

University of Tartu  
Faculty of Arts and Humanities  
Institute of Cultural Research

Farzana Shaheen

Navigating Heritage in Transition: Educating for the  
Preservation of Transforming Female Shamanism in  
Gilgit-Baltistan Amidst Islamisation and Modernity

Master's Thesis

Supervisors:

Dr. Art Leete, PhD, University of Tartu

Dr. Matthew Mullane, PhD, University  
of Radboud

Dr Dennis Francis, PhD, University of  
Glasgow

Tartu 2025

Field of Studies: Education in Museums and Heritage Studies (EDUMaH)

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of:

International Master (IntM) in Education in Museums and Heritage: University of Glasgow, UK

Master of Arts in Humanities (MA) in Folkloristics and Applied Heritage Studies: University of Tartu, Estonia

Master of Arts (MA) in Arts and Culture: Radboud University, Netherlands

Authorship Declaration: I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

Farzana Shaheen, 06/08/2025

## **Abstract**

This research explores the transformation and resilience of one of the intangible cultural heritages of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan: female shamanism. Drawing on interviews with shamans from the Hunza and Nagar valleys, this study examines how Islamisation, modernity and patriarchal structures have reshaped ritual authority in the contemporary context. Using thematic analysis and a multi-theoretical lens, it shows how female shamans strategically adapt their practices to survive. While often marginalised, female *bitayu* continue to demonstrate resilience and agency, reframing rituals and resisting erasure. The study calls for gender-inclusive, culturally grounded approaches to safeguarding indigenous spiritual traditions.

**Keywords:** Intangible cultural heritage, Education, Female Shamanism, Gilgit-Baltistan

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
List of Figures .....	vii
Acknowledgement.....	viii
Author’s Declaration .....	ix
Definitions/Abbreviations .....	x
Chapter 1 Introduction .....	1
1.1 Research Problem .....	5
1.2 Research Objectives .....	5
1.3 Research Questions .....	5
1.4 Theoretical Framework.....	5
Chapter 2 Literature Review .....	7
2.1 Global Perspectives on Shamanism .....	8
2.2 Shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan .....	11
2.3 Studies on Female Shamanism .....	18
2.4 Gender Dynamics in Gilgit-Baltistan .....	20
2.5 Modernity in the Gilgit-Baltistan .....	22
2.6 Political and Religious History in GB.....	23
Chapter 3 Methodology .....	25
3.1 Rationale for Research Approach .....	25
3.2 Research Context .....	26
3.3 Research Sample and Data Sources .....	27
3.4 Sample Characteristics and Size .....	28
3.5 Ethical Considerations.....	28
3.6 Data Collection Methods .....	29
3.7 Data Analysis Methods.....	30

3.8	Validity and Reliability.....	30
3.9	Limitations and Delimitations.....	31
3.10	Conclusion.....	32
Chapter 4	Findings.....	33
4.1	Factors Impacting Gendered Shamanic Practices in Gilgit-Baltistan .....	34
4.1.1	Social Stigma, Modesty ( <i>Pardah</i> ), and Shifting Public Perceptions .	34
4.1.2	Familial Resistance and Patriarchal Authority .....	36
4.1.3	Economic Pressures and the Monetisation of Ritual .....	38
4.2	The Influence of Islamisation and Modernity.....	39
4.2.1	Islamisation as a Boundary Marker: Faith, Permission, and Respectability .....	39
4.2.2	Influence of Modernisation: Education, Healthcare, and Migration .	42
4.3	Perceptions of Change in Female Shamanism and Strategies for Preservation	44
4.3.1	Narratives of Decline vs. Transformation and Resilience.....	44
4.3.2	The Indispensability of Shamanic Roles and the Need for Preservation	45
4.4	Conclusion.....	47
Chapter 5	Discussion.....	48
5.1	The Social Construction and Maintenance of Gendered Shamanic Boundaries .....	48
5.2	Patriarchal Control and Female Agency .....	51
5.3	Gender Performance and the Limits of Ritual Authority .....	52
5.4	Testimonial Injustice and Gendered Ritual Hierarchies .....	53
5.5	The Impact of Islamic Homogenisation on Female Ritual Authority .....	54
5.6	Modernity, Development and the Displacement of Female Ritual Authority	57

5.7	Strategies for Preservation: Resilience, Adaptation, and the ICH Framework	58
5.7.1	Community-based valuation and Intergenerational Continuity .....	58
5.7.2	Documentation as a Cultural Resistance.....	59
5.7.3	Adaptive Practices and the Ethics of Continuity .....	60
5.8	Unanticipated Findings and Rival Explanations .....	60
5.9	Limitations and Transferability .....	61
5.10	Conclusion .....	61
Chapter 6	Conclusion .....	63
Chapter 7	Recommendation .....	65
7.1	Policy and Practice .....	65
7.2	Recommendations for Future Learning and Research .....	66
	An Epilogue.....	68
	Appendix 1: Interview reference list .....	69
	Appendix 2: Questionnaire Sample .....	70
	List of References .....	76
	Bibliography .....	95
	I, .....	102
	, .....	102
	supervised by .....	102
	; .....	102

## List of Figures

- Figure 1 Map of Gilgit-Baltistan. Source: Benz (2016:142) Framing Modernisation Interventions: Reassessing the Role of Migration and Translocality in Sustainable Mountain Development in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. .... 2
- Figure 2 A picture of a female *bitan* performing in a public event, taken by Lorimer in 1924. Source: Kreutzmann, H. (2020). Hunza Matters: Bordering and Ordering between Ancient and New Silk Roads. Iran and the Caucasus, 27(1):26. ....50

## Acknowledgement

This research work results from an intellectual journey that would not have been possible without the support, generosity, and encouragement of many people to whom I am deeply grateful.

Firstly, I am grateful to be part of the EDUMaH programme, which has enabled me to embark on my intellectual journey and broaden my horizons in museum and heritage studies. Throughout this journey, my teachers and mentors at the University of Tartu (UT), Radboud University (RU), and the University of Glasgow (UoG) encouraged me to think critically and creatively, pushing me beyond my comfort zone.

I want to express my deep gratitude to my three supervisors from UT, RU, and UofG, whose thoughtful guidance, critical insights, and unwavering patience helped shape this work.

Secondly, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Hunza and Nagar people whose stories, wisdom, and courage inspired this research. I also want to acknowledge the support of local historians and anthropologists, particularly Salma Khan, whose discussions and interactions have consistently helped me grasp grassroots concepts.

To my parents and siblings, your belief in my vision, despite the distance, supported me, believed in me and provided me with quiet strength that has always been my grounding force.

I also acknowledge the use of Grammarly in writing, proofreading, and editing during the preparation of this thesis. It has been a valuable tool for enhancing the clarity and coherence of my work.

Finally, I dedicate this to the mountains of Gilgit-Baltistan, the wind, the untold and unheard stories, and the spirits that inhabit them. This research is not just mine. It belongs to all remarkable women of Gilgit-Baltistan, whose names are remembered and those whose stories have faded from memory. I hope this work honours your heritage, even as the world attempts to forget it.

## **Author's Declaration**

“I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow, University of Tartu, Radboud University, or any other institution.

This dissertation is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degree in Education in Museum and Heritage (EDUMaH) through the pathway of:

University of Glasgow – University of Tartu- Radboud University

Printed Name: Farzana Shaheen

Date: 06/08/2025

Word Count: 21334, including in-text citations.

## Definitions/Abbreviations

- Bitan (pl. Bitayu): A term used in the Burushaski language to refer to shamans. The word is gender-inclusive, used for both females and males.
- Dayal: A term used in the Shina language for a shaman; the same word is used for both male and female shamans.
- Chatti or chatti-tukki or chatto: An initiation ritual every shaman must go through to become a formal shaman. The same term is also used to refer to the sacrificed goat during the ritual.
- Epistemic Injustice: A term developed by philosopher Miranda Fricker (2007), referring to injustices done to individuals or groups in their capacity as knowers, especially when their knowledge is systematically devalued or ignored due to identity-based biases such as gender, race, or social status.
- Testimonial Injustice: A form of epistemic injustice that occurs when a speaker's credibility is unfairly downgraded due to prejudice against their social identity. This results in their testimony being given less weight than it deserves.
- Hermeneutical Injustice: A form of epistemic injustice, which arises when someone's social experience is misunderstood or rendered unintelligible because of a gap in the collective interpretive resources. This often occurs when marginalised groups lack the conceptual tools needed to make sense of or communicate their experiences within dominant discourses.
- ICH: Intangible Cultural Heritage, as defined by UNESCO, refers to traditions or living expressions inherited from ancestors and passed on to descendants, including oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, and festival events, as well as knowledge.
- GB: Gilgit-Baltistan
- AKDN: Aga Khan Development Network.
- KKH: Karakoram Highway
- NVivo: Qualitative Data Analysis Software
- Islamisation: A political and cultural process by which Islamic principles are institutionally and socially imposed or emphasised in governance, education,

and public life, particularly in post-colonial Pakistan under Zia-ul-Haq's regime in the 1980s.

- **Modernity:** A complex socio-cultural and political process involving transformations in worldview, knowledge systems, technology, and social structures, often associated with development and rationalisation.
- **Uphusas:** A Burushaski term for exorcism practices used to suppress or eliminate perceived spiritual possession or calling.
- **Pardah:** A cultural and religious practice associated with women's physical and social seclusion to preserve modesty.
- **Pariting or mamacharu:** Burushaski terms used for fairies or spirits with whom shamans are believed to communicate or from whom they draw power.
- **Zikr:** Islamic devotional acts involving the repetitive utterance of short prayers, phrases or names of God.
- **Sharam:** A culturally embedded concept roughly translates to 'modesty,' 'shame,' 'honour.' It governs socially accepted behaviour, particularly for women and is associated with moral conduct, family reputation and personal dignity.
- **Bepardagi:** The term denotes the lack of modesty or immodest behaviour, often implying the absence of physical or moral boundaries. It is viewed as a violation of *sharam* and is stigmatised in a conversational or patriarchal social setting.
- **UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, a UN agency promoting international collaboration through educational, scientific, and cultural reforms, including safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

In the valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan, female shamans have historically played a significant role as healers, intermediaries between spiritual entities, and custodians of ancestral wisdom. However, oral histories and ethnographic records indicate that once widely practised, spiritual traditions have now been marginalised. This transition has redefined the parameters of spiritual legitimacy, relegating female shamanism to the periphery of decline.

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) is a mountainous region in northern Pakistan, formerly known as the Northern Areas. The name Gilgit-Baltistan was officially adopted in 2009 under the 'Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order.' It lacks constitutional recognition as a province or state within Pakistan, resulting in an ambiguous political status shaped by its unique historical context. Under international law, the region is considered a 'disputed territory.' Its territory is claimed by both India and Pakistan (Fig. 1). India maintains that the region is an integral part of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, and Pakistan asserts its claim based on local accessions and liberation (Sökefeld, 2014; Bouzas, 2015; Sansthan and UN General Assembly, 2024). It has a very important strategic location, which made it central to colonial geopolitics and the 'Great Game'<sup>1</sup>. Gilgit-Baltistan's territory, which Pakistan administers, encompasses 72,971 km<sup>2</sup> of land and is dominated by towering mountain ranges, where the Himalayas, Hindu Kush, and Karakorum converge, forming the region's geography, climate, and history. The settlements in the region are clustered in river valleys, while much of the region remains uninhabitable due to steep slopes, aridity, or other height factors (Sökefeld, 2014). It encompasses various valleys and districts, and its population includes *Shins*, *Burusho*, *Wakhi*, and other groups (Muhammad, 1905; Hassnain, 1978; Dani, 1991). This ethnic and linguistic diversity reflects centuries of cultural negotiation, migration, and religious influence, illustrating Barth's (1969) argument that cultural identities are dynamic, continually shaped by shifting political, religious, and social boundaries.

---

<sup>1</sup> The term "The Great Game" was first coined by British agent Arthur Conolly and popularised by Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim* (1901). It refers to the geopolitical rivalry between the British and Russian Empires over control and influence in Central Asia during the 19th and early 20th centuries. (Drachenfels et al., 2008). For further discussion of the Great Game and its implications for Gilgit-Baltistan, see Hassnain (1978), Miller (1984), Khan (1999), Drachenfels et al. (2008), Meyer and Brysac (1999), Sökefeld (2014), and Brown (2014).



Figure 1 Map of Gilgit-Baltistan. Source: Benz (2016:142) Framing Modernisation Interventions: Reassessing the Role of Migration and Translocality in Sustainable Mountain Development in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan.

The religious history of Gilgit-Baltistan is undocumented due to the absence of early local records, yet ancient rock art and parallels with other Dardic cultures<sup>2</sup> suggest its ties to traditions like those of the Kalasha Kafirs and Kho<sup>3</sup> (Hauptmann, 2005; Biddulph, 1880; Nicolaus, 2015; Danni, 1991). Buddhist art and inscriptions from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries

<sup>2</sup> The terms "Dard" and "Dardistan" have been used to describe the people and regions of the Upper Indus Valley and mountainous areas north of Kashmir. However, it is essential to note that "Dard" is primarily a linguistic term without ethnic, racial, or historical meaning. Many people in this region do not use the term to describe themselves but rather identify by the name of the valley or village they inhabit (Dani, 1991:28-29; Leitner, 1996:59)

<sup>3</sup> The Kho, primarily residing in the Chitral region, speak Khowar and are often regarded as the area's original inhabitants (Biddulph, 1880: 62)

across Chilas, Gilgit, and Hunza indicate the region's significance along the Silk Road<sup>4</sup> as a centre for cultural exchange (Nicolaus, 2015b; Csáji, 2011). Earlier to Buddhism, animism and Bon-like practices prevailed and later merged with Hindu elements.

Shamanism flourished in this significant part of the Silk Road, especially in areas such as Chilas, Hunza, and Chalt-Chaprot valleys. A Bronze Age petroglyph depicting masked figures suggests its ancient roots (Hauptmann, 2005:25). Indeed, this intangible heritage flourished in areas like the Chalt-Chaprot, Baghrot, Gilgit, Hunza, and Nagar, except in upper Hunza (Gojal), and initially in Baltistan (Lorimer, 1929; Sidky, 1994). Interestingly, Baltistan itself later became a hub for shamanistic practice when, as Nicolaus (2015a, 2015b) recounts, a group led by Gil Singe resisted conversion to Islam in Gilgit and migrated there, establishing a tradition that persisted until the later spread of Shia Islam prompted further migrations towards Ladakh. Although male and female *bitan* no longer practised in the same manner as before, they continued to be essential spiritual and cultural traditions in many parts of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan has deep roots, dating back centuries, and is firmly anchored in oral traditions, animistic beliefs, and indigenous practices and cosmologies. Locally, a shaman is known by various names due to linguistic diversity, such as *dayal*<sup>5</sup> in the Shina language<sup>6</sup> and *bitan* in the Burushaski language<sup>7</sup>. They act as a spiritual mediator, channelling communication with supernatural beings called *barai* (Shina), *Mamacharo* (meaning mothers), or *pariting* (Burushaski). Within this spiritual framework, *bitayu*<sup>8</sup> use mythical narratives to use mythical stories to ritualise their worldview, conceptualising natural occurrences, spiritual forces, and collective ethics through stories, symbols, and motifs. As noted by Frog (2014) and Eliade (1964), mythology serves as a vital symbolic system through which shamans encode cosmological knowledge and social ethics. Historically, these practitioners played a significant role in divination, political prophecies,

---

<sup>4</sup> A remarkable testament to history is the journey of Fa-Xian, a devoted Chinese Buddhist monk who travelled on foot from China to India and Sri Lanka between 399 and 412 CE. His quest to acquire sacred Buddhist scriptures led him to leave behind rock inscriptions, marking his profound dedication and the enduring connection between the cultures of the Silk Road (Nicolaus, 2021: 209).

<sup>5</sup> is also written as *daiyal* or *danyal* by various scholars.

<sup>6</sup> Shina is a Hindu-Kush Indo-Aryan language (Dani, 1991; Weinreich, 2015)

<sup>7</sup> The Burushaski language, spoken by the Burusho people in the valleys of Hunza, Nagar, Gilgit, Gupis-Yasin, and Iskhkoman, features several dialects and is recognised as linguistically isolated (Britannica, Online).

<sup>8</sup> For my convenience, I prefer to use *bitan* (pl. *bitayu*) and *chatti-tukki*.

crop growth, and other matters. They also served as healers, diagnosing and resolving afflictions like *nazar* (evil eye), *saya* (spirit possession) and offering protection through *taveez* (amulets). The former function has vanished due to changes such as the abolition of princely states and a societal shift toward job-oriented lifestyles rather than agriculture. However, healing practices appear to remain valid. Shamanism in GB is characterised by a profound and intricate relationship with a hierarchical structure of female fairies. *Bitan* or *Dayal*, as the intermediary between the human and spirit worlds, undergo a symbolic public initiation called the *Chatti* (also known as *Chatto* or *Chatti-tukki*)<sup>9</sup> ceremony. This ritual involves a blood sacrifice along with the exclusive participation of ritual musicians from the Dom caste (*Bericho*), which endorses the enduring nature of ancient beliefs in the face of significant religious and social changes.

Female shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan is understudied, limiting our understanding of its role as a knowledge system within the region's sociocultural and spiritual context. This gap is further exacerbated by a lack of scholarly attention to the ways in which Islamisation and modernisation have interacted to marginalise indigenous traditions, thereby eroding the local intangible heritage. In particular, the viewpoints of both male and female shamans from the Hunza and Nagar Valleys on the evolution of female shamanistic activities have been largely disregarded, leaving a critical aspect of this shift unexplored. Addressing these gaps is essential for preserving and contextualising the region's unique spiritual traditions despite the fast societal upheaval.

To explore the evolution of female shamanistic practices in Gilgit-Baltistan's Hunza and Nagar Valleys, regions selected for their cultural significance and accessibility to the researcher. This research adopted a qualitative approach, in which semi-structured interviews with local shamans (both male and female) form the core of the study, sufficient for capturing personal narratives on historical shifts, societal influences, and gendered roles in shamanism. In-depth discussions with these participants provided sufficient perspectives to understand the patterns of perception regarding the transformation of female shamanistic practices and the impact of modern developments in the context of the Hunza and Nagar valleys. The interview transcripts were analysed thematically alongside academic literature, with ethical standards upheld through informed consent, anonymisation, and strict

---

<sup>9</sup> *Chatti* or *Chatto* is used in the Shina dialect of Lower Hunza, which refers to both ceremony and scarified goat, while in the Shina dialect of Bagrot Valley and other parts of Nagar, it is called *chatti-tukki* (Nicolaus, 2015a:206), and in the context of Chaprote Valley, Hussain (1998) describes it as *Shut-toky* ceremony.

confidentiality. By centring lived experiences, this approach illuminated how cultural change and gender dynamics shaped shamanistic traditions in the region.

## **1.1 Research Problem**

The transformation and adaptation of female shamans in Gilgit-Baltistan symbolise a broader struggle between preserving indigenous knowledge and the pressures of modern challenges. This conflict is intensified by socio-religious and cultural transformations, particularly Islamisation and the rise of conservative views, which have pushed aside traditional practices that were once key to the community's identity. As modern influences increasingly regard these rituals as outdated, the marginalisation of female shamanistic practices threatens the region's intangible heritage. It raises urgent questions about balancing cultural preservation with evolving societal norms.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

- To examine the factors contributing to the transformation of female shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan.
- To analyse the impact of Islamisation on an ancient practice of female shamanism.
- To investigate the impact of modernity on female shamanism.
- To explore how male and female shamans of the Hunza and Nagar Valleys perceive this transformation of female shamanistic practices.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

- What factors are impacting gendered shamanic practices in Gilgit-Baltistan?
- How do local shamans perceive changes in female shamanism, and what strategies support its preservation?

## **1.4 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework provides a strong scientific basis and a guide for the study (Lederman and Lederman, 2025). This embodies the philosophical perspective that shapes the methodology and anchors its logic and evaluation criteria (Crotty, 1998). The current anthropological research has not yet produced comprehensive theories or analytical tools to fully understand the role of female shamans in historical or contemporary religious practices

(Sychenko, 2021). Therefore, this qualitative study draws on a multi-theoretical framework that integrates Fredrik Barth's Ethnic Boundary Theory (1969), feminist anthropology, and the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) framework. Together, these perspectives inform an intersectional analysis of the transformation of female shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan.

By applying Fredrik Barth's Ethnic Boundary Theory (1969), this research examined how cultural and religious boundaries are actively maintained, contested, and reshaped, rather than inherently fixed. Instead of assuming that female shamanism is vanishing, this research investigated how its practices are explicitly concealed, hybridised, or strategically adapted in response to shifting societal norms. Understanding these transformations is crucial for cultural heritage preservation and rethinking how indigenous traditions persist in the face of religious and modern influences. Moreover, in the coming chapters, feminist anthropology, particularly Mahmood's (2005) theory of the 'politics of piety', serves as a key lens to analyse how these shamans actively engage with, reinterpret or resist prevailing narratives. This approach challenges the notion of portraying them as mere passive subjects of socioreligious transformations. It acknowledges that agency is not always resistance but can also manifest through strategic adaptation, negotiation, or redefinition of roles within an evolving cultural and religious framework.

Shamanism, as a performative and metaphysical tradition, also falls under UNESCO's definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), which recognises the living practices shaped by community and vulnerable to generational discontinuity. According to the ICH framework, traditions do not vanish abruptly but instead face threats to transmission, particularly when younger generations disassociate from stigmatised or discouraged practices (Blake, 2009). This theory helps to address how female shamanism can be preserved despite societal shifts. Hence, this study treats female shamanism as a cultural form undergoing transformation. These frameworks collectively enable a nuanced understanding of how spiritual authority is negotiated, how traditions persist or evolve in the context of modernity, and how communities navigate the tensions between cultural preservation and change.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter explores the transformation of female shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Pakistan, situating it within global debates on shamanism, gender, and cultural change. The literature is retrieved through academic databases (JSTOR, ProQuest, & University library) and citations from foundational texts. This study examines shamanism and gender as interrelated categories, both of which are shaped by contingent historical and political forces. As shamanic traditions adapt to the changing demands of modernity, so too do the gender roles they reflect and reproduce, rendering both concepts fluid and constantly renegotiated.

This literature review critically investigates existing scholarship on shamanism, gender roles, transformations, and socio-political changes in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) from the 20th and 21st centuries, including ethnographic studies (e.g., Lorimer, Nicolaus), historical analyses (e.g., Dani, Leitner), and theoretical works (e.g., Eliade, Singh). It is structured thematically, discussing broad theoretical perspectives to specific regional analyses, to explore key trends, primary studies, research gaps, and theoretical frameworks relevant to this phenomenon. The literature on this topic can be categorised into the following themes:

1. Global Perspectives on Shamanism
2. Shamanism in GB
3. Female Shamanism in Asia.
4. Gender Dynamics in GB
5. Political and Religious History in GB

The term "shaman" derives from the Tungusic word '*saman*,' indicating its Siberian origins. At the same time, some scholars suggest Indo-European language connections between '*saman*' and the Pali '*samana*' (meaning "ascetic") as well as the verb root "sa" (meaning "to know"); these connections remain contested (Hutton, 2001; Ripinsky-Naxon, 1993). Siberian shamanism, while later intersecting with Buddhist influences, is widely seen as emerging from indigenous, palaeolithic hunter-gatherer contexts (Siikala & Hoppal, 1998). Shamanism is one of humanity's earliest spiritual practices, with shamans acting as intermediaries between the human and spirit realms using trance<sup>10</sup>, drumming, or dance

---

<sup>10</sup> Scholars have long grappled with how to categorise these terms like "trance" and "ecstasy," which dominate discussions but reflect disciplinary divides. Psychologists and anthropologists often favour "trance" for its associations with hypnotic states, while scholars of religion lean toward "ecstasy" (from the Greek ekstasis,

(Eliade, 1964; Bosworth, 2003). Unlike organised religions, it consists of complex beliefs and techniques interconnected with diverse religious systems such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam (Eliade, 1964; Bosworth, 2003; Darmaiza, 2021; Burbar, 2022; Faiz *et al.*, 2023). Despite cross-cultural similarities, such as ecstatic journeys and healing rituals, the shamanic tradition remains locally rooted and diverse (Sukru, 2022; Morris, 2005). In some traditions, some use psychoactive plants, while rhythmic movements are the most common trance method (Furst, 1972; Ripinsky-Naxon, 1993). What distinguishes shamans from sorcerers or magicians is their intentional control over spirit engagement (Eliad, 1964). Their societal role varies, ranging from revered ritual leaders to everyday healers (Harvey, 2003; Siiger, 1967; Ali *et al.*, 2021).

## 2.1 Global Perspectives on Shamanism

This section of the literature review examines seminal works by Eliade (1975), Alberts (2016), and Winkelman (2012) to trace the intellectual history of shamanism, from its marginalisation during the Enlightenment to its contemporary standing as a globalised yet disputed discourse. The initial views of early European and Russian scholars toward shamanism included pathologisation through their classification of it as primitive superstition or mental illness (Novakovsky, 1924; Bogoras, 1974; Jochelson, 1975). In contrast, modern scholars focus on cultural context and symbolic meaning to move away from previous rigid Eurocentric classifications.

