

Migration and Society in Gilgit, Northern Areas of Pakistan

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Abstract. – High mountain areas like the Northern Areas of Pakistan are frequently regarded as having been isolated from the surrounding world before the development of modern means of communication. The paper argues that Gilgit, the modern center of the Northern Areas, had been subject to immigration and thus contact with the outside long before the era of road construction. The relationship between immigrants and people of Gilgit changed according to the conditions and (political) context of migration. Modernity did not start migration but it caused new patterns of migration and of relations with immigrants to emerge. [*Pakistan, high mountain areas, migration, change, conflict*]

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Introduction

High mountain areas are often considered to be special habitats because they are largely isolated and secluded from the outside world – at least before they have been “opened up” by modern techniques like road construction. They are said to be a kind of “ethnographic museums” where archaic cultural traits are preserved because no or only extremely limited exchange with the surrounding countries existed. The same views have been expressed frequently about the Northern Areas of Pakistan, situated at the meeting point of Karakoram, Himalayan, and Hindu Kush ranges. For somebody coming from the plains of Pakistan or Europe this assumption seems quite natural at first sight. For those not used to life in high mountain environment, the physical structure of the area with its high peaks and deep river gorges indeed seems to be very inimical to mobility and communication. The Northern Areas of Pakistan are said to have been “opened up” by the construction of the Karakoram Highway, a metalled all-weather road that connects the plains of Pakistan with Kashgar in the Chinese province Sinkiang and that has been completed in 1978. The Highway follows the valleys of the Indus and Hunza rivers and

enters China on top of Khunjerab Pass. No doubt, the completion of the Karakoram Highway (KKH) has intensified exchange between the mountain area and the lowlands extremely, but not at all have the mountains been isolated before.

Of course, high mountains restrict mobility in many respects. But they do not prevent people from moving. Man always finds his way even in very adverse surroundings. Mobility in the Northern Areas has not started only with the construction of the KKH. Only its form and extent has been changed by road construction. Thus, there has always been migration within and into what is now the Northern Areas of Pakistan. The area was never secluded from the outside world. Still more important, migration was and is not just a minor occurrence in the region. It is a condition that has decisive influence on the structure of society. In this paper I want to show some of the effects migration had on society in Gilgit, the largest town in the Northern Areas.

Today Gilgit is in every respect the center of the Northern Areas of Pakistan. Situated at the confluence of the rivers Gilgit and Hunza, not faraway from the junction of the Gilgit River with the Indus, it was accessible from all sides both through the valleys and over mountain paths. During its eventful history, Gilgit had been in turns both center of regional power and target of attack from outside. Today, Gilgit has more than 40,000 inhabitants and houses all modern and administrative facilities. Its population is characterized by its extreme diversity. Fifteen different mother tongues are spoken in the town.¹

The fact of migration to Gilgit is proved by the presence of a large number of migrant groups. Many of them have come before the British started to construct more convenient paths in the mountain world. It is impossible to date the arrival of these

¹ These languages are: Balti, Burushaski, Domaki, Farsi, Gujri, Hindko, Kashmiri, Khilli (Kohistani), Khowar, Pashtu, Punjabi, Shina, Turki, Urdu, and Wakhi.

groups in the area or to give exact details of their migration. But still it is remembered that they have come from outside. Most of them can tell stories of their origins. I just want to mention some examples: the Qizilbaş, who say that their forefathers have come from Turkey via Iran and Kashmir, or the different groups of Kaśmīrī who have come from Kashmir, of course. Some groups of Kaśmīrī even claim that their ancestors have originally started from Afghanistan. Another instance are the different families of Sayyids who claim to be descendants of the prophet Muḥammad, or the Kōhistānī from the Indus and its tributaries below Darel and Tangir. Even the different clans of Šīn and Yeškun who claim that they are the offspring of the area's original inhabitants tell stories of their forefathers' immigration.

Of course, not all of these stories can be taken as reports about factual migration. Some of them might be "invented traditions." But they show that in the minds of the inhabitants the area was indeed connected with the surrounding countries.

