KARAKORAM IN TRANSITION

Culture, Development, and Ecology in the Hunza Valley

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Chapter 28

Tourism and Portering: Labour Relations in Shimshal, Gojal Hunza

David Butz

Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of how trekking porters in the village of Shimshal, Gojal Hunza, understand the challenges of working as labourers in a transcultural tourism economy, and situates their understandings in the context of contemporary tourism in Shimshal. A typology of ten important 'dimensions of concern' is presented. The paper concludes by outlining the efforts of the Shimshal Nature Trust (SNT) to manage tourism in the community in ways that deal with the issues about which porters are most concerned.

Introduction

As the title of this volume suggests the Hunza valley is in the midst of a period of rapid social change. One dimension of this change is the increasing involvement of the region's inhabitants in a web of transcultural interactions and relations with metropolitan outsiders.[1] For the people of Hunza the reality of living transculturally (i.e., in increasingly complex interaction with and relation to the activities, agendas, representations and physical presence of metropolitan outsiders) is an aspect of social, cultural, and economic globalization that must be managed as a part of daily life. Specifically, this increasingly ubiquitous reality presents locals with the daily challenges of negotiating interactions with outsiders and outside interests, maintaining autonomy in the face of metropolitan intervention, coping with disruptions to existing social practices, gaining material benefits from transcultural interactions, and reconfiguring identity to incorporate the realities of transculturation. These challenges of transculturation—in Hunza as elsewhere—are summarized evocatively by Mary Louise Pratt:

> What peoples are struggling for now, as indeed in the earlier periods, is not the hope of remaining in pristine otherness. That is a Western fantasy that gets projected on indigenous people all the time. Rather, people are very clear that they are struggling for self-determination, that is, significant control over the terms and conditions under which they will develop their relations with the nation state, the global economy, the communication revolution...and other historical processes. (Pratt 1999, 39).

My purpose is to provide an overview of one site of transcultural interactions in one community, namely, portering labour relations in the village of Shimshal, Gojal Hunza (see Figure 28.1). Ever since European explorers began visiting Shimshal in the late 1800s the most common form of face-to-face interactions Shimshalis have had with metropolitan outsiders has been as porters—people hired to carry luggage—first for explorers and administrators, and now mainly for tourists. While the range of transcultural interactions Shimshalis experience has increased dramatically in the past two decades, portering interactions are still important. Portering is currently Shimshal's largest source of cash income, and the one most accessible to a wide range of Shimshali households. In addition, the body of published knowledge outsiders have created about Shimshalis—portrayals which strongly influence how Shimshal is understood and treated by development, conservation and tourism agencies—originates largely in the context of the portering labour relationship between locals and outsiders.[2] Given the frequency of these interactions, the importance of portering income to Shimshal's economy, and the influence of portering relations on how the community is represented, portering is clearly a site of transcultural interactions which has important implications for social change in

