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Where Empires Meet : Orientalism and Marginality at the Former Russo-British Frontier*

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

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Introduction

- 1 The Russian and the British Empires never really met. However, separated only by the narrow Afghan Wakhan corridor as a buffer zone both empires left behind two mountainous regions that are located in close proximity to each other. Both Tajikistan's region of Gorno-Badakhshan and Gilgit-Baltistan in today's Pakistan are situated at a former imperial frontier which petrified in a Cold War context. In the course of the twentieth century, the border between the Soviet Union and the Indian subcontinent was turned into a highly politicised frontier between Central and South Asia.
- 2 In this article, I seek to explore the effects of this demarcation under the conditions of colonialism, socialism, postcolonialism and postsocialism. Taking into account a broad range of cultural projections, I attempt to show how orientalism and marginality intersect in both areas as romanticised and allegedly backward imperial outposts. In

particular, I will focus on the meaning of “ colonial ” projections which found their ways into present forms of internal orientalist constructions of the frontier.

- 3 First, I will introduce the frontier between Central and South Asia as marked by the construction of otherness and changing modes of domination. I will then focus on Edward Said’s translocation to Gorno-Badakhshan and its consequences for theorising the intersection of orientalism and marginality. In a next step, I will turn to the “ Hunza myth ” as an example of a (self-)orientalist discourse on Gilgit-Baltistan’s most northern region. Finally, I will explore the different periodisations of colonial/postcolonial and colonial/socialist/postsocialist that were established for South and Central Asia during and after the Cold War, and which now pose a challenge to an analytical understanding of the regions in a post-Cold War context.

1. Beyond the frontier

- 4 In his study of the Cold War as an assembly of political, social and cultural processes with highly diversified effects on a global scale, Kwon criticises the analytical distinction between decolonisation and the Cold War, which treats the two as separate histories¹. Kwon argues that in a number of contexts, including post-World War Two Iran and Korea, both processes used to be temporally and thematically inseparable. As a consequence of the analytical inseparability of postcolonial and bipolar Cold War histories, the practice of describing their chronology becomes redundant. In a recent article, Marsden applied Kwon’s argument to the comparison of Southwest and Central Asia². Marsden perceives Kwon’s insights as of particular importance for the anthropological study of the two regions since they have been conventionally regarded as either being part of the postcolonial Southwest or of post-Soviet Central Asia. Going beyond the two regions and their boundaries as stable entities, Marsden argues, not only allows for an analytical framework that reflects the various interconnections between colonialism, postcolonialism, socialism and postsocialism. It furthermore provides the opportunity to critically take into account scholarly contributions to the processes of political, social and cultural fixation of the two regions.
- 5 Hopkins and Marsden for Pakistan/Afghanistan and Shaw for early Soviet Central Asia provide profound analyses of the processes that have shaped the separation and fixation of South and Central Asia since the nineteenth century³. Hopkins and Marsden show how the Afghan Frontier stretching from Iran to China has been perpetually constructed as “ an ‘ other ’ space, ‘ out there ’, which is acted upon by powerful centers ” since the 1870s⁴. Shaw, on the other hand, exemplifies how the Bolsheviks attempted to overcome the porous southern frontier of the Tsarist Empire and therefore restricted movement and trade beyond the border in order to clearly distinguish between socialist and capitalist realms⁵. Both scholarly works define the construction of the boundaries between South and Central Asia as processes that have been continuously implemented in colonial, postcolonial, socialist and postsocialist contexts.
- 6 For an analysis of marginality in both Tajikistan’s Gorno-Badakhshan and Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan’s north, the construction processes that have surrounded the separation of the two regions are of utter importance. The two places’ specific locations on the edges of Central and South Asia did not only lead to a number of Russian and English colonial (travel) accounts describing them as situated far away and at the end of their respective empires⁶. They have also experienced a broad range of orientalist projections from within

and from outside the two places, which have explicitly referred to marginality as their defining marker.

