunch; sometimes meat and butter were also taken with bread. There were no iron stoves; we would make bread [in a mud oven]... There was no tea...[or] rice and pulses... Sometimes vegetables were dried in the summer for use in winter.

Wool work

In former times spindles were used for spinning wool, and four or five women would spin throughout the night; now the same work is carried out by machine in three or four hours. The machine works efficiently if the people are trained to operate it; otherwise it is of no use...

In former times... six, seven—sometimes 12—women would sit together in a house and card the wool by hand, and prepare the yarn for coarse woollen cloth and sweaters... Very few women now do this work because women have taken over the assignments that were normally carried out by men in the past.

Changing division of labour

In former times the firewood that was used for lighting was hard to find, and all this work was carried out in the night... [Today] electricity...[is] available...and I advise [girls] to work hard at embroidery and...not to abandon it... In school they should be trained to card wool, make bread, knit sweaters and do other related work... Women have got plenty of work to do, for example making natural fertiliser, delivering fertiliser, fetching firewood and fetching water from the river. But if they have any spare time, they should do wool work and knitting work at night.

Muhammed Baig (M, 67 years), farmer/weaver

PAKISTAN 10

Now my daughters and my daughter-in-law do not know how to spin wool, so how could I weave **sargaz**? Today the available wool is used to make quilts, and the rest... is packed and dumped in the store... I am not happy with the present situation...but it is beyond my control. Now I have started making thread for people from yaks' and goats' hair for [weaving] **palos**, and in this way I earn money.

Men did not travel so frequently [before]... Firstly they would transport the **sufra**, secondly the **yeelban** of the Mir, and thirdly—before the spring season—they would go as far as Gulmit to bring back dried apricots and other dried fruit. In addition, they would do all the agricultural work, such as delivering fertiliser, watering the fields, fetching firewood...constructing a boundary wall around the fields—men were responsible for all this work... Today women fetch firewood, prepare...[and] deliver the fertiliser to the field. Men are engaged in other work, such as working with tourists as porters in summer.

Khaliq

PAKISTAN 1

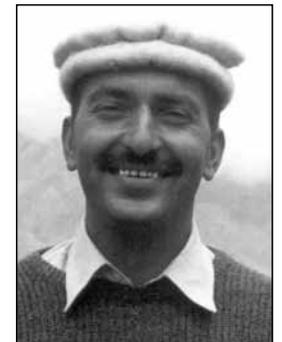
Khaliq, in his 30s, is the headteacher at the girls' school in Shimshal and believes it is his "life's work" to teach in Shimshal. He has been involved in the highly regarded Environmental Education Programme (EEP) and is active in the Shimshal Nature Trust. Khaliq gave his interview in English.

As far as I remember my childhood, we used to play a lot, compared to my own children... [Now] we force them to go to school and study... But when I was a child, I never did these things, I always went hunting birds and [went out] for picnics with friends... I used to go to the pastures... From [the age of] eight...I used to take care of the animals during the summer months with my mother... When I was 14 or 15 years old...my father taught me how to work in the fields...

Nowadays people...want their children to be educated... And now the schools are different... Children are getting four or five lessons in a day and they have to study hard...

We were about 100 [in the primary school]... There was one teacher, and...once a day we got one lesson... When we went to Gulmit we were surprised that there were a lot of teachers... I went to Gilgit...for high school... After **Matriculation**, I came back here

Today women fetch firewood



If I don't teach here, who will? and worked for the **Survey of Pakistan**... I went to Karachi with the money [earned] and I studied and did my **FA (intermediate)**... At the same time, I did a part-time job...in a factory making combs.

"I missed my village"

The first time—that was quite interesting when we left Gilgit for Karachi. [It was] night-time [when] I arrived in Islamabad... In the morning I looked outside. I was surprised that there was no mountain around, [just] flat ground—and I was shocked... When I arrived in Karachi that was quite surprising—lots of traffic...countless people, and the noise! ...

In the summer time I always missed my village because I remembered the cool breeze and the water... In Karachi one lives with tension...you have to be careful about money... Here people are friendly, but in Karachi ...you cannot trust everyone...

We were a group of students from Shimshal; we were living together. And mostly talking about Shimshal...about the pastures and the village... You should talk about your studies, but when we used to get together we started talking about the pastures... about the yaks, and riding yaks...

After my FA, when I came back to visit my parents here in Shimshal...they thought that I should support them and they asked me to look for a job... So I applied [to **AKES**] and I passed the test and the interview and I became a teacher [here].