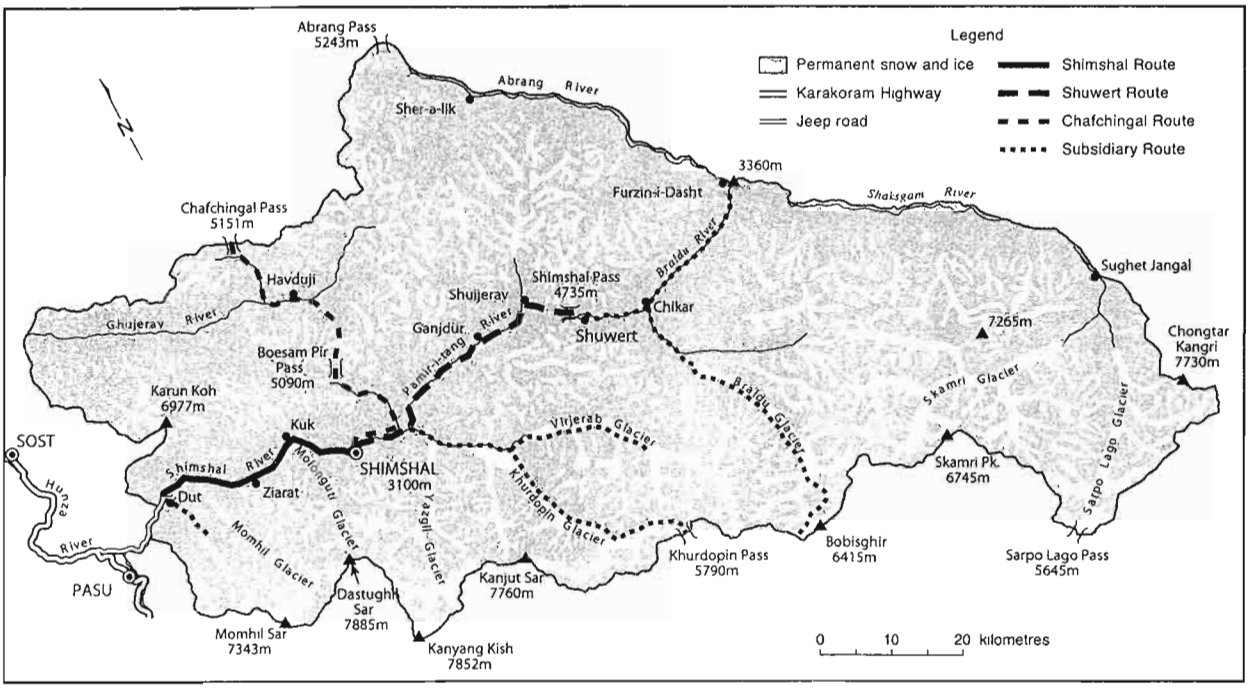

Figure 28.1: Shimshal Trekking Routes.

Shimshal; a site Shimshalis must attempt to manage as they engage with processes of globalization.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. First, a brief descriptive summary of contemporary tourism and portering in Shimshal is provided. The second section focuses on Shimshali porters' descriptions of their experience of portering labour relations drawn mainly from in-depth interviews with twenty-five Shimshali porters and guides to outline what they perceive to be the challenges of being involved in this form of transcultural interaction. The paper concludes, in the third section, by outlining the preliminary stages of three community-level initiatives to deal formally with some of these challenges.

Tourism and Portering in Shimshal

Shimshal is situated at the North-Eastern margins of Hunza's tourist map. The village of 1200 inhabitants is located five hours'drive and a further two days' walk from the Karakoram Highway at Pasu, amidst a magnificent and otherwise uninhabited landscape of high peaks, alpine pastures and valley glaciers. As one of the few remaining communities inaccessible by road, Shimshal has considerable visibility in trekking circles. Its reputation is compounded by the fact that the community's territory includes several peaks above 7000m, the highest of which is Dastughil Sar (7885m). In addition, Shimshalis are among Pakistan's most celebrated climbers, and young Shimshali men are respected as guides and high altitude porters throughout the region (at last count, twenty Shimshali men had climbed peaks above 8000m).[3] For these reasons the community receives its share of experienced self-organized trekkers in search of extended and challenging wilderness experiences. However, because of the community's distance from motorized transport, the difficulty of its terrain, its lack of tourism infrastructure, and a reputation among tour operators for driving a difficult bargain, it is seldom visited by less ambitious independent travelers. Neither has Shimshal become as popular a destination for organized tours as most community members would like. Several tour operators run occasional treks into the territory, but seldom more than one a year, and not every year.

The summer of 2000 was Shimshal's busiest tourist season ever, with about 130 foreign tourists passing through the village. Approximately 110 of those were members of agency-organized treks, visiting the community in groups of up to fourteen, for periods of two to three weeks. The remainder were split about evenly between the type of wilderness trekker/climber described above (staying from two to four weeks) and

low-budget backpackers (staying from four to ten days). The number of independent trekkers and backpackers to Shimshal has remained stable for the past decade; the increase in 2000 (of about twenty-five individuals above the average for the past decade) occurred among members of organized tour groups. In general, wilderness trekkers are well-equipped, well-organized, and familiar with local guiding and portering practices (wage rates, load weights, food and equipment obligations), often the result of prior experience in the region or previous interactions with Shimshalis. These tourists typically hire a guide, several porters, and often a cook. They tend not to stay more than one or two nights in the village itself, instead spending their time at higher elevations. Low-budget backpackers, in contrast, usually visit Shimshal on the spur-of-the-moment, as a side-trip on their journey between Gilgit and the Chinese border at Khunjerab Pass. They are seldom familiar with local trekking conventions or equipped for a challenging trek, and are often without sufficient money to hire guides or porters. As a result, they rarely trek beyond the village.