People from Gilgit and People from Outside

Here I am less concerned with stories about the advent of particular groups than with the structure of relationships between people from Gilgit and immigrants. Due to immigration Gilgit is subject to what Zygmunt Bauman (1990: 143) has called the "master-opposition" – the difference between inside and outside, that is in our case, the difference between people from Gilgit and people from outside. This opposition is used to give order to the social environment, to sort out individuals and groups. This order is not fixed in the sense that it establishes the position of groups or individuals once and for all. Not at all, sides can be changed – they could at least. There were mechanisms of integration through which people from outside could become people from Gilgit, at least relatively, in comparison with other people from outside.

The opposition is equated with a bulk of different meanings that changed over time. In attributing these meanings I take the perspective from inside. It is the perspective of those who call themselves *muḥulfau*, that means those who prepared the soil of Gilgit, the sons of the soil.² They – a minority of

Gilgit's population today – claim to be the real, the original people from Gilgit. This is not to say that theirs is the only or even the true perspective. From their point of view a whole series of oppositions can be related to the difference inside/outside (Table 1). One could call these the "traditional" meanings of the opposition between inside and outside.

Table 1: Opposition Inside/Outside

Inside	Outside
known	strange
the own	the different
land	landless
agriculture	crafts and trade
<i>xāndānī</i>	<i>bē-xāndānī</i>
people of the soil	migrants, refugees
rich	poor
powerful	weak
local order	threat of disorder
security	danger
purity	impurity
moral	immoral
high	low

Xāndānī and *bē-xāndānī*

Speaking generally, people from outside were not regarded favourably. The most important difference between both kinds of people, which expresses a difference in status and value, is that people from Gilgit are *xāndānī* whereas people from outside are *bē-xāndānī*. *Xāndānī* means "of a family." *Bē-xāndānī* are those who had to leave their families and their place of origin because of poverty, feuds, crime, conquest, and similar reasons. They had to go because they were weak. They could not defend the honour of their families. They became refugees or nomads, *xānabadōš*, an entirely negative concept. *Xāndānī* people refused to accept *bē-xāndānī* people as their equals: They did not share meals with them and refused to marry with them. *Xāndānī* and *bē-xāndānī* could be distinguished by their occupations: *xāndānī* men cultivated their own land whereas *bē-xāndānī* men possessed no land to cultivate. They were tenants, craftsmen, or petty traders, that is, they could not provide their livelihood independently but were forced to offer their services to other people.

² *Muḥulfau* is a Shina compositum of *maḥulo* ("clod of earth") and the verbum *fau thōk* that means "to spread," "to break up." *Muḥulfau* are those who claim that their ancestors have prepared the soil of Gilgit, making the place arable. For a myth of origin supporting that claim and a

detailed account of their perspectives today see Sökefeld in press c. *Muḥulfau* are not a uniformity but belong to the two different groups (*qōm*) Šīn and Yeškun (for these see Sökefeld 1994).

Because these people were not integrated into local families, they were regarded as being less subject to social control. They were said not to follow the strict moral code of *xāndānī* people. Thus they were a possible threat to the local order.

In the course of the years meanings of inside and outside have changed in central respects. From the same perspective (inside) important meanings would read now as in Table 2.

Table 2: New Opposition Inside/Outside

Inside	Outside
disowned	rich
disempowered	powerful

This shift of meanings resulted from historical and political processes related to migration-processes that have also changed the character of the boundary between inside and outside.