Eliade's *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (1964) provides essential knowledge about trance and soul flight and the *Axis Mundi*<sup>11</sup>. In this pioneering work, he distinguishes shamans from ordinary magicians or healers by emphasising their unique ability to control spiritual powers, where shamans are not merely passive vessels for spirits but active mediators. These shamans navigate ecstatic trance states, which he famously termed *techniques of ecstasy*, but he erroneously labelled female shamans as 'degenerate'. One of Eliade's most enduring contributions is his identification of shamanism as a universal

---

implying transcendence to capture the spiritual intensity of these moments (Lewis, 2002; Morris: 2005:19). Neither term fully satisfies, however, as risk oversimplifies the complexity of shamanic practices. In recent decades, researchers drawing from transpersonal psychology have adopted the more inclusive phrase "altered states of consciousness" (Atkinson, 1992), aiming to bridge these divides and acknowledge the multifaceted nature of such experiences without privileging one interpretive lens over another. However, in this research, "trance", "ecstasy," and "altered states of consciousness" (ASC) are used interchangeably with the meaning of experiencing the spiritual realm.

<sup>11</sup> Eliade suggested that the *Axis Mundi* helps shamans to traverse the cosmic worlds; it is the 'world tree' that bridges earthly and divine domains (Eliade, 1964:427-450)

phenomenon with shared elements. Despite regional variations, he identifies common motifs such as trance-induced soul flight, alliances with spirit animals, and using sacred objects to mediate between tangible and intangible worlds. Eliade's work has faced criticism for his claims about universality and marginalising female practitioners. For instance, Winkleman's (1992, 2010) empirical research and Alice Kehoe's work (2000) critique universalism and lack of cross-cultural analysis. Riboli (2020), Swenson (2009), and Tedlock (2005) challenge his gender bias, while Flaherty (1992) and Heinze (1991) expose historical and institutional neglect of female shamans.

Contemporary scholarship on shamanism offers a dynamic interplay of decolonial, gendered, and ecological perspectives, utilising interdisciplinary frameworks to bridge indigenous epistemologies and global modernity. Michael Winkleman's (2012) *Shamanism in Cross-Cultural Perspective* noted this shift by offering a neurobiological analysis of shamanic practices. He critiques the archaeological interpretation of prehistoric shamanism. He further argues that shamanic altered states of consciousness (ASC) arise from an 'integrative mode of consciousness' involving specific brainwave patterns and neurochemical processes (Winkleman, 2012: 53). While his work risks reducing complex symbolic and socio-historical practices to universal biological mechanisms. However, neuroscience is insightful but cannot stand alone; a holistic synthesis of anthropology, psychology, and indigenous knowledge remains significant to avoid reductionism.

In addition, Louise Alberts's *Shamanism, Discourse, Modernity* (2016) frames shamanism as a contested space with a universal category within religious and popular discourse. Alberts claims that the development of modern subjectivity promoted a discourse around the shaman and globalised through European modernity. He explores the relationships between this discourse on shamanism and neoliberalism, environmentalism, and indigenous movements. The text explores how the shaman serves as a versatile and adaptive discursive tool, utilised by local movements to express identity and advocate for rights. Environmentalists invoke the shamans to demonstrate respect for nature and traditional knowledge, and by neoliberals as a symbol of both personal development and control. Alberts criticises pharmaceutical bioprospecting and New Age commodification as rebranded forms of colonial exploitation, citing instances such as *Awes Tingni v. Nicaragua*, in which shamanic cosmologies are acknowledged as legitimate claims to land. According to him, this kind of "symbolic capital" runs the risk of turning shamans into neoliberal "spiritual entrepreneurs" (Alberts, 2016: 157). His work focuses on language and tends to overlook the agency of indigenous shamans

in resisting or redefining these modern categories. His narrative also marginalises emerging female shamans in regions like the Amazon and Korea, despite their crucial role in sustaining ecological and ritual wisdom.

Prior to examining shamanism within the context of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan, it is imperative to investigate scholarly studies in neighbouring countries like Afghanistan (Sidky, 2003), Bangladesh (Karim, 1988), the Himalayas (Chazot & Girolami, 2003), broader Asia (Chilson & Knecht, 2003), and Nepal (Shimkhada and Pave, 2011) to illustrate how shamans blend indigenous spirituality with Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic frameworks. For instance, Afghan *malangs* incorporate Sufi Islam with pre-Islamic *jinn* rituals (Sidky, 2003:89), and Bangladeshi *ojhas* blend Hindu Tantra with Sufi invocations, such as the use of Qur'anic amulets to ease psychological stress (Karim, 1988:285). Moreover, Himalayan *ziarat* shrines often merge Buddhist and Sufi symbols (Chazot & Girolami, 2003:114), and Japanese shamans cater to corporate clientele (Chilson & Knecht, 2003:45). These modifications demonstrate shamanism's dual trajectory: degraded by theological revisions and revitalised as cultural commodities. However, gender is still an underexplored axis. While Korean *mudangs* and Himalayan *dhamis* have spiritual power, they confront social shame and patriarchal limitations (Chazot & Girolami, 2003: 67; Karim, 1988: 298).

The Nepali *jhāñkri* tradition, as described by Shimkhada and Pave (2010), syncretises Shiva devotion with animist beliefs (Shimkhada & Pave, 2010). Sidky (2010) challenges Eliade's restricted focus on "soul journeying," highlighting how *jhāñkris* engage in both soul journeys and controlled spirit possession while maintaining agency over summoned creatures. This dichotomy reflects a larger South Asian trend in which shamanism adapts to prevailing faiths while maintaining its animist character. Yet, gender remains underexplored. Female shamans such as *Budenis* and *Mātās* are often limited to domestic rituals and excluded from formal ceremonies (Sidky, 2010; Shimkhada and Pave, 2010). Even at Baral's modernised ashram, where female *dhāmis* are trained, women are only assigned peripheral chores. These dynamics reflect a global pattern in which women's spiritual labour is domesticated and their contributions concealed by structural biases, a shortcoming replicated in Eliade's male-centric frameworks. *Jhāñkris* are positioned as symbols of South Asian shamanism, a live negotiation of both "Hindu" and "animist" traditions. Although shamanism is a resilient practice in South Asia, its gendered and indigenous aspects require immediate scholarly attention.

Shamanism has only lately been explored academically from a gendered perspective. For decades, scholarship has focused disproportionately on male practitioners, reflecting larger patriarchal views among academics and the society being studied. Scholars have only recently begun exploring female shamans' roles, agency, and marginalisation in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Despite their cultural and historical significance, female shamanic activities have received little attention, with an emphasis on their adaptation strategies to modernity, government regulation, and religious orthodoxy.

## 2.2 Shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan

Most of the earliest scholars' interest in Gilgit-Baltistan began during the British expansion into the Indian subcontinent<sup>12</sup>. Scholars such as Gottlieb Leitner, John Biddulph, Algernon Durand, D.L.R. Lorimer, Francis Younghusband, and Reginald Schomberg visited the region for linguistic, geographic, and political reasons, and often engaged in espionage on behalf of the British Empire. They were closely allied with local rulers, particularly the Mir of Hunza, which shaped the perspective found in their writings (Kreutzmann, 2020:18). Many early studies on shamanic traditions have been directed towards Kafiristan in Chitral<sup>13</sup> due to its pagan cultural presence in an Islamic society. As a result, early research on shamanism in Hunza and Nagar is minimal, with no existing studies on female shamanism in these regions. It is significant to highlight that shamanic tradition is not practised in all areas of Gilgit-Baltistan, such as Baltistan, which did not have this practice (Dani, 1991:83).

In Leitner's (1889) writing '*The Hunza-Nagyr Handbook*,' he described 'ecstatic women,' who sang histories, prophesied, and recounted events in Hunza. While he did not name them as shamans, his description implies shamanic roles (Leitner, 1889: xiv). Biddulph (1880), in *Tribes of the Hindoo Koosh*, provides the earliest detailed observation of a female *bitan*'s performances during the *Ginani*<sup>14</sup> festival, noting trance states, music-induced awakenings, and rituals involving goat's blood (*Chatti-tukki*). According to him, with the spread of orthodox Islam, *bitayu* gradually declined, surviving only in Gilgit, Hunza, and Nager as

---

<sup>12</sup> The Indian Subcontinent was the term used historically for South Asia, the physiographic region characterised by the Himalaya and Hindukush mountains, and including India, Bhutan, Pakistan, Nepal, Maldives, Bangladesh, and Sri-Lanka.

<sup>13</sup> Chitral is situated in the northern part of Pakistan and is an administrative district within the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK).

<sup>14</sup> Local spring festival and its celebration of harvesting.

stricter religious practices replaced indigenous traditions. But he referred to them as ‘witches,’ which indicates his lack of basic knowledge about local differences between witches and *bitan*. Like Biddulph, Algernon Durand documented female-led shamanic rituals and identified women as the primary custodians of these rituals in Gilgit (Durand, 1899: 212). His account reinforces the gendered structure of shamanic authority in the late 19th century, where female *bitayu* held central, public roles in ritual life. Both Biddulph and Durand described this public performance of female *bitan* as communal and highly visible, illustrating the centrality of female shamans as the region’s spiritual and social institutions. However, his portrayal of *bitan* as “very Maenad,” exotic, and irrational reflected imperial views that dismissed local culture as primitive. Therefore, Sökefeld (2014:21) considers this work more of a ‘political memoir’ than ethnographical research.

In the early 20th century, one of the prolific local writers, Ghulam Muhammad (1905), documented *bitan* practices in detail, describing trance, spirit possession, and strict ritual codes, such as the prohibition of wearing red clothing. In his book, *Festivals and Folklore of Gilgit*, he provides a rich account of *bitayu* in a single paragraph, which provides critical insights into the gender dynamics of shamanic practices and their vulnerability to sociocultural shifts. His narrative highlights the centrality of female agency in the tradition, exemplified by a woman’s initiation story, where she encounters a fairy in her childhood; subsequent possession and training by spirits underscore the profoundly personal and mystical pathways to shamanic authority (Muhammad, 1905). Yet, Muhammad’s interaction also hints at the pressures facing such traditions. For instance, ‘after long hesitation’ (Muhammad, 1905:104), the female shaman agreed to share her story, and the ritual’s reliance on communal participation suggests a fragile transmission process, vulnerable to external disruptions.

D.L.R. Lorimer, the third British Political Agent in Gilgit (1920–1924), offers one of the earliest overviews of local supernatural beliefs in *The Supernatural in the Popular Belief of the Gilgit Region* (1929), documenting spirits such as *boyo*, *jinns*, *paris*, and *arwah*. While his study touches on *bitan* figures, it lacks depth on shamanic practices. In *Folk Tales of Hunza* (1934), he recounts legends of *Bitan Shon Gukur* and *Bitan Huke Mamo* (Lorimer, 1924: 99–105) and briefly describes a female *bitan* performance during Nowruz<sup>15</sup> (Lorimer, 1924: 164). Ahmed Hassani Dani’s “History of Northern Areas of Pakistan” (1991) is one

---

<sup>15</sup> Originally an Iranian festival that has been celebrated in the region for many centuries as the new year.

of the most significant and highly cited works on the history of Gilgit-Baltistan. His book offers comprehensive historical accounts, geography, and political shifts. The book includes a brief discussion of local shamanic traditions that resemble those found in Siberia. Still, it overlooks how developments like the Karakoram Highway (KKH) affected women's lives and reshaped gendered cultural practices.

M.H. Sidky (1994) wrote *Shamans and Mountain Spirits in Hunza*, which expanded on his prior work in Afghanistan (1990). This anthropological investigation explores how beliefs in fairies, the supernatural guardians of high mountains, influence local cosmologies and daily life. This historical role of *bitan* in society, rituals, and beliefs and their transformation in the modern context of Hunza. He focuses on the local beliefs about fairies residing in the high mountains, guarding their domain against humans and livestock such as ibex and *markhor* (*Capra falconeri*). These individuals who act as intermediaries between humans and supernatural beings are *bitayu*, who inherit this ability in certain families, as also highlighted by Lorimer (1929:535). However, Biddulph (1880:96) refuted the idea of hereditary transmission. The chant of *bitan* in the Shina language, despite the fact that they do not speak the language. Similarly, Bulgakova (2018:71) also identified this feature in one of the Nanai shamans of Russia, who speaks Chinese in a trance, even though she does not know a single word. Sidky interprets this logic and agrees with Biddulph (1880) that this tradition was imported from the *Shins*<sup>16</sup>.

The initiation of *bitan* begins with a spiritual calling, typically in the form of a fairy appearing as a bird, butterfly, or human-like figure, signalling their selection for the spiritual path. Ignoring this call can lead to serious consequences like sickness and even death, while acceptance leads to trance experiences, sometimes triggered by ritual music alone, such as *Shireen Zuban*<sup>17</sup>. Sidky describes that a *bitan*'s authenticity is proven through the *chatti-tukki* ceremony, where they perform a ritual dance in a public gathering and drink the blood from a freshly sacrificed goat's head (*chatto or chatti*). Experiencing a trance can be physically and mentally draining for a *bitan*. If the musical tune and rituals are performed correctly, then only fairies accept the sacrifice, and the individual is recognised as a true *bitan*. For the

---

<sup>16</sup> Indo-Aryan ethnolinguistic groups reside in regions like Chilas, Kohistan, Dare, Lower Hunza, and Ghizer in Gilgit-Baltistan and also in Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh in India (Nicolaus, 2015).

<sup>17</sup> Type of musical tune played for shaman dance.

*bitan*, it is not blood; instead, the sensation feels like drinking milk to them. This feature sets the *bitayu* of this region apart globally, owing to its unique characteristics.

In ancient times, another test was conducted in *Berishal* village<sup>18</sup> to verify the authenticity of *bitan*, but this no longer exists today. Only *chatti-tukki* ceremonies are practised. Once confirmed, the *bitan* used to perform in royal and public festivals to deliver prophecies and fulfil other duties, including serving as a healer of the sick and counteracting harmful magic with the help of their guardians. Another unique characteristic of the *bitayu* of Gilgit-Baltistan that sets them apart from other shamanic traditions, such as those in Siberia, is that they do not play music or use drums. Instead, only *Bericho* (Dom) musicians are traditionally allowed to play specific tunes required for this ecstatic ritual. Sidky (1994) links the decline of divine intermediaries to colonial intrusions, religious reforms, and modern encroachments. Once prominent public rituals, performed during local festivals such as *Ginani*, *Bopfu*, *Siqamating*, and *Nowruz*, are now confined to the limited Bagrot and Chaprot valleys, where they are experiencing a resurgence in practice (Sidky, 1994; Dani, 1991). In Chaprot, Altaf Hussain's (1998) research offers rare insights into male shamanic rituals involving spirits like *Makhakher Aji*<sup>19</sup> (mother spirit) and *Rowoaley*<sup>20</sup>. His ethnographic focus is valuable, but it neglects female practitioners, whose historic role in spiritual mediation is widely attested.

The article written by Gadit (2003) titled *Health Services Delivery by Shamans: A Local Experience in Pakistan*, conflates shamanism with other forms of spiritual healers and folk psychiatry, misrepresenting the core definition of the shaman as understood in anthropological and religious studies. Scholars like Eliade (1964) have distinguished shamans from other spiritual practitioners by their unique use of trance, soul flight, and mastery over spirits. Gadit's generalisations, particularly in the context of Pakistan, are problematic since shamanic traditions are only present in the northern regions, particularly in Chitral and Gilgit-Baltistan.

---

<sup>18</sup> It is a village in Hunza where the *Bericho* caste resides. They were musicians who historically were considered a 'lower, uncleaned cast' (Sidky, 1994). The place they reside is called *Berishal*, where *bitan* has to perform, as this is stereotyped as unclean.

<sup>19</sup> Shina word literal meaning 'mother *Makhakher*,' who is a 'head of the fairies' (Nicolaus, 2015b)

<sup>20</sup> *Rowoaley* counterspirit to *Makhakher*; the *bitayu* chosen by *Rowoaley* are considered riskier to consult (Hussain, 1998).

To clarify these distinctions, Csáji (2011) conducted extensive ethnographic research in the Hunza Valley. In *Flying with the Vanishing Fairies*, he characterises Hunza as an “island of shamanism inside the Islamic world” (2011: 163), where *bitan* are distinct from other spiritual actors such as *dashman*,<sup>21</sup> *Jadugar* (sorcerer), *sire gus* (miraculous woman), and *akhun* (local priest). Unlike a *dashman*, a *bitan* uses dance to enter trance and communicate with fairy spirits. Initiation often begins in childhood, marked by signs of possession or illness, and refusal can result in affliction. Csáji notes that *bitan* rely solely on patron spirits for guidance, unlike their Eurasian counterparts, who train under elder shamans. He also compares their inhalation of juniper smoke or Syrian rue to the symbolic use of hallucinogens (Csáji, 2011: 176; Costin & Ennis-McMillan, 2022: 2), though this lacks empirical evidence and may misrepresent everyday cultural use. Another unique feature is the *bitan*'s dependence on *Bericho* or musicians to produce trance-inducing rhythms. Nicolaus (2015: 225–226) argues that this developed as a socio-political strategy to control ritual through musical monopoly. Unlike Eurasian shamans, *bitan* wear no distinctive clothing and often speak in Shina during trance regardless of their native language, making Hunza's shamanism both culturally specific and symbolically rich.

Peter Nicolaus's *The Taming of the Fairies* (2015) provides one of the most detailed ethnographic accounts of shamanic practices in Gilgit-Baltistan. Based on fieldwork and interviews with 28 shamans, 14 of whom are women, from Lower and Central Hunza, Nagar, and Gilgit in 2012. Nicolaus illustrates how ritual performances, such as the *chatto* ceremony, continue to define shamanic authority. He narrates the initiation of a male *bitayu* guided by a female shaman, who uses secret incantations and juniper twigs to invoke her *rachi*<sup>22</sup> and call the *pariting* (fairies). Musical accompaniment by *Bericho* is central; the tune *Ghul Ghool*, recommended by a master shaman, marks the spiritual climax. This use of prescribed melodies echoes earlier documentation (Sidky, 1994; Hussain, 1998), but Nicolaus provides more detailed insight into how each *bitan/dayal* is believed to be linked with a unique fairy lineage, determined by their *rachi* (Faiz *et al.*, 3765–66). The *chatto* ritual culminates in the symbolic consumption of goat blood, perceived by the initiate as milk. Nicolaus records that failure to follow ritual codes, such as premature consumption or

---

<sup>21</sup> *Dashman* has the closest similarity with the *bitan*; the former ‘does not dance as a technique of ecstasy’ (Csáji, 2011:165)

<sup>22</sup> *Rachi* is a personal guardian spirit, often envisioned as a small girl, that offers protective power and communicates with anti-witch figures in times of danger, reflecting both magical and animistic beliefs in individualised fortune or “luck” (Lorimer, 1929: 522)

resistance to the master shaman, can result in transformation into a *rui* (witch or malevolent entity). In this complex process, the iron bangle (*kau* or *zumozch* in Burushaski) plays a central role. Dipped in sacrificial blood and fixed to the initiate's arm, it seals the pact between shaman and spirit. Notably, Nicolaus, Hussain (1998), and Sidky (1994) all highlight the guiding *bitan*'s responsibility in protecting initiates from harmful spirits, while Csáji (2011) does not mention this role in his study.

Nicolaus offers ethnographic depth in describing fairy typologies, ranging from 7 to 44 fairies per shaman and between two and three *Makhakher* (mother spirits), usually aged 30 to 50. These spirits communicate in Shina and are often described as having fair skin, golden hair, vertical eyes, and feet that point backwards, traits that blend beauty and danger. Importantly, Nicolaus argues that increasing Islamic conservatism may influence these representations, with younger female fairies appearing less frequently due to cultural restrictions on female-male association (Nicolaus, 2015: 215).

His work also contrasts ritual variations. For instance, the *sheifal*<sup>23</sup> ceremony, primarily performed by female shamans, involves trance induction through the use of bread, butter, and an iron *kau* (bangle), but it occurs in private. Unlike *chatti-tukki*, it avoids blood sacrifice and public spectacle. Nicolaus suggests that Islamic moral codes have contributed to the growing preference for this less visible ritual. The ritual's performative core remains, but its staging has shifted. Another notable insight is Nicolaus's reflection on the socio-political context. He argues that the 1974 political integration of Gilgit-Baltistan into Pakistan accelerated the decline of earlier practices like the public *ashosch*<sup>24</sup> dance and communal *chatti-tukki*. These were replaced by individual consultations and less publicly disruptive ceremonies such as *Sheifal*. Even so, *Bericho* (musicians) continue to hold ritual authority in the rare *chatti* ceremonies that survive.

In a related publication, Nicolaus (2015b) explores residues of pre-Islamic Dardic beliefs among the *Shin* populations of Gilgit and Ladakh. He traces the story of Gil Shinge<sup>25</sup>, a

---

<sup>23</sup> Locally, the term is used for bread-and-butter-welcome (Nicolaus, 2015:206), but this term seems to be misinterpreted as serving bread-and-butter on special occasions is a common local tradition across Gilgit-Baltistan.

<sup>24</sup> It is a Shina term for a traditional public performance of the shaman to make prophecies; distinct from the *chatti-tukki* ceremony, it is conducted without sacrificing a goat (Nicolaus, 2015:223).

<sup>25</sup> Not much is known about his background; however, Gil Singe and his brother Gapo migrated to Ladakh from Gilgit (Vohra, 1981:68,1983, 9, Nicolaus, 2015).

historic shaman-like figure who resisted conversion to Islam and migrated from Gilgit to Ladakh. On his way, he performed on the *pasul hareep*<sup>26</sup> for the Baltistan ruler, suggesting he and his followers maintained older beliefs. Upon settling in the Dah-Hanu region of Ladakh, they encountered the *Minaro*, another *Shin* group, and eventually merged culturally. Nicolaus notes the divergence between Ladakh and Gilgit in ritual practice. In Gilgit, shamanic initiation involves *chatti* and *sheifal*, whereas in Ladakh, it depends on the selection of a deity and approval by high Buddhist lamas. Spirits in Gilgit speak Shina, while in Ladakh, they use Tibetan or Ladakhi, requiring interpreters. This reflects how Buddhism and Islam, respectively, shaped local shamanic practices. Despite these divergences, Nicolaus identifies shared core elements: trance, initiation, and observance of taboos. His contribution is especially valuable for bringing both male and female perspectives into academic discourse. However, he does not explore how these practices evolve beyond religious influence or how shamans themselves interpret and navigate this change over time.

Shifting from ritual to contemporary relevance, recent scholarship has started to link shamanic practices to broader psychosocial and mental health issues. For example, Faiz, Noshin, and Khan's article *Role of Shamans in Fostering Well-being and Healing for Their Believers* (2023) attempts to frame *bitan/dayal* as "devoted Muslims" who draw upon the Qur'an and Hadith for spiritual guidance (Faiz et al., 2023: 180–81). However, this conflates shamanism with *sir-e-gus* (miraculous woman), *akhun*, or other religious healers. It also downplays the pre-Islamic roots of shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan, which have historically evolved through syncretism, rather than strict orthodoxy. Another significant study titled *Youth Suicide, Supernatural Beings, and the Shamanic Response in Hunza* (2023) explores how local cosmologies explain mental distress and suicide among youth. According to the authors, fairies are said to inhabit sacred spaces, such as high peaks and riverbanks. When these areas are polluted or disrespected, malevolent spirits like *khabees arwah* (evil souls), *shusholokish*<sup>27</sup>, or *danglathas*<sup>28</sup> may retaliate by harming humans, potentially leading to suicidal behaviours. In such cases, the *bitayu* conducts the *Maari* ritual, an effort to rebalance

---

<sup>26</sup> *Hareep*, meaning a tune, and there are defined 11 tunes that are played for *bitayu* during their ritual performances. Nicolaus (2015:208-209) identified *Yudeni Hareep*, a fairy tune played during the *chattitukki* ceremony, while other featured tunes include *Shireen Zuban*, *Ghul Ghool*, *Pasul Basemani*, *Dani*, *Lathasi*, and *Saos*. Traditionally, only the *Bericho* of Hunza, a caste designated for music, could perform these tunes, as they were believed to be guided by a *pari* (fairy). However, in recent times, individuals from other family clans have taken up this profession.

<sup>27</sup> A female spirit carries trash in a wooden bucket.

<sup>28</sup> An evil female spirit resides in cliffs..

relations between humans and the supernatural. The study notes that in the absence of institutional mental healthcare, *bitan/dayal* remain a vital, if informal, support system in rural areas.

This research marks a shift in scholarly interest, from documenting performance and ritual to exploring the relevance of shamanism in contemporary life. While earlier ethnographies, such as those by Sidky (1994), Hussain (1998), and Nicolaus (2015), focused on initiation, cosmology, and cultural decline, newer work engages with lived experience, well-being, and social stigma. Yet, as this study reveals, even the most recent studies rarely examine how these changes have affected women in shamanic roles. Despite the significant presence of female *bitayu* in rituals and oral traditions, much of the academic discourse continues to foreground male practitioners or generalise shamanic functions. For instance, while Nicolaus documents female-led *Sheifal* ceremonies and outlines social pressures they face, he does not analyse how these women respond to or resist these pressures. The evolution of female shamanic roles, particularly under socio-religious scrutiny and changing gender norms, remains underexplored.

Previous works emphasised the study rituals of shamanism, while contemporary research connects it to current trends such as mental health and economic activities. Little attention has been paid to the evolution of rituals; however, no attempts have been made to explore the effects of these changes on female shamans in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. To measure the changes, it is essential to understand the gendered studies done in the region.

