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# **Linguistic diversity in space and time: A survey in the Eastern Hindukush and Karakoram**

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## **Introduction**

In his outline of geolinguistics Roland Breton (1991: xvi-xix) has identified six dimensions of operation, i.e., spatial, societal, economic, temporal, political, and linguistic. Consequently language development is seen as a “...process, combined with territorial, demographic-societal, ecomediatic, historical and politico-linguistic *spread*, that constitutes the heart of *language dynamics*” (Breton 1991: xvii). A survey of comparatively small languages in remote regions poses a great challenge to an approach based on a multi-dimensional focus like that. This especially holds true when these are incorporated in administrative entities of rather recent establishment. Circumscriptions are obvious, a few central difficulties might be emphasized: Cartographic representation is often of poor quality, census data are lacking, politico-historical units change, the aggregation of information might be irrelevant to contemporary theoretical and methodological requirements, concepts of ethnic groups are questioned and the interpretation of ethnicity is linked to different theories, and in general the interest in scientific enquiry varies over schools of thinking and over time. In spite of all these limitations there remain some good reasons for repeated efforts to survey linguistic diversity in remote regions such as the Hindukush-Karakoram-Himalaya mountain arc.

First, members of small language groups are very often neglected by national census authorities which concentrate on majority groups and omit others. A multitude of languages remain unrecorded and/or are hidden in areas of ambiguity.

Second, comparisons with historical language descriptions and colonial records reveal a dynamism of mobility in those regions which is regularly denied. Migration processes can often be linked to linguistic groups and result in peculiar cultivation and settlement patterns.

Third, an examination of linguistic diversity might present a starting point for an intensified discussion on concepts of ethnicity and encourage further enquiries in the perception of mother tongue, bilingualism, and multilingualism.

In this contribution some material is presented from an empirical survey in the Eastern Hindukush and Karakoram of Northern Pakistan enlarged with some comparative information from neighbouring regions in Badakhshan (Northern Afghanistan), Gorno-Badakhshan (Tajikistan), and Xinjiang (Peoples' Republic of China). The study aims at shifting the focus to minority languages and analysing linguistic diversity in historical and spatial perspective. Thus, the importance of regionalized and localized patterns of heterogeneity is stressed. The starting point is an appreciation of the “mountain languages” in the national context of Pakistan.

## Language patterns in Pakistan

The Population Census Organization of Pakistan includes in their questionnaire a column in which eight language options are given for the selection of the respondents. The mother tongue is asked for as the “language spoken in the household” (Government of Pakistan 1984: 5). The eight stated languages are qualified as national idioms as they are representing the majority of speakers. This approach fits well for the province of Punjab where more than three quarters of the population returned Punjabi as their mother tongue (Table 1). Similar correlations can be stated for Sindhi speakers in the Sind Province and Pashto speakers in the North-West Frontier Province (cf. Tariq Rahman 1995). In the province of Baluchistan colonial boundary delineation is reflected in the language composition of predominantly Baluchi in the south and Pashto in the north. Likewise the remaining national idioms are restricted to certain areas. Regional importance can be attributed to Brahui (southern Baluchistan), Seraiki (south Punjab) and Hindko (north Punjab).

| region/province    | population<br>million inh. 1981 | language distribution (percentage for 1981) |         |        |        |         |         |        |        |        |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|---|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
|                    |                                 | Urdu  | Punjabi | Pashto | Sindhi | Seraiki | Baluchi | Hindko | Brahui | others |
| Pakistan           | 84.253                          | 7.60  | 48.17   | 13.15  | 11.77  | 9.84    | 3.02    | 2.43   | 1.21   | 2.81   |
| Punjab             | 47.632                          | 4.27  | 78.68   | 0.76   | 0.08   | 14.90   | 0.57    | 0.04   | 0.01   | 0.69   |
| Baluchistan        | 4.332                           | 1.37  | 2.24    | 25.07  | 8.29   | 3.08    | 36.31   | 0.13   | 20.68  | 2.83   |
| Sind               | 19.029                          | 22.64                                       | 7.69    | 3.06   | 52.40  | 2.29    | 4.51    | 0.35   | 1.08   | 5.98   |
| N.W.F.P.           | 11.061                          | 0.83  | 1.10    | 68.30  | 0.05   | 3.95    | 0.04    | 18.13  | 0.01   | 7.59   |
| • Chitral District | 0.209                           | 0.10  | 0.07    | 4.45   | 0.01   | 0.00    | 0.01    | 0.01   | 0.00   | 95.35  |
| Northern Areas     | 0.574                           | 0.78  | 1.28    | 0.80   | 0.02   | 0.00    | 0.01    | 0.18   | 0.00   | 96.93  |
| • Gilgit District  | 0.228                           | 1.00  | 1.27    | 0.72   | 0.01   | 0.00    | 0.01    | 0.11   | 0.00   | 96.88  |
| • Baltistan Dist.  | 0.223                           | 0.60  | 1.68    | 0.08   | 0.00   | 0.00    | 0.01    | 0.01   | 0.00   | 97.62  |
| • Diamir District  | 0.123                           | 0.77  | 0.54    | 2.24   | 0.06   | 0.01    | 0.01    | 0.59   | 0.02   | 95.76  |
| N. Areas (urban)   | 0.048                           | 3.53  | 6.27    | 3.44   | 0.01   | 0.01    | 0.00    | 1.02   | 0.00   | 85.72  |
| N. Areas (rural)   | 0.526                           | 0.53  | 0.81    | 0.55   | 0.02   | 0.01    | 0.00    | 0.10   | 0.00   | 97.98  |

The data base for the census operation was provided by a 10 percent sample; cf. Selig Harrison (1986: 270).  
Source: Government of Pakistan 1983a: 12; 1983b: 42; 1984: 5, 18, 23; 1990a: 79, 87

**Table 1: Language composition of Pakistan's regional entities**

In section 251 of Pakistan's Constitution the decision about a national language was decided in favour of Urdu which should replace English in bureaucratic institutions (Government of Pakistan 1990b: 182). In order to enhance the status of Urdu the recently announced “Cultural Policy of Pakistan” features some objectives and policy directives:

- “To make our national language truly representative of the various languages spoken in Pakistan by providing a framework of adaptation and assimilation. ...

- The Academy of Letters will, in the first phase, sponsor a Comprehensive History of Urdu Literature, which, in the second phase, ... may be translated in major UN languages. Comprehensive history of the literature of regional languages may be sponsored by the Provincial Governments. ...
- The National Language Authority will be entrusted with the task of developing Urdu language so that it is representative of Pakistani languages. It has already undergone changes but this process needs to be accelerated and instead of foreign words, Pakistani languages will given priority in vocabulary and idioms for functional purposes.” (Government of Pakistan 1995: 43-49).

Up to now Urdu has gained regional importance in Sind where Karachi and Hyderabad are the homes of strong groups of refugees (*mohajeer*). They migrated after the partition of British India to Pakistan. Urdu became the *lingua franca* in these urban centres but failed to increase its influence on a national scale.

In the context of identifying a single regional idiom the Northern Areas significantly differ from mainstream Pakistan not only because there is no provincial government which could sponsor the above objective for the study of regional languages. There and in Chitral only 3-5 % of all households stated one of those national idioms as their mother tongue during the last census while more than 95 % belonged to the category of “others”. This terminus disguises a substantial number of languages not to be found in other areas of Pakistan. Nevertheless some are the *lingua franca* of formerly independent principalities or of the regional bazaar towns while others are restricted to certain valley societies or villages. Despite the neglect in official statistics a number of linguists have devoted their interest to a constellation which is unique due to its high degree of linguistic diversity, a phenomenon not only to be found in Pakistan.

