

Islam in Gilgit, Nagar and Hunza

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Abstract

This paper inquires about Islam in Gilgit, Nagar and Hunza which were formerly sub-divisions of one district, Gilgit. These three regions can not be separated from one another because they have almost same geo-political and socio-cultural conditions. The paper gives the geography and history of the entire region, Gilgit-Baltistan, as the background to the topic. In the three regions, three Muslim sects, Ismailis, Ithna'asharis and Sunnis inhabit. The first Muslim saint and scholar who introduced Islam was Nasir-e Khusraw, famous poet-philosopher and Ismaili Da'i of 5th/ 11th century. He and his disciple and later da'is spread Islamic thoughts in these areas. However, Ismailism strengthened after Taj Mughal's invasion of Gilgit and Hunza-Nagar in 1320 AD. By the middle of the sixteenth c. Ithna'ashari (Twelver) Shi'ite da'wa started to spread in Gilgit, Nagar and later in Hunza. In this respect, Sayyid Shah Burya Wali, Sayyid Shah Wali, Sayyid Arif and others played a vital role. However, in the 19th c. Ismaili da'wa was reorganized and Ismaili da'is, such as Sayyid Shah Ardabel, S. Shah Hussain, S. Shah Yaqoot, his descendants and other da'is and pirs propagated Ismail faith and converted the rulers and their subjects to Ismailism. From 18th c. Sunni thoughts started to spread in Gilgit and its adjacent areas. The rulers of Khushwaqt family of Yasin and Mastuj and Muslim officers and clerics of Sikh and Dogra régimes contributed in spreading Sunni faith in Gilgit. Gilgit thus became centre of Ithna'asharis, Sunnis and Ismailis. While the Nagaris are Ithna'asharis and in Hunza all most all the people are Ismailis except of few hundred families from Ganish and Murtaza Abad who are Ithna'ashary Shiites.

By studying the history of Islam in this region an observation can be made that though some conflicts and wars there were political, but there has been no conflict and clash on religious and sectarian grounds because, tolerance, diversity and pluralism, major characteristics of Islamic teachings, were maintained by mediaeval Muslim societies. Today, it is essential to

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maintain such characteristics to establish a peaceful and progressive society.

Gilgit-Baltistan formerly known as Northern Areas of Pakistan has a unique place in the political and religious setting of Pakistan. The area is situated amidst high peaks of Hindukush and Karakoram ranges in the north, and western Himalayas in the south. Geographically, this region is of great importance to Pakistan because it borders Chinese Sinkiang and Afghan Pamir. The area also lies in close proximity with Tajikistan and other Central Asian Republics. Moreover, there is a stretch of over 300 miles long cease-fire line which separate it from Kashmir and Ladakh. Spread over 72,946 sq. kilometers, the Northern Areas i.e. Gilgit-Baltistan support a population of 1.2 million people in seven administrative districts called Gilgit, Diamer, Skardu, Ghizar, Ganche, Astor and Hunza-Nagar. There is a deputy commissioner in each district and chief secretary for the whole of the Northern Areas. The Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas is responsible for the policy and administration of the areas. On 29 August 2009, The Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order, 2009, was passed by the Pakistan's cabinet and later signed by the country's president. The order granted self-rule to the people of the former Northern Areas, now renamed Gilgit-Baltistan, by creating, among other things, an elected legislative assembly.

This region is inhabited by people belonging to diverse cultures, ethnic backgrounds and different shades of thought within Islam. As a matter of fact, all of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are Muslims. They belong to four Muslim sects namely, *Isma'ilis*, *Ithna'asharis*, *Nurbakhshis* and *Sunnis*. However each of the regions has one or more sects alongwith the majority sect. For instance, in Ghizar District majority belongs to the Ismaili faith. Gilgit is the home of Shia *Ithna'ashari*, Sunni and Ismaili sects. Similarly, Skardu is the center of Shia *Ithna'asharies* and Ganche is the center of Nurbakhshis where as Diamer has majority of Sunni population. While the majority of population of Astor is Sunni and a little minority is *Ithna'ashari* Shiite and Hunza-Nagar is considered as the hub of Ismaili and *Ithna'ashari* Shiite.

Gilgit District

Gilgit, today is the provincial as well as the district headquarter. It is situated at an elevation of 4,890 feet above sea level in 35, 55 N and 74, 23 E. The ancient name of Gilgit under Hindu Ra's (kings) was Sargin.

Later it was known as Gilit and the Sikhs and Dogras called it Gilgit.¹ Historically the Shah Rais dynasty ruled Gilgit in the earlier times and its last ruler was Sri Badat. According to R.C.F. Schomberg, 'The last ruler reputed to have been a Hindu was Sri Badat, whose rule extended over all the neighborhood from Astor to Chitral. He was a real person, but he became legendary on account of his reputed cannibalism'.² He was killed by the Turk Prince, Azur Shamsheer, who came from Skardu to Gilgit. Moulavi Hashmatullah Khan, author of famous *Tarikh-i Jammu* speaks of Azur, a Rais of Tarakhan family, who is said to have invaded Hunza and Nagar from Skardu in the company of three sons, two of whom were named as Khusro Khan and Shamsheer. From there they invaded Gilgit. Sri Badat was reportedly shot dead by the arrows of Shamsheer. He became the ruler of Gilgit and married Nur Bakht, the daughter of Sri Badat.³

According to some traditions Shamsheer was a Muslim. In this regard John Biddulph says that Shamsheer was a Muhammadan and established Muslim rule in Gilgit.⁴ But Hashmatullah does not believe this to be true. However, he notes a tradition that during the reign of Shamsheer, whose dates he gives as A.D 1120-1160, six Muslim saints came to Gilgit. Their names are Sayyed Shah Buryawali, Sayyed Sultan Ali, Sayyed Shah Wali, Sayyed Shah Afzal, Sayyed Shah Akber and Sayyed Mir Ibrahim.⁵

Here we should keep in mind that the first ruler of the Tarakhan dynasty, Azur Shamsheer, according to Hashmatullah and other historians, was not a Muslim. According to local traditions which have been mentioned by Lorimer, Biddulph, Shah Rais Khan and Qudratullah Beg in their works, the circumstances under which he restored his power and married Sri Badat's daughter, proves he could not be a Muslim. Rather, in reality the traditions, particularly the rite of *Talaini* (burning wood, torch) indicates that the ruler, Shamsheer was a Turk Zoroastrian. Biddulph writes: 'In the *'taleni'* portion of the *Nos* festival we probably see the last surviving relic of Magian

¹ Amar Singh Chuhan. *Gilgit Agency: 1877-1935*, New Delhi (no date of publication) p.2; *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, p.106.