Land

An important aspect of this boundary was related to land. The rights to land people enjoyed told whether a person belonged to the inside or to the outside. In the representations of *muṭhulfau* today, land was formerly property of their clans. Land could not be alienated by individual members of the clans (who held the hereditary right for cultivation). But with the consent of the clan it could be given to people from outside. Their offspring became *uskūn* of the clan – a term that can be translated roughly as “patrilineal relatives.” Mostly, but not exclusively, this happened in connection with marriages to daughters of houses that lacked a male heir: A man from outside married this daughter and settled in her father’s house, contrary to the general rule of virilocality. Genealogical descent is ordinarily reckoned patrilineally in the Northern Areas, but in these cases descent was not traced through the father but, for one generation, through the mother. Put differently: Group membership was less a question of unilineal descent than a question of inheritance of part of a group’s land. The boundary between people from Gilgit and people from outside was permeable.

Muṭhulfau enjoyed certain privileges together with the land. First, the right to water for irrigation was theirs, mostly because they had constructed the canals. They were entitled to start agriculture with a ritual of ploughing that ensured rich harvest.

They also enjoyed the right of bringing uncultivated lands (*xāliṣa*) under cultivation.

Beside the *muṭhulfau* there were other important landowners in Gilgit – the rulers, whether the members of the ruling family itself or their *wazīr* (minister). They too could settle outsiders in Gilgit. Oral histories of *muṭhulfau* tell that they even had the power to appropriate land of *muṭhulfau* clans to give it to migrants.

From Emigration to Immigration

As we know especially from petroglyphs, migrants and travellers had moved through the area already in the early centuries. The events I will consider here happened much later. I will start this tale of migration with a period when forced *emigration* was the most important occurrence in relation with the development of population in Gilgit. This emigration created the space for subsequent immigration.

During the first half of the 19th century, Gilgit ceased to be a center of regional power and, due to the weakness of the local dynasty, became an easy target of attack for the rulers of surrounding valleys. Especially two rulers coming from the west, Suleman Shah (from Mastuj) and Gohar Aman (from Yasin), left marks of merciless violence in the Gilgit valley. Being descendants of the ruling dynasty of Chitral who in turn was related with the rulers of Badakhshan, both of them used the population of Gilgit as a resource for their flourishing slave trade with Badakhshan and central Asia. The first British visitor of Gilgit, Vans Agnew, wrote in 1847: “The population of Gilgit . . . is supposed to have been in the time of its prosperity some 6000 or 7000 houses. Suliman Shah . . . is said to have sold into slavery 2000, Ahzad Khan 1000, Mooluk Aman 1000 . . .” (1847: 288).³ Thus, already before Gohar Aman (the son of Mulk [Mooluk] Aman mentioned by Vans Agnew) started his attacks on Gilgit in 1841, only 2000 houses had remained in the valley. Biddulph wrote about Gohar Aman: “Like many of the Khushwakté family, he seems to have possessed considerable energy and ability, but his blood-thirsty cruelty, which seemed to be

³ Of course, these figures cannot be taken absolutely. The local chronicle of Shah Rais Khan, for example, tells only of 200 boys and 200 girls who had been brought to Badakhshan by Azad Khan of Punial who had been appointed governor of Gilgit by Suleman Shah and who killed him later (Shah Rais Khan 1987: 343). Still, the reports make clear that Gilgit lost a considerable part of its population.

directed especially against the people of Gilgit, threatened to depopulate the country. Whole villages were driven into slavery, and whole districts ruined, apparently to gratify his resentment. The misery inflicted by this man is almost beyond belief, and his name is still never mentioned without horror. A certain Syud in Badakhshan ... accepted a present of hundred Gilgiti slaves from Gohr Aman. Numbers of Gilgitis are still living in slavery in Badakhshan, Bokhara, Khokand, and other neighbouring countries" (1971: 138). Some of those sold to central Asia found their way back after years, but still the depletion of population was considerable.⁴ The British intelligence agent Munphool Pundit reported in 1867 for the whole Gilgit region (including Gor, Sai, Bagrot, Nomal, Bargo etc.) only 1000 houses (1870: 35). In 1885 Barrow's Gazetteer estimated: "The population of Gilgit (garrison not included) is probably about 1000, excluding the neighbouring hamlets of Khomar, Vútiál [i.e. Jutial], Barmas, Naupur and Basin, which together contain about fourhundred more" (Anonymous 1991 [1890]: 327).⁵ Thus, about two decades after Kashmir had succeeded in "pacifying" the area, Gilgit was still largely depopulated compared to the number of inhabitants at the beginning of the century.

