I Geography and Explorations

1 'Where three Empires Meet': Gilgit-Baltistan, the Former Northern Areas of Pakistan

The Northern Areas, synonymous for the Gilgit Wazarat and colonial Gilgit Agency and Baltistan and federally administered by the central government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, cover an area of 70 332/72 971/72 496 km². Curiously, this part of Pakistan has been designated also during the Buddhist time as "northern region", *Uttarāpatha*, as witnessed by an inscription from Shing Nala (73:1) with *iha uttarāpathe*, 'here in the north' [Map]. Even more definitively the designation is repeated by an inscription at Thalpan (373:110) "Śri Buddhalabdha travels here in the north" *(śri* [*bu*]*ddhalabdha vicarati iha utarāpathe)*.[1]

The autonomous region, renamed as "Gilgit-Baltistan" in 2009 (henceforth also as G-B), comprises the eight districts of Astor, Diamer, Ghizer, Gilgit and Hunza-Nager under the Gilgit division, and Ghanche, Kharmang, Shigar and Skardu in the Baltistan division [Map].[2] The Hindukush-Karakorum region stretching from western Kohistan (i.e. mountain land), Nuristan (Kafiristan) and Chitral District to the Shina-Burusho-speaking area around Gilgit and Diamer with eastern Kohistan, but excluding Baltistan and Kashmir (Kaśmīr), has been labelled also with the poetical nickname Peristan, the "land of the *pari*" or "fairies' land".[3] The region of today's Baltistan refers to the toponym Baltī used by Central Asian historiographers, while it was designated as Little or Lesser Tibet *(Tibbat-I khurd)* in Moghul and Kashmiri chronicles of the 16th and 17th century. Baltistan embedded in the ranges of the Karakorum in the upper reaches of the Indus River covers an area of around 26,200 km². The region, before 1948 a part of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, is divided into the administrative districts of Kharmang, Khaplu, Shigar, Skardu and Rondu with its administrative centre Skardu. The estimated population of Gilgit-Baltistan comes up to the number of nearly one million and represents a multi-ethnic society.[4]

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1 + MANP 4 (204, Taf. 93, 73:1); MANP 9 (177, Taf. 92, 373:110).

2 For a description of the Gilgit Agency, see: Lawrence 1909, 105–113; India Intelligence Branch 1907; Dani 2001, 15–21. Kreutzmann 2008. For Baltistan, see: Lawrence 1909, 101–105. [+ On the Wakhan corridor and the "Great Game" see Kreutzmann 2017; on Hunza, see Kreutzmann 2020].

3 The term was coined by two Italian ethnographers who worked for a long time for the IsMEO and IsIAO in Chitral (Cacopardo – Cacopardo 2001, 13–22). [+ On this topic, see the recent contributions of several authors published in Cacopardo – Cacopardo eds 2023].

4 The population in G-B comprised in 1981 the total of 57,4543 and in 1998 the number of 87,0347. According to the Census of 1901 the Wazarat Gilgit of the Kashmir State contained 264 villages, and the population of 60,885 persons (Lawrence 1909, 107).

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A mythical land called Dardistan occurs in the literature. In colonial times the whole mountain region west of the Indus River as far as Afghanistan was summarized under the legendary term as 'Yaghistan', "the land of the free" or "the land of ungovernable savages". The region east of the Indus was seen as part of Kashmir. Gottfried Wilhelm Leitner identified the Yaghi as Dards, the possible descendants of the Daradae or Dardai of the classical descriptions and the Daradas of the Sanskrit literature. The toponym Daraddes'a occurs in the *Rājatarangiṇī*, a chronicle of the "Kings of Kaśmīr", which was written by the scholar and poet Kalhaṇa in the 12th century.[5] Darat-puri, 'the town of the Dards', was the residence of its rulers, which has been located at the modern place Gurez in the upper Kishanganga Valley.[6] Their settlements in a region around the Upper Kishanganga and its tributaries seem to have formed a little kingdom, which according the Chronicle was called Daraddes'a.

The toponym 'Dardistan' was ascribed to G. W. Leitner, who would have introduced it as an ethnographic term,[7] but it was mentioned earlier in the Tarikh-i Badakhshan of 1801 that "Chitrar was a part of Dardistan" (Cacopardo – Cacopardo 2001, 22). Yet several travellers report "that the people of Kashmir vaguely call the mountain region to their north-west Dardistan, and the Gurairi and Astori call it Daristan. Daristan is then nothing more than Kohistan, or Highlands" (Tanner 1881, 294). The name Dardistan has been applied to a wide region, "which embraces Chitral on the west, including Yasin, the Gilgit valley from Gakuch in Punyal to the Indus at Bunji, Hunza and Nagar to the north, the Shin republic of the Indus valley as far as Sazin to the south, the Kohistan I Malazai, and a portion of the Indus valley, Kohistan".[8] It was John Biddulph, who emphasized that Leitner had fallen "into the error of believing that the tribes which he has classed under the name of Dard are all of the same (Aryan) race, and he has applied the term of Dardistan, a name founded on a misconception, to a tract of country inhabited by several races, speaking distinct languages, who differ considerably amongst themselves".[9]

Algernon Durand too called this geographical term "a misleading title, for there is no such country as Dardistan, and there is no one united race to which the name of Dard could be applied" and therefore "the name has no scientific value".[10]

The geographical term Yaghistan became known during the British colonial administration of the 19th century as the vast 'land of the ungovernable' between Kashmir and the border of Afghanistan,[11] including the kingdoms of Gilgit, Yasin, Hunza, Chitral with the southern tribal regions of Kohistan between Chilas and Hazara [Map]. In later geographical descriptions

5 Stein 1900, II 505.

6 Stein 1899, 101, 150, 157. The strategical position of Gurez (Gurais) in the north of Kashmir with its fort is described by Bates 1873, 198–200.

7 Leitner 1893. Leitner was also the first to begin the study of Dard languages.

8 Durand 1894, 665.

9 Biddulph 1880, 8–9.

10 Durand 1894, 665–666.

11 Keay 1979, 14–15.

Yaghistan is called 'Land of the Free', 'Land of the Rebels', or 'the abode of lawless', which comprises a more restricted region of the valley communities in the south of the Gilgit chains with Gor, Chilas, Darel, Tangir and Kohistan, but also including the Pathan tribal areas of Dir, Swat, Buner and Hazara.[12] The valleys on both sides of the Indus gorges including the valleys opposite Tangir and Darel, as central part of 'Yaghistan', with their administrative centres at Gumari and Jaglot remained independent during the whole period of British domination in the Northern Areas. These Shinaki or Shinkai republics, the "Land of the Shins", consist of communities comprising few villages, ruled by their continually rivalling elders or headmen and should rather be called pseudo-republics.[13] They remained outside of the Pax Britannica until the new political situation of the Second World War with the chance for the Wali of Swat to expand their sphere of influence as far as the Indus Valley by taking the fortified township on its west bank, Pattan. The side valley Kandia up to Seo was also included.

More than 25 languages belonging to four main groups are spoken in the high mountain area.[14] They can be divided in two main linguistic groups, the Dardic languages, such as Shina, which half of the indigenous inhabitants of Gilgit-Baltistan speaks, and the non-Dardic idioms. Of the eastern Dardic languages Shina is widest spoken in an area from Palas and Jalkot in Kohistan to Gilgit, farther to the north along the Gilgit River, in the Ishkoman Valley, and in Astor. In eastern Baltistan a valley occupied by the immigrated *Brokpa*, the 'highlanders', belongs to this linguistic province. In the side valleys of the Indus River, such as Darel and Tangir, and on its left bank downstream as far as the tributaries Palas and Alai Shina dialects are spoken. Varieties of Kohistani, also called Maiyan, are spread on the right side of the Indus River from the side valleys of Kandia downstream to Duber.[15] Phalura is spoken in southern Chitral. The other Dardic language Khowar, the main language of Chitral, is widespread in Yasin. To the non-Dardic idioms belong Wakhi, an Iranian language, which is spoken in Chitral, but also in the upper valleys of Ishkoman and Hunza. The lower caste of the Doms, who are known as musicians and smiths, have their own language as in Hunza and Nager called Domaaki, an idiom of the the middle-Indian language branch. Smaller groups

12 Lorimer 1939, 17; Jettmar 1960b, 120; Id. 2002, 45–46; Dani 2001, 270. After Curzon 2012, (14, 232, 241–242) Yaghistan corresponds with Kohistan, "where for hundreds of years, either in the valley of the Indus or in the lateral ravines, lawless and savage communities have retained an independent existence, a scourge to each other and a terror to their neighbours" [+ *loc. vacat*].

13 Curzon 2012, 232.

14 An overview is given by Fussman (see Dani 2001). For a map showing the district-wise spread of the different idioms, see Kreutzmann 2006, 264–265 fig. 18.5 and Id. 2013, 32 fig. 14. On the Burúśaski language, see: Lorimer 1935–1938; Berger 1992 and 1998; Buddruss 2006, 236–238. On the languages of the Chitral section of the Hindukush, see Cacopardo – Cacopardo 2001. [+ New data on Burúśaski are provided by a series of articles published by I. Čašule on several journals (e.g. *Acta Orientalia, JAC*). On the linguistics of the region see the recent monumental study published by C.P. Zoller (Zoller 2023)].

15 Jettmar 1983b, 505–508 with map showing the distribution of the Dardic languages.

live among Shina- and Burushaski-speaking communities. Both idioms have influenced this in the core Indo-Iranyan language.

The archaic Burushaski (Burúśaski) is spoken in two dialects by more than 100,000 people in the high valleys of Hunza-Nagar.[16] Burushaski is not related to any other language in the mountain region and retained is distinctive character until the last century, surrounded by Iranian, Indo-Iranian, Tibetan and Turkic languages. A third slightly more diverged dialect, spoken by smaller groups in the valleys of Gilgit and Yasin, belongs to this isolated language group. The history and origin of the Burúśo are in the dark and their genetic links are still shrouded in mystery, since they themselves have no written or even oral tradition about their ancient past. The speakers call themselves Burúśo, who belong to an autochthonous ethnic group of the mountain area or go back to an antecedent stratum of early immigrants from High Asia.

Balti, an archaic proto-Tibetan language, the most extreme north-western extension of the Tibeto-Burman language, is spoken in Baltistan. A small group of nomadic herdsmen, the Gujars, originating from the Indian plains, speak their own language called Gujari. After vast areas of the Punjab were transformed since the second half of the 19th century into canal colonies, the grazing grounds of the Gujari were restricted to a large extent. In the search for new pastures the nomads were forced to migrate to the northern mountain areas, where they found new grazing grounds in Chitral, Swat, around Chilas and Gilgit, and in neighbouring valleys such as Ishkoman and Yasin.

The social stratification of the inhabitants in the relevant part of the Upper Indus valley and its side valleys such as Darel and Tangir has been discussed since the first studies about the Northern Areas, especially by Frederick Drew, John Biddulph and Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner. During his stay in September 1866 at Bunji, Leitner, an Austrian in British service, had the opportunity to interview a landlord of Chilas.[17] Therefore, his accounts particularly about the Chilasis are more trustworthy than the pejorative verdicts by other authors about this stubborn Dardic community.

16 At first, the language Burúśaski was known only by a few unreliable lists of words, noted by Cunningham 1854, 398–418 and by Hayword 1871, until Leitner in 1880 presented a first grammar of the Nager dialect. Lt.-Col. David L. R. Lorimer (1876–1962), an army officer in the Political Department, British Colonial India, and Political Agent at the Gilgit Agency between 1920 and 1924, produced his linguistic analysis of the enigmatic Burushaski after his retirement in 1926 during the following 10 years. His pioneer work appeared in three volumes (see Lorimer 1935–1938). Hermann Berger revised and supplemented Lorimer's material in a series of publications (see Berger 1992) and in three final volumes (Berger 1998). For a summary of the language and its history of exploration (since the first information by Cunningham, Hayward, Leitner and Biddulph), see: Buddruss 2006, 236–238. According to a local and by far too high estimate, reported by Willson 1999, 10, who studied the region between 1988 and 1990, the Burúśo population was 50,000 for Hunza, 52,000 for Nagar, 40,000 for Yasin, and 30,000 in the Gilgit area. [+ On the Hunza-Nagar area see the recent Frembgen 2022].

17 Drew 1875, 425–427. Biddulph 1880, 34–45. Leitner 1893, 62–63.

Frederick Drew in his description of the social hierarchic system of the Dards in the Gilgit Agency could distinguish four castes – "Shīn, Yashkun, Kremin, Dúm". The Shin were seen as the dominating caste as they themselves think to represent "the aristocracy of the country". They are the landlords owning most of the land. But, even John Biddulph suggested, that this group of highest status came as a late wave of immigrants from Pakli, the area between the Indus and the Kishanganga River, into the Upper Indus, thereby introducing the Hindu religion and defeating the local aboriginal population.[18] Their peculiarity was their engagement in goat-breeding, deeply integrated into the spiritual system which Karl Jettmar called "a natural pastural ideology with livestock symbolism, like that in the ritual heritage of the Kalasha-Kafirs". He saw them also as conquerors immigrated from "southern border mountains" (Jettmar 1999[a], 390; 1957, 23). A. H. Dani connected their invasion into this region during the end of the 8th or beginning of the 9th century AD, causing the decline of the Buddhist period, which he designated as the phase of the Battle-Axe people as represented in the rock art.[19]

The next group, the Yeshkun, with a high status as farmers owning less land than the Shin, assists the highest caste. They are seen by the first explorers as "the descendants of an aboriginal Burushaski-speaking population", which adopted the language Shina from the new occupants, but continued to exist as a separate caste next to other "occupational groups" such as the highest caste, the Shin, and the poorer Kamin.[20]

The Kamin of medium status owning still less land in regard to the Dom, the Gujars and the Sonival / Maruts are socially inferior to the farmers. This caste is known from Punjab and the region between the rivers Kabul and Swat as tenant farmers and craftsmen. The Dom as a minority group of artisans, as in other parts of the subcontinent, are considered as belonging to the lowest social stratum and are excluded from central spheres of the society.[21] Yet, with their specialized services as blacksmiths and musicians they are nevertheless of essential benefit for the community. The indigenous low-caste groups live in a wide range of the Sub-Himalayan region from the delta of Bengal to the Upper Indus, where they constitute more numerous communities in villages in Chilas, Yasin, Hunza and Nager. The stock of both groups is said to have come from the south.[22]

The Sonival / Maruts seem to have settled along the Upper Indus River and in some side valleys ever since Antiquity, as reflected in classical sources (Herodotus, Plinius, Strabo, al-Biruni and Sanskrit sources). Nowadays, there are larger concentrations of these groups living mainly in Dodishal, Khanbari, Hodar [Hodur] and Chilas. Smaller goldwasher communities are found in nearly all villages along the Indus River between Shatial in Kohistan and Bagrot in the Gilgit District.

18 Biddulph 1880, 39, 155–164.

19 Dani 1983a, 231.

20 The idea of an aboriginal Burushaski-speaking population was opposed by Schomberg 1935, 119, but supported by Jettmar 1957, 23; 1961a, 81; 2001, 75.

21 A comprehensive study of the Dom is owed to Schmid 1997.

22 Jettmar 1961a, 81.

The three roads leading from Pakistan's capital Islamabad via the ancient city of Taxila through the focal point Mansehra, the junction of four main roads and the place where king Aśoka of the Mauryan Dynasty left his fourteen rock edicts, and on to Thakot [Besham] on the right side of the Indus and the entrance of the Karakorum Highway (henceforth also abbreviated as KKH) are described by A. H. Dani.[23] Coming from the Hazara Plain the traveller had to traverse the Kat Galai Pass before he could cross the bridge of Thakot [Besham] and enter into the 751 kilometre-long Karakorum Highway, called colloquially KKH. The road follows the flow of the Upper Indus gorges on its west bank through Kohistan with its impressive wild mountains. At Shatial with the bridge leading into the Darel Valley the highway passes the site of the projected Diamer-Basha dam, which will threaten most of the important ancient sites and rock carving assemblages, such as fin Harban, Bazeri Das, Minar Gah, Thor, Oshibat, Hodar Bridge, Gichi till Chilas and Dong Nala: all will be submerged by the future Diamer-Basha reservoir. The modern road upstream from the Indus, from Chilas to Raikot Bridge until the construction of the forerunner of the KKH, has been described as "difficult and almost impassable even for men of foot".[24] There is a line of rock carvings following the main route of the ancient "Indus Valley Road" on the northern bank of the Upper Indus. Complexes of petroglyphs mark river crossings, thus showing that this route, "such as it is, constantly crosses and recrosses the Indus" by suspended bridges or rafts.[25]

The ancient routes along both banks of the Indus are accompanied by chains of rock art galleries. They form clusters around ancient settlements or forts and monasteries such as Shatial or Hodar and main river crossings. The valley opens at Chilas, the headquarters of Diamer District, which is enhanced by the majestic 8126 metre-high Nanga Parbat [Map; Table 2.1]. Since the 19th century the 9th highest mountain peak in the world bears this name, "the naked mountain", but before it was called Diamer (correctly Diva-Meru meaning "Heavenly Mount")[26] by the local population in Shina language – the place "where the fairies meet". Bypassing the second highest mountain of Pakistan, marking the western corner-pillar of the Himalaya, the high plain of Gilgit is reached through the side valley of Gilgit-Ghizer to Ishkoman. Or going farther to Hunza in the north with the 7788 metre-high Rakaposhi, called Dumani by the Hunza Kuts and one of the peaks identified with Meru, the road leads to the Khunjerab Pass at the Pakistani-Chinese border [Map; Table 3.1]. Another important route to the east follows from the river crossing at Alam Bridge after passing the wide river plain through the narrow gorges of the Indus towards Skardu, the ancient centre of Baltistan. From there, a road leads to the northeast across the Indus and over the low pass Strongdokma La (2420 m) into the Shigar Valley to Shigar (Ši-dkar), which has been described by F. Drew as

23 Dani 1995, 22–27.

24 Biddulph 1880, 15. According Mulla Ata Muhammad 1876 "the worst road (from Chilas) is to Bunji, along the left bank of the Indus, which is dangerous and often impracticable in many places": Gazetteer 1890, route no. 2, p. 4.

