

Localizing modernity: The Aga Khan Foundation and the global dissemination of the Village Organization

Emily Manetta
University of Vermont
Jonah Steinberg
University of Vermont

Corresponding author: Emily Manetta
509 Williams Hall
72 University Place
Burlington, VT 05401
USA
Emily.Manetta@uvm.edu
Jonah.Steinberg@uvm.edu

The Village Organization (VO) was put into practice in 1982 by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, to serve as the sole local channel for “participatory development” in Northern Pakistan. The VO is not a political form indigenous to the Pakistan Himalaya, but rather a form introduced by an exogenous institution working on the village level. In this paper we suggest that this model emerges directly from naturalized and now widely-distributed notions of “development” and public participation rooted in normative discourses of modernity. Our analysis stems both from ethnographic research in Pakistan, with comparative material from the Tajikistan Himalaya, as well as an examination of the discourse found in a wide range of publications and newsletters circulated by the parent non-governmental organization (NGO), the Aga Khan Foundation. The language of these materials indicates that the explicit goal of the NGO is to reorganize status-based hierarchies and to inculcate in the village population an appreciation for values associated with liberal humanism, democracy, and capitalism. We argue that the Village Organization represents a radically new model for civil society, social hierarchies, and political participation in the localities in which it has been established.

Keywords: Civil Society, Development, Discourse, Modernity, Pakistan.

Introduction

In a small village in the Arkari valley in northwestern Chitral, Pakistan, on a hot August day, the Village Organization (VO) assembles quickly; the process is well-established in this remote area, and now a matter of custom.¹ Men file into a new structure built for this very purpose, seating themselves in assigned places on the carpeted floor in a large circle. Guests are introduced, surveys taken, and questions asked and answered without side conversation or interruption. The meeting follows strict rules of order arbitrated by the VO Manager, with procedures for turn-taking, resource allocation, and record-keeping. This deliberate set of disciplinary practices is not unique to this village, nor does it originate there; instead it follows the specific formula for Village Organization meetings established by an international aid organization and replicated in villages across Northern Pakistan. Every village we visited in the Lutkho region, where the Arkari valley is located, and indeed every village from here to the Chinese frontier, has its own VO. In many villages nearly every resident is a member.

¹ We are grateful to the participants of the workshop on ‘Neoliberal Globalization and Governmentality: State, Civil society and the NGO Phenomena in Asia’ at the Social Science Research Council’s conference on ‘Inter-Asian Connections’ in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (February 2008), at which some of the material in this article was originally presented. We are of course indebted to the countless villagers, organizers, and NGO staffers who assisted us in our work, particularly to the ever-energetic Muzaffaruddin and Mushtaq Ahmed Rahi.

The Village Organization is at the heart of the global community-building processes of the Aga Khan Foundation, a transnational NGO focused on rural development, primarily in Isma'ili Muslim communities. AKF is the key rural development body within the larger transnational Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), led by the hereditary imam of the Isma'ili Muslims, who constitute a major branch of Shi'i Islam. AKDN is remarkable in its provision for beneficiaries of a staggering array of services, including roads, bridges, schools, clinics, hospitals, universities, political councils, banking services, health educators, irrigation systems, cell phone networks, internet infrastructure, marked with a set of trademark signs and symbols. The Village Organization is a local council established by subsidiary organizations of the Aga Khan Foundation. In this paper we explore ethnographic and linguistic data that suggest that through the dissemination of the Village Organization model, AKDN sought to radically change the very nature of those localities where it has been established, and to create entirely new forms of civil society, social prestige, and political participation. It is telling that the division of Pakistan's Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), which deals with Village Organizations, is entitled 'Social Organization.' It is nothing less than human social organization itself that the Aga Khan Foundation's Village Organization works to reconfigure and reinvent. In this paper, we will explore the ideological underpinnings of this development model.

The Village Organization (VO) is at the foundation of the relationship between the Aga Khan Foundation (through its various regional institutions) and the local people with whom it works. While in some areas it may have superficial continuity with existing indigenous village council structures of the Northwest Himalaya, we claim that in general

it represents a completely new entity and an alternative conceptualization of citizenship and political decision-making. AKRSP in Pakistan established the VO as a replicable model which AKRSP India (primarily in Kachchh, Gujarat), the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) of Tajikistan, the Aga Khan Foundation Afghanistan, and other AKF subsidiaries have used, in modified form, as the basis of their rural development work. Important here is the process by which the Village Organization creates the preconditions for a new mode of shared experience across Himalayan borders—the borders delimited by the Russian British empires—for the first time in over a century. The VO, as created in its South Asian iteration by AKRSP, is presented as a means by which villagers are put in charge of their own “development” and which is intended to circumvent the imposition of models from institutions disconnected with local contexts: “the beneficiaries are treated as active partners rather than merely passive recipients” (AKRSP 1994: 1). AKRSP, furthermore, is eager to show that it “emphasizes that the villagers themselves have to undertake activities to improve their own lives. AKRSP is merely a facilitator and supervisor in this sense” (1). Because the VO model has become influential outside of Pakistan, where it was born, as well as outside of the Aga Khan’s institutions, its underlying assumptions and ideologies should be examined closely. As we will see, this model emerges directly from naturalized and now widely-distributed notions of development firmly rooted in metadiscourses of modernity developed in and for the sociopolitical contexts of modern South Asia.

Ethnographic Context

Our analysis stems both from ethnographic research in Pakistan, with comparative material drawn from the Tajikistan Himalaya, as well as an examination of the discourse

found in AKF's annual reports, viewbooks, conference presentations, and newsletters.² In Pakistan we worked in the Northern Areas and Chitral in the Hindu Kush and Karakoram ranges in multiple fieldwork trips from 1994-2001, in villages throughout Hunza, Chitral, Gilgit, Punyal, Gojal, Astor, and Ghizar. In our supplementary fieldwork in Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, we spoke to VO members in Khuf, Shughnan, Ishkashim, Rushan, and Bartang. In both regions we acted as participant observers, following AKRSP and MSDSP assessment and survey teams to VO project sites, attending VO meetings, and interacting with villagers. We also actively interviewed VO directors and members (as well as non-members) in both regions. This research reveals that the dissemination of the village organization in these adjacent areas represents a drastic effort to transform the social fabric in the face of rapid postcolonial social change. In this paper, we argue that the Village Organization is a new form of local political participation and citizenship, a forum for local participation in a transnational network, and a unique, exogenous, and indigenized (but not indigenous) regional variety of political organization.

