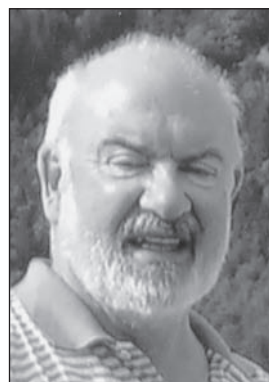


# Innsbruck, Alps and the Himalaya: A Journey

by Nigel J.R. Allan<sup>1</sup>

In Spring 1970, as the household opium poppy patches were coming into bloom I made a field research trip to the Nuristan area of Konar province of Afghanistan. I had been brought along to provide the “color commentary” of the area for a field visit of a vice president of the World Bank and his team, the resident representative of the World Bank in Afghanistan, and a team of American consultants to the Afghan Ministry of Planning. Our quest was to find out if there were development possibilities in the province. I have not been back to Ningalam village since that time although I have made several trips to Afghanistan in the intervening years and many visits to northern Pakistan and adjacent Kashmir during the period of tumult since the well deserved overthrow of the Afghan king in 1973. My choice of Ningalam as a launching pad for this essay is twofold; the first is based on recent conversations with a former undergraduate student of mine, Ed Darack, who as a teenager was the youngest climber to solo Mt McKinley exhibiting great fortitude and now a very successful photojournalist. Darack recently returned from being embedded with the US Marine Corps from the most forward base of NATO/ISAF troops in Afghanistan, at Camp Blessing located at Ningalam in the Pech valley. He has briefed me several times on the tumult enveloping that part of the Hindukush. His book on that experience set into the perspective of local people and Taliban and Salafis supporters will be published in April 2009 by Penguin.

When I look at that mountain place now nestled in the southern valleys of the Hindukush I could not imagine the huge changes in society and habitat that have occurred during the past four decades. In the biophysical environment vast swathes of magnificent deodar cedar trees have been felled by the timber “Mafia” in charge of the cross border trade between Konar and Nuristan provinces in Afghanistan and the



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Pakistanis in Bajaur Agency and Dir district of NorthWestern Frontier Province. Much of this activity was a response to a Pakistani government ban on “green” felling that is cutting of standing growing trees. At times during the 1980s up to 400 trucks loaded with “scantlings” - local rough hewn semi-finished lumber - moved across the Nawa Pass each week between Konar and Bajaur. Today, September 2008, sees tens of thousands of Pakistani citizens scurrying across the passes into Afghanistan fleeing from the Pakistani army mission to root out the Arabs, Uzbeks, and African Islamists who have infiltrated into Bajaur to create a base for instigating terrorism in northern Pakistan.

For the Nuristanis, barely Muslims of a century’s adherence, the arch conservative doctrine of the Arabic Salafiyya dominates much of their ethnolinguistic group. It is an interesting place located as it is at the juncture of Nuristani, Pashai and Pashto language speaking people. But it is an isolated region devoid of any thoroughfare in an otherwise porous Hindukush. As the first Mughal Emperor of the Indian Subcontinent said in the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century, “A narrow place creates a narrow mind.” The underlying factor preventing a solution to these and other mountain peoples’ similar problems is the rejection of the culture of modernism. Even an innocuous feature of modernism, at least to a Westerner, such as inoculation of children against various diseases, provoked a suicide bomber to kill 43 people at a hospital in NWFP in July 2008, and in one week in September 2008, in southern Afghanistan, prevented 200,000 children from being inoculated in two provinces because of the opposition of the local people to this modern intrusion into their lives.

Secondly, in the summer of 2006 at a European seminar dealing with Nuristan my task was to ascertain the development prospects of Ningalam and the Nuristan province with what I have learned over the decades doing field research in mountains. I have read the academic literature on mountains since 1966 when I first visited Nepal as a Masters’ degree student. A visit to Innsbruck contributed greatly to my comparative knowledge of mountains. Because a geographer works at various scales of investigation links that are not otherwise detected coalesce into a vision of regional interconnectedness spanning South Asia and Eurasia. Once evidence has been analyzed it behooves the investigator to marshal the evidence with contemporary theory. In this essay I set out to do this, first as it relates to mountains in general, then to the Himalaya, and later to larger regions.