² R.C.F. Schomberg. *Between the Oxus and the Indus*, Lahore, reprint, London, 1935, p.249.

³ A.H. Dani. *History of Northern Areas of Pakistan*, Islamabad, 1989, p.164; Hashmatullah Khan, *Tarikh-i-Jammu*, Lahore, 1964, p.768.

⁴ John Biddulph. *Tribes of Hindukush*, Karachi, reprint, 1977, originally published in 1880, p.20.

⁵ A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, p.164.

worship in these countries'.⁶ Dani's statement also supports this opinion. He says: 'It is difficult to accept the view of late folklores, in which these rulers are thought to be Muslims from beginning'.⁷

The six saints are considered the first preachers of Islam in Gilgit and adjacent areas and flourished in the first decades of the twelfth century AD. But evidences speak that these saints belonged to different periods. Of these saints Sayyid Shah Buryawali came to Gilgit in the mid sixteenth century A.D.⁸ or in 1000 A.H.⁹ Shah Wali came from Badakhshan during the reign of Mir Salim Khan III (d.1823), the then Mir of Hunza. And after his death he was buried in Ghulmet (Nagar).¹⁰ The third one, Sayyed Sultan Arif was there during the reign of Raja Shah Ghuritham (ruled from 1705 to A.D 1800).¹¹ This means he lived in the eighteenth century A.D.

Sayyed Shah Afzal, according to Shah Rais Khan, came from Badakhshan to Gilgit in the early time of Su Malik's reign. He was a religious scholar and saint. He converted the ruler, Su Malik alongwith his subjects to Islam.¹² But, in support of his opinion Khan does not give any reference of written or oral documents. That is why Dani, who has edited Shah Rais Khan's *Tarikh-i Gilgit*, also rejects this remark and says that we do not have any historical proof.¹³ About the other two saints, Mir Ibrahim and Shah Akbar the history has no record of their activities. It mentions their names only. The name of Mir Ibrahim points out to be one of the disciples of Mir Shamshuddin Iraqi (d. 1526) or Mir Ali Hamadani (1314-1384), whose *da'wa* activities in the Northern Areas are well known. It is evident from the historical record that the above six saints belong to quite different times, from the fourteenth to eighteenth century A.D.

However, as historical evidences speak, the first da'i (preacher) of Islam who came to Gilgit- Baltistan and Chitral was Nasir-e-Khusraw (394/1004-481/1088) who's main *da'wa* center was in Yumgan, Badakhshabn. Khusraw was the famous Ismaili *Da'i* who spread the

⁶ John Biddulph, *op.cit.*, p.108.

⁷ A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, p.160.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.195.

⁹ Yahya Shah, *Shin Ber, Chesar*, AKRSP, Gilgit, 1989, p.89.

¹⁰ A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, p.200.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.184.

¹² Shah Rais Khan, *Tarikh-i-Gilgit*, edited by A.H. Dani, Islamabad, 1987, p.28.

¹³ A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, p.28, footnote no.1.

Shi'a Ismaili Muslim faith in Badakhshan and its adjacent areas including the Northern Areas (i.e. Gilgit- Baltistan and Chitral).

Here we would like to mention the opinion of W. Ivanow, a Russian scholar, whose contributions to Ismaili history and literature are remarkable. He says: 'Local tradition in Badakhshan repeats the story that Shah Sayyid Nasir was busy with converting local inhabitants, and even undertook extensive journeys in the East during which he visited India'.¹⁴ He further says: 'Nasir had a very unflattering opinion of the local inhabitants, most probably the peoples of local *Shina* or *Darda* Stock of whom possibly no trace remains now'.¹⁵ According to this tradition Nasir had come to Shinaki Dardistan (i.e. Gilgit and Diamar). There is a famous tradition about Nasir's visit to Chitral and Northern Areas. According to Ismaili traditions Nasir-e-Khusraw visited the Lot-Kuh valley, at present a tehsil in the district of Chitral. During his stay in Yumgan, he converted many people to Ismailism. It is quite possible because there are many high mountains passes between Badakhshan and Lot-Kuh used by trade caravans from Central Asia to Chitral. So, Ismailism was imported through the passes into the Lot-Kuh valley.

Mirza Ghufuran, a local historian from Chitral, confirms the story of Nasir-e-Khusraw's visit to Chitral. According to his accounts, Nasir-e-Khusraw came to Chitral from Munjan valley and disappeared after some days. He is said to have spent forty days in a hut at village Izh on the right bank of Lot-Kuh stream and further forty days in a cave on the hill standing just opposite the hut. Both the places are called *ziyarat* (shrines) of Nasir-e-Khusraw commemorating his historic visit to the place.¹⁶

It is said that Nasir-e-Khusraw also visited Baltistan. In this regard G.T Vigne writes:

Near the entrance of the valley of Brahaldo and over the right bank, is a curiously shaped rock, which rises from the summit of the mountain like a tower. It is called after the name of Fakir, Shah Nasir Khusraw, who is said to have lived or worshipped beneath, and is buried near Jerm in Badakhshan.¹⁷

¹⁴ W. Ivanow, *Problems of Nasir Khusraw's Biography*, Bombay, 1956, p.45.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Inayatullah Faizi. *Wakhan: A Window into Central Asia* (Islamabad: Al-Qalam Darul Ishaat, 1996), p.79.

¹⁷ G.T. Vine, *Travels in Kashmir, Ladakh and Skardu*, London, 1872, p.284; Banat Gul Afridi, *Baltistan in History*, Peshawar, 1988, p.118.

The above mentioned historical evidences speak that Nasir Khusraw visited the area and preached the Ismaili faith. After him, his disciples and later Ismaili *da'is* continued preaching the Ismaili *da'wa* in these areas. Conforming abovementioned statement, Dr. Inayat Allah Faizi also states:

In the areas of Badakhshan, Gilgit, and Chitral, the *Ismaili* Dawat was spread by famous theologian philosopher, traveler and poet, Nasir Khusraw, the *Hujja* of Khurasan through his followers and *Da'is*.¹⁸

This opinion is also supported, indirectly, by Dr. M. A. Stein's statement in which he says: 'In the twelfth century of the Christian era, the conversion of the Dard Tribes on the Indus from Buddhism to Islam had already made great progress'.¹⁹ Here, it should be kept in mind that the terms of Dard, Darda and Shins were used for the inhabitants of Northern Areas in ancient times and the area was called Dardistan. It is also a historical fact that no body came to the area except of Nasir Khusraw. So, the introducing of Islam in Dardistan (i.e. Northern Areas) in those days is credited to Nasir Khusraw. While the other leading figures, such as Mir Ali Hamdani, Shamsuddin Iraqi, Nasir Tusi etc. are very late comers.