Most visitors to Shimshal follow one of three main itineraries (see Figure 28.1). First, as mentioned, low-budget backpackers usually walk into the village, spend a couple of nights there, and trek back out. Although the village has a few rudimentary guest houses which offer rough accommodation and local food, it has no other facilities or activities geared—or even easily accessible—to tourists. Second, the most popular trek for agency-led tours continues three or four day's trek beyond the village to Shuwert (4700 m), the community's main high pasture settlement at Shimshal Pass. Groups usually camp there for several nights, spending the days climbing small peaks before retracing their steps to Shimshal and Pasu. Third, since the early 1990s a few groups—initially independent, but later agency-led—have headed north from Shimshal, over Chafchingal Pass and east to rejoin the Karakoram Highway at Kuksil. In addition to these three main routes, self-organized trekkers and climbers sometimes visit the glaciated valleys and peaks south of the main Shimshal River Valley, or travel beyond Shimshal Pass towards the Shaksgam River. Every couple of years Shimshali guides and porters lead tourists on the long and difficult trek over the Braldu or Khurdopin Glaciers to Snow Lake, and from there into Baltistan or Nager. Several times a decade organized expeditions attempt to climb Dastughil Sar or an adjacent peak.

In 2000 Shimshalis earned between US$25,000 and $35,000 in porter and guide wages from trekking in Shimshal, about $8000 more than in any previous year (at an exchange rate of Rs. 50/US$). Roughly 85 per cent of that came from agency-led groups (who comprised 85 per cent of visitors), 13 per cent from self-organized trekkers (7.5 per cent of visitors), and 2 per cent from independent low budget backpackers (7.5 per cent of visitors).[4] In 2000 Shimshali porters were asking Rs 280 per stage; the guide rate per day was about Rs 500. Porters carry up to 25kg loads, and usually cover two to three stages in a day. In addition to these earnings, self-organized trekkers and mountaineering expedition members sometimes leave clothing and equipment behind, something less common among members of agency-led groups, and rare for low budget backpackers. Shimshalis earn about the same amount of money—less equitably distributed—from guiding, cooking, and high-altitude portering outside the community.

The majority of Shimshali men below middle age are eager to porter, but none would describe portering as their primary occupation. The men who porter most are in their late teens to early forties, and from large households with surplus male labour; a disproportionate number are English-speaking college students, home for the summer and separated to some extent from their households' agricultural routines. Young men from poor households are no more likely to porter than their wealthier counterparts; virtually all households provide portering labour at least occasionally. However, only rarely does the senior man in a household—the household head—work as a porter. Similarly, senior village figures—teachers, other 'salarymen,' village organization leaders, religious leaders—seldom porter, although they do sometimes work as guides. Despite the popularity of portering as a way to earn money, it bears a slight stigma associated with the indignity of accepting pay to carry someone else's burdens. In contrast to some other mountain areas, Shimshal villagers do not normally pay each other to carry loads. In Shimshal the activity of portering is not understood as an 'occupation;' nor is it associated with a particular 'category' or 'class' of household. It differs in this way from portering in India and Nepal, where it has become more strongly associated, sometimes as an occupation, with specific ethnic or class groups.

According to local informants most Shimshal households get 'maybe one or two chances a season' for one of their members to porter in the community. A total of twenty-five stages a year (about $140) is considered good luck. Large households whose supply of surplus male labour allows them to take advantage

of opportunities regardless of other obligations may treble those earnings. Approximately thirty households have committed at least one of their sons to a career in guiding, high-altitude portering or climbing, often as an alternative to formal education. These young men typically combine tourism labour in the community with long stints in other parts of the Northern Areas. When Shimshal's dozen or so career guides lead groups into Shimshal, they can often direct portering and cooking jobs to family members, thus substantially skewing the distribution of portering employment in the community.

The trekkers that porters work for in Shimshal are mainly well-educated, young to middle-aged, middle-class men and women from North America, Western Europe and Japan. Shimshali porters speak well of most tourists, and claim to like and respect them as individuals and as representatives of their 'nations.' These two main parties to the portering labour relationship interact at the road-head where porters are hired and dismissed, on the trail, at camping spots, at high pasture settlements, and in the village. Trekking groups usually travel with a non-Shimshali Pakistani guide, and often also with a foreign guide. Interactions between trekkers and porters are strongly mediated by guides, and also, to some extent, by village elders. Pakistan's Ministry of Tourism also mediates the labour relationship by stipulating a maximim wage, standard weights and stage lengths, rest days, equipment entitlements and rations. However, as very few tourists are aware of the details of these regulations, and as the government enforces them indifferently, agency guides and porters ignore them when it suits their respective interests.

Shimshal differs from most other tourism-oriented villages in Hunza in three significant ways. First, unlike villages accessible by road, tourists cannot visit the community without spending at least some money there. Second, unlike villages located on the Karakoram Highway, and many communities with a longer and more varied involvement in tourism, the community retains a strong surplus-based agricultural economy; despite the money it earns from tourism, Shimshalis claim to be less dependent on tourism income than members of less subsistence-oriented communities. Third, unlike other tourism-oriented villages in Hunza and Gojal, Shimshal earns virtually all its tourism income from portering and guiding, and almost none from shops, hotels, souvenirs, or food sales.