25 Leitner 1893, 79.

26 Dani 1983a, 1.

"the most delightful place in all Baltistan".[27] From there one of the most frequented ancient tracks follows the Braldo tributary across the Baltoro Glacier and the Mustagh Pass to Yarkand in Xinjiang. Of strategical importance are the two main connections between Baltistan and Ladakh, the "upper route" along the Shyok River and the "lower route" along the Indus. The upper road leads from Kiris, the smallest territory of the five Balti kingdoms Kye-ris, east of the confluence of Shyok with the Indus, along the right bank of the Shyok to Balghar-Foqnaqh opposite Yugo and from there to Saling near Khaplu. The capital of the Balti kingdom Khaplu (Kha-bu-lu) is the starting point for the road leading on the left bank of the Shyok to Ladakh or through the Saltoro Valley to the Karakorum Pass and farther to Yarkand. The southern route connecting Baltistan with Ladakh follows the left bank of the Indus River from Kartaksho, one of the five kingdoms called Gar-dag-ša in Kharmang.

2 Geographical Setting of the Western Himalayas

The 2400 kilometre-long mountain arc consisting of the Hindukush, the Indian Caucasus of the Greeks, and the Pamirs in the west with the Karakorum in the north and of the High Himalaya in the east – the Imaos and Emodos of the ancient Greeks (Plin. *HN* VI 60) or the "snowy" *haimavata* (Emodos) and *himavat* (Imaos) in Sanskrit – forms a formidable barrier blocking the Indian subcontinent against the Tibetan plateau and the highlands of Central Asia.[28] The High Himalaya Range forms also a climatic divide where on its southern slopes the monsoon rains lash fertilising subtropic vegetation in the lower regions, which pass over to Alpine forests and pastures in the higher mountain ranges.

The Karakorum range ('Black Gravel'), "the whitest, iciest range of the mountains outside polar regions" is situated parallel to the northeast of the Himalaya, extending from the northwest to the southeast approximately 700 km with a width of up to 150 km.[29]

The Karakorum adjoins the Hindukush and the Pamir in the west, and the Kunlun in the North. The boundaries of the mountain range are defined on the south by the bend of the Shyok River to its junction with the Indus River, then by the Indus to its junction with the

27 Drew 1875, 365–366.

28 Imaos and Emodos comprise the eastern Hindukush and Himalayas (Ptol. *Geog*. VI 14,1. 15,1. VII 1).

29 The term Karakorum / Karakoram and its boundaries have been defined during the "Karakoram Conference" of the Royal Geographic Society in 1936: Mason 1938. Tahirkheli – Jan 1984 sees the border between Karakorum and Hindukush in the Yasin Valley. See the comprehensive overview of Heichel 2003 with map II showing the different mountain ranges and groups of the Karakorum. For the earlier discussion about the nomenclature of the "Karakoram-Himalaya", see: Mason 1930a, 40 with diagram. Mason 1930b, Longstaff 1930. The name "Karakoram" has been extended from the pass of that name to the whole watershed by the earliest explorers (the main features of 'Karakoram' were determined by Colonel T. G. Montgomerie after his surveys of 1855–1865 and S. G. Burrard 1929). [+ For bibliographical updates on the Hindukush region, the repertory published in 2022 *Cultures of the Hindukush after Jettmar. A Bibliography* (Cacopardo 2022) is essential].

Gilgit River, and by the Gilgit to the confluence of the Ishkoman River. On the west it is bordered by the Ishkoman and Karumbar rivers towards the Khora Bhurt Pass (or Chilinji Pass). This wild mountain range with deeply cut valleys includes a veritable ocean of 100 peaks rising to over 7000 m and several others over 8000 m with Godwin Austen (K2) or Dapsang (8611 m) – the second highest peak in the world. Alone three of fourteen eight-thousanders existing in the world, such as Gasherbrum I (K3) or Hidden Peak (8068 m), Broad Peak (8047 m) and Gasherbrum II (8035 m) tower above the end of the Shigar Valley in Baltistan, encircling the upper corries of the Baltoro glacier. The massifs contain vast glaciers, such as the Batura with a length of 60 km and a width of 3 km the largest glacier, the Pasu and Ghulkin glaciers which all together meet the Hunza Valley.

South of the Karakorum, the Trans-Himalayan or Ladakh Range runs parallel until the Shigar Valley in Baltistan, and includes the over 4000-m high Deosai or Devil's Plateau, along the northern boundary of Kashmir. Groups of the Great Karakorum are traditionally also called the Muztagh or Bolor mountains by the Balti people.[30]

The Hindukush, the great snowy mountains, situated to the west of the Karakorum and extending from the east-north-east to the west-south-west at a length of ca. 800 km and to a width of 50 to 350 km, forms a barrier between the Indus and the valley of the Amu-Darya, the classical Oxus. The mountains reach an average height of around 4500 m with the tallest peaks Tirich Mir (7708 m) and Noshaq (7492 m) dominating the Kunar Valley. Both mountain systems meet in the area of Yasin-Ishkoman. Three large mountain systems meet at the Khora Burt Pass and the Karumbar-Ishkoman Valley, the Pamir from north-east, the Karakorum from the south-east, and the Hindukush from the west. Another spectacular junction-point is situated southeast of Gilgit at the confluence of the Gilgit River with the Indus, where the massifs of the Himalaya from the (north)east, Karakorum from the northeast and Hindukush from the west collide.[31] The majestic Nanga Parbat (8126 m) forms here the western corner-pillar of the Himalayas bordered by the flow of the Indus and towering above the plain of Bunji. The "naked mountain" received its name from the rulers of the 19th century, but it is locally called Diamar meaning Deva-Meru, the "Heavenly Mount". The summit is the watershed between the Indus and the Jhelum rivers.

The Indus River, the classical Indos, was first recorded in the 5th century BC by Herodotus, the 'father of history' (Hdt. IV 44) and by Ctesias ([Phot. *Bibl.*]), who after 401 BC lived several years as a physician at the royal court of Artaxerxes II. (404–359 BC). But even earlier, the expedition of Skylax, a mariner from Karyanda in Karia, was ordered in 518 BC by Great King Darius I to investigate the estuary of the Indus and to explore the possibilities of establishing sea connections between India along the southern Iranian coasts and around littoral Arabia to the harbours of the Red Sea.

30 The different mountain groups of the Mustagh are laid down in the map 'Karakoram' by the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research, Zurich 1990, see Heichel 2003, 20. [+ On Bolor HH quoted also Jettmar 1979b [+1977b], 1980d, and 1989e].

31 Searle 1991, 53–55 fig. 1.1. Heichel 2003, 18, 21.

The Greek Indus corresponds to the Sinthos in the famous *Periplus Mari Erythraeai* of the 1st century AD, to the Hindhu in Old Persian, to the Sindhu in Sanskrit, to Abba-Sin in Pushtu, and to Hsin-t'ou in Chinese records. The course is 3180 km long, from its headwaters on the north slopes of the Mt. Kailash massif (6714 m) in the Gangdisê Range of the western Trans-Himalaya in Tibet to its mouth on the Arabian Sea. The "ice-mountain" called Kangrinboqê in Tibetan is sacred both to Buddhists and Hindus – Śri Kailāśa, the Indian Olympus, the abode of Lord Śiva, and his consort Parvati. After the expansion of Hinduism the mountain has often been identified with Meru of Indian cosmology, the centre of the Universe.[32] Kailāśa is sacred, because it is the source of the four great South Asian river systems:[33] Yarlung Zangbo-Brahmaputra in the east, Satluj a tributary of the Indus in the west, Karnali called Ghaghara in India in the south, one of the main affluents of the Ganges River, and at last the Indus in the north. The ancient sacred symbol of the swastika is said to have been deduced by the great South Asian streams rising from the Kailāśa. The Indus River flows from its source emerging in Mansarovar Lake at an altitude of 5300 m westwards from the southwestern part of the Tibetan plateau and cuts in its upper third (reaches), lying mainly in Kashmir, through a deep tectonic valley between the ranges of the Himalayas and the Karakorum. After cutting through the Ladakh range the River runs through the wide basin of Skardu in Baltistan, and from there gushes down into the formidable chasm of the Rondu Gorge. After the confluence with the affluents Hunza and Gilgit the River flows down to the south into a sequence of narrow gorges in the Diamer District and through the barren mountains of eastern Kohistan before it turns to the southeast at Jalkot. From an altitude of ca. 2280 m around Skardu the torrent flows off to 1310 m around Bunji and ca. 900 m at Sazin in Kohistan. With its tributaries the Indus has cut several openings through this barrier, which includes the world's 14 highest mountain peaks towering at more than 8000 m. The ice- and snow-capped mountain scenery with steep-sided summits towering to more than 7000 and 8000 m of the Nanga Parbat – Haramosh Ranges as well as the High Karakorum form an enormous contrast to narrow, deeply incised gorges and wide basins with rich vegetation.

The environmental conditions of the Indus Valley, characterized by its bed deeply cut into rocks and sediments and the enormous change of water volume between its maximum in summer and its minimum between October and April, have prevented artificial irrigation by the installation of canals. The scarce rainfall in the valleys is another obstacle for intensive agriculture and therefore for the emergence of larger settlements in the valley. A further peculiarity of the geological situation is the fact that landslides can block not only communication routes but sometimes the river as well, thus creating lakes. Especially the Indus Valley in the Nanga Parbat area is endangered by landslips and mud avalanches because of the neotectonic active Raikot fault in connection with the special topographical situation there. Such great

32 Cunningham 1854, 43, 50–52 named the mountain Kailás or Gangri Range. See also Tucci 1977, 27.

33 The first description of the Indus from its source and its course to its mouth is summarized by Cunningham 1854, 84–94. A study of the landscape of the Indus region was undertaken by Prölss 1931.

cataclysms of the Indus River and its tributaries have changed cultivated plains like those of Skardu, Bunji or downstream as far as Kohistan. Some of the early writers due to their limited knowledge of the geographical situation concerned here presented contradictory evidence of these floods, which are reported since 1780. Major Kenneth Mason examined the different records and described two big floods caused by the collapse of an ice bridge of the Shyok glaciers in 1835 and 1926; it seriously affected the plain of Skardu but had no further impact lower down the Indus at the confluence with the Gilgit River.[34] The ill-famed great Indus flood of 1841, which began with a landslide in the Fall of 1840, dammed the river at a stretch of ca. 30 km for six months. It inundated the cultivated land around Bunji and destroyed ca. 200 homes there. This flood was first recorded by Frederick Drew, who located the landslip below the Hattu Pir.[35] The worst of all historical Indus floods resulted from the burst of the earthen dam near Bunji, which was formed by "the collapse of the Lechar spur of Nanga Parbat, opposite Gor", causing disastrous waves of water, sands and gravel.[36]

According to Algernon Durand, the disastrous flood of 1841 "was caused by a gigantic landslip, probably following an earthquake", which converted the plain of Bunji into a lake. "The Gilgit River, which runs into the Indus six miles above Bunji, was dammed up for thirty miles to just below the present fort of Gilgit. When the barrier broke after some months, as the people downstream still remember today, vast cultivated lands such as around Ges were covered with sand, and sites such as the old village of Thalpan were ruined. At the foot of the hill range, just at the eastern end of the wide Thalpan sand terrace before the road follows the course of the deeply Khinar brook to the new Thalpan village, remains of the old occupation with some Muslim graves are still preserved."[37] The former field demarcations and water channels are still visible across the sandy plain. The most terrible disaster of the flood occurred after two days, 260 miles below the damming near Attok, where the stream reaches into the open plains of the lowlands. There close to the river detachments of the Sikh army under Raja Golabh Singh had their camp, which unfortunately had not received any warnings of the coming catastrophe. Warnings actually had been sent by Raja Karim Khan of Gilgit, written on birch-bark as message in a bottle, sent down the river. Picturesque reports

34 Mason 1929a [+?], Vigne 1844, 362 and Cunningham 1854, 99–100 give for the 1835 cataclysm a date of 1833.

35 Drew 1875, 414–421.

36 The landslide happened in December 1840 or January 1841. By the end of May or the beginning of June the lake had reached its maximum of 40 miles length, before it was "liberated" (Mason 1929b, 12). According to the British geographer Henry Haversham Austen-Godwin (Godwin-Austen 1896, 24), the great Indus flood of 1841 should have been caused by the glacial sources of the Nubra and Shigar rivers, entailing "irreparable mischief" to the plain of Skardu. The water waves were retained for nine days by the narrow gorges of Rondu, causing the huge deposits of sands and gravels before gushing forth through the Rondu Gorge with devastating effect throughout the lower part of the Upper Indus valley.

37 Durand 1900, 27–28; Dani 1983a, 7–8.

of this disaster have been handed down by local eye-witnesses: "As an old woman with a wet cloth sweeps away an army of ants, like the river swept away the army of the Maharaja".[38] The second great flood of the Indus River occurred in 1856, caused by an obstruction to the Hunza River or its tributary Shingshal.[39] Another great flood of the Indus, which came from the Gilgit River and passed Bunji, "destroyed a large amount of property in British territory both above and below Attok" on 10 August 1858.[40]

The most recent impression of the incalculable dynamics by the geomorphological situation in the high mountains was displayed by the massive landslide at Attaabad in Hunza on January 4, 2010. It caused a 1-km long blockage in the Hunza Valley, thereby causing a lake of more than 28 km that flooded farmland and villages upstream and destroyed 18 km of the KKH downstream.

Larger communities could better survive in side valleys, where the water of rivulets and streams could be used for organized irrigation. And, also on the alluvial fans at the mouth of such tributaries agriculture could rely on both irrigation and direct precipitation (Jettmar 2002, 11).

Since prehistoric times, this mountain range with its passes together with the river valleys formed gateways, which enabled migrations or hostile invasions to occur along the natural routes, later followed by peaceful trade expeditions and Buddhist pilgrims and missionaries or envoy journeys – all contributing to the rich ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in these high mountainous regions, also designated as "Trans-Himalayan District of Historical India", since 1947 a part of Pakistan.

3 Main Routes in the High Mountain Region

The highly ramified Indus valley system, with the principal mountain tributaries of Shigar and Shyok in Baltistan, Ghizer and Yasin with Gilgit and Hunza around Gilgit, and Astor (in the north of the Nanga Parbat massif) thus constitutes a major connection system between China, Central Asia and India, linking the Tarim Basin, Chinese Turkestan or Xinjiang (Uyghur Autonomous Region) and Tibet via Kashmir to the plains of the Punjab in the sub-continent. Xinjiang, the 'New Dominion' since its conquest during the Han Dynasty in the 1st century BC,

38 According Durand 1900, 27–28; Drew 1875, 414–421; Biddulph 1880, 19; Schomberg 1935, 18. Dani 1983a (7–8 and 2001, 37), mentions the effect of this flood on the old Thalpan village. The ruined old mosque in the abandoned village of Hodar, Chilas District, according Dani 1989 (102–103 fig. 19, pl. 44) is said to have been destroyed by the Indus flood of 1841. Dani 2001, 129 supposed an Indus flooding of the region around Chilas, "a historic catastrophe", caused by a severe earthquake which affected Taxila around 30 AD, assumed by Marshall 1960a, 137. This assumption is, of course, not historically testified.

39 Mason 1929b, 11.

40 The Indus flood of 1858 is reported from Bunji and Attok by Captain Montgomerie 1860.

represents the western part of the Celestial Empire. The region had different names in the literature: Before it received its final designation as Xinjiang, it was known as Chinese or High Tartary, Chinese Central Asia, Eastern Turkestan, Kashgaria and Serindia. The southern part of the province now comprises Kashgaria, which is locally called Altešahr with its six towns Kashgar, Yangi, Hissar, Yarkand, Khotan, Aksu and Kucha. It is surrounded in the west by the Pamir, in the south by the Kunlun Shan and Karakorum, and in the north by the majestic T'ien Shan, the 'celestial mountains. The east is free of mountain ranges, but its approach is hindered by the Gobi and Lop deserts. The 'Moving Sands', *Liu Sha*, as the Chinese called the Taklamakan, appears as an egg-shaped blank on the map. The region between Badakshan and Yarkand, surrounded on three sides by a chain of mountains, has been designated by its altitude as *Bam-i-Dunya*, the 'roof of the world'.[41]

The modern exploration of both the Western Himalaya and High Asia was inaugurated by William Moorcroft (ca. 1765–1824), who was sent by the British East India Company to India in 1808.[42] His mission as veterinary surgeon during his first journey in 1812 across the Niti Pass in Garhwal in central Himalaya into Tibet was to search for the goats, from which wool for the much sought-after Kashmir shawls were made. His second journey from Kashmir through Peshawar to Balkh and Bukhara was officially justified to purchase a breeding stock of Turkoman horses to improve the native cavalry-horse of India in size and strength. The aim of this pioneer of Central Asian travel, an eccentric and visionary explorer, was to track down the main roads beyond the high mountain range dividing the regions "where three empires meet" – the Tsarist Empire, China and Great Britain – and to assess their feasibility as strategical and trade routes.