### **State of the art: Linguistic research in the Eastern Hindukush and Karakoram**

The initial compilations for the Linguistic Survey of India (George Abraham Grierson 1919, 1928) and the Shina grammar by T. Grahame Bailey (1924) were expanded by early contributions of the British colonial officer David Lockhart Robertson Lorimer (1935-1938, 1939, 1958) and the Norwegian linguist Georg Morgenstierne (1932, 1938, 1974). Surveys of linguistic research in the Eastern Hindukush and Karakoram have been presented by Georg Buddruss (1985, 1993), Dshoj Josifovna Edelman (1983), Gérard Fussmann (1972), Alexander Leonowich Grünberg (1971, 1980, 1992) and Ruth Laila Schmidt (1981). Special studies were devoted to Wakhi, Shina, Khowar, Domaaki and Maiyã by Georg Buddruss (1959, 1974, 1982, 1983a, b, 1984, 1987), Alexander Leonowich Grünberg & Iwan Michailowich Stèblin-Kamensky (1976) and Muhammad Shuja Namus (1961). The isolated position of Burushaski could be confirmed due to studies by Hermann Berger (1960, 1985, 1998), Lorimer (1935-1938, 1937), Bertil Tikkanen (1988) and Ivan Ivanovich Zarubin (1927). Berger (1974) and Étienne Tiffou & Jürgen Pesot (1989) published dictionaries and grammars on Yasin-Burushaski (Werchikwar). Hugh Van Skyhawk (2003) contributed a valuable collection of materials for a better understanding and distinction of Nager-Burushaski. The Tibetan dialect of Baltistan was examined by Roland Bielmaier (1985, 1995), Ghulam Hassan Lobsang (1995), A. F. C. Read (1934) and Klaus Sagaster (1993). Erhard Bauer (1995) presented first

findings about different groups of Pashto speakers in the Northern Areas. Clare O’Leary (1992) functions as the editor of a sociolinguistic survey of the languages of Northern Pakistan based on randomly selected samples. The account presented here cannot be exhaustive but shows the major fields of linguistic research in this area. A quantitative and comprehensive approach to the complex and heterogeneous language situation of the Eastern Hindukush and the Karakoram is still a desideratum. This holds true especially for the graphic representation of geolinguistic data in different scales.

The complexity of the topic can be estimated while appreciating previous attempts. As a result of the De Filippi expedition to the Eastern Karakoram and Himalaya in 1913-14, Giotto Dainelli (1925, Serie II, Vol. 8: Tav. 3) published a map with the title “Distribuzione delle genti” (scale 1 : 1 million) and distinguished Brokpa, Dards, and Baltis as the tribes of Baltistan. For the western extremity of the study area (Figure 1) Alexander Leonowich Grünberg published a language map of Nuristan (1971) and later on in his monograph on Kati a cartographic representation (1980: 27) of idioms in Nuristan and Chitral was included. In addition a map was prepared by Lennart Edelberg (1974) which was based on the research findings of Georg Morgenstierne. This map has been republished by Lennart Edelberg & Schuyler Jones (1979) and Karl Jettmar (1975). Muhammad Shuja Namus (1961: 78) included a map (scale 1 : 1 million) depicting the spread of Shina in his monograph on the same language.

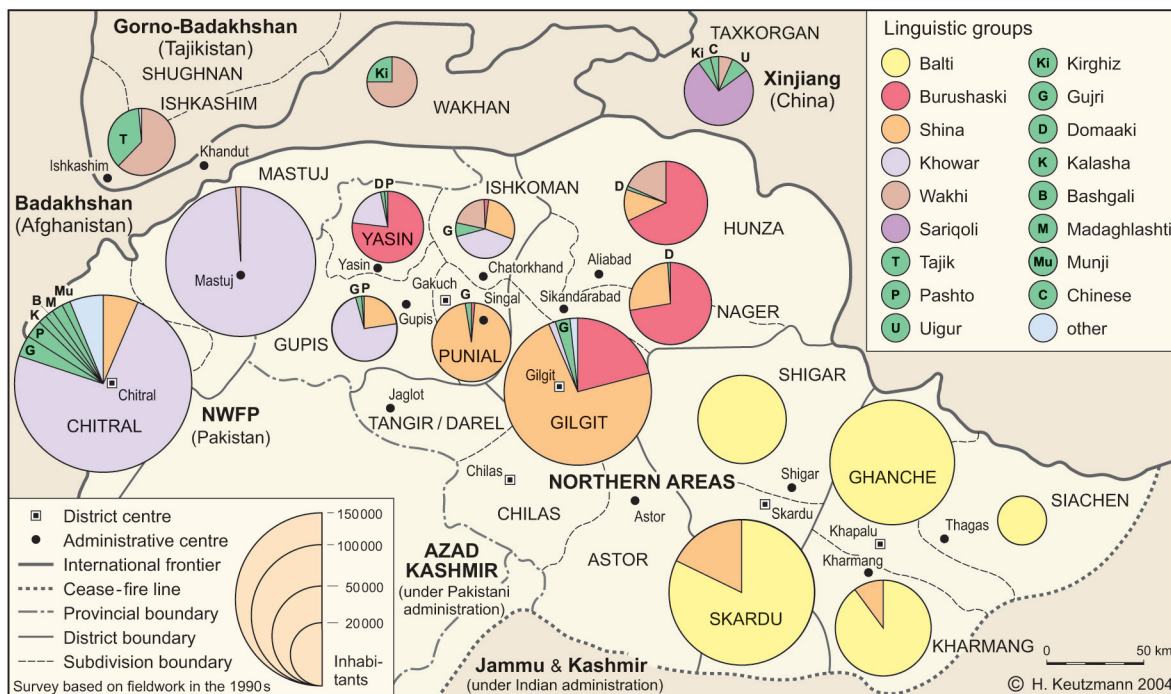


Fig. 1: Linguistic diversity of Western High Asia

All those cartographic representations have in common that contiguous areas are classified by indicating one dominant language for a given spatial polygon. The linguistic diversity within a valley, a village, and/or a settlement cluster and its quantitative composition cannot be derived from the map. The complexity of language and settlement patterns fails to appear as a special feature

of the study area. Qualitative information on language structure and distribution is available while knowledge about spatial and temporal properties of linguistic groups and their contact relations to neighbouring languages are often lacking. The dynamism of this process requires historical comparisons and contemporary recordings on different scales. The following contribution should be seen as a first attempt to disentangle some knots and to provide basic information on a complex structure.

### Linguistic diversity in the Eastern Hindukush and Karakoram

The data base for the survey of languages in the mountain belt of Northern Pakistan is composed of enquiries in about 500 villages with a population of approximately more than half a million inhabitants. Some striking patterns emerge on first sight within the surveyed region (Figure 1 and Figure 2): The western and central part is dominated by Indic languages, in the centre we find two valleys where the only dialects of the isolated Burushaski language are to be located while the eastern part is dominated by the Sino-Tibetan Balti language. Speakers from the Altaic and Iranian language groups are to be found in the northern border areas to Afghanistan and Xinjiang (China).