Portering Labour: A Typology of Concerns

In the summer of 1997 a Shimshali research assistant named Asad Karim helped me conduct in-depth interviews with twenty-five Shimshali men who have worked as porters or guides. Several of our interview participants consider themselves professional tourism labourers; the remainder are farmers or students who porter when the opportunity arises. Three of the participants are community elders involved in the regulation of tourism in the community; these three men are also heads of households in which other members are porters and guides. The interviews were designed to supplement information already obtained from participant observation and informal individual and group conversations with a similar, but larger, cross-section of the community. Participants were chosen purposefully, to cover both a wide range of experiences with tourism labour, and a representative cross-section of social positionings and lineage affiliations. The interviews focused on three sets of questions: the nature of participants' material involvement in tourism, their attitudes towards tourism and tourists in the community, and their understandings and experiences of portering as a form of tourism labour. The material presented here draws from all three sections, with an emphasis on the third.

Ten categories—or dimensions—of concern emerged from the comments Shimshali men offered on their involvement—and their community's involvement—in tourism portering labour (Table 28.1).[5] They describe some of the challenges porters and other Shimshalis attempt to negotiate as part of the everyday reality of living transculturally. Of course, Shimshalis do not experience these dimensions as discrete or separable. As will be seen, the different dimensions affect and constitute one another, and relate to a variety of often conflicting material and discursive interests.

It is no surprise that Shimshalis are involved in portering primarily as a source of *income*. All of the men interviewed acknowledged both that portering wages are important to the welfare of their households, and that portering pays better than other forms of employment available to them. This primary benefit of portering labour is also a source of considerable concern, because almost no Shimshali porters earn as much as they would like. The difficulty, as porters see it, is twofold. First, there are too few portering jobs to go around, a problem they would like to solve by increasing the number of tourists who come to Shimshal. Second, porters report that they are seldom

paid what they deserve, because guides, trekking agencies, and—less frequently—tourists cheat them out of some of their wages (porters say that guides 'eat money'). Porters are paid a specific wage (and sometimes a food and equipment allowance) to carry a specified weight (load) for a specified distance (stage), according to a loosely-regulated set of local conventions. Their income is reduced if guides or tourists lower any aspect of the rate, increase the load weight or stage length, deny rest days or *wapasi*,[6] or simply refuse to pay some portion of the wage (e.g., for unscheduled side-trips). Porters sometimes attempt to increase their income by manipulating the same set of variables, but with little immediate success because of the surfeit of porters. Over the longer term Shimshali porters have managed to improve the government-endorsed standard porter rate—it has more than doubled in the past fifteen years. Tips and gifts of equipment are also an occasional income benefit of tourism, which porters access by establishing helpful and friendly interactions with tourists. They are concerned that agency guides often impede porters' interactions with tourists in ways that direct gratuities away from porters and towards themselves.

Table 28.1: A Typology of Porters' Concerns Regarding Tourism and Portering in Shimshal

- income
- distribution of opportunities
- danger, injury, hardship
- excitement/experience/adventure
- agricultural labour obligations
- culture/identity
- autonomy/control
- reciprocal learning
- intersubjectivity/reciprocity
- representation

Given that Shimshal has many more prospective porters than portering jobs, Shimshalis are concerned about the *distribution of portering opportunities* among households (the community does not normally allow men from outside the community to porter in Shimshal). The present distribution of portering chances favours three groups: men from large households with surplus male labour; those who have guides as relatives; and those who speak some English.[7] Members of less well-positioned households would like a portering schedule to be established, which would give every household its turn, but they think this will be possible only after a road is completed to the village; until then portering jobs are taken by households who can afford to send a man to wait for tourists at the road head where porters are hired.[8] Several Shimshalis expressed regret that village men 'waste their time and money hanging about in Gilgit or Pasu waiting for chances.' One village elder complained that the present arrangements give too much power to tourists, turns Shimshalis into mere beasts of burden ('donkeys'), gives foreigners a negative impression of the community, and creates acrimony among community members. This man's assessment exemplifies locals' understandings of the complex connections among issues of earnings, distribution, identity and representation.