The exploratory work in this 'blank spot' between India and Central Asia was in the interest of the British who gave all facilities to travellers following in Moorcroft's footsteps. He and his companion George Trebeck died under unknown circumstances in Afghanistan, like other explorers after them. The daring English explorer Godfrey Thomas Vigne (1801–1863), an amateur botanist, geologist and geographer, penetrated into the Western Himalayas in the late 1830s and delivered the first eye-witness account of the Indus Valley at Bunji. The Indus River was seen as the western border of Kashmir, and the mountain region west of the Indus as far as Afghanistan was summarized under the geographical term 'Yaghistan', the land of the ungovernable savages. A first insight of the upper Indus region with the bordering Hindukush was presented by Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner (1840–1899). The name of this most remarkable linguist and famous orientalist is connected with the beginnings of scientific exploration of the Northern Areas. Born in Budapest of Jewish parents, an amazing career brought him to Malta and to Turkey. As interpreter in the British Army he was a colonel in the Crimean war, who after the democratic rebellion of 1848 against the Habsburgian Empire had to take refuge

41 Yule 1872, 469–470.

42 Moorcroft – Trebeck 1841.

in England.[43] Being a scholar interested in anthropology and the study of different ethnicities, Leitner came to Lahore. He identified the Yaghi as Dards, the descendants of the Daradae or Dardai of the classical descriptions and the Daradas of the Sanskrit literature. Knight later on pointed to the problem, that "there are no people who call themselves Dards, and there is no region known as Dardistan to its habitants".[44] Since its introduction in the geographic literature the name has become convenient, but it is misleading, because it comprises a large area between Kafiristan in the west and Kashmir in the east. It includes the districts of Astor and Gilgit, the former kingdoms Hunza, Nagar and Yasin, and the independent republics of the Upper Indus.

The knowledge of the ancient main routes and by-ways used since prehistoric periods between both Central Asia and the historical India and the different regions in the Northern Areas is based on the reports by European explorers and British officers of the 19th and early 20th century. A synopsis of the traditional routes in the western Himalaya was compiled for the first time by K. Mason in 1929.[45]

In the history of the exploration of the Himalayan mountains a considerable step forward was achieved by the three Bavarian brothers, Adolph, Herrmann and Robert Schlagintweit, whose "Mission to India and High Asia 1854–1857" was enabled by a recommendation of Alexander von Humboldt and with the support of the Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm IV, and again under the patronage of the East India Company.[46] These Bavarian geographers were the first to penetrate the Himalayas from east to west, from Sikkim, Nepal through Kumaun and Garhwal to the Panjab Himalaya and the Nanga Parbat massif. They were also the first to break through the mountain barrier separating India and Chinese Turkestan, to cross the Karakorum and Kunlun and to reach the headwaters of the Indus in Tibet. The first descriptions of the main pass routes through the mountain range and of 63 glaciers is owed to their three years' expeditions. Since their tremendous research, the Kunlun, Karakorum as the main watershed in Asia and the Himalayas are known as different mountain systems.[47] Their second travel began in 1856 in Simla, showing the brothers on different routes. Hermann and Robert went to Leh in Ladakh and across the Karakorum to Turkestan, whereas Adolph headed his tour de force through the Zanskar-Himalaya and Ladakh mountains into the Shyok

43 His life with the controversial assessments of his role as explorer and scholar is summarized by Keay 1979, 15–40; 1982, 144–164; 1996, 288–314.

44 Knight 1893, 85–87. On the toponym 'Dardistan' and its questions see above.

45 Kenneth Mason 1929a. A guidebook published by Arora 1940 describes also the then used main routes from Kashmir and Ladakh to Gilgit-Baltistan.

46 Schlagintweit 1875a and 1875b. The life-story of the Schlagintweit brothers is summarized by Körner 1982. On the tragic death of Adolph Schlagintweit in Kashgar, see: Kreutzmann 2015 [+ Brescius – Kaiser – Kleidt (eds) 2015; Schlagintweit 1859].

47 For early descriptions of pass routes through the mountain ranges, see: Schlagintweit 1875a and 1875b. For a synopsis of all routes, see: Gazetteer 1890, especially Mason 1929a; Jettmar 1994; Rizvi 1999; Heichel 2003; Sen 2003, 169–176 map 4; Haines 2004; Dar 2006.

Valley and Baltistan. In two excursions he ventured to the Masherbrum [Table 4.1] and up the Mustagh Pass, but because of the rapacious Hunzakuts controlling the other side he had to return to Skardu, the headquarters of Baltistan. His observations and lithographs of "glaciers in Balti" are of great scientific value for the later geological research in the Karakorum. From Skardu after traversing the Burji Pass he crossed the vast high plateau of Deosai and reached via Astor the south side of the Nanga Parbat massif. His famous panorama of the mountain represents the first scientific acknowledgement by a European. From there he returned along the traditional Gilgit-Kashmir route to Srinagar, where he joined his brothers.[48]

Adolph Schlagintweit's last daring trek aimed to reach through Yarkand the legendary city of Kashgar (Kashi) in a region of Eastern Turkestan, which no European had crossed again since the Venetian Marco Polo around 1270 and the Portuguese Jesuit Bento di Góis (Benedikt Goës) in 1604. There, being a foreign explorer, he was not received with traditional hospitality but was seen by the Turkestani chieftain Sayad Vali Khan of Kokand, who led a rebellion against the Chinese supremacy, as a spy. And therefore he was beheaded on 26 August 1857.[49] At the instigation of the Russian consul at Kashgar, Nicolai Fedorovitsch Petrovskij, and the Russian Geographical Society in 1888 a monument to his memory was erected near the site of Adolph Schlagintweit's murder; after some years it was destroyed by floods.[50]

With his name the foundation for the subsequent German dramatic mountaineer expeditions to the Nanga Parbat massif was laid, as well as for the accompanying scientific explorations of German and Austrian scholars of 1934, 1937, 1938 and 1939, and ultimately connected therewith the conquest of the peak in 1953 by the Tyrolian Hermann Buhl.[51] This outstanding mountaineer succeeded four years later in vanquishing another eight-thousander of the Karakorum, the Broad Peak (8051 m), for the first time in 1957. During this expedition he was reported missing after his attempt to conquer the neighbouring Mount Chogolisa.

3.1 Main routes across the Hindukush and Karakorum

This intermediate region, the Northern Areas, which can also be seen since early human history as more a part of Central Asia than of the Subcontinent, has always been accessible from Khotan through the Wakhan Corridor in Badakhshan over key passes like Khora Burt

48 Bauer 1955, 7–14. Kick 1967, 37–42 fig. 1–2. The lithographs show the mountain panorama on the right bank of the Shyok River south of the Karakorum Pass (9 August 1856), Saser Glacier between Rimo Mustagh and Saser Mustagh, Glacier in the Hushe Valley. For a description of the route used by the German Nanga Parbat expedition 1934, see: Finsterwalder et al. 1935, 131–132 with map p. 128 and Bauer 1955, map 1.

49 Schlagintweit 1859.

50 Kreutzmann 2015, 106–111.

51 Finsterwalder et al. 1935. Bauer 1955. After the failed attempt of Mummery in 1895 to climb the Nanga Parbat a renewed endeavour was started by a German-American team in 1932.

(4630 m), Baroghil (3804 m) and Darkot (4575 m) in the eastern Hindukush, or Irshad Uwin (4870 m) within the Koz group of the western or Little Karakorum.[52] The lowest mountain pass Baroghil, passable for pack animals during only eight months of the year, lies at the head of the Yarkhun and Turikho valleys, and the Darkot Pass is situated at the head of the Karumbar and Wurshigum valleys. This primary route, through the side-valleys of the Gilgit River such as the three main branches Ghizer and Yasin, Karumbar–Ishkoman, seems to have played an important role since prehistoric times. The carving of a 'mchodrten', a cross-like outline of a stupa, which is accompanied by a Tibetan inscription, found by Marc Aurel Stein south of the Darkot Pass, bear witness of the route's importance as a crossing between Wakhan and the Gilgit region during 8th century.[53] Lieutenant George G. Hayward, the first British pioneer of frontier exploration in this part of British India's border, explored all main passes across the mountain barrier to the basins of Oxus, Yarkand and Sarikol. He had seen as the most excellent route connecting Kashmir and the basin of Oxus that through the valleys of Gilgit and Yasin as the true road besides the route through the Chitral Valley.[54] This route with the passes at the head of the Karumbar and Yasin valleys is also in a tragic way connected with his name. During his second expedition in 1870, which should direct him from Gilgit to Badakshan, he and several of his companions were stoned to death at the instigation of Mir Walis, the chief of Yasin, near the village of Darkot.[55]

From the Yasin the Darkot Pass leads to the Baroghil Pass, the door to Wakhan. The route across the Khora Burt Pass to Little Pamir, the roof of the world, was traversed by Lieutenant (later Sir) Francis Younghusband, then Assistant Political Agent in Hunza, as the first European in 1891. It was described by Stein as "very difficult at all times and quite unpracticable for load-carrying men in the summer and early autumn, when the Karambar River completely fills its narrow rock-bound gorge".[56] But contrary to ancient road constructions such as those along the Upper Indus River Valley or in the Hunza Valley, all of these routes seem to have existed only as simple stony tracks. Another important commercial route leading from Chitral to Upper Badakshan, across the Dorah Pass (14,800 feet) (or Mandal Pass), was used

52 The route from Wakhan across the Darkot or Baroghil Pass to Yasin was described by Yule 1872, 462–463. See also: Gazetteer 1890; Curzon 1896, 61–62 and 2012, 173–176, 194–197; Stein 1916, 107–108; Longstaff 1920–1921, 158–159; Mason 1929a; Jettmar 1994; Rizvi 1999; Heichel 2003; Sen 2003, 169–176 map 4; Haines 2004; Dar 2006.

53 Stein 1928, 45–47, 1050–1051 fig. 48. Mock 2013.

54 Hayward 1871. This route was explored by the Yarkand Expedition of 1870 on behalf of the Royal Geographical Society: Ibrahim Khan 1871.

55 Drew 1871. The murder of Hayward, whose grave lies outside the Agency at Gilgit, is said to have been under instruction by his father-in-law, Aman-ul-Mulk of Chitral. There is more information in an eye-witness account given by Curzon 2012, 34–36.

56 Stein 1922, 119. His knowledge of the different pass routes in the eastern Hindukush apparently is more reliable than Tsuchiya 1999, 365–388, who regards the Khora Burt passage "as one of the easiest passes by which to cross the Pamirs". See also the description by Longstaff 1920–1921, 160–163.

between July and September by laden animals through the Kunar Valley (or the valleys of the Bashgul or Arnawai) to the rich valleys of eastern Badakshan. The road even offered a far more direct connection between India and the Oxus region. These northern passes provided during all periods both peaceful trader caravans and incursions of hostile forces difficult, but by no means insurmountable gateways from the crossroads through Badakshan to this part of historical India across the Eastern Hindukush and Karakorum. Therefore Chitral and Gilgit were of great importance for British India as watch-towers, when the valleys south of the mountain barrier might be safeguarded or controlled.[57] Traditional "mountain gates" in the northeast, open throughout the year to horses and camel caravans, such as the three main passes Kilik (4827 m) at the head of the Hunza River and Mintaka (4709 m) or the Khunjerab (4600 m) used nowadays, open the access across the watershed, both linking the northern arm of the Silk Route (Pamir plateau) from Kashgar, the most westerly oasis town in Chinese Turkestan, and the southern branch of the Silk Route from Khotan via Yarkand, Tashkurgan (T'sung Ling) and through the Kilik and Chapursan valleys into the Hunza gorge and down to the Gilgit plain.[58]

This track "was ever ascending and descending, the traveller having to scramble as best he can from crevice to crevice along the face of the precipices. Looked at from below, much of the way appears quite impassable for any creature, and is, indeed, in places difficult even for hill-men".[59] The cavalry Colonel Algernon Durand, from his first visit of the region, gave a vivid description of the communication situation: "When I first visited Gilgit, there was not a yard of what we should call a road in the whole region, and only one permanent bridge over the Chitral river at Chitral itself. Narrow paths, so narrow that often while the rider's boot on one side brushed the cliff, his outer foot overhung a precipice, followed the course of the streams. Often in the course of one short march the path ascends a thousand feet or more

57 Wylly 1912, 165–166.

58 Yule 1872, 463. The route from Yarkand across the Kilik Pass has been described "to be much the best for foot passengers": Trotter 1875, 165. See also: Gazetteer 1890, 369–370 (route no. 15). Skrine 1925, 231–234. Mason 1929a, 175–180 (route no. 87). Hill 2009, 502. Curzon 2012, 37–45, 51–76. In 1892–1893 Brigadier-General G.K. Cockerill was ordered to reconnoitre the main route and other byways leading from Hunza and Nagar to Sarikol and Tashkurgan in East Turkestan across the Khunjerab, Mintaka, Kilik, Wakhjir and Irshad (4880 m) passes (Cockerill 1922). A lively description of the route from Kashgar through Tashkurgan and across the Mintaka Pass to Hunza and Gilgit is given by Peter Fleming during his journey in 1935 from Peking to Kashmir (Fleming 1936 [1936], 335–383).

59 Knight 1893, 502. After the establishment of the Gilgit Agency by 1899 under Colonel Algernon Durand the northern route from Gilgit through Hunza to Chinese Turkestan, in 1892/93 explored by the mission of Colonel (Sir) William Lockhart's mission of 1886, followed by Brigadier-General Cockerill (Cockerill 1922) and in 1887 by Colonel Younghusband (Younghusband 1896, 186, 246–247; 1926; 1930) became of strategic interest for the British and was therefore expanded (Haines 2004, 552). Durand also bridged the Indus River at Bunji: "a passable road leads to Chilas, and the communications generally are improving" (Durand 1894, 687).

to avoid crossing some precipitous cliff, and the repeated ascents and descents render riding a weariness to the flesh. Frequently the path is carried across the face of a cliff on roughly constructed galleries, upheld by shaky timbers jammed into interstices in the rock".[60] But just this path through the Hunza Gorge as described both in the *Hanshu* and the *Hou Hanshu* seems to correspond to the 'Ji-bin route', which "starts in the south-west of Pi-shan, passes through Wu-cha, crosses the *xuandu* or "suspended crossings", passes through Ji-bin and then arrives in Wu-i-shan-li country after travelling for over 60 days" (Yong 1986, 213–214). The Hunza route with the Kilik Pass, the northern section of a 'Proto-Karakorum Highway',[61] has been one of the much followed two chief routes between Eastern Turkestan in two directions to Kashmir and into the lowlands of modern Pakistan.

The region around Hunza and Nagar is also located in the center of a network from where byways lead eastwards across the Shimshal Pass and through the Hispar Valley across the extended Hispar glacier to Askole and into the Shigar Valley in Baltistan.[62] This route seems to have been not very familiar, but Colonel Godwin-Austen in 1864 recorded raids across the Hispar Pass: "It was by this way that the Nagyr men used to come into the Braldoh and loot the villages; their raid was some twenty-four years since (i.e. about 1840), when a body of from seven hundred to eight hundred crossed over, and carried off about one hundred men and women, together with all the cows, sheep, and goats, they could collect".[63] Guard-towers securing the path leading to the village had been erected as a defence against raids by the Nagar people. The route from Hunza westwards leads along the long trough formed by the Chapursan Valley across the difficult Chillingi Pass at its head to the valley of Upper Karumbar with Ishkoman and then southwest across the Shandur Pass (3734 m) as far as Chitral.[64] The passage leading from Yarkand across the Aghil Range and through the Shaksgam Valley across the Shimshal Pass (and Mintaka Pass) to Hunza was for the first time explored by "the doyen of all Himalayan explorers", Sir Francis Edward Younghusband in 1889.[65]

Another important ancient route across the ice-capped Karakorum Range leading from Khotan and Yarkand to Baltistan had to traverse the old Muztagh Pass situated in the west of the K2 massif and to surmount branches of the Punmah and Baltoro glaciers. Along this track, described as a difficult and dangerous but a short alignment, the traveller could reach Shigar by passing Askole in the Broldu Valley leading into the Shigar Valley and Khaplu by following the road through the Hushe Valley [Table 4.1].[66] There are two passes, known as the new Western (5370 m) and the old Eastern Mustagh (5422 m) passes, known as some of

60 Durand 1894, 687.

61 Jettmar 1993c, 53.

62 Conway 1893a.

63 Godwin-Austen 1864, 29. Quoted and discussed also by Comway 1893a, 138.

64 Haughton 1913, 235–237. Cockerill 1922.

65 Younghusband 1896, 222–255. Younghusband 1926.

66 The Mustagh Route was described by Adolph von Schlagintweit in 1856: Schlagintweit 1875b, 1418. Gazetteer 1890, 435, 611–612 (route no. 65). Mason 1929a, 208–212 (routes no. 98/99).

the highest and most difficult in the Himalayas. This route is also a natural extension of the "Changthang Corridor" linking the fertile region around Rudok (Tibetan *Rut hog*) in Northern Tibet with Skardu.

"It is occasionally used by the Baltis (in the 19th century), who have a colony in Yarkand, and who traverse this pass when returning thence to their own country (in the Braldho Valley and Shigar)".[67] No European had crossed either of the two passes, but during their surveys of Baltistan Adolph Schlagintweit in 1856 and Colonel Godwin-Austen in 1862 reached the southern foot of the passes. Colonel Francis Younghusband ascending from Yarkand, at that time a centre of considerable trade between Turkestan and India, and after crossing the Aghil Range and the Shaksgam (Oprang) River, was the first European with a few 'native' companions to transcend successfully the old Mustagh Pass in 1887. In his description of this quite feasible way down to the first village Askole, which then comprised twenty dwellings, he points out the other pass, the new Mustagh Pass, "some ten miles further west along the range".[68] The group went down the valley of the Braldo River, until it joins the broad Shigar Valley to reach at least Skardu in Baltistan.

But, apparently, besides the more circuitous Karakorum Pass (5578 m) – traditionally the direct connection between Central Asia and India with the starting-point at Yarkand for caravans travelling to Kashmir – which was first crossed by Hermann and Robert Schlagintweit in 1856 – connecting Kashgar via Yarkand with Leh in Ladakh[69] the consolidated Hunza route was the most important one for trade connections with Central Asia.

On a Chinese map of Central Asia (Si-Yu) dating from 1758–1760 the two main routes around the Gobi and Aksu desert meeting in Kashgar indicate the southern Tsung'ling massif, here

67 Godwin-Austen 1864, 32. Trotter 1875, 12. See also Vigne 1844, vol. II, 283 mentioning this route "as one of the best ways to Yarkund", "much used by saudagurs, or merchants, in their journeys to and from Kashmir". Drew 1875, 37 mentions that between his two visits to Baltistan in 1863 and 1870 there had been no travel between Baltistan and Yarkand.