Plenty of potentially fertile land must have been uncultivated and unoccupied then. Gilgit became an attractive place for immigrants. Oral histories tell that especially many people from outside were settled in Gilgit by the last local *wazīr*, Wazīr Ghulam Haider. He governed until about 1890 in place of Raja Ali Dad who was a little child when appointed nominal ruler of Gilgit. Wazīr Ghulam Haider is said to have taken land of clans of Gilgit to distribute it among immigrants coming from various regions like Kashmir, Chitral, and Kohistan. Also the clans of Gilgit themselves settled immigrants on their land, which, of course, remained land of the clan. From many people who told that they belonged to the "original" clans of Gilgit I learned subsequently that their forefathers too had been migrants, mostly from the adjacent areas in the south, who became integrated into these clans via marriage.

Both ways of settling people from outside in Gilgit were guided by the interests of those who gave the land. These interests could consist in

enlarging the own following, in securing the services of men with special crafts or in securing the continuation of a family's line if there was no male heir.

But there was a decisive difference between people settled in Gilgit by the rulers on appropriated or vacant land and people settled by a family or clan on its own estates: Those settled by the ruler (and their offspring) remained people from outside without integrating relationships with people from Gilgit. They remained *bē-xāndānī*. In contrast, those settled by the clans were integrated into these clans: their children became *uskūn* and thus members of the clan, that is, people from Gilgit. Thus, migrants from the same places of origin could acquire quite different statuses in Gilgit, depending on the manner how they were settled in the valley.

Kashmiri and British Rule in Gilgit and the Boundary between Inside and Outside

In Kashmir, land was regarded property of the ruler. It was *māl-e sarkār*, property of the government. The cultivator was only a tenant (*asāmī*) of the *sarkār* (government) with hereditary rights for cultivation (*Census of India* 1911: 8). Therefore, land could not be alienated by the cultivator himself. When the Kashmiri administration had tightened its control in Gilgit, these regulations applied to the farmers of the valley too. In 1893/94, a land settlement was conducted in Gilgit which established the landholdings cultivated by each farmer (Aitchison 1909: 256 f.). At least after this first settlement, migrants could no longer be settled on the land at the will of a farmer. The farmer/cultivator or his clan was no longer the proprietor of the land.

The Kashmiri administration restricted not only the possibility to settle people from outside in Gilgit but also the very movement of people from outside into the town and the surrounding villages: Checkposts were established in the east of Gilgit (near Jutial), in the west, at the Kargah River, and in the north, on the other side of the Gilgit River at Konodas. Travellers could get the permission to enter Gilgit for some days to visit the bazaar etc. but mostly they had to spend their nights in a *sarāī* (hostel) at the other side of the checkpost.

The reason why the administration adopted these measures is quite clear: Kashmir's control of the area had been challenged several times by attacks from different directions. Some of these attacks even succeeded in expelling the Kashmiri

4 For a complete assessment of slavery in the Northern Areas during the first half of the 19th century see Müller-Stellrecht 1981.

5 Although it is not explicitly stated, it seems that these figures refer to individuals, not to houses.

administration and garrison from Gilgit.⁶ Therefore the administration was eager to control and restrict movements from all sides.

For the people of Gilgit these measures meant that the boundary between inside and outside became fixed. People from outside could enter the town only with difficulties. Much less could they be settled and become people from Gilgit. The social distance between inside and outside increased.

Since the turn of the century, Gilgit became a still more attractive place for migrants. It not only offered uncultivated lands but also a bazaar and an initial labor market, both growing after the British expanded their presence in the town.