The discussions of Porter wages often incorporated the issue of compensation for *danger, injury and hardship*. They feel that the standard wages—if they receive them in full—are adequate for the physical labour they perform, but not sufficient to compensate fully for the risks of accident and injury, or for the toll on porters' bodies. One aging porter complained that 'tourists don't see how difficult porters' work is, and only pay what is minimally required. Most of the pain occurs after the tourist leaves. Agencies take their cut, and the guides take their cut, and only a little money is left. This is often spent on food and medicine, and on recovering from the journey.' Others told stories of porters who had died or suffered injuries on the trail, without the offer of compensation to their families from either tourists or trekking agencies. Almost all porters also complained that they seldom received clothing, equipment and cooking arrangements appropriate to the route they were asked to travel. Shimshali men feel that extra wages (including accident insurance) should be provided to offset these risks. Beyond that, they stress that tourists and agencies should take more responsibility for porters' well-being while trekking and after the trek is over.[9] They see this responsibility in terms of a larger set of reciprocal obligations between porters and tourists, which would develop more fully if the community had more control of tourism in its territory. The issues of reciprocity and control are discussed below.

Most of the men interviewed observed that the hardships and dangers of portering are offset somewhat by the *excitement and adventure* of visiting high and remote parts of the territory, and by the *experience* of traveling with accomplished foreign trekkers and climbers. They identified crossing unfamilar passes, climbing new peaks, visiting remote places, and learning about climbing and guiding from foreigners,

as among the most rewarding aspects of portering. Foreigners are appreciated for providing locals with opportunities to develop their skills as mountaineers, climbers and guides. Many young porters prefer jobs with climbing expeditions or advanced back-country trekking groups, because they want to learn to become guides themselves. Other Shimshalis, typically older men and those from small households, prefer shorter and less adventurous treks between the road head, village and main high pastures, because these are safer and less physically demanding, and because they interfere less with *agricultural labour obligations*. In fact, porters on these well-traveled routes can often conduct household business while they are earning wages from portering. Nevertheless, even on these routes villagers must either forego portering chances or neglect their agricultural responsibilities during the peak tourist and agricultural season in July and August. Some villagers worry that the prevalence of portering disrupts traditional subsistence practices, with implications for the community's social organization and identity; others are more concerned that only large households with surplus male labour are really free to take full advantage of portering opportunities. The community is seeking ways to extend the tourist season to reduce the competition between portering and agricultural labour demands (e.g., by introducing back-country skiing).

The disruption of subsistence activities is just one way that Shimshalis think tourism threatens what they value about their *culture and self-identity*. Many porters interviewed worry that tourism is making villagers less unified, and more individualistic and materialistic. They are also concerned that village youths—who are perceived to be especially susceptible to the attractions of a Western lifestyle—will learn drinking, smoking, inappropriate dress and other bad habits from some trekkers. While porters insist this is not yet a problem in Shimshal, they refer to other villages in Hunza and Baltistan where the behaviour of tourists is said to have had these effects. A more immediate problem for the management of tourism in Shimshal is that there is little for tourists to do during rest days in the village, except to disrupt the time-space patterns of village life by wandering about the fields taking pictures, often in household or sacred spaces.

Shimshalis seem to share the opinion that many of the challenges described above could be handled better if the community achieved more *autonomous control* over tourism activity in Shimshal territory. Villagers understand this primarily to mean reducing the decision-making power and mediating influence of guides and trekking agencies, through one (or both) of two types of initiatives. Some Shimshalis advocate developing a community-level regulatory body to oversee tourism: the hiring and payment of porters, the conditions of portering labour, the timing and routing of treks, the movement and activities of tourists while they are in the community, and the conduct of porters and guides. Others imagine a fully-fledged Shimshal trekking agency, which would book, organize and run its own treks, or run treks booked through foreign travel agencies. Both sets of suggested initiatives are intended to increase the material benefits and decrease the potential risks porters (and other villagers) encounter from tourism. Specifically, they are intended to reduce what villagers see as unjust manipulation by guides and exploitation of the tourism encounter. Shimshalis feel these formal initiatives would also help the community deal with those few trekkers who insist on travelling without a guide or porter. In addition to denying income to Shimshalis, these unaccompanied travellers may cause serious problems for the community if they injure themselves or wander into restricted territory (e.g., across the Chinese border). Not only do porters feel obliged to risk their safety by retrieving dead or injured trekkers, but the community fears being held responsible for ill-advised actions by trekkers.

Shimshal, as a community, is strongly committed to its self-identity as steward of its own territory. This is evident in the community's long-standing opposition to Khunjerab National Park (KNP), and also in Shimshalis' efforts to manage tourism labour.[10] As noted above, while portering is a much sought source of income, it comes with the stigma associated with accepting pay to carry someone else's burdens. Shimshalis resent being treated or perceived by foreign tourists and other non-Shimshalis as *just* load carriers. They are adamant that tourism in the territory should be managed to nurture reciprocal interpersonal relations between Shimshalis and foreigners, beyond the labour relationship.

