

## Madaklashti: A Persian-Speaking Community Of Northern Pakistan

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PAROLE CHIAVE: Pakistan, Chitral, Madaklasht, Madaklashti, persiano, dari, cultura, storia, lingua, etnografia.

RIASSUNTO — I Madaklashti sono una piccola comunità etnolinguistica insediatasi nella regione di Chitral, Pakistan settentrionale, verso la fine del XVII secolo. Le tradizioni orali parlano di sette persone giunte originariamente dalla provincia afghana del Badakhshan, per mettersi al servizio del principe locale come artigiani specializzati nella costruzione di armi da fuoco. Il gruppetto visse in varie zone del Chitral prima di stabilirsi definitivamente a Madaklasht, una località situata in posizione isolata, alla sommità di una lunga valle laterale. La popolazione attuale – 3.964 abitanti – parla tuttora la lingua persiana dei suoi antenati. I principali fattori che ne hanno favorito la conservazione sono l'atteggiamento positivo dei membri della comunità nei suoi confronti, l'isolamento geografico, l'assenza di scambi matrimoniali con i gruppi circostanti. Le usanze matrimoniali dei Madaklashti, tuttavia, indicano abbastanza chiaramente che la comunità ha subito l'influenza culturale dei parlanti Khowar, che nel Chitral costituiscono la comunità linguistica dominante. Le condizioni socio-economiche generali mostrano che Madaklasht è socialmente sviluppata e ben organizzata per la gestione delle problematiche di interesse generale.

KEY WORDS: Pakistan, Chitral, Madaklasht, Madaglashti, Persian, Dari, Culture, History, Language, Ethnography.

SUMMARY — Madaklashti is a small, non-indigenous ethnolinguistic community living in Chitral in northern Pakistan since the late eighteenth century. Initially, according to oral traditions, seven people arrived in Chitral from various parts of Badakhshan province in Afghanistan, and were enrolled in the service of the traditional rulers for their skills in producing firearms. They stayed at various places until they finally settled in a place called Madaklasht. The current 3,964 individuals of the community still maintain their mother-tongue with some variation and with a new name, 'Madaklashti'. Its isolated location, the absence of inter-marriages with other language communities and a positive attitude of the community toward their mother tongue are the main factors contributing to the maintenance of the original Persian language. Its wedding customs, however, provide quite clear evidence that the community has been culturally influenced by Khowar speakers, the dominant language community of Chitral. The general socio-economic conditions show that Madaklasht is socially developed and well organized for dealing with community issues.

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## BACKGROUND

The northern mountainous region of Pakistan is home to nearly 30 language communities. Some of them are not indigenous to the region but have migrated to the area from neighboring countries. Madaklashti is an old Afghani Persian (Dari) community whose ancestors left their native place in north-east Afghanistan more than two centuries ago and settled in the Chitral valley. The people still maintain (Liljegren, Akhūnzada, 2017) their mother tongue, though they are exposed to cultural influences from Khowar speakers (Israr et al., 1986). In the past the community also used to be called ‘Tazi’<sup>1</sup> (Tajik) by the Khowar speakers. In the literature (Biddulph, 1880; Ghufraan, 1962) the term ‘Badakhshi’ is used for them as well. Nowadays they are known by their new name ‘Madaklashti, the one used by the people themselves Chitral, where the community live, is linguistically the most diverse region of Pakistan. Lying at the northernmost tip of the country, it borders with Gilgit-Baltistan to the east, the Nuristan province of Afghanistan to the west, Badakhshan of Afghanistan to the north, the Pashtun District of Dir and the Kunar province of Afghanistan to the south. A narrow strip of Wakhan corridor (Afghanistan) separates Chitral from Tajikistan in the north. According to the Government census report of 2017 Chitral has a population of 447,000 individuals. In addition to Madaklashti, Chitral is home to other 11 language communities with populations ranging from a few thousand to a few hundred thousand. Khowar – a North-West Indo-Aryan or Dardic language – is the dominant language and lingua franca of the valley (Decker, 1992, 25-42; Bashir, 1996; Liljegren & Khan, 2017). Traditionally Chitral was a princely state ruled by a Mehtar. In 1947 when Pakistan came into existence Chitral became part of Pakistan. The traditional ruling system of Chitral, however, was abolished only in 1969 when the old principality became a district of the North-West Frontier Province (nowadays called Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).

