

*INNOVATIONS IN TRADITIONAL CRAFTS :
NAGER AND HUNZA IN THE 20TH CENTURY.*

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In the early 20th century anthropologists were especially aware that traditional arts, technology and corresponding skills were being lost at an alarming rate. In response to a dominant colonial environment, many traditional artefacts were no longer being made. Nevertheless, later studies on cultural change chiefly concentrated on social and economic aspects often neglecting the material side of life. Conservative anthropologists still dealt with material reality as a given part of traditional culture, leaving the impression of a culture unchanged in time.

But "tradition" is never something static or unyielding; it is dynamic and flexible and has its own potential for change. Cultures are constantly changing and as a result of culture contact we can observe many processes of innovation which can be studied by an ethnographer among living peoples. Besides contemporary native art, folk recycling and its innovative impetus have been widely acclaimed in publications and exhibitions. In this paper, however, I want to concentrate on something less spectacular and eye-catching than recycling, namely a local historical process of cultural borrowing in the realm of traditional crafts. Borrowing is generally the major force in cultural change and highlights a number of implicit questions: what are the pros and cons of an innovation, which norms and values are behind it, and why do people cease using one object and instead begin using another?¹

In the high mountain area of Nager and Hunza, two former kingdoms situated in the heart of the Karakorum (Northern Pakistan), the construction of the Karakorum Highway (KKH), completed between 1972 and 1978, has brought significant alterations to living conditions. This historic event has led to innovations in the type of cultural borrowings along the axis of the KKH with the town of Gilgit as its dominating central place of horizontal diffusion. In the past, endogenous processes of change were usually slow, although enriched by exogenous influences. Now, with the whole of Northern Pakistan open to the Punjab and the rest of "down-country", cultural change is radical and rapid. Whereas innovations as

¹ Foster 1962: 25; Mohrmann 1993: 172.

triggers of social and economic change have been studied in depth in numerous studies of the Pak-German Research Project "Culture Area Karakorum" (CAK) since 1990, the question remains as to how the Nagerkuts and Hunzukuts are responding to the conditions of change as far as their traditional crafts are concerned².

Sherman duus chamage gas nimi.
"When matches appeared, flint and steel lost their value"
(Hunza proverb)³

Material Modernity in Nager and Hunza - A General Survey

As most of the villages are either situated close to the KKH or have jeepable link roads to the main highway, industrially produced consumer goods are nowadays easily traded via Gilgit. The local population's response to the radical opening of their hitherto remote high mountain valleys is adaptive: many modern prestigious items are imported, things which are perceived as new, fashionable, or practical. Here, prestige, the desire for economic gain, and utilitarianism are the main motivations which produce the diffusion of innovative elements⁴. Therefore, the impact on local everyday culture is considerable; traditional patterns of consumption are changing quickly. In this context, the *nouveaux riches* (members of the nobility and lower-class people who have become entrepreneurs) as well as the out-valley migrants, are especially innovative.

A general survey shows that functional objects such as agricultural tools are readily adopted. It becomes immediately apparent that many imported tools (made in Punjab or even in Europe) are superior to the simpler, locally made tools. As crafts generally belong to the body of practical, common-sense knowledge, especially in this context, decisions follow "instrumental thinking". Of course the objection can be raised that these modern tools allow one to work faster, even if more superficially. Skills and specific techniques are frequently lost in this way⁵. It should be

² Here I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for funding my research project on "Traditional Crafts in Change (Nager/Gilgit)" (1992). The manuscript is based on a paper presented at the 14th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies (August 21-24, 1996, University of Copenhagen) within the panel "Crafty Debates: Historical and Contemporary Issues relating to 'Art' and 'Craft' in South Asia".

³ Tiffou 1993: 70 (No. 1168 B).

⁴ Foster 1962: 29.

⁵ Koch 1993: 13.

added that agrarian innovations nowadays also include an increasing mechanisation with regard to ploughing and wheat threshing.