This concern for reciprocity has two dimensions. First, porters perceive in tourism an opportunity for transcultural *reciprocal learning*. As already mentioned porters appreciate what they learn from foreigners about mountaineering and guiding. They also talked at length about other educative benefits of interacting with tourists: learning English, 'learning about the world', getting ideas, 'getting awareness for the future', exchanging information, and helping Shimshalis 'understand ourselves'. Shimshalis feel they have a lot to learn from tourists, which they are not accessing

fully because of guides' mediation of interactions between tourists and villagers. They also feel they have much to teach tourists, about the community's history and culture, about its landscape, about a 'lifestyle not their own'. The immediate benefits of teaching tourists these things are described in three ways. First, Shimshalis feel that most tourists would behave more appropriately if they had a better sense of what the community expected of them. For example, porters often attribute tourists' occasionally disrespectful behaviour at an important *ziarat* (shrine) along the trail to their lack of awareness of how to behave at such a place. Second, porters reason that their chances of receiving full pay, gratuities, and ongoing material support from tourists (e.g., funds for community works, or to send a son to college) are best if tourists know something about the community, and have some sense of the conditions of life in the village. Third, many Shimshalis feel strongly that their culture can provide lessons to foreigners who are perceived to be searching for ways to live in spiritual, social and environmental harmony.

Shimshalis' interest in reciprocal learning is related closely to the second dimension of reciprocity, which I have termed an *ethic of intersubjective and transcultural reciprocity*, but which Shimshali porters describe as a desire to interact with foreigners in ways that acknowledge members of the two groups (porters and tourists) as having equal intrinsic value as human beings. This, to a large extent, is a desire to transcend the material conditions of the labour relationship, in which porters are valued mainly as beasts of burden. This valuation contradicts porters' understandings of themselves as skilled and knowledgeable human agents, respectable householders and land-owning villagers, and the hosts of the tourists who are traveling through their territory (with the many attendant responsibilities of hospitality). Porters, most of whom feel they serve tourists beyond the obligations of the labour contract, are resentful if tourists fail to reciprocate by treating porters with respect and cordiality (i.e., as companions on a shared endeavour). In the course of my interviews, porters cited tourists' occasional unwillingness to exchange information, their refusal to share food, water and medicine, their reluctance to take advice from porters, their fears of being cheated or robbed, and their frequent rudeness and petulance towards porters, as examples of a failure of reciprocity. Porters are inclined to place the blame on guides and trekking agencies, who they think manage treks deliberately to inhibit the development of respectful and equitable interactions between porters and tourists. Village leaders are supportive of porters' complaints about guides' interference in the development of reciprocal relations between porters/village hosts and foreign guests, but they worry that porters' desperate need to wring the most out of a portering job sometimes causes them to manipulate tourists, to the detriment of the community's good name. This concern to manage the community's reputation raises the issue of *representation* as an important aspect of the transcultural encounter.

One of the reasons why Shimshalis seek to gain more control of tourism in the community, develop reciprocal relations with tourists, and reduce the mediating role of non-Shimshali guides, is because community members (including men who porter) perceive that metropolitan outsiders frequently misrepresent the community in damaging ways. The first generation of Shimshalis literate in English are hearing and reading what outsiders have said historically about the community, and they feel that colonial-era adventurers, visiting naturalists, NGO report-writers, academic researchers, and contemporary tourists have all produced damaging representations of the community. Every person interviewed was dismayed—and perplexed—by some outsiders' representations of the community, and many of them traced the creation of the Khunjerab National Park and its subsequent management plans to a series of written reports about the community's use of its pasture environments.

Community members claim that much of the information in these reports is erroneous, and that it was collected under false pretenses by individuals who failed to tell Shimshalis the purpose of their visits to the community. Shimshalis have responded to this understanding by becoming more careful about how they portray themselves to outsiders, in behaviour and conversation. Some influential villagers admonish porters to behave in ways that encourage visitors to represent the community positively, and urge them to relay visitors' questions about Shimshal's history, customs and wildlife to 'qualified' elders, rather than answering themselves. Most porters participate willingly in the project of portraying the community positively to tourists, but some resent elders' attempts to regulate their interactions with visitors, not least because providing information to tourists is one way porters can nurture a shared sense of reciprocity. There is wide agreement in the village that visitors will leave Shimshal with more accurate and positive understandings of the community when tourism is controlled more directly by the community, with positive implications

for many of the other dimensions of the transcultural interaction between tourists and community members.