### **2.3 Studies on Female Shamanism**

As this research focuses on female shamanism in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan, it is crucial to explore studies investigating female shamanism, or ‘shamaness’ trends, across various cultures. The study of shamanism through the gendered lens is a relatively recent development. Much of the scholarship disproportionately centres on male practitioners, depicting broader patriarchal biases within academia and the societies under study. It was not until the late 20th and early 21st centuries that scholars began to interrogate the role, agency, and marginalisation of female shamans. Despite their cultural and historical significance, female shamanic practices remain understudied and receive little attention to their adaptive strategies amid modernity, state policies and religious orthodoxy. Due to the lack of research on shamaness practices in the Gilgit-Baltistan region, this study draws insights from Davide Torri and Sophie Roche’s book, *The Shamaness in Asia: Gender,*

*Religions, and the State* (2021). This pivotal collection adopts a multidisciplinary approach to exploring how female shamans navigate their authority, marginalisation, and modernity across Asia within a sociopolitical context and religious syncretism. In their first chapter, *The Shamaness at the Threshold*, Sophie Roche and Davide Torri portray female shamans as the "other" within institutionalised faiths, viewed as superstitious or backwards. They suggest that governmental initiatives to bureaucratise frequently favour male-dominated religious institutions, pushing female practitioners to operate in liminal zones. However, as the authors point out, this marginalisation has also encouraged resilience, with shamanesses adapting their responsibilities to perpetuate traditions, which is a crucial issue in my research in Gilgit-Baltistan.

This trend of gendered marginalisation persists across scenarios. In the chapter, *The Shamaness' New Clothes* Davide Torri portrays shamanic bodies as a form of rebellion against patriarchal and religious oppressions. Historically labelled as witches, female shamans were restricted to the home, while male counterparts dominated public ceremonies. Torri questions conventional gender categories, exposing how shamanic identities frequently transcend contemporary standards, combining masculine and feminine features to destabilise power hierarchies. Similarly, Roberte Hamayon's examination of Siberian shamanism (*Shamanesses High and Low*) distinguishes between high-status male shamans who mediate cosmic-political realms and female practitioners who are limited to domestic healing and reproductive rights. Shamanesses have survived among the Buryat, despite Christianisation, Soviet persecution, and contemporary spiritual commercialisation, with their responsibilities shifting in reaction to societal developments rather than disappearing entirely.

Diana Riboli's ethnographic study (*Shamanism and Gender (In)Equality in South and Southeast Asia*) on the Chepang of Nepal and the Semang-Negrito of Malaysia emphasises the endurance of female shamans. Riboli reveals indications of powerful female shamans and corresponding global patterns in which women's spiritual authority arises despite cultural norms, while male shamans are dominant due to their connections with hunting and clans. For example, in Korea and Japan, female shamans like *mudangs* and *itako* gained prominence only after institutionalised priesthoods displaced their male counterparts. This dynamic is consistent with research conducted by Danuta Penkala-Gawęcka on post-Soviet Central Asia (*Shamans, Islam, and State Medical Policy*), which found that female healers employ a combination of shamanic and Islamic methods to transcend patriarchal norms. Despite purist Islamic tendencies, women use their spiritual vocations to break through social boundaries and establish credibility through social networks; this tactic is similar in Gilgit-Baltistan's mixed religious environment.

Razia Sultanova's chapter 'Let Me Take Your Pain Away' delves into the relationship between music, gender, and spirituality, focusing on how female shamans in Central Asia retain traditions through musical rites, oral epics, and dance. According to Roche, male-dominated Sufi practices are hailed as theologically legitimate, whereas women's rites are often delegitimised by being called "shamanic" or outdated. She notes that rather than reflecting theological differences, this gendered dualism reflects social inequalities, which is an essential realisation for comprehending how female shamans in Gilgit-Baltistan negotiate Islamic orthodoxy.

This research draws on themes of resilience, hybridity, and marginalisation from *The Shamaness in Asia* to offer insight into how female shamans in Gilgit-Baltistan sustain traditional memory while facing the demands of modernity. Their experiences, which have long been overlooked in academia, demand inclusion in broader debates about spiritual authority and cultural survival.

## 2.4 Gender Dynamics in Gilgit-Baltistan

Generally, gender studies in the Global South, particularly in Muslim societies, have garnered the attention of both orientalists and occidentals, especially post 9/11. The central concept in most studies is the role of females in the Islamic world (Peristiany, 1965; Mernissi, 1987; Abu-Lughod, 1986; Awde, 2005). Pakistan as an Islamic Republic State also attracted many scholars to conduct studies on women's roles and responsibilities (Falah and Nagel, 2005; Frembgen, 2006; Patel, 2010; Weiss, 2002), while in the context of northern Pakistan, it's a recent phenomenon where some scholars contributed to this concept, such as Göhlen (1998), Halvorson (2005), and Walter (2014 and 2016). Most scholars who studied gender dynamics come from Western female backgrounds. The gender dynamics in Gilgit-Baltistan exist within a complex system that combines religious traditions with patriarchal structures and traditional practices, and socio-economic changes. Women in Gilgit-Baltistan face multiple constraints that limit their role in family preservation, as their status depends on the honour of the entire valley.

Post-colonisation and the country's integration into the Islamic Republic of Pakistan led to the implementation of state policies that enforced gender segregation, including *pardah* (seclusion) and *sharam* (modesty), shaping women's public behaviour and confining them to domestic spheres (Walter, 2016, 2022; Halvorson, 2005). This was particularly evident under General Zia's regime (1979-1988), during which state-sponsored Islamisation

institutionalised gender discrimination through mandatory madrassa education<sup>29</sup> and framed women as guardians of Islamic morality (Patel, 2010). Traditionally, the practice of gender segregation varies across regions, with differing degrees of strictness depending on the religious sects (Shia, Sunni, and Ismaili) and location (rural versus urban) (Sökefeld, 2014; Walter, 2016). The example shows that the Sunni-majority Chilas maintains stricter seclusion rules than the Ismaili-majority Hunza and rural areas, where women who work in fields have less stringent regulations than those in Gilgit town (Walter, 2016; Halvorson, 2005).

The combination of state policies and external influences, such as Saudi Wahhabism, intensifies sectarian tensions, which make gendered identities more complex. The sectarian communities of Gilgit-Baltistan, including Sunni, Shia, and Ismaili, maintain their social norms, which restrict women's movement and public presence through practices of *sharam* (modesty). This performative discipline ties personal behaviours to collective honour (Walter, 2016). For instance, public spaces like markets or hotels remain male-dominated, while women's roles are often circumscribed to the home, the field, or gender-segregated "ladies' markets" (Sökefeld, 2014; Walter, 2022). In recent decades, the literacy rate of women has increased. Despite progressive intervention projects, such as those by the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), the perception of girls as 'temporary sojourners'<sup>30</sup> continues to influence parents' attitudes towards girls' education (Alam, 2017). Moreover, due to economic changes driven by market integration and development, women serving as teachers and the women-only market have emerged as a promising model to promote women's economic participation in conservative contexts, leading to increased respect, mobility, and control over assets (Sökefeld, 2014; Bowles, 2014).

These shifts reflect Wittrock's (2000) model of modernity, where new values (e.g., education, economic integration) gradually destabilise traditional systems, creating fragmented progress. Yet, existing studies on gender in Gilgit-Baltistan focus narrowly on economic and religious pressures, overlooking indigenous spiritual practices like female shamanism. While scholars like Halvorson and Walter analyse how Islamisation reshapes gender norms, they neglect the marginalisation of pre-Islamic belief systems. Female shamans (*bitan*), once central to mediating spiritual and communal health, now face erasure

---

<sup>29</sup> Madrassa terms used for religious education system.

<sup>30</sup> Who will eventually move to their husbands' homes

as conservative religious discourses label their rituals “un-Islamic” (Jettmar, 1961b). This mirrors broader patterns in Muslim-majority contexts, such as Malaysia’s Orang Asli communities, where state-led Islamisation and logging displace shamanism into secrecy (Toshihiro, 2008). In Gilgit-Baltistan, modernisation projects like the Karakoram Highway (KKH) and Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) initiatives accelerate connectivity and economic growth but prioritise homogenised Islamic identities over cultural pluralism. Pakistan’s education system, which erases indigenous knowledge from curricula (Csáji, 2011), further severs ties to shamanic traditions, relegating them to the realm of “backwardness.”

## 2.5 Modernity in the Gilgit-Baltistan

Another crucial factor to discuss in exploring the ‘transformation of female shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan’ is the concept of modernity in the region. In engaging with modernity in this region, it is important to distinguish it from the more technical process of modernisation. While modernisation refers to the tangible influx of roads, schooling, tourism and NGO-led development projects, modernity in this context should be understood as a cultural and attitudinal shift, grounded in local experiences. Anna-Maria Walter (2014), drawing on Wittrock (2000) and Foucault (1984), frames modernity as both a transformative process and an evolving attitude shaped by moral and institutional change. Meanwhile, Kreutzmann (2020, 2024) linked it with the colonial-era initiatives like agricultural practices, administrative forms, and infrastructure, which laid foundational changes long before contemporary development discourse emerged.

Many scholars, including Jettmar (1989), Flowerday (2009), Csáji (2011), Walter (2014), and Sökefeld (2014), identified the establishment of the Karakoram Highway (KKH) as a critical turning point for accelerating cultural exchanges, economic activities, and the influx of external development interventions significantly. Walter (2014), in her work, *Changing Gilgit-Baltistan: Perceptions of Recent History and the Role of Community Activism*, revisits the concept of ‘development in Gilgit-Baltistan,’ challenging Western-centric notions where ‘change’ is perceived as synonymous with ‘development’. She transcends the dichotomy of ‘traditional’ versus ‘modern,’ framing Gilgit-Baltistan’s development as a site of hybrid, trans-local modernities influenced by foreign interventions and projects such as the Karakoram Highway, the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) initiatives, and Monika Girls School. These developments are not simply imposed; rather, they are locally

negotiated. She illustrated how local communities adapted external influences within their indigenous norms by blending traditional and foreign ideas. According to her, modernity in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan is not a Western replica but a co-created global dialogue. In this framework, 'local modernity' both empowers and constrains women in complex ways.

## 2.6 Political and Religious History in GB

The political and sectarian history of Gilgit-Baltistan is deeply intertwined with its contested geography and evolving identity. Before the 1947 partition, the region comprised semi-autonomous princely states like Hunza, Nagar, and Yasin, which were nominally under the suzerainty of Jammu and Kashmir's Dogra rulers (Ali, 2019; Kreutzmann, 2008). British colonial administration further fragmented the region into agencies like Gilgit and Baltistan, a legacy that endured post-partition. When Maharaja Hari Singh acceded to India amid local disturbances, Gilgit-Baltistan's fortunes changed drastically. A brief "Independence Republic of Gilgit," commanded by the Gilgit Scouts under British Major Brown, was quickly dissolved, resulting in the ascension to Pakistan (Kreutzmann, 2008; Dad, 2016, 2009). This decision solidified the region's status as a geopolitical flashpoint, which extends the ongoing Kashmir conflict (Bansal, 2008; Sökefeld, 1997).

In 1970, Pakistan's successive governance of Gilgit-Baltistan was renamed the Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA). After four years, all the princely states were abolished and Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) were imposed to solidify the centralised control while denying the region's provincial status (Kreutzmann, 2008, 2024b). In response, local communities began demanding constitutional integration. One such effort was the Movement for Determining the Constitutional Position of Northern Areas during Zia-ul-Haq's regime. However, the state introduced the 1994 Legal Framework Order, which offered provincial-like rights without political representation (Kreutzmann, 2024a).

Even the 2009 renaming to Gilgit-Baltistan and the creation of a legislative assembly under President Zardari failed to resolve its constitutional limbo, as the region remains excluded from Pakistan's Parliament (Bouzas *et al.*, 2015; Karrar & Mostowlansky, 2018). Adding to this political ambiguity, sectarian tensions have intensified the complex political landscape of Gilgit-Baltistan. Historically, Gilgit-Baltistan's Shia-majority communities coexisted peacefully with Sunni minorities, and even intermarriage was not uncommon (Mishra, 2018; EFSAS, 2020). However, from the late 20th century onwards, these sectarian lines began to deepen. This was fuelled by Pakistan's Sunni-centric Islamisation under Zia-ul-Haq,

combined with external ideological influences from the Iranian Revolution and Afghan Jihad (Hunzai, 2013; Feyyaz, 2011). The region soon became a frontline battleground for Saudi Iranian proxy rivalries, exacerbating Sunni-Shia polarisation (Dad, 2016). State policies, such as the promotion of Sunni-biased school curricula, further contributed to the alienation of Shia communities. This sparked unrest and conflicts, most notably the “textbook controversy” in the early 2000s (Ali, 2019; Bansal, 2008). Critics contend that the state has employed “divide-and-rule” tactics by manipulating sectarianism to justify militarisation and silencing the growing demands for political autonomy (EFSAS, 2020).

The erosion of cultural harmony has profound implications. Local religious leaders, often aligned with fundamentalist ideologies, now oppose Gilgit-Baltistan’s syncretic heritage, including its archaeological sites (Dad, 2009, 2017). Meanwhile, exclusion from power-sharing has driven identity-based mobilisation, with communities framing resistance through cultural preservation. Ultimately, the government’s perseverance on Islam as a unifying ideology has paradoxically fostered divisions that overshadow a shared regional identity (Karrar & Mostowlansky, 2018). This leaves Gilgit-Baltistan trapped in liminality between unresolved Kashmir claims, geopolitical rivalries, and internal fragmentation. The real consequences of this enduring political ambiguity are borne by its people. As Kreutzmann (2024) noted, the people’s struggle for recognition is not merely about constitutional debates; it touches upon the existential questions of belonging and cultural survival in a region where history is perpetually contested.

This study, *Navigating Heritage in Transition*, tries to elucidate the nature of these patterns by centring the endurance of female shamanism in the setting of Gilgit-Baltistan and their quiet negotiation of Islamisation and adjustment to modern encroachments. Torri and Roche (2021) contend that they are not relics but a lifeline, providing a counter-narrative to state-driven homogenisation. There is hope for revival by reporting their transformation.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter discusses the study methodologies used to explore the change and adaptation of female shamans, which exemplify the larger fight to retain indigenous wisdom in the face of current socio-religious influences, such as Islamisation and conservative attitudes. A qualitative method was employed to gain insights into and a thorough understanding of how cultural change, societal factors, and gendered roles influence shamanistic traditions. This piece of research prioritised cultural nuance and lived experiences through semi-structured interviews and academic literature, reflecting the research purpose of exploring gendered dynamics in shamanism within shifting socio-religious contexts. The rationale for this methodology is explained below, along with details of data collection, analysis, and the ethical considerations that inform it.

### 3.1 Rationale for Research Approach

The qualitative research<sup>31</sup> technique employed a specific type known as qualitative exploratory design to collect the shamans' subjective perspective, combining semi-structured interviews with academic literature analysis. According to Erickson (2017), this approach facilitates the triangulation of historical materials with contemporary narratives, thereby situating participant testimonies within broader cultural trends and providing deep insights into understudied subjects. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of both lived experiences and historical contexts, interviews focused on personal experiences, societal influences, and gender roles. This study used an emic approach, emphasising an insider's perspective, examining cultural beliefs, values, and practices from the perspective of those living within that culture (Mostowlansky *et.al.*, 2020). At the same time, academic literature has traced socio-religious and political history through scholarly written texts and ethnographic records.

This research design is grounded in interpretive epistemology. As Bryman (2004) stated, qualitative research has an interpretivist epistemology, and Mason (2018) also emphasised that qualitative research is interpretive because it focuses on how the social world is understood, experienced, and produced; however, Crowe and Sheppard (2010) argued that

---

<sup>31</sup> A strategy that assists researchers in examining and interpreting data holistically (Alam, 2019).

research without interpretation is disaggregated. Hence, by focusing on shamans' lived experiences and narratives, the interpretivist paradigm allowed a more in-depth investigation of how cultural shifts are perceived and implemented within the context of Gilgit-Baltistan. Moreover, integrating feminist epistemologies provided a critical examination of gender dynamics, particularly regarding the transformation and preservation of female shamanistic practices, thereby addressing research questions from a gender-sensitive perspective (Harding, 1987).

### **3.2 Research Context**

This research examines the cultural and historical aspects of female shamanic practices in Gilgit-Baltistan, with a particular focus on the perspectives of contemporary shamans. The region is renowned for its mountainous scenery; however, it gained international attention due to its 'disputed political status' and mesmerising beauty. It is one of the most transformative areas in Pakistan, driven by economic activities such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and a burgeoning tourism industry. These regional developments have led to significant religiopolitical and cultural shifts since establishing the Karakorum Highway (KKH) in 1978.

For this study, the Hunza and Nagar valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan were chosen due to their deep-rooted spiritual traditions, changing geopolitical backdrop, the interplay of historical narratives with current influences, and the researcher's connection to the region. Moreover, shamanism has been practised in this region since ancient times. Gilgit-Baltistan provides a unique and historically rich setting for studying female shamanism, yet this aspect of the region's spiritual traditions remains largely understudied. The sociocultural landscape of the Hunza and Nagar Valleys, shaped by centuries of indigenous beliefs and practices, has undergone significant transformation due to colonisation, nationalisation, Islamisation and modernisation. These forces have contributed to marginalising ancient shamanistic traditions, weakening the community's intangible heritage. Despite the continued presence of shamanic practices, scholarly research has largely overlooked how these shifts have specifically impacted female shamans, leaving a critical gap in understanding their evolving role.

Additionally, the perspectives of both male and female shamans on the changes within female shamanistic activities remain undocumented, further limiting awareness of this transformation. By focusing on these two valleys, the study intends to situate shamanic

behaviours in broader religious, political, and gendered contexts. The research seeks to address these gaps within this dynamic cultural and historical context, offering insight into the resilience, adaptation, and transformation of female shamanism amid rapid societal change.

### 3.3 Research Sample and Data Sources

The data for this study were collected in May 2025, using purposive sampling, where the researcher intentionally selected a ‘representative’ unit from a group to include in the sample, to fulfil research objectives (Lohr, 2021: 6). This strategy was applied to identify and engage participants, who possess in-depth knowledge and lived experiences related to shamanic practices. Seven participants, both male and female, *bitayu* from the Hunza and Nagar valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan, formed the final research sample. They represented diversity of age groups, occupations, and different spiritual affiliations. This sample size was determined on the principle of data saturation, ensuring the collected data provided comprehensive thematic coverage and meaningful insights without redundancy. Given the study's exploratory nature, snowball sampling was employed to reach individuals who are not easily identifiable through formal networks. These informal referrals enriched the study by revealing voices deeply embedded in traditional traditions.

Participants were selected based on their willingness to share personal narratives, historical memories, and perspectives on societal transformations that have impacted female shamanism. Furthermore, the interview guide was crafted carefully to align with the research’s core questions, yet it served as a compass rather than a script. Rooted in the study’s objectives, such as understanding the factors impacting gendered shamanic roles, the questionnaire provided a loose framework, inviting participants to steer conversations toward what felt most meaningful to them. While themes like historical change or cultural preservation anchored the dialogue, the rhythm of each interview flowed organically, allowing pauses for reflection, refractions into personal anecdotes, or moments where a shaman might lean in and say, “Let me explain it this way.” This flexibility allowed the interviews to become co-created narratives, shaped not just by questions but by pauses, storytelling and emotional cadence. The questionnaire was a guiding tool to revisit key topics, like ritual adaptations and community perceptions. Ultimately, the participants’ voices directed the rhythm and content of the discussion.

### 3.4 Sample Characteristics and Size

Gilgit-Baltistan comprises fourteen districts with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This study focused specifically on the Hunza<sup>32</sup> and Nagar valleys due to their cultural significance, accessibility, as well as the researcher's fluency in the local language. This linguistic competence facilitated effective communication, fostered organic discussions during interviews, and ensured accurate transcription. Consequently, it allowed participants' narratives to be captured with greater depth and authenticity.

The interview sessions ranged from approximately 60 to 90 minutes, which were conducted in the local mother tongue (Burushaski) and Urdu, both widely spoken and understood by all participants and later transcribed into English. A bilingual questionnaire<sup>33</sup> was developed in both English and Urdu and served as a guiding tool aligned with research objectives. To preserve local expressions, spiritual terminology, and cultural nuances, many of which lack direct English equivalents, the interviews were audio-recorded and initially transcribed in Urdu. English translations were carried out after consulting local cultural experts, who helped ensure conceptual clarity and contextual accuracy. For this purpose, three local experts (two historians and one anthropologist) were consulted through in-depth discussions to help preserve the integrity of cultural meanings and terminologies.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are crucial in any form of study. Fundamental principles include respecting participants' rights, acquiring informed consent, and maintaining anonymity, while further concerns include data privacy, algorithmic bias, and transparency (Ajemba & Arene, 2022; Dubey *et al.*, 2024). This study adhered to established ethical guidelines to protect the rights and well-being of participants. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was sought from the University to ensure compliance with research ethics standards. For this research, participants were provided with detailed information about the research's purpose,

---

<sup>32</sup> It is important to highlight that this sample did not encompass Upper Hunza (Gojal), where this tradition is not practised.

<sup>33</sup> Several participants requested to review the questionnaire beforehand, which allowed them to identify aspects of the research they were unwilling to discuss. For example, Bitan 7 (female) and Bitan 1 (Male) expressed their concern upfront about engaging with the religious dimensions of the study in detail. This highlighted the sensitivity of the topic and the importance of allowing participants to set clear boundaries before the interview.

methodology, and rights, ensuring voluntary participation. To protect participants' identities and to safeguard participants' anonymity, codes [Bitan 1, Bitan 2, etc] are assigned, and all personal identifiers were removed from the final research output. During data collection, special care was taken to respect participants' cultural beliefs and traditions, and sensitive and conflicting questions were avoided. If a respondent wishes to withdraw from the interview at any point, their decision will be fully respected, and the interview will be immediately stopped. Additionally, all recorded audio and transcripts remained strictly confidential and were not shared with any third party, ensuring compliance with copyright laws and protecting their privacy.

Furthermore, the study adhered to the principles of reciprocity and cultural respect, guaranteeing that the results have a significant impact on the communities involved. Furthermore, reflexivity is not just a methodological element but an integral part of rigorous research, ensuring transparency and the quality of the research inquiry. As Kralik (2005) argues, reflexivity compels researchers to critically engage with their role and position in their work by allowing them to acknowledge how biases shape the process. Further emphasised by Primeau (2003), reflexivity addresses researcher subjectivity, revealing the extent to which personal bias influences data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Also, Berger (2013) noted that researchers' social position, personal experiences and beliefs inevitably shape their engagement with the subject matter, creating both opportunities for deeper insights and challenges in maintaining analytical distance. In this, the researcher, who is from the Hunza Valley and has deep ties to the region, engaged in constant critical reflection throughout the study process to minimise any biases. The study aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of female shamanic practices while maintaining scholarly rigour and ethical integrity by contextualising the participants' narratives within the region's broader socio-historical, religious, political, and gendered contexts.

### **3.6 Data Collection Methods**

This study used a qualitative exploratory methodology to investigate shamanic practices through audio-recorded interviews on online platforms. Participants were contacted through phone calls, and interviews were conducted using Zoom and phone calls. The decision to use this strategy was primarily prompted by financial constraints that made field trips impractical. Furthermore, the study site's remote location created substantial logistical obstacles, including time limits. Furthermore, the possibility of political instability inside the

nation created worries regarding researchers' security and timely return to the UK. These factors collectively required an alternative approach to remote data collection. Additionally, one audio recording was conducted with the assistance of a key informant due to the recent India-Pakistan conflict<sup>34</sup> which resulted in limited internet access in some areas. Moreover, this was done to ensure inclusion and broader representation in data collection. To enrich the analysis, a thick description (Geertz, 1973) was prioritised, while contextual details, such as tone, pauses, and cultural references, were noted to enhance the analysis.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Methods**

This study employed a thematic analysis (TA) approach to systematically examine and interpret the collected data. Thematic analysis is widely used in qualitative research for identifying and analysing patterns within data, offering flexibility across different research paradigms (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The process involves familiarisation with the data, coding, and developing overarching themes (Dawadi, 2020). Given the exploratory nature of this study, NVivo 14 software was used to assist in coding and organising the data. This allowed for deeper immersion in the data and a more reflexive engagement with participants' lived experiences. The analysis began by sitting with the voices of the shaman; listening, not just to their words, but to the pauses, the laughter, and the unspoken tensions that lingered in their stories.

### **3.8 Validity and Reliability**

Several techniques were implemented to ensure the study's validity and reliability. This included cross-checking and discussion on interview summaries with two local historians and a cultural anthropologist. This was done before thematic analysis, using the translated transcripts to confirm contextual accuracy and capture subtle interpretation. Moreover, triangulation of data sources (Erickson, 2017), including oral accounts from shamans, historical records, and anthropological literature, produced layered insights that helped to validate claims, such as how religious influence gradually altered female initiation rituals. Thick descriptions helped to translate local cultural elements into rich, contextual narratives, bridging cultural phenomena and external scholarly understanding (Geertz, 1973; Descombes & Smith, 2002; Jorgensen, 2009). Despite its extensive use, some researchers

---

<sup>34</sup> More details can be found on (Wikipedia, 2025).

question the uncritical application, notably in educational research (Jorgensen, 2009). Thick description was a helpful tool for this research to capture cultural variation, deepen qualitative research, and facilitate peer debriefing with professionals familiar with Gilgit-Baltistan's cultural landscape, which pushed assumptions and refined interpretations. Reflexivity was practised through journaling, which served to critically examine and mitigate biases by addressing the researcher's personality, gender, and academic lens. These journals documented moments of interpretative uncertainty, gendered interactions during interviews, and ongoing reflections on power dynamics between the researcher and participants. By striking a balance between ethical sensitivity and meticulous procedure, these methods ensured the study's compliance with standards for qualitative research.