2. Taking Said to the Pamirs

- 7 Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province (GBAO)⁷ covers the border region with Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and China and includes the Pamirs, one of the world's highest mountain ranges. From Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe, Gorno-Badakhshan is often perceived as a remote and isolated territory. Descriptions of the Pamirs range from transfigured orientalist views of the region as a wild, romantic and spiritual place to a deserted mountain area that is inhabited by bellicose people. However, Gorno-Badakhshan is not just orientalised in broader Tajikistani discourse⁸, but also in a variety of internal orientalist projections.
- 8 While conducting fieldwork for my doctoral dissertation⁹ in Gorno-Badakhshan in 2009, I met a young Pamiri scholar in the town of Khorog, which is the administrative centre of Gorno-Badakhshan and located in the western part of the region. In our conversation, the young scholar emphasised to what extent the eastern part of Gorno-Badakhshan was subject to cultural, geographic and political fragmentation within the region. He mentioned that in Khorog the image of the eastern Pamirs was that of a deserted, wild and unhealthy land. High altitude, the lack of oxygen, the occurrence of strange dreams and rumours of the existence of unpleasant ghosts made the place undesirable to visit. And just as I did not find many people in Dushanbe who had been to the Pamirs, I also did not meet those in Khorog who had been to the eastern part of Gorno-Badakhshan. While some had stopped there on the way to the city of Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan, hardly anyone could remember more than Kyrgyz herders with their flocks of yaks and sheep – and some settlements where life seemed impossible to bear.
- 9 The young scholar, who had just completed a degree in political science in the UK (which is clearly a “post-Soviet” opportunity provided by cultural institutions and NGOs from all over the world), addressed this cultural divide between western and eastern parts of Gorno-Badakhshan with the help of Edward Said's book *Orientalism*¹⁰. Commenting on cultural stereotypes and asymmetrical power relations within Gorno-Badakhshan, he referenced Said's influential work and stated that people in the eastern Pamirs were “our [Khorogi] oriental others”.

3. Orientalism and marginality

- 10 The Pamiri scholar's interpretation of local cultural asymmetries in Gorno-Badakhshan through a Saidian lens indicates that “orientalism”, as a term and concept, has been globalised since its appearance in 1978. Moving away from a sole focus on the history of colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the study of orientalism has developed into the analysis of a broad range of social practices which include the production of otherness and cultural stereotypes under the influence of unequal power relations¹¹.
- 11 At the same time, the Pamiri scholar's statement points to the interdependence of orientalism and differing degrees of marginality – again a rubric which has received a great deal of attention in the social sciences lately. Green, for example, argues that “this

more recent fascination with ambiguous marginality, a focus on its fluidity, its lack of boundaries, and the inability to pin it down ” went along with the increasing interest in the postmodern¹². From Green ’s point of view, an effect of this turn towards the postmodern was a “ refusal of borders ” and an “ escape from the hegemonic ”. Following Green, I seek to underscore that fluidity does not necessarily appear disconnected from borders and that the ambiguity of marginality does not contradict hegemony.

- 12 The examples of Gorno-Badakhshan and Gilgit-Baltistan demonstrate that although marked by colonial and Cold War histories and characterised by the internal tragedies of independence, “ inventiveness ”¹³ has been a frequent reaction to marginality in both places. Taking Said to the Pamirs served the young Pamiri scholar in Khorog as a paradigm through which to locate his region in the margins of Tajikistan. At the same time, the relativity of both terms, orientalism and marginality, provided him with the opportunity to critically reflect upon power relations within Gorno-Badakhshan. As I will show in the following, inventive practices surrounding orientalism and marginality can also be located in Pakistan ’s very north. In Gilgit-Baltistan, the rubrics of orientalism and marginality have had a strong influence on the formation of regional identities. In this regard, references to colonial literature and later “ Western ” perceptions of the region have gained considerable importance.

4. Longevity and apricots

- 13 A Facebook page titled *The Hunza Valley*¹⁴ connects people who originate from Hunza or who (like me) have a specific interest in the region. The page includes more than 8600 “ likes ”, and provides the participant with texts and visual materials on Hunza. On *The Hunza Valley* Facebook page as well as in other spheres of public discourse such as tourism and travel literature, the term “ Hunza ” is used to describe a region in Gilgit-Baltistan which stretches along the Karakoram Highway from Gilgit to the Chinese border¹⁵. Despite a high degree of political, ethnic and religious difference in the region and the distinction between the former princely states of Hunza and Nagyr, “ Hunza ” has in the course of the twentieth century become a superordinate term describing a marginal and orientalised territory in northern Pakistan.
- 14 A post which was uploaded on 1st September 2012 on the Facebook page *The Hunza Valley* and which received 143 “ likes ” as well as a number of positive comments indicates that orientalist projections on the region and its inhabitants have long made their way into local identities. The post consists of a scanned book cover of Guy T. Wrench ’s work *The Wheel of Health*¹⁶. Wrench ’s book was first published in 1938 and presents the results of his medical research on health among the people of Hunza. As Wrench states in the introduction to his book, which exclusively draws on existing literature, Robert McCarrison ’s description of the people of Hunza as “ unsurpassed by any Indian race in perfection of physique ”¹⁷ encouraged him to focus on the study of “ a really healthy people ”¹⁸. With the aim to provide his own fellow Englishmen with guidance on a healthy life-style (which he perceived as having been lost in modern England), Wrench chose the people of Hunza as the object of his study exactly because they seemed so remote, different and original. He emphasises that the “ whole meaning of this people is something much greater ” and that it :

