



Yours Today, Mine Tomorrow?

A Study of Women and Men's
Negotiations Over Resources in
Baltistan, Pakistan

By Ingrid L. P. Nyborg

Noragric PhD Dissertation No. 1



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ABSTRACT

How people manage their resources in order to sustain a living is a topic of central importance both to those working to improve the lives of the women and men of the mountain communities of the Himalayas, and those concerned with conserving the biodiversity of mountain habitats. This study explores the nature of women and men's negotiations over resources in a high altitude village in Baltistan, Northern Areas of Pakistan. It seeks to better understand how women and men negotiate control and access to resources under changing contexts, and what this implies for both their livelihood situation and the ways in which they manage their resources. The focus on negotiations over resources in this study offers an alternative perspective of people's relationship to their environment to studies which, for example, focus on the identification of fixed rules and rights over resources, or studies which focus on community resource management exclusively in relation to government regulations and policy, as if the community was an entity acting in unity. Fieldwork was conducted in Basho Valley, Baltistan, stretching over a period of four years. Empirical data was collected through participant observation and interviews. The findings show that a focus on negotiations reveals the importance of the dynamics of local power relations, processes of social differentiation, and issues of identity and morality in understanding women and men's relationships between each other and ultimately with their environment. The study suggests that a better grasp of the dynamics of negotiations over resources will contribute to a better understanding of how policy is both interpreted and influenced by these processes.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

High amongst the clouds of the Western Himalayas in Pakistan hangs the valley of Basho, its lush pastures and fields winding along the Khar river like a green ribbon lying in a gray, crooked crevice, connecting the melting glaciers to the mighty Indus. At the top of the valley is a village, perched at 3100 meters above sea level on the border between an intensively cultivated valley and an extensive commons of forests and pasture. Here live the women, men and children of Sultanabad, eking out a living despite the short summers and harsh winters characteristic of Baltistan. At first glance, one might assume the way of life in this seemingly remote area has remained unchanged for centuries - the women with their loads of firewood, the men herding in the high pasture, the children chasing the livestock out of the fields, far from the influences of what some might term 'modern life'. On closer examination, however, the more rigid facade begins to soften, and one begins to uncover a more complex and dynamic picture. The village becomes one of several arenas where the women and men of Sultanabad, in sometimes subtle, sometimes obvious ways, negotiate their existence in a constantly changing local, national and global context.

What, however, is the nature of this negotiation? To what extent are different women and men able to negotiate the terms of their existence? Negotiating over the terms of one's life is not without risk - it has consequences for one's livelihood security, social position, and well-being, as well as the lives of others in one's family and community. One might contend that for some, attempting negotiation would be too risky, and they would be better-off accepting the status quo. I will argue, however, that negotiating itself is not a choice, but an integral part of everyday life, characterizing the very way we interact as social beings. One does, nevertheless, develop various strategies of negotiation, which involve a range of choices of

specific ways to argue and pursue one's interests, whether it be through open discussions in a village meeting or the avoidance of confrontation with one's spouse. It is therefore not a question of whether or not people negotiate, but of how they develop negotiating strategies - what they decide to do, at which times, for which resources, for what purposes, and with whom.

How free, however, are these choices? Are there limits to the extent to which women and men negotiate over resources? Are these limits different for different people, in different contexts? Are they gendered? In following the particularity of the lives of the villagers, processes of power and difference become progressively more visible, giving a deeper dimension to the relations between people, and between people and their environment. These processes are by no means caught in a local loop, only to be understood in terms of functional determinism, nor are they a static representation of culture and relationships. Nevertheless, there exists a degree of continuity in social relationships that persists despite, or perhaps in light of, changing contexts. People's choice of strategy is made within an ever-changing environmental, economic, political, cultural and social context, and examining the nature of their choices allows us to explore the ways in which the women and men of Sultanabad deal with change and continuity in their lives.

This study explores the nature of women and men's negotiation over resources¹ in the village of Sultanabad. More specifically, the study tries to understand how women and men negotiate control and access to resources under changing contexts, and what this implies for

¹ While much of the focus of this study is on negotiation over natural resources, it encompasses other resources as well. Resources, in the context of this study, refers to capital, social, cultural and natural entities and meanings over which women and men negotiate. This is a broader definition than the economic view of, for example, natural resources, which is based on the premise that resources are scarce and similar to market goods (Lund 1996). Inherent in the current definition is the idea that 'changing socio-economic circumstances not only lead to changing conceptualization of what constitutes a resource in concrete terms (children, water, land money), but also of what constitutes a resource in mental terms' (ibid: 134).

both their livelihood situation and the ways in which they manage their resources. The focus on negotiations over resources in this study offers an alternative perspective of peoples relationship to their environment to studies which, for example, focus on the identification of fixed local rules and rights over resources, or studies which focus on community resource management exclusively in relation to government regulations and policy, as if the community was an entity acting in unity. The focus on negotiations in this study reveals the dynamics of local power relations, processes of social differentiation, and the importance of issues of identity and morality, all of which are central in understanding people's relationships between each other and ultimately with their environment.

For those immediately involved in interacting with this community and the many other communities like it in Baltistan², a better understanding of women and men's relationship with their environment might contribute to policy which is more in tune with the everyday lives of those with whom they interact. The implications, however, may be broader. By allowing us into their specific situation, the villagers (probably unwittingly) also offer us an opportunity to explore how we think about development in general, to question and challenge the assumptions underlying local, national and global policy decisions which effect the lives of millions of women, men and children in the developing world.

Placing the Study in Development Discourse

In examining women's and men's experiences in negotiating over resources, this study touches upon several terms which have been at the center of development concerns in the late 80s and 90s; food security, poverty, livelihood security, environment, resource management

² For example: NGOs, government officials and policy makers, researchers.

and gender³. While these terms have been used extensively in both political and research fora, the concepts underlying these terms and the conceptual links between them are not always clear, and are often based on very different assumptions and interpretations of how women and men experience their everyday lives and interact with their environment.

Rocheleau (1995), for example, refers to the tendency of policy to deal with food security⁴, environment and gender as separate spheres, proposing that the reasons for this lie in "...the overall spatial and conceptual separation of biodiversity and production, and the alienation of both from 'home'..." in sustainable development efforts, which she feels has 'undermined the biological basis of rural peoples' livelihoods' (Rocheleau 1995: 9). She argues instead for a reconceptualization of the relationship between women, men and their environment where ecological and social complexity and the uneven relations of power in the use, perceptions and control of resources are central.

People and the Environment – Discovering Institutions

Throughout the 1990s, one of the central concerns in development discourse on people and the environment was the nature of the relationship between poverty and environmental degradation. The main question underlying this issue was, to what extent is there a direct causal relationship between poverty and environmental degradation? Forsyth et al (1998)

³ Here I refer to several international political fora of development where these terms have been brought into focus i.e. the World Food Summits (1972, 1996) and World Bank Policy Study (1986) (food security); The World Commission on Environment and Development's report 'Our Common Future' (Brundtland 1987) (environment); and the End Decade of Women's Conference, Nairobi 1985, and UN Conference on Women, Beijing 1995 (gender), and the World Bank's World Development Report on Poverty and Development (2001).

⁴ There is a general tendency in the early literature on food security to focus on agricultural production systems. This has its roots in an early definition of food security as synonymous with grain production and storage. More recent literature examines the importance of commonly owned and managed resources in food security. See Maxwell and Smith (1992) for an overview of the conceptual development of the term food security, as well as Scoones (1998) and Haug (1999) for a further development of the concept in relation to sustainable rural livelihoods.

refer to the ‘orthodox view⁵’ of this linkage where ‘poverty and environmental damage are inextricably linked, and are self-reinforcing’ (Forsyth et al. 1998: 2). Underlying this view are specific assumptions as to the way in which women and men manage their environment in the face of poverty or environmental degradation. It is assumed, for example, that the poor will always degrade their environment in response to population growth, economic marginalization and existing environmental degradation, and that the only way to avoid environmental degradation is to alleviate poverty (ibid.). In some cases, there may well appear to be a direct, causal relationship between poverty and environment, and thereby support the orthodox view of this linkage. Under certain circumstances reductions in food security⁶, one aspect of poverty, may lead some farmers to manage their resources for short-term gains to satisfy acute food needs, which may in the longer run damage the natural resource base. Frankenberger and Goldstein (1991) cite examples of households which when faced with food insecurity resorted to over-harvesting of wild foods, overgrazing pasture, and increased planting in marginal areas. Environmental degradation in the form of loss of soil nutrients and/or erosion might reduce a farmer’s ability to grow enough food for her family or enough produce to sell for food, thus reducing household food security. Likewise, degradation of important commonly owned and managed resources such as pasture may threaten the quality/quantity of livestock necessary in ensuring food security in agropastoral systems. Such examples postulate the relationship between poverty and environment as a simple causal relationship where land degradation is seen as a *result* of food insecurity, or food insecurity as a *result* of faulty natural resource management, neglecting possible

⁵ Refers to the mainstream view prevalent in policy discourses.

⁶ Food security is understood here as existing when ‘all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO 1996).’ This definition focuses on access to food rather than merely on food supply, as has been the basis of earlier definitions of food security. The definition has also broadened from a focus on grain storage and food production at aggregate levels, to one where individuals are central, and the importance of purchasing power and natural resources as food sources is considered. See for example Maxwell and Smith (1992) and Nyborg and Haug (1994) for discussions of the shift in conceptualization of food security from supply to access.

feedback loops, and other processes (social, economic, cultural) that may contribute to these relationships.

Forsyth et al., however, question the universality of such causal relationships between poverty and resource degradation, offering an alternative view of the social processes involved in resource management⁷. Basing their claims on a growing body of empirical studies⁸, they propose that the relationship between poverty and environment is complex rather than directly causal in either direction. They argue that ‘local responses to change are socially and environmentally specific and shaped by institutions’ and that depending on the situation, local responses ‘may actually lessen impacts and promote sustainable livelihoods⁹’ (Forsyth et al. 1998: 4)¹⁰. How women and men relate to their environment cannot therefore be automatically generalized to all people and all environmental situations, as was the tendency of development policy based on the orthodox view (Leach et al. 1999). Local institutions are seen as central, and an acknowledgement of the diversity of local contexts seen as imperative in understanding people-environment relationships. According to Forsythe’s alternative view, a reconceptualization of the relationship between people and their environment must

⁷ This line of argument is similar to that of Mortimore and Tiffen (1994), who in their work on Machakos, Kenya, examined the nature of linkages between population growth and environment. Their findings show that population growth led not to resource degradation as was expected in the orthodox view, but rather to new institutional arrangements that resulted in improved resource management.

⁸ Forsyth et al. refer to the following empirical studies which challenge the ‘crisis narrative’ of a downward spiral of poverty-environmental degradation: Ives and Messerli (1989); Forsyth (1996); Sillitoe (1998); Presston (1997, 1998); Chepstow Lusky et al (1998); Fairhead and Leach (1996); Tiffen et al (1994); Rocheleau et al (1995); Murton (1997); Adams and Mortimore (1997); Thomas and Middelton (1994); Leach and Mearns (1996).

⁹ The concept of sustainable livelihoods is broader than that of food security, in that it considers ‘the means, activities, entitlements and assets by which people make a living. Assets...are defined as not only natural/biological (land, water, common-property resources, flora, fauna), but also social (community, family, social networks, participation, empowerment, human knowledge, creation by skills) and physical (roads, markets, clinics, schools, bridges)’ (UNDP 1999).

¹⁰ See also Duraiappah (1998), who argues against a purely causal link between poverty and environment by showing that both the poor and the wealthy may degrade the environment, depending on market and institutional incentive structure. Agarwal (1997) as well, in her study of links between gender, poverty and environment in India, concludes that generalizations as to the nature of these links cannot be made, since there are geographic differences in gender bias, in environmental risk, and in poverty incidence.

occur not only at the policy level, but at a deeper level which questions how, why, and under which circumstances such processes might occur in order to reevaluate our basic assumptions.

Beyond institutions – opening the field

As the alternative view of complexity in people-environment relationships presented above has gained acceptance in the development discourse of the early 21st century, the questions to be considered have also shifted. Issues of vulnerability and power relations¹¹ have come to the fore, and rather than focusing on finding universal causal linkages we now ask how we can best explore the complex processes which make certain groups and individuals in society more vulnerable than others to environmental, social, economic and political change.

One approach to explore these complexities has been through the study of local institutions for resource management. In particular the literature from studies on common pool resources (CPR) has contributed considerably to our understanding of local institutions in resource management¹², which, when combined with political ecology¹³ and gendered perspectives has addressed how resource management is tied to the interests of different stakeholder groups with often uneven or exploitive power relations. These approaches, however, have had a tendency to romanticize the local as opposed to, for example, the government. In South Asia, this can be seen in studies by scholars¹⁴ which have supported what has been referred to as the Standard Environmental Narrative (SEN), which in the words of Madsen (1999: 2) tells us that:

¹¹ See, for example, the discussion document 'Linking Poverty Reduction and Environmental Management' prepared by DFID, EC, UNDP and the World Bank (2002)

¹² See, for example, the Biennial Conference Papers (1998, 2000) compiled by the International Association for the Study of Common Property (IASCP).

¹³ See Peet and Watts (1998)

¹⁴ Some of the better know are, for example, Anil Agarwal, Madhav Gadgil, and Vandava Shiva.

...in the days of yore vibrant local communities lived largely in balance with nature, prudently managing their common property resources to satisfy a variety of needs of the community. The British, however, expropriated the common property resources without compensating the local stakeholders in order to exploit these resources commercially, thereby undermining the resource base of the local communities. Through no fault of their own, these communities subsequently have had to exploit whatever resources they had access to, in a less sustainable manner. After independence, the state and its main agent, the Forest Department, have been increasingly corrupted by politicians, forest contractors and timber mafias. According to the SEN, this has caused the contemporary environmental crisis. Consequently, the forest-dwellers and tribals must reassert their control over the commons to manage it on the basis of their indigenous knowledge, and in cooperation with NGOs

Recent work has begun to challenge the universality of this narrative, either through expanding the boundaries of the SEN¹⁵, or developing new perspectives. Agarwal and Sivaramakrishnan (2000), in their edited volume *Agrarian Environments: Resources, Representation and Rule in India*, criticize the earlier narratives in their almost exclusive focus on environment in terms of common pool resources, such as forests or pastures¹⁶. They argue that one cannot fully understand people-environment interactions without also including

¹⁵ See for example the contributions in Madsen (1999) which explores a state, society and market framework for studying the environment in South Asia.

¹⁶ This critique is qualified, however, as the authors recognize the historical setting in which the SEN narrative developed. They realize that 'environmental history in India was inspired by a radical critique of government and development that was building up amid the Sarvodaya movement and other antical government sentiment of the early 1970s' (Agarwal and Sivaramakrishnan 2000: 10). There was thus a struggle to put environmental issues on the political agenda, which was in turn reflected in the character of studies on resource management.

the agrarian dimension. They therefore introduce the concept of agrarian environments in an attempt to erase what they consider artificial conceptual borders between the arable and the nonarable in the rural environment, and try to re-link the concepts of nature and culture. In their view:

Agrarian environments are places that can neither be isolated as parks, nor be seen as the obvious centers of Vavilovian biodiversity. They are local spaces, as all experienced space perhaps is. They are home, however, not to the striking and exoticized indigene or the essentialized natural woman but to complex social formations and identities that reflect the diversity and flux of their landscapes. The communities that live in them are not the self-sufficient and harmonious formations currently the darling of many conservationists. Rather, these communities are unavoidably fragmented politically and are located and shaped in wider sociopolitical contexts toward whose construction they contribute. (Agarwal and Sivaramakrishnan 2000: 9)

It is in this vein that the current study on women and men's negotiations over control of and access to resources is undertaken. Negotiations over resources are examined in light of social processes which span both the agrarian and environmental spheres, exploring how issues of power, difference, identity and morality are integral parts of people's relationships with nature and each other, not only locally, but in relation to wider processes in society. These are themes which have only been touched on briefly in South Asia, and are particularly little understood in the Northern Areas of Pakistan¹⁷. By taking such an approach, this study will challenge existing views of

¹⁷ Perhaps the most extensive research work done in the Northern Areas to date has been through the Pakistan-German Research Project 'Culture Area Karakorum', which spanned the period 1989-1995. While several of

the unity of local communities and offer an alternative way of understanding the lives of the women and men of Baltistan.

Organization of the dissertation

This dissertation is organized in the following manner: The remainder of this introduction will present the study's purpose, and its relevance in development studies. Chapter two presents the study area and its environment. Chapter three presents the research approach, which includes the analytical approach, both in terms of epistemological issues and broader choices within social theory. Chapter four focuses on methodology. The next three chapters present a discussion of the findings within the three main themes of the dissertation: the nature of negotiation, the creation of difference, and powered negotiation in changing contexts, which, together, attempt to depict the manner in which women and men maneuver within their changing contexts in order to gain access to and control over resources. The final chapter offers a concluding discussion.

these studies address social processes in environmental and resource management contexts (see, for example, contributions of Seeland, Linkenbach, von der Heide, Hansen, and Herbers in Stellrecht and Winiger (1997), only Hansen and Herbers focus on the Northern Areas of Pakistan, and none in Baltistan. The studies do, however, provide very relevant and rich background and context material from more disciplinary points of view. In Baltistan, the work by Ken MacDonald on the mediation of environmental risk represents one of the few examples of combining social processes and environmental change.

2.0 SULTANABAD AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

The people of the village of Sultanabad, nestled in a mountain crevice at 3200 meters, are the primary focus of this case study. Despite its relative remoteness, however, Sultanabad as a village is by no means isolated. It is, for example, one of eight villages of the valley of Basho¹⁸, and in focusing on Sultanabad one also gains insight into the more general workings of intra-valley relations and institutions. Throughout this study, many references are thus made to the valley of Basho. In addition, the lives of the women and men of Sultanabad are integrated with and influenced by a variety of wider social, political and cultural processes, attitudes, norms and discourses. This section will briefly introduce Sultanabad's immediate social and physical setting, as well as aspects of the wider society of which it is a part. It is thus intended to serve as a backdrop for the more detailed descriptions and discussions of the everyday lives of the women and men in Sultanabad in the subsequent chapters.

¹⁸ The villages of Basho from bottom to top are Matillo, Bathang, Khar, Guncho, Meito, Doros, Nazimabad and Sultanabad.

Physical setting



Photo 1. Indus River from Basha Valley

The Basha watershed is located in Baltistan, in the Northern Areas of Pakistan, cradled between the far western Himalayas and the central Karakorum range. Baltistan hosts some of the world's highest peaks, and is a popular starting point for hiking and mountain climbing, including treks to K2. The mountains of Baltistan are geologically young, characterized by snowy peaks and glaciers, rugged, barren faces, giant erosion walls in deep, light grey loess deposits, deep gulches and huge gravel fans, all cut by deep, narrow valleys carved by rivers of glacier and snowmelt. Sand dunes surround the Indus flood plain in Skardo, the

administrative center of Baltistan, and high altitude plateaus and pastures such as the Deosai plains are home to a diverse wildlife and are the focus of several tourism and conservation efforts by the government and international NGOs (Hussian 2000).



Photo 2. Basha Valley from Nazimabad

Basho watershed, on the Khar River, is located ca. 45 kilometers west of Skardo. It rises on the southern side of the river Indus from an altitude of ca. 2150 at the Indus to ca. 5520 meters at the peak of Banak La mountain. The total area of the watershed is ca. 120 km². Situated in the western-most part of the Himalayan range, Basho, as the rest of Baltistan, is found within

a semi-arid and rugged mountain landscape and can be considered a 'mountain desert'. Falling within the rain shadow of the Himalayas, the average rainfall in the valley bottoms is estimated at 100 to 200 mm annually, which rises with elevation to create a somewhat moister environment in the forest and high-altitude rangelands. Much of the increasing precipitation in the higher areas, sometimes as much as 2000 mm, however, is in the form of snowfall, which when melts feeds into rivers and streams and finally extensive systems of water channels to provide a permanent source of water for agriculture. The mean maximum temperature during summer is between 30-35 degrees C, while in the winter the temperature can drop to -15 degrees C. Snow can in some years be several meters deep in Sultanabad, making it difficult to fetch water at the springs and collect firewood in the forest (Wisborg et al. 1998).

Religious context of Baltistan and Basho

While the majority of the Muslim population in Pakistan adheres to the Sunni branch of Islam (80%), the majority of the Northern Areas belongs to the Shia¹⁹ branch (ca. 75%). By far the largest population of Shias are found in Baltistan, where they comprise ca. 90% of the population, and Sunni the remaining 10%. Islam in Baltistan was preceded by Buddhism, most of which, however, had disappeared by the beginning of the 17th century, when most of the inhabitants were practicing Shia Islam (Dani 1991). While it is not certain exactly how Islam spread to Baltistan, most sources believe that it came from Kashmir, or via Kashmir from Iran, through the preachings of Amir Kabir Syed Ali Hamadani in ca. AD 1382 (ibid.; Afridi 1988). In Baltistan there are two groups of Shia, the largest being the Twelver Shias,

¹⁹ Sometimes written Shi'i.

and the remaining ca 30% belonging to the Nurbakshi, a sect which developed in the area of Khapulo (as well as Ladakh)²⁰(Rieck 1997).

Baltistan can be considered as 'a stronghold of Shi'i orthodoxy in Pakistan, marked by intensely religious community life and a powerful 'Ulamā' class' (Rieck 1997: 221). Religion plays an important role in the lives of the people of Baltistan, not only as a belief system, but also as a way of organizing social and political life. Religious leaders in Baltistan have significant influence in community life. This is both religiously and politically, with religious groups and parties playing an increasing role in the politics of particularly Skardo. The ways in which people of the area express their religious beliefs varies from district to district within Baltistan, with Skardo considered to be the most religiously strict in the district, perhaps due to active religious parties. NGOs working in the area, for example, are closely monitored by the religious leadership, who may at any time issue a *fatwa*²¹ if the organizations are considered to have behaved, for example, immorally²².

While there are variations in the way religion is manifested between the districts, there are also differences between urban and rural areas. One of the more visible expressions of religious practice in everyday life in Pakistani society is the regulation of women's mobility and the degree to which women are veiled (Donnan 1997; Mumtaz and Anjum 1992). In Skardo, there are strict social controls on women's movement and the wearing of the veil. Women are not welcomed in the main bazaar, and if they must go there they cover not only their head, but also their face except for their eyes. In fact, until the military takeover in 1999

²⁰ Although Rieck (1997) classifies the Nurbakshi as Shia, he informs that they consider themselves neither Shia nor Sunni, but something in between.

²¹ A religious decree.

²² In 1996, for example, there was a *fatwa* against the Aga Khan Rural Support Program, apparently due to their credit program, which was accused of charging interest (deemed unislamic), as well as their women's program, which was seen as promoting improper behavior by local women.

there were large signboards erected by the religious leadership informing women entering the area of the need to observe *hijab*²³ in Baltistan. This restriction of movement in the town area of Skardo, supported by a politically motivated religious discourse, seems to reflect what Donnan (1997) refers to the stereotypic picture of Pakistani women as restricted in movement and confined to the house. In the rural areas of Baltistan, however, women enjoy much more freedom of movement, and veiling is less strict. In Sultanabad, there are no walls separating the houses and properties, and women use their *chadors*²⁴ both inside and outside their houses, sometimes rather haphazardly and never over their faces, and they are free to move anywhere in the village. These limits, however, are not absolute. Some local women in Skardo, for example, do venture into the bazaar if they live in the center and the bazaar is defined as within their neighborhood and they are well known to the shopkeepers. Also, when strangers or religious leaders enter Basho, most women would tighten their chadors and remain at a distance. This implies that the ways in which women and men practice religion is highly variable, and depends on the ways in which women and men manage the different discourses surrounding these practices.

Religion in Basho, however, is more than mobility and veiling. It is a part of people's everyday lives and an expression of their social relationships with friends and neighbors. Religious discourse contributes to one's construction of identity through defining the moral boundaries of the community. While only a few members of the community of Basho can be considered religious scholars and thus able to present a discourse of a formal Islam, the vast majority participate in a discourse concerning the importance of certain religious practices in defining their membership in the community. For example, a year in Basho is comprised of a

²³ Hijab is the wearing of a scarf on the head. The signboards were removed by the army soon after the military takeover.

²⁴ A *chador* is a very long scarf used by women in Baltistan which covers most of the body, but not the face as would a *burqa*.

series of religious holidays where members of the valley gather at the *imambarghs*²⁵ to listen to sermons by either local or visiting *mulanas*²⁶. The villages take turns hosting these gatherings, in which villagers pray and share meals together. These gatherings are so important to the villagers that the religious leaders can, if they wish, threaten to boycott the village sermons if they disagree with community decisions. In Basho, this actually took place during the research project, when religious leaders from the lower part of the valley at one point threatened not to hold sermons in the valley if the villagers invited researchers into their homes.

In this study, religion or Islam per se is not in focus, but rather the ways in which religious practice and discourse contribute to people's identities and sense of morality in their negotiations over resources. As Leif Manger (1991: 18) so aptly states, '...rather than focusing on beliefs and conscious religious thought alone, we should link such aspects to practices and dynamics in non-religious fields in order to understand the various ways in which religious beliefs and habits become politicized as symbols of identity'.

Social setting

Sultanabad is the uppermost village in the valley of Basho²⁷, at the gateway to the villages' common grazing areas and one of Baltistan's largest natural forests. It is comprised of ca 28 households, with a total population of ca. 184²⁸. Most households (18) can be described as

²⁵ Imambargh is a religious community center

²⁶ Religious leaders

²⁷ Basho valley is comprised of 8 villages with a total population of ca. 2376, distributed among 297 households.

²⁸ A household in this study is defined according to the villagers' criteria of whether a unit is paying dues to the local village religious organization, Imamia Enjuman. These figures for Sultanabad are based on a census, and differ somewhat from surveys conducted the same year by both IUCN and AKRSP, who used random sampling

nuclear, with a husband, wife, children and possibly a widowed parent, there are two households where the husband has two wives, three where two brothers and their families comprise the household, and five where the parents head a large household with their sons and their families. This last type of household was apparently more common in the past, but the trend over the last 20 years has been towards nuclear households. Villagers claim that with the increase of off-farm income sources from labor and employment in the army there is no longer such a pressing need to pool resources and labor (Ahmad et al. 1998). This pattern of nuclear households is not unique to this area. Referring to ethnographic literature, Donnan (1997) states that nuclear households seem to be more prevalent in Pakistan than previously thought, and that the joint household as the norm is more a myth than based on empirical evidence.

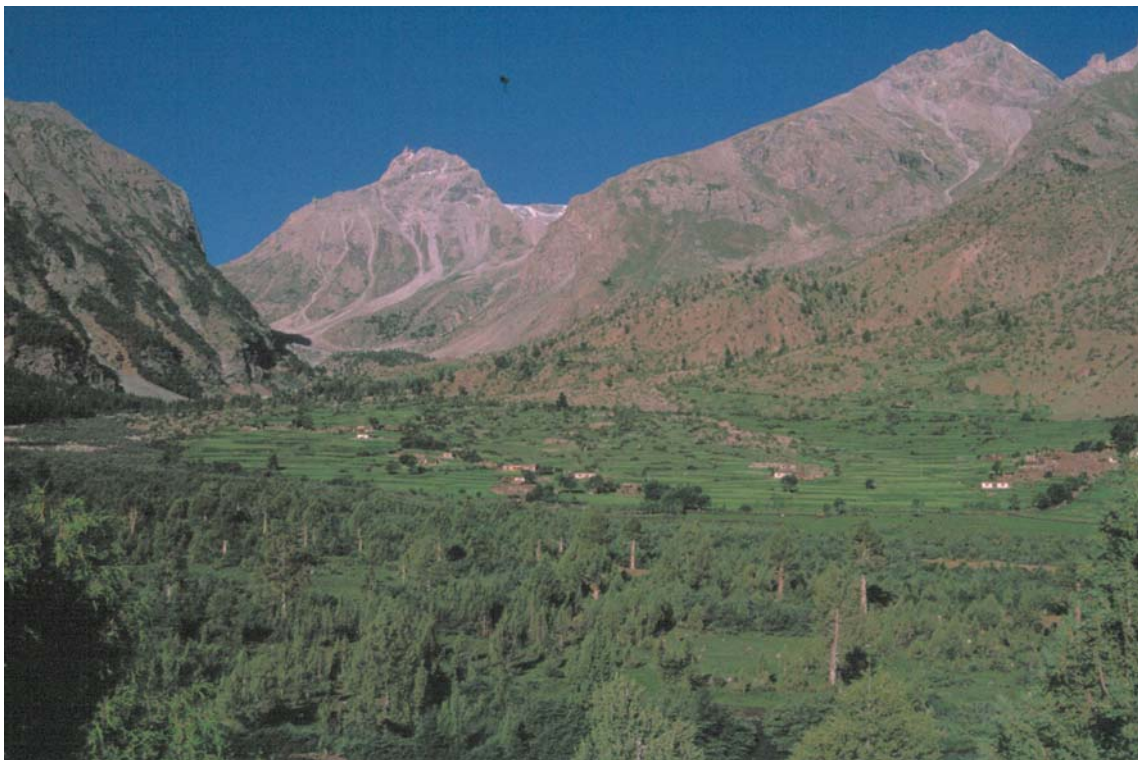


Photo 3. Sultanabad

methods. IUCN estimated 33 households and a total of 252 people, while AKRSP estimated 28 households with a total of 224 people, using household sizes of 7 and 8 respectively.

The main livelihood of villagers is farming. Most men, however, participate as well in casual labor on the construction of irrigation channels, some men earn money as carpenters in local house construction, a few women and men serve as shopkeepers, and others perform services as teachers or livestock specialists. About half of the village households have male family members who are employed elsewhere (for example in tourist hotels or the army) and send remittances home. Women perform mainly *rokh*, or exchange labor, but poorer women in the village and valley do agricultural work for pay, mainly in kind, but also in cash. This contradicts assumptions by development agents that women in Baltistan do not earn wage income²⁹.

Basho valley has four primary schools (one of which is for girls established in 1999), and one middle school, used mainly by boys, but not exclusively. One of the more influential villagers from a lower village was very proud of the fact that he sent his daughter to the middle school as the only girl ever, showing how committed he was to girls education. Literacy, however, is low in Basho, ca. 14% (Zia 1998), and we were not able to find a single literate woman. This is significantly lower than the national average of literacy: 50% for males and 24% for females, which again is the lowest in the South Asian region (Haq 1998). There is no health center in Basho, however there is a first aid station in the village of Khar (see map in Appendix 2), where one can purchase simple medications. The only trained medical people in the valley are a few midwives, who have received periodic training from the central health authorities with the assistance of NGOs.

The villagers of Sultanabad introduce their village as Thourmik, meaning the ‘hole underneath’. Originally, the settlement was said to have been located at Rushkin, the nearest

²⁹ The Farm Income and Expenditure Household Survey conducted in the valley by AKRSP, for example, did not include any question concerning women’s labor income.

summer *broq*, or pasture area, overlooking the valley, while the current settlement area was a lake. When the lake drained, the villagers moved down from the *broq* to establish its current location³⁰. The village is now divided into three hamlets: Chokot, Barodrom, and Mayadrom, and there is an *imambargh*³¹ and a mosque in the village. There are several clans in the village which are said to have migrated from different parts of the Northern Areas and Kashmir either recently or in the distant past. Recent migration has occurred mainly from Gilgit and Astore, and has been mainly through marriage and the encouragement of relatives to follow early migrant family members who were looking for land opportunities³². These clans are reflected somewhat in original settlement patterns within the three hamlets, but there is also extensive intermarriage between clans so that the hamlets are today quite mixed. Perhaps the most significant recent development in terms of clans is the growing number of Astoripa, or migrants from Astore, who are taking a leading role both economically and socially in the village.

The early origins of the people of Sultanabad have an interesting place in the history of Baltistan. Being in the path of ancient trade routes in the region, including the famous Silk Route, Baltistan is comprised of a mixture of people of different origins and languages. The dominant group, however, is of Mongolian descent which most likely was a result of early Tibetan settlers³³ as well as a wave of control from Tibet in the east through Ladakh in ca AD 650 (Dani 1991). This Tibetan influence can be seen today in the existence of a number of Buddhist carvings in Baltistan (Jettmar 1989), as well as in the dominant language, Balti,

³⁰ Ironically, there is currently talk by the government of installing a fairly large mini-hydel in the upper valley, which might once more lead to the flooding of the plain and some of the current settlement area.

³¹ Religious meeting place

³² Land was relatively abundant ca. 50 years ago. Now, however, land is becoming scarce. See discussion in chapter 6.

³³ The original settlers of Baltistan Archeological are believed to have been followers of the shamanic Bon or Pon tradition of Tibet, however, by ca. AD 400 Buddhism was the dominant religion (Francke 1926 in MacDonald 1995, Dani 1991).

which is closely related to the Tibetan dialect spoken in Ladakh. In addition to Balti-speakers, however, there is a relatively large group of Shina-speakers in Baltistan. These people originated from the west, from, for example, the areas of Chilas, Gilgit and Astore.

In Basho, the people in the lower villages speak Balti as their first language, but in Sultanabad, and partially Nazimabad (the next village down) people speak Shina³⁴. This phenomenon of Shina-speakers in the upper villages can be found along the entire stretch of Baltistan's southern range which borders on Astore. One explanation is that migration occurred due to easy access from Astore over the Deosai Plains into the valleys of Baltistan. Another is connected to the ruler Ali Abdullah Anchan, a Maqpon³⁵ ruler of Baltistan (from A.D. 1540-1565) who when expanding his reign over Chilas and Astore placed the prisoners from these areas in the uppermost parts of the valleys bordering Astore to act as watchmen against attacks from their relatives over the passes. These people were termed *broqpa*³⁶ by the Baltis, a term which has to this day a negative connotation in Baltistan. In Skardo, there is very little integration of Balti and Shina speakers. In Sultanabad, however, people from the two communities do intermarry, although many Baltis from the lower villages consider people from Sultanabad inferior, and the people of Sultanabad express feelings of being discriminated against by the Baltis in the lower villages.

In Sultanabad, there are various forms of social differentiation, some of which will be discussed in detail in chapter 5. One aspect of social differentiation which has not been evident in Sultanabad, but which forms a part of the wider context of Baltistan and down country Pakistan, is the concept of caste. Normally associated with Hindu ideology, a caste

³⁴ Shina is a Dari or Persian language

³⁵ A title probably originating from Tibet meaning 'head of a tribe' (Dani 1991).

³⁶ Balti for 'people living in high places'.

system refers to ‘groups of persons engaged in specific occupations or with specific characteristics and ranked hierarchically’ (Barfield 1999:50). Lois Dumont (1966/80) in particular claims that caste cannot be dissociated from ideology (hierarchy and purity), and that non-Hindu systems, including Muslim systems, can only be caste-like. Although some scholars have argued that caste is incompatible with the egalitarian ideology of Islam (Karim 1956), others claim there is evidence of a form of caste in Pakistan which, while not based on Hindu ideology, has similar characteristics. Ahmad (1973) refers to such groupings as *quoms*, where membership may be based on occupation and gives a certain status, but does not preclude an occupation by birth, and thus are not, according to Ahmad, a true caste system. Fredrik Barth (1960), however, in his work in Swat³⁷ describes the Pathans as a caste-based community where caste is not rooted in Hindu ideology, but on the division of labor and hierarchy. Nazir (1993: 2898) in his study of social differentiation among Muslims in Punjab, defines a caste system as ‘a local system of hierarchically ordered corporate groupings involving social division of labor, occupational specialization, unequal dependence, and recruitment by birth only’. He describes three main groups in Punjab society: landowning cultivators, artisan/service castes, and landless agricultural laborers/tenants, where caste is based not on Hindu ideas of collective purity, but on ideas of power, honor and prestige. How much of these systems are influenced by past association with Hindu culture, however, is unclear. In the case of the Pathans, Dumont (1966/1980: 210) stresses the system as an example of ‘the direction Muslims tend to take once they escape from strict cohabitation with Hindus’. Particularly the Punjab and Sindh areas are considered to have been heavily influenced by the caste system in India due to the large numbers of Indian Muslims having resettled there after partition in 1947³⁸ (Horowitz et al. 1995). Whether this is the case for all

³⁷ In Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province (NWFP)

³⁸ Technically, Muslims in pre-partition Punjab were also Indian, however they comprised a majority of the population of the area and were thus considered less influenced by the Hindu culture than their contemporaries living in other parts of India.

migrants, however, is not completely clear. Many of those who migrated from India were urban dwellers and resettled in the cities of Pakistan, particularly Karachi. These groups, however, do not show evidence of caste.

The Northern Areas of Pakistan, however, lie on the outskirts of what might be considered Hindu influence in Pakistan, but there is evidence of at least caste-like social stratification here as well. In the Shin-speaking population of the Gilgit region, there are what might be described as four main castes (Dani 1991; Ali and Rehman 2000) or qawms³⁹: Shin, Yashkin, Kamin and Dom. In this area, the Shin consider themselves to be spiritually cleaner than the others, and give a special status particularly to goats as sacred animals. On the other hand, Yashkin (who are in the majority) generally consider Shins as backward and uncultured. The Yashkin are landowners, the Kamin (or Krameen) craftsmen and poorer farmers, and the Dom are minstrels, and are thought to have migrated originally from the south. Ali and Rehman (2000) also mentions Ronos, (a ruling class of leaders and administrators), the Sayeds (those who claim descent from the prophet Mohammad) and the Gujars, who are settled nomads and represent the lowest social class into which the other groups will not, for example, marry. Informants from the region, however, say that most of these casts are particular to the Shina-speaking population, and play a more important role in the creation of one's identity where there are large Shina-speaking populations. In Astore, a purely Shina-speaking area, everyone would know whether they are, for example, a Shin or a Yashkun, and this can be the cause of conflict between groups. Caste identity in these areas can also, however, serve to unify groups, such as Sunni and Shia sects, who otherwise would be in conflict, if the circumstances allowed and people chose to do so. Sökefeld (1997: 108), in examining ethnic identities in Gilgit, points to the recent preponderance of religious identity, in this case Sunni vs Shia, over

³⁹ Aase (1999) describes qawms as agnatic descent groups, translated into 'caste' or 'nation' by English speaking locals.

that of *qom* (*qawm* or caste), but does not preclude this is always the case. He gives an example of how two men from the same *qom* but different religions negotiated their identities in the context of participation in one of their daughter's marriage dinners, oscillating between close community ties and religious antagonism as the evening progressed. He argues, thus, that the meaning of people's identities 'is established only in the course of interaction – and it can be changed over again'. In other words, different aspects of plural identities can be brought forth in different situations, or during the same interaction, depending on the nature of the interaction itself. This is analogous to the discussion in chapter 5 which looks at identities particularly in terms of gender.

In Baltistan, the Shina-speaking population is in the minority, but most belong to the Shia sect as do the majority of Baltis in the area⁴⁰. In this area, the Shina-speakers seem to be more concerned with balancing their collective political interests in relation to their Balti neighbors than feeding difference amongst themselves, and many are not necessarily aware if they are Yashkin or Shin. They are, however, more conscious of the groups of Kamin, or craftsmen, and Dom, minstrels, as well as the Raja (ruling families), Wazirs (administrative caste) and Sayed (descendants of the prophet Mohammad). In Sultanabad, there was never any reference made to whether one was Yashkin or Shin, and there was no Kamin or Dom living in the valley (Dom would travel from other valleys to Sultanabad to perform in celebrations). Reference was made, however, to the Rajas, who owned land in the valley, and the Sayed, of which there were several families in the valley. The Yashkin and Shina identities, however, cannot be said to be completely irrelevant, in that Shina-speaking immigrants to both Skardo and Sultanabad would also bring their consciousness of their caste identities. There is limited evidence in this area, however, of lasting strict social and occupational divisions with the

⁴⁰ Sunnis comprise ca. 10% of the population of Skardo.

spread of educational and economic opportunities. Nevertheless, families, particularly in Skardo, continue to evaluate critically the family background in prospective marriage alliances, where caste is one of the criteria considered.

Political context

The political and institutional context within which Sultanabad is nested is historically vast, as these northern areas have been at the crux of a number of important ancient and modern civilizations spreading from Russia and Central Asia, China and Tibet, India and the British Empire. More recently, partition with India, conflicts over Kashmir, and the military coup in 1999 have all influenced the political scene on which local actors currently play. This section will give a brief overview of the political history of Baltistan and describe the current governance structures in light of some of the recent political events in the region.

In its early history, Baltistan is thought to have been ruled for centuries by the Hun, a tribe whose influence spread from China to Europe, but whose origins are difficult to trace (Dani 1991). Their power waned, however, about the time of the rise of central authority and dynastic rule in Tibet (ca. AD 650). In an attempt to gain control over Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang) in a wave of territorial expansion, the Tibetans occupied Baltistan, introducing the Tibetan script⁴¹ and Buddhist doctrines (ibid.; Hurley 1961). Tibetan control ended ca AD 880-900 with the dissolution of dynastic power, making room for the development of new state powers. It is not certain, however, where these new state powers originated, although they were most likely from outside the region. One theory is that Turkish rulers intent on controlling trade routes across the Karakorum through India settled in Baltistan. Another

⁴¹ Local knowledge of Tibetan script in writing Balti has almost been lost in Baltistan, where only a few poets and teachers have limited skills. In recent years, however, there has been a resurgence of interest in Baltistan's pre-Islamic culture, and teachers in writing Tibetan script are being sought from, for example, Ladakh.

theory, however, which is a part of the traditional lore of Skardo, is of an immigrant from Kashmir, Ibrahim Shah, who married a local princess and started the Makpon dynasty of Skardo. Over the next centuries this dynasty consolidated its power and fended off invasions by the Dards of Chilas and Astore, Mughals of Delhi, as well as attacks from Ladakh. Although the Moghals from India did manage to gain control over Baltistan for a period, they did not rule directly, and the local rulers continued to manage their affairs. With the decline of the Moghals central power, Baltistan regained its independent position, and local rajas continued to rule as autocrats. Baltistan at this time was divided into 8 principalities, each with its own raja; Skardo, Khapulo, Shigar, Keris, Kharmang, Rondu, Tolti and Parkuta (Polzer and Schmidt 2000).