## LOCATION OF MADAKLASHT

The community live in Madaklasht (Fig. 1), in the upper reaches of Shishi Koh, a side-valley in Chitral. Madaklasht is a green place surrounded by mountains thickly covered with timber forest.

The dirt road from Drosh town, the major urban center of South Chitral, located in the main valley, is 40 km long. It takes more than four hours to reach Madaklasht, after going through many villages occupied by Khowar, Palula<sup>2</sup>, Gujari<sup>3</sup> and Pashto speakers (see Fig. 2).

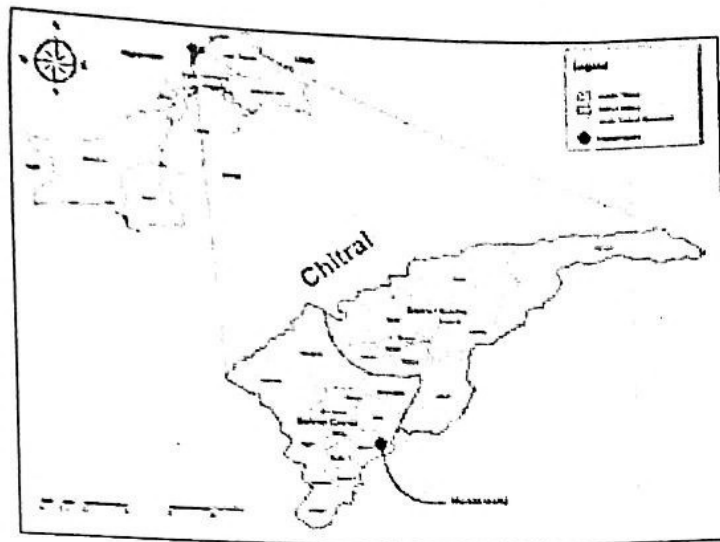


Fig. 1. Location of Madaklasht in Chitral in northern Pakistan.



Fig. 2. Map of Shishi Koh, adapted from "Gates of Peristan" © Alberto Cacopardo, 2001.

To the south of Madaklasht are Bela and Kawesh, hamlets of Gujari speakers (Gujars), Askari where Pashto is spoken, and Kotik and Balpanch which are shared by Pashto and Gujari speakers. Further south of Madaklasht are Tar, Kelas and Birga, villages of Khowar speakers, Sherati where Gujari is spoken and Purigal where Palula is spoken: the Shishi Koh valley is therefore one of the most polyglot corners of the Hindu Kush. The Shishi Koh stream, a tributary of the Chitral river, starts from Madaklasht and flows down through the narrow valley. Recently the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has initiated work on a mega hydro-power generation project on the stream called Lawi which will generate 69 MW of electricity from the stream. Up-valley, Madaklasht is surrounded by high mountains and connected to the other areas through passes. It is connected to the Laspur Valley of eastern Chitral through a two-days long foot trail; to Jughoor of central Chitral by an 18-hours walk, and to Dokdara, a Pashto speaking area of Dir district, by a 24-hour walk. Nowadays only tourist trekkers occasionally use these passes. Due to the high altitude (8,500 feet) and the heavy snowfall, the jeep road to the area is blocked for several months a year, and the people have to walk for three hours to reach a place where transport is available. The dirt road of Shishi Koh valley ends at Madaklasht. It was constructed in 1969. Before that, the people could only reach the main Chitral valley on foot.

## POPULATION

According to the demographic survey conducted by Sabit Qadam<sup>4</sup> (2013), the population of Madaklasht consists of 3,964 individuals – 2,005 males and 1,959 females – including those who were not present at the time of the survey (information was collected from their relatives and fellow villagers). The survey reported 480



households in Madaklasht. According to the latest government census report (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics Government of Pakistan [PBSP], 2018) Madaklashti villages have a population of 3,635 individuals, not including those who were not present during the survey. The census reports 509 households. Madaklasht has five sub-villages called Mativ, Kashakal, Ubara, Ebara and Bebandi. All the five sub-villages are occupied by Madaklashti speakers. The population is divided into six main patrilineal lineage groups named Qambari, Ashuri, Sayed, Qurbani, Kergi and Uzbaki.