"Without education we cannot face the world"

[At first] I was thinking that this was just a temporary job... I think now it is my life's work to teach... When I see the situation in the village, if I don't teach here, then who will come and teach? ... And without education we cannot compete or face the world.

When I first joined the school...parents used to take their children back to their houses to assist them...[with practical] work. But now parents are sending their children to school regularly, so it shows there is a big change in the attitude of people...The first reason is that our **jamat** and our **Imam** emphasise education... The second reason is that people here in Shimshal who got education got good positions... So the people are now thinking that if you want a good lifestyle or a good position in society, we have to educate our children... Not everybody feels the same... For example, those people who have many yaks...and a lot of land—their children are not so active in education...

There are 87 [boys] at the government school...[and] 106 girls... In our times there was no school for girls... After graduating

Qurban (M, 60 years), farmer

PAKISTAN 28

The mock ambush between the youth of the village and those at Pamir—called *Nash Qalam Din*—is a great attraction for young people, and provides an opportunity for them to prove their bravery and skill in attacking an enemy... A group of four or five youths go to Pamir and hide... near the yak pen and wait for the darkness of the night before ambushing the pen. They then cut the ropes around the yaks' noses [and let the yaks out]... The youths living in Pamir tighten the security around the yak pen, to foil the attempt of the attackers and catch them... Meanwhile, a group of youths from Pamir comes to the village on the day of *Chaneer* and tries to snatch the special dishes prepared for that festival. If caught, they are "taken prisoner"; and then people gather at a [certain] place and dance, sing and play *dorobi*. It was a very joyful event in those days.

from these schools...[only those girls] who have a relative outside of the village...can go outside. But those students who have no relatives...stay here. That is a big shock for us. Because after eight, nine years of hard work with the [female] students, they just become normal villagers and they don't study further... I think at present there are 15 [female] students studying outside; the rest—over 90 or 100—are staying here... [There are still benefits.] When they get education up to eighth class they can teach their children...they can manage their household better, they can write to their relatives, they can read...

As a headmaster I feel a kind of responsibility... [Last year] I went to Lahore and I spent one year at the Ali Institute of Education... My approach is now quite different... I used to force my students to learn everything by heart. Now I think that...the best approach would be to let the student experience [things] and...[then] they will remember forever.

The Environmental Education Programme

The EEP was promoted by Hideki Hamochi, a photo-journalist from Japan... He ...and students from Nihon University visited Shimshal and they did a lot of research on several topics... So we asked Hideki: how can we learn from these Japanese? So, after many discussions... we decided...to initiate the Environmental Education Programme.

[In] the beginning...we used to bring guest speakers to the schools—locals—to speak about the culture, about the history, about festivals, and about working systems... Students used to write down their lectures, and we made a small booklet of these. But we decided this was just a kind of dictating to the students and we thought...we should give an opportunity for the students themselves to learn about the society... So we developed a format...[for] students...to study the environment. There are 10 committees and the students



A boy watching his father spin yak hair. "Everyone must get education, but they must not abandon their culture and traditions..."

according to their interest choose one...population, daily life, agriculture, politics and economics, festivals, nature, livestock, tourism, weather and history... For example, the weather and climate [committee], they record the temperature daily. And population—they write down whenever there is a birth or a death; and in agriculture...they keep a record of the crops...

Last year the students presented their research in Gilgit to the government education department and AKES; and also people from WWF and IUCN joined the symposium. It was a very exciting event... Actually [WWF and IUCN] were surprised...that such a remote village has promoted such a good environmental project and has collected so much information about their valley. And they said this is the real education... And they were ashamed that they haven't done anything like that themselves.

Shimshal Nature Trust

I also work for SNT, the Shimshal Nature Trust... When this Khunjerab National Park was established it created much worry in the village, because they were trying to deprive us of our lands, which we have been using for hundreds of years—grazing lands and also agricultural lands... The people in the village even confronted the Park officials and didn't allow them to go to our pastures.

And we thought that [this] is not the right way, we cannot stop the government officials in this way... [The] idea we developed was

that we should...[form] an organisation and...prove that we are the best managers of this land; so we promoted the Shimshal Nature Trust and we wrote the management plan. We presented the management plan to government officials and they also agreed...that this is a good approach, they appreciated it...

I feel passionate [about SNT] because...the people were, I think, going in the wrong direction to fight with the government. But this idea...created a good atmosphere that...we should prove in a good way and with wise decisions that we are not doing anything harmful against the environment, we are not doing anything illegal, but... supporting the government.

