

### **Thematic session V: Knowledge generation and heritage preservation<sup>1</sup>**

The final session of the ‘meeting of minds’ included three contributions from speakers of different origins and educational backgrounds about diverse aspects of knowledge generation and heritage preservation in the Pamirs.

Odinamamad Mirzo, former headmaster and current curator of the museum in Namadgut, Ishkashim District of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (Tajikistan), provided interesting background information on historical knowledge generation in the Wakhan and Ishkashim Regions of modern day Tajikistan. He emphasised the general importance of communication corridors for knowledge generation and education in remote mountain regions, and described the effects of Soviet educational expansion in the Tajik Pamirs. He concluded his presentation with an introduction to the local Museum of Namadgut, which was established under his guidance.

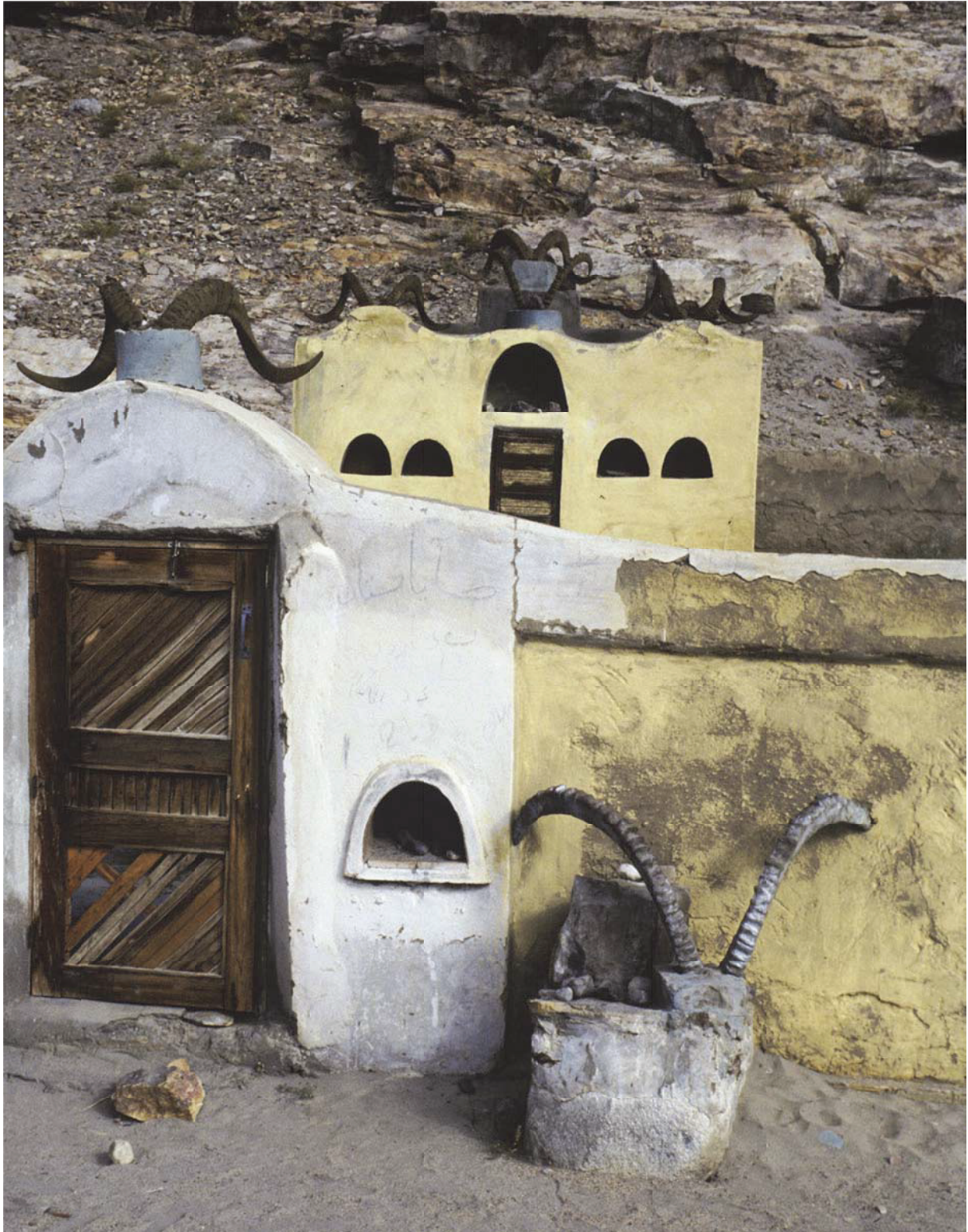
Nazir Ahmed Bulbul introduced himself as being a ‘shepherd’ preserving and generating knowledge about the Wakhi Culture. In his various functions as the President of the Local Council of Gulmit, Gilgit-Baltistan (Pakistan); the headmaster of the local school; and a poet, he pursues different approaches to promote Wakhi culture and language and to preserve the cultural heritage of his people.

Markus Hauser, a Swiss cartographer from Winterthur with a long standing enthusiasm for the high mountains of Tajikistan, presented the ‘Pamir Archive’ project, which he started 20 years ago. Since then he has continuously collected, digitised and catalogued sources for the project, including: books and articles, maps, images, and postcards with the objective of systematising, preserving and making information available about the Pamirs and adjacent regions.

The discussion that followed dealt with the advantages and challenges of putting an oral language such as Wakhi into writing, the question of whether development and cultural preservation are contradictive or mutually beneficial processes, and the importance, and often overseen, potentials of local knowledge for heritage preservation. As a possible solution for the latter problem, ‘public archaeology’ with its high degree of local participation in research and preservation activities was proposed.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on minutes recorded by Marina Heyink and Sarah van Bentum



*Religious shrines (aston) form a major asset of cultural heritage in Tajik Wakhan and have been studied by various local scholars  
Photograph © Hermann Kreutzmann 10 August 1999*