#### MADAKLASHTI – THE MOTHER TONGUE

The mother tongue of the community is also called 'Madaklashti' which is a dialect of Persian (Decker, 1992). The Afghani-Persian language of these immigrants was influenced by the surrounding languages and environment and developed into a new dialect of Persian. Lorimer (1922) noted the impact of Khowar, Pashto and Hindustani (Urdu) on it. According to the people their mother tongue is closer to the Tajiki dialect of Persian than the Badakhshi dialect. Muhammad Muneer Khan (personal communication, August 2, 2007) is of the opinion that there is only a 30 to 35 percent lexical difference between Madaklashti and Tajiki. Both Tajiki and Madaklashti speakers understand each other. Most people in the area listen to the radio of Tajikistan for information and entertainment. According to Muhammad Muneer Khan and Sher Jahan (personal communication, August 2, 2007) the Persian language aired from Tajikistan radio is closer to Madaklashti than the Dari of Afghanistan. By listening to the radio, they have also learned that there are some similarities between the culture of Madaklasht and the Tajiki one. Only some elderly people read Persian books and write in Persian. According to Muhammad Muneer Khan the male members of his family usually write in Persian. The majority of women and children of the group are monolingual, and they cannot speak and understand other languages of the area. Almost all men can speak Khowar, the lingua franca of Chitral, and most of the men can also speak Pashto. The people visit the Khowar speaking area for market, hospital, education and official purposes. Their familiarity with Pashto is due to the presence of a small hamlet of Pashtun speakers near Madaklasht. Educated people can speak Urdu and some English. Pashto is used for communication with Gujars (speakers of Gujati) living in the area. According to some respondents from Madaklasht a majority of the men of the nearby villages of Gujars and Pashtuns can speak Madaklashti. Various forms of poetry are practiced in the community. Famous poets of Madaklasht are Said Nawaz Tanha, Sead Wazir, Dawlat Shah and Qurban Muhammad. Said Nawaz Tanha has published his poetry in book form. In sung musical performances both Khowar and Madaklashti are used. Chitrali musical instruments are used in such concerts.

The main causes of the maintenance of the language are its status as a language of prestige, the isolated location of the community, and the lack of intermarriage with members of other language communities.

Madaklasht is surrounded by mountains on three sides. The valley opens towards the South-West where there are other language communities, but there is no daily interaction as they are at a considerable distance from Madaklasht. The majority of the Madaklasht people follow the Agha Khan and belong to the Ismaili Confession of Islam. Intermarriage between them and the nearby language communities who belong to the Sunni sect, does not take place. Also, unlike some other small language communities of the region, the Madaklashti people do not feel inhibited to use their mother tongue in the presence of speakers of the dominant languages. Persian has remained the official language during the rule of the Mehtars (Munnings, 1990) and was taught as an optional subject in the schools until the very recent past. Speaking Persian is considered prestigious in the region. The community holds the same attitude toward their mother tongue. The dominant language of Chitral valley, Khowar, and the languages of nearby villages, are not considered to be as prestigious as Persian.

#### MIGRATION FROM BADAKHSHAN TO CHITRAL

The Madaklashti people migrated from Badakhshan in Afghanistan to Chitral, to seek employment with Mir Kalan<sup>5</sup> Mehtar of Chitral (Lorimer, 1922, 127). The people were experts in metal work and were particularly skilled in the production of weapons. The Mehtar realized the importance of their work and asked them to settle in Chitral. Initially their intention was not to live permanently in Chitral (Hemphill, Ali & Hameed, 2010). Lorimer (1922) reports that the initial immigrants at one point left the Chitral valley and settled in Chukhiathan in Dir, a Pashtun area, for some time, until the Mehtar invited them back to Chitral.