Taj Mughal's invasion of Gilgit and spread of Ismaili faith

In reality, the first Muslim ruler of Gilgit was Taj-din Mughal. Some authentic local and non-local historians have mentioned Taj-din Mughal's invasion of Chitral and Gilgit. M. Ghufuran in his *Tarikh-e Chitral*, Moulavi Hashmatullah Khan in his *Tarikh-e-Jammu*, Shah Ra'is Khan in his *Tarikh-e-Gilgit* and Dr. Shuja Namus in his *Gilgit aor Shina Zaban* have mentioned about this event in detail. The local traditions in Gilgit, Hunza and Ghizar are also famous in this connection. According to all of these sources Taj Mughal is said to be a follower of Ismaili sect and its ardent propagator.²⁰ According to *Tarikh-i-Chitral*, Taj Mughal invaded Chitral and Gilgit in 1320 A.D.²¹

¹⁸ Inayatullah Faizi. *op.cit.*, p.79.

¹⁹ M.A. Stein (tr.) *Kalhana's Raja-Tarangini*, Vol-II, Delhi, reprint, 1977, p.217, footnotes 27,62,64, G.M.D. Sufi, *Kashmir*, Vol.1, Lahore, 1948, p.77.

²⁰ A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, p.170; Hashmatullah Khan, *op.cit.*, p.687; Shah Rais, *op.cit.*, p.57; M.S. Namus. *Gilgit Aor Shina Zaban*, Bahawalpur, first edition, 1961, pp.120-37.

²¹ M.M. Ghufuran. *Tarikh-i-Chitral*, Peshawar, 1962, p.36.

According to Shah Rais Khan, however during the reign of Trakhan his cousin Raja Shah Rais Khan left Gilgit along with his followers and took shelter in the court of Badakhshan, whose name is given as Taj Mughal. Shah Rais is said to have accepted Ismaili faith along with his followers. He also became a son-in-law of Badakhshabn's ruler. After some years Raja Shah Rais persuaded Taj Mughal to invade Gilgit. Preparations were made for one full year. First Chitral was conquered and annexed. Then the areas of Yasin, Koh Ghizar and Punial were occupied and then the Mughal forces advanced towards Gilgit. Torra Khan (Trakhan) had no alternative but to accept Ismaili faith himself and agreed to the terms of Taj Mughal. Shah Rais was made the ruler of Chitral and thus the Raisa dynasty of Chitral was founded. It was at this time that Ismaili faith was also propagated in Nagar and Hunza. It is also said that during this time Taj Mughal built 'Mughali Tower' at Jutial and another one on the way to Hunza near Thol.²² The Ismaili state of Badakhshan, which had been established in the 5th/eleventh century, ended in the sixteenth century with the invasion of Abu Said Timri. From this it is evident that Taj Mughal must be one of the rulers of Badakhshan in early decades of fourteenth century. He was neither legendary nor a Buddhist ruler as suggested by Prof. Dani, but an Ismaili ruler and Da'i.

Hence, historians such as Hasmatullah Khan, Mirza Ghufuran and Shah Rais Khan confirm him as an invader and an Ismaili Da'i in their works. Hashmatullah Khan in his famous work *Tarikh-i-Jammu*, which is based on both oral and written material, gives a detailed account of Taj Mughal's personality and his military and da'wa activities in the Northern Areas. As a British government officer, Hashmatullah had access to then available sources. Thus, he is the first author to narrate Taj Mughal's story. He says that under the rule of Tor Khan (1290-1335 A.D) Gilgit was attacked by 'Taj Moghal' to enforce conversion to the Ismaili faith. Tor Khan embraced this creed and made efforts towards its diffusion.²³

While the other writer Mirza Muihammad Ghufuran has confirmed Taj Mughal's arrival in Chitral and Gilgit as an invader and an Ismaili Da'i from Badakhshan.²⁴ The author of *Tarikh-i-Chitral* says that his source of information was an old Persian *Tarikh-i-Chitral* on which

²² A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, p.170; Shah Rais Khan, *op.cit.*, p.57; Hashmatullah Khan, *op.cit.*, p.687-88.

²³ A.H. Dani, *ibid.*, p.63; Hashmatullah Khan, *ibid.*, p.682.

²⁴ M.M. Ghufuran, *op.cit.*, p.376.

the new work is mainly based.²⁵ Taj Mughal also figured in the folklore of Gilgit and what the tales of Taj Mughal in Gilgit tell is not much different from the information given in *Tarikh-i-Chitral*.²⁶ The third author Raja Shah Rais Khan, a descendant of Trakhan dynasty, has also given a detailed account about Taj Mughal's personality and his achievements in the Northern Areas. He says that Taj Mughal was an Ismaili *Da'i* and commander of a troop from Badakhshan and very zealous in the propagation of Ismaili faith in the area.²⁷

Ismailism thus became the state religion of the Tarakhanid Dynasty. The Ismaili doctrines spread over all Badakhshan, Wakhan, Chitral, Ghizar, Gilgit, Hunza, Nagar and Astor. Although, the evidences of Ismaili missionary activities are not available about this period and the local traditions are also silent in this regard. But when we study the history of Ismaili *daw'a* in general then we know a little bit about the *daw'a* activities in these areas. Thus, the famous Ismaili *Da'i* Shams al-din Sabzwari (d.757A.H/ 1356A.D) came to this area on his way from Badakhshan to Kashmir and Multan in order to propagate the Ismaili *da'wa*.²⁸ But the evidences of his *da'wa* activities are not available as of his predecessors. Nevertheless, according to some traditions he had succeeded in converting the famous Chack rulers of Kashmir into Ismaili faith. In the time of Imam Islam Shah the Ismaili *daw'a* spread up to Badakhshan, Hunza, Chitral and Kabul and a number of people accepted the Ismaili faith.²⁹ It is also a historical fact that after the fall of the Badakhshan state of Ismaili rulers the Ismaili *da'wa* was led by the hereditary Pirs and Mirs, originated from two Ismaili *da'is*, Sayyid Shah Malung and Sayyid Shah Khamush. In this regard W. Madelung states: 'Two *Da'is*, Sayyed Shah Malang and Shah Khamush, who were sent by the Imam and became the founder of the dynasties of Pirs and Mirs. The Ismaili communities continued to be guided by local dynasties of Pirs'.³⁰ These Pirs and Mirs have played important role in spreading Ismaili

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.376; H. Shah Mumtaz, *Ismailis in Chitral*, M.A. Thesis submitted to the Pakistan Study Center, University of Peshawar, 1984, p.27.