After the surrender of the neighbouring principalities of Hunza and Nagar in 1891, the British had developed a kind of romantic relationship with Hunza. People from Hunza were regarded as rich in virtues estimated by the British like industriousness and reliability. Thus although the borders of Gilgit remained closed by Kashmiri efforts, people of Hunza were allowed to trickle into the town. Population pressure and shortage of land in Hunza induced these people to come to Gilgit. The British offered people of Hunza land around Gilgit to cultivate and to settle on (Kreutzmann 1989: 181 ff.). For a considerable period, this migration continued to be restricted and opposed by the ruler of Hunza. People from Hunza also found employment with the British, for example in the Gilgit Scouts Corps.

All these incentives of migration remained closed to the people of the southern regions, of the Indus Valley, of Chilas, Darel, Tangir and Kohistan; people who, speaking more or less the same language as the people in Gilgit, had formed the bulk of migrants before. The Kashmiri administration of the Gilgit Tahsil feared that these people would only create trouble as they had done before when they assisted the attacks on the Kashmiri garrison in the town. The British had already enough problems in dealing with feuds in these regions. Both powers were interested in keeping potential migrants from the south out of Gilgit.

Thus, under the influence of dominating powers from outside (Kashmir and Britain) both the direction and the manner of migration to Gilgit changed. People came (or rather, in the beginning, wanted to come) from the north and not, as before, from the south. Equally important, they began to develop means of livelihood in Gilgit (trade, crafts, employment) independent of the local population.

6 For accounts of Kashmir's struggle about Gilgit see for example Hashmatullah Khan 1991: 693 ff.; Drew 1980: 437 ff.

The avenue to become people from Gilgit was not only closed because land could not be allotted to outsiders. It was also much less necessary, for people from outside were able to find a more independent standing.

When the British took over the administration of the Gilgit Subdistrict from Kashmir in 1935,⁷ this change was accelerated. The control of movements into the town was relaxed and land was declared property of the cultivator that could be alienated at least in part.⁸ Since the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s, people from outside, especially people from Hunza, began to buy land in Gilgit. They bought both irrigated land (*ābādī zamīn*) and unirrigated land (*xālisa*). Those with irrigated land developed a relationship based on water with the *muṭhulfau* who sold the land because the right of water for irrigation remained customarily with them and had to be asked for when needed. The new settlers became the *sāmī* of the *muṭhulfau*. They were not integrated into the clans, they did not become *uskūn*, but still a relationship between families was established. Migrants who bought unirrigated land did not establish such a relationship. They remained apart.

Beside people from Hunza also people from Nager and Paštūn entered Gilgit in increasing numbers. In the following decades, irrigated lands quickly became sold out. New migrants had only the chance to get *xālisa*. Therefore, new relations between people from Gilgit and people from outside based on land could not develop. A growing resentment against people from outside developed instead: People from Gilgit felt more or less dispossessed by people from outside. First, they had sold their land at quite cheap rates be-

7 The administrative conditions of the so-called Gilgit Agency were quite complicated. The British Political Agent had his office established at Gilgit town. But the town and Gilgit *tahsil* (subdistrict) was under the administration of a governor (*wazīr-e wazārat*) of Jammu and Kashmir State. Formally, British authority was valid only in the areas situated around the Kashmiri Gilgit Wazārat and not in Gilgit itself. A lot of quarrels and problems ensued from this "double control" in the Agency because, practically, the Political Agent considered British powers paramount also in matters of the Gilgit Wazārat, at least when he considered them relevant for the whole Agency. Therefore, the British took over the whole administration in 1935 in the form of a lease of the Gilgit Wazārat from Jammu and Kashmir State.

8 Land had been declared property of the cultivator by Maharaja Hari Singh in 1933 (*Census of India* 1941: 16). Still, land in Gilgit could not be sold until the British decreed the *Gilgit Subdivision of Land Regulation* in 1936. Some restrictions were imposed on the sale of land to preclude the development of large landed properties.

cause in the beginning there was no regular market and no appropriate price for land. Subsequently, land became quickly a scarce resource and therefore very expensive. This increase in price was accelerated by the growth of population in Gilgit and subsequent portioning of inheritance. For many people in Gilgit, their landed property was no longer sufficient to maintain their families. Second, most economic alternatives beside agriculture (trade, crafts, and higher employment in the administration) seemed to be already occupied by people from outside. They specialized in these areas because frequently scarcity of agricultural land in their homelands had already been the cause of their migration.