According to Muhammad Muneer Khan, Haider Ali, Sher Ajeeb and Habib Ullah, members of the community, (personal communication 02 August, 2007) the people stayed in different villages in South Chitral – Ayun<sup>6</sup>, Jinjeret, and Drosh – before permanently moving to Madaklasht. At length, during their stay in Taar in Shishi Koh, they discovered Madaklasht, a place without any previous habitation and without any claimed ownership. They were searching for exactly such a place. When they arrived there, they first checked the soil to see if it was suitable for growing crops. Once they succeeded in growing maize, they went to the Mehtar and asked his permission to settle there. The Mehtar agreed and sent men from Madak – a village in northern Chitral – to dig a water channel for irrigation from the stream that was flowing through the middle of the Madaklasht settlements. They made the two water channels of Madaklasht. Because of the work of the people from Madak, according to this tradition, the area was named Madaklasht (in Khowar ‘the meadowland of Madak’).

Sher Nazir, another member of the community, does not agree with the story behind the name. According to him (personal communication, 29 March, 2018), Madak was the name of a Kalasha man from Lawi village. Madaklasht was his summer grazing area and that is why the place is named Madaklasht. He added that the

water channels are too small to call people from other places to build them, especially from a place as far away as Madak. The initial immigrants themselves dug the channels. Sher Nazir wrote down the following migration story<sup>7</sup> (Sher Nazir, 1974).

“During the time of Shah Afzal Mehtar, people from Gilgit and Vershegom attacked Chitral in order to occupy it. In the fighting, the people of Chitral faced gun fire for the first time from the people of Gilgit. The people of Chitral were fighting with swords and arrows. The people of Chitral went to their Mehtar and told him about the new weapons. The Mehtar asked his son Katur (junior) to go to Badakhshan and bring people to make the new weapon called ‘*dav korim*’ (‘producer of sound’ in Khowar) at that time. Katur brought six people named Haider, Ashqalek, Sangeen, Sarwar, Logh Baig and Dowlat Baig to Chitral from various places of Badakhshan. The first gun made by the people was tested in the fort in the presence of Shah Afzal Mehtar. A target was hit successfully with the new gun. The Mehtar was happy and the success was celebrated. The Badakhshi people lived in the fort for five years.

When Shah Afzal died, his son Katur got the throne of Chitral. Khair Ullah, the ruler of Mastuj, attacked Chitral and Katur escaped towards Dir. Katur sent a message back to his people in Chitral and asked them to send the Badakhshi people to Dir because he was afraid that Khair Ullah could benefit from their skills. The six Badakhshi people arrived in Dir and started living in Chukiathan. Katur also came to Chukiathan and lived with them. In Dir, the people used to make guns and sell them in the market. They lived there for 12 years and during that time 500-600 guns were made. They collected large numbers of animals in exchange for these guns.

A man, named Qalander who had accompanied Katur when he was fleeing from Chitral, returned to Chitral after 12 years. Khair Ullah asked him to live in the house of his brother, named Faramat. One day, when he had the opportunity, Qalander killed Faramat. Khair Ullah was in Bashgal<sup>8</sup> at the time. The next day Qalander went to Dir and told Katur about the opportunity to attack Chitral. Katur started marching towards Chitral with a force of Pashtuns and the Badakhshi people. When he reached Nagar, he was told that Khair Ullah had arrived in Urtsun. The Mehtar went to Urtsun and killed Khair Ullah and his son. Then he went to Drosh and conquered Drosh Fort. He left 100 Pashtoon people of his force in Drosh fort and went to Chitral town and occupied it, too. Katur awarded Qalander by making him *Hakim* over the area from Kesu to Chaghai Sarai, a town now on the other side of the Durand Line, in Afghanistan. The Mehtar wanted to donate lands to the Badakhshi people in various places in Chitral, but they did not accept these donations because they did not want to occupy lands that belonged to other people. They came in Taar village in Shishi Koh and stayed there for a year. One of them, named Haider, died. During their stay the people cultivated the untilled lands named Kotik, Balpanch, Shalik and Kawash. After that they came to a place currently called Madaklasht and liked it. They asked Katur for permission to settle there. The place was used by Kalasha Kafirs as summer grazing land. Katur went to Madaklasht with his force and stayed there for 10 days. He removed the Kalasha people from the place and gave the place to the Badakhshis. The Badakhshi people all came to Madaklasht and settled here but maintained ownership of the previous places named Kotik, Balpanch, Shalik and Kawash. They used to cultivate those lands until the rule of Muzafat ul Mulk Mehtar. He snatched them and gave them to the Gujars for Qalang (grazing tax)”.