The Global Organization of Isma'ili Institutions

The Isma'ili Muslims are distinguished by the fact that they have a living hereditary Imam, in the tradition of 'Ali and of the caliphate, a leader of the community responsible for interpreting the meaning of Islam and adapting it to changing historical conditions. It is in part for this reason that the Isma'ili community has been able to develop a modernist identity and orientation. The Isma'ili Imam is considered the sole legitimate interpreter

² AKF is located in Geneva. The Imamate, from which the Aga Khan directs global operations, moved in the last generation from Bombay to Paris.

and translator of religious meaning. The Isma'ili community formed in the 8th Century in a schism over the rightful succession to the Imamate. Beginning in the 10th century the Isma'ilis established a territorial state, the Fatimid Empire, which included much of North Africa, Southern Europe and West Asia. They built the city of Cairo, and their religio-political network stretched from Africa to India. As the Fatimid empire fell, another schism produced what became the Nizari state in Iran with its network of fortresses connected by intensive communication. The radical Nizaris launched repeated covert attacks on the various dynasties of the era, especially the Seljuqs, during which time they gained the epithet 'Assassin,' from which the English word derives. The Mongol invasions in the late 13th century destroyed the Nizari state and dispersed the Isma'ilis far and wide. While the term "Isma'ili" is now used to designate these earlier polities, it should be noted that their historical connection to contemporary Isma'ilism—despite an institutional effort to establish a direct lineage—is somewhat indeterminate. The communities referred to as "Isma'ili" are now scattered across the planet. There are communities in Pakistan, India, China, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Syria, several East African countries, Canada, the UK, Portugal, and a number of other states. Isma'ilis across the world pay a religious tax known as a zakat to the Imam, usually at around 12.5% if possible. Different countries have national councils with elected leaders. These councils are responsible for ratifying and implementing the Isma'ili constitution. Isma'ilis are encouraged to participate in promoting the social welfare of their co-religionists, as well as others who are in need.

But the Isma'ili engagement with the "modern" is far more complicated than the brief account above suggests. At the dawn of empire, what has now turned into the

integrated Isma'ili *écumène* consisted of a set of scattered populations (Himalaya, Hazarajat, Western Indian Khoja, Zanzibar Khoja, and Syria among them), pelagic in their distribution and isolation, with widely variable historical relationships to the formation called Isma'ilism, many of them with loose or non-existent relationships with the Imam of the time. The intensive process of consolidation and incorporation of remote communities that has occurred in the intervening generations has fundamentally reconfigured the relationship of those communities to each other and to the Imamate, and developed complicated relations of power between the wealthy diasporic Khojas and autochthonous Isma'ilis elsewhere, particularly in the Himalaya.

Empire was critical to the construction of a centralized and eventually global community for three reasons: first, it opened up channels of movement, exchange, and labor which aided in the creation of an extensive Indian Ocean diaspora; second, the British saw in the Iran and Bombay-based Aga Khans and their adherents strategic allies for the perpetuation of their own objectives, and the possibility, as part of a well-established practice, that a third party would do their bidding; and third, the empire's orientalist legal discourses of community were essential in according a unitary status to its component populations. The modern position of the Imam is in large part a product of the negotiation and interaction between the influential Khojas and the representatives of empire, mediated by law and colonial scholarship. In "The Aga Khan Case" (1866), the British High Court in Bombay legally decreed the authority of the Aga Khan over Isma'ili subjects, proclaimed him the official leader of all Isma'ilis, and produced through presupposition and "expertise" the integrality of a single and unified Isma'ili community (see Shodhan 2001). It is certainly relevant, despite the radically different

political setting, to draw parallels between this and the later Soviet production of “Pamiri” and “Badakhshani” identities which would come to articulate closely with the emergent post-Soviet “Isma’ili” identity in Tajikistan. Both represent the interaction between modern European politico-legal discourses on and classifications of culture, on the one hand, and ethnographic complexity, on the other.

The Aga Khan Development Network, though nonsectarian in its mandate, is critical in inculcating in Isma’ilis an awareness of their connection to a global set of Isma’ili institutions controlled largely by affluent diasporic Khojas of South Asian origin. AKDN also serves as the primary channel for the efforts at social welfare described above. Through interaction with its complex structure, whose activity reaches even into the local and domestic spheres, Isma’ilis come into contact with other Isma’ilis and become conscious of their membership in a larger global society and polity (Steinberg 2010). Individuals from disparate localities come to believe themselves part of a unitary and cohesive whole. This strong sense of connection to a deterritorialized community suggests the development of a new type of global “imagined community” wherein subjects’ knowledge of unseen localities (through novel forms of mobility and media) participating in similar processes across the planet facilitates integration into a transnational *écumène* (Hannerz, 1989). However, this *écumène* has its own clefts and faultlines, as there exists within it the aforementioned power imbalance between the diasporic Khoja elites, largely of Gujarati origin, and the indigenous Isma’ili societies of the Himalaya. These Khoja elites play a significant role in directing and managing the Aga Khan’s institutions (Steinberg 2010).

The Aga Khan Development Network is the umbrella organization for a set of secular institutions created and administered by the Aga Khan that provide services and help to direct “sustainable development” in diverse areas around the world. It is not the case that AKDN serves Isma’ilis exclusively. Almost everywhere that it works, AKDN works with Isma’ilis and non-Isma’ilis, Muslims and non-Muslims. It is, however, the case that AKDN almost always works in areas where Isma’ilis live. In July of 2004, Tom Kessinger, the General Manager of AKDN at the time, explained the organization’s mandate as “development, in the broadest sense of the word, for Isma’ilis” (p.c., 7/04). While it is also true that AKDN and its institutions are committedly secular in their self-definition, the fact that they evoke religious associations among the Isma’ilis with whom they work is undeniable. A young Isma’ili in southern Tajikistan told us that when local villagers “see AKDN institutions, they see the Imam.” The ubiquitous symbols of AKDN and local participation its institutions are invariably tied to devotion to the Imam.

AKDN and the modern

AKDN is also importantly a conduit and an embodiment of the modernist discourses of progress first established by Aga Khan III (Boivin 2003); it both reflects and perpetuates the dominance of enlightenment rationalist ideology through that discourse of “grassroots development” which produces new social configurations, local realities, and modes of subjectivity. It serves in part to socialize local populations to norms of modernity, and to modernity as norm. Such a discourse espouses a certain view of the autonomous individual as the locus of decision-making, and accords a special status to rationality in the promotion of progress and self-improvement (Escobar 1991, 1995). For instance, in the process of surveying small-scale poultry farmers in Ghizar about successful feeding

practices, we noted that each farmer, though often functionally illiterate, kept a ledger recording the details of his poultry business. Such minutiae reveal the degree to which the Aga Khan Foundation's institutions represent a historically unique fusion of liberal humanism, rational individualism, corporate capital and entrepreneurialism, disciplines of information management, and Islamic modernity (Boivin 2003).

Perhaps connected to this zeal for modern liberalism and rationalism is the central role AKDN plays in the socialization of localities and local societies to market capitalism (Keshavjee 1998). Participation in local capitalist systems is enthusiastically endorsed by the institution, which helps them in the transition to participation in regional and even global markets. Consider the following excerpts from AKDN's booklet promoting the University of Central Asia:

Mountain regions almost everywhere *lag behind* the great down-country urban centres and agricultural flat-lands in economic and social development. Remote from capital cities and central governments, they are easily neglected. Such neglect is deepened by the fact that many high mountain regions are situated on distant border zones where security considerations outweigh the concerns of civil administration. (UCA, 2003: 1, emphasis added)

From this we can see elements of the teleological orientation to modernity underlying much of the discourse contained within the print materials of the Aga Khan Foundation and its correlates. If a place can 'lag behind,' it can also 'surge ahead.' AKDN, especially through the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED) has endeavored to introduce basic market and business skills and processes to localities as remote as Chitral (Pakistan) and Murghab (Tajikistan). In yoking such places to systems of exchange AKDN encourages a certain conception of 'progress,' values a certain vision of social happiness, imbues local people with

enthusiasm for the governmentalities and disciplines of neoliberalism, and aligns remote peripheries with a global norm.