In the domestic domain many ordinary household items belonging to traditional material culture are being discarded⁶: metal and stone pots for cooking, formerly made by local blacksmiths and specialised stone cutters, are being replaced by steel, iron, and aluminium vessels (including pressure cookers made in Wazirabad/Punjab). Instead of wooden pots and plates for serving food, people prefer Nirosta steel, plastic, and glass. Until recently, milk and water were drunk from wooden bowls and calabashes, now the drinking vessels are of glass, steel, tin or plastic; for the same purpose people use jugs made of aluminium and plastic in the form of a *lota* (widespread in Indo-Pakistan), as well as tin vessels for canned food, *ghi*, etc. Wooden spoons and receptacles made of wood and basketry, used for storing various items and food, are being replaced by objects of aluminium, steel, and plastic.

For keeping clothes, jewellery and other valuables, metal boxes have been used for about 20 years; they are usually closed with metal locks imported from Sialkot (Punjab) or China. Wooden boxes and wardrobes, directly fitted to a wall and pillar in the traditional type of house, are increasingly being replaced by modern storage facilities.

Depending on the respective financial possibilities, not only the exterior architecture of the house, with cement walls, new doors, glass windows, and verandas, but also the rooms are furnished in a "modern" style (fig. 1). Sometimes there are chairs (even chrome folding chairs), sofas, low tables, imported carpets, foam rubber mattresses and bed sheets. Besides a mirror and family photographs, popular colour prints and posters, showing natural scenery from Pakistan, Europe, Japan and the USA, as well as film actresses, are affixed to the walls.

Often sheets of plastic and wax are spread on the floor instead of the traditional embroidered "tablecloths" in the typical oriental way. Part of the inventory of a typical living room also includes insect repellents, petroleum lamps, torches, radios, cassette-recorders, and different kinds of kitsch crockery, mostly from China. In some households there are sewing and even knitting machines paving the way for changes in the art of embroidery.

⁶ Frembgen 1985 b: 284.

Watches, folding knives, plastic bags, combs, cosmetics, etc., are personal belongings which are, like all the other items mentioned above, forwarded from larger industrial towns in the Punjab to the bazaar of Gilgit - the economic and political centre of the Northern Areas and the focal point of change. From Gilgit they reach the small village shops⁷. The local dress, *qamiz-shalwar* (shirt and trousers), common throughout Pakistan, was introduced to Nager and Hunza during the first decades of the 20th century; at that time some men started tailoring as a new profession and copied these garments which were later sold in the Gilgit *bazaar*⁸. Anoraks, parkas, and sleeping bags are mostly from equipment left over from mountaineering and trekking expeditions. Imported European shirts, trousers, pullovers, socks, etc. come from down-country *landa bazaars* (specialising in second-hand clothing) and are sold in Gilgit. Shoes, boots, and sandals are either made of leather or often of cheap plastic, sometimes having the forms of traditional leather shoes common down-country and imitated through ornamentation. Since some decades, local leather boots, wooden and grass sandals have nearly disappeared.

Objects of luxury often spread easily⁹. In Nager, Hunza and other mountain valleys of the Karakorum, prestigious luxury goods had already been introduced from Kashmir and eastern Turkestan as unique pieces especially during colonial times (19th/20th c.)¹⁰. Thus, it is known who brought the first empty whisky bottle and gramophone from India and presented it to the king of Hunza¹¹.

From the beginning, loan-words for these items were derived from subcontinental English and penetrated the local Burushaski language through Urdu; in this context, the number of English loan-words is a suitable barometer for the change in local material culture¹². Some examples from the semantic field of imported goods (more than 50 loan-words) are: glass bottle (*botal*), glass (*gilas*), lamp (*jermani*, *lemp*), matchsticks (*maches*), man's coat (*koot*), waistcoat (*waskat*), jacket (*jaket*), sandals (*silipar*), etc.