In 1842, Dogra rulers of Jammu and Kashmir took advantage of local feuds and extended their influence into Baltistan and Gilgit, with the blessings of the British in India. For the next 50 years, the Dogra of Kashmir dominated relations between Baltistan and the lowlands, with the rajas continuing their local administration. Baltistan was considered a part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, with Ghulab Singh as independent ruler under the British. From ca 1890, and until partition, however, the British took a stronger role in the region. This was a continuation of the era of 'The Great Game', or the struggle between the great powers of Russia, China and the British Empire to gain control over the strategically important passes of the region, as well a time when British explorers roamed the area mapping and collecting information for the British Empire. In 1899 the Frontier District was formed, comprised of Baltistan, Ladakh and Gilgit. In 1901 the district was split, and Baltistan became a part of Ladakh District. Despite this increased interest, the British continued their strategy of indirect rule through the maharaja of Jammu, and the local population continued to be administrated by the rajas, who now had to pay tribute to the Dogra (Polzer and Schmidt 2000). Each valley

had a *numbardar*, who was responsible for carrying out the wishes of and collecting taxes for the Raja. In Sultanabad, the *numbardar* was a Shina-speaker living in one of the middle villages. The latter period of Dogra rule is still remembered by the elders of Basho. They refer to the Dogra, mostly in a negative way, who according to them controlled the trade in the bazaar in Skardo and gave villagers bad prices on their produce. They also recall how the Dogra left after partition, and trade routes to Leh and Ladakh were cut, causing a shift in trade routes from east to west as the Karakorum highway (stretching from Islamabad to China) and road between Gilgit and Skardo were constructed.

At partition in 1947, the Dogra ruler Maharaja Hari Singh decided, despite the Muslim majority of the district, that his principality would join India, sparking a freedom struggle in Gilgit and Baltistan (*jang azadi*). The Gilgit Scouts, after defeating the Dogra in Gilgit, assisted Baltistan in pushing them out of the area in August 1948. The people of the Northern Areas at that point asked Pakistan for accession, but was granted only status of federally administered area of Pakistan⁴². In 1948 the Pakistani government established the Gilgit Agency, and two years later installed a political agent in Skardo, Baltistan. First placed under the political resident of the North-West Frontier Province, responsibility for Gilgit and Baltistan was transferred in 1950 to the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs, where a post of political resident and chief advisor was created (Ali and Rehman 2000). By 1967, a separate post of resident of Northern Areas was created at Gilgit.

In the early 1960s, the military president Ayub Khan introduced a program of ‘Basic Democracies’ nationally, which was introduced to Baltistan in 1961. He intended this program ‘to develop local leadership, to develop pride in their own areas, to bridge the gap

⁴² To this day the people of the Northern Areas do not enjoy full citizenship in Pakistan, as evidenced by their exclusion from the referendum called by President Musharraf to extend his rule by an additional 5 years.

between the people and the administration, to bring the people's thought to bear on all their problems, to initiate them in the act of self-help and collective action, and above all to release their latent creative energies and to utilize the vast manpower in the country for its development' (Afridi 1988: 294). Under this program, 24 Union Councils were formed in Baltistan, headed by a District Council in Skardo. Overall power in Baltistan, however, was in the hands of the political resident, who exercised the functions of the local government, acted as high court judge and commissioner for the Frontier Crimes Regulation⁴³, financial and revenue commissioner, and exercised legislative powers for the Pakistani government (Dani 1991; Ali and Rehman 2000).

What is interesting during this period is that both during the colonial period and in the face of the establishment of these new government bodies and popular councils, the Northern Areas continued to be practically administered by the raja system. Rajas still collected a tax from their subjects, and continued to control the administration through the *wazirs*⁴⁴ and *numbardars*. In the villages, a system of *jirga* (community assembly) run by a group of elders made important community decisions and resolved local conflicts. Rather than replacing this system, the new government structures existed side by side with the raja system, and in many ways the two systems became integrated and reinforced each other. Members of the raja families were voted into the Union Councils, often uncontested, as were the *wazirs* and sometimes the *numbardars*. This set-up, however, did not last indefinitely. As a part of President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's implementation of a socialist program in wider

⁴³ The Frontier Crimes Regulation (1901) was a law designed for the tribal or frontier districts to suppress crime. The law was also known as the 'black law' due to the 'extremely harsh, inhumane and discriminatory provisions' (Ali and Rehman 2000: 52). These laws survived independence, and have formed a parallel judiciary system in the NWFP. While the FCR was also applied in the Northern Areas, it was abolished in the 1970s due to its oppressive provisions. Civil and criminal courts are today regulated under the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Civil Courts Ordinance, although local systems of *jirga* (village assemblies) are still active, and their decisions accepted by the formal system of law (ibid).

⁴⁴ a 'caste' of administrators for the rajas, directly supervising the *numbardars*.

Pakistan, the raja system of the Northern Areas was abolished in 1972, Gilgit and Baltistan Agencies were converted into districts, a new district, Diamer, was formed, which included Astore, Chilas and Darel/Tangir. The Northern Areas Committee was formed, headed by the minister for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Affairs, which later became the Northern Areas Council. The council has only an advisory role, no real political power. The Ministry functions somewhat like a provincial government, implementing laws from Pakistan it sees fit for the Northern Areas.

Since 1972 there have been a number of changes in the administrative system of the Northern Areas, particularly in light of the recent reforms implemented by President Pervez Musharraf after his military takeover in October 1999. Despite the formation of the union councils and district councils in 1961, all power at the district level continued to be concentrated in the hands of the Commissioner of the Northern Areas and his Deputy Commissioners in Gilgit, Baltistan and Diamer. After Musharraf's takeover, however, changes in the governance structure were implemented, initially but only partially in the Northern Areas, and later and more fully in the rest of Pakistan. In down-country Pakistan, there was the creation of local (*dehi*) councils, and a restructuring of power and responsibilities between the administration and the elected district council. The Deputy Commissioner lost his formerly all-encompassing powers and became instead the District Coordinating Officer (DCO), under the supervision of the elected *Nazim*, or head of the district council. In this new system, federal funding is channeled through the district council, which then distributes it to the local councils for development activities. In the Northern Areas, however, the DC is still in power due to the special political status of the area. The most significant change in Baltistan in this process was the creation of the local (*dehi*) councils with representatives from every valley. Initially, this has had a profound affect on at least certain local communities in Baltistan, whose

representatives feel they now have a say in how government resources should be allocated. In Basho, for example, the local council received funding from a federally initiated poverty alleviation program and managed to improve their local road in a matter of only a few months. It is not clear, however, if this system will continue to function in this manner. In addition, power structures within the villages and valleys may not have changed significantly. In Basho, for example, we find the leaders of the Basho Development Organization (BDO) (a new organization based on the former *jirga*) serving as well as the valley's representatives in both the local and union councils. If these representatives are committed in their work for the community, such consolidation of power can be good for the valley. However, if these representatives prioritize their personal interests, their positions of power can hinder others in the valley more committed to community development in contesting elections.

Gender relations and the status of women in Pakistan

Statistical social indicators for both women and men in Pakistan are among the lowest in South Asia, with substantial gender disparities (DFID et al 2002, Haq 1999)⁴⁵. The national literacy rate for women, for example, is 24%, half of that of men, and there exist large urban-rural differences, where 55% of men and 37% of women in the cities are literate, while only 26% of men and 7% of women are literate in the rural areas⁴⁶. Violence against women, particularly in the home, is considered to be widespread, estimated to lie within a range of 70-

⁴⁵ In recent years, UNDP has developed a number of indexes designed to examine gender disparities in social status, such as the Gender-related development index (GDI) and the Gender empowerment measure (GEM). For both of these measures, the values for Pakistan indicate substantial gender inequities with regards to life expectancy, educational attainment, income, economic participation and decision making (percentage of female administrators and managers, and professional and technical workers), political participation and decision making (percentage of seats in parliament held by women), and power over economic resources (measured by women's estimated earned income) (UNDP 2001).

⁴⁶ Some rural areas have even lower literacy rates. In Balochistan, for example, only 1.7% of women are literate (Haq and Haq 1998).

95% of all women in Pakistan⁴⁷. These statistics paint a dismal picture of particularly women's status in Pakistan, prompting the World Bank to classify the status of women in Pakistan as being 'among the lowest in the world' (World Bank 1998).

While it is important to be aware of the extensive degree to which women's interests have been neglected in various social sectors, understanding gender relations in Pakistan, (and furthermore Baltistan) requires more than a study of national statistics. Exploring some of the discourses on gender relations at a wider level in society can as well serve as a backdrop to understanding the ways in which local women and men, and public policymakers might participate in or be influenced by such a broader discourse. These discourses both support and challenge what might at any time be the dominant discourse or gender ideology. This dynamic can be seen by examining briefly some of the historical discourses on gender in Pakistan.

Even prior to Pakistan's relatively short history as a state, there have been significant public discourses precisely on gender relations, particularly in terms of women and men's public and domestic roles in society. This contradicts conservative claims in Pakistan that discussions of gender relations and women's rights are primarily modern, Western phenomena, and the Pakistani women's movement is 'a movement of English educated, upper class women whose heads are filled with foreign, imported ideas, and who have no roots among the true Pakistani women' (Alavi 1988: 1329). In fact, evidence of public discourse on gender relations can be found in colonial India in the mid 19th century, where discussions took place within the Muslim community, as well as between Muslim, Hindu, and colonial officials. These pre-partition discourses varied in their content and motivation, but often gravitated around the

⁴⁷ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan; Women's Ministry, and Amnesty International in Human Rights Watch (1999).

interpretation of purdah; some supporting a concept of segregation, others rejecting it.

Willmer (1996: 576) contends, for example, that due to the consolidation of colonial power and the resultant loss of power and authority of Muslim men in the public sphere, they turned their attention to the politics of the household. The dominant discourse during that period thus promoted the imposition of orthodox Islamic values as a means to protect the Muslim way of life in India, making the household 'the new stronghold of Muslim civilization'. In this discourse, women's segregation was central, but so was women's dedication to religious orthodoxy. Thus despite segregation, women were not absent from public debate. Women were, in fact, considered to be politically powerful both indirectly through their male family members, and directly through addressing all-male crowds, albeit veiled. As one colonial official remarked in 1919, 'My problem is to keep the Musalman women right. If they get a handle, as they did over the Cawnpore mosque incident, they will force their husbands and male relations to do something for Islam. No Government in the East can control a combination of priests and women.'⁴⁸ Women thus constituted a moral force in the Muslim community, participating directly and indirectly in public discourse in the very community in which men were promoting segregation as a means to protect the existence of the Muslim community.

In the first half of the 20th century, however, the dominant discourse of sexual segregation or purdah as defining gender relations was challenged by the educated elite among India's Muslim community. As early as 1903 it was suggested in an Urdu monthly that the practice be abolished, and by the mid 1930 there were many widely differing opinions being discussed in public debates (ibid.), and seem to have formed the seeds for a growing women's

⁴⁸ In Willmer (1996: 576) quoted from Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces Muslims, 1860-1923* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974). The quote is from a document sent by Harcourt Butler, lieutenant governor of the United Provinces to the Viceroy in Chelmsford (Chelmsford Papers (22), India Office Library).

movement amongst both women and men elites. This emergence of public debate around gender relations, however, coincided with the emerging forces for Muslim political self-determination, and in the process the discourse on gender relations was co-opted into the struggle for a separate Muslim state. In attempts to consolidate forces for partition, the women's movement was thus forced into the background, and had to be content with Jinnah's⁴⁹ placating of the conservative sections of the Muslim community through toning down demands of, for example, the abolition of purdah. Any support women got towards participating in public debates was based on their support of the independence movement and not on the basis of any move towards modernity or individual fulfillment for women.

Pakistan, at partition, was thus not devoid of a discourse on gender relations, but nationalist interests qualified the nature of the discourse. Issues of self-fulfillment and modernization were put in the background, but did not disappear from the political arena. In the years following the great migration connected with partition, the women's movement took the form of relief organizations –the most well known being the All-Pakistan Women's Association (APWA), headed by Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan, the wife of the first prime minister (Mumtaz and Shaheed 1987). These organizations continued to work for the improvement of the status of women by starting girls' schools and other welfare projects, but the struggle for women's rights was slow, and there was little public debate on gender relations beyond a welfare-based discourse.

This changed, however, with the coming of General Muhammad Zia ul-Haq to power in a bloodless coup in 1977. During his rule, and particularly during the period of martial law (1977-1985) gender relations again came to the fore of the political discourse during what is

⁴⁹ Mohammad Ali Jinnah, leader of the Pakistan movement for self-determination.

commonly referred to as the Islamization program. During this period, the Council of Islamic Ideology⁵⁰ recommended measures which would strengthen a conservative interpretation of Islam and ‘establish an Islamic atmosphere in the country’ (Pal 1990). Three areas of legislation introduced during this period are considered as the main content of the Islamization program, and all have implications for the consequent discourse on gender relations in Pakistan: the Haddoo Laws of 1979; the amendments to the Law of Evidence (1984); and the draft ordinance on Qisas and Diyat. Within the Haddoo Laws, it is the ordinance concerning the enforcement of the offence of *zina* (adultery, fornication and prostitution) that has caused the most reactions from women’s groups as threatening women’s rights as previously stipulated in the 1973 Constitution (Weiss 1999). Under this law there is an apparent lack of distinction between adultery (*zina*) and rape (*zina-bil-jabr*), and a woman who has experienced rape runs the risk of being accused of adultery if she cannot provide the court with four male witnesses to attest to the rape. Likewise, the amendment to the Laws of evidence, was considered not to give equal weight to men’s and women’s testimonies in court in that it required testimony from two men, or one man and two women in matters pertaining to financial or future obligations. Finally, the draft ordinance on *qisas* (retaliation) and *diyat* (blood money), proposed that the compensation the female victim of a murder would be half that of a man, and in the case of *qisas* retaliation the testimony of two men would be required. This ordinance was, however, never implemented.

As a reaction to these laws of Islamization, there was a resurgence of the women’s movement throughout the 1980s. The reason for this activity was not necessarily that these laws themselves had a great impact on women’s everyday lives through increased prosecution. In fact, Kennedy (1988) has found that the Federal Shariat Court overturns over half of the

⁵⁰ This council was reconstituted by Zia under the 1973 Constitution to represent the fundamentalist viewpoint of Islam (Pal 1990).

appeals cases it tries, and the majority of convictions, even for *zina*, are of men. Rather, it was the political and psychological impact of the ordinances which had the greatest impact. On the one hand, it represented a political victory for the traditionalist religious leaders (Pal 1990), which served to strengthen the zeal of the political discourse surrounding gender relations and women's roles in society. The psychological effects had possibly a wider impact. As put by Alavi (1988: 1328), 'the military regime's action, rhetoric, and propaganda generated an atmosphere in the country which seemed to give license to individual and self-appointed guardians of public morality, to take the 'law' into their own hands and harass women. There was an unprecedented increase in attacks on women in all kinds of situations by all and sundry...[which] was allowed by the authorities to go on with impunity'.

There were many more laws and ordinances which were, when taken together with the above, considered as discriminatory to women (which will not be mentioned here). Thus, in challenging these laws, mainly through legal and policy channels, the women's movement in the 1980's represented a strong counter discourse to the dominant ideology on gender relations. This dynamic continued throughout the military government rule, and into the civilian governments of, more recently, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. There have been several setbacks to the discourses on gender relations in Pakistan in recent years, particularly the acceptance of Shariat as the basis for law in 1998 during the conservative government of Nawaz Sharif. In the current government, however, President Musharraf, professes a clearly secular agenda, and has been actively bringing gender relations and the rights of women into the national political discourse in ways which challenge the former fundamentalistic ideology. Women's representation in government advisory bodies has increased, and women have been given a quota of minimum 33% seats in the district and local councils.

While these discourses have been occurring at the national level, they are, through the political activities at the local level, also becoming more visible in remote areas such as in Baltistan. Local political elites latch on to the national rhetoric when it serves their purpose, whether it be to support a conservative gender ideology, or to challenge it. Until the military takeover, conservative rhetoric formed the dominant discourse on gender relations in Baltistan's center Skardo. With the weakening of the dominance of religious ideology, however, there are increasing opportunities for local actors, i.e. NGOs and other local organizations to latch on to discourses which support a less restrictive view of gender relations.

Development and research activities in Basho

Several government departments have been involved in development activities in Basho, including the Public Works Department (bridge, hydropower station), the Education Department (primary and middle school) and the Forest Department (road, forest conservation). There are, in addition, several non-governmental organizations actively involved in community development activities. The primary school in Sultanabad, for example, was originally financed by the Marfi Foundation, a Kuwait-based NGO. IUCN has been involved in community-based resource management and conservation since 1997. The most active organization in the valley, however, has been the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP), which throughout the 1990s has 7 Village Organizations (VOs) and 5 Women's Organizations (WOs) in Basho. These VOs and WOs are the focal point of AKRSP's support to the valley. Activities through these organizations have included the construction of irrigation channels and the consequent opening of new productive land, training in various agricultural skills (plant protection, animal vaccination, vegetable

production), planting of forest plantations, and general institution-building activities i.e. training in leadership, management and bookkeeping.

The research program of which this study is a part is the 'High Altitude Integrated Natural Resource Management Program', a collaborative effort between the Agricultural University of Norway and AKRSP initiated in 1997. The research program is comprised of six components:

- Institutions and organizations in pasture and forest management
- Gender in natural resource management
- Pasture, livestock and biodiversity
- Farm forestry and natural forest management
- Farm resources
- Information and documentation

The main objective of Phase I of the research program (1997-2001) has been 'to gain further insights into pasture and forest resources and their role in farmers' livelihood systems through participatory, applied research together with local organizations.' The research has employed an interdisciplinary approach through the choice of one valley where issues can be seen from several angles by different researchers, and through direct interaction between researchers from different disciplines in the field. There has also been continuous involvement by government, particularly the forest department, in both field exercises and policy discussions. AKRSP staff has been fully involved in the research activities, in addition to being responsible for the field logistics of the program. They have thus played a double role in the valley, both as implementers and researchers.

3.0 RESEARCH APPROACH

Choosing a research approach within the social sciences in a society influenced by poststructural/postmodern discourse is a different task today than it was in the past. As Denzin and Lincoln tell us (1994: 15), ‘We are in a new age where messy, uncertain, multivoiced texts, cultural criticism, and new experimental works will become more common, as will more reflexive forms of fieldwork, analysis, and intercontextual representation.’ This makes the choices of method and approach more complicated, as the rules and boundaries governing the distinctions between disciplines and schools of thought become blurred in the process (Crotty 1998: 209). Along with this complexity, however, rides a flexibility of choice that, if managed deftly, can open for new creativity in addressing the difficult challenges posed within the realm of development and development research. Rather than confining our choice of approach to specific schools or thinkers, Crotty (ibid.: 216) suggests, ‘As researchers, we have to devise for ourselves a research process that serves our purposes best, one that helps us more than any other to answer our research question.’ This involves a process whereby we ‘engage in a running conversation’ with other scholars, who become ‘our partner[s] in the generation of new meaning’ (ibid.). It is in this spirit that this research has been undertaken.

Research, however, is not exclusively a conversation with scholars. Social research that involves the collection of empirical data from the field extends the discussion to include those who are the focus of the study. Following a constructivist epistemology⁵¹ as this study chooses to do, the subjects of the study are not merely objects for study, but partners in the creation of knowledge. As Guba and Lincoln (1994: 111) explain, ‘The investigator and the

⁵¹ See footnote nr. 58.

object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the ‘findings’ are literally created as the investigation proceeds.’ Research thus proceeds according to hermeneutic and dialectical principles, where the life-worlds of researcher and subject interact to create new meaning. The implications of such an epistemological stance for this study are presented in the discussion of an actor-oriented approach below, and the discussion of methodology and method in Chapter 3.

How does one go about choosing which approaches and theories are relevant to the research question? From its inception, this study has been approached in an interdisciplinary manner, to be understood in terms of process rather than representation⁵². This implies that the search for theoretical approaches, methodologies, and discussions of the concepts addressed in this study has not been confined to one specific discipline. Instead, works within a broad range of disciplines have been consulted and assessed according to their relevance and usefulness in explaining the empirical data and addressing the research question. While the search may have been wide, however, the focus has not remained broad. In the course of the research, works from some disciplines i.e. anthropology, political science, and development studies have become more central than others, depending on the concepts on which I chose to focus, and the disciplines that have these concepts as their focus. This has narrowed the literature relevant for the concepts chosen for in-depth study. Thus, rather than having as a goal the representation of a broad range of disciplines, this study chooses an interdisciplinary *process*, continually assessing the relevance of different works of different origins, and delving into deeper discussions with those works which can help to enlighten an understanding of the particular issue being addressed.

⁵² See Bergstrøm and Molteberg (1999), Molteberg and Bergstrøm (1999), McNeill (1999), and Molteberg, Bergstrøm and Haug (2000), for detailed discussions of the concept of interdisciplinarity.

To help sift through the choices inherent in conducting research, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive analytical approach. By this, I refer not to one specific theory, but to the set of strategies that will guide the different phases of the research, from problem formation, through fieldwork and analysis, to write-up of the final dissertation. The choice of methodologies and methods is mainly to be guided by the research purpose and questions (Crotty 1998). Crotty, however, argues further that

...there is more to it than that...Justification of our choice and particular use of methodology and methods is something that reaches into the assumptions about reality that we bring to our work. To ask about these assumptions is to ask about our theoretical perspective. It also reaches into the understanding you and I have of what human knowledge is, what it entails, and what status can be ascribed to it...These are epistemological questions (ibid.: 2).

Crotty thus suggests four elements that should be considered when choosing an approach to social research: epistemological stance, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. All of these will be considered when discussing the choice of analytical approach below. I propose, however, that particular attention has to be given to how our assumptions of reality and knowledge (epistemology) that we bring to research are determined, since they influence our choice of approach and method. As Crotty suggests above, some of our choices are certainly based on our experiences of our life-worlds preceding the research exercise. Others, however, are influenced by our experiences in conducting the research itself, and in particular on how we meet and interpret our subjects and experiences in the field. Because we are constantly facing new experiences in the process of research in the field, we have the opportunity to test and update our assumptions, such that our approach can evolve over time.

The choices of approach made in this study have evolved in this manner, being influenced both by theoretical discussions and by the empirical data and experiences in the field.

Approaching the study of social processes

How one perceives the essence of social change and development in general will have a deciding influence on the analytical approach one chooses in studying a particular development problem. Long (1992: 18-22) distinguishes between two broad paradigms in the development literature which exhibit starkly divergent views on how society works. The first he terms structural models of development, and includes theories of modernization and neo-Marxist dependency. In some respects, he argues, these theories are ideologically opposites - modernization theory conceptualizes development as 'a progressive movement towards technologically and institutionally more complex and integrated forms of 'modern' society' with a focus on economic development, macro policies promoting ever increasing rates of productivity and consumption, and the 'trickle-down' effect, while neo-Marxist theories of development stress the 'exploitative nature of these processes'. What he claims they have in common, however, is their belief in the overriding importance of macro-processes in determining social change, particularly in the South⁵³. They are thus 'determinist, linear and externalist views of social change' (ibid.), where people are seen as passive recipients of social systems which are formed in processes which are out of their control.

The second paradigm of social change and development which Long presents as a counterpoint to structural analysis is an actor-oriented paradigm. He argues 'although it may

⁵³ Long does, however, acknowledge the neo-Marxist attention to internal patterns of exploitation such as class. Nevertheless, he agrees with Kay (1989: 194-6) that the bulk of the literature on the South (developing countries) 'overdetermines' the external.

be true that certain important structural changes result from the impact of outside forces (due to encroachment by the market or the state), it is theoretically unsatisfactory to base one's analysis on the concept of external determination. All forms of external intervention necessarily enter the life-worlds of the individuals and social groups affected, and in this way are mediated and transformed by these same actors and structures' (ibid.: 20). Long thus argues for an approach which 'stresses the interplay and mutual determination of 'internal' and 'external' factors and relationships, and which recognizes the central role played by human action and consciousness'. In other words, an approach which includes actors as both participants in and determinants of social development. This, he argues, is the essence of actor-oriented approaches.

In terms of this study, an actor-oriented approach as interpreted by the authors contributing to Long & Long's *Battlefields of Knowledge* (1992) provides methodological and theoretical underpinnings which are useful in addressing the main research question. Studying the nature of women and men's negotiations over resources requires an approach which is able to explore the essence of social interaction as it occurs in the context of their everyday lives. This study has found that in Sultanabad, Pakistan, the manner in which women and men choose to manage their resources is very much defined by dynamic power relations in their immediate environment, but is by no means isolated from wider processes in society, something which becomes apparent when examining the social, political and economic context of, for example, forest resource management in the Basho watershed to which Sultanabad belongs (see Chapter 6). An approach which offers a view of social processes which is able to both capture the dynamics of power relations between individuals and groups, and explore the nature of this social interaction in light of wider social, political, economic and natural processes is thus very relevant for this study. In addition to theoretical guidance

in the study of social processes, Long and Long include epistemological and methodological discussions which address the relations between theory, empirical data and fieldwork in a way not often addressed in other approaches to the study of social change. For this study, such perspectives were particularly important in analyzing a situation where we as researchers, through everyday interaction with villagers, in many ways became a part of the context that we were studying.

Actor-Oriented Approach

The guiding analytical concepts of an actor-oriented approach include agency and social actor, the notion of multiple realities and life worlds, and the idea of interface in terms of discontinuities of interests, values, knowledge and power (Long 1992: 271). A closer look at each of these concepts will clarify how this research chooses to approach the study of social processes in Sultanabad.

Agency and Social Actors

Agency is quite simply the ability of a social actor to act. Understanding the nature of agency and action, however, has been shown to be anything but simple, and has in the wake of theories of structural determinism become the ‘pivot around which discussions aimed at reconciling notions of structure and actor revolve’ (ibid.: 22). Several of the actor-oriented discussions of agency and action take as their starting point Giddens (1984)⁵⁴, who refers to action as depending on ‘the capability of the individual to ‘make a difference’ to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events. An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the

⁵⁴ Long (1992), for example, uses Giddens while laying down the premises of an actor-oriented approach.

capability to make a difference, that is, to exercise some sort of power' (Giddens 1984: 14). To what extent, however, are women and men able to act in light of social relations that serve to constrain their actions? To what extent are social relations enabling? These questions surfaced early when trying to understand women and men's negotiations over resources in Sultanabad, particularly when exploring the gendered aspects of these social relations. In some cases there appear to be structures defined purely along gendered lines, which limit, for example, women's mobility in the valley. Closer examination of the findings reveals, however, that there are numerous exceptions to what appear to be strict rules on women's mobility, and certain women - e.g. older women, and those whose husbands are away in the army - under certain circumstances, can move much more freely than others. What, then, is structure, and what is the nature of the interplay between actors and structures? How can they be conceptualized? Burns and DeVille's (1985) presentation of the Actor Systems Dynamics (ASD) framework focuses on actor-structure relations, offering a convincing critique of both rational choice approaches (based on unlimited freedom of individual choice common in economic theory)⁵⁵ and structural determinism as theories of social processes. They propose a framework which focuses on a dualism between actor and structure taking consideration of the role of human creativity, social structuring (following Giddens' concept of structuration), and relational and collective properties (ibid.: 21). Whereas a structural approach would focus on the limits to agency through the existence of external social structures or particular patterns of social relations, actor-oriented approaches are concerned with the flexibility of the processes through which structuring is created. Villarreal (1992) stresses in particular the negotiability of structure, where structure is perceived of as what is happening at the

⁵⁵ Long (1992: 21) as well extends his critique to approaches which focus exclusively in 'internal' determination, including not only rational choice models, but in the methodological individualism found in some anthropological works. Like rational choice theory, methodological individualism seeks to explain social processes primarily in terms of individual motivations, intentions and interests. Actor-oriented approaches reject the volunteeristic views of decision-making implied in such a approach, arguing that there is 'insufficient attention to how individual choices are shaped by larger frames of meaning and action' i.e. power relations in the wider arena (Long 1992: 21).

boundaries between social actors. There are then (at least) two interesting aspects to consider ‘at the boundaries’. First, how does one analyze the nature of the power relations between social actors, which would influence their relative positions at the boundaries? In this respect, Villarreal (1992) suggests analyzing power not in terms of who possesses power and how it is exercised, but in terms of trying to better describe and understand the fluid nature of power processes through the examination of the everyday struggles which take place in different contexts. A second aspect of boundaries concerns how one analyzes the nature of the boundaries over time. How are the processes through which social relations are produced at the boundaries, reproduced or transformed over time? Giddens, with his focus on structuration theory⁵⁶, stresses the importance of the ‘storage of authoritative resources’.

‘The storage of authoritative and allocative resources may be understood as involving the retention and control of information or knowledge whereby social relations are perpetuated across time-space. Storage presumes *media* of information representation, modes of information *retrieval* or recall and, as with all power resources, modes of its dissemination. Notches on wood, written lists, books, files, films, tapes - all these are media of information storage of widely varying capacity and detail. All depend for their retrieval upon the recall capabilities of the human memory but also on the interpretation that may be possessed by only a minority within any given population’
(Giddens 1984: 261).

This way of viewing some aspects of the reproduction of social relations may be useful, particularly at more aggregate levels, but also where the ‘rules’ are fairly apparent. It may not

⁵⁶ Giddens explains structuration theory by proposing that ‘the rules and resources drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social action are at the same time the means of system reproduction’ (Giddens 1984: 19). This points to what he terms the ‘duality of structure’ which sees social systems as reproduced social practices.

be sufficient, however, in describing the processes as powered, in the face of changing local and wider contexts. How would changes in the wider arena influence women and men's interpretations of social relations? Also, what constitutes 'the rules' in Giddens' theory is problematic. He dismisses habit or routine as a 'weak' reflection of rules, since 'it does not usually presuppose some sort of underlying precept that the individual is following any sanction...it is simply something that the person habitually does' (ibid: 19). Dismissing the more subtle forms of human action, however, undervalues the importance of these forms of action in reproducing and transforming social relations. Bourdieu (1977), for example, puts everyday actions such as gestures and postures in the forefront in defining the contours of people's social behavior⁵⁷. In fact, an actor-oriented approach would put particular emphasis on analyzing 'individual acts of subtle defiance, muffled voices of opposition and mobilization' (Villarreal 1992: 258) to better understand changing 'spaces of maneuver'.

Finally, an actor-oriented approach refers to a particular type of social actor. Rather than equating the term social actor with individual, an actor-oriented approach defines social actors also as groups which 'have the means of reaching and formulating decisions, and of acting on at least some of them (Hindess in Long 1992: 23). In other words, social entities must have the power of agency. This allows the analysis to transcend the individual and examine social processes that involve groups attempting to influence a pre-existing state of affairs. This has important implications for the aspects of this study that deal with the collectivity of action above the individual level. In this study, it has particular implications for conceptualizing gender and potential gendered interests, as well as understanding the dynamics of inter-village negotiations over, for example, the valuable forest resources of Basho. If we are to define social actors as Hindess does above, groups of women and groups of men would only be

⁵⁷ See, as well, studies on the importance of rituals and ritual and habits (Alexander 1997; Rothenbuhler 1998; Burns 2000), bodily practices (Connerton, 1989), and silent and subtle negotiations (Scott 1985, Dwyer 1999) as forms of action.

social actors to the extent they were able to collectively make decisions, act and influence their surroundings. What becomes interesting, then, is the process whereby groups become social actors, or perhaps, are hindered in such a process.

Multiple Realities

An actor-oriented approach assumes a world where there is no one, universal, concept of 'truth'. Rather, meaning does not exist in itself, but is socially constructed. The approach thus firmly reflects its ontological and epistemological roots in a constructivist philosophy⁵⁸. Combining influences from post-structural and postmodern thought⁵⁹, the approach reasons that not only is reality socially constructed, but also that there are different versions of this reality, depending on the experience and situation of each of the actors. The implications of such an approach for research are many, two of which I will address below.

⁵⁸ Although I refer here to a general constructivist philosophy as presented, for example, in Guba and Lincoln (1994), there are variations that are also relevant for this study. Social constructionism, for example, is presented by Schwandt (1994) as one version of constructivist thought. While the terms constructionist and constructivist are often used interchangeably, constructionists share the constructivist view that truth is created, or socially constructed, but there is in fact a slight distinction between the two concerning the process of constructing truth. Constructionists 'instead of focusing on the matter of individual minds and cognitive processes...turn their attention outward to the world of intersubjectively shared, social constructions of meaning and knowledge' (Schwandt 1994: 127). This allows for the idea that the meanings we construct about the world are not determined solely by our individual perceptions, but also by the meanings we have 'inherited' from the culture we are born into. In other words, it represents an acknowledgment of the role of culture in constructing reality.

My preference for the term social preceding constructionism refers to the way in which I choose to relate to the natural world in this study. In this study, concepts concerning the environment are considered as socially constructed - therefore the emphasis on exploring local and multiple perceptions of the relationship between people and their environment. Despite this focus on constructions, I do not believe that *all* of reality is merely a construction, not existing at all until it is interpreted. Thus, I agree with Schwandt's remark 'one need not be an antirealist to be a constructivist. One can reasonably hold that concepts and ideas are invented (rather than discovered) yet maintain that these inventions correspond to something in the real world' (Schwandt 1994: 126). For this study, therefore, the natural world is considered as existing, but the focus is the multiple creations of meaning which influence the way people relate to their natural world.

⁵⁹ Here I refer to the plurality inherent in both post-structuralism and postmodernism (Crotty 1998), as well as the fragmentation inherent in postmodernism where metanarratives are 'fragmenting into a disorderly array of little, local stories and struggles, with their own, irreconcilable truths' (MacLure in Crotty 1998: 212).

First, belief in the concept of multiple realities allows for a ‘deconstruction’ of interests reminiscent of critical theory, where power differences are not ignored but embraced. It does so, however, without ignoring structure, or being based on structuralist interpretations of broader processes, but rather upon a different understanding of structure focusing on the dynamic nature of power relations at the multiple borders of social relations. The concept of multiple realities can also be explored in terms of multiple identities, and is particularly relevant in trying to analyze the complexity of gendered relations. Early studies of gender emphasize a feminist epistemology where there is a belief in the universality of women’s experience (Sachs 1996). Women are seen as having common standpoints based on shared experiences, or having a common ‘way of knowing’ that is fundamentally different than men’s⁶⁰. More recently, however, theories of postmodernism have significantly influenced feminist thought, and thus the ways in which gender is conceptualized. In post-modern feminist theories⁶¹, universality is ‘deconstructed’ and there is a call for situated knowledge - knowledge that is located and positioned (ibid: 16). There is an acute awareness of difference, and a focus on the diversity of women’s experience. Gender in a postmodern sense cannot be divorced from the context in which it is constructed⁶². An actor-oriented approach takes on this challenge precisely by emphasizing the lived experience of different women and men in negotiating their lives. Villarreal (1992), for example, shows in her work on Mexican tomato growers how different women choose different alliances and strategies that do not necessarily fall along the expected lines of gender or class. Where does this leave a study of gender? Does it disappear into a discussion reminiscent of methodological individualism? The challenge in an actor-oriented approach where such analytical categories

⁶⁰ One strain of this is ecofeminism, where it is proposed that women have a particularly close connection with nature (Merchant 1982; Shiva 1988). For a discussion of others belonging to the ‘universalist’ approach to gender i.e. radical and social feminists, see Sachs (1996).

⁶¹ See, for example, Fraser and Nicholson (1988) and Hekman (1990), and Haraway (1991).

⁶² This view is synonymous with (and likely influenced by) phenomenological approaches (Csordas 1994; Holstein and Gubrium 1994).

are deconstructed is to not ignore the possibility of gendered power relations, but rather to be keenly aware of their complexity and diversity of manifestation.

A second aspect of multiple realities relates to epistemology. In an actor-oriented approach, the actors or interests to be examined include not only those conventionally defined as the 'subject' after a positivist research tradition, but also the researcher and her values and interests. As stated earlier, the researcher under a constructivist/ constructionist paradigm is not a detached observer. In the field this means that a researcher's process of inquiry cannot be divorced from the role she is given in the local social system as a guest, friend, ally, threat, outsider, or insider as the case may be. Rather than seeing this double role as negative and a limitation to research as in the positivist tradition, a constructionist approach focuses on the insight gained through examining these relationships as a part of the life-worlds of local women and men. To be able to learn from the experience of interactions, however, requires a reflexive approach by the researcher, who critically explores her own role in both interpreting and influencing events in the field, making her experiences as researcher relevant in terms of both methodological and theoretical discussions⁶³. In terms of this research the events around my own and my research assistant's interaction with local women and men give particular insight into how they relate to outsiders and outside influences (see chapter 5).

⁶³ For further discussions on the role of the researcher under an actor-oriented approach, see de Vries (1994), Torres (1994) and Seur (1994).

Interface and Discontinuity

A focus on the dynamic nature of social relations ‘at the boundaries’ requires attention to the concepts of interface⁶⁴ and discontinuity. Long and Villarreal (1989) argue for the centrality of these concepts in an actor-oriented approach, where the notion of interface is

...an important structuring principle of social life, since the identities of individuals and social groups are generated and reproduced, among other things, through their many encounters at the boundaries. Self-reflection can only take place in relation to contrasts and oppositions to self; and the definition and transformation of life-worlds can only occur through reference to their boundaries...life-worlds are reshaped at the point where structural discontinuities manifest themselves. (Long and Villarreal 1989: 142-3).

Thus, rather than a preoccupation with the externally-defined categorization of people into particular structural social relations, an actor-oriented approach is concerned with studying what happens at the ‘moments of encounters with others’ at the points where the ‘margins of action are defined and changed’ (Villarreal 1992: 254). Processes of negotiation become central, as they reveal the nature of power and knowledge relations between actors. Power, for example, is not something to be measured *per se*, but to be explored in terms of struggle, negotiation and compromise at the boundaries (ibid: 257), not primarily in terms of linkages, but where there are discontinuities of knowledge and meaning.

⁶⁴ Long defines interface as ‘a critical point of intersection or linkage between different social systems, fields or levels of social order where structural discontinuities, based upon differences of normative value and social interest, are most likely to be found’ (1989: 2).

4.0 INQUIRY IN THE FIELD - METHODS

Choice of site and scope

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in Basho Valley, Baltistan, Northern Areas of Pakistan. There were two periods of fieldwork, the first in the spring and summer of 1998, and the second in the summer of 1999, lasting a total of seven months. During this period I was provided an excellent research assistant⁶⁵ who both translated from Balti to English, and developed a good rapport with the villagers that made my work much easier⁶⁶.

The rationale behind using a case-study approach was to be able to investigate the complexity of social relations between those whose daily lives intersected in several spheres of activity, in both space and time. This does not, however, confine the study to physical or interactional borders of the village. Rather, it situates the experience of women and men's interaction with 'external' actors and wider trends in society within in the context of their everyday lives in the village, where it is given meaning. The goal of this case study is of course not to generalize, but to explore the basic premises of social interaction in a real-life context in order to inform existing and developing theories of social change⁶⁷. The choice of Basho Valley was made in

⁶⁵ I was very fortunate to have been provided one of the few existing female research assistants in Pakistan who, first, is fluent in English, Urdu and the local language of Balti, and second, who was permitted by her family to live in the field. Being a young, unmarried woman, she had to fight many a battle in challenging the skepticism of her extended family in working at all, and then as something other than a teacher, which is considered one of the few 'acceptable' vocations for a woman in Baltistan.

⁶⁶ The use of a translator has its limitations, one of the more significant being the researcher's dependence on someone else's interpretation of discussions, which, as for anyone, will be influenced by that person's own background and experience. A lot of time was therefore used both to get to know each other personally, and to discuss at length what our impressions were after each day of field inquiry. Since my assistant was not from this particular area we were both participating in a process of discovery, rather than being caught in an 'insider/knower-outsider/ignorant' relationship. Instead, she provided me with invaluable discussions of the wider social context, and became keenly reflexive concerning her own reactions to the villagers.

⁶⁷ According to Stake (1994), a case study can be seen as having both *intrinsic* value, leading to a better understanding of the uniqueness of this particular case, and *instrumental* value, in contributing to theory on development (Stake 1994: 237).

collaboration with AKRSP staff and other researchers working on the HAINRM⁶⁸ research program. AKRSP was particularly interested in studying Basho Valley as the forest represents the largest natural forest in Baltistan, and has been the target of many years of exploitation by both government and private interests. Sultanabad was chosen for the case study due to its location as the highest village in the valley, where it serves as a gateway between the intensively cultivated valley and the more extensively used grazing and natural forest areas. These villagers, with limited cultivating options at such a high altitude (ca. 3 100 meters), are particularly dependent on grazing and forest resources, and are thus those most likely affected by government policies designed to protect and manage the forest and pasture areas. Little is known by policy makers and development organizations, however, about the lives of these *broqpa*,⁶⁹ making a study of Sultanabad relevant to those working in the area.

Methods

Due to the emphasis the research gives to understanding relations of power and local perceptions, beliefs, knowledge and attitudes concerning food and livelihood security and resource management issues, the methods used in collecting and analyzing the empirical materials for this study are mainly qualitative. As Denzin and Lincoln argue,

‘Qualitative research is inherently multimethod in focus (Brewer and Hunter 1989). However, the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Objective reality can never be captured. Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation (Denzin 1989a, 1989b: 24; Fielding and Fielding 1986:

⁶⁸ High Altitude Integrated Natural Resource Management Program is the collaborative research program between AKRSP and the Agricultural University of Norway.

⁶⁹ *Broqpa* is a Balti term referring to ‘those living in high places’.

33; Flick 1992: 194). The combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood, then as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth and depth to any investigation (see Flick 1992: 194). (Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 2).

Thus, under the methodological umbrella of participant observation⁷⁰, and in the context of either individual or group interviews, a combination of qualitative methods was used which together try to capture the complexity of negotiations over resources through what could be termed methodological triangulation. For addressing negotiation processes, for example, situational and discursive methods were helpful, i.e. examining particular situations of conflict and the discourses surrounding them⁷¹. Network analysis was also used in trying to understand the diversity of contexts women and men exercise social relationships, for example, in connection with the management of natural or agricultural resources⁷². Finally, life histories were also used in some cases. This method was particularly useful in exploring the relationship between normative notions (what people say they should do) and action (what people actually do) (Holy and Stuchlik 1983), when investigating issues of inheritance. In the course of discussions, basic quantitative information was also collected from all of the households in the village, including basic demographic data (number of household members,

⁷⁰ Participant observation, or ‘observation carried out when the researcher is playing an established participant role’ (Atkinson and Hammersley 1994: 248) is not necessarily a straightforward term, and can be deconstructed into at least four types, where the researcher is: a complete observer, an observer as participant, a participant as observer, and a complete participant (ibid.: 248, Burgess 1982/94). On reflection of the experience in the field, participant observation in this study could be considered of the ‘participant as observer’ type, in which the researcher ‘forms relationships and participates in the activities but makes no secret of an intention to observe events’ (Waddington 1994: 108). This is discussed more fully later in this section.

⁷¹ See Andrew Long’s (1992) discussion of the use of situational analysis and discourse in studying social action at the interface, where the ‘modes of actions and cognition constructed by the actors themselves...take account of the negotiations, manipulations and accommodations that become part of the interactions between actors’ (Long 1992: 165), as well as Norman Long (2001: 51), who defines discourse as ‘a set of meanings embodied in metaphors, representations, images, narratives and statements that advance a particular version of ‘the truth’ about objects, persons, events and the relations between them.’