is none less than that the perfect physique and health, which we have grown accustomed as the privilege of the wild, and, with rare exceptions, beyond the

attainment of civilised man, is not unattainable. It is attainable, if we give the same devoted service to our soil, its health and the health of its production, as for centuries this remarkable people have given to theirs¹⁹.

- 15 Wrench's work stands in line with a series of publications on Hunza which mystify the region as a dream world of natural beauty and its inhabitants as a people without diseases²⁰. Including colonial travel descriptions²¹, British nutrition research²², novels²³ and a log of an anti-communist adventure trip²⁴ numerous publications on Hunza have contributed to the establishment of an orientalising myth which resembles projections on neighbouring Tibet²⁵.
- 16 Remoteness, spirituality, longevity and a healthy diet based on apricots and walnuts can be considered central elements in the "Hunza myth"²⁶. While these elements have long been part of a "Western" discourse on the region, they have also become important categories of self-representation in Hunza itself. Apart from their use in tourism advertising²⁷, these categories are now embedded in everyday life – as the example of *The Hunza Valley* Facebook page indicates. During fieldwork in Hunza in 2013, interlocutors furthermore underlined this embeddedness by referring to their region as home to particularly old people, shamans (*bitan*) and fairies (*pari*), as having a distinct diet, and as being culturally and geographically distant from the rest of Pakistan and the subcontinent.

5. Colonialism and postcolonial colonialism ?

- 17 In addition to geographical distance and cultural difference, the marginal position of Gilgit-Baltistan in the national political framework contributes to the local distinction between the region (and its sub-regions) and Pakistan. This distinction derives from a lengthy history of domination that dates back to the early days of Pakistan and which has resulted in the fact that the inhabitants of Gilgit-Baltistan (and its predecessor entity, the Northern Areas) do not enjoy full citizenship rights (e.g. such as the right to vote on a national level)²⁸.
- 18 Challenging linear conceptions of colonial and postcolonial, Sökefeld suggests that large parts of today's Gilgit-Baltistan ("Gilgit and the surrounding mountain country") had been "subjected to three different powers in the last 150 years: Kashmiri, British and Pakistani". In contrast to clear-cut transitions from the precolonial to the colonial, and from the colonial to the postcolonial, Sökefeld argues that "we discover only transitions between specific relations and modes of dominations and subalternity in the history of the Northern Areas"²⁹. This is exemplified by that fact that Pakistan's independence day on the 14th of August is not a particularly positive event for the people of the region considering that the then British Gilgit Agency did not become part of Pakistan, but was handed over to the Maharaja of Kashmir. And even after the struggle for freedom (*jang āzādī*) from Kashmir in November 1947³⁰ neither the Northern Areas nor its successor entity Gilgit-Baltistan has been fully integrated into the constitutional framework of Pakistan.
- 19 Gilgit-Baltistan's lacking integration into the nation of Pakistan, on the one hand, and its population's dependence on Islamabad and on job-opportunities in the urban centres, on the other, have led to ambivalent attitudes towards the state³¹. While my interlocutors in Hunza in 2013 considered jobs in the national army prestigious, well-paid and desirable, they at the same time expressed bitterness deriving from political, economic,

infrastructural, religious³² and ethnic marginality. Apart from the fact that Pakistani rule is often experienced as exploiting, and literally “ colonial ”³³, the struggle for political legitimacy in the region also reaches into scholarly work.