In this section I have outlined what my conversations with Shimshali porters suggest are ten important dimensions of the portering labour relationship. Community members face the formal and informal task of dealing with each of these dimensions, in combination with the others, as they live their daily lives in contact with metropolitan outsiders. The results of a series of similar interviews conducted by my research assistant Inayat Ali in thirty additional villages in the region indicate that these concerns and challenges are widespread in communities involved with tourism.

Conclusion

Main objective in this chapter was to provide a preliminary overview of Shimshali porters' understandings of the challenges of working as labourers in a transcultural tourism economy, and to situate their understandings in the context of contemporary tourism in Shimshal. In describing how village men interpret their participation in portering labour it was necessary also to talk more about their general concerns regarding the community's involvement with international tourism; because porters are also villagers whose interests in tourism extend beyond portering they tend not to understand their treatment as porters as separable from the community's experience of tourism more generally. Nor do they think that their concerns regarding portering can or should be dealt with in isolation from the community's larger set of concerns about tourism. That is not to say that porters do not regularly employ their own individual and collective informal tactics to 'work' the portering labour relationship to their advantage. Elsewhere I have employed the concepts of everyday resistance, autoethnography, and agonism to describe porters' day-to-day tactical practices in relation to guides, village leaders and tourists (Butz 1995, 2002; Butz and Ripmeester 1999; MacDonald and Butz 1998; see also MacDonald 1998).

Increasingly, however, porters are joining other villagers in developing formal and strategic initiatives to manage the transcultural relations of portering—and tourism more generally—to the community's advantage. This chapter is concluded with a brief summary of the most important of these: the 'Visitors Program' of the Shimshal Nature Trust (SNT).

I talked earlier about Shimshalis' increasing preoccupation with issues of representation, especially as they relate to the formation and management of Khunjerab National Park. In 1997, after two decades of mainly material forms of resistance to the KNP management plan, the community engaged in a formal representational project of its own, which resulted in the formation of the SNT, and the production of a document describing the trust titled *The Shimshal Nature Trust: Fifteen Year Vision and Management Plan* (Shimshal Nature Trust 1999). The document provides a representation of the community as capable of managing its environment without intervention from external environmental agencies. Accordingly, the SNT document emphasizes the trust's Nature Stewardship and Environmental Education programs. It also describes four other programs, including a Visitors' Program, which outlines a preliminary strategy for dealing with tourism in the community over the next decade or so.[11]

The Visitors' Program has three main components, the first two of which are still at the early planning stage. First, the community hopes to establish a Visitors' Resource Centre 'where visitors can (a) learn what behaviour [Shimshalis] expect of them, (b) learn what behaviour they can expect from [Shimshalis], (c) establish initial local contacts in various areas of interest and expertise, and (d) arrange to conduct workshops, seminars, or volunteer work in their own areas of expertise' (Shimshal Nature Trust 1999, 3.4.1). The implication here is that all foreign visitors to Shimshal (and not just researchers) have knowledge or skills that may be valuable for the community, and they all have an obligation to learn something about the community and its expectations of visitors. The resource centre initiative is thus intended to provide an institutional context for (a) reciprocal learning, (b) developing an ethic of reciprocity, (c) encouraging local control of transcultural interactions, (d) promoting Shimshali culture/identity, and (e) improving the way the community is portrayed to the outside world.

Second, the community hopes eventually to exploit its members' considerable stock of climbing expertise to establish a Summer Mountaineering Program, in which Shimshali climbers would provide training courses to Pakistanis and foreigners interested in becoming high altitude guides or mountaineers. The courses would include technical and organizational training followed by practice on rock, ice and snow, and finally an ascent of one of Shimshal's many peaks. Community members think that this program would (a)

increase the community's income from tourism, and (b) broaden the distribution of tourism income opportunities, with positive implications for issues of (c) control, (d) culture/identity, and (e) the development of reciprocal relations with outsiders.

While some Shimshalis clearly have the climbing expertise to run a mountaineering program, they feel they currently lack the necessary instructional, administrative, and intercultural communication skills. The third component of the Visitors' Program provides a way to gain some of those skills. Since 1999 the SNT has been trying to increase its involvement in organized trekking. In 2000 it collaborated with the British company, KE Adventure Travel, to organize and run an eighteen day trek for a group of fourteen foreign trekkers (including an American KE guide).[12] In exchange for a lump sum payment, the SNT took responsibility for hiring and paying porters, cooks and local guides, planning the route, organizing cultural activities, and providing some of the food and equipment. Profits were sufficient to allow the SNT to purchase some of the equipment necessary to run future treks. Community members involved in this venture feel that it achieved the objectives of (a) increasing local monetary benefits from tourism labour, (b) giving the community more control of the distribution of portering opportunities and the conditions of labour, and (c) promoting local culture and transcultural reciprocity. They are inspired to seek similar collaborations in the future, and hope eventually to use their developing expertise to form a Shimshal-based trekking agency.