This vast machinery of AKDN demonstrates the status of the constituent organizations as absolutely critical regional institutions upon which the life of an area like the Northern Areas (of Pakistan) crucially depends, not least because of their role as primary employers. For this and other reasons, these organizations, like most institutions, acquire a life and momentum of their own; despite a mandate and plan which decreed their disappearance, they need to survive, and they are also inextricably intertwined with local patterns and rhythms. A number of Aga Khan development organizations sought to establish a self- sustaining development process in which the need for the central institution itself would eventually be obviated, but in almost every case, when the time came for the institution (notably AKRSP) to consider terminating its services, conditions did not lend themselves to this possibility; the institution had become an absolutely integral part of the local context. The dynamics of these organizations thus suggests that AKDN institutions are now often permanent and central elements of local societies.

The Village Organization

When the Aga Khan Development Network's Aga Khan Rural Support Programme moves into a new area, they establish a dialogue with villagers in that area: AKRSP offers extensive assistance, support, and abundant resources provided that the villagers form a Village Organization through which all development is to occur from that point on. The VO is meant to be the locus of all decision-making and the conduit for all donated resources. A prerequisite for VO-formation is involvement of at least 75% of the

domiciles of a given settlement (AKRSP, 1994: 1). AKRSP itself defines the VO process as follows:

Social Organization is a process initiated by the villagers when they accept the terms of development partnership offered by AKRSP and form a broad based, participatory Village Organization (VO). As an incentive to organise, AKRSP provides investment in social Organization in the form of a grant for village infrastructure. The project is identified, undertaken and maintained by the villagers. The process of project identification, as well as follow on activities in other sectors, is done by holding three dialogues with the villagers. Once the villagers have organised themselves into VOs, AKRSP provides support in the form of credit, training, inputs for agriculture, livestock and forestry. Rural women are provided support in those activities in which they have traditional roles, e.g. vegetable cultivation and poultry rearing. AKRSP always felt that the VO/WOs will only function if they continue to meet the varying needs of their members. (AKRSP, 1994: xi)

The VO, moreover, is intended to function not only as a council to manage relations with and decisions concerning AKRSP, but to be a general council for the village, and to meet regularly to discuss village matters. Thus, AKRSP creates a form which is not simply specialized and oriented towards ‘development,’ but is also a generalized, new, and enduring element of local society. AKRSP and World Bank materials refer to the relative “maturity” of a VO, or its ability to persist without external support. It is essentially a new type of village government or popular representation. In the VO meeting in Arkari valley of Pakistani Chitral, mentioned above, it is the week-to-week business of the village that comprises much of the meetings, not necessarily the distribution of AKRSP resources or monitoring of AKRSP projects.

Wherever AKRSP creates a VO in Pakistan, they also coordinate the creation of a parallel Women’s Organization (WO), which is supposed to handle decisions and matters

concerning the often separate women's socioeconomic sphere. VOs and WOs meet at least weekly to discuss matters concerning village resources and social issues. Members are expected to make regular financial contributions at weekly meetings to the VO; these funds are pooled and used for later projects. In this way, the VO also serves as a local bank of sorts, holding funds meant to be available for future village initiatives or for lending to enterprising individual members.

VO coverage in the program's South Asian project area is remarkably widespread. Almost every village we visited in the Pamir and Karakoram ranges had a VO and a WO. In Northern Pakistan, there are reportedly 3,900 AKRSP-initiated VOs, covering a population of 1.3 million (AKF 2003: 25) across most of the Northern Areas, Baltistan, and Chitral. Coverage in Tajik Badakhshan by VOs established with the help of the Mountain Societies Development and Support Programme (MSDSP) is said to be 100%: there are over 700 VOs in that region (p.c. Khaleel Tetlay, MSDSP, 2003). AKF is now active in 850 villages of Afghanistan, where it is working closely with pre-existing indigenous village councils (AKF 2003: 17); a major expansion is currently underway in that region. In India (primarily Gujarat, but also Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh), the Aga Khan Foundation reports 1,400 village level institutions, comprised of "Village Development Committees," which themselves come together to comprise "Apex Institutions" at the *taluka* level (http://www.akdn.org/india_rural.asp). In all these places, the VO model seeks to profoundly transform the nature of social relations and political life. Moreover, the presence of the Village Organization in alpine regions of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan creates a vast, contiguous area in which villagers are participating in the same process. It holds the potential to create a new sense of shared

experience across borders, to reconnect in the postcolonial moment societies once bound together in a single sphere of communication. All of these areas, by virtue of the Village Organization, are participating in the same system of local sociopolitical organization for the first time in at least a century.

As described, the VO model was pioneered in Northern Pakistan in the early 1980s by AKRSP, and from various vantage points it has enjoyed enormous success in that region. A brief look at the institutional landscape of Northern Pakistan prior to the arrival of AKRSP underlines how new the VO model really was. Until the early 1970s, Northern Pakistan (including the Northern Areas and Chitral) was divided into a number of clan-centered principalities. The feudal economy featured the exchange of cash rent or infrastructure labour for cultivable land rights, security, and access to common property. Upon the dissolution of these princely states, the Northern Areas (due to its proximity to Kashmir) became a federally administered territory of Pakistan without direct representation in federal structures, while Chitral was incorporated into the Northwest Frontier Province. However, government presence at the local level was quite low and “the formal liberation of peasant-pastoralist clans from labour and rental obligations to their lords did not place them under the development authority of an effective alternative government” (Wood and Shakil 2006:40). AKRSP documents often refer to this period as an “institutional vacuum.” More explicitly, the entire region was uniformly poor, and engaged in subsistence agriculture, while much public infrastructure was in a state of decline. Wood (2006:41) mentions that *mohallas* (neighborhoods, or more accurately in the rural context, regional divisions and associations) continued to perform limited localized maintenance, but ultimately the limited existing infrastructure fell into disrepair.

It was at this juncture in 1982 that AKRSP introduced the Village Organization, novel in its relative inclusivity, its standardized operating procedures, and its promise of investment capital. So although some have argued that the isolated rural poor in this context typically have a “long and well-established tradition of cooperative or collective behavior for survival” (Khan and Khan 1992:29), AKRSP certainly offered an exogenous form for the distribution of newly available resources. Villagers in Pakistan’s Hunza and Gojal valleys see the NGO’s arrival as marking the onset of a new period of prosperity and privilege.

It seems that the Northern Areas and Chitral were socialized to a culture not only of the VO but of AKRSP itself, and thus of its values. For instance, villagers in Hunza viewed leadership positions in the VO as stepping stones, with the express goal of advancing into the ranks of locals employed AKRSP and ultimately moving to the Gilgit regional offices or beyond. It was (and remains) an institution of the highest prestige. Both the VO and AKRSP are now deeply, even inextricably, ingrained into the regional social fabric.

The context in which the concept of the VO has been applied in Tajikistan is radically different than that in which it was developed in Pakistan; a comparative inspection of the region over the border sheds some light on the distinctive dynamics of the Village Organization in the historically South Asian milieu, and both reflects and problematizes distinctions between “South Asia” and “Central Asia” at their points of convergence. Despite the historical divergence between the two regions, the same model was applied in both places. In fact, VO experts with years of experience with AKRSP in Pakistan were transferred to Badakhshan in order to implement the VO structure in this

new region. Few adaptations were made, however, and the VO of Tajikistan, according both to NGO administrators and locals, was one which was adapted to a social configuration from Pakistan. Perhaps for this reason, the VO structure in the Pamir has taken on a different character from that in the Karakoram and Hindu Kush. It has not been embraced with the same level of enthusiasm, nor has it enjoyed the same level of participation. One villager in Khuf (Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan) told us that there was 100% membership in the local VO, but then said that “we never have meetings”. The complete VO coverage of localities in Badakhshan gives the impression of “success,” but a closer look reveals that feelings toward the VO structure are highly ambivalent, and sometimes critical. Often VO members complained that the services were not as extensive as those offered by the Soviet infrastructure. Some Pamiris are, furthermore, conscious that the VO is a form adapted to Pakistan in a context that they themselves define as very different. It seems, to them, out of place, involving decision-making norms and processes which they believe to emerge out of a different cultural milieu.