⁷² Network analysis in an actor-oriented approach is concerned with exploring the arenas where women and men interact to produce powered social relations and is not an expression of structural functionalism in the Durkheimian sense, where ‘attention is concentrated upon attributing rationality to a social system, not to individuals’ (Giddens 1984: 294). Again, exploring agency is central.

education, age) and level of assets (area of land owned and rented, number of animals owned and shared, levels of production, and income), which was brought into the analysis using descriptive statistics. Analysis is the process through which meaning is discovered and constructed from the empirical data (Clandinin and Connelly 1994). Thus, analysis is inherent in the process of research design (choice of research questions), fieldwork (choices of discussion topics and the recording of information), as well as the coding and representation of empirical data for use in research texts (Huberman and Miles 1994). Analysis in this study thus occurred in an iterative process throughout the research, gradually moving from a deductive mode in defining the research questions, to an inductive emphasis on reflections on the conceptual meaning of the field data, to a process whereby further meaning is sought through ‘discussions’ with conceptual and theoretical constructs in the literature.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), the choice of method is not set in advance, but depends on the questions asked, the context, what is available in the context, and what the researcher can do in that setting. A discussion of methods should thus relate not only to the relevance of the choices to the research topic, but to the process of field research itself where researchers are faced with a context which influences how successful or useful different methods are in communicating with research subjects in exploring the research question. Since all of the methods mentioned above were employed in either an individual or group interview setting, the experience of doing research in these contexts will be the focus of the methodological discussion below. I should mention at this point that originally, it was my intention to employ PRA, or Participatory Rural Assessment, as a method in this research⁷³. I

⁷³ PRA here refers to those methods belonging to the family of approaches which have as their basis Robert Chambers’ Participatory Rural Appraisal methodology (i.e. Participatory Learning Approach (PLA) and Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs)), where emphasis is on eliciting participation from villagers (Chambers 1994; Norton et al. 2001). This is not to be confused with the anthropological idea of participation

commenced my research at a time when PRA was considered by its proponents as a valid method for research as well⁷⁴. In addition, I have worked for several years together with NGOs in the field, using PRA techniques for gathering information and interacting with local communities. It was therefore natural for me to employ this methodology as I entered the field for my research. During fieldwork, however, the limitations of the approach for my purposes became clear, and I turned my emphasis entirely to participant observation and group and individual interviewing⁷⁵. Nevertheless, the lessons gained in the process of using and critiquing various PRA techniques have been so useful to me in understanding power relations in the field, that I include some of this experience in the discussion below.

Individuals and Groups

As mentioned above, interaction with the women and men of the community was mainly comprised of discussions with either individuals or groups, although group discussions were by far the more common. This was not due to the greater value of group over individual discussions, however, but instead to the difficulties in orchestrating a discussion with an individual without attracting the curiosity of his or her family and/or neighbors. This can be illustrated by one of our visits to a poorer woman of the village with which we had developed a particularly close relationship. We arrived at her home at a time when her husband was not present, hoping to discuss issues of husband-wife relationships which we from experience knew would be difficult to do in a gender-mixed setting. A few minutes into the discussion, however, the women brought to our attention three children running towards her compound.

inherent in a participant observation methodology, where emphasis is on the participation of the researcher in community life.

⁷⁴ See, for example, the CGIAR Systemwide Program on Participatory Research and Gender Analysis for Technology Development and Institutional Innovation (PRGA Program) at <http://www.prgaprogram.org>.

⁷⁵ Likewise, critiques of PRA as a research methodology have increased over the last few years. See, for example, Kapoor's (2002) for a critique of the theoretical underpinnings of PRA.

‘Ah, here come the spies!’ she remarked softly. ‘Let us hope they get bored soon and leave so I can tell you what is on my mind.’ Despite the difficulties in arranging them, these individual discussions were invaluable, particularly as an input into understanding the power dynamics involved in the all more common group settings. It was not unusual for individuals we met with following a group discussion to comment on what was said in the group, and to offer clarifying remarks such as ‘He did not tell you the whole truth in that meeting! Let me explain why...’ Thus, these individual meetings, although difficult to orchestrate, provided us with pieces of the social context which would otherwise be hidden to us as outsiders dealing only with more public group situations, and underlines the importance of staying in an area over time.

Because of the key role the movement between individual and group fora played in uncovering sensitive local power process in this research, a closer look at issues surrounding particularly group interviewing methods is warranted. Group interviews represent a diversity of possible forms and situations, with varying degrees of researcher direction or participation in the group encounter. In the field, a group may be formed naturally, depending on the context, or constructed by the researcher according to certain criteria i.e. wealth, social status, gender. The researcher may choose to take an active role in interviewing group members and defining a specified topic, or to let the conversation drift in directions natural to the participants. Literature on qualitative methods provides overviews and guidelines on the choices available between different types of group interviewing methods⁷⁶, but what do these choices actually mean? The different types of group interviews are presented to researchers as if they are always separate experiences between which they may choose. In my experience, however, different types of group encounters are not necessarily discrete events -

⁷⁶ See, for example, Loftland and Loftland (1995) or Silverman (2000) as examples of methodological textbooks which offer a practical ‘how to’ approach to qualitative research.

one group encounter may move through several dimensions, depending on, for example, who is participating at which times and in which combinations during the course of the discussion, as well as on the nature of the social relations between the researcher and the participants. The lines between these different types of group inquiry thus become blurred, and it becomes a challenge to the researcher to constantly reevaluate her role in the group in terms of this changing context.

Group encounters for this study, rather than being discretely categorized into types, might instead be considered as moving along a continuum. The meetings ranged from casual encounters with groups of friends discussing whatever ‘came up’ naturally, to semi-structured interviews where we asked specific questions on specific topics, with one kind of group and interview turning into another, and perhaps even another, during the period of the meeting. This can be illustrated in the case of interviewing households in Sultanabad. All of the 33 households of the village were visited and interviewed at least once, while six households were chosen for more in-depth study. These households were chosen in order to represent the three different categories of wealth and well-being which were identified by the women and men through a wealth ranking exercise at the beginning of the field period. The household interviews had several purposes; to introduce ourselves to the members more personally than at a village gathering; to get to know the individual members and their relationships with others in the village, to obtain quantitative data on household’s demographic and resource situation, and to learn more generally about life in the village and the way they manage their resources. Those present at these discussions varied; at some homes only the women and children were present, at others, the husband, in-laws and/or neighbors were also present. The household discussions usually began with our asking about those who were present, and who was a member of their household and extended family. Questions about their resource

base were slipped in during discussions of how the different resource management systems functioned. Sometimes a discussion which had started as answers to a question drifted into discussions of other topics which, although not directly related to the question, provided important information on the wider context of village life. In some cases, the villagers went so far as to ‘forget’ about us, sometimes lapsing into their first language of Shina, which my assistant could not (at least at the beginning of fieldwork) comprehend⁷⁷. Women and men came and went, with the tone of the meeting changing, for example, if a male entered a female group, or a mother-in-law left her daughter-in-law alone in the course of the discussion. Thus, the household interview was at varying times a mixture of focus group, natural group, semi-structured and unstructured encounters, something which also reflected the complexity and fluidity of the household as a social unit. This posed special challenges to the researcher to recognize changing tones of meetings, and reflect over how this affected the direction of discussions.

Spontaneous and Arranged Groups

Despite the sometimes fluid character of some group interviews, a distinction can nevertheless be made between why the various types of group interviews were chosen initially. These choices were based not only on expectations of the type of knowledge that will be produced, but were influenced as well by assumptions on how the group experience will function.

Group interviews in the field can be divided into two broad categories: natural and arranged.

This follows to some extent Frey and Fontana’s (1993) typology of group interviews⁷⁸, which

⁷⁷ Of course this switch to Shina was also done to exclude us from certain comments and information, which was often apparent when studying people’s body language. In some cases we were able to discover the nature of the comments through subsequent individual discussions, in others we could only imagine what was said. It did, however, make us aware that something was being held back, and curious as to find out what that might be.

⁷⁸ Frey and Fontana’s typology of group interviews distinguishes between five types of groups (focus, brainstorming, nominal, field natural, field formal) which are presented according to their setting (formal,

distinguishes between natural group interviews, which are formed spontaneously, and formal group interviews, which are arranged and semi-structured. Focus groups in their typology fall as a separate category, where they are described as formal, directive and highly structured, despite the fact that they may in some cases be conducted in a field setting. I would argue, however, for including these types of focus groups (when they are conducted in a field setting) in the arranged group category, as they represent merely a greater degree of directiveness on the part of the researcher. As Morgan (1997) suggests, ‘group interviews vary along a continuum from more formally structured interaction to more informal gatherings’ where it is not necessarily possible to ‘draw a line between formal and informal group interviews in a way that defines some as focus groups and others as something else’ (Morgan 1997: 6). In this discussion, the terms focus group and arranged group refer to the same phenomenon, and are used interchangeably.

Most of the group encounters in this study occurred in an ad hoc manner, and would therefore fall into the category of spontaneous group interviews⁷⁹. The use of natural group interviews is an integral part of participant observation, where the emphasis is on learning about the processes of the production of meaning in an everyday setting⁸⁰. This method gives valuable information on the context within which the inquiry takes place, as well as for a better understanding of what Briggs (1992) refers to as the indexical meaning of discourse, or meaning which is produced in a particular forum and is conveyed, for example, through syntax, inflection, tone and gesture. When a central part of the inquiry is concerned with local

informal, spontaneous, preset), the role of the interviewer (directive, non-directive), the format of the questions (structured, semi-structured, unstructured), and the purpose (exploratory, pretesting, phenomenological) (1993: 33).

⁷⁹ I use the term interview here, however the term discussion would also be appropriate, particularly when referring to a setting where the researcher has established a relaxed and trusting social relationship with the local participants.

⁸⁰ How ‘natural’ a setting can be when a researcher is present, however, is questioned by Morgan (1997) as well as Frey and Fontana (1993: 31), who comment ‘by virtue of entering the group and asking the questions the field worker has altered the ‘natural’ status of the group’.

power structures, as is this study, interacting with and observing women and men in as unarranged a setting as possible gives clues as to how they relate to each other socially - who meets with whom, at what times, and who says what in differently occurring groups.

The study also included meetings which would (at least initially) fall into the category of arranged or focus groups. These provided a different type of forum than natural groups in that the emphasis was on exploring particular issues with a particular group of participants in a concentrated setting. In such cases we as researchers called a meeting with a specific group of villagers to discuss a specific topic defined by us. One example is the wealth-ranking exercises, where we created gender-specific groups in which we asked the participants to classify the households according to their wealth and well-being. Using focus groups, however, is not unproblematic. Having been a method used mainly in marketing research for the past 30 years, focus groups have recently been 'rediscovered' by social scientists (Krueger 1994: 8). Focus groups are, for example, a central method of PRA, a methodology that has had widespread appeal both in development assistance and research, and where its participatory methods have gained a firm position in the global discourse of social analysis (Moss 1994)⁸¹. Perceptions of the purpose and functioning of a focus group, however, vary widely in the literature, ranging from formal, researcher-directed exercises divorced from the field as in market research, questionnaire development and program evaluation (Frey and Fontana 1993, Krueger 1994) to informal, researcher-as-facilitator exercises in the field i.e. forms of action and participatory research (Padilla 1993; Pretty et al. 1995). As the use of arranged groups becomes increasingly popular, the need to keep in touch with the underlying premises of the method becomes increasingly important. This is a challenge particularly to field researchers exploring the possibility of using arranged groups, as much of the early

⁸¹ While PRA is comprised of many techniques, I chose in my initial fieldwork to use some of its focus group techniques i.e. wealth ranking, Venn diagrams and cropping calendars. Reference to PRA in this context is, therefore, to the use of focus groups, and not the use of the methodology for research in general.

theoretical work in focus groups was based on non-field situations. Rather than a presentation and evaluation of all of the group interview options available to the field researcher, the discussion below is an attempt to bring to the fore the issues surrounding both arranged group interviews and group interviews in general which proved important in the collection and analysis of the field data for this particular study.

Arranged groups

Krueger (1994: 6) defines focus groups as ‘a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment’. According to Krueger, the role of the researcher in the focus group is to ‘nurture different perceptions and points of view, without pressuring participants to vote, plan, or reach consensus’ (ibid.). There is an emphasis on group homogeneity, where participants are alike enough to be able to express their views openly⁸². It is also based on the assumption that people form their views not in isolation, but in situations of social interaction (ibid.: 11; Albrecht et al. 1993). This is where focus groups can be distinguished, for example, from individual interviews; the emphasis is on interaction between participants in addition to the interviewer. Krueger wants to take advantage of this social interaction, but nevertheless warns of the dangers of using existing groups, where superior-subordinate relationships can inhibit discussion and the sophisticated nature of communication between participants ‘makes analysis almost impossible.’ Thus, despite the focus on interaction, Krueger (and the bulk of

⁸² Group homogeneity is also preferred in action and participatory research such as PRA, but the motivation is slightly different than in social research. While social research as described by Krueger is concerning with group discussions which allow everyone the opportunity to interact in order to discover views which would be informative to the research (and possibly later to policy). In PRA, however, forming homogenous groups is motivated by a democratic ideal where concern is on ‘empowering disenfranchised and marginalized groups to take action to transform their lives’ (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995: 1671).

the literature on focus groups) looks for this interaction in a relatively non-powered environment.

Is such an approach to focus groups appropriate, however, when one is interested in studying the views of women and men in the field, in their own environment? Is it still possible, or even desirable, to employ a focus group method when facing the specific challenges of doing field research where participants have pre-existing social relationships? Two main issues arise in this respect - the importance of context, and the nature of power relations in the focus group. Concerning context, Agar and MacDonald (1995), based on their study of former LSD-users, claim that knowledge of the broader ethnographic context is not only interesting but essential in understanding what is discussed (and not discussed) in focus groups. They argue, 'without prior knowledge of the folk models as a base, there's nothing to evaluate the group exchanges against, nothing in terms of which to register and interpret the surprises that occur' (Agar and MacDonald 1995: 85). Likewise, Kitzinger (1994) discusses the importance of considering context in her work on exploring perceptions of AIDS. In her study, focus groups were comprised of pre-existing groups precisely because 'they provide one of the social contexts within which ideas are formed and decisions made' (Kitzinger 1994: 105). In my own experience, it was only through a knowledge of the broader context that I could hope to gain some understanding of what was expressed in the focus groups - something which became clear as I reanalyzed early focus group encounters after learning more about the individuals who had participated, and their possible motivations for expressing what they did in the group. I therefore agree that focus groups can be a useful method in gathering information on specific topics, but only when considered in light of information gathered through other methods, such as individual and natural group interviews under a participant observation approach.

The second but related issue, the nature of power relations in the focus group, needs closer attention, as it is here that a researcher is confronted with the real challenge of using focus groups in the field. What is the nature of social interaction in groups, and is it different in the case of arranged and natural groups? Part of the underlying rationale of using focus groups in research is that people do not form opinions in isolation. This is confirmed by research in communications, where according to Albrecht et al. (1993: 54) personal opinions are rather 'derived from social rather than personal processes' where 'decisions individuals make about various actions are affected by the reactions that such individuals predict that their significant others will have to their actions'. In other words, what people think about an issue is (among other things) dependent on how they think others will react. If one accepts this, however, the idea that focus groups should be homogenous and non-hierarchical to foster discussion becomes problematic. In their own settings, people form their views not only in fora which are permissive, but also 'powered'. And if social processes are key to forming opinions, then even in permissive situations people continue to consider what others will think. Even more relevant to researchers is Albrecht's claim that 'social interaction affects not only opinion formation, but opinion articulation as well'. He builds this argument on Kelman's (1961) concern with three processes which affect how people express themselves in groups, which, according to Albrecht, threaten the validity of the data collected in group interviews: compliance, internalization, and identification. While both compliance, or 'the act of responding in ways one believes are expected by a questioner, in anticipation of some immediate reward', and internalization, or the reluctance to report 'opinions that are deeply ingrained and personal' are important to consider in group interviews, I would like to emphasize here the process of identification, which refers to 'a situation in which a respondent's position on an issue is similar to the position held by someone the respondent

admires or with whom he or she seeks solidarity'. According to Albrecht, however, identification can occur both with those one admires, and in situations where 'it simply may be too professionally and personally risky for a subordinate to disagree publicly with an opinion offered by a superior who holds fate control'. Identification is thus a potentially powerful process in social interaction, and can lead to what Janis (1972) refers to as 'groupthink' where people's concern with expressing cohesion overrides other processes of opinion articulation.

Does this aspect of powered social interaction, however, somehow disappear completely in the case of focus groups? Kitzinger observes that despite the fact that the underlying premise of focus groups is social interaction, there has been little attention given to the nature of this interaction in reporting focus group research. After reviewing over 40 published reports of focus group studies she remarks, 'I could not find a single one concentrating on the conversation between participants and very few that even included any quotations from more than one participant at a time' (ibid.: 104). Thus, despite Krueger's denial of consensus as a goal of focus groups, the interactional aspect of discussions disappears in the focus group literature in the form of a consensus-like reporting of group discussions. In fact, this is one of the more important criticisms of the use of focus groups in early PRA practice. Groups were being used to develop a consensus of local opinion, where there was in fact a diversity of interests which were being 'averaged' into a mythical community view⁸³. While PRA approaches have become more sensitive to power dimensions within communities, the response is to 'de-power' encounters by orchestrating more and different focus groups, rather than to examine more closely the group phenomenon itself (Pretty et al. 1995).

⁸³ See in particular Guijt and Shah's book *The Myth of the Community*, where the authors comment 'Despite the stated intentions of social inclusion, it has become clear that many participatory development initiatives do not deal well with the complexity of community differences, including age, economic, religious, caste, ethnic and, in particular, gender...hiding the bias that favors the opinions and priorities of those with more power and the ability to voice themselves publicly' (Guijt and Shah 1998: 1)

What actually happens in group discussions, and how do assumptions on peoples' social behavior in group discussions affect inquiry? Discussions in groups are one of many fora where women and men negotiate meaning and power relations. The more formal the forum, the more important these power relations become. In this study the importance of power relations became evident in observing the villagers' preparations for discussions with different researchers and other visitors to Basho Valley⁸⁴. Community meetings in this society are seen as formal affairs, and male for a. Discussions preceding these meetings on who would attend meetings, where they would be held, and who would 'officiate' were highly politicized, while the subsequent discussions with researchers were surprisingly conflict-free, giving an impression of agreement when in fact interests were quite divergent. While keeping the facade of a conflict-free community became less important or possible during the course of our stay, both the men and women of Sultanabad remained very cautious about what was expressed in group settings (although the context of the group setting did influence the degree of caution). The reasons for this are surely complex, but it was clear that social pressures towards presenting a unified view of village life and not arguing with the authority presenting these views were strong. In fora where the highly valued timber resources were discussed, for example, the threat of violent retaliation by powerful timber mafia⁸⁵ interests was real. Even in apparently less politicized groups, where an effort was made towards a certain degree of homogeneity (such as focus groups of women), power differences still played an important role in what was said in the group setting. Thus it was not until we were alone with a villager that she (or he) dared to express dissent, and only if she trusted us enough to believe that her

⁸⁴ We were among the first researchers with the project to arrive in Sultanabad, and as such had several months to get acquainted with the villagers and shed our initial strangeness enough to be privy to the activities preceding the arrival of our colleagues. Of course, we experienced a similar process of certain influential individuals orchestrating our meetings and trying to censor the information provided us, but on a much smaller scale, since our main focus was the village rather than the whole of Basho valley.

⁸⁵ See Knudsen (1995) for a discussion of illegal felling in the Northern Areas.

comments would not be exposed. The interaction in group discussions was thus relatively non-conflictual, but nevertheless highly powered through strong processes of identification.

This experience is quite different than that described in the focus group literature concerning social interaction in groups. One of the rationales in using focus groups in PRA, for example, is the assumption that when people are in a group of their peers they will not misrepresent others due to social pressure⁸⁶. The danger of bias is thus connected to contact with individuals, who have the opportunity to misrepresent others while they are alone with a researcher, without any social checks and balances. I suggest, however, that dealing with misrepresentation is actually a natural part of research under a paradigm of multiple realities and interests, and that if considering the presence of powerful identification processes inherent in all social interaction, the ‘danger’ of misrepresentation does not necessarily disappear in a group setting, whether it be a spontaneous or arranged group. In my field experience, group-based social pressure seemed to more often than not have the opposite affect on expression of that envisioned in the PRA literature - it suppressed dissent. While the PRA literature does address the suppression of views in groups, due to its emphasis on encouraging participation and empowerment processes it only addresses it as a problem to be dealt with in terms of, for example, encouraging quiet members to speak. Active participation is considered a successful group encounter. In some settings, where a certain degree of dissent is possible, discussions could reflect an open, democratic process where the less influential are actually allowed a voice⁸⁷. In an environment of suppression, however, the quiet may dare to speak, but not necessarily to challenge the received view presented by those in power.

⁸⁶ For PRA’s use of focus groups I refer in this discussion to Pretty et al.’s book *Participatory Learning and Action: A Trainer’s Guide* (1995), a practical book which addresses specifically how to deal with groups in the field.

⁸⁷ I have myself experienced group interviews in settings where dissent is at least to some degree accepted, for example while exploring food security issues with a Norwegian NGO in Ethiopia.

In summation, how one conceptualizes social interaction in groups has a number of implications both for the use and analysis of spontaneous and arranged groups. Despite the orchestrated nature of arranged groups, as groups they exhibit social interaction processes comparable to spontaneous groups, and both must therefore be analyzed in light of the referential meaning of what is said, as well as indexical meanings articulated, which are highly determined by the dynamic context of powered social relations. For this study, the knowledge produced in groups was constantly related to the group situation itself - who was present, who left or arrived, who said what, when, in what manner, and why - not primarily to address issues of validity⁸⁸, but to contribute to a better understanding of precisely these processes of interaction.

Finding a Place in the Community

Initiating research in the Basho Valley, and in particular Sultanabad, entailed numerous challenges for a researcher who was neither Balti, Pakistani, Muslim, nor male. While the formal arrangements in gaining clearance from the villagers were handled quite deftly by AKRSP prior to our arrival, we (my research assistant and I) were, left to ourselves to negotiate our place in the community (as we requested). It was clear from the beginning that many men of the community were extremely skeptical of allowing 'outsiders' to live amongst them, and gaining access to the village women, even for a female researcher, was not a straightforward task. At the project team's first visit to Sultanabad six months before the start of the fieldwork, I asked if I could meet with some of the women of the village after the

⁸⁸ Validity is most relevant when concerned with establishing the 'truth', as in a more positivist tradition. Constructivists might be more concerned with, for example educative authenticity, a continuous process towards an improved understanding of the social constructions of others (Guba and Lincoln 1994: 114). This opens, for example, for the possibility of considering that a person choosing to express seemingly contradictory opinions in different situations is not 'lying', but rather offering different representations of one's self.

‘official’ meeting was concluded. There was a flurry of panicked responses including; ‘no, that is not possible, we have no women’s organization here, you can have no meeting, we would have to ask our Sheikh and he is in Skardo’⁸⁹. After several minutes of discussion the answer was still no, however the teacher decided it was acceptable to invite us to the house of his brother (who was away in the army) where we could speak with his family members. The discussion with the women was friendly and lively, and thus began our slow but fascinating entry into the world of the women and men of Sultanabad. The skepticism so evident at the beginning of our stay subsided somewhat after a few months, we were allowed into the households of those who had shunned us at the start, developed friendships, became mentors and confidants, and were in the end even protected and defended by the villagers when our reputations were threatened by malicious rumors⁹⁰. The fact that I had my husband and two small children with me in the field also contributed to a kind of acceptance – being married with a husband and children conferred more respect in the village than might have been the case if I were a single woman. I thus experienced roles such as neighbor, mentor, friend, and ally, but at the same time my position and purpose as a researcher/outsider was quite clear. Thus in many ways we were accepted into the community, but never completely. We were neither totally insiders, nor totally outsiders, but somewhere in between, perhaps as guests.

How does one deal with this ambiguous position in the community methodologically? How can one capitalize on the possibilities it offers rather than dwell on its limitations? This warrants a return to the epistemological question of the nature of the interaction between researcher and subject. Accepting an epistemological stance, where researcher and subject engage in a dialogic and hermeneutic process of knowledge production, makes room for interaction but does not in itself reveal how a researcher might actually function in these

⁸⁹ Skardo, two hours way by jeep, is the regional capital of Baltistan.

⁹⁰ See Chapter 5 for a discussion on the role of rumors.

settings. There are, in fact, several choices of methodology within this paradigm. PRA, for example, offers one methodology that clearly defines the role of the researcher as a facilitator for change. Since the purpose of the interaction in PRA is to empower others to participate in knowledge production, the researcher should take a secondary position in the process of inquiry⁹¹. While this is certainly an admirable goal in terms of its political agenda, I argue that reducing the role of the researcher to facilitator both misses the opportunity to explore the interface between the life worlds of locals and outsiders, and is in danger of underestimating the need for reflective thinking on one's own experiences in the process of inquiry.

Participant observation as a methodology, on the other hand, requires a researcher to participate in varying degrees in the lives of the researched, 'the crucial importance of the researcher's active participation in the lives of subjects derives from making it possible to learn the meaning of action: through living with the people being studied, and through the necessity of behaving towards them and communicating with them, s/he comes to share the same meanings with them in the process of active participation in their social life' (Holy 1984: 30). This participation can range from Malinowsky's (1922) camping in the village, to Wax's (1971) involvement in social, and sometimes reciprocal relationships with the villagers, with validity of the research often resting on the ability of the researcher to become as full a member as possible of the society which she was studying (Holy 1984). In a positivist tradition, this type of close interaction is problematic, and considered a methodological limitation in that the researcher leaves her assigned role of objective observer and has an influence on the actions of the researched such that the results are biased⁹². A

⁹¹ PRA is based on a Freirean approach to research (or action research), which is concerned with 'the relations of power which permeate relations between the researcher and those who it involves and concerns...a central thread which runs through these approaches is an emphasis on changing the role of the researcher from director to facilitator and catalyst' (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995).

⁹² See Guba and Lincoln (1994) for a constructivist discussion of positivist and constructivist approaches to the concept of bias, as well as Sellamna (1999) for a critique of the constructivist.

constructivist philosophy, however, sees this interaction as not only unavoidable, but necessary in the production of knowledge, where the interests and values of different actors are acknowledged and reflected upon in the process of inquiry and analysis. With a focus on the interactional aspects of the development of meaning, however, the emphasis on becoming a member through social relations is transformed into a focus on the social relationship of the researcher and subject, such that 'it is the interaction between anthropologist and host which can be used as the method of yielding data and developed into the main research tool' (ibid.:32). The researcher can thus retain her identity and rather 'take advantage of a performative inadequacy'⁹³ not by trying to accomplish the impossible task of becoming a member, but by systematically exploiting the fact that s/he is not a member, and acting on the basis of his or her cultural rules to find out to what extent they differ from those of the actor' (ibid.: 32).

Once this type of interactional inquiry is accepted as a part of the methodology, the experiences of the interaction between the researcher and the community becomes central in the investigation. Reflections on field experiences are no longer regulated exclusively to methodological discussions, but find their place in the interpretation meanings being investigated. In the course of the fieldwork for this study, it became clear that my experiences in the various roles I was given in the community provided valuable insight into how women and men negotiated for power and resources. This included the experience of being associated with a development project. Rather than considering this connection as a hindrance in conducting the research, for example, we tried to use the situation to explore the ways in which women and men in the village and valley negotiate with people and

⁹³ Here Holy refers to the difficulties of studying meaning in a community which is radically different than one's own, in which she cannot hope to become a member.

organizations which represent a potential source of economic support. These experiences are thus reflected on and included in the main body of this study.

5.0 PROCESSES OF NEGOTIATION

Introduction

How do women and men in Sultanabad acquire resources? Consider the following:

'Inheritance follows the rules of Islam. Sons, for example, inherit twice the land area of daughters.' The village teacher, a well-to-do, 35-year-old married father of two boys, informing on how land is divided upon the death of a father.

'I decide who will inherit my land. My daughters will not inherit my land - they might move out of the village and I don't want to divide up the land too much to make it difficult for my son to make a living. My daughters will inherit animals and jewelry.' Behboob Wali⁹⁴, an elderly man with two daughters and one son, and the villager owning the largest land area (who has in fact sold most of his animals to finance a legal battle over a small piece of land farther down the valley).

'It is different from family to family - in our family we daughters will not inherit, not even animals and jewelry - this is what our father has told us.' Behboob Wali's daughter, Habiba Shameem, who is married

⁹⁴ All the names of the villagers have been changed to pseudonyms.

and has five small children and is one of the poorer farmers in the village.

'Every daughter has the right to inherit land from her father, but she seldom asks...my aunt didn't claim for her share until both my brother and father were gone.' Nadia Batool, young married woman with two small children, and one of 10 sisters who inherited land from their father Bakhtawar Shah, whose only son's death had preceded him.

From these villagers we see that some swear to formal rules, such as those on inheritance set forth in Islamic law as interpreted by the village teacher⁹⁵. Others claim to follow what is deemed as custom in the area, as Behboob Wali does. What is really the case? Do people choose to abide by one of these two, making this a 'simple' case of statutory versus customary law⁹⁶ - or is the picture more complex?

⁹⁵ In pre-divided India, judicial land rights and inheritance were based on British colonial interpretations of custom and usage, where women had limited rights. In 1937 the first Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act was passed, bringing Muslims under the laws put forth in the Shariat, which should have ensured the rights of women to inherit land (albeit half the land of their brothers). The Act, however, explicitly excluded agricultural land, which would continue to be governed by local custom until 1948 in West Punjab, 1950 in Sind, and finally in 1962 for the rest of Pakistan. This Act (the West Pakistan Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act) officially supersedes prevailing customs in favor of Muslim personal law as specified in the Shariat, extending the rights of women to inherit agricultural property as full owners. [See Agarwal (1994: 227-237) for a fuller account of land rights and inheritance laws in Pakistan, including the differences between Shia and Sunni sects.]

⁹⁶ The 'authentic' nature of customary law has been challenged by many authors who have examined the term in the African context (Berry 1993, Colson 1971 and MacKenzie 1995), where it is argued that what we now see as customary law is, in fact, the colonial interpretation and local elite representation of local practice, and does not adequately reflect the degree of legal pluralism that is inherent in many local systems. 'Customary law' as I use it in the case of Sultanabad refers to the elders' continuous interpretation of local rights, since there has not in this area been an attempt to institutionalize local practices at a more formal level. In Sultanabad it is currently usual for sons to inherit the land - daughters may get jewelry and clothing, and in some cases animals. Only in one case about 30 years ago did a daughter inherit land from her father - he was one of the wealthiest farmers and his son-in-law was a migrant without land of his own in the village. There have, however, been cases where daughters with no or deceased brothers have inherited land, as in Nadia Batool's case above.

The second two quotes⁹⁷ allude to the existence of other aspects to consider, and how views can be different even within the same family (i.e. Behboob Wali and Habiba Shameem). Habiba Shameem refers to how different families exercise different sets of rules for, in this case, the redistribution of land resources at a father's death. Inheritance, according to her observation, is not represented by one, agreed upon, set of norms in the community, but open for different practices by different families. Nadia Batool's comments take us even further by opening up for other aspects of resource transfer - power and choice (or the lack of them), and the possibility of negotiation. Why don't daughters ask? Does one's power in negotiations change over time in the face of changing circumstances? How does one's position as a daughter with land affect her ability to negotiate for other resources? What becomes apparent in the case of Sultanabad is that access to and control over resources, whether they be private resources such as the agricultural land in the above example, or common pool resources such as pasture and forest, are seldom pre-defined and constant, and the terms of negotiation are anything but fixed - even where there exist formal laws. Rather they are continuously negotiated and reconstructed as social, cultural, economic and natural conditions change.

If one accepts that negotiation is central to resource acquisition, then one opens up as well for the possibility of differences in people's abilities to negotiate over resources, and that these differences may reflect some dimension of power. While this has often been recognized when looking at resource conflicts and negotiations between larger interest groups (i.e. pastoralists vs. farmers), between villages claiming access to common resources, and between villages and the government (and beyond into the global arena), the analysis can also be extended to the sub-local level. In such an analysis, the community is no longer considered a unit where individual and household interests are one with the community's. Likewise, assumptions that

⁹⁷ The term quote is used loosely in this context, as the fieldwork is based on interviews conducted with the assistance of a translator, making direct quotes seldom possible. Thus, the quotes in this paper represent the translator's best interpretation of what the village women and men expressed.

communities function in a world of egalitarian reciprocity when deciding over issues of resource management no longer go unchallenged (Mitchell 1991). This ‘myth of the community’⁹⁸ has in recent years been shattered, much in the same way as the myth of the household as a unit has been slain in the literature on gender (Harris 1981; Guyer and Peters 1987; Kabeer 1994).

Resource conflict and inequity in negotiation does exist in Sultanabad, with clear differences in power between individuals, families and village sub-groups. This chapter explores the nature of negotiation over resources in which these differences become central. The analysis transcends the individual and local levels, by examining how women and men use their influence (or are impeded by their lack of it) in relations with groups and individuals at several levels - household, extended family, village, inter-village and regional. Some of the central questions considered are: How do women and men actually gain access to the resources they need or want for their families? Through what processes do they negotiate control and use of agricultural land, animals, forest products, and pastures? Does one’s ability to negotiate access to resources change over time? What is the role of social networks in determining one’s negotiating power and strategy? The discussion below is organized into four parts. The first part conceptualizes the term negotiation. The second part addresses the nature of negotiation in the context of specific examples of conflict over various resources - how do village women and men perceive the acquisition and retention of resources in terms of process and power. The third part contextualizes the negotiating process by exploring the social networks which frame women and men’s perceptions of self and experience of agency. Finally, the fourth part focuses on strategies of negotiation, and the extent to which these strategies are dynamic and transformed in light of changing social and economic conditions.

⁹⁸This phrase is coopted from Guijt and Shah’s (1998) book *The Myth of the Community*, which focuses on the importance of considering power differences and the presence of conflict within local communities.

Conceptualizing Negotiation

The term negotiation is used in many different contexts to mean many different things, and its meaning for this study needs to be clarified⁹⁹. In sifting through the literature on negotiation it becomes apparent that there are two main ways in which negotiation has been considered; as an event, and as an activity. Firth, (1995) in an extensive review of literature dealing with negotiation, finds that the bulk of this literature considers negotiation as a formal, problem-solving event dealing with business, labor, diplomatic, and arms control issues. One could easily extend this list to include, for example, the literature concerned with conflict resolution in natural resource management (Penzich 1994; Moore and Santosa 1995; Anderson et al. 1996). The literature in this vein comprises not only theoretical works exploring the phenomenon of negotiation as events, but also what Firth (ibid.: 11) refers to as ‘prescriptive’ or ‘how to’ works, which present recipes for successful processes of negotiation.

Negotiation, however, can also be considered as an activity, something which of course can occur in the context of a formal event, but also in the much wider context of everyday social interaction. Firth refers to negotiation in this sense as ‘a pervasive activity of social decision making on substantive matters’ (ibid.). Firth sees negotiation in its broadest case as communication, and is thus more interested in processes than outcomes¹⁰⁰. The idea that negotiations have a focus or goal with some degree of mutual interest is expressed by Casse (1981:152) who defines negotiation as ‘a process by which one individual tries to persuade

⁹⁹ The term is derived from the Latin *neg-* not + *otium* leisure, meaning ‘business’, which may refer to its early use in bargaining in the marketplaces of the late 16th century⁹⁹ (Bell 1995: 42). Since then its use has spread to political and social arenas to refer to social interaction ranging from discussions over household duties to international peace talks.

¹⁰⁰ Firth, along with other contributors to his edited volume *The Discourse of Negotiation* (eg. Bell, Bilmes, Linell and Fredin) concentrate on the discourse processes of negotiation, where language and conversation analyses are central (1995: 18). While this study does not choose that particular approach, the concepts used in that approach do inform the discussion of social interaction in this and the next chapter.

another to alter ideas or behavior; a process in which at least two partners with different needs and viewpoints try to reach agreement on matters of mutual interest'. This definition, however, does not adequately address situations where negotiations lead to new positioning where the term 'agreement' may not reflect the position experienced by, for example, those who are negotiating with limited power. Walton and McKersie (1965: 3) choose a broader definition, where negotiation is 'the deliberate interaction of two or more complex social units which are attempting to define or redefine terms of their interdependence'. This definition gives attention to the terms of interaction, or relative power positions of the actors, regardless of them reaching an 'agreement'. Negotiation is therefore at the core of producing and reproducing powered social relations. According to Moore (1994) this formation of powered social identities, including gendered identities, involves a continuous negotiation process over access to and control over resources, where examining systems of redistribution of resources gives insight into how social relationships have been and are being formed.

Negotiation in the context of this study is characterized by the constant, everyday interaction between social actors, where women and men (either as individuals or groups) exercise social relations that determine their ability to gain access to resources. Negotiation is considered in terms of agency and choice, within a social and physical context that is both constraining and enabling. Negotiation in this study ranges from villager interactions with Ministry of Forestry representatives in arranged or ad hoc settings, to conversations or encounters between family and non-family members in the course of everyday social interaction. Rather than confining the discussion to negotiations as specific events, the focus of this study is to examine women and men's strategies, choices and constraints in negotiating over resources, with special attention given to the context surrounding social interaction and the actors participating.

Fora for negotiation in Sultanabad

In examining resource acquisition and transfer in Sultanabad, negotiation over resources occurs in several fora¹⁰¹. Village women and men might use more formalized fora such as in courts of law, the police, the Basho Development Organization (BDO)¹⁰², or village elder committee, to negotiate over access to and/or control over resources. There are also, however, less formalized fora where negotiations take place. These may involve mediation by a religious leader, discussions between members of different families, or discussions within the family. While it may be tempting from an analytical standpoint to divide these different types of fora into a formal/informal dichotomy¹⁰³, this may create a split that is meaningless when considered in the context of women and men's actual strategies. While fora such as the courts might relatively easily be considered as formal, and discussions within the household as informal, there are several fora which may either fall within a fuzzy area in between, or fluctuate between formal and informal in different contexts. The group of elders is one example - on the one hand it might be considered an informal forum since it is not officially a part of the state¹⁰⁴. The group of elders, however, is a highly respected local

¹⁰¹ Although some might prefer to refer to these fora as institutions, the term institution is not stressed in this paper. While more cognitive understandings of institutions have released them from the grips of regulatory determinism [Mearns (1994:103), for example, refers to institutions as 'regularized patterns of behavior between individuals and groups in society'. See Scott (1995) for a presentation of the schools within the studies of institutions], I still feel the term 'institution' does not adequately portray the dynamic interaction between individuals and groups in resource negotiations, and the importance of context in defining institutional terms. I prefer to use forum, a term which for me better expresses the flexibility and sometimes ad hoc nature of negotiations observed in the field.

¹⁰² The BDO was a fairly new organization at the time of this field research (formed in 1997) whose role is to represent the interests of the various village organizations in Basho in matters concerning the development of the valley. In reality, it is comprised of the same group of influential men, the *Jirga* (elder group) who were called upon in the past to manage conflict in the valley, although they have adjusted the original organization by forming various functional sub-committees.

¹⁰³ Ostrom (1990) in her discussion of collective choice arenas, for example, distinguishes between national/regional and/or local formal arenas which include legislatures, regulatory agencies, and courts, and informal arenas, which include informal gatherings, appropriation teams and private associations.

¹⁰⁴ Following Weber, the state can be defined as consisting of 'the government or legislature which passes laws, the bureaucracy or civil service which implements governmental decisions, the police who are responsible for law enforcement, and the armed services whose job it is to protect the state from external threats' and 'welfare, education and health services' (Haralambos and Holborn 1995: 504). What exactly comprises the state, however,

forum that has existed as far back as the elders recall, and while they do not receive any compensation for their mediation activities from the government, according to the villagers their decisions are recognized by both the courts and the police. The simple formal/informal dichotomy is thus not adequate in dealing with such ambiguous fora.

Rather than categorizing negotiation fora as formal and informal entities, it may be more relevant to examine how different actors experience formality in different fora. A forum that is considered informal by one, may be experienced as formal by another, depending on the purpose and context of the encounter - where it occurs, the gender and social status of the participants, who else is present, and what events precede it¹⁰⁵. In the case of Sultanabad, the experience of formality is highly gendered. There are, for example, certain fora that we were told were only accessible to women through their husbands or male family members¹⁰⁶. It was made clear to us at the onset of our research, for example, that women could not attend public meetings with 'strange' men. But despite the sometimes dogmatic insistence of the strictness of purdah¹⁰⁷ in public fora, women and men's actual participation in various fora points to the flexibility of the concept of purdah. For example, during a household interview conducted by a male AKRSP staff member it was not expected that the women of the household would participate - according to the villagers this had never happened earlier, as it was impossible for male AKRSP staff to meet with village women. Circumstances were such, however, that due to several days of rain the floors of the house were too wet to

is the focus of much debate, where strict divisions between state and civil society are no longer the analytical norm. See, for example, Timothy Mitchell (1991: 77), who describes the state's boundary as 'elusive, porous, and mobile'.

¹⁰⁵ This argument parallels that made in the methods discussion in Chapter 3 when discussing the changing character of group discussions depending on who was present at the meetings.

¹⁰⁶ Women could not, for example, attend BDO meetings.

¹⁰⁷ 'Purdah' here refers to the Muslim practice of seclusion, where women are separated from men either spatially (boundary walls, restrictions on movements) or through the use of clothing, most commonly the veil. In Sultanabad, purdah takes the form of women wearing a *chador*, or large shawl, covering their heads and body to varying degrees depending on the context, and restrictions on women's movements and interaction with male strangers.

entertain visitors and this particular meeting was held outside. While the openness of this area (none of the courtyards in Sultanabad are walled for privacy) and the presence of a strange man conducting a formal interview seemed a public arena to begin with, it was in fact relatively easy for the women (from both the household and the neighboring households) to first hang silently on the periphery, and then venture closer to the side where my assistant and I were sitting, then offer answers to some of the questions, and finally take over the discussion completely and talk directly with the male interviewer as the husband left to do some other business. The meeting became the unthinkable - a public meeting of the women with a strange man without another village male present¹⁰⁸. This challenges notions of a strict dichotomy between the private (domestic) as purely female space, and public as purely male space that dominated early anthropological literature¹⁰⁹. Instead, it gives a picture of the sometimes-flexible nature of negotiating fora, where women and men experience varying degrees of formality in different contexts. The formal and the informal do not operate in isolation from each other - the analytical split between the two is, thus, construed. There are, as York (1997: 214-5) argues, 'a variety of factors which define a situation as either public or private...not only does space both reflect social organization and define the people in it, but people define space'. The forum chosen will depend not only on one's position at the time of the negotiation, but will be determined as well by the nature of changing relationships with others, and by expectations as to the process and success within it. Rather than being caught

¹⁰⁸ It is likely that the presence of my research assistant and I, living in the village and being better known to the villagers, was a sufficient insurance to the village men (and the household's husband in particular) that our male AKRSP colleague would behave appropriately.