- 20 An official state-sponsored history of the then Northern Areas³⁴, for instance, dates back to the 1980s and was written at the request of the Pakistani military ruler Zia ul-Haq³⁵. The book was published by the well-known Pakistani historian Ahmad Hasan Dani who underlines the work’s authority through the inclusion of chapters by the French and Austrian professors Gérard Fussmann and Karl Jettmar. The history provides an orientalisng picture of the region and its inhabitants as passionate freedom fighters – however, not for their own purpose but as martyrs in the fight against “ Indian ” invaders³⁶ – and as backward and ethnically diverse mountaineers. Thus, Dani introduces the Northern Areas in the following way :

Sandwiched between the high peaks of Hindukush and Karakoram on the north and those of Western Himalaya on the south is the mysterious far-off land, now called Northern Areas of Pakistan [...] preserving the hoary human traditions in association with mountain fairies. Fairy tales, and not folk tales, linger on in human mind, as men and animals disappear with sudden glacial movements, icy breezes and rapid snow and mud flows that devour everything that come on way [sic]. The natural phenomena remained a secret until geologists and geographers penetrated into this region to unlock the story of mountain, river and lake formations, and very recently the construction of the Karakoram Highway opened facilities for communication and human contact. In the back-drop of Himalaya, Karakorum and Hindukush humanity lived on in isolated valleys, cut off from the rest of the world, seeking a livelihood out of mountain hazards and only daring an occasional breakthrough across high passes during summer interlude [sic] in the year to catch a glimpse of the world beyond and snatch frugalities of life to ease their sordid living³⁷.

- 21 On a local level, the national discourse on Gilgit-Baltistan’s marginality and cultural distinctiveness has resulted in various opinions on how to relate to Pakistan as a state. A number of movements have chosen to turn “ the shared experience of political disenfranchisement ”³⁸ into the promotion of a common regional identity and the political programme of a separate nation of *Bālāwaristān*. One of these movements is the “ Balawaristan National Front ” which is led by the political activist Abdul Hamid Khan. Khan has published a series of texts on the movement’s website³⁹, which is banned in Pakistan. His main work is a book entitled *The Last Colony of the 21st Century*, in which he describes the people of Balawaristan as being culturally and in a civilisational way distinct from “ Pakistanis ” who are said to treat them as “ slaves ”⁴⁰.
- 22 Sökefeld has noted that in the discourse on the nation of Balawaristan, Pakistan is constructed as “ the other ”⁴¹. Drawing on a distinction from Pakistan rather than on political or linguistic homogeneity within the imagined nation, the “ Balawaristan National Front ” defines the people of Balawaristan as physically, physiognomically and culturally closer to Europe and Central Asia. In Balawaristan, and in contrast to Pakistan, religion is not considered a necessary marker of common identity since, as a result of sectarian tensions in the whole of Pakistan in the past decades, “ Islam has become worn out as a symbol of a shared identity with Pakistan ”⁴². Balawaristan is therefore imagined as a high, mountainous territory (Persian *bālā* for “ high ”, thus its name) with an ethnically, linguistically and religiously heterogeneous population.
- 23 As the example of Gilgit-Baltistan shows, notions of “ colonialism ” can reach out far beyond the period of British rule that has been conventionally described as “ colonial ”. It

is furthermore remarkable that a region which was located at the northern edge of the British Empire in Asia until 1947 continues to be involved in discourses that are shaped by “ colonial knowledge ” of various origins. While the region ’s inhabitants have, on the one hand, frequently been described in orientalist terms and labelled as living in the margins, similar descriptions have, on the other hand, become part of local identities and now even serve to emphasise distinctiveness and the struggle for political legitimacy.