⁷ Frembgen 1985 b.

⁸ Frembgen 1996.

⁹ Thumwald 1932: 560.

¹⁰ Frembgen 1985 a: 211-212.

¹¹ Schomberg 1935: 122-123; Müller-Stellrecht 1979: 271.

¹² Frembgen 1997.

Modern innovations, which took place in the first half of the 20th century in the fields of the economy and material culture, are reflected in the trade relations of that time¹³. Since then, new consumer items were continuously brought to Nager and Hunza and were predominantly used by the royal families and by selected members of the upper class. Members of the ruling dynasties, noblemen, and official traders were the first agents promoting change. To illustrate the local trade it is sufficient to give one example: chinaware was a prestigious commodity imported by Hunzukuts from Eastern Turkestan and traded to the neighbouring Nagerkuts. The value of a teacup (*chai-shisha*, *kap*) was one lump of butter or one silver rupee (introduced in 1935)¹⁴.

It should be mentioned that "all craftsmen only practise their crafts as subsidiary occupations in their spare time. Always they are first of all peasants, supporting their families by the cultivation of their fields" (Lorimer in Müller-Stellrecht 1979: 90). This statement by the late D.L.R. Lorimer (1876-1962), who spent 1934/35 working as a linguist in Hunza, holds true today. In the following part, I shall focus on innovations in the different fields of traditional crafts in Nager and Hunza.

Silversmithing

The silver and goldsmiths (*Zargar*) of Nager belong to the Kashmiriting, a clan originally from Kashmir. They chiefly worked for the royal family and other nobility, but also made bridal jewellery for the common people. Today, they have almost given up their craft. Only in the villages of Uyum Nager-Khay, Uyum Nager-Dalum Chamaling and Sumaiyar-Jatorkhan is there one silversmith still working on a part-time basis. As these master craftsmen do not train apprentices any more, the craft is dying out. Nostalgically sticking to their tradition, they still use the old tools inherited from their forefathers.

In neighbouring Hunza the last two practising silversmiths were more innovative and had already imported new tools from Gilgit. A third one, an old man from Altit, has almost given up his craft. None of them has an apprentice. From the 13 different types of traditional silver jewellery, only a few items are still ordered for a bridal set. Since the 19th century

¹³ Frembgen 1985 a. It should be mentioned that the role of traders, for example of Gujars, itinerant craftsmen, Pathans, etc., as "transmitters" of innovations has not yet been studied in detail.

¹⁴ Frembgen 1985 a: 205-206.

some of these pieces had been decorated with imported glass beads instead of the locally found precious and semi-precious stones traditionally used for that purpose. In addition, special gold embroidered shoes (*zare kabshamuts*) for the bride were imported at that time from Kashmir and Peshawar, while today they are bought in Gilgit.

Nowadays the Nagerkuts and Hunzukuts as a rule buy jewellery from the Kashmiri and Hazara silversmiths in Gilgit. It is of inferior quality and in no way comparable to the pieces produced even 40 or 50 years ago. The community of silversmiths in Gilgit consisted until 1947 only of Kashmiri and two Hindus. After partition, two *Zargars* from Baffa (Hazara District) and one from Taxila migrated to Gilgit. Many Kashmiri jewellers took advantage of the new economic possibilities after the completion of the KKH and became traders, contractors, etc. Several craftsmen from Baffa and Balakot (Hazara District) responded to the demand for silversmiths in the expanding town. In the time of Ayub Khan, these Hazarawal (ethnic Awan) got special credits through the "House Building Finance Corporation".

With regard to the use of new imported tools, it is important to note that the leather bellows (*phushun*), are still used in Nager but no longer in Hunza and Gilgit. Today the Gilgiti and Hunza craftsmen work with electric or hand wheeled blowers (*banta*), such as those made by the "Diamond-Company" (Karachi). In addition, silversmiths use the following imported tools and materials: small saws, sandpaper (*chaghishum chapis*), blowpipes (*gabi*), Bunsen burners (*barnal*) for soldering, solder (*tanka*) and clay crucibles (*gutali*).