¹⁰⁹ See Sciamia (1981) for a critique of the notions of privacy and public space in early ethnography and theoretical works, as well as Harris' (1981) seminal article critiquing the private/public dichotomy, as it was proposed by Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974). The dichotomy of public and private spheres as presented by Rosaldo and Lamphere coincides with certain Muslim interpretations of the concept of *purdah*, or the seclusion of women, which serve to regulate women to the private sphere and reserve the public sphere such as legal and political fora for men. Mernissi (1993) questions the interpretations of Islam which strictly limit women to the domestic sphere (i.e. those by Ibn al-Jawzi (1981) and Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan al Qannuji (1980)). She offers instead a reinterpretation of the meaning of the descent of the hijab (veil) where she suggests that the Prophet, plagued by visitors at all hours in his home, had a revelation which expressed the need to separate private life from public, not men from women, nor women from the public sphere (Mernissi 1993: 85-101).

in an inflexible gender-based dichotomy, there is a need to explore different aspects of agency and power, for example, the flexibility of situations for women, the rigidity of the system for men without power, and the possibility for the simultaneous existence of different experiences of the formal and the informal.

The nature of negotiation in Sultanabad

The women and men of Sultanabad negotiate over several types of resources i.e. agricultural land, monetary resources such as in the case of divorce, grazing resources, timber and firewood. The nature of negotiations, however, can be quite different, depending on the stakes involved and the degree to which the resources can be divided or shared. Below are three examples of the use of various fora for negotiating for control over three different types of resources: the first involves a dispute over land inheritance between relatives, the second involves a firewood collection dispute between villages, and the third involves a dispute over rights to construct a grazing shed in the high pasture.

Case 1: Agricultural Land

The first case was mentioned briefly in the introduction, and concerns the negotiation over inherited property:

Nadia Batool's aunt lives in the next village, and was the sister of Bakhtawar Shah. Nadia Batool claims that when her father Bakhtawar Shah was alive he had given his sister many animals after their father's death because she said that she did not want land. After her brother Bakhtawar Shah's death,

however, the aunt claimed that she had never gotten her share of land from their father, and was thus claiming it now that Bakhtawar Shah was dead. Nadia Batool and her step-mother Kulsoom (Bakhtawar Shah's second wife) argued that the aunt had already inherited her share in the form of animals. The issue was brought before the valley elders and they decided in favor of the aunt. When asked how this could be so, Nadia Batool replied that the evidence (the animals) was long gone - either sold or eaten - and thus there was no proof that the aunt had already gotten her share. It was the aunt's word against Nadia Batool's and her mother's, and the aunt won the support of the elders.

In this example, negotiation takes place on several levels. The most visible is the process of negotiation involving the elder committee, where they act as mediators between Nadia Batool and her mother on the one hand, and her aunt on the other. The aunt claimed to not have received land after her father's death, and thus claimed that according to Islamic law she was entitled to it, no matter how many animals she may have received. Nadia Batool and her mother claim, however, that the aunt actually said no to her land inheritance and took animals instead, however this is not easy for Nadia Batool and her mother to prove. Nadia Batool's aunt was now both older and married, which according to Nadia Batool gave her a certain amount of status in relation to young Nadia Batool, and Nadia Batool's young widowed mother.

Focusing on this negotiation as an event only, this case might appear to be a type of distribution negotiation, where there is a one time, one opponent, and one negotiation over a limited good (Rognes 1997:13). While this negotiating event illustrates perhaps the most visible level of interaction in this case, negotiation may also have taken place at times and in

fora which are less visible from our present vantage point. Referring back to the fourth quote of the introduction, we see that girls seldom ask for their share of their father's land. While they do have a right according to the laws of Islam, there is strong social pressure not to ask for (nor concede) that right (Agarwal 1994: 19), and to accept that it is more important for the sons to inherit, since sons are considered as having the main responsibility to support their family. If the negotiation over land resources is considered over a longer span of time, however, a picture evolves where daughters who are in a weak position to negotiate for land at the time of their father's death may choose not to permanently give up their claims. Instead, they wait with their claims to a later date, stretching the 'negotiation' over a much longer period of time, when the terms of negotiation have changed¹¹⁰.

The inclusion of a longer dimension of time in analyzing negotiation changes the view of negotiation as a single episode, to one that is dynamic, based on changes in relative power of the participants over time. In Basho, and particularly Sultanabad, participants often have a long-term relationship, not only between themselves, but also with the mediator(s). The elders in the elder group, as well as other individuals acting as mediators, are an integral part of the community. Their role is both mediator and arbitrator, which is comparable to certain African traditional systems where 'elders who mediate conflicts are given authority to make decisions and impose sanctions', a characteristic which distinguishes traditional systems from formal, judiciary processes where mediation is performed by a neutral third party (Cousins 1996:50). In Sultanabad, a conflict may have a long history of more or less formal negotiations in which

¹¹⁰ This practice in the village of giving up their land in the present and trying to gain control in the future is somewhat different than the practice described by women and men living in other areas of Baltistan. In Skardo, for example, women could legitimately wait with their claim until they may need it in the future, where they could claim it with relatively little difficulty since the norm was to honor the wishes of daughters concerning their claim of land (although not all families honor this norm). In Sultanabad, however, daughters are expected to permanently give up their claims, although as seen in this example they may try to assert a claim later in life, which involves a legal battle, whether locally or in the courts.

all the parties, including the mediators, are involved. While the elders are chosen¹¹¹ both out of respect and villagers' perceptions of their ability to be fair, they are also products of and participants in the community and cannot completely divorce themselves from their roles as fathers, husbands, uncles, or neighbors, nor are they necessarily expected to. Thus, in Sultanabad, where negotiations stretch over longer periods of time, and are entangled in further overlapping resource negotiations, and are between parties and mediators which are well known to each other, the notion of mediators as neutral third parties become close to meaningless. What becomes interesting, instead, is an analysis where alliances and strategies of the participants as well as the mediators are considered. As Yngvesson (1984: 254) argues, '...focus on the role of third parties is surely of significance, for the interests they represent seem to play such an important role in shaping the course a conflict takes. But understanding and explaining third parties requires a consideration of political alliances, and of cultural, social, and economic affinities, between third parties and others.' It is thus surprising that the elders in Nadia Batools aunt's case claimed not to know the details in the inheritance settlement in a community they know so intimately, and that further investigation might reveal ways in which their interests were involved in the settlement¹¹².

Case 2: Collection of firewood

Habiba Shameem and Peza tell of a recent conflict between villages over the rights to collect firewood in Chiart forest. Until two years ago, firewood collection at Chiart was reserved for the women of Sultanabad. They could go several times each day undisturbed in groups of 10-15 to collect what they could

¹¹¹ Elders are chosen by consensus for as long as they prove to be respected for their opinions – if they are no longer desired as elders they are marginalized by not being consulted in village matters.

¹¹² See Carsten (1995), who in her study of migration histories of villagers in Malaysia, refers to the fragmentary nature of memories, how memory is a social construct, and how forgetting is both systematic, patterned, and a part of the construction of identity.

of fallen and dead branches. Then two years ago the women of two of the lower villages, Nazimabad and Khar/Guncho, began to come to Chiart to collect their firewood as well. There was fierce arguing, and they were doing ‘everything but beating each other’. The women of Sultanabad pushed their husbands to take the problem up with the elders, who brought the problem up at the BDO level.

Despite Sultanabad’s rights to the firewood in this part of the forest, the decision of the elders was that they had to share the forest, as the lower villages had no longer any other source of firewood. The women had to agree not to fight again, and now they go to collect firewood together because they have become, as they say, ‘sisters.’

In this case the women gained access to the elders only by urging their husbands to act. The rights of the villages to firewood were clear and in one sense they were not in themselves being challenged. What was being negotiated was the change in the context under which the village women found themselves. Part of the narrative of the deforestation of the Basho valley includes the observation that the lower villages sold the bulk of their trees to the government and timber mafia and thus no longer have trees for either timber or firewood¹¹³. Sultanabad, which has areas of forest far from the road, did not participate in this process to the same degree, and now still has firewood - albeit in areas progressively farther from the village. Sultanabad, however, could not merely insist on its exclusive rights to the firewood, denying Nazimabad access. The women and men in the entire valley are tied together through social networks that have their base in the sharing of resources of the valley. These social relationships, and the discourses defining them, help to define the moral fabric of the community, and have implications concerning access and rights to resources. Denying the

¹¹³ See Chapter 6 for a discussion of timber interests in Sultanabad

Nazimabad women access to firewood when they need it is not considered by villagers as a feasible option in such an intertwined community. With no other affordable sources of fuel for both cooking and warmth during the long winter season, denying one's neighbor fuelwood would seriously affect their ability to survive in the valley. Rights to forest resources in Sultanabad can thus change according to changing circumstances; under certain conditions Sultanabad villagers can exclude other villagers from the use of the forest, while under more extreme conditions they cannot be excluded¹¹⁴. Access to firewood can thus be considered a moral right within the valley, justified by a 'basic human or social purpose' (MacPherson 1978:11). Gore (1993), in his discussion of Amartya Sen's entitlement approach, claims that moral aspects of resource management play a much greater role in, for example, people's actions under conditions of famine and hunger than Sen's relatively legalistic approach to entitlements suggests. People are not, for example, passive victims, but choose to follow what they consider legitimate or moral claims, despite their sometimes illegal character¹¹⁵. He argues that attention to the workings of the 'moral economy' can give valuable insight into how people mesh more legalistic rights with more informal social rules of conduct. In Basho, while the sub-valley use rights to the forest are not formal in legalistic terms, one can still consider the interface between more established or longer term customary rights and shifting moral claims. This situation is somewhat analogous to Cleaver's (1997) findings from the management of water resources in the Southern African context. She found that farmer/pastoralists in Nyaki, Zimbabwe, despite the scarcity of water resources and the practice of restricting users under non-extreme conditions, had an ideal of open access to water for all, where 'it is considered undesirable, indeed socially unacceptable to exclude anyone from a water source' and that 'restrictions on access to water are considered deeply undesirable by both users and local government officials and are deemed likely to result in

¹¹⁴ According to MacPherson's (1978) discussion of property, this would entail a shift from private to common property relations, although in this case it is only a temporary shift. See also McCay (1996).

¹¹⁵ This could entail, for example, the illegal harvesting of forest products for survival.

increased conflict and inequitable outcomes' (Cleaver 1997: 15). While the people of the upper villages in Basho realize that they at some time might also be in a similar situation of resource scarcity (as in the case of changing pasture conditions), moral concerns are not necessarily only based on reciprocity. Scott (1976: 176) refers to two types of morally based norms in his work on peasant rebellions in Malaysia; the norm of reciprocity, where the receiving of a gift creates an obligation to return the gift in the future¹¹⁶, and the right to subsistence, where 'all members of the community have a presumptive right to a living as far as local resources allow'. In Basho, despite the fact that the lower villagers exploited their forests by selling timber and firewood for financial gain, the moral concerns, in this case the right to heating and cooking resources, take precedence when resources become scarce.

¹¹⁶ See also Mauss (1990).



Photo 4. Sherimon (Charimond) Forest

Furthermore, the inter-valley political aspects of this issue should not be underestimated.

Sultanabad is only one member of the BDO, or valley elder group, and that member which is closest in proximity to a significant amount of the remaining resources in the upper valley of Basho. It is clear that the other members of the BDO are interested in sharing these resources when they can, rather than allowing Sultanabad to retain full control. Sultanabad, however, cannot risk divorcing itself from the activities and interests of the BDO, in that the BDO is comprised of powerful interests in the valley, and is fast becoming the main contact point for access to external resources (i.e. from AKRSP). Thus, denying the villages their moral rights

would likely affect Sultanabad's ability to influence the BDO in other matters central to the valley, such as the building of roads and irrigation channels. These relative power relations will be discussed more in Chapter 7.

Case 3: Rights of Construction of a Khlas¹¹⁷

Haji Liaqat Ali, an elder of the village, informed us that three years ago Sultanabad had bought land in the Daminimona pasture area from Meito for 2500 rupees. Sultanabad needed the land for a new irrigation channel - the channel built on their own land was ruined by a slide. The channel was then built without incident. This year, however, Sultanabad decided to build a shed on the land they had bought in the pasture. When it was finished, Meito villagers reacted, shooting the roof off of the shed in protest. The police were called, and the participants calmed down enough to agree to have the BDO settle the matter. Meito villagers claimed that while any village could graze in that area during the day, only Meito villagers had the right to build a shed and sleep there. Sultanabad disagreed, arguing that they had the right to do what they pleased on the land they had purchased. Finally it was agreed that Sultanabad could keep their shed at Daminimona, on the condition that they paid an extra 1500 rupees to Meito.

This case illustrates how an agreement over resource rights was seemingly reached with the purchase of pasture land, but the terms were not clearly specified, and thus the rights remained negotiable. While the purchase of agricultural land has a long tradition in the valley, the purchase of land in the pasture areas is a relatively new phenomenon. Pasture

¹¹⁷ A khlas is a human dwelling located at the pasture, with a corral attached where the animals are kept at night.

areas in Basho have complex, multiple systems of use rights, and these rights were confronted when the context changed to incorporate the notion of the purchase of land. Normally, only temporary access to grazing and use of the *khlās* has been granted members of other villages. When grass is scarce in one village's pasture, for example, they can ask another village for the rights to graze in one of their pastures that season¹¹⁸. The purchase of land at Daminimona, however, involved a permanent change in 'title' from one village to another through the purchase of rights¹¹⁹.

In this case, the BDO elders were called on to help sort out just what rights the purchase of land had secured. The process of negotiation, however, was more than just a clarification of the terms of purchase. It also involved the longer-term negotiation of resources in a changing environmental context. At the time of the purchase, water rights and the construction of a channel were the issues – the issue was one of ensuring that water could be transported through the pasture without the channel being sabotaged or tapped for water. This year, however, grass was scarce in Sultanabad's high pasture, Challabat, and they needed to find another area for grazing. This worsening of grazing conditions for Sultanabad no doubt allowed them to play on the moral aspects of their needs for pasture, something that Meito could not ignore, since the next time it might be them who were in need of fresh pasture¹²⁰. Thus, this negotiation involved more than the conditions surrounding the purchase of land.

The changing environmental context, as well as the social obligation to assist each other in

¹¹⁸ The management of pasture resources in Basho differs significantly from, for example, that in Khapulo, a valley to the east of Skardo. In Basho, decisions on pasture allocation are reached through discussions amongst the local elders, (unless it involves land owned by the Raja), and the terms are flexible and informal. In Khapulo, rights to pasture are more firmly based on title, where land may be leased (rather than merely borrowed as in Basho), and the few conflicts arising are managed by a '*raja of the broq*', (prince of the pasture, although not a member of the actual royal family). This is somewhat analogous to the pastoral systems of Tibet's northern plateau where a religious landlord controlled the allocation of pasture land, ensuring rotations every few years to avoid overuse of the pasture areas (Goldstein et al. 1990).

¹¹⁹ Control over pasture areas has been given by the government to villages rather than individuals (see Steinsholt et al. 1998). In this case, the sale of the land was made orally, however, after the conflict over the *khlās* the terms of sale were spelled out in a written document, kept by one of the elders of Sultanabad.

¹²⁰ Refer to the earlier discussion of morality and reciprocity in this section.

difficult times, illustrates the importance of expanding the analysis of negotiations from a limited episodic occurrence to a continual process of social interaction. It also questions assumptions concerning the inevitability, necessity, or even desirability of more permanent forms of property relations¹²¹. The year following the shooting incident, the pasture at Daminimona was in relatively poor condition (due to environmental factors), and Sultanabad decided not to use it that year for grazing. While rights to the pasture were now clearer, they were nevertheless in need of other pasture for their animals. New negotiations ensued for other pastures, to which they gained access based on need (Macpherson 1978). The question remains whether the new rights actually enhanced their access to grazing as compared to before, or whether, in fact, they have lost the possibility to renegotiate aspects of the pasture that may be important in the future, i.e. in relation to the growing interest in promoting tourism in the valley.

Contextualizing negotiation in social networks

Negotiations over resources in Sultanabad occur in the context of existing and developing social relations, some of which can be examined in terms of the various types of networks in which women and men are connected. Networks in Sultanabad are often organized around practical tasks, however it would be misleading to confine an analysis to the functional aspects of these networks alone. Networks represent fora where resources are negotiated, and social relations developed, and examining the nature of these networks gives clues as to how they are used to gain access to and redistribute resources.

¹²¹ See Alston et al. (1996) and de Soto (2002) for support of formal rights and land titling, Bunting (2000) and Odegard (2001) for critiques particularly of de Soto, and Fernandez-Giminez (1998) for arguments for alternatives to tenure formalization, i.e. through the regulation of pasture land use rather than enforcement of land tenure.

The concept of networks is not new. Kinship networks in particular have been in the forefront of early anthropological studies in examining social relationships¹²². A focus on kinship as the only, or at least dominant determinant of social relations in rural societies, however, has proven to be inadequate in explaining how women and men actually organize their interaction. There are two main aspects of the structural-functionalist approach to kinship¹²³ which have been criticized in this respect. First, early theorists considered kinship a system in itself, which could be studied in relative isolation from other domains in society. As Collier and Yanagisako (1987: 6) state, however, “kinship is not a discrete, isolatable domain of meaning, but rather that the meanings attributed to the relations and actions of kin are drawn from a range of cultural domains, including religion, nationality, gender, ethnicity, social class, and the concept of ‘person’”. This opening of analytical boundaries has led to studies which, rather than focusing on kinship alone, examine kinship as an aspect of, for example, broader systems of inequality and power construction (ibid.: 3). Second, the analytical dichotomy between ‘domestic’ and ‘political-jural’¹²⁴ so central in early kinship work has been strongly criticized by feminist anthropologists. As Moore (1988: 60) states:

...anthropology tended to divide kinship systems into two domains; the domestic and the politico-jural. It goes without saying that women were seen as involved in the domestic domain. The domestic and the politico-jural domains were viewed as mutually determining, but this did not alter the fact that kinship systems were

¹²² Fortes (1969), an anthropologist and kinship theorist himself, considers in particular the anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan to be the ‘founding father’ of the study of kinship, arguing that the results of Morgan’s pioneering work in developing a methodology which systematized social relations can be seen in later work by, for example, W.H.R. Rivers, and structural functionalists such as Radcliffe-Brown. Fortes is careful, however, to separate Morgan’s methodological contributions from, for example, his more controversial evolutionist interpretations (which characterized much of the discussions within the scientific community during the mid-nineteenth century). Fortes agreed with Rivers in that it was Morgan’s analysis of kinship, and not his speculative theories, which was Morgan’s important and fundamental contribution (Fortes 1969: 9).

¹²³ As developed, for example, by Radcliffe-Brown (1952) and later Fortes (1969).

¹²⁴ As expounded by both Morgan and Fortes (ibid.)

essentially about the ways in which men could gain access, or arrange for other men to gain access, to resources, including women.

Kinship has been essentially reserved for the study of male systems, leaving women to be studied as members of the households within a particular line of male descendants. Being relegated to an ideologically constructed household unit, women and their links outside the household to kin and non-kin women and men have been invisible. By not studying these linkages, however, the agency of a woman in gaining access to resources beyond the household cannot be fully understood. Vaughan (1983) gives an example of this in her study of rural women in Malawi, where she describes how women use both close kinship ties outside of the household, as well as special friendships with non-kin women (*chinjira*) to gain access to, for example, food and consumption items. Such ties between women of different households can also be found in Sultanabad, as the examples of networks below will illustrate.

Furthermore, it is unlikely that the study of male networks alone have been able to capture the full realm of social interaction among men, nor the interaction between men and women, making our understanding of gendered resource management lacking in credibility. Leach (1991) illustrates, for example, how older women and younger men create an alliance in the utilization of tree products in Sierra Leone, in competition with older men's interests in timber. Without an opening-up of the analysis of networks to conventionally unexpected constellations, we may miss key alliances that determine women and men's access to and control over resources.

In Sultanabad, networks abound, connecting each villager to another in relationships that can either ensure or hinder access to resources. And while each network on the surface tends to the practicalities of carving a living from one specific aspect of the harsh mountain environment, they are all interconnected through overlapping social relations. These networks vary as to their duration and composition, and the alliances formed through these relations comprise some of the alternatives open to women and men when acquiring resources. It is useful for the analysis at this point to distinguish between the concept of a network as a group, and as an individual's field of contacts. When individuals are organized, for example, around various practical tasks it is tempting to perceive this as a well-defined group, where individuals enjoy membership and have obligations. Holy and Stuchlik (1983: 112) however, warn that such assumptions may be misleading, in that 'when the composition of any actual task group is analyzed, it appears [the actors] use a far more complex model of dyadic relationships within and across the community boundaries both to recruit helpers and to account for their presence.' Thus, a structural analysis of a network which focuses on membership and rules may hide how people actually interact and form personal relations, which they then use to gain access to resources. I use the term network rather than 'group' when discussing social relations in Sultanabad precisely to be able to better analyze what I have found to be the diverse and context dependent nature of the connections among a network's participants.

Another use of the term network refers to an individual's field of contacts, in an egocentric sense, as 'chains of persons with whom a given person is in actual contact, and their interconnection' (Bossevain 1974: 159). Here one is concerned with examining an individual's social strategies as they move among different tasks and contexts where they interact with different or the same people. Bossevain suggests several criteria for examining

the nature of a person's social interaction, placing them into two categories: interactional criteria, where one can examine the diversity of linkages, transactional content, directional flow, and frequency and duration of interaction, and structural criteria, where one considers size of network, density of interaction, the degree of connexion¹²⁵, the centrality of position of the individual in relation to others, and the degree of clustering in the network. This type of framework is not concerned with networks as 'closed' units, but as individuals' strategies.

For studying negotiation over resources in Sultanabad I propose that a dual understanding of networks is most useful. Considering networks as flexible entities organized around specific tasks or for specific reasons puts negotiations in the context of the different resources over which women and men negotiate, and a presentation of some of these will be the focus of the next section. How women and men maneuver within these contexts to gain access to resources, how they 'activate' or manage relationships, will be considered in the subsequent section. While Bossevain proposed that such relationships could be measured, or at least modeled, according to his criteria, this is not the intention of this study. Instead, his (and others') analytical insights will be used to attempt to give a picture of the complexity of negotiating strategies within a changing context.

Food/Ceremonial Networks

These networks are used mainly by the women in relation to their extended family. A woman brings food as gifts mainly to her own family, such as to her mother, sisters and uncles, on religious occasions. Gifts of food¹²⁶, often eggs, are given to the mother when a child is born

¹²⁵ average number of relations each person has with others in the same network

¹²⁶ Food is by far the most common gift exchanged in the village. The exceptions include wedding jewelry for a bride from her father, and small gifts purchased by men with access to cash income for their wives and children.

by only her closest relatives; her mother and sisters, and sometimes her uncles. This type of gift giving is limited and takes place in the woman's home. Money gifts are also 'put into the hand' of the newborn outside the mosque, but this is not for the child or its parents. The child rather 'carries' the money to the mosque where it is donated to the common village fund. Food is provided to these occasions by the guests, where at least one person per household attends, although it is only family members which are expected to give gifts. The food varies from *chipatis*¹²⁷ to *paranths*¹²⁸ with butter and cheese, depending on what each family can afford¹²⁹.

While there are norms concerning who should give gifts to whom on which occasions, the actual giving of gifts was subject to variation. There are, for example, cases where a gift was expected but not given. One such case was when a relatively well-off man refrained from giving one of his nieces a gift at the birth of her child. When his own daughter gave birth, she, in turn, received no gift from her maternal uncle. The extent to which such 'tit for tat' behavior would continue is difficult to speculate. The issue, which moves beyond the specific example mentioned here, is whether such 'breeches' of etiquette represent breakdowns in a 'total system' of reciprocal relations as described by Mauss (1990: 5), or merely an on-going play of power between two individuals (in this case between the two uncles) with different opinions on who has 'defaulted' on the norms of reciprocity, and who may at some point manage to even-out the terms of their relationship¹³⁰. In this case, the daughters are caught in

¹²⁷ A thin, round unleavened bread of wheat flour.

¹²⁸ An oily chipati.

¹²⁹ The purpose of presenting data on gift-giving in this study is to see its role as one of the types of networks people have access to, rather than to describe in full detail all of the workings and implications of gift-giving. For a full discussion, see in particular Mauss' (1950/1990) seminal work on gift giving as an exchange system in 'archaic' societies, which in turn formed the basis for extensive writing in both anthropology and economics on reciprocity and exchange.

¹³⁰ Gouldner (1960) defines reciprocity as not only a pattern of exchange, but as both a folk belief or fact of life, and 'a generalized moral norm...which defines certain actions and obligations as repayments for benefits received (p. 170). He distinguishes between the kind of duties or obligations which are based on prior action

the middle, used as pawns in their fathers' powered social relations, which will, in turn, influence their power relations as well.

Agricultural Labor Networks

Labor is both exchanged and sold, both by men and by women. Poorer men who need work are hired by other households to carry harvested grass and manure. They also work as casual laborers on channel projects in the valley (see photo below). Men from any family can be hired by others for house building, although they charge less for their labor if they are hired by a relative. Men, however, seldom exchange labor (*rokh*). Women, on the other hand, are very active in exchanging labor. Women exchange labor primarily amongst their extended family, but also between friends. This type of labor exchange allows a woman to enjoy a broader network of support in the village, in that she can call upon members of her own family as well as that of her husbands, to assist. One interesting aspect of this exchange is how the women do not necessarily have to return the same type of labor to the same household. A woman can, for example, call others for help during the weeding season when she needs extra labor, and wait until harvest to return the labor. In fact, labor sharing can extend not only over one season, but also over several years. Only the very destitute are not expected to return labor after they receive help¹³¹.

(generalized norm of reciprocity), and those which people owe each other because of who they are or to which social group they belong.

¹³¹ The poor do not 'call' for help in the same way as one who will return the labor would – rather they make it clear they need help, but that they will not be able to return the favor.



Photo 5. Irrigation channel in mid-level pasture area

In this system of labor, there is a very strict ‘accounting system’ whereby each woman keeps track of exactly how many days of work she has done for others and how many days other women have done for her during the season. Thus, the exchange of labor seems to take on a flavor of economic transaction, where the exact obligations of both parties are decided in advance and agreed to by both parties¹³². When exchanging labor is not possible, then

¹³² Blau (1968) distinguishes between economic and social exchange, where economic exchange involves transactions where the terms are decided in advance, while in social exchange ‘one party supplies benefits to another, and although there is a general expectation of reciprocation, the exact nature of the return is left unspecified’ (p. 454).

payment is usually made in cash or in kind to the woman performing the work. In Sultanabad, very few women were said to have performed *rokh* for payment - it was only the very poor. Not everyone who works for others, however, is paid the same, or is able to call on others for labor work. Habiba Shameem, for example, does *rokh* for relatives, but does not call anyone to help her with her work, nor does she get the same payment. Like other women doing *rokh*, she has the right to meals during the workday - not only for herself but for her children as well¹³³, but she does not receive any payment in addition to the food. Habiba Shameem offers labor when food in the household is scarce - she does about 10 days of this type of labor during the season. By offering labor, however, rather than being called, she is in a position where she cannot demand payment. Those agreeing to 'hire' her view this as helping her in meeting her food needs by creating work, as an act of charity, while Habiba Shameem, grateful for the food and the work (which is less morally degrading than merely receiving food as charity), nevertheless feels exploited by not receiving the same payment as others. There are thus simultaneously two contrasting views of the nature of social relations apparent in this case; those hiring refer to moral norms guiding their behavior, an argument which Scott (1976: 167) refers to as the 'rights to subsistence', while the hired prefers to view the relationship in terms of reciprocity, stressing the unequal terms of this reciprocal arrangement as a breach of what Scott refers to as 'a central moral formula for interpersonal conduct'¹³⁴. It is this ability of the better-off to change the terms of exchange which allows us to question the seemingly dominant economic nature of women's labor exchange. It also, however, despite the wishes of Habiba Shameem, does not exhibit elements of mutual reciprocity, where terms may be fairly equal, as might be expected in gift giving. Rather, it represents power differences present in social relations. As expressed by William Mitchell (1991: 213) in his work on Andean communities, 'The emphasis reciprocity and the related

¹³³ The hiring households have to serve both her and her children butter, and her children milk.

¹³⁴ See also Gouldner (1960), who sees unequal exchange as violating certain pervasive values of reciprocity, which he terms 'one of the universal 'principal components of moral codes' (p. 161).

use of such terms as duality...and complementarity...to discuss aspects of Andean behavior and ideology have tended to obscure the asymmetrical – and sometimes very nasty – character of the Andean world. Such terms imply equivalence, balance, wholeness and symmetry...The Andean world, however, is not a reciprocal or complementary or dual world in that sense, but an asymmetrical one in which a few people benefit at the expense of many'. Power relations are an integral part of social relations, and reciprocal relations are no exception. As Blau (1968) argues, power lies in who has the discretion over repayment. It is not Habiba Shameem, for example, who decides what she will receive for her work – but rather those for whom she works.

For labor networks, it is important to consider the effect of wider changes in the community and society on this network. Employment opportunities inside (i.e. irrigation channel digging) and outside the valley (i.e. tourist hotels) will affect labor availability in the village, as it may not be excess labor which is sent out, making the exchange of labor both necessary and difficult. The husbands of Habiba Shameem and Haseena have both found work outside the village. Since both women have many small children to care for, they cannot utilize their land to the fullest, and they cannot ask for help from others because they would find it difficult to return the labor, at least in the foreseeable future. Thus, they will not be able to exploit their own resources, nor take part in the labor network.

Sharecropping

There is an intricate system of sharecropping in Sultanabad, *barthab*, for cropland, and *barghnas* for irrigated grassland. In these systems, one family is permitted to grow crops/grass on another's land; under the condition that half of the produce is given to the

owner. This practice is very common in Sultanabad - for the 1998 season, one-quarter of the villagers were allowing others to do *barthab/barghnas* on their land, while one-third were doing *barthab/barghnas* on other's fields. The system is also very flexible - who does *barthab/barghnas* on whose land can change from season to season, depending on the needs of households, the availability of labor, and the availability of manure from those wishing to rent land. This allows different households to develop different production relationships each year. This type of sharecropping differs, for example, from sharecropping systems based on tenancy, where farmers have dominant dependency relationships with one particular landowner on whose land they reside and farm over long periods¹³⁵. Thus, while differential power relations do exist in Sultanabad, they are not based on fixed land/labor relations.

Animal Herding

Another arena around which we can observe a particular system of social relationships is animal herding. Animals are herded using a turn system (*noress*), where each family takes its turn herding large animals (*baress*) and small animals (*looress*) in the lower and upper pastures. Both men and women herd animals, although the patterns differ. Women are more involved in herding in the lower areas, particularly the larger animals before they move to higher pasture, and any sick or pregnant animals left behind. Men and adolescent boys take the small animals to the higher areas, where they stay in the common *khlas*¹³⁶ for the mid-summer months. Each family has a male representative in the upper *khlas*, responsible for taking turns herding and milking the animals, and making *lassi*¹³⁷, cheese and butter.

¹³⁵ See, for example, Agarwal (1994) where tenancy relations are discussed with regards to control over labor and land reform in South Asia.

¹³⁶ Pasture shed

¹³⁷ soured milk

While the turn-system of herding has existed for as long as the elders can remember, the gendered patterns were different in the past. Peza tells of her mother going with the other girls to the high areas with the sheep and goats during the day, staying together in the lower *khlas* at night. Now it is not considered 'safe' for the women to go so far with the animals, and it is not possible for them to stay in the common *khlas* at the high pasture¹³⁸. Despite these adjustments, however, the system continues, tying households together through family as well as non-family linkages. Herding networks are based not primarily on family units, but rather on one's use of a particular lower pasture. While the use of the lower pastures may have originally been based on families, generations of intermarriage and land trading among the villagers have resulted in a mix of families sharing a lower pasture.

Firewood Collection

Firewood collection is mainly done by women, although men play an important role in collection at certain times of the year when the women are heavily engaged in critical agricultural tasks, such as weeding. The women go in groups to collect wood, but these groups are neither fixed nor based solely on families. Their composition can vary from day to day, giving each woman a chance to 'network' with women not only from her hamlet, but also from the whole village. This flexibility allows friendships across established family and hamlet lines, widening the support system for a woman. It also, however, ensures a women's mobility in a system where a woman's ability to move around the valley alone is limited. By being able to join a variety of groups, one can move in almost any direction at any time. This

¹³⁸ An male elder claimed the reasons for this change were increased exposure to town customs. The men of the village traveling to Skardo saw how the women there stayed close to their homes. They then realized it was unfair to send their women so far from home with the animals. With an increasing number of outsiders in the area it was safer to keep them closer to the village. Likewise, it would not be proper for the women to stay in the common *khlas* along with non-family members.

ad hoc group formation is also used to move out of Sultanabad and farther down the valley to visit friends and relatives.

Animal Ownership-Sharing

In Sultanabad (and throughout Basho valley), there is a system of animal ownership-sharing for large livestock¹³⁹ called *barpa*. In this system, households can invest in a large animal together with another household, usually splitting investment 50-50. The household caring for the animal is responsible for its feeding, and is entitled to the manure, and milk if it is a lactating animal. Butter (a pre-agreed amount irrespective of production) and offspring are divided 50-50 between the households. Households also share draft animals. Rather than owning one *dzo* and trading draft power with another household, for example, a household may instead own two halves in different villages (the same level of investment). Sharing large animals is quite common - of the 133 large animals associated with Sultanabad, 61% are shared, the remainder owned by single owners. Animals can be shared between households within the village, or outside the village, most commonly with households within the Basho valley. Of the 61% shared animals, just over half are cared for outside of Sultanabad.

¹³⁹ In livestock I include *dzo*, *dzomo* and cow. Oxen are also present in the system, but their role is limited in the *barpa* system. They are used mainly for breeding, threshing, meat and income, and most often sold before reaching two years of age.



Photo 6. Mid-level pasture khlas; Raymil

The reasons why people share large animals are several. Since the altitude of the villages differs quite significantly (a difference of ca 1200 meters from the lowest to the highest village) plowing operations are staggered such that there is a minimum of overlap in the need for draft power. Sharing the risk of investment is another reason. For example, if there is disease in one village it may be possible to isolate other villages such that those with shared livestock in the other villages would not have lost everything. Likewise, if an animal is killed by a predator or by falling off a cliff (a not-so-uncommon cause of death in some of the more steep pastures and paths), the loss is half that experienced if one were to own the entire animal. Another important consideration is the labor involved - there is basically no labor involved for the household not providing primary care, something important for families experiencing labor constraints. Thus, even when a family can afford to own their own large animals, they still prefer that some of them are shared - all but three households in the village participate in the *barpa* system - one well off, one middle and one poor household. If a

household does not participate in the *barpa* system, it is quite out of the ordinary, and the subject of comment. For example, one villager comments on another who is experiencing difficult economic times, 'he is so poor that he had to sell his *barpa* cow, so he does not even get butter anymore'. In fact, the decision to share ownership of large animals is also important in terms of the cash it can generate, particularly for women, who may decide to sell half of their animal at a time when they need the cash.

What men and women get in addition to the spread of risk, however, is a wider social and economic network. *Barpa* is an important mechanism in cementing friendships, both between more distant family and between friends. As put by one woman, '*Barpa* is friendship - they become our relatives.' Since both women and men can own animals, the *barpa* system is a means by which both can develop social and economic ties within and outside the village. Some choose to strengthen family ties by choosing a relative, perhaps a wealthy one, with which to share an animal. For women with restricted mobility, it provides an opportunity to move down the valley to visit friends or relatives when collecting their share of the milk products. Those who choose partners outside the family effectively extend their network, fostering possible new alliances, as well as a degree of freedom from familial obligations.

Networks: function and agency

The networks presented above provide a glimpse into the variety of ways women and men in Sultanabad organize their social and practical interactions. These networks vary as to who is involved, the types of resource they manage, and the tasks involved in the management. We must, however, be careful not to over-emphasize functional interpretations of the role of resource-based networks in resource negotiations. Whereas a network may seem to be based

primarily on practical or ecological necessity, there may be other, non-ecological aspects that shape them as well. The standard explanation of the existence of the *barpa* system, for example, is that farmers share ownership of draft animals in order to take advantage of different altitude zones, but this only holds to the extent animals are shared exclusively with lower villages (MacDonald 1998). How do we then explain the sharing of draft animals within the same village, as is common in Sultanabad? Clearly other social and economic dynamics are at work, as illustrated in Sultanabad by the importance of selling animal ‘halves’ to obtain cash, and the desire to incorporate non-family members into the realm of ‘relatives’ by sharing ownership.

Resource networks provide opportunities for regular social interaction. But while the frequency and density of interaction within certain networks is determined somewhat by the nature of the resource (i.e. daily collection of firewood, seasonal cooperation in grazing), the role of women and men’s agency in determining the nature of social relations is more complex. As Bossevain (1974: 37) remarks, ‘a logical trap must be avoided: a statement about form is not a statement about content...network density is simply an index of the *potential* not of the *actual* flow of information.’ In other words, just having contact with others does not mean one chooses to use these contacts to obtain control over resources. The simplicity of this statement belies its theoretical significance for those contemporary discourses on resource management that are based on the premise that social capital is an important component of collective action (Prakash 1995; Jodha 1998; Molinas 1998). Social capital has become a popular term in resource management literature, however what exactly is meant by social capital is not always made explicit. The term has been used by anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists and economists to express the somewhat diffuse concept of social cohesion, and although some works retain their disciplinary roots,

there has been extensive cross fertilization in developing the concept (Serageldin and Grootaert 2000). Woolcock and Narayan (2000) identify four views of social capital that have become apparent in the literature: communitarian, networks, institutional and synergy. The communitarian view, perhaps the most widely acknowledged in community development literature, has its roots in the work of Robert Putnam, and stresses the importance of local networks and associations in the development of responsible civic society. In this view, the local is somewhat romanticized, in that it assumes communities are 'homogeneous entities that automatically include and benefit all members' (p. 230) and argues that the key to development lies in the reinforcement of local social ties. In this view, membership in social networks is promoted as one of the main indicators for social capital (Wall et al. 1998; Coleman 1990; Putnam 1993)¹⁴⁰. Wall et al. (1998), however, criticize the manner in which theorists such as Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam use the concept of networks by arguing 'all three social capital theorists are associated with quantitative assessments of the concept, an association that is even more pronounced in the empirical work on social capital that has been precipitated by [them]. With approaches to social capital that are based on counting who one knows, how many people are in a household, the number of voluntary associations in a community, or participation rates in those organizations, the quality of the relationships among the individuals involved can easily be ignored, even though they are very important elements of building trust and obligations' (Wall et al. 1998: 315). In addition, the concepts put forth by Putnam were developed in a European context, with an emphasis on formal networks and groups. Krishna (2001), in his study of social capital and development in Rajasthan, India, argues that examining the study of the density of formal organizations

¹⁴⁰ Wall et al. (1998) explain that despite Bourdieu and Coleman's focus on the individual's status and economic position, and Putnam's focus on the regional scale, where 'social capital fosters democratic institutions' (p. 312), all three focus on networks in their definitions of social capital. The importance of networks is made most explicit in Putnam's definition of social capital, where 'social capital refers to features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (Putnam 1993b:1)

(Putnam 1983) is inappropriate where there are few formal organizations. Krishna therefore focuses on informal networks in Rajasthan, going beyond formal membership measures by looking at the nature of trust and reciprocity in everyday social interactions¹⁴¹. He finds that it is not only strong social ties within communities that are important for moving towards social change, but the agency of certain key individuals to obtain access to resources outside the communities. Discussions of resource management based on a concept of social capital derived from mapping the structure of social networks, rather than from an understanding of the actual agency and dynamics of women's and men's interactions when negotiating over resources, provides little insight into the workings of the local community, and in the case of Sultanabad, would miss the flexibility and varying degrees of agency inherent in women and men's strategies.

The emphasis of the communitarian approach on the promotion of denser social ties, however, has been strongly criticized by what Woolcock and Narayan term the networks view. Portes and Landolt (2000; 1996:1) for example, criticize what they refer to as 'the popular view of social capital as wholly beneficial with no significant downside'. They refer to several negative aspects of social capital i.e. the exclusion of outsiders and demands for conformity, which they claim have not received sufficient attention in the literature¹⁴². As in the Sultanabad case of the woman denied sharecropping opportunities, or the woman not given an expected gift, one can be both excluded from, and denied rights within a network. Also, close social ties can form the basis for corruption, a practice considered detrimental to community functioning. In Sultanabad, for example, close social relations between the forest volunteers and the villagers make enforcement of forest regulations, considered a common good, very

¹⁴¹ See also Lyon (2000) for an in-depth study of the production of social capital in agricultural economies in Ghana.

¹⁴² See also Harriss (2001) for a critique of particularly the World Bank's use of the concept of social capital.

difficult¹⁴³. This negative side of social capital reveals the difficulty the concept has in moving between analyses at individual and collective levels. As Portes and Landholt explain, ‘individual social capital in such instances consists precisely in the ability to undermine collective social capital, defined as ‘civic spirit’ and grounded in impartial application of the laws’ (ibid.: 535).

The networks view thus allows for both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ social capital, in fact, ‘it regards the tension between social capital’s virtues and vices as a defining property’ (Woolcock and Narayan 2000: 231). It also allows for social difference and conflict of interest within and between groups, such that if one group has ‘good’ social capital, it may be at the expense of another group with apparently weaker ties. Thus, while the communitarian view sees communities as homogenous, the network view focuses on power differences, and stronger and weaker ties between individuals and groups. On the other hand, the networks view has been criticized as focusing on the local as a closed system, disregarding the wider political and institutional context¹⁴⁴, not necessarily in terms of its affects on the local, but rather ‘the role communities can play in shaping institutional performance generally, and the enormous potential of positive state-society relations in particular’ (ibid.: 234).

Elements of the communitarian and network views can be seen in contemporary resource management literature which refers to the breakdown of traditional systems of cooperation and reciprocity in the face of either interventions or wider political and economic changes (Berry 1997)¹⁴⁵. Jodha and Bhatia (1998), for example, state ‘The decline in CPR’s, as shown by field evidence, is closely related with the depletion of social capital i.e. the

¹⁴³ See Chapter 7.

¹⁴⁴ Stokke (2000) argues that social capital arguments that focus on the local, supports neoliberal views that development is dependent on the individual, and ignores more structural aspects inherent in wider society.