²⁶ H. Shah Mumtaz, *op.cit.*, p.29; Ghulam Muhammad, *Festivals and Folk Lore of Gilgit*, Islamabad, 1980, p.62.

²⁷ A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, p.170. Shah Rais Khan, *op.cit.*, p.52-3.

²⁸ John Hollister, *Shia of India*, London, 1953, p.353; see for detail: Ivanow, 'Sect of Imam Shah of Gujrat', *JBRAS*, 1936-1970, pp.23, 30-3.

²⁹ Didar Ali and Zawahir Muir, *Tarikh-i Aima-i Ismailia*, Vol.III, Karachi, 1996, p.105.

³⁰ W. Madelung, 'Ismailia', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. IV, London, 1970, p.202.

da'wa in Badakhshan, Chinese Turkistan and Northern Areas of Pakistan i.e., Gilgit – Baltistan and Chitral.

In history the Ismailis have been called by various names such as, *Batinis*, *Qaramita*, *Sab'in* (Seveners), *Fatimids* and *Nizaris* etc. Thus, the Ismailis of Northern Areas of Pakistan as well as the Central Asian Ismailis are called *Mawlais* (followers of the Alid's Imams, that means Ismaili Imams). Such as, John Biddulph writes: 'The *Ismailis* of Chitral, Gilgit, Hunza, Wakhan and China are known as *Mawlais*'.³¹

However, the Ismaili faith has prevailed in Gilgit for about two hundred and fifty years, from 1310 A.D to 1565 A.D. In this long period, six rulers, one after the other, ruled successfully in Gilgit and its adjacent areas. Ismailism was the state religion of the Tarakhanid dynasty in those days. The seventh ruler Mirza Khan converted to Twelver Shiism due to some socio-political reasons. So, the Ismailism was replaced by Twelver Shiism.

Twelver Shiism in Gilgit

When the seventh ruler, Raja Mirza Khan came to the throne in 1565 AD., the *mehter* (ruler) of Chitral invaded Gilgit. Mirza Khan went straight to Skardu to seek help of the ruler of Baltistan. During his stay in Baltistan he married the daughter of the ruler of Baltistan and accepted *Shi'a Ithna'ashari* (Twelver Shiite) faith.³² With this help he invaded Gilgit and succeeded in regaining his rule. When Mirza Khan turned his back on his ancestral belief, his subjects also converted to the ruler's religion. The influence of Twelver Shi'ism spread rapidly and became the state religion of the latter Trakhanid dynasty.

First of all it is important to explain the origin and development of the *Ithna' ashari* Shism so that it would be helpful to understand its religious and political activities. *Ithna'ashari* is the name of that branch of *Shi'a* Islam that believes in twelve Imams beginning with Ali and ending with Muhammad-al-Mahdi. Although, Twelver Shia sect was active from its early times but it became strong in the sixteenth century AD in the region. When Shah Ismail, the founder of Safavid dynasty, crowned as the King of Persia in Tabriz, took steps to have *Imamat* Shi'ism made the official religion of his realm.³³

The Safavid rulers always endeavored to propagate the Twelver Shiite faith almost all over the Muslim world. Their net work of *da'wa* was being spread from Anatolia to Kashmir. In this way they directed their attention towards India. They sent their saints, scholars and

³¹ John Biddulph. *op.cit.*, p.116.

³² A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, p.178.

³³ W.M. Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, Edinburgh, 1962, p.169.

preachers to northern India and more particularly to Kashmir, little Tibet (Baltistan) and Gilgit. One of these famous saints, Sayyid Shah Burya Wali, came to preach in Gilgit, Nagar and Chitral.

Sayyid Shah Burya Wali's contribution to expansion of Ithna'ashari or Twelver Shi'ism in Gilgit: Sayyid Shah Burya Wali remarkably contributed to the expansion of Twelver Shi'ite *da'wa* in Gilgit and Nagar. Local historians, like Hashmatullah Khabn, Shah Rais Khan, Qudratullah Beg, Abdul Hameed Khawar and many western scholars and writers have mentioned Sayyid Burya Wali's missionary activities. Summarising the statements of the above mentioned scholar, Dr. Dani says:

During the closing years of the reign of Raja Shah Rais Azam (1522-1561 AD.), one holy man by the name of Shah Burya Wali came to Nagar from Isfahan through Kashmir along with two servants (or devotees) Abdul Hasan and Sange Ali. As a result of his influence people of Nagar accepted Islam. Raja Shah Kamal of Nagar also became devoted to the Sayyid. Abdul Hasan was left behind in Nagar to continue preaching. Sayyid Burya Wali himself left Nagar and came to Gilgit. The Shazada Mirza became his disciple. From Gilgit Sayyid Sahib went to Chitral where the King Shah Rais Azam was then staying. The king welcomed the Sayyid and honored him with great respect. The Sayyid died in Chitral where he was buried.³⁴

So it is right to say that it was due to the efforts of this great saint that Twelver Shi'ism spread in Gilgit and Nagar. Indeed, he should be considered as the real founder of Twelver Shiism in Northern Areas.

Sayyid Shah Sultan Arif: After Sayyid Shah Burya Wali his chain of preachers continued their activities. The other Sayyid was Sayyid Shah Sultan Arif. He flourished in the first decades of eighteenth century AD. Raja Shah Goritham, who ruled from 1705 AD to 1800AD, received his education from Sayyid Shah Sultan Arif, who was buried in the Dargah at Danyor.³⁵ According to Shah Rais Khan, Sayyid Sultan Arif was a scholar who belonged to *Saadaat* of Hussainy and Jalali.³⁶ According to a local writer, Ghulam Hussain Anjun, he came from Baltistan through Astor to

³⁴ A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, pp.176, 177.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.184; Shah Rais. *op.cit.*, p.199.

³⁶ A.H. Dani, *ibid.*, p.199.