"My father taught me how to hunt"

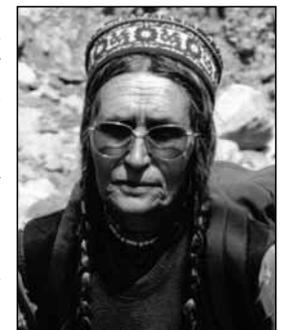
My father himself is a hunter. He used to hunt and he also taught me how to hunt... Big game—blue sheep or ibex—were there. But when we developed this idea of SNT and we thought that we should put a ban on hunting...[my father] said, "What are you thinking? ...Our entire family...[throughout its] history...has hunted and we are proud of being hunters, because we have fed the villagers, even the government soldiers when there was no ration for them..." And I told my father... "If we put a ban on hunting and we bring some **trophy** hunters here and they hunt, then the benefits will go to everyone." And he thought a while on this point and he said this is a good idea.

Gulbika

PAKISTAN 27

Gulbika, aged 65, and her late husband sold all their yaks so they could educate their children. She is a firm believer in the importance of education, for both men and women, but acknowledges that it comes at a price: "My children have left the family home due to education." One of her sons, who has retired from the army, is the only one looking after all the family's land.

When I was married my father brought me on horseback as far as Shaskeen. From there my "foster father"...took me on his back and crossed Shimshal River as many as 52 times, travelling over the hilltops till we reached Shimshal. At that time the journey was very dangerous. When I reached Shimshal I felt very strange that there was no sunshine in the village... [Later] I came to know that in winter the sun passes beyond the high mountain and there is no sunshine in the village [for 40 days]...



We are the best managers of the land

Muhammed Baig (M, 67 years), farmer/weaver

PAKISTAN 10

There is a festival called *Hoshigaram*... The festival is such that [in the winter] the sun moves beyond the high mountain and half of the village remains in complete shadow, resulting in severe cold. After 40 days of shadow, sunlight fills the entire village; [this day] is called *yeer har yupk* (sunlight falling on the water). This indicates the decline of winter and brings happiness to the people. As a token of thanks, people prepare soup at their homes and bring it to the *Jamat khana* to share.

All the activities related to livestock were carried out by my mother-in-law, but after her death I took over this work. We would visit the animal shelter four times a day; we would clean [away] the fodder waste and then feed the livestock with fresh fodder and also give them water... We would also feed the sheep, goat and cows... [and] give them warm water to drink so that they could give more milk... After milking the livestock we would take the milk to the house and would boil the milk and feed our children. The rest of the milk was used to produce butter to meet our everyday needs...

Another benefit from the livestock was the fertiliser... [Yet another] was wool... [This] was mixed with white silt and beaten with sticks until it became soft and clean. Then yarn was made out of the wool, which was then taken to the weaver to make woollen cloth...to make clothes for the family.

Managing resources

Those who used poor quality fertiliser and did not care for their crops properly would get insufficient grain to meet their needs. Such people would borrow food grain from the *dambore* of the *Mir* of Hunza to fulfil their needs. The [same amount of] grain was then deposited in the *dambore* when [these people's] new crops were ready.

Nothing except dried apricots was transported from the **down valley**. The dried apricots were used to prepare our local soup... Our everyday needs were met through local products such as flour, butter, *qurut*, etc... In view of the scarcity of resources we carefully planned our expenses... We would prepare food for the people who came to assist us in cultivation of the fields. On the occasion of marriages **beth** was distributed among the households and this *beth* was frozen and stored and was then consumed in the spring.

"The light of education"

As far as I remember, when I came to Shimshal Shaheen Baig had sent his son Daulat Amin to Hunza for education... After passing his **Matriculation** he returned to the village, [became the first

teacher] and laid down the foundation for education. Today our children who are in good positions were the students of Daulat Amin. I always used to tell my five sons that it was Daulat Amin who lit the light of education... My husband...sold all the yaks in order to educate our children... Now all are busy with their jobs and education in Gilgit and Islamabad.

Education is very important and it has several advantages, but my children have left the family home due to education. Their father passed away and now there is nobody to look after our fields. One of my sons retired from doing military service and now he alone is looking after the lands of my other sons, but he has a lot of worries. I am living in Gilgit...with my [other] children. Now I observe that the improvements I made in my fields are being wasted...