6. Colonialism, socialism and postsocialist colonialism ?

- 24 As I have attempted to show above, Gilgit-Baltistan serves as an example of how the periodisation of colonial/postcolonial is challenged by socio-political realities. Taking this conclusion to the other side of the Central-South-Asian frontier, I will now turn to Gorno-Badakhshan and question to what extent the region ’s conventional periodisation of colonial/socialist/postsocialist can be considered legitimate. I thereby follow Chari and Verdery who have argued that “ [i]t is time to liberate the Cold War from the ghetto of Soviet area studies and postcolonial thought from the ghetto of Third World and colonial studies ”⁴³ and who suggest using the overarching term “ post-Cold War ” instead.
- 25 Khalid has pointed to the considerable degree of complexity that needs to be attributed to Soviet rule in Central Asia⁴⁴. Its classifications range from early Soviet times as a period of “ decolonisation ”⁴⁵, but also militant resistance against the Bolsheviks, to subsequent modernisation policies and accusations of the Soviet empire as “ colonial ”⁴⁶. In large parts, this statement is also valid for the history of Soviet Gorno-Badakhshan. However, due to the region ’s location at the border of once hostile Afghanistan and China, Gorno-Badakhshan received generous state supplies⁴⁷ and experienced a period of relative prosperity from the 1960s onwards. Contrasted with the post-Soviet tragedy of the Tajik civil war from 1992-1997⁴⁸, this period of prosperity makes Soviet rule retrospectively appear as utterly positive and uplifting from a Gorno-Badakhshan point of view. Against this backdrop, current governmental rule in the national framework of an impoverished independent Tajikistan is often perceived as negative, oppressive and “ colonial ” (*mustamlíkavî*) in Gorno-Badakhshan.
- 26 During fieldwork in Gorno-Badakhshan between 2008 and 2011, my interlocutors frequently referred to these contrasting periods, namely from the 1960s till the 1980s versus from 1992 onwards, as an example of how their region had moved from centrality and strategic importance during Soviet times to marginality and hostile rule in independent Tajikistan. This comparison precisely reflects the experience of political and social turmoil in the former Soviet border region. However, a look back in history shows that it was actually under Soviet rule in the 1930s when the borders with China and Afghanistan were sealed, social and economic relations were cut and Gorno-Badakhshan became solely dependent on “ Moscow provisioning ” (*Moskovskoe obespechenie*)⁴⁹. Gorno-Badakhshan ’s loss of provisioning and connectedness in the wake of independence not only contributed to its political and economic marginalisation, but also fostered orientalisng stereotypes on the region. As described above, civil war history supported the image of Pamiris as bellicose mountain people who are ethnically and religiously different, and recent violent conflict between government forces and local Pamiri militias in 2012 has supported such views⁵⁰.

- 27 While the majority of Gorno-Badakhshan's population are Shia-Isma'ili Muslims, western Tajikistan is mainly Sunni dominated. Despite the Isma'ilis' omnipresence in the capital Dushanbe's political and cultural elite, the social construction of difference between the two groups is considerable. For instance, when living with a Tajik-Sunni family in Dushanbe in 2008, their eldest son showed concern that I was about to travel to Gorno-Badakhshan because he had learnt that the region was inhabited by armed Shia extremists. Since he had been taught this in history lessons at school, it was next to impossible to contradict his view.
- 28 The social construction of difference between Gorno-Badakhshan and western Tajikistan, between ethnicities attributed to these regions, and between Isma'ilis and Sunnis under the conditions of changing power relations is a process that was triggered when the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic was created in the 1920s⁵¹. In an early Soviet context, which can well be called "postcolonial", a socialist political entity emerged, which was soon shaped by its location at a Cold War frontier that separated "modern" from "backward", "socialist" from "colonial" and eventually "socialist" from "capitalist". Current constructions of difference in Tajikistan draw on this historical background. However, as the example of Gorno-Badakhshan and recent interpretations of political domination show, they also challenge a linear periodisation from colonialism to socialism and postsocialism.

Conclusion

- 29 I started this article on orientalism and marginality at the former Russo-British frontier by not taking the frontier for granted. I have attempted to show that the frontier between Central and South Asia can be perceived as a process which has been developing since the late nineteenth century. I have argued that, not being limited to imperial divisions, the frontier has had a profound impact in Cold War and post-Cold War contexts.
- 30 Taking two regions at the frontier, Gilgit-Baltistan and Gorno-Badakhshan, as examples, I have sought to explore the impact of these different contexts in regard to the construction of marginality and orientalist projections under changing modes of domination. While I have put emphasis on the historical and cultural specificities of the two regions, I have also maintained that such a comparison can shed light on the conceptual shortcomings of an analytical distinction between Central and South Asia. I have argued that the study of orientalist discourses and marginality in both regions shows that "classical" periodisations of colonial/postcolonial and socialist/postsocialist have become blurred and should be re-thought.
- 31 As Marsden states, the aim of such a rethinking is not to restore "pre-existing cultural links" between Central and South Asia (even though locally people often attempt to "revive" them) but to grasp the effects of these divisions on people's lives⁵². In addition, Marsden argues that it is important to understand how future research might contribute to the decomposition of such divisions. In this regard, the inclusion of (Western) China as a historical and contemporary space, located directly at the former Russo-British frontier and bordering Gilgit-Baltistan and Gorno-Badakhshan, will be crucial to enriching the analysis of orientalist discourses under contemporary "socialist", "capitalist" and "colonial" conditions.