The immigrant Gilgiti silversmiths introduced new types and variations of jewellery. Some examples may be mentioned: the standardised form of the necklace (*har*) with a central brooch has been common since the 1930s and 1940s and was actually borrowed from Kashmir (fig. 2). Heart shaped brooches have been very much in favour since the early 1980s; as a pattern these *panwala-har* (necklaces with brooches in the shape of a betel leaf) were taken from "design-books" (see below; figs. 3-4). Many new forms were also introduced for rings.

Single pieces and certain types of jewellery clearly document the recent modern changes: sometimes even "non-traditional" materials can be incorporated. In Gilgit, for example, I found a silver brooch (*bazuband*) with a curious new medallion in the centre: instead of a precious stone or a

glass stone it contained a plastic relief in the shape of a basket with fruits (fig. 5). Apart from this "transformative" response to plastic culture, other craftsmen are more imitative. For about 20 years, new earrings have been made with a small attached star. These pieces are stylistic adaptations reflecting the awareness of Pakistani down-country culture. Furthermore, for customers of Ismaili faith, jewellery elements are made which imitate the crown of the Agha Khan.

The people of Nager and Hunza know a proverb: *thoskushi besan uyoon uyam* - "everything new is pleasant"¹⁵ which also holds true for jewellery. Besides variations of traditional forms of jewellery, the use of imported "design-books" from Karachi and Rawalpindi is of incisive importance and leads to the production of very new and fashionable types of jewellery characteristic of urban Pakistani culture (fig. 3). In addition, recently, more and more gold jewellery has been sold in Gilgit's jewellery shops.

Blacksmithing

The general remarks on change in the craft of silver and goldsmiths also hold true for the blacksmiths (*Bericho*) of Nager and Hunza. As a lot of ironmongery has been imported to Gilgit since the completion of the KKH, orders for local blacksmiths have been considerably reduced. Many underprivileged craftsmen migrated to Gilgit and Karachi to look for new sources of income. In autumn 1992, for example, only two craftsmen were still working in Uyum Nager. Before the opening of the KKH, at least 20 of them had their workshops in this main village of Nager.

In colonial times, the Nager blacksmiths started to use imported tools like "Nicholson" made in the USA, and since the end of the 1970s iron ferrules (*sukanja*) instead of locally made files (*murmu*). In several cases the leather bellows were replaced in the middle of the 1980s by the Gilgit-made metal wheels pushed by a handle. Wire has been imported since the end of the 19th century¹⁶.

For about two decades, the blacksmiths have produced simple stoves (*bukhari*, fig. 6), wheelbarrows, water receptacles, buckets, cookers (fig. 7), and still earlier, folding knives. Broken aluminium vessels have been recycled and remodelled into ladles, etc. (since the British). As raw

¹⁵ Tiffou 1993: 77 (No. 1188 B).

¹⁶ Cf. Müller-Stellrecht 1979: 272.

materials for recycling are more readily available, it remains to be seen if this sector of refabrication will expand or not.

Woodcarving and Carpentry

With the import of cheap industrially produced bowls, cups, etc., the demand for turned wooden vessels came immediately to a stop at the end of the 1960s/beginning of the 1970s. Today the *tarkhan* (carpenter), who has the highest status among craftsmen, builds houses, makes agricultural tools, chests, and containers for storing grain, as well as more recently recently turned legs for tables and beds, coat hooks, etc. In Aliabad (Hunza) carpenters even started in 1994 to produce rectangular tubes with attached metal handles for churning butter as a modification of the traditional round ones (*tsaghu*) which are increasingly being replaced (fig. 8).