The information in the oral tradition recorded by Sher Nazir agrees pretty much with the accounts given in the books of the history of Chitral (Murtaza, 1962, 65-7; Azizuddin, 2001, 69-78). Some of the events it refers to are major historical events that occurred during the second half of the eighteenth century. The eviction of the Katur dynasty by Khair Ullah, a ruler of the Khoshwahite dynasty of Mastuj, in Upper Chitral, and the murder of Khair Ullah in Urtsun are related both by Murtaza in the *Nai Tarikh-i-Chitral* (new history of Chitral) and Azizuddin in *Tarikh-i-Chitral* (history



of Chitral). Both Murtaza and Azizuddin have given the dates of these events but some historians have challenged the reliability of their chronology (Holzwarth, 1996; Cacopardo & Cacopardo, 2001; Israr, 2016). The German historian Wolfgang Holzwarth (in Cacopardo & Cacopardo, 2001, 52) on the basis of an eye-witness account, concludes that Katur had recovered the throne of Chitral by 1792-1793. According to the tradition related above the Madaklashti people were invited by Muhtaram Shah Katur, also known as Shah Katur-II, when he was not yet the Mehtar of Chitral but had a key role under the rule of his uncle Shah Fazil and of his brother Shah Nawaz<sup>9</sup>. The tradition of Madaklasht regarding the stay of the people in Drosh, Jinjeret<sup>10</sup> and Ayun also supports this finding because according to Murtaza, Shah Katur lived in Drosh when his uncle was Mehtar of Chitral and lived in Ayun when the throne went to his brother. Possibly, Shah Katur was keeping them close due to the strategic importance of their skills. Murtaza (1962) and Israr (2016) also report that it was Shah Katur-II who lived for some time in Chukhiathan. These wanderings are possibly reflected in the Khowar proverb: "*mitaro sum qadayi*", which means 'nomadic with mehtar'. Shah Katur II and his brothers fought with Khair Ullah in Urtsun and killed him (Azizuddin, 2001; Murtaza, 1962) According to the account recorded by Nazir, the Badakhshi people were with him in the Urtsun battle. By 1792-93 – as we have just seen – the Katur dynasty had resumed power in Chitral. It appears, therefore, that the ancestors of the Madaklashti must have settled in the Shishi Koh valley around that time. From the genealogical trees (table 1) of the Sayed lineage, which is the longest among the genealogical trees of the lineages living in Madaklasht, it also appears that the current generation is at least the 10<sup>th</sup> of the group in Chitral, which is quite consistent with the notion that their arrival from Badakhshan may be dated to the late eighteenth century, as Israr, (1969) and Decker (1992) also believe.

The ancestors of the present community of Madaklasht, however, did not arrive all at the same time. After the first group settled in Madaklasht, several others joined them in time. The apical ancestors of the various lineages came to Madaklasht in groups or individually at different times from different places for different purposes (see Table 1). The initial settlers came in groups while the later immigrants were individuals or single families. The forefathers of the Uzbaki lineage, for example, reportedly settled in Madaklasht only six (Table 1) generations ago. The apical ancestor of the lineage was Haji Dowlat Baig. According to Shah Jahan Khan (personal communication, August 2, 2007) a retired teacher and a member of the lineage, Haji Dowlat Baig came with Mehtar Sher Afzal<sup>11</sup>. The Mehtar then went to Bashqar (Kalam) and Haji Dowlat Baig was held in Madaklasht because of a man named Mullah who offered him his daughter in marriage. The arrival story of the Kirgi lineage is different as well. The Kirgi people came from Keran<sup>12</sup> in Badakhshan in Afghanistan and that is why they are called Kergi. According to Haider, a member of the lineage, the apical ancestor of this lineage was Sead Nazar Muhammad who came with his brother Sead Fazal Muhammad to Chitral during the Mehtar rule. Sead Fazal Muhammad settled in Chitral town while Nazar Muhammad went to Madaklasht and settled there.

The ancestors of some other smaller lineages that live in Madaklasht – Ghazni, Sheghni and Ozhore – came much later. The Ghazni and Sheghni came from Ghaz and Sheghnan in Afghanistan respectively. The Ozhore are originally Khowar speakers who came from the Ozhore valley in western Chitral.