¹⁴⁵ See also Turnbull and Fattore (1999), who critique the argument of the effect of government intervention on social capital formation.

community spirit and actions reflecting reciprocity, trust, shared values, networking and group action. This in turn has happened due to several legal and administrative, as well as institutional and technological interventions, which have disrupted or disregarded the customary collective arrangements for CPR, and in the process tried to replace 'social capital' by externally designed, top-down formal arrangements' (1998: 1). There two underlying assumptions in the above described scenario; first, that there was a degree of harmony inherent in the traditional social systems, and second, that that harmony is breaking down as a result of intervention. The first assumption romanticizes the community as in the communitarian view, and denies the often conflictual nature of local negotiating processes which occur between people with different interests and power bases (Leach et al. 1997b), the acknowledgment of which is one of the main arguments of this study. The second assumption is that the social system was 'something' and broke down into 'something else'. The point is not to deny that local social systems have changed, but rather to question the relatively static way local social systems are perceived. Networks in Sultanabad, with their inherent flexibility and multiplicity seem to suggest that rather than representing complete, static structures with rules for interaction, they provide women and men with options of association under changing conditions. Change does not occur in the same way in all aspects of village life, and relationships are developed in light of changing contexts. Weakening of network ties in one aspect of life, i.e. gift giving, may, in a sense, be compensated by the development of stronger relationships in other networks, or the creation of new ties, making reference to a general 'breakdown of local systems' too simplistic. Berry (1993: 180) makes this point in her work on social networks in Africa, where she explains, '[p]eople could alter their positions within a particular network or shift their energies and attention from one to another as circumstances and their own resources changed. This gave farmers considerable flexibility to adjust their productive activities in response to changing opportunities and

encouraged them to proliferate memberships in social networks. It also meant that membership in a particular network did not determine the way in which individuals participated in economic or political activities'. In Sultanabad, as we will see below, new opportunities for expanding and creating networks arise in the promotion of a Women's Organization, which affects the ways in which both women and men relate to both each other and those outside the village and valley.

There are, certainly, several examples of local social systems changing to the detriment of resource management systems. Sarin's (1995) study of forest management in India, for example, shows how a well-functioning system of forest management by women was co-opted into a joint forest management program in the name of participation, resulting in the alienation of women, increased conflicts over resources, and poor forest management. The challenge thus lies in exploring the nature of changes in social systems, both positive and negative, in order to be able to examine the affect on resource management. One must also be clear as to who is defining the nature of local relations. What one analyst describes as a breakdown, another may describe as a logical and adaptation to changing conditions. Turnball and Fattore (1999) in his critique of the use of social capital perspectives in welfare politics in Australia, argues that describing community members as moral failures, deviant and dysfunctional is more an example of a particular cultural perspective than a thorough analysis of peoples strategies:

'The focus on culture normatively defined in bourgeois terms dismisses the coping strategies individuals and groups employ in response to the structural conditions which arise out of the conditions of late modernity, or post modernity, depending on your preferred perspective. Therefore social capital

theorists cannot make sense of particular coping strategies which, for them, seem quite destructive. In reality these actions are not only a response, but a progressive rejection of the exploitive conditions of our times' (p. 233).

In Sultanabad, the changing importance of various resources for individuals, groups, or the village as a whole (for example, due to ecological, economic or social reasons) affects people's negotiating strategies, and how they choose allies in their various networks at different times. As we shall see below, networks are not confined to the local level – women and men have allies and contacts outside the village and valley which they use to gain access to different kinds of resources, and many types of institutions reach into the sphere of the local through either family connections or through representatives of government or civil organizations. Thus, networks and peoples' use of them are both affected by and contribute to wider societal change, but they are not solely determined by the political, legal and institutional environment, as proponents of the institutional view imply¹⁴⁶. Rather than confining analysis of networks and their contribution to social cohesion to either the local or the macro environment, Woolcock proposes a synergy approach. This approach combines the networks and institutional views to emphasize complementarity between the public and private, and embeddedness, or the nature and extent of ties connecting citizens and public officials. It accepts the view that social capital can be either good or bad, and sees the potential of government institutions in helping to bridge alliances between class, ethnic, racial, gender, political and religious boundaries. This approach opens for the study of social capital, or the nature of social relations as both a stock and something which is produced. Evans (1996) for example stresses the difference between endowments of social capital i.e. the extent to which there are already existing networks and conditions for collective action, and its

¹⁴⁶ Woolcock and Narayan (2000: 234) cite North (1990) and Skocpol (1996) as examples of institutional approaches which view the success of social groups are dependent on macro-level institutions, and Tandler (1997), who equates social capital with the quality of a society's political, legal and economic institutions.

constructability. The implications of this distinction lie in the belief in the possibility of building the stock of social capital in the short run (i.e. actively forming organizations or associations), versus the belief that the building of social capital depends on long-term, hard-to-change, socio-cultural processes. If, however, measures of the stock of social capital are to make sense in a particular context, they must be based on an understanding of the processes through which social capital is produced. The next section explores women and men's maneuvers in negotiating over resources in Sultanabad.

Negotiating maneuvers

In Sultanabad there is no single strategy or single form of negotiation for access to and/or control over resources. Negotiation takes many forms, depending on the context under which acquisition is sought: for example, the relative power position of the parties involved, expectations of success or failure, previous events, the type of resource to be negotiated, how the individual and/or group perceives norms concerning access and control, and the level of involvement (individual, group, village, valley, government). What, however, does acting within a context actually entail? As proposed in the introductory chapter, negotiation itself is not a choice, but an ongoing process of social interaction in which social relationships are formed and re-formed. The way people maneuver within and amongst these relationships, however, involves decisions, conscious or unconscious, with respect to one's actions. In Sultanabad, these decisions might in some cases be manifested in active and overt strategies for control over resources, while in others these may be more covert, and in many cases gendered. Gerami and Leherner (2001) identify four types of strategies; collaboration, acquiescence, co-optation and subversion, used by women to negotiate their lives in the fundamentalist environment of post-revolutionary Iran, claiming that 'women's strategies

differ from men's because men have access to authority in the Weberian sense and women's access to power is often through indirect tactics. One of the most striking attributes of resource acquisition in Sultanabad is that when overtly claiming resources women and men seldom act 'alone' - resource negotiation is a process by which women and men actively recruit allies which they feel will strengthen their position *vis á vis* others. The choice of allies and the process of 'enlisting them into one's project' (Villareal 1992) represent one way a person or group attempts to exercise agency. Related to seeking allies is its moral counterpart - denying others access in the hopes of gaining resources for one's self, either through force or through attempts at invoking social sanctions. The spreading of negative rumors to weaken the position of others in resource negotiations is not, for instance, uncommon in Sultanabad, or in Basho Valley in general.

Decisions for action, however, can also be manifested in the use of more covert strategies, where negotiations are concealed, muted, or embodied in action – strategies which may be used when risk of conflict is high. In Sultanabad it is not always possible or desirable to actively or vocally contest or lobby for control over resources, sometimes in fear of physical retaliation. Women in particular can resort to less confrontational forms of negotiation. This is consistent with Kabeer (1994) who suggests that women in corporate households (common to South Asia) with dominant male household heads often choose covert strategies in resource negotiations, as compared to women in segmented households (common in Africa) who can negotiate more overtly¹⁴⁷. Negotiations can also be evident in actions which are apparently non-directed or unconscious, but which nevertheless may represent part of a broader strategy for claiming or maintaining control over resources. Keeping silent rather than speaking,

¹⁴⁷ Leach (1994), however, describes how in Sierra Leone covert negotiation is also present in segmented households, not necessarily to avoid conflict, but to avoid their husbands losing face. She uses the example of women secretly receiving gifts from their boyfriends in cases where their husbands are unable to provide for them.

adjusting a shawl as a reaction to a stranger approaching, actions which while unplanned and unconscious, nevertheless might be considered part of a broader, conscious strategy not to provoke negative opinions of one's character, which can influence the support one can expect from potential allies.

Below are several examples that explore the various ways women and men maneuver when negotiating control over resources. They are presented in such a way as to illustrate the variation and diversity of negotiating. This is not to imply, however, that the different ways of negotiating represent distinct domains. Negotiation occurs at several levels, and different ways of negotiating are often intertwined in ever-changing combinations. Thus, in the process of enlisting allies, one may simultaneously negotiate in both covert and unconscious ways, depending on the situation.

Enlisting Allies: Family

In cases of openly contested access/control – for example when a woman, man, or group either challenges others for rights to resources, or is challenged by others and is thus in danger of losing access to resources - strategies of negotiation can take the form of active recruitment of allies to be enlisted in processes which may range from discussions with family and elders to the filing of court cases. Both men and women in Sultanabad enlist members of their broader families as allies. Men tend to have most contact with their own families, asking advice from their father or uncle, and cousins. Women tend to use their own families as their strongest networks, if they are fortunate enough to have them in the village or the valley. In addition, however, women can extend their network to include the women on their husband's

side of the family through the system of labor exchange among women. Consider the ways that Haseena and Nimat Khan choose to use their family networks.

Haseena and Nimat Khan have five young children, and have been ranked as middle class by both the men and women's groups¹⁴⁸. Nimat Khan is of the Bundopa clan¹⁴⁹. His father's brother, Shikaribaba¹⁵⁰, and Shikaribaba's four sons are an important source of support for Nimat Khan in the village. They are all powerful men, and Nimat Khan often goes to them for advice. Nimat Khan goes to his family first, then to the elders of the village if he needs advice. The rest of his network is ad hoc, shifting according to need. He hires male labor for carrying crops, grass, and firewood - but rather than base this hiring exclusively on family connections he hires from any family that may need income. The family takes care of one *dzomo* and one cow shared with households in the villages of Parmashott and Matillo¹⁵¹ respectively. His elderly father lives in a village down the valley, where he has 8 dependents, which Nimat Khan helps to support.

Haseena is of the Astoripa¹⁵² clan. She has several uncles in Sultanabad - one of which is Liaqat Ali, a village elder. She goes to him for advice and if she needs him to extend credit to her (he is a shopkeeper). She also does exchange labor (*rokh*) with his family, as she does with the women in her husband's family. Her best friend is Bano, the wife of one of her husband's cousins. Haseena also has contact with the families of her own uncles, Yousuf Ali and Haji Ghulam

¹⁴⁸ Middle class, as defined by the men and women, comprised those households who had neither more nor less land than others, had adequate labor for their land, and had some cash income from an Army pension.

¹⁴⁹ Bundopa is one of the eleven main clans of Sultanabad

¹⁵⁰ Shikaribaba means, literally, hunter-grandfather, and is the oldest member of the village.

¹⁵¹ Villages along the Indus at the foot of the valley.

¹⁵² The Astoripa clan originated in Astore, and are referred to as immigrants despite the fact that they have may have lived in the village for generations. Haseena immigrated to Sultanabad upon marriage.

Murtaza, although this is mostly in terms of visiting during religious occasions and sharing and exchanging food. She hires Guldafa and Afrada Bibi, two of the poorest women in the village, for paid *rokh*. Her parents are divorced and she has no contact with her father - her mother received her in her Haq Meher¹⁵³ instead of money. Her mother is remarried and lives in Guncho, but has a field in Sultanabad and is often together with her daughter.

In the case of Haseena and Nimat Khan, Nimat Khan has quite powerful allies in the village in his cousins, one of which is an elder. But while Shikaribaba and his sons might seem to represent a powerful 'block' in the community, in reality they represent many conflicting interests. Rather than weakening the base of Nimat Khan's support, this diversity of interests actually represents a broader base from which he can choose different cousins at different times as allies, depending on his needs. As argued earlier, families represent merely a *potential* pool of allies, and women and men use specific strategies when deciding whom to approach for which issues at which times. Haseena has a much broader-based contact network than her husband; it involves the women from both her own and his family through the system of exchange labor¹⁵⁴. Despite a rather wide family network, however, Haseena chose to ask her mother to go outside the family to ask for food when she was short, explaining that admitting her need to her wider family would be degrading, more so than asking a friend. Her mother was in this case the only family member who she chose to enlist, despite her acute need for food.

¹⁵³ Payment made by the husband to the wife in the event of divorce.

¹⁵⁴ Very few women in Sultanabad come from outside the valley, and therefore have at least some of their family in the vicinity. Those who do come from outside rely on friends and those from their husband's family with which they are friends.

Village elders (Jirga)

Men and women use their family networks to the extent they can. If they cannot gain support there, they then have the option of gaining allies outside of the family. One of these options is the village elders. The elders of the village mediate conflicts over the access to and control over resources, i.e. animals grazing in other's fields, and land disputes. They also are called upon to resolve conflict both within families and between them. Conflicts between families are often settled at wedding celebrations since this is a time when everyone in the village comes together. Both men and women can use the elders if they cannot solve their problems within their families, although a woman's case is always stronger if she has a male relative to assist her in her claims - be it for land or a divorce. Men and women do not have to address the elders as a group, but can approach them as individuals. Consider the case of Nadia Batool:

When Nadia Batool tried to get a divorce from her first husband, she had the support of her sisters and most of her brother-in-laws, but not, at first, from her father and one of her religious brother-in-laws. These two sided with the husband; the brother in law for religious reasons, the father to avoid having to pay the husband for the divorce. After countless episodes of running away from her husband's house, Nadia Batool was able in the end to enlist the support of one of the elders of the village. He convinced the father and finally the husband that she should be granted a divorce. The father then paid the husband Rs 10 000 - the transaction and the divorce being facilitated by the elder.

While Nadia Batool got the support she needed from this elder, she might not have been so lucky had she addressed the elders as a group. There are three village elders in Sultanabad. They were chosen not primarily for their age, but for their qualities as respected members of the community. Within this group, there is a difference between the personalities and how they relate, for example, to outsiders and change within the village. The two oldest members are relatively open to outsiders (one immigrated to the valley about 40 years ago), and are enterprising individuals who are interested in trying new ideas out in the village. It is from these two, for example, that our research has received the most support, and they have shown a strong interest in learning and discussing the village's future. The third member of the elder group is a religious figure in the village. His main income in addition to agriculture is the sale of *taweez*¹⁵⁵. It is quite possible that had they been approached as a group they would not be in agreement on whether to support Nadia Batool or not, and there would have been a greater chance of the group not supporting a divorce, something which may have influenced Nadia Batool's choice to appeal to only one of the elders.

Religious leaders

In addition to family members and the elders of the village, religious leaders can also be consulted by both women and men. Sultanabad has two lay-religious¹⁵⁶ figures living in the village - one is the Akun (seller of *taweez* mentioned above), and the other is the Molvi (responsible for calling the village to prayer). In addition to these, Sultanabad has a Sheikh who lives with his family in Skardo. This Sheikh, although not currently residing in the

¹⁵⁵ special prayers for healing or protection

¹⁵⁶ I term them lay-religious, in that they do not have higher religious education.

village, is still closely affiliated with the village and works as a lobbyist in Skardo for the interests of the village. He has his formal religious education from Iran¹⁵⁷.

In theory, all of these men are potential allies to the men and women in the village. Since the Akun and the Molvi are located in the village, they are more accessible to the women of the village than the Sheikh (although the women of his and his wife's family have direct access to his assistance). In terms of helping women to gain access over resources, however, the Akun and the Molvi may not be the best choices of allies for the women of the village, as they have in several instances taken a conservative stance when women have attempted to negotiate for control over resources in other fora¹⁵⁸. Like the elders discussed earlier, the Akun and Molvi cannot completely divorce themselves from their other roles or positions in the community. Erin Moore (1993), in describing the maulavi in the Northern Indian context, explains the significance of their multiple roles for women in the village of Nara: 'The maulavi is a spiritual liaison between God and humans. He is also a Meo¹⁵⁹, a father, a landowner, and a representative of a patriarchal religion. The maulavi acts from his position in a culture of domination to maintain the status quo... (ibid: 538)'. This leads to the men in the Nara community discussing social conflict with the maulavi in a legal discourse (in a different forum), while the women must 'mask their complaints against the patriarchy in a medical discourse' (ibid.: 539). In Sultanabad, the Akun is an elder which can be addressed by the men in fora of village politics. His spiritual services, mainly in the form of taweez, are used by the women for their healing powers when they or their children are ill, or when they wish for something good to happen. While his performance in this role may not appear to offer women overt assistance in negotiating resources, he may nevertheless play a role in women's

¹⁵⁷ The Shia from Baltistan follow the religious leaders of Iran for inspiration, since they, too, are from the Shia sect. Many take their Hajj, or religious pilgrimage to Iran, and the majority of educated leaders receive their educations from there as well.

¹⁵⁸ See the case of Nadia Batool above, and the process of Women's Organization formation below.

¹⁵⁹ A dominant and well-off caste of the village.

negotiations over the use of, for example their time and energy. Moore suggests that for the women of Nara, an excursion to the maulavi may be the women's distinctive form of work stoppage:

'The visit usually requires an overnight stay, meaning that the woman and often her husband or brother are pampered at the home of a relative; they buy gifts for the children at home (adding excitement and expectation to their homecoming); and she enjoys a needed break from the routine of daily work and a mother-in-law. In addition, the maulavi's cures often require that the patient drink a quarter kilo of warm, sweetened milk and take a warm bath daily. These would be mandated luxuries for a woman in Nara. The maulavi's cure always involves a naqas¹⁶⁰ that is to be worn forever. But the naqas becomes polluted and must be replaced, requiring a return visit at least once a year' (ibid.: 539).

While a visit to the Akun in Sultanabad is not completely comparable to the Nara case, it may still offer women the opportunity for a break in their taxing workday, legitimized by the Akun, albeit keeping with the confines of what he defines as appropriate in terms of women's position in the community.

Allies outside the village: Valley Jirga/BDO

If sufficient support cannot be elicited within the village, both men and women can search for allies in their wider environment. One option is approaching the valley *jirga*, or elder group. This group deals primarily with conflict between villages, but also is called on in family disputes if the village elders have a conflict of interest or are directly involved in the conflict.

¹⁶⁰ Religious charm, similar to *taweez* (see following footnote).

The *jirga* of Basho is comprised of elders from seven of the eight villages in Basho.

Nevertheless, the *jirga* is available for the use of everyone in Basho. For example, there is no representative on the *jirga* from the village of Matillo at the bottom of the watershed, but the men and women of Matillo still use the *jirga* if they are unable to solve their problems using their village *jirga*. In Matillo, the use of the *jirga* is in fact an important strategy when someone is at odds with the powerful individuals of the village (who are often in opposition to the *jirga*/BDO). Many of these powerful individuals have powerful allies outside the valley, for example, in the ranks of the police and other government agencies.

Influential Individuals

As already mentioned in the section above, there are strong individuals elsewhere in the valley who get their authority from allies outside the valley. While these represent a kind of check on the BDO as an interest group, they also represent possible allies for individuals or groups in any of the villages. Their support and advice can be sought by both men and women, although the farther away from the village the resource person is, both in terms of distance and acquaintance, the more difficult they are to enlist of allies by the women. The most likely allies for women still include family members living elsewhere in the valley, as well as ‘friends’ made through the animal ownership-sharing system.

Allies outside the valley

As contact with Skardo has increased over the years since the completion of the road, so have the options for seeking external support for resource claims. These may be in the form of relatives or other villagers who have moved out of Sultanabad and are able to be a contact

point in the town. One example of this for Sultanabad is the Sheikh, who has for many years helped his people gain access to resources from the government and various NGOs. Another example is the shopkeepers who have affiliations with the different valleys - when a man from Sultanabad goes to the Skardo bazaar, he does business first with those who are originally from his valley. Support may also be sought, however, from other sources directly, i.e. government offices and NGOs. The most common contact outside the village is with the police, the hospital, lawyers/legal authorities and AKRSP.

The possibility of allying oneself with someone outside the valley depends to a large extent on one's mobility, and support systems within the valley. Many women from Sultanabad have been in Skardo - but for most this is very seldom, and only together with a male relative. Some women have husbands which bring them to Skardo once a year, a few women visit relatives, a few have gone there to pray on special religious occasions, and one or two have been to Karachi to visit a migrated son. The majority, however, have only been to Skardo for medical treatment at the hospital for either themselves or their young children. This means that they can seldom directly approach potential allies from outside the valley. One alternative is to elicit the help of a male relative to go into Skardo and act on the woman's behalf. This, however, is not always possible. The following case illustrates the difficulties a woman can have in dealing with authorities without the support of her male relatives, but also how she manages to in the end get help from allies with connection outside the valley.

Farzana Nadeem is one of 7 daughters of Haji Hedar, who has two wives living in separate homes. She is 25 years old with 5 children from the ages of 6 to 12. She was married at the age of 13 to a man who was older than her own father, who is currently somewhere over 60 years old. She moved with her husband to his

village, which is about 45 minutes drive from Basho on the main road towards Skardo.

Farzana Nadeem says her marriage was not a bad one, and that her husband seldom hit her. It was difficult, however, to live in a village with no family and to be married to someone so old. She waited patiently, however, because like most Shia-marriages in Baltistan, she had muta marriage, or temporary marriage, which could be dissolved at the end of the agreed period at her request. When the muta ended after 10 years, she requested a divorce from her husband. He agreed, but Farzana Nadeem's father did not, and forced her to stay with her husband. It seems that when her father gave her to her husband, the husband paid the father a large amount of money – several villagers say he in affect sold his daughter - and was not willing to pay back the money to the husband upon her divorce.

The next events in this case are unclear - some sources say that Farzana Nadeem showed an interest towards a younger man from that village which angered the families planning his future marriage. Others, among them Farzana Nadeem, refer to a dispute over grazing land, where Farzana Nadeem's father played a role in chasing the villagers off their land, making them angry towards Farzana Nadeem and her husband. Whatever the case, Farzana Nadeem was attacked in her home by some of the villagers when her husband was out and ended up in the hospital with internal injuries and having lost the baby she was carrying. After this she and her husband and their children fled to Basho to live with Farzana Nadeem's father. Over time, the husband moved back to his own village. Farzana Nadeem tried to go back once, but the villagers threatened her life again

so she returned to her father's house. Her husband wanted her to return to him, but she refused unless he could guarantee her safety. He could not, but he also refused to give her a divorce.

During the period we were in Basho, the husband took their children from her, first the older boys, but then also her small daughter and son. He sent villagers and then the police to get her, spreading rumors about her character (she worked for us as a cook, and was accused by her husband of working in a den of immorality). He refused her permission to work for us. She continued, however, to visit us and help her sister who was now the official cook. We tried to get her help from the police through our contacts, and they were willing to help, but they needed a male relative to step forward to defend her. Anyone else would have been questioned as to his motives for helping a woman outside his family. One option might have been to get the support of one of her brothers-in-law. This, however, was difficult because her father sells *taweez*¹⁶¹, and relatives and non-relatives alike are afraid to act against him in the event he decides to use these *taweez* to curse them. They are, however, willing to go with her to Skardo every now and then, so she can continue to try to gain support for her case from either the police directly through complaints filed against her husband, or a lawyer (a friend of a friend). Farzana Nadeem did not give up. She worked through friends, family and female staff of AKRSP in Skardo towards her divorce. AKRSP officially was not able assist her for fear of associating itself with controversy after being the focus of a *fatwa* the previous year. Finally, after one year of negotiating, Farzana Nadeem is divorced - her father, after pressure from friends

¹⁶¹ Charms which contain strips of paper with religious verse, often used to bring luck, good health in the case of illness, and protection from evil people or spirits.

and family, agreed to pay the money to the husband - most of which was earned by Farzana Nadeem herself the previous summer.

Farzana Nadeem's case illustrates how difficult it can be for a woman to get support outside the valley, albeit not impossible. This does not, however, mean that the use of outsiders is not open to women. If contact with outsiders can be made *in* the valley, then women as well can seek allies from people from outside the valley. This depends, thus, on whether outsiders are able or willing to come to the valley - the arena in which women can more easily gain access to their support. Farzana Nadeem was able to enlist the project's support because it was present in the valley. Government services i.e. health and legal, have not had any presence in the valley, and are thus not a contact point for women in the valley. AKRSP and IUCN are two NGOs that have made an attempt to assist women in their own arena. My research assistant and I were also approached for support, both in terms of private cases such as the case of Farzana Nadeem, and for support in forming a Women's Organization (WO) in Sultanabad. We, in our capacity as friends and employers, tried to use contacts in Skardo to assist the women. While both men and women approached us for assistance, the male researchers and AKRSP staff were only approached by village and valley men.

Muted Negotiation

The examples above refer to strategies in light of fairly open conflicts over resources, where women and men sought allies to resolve their conflicts over claims. Conflict resolution, however, is only one aspect of gaining or maintaining control and access to resources. In order for there to be conflict resolution, there must be a conflict, or perceived conflict. Is there, however, always a conflict? Does negotiation occur only in the face of an openly

perceived conflict, or can it also take place as well to avoid conflict? Are negotiations always in the form of verbal interaction, or can they also be actions, and/or non-action negotiations?

Negotiating through actions: Women's mobility and access to resources

One aspect of a woman's access to resources is her mobility within the community. Limits in the mobility of women are common in many cultures, with varying degrees of institutionalization¹⁶². In Muslim communities, these limitations are institutionalized mainly through *pardah* (seclusion), influenced by the Islamic concepts of *mahram*- a blood or foster relation with whom it is unlawful to marry¹⁶³, and of honor¹⁶⁴. For example, in order to avoid illicit relations between non-*mahram* men and women, and thus protect the family honor, families restrict the interaction between unrelated women and men. While men are expected to avoid contact with non-relative women by, for example, 'lowering their gaze'¹⁶⁵, women are expected to observe varying degrees of *pardah*, which may range from total seclusion in the home (Ardener 1993), to avoidance of areas where men are present. In Sultanabad, as in the rest of Basho, women's mobility both within and outside the village and valley is to a certain extent restricted. These limits, expressed both explicitly in public representations of gendered norms, and implicitly through action, determine where it is acceptable for women to move and leads to gendered patterns to access to resources. One can, for example, map to which grazing areas a woman can go only for the day, in which areas she can spend the night, and which she can never visit. This spatial construction of movement, however, has changed over time as the social and economic context has changed. For example, due to increased labor opportunities for the men outside the valley, the women from some of the lower villages

¹⁶² See Ardener (1993) for cases of gendered boundaries drawn from South America, Great Britain, the Mediterranean, Africa, the Middle East and the former Soviet Union.

¹⁶³ See Awde (2000) for details on which relations would be considered *mahram*.

¹⁶⁴ For a full discussion of honor see, for example, Abu-Lughod (1986).

¹⁶⁵ (Awde 2000: Quran 24:30-1)

have stopped bringing their animals to higher pasture where they could spend the night, as they need a male relative to stay with them in the pasture areas. They continue, however, to bring the animals to the lower pastures, as long as they can reach home again by dark. Changes in patterns of movement have also influenced the way people perceive the pasture areas. Whereas staying in the upper pastures was part of their everyday lives in the past, women from the lower villages now consider spending the night in the pastures as shameful.

This in turn reflects on their view of women in the upper villagers, who are looked down upon for their freer movements in the pastures. Women from Sultanabad (and Nazimabad, the next village down the valley) spend the night at the pasture areas where there are agricultural activities and individual household or family *khlas*. Families move to these pastures after the first weeding of the valley crops and before the men move up to the higher pasture in mid summer. During this period the whole family moves, including the chickens. Women can only spend the night there, however, if there is a male member of the household present as well.

Women from Sultanabad cannot, however, spend the night at the higher pastures i.e. Challabat and Daminimona. The reasons given for this are several. One is that the *khlas* at these pastures are village *khlas*, where the men of different families share the same dwelling. It would not be appropriate for a woman to spend the night there. They are permitted, however, to visit the pasture area during the day, and do so in order to help herd the animals there at the start of the season, and occasionally to bring food and firewood to their husbands. Another reason why women do not stay at the high pasture is that they have the main responsibility for agriculture in the valley and the broq, which during this period needs watering and weeding. There was little indication of restrictions on women going to the high

pasture based on religious reasons¹⁶⁶. Although there are several stories or fairy tales that are told, particularly from the forest - more needs to be explored on what they might mean. There was also no protest to either myself nor my assistant spending the night at the high pasture in a tent, although our female cooks from the village were not willing to accompany us.

Conditions of mobility and resource access by women

While women cannot access the resources that are more than a day's travel from the village, they can access resources within a day's walking distance. An important part of a woman's mobility is the conditions attached to her movement. The conditions of this mobility depend on where the women wish to move, and with whom she wished to move. For travel outside the valley, a male relative must accompany the traveling women. For movement inside the valley, however, a woman can move without the accompaniment of a male relative. In this case women's movement (outside a defined local area) is conditioned on her moving in a group of women. In the area around Ranga¹⁶⁷ and the village, women are permitted to move alone. In the forest, a group of two is sufficient, but more is better. They must be a group of three or four women to move beyond the bridge and enter the rest of Basho valley. It is most important for young married women to be in a larger group since they have to listen to their husbands. The very young and the very old can go anywhere in the valley alone.

The women claim these rules of mobility within the valley have not changed for the last 20-30 years. We did learn, however, that over 50 years ago the women actually went to the higher pastures to herd sheep and goats in the *noress* system. This has changed, in that women no longer herd small animals in the higher pastures, but only cows (and sheep and goats) when

¹⁶⁶ See Knudsen (1994) for a discussion of restrictions on the movement of women in the Hunza mountains in relation to spiritual beliefs and changing economic opportunities.

¹⁶⁷ Ranga is the pasture/forest area on the floodplain immediately below Sultanabad. See map and photo.

they are grazing in the lower areas around the village. The reason given for this change was that when the road opened and the men traveling to Skardo saw how the women of the town were kept close to their homes, they decided it was not right to send their women alone with the small animals, particularly when there were men from the outside (lower villages) roaming the same or nearby pastures with their animals. This matches what the women from the lower villages said about a shift in their role of grazing - it is possible that when the women from lower villages stopped going to the pasture (and were replaced by men) it was no longer 'safe' for Sultanabad's women to continue in the higher areas alone.

It thus seems that the conditions of mobility on the one hand restrict women's access to certain resources, but on the other hand they also ensure women access to resources as long as they adhere to the conditions. By moving in groups, women can move freely in the forests and up and down the pasture areas. Are these conditions, however, fixed? Experience from other areas of Baltistan suggests that women of higher status tend to be more mobile than others in the village. Limits might be pushed by these women, or by women who have managed to change their status in the village, thus affecting the conditions for access to resources.

Women negotiate for the freedom to access several types of resources. Many of the women in the village were initially restricted by their husbands from meeting with us. These were the wives of those who were against the formation of a women's organization in the village. We were also denied access to some women by their husbands because they said their wives were too busy to meet us. Nevertheless, during our stay, more and more women became 'available' for discussions, and even those whose husbands were against the women's organization in the end attended the final WO formation meeting and signed as members. By

associating with outsiders, the women were in a sense stretching limits of behavior through a process of negotiation with their husbands. It is unlikely that these negotiations were overt - particularly in the cases where the men were negative to involvement with us. It is more likely that the women undertook activities that were at least not explicitly known to their husbands. Leach (1994), for example, in her study of gendered resource use in Sierra Leone, discusses how women sometimes use covert strategies to acquire resources i.e. stealing from her husband (with or without his knowledge) or receiving resources through illicit relations. Not living closely with a family, however, made the observation of such negotiation difficult. One woman, however, commented on the relative ease with which she could move around the village while her husband was away in the Army. Despite the fact that she lived in an extended family, she felt she was able to make more independent decisions on the use of her time than those whose husbands were based in the village.

Thus, while the contours of mobility are somewhat shaped by gendered norms, the way women maneuver their mobility reflects to a certain extent a conscious strategy to gain access to resources they need or desire. At the same time as they are negotiating access to resources, however, they are as well negotiating their broader identity as women, through their bodily meeting with the norms (i.e. mahram, purdah and honor) governing their sexuality. Physically moving around combines more overtly strategic negotiations of space with less conscious movements of body and veil that might resemble habit more than conscious choices. These less obvious movements are thought by Bourdieu to be central in establishing large-scale social inequalities 'through the subtle inculcation of power relations upon the bodies and dispositions of individuals' (on Bourdieu in McNay 1999: 99). How conscious and strategic such movements are, however, is difficult to assess: 'social agents have 'strategies' which only rarely have true strategic intentions' (Bourdieu 1999: 81). Adjusting a

veil may seem unconscious, but the action might ensure a woman remain present where she might otherwise be expected to leave, or to pass where she might not be allowed to pass with her basket backpack of firewood. Dwyer (1999) looks specifically at the use of the veil by women from Pakistani families in Great Britain. In order to negotiate greater participation in public society, for example the right to study at the university, some young, unmarried women use the veil consciously in order to signal to their parents that they can be trusted to act morally beyond the confines of the household. Likewise, in Gerami and Lehnerer's (2001) study of how women in Iran negotiate post-revolutionary fundamentalism, some women chose to actively co-opt the state's rhetoric and follow the strict dress codes as a strategy to gain access to higher education, successfully arguing with skeptical family males that 'under the Islamic Republic, universities were safe for women and allowed them to serve the revolution and Islam' (p. 563).

Mobility, however, is not an issue that only concerns women. Generally, there was little evidence of restrictions of men's mobility within the village – we observed men (non-relatives) entering houses of neighbors, and talk with, for example, the women present even when male family members were not at home. Men's mobility (as well as women's) can, however, be restricted in terms of legal or customary rights to enter an area (such as pasture) to utilize resources. Also, social standing can define where a man is permitted to move: in Basho there were several poorer men who would not go near the Forest Hut¹⁶⁸ in the past for fear of abuse by an earlier forest guard and his local assistants. The norms underlying many aspects of women and men's mobility, however, are quite different, making the manner in which men and women's mobility and access might be addressed in policy quite different. Improving the social status or legal rights of both women and men may affect their mobility

¹⁶⁸ The Forest Hut is owned by the Forest Department and in addition to housing forestry staff is used as a guesthouse for visitors to the valley with the permission of the Forest Department.

and access to some extent, as would, for example, a shift to a less corrupt forest guard, but for women there may in addition be a need for attention to their ability to negotiate the terms of their social interaction specifically with men. By observing women and men's overt and subtler negotiations over resources, one can gain valuable insight not only into the processes that influence how people decide to access resources, but also the policy options possible for influencing this access.



Photo 7. Forestry Department's Forest Hut in Basho

Preventing others from gaining access to resources – the use of rumors

One strategy used by men and women in Sultanabad/Basho to try to gain access to resources, or merely to maintain the status quo in terms of power and control over resources, is to prevent others from gaining access to resources. In such cases the actors are purposefully and actively trying to weaken the position of others. Moss (1994), in examining a water tank management system in India, refers to the way the headmen, who initially supported an NGO-supported project, eventually through various covert ways, began to ‘withdraw support or to obstruct project ventures when it became clear that the kind of activities [the project] would undertake (low-cost, self-help measures and community action) were not those which would support their existing lifestyles (p. 19). Similar tactics are used in Basho, where one way of denying others access to resources is through the use of rumors. The following section gives an example of how rumors were used in Basho to protest or try to gain resources from the research project of which we were also a part.

Initiation of the research project in Basho – the role of rumors

Initiating a research program in Basho was not unproblematic. AKRSP had to negotiate with villagers over several months in order to ensure agreement that researchers from ‘outside’ were allowed to live and work in the valley. There was apparently a multitude of interests in the valley, and a clear split between the lower and upper villages. The BDO, the group most interested in research cooperation, had to face opposition from other interests in the lower villages who were used to getting first access to any resources entering the valley (for example schools, doctor, power station, transport). This split between lower and upper valley interests became clearer during the first summer of fieldwork. There was a great concern by

the lower villages that the upper villages would benefit more than the lower ones from the research program. Throughout negotiations between the villagers and the villagers and AKRSP there was concern with where visitors would live, who in the valley would benefit from them in terms of rent for housing, who would work for the researchers, and to what extent development activities would be implemented. Despite an apparent consensus by the valley's men that the activities would benefit the whole valley, it became clear over time that the consensus was more like a reluctant compromise, and that there were still interests that felt the upper villages would getting the better part of the deal¹⁶⁹.

It seems, however, rather than try to go back on an agreement to allow the research, the opposing interests chose another strategy - the spreading of rumors. By spreading rumors about the researchers and their motives and character the opposing interests might hope to convince the supporters of the program to change their mind and not support the research. They would thus prevent the villagers from the upper valley from reaping any benefits, including more control over the upper forest. If the researchers left the valley, for example, the lower villages might be allowed to continue using forest resources in a way that is probably not in line with what the upper villagers would agree with, and which is likely illegal. Thus, there were constantly new rumors originating in the lower villages circulating in an attempt to sabotage research cooperation with the upper villages, and particularly Sultanabad. Those local villagers supporting project activities, however, managed to continually negotiate with these interests to stop this 'sabotage' by either including them in decision making, hiring them for project activities, or granting them some other favor or concession.

¹⁶⁹ Refer to section on forestry which explains the conflict between the lower and upper villages, where the upper villages claim they have traditional rights to the upper forest, and are trying to exclude the lower villages from harvesting these forest resources.

It is perhaps not so unusual in most societies that the spreading of rumors is used to diminish support of certain groups or individuals. What is, however, interesting in Basho, as well as Baltistan in general, is the type of rumors spread, the acceptance of rumor spreading as a legitimate vehicle for the furthering of interests, and the gendered nature of these rumors.

In the case of Basho, the rumors spread about the researchers are many, which may not be unusual in an area that there have been very few outsiders, and basically no foreigners. Most of these rumors are of a harmless nature, motivated by a genuine curiosity and being made known to us rather openly through comments and questions, and often wrapped in humor. The women are in general more open with their questions than the men, and it is only the men we know well that dare to shyly ask about things they have heard about my research assistant and me, or about the other researchers in the project.

In contrast to these relatively harmless rumors, however, are those rumors that clearly have been instigated in order to actively try to turn valley supporters against researchers, as well as AKRSP. One of these was a rumor that the Norwegian researchers were making lots of money from NORAD - keeping funding that should have been going to the villagers for themselves. This rumor was focused mainly on the research activities associated with the forest, and the researchers located mainly at the Forest Hut. Here, while the focus of the rumor was the monetary aspect, there is also an ethical side of it. The researchers were surprised to hear such a serious accusation against their ethical character. Those starting the rumor, however, had counted on support from their allies due to the unethical aspects of researchers reaping profits from the villagers, drawing a comparison with the illegal timber-felling by other outsiders.

There is also another type of rumor, however, which focuses on sexual morality. This type of rumor is mainly used against women, either by questioning their morality, or against men by using the immorality of women as a focal point. For example, there were several rumors that the school where my research assistant and I were living was the center of immoral activities, and this rumor was spread to a valley sheikh, newly-returned from religious studies in Iran. The sheikh then commenced preaching against our presence, strongly criticizing the valley people for allowing outsiders into the valley and threatening their moral existence. Fortunately, this condemning did not last long. The elders of Sultanabad and the BDO as well as the sheikh who was supporting us in Skardo promptly made a visit to the returning sheikh and convinced him the rumors were all lies. He also sent his wife to visit us, who was then able to return to him and attest to our acceptable moral standards. With our characters approved, the new sheik did not hesitate to strongly criticize the valley people once more, but this time for spreading lies about the outsiders.

The role of rumors as a legitimate strategy is not only confined to Basho. The *fatwa* against AKRSP in Baltistan was a campaign focused on two aspects of AKRSP that are interpreted as immoral - charging interest on credit and implementing a women's program. The criticism of the women's program was based on rumors of immoral conduct by AKRSP female staff, which the opponents argued they were teaching to the village women through the women's program. These criticisms were enough to stop activity in the women's program for one year, although credit activities for the men were able to continue.

These examples show how rumors based on immorality can be used to affect resource relations, and how they might be gendered. The other side of the picture, however, is to examine how the villagers of Sultanabad chose to deal with the issue of moral character.

While on the one hand moral norms were expressed by village religious leaders as being strict, everyday life involved men and women interacting socially as friends, and we did not during the first years of our stay hear any rumors about anyone in the village acting in an immoral way¹⁷⁰. As outsiders, however, our behavior and dress were scrutinized from the start. We were expected to dress and behave properly, perhaps be stricter with our dress than the village women themselves. But rather than let us make mistakes, the village women made discrete hints about our dress - pulling down on their sleeves if they saw mine creeping up my arm, adjusting their *chadors* if mine was slipping back too far and if we met a religious person who required more respect. Tolerance of our less than perfect knowledge of the intricacies of proper dress and behavior seemed almost boundless, and both the men and the women continually defended our character in the face of rumors from lower down in the valley.

Summing up negotiation

This chapter has explored the nature of negotiation of resources by the women and men of Sultanabad, considering the ways in which they organize their social and practical interactions, and the strategies they use to gain access to resources. Rather than seeing the acquisition of resources as events defined by fixed rules and regulations, the flexibility of the system is put in focus and the importance of process is examined. Women and men, through their social networks, have access to allies through several different networks at different levels that can be called upon in different situations depending on changing contexts. The concept of morality in negotiations is also considered, both in terms of the way wider moral norms in the community affect decisions on access to resources, as in the case of firewood and the right to survive, and in terms of the way moral norms affect particularly women's

¹⁷⁰ Our cook's honor, as well as ours, however, was attacked by her husband when he was trying to get support from the police in getting her to come back to him. This was only an attempt, however, and it was clear that no one believed his accusations.

strategies of negotiation, and thus represent negotiations not only over resources, but over identity as well.

An understanding of the dynamic nature of negotiations in Basho has several important implications for, for example, planned development activities in the valley. In building and strengthening local institutions¹⁷¹, attention to the nature of social interaction, or how different women and men interact to gain access over resources, can give insight into how these institutions shape and are shaped by dynamic social relations. Social relations would affect how these institutions are organized politically, how resources are funneled to and through them, what their collective and individual responsibilities might be, and how they link with other institutions in the community and state. Local institutions in Basho, for example, currently cope to a great extent with the flexible demands of pasture management, which each year faces changing natural conditions and fluctuations in animal populations. Livelihood shifts towards higher animal populations (for example through technological changes in animal productivity) would challenge this system to develop mechanisms where negotiations are still flexible, consider wider moral norms of rights to survive, but occur in a context of scarcer pasture resources. Who wins and loses under such a changing system depends to a large extent on who is able to negotiate successfully for access to resources in these emerging institutions. Gender relations are clearly reflected in the power structures of local institutions, for example, in the practice of choosing men as leaders of the women's organizations. This was a strategy employed by AKRSP to ensure the formation of women's organizations (WOs) in conservative valleys, and to ensure WO representation in all-male village and valley decision-making bodies. Men as WO leaders in Basho have in practice, however, not been

¹⁷¹ In Basho this would include AKRSP and IUCN's work with village organizations and women's organizations, and governments work in the development of local and district councils.

able to ensure women's representation in any of the village or valley fora, because the male leaders are not a part of these fora.