68 Younghusband 1896, 150–184; 1926 and 1930. Fifteen years later in 1902 the German A. C. F. Ferber (Ferber 1907) crossed again the Mustagh Pass. See also Vohra 1990 and Rizvi 1999, 16.

69 The march by the expedition of 1870 under T. D. Forsyth from Lahore and Jammu through Kashmir across the Zojla Pass to Leh as far as Yarkand took 69 days, "exclusive of halts": Henderson – Hume 1873, 11–12. For the different possible routes from Leh to the "bottleneck" of Karakorum Pass, see: Rizvi 1999, 28–31. The pass was open throughout the year and acted therefore as the main commercial route between Punjab and East Turkestan. Rocks with Arabic and Sogdian inscriptions and a few Nestorian crosses at Tangtse, just northwest of the Pangkong Lake mark the importance of this 'Ladakh Route'. They were first noted by the British missionary F. E. Shawe in 1906 and published by A. H. Francke: see Francke 1925. Sims-Williams 1993 refers to four rocks with 14 Sogdian inscriptions; inscription 2 yields "In the year 2010, (we), *Caitra* of Samarkand, together with the monk *Nōsh-farn*, (were) sent (as) messengers to the Qaghan of Tibet", apparently coming from East Turkestan. Vohra 1995 [+ 1994 most probably] and 1999.

equated with Bolor, which is to be identified with Baltistan.[70] It was the British army engineer Major-General Alexander Cunningham (1814–1893), later renowned as 'father of Indian archaeology', who threw the first light on the geographical term Bolor, which he equated with Xuanzang's Po-lu-lo. He erroneously narrowed this province to Balti or Little Tibet, the mountain chain extending for 300 miles from the source of the Gilgit and Yasin rivers to the source of the Nubra River. Adding the chain eastward to the source of the Shyok, altogether around 450 miles, the Bolor mountains would correspond with the Karakorum range: "The people of the neighbouring Dârdu districts on the Indus know the Balti only by the name of *Palolo*".[71] Marco Polo's *Belor*, occupied by "malicious idolaterish people" on the contrary, describes a wider area, which in 1272 he traversed on his way from Badakshan to Kashgar. But the Venetian merchant took on his way to Dunhuang, the southern branch of the Silk Route, passing through places like Yarkand, where in later centuries a community of Balti merchants lived. There he could easily have heard accounts of the region south of the Karakorum, the plain of Bolor, i.e. Baltistan. Throughout the Middle Ages Bolor (Bilaur) comprised a vast mountain country south of the Hindu Kush from the valleys of Kafiristan, Upper Chitral, Yasin, Gilgit, Hunza-Nagar as far as Baltistan.[72] Bolor is also known for being rich in gold, which until now is extracted from the sandy banks of the Upper Indus by the *soniwal* or *maruts*, the 'people of gold'.

Two ancient main routes connect Ladakh and Baltistan.[73] The "upper route" preferred by caravans, runs along the right bank of the Shyok River to Saling (Sagliṅ) and Khaplu and from there passes Kuru (Ku-ro), the small principality of Kiris (Kye-ris) and Nar with its fort, to Skardu or Shigar (Ši-dkar). Through the Nar Valley a track leads to Shigar, and along the Shyok the road goes to the Skardu Plain.

The arduous "lower route" *(yog-laṃ)* or Indus Valley Route from Kargil in the Suru Valley, running along the left bank of the Shingo Valley and along the Indus farther to Tolti and Parkuta (Mehdiabad) in the former kingdom of Kartaksho (Kharmang), has been detailed and lively described by the famous Lady Eleanor Louisa Montagu [Hervey] (1811–1903) in her "adventures of a lady",[74] who travelled there in 1851, and again by Cunningham, who felt the arduousness of his march in particular "when the waters of the river are much swollen by the

70 A first comprehensive discussion about the different localizations of Bolor since its first introduction during the Middle Ages and in Chinese maps of the 18th century was given by Yule 1872, 473–480; see also Curzon 1896, 247. The original Chinese map was redrawn by d'Anville in 1770 (Carte chinoise du Si-Yu ou Asie Centrale, 1758–1760, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris: Cartes et Plans, Rés GeD 25948) (information kindly provided by H. Kreutzmann. See: Kreutzmann 2015, 98–99 fig. 4).

71 Cunningham 1854, 34–35 and 1871, 83–84. [+ On *Belor* see Veniukof 1866].

72 Curzon 1896, 247.

73 The distance from Leh to Gilgit by this connection has been estimated by Knight 1893, 70, to cover "around 370 miles, or thirty-two marches".

74 + Not to be confused with an earlier and possibly more famous Lady Montagu (Lady Mary Wortley Montagu), whose letters from the Orient (*Turkish Embassy Letters* = Wortley Montagu, 1973 [1861]) are better known to the general public.

melted snow".[75] "It is the dullest, as well as one of the most arduous" routes from the Dras Valley to Skardu leading "either over steep slopes of stones that have fallen from the crags above, and which vary in size from a pebble to a railway-carriage, or else you are climbing over precipitous ridges, ('parris' as locally termed), some thousands of feet high and falling sheer to the river. These are usually crossed by means of 'galleries', that is to say, a sort of staircase of flagstones, and by no means stable ones at that, is conducted along the faxe of the precipices, supported on rough beams, which in their turn are held up by stakes stuck into any crevice in the rock that may be handy".[76]

3.2 Main routes between Kashmir and Gilgit

There have been different possibilities to travel from the Gilgit Valley to the region along the lower part of the Upper Indus between Shatial and Ges, by crossing the Gilgit chains downward into the side valleys of the Indus. The route upstream the Gilgit River leads through the Singul or Kar Gah with Shinghi Gah to the south into the fertile and well populated valleys of Tangir and Darel, as well as those of Khanbari, Hodar, Khinar and Ges. The route from Gilgit through the Kar Gah across the Chonchar Pass into the valleys of Darel and also of Khanbari has often been described as the only track passable for pack animals. This passage was also used by the Kashmir Durbar's troops during his campaign in autumn 1866 against the Shinaki republic of Darel, after the Dogra ruler of Kashmir had gained control of Gilgit in 1860–1866.[77]

There are two main routes leading from Kashmir to the Northern Areas with its centre Gilgit: The traditional 240-mile trek from Gurez (Gurais) in the upper Kishanganga Valley of the Kashmiri foreland traverses the two passes Tragbal (3640 m) and Burzil (4200 m), or via an alternative way across the Kamri Pass (4075 m) into the Astor Valley, and then leads down along the former Indus route to the modern bridge near Raikot in the Upper Indus Valley.[78]

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75 Lady Montagu published her travel account under her family name, after the marriage with Thomas Kebble Hervey († 1849): Hervey, 1853, 323–366. Cunningham 1854, 162. See also: Thomson 1852, 187–284. Knight 1893, 69–76. Adair 1899, 29–81. About the historical importance of the mentioned sites along this part of the 'Indus Valley Route' (after Arora 1940, 196–198), see also: Schuh 2008, 47, 407–454 [+ On this, see also Hakal 2021].

76 Adair 1899, 29–30. For another lively account of this arduous route through the most rugged part of the Upper Indus, see: Thomson 1852, 248–284), Meebold 1908, 298–307.

77 March 1876. Gazetteer 1890, route no. 13. Biddulph 1880, 14. Durand 1900, 272 (see also Dani 1998). Darel like the other communities at Hodar and Gor since 1860 paid tributes to Kashmir. [+ After "Chonchar" HH left a side note: "(??)"].

78 Gazetteer 1890, 247, 422 (routes no. 23, 68/69). Cockerill 1922, 99. Mason 1929a, 76–81 (routes no. 41 and 42). Arora 1940, 219–228. An expedition of the Royal Geographical Society in 1892 consisting of Sir W. M. Conway, O. Eckenstein, and the artist A. D. McCormick undertook geographical studies along the route between Srinagar and Gilgit, from Hunza-Nagar through the Hispar Valley to Arandu

It took 22 or 23 marches to cope with the distance of 380 km between Srinagar and Gilgit, and nine marches between Astor and Gilgit.[79] After passing the outlet of the Astor Valley, whose narrow and deeply carved out ravine is called *Shaitan Nala* or Devil's Gap, the track leads to the Partab Bridge, an ancient river-crossing; or from the other bridge-head Jaglot across Bunji routes lead through the valleys of Gor (present-day Gorabad) or Sai to the basin of Gilgit, thus bypassing the narrow gorges with its sun-scorched rocks and bleak mountains of the Upper Indus. The hardship for the traveller on this route was increased by the danger of crossing the river near Bunji. Sir George Scott Robertson (1852–1916), who succeeded cavalry Colonel Algernon Durand as British Agent in Gilgit in 1894, went through terrible misfortune during his travel from Srinagar to Gilgit. In August 1888 when crossing the Indus River, one of his boats sunk and most of the Astori coolies drowned.[80] After a wire-rope ferry had been established by Durand in 1891, the transports for supplying the British troops across were secured.[81]

This often described main communication line, the later consolidated "Gilgit Transport Road" or "Gilgit Military Road" of the Sikhs and Dogras, was of considerable strategic importance under British rule by the 1880s for connecting the Kashmir Vale, praised as the blessed

and Skardu. Conway 1893b, 290–291 describes this travel from Srinagar across the passes Tragbal and Burzil and traversing the Astor Valley to Bunji in 18 marches and after crossing the Indus reaching Gilgit through the Sai Valley in 4 marches. Part of this travel of ca. 240 miles between Srinagar and Gilgit is referred to by Eckenstein 1896. G. N. Curzon 2012, 18–31, conveyed a detailed itinerary of his ride in 1894 on the 'Gilgit Military Road'. Durand 1900, 14–43, 113 describes his march from Kashmir over the Kamri Pass (and Burzil Pass) on the same route up to Gilgit. See also: Curzon 1896, 17, who held the record of the travel between Gilgit and Srinagar in 6 days, and Haines 2004, 542–543. Knight 1893, 36–51, 88–97 also used the traditional Gilgit transport route from Kashmir to Gilgit by traversing the Burzil Pass. He described also the route from Leh across the Zoji La ('La' in Tibetan means 'pass') to Gilgit. For photos of O. Honigmann's travel of 1911 across the Burzil Pass in 1911 with a photo of the guesthouse; see: Appel 2010, 32–35 fig. 43. A lively description of the route and changing landscapes is given by Schomberg 1935, 16–18 and by Trevelyan 1987, 27–34 fig. 5–7, who travelled in 1927 with his family from Srinagar to Gilgit. E. O. Lorimer, the wife of Lieutenant-Colonel D. L. R. Lorimer, is owed a report of their ride in June 1934 along the same route (Lorimer 1939, 41–64). This traditional route was used also by the German Nanga Parbat expeditions since 1934, and in 1938 and 1939 the team was allowed to take the more comfortable route from Rawalpindi through the Kaghan Valley across the Babusar Pass to the formerly prohibited Diamer Region: Finsterwalder et al. 1935.

79 Knight 1893, 88 mastered the distance between Astor and Gilgit in six days. On his ride in 1935, Peter Fleming managed the distance between Gilgit and Srinagar in 8 days – the normal duration of the travel demanded up to 12 legs –, by traversing the route across the Burzil Pass: Fleming 1936 [1936], 383–391.

80 Robertson 1896, 38–40. Leaving Gilgit he used the traditional route along the rivers Gilgit and Ghizer across the Shandur Pass via Mastuj to Chitral (see map).

81 Durand 1894, 249. Colonel Algernon Durand was British Agent in Gilgit 1889–1894, military secretary to the Viceroy of India 1894–1899.

land of fabled beauty and eternal romance, from Srinagar via Astor with the British outpost Gilgit. The consolidation of the old track into a military road between Bandipur, which could also be reached from Srinagar by crossing the Wular Lake by boat, and Gilgit was started in 1890 and completed in 1893.

Before the new road was made "the difficulties of the journey to Gilgit were enormous, and men who had to carry loads to the distant garrison suffered heavily", and many perished on the passes or goat paths.[82] The journey to Gilgit before 1890 has been aptly compared with a journey to Siberia. After the road's completion, ponies could carry the supplies and the name Gilgit was "no longer a terror to the people of Kaśmīr". Lord Curzon of Kedlestone, the later viceroy of India, after his 229-long ride in 1894 from Srinagar to Gilgit gave a vivid description of the route through the Astor gorge to Bunji: "As regards the scenery of the road, its main characteristic is the almost total absence of horizontal lines. The track itself winds up and down, now along the roaring bed of snow-grey torrent, around 2000 feet above the yellow riband that humps faintly on the deep gorge below".[83] Until the middle of the 19th century the arterial route was exposed to continual raids by Shinaki tribesmen from Chilas, ill-famed as "the home of rascally cut-throats, whose raids and brutal murders were the curse of the border".[84] They reaped the ripe crops, lifted cattle, killed men, and enslaved women and their children. The robberies by the "dreadful freebooters" of Chilas were interrupted by the intervention of Maharaja Gulab Singh's Dogra troops with 10,000 men in 1851, which ended in the final destruction of the principal Bhot Fort at Chilas in 1855. After that Chilas had to acknowledge the suzerainty of Kashmir by providing hostages to Srinagar and paying a nominal tribute of five tolas of gold-dust and 100 goats. The final loss of its independence was concluded with the establishment of a garrison of British Imperial Service troops in Chilas in 1893, where the Chilas Fort was built by the 23rd Pioneers in 1894,[85] and finally with the installation of an Assistant Political Resident by the British Agency in Gilgit. As an outcome of these events the Chilasis had built up this until present persistent bad reputation as "raiders", "kidnappers", "robbers" and "slave-dealers". After his personal contacts to Chilas, Leitner on the other hand gained a divergent mental attitude against the Shinaki. Such reports pleaded for them as being "brave and by no means quarrelsome" and "since 1856 as a peaceable people".[86]

82 Lawrence 1895, 4, 246–247 with chart 3 showing the section of the Gilgit Road from Srinagar to Gilgit, "how to the north of the valley trade must toil up mountains after mountains". Lawrence 1909, 8. Hassnain 2002, 458–464 summarized the hardships of transportation supplies from Srinagar to the garrison at Gilgit after the subjugation by the Dogra Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1860.

83 Curzon 2012, 24

84 Vigne 1844, vol. II, 301. Biddulph 1880, 15–16; 1893, 343. Durand 1894, 690; 1900, 272.

85 Report on Chilas Fort of Lieutenant-Colonel C. H. Haswell, Kashmir Residency Office, File no. 3-C (1921). See also Curzon 2012, 239.

86 Leitner 1893, 78. A local saying characterizes the reputation of the Shinakis: "The shajtan was born in Thor Valley, grew up in Hodur [Hodar] and finally settled in Thak Nala".

Another connection from Kashmir to the Diamer Region around Chilas led through the Buner Valley to the Upper Indus or through the Niat Nala into the Thak Nala, which later formed the second direct connection of military importance between the Kaghan Valley and the Indus Valley Route leading along the southern bank of the River from Chilas to Raikot Bridge.

The link continued from Gilgit westward through Punial on both banks of the Gilgit Valley. Along the southern bank the old mule road from Gilgit led to Gupis with its British Fort, designated in 1829 as "the ultima Thule of India" or rather as the most northerly military post in Indian Empire.[87] From this strategically important post at the entrance to two valleys a mere track led through Ghizer Valley across the 3734 m (12,250 feet) high Shandur Pass to Chitral. This 220-mile long route between Gilgit and Chitral has been described as one of two main connections between Chitral and India, "across the Shandur Pass to the Gilgit Road and thence through Kashmir and the Jhelum Valley to the rail at Rawal Pindi".[88] The pass route was also crossed by the 32nd Pioneers from their headquarters at Bunji and Gilgit under Colonel Kelly in late March 1895 to join the Chitral Relief Expedition, the main force of the First Division, under Lieutenant-General Sir Robert Low, who advanced from Nowshera across the Malakand and Lowari passes.[89] The famous power game of Chitral State ended with the relief of the beleaguered town. From there another branch leads across the Lowari Pass to Dir and Peshawar. Until 1891 the Srinagar – Gilgit route of ca. 228 miles represented the only fair-weather path, before another main crossroad was opened through the Kaghan Valley in the Hazara country across the Babusar Pass.

The traditional route connecting Skardu with Kashmir, which was most frequented by travellers such as Buddhist pilgrims or by the explorer of the Chilasi language and traditions G. W. Leitner in 1886, by the British agent A. Durand in 1889, was also used in 1856 by Adolph Schlagintweit on his return from Baltistan across the Deosai Plateau and through the Astor Valley to Srinagar.[90] Schlagintweit's famous watercolour painting exposing the south side of the Nanga Parbat panorama as seen by him from the east, from the pass route between the Gurikot and Rupal valleys, conveys the whole magic of the peak with its glaciers bathed in the glow of the early autumn morning light.[91] The romantic effect of the mountain scenery

87 Captain H. C. Marsh gave a lively description of the Gilgit Valley up to Gakuch near the Frontier to Yasin: Marsh 1876, especially p. 136.

88 Willy 1912, 185: "The other main road from Chitral to India, over the Lowari Pass, through Dir and Swat, and across the Malakand to railhead at Dargai".

89 Colonel Kelly, at that time in military command at the Gilgit Agency, controlled an area from Astor to Chitral. A report of the Chitral Campaign is given by Thomson 1895 and Wylly 1912, 162–164, 201–210.

90 The route from Skardu across the Deosai Plain to Srinagar was taken by O. Eckenstein on his return with the expedition of the Royal Geographical Society in 1891 (Eckenstein 1896, 217–240.