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NOTES

1. H. Kwon, *The Other Cold War*, p. 26.
2. M. Marsden, “*Southwest and Central Asia*”, p. 340.
3. B. D. Hopkins, M. Marsden, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier* ; Ch. Shaw, “*Friendship under Lock and Key*”.
4. B. D. Hopkins, M. Marsden, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*, p. 218.
5. Ch. Shaw, “*Friendship und Lock and Key*”, p. 333.
6. See for example A. A. Bobrinskii, *Gortsy verkhov ’ev Piandzha* ; G. N. Curzon, “*The Pamirs and the Source of the Oxus*” ; I. L. Iavorskii, *Puteshestvie russkago [sic] posol’stva po Afganistanu i bukharskomu khanstvu* ; O. Olufsen, *Through the Unknown Pamirs* ; F. E. Younghusband, *The Heart of a Continent*.
7. Although the official Tajik name for the region is *Viloyati Mukhtori Kūhistoni Badakhshon*, the most commonly used terms are still GBAO or Gorno-Badakhshan, both words which derive from the Russian *Gorno-Badakhshanskaia avtonomnaia oblast*. This is not only true for everyday communication but also for Tajik offices where the terms GBAO, (Gorno-)Badakhshan or simply *Pomir* are widely used.
8. The topoi of remoteness also frame depictions of GBAO as a main theme in English research. While usually referred to as “*far away*” (*dur*) by my interlocutors in Dushanbe, development reports and studies label the Pamirs as “*an extremely isolated high-mountain region*” (Th. Breu, H. Hurni, *The Tajik Pamirs*, p. 6), or speak of the “*extremely peripheral Pamir region*” (K. A. Vanselow, *The High-Mountain Pastures of the Eastern Pamirs*, p. 32). Discourses of natural beauty, spirituality and danger (both in the sense of human aggression and natural disasters) derive from such notions of remoteness. They are then attributed to purity and health (hot springs with pilgrimage sites, fresh mountain air) or destruction (bad roads, landslides, civil war).
9. T. Mostowlansky, *Azan on the Moon*.
10. E. W. Said, *Orientalism*.

11. See for example M. Deeg, “Wer eine kennt, kennt keine...”; K. Kollmar-Paulenz, “Zur europäischen Rezeption der mongolischen autochthonen Religion und des Buddhismus in der Mongolei”; A. L. Mcfie, *Orientalism*.
12. S. F. Green, *Notes from the Balkans*, p. 4.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
14. Hunza Valley, “The Hunza Valley”.
15. J. W. Frembgen, “Hunza und Shangri-La”, p. 53.
16. G. T. Wrench, *The Wheel of Health*.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 142 (emphasis in original).
20. J. W. Frembgen, “Hunza und Shangri-La”, p. 51.
21. E. F. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*; F. E. Younghusband, *The Heart of a Continent and Kashmir*.
22. R. McCarrison, *Studies in Deficiency Diseases*.
23. J. Hilton, *Lost Horizon*.
24. J. Clark, *Hunza*.
25. See M. Brauen, *Traumwelt Tibet*. Both cases, Hunza and Tibet, can be compared with the construction of other colonial and postcolonial “myths” around the world, e.g. the “Kabyle myth” which gained particular importance in nineteenth century France (J. Scheele, *Village Matters*, p. 12).
26. As far as Switzerland and a German-speaking audience is concerned, an important broker of the “Hunza myth” was Ralph Bircher who authored the book *Hunsa: Das Volk, das keine Krankheiten kennt*. The son of the Swiss physician and nutrition researcher Maximilian Oskar Bircher-Brenner (1867-1939), himself the inventor of the famous “Bircher musli”, wrote the book in memory of his father who had valued “the Hunza” as extraordinary healthy people. Remarkably, “Hunza musli” has found its way into the menus of tourist cafés of the region, however now as part of the local tradition of healthy food.
27. J. W. Frembgen, “Hunza und Shangri-La”.
28. Despite the “Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance Order” from 2009 (Associated Press of Pakistan, “Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance Order 2009”) which included the re-naming of the Northern Areas as Gilgit-Baltistan as well as the introduction of a regional parliament, the people of the region are still barred from political participation on a national level. A full constitutional integration of Gilgit-Baltistan seems unlikely until an agreement on Kashmir is achieved with India.
29. M. Sökefeld, “From Colonialism to Postcolonial Colonialism”, p. 940.
30. M. Sökefeld, “*Jang Āzādī*”.
31. See for example H. R. Sulemani, *F. M. Khan*.
32. In contrast to the rest of Pakistan, which is predominantly Sunni, the majority of Gilgit-Baltistan’s population is Shia (either Twelver Shia or Ismaili). Tensions have particularly risen between Twelver Shia and Sunnis, and have recently become more violent (see N. Ali, “Sectarian Imaginaries”).
33. M. Sökefeld, “From Colonialism to Postcolonial Colonialism”, p. 961.
34. A. H. Dani, *History of Northern Areas of Pakistan*.
35. M. Sökefeld, “From Colonialism to Postcolonial Colonialism”, p. 968.
36. A. H. Dani, *History of Northern Areas of Pakistan*, p. 396-407.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
38. M. Sökefeld, “Bālāwaristān and Other Imaginations”, p. 366.
39. Balawaristan, “Balawaristan National Front”. See also the movement’s Facebook page Balawaristan, “Balawaristan National Front Facebook”.