### *The Innsbruck Connection*

Around the Day of Ascension in 1983 I was fortunate to receive an invitation from Prof. Hugo Penz to spend some days at the University of Innsbruck. The invitation came at the conclusion of the conference on “Problems of Comparative Cultural Geography of High Mountains” that Prof. Erwin Groetzbach had organized at Eichstaett University in Bavaria. I had met a number of German geographers many years before when they had been associated with the Faculty of Economics at Kabul University in

Afghanistan where I did field research on ethnic groups in 410 Hindukush villages for my PhD dissertation. Erwin Groetzbach had done his habilitation based on Afghanistan field research and invited me to this very stimulating conference attended by many luminaries in mountain geography based in the Alpine countries and beyond. The Eichstaett Beitrage, volume 12, was the outcome of that conference. Prof. Hugo Penz, a conference participant, kindly invited me spend a few days in Innsbruck after the conference field excursion he promised me a personal field trip in the area and possibly a stay at Alpine Forschungsstelle in Obergurgl. As a geographer with pretenses of being a mountain geographer, I could not turn down his invitation to spend some time in Innsbruck before I journeyed on to Switzerland to Bern and find out what Bern geographers were doing. This Alpine sojourn added immeasurably to my knowledge of mountain geography. I learned to place my Himalayan experience into the larger context of the discipline but foremost of all I began to understand the role that Alpine studies had played in creating intellectual images of mountain society and habitat. Theories about the cultural variation in mountain populations and their relationship to resources were foremost in my mind. American cultural ecologists/anthropologists had made several studies of villages in the Alps seeking a universal pattern of adaptation among mountain villages. The theme of the Eichstaett conference “comparative cultural geography” fell into that same category.

Prof. Penz was an admirable and gracious host. He found me temporary accommodation at 2 Fallmerayerstrasse with a charming landlady who informed me that her daughter was a physician in the American state of North Carolina thereby making me comfortable. I made a pilgrimage up the stairs of the Institute to meet Prof. Leidlmair. Later I examined the great details of the Tyrol Atlas during the day while in the evening I enjoyed dinner with Penz and Klaus Frantz from whom I learned of the geography institute's linkage with the University of New Orleans. Penz personally led me on a field excursion up Wipptal over the Europabrücke to show me how much mountain life has changed in the side valleys. It was an indelible lesson in the geographic notion of *Passland*, the story of Tyrol and its role in history as the portal between northern and southern Europe. After a day long visit to the Olympic sights, to the top of the ski jump, and to Seefeld where Bill Koch, the American from the Green Mountains in the state of Vermont had won his *Langlauf* silver medal in the 1976 Winter Olympics, I fled Innsbruck for Obergurgl, not because I was neglected, but because the dreaded *Foehn* had come with temperatures at 26.5 C and the Man and the Biosphere Project 6 site beckoned. Obergurgl was in the midst of the mud season as we call it in America. Prof. Patzelt had notified Meinhard Stroebel, the AFO manager of my arrival and I settled in with abundant reading material from the special library but with several rolls of film I quickly ventured outside with my 1:50,000 topographic sheet and my Oetztal/Pitztal Wanderbuch in hand. All too quickly my Innsbruck visit was over and I was on my way to Switzerland to meet with the alpine geomorphologist, Bruno Messerli, and his

colleagues at the University of Bern. Next year, 1984, these previous Alpine visits had prompted me to sign up in 1984 for a stay at the Institute of Alpine Geography in Grenoble prior to presenting a modified version of my Eichstaett paper on accessibility of mountains landscapes at the International Geographical Union meeting in Paris. My Grenoble sojourn was equally illuminating. I learned of the French literature by Blanchard and especially the Veyrets.

To present my 1994 Paris paper I had several intellectual tasks. How could I bring my experience of the western Himalaya to bear upon ideas and theories of mountain geography that I found in the three Alpine countries I had visited recently? More importantly, how could I synchronize findings from this academic effort with what was current in the literature on mountain geography that was prevalent in English speaking United States? Did what I have to say at the IGU reflect contemporary thought on the topic? Ultimately, the published paper on the role of accessibility into mountains proved to be well received, not necessarily for agreement by everyone to my conclusions but because of the contentious debate that it produced, which has lingered for at least twenty five years during which time I have drawn the wrath of one of the Swiss geographers, Bruno Messerli, who objects vociferously to my conclusions. My paper has been republished in several separate sources indicating the degree of interest from a wide audience. Later, lacking a book devoted to humans in mountains in the English language I solicited manuscripts from a variety of authors, American and foreign who could shed light on concepts and terms, theories, and regional studies. That edited book, *Human Impact on Mountains*, is still in print, now paperback, allowing penurious professors and students to purchase it for a very modest price.