I educated my elder daughter up to Matriculation...[then] her father arranged her marriage without my consent. It was a great setback for us that we could not educate her further. [My younger daughter] received her early education in the village; thereafter her brother moved her to the Aga Khan Academy, Karimabad. She passed her secondary school examination with grade A and went to Islamabad for further study.

One must concentrate more on the education of daughters... Men can work in any circumstances, irrespective of their education, but women can only get a respectable job if they are very well educated... The mother can [also] very well educate her children at home... A husband can work and earn money but his educated wife can manage this money wisely.

The road: hopes and fears

I thank God that our road has been improved... There are bridges located at all the river crossings...and we can travel by jeep almost half the way. And if, God willing, the road reaches the village very soon...our men will also be freed from carrying loads... Hotels will be built in the village, new shops will be opened and people will buy vehicles and earn from them... From Shimshal they will trek to

Aman (M, 41 years), teacher trainer

PAKISTAN 12

[When the road is completed] we may not need to move to Gilgit with our children... because we will be able to get all the facilities here in Shimshal... We have a lot of local products that have no value now—for example, *palos*. After the road [is finished] we will be able to build our own factory in Shimshal. Now we waste most of the goat hair but in future we will...sell these sorts of product to generate income.

Our parents were uneducated

Pamir with tourists and earn sufficient money to meet their needs...

But the only reservation is that today we [women] can move around the village freely and can go to work alone, but after the linkage of the road [this will]...be difficult, because so many people will come to the village. Then it will be essential [for our safety] for the men to remain present in the village.

Hussn

PAKISTAN 19

*Hussn, aged 31, was one of the first women in Shimshal to be educated. She and her classmate both sacrificed their dreams of college and decided to teach in Shimshal following their **Matriculation**. She describes how attitudes towards female education have become more positive since she was at school and says people now realise that both men and women "can bring about changes" in their society.*



Whether [the home] runs in a good way or a bad way depends upon the woman... There is a proverb: "The man is an outsider"... [He has] to hand over his earnings to the woman...the actual owner of a home...[and she] has to use things skilfully... The status of a woman is like a president, who has the responsibility of running a state...

Nowadays, men have to spend most of the time outside the village, earning an income for their families. And the women have to play all those roles, such as watering the fields and watering the trees, which were previously...performed by the men of the family... [For my part], I am doing my job as a teacher and along with this I am doing my household chores. And there are other sisters like

me who are doing their jobs and are also doing their household chores by themselves...

Nowadays I don't have that much time to keep more livestock... My relatives help me, and they make butter and cheese for me when they go to the pasture... I am the only woman in my home and it is our culture to help those who are alone, poor or orphaned.

"An illiterate person is like a dark room"

Every parent is now thinking for their children that even if they have to sell their farmland, even if they have to remain without clothing or food, [they] would give education to their children...

Now people are motivated to send their daughters **down country** to get higher education... [For] the population of our

Qurban (M, 60 years), farmer

PAKISTAN 28

It is indeed the period of knowledge and information. Everyone must get education, but they must not abandon their culture and traditions. Following the traditions, respecting the norms and laws and not going astray is the unique culture of this village. The educated people should not criticise these traditions by saying they are outdated and [just] old things. [Our traditional culture] will be useful to the new generation, in the future.

village, the number of working women is small, but three females are in the education [sector], five are working in health and one is working with **AKRSP**; and five are teaching at the religious centre...

An illiterate person is like a dark room. When people know [things], when they get education, it is possible for a village to develop... According to me, education doesn't mean...joining the field of medicine, engineering or becoming a lecturer somewhere... [but] improving our livestock system and agriculture...

Our parents were uneducated... [But] our **Imam**...gave a **farman**...that if you had two children, a boy and a girl, you should educate your daughter... At that time there was no system of educating daughters...

We started...our classes on the ground of the **Jamat khana**, where a volunteer teacher...used to teach us... But due to the lack of facilities we all left the school, and there was a gap of three years... [Then] **AKES** appointed [a teacher]...

"An educated woman is confident"

When I passed my **Matric** examination ... I thought that if I could transfer my little education to our new generation, it would be an honour for me, and at the same time our village would develop... [I have been teaching] for the last 11 years. Presently, three of our students are studying in Islamabad, four are in Gilgit and many are studying in the high school at Gulmit...

An educated woman is confident enough to solve all her problems, whether they are social, economic or educational... If she has health problems, she can talk to the doctor...confidently and openly... [She] always tries to make her child aware about good and bad things, and help them in their growth; or if her child is having some problem doing their homework an educated woman can easily help...