### **3.9 Limitations and Delimitations**

This study acknowledges several limitations of the research, which relied on conducting online interviews and recording audio interviews with the assistance of a proxy interviewer, due to various issues, including budgetary constraints for an in-person field visit. However, this approach has several drawbacks, including its reliance on virtual contact. It may have made it more challenging to establish a close relationship with participants and gather the nonverbal cues necessary for qualitative research. Additionally, participants were contacted via online connection due to the geographical distance and restricted internet access in some areas of the Nagar and Hunza valleys. The quality and regularity of the interviews were affected by these issues with internet access, which may have resulted in data gaps. Because interpretations or technical problems might change the accuracy of collected data, using intermediaries in audio recordings increases the risk of bias.

Furthermore, the absence of direct, in-person observations limited the researcher's capacity to completely immerse themselves in the cultural and environmental context of the shamanic rites. Moreover, the study's broad generalisability is limited by the specificity and depth of the description, which may limit its application outside the environment under examination. Qualitative research, on the other hand, places more emphasis on transferability than generalisability, enabling results to be used in comparable contexts rather than universally. Several boundaries were intentionally established in this study to ensure a focused and comprehensive investigation of shamanic techniques. Participants from the Hunza and Nagar valleys are carefully examined in this study, which restricted its reach to specific cultural and geographic settings while enabling a deep, localised knowledge. Furthermore, the research purposefully excluded additional ethnographic techniques, such as extended

field observation, in favour of audio-recorded interviews and internet sources. This method places more emphasis on transferability than generalisability; thus, while the results were not intended for broad application, they could provide insightful information for comparable cultural or scientific contexts. These guidelines guaranteed a thorough, context-driven examination of shamanic traditions while preserving methodological consistency.

In the context of delimitations, the study purposefully excluded wider regional comparisons in favour of concentrating on the Hunza and Nagar Valleys due to their distinctive cultures and the researcher's convenient access. Participants were limited to shamans/*bitayu* with at least ten years of experience to promote experiential depth, which may have marginalised voices. Being open about these limitations and bounds highlights the study's rigour and encourages further research to broaden its focus.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This study examined the subjective opinions of shamans (*bitayu*) in the Nagar and Hunza valleys regarding the evolution of female shamanistic rituals in the area, employing a qualitative exploratory approach. Online interviews (via Zoom or phone) were used to collect the primary data, and audio recordings were added with help from friends and family to reach participants with poor internet connections. In order to find recurrent patterns and essential themes, the gathered data were processed using thematic analysis, beginning with familiarisation and open coding, and supported by NVivo software for systematic organisation and coding of the data. Academic literature was added to this data to analyse significant historical turning points in the area, track changes, and evaluate their impact on local culture. The research provided a thorough understanding of how these elements have impacted cultural transitions over time, with a special focus on the consequences of development, political changes, and religious influences. This method upheld strict ethical norms while facilitating a profound and reflective engagement with the material, placing participant narratives within larger socio-historical, religious, political, and gendered contexts.

## Chapter 4 Findings

This chapter presents the core findings from interviews with male and female *bitayu* (shamans) in the Hunza and Nagar valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan. The data collected through semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis outlined in the Methodology chapter. The interview data are interpreted through a thematic lens to answer the two research questions: exploring the factors impacting female shamanic practices and discussing the transformation and strategies to support their safeguard and preservation. Thematic coding was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework and supported by Geertz's (1973) concept of thick description, which aimed to retain the cultural and emotional depth of the data.

The chapter is organised around emerging themes that speak to the transformation, marginalisation, and education for safeguarding female shamanism in the region. Verbatim quotes are used frequently to keep the shamans' voices at the core of this study, offering tangible evidence for the interpretations and synthesis presented. During interviews, a wide range of findings emerged from rich discussions, including shamanic cosmology, healing techniques, the experience of receiving the first call, and states of ecstasy. However, this chapter focuses on the most relevant themes aligned with the study's aims and objectives. The insights presented in this research prioritised the factors influencing the transmission of shamanic knowledge, particularly female shamanism, and the educational and cultural strategies that support its preservation. The following are defined core themes:

### 1. Factors Impacting Gendered Shamanic Practices in Gilgit-Baltistan.

- Social Stigma, Modesty (Pardah), and Shifting Public Perceptions.
- Familial Resistance and Patriarchal Authority.
- Economic Pressures and the Monetisation of Ritual.

### 2. The Influence of Islamisation and Modernity.

- Islamisation as a Boundary Marker: Faith, Permission, and Respectability.
- Influence of Modernisation: Education, Healthcare, and Migration.
- Perceptions of Change in Female Shamanism and Strategies for Preservation.
- Narratives of Decline vs. Transformation and Resilience.

- The Indispensability of Shamanic Roles and the Need for Preservation.

## 4.1 Factors Impacting Gendered Shamanic Practices in Gilgit-Baltistan

The interviews discover a complex interplay of socio-cultural, modernity, and religious factors collectively reshaping the landscape of female shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan. While some traditional aspects persist, new challenges and perceptions significantly impact women's ability and willingness to practice.

### 4.1.1 Social Stigma, Modesty (*Pardah*), and Shifting Public Perceptions

A recurrent theme, particularly emphasised by all-male *bitayu*, is the societal unease surrounding female public performance in shamanic rituals. An elderly shaman from Nagar Bitan 1 (Male) acknowledged that while core practices may not have altered, societal readiness to accept female *bitayu* remains limited:

“Our society is still not ready to accept female *bitayu*. Not happily, at least, but eventually, we will have to accept them out of necessity.” (Bitan 1, 2025)

This "necessity" hints that despite resistance, there is an underlying communal reliance on female shamans to fulfil societal needs, yet it is a reluctant acceptance, tempered by prevailing gender norms. This pervasive social stigma surrounding female public performance, especially in the *Chatti-tukki*<sup>35</sup> ritual, central to becoming a *bitan*, which involves ecstatic movements and dance (*giratas*), often clashes with prevailing gender norms tied to transgressing local norms of female modesty (*pardah*). These norms frame public ritual performance by women as morally questionable. A young female, Bitan 5<sup>36</sup> (Nagar), starkly articulated the intense backlash she faced from her community due to her father's religious status:

"[Because] my father is a *Sheikh*, people talked: 'How can a Sheikh make his daughter dance?'... [A neighbour woman even gossiped], saying: 'This *Sheikh*

---

<sup>35</sup> *Chatti* or *Chatto* or *Chatti tukki* is a ritual where a shaman dances in public and drinks the blood of a freshly sacrificed goat's head.

<sup>36</sup> Bitan 5, a 25-year-old female shaman originally from Nagar, relocated to Iran after marriage. Due to this shift in circumstances, she is currently unable to continue her shamanic practice.

lets his daughter dance.' After the ritual, those same people came to me for help."  
(Bitan 5, 2025)

Her testimony underscores not only the psychological burden of such criticism but also the paradox of public reliance on female shamans despite their social delegitimisation. Her experience highlights the immense pressure faced by women whose spiritual calling necessitates public ritual. This pressure is amplified when the family holds a respected religious status, such as that of a *Sheikh* (a religious scholar). However, she subsequently defended against a gossiping neighbour.

"I did not do this for fun or men. I was in pain. You go to doctors without worrying if they're male or female. Why judge me?" (Bitan 5, 2025)

This robust defence exposes the gendered double standard and the delegitimisation of female spiritual suffering and agency when it transgresses cultural norms of modesty (*pardah*). The phrase *What will people say?* emerged repeatedly across interviews as a boundary-setting mechanism used to limit women, encapsulating the power of public opinion in policing female behaviour. A male voice further confirms this pressure. An adult practitioner from Nagar, Bitan 3<sup>37</sup>, observed:

"Our culture does not approve of this for women, fearing it would compromise their modesty (*sharam*). Because of such concerns, there are efforts to eliminate female participation in this tradition." (Bitan 3, 2025)

Another male *bitan* added:

"It is difficult for women to continue because of issues around modesty (*sharam*) and immodesty (*bepardagi*). I do not prefer to go into details about this." (Bitan 2, 2025)

Here, *sharam* (a sense of shame or modesty) and *bepardagi* (immodesty or unveiling) are closely linked to the broader cultural concept of *pardah* or seclusion. Both terms collectively represent the cultural framework that functions as cultural enforcement of policing not only

---

<sup>37</sup> Bitan 3, a 32-year-old male shaman from Nagar, combines his shamanic duties with farming. Holding a Master's degree in Environmental Studies.

women's bodily expressions but also their spiritual legitimacy. These social expectations of *sharam* and *bepardagi* add another layer to *pardah* (practice of veiling or seclusion) by emphasising modesty, decency, and acceptable female conduct.

The historical shift in this perception is highlighted by an elder practising shaman from Hunza, Bitan 4 (Hunza, Male), who noted,

"People often consider it shameful for a woman to become a bitan. In ancient times, these ceremonies were celebrated and respected by the community. Now, people think it's inappropriate. Because women let their hair open (*ugoyang jal*) and perform in public, it's seen as immodest or disrespectful." (Bitan 4, 2025)

The shift from *celebrated and respected* to *inappropriate* signals a significant transformation in public perception, directly impacting the viability of female shamanism. This suggests a broader social transformation where traditional rituals, once public and revered, are now viewed through a moralising lens shaped by the modern interpretation of religious propriety.

Another case, recounted by Bitan 6 (male) from Hunza, demonstrates the role of male gatekeepers in shaping perceptions of female authenticity. During the time of Hunza's last *Tham* (ruler), his father was sent to verify a woman's authenticity:

"When she realised he was a real *bitan*, she stopped performing and apologised, saying she was only doing it to earn some money." (Bitan 6, 2025)

This anecdote reflects a lingering suspicion that female shamans are often perceived as inauthentic unless sanctioned by male spiritual authorities. Such narratives depict how patriarchal gatekeeping not only challenges the legitimacy of female shamans but also inhibits the intergenerational transmission of this intangible heritage.

#### **4.1.2 Familial Resistance and Patriarchal Authority**

In addition to broader societal stigma, direct familial opposition, often shaped by patriarchal authority and concerns for family honour, presents a significant barrier for aspiring female shamans. A young and educated female shaman, Bitan 5, provides a stark account of this:

"My father... strongly refused at first, even saying he would not care if I died. He could not risk his honour." (Bitan 5, 2025)

This powerful testimony reveals how deeply patriarchal values, intertwined with religious standing and social honour, can intersect to block female spiritual agency. The father's concern for his reputation (honour) outweighs, at least initially, his concern for his daughter's suffering and spiritual calling. In contrast, all male participants often reflect on their practice with pride and legitimacy, rarely mentioning this challenge. Hence, it can be observed that the internal family dynamic reinforces the marginalisation of female *bitayu*, even when their spiritual affliction is evident. This asymmetry shows how gender operates as a gatekeeping mechanism within the domestic context, reinforcing broader structural marginalisation.

Even after the intervention of her maternal uncle, Bitan 5's father continued to distance himself from her shamanic practice:

"Eventually, my father agreed, but during the 7-day ceremony, he would leave the house. He never stayed to witness it. That was a deeply painful time for me."  
(Bitan 5, 2025)

This account illustrates the emotional cost and the significance of kinship alternatives in enabling female participation. In this case, her maternal uncle was a crucial ally in navigating restrictive family dynamics. This familial resistance is not limited to fathers. Another educated young participant, Bitan 2 (Male), who happens to be a teacher by profession, noted that many parents, especially today, discourage their children, particularly daughters, from becoming *bitan* due to the physical toll of the role:

"Many parents today do not want their children to become *bitan*...because of the physical suffering it involves. They do not want their children to go through that pain." (Bitan 2, 2025)

Although framed as a general concern, this attitude is more consequential for the daughter, who faced heightened scrutiny and expectations around modesty and obedience. Further, Bitan 5 shared that her elder sister had to abandon her *bitan* path after marriage due to the demands of caring for young children and the implied disapproval of her in-laws. Their grandmother had also been denied access to the ritual and was instead exorcised (*muphusam*), suggesting a broader trend of female spiritual repression within domestic and

marital hierarchies. These examples highlighted how patriarchal family structures not only shape but also often sever the transmission of the female shamanic knowledge.

### 4.1.3 Economic Pressures and the Monetisation of Ritual

All participants consistently highlighted economic pressures as a key factor shaping the current and future landscape of shamanic practices in Gilgit-Baltistan. The growing monetisation of rituals was viewed both as a source of livelihood and a barrier to inclusion, particularly for women and lower-income community members. This dual role underscores how economic factors intersect with gender and class, influencing who can access, practice, or preserve these traditions. As such, the economic dimension is not simply a backdrop to shifts in shamanism, but it is a core driver, shaping decisions, perceptions, and practices across generations.

For some practitioners, particularly men, shamanism offers a viable source of income, as Bitan 3 (Male, Nagar), who is a farmer, notes:

"It is also a good source of income." (Bitan 3, 2025)

Similarly, Bitan 4 (Male, Hunza), who adopted this as his primary source of income to support his household:

"This skill helped me support my family... This was my source of income."  
(Bitan 4, 2025)

However, this shift towards monetisation is not without criticism. A senior practitioner, Bitan 1 (Male, Nagar), laments this transformation and views it as a loss of earlier values:

"Today's *bitayu* often perform for monetary gain, whereas in the past, practitioners were more open-hearted and did not focus on earning from it."  
(Bitan 1, 2025)

This transformation has broader implications. As rituals become commodified, they can become inaccessible to economically disadvantaged villagers. Bitan 5 (Female, Nagar) points out this disparity:

"*Bitayu* charge a lot for rituals, and most villagers cannot afford it." (Bitan 5, 2025)

Both family ethics and personal experience guided her commitment to offer services without charges:

"I have conducted the ritual for a few girls and never charged. I have suffered myself; I understand.... My father instructed me never to take money." (Bitan 5, 2025)

This shows a contrasting ethos, based on empathy and shared responsibility, that pushes back against growing commercialisation. While some male practitioners benefit from this economic shift, women often lack financial independence and face greater scrutiny around the exchange of money, particularly within conservative households, where female income is either controlled or viewed suspiciously. Furthermore, monetisation can exacerbate gendered access, affecting women both as clients and aspiring shamans. Women from lower-income families may be unable to afford essential initiation ceremonies such as the *chatti-tukki*, or face resistance from families unwilling to invest in what they perceive as a stigmatised practice. This adds a classed layer to the gendered barriers already documented, reinforcing unequal access to spiritual authority and participation.

## **4.2 The Influence of Islamisation and Modernity**

The interview data showed a complex interplay between shamanic traditions, the growing influence of orthodox or reformist Islam (Islamisation), and the multifaceted processes of modernity (education, migration, development), emerging as a crucial area of negotiation and contestation.

### **4.2.1 Islamisation as a Boundary Marker: Faith, Permission, and Respectability**

Addressing the influence of Islam on local shamanic traditions was a critical and sensitive aspect of this research. In Gilgit-Baltistan, cultural norms are deeply intertwined with Islamic social frameworks, particularly concerning female *pardah* or gender segregation. Therefore, the relationship between shamanic practices and Islam is portrayed with some variance by the *bitayu*.

Several male practitioners emphasised the compatibility of their work with their Islamic faith, as permitted by local religious leaders. For instance, Bitan 1 (Male, Nagar) asserted:

"Our faith does not contradict our practices. Local religious scholars and sheikhs (clerics) have permitted us to carry out our duties." (Bitan 1, 2025)

Similarly, Bitan 2 (Male, Nagar) stated:

"As far as I believe, religion has not impacted our practices. Our local *sheikhs* have never forbidden us. We practice in our way." (Bitan 2, 2025)

Bitan 3 (Male) also notes:

"My *pariting* are Shia... Hindu *pariting*, on the other hand, would not ask about religious matters... Their religion does not affect the *bitan's* faith." (Bitan 3, 2025)

At the same time, he also acknowledged that fairies (*pariting*) expect him to uphold Islamic rituals:

"They often ask me religious questions about the *kalima*, names of Imams, and so on. They are punctual about their prayer and expect me to follow it too." (Bitan 3, 2025)

This duality illustrates a lived syncretism where local practitioner perceives their work as compatible with dominant religious expectations, often through conscious efforts to reframe their practices within an Islamic ethos. Interestingly, two practitioners during the interview recited some verses from the Holy Quran to describe it as something aligned with the Islamic faith.

Yet, this religious accommodation is not equally accessible across gender lines. Bitan 5 revealed how Islamisation intersects with gender and public respectability. As the daughter of a *sheikh* (religious leader), she faced intense scrutiny and internal resistance: "My father is a Sheikh in Nagar and does not believe in these things... 'What will people say if a Sheikh plays music and allows dance in his home?'" (Bitan 5, 2025)

In this case, religion operates less as theological disapproval and more as a symbolic framework that enforces respectability and reinforces gendered boundaries. Here, the concern is less about doctrinal incompatibility and more about maintaining a sheikh's respectable Islamic identity in the public perception. This highlights how various interpretations of Islam, and its sociocultural implications, can differ significantly, particularly along gender lines, creating boundaries that enable certain forms of shamanism while disabling others, especially for women associated with figures of religious authority.

These dynamics were aptly summarised in a discussion with Salma Khan<sup>38</sup> (Hunza), a local female anthropologist, who has served for more than seven years in the studies of shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan. She highlighted a significant and multidimensional view of the impact of Islam on local traditions, such as female shamanism. She quoted:

"The interaction between Islamic thought and established local traditions like female shamanism is a dynamic and often contested process. In areas where Islam is perceived as an encompassing cultural system, not just a religion, there has been a noticeable push to either replace or significantly alter ancient practices deemed 'un-Islamic.' This has led, in some instances, to shamanic traditions being reframed or presented by current practitioners through an Islamic lens, reflecting the influence of dominant religious ideologies. We must not forget that these traditions are centuries old, predating the Islamic presence. While their adaptability is a testament to their cultural significance in some regions, they are simultaneously threatened. This erosion is driven not only by religious reinterpretation but also by developmental pressures and a Western-centric view that can marginalise indigenous cultures by labelling them primitive and superstitious." (Khan, 2025)

Khan's commentary aligns with Kuper's (1988) and Berkes's (2012) critiques. Kuper exposed how Western anthropologists constructed the concept of the 'primitive' to position non-Western societies as inferior and static. At the same time, Berkes underscored the adaptive, place-based knowledge systems embedded in traditional ecological practices, which are frequently marginalised by modern scientific or development discourses. These

---

<sup>38</sup> Salma Khan is one of the experts in Shamanism in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan. She was consulted to cross-check the local terminologies and concepts.

insights underscore how both Islamisation and modernity can marginalise practices like female shamanism, despite their deep cultural and spiritual roots.

#### **4.2.2 Influence of Modernisation: Education, Healthcare, and Migration**

The encroachment of modern institutions, such as formal education, healthcare, and economic migration, introduced additional complexities in the transmission of female shamanic knowledge. These elements reshaped attitudes, values, and access to ritual practices for women.

A 68-year-old senior shaman noted the impact of these changes:

“Modern changes like education and migration have certainly influenced female shamans. Many are reluctant to accept this knowledge unless they feel confident in it, which prevents them from taking up this role.” (Bitan 1, 2025)

His statement suggests that modern education might foster a scepticism or a shift in an epistemological framework, whereby shamanic knowledge is seen as incompatible with dominant rationalist worldviews. This hesitation, particularly among women, reflects the internalisation of modern discourses that privilege scientific knowledge over embodied or spiritual knowing. According to him, the availability of biomedical healthcare, however, had not necessarily replaced the need for traditional healing:

“The development of hospitals has not lessened the need for shamanic practices. This tradition has always been a societal necessity.” (Bitan 1, 2025)

While a younger practitioner from Nagar elaborated on this differentiated role:

“People do not come to us for every illness; if I am unwell, I go to the hospital myself. But people come to us with other issues: someone has done black magic, their work is stuck, or they cannot marry the person they love, things like that.” (Bitan 2, Male, Nagar)

These statements indicate a functional co-existence, where shamanism addresses afflictions perceived to be outside the purview of biomedicine, particularly issues of spiritual affliction,

misfortune, or interpersonal disruption. However, a senior practising shaman observed a broader attitudinal shift linked to socio-economic changes:

"Development... brought opportunities, money and worries. All this changed people's attitudes." (Bitan 4, 2025)

He further added:

"Younger generations still come to me seeking help, but the level of faith people used to have is no longer there"

These reflections highlight how development may displace or dilute traditional belief systems, not through direct opposition but by reshaping priorities and forms of trust.

A particularly significant concern voiced across interviews was the increased preference for exorcism (*uphusas*) or to discontinue the shamanic 'call' or serving as *bitan*. As Bitan 4 underscores this perceived erosion, "These days, when women show signs of influence, families often opt for exorcism (*muphoshan*)."

This decision often stems from two primary concerns. First, the signs of shamanic calling, like trance, pain, and visions, are usually misread as symptoms of mental illness, especially in educated or urbanising contexts. While this shift indicates a growing awareness of psychological health, it also signals the lack of understanding of culturally embedded spiritual calling. All participants shared stories of their parents, or people they knew, choosing exorcism (*Uphushan*) instead of adopting a spiritual path.

The second major factor is framed as acts of protection. Parents and guardians fear the physical pain and social costs associated with the calling. Common symptoms mentioned by participants include 'body pain,' 'headaches, and general affliction, which they described as a 'deeply painful' (*takleefda*) process. These experiences are often interpreted as illness or possession, leading many families to pursue exorcism (*uphusas*) as a remedy. In this context, exorcism is viewed as a protective measure designed to alleviate suffering and restore normalcy. However, some participants challenged this approach. Bitan 4 reflected: '...exorcism is not always the right solution (*ophusas showa api*).' (Bitan 4, 2025).

This perspective points to the unintended consequences of treading spiritual calling as a pathology. At the same time, exorcism may offer relief or social acceptability, but it often functions as a mechanism to silence or suppress a legitimate spiritual experience, especially for women. These factors demonstrate how modernisation operates not only through institutions like schools and hospitals, but also through shifting perceptions of illness, authority, and gender. Female shamanism becomes increasingly challenging to sustain in contexts where families equate ritual calling with madness or shame, and where healing is monetised or displaced.

### **4.3 Perceptions of Change in Female Shamanism and Strategies for Preservation**

Despite the numerous challenges, the interviewees offer nuanced perspectives on the state of female shamanism, ranging from observations of decline to assertions of its enduring necessity and adaptability. They also implicitly and explicitly suggest strategies for its preservation.

#### **4.3.1 Narratives of Decline vs. Transformation and Resilience**

While there is a broad consensus among the *bitayu* that the number of practising female shamans has declined, interpretations of this trend vary. As one adult male asserted:

“In my opinion, the number of female *bitayu* has decreased, but they still exist, just fewer than before” (Bitan 2, 2025)

Similarly, Bitan 1 noted, “There are women who still practice today, but very few.” (Bitan 1, 2025).

In contrast, a senior shaman from Hunza offered a more inclusive account:

“There are no female *bitayu* left in our region—it has ended. Only the spiritual presence of miraculous ladies (*sir-e-gus*) remains.” (Bitan 4, 2025)

This rise in the tragic cases of ‘*sir-e-gus*’ suggests a strategic form of adaptability, societal acceptance, and females’ preference for the miraculous one instead of *bitayu*, as a tool to maintain a spiritual role in society. It also signals the emotional distress faced by many

women whose callings are unsupported or actively suppressed, mainly because of pressure from family and society.

However, not all participants see this transformation as evidence of decline. Bitan 1 (Male, Nagar) offers a counterargument:

“The core practices of *dayal*<sup>39</sup> have not changed; what has changed is the authenticity and sincerity of those who now claim to be practitioners.” (Bitan 1, 2025)

This critique points to a crisis of legitimacy and authenticity, rather than is not the disappearance of the practice itself. The concern over ‘*fake and insincere individuals*’ entering the field was echoed by others:

“There are now many more fake *bitan* than there used to be” (Bitan 4, 2025)

In contrast, female *bitayu*, like Bitan 5 and 7, demonstrated resilience through adaptation. Bitan 5 recounted that her *Chatti-tukki* was co-led by a male *bitan* and included recorded music instead of live male musicians to maintain *pardah*, demonstrating a pragmatic negotiation with patriarchal norms to enable her practice. Such acts of "making do" are a powerful way to preserve tradition in a modified form.

### **4.3.2 The Indispensability of Shamanic Roles and the Need for Preservation**

Despite declining participation and challenging perceptions, all interviewed *bitayu* affirmed the ongoing societal need for shamanic practices. As previously noted by Bitan 1, these traditions are deeply rooted in social life and continue to serve important cultural and spiritual functions. Similarly, Bitan 3 described these traditions as a ‘*source of traditional wisdom*’ and emphasised ‘the role of a shaman is central to our society, and it will always be needed’ (Bitan 3, 2025).

---

<sup>39</sup> *Dayal* is a Shina language term for shaman, while *bitan* is used in the Burushaski language.