### *Mountain Studies: The Background*

Let me sketch out the bases of mountain studies as perceived in the United States and abroad during the past twenty-five years. Over a decade ago I published another edited book entitled *Mountains at Risk: Current Issues in Environmental Studies*. It was focused on the Himalaya region but also included chapters from around the mountain world; the idea of publishing this book in India was to bring to a South Asia audience some of the more notable research being done on mountains. Although the book has been cited extensively the message of the title and my introduction and initial chapter in the book has been overlooked. Mountains were “at risk” because self serving academics and NGOs with a biophysical slant perceived them to be at risk thereby refuting scientific evidence that clearly indicated that the biophysical environment was subject to perturbations but not really at risk. This contention spilled over at the International Mountain Society’s conference at Mohonk in the Catskill Mountains of New York State in 1987. Organized by Bruno Messerli and Jack Ives, self styled founders and officers of their International Mountain Society, the meeting reached a crescendo when Colin Rosser, a veteran of Himalayan studies since the early 1950s when he was a graduate

student writing his DPhil at Oxford and later the Director-General of the International Centre for Mountain Development in Kathmandu, repeatedly stated that doom and gloom statements about the Himalayan environment “were not an issue” meaning that the principal problems in the Himalayan regions were largely cultural and not environmental. Messerli and Ives, both of the natural hazards fraternity of geomorphologists, had reached their conclusions based on earlier work of Germans working in Nepal and a subsequent meeting in Munich in 1974, which published papers in a volume edited by Mueller-Hohenstein. The 1975 Innsbruck meeting of the Germanic geographers continued to place environmental issues at the forefront.

In the decade following these German reports articles appeared in print producing the hysteria about mountain degradation in the Himalaya and in a general sense mountain degradation around the world. The creators of this Theory of Himalayan Environmental Degradation were Messerli and Ives as many editorials and articles in the early 1980s issues of their journal/newsletter *Mountain Research and Development* will support. When abundant contrary evidence was presented to Messerli and Ives in the 1980s by Brian Carson and L. A. Bruijnzeel in ICIMOD reports with support from Michael Thompson they reversed their earlier stance and presented themselves as saviors of mountains and their populations. There had been earlier precedents for the views that Messerli and Ives had taken. A German team visited Nepal in the mid 70s producing a call to arms to prevent the purported Himalayan degradation. The aforementioned papers at the 1974 Munich international workshop on the development of mountains had a similar environmental focus. The linkage between the Alpine experience and, specifically, the Nepal environmental conditions became apparent when Messerli selected three locations, the Everest Khumbu area, annually subjected to many thousands of tourists every year, the settlement of Kakani on the NW suburban periphery of Kathmandu, and a third location outside Chandigarh, the new capital of Punjab province in India. These three locations, high altitude, middle attitude and low altitude were chosen to represent “typical” local environmental conditions of the Himalaya. Messerli later published a book recounting his twelve years of research in the Himalaya, which generated considerable criticism. Human geographers were not idle and a Mainz 1970 conference highlighted the cultural geographical features of South Asia. A recent book, *Himalaya*, by two American authors, David Zurick and Paul Karan, who have many decades of Himalayan field research experience, carefully analyzed the Himalayan environment thereby refuting much of the hysteria over the doom and gloom warnings about the Himalaya. Nevertheless the contestation between physical geographers, usually well funded as “scientists” and human geographers, much less well funded, still pervades the field of mountain geography.

At the same time American geographers and anthropologists were not idle dealing with mountain habitat and society. Aside from early 1930s works of Roderick Peattie of Harvard, American geographers during the 1960-70 period relied on American

anthropologists for leadership in mountain studies. Several cultural anthropologists had accomplished research in the Alpine areas including Cole and Wolf, and Friedl. Underpinning this mountain research was the theory of cultural ecology, a field that has weathered the passage of several decades. Invented by Julian Steward, an anthropologist, the theory suggested that society was formed by geographical, or rather environmental, conditions. Fred Kniffen, an early Carl Sauer PhD student remarked in his late 80s that Kroeber, an anthropologist and Steward's major professor at UC Berkeley and a colleague of Carl Sauer there, had told Sauer that cultural ecology was merely "bad geography." Indeed it was bad geography as the content was redolent with environmental determinism (originally stated as environmentalism although now that term has another connotation) of a bygone era. The link to European geographical research was to discover common characteristics in separate mountain settlements thereby adding to theory. Perhaps the most prominent example of this is anthropologist Brooke Thomas's chapter in *Human Impact on Mountains*. This had already been the theme of the "Comparative Cultural Geography" sessions by European geographers. But there is little evidence that American anthropologists knew much about Alpine geographers' work. That environmental determinism was implicit in cultural ecology goes without saying.

Any links between culture and ecology can be divulged as demonstrated in David Sopher's magisterial robust work in the 1960s -70s on culture and ecology in India. But this was only possible because of Sopher's massive historical census data base of all Indian castes and tribes and his intimate knowledge of environmental features like geomorphology, vegetation, soils and water. The lesson to be learned here is that it takes a geographer's very deft touch and sophisticated quantitative causal analyses to reveal links between divergent cultural and environmental variables.