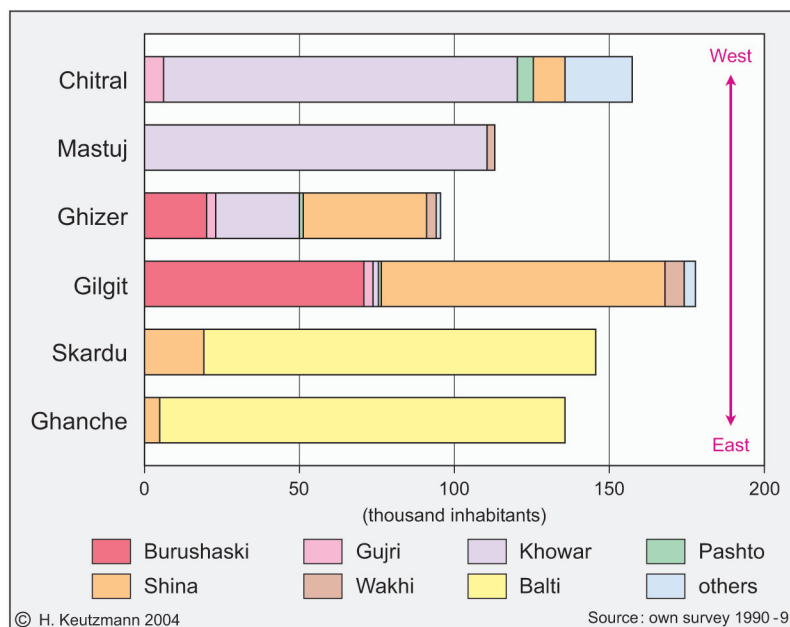


Fig. 2: Districtwise language composition

More than 25 different languages belonging to the four above mentioned groups (Table 2) have been recorded in the Eastern Hindukush and Karakoram. On this level the complex spatial distribution patterns are still unrevealed, but in an initial step some linkage between the origin and migration history of members of different language groups can be established. Basically four groups need distinction:

- *Autochthonous languages in compact settlement areas:* To this category belongs the isolated language of Burushaski which is confined to this mountain region. No link to any other



language group could be established so far. Karl Jettmar (1977: 429) summarized the “... evidence suggesting that this other group [the Burusho] goes back to an antecedent stratum of immigrants or even the original inhabitants.” In his opinion it is most probable that the two Burushaski-speaking valleys of today—Hunza and Yasin—were once connected via the Gilgit Valley and that Shina has superseded and replaced Burushaski there (Jettmar 1975: 190; cf. for this discussion John Biddulph 1880; Oskar von Hinüber 1995: 660; D. L. R. Lorimer 1935-1938, III: 384; Bertil Tikkanen 1988: 305). In this category of autochthonous languages a similar role can be attributed to the Nuristani idioms which are mainly to be found in a compact area of diffusion in the Eastern Hindukush. Likewise Balti has to be added as the dominant language of Baltistan which together with Purik and Ladakhi forms the westernmost exponent of an archaic dialect of Tibetan (Ghulam Hassan Lobsang 1995). Traces suggesting an expansion, contraction, or displacement of the distribution areas of these language groups have been presented from toponymic incongruencies and from narratives describing migration processes.

- *Indic languages of early migrants*: Scattered information is available about the initial immigration of Prakrit speakers. Evidence is based on oral traditions and linguistic analysis (Georg Buddruss 1983b: 8-9; Gérard Fussmann 1972: 31; David Lockhart Robertson Lorimer 1939: 7). Most probably the immigration started about a millenium ago and resulted in a process of occupying the lower parts of the valleys by the ancestors of the present-day Khowar, Maiyā and Shina speakers. Gilgit and Chitral became their political centres from which further settlements spread into the side valleys. Along with these migrants Domaaki speakers have arrived in the mountain belt and became prominent as the professional groups of musicians and blacksmiths (Anna Schmid 1993). As professionals providing services they have been settling with Shina and Burushaski speaking groups. Their own language has been replenished with loan words in such a manner that Georg Buddruss (1983b: 7) estimated its share at about 80 % of his recorded material from Hunza.
- *Later immigrants and refugees from Eastern Iranian and Altaic language groups*: During the last two centuries scattered groups of refugees and migrants settled in various valleys of the Hindukush-Karakoram. In general, they were allocated cultivable land at the upper limit of settlements and have been instrumental in the expansion of the ecumene by converting pastures into cropped land. From Badakhshan speakers of Iranian idioms such as Munji, Madaghlashti, and Wakhi have to be mentioned as well as Turk refugees from the northern fringes such as Uigur and Kirghiz who found a temporary or permanent abode in those valleys (Kreutzmann 1996: 151-153, 374).
- *Immigration of Gujur nomads fom the Indus Basin*: Following the transformation of vast areas in the Punjab into canal colonies, the grazing grounds of Gujur nomads were reduced (Bruno Fautz 1963: 45). As a consequence of these developments, which commenced in the second half of the 19th century on a grand scale, Gujur nomads migrated to the mountain rim in search for pastures. This process of lowland-highland migration continues until today. Some Gujur settled in Chitral (Inayatullah Faizi 1995) and the Northern Areas (Hiltrud Herbers & Georg Stöber 1995; Michael Langendijk 1991). In Ishkoman a version

was recorded which traces the migration history of Gujurs back to an event in which a Syed Ismail Shaheed was defeated by a Sikh army under the leadership of the famous Punjabi ruler Ranjit Singh at Balakot in 1840. In the aftermath the defeated Gujurs dispersed themselves and sought refuge in the mountains. According to this account the Gujur settlers of Chilas and Gilgit are descendants of those refugees. From there new grazing grounds were occupied in neighbouring valleys such as Ishkoman and Yasin.

| INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGES     |                  |                 |                       |                 | ALTAIC LANGUAGES    | SINO-TIBETAN LANGUAGES | ISOLATED LANGUAGES |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Indo-Iranian Language Group |                  |                 |                       |                 |                     |                        |                    |
| Old Indic                   |                  | Nuristani       | Iranian               |                 |                     |                        |                    |
| Middle Indic (Prakrit)      | Dardic Languages |                 | West-Iranian          | East-Iranian    |                     |                        |                    |
| <b>Sindhi</b>               | <b>Khowar</b>    | <b>Kati</b>     | Persian:              | <b>Pashto</b>   | <b>Kirghiz</b>      | Tibetan                | <b>Burushaski</b>  |
| <b>Seraiki</b>              | <b>Kalasha</b>   | <b>Bashgali</b> | - Dari                | Parachi         | Uigur               | <b>Balti</b>           | <b>Werchikwar</b>  |
| <b>Punjabi</b>              | <b>Phalura</b>   | Prasun          | - <b>Tajik</b>        | Ormuri          | - <b>Kashgarlik</b> |                        |                    |
| <b>Hindko</b>               | <b>Maiyā</b>     | Waigali         | - <b>Madaghlashti</b> | Yaghnobi        | - Yarkandlik        |                        |                    |
| <b>Gujri</b>                | <b>Shina</b>     | Ashkun          | Baluchi               | <b>Yidgha</b>   | - Taghlik           |                        |                    |
| Hindi                       | <b>Kashmiri</b>  | <b>Dameli</b>   | Kurdish               | <b>Munji</b>    |                     |                        |                    |
| <b>Urdu</b>                 | Torwali          |                 |                       | Ishkashimi      |                     |                        |                    |
| <b>Domaakí</b>              | Bashkarik        |                 |                       | Sanglechi       |                     |                        |                    |
|                             | Gawar-Bati       |                 |                       | <b>Wakhi</b>    |                     |                        |                    |
|                             | Pashai           |                 |                       | Shughni         |                     |                        |                    |
|                             | Wotapuri         |                 |                       | Roshani         |                     |                        |                    |
|                             | Tirahi           |                 |                       | Bartangi        |                     |                        |                    |
|                             | Grangali         |                 |                       | Yazgolami       |                     |                        |                    |
|                             | Sawi             |                 |                       | <b>Sariqoli</b> |                     |                        |                    |

Languages prevalent in the area under study are represented in bold

**Table 2: Overview of languages prevalent in the Hindukush-Karakoram**

The classification of established language groups in the Eastern Hindukush and Karakoram distinguishes autochthonous settlers and extra-mountainous/extra-territorial immigrants. In addition two more groups should be mentioned which have been important for recent migration processes:

- *Intra-montane migration*: In search for cultivable land and grazing grounds, a significant migration within the mountain belt has taken place during the present century. New settlements were established in previously unoccupied territory either on barren terraces through irrigation or by converting temporary pasture settlements into permanent villages.