Importantly, participants not only underscored the value of these practices but also offered pathways for their preservation, particularly amid concerns about decline and misrepresentation.

Explicit strategies for preservation emerged from the interviews:

- **Familial Support:** Several respondents highlighted the role of family, especially in recognising and supporting the complex initiation process. As Bitan 2 put it, “Parents should understand its value and support their children through the initial suffering.... instead of suppressing it, as is often done” (Bitan 2, 2025).
- **Mentorship and Authentic Transmission:** The concerns about legitimacy emerged repeatedly. Bitan 1 warned against the rise of ‘fake and insincere individuals’ while Bitan 4 shared that efforts to train new bitan had faltered due to a lack of discipline among youth. These accounts suggest a pressing need for guided mentorship rooted in ethical transmission.
- **Ethical Practice and Access:** Female participants especially stressed the importance of non-monetised practices. Bitan 5, for instance, explained her choice to offer services freely as a personal commitment. By not charging, she presents an alternative model that could make shamanic help more accessible and potentially revive a sense of ‘open-heartedness.’
- **Documentation and Recognition:** Another strategy highlighted was the need for documentation. As Bitan 3 suggests, a modern approach: “the first thing we must do is encourage those individuals who have been affected by the *bitan* call. They are the primary source of continuity. Secondly, it should be documented in historical literature” (Bitan 3, 2025). This call for documentation and the valuing of practitioners aligns with global heritage preservation frameworks such as UNESCO’s (2003) safeguarding principles for intangible cultural heritage.
- **Adherence to Proper Protocols (SOPs):** Finally, emphasis was placed on respecting the internal ethics of the practice. Bitan 2 (Nagar) urged that ‘.... just like we respect doctors, *khalifa* or religious scholars in our society, *bitanyu* deserve that same respect... So, all these aspects must be taken seriously” (Bitan 2, 2025) This is about maintaining the integrity and perceived efficacy of the practice.

These strategies reflect resilience and cultural creativity in preserving female shamanism amidst shifting religious, social, and economic pressures. They signal a desire to pass down the practice responsibly without diluting its essence, while ensuring it remains accessible, ethical, and meaningful in a rapidly changing world.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the findings from in-depth interviews with the *bitayu* in Hunza and Nagar valleys, organised thematically around the research questions. The narratives reveal that female shamanic practices are impacted by several factors. These include social stigma tied to modesty and public performance, significant familial resistance rooted in patriarchal authority, and economic pressures that both enable and restrict practice. Additionally, the transformative influences of modernisation, including education and healthcare development, also play a significant role. Despite a general perception of a decline in the number of female shamans, the *bitayu* articulate a strong belief in the enduring societal necessity of their traditions and highlight strategies for preservation. These include fostering familial support, ensuring the authentic transmission of knowledge and discipline, documenting the tradition, and maintaining ethical practice. One of the key reasons for the continuity of shamanism is often seen as its compatibility and integration into local Islamic beliefs. Spirits are sometimes described as religious and observant. Although female shamans face many challenges, including social pressure around modesty and male and patriarchal control, their voices also reflect resilience, adaptability and a deep commitment to their spiritual path.

## Chapter 5 Discussion

This chapter moves from the presentation of findings to an in-depth interpretation and synthesis, aiming to unpack the complex dynamics that shape female shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan. The preceding chapter outlined the empirical landscape through the voices of the *bitayu* themselves, detailing the multifaceted factors that influence their practices and perceptions of change and preservation. Here, the task is to weave those insights into a broader analytical tapestry, engaging critically with the study's research questions, the existing literature reviewed earlier, and the multi-theoretical conceptual frameworks. This includes Barth's Ethnic Boundary Theory, Feminist Anthropology, and UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) framework that has guided this inquiry.

The discussion proceeds by first examining the emergent patterns and themes from the findings, particularly the interplay of social stigma, patriarchal control, economic pressures, and the influence of Islamisation and modernity on female shamanic roles. A second layer of analysis will then situate these empirical realities within existing scholarly debates, exploring how the literature corresponds with, contradicts, or deepens our interpretation of the lived experiences of shamans in Gilgit-Baltistan. Throughout this process, issues of trustworthiness and credibility, inherent in qualitative exploratory research, will be addressed, particularly in relation to remote data collection methods and the interpretation of complex, culturally embedded narratives. Finally, the discussion revisits the study's limitations and considers the potential transferability of its findings to broader populations or similar contexts where traditional spiritual practices are navigating profound social and cultural transitions.

### 5.1 The Social Construction and Maintenance of Gendered Shamanic Boundaries

The stigma surrounding female ritual performance, as voiced by all participants, reflects broader socio-cultural dynamics in Gilgit-Baltistan. The region's gender relations are shaped by intersecting religious, patriarchal, and traditional norms. As Walter (2016, 2022) and Halvorson (2005) note, practices like *pardah* (seclusion) and *sharam* (modesty) defined women's roles in public life and confined them largely to the domestic sphere. This poses challenges for female *bitayu*, whose spiritual work often requires public and ecstatic expressions.

Notably, while shamanic rituals in Gilgit-Baltistan transcend linguistic or tribal backgrounds, participation remains gendered. Sökefeld (2014) and Walter (2016) observed that this restriction varied across the valleys. In Nagar Valley, female exclusion is often couched in Islamic moral narratives linking it with *na-mahram* or *pardah* (the terms frequently used by Nagar participants). Whereas in Hunza Valley, similar restrictions are framed as a consequence of cultural shifts and the threat of demographic change, as expressed in Bitan 4 & 6 through the phrase “*ghair sis mu olu giyawan bey*” (now many outsiders have come in), as the arrival of outsiders threatens female honour. This contrast between how females are viewed in Hunza versus Nagar supports what Asma Barlas (2002) argues: that Islamic gender norms are not monolithic but locally constructed and interpreted, often shaped by regional histories and power relations rather than by religious scripture alone. For instance, Hunza has always been a crossroads, a key spot on the Silk Route, and even today, China’s trade route passes through it. This constant flow of outside influences and economic activity has naturally had an impact on women's roles in this part of Gilgit-Baltistan. Due to this economic integration, in Hunza, it has enabled greater female visibility, while in Nagar, patriarchal religious norms remain more rigidly enforced.

Social expectations around modesty, honour, and public performance operate as a powerful mechanism for regulating female spiritual authority. Fredrik Barth's (1969) concept of ethnic boundaries being maintained through social interaction and the ascription of identity is powerfully applicable here, not just to broader ethnic distinctions, but to the internal gendered boundaries within the community itself. These norms about modesty and public behaviour are not just sitting in a religious text; they are actively used to draw boundaries in the sand. The societal judgment a female Bitan 5 faced acts as a mechanism of boundary maintenance, dictating what constitutes "acceptable" female spiritual expression and public comportment. The statements from Bitan 3 and 4 further underscore how acts such as public trance or dancing, core components of ritual practice, are interpreted as immodest when performed by women. Bitan 3 remarked that the culture does not approve of this for women, “fearing it would compromise their modesty,” polices this boundary. This fear of ‘compromising modesty’, of transgressing the norms of *sharam*, is a potent social sanction. Bitan 4 recalled how “people often consider it shameful for a woman to become a *bitan*.... It is seen as immodest or disrespectful.” Walter (2016) notes that in such contexts, female behaviour is tied to collective honour, rendering any public ritual by women inherently suspect.

Yet, historical evidence indicates a time when female *bitayu* used to perform openly, without it being perceived as a stigma. Archival photographs, such as those taken by Lorimer in 1924 (Fig. 2), and oral testimonies support this.



Figure 2 A picture of a female *bitan* performing in a public event, taken by Lorimer in 1924. Source: Kreutzmann, H. (2020). *Hunza Matters: Bordering and Ordering between Ancient and New Silk Roads. Iran and the Caucasus*, 27(1):26.

A statement from a 64-year-old man from Hunza recalled attending many female performances during his youth. He remembered attending Dadi Kaneezo's<sup>40</sup> *chatti* ceremony under *tham* (ruler) and another 80-year-old shaman, who mentioned the names of other renowned female *bitayu* of that time, such as Nooran, Laya, and Raheel<sup>41</sup>. Inexcusably, now there is not a single publicly known practising woman *bitan* in the Hunza region. Their public presence has vanished. As stated by Bitan 4 (Male), "I am the only remaining *bitan* in Hunza", and not publicly known female *bitayu* remain in lower or central Hunza, though some may practise privately or adapt to practice as *sir-e-gushiganx*<sup>42</sup> (miraculous women) than *bitayu*. Unlike Hunza, Nagar continues to host a number of female practitioners, though

---

<sup>40</sup> Bitan 4 recalled a well-known female *bitan* from Hunza, describing her as one of the most recognised *bitayu* in the Hunza region, renowned for her exceptional spiritual abilities.

<sup>41</sup> These three names of notable female *bitayu* from Hunza were well-known, and even the ruler would consult them on various occasions.

<sup>42</sup> In the Burushaski language, the singular form for "woman" is "gus," while the plural form is "gushiganx."

they remain marginalised. The emphasis on religious restrictions such as seclusion and interactions with *na-mahram* (non-permissible males) is a consistent theme.

The pressure is undeniable and often comes laden with gendered disciplinary undertones. Bitan 5's (Nagar) account of her father's distress over her musical performance offers a compelling example. His concern is not merely a theological objection to music or ritual, but it is an anxiety about how female visibility affects family honour. Abu-Lughod (1986) emphasises how the threat of social shame (or 'what people will say') becomes a regulatory force in many Muslim societies. The intense social surveillance and the significant threat to individual and familial honour posed by perceived transgressions of gender norms. In this context, the shamanic practice becomes risky for women because they challenge established gendered expectations of silence, modesty and invisibility.

Still, moments of subtle negotiation exist. As one female informant (Bitan 7) noted, '*You know, we should also be mindful of pardah, and we should try to ensure that a woman leads another woman's chatti-tukki. If that's not possible, then out of necessity, it must be done by an elderly man.*' This suggests a nuanced view of how women navigate these cultural boundaries without necessarily rejecting them. This kind of navigation within religiously defined boundaries resonates deeply with Saba Mahmood's (2005) concept of agency as ethical self-formation. Rather than viewing compliance with norms like *pardah* as passive submission, Mahmood invites us to understand such choices as forms of self-cultivation. For female *bitayu*, adhering to, or careful negotiation of, modesty (*pardah*) or ritual silence in certain contexts might not be mere submission. Their agency is not in resistance alone, but in the strategic calibration of public behaviour, religious expectations, and ritual authority.

## **5.2 Patriarchal Control and Female Agency**

The socio-cultural fabric of Gilgit-Baltistan is deeply embedded in patriarchal structures. Historically, men have occupied dominant positions as providers, hunters, warriors, and decision-makers. Conversely, women were confined to the domestic sphere, responsible for child-rearing and household labour. These roles are not biologically determined, but, according to Ann Oakley (1972), are products of the social construction of gender roles, which is shaped by historical, economic, and cultural systems.

This social division also illuminates the concept of gender performativity by Judith Butler (1990), where gender is not fixed but continually produced through stylised, repetitive acts. Similarly, in Gilgit-Baltistan, this ongoing performance has historically naturalised patriarchy while often rendering female contributions invisible or strictly confined to private life. This very status of women is neither static nor uniform; somewhat, it is shaped by intersecting identities, where honour, modesty, and kinship norms frequently define a woman's place as the symbolic preserver of family and community reputation.

State integration and post-colonisation developments, entrenched gender segregation, particularly during Zia-ul-Haq's Islamisation campaign (1979-1988). Where state-sponsored Islamisation intensified gender discrimination, notably limiting women from engaging in public rituals or communal roles essential to shamanism (Patel, 2010; Walter, 2016, 2022; Halvorson, 2005). These norms were further compounded by sectarian tensions that started influencing women's presence, flowing from the inside into the community and gradually women started disappearing from the social context.

### **5.3 Gender Performance and the Limits of Ritual Authority**

In such a context, female *bitayu* face significant familial and societal resistance. The case of Bitan 5, whose father initially refused to witness her ritual, was not a personal disapproval but an enactment of patriarchal authority. Such refusals are not isolated decisions but reflect what Walter (2016, 2022) described as the structured disciplining of women's bodies and visibility in ritual and public life. Similarly, Halvorson (2005) has shown how notions of honour and *pardah* operate as social technologies of control, determining which forms of female agency are permitted. In Gilgit-Baltistan, male shamans express verbal support for female *bitanyu* but with certain qualifiers, emphasising the need to 'observe modesty' and 'maintain family honour'. These conditions are striking manifestations of soft patriarchy, where women's access to spiritual professions remains contingent on male-defined moral frameworks.

This 'soft patriarchy' allows nominal support while still subjecting women to male-defined moral conditions. For example, Bitan 4 explained, "*My son and father did not agree for my daughter to proceed with this profession... [because of] various male visitors.*" Reveals how women's spiritual roles are embedded in kinship hierarchies, where legitimacy is granted or withheld through male consent. Bitan 7, a working woman, declined to engage in a detailed

conversation during the interview because her husband does not allow her to have lengthy discussions over the phone. This situation highlights not just resistance but also symbolic exclusion from the sacred domain, reinforcing the gendered boundary between private and public spiritual authority.

Judith Butler's (1990) work further illuminates these dynamics. Female *bitayu*, such as Bitan 5, do not necessarily engage in "gender trouble" in Butler's sense of subverting gender binaries, but their public performance of rituals challenges established norms of femininity. This shaman's persistence, despite resistance, becomes a form of constrained agency. A historical parallel can be drawn to the Soviet era in Siberia, during which public shamanic rituals were banned and practised underground (Sychenko, 2020). In both contexts, the spiritual labour, particularly of women, is delegitimised not through disappearance but through forced invisibility.

## 5.4 Testimonial Injustice and Gendered Ritual Hierarchies

This historical marginalisation of female shamans was further entrenched by colonial-era ethnographic research, which disproportionately focused on male *bitayu*. As Bitan 6 observed, male *bitayu* were invited to royal courts for formal consultation, while women were only occasionally consulted, always alongside male counterparts. Clark (1955) described Hunza women as "intellectually inferior". This is a clear stance of what Miranda Fricker (2007) terms testimonial injustice, where individuals are wronged in their capacity as knowers due to prejudicial assumptions tied to their social identity, in this case, gender.

This gendered epistemic hierarchy persists in Gilgit-Baltistan to this day. Male shamans are typically the ones sought out for what are perceived as high-stakes spiritual tasks, such as conducting powerful rituals like unearthing hidden *tumering* (amulets), diagnosing the causes of chronic or inexplicable suffering, or navigating profound life-and-death crises. In contrast, female *bitayu* are more often approached for what might be culturally framed as "lighter" spiritual tasks, including casting spells to influence the future, performing rituals to ward off the evil eye, treating minor ailments, or helping to resolve domestic disputes. These divisions reflect not a lack of spiritual ability but a social and symbolic division of ritual labour.

Besides, these challenge some female *bitan* to opt for this tradition as notions of "choice." Bitan 5 and 7 did not "choose" their spiritual calling in a liberal individualist sense; it was an affliction, a pain. Their agency lies in how they respond to this calling amidst severe constraints. This speaks to Mahmood's (2005) understanding of agency as a capacity to inhabit and work within them. Bitan 1's phrase 'spiritual necessity' captures a point towards a non-liberal form of agency, which may eventually compel societal acceptance, even if it conflicts with dominant gender expectations.

Hence, these negotiations are further complicated by Islamic discourses that branded female-led rituals as 'un-Islamic' (Jettmar, 1961), mirroring the broader patterns of spiritual in post-colonial contexts. Similar dynamics are documented among Malaysia's Orang Asli communities (Toshihiro, 2008). In this regard, *bitayu* stories are not merely a case of regional or cultural inappropriateness; they are part of a broader narrative of gender, religion, and the politics of ritual legitimacy in post-colonial and increasingly orthodox Islamic societies.

## **5.5 The Impact of Islamic Homogenisation on Female Ritual Authority**

The transformation and marginalisation of female shamans (*bitayu*) in Hunza and Nagar valleys are inextricably linked to broader historical and religio-political shifts, reflecting a South Asian and East Asian pattern where indigenous spiritualities are frequently sustained through women's ritual labour. Like the Bangladeshi *ojhas* (Karim, 1998), Afghan *malangs* (Karim, 1998) and Korean *mudangs* (Sidky, 2003) who faced a burden of social shame, syncretise Islamic and pre-Islamic elements to maintain spiritual legitimacy. In GB, *bitayu* have increasingly reframed their practices using Islamic terminologies, reflecting what Sidky (2010) observed that South Asian shamans often seek to assert compatibility with dominant religious ideologies.

The roots of these transformations in GB can be traced back to the region's early encounters with external religious forces, beginning with the spread of Buddhism in the 8th century and later Islam in the 12th century (Nicolus, 2015b). While historical texts rarely document how Islamic ideologies specifically impacted local shamanic practices, oral traditions offer critical insights into his intersection. Nicolaus (2015b) recounted one of the earliest oral narratives of resistance that occurred when a group of shamanic practitioners, led by a

shaman named Gil Shinga,<sup>43</sup> refused to convert to Islam. This story of resistance and the claims that his lineage preserved shamanic practices by incorporating Buddhist elements serve as a testament to the region's religious syncretism.

Once autonomous princely states, their affiliation with the postcolonial, Sunni-dominated structure of Pakistan has stirred significant sectarian tensions in the 1980s (Hunzai, 2013; Dad, 2017; Feyyaz, 2011). The sectarian tensions that have simmered, especially since the Islamisation campaign, followed by national curriculum reforms and heightened scrutiny of local ritual practices, particularly those involving women (Kreutzmann, 2008, 2024; Bansal, 2008; Mishra, 2018; Ali, 2019). This resulted in increased religious scrutiny, the censorship of pluralistic rituals, and even accusations of blasphemy. It was an atmosphere that forced many spiritual practitioners to tread carefully, often working secretly to avoid social and legal backlash.

These changes have pressured practitioners to adapt. Many now reframed their services using Islamic terminology, referencing Quranic verses or incorporating *zikr* (ritual chanting). Bitan 1's firm assertion that "our faith does not contradict our practices," and Bitan 3's description of his *pariting* as Shia and devout. These are more than just words; they are adaptive framings, acting as discursive shields that allow practitioners to continue their vital work while appearing to align with dominant religious ideologies. This is an apparent effort to '*Islamicise*' their indigenous rituals, likely to gain public acceptance. While such shifts may secure public tolerance, they also reflect growing constraints on the legitimacy of female ritual.

Yet, these necessary adaptations come at a cost. As Miranda Fricker (2007) argues, when women's experiences fall outside dominant interpretive frameworks, they face hermeneutical injustice. Female *bitayu* are denied full recognition not because they lack spiritual insight, but because their wisdom operates outside the established norms of institutional religion. This is tragically evident in the multiple accounts of exorcism (*muphasas*) performed on women, showing women clear spiritual signs, denying them initiation and silencing their roles.

---

<sup>43</sup> A shaman who led a group of his followers to migrate from Gilgit to Baltistan.

Bitan 5's story brings these pressures into sharp focus. She reveals how the public visibility of women in shamanic roles, especially the ritual dancing during *chatti*, is often cast as inappropriate or shameful within the dominant Islamic discourses around modesty. Her father, a *Sheikh*/clergyman, vehemently resisted her performance; such anxieties are not just external; they reflect how deeply Islamic moral codes can be internalised. It is a living illustration of Judith Butler's (1999) concept of gender performativity, where 'proper' femininity is enforced through social regulation through gossip, the withdrawal of support, or even, as we have seen, exorcism (*uphusas*). So, the *bitayu*'s struggle for religious legitimacy is not just an external battle; it's also an internal negotiation.

In the Hunza Valley, silence is prevalent; no active *bitayu* are publicly acknowledged, and reportedly, only one elderly male *bitan* is still performing. The cultural shift is stark and deeply felt. Women like 'Dadi Nooran and Dadi Kaneezo', who once commanded ritual spaces during the reign of the *tham* (ruler), have seen their potential successors exorcised (*uphushan*), silenced, or blocked from participating. The reasons for this are deep-seated fears around honour, concerns about male visitation during rituals, and the general visibility of women in such roles.

In Nagar, the picture is a little different. Female shamanism clings on in pockets like Chalt and Chaprote, yet even here, its existence is precarious, economically vulnerable, and increasingly reliant on men. Bitan 5 painted a clear picture of the costs involved in *chatti* "...the goats, the white clothing, the sacred spaces," all necessities that must be funded by a male relative, usually a maternal uncle (*mamu*). Bourdieu's (1985) theory of 'social and symbolic capital' helps to explain her experience, which elaborates that women lack autonomous access to ritual authority without material backing and social approval from men.

Despite these formidable barriers, some women like Bitan 5 have endured at least for a time. Her past practice represented a moral stance against the increasing commodification of spiritual labour, echoing concerns raised by male practitioners about the erosion of sincerity in *bitan* work. This dynamic bears essential similarities to the female shamans of the post-Soviet Central Asian context, specifically in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, who navigated their practices in response to the political attitudes and Islamic reinterpretations (Penkala-Gawęcka, 2020).

The current state of female shamanism in Hunza and Nagar reflects a dynamic process of erosion, reinvention, and negotiation. The Islamic reformism has not eradicated female ritual authority but has reshaped its terms. Women must now navigate theological conservatism, economic dependency, and gendered moral expectations to sustain their roles.

## **5.6 Modernity, Development and the Displacement of Female Ritual Authority**

The shifting landscape of female shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan must be situated within the extensive patterns of modernity and development that have redefined the region's political, cultural and socio-economic framework. In the context of Hunza and Nagar, modernity is not a simple embrace of Western norms. Instead, it reflects what Anna-Maria Walter (2014) calls a 'transformative process' that resonates with Wittrock's (2000) idea of fragmented modernities of evolving attitude towards tradition, knowledge, and institutional power. Walter (2014) further noted that modernity in Gilgit-Baltistan unfolds through a trans-local dialogue between external influences and local cultural responses.

From the 1970s onwards, transformative projects like the construction of the Karakoram Highway (KKH), the expansion of modern schools, and the expansive reach of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) have been undertaken. These endeavours undoubtedly brought about significant social and infrastructural change, boosting literacy, enhancing mobility, and opening doors for women in specific sectors (Sökefeld, 2014; Bowles, 2014; Alam, 2017). Yet, alongside these advancements, institutional frameworks began to quietly sideline indigenous spiritual practices. As '*development*' became synonymous with '*progress*' and '*modernity*,' the traditional roles held by figures like female *bitayu* increasingly came to be seen as outdated, or even incompatible with newly emerging moral and religious norms.

Csáji (2011) points out that Pakistan's national education system tends to marginalise local knowledge systems in favour of a unified Islamic identity. Similarly, Walter (2022) observes that educated men and youth often describe shamanism as "un-Islamic" or "superstitious". These ideological shifts have tangible consequences in communities like Hunza and Nagar. It is almost impossible to find female shamans to interview in most parts because they have disappeared from public view, sometimes continuing their work secretly. While one elderly female *bitan* is said to still practice in lower Hunza, female shamans are no longer publicly acknowledged, with some reportedly continuing their work in secret to avoid religious

scrutiny or social condemnation. This scenario, however, is not unique to Gilgit-Baltistan. Torri and Roche (2020) highlight similar dynamics across Asia, where female shamans are often pushed into a liminal space and sidelined by institutionalised religion, barred from formal authority that typically favours male practitioners, and thus compelled to practice informally or clandestinely.

Multiple respondents of this study cited education, migration and development (Bitan 1, Bitan 2, Bitan 4) as drivers of this erosion. These findings echo long-standing anthropological concerns about how formal schooling displaces embodied and ritual knowledge with abstract, textual systems. Migration also weakens kinship-based transmission of spiritual roles, especially between older and younger women. Hence, the decline of female shamanism is not a simple story of 'cultural change' but rather a complex outcome of many colliding forces such as developmental restructuring, the displacement of traditional knowledge, economic gatekeeping by men, and a push towards religious homogenisation. Yet, despite these pressures, female *bitayu* continue to adapt. It is vital to remember, as Torri and Roche (2020) remind us, that female shamans are not merely passive relics of a bygone era, far from it. In contexts like Gilgit-Baltistan, they remain agents of cultural persistence, offering their services to communities with quiet dedication and framing their sacred role as not a profession. They offer a lived critique of dominant paradigms of development and modernity.

## **5.7 Strategies for Preservation: Resilience, Adaptation, and the ICH Framework**

Despite social, economic and religious pressures, female shamanic traditions in Gilgit-Baltistan emerge not as an act of nostalgia but as a deliberate, negotiated process rooted in resilience and everyday agency. All participants articulated a living relationship to tradition that evolves, adapts and endures. Their strategies for continuity closely align with UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) framework, particularly prioritising community-based identification, intergenerational transmission, documentation, and the living, dynamic nature of traditions.

### **5.7.1 Community-based valuation and Intergenerational Continuity**

The most important principle of the ICH framework is that the communities themselves are the best stewards and definers of their own heritage. Several *bitayu* stressed the priority of

recognising and valuing their wisdom system. As Bitan 3, for example, remarked: “Those who have been affected (*Chal dila*) [or have signs of] should be encouraged because they are the primary source of continuity.” This statement is not only a call for recognition but a plea for familial, financial, and moral support so that these women are not denied their spiritual vocation.