Wooden spoons, albeit almost eliminated in the domestic domain, are still carved especially in the Nager village of Chalt (in the so-called Shenber area of the lower Hunza Valley). Spoons of two different kinds are presently made and sold primarily to souvenir shops in Gilgit (where spoons sold in 1992 for 20 rupees and forks for 10 rupees each) and in Hunza (fig. 9/right and left). Many of the craftsmen belong to the royal family as the carving of spoons has long been considered as a true artistic skill (*hunar*). Thus, Raja Sultan Alif Khan himself invented a new form besides the traditional spoons for eating and scooping: the spoon whose scoop is perforated is used for frying *pakora*, a pastry introduced to the Gilgiti by Punjabi people. Unlike the use of the *pakora* spoon, which remained an individual habit, the *kafgir* spoon, with a broad flat scoop to serve rice, became socially accepted. It has been known since the 1930s and 1940s and was introduced together with this new food. Generally *kafgirs* are made of steel, but sometimes also of wood (fig. 9, right). Wooden carved forks are exclusively produced for sale to tourists (fig. 10).

Since 1986/87 traders from Gilgit and Hunza (Karimabad, Aliabad) have come to Chalt to buy spoons and forks (cost: 10 rupees each). To carry out a wholesale order, the most famous carver, Haji Ahsan Ali from Chalt-Paen, bought a special "Black & Decker" electric saw as well as a "Bosch" grinder in 1990 in Karachi; with these he can finish about 20-30 spoons per day. Spoons carved for tourists are generally a bit shorter than the traditional ones used in local households. Furthermore, the form of the handle's end has been modified.

Innovations can be observed in a peripheral field of woodcarving as well, namely in the making of polo sticks. Thus, the Nagerkuts have used at least six different forms of sticks during the 20th century¹⁷. Each form was introduced by a famous player and differs in length and weight of the bat. Besides these local forms of polo sticks (*mishaski pinch*), the *angrezi pinch* has been in use since the British; today it is imported from the Punjab.

In the field of wood carving and carpentry, several new tools and related techniques have been introduced during the 20th century, for example drilling machines, grinding machines, balances, and planes (figs. 10-11). Nowadays, craftsmen also buy files and knives from Gilgit *bazaar*. Some innovators are still known by name: a genuine invention is attributed to Wazir Asadullah Beg (d. 1886) from Hunza; after much effort he prepared a mixture of the outer skin of walnuts and a special black earth to colour the wooden parts¹⁸. In the time of Mir Sikandar Khan (1905-1940), the carpenter Mozahir from the Nager village of Chalt-Bala went to Kashmir and returned with a spirit-level made by "John Rabone & Sons. Birmingham" (fig. 11) as well as with a "Ding-Dong" handsaw, screw clamp, and a plane made in England. In a double-edged way the introduction of the large handsaw has made wood cutting much easier; in densely wooded regions, like Indus-Kohistan and Nuristan, it has helped to increase lumbering and has led to ruthless, excessive felling. That carpenters worked differently in the past can be concluded from D.L.R. Lorimer's remark that "... with chisel and adze they did better work than these craftsmen of today with their fine tools" (Lorimer in Müller-Stellrecht 1979: 92).

With regard to house construction, it should be noted that new hybrid forms are appearing: for example, within the central square room - the basic unit of the Nager and Hunza house - the spatial arrangement of the rear of the house with traditional architectural elements (platforms for sitting and sleeping, pillars, wardrobes) is preserved, whereas the area near the entrance may be furnished with a modern sofa, chairs, and a table for the reception of guests, thus reflecting the new prestigious lifestyle (fig. 1).

¹⁷ Frembgen 1988.

¹⁸ Müller-Stellrecht 1979: 92.

Textile Art

In addition to the traditional techniques of sewing clothes and embroidering women's caps, sleeves, collars, etc., knitting and crocheting were borrowed from the British. In colonial times British officers presented the first metal knitting needles and crochet hooks as well as textile samples to the local royal women.