Gilgit with his two brothers, Sayyid Akbar Shah and Sayyid Ibrahim Shah, whose tombs are found in Gilgit.³⁷

Sayyid Shah Wali: After Sayyid Shah Sultan Arif the famous saint and scholar whose contributions are remarkable to Shi'a thoughts was Sayyid Shah Wali. According to G.H. Anjum, Sayyid Shah Wali was the son of Shah Zaman. He was a Naqavi Sayyid.³⁸ However, Anjum has not given more information about this Sufi saint. In this regard the well known local historian and social leader from Hunza, Qudratullah Beg, has provided some historical information about Sayyid Shah Wali. In his famous work *Tarikh-I ahd-I Atique* Beg tells us about this saint that he came from Badakshan to Hunza during the reign of Mir Salim Khan III (d. 1823 AD), the then Mir of Hunza, and after his death he was buried in Ghulmet (Nagar).³⁹

Sunnism in Gilgit

Sunnism is considered as the second largest community in Northern Areas, i.e., Gilgit- Baltistan and Chitral. Although, Diamar is regarded as the hub of Sunnism but a noticeable number of Sunni population lives in Gilgit as well as in Astor, Ghizar and Baltistan.

However, it is difficult to trace the beginning of Sunni *da'wa* in the Northern Areas particularly in Gilgit. However, it is believed that the Sunni faith was introduced in the neighboring regions, such as in Kashmir, Chitral and Badakhshan in thirteenth to sixteenth century AD. But still its activities in Gilgit remain unexplored. There is a general belief that Gilgitis were converted to Islam by Sayyid Ali Hamdani but it is nowhere evident from history that Sayyid Ali Hamadani ever paid a visit to Gilgit. Even his visit to Balitistan is disproved.

The famous Kashmiri historian G.M.D Sufi is of the opinion that Sayyed Ali Hamdani visited Kashmir in (774 A.H) 1372, (781 A.H) 1379 and (785 A.D) 1383 AD, on his journey to Turkistan.⁴⁰ But he does not mention about his visit to Gilgit- Baltistan. Other Kashmiri writers also have not maintained this visit. Therefore, his visit to Northern Areas, Gilgit- Baltistan is disproved. Nevertheless, some writers are of opinion that he had come to Baltistan. Such as Dr. Ahmad Hasan Dani, on the basis of Hashmatullah Khan Lakhnavi's accounts, writes that in

³⁷ Ghulam Hussain Anjum, *Islam Gilgit Main*, Karachi, 1994, p.71.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.74.

³⁹ Qudratullah Beg, *Tarikh-i-Ahd-i-Atique Hunza*, Rawalpindi, 1962, pp.126-28.

⁴⁰ G.M.D. Sufi, Kashmir, Vol. I, Lahore, 1958, pp.86-7.

the time of Gori Tham Amir-e-Kabir Sayyid Ali Hamdani came to Shigar (Baltistan), converted the local rulers, spread Islam here and built the Ambariq mosque, which still stands in Shigar.⁴¹ In the light of these accounts Hamdani's visit to Baltistan is possible to some extent but his visit to Gilgit is not proved.

However, Islam came to Gilgit (District) in the shape of Sunni faith in the eighteenth century AD. According to Shah Rais Khan, the Sunni faith spread and developed, in the real sense during the reign of Raja Guritham ruled from 1705 AD to 1800 AD.⁴²

It is also said that during his rule some Kashmiris came to Gilgit and settled in Kashrot.⁴³ These Kashmiris, indeed, were Sunnis by faith. But Sunnism was introduced properly in the first quarter of nineteenth century AD when the great ruler of Khuswaqt family of Yasin, Sulaiman Shah, invaded Gilgit and deprived the Tarakhan family of its rule. He was Sunni by faith and contemporary of Sayyid Ahmed Shaheed (1786-1831). He had correspondence with the said Sayyid Ahmad Bralvi and suggested to propagate the Sunni faith in the whole area. But, unfortunately, he was killed in Balakot by Sikh army in 1831 and Sulaiman Shah's desire could not be fulfilled. His letters have been published in *Makatib Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed*.⁴⁴ After him Gohar Aman was also eager to spread the Sunni faith. With the efforts of these rulers of Yasin Sunni faith spread successfully in Gilgit and Ghizar. After Gohar Aman the Sikhs came to Gilgit in 1842 AD.

History tells us that a couple of Sikh regiments were sent under Nathu Shah, a Sayyid of Gujranwala, who was a capable commander and held the rank of a colonel. This was in the year 1842.⁴⁵ Commander, Nathu Shah himself was a Sayyid and with him many other Muslim *pirs* and men of letters came to Gilgit and played an important role in spreading Sunni Islam in Gilgit as well as in Astor.

Islam in Nagar

The present territory of Nagar is a sub-division of the Hunza-Nagar District, it spreads along the Nagar river on the left side of the Hunza

⁴¹ A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, pp.229-30.

⁴² Shah Rais Khan, *op.cit.*, p.204.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.204.

⁴⁴ Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed, *Makatib Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed*, Shaheed Ahmad Shaheed Academy, Lahore, n.d.

⁴⁵ Amar Singh Chuhani, Amar Singh. *Gilgit Agency: 1877-1935*, New Delhi (n.d), p.6; Frederic Drew, *Jammu and Kashmir Territories*, Karachi, reprint, 1980, also New Delhi, 1975, originally published in 1875, London. p.438.

river upto Sikandarabad which is the newly build sub-division headquarter and spills over the right side of Hunza river at Chalt. Prominent western scholars and travelers such as Biddulph, Durand, Schaumburg William Moorcraft and George Trebeck have all given details of its stated geography, history and culture. More particularly, William Moorcraft in his work, *Travels in the Himalayan Princes of Hindustan and the Punjab from 1819 to 1825*, writes:

Nagar, or Brushal, is a small state lying on the road from Skardu to Gilgit and consists chiefly of a valley of about three days journey in length and six or eight miles broad. It is wandered by a river of Gilgit, and on the banks of which stands the town, with a fort as upon a hill. The people are called Dungars and Raja is independent.⁴⁶

Here, it is appropriate to jointly discuss the history of Nagar and Hunza to set a clear idea of the religeo-political history of both regions.

Long before their partition between the two brothers, Girkis and Mughlot, Hunza and Nagar remained under the Tarakhanides of Gilgit. Even before the Tarakhanid dynasty these two territories were under the Gilgit rulers. However, the division took place in the fifteenth century. Before that, according to Biddulph, 'Under the Shin rule Hunza and Nagar appear to have been under one prince, whose capital was Nagar'.⁴⁷

While according to Qudratullah Beg, Soo Malik, the ruler of Gilgit had three sons, one Shah Malik became the ruler of Gilgit while the second son, Mir Malik was made the ruler of Hunza and Nagar. Mir Malik was succeeded by his son Sahib Khan who was succeeded by Dula Shah after him his son Shah Malik II became the ruler of Hunza and Nagar. Shah Malik II married a woman from Baltistan, whose name was Shah Begum. Shah Begum gave birth to three sons, Shah Tham, Bukha Tham and Noni Tham. Shah Tham had a son, Lali Tham, and according to Shah Rais Khan, he was famous as Lughum Guspur.⁴⁸ During this time a legendary King of Ladakh came to Hunza via Baltistan and ruled Hunza. In these circumstances the offspring of Shah Begum became dispersed.⁴⁹ When Gesar (Kiser) came to Hunza, Bokha Tham and Noni Tham fled to Shighnan, and Lali Tham, the son of Shah Tham, went to Gilgit to Tarakhan and Chilis Khan. Chilis Khan married Trakhans's

⁴⁶ W. Moorcraft, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab from 1819 to 1825*, Vol. II (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1979, reprint) pp.265-66.