The biggest pressing threat to female shamanic knowledge is the chain of continuity, as Bitan 2 warned, which is ‘missed transmission.’ As highlighted by all interviewees, many prospective female shamans, typically daughters or nieces of practising *bitayu*, are not prevented from undergoing the *chatti-tukki* ritual primarily by male guardians or due to financial burdens. This results in a loss not just of ritual skill but also of what Walter (2014) and Fricker (2007) describe as hermeneutical resources, which are shared cultural frameworks that allow individuals and communities to interpret and legitimate their experiences. In other words, when these frameworks are devalued, women’s spiritual expression becomes unintelligible, misunderstood as psychological instability or suppression.

Such erasure is not simply about forgetting tradition but denying the epistemic validity of female knowledge systems. This means that the urgency of intergenerational transmission is not only about succession but also about safeguarding the interpretive tools that allow these women to make sense of and act upon their experiences.

### **5.7.2 Documentation as a Cultural Resistance**

Several informants, especially Bitan 3, expressed a desire to preserve this tradition through formal documentation, including written accounts, oral history projects, or archival inclusion in local histories. This emphasis on documentation is especially important in a context where indigenous knowledge systems are marginalised by state institutions and national curricula (Csáji, 2011). Such initiatives of writing down or archiving these traditions are not merely preservation efforts but are cultural resistance. By creating a public record, it helps to validate female shamanic knowledge as legitimate, complex and historically grounded. It is a resistance to the epistemic erasures often caused by development and religious reforms. Such efforts align with UNESCO’s recommendations for recording and archiving endangered practices, particularly when direct transmission is at risk. By relocating these practices from private to public memory, documentation becomes a means of asserting their significance within broader cultural and political discourse.

### 5.7.3 Adaptive Practices and the Ethics of Continuity

In Hunza and Nagar, female *bitayu* preserve tradition and exhibit remarkable agency in adapting their practices. Some participants described modifying ritual performances to fit contemporary standards of morality, for example, performing the *chatti-tukki* ritual in women-only spaces to frame their work as religiously sanctioned. This reflects UNESCO's insistence that intangible heritage is dynamic, not static, and that adaptation is a legitimate mode of cultural survival. This strategic flexibility resonates with Saba Mahmood's (2005) theory of piety projects, demonstrating how female shamans adapt traditional practices to align with shifting moral landscapes.

In this light, these narratives challenge developmentalist assumptions that modernisation leads to cultural disappearance. Instead, they show how women ritual specialists continue to practise, remember, adapt, and innovate, even within immensely constrained socio-political environments. The strong alignment between their grassroots strategies and the formal principles of UNESCO's ICH framework suggests that supporting female shamanism is not only an issue of heritage preservation but also of epistemic justice, meaning recognising and protecting gendered systems of knowledge that have been historically silenced. For these traditions to thrive, preservation must go beyond symbolic inclusion in festivals or tourism brochures. It must focus on women whose lives embody its transmission, moral weight, and sacred continuity.

## 5.8 Unanticipated Findings and Rival Explanations

One unexpected aspect that emerged was the assertion by Bitan 1 (Nagar) that "the rituals and practices of male and female *bitayu* are the same," which appeared to minimise the gender-specific challenges other informants identified. Another possibility is that Bitan 1 was an established male practitioner, speaking from an idealised or de-gendered point of view on basic spiritual practice. In contrast, other informants (male and female) are more attuned to social performance and its gendered implications. Alternatively, his subsequent acknowledgement that society is "not ready" for female *bitayu* implies that he may see them as extrinsic to the basic practice itself.

The differential emphasis on the pain versus the societal challenges of the *bitan* path should potentially be investigated further. Is there a gendered difference in experiencing or expressing the calling? Or is it more about individual personality, stage of practice, or

regional variances in the tradition? This study's remote approach and sample size limit preclude decisive findings, but it does pave the way for future, more granular research.

## 5.9 Limitations and Transferability

The key limitation of this study is its reliance on remote data collection. While this technique was necessary given the circumstances, it unavoidably constrained the opportunity for in-depth anthropological immersion, nonverbal cue observation, and in-person observation of rituals. Furthermore, while the participants generously shared rich and diverse narratives that formed the heart of this research, the sample is non-exhaustive. As a result, this work cannot claim to represent all regional or gendered experiences of *bitayu* across Gilgit-Baltistan. Therefore, generalisations must be made with caution.

Despite these limits, the findings provide significant, analytical, and transferable insights that extend far beyond the study's specific environment. The specific dynamics of how marginalised spiritual traditions, particularly those involving female ritual performers, deal with dominant religious (Islamisation) and secular (modernisation) influences, patriarchal authority, and economic shifts are common in many parts of the world. Indeed, communities across Central Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and Southeast Asia face strikingly comparable difficulties as they struggle to conserve their precious intangible cultural heritage in the face of religious and development standardisation demands.

The theoretical synthesis used throughout this study drew on Barth's insights on boundary-making, Mahmood's work on embodied agency, Butler's concept of gender performativity, and the critical contributions of broader feminist anthropological critique. I hope for a robust and insightful lens for analysing the intricate relationship between tradition, gender, and power as it unfolds in lived human experience. Moreover, this study's deep engagement with concepts of epistemic injustice and relational knowledge invites us to reconsider cultural erasure. It suggests that we should not recognise it as a passive disappearance, but as an active, often painful silencing within dominant discourses.

## 5.10 Conclusion

The analysis has revealed that female shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan is shaped not by a single force but by the interwoven pressures of religious reform, gendered expectations, economic limitations, and broader developmental changes. Rather than representing a straightforward

or inevitable disappearance, the current state of female shamanic practice reflects a more complex picture, one marked by both restriction and quiet persistence.

Across the narratives, it became clear that women who carry spiritual callings continue to negotiate their roles in ways responsive to the changing moral and social climate around them. Whether by adjusting ritual forms, seeking community affirmation, or reframing their practices through religiously accepted idioms, they are not passive inheritors but active custodians of this tradition. Their efforts to sustain these practices often rest on community recognition, the support of intergenerational transmission, and careful adaptation to prevailing religious and cultural norms.

## Chapter 6 Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to undertake an academic investigation into the transformation of female shamanic practices in the Hunza and Nagar valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. These traditions or practices are sometimes disregarded or misrepresented in academic scholarship and local discourse. When I began this research, a simple yet profound set of questions propelled me: What factors shape gendered shamanic practices in Gilgit-Baltistan? How do local shamans perceive the change and its challenges, and what possible strategies do they envision for its preservation? This study explored the notion that this ancient tradition is not fading away because it is old or irrelevant. Instead, it is being actively, though sometimes subtly, suppressed, diverted, or reshaped by a powerful convergence of socio-cultural and religio-political forces.

Firstly, the research findings indicate that female shamanism is not vanishing; it is being made invisible and selectively silenced. While the more public voices and official stories might suggest that the *bitayu* are a thing of the past, my findings paint a different picture. Many women continue to practice, adapt, and pass on their shamanic knowledge. They often do so discreetly in private, while navigating difficult circumstances. This is not about a tradition dying out. It is more akin to what we could call an epistemic erasure, a process where necessary knowledge is delegitimised, pushed aside because women own it or because it does not fit neatly with prevalent religious or societal ideas of what is right. Secondly, it is often moral and economic hurdles, more so than deep theological disagreements, that exclude women. The decline in public female ritual performance appears to be due to societal concerns about modesty, family honour and the financial burden of ceremonies like the *chatti-tukki*. These are not merely regulations imposed by formal religious institutions, but they are deeply woven into family structures -and the gender norms that people internalise and live by.

Thirdly, the processes of Islamisation and what we call 'development' or 'modernity' have often worked hand-in-hand, unintentionally displacing local culture. State-led efforts towards Islamisation and large-scale infrastructural development projects, like the KKH or the work of the AKDN, have, without necessarily intending to, chipped away at indigenous ways of understanding the world. They have often done this by promoting a more uniform religious identity and educational models that prioritise a particular kind of rationalist thinking. These modern approaches have, in turn, made it harder for experiential spiritual

knowledge. Additionally, amidst all this, female practitioners show incredible agency; they are not just passively accepting cultural loss. However, they reconfigure their rituals to fit current norms, perhaps by holding private gatherings for women, reinterpreting their ancient cosmologies in Islamic terms, or by offering their healing work without expecting payment. This reminds us of Saba Mahmood's (2005) concept of 'pious agency,' a thoughtful, moral, and strategic approach to negotiating life within significant structural limitations.

Finally, the seeds of preservation to keep these traditions alive exist within the communities. All participants highlighted the grassroots approaches, such as encouraging the community to validate a divine calling, passing down knowledge through oral history, and the ethical commitment to non-commercial practice. All reflect the principles in UNESCO's framework for Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). The missing piece, however, is that these vital community-led efforts often go unsupported and unrecognised by official state policies.

## Chapter 7 Recommendation

Based on the study's findings, this section offers recommendations to support the continuity of female shamanic traditions in Gilgit-Baltistan, particularly in the Hunza and Nagar valleys, and enhance our understanding of their transformation. These suggestions address policy, community practice, and future research.

### 7.1 Policy and Practice

- **Develop gender-inclusive heritage policies in Gilgit-Baltistan**

This means that cultural and heritage institutions, as well as newly formed community-focused bodies in Gilgit-Baltistan responsible for culture and heritage, should actively work to support women in preserving their spiritual practices. This must be done with great sensitivity, respecting local moral values and customs. Practical steps could include funding women-led oral history projects or helping to create safe, women-managed spaces for rituals.

- **Subsidise the *Chatti-Tukki* ritual for female *bitayu***

Economic dependence on male relatives is a significant barrier that often prevents many women from gaining formal recognition as shamans. Perhaps targeted financial support from relevant government departments or non-governmental organisations could help these women, who demonstrate a spiritual calling but lack the financial means.

- **Integrate indigenous spiritual knowledge into provincial curricula**

A thoughtful reform of what is taught in local schools could create space for modules that respectfully explore Gilgit-Baltistan's shamanic traditions. It would be vital to ensure these include women's perspectives and experiences, as this would be a powerful way to support transmission and build broader cultural legitimacy.

- **Establish community-based safeguarding bodies**

To truly empower local people to care for their own heritage, it would be valuable to support the formation of local councils. These councils could bring together practitioners, respected elders, and interested researchers, who together can decide what aspects of their heritage

they wish to preserve and how best to do so, guided by the spirit of community-led approaches, such as those in the ICH framework.

- **Ethically reform cultural festivals such as the Shaman Festival.**

Current state-sponsored festivals often reduce shamanic traditions to folkloristic performances by focusing on a touristic and official gaze rather than sacred rites. State-level promotional materials used sensational language like ‘enthraling powers’ and ‘superstitious beings’ that devalue the spiritual reality of these practices. Moreover, female *bitayu* have been largely excluded from public recognition, reinforcing gendered erasure where men become the official tradition custodians. To align with ethical preservation and inclusivity, festivals must move beyond performance-based tourism. It is crucial to involve women practitioners meaningfully and provide rich background information to protect the integrity of the practices. Also, to avoid misrepresentation, such as mimicry, and prioritise community-led definitions of cultural values over institutional agendas.

## **7.2 Recommendations for Future Learning and Research**

- **Comparative studies on women’s spiritual experience in similar regions**

It would be valuable to conduct comparative studies on women’s spiritual experiences in similar regions. Research in areas such as Ladakh and the Pamirs could deepen our understanding of how gender, religion, and spirituality intersect in Muslim highland communities.

- **Examine the impact of education and migration on spiritual practices**

Longitudinal research could explore how young people, particularly girls, negotiate traditional spiritual knowledge alongside modern schooling and increased mobility.

- **Investigate the role of tourism in reshaping ritual meanings**

Further study is needed on how tourism influences the representation of ‘authentic’ culture in often commercialised public spaces and who controls these narratives.

- **Comparative studies on women’s spiritual experience in similar regions**

It would be valuable to conduct comparative studies on women's spiritual experiences in similar regions. Research in areas such as Ladakh and the Pamirs could deepen our understanding of how gender, religion, and spirituality intersect in Muslim highland communities.

- **Examine the impact of education and migration on spiritual practices**

Longitudinal research could explore how young people, particularly girls, negotiate traditional spiritual knowledge alongside modern schooling and increased mobility.

- **Investigate the role of tourism in reshaping ritual meanings**

Further study is needed on how tourism influences the representation of 'authentic' culture in often commercialised public spaces and who controls these narratives.

## **An Epilogue**

This research journey has profoundly reshaped my understanding of tradition, resilience, and silence. I thought I would record a practice about to disappear. Instead, I saw a subtle, lasting strength. I met women who, even without formal acknowledgement or public roles, still heal suffering, future casting, and protect their communities through old and new rituals.

I did not think any female shaman would join this study, mainly because finding them was difficult from afar. Most said they did not consent to online discussions, often because they were cautious about sharing their opinions. Only two agreed to share, and even this discussion took work. This shows that many women still practice privately but do not want to be seen. If the study had been done in person, more female shamans might have participated in their own way and in places where trust could grow naturally.

This experience showed me that tradition is not set in stone; it lives by adapting and through the meaning people give it. Protecting cultural heritage is more than just a matter of politics or academic work; it is a fundamental ethical responsibility.

The female shamans of Gilgit-Baltistan are not from a mystical past. They are living cultural figures, balancing old and new under the pressures of religion, gender, and current changes. They should be recognised, supported and studied more.

I hope this study makes their lives and work more visible. I also hope it contributes to the discussion about gender, education, and heritage, especially in the margins of our world.

## Appendix 1: Interview reference list

Bitan 1, 2025. *Navigating Heritage in Transition: Educating for the Preservation of Transforming Female Shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan Amidst Islamisation and Modernity* [Interview] (Saturday May 2025).

Bitan 2, 2025. *Navigating Heritage in Transition: Educating for the Preservation of Transforming Female Shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan Amidst Islamisation and Modernity* [Interview] (Tuesday, May 2025).

Bitan 3, 2025. *Navigating Heritage in Transition: Educating for the Preservation of Transforming Female Shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan Amidst Islamisation and Modernity*. [Interview] (Sunday, May 2025).

Bitan 4, 2025. *Navigating Heritage in Transition: Educating for the Preservation of Transforming Female Shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan Amidst Islamisation and Modernity*. [Interview] (Wednesday, May 2025 2025).

Bitan 5, 2025. *Navigating Heritage in Transition: Educating for the Preservation of Transforming Female Shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan Amidst Islamisation and Modernity*. [Interview] (Tuesday, June 2025).

Bitan 6, 2025. *Navigating Heritage in Transition: Educating for the Preservation of Transforming Female Shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan Amidst Islamisation and Modernity*. [Interview] (Friday, May 2025).

Khan, S., 2025. *Navigating Heritage in Transition: Educating for the Preservation of Transforming Female Shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan Amidst Islamisation and Modernity*. [Interview] (Sunday, June 2025).

## Appendix 2: Questionnaire Sample

Research Title: **Navigating Heritage in Transition: Educating for the Preservation of Transforming Female Shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan Amidst Islamisation and Modernity**

تحقیق انٹرویو گائیڈ: عبوری ورثے کی راہنمائی۔ گلگت بلتستان میں خواتین بیٹن/ادایال کی تبدیلی اور زوال

**Introduction:** As a member of this community, I am conducting this anthropological research to document and understand the transformation of female shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan. This research is rooted in local knowledge, perspectives, and lived experiences of the shamans themselves. Your insights are invaluable in preserving this cultural heritage.

بحیثیت ایک مقامی فرد، میں گلگت بلتستان میں خواتین بیٹن/ادایال کی تبدیلی کو سمجھنے اور اس کی دستاویز بندی کے لئے یہ تحقیق کر رہی ہوں۔ یہ تحقیق مقامی علم، نقطہ نظر، اور بیٹن/ادایال کے ذاتی تجربات پر مبنی ہے۔ آپ کی رائے اس ثقافتی ورثے کو محفوظ رکھنے کے لئے بے حد قیمتی ہے۔

**Consent Statement:** Dear Respected ma'am/sir, you are invited to participate in this research study exploring the transformation and changes in female shamanic practices in Gilgit-Baltistan. Your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for academic and cultural documentation purposes. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. By proceeding, you agree to participate in this study.

رضامندی کا بیان: محترم/محترمہ، آپ کو اس تحقیق میں شرکت کی دعوت دی جاتی ہے جو گلگت بلتستان میں خواتین بیٹن/ادایال کے تغیر اور زوال کو سمجھنے کے لئے کی جا رہی ہے۔ آپ کے جوابات مکمل طور پر رازدارانہ رکھے جائیں گے اور صرف تعلیمی اور ثقافتی دستاویز بندی کے مقاصد کے لئے استعمال کیے جائیں گے۔ شرکت رضاکارانہ ہے، اور آپ کسی بھی وقت اپنی شمولیت واپس لے سکتے ہیں۔ تحقیق میں حصہ لینے پر آپ رضامندی ظاہر کر رہے ہیں۔

### Section A: Rapport-Building and Demographic Information

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself and your background?

کیا آپ اپنے بارے میں اور اپنی پس منظر کے بارے میں کچھ بتا سکتے ہیں

2. Where were you born, and where have you spent most of your life?

آپ کہاں پیدا ہوئے، اور آپ نے اپنی زیادہ تر زندگی کہاں گزاری؟

3. What language(s) do you primarily speak at home and in practice?

آپ بنیادی طور پر گھر میں اور اپنی عملی زندگی میں کون سی زبان بولتے ہیں؟

4. What is your age group?

آپ کی عمر کیا ہوگی؟

- 30-40
- 40-50
- 50-60
- 60-70
- 70-80
- 80+

5. How did you become a shaman, and what was your age at the time?

آپ بیٹن/دایال کیسے بنے؟ اور اُس وقت آپ کی عمر کیا تھی؟

6. Have you learned shamanic practices from family members, elders, or other sources?

کیا آپ نے شمانک طریقے اپنے خاندان کے افراد، بزرگوں یا کسی اور ذریعہ سے سیکھا ہیں؟

7. How does the community perceive your role as a shaman?

لوگ آپ کے بیٹن/دایال کے کردار کو کیسے دیکھتی ہے؟

8. How you define your role as a male/female shaman in your community?

آپ اپنا برادری میں مرد/خاتون بیٹن/دایال کے طور پر اپنے کردار کی وضاحت کیسے کریں گے؟

9. How are Bitan/Daiyal different from practitioners like *Dashman* or *Akhun* in their roles, rituals, or community status?

بیٹن/دایال اور دشمن، پشو یا خون جیسے عاملین کے فرائض، رسومات، اور معاشرتی مقام میں کیا بنیادی فرق ہے؟

## Section B:

### Personal Journey as a Shaman (personal relationship with family/partner/children)

10. Can you share your journey of becoming a shaman? How did this initiation happen?

کیا آپ اپنے بیٹن/دایال بننے کے سفر کے بارے میں بتا سکتے ہیں؟ آپ کو یہ بلاوا یا ابتدائی تربیت کیسے ملی؟

11. How long have you been practicing shamanism, and what role do you play in community?

آپ کب سے بیٹن/دایال کی مشق کر رہے ہیں، اور برادری میں آپ کا کیا کردار ہے؟

12. What do female shamans perform the core responsibilities and rituals in your tradition?

آپ کی روایت میں مرد اور خواتین بیٹن/دایال کی بنیادی ذمہ داریاں اور رسومات کیا ہیں؟

## Section C: Female shamanism in old times

13. How was female Shamanism practiced in ancient times? Is it the same or different from today? If other, how?

قدیم زمانوں میں خواتین بیٹن/دایال کیسے عمل میں لایا جاتا تھا؟ کیا یہ آج کے دور سے مختلف ہے یا ایک جیسا ہے؟ اگر مختلف ہے، تو کیسے؟

14. Do you remember any incident, or have you heard from someone about how the rituals of female Bitan/Dayal were performed during the *thamo* era or in ancient times?

کیا آپ کو کوئی ایسا واقعہ یاد ہے یا آپ نے کسی سے سنا ہو کہ تھمو کے دور میں یا قدیم زمانے میں خواتین بیٹن/دایال کی رسومات کیسے ادا کی جاتی تھیں؟

15. How does female bitan/daiyal perform *Chatti* rituals today, and were these practices the same in ancient times? If different, what key changes can be observed, and why might these transformations have occurred?

خواتین بیٹن/دایال آج کل چھتی کی رسومات کو کس طریقے سے انجام دیتی ہیں، اور کیا قدیم دور میں بھی یہ طریقہ کار ایک جیسا تھا؟

اگر فرق ہے، تو کون سی نمایاں تبدیلیاں آئیں ہیں، اور ان تبدیلیوں کے پیچھے کیا وجوہات ہو سکتی ہیں؟

16. In your opinion, how has religion (Islam) influenced practice as a shaman in general and female shaman in particular. Have these changes been gradual or sudden?

آپ کے خیال میں اسلام کی آمد سے پہلے اور بعد میں شمن کی رسومات، خاص طور پر خواتین شمن کی رسومات پر کیا اثر ڈالا؟ کیا یہ تبدیلیاں تدریجاً واقع ہوئیں یا اچانک رونما ہوئیں؟

or

17. In your opinion, has religion (Islam) generally influenced the rituals of Bitan/Daiyal, and in particular, the rituals of female Bitan/Daiyal? If yes, please explain in detail. If not, why?

کیا آپ کے خیال میں، اسلام نے عمومی طور پر بیٹن/دایال کی رسومات اور خاص طور پر خواتین بیٹن/دایال کی رسومات کس طرح اثر ڈالا ہوگا؟ اگر ہاں، تو تو تفصیل سے بیان کریں۔ اگر نہیں؟ تو کیوں؟

18. Have religious teachings and community expectations affected the acceptance of female shamans? If so, how?

کیا مذہبی تعلیمات اور سماجی توقعات نے خواتین بیٹن/دایال کی قبولیت کو متاثر کیا ہے؟ اگر ہاں، تو کیسے؟

19. Compared to the past, are there more or fewer female bitan/daiyal today? What reasons might explain this trend?

آج کل خواتین بیٹن/دایال کی تعداد ماضی کے مقابلے میں زیادہ ہیں یا کم؟ اور اس رجحان کی کیا وجوہات ہو سکتی ہیں؟

#### Section D: Modernity and its impact

20. What do you think, in what ways has modernisation, such as education and migration, impacted female shamanism?

آپ کے خیال میں جدیدیت جیسے تعلیم، اور نقل مکانی، نے خواتین کے بیٹن/دایال پر کس طرح اثر ڈالا ہے؟

21. Have changes in lifestyle and technology altered the need for or belief in shamanic healing particularly healthcare advancements?

کیا طرز زندگی اور ٹیکنالوجی میں تبدیلیوں، خاص طور پر طبی ترقی، نے بیٹن/دایال کے علاج کی ضرورت یا اس پر یقین کو متاثر کیا ہے؟

22. Do younger generations seek knowledge of shamanic traditions, or is there a decline in interest? Why or why not?

کیا نوجوان نسل بیٹن/دایال روایات کو سیکھنے میں دلچسپی رکھتی ہے، یا اس میں کمی آرہی ہے؟ کیوں یا کیوں نہیں؟

### Section E: Change

23. How do you personally perceive the transformation of female shamanism over the years?

آپ خواتین شمانزم کی سالوں میں ہونے والی تبدیلی کو کس نظر سے دیکھتے ہیں؟

24. How can female shamans adapt their practices to remain relevant in contemporary society while maintaining cultural authenticity?

خواتین بیٹن/دایال اپنی روایات کو کیسے برقرار رکھتے ہوئے جدید معاشرے میں اپنا کردار نبھاسکتی ہیں؟

25. What are the most significant challenges you face in continuing your practice today?

آج کے دور میں آپ کو اپنی رسومات جاری رکھنے میں آپ کو کن بڑے چیلنجز کا سامنا ہے؟

### Section F: Preserving Female Shamanism

26. Have there been efforts from the local community, scholars, or organisations to document or support female shamans?

کیا مقامی برادری، اسکالرز، یا تنظیموں کی طرف سے خواتین بیٹن/دایال کی حمایت یا دستاویز بندی کے لیے کوئی کوششیں ہوئی ہیں؟

27. Do you think female shamanism should be preserved as an integral part of the region's cultural heritage? Why or why not?

کیا آپ کے خیال میں خواتین بیٹن/دایال کو علاقائی ثقافتی ورثے کا ایک لازمی حصہ سمجھ کر محفوظ رکھا جانا چاہیے؟ کیوں یا کیوں نہیں؟

28. What steps do you believe should be taken to safeguard shamanic knowledge and traditions for future generations?

مستقبل کی نسلوں کے لئے بیٹن/دایال علم اور روایات کو محفوظ رکھنے کے لئے کن اقدامات کی ضرورت ہے؟

Thank you

شکریہ

**Note:** This questionnaire serves as a guideline that can be adapted for natural and organic conversations while ensuring alignment with the core research objectives: analysing the impact of Islamisation and modernity on female shamanism and exploring how male and female shamans in Hunza and Nagar Valleys perceive these transformations.