The success of Shimshalis' various formal efforts to increase the community's benefits from tourism depends largely on increasing—or at least maintaining—the flow of foreign visitors to the community. Villagers are concerned that recent international events will drastically reduce the flow of international tourists to northern Pakistan. In addition to decreasing Shimshalis' access to portering income, a reduction in the number of tourists would almost certainly limit the community's power—in relation to trekking agencies, guides, and tourists themselves—to manage portering and tourism relations in ways that would deal satisfactorily with the dimensions of concern discussed earlier in the chapter.

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Notes

1. The term *transcultural interactions* refers to the range of discursive and material interactions that occur when cultural groups, often in 'highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination' (e.g., colonized and colonizer) engage in sustained contact (Pratt 1992, 4). Following Ortiz (1995), the term *transculturation* is an alternative to the reductive concepts of acculturation and deculturation, and is used to describe the process whereby members of each group select and invent from materials transmitted to them from the other group through the relations of contact (see also Pratt 1992, 1999). While interactions between colonizers and colonized provide the clearest example of the asymmetries of transcultural relations, these are also apparent in contemporary relations between tourists and porters. The term *metropolitan outsider* is a shorthand way of describing those 'Westerners' (as a discursive, rather than spatial, category) and urban lowland Pakistanis whose life paths intersect with and intervene in the lives of local people.
2. The relationship between portering labour relations and the metropolitan discursive construction of Karakoram peoples is discussed elsewhere (Besio 2001; Butz 1998; Butz & MacDonald 2001; Dolphin 2000; MacDonald 1998; MacDonald & Butz 1998). Suffice it to say here that common—and predominantly uncomplimentary—representations of locals as bestial, naturally servile, greedy, recalcitrant and unpredictable, and therefore in need of constant surveillance and correction, are deeply rooted in foreigners' predominant (and dominant) structural and experiential position as employers of local porters.
3. Thanks to Hasil Shah and John Mock for providing this information (see http://www.mockandoneil.com/shimpeak.htm). Mock & O'Neil (2002, 259) also discuss Shimshal's remarkable summit record.
4. In the absence of accurate information on Shimshali porters' and guides' earnings, I arrived at these estimates by multiplying the number of trekkers by an estimated number of porters/guides per trek, by the estimated number of porter stages per trek, by an estimated porter rate per stage. The upper limit ($35,000) is about what Shimshalis would have earned had they been paid according to the regulations (for number of stages, rates per stage, weight per load, etc.); the lower limit ($25,000) is probably closer to what they actually received after trekkers and especially trekking agencies had negotiated for lower wages.
5. I should note that these are analytic (as opposed to indigenous) inductive typologies: *inductive* in that I did not construct my interview questions in anticipation of these categories; *analytic*

in that the types and topologies derived from my coding of the interviews, not from participants' efforts to typologize their experience.

6. *Wapasi*: partial wages per stage porters earn for returning to their village after being dismissed.
7. I am indebted to John Mock for pointing out a complication to this general pattern. In 2000 he noted a preference among community members to give portering jobs between the road-head and Shimshal to economically disadvantaged men (e.g., orphaned young men and handicapped older men), because they could not otherwise earn money (locals describe this practice as *swabi*: doing right, virtuous action). Work beyond the village, however, was seen as less appropriate for such individuals and more suited to vigorous, fully capable porters. Porters prefer the latter because it offers greater earning potential, more interesting travel, cooler temperatures, and often lower load weights than the road-head to Shimshal route.
8. For a period in the late 1980s the community established a schedule which linked road building obligations with portering opportunities (see Butz 1995).
9. Mock and O'Neil (2002, 46-52) provide an excellent description of tourists' responsibilities to porters, which coincides with the attitudes of Shimshali porters.
10. Khunjerab National Park was established in northern Gojal, east of the Karakoram Highway, in 1975. Within its borders are most of Shimshal's pastures, which park regulations prohibit Shimshalis from using. The community refuses to acknowledge these regulations in their territory, and continues to graze livestock on its traditional pastures. Knudsen (1999) describes the history of relations between Khunjerab National Park administrators and Gojali communities.
11. The Shimshal Nature Trust also includes a Women's Program, a Self-Help Development Program, and a Cultural Program..
12. Page 28 of the 2001-02 KE Adventure Travel catalogue provides a description of the second iteration of this trek, which was cancelled due to lack of interest from prospective tourists. The catalogue is available by emailing keadventure@enterprise.net.

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