In efforts to strengthen and create local institutions, a concept of social capital which considers more than membership and meeting attendance is necessary to understand the potential of collective community action. In Sultanabad, there are many 'inactive' village and women's organizations initiated by NGOs which are embedded in already existing systems of powered social relations. Challenging existing power structures through the establishment of newer organizations may provide opportunities for those with less negotiating power to find allies and create new networks where they improve their access to resources. As Portes and Landholt (2000) suggest, 'Social capital can be a powerful force promoting group projects...but it consists of the ability to marshal resources through social networks, and not the resources themselves' (p. 546).

Evidence from Sultanabad suggests that the process of negotiation is far from equitable – one's success in negotiations depends not necessarily on one's rights as an individual alone, but also on one's ability to successfully elicit support. There are great differences in the ability of different women and men to gain access to resources, despite the flexibility of the system. The next chapter will examine more closely the nature of social difference in Sultanabad.

6.0 THE CREATION OF DIFFERENCE

The previous chapter introduced the concept of negotiation, illustrating people's varying ability to negotiate access to and/or control over resources in Sultanabad. But what is the nature of this difference, and how is difference related to the concept of power? This chapter begins by taking a closer look at the concept of social differentiation, exploring how difference in Sultanabad is defined and created through powered processes of resource redistribution. Here I explore the various ways in which village women and men perceive and describe difference in access to resources, and discuss, using an example of the formation of a women's organization, the relevance of gender as a category of difference. I then examine resource distribution issues within the village, and argue, using the example of land distribution in Sultanabad, for the importance of incorporating powered processes into the analysis of resource management issues.

Social differentiation in Sultanabad

When examining social differentiation, one is immediately confronted with the challenge of identifying the contours of difference between members of the community. In exploring social difference in Sultanabad, this process took several forms. In some cases, such as the ranking exercise described below, villagers were asked to categorize households according to their own perceptions of well-being. In other cases, social differentiation was either observed or examined through discussions of processes of resource distribution over time. In each case, discussions moved in and out of the different life-worlds of the researchers and the villagers, such that the contours of social differentiation discussed here are neither purely local perceptions nor purely categories defined by the researchers, but represent a variety of

ways through which the meaning of social differentiation might be understood. The aim is thus not to choose one approach to understanding social differentiation as absolutely superior to another, but to try to critically examine the varying levels of insight which different approaches offer in understanding social difference in Sultanabad. Particular attention is given to the implications of a categorical versus a processual approach to studying social difference and differentiation.

Well-being or wealth¹⁷² ranking by a group of women

The first attempt during the fieldwork to explore social difference was in the form of a series of well-being ranking exercises conducted with segregated groups of women and men. The main purpose of these exercises, which were done early in the fieldwork, was to get an overview of the different households in the village, start to learn the names of the men and women, and to see how the groups of women and men chose to rank village households according to their well-being. The women were asked to decide whether a household was well-off, poor, or somewhere in between - the villagers themselves were to decide what criteria they would use to categorize the households.

The first comment arising during this process, with both the women and the men, was that there were no big differences in the village - that they were all the same. Before, there were large differences between rich and poor, but now they are more equal. Here they refer to how things have changed since the rule of the Raja, which I will discuss in more detail below. We

¹⁷² Originally it was the intention of these sessions to focus on well-being, in order to explore non-material aspects of women's (and men's) quality of life (Narayan 2000). It became clear during the discussions, however, that the villagers were focusing so much on material criteria that the sessions seemed to take on the character of a wealth-ranking exercise despite our efforts to explore other aspects. This could indicate at least two things: material wealth was an important local indicator of well-being, and/or this was not the appropriate forum to capture all aspects of well-being. Nevertheless, other aspects of well-being did surface during the discussion, and are incorporated into the analysis.

asked them to try to differentiate anyway, and they came up with three categories - the well-off (*pjokpo*), the middle (*guzara*) and the poor (*shergo*). The well-off group consisted of three households, the middle group of 21 households, and the poor group of eight households. In order to learn more about the middle group, we asked them to split it up once more, maybe into two categories. They then chose to put 16 of those households into the upper middle group, and 5 into the lower middle group based on the criteria 'a person who can sow one mund seed (40 kg) is better off than a person who can sow ½ mund.'

One interesting outcome of the discussion is the way that the women choose to discuss the different categories. Being included in a category did not seem to be only dependent on having something or not, or having degrees of something or not. When describing the well-off, having a 'proper' job income seemed to be an important criteria¹⁷³. For the middle group, however, land size became a central criterion. This is despite the fact that several of the households in the middle group have access to income. The poor group, on the other hand, was described using several different criteria, i.e. no job outside the valley, no land, no one to work the land, no animals, lots of young children, handicapped, where a household may be experiencing several of these conditions. While the group of women presenting this information was mixed in terms of which well-being group they were put in, the poor in the group were conspicuously silent. The session was dominated by one of the more well-off women in the hamlet, who on several later occasions as well stressed the importance of income in being well-off. Are these, however, the perceptions of the poorer women in the village as well? While earning increased income may be perceived as a goal by the better-off, it is less clear that this is such a central issue for the poor. This is not to say that the poorer women are not concerned with income as a means to food security and well-being - the

¹⁷³ 'Proper' in this case refers to holding a position in either the village (i.e. teacher) or Skardo, as opposed to earning labor income.

importance of income to poorer families is clearly demonstrated by men's and women's participation in paid labor. Rather, the path to well-being is more complex, as hinted by the diversity in the situations of the poor. The importance of labor availability, networks, and power relations in both the struggles of the poor and the better off for food and livelihood security need to be examined more closely.

Well-being ranking by a group of men

In the shade of a small cluster of trees 600 meters above the village we perched on the steep slope together with a small group of men taking a rest from their work on the new water channel. As with the women's group, we asked the men to group the village households according to well-being. The men ended up with three categories: the well-off with seven households, the middle class with 15 households, and the poor with seven households. Comparing the group interviews of the men and the women, the households were placed in very similar categories, particularly when consideration is made as to whom was present in the groups.

This discussion yielded a more complex picture of the dimensions of poverty and well-being. The men, in explaining their placement of the households, explained not only why they were there, but gave some indications of how they got there. The resulting discussion gave a picture of poverty far from the mono-dimension of income.

Before they started ranking households, one of the men, who previously was less willing to meet with us, was eager to explain what being well-off meant in the village. He claimed that being well-off meant that one had more land than others and enough labor to work the land,

but that was not all; one had to have the will to make something out of the situation. This was a very important aspect, which the other men in the group actively agreed to through both affirming comments and eager nods. The households in the well-off category were said to have enough land, enough animals, a source of income, a male member retired from the army or some other job, and young boys working. It is important to note that two of the households in this meeting put themselves in the middle category rather than the well-off, where they were placed by the women. It was clear from the exercise that it was not acceptable to place one's self in the well-off category, nor to suggest someone for that category if they were present. The same was the case for the women's group, where the leading woman put herself in the middle category whereas the men put her household in the well-off category (her husband was not present in the men's group).

It was much easier, however, for the men to suggest households who were middle and poor, despite the fact that there were men from some of these households present. For each household, the men discussed why they were classified as they were. They stated the following as characteristics of poorer households: not enough land, not so many animals, no source of income, not enough labor, no other resources, so many children. It was not the case, however, that all the poorer households had all of these attributes; each one had a different one, or combination, that together with their particular situation at the time made it difficult to secure a livelihood.

The categories into which the men classified the households gave only one indication of how they perceive differences of well-being in the village. What was most interesting, however, was the discussion of how families have moved, or not moved, between categories. The discussion of the households in the middle category was particularly interesting. Abdullah,

for example, came from a well-off family, where he was one of many sons. When his father died, the land was divided into relatively small shares, and Abdullah and his wife, who had many small children, were poor. Now that the children are older they can work, and thus the family has moved up to the middle category. This is in line with theories of household dynamics where labor availability is tied to domestic cycles¹⁷⁴.

While there are several families which had experienced a similar improvement in well-being as their children grew older and could work, this in itself was no guarantee for the success of the household. Mehr Jan and Hurani are termed by the men as well-off and poor at the same time. They have enough land, and their three sons are working for income. Nevertheless, they are considered poor in the sense that the sons are not helping the father by sending money home. Tariq and Nafasi's family are in a similar situation - their oldest boys are working, but not giving their parents any support. In addition, this family does not have good relations with the rest of the village. The moment Tariq gets any money, they claimed, he uses it in a case against one of his neighbors. This may also contribute to the groups' view of his well-being – his 'poverty' in their view may be in his inability to relate positively to other households in the village.

Perhaps the most revealing discussion with the group concerns the case of Behboob Wali and Bibi Khatoon. This household owns the largest land holding in the village, but was classified by both the men and the women's groups as poor. One reason for this was the lack of labor in the households to work the land; another was the fact that Behboob Wali sold all his animals in a legal case to maintain control over some land which had been rented out to someone down the valley. More important to the men, however, was that Behboob Wali lacked the

¹⁷⁴ See for example Goody and Fortes (1958).

will to do anything with his resources. If one's perception of well-being and poverty is exclusively material, this aspect of well-being or poverty is essentially invisible.

Conventional measures of wealth i.e. size of land holding or income would not capture the significance of one's attitude in the determination of well-being. This is in line with recent work on poverty by the World Bank, which has shifted from a focus in the early 1990s on material assets, to one which includes dimensions of health, education, vulnerability, voicelessness and powerlessness (World Bank 2001).

While the well-being ranking exercises led to certain types of discussions of social differentiation, it by no means was able to give a comprehensive picture of social difference in the village. As observed by Karen Brock in her work on local perceptions of ill-being and poverty, 'Exercises with groups to identify the key features of poverty often occur at the start of participatory processes of enquiry or planning, and they usually take place in a public setting. It is important to take this context into account when analyzing the results which emerge from this kind of process: the issues that people choose to prioritize and describe in public may provide outsiders with a broad outline and description, but may also provide clues to the power relations which surround them. The synthesized results of such exercises cannot be taken as representative of entire analyses of the experience of poverty...' (Brock 1999: 9). There exist several indicators of social difference in the village which become apparent only after exploring not only what people say about each other, but how they act towards each other in their every day relationships, how they relate to cultural norms and how they participate in the practice of local institutions. In Sultanabad, for example, there are various systems whereby wealth is redistributed among the villagers, several of which follow the rules of charity-giving prescribed in Islam. At the end of Ramazan¹⁷⁵, the month of fasting, most

¹⁷⁵ While the most common spelling internationally for this month is Ramadan, Ramazan is the most common usage in Pakistan.

households pay *fitra*¹⁷⁶, a type of charity, to their poorer relatives and neighbors. The amount is fixed, paid according to the number of household members in the paying household, and is paid mainly in kind (grains in this case). In Islam, there is also a system of *zakat*¹⁷⁷, where those experiencing a net surplus at the end of a one-year period are expected to pay a percentage to their poorer relatives and neighbors. While this is an obligatory tax, we were told that none of the people of Basho pay *zakat*, because they are too poor. They do not, however, receive *zakat* from the central authorities either. There is also a charity payment which is particular to Shia Muslims called *khumsa*. *Khumsa* is, like *zakat* and *fitra*, paid to the poor, but is in addition paid to the *syed*, or the descendents of the prophet Muhammad¹⁷⁸. In the whole of Basho, only a few people, the well off, pay *khumsa* to the *syed*. For all of these payments the same criteria are used: households prioritize their poor relatives, then neighbors, and then institutions (such as the mosque) if they wish. It was thus the case in Sultanabad that the poorer households received alms primarily from better-off family members and/or those living in the same hamlet.

In addition to the charity payments above, there is a religious institution in Sultanabad called the Imamia Enjuman which was established by the village Sheikh for the welfare of the village. Most people in the village pay 5-10 rupees per month to the Imamia Enjuman fund, although payments are usually made every few months when the village Sheikh comes from Skardo to visit. Every village in the valley has an Imamia Enjuman, but Sultanabad had the first, started 8 or 9 years before the Village Organization was established by AKRSP. The main purpose of this institution is to provide loans to villagers. In cases where households have experienced an unexpected hardship or accident, then they can obtain an interest-free

¹⁷⁶ *Zakat al-fitr* in Arabic (Awde 2000).

¹⁷⁷ One of the five pillars of Islam is *zakat*, or 'purification', which is an obligatory tax, the payment of which makes the rest of one's wealth 'religiously and legally pure' (Encyclopedia Britannica 2001).

¹⁷⁸ There is also *niaz* (or *sadqa* in Arabic), which is a non-obligatory charity payment which can be made at any time for any amount.

loan from this fund. Otherwise, a person has to pay 200 rupees per 1000 rupees loaned (annually). While the main purpose of the fund is to help the poor, many of the loans are actually taken by the better-off. We were told that it is common that retired army employees borrow money from this fund when their severance pay runs out, and then pay it back with their pensions or earnings from casual labor. Poorer families hesitate to take even interest free loans, as they are not sure they will have the means to pay them back. Thus, although it is claimed that this institution is to benefit those in need, there were very few examples of the poorer having real access to its resources. Nevertheless, the Imamia Enjuman still survives as an institution, alongside the AKRSP Village Organization, which according to villagers is ineffective and plagued by internal power conflicts. Some say this is due to the difference in purpose of the organizations; the Imamia Enjuman is for the welfare of the village, while the VO is for productive purposes and for strategically gaining access to resources outside the valley.

Social differentiation is also apparent in systems of redistribution such as gift-giving. As discussed earlier in Chapter 4, gifts, most often food or clothing, are given on special occasions, i.e for the birth of a child, a wedding or funeral, and religious celebrations. It is expected that relatives which are better-off give relatively better gifts to their poorer relatives than they would receive from them. From the example we saw earlier, however, it was not always the case that better-off relatives fulfilled their obligation to support their poorer relatives through gift giving. Power relations play an important role in this context. By arguing that there is little social difference between households in the village, the well-off can claim that the need to give better gifts, or gifts at all, as a redistributive measure has been reduced. While the less well-off might agree times are better than in the past, they do not conclude that this should be reflected in a decrease in transfers from the better off. It is the

well-off who have the power to decide whether or not to participate in transfers – there seems to be little social sanction to prevent this from happening. It seems it is easier for poorer family members to ask others for assistance than expose a powerful relative's lack of generosity. Again, this may be a strategy to keep the powerful relative as an ally for possible assistance in the future.

Exploring social differentiation

When considering how the men and women of Sultanabad compare their situations, and examining the varying degrees of success with which women and men are able to negotiate control over resources, the concept of social difference inevitably emerges. What is social difference? How do we perceive social difference, and how does this influence our understanding of power relations? The concept of social difference is an important one to clarify in that the manner in which we conceptualize difference¹⁷⁹ will influence the analysis of power and change within the local community. In her book 'A Passion for Difference', Moore (1994) points to two main ways of dealing with difference: categorically and processually. Studying difference, through categorical and/or processual means, however, involves movement between two very different ways of relating to people and resources. While categorization has historically been dominant in studies of difference within the social sciences, particularly at macro levels, there is increasing skepticism as to the appropriateness of categorization in examining the causes and processes of social differentiation. The limits of categorization in understanding local perceptions of difference and well-being in Sultanabad, for example, can be seen in the wealth-ranking exercise. 'Forcing' the villagers to categorize households revealed the difficulties of trying to determine causes of poverty

¹⁷⁹ Difference is inherently a comparative term, which requires one to specify the parameters of difference. When discussing difference in Sultanabad, for example, the focus is on social difference and the process of social differentiation.

based on specific characteristics; well-being and poverty were much more dynamic concepts, which required an understanding of changing social relationships (e.g. employed sons supporting their fathers, labor relations between and within households). In the poverty literature, recent debates concerning how poverty is measured question an exclusive focus on merely identifying attributes of the poor (Baulch 1996; World Bank 2001). As Baulch argues, ‘...existing methods tend to furnish essentially static descriptions of the characteristics of the poor, which tell us very little about the causes of poverty...to ensure that poverty measurement provides the causal analysis needed by policy makers, more attention needs to be paid to process indicators and the dynamics of poverty’ (Baulch 1996: 4). Baulch suggests therefore that poverty analysis could probably benefit from the way food/livelihood security literature makes a distinction between process and outcome indicators to capture the dynamics of women and men’s struggle to survive¹⁸⁰.

There has been a move towards more a more dynamic understanding of poverty at the international policy level. The World Bank (2001), for example, has in its newest World Development Report shifted from an almost exclusive focus on measuring income and consumption status, to one which incorporates the concept of vulnerability in an attempt to capture the dynamic nature of poverty. In addition, other aspects i.e. health, education, voicelessness and powerlessness, have been incorporated, which open for a broader understanding of the complexities of poverty. Nevertheless, international organizations such as the World Bank, which have in their mandates the aggregation of poverty indicators, depend on the categorization of people as a means to achieve political and economic commitment for the eradication of poverty. The question, however, remains as to the degree

¹⁸⁰ Here Baulch refers to the food security concepts and indicators developed by Maxwell and Smith (1992), whose work inspired a move away from an understanding of food security as a condition to encompass ideas of access, vulnerability, and livelihood security. These processual concepts required the development of indicators which went beyond categorization to capture the dynamics of women and men’s struggles to provide for their families in both the short and the long run.

to which categorization is able to tackle the processes leading to poverty in such a way that they can influence the development of effective policy. Ward (1999) argues that an approach that concentrates on the identification of the poor as objects of relief is bound to lock the poor into a cliental relationship with the state¹⁸¹. He concludes, ‘the way governments, since the beginning of the earliest records, have collected empirical information of the poor has tended to bias perceptions. It has led analysts to focus attention on preconceived factor market models and conventional explanations rather than to work with freely associating data and independent inquiries that could potentially have captured the multi-faceted dimensions of poverty and its basic causes’ (ibid: 31).

Another important aspect of categorization to consider is that it is a highly ‘political’ endeavor. Who decides which categories are relevant and who can be classified as what within these categories? Consider, for instance, the difference between a researcher’s choice of categories for analysis, and categories defined by the local population. Assuming the life-worlds of the researcher and local women and men may differ considerably, categorization by only one of these sets of actors would contribute to only a partial understanding of difference by the other. Examining the interface between these two life-worlds through discussions between researchers and local actors provides the opportunity for researchers, for example, to question their own preconceptions through exploring local perceptions of difference (Seur 1992). When the women in Sultanabad, for example, expressed the importance of income for well-being, this challenges findings elsewhere that it is men to a greater degree than women who are concerned with money and income (Brock 1999). Likewise, when the men classified

¹⁸¹ Ward (1999) presents an interesting historical comparison of the English and French approaches to poverty. The English, he argues, identified the poor as a group who were to be kept where they were, and be provided for at the lowest cost possible, resulting in the pauperization of the poor by making them dependent on public relief. The French, however, believed in the expansion of public works and the use of taxation to counteract the ‘exploitive economic malaise of the system’ (p.25). The English model, Ward explains, formed the basis for neo-liberal approach to poverty so dominant in international development policy.

the family with the most land as poor, this challenges assumptions of the importance of land ownership in defining well-off households¹⁸². When such challenges occur, it prompts the researcher to investigate more closely the nature of local categories through further discussion – not only to discover different perceptions of difference, but also to try to understand what lies behind one’s own preconceptions, or why we thought what we thought.

At this point a closer look into gender as a category of difference in Sultanabad is warranted. To what extent can one speak of gendered interests? Is gender as a category valid as more than a political construct for use in development aid discourse? To explore this, we can consider the example of the formation of a women’s organization (WO) in Sultanabad.

Categorizing Difference: Negotiating a Women’s Organization

At one of the first meetings with the women we were confronted by requests for assistance in forming a women’s organization. There were several activities the women felt were important to begin in the village, including a water pipe to the village and a fence for enclosing the village and keeping out animals from other villages. The teacher, however, expressed to us early on that the formation of a WO was impossible. In the summer of 1997 there had been a *fatwa* declared against AKRSP by a religious leader invited to Skardo from Karachi. He criticized AKRSP on two points. First, he claimed that AKRSP’s credit program went against Islam by charging interest and being mainly comprised of Aga Khan money¹⁸³. Second, he criticized the women’s program,

¹⁸² Land ownership is, of course, one factor in determining wealth, but its importance is closely tied to other factors and circumstances.

¹⁸³ The Shia population in Skardo (the majority sect in Baltistan) is generally suspicious of AKRSP’s connection to the Ismaili sect (led by Prince Aga Khan, currently residing in Paris), - they are thus not totally convinced that AKRSP is supporting Shia interests. This is despite the fact that the majority of staff of AKRSP Baltistan are, in fact, Shia Muslims.

claiming that AKRSP was encouraging women to act immorally and throw away their *chadors*. This second point led to a freezing of all AKRSP women's activities in the field for almost a year while negotiations with the religious community were being conducted. Concerning the effect of this on Sultanabad, the teacher informed that they had made an agreement with the religious leaders in Skardo that they would not form any new WOs in Basho. This could not, he insisted, be changed.

Nevertheless, my assistant contacted the Sheikh of Sultanabad, Ali Hassan (resettled in Skardo). Discussions with him were encouraging - he was in favor of starting a WO and suggested that he speak with the men of the village to see how they felt. Not long after we got the message through the teacher that the men had agreed, and that the WO could be formed. Rather than assist in this process, however, the teacher avoided calling the women for a meeting until the day before the fieldwork was over. Even then, he admitted he had not told all of the women, and had not given them a time or place. We showed up anyway, insisting that he accompany us to the meeting when he hesitated. No one had arrived, and as we sat it became clear that he had not informed anyone of the meeting. Nevertheless, the senior woman of the house where the meeting was to be held had sent her daughter out to gather the village women, and after some time almost all of the women were in attendance. At this meeting, the letter of intent was signed¹⁸⁴ by almost every woman in the village, they had agreed who would be WO president and manager, and had received approval of their choice from the husbands of the chosen women. The women were very happy at this meeting, and very proud to be 'signing' a paper themselves. Present at the meeting as well was the

¹⁸⁴ None of the women in the village are literate- the documents were signed by thumbprint.

teacher, and one of the elders of the village. All that was left to do was to open a common bank account for the WO.

About a month later, this process went awry. Arguments started among the men of the village on whether or not they should have a WO. One of the brothers of the Skeikh, the Akun, led this opposing group, and caused so much disagreement within the village that the village men decided to dissolve the WO. This seemed like the end of the story. The women, however, did not give up. They quietly lobbied their husbands to continue to discuss the issue with those who opposed it. In the end, only the Akun was against the formation of the women's organization. The lobbying men finally presented the Akun with a proposition - they suggested he go to Skardo to talk with a highly respected religious politician who was then visiting the district. If this religious leader in Skardo recommended the village not cooperate with AKRSP, then the village would not form the WO. If, however, the leader supported AKRSP, then the Akun had to agree not to interfere in the project in the future. The end of the story (at least at the time of writing...) is that the leader in Skardo supported AKRSP, the WO was formed, and the Akun began teaching the Koran to the boys and girls of Sultanabad¹⁸⁵.

What happened to influence this process? While we were residing in the village there was no direct disagreement concerning the WO. We, as outsiders, were seen as allies for the women and their male supporters (the village elders and the sheikh), as well as potential allies for the opposing interests. The reluctance of the teacher to actually form the WO was based on the knowledge of dissent on the issue within the village. This dissent surfaced upon our departure. According to some sources, the Akun and his followers called upon their political

¹⁸⁵ In fact, this was the first year the girls were offered any kind of schooling in Sultanabad. The following year funding was secured for hiring an additional (male) teacher for a girl's school, and currently the boys and girls are instructed in a coed fashion by both teachers.

allies in Skardo which had been involved with the *fatwa* the previous year and were able to exert enough pressure as to counter the influence of the village's own sheikh. This may have been enough to stop the WO formation in itself. The women, however, continued to lobby within the village, with AKRSP staff supporting them in Skardo, despite the seemingly overwhelming power of an increasingly politicized religious force in Skardo. In the end, the majority of the men in the village agreed, giving them the legitimacy to challenge the Akun.

This case illustrates several points. At one level, it shows how external interests can influence local decisions, as well as how local interests are able to resist outside influence. Some of the men of the village saw this issue as an opportunity to resist conservative influence from Skardo - by allying themselves with AKRSP they have been able to achieve a change in the constellation of power in the village away from those with conservative ties in Skardo. It also reveals how women's interests can be controlled by men's interests, whether they be in the village or external. At the same time, however, women can exert a certain amount of pressure through their husbands and male relatives, elders, and supporting organizations to forward their interests. This is similar to the findings of Göhlen (1998) from a study in Astore Valley¹⁸⁶ which found that while women's freedom in decision-making is to a high degree dependent on men, they are nevertheless able to take part in decision-making processes, albeit not usually at the public level. Women were influential mainly through informal networks, and at times when the men were less present, i.e. in the case of migrant work in the cities. In these cases it was the women who were best informed of and involved in village happenings, and thus had a greater influence in day-to-day decision-making.

¹⁸⁶ Astore Valley is an Additional District in the Northern Areas, where many of the Shina inhabitants of Sultanabad originate.

At another level, this case is an example of how interests are organized along gender lines. The women were negotiating for a common goal, the formation of the WO, whereas the men, while initially split, decided nevertheless to dissolve the WO for a period in order to maintain a certain unity within the male community. Is this always the case, however? Do interests always align by gender? This issue also has another dimension in relation to policy debates on gender. Women's Organizations in Baltistan, as elsewhere in the Northern Areas, are inherently a construct of development agencies such as AKRSP¹⁸⁷. To what extent does the formation of a WO represent political interests of development agents, or support women and men's gendered interests? What lies behind the concept of gender in development, and how does it relate to social difference in the village? As we will see in the section below, theoretical discussions of gender are comprised of a somewhat diverse set of understandings of differences between women and men, both in biological and social terms. Examining some of the ideas underlying different approaches to gender will help us perceive of gender as one aspect of a process of social differentiation rather than merely a discrete category of difference.

Gender theory in development

While gender has long been a part of anthropological and social analysis, its significance as a concept in development became apparent during the 1970s when the UN Decade for Women began to document how development efforts, particularly in rural areas, had fallen short in terms of positive impact for women in low-income countries. In an attempt to improve the situation, efforts over the next ten years focused on women through special projects either within or independent of mainstream development programs. When at the close of the UN

¹⁸⁷ Here I refer specifically to the Women's Organizations promoted by AKRSP, and not to already existing organizations or institutions.

Decade for Women in 1985 it was found that conditions for women had not significantly improved using this strategy it was clear that one had to look at the challenge anew. What was the problem? Why hadn't efforts been able to make a difference? While there were certainly problems in general approaches to development (i.e. top-down, non-participatory), were there as well flaws in our conceptual understanding of gender which had an impact on how change is promoted? Particularly in resource management, there are extensive examples of how both theoretical and practical approaches have ignored women as resource users, managers and owners with disastrous results, both socially and environmentally (Carney and Watts 1991; Mearns 1994; Horowitz and Jowkar 1992; Rochleau 1991). This is not necessarily due to a lack of attention to social dimensions of resource management; analyses of for example class, caste and ethnic aspects of resource management are indeed well documented. Instead, it is evidence of a broader and more serious lack of understanding of how social relations defining resource access and control are inherently gendered.

Theoretical underpinnings of gender reflect different "views of the world", and have consequences as to the choice of units and approach. Feminist theories from the North have previously dominated approaches within gender studies. These theories can be grouped into two main strains; liberal feminism and Marxist feminism, which are again based in the traditions of liberalism/neoclassicism and Marxism. These two strains have differing views on both the reasons for women's subordination and the remedies to improve their position.

Liberal theorists believe in the viability and goodness of capitalism and that social inequalities can be corrected through legal procedures and attitudinal changes (Bandarage 1984:495). Liberal feminists (and modernizationists) follow along these lines and see the subordination of women as a flaw in a basically egalitarian system. In this view, correcting the flaw would

involve directing resources to women who have been “left out” in the past. In analyzing gender in this tradition, the focus is on defining the roles of men and women to see where support should be redirected within existing social structures. It is within this school that the term “women in development” or WID emerged.

Marxism, on the other hand, focuses on the structural roots of poverty where the social system is based on economic exploitation of disadvantaged groups (ibid.). Solutions to poverty within this view are structural, and therefore political. Marxist feminism follows along these lines by viewing women’s suppression as structural. There are two main branches of feminism stemming from Marxist thought. Socialist feminism bases its view on the division of labor between men and women. For this school the solution lies in redefining women’s economic roles i.e. changing the division of labor in households and societies. Radical feminists, on the other hand, feel that subordination emerges from the sexual exploitation of women by men, which is a result of the dominance of a patriarchal culture. In their view it is not enough to change the division of labor, sexual domination must also be addressed (Sachs 1996:15).

The theoretical approaches outlined above attempt to give “all-encompassing” explanations of women’s subordinate position in society and general solutions as to how this position could be improved. Critics (see Sachs 1996: 16), however, are rejecting the validity of these schools and are pointing to new approaches. One reason is that feminist theories to date have not been able to agree on one unified approach to the question of women’s subordination, as we have seen above in the case of liberals and Marxists. Another and more fundamental reason is that feminist theories are not seen to be immediately derived from women’s experiences. Both of these, but particularly the second one, is rooted in a more general

realization that women's experiences are considerably more diverse than anticipated, and it has been difficult to define a theoretical basis encompassing this diversity.

Some attempts to find such a theoretical basis for diversity are being made by post-structural and postmodern feminists, who emphasize the deconstruction of society into a multitude of voices from the grassroots and reject the concept of one, universal, 'truth'. Under this paradigm feminists depart from universalistic views of subjugation by focusing on pluralism and experiential diversity (Barrett 1987). Haraway (1991, in Sachs 1996), for example, focuses on the importance of situated knowledge. This approach rejects top-down, all-encompassing feminist standpoints and embraces diversity, emphasizing location, positioning and situation. Postmodern feminist approaches are faced with two fundamentally different aspects of difference. The first is what Moore (1993) refers to as 'the difference between', referring to the diversity of experience not only between men and women, but between women (and between men) as well. Feminist theory has been seen as being the brainchild of "white, upper-middle-class, heterosexual, Western women" incapable of representing women of different classes, ethnicities, and nationalities (Sachs 1996:20). Even within small communities differences between women can be significant. In becoming acquainted with the women and men of Sultanabad, for example, it became clear that the interests of the women (and likewise the men) could be quite diverse, despite their common gender. An older woman co-heading a joint household and dependent on the labor of her sons' wives, might have very different views on sending women for training than her daughter-in-laws. Likewise, a man away working in the army might have different views on education for his daughters than a man growing barley and raising animals with six daughters and no sons.

The second aspect of gender difference is termed by Moore (1993) as the ‘difference within.’ This refers to differences apparent within an individual, and challenges the concept of a unified subject. Emphasizing difference within the subject has been a particularly central theme in discourse by feminist scholars from the South who reject the Western feminist assumption of a common women’s interest by questioning the degree to which women can be considered separate from their class, ethnic, and racial identities (Anzaldúa 1990 in *ibid.*:21). Anzaldúa claims that white feminists actively strive to de-emphasize differences between women in an attempt to support the notion of the universal woman, whereas other women i.e. women of color, stress that they live in “multiple worlds with multiple identities” and try to make these differences visible. Likewise, bell hooks (1990: 93), for example, insists that one cannot separate race and sex when trying to examine issues of domination as if they are ‘competing oppressions’. Instead we must seek to ‘explore and understand the connections between racism and sexism’.

The implications of considering a subject as having multiple identities are several. If, through the use of categorization, one groups people according to certain characteristics, she is in effect making choices as to which characteristics are central for understanding difference. In this process, people’s characteristics are separated from the person through whom they are experienced, and are thus both split from other attributes that have an affect on a person’s behavior or situation, and given an importance that may not be warranted in every context. In such an approach, one is thus forced to assign a dominant identity to a person, who is then perceived as if she has a single identity. This is often what happens when speaking in terms of gender, where it is assumed that women will always have a common interest in their common identity as women. An example from Basho might illustrate how this can be misleading.

Gathered in the home of the president of the Nazimabad WO, we initiated a discussion with a group of women on the use of pasture areas in Basho valley. Each of the four villages in the upper valley was represented by one or two women. Our main interest was to try to gain a picture of women's movements in the valley, where they could move with their animals for the day, which pastures they could spend the night, and any changes in women's roles in herding over time. The women were eager to discuss –it was seldom that women from outside the valley (apart from relatives) came to speak with them, it was always the men who met with outsiders. They were very proud that there were several WOs in the valley, and stressed the fact that they, as women, were trying to get piped drinking water to their villages from AKRSP or WASEP¹⁸⁸. We began by asking the women from the lowest of the four villages which pastures they used, and how they used them, and within 10 minutes the entire meeting was in an uproar. It seems that the women from the lower village were claiming use rights to pasture that the upper villages claimed were theirs. There was total disagreement on the degree of rights to the pastures, and while we managed to settle things down enough to finish the exercise, the women left the meeting angry and frustrated. As we walked back to Sultanabad with some of the older women, they complained bitterly about those women from the lower villages, saying that if we outsiders had not been there, they would have beaten them.

Thus, the same women who in one breath claimed to have a common interest on one issue, water, turned to enemies the minute their rights as a village came into question. This switch from identifying oneself with the village rather than their gender is one example of how

¹⁸⁸ A water and sanitation organization working in the Northern Areas.

context influences identity, and how we can easily misrepresent interests by oversimplifying complex power relations.

Moore, questioning the analytical usefulness of a view of subject and identity based on separating and thereby favoring certain characteristics, suggests that a post-structuralist understanding of self offers more insight into how multiple identities which converge in the same individual may be analyzed. As Moore (1994: 55) explains:

‘The basic premise of post-structural thinking on the subject is that discourses and discursive practices provide subject positions, and that individuals take up a variety of subject positions within different discourses...Individuals are multiply constituted subjects, and they can, and do, take up multiple subject positions within a range of discourses and social practices...What holds these multiple subjectivities together so they constitute agents in the world are such things as the subjective experience of identity, the physical fact of being an embodied subject and the historical continuity of the subject where past subject positions tend to overdetermine present subject positions’.

Postmodern discourse thus seems to weaken arguments for categorization in general and the use of gender in particular along two fronts. First, its focus on multiple identities makes separation and prioritization of characteristics problematic. Second, its focus on diversity of experience questions the validity of universal women’s subjugation upon which much of feminist thinking around gender is based. Critics of postmodern/post-structural discourse are concerned with these implications, and warn against the dangers of focusing too much on difference, claiming this leads to a focus on the individual and precludes discussions of

power, oppression and political agendas (Sachs 1996)¹⁸⁹. Parpart (1993), however, disagrees, arguing that situated knowledge does not confine analysis to the individual, but rather allows for an interpretation that considers local context. The postmodern 'focus on localized, subjugated knowledge/power systems would encourage development planners to pay more attention to the concrete circumstances of Third World and minority women's lives' (Parpart 1993: 262).

Moore (1994) offers one way out of the dilemma of postmodern differences between and within through the use of the concept of competing discourses. Defining the terms of difference actually becomes an arena for competing discourses that, according to Moore, are hierarchically ordered. This renders attempts at identifying general, cultural categories exercises in sorting out dominant and subdominant discourses that, under various contexts, converge and/or diverge. This supports the view that local perceptions of difference, even where they may seem universalistic, are hardly a unified representation. Moore suggests that a unified idea of gender in which men and women comprise oppositional and mutually exclusive categories conceals the fact that, rather than having a single gender system, cultures have 'a multiplicity of discourses on gender which can vary both contextually and biographically' and which are 'frequently contradictory and conflicting' (1994: 56). In Basho, we see this in differing views, for example, on the legitimacy of forming women's organizations.

Thus, in a postmodern approach to gender, power differences between genders do not disappear, but are considered as an integral part of discourses in which relations are gendered according to cultural, social and economic contexts. Furthermore, while women's subjugation

¹⁸⁹ Despite fears of too much focus on the individual, Sachs (1996) concedes that situated knowledge has particular promise as an approach to exploring women's connection with the environment since it puts the rural woman's experience in the center of the analysis.

may not be considered universal, a discourse of male domination is quite often the dominant and determining discourse in a variety of cultural settings. This makes the category of gender relevant insofar as it reflects dominant and sub-dominant discourses concerning women and men's agency. In the case of the formation of a WO in Sultanabad, the negotiation process might be considered a struggle between a dominant and a sub-dominant discourse concerning the rights of women to organize. The dominant discourse presents a view of women's participation in organizations (WOs) as morally undesirable, while the sub-dominant discourse sees the formation of a WO as a way to gain access to additional resources for the village. The interests of the development agency would represent a third discourse, the promotion of women's interests, which would engage with the various local discourses, the outcome of which would be a new configuration of interests and allies.

Thus, while gender may be considered a category, an analysis which confines gender to a category would miss the possibility of understanding, for example, the complementarity of interests which may emerge across gender, as well as the dynamic nature of the collectivity of meaning. In the case of the WO in Sultanabad, this can be seen in the way the husbands supporting the WO eventually convinced enough others to support the formation of the WO, effectively challenging the dominant discourse against women's organizations. In the end, a new discourse emerged whereby it was accepted that women could organize to gain resources for the good of the village, but where the idea of women's interests was still somewhat suppressed. The former dominant discourse did not disappear, but is currently in a subservient position, as are its promoters.

Thus, in Sultanabad, gendered discourses and discourses of gender help shape the contours of social differentiation by providing competing norms of behavior to which women and men

must relate when negotiating control over resources. Each discourse conceptualizes a bit differently the rights and needs of women, men, well-off and poor, affecting the terms and outcome of negotiations over resources (Moore 1994). A focus on discourse goes beyond identifying discrete differences between women and men, exploring rather than dismantling the context in which women and men negotiate their identities. Categorization is not, however, without value. Studying processes of categorization can be useful in that they may help to reveal the different discourses through which they are created. The discussion surrounding the process of well-being ranking, for example, gave insight into the way in which women and men consider a whole range of characteristics and social relations, which are both temporally and spatially variant, when assigning a household to a well-being category. It revealed how the poor, for example, are not merely a group that lacks the characteristics of the well-off – they are a diverse group in varying situations despite their similar condition. The challenge is thus to avoid strict divisions implied by the separation of characteristics in favor of exploring the complexity of category negotiation and creation.

Social Differentiation as a Process

In Sultanabad, local perceptions of social difference are very much interlocked with perceptions of change and continuity in the community over time, and thus need to be seen in relation to how women and men choose to represent their experience of changing or persisting conditions. I start this discussion, therefore, with two examples of how women and men have chosen to represent change, and how this relates to a dominant representation of social difference in the village in a historical context.

Sitting outside his khlas on Rushkin pasture, elderly Haji Behboob Wali rocks a goatskin filled with souring milk - a process which takes between three and four hours. His being halfway through this process gives us a good two hours of Behboob Wali's undivided attention for discussion. Behboob Wali was at first skeptical about talking with us - it has taken several months for the teacher to arrange a meeting with him, but in the end he agreed. Now, as he warms to our company to the swishing beat of the churning milk, Haji Behboob Wali embarks upon a narrative in which he tries to convey his views on the major changes in the village in his lifetime:

'The most important change was the abolishment of the Raja tax in 1973. The problem with the Raja tax was the money -we had to sell our butter and produce for much less than their value in order to pay cash to the Raja. Today there are better prices for our products in the market - before 2 kg butter bought about 1 kilo salt, now 2 kg butter buys a month's worth of salt. Earlier, there was no market for dried fruits and nuts, villagers worked on the farms down the valley for their own consumption. Now that there is a market for these products they get more for their labor. Women used to work down the valley picking nuts and fruit. Now they do not have to because the men have other income sources. Before they used to only eat the greens of turnips, now everyone eats chipati¹⁹⁰.'

Other aspects of their lifestyles have changed as well. The building of the road in the valley not only provided income earning opportunities to the village men, but

¹⁹⁰ Chipati, as explained earlier, is made from wheat flour. According to the villagers, wheat is a relatively new crop in Sultanabad, not too commonly grown until about 25-30 years ago. It has almost replaced buckwheat as a crop but no family is self sufficient in wheat; all families purchase wheat in the market for some months of the year. Turnips are still grown in Sultanabad, but whereas in the past they were a staple for most of the families, they are now used for fodder, and considered as a food only for the poor, or in difficult times.

increased exposure to the town-culture of Skardo as well. The men saw the town women were kept close to their homes, something which was seen as good for the villagers in Sultanabad as well. Personal habits have also changed; 'In the past we used to bathe every 2-3 months, whereas now we bathe every 2-3 days'.

Before, there were few people in the village and much land. Now, the negative thing is that there is less land for each household. All in all, life is better for everyone, even for the poor. Someone with a small piece of land now is better off than a well-off person was in the past, and there are no longer big differences between the households of the village.

Haji Behboob Wali's narrative in many ways represents one of the 'received' narratives in the village by men with a bit of power or resources¹⁹¹, although there is hardly a consensus on every point. Thus, while several might agree with parts of this narrative, there are also aspects on which the perspectives of different men and women of the village diverge. For example, there are several families without adequate income where the women continue to work down the valley as agricultural labor. However, it was clear that change for the better was supported in other fora, as exemplified in the following account:

Gathered in the living cum sleeping area of one of the newer houses in Chokot, we are towards the end of a discussion with a group of women where they had ranked the families of Sultanabad according to well-being. As we sip our tea, the discussion drifts on to what life had been like in earlier days, when the oldest of the group had been young, and the Raja had still been in power. The senior woman, perhaps the oldest in the group, speaks first. She tells of how

¹⁹¹ Behboob Wali himself is the largest landowner in Sultanabad.

times have improved considerably since her youth. People in the village eat both more varied and more often than before, and they have more and better clothing. At this point one of the younger women shoots a remark to the older one that causes a great deal of laughter and giggling from the group. After clearing her tears of laughter my assistant translates that before they had only one shalwar (traditional pants) in the family, and that those inside had to wait for the one outside to come in with the pants before they, in turn, could go out! After the meeting we wonder if this was literally the case, or if the women were merely exaggerating to make a point. We are hesitant, however, to ask others, particularly the men, for fear of this being a topic not acceptable in mixed male/female company. Much to our surprise the same example is used by a group of men a few weeks later - although without the same degree of humorous overtones as with the women.

This improvement in everyone's standard of living is clearly important to the villagers, and both men and women in different contexts throughout our stay in the village repeat it and similar accounts. It confirms what seems to be a general perception by the village women and men that the quality of life in the village has improved significantly over the past 25 years. Part of this representation, however, is a belief that there is less social and economic difference between households in the village. This became clear particularly when we were conducting the well-being ranking exercises, which always began with an insistence that there were no longer rich and poor – now everyone was alike somewhere in the middle.

If this representation were accepted at face value, it would seem to support what is a widespread view of villages in Baltistan by, for example, development agencies– that there is

little socio-economic differentiation within villages, and that interests within the village are relatively homogeneous and conflict-free. In Sultanabad, however, such a claim would be misleading. Representations of difference in Sultanabad must be related to conditions before and after the Raja tax in order to be understood. Under the Raja there were indeed, as Behboob Wali relates above, large disparities between those who owned lots of land and those who did not, and that most of the villagers were much poorer than today. But the fact that they are less poor and the rich are relatively less rich, does not mean there is no difference in the village – merely that there are relatively fewer poor and wealthy people than there were 25 years ago. In particular, the process of population growth and land scarcity referred to by Behboob Wali as a condition which all are facing, implies a fairly equitable process of resource redistribution following the Raja-period for which there is little support empirically.