A special innovation goes back to Raja Sultan Ismail from the Nager village of Rahbat near Chalt who was the only one to carve flexible needles out of ibex horn since the 1960s. As this kind of carving is delicate and time-consuming, and moreover, the raw material difficult to obtain, these needles are only found among the royal family of Nager.

As far as embroidery is concerned, samplers provide the best survey on changes in cross-stitch motifs¹⁹. New motifs, like the rider, gun, tiger, dog, and duck, are inspired by pattern-books and brochures brought from down-country. Women predominantly use them on modern even-weave fabric made into cushions, wall hangings, napkins, etc. Modern cotton or silk thread are industrially dyed and therefore brightly coloured and lustrous. Since about the 1970s, variegation has been increasingly considered old-fashioned by men and is associated with women²⁰. Therefore, men either prefer one colour or do without any embroidery at all on their coats and waistcoats.

Women's caps are still traditionally embroidered. They consist of two parts, namely the plate and the brim; in former times the brim was stiffened with pieces of bark, but today it is filled with pasteboard (packing material from corn flakes, Vasa shoes, etc.). The use of thick, imported cotton as embroidery thread has led to a considerable decline in the quality of this textile art. In neighbouring Hunza, caps are made in greater quantities for sale to tourists. Caps of inferior quality have a density of 16 (or even only 8) threads per square centimetre on the plate and 20 on the brim, whereas excellent pieces from the first half of the 20th century have 81 to 100 on the brim. Until about 1946 Nager women used local silk for embroidery which was produced in the village of Ghulmet²¹. As young women have stopped wearing these traditional caps, whose style was

¹⁹ My monograph on embroidery in the Karakorum has a special chapter on modern developments in textile art. For more detailed studies and illustrations, the reader is kindly referred to that forthcoming book.

²⁰ Frembgen Ms.

²¹ Frembgen 1989.

borrowed from the Pamir region, embroidery is slowly but steadily dying out.

Techniques and motifs of traditional embroidery partly survive on modern tea cosies, embroidered devotional pictures, "tablecloths", etc. Since 1994 an NGO based in central Hunza, called "Karakorum Handicraft Development Programme", has been promoting the production of souvenirs decorated with traditional embroidery designs (fig. 12).

Finally, a very specialised handicraft must be mentioned: the famous old tailor Nisar Ali from the Nager village Budalas, widely known in the valley as *Darzi Nisaro*, is the only one making riding-breeches (*birdis*) for polo players. In his youth he accompanied Mir Sikandar Khan to Kashmir, received some training there, and later began the manufacture of breeches in his native village. As there is a great demand for this special clothing among the polo players of Nager and Hunza, the innovation proved to be very successful.

Weaving

In each village some farmers work as part-time weavers. On horizontal looms they produce long strips of sheep wool (for caps, waistcoats, coats, etc.) and on vertical ones, Kelims made of goat-hair. With the change in dress, already mentioned above, the demand for the traditional woollen fabric called *philam* has enormously decreased as modern westernised clothes are considerably cheaper and in addition socially more recognised. Since the completion of the KKH, only a very limited amount of *philam* is now sold in the Gilgit bazaar. Until now, the looms as well as the form and patterns of the fabrics have remained unchanged. Nevertheless, in Hunza, Kelims of white artificial silk have been woven since the middle of the 1980s; the raw material is imported from Karachi. Meanwhile, it is possible to find carpets in the Gilgit hotels of a rather heterogeneous provenance: the goat-hair comes from Chilas, the threads were twisted in Hunza, and the piece was woven in Yasin by a local weaver under the guidance of an old master craftsman from Hunza. By the middle of the 1970s, Nagerkuts from the village of Pheker settled in Gilgit and specialised in the trade of woollen caps for men (today there are 11 shops on Pul Road). The fabric is made by weavers from Pheker whose women sew the caps at home; when finished, they are marketed in Gilgit.

Basketry

Household items made of willow twigs (baskets, bowls, and other vessels in different shapes) are still produced exclusively for the needs of the villagers themselves. Therefore, they remain virtually unchanged in form and technique.