A major failing of cultural ecology was the introduction of the notion of an ecosystem. Leaving aside its connotations with the Nazi period, the failings of the ecosystem approach are evident because the locality is seen as a closed system. In the classroom, I used to call it the "Obergurgl UN problem." As I found out after reading many scientific reports about the biophysical characteristics of the village and vicinity, it was only until the last year of the project that a consideration of social characteristics was commissioned. That report was authored by Meleghy and Preglau. Virtually all American anthropology mountain studies were of a single village. All studies, like UNESCO's MaB-6 studies, and similar numerous studies in Switzerland exhibited the "Universal Fallacy," that is, generalizing from a single or a few studies the characteristics of all. In my opinion mountain societies' characteristics of people and the biophysical environment exhibit a great range when compared to an adjacent flat lowland area and between localities. Furthermore, the methodologies were sadly deficient in any scientific methodology. In American social science this type of research involving one or a few cases is called the "Law of Small Numbers" in which numerical data cannot be analyzed in

a robust manner. Ascribing positive or negative values to innate characteristics, even when context is overwhelmingly important, results in the “Law of Fundamental Attribution Error.” This problem is always with us in mountain research because of logistical difficulties in executing field studies. It was present during the summer 2006 while I was the only social scientist on a scientific expedition to the Indian Himalaya examining a “misbehaving” glacier. Only one glacier was examined while many existed up and down the long valley. No simple “context” was considered, whether the glacier ran E-W, W-E, N-S, S-N, nor differed in some way from all the glaciers near it in terms of altitude. Nevertheless I am sure “scientific” papers will be produced by members of the expedition ignoring these fundamental methodological difficulties in selecting research sites.

Geography does not work well at the micro level—it performs best at the meso and macro level. By relying on the information of Obergurgl MaB-6 material and the Swiss MaB-6 studies we end up with a very minute view of the habitat-society relationships in mountains. How then do we change gears and gain access to a more representative sample. We certainly need the information that is provided by microstudies at the level of Obergurgl village, but how can we be sure that Obergurgl is representative of a much larger area that might be called the Eastern Alps.

A suitable field methodology exists by employing exploratory data analysis instead of confirmatory data analysis. Obtaining ordered and unordered polytomic variables of phenomena is a relatively easy task, for example 1=good, 2=better, 3=best, or 1=Hindu, 2=Muslim, or 3=Christian, as are recording simple dichotomous variables like 1=present, 0=absent. Many robust measures of association with appropriate sample sizes are now available in statistics. Elementary causal analysis holds up with appropriate caveats. Once appropriate data have been sketched out it is possible to identify the modal case, and the outliers, or residuals as they are often called. Once these parameters are established and mapped out, research can proceed at a more intensive level examining micro locations, such as selected villages located in the mountains derived from the initial spatial analysis. I never could figure out if Obergurgl was a “typical” Austrian village or if that lone mountain farm, “Rofen,” above the trees of Vent, was a “typical” abode of a “*Hinterwälder*” with all the negative folk mythology surrounding it. How might the visit of a geographer to Innsbruck contribute to an understanding of what is happening in Afghanistan?

### *Afghanistan*

In my mind, first and foremost, the key feature of the Tyrol is the existence of the notion of “*Passland*”, the idea that Tyrol is a portal through which travelers have journeyed for not just centuries but millennia. In my mountain geography class I used to show slides from the book about “Oetzi” and I would have the students read from the English language edition portions of the book that I had photocopied and placed in

their *Reader* for the course. Oetzi was a traveler across what became known as Tyrol. Afghanistan is indeed a *Passland* just like Tyrol, like Switzerland, or like the bishopric of Salzburg of old as Lichtenberger has written.



*Picture 1: Well intentioned health programs in Afghanistan have caused enormous ramifications for Afghanistan society. Vaccination programs carried out by UN/WHO personnel as seen here in Kabul caused the population to explode vastly exceeding the carrying capacity of the country. A population figure of 6.5 million in a 1968 census compares with 32 million in 2008. An astronomical Total Fertility Rate of 7.48 is registered. No amount of development programmes lavished on this country with an inelastic environment can support such a large population. Prior to the extensive vaccination programmes in the late 1940s and 1950s the Malthus-Ricardo “Trap” model of births and deaths provided a check on population growth.*