Difference creation: The case of land

In Behboob Wali's narrative, he describes how in the past there were fewer people in the village and land was in abundance, but now there is less land for each household. The scarcity of land due to population increases and land fragmentation appears to be a narrative that other villagers of the valley have expressed as well¹⁹². This gives the impression of land scarcity, which supports very well arguments for a new irrigation channel for the development of new agricultural land¹⁹³.

Is land in the village really scarce? What is meant by land scarcity? More central for our focus on social difference is whether land is scarce for everyone, or rather perceived as more of a problem by some than by others? It is clear that many households in Sultanabad are

¹⁹² See Steinsholt et al. (1998).

¹⁹³ AKRSP has assisted all of the villages of Basho in the construction of irrigation channels to bring new land under cultivation.

experiencing decreasing landholding size, however, whether this represents scarcity at an individual or village level is another matter. There are ca. 555 kanals of land used for the cultivation of food crops and grass in the village, giving an average of 20 kanals (ca. 1 hectare) per household. Land holding size, however, ranges between 2 and 82 kanals, with nine households having more than the village household average of 20 kanals, and 11 households under 10 kanals. There are thus large variations in the size of holdings. The size of land holding itself may not be the main issue to consider, access to land is also relevant¹⁹⁴. Agricultural land in Sultanabad (as in the rest of Baltistan) is privately owned, with titles registered with the authorities in Skardo. Access to agricultural land, however, extends beyond land ownership - the availability of labor, and particularly female labor, is central to the extent to which a family can access land, both their own or that of others'.

In Sultanabad there are households with little land and surplus labor, and others with relatively lots of land, but limited labor to work it. To cope with this 'mismatch' of resources, a redistribution of land and labor resources occurs through systems of sharecropping for cropland, *barthab*, and irrigated grassland, *bargnas*. In these systems, one family is permitted to grow crops/grass on another's land, under the condition that 50% of the produce is given to the owner. This practice is very common in Sultanabad, and very flexible - whom does *barthab/bargnas* on whose land can change from season to season. For the 1998 season, 25% of the villagers were allowing others to do *barthab/bargnas* on their land, 32% were doing *barthab/bargnas* on other's fields.

This flexibility qualifies the concept of land scarcity in terms of individual households.

While it is more desirable to own land rather than sharecrop, it is not certain that one can find

¹⁹⁴ While there are some very significant differences in quality of land in Sultanabad, these differences are very localized, such that each household has productive and less productive areas in each of their fields. There is little evidence that there is a systematic difference between the quality of land for well-off and poor households.

the labor necessary to cultivate one's land at times when one's own labor is insufficient, i.e. when one has many small children, or only married daughters who have moved to their husband's home. At the household level, then, some might speak of scarcity as fluctuating over time – leasing out land when children are babies and require a mother's labor, managing one's own land with one's own labor as children grow older, sharecropping on the land of others as children join in agricultural labor, managing one's own land as daughters marry and leave, and sharecropping other's land as sons marry and daughter-in-laws join in labor. For those with an abundance of land, scarcity may be perceived in the inability to secure labor for cultivation of all of the land, but in terms of land are still able to either sharecrop their land out, or in some cases, leave some of their land fallow. Those with little land are dependent on sharecropping on a continuous basis, providing they are not prevented from working due to sickness or the birth of a child. Villagers in Sultanabad also have an option within this system of switching to crops of less labor intensity when labor is scarce. Because of the importance of animals in the system, the cultivation of grass for fodder is an option when labor is scarce since it requires no weeding.

While sharecropping allows for flexibility, it does not erase the more fundamental differences between households in the village which have developed over time. Difference did not simply disappear with the abolishment of the Raja tax as implied by the dominant narrative – there were processes of accumulation and redistribution both before and after the change in government. Likewise, the increase in population and fragmentation of land through intergenerational inheritance affects all households, as the narrative claims, but as the above description suggests, the effects on different households with different land and labor endowments are different.

Changes in wealth and resource distribution in Sultanabad

Prior to the abolition of the Raja system in 1973, villagers in Basho valley were required to pay the Raja based in Skardo a tax on their production. In most cases this tax was paid in kind, mainly grains, however in Sultanabad the system was a bit different. Villagers tell of a time when, due to the relatively poor quality of the crops grown at such a high altitude, they were often beaten when taxes were collected in the village. At some point both the Raja and the villagers had a 'case' where both parties agreed¹⁹⁵ that it would be better to pay in money to avoid these annual beatings. The result was that a few families in Sultanabad functioned as middlemen, trading the crops produced by the poor, and selling them for money in the market. These middlemen were thus able to accumulate wealth within the village, resulting in vast differences between the well-off and the poor.

After the abolition of the Raja system villagers were no longer required to pay the Raja tax, and thus were able to keep the grain they produced. This made a big difference to the majority of villagers, who were able to better manage their food needs with what they produced, and in addition got better prices for their goods in the market as compared to what the Raja had paid. The rich lost their monopoly on agricultural goods, as well as their influence over most matters in the village. As one formerly well-off man put it, 'before people used to listen to what my family said, now they are not interested'. As related earlier, villagers agree that today there is much less social and economic difference between the families in the village than during the time of the Raja. The rich are less rich, and there has been a growing 'middle class' in the village. There has also been a growing population, particularly in terms of immigrants from Astore over the last 25 years. The effects of this

¹⁹⁵ It is unclear who actually agreed to this arrangement and who it really benefited.

growth in population on the environment and food security, however, have to be considered in light of changing land distribution patterns and processes. When Behboob Wali refers to the growing population as a problem for land, he infers that due to population growth there is less land per household, and that this is problematic for all households as compared to previous times. One can, however, raise questions as to the equity of such a process of resource redistribution both before and after the Raja reign.

Another picture emerges from discussions with immigrants and the poorer households of the village population. Immigrants began to arrive in Sultanabad during the Raja reign, when there was great poverty for some families, and prosperity in terms of agricultural resources for a few well-off families. The immigrants, mainly from Astore and Gilgit, were accepted into the village by marrying the daughters of the Astoripa¹⁹⁶ clan, although there were also marriages with other clans. The Astoripa clan is somewhat different from the other families or clans in the village, in that it includes most immigrants whether they come from Astore or not. These immigrants are not necessarily related, and they might have immigrated several generations ago, but are still referred to as Astoripa. Haji Liaqat Ali is one of the more recent immigrants to the village.

Haji Liaqat Ali came to Baltistan about 30 years ago. Before moving to Sultanabad he had a wood-chopping job in Skardo. He came to Sultanabad to help his future father-in-law with farm work, and eventually was offered Nasima Begum's hand in marriage. Nasima Begum inherited 1/3 of her father's land (her father was one of the largest landholders in the village), and Liaqat Ali, an enterprising fellow, used the money he had earned in Skardo to buy more land in

¹⁹⁶ Astoripa translates as 'people of Astore'.

*the village*¹⁹⁷. He then brought his two brothers with him from Astore, who married daughters of the village as well. He is currently an elder of the village, and the head of the Astoripa clan, which comprises about 1/4 of the village population.

Looking more closely at Liaqat Ali's case, we learn that initially his access to land was through his marriage to Nasima Begum, then later the land accumulated by him using his earnings from Skardo was purchased mainly from the poor. The rich had large amounts of land, which have, through inheritance, resulted in less land per household. The poor, however, were faced with a more acute problem - in addition to the land being divided among the sons and/or daughters, they also had to sell a portion (or all) of it in order to survive. Interestingly, instead of this being a transfer of resources between village clans over resources, these were redistributions remained primarily within one clan, Astoripa. Currently, the Astoripa clan owns ca. 25% of the land, 31% of the small animals and 18% of the large animals in the village. At the same time, 6 out of the 8/9 households which the villagers have classified as poor come from the Astoripa clan, but are not a direct part of Liaqat Ali's family. It is likely that the poor from whom Liaqat Ali bought land were Astoripa who resided in the village long before he arrived. This would mean that they provided him the opportunity to bring his family to the valley, but he has no direct obligation to support them in times of trouble. As it turns out, several of the families emigrated from the village after selling their land to Liaqat Ali to make a living elsewhere.

¹⁹⁷ Land can be bought and sold in Sultanabad, but only with the approval of the elders of the village. They can restrict transactions on the basis of, for example, the residence of the purchaser, and if s/he has family in the village or valley. Land purchase has in recent years been almost exclusively for the construction of new houses by families already residing in the village.

The poverty predicated by the Raja reign thus allowed for a displacement of the poorer population by immigrants from Astore, who were able to negotiate control over resources through both marriage and the purchase of village land. Thus, while land was being fragmented through one process, inheritance, it was being reconsolidated into the hands of others through purchase. Thus, where the dominant historical narrative presented at the beginning of this section gives us the impression of a relatively smooth process of the poor villagers breaking free from the Raja rule towards a more equitable society, it hides the actual differences in landholding size within the village, and the somewhat dramatic swings of influence and control between village interests, where the poorest were actually displaced rather than lifted from their retched existence.

Discovering difference in Sultanabad thus involves exploring a variety of dimensions of social difference: categories, processes, identity and power. As Moore (1994:2) rightly reflects, 'Identity and difference are not so much about categorical groupings as about processes of identification and differentiation'. This does not mean that categories are not interesting, but they are perhaps most interesting when seen in relation to the way they are defined and created by different actors, through participation in different discourses. In the various discourses, different persons are conceptualized as having different rights and needs; thus the definition of one's identity or position is not an individual, isolated process. Rather, the creation of difference is relational, and therefore powered. Thus, one's agency in choosing a discourse in the creation of one's identity is influenced by the nature of the social relationships of which one is a part. The definition of the dominant discourse will thus reflect relations of social, political and economic power, which are, according to Moore, manifested in the systems of distribution and redistribution of resources. In the case of the Women's Organization, where there arose the possibility of mobilizing new resources for the village,

the dominant discourse promoted a view of the rights and needs of women which would deny them the right to organize and thus prevent resources from being channeled through the WO. A closer look at land distribution processes in Sultanabad reveals a system of redistribution where those with power, who can decide whether land can be bought or sold in the village, did not define the rights and needs of the poorest in terms of land ownership in the village, and allowed the sale of their land to the better off. Thus, we see how in Sultanabad, perceptions of women and men's rights and needs, and thus their rural identities, are intimately associated with negotiations over resources and the creation of systems of redistribution. The next chapter will look more closely at the ways in which power is manifested in resource relations in Sultanabad, taking the case of forest resources as an example.

7.0 POWERED NEGOTIATIONS: ACCESSING THE FORESTS OF BASHO

‘No one can report the powerful, but the powerful can report the poor

– they can even blackmail them...’

A poor village woman, on who can get away with selling firewood, despite the ban on its sale.

The previous chapter explored how negotiations over resources are also negotiations of identity, where women and men, throughout the course of their lives, seek to identify with one or more of the many competing representations or discourses available to them in their life worlds in order to secure their livelihoods. In this process, women and men are constantly reifying and redefining their social relationships with family, friends, relatives, neighbors, government representatives and development agents. Given the changing contexts and power relationships, however, these social relationships are seldom, if ever, equal. Rather they reflect powered processes where certain actors, often somewhat consistently, are able to negotiate for certain resources more successfully than others. How, when, and why does this occur? How do some people manage to consistently lay claim to resources, even illicitly as in the sale of firewood, while others cannot? How is power exercised and challenged?

As we discovered from the example of land distribution, the creation of social difference is a process which develops in light of historical and current events and experiences both within and outside village life. The study of power in negotiations must therefore consider a myriad of historical, current and possible future relationships which extend from the villager to the regional, national and even international arena. Identifying conflicting and converging interests of actors at different levels is central to understanding these relationships.

Researchers using political economy and political ecology perspectives, as well as many who have operated under the emerging studies of common property resources have made important contributions to understanding conflicting interests in resource management, as can be seen in the discussions of this chapter. However, as mentioned in the introduction, many of these approaches have assumed a somewhat macro perspective, where the local level is subsumed in an image of community whose interests are assumed to be common in relation to interests outside the community. Merely extending the political economy approach to the micro level, or incorporating elements from other analytical tools which focus on the categorization of interests by, for example, gender (Overholt et al. 1985), however, may not be sufficient to understand the dynamics of power in negotiations. Since negotiation occurs between people through relationships, it is not enough to merely identify each set of interests – it is how they relate these interests to each other in practice that offers insight. Leach (1991), Li (1996) and Gururani (2000) are examples of authors who in exploring resource management issues put actors within communities in focus *vis a vis* other actors through looking at actual points of interaction between these actors in their everyday lives. Li terms this a ‘micropolitical economy’ approach.

This chapter, using the case of forestry resources, explores the points where the interests of actors meet in the everyday use of resources, examining how negotiations over forest resources involve powered negotiations of meaning and identity between actors of several levels simultaneously. I will conclude by discussing both how a focus on negotiations in a broader sense, one which includes attention to the dynamic creation of meanings, and identities, and the morality of all actors, better reflects how resources actually are managed locally, and how attention to these aspects influence how policy is both developed and interpreted.

Using forest resources – who and for what?

As one reaches the top of the treacherously steep road to Sultanabad and the vehicle begins to level, the view opens up onto a vast pasture, surrounded by steep slopes and towering peaks. Concentrated on the southerly slopes of the main valley, toward the high pasture of Challabat, are the upper forests of Basho - the largest natural forest in all of Baltistan.



Photo 8. Durum area of Basho Forest

The users of this forest are many and varied. Daily, there is an almost constant stream of young and old women and men, from villages throughout the valley, heading across *Ranga* into the forest area, returning after some hours with their catch of the day in the form of firewood, timber and/or other products. By far the most common sight is groups of 5-15 young girls, most often from the same village, prancing across *Ranga* in the early morning with their empty basket-backpacks strapped to their shoulders (and sneaking glances over the

wall of the school or up towards the Forest Hut where the ‘outsiders’ live...). These girls return in the late afternoon with overloaded baskets of firewood and branches, this time at a much slower pace and with frequent rest stops along the banks of the river. Several times a day, and more often on holidays when the forest guard is off-duty, one can also see young and old men, either alone or in groups of two or three, carrying large tree trunks, presumably for house construction in their villages. Young boys and girls are seen tending their animals, which are led to graze on *Ranga* and the forest slopes. And sometimes, often at night, a vehicle is spied, loaded with timber and firewood, most likely for illicit sale in Skardo.

Villagers from the upper Basho valley have for generations managed this forest in order to satisfy their food and livelihood security needs. Villagers explain, however, that there have been dramatic changes in access to the forest which have had an impact on how men and women in the upper Basho villages, including Sultanabad, use this resource today. According to the valley elders, forest resources have decreased over the last 30 years to a point where there is a serious concern by villagers and government officials alike that unless changes in management occur the forest will virtually disappear in the near future. This would mean that the well-being of the many actors who base their livelihoods on the utilization of forest resources would be threatened.

In Sultanabad, as in several of the upper Basho villages, the upper forest has always been a central part of the villagers' livelihood systems. Women and men have been dependent on this forest for firewood collection, both for food preparation and heating during the long, cold winter. The forest provides timber for house construction, and grazing areas in summer (large and small livestock) and winter (small livestock) as well as fodder for winter stall-feeding. Its

products have also provided cash income when sold, and been used to pay men and women in kind for work done in the *rokh* labor system.

Use of the forest is both constant and seasonal, depending on one's perspective. Within Sultanabad, women and girls are the main firewood collectors, collecting at times when their other activities are not so pressing i.e. prior to sowing, prior to weeding, after weeding and before irrigating, and after harvest. During weeding periods, men may collect firewood. During winter it is often the men who collect firewood, but women do so as well if they have the time, or if there is no man to do it. Because the top four villages differ in their cropping calendars (due to different altitude-determined cropping patterns) they visit the upper forests during different times. Young girls from Nazimabad, for example, are finished with their weeding earlier than those of Sultanabad, and therefore have a window of time before Sultanabad to collect firewood before they go the *broq* to start their weeding there.

In an area where winter temperatures drop to minus 15-20 degrees Celsius, firewood is important not only for food preparation but for heating as well. It is not unusual for a household to collect 60-70 *maunds* of firewood for the year (one *maund* is approximately equivalent to one backpack load). Generally, each *maund* represents one day's collection, although some women make two trips in a day if they have the time and energy, and the sun is not too hot. They have to walk to Sherimon to collect it from "where the vehicles cannot go". There the forest is thick, like it used to be in the other areas of Sultanabad around Ranga. The women from Sultanabad started going to Sherimon about five years ago because firewood in the forests surrounding Ranga was becoming scarce. The other three upper villages still collect firewood around Ranga. Although Sherimon is farther for the women to go to get

firewood than Ranga, Sultanabad is the closest village to Sherimon, so Sultanabad's women decided to start using Sherimon.

The women and men of the village have a clear understanding of the restrictions imposed by the Forestry Department concerning firewood collection – only dead branches and trees for own use can be collected. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon to see a few green branches included as well in the backpack loads of the villagers. The women of Sultanabad, however, insist that they are not cutting green trees – there is enough dead wood for their needs in Sherimon - the green branches are from trees which are dying already¹⁹⁸. Instead, they explain that women and men from other villages often take green wood from the other parts of the upper forest. In those areas there is less dead wood, particularly in the lower areas. Rather than use a full day to walk to the top of the forest to collect fallen wood, they choose rather to cut green trees lower down and make it home before dark. According to the women, there is little to fear from the forest volunteers¹⁹⁹ when they collect firewood for their own use during the day. The risk is greater, however, for those women and men who fill the local vehicle with firewood at night for sale in Skardo. Villagers estimated that in 1998, 12 truckloads of wood were 'smuggled' out of Sultanabad. For those who get caught, however, there is a stiff fine, and the Forest Guard confiscates the firewood. Several poorer families, nevertheless, take the risk, as it is a welcomed source of scarce income.

Since 1986, the government has banned commercial tree felling. Current regulations say trees can only be cut upon issuance of a permit by the Forestry Department. While some villagers do apply for permits, the majority still fell trees without having obtained them. Felling small

¹⁹⁸ Evidence of trees damaged in such a way that they die slowly over a period of years has been observed in the forest, but the extent to which this is practiced has not been documented (Steinsholt, pers.com).

¹⁹⁹ There are two forest volunteers from Sultanabad, and one from Nazimabad, to report to the BDO or Forestry Department on any illegal firewood selling or timber cutting from the upper forest. They do get paid a small amount, however, from the valley conservation fund set up by the BDO in collaboration with IUCN.

trees for small structural repairs is done somewhat openly, mainly in the *broqs*. Trees are felled throughout the summer season, however, we observed particularly intense activity during the first days after the families moved to the lower *broqs*.

After this year's long winter there was much to repair. Mustafa and Shamim start immediately repairing their *khlās* upon their arrival in Sari (a lower *broq* in Sultanabad). They bought this *khlās* about three years ago from Mustafa's uncle, and they decided this year to improve it by building a roof over the animal pen. Mustafa spends the first two days at Sari cutting trees from the nearby forest (Lazang) and carrying it to his *khlās* - a combination of logs and branches with needles to protect the animals from the rain. Shamim helps him place the larger logs in the correct position, and various young boys of the village help him carry one or two thin logs each. As the *khlās* begins to take shape, Shamim goes to the fields to help the other women weed. When the *khlās* work is finished, Mustafa spends time collecting firewood - sorely needed after the long winter depleted their usual firewood stocks, and takes his turn herding the animals.

The use of timber for the construction of houses has, in fact, increased over the last few years, despite the ban on cutting and limit of one tree per household for construction purposes. In Sultanabad alone, 13 new houses have been built over the last three years. It is clear that the villagers need more than the one tree they are allowed – it is estimated that construction of a house with two rooms would require about 20 trees. When asked how they manage, they just smile and shrug their shoulders with a 'what can we do?' gesture. On the other hand, the type of house they are building has changed from all wood and mud, to stones, wood, mud and

cement. This has reduced the dependence on wood for building, but has increased the need for firewood, since the new houses are very cold in the winter. This represents a gendered shift in resource use - less timber is needed (men's responsibility) but more firewood is needed (mainly women's responsibility).

In addition to providing villagers with the resources they need for building and cooking/heating, the forest has also been an important source of income for the households of Sultanabad. Both men and women have been involved in the harvesting of tree resources for sale. This type of activity became important when the demand for timber and fuel wood increased upon the construction of the road. Men have either felled trees for contractors for payment in cash, or sold their timber directly on the market. It was common for families to collect whole vehicles of fuelwood to be sold in Skardo when they needed cash. When in groups, the men say this type of income generating activity was stopped about four years earlier (as it is illegal). Privately, however, both men and women name the sale of firewood as a current source of income. The cutting of trees for timber and firewood sale is something which is done, but not talked about openly with outsiders.

A final area where the forest is an important resource is as a source of fodder for livestock. Both leaves and grasses are available in the forest for grazing in the summer and collection in the winter. Men and women, girls and boys, herd animals in the lower sections of the forest, as in Ranga, but in the upper sections herding is done exclusively by men and young boys²⁰⁰. The slopes are very steep, and people and animals risk the possibility of slipping to their death.

²⁰⁰ The herding system is described in chapter 5.

Changing access - changing perceptions of ownership and user-rights

The process of intense exploitation of the forests of Basho is tied to a large extent to infrastructural improvements in Baltistan, mainly roads, making transportation of large volumes of timber to regional and down-country markets increasingly easier. In 1952, the jeep road between Gilgit and Skardo was completed, connecting Baltistan to the trade route through Gilgit to down-country Pakistan. In 1968 the Government completed the suspension bridge across the Indus, and Basho was thus connected to the main jeep road between Gilgit and Skardo. Soon after, the Forestry Department completed construction of a jeep road from Matillo to Sultanabad, which skirted the south side of the pasture Ranga along the bottom edge of the upper forest. The road was built specifically to allow the Forestry Department to gain access to the upper forest area, evident from the fact that it by-passed several villages along the Basho *lungma* and completely avoided the village of Sultanabad. There was at that time an increasing demand for timber in the Skardo area, mainly by the Army for construction of garrisons, but also for the construction of public and private dwellings in this expanding district capital of Baltistan²⁰¹.

The construction of these roads initiated a dramatic change in access to the forests of Basho, and contributed to a change in the terms of ownership of and user-rights to the forest. The forests of Basho, like those of most of the Northern Areas, are classified as protected forests according to the Forest Act of 1927²⁰². Formally, therefore, the government owns the forest, and as such is entitled to the full 'bundle of rights' associated with ownership: access, withdrawal, management, exclusion and alienation (Ostrom and Schlager 1996). In practice,

²⁰¹ Since partition in 1947, Baltistan has been strategically important in Pakistan's on-going border conflict with India over Kashmir. The government's development activities in the area are thus very much influenced by political relations with India.

²⁰² Government of Pakistan (1985)

the government claims ownership of all land ‘above the channel’, or land which has not been put to use through irrigation. This includes both forest and pasture. In addition to the land above the channel, the government has exclusive right to all ‘natural species’ of trees, whether they stand on government-owned land or privately owned land. Within the protected forest status, local villagers have been granted certain user-rights by the government²⁰³. Villagers can collect dead trees and branches, and use the area for grazing, but cannot cut green trees (of indigenous species) without a permit from the government. Everyone who wishes to obtain timber from the forest must apply for permission from the Forestry Department and pay a fee in order to fell a green tree. There are also restrictions on the sale of firewood - those who wish to sell firewood need to apply for a permit and pay a fee²⁰⁴. The villagers could in these terms be considered authorized users, provided by the government with the right of both access to the forest and the right to withdraw resources, mainly for their own use, but sometimes for sale after obtaining a permit.

In addition to the user-rights granted by the government, however, there was also an informal internal division of access to resources in the valley in the period before the road. The top four villages of Sultanabad, Nazimabad, Doros and Meito, through practice, enjoyed access to the upper forest, which included access to timber, fuel wood and grazing. Thus, unofficially, the upper villages also had the right to manage the upper forest, or to ‘regulate internal use patterns and transform the resource by making improvements’ (ibid: 131). They may have therefore to some extent been considered as claimants, with the rights of access, withdrawal and management, or even proprietors to the extent they were able to exclude members of the lower valleys from exploiting the upper forests. Before 1968, these access rights were virtually uncontested, as each village along the Basha valley had its own forests to manage,

²⁰³ These rights are spelled out in detail in the Forest Act of 1927 (Government of Pakistan 1985).

²⁰⁴ See Steinsholt et al. 1998 for a more detailed discussion of the legal aspects of land and tree ownership.

and trees were in ample supply. As the road between Skardo and Gilgit was improved and the forestry road up the Basho valley was built, however, members of the lower villages began selling their forest resources to the Skardo market. Over time these lower resources were depleted, and the pressure shifted to the upper forest. When members of the lower villages began staking claims to the upper forests, members of the upper four villages found they could no longer enforce what they had considered their exclusive rights to use the forests surrounding Ranga. Likewise, the government, despite being faced with a booming market in timber, did not have the capacity to exclude those enjoying access beyond what was officially permitted. Instead, everyone claimed rights to the trees, but no one was in the position to enforce their rights and exclude others - the former terms of use and ownership of forest resources became blurred, and the utilization of the forest area became, *de facto*, open access²⁰⁵. The result, according to villagers, has been a dramatic reduction in the overall forest cover in Basho²⁰⁶. This process, while having slowed, continues. After thirty years of intra-valley and external interests competing for control of and access to the forest, conflict over these resources is still a hot topic in the valley.

Currently, a different form of management is emerging, and new constellations of rights and access are evolving. The BDO, for example, a relatively new organization in the valley, now plays an important role in forest management through the monitoring of forest use in cooperation with the government. Who, in this process, has managed to gain control over resources, and who has lost access or control? Merely attempting to sort out who has the formal rights to what and how they have changed may not, however, be a particularly fruitful

²⁰⁵ Open access has been described as existing when 'no rights to a resource have emerged and the resource is in the public domain' (Eggertson 1996: 161) and as the 'null condition of no property claims' (McCay 1996). *De facto* open access, however, can be said to be evident when existing systems of rights and claims or control mechanisms fail, break down or degenerate, and resources are exploited *as if* they were open access resources lacking property rights (Eggertson 1996).

²⁰⁶ Villagers estimate that the forests of Basho have been reduced by ca. 70% since 1948.

approach to understanding the social dynamics of forest resource management in Basho. To understand this seemingly (at least to outsiders) intangible world of informal resource management, the emphasis in this study is on access²⁰⁷. The term ‘access’ is not so theoretically explored as is the term rights in the development literature, and therefore takes on different meanings for different people. Agarwal (1994: 19) defines access in terms of the of formal and informal rights of use, where access is considered to be the granting of use of a resource, but without the beneficiary being able to ‘claim it as a right or call for enforcement’. Thus, access and use are seen as basically the same, and is dependent on the acquiescence of whoever controls the resource. Ribot (1998: 312), on the other hand, takes the concept of access a bit further by introducing the concept of ability, as in the ‘ability to obtain or make use of benefits’. Ability is, according to Ribot, a descriptive term, which rests ‘solely on the fact of demonstration without the need for any socially articulated approval’. In addition to the *de jure* aspects of resource use (common in considering rights), access as ability encompasses the extra-legal aspects, in which he includes social identity, social relations, coercion and trickery, material wealth, and physical circumstance. In being concerned with access, one is thus interested in not only the rules²⁰⁸, but also other ways to gain access to resources, including rule-breaking. Gururani (2000), in her examination of forest use in Utterakhand Himalaya, India, focuses precisely on the ways in which woman resource users break the official rules of forest use in order to gain access to resources. But instead of an emphasis on the control and enforcement aspect of the breaking of rules, Gururani chooses to see instances of rule-breaking as examples of powered negotiation over access to resources,

²⁰⁷ Ribot (1998: 310), in his analysis of forest utilization in Senegal, argues for a focus on access rather than rights in understanding processes of resource management. The term ‘right’, according to Ribot, ‘implies an acknowledged claim that society supports (whether through law, custom or convention)’. Ribot argues that the concept of rights, particularly in property rights discussions as influenced by for example MacPherson (1978) and Schlager and Ostrom (1992), overemphasizes the *de jure* aspects of resource use, at the expense of other *de facto*, or extra-legal mechanisms for gaining control over resources, which in some cases could be the deciding factors in how resources are secured.

²⁰⁸ Which according to Schlager and Ostrom define rights; ‘rights’ are the products of ‘rules’ (Schlager and Ostrom 1996: 130).

‘...Rules are constantly contested, resisted, redefined and reinterpreted in ways that not only highlight the complex interface between rules and practice but show that rules are subject to multi-stranded power relations shaped along the lines of caste, class and gender’ (ibid: 175). Gururani gives attention to the everyday negotiations that take place between the villagers and those who implement and enforce the rules. With a focus on access, however, the analysis can be extended to encompass negotiations over resource-use practice between villagers as well. Then the question of who makes and breaks the ‘rules’ (whether they be jural or socio-cultural) becomes central. Consider the example of a poorer woman in Sultanabad commenting on the claim by a group of men that anyone had the right to graze on private land not under cultivation, ‘They say it is a right, but really they are stealing. Why else would they only do it at times when I am away in the *broq* where I cannot see?’ Identifying rights involves exploring different people’s perceptions of rights, on which there may or may not be agreement. What one person considers a right, another may consider an impingement on her rights, which she currently cannot enforce. Who, then, has the right to the resource? Who decides what is legitimate practice? There may not be one answer, and looking exclusively for strict, formal or informal rules and rights may cloud the dynamic nature of actual negotiations over resources. By examining different people’s strategies of access, however, one can learn how different actors negotiate through a landscape of jural and extra-jural rules, social, economic and moral interests in order to gain access to resources. These strategies must be seen in the context of local power dynamics, different perceptions of rights, as well as the dynamics of economic, social and political processes occurring in the wider society.

Strategies of access to forest resources

In this analysis, I examine changes in access to forest resources during two phases; first, during the actual construction of the road, and second, upon its completion. During road construction there were large numbers of workers from farther down the Basho valley coming to Ranga with their animals for the day. This was permitted, as Ranga was a pasture where anyone in the valley could let their animals graze during the day, but they could not spend the night there. Despite this constraint, they established a strong presence in the upper valley which later would be full of ‘outsiders’²⁰⁹. At about the same time, some of the animals in the lower pastures were hit by a disease (‘where the animals’ coats would itch’) and the villagers had to find new pastures for their animals. Several lower village farmers asked the elders of the four upper villages if they could build *khlas* at Ranga to save their animals, and they were granted permission. Thus, their status changed from daytime visitor to having the right to live in a *khlas* during the grazing season. What this change entailed concerning the forest, however, was not clear. While the new herders from the lower villages interpreted their rights to include rights to the trees in the forests, the upper villagers maintained that the lower villagers were given only grazing rights, and not the right to utilize the trees and firewood resources of these forests other than for their own consumption at the *khlas*. Nevertheless, women from the lower villages began to gather firewood there, and men felled timber needed for local housing. Thus, the lower villagers gained expanding access to upper forest resources by insisting they had the right, despite counter claims by the upper villagers. This issue intensified as the valley opened-up to outsiders intent on exploiting the forest.

²⁰⁹ Outsider in this case refers to non-valley people.

A second phase of exploitation began upon the completion of the road, when the government and private contractors started extracting timber on a grand scale. One might describe the extraction of forest trees as a 'free-for-all' where the government, private contractors and opportunist local villagers harvested huge numbers of trees for use outside the valley. One local farmer said he had been personally responsible for the felling of 3000 trees, for which he was duly paid by the government. The contractor who built the Forest Hut was paid in timber. According to the villagers, permits for cutting were either not applied for, not controlled, or issued to anyone with influence. There is strong reason to believe that the infamous timber mafia was also involved in these activities²¹⁰. Local farmers, including those from the upper four villages, took an active part in this harvesting. Despite the negative effect of the harvesting on forest reserves, felling trees provided the local farmers with an income that enabled them to purchase both food and other consumer items from the market. The villagers were facing a new situation - they could not do anything to stop the felling of trees by others since they had lost the ability to regulate and exclude users from within the valley. Also, they were unwilling to stop using the forest themselves – they considered it their traditional right and they were dependent on the tree products (and the income from them) for their own livelihoods.

This apparently unregulated activity continued until the early 1990s, when the Forestry Department, due to pressure from the national level²¹¹, scaled down its operations in Basho and began to try to enforce the ban on commercial cutting and other regulations concerning

²¹⁰ There is little documentation of the activities of the timber mafia in Pakistan, however, local sources are clear that they do operate in Baltistan and have strong influence over certain government officials. On the one hand I was informed that they seem to have pulled out of activities in the main forests of Basho, partly because of the attention the valley has received through this research program. Nevertheless, several informants claimed that powerful external interests still operate in the valley, in cooperation with powerful actors in the valley leadership.

²¹¹ In 1992, a devastating flood hit Pakistan. In the aftermath, the massive destruction was attributed to deforestation in the mountains (loss of forest cover), prompting the Prime Minister to intensify efforts to conserve forests through, for example, a two-year ban on commercial exploitation of forest (Knudsen 1995).

the felling of trees and selling of firewood. This resulted in a considerable slowing of tree extraction. This was not due, however, to the government's efforts at regulating local interests, but rather to their enforcement of the ban on commercial interests (contractors as well as government interests). When these interests were controlled, so was the bulk of the harvesting of the forest²¹².

Now that external interests are no longer dominating the timber and firewood scene, the intra-valley conflicts which were buried in the free-for-all seem to be rising to the surface. Until recently, the government has dealt with the local community as one in terms of user-rights to the forests of Basho, and particularly the upper forests. In their increasing efforts to work in collaboration with communities in forest management, the Forest Department has until recently apparently been unaware of conflicting rights within the valley. Policies on the issuance of permits have treated all villagers of Basho alike, with equal rights to the now severely limited timber resources. This perception is changing as exemplified by two events initiated mainly by the villagers themselves during 1998. First, in June the Basho Development Organization (BDO) petitioned the District Forest Officer (DFO) concerning the marking of trees for cutting. The BDO requested that the trees from this upper area only be marked for cutting for people from the upper four villages. This was based on what they considered their traditional rights to timber and firewood, which they claimed were ensured in documents given to them during the reign of the Raja. The second event was in August, when representatives of the BDO met with the Chief Conservator, two of his assistants, and the DFO to discuss how trees damaged after the winter snows would be distributed to the people in the valley. Rather than be distributed equally, it was agreed that the damaged trees from each forest would be distributed to the people from the villages with the rights to that forest.

²¹² This is not to say that external commercial interests are absent in Basho today (see footnote 210).

The following year, and possibly as a response to the local petitions, there were no trees marked for cutting by the government, and 91 damaged trees were distributed according to the BDO's criteria throughout the valley. The process whereby individuals in each village gained access is less clear, however. The BDO informed that they had received applications for the damaged trees from individual villagers, but how free this process was needs further investigation.

These are important steps, according to representatives from the upper four villages, in regaining access to and control over the resources they claim are theirs traditionally. They do, however, anticipate continued conflict. The lower villages of Khar and Guncho, for example, are also arguing for the right to collect firewood and mark trees for felling in the upper forests. Up to now they have not been heard. The BDO currently has very strong representation from the upper villages, and uses several strategies to ensure their voice dominates in dealing with the government – one is to orchestrate meetings without informing representatives from the lower villages. Another is to simply use their social status and influence to override dissent. The BDO is thus an active actor in negotiations where the rules of access are being redefined. These negotiations occur at several levels, however, and involve those who want to retain existing access, expand their access, and those who want to restrict the access of others. I move now to a discussion of the dynamics of these negotiations, and how access in situations of scarcity is powered, and influenced by perceptions of control.

Local versus government perceptions of control

The government, represented in this case by the Forest Department, exercises control over forest resources through rules that regulate access to, withdrawal from and management of the forest (i.e. ban on tree felling, requiring permits). Enforcement of these regulations has in Basho been the responsibility of six locally recruited forest volunteers, who are responsible for checking permits and reporting any illegal harvesting of the forest products to the forest department. Although they are termed volunteers, they receive some payment through an IUCN initiative, where they are paid some of the interest generated by a fund granted to the valley for local resource conservation. The forest volunteers are supervised by a range officer, who is a Forest Department employee. There is also a checkpoint at Kachura, en route to Skardo, where permits are to be controlled²¹³. The checkpoint staff is salaried by the Forest Department.

These means of control by the Forestry Department, however, seem to have had limited effect on the villagers' access to or use of the forest. We were informed by some of the men of the village that the issuance of permits for firewood, for example, has been misused - those with permits do not collect only dead wood, they cut green trees as well, and sometimes use them for timber. More common, however, is that the locals from both the upper and lower villages simply do not apply for the permits because of the fee - instead they just take the trees and risk getting caught. Other measures in place to control the use of the forest have been shown to be just as ineffective. Villagers revealed that the checkpoint at Kachura is just for show - the checkpoint guards have never been known to prevent anyone from bringing firewood to Skardo, and reportedly make a good living from exacting bribes from the occasional vehicles

²¹³ Recently, a new checkpoint has been installed at the base of the valley, staffed by the forest department and a local villager, paid by the government.

which are stopped. The locally recruited forest volunteers for the upper forests are in a difficult situation regarding their ability or willingness to report offences by their fellow villagers. One day during a chance meeting with a volunteer we were overtaken by three young men carrying one large log each. There was no apparent reaction from the volunteer, and when we asked if this wood was green he replied yes. When asked why he did not stop them he replied that he just couldn't - they were his neighbors. Again, there was a smile and shrug-of-the-shoulder 'what can I do?' gesture. The forest volunteers are often aware of the extent to which villagers cut illegal timber in the forest, but they are unable to act against those upon which they in other situations are dependent for their survival²¹⁴. There have been cases, however, of both forest volunteers and other villagers reporting outsiders trying to extract timber.

The situation in Basho with both a forest ranger salaried by the government, and forest volunteers from the local communities managing the forest raises some fundamental questions concerning resource management at the boundaries between what may be termed the state and civil society, and the meeting of potentially different perceptions of access and control. The forest ranger, as a government employee, is expected by both the villagers and the government to represent the interests of the state. In theory, he is to stay clear of local interests and implement government policy²¹⁵. In Basho, the relationship between the forest ranger and the villagers has in the past been strained, characterized by villagers' mistrust of the ranger's motives, their poor opinion of his qualifications and character, and in some cases fear of violence in the enforcement of forest regulations. This situation is somewhat similar

²¹⁴ Cf. earlier discussion of inter-village and valley networks.

²¹⁵ Attempts to avoid loyalty to local interests are common in government service in many countries, where staff is for example forbidden to serve in their home areas or transferred every few years. This is particularly true in agricultural extension systems. Springer (2000) cites the example of agricultural extension workers in India, who although not allowed to work in their home villages, still 'share a range of social ties with various segments of the population in their assigned villages'.

to what Gururani (2000) describes in her work in India, where forest guards in the past had used fear as a basis for their authority, but whose competence in managing the forest was questioned by the villagers. In her example, women were able to gain access to forest resources through avoiding the guard (harvesting at times and places he was not present), trickery (handing over old, rusted tools to the guard when caught, keeping the newer ones for use), and appeals to his sense of sympathy (getting him to understand the women's need for forest products). The situation in Basho, however, is nevertheless somewhat different in that there exists additional layers of interests somewhere between the government and the village: the forest volunteers and the BDO. The volunteers and the BDO mediate relations between the government and the women and men using the forest, and are at the same time themselves users of the forests, which in Basho has led to a variety of strategies of access by the villagers, as well as different ways of exerting control over resources. Villagers, for example, may hide timber from the forest volunteers – one family had recently felled 20 trees for house construction that they hid in the forest and floated down the river at night shrouded in branches and leaves. A volunteer's loyalty to family and friends can be strong, so villagers may in other cases strike deals with the volunteers, where volunteers look the other way at the felling of trees for timber. The volunteers, likewise, have strategies and choices in reporting violations. The volunteers may at times choose to ally themselves with their fellow villagers, but at other times report them to the authorities. They may choose to report directly to the government forest guard, who will issue a fine to the offender. This option leaves little opportunity for the villager to negotiate his own position. One of the poorer villagers, for example, explained that at one time he was given permission by a forest volunteer to cut a tree, but was then nevertheless turned in by the same volunteer to the forest guard. He had no way to pay the fine, for which he was physically beaten at the Forest Hut. Another villager, however, stepped in and negotiated with the forest guard, paying the fine for the poorer man

and keeping the timber for himself. Volunteers can also, however, choose to report violations to the BDO, which has the ability to regulate the size of the fine according to their own criteria. This leaves some room for negotiation, allowing the BDO either to consider the difficult position of the offender, to acquire forest resources for themselves, or to nurture useful social relationships.

The exercise of control over resources thus takes many forms. What, however, does control mean? How does the government's concept of control by regulation and forced exclusion compare with local concepts of access and control? Literature on social and community forestry (Prakesh 1995; Jodha and Bhatia 1998) and community based natural resource management (Leach, Mearns & Scoones 1999) is sometimes based on an assumption of the existence of social regulation at the local level, where villagers follow local sets of rules enforced through a type of social pressure from within the community. Does this view of local rules, however, still reflect an understanding of control in terms of denial of access through enforcement, albeit in social terms? Is this adequate for understanding the strategies taken by men and women in gaining or retaining access to or control over resources?

How we view the concept of control is closely related to our understanding of power in general. I would like to move now to the arena of political theory, where the concept of power has been an important part of theoretical discussions for centuries. Political theorists have conventionally dealt with the concept of power in terms of sovereignty and government, where authority and legitimacy are central concerns. Weber, for example, has influenced much of contemporary political theory with his three types of authority: charismatic (derived from the devotion of people to an individual which they believe has exceptional qualities), traditional (based on beliefs in the rightness of established customs – commitment to

traditional wisdom), and rational-legal (the acceptance of a set of impersonal rules). Marx influenced political discussions of power by emphasizing (among other things) the importance of economic wealth, or control over the means of production, as the major source of power between groups in society²¹⁶ (Haralambos and Holborn 2000). Political and social theory, however, have a much broader base, and Hindess (1996) offers a particularly insightful discussion of the way power has been defined in contemporary Western thought by comparing the works of the influential theorists Hobbes, Locke, and Lukes and some of the political theories based upon them. Hindess suggests that despite the apparent differences in the way these thinkers define sovereignty and government, their conceptions of power fall into one or both of two main categories: power as simple capacity, and power as legitimate capacity. Power as simple capacity refers to the idea that power can be reduced to a simple, quantitative capacity, or a ‘generalized capacity or essence of effectiveness which is bestowed on individuals and collectives by virtue of the resources which they happen to possess’ (ibid.:138). This type of power can be cumulative – the more resources the more power, whether they be political, economic or cultural. Using this type of analysis, defining power in Sultanabad would be a relatively straight forward affair of taking an inventory of people’s resources, or as Hindess remarks, ‘if power may be quantified, then the investigation of the distribution and the uses of power in society becomes a straightforward empirical matter. At the simplest level some have claimed that the location of those who are ‘powerful’ involves little more than identification of those in possession of attributes and possessions...’(ibid.: 27). This view of power, however, is not able to capture the dynamic processes of negotiation which are so apparent in the everyday lives of the women and men of Sultanabad. As we saw in the previous chapter, women and men draw on a wide variety of power bases depending on

²¹⁶ Obviously, such a brief treatment of the works of such influential thinkers as Marx and Weber does not begin to do justice to their contribution to political theory, and it is not the ambition of this section to give a comprehensive review of the history of political thought. Rather, the intention is to explore some of the various ways power has been perceived in different theoretical traditions as a background for discussing power relations in Sultanabad.

the context, making the practice of power much less predictable than a categorization of assets or attitudes would suggest.