نوٹ: یہ سوالنامہ ایک رہنما کے طور پر کام کرتا ہے، جسے فطری اور رواں گفتگو کے لیے ایڈجسٹ کیا جاسکتا ہے، جبکہ تحقیق کے بنیادی مقاصد کو برقرار رکھنا ضروری ہے: خواتین بیٹن / دایال پر اسلامائزیشن اور جدیدیت کے اثرات کا تجزیہ کرنا اور ہنزہ و نگر وادیوں کے مرد و خواتین بیٹن / دایال کے نقطہ نظر سے ان تبدیلیوں کو سمجھنا۔

## List of References

- Abu-Lughod, L. (1986) *Veiled Sentiments: Honour and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*. Oakland, California: University of California Press.
- Ajemba, M.N. and Arene, E.C. (2022) “Ensuring an Ethical Approach to Research” in *Magna Scientia Advanced Research and Reviews*, [online] 6(1), pp.046–050. doi: <https://doi.org/10.30574/msarr.2022.6.1.0065>.
- Ajemba, M.N. and Arene, E.C. (2022) “Ensuring an Ethical Approach to Research” in *Magna Scientia Advanced Research and Reviews*, [online] 6(1), pp.046–050. doi: <https://doi.org/10.30574/msarr.2022.6.1.0065>.
- Alam, B. (2019) “Qualitative Research Framework: Integrating Philosophical and Methodological Assumptions” in *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion*, 40. doi: <https://doi.org/10.7176/jpcr/40-01>.
- Alam, S. (2017) “Female education: the Facilitating and Hindering Factors regarding Female Education in the Gilgit-Baltistan Context of Pakistan” in *International Women Online Journal of Distance Education*, [online] 6(2), pp.35–52. Available at: <https://arastirmax.com/en/system/files/dergiler/116394/makaleler/6/2/arastirmax-female-education-facilitating-and-hindering-factors-regarding-female-education-gilgit-baltistan-context-pakistan.pdf> [Accessed 6 Apr. 2025].
- Alberts, T.K. (2016). *Shamanism, Discourse, Modernity*. [online] Routledge. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315608815>.
- Ali, N. (2019). *Delusional States: Feeling Rule and Development in Pakistan’s Northern Frontier*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/delusional-states/6AE972EBD2D6F8B20F80E281DD0DAEC8> [Accessed 26 Feb 2025]
- Ali, M.K., Shabbir, G. and Chawla, M.I. (2021). *Library Sources Available on Pre-Islamic Religious Traditions of the Eastern Hindu Kush and Shamanism among the*

*Kalasha People*. [online] DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/5286> [Accessed 5 Feb. 2025].

Awde, N. (2005) *Women in Islam: an Anthology from the Qur'an and Hadīths*. London: Bennett & Bloom.

Barth, F. (1969) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. [online] Available at: [http://www.bylany.com/kvetina/kvetina\\_etnoarheologie/literatura\\_eseje/2\\_literatura.pdf](http://www.bylany.com/kvetina/kvetina_etnoarheologie/literatura_eseje/2_literatura.pdf) [Accessed 19 Feb. 2025].

Bansal, A. (2008) “Gilgit–Baltistan: The Roots of Political Alienation” in *Strategic Analysis*, 32 (1), pp.81-101.

Berkes, F. (2012) *Sacred Ecology*. [online] Routledge. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203123843>.

Biddulph, J. (1880). *Tribes of Hindoo Koosh*. [online] *Mahraka.com*. Available at: <https://www.mahraka.com/pdf/TribesOfTheHindooKoosh.pdf> [Accessed 14 Feb. 2025].

Biddulph, J. (1971). *Tribes of Hindoo Koosh: Muhammad Yusuf Mujahid: Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming: Internet Archive*. [online] Internet Archive. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/tribesofhindookoosh/page/n19/mode/2up> [Accessed 11 Jan. 2025].

Blake, J. (2008) ‘UNESCO’s 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage: The implications of community involvement in “safeguarding”’, in Smith, L. and Akagawa, N. (eds.) *Intangible Heritage*. 1st edition, London: Routledge, pp. 29–45. doi:10.4324/9780203884973.

Bogoras, W. (1974) *The Chukchee* (Reprint of the 1909 edition). Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, Vol. 7. Edited by Boas, F. New York: AMS Press.

Bosworth, C.E. (2003) Shamanism in C. Adle, I. Habib and K.M. Baipakov, eds., *History of Civilisations of Central Asia: Development in contrast: from the Sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth Century*. [online] 7 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris: United Nations

Educational, pp.790–800. Available at:

[https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/documentViewer.xhtml?v=2.1.196&id=p::usmarcdef\\_0000130205&file=/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/attach\\_imp ort\\_e08a67ce-fa3a-43fe-b234-58dca0d06a39%3F\\_%3D130205eng.pdf&locale=en&multi=true&ark=/ark:/48223/pf0000130205/PDF/130205eng.pdf#%5B%7B%22num%22%3A5973%2C%22gen%22%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%22%3A%22XYZ%22%7D%2C0%2C842%2Cnull%5D](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/documentViewer.xhtml?v=2.1.196&id=p::usmarcdef_0000130205&file=/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/attach_imp ort_e08a67ce-fa3a-43fe-b234-58dca0d06a39%3F_%3D130205eng.pdf&locale=en&multi=true&ark=/ark:/48223/pf0000130205/PDF/130205eng.pdf#%5B%7B%22num%22%3A5973%2C%22gen%22%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%22%3A%22XYZ%22%7D%2C0%2C842%2Cnull%5D)  
[Accessed 5 Jan. 2025].

Bourdieu, P. (1986) *The Forms of Capital*. [online] The Forms of Capital. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm> [Accessed 4 Jun. 2025].

Bouzas , A.M. (2015) *Territorialism, Ambivalence, and Representational Spaces in Gilgit-Baltistan | Antía Mato Bouzas | Transcultural Studies*. [online] Uni-heidelberg.de. Available at: <https://heiup.uni-heidelberg.de/journals/index.php/transcultural/article/download/23585/17424>  
[Accessed 4 Jan. 2025].

Bouzas, A. M. (2012) *Mixed Legacies in Contested Borderlands: Skardu and the Kashmir Dispute*. *Geopolitics* 17 (4), pp. 867–886.  
doi:10.1080/14650045.2012.660577.

Bowles, M. (2014). *AKF's Women-only Markets: A Promising Model*. [online] [akflearninghub.org](https://akflearninghub.org). Aga Khan Foundation (AKF). Available at: <https://akflearninghub.org/document/women-only-markets-a-promising-model/#:~:text=The%20women-only%20markets%20introduced%20and%20supported%20by%20the,in%20the%20ec onomy%20while%20contributing%20to%20their%20empowerment> [Accessed 1 Apr. 2025].

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, [online] 3(2), pp.77–101. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

Britannica (n.d.). *Burushaski Language* | *Britannica*. [online] [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com). Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Burushaski-language> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2025].

Britannica Academic (2025). *Shamanism*. [online] Britannica Academic. Available at: <https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy1.lib.gla.ac.uk/levels/collegiate/article/shamanism/109509> [Accessed 1 Mar. 2025].

Brown, W.A. (1998) *The Gilgit Rebellion 1947: Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming: Internet Archive*. [online] Internet Archive. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/1998-the-gilgit-rebellion-1947-by-brown-s> [Accessed 29 Jan. 2025].

Brown, W.A. (2014) *The Gilgit Rebellion: The Major Who Mutinied over the Partition of India*. [online] Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/gilgitrebellion10000will/page/n7/mode/2up> [Accessed 1 Jan. 2025].

Brower, B., & Johnston, BR (eds) (2007) *Disappearing Peoples? Indigenous Groups and Ethnic Minorities in South and Central Asia*, Taylor & Francis Group, Oxford. Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. [6 March 2025].

Bryman, A. (2004) *Social Research Methods*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press.

Burbar, S. (2022) “The Shamanism in Altai and Tuva from past to present: Universal and local aspects” in *Turkic Studies Journal*, 2, pp.22–34. Available at: <https://tsj.enu.kz/index.php/new/article/view/154/108> [Accessed 7 May 2025]

Bulgakova, T. (2018) “Alcohol as a Unifying Force in the Shamanic Community: Nanai Case Study” in *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*, 12(2), pp.65–77. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2478/jef-2018-0011>.

Butler, J. (1988) “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory” in *Theatre Journal*, [online] 40(4), pp.519–531. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893>.

Butler, J. (1999). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. [online] New York: Routledge. Available at: [https://selforganizedseminar.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/butler-gender\\_trouble.pdf](https://selforganizedseminar.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/butler-gender_trouble.pdf) [Accessed 3 Dec. 2024].

Chazot, É. and Girolami, J.-P. (2003). *Shamanism and Art himalaya; Previous Features V 1:1/ 2000*. [online] *lightforcenetwork.com*. Available at: <https://www.lightforcenetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Art-and-Shamanism-in-the-Himalayas-Eric-Chazot-and-Jean-Pierre-Girolami.pdf> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2025].

Chaudhary, M. A. (2015) “The Ways of Revenge in Chilas, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan: Shia-Sunni Clashes as Blood Feuds” in *Ethnoscripts*, 16(1). Abgerufen von <https://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/ethnoscripts/article/view/775>

Chilson, C. and Knecht, P. (2003). *Shamans in Asia*. [online] Routledge. Available at: [https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781134434251\\_A23777054/preview-9781134434251\\_A23777054.pdf](https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781134434251_A23777054/preview-9781134434251_A23777054.pdf) [Accessed 23 May 2025].

Clarke, G.E. (1977) *Who Were the Dards? A Review of the Ethnographic Literature of the North-Western Himalaya*. [online] Cam.ac.uk. Available at: <https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/items/464241cc-fb64-4ca7-9cc4-c6fb77ae8c8e> [Accessed 17 Mar. 2025].

Clark, L. (1956) *Hunza: Lost Kingdom of the Himalayas*. Funk & Wagnalls Company, New York. Available at <https://pahar.in/pahar/Books%20and%20Articles/Indian%20Subcontinent/1956%20Hunza--Lost%20Kingdom%20of%20the%20Himalayas%20by%20Clark%20s.pdf> [Last Accessed 10.11.2024]

Conway, F. (1967) *Sampling: An Introduction for Social Scientists* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003611738>.

Cooke, J. and Nyhagen, L. eds. (2024) *Intersectional Feminist Research Methodologies*. [online] Taylor & Francis. Available at: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/reader/download/be7d5622-e307-4936-b733-9dfd7426ee51/book/pdf?context=ubx> [Accessed 2 Mar. 2025].

Costin, C.L. and Ennis-McMillan, M.C. (2022) *Evaluating plan-induced Altered States across Cultural Context Volume 10, Issue 1*. [online] Available at: [https://www.bing.com/search?pglt=427&q=evaluating+plan-induced+Altered+States+across+Cultural+context+volume+10%2C+Issue+1&cvid=d2bce23e433f4c99969c9e722c8bd935&gs\\_lcrp=EgRlZGdlKgYIABBFgdKyBggAEEUYOdIBCTU3MTYwajBqMagCALACAA&FORM=ANNTA1&adppc=EDGEDBB&P C=HCTS](https://www.bing.com/search?pglt=427&q=evaluating+plan-induced+Altered+States+across+Cultural+context+volume+10%2C+Issue+1&cvid=d2bce23e433f4c99969c9e722c8bd935&gs_lcrp=EgRlZGdlKgYIABBFgdKyBggAEEUYOdIBCTU3MTYwajBqMagCALACAA&FORM=ANNTA1&adppc=EDGEDBB&P C=HCTS) [Accessed 9 Mar. 2025].

Creswell, J. W. (2013) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Crotty, M. (1998) *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London: Sage Publications

Crowe, M. and Sheppard, L. (2010) “Qualitative and quantitative research designs are more similar than different” in *The Internet Journal of Allied Health Sciences and Practice*, 8(4), Article 5. Available at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/ijahsp/vol8/iss4/5/#:~:text=12%2C13,without%20interpretation%20is%20simply%20disaggregate>. [Accessed 29 Mar. 2025].

Csáji, L.K. (2011) “Flying with the Vanishing Fairies: Typology of the Shamanistic Traditions of the Hunza” in *Anthropology of Consciousness*, 22(2), pp.159–187. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1556-3537.2011.01048.x>.

Dad, A. A. (2009) *State, Religion, and Culture in Gilgit-Baltistan*. [online] Academia.edu. Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/70790643/State\\_Religion\\_and\\_Culture\\_in\\_Gilgit\\_Baltistan](https://www.academia.edu/70790643/State_Religion_and_Culture_in_Gilgit_Baltistan) [Accessed 29 Jan. 2025].

- Dad, A.A. (2016) *Boundaries and Identities: The Case of Gilgit-Baltistan*. [online] bonndoc.ulb.uni-bonn.de. Available at: <https://bonndoc.ulb.uni-bonn.de/xmlui/handle/20.500.11811/169>. [Accessed 07 Jun 2025]
- Dad, A. A. (2017) The sectarian spectre in Gilgit-Baltistan: Part I. The News. Available on <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/215718-The-sectarian-spectre-in-Gilgit-Baltistan-Part-I>.
- Dani, A.H. (2001) *History of Northern Areas of Pakistan*. Sang-E-Meel Publication.
- Dani, A.H. ed., (1987) *Shah Rais Khan's History of Gilgit*. Director, Centre for the Study of the Civilisations of Central Asia, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.
- Dani, A. H., Khawar, A. H., & Akbar, A. H. (1987) *Shah Rais Khan's History of Gilgit*. Islamabad: Director, Centre for the Study of the Civilisations of Central Asia, Quaid-i-Azam University. Available at [1987-Shah-Rais-Khans-History-of-Gilgit-ed-by-Dani-s.pdf](#).
- Darmaiza, D. (2021) “Study on Shamanism in a Primitive Community Trust” in *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*, [online] 6(6), pp.299–306. doi: <https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v6i6.842>.
- Dawadi, S. (2020) “Thematic Analysis Approach: A Step-by-Step Guide for ELT Research Practitioners” in *Journal of NELTA*, [online] 25(1-2), pp.62–71. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v25i1-2.4973>.
- Descombes, V. and Smith, H.M. (2002) “A Confusion of Tongues” in *Anthropological Theory*, 2(4), pp.433–446. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/14634996020020041101>.
- Drachenfels, D. and Luczanits, C. (eds) (2008) *Gandhara: The Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan. Legends, Monasteries, and Paradise*. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern
- Dubey, S.K., Gupta, S., Pandey, S.K. and Mittal, S. (2024) Ethical Considerations in Data Mining and Database Research. *2024 11th International Conference on Reliability, Infocom Technologies and Optimisation (Trends and Future Directions) (ICRITO)*, 11(10522200). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1109/icrito61523.2024.10522200>

Durand, A. (1899). *The Making of a Frontier*. [online] Internet Archive. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.208314> [Accessed 13 Mar. 2025].

Eliade, M. (1964). *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. Translated from the French by W.R. Trask. Revised and enlarged edn. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Bollingen Series LXXVI).

Eliade, M. (1967). Cosmogonic Myth and “Sacred History.” *Religious Studies*, 2(2), 171–183. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20004652>

Erickson, G.Scott (2017) “Exploratory Research design” in *New Methods of Market Research and Analysis*. [online] Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, pp.27–50. Available at: <https://www.elgaronline.com/monobook/9781786432681/9781786432681.xml> [Accessed 2 Mar. 2025].

European Foundation for South Asian Studies (EFSAS) (2019) *An Introduction to the Disputed Territory of Gilgit Baltistan: the Himalayan Flashpoint*. [online] [www.efsas.org](http://www.efsas.org). Available at: <https://www.efsas.org/publications/study-papers/an-introduction-to-the-disputed-territory-of-gilgit-baltistan-the-himalayan-flashpoint/> [Accessed 29 Jan. 2025].

Faiz, F.A., Noshin and Khan, H. (2023) “The Role of Shamans in Fostering Well-being and Healing Among Their Believers” in *Pakistan Journal of Society, Education, and Language (PJSEL)*, [online] 10(1), pp. 176–185. Available at: <https://jehanf.com/pjsel/index.php/journal/article/view/1287> [Accessed 6 Feb. 2025].

Faiz, F.A., Sadaf, F., Ahmed, F. and Parveen, A. (2023) “The Economic Determinants of Mystical Healing: An Empirical Exploration of Danyalism in the Sociocultural Landscape of Gilgit Baltistan” in *iRASD journal of economics*, 5(1), pp.179–189. doi: <https://doi.org/10.52131/joe.2023.0501.0120>.

Falah, G.-W. and Nagel, C.R. (2005) *Geographies of Muslim Women: Gender, Religion, and Space*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Farooqi, Y. N. (2006) Traditional healing practices sought by Muslim psychiatric patients in Lahore, Pakistan. *International Journal of Disability, Development, and Education*, 53(4), 401-415. [DOI: 10.1080/10349120600929995].

Frembgen, J.W. (2006) *The Friends of God*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Feyyaz, M. (2011) Sectarian Conflict in Gilgit-Baltistan. Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency. Available at: [http://irc.pildat.com/publications/publication/Conflict\\_Management/GB-SectarianConflit-BackgroundPaperEng-May2011.pdf](http://irc.pildat.com/publications/publication/Conflict_Management/GB-SectarianConflit-BackgroundPaperEng-May2011.pdf) [Accessed 13 Feb. 2025].

Finlay, L. (1998) “Reflexivity: An Essential Component for All Research?” in *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 61(10), pp.453–456. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/030802269806101005>.

Flaherty, G. (1992). *Shamanism and the Eighteenth Century*. Princeton University Press.

Flowerday, J. (2005) “Framing change: Hunza (Pakistan) in Treble Vision - 1930s and 1990s” in *Visual Communication*, [online] 4(3), pp.296–303. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357205055921>.

Frazer, J.G. (1890). *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion*. [online] London: Macmillan. Available at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/41082/41082-pdf.pdf> [Accessed 12 Jun. 2025].

Fricke, M. (2007). Epistemic Injustice. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. [online] doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198237907.001.0001>.

Frog. (2014). From Mythology to Identity and Imaginal Experience: An exploratory approach to the symbolic matrix in Viking Age Aland. In J. Ahola, Frog, & J. Lucenius, *The Viking Age in Aland: Insights into identity and remnants of culture* (pp. 349-415). Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Furst, P.T. (2025). *Flesh of the Gods: the Ritual Use of Hallucinogens: Furst, Peter T: Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming: Internet Archive*. [online] Internet Archive. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/fleshofgods00pete> [Accessed 12 Mar. 2025].

Geertz, C. (1973) “The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man” in *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, [online] 22(4), pp.2–8. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.1966.11454918>. [Accessed on 04-03-2025]

Göhlen, R. (1998) “Mobility and Freedom of Decision-Making of Women in Astor Valley (Pakistan-Himalaya)” in Stellrecht, I. (ed.) *Karakorum – Hindukush – Himalaya: Dynamics of Change. Part II*. Köln: Köppe, pp. 463–488.

Gupta, D. (1989) Review of *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*, by M. Taussig. *Labour, Capital and Society / Travail, Capital et Société*, 22(1), 197–199. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43157870>.

Halvorson, S.J. (2005). “Growing up in Gilgit: Exploring the Nature of Girlhood in Northern Pakistan” in G.-W. Falah and C. Nagel, eds., *Geographies of Muslim Women: Gender, Religion, and Space*. New York: The Guilford Press, pp.19–43.

Harald, H. (2005) Pre-Islamic Heritage in the Northern Areas of Pakistan in B. Stefano, ed., *Karakoram: Hidden Treasures in the Northern Areas of Pakistan*. [online] Umberto Allemandi for Aga Khan Trust for Culture 2nd ed. rev., pp.21–40. Available at: <https://www.mybib.com/#/projects/Jme19w/citations/new?q=https%3A%2F%2Fs3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com%2Fmedia.archnet.org%2Fsystem%2Fpublications%2Fcontents%2F4868%2Foriginal%2FDPC1581.pdf%3F1384787065&source=webpage> [Accessed 2 May 2025].

Hassnain, F. M. (1978) *Gilgit: The Northern Gate to India*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.

Harding, S. (1987) *Feminism and methodology: Social science issues*. Indiana University Press.

Hauptmann, H. (2007) *Pre-Islamic Heritage in the Northern Areas of Pakistan*. In: Bianca, S. (ed.) *Karakoram: Hidden treasures in the Northern Areas of Pakistan*. 2nd ed. Turin: Umberto Allemandi & Co.

Hegland, M.E. (2003) “Shi’a Women’s Rituals in Northwest Pakistan: the Shortcomings and Significance of Resistance” in *Anthropological Quarterly*, [online] 76(3), pp.411–442. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3318183>.

Heinze, R.-I. (1991). *Shamans of the 20th Century*. Ardent Media.

Howe, K., & Hunzai, I. (2019) The politics of exclusion. *South Asian History and Culture*, 10(1), 14-27.

Howe, A., & Sökefeld, M. (2015) Intersections of sectarian dynamics and spatial mobility in Gilgit-Baltistan in Conermann, S., & Smolarz, E. (eds.), *Mobilising Religion: Networks and Mobility*, Berlin: EB-Verlag. Holden, L. (2019). Law, governance, and culture in Gilgit-Baltistan: introduction. *South Asian History and Culture*, 10(1), 1-13. Hunzai, I., (2013). *Conflict Dynamics in Gilgit-Baltistan*. United States Institute of Peace. Jamal, U. (2020). How Pakistan’s Political Parties Spread Radicalism. *The Diplomat*, accessed on July 31, 2020, via.

Hussain. S. (2015) *Remoteness and Modernity: Transformation and Continuity in Northern Pakistan* (New Haven, CT online edn, Yale Scholarship Online), <https://doi.org/10.12987/yale/9780300205558.001.0001>, accessed 14 Feb. 2025.

Hussain, A. (1998) *Danyalism: A Study on Spiritual Healing in Chaprote Pakistan*. [online] Icimod.org. Available at: <https://lib.icimod.org/record/10213/files/95.pdf> [Accessed 1 Feb. 2025].

Hutton, R. (2007) *Shamans: Siberian spirituality and the Western imagination*. A&C Black. Available at [Shamans: Siberian spirituality and the Western imagination: Hutton, Ronald: Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming: Internet Archive](https://www.archive.org/details/shamans-siberian-spirituality-and-the-western-imagination-hutton-ronald)

- Hutton, R. (2011) "Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic" in *Time and Mind*, 4(2), 225–226. Available through the University of Glasgow: <https://doi-org.ezproxy2.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.2752/175169711X12961583765414>.
- Jettmar, K. (1989) 'Northern areas of Pakistan: an ethnographic sketch' in Dani, A.H. (ed.) *History of northern areas of Pakistan*. Islamabad: Historical studies (Pakistan) series, pp. 59-88. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.11588/propylaeumdok.00006464> (Accessed: 29 January 2025)
- Jettmar, K. (1980) "Bolor & Dardistan" National Institute of Folk Heritage, Islamabad, Pakistan. Available at [bolor\\_and\\_dardistan.pdf](#). [Last Accessed 27.01.2025]
- Jettmar, K. (1974) *Cultures of the Hindukush: Selected Papers from the Hindu-Kush Cultural Conference Held at Moesgård 1970: Hindu-Kush Cultural Conference (1970 Moesgård, Denmark): Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming: Internet Archive*. [online] Internet Archive. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/dli.pahar.3446> [Accessed 6 Jan. 2025].
- Jettmar, K. (1960) 492 REPORTS OF COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH. [online] pp.492–499. doi: <https://doi.org/10.11588/propylaeumdok.00006513>.
- Jettmar, K. (1961a) 'The cultural history of NorthWest Pakistan,' *Yearbook / American Philosophical Society*, 1960(1961), pp. 492-499. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.11588/propylaeumdok.00006513> (Accessed: 29 January 2025).
- Jettmar, K. (1961b) Ethnological Research in Dardistan 1958. Preliminary Report. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 105(1), 79–97. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/985355>.
- Jochelson, W. (1975) *The Koryak* (Reprint of the 1908 edition). Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, Vol. 6. Edited by Boas, F. New York: AMS Press.
- Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004) "Mixed Methods Research: A Research Paradigm Whose Time Has Come" in *Educational Researcher*, 33(7), 14-26.

Jorgensen, E.R. (2009) “On Thick Description and Narrative Inquiry in Music Education” in *Research Studies in Music Education*, 31(1), pp.69–81. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103x09103632> Available through University of Glasgow’s Library at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1178280?seq=1> [Accessed 7 May 2025]

Karim, A. [1988]. ‘Shamanism in Bangladesh’, *Asian Folklore Studies*, 47(2), pp.277–309. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1178280>

Karrar, H.H. and Mostowlansky, T. (2018) “Assembling Marginality in Northern Pakistan” in *Political Geography*, 63, pp.65–74. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2018.01.005>.

Kehoe, A.B., (2000) *Shamans and Religion: An Anthropological Exploration in Critical Thinking*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

Khan, H.U., Shah, J. and Ur-Rahman, F. (2020) “Zia-Ul-Haq and the Rise of Religious Extremism in Pakistan” in *Journal of Grassroots*, [online] 54(1). Available at: <https://prdb.pk/article/zia-ul-haq-and-the-rise-of-religious-extremism-in-pakistan-1462> [Accessed 13 Feb. 2025].

Kralik, D. (2005) “Reflexivity: A Practical Guide for Researchers in Health and Social Sciences” in *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 50(2), pp.227–227. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2005.03416\\_2.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2005.03416_2.x).

Kreutzmann, H. (2024) *Pamirian Crossroads and beyond: Human Geography and Geopolitics*. [online] *Google.co.uk*, Brill. Available at: [https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/\\_/1K0XEQAQBAJ?hl=en](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/_/1K0XEQAQBAJ?hl=en) [Accessed 8 Apr. 2025].

Kreutzmann Hermann (2020) *Hunza Matters: Bordering and Ordering between the Ancient and New Silk Roads*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.