However, in this field of traditional crafts too, cultural borrowing is on the increase; thus, in the Shenber area, the *chura* type of basket for collecting hay is increasingly being replaced by jute and plastic bags. Instead of the traditional woven plates for drying apricots, simple wooden planks can be seen. Ali Madad, a craftsman from Huseinabad (Hunza) who does wickerwork on a part-time basis, introduced a new form of a flat basket standing on a ring and decorated with a chiaroscuro pattern obtained by peeled and unpeeled willow twigs. In the middle of the 1980s he borrowed this type of basket used for keeping bread and fruits from similar shaped baskets brought by Pakhtun traders to Gilgit (fig. 13).

Leather Crafts

The preparation of hides and the leather-work was always of limited importance in the Karakorum. Today, in Nager there are, for example, only two families producing leather goods (bridles, saddles, sieves, bags, whips) and repairing shoes on a part-time basis.

Modern change has generally led to a great decline of this craft. Therefore, members of the socially despised occupational group of the *Shauting* increasingly work as tenants. Since the 1960s, their traditional products have been replaced by cheap linen bags for corn, metal sieves, plastic shoes etc.; nowadays, locally made leather bags are only used in remote villages.

Children's Toys

In Nager and Hunza, as everywhere in Pakistan, boys play with hoops bent from metal wire which are driven with a stick. Tin cans (imported ghee containers, etc.) are recycled and made into small cars, tractors (fig. 14)²², and other toys either by the boy himself or by his father. These toys are proof of the widespread fascination for vehicles, and are virtually icons of the modern world²³.

²² The tractor belongs to the collection of the State Museum of Anthropology in Munich (Inv.-No. 89-311 934, Coll. J. Frembgen 1989, L 20 cm).

²³ Seriff 1996: 19.

Material objects clearly reflect the dynamics of culture change. With regard to technological improvements, Nagerkuts and Hunzukuts pursue economic utilitarianism. Corresponding cultural borrowing can be found in different fields of traditional crafts, sometimes to a considerable degree. In the Karakorum as elsewhere, members of the nobility, as well as underprivileged craftsmen from the bottom rungs of society are more eager to adopt new material products; key communicators and taste-makers come from these groups of culture-brokers. However, innovations are not restricted to crafts, where the elimination of objects belonging to traditional material culture is already in full swing. The diffusion is taking place on a larger scale; Nager and Hunza are on the accepting and receiving ends of a process of contact with Pakistan's modern mass-consumer culture spreading an Indo-Pakistani "standard culture". In this context, Punjabi, Pakhtun, etc., represent the "donors". The transfer of artefacts and ideas from the southern lowland to the northern highland here implies interaction between a dominating socio-cultural system and a local culture, situated in a peripheral high mountain region which was until recently rather isolated from the subcontinent. Suzanne Seriff's notion, that "...mass-mediated images, technologies, and commercial products collide and intersect with local materials, communities, and customs on a daily basis" (1996: 20), can also be applied to the present case study. A discussion of the conflicting values, the desire for monetary gains, the problems of migration and employment, etc., is beyond the scope of this paper and can only be mentioned briefly. However, concerning the new material culture, we can argue that it is still being worked out and that we may expect a kind of hybridism as a response to change and novelty. Richard Thurnwald made the general remark that "...material objects never remain as they are, since they meet another environment, another society, other men with other aims and traditions. Consequently their function changes" (1932:560). Thurnwald probably had the colonial situation in Africa or in the Pacific in mind, where differences between confronting cultures were tremendous. In comparison, the "cultural tension" between Nager and Hunza, on the one hand and down-country on the other, is not as high according to my observations. Apart from the binding force of Islam, they share many common values, even if the forces of conservatism seem to be stronger in Nager.