⁴⁷ John Biddulph, *op.cit.*, p.135.

⁴⁸ A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, p.193.

⁴⁹ Qudratullah Beg, *op.cit.*, p.38-43.

sister; Girkis and Maghlot were born to the couple as twins.⁵⁰ When Gesar left for Baltistan, Tarakhan, the uncle of the two princes, divided Hunza and Nagar between them. Hunza fell to Girkis as his portion and Nagar to Mughlot. This partition came about, according to J. Biddulph, in the beginning of the 16th century.⁵¹ However, it is perfectly clear that before the partition of Hunza and Nagar between Girkis and Mughlot, these two territories were ruled by Mir Malik's family.

When Shah Taj al-din Mughal invaded Gilgit in 1310 A.D, he converted the ruler of Gilgit, Tarakhan-I to Ismaili faith. He invaded Hunza and Nagar and the ruler and subjects of these regions also converted to Ismailism and then Taj Mughal went back to Badakhshan. It is also said that he built 'Mughlai Tower' at Jutial and another one on his way to Hunza near Thole.⁵²

The tower of Thole, Nagar, indicates that Taj Mughal had stayed for a time in Thole and adjacent areas in order to propagate the Ismaili *da'wa*. It seems that he had succeeded in this respect. The oral traditions speak of the inhabitants of Ghulmet, a village of Nagar near Thole having accepted the Ismaili faith and Ghulmet remained a center of Ismaili missionary activities.⁵³

Ithna'asharism (Twelver Shi'sm) in Nagar

When Ismaili *da'wa* became weak in Gilgit the *Ithna'ashari da'wa* came to power in the whole areas of the north. In sixteenth century AD, the Shia *Ithna'ashari* faith was propagated in Nagar as well as in Gilgit. According to Dr. A.H Dani in Nagar Raja Ali Dad Khan was succeeded by Raja Shah Kamal in AD 1559. During his time Shah Burya Wali came to Nagar via Hisper and later went to Chitral. He was a follower of the Shia faith. It is said that this Sayyed spread Islam in Nagar.⁵⁴ About the origin and early coming of Sayyed Shah Burya Wali, Shah Rais Khan writes: 'Shah Burya Wali came from Isfahan along with his two servants Abdul Hassan and Sang-i Ali by way of Kashmir, Baltistan and Hisper to Nagar'.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ R.C.F. Schomberg, *op.cit.*, p.145; S.J. Muller, *Hunza*, 1979, pp.106-108; Qudratullah Beg, *op.cit.*, pp.44.

⁵¹ John Biddulph, *op.cit.*, p.145; S.J. Muller, *ibid.*, pp.44-5.

⁵² A.H. Dani. *op.cit.*, p.170; Qudratullah Baig, 'Burushiski Adab', *Tarikhe-I Adabyiate-i-Musalmanan-i-Pakistan*, Fayyaz Muhamood (ed.) (Lahore: Punjab University), p.72; Shah Rais. *op.cit.*, pp.53,57-8; Ghufran. *op.cit.*, pp.28-9; Hashmatullah Khan, *op.cit.*, pp.682-83.

⁵³ Narrated by M. Shifa, a social worker from Ganish, Hunza.

⁵⁴ A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, p.195.

⁵⁵ Shah Rais Khan, *op.cit.*, p.93.

As a result of his influence people of Nagar accepted Islam. Raja Shah Kamal of Nagar also became devoted to the Sayyed. His disciple, Abdul Hasan was left behind in Nagar to continue preaching. Sayyed Burya Wali himself left Nagar and came to Gilgit. Shahzada Mirza also became his disciple. From Gilgit Sayyed Sahib went to Chitral, where the King Shah Rais Azam was then staying. The King welcomed the Sayyed and honoured him with great respect. The Sayyed died in Chitral where he was buried.⁵⁶ It is also said that by the efforts of Shah Burya Wali Twelver Shiism became the state religion of Nagar. Such as Sayyed Yahya Shah, a well-known social and religious personality from Somayar, Nagar, writes: 'In 1000 A.H when Kamal Khan accepted Islam by the preaching of Sayyed Shah Burya then Islam (Twelver) was accepted as State- Religion'.⁵⁷

Sayyed Shah Burya Wali and his disciple Abdul Hasan and his descendants were famous as *Akhwnds* (religious scholars). They spread the *Ithna'ashari* Shia faith in Nagar and by their efforts the whole of Nagar became *Ithna'ashari* Shia. In 1885 A.D. Akhwnd Jafar came under the influence of Islam and much later son of Qanbar, resident of Sumayar, came to Shin Bar, Chaprot, and taught the people about fundamental rites and rituals of the religion.⁵⁸ Now the whole population of Nagar is *Ithana'ashari*. Arthur Neve thus writes: 'The People of Nagar are Shias'.⁵⁹

Islam in Hunza

Geography and history: Hunza is now a subdivision of Hunza-Nagar district. It is situated to the north of the Hunza river, at an elevation of around 2,500 metres (8,200 ft). The territory of Hunza is about 7,900 square kilometers. It is bordering China to the north east and Pamir to its north east. It has a unique place in the area due to its geo-political and strategic position. William Moorcroft, who came to Hunza in the first quarter of 19th century AD, describes its geography in these words:

Beyond Nagar, and nearer to the Pamir Mountains, is the district of Hunza also inhabited by Dungars. Kanjut is the name of the capital, which is the residence of Salim Shah Salim Khan III 1790 to 1824 AD, Mir of Hunza)

⁵⁶ A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, pp.176-77; Shah Rais Khan, *op.cit.*, p.93.

⁵⁷ Sayyid Yahya, *Shin Ber, Cheser: ek Imrani Jughrafiyai, Tarikhi Aur Ma'ashrati taj-zia*, AKRSP, Gilgit, 1989.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.89.