The second type of power Hindess highlights in his discussion of political theory, power as legitimate capacity, refers to the degree to which power rests on consent. Legitimacy, in these terms, rests on the degree to which subjects/citizens/classes consent to the actions of rulers/governments/classes – rulers do not have legitimate power unless their subjects or citizens give them the right to rule. Just how rulers manage to ensure legitimacy of this sort is one of the questions many theorists attempt to answer. Gramsci, for example, in his influential work on bourgeois hegemony²¹⁷ contends governments exercise power through the use of a combination of coercion and consent:

‘The ‘normal’ exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary régime is characterized by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent. Indeed, the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion - newspapers and associations – which, therefore, in certain situations, are artificially multiplied. Between consent and force stands corruption/fraud (which is characteristic of certain situations when it is hard to exercise the hegemonic function, and in certain situations when the use of force is too risky)’ (Gramsci 1971: 80*n*).

²¹⁷ See Gramsci (1986). Gramsci’s concept of bourgeois hegemony has, according to Scott, been employed by a large number of influential, revisionist, Marxist scholars, including Althusser, Miliband, Poulantzas, Habermas, and Marcuse (1985: 315).

Already in the above passage, it is clear that the idea of consent is problematic. If force can be concealed through *apparent* consent, when can one recognize true consent? When is consent voluntary or forced? If consent can be forced, what do we really mean by consent? What are the implications of this in terms of understanding power relations? How we view the concept of consent will have implications, for example, as to how we interpret people's apparent willingness to accept domination in some situations, while in others they choose to protest or revolt. Are people truly convinced that the views of their leaders are reasonable, or are they somehow conditioned to believe that their rulers know best – or, as Scott (1990: 72) puts it, do rulers dominate 'by persuading subordinate groups to believe actively in the values that explain and justify their own subordination'. This concept of 'false consciousness,' supports an overall theory of the hegemony of power present in much of contemporary political theory, as well as feminist theory which examines why women, for example, seem to be content with situations which are in opposition to their interests. Scott (ibid.) distinguishes between a thick and a thin version of false consciousness: the thick version, referred to above, claims consent, while the thin version maintains that 'the dominant ideology achieves compliance by convincing subordinate groups that the social order in which they live is natural and inevitable' (ibid.), claiming merely resignation. According to Scott, both of these versions serve to support conventional views of consent and domination within a paradigm of the hegemony of power. Scott, however, argues that views of power that are based on an idea of hegemony, or pervasive social domination by a ruling class, are inherently flawed in their understanding of the nature of the interaction between the rulers and the ruled. Views of hegemonic power (and false consciousness) assume not only a ruler's ability to coerce or impose sanctions, but also assume the 'passive compliance' of subordinate classes' (Scott 1985: 316). It is this idea of passive compliance that Scott most strongly opposes. Supported by fieldwork in a Malaysian village, Scott finds an assumption of passive acceptance of the

dominant ideology rather naïve. In particular he argues, ‘Perhaps the greatest problem with the concept of hegemony is the implicit assumption that the ideological incorporation of subordinate groups will necessarily diminish social conflict’ (1990: 77). While leaders will certainly attempt to influence the thoughts and values of their subjects, peasants, he claims, are not merely the victims of ‘processes of ideological domination²¹⁸’ where they are indirectly coerced into consent (ibid: 71). They are, instead, social agents who are ‘active appropriators who reproduce existing structures only through struggle, contestation, and a partial penetration of those structures’ (Willis, P. in Scott 1985: 319). Conflict, Scott argues, does exist in what may appear a hegemonic society – if not overtly, then in the everyday struggles of peasant resistance. Views of power as a zero-sum game, where some hold power at the expense of others²¹⁹, are thus too simplistic – even those who seem to have no power, are able to resist complete domination through strategies such as foot-dragging, non-compliance, false compliance, deception and sabotage (Scott 1985: xvi). In Basho, for example, the choice of villagers to engage in covert activities to secure access to forest resources, despite threats of stiff fines and violent retribution, attests to their willingness to resist despite their apparently weak position. In these terms, the interesting question is not who has power and who does not, but rather how, and under what social conditions, power is produced (Hindess 1996: 34), and challenged.

Questioning the premises of consent leads us away from the paradigm of hegemonic power towards Foucault, whom Hindess claims approaches the study of power in a completely different way than the bulk of Western political thinkers. Foucault views power as a fundamental aspect of human interaction, which in itself is neither intrinsically positive nor negative. Rather than concentrating on quantitative capacity or consent, or privileging

²¹⁸ A term Scott adopts from Marx and Engel’s *The German Ideology* (1985: 315n).

²¹⁹ A Weberian view of power (cf. Haralambos & Holborn 2000).

specific forms of power over others, he suggests that the study of power should be “the study of ‘the total structure of actions brought to bear’ (Foucault 1982: 220) on the actions of others in particular cases, and of the resistances and evasions encountered” (Hindess 1996: 101). Such an all-encompassing view of power has been criticized by several as lacking in utility. Nancy Fraser (1989), for example, a feminist theorist, claims that by taking such an all-encompassing view Foucault ignores the entire body of Weberian social theory by not addressing what she feels are important distinctions between notions such as authority, force, violence, domination and authority. Hindess (ibid.), however, claims that Foucault does not ignore these forms of power, but rather advocates a pluralistic approach to the study of power, where an analysis would depend on the conditions and issues present in a particular case. Thus, Foucault opens for the study of power processes beyond those defined in governmental or sovereign terms. Several feminist writers have, for example, used Foucault in trying to understand power in gendered social relations. Particularly useful to Foucauldian feminists²²⁰ has been the idea of power as exercised rather than possessed, putting a focus on the ‘how’ of power rather than the ‘who’. This allows for the analysis of, for example, the ways and processes in which women and men are subjected to, and grab, power, rather than trying to identify what types of men and women, with which characteristics, have more power than others. This contrasts with feminist approaches which analyze power exclusively ‘as something men possess to suppress or dominate women’ (Cooper 1994: 439), and parallels Hindess’ critique of power as simple capacity discussed earlier. A Foucauldian approach to power encourages us to see power in everyday situations, and everyday situations as powered. Basho women adjusting their *chador* in the presence of different status men, choosing where to move, when, and with whom within the valley, do not represent overt situations of conflict

²²⁰ Foucauldian feminism is the term used by Davina Cooper (1994: 435-436) for ‘a theoretical trajectory deeply influenced by the work of Michel Foucault (1978, 1980) and subsequent writings that have used his frameworks.’ She acknowledges, however, that ‘...among feminists who have drawn from his work, there has been ambivalence...thus, to talk of Foucauldian feminism is to talk of a trajectory or paradigm that is unstable and in a constant state of flux’.

and domination, but nevertheless subtle, and sometimes unconscious expressions of power. And power can, according to Foucault, have positive forms, for example the elder who used his power to help a young women obtain a divorce from a violent husband.

Despite the possibility of ‘positive’ power introduced by Foucault, he never completely abandons the idea of the inevitability of dominance in social relations. In fact, it is Foucault’s continued attention to domination and resistance which has been used extensively in Foucauldian feminist literature (ibid.), as well as by writers such as Scott discussed above²²¹. While in one sense Foucault distinguishes dominance as only one form of power²²², he at the same time continues to stress its presence in all relations – not as something which can be totally eradicated, but which may be minimized. Hindess refers to this as Foucault’s ‘dream of universal reciprocity’ (Hindess 1996: 104) where conditions are sought which would allow power games ‘to be played with a minimum of domination’ (Foucault 1988, in Hindess ibid.). The question arises, however, whether or not such an overriding focus on domination and resistance will allow for an adequate analysis of power relations when there is a ‘minimum of domination’. What of a case where an actor is not an individual, but a group²²³? How would one explain, for example, groups that act collectively? One might examine a group’s relationship to another group or actor in terms of dominance and resistance, and even within a group there would be relations of dominance and resistance, but would this be the only way to analyze the processes by which individuals choose to cooperate as actors? Is the formation of village and women’s organizations (VOs and WOs) only a matter of dominance and

²²¹ See Scott (1985, 1990).

²²² Foucault outlines several types of power, eg. power in general, dominance, government power (wherein he identifies pastoral power, discipline and liberalism), bio-power, each of which can be called on in an analysis depending on the context to be considered.

²²³ To cite Hindess (1988: 115) ‘single individuals are not the only entities that reach decisions and act accordingly. Capitalist enterprises, state agencies, political parties and church organizations are examples of social actors: they all have the means of reaching and formulating decisions and of acting on at least some of them.’

resistance? Long (2001: 17) proposes ‘agency (and power) depend crucially upon the emergence of a network of actors who become partially, though hardly ever completely, enrolled in the ‘project’ of some other person or persons’. How this process of enrolling others in one’s own project occurs when women and men perceive their interests as being at least in some cases convergent may not be best understood in terms of domination and resistance. Villarreal (1992) suggests that, when we are looking at power, we look not only at resistance, but also at accommodation and strategic compliance, at struggle, negotiation and compromise. If we are to understand the different lifeworlds of different actors, we must study power at the boundaries of these lifeworlds, in the course of their daily lives. As Villareal suggests:

‘...if the intention is to understand the causes connections and consequences of power processes, we have to look very closely at the everyday lives of the actors, explore the small, ordinary issues that take place within different contexts, and show how compliance, adaptation, but also resistance and open struggle are generated. In this endeavor, we shall find no strong, visible manifestations of power. Rather we have to look for small flashes of command that may peek out from behind the screens. More than solid, rigid blocks of control that are possessed or dispossessed, I claim that power is of a fluid nature that fills up spaces, sometimes for only flickering moments, and takes different forms and consistencies, which makes it very difficult to measure, but conspicuous enough to describe’ (Villarreal 1992: 258).

I now return to the question of whether government authorities and village women and men of Basho have different understandings of power and control. The government, through the

promotion of regulation and punishment of violators, clearly retains a hegemonic view of power and control, where domination is central in the protection and management of forest resources. The recent involvement of the BDO in forest management does not sway from this emphasis. Rather than represent a shift towards another form of control such as community management, the involvement of the BDO represents merely a decentralization of hegemonic control. Jodha and Bahtia (1998) describe a similar scenario from India, where the government, in the guise of joint forest management, allows for some local use of the forest, but retains overall power. They criticize such a set-up as a 'half-hearted compromise' on the part of the government in a policy environment which otherwise promotes community management of natural resources. In Basha, the BDO is expected by the government to assist in the enforcement of regulations, and sometimes give advice to the government; however, they are not given any real decision-making power, nor allotted any of the revenues generated through fines. The BDO continues to try to influence the government to allocate some of its management activities, but the government, at both the local and the provincial level, remain reluctant.

At the same time the BDO is relating to a rather rigid interpretation of resource control, it is also participating in other arenas in which control and power are better described in more fluid terms of negotiations and the 'enlisting of others into one's own project'. Here, the BDO is in negotiations with villagers and the forest volunteers concerning access to resources. Dominance occurs here as well, but not without resistance, with both forming aspects of the negotiating scene rather than defining all of its contours. The dealings between upper and lower villages concerning access to the forest can best be described as negotiations, where the BDO is both a party (in that it has heavy representation from the upper villages) and a representative of the villages in relation to the government. If we re-examine the case

mentioned earlier, where the upper villagers managed to influence the government into recognizing locally differentiated access to the forest, we find that the upper villages did not request the government to regulate the upper forests by exclusion. Instead, they asked for assistance in ‘reminding’ the lower villages of the traditional use practices, and convincing the lower valley people to respect these practices. The government was thus used for reinforcement, but through being pulled into the valley’s negotiations rather than being requested to enforce a strict regulation of the forest by exclusion. By enlisting the lower villagers, and the government into their project, the upper villagers hope for a broader base of support for their access and control of the upper forest resources.

The form of local ‘rules’ of resource use can also be examined in terms of the extent to which they are best described as rules of social control, or dynamic negotiations between actors. In Basho, it is evident that some general guidelines have existed in the use of forest resources in the past, but that many of these were negotiable. Social control of resource use in the period before the road was limited, possibly because in the past forest resources were not particularly scarce. Today, the use of forest resources by the women and men of the valley can be characterized more accurately by powered negotiations rather than strict local rules which are either followed or broken. When a large tree is marked for cutting in the winter months, there are no rules which guarantee that the one initiating the cutting will retain the wood – another more influential person may come and claim the wood and the initial cutter has no recourse since the cutting is actually illegal. On the other hand, a poorer person may also come and claim wood based on need, a request that morally cannot be denied, but nevertheless is not always honored. As mentioned as well in an earlier example of firewood collection (Chapter 5), women from the lower villages were not denied access to firewood from the upper forests when their own supplies became scarce because it was clear that they could not survive

without it – irrespective of their own role in ‘over-marketing’ their own forest resources. But in this case the negotiations and moral arguments were relatively public, as firewood gathering, as opposed to tree cutting, is not illegal.

Forest volunteers in Basho do not necessarily have the power to enforce government resource management regulations, nor do they operate in such a way that they enforce any clearly defined local rules of management. Rather, they take part in a series of negotiations that are rooted in different meanings of resource access and control, the formation of different identities of the different actors, and the moral and socio-economic context of the area. The BDO is also a part to these processes, and brings them further with their dealings with representatives of the forestry department – the implementers of government policy. When examining how these actors meet, under which circumstances, we are able to see resource management in terms of how they influence each other, rather in terms of merely rule-makers and followers. Rules from the state are not merely implemented – they are interpreted differently by different actors, and are negotiated at several different levels, the results of which are fed upwards in the system to influence both the relationships with state representatives and the definition of policy itself. But, while such negotiation can open for more influence into a seemingly rigid political and social system, the terms of negotiation are so intrinsically powered that there is no guarantee of equitable resource management. Thus, social difference in Basho continues to be an integral part of resource management in Basho.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

The full moon rolls swiftly along the snow-covered peaks above Basho valley as winter approaches, dropping suddenly behind them as if seeking refuge from the frigid autumn night. The daytime scene has turned bleak – the harvested fields and leafless shrubs leave the landscape exposed. But the lives of the people of Basho are anything but bleak, and while they have allowed us to carefully peek behind their façade, there are still many secrets in Basho which are waiting to be discovered...

This study is an inquiry into the nature of negotiation in a particular valley in Baltistan, where the emphasis is on exploring the social processes through which women and men gain access to and control over resources. It is an investigation which examines issues of power and social difference underlying these processes, and how negotiation is linked to wider political and economic processes in the region. This chapter looks at what, through the empirical study in Basho, has been learned about negotiation, power and social difference, and what the findings mean in terms of access to and control over resources.

This final chapter will also examine the implications of these findings for issues relevant to development policy, particularly as they apply to activities in Basho and Baltistan, but also more broadly in the region. What might these findings mean for activities in collective action and local institutional development, initiated by local and international NGOs, local and regional governments?

Negotiation – flexible, socially and morally-based

In exploring how women and men negotiate over resources in Basho, a closer examination of the nature of negotiation is useful. How do we conceptualize negotiation? Rather than seeing the acquisition of resources as time-bounded or one-off events defined by fixed rules and regulations, the flexibility of the system and the importance of process are examined. This allows for an analysis of the dynamic sides of negotiation, where women and men, at different times and under changing contexts manage to gain access to resources. In Basho, it is evident that a decision concerning access to resources is seldom ‘final’ – negotiations might reach some point of agreement, but there is usually an opportunity to renegotiate the terms of an agreement later on, when circumstances have changed. We see examples of this flexibility in negotiations over several types of resources. For agricultural land, for example, a daughter who may forego her inheritance rights of land at her father’s death in favor of her brother, but then attempt to claim them years later, at her brother’s death, when she may have a higher status and strong allies in the form of her husband’s family. In the case of firewood collection, a village once self-sufficient in firewood resources might, when resources become scarce, be able to negotiate access to other areas controlled by other villages. Particularly in the case of pasture resources, when environmental conditions or animal herd sizes change, access to pasture may be renegotiated, something which in Basho happens almost every year due to for example very localized differences in pasture conditions. For any case of negotiation, while it is clear that those with greater power in general have the ability to negotiate control over more resources than their neighbors, this is not an absolute power. Changing circumstances can give new opportunities for the less powerful, but also result in them losing what they once had gained. Consider for example the women of Sultanabad, who, despite a ban by religious leaders on forming a women’s organization, managed after

months of garnering support from the village men to form an organization. They lost that right later, however, as religious leaders of the valley and Skardo decreed a new ban. In the future, the situation might again change, and women may be allowed to organize.

Acknowledging these processes and trying to understand the dynamics involved would influence how NGOs, for example, might work in supporting local institutions. In the case of building women's organization, it would be important to explore how the women and men have managed to negotiate the right to organize at certain times, and how these activities could be supported, rather than accepting the views of particular leaders at particular times who may not represent the interests of the majority of villagers.

Further implications of these findings become apparent when there are efforts to clarify or formalize rights to resources. There is a clear global trend in agricultural and resource management policy to formalize rights to resources, often in an attempt to ensure rights to less powerful users. Throughout Africa, for example, land titling processes are a central part of land reform programs²²⁴, and community and joint forest management projects in South Asia aim to clarify use rights between communities and the government²²⁵. In Pakistan, attempts at joint forestry management have been limited²²⁶, although international and local NGOs are actively lobbying to increase the legal rights of local communities to manage the forests upon which they depend²²⁷. While these attempts are steps in a process to formalize the rights of users, giving legally binding access to resources to less powerful users, they may also have

²²⁴ See, for example, Benjaminsen (2000), Cousins (2001) and Benjaminsen and Sjaastad (2002) for recent discussions of South Africa's current process of land reform.

²²⁵ See, for example, Ahmad (2000).

²²⁶ An early attempt at community forestry was made in Bhurban Guzara Forest in the Murree Hills in 1936, where control over forest management was given to the local villagers, who subsequently cut down all the trees and grew agricultural crops to meet their food security needs. More recent attempts, such as Kalam Integrated Development Project in NWFP, have tried to motivate villagers for conservation by addressing the needs of the people such that their demand for forest products decreases, but with little emphasis on giving control over forest management to users (Ahmad 2000).

²²⁷ IUCN, AKRSP, SUNGI and other NGOs have been active in lobbying the government through their involvement in revising forestry policy and initiating dialogs between local communities and government forestry officials.

unintended consequences. Users who have been enjoying some access to resources may experience reduced access unless they are able to negotiate access under the more formalized rules – something which may be difficult for those in the community who are not necessarily included in the negotiation processes between the communities and government. In Basho, there are those who now have little chance of gaining access to the timber auctioned by the government to the local communities, whereas earlier they could either fell the tree in peace, or negotiate access with the local forest guard. The formalization of rights may thus change who negotiates with whom, and take away the ability of some people to take advantage of the ambiguity of informal rights to renegotiate over resources, something which could be in conflict with other development goals of livelihood security and poverty alleviation.

Regulatory activities must also take into consideration the need for flexibility due to changing ecological and economic conditions, for example the fluctuating quality of grazing areas and animal populations, to ensure equitable and ecologically sound management in situations of resource scarcity.

In Basho, it is important to understand that flexibility in negotiations also reflects the fact that negotiations are intricately intertwined with social relationships. The dynamics of these social relationships form the contours of negotiations, influencing the way women and men choose strategies to gain access to resources. The networks described in Chapter Five provide opportunities for interaction, but how women and men actually interact is much more complex. Understanding the flexible, socially-based nature of negotiations has important implications for planned development activities in the valley. Efforts towards building and strengthening local institutions, be they village organizations or local councils, would benefit from a better understanding of how these institutions shape, and are shaped by dynamic social relations. Social relations would, for example, affect how these organizations are organized

politically, how resources are channeled to and through them, what their collective and individual responsibilities might be, and how they link with other institutions in the community and state. Gender relations in Basho, for instance, are clearly reflected in the power structures of local institutions in the practice of choosing men as leaders of women's organizations, as well as in the lack of women's representation in valley committees and local councils. Intended as a strategy to ensure the formation of women's organizations (WOs) in conservative valleys, and to ensure WO representation in all-male village and valley decision making bodies, men as WO leaders have in practice not been able to ensure women's representation in any of the village or valley fora. Social relations are also evident in the make-up and functioning of the BDO, and therefore affect the way rules and regulations concerning resource management are both formed and adhered to. Activities directed at creating democratically-based local institutions have to take seriously the social dynamics which create power relations and determine the nature of representation in these institutions, and what this may mean to the way they function. It may be that while some local institutions may be regarded as sustainable and effective in some ways, they may not be representative or equitable in terms of their contribution to wider development goals in the community.

A similar argument can be made concerning the issue of morality. Morality surfaces prominently in Basho in situations and discussions focused around resource negotiations. This is both in terms of the way moral norms are used in deciding access to community resources, i.e. as in the case of not denying access to firewood based on the right to survive, but also in terms of the way moral norms affect women's strategies of negotiation. Women's negotiations over resources represent negotiations not only over resources, but over identity as well. We see that not all women can negotiate in the same way – the ability to negotiate mobility for example is dependent on perceptions of morality; younger women cannot move

alone freely and thus have to move in groups to gain access to forest resources, whereas older women, beyond child-bearing age, can move both farther and alone as they no longer have to worry about protecting their reputation as women. Concerns of morality reach deeply into the way people relate to each other, and can in some cases evoke violent reactions, as in the extreme example of honor killings. The pervasiveness of issues of morality in influencing people's social relations makes morality an important dimension in considering institutions and policies in resource management. Perceptions of what is morally right or wrong can vary with the different actors involved in policy formation and implementation, and the context of the situation, and will have consequences for how one judges, for example, successful resource management. For example, allowing a poor villager to fell a tree to repair a house destroyed in a heavy snow may be morally right in the context of the village, but morally wrong in the eyes of forestry department staff determined to uphold the law. Thus, making policy involves going beyond merely being concerned with rules and regulations of access for women and men, to being concerned with how women and men meet these rules in their social relations with each other, NGO staff and government officials. Finding the moral codes in this process gives valuable insight into whether policies will in fact have a chance of being effectively implemented.

Perceiving social difference – categories vs process

Discovering difference in Sultanabad involves not only a discovery of social difference in the community, but also a discovery of the concept of social difference itself. The findings from this study reveal that there indeed is social difference among villagers in Sultanabad, despite wider claims that such differences do not exist in the Northern Areas²²⁸. There are both big

²²⁸ It was often claimed by AKRSP staff that communities in the Northern Areas are relatively homogeneous, both economically and culturally, and that this has contributed to the successful formation of village

differences between landholding sizes, and varying access to off-farm income. Studying social difference in the community, however, involves more than merely a categorization of people and resources; it also involves an exploration of identity, power and process.

Categories are most interesting and relevant when they are seen in relation to the way they are defined and created by different actors, revealing how they choose to represent themselves in relation to others in various situations. In Sultanabad, women and men's categorizations of each other revealed the importance of having not only land and income, but a steady income through proper employment, responsible sons who send remittances to the village, and a will to use their resources in a productive way. Being poor, on the other hand, was not necessarily merely a lack of the resources which well-off people had, but described as a combination of many factors resulting in a situation which might very well be temporary, i.e. having young children who eventually grow to be able to provide labor and income to the family.

Studying process in Sultanabad, however, gives a different dimension to an understanding of social difference. The abolishment of the raja system in 1973 and discontinuation of the Raja tax had according to many villagers a certain leveling effect on social difference in the community, where the community as a whole became better off, and those who had been supporting and supported by the raja system lost power. An examination of land distribution processes over the last 30 years, however, revealed a system of redistribution where land was transferred from the poor to the well-off when poorer families had to sell their land and migrate from the village. This second process was very toned-down by most villagers, particularly by those who had bought the land from the poor, indicating that it was not necessarily morally correct to have gained access to land in this way. Again, morality enters

organizations. Such claims are not completely unfounded if one compares the situation in the Northern Areas with that of the rest of Pakistan, where a few very rich feudal landlords control most of the economic, natural and political resources in the rural areas. It would be misleading, however, to imply that there are no social differences between villagers, and therefore fail to explore whether economic change, for example, has contributed to the creation or enhancement of social difference within communities.

into the arena of resource negotiations, as well as issues of power. In the different discourses surrounding resource use, different people are conceptualized as having different rights and needs; thus the definition of one's identity or position is not an individual or isolated process – rather it is relational, and therefore powered. The dominant discourse will thus reflect relations of social, political and economic power. In the case of land redistribution, those with power who can decide whether land can be bought or sold in the village, did not define the rights and needs of the poorest in terms of land ownership in the village, and allowed the sale of the poorer families' land to the better off. In a similar way, the dominant discourse as expressed through the elders does not define the rights and needs of daughters in terms of land inheritance in the village, and therefore sons (except where there are none) are favored. Thus, we see how perceptions of people's rights and needs are both morally-based and intimately associated with the powered creation of systems of redistribution.

One implication of these findings is that it is not sufficient to merely identify, for example, the poor as a category when addressing issues of poverty. Studying process, particularly historical processes, helps to put current situations of social difference in their social, cultural, political and economic context. Confining studies of process to the study of poverty, however, may nevertheless also prove limiting. Yapa (1999) claims that there are fundamental problems with an approach where 'the academic study of social problems is founded on the idea that the world can be neatly partitioned into two sectors – the problem and the non-problem...[where] the academic is transformed into the rational, knowing 'subject-self,' who gazes upon the needy 'object-other' - the non-problem contemplating the problem. Contrary to this view, I argue that academic theories of poverty are deeply implicated as causative agents in the very problem they are designed to resolve' (p.544). I do not with this mean to discount the value of the extensive contributions made by poverty researchers to our

understanding of development. Studies of poverty are very diverse in their approaches and content²²⁹, and increasingly include issues of both process and power. There is nevertheless value in examining these approaches in light of other ways of studying social change. This study shows that an examination of dynamic processes of social differentiation opens for a slightly different analysis of the ways in which the powered production of social relations, in this case through negotiations over resources, are implicated in the creation of social difference.

Gender – a matter of discourse and identity

Gender relations in Basho are an important organizing principle for people's everyday activities. This study pays particular attention to how these relations are manifested in negotiations over resources, and, conversely, how resource negotiations are gendered. In terms of gender roles, the study shows that there are very few agricultural and resource management activities which are exclusively performed by women or men. Even for weeding, which is most often considered to be a women's task, men were observed helping women (although this was rare). Firewood is collected mainly by women during certain periods of the year, but when they are busy with other tasks men also collect. Timber-felling is a male activity, but smaller trees for repairing *khlas* roofs can be felled by women. Both women and men herd animals, but the men take the higher pastures in mid-summer while the women care for the milking and weaker animals in the lower areas. Some of these roles have changed over time, while others have remained the same.

²²⁹ See, for example, Øyen (1996) for a review of international research on poverty

Merely an examination of gender roles, however, does not offer much insight into the dynamics of gendered negotiations over resources, or the ways in which women and men actually gain access to or control over resources. As explored in the chapter on negotiation, women and men have a variety of strategies to gain control over resources. In terms of gender, this study shows that women and men comprise diverse groups, where the ability to negotiate depends not only on gender, but on for example age and status as well. This makes gender as an absolute category somewhat problematic. In categorization, people's characteristics are separated from the person through whom they are experienced, and are thus both split from other attributes that have an effect on a person's behavior or situation, and are thus given an importance that may not be warranted in every context. Assigning a dominant identity to a person represents her as having a single identity – and one loses the complexity of identity which defines one's relations with others. Women and men do at certain times choose to identify themselves with other women and men in some situations, only to shift to other identities as the context changes, just as women from different villages in Basho agree they have a common interest as women in drinking water issues, but cling to their village identity in grazing politics.

Postmodern feminist discourse offers alternative views of gender which deal with issues of multiple identity and the diversity of experience of women and men. Universalistic views of gender are put aside in favor of the concept of competing, powered discourses of gender. In this view, in any culture there are dominant and sub-dominant discourses concerning women and men's agency, each discourse conceptualizing a bit differently the rights and needs of women, men, the well-off and poor. In such a view, women and men may choose to identify with different discourses in different contexts. In Sultanabad, for example, the dominant discourse presents a view of women's participation in Women's Organizations as morally

undesirable, while the sub-dominant discourse sees the formation of a WO as a way to gain access to resources for the village. The interests of the development agency would represent a third discourse, the promotion of women's interests. All actors thus engage to a certain extent in the various discourses, cementing old or forging new configurations of power, interests and allies, sometimes along gendered lines, other times across. Issues of morality are particularly prominent in discourses on gender in Basho, and serve to intensify power relations.

The implications for a more flexible understanding of gender for development activities in Basho are several. Supporting women is not necessarily dependent on finding common interests based on gender, but recognizing their common constraints, and on supporting discourses where women are recognized for their multiple and diverse interests and identities in the community. Women's organizations can support women's multiple interests and identities, perhaps through activities covering several sectors i.e. health, resource management, agriculture, education, leadership training, particularly if they avoid narrowly defining women's interests within the dominant discourse, or basing activities purely on practical roles rather than powered processes of resource negotiation. Gaining an understanding of the competing discourses about gender locally, and being sensitive to their moral basis as well as their power relations, will likely reveal at least some possible points of complementarity or congruence, as well as opportunities to influence the ability of sub-dominant discourses to challenge power relations and advance their interests.

Powered Negotiations

From the investigations of negotiation and social difference in Sultanabad, it is clear that the social relations through which negotiations took place are seldom, if ever, equal. Rather they

reflect powered processes where certain actors, often somewhat consistently, are able to negotiate for certain resources more successfully than others. Negotiations over forest resources provide one backdrop for exploring how power is exercised and challenged in Basho. The study shows that there are different perceptions of power and control involved in negotiations over resources, and actors from different arenas move both within and between these discourses. The government, for example, functions officially within a tradition of hegemonic control, where domination is central in the protection and management of forest resources. While domination is also present in the village, these women and men have a wider range of ways of exercising power through their social relations, where control and power can better be described in terms of negotiations and attempts to 'enlist others in one's project'. The BDO and the forest volunteers mediate between these two views of control, resulting in a variety of outcomes in terms of access to resources, sometimes apparent in the enforcement of government regulations, other times apparent in regulations being ignored. In light of this, it is not necessarily fruitful to consider local access to forest resources only in terms of rules of social control, but also in terms of negotiations between different actors. We see that forest volunteers, for example, take part in a series of negotiations with village women and men that are rooted not only in different meanings of resource access and control, but also the formation of different identities of the different actors, and the moral and socio-economic context of the area. These social relations surrounding negotiations, however, do not stay at the local level, but influence negotiations in other fora as well. The BDO carries these social relations over to dealings with the forestry department, influencing their negotiations over the terms of local resource management. One of the areas where the BDO would like to be granted more authority, for example, is in deciding the level of fine to impose on those caught felling trees illegally. This would provide the BDO with a continued negotiating arena with villagers, and at the same time influence the rule regime of the

government through increasing its flexibility. Also it is important to realize that government staff, despite their apparent adherence to a hegemonic view of control and domination, are nevertheless also negotiating their identities (as either important government officials or collaborators with the valley elite) and moral standpoints in their relations with villagers. In Basho, for example, there was no evidence of any woman being fined for breaking wood harvesting rules - that would not be morally acceptable.

Thus, we see that rules from the state are not merely implemented – they are interpreted differently by different actors, and are negotiated at several levels, the results of which are fed upwards and downwards in the system to influence both relationships between villagers, intermediate actors, government representatives and the definition of policy. Because these processes involve complex, powered social relations, their outcomes are highly unpredictable, and there is for instance no guarantee of equitability at the local level if local institutions are allowed to participate more actively in forest management. This is why it is important to examine the different interests and discourses surrounding these negotiations not only in terms of government versus villagers, but amongst the villagers themselves, where there are a whole range of competing discourses which influence women and men's strategies of negotiation. The local perspective is thus not one-dimensional, and women and men are acutely aware of power relations and their need to position themselves in terms of these competing views. Through such an examination of competing discourses we acquire a more dynamic view of the collectivity of meaning.

An awareness of different local discourses, and the power relations in which they are embedded, has implications for how development agents approach their work with communities. One dilemma faced by development agents is that there is often a wish to do

two things at the same time – be dependent on local organizations and power structures to implement policy etc. with the belief that this will be the most resource efficient and culturally sensitive. At the same time there is a wish to break down local power structures to fight poverty or ensure equity (usually according to international norms). This study argues for taking a different, less dichotomic perspective on local institutions. It supports the need to move away from a static view of local institutions to one which acknowledges the dynamic creation of power relations which occurs in any environment – either emerging from existing social configurations which may or may not be equitable (or perhaps sustainable), or emerging from an interface with other actors with other interests, again, in social configurations which, again, may or may not be equitable. Planned development, with its explicit intention to improve the lives of the less endowed, is a highly political endeavor. In this process it is fruitful to keep in mind that how we look at power will influence our analysis, ‘...the way in which power is conceived is a political issue, highlighting certain social relations and marginalizing others. Conceptualizing power is also political in the ways in which it structures social strategies. If power is theorized in a way that dampens struggle, then it may be of less use to those seeking change than a framework which allows for resistance and transformation and sees future social relations as, whilst contingent, without theoretical closure²³⁰.’ A focus on power relations will, following Sen’s (1999) work on development as freedom, be a focus on the removal of “unfreedoms”, where agency in the form of political participation or freedom of opportunity is both a means and an end.

This research has focused specifically on how issues of gender, morality, identity and social difference are intimately entwined in resource negotiations far beyond the local level.

Networks with allies which stretch from Basho to Skardo to Karachi, and government and

²³⁰ Cooper 1994:453.

NGO representatives who live in and visit the valley daily contribute to a sense of boundlessness where the local, and all the social complexity it harbors, cannot be considered a completely separate entity from the greater communities of Baltistan and Pakistan. This is particularly true in light of the recent process of devolution initiated after the military takeover of the government in 1999. In this process, local and district councils were formed, redefining the roles of civil society and government through the creation of a new configuration of actors. This process has thus provided new arenas of social interaction where access to resources is negotiated, and links between the micro and the macro are expanded. Studying these linkages supports a synergy approach²³¹ which emphasizes the complementarity between the public and private, and embeddedness, or the nature and extent of ties connecting citizens and public officials, accepts the view that social relations (or capital for some) may be either good or bad, and sees the potential of government institutions in helping to bridge alliances between class, ethnic, racial, gender, political and religious boundaries. In the case of Basho and Baltistan, such an ambitious role for the government may be questionable in the short run. Government institutions which might have played a role in supporting local institutions in, for example, controlling illegal tree felling are themselves riddled with conflicting interests and are thus not automatically capable of providing bridging activities. But the potential exists, and expanding the competence of government institutions into new roles of supporting local initiatives is an important step towards creating effective links between civil and government institutions.

²³¹ See Evans (1996).

People and environment – the case of Basho

We now, in the end, return to the broader issues of people and environment raised at the beginning of this enquiry into negotiation. What can our analysis of negotiation, power, and social difference in Basho contribute to our understanding of how women and men relate to their environment? In terms of the discourse on poverty and environmental degradation and the Standard Environmental Narrative, the results of this study indicate that at least in terms of forest resources, one cannot conclude that the overexploitation of resources is confined to poorer women and men trying to satisfy their subsistence needs. While those with less resources and negotiating power are certainly heavily involved in harvesting both firewood and timber, it is those with more power and resources that manage to exploit the system such that large amounts of timber and firewood continue to find their way past the various checkpoints. It is also the better off who have been active in the felling of trees for the construction of new housing in the valley. While government staff is both ineffective in controlling felling, as well as heavily implicated in these endeavors, neither do local institutions and organizations unconditionally have the ability to or the inclination to manage resources in a sustainable or equitable manner. The picture is more complex, and depends on a whole range of context dependent processes, which are not confined to one type of resource, or one level of analysis. Processes of social differentiation, and the issues of morality, gender and power all combine to create a complex picture of when and why different women and men, for different reasons, use resources, sometimes degradingly, other times not. These processes need to be examined across the board, in terms of both arable and nonarable environments, in order to capture the ways in which they influence women and men's livelihood choices. Ideas of morality and identity, for example, can be seen as influencing resource management in terms of women and men's mobility, who should inherit land, who

should have access to firewood and pasture, and who should be reported to and by the forest guards. In some cases the broad relationship between people and their environment may seem clear; in Basha those with less resources and negotiating power in the community are more vulnerable, and have fewer livelihood options in the face of increasing restrictions on resource use, something which is important to address through environmental, economic and social policy. In specific cases, however, the boundaries between who can negotiate over which resources may shift according to the situation, making categories such as poor/rich or powerless/powerful limited in their analytical value in understanding people-resource relations. This is where the study of processes of negotiation gives insight into women and men's livelihood strategies, to help us maneuver between the different actors and their relations and see, for example, how policy changes might influence these processes.

In the process of informing on people and resource relations in Baltistan, this study contributes as well to development debates occurring on a wider level in Pakistani society. The issue of land rights for women, for example, has been debated in Pakistan particularly since the 1960s, and while women may have legal rights to land according to Islamic law, it is clear from studies such as this one that on the ground, women's ownership and access to land is substantially limited. Understanding the different contexts as to why this is the case could lead to adjustments in policy which might strengthen women's *de jure* and *de facto* access to land resources. Another national debate where this study could offer insight concerns the process of political devolution which President Musharraf initiated after his takeover in 1999. Understanding how power relations are formed through negotiations over resources can, for example, help us explore whether the basic assumption of democratic local participation in the devolution process is valid. In Basha we learn among other things that local institutions are highly gendered, and that power relations in terms of the local and union councils, are

concentrated in the hands of a few influential actors. How women and men negotiate for resources within this scenario, with all of the accompanying aspects of power, social differentiation, identity and morality, will indeed influence the devolution process, although not always in ways which are intended. Our challenge is thus to move between the local and the national, regional and even global, but without losing our grasp of how different people feel and think and decide. Negotiation is a part of everyday life, and understanding its intricacies brings us closer to understanding women and men's lives as they experience them, rather than how we imagine them, looking up from the Indus into the clouds of Sultanabad.

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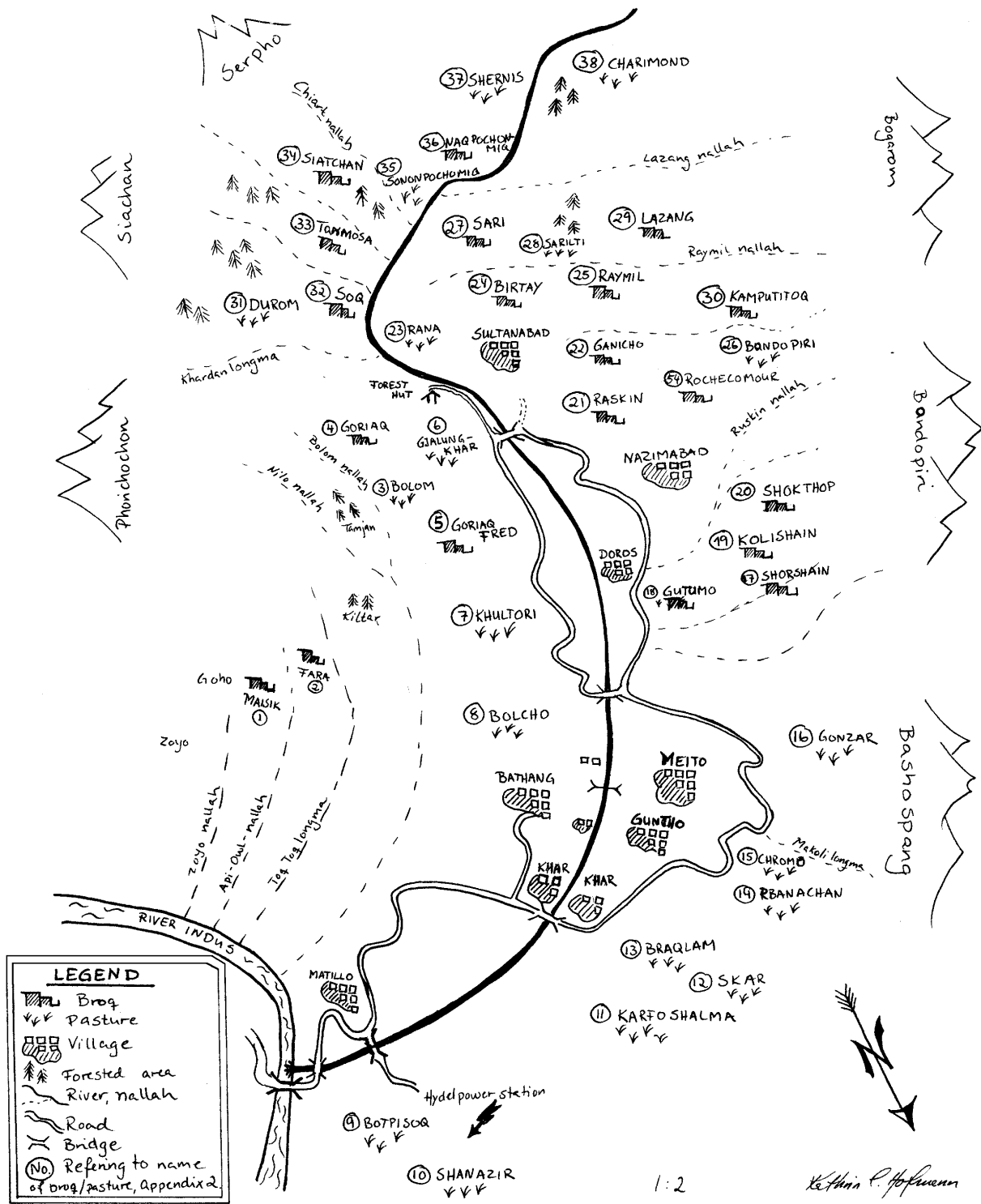
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APPENDIX 1: MAP OF FEDERALLY ADMINSTRATED NORTHERN AREAS AND CHITRAL (NWFP)



APPENDIX 2: MAP OF BASHO VALLEY

(reproduction of map sketched by villagers)



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