On top of that, the success of MSDSP and its associated VO are inevitably compared in the “Central Asian” regions with the services provided by the Soviet Union, which dealt with every imaginable aspect of social, economic, and political life. Many Pamiris find that NGO activity plays second fiddle to the efforts of that totalizing polity. In the eyes of many people in Tajikistan, especially in poorer areas, the Soviet era was a utopian one and it is remembered with nostalgia. Badakhshanis express some doubt about the efficacy of VOs in and of themselves; they complain of corrupt VO leaders, misuse of funds, and non-implementation of projects. Some feel that the system has worked poorly in Gorno-Badakhshan. In the Bartang valley’s Yemz village, an informant told us

pointedly that he was dissatisfied with the VO's activity, and that he "didn't even know what they are doing."

The VO does have some superficial continuity with Soviet forms, in particular with that of the *kolkhoz* or collective farm community, with its accompanying local council (cf. Humphrey 1983). However, in the 1970s these cooperative farms in Badakhshan were amalgamated into the *sovkhos*, or large state-run farms whose leaders were appointed by the party central committee in Dushanbe without significant local input (Bliss 2006). Smaller village *soviets* (administrative units) lacked any real authority because the *sovkhos* leader in fact controlled the distribution of nearly all resources including water, energy, goods, and raw materials. And although the notion of collective work (such as house building) through the *amtabaq* system was not unfamiliar to Pamiris, as the Soviet Union broke down, even these kinds of activities declined due to severe resource constraints (Bliss 2006).

Tajikistan declared sovereignty in 1990, and civil war soon followed. The Aga Khan Foundation in the form of the Pamir Relief and Development Programme (subsequently MSDSP) became involved in the Pamirs in 1993, at first providing emergency food aid. The *sovkhos* were in a process of collapse, and the land that they owned was eventually released for distribution by MSDSP (Bliss 2006:308). It was in this context that VOs were introduced in Badakhshan, with leaders "elected for the first time by the population" (Bliss 2006:319).

Some Pamiris, such as the woman we spoke to in Badakhshan's Murch village, interpret the VO as a variant of the *kolkhoz* concept. Our data revealed that VO leaders are often the very same individuals who were prominent and powerful in the Soviet era, much to

the frustration of some villagers, who feel permanently disenfranchised (see also Keshavjee 1998). Fundamentally, however, the ideology underlying the VO, rooted as it is in South Asian contexts, is markedly different from the collective systems of Soviet Tajikistan. The goal of the VO, we claim here, is, here as elsewhere, to provide a localized social form to mediate between individuals and larger market processes, a goal that seemed to be tailored to emergent conditions in 1980s Himalayan Pakistan (and perhaps echoed in contemporary Afghanistan).

According to Bliss, unlike in northern Pakistan, “in the Pamirs there is no tradition of public discussion in which everyone takes part, including younger people, women, and girls, workers as well as management ... only 15 years ago it would have been extremely risky to voice one’s opinion publicly” (Bliss 2006:326). We can thus conclude that the VO was as new a form of social organization in Tajikistan as it was in Pakistan, though the prior contexts and historical conditions were completely different. Some villagers seem explicitly to recognize this. MSDSP, explained one villager in Baghow, in Tajikistan’s Rushon valley, “replaces” Soviet things and “builds new things.” It is crucial to distinguish the “participatory” model of the VO from the characteristic structures of collectivity. AKDN institutions are themselves at pains to make this distinction clear, declaring collectivist systems to lack autonomy for the individual and sufficient incentive for individual effort (Khan and Khan 1992). They instead view the VO as a local social institution providing means to “self-reliance” in a wider market system, offering supportive infrastructure above the level of the individual or household. Our claim here is that the model of development advanced by AK institutions does not take such a form because belief in “democracy...private institutions, liberal economics,

and a recognition of fundamental human rights” (Aga Khan IV, MIT Commencement address, May 1994) is at the heart of the mission of the religious leaders behind the development network. In this way, AKDN intentionally promotes participation in wider capitalist systems and thus socializes its participants to capitalist ideologies, aiding the entry of those members of the Isma’ili community previously isolated in feudal or communist polities into the global economic sphere.

In some cases, as has been noted elsewhere, Pamiris in Tajikistan consider the system offered by AKF through MSDSP a transitional form between socialism and what they see as unbridled market capitalism. The current Aga Khan himself has framed his institutions as intermediary forms (see Keshavjee 1998: 56). This brings us to some common features of and general observations about VOs across the two regions under consideration. In both Tajik Badakhshan and Pakistan’s Northern Areas, AKF and the VOs arrived at the very moment that those areas opened up to capitalist market economies. In northern Pakistan, AKRSP first arrived when an enhanced connection to the outside world and entry into larger exchange systems was facilitated by the construction of roads, particularly the Karakoram Highway. In Tajikistan, the VO was introduced through AKF efforts as the Tajik civil war came to an end in the wake of the collapse of the USSR. AKF made a transition from relief work through the Pamir Relief and Development Programme to development work through its successor, the Mountain Societies Development and Support Programme. Again, the VO arrived at the first (very tentative) contact with larger market systems, and in fact itself helped facilitate early and small-scale attempts at capitalist activity. And more recently, AKF began its work in Afghan villages, at the moment that businesses and contractors began to attempt to carry

out their work throughout the country. Perhaps then, we might hypothesize that these are threats villagers associate with the establishment and entrenchment of Village Organizations with their communities' general entry into a market system and their integration or re- integration into a changing national polity (as Keshavjee (1998) puts it, the "penetration of global economic forces" (23)). Using the same terms as are used to describe religious conversion, one villager in the Ishkashim region explained to me that it was through the Mountain Societies Development and Support Programme of AKF that they 'accepted the market economy.' The verb used to describe local acceptance of the market (*qabul kardan*) was the same as that normally used to describe the acceptance of Islam. This is an apt reflection of our argument that the VO can function to encourage a sort of socialization to capitalism.

The VO is usually rationalized and described as a democratic and representative institution, and an activist one disseminated in the name of fostering social equality and enhanced standard of living. At the same time, because it so radically transforms social life, the VO becomes its own context for power relations, and can itself create new forms of inequality and exclusion just as it creates new forms of equality and inclusion (Escobar 1994; Kamat, 2001). There is certainly hierarchical prestige associated with the VO, and the ranking of VO managers, accountants, treasurers, and other representatives creates almost a new form of social stratification. The VO manager is a well-known figure in any village in Pakistani Chitral or the Northern Areas. For instance, Nur Mohammed, prominent in the VO of Altit, Hunza, derived much of his high social status from his

position.³ Both Wood (2006) and Bliss (2006) note that some villagers were critical of emergent of imbalances in wealth and status following the establishment of VOs.