Some years ago I wrote a piece that someone else put on a Web site without my permission. Many were not happy with it, mostly young Afghanistan ultra nationalists living in the West because I wrote that Afghanistan was a “space” and not a “place.” No young Afghans today know that word Afghanistan used as a state is an invention of the British in 1801 and that a State of “Afghanistan” first appeared in 1880 when the British electorate had Gladstone defeat Prime Minister Disraeli and his “Forward Policy” of the British along the Kabul–Kandahar axis. By examining recently discovered, formerly secret documents, we now know that the British by 1840 had acquired detailed field information that a Russian field force could not enter the Indian



subcontinent over the Dandan Shikan Pass, the principal Hindukush pass that was the equivalent of the Brenner Pass. It was much too difficult for a field force hauling artillery. The route into South Asia from Central Asia had been traversed for millennia by ancient caravans. This discovery by Capt Garbett's Bamyan based reconnaissance team in 1839 clearly indicated that there was no need for the British to set up north of the Hindukush any array of defensive forts and fodder posts for their cavalry. The Russians accepted that. Nevertheless newspapers in England invented the "Great Game" as it became known with "Afghanistan" being contested. The "Great Game" along with the "Silk Route" are great Eurasian myths. With Gen. Kaufman's capture for the Russians the khanates of Central Asia in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian railway extension to Orenberg capturing the Central Asia trade, coupled with the total demise of all trade of South Asia with Central Asia after the 1920s, the Great Game fizzled, if it ever existed.

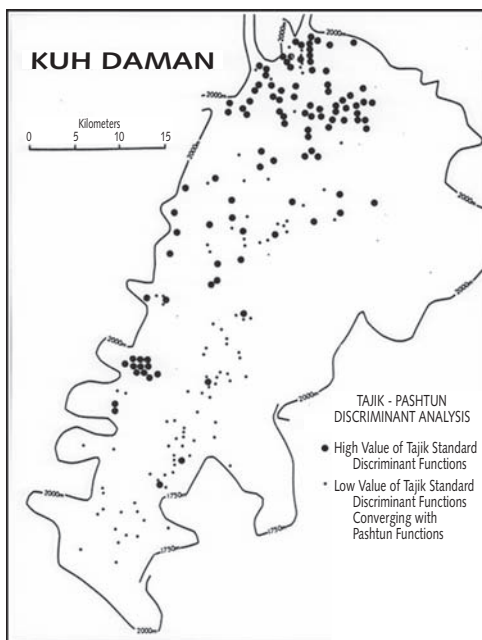
But during the half century or so after 1880 during which Afghanistan was a British protectorate the British had to deal with restlessness on the south and east of Afghanistan with the Pushtun tribesmen. This restlessness is still a presence today as ACM (American jargon for AntiCoalition Militia) are causing increased vigilance from NATO/ISAF forces. These tribesmen are not all wild savages as some would have it. When I was a young graduate student in India in 1966 I had the opportunity to meet Dr. Zakir Husain, then the vice president, and later the president of India. This distinguished gentleman proudly said he was an Afridi Pathan (the India usage of Pushtun) who decided to stay in India while mentioning that his brother was the vice-chancellor of Karachi University in Pakistan. Afridis are known as warlike tribesmen guarding the Khyber Pass. Lately, we have heard in November 2006 *Eurasia Insight* a collective voice from Pushtuns in Pakistan, including Afridis, denouncing the extreme behavior of Pushtuns on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, yet at the same time condemning the NATO/ISAF forces in Afghanistan. There is no doubt that North and South Waziristan are rebellious as are the other FATA tribal administered agencies to the north including Khyber Agency where the Afridis live. What is the relationship between the tribesmen along the Durand Line frontier and my memory of Dr. Zakir Husain.

The Durand Line, the 1893 border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, has long been contested by the Pushtun tribes living in Afghanistan. In the 1950s the Pushtun administration in Kabul started a war of words by claiming "Pushtunistan"—a land of Pushtuns—all the way to the Indus River. But why stop at the Indus River? It made no sense to anyone who had studied the Indian subcontinent. Pushtuns in past centuries had probed far beyond the Indus down into the Gangetic plain. Indeed the British and common designation for a Pushtun is "Pathan," a term invented by the British residents in Calcutta in the late 1700s for these tribal Muslims living in Patna, (Patanah=Pathan) now the Bihar state capital but then a major town in Bengal Presidency. These migrants, traders and other peripatetics, from the NW of India, were spread all down the Gangetic plain. There are vestiges of them today in the surnames of Indian cricket players (Irfan

Pathan) or the voluminous British census records of the 1931 Census. A close scrutiny of the dominant caste maps as displayed in the Schwartzberg Historical *Atlas of South Asia* reveals “Pathan” to be a dominant “caste”—albeit Muslim—in the location of Pilibhit district in Uttar Pradesh (United Provinces in pre-Independence times).