### ENGAGEMENT AND WEDDING CUSTOMS

Below are related the engagement and wedding customs of Madaklasht, as described by Sultan Hussain (personal communication, September 6, 2012) a member of the community.

Forty years back the marriages of couples were arranged by their parents. The boy had to agree with the choice his parents – especially his father – made for him. Refusal of a father's selection was against the social norms of the community. Nowadays, boys and girls make their own choices and parents agree with them. In Madaklasht girls are also allowed to select their spouse and the community recognizes them this right.

The traditional wedding process starts with sending a person, usually a close relative of the boy, to the house of a girl with a proposal that the girl's parents and brothers will consider. The acceptance of the proposal usually depends upon the economic condition of the boy and his family. The girl's family then provides a list of relatives whose agreement is also necessary. The boy's family meets them as well.

At the second stage, which is called *dukhtar talabi*, (Persian term) the elders of the boy's family and neighborhood go to the house of the girl again to confirm the agreement. Unlike the Khowar speakers, the elders do not bring with them any gift for the girl or her family. Sometime *maal* (the money or grocery items provided by the groom's family for the wedding feast to be held at the home of the bride) items are decided at this stage. In the old days the *maal* was comprised of two cows, two oxen or some goats or sheep. The groom's family had to deliver the animals to the bride's family before the wedding. Decision on a special gift for the maternal uncle of the girl was also made at this stage but the gift was given to the uncle on the day of the wedding.

At the third stage it is the women, including the mother of the groom, who go the house of the bride, and this custom is called *rasm-e-nishani* (Persian term). They carry with them a ring for the girl. The wedding takes place soon after the engagement or, at any rate, within two years. During this time, like Khowar speakers, Madaklashti people also send a gift of cloth to the girl on the occasion of Eid.

The wedding preparations start with the delivery of *maal* to the family of the bride. In the past, the girl's parents used to sell some of the animals and to buy house-hold items like beds and utensils for the girl to take with her to the house of the boy on the day of the wedding, and the remaining animals were slaughtered for the wedding feast.

The wedding starts with an invitation to all villagers to the house of the groom. On the first day the guests are served with cheese and on the second day feasts are again prepared for the whole village. On the third day a big party from the groom's



house go to the house of the bride to carry her with them. The party are served the wedding feast at the girl's house. After the feast, the party leaves for the house of the groom with the bride. She brings with her gifts for the relatives of the boy. The gifts include cloth, sweaters and socks etc. The groom goes to the house of the bride after three days. In the old days he used to carry with him some meat of a slaughtered goat.

In the community *jabeez* (dowry) is given to the girl a few months after the wedding. *Jabeez* includes a cow, a goat and a sheep. People with more resources may send more animals. Divorce is not unknown in the community, but it is very rare.

Nowadays there is a marriage committee of elders in Madaklasht. The main job of the committee is to make weddings affordable for all and curb extravagant wedding expenses. The villagers accept the suggestions of the committee and most of the old expensive customs are no longer observed these days. The committee also arranges joint weddings to further reduce the costs and make marriage feasts affordable for all. So it is arranged for several couples to get married on the same day, in the same place and with a single feast. The expenses of the feast are divided among the grooms. 5,000 rupees each are charged to their families for the feast and its organization. The grooms must submit an early application for this kind of wedding. In July 2013 the committee arranged in Madaklasht the joint marriage of 19 couples.

The engagement and wedding customs of the Madaklashti are almost the same as those of the Khowar speakers (Akhunzada & Liljegren, 2009), the majority group of Chitral. Differences are not greater than those normally found within the Khowar community itself. This shows that the Madaklashti have been culturally influenced by the Khowar speakers even if the rate of inter-marriage between the two communities is quite low.

## SOCIAL-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE COMMUNITY

### *Social Network*

The majority of Madaklashti people belong to the Ismaili Confession of Islam and very few families are Sunni-Muslims. They follow the Aga Khan as their spiritual leader. As is usually the case among Ismailis, the social network in Madaklasht is very strong. The people solve every issue of their community in an organized way. They have created different formal organizations with different functions to deal with community issues.