The VO can in fact be conceptualized as a manufactured structure of a particular polity or community, rather than a more generalized, organic form. AKF has in the past considered the Village Organization as a proprietary model. In Tajikistan, an incident occurred when representatives of AKF found that another global NGO was implementing VO-like structures in its project region. AKF approached this as essentially a trespass on their process, and allegedly confronted the other NGO. An expatriate working for AKF commented, “they are trying to copy our model.” In this context the VO becomes a unique and highly marketable product in the context of competition over human loyalty, an innovation which may provide, in the complex politics of affiliation at play in these regions, a significant advantage in winning over enthusiastic participants.

It is also telling that the VO has had greater relevance in Isma’ili areas in Pakistan than Sunni or Shi’a regions (World Bank Report 2002, Wood 2006)⁵; the fact says much about the institution’s role as a constituent form in a specific social contexts. It suggests that it is intimately engaged with Isma’ili identity and participation, and is a form which is a particularly important locus of interaction between Isma’ilis and the global (but

³ In fact, he began to take on a near-heroic role in the village, with rumors circulating about his karate prowess – a highly valued skill in Northern Pakistan.

⁵ This includes non-Isma’ili areas such as Chilas, Sazin, Darel, Tangir, Astor, Bagrote, Haramosh, and southern Chitral.

nominally secular) Aga Khan Development Network. For them, it is also interaction with a project of the Imam to whom their allegiance is devoted and is often connected by subjects with religious benefit and duty. As Bliss (2006) points out, the majority of the employees of the local AK institutions are themselves Isma'ilis and since "the project is directly supported by the imamate [this is] strongly motivating for the individual employee" (305). And as Keshavjee (1998) further observes: "the fervor with which local peasants have adopted new and foreign practices—have integrated these into their lives—is undoubtedly associated with the reappearance of the Imam" (73). The development activities of AKDN socialize more isolated members of the polity to the values of the wider community, at whose center are diasporic Khoja elites of South Asian heritage. Further, young Isma'ili citizens from the first world are encouraged to spend time working in the AK development institutions, explicitly linking religious participation, this type of development work, and the ideologies underlying the model.

Ultimately, we argue that the VO model also serves as a means by which local villages in the Isma'ili Himalaya are socialized to capitalism. As we will see in the next section, the institutional language on VOs echoes the discourses and ideologies of liberal humanism, citizenship, and rational individualism promoted by nation-states themselves (cf. Mamdani, 1996; Chatterjee, 1986). At the same time, the published materials surveyed also establish a dialectic between the AKRSP model and the nation state, only gradually bridged by an increase in the involvement of government in the project areas.

Ideology of the VO through discourse

At the core of the NGO's processes and the establishment of new VOs/WOs are a set of enlightenment discourses of political participation and rational consensus, as well as later

discourses of capitalism and democracy, embodied and legitimized in a more modern lexicon of development. Consider the following passage from an AKRSP report (boldface from original text):

What Makes a VO/WO Click?

- **The VOs/WOs address a felt need and a common interest.** When the villagers share a common problem which can be best addressed by **collective** action they are likely to mobilize internal resources and work with support agencies to change the situation.
- **The benefits of collective action outweigh the costs.** Benefits may be economic (savings, income generation, increased production); social capital formation (increased ability to collectively solve village problems); increased individual capacity (Knowledge and skills); and or Psychological (*sic*) (sense of belonging, confidence).
- **Grafting of the new on the traditional.** VOs/WOs are most successful when based on existing/traditional social and economic structures.
- **Village level motivator/activists.** Honest/hardworking, informed and respected individuals occupying positions as VO/WO managers.
- **Rules and sanctions.** All successful VOs/WOs are characterized by internalized rules and regulations that are known and abided by all their members. VO/WO members have participated in the formulation of rules and enforcement mechanisms.
- **Management Structure.** Specialized committees are set-up (*sic*) to deal with credit, conflict management, education, water supply and sanitation, etc. (AKRSP 1994: 4)

We see in this print material from northern Pakistan the (largely Euro-American) vocabulary of the modern: individualism, progress and tradition, rational decision making, industriousness, thrift and capitalism, law and democracy.

In what follows we examine texts produced by AKF institutions that help us to explore the explicit goals of the NGOs and their own assessment of their efforts. There are two types of texts produced by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, the Aga

Khan Development Network, and AKF that are analyzed here. The first is a series of viewbooks and annual reports, some of them printed in Pakistan and some in Europe, dating from the years 1994 to 2006 (a span of 12 years). These books and reports have a number of intended audiences, including the broader Isma'ili community in Europe and North America, current and potential individual donors and contributing foundations, as well as other NGOs and governmental organizations working in the host nations. The second type of text is a series of Urdu- language newsletters entitled *Dehee Tanzeem* ('Village Organization') distributed by AKRSP in the Northern Areas of Pakistan over the course of the year 1994. The newsletters contain short articles on matters social, technical, and agricultural, brief NGO-related news items, drawings, and serial installments of an informational comic. The newsletter's audience is the population served by the NGO (VOs and WOs), with the intention that even non-literate portions of this population will receive some of the information secondhand. The newsletter's mission statement also indicates that the production of the newsletter itself will provide training and experience for locals in basic writing, editing, layout, and printing skills. In each type of text, whether report or newsletter, we can trace the explicit development of new ideologies of civil society and political participation. These ideologies are discussed in terms familiar to European and North American audiences from discourses on liberal humanism, democracy, and capitalism. In what follows, we will show that the text of the reports traces the NGOs' initial intentions, their perceived successes in effecting significant changes in social and political organization in the regions served, as well as the evolving relationship between the NGO, the Village Organization, and the host nation-state. The text of the newsletters, on the other hand, indicates how these new

sets of values are being communicated to and inculcated in the local population, and how a system of ‘publicly accessible signs’ (Urban, 1991) is being constructed in the public discourse.

We will begin by examining the reports themselves, which present a diachronic view of the formation of the Village Organization (VO) as well as the parallel Women’s Organization (WO). Below we have collected the wide range of descriptors used to refer to the VO, the WO, and the agenda of social organization throughout the reports. These descriptors provide a clear picture of the underlying motivation of the NGOs, and their goal of establishing a new model for civil society.

Describing the VO

Descriptors of the communities prior to the arrival of the NGO: *old, previous, feudal, passive, “top-down”, breakdown, neglected*

Descriptors of the VO and the VO-formation process: *participatory development, cooperative management, active partners, enabling process, local governance, empowerment, mobilizing, democratic, egalitarian, catalyzing, positive change, building civil society (AKF 2006:3), inventing new realities (AKDN 2000:6)*

Describing the WO

Descriptors of women’s roles prior to the arrival of the NGO: *limited exposure to market forces, traditional, restricted, invisible, less advantaged, unacknowledged*

Descriptors of the WO and the WO formation processes: *reversal, opportunity, productive, empowerment through economic change, independent, free and confident, equitable, leading roles, diversity of roles*

Describing Social Goals

Descriptors used to describe overall social goals of the NGO: *pluralism, progress, higher stage, maturity, new heights of human endeavour, participate fully in the modern world, adapt to the emerging reality of open societies and market economies* (UCA 2004:3), *enlightened leadership, respect for people of diverse backgrounds* (AKF 2002:2)

We see from the descriptors above that the reports depict the pre-existing social hierarchy as old, outmoded, or outdated. In contrast, the VO model, and the VO itself are linked with notions of *progress* and *modernity*. This serves to establish the positive value of newness and change and disparage both the feudal political processes that predated the nation-state as well as the equivalent forms established by national governmental policies. The contrast is made most explicit in this statement about Northern Pakistan from the AKF 1996 Annual Report: ‘Where once mountain tribes warred over control of the caravan routes between 8,000 metre peaks, they now meet regularly to plan the best use of village savings over \$7.5 million’ (AKF 1996: 22).