Thus the change in the meaning of the opposition inside/outside referred to above occurred: People from Gilgit began to see themselves no longer as the masters of the place. They considered people from outside, especially Paštūn, as having become much richer and much more powerful than themselves.

The Impact of Karakoram Highway

Finally, the construction of the KKH again changed the pattern of migration and the structure of relationships between people from Gilgit and newly arrived migrants, mostly Paštūn. Already the unmetalled Indus-Valley-Road accelerated traffic considerably. The duration of a journey between the villages in Dir, where the majority of the Paštūn migrants in Gilgit comes from, was very much reduced. It became still shorter when the road was finished. Now it was possible to travel home every few months, a journey that was undertaken only once a year or even more rarely before. A pattern of seasonal migration developed. Many more Paštūn traders came to Gilgit but they did not settle in the town. They did their business together with one or two partners, mostly brothers or close cousins. One of them stayed in Gilgit for business whereas the others remained in their villages together with their families. After two or three months they changed. These traders did not establish complete households in Gilgit. They rented houses together with other traders and shopkeepers, mostly relatives or at least fellow villagers. All their families, wives and children, stayed behind in their homevillages. In Gilgit they were literally *bē-xāndānī*. Because they did not settle in the town, they did not develop relationships with people from Gilgit apart from business relations. They did not learn the local language.

They did not come to know people from Gilgit personally. When Paštūn started to migrate to Gilgit, there were even occasional marriages with women from Gilgit (mostly Kašmīrī), but such relations are unthinkable now. There is even a considerable alienation between those Paštūn who settled in Gilgit earlier and those who come only seasonally: Those settled in the town are no longer regarded as "real Paštūn" by those who came later.

People from Gilgit regard these seasonal migrants as people from outside and strangers par excellence. They are regarded with extreme mistrust. They come only temporarily for business, an occupation that is seen as potentially dishonest. They are said to be engaged in all kinds of illegal trafficking. Because they come and go, they are not subject to social control in the town. They are not visibly bound to families, thus they are *bē-xāndānī*. Paštūn regard the people from Gilgit with equal suspicion, and that is an important reason for why they do not bring their families to the town.⁹

Thus, the diminution of the relative physical distance to the "outside" by a considerable acceleration of traffic has widened the social distance between people from Gilgit and people from outside. Mutual stereotypes developed that impede personal relations which could unmask these very stereotypes: A vicious circle of mutual mistrust is the result. The acceleration of life by modern means of communication has made life too fast to let personal social relations develop between people from Gilgit and people from outside. Such relations need time to develop, time of living side by side, time of sharing a common social environment. This time is not available today. The question of integration of migrants does not arise. They are no longer forced to integrate in order to ensure their livelihood and they do not want to integrate. Also, the local people do not want to integrate outsiders. They regard them as even more dangerous and threatening to the local order than in earlier decades because they feel that they have completely lost the control over immigration.

The social separation is embodied in physical space now: Gilgit has become separated into areas for local people and areas for people from outside. The bazaar area of the town is the place for strangers, for people from outside whom the people from Gilgit cannot control properly and who are not integrated into the local web of social relations. The most important symptom of this character of the bazaar is the fact that local women are not

⁹ For an analysis of mutual stereotypes of Paštūn and people of Gilgit see Sökefeld in press *b*.

allowed into it. Their honour is threatened by the strangers there and thus is the honour of their men. The strangers live in rented quarters in the bazaar area. Hardly anybody else is willing to live in these neighbourhoods.