What were the Pathans doing there to dominate this district between Delhi and the Shiwalik foothills of the Himalaya? A search back to medieval NW India reveals a territory of Roh, which meant hills. Today the region of the Rohilla, Rohilkhand (roughly equivalent to “*Hinterwälder*” in both the positive and negative aspects) is found near Delhi in the adjacent state of Uttar Pradesh. This was the place that many of the Pushtun residents settled. Other evidence exists. The town of Deoband in nearby Saharanpur district, midway between Dehra Dun, the capital of the new state of Uttarkhand, and Dehli, is noted for its Muslim seminary that has produced many ultra conservative clerics. Late in 2001 much attention was focused on Deoband because clerics from that town were seen to be sowing discontent in Afghanistan. The social connections were not unusual; the Deoband mullahs were interconnected with their ancestral origins in what is now Afghanistan by sending new clerics there. How is it that so many of these people whose forbearers migrated from Roh—the Durand Line area today—yet lead a productive existence today in India. Here I can introduce some geographical theory.

Many commentators, even Western sources, for example Middlebrook and Martin recently, suggest that a reconsideration of the status of the Durand Line is necessary



*Picture 2: Ethnosymbolism on the agricultural landscape provides a visual clue to occupation of territory by different ethnic groups and tribes in Afghanistan. This map of villages north of Kabul displays Tajik and Pushtun villages as they are statistically classified by their adherence to cropping patterns of 31 crops. „Tajikness“ that is, high conformity to a Tajik Standard Discriminant Function strengthens the further away from Kabul and the principal central road. Low levels of „Tajikness“ of villages converging with Pashtun functions reveal the extent of Pashtun deprivations and confiscation of Tajik owned villages and land in the aftermath of the 1929 overthrow of Amir Hajibullah Kalakani (a native of the Kuh Daman Valley) by Pashtun Durrani forces.*

for the settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan's border provinces and Pakistan's FATA districts. What is overlooked is the environment along the Durand Line. It appears a logical boundary for delimiting the boundary between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The celebrated Russian cultural geographer and leading Neo-Eurasianist, the late Lev Gumilev, proposed a theory for ethnogenesis, the emergence of a new ethnic groups consisting of a fusion of previously disparate elements that would occur along ecotones, the interface of habitat boundaries. Roh, its ancient name for the homeland, is such a place.

The Rohilkhand region of Uttar Pradesh is centered on the Rampur area to the NW of the old state of Oudh. Bartholomew still prints Rohilkhand as a regional toponym on their South Asia map because of its currency today. Its Koeppen climate zone is Caw, meaning humid subtropical climate with winter drought and summer rain. The humid mesothermal climate with its coldest month freezing is supplemented by its warmest month above 22 C. Monsoon rains reach Peshawar in Pakistan and Jalalabad in Afghanistan on the west side of the Khyber Pass while the moist air reaches Kabul raising the dew point but rains fail to be a factor in Kabul in the summer. Contrasting that relatively benign climate of the Gangetic plains is BSh, the dry subtropical steppe where semiarid conditions are found in the regions that comprise traditional Roh—eastern Afghanistan and adjacent land to north and South Waziristan. An ecotone is contiguous with the Durand Line. Throughout history the surplus population in this region has periodically abandoned the dry land agriculture and pastoralism for the moist fertile conditions found in the Gangetic valley. Sikhs and their ancestors already occupied the Punjab so the Pashtuns migrated further into the less settled Doab but more importantly into the piedmont plain with its many distributaries from the Himalaya that today characterizes the terrain. Throughout centuries it was named Rohilkhand, the land of the Rohilla from the hills of the northwest.

Further settlement evidence is shown in Schwartzberg's *Atlas of South Asia* where the district of Pilibhit shows up in the 1931 map of castes indicating that "Pathan" is the dominant "caste" in places in Rohilkhand. The link between the Durand Line tribes today like the Wazirs and Mesuds with Rohilkhand is that the climate conditions of the two Koeppen climates interface, creating an ecotone--and perhaps ethnogenesis--that in turn, may have contributed to mass migration SW to the fertile the Gangetic plain. Other Pushtun migrants, like the "real" Afghans according to their genealogy, all from the around the Vale of Peshawar, Yusefzai, Khalils. Momands and Muhammadzais migrated too. What remained in the northwest were remnants, the old landrace DNA of tribes largely marooned in the BSh climate zone. Invigorated Pushtuns, in the entrepreneurial sense, essentially a new ethnic group intermarrying with the Indus valley population and the indigenous population of the Gangetic plain, were the product of a new ethnic group and adapted the name of Pathan that the British bestowed upon them in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Marooned in the BSh climate area merging with the BWh in the hot dry region were the Durrani and Ghalji tribal confederations who occupy Afghanistan today. Agriculture is difficult with sparse water supplies, usually supplied by snowmelt or winter rains, where soil is poor compared to the alluvial plains of the Indo Gangetic drainage basin. Contributing to today's friction between ruling Durrani in Kabul, like the prime minister and the former royalty, is the popular designation of the Afghanistan Pushtun tribes as being the riffraff remnants on the western periphery of the Greater Pathan ecumene. Afghans reciprocate by calling the plains Afghans in Pakistan and India today as "dal eaters," a familiar term used by young Afghan ultranationalists on Web postings to indicate that "real" Afghans do not eat dal (split peas) but meat that is available from the pastoralists of the higher country. Ethnosymbolism is rampant among ethnic/tribal groups in Afghanistan as I discovered while writing my dissertation because cropping systems correlate not with any biophysical property but with ethnic/tribal affiliation. Perhaps ethnogenesis along the ecotone created a new ethnic group, speaking the same language but later dropping it in favor of Persian and Urdu that reflected their locational circumstances, and dropping their pastoral tradition because of abundant Ahir Hindu pastoral caste in their colonized land.