Now they have appointed female members in the Local Council, the **Tariqa Board**, the **Arbitration Committee** and other **Imamat** institutions in our village... Women are also given preference in government jobs within the village. It is the need of the time that women should work along with their male counterparts [and]

You should educate your daughter

Our men will be freed from carrying loads

should share their education, ideas and views, because the joint participation of men and women is beneficial for society. Presently I am working as a member of the Tariqa Board, and...as a manager with the Women's Organisation established by AKRSP...

“Both men and women can bring about change”

A few years ago when...girls' education was newly started...people used to say to us that boys are getting education to be a pilot or to be an officer, so what do you people [want to] do? ... Go to the moon? They were taunting [us]... That is why we educated females decided...we would be an example...

People are getting a good impression...[and seeing] that education doesn't mean just to dress up...to do a job or to get money... They now understand that our educated daughters are working on all those chores that we are doing and that society will get a good effect from education... We are bringing soil to spread at the shelters under the livestock to enhance the natural fertiliser, and like other mothers and sisters we are bringing fuelwood, and looking after the livestock, and we are doing...all those things that are part of our culture...

In the past, people were of the opinion that only men could bring about changes in society, but now they have learned that education is the only thing that brings women and men to the same level, and both of them can bring about change.

GLOSSARY

Every attempt has been made to gloss all the terms in the testimonies. Most of the words below are Wakhi, a few are Brushashki (language of Hunza) or Urdu (national language of Pakistan).

AKES	Aga Khan Education Service
AKRSP	Aga Khan Rural Support Programme
Arbitration Committee	a group of villagers responsible for resolving conflicts
arbob	Mir's main representative in the village
beth	local dish; wheat flour mixed with butter, water and salt, served with mutton
bett	woollen overcoat
bitan	person who can communicate with the mountain spirits, enabling them to heal the sick or predict the future
borwar	(literally, one who carries the load); less wealthy villagers who carried the Mir's taxes from Shimshal to the Mir's palace in Hunza
Chaneer	harvest festival
charkh	spinning wheel
chomorow	thyme
chorbu	public announcer
clean-up expeditions	expeditions to remove debris left by previous mountaineering and trekking groups
daghove	kind of soup: <i>qurut</i> mixed with water and butter
dambore	grain store
deg	cast iron cooking pot; 100 litre capacity
doon	fried wheat
dorobi	tug-of-war
down country	refers to the rest of Pakistan
down valley	refers to Hunza and Gojal
FA intermediate	higher secondary school certificate (Faculty of Arts)
farman	instruction/guidance from the Imam of the time
Hoshigaram	hot soup festival celebrated in February to mark the end of winter, when the sun's rays hit the village for the first time after 40 days
Imam	hereditary spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslims, currently Prince Karim Aga Khan
Imamat	office of the Imam (Aga Khan)
IUCN	World Conservation Union
jamat	Ismaili community

Jamat khana	religious and community centre of Ismaili Muslims
K2	highest mountain in Pakistan, second highest in the world (8,611m)
khun shaheen kooch	“the falcon nest”, name of local song migration; especially seasonal migration with livestock to and from Pamir, the pastures
Kooch festival	takes place at the start of migration to Pamir and, most enthusiastically, when people return months later with many livestock products
kuryar lopan	communal labour (literally, elders); also refers to those wealthy enough to pay taxes (in kind) to the Mir, and to those representing the Mir in the village
lubi	border security personnel
mahram	personal servant of the Mir
Mamusing	original founder of Shimshal
Matriculation/ Matric	secondary school certificate (stage below FA)
Maula	(literally, master); the Imam (Aga Khan)
micro-hydel	small hydro-electric generator
minderich	type of grass
Mir	rulers of Hunza up to 1974
Mir's load	the taxes and products from the Mir's own livestock and land in Shimshal, which were carried to Hunza by the <i>borwar</i>
Mirgichig	purification custom which inaugurates the milking season and takes place in the pastures
molida	local dish: bread mixed with <i>qurut</i> and butter
mullah	religious literate person who recites words from the Quran
namekdon	“the salt pot”, name of local song
Nanga Parbat	second highest mountain in Pakistan, ninth highest in the world (8,125m)
Nausadar	ammonium chloride
nigan	thin flat bread
nikah	Islamic matrimonial agreement
nomus	Shimshali system by which people with sufficient resources sponsor a community development project in the name of a relative
noonik noonik	“the sister in-law”, name of local song
palos	carpet made of yak or goat hair
qurut	local dried cheese