Most disputes within the community are decided by a "Local Arbitration and Conciliation Board", composed of eight members and one convener of the board. It was established at the beginning of the 1980ies and around 90% of local cases are decided by the board. Before hearing any case, the board examines the observations presented by the attorneys from both parties in written form. According to Muhammad Muneer Khan (personal communication, August 2, 2007) some Pashtun people of nearby villages also address the board for the resolution of their conflicts.

There are also two Higher Boards for appeal against the decision of this board called Regional Arbitration and Conciliation Board based in proper Chitral and a National Arbitration and Conciliation Board that holds office in Karachi. Only very rarely do cases go to the National Board.

The village has six elected councilors and one village *Nazim*. The *Naib Nazim* of Shishi Koh valley is also from Madaklasht. All these represent the community at the local government level. The main job of the councilors is to get funding to initiate small development projects in the community. In the traditional ruling system there was an *Asaqal* in Madaklasht to implement the Mehtari system and to represent the people at the Mehtar's court.

There is a council of elders called Aga Khan Local Council. The council is quite active in introducing reforms. It was the Council that recently changed the marriage customs in the community to make weddings affordable for all. It banned the numerous feasts and other unnecessary wedding customs. Nowadays no *maal* is taken from the groom and only drinks are served in the house of the bride. The maximum *mabar*<sup>3</sup> amounted to forty thousand rupees. Only a single feast is served in the house of the groom. The Council is also involved in the organization of joint marriages.

Sabit Qadam is a locally based organization of the community that mainly works to enhance literacy rate in Madaklasht. The organization awards study scholarships to the students who cannot afford their study expenses. Jobholders of the community give donations to the organization as membership fee.

### *Education*

Madaklasht has a good literacy rate. According to Sabit Qadam's survey (2013) the people holding a high school, or higher, certificate are 43.3% of the total population. Of these, 52.1% are males and 34.5% females. The first primary school in the area was established in 1949 by Muhammad Amir Khan, a renowned political and social worker, with his own resources. According to Muhammad Muneer Khan (personal communication, 2 Aug, 2007), who was among the first students in the school, the teacher was only religiously educated at that time. He was appointed teacher in the school after completing the 8th grade in 1962. The school was recognized as a middle school as well, in 1985.

Nowadays there are four primary and one high school established by government and two private high schools. One of the high schools is run by Aga Khan Education Service and it collects only a small fee from the students. 100% of children go to school. The college joining rate of girls is higher than that of boys and a number of girls have completed their graduation.

Riaz Hussain is the first Ph.D. and Sher Nazir is the first graduate from the community. Muhammad Amir Khan, the politician who established the first school in Madaklasht, was the first formally educated person from Madaklasht in the past. He had done his studies in Peshawar and in Bombay. Before joining politics, he served in the Royal Indian Air-force and then in the Pakistan Air-force as a pilot and was promoted to wing-commander. He was killed in 1964 in Chitral town in his home at night by two unknown assassins.

## *Economy*

The economy of the people depends upon agriculture, animal husbandry, handicrafts and government and private sector jobs. The agricultural products are harvested only once a year; due to heavy snow fall in winter no double sowing is possible. The soil is particularly suitable for potatoes, and great amounts of them are exported to other areas. The other main products of Madaklasht are beans, maize and wheat. Vegetables are grown too, as well as fruits like apples, walnuts, apricots and pears. The people also rear animals. Every household has cows, sheep and goats. Rearing of flocks of sheep is common due to the importance of using their wool for handicrafts. A family has in average 20 sheep. Dairy products like cheese, buttermilk, butter are made. Handicrafts are a source of income for women. They make sweaters, woolen cloth and capes. Madaklasht sweaters are in great demand in the markets of Chitral. There are also some skilled laborers like carpenters, masons and blacksmiths. Some people also have jobs in government and private sectors: they work as soldiers in the various forces, as teachers, police officers, medical doctors and bank employees.

Seasonal migration of young people to down country is also very common. Almost 80% of young men go to the cities in winter. The people also get some income from the royalties of the timber industry. Some people run shops in the area and some others drive passenger-vehicles between Drosh town and Madaklasht.