91 The first publication of the watercolour, painted by Adolf von Schlagintweit between 15–19 September 1856 is found in: Finsterwalder et al. 1935, 64 with frontispiece. The original view, which

is enhanced by the wild goat (Markhor, *Capra falconeri*), which is inserted in the centre of the painting as staffage. This "true monarch of the mountains" on his way back from Gilgit to Srinagar both in 1889 and again in 1891 was described by Sir Francis Younghusband when seeing it at sunset as "a pearly island rising from an ocean of ruddy light" and when seeing it in moonlight as an experience that "rivalled the Taj Mahal".[92] Praise of Nanga Parbat has been put into verse: "King amidst kingly mountains, Monarch o'er snowy heights, Girdled with glacial fountains, Fenced by avalanche might, Battlements towering skywards, Pinnacles glistening bright, Who shall dispute, Dyamir. The Crown that's thine by right?".[93] Lord Curzon of Kedlestone, who travelled in 1894, also was enthused by "the monarch among the loftier summits, and the sight of his imperial form, as seen from the Indus Valley at Bunji is one of the glories of Kashmir.[94] The first view of the "Dayamur", the Nanga Parbat, as seen from Harpo La, is owed to Alexander Cunningham, who travelled in 1847 through the Astor Valley.[95] This grandest mountain in the world has attracted many mountaineer expeditions, which however failed in conquering its towering dome of ice. One of the experienced mountaineers of his time, Albert F. Mummery (1855–1895), was the first to attack the mountain in August 1895.[96] During his bold ascent from the Diamer flank he and the two accompanying Ghurka disappeared without a trace, perhaps buried by avalanches. This military Gilgit route following Schlagintweit's trail was also used by the German Nanga Parbat expeditions since the first attempt to climb the peak in 1934, which resulted in a tragedy.

Kashmir is connected with Leh by the Zoj La Pass,[97] the gateway to Ladakh. It leads through Leh across the Karakorum Pass to Khotan, the most frequented oasis by Indian merchants in Eastern Turkestan. From Ladakh the main western route is opened by the Zoj La (or Dras) Pass to the route via Dras into the Barwai Valley and after traversing the Deosai Plateau into the Satpara Valley down to Skardu or via Kargil along the Indus River into the central basin of Baltistan. The vast tableland of Deosai with an elevation above 4000 m is bordered by the Indus River in the north, the Astor in the west and four rivers in the south, all tributaries of the Indus. It can be traversed only in summer time. Yet, because of its inhabitable stormy wasteland, the Deosai Plateau is called 'Devil's Plains'. The Deosai plains consist of Bara (big)

seems to be lost since 1856 at least, is also depicted by Kick 1967, 37–42 fig. 4, Kick (ed.) 1996 [?], 15 fig. 4, and Nüsser 2015, 331–333 fig. 11 (with a discussion about the idealized mountain scenery). The eldest known view of the "Dayamur" of 1846 as seen from the Astor Valley goes back to R. H. Bates (Cunningham 1854, 44 pl. 2.).

92 Younghusband 1896, 188, 254, 300. A earlier lively description of the "stupendous peak Diarmul" Nanga Parbat is owed to Vigne 1844, vol. II, 204.

93 After Arora 1940, 3.

94 Curzon 2012, 25.

95 Cunningham 1854, 44 pl. 2.

96 Bruce 1931. An appreciation of Mummery's attack on Nanga Parbat is owed to Bauer 1955, 15–24 pl. 7 and 11.

97 Lawrence 1909, 9–10: From Srinagar to Leh is 243 miles.

Deosai, which measures 20 miles from east to west and 15 miles north to south, and of Chota (small) Deosai. Bara Deosai is entered from the east by the track along the Satpara Lake and through the Ali Malik Mar Pass and slopes into the Astor Valley to the west through the Chachur Pass (4266 m) by Lake Sheosai. A trail branches off the main route to the south across Chota (Chuni) Deosai by the Burzil Pass leading to Lake Wular in Kashmir.

From the southwestern end of the Skardu Basin the ancient paths follow the course of the Indus down to the plain around the confluence of the river with the Gilgit River and to the river crossing at Alam Bridge; the area has been described "as very difficult and dangerous in many places". Even in its upper stretch connecting Kachura with Rondu, the site with a raja fort, there exists no horse-path.[98] In lieu of this road from Kachura with its two natural lakes embedded in a dramatic mountain landscape, an ancient road leads across the Banmok La pass to Astor, where it joins with the Kashmir-Gilgit route.[99]

Gilgit, situated in the centre of the most mountainous region of the Himalayas and a place of great strategical importance, has always served as the "gate(way) to India". The place itself, planted in a fertile oasis, has been described as "a far-flung, disaster-prone and run-down outpost of the Maharajas of Kashmir".[100] It has always been the point from which connection with or control over neighbouring political entities and tribes south of the great ranges could be maintained. Due to its location in the basin at the junction of the tributaries Hunza and Gilgit and about thirty miles away from the main valley of the Indus River, into which the Gilgit River flows, the site of Gilgit from its central position could control or coerce the tribes in the southern independent communities of Kohistan and Yaghistan. Lord Curzon of Kedlestone, who in 1894 undertook a 1200-mile trek through the Indian Frontier region from Kashmir to the Pamirs, called the Dard tribal areas an "outlaw-land, where for hundreds of years, either in the main valley of the Indus or in the lateral ravines, lawless and savage communities have retained an independent existence, a scourge to each other and a terror to their neighbours".[101]

As a main crossing point in this road network (in which six of the nine passes lay within a week's march to reach Central Asia from historical India), this township connects Ladakh and Kashmir with the west and Central Asia with India. "From Gilgit, mountain roads radiate into all the surrounding valleys, and it is easy to see how favourable is its position for the establishment of the head-quarters of a confederacy of small States".[102]

Along the valleys of Gilgit and Ghizer the main transit route leads over the Shandur Pass (3734 m) to Chitral and from there across the Lowaral Pass to the territory of ancient Gandhara with its capital Gandhavati (Puṣkalāvatī or Puṣkarāvatī in Sanskrit), named Peukelaotis (Arr.

98 Vigne 1844, vol. II, 304–305. Knight 1893, 83 described the route along the Indus as "perhaps the worst in Kashmir".

99 Knight 1893, 83–85.

100 Keay 1979, 2.

101 Curzon 2012, 14.

102 Gazetteer 1890, 329.

Anab. IV,7), Peukolaitis or Peukelas by Greek authors, and Proklaïs after Claudius Ptolemaeus.[103] The site is situated at Charsadda on the eastern bank of the lower Swat River, near its confluence with the Kabul River. This kingdom was absorbed by the Achaemenid Empire during the reign of Kyros the Great (559–530 BC) and incorporated by Dareios I (522–486 BC) as its seventh satrapy Gadara. It comprises a region bordered by the Hindukush, and the rivers Kabul and Indus. From the plains around Charsadda (Puṣkalāvatī), Peshawar (Puruṣapura) and Taxila (in Sanskrit Takṣaśilā), described by Arrian (Arr. *Anab.* V 8) as most wealthy and populous that lay between Indus and Hydaspes, close ties were maintained with ancient Bactria (Baxtrish) and Sogdia (Suguda) to the northwest of the Hindukush chains and thus also with the widespread Silk Road system of Central Asia.[104]

3.3 Routes from Chilas to the southern plains

From Chilas in the Diamer District, the third focal point of the Northern Areas, a key route to Mansehra in Hazara leads through the Thak Nala to the Babusar Pass (4173 m), which is situated at a distance of 35 km from the river crossing descending to Thalpan and the Khiner Gah. From the top of the pass, where the territorial borders of Chilas, Hazara and Kashmir meet, the track follows the Kaghan Valley to the south.[105]

Opened in 1892, the road thus forms the second strategic linkage apart from the "Gilgit Transport Road" from the Upper Indus to Kashmir and farther to the southern plains. Algernon George Arnold ("Algy") Durand, the brother of Mortimer Durand – whose name has the evil reputation of drawing up the fatal border between Afghanistan and British-India – who had

103 McCrindle 1876–877, 184–185; 1901, 115–117. Curzon 2012, 217–229 gave a detailed description of his travel with Younghusband in 1894 from Chitral Fort across Shandur Pass to Gilgit, passing Gupis Fort and the little state of Punial with Gupis Fort and Cher Kala. For the route from Gilgit and Yasin to Ghizer across Mastuj Pass to Chitral, see Yule 1872, 463. The main route from Chitral across the Shandur Pass to the Gilgit road is described by Anonymous 1895, whom after his arduous travel "Gilgit seemed to us a garden of Eden"; it is also mentioned by Wylly 1912, 185 map no. 5. See also Thomson 1895, 116–155.

104 + On the Achaemenid satrapies of the East see Henkelmann 2017, Callieri 2023, and Petrie 2020. On Kaspapyros / Charsadda see Pirozzi 2017.

105 The importance of the Kaghan Valley route in Hazara for the connection of Taxila or nowadays Rawalpindi and Abottabad with Gilgit via Chilas as "sheet anchor" in the "Shinaki country" has been often noted: Biddulph 1893, 15: "from Khaghan in the Hazara country by the Babusar pass to the Indus (Chilas) in seven days, and from Shardi in the Kishenganga valley by the Shoto pass in five days". Normal travel on horseback from Rawalpindi to Gilgit required 23 stages (165 miles). This road as the second main access to Gilgit was opened in 1892, route 37 after Mason 1929a, 66–68. For the former connections, see Gazetteer 1890, routes 1–3 and 11. Thomson 1895, 115–116; Curzon 1896, 18; Durand 1900, 290; Schomberg 1935, 20; Arora 1940, 228–230; Alder 1963, 257–261; Hamid 1979, 163; Haines 2004, 553–554. For a comprehensive overview of the Kaghan Valley, see: Grötzbach 1989.

subdued the mountain states Hunza and Nagar, thus pushing British rule forward to the mountain ridge of Hindukush and Karakorum against Zaristic expansions and also the Shinaki republic of Chilas, forced the opening of this route. Indeed, he believed that it would be the most direct connection between British India and Gilgit, thus being freed of the dependence upon "devious Kashmir officials" and the "inefficiencies of the Srinagar commissariat".[106] The road cuts the distance from Gilgit to the railhead at Hasanabdal and Rawalpindi by almost one-third, and made it possible to order the support of a battalion of regular Sikhs straight from their barracks in Punjab instead of waiting months for half-trained Dogras. This road along the Kunhar River by Kaghan through the wider Thak Gah or the track through the Buto Gah has been described also as the easiest access from the south to Chilas, but is only passable for a short period of three to four months in the year.[107] The Kaghan-Babusar route was also secured by the construction of police stations and rest houses, whose ruins at Besal and Gittidas give evidence of the former busy traffic. In one of the early, more detailed accounts of his ride through the Thak Nala, across the Babusar Pass through the Kaghan Valley to Abottabat, Curzon emphasized that "this route is likely more and more in the future to constitute a line of communication between our outposts in the Hindu Kush and the military bases of British India", "one of the main highroads of communication from India to the Pamirs".[108] The track through the more comfortable Buto Gah, which joins the Kaghan Route at ca. 500 m below the Babusar Pass at an elevation of 3602 m, thus avoiding the steep access to the mountain peak, seems to have been preferred by early travellers and caravans to reach Hazara and the eastern centre of Gandhara, Taxila. There, the southern branch of the Silk Route meets the legendary 'Grand Trunk Road' (GT Road), the present Sarak-i-Azam, which at a distance of 2400 km (1500 miles) connected Peshawar with Calcutta.[109] The place is marked by the Sarai Kala, a Mughal caravan serai of the 16th century. The alignment of the G. T. Road corresponds to ancient routes of mercantile importance, the *Uttarapatha*, the Grand Northern Route, which connected Central Asia with East India as far as the Gulf of Benghal. Starting from the Mauryan capital Pātaliputra (Patna) on the Ganges River, it traversed northern India by Mathura on the Jumna, Sāgala (Sialkot), by the two Gandharan centres Taxila and

106 Keay 1979, 229. For the connection between Chilas and Gilgit via the Indus Valley (85 miles), see: route 38 after Mason 1929a, 69–71.

107 Curzon 2012, 231–241 and 243–251 again is owed a detailed account of his ride in October 1894 from Gilgit (with stages at Ramghat, Bunji, Jalipur (Jelliper) and Bunar) to Chilas, referring to the occupation of the village and its fort. The new Chilas Fort he found garrisoned by 400 Kashmiri Imperial Service troops under two British officers. From Chilas he crossed the Babusar Pass, where on its top he observed "four or five stone cairns" still standing today; he reached Abbottabad through the Kaghan Valley after 169 miles. Leitner 1893, 79; Thomson 1895, 116. Practicable for ponies between 1 July and 31 October: Arora 1940, 228–230. Grötzbach 1989, 1.

108 Curzon 2012, 243–251.

109 Dar 1994 and 2006, 37, 63–64, 78 [+ Dar 1999].

Gandhavati-Puṣkalāvatī to Puruṣapura (Peshawar), and from there to Alexandreia-Kapisa as far as Bactra (Balkh).

The route was not only the arterial road for mercantile exchange from India to Bactria as far as the Aegean with Seleukeia as nerve centre, but also the track for the armies of Achaemenid kings as well as of Alexander's Macedonians on his march to Taxila, and further Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, the Mughals and the British. Near Taxila, on the Tarnol or Margalla Pass of the GT Road, stands the Nicholson Tower, built in honour of General Nicholson, who was wounded there during the First Anglo-Sikh War 1845–1846.

Located north of Taxila is Mansehra, which occupies the connection point from where roads lead to the Indus Route, to Chilas, to Swat or to Kashmir. The strategic importance of this place is marked by the famous edicts of the Mauryan emperor Aśoka (268–240 BC), inscribed in Kharoṣṭhī on three rocks at the southern outskirts of the city.[110] The emperor, who called himself Devānāṃ Piyadassi (in Sanskrit Devānāṃ Priyadarśin), was the third king of his dynasty, which was established by Candragupta between 321 and 317 BC after the short episode of Alexander's invasion in Northern India in 327–326 BC. Aśoka, who left behind 14 big rock edicts on the Indian subcontinent and another in Pakistan at Shahbazgarhi in the Mardan District, followed an Achaemenid tradition of the Great King, namely of engraving royal records on rock façades, as for example in Persepolis, Naqš-i Rustam, Bisutun, Susa and Van Kale. The ancient path at the entrance to the gorge of the Buto Gah is accompanied by prehistoric rock carvings, Buddhist inscriptions and stupa images, showing the importance of this earlier main route. Other southern side valleys of the Indus River were also used as connecting passages, such as the Thor Nala, which could be used from the south as a route either to Babusar or across Sapat maidan to reach Jalkot in the lower part of the river valley. From Besham then there is access to the pathway across the Shangla Pass to Swat.

One of the main routes connecting Hazara with the upper Indus region is the ancient "Indus Valley Road", the forerunner of the Karakorum Highway (KKH), as described in 1890. Starting from Thakot [Besham] in the south, the gateway to the KKH, the route follows the Indus with different river crossings up to Sazin in Kohistan, there again crossing the torrent, and from Shatial following the right river bank via Dudishal, Hodar, Thalpan and further continuing to Ges, Darang, Gor to Talish and Bunji, and from there traverses the Sai Valley to Gilgit.[111]

At Shatial, some 3½ miles away from Sazin, where the Darel Stream joins the Indus, there existed a bridge, and 4 ½ miles farther on the right bank from a place which is still marked by

110 Discovered in 1889 by a member of the Archaeological Survey of India, first published by Èmile Senart 1888a, 1888b; Bühler 1889, 1890; for the description of the site, see: Falk 2006, 127–129. The other Aśoka edict, the primary source for deciphering Kharoṣṭhī, was the inscription on two rocks close to the village Kapurdigarhi (Garhi Kapura) near Shahbazgarhi in the Peshawar Valley; it is known since 1836: Falk 2006, 132–135.

111 A detailed description of the 'Indus Valley Route' is given in: Gazetteer 1890, route 1 and 11. See also Durand 1900, map to face p. 136.

ruins of a British post, a raft carried travellers to Harban on the opposite side. Between Shatial and Chilas an ancient route also followed the course of the river on its left bank, whereas contrarily the track from Chilas upstream to Bunji was described as "difficult and almost impassable even for men on foot", that is until Colonel Kelly with his pioneers during the late 1890ies engaged in road-making between these two important places for the British.[112] The track leading from Chilas through the Buto Gah according to the great number of prehistoric but also of Buddhist images carved on boulders and rock faces accompanying the ancient path seems to have been more practicable in earlier times than the road through the Thak Nala.[113] The long and dense succession of petroglyphs which line the ancient routes on both banks of the Upper Indus River, starting at Shatial, mark "a sort of proto-Karakorum Highway",[114] leading to the east as far as Raikot Bridge and from there to the confluence of the Indus with the Gilgit River and its branches to Baltistan and the Karakorum passes.

4 Routes of Conquerors, Merchants, and Pilgrims

A reconstruction of the early history of this region – where in later centuries "the empires were to meet" – is rendered more difficult by the lack of an indigenous historical tradition based on written documents. Reliable Chinese sources dating from the Han Dynasty (Western Han from 206 BC to 9 AD and Eastern Han from 25 to 220 AD) tell of the nomadic Ta Yüeh-chih, the "Great Children of the Moon". The first known Chinese travellers to the Western Regions *(xiyu)* were Zhiang Qian from the early Han Dynasty and Gan Ying from the late Han Dynasty. The report of the imperial envoy Zhang Qian, an officer of the palace guard, who was sent "in the third year of the Quianyuan era of the reign of Emperor Wudi" to contact the heads of Central Asian tribes such as the Ta Yüeh-chih around 139–138 BC for the first time refers to historical developments in Central Asia, which also affected the high mountain region of historical northwest India. They were expelled from the steppes of Northwest China by continual migrations of other nomadic groups caused by the rise of the Xiongnu kingdom, and thus turned from Gansu to the south where they invaded Bactria and after crossing the Oxus they settled in a huge territory. Zhang Qian's diplomatic mission to the Western Regions *(xiyu)* had the aim to win the Yüeh-chih over to an alliance against the fierce Xiongnu nomads. However, instead he and his escort were imprisoned for ten years by them. After several years Zhang Qian reached the final destination, the homeland of the Yüeh-chih, the trans-Pamir regions in the Ferghana as far as the Upper Amu Darya. While

112 Biddulph 1880, 15. "The worst road is to Bunji, which is dangerous and often impracticable in many places": Gazetteer 1890, route 2, p. 6 and route 11, p. 39. About the road-construction between Bunji and Chilas by the 32nd Pioneers under Lieutenant-Colonel Kelly in 1895, see: Wylly 1912, 194, 201.