40. A. H. Khan, *The Last Colony of the 21st Century*.
 41. M. Sökefeld, "Bālāwaristān and Other Imaginations", p. 366.
 42. *Ibid.*, p. 366.
 43. S. Chari, K. Verdery, "Thinking between the Posts", p. 29.
 44. A. Khalid, "Introduction".
 45. *Ibid.*, p. 468.
 46. *Ibid.*, p. 465.
 47. T. Mostowlansky, *Azan on the Moon*, p. 107.
 48. See for example M. Djalili *et al.*, *Tajikistan* ; K. Nourzhanov, Ch. Bleuer, *Tajikistan*, p. 323-335.
 49. T. Mostowlansky, *Azan on the Moon*, p. 51-62.
 50. See for example F. Devji, "Tajikistan" and "The Dictatorship of Civil Society in Tajikistan" ; S. Kendzior, "Understanding the Violence in Tajikistan".
 51. See for example P. Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*.
 52. M. Marsden, "Southwest and Central Asia", p. 340.
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ABSTRACTS

This article explores the intersection of orientalism and marginality in two regions at the former Russo-British frontier between Central and South Asia. Focussing on Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan and Gilgit-Baltistan in today's Pakistan, an analysis of historical and contemporary orientalist projections on and in the two border regions reveals changing modes of domination through the course of the twentieth century (British, Kashmiri, Pakistani and Russian, Soviet, Tajik). In this regard, different local experiences of "colonial" rule, both in Gorno-Badakhshan and Gilgit-Baltistan, challenge "classical" periodisations of colonial/postcolonial and colonial/socialist/postsocialist. This article furthermore maintains that processes of marginalisation in both regions can be interpreted as effects of imperial and Cold War contexts that have led to the establishment of the frontier. Thus, a central argument is that neither the status of the frontier between Central and South Asia as a stable entity, nor the periodisations that have conventionally been ascribed to the two regions as linear timelines can be taken for granted.

L'article explore l'intersection entre les notions d'orientalisme et de marginalité au sein de deux régions situées à l'ancienne frontière russo-britannique, entre l'Asie centrale et l'Asie du Sud. En se centrant sur les régions de Gorno-Badakhshan au Tajikistan et de Gilgit-Baltistan dans le Pakistan actuel, une analyse des projections orientalistes historiques et contemporaines sur et dans ces deux régions limitrophes révèle des modes changeants de domination tout au long du XX^e siècle (britannique, kashmiri, pakistanais et russe, soviétique, tadjik). A cet égard, les différentes expériences locales du régime «colonial», à la fois dans les régions de Gorno-Badakhshan et de Gilgit-Baltistan, remettent en question les périodisations «classiques» entre colonial / postcolonial et colonial / socialiste / post-socialiste. L'article soutient au demeurant que les processus de marginalisation dans les deux régions peuvent être interprétés comme des effets des contextes impériaux et de la guerre froide qui ont conduit à l'établissement des frontières. Ainsi, l'une des conclusions est que ni le statut de la frontière entre Asie centrale et Asie du Sud comme entité stable, ni les périodisations dessinant conventionnellement des trajectoires temporelles linéaires à propos de ces deux régions ne peuvent être sans autre acceptés.

INDEX

Keywords: orientalism, marginality, borders, Tajikistan, Pakistan, post-colonial, post-socialist

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