Interestingly, women’s roles before and after the formation of WOs are often described in terms of their participation in economic spheres. While before the WO women had ‘little exposure to market forces’, afterward they are ‘productive’ and have been empowered through ‘economic change’. The NGO is not only valuing the wider participation of villages in the market economy, but even encouraging the production of useful subjects (particularly those previously excluded from market processes).⁶

⁶ In contexts where WOs fail to exhibit the appropriate ‘productive’ behaviors, criticism has been harsh. The World Bank report (2002) claimed that a particular WO meeting visited by ethnographers lacked the procedural clarity of the VO meeting, in that “not a

We must keep in mind the primary audience for these reports. They in part serve to communicate and celebrate the NGO's perceived successes to a wider Isma'ili community across the globe, working both within and outside development contexts. In this capacity, the language in these reports serves to generate the 'particular solidarities' of Anderson's (1991: 133) 'imagined communities.' That is, the reports themselves are part of an attempt to establish common ground, encouraging the Isma'ilis outside the developing world that the Isma'ilis of Pakistan and Tajikistan can now share in their metadiscourse of modernity. They may better identify with 'farmers meeting each other on the way to the newly vibrant bazaars' who 'now stop to talk about investment opportunities' (AKF 1996: 23).

Beyond this, the reports serve to establish something of a dialectic between the VO model of development initiated by AKRSP and development sponsored by the nation-state. In the earlier reports, AKRSP and AKDN seek to clearly set the agency and its development strategy in opposition to the government (both regional and national), and development efforts pursued by governmental bodies. However, over the course of the time, this dialectic is gradually dismantled in favor of a kind of apprenticeship for government entities – a change that is reflected in the language of the reports. For instance, discussion of cooperation or co-participation by AKRSP or AKDN alongside governmental agencies is often described asymmetrically. That is, it is the NGO that is the agent in sharing or assisting the governmental institution to replicate the NGO's

single women's group planned a presentation; no woman got to her feet to make even the shortest speech on behalf of her organization..." (21).

forms and structures. It is never the case that the governmental bodies are providing help, initiative, or know-how. This asymmetry is reflected in the following excerpts:

- ‘AKRSP helped facilitate the institutional linkages necessary’ (AKRSP 1994: 6).
- ‘Recognizing the value of grassroots participation and involvement in local development initiatives that has been demonstrated over the past twenty years of successful partnerships between communities and AKRSP, the Government decided in year 2000 to support creation of Village Councils’ (AKRSP 2000:7).
- ‘The Government has come to recognize that progress can only be achieved in the region if people themselves are given the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the improvements in their standards of living’ (AKRSP 1994: 6).
- At a meeting between Directorate of Education officials (Pakistan) and AKRSP: ‘AKRSP shared its experiences, methods, and practices for community participation and social motivation in a formal way’ (AKRSP 1996: 5).
- The Aga Khan in the introduction to the 1996 AKF Annual Report ‘Indeed, I believe that it is the combined force of private and public initiative that will ultimately move us to new heights of human endeavour and equitable development. Partnerships must be formed and experience shared in order to expand the range of choices available to poor communities’ (AKF 1996: 2).

This view seems to emerge even in local discourse. In the online materials from a 2003 conference, a villager is quoted as saying ‘those who previously ran the government and used authority are now compelled to work with the people’ (AKRSP Lessons). This indicates that the local population to some degree views the AKRSP development model (‘work[ing] with the people’) as antithetical (and preferable) to the government alternative.

Turning to an analysis of the more locally-circulating Urdu-language newsletter Dehee Tanzeem and the accompanying English-language commentary, it is unsurprising that we find significant overlap with the reports discussed above. The newsletters differ

in two key ways: they present something of a synchronic, rather than diachronic view, produced over the course of a single year, and more importantly they are produced for the benefit of the rural populations of northern Pakistan themselves. And indeed they circulate very widely among these highland populations, making their way through the networks of AKRSP staff members and VO managers into the hands of the villagers themselves.

Much of the actual text of the newsletters is technical and agricultural in nature, offering instruction on ‘Breed Development of Sheep’, ‘Single Super Phosphate – A Beneficial Fertilizer,’ and ‘Technical Advice to Increase Potato Yield.’ Beyond this, however, there are three important themes addressed repeatedly over the course the 1994 newsletters that will be of particular interest to us. First, a number of articles and blurbs address the VO and its processes for the benefit of villagers and participants, and describe its role in decision-making, resource-allocation, and social organization. Second, whole sections of the newsletter are aimed specifically at women’s issues and the WOs, further underscoring new assumptions about gender and identity, and about the role of women in local political and economic life. Third, the newsletters feature a range of pieces extolling notions associated with capitalism and market economies, focusing on the virtues of banks and banking, the processes of loans/lending, and best practices of marketing and accounting for small businesses. Such articles also report on efforts to mobilize youth to discuss ‘ambitions’, ‘career planning’, and ‘career building’, notions that can be tied not to traditional agricultural and rural societies, but instead to ‘modern,’ ‘globalized,’ and ‘cosmopolitan’ contexts in which occupation is viewed as a personal choice and a way of building personal capital.

Among the articles in the newsletters referring to the VO emerges a short piece concerning the visit of AKRSP's VO representatives to the Pakistani government-affiliated National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) (*Dehee Tanzeem*, June-July 1994:9-10). The evolving relationship between the VO-model implemented by AKRSP and the Pakistani government's interests in the region have been addressed above. This article summarizes the activities of the two development groups and then reviews the VOs' recommendations to NRSP on technical and agricultural matters. As discussed above, the language in this article implies a hierarchy in which the AKRSP-sponsored VO representatives are seen as the more established and knowledgeable party, and are willing to share that knowledge with the less established government-funded organizations.

Articles on women's issues in the newsletters tend to mark women's involvement in matters of small business, investment, and local leadership. They offer both praise for developments (such as the first woman accountant in the town of Gilgit or the successful woman owner of a poultry farm), as well as instruction into how best to accumulate the skills and capital required to start and maintain a business. Pervasive in these articles is a forceful emphasis on the connection between a new understanding of gender norms and financial and business achievement. The villager is being encouraged to link the notion of women's liberation with positive values of the market economy and even with the promise of wider economic success.

One of the most fascinating portions of the newsletters is the informational comic at the end of each edition, entitled 'Uteelo and Dudeelo'. The comic features two folktale characters whose antics are already well known to the audience from stories in the oral

tradition in the western Karakoram. The comic recasts the characters as discussants of the participatory development process, using a specific rhetorical style. Dudeelo is ‘younger, simple, curious and constantly asking questions and responding to the situation’, while Uteelo is ‘comparatively wiser and is the savior of Dudeelo by saving him from difficult situations’ (*Dehee Tanzeem*, 1994:17). Through these characters, the workings of the VO and the details of market processes are verbally and graphically explicated. The comic reproduced in Figure 1 and translated in part below contains many of the terms and phrases we have been following throughout our discussion of the discourse of this set of NGOs.