113 Dani 1983a, 9–10.

114 Definition coined by Jettmar 1980c, 186.

the aim of his mission failed, Zhang travelled almost to the outskirts of the Hellenic world, returning thirteen years later in 126 BC to the court, bringing back lively descriptions of the hitherto unknown western countries of Bactria, Anxi (Parthian Persia) and Ferghana. The land between the river was praised for their vineyards and rich fortified towns, where there were bred the fabled "celestial horses that sweated blood". He is considered as the first protagonist of opening the later Silk Routes for Chinese imperial interests. The importance of his diplomatic mission for the imperial court is also evident from the scene of a mural in the cave temples of Mogao, showing the emperor Wudi dispatching his emissary to the Western Regions.[115]

There may have been earlier contacts between China and the west, but Zhang Qian's mission is the first diplomatic mission that is historically recorded. Since prehistoric times these routes were part of a far-reaching communication system. The address by the councillor Du Qin (Tu Ch'in) to the supreme general Wang Feng, the all-powerful uncle of Emperor Ch'eng (ruled 51–7 BC), was given about 25 BC (from Hanshu 96A), concerning envoys travelling between China and Chi-pin (pinyin: Jibin). It refers to Kapiśa, at that time a state centred in the region of modern Begram. The address gives an account of the journey's hardships across the mountain pass and represents for the first time a reference to high altitude illness. This tale even found its way into medical literature and described as acute mountain sickness (AMS), which usually develops above the height of 2500 m:[116] "In addition, they (the envoys) pass over the ranges (known as the hills of the) Greater and Lesser Headache, and the slopes of the Red Earth and the Fever of the Body. These cause a man to suffer fever, he has no colour, his head aches and he vomits; asses and stock animals all suffer in this way. Furthermore, there are Three Pools and the Great Rock Slopes, with a path that is a foot and six or seven inches wide (i.e. less than 40 cm wide – these high narrow paths still exist in places and are now known as *rafiqs*), but lead forward for a length of thirty li (almost 12 and a half kilometres) overlooking a precipice, whose depth is unfathomed. Travellers passing on horse or foot hold on to one another and pull each other along with ropes, and only after a journey of more than two thousand li (832 km) do they reach the Suspended Crossing [which I have identified as being in Upper Hunza, in what is now northern Pakistan]. When animals fall, before they have dropped half-way down the chasm they are shattered in pieces, and when men fall, the situation is such that they are unable to rescue one another. The danger of these precipices beggars description".

Later Chinese sources relating to the period of the Chinese-Tibetan conflicts during the 7th and 8th century AD present more details concerning the local principalities in the southwest of the mountain ranges bordering the Tarim Basin and also remark on the dangerous paths leading through these mountains. An important addition to these sources are the accounts of Chinese and Korean pilgrims, who during the first millennium set out for their long and strenuous way to India, the land where Buddha had lived and taught. It was also the home of the most sacred Buddhist pilgrimage sites and monasteries with the sacred books written in Indian. They had to be studied and translated into Chinese.

115 Cave 323, High T'ang Dynasty: Whitfield – Whitfield – Agnew 2000, 11 with figs.

116 Hulsewé 1979, 110–111. My thanks to John Hill for his kind reference to this chapter.

With the emergence of states such as the empire of "the Great Kushans" the former trails of migrations were transformed into trade routes, and used by diplomats, missionaries and pilgrims as well. The shortcut through the mountains became most important for the diffusion of Buddhism in Central and East Asia. Such communications brought material gains (new ideas) into the mountain valleys along the main roads, and incited outsiders to participate in this boom, by conquering the area where roads crossed.

The record *Shiji* (chapter 123, the memoir on Ta Yüan) and the later *Han Shu* (Book of Han: chapter 61, the biography of special individuals and chapter 96A and B, the monograph on the Western Region), a chronicle of the former or western Han Dynasty, provide the first sources mentioning the legendary "Silk Road". Its origin lies in the account of the Chinese envoy Zhang Qian, the "pioneer of the Silk Road", who was sent in ca. 139 BC by the Chinese emperor Wudi to the Western Regions to negotiate with the Great Yüeh-chih for an alliance against the Xiongnu.[117] The name Zhang Qian appears in three Chinese inscriptions along the Upper Indus, at Thalpan and Chilas-Jayach and. It is first of all a personal name as the mentioned Zhang Ziqiu in an inscription of Thak Nala, but "it cannot be completely ruled out, however, that somebody wanted to remember Zhang Qian" – the famous explorer of the Silk Road.[118]

The "Description of the Western Regions" (chapter 118) of the *Hou Han Shu*, the History of the Later Han, represents another valuable source about the development of the communication network and the Chinese diplomatic and economic drive to Central Asia. The chronicle, covering the period between 25 and 221 AD, was compiled by Fan Yej († 446 AD) and is based on a record delivered by general Ban Yong to the Chinese emperor.[119]

The main motif for the Chinese expansion into the Western Regions has found different interpretations. Sir Aurel Stein proposed an economic reason as the need to find new markets for the export of Chinese silk.[120]

A similar motivation was seen by other historians, as the conflict of the Han Dynasty with the Xiongnu about the control of the trade routes with the west. On the contrary, a more political and strategical factor seems to have been decisive for the Chinese view of Central Asia with the aim to restrain the Xiongnu influence from the oases as far as the Gansu Corridor and to repel them beyond the Gobi Desert. The attainment of commercial control over trade routes was of secondary importance, but apparently another element of the Chinese diplomacy, i.e. the desire for the 'celestial' or 'heavenly horses', as narrated by Zhang had a role in the whole story.[121]

The term *Seidenstrasse* ("Great Silk Road"), synonymous for a complex network connecting central China through Samarkand at its centre with the Eastern Mediterranean shores, was

117 Hulsewé 1979, 24–39. Hill 2003. See also Tsuchiya 1999, 353. Jettmar 2002, 174.

118 Höllmann 1996, 428–429 footnote 9.

119 Hill 2009.

120 Stein 1921, 406.

121 + Benjamin 2018. See Falk ed. 2015, Source 003 (and 018).

coined in 1877 by the Prussian Baron Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen (1833–1905), one of the great founders of geography as a modern scholarly discipline. Referring to the description of the overland route by Marinus of Tyre, he introduced the plural form *Seidenstrassen*, because the caravans did not follow just one single track, but "a widely branching and ancient transcontinental network of transportation and communication".[122] Nonetheless, the term and importance of the fabled "Silk Roads" or "Silk Routes" did not become known to the western world until the adventurous journeys of Sven Hedin, a student of von Richthofen in Berlin and Aurel Stein. The Silk Road begins at the imperial capital Chang'an (modern Xi'an in the Shaanxi province), proceeds northwest through the so-called Hexi or Gansu Corridor to the oasis town of Dunhuang (which means 'blazing beacon') in the Gobi Desert. The Hexi Corridor forms the initial stretch from the Chinese heartland on the western frontier of China with its modern-day Gansu Province and the Nigxia Hui Autonomous Region. After passing the famous Jade Gate, *Yu-men-kuan*, the road divides into two main branches which circumvent the sands of the Taklamakan desert, a no-man's land between the great civilizations China and Central Asia with the neighbouring cultures of Iran, Mesopotamia and the Eastern Mediterranean. The desert's deadly perils have been emphatically described by early Chinese pilgrims and by courageous Western merchants and explorers.

The northern trail leads across the desert towards Hami. Then hugging the foothills of the T'ien Shan, where irrigation from glacier-fed streams such as the Tarim River enabled human habitation, it follows the line of the oases, which were threaded like a string of pearls along the northern outskirts of the Taklamakan, passing through Turfan, Karashahir, Kuča, Aksu, Tumchuq to reach the trading centre of Kashgar. The southern route followed the track between the northern barrier of Tibet and the desert's end, passing the oases of Miran, Endere, Niya, Keriya, Khotan as far as Yarkand. Both caravan routes are reunited in Kashgar by a connection around the western outskirts of the Taklamakan. From the caravan centre the Silk Road continued westwards, starting with a long and perilous ascent of the High Pamir, here leaving Chinese territory behind, continuing via Khokand, Samarkand, Bokhara, Merv through Persia and Iraq, to the Mediterranean coast.[123] Yarkand at the end of the southern route is also the starting-point for caravans travelling to Balkh in present-day North Afghanistan, or crossing the hazardous Karakorum passes, the gates of India. The most eastern Karakorum Pass leads via Leh to Kashmir or to India, the Kilik or Mintaka passes through Hunza or the Baroghil Pass to the "Gate of India" important Upper Indus routes.

The great network of trade routes which connected China with the Mediterranean world and all lands between these two corner points of Eurasia at an extension of more than 7000 kilometers came to life since the emergence of the Achaemenid Empire and the expansion of the Greek-Roman world to the east. The catalogue of entries of Han Shu (chapter 96A) provides

122 Parzinger 2007, 7.

123 For an overview of the trade routes in Eastern Turkestan between the downfall of the Mongolian Empire (14th century) and the arrival of Portuguese missionaries (17th century), see: Hayakawa 2015.

information about the existence of two routes leading around the Taklamakan desert to the Western Territories and of the communities, states and tribes settled along them. The entries in chapter 96 also contain references to five states of the Western Regions lying beyond the western end of the Northern and Southern Routes, noting their distance to the Han capital Ch'ang-an: Chi-pin, Wu-i-shan-li, Anhsi, Ta Yüeh-chih and K'ang Chü were not subject to Han authority of the protector general (this post was established in 59 BC), because of their "long distance beyond the range of Han troops".[124]

Through the celebrated astronomer and geographer Claudius Ptolemaeus (from Ptolemais in Egypt, 150 AD) an elder, now lost itinerary by the Roman geographer Marinos of Tyros was known, in which a western merchant expedition to the remote country of Serica (China) was recorded.[125] The agents of the Macedonian merchant Maës Titianos in the first half of the 1st century of our era travelled from Syria through the Parthian Empire and Baktra to the important centre of the Sogdiana at Marakanda (Samarkand) and from there along the Pamir route to a place called the Stone Tower (πύργος λιθικός, *turris lapidae* after Ptol. *Geog.* I, 298). This fort has been placed in the state of Hsiu-hsun, described in the list of western territories, chapter 96A of Han-shu, at sites such as in the Alai Valley or even Tashkurgan in Xinjiang.[126] This place seems to have been one of the most important stages on the trade route between Bactra and the land of the Seres. The account was a first glance beyond the Stone Tower and at the wide region between Pamir and Emodus (Himalaya) and formed the imagination of the immense extension of Asia to the far east, thus eliminating the idea of a universal surrounding ocean.

The southern branch of the "Silk Road" led from Guma (Pishan) in the Tarim Basin (west of the famous trade centre Khotan), through Yarkand, Tashkurgan (Wu-ch'a) and Langar across the south-western mountain chain of the Hindukush and Karakorum to *Nandou* and to a kingdom called *Ji-bin* (Chi-pin). As described both in Hu Han Shu and Han Shu, the Ji-bin Country is reached from Pishan, between Kargalik and Khotan, from where the so-called Jib-in Route branches of the southern route of the Silk Road to the southwest. Before the T'ang period (618–907 AD) this route was the most frequently used connection among

124 Hulsewé 1979, 54–55. The state of Wu-i-Shan-li adjoins Chi-pin in the east and seems to be a transliteration of Alexandria ἡ εν Ἀρίοις, i.e. Herat (*ibid.*, 112–115). The state of An-his with its capital Fan-tou or Po-tou corresponds with Parthia (*ibid.*, 115–118). The Central Asian states of the Ta Yüeh-chih, a land of nomads, is situated in Badakhshan (*ibid.*, 109–123), and of the K'ang Chü, the Stone Country, is located in Samarkand (*ibid.*, 123–131).

125 Ptol. *Geog.* I, 11, 6. McCrindle 1901, 12–13 footnote 9, 18–19 footnote 16. Herrmann 1910, 19 [+ ? HH notes include also Herrmann 1922]. The state of Wu-Ch'a adjoins Nandou in the west and was located in Badakhshan, in Sarikol south of Yarkand or in Tashkurgan (Hulsewé 1979, 98).

126 Stein 1933, 47, 126–132 referred to a place near the village of Chat in the Alai Valley at the route leading to Irkeštam at the Sino-Russian border. See also Herrmann 1938, 103 and following pages. Summarized by Hulsewé 1979, 138 footnote 355.

all other linking roads between China and India, because it enabled direct access from the southern Pamir region to Kashmir and Uḍḍiyāna, i.e. Swat.

"One starts in the south-west of Pishan, passes through Wu-cha, crosses the Suspended Crossing, passes through Ji-bin and then arrives in Wu-i-shan-li Country after travelling for over 60 days" (as recorded by Xiyu Zhuan in Hu Han Shu: Yong 152). The same direction of the route is recorded by Du Qin's account under the heading "Ji-bin Country" (see above, and fn. 116).[127]

Ji-bin, first mentioned in Zhang Qian's Han Shu, chapter 96a, has been identified for the period of the early Han Dynasty up to the beginning of the 4th century AD with the western Gandhara region of Kapiśa with its city Kāpiśī (Panjshīr-Ghorband valley below Hindukush) and Puruṣapura (Peshawar).[128] The later capital of the Kuṣāṇa (Kushans) is located forty kilometres north of Kabul in the Panjshīr-Ghorband Valley below the Hindukush.[129] Ma Yong in his reading of the famous Chinese inscription at the 'Sacred Rock' of Haldeikish in Hunza Valley [Table 30.1], mentioning a delegation of the Da Wei (Great Wei), presumes at this place a "necessary staging post on the ancient "Ji-bin" route":[130] "Gu Wei-long, envoy of Da Wei (is) now dispatched to Mi-mi". The title 'Da Wei' after him refers to the North[ern] Wei Dynasty (365–380 AD), but other Chinese palaeographers on the basis of linguistic arguments prefer a dating to the earlier Cao-Wei Dynasty (220–264 AD).[131] The name, which appears only in this inscription, is not mentioned elsewhere. The country Mi-mi or Mi, which belongs to the "Western Territories", is not recorded in any Chinese sources before the period of the North Wei. Annals then mention that "the states of Fergana, Ji-bin and Mi-mi sent envoys to the court to present tributes respectively", and also other sources note diplomatic and economic relations

127 Hulsewé 1979, 110–111. Cited and commented by Jettmar 1987a, 95; 2002, 174–175 and Yong 1989 [1986], 151–152.

128 The different identifications of Ji-bin with an area south of the Hindukush and west of the Indus have been discussed by Hill 2009, 489–499. Ji-bin (Jimi in Waiguo Shi) in accounts of Buddhist monks from China between 4th – 6th centuries included a wider area than Gandhara, comprising also Kashmir (Kaspiria) and possibly Tokharistan. Since the T'ang Dynasty, the early 7th century, Ji-bin indicated Kapiśā (Kashmir): Chavannes 1903–1904, 336; Stein 1907, 53; Petech 1950, 63–79 (see Hulsewé 1979, 104 footnote 203); Chattopadhyaya 1967, 12. Yong 1989 [1986], 151–153; Deeg 2005, 245. Benjamin 2007, 110–111 identified Ji-bin with the modern Kashmir, which was controlled since the 1st century by the Indo-Scythians. The changing localizations of Ji-bin with "Greater Gandhara" and the course of the Jib-in Route according Chinese records are summarized by Li 2008 and 2014, 295–299, 657–693 and 721–736.

129 + Begram. On the archaeological site of Begram see Morris 2020 and 2021 with references.

130 Yong 1989 [1986], 141–150 refers to two "Great Wei" dynasties, which sent envoys to the "Western Regions". The first is known as the Cao's Wei Dynasty (220–265 AD) during the period of the great states, the second as North Wei Dynasty (386–556 AD). Li 2014, 733 fig. 3 follows the interpretation of Yong. For a short assessment of the inscription, see: Litvinskij 1989, 29.

131 Höllmann 1996, 427 footnote 7.

between Mi-mi and the Northern Wei Dynasty beginning with emperor Zheng-ping (451 AD).[132] The Haldeikish inscription near Hunza is therefore the only historical record of Sino-foreign relations outside the Chinese realm, when within the time between 444 to 453 AD Gu Wei-long used the ancient route from China to Ji-bin and Wu-i-shan, established since Han period.

Jettmar suggested that the Chinese delegation would not have taken the arduous detour by crossing the Karakorum to reach Mi-mi (i.e. Mâymurgh after Arabic geographers), a town southeast of Samarkand in Sogdiana. This because from the Hunza Valley the delegation would have faced another crossing of the Central Hindukush, followed by further crossings of the Tienshan and Alai[133] It would mean another place "somewhere in Gandhara, in the mountains between Swat and Kashmir". Yet, an explanation for such a time-consuming roundabout way could be that the direct access to Sogdiana was controlled by the Hephtalithes and therefore blocked for the Chinese delegation. Mi-mi apparently is the Central Asian state located in the north of the middle Syr Darya at the road from Samarkand to Kashgar (Shu-le).[134] During the later Han Dynasty the state of Ji-bin has been located in Kashmir (Kaspiria). Because of its geographical location Ji-bin controlled the main communication routes from China into northwestern India and thus also the access to the southern branch of the Silk Route.