room	main lineage groups/clans
Safza Sar	crop sprouting festival
sargaz	woollen cloth, often coarse
shapik	unleavened bread
shartwurza	(literally, promised guest); two men from the village who visit Pamir to grace the Chaneeer festival, and bring back butter for the villagers
Shegd-tar-charaman	festival celebrating the moment when the new crop is taken to the threshing place
Shogoonpathok	person designated to inaugurate festivals, hereditary position
shpun	herder; usually refers to those who spend winter in the pastures taking care of the yaks
SNT	Shimshal Nature Trust
sufra	(literally, gifts); refers to some of the taxes paid by Shimshalis to the Mir
Survey of Pakistan	every 25 years the Boundary Commissions of China and Pakistan send teams to check the border area, verify maps etc
Tagam	sowing festival
Tariqa	(literally, the way); religious education
thrangpa	representative of the Mir who visited Shimshal once a year to monitor tax collection
tikmai	hand carding of wool
toman	smoke from burning juniper branches used to purify homes at the beginning of the Tagam festival
trophy ibex	older ibex, usually male (people avoid hunting younger or female animals)
tuksori	game similar to cricket
vushdon	area where people save grass for winter grazing
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
yeelban	taxes paid to the Mir
yeenjui	underground cold store for butter

INDEX

- Agriculture:** 13, 15-16, 20, 21, 33
crops: 10
fertiliser: 42
- Childhood:** 3, 37
(see also Education)
- City life: 8, 10-11, 28-29, 38
- Climate/weather: 21, 25, 34, 41
(see also Floods)
- Collective activities: 10, 32, 35
- Communications:
conveying messages: 13
radio: 13
road: 12, 15, 17, 23, 43
travel: 21, 29-30, 41
- Community work: 3, 19
- Conservation: see Environment
- Cooperation/unity: 21, 32
- Customs/culture: 27, 31-33, 41, 45
(see also Poetry/songs/drama)
- Development:** 12, 17
AKRSP (Aga Khan Rural Support Programme): 11
nomus: 10, 11, 20
(see also Communications)
- Economics:** 11, 15, 21, 29, 44
managing resources: 15, 35, 36, 42, 44
(see also Communications, Cooperation/unity, Tourism)
- Education: 8, 11, 23-24, 37, 42-43, 44-45
Environmental Education Programme: 39-40
female education: 38-39, 43
teaching: 38-39, 45
- Employment: see Migration, Portering, Tourism
- Environment: 6
Khunjerab National Park: 5-6, 13-14, 40-41
Shimshal Nature Trust: 7, 13-14, 40-41
(see also Education)
- Family life:** 3, 15, 18, 34
(see also Marriage, Social relations)
- Farming year: see Agriculture
- Festivals: 16, 30, 30-31, 42
- Firewood: 15
- Floods: 13, 22
- Food: 32, 34, 35, 36, 42
food security: 42
(see also Self-sufficiency)
- Gender:**
division of labour: 15, 20-21, 29, 36-37, 44
participation in public life: 17, 45-46
- Health:** 16-18
animal health: see Livestock
facilities: 12
- History: 19, 26, 34
knowledge transfer: 7
Mir's tax system: 18-19
- Identity:** 4, 5
- Imam/Aga Khan: 17, 45
- Land development:** 7, 27-28, 35
- Language: 8
(see also Poetry/songs/drama)
- Livestock: 15, 20, 34, 42
herding: 24-26, 29
products: 9-10, 24-25, 29
yaks: 25-26, 41
- Marriage:** 8-9, 14, 30, 33-34
- Migration: 32
for education: 3, 38
seasonal: see Pastures
- Mountaineering: 7, 22-23
- Pastures:** 9, 24-26, 29-30, 31-32, 35, 41
- Poetry/songs/drama: 3, 33
- Portering: 7, 23
- Poverty: 9, 22, 35
- Religion/spiritual beliefs:** 20
(see also Imam/Aga Khan)
- Security:** 17, 43
- Self-sufficiency: 15, 22, 29, 42
- Social change: 5, 8, 12, 32-33
(see also Economics)
- Social institutions: 17, 45
volunteers: 17, 35-36
(see also Development)
- Social relations:
between generations: 5, 15, 34
- Tourism:** 7, 12-13, 23
(see also Economics, Portering)
- Traditional skills:
wool work: 36, 37, 42