Figure 1: Uteelo and Dudeelo

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

(*Dehee Tanzeem*, Dec 1993-Jan 1994: 19)

In Box 1 of the comic above, Uteelo explains to Dudeelo that the gathering is a VO meeting.

Box 1:

Dudeelo: Uteelo! Allah khair kare woh dekho gaun ke saare log drakht ke niche kyon jama' hain.

Uteelo! May Allah make it good! Look at that, all the village people are gathered under the tree.

Uteelo: Gaun ki tanzeem ki meeting ho raha hai ao nazdik tabakar sunen ki kya baaten ho raha hai.

The village organization meeting is happening, come near and let's listen to what the participants are saying.

In Box 2, the VO manager is explaining to the assembled crowd about the purpose of the VO. It expresses two of the key goals of the VO from the NGO's perspective: to increase personal wealth and to increase standards of living.

Box 2:

Manager: Gaon me tanzeem banane ka maqsad yeh hai ki logon ki aamdani baRhe aur mu'ayyar

zindagi buland ho mazeed baraan zaqi maleet ke saath saath ajtamani ke maleet ke asaasajaat bhi taraqi...

The purpose of making a village organization is to increase people's wealth and heighten their living standard. Both individual and communal assets must be boosted...

Of note in the third box of this comic is Uteelo's reply when Dudeelo wonders why the villagers are giving money to the manager. Uteelo says: "*tamam mambaraan sahib ko haftavari bachat karvaa rahe hain*" ('all the members are having the manager deposit their weekly savings'). The form of the verb (*karvaa*) indicates that the manager is literally 'doing savings' or for them (on their behalf). This defines the role of the manager merely as facilitator in the act of saving (the agents of the saving event are still the members themselves, not the manager).

Box 3:

Dudeelo: Yeh kya ho raha hai log ek hi aadmi ko paise kyon de rahe hain?

What is happening here--why are people giving money to just one man?

Manager: Aaye maaherbaan sahib...

Come kind sir...

Uteelo: Tumhen samajh kyon nahin aa raha ki tamam mambaraan sahib ko haftavari bachat karvaa rahe hain.

Why aren't you understanding that all the members are having the manager deposit their weekly savings?

In the last box in the comic above, Dudeelo summarizes the comic's lesson, saying that the VO is doing *achcha kaam* 'good work' in the village.

Box 6:

Dudeelo: Gaon ki taraqi ke liye dehee tanzeem achchha kaam kar rahi hai

The village organization is doing good work for the development of the village.

Uteelo: Shukr hai tumhen bhi samajh aa gayi.

Thankfully you too have understood.

The comic itself is a stunning example of the use of a traditional set of shared symbols (this type of folktale and its familiar characters) in a new medium (the comic) to promote a new set of political, social, and economic ideologies. However, it presents this in a traditional storytelling framework, anchoring the novel social ideologies in shared systems (Spitulnik, 1997) and providing a classic example of Bakhtinian intertextuality.

The VO in a global context

It is likely that the decision-makers who devised and established the VO system had specific liberal humanist notions in mind when developing the program, and that these ideas meshed well with their perception and image of those distant, exotic, autochthonous Isma'ilis' lives and needs. The idea of the Village Organization may be the result of an orientalized imaginary of distant localities by the élite within the transnational assemblage, of the romantic and organic life of a *village*.⁷ Consider the following passage from an AKDN publication, which describes the advent of Village Organizations almost as part of a transition from barbarism to civilization, from irrational tribalism to sensible capitalism:

When institutions of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) first began working in northern Pakistan more than twenty years ago, it was one of the poorest areas on earth. Rural communities of different ethnic and religious backgrounds – Shia, Sunni and non-Muslim –

⁷ The notion of the village itself as a distinct epistemic, organizational, and administrative unit in colonial and pre-colonial systems of knowledge, and its romanticization in orientalist discourses, deserves its own analysis. Surely the idea that every village deserves its own organization can be tied to naturalized presuppositions about what kind of unit a village is.

struggled to eke out a meagre living, farming small holdings in the harsh environment of the mountain desert ecosystem. Relations among the communities were often hostile.

Since that time, over 3,900 village-based Organizations, comprising a mix of broad-based and interest-specific groups in such fields as women's initiatives, water use and savings and credit, were established by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF). The quality of life of 1.3 million people living in the rural environment, which in many ways was representative of the majority of the population of Asia and Africa, has been dramatically improved. Per capita income has increased by 300 percent, savings have soared and there have been marked improvements in male and female education, life expectancy, primary health, housing, sanitation and cultural awareness. Former antagonists have worked together to create new programmes and social structures. Consensus around hope in the future has replaced conflict born of despair and memories of the past. (AKF 2003: 2)

In such an imagining, a 'Village Organization' becomes a heroic concept, one which fits that mythic image of the distant yet connected other. That exotic and primitive 'other' is not only spatially distant from the reader, but also temporally distant, associated with a different moment in history (Fabian, 1983). Such images of the heroic and locally-rooted other fill the pages and the images of AKDN publications.

For the villagers, however, the VO is something altogether different, though it is not disconnected from these imaginaries and processes. The Village Organization is not only focused inwards, on the community itself, but is also a forum for local participation in a transnational network. It mediates between the polity and the individual. It is simultaneously a channel through which subjects are involved in and incorporated into this polity; it inculcates in them an awareness of their connection to that macrostructural formation, and is thus a central link between subject and structure. The new 'grassroots' political structures which this NGO has created serve as a connection between the local

social fabric and the larger global network. Moreover, the Village Organization has come to form a basic community unit of the transnational network, and acts as the primary forum for local participation in the parallel and alternative public sphere of the Isma'ili transnational social formation. In that sense, it is a crucial medium through which interactions between local subjects and transnational institutions are channeled, a key node of contact. One might even describe it as a building block of a global Isma'ili Muslim community (Steinberg 2010).

This is, however, neither organic nor entirely without design; certainly the Khoja elite at the helm of Isma'ili global institutions—a set of institutions which has worked intensively over the past several decades to incorporate diverse and scattered local communities with loose connections to the Imamate into a standardized, global, centrally-directed structure, all unified under the 'Isma'ili' banner.⁸ Thus the Village Organization simultaneously provides opportunities for local autonomy and provides a vehicle for the introduction of new and exogenous governmentalities. The Village Organization, then, amounts to nothing less than an effort to transform the very social fabric of the regions in which it has been deployed. Beyond serving as a critical local linkage between subject and transnational collectivity, we argue it is an entirely new model for social organization in parts of the Pakistan Himalaya, the Tajik Pamir, the Afghan Hindu Kush, (and even the distant plains of Gujarati Kachchh), and has as its goal a socialization of the local subject

⁸ The notion that the various people now referred to as “Isma'ili” are all part of the same community is a relatively new one, dating from late 19th Century British India. Until recently, the Himalayan communities now labeled “Isma'ili” fell under a range of different labels.

to the global norms of modernity. Its impact in this regard has been tremendous, and the cultural landscape of the Isma'ili Himalaya has emerged profoundly altered.

References

Aga Khan IV. 1994. "Commencement Address". Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA.

Aga Khan Foundation. 2003. *Annual Report 2003*. Geneva.

Aga Khan Foundation. 2004. *Annual Report 2004*. Geneva.

Aga Khan Rural Support Programme. 1996. *Fourteenth Annual Review, 1996*. Gilgit, Pakistan: Aga Khan Rural Support Programme.