The other territory of Nandou (Vanda / Banda) mentioned in the Han Shu (chapter 96A) is said to have been subject to Ji-bin. The "kingdom", whose name disappeared from Chinese sources after the Han period while incorporated during the 5th century into the great kingdom of Bolor, was situated in the northeast of Ji-bin and has been referred to the valleys of Swat and Chitral as far as Mastuj or with an area encompassing evidently Wakhan and the plain of Gilgit with Yasin and Hunza or most recently was located "on the lower course of the Gilgit River".[135]

This route from the Sarikol-Pamir region (Śaraḍūgä / Śarakūgä), perhaps starting at Khotan or Kashgar, to Kashmir (and India) seems to have been frequently used as demonstrated by a Khotanese Saka document, which was found at Dunhuang. Instead of trying to use the other important Karakorum passes of Kilik or Mintaka and to pass through the Hunza gorge, the traveller got to Gilgit in a rather roundabout way to the west. After crossing the Wakhan corridor and traversing apparently a Karakorum pass like Baroghil and Darkot or Irshad and following the track through the valleys of Yasin or Ishkoman and Gilgit the traveller entered the district of "Prushava", the region previously called Bruža.

"There the head of the Golden Water issues. There is the first town *Syadiṃ* by name; on the mountain top are three *saṃghārāmas* (Buddhist monasteries). From there six days by land is a town *Baurbura* (Bubur) by name. A great river *Sīna* by name exists. There men cross

132 Wei shu, chapter 4B, Shizu record and Bei Shi, chapter 97, Xiyu Zhuan record: see Yong 1989 [1986], 145–149.

133 Jettmar 1989c, LIII, 1993a, XIII–XIV.

134 For the localization of the Mi Country, see: Sverchkov 2009.

135 For Nandou: Hulsewé 1979, 103. P'iankov 1994, 43–44. Tsuchiya 1999, 353–354; Sen 2003, 3–4, 27, 246 note 6. Benjamin 2007, 109–110. Hill 2009, 499–501.

on *byaḍa* (rather by raft than on a bridge). Four *saṃghārāmas* are there, beside the river are village quarters. From there southwards along the river the great city *Gidagitti* (Gilgit) by name. There are eight stone *saṃghārāmas*. The king's residences are there, in four districts. From there southwards along the river is the road to Indian country. Along the Golden River (Indus) there upon the river bank is a great city *(kṣīra)* called *Śīlathasa* (Chilas). There beside the river are village's quarters. Upon the river bank are pomegranate trees. Afterwards they cross over by *byaḍa* (bridge?). From *Sīḍathasa* to *Ttīḍī* (*tartiya-, crossing-point) eight days (on) land southwards, along the river are walnut-trees, and *banāva*-trees. Then also are *devadāru*-trees. There monkeys live. The *Ttīḍī* (bridge) is called Mangala Cakra. That is the first Indian city towards Kaśmīra. On a mountain is one (*saṃghārāma*?) southwards on the Mahuvi river bank". The itinerary, which describes in a few brief sentences a traditional route between the Silk Road "southward to the Indian country": along the 'Golden River', the Indus, was written in a middle Iranian language during the reign of the Kashmiri king Abhimanyugupta (958–972 AD).[136]

The most terrifying and extremely arduous path at the end of this route was also described in later Chinese accounts as *xuandu*, the "Suspended Crossings" or "Hanging Passages". But it is still controversial whether these "Hanging Passages" are the same as those mentioned by Han Shu. The geographer and historian Albert Herrmann (1886–1945), the outstanding explorer of the Silk Routes, stressed their different location and tried to identify the Ji-bin track leading from the Kilik (4755 m) or Mintaka Pass (4629 m) or the Shimshal (4787 m) at the present-day Chinese-Pakistani border and the Hanging Passages along the narrow precipices of the Hunza Valley, where the ancient routes are still visible. The "twelf marches between Baltit and the Mintaka Pass" with its terrifying gorges has been described by C. P. Skrine "as difficult a tract of country as can be found anywhere in the world".[137] Parts of the ancient cliff paths above the Hunza are still preserved. However, most scholars localize this route in the narrow and often adventurous mountain pathways cut into the slopes of the Gilgit Valley or above all in the Upper Indus gorges. The traveller marching from the Raikot Bridge to Sazin in Indus Kohistan [Table 1] constantly had to cross and to recross the river either by rafts or rope bridges.

136 Bailey 1936, 1968. This Khotan-Gilgit-Chilas-Kashmir-North India route kept its importance for the trade between China and India until the Song Dynasty (960–1126): Sen 2003, 171 map. 4.

137 Skrine 1925, 232. Herrmann 1935, 34 map 16. Jettmar 2002, 174–181. Benjamin 2007, 107–109 identified the "Suspended Crossing" with one of the Karakorum passes leading from Wakhan (?) to Gilgit. Jettmar 1987a, 2002, 174.

5 Three Chinese Pilgrims

5.1 Faxian and his visit at To-li/T'o-leih

Records of Chinese Buddhist pilgrims provide a description of Buddhist India and also of the mountain areas in its northwest between the early 5th and 8th century, whereas Indian sources remain silent. After the first known Chinese mission to the Western Territories *(xiyu)* by the celebrated imperial envoy Zhang Qian, who during the early Han period stayed few years with the Ta Yuezhi and came as far as Bactria and the Ferghana, it was Faxian who ventured into remote regions as far as India. The less known envoy Gang Ying, sent by the imperial court in the late Han period 97 AD on a mission to the Roman Empire, mediated a deeper insight into the political situation in Central Asia. He crossed Anxi, the Parthian Empire, as far as the western coast of the Caspian See from where he returned to China. The routes followed by Zhang Qian and Gang Ying were apparently known to the pilgrim Faxian, who mentions both predecessors on their paths to the Western Territories, but not reaching the Hanging Passages of the Sindhu *(xindu)*.[138] His travel should open a new chapter of Chinese Buddhism with the search for the original roots of this religion. In his following the number of pilgrims towards India increased during the T'ang period. After a long period of ca. 700 years these pilgrimages ceased in the Song period due to the decline of Buddhism in historical North India, caused by ethnic and political changes along the Upper Indus and the intrusion of Islam. The itineraries written by the known Chinese pilgrims Faxian (travel 398–412), Song Yun (travel 518–522), Xuanzang (travel 629–645), Huichao, Wukong (travel 751–790), who travelled through the Karakorum region to India refer to the gorges of the Indus as the most difficult part of their pilgrimage.

Faxian (Fa Hsien) (317–420 AD),[139] whose original family name was Gong, a Chinese monk of the (Eastern) Dong Jin period, set out on his 15-years long pilgrimage (398–412 AD) from his residence town of Chang'an (modern Xi'an in the Shaanxi province), the later Chinese capital of the Chou, Ch'in and Han dynasties. During the T'ang Dynasty (618–907 AD) the place developed into a prosperous economic, cultural and political centre, with a settlement area of ca. 77 km and a dense population of more than one million, including different ethnic groups, thus representing then the flourishing focal point of the medieval world.

Faxian travelled with his four companions most of his way by foot through the Hexi Corridor, but did not follow the traditional way along the southern or the longer northern route around the outer periphery of the Taklamakan Desert. From Dunhuang he took the so-called middle route to Loulan (Shanshan) towards Qarašahr (Yanyi), where the road joins with the northern route. Instead of following the northern route, perhaps for unsafe

138 Zhang Mo and Gan Ying are misspellings of the names: Beal 1869, 21–22 and Legge 1886, 26–27. Deeg 2005, 519.

139 Deeg 2005, 27–29 on the basis of Faxian' personal account, investigated the duration of his life with his birth between 336/340 and 341/345 and the year of his death between 418 and 423 AD.

political reasons, the pilgrims had to choose the arduous track in southwest direction across the Taklamakan towards the southern route to get to the major oasis in the southern Tarim Basin, Khotan (Gostana, in Hou Hanshu: Kingdom of Yutian). Faxian gave a vivid account of the kingdom with its fourteen large monasteries 'without counting the smaller ones'. From there he continued his pilgrimage to Kashgar, where the northern and the southern branches of the Silk Road rejoined. Faxian then went southwest to India with the aim of searching for authentic texts from the Buddhist canon unknown to his countrymen.[140] His sojourn through India occurred during an era of political consolidation and cultural revival under the realm of the Gupta Dynasty. Its ruler Candragupta consolidated the empire by pacifying the areas, which his father Samudragupta had conquered. Faxian arrived in the country of Zihe, and travelled farther to the south, reaching the country of Yuhui in the "Congling range". After crossing the "T'sung-ling" or "Congling range", the "Onion Mountains" (perhaps the eastern Karakorum), he and his fellow-travellers entered the Buddhist kingdom Jiecha (Kie-cha) after 25 days in ca. 400 AD. This country is described as mountainous and cold, and can very likely be located in Baltistan.[141]

From there he proceeded westwards to a small kingdom that he called To-li / T'o-leih (Ta-li-lo according Xuanzang), which he reached in one month. This Buddhist place of pilgrimage was famous for its eight *zhangh* or twenty-four metre-high statue of the messianic Bodhisattva Maitreya, the Buddha of the future, made of carved and gilded sandal wood.[142] The miraculous figure is described as standing beside a large *saṅghārāma,* which is held by a congregation of monks, all students of the Hīnayāna, the 'smaller conveyance' or "Lesser or Smaller vehicle". It describes the earlier form of Buddhism – in contrast to the later categories of Buddhism, the Mahāyāna or the 'great conveyance, the "Great Vehicle" –, in which only a few beings spiritualize the germ of potential Buddhahood. Both 'vehicles' were paths, narrow or wide, leading to the same Nirvāṇa. With regard to the erection of the figure, Faxian mentions

140 Record of Buddhist kingdom by Chi Fah-Hsian: Beal 1869, 18–20 and 1884, XXIX. Legge 1886, 24–29; Deeg 2005.

141 [+ Here HH added: "Zihe (wohl nicht Xihe, Zihe=Shahidulla [= Xaidulla, Shahidula] was a Buddhist kingdom (identified with Karghalik / Kargiliq [Kageleke] by Chavannes 1907?) (stimmt nicht)". Addition: the titles of the chapter 4 and paragraphs 4.1–3 have been rephrased]. The pathway across the "Congling mountains" – Karakorum or Pamir-Hindukush – that was traversed by Fa-Hsien is in dispute: summarized by Curzon 1896, 241–242. Jiecha has been identified mostly with Taškurgan, but also with Kashmir, Ladakh, Skardu or Baltistan (as earlier proposed by Klaproth [+ in 1826? The point is not clear. Perhaps HH refers to Rémusat and Wilson 1838, 112]; and Watters 1904–1905), see: Deeg 2005, 99–109. Its location at Skardu in Baltistan has recently convincingly been proposed at Shigar by Deeg 2000, 884; 2005, 102–110 [+ see Hakal 2021]. Kuwayama 2006b, 112 fig. 5.1 rates Fa-Hsien's itinerary as "almost identical" with that of Zhimeng: "Departing from Kiecha (Qisha of Zhimeng), Faxian crossed over the Pamirs to enter Tuoli". "Then he went southwest for fifteen days along the foot of the mountains to reach modern Swat".

142 + In theory, if the sculpture was a work of Madhyāntika, the disciple of Ānanda who is said to have brought Buddhism to Kashmir, it should have been very ancient instead.

a Buddhist saint, an *arhan* or *arhat*, named Madhyāntika. "Through his supernatural power (he) took a clever artificer up to the Tuṣita heaven (the heaven presided over the Maitreya), to see the height, complexion, and appearance of Maitreya, and then return and make an image of him in wood. First and last, this was done three times, and then the image was completed". Faxian praised the miraculous image: "On fast-days it emits an effulgent light. The kings of the (surrounding) countries vie with one another in presenting offerings to it" (after Legge 1886, 24–25). The wondrous statue in bent-leg posture is said to have been a model for similar monumental Buddha figures, even in remote Transhimalayan regions such as in Yun-kang (Vungang) in China.[143] According to the time of Faxian's visit the monastery with its Buddha figure could have been founded at least during the 3rd century AD. The erection of this most revered ancient Maitreya image in India, which was known and celebrated in China, marked the beginning of the extension of the Buddhist faith to the East. Other mentions of this colossal figure exist, such as by the Chinese monk Bao-yun who had accompanied Faxian.

To-li or T'o-leih after Faxian and Ta-li-lo according to Xuanzang have been usually located within the western side valley of the Indus River called Darel belonging to Darada, the country of the ancient mountaineers, the Dardae.[144] The identification of Darel, "one of the Dardu districts on the Indus", as "an exact transcription" of the name Toli / T'o-leih, goes back to Major General Sir Alexander Cunningham (1814–1893), since 1861 the archaeological surveyor to the Government of India, used the itineraries of Faxian and Xuanzang as a guide to identify the various sacred places, monasteries and stupas in historical India. In 1871 he was appointed first Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India until his retirement in 1885. During his journey of 1913, when he travelled from Kashmir via Chilas to Hodar into the valleys of Khanbari and Darel, Sir Aurel Stein tried to locate the place of the gilded Maitreya statue in the village Phuguch (Pouguch)[145] in Darel, where the Buddhist sanctuary seems to have been

143 Seckel 1962, 139; 1992, 222 footnote 21.

144 Cunningham 1854, 2; 1871, 82–83; 1924, 95. Since then the identification has been adopted and repeated by most authors. Beal 1869, LXVIII–LXIX, 18–19 identified "To-li with the Tha-li-lo (Dhalila) of Hiouen-Thsang" and further with the town Dhir near the river Tal. Biddulph 1880, 110–112 (To-li, or Tha-li-lo, must certainly be Darel or Gilgit), Beal 1884, 134 (finds To-li to be Daril or Darail in the Dard country), Curzon 1896, summarized the contradictory geographical identifications mentioned in the pilgrim's travelogues and locations of Ta-li-lo (To-li). In his posthumous book (Curzon 2012, 234) he notes: Darel "is believed to be the To-li and Ta-li-lo of the Buddhist narratives". See also Gerard – Holdich – Wahab – Alcock 1897, 33. Watters 1904–1905, 239, Chavannes 1907, 433 and Stein 1907, 9; 1921, 6; 1928, 21–23, 30–31; 1942, 54–55, Petech 1950, 17, Ganhar – Ganhar 1956, 205, Rosenfield 1967, 230–231, Kuwayama 1987, 711, Carter 1990, 30–32, Tissot 1991, 102–103, Tsuchiya 1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2000, 2005b, Li 2008, 27, Filigenzi 2015, 123, 131. Stein 1928, 31 even located the place of the colossal Maitreya statue in the village Phuguch (Poguch) in Darel. Referring to the location of "a little kingdom called To-li", Raverty 1878, 298 points more cautious to "Honz, Balti (Bolor) or Yasin" [+ see Hakal 2021, and Hakal 2022].

145 +On Phuguch, see also Jettmar 1961a, 85–86.

replaced by a Muslim *ziyarat*.[146] He also saw in the carved decorations on this sanctuary and other vernacular mosques the survival of traditional Gandharan motifs. But all attempts to identify ruins of a "trapezoidal compound" above Pouguch in the Darel Valley as the location of an important Buddhist monastery, where the famous statue was being venerated, have failed.[147] Above the village Pougouch on a hill in the middle of the 40-km long valley Stein noticed remains of a fortified place which he called Lohilo-kot. This site, now known as Raji Kot, has even been declared as the seat of the local ruler of Darel. Yet, in spite of all efforts since Stein, followed by field investigations of a team of the Italian Archaeological Mission, of a Japanese team under Haruko Tsuchiya, and of the PGAM ('Pak-German Archaeological Mission to the Northern Areas') no architectural structures were revealed, which could be identified with the expected sacral centre of supra-regional importance.[148]

However, the early conjectural identification of To-li / T'o-leih (Ta-li-lo) with Chilas of 1839 has been disregarded by the following historical research.[149] It was T. G. Abaëva who in 1975, unaware of Stein's arguments, again called forth the problematic identification with Darel, on the basis of the apparently striking accordance of both names, and thus proposed Chilas in lieu of Darel.[150] Her main argument against Cunnigham's first identification was that the actual distance given by Xuanzang for the route between Swat and Darel is by far too short.

The sacred place of To-li according to the pilgrim Faxian's account apparently lies on the left bank of the Indus. From here, the first known Chinese traveller to the area went during a 15-day long journey to the kingdom Uḍḍiyāna, i.e. Swat, after he had passed the dangerous "route of hanging chains" in the stupendous gorges of the Indus of present day Indus Kohistan. From there at last he travelled to Gandhara. A reference to the localization of the "Suspended Crosses" is perhaps indicated in an inscription in Shatial, if the interpretation as

146 Stein 1928, 31–32.

147 Tsuchiya 2005a and 2005b.

148 Gnoli 1980a and Tusa 1985, 183. Tsuchiya 2005b and 2006.

149 Wilson 1838, 114 resuming M. Abel Rémusat's conjecture to identify To-li with Dardu, the capital of the Dard country (Rémusat 1836).

150 The identification with Darel was placed in question by Abaëva 1975, 159 pleading instead for Chilas as conjectured on the basis of Rémusat's edition of Faxian's *Foe-koue-ki* (relations des royaumes bouddhiques) by Wilson 1838, 114. According to Jettmar 1975, 200, 296; 1977a, 148; 1977b, 417–419; 1979b, 45; 1980a, 9–11; 1984a, 178–180, 212; 1985, 762; 1995, 38–39; 1997, 85–86, 90–91; Jettmar – Thewalt 1985, 19; 1987, 19–20, and Dani 1983a, 3–4, 50–52, 1983c, 90–91 and 1995, 15 stressing "the problematic character of this identification" with Darel, Ta-li-lo would cover more easily "a much larger area" than Darel, and therefore corresponds to "the whole of the Chilas zone". Kuwayama 2006b, 112 also located "Tuoli" (Dareda or Darada) around Chilas. An alternative location for Ta-li-lo at Shatial was discussed in MANP 2, 1997, 85–86, 90–91 (Jettmar), 83 (Fussman), 104–105 (Bandini). But, no archaeological proof exists for tracing this important bridge head in Indus Kohistan the "center of Faxian's kingdom Tuoli", as also assumed by Deeg 2005, 111–112, 189.