⁵⁹ Arthur Neve, *Thirty Years in Kashmir*, London, 1913, p.157.

from this province a difficult pass leads across the mountains to Badakhshan.⁶⁰

Before the partition of Hunza and Nagar, between Girkis and Mughlot in 15th century AD,⁶¹ the two territories were under one ruling family. During those times Islam was introduced in these areas as the result of Taj Mughal's invasion of Gilgit and Chitral in 1320 AD. So, then the rulers of Hunza and Nagar and the Trakhan rulers of Gilgit accepted the Ismaili faith.⁶² But after the partition in the sixteenth century both territories became independent states. Girkis became the ruler of Hunzas and Mughlot came to the throne of Nagar state.

Unfortunately, Girkis, the first ruler of Hunza, was shot dead by Mugal Beg, the foster father of Mughlot, the ruler of Nagar. After his death, his daughter Nur Bibi became the ruler of Hunza. Her *vazir* was her own foster-brother, Boto, son of Chaosingh. There is a slight variation in the subsequent history of Hunza. According to Muller, *vazir* Boto went to Wakhan to search for the exiled Mayur. In Darwaz he learnt that the Prince had died but his son, Auasho, was with the Mir of the place. He was brought to Hunza and crowned as King in place of Nur Bibi.⁶³

The other tradition is that the husband of Nur Bibi was a descendant of Shah Begum, who had fled to Shighnan. He was brought back to Hunza and his child became the ruler of Hunza. The name of the child is Auasho Alias Shah Khan.⁶⁴

The ruling family of Hunza holds the third tradition, which seems to be correct. Hence, narrating the oral tradition, Raja Sher Ali Khan ibn Khusraw Khan ibn Nafees Khan ibn Mir Ghazan Khan-I ibn Mir Gazanfar Ali Khan, the great ruler of Hunza, says:

After the death of Girkis, his daughter, Nur Bibi came to the throne in the place of her father. When she reached the age of fourteen her *vazir* and other elders felt the princess ought to be married. Hence, a delegation of the elders set out to Shighnan, Badakhshan. In Shighnan, they learnt that there were two princes in the village, who belonged to the King of Shighnan, Shah Sikandar, the elder prince was named Shah Khan and younger one

⁶⁰ W. Moorcraft, *op.cit.*, p.265.

⁶¹ E.F. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, Karachi, reprint, 1980, originally published in 1893, p.99.

⁶² A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, p.170.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.197.

⁶⁴ A.H. Dani, *op.cit.* Qudratullah Beg, *op.cit.*, pp.52-3.

was named Shah Ghuncha. In short the elder Prince, Shah Khan was brought to Hunza. The nobles of Hunza married Shah Khan to Nur Bibi.⁶⁵

This last tradition seems to be correct as another source also confirm this idea. Major J. Biddulph says:

A prince of Shinghnan became the husband of the princess, but that his name being forgotten he is known only as Auasho (Heaven-sent), from which the present ruling family of Hunza takes the name. The present thum of Hunza is Ghazan Khan.⁶⁶

Following the above tradition Dr. Leitner also accepts the same in his work, *Hunza and Nagar Handbook*.⁶⁷

Ismailism in early period: According the Raja Sher Ali Khan, a member of royal family of Hunza from Khuda Abad,⁶⁸ the rulers of Shinghnan were Ismailis by faith because their ancestors were converted to Ismailism by the efforts of Sayyidna Nasir-I Khusraw, the poet-philosopher and Ismaili missionary of the fifth century A.H. Therefore Shah Khan (Ayasho-I) was an Ismaili. According to Ismatullah Mushfiq.⁶⁹

In the previous lines we have mentioned Tajuddin Mugal's invasion of Chitral and Gilgit. It was at this time that Ismaili faith was also propagated in Nagar and Hunza. He converted the ruler and his subjects into Ismaili faith. After the invasion of Hunza, Taj Mughal proceeded to Sinkiang through Pamir.

On the second phase, Ismailism was reintroduced in 15th century AD, with the establishment of Ayasho dynasty in Hunza. Mir himself was Ismaili and Wakhis who had come to Hunza were also Ismailis. Hence, Ismatullah Mushfiq, a local historian from Hunza Gojal, states that some Wakhi Ismailis accompanied Shah Khan (Ayasho) on his way to Hunza and settled in Gojal. So, after Taj Mughal's invasion Ismailism came to Hunza for the second time. Certainly, Ismailism, as historical facts speak, had remained as the state-religion. The rulers and their subjects of Hunza remained Ismaili until the time of Ayasho-II, son of Mayoru ibn Shah Khan, who converted to Shia *Ithna 'asharia* faith.

⁶⁵ Narrated by Raja Sher Ali Khan, a descendant of Mir family of Hunza resident of Khuda Abad Hunza.

⁶⁶ John Biddulph, *op.cit.*, p.28.

⁶⁷ G.W. Leitner, *Hunza and Nagar Handbook*, first edition, 1889, reprint, Karachi, 1985, p.III.

⁶⁸ Narrated by Raja Sher Ali Khan.

⁶⁹ Narrated by Al-waiz Ismatullah Mushfique, Gojal, Hunza.

Ithna'asharism in Hunza: After the conversion of Ayasho-II into *Ithna'asharism* the Twelver Shiite *da'wa* rapidly spread and Ismailism was replaced by *Ithna'asharism* in Hunza. Thus, justifying the conversion of the ruler, Colonel R.C.F. Schomberg writes:

It is said that Auesho-II married the daughter of a Raja, and when the lady came to Hunza Baltit and Altit were built for her, and by workmen from her own country. Through this marriage the Shia form of Muhammedansim was introduced into the country.⁷⁰

The father-in-law Abdul Khan, the then ruler of Skardu gave as dowry, among other things, a gun, which bears a date of A.H. 946/AD. 1539. The Skardu ruler also sent some artisans from Baltistan who built the palatial forts of Altit and Baltit. Inside the Altit fort a mosque was also built. It was named the Mosque of Bibi Ghoras (or Gohar). Near this mosque a square tower in the ancient Hunza style was built. This tower bears A.H. 966/AD.1548⁷¹ as its date of construction.

The above date indicates that the Shia *Ithna'ashari* faith came to Hunza in 10th/16th century. And it remained for about two hundred and fifty years as the religion of rulers and their subjects of Hunza up to the time of Salim Khan III (d.1823 AD).

During the time of Salim Khan, Ismaili form of Islam was re-introduced by the efforts of Ismaili missionaries of Badakhshan. According to Schomberg, by the time of Mir Ghazanfar Khan practically all the country was Ismaili or Mawla'i.⁷² So, renaissance of Ismaili *da'wa* happened again.