Aga Khan Rural Support Programme. 1999. *Joining Hands in Development: Women in Northern Pakistan*. Gilgit, Pakistan.

Aga Khan Rural Support Programme. 2000. *Towards a Shared Vision: Partnerships for Development. Annual Report 2000*. Gilgit, Pakistan.

Aga Khan Rural Support Programme. 1994. *Twelfth Annual Review, 1994*. Gilgit, Pakistan.

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 2nd ed. New York: Verso.

Bliss, Frank. 2006. *Social and Economic Changes in the Pamirs*. London: Routledge.

Boivin, Michel. 2003. *La Renovation du Shi'isme Ismaelien en Inde et au Pakistan*. London: Kegan Paul.

Chatterjee, Partha. 1986. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Dehee Tanzeem: Bi-Monthly Urdu Magazine. 1994. Shahid Mehmood and Noor Mohammad, eds. Gilgit, Pakistan: Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, Human Resource Development Institute.
- Escobar, Arturo. 1994. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Fabian, Johannes. 1983. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Humphrey, Caroline. 1983. *Karl Marx Collective: Economy, Society, and Religion in a Siberian Collective Farm*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kamat, Sangeeta. 2002. *Development Hegemony: Non-Governmental Organizations and the State in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Keshavjee, Salmaan. 1998. "Medicines and Transitions: The political Economy of Health and Social Change in post-Soviet Badakhshan, Tajikistan." Ph. D. Harvard University.
- Khan, Mahmood Hassan, and Shoaib Sultan Khan 1992. *Rural Change in the Third World: Pakistan and the Aga Khan Rural Support Program*. London: Greenwood Press.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Said, Edward. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Spitulnik, Debra. 1997. The Social Circulation of Media Discourse and the Mediation of Communities. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 6: 161-187.
- University of Central Asia (UCA). n.d. The University of Central Asia (information booklet). Geneva: Aga Khan Development Network.
- Urban, Greg. 1991. *A Discourse-Centered Approach to Culture: Native South American*

Myths and Rituals. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Urban, Greg. 2001. *Metaculture: How Culture Moves Through the World*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Wood, Geoffrey D., Abdul Malik, and Sumaira Sagheer, eds. 2006. *Valleys in Transition: Twenty Years of AKRSP's Experience in Northern Pakistan*. Karachi and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wood, Geoffrey D and S. Shakil. 2006. "Collective Action: The Threatened Imperative." In *Valleys in Transition: Twenty Years of AKRSP's Experience in Northern Pakistan*.

Geoffrey D. Wood, Abdul Malik, and Sumaira Sagheer, eds. Karachi and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wood, Geoffrey D. 2006. "The Ethnographical Context." In *Valleys in Transition: Twenty Years of AKRSP's Experience in Northern Pakistan*. Geoffrey D.

Wood, Abdul Malik, and Sumaira Sagheer, eds. Karachi and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

World Bank. 1987. *The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme in Pakistan: An Interim Evaluation*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Operations Evaluation Department.

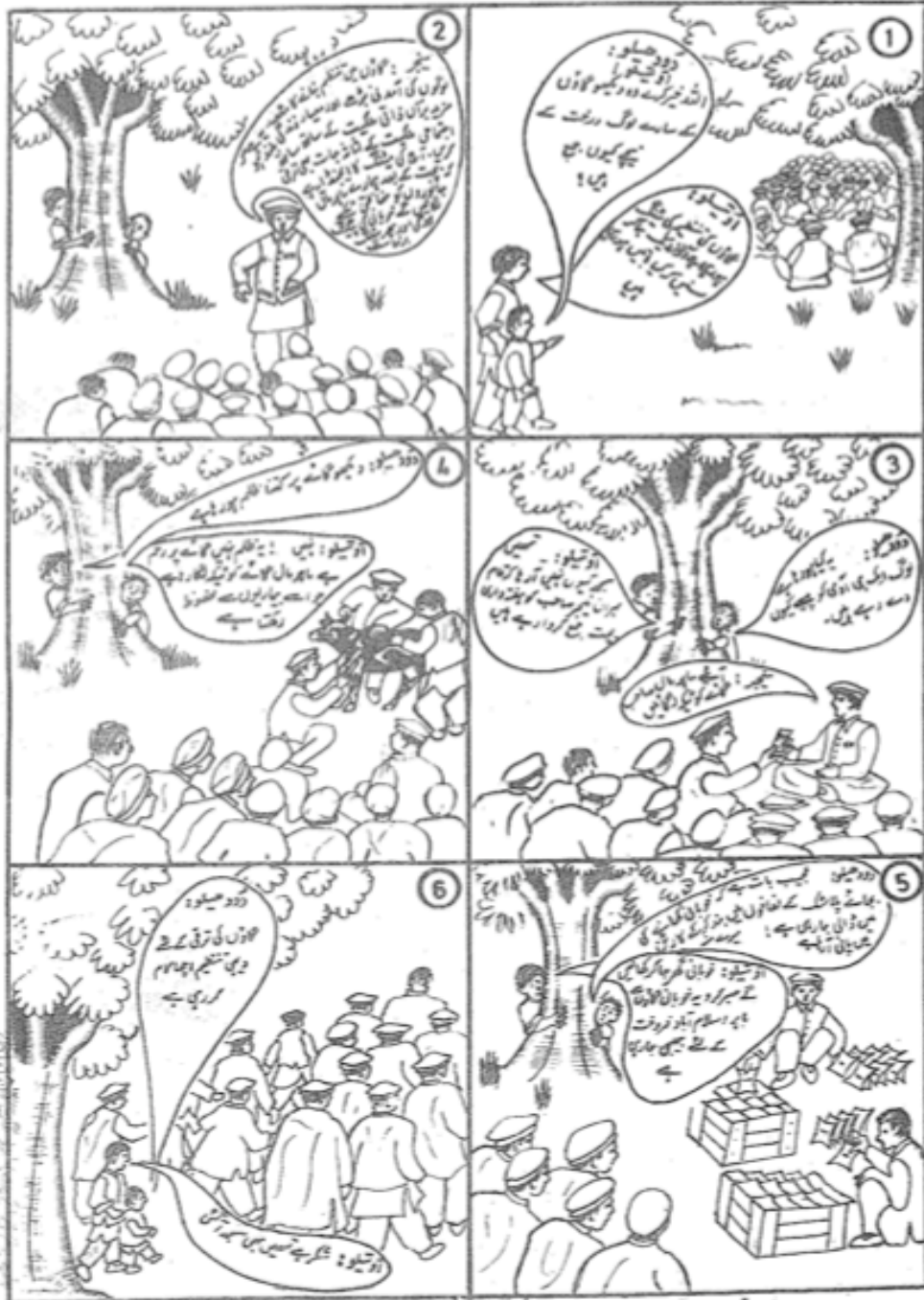
World Bank. 1990. *The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme in Pakistan: A Second Interim Evaluation*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Operations Evaluation Department.

World Bank. 1996. *The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme in Pakistan: A Third Evaluation*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Operations Evaluation Department.

World Bank. 2006. *The Next Ascent: An Evaluation of the Aga Khan Rural Support*

Programme, Pakistan. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Operations Evaluation
Department.

اوتیسلو و دو و هیلو = بلغ میس



ذرائع، ترتیب، خیال، و شکش: شاہد حمید، مبارک اللہ