Shina and Burushaski speakers from the Hunza valley migrated down the river. Nowadays irrigation colonies are to be found in the vicinity of Gilgit Town and as far away as in Punial, Ishkoman, and Yasin. A comparatively recent development is the migration of households to the commercial and administrative centres of Chitral and the Northern Areas in search for non-agarian employment.

- *Temporary population exchange between lowland and highlands:* The quota of down country languages such as Urdu, Punjabi, and Pashto becomes statistically significant only in the few urban centres of Northern Pakistan. There the percentage of households can rise up to 15 % of the resident population while in the average of the rural areas only 2 % stated one of those languages as their mother tongues during the last census (cf. Table 1). Most of those temporary immigrants are either officers and bureaucrats on duty or entrepreneurs in the bazaars. In the other direction an increasing number of montane out-migrants seeks education, employment and business opportunities in the urban centres of down country Pakistan. Taking into account the seasonal or temporary character of these migrations the unique and persistent position of this linguistic region is underlined.

The qualitative classification has shown the range of different language groups and their dominant areas of distribution as a result of settlement history. In the core of the study area a comparison of previous census data (Table 3) with the findings of the empirical survey is possible (Figure 3). As could be expected the essential features of language group composition have not significantly changed since independence. While the population growth could be calculated to 2.8 % per annum resulting in the tripling of the number of inhabitants the share of the major idioms remained stable over the period of consideration.

| region<br>language | Chilas | Gilgit | Hunza | Nager | Punial | Ishkoman | Yasin | Kuh/Ghizer | Gilgit Agency |            |
|--------------------|--------|--------|-------|-------|--------|----------|-------|------------|---------------|------------|
|                    |        |        |       |       |        |          |       |            | total         | percentage |
| Shina              | 13155  | 18996  | 2177  | 3252  | 8600   | 1650     | 213   | 2473       | 50516         | 47.5       |
| Burushaski         | 15     | 3983   | 10099 | 15095 | 31     | 2        | 7822  | 3          | 37050         | 34.8       |
| Khowar             | 9      | 587    | 200   |       | 95     | 1925     | 1368  | 5080       | 9264          | 8.7        |
| Wakhi              |        |        | 3196  |       | 2      | 1139     |       | 6          | 4343          | 4.1        |
| Gujri              | 2247   | 975    |       |       | 209    | 157      | 37    | 514        | 4139          | 3.9        |
| Pashto             | 453    | 31     |       |       | 6      | 27       | 4     | 144        | 665           | 0.6        |
| Uigur              |        |        |       | 2     |        | 57       | 8     |            | 67            | 0.1        |
| Farsi              |        |        |       | 3     | 4      | 12       | 1     |            | 20            | 0.0        |
| Urdu               | 2      |        |       |       |        |          |       | 16         | 18            | 0.0        |
| other              | 179    |        | 19    | 1     | 43     | 6        |       | 13         | 261           | 0.3        |
| total              | 16060  | 24572  | 15691 | 18353 | 8990   | 4975     | 9453  | 8249       | 106343        | 100.0      |

Source: Government of Azad Kashmir 1952: Tab. 4

**Table 3: Language groups in Gilgit Agency 1951**

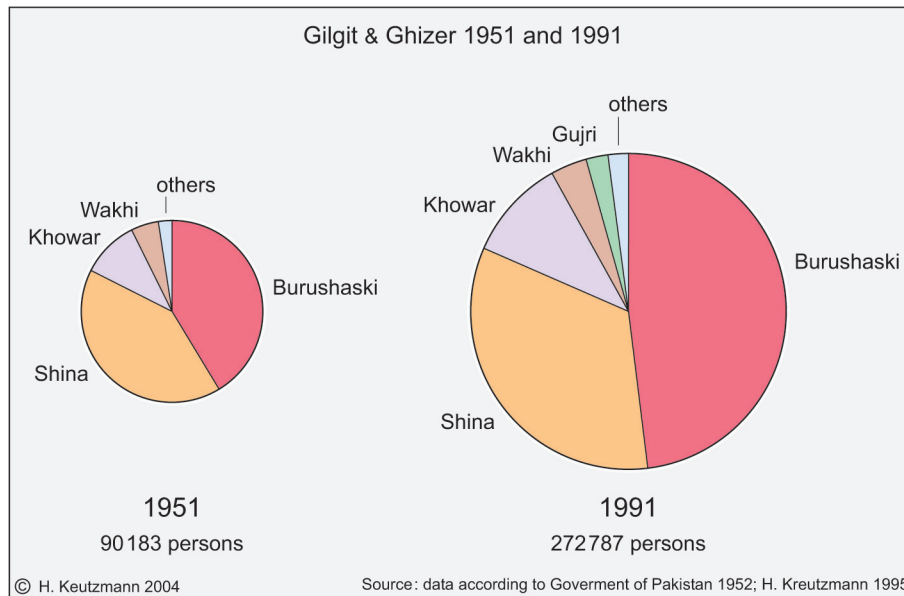


Fig. 3: Comparison of major language groups

A quantitative analysis of the recent data (Table 4a) supports the statement of regional linguistic centres of gravity. Balti is the dominating language of all subdivisions in Skardu and Ghanche Districts. More than a quarter million mother tongue speakers have been identified during the survey. Thus this Tibetan language outnumbers Shina which is the dominant idiom of Gilgit and Ghizer Districts. More than 150 000 inhabitants returned Shina while in Gilgit District including Hunza and Nager Burushaski comes second (70 000). In Ghizer, Yasin-Burushaski speakers (Werchikwar, 20 000) trail the number of Khowar speakers (27 000), a fact which underlines the function of this region as an intermediate zone between Chitral and Gilgit. Over long periods Ghizer was under Chitrali rule and revenue schemes resulting in the presence of members of the hereditary leadership and of settlers from Chitral. Four out of five persons in Chitral are Khowar speakers (Table 4b). In neighbouring Wakhan Woluswali (Badakhshan, Afghanistan) three quarters of the population speak Wakhi, while across the Amu Darya boundary in Rajon Ishkashim (Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan) nearly two thirds belong to the same language group. In the contiguous Taxkorgan County (Xinjiang, China), Sariqoli (18 000) dominates Wakhi (1 600). Both languages are related and belong to the Eastern Iranian branch. Wakhi settlement regions are to be found in the upper parts of the Hunza, Ishkoman and Yarkhun Valleys and are the home of nearly 10 000 speakers. Next follows Gujri (6 000) with local importance in the Gilgit subdivision and Ghizer. Smaller groups of Domáaki, Uigur, Kohistani, and Pashto speakers, each of less than 2 000 persons, reside in the Gilgit and Ghizer Districts (for detailed maps cf. Kreutzmann 1995a). Differentiated spatial patterns need an investigation on a large scale. Two case studies are presented to illustrate differences of the rural and urban context as well as the hierarchical structure of regional and local levels.