## CONCLUSION

This study provided evidence that the Madaklashti community still maintain as their mother tongue, with little change, the Persian language brought by their ancestors more than two centuries ago. The main reasons of the maintenance, we have seen, are the relative isolation of the community, the lack of inter-marriage with other communities and the circumstance that Persian is a language of prestige. The marriage customs revealed that the community has been profoundly influenced, culturally, by the Khowar speakers. Indeed, most marriage traditions of the community are the same as those of the Khowar speaking community. The study also indicated that the community is socially developed even if it is located in a far-flung mountainous area of the country. The people solve their community issues through a well-organized system. The community depends mostly on the traditional economic system with the addition of some new opportunities of earning.

This study covered only some aspects of Madaklasht society and culture, and to a limited extent. I spent only two days in Madaklasht and subsequently gathered information through the phone or from people of the community who live in my area. A complete ethnography of Madaklasht can present interesting information about a linguistic minority settled in a far-flung area with good social development.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Khowar term for Tajik.

<sup>2</sup> Palula is, like Khowar, a North-West-Indo-Aryan (or Dardic) language. For a sociolinguistic survey see Decker, 1992, 67-95; for a detailed account of the oral and written traditions of the community see Cacopardo & Cacopardo, 2001, 79-143; for a study of the grammar see Liljegren, 2016. It is spoken in eight villages in the southern part of Chitral (Decker, 1992, 67). One of them, Purigal, is located in Shishi Koh (Cacopardo & Cacopardo, 2001, 95; Liljegren, 2016, 4) The language is spoken by approximately 10,000 people (Liljegren, 2016, 7).

<sup>3</sup> Gujari is an Indo-Aryan language. Its speakers (Gujars) are spread from India to Eastern Afghanistan. In Chitral they used to be nomadic goat-herders in the past, but nowadays they have largely become village-dwellers (Decker, 1992, 17).

<sup>4</sup> It is a non-governmental community-based organization working for the enhancement of literacy in Madaklasht

<sup>5</sup> 'Mir Kalan' is a Persian title meaning top ruler. It does not identify any specific ruler of Chitral. In the traditional ruling system the ruler was called *Lot Mehtar* (top ruler) and governors were called *Cheq Mehtar* (small ruler).

<sup>6</sup> Some people in Madaklasht are of the opinion that their ancestors lived in 'Tholiyan deh, one of the villages forming the Ayun conglomerate, in South Chitral, and that this is the reason behind the name of the village, which they consider a transformed form of Taziyan deh (Tajik Village).

<sup>7</sup> Sher Nazir wrote down in Urdu a tradition he collected from Musafar Baig, an elderly person from the Madaklashti community, in 1974. He gave me a copy of his notes in 2018. The text in quotes is excerpted from those notes.

<sup>8</sup> Bashgal is the easternmost valley of the Afghan Province of Nuristan, formerly known as Kafirstan because its inhabitants resisted conversion to Islam, clinging to their ancient polytheistic religions until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Robertson, 1896; Cacopardo & Cacopardo, 2001, 173-225). The people of Bashgal, in the conflict in question, had reportedly sided with Katur, prompting a punitive expedition by Khair-Ullah.

<sup>9</sup> See the genealogy of the ruling family of Chitral based on *Nai Tarikh-i-Chitral* (Murtaza, 1962) in Cacopardo & Cacopardo, 2001, 46.

<sup>10</sup> Jinjiret is a village 6 km to the south of Drosh.

<sup>11</sup> The Sher Afzal mentioned here was the brother of the great Mehtar Aman-ul-Mulk and the unsuccessful anti-British claimant to the throne after the Mehtar's death (Cacopardo & Cacopardo, 2001, 55; Baig, 2008, 327). He held the throne only briefly during the dynastic struggle that followed Aman-ul-Mulk's sudden death.

<sup>12</sup> Currently Keran is a district of Badakhshan province in Afghanistan populated by Tajik people.

<sup>13</sup> The money (or other asset) the woman is entitled to, once the marriage contract is signed; the husband is legally bound to pay the designated amount to his wife. Unlike *maal*, which is a Chitrali custom, it is an Islamic religious obligation valid for all Muslims. In the Khowar community it is intended mainly as a guarantee in case of divorce: it is only paid by the husband if he opts for divorce; in contrast, nothing can be claimed by the woman's side if divorce is her choice.

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