On the other hand, the old "villages" of Gilgit like Napura, Barmass, and, to a lesser extent Khomar and Jutial, situated in some distance around the center of the town and the bazaar, are the "inner" areas of Gilgit, the place of the people of Gilgit. Here the women can move freely in their neighbourhoods. No suspicious stranger is allowed to enter these settlements, much less are they allowed to rent a place there. In these villages, "earlier" migrants have been allowed to settle, migrants that have been integrated by relationships via marriage or land into the local population.

The growing enstrangement between people from Gilgit and people from outside is not only observable in the relations between people from Gilgit and people who came from as "far-outside" as do Paštūn. Almost the same holds true for people from Hunza that came from a neighbouring mountain region and that are regarded in comparison with Paštūn sometimes as quasi-local people. They have developed their own, separate social institutions in the town around which their lives revolve, mostly institutions related to their Ismā'īlī faith that are indeed closed for all others.

The Negativity of the Outside

From the perspective of people of Gilgit, the problem with the immigrants is that they are not content with the place and evaluation accorded "traditionally" to people from outside: with the position of the poor and dependent living in the town at the mercy of the masters of the soil. To the contrary, they, mostly devoid of the traditional means of livelihood in the area, i. e., land for cultivation, have become very successful in exploiting the opportunities of modern and monetarist economy.

"From outside" is today nearly always equated with negativity. The negativity of the outside is in Gilgit not only a structural contrast to the positive evaluation of the inside (Bauman 1990). It is a historical experience which is not only nourished in the sphere of economics by the unsuccessful competition with prospering migrants, but also in the arena of politics. In the period of the political history that is remembered in Gilgit until today, forces from outside meant always the disempowerment and surrender of the people of Gilgit and, in the last century, also physical destruction and

death. This feeling of disempowerment by the outside is not restricted to the past, to the attacks (and victories) of Suleman Shah, Gohar Aman, the Kashmiri or the British. It is frequently extended to the present Pakistani administration. After the British had left Gilgit, local troops and the population of Gilgit revolted in November 1947 against the Kashmiri regime in an act of liberation and self-empowerment (Sökefeld in press *a*). But this liberation led to a new relationship of domination. The administration of the Gilgit Agency was voluntarily conferred in 1947 to the newly created state of Pakistan. But the practice of Pakistan's administration in Gilgit contradicted with the expectations of those who volunteered this takeover. The region became subject to a political agent with no less absolute political and juridical powers than those which had been executed before by the British or the Kashmiri – only that the political agent was a Pakistani now. Due to the Kashmir conflict, the Northern Areas are still today not a constitutional part of Pakistan but only under Pakistani administration. Despite a number of reforms, the inhabitants of the area are still largely excluded from political participation, for example from voting for the National Assembly of Pakistan.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to argue that Gilgit was never isolated from the "outside world" but that it always was subject to conditions and movements that originated in the surrounding world. Migration – both within the mountains and from the "outside" – always had its influence on Gilgit's population, but the kind of this influence changed according to the historical context. During the past hundred years Gilgit attracted so many immigrants that the "original" people of the town became a minority. I gave only a very rough sketch of the development of this immigration, its changing contexts and results. But we can already discern a general pattern: The social distance between inside and outside grew at the same time as the relative physical distance between Gilgit and its surroundings diminished. Probably, this is less due to the sheer number of immigrants (relatively, Gilgit must have experienced similar numbers of immigrants in the second part of the last century) than to the fact that the circumstances of immigration became more and more inimical to the integration of people from outside. Land, which was an important avenue of integration,

became a matter of conflict between people of Gilgit and people from outside after the legalization of its alienation. The economic necessity for the immigrant to integrate himself became reduced by the development of occupations other than agriculture. Finally, the acceleration of traffic through the KKH reduced the compulsion to be physically present in the town for longer uninterrupted periods. It reduced the time available for the development of social relationships between people from Gilgit and people from outside.

Modernity has proved its ambivalence for Gilgit. Technical development made life in Gilgit much more comfortable in many ways. But at the same time it enlarged the social distance between the segments of the population, creating estrangement and thus producing new sources of conflict.

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