| District          | Subdivision District | Household Number | Inhabitants absolute | Balti | Burushaski | Domaaki | Gujri | Uigur | Khowar | Kohistani | Pashto | Shina | Wakhi | Others |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------|------------|---------|-------|-------|--------|-----------|--------|-------|-------|--------|
| Ghanche           | Khapalu              | 12 615           | 77 552               | 100.0 | 0          | 0       | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0         | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      |
| Ghanche           | Siachen              | 1 989            | 11 949               | 100.0 | 0          | 0       | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0         | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      |
| Ghanche           | Kharmang             | 6 786            | 45 902               | 89.9  | 0          | 0       | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0         | 0      | 10.1  | 0     | 0      |
| GHANCHE DISTRICT  |                      | 21 390           | 135 403              | 96.6  | 0          | 0       | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0         | 0      | 3.4   | 0     | 0      |
| Skardu            | Shigar               | 5 712            | 39 355               | 100.0 | 0          | 0       | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0         | 0      | 0     | 0     | 0      |
| Skardu            | Skardu               | 14 795           | 106 214              | 82.2  | 0.2        | 0       | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0         | 0.3    | 17.3  | 0     | 0      |
| SKARDU DISTRICT   |                      | 20 507           | 145 569              | 87.0  | 0.15       | 0       | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0         | 0.25   | 12.6  | 0     | 0      |
| Ghizer            | Gupis                | 2 563            | 21 184               | 0     | 0          | 0       | 3.0   | 0     | 73.1   | 0         | 1.1    | 22.6  | 0.2   | 0      |
| Ghizer            | Punial               | 3 150            | 31 420               | 0     | 0.8        | 0.6     | 2.5   | 0     | 0      | 0         | 0      | 96.1  | 0     | 0      |
| Ghizer            | Yasin                | 2 937            | 25 442               | 0     | 76.4       | 1.2     | 0.6   | 0     | 19.3   | 0.6       | 1.3    | 0.4   | 0.2   | 0      |
| Ghizer            | Ishkoman             | 2 225            | 17 283               | 0     | 1.9        | 0       | 7.6   | 0.6   | 40.1   | 0         | 0.6    | 28.8  | 20.4  | 0      |
| GHIZER DISTRICT   |                      | 10 875           | 95 329               | 0     | 21.0       | 0.5     | 3.0   | 0.1   | 28.7   | 0.2       | 0.7    | 42.0  | 3.8   | 0      |
| Gilgit            | Gilgit               | 13 502           | 108 809              | 0     | 20.7       | 0.4     | 3.2   | 0.9   | 1.5    | 1.1       | 0.4    | 71.8  | 0     | 0      |
| Gilgit            | Hunza                | 4 681            | 34 607               | 0     | 67.9       | 1.4     | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0         | 0      | 12.3  | 18.4  | 0      |
| Gilgit            | Nager                | 3 827            | 34 042               | 0     | 72.3       | 1.1     | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0         | 0      | 26.6  | 0     | 0      |
| GILGIT DISTRICT   |                      | 22 010           | 177 458              | 0     | 39.8       | 0.7     | 1.9   | 0.6   | 0.9    | 0.7       | 0.3    | 51.5  | 3.6   | 0      |
| Σ NORTHERN AREAS* |                      | 74 782           | 553 758              | 46.5  | 16.4       | 0.3     | 1.1   | 0.2   | 5.2    | 0.3       | 0.3    | 27.9  | 1.8   | 0      |

\*) Northern Areas excluding Chilas District

Source: data base according to survey of 1991

**Table 4a: Linguistic diversity in the Karokoram and Eastern Hindukush in 1991 (percentage figures)**

| District   | Subdivision District | Household Number | Inhabitants absolute | Balti | Burushaski | Domaaki | Gujri | Uigur | Khovar | Kohistani | Pashto | Shina | Wakhi | Others            |
|------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|-------|------------|---------|-------|-------|--------|-----------|--------|-------|-------|-------------------|
| Chitral    | Mastuj               | 13 600           | 112 500              | 0     | 0          | 0       | 0     | 0     | 98.9   | 0         | 0      | 0     | 1.05  | 0.05              |
| Chitral    | Chitral              | 19 000           | 157 500              | 0     | 0          | 0       | 3.8   | 0     | 72.2   | 0         | 3.2    | 6.3   | 0.01  | 14.0              |
| Σ          | CHITRAL DISTRICT     | 32 600           | 270 000              | 0     | 0          | 0       | 2.2   | 0     | 83.6   | 0         | 1.9    | 3.7   | 0.4   | 8.2 <sup>1</sup>  |
| Taxkorgan  | Taxkorgan            | 3 748            | 23 953               | 0     | 0          | 0       | 0     | 8.3   | 0      | 0         | 0      | 0     | 6.6   | 85.1 <sup>2</sup> |
| Wakhan W.* | Wakhan               | ?                | 12 562               | 0     | 0          | 0       | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0         | 0      | 0     | 75.0  | 25.0 <sup>3</sup> |
| Ishkashim  | Ishkashim            | 2 763            | 22 747               | 0     | 0          | 0       | 0     | 0     | 0      | 0         | 0      | 0     | 62.2  | 37.8 <sup>4</sup> |

\* )Wakhan Woluswali: administrative unit within Badakhshan (North-Eastern Afghanistan)

1) Others include in Chitral 1.5 % Kalasha, 1.5 % Bashgali (Eastern Kati), 1.8 % Madaghlashiti (Tajik), 1.5 % Munji (Yidgha), 1.8 % Dameli, 0.1 % Sariqoli and Kirghiz. Chitral District data according to Faizi (1995: 449, Tab. 1).

2) Others include in Taxkorgan Tajik Autonomous County (Xinjiang) 75.2 % Sariqoli, 5.9 % Kirghiz, 4.0 % Han Chinese. Data for 1991 were provided by the administration of the Autonomous County in Taxkorgan.

3) Others include in Wakhan Woluswali small groups of Kirghiz in the Pamirs and some traders from other parts of Badakhshan and Pashtun areas. Data for 1990 are based on estimates by Eighmy (1990).

4) Others include in Rajon Ishkashim (Gorno-Badakhshanskaja Avtonomnaja Oblast, Tajikistan) app. 36.3 % Tajik inhabitants from Gharan (Western part of the rajon) and a few Tajik and Russian administrative staff (app. 1.5 %). Data for 1993 extracted from official statistics in Khorog (Gorno-Badakhshan).

**Table 4b: Linguistic diversity in neighbouring regions in the 1990s**

**Language groups in Ishkoman: Migration as a structuring factor**

The Ishkoman Valley (Figure 4a), a tributary to the Gilgit River, is located in the transition zone between Hindukush and Karakoram. In historical perspective Ishkoman figured as a regional political entity between the principalities of Hunza in the west and Yasin in the east. The northern boundary is contiguous with the Afghan controlled part of Wakhan. During the 19th century the Mehtar of Chitral still controlled territories east of the Shandur Pass including Yasin and Ishkoman. The latter basically formed a buffer zone to other competitors. Natural disasters, armed encounters, and epidemic diseases can be considered responsible for a dilapidated state of affairs in Ishkoman described by George Hayward (1871: 4-6). All those events dramatically reduced the residential population and in 1878 John Biddulph recorded:

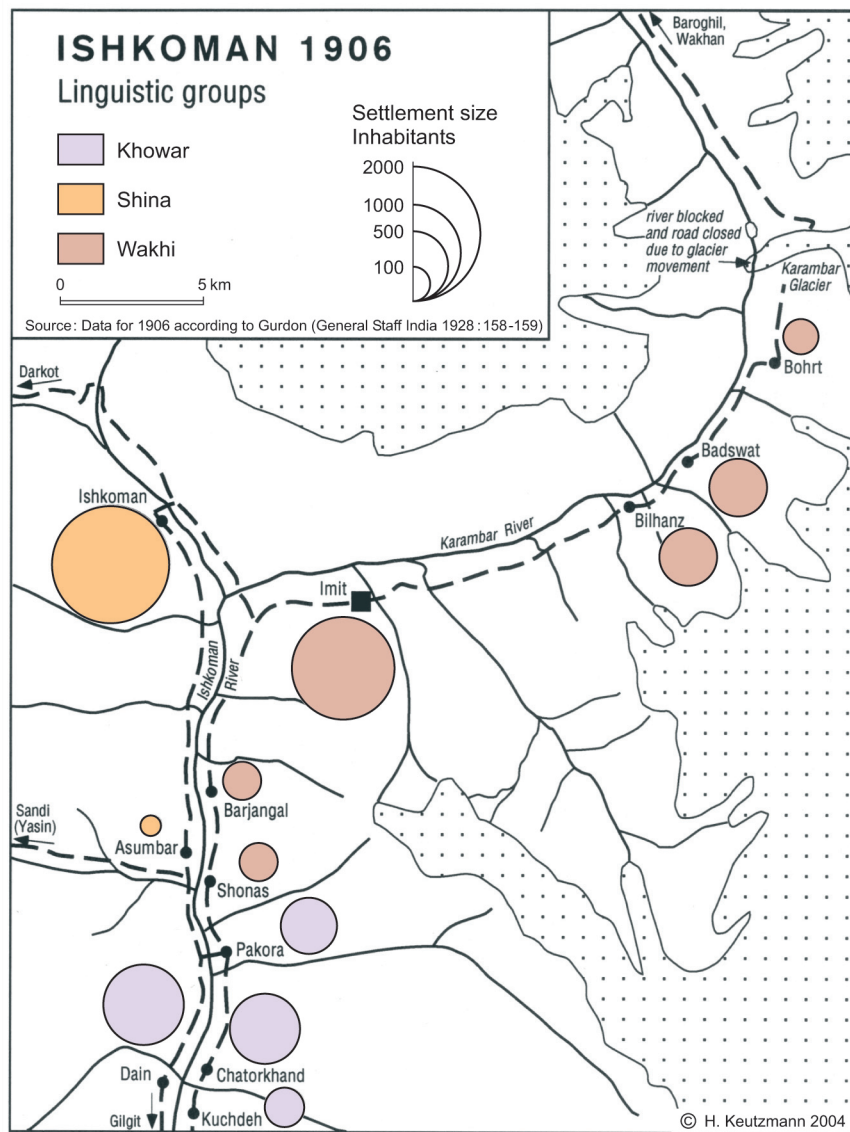


Fig. 4a: Linguistic diversity in Ishkoman 1906

“The Karoomber [= Ishkoman] Valley, which contains the ruins of several large villages, now supports only 300 souls. The former inhabitants are said to have been exposed to constant forays from the Wakhis and Sirikolis, but the wars of the Yassin rulers since the beginning of the century have been the most powerful agent in depopulating the country. The security given to the inhabitants in one way has been accompanied by a fresh source of danger to them in another. More than once the glacier has temporarily dammed up the stream until sufficient water has accumulated to burst the barrier and carry destruction to the valley below.” (John Biddulph 1880: 32-33)

Since this observation the population of Ishkoman has been steadily increasing, during the 20th century the average growth rate figured at 3.2 % per annum. This development outnumbers the growth rate of the overall study area (1.2 %) by far and is higher than the national average of Pakistan (2.1 %). The present-day population of Ishkoman (Figure 4b) exceeds 17 000 inhabitants (Table 4a). The process of settlement could be reconstructed by applying different methods in search for evidence; oral traditions and narrations about the establishment of irrigation channels provide hints as well as the evaluation of colonial records and source material from local and regional archives.

The toponym Ishkoman was restricted to the major settlement in the northwestern branch of the river (Figure 4a). The Shina-speaking residents claim to be descendants of immigrants from Darel and Yasin. Additional migrants arrived from neighbouring regions and introduced other languages. In the central part of the valley, Khowar-speaking Saiyid families from Ghizer, Turkho, and Laspur (Chitral) took residence. For meliorisation and cultivation purposes they hired labourers from Tangir and Darel. In 1883, the ruler of Wakhan, Mir Ali Mardan Shah, fled his principality and took refuge under the protection of the Mehtar of Chitral. Mehtar Aman-ul-Mulk allocated barren tracts of land in the Karambar side valley (Figure 4a) to a growing group of Wakhi refugees (Kreutzmann 1996: 98-100). In 1906 the total population of Ishkoman consisted of 1 220 persons, of which 390 claimed to be Kho (32 %), 377 Shina speakers (31 %), and 453 Wakhi (37 %; data according to a survey by Gurdon in 1906, quoted in General Staff India 1928: 158-159). Wakhi habitations were clustered in the Karambar. Shina speakers dominated the oldest settled part of the upper Ishkoman River in addition to both banks of the lower valley where Ishkoman borders with Punial, a Shina speaking area. The Kho villages and hamlets occupied the central fertile lands of Pakora, Chatorkhand, and Dain. All settlers had to pay tributes to Governor Ali Mardan Shah who was appointed by the British-Kashmiri colonial administration in 1896. After his death in 1926, a number of Wakhi remigrated to Afghan Wakhan and their population share had dropped by 1931 when it figured at 23.7 %. In a total population of 2 985 persons Shina speakers remained in a similar position (30.4 %) while the number of Khowar speakers rose (45.9 %; Muhammad Masih Pal 1934).

Since then the population growth rates have soared. This fact cannot be explained from demographic transition phenomena alone; a substantial contribution goes back to immigration into Ishkoman. First of all, more members from the above-mentioned groups settled in the valley. In addition, new migrants arrived:



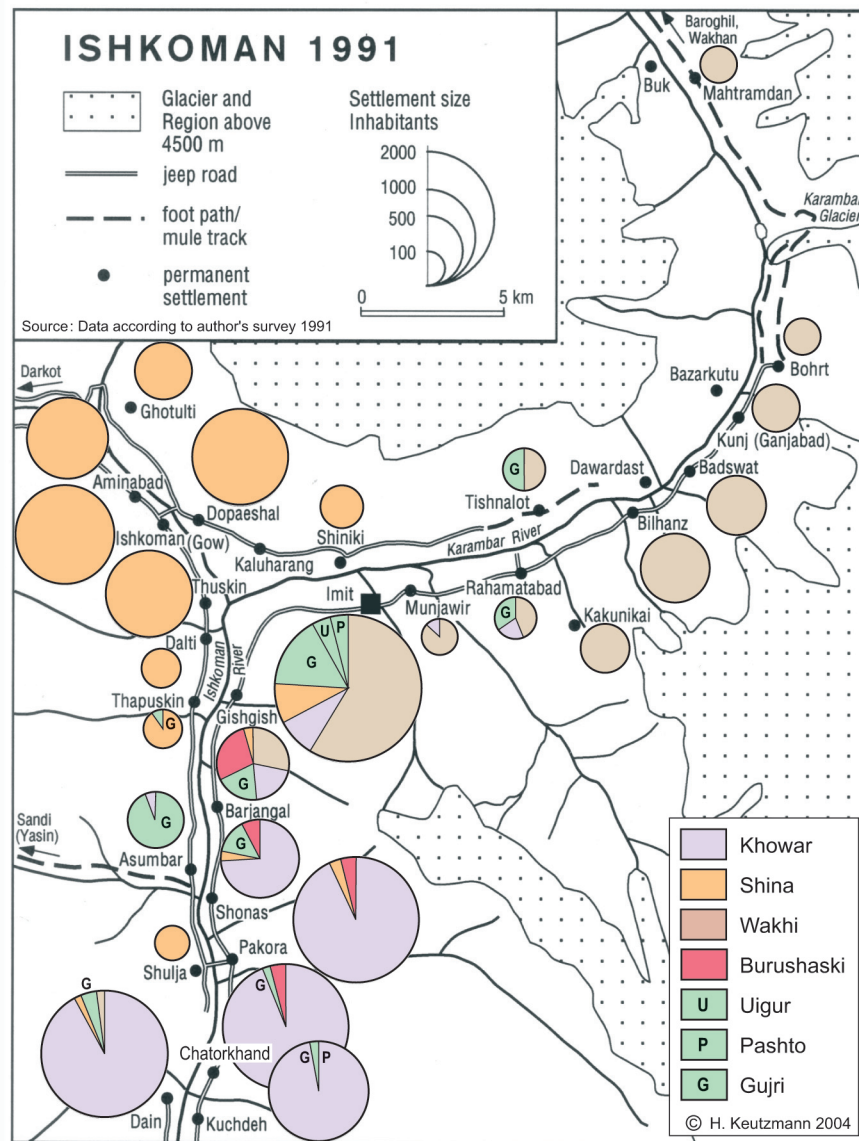


Fig. 4b: Linguistic diversity in Ishkoman 1991

- Gujur nomads who had initially been hired as shepherds by the Saiyid families negotiated the right to settle permanently in the Asumbar side valley (Figure 4b). A process of sedentarisation in permanent winter quarters commenced there. Some Gujur have acquired pasture rights and property in Karambar, a process which is continuing until today.
- Burusho settlers from Hunza took advantage of cheaper prices for cultivable land in Central Ishkoman. In two generations they have constructed new irrigation channels and expanded the oasis of Bar Jangal.
- When the Chinese boundary was sealed in 1951, some stranded Uigur refugees from Kashgar (Xinjiang) were accepted as settlers in Ishkoman and have remained there.