Nevertheless, generally speaking traditional material culture is being lost quickly, traditional crafts and corresponding skills are on the decline, so their documentation is therefore an urgent task.

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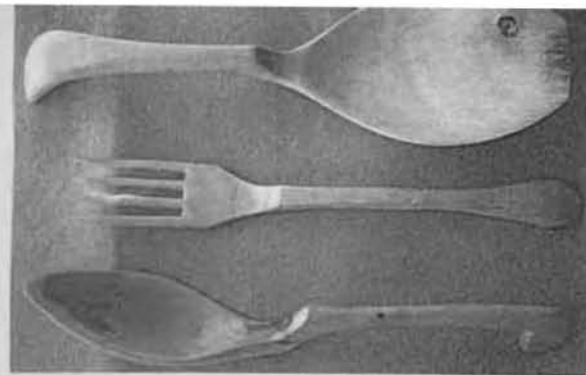
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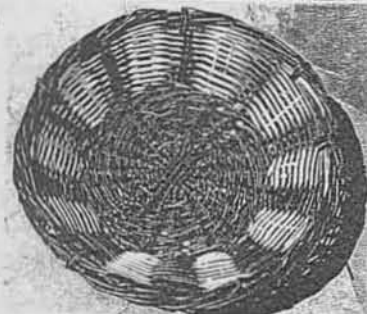


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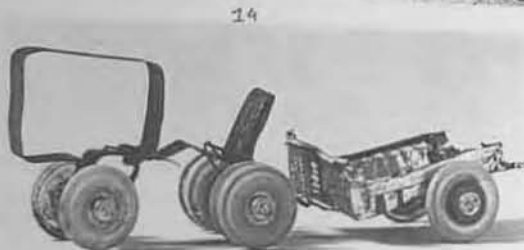
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Illustrations

n°1 Modern furnished reception room of a royal family in the Nager village of Ghulmeth (J. Frembgen, Oct. 1992).

n°2 Silver necklace with a central brooch in a jewellery shop in Gilgit, made by Zargar Hajji Khan Shirin (J. Frembgen, July 1991).

n°3 Necklace of the *panwala* type depicted in "Hanif Jewellery Design Book" (J. Frembgen, April 1992).

n°4 Panwala necklace made by Zargar Tariq Javed (Gilgit) after the design of ill. no. 3 (J. Frembgen, April 1992).

n°5 Silver brooch with medallion in the possession of a Hunza family residing in Gilgit, originally made by a silversmith from Gupis (upper Gilgit Valley) (J. Frembgen, July 1991).

n°6 Workshop of Ustad Ibrahim in Rahbat (Nager) showing stoves and various tools (J. Frembgen, Oct. 1992).

n°7 Workshop in Karimabad (Hunza) where metal is recycled and turned into cookers, buckets, pots, etc. (J. Frembgen, Oct. 1992).

n°8 Tubes for churning butter made by carpenters in Aliabad (Hunza) (J. Frembgen, April 1994).

n°9 Wooden spoons and a fork made in a Nager village of Chalt and sold in Gilgit tourist shops (J. Frembgen, July 1991).

n°10 Imported iron plane made in England, and above copied wooden plane made by the carpenter Qurban Ali in Hakalshal (Hopar/Nager) (J. Frembgen, July 1991).

n°11 Imported and locally made tools used by the carpenter Nisar Ali in Chalt-Bala (Nager): spirit-level made by "John Rabone & Sons. Makers, Birmingham", file made in China, plane made in USA, tools for wood turning made by local blacksmiths, and adjustable pliers made in England (J. Frembgen, Oct. 1992).

n°12 Embroidered souvenirs sold in a tourist shop in Karimabad/Hunza (J. Frembgen, Nov. 1996).

n°13 Basket made by Ali Madad from Hunza (J. Frembgen, April 1992).

n°14 Tractor with trailer made by the 13-year-old Amanullah from Altit/Hunza (S. Autrum Mulzer/State Museum of Anthropology, Munich).