The current friction between highlanders and lowlanders is not new. In my native Scotland, the sobriquet "Highlander" has always meant crude, rude, bellicose ruffians and worse yet, Roman Catholics, who played little role in the great period of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> C of the Edinburgh Enlightenment that transformed Scotland into a literary, innovative and entrepreneurial country on the brink of the Industrial Revolution. The lowland reaction to the Highland "Clearances," when tenant farmers were forcibly removed from the land in the early 19<sup>th</sup> C, only exacerbated the dislike of lowlanders for highlanders. These highlanders dominated the migration to the expanding New World. This spatial emancipation released the potential of humans to lead a better life. I am sure the "*Hinterwälder*" fall into the same category as does the Afghans resident in Afghanistan today. Vestiges of the old order in Afghanistan today are seen in the conservative theology at Deoband in Saharanpur district that gets exported to Afghanistan even though that town is now on the principal road between the Uttaranchal state capital of Dehra Dun and the union capital of New Delhi.

### *Neo-Eurasianism in Regional Geography*

Lev Gumilev shows up in the current situation in Afghanistan. He was the leader in Russia of the Neo-Eurasianism ideology that came to the fore in the Soviet Union and subsequent Russia since the 1970s. Eurasia has contemporary popular currency these days as a new Eurasian studies scholarly organization has been formed six years ago and a journal, for example, has gone through mutations of a title from once being titled *Soviet Geography*, to *Post-Soviet Geography*, and immediately after I published an article on Afghanistan in it, to *Eurasian Geography and Economics*. The word Eurasia,

then, has currency. What does it mean? The idea of Eurasia as a place has its origins in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when it referred to the space in Russia between the Volga and the Yenisey in the far reaches of eastern Siberia with a north-south axis between the Arctic and southernmost Turkestan. Throughout this vast region are numerous ethnic and tribal groups. Although Euro-Americans think today of Russia as being a former Christian Byzantine relict, focusing on the European Moscow-St Petersburg axis, Gumilev's geography forces us into the massive eastern land mass of Russia to focus on the sweep of all the ethnic and tribal groups, especially of those of the Uralic-Altai linguistic region to get us to visualize Russia as a product of these non-Indo-European peoples, of Tatars in Russia, and others such as Turks. This agglomeration in Gumilev's eyes is perceived as a "civilization." His popularity in "Eurasia" today is exemplified by the recent naming of the principal university in Kazakhstan in the new capital Astana, after him by President Nazarbayev

Gumilev's increasing popularity during the past several decades brings into focus the southern rim of Eurasia that is Turkestan and Afghanistan. In 1955 premier Khrushchev visited Afghanistan and signed a bilateral treaty. By the late 1950s Afghanistan was considered a Soviet colony such was the penetration of Russian civil and military affairs into Afghan government. Large numbers of Afghan citizens from all walks of life were educated in Soviet dominated institutions and inevitably, Communist political cells were formed. Much of the spatial penetration was accomplished by the construction of the Salang tunnel, a true *Passland* artifact, penetrating the Hindukush Mountains from Turkestan in the north into the Indian subcontinent south. The stage seemed set for the incorporation of Afghanistan into the Russian (Soviet realm) but it was thwarted by two Afghans, Md. Taraki and Hafizullah Amin, both belonging to the marginalized (by the royalist Pushtun Durrani tribal confederacy) Ghalji Pushtun confederacy. As luck would have it, both of these avowed communists had American pedigrees, Taraki having worked for the American foreign aid group, USAID, in Afghanistan, and Hafizullah Amin had been a post graduate student at Columbia University, in New York City, then in the throes of radical leftist ideology, although not distinguishing himself because he failed his PhD exams twice thereby forcing him to leave the university and return to an Afghanistan, really Kabul, in the midst of battles between Islamicists and modern communists. Gumilev comes to the fore via his theory of ethnogenesis as applied to Afghanistan.