- Pathan itinerant traders from Bajaur (N.W.F.P.) were among the businessmen visiting Ishkoman occasionally or seasonally. Some of them became residents in Imit where the first Pathan shop was opened in 1963. Twelve years later the number of enterprises had increased to four establishments. Presently they dominate the commerce in Imit. After the transfer of administrative function to the new central place of Ishkoman, Chatorkhand, the local bazaar grew and attracted more Pathan traders.
- Kirghiz nomads sought a temporary refuge in Ishkoman after they had left the Afghan Pamirs as a consequence to the Saur Revolution of 1978. After four years of exile in a valley that could not provide anything close to the Pamir pastures, most of them left Pakistan and found a new home in Eastern Turkey (Malik Kutlu & Bernard Repond 1992; M. Nazif Shahrani 1980, 1984). In Ishkoman no Kirghiz households remain.

The contemporary settlement pattern (Figure 4b) proves an increase in ethno-linguistic diversity compared to earlier times. Imit, founded by the former Wakhi governor, has grown to become the largest village of the valley. Its population of 250 households is composed of mother tongue speakers who use six different languages. All but one of Ishkoman's languages is represented in this single village. The three original settlement centres of gravity continue to be the domain of Wakhi, Shina, and Khowar speakers, while younger immigrant groups have adjusted this pattern.

The modification of the language structure and the extraordinary population growth could be linked to the immigration of persons who pioneered the fields of cultivation and meliorisation, or sought refuge from persecution, or explored business opportunities. What we observe today is the result of making a more or less successful living in a remote rural valley society. Similar processes can be identified and traced in an urban context.

### **Ethno-linguistic segregation in Gilgit Bazaar**

During colonial times Gilgit grew from an agricultural settlement to a garrison and administrative centre that attracted some traders to set up a few shops. Gilgit Town never surpassed the mark of 5 000 inhabitants in the period from 1911 to 1961, but experienced a tremendous growth after the construction of the Karakoram Highway (Kreutzmann 1995: 114). Increased bureaucratic, civil and military functions have had an effect on urbanisation processes. The central bazaar of the Northern Areas exercises a privileged position in terms of merchandise traffic, purchasing power, and job opportunities. As a result Gilgit's population now stands at about 40 000 inhabitants, most of them recent settlers who have been attracted by the economic potential. A substantial group of immigrants originates from the surrounding valley societies, and they have found employment as craftsmen, traders, and in services. A second group is composed of entrepreneurs who shifted their economic activities partly or totally into the mountains. Professionals of both groups pursue an occupation in public administration or development institutions.

The origins of bazaar activities in Gilgit are linked to outside traders. Some Kashmiri and Punjabi (Hindu and Sikh) shopkeepers came to Gilgit and opened up businesses for the supply of British-Kashmiri troops stationed in the garrison. Since the second half of the 18th century some Kashiro-as the Kashmiri were called locally- settled in hamlets which are called even today Kashmiri Bazaar and Kashrote. In the beginning of the 20th century a gazetteer recorded that a prominent position had been filled by the Kashmiri who are "... the largest section of the population

in Gilgit proper, but being weavers and carpenters [they] are regarded with some contempt by Shins and Yeshkuns alike.” (General Staff India 1928: 168, cf. Frederic Drew 1875: 433). In addition the commerce increased during those times and a number of traders came to Gilgit with a specialized range of goods to be offered:

“Traders from the Indus Valley districts of Koli and Palas bring up their goods from village to village for sale. The chief articles of their trade are cotton fabrics of white and grey colours, salt in considerable quantity, and also tea, sugar, tobacco and spices. In return for these and in lieu of cash they take grain, gold, *ghi* [clarified butter] and *pattu* [wool] cloths. Pathan traders from Bajaur also bring goods into the Agency via Chitral and the Shandur Pass. Musalman merchants from Kashmir established a few shops here and there about 40 years ago, importing their goods from Kashmir, and about 11 years ago [= 1916] these were followed by some Hindu shop-keepers from the Punjab, who opened their shops in Gilgit and whose numbers are slowly increasing. Russian chintz is brought by traders from Yarkand, ... while in Yasin and Ishkoman the Wakhis from Wakhan sell ponies, harness, *numdas* [felts] and a little coarse salt in return for grain.” (General Staff India 1928: 31-32).

John Staley (1966: 249) reported that in the 1940s Kashmiri shopkeepers controlled the majority of businesses in Gilgit. This situation was dramatically changed after the partition of British India when Hindu and Sikh entrepreneurs left the Gilgit Agency for Kashmir and India. The vacuum in Gilgit Bazaar was filled by Muslim entrepreneurs, partly by locals and partly by Pathan businessmen from the North-West Frontier Province. Prior to independence Pathans had been hired as policemen only in Gilgit while they now participated in crafts and commerce; already in 1963, two thirds of all 75 Pathan businesses were engaged in leatherwork and/or trade (John Staley 1966: 249).

But another development is of major importance: more and more entrepreneurs from neighbouring valleys such as Hunza, Nager, and rural Gilgit opened shops. By the mid-60s more than two-thirds of all businesses in Gilgit Bazaar were operated by local people (Table 5). This trend has continued and now about three quarters of all shops are run by locals. In a random sample (Figure 5) taken from one of the younger bazaar roads (post-1978) of Gilgit, 60 shops were mapped. This example underpins the linguistic heterogeneity where, in a short section of the bazaar, eleven different languages are spoken by the shop keepers. Andreas Dittmann (1995) and Katrin Gratz (1995) have described the development of bazaar sections of Gilgit and the gendered space properties and boundaries in greater detail. Thus, the bazaar of Gilgit reflects the linguistic diversity in a manner similar to the rural areas in the respective valley societies.

### **Explanations for persistence of geolinguistic diversity**

The examination of linguistic diversity in Northern Pakistan has shown that recorded patterns are only valid for certain time periods. As a reflection of politico-historical and socio-economic conditions they have undergone dramatic changes in the past, a phenomenon which did not cease and continues even today. Nevertheless, some persistence in dominant features is to be acknowledged which led Georg Buddruss (1993: 39) to make the statement: “The Northern Areas of Pakistan may be called a big ‘linguistic museum’. ... But the Northern Areas are not only a museum of languages now extinct but also of living vernaculars hitherto very imperfectly known to the linguistic world.”

| Regional affiliation of entrepreneurs | Potential languages spoken | percentage of traders in Gilgit Bazaar |         |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|--|---------|
|                                       |                            | 1964                                   | 1991    |
| Hunzukuts                             | Burushaski, Shina, Wakhi   | 33.3                                   | 41.7    |
| Nagerkuts                             | Burushaski, Shina          | 18.8                                   | 0.0     |
| Gilgiti                               | Shina                      | 26.8                                   | 28.1    |
| Astori                                | Shina                      | 0.0                                    | 3.1     |
| Yasini                                | Werchikwar, Khowar         | 0.0                                    | 3.1     |
| Balti                                 | Balti                      | 0.0                                    | 1.1     |
| Hazara/Pathan                         | Pashto, Hindko             | 18.8                                   | 12.5    |
| Kashmiri                              | Kashmiri                   | 5.2                                    | 0.0     |
| Kashgari                              | Uigur bzw. Kashgarlik      | 5.0                                    | 0.0     |
| Punjabi                               | Punjabi, Seraiki, Urdu     | 0.0                                    | 9.4     |
| others                                | Balti, Khowar, Shina, Mayā | 2.7                                    | 1.0     |
| sample size                           |                            | N = 400                                | n* = 96 |

\*) This distribution pattern is based on a sample survey by the author in the Airport Bazaar.