Many famous writers have narrated the detailed account of Ismaili *da'wa*, particularly Muller and Qudratullah Beg are well known in this regard. S. J. Muller says:

After Tham (ruler) Salim Khan-III had been exiled he studied in Badkhashan. When he became the tham (ruler) of Hunza (in 1790, AD) Shah Ardabil came from Badakhshan to Gulmit and secretly imported the *mualai* faith to Tham Salim Khan.⁷³

Salim Khan III accepted Ismaili faith and after his conversion to Ismailism Sayyid Shah Ardabil went back to Badakhshan. Salim Khan died in 1823 AD. His death ceremony was performed by Sayed Shah

⁷⁰ R.C.F. Schomberg, *op.cit.*, p.147; also see Muller. *op.cit.*, p.211.

⁷¹ A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, p.197; Qudratullah Beg, *op.cit.*, pp.68-70.

⁷² R.C.F. Schomberg, *op.cit.*, p.147.

⁷³ S.J. Muller, *op.cit.*, p.12; Qudratullah Beg, *ibid.*, pp.140-41.

Hussain, the son of Sayed Ardabil.⁷⁴ After the death of Salim Khan, his son, Ghazanfar Khan came to the throne of Hunza. It is said that in his time learned men used to come from Badkshshan. Muller writes,

Tham, Gazanfar Khan had sent for the son of Shah Ardabil, Sayed Hussain, and had brought him by way of Ishkoman to Hunza in order to appoint him as pir (for Hunza). He sent some superior headmen of Aliabad with Wazir Zinat Shah to Hindi (present Nasir abad) to meet him there. Zinat Shah became Sayed Hussain's disciple. When the latter arrived in Hunza Tham, Ghazanfar Khan did not become his disciple.⁷⁵ But paying Sayed Hussain respect and honour he sent him back.

After Sayed Hussain's death Sayyed Yaqut Shah, son of Pir Sayyed Shah Nawaz Shah arrived in Hunza. Ghazanfar Khan and Wazir Puno and all the people of Hunza became his disciples and adopted the *Maulai* faith.⁷⁶

When the other Muslims and Sayyids of Badakshan heard about the achievements of Sayyied Yaqut Shah in the *da'wa* activities in Hunza, They came here and attempted to make disciples. Hence Sayyid Ghulam Ali Shah son of Sayyid Husain Ardabili came to Hunza. Wazir Zada Zinat Shan and his other companions became the disciples of the Sayyid and therefore they are called 'muridani Sayyid Husain' or disciples of Sayyid Husain.⁷⁷ In Ghazanfar Khan's time Khwaja (Khajah) Shahdad came from Sarikol and converted the Wakhis and some Hunza people and made them his disciples.⁷⁸ In Ghazanfar Khan's time they practiced Shia rites secretly in Ganish. Ghazanfar Khan made the people *Maulai*.⁷⁹

According to Muller, in the time of Aman al-Mulk of Chitral, *Pir* Shah Abdul Hamid fled from Chitral and came to Hunza.⁸⁰ It was the time of Ghazanfar Khan when the *pir* came to Hunza. Shah Abdul Hameed converted the people of Hindi (Nasir abad, Shinaki) to Ismailis.⁸¹ Now all the Shins are disciples of Abdul Hamid because he

⁷⁴ A.H. Dani, *op.cit.*, p.200; Qudratullah Beg, *ibid.*, p.121.

⁷⁵ S.J. Muller, *op.cit.*, p.213; Qudratullah Beg, *ibid.*, p.140.

⁷⁶ S.J. Muller, *op.cit.*, p.213; Qudratullah Beg, *ibid.*, p.174.

⁷⁷ Qudratullah Beg, *ibid.*, p.176.

⁷⁸ S.J. Muller, *op.cit.*, p.213-214; Qudratullah Beg, *ibid.*, pp.176-77.

⁷⁹ S.J. Muller, *op.cit.*, p.214.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.214.

made them *Maulai*.⁸²

Munshi Abdul Rahim, who was given an assignment to prepare a report on Badakhshan and Wakhan by the Government of India in 1890 A.D., writes: 'In Hunza there are some disciples of Shah Abdul Rahim, some of Sayyid Shah of Chitral, some of the Khwajas of Wakhan and Sarikol'.⁸³

A report on Ismailia *pirs* in Sarikol was prepared by Sher Muhammad Sher, and submitted to the political agent in 1905. The report says: 'Said Ahmed Khan has about 100 families of Hunza as his follower'.⁸⁴ However, the process of conversion continued till the end of 19th century and the first quarter of 20th century AD. Now, almost all the people of Hunza are Ismailis but few hundred families from Ganish and Murtaza Abad belong to *Ithna'ashari* school of thought.

Conclusion

Gilgit-Baltistan is an autonomous region of Pakistan. It consists of seven districts, namely: Gilgit, Diamar, Astor, Skardu, Gancje, Gizer and Hunza-Nagar. All of the people of the region are Muslims. Gilgit is the home of Shia *Ithna'ashari*, Sunni and Ismaili sects. While the Nagar is a major centre of *Ithna'asharis* where as the people of Hunza are Ismailis. First, Ismailism spread there through efforts of Nasir-I Khuraw, and his disciples. But Ismailis properly penetrated the region when Tajuddin Mughal invaded Gilgit Nagar and Hunza as well as Chitral in the first second decade of 14th century AD. After a long time, from the beginning of 19th century Ismaili *da'is* of Badakhshan re-organized the Ismaili *da'wa* and converted thousands of people of Hunza and Ghizer to Ismaili faith. From the middle of 16th century *Ithna'ashari* faith was propagated by the saints and scholars, such as Sayyid Shah Burya Wali, Sayyid Shah Arif, Sayyid Shah Wali and their disciples and clerics in Gilgit, Nagar and Hunza. The Sunni faith was propagated by the efforts of the rulers of Khushwaqt family of Yasin and the Sunni officers and clerics, who served their duties as the employees of the both Sikh and Dogra regime in Gilgit. These three schools of thought have lived together peacefully for centuries. The characteristics of tolerance, freedom of thoughts and diversity were maintained by the then Muslim societies.

⁸² *Ibid.*, Qudratullah Beg, *op.cit.*, p.304.

⁸³ Munshi Abdul Rahim, *A Journey to Badakhshan, With Report on Badakhshan and Wakhan* (Gilgit Agency: F.D. Press Simla, 1890), p.16.

⁸⁴ Sher Muhammad Sher, *A Report on Ismailia Pirs in Sarikol*, prepared by Sher Muhammad Sher submitted to the Political Agent in 1905, possessed in D.C. Office.