Guozhai pass is not only "questionable". Namely, Höllmann and Jettmar[151] have considered Faxian coming from Baltistan, perhaps traversing the 'snow mountains", the Deosai plains, through Astor. According to his report he did not cross the Indus before he entered T'o-leih, which obviously was situated on the left shore of the Indus River. Against the identification of Darel with To-li another argument is convincing: Xuanzang reports "proceeding east of Ta-li-lo across mountains and gullies, going up the Indus, by flying bridges over precipices, a journey of about 500 li brought you up to the Po-lu-lo country", i.e. Bolor. The distance between Bolor and T'o-leih (one month's time) given also by Xuanzang is twice as long as between Darel and Swat (15 days). The traveller would hardly return from Darel to the Indus Valley, because the track even on the left side of the river was difficult before the 'Indus Valley Road' was constructed. Indeed, no really passable ancient footpath existed between the mouth of the tributaries Tangir and Kandia along the northern Indus bank for travelling through this narrow gorge downstream to Besham, from where a direct connection leads over the Shangla Pass (3734 m) downwards into the Swat Valley. Even the way on the left bank was difficult before the British Indus Valley road and the subsequent modern KKH were constructed. From Darel Faxian / the traveller would have gone over the known passes to Tangir via Satil and then Kandia, finally reaching Kalam in Swat. The direct passage from Darel to the Gilgit Basin would also not lead through the gorges of the Indus.

5.2 The pilgrimage of Song Yun (Sung Yün)

The same "southern route" of the Silk Road and the pathway through the T'sung-ling mountains, the Snow Mountains, was taken by another Chinese pilgrim named Song Yun (Sung Yün). He was sent as an envoy by the empress Dowager (Tai Hau) of the Great Wei Dynasty in 518 AD. This period was marked by political upheaval in the Upper Indus Valley (Hsin-t'ou), when the region was under the supremacy of the Hephthalite kings. After crossing the Tsung Ling mountains (Hindukush?), Song Yun and his monk companion Hwui Seng entered the stony land of She-mi (Chö-mi) (Chitral), and from there went via Po-lu-lo to Wu-ch'ang (Uḍḍiyāna). On their way they had "to cross iron-chain bridges across bottomless mountain chasms". The dangerous travel is described quite dramatically in his travelogue with similar descriptions as by his forerunners:

"From the country of Po-lu-lai (Bolor) to the country of Ouch'ang (Uḍḍiyāna) they use iron chains for bridges. These are suspended in the air for the purpose of crossing. On looking downwards no bottom can be perceived; there is nothing to grasp at in case of a slip, but in a moment the body is hurled down 10,000 *fathom*s. On this account travellers will not cross over, in case of high winds".[152]

151 Jettmar 1987a, Höllmann 1996, 430.

152 Beal 1869, 188.

His official visit in Puṣkalāvatī and Gandhara (Kan-t'o-lo) was "to obtain Buddhist books in the west". In his accounts, he presents a vague description of the political situation in the Northern Areas, mentioning the land of Po-lu-lai, i.e. Little Palūr, usually located around Gilgit.[153] On the contrary, until now there are no substantial archaeological or epigraphical vestiges in Darel that would support Cunningham's outdated assumption.

5.3 The illustrious pilgrim Xuanzang

In Xuanzang's travelogue his route from Swat to Ta-li-lo can clearly be traced: "Going north-west from the town of Mung-kia-li (modern Mingora), crossing a mountain and passing through a valley, we reascend the Sin-tu River. The roads are craggy and steep; the mountains and the valleys are dark and gloomy. Sometimes we have to cross by ropes, sometimes by iron chains stretched *(across the gorges).* There are foot-bridges (or covered ways) suspended in the air, and flying bridges across the chasms with wooden steps let into the ground for climbing the steep embankments. Going thus 1000 li or so, we reach the river valley of Ta-li-lo, where stood once the capital of U-chang.na. This country produces much gold and scented turmeric. By the side of a great [monastery] in this valley of Ta-li-lo is a figure of Maitreya, carved out of wood".[154] Xuanzang following the reverse direction than Faxian, thus starting from Mung-kia-li, the capital of Uḍḍiyāna, which is probably modern Mingora in northern Swat, would follow the most reasonable stretch to reach the Upper Indus Valley at Besham by traversing the Gilgit chains across the Shangla Pass (2814 m). His way along an arduous route through the gorges in Kohistan could have led him to the basin of Chilas-Thalpan. This place by virtue of the striking assemblage of elaborate Buddhist carvings and inscriptions with devotions to Buddha and the location of a monastery was apparently a sacred place of supraregional importance. A later literary hint corraborates the proposed localization at this place of the wondrous Buddha figure. An "Idol of Shamil called Śārada", which was bypassed by the Indus River, before its exit from the mountains, was mentioned by the Arab chronicler al-Bīrūnī in the 11th century and may thus be a late reminiscence of the wooden Maitreya described by Faxian (Fa-Hsien)[155] and Xuanzang: "In Inner Kashmir, about two or three days' journey from the capital (the city of Tāneshar) in the direction towards the mountains of Bolor, there is a wooden idol called Śārada, which is much venerated and frequented by pilgrims". Shamilan would therefore include Chilas, and it seems more likely that T'o-leih (Ta-li-lo) would cover more easily "a much larger area" than Darel, and therefore would correspond

153 Yang Hsüan-chih's account [+ Lo-Yang ch'ieh-lan chi], see: Chavannes 1903; Watters 1904–1905; Jenner 1981, 261; Jettmar 1980a, 10 and 2002, 118–119; Dani 1995, 15–18 map 3 and 2001, 144–145.

154 Beal 1884, 133–134.

155 Sachau 1888, 117. Said 1989, 203. Jettmar 2002, 154.

to "the whole of the Chilas zone" with its political centre at Chilas and the corresponding Buddhist sanctuary at Thalpan across the Indus.[156]

This identification is supported by the great number of inscriptions containing also names of monks or pilgrims. Of particular significance are the numerous images praising Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara / Padmapāṇi, Maitreya and Mañjuśrī, and respectively the future Buddha Vipaśyin and Śākyamuni at Chilas-Jayachand and in Thalpan expressing pious devotion to Buddha, "which become more dense and more carefully executed the closer to Chilas (and Thalpan) they are found".[157] According to Dani the depiction of "three Bodhisattvas appear to have attained prominence differently in the eyes of different persons. It is very likely that sectarian developments had already started and the followers turned their faith towards one or the other bodhisattvas according to whether they belonged to one or the other school".[158] From the preference of the bodhisattva images his cult occupies a prominent place in local Buddhism. The singular wealth of Buddhist imagery around Chilas and Thalpan gives evidence of the predominance of this doctrine, which is well-founded by the ruling Dāradas kingdom.

The same area, here called Po-lu-lo, is also mentioned by the third renowned pilgrim of the T'ang Dynasty called Xuanzang Sazang (ca. 602–664 AD). His famous travelogue *Da-Tang xiyu ji*, "Records from the Regions West of the Great T'ang", which was compiled by his disciple Bianji, describes the countries and city-states along the caravan routes through Central Asia and across the Hindukush to India. This Chinese Marco Polo, also designated as Buddhist Pausanias, travelled between 629 and 645 AD to India, the holy land of Buddhism.[159]

Xuanzang Sazang symbolizes the cultural exchange between the two great Asian civilizations, China and India. He set out for his travel from Chang'an (modern Xi'an, Shaanxi), the capital of the T'ang empire, for Anxi, the administrative centre of Dunhuang, the gateway to the western regions and to the junction of the Hexi Corridor to the Silk Road system.

His famous pilgrimage is even portrayed in paintings, such as those in the Mogao cave 2 of the Eastern Thousand Buddha Grottoes at the small oasis Dunhuang at the westernmost end of the Gansu Corridor in the vast Gobi Desert.[160]

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156 Deeg 2000, 884–885; 2005, 101–120, 517–518 confronts Faxian's description of his route with the different identifications since Cunningham.

157 MANP 6: Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Chilas Bridge 63:4, 13; 84:2), Maitreya (8:1; 63:6; 64:19), Mañjuśrī (6:2), Śākyamuni (64:14, 20), Vipaśyin (64:16), and seated Buddha (65:1). Jettmar – Thewalt 1985, 19; 1987, 19–20. See also footnote 95, Curzon 2012, 25.

158 Dani 1983c, 90–91.

159 Watters 1904–1905; Hiyarama 1999; Dani 1995, 18–21 map 3 and 2001, 39.47–48.146. A vivid description of Xuanzang's pilgrimage is owed to Wriggins 1999 and 2004, 67–70 map 4.1. For a map of the routes taken on his pilgrimage, see: Kuwayama 2006b, 112, 120 fig. 5.4 and Li 2008, 24.

160 Dating to the period of Western Xia (1036–1227): Chung 1994, 185 pl. 55. See also a Japanese copy of the 13th–14th century in National Museum Tokyo: Hiyarama 1999, 69 pl. 204. Seckel 1997, 274–275 footnote 146, fig. 231 classified the form of traditional representation as an ideal portrayal of Buddhist clergymen in narrative action scenes.

A wall painting renders Xuanzang's return from India with the great white elephant given to him by the illustrious king Harṣa or Harṣavardhana (606–647), a follower of the Mahāyāna Buddhism, who united northern India und moved his residence from Thānevar north of Delhi to Kanauj, the new great metropolis. The ideal portrait of the great sūtra translator shows him on his way back to China, heavily loaded with sûtra scrolls on his back. From Dunhuang he travelled along the northern route to Samarkand, to Baktra (Balkh), the capital of Bactria ('Daxia' in Chinese), and at last to the kingdom of Bāmiyān, where he spent 15 days. This valley, called Fanyuan, is described as the political and religious centre of the kingdom of Bāmiyān. We owe him the first and also the most authentic description of the colossal Buddha figures of 53 m and 38 m height, sheltered in niches.[161] After traversing the Khyber Pass he reached Gandhara and its eastern part the Swat Valley, and from there he came into the upper Indus region. He passed on his 16,000-km and seventeen-year-long pilgrimage "vast plains of shifting sand" and crossed "bridges of rope and iron chain" or "bridges spanning precipices by means of pegs for steps".[162] Like his predecessor Faxian, he praises again the miraculous power of the gilded timber statue of Maitreya erected near "a great monastery" in the "Ta-li-lo valley, the old seat of government of Uḍḍiyāna". Like Faxian he described the Buddha also as a being the work of the Arhat Madhyāntika, who converted Kashmir to Buddhism. Xuanzang is owed not only a description of the geographical position of the 136 different countries and towns he had passed through and their political status. He also provides information about the situation of Buddhism in its home country India. At last Xuanzang returned to his home using the southern branch of the Silk Road.

6 An Epilogue with Marco Polo

A clear division between the two kingdoms of Little Bolor (Palūr) and Great Bolor (Palūr), which is usually identified with Baltistan (Tibbat-i Khurd), is reported by another pilgrim, the Korean Hye Ch'o (Huei Ch'ao).[163] He was descendant of the Korean kingdom of Silla (Xinluo) and active in propagating Tantric Buddhism in China during the reign of emperor Yuanzong in the T'ang period. On his pilgrimage to the five Indian countries, he travelled between 723 and 729 AD, when Great Bolor was under Tibetan predominance – ca. 720/721 AD – and Little Bolor belonged to the Chinese sphere. In his report he mentions that the king of Little Bolor, who originally had his seat in Great Bolor, fled to the Gilgit region after the Tibetan

161 The two stone Buddhas were destroyed on 26 February 2001 by the Taliban, at that time the fundamentalist Muslims rulers in Afghanistan. The visit of Xuanzang in Bāmiyān and the chronology of the colossal figures are discussed by Tanabe 2004.

162 Beal 1869 and 1911; Watters 1904–1905, I. 239–240. Iron chain suspension bridges are mentioned especially for the western mountain region between Gilgit and Swat: Deloche 1984, 67.

163 His "Memoir of a Pilgrimage to the Five Regions of India" was found in Dunhuang by Paul Pelliot in 1908: Fuchs 1939, 20–22. Yang – Jan – Iida – Preston 1984, 47–48.

invasion in 678 AD. The mountains around Little Bolor are described as having only burnt tree stumps and no other vegetation.

The Pamir route via Chitral was taken in 751 AD by the Chinese pilgrim Wukong, who also entered the Wakhan Corridor through the Hexi Route. He visited the sacred place of Uḍḍiyāna (Swat) as well as Gandhara, where he converted to Buddhism.[164] During the first millennium the region from the eastern Hindukush, the Karakorum and the western Himalaya clearly display intense integrating links. On the contrary, with the decline of Buddhism in the following period from 1000 to 1500 this area is characterised by an obvious isolation, and only few chronicles are available.

The above mentioned Khotanese "Saka itinerary" outlines an apparently frequently used connecting route between Sarikol *(Śaraḍūgä/Śarakūgä)* and the centres of the Silk Route such as Kashgar or Khotan, through Wakhan and across the Barogil or Irshad Pass into the Yasin Valley to "the great city of *Gīḍagīttä*", *i.e.* Gilgit. There the traveller found four Buddhist monasteries, built of stone. The region was divided into four districts and governed by a king. From there the route leads to India over the next noted and for the first time termed place, the 'great city' *Śīlathasa/Sīḍathasa*, Chilas, which is situated on the bank of the Golden River *(ysarnīji ttājä)*.[165] Before the end of the 10th century Buddhism was still prevalent, as the aforementioned monasteries demonstrate. But in Chilas there is no mention of them. Scanty, but nevertheless relevant information about the political situation in the Northern Areas is obtained in the geographical compendium *Ḥudūd al-ʿĀlam*, "the regions of the world", which was compiled by an anonymous in 982/93 AD and dedicated to the Amīr of the local dynasty in Gūzgānān, in what is now northern Afghanistan. In "Bolorian Tibet *(B.lūrī)*, a province of Tibet, adjoining the confines (ḥudūd) of Bolor", "the people are chiefly merchants and live in tents (khayma) and felt-huts (khargāh). The country (*Pu-lu* in Chinese sources) is 15 days' journey long and 15 journeys' wide". Great Bolor, i.e. Baltistan or Little Tibet, is clearly seen as separate from the "vast country" Bolor *(Bulūr)*, Little (not Lesser) Bolor, the region around Gilgit (*Nieh-ho-to* in Chinese), which was reigned by a king "who declares that he is the Son of the Sun". "In this country there is no salt but that imported from Kashmir" *(sic)*.[166]

The places of Gilgit, but also of Chilas are again mentioned in ca. 1030 by Al-Bīrūnī, *Gīḍagīttä* and *Śīlathasa* as Shiltās / Shilathās. Gilgit-*Gīḍagīttä* apparently was the ancient name of this centre as mentioned in the inscription of Hatun and the "Saka itinerary". Under this name it remained the capital of the region during the period of the Trakhan Dynasty. Therefore, the statement of Hashmatullah Khān that the original name of the town was "Sarjan or Sargan" and that later it was called "Gilit" is incorrect.[167] Biddulph also followed this version,

164 Lévi – Chavannes 1895, 348. [+ Here HH left a side note: "Jettmar 2002, 116: Palola Sahi"].

165 Bailey 1936, 1968, 70–71 pl. 52–54. Jettmar 2002, 144–145. Hinüber 2004 [+ here HH left a side note: *hier weitere Zitate*].

166 Minorsky 1937, 93, 121, 369–370. [+ see also Taylor 1902].

167 Hashmatullah Khān 1987 [1939], 678–679. Dani 2001 [+ ?], 37, 162–163.

that the ancient name was Sargin, later changed into Gilit, and finally by the Sikh and Dogra conquerors into Gilgit.[168]

Mirza Muhammad Haidar, a commander of the Chagathay-Moghul khanate who had participated in a raid into Baltistan in 934/1527/28, reports that "not one" of the inhabitants of Bolor *(Bulūr)* "has a religion or creed". Until 1530 this wide region of "infidels", a *Kāfiristān*, from Chitral, Gilgit to Baltistan "did not constitute a part of the Muslim world".[169] On his travel to the court of the Great Khan at Beijing, Marco Polo passed Badakshan *(Badascian)* through Wakhan to Kashgar in 1271. In his itinerary *milione*, the Venetian makes mention of Bolor. "The people dwell high up in the mountains, and are savage idolators, living only by the chase, and clothing themselves in the skin of beasts. They are in truth an evil race".[170] Typically enough the Venetians took the same route along the Silk Route as the pilgrim Xuanzang, but in the opposite direction. It is inconceivable that Polo's caravan should have made such a long detour through a rough and dangerous terrain across the Hindukush or the Bolor mountains, the Karakorum. Thus, the description of the savage idolators would be more likely true of the inhabitants of Kafiristan than of Baltistan, which usually is designated as Bolor still inhabited by Buddhists. He names a dark-skinned population with an own language living in a province called "Pasciai", some ten day's journey south of "Badascian", present-day Badakshan in Northeast Afghanistan. Marco Polo may have been knowledgeable of the Pashai, who had their seats south in the lower Hindukush outskirts to the south of Nuristan, the former Kafiristan.[171] The region called "Greater Kafiristan" would extend from Nuristan in eastern Afghanistan to that of the Kafir Kalasha in Chitral and farther up to the Upper Indus Valley. Therefore it has been supposed that this information could only have been obtained through hearsay (Jettmar 1965, Cacopardo – Cacopardo 2001, 22).

Baltistan, also termed as "Little Tibet", *Tibbat-I khurd*, in contrast to Great Tibet, i.e. Ladakh, actually came under Muslim rule for the first time, when it was governed from Kashmir between 1548 and 1850. In the following decades local principalities there gained power.

168 Biddulph 1880, 20.

169 Holzwarth 1998, 300–302. See also Cacopardo – Cacopardo 2001, 33–37.

170 Yule 1903, 172. Cacopardo – Cacopardo 2001, 22, 30.

171 Wutt 1981, 16.