Source: data for 1964 according to STALEY (1966: 249-250) and own survey 1991

**Table 5: Comparison of regional affiliation among entrepreneurs in Gilgit Bazaar 1964 and 1991**

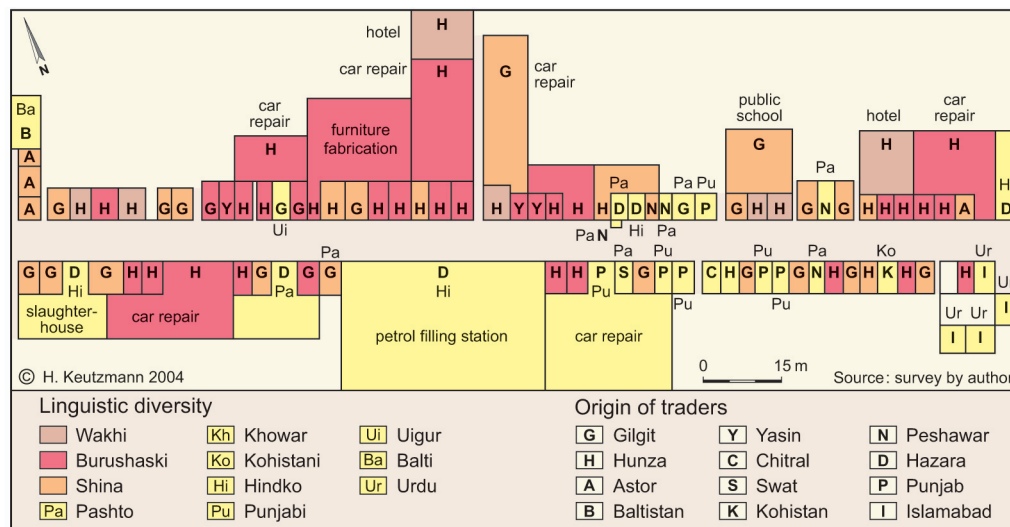


Fig. 5: Linguistic diversity, origin of traders and business structure in Gilgit Bazaar

On first sight it appears that remoteness has provided the favourable conditions that permitted the survival of traditions and among those the preservation of small and peculiar languages.

Obviously more parameters than only distance as reflected in remoteness contributed to the fact that linguistic diversity exists and the language situation significantly differs from that of down country Pakistan. A special feature in the history of the Northern Areas is on the one hand the absence of a dominant supra-regional language being linked to a central authority. On the other hand comparatively small regional entities enjoyed semi-independence and internal autonomy over long periods of time. The hereditary rule in principalities was abolished long after the independence of Pakistan, the last less than a quarter century ago. Unlike other regions of the Himalayan arc, a widespread court language was missing; only contracts (*sanad*) which were exchanged with neighbouring and colonial authorities were written in Farsi or later on in English. Until today no real *lingua franca* has taken over everyday conversation, although Urdu is gaining importance as the medium of instruction in schools.

Evaluating the linguistic diversity it could be shown that transformation processes such as population growth, intra-montane and extra-montane migration, and the incorporation of this region into the national economy of Pakistan are reflected in spatial patterns changing over time. Language features are only one indicator in this context. The reasons for socio-economic transformation, group relations and conflict potentials are not touched here.

### **Outlook and future prospects**

Language groups become important when their lobbying potential is utilized for regional representation and for the access to mass media. The dissemination of radio receivers and state-controlled boosters in the Hindukush-Karakoram triggered off the demand for a fair share in transmitting time in local languages. Radio Gilgit started at the end of the 1970s, and Shina as the dominant language of Gilgit Town was the only one considered besides Urdu. In the mid-80s a daily hour of Burushaski programmes was added. Those two were the only preferential languages for the listenership of Gilgit Town. The supply with local news, job announcements, poems, short stories, and interviews became part of urban life. The range of transmission did not reach much further. Since 1989 the technical equipment has been improved and more inhabitants of the Northern Areas can receive Radio Gilgit now. In line with this media progress, demands were made for more transmissions in local languages and a more liberalized news coverage under the supervision of representatives of language societies. Radio has become a way of reaching a great number of people who understand and can communicate in the same language. Thus, it has become important to produce material for transmission, to write poems and short stories, compose dramas, and to preserve interviews and news items.

Consequently, besides being a lobbying institution one of the most important functions of language societies has become their initiative to reach an agreement upon a script for the respective language. Basically there are two factions to be distinguished: one side supports the introduction of an script using Arabic characters like in Urdu and Persian, the opposition favours a romanized script with additions from the international phonetic alphabet. In some cases both schools of writing follow their own schedules and serve different clientele.



Regional language societies exist in some central places such as the Anjuman-e-Taraqqi Khovar (Chitral), the Wakhi Tajik Culture Association (Gulmit), Halq-e Ilm o Adab Baltistan (Literary Society of Baltistan, Skardu), and the Gujri Adbi Academy (Islamabad). The only organisation accepting members from different language groups is the Karakoram Writers' Forum based in Gilgit. Its members are mainly poets and writers in Shina and Burushaski.

The shining example for all these recent attempts is the far-sighted initiative of Shazada Hussam-ul-Mulk, a Chitrali scholar, who founded the Anjuman-e-Taraqqi Khovar in Drosh in 1956. He is the author of the first textbook in Khovar and under his guidance Khovar language programmes were already transmitted from Chitral in 1965 and a number of publications followed. After a period of inactivity this language society reorganized itself in 1978 under the leadership of Ghulam Umar. Among the objectives of the Anjuman, the most important is "to provide the writers, intellectuals and artists of Chitral with a platform to work together for the promotion of their language and nourishment of their creative talent." (quoted from background paper 1995). The active members managed to become the host organization for the Second and Third International Hindukush Cultural Conferences held in Chitral in 1990 and 1995 respectively.

The latest addition to the list of language societies has been the Wakhi Tajik Culture Association based in Gulmit (Gojal) and founded in 1992. Its objectives cover a wide range including:

- "to determine ways and means to propose and draw-up suitable scripts for Wakhi/Tajik language,
- to publish Wakhi/Tajik language grammar and dictionary,
- to prepare and publish text books for formal elementary classes in Wakhi language,
- to approach the Government and concerned authorities to include Wakhi/Tajik language in mass media like Radio and Television etc." (quoted from the by-laws 1992).

Evidence for a local interest in performing arts and the preservation of oral traditions was given when the Silk Route Festival was held in Hunza in August 1995, an experiment to become a regular event. With meagre financial support a local organization arranged a five-day programme with main emphasis on traditional practices, folk traditions and recitations in local languages (*mushaira*). Representatives from Xinjiang took part in the event and corroborated cross-boundary cultural ties.

The language societies form the organisational structure for demands regarding the consideration of all language groups in the national population census system and in the participation in cultural activities. Somehow they function as pressure groups for the acceptance of regional cultures and tolerance of autochthonous traditions.

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