Kreutzmann, H. (2015) “Boundaries and Space in Gilgit-Baltistan” in *Contemporary South Asia*, 23(3), pp.276–291. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2015.1040733>.

Kreutzmann, H. (2024a) “Boundary-Making and Border Practices in Northern Pakistan” in *Pamirian Crossroads and Beyond: Human Geography and Geopolitics*. LEIDEN | BOSTON: Brill, pp.101–141.

Kreutzmann, H. (2024b) “Democracy for Gilgit-Baltistan? Kashmir’s Legacy and Administrative Challenges on the Route to Equal Rights within Pakistan” in *Pamirian Crossroads and Beyond: Human Geography and Geopolitics*. LEIDEN | BOSTON: Brill, pp.179–211.

Kuper, A. (1988). *The Invention of Primitive Society*. [online] London: Routledge. Available at: <https://fpa2014.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/adam-kuper-the-invention-of-primitive-society.pdf> [Accessed 21 May 2025].

Lederman, N.G. and Lederman, J.S. (2025) “What Is a Theoretical Framework? A Practical Answer” in *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 26(7), pp.593–597. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10972-015-9443-2>.

Leitner, G.W. (1889). *The Hunza and Nagyr Handbook: Being an Introduction to a Knowledge of the Language, Race, and Countries of Hunza, Nagyr, and a Part of Yasin*. [online] Google.co.uk. Available at: [https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The\\_Hunza\\_and\\_Nagyr\\_Handbook\\_printed\\_by/wTRpyQEACAAJ?hl=en](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Hunza_and_Nagyr_Handbook_printed_by/wTRpyQEACAAJ?hl=en) [Accessed 15 Jan. 2025].

Leitner, G.W. (1996). *Dardistan in 1866, 1886, and 1893: being an account of the history, religions, customs, legends, fables, and songs of Gilgit, Chilas, Kandia (Gabrial), Dasin, Chitral, Hunsa, Nagyr, and other parts of the Hindukush*. New Delhi: Bhavana Books & Prints. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/dardistanin1866100gwle> [Accessed 15 Jan. 2025]

Lohr, S.L. (2021) Sampling. *Sampling Design and Analysis*, [online] 3rd Ed. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1201/9780429298899>.

Lorimer, D.L.R. (1929) “The Supernatural in the Popular Belief of the Gilgit Region” in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 61(3), pp.507–536. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0035869x00151548>.

Luczanits, C., von Drachenfels, D. & Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (2018) *Google Books*. [online] Google.co.uk. Available at: [https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Gandhara\\_the\\_Buddhist\\_Heritage\\_of\\_Pakist/HBEAQAAIAAJ?hl=en](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Gandhara_the_Buddhist_Heritage_of_Pakist/HBEAQAAIAAJ?hl=en) [Accessed 18 April 2025].

Mahmood, S. (2005) *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (REV-Revised). Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvct00cf>.

Mason, J. (2018) *Qualitative Researching*. Third edn, Sage Publications Ltd.

Marsden, M. (2011). Possession in an Islamist Valley: Spirits, Islamists and Love in Chitral, Northern Pakistan. In: F.M. Ferrari, ed., *Health and Religious Rituals in South Asia: Disease, Possession and Healing*. USA and Canada: Routledge, pp.35–47.

Masica, C. P. (1991) *The Indo-Aryan Languages*, Cambridge. Available at [The Indo-Aryan languages: Masica, Colin P., 1931-: Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming: Internet Archive](#).

Mernissi, F. (1987) *Beyond the Veil: male-female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Meyer, K.E. and Brysac, S.B. (1999) *Tournament of Shadows: the Great Game and Race for Empire in Central Asia: Meyer, Karl E. (Karl Ernest), 1928-2019: Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming: Internet Archive*. [online] Internet Archive. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/dli.pahar.3713> [Accessed 1 Jan. 2025].

Meyer, K.E. and Brysac, S.B. (2009) *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia*. New York: Basic Books.

Miller, K.J. (1984) *The International Karakoram Project: Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming: Internet Archive*. [online] Internet Archive. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/internationalkar0001unse> [Accessed 2 Jan. 2025].

Mishra, V.K. (2018) Sectarian Violence in Gilgit-Baltistan. *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations*, [online] 23(1), pp.1–25. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973598418789993>.

Mohanty, C. T. (1984) 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,' *Feminist Review*. Available online at [https://www2.kobe-u.ac.jp/~alexroni/IPD%202015%20readings/IPD%202015\\_5/under-western-eyes.pdf](https://www2.kobe-u.ac.jp/~alexroni/IPD%202015%20readings/IPD%202015_5/under-western-eyes.pdf) [Accessed 19.10.24]

Morris, B. (2005) Shamanism. *Cambridge University Press eBooks*, [online] pp.14–43. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511814419.003>.

Mostowlansky, T. & A. Rota. (2020) *Emic and Etic*. In *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Anthropology* (eds) F. Stein, S. Lazar, M. Candea, H. Diemberger, J. Robbins, A. Sanchez & R. Stasch. <http://doi.org/10.29164/20emiceti>.

Muhammad, G. (1905) *Festivals and Folklore of Gilgit*. [online] Internet Archive. Available at: <http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924023651064> [Accessed 13 Mar. 2025].

Nicolaus, P. (2015a) The Taming of the Fairies in U. Bläsing/V. Arakelova/M. Weinreich (eds.), *Studies on Iran and the Caucasus in Honour of Garnik Asatrian*, Leiden/ Boston: 205-228.

Nicolaus, P. (2015b) “Residues of Ancient Beliefs among the Shin in the Gilgit Division and Western Ladakh” in *Iran & the Caucasus*, 19(3), 201–264. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43899199> [Last Accessed 20.01.2025]

Oakley, A. (2015) *Sex, Gender and Society*. London; New York: Routledge.

Peristiany, J.G. (1966) *Honour and Shame*. Weindenfeld and Nicolson.

Pandya, A. (2020) Focus 50 – China and Pakistan: Original Sinners of Gilgit-Baltistan and the ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’: A tale of genocide, covert demographic engineering, slavery, and suppression. South Asia Democratic Forum, Available on [Focus 50 – China and Pakistan: Original Sinners of Gilgit-Baltistan and the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir': A tale of genocide, covert demographic engineering, slavery, and suppression - SADF](#) [Accessed on 15.02.2025]

Peristiany, J.G. (1966) *Honour and Shame*. Weindenfeld and Nicolson.

Pandya, A. (2020) Focus 50 – China and Pakistan: Original Sinners of Gilgit-Baltistan and the ‘Azad Jammu and Kashmir’: A tale of genocide, covert demographic engineering, slavery, and suppression. South Asia Democratic Forum, Available on [Focus 50 – China and Pakistan: Original Sinners of Gilgit-Baltistan and the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir': A tale of genocide, covert demographic engineering, slavery, and suppression - SADF](#) [Accessed on 15.02.2025]

Patel, R. (2010) *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Pakistan*. [online] Google Books. Available at: [https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Gender\\_Equality\\_and\\_Women\\_s\\_Empowerment.html?id=LQilcQAACAAJ&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Gender_Equality_and_Women_s_Empowerment.html?id=LQilcQAACAAJ&redir_esc=y) [Accessed 4 Apr. 2025].

Penkala-Gawęcka, D. (2020) Shamans, Islam, and State Medical Policy in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In: D. Torri and S. Roche, eds., *The Shamaness in Asia: Gender, Religion and the State*. [online] London: Routledge, pp.103–131. Available at: <https://doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.4324/9780429319808> [Accessed 19 Apr. 2025].

Primeau, L.A. (2003) “Reflections on Self in Qualitative Research: Stories of Family” in *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 57(1), pp.9–16. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.57.1.9>.

Riboli, D., Stewart, P.J., Strathern, A.J. and Torri, D. (eds) (2021) *Dealing with disasters: perspectives from eco-cosmologies*. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland AG. [Online] Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-56104-8>. [Accessed 17 May 2025]

Ripinsky-Naxon, M. (1993) *The Nature of Shamanism: Substance and Function of a Religious Metaphor*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Sansthan, R.S.K. and UN General Assembly (2024) *Human Rights Council*. [online] un.org. Available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g24/045/99/pdf/g2404599.pdf> [Accessed 1 Feb. 2025].

Shimkhada, D. and Pave, A.D. (2011) Shamanic Healing: A Jhāñkri in the City. In: F.M. Ferrari, ed., *Health and Religious Rituals in South Asia*. USA and Canada: Routledge, pp. 100–113.

Sidky, M.H. (1990) “Malang, Sufis, and Mystics: An Ethnographic and Historical Study of Shamanism in Afghanistan” in *Asian Folklore Studies*, 49(2), p.275. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1178037>.

Sidky, M.H. (1994) “Shamans and Mountain Spirits in Hunza” in *Asian Folklore Studies*, [online] 53(1), p.67. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1178560>.

Siiger, H. (1967) Shamanistic Ecstasy and Supernatural beings: a Study Based on field-work among the Kalash Kafirs of Chitral. *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*, [online] 1(1), pp.69–81. doi: <https://doi.org/10.30674/scripta.67023>.

Singh, M. (2018) ‘Why is there shamanism? Developing the cultural evolutionary theory and addressing alternative accounts, *Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, 41, p. e92. Available through the University of Glasgow Library at doi:10.1017/S0140525X17002230. [Accessed 12.03.2025]

Sökefeld, M. (2014) Anthropology of Gilgit-Baltistan: introduction. *EthnoScripts: Zeitschrift für aktuelle ethnologische Studien*, 16(1), 9-29. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:18-8-7711>

Sukru, B. (2022) “The Shamanism in Altai and Tuva from past to present: Universal and Local Aspects” in *Turkic Studies Journal*, [online] 4(2), pp.22–34. doi: <https://doi.org/10.32523/2664-5157-2022-2-22-34>.

Swenson, D. (2009) *Society, Spirituality, and the Sacred: A Social Scientific Introduction*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Sychenko, G.B. (2021). Female Shamanhood in Southern Siberia at the Turn of the Millennium: Revival of an Ancient archetype, Modernisation or Declining of ‘traditional’ shamanism? Galina B. Sychenko. In: D. Torri and S. Roche, eds., *The Shamaness in Asia: Gender, Religions and the State*. 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN: Routledge, pp.167–188.

Sychenko, G.B. (2020). Female Shamanhood in Southern Siberia at the Turn of the Millennium: Revival of an Ancient archetype, Modernisation or Declining of ‘traditional’ shamanism? In: D. Torri and S. Roche, eds., *The Shamaness in Asia: Gender, Religion and the State*. [online] London: Routledge, pp.168–188. Available at: <https://doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.4324/9780429319808> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

Tedlock, B. (2005) *The woman in the shaman's body: reclaiming the feminine in religion and medicine*. New York: Bantam Dell.

Toshihiro, N. (2008) *Living on the Periphery: Development and Islamization among the Orang Asli in Malaysia*. Kyoto: Kyoto University Press and Transpacific Press.

Vohra , R. (1983). *Research Projects and Paper Abstracts: Himalaya, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies: Vol. 3: No. 2, Article 7*. [online] DigitalCommons@Macalester College. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/himalaya/vol3/iss2/7> [Accessed 22 Mar. 2025].

Walter, A.M. (2022). *Love and Marriage in Pakistan's High Mountains*. [online] Rutgers University Press. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2v55hxx>.

Walter, A.-M. (2016) ‘Between “Pardah” and Sexuality: Double Embodiment of “Sharm” in Gilgit-Baltistan’ in *Rural Society*, 25(2), pp. 170–183. doi: 10.1080/10371656.2016.1194328. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10371656.2016.1194328> [Accessed 19 Mar. 2025].

Walter, A.-M. (2014) “Changing Gilgit-Baltistan: perceptions of the recent history and the role of community activism” in *EthnoScripts: Zeitschrift für aktuelle ethnologische Studien*, 16(1), pp. 31–49. Available at: <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:18-8-7724>.

Weinreich, M. (2023) “Hunza Matters: Bordering and Ordering between Ancient and New Silk Roads, by Hermann Kreutzmann” in *Iran and the Caucasus*, 27(1), pp.125–127. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/1573384x-02701008>.

Wikipedia Contributors (2025) *2025 India–Pakistan Conflict*. [online] Wikipedia. Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025\\_India%E2%80%93Pakistan\\_conflict](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_India%E2%80%93Pakistan_conflict) [Accessed 8 Jul. 2025].

Winkelman, M. (2004) Shamanism as the Original Neurotheology. *Zygon*®, [online] 39(1), pp.193–217. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9744.2004.00566.x>.

Winkelman, M. (2012) Shamanism in Cross-Cultural Perspective. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, [online] 31(2), pp.47–62. doi: <https://doi.org/10.24972/ijts.2012.31.2.47>.

Weiss, A.M. (2003) Challenges for Muslim Women in a Postmodern World. In: A.S. Ahmed and H. Donnan, eds., *Islam, Globalisation and Postmodernity*. London: Routledge, pp.1–20.

Zarcone, T., & Hobart, A. (eds.) (2017) *Shamanism and Islam: Sufism, Healing Rituals and Spirits in the Muslim World*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

## Bibliography

Abbas, M. and Ahmad, M. (2021) “The Development of Nūrbakhshī Sufi Order in Gilgit-Baltistan” in *ISLAMIC STUDIES*, 60(4), pp.365–398. doi: <https://doi.org/10.52541/isiri.v60i4.1892>.

Ali, I., Khan, M. and Alam, A. (2021) “What Restraints Are There on Female Education in High Mountainous Rural Areas of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan?” in *Development in Practice*, [online] 31(8), pp.1040–1050. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2021.1907539>.

Ali, N. (2013). Grounding Militarism: Structures of Feeling and Force in Gilgit Baltistan. In: Visweswaran, J. (ed.), *Everyday Occupations: Experiencing Militarism in South Asia and the Middle East*, Pennsylvania University Press.

Argon, K. E. (2015) “Shamanism and Islam: Sufism, Healing Rituals and Spirits in the Muslim World, edited by Thierry Zarcone and Angela Hobart” in *Ilahiyat Studies*, 5(2), pp. 285–288. doi: 10.12730/13091719.2014.52.120.

Azam, Z., & Iqbal, K. (2017). Shiite Mobilisation and the Transformation of Sectarian Militancy in Pakistan. Middle East Institute, Shiite Mobilization and the Transformation of Sectarian Militancy in Pakistan | Middle East Institute. [Accessed 25 Apr. 2024].

Barth, F. (1987) “Cosmologies in the Making” in *Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology*, [online] (64). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511607707>.

Barth, F. (2002) “An Anthropology of Knowledge” in *Current Anthropology*, [online] 43(1), pp.1–18. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1086/324131>.

Barth, F. (2007) “Overview: Sixty Years in Anthropology” in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, [online] 36(1), pp.1–16. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.36.081406.094407>.

Beimborn, M. (2015) “Christians in Gilgit: Negotiating Sub-alternity and Citizenship” in *Ethnoscripts*, 16(1). Abgerufen von <https://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/ethnoscripts/article/view/774>

Bradpiece, S. (2020). *Virtual healing: the Shamanic Answer to Coronavirus*. [online] Huck. Available at: <https://www.huckmag.com/article/virtual-healing-the-shamanic-answer-to-coronavirus> [Accessed 28 Jan. 2025].

Buyandelger, M. (2013) *Tragic Spirits*. [online] University of Chicago Press. Available at: <https://academic-oup-com.ezproxy2.lib.gla.ac.uk/chicago-scholarship-online/book/23872> [Accessed 1 Mar. 2025].

Chant, S. (2014) “Exploring the ‘Feminisation of Poverty’ in Relation to Women’s Work and Home-based Enterprise in Slums of the Global South” in *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, [online] 6(3), pp.296–316. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijge-09-2012-0035>.

Deitz, P. (2007) “Life on the Roof of the World” in *The Sewanee Review*, 115(3), pp. 470–474.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.). (2011) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Dinar, H. and Chaudhry, W. (2015) “Exploring Ruli: An Indigenous Notion of Female Authority among Burusho in Central Hunza” in *The Explorer: Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), pp. 9–11.

Ganguly, S. (2020) Kashmir’s Year of Hopelessness. *Foreign Policy*, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/08/05/kashmirs-year-of-hopelessness/>. [Accessed 15.02.2025]

Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2017) *The Practice of Qualitative Research: Engaging Students in the Research Process* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Kreutzmann, H., & Watanabe, T. (2016) *Mapping Transition in the Pamirs*. [online] Springer. Available at: <https://link-springer-com.ezproxy1.lib.gla.ac.uk/book/10.1007/978-3-319-23198-3> [Accessed 5 Mar. 2025].

Kamal, N. A. (1979) “Karakoram Highway: A Nation-building Effort” in *Strategic Studies*, 2(3), 18–31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45181848>.

Kabeer, N. (2020) “Women’s Empowerment and Economic Development: A Feminist Critique of Storytelling Practices in ‘Randomista’ Economics” in *Feminist Economics*, [online] 26(2), pp.1–26. Available at: [https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/103880/1/Kabeer\\_womens\\_empowerment\\_and\\_economic\\_development\\_published.pdf](https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/103880/1/Kabeer_womens_empowerment_and_economic_development_published.pdf) [Accessed 4 Jun. 2025].

Khan, A. (1999) *Gilgit Baltistan, a Disputed Territory or a Fossil of Intrigues?* [online] Javed Printers (Pvt) Ltd. Gilgit. Available at: <https://www.pahar.in/pahar/Books%20and%20Articles/Indian%20Subcontinent/1999%20Gilgit%20Baltistan--a%20disputed%20territory%20or%20a%20Fossil%20of%20Intrigues%20by%20Khan%20s.pdf> [Accessed 1 Feb. 2025].

Klar, S. and Leeper, T.J. (2019) “Identities and Intersectionality: A Case for Purposive Sampling In Survey-Experimental Research” *Experimental Methods in Survey Research*, [online] pp.419–433. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119083771.ch21>.

Kreutzmann, H. (2024c) “Pamirian Crossroads and Beyond: Human Geography and Geopolitics” in *Kashmir and the Northern Areas of Pakistan: Boundary-Making along Contested Frontiers*. LEIDEN | BOSTON: Brill, p.299.

Lines, M. (1988) *Beyond the North-West Frontiers: Travels in the Hindu Kush and the Karakorams*, Oxford. Available at [Beyond the North-West Frontier: travels in the Hindu Kush and Karakorams: Lines, Maureen, 1937-2017: Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming: Internet Archive](#)

Lorimer, R. (1935) *Folk Tales From Hunza*, Oslo. Available at [Folk Tales of Hunza : Lorimer: Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming: Internet Archive](#)

MacDonald, M.N. (2002). “The Study of Shamanism: Local and Universal Dimensions” in *Journal of Ritual Studies*, [online] 16(2), pp.88–107. doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/44364146>.

Michael, Smith, C. (2007) *Jung and Shamanism in Dialogue: Retrieving the Soul, Retrieving the Sacred. Smith, C. Michael, 1950. Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming Internet Archive*. [online] Internet Archive. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/jungshamanismind0000smit/page/n7/mode/1up> [Accessed 7 Mar. 2025].

Mons, B. (1958). *High Road to Hunza: Mons - Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming on the Internet Archive*. [online] Internet Archive. Available at: <https://archive.org/details/dli.pahar.3117> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2025].

Murtaza, K.F. (2012) “Women's Empowerment through Higher Education in Gilgit-Baltistan” in *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, [online] 2(9), pp.343–367. Available at: [https://ecommons.aku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1027&context=pakistan\\_ied\\_pdf](https://ecommons.aku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1027&context=pakistan_ied_pdf) [Accessed 6 Apr. 2025].

Najam, N. and Hussain, S. (2015) “Gender and Mental Health in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan” in *Journal of Pioneering Medical Sciences*, [online] 5(4), pp.117–120. Available at: <https://jpmsonline.com/article/jpms-volume-5-issue-4-pages117-120-oa/> [Accessed 6 Feb. 2025].

Nelson, S.M. (2019) *Shamanism and the Origin of States*. [online] Routledge. Available at: <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy2.lib.gla.ac.uk/chapters/mono/10.4324/9781315420295-3/shaman-sarah-milledge-nelson?context=ubx&refId=97d16b8a-b3d9-4307-9d0b-48683d193704> [Accessed 6 Feb. 2025].

Novakovsky, S. (1924) “Arctic or Siberian Hysteria as a Reflex of the Geographic Environment” in *Ecology*, 5(2), pp.113–127.

Pitard, F.F. (2019) *Theory of Sampling and Sampling Practice*, Third Edition (3rd ed.). Chapman and Hall/CRC. <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781351105934>

Pratt, C. (2007) *An Encyclopedia of Shamanism Volume 1*. The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc.

Rashid, N.A. (2010) “Islam in Gilgit, Nagar and Hunza” in *Pakistan Perspective*, [online] 15(2). Available at: <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.journal.psc.edu.pk%2Findex.php%2Fpp%2Farticle%2Fdownload%2F244%2F242%2F&psig=AOvVaw1xFAZIFKQmGruPKBETQVvc&ust=1739284602702000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CAYQrpoMahcKEwjgpqikqrmLaxUAAAAHQAAAAAQBA> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2025].

Rashid, A. (2012) *Pakistan on the Brink. The Future of America, Pakistan, and Afghanistan*, New York. Available at [Pakistan on the brink: the future of America, Pakistan, and Afghanistan: Rashid, Ahmed: Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming: Internet Archive](#) [Last Accessed 28.01.2025]

Rehman, S. (2022) *Unveiling the Secrets of Hunza’s Shamans*. [online] Forbes. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sonyarehman/2022/10/10/unveiling-the-secrets-of-hunzas-shamans/> [Accessed 5 Jun. 2025].

Robertson, G. S. (1896) *The Káfirs of the Hindu-Kush*, London. Available at [The Káfirs of the Hindu-Kush: Robertson, George Scott, Sir, 1852-1916: Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming: Internet Archive](#) [Last Accessed 28.01.2025]

Robova, P. (2023) “Notions of Lha among the Brogpa of Ladakh” in *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research*, 61(61). doi: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ebhr.1928>.

Rubin, M. (2019) Pakistan’s Kashmir hypocrisy. American Enterprise Institute, Available via <https://www.aei.org/op-eds/pakistans-kashmir-hypocrisy/>. [Accessed 1.02. 2025].

Sering, S. H. (2010) “Constitutional Impasse in Gilgit-Baltistan (Jammu and Kashmir): The Fallout” in *Strategic Analysis*, 34(3), 354-358.

Singh, M. (2017) “The Cultural Evolution of Shamanism” in *Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, [online] 41(e66). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0140525x17001893>

Singh, K. (2004) *A History of the Sikhs*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Volume II: 1839-2004. Oxford University Press, second edition.

Singh, M. (2018) “Why is there shamanism? Developing the cultural evolutionary theory and Addressing Alternative Accounts” in *Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, 41, p. e92. Available through the University of Glasgow Library at doi:10.1017/S0140525X17002230. [Accessed 12.03.2025]

Singh, G. (1981) “The Karakoram Highway and its Strategic Implications for India” in *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 42(1), 18–26. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41855073>.

Sökefeld, M. (2005) “From Colonialism to Postcolonial Colonialism: Changing Modes of Domination in the Northern Areas of Pakistan” in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 64(4), 939–973. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25075905>

Spivak, G. C. (1988) “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Available online at

<https://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/Spivak%20CanTheSubalternSpeak.pdf> [Accessed 15.11.24]

Tikoo, T.K. (2013). *Kashmir: Its Aborigines and Their Exodus*. [online] Lancer Publishers LLC. Available at: <https://dokumen.pub/qdownload/kashmir-its-aborigines-and-their-exodus-9781935501589.html> [Accessed 10 Feb. 2025].

Tongco, Ma.D.C. (2007) “Purposive Sampling as a Tool for Informant Selection” in *Ethnobotany Research and Applications*, [online] 5(1), pp.147–158. doi: <https://doi.org/10.17348/ERA.5.0.147-158>.

Vitebsky, P. (2001). *Shamanism*. [online] Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. Available at: <https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Shamanism/DwuBGjEyN64C?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Shamanism&pg=PA96&printsec=frontcover> [Accessed 7 Mar. 2025].

Willard, A. K., Nakawake, Y., & Jong, J. (2018) *The Evolution of the Shaman's Cultural Toolkit*. *Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, 41, e89. Available through the University of Glasgow at <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X17002205> [Accessed 1.03.25].

## Non-exclusive licence to reproduce the thesis and make the thesis public

I, Farzana Shaheen ,

1. grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to

reproduce, for the purpose of preservation, including for adding to the digital archives of the University of Tartu until the expiry of the term of copyright, my thesis

Navigating Heritage in Transition: Educating for the Preservation of ,  
Transforming Female Shamanism in Gilgit-Baltistan Amidst Islamisation and  
Modernity

---

supervised by Dr. Art Leete, Dr. Matthew Mullane & Dr Dennis Francis ;

2. grant the University of Tartu a permit to make the thesis specified in point 1 available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the digital archives, under the Creative Commons licence CC BY NC ND 4.0, which allows, by giving appropriate credit to the author, to reproduce, distribute the work and communicate it to the public, and prohibits the creation of derivative works and any commercial use of the work until the expiry of the term of copyright;
3. am aware of the fact that the author retains the rights specified in points 1 and 2;
4. confirm that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe other persons' intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.

Farzana Shaheen

**06/08/2025**