Are the people living in Afghanistan Eurasia—in the macro-Russian sense—or are they South Asia, that is, part of the Indian subcontinent. I suggest that the Soviet reinforcement of their already dominant established position in December in 1979 was an attempt to incorporate this fuzzy boundary of Afghanistan into Eurasia. (One could make this same argument for Chechnya, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia.) But events in Kabul escaped them. Their radical janissaries, for that was who Amin and Tariki were, could not be controlled by Moscow and the marginalized Pushtuns revolted against

this socialist modernism. They claim they defeated the Russians but in fact it was the greatly reduced price for oil in the world market, and President Reagan's bluff about Star Wars coincided with the emergence of glasnost and perestroika that brought down the Soviet Union. Afghanistan disintegrated into the morass of tribal and ethnic warfare that has plagued it for centuries. Where are the marginalized Pushtuns now located in space? Perceiving themselves as just one of many ethnic groups in Afghanistan they have decided to invoke the Umma of the Islamic realm to place them into a position in the new geography of that part of the world. Fueled by donations from wealthy Muslim Arabs they now see themselves as leaders of an antimodernist Salafist Muslim presence in an Afghanistan that once had moderate clerics and was home to mystical Sufis in a sometime hybrid society—at least in the major cities. Pushtuns are now seeking to situate themselves into an Islamic macro “civilization” in the sense that Huntington used it while ignoring Afghanistan, Eurasia, and the Indian subcontinent.

### *Retrospect*

I think back to the time when I studied the human geography of the Alps taking notes of the Alemannic groups, and dealing with terms like Walser, and now realizing the role that ethnosymbols had in creating nationalism while dealing with regions within territory. The Alpine countries and regions did this in the past few centuries. This sorting process is underway at the moment in Afghanistan and the contiguous area.

What can I say to those who would like to see “development” in Afghanistan and more specifically, Nuristan? I must first look at the “Three Phase Model” pioneered by the Grenoble geographers who saw the first phase at a time period up to 1850, of a sustainable settlement where high mortality and low nuptuality were responsible for the carrying capacity of the population/resources equation. The second phase occurred from 1850 to WWII, which saw increased central authority and communications, while the third phase ushered in a massive outmigration of mountain people from their traditional occupations in the mountains down to urban places. In addition to the Grenoble three phase model I would now add a fourth phase for some mountain regions where wealthy urban “refugees” abandon cities for a much higher quality of life in mountain areas. There is no need for me to dwell on this aspect because our colleague, Ernst Steinicke has published extensively on this phenomenon.

For Nuristan it is foolish to invest in any infrastructure or “development” other than the construction of jeep roads to every village. Out migration is well under way throughout the entire Himalaya. In hill and mountain districts of Nepal for example the sex ratio in some districts is down to .8 male to one female. All the young males are migrating to the plains of Nepal, India and further afield to the Gulf States as well as Japan and Malaysia. India and Pakistan show similar trends. While the NGO charities in Afghanistan seek to support “sustainable communities” they are totally unaware of

the choices that mountain people have made in other mountain places and are making at the present around them.

How would the Nuristanis insert themselves into the larger cultural world? They have never had any great fealty to an Afghanistan state, nor to a regional designation of the hill region of northwestern India—in the cultural not nation/state sense—that one might find in the Kabul-Kashmir linguistic affiliation sense. What Nuristanis have done is to align themselves with a “civilization,” not with the Pushtun Taliban, but with the Sunni Salafiyya ideology. They have bypassed affiliation to an Afghanistan that largely ignored them and an age old alien Pushtun Taliban that they have now ousted from their territory.

As European nations choose to align themselves with the macro EU resembling a European “civilization” and as other claimants from the debris of Europe such as Montenegro and Kosovo seek membership in the EU our ideas about the nation state and its geography must change. As for Europe and its Alpine countries, so too for the mountain rimland of South Asia, which lies astride a resuscitated Eurasia and the emerging powerhouses of India and China.

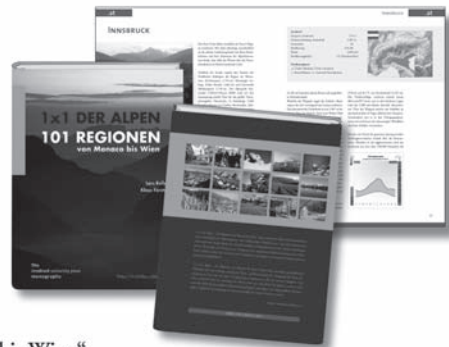
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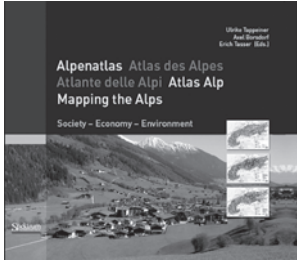
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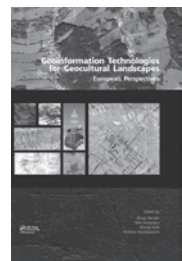
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